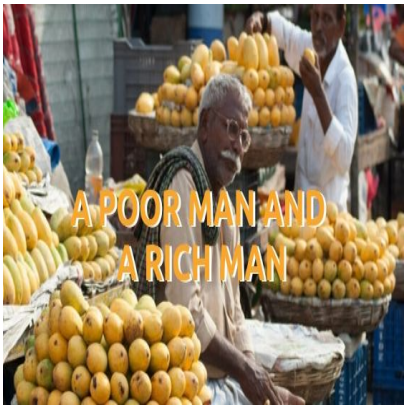


A POOR MAN AND A RICH MAN

Description

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(A poor man is an absolute rich man who pockets no debts, but a rich man is forever a poor man who belts a garland of groans and loans.)

The highway, being a weekend, seemed choked with traffic, speeding cars, overloaded trucks racing with one another; itâ??s a scene of chaos. The carelessness, the rashness is evident when the vehicles rush inches close to a crash causing the whole length of the carriers to a rattling jolt: a response to the screeching brakes. On that day, looking at the lunacy on wheels made me infer that disaster on the freeways is just one careless driverâ??s blink away.

Ignoring the rowdy noises whizzing past, I sat on a bench a little away from the highway for a coffee and gave myself a relaxing nod, â??Iâ??m not in a hurryâ?? Iâ??ll see if I could grab a quick breakfast.

The winter sun in the morning seems too friendly to leisure under the canopy of thick trees that dotted all along the road. I have two more hours to drive to attend a marriage function.

â??Take you time,â?? catching a whiff of boiling coffee, I answered, when the middle-aged man who is managing this roadside shack signals with his hand, â??just five minutes, sir.â??

I drooped in the chair, stretching and watching the surrounds aimlessly. I found no dwellings anywhere around, itâ??s so soothing under the cluster of trees I felt so blissful to the body used to the noise and drone of the city.

I found the place so casual and easy on my mood, and lazily I gave a long look at the coziness of this unnoticeable out-of-town setting.

There is a freestanding wooden platform upon which a stove and cooking wares were placed. And a huge kettle to prepare coffee and a large clean thermos are arranged adjacent to it. A steamed cooker shedding out vapors, like an angry dragon we see on the TV, perhaps, the hot idlis (a local breakfast snack) seem getting ready. It felt so calming to watch the couple immersed in managing the roadside self-employment enterprise.

Iâ??m in my best cushy moods, I always look for it, with my salt and pepper beard and stumbling into the sixties with a full shock of hair, retired and a single parent and children married and settled. I never took a break for thirty-five years caring for one of the biggest educational institutes. I too, like many, was swept away by the troubling financial currents and got battered badly. But at the moment, Iâ??m retired and relaxed with complacency that I reached safe, calm shores. Many of the irritants no longer troubling me, I meant to romance the beloved freedom every day that came after battling the stampede of severe storms for thirty years. Itâ??s a feeling something similar to a freed prisoner looking back at the ominous structure that had mentally distressed him for years.

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Iâ??m lost in the thoughts and in my past.

Suddenly a flashy car stopped a little away from the shack.

I saw a well- dressed gentleman step out of his car, yelling in his cell-phone, he didnâ??t even bother to close the car door. His frame was lean and taut but the face seemed slack with creases of unease and hints of worry and tension. His tone showed off a command but pleading is the expression I detected while he walked towards the tea-counter.

It struck me, looking at the worried man, a rationale, â??the bigger the flashy cars the more the turmoil and distress it carries.â??

He sat at the edge of the dust-covered stool with some hesitation, lest his dress would catch the dirt.

I observed his mannerisms and the low-spirited voice, and the stressy way he sat on the stool. The sick contours of his face all hinted that he looked severely disturbed at the moment. â??Something, maybe, finances, seems badly tormenting him.â?? I concluded for myself.

He asked, pausing speaking into the cell-phone, for a hot tea. The couple behind the counter nodded with familiarity and a smile as if he was a regular at the place. Later I came to know that he drops in occasionally.

Throughout the time he sat there, the offending and anxious eyes narrowed on his face, restlessness was apparent when he moved away preferring some privacy or a matter of vanity not to allow others to overhear his pleadings. Iâ??m almost done with my second cup of coffee, and then I noticed he suddenly turned meek with requests almost like a humble supplicant and somehow it didnâ??t match the swagger he has been carrying.

â??I need more time,â?• itâ??s a cry of a petition.

â??No, it wonâ??t happen this time,â?• the words came out strained.

â??You understand my situation,â?• a sense of defeat.

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Sitting there waiting for the tea, now the gentlemenâ??s pleadings of worry came out so loud as if they erected a speaker system around. I gathered all the details which I would never have known: to whom and how much the gentleman owes at the moment.

The bankers and the private lenders seem to slam heavily on him, and this remote place has given him some ease of privacy which I imagined his home or office wouldnâ??t have provided. But he sounded like a fighter, a tough guy by all appearances.

He seemed so consumed, so swallowed in the heat of arguments that ignoring the tea being offered, he walked back into his car and drove away.

The couple watched the untouched tea and speeding car with a nonchalant flicker in their eyes. It suggested a routine that they have witnessed was nothing unusual in their state of being managing this road-side tea business. A mild smile played in their eyes only evident in the people contended and resigned and who assumed, â??we are happy with what we have and we are at peace within ourselves.â??

The whole episode that ran less than ten minutes but curiously had a tinge of familiarity of the incidents of my past in my life. It meant something to do with what I have tolerated â?? a roller-coaster ride of success and defeat, hope and despair, breezy days and mournful incidents, ignorance and stupidity and of learning and evolving. It is as though the kaleidoscope of my life. At every turn, I was stunned,

staggered and sometimes fascinated at the change of colors, patterns and transience of the harmony, peace and pain and the multiple spectacular shapes and designs of survival that I went through. It scares me sometimes when I look back at what I have been served so sweetly and sourly on the plate of my timeline.

They were times only a few years ago the moment I opened my eyes phone calls, the menacing voices of lenders assaulted me and threatening ultimatums from bankers. The slightest ring from my phone sent me trembling. For years I have led a life as a nervous wreck. Even the odd footsteps would shake me with unease and unexplained fear. In many countless nights, I could never seek a comfortable sleep relentlessly anticipating a menacing knock on the door in the morning. I feared doubts that someone crooked to attack me was out there waiting to confront me.

The tea-shop couple later apprised me of the gentleman who lives locally, who pushed himself into a financial muddle and havenâ??t been making any amends in his personal and professional domain to stay out of the mess. They have added that he addictively sticks to his manner of loftier expanse of living which distances many to help him in times of need.

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Hearing the full of airs and graces version of his character, I felt no sympathy for him. I have an opinion that who thinks, â??I can live on someone else money and behave rich is one who barrows troubles in advance.â?? One can never stay rich for long or act rich on borrowed money. I assume itâ??s as dangerous as sleeping with a snake under your pillow. Most of the time you hear only hissing, but one day the bite may prove fatal.

One must never live a life of fear and stay perpetually in liabilities. Itâ??s like standing hopelessness, like a servant before a lender. The point here is once the goal post reaches closer to retirement one should sort out all the encumbrances and plan to lead a life of peace, freedom from credits and financial cuffs. Itâ??s helps to realize early that once the debts get dissolved one can easily control and change the sources of unhappiness, stress, mental fatigue â?? the plague â?? a result of mortgage. Wisely, I would recommend constraining all the indulgent and expensive lifestyle, alter the ethos and strongly hold an urge and work honorably hard for your family and children and resolve, â??I have to lead a debt-free life.â??

Category

1. Uncategorized

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