

A Drizzle
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The power was cut off and the noisy fan slowed down and ultimately came to halt. The bulb that spread yellow light was also turned off. Amubapa's eyes began to search the darkness. He was sitting on a coat and from there he looked into the front yard. The sky seemed dark. The age old wall clock struck five and that startled him.

He was confused: Did he sleep longer or the time stood still? As if it was a dream he shook his head and tried to disperse the thoughts off. He felt he should sleep again. But very next moment he dropped the idea. He sighed deeply. It was such a feeble thing that even the damp air wasn't disturbed at all.

The walls showed black patches at many places. The sky-blue colour had also come out here and there. Amubapa's eyes surveyed the whole room. Everything was all right as it had been once upon a time. Each moment convinced him that none had visited the house since a very long time. Only a customary damp smell lingered and it had enrooted all his body and mind. He took a deep sigh again and again he felt that damp smell.

No motion. He remained seated for a while. Except his breathing there was no sound. A total emptiness. The walls displayed old, and yellow framed photographs but he never ever had a wish to see them. On the contrary he never ever thought to remove them. The faces in them had paused for years. They too didn't express anything like Amubapa. A prayer-sutra made of Tulsi and a scarf hung at a stand near a wooden cupboard. He would sometimes eye at them from a distance. Often he felt to have a touch of that prayer-sutra but the darkness would hamper everything and then all the things looked dim. He has forgotten that he himself had put the scarf that always remained on his shoulders. Both, the prayer-sutra and the scarf had lost their value and were useless now. She wore that sutra around her neck. He fancied many a times that those eyes through the brown frame glasses looked at him. She looked gorgeous in dark green sari.

Outdoor darkness was now matching to indoor one. It was a humid night yesterday and the noon restless. He had nothing to do. Had not thought it that the sky would turn so dark during a nap at noon. He looked in the solitary passage. He wished to go out. The left hand felt a sensation but the right one worked. He held a plank of the coat and stood up. Picked up his walking stick and walked up to the threshold. The eyes welcomed the outer light. Now he was in the passage. His eyes turned to both the sides to find nothing. He dropped himself on an easy-chair that was near to the wooden support to the house. Breaths grew. He turned his head back as if to see how far had he walked! Because of the darkness inside the room he couldn't find anything there. He stretched himself. He breathed easily now. He gave a gentle push and the chair began to jolt.

The front entrance unfolds high walls to the three sided passage and that holds the roof made of foreign tiles. It showed holes at many places. All the house doors and windows were carved. Above the door silt were laid semi-sphere coloured glasses. The house gave a prestigious look that can only be possessed by a man of status. It had royal furniture. Three rooms on each side and two adjoining rooms to them at the front side. And yet it was insufficient to the family. The whole house roared full day. She ran behind the children and when got tired, sat down on the floor resting her back at the wooden pillar.

Amubapa threw eyes into the lonely passage. His eyes were habituated to this. And yet he felt a bit. He pushed his eyes somewhere else.

A peepal plant had sprouted from the front gate wall. It had odd growth. But now the wall possessed only its trunk. He glanced at it. Even several rains couldn't bring any leaf to it. Once it was a shady tree. Its fallen leaves filled the full yard. He never liked it but she always said, 'Our forefathers dwell in them. They always bless us. It's not good to cut a peepal.' He felt salty taste in the mouth.

Amubapa shuddered for a while. He looked around him. Almost missed heartbeats. Eyes fixed on the peepal for a while and then jumped into the empty front yard. Both the sights prickled his eyes. He knew never a leaf would grow there and yet he hoped it. And then no regret can linger in the heart.

His half-cut hand shook. He sadly looked at it. He found it like that of a cut peepal trunk. It was the very hand that had axed the tree.

He stared at the closed doors as if they would open soon. What else had he to do except looking at them! This was a place where no change would take place and he had to be a witness only. Like his body everything was getting rotten and he watched.

A pigeon flew in, sat into a recess of the passage and began to coo. Its sound filled the house. Then the pigeon flew and perched on a well-head and stretched its neck to look into it. Amubapa was a bit scared lest it fell into the well. Eyes widened for a while and shrunk then. Upright position changed. He was relaxed now. He watched the rusted wheel on the well. He felt it would move with a creaking sound and bring water out but how can it be possible when the well is waterless? He imagined her there. She was pulling the rope out to fetch water. He again saw her. The wheel was turning and the container was moving up slowly. He lays his hand upon her bangles but at the same time she loses the grip of the rope and the container goes....

The clouds roared now. He looked up in the sky. The lower lip moved at a side. There was a noise of someone's opening the front gate. He tried to see the things. A troop of noisy children rushed in and began to run all over. His lips spread in happiness. The face became kind. Stretched line on the face disappeared. The children had their tempo and it increased as the sky started to shower gently. He wished the children continue to play like this. May the sounds continue to fill the house! She too run behind them, get tired and sit down resting her back at the wooden pillar. He viewed the whole passage with a different mind. For a while it seemed that hidden bats in the corners came out and hovered through the passage. The dark corners began to come to life and everything seemed to be filled with happiness.

The children were elevated to a different mood. They had become naughty. Now they took in hand a task of pushing an old tyre that was at a corner. A couple of them pushed hard but the tyre seemed to be fixed. The rain wiped their faces looked happy but then their expression changed as the tyre was not moving at all. In an effort to push it, one child missed the thing, he too fell down and that brought the others down to the ground as well. Even though they fell they liked it and laughed a lot. They all got up and began to dance.

Amubapa couldn't but laughed. How that tyre was to move? For many years it's lying there. The Fiat car no longer is with them but this, only tyre is left behind. He gazed at it. The car descended to his memory. He found the children playing into it. Two

of them began to turn the steering, while one jumped on to the car. Everybody shouted loudly.

But where's the car? Amubapa found nothing. Couldn't believe that it was a dream only but the tyre lying there brought the harsh reality. He saw that there were red spots on the wrecks of the car.

Now the force of the rain grew and so grew the happiness of the children. Seeing them in such a jocund mood he too felt to go out and get wet. Now there, on his face alighted happiness. The children looked at the old man. He waved his hand at them and this was a sign to carry on the fun and they did it whole heartedly. The yard began to fill up with the rain water. The wind pushed the rain hither and thither. From the roof the water channels were sharply coming down. He liked to see this. It broke the monotony. He forgot his cut hand. A drizzle fell upon him and his half of the body got wet. Even the glasses were not spared. The things became dim. He was almost confused. His wish to get wet was fulfilled but.....

Everything changed now. His face and eyes too changed their expression. Lips were pulled together in anger. He got up quickly. The children invited him to join the party but his mind wasn't there. It was something strange, he felt. There was pace into his steps. Six strides and he was inside the room! He was relieved now.

He walked up to the wooden cupboard and looked at the prayer-sutra and the scarf hung at the stand. He never touched that sutra but today he felt a strong urge for it. The face shone bright before him whose hands held it. He opened the cupboard slowly that had remained closed for many years. Dampness showed its marks over it. He inhaled that known smell which filled his heart. Everything was in order as it was years before. Radio, wrist-watch, hat, old diary, some packets, carved jewellery box, newspapers and so on.... He stopped for a while..

His shaking hand held a newspaper that had turned yellow. He was unconscious of the force that was pushing him to do it. His eyes didn't wish to see the newspaper and yet they read. In the big impressive headlines some accident news had been printed. He stared at it. A photo displayed a completely wrecked Fiat car beside the road.

His body shivered flesh to bones. His hands trembled. He put the newspaper at its place and closed the cupboard. He saw his cut hand for a while and then he looked at the group photograph on the wall. Except his face, others in the photograph had become still forever. It was the last time that five people had slept here under this roof. He had wept but how much can a lonely man weep! Still the children were playing. He heard them. Everything was mixing up now. He was in the dark room and as if he was out of the senses he gazed the black marks on the damp wall. The feet went numb. It was impossible to stand and so hurriedly he shut the doors from inside. The darkness enveloped all the things and he dropped himself on the coat.

Now the children noise was not heard at all.

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