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The Swing

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Left the station and had to stop at the crossing. The red light was on. As I stood my eyes didn't wander but directly went to the couple who always swung in the balcony of their second storey flat that was at the north-east corner of the crossing. The same man and woman as I had seen them, the day before. Yesterday also in the same manner, on this right time, at the same place, in this very same fashion they had been seen laughing and swaying. I couldn't decide whether they laughed and swung or swung and laughed. Yesterday casually my eyes caught them otherwise I have no such a habit to look here and there. Otherwise I have been passing through this road since last one and a half decade. If not while going, then at least while returning it has happened that I've to stop over here. Sometimes during green light if the timer shows more seconds easily the road is crossed. If there are ten or eleven seconds in green seen from the distance, I gear up my scooter. It's also fun to cross the road during the critical seconds! If I find no time to cross then far from the crossing I let go the scooter free, at least some petrol is saved. Of course do access all the possibility of crossing. By chance, avoiding the Bobby Darling the - traffic Inspector, there's always problem. If caught, be sure of fifty rupee fine! If you try, the fifty rupee petrol can run a week or buy a week vegetable stock or if you think at least one month expense of pen pencil can be managed. But there's different emotion in crossing the road in such a way! The experience of fast life that I always have in the morning as I have to get a train helps me deal such a condition. If I stop on all such crossings then in buying the things according to Swati given list, sure it would bring the nightfall. Isn't it better then to hurry up and reach home in time and be engrossed in plenty of possibilities of Swati's complaints of no gas cylinder delivery, tap leakage, children fees payment, no edible oil or something like this and that and find peace in all options of 'ifs'. Or it's also that going though the local newspaper watch a certain TV channel and entertain myself and at night or midnight be with the wife and satisfied and again back to the day with the 4.40 a.m alarm tune!

Saw them yesterday. Can't say you very clearly have seen them earlier or not seen at all; but yesterday just found them. Suddenly my eyes found them. Of course everyday my eyes watched big hoardings and laughing men and women in the changing advertisements. No doubt I've not so much interest in them. But what to do for those thirty or forty seconds till the green light's not on? Sometimes I see advertisements of anything sold at the fair price or any 'buy one get one free' scheme and the same thing is on Swati's shopping list than it's that much beneficent. But yesterday, don't know how, my eyes stretched and stretched up to the couple who swung in the balcony of their second storey flat that was at the north-east corner of the crossing. I had turned my pure eyes back from them as they

didn't notice anything special. And I also had started living my routine life. Since my waking up by 4.40 am alarm to this 5.45 pm returning, within those thirteen hours many a past, present, and future things appeared before me and disappeared. But none of them had possessed to my mind even for a while. And after these twenty four hours I saw them and yesterday memory got refreshed. O yes, before this too, I've stood up many times here on this place, on this time, and in this same manner. But yesterday's seeing them for the first time was never ever pre-decided. Only the eyes moved right or left and in between looked at the timer. Then why it happened today that my eyes went up to that place which was seen yesterday? Don't know how? The timer started showing count down and I bent my scooter to start and kicked it. As I began to move ahead I glanced to the north-east corner and finally was lost into the issues of growing dearness, forthcoming increment, wife's medicine for B.P. and deshi fertiliser for the plants of my neighbour.

Waking up at 4.40 a.m., when I started for 6.10 a.m. Memu train, the road was quiet. Instead of red and green lights, flickering yellow light fell on the road. It looked as if it was playing hide and seek game and suggested to move ahead carefully. While on the scooter, I glanced to the north-east corner flat second storey balcony. The swing stood still like an ascetic, and bathed in the fifth day light of the old moon light. Was it the fifth night or the seventh? Really don't know whether its old moon or the new moon? It happened that I remembered a couple of lines read two days back in a newspaper supplement. Strange is the mind! If I remain lost in such lines then I forget my own work too! Least are the problems in the eight hour office work that the mind wanders here and there and be lost? All right it may look beautiful in a story or a poem, but reciting such lines in a daily routine, you become an idiot and people may laugh at you.

Not in the office, but as I got 5.35 train, that swing began to sway in my mind. The crossing red light made it possible to stop there. I smiled as I found the couple swaying in the balcony of their second storey flat that was at the north-east corner of the crossing. As I watched them I didn't realise that the scooter had moved a bit beyond the border line and stopped on the zebra crossing. I came to reality only when Bobby Darling neared the scooter and hit his stick slowly on the front wheel and I pushed the scooter a few steps back. The swing was to take away my fifty rupees. And yet I couldn't take my mind away from the swing. It looked that the man and woman weren't newly married. They weren't old too. But they must be somewhat elder. And yet their swaying and smiling kept miles away their becoming elder and also attracted people miles away. To now their facial expressions I lifted my slid spectacles up and tried to see distant things closer by. Was there anything except their sublime happiness? Was the swing its cause? Don't know myself. As the timer indicated Green light I bent the scooter and kicked. I felt the swing was left behind but in reality it seemed chasing me. Even though I finished shopping and reached to the home I felt I was still trapped at the crossing. I had begun to like that picture: the swing moving up and down, candidly smiling couple, and the happiness around them, and that's all. Nothing more. Won't they have any interest in the traffic light that stopped, ran, making efforts to run, on the indication of this crossing red and green light? Three days passed but haven't found them taking a glance to this side. They were atoned deeply. What it could be in each other that they are searching? Don't know really. But when I reached home Swati was rebuking Rashmi, sulking at the gate bars. On seeing me she started complaining: 'Say a few words to your darling son. Doesn't obey at all. As soon as he becomes free stands at the gate. Moves the gate this way and that way. The gate will break and need repairing. In that case don't say anything to me.'

Don't know why but even though I heard matter of expense, I couldn't stop him. The days stood before me: we did various experiments to miss his cradle sleeping habit. We were tired of beyond anything. No sooner he woke up, and then he demanded the cradle. It was his tough and hard habit. Coxed, frightened, and even after threatening and thrashing we couldn't take away his habit, we had to untie the cradle and pushed it to the attire. My God what a show he had made! For three days he had cried. It was only then that we gave some intoxicic medicines for a week and he forgot the cradle. But his habit to be at gate bars

and sway didn't go. 'Let him have the fun of it' I could think but for Swati it was impossible. She dragged him into the room. I also allowed her to do so. Right at that moment I felt if there's a swing at the home both of them could be pleased. How it would be if I gift Swati a swing on her birthday? It's also that the next month there's the increment. An instalment for it can easily be made? Let's think!

The night also passed by and so the day in such a thinking. Again got up at 4.40 a.m. reached the station as usual at 5.50 and got in 6.10 a.m. Memu train. Swayed in the works between 8.00 a.m. to 4.00p.m. office hours and till I reached the crossing couldn't push away the swing from my mind. The couple was already there on the swing. I had also a longing to be on the swing with Swati beside me. but don't want to tell about it to Swati. Want to give her a surprise. Like me, she too might have swayed on the swing. To me, my Father used to take me at the Sayaji Garden. Had enough play with the swing. Then, as the garden was left behind so was swing. Yea once we had to Mumbai after our marriage. Among the various Essell World rides, we experienced swaying on a Columbus ride – a ship shaped big swing. You feel like a Godly swing. In my eight standard class I had learnt such poem, related to the God's super giant wheel- the World. The teacher had made us it learn by heart. At first I couldn't do it so the teacher had made me stand on the bench till the class ended. Because of it such a thing like God's Big Wheel and the sway entered in to the mind. Today the poem's also forgotten and so the swaying. If I find time enough on this Sunday, then will take Rashmi to the Sayaji Garden; and during his vacation to Kabirvad.

Far from the distance I saw red light and made me happy but soon it turned green. Slowed down the scooter and the speedometer indicated slowing down speed with the timer count down. Will it be possible to cross? Just to carry on I let the scooter go. Didn't turn the engine off. 'Thank God!' Soon I reached to the crossing and it turned red. With that there came up a feeling that I couldn't understand. They were there on the swing. The couple was swaying in the balcony of their second storey flat that was at the north-east corner of the crossing. Who could they be? Where did they come from? What's work? No profession, business, service? Or was it the aim of their life to swing only? This is how they swayed all day? Or be there in the evening for a while and have a little fun at the time of my returning? But in my mind the picture of their always swaying together has been galvanised. Their constant swaying has moved me. I feel swaying myself. Their open laughter, and pleasant being as almost pushed aside all worldly reality. And because of their swayingbecause of their swaying....what should I say? No words handy to express. Had I paid attention in poetry and like things at that time of study, right now I might have understood this swaying very well. Of course can understand but don't understand what name should I give to such an experience. But I feel that the feelings of intimacy that has taken place all around, melts down those frozen problems and make them subsidiary. The kicks and engines noises of the vehicles at my back brought me in to reality and when I looked at the timer only two seconds were left for the green light. Quickly I bent my scooter and tried to compose the broken pieces of the picture that I have just seen.

While I was shopping according to Swati given list, a saw a furniture mart and that stopped me. I saw different swings that suited to my budget. For the trial I also swayed on a or two swings. Really liked very much. When I was sitting I thought that each house should have at least one. I found one that can easily accommodate two people and made the mind for it. Next month surely I'll have it. When I reached home Swati was swaying in the daily chores. Rashmi was unwillingly doing his homework. When she saw me swaying into a different mood she started: 'No oil. Also need sugar. Yesterday I forgot to tell you. Just now hotchpotch for the meal. Little sugar for morning tea. Don't forget tomorrow. See it well. And I tell you, put it right now in your list.'

Like every day, today I couldn't involve myself into Swati's complaints, Rashmi's demands, shopping list, stale news that were fresh in the morning, and a certain everyday

watched channel. The swing had made turbulence into my mind. Though I controlled my mind all the time drifted to the couple swaying in the balcony of their second storey flat that was at the north-east corner of the crossing. What may come, like them let me swing. Like them let me live. Want to sway lifetime with Swati. Like them. While we swa she will be happy and satisfied. And yes after that, when I return from the office, I will have tea and snake there on the swing. Will go through the newspaper there as well. Even TV programmes from there possible. The swing can't be fixed in the drawing room but the passage before it is quite suitable for it. The measurement of the desired swing was there in the mind when I thought the passage. Keeping in mind its length and width there won't be any fixing problem for its fixing there. If it's fixed nearby the drawing room window, and if the windows are kept open, then the TV programmes can be watched even while we are swaying. But in doing so, we face the other end of the entrance. No it's not like that. I want to arrange it in such a way that we can face the right side of the entrance and we can see any one's coming in. And it would also be that anyone can also see us on the swing. Of course once we're there on the swing who cares for others? In my dreams I have always swayed. Cleaning my specs with my shirt end I looked at Swati. I found her on the swing with me. A butterfly came flying up to me and sat down on me. Seeing it Swati became so happy that seven or eight butterflies began to fly around her. Swaying high up to the sky we found ourselves whispering to the clouds. Along with the clouds we sang, and smiled and in the season of happiness we began to reap the fruits of delight. Some heavenly music seemed to move us. Slowly it deepened so much that I was startled and woke up and found the set alarm was ringing.

As I read 4.40 a.m. got up immediately. Finished routine and directly reached the crossing. Stopped for a while at the swing. The swing had also stopped. As if watching me it began to sway. In my imagination I saw the couple swaying there. Pulling up specs a bit I found that the couple was known to me. In woman figure I found Swati and in man me. My whole existence opened up like a flower. But why it seems so dim? So sudden? Again I wiped my specs, pulled the specs up a bit more and looked up there. Really it looked dim. Did my eye numbers grow? I looked around. Oh! Municipal lamp posts were off that's why it happened. It was now 6.00 a.m. when I looked in to my wrist-watch. Hurriedly I bent my scooter, kicked it, and ran toward the station.

The Memu was to depart. Had I got a little late, might have missed the train. The dreams might have severed me from the reality. Making my way through the crowd when I tried to be at my regular seat something soft struck my head. To pacify a crying child someone had tied two ends of a dupatta with the upper berths. It was a swing for the child. As my head struck to it the child started again. The mother began to swaying him. Among the four passengers on a seat I pushed myself. A traveller was saying: 'If he's freed his stomach right now, be sure no office.' The other supported him, 'Remove it, no swing no problem.' The third one was to be little more adventurous but I stopped him. put them in to discipline. No doubt I knew the seriousness of the problem. If the child urinated, the possibility of spoiling ourselves was great. Once such a thing had happened and at that time we had removed the swing. I remembered it just now. But it was the wisdom after a great loss. That's why we felt look before you leap. And still I stopped all my fellow travellers. I asked the woman put more clothes in the swing. And so it went on. The swing went on. It also sways with the train speed. Does it sway because of the train or does the train have the rhythm because of this swing? It was really very difficult to know. But for me I felt that all the passengers were swaying.

As it was the fourth Saturday there were few in the office. There was also little work burden. If there's possibility, wish to leave the office early. Wanted to find out whether they are on the swing in the evening only or is it that they spend time whenever they are free? Suppose that man didn't return from the work, then? But at least she would

be there, no? Let me see her figure longing for him. It would delight me. How she looks awaiting for her husband? Let me see on the other given time how high is their scale of happiness! Of course in doing so there was the fear of losing that picture of their swaying. And yet I couldn't control myself. Got the chance to leave the office at 3.00p.m. Didn't care for the hot day and I left. I was early by an hour. Got off the station and began to move lessening the distance of the crossing. It was good that when I reached there the red light was on. My eyes directly went up there in the balcony of second storey flat that was at the north-east corner of the crossing. I felt like that of a bird in search of food goes away and on returning finds the nest destroyed. It was the north-east corner. The flat was also at its place. The north-west corner. But the second storey balcony was motionless. No swing there, and no one to swing. Where did they go? What happened? Why aren't they are there? A train of questions came up in to my mind. I felt I made a mistake in coming so early. I regretted myself. My throat went dry. Was it a dream? To make it sure I removed my specs and rubbed eyes. Wiped the spec glasses, again put them on, pushed a bit up and tried to look closely. In the desolate balcony a dead board read: 'HOUSE ON RENT'. As if an accident to a five day ongoing journey. Everything laid into pieces. Since how many days have they been swaying? To this happy time, even for seven days, I couldn't be a witness! I felt I had a great loss.

Bobby Darling's stick woke me up. The green light had turned on. Four seconds had also passed. The vehicles at my back blew horns loudly either to move or to give way. I made hurry and started the scooter. Oh I forgot to bend it. I bent it and kicked. But what happened? I kicked and kicked. Was it that I was puzzled or no petrol? The scooter didn't start. I moved in a side. And again made an effort. Oh! It started. Only two seconds for red light were left. Without paying attention to the Bobby Darling, saving myself from the fast moving traffic, hurriedly left the crossing.

Dead tired when I reached home in Rashmi's drawing book a swing was taking its shape. Without looking at me she was preparing wheat for grinding and handed me an envelope and in her usual tone she said, 'It's the house tax memo. Something like two thousand rupees. Will have to arrange for it, no?'

'Would be done, Next month's increment.' I put her like that but I knew I was perspiring heavily and to save myself from it I rushed in to the bathroom. There in the kitchen the utensils made clinking sounds. The smell of boiling tea reached to me. Oh my God! Swati given list is unattended! Now have to take sugarless tea? What do you say?!!

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