

I moved on to the next subject.

"What ya doing here, mate?" I asked the Australian female.

"Poverty." She said and smiled condescendingly. Her eyes were deep blue. They had a sparkle of their own.

"Sorry," I said.

"Conscience. Poverty. I want to do my bit. You get one life. I want to build lives---by teaching English to slum kids of an Asian country and change their lives forever," she said brightly. Evangelism of another kind?

"Do they understand English?"

"Nope."

"Then?"

"English is neo-imperialistic tool of domination. I want the damned and the exploited to learn this language Caliban-like and be part of the global success story," she revealed.

Enough sound-bites.

The third one was pukka British. Clipped. Precise. Aloof but opening up slowly.

"Yes. I am waiting for my son who is to come here shortly. He said he will be here by three in afternoon. It is four now. But I am prepared to wait. People can get delayed." He stated these facts in a staccato manner.

"Where is he right now?" I asked.

"He is in some guru's ashram in Pune. Said he wants to experience peace and bliss. Yoga and bakhti will give him that desired inner peace."

"The Orient teaching Occident?" I said.

The British banker smiled broadly. "I am ready to wait till eternity. This is only a week here. I donot mind. He ran away. I am searching for him everywhere. Our last communication was five years ago. He, Tom, said that he can be contacted at the Café Bloomfield, any time, any day. I flew down. The staff says they have never heard or seen this young man." He pulled out a picture of a freckled young man in his twenties, a troubled expression in his blue eyes, blond hair tousled.

"Suddenly, my Tom has grown invisible."

"Contacted the police?"

"I do not trust them."

"Sure, Tom is around?"

"My heart tells so. Heart never tells a lie."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I can feel him in the air. I know he is angry with me. I have come to meet him last time. He is a nice kid. He will forgive his dad suffering from cancer. I know he is somewhere near and watching me. He will turn up soon. Here. In Café Bloomfield."

"Any phone number?"

"No. He said he will contact me. Snapped up his relations with me. Just

ran away from England. I have been searching for him everywhere. One day, I will find him sure. My son who adored me as a kid. Then, something went wrong. Horribly wrong. I have come to right that wrong. I *will* find him."

A son who was not.

I went to the fourth person. He was buried in a magazine, his coffee near his laptop.

"Hi," I said.

In his confusion, he almost spilled the coffee.

"Waiting?" I asked, while the camera took a close-up.

"Yeah."

"Girlfriend?"

"Naw."

"Friends?"

"A man from USA to hire me."

"In a Café?" I asked, sounding bewildered.

"Yes. A head honcho. On head-hunting spree. Unconventional man and methods. IT and computer wizards are like that."

"Good. How long you waiting?"

"Three hours. Said he will turn up in a white Mercedes, chauffeur-driven. Will be wearing Rolex and Versace. Cologne will be Yves Saint Laurent L'Homme. It is power and wealth combo, you see. Heady. I am sure I will get hired to-day itself."

"How?"

"I am bubbling with ideas. I know how to turn them into start-ups and earn money. I am the next Bill Gates. I want to run an empire. Everything is ready in my laptop. He is here to listen to me. A neutral place. No rivals. No snooping colleagues eavesdropping. Two top business guys talking of ideas that will change the face of the world," he said excitedly, his thin hands trembling badly.

Mark Zuckerberg in making?

Now that is fantastic, is that not? Four subjects caught up in their reveries in a neat little standardized café on a gloomy afternoon wharf overlooking a heaving sea that reminds you of Anton Chekov and Malta...

