

## THE TRAMP

An infinitely long and narrow strip of asphalt that divides into two halves the molten highway on two sides. This strip, like a sidewalk, slightly rises above the carriageway.

And here on this strip - a long "podium", he is standing.

Like on an island.

On his head is a huge mane of hard black hair tangled in a lump, covered with grey dust, with garbage.

You can hardly see the faces, because of the beard.

His clothes look like a masterpiece for a theatrical performance: different width and length of strips of rags, somehow fixed at the skinny neck and shoulders, hanging down to the ground. These strips of rags are in many layers. It's just a knot of long pieces of fabric similar in colour to the rotten shrouds in which the mummies of the pharaohs are wrapped. Grey-brownish-brown-ash-black.

His body is the same colour.

The same colour as the asphalt on which he stands.

He all is the same colour.

He's standing still, intently looking at the distance.

A lonely man-lighthouse in the middle of a sea of cars. Like a tree with its branches cut down.

Heat at 40°C, noon. In the state of Maharashtra.

For him, there's no shadow or wind.

Why did he choose this place?

A short shadow like a short column lies on the asphalt from his frozen figure, the only shadow throughout the dividing strip of asphalt.

After all, here in India are so many huge trees with their hard leaves and fresh coolness! One can live in the intricate labyrinths of their thick branches!

The hot air from by-racing cars gently swaying his garments, looking beautiful, but unreal.

A living being, defenceless, fragile, lost human appearance, stands in the middle of the apotheosis of civilization, puffed with exhaust gases, the smell of gasoline, not defensive. In the 21st century!

Almost physically, I could feel his heart beating, deeply in this knot of dirty rags and rejected flesh. A human heart, just like mine.

He must be mad.

Traffic on the road has slowed and froze.

A traffic-jam.

Maybe a homeless cows got on the track, maybe a truck turned over again, maybe some religious procession was the reason... Could be anything, even an elephant or camels.

Our car sailed slowly past a madman, only a couple of meters and stopped.

I wanted to see his eyes. I wanted to see if my "diagnosis" and conclusions were correct.

And he, as if hearing my thoughts, smoothly took several steps towards my window and slowly sat down on the asphalt.

Every movement he made expressed relaxation and comfort.



And then... I flinched.

He turned his shaggy head-muzzle and looked me right in the eyes!

From the shock, I felt like bouncing off a window, hiding.

But I sat there, hypnotized by what was happening.

Clever, shining two eyes were looking at me.

The eyes were the only part of his body uncovered with dust. And maybe that's why they seemed to shine like polished hematite.

Rather, in order not to lose the sense of reality, my mind "knowing" the Indian beggars, suggested: "now he will start asking for money.

But he didn't beg!

He sat relaxed like a Buddha, holding his hands around his bare knees and looking me in the eyes.

Without curiosity, without reproach, without request. Just looking, because eyes are for looking.

His knees were covered in a grey crust and looking like reptile skin.

A man who had brought himself to such a state has no right to stare like that!

All his posture, his eyes, his aura, his energy, his vibration... What else is there... - all exuded leisure, peace, contentment and quiet joy.

He was enjoying life!

He took his eyes off me a couple of times and looked somewhere else. And then again, in my eyes. Then again, without curiosity, without reproach, without waiting. In his eyes was a fascinating calm, some unknown silence and somewhere in the corners of his eyes I guessed a smile. Or did it only seem to me?

I suddenly felt uneasy.

"My God, how does he know? How does he know that I, sitting in an air-conditioned car, on a clean, beige leather seat, with fragrant-smelling armpits, polished nails, skin greased with coconut oil...feel like a beggar, lost and confused, extraneous and depressed, tired of constant internal stress?

Well, I can't just quit like him!

I have a diploma, an apartment, a husband, a career, meditation finally...

Wait a minute.... Who's have whom? Do I have them? Or do they have me?

Who owns whom?

I'm the enslaved...

No one knows that my wings are tied.

He knew! I could feel it.

I turned away from the window. It seemed to me that his gaze burned my cheek. I started breathing deeply and slowly to calm down. My cheek was burning.

Many cars stuck with us in traffic began to honk. Aimlessly to release emotions and express irritation.

Indian drivers love to beep in general.

Soon, traffic restarted. The car swam softly.

I took a quick glance at the tramp, assuming he was still sitting. He was lying.

With his hands under his head, sweetly stretched on his island of independence, forgetting about me, undisturbed by car signals. He lay covering his eyelids like on a beach and a smile wandered in his wild beard...

For a while I was still sitting, watching my thoughts and feelings, surprised by my sudden insight.

Then a warm feeling appeared inside of me, a rising wave, spilled out in my mind in words addressed to someone invisible but present everywhere: "Thank you, Master".