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Travel Experience-Semi fictional

**THAT GERMAN PROFESSOR WITH SILVER EYES AND ... ..**  
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Travel, certainly, is a great experience and more so, when it is associated with some thrilling and unforgettable moments interwoven into it. When such moments transcend us beyond this ordinary mundane life, it could turn to be an experiencing dream than just astonishingly wonderful thrill. Something of that kind happens sometimes in everyone's life, and the one such story I would like to share with you here is that which happened during my recent Delhi visit.

I was travelling in a jam-packed Metro train from *Saket* to *Chandini Chowk* when the whole episode began. On that day it just slipped off my mind that travelling in Delhi Metros during peak office hours is not only uncomfortable and embarrassing, but also a bit challenging, more so for a person of my age and temperament.

Among the crowd of young men and women, mostly office commuters, college students and a number of foreign tourists, stood me, on the platform at Saket Metro waiting for the next train to arrive. Shortly, the next train arrived, and when the sliding door opened up right in front of me, a host of passengers were ejected out of the compartment and the jostling crowd outside throbbed in simultaneously. Both these happened almost in a few seconds as if in a fast moving video clip. I did not very well know how I was taken from the platform into the crowded compartment, but I did very well know that my feet hardly touched the floor! After some kind of hustling and tossing, the crowd settled and I ended up standing near a side row of seats. I lost sense of myself in the hassle, until the aroma of *eau de cologne* that came from where I did not exactly know cast a spell upon me, like some breeze of enchanting relief.



The train moved. It was drizzling outside and the chill of the AC together with the fine drops of shower that played dancing outside lent an air of uneasy comfort in the togetherness of the thickly packed train. I wished if I could get a space to rest my back when some of the passengers probably got down at the next station, Malavya Nagar. But before something of that anticipation came through, a young lady in professional dress, who later introduced me as a professor in one of the German Universities, adjacent to me in the seat, roughed out of her seat with a gentle smile and offered me the seat. I glanced at her with respect for a moment in appreciation of her good gesture. She was a German lady with silver eyes and golden hair, tall, reddish in her middle thirties, yet in perfect contours, thanks for my observing eye, but for the rear pelvic prominence being a bit heavily formed. Edelina Alois, the lady later introduced me herself, I thought, was making herself ready to alight at the next station, Malavya Nagar, for we generally offer our seats to a needy one before we vacate the seat. She smiled a gentle, solemn flash, where upon I thanked her in my mimicked accent and threw myself in to the seat with a sigh of soothing relief.

That was just too simple a description, but what happened exactly needs a better deal. To be truthful, that rising from the seat and the kind of turning around and all that moves and shifts even though done involuntarily in the thick of the crowd, had let on me some striking effect which would have let me down in tears, but for the protuberant levering back that caused all these spontaneities on me. I consoled myself that nothing worse happened. I was safe, sound and in easy shape. The smell of the 'eau de cologne' was more enchanting but left me ambivalent as the heaving crowd made her shift closer to me.

*"Sorry Sir, but Relax and find yourself OK"* She said with a professional smile. I was all fails to return at the least of that radiant smile since I was out of order and busy trying to regain my presence of mind that went out of gear during the above maneuvers.

I soon realized that she was uncomfortable in an awkward posture on her feet, and guessed she would be recounting on her being too generous to an aged fellow passenger. The lady kept shifting her weight from left leg to right and right to left. But to me, that was something more than horrible. I have heard of disastrous landslides



happening during monsoons at hill slopes. But here, I was witnessing and experiencing the fall of that kind of a sliding mass right under my very nose!

Disconcertingly much embarrassing was it for me. I must, I thought, therefore, find some way out escaping this. I got up and said to the lady in my articulated accent, "Thank you madam, now you may have your seat. Next station I get down". She looked at my face. I was surprised to see in her face the professional expression slowly winding towards me in a blend of academic fascination.

"What do you do? and where are you from?". She asked. Such a question was quite shockingly unexpected. Who am I to that strange and sophisticated German lady to have particularly thought of me in that crowded train compartment.

"I was in the Air Force, but now I serve as a teacher in a College. I live in Kerala". I answered in one breath. Considering her friendly gestures, I added to it an informal touch, "Well, in 'God's own country'- You know." Quickly did come the respond.

"Oh! Great" the lady talked to herself "What an accidental coincidence!"

and turning to me, the lady continued "Its really something wonderful Sir." She paused for a while in serious contemplation and then continued. "I am a teacher in Berlin and now on the last phase of a research study. I just missed a visit to Kerala as part of my project" She continued, "I would like to talk to you, and collect your views as a Keralaite on a number of issues relevant to my project. Would you mind meeting me near south block of central secretariat tomorrow morning at 8? I mean near Rashtrapathi Bhavan"

After reading on my face the question "why?" She continued, "I would like to have a brief interview with you, sir. Hope that could be mutually beneficial as well."

The German Professor did not speak out all these in one breath, we exchanged a few dialogues and this was only a summary of that conversation. I was astonished how a totally strange woman could take that freedom on a strange person like me to call for a formal meet. I was really spellbound. I had, on previous several occasions, met



foreigners both men and women from different countries but this was the first time in my life that a person seeking an appointment for interview. I was greatly elevated!

Curious I was, to reach near South block the next day at 8, and there I did reach well on time. I could spot the lady from a distance and she also noticed me and waved her hand. She was not alone as I had expected! There was a young, heavily built muscular tall fellow in Jeans sporting long curly thick hair shoulder reach, in sophisticated demeanor, reddish complexion as is normal to Germans, with brown eyes and quite a handsome face. I was taken aback for a while. However moved on when I saw him joining her in approving signal, waving hands and walking towards me on taking some promptings from the lady.

The lady, expressive and friendly, and I, hesitant and cautious, exchanged words of greetings together with warm shake hands followed by a brief introduction of her companion, Alois Nicolas, her husband. In spite of his rough physique, he sounded very friendly and accommodating. After exchanging some preliminaries, we moved on to the nearby lawn surrounding the iconic water fountains near the north block and sat on a durry spread by them.

Mrs Edelina works in the Dept of English of the great Humboldt University of Berlin. She spoke of the Germans, of the university and her work in the research wing, of her colleagues and of many interesting things while she asked me on varied topics ranging from personal to ancient Indian heritage, on Vedas and Upanishads to traditional martial arts, the great epics Mahabharatha, The Ramayana to Indian folk stories, Kayamkulam boat race to Ellora Ajanta caves, Indian politics to women safety, use of plastic to internet and youth culture, my experience in defence service to life style of the people of 'Gods own country', Sabarimala to Haji Ali Darga, Note demonitisation to corruption and black money among scores of other subjects for which I hope, by and large, I could satisfy her with my brief answers. By this time we had made a strong bond of relation based on mutual respect and good will. The lady asked, "How is the University of Calicut, your college, your students?"



Showing no trace of uncertainty, quick went my answer, "Our University? It is one of the great universities in India, and I am afraid it could even stand at par with at least some of the world universities if not OxforDs or your Berlin's." Further I added that as for students in our college, they are a wonderful lot, quite wonderful- so studious, so disciplined and therefore exemplary and destined to scale glorious heights, to which the professor said eagerly that Karl Marx ranks among notable alumni of their college. To this I countered, "but we will certainly roll out many more Marxes from our college in near future".

"Are'nt you joking?" she said curiously, to which I just smiled back.

Making some notes in her jotter pad, she looked at me whether I really meant what I did say! She read it out from my face corroborating with the little knowledge she already had.

The session continued for about an hour. The couple was to leave Delhi the same day for Mumbai from where they would leave for Germany. I was pained to leave them off. But, exchanged usual words of taking leave; they regretted having to leave the same day. Had it not been so, they wished they could have treated me at their star hotel for which I said thanks for their kindness and added that I really enjoyed this meeting which would be cherished as one of the most unforgettable experiences in my life.

At this point of time, my phone rang the tone. This tone was set by my wife when I left for Delhi. Every day at 8 after breakfast, I used to call her unfailingly, but today the interview broke it first time. Truly speaking, I just forgot. I was lost in this interview. And the time was five minutes past nine. An unpardonable delay of one hour five minutes!

ഇനിയെന്ന്കാണും നമുൾ തിരമാല യമയലയ യാലരി ... ..  
കുറുപ്പാളമായക നിൻറയെ ഗർഭഭം മുഴങ്ങിടുന്നൂ ... ..

I answered the call.

"What's that language, but, sounds melodious ..., Isn't it a sorrowful note?" "what do those lines mean?" The professor asked curiously about the ring tone that my phone played.

Before I could turn to answer the Professor's, down came the shot from the other end of the phone, "Who is there?" My wife spoke in an unusual tone 'Who is that asking the meaning of those lines?'

I cut short the call after giving some terribly inconvincible reasons for my delay in calling home that morning, and equally so about the person in my vicinity who asked the meaning of those lines.

Way back home, how am I to explain this academic scenario to my wife?

Now, back to the farewell scene ..... exchanging words of parting, I received a gift packet, thanked each other umpteen times, and the stage was set for a final good bye. The couple bade farewell and moved towards India Gate, turning back, waving hands, till finally vanishing into the thick of the morning Delhi fog.

On my way back in metro, there was neither the *eau de cologne* nor the rain outside, nor the warmth of togetherness'. The compartment was almost empty. The whistling sound of the moving train and the recorded announcements were heard as if in a drowse, all the while my eyes remained in my head sorting out a reply to the question "who is there?" that came down the distant phone.

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