

A story narrated by amature
By Shivang dalwadi
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FOREWORD:

There has to be a humble admittance - Any word, however well meant and well spelt, is a possible suspect of misinterpretation. There is a simple reason. People are in different consciousnesses and culturally as well as personally inclined to a specific value-summation of utilities. As a writer, it is a huge temptation to take liberties, with not only imaginations but also with the words, as against their common and popular use. Do kindly accept my latitude with language and personal coinages of words, as I understand, many times, they may not conform to popular usages. I share with you whatever is part of my consciousness. All wisdoms say, what stays with you is what sinks in. Wisdom is what we internalize. I share with you whatever I have internalized in my life. This may not be mainstream but may have utility in some meaningful way. I believe, as a reader, you shall enjoy this novelty and pleasant awkwardness of the writing.
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CHAPTER 1

I is what we never acquiesces to be. Equally, we is what I eventually is seldom happy to accept to stay as. They ensures, lives do not ever run out of the energy of variance. Evolution must stay immortal; everything else has to feel incumbent upon it to burn as the fuel of cosmic conflict. Objectivity's encores do ensure; the symphony of the quantum of earthy

relativity keeps playing
to eternalize sanity of senses.

The innate exuberance of realisms may truly be in its randomized super-
positioning. Still,
objective pattern-building of energies and un-patterning of subjective
sensitivities for
personalized as well as collective utilities are fruition of life and
living experiences.

It seems like a mystical revelation to be in the tempest of 3Cs -
consciousness, cognition and
causality. The infinite possibilities of these three, engendering
immeasurable, often
unfathomable chunks and slices of realisms, only ensure that validity of
singularity of truth
remains evolutionary in time-space journeys.

Journeys need always beckon us to newer destinations of consciousness.
Still, it is bliss to be
back - back to home.

The mighty force of Beas River water, pursuant to the lusty pull of tangent
slopes towards lower
plains and sensuous whispering of thick groves of woods on both sides, as
if occasioning the
baser instincts to sweep away whatever comes on its way, presented this
conflict to him in its
entirety and magnanimity. He knew; nature was the only true Guru as, it
taught without the
slightest semblance of the preposterous pride and presumptuous purposes of
teaching and
preaching. No Guru could be as brutally objective and equally overpowering
as nature. That was
why he was here.

Long ago, the river, as an individual, had outscored the patient obduracy
of the colossus stature
of the mountain chains of Himalayas; working single-mindedly in charting
out its passage,
cutting through the majestic establishment and finally, moving ahead,
stamping the signature of
its victory over them.

Mid-stream, Mayank Mishra was sitting on a rock and continuously watching a
small pebble on
the riverbed, which was holding still, probably for years, challenging the
collective might of the
river current. The river flow was steep, yet the depth of river water was
shallow and the clarity of
water allowed clear view. The green moss woven around the pebble was sure
indicator that the
pebble was steady there for years. A small fish parked itself around the
pebble, wobbling at the
moss, enacting the ballet of life. He was looking at the pebble for hours.
Yesterday too, he did
the same.

When Mayank arrived at Manali; a lovely small town in the laps of
Himalayas, three days back,
virtually fleeing away from the place he lived and worked, none of his

friends, colleagues and bosses had any inkling of where he was and what he had in his mind. He first headed for higher peaks of the Himalayas, spending a whole day on top of a large chunk of rock, twelve kilometers away from the nearest congregation of population. He tried to jerk off what had happened that made him to run away from his city, two thousand kilometers away and take shelter in mountains in northern parts of India. That happened sooner than he expected as the immensity of nature, the enormity and sheer novelty of his positioning amid the inimitable surroundings unsettled him. He could not handle the trepidation of nothingness and threat to mortal existentialism as he looked down at ten thousand feet deep gorges on one side and almost perpendicular rise of thousands of feet high mountains on the other. He rushed down and found a small dingy food stall beside the narrow road. He ate a large serving of hot and roughly edged noodles with lots of chili sauce to pamper his physical poise. Half an hour later, he reached back to the top again, this time, a warm packet of Momos tucked in his pocket as his life support mechanism. After an hour, a sheep wandered near him. A boy with his herd was nearby. He offered a Momo to the sheep but it refused to eat and moved towards the steep slopes leading to the deep gorge. He could not dare peep down to see where it went. Soon, the rest of the herd followed it. The shepherd boy came near him and sat near the Momo on the ground. He offered Momos to the boy and asked him did he fear living in such conditions? The boy took a Momo but said nothing. From his face, he could read that the boy had not understood the question. He felt embarrassed to have asked such a stupid question. He looked up to the blue sky above. It was immaculate with not even a spot of cloud. It was mesmerizing. He kept his gaze and started to feel that he was actually rising high above and penetrating the depth of the blue stretch, which first looked to him only like a thin sheet of clothe. He felt his consciousness becoming light like a feather and surging above to sway past the thickness of the blue sky to transcend into a world beyond. Suddenly, he felt something pulled him down and he found himself crashed to the rock top, where he was sitting moments before. The shepherd boy was pulling his hands and asking a Momo for his little sister, probably a year younger than him. The girl was looking at him and

innocence was writ large on her face.

A strange feeling engulfed his consciousness. It was not happiness, not satisfaction, not thrill, not affection, not compassion, nothing which he had ever felt. It felt he had landed in some dimension, which could make him see not only the little boy and girl, but also himself from a distance. It was like he was watching a theatre where his character was in a role-play with the two kids. He saw, he took both the kids in his lap and made them eat Momos with his own hand.

He saw the three chatting and laughing. He wished to clap in joy but could not find his hands.

Two hours later, he was back in his hotel room and slept for hours; first time in the last one week.

A week back, it was that fateful night and the tumultuous dawn.

The mobile phone buzz stirred him in the bed but he ignored. Half asleep, he closed his eyes in desperation to extend the inevitable. Minutes later, the landline phone started ringing and he could no more carry his pretentious sleep. Still in the bed, he looked beyond the windows to ascertain the march of the morning and the faint light outside made him uneasy.

Instinctively, he moved out of his bed and dragged himself towards the door to look for the newspaper but it was not yet delivered. He felt relieved but quickly got irritated. Another bad start of the day, as usual, even when the dawn had not yet smiled on him and said good morning.

Life throws up a queer spectrum of desires. As you are born, everyone desires that you wake up, open your eyes and deliver a playful smile. But as a new born, you are mostly asleep as your blank head ensures that you do so and you do so because sleep comes natural to you. As you approach your death, all you want is a sound sleep and its natural prerequisite, the blank and unburdened mind. But, in between the two points, you do not sleep well and even do not want to sleep well as your desires make you awake.

It is probably this desire of humanity that has led to the coinage of the word good morning.

People desire to attain a lot and as time is always running away, they wish to compromise on their sleep. That is why morning becomes so important in a person's 24-hour journey of the day.

Morning ends the „undesirable sleep? and starts the chase of desires afresh. That is why in all civilizations, people say good morning to each other even when most people would admit that there is nothing so good about most of their mornings. Actually, there is only a valid good night

as it invites the sleep and halts, at least temporarily, the desire chase. Mayank Mishra was irritated. The phone calls so early in the morning had its clear signals. As he checked the missed incoming call on his cell phone, he got doubly sure that his irritation was not misplaced. The mobile phone screen flashed „missed call from editor? and he instantly knew something was terribly wrong with the newspaper that hit the stands. As the News Editor, Mayank was practically responsible for selection, placement and display of all news stories and pictures accommodated in the newspaper he worked with. Irritated he was, not because his morning sleep was disturbed, for he had adapted to sacrificing his sleep for his professional commitments. He was irritated as he could not see the morning newspapers to know if anything else went wrong, apart from what he already knew. He expected the call from the editor and was even braced up to face his usual annoyance with something „wrong? he had done. But a call so early in the morning made him a bit scared of some other error which he did not know of. He knew it well that once he got wind of the mistake, he would certainly devise his response. The first important lesson he was taught as a journalist was how to pass the buck on others and save his skin as committing errors in the pressure deadline business like newspaper was a routine affair. Only later, he realized that almost in all jobs, the mastery of art was not in allowing your creativity a free flight to produce an innovative cut. It was rather in playing safe to avoid unproductive and wasteful cuts. That's why; the genius in all organized works around the world had devised production strategies that valued safety and conformity to fixed mechanical patterns more than anything. The standardization of production process is the established benchmark; liberty to diversion of innovation and originality is taken with suspicion. When this mechanical virtue became part of intellectual aptitude of art and media, he did not know. In almost all jobs, the bosses would tell their subordinates, "In our business, the deadline is always yesterday". Mayank always thought, when someone is already made to be guilty of „delayed start?, even before he commences, subsequent guilt hardly troubles anyone. It is like humanity being guilty of the „original sin? of Adam and Eve and never being sorry for loads of other subsequent wrongs. He remembered, once he was interviewing the CEO of an FMCG major and had asked why

conformity rather than creativity was the preferred virtue in most established and organized work systems. The CEO had said, "Stupidity and creativity are like twins. But, creativity is popstupidity.

If markets; the consumers accept it, a stupidity is quickly branded as creativity. But as a CEO, I cannot take a risk as no CEO on the earth can predict which way the markets behave.

Genius can rarely be customized, it is usually accidental stupidity." The CEO had added on condition of not printing it, "when big time money is at stake, safety is the only virtue for business; of course I save my creativity for times when I am with my wife or in a seminar".

The lesser geniuses, the larger workforce, however have since ages designed the smart excuses for not being up to the cut. The words like optical illusion, printer's devil, computer error, server snag, news swap, etc are the excuses that have been designed dexterously for saving a journalist's skin. Of course, they don't tell you all about these in their induction programs for trainees. That's why godfathers are so important in all fields of activities, especially jobs.

Mayank was anxious to lay his hands on the morning newspaper to know the error so that he could decide on the onus and then confidently ring back the Editor. He would not be shy of accepting his fault, if it was his but would never accept an unnecessary interference on his innovative cuts. As he entered the kitchen to make a cup of tea, the mobile phone buzzed again. He made up his mind to face it and also very quickly rehearsed his reply. He picked up the phone.

"Hello... Mayank... we fucked them today... bloody you rammed their asses real hard this time... congratulations", the editor blurted out loud on the other side. Mayank fumbled with his response as the praise from his editor was unexpected. The man on the other side was least bothered about the response as he continued his joyous exclamations over how their front page scoop about the scam in medical entrance test results went exclusive and how their copies were sold like hot cakes in the stands. The editor was happy not because their newspaper was going to be the talk of the town but because he was told by the circulation department guys that some hawkers refused to lift the copies of the rival newspaper and insisted on increased quota of their newspaper copies. A rare joy for an editor; the sales guys heaping praise on editorial genius is like a solar eclipse...very rare indeed!

"Nice placement, good display... brilliant judgment... you are a real bastard of a journalist ...

tonight I will cheer the scotch in your name", the editor exclaimed.

"Thanks sir, thanks ... it is indeed a good day for us", Mayank managed a reply.

"Enjoy you bastard, enjoy your day of glory under the shining Sun, there ain't many such days in

the career of a journalist", the editor said and signed off.

Mayank murmured something, threw himself on the bed and slept.

The pre-dawn in the city belongs to the sweepers of the municipal corporation and the newspaper

hawkers. One clears the dirt and another spreads it. Murders, rape, loot, bungling, mishaps,

death, pain, sufferings and all possible negativities are splashed all over the front page and the

important page three- four city pages with great linguistic skills.

Importantly, all troubles need to

be assigned to governance and system, never the public. Readers love to know that whatever

wrong happened to them, someone else is to be blamed, not them. Early morning pride sails

them through their tough and humbling lives.

The glory for newsmen however, is not in cramming the pages of the newspaper with negative

news and writing it in a style that would beat a blockbuster movie

screenplay but, it is indeed in

doing it exclusively. The joy is not in how good you are but in how bad you made the rivals

proved out to be on a given day.

Mayank looked at the bundle of newspapers as he left his bed a few hours later but did not care

to read them. He, like most journalists, read them only when an error would be pointed out. He

recollected the morning conversation with his editor and shook his head as if he wished to throw

away the memories from his head. He however smiled. He smiled because in his ten-year career

in the newspapers as a journalist, he could never anticipate right whether he would receive praise

or punishment in the morning for what he did late night in the newsroom.

He remembered; the editor was not very convinced of this medical entrance exam result scam

story last evening when it was shown to him as he was not confident of the credibility of the

reporter. He was sure that the story would fall flat as a front page scoop because it would not be

exclusive. He doubted the source would also leak it to other media persons.

Mayank had insisted that he wished to play the story as a front page scoop and had also rewritten

the story to make it impactful. The editor had left the office late evening making clear that the

story should ideally be covered as „also ran? story on the lower half of the front page but not as

front page scoop. Mayank had taken the challenge and as usual, he took the

risk, cross-checked with his sources and ran the story as front page top scoop with a banner display.

He expected the editor's ire next morning but once again he was proved wrong. The story went exclusive and that made the editor happy. But despite editor's praise, Mayank was apprehensive as his journalistic intuition warned him of trouble ahead. How the rival newspaper could miss such a big story, he wondered. His apprehensions proved right as the day progressed.

By the time, the reporters gathered in the newsroom for the 12 o'clock meeting, the editor had received many phone calls which made his morning bliss disappear. A call from the deputy general manager of advertisement had also made him nervous. He sent a message from his chamber to the reporters that he would not take the meeting and the chief reporter should go ahead with it. There also was a one line instruction that no follow ups of today's scoop will be required.

Mayank did not react when the editor briefed him of the situation at hand and asked him to proceed on leave. As a true journalist, he had the intuitive perception of bad things and vibes. As he had entered the office, the body language of the guard on the ground floor, the reception girl and his own colleagues and the calm in the newsroom had made him realize that bad news was coming his way.

A chaotic news room is a sure sign of a satisfying morning for the readers and peace and order there means a disaster for one or other journalist. As a news editor, he had witnessed the fall out of a peaceful newsroom on some of his colleagues but this time around, not others but he himself looked to be on the firing line.

He made extra efforts to look nonchalant and put up a normal voice as he asked the editor, "I think, you should be honest to me; I can understand, after all I am in this profession and also with you for such long years. Don't hang me on this leave thing... simply tell me, am I being sacked or ... ?"

The editor was agitated and interrupted him, "... look Mayank, I am not in a mood to entertain your crap. I am already running out of patience. Can't you see where we have landed ourselves!

The chief minister of the state has asked the public relation department secretary to stop all government advertisements to us and you know what it means! Our monthly billing is one crore and forty lakhs a month, do you listen, and we are not losing our pocket

moneys but the
lifeline...! Go and sleep well. Be positive; take this opportunity to relax
as leaves are so rare in a
journalist's life. But do not leave the city, the boss is coming."
He was about to leave when editor said, "You know, when a lightning strikes
in the sky,
someone on the earth below has to lose his luck. Trust me, only the poor
are ruined in rain...you
and me live in concrete houses."
Mayank looked deep into the eyes of his editor and could not get the vibes
he was expecting. He
could easily see the face of the man in the eyes of the editor who had
clearly run out of luck. He
had seen many soldiers sacrificed to save the skin of the general but this
time, he was the general
who was taking the innocent blood and the poor soldier was too young and a
favorite with him.
"The reporter is not at fault. He just had a story and I took the decision
to run it as front page top
scoop, even when you had disapproved of it. So, I should be kicked out not
him", Mayank said
sounding determined and assertive.
"Don't try to be my dad. When I was your age, I too enjoyed being a messiah
even while I knew
it quite well that none in seven generations of my family was one. Always
remember, you are a
servant of a baniya (trader) and you waste your talent singing the song of
universal brotherhood
in front of a butcher. Preserve these sweet sentiments for your girlfriend;
she will be impressed
and suck it. May be in return of your baby talks, she will give you a yummy
fuck like a well-paid
whore. Push the door when you move out", the editor said in low murmuring
voice and turning
away, pretended to look busy scanning stories of the day on the Newstrack.
The chief reporter outside was waiting for Mayank as he had got his facts
ready. The rival
newspaper editor had done the trick. He too had this story about the exam
result bungling as the
source had shared the leak. The rival editor however chose not to publish
the story and late night,
he phoned the personal secretary of the chief minister informing that they
were not going ahead
with the story. The editor however lied to the personal secretary saying
that the story was
exclusive. The rival editor also had it confirmed earlier that Mayank was
taking the story as front
page lead scoop. Mayank could guess who in his newsroom had leaked the
piece of information
to the rival editor.
In a rather smart move, the rival newspaper had made the chief minister to
believe that there was
a political conspiracy behind the scoop to embarrass him and his government
ahead of the crucial

assembly by-polls and Mayank's newspaper was playing in the hands of the opposition.

Everything is fair in love and corporate wars. It was nothing unusual.

However, unlike other

wars, it was difficult to make out who was fighting against whom and whose behalf. The

warriors were not lined up against each other as in traditional wars and loyalties were always at premium.

Mayank smiled and remembered his hunch in the morning when he had doubted how the rival

could miss such a big story and there was something bigger than what looked like a simple miss.

He thought of going back to the editor's room to inform him what he had just learned but quickly

decided against it. He recollected the editor's word, „don't try to be my dad?. He was sure he

knew more.

Next night, Mayank took a train to New Delhi for his onward journey to Manali, the

mountainous resort. He had nothing specific in mind, but was sure, he would return to his town

only when he would have made his mind of his journey of life ahead. It was long due.

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CHAPTER 2

Twelve years back, when he was only 22, Mayank had experienced something which would

eventually decide not only his thought process but also his life journey.

It was a hot summer day

and there were too many guests in his house. He liked being with people but that night he got

irritated by the negative talks that the entire family and guests were indulging in and decided to

sleep alone on the roof of his house.

Summer nights are not usually calm but that night he could hear the whistle of the train ten

kilometers away. There wasn't anything particular in his mind and as he rested on his back, he

started to look the sky above.

It was a dark night, no moon shining and stars competed with each other for attention. Mayank

kept looking at the stars. He had recently read about the theories of the origin of the universe and

naturally, he started thinking about the origin of universe, continuing to gaze at the dark sky. He

always created in his mind an imagery of what he thought and learnt. But he could not create an

image of a gas ball exploding to create universe and subsequently creating the galaxy systems,

his own earth and on it his own life. He had never clearly understood the theories of creation of

the universe and that's why that night his thoughts became confused as he kept watching the

endless expanse of the dark sky and the millions of shining stars. He tried to relate his existence with the infinity of the universe, allowing his mind to travel deep inside the darkness.

It was around two o'clock that he lost it.

Probably, he had dozed off for 15 to 20 minutes and suddenly he was awake and his mind went

blank. It was a rare feeling for him. He could sense that he was what he was. He could certainly

make a distinction that he was well awake and not sleeping, could feel that his eyes were seeing

things but his other sensory faculties were blank. His mind could not connect to him as he

remembered neither his past moments nor could he feel any moments ahead.

When you are in your full senses, your being, your existence registers a clear and explainable

connect and continuity with past moments and those which will come ahead. The mind knows

that I am sitting here for the last ten minutes and will sit for another five minutes, etc.

Mayank however could not connect. All he could feel was that he was among the stars and deep

inside the universe. Seconds later, he could realize that he had a body which he could feel as

separate from the universe where he found himself a few seconds back. The realization was

followed by a strange but very powerful feeling which he could not register as never had in his

life he had such a feel. He was terror struck as he clearly missed the gravity and felt the awe of

the enormity of infinite universe. In a quick succession of changing realities, he found the feeling

of the hard roof surface beneath him, felt a bit assured but next moment fatal fear gripped him as

he felt himself completely alien to his body.

Mayank had the first encounter of the massive and unintelligible fear of the formlessness of

existence that night. The fear gradually gave way to shock but for an hour he continued to feel

the formlessness of being. His existential sense of time and space returned to him in a few

minutes, though in very feeble strength but his biological and animated connect with his body

continued to elude him for an hour or so. He had never faced such strange and unexplainable

feelings and that too in an assemblage unleashed to him in such fast successions. He felt very

unsettled and his mind was in a complete flux. But still, he felt deeply defeated and embarrassed

that his faculties were so weak that it could not help him handle the crisis. He gained his full self

an hour later but soon lost it to an overwhelming bout of sleep.

An array of medical tests in the next one week made it clear that nothing was wrong with him, at

least biologically and physically. As Mayank was settling to forget the incident as one off accident in his otherwise good life, the feeling revisited him and it was day time. He was in a busy market and with a friend when he lost connect with his body like that night. This time however, there certainly was some improvement compared to the last experience. He continued to do the shopping and other usual activities. He clearly felt his existence split into two. He felt himself separate from the body which was doing all the activities as usual, very mechanically though. He once again lost the sense of time and space. This time, the initial fear however was less intense and soon gave way to utter confusion. He could understand that his experiences had nothing to do with body but the mind. He consulted a neuro physician and he told him it was some sort of a panic disorder and he would do best to jerk it off his mind. The doctor asked him to stop doing deep thinking on issues, beyond his comprehension. The doctor attempted to trivialize the issue telling him that majority of people on this earth had some mind disorder or other in varying intensity and most of them afforded to live out their lives carrying them reasonably successfully. "Sanity is a fine line like a strand of your hair and most of us stand on the border; often susceptible to cross the line, inadvertently or otherwise", the doctor said. He told him jokingly, "I am a doctor of minds but even I have a phobia that someday my wife will kill me. But still, I enjoy a delectable sex with her. It is rather my phobia that helps me do that as I always do it as if this would be my last with her". As these bouts became regular, Mayank turned determined to find a pattern to it. After few months, he could feel he had better control over his body even when he encountered varied degrees of formlessness and disconnect during such bouts. Mayank was not sure what the right way to deal with his problem was but he was however very sure that he could not do what his doctor advised. He could not jerk off the issue. He had to confront it and find an answer. His natural inquisitiveness egged him to do two things - understand the problem in its widest possible connotation and then find a lasting solution. He hooked on to all available resources on fear factors and especially the mind mechanisms. Knowledge is embarrassing. It exposes us to the world of stark objectivity for which we are not always trained and prepared. You feel discomfited by the ignorance you had

lived so far with
and the subjectivity you indulged in. The knowledge about the complexities
of brain and an
interpretation of humanity through mind perspectives made him feel and live
the shame of
stupidity. Though he was too young to fully understand the intricate
artistry of mind universe, he
learnt his first major lesson of life - the criticality of communication in
the overall intelligence of
intellectual universe. It was ingrained upon his sensitive perception that
he had to invest lots of
time and energy to understand two core ideas - the media and communication,
to understand life
and its intricacies in entirety.
He was truly awestruck by the enormity and extent of mind disorders the
humanity was faced
with. There were so many phobias that he was almost sure that there was
nothing that did not
have the potential to spark off fear in a human mind. He was truly
apprehensive and in great
dismay that anybody at any given time could be affected by one mind
disorder or the other. He
was more troubled by the knowledge that people in large number all
throughout ages in the long
history of civilization were in great pains and sufferings because of
something which doctors say
were actually never there. A fear that was never there, a reason not fit
for being depressed, a
disability which never was one but the mind did accept them as if they
were. And the scare that
humanity has entered a phase where mind disorders would be the largest
destabilizing factor for
larger population made him very determined to find a lasting solution to
it.
After initial confusion, he arrived at the truth that if devil could be in
the mind, so could be God.
He accepted that if devil was a man standing beyond his worst of
disabilities and negativities,
God was there standing just on the opposite side of it. He, standing beyond
the best of the
potentials and capabilities of his positive and uninhibited mind, was his
own God. He got to
know; mind is a mechanism of unlimited potential. All he needed to know was
what limits and
inhibits minds in its journey towards Godliness. He realized that mind was
a value-neutral and
objective media. What it opts, the devil or the God is not its own choice
but depends on
something which programs it one way or the other. He came to a conclusion
that communication
to mind was the crucial thing. And the mind accepted thoughts and emotions
as communication.
Mind needed to have the right communication to head towards Godliness.
That's why, positive

thoughts and emotions to a new and un-programmed mind were important. He also understood that the problem with contemporary world was that minds were being flooded with negative communications since childhood. We have loaded our minds with lots of negative thoughts and ideas. The mind has been negatively programmed even before we could realize. The early socialization, prior to our own rational awareness, the hereditary inputs, the very competitive social environment etc send negative communication to mind. He realized; thought was the core programming language of mind. The thought is largely a social product and that's why the society is primarily responsible for creating either devils or gods. He could understand the importance of a positive and constructive society in creating good minds. It was a cyclic chain. He could also understand that a society at any stage was more suitable for creating more devils than god. He came to a conclusion that two things were very crucial inputs for mind and they needed very clear understanding. First was fear in its entirety and complete complexities and second was the sense of real and unreal. He understood it quite well that he needed to comprehend the spectrum of fears and its dynamics. Getting to the core of the multi-dimensionality of fears would make him understand the mysteries of life well. He was also not bothered too much by the enormity of the task. The management of fear would be tough but he was sure; it would not be as tough as the management of hunger, management of greed and management of sexuality which humanity had failed to do. The acceptance of the primary need to understand fear helped him in unexpected way. As he grew up, he actually developed an objective perception about all his fears and anxieties. This objectivity helped him understand the power of the conscious mind over unconscious and subconscious mind. Not that he could conquer all his fears and anxieties but he had better control over his fears. His conscious mind stood him in good stead with a power of analyses of what was happening to him and why. This assured that fear was never out of control to reach a stage of panic. In the progression of time, he got inclined to the idea that fear was actually good for him, or for anybody, who could have the objectivity standards to understand it. Fear was a very positive signal about the incidence of an unattained and unprepared mind. An unknown thing or idea

cannot spark off fear. A known thing or idea has the similar capacity. It is things or ideas in between the two ends that create fears. A rope in a semi-dark room makes one panicky as it looks like a snake but even an actual snake in a totally dark room fails to create fear. A snake generating fear is good thing. The snake experts also know that its venom is deadly but they do not fear it because they have complete knowledge about snake behavior and all possible dynamics of its threat perception. Fear is an instant invite for positive action. Fear makes you accept that something is wrong and negative with your mind programming. You need to delete the program and write a new one with complete and objective knowledge about something which unleashed fear. Fear is an invitation to become your own god by embarking on a journey towards the best of your own potentials.

As he developed good understanding of fear, he realized that the formlessness, or what the doctor called unreality feeling was also not a bad thing either. He actually started to use the unreality experience as a constructive tool. The objectivity standards also made him take his formlessness as just a media, like anxiety and fear. This formlessness or unreality was value-neutral and presented an opportunity for greater objectivity benchmarks. A very beneficial proposition for humanity!

He began to understand that minus or plus; pain or pleasure; was not the ideal state of being. It had to be a zero - a truly objective, value-neutral position. Most sins and aberrations of humanity were committed when humans drifted too far either in the plus of pleasure or minus of pain. Humans committed acts of banality and benediction, omission and commission on the basis of his or her judgment of the reality he or she perceived as facing at a particular moment of time and space. Quite often, the real which was identified as real was either more on the side of plus or minus, often off target of the real.

Mayank later on developed mastery over the craft and called it a trick. He could actually help himself on the onset of the bout of formlessness. Whenever, he felt his body and senses were too overwhelming or ruffled up, in minus or plus, and he could commit a mistake, he would slip into what he called the zero-mode. He had developed a way to trigger off the formlessness bout and as he welcomed it, he gained on the objectivity benchmarks for himself. In the years to come, he used the technique to avoid many sins and wrongdoings which men his

age would commit with aplomb. As he passed his prime of youthful years he was happy to discover that he had developed two personalities. The formlessness had turned into a personality which he felt remained silent and in the backstage, giving frontstage to his physical personality which was socially interactive. He successfully used one of his two personalities interchangeably to derive best of results for him. He even enjoyed his split personalities simultaneously, realizing very well that this had made him an enigmatic person in the eyes of most of his relatives, friends and colleagues. The liberal of them would call him maverick but most would prefer a „confused? tag for him.

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CHAPTER 3

Mayank was not that young to allow any momentary lapse of reasoning and take a fleeting decision. Though 34, his disposition suited a 45-year old. A week earlier, he felt an urge to do something even at the risk of being labeled hasty and rash. However, coming back from Manali, he had his mind in poise and clear on what he wished to do and how. The mountains had stoned the poise in him. He rang up the reporter who had written the scam story and as he had expected, the reporter had been handed over transfer orders which would mean he would quit his job. Reporters are very reluctant to change their places. It takes years for a reporter to build his contacts and his worth depends on his contacts. He could sense a shade of anger building up inside him. Perhaps, his own anger and frustration with his profession had piled on the incident. As a journalist he had so many issues which he held dear to his heart and wanted a patient hearing from his editor and owner of the newspaper. Let alone as a professional; as a social person too he believed he had genuine questions which at best needed clear answers but at least, he expected sympathetic audience to such questions. His anger always liberated him. It gave him the energy to vent his feelings, to bring up queries. He believed that inquisitiveness was a growth sign. He would never allow his simple and innocuous „why? to wither away. Anger was his critical energy that jolted him out of the inertia of status quoism that the social milieu around him would often slap on his face. Anger would give him the energy to extend strong support to his instinctive inquisitiveness by adding the stubbornness of his determined self.

He used his anger to ascertain that at least things were seen in right perspective. He was always very clear in his mind about the fact that judgment about a justified action can be postponed but not the judgment of a justified thought position. A fact will remain a fact even if its practice be procrastinated or even stopped. What irritated Mayank most was that most people, who were in the positions from where taking right judgment and that too at the right point of time would make the world a better place, would simply not do it. The tragedy is that most often, they would use all power at their disposal to kill the question itself. Naturally, the questioner became first victim.

For the larger society, rooted in inertia and status quoism, a question is like a poisonous snake.

People with baton of socio-economic and political authority are so panicky of the venom of nonconformity, which a question has the potential to unleash, that they are quick to thrash its head.

Often, innocuous and well-meaning questions and questioners are killed in the panic over the threat to peace and order of suitable conformism.

Questions are important. God is the biggest question. The religion is the mother of all questions.

The greatest tragedy of humanity is that today religion smothers more questions than it was suppose to answer. Regrettable it is that on the name of religion, mediocre and conformist answers are being forced on masses and many meaningful questions are not even allowed to breathe.

Since his childhood, Mayank had witnessed his family members stifling questions which he

asked innocently. He would be hushed up and told that it was bad manners.

Often, discipline was

considered the primary virtue and even his innocuous curiosity would be bracketed as

undisciplined behavior. Discipline as the greatest morality was not always acceptable to him as

he saw it as a non-reciprocal tool of outdated notions of societal conformity.

Even later, in his school, in college and in his career, he would be faced with the authoritative

structure that emphasized and enforced discipline, pouncing on any chance to kill even the most

innocent inquisitiveness. A slap would always save the burden of thousands of unconvincing

words for the authority. And why would anyone anyway consider it an authority if it didn't slap!

This only made him become sure and more confident of the righteousness and justification of his

natural inquisitiveness. The nervousness that he could see his questions

generated among those who were responsible for answers assured him that righteousness was on his side. If not, why would questions scare? The force with which the authoritative layers attempted to smother questions only reflected the reality that there was something that they feared the questions would expose - either their incompetence or ignorance to answer them or the larger hypocrisy of humanity.

He grew up to the realism that asking question was a greater virtue than giving answers. Keeping a question alive, not allowing it to die prematurely required a lot of courage, character and conviction. Almost everyone claimed to have the answers; some of them probably had. Most of them even fought for their answers to be the only justified one. Many had the authority to impose answers or the refusal of it on people. Only few however had questions and the courage to stand them. He realized, if necessity was the mother of inventions, inquisitiveness was the primary energy behind all inventions, all creations. He refused the socially popular notion that a question was a sign of weakness as it exposed the ignorance of the questioner. He learnt it quite early in his youthfulness that a question is sign of innocence and courage. It required childlike innocence and courage of highest order to rise above the fear of being labeled an ignorant, to face the taunts of peer group and society to be a duffer, even retarded. He had made up his mind to always be on the side of questions. He had accepted that if something had fear in its side, it was good as it would lead to the ultimate truth.

He opted for media as a career primarily because he felt the profession would provide him a good platform for raising his questions. He also believed media had the responsibility to find the right answers. He thought he was naturally inclined to be in media as inquisitiveness was the core character of a good journalist and he had it. He had also learnt that media was feared just because of its freedom and privilege to ask questions to the high ups and mighty. He chose the print media, a newspaper, as he always believed in the power of the printed words.

In the first three years of his career in media, he had realized the gap between the fiction and the fact. Within media, more questions were killed than given life. Media itself killed a lot many questions as either it would be detrimental to its own economic health or too troublesome to ask. He learnt it later that this was not a very depressing fact. All goodness

has to operate within the confines of practicality. Idealisms too have to be sustainable. What troubled him however was that valid questions were being shunned because of sheer ignorance and inflated professional ego and pride of media people.

Early in his career as a journalist, he asked his chief reporter why he allowed so many crime stories in local news. Mayank also complained to him that rape stories were being written with unnecessary graphic details that put victim in very poor light. He showed him a story published a day back which narrated in detail that the rapist gagged the mouth of the victim with one hand and that of her small child sleeping beside her with another hand. He then raped her lifting her sari to her stomach. Mayank told the chief reporter that the story not only was in very poor taste as it unnecessarily presented graphic details of a heinous crime, it was also factually wrong as such a chain of incident could never have happened. He reasoned that humans had only two hands and if two of the hands of the perpetrator of the crime were busy smothering the mouths of victim and her child, how could he get a third hand to lift the sari of the victim? And more importantly, was the reporter of the story present at the time of rape to witness that the sari of the victim was lifted up to her stomach and not beyond? The chief reporter got infuriated and defended his reporter saying that it was not his fault as what he wrote in his story was the version he found in the FIR of the rape. „If the police write illogical things in their report, what we can do? We are only supposed to go by the police records?, the chief reporter said almost yelling at him. The news editor had intervened and had taken Mayank away who was unwilling to accept the answer of the chief reporter. He insisted this was not the right answer of his question. The news editor later on reasoned with him, „Young man, you are still new to the trade. These rape stories with such colorful details are the flavors of the day, the pick of the stories read by most readers. These bloody cops too enjoy writing a rainbowishly detailed FIR of the rape. They would not do it for any other crime. Everyone loves a good rape...I mean a rape story!?” Mayank asked him how was he sure that every reader loved such rape stories? Did he have any research done or any survey published that confirmed the percentage of readers loving it? The news editor paused for a moment and then said in an irritated voice, „No survey is required. If I love them as

a journalist, the readers would also love it; that is for sure. Don't you know; sex sells more than anything in this world??

Mayank regretted that he worked at a place where even seniors had such inflated sense of ego and self-importance that they refused to see the larger questions. They could not see the difference between sex and a rape. They were happy to demolish the huge separating line between a crime and gratification. No doubt, the basic issue of sanity was relegated to back seat in media. The common sense inquisitiveness was also a big casualty. Even a kid knows that humans have only two hands but a zealous journalist has lost even this common sense.

The biggest trouble the media faced, that Mayank could realize as he continued with the profession, despite the oddities was that most seniors passed on this sick and archaic mentality and attitude to their juniors. Those who did not like to be part of this stupidity were labeled as unfits.

He was sure he wanted to confront the question which his anger kept alive and kicking. He looked at his watch and it was 7 pm. In the balcony of his flat where he lived alone, he could feel the evening's youthfulness entering his breathe and he was ready to move to the next step of his plan.

Mayank's call at 7 pm had made him understand that he would have to cancel his next morning's meeting. Whenever Mayank wanted him for a talk, it would start late evening and end by the break of dawn. He agreed on the phone that he would head home straight away. Curious as usual, he had asked Mayank what was the occasion for celebration and he had replied, „I am quitting my job next morning and whole night we will celebrate?. He had no choice but to rush home.

Before starting his car he called Utkarsh but he was out of town. Utkarsh, he and Mayank were school friends and formed a trio complementing each other so well for the last 24 years. He desperately wanted Utkarsh to be with him now and was sure that Mayank too would love to have him with them. Mayank had indeed called Utkarsh to tell him to join them and knowing that he was out of town, he had briefed him about his decision to quit his job.

Ashish Sinha, Deputy General Manager, Marketing, Tantra Tele Services. His business card would read. On his profile, on a social networking site, he had uploaded long paragraphs about him which he could not understand as Mayank had written them for him to

attract single girls.

Being a friend of a person like Mayank was not very easy but it came as a package. Mayank would do a lot of things for him, which he would flaunt as his own and this somehow

compensated the trouble his friendship with Mayank created for him. Five companies, four exgirl

friends and a journey from assistant manager in an FMCG company to Deputy General

Manager in a telecom company in ten years was not a bad CV for Ashish.

"So, angry young man! Finally you have found the villain of your life and you want your anger

to sustain so that you could battle it out with him. But how can your resignation do any harm to

your editor", Ashish asked, picking up the conversation as he finished his first glass of whisky.

"Who said the editor is my villain and I'm quitting to harm him?"

"No, I mean what I perceive is that you are angry that the editor did not own the crisis and

instead of protecting his reporter he took action against him. I presume this is double

standards...stark hypocrisy."

"I would rather say my editor is not a habitual hypocrite. Usually, he is very true to what he is; a

single personality at most times."

"Oh, hypocrisy is out, then what?"

"No, it is not out. I am not trivializing the issue by confining it to an individual. I am talking

about the broad-based system of hypocrisy that has percolated deep down in the thought

processes and even general work culture of media in particular and all organized human

endeavors in general."

Ashish knew it was best for him to listen as Mayank unfolded his heart and all he could do is to

pick up any inconsistency and contradiction in his view point.

"You know, hypocrisy no doubt is the greatest malaise of humanity. I mean, people of all mental

levels know well what is good, ideal and godly. It is in fact such a huge benefit for humanity that

universal goodness and ideals are so simple to see and understand that even an illiterate can

know them. The learning processes devised by humans and all acquired knowledge actually

facilitate avenues to circumvent and obfuscate the practice of good. Most men and women would

speak of good and ideal of life but they would not put them into action. As a broad rule, more

learned and academically attained a person, more skilled he will be in practicing hypocrisy".

"Good then; the larger picture you have sketched, leaves nothing very concrete for people like

you and me to do to make a difference".

Ashish regretted having said that. Thank God, Utkarsh was not there for he

had time and again advised him not to throw blanket statements aiming to kill a conversation when someone, especially Mayank would be making a point. He remembered Utkarsh telling him one evening,

„When an in- form batsman is scoring runs, the batsman on the other end should just concentrate on running hard on his call so that the in- form batsman retains most of the strike and does not get run out before he hits a century?. Little was lost as Mayank probably did not listen to Ashish as he continued.

“I can say with lots of confidence that hypocrisy is the mother of most ills of our society. It is hypocrisy that breeds crisis of faith among men and women. It is this huge gap between what we say and what we actually do that creates the first seed of mistrust. The seed of mistrust bears the fruit of anger, rivalry, jealousy and a spectrum of negative feelings. It is a vicious cycle; anger and rivalry in turn feed the mistrust and growing mistrust forces people to become greater and smarter hypocrites. I am not blaming anyone. My generation is bigger hypocrites than previous generation because they bequeathed us greater mistrust than what they inherited from their previous generations.”

Ashish made second glass of whisky for himself as part of his resolve to be a supportive nonstriking batsman and keeping quiet, he kept his eyes fixed on Mayank's face.

“You know, sundry hypocrisy that many people often practice because of sheer foolishness is not dangerous. What I am angry about is the street-smart cunningness of people, especially those who are authoritatively positioned in society. It is tragic that most people practice hypoc risy on the name of being practical and in the name of practicality become cunning and justify their wrong actions. It angers me no end when people boast of being practical and use it as a license to unleash a series of wrong against humanity and society in general.”

“And the bigger trouble is that such people often land at top positions in society and even the society makes them its idol”, Ashish added making a philosophical face in an attempt to match the countenance of Mayank and continued, “Most often, such people become your bosses; my boss, the general manager is also one such big cunning fox. The amount of intentional lies he has told in his career so far should be more than the GDP of USA.”

Mayank could not resist a smile and quipped, “What about you?”

“Lo..! What about me! And what can I do? You know it's a lateral stupidity. I mean, it's like driving on an expressway and you have to drive to the prescribed high

speed. You stop and your
ass-bone is splintered into smithereens. It's a war out there and you make
a killing for surviving
and not for fun. You said it yourself that it is a vicious cycle; why blame
me?"

"Ashu, I'm not blaming. I understand we all need to be practical. However,
just open up to my
humble request that please be alive and alert to each compromise we do. It
is practical to make a
compromise out of compulsion but often, people make compromises out of
sheer convenience.

And this people make a smart habit and try to sound virtuous, the society
very willingly tailing
up to stamp its seal of approval. I firmly believe, if we prune them on the
basis of sound moral
auditing points, half of the compromises we make will be found as being
made as sheer out of
convenience and not compulsion. If we do away with it, much of the lost
faith will be restored.

All we need to do is stop being self-possessed and be open to questions
that others have for you."

There wasn't much for Ashish to say as he knew it well that Mayank was
right. He felt

uneasiness at his heart. This was not unusual as being with Mayank often
unleashed such

feelings as he would instill a conflict in him. He wished Mayank would end
the conversation or

at least change the topic. That was not to be as Mayank was preparing to
deliver more.

"You know Ashu; hypocrisy hits hard the sanity of the system. In the media,
we have a crisis at

hand. Why media, all corporations are facing it. Media faces it the most.
We are besieged with

the shortage of good human resource. There are few good hands who know
their work well and

they are assets. But they keep moving. Rival houses lure them with better
salaries. So, we have

serious sessions on building what they call institutional loyalty. Sermons
are issued and

workshops are conducted on enhancing loyalty of human resource towards the
company. And on

the other hand, high ups treat them as disposable syringes. Worse off,
talent and work

commitment has become cheaper than loyalty. Personal loyalties start
getting preferences over

institutional one. And still workshops on loyalty building and enhancing
human resource quality

go on. This hypocrisy is so manifest, so crudely and cruelly practiced that
all employees can

understand it and that is why they work in complete mistrust. The faith
over goodness, especially

at the work places has been lost ages back. Worst still is that there is a
reactionary reluctance

among the leadership to the admittance that this trend is annihilating the

basic premise of human resource and sanity of institutionalized work processes." Ashish could not resist himself, "You know Monku, I cannot express myself well but I actually understand this trend better than you. Actually, economics is far greater congregation of idiots than politics or society. Someone had told me that wherever eight economists would gather, there will be nine opinions. And if these economists were Indians, you never know; worse off it they were Americans. I can tell you with conviction because I am also part of the idiosyncrasies of economics."

Mayank knew that after three glasses of whisky Ashish would start talking nineteen to the dozen.

As he would start calling him Monk or Monku, it was sure sign of his inhibitions waning away.

He was usually all ears to him on such occasions as he would say things others may label as trash

but Mayank knew, he talked straight out of his heart. He encouraged him to take the crease and was pleased to see him bat from the non-striker's end.

"Monk dear, you are a journalist but you are a good man. I am not, I am a beast. I have to be. I

have to see things differently. You have to see things only this way in corporate jungle to

survive. You know, when I see a beautiful woman, I fix my target. I approach her, make all right

investments on her; may be, use a bit of tricks and manly pranks on her and I am not even

ashamed to admit that some of them may not be morally as correct as a man like you could

approve of. But, my target is to take her to the bed as early as possible. And, I am not bothered

about whether I can do that or not. I can do that and that's why I am in the business since all

these years. I've done that often. However, my success rating depends on how much time I save

reaching the target. This is naked economics. Do it whatever way it takes, but do it fast. You

must have heard, in economics they say, all realities exist in short run only as in the long run we are all dead."

Mayank wanted Ashish to play some more swashbuckling strokes and continue his joy at the non-striking end of the batting pitch.

"Ashu, you are jumping your lines. Are you okay? Take a break. Take some fresh air."

"No, I'm fine...I am fine".

"I appreciate your approach to the idea but you need to take one step at a time".

"Yup Monku...I realize that. See, my point is; we are here for making profit and it's a hugely

competitive stuff out there. In economics, all realities are countable and

we run our companies on the clear cut operative philosophy of counting it faster than others. We cannot afford long run aims and ambitions. That is where society and economy see differently. Human Resource idealism and institutional ethics etc are all long run things. But in the short run you have to ensure that you survive to remain alive in the long run.”

As Mayank did not interrupt him, Ashish felt encouraged to go ahead with his views.

“That was why I used this beautiful woman analogy. What society thinks as proper is that the father of the woman will find a suitable boy for her and he will spend unnecessary money on her dowry and marriage. And what the suitable boy will do is finally take the woman to the bed. Or, the woman would waste her youth days finding a lovable guy and struggling to get her family accept him and the vice versa. After big trouble the love will result in a marriage and even then the woman would land herself on the bed. Even the law admits that a marriage is de jure and complete only when it is consummated. The countable reality, the pragmatic exactness is; though it sounds offensive, that the beautiful woman has to be ultimately taken to the bed. Economics sees the countable end and does not waste time and energy on those processes which society prescribes as human and just. So, if you see from a different point of view, the hypocrisy has its origin and support in society. Economics does exactly what it thinks, sees and says. But then, within economics there is a small society and whatever hypocrisy is being associated with economics is actually because of this small society within. This human resource bullshit is actually a confused society within.”

Mayank did not wish to bat longer. He had already decided to declare the innings. He only wished Ashu could see the larger picture. But he understood that mindset issues were hard to trickle down fast on the perceptual platform. Economy globally was facing new process benchmarks and operative principles. Liberalization changed everything fast. Survival in the open competitive environment was tough and often cruel. This toughness and cruelty percolated in the work environment within.

He remembered, when he had joined media, both technology and profits were in bad shape but the work environment was great. Within two-three years, investment made everything at par with global benchmark but then, the mood and work milieu in the newsroom worsened. The joy of

work was squeezed out gradually even as sales and profits touched new heights. Ashish said it right. Economics found its short-term agenda and happily buried the long-term issues of human resource. Who cares! The girl after all had to land on the bed and it happened fast. Quite as what the operative prudence of economics prescribed!

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CHAPTER 4

At 11.45 am the owner made two calls. He rang up the editor first and asked him whether

Mayank was going to the rival newspaper? The editor as usual had not checked the mails in the morning and was rather taken aback. He could not answer the owner's query. "Editor Saheb, at least open the laptop sometimes when the company has invested on it", a

visibly irritated owner said adding, "see the mail first and report me in half an hour which

newspaper Mayank is joining and what's the package. Also send me an explanatory mail why your trusted Colonel left your army".

The general manager smiled as the owner called him and asked to report him in all possible

details whether the editor mishandled Mayank and what impact his resignation could have on the

editorial team spirit as he was very popular among them.

The first thing both the editor and general manager did after receiving the owner's call was to

call Mayank but he would not respond. The editor was quick to perceive the seriousness of the

situation. He was in for big trouble as the resignation issue would revive all dormant issues

against him and his detractors within would leave little to embarrass him taking advantage of the

situation. He hastened to read his mail to be in control of things.

The general manager checked that the deputy general manager, sales had arrived in his chamber

and ordered two strong coffees. The deputy general manager, marketing had left his home and

would be joining him soon.

"So early in the day you have invited me for coffee that means somebody's ass has gone for a

toss and shock me if it is not him", the sales head blabbered, almost barging into general

manager's room.

"Genius...stupendously genius...such a gross wastage of talent here...if I were the owner of the

newspaper I would have promoted you to vice-president for guessing it right."

"How bad is the ground situation... is it out of control?"

"Not yet...but we will make it. Don't have to do much this time."

"Sir Ji, give me the whole lead story. You know we sales people are basically hawkers; only

when I read the whole story I can decide which way to sell it."

"Oh! The story is simple. A man was cuddling his dear baby boy in his lap. The boy was very happy to get his father's attention. In sheer joy the baby kicked his limbs in the air to express his feelings. One of his kicks landed on the balls of his dad. As the dad screamed in pain, the terrified boy pissed in his lap. The story is as simple as this." The coffee arrived. A visibly happy general manager asked for some snacks and by the time the attendant could come up with it from the office canteen, general manager had narrated to the sales head the entire story from the resignation mail of Mayank to the owners phone calls. The sales head was about to say something when the deputy general manager, marketing entered the room, as usual in a disturbed state of affairs. "The condom ad is missing today as you had instructed us not to negotiate beyond 45 per cent discount and the rival stooped far below to lick their ass", he shot before he settled on the chair. "To hell with the ad...do you regret about the „missing condoms? even when you are in the bed with your wife? Anyway, this news is stale. I knew about the deal late evening itself. I had called you for different reason. Have your coffee first." The sales head smiled in the side chair. He said to himself, „is this man really as stupid as he presents himself to be or he does it purposely to counter the devilish mechanisms of the general manager?? He put his bet on the latter. The sales head enjoyed his snacks as the general manager enquired about what the latest development in government advertisement case was and whether there was any change of mind. "How long this will go? You know Boss asks me the same question and you do not seem to have any answer as yet", general manager said annoyingly. "Sir Ji, the problem is, the chief minister does not want to talk anything on this issue. His personal secretary has told me that chief minister is very upset. And I think his point is justified. He says chief minister also knew there was something wrong with the medical exam results and he had been thinking of setting up a probe when we hit the headlines. The chief minister is angry that even when he has now announced enquiry into the matter, it is just because we chose to run the story that the opposition has gained upper hand. The opposition is now making a hue and cry and misleading the people by saying that the enquiry is a cover up exercise". "Yeah...I know this too but tell me what is the way out? I am going to tell the Boss that from next time, it should be made mandatory for the editorial team to consult

the management before
going ahead with such stories. Bloody who will feed these wide mouthed
beggars if we don't
earn for them. Right now, we have to make right moves to ensure that the
ban on government ads
is lifted as soon as possible."

"Sir, if you could accept my humble suggestion, I would say that this is
beyond us. The officials
have clearly said they could not help as the chief minister has himself
ordered the ban. Only he
can lift it. The problem is we cannot even go to the chief minister. Only
the editorial people can
save the day, as chief minister would meet only them. And why not they,
after all they have
landed us in this trouble?"

"My dear brother, first time in so many years I am not regretting that I
made you the deputy
general manager. Genius...stupendous genius; you have prescribed the winning
formula. Why
should we lose our sleeps, those who have brought the Tsunami should also
foot the bill of
rehabilitation, ain't it?"

The general manager looked at the sales head for support and confirmation.
He smiled as usual
and offered him a cigarette which the general manager took and gave it to
the marketing head
who kept it in his shirt pocket as if it was a trophy of victory.
As the marketing head moved out of the room, the general manager worked out
his strategies and
assigned the sales head his little part in his game plan.

"You can use the services of my personal secretary; her English is as
beautiful as she is. Ask her
to draft a mail to the Boss. In the mail, you only express your concern
that newspaper looked
weak in the last one week and though the sales were not down yet but the
unsold percentage had
gone up on account of poor cash sale. Do not mention anything about
editorial and shoot the mail
within half an hour so that it should sound to the Boss that you are still
unaware about the
resignation of Mayank".

As the sales head moved out of his room, the general manager picked up the
phone to call the
chief reporter.

"General Manager here... got the news? What news? Lo... a journalist asks me
what news. Your
dear friend Mayank has been fired and you don't know yet."

"Fired...? But he has resigned! Editor Saheb had phoned me half an hour back
and he told me
Mayank resigned citing personal reasons. He even asked me to go to his
place and ask him to
talk to Editor Saheb as he was not picking up the call", the chief reporter
replied to the general
manager in utter confusion.

"What else the poor man could do? He was demoralized so much. And what was his fault? What a simple and honest man like Mayank can do but tender his resignation when you push him that hard against the wall? I know the inside thing; there were efforts to influence the Boss against Mayank and all sorts of wrong information were being fed to the Boss so that he fired Mayank. He took the right decision and well in time to save his career. And I tell you, you may be next in line as you are being publicized as a man of Mayank's lobby. But do not worry; I am the general manager here. Mayank should have come to me but he trusted someone who did him in. Bad choices always make people pay for it. I hope you understand". Satisfied that he had made best use of his resources to attain what he wanted, the general manager started writing the mail to the owner.

Dear Sir,

I'm writing to you in utmost confidentiality.

It is truly unfortunate chain of events that we find ourselves into. No doubt, there is a n immense need of caution and care in handling the situation. Prima facie it seems that somewhere, this important point has been missed.

As Mayank is not responding to anyone right now, we have reasons to believe that he looks hurt and down. What I have gathered from editorial team is that he had not taken things too kindly and had some sort of run down with Editor Saheb (Details awaited). In the past too, I had pleaded with Editor Saheb to go easy with his penchant for office time booze bouts as often it affects his judgment and handling. This new development may unsettle many in editorial but I will see to it that nothing untoward happens. Sincerely yours.

General Manager.

PS: I'll call as and when I get to talk to Mayank.

Prakash Pandey, the sales head had to take a tough decision. He smiled at his own predicament.

The choice between the devil and deep sea! He was himself a living predicament. A man of high academic credentials but he was onto a profession which demanded street smart levels of hawking and at times, extents of cunningness which his heart would not approve of. He hated the autocratic and closed door mannerisms of the editor and was equally at war with the „me-only? attitude of the general manager who technically was his boss. The editor would make serious efforts to boss around him but with little success. The editorial and sales war was always on. The sales head had amazing gift of putting self-made quotations in the mouth of historical

figures and he would do it with such seriousness and aplomb that it would be impossible to disbelieve. This he would do intentionally to embarrass his rivals. Once in the chamber of the editor, he had said to Mayank, „Winston Churchill had told Roosevelt in 1943 that the chief curse of humanity was that superior intelligence was always ruled over by inferior intelligence and that was because God Almighty believed in the theory of balance of power?. Mayank had understood his jibe and had prodded him to add more by asking, „how do you know of this historical fact? to which he had said, „Joseph Stalin has written the full account of the conversation between Churchill and Roosevelt in his autobiography?. Mayank had a hearty laugh as he knew it too well that to whom it was directed. The editor had neither doubted the story nor did he understand and had continued watching live cricket on his desktop computer. This was however unusual, as often, the sales head would credit Marco Polo and his accounts to most of the quotes he would muster up. He would say it with a dead face, „I admire Marco Polo as he was an obedient husband like me and had left home on the advice of his wife to find and write about all those living people on earth who were superior stupid than him. I will too do the same someday.?

The sales head weighed his options on the basis of long-term mileage and arrived at a decision on the basis of the old corporate wisdom of balance of power. He rubbed his hands in sheer joy to visualize the end result of his game plan. The editor was almost done with the morning meeting with the reporters when the sales head entered his room. He gestured him to have a seat. „So, what’s the bad news from your side this morning“, the editor initiated the talk. „Why bad one...I think it is a usual day of business!“

„Pandey Ji, it suggests you do not seem to know the full story. Everyone today is interested in grabbing a slice of my precious ass. But they don’t know that like a lizard, I can grow my ass as many times they chop it off.“

The sales head laughed heartily correcting him that lizards were more fortunate than humans as God had chosen not to trouble them by giving them a protruded ass and instead gave them a tail. He then told him in a manner of earnest inquisitiveness, „Yeah...morning birds were talking about a rebellion in your army.“

„Rebellion...! And in my army! You need to see it differently. This is battleground of life. This is men’s war. Do we invite these pigeon-hearted boys to join the battle? We

don't. We face the enemies upfront. Losing or winning is part of the game but your destined part is to fight like a man...a true warrior with a lion-heart. Sad it is that at times, some soldiers join the ranks whose best place to breathe is in their mothers' lap. These cowards are deserters when the first shot of enemies' artillery rends the air in the battleground. For the general and the army, it is often a good riddance. The general is saved of the unnecessary burden of footing the bill of their coffins."

"I presume; this is an overreaction and circumstantial assessment of reality."

"So be it."

"It should not be it. All wars are not won in the battleground and all enemies need not be taken to war to win against them. Some gentleman said somewhere at sometime that more muscles, more hurdles in peace and that's why brain has the least of both."

The editor calmed a bit and threw a circumspect gaze towards the sales head. His instinct warned him against it but he felt he was getting inclined to listen to what the sales head was saying. He didn't trust him, no doubt about it but the way the sales head sat relaxed and spoke with authoritative composure, making constant eye contacts with him, he thought it was not bad actually to pay heed to what he was attempting to hint at. The sales head realized that his words had succeeded in doing what they were intended to and he quickly changed the tack.

"Editor Saheb, Marco Polo once visited our town after his long journey to China. Outside the town gate he saw a man with a sword walking impatiently, looking every now and then towards the path, sitting hesitatingly and within seconds start walking again. Marco Polo thought he was a robber and he might even kill him. But, as he approached him, it was clear that the man with the sword was least interested in him. Marco Polo could not resist his curiosity and asked the man what he was doing there with a sword in hand and why was he so impatient. The man said in apparent anger that he was waiting here for his friend to come so that he could kill him before his unholy foot could disgrace his town. Marco Polo asked why he was ready to kill a person who he was calling a friend. He replied that his inevitable victim was once a friend and no more as he had said disgraceful things about his dear wife whom he loved more than anything in the world. Marco Polo asked how he could know that his friend had done such grave injustice to him

to which he said his neighbor had said so a few moments before. Marco Polo asked how he was sure that what his neighbor said was true. The man said with confidence that his neighbor was a notorious thief and he had overheard his friend saying such nasty things against his wife's integrity when he had gone late night at his friend's house for committing theft. Marco Polo smiled and asked him to go home right then assuring him that he would hold his friend there till he returned from home after ensuring that his wife was well. The man reluctantly went home but Marco Polo knew the man had lost his wife to his neighbor who, after ensuring that he would be killed by his powerful friend would have fled away with his beautiful wife."

"So, what is the moral of the story then?"

"It is subjective...it depends on your individual positioning...there may be more than one. One

moral of the story, the objective and mandatory one is that since the age of Marco Polo, the truth

remains that your neighbor always has the potential to be your worst enemy because he is the

nearest and especially when you have a beautiful wife at home", the sales head said closing the door behind him.

The editor promptly swung into action to rush to the facts. He called the attendant who was in

the morning duty for the general manager's cabin and asked him some straight questions. He

smiled as the attendant answered his queries. He handed him a hundred rupee currency and

lovingly enquired about the health of his ailing wife.

He recollected the story told by the sales head a few minutes back and made some mental

calculations. There were some loose ends in the scene. He could not accept that the sales head

would not align with his neighbor and instead look like being supportive to him even when he

was in crisis. Hesitatingly, he picked up the intercom.

"Pandey Ji, as an afterthought; it might be possible that the friend of the man in your story had

done something similar in the past or something wrong and that's why this man was easily led to

believe what his neighbor gossiped about his friend."

"Editor Saheb, the important thing should not be missed in the mist of dark possibilities. The

question in the core is a smart choice between probability and certainty.

Whether you trust a

friend, a strong one, who had probably turned against you or a certain thief who, unfortunately,

was your neighbor?"

"And should it matter that the man's wife was extremely beautiful?"

"It is indeed the crux of the matter. Marco Polo would not care if it were

otherwise."

"Your wife is beautiful too!"

"My neighbor has even better...!"

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CHAPTER 5

Those were the best moments in his life when she would be around.

She was in the prime of her blossoming years of youthfulness. Was she beautiful...! A

definitional conundrum! Beauty, especially of a woman is a deterministic realism. It is as

localized or regional as weather preferences. Then, personal choices also create strong

benchmarks. Rather difficult to have a universal yardstick of beauty.

Mayank would remember

how Ashish had extended a rare concurrence with this idea of beauty and had philosophically

added, „That?s why I have never seen a poster of any Miss Universe or Miss World in the

bedroom of any boy.?

Mayank would call her the most beautiful enterprise in his life. That kept him in constant fear.

He knew most beautiful things in life were ephemeral. Strange though, he never thought beauty

was the best thing about her. He loved her vitality and valued as a huge complement to his own

personality for his own was rather low. When she would come close to him, he could feel the

pink of her health and vitality in the millions of specks of her heavily moist breath. He found it

strange but her breath would remind him of the moist and strangely aromatic air which he had

breathed in when sitting beneath a very old banyan tree in the backyard of his native village. He

related it to a clear sign of her superior health and took a lot of security and confidence from it.

He admired more the fact that she from her very presence would raise the bar of his potential and

possibilities as a person. Mayank would always be indebted to her for a strange realization which

dawned upon him only when she entered his life. She chiseled a man out of him; made him

understand the multi-dimensionality of roles a man is invested with by the almighty or the

nature. He could gain the importance of the pride of the burden of performances as well as the

joy of actually performing these multi-dimensional roles.

Almost a year back, when he first met her, the first feeling he had was that of the protectiveness

of a father. She looked so young and effervescent, almost like a college sophomore; capricious

and vulnerable. It was one of the reader interactive programs organized by his newspaper and she

was invited. There were other women in the program but she caught the attention of all men

because of her spiritedness. Men are men and anywhere they will be too willing to extend ample proof of it. Men start speaking the language of their desire and even start picking up commensurate signals which may not actually be there but their accentuated and conditioned mind would see one. A bubbly woman, who does not wear a culturally self-imposed veil of nonchalance and pretentious aura of pre-eminence, automatically draws an „available? label in the language of men. Mayank could see it happening with her. He promptly took her in his authoritative custody as if he were her dad. She took proper notice of his gesture. Later, though he got to know that she was no college girl but a professional, working for a private bank; his dad-like feelings for her didn't change. She, by her enigmatic persona and inexplicable mannerism would set personality benchmarks for him. Being with her opened such varied roles for him and he realized that doing them gave him such satisfying feelings which he could not clearly understand and name. One day, she would be preparing to go out with him and suddenly she would complain lovingly to Mayank, „I'm standing in front of the wardrobe for ten minutes...when would you decide which dress I should wear?? He would smile and say, „the pink one...the color compliments you?. She will feel elated and wear the dress. He could never realize that she expected such a role from him which he would usually consider intrusive and a no no...! The very feeling that he was trusted by her so much that she actually delegated her right to make choices for herself to him, made him realize how much responsible and correct he always needed to be to stand up to her trust. He realized this was not a small thing. Often, men are trusted with loads of emotional gems by women they love but they are so self-obsessed that they don't even understand how quickly they squander them. Men often pride and strive for what they give to their women but seldom value what they get from them. He was not scared but felt very humbled by this. His discretion for goodness was only sharpened. He was sure he would always cherish the wealth she entrusted to him and would never waste a dime, let alone a gem. One of the most amazing and cherished memories with her was of an evening with her in her studio apartment flat. She was down with cold and as she lived alone, he visited her to enquire about her health and be a support. She had trouble breathing and all of a sudden, she asked him

to rub the decongestant ointment on her chest and back. He unfastened the top two buttons of her shirt and was thinking of looking the other way when she started a conversation and he had to look in her eyes all the while he rubbed the ointment on her chest. He was very conscious that his hands should remain confined to the upper region but still he would unintentionally get the touch of the softness beneath. She turned back and half lifted her shirt to bare her back to him. He could see the marble of white and feel the silk in his hands. He carefully buttoned her up and tucked her in a thick blanket. He would clean her dripping nose with his hands as if she were a baby. He would watch her sleep comfortably. He felt a strange sense of satisfaction. It emanated out of his realization that childlike innocence and complete trust is the most potent and pious emotion of humanity. He felt resplendently elated that he was worthy of such an emotion. Nobody in his life had reposed such complete and colossal trust on him as she had, nor had he experienced such immaculate innocence ever. However, what gave him greater contentment was his internal knowledge that all throughout his physical intimacy with her; he had not for one moment felt sensuousness. He was not sure why and how his being responded truly and mutually to her childlike innocence and trust. He could actually feel the pride of paternal care still alive in him as he watched her sleep well; her chest undulating to the rhythm of deep breathe. He felt full...fulfilled...! He felt liberated...formless....infinite...! It is because of her that he started doing things he never ever thought he would do. He started watching cookery shows and bought recipe books as he enjoyed cooking for her. He found the recipes too common and available in most restaurants he could visit. He added his imaginations to the recipes and created fusion food which would make her so happy. He would mix the styles and ingredients of south Indian recipes with Chinese, the Punjabi recipes with Italian and local dishes with Mexican to create unique tastes and looks of his food. She will be so happy and fight like a kid to reveal the recipes which he would protest naughtily and teasingly say, „the recipes are fond memories of my former wife who fled away with my driver and that?s why I cannot share them with anyone?. He derived immense satisfaction in mothering her. He would feed her with his hands as she would playfully refuse to take her hands out of the pocket of her jacket. And, if she liked the

taste of the food, she would insist making him eat it by joining her lips to his lips and move half of her munched morsel in his mouth. Keeping the lips entwined, she would ask him how the taste was. He knew; humanity had not created a word and a language which could help in answering her question. His moist eyes however would betray the gratitude to the almighty and the woman in his life!

His emotional and physical intimacies with her, as their relationship grew, would leave him exhausted, confused and even annoyed. For her, intimacy was as natural as for a child. When with him, she would actually not like to behave like an adult. As a kid never thinks before saying or demanding anything, she too would look least bothered about the practicality of it. She would hug him and sleep in his arms and lap. He would try to put her in the bed but she would insist he remained there with her in bed. She would clutch him, wrap herself around him and sleep for hours. He could not keep her away from him. Her breasts would remain softly pressed against his chest and she would wake up and groan complainingly if he tried to unlock himself. Once, he used slight force of hands, in a determined attempt to separate her from his embrace and she responded by crying like a baby. The tears would not stop despite thousand apologies and finally he had to pull her back into a tighter embrace to restore her usual peaceful sleep.

Initially, he found himself precariously poised handling her intimacy language. He would wonder how one could sleep when in such passionate proximity. He checked his doubts and once, when she looked like in sleep in his cuddle, he squeezed her closer. Her breast bones could rub against his. First time, he could feel the velvety traces of her chubby stomach as he pulled her close wrapping his arm around her waist. As he felt her abdomen neighborhood, he missed a heartbeat. He planted his lips against her softly and gently massaged her back. He felt an unexplainable buzz in his body; his muscles contracted, felt cold inside though he sweated and finally he could not breathe anymore. He let out a groan and pulled himself away. She stirred and opened her eyes in complete bewilderment. He could see a rather idiotic expression on her face which is usual when someone is abruptly jolted out of his sleep. She didn't say anything, locked herself back in his hug and slept like a stupid.

He realized, not much to his amazement, that she actually slept in great peace in his embrace. To

her, he and his hug was like a teddy bear comfort. He returned her, her childhood days. She would feel the teddy bear security and confidence when in his arms and would sleep well. That was pure child act but she was not a kid trapped in an adult body. He would repeat the act on her when he knew she was not sleeping and she would respond his groans, her body tweaking as her muscles contracted too. Once, she kissed him unusually long and he asked her whether she knew that a long and wet kiss like that was a sure sign of passion and sensuousness. She did not reply; thought for a moment and then almost munched his mouth, leaving scar marks on his lower lip.

He spent lots of time with her and more on analyzing his relationship with her. He could realize that affection was important...intimacy was important...more important was the person who would share them but...most important however was the power of wide and deep knowledge which makes realization of all goodness. A blind might throw a gold coin in his hand and a deaf would not pick it up even if the coin fell behind him. A monkey passing by would pick up the coin, try to chew it, find it tasteless and would throw it. A child playing nearby would pick up and would be dejected to see it twisted and would toss it in the well. It is individual knowledge of true joy, discretion of real goodness and the courage to pick up the right and righteous option which is most important. A beautiful woman on the street is a veritable goodness. Somebody goes out and molests her. He apparently gets some joy in it. In the language of economics, this act is what Ashish called as the countable joy and short-term operative goal. The same girl goes home and her father, seeing her pained huddles her in his embrace and caresses her long hair gently. The girl forgets her pain, gets assured of her wellbeing and turns the usual self. Both were touches, both had skin and flesh involved in the action but sense of purpose and emotions differed as the knowledge of goodness was in utter contrast.

Life and its realism is like a beautiful woman but most humans in their stark ignorance opt the enjoyment of molesting life, without even caring that it pains life no end. Few geniuses pull life in their laps, hold it in tight embrace, cuddle her gently with the pure emotion of a creator and make her attain her true self. Unfortunate it is that there are only a few geniuses left and fewer are those among the geniuses who have the courage to sustain it as the normal society would either call them hypocrites, mad, idiots or a certain threat to a

harmonious social order.

His realization landed him in trouble. He understood; she was important for him but only as a catalyst; so was he for her. She unleashed the potential and possibilities which were already there within him and he valued it more than she could realize. He even told her this but she would not register it the way he put it. He wanted her to understand that she needed to diversify her personality to derive better joy and satisfaction out of her love for him. He wished she could develop a better sense of reception, graduate to more meaningful roles in his life, as well as her own.

He knew in his relationship with her, both of them had reached a stage of mutual commitment.

Their relationship could not be open-ended for long. He even understood that problem was in his side. He loved her truly and treasured her. He was sincerely indebted to her for lots of good her

presence opened up for him in a short period of less than a year. Her qualities and dedication to

him were unblemished. However, he still believed; she was not very receptive to some of the

key areas of their relationship which he felt was crucial for the completeness of their union. He

would hate to do it but he needed to objectively assess her as a complete person. He could not

accept the theory that love means acceptance of what it is and how it is.

He strongly believed that

if he would commit to her, she would be the most important person in his life. She would be such

a close and continuous presence in his life that she would have the power and potential to

influence him and his future a great deal. Such an important person would have to be a complete

person. She would have to be what it takes to perceive life in its entirety and enormity. She

would have to be open to evolving as a person as life itself is an evolving reality.

The reality, a troubling one, remained for him that she was not very receptive to newer and wider

things in life and would often be unwilling. More than often, she would be a single emotion

person and very true at it. He would talk with her about myriad of higher issues of life and

humanity and would ask her to share her views on them. At times, she would be patient and

listen to all he had to say but when her turn came to respond, she would say, „what you say is

absolutely right...just tell me what you want me to do. You know you won't need a second call?.

He would caution her that life is not as simple as she took it. She could not always take an easy

ride of his perception and judgment and she would have to be geared up to make her own. She would think for a while and then say in an affected earnestness, „I know that you know the problems well and the solutions too...why do you think I am with you...you are my insurance policy...and am I a bad premium?? He would ask her to be serious and would get a prompt rejoinder, „you be with me...you hold me in your arms for eternity... kiss me so that my eyes are closed in ecstasy and my being melts in your soul... let troubles come, am I there to feel what comes and goes!...do I fear!...I?m safe and smiling in the heart of my braveheart...I can walk on pebbles but I know for sure, your arms will take me to your embrace before my legs bleed...and am I scared of the blood!...not till you are with me and if not, let them leave my veins...do I care...!?

He would wish she could also learn languages other than that of intimacy and affection, which she spoke brilliantly. He wished to make her see the other side of life where emotions would not provide solutions even though it would help keeping the bond stronger and would add pep to the spirit of struggle against the odds. He could not do so as he could clearly see such persistence with his viewpoint and efforts would make her insecure. He would immediately realize that she would become unsettled and behave more childishly. She would perceive it as a sign of loss of love and would promptly start doing things to replenish it. She would take his face in both her hands and gently shove it to her soft breasts. As he would go breathless, she would kiss him passionately and deeply. She would croon sweet sounding moans in his ears and encourage him to hug her with all his might. She would accept the intensity and passion of his hug as the sign of his continued love and affection for her. As he did it to assure her, she would calm down and fall asleep in his lap.

He did not mind being a teddy bear for her, rather he loved being one for her but he wished, she could accept and appreciate that life outside teddy bear security was tough. There were attainments in life waiting for her attention outside the teddy bear fulfillment. And, the journeys are not so short that she could be carried in the lap. Moreover, everyone has to go through the individual pains. You cannot see the seven colors of rainbow through other? s eyes. You need to see it with your own eyes then only the beauty and joy of rainbow would be unraveled to you.

He regretted that she was a close door person on such matters. She would not receive and appreciate the fact that it was his immense love for her which made him pursue her to reach newer horizons and extend it every day. He wished she could understand that life; its beauties and pleasures, the pains which broadens and deepens perceptions, are unraveled to individuals in long and tedious journey of time and space. The journey has no meaning if you do not have the endowed and cultivated faculties to pick up experiences and ideas unraveled en route.

Love consumed her completely. He knew; she had run a deficit of it since childhood, like most girls and she prided it as ultimate virtue. Surrendering her being in all possible sense to him was her first desire, an instinctive one and the last attainment. Beyond that everything was his trouble and surely, his calling to deal with it. He had almost given up. Happy but not satisfied.

She was 28 and would remind him of her age whenever he would tease her that she still had baby flab around her waist and inside her brain. In one year of relationship with her, he had reached the level of intimacy with her which would have prompted any other girl to ask for the next best thing to institutionalize it. His irritation stemmed out of the fact that he realized he had traveled too far with her and it would not be easy for either of the two to go back. He also realized that she had gone beyond the level of doubts about his commitment for her. The question of commitment ceased to exist for her. It was from his side that the question was in limbo; she had not even realized that there could be such a question with him. He was irritated with himself as he was truly in love with her and could never ever think of giving her pain. This suffocation of optionlessness however irritated him.

He understood; he had to take a decision about her, that too very soon. His resignation provided him the opportunity to do it. He had the leisure time and he wished to make the most out of it. He understood it quite well that it would take the courage of a clear and resolute mind to carry his decision vis-à-vis her as he knew the energy of her love and innocence was potent enough to melt the staunchest of his resolves. He also understood it well that he would have to be very meticulous and artistically dexterous in handling her and implementing his agenda on her as he could not afford to distress her original and instinctive qualities of innocence, trust and intimacy. The agenda was to add new dimensions to her personality without affecting

the ones which made her the angel she was. He was very sure in his mind that if there was a conflict and if he had to choose between what she was and what more he wanted her to be, he would blindly choose her with what she was. That truly was the challenge. He had to plan his ways which could not only add the new personality traits in her but also enhance the intensity and range of her existing qualities. He decided, he would have a go at it, see how she responded to it and then decide his next course of action after assessing the first symptoms. His love for her however would also try to make out a case against his own decision. „Don?t you love her too much...should not you ensure that all that you do should enhance her joys and satisfaction?, the lover inside him would ask him. It was not possible, he realized it. Calculating life?s worth in terms of pleasure and pain was certainly not his preference. He accepted that any decision that would help in making her a better person, more knowledgeable and more receptive to wider and deeper aspirations and attainments of life would be a clear choice. Love cannot be blind...being blind is never ideal...humans cannot be akin to puppy love. Love is not only care, protection, provision, intimacy and passion; it is a magical concoction of all pure human emotions. And, this magic gives lovers the kick of their lives to clinch the attainable; expand the confines of their potentials, stretch the horizons of possibilities and reach their not alone but together, hands in hand...as one soul. The decision made, he called her the next morning of his resignation, didn?t tell about it and simply asked her to come home in the evening. She jocularly asked him had he quit his job as she knew his office hours started when her ended and that?s why they could meet only on Saturdays. He smiled and told her that he had taken leave and would be at home. She asked him to pick her up and as usual asked him to cook a nice and innovative dinner for her.

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CHAPTER 6

“Boss is in your town, will see you in his hotel suite, sharp at 8.30 am”. It was already 8.15 in the morning when Mayank saw the SMS of the personal secretary of the owner on his mobile along with his three missed calls. No time to rehearse his lines that he intended to say but did not expect it so soon. He picked up a piece of paper and a pen, jotted down something, read them and threw it in the dustbin in a clear sign of disapproval. Stood for a

while in front of the mirror, reviewed some gestures and smiled. Picked the keys of his car and stepped out of his house. As he locked his door, his neighbor commented, "Looks like it will rain today". Mayank asked him did he like rains. "Does my liking or disliking matter to the rain God? You can't choose your destiny, you can however choose your courage", the neighbor shot back. As Mayank entered the lift, he just added for fun, "You can simply choose the size of your umbrella". He could hear his neighbor saying it almost shouting, "...what umbrella..! The one your newspaper gave me for six-month subscription? It can't even shield a dog's piss, let alone rain".

The Boss, the owner of the newspaper had a fixed suite in the seven star hotel. Mayank had been to his suite once before and knew it quite well where he would comfortably sit to face the boss.

The suite attendant asked, as he ushered him in to the large hall like sitting room, if he liked the idea of having tea or coffee in the meantime as saheb was in the bathroom and might take a few minutes. He declined it and instead asked for a bottle of mineral water. He knew the Boss liked to sit on the large couch at the farthest end of the room, so he chose a seat opposite the Boss but slightly across to ensure he avoided direct eye contact.

He had occasions in the past to talk with the owner but it was first time that he was facing him one to one. The previous encounters were very formal, usually in group meetings where he would just respond to some queries he made or simply listened to what he said. There never was the need to know more about the Boss as he had no business with him. Anyway, the Boss would be guarded and made largely inaccessible by the editor and general manager whenever he would visit the office, once a month or so.

As is usual with all big people, there were rumors about the nature, lifestyle and habits of the owner which could interest a page three journalist but he never heeded to them. He firmly believed, gossiping is more about disproportionate smoke of the actual fire and he had no business with either of the two. Moreover, he believed, a person had multiple personalities and what one aspect of his personality did should ideally not be a benchmark for judging the actions by the other. He was associated with the owner in a professional capacity and what the Boss did in his personal capacity was neither his concern nor the yardstick of his judgment about him. As he had left home, he had made a firm resolve to receive him with an

unburdened mind. He basically knew too little about the Boss, his ideas and mannerisms to create any presumption and premonition about him. The owner, in his late forties, had seen the rise of the media empire he owned from its struggling days. He was known for his generosity with heart but miserly with his words. Mayank had known more about him through the manner in which he was talked about among top people of his newspaper. He could gather that the Boss was probably bit more amicable and approachable; at times even weak and supple than it would be befitting and professionally appropriate for him as an owner. Loose talk about bosses and owners are favorite pastime of people all over the globe but at times, he would be puzzled whether the owner was actually as submissive and pliant as he was taken as in the talks of the editor and general manager. He was very unsure, how he would put up with him. He had however decided, before leaving his house that he would be honest to his nature without caring what perception his owner would carry about him and whatever end the talks might achieve. The Boss looked relaxed. He entered the room in shorts and tee-shirt which did not look very expensive. He held the pack of cigarette and a lighter in his hand. Mayank greeted him but he did not respond. He knew about this habit of the Boss and did not take it badly. He would hold it as a sign of the low self-esteem of the man who would not respond to the greetings or at best a oneupmanship ploy and would usually consider a waste of time and energy talking with such a person. He however did not mind it as he had made up his mind to give the occasion a full chance. The Boss gestured him to sit on the sofa vertically in front of his usual couch. He moved in and was settling on the sofa when the question came. "Have you joined anywhere?" "No." "Have plans to...any offer..?" "No...no thoughts yet." The Boss pressed the remote bell and the attendant appeared. "Would you like sandwiches or something else...?" "Tea or coffee would be better." The Boss nodded and asked the attendant to pass on the ashtray before he left. He lighted a cigarette and stretched relaxingly on the couch. "What exactly is your problem?" "Nothing...the issue is not me, not about me...no personal complaints..." "...you are a good hand... if you think your career gets better shape with

some other people; I will say all the best. But, I would want to have people like you in my team so, I should know what is there in my place which makes good people leave us...”, the Boss said haltingly focusing all the while on the cigarette which he rolled between his fingers. Mayank held his reply...weighed his words...checked with his resolve; asked himself, „do I really want to do it, will it be of any use?, realized it quick that he had nothing to lose. He understood, all good things take time to come through and that should not deter people in taking the very difficult first step. He resolved he would take a chance with destiny. “Sir, I am completely unemployed now, not even a wife or kid waiting for me at home so, I have lots of time but I understand; you are extremely busy person. What I have to say, and given a chance I would like to say, will take a long elaboration”, he said with a grin on the face to make the environment relaxed and agreeable. “Nobody has invited me for lunch either...”, the owner returned the grin. Mayank got positive, shifted position on the chair to take off his plan. The Boss also moved slightly forward on the couch in an apparent bid to lend ears to him. “A few centuries back, there was a monk who was famous for his magical powers of cure. People would come to him with terminal diseases and he would cure them by the touch of his hand. There however was another strange thing about him. He would always be weeping. His eyes would shed tears incessantly, even when he would be in deep sleep. Often, he would raise both his hands towards open sky and would cry and howl like a baby. People around him and even his own disciples had never seen him speak a single word since last 20 years. One day, his childhood friend visited him and first time people saw him smiling. His friend was very concerned and asked him about his continuous tears and wails. He wondered; when his magic could cure pains of thousands of humans, what pains made him weep and moan. The monk replied, „I am not in pain, I have no problems. I weep and cry to draw the attention of the God Almighty. There is so much pain and problems with millions of humans in the world and God alone has to take care of all of them. People speak to God in languages which they themselves have created, so their appeals do not reach him. Almighty receives only pure emotions as a language and there are only two words in his language - the weep and wail and the second is smile and laughter. You do not weep in French or Chinese languages, similarly smile and

laughter is common in all human languages. I weep and wail so that God could pay attention to me and lift me in his lap. The monk told his friend that he did not have any magical powers of cure. What he did was to take the pains of others and pass it on to the Almighty through his tears and wails and it reaches him. He is then moved and cures them. Normal humans could not get God's solutions as they could not speak to him in the language of pure emotions which God understands. The monk said he just worked as a translator." The boss did not react...played with his lighter for a few second, probably taking his time for the story to sink into his mind. Was about to say something when the coffee arrived and he checked his words. He asked the attendant to put the coffee tray on the table in front of his couch and waived him off. He asked Mayank for sugar and made coffee himself for both. "Forgive me if I am wrong because I am a business person, not versed with the intricacies of emotionalism of literature. What I make out of your story is first, I do not understand the language of my people and their problems and secondly, there are too many problems in the place I own."

"You have approached the reality from the wrong end."

"But the fact anyway is that I am ignorant about the problems, isn't it?"

"True it is; but not your fault. It is not ignorance but a communication bottleneck."

"So, what I have to take out of that, where do I figure in the problem and what is expected of me. Do I have ready solutions?"

"That exactly is the purpose of my story. You are the almighty of this small universe where life has put you, me and a few others. You have all the solutions. You can never be a problem and do not figure in any of the problems because you have created this for all of us. You actually figure in all the solutions, you have the power to mitigate all pains of all those in your universe. The problem is that problems do not reach you, not because you are ignorant. It is because you are busy, very busy and problems are not being reached to you as you do not have a monk in your top and middle management ranks. The meek workers of your universe have double trouble. They neither have a magical monk who could work for them as the translator, like the one in my story, nor do they know to speak the language which their almighty understands. In this case, their God is not even accessible. "

The owner looked unsettled. Probably too many things had come up in too short a time for him to grab and react. He lighted a cigarette and this time also offered

Mayank. He took it but did not light up.

"Sir, if you allow me and extend some liberty, I would like to make things clear for you. I only request you not to react immediately; let the talk sink in, let issues get processed in leisure. You have the last word on all matters so; you have nothing to worry about." The Boss didn't say anything, continued smoking and gestured him to go ahead, still in the same thoughtfulness.

"There is small bit of an attitude crisis, better call it a psychological trap for people who are big, successful, leaders in their fields of activity and owners of fortunes which they make with so much pain and perseverance."

The Boss raised his eyes from the ashtray and fixed it on him. Mayank could see the apprehension in his eyes. He had succeeded in getting his attention back on his talk.

"Success and achievement becomes a habit and second nature for them. That is why; they pay more attention to answers than the questions. They do not want to listen to the problem but move ahead to talk about solutions. Answers and solutions are the script of success and continued achievement and it is quite natural that leaders and owners always avoid questions and problems. The trouble is; the top and middle management people, who always look for keeping the owners in good mood and remain his blue eyed boy, stop the access of problems and question to the owners. They actually kill the questions and problems. God cannot be him if he fails to listen to the problems and questions of his people. He may not solve them but every human has the liberty and faith to tell him his problems and this is how almighty remains their last hope."

The Boss looked more focused now to him and his talks. Mayank thought of moving ahead with his dialogue but checked himself. He thought it more useful to take along the right perception of the owner with his talk so that he could be on the same plane of perception.

"It interests me to see things from a different perspective, the one you are putting ahead. I am also open to travel the path along with you, though not fully confident. Actually, to be frank, I am not mentally prepared to sit over such larger issues which I believe you wish me to. My immediate concern is; as you probably said it right, the solution of the current crisis. I am probably trained this way but even you would admit, solutions are important than problems. And I would surely like to see the solution of the problem at hand then move on

to other larger issues
which you seem to be interested in."

"Sir, my purpose also is the solution. Actually, there never was a problem.
It was made one and

now it is being made out that the solution is difficult, which isn't."

"Do you understand we are losing big revenue because of the government ad
ban?"

"Yes, I am a journalist but it does not mean I am not concerned about the
financial health of the
newspaper which provides me bread and butter."

"Do you mean to say, there is a ready solution to get over the ad ban?"

"Yes sir; we can start getting ads from tomorrow, if we do a small thing."

"Okay; let me say I trust you on that front but what about you?"

"My resignation is like the cry and wail of the monk to attract the
attention of the almighty about
the problems our institution and people within it have, which has no ready
solution but needs
one."

"And what I have to do for you to take it back?"

"You are already doing it, giving me your precious time and attention. But
I think I will need
more of both, if not right now."

"So, it is a deal now..."

"No sir, it is not a deal. It is a humble request from my side. I will work
out the solution for the
government ad ban and may be back to work after you sit out over the whole
thing which I wish
to tell you."

"Call it what suits you but I call it a deal so that I could move ahead
with it. What next?"

Mayank told him that he would get an appointment with the chief minister
and the Boss along

with the editor would meet him the next day. Both of them must go as it
would relax the hurt ego

of the politician. When they would meet him, the Boss would have two
options. One, he could

simply say sorry, making it clear to the chief minister that they could not
calculate it right that

the story could make such brouhaha. Even the chief minister knows the story
was not incorrect

but the timing was wrong and that is why there is no harm saying a simple
sorry. Second option

would be to throw up the coin of tit for tat. They would say to the chief
minister that they were

ditched. The rival newspaper also had the story and their editor had an
understanding with their

editor that both of them would run the story as the scam was more of a
bureaucratic bungling

with little political overtones. But unfortunately the rival editor played
the game and held the

story back. They would say they never believed that such a trouble would be
caused and then

would say sorry.

The Boss listened to his solution. He stretched back on the couch in a

relaxed posture. Lighted another cigarette and took a deep gasp. He looked at his watch and rose up. "We meet tomorrow. I want you to be with me when we go to the chief minister's place. I presume you have not talked to the editor and others since you resigned and I don't think you need to till tomorrow", the Boss said in his usual authoritative voice as he gestured Mayank to come along.

At the door, when Mayank was about to leave, the Boss said, "Your second option is a better one, if we pull it off well." Mayank only nodded in affirmative.

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CHAPTER 7

The quartet of infinite intelligence, as Mayank would love to call them, the top and middle management pillars of his newspaper were faced with a precarious situation. The Boss had asked them to hold a meeting among themselves and list those areas in their respective fields which affected the work excellence and quality management. He had asked them to then come to his hotel suite for a post-lunch meeting with him and discuss solutions of all outstanding problems.

The editor, general manager, sales and marketing heads were at loss as what they were supposed to do. Fifteen minutes had passed since the start of the meeting but nothing was discussed.

"What is this work excellence and quality management stupidity...fuck this bloody job...who the bastard devised such cactus ideas that owners use to bleed the asshole of their employees", the editor said in utter exasperation.

"Editor Saahab, Marco Polo traversed over twenty- four thousand kilometers and visited many countries in search of the excellence and quality but still he could not find one. How can you find it in an hour's meeting? I think, you should go to the Boss, hand over your resignation to him and take off to an unending journey similar to Marco Polo", the sales head said in his typical jocular style.

"Editor Saahab, I think I can understand a bit what the Boss meant", the marketing head intervened, looking serious as he would always be.

"Please...keep your knowledge to yourself. Am I interested? Am I troubled? I am doing as best as I could. If Boss asks me, I will simply say, given the team of idiots in the editorial, I am bringing out the best possible newspaper. And despite that, editorial quality is the best in the market. The poor newsprint and those typical sales problems are none of my concerns. If the management cannot sell a good content what the editorial can do? I have no

quality problems

rather; it is my efforts that even these idiots in my team deliver excellent results".

"Editor Saheb, we are using the best quality newsprint. Others use the foreign and Indian newsprint in 40:60 ratios whereas we do it 45:55. You cannot complain about the newsprint", an irritated general manager said.

"Then...that shifts the blame on the sales team. But can we sell apples if we are given peanuts.

Sales is a simple love affair. What looks good sells good. And I am not talking about the face but

the whole body. The most voluptuous and ripe whore gets the best price.

Customer satisfaction is

not in the face and limbs; it is in the torso of the body. I have time and again said that the

newspaper has emaciated torso pages. Customer has a choice and he will buy the best. Or, I

suggest you lower the price. Even then you may not get the desired result.

If you ask me, I am

not sleeping with a flat-chest size-zero whore even if she comes free."

"I also feel that something is missing in our pages. The same news we have in our newspaper too

but you get more satisfaction when you read it in rival newspaper. I do not understand much

about the content thing but it seems, they present it better and the layout is also clean", the

general manager added, looking expectantly at the sales head.

"Sir..., with due respect to all, my trouble is that my clients say they get lower response per ad

insertion even when we claim, as per the latest IRS figures that our readership has gone up. The

rivals have edge over us as clients feel their response ratio is better than us", the marketing head

said avoiding eye contact with the editor.

"It is quite natural...that is what I was saying", the editor picked up his arsenal, "it is because of

the faulty sales policy...how can you expect good response when you sell the newspaper to the

tea stall, roadside vendors and petty retailers. Haven't I complained in the past that the sales guys

never visit the apartments and affluent households? And how can you expect this from these

sales guys who look no better than street-side loafers. They look as intimidating as recovery

agents of a private sector bank. And what about the poor quality gifts the sales team has

distributed to the readers for the subscription schemes?"

"Editor Saheb, only recently you complained that sales guys were paid more than your editorial

people and they looked like sahibs in comparison to the later. You had even told the boss that

your editorial team had inferiority complex vis-a-vis the sales guys as they were given smart

dresses from company whereas your team wore the same stinking shirt for three days. This blame game serves no purpose. Newspaper is like a team work, I am not denying that but there is also no second opinion that it is the product and its USP that creates brand. The brand searches its own market. We only ensure that if there is a demand, our channels are in place to keep the stocks ready and on top of the shelf", the sales head said, looking straight in the eye of the editor, keeping his left arm on his shoulders.

"Pandey Ji, it is easy to say things. I accept, content is the real brand but this brand is raped every day. You expect us to swim with our hands tied. You yourself sold the newspaper like a hot cake the day we broke the medical scam story. What happened? Everyone, including the Boss is out to cut a slice out of my ass. And that is not only it. Somebody has even gone on to blame it on my boozing. Areh..! I have been taking liquor since my college days and if that was such a big doom for me, I would not have been an editor for the last fifteen years. The problem is, editorial is like the young widow of a poor man whom everyone wants to rape and then declare her a witch."

"Oh ho...! Editor Saheb, you always look at things from a wrong angle", the sales head said.

"Why the hell you feel editorial is a weak and meek widow? I tell you a story I was told recently. Once there was a global convention on women's right and women of all ages from countries all over the world had gathered to discuss measures and action for betterment of women's plight, especially working out a plan to protect them from the torture of men folk. Serious speeches were being made and there was so much noise. In the midst of all these, a beautiful teenage girl sat on the front row of seats and kept polishing her nails, looking completely disinterested and disenchanted by happenings around her. Many women were watching her and finally a woman speaker from the dais could not tolerate it. She called the girl on stage and said to all women present there, "we are discussing such grave issue of women's deprivation and torment by men and this young lady thinks her nail polish is more important than all our issues. Such women actually are responsible for our plight?. All women present said, "shame... shame...? The girl remained unmoved; kept polishing her nails. She went up to the mike and said, "your problems are yours, I do not have any, you consider the men as such big demons but I make them dance on the tip of my small finger?. She stepped down from the dais rocking her

ass".

"So you mean to say that I should also walk confidently swaying my ass! Hell on you...already

so many people are wanting a piece of my troubled ass and if I start swinging it, how many hell

will break loose on me on daily basis?", the editor replied laughingly.

The general manager looked irritated but he chose not to say anything. The editor was making

indirect remarks on him and he was shocked that the sales head had clearly shifted his loyalties

to his rival. The sales head had apparently chosen the lesser devil to square up with the lord of

devils. The editor could sense the support and he was elated at his possible smooth sail when he

would confront the Boss, though he had not completely dropped his guard against the sales head.

The marketing head pointed out, looking at his wristwatch that they were getting late for the

proposed post-lunch meeting with the Boss. The general manager asked them all to end the

meeting and move to the hotel. The editor was however enjoying the irritation of the general

manager and wished to indulge more.

"General Manager Saheb, a few minutes back Pandey Ji has told you that the torso of your

newspaper is emaciated. You don't pay enough; don't even allow enough leaves to sleep well, at

least make mandatory provision for coffee and sandwiches in such important meetings like this.

What did the Boss say...? Yes, work efficiency and quality management...!

Huh...empty stomach

deputed as security guard for chicken biryani...! Pandey Ji, this work efficiency thing is not for

me...even my great grandpa would not venture into it...you better call Marco Polo...you said it

quite right, I am going to offer my resignation to Boss and will go home with whatever is left of

my devastated ass. The number of attacks my ass has survived is more than the attacks India

faced from Mohammad Ghauri to Lord C urzon."

"Subhanallah...! What great knowledge of history! Editor Saheb, you must have been the topper

of your school in your tenth grade exam?"

"Huh...I would not have been in this thankless job of a baniya had I been the topper."

The general manager had no option but to order chicken sandwiches and coffee.

The Boss was on his couch and sipping black tea when the attendant ushered in the four. The

sales head was the most vocal of the four and least timid when with the Boss and that is why he

was not afraid of sitting on the nearest sofa of the Boss's couch.

"What you like to drink in day time Editor Saheb", the Boss broke the silence.

"Nothing...I do not drink at day time...only late evening."

"No..no, you took me wrong, I meant to say tea or coffee", the Boss said smiling, "but anyway, people say you even enjoy whisky at day time?"

"In winter, when you exhale, smoke like thing comes out of your mouth but it does not mean you have fire burning in your stomach. The myopic vision sees demon in the cloud. I doubt; the global warming is more the result of the heat of jealousy that has gone up manifold in recent years."

"Is the room temperature here okay with you or should I ask the attendant to pep up the airconditioner knob", the Boss asked, smiling.

The editor understood there was no sense stretching the issue. He simply returned the smile. First time in hours, the general manager also did manage a grin.

As the coffee was served, all four waited for the Boss to start the conversation. Nobody wished to take the lead and face the first ire of the Boss.

"At the very outset, I want to make a few things very clear. Our media house is not part of a group of industries. We are not running this newspaper as a shield or pride for other sister concerns. You all know, we are only into media. It is why we have to be fitter and smarter to survive. Our profit motive has to be more aggressive than some other media houses. Our survival and growth depends on our profits alone as we do not have profits from other verticals to feed the newspaper. Now, life is tougher for us as we have twin swords hanging from both back and front. On the front, we have public to answer to as we have taken huge moneys from share market. On the back are our international partners as we have also availed foreign direct investment (FDI). We cannot take profitability casually. Twenty years back, when I joined my father in this business, profit was as unpredictable as monsoon but my father would sleep well. I cannot, though I can control profits better. But, this is how things are; we all have to breathe whatever the reality of ambient air is. However, this does not mean that profit is all that we should care. We sell a product which has social utility; we have an emotional connect with our customers. Profitability does not mean that we compromise on quality, especially the human quality. The excellence is not only confined to profit maximization; it is a way of seeing work as a commitment towards overall satisfaction. Am I making myself amply clear?" There was complete silence. All four were too apprehensive to say anything. Anyway, they were not sure to whom the Boss directed his words and what exactly he wanted.

Not that his sincerity was above doubt. Bad habit like an itch has its own inherent pleasure. The hierarchy system in work models has created such safe havens where any non-performing and stupid employee can breathe easy. One can pass the blame either on the boss or on the subordinates. Hierarchy ensures, success is nobody's sole prerogative and failure is nobody's individual problem. The public sector knows it better than private sector but, along the vast sea of private sector, there are beautiful beaches of hierarchical non-performance where all people, from a clerk to CEO enjoy the blue comfort. Nobody wants initiative in business as it will not only mean extra work, but worse than that, the added trouble of the hierarchy. One's work in any stage of the hierarchy means added share for all. The top people would never bother to take initiative because of the pain involved in taking along all his subordinates to be involved in this initiative. The hierarchy desiderates it. Even most competent and hard working top management guy would shiver at the idea of carrying the entire hierarchy on his own shoulders. That is why, top people devise such work patterns which either individualizes excellence or skips hierarchy problems. There are magician CEOs in industry who get astronomical pays for their individual excellence but if they are asked to ensure that their excellence gets broad-based, that is; the same excellence is reflected in the subordinate hierarchy, they will either quit or fail. The Boss knew it quite well that all four of his top and mid management guys were smart operators in their individual capacities but extremely poor as team people. None of the four had ever taken any initiative or interest in subordinate building. The Boss knew; he had a difficult task at hand. He knew it; the four were never going to be a team for achieving a collective goal, as they believed more on balance of power politics than the power of the balance.

The sales head would always be the one to break the silence.

"We do understand that we are facing difficult times. I have read that corporate biggies are slashing their advertising spends and GM sahib was telling us that our advertising revenue has fallen by 35 per cent because of the economic slowdown. This throws a challenge for all of us to put in place new structures for ensuring higher work efficiency and excellence; that too quickly after ascertaining the procedural or other bottlenecks."

"Pandey Ji, please leave the task of mouthing the management jargon to some

CEO of some big FMCG corporation. You better stick to your Marco Polo intelligence. It suits us better. What would Marco Polo say in these situations?"

"Blessed be his soul in heaven. Better, he died before the liberalization era and the globalization pains otherwise he could not even move out of his country...! Visas are so difficult today.

Anyway he would have been detained by FBI at some American airport. "

"And what would he say about our newspaper?"

"This is what I was telling Editor Saheb in the meeting we had just before we came here.

Newspaper is not only about first and last pages. Somehow, we have not been successful in

having good content in inside pages. The fizz is missing in our soft drink bottle; though like the

rival, our bottle is also full and same size, same price too."

"Editor Saheb does not drink soft drinks, he likes whisky and it has zing, no fizz", the owner

made a remark to hit the chord with the editor.

"It has the fizz...I do not take whisky with water like Pandey Ji, I take it with soda."

"Okay, Pandey Ji, if you are made the editor, what would you do to improve the content of

newspaper in these inside pages", the Boss asked.

"Sir, one can change his bed, it is easy, but one cannot change his bed partner, however

dissatisfied one is from both his life and wife", the editor intervened before the sales head could

speak.

"Editor Saheb, nobody is going to change even your bed sheet, let alone bed and bed partner. I

am not a content person anyway. Whatever I said about the newspaper content is not even as a

sales person but as a reader. As a reader I get bored. I may not complain but younger readers do

want freshness and fizz in the content. "

"It is only natural, everybody is. Are you not bored seeing the same wife every day and eating

the same dishes she makes, even when as a simple onlooker, I rate her most beautiful woman

after Meena Kumari and Madhubala", the editor said.

"Editor Saheb, no personal comments here, we are discussing newspaper.

Please stick to basic

things. Consider this as a valid complaint. What do you think is the reason about dull mid

pages?"

"I beg to differ. I do not think the complaint is valid. Editorial business is like digging up a well

daily to quench your thirst. The content quality cannot be expected to be standardized for all

thirty days of the month. We have threadbare team strength in the editorial after we were forced

to cut down on them. Someday, more people are either on off or leave, it

affects quality. It is easy for anyone to say that rival newspaper has more fizz in their content but things should be compared in totality. The general manager will be better aware that they have better fizz also in payment structure and team strength. The salt and pepper make the food better and a gift of diamond ring to wife makes the bed hotter...!"

"Oh ho...Editor Saheb, cannot you say anything without having to refer to either wife or the bed?

Pandey Ji, can you make out why he is so obsessed by the two things?"

"Sir, Marco Polo had once said something related to both these in 13th century itself...he had very sound opinion about them..."

"Yes...yes! I want to listen to that...historical prudence is evergreen solution."

"Marco Polo was a veritable genius. He had learnt four languages and traveled over 24,000 kilometers in 24 years of his travel all over Asia. He was a stupendous merchant having astute business sense. You can well understand how great he was as he could do profitable business even with Chinese people and made a huge fortune..."

"Pandey Ji, please come to the point straightaway...we know he was genius otherwise you would not have been his fan; that is for sure..."

"Okay. I am told, he had once confided to one of his friends that all his travels and business could make him learn a reality which is applicable to all humans across nations and society.

Most economic activities in this world originate from two sources- the bed and the bed partner.

History of mankind would not be same if these two were not in the reckoning. The bed and the wife are the source of all struggles in life. Men would go to war if they do not get comfortable

bed and comforting bed partners. I say it metaphorically; Editor Saheb understands it well. And, remember, the famous silk route Marco Polo traveled. Silk makes the best bed sheets. I have

been telling Editor Saheb that newspaper is also reached to readers when they are in bed. Also, wife's today decide which newspaper the family will read but he does not give enough content for wives. Let alone a diamond ring, he has never ever bought bangles for his wife. "

"Pandey Ji, it is then better that we close the newspaper and start making silk bed sheets", the editor said.

"Sorry, I am not going to close the newspaper. But, we are going to continue our efforts for qualitative changes in the newspaper so that overall work efficiency is improved. I suggest, you all call a general meeting of your respective departments shortly and

discuss an action plan

aimed at achieving the goal. You all should come up with your presentations and I will take the meeting next week."

The general manager was about to say something when the mobile phone of the owner rang up.

The Boss did not say anything and ended the call in a jiffy.

"The meeting is over, please follow my instruction and give me a date by tomorrow for the next

week meeting. And Editor Saheb, I want you here tomorrow 8 am sharp. We have an

appointment with the chief minister at 8.30 and I cannot afford to be late. I hope you understand

the importance of tomorrow meeting?"

The editor nodded in utter confusion. The Boss smiled at the bewilderment of the editor. The

editor had more in store as he would see Mayank with Boss the next day. He would be shocked

to see the chief minister being convinced and the Boss tell a big lie about the rival newspaper

editor with aplomb.

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CHAPTER 8

Utkarsh Singh had better compatibility with Mayank, though the two along with Ashish formed

the gang. He worked with a public sector bank and his life was slower and relaxed. He was back

in town and Mayank could not wait for an evening with him. Utkarsh was recently married and

his wife had immediately struck a chord with Mayank. Like all good and intelligent women, she

could feel the vibes in a man. She found Mayank a mother at heart and in very few encounters;

she looked up to him as her brother and a father-figure. He too would love to pamper her as she

had one big quality about her - she understood very well the preciousness of the innocence of

emotions and had beautiful ways of saying thanks, not with words but with her very expressive

body language.

The best part of it was her large eyes which flickered almost sixty times a minute. Even an idiot

could see the smile or pain in her eyes which were white as moon. Mayank had issued a warning

to Utkarsh that if any day, he would see even a single red strand in the immaculate white of her

eyes, he would get her divorced and marry her off to a man he would pick up for her. Utkarsh

had smiled at his threat and said he was confident that Mayank would not ever get his right man

for her and would finally return her to him.

She would be overwhelmed by the attention the two men in her life would shower on her. As the

two would fight friendly battles over her small joys, she would rush to the

kitchen, pick up five red chillies, waive them over the heads of her two men and burn them to ward off any evil which might cast its bad eye on them. She would walk in joy and pride and it would look as if she was dancing. Dance is a process of blossoming of love after the soul is fully soaked of it. She would be in a perpetual state of dance and like a ballerina, would walk in air. The two men knew, there was a force of love in their lives that would make life difficult for God, if it had anything planned against the two.

What Mayank appreciated most was her gracious poise which crowned her feminine charm.

Despite being in a very demanding and high-paid job, she clearly understood, money is not served on the dining table and bread and cheese are not kept in the jewelry box. She had the poise to ascertain the rightful place to her priorities. Reactionary practicality didn't fix her priorities. Womanhood is like a rose; the beauty is spontaneous and ubiquitous. She was feminism naturally unstructured.

Ashish was awaited. Mayank had come to Utkarsh's place even before he came back from office

and was helping her in the kitchen. Utkarsh knew Ashish would come late as he would go home

first, take his daily quota of whisky and then come to his place as he too, like Mayank did not

drink and did not allow any at his place.

"Guddi, I think we should not wait for Ashu and have our coffee. Anyway, he would not be

interested...you know that", Utkarsh said to his wife, who was still in the kitchen as he and

Mayank relaxed in the living room.

Guddi came out of the kitchen, looked up to Mayank for his approval and as he nodded, she went

in to ready the coffee.

Ashish entered the same time the coffee came. He avoided eye contact with Guddi and sat on the

sofa farthest from the kitchen. He had brought a huge can of pineapple juice for Guddi as it was

her favorite but pushed it in Mayank's hands to give it to her. Mayank dropped it on the center

table.

"Oye Guddi...look, Ashu has brought something for you...come here", he said in an apparent

attempt to put him in tight spot. He knew she would understand why he wanted her to come out

of the kitchen.

"Bhaiya (brother) ... a cop does not always have to take help of a sniffer dog to get the wind of a

crime", she said from the kitchen. "It only confirms that Ashu does not love me, or why would

he do something he knows I hate and then add to the guilt by avoiding me. " "Guddi, you know it is not true. I am sorry my little angel. I understand you get hurt. You are pained because you have known me only recently. What I can do, I am an idiot ever since my school days. A donkey is a donkey, even when age makes him a bit intelligent."

She emerged out of the kitchen and sniffed twice standing close to Ashish.

"How much..? Did you eat something before or are you empty stomach...?"

"Only small bit Guddi...less than the coffee in the cup...I swear."

She blinked her eyes a hundred times in protest, brought snacks from the kitchen and sat with

Mayank on the same sofa.

"Had his dad scolded Ashu like you, he too would have been a great soul", Utkarsh teased her.

"Yes, you are right, I would have been even better than Monku", Ashu joined him.

"Nobody can be like my brother", she said in a clear bid to end it as she did not like comparison of Mayank with anyone.

"And do you know what your dear brother has done?"

"Yes. I knew it from the day first that this job is no good for a person like him."

"Guddi, this resignation is just the tip of the iceberg. Your brother has declared a war against his editor and more than that, against the owner of the newspaper. He thinks he can change the world. The reality is, nothing will change but he will certainly be declared mad, already is".

Mayank smiled at Ashish's comments and pressed the hands of Guddi hinting her not to react.

Utkarsh was only happy that Ashu had put the talk on the right track. He too wished to know

what Monk had in his mind about his resignation and life ahead.

He knew Mayank never said anything in reaction and that's why he had to do something to give him a start.

"Somewhere, in a book by a very famous writer, I had read some lines", Utkarsh said. "I do not

remember it in the right sequence but what it meant to say is, every race, every art has its

hypocrisy. Every community, every nation has its own lie, which it calls its idealism. Every

creature therein breathes this lie from birth to death; lies are adapted to the mind of each race

and art. There are only a few men of genius who can break free from it through heroic moments

of crisis... It was also said that genius cannot be defined without touching the ridiculous... "

"Great! But I am not doing or trying to do anything with any foolishly self- important purpose of

changing anyone, let alone the whole world. Change is not person- induced proposition; it is

intrinsically environment- induced. Yes, a person at times can be a big

influence on environment

and that too will be decided by a particular environment. I am anyway a common man. "

"But Monku, we have had strong individuals in the history, who proved to be so powerful people

leaders that they could actually change the course of history. We are so fortunate that we were

born in the same century Gandhi Ji lived", Utkarsh prompted him.

"There is no denial that personality and character of strength of individual are great factors in

history but when it comes to becoming a powerful source of effecting change, the layer which

has to accept change becomes far more important. When Gandhi Ji came back to India from

South Africa, Indian people had already accepted him as their leader. He was rather bewildered

to see the type of welcome he received. Even later, he was a reluctant leader. He was led into

situations by people who expected change from him even at a time when he was not sure what to

do and how to approach the role he had landed into. But, even in situations where leadership was

thrust upon him, he would not do things which people wanted him. He would do what his

personal convictions called him to do. He would do things what he believed was morally right

and not something which was required to change things. Things would change sometimes that is

altogether the right coincidence but not always how he wished."

"You mean to say, Gandhi was an accidental hero; a leader by coincidence of sorts", Ashish said.

"Individual capacity has its limits Ashu...change is a big incident in history. I say it without

offence meant for anyone that leaders are only as good as the crowd which makes them one. The

same army which made Alexander a mighty conqueror also caused his doom. Often people now

say Gandhi Ji has lost relevance in contemporary India. Today, the Indians have different icons.

They expect different leadership, one which could bring about such changes that could make

their lives more comfortable. Leaders just fit into a role which a particular environment creates a

space for. Indians are now even changing their personal Gods, let alone their leaders. The crucial

thing to understand is that an individual can show what goodness is but it is effected only when

there is a favorable environment which ushers in people to accept and practice the goodness."

"And you believe that environment is not favorable for you and there is not much you can

contribute, so you have resigned", Ashish attached prompt rejoinder.

"Actually, if you could see things from a different perspective, I am doing my small bit of efforts

to create a favorable environment. However, it would be hypocrisy if I say I do not want to change quite a few things. But I know I cannot. I do feel very strongly about a few things and if I had a magical wand which could empower me to change the scenario in a jiffy, I would not take an extra second in doing it. But I know, even if I do it, it would not be sustained until a majority of people actually feel the importance and need of such changes.”

Guddi, who was listening to Mayank with rapt attention, looking all throughout in his eyes; rushed to the kitchen and came out with a large and shining silver spoon. She thrust it in the hands of Mayank and said, “Assume this as your magic wand and tell us what you want to do. The almighty above is listening to us and I am very sure, he will someday make your wish true. If he does not; he is not my God.”

Mayank had no words, nor the resource to pay back the goodness she showered on him. His eyes, as usual, would spill over the gratitude. Utkarsh could easily see the six oceans of compassion in his eyes and would envy his pride that he had a life partner who was still a billionaire of a wealth that God bequeaths to all humans at the time of their birth but they successfully squander in the long years they learn to live and actually live smartly. He closed his eyes in prayer of the almighty, thanking him for bestowing him such beautiful endowments like Guddi and Mayank, even as he joined his wife’s wish to make his friend’s wishes come true.

“There are endless wishes. Every time you step out of your house, every time you speak to someone, every time you start doing something, and a wish comes tumbling down. One life that we get is not enough for even one wish to get fulfilled, even when we devote all our energy and resources on it. Sometimes I really wonder; how God or nature could construct such a life mechanism on this earth which has so many loopholes and basic problems. You wish to do away with all of them. You actually have a tough decision to make; which one wish or desire you should consider as the most crucial, and more than that, which one desire you can actually contribute to and pursue to a fruitful end. You need to do a reality check on yourself.”

“Monku, let us not get bogged down by what we can do and what we cannot. A desire is independent of resource and capacity. A wish is important not because it is considered as first step of an attainment. It is because all wishes of heart, your pure emotions, are one of the most

beautiful things in life. Tell us about the one wish that you would desire to get fulfilled in your lifetime", Utkarsh prodded him.

"In my lifetime...! No..no, let us not see things this way. Anyway, it is said that success drifts away farther, the more you make effort to get it closer. I would rather pick my wish in terms of the larger good it involves for largest portion of humanity. Then, there is a second set of wishes which I have picked up on the basis of my own meaningful contribution to it; that is bringing about meaningful changes in media. My lifetime anyway is too miniscule a time frame for anything substantial to happen."

"Okay; ladies and gentlemen, we now present the first non-contributing wish of our good friend and future editor-in-chief of some unfortunate newspaper", Ashish announced, holding the silver spoon as a microphone.

"My first wish, when I was around 12, was that people around me could speak a language which should be respectable, decent, lovable and commensurate to the status humans enjoy in the intellectual hierarchy of creatures of the world. Later, when I could see the larger world, this wish became more broad-based. In all languages that we speak, there is so much abusive tongue; such crash overtones of sexuality and habitual use of bestiality. When I was a teenager, I could not understand why even dignified men of our society would speak such demeaning language. I am no expert but I feel; the language like most human creations has very loud and strong influence of sadomasochism in it. It definitely was a cruel world for early humans. The primeval definition of gain in terms of negation of loss influenced the concept of joys defined in terms of pains. Still, most humans think of pleasure in terms of lack of pains. The language which humans created and used in societal conversations naturally imbibed this primeval negativity. You will be shocked; even today, when the world is considered to be most civilized, even in high social spheres like corporate offices, they speak a language which is nothing but shameful. In my office, a media house, this is where language is bread and butter; even my editor and editorial colleagues would speak a language which they cannot speak in front of their mothers and sisters, even when they are drunk. It is very painful to see teenagers mouthing so much abusive and sexually embedded language. The growing liking among them and pride involved in mouthing slangs and cuss words of all languages only shockingly point at the ever-

increasing

sadomasochism even in contemporary times.

"You cannot blame we Indians for that Monku. The Americans, the acclaimed leader of world's

top civilized nations, speak far more slangs than us and the quotient of brat sexuality and

bestiality in the languages of their teenagers is many times more than us", Ashu said.

"That is why Ashu it is my first major wish. In today's highly connected world, people have

access to all cultures and they ape it fast, especially those whom we call our Generation Y. But

you must know that even the Americans have not lost the whole of it. The good people even in

America speak decent language. Rather, good people all over the globe speak dignified language.

The American society has lot many good things but what we ape is what we get exposed to;

through their many third-rated movies and most confused Hollywood and other pop icons. The

real America has lots of good things to make others in the world learn from them. It is not their

problem that we Indians or for that matter anyone else see and ape only the negatives of their

pop-culture, which is just one aspect of their brilliant society and economy.

"This is the worst problem USA faces today. America is being perceived and imaged by the

whole world through a media which so badly represents its socio-cultural reality. This bad

media, like all media anywhere in this world is interested in showing only the pop and grey

glamour of a minority chunk which do not truly represent America. This makes more enemies

for the country and creates confused friends," Utkarsh said.

"Confusion is the definitive reality of 21st century. One thing which defines all of us across the

globe is confusion", Ashish said making a face as serious as he could.

"You may be right Ashu but in India, out of this chaos and confusion, a beautiful and very

prospective energy is being engendered, which we can say gives us hopes for a better society and

culture. We are witnessing a great but very silent revolution in our society. Most revolutions are

boisterous, built in frenzy, hold oceans of negativity and that's why often demand huge amount

of human blood. The revolution, I am seeing as building in India is slow but full of strong intent

and it has little energy upfront but in the middle; a positive sign. If it rises above the negativity, it

has the potential of bringing about a sustained and major change in our society in the right

direction."

Guddi had gone in the kitchen and had brought the pineapple juice in large

glasses. Mayank

looked at her and asked her to sit by his side. He held her hand in his and rubbed it gently.

"Guddi, you and millions of women like you are the hope and future of India and in the entire

globe. This I say with complete sense of responsibility. I am happy and I see a great hope in the

strongly rooted trend among average Indian women who are definitively holding the potential for

a better society in future. Thankfully, it is not as fiercely reactive, as it was made to happen in

America and Europe. Secondly, it is not competing with men for space in their world of stupid

supremacy but building its own alternative identity. This will emerge in time as the basis of the

new social order in India and will have the goodness and power to change the stinking global

order built on men's hypocrisy and sadomasochism. Initially, it is tough for women to even

survive there. If a lady joins as a journalist in my office, she will face the same abusive and

sexually explicit language from all corners. She will have two options, first to accept the

language and start speaking it to compete with the men colleagues or she would fight a lonely

battle to make her colleagues and superior change their language and speak a respectable one, at

least when she is present. The good thing in India is that majority of women are struggling and

waging a lonely and quiet resolve to change things and make the place become suitable to their

ways of life. You can see it very clearly; Ashu would have never felt apologetic if Guddi too

would drink with him and us. Men would definitely change and they are changing fast as our

women, good and very intelligent women like Guddi are standing tall and making it count that

men would have to accept the order and rules which they cherish. And, what the real Indian

women cherish is our tested and very good lifestyle and life principles. I dream for a time, even

when I am dead long ago, when women of India would make their way of life and their

perception of life principles as the general rule of society, polity and economy. "

Guddi who was listening to what Mayank was saying with keen interest looked confused. She

could not fully understand what he said about the role of women in creating a better future which

Mayank saw coming. But she could know it for sure that Mayank reposed very high hopes on her

and women like her. She was very keen to know what woman like her was expected to

contribute.

"You said I and women like me hold future but if you ask me, I even don't know what good or bad I am doing and what I am supposed to do to make it count. I don't think this feminism thing in India even has an agenda?"

"There is a clear agenda Guddi; but you do not have to often think in terms of agenda. You do not even have to name it as feminism. This nomenclature itself is calamitous. All you have to do is to be a woman you are. Women have evolved in the long history of humanity as an alternative mode of life view. This alternative model is not born out of what women decide to achieve while competing for an equal space in the man's world. It is rather a simple manifestation of a woman's own alternative view on all things in life that affects humanity. Feminism is all about the very essence of the female portion of the nature. The good thing about the golden future of this model is that there is more good women in all good men of substance which they refuse to accept and there are shades of good men in all females which they do not know how to handle."

"And you said there is a clear agenda..."

"Oh yes, there is this agenda. We have the world divided between the burka and the bikini. The Indian challenge is to understand the inherent conflicts and characteristics of both; the strengths and weaknesses of both and then create benchmarks of our own variety of womanhood, which has strands of scientific modernism but useful Indian ethos is retained. Our women have to rise up, grow, empower themselves, but never forget that their strength and individuality is in being the women they are. They do not have to be like men and compete against men to get their rightful place in the men's world. Most that glitter in men's world is certainly not gold. The men's world view has not done a lot good to the humanity. If this alternative model becomes a competitive idea, it will only add up to the stupidity which the men's world has built up so magnificently. There is definitely no need for that. Enough is enough. The power of this new world order is in being different and an alternative to the men's ways. And this difference must traverse the path of tolerance and persuasiveness; never reactivity." Guddi still did not look convinced. It was clear that she wanted a simpler and direct interpretation of what Mayank was telling all about. Mayank could feel it but he could not help. He knew, like Guddi, most women globally perceived feminism as something big and complex and that's why they failed to accept that it is as simple and direct as

being a true woman.
Feminism is in being than in doing. All goodness is in being, not doing.
Women, used to
accepting the male world view of actionable accomplishments, are reluctant
to accept that
feminism is achieved just by doing nothing but being what they are.
Ashish was watching her face and his mischievous self grabbed a chance. He
never left a chance
to tease Guddi. He enjoyed when she would reproach him for that. He loved
the way she
commanded him and chided him to see the reason. Most men have this stupid
habit of deriving
pleasure from women that way. Men actually love being mothered and
commanded in a kiddish
way by their women till their last breath.
"Monku, I really think you are taking it quite far stretched than it really
fits the bill", Ashish said
in his usual matter of fact mannerism. "Okay, nice with your support and
favor for women and I
am saying this with lots of respect to Guddi and other women. But, I think
your theory of a world
order based on women-centric ideas as a successful alternative to the
current one, what you call
the male-order, looks quite long drawn one. I say it with the risk of
sounding stupid but I must
say that you are still young and in your age, most things look beautiful,
especially the women.
Your youthfulness, besotted with the attraction for the opposite gender
makes you see all things
beautiful in females and their priorities. All young men are feminists;
like all teenagers are
instinctively socialists...they have to be, do they have a choice? As you
would grow old, you
would yourself see lot of grey areas in the feminism, as most teenagers
turn capitalistic when
they grow up. Then it will cease to be your panacea".
"Ashu, Monk is not a teenager. He is very mature for his age. Anyway, 34 is
the age of reason.
You should rather put it this way; Monk is a beautiful person and that is
why he sees the beauty
in feminism and puts his money on it", Utkarsh intervened and looked
towards Guddi in an
apparent bid to win her good vibes.
"I think we were discussing an issue and there is no need for digressing to
personal references",
an irritated Guddi added as she could not bear any criticism aimed at
Mayank. "An issue is
always larger and greater than a person. So far as Bhaiya is concerned, the
truth is the other way
round. Women might have obsession about him but he is obsessed only with
goodness, even if it
is in a donkey, let alone women".
Mayank smiled at the child which he could see in Guddi, defending her
favorite toy. He knew

Ashish very well. He knew he intentionally said things to him to prod him say something which Ashish would remember and later tell those words to his colleagues, boasting that they were his own creations. He remembered Ashish had once told him, „You know Monku, I really love what you and Utkarsh talk about. I wish I could also talk like that but you know I cannot. I even do not understand many things you say but I really like the way you people can talk. Just listening to you, I get quotes which I use on my girl friends and bosses and they are invariably charmed by them?. Mayank never divulged this secret even to Utkarsh.

„Ashu, you have a reasonable query. I appreciate you. Nothing is stupidity if you do not accept it like that and instead treat it as a possible aspect of an issue. I would simply say that I see something more prominent and predominant in females compared to men and my preference for a female order over the contemporary male order emanates out of this. The women too have their own set of problems but overall, I see they are ruled more by compassion compared to passion which rules men folk. Things get different interpretation when treated with compassion instead of passion. Compassion discounts a lot of hypocrisy and that is why I have greater hope from compassion and the female order that promotes it. You consider this Ashu; a nation, which is the largest supplier of arms and ammunitions to the world, gets a death sentence for a person selling heroin. A civilized nation can sell arms to the world which kills thousands in perpetual wars and civil wars but the same nation hangs the sellers of drugs like heroin which is somehow a lesser killer. This hypocrisy is the product of a male order which has created the contemporary world order where such hypocrisy thrives. I know Ashu that your economics has smart justification for even this one. But I cannot see it happen if this is seen from the angle of compassion and not from the angle of passion, which so successfully defines national interest in the contemporary world order. I am doubly sure, if we have a female view point being decisive, such hypocrisy cannot be part of the world order.”

„I think Monk is right”, Utkarsh said. “Even I see quite a few things in our male order which I feel the world should be free of. The first and foremost is the indecency of language and overall behavior which Monk has already pointed out. I would add into the list all the intoxicants, the scary sense of sexuality of men folks, which Monku rightly said reactionary feminism is so

proud to ape and above all, the perpetuity of violence as a way of finding solutions to difficult problems. Monk has rightly used the term sadomasochism. I really think Monk is right when he says, females have better sense and utility of compassion whereas the men are guided more by passion, the passion of painful joys".

"So, let us come down to the core issue. Is this your wish that the women should now be handed over the reins of the world and then things will get okay for you", Ashish continued with his tirade.

"Guddi, get some sweets for Ashu, he is finally ready to hand over the reins to you even when he is aware that the first thing you will order is to ban the liquor for Ashu as you get the authority", Utkarsh quipped.

"It is not about the reins and the ruling. It is about what stays as the defining benchmark of all human endeavors. The important thing is that compassion alone should be the most predominant and deciding influence over every single initiative and action that humanity as a whole should consider worthwhile and that is why it is a wish. My advocacy for feminism is part of my wish to see this happen as I see compassion more on the side of women than men. I am not blind to the history. I know it well that earlier, even men had compassion in their side but they did not honor it. When the capitalism was at its worst best, the communism had compassion on their side. The communism was the hope and millions of people joined the revolution riding this hope. But they lost it. The rule and reins came to communism and it acted worse than the capitalism empires. It killed more compassion than capitalism could ever. I do not wish reins for feminism; it would rather do well without it. I just wish, the social order and the family systems should have greater compassion and this will happen when females sustain their distinct identity. The resultant feminism would automatically become the first choice, the instinctive benchmark of social and individual behavior and action. Feminism does not need the reins; it needs the love and appreciation of men. It just needs the realization by men that the best part of their own personalities is feminine. Men need to accept that they are at their best when influenced by a female; be it the mother, wife or a daughter. I am two hundred per cent sure; Ashu will quit both smoking and drinking if he gets a wife as good, intelligent and beautiful as Guddi. And this he will do out of love for his woman, not out of the force of authority which

is often associated with reins and rulings. I visualize the success of feminism as it does not attempt to rule. It creates an environment of trust and love which is conducive to an order where compassion thrives. And that is the true world for me. "

"Let us say amen to Monk's wish and pray that Ashu sees the light at the end of the day and gets married to a Guddi twin soon, if not for his own sake then for the sake of making Monk's wishes on feminism come true", Utkarsh declared sounding solemn but could not hold back a smile.

"Here I am bound to agree with Monk. If I get a wife like Guddi, I will surely do whatever she will ask me to do. That is what I have been telling to Guddi. We men are like dog; if you show us your teeth, we will bark and snap your flesh but even the fiercest dog will obey if you caress him with love and occasionally throw a useless piece of bone. And among dogs, you have breeds;

Monk is a sweet Pug and I am a nasty Bulldog. Then you have pedigree..."

"Sorry... I do not buy this idea Ashu, I do not like dogs", an irritated Guddi interrupted him.

"Even the most obedient dog will look for a pole and would refuse to go to a toilet even if Miss

Universe would kiss him on his stinking lips. Chhee...! How can you compare men with

dogs...My husband and my dear brother are better as men and I love them the way they

are...they are angels to me. Please let the dogs be what they are".

"Yes...yes...I know Guddi you do not want me to become a nice guy. But you don't know I

have already outsourced Monk the task of finding a girl like you for me.

And he has promised he would do it for me. I know you do not trust me but you will never doubt your brother's good intention, I know that."

"No...never...! I know my brother very well. He is a good man; he will never risk a girl's life.

Until you turn a gentleman, none of us will allow you to get married."

"Guddi, Ashu is sincerely trying to set his life on track but what he can do as his boss is not

leaving any moment free for him. Anyway he is not going to get married as he has no time for

the next ten years. We have already posted his profile on the portal meant for second marriages ",

Utkarsh added to the banter.

"God be with that woman and the portal...", Guddi shouted from kitchen as she readied to serve

the dinner.

Mayank was delighted. So were Utkarsh, Ashish and Guddi. They all cherished the fact that the

four had made the best out of the evening. It was not quite often that they

could meet and enjoy things together as the busy life offered very little time and space for such a free and careless evening. Mayank was happy for Ashu as he knew he had understood what intimacy of a woman really meant for a man. He knew despite all her repartee with Ashu, she will shower all care and attention to him as she knew Ashu was a bad eater. Ashu too loved being mothered by her and would turn a small baby when she will forcibly make him eat the stuff she had cooked. Utkarsh was happy that Mayank had done the right thing. He knew struggle makes a man and men like Mayank really thrived and excelled when faced with something which made them think and do what they thought was right. Ashu was the happiest. He was the most insecure of the four and an evening like this assured him that he had people in his life who would never leave him to drift as they knew better than him what was best for him. He ate like a baby. Slept on the sofa, resting his head on the lap of Monk, holding his hands to ensure he would not leave him come what may. Guddi would wake him up and tell him to sit steady as he would resist Guddi applying oil to his head. As she would comb his hair after massaging his head, Ashu would close his eyes as his manly pride would not allow him to show his moist eyes to Guddi and others. Guddi silently prayed that her men would remain the kids they were at heart; at least they were when with her.

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CHAPTER 9

It had been a perpetual struggle for him. His overriding sense of redundancy would present the advocacy for the futility of any exercise first up. Mayank was advised by many not to smother initiatives by his penchant for „over thinking?. „Do it and then regret is always better than regret not doing anything...most wonders of the world are accidental and almost all geniuses are first exercise towards stupidity?, a wellwisher had told him once. Mayank never believed in such pep talk. He knew it well that humanity had to face the dire consequences of hundreds of accidents before one of them could click as a wonder. The world bore the brunt of loads of stupidity before a miniscule portion of it could stand the test of a genius. One needs to be sure which was the larger evil; thoughtful inaction or un-thoughtful action. He would admit that his preference for former was born out of the fact that he was living in a world where over activity was destroying more than it was creating.

Creativity should ideally be fueled by reason and not necessarily by necessity. The contemporary age of necessity-driven creativity and activity had designed many geniuses which actually deserved the rightful nomenclature of stupidity. He believed in thoughtful inaction because of two simple reasons. First was his adherence to the conservation of energy theory which he had learnt to put to smart use from his favorite cricketer. It said, „when the ball is new in the morning session of the game, the bowler is fresh and full of energy and the morning humidity helps the ball to swing both ways; the opening batsman should keep a low profile and conserve his energies in saving his wicket, leaving the ball watching his off stump and avoiding flashy strokes. The batsman would surely have his time when the ball would turn old, the bright Sun would soak away the moisture and the bowler would tire?. Genius was not always in confronting the risks one up but in understanding and managing them well. Patience is a smart wife of a genius. Secondly, he knew it quite well that if one is not sure of the ends, however bright and noble the means be; it cannot be a justification for initiative. Good intentions ending up as bad inevitable and consequent regrets made poor history. Individual regrets get washed away by an innocuous sorry but the overall toll on the body of society is long lasting.

The meeting of the owner with the chief minister had gone well and as it was planned to be. A happy Boss had asked Mayank to mail him all issues which he believed were important for the betterment of the newspaper and the company's performance; or what he had in his heart. He had his flight the same day but he promised he would come next week and will discuss in detail all those issues which Mayank would mention in his mail.

The sense of futility of the exercise had consumed the whole evening and he could not write a single line as part of his mail to the owner. He slept the whole night allowing his sense of being to drift away. This was his usual practice to arrive at an objective and unattached mindset before launching on a new initiative. He woke up at 4 in the morning; swallowed a waft of morning breeze filling his lungs and assuring him of a sense of well-being. For him, being positive and being bereft of negativity had different meaning. The whole previous evening he felt the unease and could not write a word but the morning brought him the positivity which eluded him earlier.

He could find touch with his objectivity. He had begun to see things in its

largest possible perspective. One after one, thoughts came drifting in as he sat near the window, looking at the eastern horizon, where the Sun had heralded its ascent, beaming a radiant orange color in the sky just above where earth kissed the sky --

„We have drifted too far... so far that the vision of rational objectivity is blurred... truth?s reasonable veracity looks like well beyond average human?s sensory perceptions. Trust of human mind and soul too has its limits... mind and soul just cannot build trust around an idea or object which has lost its chastity and elemental originality way back in human evolution till date. Acquired knowledge, intuitive awareness and transcendental realism, all are bound to be expressed through a very restrictive pool of human-created words, in order to be relocated from one being to another. Words however are the failed media of intention-transference of humanity. Words are at best the most mediocre mode of human communication and at worst the first qualifier benchmark for humans to rise above animalism. Human languages anyway are not the first preference of individual self but a secondary compulsion of collective being and social living. The intellectual contradiction of the universe is that the capacity of human mind is currently amenable only for "known" realm whereas the most important intellectual acquisitions fall in the realms of "Unknown and Unknowable" - the former is still to be understood but can be known on a future date and later is to be realized but cannot be known.

„If human intellectual acquisitions and perceptual properties are attempted to be shared or bequeathed to others and especially the generation-next, one has to work his or her way around and circumvent this quintessential paradox of contemporary human wisdom. This can happen to a good extent... words can be a reasonably sound media and can carry a lot of true sense if one simple assumption is fulfilled. In contemporary state of affairs of humanity, one thing is for sure - you cannot teach anyone but anyone can learn! You can speak a lot but cannot be sure how little or what the other has actually listened. Human communication has a precarious absurdity. Transmission is no guarantee of equal reception and what finally lands at the end of reception may not always be what was transmitted. If someone is willing and has the necessary mental level, he or she can understand even with the help of the restrictive words from the human inventory. Even silence speaks better than thousand words. A good soul had

said, "If a husband and wife are in best of communication, they will mostly be silent. More they talk, less they communicate". All languages, other than what human mouth speaks, communicate better and breed less strife and negativity.?

Mayank smiled at his own tragedy. He was presented with an opportunity to communicate with a person who needed to understand him and his words in their true sense but Mayank knew he did not have anything favorable. What one has to say to other is like an aircraft and it has to land in the mind of the person for whom it is meant to be understood. The safe landing depends not only on pilot but also on the runway on the ground. If the plane is not provided with good runway facilities, the plane may never land or it would crashland.

He could not resist the sense of history creeping in his mind. He chuckled at the thought that when he would grow old and would have no strength and engagement left but to savor the reminiscence of his past life, he would only laugh at what would then certainly look like a huge stupidity. But he did not let his sense of history get control of him. He allowed the thoughts to come in --

„We must first understand what our capacity is as human beings to perceive and receive things. How can we say how this world is, what is the cosmic truth if we do not ascertain what our capacities are for understanding things. You can only understand what your sensory faculties allow you to and what your mind can process. Geniuses of the world admit that human brain is still not good enough to understand the larger questions of life and the cosmos. Though, the vast areas of human brain and its overall functioning are still to be understood, still, it can be safely accepted; human mind basically operates through images that it gathers through the most potent of human sensory faculty called eyes. That is why; it is an old human wisdom to believe as true only that which the eyes see. Mind is still evolving... it facilitates many functions for humans but what it seems to do is unleash a self-operative image-mixing as well as image interpolation and extrapolation...! There does not seem any rule and order for such image-mixing; rather it may depend on which particular image becomes lead input and which others become secondary and tertiary ones. This almost free-hand image-mixing of mind keeps most humans in a state of confused realism.

„It can also be believed that human brain is essentially status quoist.

This status quoism emanates out of the instinctive urge of human brain to preserve the body. Status quoism is a preservatory instinct. But the five senses incessantly feed the brain with new images and are truly the carriers of change. Naturally, the brain responds to them but it has the tendency to settle for a template with fixed spaces for different images, depending upon weight and importance assigned by the five senses, past antecedents and ambient culture. However, this process is not very simple and a human brain needs lots of leisure and time space in a stable environment to create a template after screening the inputs subjectively. Unfortunately, life has been so fast, leisure has become so rare and social milieu is so instable and wildly competitive that brain is in a continuous flux. Therefore, contemporary humans see lots of transitional templates which mind has not fully processed and stabilized as an objective template suitable for status quoism. What people call "wisdom" is essentially a well-processed template which brain marks as final for preserving (status quoist mode). What five senses feed to the brain constantly is just information. The partially-processed templates of human brain consisting mostly of information only and that too the contradictory ones, is the trouble of the contemporary generations. Human brain needs lots of leisure and by denying it to the brain; we have complicated things for us and the world we live in. The lack of leisure and stability has hit hard the very instinctive urge of preservation as the human brain gradually starts producing templates full of images of annihilation rather than preservation. The contemporary brain is probably creating such immature templates which send confused or wrong signals to the body, undermining its own judgment of well-being and preservation. Modern era has witnessed a major surge in accident related deaths, suicides and long-term annihilative lifestyle diseases and anomalies that lead to unnatural deaths. Mental problems and psychosomatic troubles are on the rise. For preservation and good growth human brain needs to create good and stable templates and store them. These templates human brain starts storing from an early age of 4-5. These first set of templates create a "benchmark" within human brain which are usually created within 12-14 years of human existence. These first set of templates in entirety form human conscience. Many people like to call it the "heart" or the "soul". To most humans, the heart and mind are two different perceptory

faculties. They seem to exist separately. Most people believe there is a soul within that is separate from human mind and it is detachable from human body. This soul or what most people perceive as a human consciousness above the body limits is this first set of "fully-processed templates" which works as a benchmark for all future template making and that's why looks like existing separate from brain.?

Mayank essentially was a man of his first conscience. He understood the social problems of being in a perpetual state of a 12-year old mind but he firmly believed his social personality as a 12-year old served him best. At least, it saved him of series of hypocrisy which he believed was the primary sin of humanity. He understood the risk of being labeled an emotional fool, an impractical person and worst as a self-styled martyr but he had the brave heart to rise above the criticism and adhere to his first conscience which so far had fetched him not much success in traditional sense of the term but immense satisfaction. He had decided quite early in his life that he would love to go to the grave with his hard-earned satisfaction and with a 12-year old conscience, whatever be his actual age. He had seen many people die before his eyes and had drawn confidence from the fact that all of them, who died at a ripe age, left for heaven as a 12-year old. He had naturally concluded that something, humans start and end with must be the superior intelligence. Innocence was what humans started and ended their lives with. Innocence naturally was the superior intelligence and he opted to remain with it, knowing very well that this superior intelligence was not profitable by societal definition; often painful but very satisfying. The communication between Mayank and the owner was a difficult one. His preference always was innocence of his first conscience but for the owner, innocence meant a great shortcoming and a definite burden for business. The templates of brains of the two were diametrically opposed. Naturally, a resultant gap created a huge breach of trust. Making a bridge of true and meaningful communication was very difficult. But, the communication had to happen. The challenge was not in making it a fruitful one (it was a non-starter even as an idea) but was in making it less catastrophic. He knew the owner was habituated to seeing any request or proposal of initiative in business terms; to be valued with an eye towards profitability of the enterprise.

The ROI (return of investment) syndrome had become a typical trait of most corporate personalities. He would be reluctant to accept changes which would mean taking risks to attain something not directly linked with profitability in the short run. He remembered; the sales head had told him after his resignation, „It is easy for you to risk your rupees 25 k job but very difficult for the Boss to risk his 250 crore empire for changes that you want him to accept?. The sales head had told him clearly, „So far as the boy stands first in his school exams, the parents are least bothered where he spends his nights?. He clearly hinted that as the newspaper was still in good profit, the owner would be least inclined to initiate any changes. Only crisis makes justification for changes. He had listened carefully to what sales head told him and even appreciated his viewpoint on the disposition of the owners. He even accepted it to be a reality with the Boss. He was now past his first dilemma and had entered a stage where the conflict was not about whether to say or not as he had decided to say irrespective of what fruitfulness it promised. The argument now was to decide what to say. There were lots of issues with media overall and print media in particular about which he would have loved to talk with the Boss. But he had good understanding of the fact that attention span of successful and big people was very short and if he loaded the Boss with too many problems, he would certainly believe that Mayank was a frustrated and insecure guy seeking undue attention and importance. The challenge was to pick up selected issues which could actually hit the interest zone of the Boss. He also had to keep an eye on the personality of the owner to ascertain which style of communication would serve his purpose. Mayank thought, he would be most pleased and the owner would have been best served if he could talk primarily about media in the cosmic and spiritual sense. If the Boss could understand the root issue, he would be spared of the trouble, time and energy to explain the trunk, branches and leaves. He believed; media needed to be understood in the broadest possible sense. The cosmos is the media; the life itself is the most potent media. The energy, which runs the cosmos, is a media. A media is never an end unto itself; it is just a means. Means empowers, it facilitates, and works as a catalyst for attainment of ends but it cannot be end in itself. And, that's why; all good media must have two prerequisites; purity and purpose. The chief

trouble with contemporary media is the chaos and confusion about the two. There is a tendency to get confused over what is typically associated with media - the objectivity! He had seen enough misuse of objectivity both in life and media he worked in. He had always been very categorical that objectivity is never the best practical benchmark for quality and utility. Objectivity, in its purest sense is near impossible. And if true objectivity is taken into consideration, it often lands things in a state of non-belief. The ideal benchmark, he believed was purity and purpose. Each human life is also a media and to understand the purity and purpose of media, one should also understand life. In human life also, there is complete chaos and confusion about role and purpose. The defining line between ends and means is blurred and confusion rules supreme when it comes to deciding things with utmost objectivity. It seemed to Mayank; the very intrinsic urge of every living cell for self-preservation along with this perceptual reality about a soul as something detachable from perishable body has created the templates of hell, heaven, other life and even moksha. Cosmic evolution is a huge astrophysical event-chain and one single human life is such a petty particle of this chain that it hardly matters. However, the primeval instinct of aping each other has now created a potent force and humans in a collective state of things are in a strong position to at least affect their own petty environment in the world called earth which in itself is like a small particle in the immensely colossal cosmic system. If viewed on the basis of complete objectivity; it is essentially a cosmic duty and real purpose of life for each human body to pass on the gene to the coming generation which is more evolved and better endowed (not necessarily the Darwinian way) than what one received from the past generation so that the cosmic evolution is powered positively. This process of healthy gene transference itself presupposes all goodness of humanity like, social peace and harmony, healthy family system, personal trust and care, good life & living with sufficient leisure, social equanimity, sound education, collective living, etc. The word "gene transference" as every human's "cosmic duty" and "purpose of life" sounds quite pedantic and too mechanical to be acceptable but then, objectively the truth looks like only this one. This objectivity however is so beautifully wrapped in a series of sensually appetizing follies, which

revealed souls have called
"Maya" that most average people would accept this as purpose of life. If we
say to a young man
that his purpose of life is transfer his best gene to next generation he
would term it abject
madness. But tell him that the real purpose of life is to attain social
peace and harmony, healthy
family system, personal trust and care, good life & living with sufficient
leisure, social
equanimity, sound education, collective living, etc; he would be impressed
and accept it. Many
others will gladly accept moksha as the purpose of life. Objectivity is for
evolved souls but
average people do not and cannot see things with such high objectivity. For
them, it is better that
things are interpreted in terms of purity and purpose. That is why, it is
said, „all objectivities are
not practically sensible and all subjectivities are not ultimately bad?.
Unfortunately, both for humanity and media; there is always a huge
confusion about means and
ends. Mayank remembered, a great writer had once said in one of his
stories, „most people spend
half their lives preparing for life...?. It was a real tragedy that even
today, three fourth of
humanity on earth spend their whole life fighting for survival. Of the rest
of a quarter, majority
waste their lives either stacking resources for good life or indulging in
resourcefulness and
abundance. The media has similar fate; either struggling for survival or
indulging in insurance of
abundance. Mayank was part of a media which had no issues of survival. His
newspaper group
was a large empire; the venture was sitting pretty on a profitability
position and had a long
secure future. Its marketing instincts and team were both perfectly geared
up for any corporate
struggle to keep notching up higher profitability benchmarks every year.
The media in India
anyway was having a good time as literacy and purchasing power were growing
much higher
than the population growth rate. The overall economy parameters were all in
reasonably good
health and there was no panic, some cautions apart. This, Mayank felt was
the right time for
media, especially his own newspaper to think of the purity and purpose.
He did not think changes were always risky. Even if it were, many media
houses had enough
resource to take the risks but they were not taking it because of lack of
knowledge and not
because of the reluctance to take risks. The content of all media needed to
be reviewed in the
light of the new purpose which a vast set of changes had brought forward.
Most media
leaderships and owners actually did not truly understand the changes that

pervaded India and therefore he felt there were little initiatives taken in right direction. The trouble, as he visualized, with most in media was truly representative of the average person's psyche. People in general are mostly reactive to situations and not proactive and this was since ages. Civilizations that excelled depended on proactive thinking. The proactive thinking, which necessitates beforehand initiatives, involves risks. Proactiveness usually emerges when there is a calculated risk taking to attain an end which may not seem a probable reality in present but a highly possible yes in near or distant future. Reaction on the other hand creates initiatives mostly for handling current crisis to check damage to a contemporary position. Reaction is for retaining what is there but proactiveness is for attaining which should ideally be there.

Any big leap forward of humanity impacts every human life in some way or other. Nations, civil societies, families and individuals get affected but how and how much depends on lot of factors. Mayank had known, through his knowledge of history that all major developments in the world had three things in common. First, most of these developments were very good-intentioned and originated out of the long struggle or deep pain of humanity to make the world a better place to live. Second, it is a real curse that only a small group of people initiated actions over good ideas but they seldom penetrated and reached to the mass levels. Mayank being a man from media had learnt a hard lesson that all goodness started with a minority voice and needed support from all possible media to reach the masses to ascertain authentication from the majority. He regretted that most goodness in the past had either got a bad media or no media. The „no media? was not as perilous as the „bad media?. He learnt the sad reality that in the long history of civilized nations and civil society, the media of their times failed to rise up to occasion and chiefly because the leaders of media were themselves very poorly knowledgeable and aware. The end result was low or unfocused people participation to support the goodness. The third and important thing was the natural corollary of the second. As the goodness could not assure involvement and participation of the majority, a small group of unscrupulous people very cleverly entered the scene as middlemen and usurped the benefits in connivance with the authorities entrusted with the task of delivery of the goodness. Here too, he felt, historically, media failed in

its role to preempt and prevent such unwanted usurpation. Rather, in most cases, media and its leaders proved hand in glove with the pilferage mechanism and enjoyed undue heavens. He realized the importance of two prerequisites for the success of any goodness that was initiated for general well-being of humanity. First and foremost was a very aware and proactive media and secondly, a well-oiled regulatory mechanism for fast and steady penetration and reach to the masses as well as the insurance that goodness reached in the right and avowed shape and size. Human ingenuity for pilferage was instinctive; it cannot be completely done away with. It has been said hundreds of years back by a wise man, „nobody can understand and check when a fish drinks water while swimming in water?. Self is an undeniable reality and selfishness is also very natural. It comes out of the genetically designed urge for self-preservation of any living cell. The nobility of human selfishness is however a social product. The fear or care for social approval and reprimand decides the intensity of inclination of selfishness to indulge in ingenuity of pilferage. The basic fear is the fear of majority and the only potent check on human ingenuity. Human beings are social creatures by nature and what they really dread is not hell or law of the land but complete isolation from the society. That is why; the only successful insurance for success of any goodness is the acceptance of majority. Corruption could not be successfully checked in most nations as our society in general not only approved of it, rather also encouraged it. We made the rich our icons eulogizing how he pilfered the whole system. Still, when the father of a bride goes for marrying his daughter to a suitable guy, the father of the groom proudly says, „my son is in government service...has orderlies to do all the work...has little work in office and most of the time he is at home...the salary you know is not much but has great scope for other income?. The father of the bride is too happy. Not for a single moment he thinks that he should not marry his daughter to a man who considers no work as a virtue and boasts of his illegal wealth making skills. The father of groom is anyway too proud to have such a son! Mayank only wished, he could tell all these things to his Boss and he could really understand them so that he would allow his newspaper to become a potent and proactive vehicle of reaching the myriad face of socio-cultural evolution to the masses. He firmly believed that loads of

scientific advancements had taken place and some very good- intentioned people were evolving a new thinking, based on holistic, assimilative and integrative wisdom of old and new for making the globe a peaceful and prosperous place to live for billions of people. But, he was sure human ingenuity had not spared the goodness of the new thinking trends and that is why he was very eager that it gets a proactive and good media to work on the archetypal thinking and attitudes of average and common people. After much deliberation, Mayank decided against it. He repeated to himself, „all goodness has to be practical?. He understood; the owner would have neither the time nor the inclination to listen to things in details. Anyway, even if he would listen, at the end of it he would ask him, „so, what you expect me to do?? He knew it well that the Boss, like all successful people considered thinking and analyzing as sheer wastage of time and energy. They believe in action and that?s why Mayank decided it would be appropriate if he simply told the Boss what action needed to be taken. It was up to his genius to devise an action plan that would contain remedies of all outstanding problems of media in general. He decided and zeroed on one thing that would have such linkages that it would touch the whole spectrum of issues. He picked up his laptop and started writing the mail to the Boss:

Dear Sir,

As I begin to tell you what changes I expect in the place I work, I am forewarned of the peril of the exercise. It is bound to have references of some senior people in our newspaper and the changes which I talk of may look like putting them in a position of disadvantage. At the very outset, I earnestly wish to say that my stand is purely professional, involving no personal biases as I believe, issues are more important than persons. Media is a strangely specialized field of activity. The work process may not need specialized learning but the profession of media requires a special mindset, aptitude and attitude. It is believed that eligibility and qualification are two different things. In media today, especially in print media, there are more eligible people than the qualified one. Then, qualification and excellence are also two different notions. There are some professions in which only excellence is required as the very sensitivity of the job and responsibilities towards nation demands nothing short of excellence. Like Army. Media is also a profession like Army. It needs special aptitude, a

different propensity towards work. All people, who enjoy royalty and love their nation, cannot join Army. The Army has a very well-designed aptitude test mechanism to pick up the right people with mindsets and aptitude well inclined for a position in the Army. After that, it has a very tough and focused training module which ensures that not only eligible and qualified but excellent people join the ranks before they are part of the very important work of national security. Tragically enough, media has the worst recruitment process in the industry and that is why, media, especially print media has the worst human resource, highly ineligible, let alone qualified and excellent. Worse off, there is no training module in place of whatsoever nature, to ensure a semblance of sanity to the human resource management. In our newspaper too, the biggest crisis is that of human resource. It would be improper of me to point out the grey areas in our team, especially in the editorial team. It is ideal for you to personally do the reality check. I would however like to register my sincere protest to the fact that in our newspaper, there are four eligibility criteria for recruitment - relatives, personal loyalty, political/bureaucratic connectivity and dubious antecedents. And all should come at a cheap rate. Naturally, it happens with active support of the department heads. So, we make a team of people who have nothing to do with content and media; all they care to do is keep the editor and other bosses in good humor by extending personal loyalty to them. The leaders are well served. Life is smooth. The crisis however starts when owners demand quality. The hypocrisy is; owners want a newspaper for class people; those who have the money and means. The advertisers also want the same. But the team that most newspapers have is good enough to do only the press conferences and day's events. They do not have the qualification or the training to produce quality content for class readership. India is witnessing great many changes at different levels. It is brimming with potential for both smartness as well as stupidity. The new is fast replacing the old and established Indian morality and identities are in for a toss. Where and which way things will finally settle is open only to guess. Media, especially the print media is in for a historical role of being the smart moderator of all these changes to ensure future generations are handed over a new India which has the ideal

amalgam of the best of both tradition and modernity.

The human resource we have in our media is completely out of sync with times and badly misfit

for the historical role they are entrusted with. Our team needs complete overhaul. Naturally, the renaissance in human resource will necessitate top level changes. I know that would not be easy.

There will also be need of continuous training of journalists and that will be more difficult as

journalists today have no other possession but their inflated egos. And, despite that, they are still pampered.

Somebody said, „I have heard that life in love is difficult...better it is that we do something easy?.

We may also say the same. When quality is so difficult a proposition, why not do something

easy! But then, love is what humans should always be in; life without love is a long road to

drudgery. Quality and excellence is what media should always be identified with; so is our

historical duty!

I insist, creativity should not be decided by necessity but by reason. What I propose may not

seem necessary to you, at least at this point of time but this is what reason beckons us to do.

It is always said, „morning starts when you wake up?. This is immaculate artistry of the

hypocrite. Morning always starts at an appointed time, we sleep or are awake is our sole

discretion. The bigger reality is; the day also ends at the fixed time, whenever we wake up in the

morning!

Yours sincerely,

Mayank Mishra.

**

CHAPTER 10

They finally met. Mayank had to postpone his proposed encounter with her earlier. Sunday was

usually a working day for him and he narrated all past event chain to her to explain why he was

free even on Sunday and had suddenly landed at her flat to be with her. He was expecting some

trouble but not what came his way.

“This is not fair...you cheated me...”, she said smiling. “I had planned to leave my job this

month and you grabbed the joy for yourself first. Selfishness...utter opportunism!”

He smiled and asked, “Why would you quit?”

“You remember, once you had told me something about non-violence. You had said that nonviolence

essentially had to be ingrained in thought and violence of action would automatically

get checked.”

“Yes, you are right. Violence of action is only a miniscule proportion of

the overall human violence as violence of thought fills up the major part. That is why I said, violence should be checked in its inception itself and non-violence of thought does it quite well."

"Exactly...and then you had added that the best way to ensure non-violence of thought is to be physically out of the place and environment where you feel your true personality is not at peace."

Yes, I had said that but if you are strong enough, you do not need to be physically out; just moving mentally away from the place can do."

"I have in mind the same thing and so, I want to quit."

"Is there no way out?"

"Does not look like...you know; stupidity is a highly contagious disease and there is only prevention, no cure for it. Keep safe and sufficient distance from stupid is the only way out to avoid being inflicted with the dreaded disease called stupidity."

"But you also have to be sure there is a real threat of the disease lurking on the head. Most of the times, there is a panic reaction and that makes even an innocuous threat look bigger. Usually, primary stage stupidity, like most communicable diseases can be quarantined to prevent its spread."

"May be; but I also had something more important in my mind."

"And what is that?"

"I will tell you later. Let us not talk about it. Mine would happen but yours has already happened. What made you quit?"

"We have the whole of evening and night; I will tell you everything but not right now."

"Then let us sleep together", she exclaimed in joy, reverting to her usual baby-disposition, wrapping her around him.

"Nobody is sleeping tonight", he said in serious tone. "We have things to talk."

"But I want to sleep with you", she complained like a kid.

"I make coffee for you; it will douse your sleep."

"I don't want coffee...I want you", she said sulking.

He gave her a resolute look; pulled her close, made her ride his back and entered the kitchen to make coffee. She remained tightly tied to his back all the while he made coffee and acted as if she was fast asleep. He softly dumped her on the sofa and placed the cups on the table in front.

She continued to feign sleep as he sipped his coffee alone.

"Once upon a time, there was a king", Mayank said without looking at her as she continued to

remain motionless on the sofa. "The king had only a daughter and she was famous for her beauty in all neighborhood kingdoms. The young princess was not only beautiful but also a very goodhearted

lady whom everyone loved. Once, she was in the royal orchards playing with flowers, birds and small animals who all enjoyed her company. The day progressed and when she slept on the grass-bed under a tree, she could not remember. Incidentally, the devil of the jungle passed by her and out of jealousy, he decided to play a trick with her. He stole the expression of the princess. She returned to the palace with an expressionless face and mannerisms. She looked like a statue. She did not smile, showed no emotions and did everything quite mechanically. The king got to know of the developments and called the doctors. Later, magicians, tricksters, clowns, saints and every type of experts were called but nobody could help. The panicky king tried to marry her off expecting some change after marriage but all the princes who came after getting the invitation refused to marry her. Nobody wanted a wife who was literally a statue. The king was sad and the entire kingdom was doomed."

He paused for a while as he realized that she had shuffled her position on the sofa. He continued, "One day, a tantric came to the palace seeking alms. He asked the king what was wrong as the king looked in poor health. The king narrated his woes. The tantric urged the king to take him to the royal orchard. The tantric immediately understood what had happened and he used his power to invoke the devil of the woods. The devil appeared and the king fell on his feet imploring him to forgive his daughter. The devil relented but put a condition. He said he would take back his curse and the princess would come back to her normal self but in return he would take away something from her. The king happily asked what he would like to take away as he was ready to even give him the entire kingdom for her daughter's smile. The devil said he would take away her beauty and give back her expressions. The king was shocked. He was very proud of her daughter's beauty and could not imagine how she would react if her beauty is taken away. The devil was adamant and the king was very unsure what he should do. The devil gave the king a day's time to decide and disappeared. The devil also warned the king that if he shared what had happened there with anyone else, he would be dead."

She had opened her eyes and had started sipping coffee, listening carefully what he was saying. She looked anxious and quite interested in the story. "So, what the king decided? What happened to the princess?" Mayank did not reply. He picked up the empty cups and took them to the kitchen. She followed

him there. Mayank washed the cups silently, put them in place and entered the bed room while she followed him. He stretched himself on the bed facing her. She waited for him to resume the story but he kept quite. After a while, she moved out of the room, checked the main door to ensure it was properly locked, put off lights of all the rooms. It was already dark outside. She switched off her mobile phone and sneaked into the bathroom. He felt overwhelmed by a sudden touch of silk and sandal. She was on top of him; her body still moist and cool. Drops of fragrant water from her wet hair lashed his face as she kissed him softly on the lips. "Sorry", she kept her lips locked with him and said. It was dark. Her long black tresses covering his face anyway made him blind to any reality outside! ...Love and total intimacy is so complete, so absolute. When love comes your way, you do not want more of it; you just want the infinity of it. Love is so fulfilling, so perfect that you cannot want more of it...there cannot be more of it as love does not come in half measures. You do not even want to be a lover; you just desire that you become love itself, dissolve your being into it to become it and not do it. A strange idea revisited him whenever he realized he ceased to be a lover and become love itself. He wished to die the moment he turned the love. He did not want an identity other than love and wished he died that moment so that he could enter the eternity of love. Only love made death beautiful and acceptable... The darkness was perfect. His identity, her personality and the sorry were all dissolved into the darkness. The whole universe, the realism and the being-ness, all melted into love. She showered a hundred kisses on him. The weight of the mass of physicality of intimacy brought back the connect with the actual world to him. He for a moment thought, „love is so consummate and ultimate; does it leave any space for anything more? Why does he want to add more to it? Why he insists to make personality changes in her? Why would he risk giving shape to the formlessness of love? Will he be able to control the eventuality? What if he actually loses love in an attempt to make it more meaningful?? That?s why he was there; to find answers. He kissed her back, hugged her tightly till she let out a sigh. He was sure, if he had to make her listen to what he had decided to tell her, he had to do it with overdose of intimacy. She needed to be highly emotionally secure if he wanted her to accept changes in her. She

felt the confidence

after a while and repeated her question:

"Won't you tell me what the king decided about the princess and what happened to her finally?"

"The story has no specific end. It is just a possibility; like life. What the king will choose the princess? fate would depend on and the story will end that way. And this is life; the predicament, the conflict and the discretion. Anyone can be in the king's place. And there can be people like the princess; none of her fault but she had to be at the center of all tribulations of life."

"But the king should know what is best for the princess; after all he is a father and a king too. On his prudence and right discretion depends the fortunes of millions of citizens of his kingdom! If fathers ain't good enough to protect the best interests of their daughters, it is truly tragic."

"You should consider the fact that all good people may not take all right decisions. An important decision is usually taken after consultations and the kings are used to it. But the devil has forbidden him to share his trouble to anyone. He only has the tantric to consult."

"Oh yes...I really forgot that. So what the tantric thought was the right thing to do?"

"What you think is the right thing to do?"

"Why me? This is not fair! It is your story; you should know better."

"Forget the story. If you have to choose for yourself, what you would want; the beauty or the expressions?"

She kept quiet for a minute and said smiling, "Why should I decide? It is for you to decide. I will love you whatever and however I am. You decide which way you would want me and still love me."

He could not resist a smile. He knew she would throw the onus on him. And what she said was also true. She only understood love and intimacy. All other realities were entrusted to him.

"Can I decide for you, should I", he said in a low solemn voice, gently laying her beside him but continuing her in his soft embrace. "It's something that primarily affects you and your entire life.

And you will be deeply influenced by it. Things at stake are not trifle. The beauty is not only for mirror, it is for you first and then for the entire world. And expressions...it is as important as breathing."

"You are right there but why should only girls be troubled with all things in life. You said the princess was also very good hearted and she did nothing wrong to deserve this punishment from the devil. She was actually in deep slumber when her world came crashing on

her feet and she could not even realize why. Did she deserve to face all these troubles?" "That is why I told you earlier; this is life; full of uncertainties, some time golden but often black. Then; you should also consider carefully the details of the story. The girl in question is a princess and she also happens to be phenomenally beautiful; three best endowments of life - wealth & comfort, authority & status and beauty & fame. And why do you think there is a devil in this world. The devil is out there to level out things; set off a balance of sorts. This world has love, intimacy, care, compassion etc as golden uncertainties and in the same space jealousy, anger, pride, selfishness etc as black certainties also exist. One human body possesses them all simultaneously. Well; this is a story and that's why for convenience and brevity, the devil has been personified as some outside entity but usually, it is the devil inside that starts the trouble. And as you said, even if you do not make a mistake, the devil inside you creates such environment that a harm looks like an external creation. The devil in the story is just a symbol. May be, the princess had taken undue pride of her possessions, anybody can; such enormous were the possessions and may be over a period had turned herself away from the world outside. Probably, her pride made her loose contact with people and she ultimately lost her expressions. May be; the many princes, who came to see her after the king invited them to marry her, had earlier felt insulted by her behavior of exclusivity and when they saw her in such trouble, they felt great joy in refusing her." She did not say a word. Looked at him for a while; her lips quivered as if she wished to say something. Tears lined up on the margins of her eyes. He could not see it in the darkness and realized that she was in tears only when the first drop fell on his cheek. "Oh god...! Why should you weep? What happened?" She did not reply and gently freeing herself from his embrace went inside the bathroom. He smiled, as if he knew it was coming. He took the opportunity, went to the kitchen to get some food for her. He had brought some cheese sandwiches which he had himself made at home as she liked them. He warmed them in the microwave oven and came back to the bedroom to find her sitting on the bed. He did not light the room. He sat beside her. Made her eat with his hands but she would not eat. He knew what it took to make her happy. He placed a pillow on her lap and rested his head on it,

stretching on the bed. He kept the plate of sandwiches on his chest. He could see her face even in the darkness. He could read the thoughts that were marking their impression on her face.

"Darkness is so good. It makes both beauty and expressions redundant. In the darkness, all issues of life lose their existence; no questions and so no answers. I am in your lap but even then I cannot see either your beauty or your expressions. But still, I am the happiest man in the world now as I love you and I do not need to see it; I feel love and want to continue with the feeling alone. And, they say love is blind; darkness anyway. So, do I want beauty or expressions?"

That was enough! She picked up a sandwich and took a bite. She munched it a bit and then as was usual with her, she joined her lips with him and put the whole morsel in his mouth. In their relationship, they had created an alternative language which alone could communicate the highest and purest forms of emotions, affection and care. This was the language of intimacy. This was the language powered by vibes and it could not be faked. When he would hug her close and the two bodies melted to lose both their physical and mental identities, dishonesty and hypocrisy were squeezed out. The lips locked together would immediately know any miniscule element of fakeness. The body knows the last truth. The baby stops crying as the mother suffocates all doubts by hugging him close to her bosoms. This language takes off where the humanly created words fail to communicate.

"Won't you want to know what the king finally decided", he said as they finished sandwich.

"No...but I want to know what you wanted to talk about. I am a silly girl and you know that well.

I felt bad as I thought you were not telling me straight forward, something you wanted to. It's not your fault however. You had told me that you wanted to talk but my stupidity made you do it.

But I had said sorry to you."

"Yeah...it stretched a bit too far. It was not intended. Sorry."

"Remember, you yourself say, „lovers should not speak, love should?, she said innocently.

He wished to say to her that it was his love for her that was prompting him to speak but he chose

not to say. He needed to guide her to a condition where it would be easy for her to listen what he

had in his mind. Speaking is a waste until there is complete desire to listen. Intimacy makes one

receptive. It creates a trust that is a must for right reception of what is said.

"Okay, let the love speak...and how would that be?"

"That's what I've been telling you...", she was back to her guiltless best. "Let us sleep together... my lips and your lips will say hello hi to each other...our eyes will say something something to one another... our hearts will meet and pick up a chat...our tummies will kiss each other and discuss recipes...our legs will cross and talk about the journeys ahead...and..."

"And what...?"

"What...! It's their choice...", a tweak of her impish tongue was palpable.

"What love will do to us how can I say...love is unfettered...when love speaks, how long and how far it will go how can I know...!"

"Okay...no problems...and when will we talk?"

"Naturally, when love will finish its talk...! And who knows, there may not be then any need of we talking."

He understood well there was no scope for words. He resigned to her desires. The darkness that she had opted had a light leading them to a definite end. He could see the end but was not sure of the journey ahead after they both reached there. He had realized that there was a clear gender divide on approaching things. Intimate and meaningful communication would give him a definite high. He would go an extra mile in reaching out solutions. He would discuss issues, analyze all possible aspects and lay out the reason and logic for to be or not to be questions. His satisfaction doubled at the sense of success of a communication enterprise even when it did not yield desired results. For her, immaculate sense of well-being was the only worthy enterprise and an explicit overdose of intimacy was the best prescription. Men would be at their best when faced with a challenge and women would be when love and intimacy abound. It is truly tragic that men's enterprises would often lead to situations which would destruct the sense of well-being of their women.

He for sure did not want to disturb her intimacy quotient but he had his doubts. His woman was perfect for this stage of their intimacy but he was always very unsure whether she would

understand that everything in this world changes as part of a certain evolution mechanism. She would be required to evolve herself, her love and her sense of intimacy as they would grow

together in time and space. He wanted a talk. He wished to acquaint her with the challenges that he could see ahead in their relationship. He never was really prepared to lose even a tiny bit of the fragrance and sweetness of their relationship even ten twenty years

down the line. He had seen most of the couples just dragging their relationship. Most stuck to it as parting ways was inconvenient proposition. He would admit he was scared. He felt a happy and meaningful relationship; especially husband-wife was a huge enterprise. Nothing in it should be taken for granted. It needed immense and daily physical as well as mental investment, very cautious emotional nurturing and great intuition to keep the relationship fresh and tender.

Man and woman together can create a universe of joys. He had little doubt that the two were designed and had evolved in such a way that together, the complementary energies of man and woman had all that was required to be in infinite state of ecstasy. When the energies of intimacy and love would either lose their purity or would fizzle out, matter would start filling up the empty spaces between man and woman. The pelf, the position the pronouncements of material well-being are all just the subterfuge of intimacy. In his journalistic career, he had closely witnessed the lives of big and mighty of the society. A journalist often has information and knowledge which are not printable but they give him a deep insight into the minds of people high and low. Mighty and iconic politicians, corporate colossus, spiritual gurus, media barons, film stars ruling million hearts...he had seen them all from close quarters. He firmly believed; all enterprises of men in their purest form were exercises towards attaining intimacies. It is a great humor of life that men actually believe that more they attain material accomplishments of life; better eligible they are for larger intimacies. It is enormous tragedy that men waste the best of their abilities and creativity in amassing material success to buy intimacies; which essentially comes naturally and free of material cost. And, if endowments of intimacies come at a cost, they are not true ones; unfit for an enterprise worth a salt.

Yes...many successful men would boast of savoring the taste of selective and delectable recipes of beautiful intimacies. Being in media, he would be bored by the favorite time pass of his colleagues discussing with lots of masala the intimate lives and antics of politicians, bureaucrats and even their own bosses. He remained least interested as this he considered as nothing compared to the harems of the mighty of the past and even present. The harems are actually living proof of one of the greatest travesties of men's world. The mighty man picked up horses

from far off places; of great breeds and pedigrees. His royal stable symbolized his power but the horses actually fought magnificent battles and many died while saving lives of their masters. They also raised large harems and exceptionally beautiful women from all over the places would be forcibly housed in them. They also symbolized the power of the king but unlike horses, the women in the harems did not perform the roles they were naturally endowed with. The kings would possess and relish the volume and mass of intimacy but not the energy and fragrance of intimacy. The mighty consumed excess of the body of intimacy but not a bit of its soul. And that's why; he was never satisfied with the size of his harem. He would add more women and lose more pride. The men would go to lots of women to find something that a woman is enough to give but would never get that one woman. The harem is the mortuary of intimacies but the mighty would not admit it. He knew it quite well that most men have the ultimate dream to be like a king and possess such a harem. The common man keeps his harem in his heart; the successful and mighty get the chance to descend it from their hearts to their chosen bed. Only a few mighty men fail the chance. He remained on the bed and his mind was racing up with thoughts. He understood it well that he was not in tandem with the beauty of the time in present but was messed up with a time that was yet to come. He even tried to stop being apprehensive and drift along the present which was so blissful but his mind would not partner with him. But he did not know; he was making a cardinal mistake. He was seeing reality from his own viewpoint and taking that of her as granted. She had equal stakes in his reality and what she had in her mind, what she had kept in abeyance to shock him, he could not even have an inkling of. She was in the kitchen readying dinner before she said „love would start speaking?. He waited on the bed. Time waited too; so did his destiny. All beautiful and important attainments of life happen in a semi-conscious state of mind. The mind cannot recall them in vivid details. There would be just a ghost feeling...one would remember he or she was there when that happened to him or her but what exactly happened, the mind does not register it. The ultimate in love and intimacy happens in semi-conscious state of mind. God happens in semi-conscious state. Life happens and death happens in the same state of mind. Bodies are needed for the initiation but the attainment comes with

bodies becoming
redundant. Hands are needed for prayers to start but when godliness
happens, prayer withers
away. Bodies set up sex but orgasm ensures; the mass of flesh melts into
energy.

He tried in vain to relive the moments that he had with her an hour back
but all he could recollect
was a feeling that he was there. He still lived the profoundness of the
bliss of togetherness but
could not recall in vivid details what had happened. She had fixed the
dinner and gone to the
bathroom; that he had seen. She had called him from there wanting some
help. The door of
bathroom was ajar but still he had asked her if he could come in. She had
asked him in. The light
was not on but it was not completely dark. Some feeble radiance from
outside light made him see
things. She was sitting beneath the shower, on the floor. After few
seconds, when his eyes got
adjusted to the dim light, he could see more than the outlines of her body.
He could see
clearly... he shedding lots of the weight of unnecessary carriages of his
personality; his male
ego, his self doubts...and his natural awkwardness with his own body. He
could see entirely new
dimensions...

He had realized quite early in his life that the one single fact of life
which presents itself to all
humans as greatest enemy and which every human has to befriend is not
greed, not ego, not pride
but fear. He had read the religious scriptures and had realized that all
rational men and men of
genius sought only one thing from God. They called the almighty - bhav bhay
niwarak -
solution provider to the fears of the world and prayed him to make humans
understand fear and
make fear his best friend. He accepted this as a certain sign of inferior
intelligence of men as
compared to the women. Females never seek fearlessness from God. They have
the superior
intelligence to understand the simple fact that God is all powerful and
when something is sought
from a powerful person, one should seek not the negation of something but
the affirmation.

That's why; females seek love from God - His love and love for all in this
universe. The women
have the innate acumen to realize that when love prevails, fear loses its
existence. Women
always seek root goodness whereas men would look for the fruits of
goodness. That's why most
men end up having a barren tree of life.

...a woman's beingness is bhav bhay niwarak... truly, God's stamp on earth.
He remembered, once, when he was only a twelve-year old, he had fallen from
a tree and despite

his best efforts could not breathe. He had seen his mother rushing towards him from a distance but he had virtually accepted that before she would come, he would die of breathlessness. His limbs had already got numbed and he could not even let out a cry. His mother had hugged him tight to her bosoms and though he still could not breathe, he had lost his fatal fear. He remembered till date (and smiled now for his foolishness), how he was at peace being in his mother's lap and had prominently felt an icy sense of contentment that when he would die, his soul would enter the soul of his mother as she had her heart kissing his heart. As his sense of shock and fear had got dissipated, his breath had been restored. Even today, his fatal fears had only one solution; not God but his mother's bosoms which had clinched his first fear when he had come out of the secure walls of her womb.

... A woman's beingness is man's ultimate prayers come true... The tiny vapors of shower had been reaching his face. He had stood in a stupor; quietly experiencing his inside feelings. As a director of a movie makes all the right moves to ensure that all the scenes shot of a particular script in hand descends down on the celluloid in a way he or she had visualized them in his or her mind; she called him to make movements and he, as a dedicated actor, who has full confidence in his director, performed the scenes as per her command. She had asked him to pull off his clothes and come in. She made him sit close to her under the shower, their faces facing each other. She insisted he kept looking at her face and her eyes. Instinctively, he had lowered his eyes. His intimacies with her had been with touches...his eyes would automatically close when she would get bodily intimate with her. What eyes see, mind registers and responds best but differently. Visual intimacies are excruciating...difficult to receive. You touch a fire and its heat makes your mind respond instantly. And, when you see a fire burning, the myriad colors that it exudes make mind respond differently. Mind warns to withdraw but simultaneously wishes to keep looking at it. You love watching it...and strangely, even desire to capture it in your fists... the golden hue, the red core, the bluish outlines, the grayish smoke head...each triggers off different feelings in the heart. Visual intimacies are agonizing like a fire...he withdrew first. She upped his face with her soft palm. She whispered on his lips to see her well...understand her through his eyes...explore her with the help of his eyes...she kissed his eyes and asked him, "... let your

eyes see me in fullness,
nakedness and completeness...it is important...you must do it... let me be
very sure that you do
it... I want to ensure that even if I do not know myself well, you
must...you know what is best for
me; you should also know me better than me..." .
The art is in symmetry and it is awesomely beautiful. Never in his life had
he seen the form, the
symmetry, the chiseled undulations, the righteousness and the profundity of
an art. All of a
sudden, he felt an agonizing sense of guilt. He felt dwarfed by the
magnanimity of the perfection
of the art. „How can men be so blind...?, he said to himself. „How can they
be so brute...how can
a man muster up the courage to defile the art...how dare they...oh my God!?
He felt ashamed;
feeling guilty that he unfortunately was a part of the discreditable legacy
of the male world... he
wanted to move out. But he did not write the script. The director knew what
was best and what
was next.... She had closed the shower and handed him the soap. He could
see; she had closed
her eyes. This gave him the courage...
The music had begun...the ultimate melody had started filling up the
universe...each element,
every bit of body and soul had started absorbing the composition. The cells
had passed on the
message to the tissues and the dance had started to happen...! The notes
were struck
perfect...both the bodies had started humming sounds originating from the
bellybottom...the
resonance of the molten lava that jostles to burst out of the surface of
earth from beneath the
bellybottom of the earth...the naad swar (primeval sound) of creation...the
whining of God?s
avowal of shrishti (creation)...the bodies melt, existentialism liquefies;
the expression takes the
form of dance...the form of godliness...a definite invitation for the
universe to bow in total
deference to the energy of creation...silence..silence...!
The music had filled up all spaces...a rarity. He understood; music is
everywhere in the universe
but it was very rare for humans to find it in their lives. A very rare
discipline of harmony and
surrender of senses is required for the realization of ultimate music of
life. He had heard it from
someone. Once there was a world renowned singer who was considered the
ultimate master of
music. When he was dying, a disciple sat at his feet and asked,
„master...you know music better
than anyone living or dead in this universe. Please tell us what the
greatest music is?. The master
closed his eyes and said, „I did not know it for long but now, when I am
dying, I can say with

conviction that greatest music on earth is compassion in the heart?. He understood; he felt compassion...he lived the music...he rendered the composition of compassion...! He understood; music needed great discipline...the discipline of saat sur (seven notes) ...the regulations of taal (beats) ...the obligations of laykaari (melody) ... then only came the accomplishments of a musician to qualify for his own musical adaaygi (rendition). And that is not the desired end of music. A great musician needs thousands of hours of riyaz (practice) to reach a stage in music which the connoisseurs say, „Aaj ustad ne kah di hai (the maestro has said it)...? The first four stages are learning the language and being proficient in it but expression of poetry comes rarely. Poetry comes with compassion. Music scales greatness...godliness with compassion. A compassionate heart is music's true source... the God's abode... The music had replenished the space with compassion... it was made possible. The stage was ideal. Love and intimacy, the supremacy and all pervasiveness of it, sets it on. The absoluteness of intimacy initiates the poetry and the heart is soaked up with compassion... He had felt his guilt washed away...passion had bowed out the moment compassion ascended the throne. The transformation had begun...! When rains wash the face of earth, each and every speck of it looks new and different....her eyes looked so large and heavy; he had seen them before. The long and black curls of her looked longer as his hands reached their ends...her limbs, her back, the neck...the soft shoulders...the verve below...the ascent and descent of seven steps of heaven...oh! ...every touch made him realize he was discovering a completely new she. A déjà vu...certainly...most certainly...she was not what he had known for over a year but the new „she?, was very much what he had known for ages...what? Something so vivid, so ostensible but still so elusive... so intangible...! His realism had got metamorphosed. He did not stop...the journey must not stop before it reaches destination and then, the realization dawns upon that it was not what had initiated and energized the journey. And finally...he touched the woman...moments of beinglessness...a sharp shrill down his spine...and he attained it...he dropped the soap...curled up, crying, closing all his senses... he crept into her lap...slowly but surely pushing himself to her womb...she wept too...curled her up and shoved him firmly to accommodate him, imbibe him in her fullness. The compassion took both of them in its refuge...compassion made her the womb...the highest

repository of human
compassion. And, compassion melted his gender...made him a fetal reality...! Coiled up in her
womb, he understood the déjà vu...he attained it...the infinity... he
realized the unknowable...
She remained motionless in his arms. Both of them had forgotten dinner;
opting for the comfort
of the bed, resting as just-born enjoined twins. Nothingness is the recipe
of intimacy...even
redundant is unnecessary...! Time however cannot be wished away. It was 2
am when she
checked the watch. He too moved as she slipped out of his embrace. She went
to the kitchen to
make some tea and he opened the windows to allow the fresh breeze in. He
took out the bed
sheet, clothes were such a burden... wrapped the sheet around him and moved
to the living
room. She brought one large cup of tea. He took her inside the bed sheet as
both sat on the
couch. They sipped tea together.
Rise up before the Sun does and see the magic, the old prudence has it. He
was used to the
timing. He would not return home until the printing machine ran the first
copy of the late city
edition at 3.30 am. For her however, this was a new experience. She felt a
strange rejuvenation.
This was the right time to direct the climax that she had in her mind. How
unaware he was...
"Say something...!", she whispered in his ears.
"What...!", he asked softly.
"You had said you wanted to talk... something important!"
"Yeah...I did. But now I am not sure what I wanted was necessary...even
right."
"You are always right. I cannot see you go wrong...I don't want to. And, I
think I know what you
wanted to say. That's why I say you were right."
He looked in her eyes; her determined self was clearly visible. He kissed
them.
"My princess, you do not know us men. We breathe the legacy of corruption
of intellect...we are
the directionless and destructive energy of the universe. We men are born
in contradiction and
die in confusion."
"My man is not part of the legacy", she said promptly, rubbing her lips to
his and grabbing him
in her arms. "My man understands contradictions and that's why he is above
everything...he is
not the man the way it is... he is my God; gender- neutral and formless
like him."
He could not say a word. He appreciated the word gender-neutrality. He had
often realized that
he lost his man- identities when in total intimacy with her and even did
not register her as a
woman. The formlessness anyway was his favorite existential positioning.

But this was not easy.

"You scare me", he whispered to her. "You put me on such pedestals I can never justify. I am

already so nervous...I never think I am good enough to deserve you."

"You say that and I may say the vice versa. The reality is; we do not have to be in deserving

business. We do not even have to be in the confusion of mutual expectations. We are two lives

and we have to ensure that together we create such a positive environment which develops and

perfects conclusive complementarities between us. Of course; I am a woman and you are my

man. But when I and you will it to be us, we will need to rise above socially prevalent standards

of gender-role exclusivity."

Since evening she had been a revelation. He had never expected her to say what she had said. He

realized she had more to say. He understood; the first ray of Sun would bring in a new world

where some of his questions would lose relevance and rest would get answered for good. He put

in his left hand fingers into her curls and very tenderly rubbed her back with his right arm

fingers. She rested her head on his chest.

"Say it please...don't stop", he said and kissed her forehead. "This day is so unblemished, so full

of divinity's exquisiteness, so very enlightening...I am very sure each of the words you speak

will add a meaning to our lives."

"Hold me tight so that I have the confidence and conviction to speak to my God."

"You are a woman, you need no help, and your womb holds the truth of the universe...your God

is born out of your womb."

The Sun is not the first to rise up. Before it wakes up, the breeze gets up and heralds the

morning. The pre-dawn breeze wakes up the trees, the birds and those humans who understand

life. The nature wakes up before the Sun does and nature stirs the potential from slumber. The

potential hits the morning alarm bell for all those humans who understand purity and purpose of

life. As she readied to say what she had planned to say, the pre-dawn breeze started to blow. The

nature and all its elemental energies sat around her to listen. The light of the day awaited her...

"I have understood what you have been trying to make me realize", she said in low whispering

voice but he was all ears. "I did not tell you but I've been thinking over it. I am so happy, so

proud of you...I feel so blessed; I feel no need of prayers and I call you my God not out of the

intensity of my love for you. I understand I have to be in your light to become a perfect person

and that is what God is - the highest benchmark of human perfection. I know, you too would wish to say the same about me. And God you are for me because you want me to be perfect not for yourself but for my own joys and satisfaction in life. I am so proud to have you; I am even scared at times."

"But, I am a human, probably better positioned to qualify as your man than God."

"That's where my problems also start. I am a woman. We are into a man-woman relationship. If

I can understand what it is to be a woman, I also do appreciate what it is to be a man. You look at life in terms of purpose, higher attainments, issues and agendas. I am a woman. And I think I understand what is being a woman. You have also helped me immensely in understanding what elemental womanhood is and I call you my God because it is the woman in you that made me

learn what I was missing as a woman. You made me a perfect woman and I am so happy and

proud that I have attained what I was born for. But you are a man. You define perfection from

benchmarks which you see not as man or woman but human; a goodness common for all. Here

you think I need to do more and add in my personality. You think it will make me happier and

enhance my contentment; not as a woman but as a human."

"...it seemed to me that life's goodness and purpose was gender-neutral. Woman or man is a nonissue.

Both are humans and equally entitled to attain the goodness of life. But that was yesterday.

Today I feel unsure. I can say what I said probably needs scrutiny. This evening has probably

changed something in me. I am even not sure which way I should say I am a man. I am probably

more woman today. You have sort of absorbed me fully. If I am a man right now then probably

like a baby boy; unaware of my gender."

"You know, I am never good with words. You too know it well that my expression is poor. But I

have been wanting to tell you that I have been thinking over this conflict of sorts between

us...forgive my ignorance for not choosing the right word to express myself. I have spent many

sleepless nights over it. I assessed what and why you wanted me to see things in life and groom

myself for that ends. For many days I felt confused and even in some sort of conflict with your

ideas. I think I am either a big fool or too innocently simple but I could only come to the

conclusion that we basically want to reach the same destination in our relationship but our roads

to approach it looks separate. I am not sure how to put it but I hope you

get me right. I think there are two broad issues with us. First, we are into a man-woman relationship...I am a woman and you are a man; there cannot be a denial to body segregation. Second; we are into love and supreme intimacy. The fact looks like; the gender agendas are different and love's requirement is different. Gender seeks role segregation and love seeks unification. Is that what we wanted to talk about?"

He nodded in affirmation and kept quiet. He did not want to obstruct her flow of thoughts by making certain refinements in her observations.

"What I have come to the conclusion is; and again I say, I am probably too foolish or too simple to form such an opinion; there is actually no confusion, no conflict. When you live true to your gender identity as man, you also want me to refine my woman-specific gender role and rise up to accept roles that are human; not man not woman. That basically means that life's attainment requires us to dissolve our gender-identities. And, when you are in complete intimacy with me, you yourself said you stop being a man and become more of a woman. I too lose my identity as woman. Absolute love dissolves gender- identities. So, you see; when you think as a man, you wish to attain something which ultimately reaches the same stage where you reach when you think as a woman and peak in love and intimacy - the genderlessness..."

He had no words. He could not feel the need to be a speaker today; he just wished to be a listener. He waited for her to continue but she did not say anything. He intuitively felt there was something more that she has to say.

"So, what you think is the one out of the two roads we should together tread to reach our common destination?"

"Here I am not confused and I really think I am wise enough to say it."
"What...?"

"You are my God. I am happy and satisfied that we will anyway reach together to the destination which is our common end. I will tread the path with you and will never question why you chose either of the two. I am a woman; my happiness is in your happiness. Choose the path which you think is ideal. I am a woman; my rationality and my irrationality is love and absolute intimacy. I am a woman; my path and destination is love and intimacy. But, whichever road I tread, you are with me so love is with me all the time. I am a woman in love and that makes me happy in doing whatever my love asks me to do."

"And what happens to man rationalities if I also become one with woman

love?"

"You decide what you think is best, I will become that."

"What if you were me?"

"Should I say something; the way out; but, it will sound stupid!"

"Give this precious thing to me..."

"Yesterday, I was talking to God, not you, the other God, in my dreams. I asked him what I

should do? I told him that there looked some conflict of sorts between you and me. I asked him

was I being too foolish? You know what he said?"

"What...?"

"He said..., I think he was in a hurry, may be a bit annoyed too. He sort of chided me. He said,

"Did I create you, the man and woman to compete with each other? What I had ordered to my

chief engineer and chief architect was a complementary model of two humans with separate

identifications but complementing identities. How come such lot of conflict is prevailing on

earth? O h...! I will have to call a high-level meeting to reassess the design. He then

disappeared."

He could not resist a smile. He always believed she was innocence

personified and intrinsically

simple-hearted girl but he had never understood that basic intellectualism

is in innocence and not

in complicated idealisms.

"So, the God's prescription is...", he asked her, hinting her to complete the sentence.

"It looks like God said us to understand very clearly that man and woman have been made to

complement each other perfectly. A woman is a woman and she has her gift of nature. Man is

man and he has different set of gifts. And God designed us in a perfect way. He ensured that

when it would come to the concerns of life and the world, the man would initiate proceedings as

he would be gifted such a way; the woman would be with her in all odds.

And, when it would be

matters of love and intimacy, woman would lead and the man would follow her. But God had put

a condition to this rule which basically is the root of all confusion of humans."

"And what is it?"

"He had said that the complementarities would happen only when there would be complete and

immaculate love and intimacy between the man and woman. If this will happen then the woman

would only be too happy to follow her man and the man would be equally willing to surrender

himself to his woman. When love and intimacy will happen, complementing would

automatically fall in place and when complementarities will happen, gender conflict will be

dissolved for good."

"Perfect...God cannot be wrong. It's a deal then. Now decide what we have missing in our manwoman relationship?"

"Yes...this is what I was dying to tell you. Did I tell you that I wanted to resign this month?"

"Yes you did and you also said you had a second reason too for quitting the job."

"Yeah..yeah, I remember and I will tell you but I feel hungry."

"Nobody is eating before you tell me why."

"Okay; anyway, it is a one line thing. I thought you would guess it. Today everything I have to do so I will do this too. The reason I wanted to quit my job is because I wanted a three-year break from job. I have something important to do in these three years. If needed, I will pick up some meaningful activity after three years."

"And what you will do in coming three years?"

"I am marrying", she said sounding very casual. "And all these years I want to spend every moment in complete and unfettered love and intimacy. I won't even allow my husband to do anything else but be with me all these years."

"Brilliant... congratulations! May I know who the lucky man is?"

She freed herself from his arms and bit his lower lips hard. He screamed, pulled her back in his embrace. He kissed her and asked, "What next?"

"I have nothing more to say", she quipped.

"Let us then sleep together", he said, copying the tone in which she had said the lines when they had met in the evening.

"But don't you think we are getting a bit late for the dinner", she pulled him.

"Nobody is eating, we will sleep together. A wife must obey what the husband says", he said with an affected pride.

Before she could say anything, he lifted her in his lap and carried her to the bed. They slept again as enjoined twins. She felt the drops of his tears on her cheeks. She washed her guilt with it. The Sun did not come out in deference to this man-woman union. It finally rained...

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CHAPTER 11

Monday started with a bang threatening a hectic week ahead, quite in contrast to what he had desired. Late in the morning, when Mayank left her place and reached home, all he wanted was a quiet and lazy Monday to rewind and relive the Sunday moments. That was not to be. First to dent his peace was a call from the editor. He sounded cool and wanted to meet him to what he said, "clear the air over some issues between them?". He promised he would see him Tuesday

evening at his office. The next was the general manager who was at his inquisitive best. He was more interested in knowing what his next step was and whether he had got a call from the rival newspaper as yet or not. And, next call of course was from the office of the editor of rival newspaper. His personal secretary wanted to fix a time „as early as possible? for a meeting between the two. The rumor mill had really started churning out. The deputy news editor, who claimed himself as his confidante rang up next and briefed him about the different stories doing rounds in the office. The most interesting one was that he had reportedly got a big salary hike as the owner was very impressed with him. He thanked him for updating him and was about to switch off his mobile phone when the owner called him, first time coming directly on the line. He only confirmed that he had read his mail and would talk about that when he would visit him this Friday. As the day progressed, he could gather that his resignation had indeed proved a strong catalyst for changes but he also realized they were not what he had actually aimed at. He had created ripples in the static pond by throwing a stone chip but the ripples were not in his control. The energy that he put in the system through his resignation took its own travel route. The energy is always innocuous but it is people who make good or bad use of it. He smiled as he put together all the information that came his way since morning. Early afternoon, he slept making a resolve that he would not meet anyone and would respond to no calls. He could not be sure whether he was irritated but felt uneasy with whatever he could make out of the developments that he was informed of from various quarters. The best way was to sleep with the entire muddle in his mind. Often, that had proved helpful to him. Around 18 years back, he had understood the power of the sleeping mind. He had been irritated by a rather difficult question of math. He could get to the right answer but could not follow the right process and steps to reach it. He gave up and slept thinking about the question. He had a dream in which he found himself detailing the right process which he had missed. When he woke up, he could still remember it. The mind gave him the right solutions when his body was sleeping. He later used the technique to unleash the power of the sleeping mind to find the missing solutions. He had started believing that mind had better answers as it worked in a linear fashion. It is the

perplexed emotions of body that somehow made the mind go zigzag. That is why, the mind worked best when it was independent of body interruptions. Late afternoon, when he woke up, he still found himself unsettled. The magic didn't work this time. It could not have. The contradiction was too intense for the mind to find a linear solution. He was still emotionally too high and was very reluctant to entertain anything but what he had experienced on Sunday night. On the other hand, there were developments triggered off by his resignation which demanded his immediate time and full attention. He could not avoid a list of people for long and as decisions knocked at his door; he could not turn a blind eye to them either. Even his small gesture and actions were now open to wild interpretations and he understood well that he needed to have his resolve on key things that presented themselves at his doorstep. Usually, he was a mind person, preferring to depend mostly on his intellect. When he was a teenager, there was confusion over what should rule the lives of humans: mind or heart. Later in his youth, he also understood that there was this so called „feminist agenda? which warned that females of substance should curb their instinctive heart-ruled decisions and allow prevalence of mind over heart. From his peer group, he learnt that a man has to be man and avoid emotions which were clearly referred to as feminine trait. Later, as he matured to build his own ideas, he felt that in reality, there was no clear cut objective rule of what should prevail. He got to a conclusion: The ideal scenario is that you apply what is best required. If emotions are the requirement, you should never push ahead your intelligence and the vice versa. This however, clearly leads to the fact that essentially, it is your intelligence which makes the day for you as you need your higher intelligence to guide you to decide whether emotions are required or intelligence. So, you need to be very intelligent to make the right decisions. And for that you do not have to learn a lot, read a lot and understand a lot...! The intelligence is very simple thing...and nobody can teach you this...it is automatically available to all humans. But in the last, the prescription is, try to put your emotions upfront and intelligence as cushion. Better it is that emotions win for you...if not then, you know your intelligence will save you from defeat...but it will not always make you win. His emotions were already upfront. He however needed his intelligence to be pressed into

service as he needed to take key decisions. His own editor was under pressure to change things or two in his working style and naturally he had been pushed to work them out in consultation with Mayank. The editor was told to change things in almost all areas of editorial business but even other departments had been asked to assess human resource issues and working system. He was a hero as it was being rumored that boss had taken all the senior persons to task after Mayank had a one to one meeting with the owner. His friends in the rival newspaper had confirmed that he was to be offered editorship of the newspaper's edition in the neighbor state capital. The rival editor however had his own designs while offering editorship to him. He wanted Mayank to join along with his team of selected senior journalists. This was aimed at weakening Mayank's newspaper. Nothing new; everything is fair in corporate wars. The rival editor knew he was very popular with his colleagues and they would come with him if he was made editor. This however would mean Mayank would lose all favors with the owner with whom he had only recently struck cordiality and trust. There was a place where he would be back with more say and prestige and will probably be in some sort of a position to change content as per his vision and values, of course given the fact that the owner looked agreeable. But he also knew that newspaper is basically an editor's medium and he would not be very successful in having a complete say in content changes. He also understood clearly that even the owner would never go too far against the editor as that could invite lots of trouble for him. The editorship with the rival newspaper looked a step ahead in his career and naturally meant more money and more power. However, he was not sure he would be able to make any changes in the system there and the content. In the current newspaper, he had direct access to the owner but in the new set up, it would take at least four- five years to get connected with owners. And without having control over the owners, no concrete change could be possible. Then, the rival newspaper was notorious for inside politics and hire- fire policies. He had seen editors there getting fired as they grew in strength. He could use the editorship there just as a stepping stone to get to a higher break in career. Career-wise, he was in an envious position but both ways, he was not sure he would be in a position to bring about a positive change that he wanted. He knew he

was emotionally too high to make any fruitful mind decisions but he wanted, for sure, to remain so. He felt at peace with his high emotionalism and wished to remain in its cusp for days to come.

Optionlessness is very suffocating. He had personally experienced it. Every life, however insignificant it may sound, is a genuine potential. Ambitions and zeal apart, everyone has an inbuilt capacity to be something of reckoning. Unfortunate it is; majority of the humans of the world have to live their lives in near optionlessness. The struggle for survival...ensuring two square meals, devoting all the time energy and creativity to protect and prolong life's drudgery.

The fast growing urbanization creating more troubles every day. The civil wars, security threats from internal crises and terrorism add to the already grave situation of poverty and malnutrition.

There is a primary need of all living creatures in the universe: the freedom to be, the free will to

access the options to reach the potential. All human institutions were created to protect and

pronounce this free will of individuals. This was for the benefit of the institutions and the larger

collectivity itself as any individual initiative for wellness shall automatically fall in the lap of

collectivity. No individual operates in emptiness; it always works within society. Unfortunate it

is that most human institutions have become highly effective tools of smothering potential, ensuring optionlessness.

The cultures of all communities were once great insurance of the freedom to attain variety of

options. The crazy culture of consumerism that has become one single global culture of all

humans has taken away the freedom. The omnipotent culture of consumption was slowly but

surely pushing everybody to greater optionlessness. Since long, men have created benchmarks

for defining success in life and generations after generation, men and women become slaves to

this benchmark. Even this slavery is part of the golden benchmark and people say it with great

pride that they are great slaves. The instinctive aping has its sorry fallout too.

He could never appreciate when people around him would say, „I'm a complete workaholic?.

Most who said this would do so with lots of pride attached to it and usually to show off as if

hours they worked were cash money and they would be proud that they had their hands full. He

believed it was a case of people making wrong benchmark of excellence and then becoming a

slave to it. Often, he would listen people saying, „I am damn busy yaar, really do not even have the time to die?. It would never be said with regret or pain but with loads of self-satisfaction and flamboyant pride. It was truly tragic that what people once used to say as banter later became an arrogance statement and finally, the joke has turned out to be a dark reality. Many people actually have no time to die as their lives have become so fast paced and busy. So, the death keeps up pace with their tight schedule. Snap the finger and heart attack sends them packing...flick an eyelid and accident sets you free forever...some make their own choices and they are being duly helped by the markets providing best sellers on how to make quick and sure suicides. And the apeing instinct makes millions follow it as fashion. People create their own optionlessness by being slave to a few social benchmarks of goodness and attainments. Mayank knew that the societal benchmarks of success and goodness were created by few successful people and never had majority roots. The society in general had the tendency to generalize what they achieved. The most stupid generalization that humanity has created is the slogan: Nothing succeeds like success! This must have been said as a cruel joke but got finally established as the popular benchmark of excellence. He only wished that generation after generations, people would not have to ape the benchmarks of others? successes and had the liberty and mental strength to follow one's own distinct success path to break free from the suffocation of optionlessness. It somehow got registered in his mind that generalizations were very lopsided viewpoint of successful people and they truly discounted many aspects which contributed to their success. Success in itself justifying everything and what successful people said being lapped up as a formula by the rest was the worst voluntary slavery for him. Success is a very random juxtaposition of an array of factors at one opportune point of time and space. It must be kept alive in the minds that success is no rule; rather it is a very rare exception. Success is so subjective and creating a singular process to this success is one great trap that humanity is so happy to fall into since ages. Most human benchmarks of success and goodness are such huge burden and stumbling block for higher evolution. The trouble is; most benchmarks of goodness kills the free will of an individual to attain and achieve what he or she has been naturally

endowed with or ordained to. Most societal benchmarks of goodness force people to be what they are neither inclined to nor naturally endowed. Society and social facilities should ideally be like a fertile land which aids and abets any seed of natural possibilities but unfortunately; societies have become fixed moulds which forces any potential to take only a few established shape which at a certain point of time and space happens to be the prevailing benchmarked mould of success or goodness. Restricting options, even killing them in infancy has become the most honorable task of most human institutions.

Mayank was very indecisive. He was subtly enjoying his moments of indecisiveness as it extended him the pleasure of having open options. Inside in his heart, there was this desire to allow the state of affair to linger infinitely. But, he knew it was a desire completely against the benchmark of success and goodness. He also understood it that what he wished was an improper proposition in the eyes of society. Even his parents would not appreciate his indecisiveness. He was pressed hard to take a decision and as early as possible. That certainly irritated him. „What's the big issue if I just want to do nothing?, he asked to himself. ? What's the problem if the only thing I wish to do is to sleep with my girl for days and night, holding her tight to my chest, kissing her a thousand times, savoring her body and soul, till I dropped dead? Do I trouble anyone? Am I asking anyone to give me bread and butter? God has given me enough! Why can't I be left alone to be what I wish to be? Why should I be what others want me to be??

He knew he was completely consumed by love. His instinctive sense of redundancy and futility had just found a refuge in her love. And how beautiful and meaningful this refuge was! He warned himself that love too is ephemeral, like all good things in this mortal life; especially this lovingly suffocating intensity of her love at this point of time was very short-lived and he should not waste a single moment of it. He wished to go crazy in love, do all sorts of madness in love. Nothing short of mundane and perfunctory aawargi (recklessness) would satiate his soul. He wished his free will to redefine wildness...restructure all dispositions that societal sense of gentlemanliness required. He desired his free will to recreate the universe, replacing the gravitational force with the far more powerful and purposeful force of love and unfettered intimacies. He just wished to be the 12-year old he was; the happiest and

most free stage of his life when he was acultured. His heart ruled him. He understood it and was truly not ashamed of it. If foolishness was sweet, stupidity was freedom and kidishness was purity, he was too happy to be that. He felt a crazy sense of wild satisfaction in breaking all established social benchmarks of righteousness and goodness. He was certainly at peace with his dominating heart...it took him to a journey he would often take when 12-year old. Woolgathering...! It was his favorite activity when he was a 12-year old. It took off... „...there would be a world where leisure would be a fundamental right. God would create a special facility on earth which would ensure love, trust and larger intimacy among all living being. Anyone, who would not love, show distrust or disturb intimacy would be ejected out of the earth?s orbit and sent to Mars for internship till he or she sees reason. This would be done by replacing the force of gravitation with a superior force, the force of love. On the earth, only people who love would stay and thrive. There would be a few private economic activities to fulfill only the basic needs of humanity. All education and health would be in social sector and not in public or private sector. Everyone would be allotted his work which would not be more than eight hours a day and four and a half days a week. Access to leisure would be protected as fundamental right. There would be no currency. There would be just enough and equitable amount of food, clothe and house space for all. Singing, dancing, writing poetry would be encouraged but not forced. Art will be additional qualification over the primary and mandatory intellectualism of innocence. Anyone showing disrespect to this basic intellect would be automatically ejected and sent to Mars.?

In that world, he would prefer a house at the foothills where a river would be flowing and the valley would be lush with flowers and fruits. She and he would finish their allotted work and then do all sorts of things that would fill the mountains and valleys with music, dance and musk of love and intimacy. And the last thing! God would create a facility for all humans that they could choose to die together with any one person they would love. He had grown up but his woolgathering habit had not worn out. At times, he would feel ashamed about it even making unsuccessful resolves that he would cease to do it as it was childish act, unbecoming of his age. He however knew; there were millions of people who

were doing similar things with the help of computer. The virtual world software enabled them to create a world of their own. He even got to know that there were small groups of people who had created what was being called micronations. These people had declared their small and personal habitat as independent nations irrespective of the need of recognition. In these micronations, laws did not ascertain behavior of people but people decided what would be the law governing them. These micronations were at least not as unreal as the virtual world was and they certainly allowed some degree of freedom of expressions and option to the free will of humanity. They at least registered the ideal that people create institutions to enrich humanity with greater options, potential and possibilities and not for subverting them. In the evolution chain, institutions created by humans have become potent tools of slavery for humanity itself. The clock was ticking for Mayank. He had to make a decision. His indecisiveness was his safe refuge but he too knew, it was not the demand of the hour. He could not always afford to trivialize the social benchmarks. His withdrawal, even for short period would be considered as escapism. Social mindset never appreciates indecisiveness. Even if you take a suicidal decision, it must be taken fast. This is what the corporate world appreciates as aggressive approach. Economics is the only place where aggression is praised. Kids are now taught to be the same, not at home but in their classrooms. He made up his mind and planned his next move. He called up Utkarsh first. He agreed. Ashish had no choice. He could never say no to Mayank.

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CHAPTER 12

There was nothing unusual about the three friends meeting late evening and talking past midnight. This had been a practice since their college days. However, Utkarsh had an intuition that this meeting had something unusual; at least what it would end up with. He had sensed trouble as Mayank insisted that the meeting was very crucial and could not be delayed even for a day. He dropped in early to have a one-to-one talk with him before Ashish arrived. He sat quietly till Mayank made coffee. "For years now, we have sat together to discuss issues and then reach on a key decision but I have a feeling that you have already decided something very important and called us to just announce it. I think Monku you should come clear on that. I am not

complaining but it is important for me to know. I have always trusted your decisions and you know it very well that I also respect your freedom to make them. But, I need to be told as honesty and transparency has always come first in our relationship."

Mayank did not say a word. He had lowered his eyes, looking at the steam rising out of the coffee cup. He shuffled his memories to find the right reply. Being a journalist, he always remembered how important it was to have a good content as introduction of an impacting story.

A good content was one which could have a smooth navigation.

"You remember the cricket match we played against the St. Xavier's school when we were in class six", Mayank asked still looking at the coffee cup. "You were at the non-striker end and screaming at me as I was continuously missing the ball outside the off stump. From the nonstriker end, you could easily see the out swing that the bowler was able to get but I was new to the crease and realized it only after you told me at the end of the over. You later told me that you thought I knew the ball was swinging and still playing dangerously." Utkarsh could not resist his tears. He took his arms and hugged him. Both friends washed their guilt.

"Monku, I am still scared when I feel you play and miss it outside the off stump. I do not care whether you make a century or not. All I want is both of us remaining together at the crease till the end of game."

"What if the bowler bowls a really good ball? I can only assure I won't be out on a bad ball."

"This is exactly my concern. If you play to the merit of the ball and not commit yourself to a stroke even before the ball leaves the hand of the bowler, I am over confident you will never be out."

"I have not committed to a stroke... not made a decision as yet. But I can admit that I am drifting fast towards a decision. There are some missing links. Things have unfolded in such fast pace that I could not acquaint you and Ashu with them. That is why; it seems to you that I am not being honest. The reality is in the making and we are sitting together to talk about all these."

Utkarsh could not be sure how he felt after Mayank's explanation. He still felt some unease as he could sense that Mayank had already half committed him to some important decision. He had an intuition that this decision would change things in their friendship and would bring up an adjustment which would be difficult for him.

"I have a feeling that you have breached the G-3 constitution of collective decision-making. I have enough reason to believe that there is another person in your life who is replacing me and Ashu in the collectivity. Who is this girl", Utkarsh said, sounding, as if he was complaining. Mayank smiled. This is the magic of transparency. The two friends were so honest and unambiguous to each other that they could see through their minds. "How could you know there is a new person in my life; that too a girl and influencing my decision", Mayank asked, still smiling. "This is no Sherlock Holmes stuff Monku. I know you are not gay. I can see a new confidence in you and that comes only when a female is involved in the decision-making process of a man. I am married for the last six months, you know that." Both the friends laughed heartily. Mayank told Utkarsh everything about the woman in his life and the influence of her being an enormous enterprise for him. "You know Utta, I am being challenged. And it has exposed me completely. I can say this to you with complete innocence and self-aplomb. Love does different things to different people. It has exposed me. Her love for me has dwarfed me, made me feel what a pauper I have been all these years. But look at the goodness of love; I don't feel ashamed nor is my pride hurt. I am exhilarated, deeply satisfied that I am such a stupid. Love has stripped me off the pride of the useless possessions and as now I stand naked, I am truly happy because I can see what is to get and that seems gettable." Utkarsh knew, Mayank did not need a prompt to continue. The two had such trust between them that there was never a need of confirmation from the other. He could feel Mayank was on song. He would call him Utta, only when he would be emotionally too high. He ensured closing the world to his five senses to be in complete audience of the song of life. "I think you remember Utta, we had a serious difference of opinion and our friendship was threatened when we were in class three. We were discussing what we would become when we grew up and you had declared that you would run a shop selling kites and its accessories. I had grave objection as I told you I had decided much before that such a shop would be mine. I even offered you to drop your plan in favor of mine and instead settle for a pastry shop but you didn't accept. We had quarreled over the issue and for three days we did not speak to each other." "Yeah Monku", he said with tears lining up in his eyes. "We were too stupid not to understand

that we both could have opened similar shops or we could have done it on partnership basis."

"That's it...this exactly is it! Even now Utta, we are in similar state of stupidity. At all stages of life, wisdom always escapes us by what looks like a short margin and life-long, we chase stupidity. Wisdom is always round the corner but seems a step ahead of us. For most people, wisdom is available only in retrospect but we have only one life to live. If I were to relive my childhood, I would give that kite shop to you and would also agree to be with you in the shop all the time. Being with you and having common joys is the wisdom I can now understand but could not do it then because we did not then understand love. Love holds the wisdom, does not allow it to slip away."

"You've got it right Monku, even I'm not embarrassed to admit that being in love is the true satisfaction, if not the right wisdom?"

"No...no! Not being in love but love itself. And it is because it exposes you to the stupidity of the world and yours. When you become love, you see the wisdom. Oh my God... how can I

express it...it is like...! I can say that...you know, what we all do basically is chase our shadows throughout our lives. The source of light coming from behind, our shadow is always a step ahead of us. The source of light being the social expectation, or to say the world view created by our contemporary social definition of success and goodness, coming from behind, creates the shadow of personal benchmarks for us. And in sheer madness and stupidity, we chase this personal shadow to attain the benchmarks. We die tired and exhausted but fail to understand that shadows will always be unreachable as it will always walk a step ahead of us. What love does to you is put a new light in front of you and suddenly, your shadow shifts behind you and starts following you. You become a step ahead of your shadow and this is the ideal situation, the wisdom. The shadow of your personal success and goodness, defined by social expectations should always follow you and never the vice-versa. We quarreled in childhood over that kite shop because we put our personal success ahead of us. Had we understood love then, we would have known that wisdom was not in owning the shop but it was in being together in any shop, whoever owned it."

"Monku, I really miss Ashu to know what he takes out of your wisdom thing. I have always found myself close to your ideas but even you would admit that ours is not the world view that

majority of people have. Ashu probably holds the common man's world view, which is also the popular one."

"Yes, I accept that. Human mind is all about societal training. We were all trained the way our parents and their forefathers were taught and trained by their societies. We quarreled in childhood because we were trained to the idea of ownership as benchmark of personal success and goodness. If we were trained in childhood in the tradition of love and compassion, we would have understood that ownership was not the joy thing; the joy is in just being there...together. It is redundant who possesses a rose garden. Important it is that we have the mental training to enjoy the beauty and fragrance of roses and share the joy and satisfaction together...not own it.

"But Monku, you cannot simply trash all that we have acquired and the world is so inclined in acquiring. There must be something of real worth in what we have done so far as billions of people are doing the same."

"It is a matter of the world view. I am saying it that you have to understand the basic problems in our existing world view to realize why it is not serving us right. The very training of minds as per the existing world view is flawed, if you see it from the view point of love and compassion."

"Where do you think we have gone wrong in our mental training?"

"Uttu, I am not saying I understand everything. If you ask me specific details then I am bound to sound stupid. I sincerely feel crippled; I am shocked at the mediocrity of my mental and physical faculties. Even the languages I have learnt are not helping.

"Express your ideas Monku; there cannot be things which human words cannot describe. You need to put your feelings and ideas in words."

"This exactly is the mediocrity. There is a whole universe that needs to be described and expressed but falls outside the scope of human words. There is also a life outside the popular world view that needs to be lived and enjoyed but we are not mentally trained for it. I remember, when I stood at the point in Kanyakumari where the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal merge, I was overwhelmed by the expanse of blue and green water all around me. I did not want to possess it, it could not be. All I wanted was to stretch my hands to the farthest limits of the sea, hold the expanse and huddle it to my bosom. There was an initial fear...the immensity of the expanse triggers off a fatal fear...the first sign and symptom of a bad and faulty mental training...then gradually I could sink in into the song of serenity of the

waves. I wished to describe my feelings, I wanted to write poetry on it...I wanted to paint the landscape...many things I recollect I wished to do but I could not. I was crippled; I was not trained for that. Similarly incapacitated I felt when I was on top of a mountain cliff of the Himalayan ranges at Rohtang pass, around 12,000 feet high. The suffocation, the debilitation of having an untrained mind is hundred times more when I am with her and feel being love. The passion, the joy, the satisfaction is beyond my capacity of expression...and the compassion loves fills your heart with...it needs expression Utta but we have not been trained for that. It cannot be expressed through words. Uttu, we have missed a huge learning in our lives. The faulty training led us to accept the mediocrity of words and languages as mode of expression. We missed the far superior and divine modes of music and dance. I am in love Uttu...and as I reach the high point of joy, compassion and exhilaration, words become useless for me. I wish to sing, I want to dance and paint to express myself. I need to express myself; express it not for others but for myself, I need a talk within. I feel suffocated...deeply defeated. I feel I am losing out. I feel wasted. We did not learn the song and dance...everyone must learn them." Utkarsh could see the pain in his eyes. He dabbled in poetry and knew the suffocation of the inadequacy of appropriate expression through words. "I realize it only when I am deep inside love that there is a huge unlearning process that I need to go through. Then only I can think of developing the faculties that are needed for what I have understood as wisdom. The languages that we have learnt are very mediocre. They have been designed for social economy. They put us in somehow manageable situation when we need to express ourselves as social beings in the collectivity business of mutually agreeable survival mechanism. But we also need to express individually. There is a world of love, the universe of compassion, the cosmos of spiritualism where this language we have been taught loses significance. The society where we speak is only one small part of our individual universe. We need a language for other parts of our universe too. There is a talk going on inside us. We need to reach at different dimensions...different state of beingness...distinct from our social state...! We need to reach there and how can we? Our minds are not trained to understand what happens to us. My mind must tell me what and why it is happening to me. I need a

language, a mode of expression to tell me constantly what is happening to me. This expression is required not for the collectivity. It is not required for social interaction. It is altogether a different need. I am so poorly trained that I feel incapacitated. But look, what love has done to me...it has landed me into a harmony of sorts. It has taught me to stop and take my new journey to the positives of life. It has given me the courage to unlearn the redundant and accept the unknowable."

"Whatever is your current state of mind, is it primarily because love has happened to you or you would be same even if love did not happen?"

"I am not sure; should I give the whole credit to love or not. You know; we all basically attempt to be a comfortable person out of the inertia. We are socially trained like that. Throughout your life, you think you can do lot of better things. You always look for better alternatives to your current position in life. But, we have been trained to reject an existing thing only when we have a better alternative in hand. We do not drop out of a chaos simply because we think it is not good for us. We wait till something good or better comes to us. This also is the case with me. As I told you, I knew it well that my current state of things was not good for me. I had already rejected it mentally but physically I was continuing with it, as my social training of comfort of inertia made me to. When love happened to me, I found an alternative. I already had the reason to move out of the world where I was. Love provided me the will and a beautiful refuge. If love did not happen to me, maybe I would have lingered in inertia. But, I think I can say that may be late, but I would have done the same, even if love was not there as a powerful catalyst."

"Okay, I accept what you say but there is still something you have not made clear."

"What."

"What is so bad and faulty about our mental training and contemporary world view that makes you so critical of it? You seem to completely reject it."

"You think I know the answer?"

"That's why I've asked you Monku. We have always shared all good things in life. If you are confident about your position and thinking, I will have all the ease in accepting it as my truth too."

"I truly appreciate your feelings Utta but I am not sure of the answers. What I have been telling you is about my discomfort with the world view which leads us. I feel my mental training is letting me down when I want to fly and reach to the expanse ahead of me."

That makes me feel
that there is something terribly wrong with it. All I can say is about my
own perception of things.
Are they answers? It will be stupidity to think so. But yes, I can say, my
perceptions are my
truths as I think now I am much better qualified to say that, as I have
love and compassion in my
heart."

"Let us not waste time and energy on the terminologies Monku. Let us say,
what you understand
are your perceptions and personal truths and not universal realities... okay
with me! Now give it
to me. At least I can decide they are my truths too or not. The world and
its seven billion people
have their own truths and we are not here to decide for them. I want to
know what you think and
that is my universe."

"Uttu, there are larger questions in our lives. Why are we born? Why and
for what we live? What
is the ultimate aim and end of life - money, status, power and
prestige...or for that matter
attaining spiritualism and moksha (liberation)? Since thousands of years,
the questions have
remained with humanity and the struggle to find the right answers. I am
also not an exception. I
also spent sleepless nights over the questions. I know that I still don't
know the true answers.
But, now I have realized something that makes me comfortable with the
questions and this is
because of the wisdom love has brought in. Well and good if we humans find
the ultimate end of
life, the final destination of all of us and most important is that we
should all agree to that.
However, if we see the larger picture and accept facts objectively, with
whatever knowledge
humanity has so far evolved and understood, we shall have to accept that
all life on earth,
including humans and its evolution is one huge random and multi-dimensional
event-cyclicity.
On the other hand, what we humans make out of it and charter our own ways
for survival,
purpose and excellence is another multi-dimensional cyclicity. Both
forces, though interdependent
only at the core and having some patterns, which can be replicable, still,
they remain
highly and intricately randomized. The element of unpredictability,
inadvertence, accidentality
and asymmetry in both largely sovereign forces of the cosmos only
ensures that humanity
can never ever remain in perpetuity of singular purpose, peace and order.
Especially in
contemporary situation, when humanity long before evolved and acquired the
criticality of
conscious intelligence, which is bound to lead it to ever-growing entropy

(degrading randomization) and ultimate extinction in the long run. Finding a purpose and purity of singular pattern or model of culture and virtuosity for global community is out of question. The mechanism of cosmic realism never ever allows it. It is more impossible now. The wise can only understand that and find its own subjective peace. However, not all these are what look important to me now, especially when love and absolute intimacy has completely absorbed my consciousness. The destination is not important; important is that we all, you me, all our closed ones, travel the path with love and compassion and together, so far as possible. If we all travel with love and compassion all throughout our journeys, wherever we will reach will be the desirable destination. Moreover, even if we do not reach anywhere, our path itself is so beautiful and satisfying that there is no need for a destination. It is love that has shown me this simple wisdom. Love does not look for ends of life. It believes in the simple fact that life is one endless drive and on the way look for no signposts to reach anywhere...the joy and satisfaction of journey is more important than the nobility and utility of destination. There is no need to reach. Be on an endless journey and make it your destination where you tire. But always remember to travel with love and compassion in heart and why I say this? Because, when love and compassion are with you, the path and the journey becomes the theatre of infinite song and dance. When song and dance is with you, journeys are full of incessant joy and satisfaction. If you reach the stage; if ever there happens to be one, you will automatically lose the question of destination. The question of meaning of life and its purpose will be lost. Love makes you understand the futility and redundancy of the intellectual concerns of life's larger purpose and the material desire of life's acquisitions. Love and compassion makes you understand that the true wisdom is not in reaching but in traveling well. May be also because, there is no destination and reaching. Love and compassion and its accompanying innocence is the greatest intellectualism, it is the best acquisition, if one defines life's purpose in terms of acquisition and possessions."

"And where do you think our current world view and mental training puts us away from this realization?"

"I have the feeling that our mental training to see the world as a stage for perpetuity of action,

aimed at personal acquisition, based on societal and cultural notions of utility, possession and consumption is major trouble. This somehow engenders a consciousness in all of us, which is majorly and perpetually reactive, as against the need of being receptive. This makes us refuse to see the mechanism of cosmic realism all around us. To only a few, who have this highly receptive higher consciousness, the cosmic mechanism of asymmetrical randomization is unraveled. That is why the wise have said, wisdom is always in the domain of unknowable, something which can be realized but not known. First of all, the idea of meaningful action, what we term as our karma, has become such a misinterpreted thing that our world view has become majorly faulty. I rate myself a super idiot but even then I feel there is so much stupidity attached to the word karma. I fail to understand why we humans attach so much physicality to the notion. Most people confuse karma with physical labour. Karma is not labour, it is nowhere associated with action, as most people conceive it as. Shram (labor) and karma are two distinct things. I have always wondered whether this association of a pure idea like karma with daily life shram has been the basic fault with our world view and the resultant mental training. It seems, the cardinal error is associating human duties on earth as an actionable entity. The problem is that there is an over emphasis on one's karma but most people follow what looks like the misinterpreted version. I have read that most great people in the long history of civilization have said that the purpose of life is to perform his or her karma but what I feel is that what most of them actually meant to have associated the golden word with is not action but a mind positioning. I know, all goodness are ideas and they need to be converted into action to be of larger good for humanity but the problem is; you need to understand the idea in its purest form then only a suitable and commensurate action pattern can be devised." "But Monku, you know it very well that average people have their own limitations. You must have read the philosophical premise that most humans have such limited mental levels that they only understand matter and not the idea. They need to be told all ideas of goodness in actionable terms only."

"This makes out a case for change in our mental training since early childhood. You know Utta, all major questions of humanity are thousands of years old and that is why I presume, the right

answers of all these questions must also be around for thousands of years. Reason and rationality have been there since ages to guide all generations of humanity. What I have told you about love and compassion may be my own personally acquired and experienced wisdom but there is nothing new about it. Millions of people before me have realized this and many have even practiced it successfully. What I have said about love and compassion has also been told time and again. Millions of more will realize the same in coming years. Read the ancient scriptures, read the ideas expressed by great humans, read the Holy books of all religions of the world. All of them have given common answers to all major questions of life. The answer is love and compassion. But this commonality of goodness is only at idea levels. When it comes to practice them, when the idea descends down to the actionable platform, it changes meaning and seven billion people on earth start practicing eight billion ways to attain the good. Loads of hypocrisy creeps in. The problem of humanity is not the idea but the action. That is why; I always say hypocrisy is the greatest malaise on earth. People in general know the idea of goodness but they rarely put them in action; or, they make bad actions out of good ideas. There is something majorly faulty with our mental training and current world view as it fails us in converting the right ideas into good action and practices. The knowledge of science makes us good doctors and engineers. But when we start prescribing unnecessary drugs and treatments to our patients for acquiring money and status, when we mix sand in cement in making a bridge to acquire luxuries of life, can we blame the goodness of the idea of education? There is something terribly wrong with our mental training as social beings. Our world view, created since childhood, has something faulty. The goodness of idea loses out on the actionable platform."

"What is the way out then? Any remedies...?"

"You may blame me for what you may call a eulogy of laziness and there may be some semblance of truth in that... my growing age must be behind it, but I really feel that overemphasis on karma as an action entity needs some close scrutiny. And I truly feel that it is because of male world's obsession with seeing life as an enterprise. You know Uttu, what is the most popular definition of life? What has been termed by many greats as a synonym to life? They have said, „life is a battlefield?. The scientists say that man's

predator gene of ancient times, when he survived by killing animals in deadly battles in jungle, still rules his actionable decisions. I wonder; this battlefield obsession with all human actions has been the most corrupting influence on the idea of karma."

"You cannot at least blame Indians for that Monku. The very concept of karma was born in a battlefield. Lord Krishna should not have revealed the idea of karma to Arjuna on the battle field of Kurukshetra. He chose the wrong occasion. The context too was wrong. He urged Arjuna to understand his karma and go to battle with his relatives and friends. Had he chosen to do it when he and Arjuna were enjoying a coffee like you and I, the idea of karma would not have been so intrinsically attached to hard-fought actions! The life too would have been defined as something simple", Utkarsh said jocularly.

"You never know Uttu. You may be right. Religion is such a huge influence on most humans. And as I was telling you, the mental training of our society is passed on from one generation to another in such a way that there is very little chance of a wrong interpretation getting filtered out for centuries. Then, you have so many self-acclaimed teachers of religion who assure that all good ideas of ancient scriptures are poorly misinterpreted. The stupidity also becomes a venerated ideal."

"But Monku, there must be a remedy to it. There has to be a way out of this stupidity."

"I have already told you Uttu that I have come to believe that this world would be better off if we all accommodate and subscribe to the alternative world view of compassion, instead of passion. It's a male world Uttu and the problem also lies with the typical male view of life and karma. I really cannot understand why life's view accommodates so much action and continuous struggle for activity. Why make life a battlefield. Why cannot we all settle for life as a mental thing, aloof from the physical action? Why cannot we define life as a beautiful mind experience or a mental journey, as against a struggling physical activity? You are right Uttu when you said most humans have the faculties developed only to understand matter and not the idea. That is why most humans understand body entities and not mental ones. But what I just wish to add is that this is basically because of our wrong mental training. You remember, when we were kids, we were told, „study hard and do well in your class. You will get all pleasures and comforts of life only

when you toil now to have a successful career?. Nobody told us to study hard so that when we grow up, we would be in a better position to understand the conflicts of life and would be successful in discerning good and bad. People told us that if we became successful persons, we would get beautiful and wealthy wives. Nobody told us what we would then do with our beautiful wives. We were not trained how to love our wives well, how to make her happy and how best to become a caring and successful husband."

"Yup Monku, there were many who were offering us expertise in sex to have good times with our wives but nobody trained us in the art of love and compassion which we need most when we get our wives finally."

"The matter, the body, the action are so obsessively part of our karma and world view that the idea, the mind and the golden leisure gets no place. I firmly believe Uttu, when we will have a world view, which will be adorned by the feminine principles of love and compassion, we will find in place an alternative mental training mechanism. We will be trained not about the joys of consumption and ownership of matter in life and the resultant struggle for action but about the satisfaction of the beautiful ideas of love, care, emotions of togetherness, compassion and the very essential leisure to attain them."

Utkarsh could not say anything. His mind was full. He was not very sure what Mayank was saying truly meant but he had always trusted his view point. He needed time to put all these in perspective to say anything concrete. He could however fear that Mayank had made up his mind for something which would leave him in disadvantage. He could not resist his query.

"What is then the final word Monku? What are you up to?"

"I am not sure Uttu. May be I am reacting too much. May be I am biased in my stated positions because I have landed myself into a particular groove. But one thing I am very sure and confident of. I am not comfortable. I cannot think of continuing with what I am currently in. I refuse to accept that. I must say I am not saying that I sort of rebel against this chaos of the world I am in but can't I demand a small non-intruding space for myself and my beliefs? This world view based on personal utility and consumption is not acceptable to me. I feel very incapacitated and suffocated in it. I am doubly sure that I do not want to bequeath this chaotic world view to my kids. This mental training of counting pleasure and discounting pains defined in terms of

utility, possession and consumption kills my real joys, it shortens my horizon of satisfaction, it does not allow me to be what I am born for. I am sure I cannot survive with so many wrong benchmarks of goodness defined by this chaotic world view. You know Uttu, a lover says to his beloved, „my dear, I would pluck the moon and stars and stitch them on your silk bodice, I would buy all the flowers of the world and pour them on your feet...?. O h my God! Why can't he say, „my love, join me, be in my arms so that together we see the beauty and exuberance of the beautiful moon and stars, come and breathe the fantastic fragrances of the rose, the different flowers that God has been so kind to bestow us with...let us pray together, thank God for such joys in our lives and beseech his blessings for making us together...allowing us the satisfaction?. Why is this mind training to pluck a beautiful rose from the Garden of the God and tuck it in the locks of our beloved? Who trained our minds to define the worth of things on the basis of our personal utility? Why does our mind understand pleasure only in possessing things for our personal utilities? Why success and status is defined in terms of how much we have available for our personal consumptions? Why do people value and respect a man who has million dollars in his pocket but knows no poetry, no music, no dance, no decency to respect fellow human beings and not even a language of respectability for others? Why is it that love and compassion in mind is considered a threat to individual success? Can't you see Uttu, this is our faulty mental training! And then, people are full of complaints with their lives. Most part of world is faced with chaos. How sad and pathetic it is that we have been so poorly trained by this current world view that we cannot even see and recognize the Frankenstein in our lives.”

“But Monku, you miss the golden rule. If what you say is ultimate goodness and we all know goodness must be something that has inherent and all-pervading power of prevailing ultimately, why is it that large majority of people are still with this world view which you call as chaotic and unlivable for you?”

“It is not easy to explain it Uttu. There does not seem a straight and singular answer to it. I can think of multiplicity of factors and they probably happened over a space of time in the evolution of humans. You can say; there might be a mix of biological pre-disposition, neuro-chemical system of human body and socio-psychological factors in the long history of our evolution as

social beings. Then there is this big conundrum called brain! There might be an answer which comes after assessing the impact of all these on intrinsic human nature. Huge initiatives are being made to unravel the mysteries of the functioning of mind and its connection with our multidimensional consciousness. May be, some day, we shall have the right answers as why we are what and how we are. "

"I don't take this for an answer Monku. If we know the trouble, we should also very well know what causes this trouble so that we head for a clear cut solution."

"You know Utta, I always feel the language which we have learnt are not good enough to express the deepest and truest of feelings and realizations. That is why; the real intellectuals prefer to keep quite. The greats have said that wisdom cannot be known, it is unknowable.

Wisdom cannot be known but can only be realized. This is the core trouble of humanity. Science, information, knowledge can be passed onto generations of humanity. It is said that social habits based on contemporary knowledge get registered in gene and pass onto next generations. The core wisdom however cannot be passed. Every human born on earth needs to go through the individual travails of life to understand it. That is why, only few men and women reach the wisdom. Wisdom is personal and very individual realization. You can make the wisdom as an opening line in all the books that our children read but still it cannot be understood. Tell it to the world that love and compassion is the only wisdom and make it the opening lines of all books of knowledge of the world but still only one out of a billion will understand it. It is because, love and compassion is useless if it is just knowledge. It is useful only when it captures your heart and mind and in tune with it, your entire consciousness reflects it. It is personal realization and useless as a community knowledge. That is why, transcendental wisdom cannot be part of the eugenics. "

"So, you see little hope. We can say that there is no practical solution in hand for us?"

"No Utta. The reality is just the reverse. There is great hope. We may say that things look so bad at this moment but when we see the positives, it is amazing how satisfying the situation seems for future."

"How can you explain that? You already said wisdom is personal realization and not something which could be taught as a subject of knowledge like science and history." "You just see the positives. You know what is the best part of this chaotic

world? It is the universal acceptance of goodness and wisdom across civilizations and cultures. This world we live in is so big, so diverse and so dynamic. There is huge diversity of culture, mental conditions, stages of social evolution, economic conditions, spiritual sense and religious beliefs and practices. But all religions, all cultural blocks and all humans across geographical and historical layers accept one common goodness and wisdom. All humans accept that love, compassion, peace and brotherhood are the ultimate attainable aim and ends of humanity. The trouble is the wisdom is seldom put to practice. Think it Uttu, it is such a huge satisfaction that at least all men and women accept one goodness. Can you believe that! Seven billion people on this earth subscribing to one single belief across all diversity of religion, cultures and socio-economic realities! My God! It is huge hope for humanity...at least we all know and accept what we all need to do in our lives. The only small trouble is that most of us fail to achieve this de sired aims in our lives. And why do we fail? You can ask that. But the answer, which my foolish brain understands is that our world view is faulty as over the years, we have created for ourselves very wrong benchmarks of personal success and goodness which dominates our world view. And this is because; the typical male view point dominating the world view. We need to change our world view and the mental training that we impart to our new generations. And as I had told you earlier, I have great hopes on the women-centric life-view, which is slowly but assuredly emerging as a beautiful alternative to the prevalent male world order."

"Is that all about your positives? Are there more good news for us?"

"Yes, there are more positives, if you accept patience as a big virtue."

"I still have to live a few decades more and I think I can afford some patience. Do tell me what are they?"

"Not only is there a singularity at the idea level about ultimate goodness and virtue of humanity; you will be amazed that there is concurrence even in practice, which is where we think most men and women fail. If you take a survey of old people, who have led a comfortable life or a luxurious life, you would find them closer to this goodness in actual practice. One such person, who happens to be a close relative of mine, had told me. He was then above 65 years of age. He said, „I regret that I could not love my own son well but I am able to compensate it with my love and affection for my grandson. When my son was a kid, I was then young and

my own senses
were also young demanding too much attention and time. I was busy making
money, enjoying
sex, indulging in habits, making merry with my friends and peer group and
seeing the world. I
could find little time and could devote very little attention to my son's
emotional and other
needs. Now when I am old, my senses do not give me the same kick and my
doctor tells me not
to indulge them, I have the time and mental state to see and derive
pleasure from the growing up
of my grandson. Now I realize what gold I missed and wasted all throughout
my life foolishly
collecting pebbles. The love, the satisfaction and the joy that my
grandchild gives me is my real
asset. But I have to run after him to be with him always and this is really
tiring. This little bastard
is a real tornado?. He then said the golden word, „Now I understand why
interest earned is
always better than the principal amount acquired. You have to toil hard and
waste your precious
time and energy earning it but interest on the principal is something you
get without making any
effort and you have the time and energy as well as the mental state to
enjoy the interest?.

“You mean to say that we all understand wisdom only when we grow old enough
to see our
graves in front of us. What is the positive about that? I am a banker and I
appreciate the theory
on principal and interest as we are trained to keep an eye primarily on
interest earned. Still, I see
only negatives. If we are such fools that we cannot see something so
important when we have
time and energy and what we finally do when we approach the end of it, then
what good I can
take of that?”

“Uttu dear, don't see things from a banker's perspective. The interest
earned no doubt sounds a
better thing but you know it better that there cannot be an interest gained
if you do not have a
principal amount. The principal has to come first and then only an interest
becomes eligible.
Earning a principal in life to gain interest later is not the negative
thing. It is a great positive.
Everyone has to earn his principal. The negative is that we have a world
today, where creating a
principal has become such a tough and humungous physical and mental
exercise that it squeezes
any possibility of enjoyment of leisure. We humans must have a system in
place in contemporary
world where earning a living should not take away everything from youthful
period of life.
Secondly, the world view that we have must also throw away such competitive
and stupid

benchmarks of success and goodness of life that makes us toil more than what is necessary for creating a principal amount for our lives. Anyway, let us not miss the real issue. I was talking about the real positives which are there, the silver lining in the dark cloud."

"Yes Monku, tell me the final thing. I am very happy and eager that we still have a hope. If there is a positive, at least I will have peace of mind that Ashu would someday become a gentleman...come on, give it to me!"

"You can even think of being successful in changing the world view of rest of the world but not Ashu. I think he will be here any moment and it is better we wrap up this talk quickly.

Sometimes, the virtue is in patience. We need to take into account that all good things take time

to mature. Hope is also a close cousin of patience. The real positive is that ultimate and universal

human wisdom is a very simple reality; very much apprehensible and easily executable. You

don't need a doctorate degree for it. Even an illiterate person can handle it well. The fact that I

wish to tell you is that we have practical evidence that when people have their senses stabilized,

poised and receptive in the long journey of life, they are in better position to understand and

accept the wisdom. It is therefore a big positive that wisdom is very much attainable by our

senses which are always referred to as the core trouble-makers for humanity. But in a particular

state of time and space, the same five senses tend to become less reactionary and become

receptive, capable of attaining wisdom. The positive, if we can make of is that we will someday

have a world where humanity will attain this particular mode or state of things greatly amenable

for overall wisdom. We need to accept the fact that as civilized beings, we humans have just

grown and matured above the state of animalism. This world we live is still very nascent. Four or

five thousand years of civilization is a tiny bit time frame in the overall clock system of the

cosmos. It is really pity that we die in less than 70-80 years but the cosmic time-scale is huge, in

billions of years. We humans in it are in a world which is a just born, in the cosmic time

mechanism. I am very sure that in coming few hundred years, humanity will mature and its

senses would reach the stage where an individual reaches when he is 70 or 80. If you study the

evolution of living beings on earth, you will find how a time frame of a few thousand years is

just too little to effect any substantial change. But humanity today is far

better off. We have reached a stage of evolution where things are happening real fast. The next few hundred years will do things to humanity which the previous one million years could not do. We have the technological edge now that holds the potential for future. But, if you think things will be there for your kids and their kids, we can see nothing but doom. This transition, humanity is in, shall take some time to wither away and this shall lead us to the era of sanity. That's why I told you earlier that a desire coming true in a lifetime is a bad idea."

"Okay Monku, no thanks for giving me a solution that even my imagination cannot foresee. I really thought we have something, even a tiny bit for my generation and my kids. Are you sure we, in the meantime cannot do anything?"

"God...! Why should you sound so pessimistic Utta! Everyone has a chance to understand the wisdom and lead his life according to that. Millions of people in the past have acquired this wisdom even when they were kids. And, we all can work towards a better future for the humanity by attempting to bring about a positive change in the world view which we currently hold and suitably change the faulty mental training that makes our senses not understand and accept the wisdom. We and our kids certainly can opt our truth. We can at least refuse to be part of this world view and opt for an alternative mental training for our kids. The charity must begin at home."

"Is this all we can do?"

"Yes, this is the only thing we should do. There is a famous story. A great man was dying and his close acquaintance was by his side. He asked him to say something so that he could learn from the great man. The dying great said, „when I was young, I thought I would change the world. When I grew a bit older, I realized I could do nothing so I decided I would change the society. I grew old to understand that nothing could change and that is why I thought it would be easy to change my family. Now when I am about to die, I realize that no one even in my family changed and it would have been ideal had I decided in my youth itself to change only myself. That probably would have been possible but I am dying, I even cannot do this.?"

Utkarsh did not say a word more. First time in many years, he felt he was alone in this planet. He could not remember his family, his friends or his own being. But he felt light. He felt a void inside him. He realized the zero shaping inside him and usurping all space.

**

CHAPTER 13

"Can't you be on time for anything important", Mayank complained lovingly to Ashish as he entered late for the meeting.

"Monku, clear off, don't say anything to me. Let me have a drink first. After all I am a human being; I can't handle my idiot boss, this chaotic traffic, Utkarsh's wife and you all at one time!"

"Why do you curse my sweet little wife, what she has to do with your already troubled life", Utkarsh asked smiling, understanding quite well why Ashish was referring to his wife for his troubles.

As Mayank helped Ashish in arranging the food he had brought with him and got the glass and ice cubes for his whisky, Utkarsh asked Ashish whether he was successful in doing the work which his wife assigned to him?

"All women in this stupid world are alike", Ashish declared with irritation writ large on his face as he settled for making second glass of whisky, gulping the first one in one go.

"Brilliant discovery...", Mayank teased him.

"Monku, don't pull my legs, I am already in deep trouble because of you.

"Oh God, what I have done wrong?"

"Don't act innocent. If I love a girl, I tell you the next morning, don't I? And this stupid Guddi...why should she be losing her sleep if Monku does not want to show her girl to the world! She has made my life hell...how can I find this girl, nobody else on earth knows about her but she does not take this for an answer. Oh my god...how stupid I am...is Monku's girl around?"

"Relax Ashu, she is not around and don't be troubled, I will tell you everything and will also take her to Guddi very soon."

"Thank God. I thought for a moment this meeting was for introducing her to us. So, you are marrying?"

"Yes, I am. But we are not discussing my marriage and my girl tonight. The agenda is different."

A confused Ashish looked at Mayank and then turned to Utkarsh for help.

"Don't look at me Ashu, Monku hasn't even told me about it. We were waiting for you. Monku has said he has something in his mind and before he makes up his mind, he would like you and me to share with him our opinion on that. I think you make a large glass of your drink and we should move to the talk."

The three settled on the carpet of the living room. Mayank made large glasses of lime soda for

Utkarsh and himself. He asked for a cigarette from Ashu and Utkarsh asked

him to share it with him. Ashish anxiously waited for Mayank to start the talk even as Utkarsh remained relaxed, stretching out on the floor.

Mayank briefed them with the latest developments in a matter of fact manner. He talked about the options he had in career front and also acknowledged that he had been in love for the last many months and now he was marrying. He then took a pause to gauge the reaction of Ashish and Utkarsh, especially the former.

"Now what you wish to do and what you want us to do", asked Ashish.

"I am not sure what I want to do and that is why I want you two to give me your opinion about what I should ideally do."

"If you ask me, I would say you should grab the offer of the rival newspaper. Take the opportunity to enjoy the editorship and do what you could not do so far. I cannot think why you ask me what you should do. Always look ahead and above in life and especially in career.

Editorship is a definite promotion and no doubt they will pay you better. Utkarsh would get his transfer in the new place you will go and I will quit my job to get a new one in your new place.

Anyway, I am fed with this boss and the company. May be, I will find a suitable girl in the new place too. I now need to marry to keep pace with you. "

"What you suggest Utkarsh?"

"I am not suggesting anything. I believe, Monku has always had different priorities in life and even in his career he values things more than the money and position. If Monku feels he can find better purpose and peace in his existing job, he might well think of remaining where he is.

Anyway, the owner has assured him proper audience, so he might be in better position to find his purpose here than going to a new place where he will have completely new set of people to deal with."

"What purpose...! Jobs have only one purpose; the money that comes with it and the position of greater power. Editorship is bringing him both so the purpose is clear as anything. Utkarsh, we were taught in eighth class that one should always chase what is certain. Don't you remember a bird in hand is always better than two in the bush?"

"Ashu, media is not a job as yours and mine. Monku is in media not for a living but for a purpose."

"So you say working for a living is not a purpose? And what is the other purpose? Changing the society? Improving the ways of the incorrigible idiots of this ever-so-in-crisis nation? Making

this world a better place to live? What more?"

"My God Ashu, why do you always take things in their extremes?"

"I am sorry Utkarsh...you know I am not good with words. But believe me; I sincerely cannot

understand where the dilemma is?"

"You don't need to be sorry Ashu. Utkarsh and I value your views and your inputs have always

helped me see the larger rationality, especially the popular one. I would always want that you

should stick to your views."

"Yes Ashu, Monku values your views very much but I wonder he didn't call for them when he

settled for his life partner", Utkarsh teased him.

"He consults me only when he is in a dilemma", Ashish said with innocence.

"Now he will need

my expertise as your dilemma starts only after you fall in love."

"Dilemma is not the core issue Ashu. I and Utkarsh believe you are a mainstream person. Your

world view accommodates most of the popular perceptions and we also believe that they are very

contemporary. When I am seeing things and create a perception about things affecting me, I am

led by my own set of ideas which are not mainstream ones. That is why, your opinion counts for

me. It sort of balances me. I must declare it that though at times you sound offensively obsessed

by your views but Ashu, you are always true to what you feel. Honesty and transparency has

always been the hub of the wheel of our friendship. I expect the same from you today."

"Go ahead Monku, tell me what you have in your heart. Anyway, after I am down three glasses

of whisky, I always speak from my heart."

Mayank paused for a while to pick up the right words for the start. He also repeated his resolve

that he would not commit himself to a decision before listening out to Ashu and Utkarsh. He also

realized that his words must also reflect his objectivity.

"I think, before I tell you what I have in my mind, I must seek your concurrence on a notion

which basically defines what I wish to do. There is a popular theory in political philosophy

which says that people enter into an agreement with society under which every person agrees to

surrender some of his individual rights so that he or she could enjoy a set of rights in collectivity.

There is however also a view that says, rights exist only in collectivity as individuals cannot have

rights in isolation. This is one side of the coin. The history however, tells us that collectivity

always has instinctive corrupting tendencies as power rests with collectivity and power corrupts.

Given that most powers have in-built tendency to move towards absoluteness and there is a

saying that absolute power corrupts absolutely, the collectivity at some stage becomes absolutely corrupt. We all live in the collectivity of society, be it the social collectivity, the economic or political collectivity. Historically, individuals or motley group of individuals have challenged the corrupting absoluteness of collectivity and most revolutions start as individual struggle against collective corruption. When the individuals gain larger volume and power than the existing collectivity, revolutions are successful and the status quo of a corrupting collectivity is overthrown by a change. "

"Oh my God...! Monku, your editorial has evaporated the effect of the three glasses of whisky.

Can't you simplify things for me? I am a simple guy. Even my genius has specific limitations...I am trained for multi-tasking but not multi- intellectualism."

"Ashu, it is simple and not beyond your hereditary constraints. What Monku wants to say is that

in the long history of mankind, there has been an incessant struggle between individual and collectivity and it is to the credit of individuals that corrupting influences of an established collectivity are corrected; at least challenged, am I right Monku?"

"So, what I am supposed to understand? The lessons from history, the stupid struggles of my troubled humanity or what?"

"Yes Ashu, Monku wants you to understand that history tells us that individual position, however conflicting it may sound, has been fruitful and correcting influence on established and mainstream collective norms."

"I would add to it Ashu that what history tells us is that the majority has an in-built tendency to corruption as it intrinsically aims at absoluteness. That is why, a healthy society is one where individualism is respected and given an equitable, if not equal, field for fair play. Similarly, a rational being is one who adheres to the collective knowledge but also respects individual wisdom."

"Okese... accepted. But why should you tell all this to me and why now?"

"Ashu, Monku is telling you this because he wants you to respect what he views and desires as an individual which might stand in clash with the collective and mainstream practices."

"Not only that Utkarsh. I also want Ashu to be open to the idea that the mainstream can be also be subjected to the individual scrutiny and not always the vice-versa. An individual's nonconformism to collective compliance should not always be brushed aside as dangerous absurdity and mundane stupidity."

"Wait...wait please! Let me have another drink to clear my mind. I have an intuition that you and Utkarsh have joined hands to put me in some sort of trap. Why should you two tell me about the corruption of collectivity? Am I some sort of spokesperson for this what you call collectivity.

Am not I an individual too?"

"Yes you are and I am very sure that you respect the value of individual's right to take on the corrupting influences of collective status quoism, especially when it starts to show perceptible signs of degeneration."

"Okay, I do what you say; then, what next?"

"There are two parts of the reality that makes me drift towards a decision. First, my perception that media, where I work, has become such a place that I think I should not be a part of anymore.

Second, there is a realization that I have something so beautiful and meaningful in my life that I feel I should devote all my time and energy to enjoy that."

"So, what you want to do now, go to the Himalayas and become a saint...a majnu to be precise..?"

"Ashu, what is this? You just said, you would respect individuality and now you speak to Monku like that...how can you!"

"I am respecting his individuality Utkarsh. If he says he wants to go to Himalayas for a honeymoon with his girl then it is okay with me but I cannot accept that this world, or for that matter the media has become an awful or unsuitable place to be in. When was this world a good place, let alone the ideal one to live? You think of media as a bad place, come to my world and then see what a hell I work in and still able to smile. When will you people accept the realism of life? If this world is stinking, buy any good deodorant from the market and if you do not have the money to buy one, be habituated to the stink...stop complaining."

"What is the realism Ashu? How can you say Monku is acting escapist?"

"I am not a philosopher but I know it quite simple. This world has always been like that, good or bad. This is reality and the wisdom is that you create a way around the chaos and stink and move ahead."

"You mean to say, the realism is in finding a solution in the chaos, whichever way it comes?"

"I think so, what's wrong with this view?"

"Your realistic world says that if the need be, you should call a donkey your dad, just to find a timely solution to a problem. This is taught as realism but another realism is that a donkey cannot be our father, some fathers may however sound like a donkey. And yet another reality is that

humanity should never bow to a donkey's whim even if that creature blocks your road to the solution. The reality is that we all should strive to create a world where all such donkeys are relegated to their rightful places."

"Now Ashu, this is wrong! You cannot take an exception to prove a rule. The proverb is all about being practical in this world. What I say is that realism is in accepting things as they are and then find a solution facing it. I am against this escapism...after all we are men and men should always battle it out in the middle and not flee away."

"Now take it Monku...this male world view is in front of you. The battlefield syndrome of male world view will not leave you in peace. All yours...I quit!"

"Now what is this? Why did you drag the gender question? You won't understand Ashu, it is a long story you missed as you came late."

"No Utkarsh, Ashu can understand everything. We must come around this realism idea and know the dynamics of this world view about battling and escaping."

"Yes Monku, do tell me. Do you think I am wrong? Correct me if I am."

"Ashu, my brother, there is a word in our dictionary called relativity. There are things which you see and others which you cannot see but feel; there are matter and ideas. In natural state of

affairs, they are essentially value neutral. Good or bad, important or redundant; it depends on the relative position from where you approach them. A knife is a knife but it changes meaning when

in a robber's hand and when in a doctor's. Both realism and idealism are subject to the test of

this relativity. The relativity demands that we approach any idea or a matter in perfect

objectivity. Subjective preference for any single entity may be lopsided and may end up in seeing

the world from a biased perspective. This world is better off neither in absolute realism nor in

absolute idealism. Neither unbridled individualism nor the absolute collectivity is prescription

for goodness. Both interchangeably balance each other. Then there is a question of prioritizing

them. There cannot be a universal rule to what we should put ahead, idealism or realism. We

need to assess the situation with objectivity to decide on the priorities. But still, idealism has an

upper hand because often, it balances the unbridled realism."

"Monku, the trouble with Ashu is that he always puts realism upfront and does not want to give idealism any chance whatsoever."

"I deny the charges. You can say Utkarsh that I am more inclined to realism and why should not

I be? I live in a world where I have seen all idealism as a façade to the hardcore realism. I believe

in realism because I believe in truth. Monku has always told me that I

should never practice
hypocrisy and I find idealism the safe haven for the biggest of hypocrites.
I profess realism
because I really think; it at least allows me to be honest. If I am bad, if
I am corrupt, I have the
courage to say it. I am honest. At least, I don't pretend to be what I am
not and cannot ever be.
My naked body is my creed. I am not like my boss who aims at profit
maximization at any cost
and speaks volumes on corporate social responsibility in seminars."
"Monku, this „hips don't lie? thought system is strange. Ashu says his
naked body is his creed.
But is this realism practical? Why don't we all walk on the street naked,
showing our ass to the
whole world? Truth and realism cannot be naked. There is a pardadari, a
cover for every naked
truth to be accepted in the practical world."
"Oh God Utkarsh...! Why do you always take my words at their face value? I am
not saying we
should walk naked. What I am saying is that the reality is that beneath the
clothe we all are naked
and it is a truth."
"This is exactly what you have to understand Ashu. We are born naked but in
a civil society, we
need some sort of a pardadari - a cover. Similarly, the realism what you
call as naked truth may
be as natural as we are born but it always needs a cover of idealism to be
practically operational
in our civilized society. We don't live in jungle Ashu. The naked realism
is not a prescription for
civil society. The cover of idealism is always needed and what Monku is
saying is that idealism
has an upper hand as it covers up the brute and naked body of realism."
"Okay, you cover up the realism but still the world's operative prudence is
realism, won't you
accept that?"
"No Ashu, it is not. There is at best a latent desire among a minority of
people to make brute
realism as the operative wisdom of human action but the world still runs on
cherished ideals of
humanity. We have a typical case in India. We all know; the chief trouble
of India is the largely
pampered and irresponsible citizenry. The democracy here has unleashed all
rights but few
duties. The bureaucracy, the politicians, the elite and socially strong
people have misused the
ideals of democracy. A minority of people have usurped Indian democratic
fruit. The masses too
think democracy extends them all rights but never feel the obligations for
the ir duties. The
trouble is, democracy as an ideal itself is in the root of larger trouble
of India. If you apply your
realism as an operative prudence, the truth is, India needs a strong and
decisive hand as ultimate

authority. We all see, larger part of India still has little governance. The rule of law, the benefits of welfare state, a civil administration, the dispensation of justice, the fruit of economic growth are still like islands in vast sea, available only to a few in big cities but poorly visible in majority of India. But still, we keep our faith intact on democracy as the ideal operative prudence. The iron hand, the authoritative might of a decisive ruling dispensation is not acceptable. The stupidity of majority is still preferable over the tyranny of a minority. We cannot just give realism a free hand just because idealism has not fared reasonably well in our selfish and foolish world."

"Ashu, I and Utkarsh always appreciate your honesty. We value your opinion because you are always true to your belief. But what you complained about idealism is the corruption of idealism and not idealism itself. That's what Utta has told you about our democracy. That is why I told you about our subjective priorities. The idealism of a knife is that it should be in a doctor's hand but if a doctor uses the knife for his money-making adventures, it is the corruption of the idealism and this corruption is done on the pretext of realism. This is the trouble. I tell you an interesting story. I had investigated about a big heart specialty hospital last year. My reliable sources within the hospital told me that the owner, a big time doctor, had made huge investments on latest and costly medical equipments which had landed him in trouble. The trouble was that his investment necessitated that his hospital carried at least 35 open heart surgeries a month to break even but currently the numbers were falling short, averaging only 20 a month. It was revealed to me that to meet the numbers, many heart patients, who could be cured by drugs and simple interventions were advised to undergo open heart surgery. The patient and his or her family were fed adverse reports making them so panicky that they did not even consider a second opinion. The hospital saw a 250 per cent rise in open heart surgeries within six months. When I talked with the doctors working in the hospital, many of them justified it by giving strange logic. „You know, generally, we do it on those patients who are rich and can afford it?, a doctor said. Another said, „we basically do what the patient anyway would need in next two years. These rich people would anyway need the open heart surgery as they do not follow the tough lifestyle regime which is necessary with drug treatment.? We can say that what the

doctors did was justified, if we see from a point of view of realism but it is corruption of idealism. The doctors are trusted like God. No amount of realism can justify the breach of trust."

"Why did you not expose them? I don't remember you ran the story in your newspaper, did he Utkarsh?"

"You are right. The editor turned panicky when I discussed the story with him. The management refused to give permission as the hospital was a big time advertiser with us. The owner of the hospital was very friendly with media and always offered free services to media persons. The report was dumped. The best part of it was that the editor told me that there was nothing new and exciting about the story as it was a routine affair in most private hospitals. "

"This is realism for you Ashu and I think, you are sure we all need to accept things as they are and move ahead with it!"

"I am not saying it is acceptable. Do not misinterpret me Utkarsh. What my humble submission is that things like this are what this world is full of. Why blame media? Still, media brings out so many bad things every morning. Media too has a right to survive and can you show me a single person on earth who is not making compromises to survive?"

"Ashu, I am sorry if I put you wrong but please try to understand what Monku wants to show you very clearly. This world has equal utility for both idealism and realism, even if you do not accept that idealism is a superior position. Monku has already told you that what your priorities are, depend on your relative positioning to a particular scenario. Man's ingenuity creates strange justifications and subjective truths. But above all remains an objective reality which is the core idealism."

"This is true Ashu. There are times when we face the question of survival and for all living being, survival is first realism. But, seldom would you see wrongs being committed for the cause of survival. Crimes and corruption are not the outcome of survival demands but a tool for acquiring that extra compared to the fellow people. Even if it seems there is a question of survival, in most cases, it is a case of inflated sense of threat to survival. The loss that the hospital faced, making its owner resort to corruption looks like a survival question but it is not. It is a simple reality of a business calculation going awry. Investments are made for long-term profit but that hospital owner wanted to have profits from day one and this

certainly is a hugely inflated sense of survival threat. Even in government sector, where you see most of corruption happening or in the corporate world where unethical and illegal practices are resorted to, the survival is not threatened. Yes, the level of competitiveness is intense and nobody wants to be a loser."

"But Monku, in today's reality where stakes are so high in corporate world, a loser is almost like a dead man. You know it well that such is today's market that if you are not number one or two, you are virtually out of the markets! I can tell you, the corporate world lives on the dictum of „me only? as the earlier „me too? syndrome will kill you and your business in a day. You know this struggle about brand power in the contemporary world? It's a battle out there, you win or you are eliminated. Believe me Monku, survival is the core concern in today's competitive world."

"Ashu, this is where we go wrong. This is clearly an inflated sense of survival question. The problem is with contemporary corporate culture and functioning. If stakes are so high that it creates survival question then there is a clear need to correct the amount of your stakes. There is intrinsically something wrong about how you do business. You know Ashu, only a few months back, my editor said to me, „Mayank you will never be successful in life?. When I asked why he thought I had such bleak prospect, he replied, „you are a vegetarian, you do not take liquor and above all, you do not womanize...how you can succeed in career with such old fashioned inhibitions and limitations?? It is very clear to me that if these are the qualifications for success in career and life, the problem is not entirely with the definition of success but mostly with our character which justifies all possible short-cuts in life for attaining a position which the social benchmarks have labeled as success."

"But the point is Monku, what your editor said is the truth of corporate culture and I am repeatedly telling you that this is how the world is, you like it or not. You accept it or condemn it, it's your choice but you cannot change the reality as it exists today." "I know Ashu, what my editor said to me was a sincere advice to me and I accept that he wished and meant good for me. He has always been so. He has told me how tough and difficult his journey has been in his long career. What he prescribes to me emanates from the insecurity that he has faced. I too live in this world and being a journalist, I happen to

see mostly the grey side of the world. The two Cs of life, the contact and connections are so very important for attaining success defined as per the existing world view. I know the two Ws, wine and women help you gain better and faster connectivity to the two Cs, so very crucial for success. But then, my humble submission is that I can still survive without them. And why only me, the whole system can survive."

"And what Monku is the right recipe for survival?"

"I tell you a story which a poor tea stall vendor outside my office once told me. Once upon a time, two dead bodies were floating in the river Ganges. Both the bodies had their hands on the forehead. As the current brought them together, the dead bodies exchanged greetings. One dead body asked the other as why he was holding his hands on his forehead. The body said that he always wanted to be a rich man and so he resorted to all wrongs and corruption to acquire money. He gave his sons all possible comforts of life but the greedy sons could not wait for his natural death and after killing him, threw his dead body in the river. That is why he is hitting his head with his palms in utter regret why he became a corrupt man. Had he been an honest person, his sons would not have killed him in greed of his money. He then asked the other dead body as why he was doing the same. The body said he was a dry honest man and because of that his sons were brought up in utter hardship. The sons chose to kill him and threw his body in the river instead of spending the little money left on his treatment as he fell ill. He was now regretting as why he chose to be honest. Had he been corrupt, his sons would not have killed him for want of money."

"This story suggests there is a dead end all the way! No solutions anyway..."

"No Ashu, it is rather the contrary. You should not take into account the sad part that both were finally killed. The important point you missed is that both were dissatisfied with what they did. Both felt that they wasted their lives doing something which they always believed was the right thing to do. You need to be very clear from the very start what you want out of your life. Success always wants its cost; you must be ready to pay for it. But then, what I wish to say is that there are alternative ways available. Just don't be part of this success thing if it does not come the way you want it to be. Success has to come at a cost what I would decide, not at what success decides for me. I would thrive, let alone survive, if I choose what I want."

Ashish did not say anything. There was silence for few minutes. Mayank went out to bring the food plates from the dining table as Ashish made another drink.

"I do not know what Ashu has in his mind about whatever you have been telling him but Monku, what I have to say is, why withdraw, why not be there and keep our efforts to make a difference, even if a very small one?"

"Yes Monku, I agree to Utkarsh. You are in a position from where you can make a difference. If you withdraw, if you take an alternative route to your own peace, nothing will happen. You yourself said that every individual has a right to point out the correction in the collectivity. I think we should conclude this talk. We agree that this world is not as it ought to be. We also agree that the collectivity needs correction and an individual should do the correction, if he or she has a chance and it is very clear that Monku has a chance in hand. I am glad I do not have any! Further, we agree, sorry..., now I agree that though it is hell of a task but this bloody world can be changed, it should be changed...even if a bit, it is not bad at the end of the day.

Satisfaction is always better than the joy, Monku has taught me. Done then, should I finish the remaining of my whisky in the bottle?"

"And what about Monku's job? Should he remain with the current job as the environment here is more conducive or should he move to take up the editorship as it will probably give him larger say and control?"

"Oh yes...I think, there seems to be a preference for the current job as Monku now has direct access to the owner. Best it is anyway. I and Utkarsh won't have to move to a new place with Monku. I am anyway thinking of changing the industry and may find a job in media itself. This way I can help Monku effect changes. He always needs me to be focused, you know that Utkarsh?"

Utkarsh looked at Mayank for his approval. This arrangement suited him fine. But he had the intuition that Mayank had something different in his mind. He however accepted that Mayank was not telling it not because he did not want to share it with them but because he had not made up his mind.

"I am waiting Monku...I am not going home today, I am sleeping here. So, if you say yes, I will finish off the remaining stuff in the bottle."

"What should I say Ashu! I am not sure of yes and no."

"Then you should follow what Utkarsh said is the operative wisdom of democracy. I and Utkarsh

believe that you should stay with your current job and do whatever little you can to make a difference. And as this forms two-third majority, you must submit to the majority wisdom. And as Utkarsh said, „stupidity of majority must prevail over the tyranny of minority?, so we close the deal here.”

Mayank did not say a word more. He just smiled. Utkarsh knew; democracy was no solution for what Mayank had in mind. A revolution was probably the answer.

**

CHAPTER 14

The editor accepted his request to meet at his home instead of office.

Mayank reached the editor's home in a very relaxed mood. He knew, at home, the editor would talk more like a big brother. The editor, like many professionals had successfully developed the habit of leaving his heart at home before leaving for office. Mayank was sure; he wanted to confront not the editor but a senior friend.

The editor himself opened the door and waved him in. He was probably still sleeping and was

awakened by the doorbell buzz. Mayank was happy that he had caught him early morning. This was the best time when people like him would be him and not his job title. Mornings are good

because they present people without their make ups sans cosmetic personality. Mayank had come

just to see him. He had no agenda with him but he knew, the editor had a lot to say and it was ideal to listen to him, not the editor.

“I hope you don't mind to have a cup of tea with me?, the editor asked with a tint of sarcasm in his voice.

“Why do you ask that...you know it well it's my privilege.”

“I asked because you now a day enjoy tea or coffee only with big people and that too in seven

star hotel suits. A poor editor's home tea may not suit your taste.”

Mayank could not resist a smile. He did not want to lead him to talks around work and issues

concerning their professional universe. He wished it to remain personal.

“A son going out, seeing places and exploring life is what a father wants for his son but both

know that home is where they come back and the food tastes the best.”

“And what the father should do when the son goes out to people and places projecting him as a

devil”, the editor persisted with his cynicism.

“He should straightaway ask his son about the truth instead of going by what others tell him about the reality.”

“Why should he believe what the son says is truth?”

“Because, what you hear is other's mouth and what you believe is your own ear.”

"And why should he believe that his ear is still his and worth his trust?"
"It is the problem of the heart and not the ear. The best option is best till the heart accepts it as one."

"That comes to the truth that I am the problem."

"This is the problem."

"What?"

"The problem is; first thing should always come first. Let us enjoy the tea first."

The editor looked in his eyes and smiled back. Mayank's face exuded the serenity and confidence which the editor could see and got somehow assured. The tea arrived.

"We all have one common problem", Mayank led the talk. "Where we are sitting right now is your house. But the reality is that we are in the living room of your house and this is only part of your house, not the full house. We can say, this room is very well your house but it is not your complete house. Sitting in this room, if I believe that I know your entire house then I am a big fool. Human personalities are also the same."

"What do you mean to say?"

"We all are like houses, our personalities having different rooms for different purposes. We get associated to people in the society as one room of this house but never as one whole house. It is not even possible. I have come to your house but you can make me sit only in one room, never in all rooms of your house simultaneously. I can say I visited your house but actually I visited only one room. We also visit a person but meet only one small personality of his full persona. The problem is; we define this one room as whole house. You are an editor but this is only one small room of your big house; I mean your personality. If I say that I know the editor inside out and that's why I also know you completely then I am stupid."

"Should I understand that you mean to say is I am not seeing the whole of your personality and this is my problem?"

"This is not the problem. It is a difficult reality. Why talk about me, it is your house but even you cannot live in all the rooms of your house at any given time. You actually live only in one room at a time. If you want to see your entire house, you cannot do it living inside it. You will have to come out of it and see it from a distance to get the picture of your whole house. People usually do not even see their own personalities in full. How can they see other's personalities in completeness and totality? But the fact remains that we all live in houses with many rooms."

"And what do you suggest? I should live in one-room house or move out of my

multi- room

house to see it in totality?"

"You have options. It is entirely up to your discretion. Your house is actually one single roof.

Your architect has structured them by erecting walls to create different rooms for distinct

purposes. You can choose to undo the walls and make the whole house one single room. Or, you

can make every single room the room of innocence and this way the entire house will become a

space of singular and uniform innocence."

"Why not go to the jungle, grow long beard and become saints? The open sky is singular,

ultimate and infinite innocence!"

"A difficult choice but it is one."

"Mayank, your editorial is good but nobody reads them. We are into news business and what

sells is not innocence. It's bloody life. More rooms in your house mean more status and goodwill

for you and more than that, it is good for your security and mental peace.

You can keep yourself

away from unnecessary people. Not all of them are worthy to allow them to the bedroom and

that's why a living room is a must."

"I told you it's your choice."

"And what is your choice? If your choice is not my choice then it does not mean my choice is

wrong!"

"I never said that mine is the right choice and yours is wrong."

"But I say your choice is wrong, even if mine is not right. And I can say that because I have been

through all these which you have just begun to see. You are at the start of the journey and I stand

on the end of it. You cannot see what I have already seen. And you will also see the same when

you will end your journey. Raw milk and cheese are different things though their origin is the

same. When life ferments you, when its practicality makes you go through the long and stinking

processing, you lose the idealistic white shine of the milk and its fluidity. Milk is for babies and

they get it gratuitously. But men have to battle it out to grab their share of cheese to enjoy it with

their hard-earned wine in a relaxing evening. You too will lose your milky idealism when you

reach my age. I hope I live to see it happen."

"Sir, I am only saying that you have the option. You could stick to your milk. We can keep out

of the battles for cheese, at least."

"No I can't. Have I set the battles for me? They are there and don't expect me to be a coward to

turn away from them. That is where you are wrong. You cannot keep your milk for ever. Your

innocence does not come with long shelf- life, quite like milk. You do not

have option. Smart people make cheese out of it. A fool like you, insisting with milk will end up with nothing as the milk will go sour and become of no use."

"You still have options...we can make powder out of milk to extend its shelf- life."

"When will you grow out of your baby obsessions? When will you understand the taste of pizzas and pastas which the whole adult world likes? And nobody makes pizzas and pastas with milk powder; at least I don't have the idea."

"No options...even I cannot make them without cheese."

"Mayank, you are like a younger brother to me. I do not need to trouble my brain so early in the morning but I am doing it just to show you the righteousness of life we are made to face and live.

I wish you better success than me in life. That's why I am arguing with you. I too know what is

good and what is bad. But we are not faced with this question anymore. The question is what

works and what fails. My experience is; goodness does not always work. You know how this

whisky tastes which I gallop half a bottle every day? How can you know! I know. Milk definitely

tastes better and is also good for health but still I drink this bitter thing because it works for me."

Mayank did not reply. He had achieved what he wanted. The editor was talking like a big brother

and he wished to listen to him. Every life, every life experience is like a flower. The bouquet of

life is made out of bunch of such flowers of different hue and shape. The editor construed

Mayank's silence as his coalescence with his ideas. He continued with more authority and poise.

"I became editor when I was only 29. I had dreams. Creation gives you a huge kick. It somehow

licks your hurt pride which your own fallibility and sense of eventual mortality leaves you with.

There is an instinctive desire in every human being to create something which would defeat his

own mortality and live even when he is dead long ago. I had prepared great starts for the first day

of my editorship and you know what eventually happened that day when I entered my office? A

group of colleagues opposed to my elevation as editor, where till yesterday I worked as newseditor,

had removed the big and nice chair of the editor and instead placed an ordinary one. The

whole day I spent finding that missing chair and finally I got it re-installed in my office chamber.

The whole month I battled with the opponents and finally established myself as the undisputed

leader. This is life."

"What happened to your opponents?"

"Two things I never forget - the faces of my opponents and the birthday of my wife. Within a month I got them either transferred or sacked and brought in my own loyal team. I admit I am a bit paranoid about loyalty. When you will become editor one day, you too will understand quality and good work are important but the first thing you need is to survive. On the top, you are not lonely. Such banal idealisms stink. There are hordes of people wanting to pull you down and then you do not have options."

"I understand the predicament. But that was the start. You have been editor for last many years now and I don't think the survival issue stands anymore."

"Come out of the world of wishful thinking Mayank. Your innocence mindset does not allow you to see things on the other side of the coin. You can only wish that you grow alone with time. The reality is, with time, if your friends grow with you, so do your enemies."

"The great absurdity of this evolution is that our enemies also think the same about ourselves.

The cyclic stupidity remains ever energized."

"The innocence however may buy the satisfaction that it didn't start the chain, nor can it help in its end. Everyone has to be in this grind. You are born with your enemies; you make friends only when you grow."

"Is this all you want me to learn?"

"Why should I make you learn anything? It is your choice. I wish well for you. That's why I am telling you about the practical realities of life. I may not have the artistry of language and the charisma of an intellectual but I can also make long and passionate speeches about the virtue of being compassionate even with your enemies. But I am also well prepared and capable to chop off the asses of my enemies. I just wish you also see the reality and brace up for practicality of life. Enemies are enemies because they don't understand the language of compassion."

"All our enemies must also be thinking the same way about their enemies."

"May be, but did I start it. I too wanted to be a good editor. I got only a few thousand when I was first made editor but I was happy. I only had one enemy; the outgoing editor. Now I earn more than a million and I have a few thousand enemies. Show me the compassion and I would reciprocate in double. Yes they do, they show it only when they offer wreath on your coffin."

"You believe there is no chance for survival of innocence. Is death the only innocence?"

"I think so. It is like you have no money and you have no friends, no enemies either. Then you

toil hard to make a hundred rupee. Instantly, hundreds of people who have a hundred rupee note or less become your enemy. Everyone fears competition. These hundreds have the option to work harder and add more money so that their hundred rupees become two hundred. But everyone wants the easy and lazy option. It is always difficult to grow above the competition and very easy to eliminate or emaciate the competition. If you and I both have hundred rupees then it is difficult and time taking for either of us to earn another hundred to become one up. So what I do is steal your hundred rupees. This gives instant and better results. I become two hundred rupees and the greatest joy is that you become a big zero. That's why I said, enemies come easy to you."

"I think I should suggest that enemy is quite a harsh word. Competitor looks like the right reference and makes us take the life a bit more easy and friendly."

"Euphemism is the problem of the heart and not the eye. I take what I see. Competitors are in sports only; not even in all sports. In life you have only enemies. The bread and butter is where life's fiercest and deadliest battles are fought. Survival is no sports, it's a battle. Your euphemism will make you the first victim in this battle. It's your choice. I know my options very well."

"But we should also count our friends, if we are so obsessed by our enemies. I think, the owner of the enterprise should be our best friend. I don't think he wants battles where his profits are at stake."

"This is the last time I am warning you; come out of your world of dreams and wishful thinking. You will end up as a big stupid and not a shred of friends. This whole rot in this world has been wreaked by none other but the owners of enterprises. Why this world is such a hell? Because, the owner of this world; our all powerful and almighty God is nonchalant. He himself lives in the comfort of heaven and lords over the world so full of filth and felony. Why doesn't he punish the bad ones? Because he wants the continuation of his almighty status! He is the most insecure of us. He knows it well that if all people on earth will become happy and self-sufficient, nobody will even bother to remember him. The lord's compassion is worthy only when his empire lives in the pool of woes. The magnanimity is virtue only for non-entity; the able take it as pomposity."

"But the God is not running a profit-making corporation. Our owners may not like the woes of

his empire as it may affect his corporation's efficiency and ultimately its profitability."

"That's why God is slightly better than our owners. If God can be so unkind, when he is not into profit taking venture, think of what monsters our owners can be when what they care is profit and more of it."

"I cannot understand you. Anyone would guard his profitability but why should one intentionally make his enterprise a battleground? I believe, owners want the best for something they so arduously create and struggle hard to grow."

"That's why I say you will see the reality only when you land at the end of journey. At the start of journey, where you stand now, things do not look like what they actually are."

"I admit that but it still does not answer my question. If you think you can trust me, you should make things clear to me so that I can really learn from your experiences."

"Trust is not the issue. If you tell what I tell you to the boss, you will lose your own credibility.

In our world, a man is valued only when he can keep secrets and promises."

"Then tell me your experiences."

"You know; in old times, there were kings and they lorded over large empires. Communication

was very poor and it was very difficult to rule for long. The kings had developed a very trusted

communication system through a large network of spies. The spies were not only his eyes and

ears taking him to all parts of his empire sitting right in the safety of his palace but they also

performed one huge function for him. They ensured that all the possible enemies of the king had

more enemies to battle with so that they could never be so strong to challenge the king. And, the

king knew it well; the closest of friends were the most likely and potent enemies anytime

opportunity presented them with a chance. So, he had his most trusted and loyal spies working

overtime on his wives, ministers and commanders. The secret lover of king's dearest wife would

be his most trusted spy. The wife of his most powerful minister would be on his payroll. He

would go to any length to ensure that all his friends and enemies alike would never ever get so

powerful to challenge him. The easiest thing to do was to create so many enemies to all of them

that they remained weak and vulnerable ever and always dependent on the magnanimity of the

king for their survival. Do you ever consider a charity for Bill Gates!

Magnanimity is a joy only

when there are beggars around you. "

"This is very mean interpretation of humanity. I am not sure it is an exception or a rule. I have a

feeling you are blowing it all up."

"Foolish boy, this is not an interpretation, it is a transcendental reality. We live in a world of far greater distrust and far superior communication technologies. Though, they have euphemized things and call espionage as intelligence. When you will end up on top, you will understand the lethal world of corporate intelligence. The history was benevolent in some respect. The king's magnanimity was king-size and those who were loyal enjoyed the extravagance of his compassion. Our owners are banyas. They behave like kings and want the kingdom's booty for their own luxuries but their magnanimity and compassion is no better than a beggar. A beggar is even better; he will give you one rupee if he has two. The owners of today's enterprise cannot."

"If people on top of the rung, like you, paint such painfully sad picture of reality, what picture the petty employees must be having in their minds."

"This is the good part of the enterprise. The starters see the rosy picture. They still live on the very comforting hope towards lord's magnanimity. Their positivity actually is the energy that makes all modern enterprises run and thrive. A cancer patient has lots of hopes from his doctors and the God. He prays a lot and believes in what his doctors prescribe for him. He suffers a lot but his hopes still make him carry on the struggle with vigor. Then the doctors finally tell him there is no hope and he understands that God did not pay heed to his prayers. He dies before his death actually comes. He does not pray. Hopes should never die before our deaths. I salute your hope. I am at the end of the journey. My hope has died long ago. I do not pray to the magnanimity of my God. I simply battle on my own to get my cut of the cake."

"But you still smile. You still fight it out like a true warrior. How can you say that?"

"Because; I don't drink milk! I enjoy my whisky and this makes me connect to this world well. It always reminds me that this world is bitter, not worth your good taste but still, this is what gives you the kick of life; it works well for you. It makes you smile without the energy of the stupid ephemeral hope."

"So, there is no hope for people with option of milk like me?"

"You are hopeless anyways. Don't lick my brain. I am getting late for office. Come and join this evening. And do come with your hope. I like its fragrance. Everyone loves a toddler smelling like a pot of milk."

"I will do it only when you promise that you will teach me the art of

making cheese out of the milk."

"Start drinking whisky with me and you will automatically learn the great art which I learnt through so much pain. Anyway, what's the use of making cheese if you can't enjoy it with whisky", the editor said and went inside the bathroom. Mayank knew, when he will come out of the bathroom, he will be the editor and not the big brother he was a few minutes back. It was time he moved out.

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CHAPTER 15

She did not quite understand what he had in mind but she said okay to what Mayank proposed. He told her to arrange things as they were going for week-long pre-wedding honeymoon to Manali on Friday night. She reminded him that he had an all important meeting coming up on Friday with the owner of his newspaper and asked whether the journey same night would be possible. He assured her that there would not be any problem. She could not see the smiling face of Mayank on phone but she could sense the confidence and joy that his voice carried. He told her that he had already booked the tickets and hotel and would be with her by Friday afternoon to help her in packing. Mayank smiled at the different strokes of destiny. Last time he had to meet the owner, he wished to have some time beforehand to prepare for what he would talk with him. This time, he had the time, the whole evening and night to plan and prepare for the proposed morning meeting with the owner but he did not feel the need for preparation. He sat by the window of his house watching and enjoying the blank sky. The blue sky would gradually turn grey and finally black. The darkness of the sky was what he was waiting for. He had a feeling it would look wonderful. He reminisced and smiled. How many times in his life, he found and cherished loads of beautiful purposes. He smiled because he realized how important stupidities of life are... how they extend you the chance to be wise. How people miss the relevance of stupidities as catalyst of wisdom. He recalled the efforts and pain he had to invest in the preparedness for attaining his purposes at different stages of his life. The brilliance of the conspiracy of almighty... whenever he prepared hard and meticulously for a purpose, he wanted to attain, he would invariably fail. He would feel bad, low and frustrated about the wastage of his investments. Most of his successes came when he had done the least preparation and was not even sure of the purpose. He

had finally accepted that preparation and purpose had a strange relationship. He understood that preparation for a purpose is a misnomer. The preparedness is required for something which is uncertain. His father would often tell him - „hope for the best and be prepared for the worst?. He realized it that what is certain and a definite purpose is what falls in the realm of hope and preparedness is required for what is uncertain and does not form a purpose. If preparedness and purpose were linear realities, there would have been far more success stories on earth. Success has traditionally been referred to as object of desire, hope and dreams. The real world faces the trouble that failures are the rule and most people are least prepared for it. Mayank realized that one needs to be in the state of readiness not for a specific purpose but as life in general. One needs not to prepare but to be ready. Preparedness is for a specific purpose whereas readiness is for all time and circumstances to come. Readiness itself is the larger purpose for all preparedness. Preparedness is only a process whereas readiness is the end product, the final destination. The readiness is required not only for failures but also for successes. Handling success is more tedious task than handling failures. Success requires larger readiness.

Mayank was in the readiness and that's why he did not feel the need for preparedness before his crucial meet with the owner of his newspaper next morning. The smile on his face was the shine of satisfaction of the readiness. He smiled as he realized he had attained readiness. When you attain, you go blank. The zero is the highest point of readiness. He thanked the almighty for bestowing upon him a series of crises and loads of stupidity. He however prayed that the wisdom of zero remained with him. He wished to continue with his readiness and not be part of any preparedness in future.

He had realized his stupidity. The road ahead was clear to him. He had gone past the fear factor in his life. And, the readiness, the ultimate and exalted beingness was just beyond the confines of the fear factor. He remembered, how since childhood, he struggled to conquer a series of fears he thought he was born with. He grew up demolishing them but only to realize that he had added more fears than he overpowered. The existential fears were replaced by fears that society offloaded on him. He grew up accepting so many benchmarks of successes and goodness that his

family, his peer group, his seniors, icons and leaders lined up for him to follow. He grew up preparing hard to win all the benchmarks and in time got more apprehensive of failures and loses. Even successes, that came when he expected them the least, made him burry deeper in the abyss of fear. Each success only stretched the benchmarks and prolonged the process of preparedness. The fear never went away; rather it grew up engulfing his beingness totally. He could not understand the elusiveness of the state of readiness; a stage after reaching where he could say he had finally arrived. He could not understand the hydra-headedness of the fear; that no doubt egged him to higher stage of preparedness but never allowed him the basic urge of a lasting satisfaction. He had even started believing that life is a never-ending struggle for the elusive satisfaction. Love made him realize for the first time what wins all fears. Love taught him to rise above the process of preparedness to the ultimate stage of readiness. He truly understood why he felt fearless when in love. When true love happens; all good and cherished ideals of humanity fall in your lap, they fill your being. Love embodies all goodness - honesty, transparency, selflessness and egolessness and above all the compassion. It does the magic. It makes the willful merger of individualism into the collectivity; the individuality of I dissolving into the collectivity of us. Love fills the heart and mind with compassion and when compassion plays the music in the heart, all cherished ideals and goodness of humanity get drawn into the mind. The fear goes away the next moment as this happens. He thanked the almighty for making him understand the fear factor and its dynamics. Since ages, the genius of mankind had listed the ideals and ultimate goodness for all people to follow and he realized that they were good and ideal because they made one fearless. Honesty makes you lose fear as you are not apprehensive of being caught with a lie. Transparency makes you fearless as you are not apprehensive of being caught hiding anything. When you are with these ideals, you don't fear the loss or losing out. When you attain zero, you do not fear to lose as you have nothing. You do not fear as you have nothing to hide. Being fearless is the ultimate readiness. He thanked almighty that he was chosen to be blessed with love and compassion which made him fearless. But he understood that love too was only the higher stage of preparedness and not the readiness. Love just shows you

the road. The readiness is attained when one totally personifies all the cherished goodness and ideals of humanity. Love leads you to the door, the entry point of zero but then, you have to step ahead to be into the zero. Every human being is blessed by the almighty to attain this readiness as all human beings are given at least one chance to experience love. Only few of them understand love. To the blessed ones is revealed the music of compassion when in love. Very few people are worthy enough to understand and appreciate this music of compassion that love plays for them. Those who understand hit the road to readiness. Love and compassion reveals the road to real preparedness - prepare to be compassionate, to be honest, to be transparent, to be selfless, to be egoless. It reveals the necessity to prepare oneself for the joy of giving, the importance of us. Love and compassion leads one to the ultimate empowerment of self - the ability to forgive. When forgiveness becomes the first instinct, it is a sure sign that the stage of readiness has been attained. The forgiveness is attaining the blank, the zero, the ultimate empowerment, the readiness. You accept nothing - no pride, no self, no ego, no I and you give everything as you forgive. The state of zero is the readiness. Mayank sat on the chair in front of the couch that the owner preferred to sit. He had arrived at the hotel ten minutes earlier than the appointed time. As usual, the owner showed no expression on his face as he greeted him. Mayank knew the boss did it purposely. He was always a businessman and not for a second, a true businessman would let off his guard. Toughness, emotionlessness and matter of fact disposition are considered core benchmarks for smart operators in business. The boss wore his mask as usual and Mayank understood it that the boss perceived this meeting also as a business deal. No problems...he just smiled. "What you have in mind", the owner asked him casually, not even looking at him. "Nothing specific...I have come here with a blank mind", he said smiling. "I had expected that you would join your duties after I had assured you we would talk. That's why I am asking you. Are you considering other options?" "No, I am not going anywhere." This changed the expression on the face of the owner. Mayank understood; loyalty mattered most to the boss. The media world is such a small place. He realized that somebody must have informed the boss about the offer he had got from the rival newspaper. "I appreciate your inputs and you will get due return for your good

intentions. We have our growth plans in the right place and I firmly believe in home grown leaders taking key positions in my organization."

The boss looked at Mayank expecting him to be happy as a reaction to his assurance. He

however showed no reaction. His thoughts were on something different.

"Last time, when we talked here, I had told you a story. Can I tell you another one, would you mind?"

"I won't if I understand it."

"It is a very simple story. You might even have heard it before."

"May be but when you tell them, they seem to carry a different message. Go ahead."

"Once upon a time, there was a king named Uttanpad. He had two wives, Suniti (wisdom) and Suruchi (beauty) but he loved the later more. From both wives, he had a son each and only

naturally, he loved the son from his favorite wife Suruchi more. One morning, the son from the

second wife Suniti, called Dhruv saw his brother playing in the lap of the king and he too desired

the same. His step mother however chided him and drove him away. Dhruv was only five year

old. He narrated the story to his own mother. His mother told him that he should instead aspire to

be in the lap of Lord Vishnu who is all powerful and rules the universe.

Dhruv took the advice

and headed straight to the forest for penance to attain his desire to be in God's lap. In the forest

Sage Narad accosted him and knowing the resolve of Dhruv to appease Lord Vishnu, he taught

him a very difficult regime of worship to test his resolve. Dhruv followed the method for over

five months and finally the Lord appeared before him. Lord Vishnu asked him to seek anything,

any attainment which he thought of. Dhruv meekly said to him that he was just a child and asked

Lord Vishnu to give him the power of words so that he could sing hymns in his praise. Little

Dhruv even forgot to ask for what he had done all this impossible penance. Lord Vishnu gave

him what he wished and also bestowed him the pole position which no man has ever got. He was

positioned as star above the universe and Lord Vishnu blessed him that the universe might

someday end but he would still sign as the star."

The owner lighted a cigarette. Did not say a word for a few minutes as if he was trying to absorb

and assess the story. He rose from his couch and before going to his bedroom, he handed out the

pack of cigarette to Mayank. He lighted the cigarette this time and had the time to finish it as the

owner returned to his seat after five minutes.

"I think; I should not waste my grey matter. It is better you tell me what is the moral of the story you want me to understand."

"The story has so many of them. The king is supposed to be the repository of wisdom but this king had his priorities wrong. He preferred Suruchi over Suniti; it suggests he indulged in beauties and comfort of life neglecting the high and ideal principles of wisdom. The king is the symbol of justice which presupposes unbiased disposition. The king however showed bias against the son of his less favored wife. The mother of Dhruv was wisdom personified and she showed her son what wisdom always does for humanity. Wisdom guides humanity to value love and compassion over material gains. She prodded her son to aim for the love and compassion of the highest order; that of the almighty. Dhruv was only five years old when he understood the wisdom and headed for it. This suggests; wisdom is such a simple thing; it is such an amenable reality that even a child can understand it. This also otherwise suggests; childlike innocence and trust and right guidance can make people help attain the ultimate achievements. Then, the story reflects the reality that when you attain wisdom, you do not want any other indulgence but the infinity of the wisdom itself. Dhruv did not seek anything from Lord Vishnu but the almighty himself. And the last thing is the compassion of the almighty. The Lord gives you something which you do not demand. Almighty is so compassionate and magnanimous that he bestows on you the supreme position."

"I understand what you say but I believe; you have specific purpose in your mind which you wish to convey to me through the story, like last time."

"The purpose actually kills the endeavor. But still, as we are accustomed to a perception mechanism; any initiative defined in terms of a purpose is understood easily. That way, the story's purpose is a simple message - what I wish to attain from you is irrelevant but what you bestow is all important. The compassion is on your side as you are the Lord here. My pursuit ends here as I have attained an audience with your compassion. It is the turn of your compassion as to what it thinks as best to do. You can give me the crown; you can load me with wealth. Like Dhruv, I seek none. I have attained your compassion. You have to decide what your compassion bestows on me. It will show to your world what Lord's magnanimity is."

"I refuse to be the Lord. I can accept the call on my magnanimity; not in the way you put it; but

still, I need to be told which way I am expected to shape my magnanimity." "You cannot refuse the Lord position. You are the owner of an enterprise you have so meticulously and successfully built. Millions of people are born and die remaining engaged in arranging the basics of life - the resource to have two square meals. They seek livelihood, good health, wealth and comfort from the lord almighty. No doubt, it is believed that God gives them what they seek. But this is not the magnanimity of the Lord. The Lord has the pivotal role in the sustenance and maintenance of goodness in the world he presides over. The mythology of Lord Vishnu says that whenever there is loss of dharma, the core goodness on the earth, he takes an incarnation to restore the balance. The magnanimity of the Lord is in restoration and maintenance of the supremacy of goodness on the earth. It is entirely up to the magnanimity of the Lord which way he would do it. The Lord may punish the erring elements and promote the saner ones. The Lord alone can do it as he has the ultimate power and most importantly, he has the compassion to ensure that the world he presides is ruled by goodness." "You draw a useless parallel between the businessman and bhagwan. I own the enterprise all right but, I too have my hands tied. You won't understand it. The more you rise in life, more you lose the freedom to operate. The father of the family looks all powerful and resourceful. It is rather customary to look up to the magnanimity of the father, the provider of the family but if you put yourself in the position of the father, you would realize he is probably the most vulnerable of the lot. You talk of the magnanimity... the father is at times forced to show his worse ire to the family!" "This portrayal of yours is so very close to the concept of the Lord. My parallel is perfect. The almighty is the most vulnerable entity on earth. He is more challenged than cherished. And, though he may never intend it to be like that, his fear is what helps establish his authority more than his compassion. Most would say they are god-fearing people, never do they say they are god-loving people. Humanity has always been made to fear the be-aawaaz lathi, the soundless baton of the almighty. I am not saying the father should always show his magnanimity to all. Even the almighty does not seem to do it. Father knows the best. He must. We all trust. We must. Even the punishment of the father is part of his magnanimity. It puts back the errant son to the right track. Do take me right. I am just trying to say is that the father

must always ensure that his family is in right track. The family traverses the right path. The family understands and practices the right principles of wisdom. This is my call to his magnanimity. I also call upon the compassion of the father towards all members of his family. His compassion forgives the errant son and bestows the pole position to the right son. But never ever he allows his errant son to traverse the wrong path."

"Okay. Let us accept that I am in a position where I am supposed to be magnanimous. Let us also accept that this magnanimity calls for me to lead my enterprise or what you call my family, to the established principles of goodness and wisdom. The next, I would need to know what is currently wrong with my family, who are the errant sons and what correction I need to bring about. But before that, I would like to ask you, what fruits of my magnanimity you would like to have for yourself? What's the pole position you want from me?"

"I think I can ask for a cup of coffee."

"How demeaning...! Don't underrate my magnanimity. I am generous enough to add some sandwiches and French fries to the coffee. And, my pack of cigarettes is already with you."

Mayank could not check a smile as the boss busied himself ordering things to the attendant asking him to make a large cup of coffee and make it quick. The boss lighted a cigarette and looked at his watch. Mayank looked at the face of the boss. He looked relaxed. He had dropped his guard. The way he sat on the couch revealed that he had assumed this talk with Mayank as personal and not part of his business negotiations. Mayank however realized that there is a time factor. The bosses do not have long attention span. Also, the boss looked more eager to actionable part of the agenda that he had been attempting to get accepted.

"I have read your long mail three times. You had written that media was like army and our people need strong training and sense of purpose like army. I appreciate that. I also believe that right training makes productive work environment and work culture. Army like training sounds a tough ask but a suitable training is what I also agree to. Do you have anything specific in mind?"

"I always had admiration for army life. We are middle class people and we have been trained to see ethical purpose in life. I believed army duty is the highest purpose that a job can bring to one's life. I could not get into army but later, as a journalist I had the occasion to see the army

realities inside out. I have been fortunate to be trained in the mould of a journalist. There is a basic instinct that is essential to be a good journalist. The instinct of inquisitiveness is a must. All humans are born with this instinct but only a few keep this alive for long. My inquisitiveness led me to see things within army which made me feel sad. I have a few friends in para-military forces and fortunately or unfortunately, I could also see the scenario out there. When I said we in media need to see our job like an army duty, I meant what the job ought to be and not what it is. I am amazed how much similarity the army and media have. "

"If you think I should know these similarities in detail and it would put me in good position, as the head of my enterprise, I would say you must tell me."

"Yes, I will do it. In fact, I had come here to tell you only these facts. I know, I have already taken too much of your time but now I will wrap it up in quick time."

"Take your time. I presume all this will help me do better the role you have told me I have as a father of my family, or what you called the lord of my own universe. Let me accept that I've been learning a lot from you. "

"There is a story. Once sage Narad was saying eulogies to Lord Vishnu. He told the Lord that it was so compassionate of him that he always took such great care of all his devotees. Lord Vishnu surprised him by saying that it was not because of compassion but because of his own selfish need. The Lord clarified that he learnt from his devotees what he had to do to be a lord to them. He told Narad, „what I am is what my devotees make me to be. From their expectation and exhortations I know what I have to be like?. Leaders are what their followers want him to be. In India we are having a large crop of bad leaders because the people, their followers want them to be like that. I am not making you learn anything. I am just telling you what we as your people expect from you. "

"My God Mayank...you always have a story ready for anything. How do you do that?"

"I am a media person. It is my primary role. The stories are there because there are so many things people have to say and get exposed to learn."

"Okay, I will someday spend a whole day with you draining out all your stories. Now let us conclude. Tell me your army experience."

"Yes, what I wished you to know about my army and para-military experience is that how lofty ideals and purposes of media, like army is lost because of some fast growing trends and some disoriented people. Army and forces are tough jobs, like media. The jobs

are primarily sacrifice-oriented.

This is well understood and that is why, the army especially is provided with extra facilities and supports. The army has a special status and over the years, there is a sense of superiority, bordering the feeling of elitism and exclusivity that I think has been well accepted in the ranks and file. There are special canteens for army men from where, they are provided a range of consumer items at dirt cheap rates. Then, there is quota for subsidized liquor. In the media too, there is a similar situation. We may not have a separate dream canteen for us but the whole market is made one. The dangerous trend in both army- forces and media is that both are growingly being perceived as glamorous jobs. This is in complete contrast to what the intrinsic natures of both jobs are. Both are sacrifice jobs and not in the wildest interpretation glamorous and elitist jobs. The reality is that growing number of new breed of entrants in both jobs have conflicting mindsets. Both jobs are being corrupted by the benchmark of exclusivity. "

"And where do you think the fault lies."

"What I saw is that both in army and media, the trouble-makers are in minority but as this minority comprises officer rank people, we can say the mid-management people, they have the power and access to wreak larger damages. I have seen officers in army and forces spending time in their offices only to plan and execute for ensuring gains from the facilities and the status. In the media however, the disease has affected even the lower rank journalists. But still, the magnitude of corruption is with the leadership; the numbers may be with masses. One corrupt minister is equal to ten thousand corrupt clerks and a million common masses in magnitude."

"Can you tell me of any specific case of what you called the elitist and exclusivity trend? I think

I need to know what it is in actual picture."

"There are many but I tell you of the most recent one. Few months back, a young man came to our newspaper office. He told the editor that he wanted a job in media. When asked about his qualification, he said he had been in the jail for over a year and has come out on bail only a week back. He said he had developed good contacts with top gang leaders who operated from within the jail. He assured that he would provide exclusive stuff for good crime stories as even the gang lords wanted media coverage to boost their image outside. He said he would not take any salary but he would need a press identity card. The young guy is serving as lead

input person for crime stories now. He cannot write but his inputs make exclusive crime stories. The editorial is happy because it now has edge over the rival. The young man has his own happiness. When I asked him why is he doing all this without any money. He said that money came to him from so many sources but what this job gave him was status of a VIP. He said, „this director general of police had refused to meet me when I had approached him in connection with my arrest earlier. Now when I shove a baton in his ass through my crime reports, he wants to meet me but I refuse to oblige him?. The fact remains that he still cannot write his stories but still is a favorite with the editor. And the guy, who writes stories for him, using his input is an M.Phil. degree holder from the most prestigious university but is always in the firing line of the editor. ”

“Hmm...I understand. Any other issue?”

“This is one part of the army and media parallel. The second part is more important. This we can say is applicable for all traditional jobs. In the armed forces, as it seems, there is a clear divide between the soldiers and the officers. The pre-independence mindset probably still lingers. The rules are still archaic and the superior-subordinate divide is very pronounced. The life for a soldier is very pathetic but the officers are continuing to enjoy most of the facilities. The life in barracks is tough. There are very few officers who are truly respected and loved by the soldiers they lead. In the typical British legacy, fear not respect is still the core principle of command.

“You mean to say, there are some key attitudinal issues which need to be brought up for debate as they are usually not even considered a genuine problem?”

“I was witness to a scene which will tell you how things are. A soldier of a reputed para-military force came to the chamber of his commanding officer who happens to be my friend. The soldiers on field duty are allowed only a few days? leave annually to be with their family. This soldier had already availed all his leaves but he asked for one month?s leave as her sister was to be married. My friend reasoned with him that why should he need a month when marriage is a d ay?s affair. The soldier very innocently said that his village home was in Arunachal Pradesh and it took four days to reach him. The customary marriage in his village was a minimum 16-day affair. He also needed to reach there earlier as his house needed renovation for marriage. My friend told him in a friendly manner that he could not allow him leave

because it would be against the rule and his own job would be in danger if he flouted rule for him. The soldier did not budge from the room. He insisted he would go. He told my friend that if he did not reach his village in time for marriage, he would be ridiculed by the village society and he would prefer to die instead of being an outcast. My friend had to order him to go back to his barrack as he was not willing to accept a refusal. As the soldier was dispatched, my friend got worried. He said, these are routine affairs in the armed forces and he always feared that someday one such soldier would not accept his no and would shoot him."

"Yeah...I often read such stories of soldiers shooting his superiors, colleagues or themselves. Now tell me, where we go wrong in media. We must concentrate on the problems which we can solve."

"The core problem is that when times change, we need to change. And this change has to be well before things go out of hand. Change in reaction of a trouble is not the right solution. We need to be proactive in our problem solving initiatives. The media has a similar situation, as in armed forces. They need to change the old- fashioned mindsets, the archaic and bizarre rules of recruitment, training and working system. The archaic standards of discipline and command, the historical sense of superiority of officers, the benchmarks of exclusivity and elitism and above all, the work environment for the lowest rung of the armed forces. Similar are the requirements in media."

"The last question. What you think should be the core principle of training in media?"

"I am not the expert. I know the problems because I have been part of the media for long. The solution may not be very simple."

"I am just asking for your views. One who knows the problems knows the solution better than anyone else. Tell me your mind."

"We have a strange problem in India's human resource front. There is such a huge population of unemployed educated youth. There are colleges, universities and other educational institutions in every nook and corner of our neighborhood churning out professional graduates. But still, the industries and service sector in India complain that they do not have enough employable people. Why is it? The human resource experts, the global agencies assessing Indian human resource say that not more than one fifth of the engineers and management crop produced in India are

employable. That means, even after spending lakhs of rupees, the majority of young ones in India remain unemployable, unworthy of absorption in India's growing economy. So basically, our economy somehow bears and breeds unworthiness."

"Interesting...but how come?"

"The reason is that the professional educations which are being provided in India by hordes of educational centers are far below the par of global benchmarks. The faculties are sub-standard and academic methodology is questionable. The other crucial point is that most of these new breed of professionals are poor in soft skills. This soft skill phenomenon is new to India and very well one of the very useful global benchmarks of the liberalization and globalization era. And what is this soft skill all about. It is sum total of all the goodness and high ideals of humanity which since ages all human beings are supposed to embrace and embody. This is now being realized and accepted that a good professional is one who also happens to be a good human being. It is equally important to be a good spouse, a good father and above all a good person to be accepted as a good professional. I will mail you the long list of soft skills that is now considered globally as a must apart from the high and strong hard skills. When you will see the long list, you will only realize that it is nothing but old, traditional and transcendental wisdom or what you may like to call common sense, coming back to humanity after long period of rejection in the staunch capitalistic economic ethos. The transcendental wisdom is now being recalled and vowed to be made a practical craft."

The coffee and sandwiches had arrived. The boss silently sipped the coffee. Mayank too had

nothing to say. The cheese sandwiches made him remember that he had promised her girl that he would be with her by noon and help her in packing. He quickly finished his coffee and sought permission from the boss to take his leave.

"Oaky...you can go now. Anyway, you have put so many things in my mind that I would anyway need sometime alone to put them in right perspective. I think I will see you in the office in the evening?"

"Sir, as I just said, one needs to be a good husband to become a good professional. And I will need a wife to be a husband first. That's why I have promised my girlfriend that we would spend the evening together to finalize the next step."

"Great...! But also see to it that your soft skill training does not land me in hard times."

Mayank did not reply but smiled as he moved towards the door. The attendant came forward, handed him a rose and said, "Congratulations sir, may our services be there for you when you marry your love".

Mayank accepted the rose and looked back smiling. The boss stood smiling too.

"Is this what you call the soft skill? Oh God...!"

Mayank took out a hundred rupee note from his pocket and pushed it inside the shirt pocket of the attendant. He quipped before closing the door, "this is the difference... he is in hospitality industry and not in media!"

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CHAPTER 16

Utkarsh could see nothing around him. His eyes were full of tears. Everything looked so hazy.

He for a moment failed to decide what he should do first. He experienced for the first time what

Mayank would tell him - mind reacts to the extremes of joys and pains in a similar way and the tears express gratitude to almighty for both. More than three months after Mayank went

traceless; suddenly he got his mail.

He had casually switched on his laptop and logged on to check his mails as he had nothing

interesting to do on the Sunday morning. As he saw Mayank's mail, his eyes betrayed him. He

thought to scream and tell his wife about it who was in the kitchen. He probably could not have

done it as his voice was choked. He quickly changed his mind and decided to call Ashish to

come over as soon as possible as he feared he might go to office even on Sunday but did not do

it. He thought he should first read the mail himself peacefully and then tell others about it. That

however seemed selfishness to him. After all, Ashish, Guddi and he were equally in pain not

even knowing where Mayank was and what he was doing. He had just shot a one line mail to

him three months back that he was fine and would be out of contact completely for three months.

He wiped his eyes so that he could see clearly. He took a print out of the mail, went to the

kitchen showing it to his wife. He told her that he would call Ashish and then only he would read

the mail. Guddi was impatient to read the mail but agreed to her husband's idea that he would

read it out for all three when Ashish came. Ashish told him that he would be there in fifteen

minutes but barged in just in ten minutes. Before Utkarsh started to read the mail, Ashish

proposed that irrespective of whatever excuse Mayank offered in his mail, the three would not

forgive him for what he had done to them. All three pained hearts agreed in silence. The joy of finally having Mayank however took over the resolve as Utkarsh read. Dear Guddi, Uttu and Ashu, No thanks and no sorry between friends. They say it but I never believe in that. I understand; the stupid words are so insufficient that people believe they should not be told. But Uttu, Ashu, Guddi...you know it that I owe you sorry not only for these three months but for millions of moments where I have failed to be up to the mark of your love towards me. My entire being is so insufficient in front of your affection for me that I am always guilty and I treasure this guilt. Between us, a sorry is not an issue. The core issue has always been honesty and transparency. We all are one heart and will always remain so. At times, an action from me or anyone of you may look like in incongruity with rest of us. It may feel to us that the erring activist owes a sorry to the rest. But, we all know it very well that the guilt with the errant is not for doing something which rest of us disapproved, but it is in that he or she should have shared it before doing it. The transparency and honesty discounts a sorry. That's why, between our hearts, there has been little space for a sorry. I am guilty of not being transparent and honest but I wish you all to believe that I have been transparent. I myself was not sure of what action I would take in the three months that I have been away. Remember Uttu, Ashu; I had told you the last time we were together that I was not sure. Now, I have made decisions and now I know what I am doing and will do ahead, I am back and telling you everything. Very soon, we all meet and everything will be as transparent as it has always been between us. This however does not anyway mean that I am not saying sorry. But right now, my joy of connecting to you all is so colossal that saying sorry and guilt is not coming naturally to me. Saying it here will make it just greetings card sentimentality. I have decided to say sorry when we all meet and Ashu will thrash me black and blue. I will say it when Uttu will try to suffocate me in his angry hug. I will try to say it to Guddi but she will force her hand on my lips and will forgive me. A woman always accepts love, never a sorry. I have a lot to tell you. I also know that despite your anger against me, you all too want to know every detail. But I am not telling you all. I will tell you part of it and rest you all will see when we meet. I will share something which I said I was not sure of earlier and

now I am. But first, I have to say is that I am married and living with my wife in a village we mutually chose. I have quit my career as a media man and I must say I am a full-fledged farmer now. My wife has also quit her job as a banker and she is into lots of activities. So, I cannot truly describe her. Women adapt faster to a new environment than men and she looks more in place than me. You all will see it yourselves. I must say, women are the architect of life, good or bad. We men basically build structures over their design, good or bad. I had heard from people that idiots usually get good wives. It is considered God's sense of justice. I endorse this as hundred percent true. This kindles hope for Ashu too! We married in a temple at Manali. It was not planned. I had never ever thought that I would marry like this. The day we arrived here, we both decided this was the place where it should happen. Utta knows it better that though I never have very strong ideas over any issue but I always had about marriage. I have always hated the amount of pride and prejudice being part of contemporary marriages. Marriage is about attainment of humility, celebration of tolerance and establishment of supreme body-mind harmony among two beings who pledge to become one single spirit of love and compassion. I never understood why marriages have come to become part of a man's pride, of worldly achievements. Why should it even be listed as a father's duty? The pride or sense of duty should only be in making your daughter and son a good human being. The celebration of marriage may be a social thing. Marriage was always a special thing for me. It also has to do with the fact that long ago, I had realized that this world of humanity has many mismanaged contradictions but two things were the most mismanaged. First is marriage and second is the conception of a child. I have personally seen worst and nastiest of marriages, be it what we popularly term as love marriage or an arranged one. Globally, the systems of marriages are flawed and the worst managed. And God may forgive me for saying this but I really believe; most kids born in the history of humanity are outcome of a casual sex between parents. I really wonder; how little thought goes over these two most important issues of humanity. I am amazed how humanity has failed in evolving a universally accepted and practically aesthetic system of such a beautiful and important life event as marriage. When I look at it, I find it to my bewilderment that how

humanity has created so much utility and consumption for good life and living but failed miserably in making basic things as good and beautiful. That's why I say there is something majorly wrong with our mental training that helped in creating a world order we all have lived in since ages.

Somehow, it seems to me that the general view that birth, death and marriages are beyond human capacities; „made in heaven? psychology that have led to this casualness in approaching the three most important events of humanity. That's why there is so much chaos and mismanagement in these three events. Amazing it is that we leave simple things; which we should do ourselves, to God and take up all difficult tasks ourselves. Men would do the unthinkably onerous and difficult tasks of challenging nature and God. Men would walk in space, climb Mount Everest without oxygen, make its own clone and the list is endless. But they never spare few moments for readying themselves for basic things like marriage, birth of their child and their own death. You need to prepare and be in final readiness for marriages and birth. We all need to prepare hard and be very timely in readiness for our deaths. Tragically, we humans are least prepared and in readiness for the three most essential and basic events of life but spend all our time, energy and resources in readying dispensable utilities and consumptions.

As I had told you Uttu, these are problems of a contemporary world order because of the dominating male view. I am a male too and that's why I understand the corruption of male intelligence better. That's why; I made good preparations for my marriage. But, as you all know, I am a stupid. The management of my marriage also had to bear the seal of my stupidity. But, I am God's blessed man. The almighty took pity on my stupidity and as his sense of justice always ensures; he gave me a beautiful wife. She has gorgeous and magnificent artistry of shaping my stupidities into a noble enterprise.

Before marriage, together, we penned down a constitution of our marriage for both of us to follow. I wanted to accommodate only her views on the constitution as I did not want it to be corrupted by my instinctive male attitude. She understands me so well. The constitution that we have finalized is what she has said and I have only penned it down but what came out is what I am dedicated to follow lifelong. The constitution reads as:
The two rationally endowed people - a woman and a man; physically, mentally and spiritually

sound and mature; in decisive and total possession of love and compassion for each other and all; otherwise resourceful and capable of free will and independence of body and mind; hereby declare the aspiration and commitment for an assimilation; fully understanding and accepting the utility and desirability of such a union called marriage to attain the higher purity and purposes of life together; that otherwise is uncalled for. We as woman and man pledge and give ourselves to become wife and husband in absolute humility and inclusive objectivity. The constitution then goes on to list the seven pledges akin to saat phere:

1. The wife and husband shall strive and ensure, through thought and action that the roles and aspirations of each, as woman and man, are supported and enhanced through collective endeavors in best of meaning and spirit.
2. The wife shall support the husband with total dedication for his endeavors to augment security, peace and organization in the marriage whereas; the husband shall devote himself completely in his wife's initiatives to enhance the quotient of sanity, civility and beauty. In case of a conflict, the agenda with larger good shall prevail; otherwise, preference shall be given to latter.
3. Conscious and copious efforts shall be made to design and devise platforms of togetherness and common actions of wife-husband. Individualism needs space within oneself so, there shall be very little physical space left for individual actions. Wife and husband shall be together and do together all possible activities in all possible ways. Togetherness and commonness is the essence of marriage but it does not come naturally to woman and man; necessitating endeavors aimed at its complete integration.
4. The wife and husband shall observe complete transparency in thought and action in matters individual or common. Transparency shall always prevail even as time, space and circumstances necessitate divergence of opinion and action. Wife and husband are exclusive to each other because each one is the only person in front of whom; other can be naked and still not ashamed but the happiest. Lack of transparency alone shall be the ground for breach of trust in marriage.
5. Emotions shall rule most matters and decisions in marriage. Intelligence shall always be a back up device; emotional intelligence shall prevail over intelligent emotions. Marriage is an institution of heart and therefore, mind shall not be indulged; it will

however be duly consulted. Innocence shall be the ultimate wisdom of marriage; the wife and husband shall strive to preserve and promote it through their efforts, individual as well as common. The success of marriage is in continuous and copious enhancement of prosperity, defined in terms of the sense of collective well-being. Both wife and husband pledge and accept that the benchmarks for this well-being shall be emotional fulfillment and abundance of innocence.

6. There is a perfect acceptance to the fact between wife and husband that marriage is a small heaven within this infinite universe which is full of conflict, contradiction and resultant violence. The wife and husband therefore pledge and accept that in the heaven of marriage, violence, both of thought and action, shall have no place. All conflicts and contradictions shall therefore be brought up with utmost transparency and listed. The wife and husband hereby agree that such listed issues shall be brought to bilateral discussion only and that too when both are in best of the state of body and mind. Any of the two, who shows first sign of violence of thought, will automatically lose his plea. The concept of collective well-being will be the guiding prudence for resolution of conflicts and contradictions. Non resolution will be preferred if a mutual resolution is not arrived at. The final say however shall be of the wife as sanity falls in her side.

7. Love and compassion shall be the core virtue of wife-husband relationship. Even in the worst of situations between wife and husband, in the long journey of married life; the husband shall remain with his wife, in thought and action, as a Father-figure to her. The wife shall, come what may, remain with her husband, in thought and action, as a Motherfigure to him. Marriage can cease to be, love and compassion can never. The wifehusband shall remain mother- father to each other, even in separation, till death lets them apart.

I now tell you what I have been doing since I became sure of what I wanted to. My wife had already decided to quit her job so that we had most of the moments together. I was sure that I did not want to return to media but was not certain what next I can do. We both wanted to do something as work is a sign of cultured person; but the trouble was that we wanted to do it together. It was she who suggested we should go to a village and look for

some simple but honest work doing it together. We decided that we give it a try and for the next three years, we would attempt in all seriousness to make the best out of our village experience. We would review the situation after three years. So, here we are; in a village, making a start to our new life. Initially, I must admit, I was worried whether we will be able to find something worth doing in the village. I was more apprehensive about whether she would cope with the tough life in a village. How wrong I was. Only in a month, I started wondering how many things I have the options to do? And most amazingly, she has adapted so well to the life in village as if she belonged to the place since ages. She revealed it to me that she had done a long stint with an NGO in rural areas as part of her management studies. We have pooled in some land and together we raise vegetables in it. We are being well supported by people around us. My experience as a journalist has proved handy. I had personally seen a President Medal winner farmer successfully managing four crops simultaneously from a land. We are replicating the experience here and initial results are very encouraging. I am a lazy bone but my wife is so full of energy. She has already organized some village women and formed a self-help group. She is brilliant with organizational skills and her banking background has helped her organize micro- financing support for the group. You all will be amazed how much she has done in such a short time. She has earned admiration of half the village. You ask anyone in the village about Laptop Bahu and they will reach you to her. She carries her laptop all the time and helps anyone get any information about anything under the Sun. She is already into a big project and you all will be amazed how she goes about it to make her project a success. She is planning to open a rural bank which will offer small loans to women enterprises. Nominal interest would be charged and taken only from the profits of the enterprise. She has devised a novel way of garnering money for her bank. She has written all her relatives and friends to send in whatever money they would have spent on her marriage and the gift for the bank. Her parents offered to give her huge money which they said they had kept for her marriage but she has accepted only one lakh rupees from them. My parents had little option but to send in a matching amount. Already, six lakh rupees have been pledged to her but she wants to start the bank with ten lakh

rupees. When the villagers got to know about it, they came up with innovative ideas to pool in the rest of the money. The youth club of the village announced that they would celebrate the Durga Puja in Dusehra this year with simplicity and thus save rupees one lakh which they pledged to the bank. A local politician also offered to give one lakh rupees. But she politely refused the help. She has better ideas for creating the corpus. We are not in any haste. We do it with a speed that suits us.

If you ask me how I find my new life, I would say I am amazed how much the rural areas have to offer you, in all aspects of life. You will feel them only when you shed your inhibitions and accept the bounties that are there to be accepted and enjoyed. I am amazed how much I have found that interests me and prompts me to work on. I have already picked up something very interesting. I got to know that over the period, we have lost many species and varieties of flora and fauna. Only a century back, we had hundreds of delectable varieties of rice which we have lost. There were at least 50 varieties of mangoes that were grown till only 50 years back but we have lost all such species. In my village alone, there were more than 30 species of cows and cattle which we have lost. Similar is the situation about fishes, local vegetables and fruits. I found that still some of the lost species can be retrieved and some endangered ones can be saved. I have already involved myself on this project of reviving the lost species of flora and fauna and saving the endangered ones. In this connection, I started meeting old people; many of them are 100 years old. You will be amazed, in my village and in five villages around us I have found 15 people who are 100 years of age or above. Six of them are in good shape. I have also listed 26 people who are 90 or above. Talking to them about the lost species, it struck to me that they too are the endangered species of humanity. It clicked to me that I should write a book on them. And, be sure I am writing it. This book will not contain their views on the secret of longevity. This book will have ideas and mental picture of how life was when they were young and how it is when we are in the same age. I and my wife cannot help but cry when I hear from the 100 year olds how they lived their lives in utmost miseries. There were regular floods, famines, fire and epidemics and they would lose everything, including their dear ones. But still, they survived and prospered as there was love and compassion, camaraderie and brotherhood and

above all, the firm faith in the ultimate justice of the almighty, the unflinching trust that good things would return in their lives. You put these with what our media shows in our popular soaps about our contemporary families and society, you would feel what we have lost in the short but decisive march of civilization.

My wife has been prompting me to work simultaneously on the lost traditional healing techniques that were once so popular and very effective. These healing wisdoms include the local system of herbal medicines, faith healing and tantric healing system. I wonder, how much and to what extent I can do these things. What I enjoy most is farming. And we have revived the village theatre which my father says was very active and regular in his days. This will help me learn music and dance. We have already found a Guru. We are happy. We have been able to pick up what we wanted. We are together always and learning new meanings of life. We have been successful in our journey to zero. Every new day in our lives, a positive is added and enhances our satisfaction. But, the picture is still not perfect. Now that we have done our primary sketches, we want to make the picture look perfect. You all know what I am talking about.

Utta has been to my paternal village once. He knows it very well that it is just five-six hours drive from your place. We could have chosen any village but she rightly pointed out that things would be easy in our own village. I feel; we have taken the first good step towards a life that should lead us to larger satisfaction and joy. But, she and I know it very well that we are missing something very important.

Last week, I asked a 102 year old man in my village, who is still active, what he believed was the true joy of life? You know what he said? He said, „enjoying a meal together with those whom you love and call as your own is the real joy?. I asked him was he sure that life's goodness was as simple as he made it to be? He smiled and replied, „All good things in life are simple. The trouble of humanity is that the goodness is so simple that most people believe it cannot be good if it is this simple and available so easily; almost gratuitously?.

I and my wife desire to attain this simple joy of life. If we desire to have five plates instead of two on our dining table, are we asking too much? In fact, we do not even have plates and dining table. Our open kitchen does have space for five banana leaves on the ground and we have

enough banana trees in our garden. Not only we but the entire village wishes for that to happen as my wife has told them that she would give them a big bhoj (party) the day our kitchen would have five banana leaves instead of two. The old man has taught us the prayer which he says must be said to the God thanking him for allowing the opportunity of having a meal together with our loved ones. We have saved the prayer for the day of five banana leaves. So, now even the God is waiting for this to happen.

Yours stupid,
Mayank.

Ten hours later, five large banana leaves waited for the start. Twenty households had already sent in more than 28 different vegetable and fish dishes in small bowls for the guests as part of the prevailing tradition of the village. Three households had sent in messages that their contributions would take a few minutes more. A man was sent in to fetch some more banana leaves to accommodate the new arrivals and eight different pickles and chutneys. God waited... the prayers waited. All good things in life are simple...so bad that it takes time for them to happen. The wait is worth it. But, let us not wait...

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Accept My Gratitude

Writing something is a daunting task as there is always a lurking apprehension of it not being in utility for some readers. I however feel at ease, because of my faith in magnanimity of readers. I am happily sure; you shall forgive if my efforts could not be up to your expectations. Thank you so much for being with me and allowing me to share with you. Wish you an empowered life; with the prosperity of the consciousness.

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About The Author

People say, what conspire to make you what you finally become are always behind the veil of intangibility. Someone called it „Intangible-Affectors?. Inquisitiveness was the soil, I was born with and the seeds, these intangible-affectors planted in me made me somewhat analytical. My long stint in media, in different capacities as journalist, as brand professional and strategic planning, conspired too! However, I must say it with all innocence at my behest that the chief conspirators of my making have been the loads of beautiful and multi-dimensional people, who traversed along me, in my life journey so far. The mutuality and innocence of love and compassion always prevailed and magically worked as

the catalyst in my learning and most importantly, unlearning from these people. Unconsciously, these amazing people also worked out to be the live theatres of my experiments with my life's scripts. I, sharing with you as a writer, is essentially my very modest way to express my gratitude for all of them. In my stupidities is my innocence of love for all my beautifully worthy conspirators!

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fect our lives most as there is always a mist of confusion about their utility. The quantum consciousness knowledge tells us, what affects us most are the „intangible affectors? of life as more than 90 percent of our mind has subconscious space. The life skills are the conscious choices, we make to take all decisions of life and living with clear and conscious mind, never being swayed by the mystical mastery of the subconscious mind. The book is designed for you to test your life skill quotient yourself. The questions, which test your LSQ, are preceded by real life situations, which shall help you understand, what is required of you, if you do not have them. All best.

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Thank you so much my lovely readers this was a Author who wants to convey his message spreading love . do read this and make others too . love your life and love you .

-student doctor shivang dalwadi