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## Awakening of Soul

**Dr. Vandana Singh**

Off late I have been pondering over the reason behind my existence...There has been fervour to find out the crux of the matter, i.e., reason for my jittery self. Not able to focus on anything, everything seems to go haywire. I have not been able to change my present job nor have I taken up my new job offer. I am unable to pinpoint the trouble. It's a continuous pain in the gut. What exactly do I wish to do in life? Am I running from problems? Is it the reason which has withheld my progress or exactly where is my progress? What exactly progress meant at this juncture? Why do I get this feeling of stagnation in life? It seems as if I am imprisoned in a limbo...not able to move a muscle captivating my soul. I am like my pet parrot that refuses to leave the cage in spite of the fact that the gates are open. I am in search of peace of mind but I forget that peace is inside and cannot be found outside. Externally it will always be chaos, and the frustration of not able to emancipate my soul, I tend to vent my anger on hapless souls around. People seem to enjoy around me and are very happy so why can't I stoop to their level and be happy. Work seems to enervate my energy and soul instead of invigorate. Life no longer holds any charm as I feel I am being pushed into a quagmire with no letting out. The feeling of water entering my nose while I sink deep slowly is nauseous. Transgressing thoughts ran through mind randomly as Sarah ran about managing errands at home. Philosophical thoughts got intermingled simultaneously these days making life more difficult. Recent initiate in the Mystery School i.e., Life, every human on the earth, whether they are conscious of it or not, each one will experience in the presence of others: Mirror of them in that moment. If we have the wisdom to recognize those mirrors, we may accelerate the evolution of emotion and understanding.

Year 2001 was going to be a year of upheavals for Sarah. Things were not working as she had expected. Falling in love was not her cup of tea. But now she was at an age when her parents were worried that their youngest daughter might remain a spinster. Going to Delhi after a long semester was full of apprehensions. Meeting Jane, her eldest sister, and her nieces, Sylvia, Nancy and Kylie felt like a break from the monotonous life back at home. Second sister's daughter, Michele, was also at Jane's place because her parents were in United States of America. Meeting Michele used to bring a sort of solace and freshness to Sarah. Back home Sarah's mentor insisted on finishing her doctorate within the stipulated time. Sarah was stressed and had to finish her doctorate but the contents were not available in

India. The idea behind the trip to Delhi would serve two purposes this time- Sarah had to gather books and related texts for doctorate and parents were on lookout for prospective groom for Sarah. Her mother was happy because she had the opportunity to take a dip in the Ganges at Allahabad. Sarah had no inclination towards religion but loved to bathe in the Ganges since childhood. Sarah had no premonition of how <sup>1</sup>'Yogi-Convention', being held in Allahabad in 2001 after 12 years would change her life forever. No inkling at all that the religious convention would bring a drastic change to her innocent outlook towards Life. Sarah was on the precipice of the change and awakening of mind awaited her. Something extraordinary had to happen to clear her befuddled mind, which always looked at the world with rose tinted glasses. Filled with fun and chirpiness Sarah rejoiced when she reached her destination. "It would be a vast change from the grogginess and loneliness back home. I will be free to live idly for some time, away from daily worries about studies and financial problems", thought Sarah, full of bliss, meandering in her own universe. But hallelujah, a stranger entered her life from nowhere, drastically changing her views about life. Not particularly the man of her dreams, too much of reading romantic novels had instilled penchant for Prince charming on the white charger, Norman was not at all what Sarah had dreamt of. He was not good looking and did not speak English by BBC standards, yet had charming persona. He enamoured listeners with his voice. Eyes seemed to hypnotise. A lawyer by profession he had all the imbibed qualities of the profession and novice Sarah fell head over heels in love with Norman.

Meanwhile Sarah's father suggested to his eldest daughter, Jane, about an alliance between Sarah and Norman. Though Sarah's father had always been on a lookout for a bureaucrat for a son-in-law yet Norman, the lawyer, seemed a good choice also because Sarah's lineage fitted the bill, her great grandfather and grandfather being famous lawyers. But Jane's reply was instantaneous, "Father, the boy is younger than Sarah". Desperate father insisted on the alliance in spite of the miniscule matter like age difference. But then in India boys cower from marrying a girl a year or two older than him. The patriarchal mind-set does not allow such breach in the socio-cultural anomalies. Jane, the lawyer, had acquired her degree after marriage. Jane's eldest daughter, Sylvia, was only eight years younger to Sarah. Norman and Jane had been batch mates and colleagues while pursuing law. She was trying to establish

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<sup>1</sup>. In India the time for Yogi-convention is judged by the astrological positions of Jupiter and the Sun. In Allahabad, India, the Yogi-convention (Kumbh) takes place during January-February, when Jupiter is in Taurus and the Sun enters Capricorn.

Norman in his profession meanwhile establishing herself and Sylvia, who was by then a lawyer too. Professionally, Norman and Sylvia were already working in a law firm where Sylvia assisted Norman. Quite an ironical situation! Jane always talked about Norman and his family and their struggle to come up in life. Listening to the details Sarah got impressed. Sarah always had a weakness for down-to earth people or the underdogs. Sarah decided to declare her love for Norman to Jane and Sylvia like a novice. "If only I had been more practical" Sarah would wonder later on in life. Sarah could feel something amiss by the facial expression of Jane and Sylvia but she was already wandering in her poetic world. "Looking at the stars and the moon I wondered what love is. The feeling called love has multitudinous facets, so delicate; it generates the rainbow of sensations. In Mother's love for her child, Unconditional love of Nature for the newborn. Lovers' paradise, it fills the wedded life. The Birds and the Bees; the Animals and the Flowers around; Love wins all but how to win Love. That's the question all around" hummed Sarah and wondered if she would be able to achieve the impossible, i.e., to cajole and win Norman's heart. The countenance of Jane and Sylvia spoke volumes yet Sarah could not decipher the expressions.

Perplexed Jane did not know how to react but recovered from her stance quickly. "How do I get out of this situation? Already I wish that Sylvia gets married to Norman. How do I convince Sarah to look out for another man?" contemplated Jane. Later Sarah was to realise that Jane had plans to get Norman married to Sylvia and establish a firm of lawyers (which comprised Norman, Sylvia, Jane and of course the mastermind, Jane's husband, Lucifer), which would make them stronger economically, professionally and socially. How was naive Sarah supposed to read anyone's mind, especially her sister's mind who professed to love her? Matters were subtly handled and Sarah was manoeuvred emotionally into a spider's web of confusing realities. Jane's husband, Lucifer assured Sarah that he would help her to woo Norman. Earlier Jane and Lucifer had arranged proposals of prospective grooms for Sarah but somehow or the other the alliances had never materialised. Subsequently, Sylvia had strongly voiced her annoyance to Sarah about her parents being harassed due to Sarah's marriage and had advised Sarah to look out for her own groom. Now that Sarah had shown her inclination towards Norman, strategy had to be laid out by Lucifer to help Sarah to enamour Norman. So the first step was to start taking drinks and hang-out with Norman in the evenings at home because Norman liked to drink. The entire show depended on how fast Sarah would tune her tastes to match Norman's lifestyle. The so called high society culture had to manifest well into a girl in order to attract prospective groom. "You need to start talking and mixing with Norman so that you both know each other before marriage" reasoned out Lucifer. Well, in

addition to flaunt her beauty & cooking skills, Sarah needed to make herself attractive to prospective husband by her attitude. Sarah, having been raised in a traditional and conventional Christian family (Sarah's family were converts to Christianity from Hinduism), was hesitant and prude. Parents were against drinks. A virgin, and a prude by modern standards, Sarah hardly knew the life style of cosmopolitan cities and the treacherous insinuations behind suave countenances. Unaware of hidden facets of her love adventure Sarah asked her mother if she could go ahead and experiment with her new lifestyle. Hapless mother allowed as she was worried about her daughter, who was beyond the marriageable age: marriage age being eighteen- twenty one in Indian socio- cultural societal norms. Sarah and her parents were often questioned about Sarah's single status by inquisitive relatives. Mother had to bow down to the wishes of Sarah who had fallen in love. Now destiny had to take its turn. Maybe the Sun had moved into Capricorn, with Jupiter playing the cupid, to bring changes in the life of Sarah. Surrounded by various people (Jane, Lucifer & nieces), during evening gatherings Sarah finally began to awaken to her own feelings as a woman when Norman was around in the evenings.

The ultimate had yet to dawn though. Sarah was cleverly manoeuvred and manipulated into cooking food at midnight when Norman arrived daily to discuss cases with Jane, Lucifer and ofcourse, Sylvia. Sarah cooked and toiled in the kitchen trying to reach out to Norman's heart following the proverbial nuance of winning the man's heart through his stomach. Sylvia and Kylie were trying to be very helpful by letting her cook, serve, drink and be merry.

But everything good had to come to an end. The day came when Sarah had to return back home with her parents. Lovelorn Sarah went out to seek help from Jane and Lucifer and was rest assured that they would convince Norman for the alliance. Back home Sarah dreamt of marrying Norman and kept getting updates on phone from Jane. How was she to know that Sylvia, who had earlier proclaimed her disgust about the mannerisms of Norman and confessed to have no interest, was nothing but a clever move to deter Sarah away from Norman congenially? Naive Sarah could not apprehend the white lies. Sarah was unaware of the worldly ways and the sophisticated veneer of Sylvia who had quietly ensnared herself into Norman's heart. Being younger and beautiful Sylvia had easier access to Norman. Helped by her youngest sister Kylie, Sylvia was able to convince her parents that she loved Norman. Jane was happy that finally her wish was to materialise. Meanwhile she kept assuring Sarah on phone that things were alright. Six months lapsed when a call came from Jane about some religious convention which was going to take place and Sarah's mother was invited to the

convention. Sarah accompanied her mother happily. On cloud nine Sarah could hardly contain her happiness about meeting Norman after a long time. When Sarah reached Jane's place she was in the seventh heaven. Apprehensive about meeting Norman again, Sarah had the gut-feeling that things were not right. Sarah had been an intuitive soul since childhood and could sense things amiss. Blind in love Sarah ignored the inevitable. Happily she would tend to her sister's needs and helped the nieces. She would be the in-house masseuse for all, including Lucifer, as part of her duty. Drinks over casual gatherings were organised in order to give more time to Sarah and Norman, though lovelorn Sarah hardly realised that things were not as it looked to the eyes.

And one fine day Lucifer tried to molest Sarah after the drinks were over on pretext of massage. Lost in the thoughts of Norman Sarah had no idea of his intentions as she had considered Lucifer her elder brother. She had felt very safe while drinking in the group. Drinks had always been served by Lucifer. While giving massage, Jane's husband had stripped off his shirt and though Sarah felt uncomfortable, his intentions became clearer as he kissed her on the cheeks while sipping drinks from the same bottle. Realisation hit hard when Lucifer tried to detain Sarah from leaving the room. Sarah slapped off his hands as Lucifer tried to catch on her arms, ending the prelude. The conservative mind of Sarah, who somehow had tried to change for Norman, could no longer accept this new turn in her life. Trust had been breached beyond reparation. Innocence of the Lamb had been destroyed forever by the experience of the conniving Tiger. Rushing out of the room Sarah vomited in the bathroom. She realised later on that Jane must have been aware of her husband's untoward habits but had never tried to warn Sarah about it. Exactly what had Jane been up to? Jane had already accused Sarah about stealing her husband away from her and Sarah had laughed it off. Sarah did not know what to do while Lucifer stalked her requesting her not reveal the details to his wife. "Keep it to yourself. I am Sorry. Please do not tell Jane or the children. It will destroy my family" went on Lucifer. Five days lapsed while Sarah tortured herself with the filthy feeling of having her body soiled from the touch of a repugnant man. She kept secluded in a corner avoiding Lucifer. Sarah's mother had no idea about the reason for Sarah's sudden behavioural change, but being an experienced and mature lady, she did realise that something drastic had occurred. The day to leave for the religious convention drew nearer. Sarah kept on speculating as to how to handle all the pent up anger and disgust while the inner voice kept on pushing her to speak to Jane. Sarah's grandmother had imbibed the values of virtue in her and the parents had always kept her in a safe cocoon where untoward behaviour from men was deplorable. To have something like this happen to her

inside her family had incarcerated Sarah's soul. She had lost faith in pious relationships. Sarah had an independent mind since childhood and was never afraid to confront people. Jane tried to talk to Sarah. Her experienced life and worldly outlook had to be used effectively now. "Oh why are you depressed"? Jane questioned Sarah. "Maybe she is very observant" thought Sarah. "Talk to me. Tell me what's wrong? Are you not happy? Tell me what you feel? Why do you get so angry often? "Can I ask a question? 'Sure', answered Sarah after long thought. "God gives everyone some quality. You have such a beautiful complexion. You may not have sharp features but you have skin which glows. No aberrations like all of us. Do you feel low because rest of us are more fair and beautiful? Jane persisted in getting a reply. "Is she counselling me or is it a showdown', thoughts entered unsuspecting into Sarah's mind. Anyhow questions had to be answered. "Yes I feel low because I am not tall like you all nor I am fair. I am fat and parents get angry because I pay no heed to my studies. You know what?" "What? asked Jane. "It happens at this age. Don't take it seriously". And then the snoring was heard. Concerned Jane was already fast asleep leaving Sarah wondering as to what the whole exercise was all about.

The day dawned when all had to depart for the convention. Sarah drew her sister in a room and told the details of what her husband had been up to. Crying her heart out Sarah seemed to question herself as to why it had happened at all. Deconstructing moral values and relations was a difficult task. 'Why me', cried out Sarah silently. Inside she kept questioning herself if she had been the culprit in instigating what had happened. 'Is it because I am single', questioned her perplexed mind. "Was it her single status that had instigated her brother-in-law?" Thousands of question but Sarah could not find an answer. A girl, who was not married, need not become a prey to any man's attention to satisfy his physical needs. Sarah was self sufficient and she was not able to digest this breach in relations. She was completely withdrawn and taken aback. After all the brother-in-law had been hitting on her for a long time but naive Sarah had not understood the frivolities of high society culture. Jane tried to convince Sarah that her husband must have been under the influence of alcohol and as a consequence things must have turned ugly. 'No wonder things turn ugly where you feel the safest. Or was it the only answer that Jane could come up with to defend her husband. What kind of life is she leading knowing her husband's untoward attitude towards women?' Sarah thought vehemently.

Unburdening her soul to Jane, Sarah felt relieved for the time being. She knew that if things had been told to Jane during the convention, away from Delhi, it would have put Sarah on the wrong foot. Sarah left for the convention along with her mother, sister, nieces, Norman and

his family. Along came the Spiritual Master of Jane with all her wisdom and knowledge. Sarah was to realise the manipulations of the Spiritual Master much later in life.

Unaware of all treacherous on goings around her, Sarah was cheerful to be in company of Norman even though from distance. But Norman seemed to be comfortable in Sylvia's company, sharing her compartment berth. Jane seemed not to notice this brazenness though Sarah was uncomfortable. What girl could accept the man of her dreams sleep with her niece? "Oh they are friends and of the same age so they are enjoying", responded Sarah's youngest niece, Kylie. Kylie was the chirpy one trying to help Sarah, though covertly helping Sylvia to enamour Norman with her wiles. Sylvia had confessed her love for Norman to Kylie. Subsequently Kylie had managed to manoeuvre naive Sarah away from the lovebirds.

Getting down the train at the place of convention was a delight for Sarah as she was to explore a new place and enjoy. Soon all reached the holy Ganges. After taking nap in the guest house, Sarah tried to seek the company of Norman but he was fully engrossed with Sylvia taking her around Allahabad and explaining the intricacies of convention and its religious implications. The banks of Ganges had been turned into a town full of lights. Meanwhile destiny had been upto its strategies and in Delhi Sarah had encountered ligament rupture in her right knee and was uncomfortable due to the pain. The night spent in the hut near Ganges again failed Sarah to come out of her reverie. She had sprained her knee again while taking dip in the Ganges and the painful knee was cumbersome. Yet it could not deter her from the night walk around the Ganges with others and Norman though Kylie had tried her best to stop Sarah from accompanying them. Sylvia kept walking with Norman and his sister while perplexed Sarah looked on. Journey back to Delhi was again a pain physically and psychologically. Sylvia and Norman kept close to each other and slept together on the same berth on pretext of not having enough bookings. Sarah had never encountered such frivolous behaviour in the family. Maybe the Cosmo-culture was different.

Sarah pretended to sleep sharing the train berth with her mother and Michele while journey back to Delhi from Allahabad. The holy environs had failed to bring in the awareness into Sarah's love boggled brain. Again things were amiss. Jane and her Guru manipulated Sarah's attention away from Sylvia and Norman and continued to do so till they achieved their purpose to get Norman and Sylvia married. In Delhi Jane forced Sarah to meet the spiritual Master and confess. When Sarah told the guru about her love for Norman she gave Sarah three months time to cajole Norman. Well quite an advice! Sarah lived 1000 miles away from Norman while Sylvia was available at hand.



Much later in life Sarah realised that it had just been a passing phase in life. The momentous revelation of Sylvia was enough for Sarah to realise and accept the truth and move on with her own life. It was the moment of awakening from slumber rather than an ordinary thought—a distant memory, the clearing in the clouds, knowing that there is more to life. ‘There’s more to me’, thought Sarah. The revelation of Sylvia was like hitting the bottom. Things got into perspective as after returning from the convention, at two in the morning next day Sylvia confessed to Sarah that she actually loved Norman and it was mutual. Norman had confessed his love for her. She requested Sarah to back out. Was Sarah ever in the race to win Norman? It was a losing battle from the beginning. Shockwaves went through the Sarah mutilating the heart forever. Whole night was a torture and Sarah cried into the wee hours of the dawn trying not to wake her mother. She recalled the nights when her niece had stole secretly into the room of Norman on pretext of discussing cases and appeared only at 4 am in the morning, peeping here and there trying to see if there were any onlookers. She always missed Sarah’s hurt and wondering eyes questioning her moves.

Back home when things got out of hand emotionally, Sarah confessed to her mother. Mother just embraced and told Sarah that she knew everything and that she had left everything upto the Divine. She had the belief that only God could bring her daughter back to her senses. Sarah had been through the most difficult lessons in her life but recovered with the help of her mother. Things never got back to normal for Sarah though. Belief in relations had been shattered. Mom had already told Sarah how Jane and her daughters had tried to manipulate things by backbiting about her. No longer could Sarah relate to Jane and Sylvia. Jane and Sylvia, guilt ridden, tried to manipulate Sarah’s emotions in order to extricate themselves from the hurtful game of manipulations.

One fine day a call from Jane to mom brought the clarity, “Sylvia’s marriage has been fixed with Norman but I am feeling guilty. Sarah being elder to Sylvia is still unmarried. How do I fix the date?” Benevolent mother asked Jane to go ahead with her plans. Perspectives had changed forever for Sarah and life moved on. Yet Sarah’s beleaguered and independent mind wondered exactly what Norman had been to Sylvia? Was he a trophy to be taken home with panache and pride in order to prove that Beauty and Youth can win the world? Or was it Sylvia’s jealousy towards Sarah and she had wanted to prove a point? Sarah had queried time and again if Sylvia was in love with Norman after her nocturnal visits to Norman’s room and the answer had always been negative. “Oh he is such an offending personality, has no table manners. He can hardly speak good English.” Then what was the entire hullabaloo about? Sarah wondered. Getting Norman out of her system was difficult yet fast.

Sarah fell in love again. Life has its way of healing and teaching. Just like a child Sarah tread slowly towards a new phase of her life. Chagrin at the memory of past incidents and despair at the realisations catapulted innocence into bitterness as Sarah finally entered the world of wisdom. Passion and Compassion combined but does it define the line? Let's shed all the evils; hatred, jealousy, rivalry and war, let's wander the world of Love. Is Patience and Peace the keyword to Love? The eternal question recurs -meandering around the world of Love and its intricacies, till life meets Death and soul meets the Origin-the Eternal source of unconditional Love. Rising from the ash like a phoenix Sarah decided to undertake new venture with aplomb. Unwavering, she moved ahead towards a life which was a complete new page in her life, yet to be written. Apprehensive Sarah, coming out of sabbatical mode, decided to move on and step into the real world outside the warm cocoon to carve a niche for her. To be a part of a place where Sarah breathed fresh air... But will the new beginning bring solace?; Or was it a journey towards a new lesson? Sarah wondered as she boarded the bus headed towards yet another genesis.