

FLOWERS SING AND SONGS BLOOM

**A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY FROM ONE CIRCLE TO ANOTHER WHERE
CENTRES MEET WITHOUT TOUCHING THE PERIPHERIES**

PART - II

By MEERZA HASAN NIZAMI (Rumi Ikhtiyari)

TO MY MURSHID*
WHOSE LUMINOUS PRESENCE MADE ME SAY

DARKNESS KNOCKS AT THE DOOR OF LIGHT
LIGHT OPENS THE DOOR AND RECEIVES ITSELF

*** Dr. MEERZA IKHTIYAR HUSSAIN R.A. - A SUFI MASTER**

Allah is like the jasmine plant
Which the preceptor planted in my heart - O-HU
By water and the gardener of negation
And positive statement it remained near the
Jugular vein and everywhere - O-HU
It spread fragrance inside when it
Approached the time of blossoming - O-HU
May the efficient preceptor live long
Says BAHU who planted this plant-O-HU

By Hazrat Sultan Bahu (translated by unknown)

RESURRECTION

A glance of my beloved fills me with a desire to go
beyond myself

And I explode and scattered like dust at his feet
Now the magician of love – the Christ has raised me from
my extinction to glorification

My dust particles have transformed into the colorful
stars on the sky of eternity

Where each star is emanating different hue from the
reflecting light of my beloved

LONG LIVE MY MURSHID – O HU!

Meerza Hasan Nizami

PART II

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BACK TO KARACHI:

Several years passed by when after completion of my studies, I decided to go back to Pakistan. It definitely was the influence of my closely-knit family that attracted me, but the biggest reason was the spiritual pull of my mentor (A Sufi Murshed)*. Just as a rose by its overwhelming beauty and intoxicating perfume attracts an individual, likewise Grace of the Murshed pulls a disciple up from the dreaming world of thoughts and an unknown fire like feeling takes control of the heart. Mind bows before heart; Reasoning evaporates in the domain of feeling; Answers arrive before questions. And lover just follows his Pied Piper, intoxicated and mesmerized.

When I landed at the Karachi airport in the September of 1987, it was quite hot and humid. However, it was extremely pleasing to meet with my family members, relatives and friends after such a long time. The gap of six years simply evaporated in the warmth of love. Such meetings continued for several days to come. More importantly, I continuously found myself in the physical presence of my Murshed.

Besides this good side, a parallel negative side of lawlessness and violence had erupted like fiery lava ready to burn and destroy in those days. The Karachi that I left years ago seemed nowhere to be found, as the ethnic problems created an air of fear everywhere and no one felt safe. The armed rival groups were dominating the city. Killings and destruction of opponents seemed to be the norm. Such news on daily basis created so much mental anguish in the minds of common folks that there remained nothing else to talk about. The newspapers would provide the graphic details and pictures of people assassinated, mostly very young. Such a contrasting face of life appeared very cruel and ugly particularly for an individual who spent several years in a peaceful environment before returning back.

After doing some contractual assignments, I started my first regular job for a leather company in the city of Karachi. The factory was located on the other end of the city at a far off Korangi industrial area away from the main road in a newly designated area for the construction of factories. Due to less factories and more land, that area had been arid and desert like terrain with a thin strip of half completed rutted road leading towards the few scattered factories. The car would shake and rattle preparing me for the days work before entering into the factory. It was peak of the summer season, when I joined that company. The temperature would almost always be in 35 plus degree centigrade and extreme humidity had also added flavor to the heat. Karachi being a coastal city is extremely humid. The office building, which was adjacent to the factory, had been newly constructed with no air conditioning facility. I remember my first day, when I was in a dilemma as to what to do! If I had opened the windows, stench of raw hides and chemicals would have a one sided victory over my olfactory sense and interfered with my breathing. While if I had turned the fan on, it would be difficult to manage the paperwork. I tried the third route by closing the windows and turning off the fan but in no time, I was floating in a river of sweat from top to bottom. Then, for the next three months, I survived with open windows amid the odor of chemicals and hides with a lower speed of fan to counter heat and humidity. After a while, perhaps my mind got numbed and the sense of smell lost its dominance over me, though stench at times would still become unbearable. I started concentrating more on my work. The company used to export leather jackets; hence the raw hides would pass through different processes to reach at the stage of finished leather. Then, another department would design, cut and prepare jackets. During my lunch break, I would go out and walk on the second floor of an adjacent building owned by the same group of companies. It was not fully finished and had been left incomplete. It just had a roof stood on bare pillars without any walls but with a concrete floor giving a feel of an open hall. It used to be cooler relatively due to open crossing of the wind. From there, I could view at times the iguanas crossing the deserted ground in an elegant

manner while keeping their heads high under the scorching sun. As a contrast to stench of hides, at times a drift from a nearby biscuit factory would entertain my olfactory sense.

Days passed by, and I kept commuting between the two ends of the city of Karachi. I remember those close encounters with violence when once; I got trapped in a riot- ridden area and two rocks landed on my car. At another time, a rock had hit my chest but with an angle that did not prove to be injurious. The sudden breaking out of riots was a common occurrence in those days and then the echo of gunshots out of nowhere would create an immediate silence of a graveyard. Driving car on those deserted roads amid the burning tires and dark smoke would generate extraordinary fear. Life was a total chaos in those days and no one seemed to be safe. There existed just one shelter for me – the Sufi spiritual gatherings and *Sama* (Sufi Music). It would help me a lot by providing a sort of spiritual contentment. Its existence appeared like an island of peace surrounded by the sea of turmoil.

It was a strange experience for me that two parallel realities existed side by side. They seemed interdependent and both were absolutely real. The blood soaked bullet riddled bodies of young men were as concrete as the ecstatic faces of spiritual men. It seemed that I could not avoid any of those polar opposites. In one of those days, a roaming car of terrorists kidnapped one of my closest friends from his home. He was shot dead, then and there. To the horror of the family members, his bullet riddled dead body was thrown out in front of his home. It was an event that turned out to be extremely disturbing for all of his acquaintances.

Amid such vicissitudes of life, a breeze of fresh air touched me from another dimension. It turned out to be an opportunity to perform Umrah that would allow me to visit Mecca and Medina.

BACK TO KARACHI AFTER PERFORMING UMRAH:

It was another morning and I headed towards my office as usual. It was an extremely hot and humid day. At work, I kept on perspiring profusely. During the lunch break, I had my usual walk outside of the factory and went upstairs in the adjacent building to relax in a relatively cool atmosphere. I felt no relief from the heat, as there was no wind while humidity was at its height. Out at a distance, I could see a few birds and crows flying in a lazy manner seemingly tired from the harsh weather. A mirage was also visible at a far off distance due to bright sun and intense heat. I walked back towards the office in sheer frustration, as there seemed no escape from that penetrating heat. Day seemed to drag at a snail's pace, but finally came the time to go home. After locking my room, I approached towards the car that was parked in the vicinity of the factory area. As soon as I opened the door, some flies came directly towards me along with the smell of raw hides and went inside the car, before I could distract them. I started engine and turned on the AC, but as soon as I started to move, flies started buzzing and touching my wet perspired face. I tried to get rid of them by slightly keeping the door ajar; instead few more entered the car. I drove out of the factory premises and lowered the glasses to push the flies out. A gust of wind took some of the flies away, however a few remained there. I kept on trying with one hand to push those flies out, but they were persistent in sticking inside the car. In two or three attempts while lowering and closing the windows, I was able to get rid of most of the flies, but two or three were still buzzing around my face. With a constant effort, two were slipped out and all of a sudden, last fly was also sucked out of the window. I immediately raised the window glasses to form a wall of convenience around me. What a relief it turned out be! In a short while, AC also regained its power. After coming out of the rugged strip of road, I turned on the music and the wheels touched the main road towards my home giving rise to a pleasant feeling of calmness and silence.

EYES CLOSE YET OPEN

Life of flies hovering and residing at the heap of garbage seems strange. Buzzing all day, eating, copulating and death appear to be the only realities of their lives. This is a story of the same flies that used to live at a garbage dump besides a roadside of a small town. They had been passing a monotonous life and were not even aware of anything beyond the garbage dump. It was their only universe. The dump had always been abuzz with the whole colony of flies. Cars and trucks would come on a daily basis for throwing garbage at that place. Though vehicles bringing garbage would arrive continuously, but flies oblivious to those vehicles were only interested in the left over food items. Time was slipping by! Days were passing by! Suddenly out of nowhere, some of the flies started becoming conscious of the changes happening around them. Life started unveiling its face in a new way for them besides daily routine of partaking in the feast over rotten fruits and stinking food items. They were seven in number and due to their common observation and understanding, started coming close to each other and became friends. Those seven flies created their own world within that world of garbage. To the extent of food, they were the part of the same group, but beyond that they existed on a different pole. They would get together for discovering the ways to find meaningfulness in their lives. At times, they would question their existence as flies, yet at other times be fascinated by the awareness of their presence enabling them to experience an unfolding new world. They could vividly feel that garbage dump was not the only world rather one of the many worlds around them. To ordinary flies, those seven flies looked like idiots wasting time just for nothing. With the passing of time, more and more insights were dawning upon them like shooting stars from an outer world. Once, while sitting together, one of the flies noticed a fast passing by car. Immediately, significance of her wings appeared in a new light with a potential of generating extraordinary speed. A

further contemplation on that insight also showed them the lightness of their wings. Such awareness of the power of the wings fascinated them and showed the inherent strength that could be tapped upon. With those bestowed qualities, they felt confident enough to move anywhere without any difficulty both on the ground and air hence started spending more time in looking and searching beyond the garbage heap. In the process, passing by speedy vehicles with versatile colours and models became more prominent and meaningful for them. A number of vehicles would pass from that area on daily basis. Those friends would observe them all day long and love to see the fast moving action. A lurking hidden desire of traveling in the vehicles was on the rise with every passing day.

The vehicles would often stop at the dump to throw garbage before proceeding onwards. At times, those friends could get a glimpse of the inside from the open doors. They would web different theories about the inside and outside of the car, wonder about the destination of vehicles, but in reality were not sure about their unknown curiosity. They could not figure out the source of interest for an outside world that could have been worst than their own world of garbage. It seemed that an unknown force was trying to pull them out from their roots. By watching the colourful and speedy vehicles on daily basis, they liked to be in close proximity rather wanted to travel along with the vehicles. However, they were afraid to take the jump. An inner urge was constantly compelling them to take the move, but fear would not allow them to proceed. Time and again, they would think to leave the heap of garbage but a sort of gravitational pull was hindering their steps forward. There was a fear of the unknown. They kept on discussing the future course of action among themselves, but fear would get hold of them as they were not sure about the destination of the cars and what if they were unable to reach back home. They were not ready to lose themselves for an unknown destination. It seemed like a high price to pay for the ride in a car. They were afraid on one hand, but on the other, attraction of the vehicles was constantly on the rise. One day, five flies out

of seven had finally decided to move on with the vehicles at any cost. They could see the futility of their lives while living at the heap of garbage. Daily routine of waking up and buzzing all day on rotten food was getting too much for them. Two out of seven were still not prepared to head for an unknown destination but the remaining five had determined to risk their lives for something more than their present monotonous boring lifestyle. They were fed up with the imprisonment at the heap of the garbage day in and day out. At times, they would feel pity at the large population of flies who were just busy eating and copulating. They were no more interested in the buzzing all day around.

The two flies that became conscious but did not dare to move ahead with their five companions decided to work on the welfare projects for the flies inside the garbage heap. They focused on devising the ways to eradicate hunger and food problems enabling the flies to have a fulfilling and less problematic stay at the heap. Their intentions were good but they could not see the bigger picture of that decision. Their vantage point of view was limited to the heap; however there were other factors also at work. As they were thinking of finding ways that could attract more and more garbage so that rotten food be available in abundance, a latent danger was not taken into consideration that how would people living in the neighbourhood react to increased garbage and simultaneously increasing number of flies. The neighbourhood could have found it disturbing and unhygienic and might take action to limit or cover the open garbage resulting in the curtailment of population of the flies. Infact, steps could be taken by the neighbourhood even to annihilate the whole colony of flies.

The remaining five flies were determined to go ahead and were waiting for a suitable time and a vehicle. Everyday, they pondered and thought over different colours, styles and speed of vehicles, but could not reach at a consensus. Time was ticking by and their frustration was getting higher and higher. Daily at sunrise, they got together and started staring at the empty space in front of the heap in anticipation of finding a vehicle of their choice,

but without reaching anywhere would come back to the heap. There was a constant burning feeling inside each of them that they even stopped talking to each other. They would not want to eat food – just a thirst had engulfed them to move on an adventure; to just go ahead and enjoy the ride on a speedy vehicle. They were fascinated with the speed. Life at the heap was dull and slow and they want to fly rather than crawl. They were ready to move on. Consequently, they decided to risk their lives by sitting close to a place from where the garbage would be dumped in, so that as soon as the vehicle made a stop, they would rise towards the car. It was definitely a courageous plan, as usually the flies could not even stand a small drift of air. However, moving ahead became the matter of life and death for them and they were ready for it at any cost. One day, while they were waiting, a car had arrived and parked in front of them. As they noticed the glowing headlights of the vehicle from such a close proximity, fear cropped up within them and despite firm intentions, they could not gather enough courage to fly towards the car. In the meantime, window glass was lowered and garbage was dropped at the heap almost hitting them, but they dived back and flew up at an angle escaping the hit. With that unsuccessful attempt, they were again brought together for developing the future course of action. Then, they decided to follow the vehicle when it would start moving away from the garbage after dumping it, so that her glowing headlights like eyes would be looking in other direction. As soon as the next vehicle arrived, they were prepared to fly with it. After throwing the garbage, as the vehicle proceeded ahead, they flew towards it and tried to align themselves parallel to the contour of the vehicle. Initially, they were able to fly with the vehicle, but that outward emulation threw them back due to the pressure of the wind as it was too much to bear and they were instantly pushed back.

For next time, they decided to land on the body of the car. However, that plan could not be materialized, as they were afraid to touch the glaring coloured body of the vehicle. Despite fear, they decided out of frustration, to go ahead with the landing on the shiny surface of the car. In that way,

movement of the car would carry them along with it. They were ready for action once again. As soon as the vehicle stopped, they flew higher to avoid the front glowing headlights and then darted downwards to sit on the body of the car. Initially it was fine as they were able to land on the coloured surface of the car but as soon as the vehicle started moving away from the heap and picked up the speed, they could not resist the pressure of the oncoming wind, which kept on rising with the increasing speed of the vehicle. The same speed that looked so attractive and exciting from a distance turned out to be a nightmare from a close proximity. They were again pushed back with a sudden jolt, hence could not cope up with the speed of the running car and ended up back at the heap of dirt.

The obstacle of wind pressure was very much frustrating particularly due to an imagined wise plan that was shattered into pieces so easily. The mere following of the car had hurt them badly not only physically but psychologically also. A fear had crept in again despite their courage. However, healing did not take long to occur and they were again ready with the renewed hopes. For one more time, they sat together and after contemplation and discussion upon the various alternatives arrived at a consensus to sit on the bumper situated behind the vehicle to avoid wind pressure. Though it appeared quite risky, as they were afraid of sitting close to the glowing red lights, but that seemed like the only alternative to move ahead. With the arrival of next vehicle, they managed to sit on the bumper and to their relief; red lights were seemed oblivious of their presence. It turned out to be just a thought of the fear in their minds without any reality of its own, as nothing happened. The third method seemed quite plausible and they took a sigh of relief by reaching close to the only possible way of moving ahead. It all started fine, as the front end of the car did not allow the high winds to push the flies back. However, as soon as the vehicle took a turn, a hidden hand of harsh winds pushed them away from the bumper of the vehicle. They were not ready for this situation and could not resist the force of the wind one more time. Again, they had to turn back abruptly

towards the garbage dump back to the old world. One more time, their adventure turned out to be so painful and heart breaking that they lost interests in everything around them. They even stopped buzzing with each other. No more planning for discovering a mysterious destination through the vehicle was at hand. Life turned out to be extremely dull with no hope for any improvements. They had to live amid somnambulist colony of flies whose life was revolving around eating dirt and copulating. The heap was getting dirtier for them, with each passing day. Those awakened flies were simply helpless. They tried their best but were not destined to reach anywhere.

They decided to stay back at the heap of the dirt, but started imagining things of the outside world. They started meeting on daily basis away from the hustle and bustle of flies and would share their dreams and ideas. An unknown thirst of those colorful and speedy cars were still lurking somewhere. At times, they would notice the passing by cars in a detached way and tried to stay calm, but spark within was about to catch fire.

At last, one day a beautiful car stopped by to throw garbage. When the door opened, they noticed that inside the car, there were trays of sweets and fruits arranged on the seats. The whole scenario was so tempting and attracted them in such a way that by the time they could realize the situation; they simply ended up inside the car. It was like an unknown power that pulled them from their old world to a new world. They were surprised rather shocked to find them inside the car with no effort on their part. Earlier, they strove hard and tried their best to get into any vehicle but to no avail. All their efforts bore no fruit rather exasperation. Then, just as they had left the adventure behind, out of nowhere, opportunity to embark on a life long journey knocked at the door. They found them inside a perfect vehicle, as there was abundant food including sweets and fruits for all of them. The pain of longing simply evaporated. The mind was not even capable of thinking about the world of garbage that they had left behind. In the meantime, door of the vehicle got closed and it moved onwards.

It was altogether a new experience for those five flies, where no effort was needed to move ahead; no hard work to find food; no problems of weather. It seemed like a wonderful world of physical comfort. Initially for a period of time, they missed the heap and its continuous buzzing sound. Gradually they started becoming used to the world of silence and that environment opened up a new dimension for them. Due to less disturbance of the outer world, an inner strength surfaced up. It became evident as to why they felt uncomfortable at the heap. It was a call from the world of silence, which got translated into a journey away from the colony of flies to a place of seclusion. It seemed like a miracle as to how they ended up inside the vehicle. They had a good laugh while discussing their different planning scenarios and fruitless efforts for getting inside the vehicle that finally took place in a most unusual way and without any obstruction. They were unable to relate that easy entry with all those periods of trial and error. Was it that easy or just a coincidence that resulted in getting rid of those frustrated and painful moments? One of the flies finally advised other flies to leave such thoughts aside and enjoy the journey as an adventure of a lifetime. With that attitude in focus, they started to look outside of the vehicle. It was a different world altogether with a constantly changing view as everything seemed to be moving faster than usual. With such an indulgence in speed, a surge in their level of energy started taking place somehow, and for no obvious reason at all, they felt excited. Before such unusual changes could go any further, they heard a voice – a gentle and a friendly one. Consequently, they did not get disturbed or felt any fear from the emergence of an unexpected situation. Still, they tried to find the source of that voice but it seemed to be coming from everywhere. The voice said, ‘everything occurs for a specific reason and at a proper time. Once you understand this then nothing occurs within the parameter of time.’ The flies were simply dumbfounded with that utterance. The voice came again with a laughter imparting a message of joy in the atmosphere and said, ‘Do not you worry and burden your minds to find or understand me. Just relax and enjoy your journey. I am the friend of your friends.’ All the flies look into the eyes of each other to find mirrors of

friendship reflecting in each other. While they were trying to fathom the situation, the voice invited them to share events and experiences of their lives that forced them off to the journey. Such invitation had a soothing effect on flies and an ever-increasing feeling of distance with the voice subsided on its own. One of the flies volunteered and narrated her story:

STORY OF THE FIRST FLY

“I always dreamt of another home. In the heart of my hearts, I always felt that garbage dump had only been a visiting place for me. I could see flies dying almost on daily basis; hence sooner or later all of us had to depart from there. I could clearly see that every meeting ended up in separation, hence never felt any attachment for the place. However, I always liked and respected flies inhabiting the place. Due to my secluded nature of being, some of them considered me boring; others thought me to be proud; yet others found me insane. I respected their opinions, but then they started interfering in my life. They wanted me to live like them, to follow their styles. I was being pushed hard to tread a path that I did not want to follow. Day in and day out, I was in a state of continuous frustration that led me in search of a place that could really be called home, where I could live freely on my own. It directed me to look outside of that garbage dump and the first object of my attention turned out to be a vehicle. Its graceful movements and swift turns stirred something inside me. Later, I came to know that I was not the only one with that line of thought, rather there were some other flies also going through the similar experiences. Hence, we became friends in pursuit of something more than our ordinary and meaningless lives.” After telling that much, the first fly became silent in order for the second fly to start her story. However, before the second fly could proceed, the same voice came again seemingly from nowhere,

” Let me tell you stories of human beings in relation to your experiences. Remember, human beings are more evolved and powerful than you. Their actions directly or indirectly govern

your life. They provide food for you and provide environment so that you flourish. Also, they become cause of your death. Learn from them, while you are alive, as you may know why you are here?”

STORY FOR THE FIRST FLY

A LOTUS FLOWER

Once upon a time, there was a man who was considered an outcast among his people. Though, he was always there to help needy people, but disliked by the influential people of the society due to his unconventional ideas which time and again posed threat for the status quo. At an older age, he appeared more like a child and would behave like one, unlike people who posed to be sober and wise. For him, life from one end to another was nothing more than a childhood episode. People used to tell him to grow with time, get serious and learn the ways of the world that are designed for aging people. To him, seriousness in life was a sign of hypocrisy, as he firmly believed that older people just pose sobriety, otherwise every one wants to live like a child in a laughing playful mood. Such people intentionally suppress the inner voice otherwise heart never grows old. To him, there could be no communication with such people. Hence, when those people labeled him retarded and immature, there was no reaction coming from his side and he never felt bad. To him, the whole universe was in a playful mood like an innocent cute child. When wind moved, he used to feel that plants and trees were feeling ticklish and their branches were shaking with laughter. Once, when an apple dropped right in front of him from a nearby apple tree, he smiled after looking at it as the apple appeared like a little baby with pink cheeks. He kept holding it in his hands staring lovingly at it and said, ‘Hey friend! Why have you left your family? Then lightly threw it back towards

the tree, but it came back to him with a message in silent language, 'Just to have friendship with you'.

To him, trees would appear like friends hugging each other; crest of waves in a river would appear like toddlers jumping and making noises; floating white clouds against the backdrop of vast sky seemed like innocent children running after each other. If he ever felt sad, it would not last long for him just like a child whose toy had been broken but very soon would find joy in a new toy.

People started considering him a crazy person. His lion like laughter would be considered insanity. They tried to tell him again and again to behave like a mature person, but to him the so-called maturity was like a dark fearsome cloud, which would pose its heaviness despite being in the hands of wind.

People would advise him to plan for his future and a successful life. His response was almost always was the same, 'I cannot be better off what I am today'. Then he would say,

'There is no tomorrow rather it is a part of today. We always live in present so why to prepare for a better future when present is already the best. If one leaves happiness of today in order to gain tomorrow's joy then what's the use!

People gave him example of crops that seeds of today would only bear fruits tomorrow. Again, he would reject them by saying, 'Distance of time for cultivation of crops is an illusion. The seeds are sown today, crops grow today and they are cut today. If we could not get crops today, how could we survive and live without eating. At every juncture of time, human beings had food to eat. In reality, he sows and reaps at the same time.

His ideas were troublesome for influential people as they were feeling indirectly threatened by his behavior. Despite his so-called insane behavior, majority of the people started becoming jealous of him. His festive individuality and a lifestyle of enjoying the present moment started hurting people for no obvious reason at all. The followers of different religions, whose heaven was at a distance of tomorrow, could not see him living in the heaven here and now. How could the politicians who were luring people from the promises of tomorrow, could see him talking of today. With the conspiracies of such people, he was framed into fabricated situations and had been given ordered by the court to be hanged.

When he was taken towards the gallows, he started laughing and uttered, 'what a joke! A rose flower blooms in the morning as radiant colours and stir its surroundings with the soft magical waves of its perfume. By the evening, its petals fall away in humility to kiss the mother earth after living a life of grand celebration. It is born today in a majestic way and departs the very same day after enriching the mother earth from its vivid scented presence'.

The 'voice' became silent after telling the story that seemed more like a profound truth. The flies experienced a deep silence after listening to that story. It was a feeling of an awakening within the sleep as they could see and feel everything but there was no way to express it. The 'voice' itself had a tone of peace with a soothing effect. The flies were absolutely drunk with no wine at sight:

SONG OF A DRUNKARD

*The wine of roses
is a song of spring
The experiencing eyes are red
with its fragrance*

*Every petal reflect
movements of an eye
With its dancing gestures
amidst the breeze of silence*

STORY OF THE SECOND FLY

‘I have always very much disliked wars and destruction. The face of ugliness before, during and after the war brings an unbearable pain for me. It had always hurt to see the broken families due to devastating wars. No doubt it provided lots of food for all of our community in the form of dead, but somehow I preferred daily food available at the dump. I had always wanted to put an end to it and want to live peacefully with others living beings. Those thoughts of mine had very much disturbed other flies and they started calling me enemy who wanted to deprive them of abundant food opportunities during the war time in the form of dead bodies. I became an outcast living in my own world all by myself without any support. The pangs of loneliness were too much to bear at times; hence I decided to move away from there in order to find a better place. After listening to the second fly, the ‘voice’ uttered the following story while reflecting upon the nature of violence and peace:

STORY FOR THE SECOND FLY

WAR AND PEACE

There exists a wonderful planet called ‘Heart’ in our galaxy of imagination. The people called ‘Innocents’ have inhabited it. This is the only planet where lively pulsating colours of versatile nature crisscross each other, making it to be a colourful planet of outstanding beauty. Unfortunately, the

colours are losing lustre and getting dim due to fog of destruction and devastation as a very powerful king whose name is 'War' is presently ruling it. He has transformed this planet 'earth' into a hearth, where everyone seems to be burning in the fire of hate and fear. Although, he is blind and cruel down to the core, but cannot be overthrown due to an inherent special power of emanating fire from his mouth towards his enemies while burning them to death from his dragon like fiery breath and then eating them. His advisors are the most cunning and cruel and keep on displaying the charred bodies of victims to the 'innocents' discouraging them to challenge the 'King War'. He is ruling the kingdom in a ruthless manner without any fear of being threatened. His destructive might is being manipulated by a cunning group of villains who are getting all sorts of favours in his kingdom. The reason is quite simple as this group looks after the kitchen supplies of the 'King War', i.e. they find prey for his ever-increasing appetite of burning flesh and bodies. Besides, this cunning group provides entertainment for the King with the music of crying victims. The King becomes ecstatic with this music of pain and dances before annihilating the victims. At times, to make the music louder for the happiness of the 'King War', victims are divided into different groups and are forced to fight with each other before finally being burnt into the flames emanating from the mouth of the King War. The cunning group of villains has developed another cruel technique to fulfill the hunger of the King War i.e. to mint pseudo enemies in turn to create real enemies so a vicious circle is created to victimize more and more 'innocents'. This not only provides the justification for killing, but also makes the circle of destruction bigger and the music louder for the entertainment of the 'King War'.

'King War' has a sweet wife called 'Queen Peace'. She is one of the most beautiful personalities on the planet 'heart', however she is without hands. Once while trying to save children, who were brought in front of the raging 'King War' in disguise of enemies, got her hands burnt by the venomous flames erupting out of King War's mouth. As a punishment for interfering in the affairs of the kingdom, she has been expelled from the palace and now lives in a remote island called 'Love'. The 'innocents' like 'Queen Peace' a lot and want her to rule the planet 'heart'. They visit her and plea, "Please come back to us and live amidst us."

The Queen Peace has a simple answer, "As soon as King War sees me, he will attack you and I do not want to see you people getting destroyed."

Hence, the life goes on! The terror reigns supreme all over the planet except in the island 'Love', where law of Peace prevails. The 'innocents' are trying their best to get rid of the King War but the cunning advisors to King whose vested interests are threatened by the rule of 'Queen Peace' are preparing all sorts of conspiracies to maintain the status quo.

A TALE OF MULLA NASRUDDIN IN A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Nasruddin was awakened by his wife in the middle of the night asking him to take care of the two quarreling men in front of their house. As it was a cold night, Nasruddin wrapped his quilt tightly around his shoulders and rushed outside to separate the men who had come to blows. When he tried to settle the issue, one of them snatched the quilt off Nasruddin's shoulders and then both of the men ran away. Nasruddin, tired, half asleep and

perplexed, returned to his house shivering in the cold. "What was the quarrel about?" wondered his wife when Nasruddin came in. "It must be our quilt," replied Nasruddin.

In the light of current and not so distant past, characters can also be seen as follows:

Two Thieves : The Bush regime and the Al-Qaeda people.

Nasruddin : The Muslims

Quilt : Mental / Spiritual comfort.

Wife : Religious ulemas who try to wake up (Nasruddin) Muslims.

Their house : Islamic countries.

STORY OF THE THIRD FLY

While living in the colony of flies, I always felt a deep sympathy for all the flies. Though monotonous behaviour of flies did annoy me a lot but still I tried my best to divert their attention to other significant event of our lives. I would tell them about the changing seasons and its effect on all of us. I tried to tell them about the wonderful world outside. However, majority of the flies were not interested in anything new rather they were comfortable in the lifestyle of repetitive behaviour that was passed on to them by their parents. Later, I was able to find seven flies of my own understanding and this is how, I proceeded onto this journey. Still, I must confess that I miss that colony and its inhabitants. I developed a likeness for my kin that hitherto continues. On an intellectual level I was different but not at the level of feelings. It made me realize that our source is the same and somehow we are related to each other. There exists an invisible bridge connecting every one

of us to each one of us. I wanted to find that bridge and vehicles seemed to be the only source to reach there.

The voice sounded again. Compassion is the ultimate flowering of inner strength. You are bestowed with a great treasure in the form of affection and likeness for your kin and your idea of invisible bridge connecting each one of you is not an abstract idea but a reality. Let me tell you a tale of the waves:

STORY FOR THE THIRD FLY

TALE OF THE WAVES

With the advent of breeze, waves become aware of their existence on the surface of ocean. I as a wave feel my existence on the ocean of life amid a family of waves. Wherever I see, find waves. They are everywhere – close and far; small and big; noisy and calm; so on and so forth. I try to manage and take control but continuously being pulled and pushed by other waves. At times, some of the waves come close to me but side by side, others move away. Yet, at other times, those who moved away come back to me. I can see joyous waves splashing and playing with each other, while I can also see sad waves. There are violent waves and calm waves. However, most fascinating part of my journey is the fact that we are all joined and moving together. There is another reality at work too that whenever a new wave rises, sooner or later it falls back into the ocean. Every rise falls back and every fall rises, but with a new form every time. I am changing every moment and so are the other waves. When I close my eyes, I feel an inner connection with all the waves. On a deeper level, all the waves are somehow united, as source is just one and the same i.e. the

ocean. Then, it appears that there is no loss and no gain by our disappearance or emergence, rather just the change of faces.

UNITY WITHIN DIVERSITY

Love is like an ocean and lovers are like waves

On surface they are different but deep down they are one

The voice continued, ‘Listen to another story in the same context:

A MIRROR OF WATER

A stream from the very beginning flows towards the river to find it as a source of everlasting life. An invisible bridge exists between the stream and the river, hence river also attracts the stream as the earth attracts rain or the wind attracts wings. River on one end joins with the stream and on the other with the sea. Once the meeting happens, stream loses its smallness into the vastness of river in a state of rupture making the river dance with a roar. This union gives rise to a unique dance of love that continues till the river through another invisible bridge falls into the sea so as to rise through the waves to find a bridge to the moon. This is the state of love affair between the part and the whole where the reality i.e. water remains the same everywhere.

Similarly lover, beloved and love represent stream, river and sea respectively.

To further emphasize the idea of an invisible bridge, the ‘voice’ said, ‘Life is a unity. Distance is an illusion for dreaming eyes, which are fixated on

divisions under the influence of imprisoned self i.e. ‘i’. Such eyes only notice multiplicity in unity, though it should be the other way around. With the dominance of spiritual dimension in one’s life, a living being starts feeling likeness for others that gradually transforms into love for everyone. It has to be a natural consequence of spiritual evolution as one is connected to everyone else in a deeper sense. The diverse realm of forms and shapes are nothing more than the various aspects of a single reality. While existing in the physical realm, eyes tend to get fixated on the parts hence gradually loses connection with the holistic view, otherwise it is just a matter of switching over to a different perception i.e. from parts to whole and that invisible bridge will come into view out of nowhere as it is always there waiting to be discovered.

STORY OF THE FOURTH FLY

I am an adventurous type and always tried to get involved in unusual activities. Though, it was quite uncommon at the heap to develop interest beyond the monotonous activities of eating, buzzing and sleeping but I wanted something different. I even initiated various games in the community to involve other flies in a positive group activity but did not succeed. Once, I prepared several teams of flies and devised a game where each team would fly in different formations but devotion seemed to be missing and I found out that the flies at heap were not genuinely interested in any other activity besides routine ones. Hence, I stopped wasting time and delved deeply into my own world of action. On that path, I did find some unusual colleagues who were not into games though but in search of an ultimate adventure. This is how; all of us ended up having this wonderful journey. The voice appeared again from a close proximity and sounded, ‘Life really depends on your perception. You can live seriously for mundane things or ordinarily for extraordinary adventures. You can make a diamond out of a rough stone or a useless metal out of gold. It is your quest that either can be directed towards ‘i’ or ‘I’; illusion or Reality; drowning or Flying. For you, game was not

only a source of entertainment rather it was a projection of your thirst for finding something extraordinary from the monotonous lifestyle of the garbage heap. Also, by bringing flies for a common sport, you were tilting unknowingly towards a unifying force that binds everyone together. Paradoxically, display of unifying force amidst the diverse sources makes uniqueness more prominent just like grafting of different rose plants gives rise to a unique flower with a radiance and perfume of unmatched beauty. The voice appeared to be joyous and playful this time and told another tale:

STORY FOR THE FOURTH FLY

A GAME IS AFTER ALL A GAME

Khoji* is a good player of chess, However, his opponent who is behind the screen and invisible is a champion. His moves are absolutely unpredictable. Whatsoever, strategy Khoji develops; champion outclasses him sooner or later. Khoji seems to be in a constant trouble. It has occurred several times that Khoji was going to win the game but all of a sudden, it all collapsed and he started to loose. Now it is apparent to Khoji that his opponent is no ordinary player rather has got a full command on the game. Still, Khoji feels that the champion does not want to defeat him as the game continues despite several blunders of Khoji. The champion seems to be playing just for the sake of teaching by creating different situations to make Khoji understand the most important rule of the game i.e. to maintain a balanced attitude whether winning or loosing because a game is after all a game.

*Khoji in Urdu language means, 'one who searches'.

STORY OF THE FIFTH FLY

‘I have always liked to dance, since somehow, I can express myself much more effectively through such acts. It is like talking to myself through natural gift of noiseless gestures. Dancing activity has helped me even communicating with flies that did not understand my language. I buzz in a dancing way, where action becomes important than the words and message is conveyed yet in a stronger way. I tried to share gift of dance with other flies as I felt within that dance can be transformed into a celebration when more flies join and dance with each other hand-to-hand and face to face without uttering anything. I have tried my best to gather flies for sharing the gift of beautiful gestures of body in action but to my disappointment, I realized that flies were more focused towards rewards of food that would be provided after the dance session. I could feel that dancing gestures of flies would lose the grace due to less attention and awareness directed towards the dancing act. It was becoming more like another habit of deriving pleasure just like the other prevalent acts at the heap. I started distancing away from them, as I did not want to get indulged in something monotonous. For me, dance was always beautiful and rich in expressions. Gradually, I discovered a few flies like me, which were focused in various creative activities. Interestingly, almost all of them ended up in this vehicle for an onward journey to find meaningfulness in life.

The ‘voice’ took a deep sigh and interpreted that magical transformation among the flies from language to action in terms of music:

STORY FOR THE FIFTH FLY

RHYTHM OF SILENCE

Music is everywhere, yet nowhere. It pervades every thing yet beyond everything. It communicates with every living being. It makes an order out of chaos when everything flows in a

dancing mood in its enfoldment. It appears from nowhere and disappears into nowhere. It is so manifest yet cannot be pinpointed. It is sound yet it makes a listener quieter than before. It is but paradoxical that sound creates silence. Likewise, an artist expresses his inner music through colours. To him, different colours are like various keys of a piano through which a heart catching tune is created on a canvas. In the same way, a musician creates an abstract painting full of colours that can only be seen with closed eyes and open ears.

The ‘voice’ turned silent, while the impact of the metaphor of music moved the flies into a deep contemplative state and they found themselves in a realm where flowers sing and songs bloom. Again, they heard the ‘voice’ but from a very close proximity addressing to the flies, ‘At times, when dancer moves deeply into his dance, then her actions becomes musical full of rhythmic expressions and dancer simply disappears into his dance. It is a flight from silence to silence.

The voice continued to utter another piece of wisdom:

OM

A flower is born silently and after living a life of celebration and grandeur passes away silently. Its existence reveals a mystery of colors, fragrance, beauty and purity. Though, it does not try to draw attention of others, yet the whole universe is drawn towards it to partake in its celebration. Sun smiles, rain sings and wind dances with it. The human beings also find fulfillment in one or multifaceted aspects of the flower. It is wonderful that although a flower speaks the language of silence yet the whole universe listens to it. This is the beauty of silence that it uses all kinds of metaphors to express itself. Not only a flower, rather sun, moon, stars, eyes, seasons, peaks of

mountains, depths of valleys, tears, smiles are but a few expressions of silence.

A human being after taking birth from the silent world of mother's womb and passing through many phases of understandings ultimately realizes that fulfillment of any kind lies in getting in tune with the subtle aspect of life. In other words, gross presence of objects serves as a vehicle to convey something subtle. This subtlety has an intrinsic quality of impressing itself through silence. Hence, a note played on Sitar makes one silent than before and the fire of agitated mind gets extinguished from the river of silence arising out of music. Likewise, when a bird calls in a deep silent forest, the silence gets deeper than before because that call which arises out of silence touches the spring of silence in the listener and a bridge is formed between the two cities of silence i.e. within and without. As a result, a deeper silent unity prevails in and out of the listener. In the same way, a starlit silent night makes one aware of some unknown relationship between oneself and the universe and one feels at home with the twinkling stars, which convey smiling messages of celebration, and makes one silent than before.

If we see a little deeper, silence is not just a silence rather it has different moods to it. Sometimes, it is ecstatic where one can only dance to express it. It may be joyous where one's eyes smile to reflect it. It may also be immaculate like a monk meditating silently in a temple amidst mountains. It can be full of sorrow like a quiet evening of autumn. However, all these moods are inter-related, since born out of same source. This is how the poetry is born when a poet expresses these moods under the influence of a state where he gets in touch with the silence of his being, where doors to incoming thoughts are shut

and one starts listening to oneself in utter silence and a new colorful world full of flowers blooms out of nowhere.

Silence is a paradox as it says everything without saying it. With a silent mind, one reaches to an understanding that silence is not death as commonly misunderstood rather it is throbbing with life. It has a heartbeat to it that keeps on sending life waves all around in endless directions and in innumerable forms.

After imparting wisdom to all the listening flies, the voice became silent. Somehow, the flies felt an inner strength by listening to these stories. They felt a deep connection of an inexplicable nature with the voice of an invisible source. With the emphasis on silence, journey continued with a new vigour. The buzzing had been stopped and a milieu of silence prevailed in the vehicle. The flies then started looking outside the window towards the moving scenes, rather than buzzing with each other and even lost interest in sweets lying naked in front of them. They were just gazing outside where changing views were continuously happening at a faster speed. With a continuous outward focus in such a speedy vehicle, they started feeling nauseous and had to redirect attention inwardly to the vehicle. With a continuous inward gaze, a feeling of frustration again started settling in. The voice came again and directed them, 'Do look outside, but do not focus at a closed by fleeing object rather see far ahead. Expand your view.' They made another attempt to view outside and tried to focus far away at the horizon. Gradually, they were able to enjoy the ever- changing view. The colorful scenic environment was very attractive and the flies were deeply absorbed in watching outside. They almost forgot about the vehicle as the view was continuously changing towards the better. However, the evening was approaching fast and shadows were getting larger. The beautiful colors were losing the luster and a snake of fear started raising its head. It became evident that soon the beautiful world of burning colors would disappear from the view. The flies realized the limitation of that view which was turning out

to be nothing more than an illusion as it was unreachable and disappearing fast. It could only be enjoyed from a distance without actually participating in that celebration of beautiful colours. It did not turn out to be a comfortable feeling at all and brought the flies back to the lurking fear that reality for them either is just the heap of garbage or the vehicle that was slowly turning out to be nothing more than a moving prison. The dancing colors outside of the vehicle existed nothing more than an illusion, which started to disperse at the advent of evening. The flies came out of their silent trance like state and started buzzing with each other in order to find their journey meaningful.

DISAPPOINTMENT

*While I am walking on the shore in the full moon night
I can feel that the waves are in deep love with the beauty of the moon
They are raising their hands to touch the shining face of the moon
And it seems that sea is going to explode with the intensity of the
emotions of the waves*

*But like the thirsty man in the desert who always sees the mirage but
unable to get a single drop of water
the effort of the waves is useless
the distance is unbridgeable*

*The soft cool sand like a mother is consoling the tired and
disappointed waves that live with me, live with the earth
Do not live in the hope of the moon that can never be yours
But will the waves ever hear to the voice of sand?*

The wonderful time in that silent world turned out to be a short-lived experience for them due to their volatile nature. With the passing of time, a few flies felt an unknown fear from the approaching destination, while others started getting bored. Some, due to lack of patience, started fabricating unfavourable future events, which were just a figment of their

mutual imagination and perhaps were not likely to occur but an uneasy feeling started to take over. The very same vehicle that was the biggest temptation of life somehow turned into an alien with no relationship at sight. Though they had every physical comfort available at their disposal, but their risk taking nature that forced them to even leave their home did not find this trip worth taking. They expected something more out of that journey, but it was again turning out to be monotonous just like the life at the heap. They were not at ease rather getting frustrated with the passing of the time and wanted to go back, hence started trying to find way out of the vehicle. They realized that the windows of the cars were closed and could not be opened. The very same vehicle that attracted them like a loving magnet now appeared like a travelling prison. Out of sheer frustration, two of those flies started hitting their heads on the glasses, but there seemed to be no way out. The moving prison of vehicle turned out to be bigger prison than their world of garbage dump. To them, journey turned out to be a big mistake that even took away their motherland. It was more like a bondage rather than freedom.

Suddenly, the vehicle stopped and its door opened. Strangely enough, right before their eyes they had their home - the garbage dump. Before they could depart, a voice came out from somewhere,

‘Go! Go back! If this vehicle is a prison then go back to your garbage dump - your world of freedom, but remember, real freedom does not happen without bondage – a temporary bondage. Journey to an unknown destination needs to be experienced from that perspective. Contemplate on these words. You have only been listening to yourself. Listening to yourself was good while you were at the heap but now it is no more needed. In the first place, your attraction for the vehicle occurred, when you were able to see beyond yourself; when you could experience a pull from another object and wanted to merge with it. Your attraction itself revealed the bridge to the vehicle. Now inside the car, heading for a meaningful journey,

you are supposed to contemplate on stories, as they are the devices used by the Guides down the ages to hit a certain center of understanding in a seeker to develop a faculty for experiencing the subtle aspect of existence. The core message behind every meaningful journey is a transformation from 'Grossness' to 'Subtleness'. Come out of your pre-conceptions. Do not judge anything now. A turtle as turtle does not have either speed or wings to get any idea about flying. He needs to come out of his 'turtleness'. See your limitations and do not think! Try to feel the message beyond the words of the stories without verbalization. Look for the contents within the container of words. Only then, listening is possible'.

ART OF LISTENING

There is a famous tale of Mulla Nasruddin:

Mulla was staying in a village. One day, he visited a village mosque. With his ascetic appearance, villagers invited him to deliver the Friday sermon. He happily agreed to it. From pulpit, he asked the congregation: "Do you know the subject I am going to discuss today?" "No" said the people. "Then I refuse to preach to such an ignorant assembly and left hurriedly. Next Friday he was invited again and when he repeated the same question again. The villagers afraid of what had taken place a week before said: "Yes yes, indeed we know." "Well, then. There is no point in telling you what you already know", said Mulla and left. On the third Friday he again asked from the pulpit: "Do you know what I am going to speak about today?" The villagers were well prepared that time, hence, some said yes and some said no.

"Then those who know can tell those who don't", said Mulla and left.

This story acts like a mirror for certain behaviours of listeners who basically do not listen while listening. Three types of listeners can be broadly classified here:

First type is not ready to tread the spiritual path, hence cannot even understand the basics but still try to attend a discourse under the influence of family pressure, fad or due to exotic nature of the teachings. The message simply cannot reach him due to difference in heights; hence the Master comes and goes without speaking to him.

Second type does not listen to the discourse rather to his personal thoughts. He always seems to know the truth. By reading religious scriptures, he considers himself expert. He behaves like a doctor who starts treating people after reading from the books. He attends a spiritual discourse with an attitude of arrogance whose sole intention is to find the Master less knowledgeable than him.

Third type only listens for the re-confirmation of his belief system. He may or may not be proficient in religious scriptures, but to him a proper discourse needs to agree with his belief system. Hence, he listens selectively by approving parts that matches with his beliefs while rejecting parts that appear contrary to his beliefs. He just comes to listen to himself in the backdrop of the discourse.

By the way, villagers refer to mental faculty of so the called listeners.

Those words seemed to carry such a weight that three out of five flies could not feel like leaving the car. However, two out of five who became impatient and were hitting their heads against the window glasses immediately flew

towards the garbage and joined their colony. They shared memories of that journey to their friends and relatives as their worst ordeal of life. They told the other flies:

‘There is no place better than this place. We made a big mistake by traveling into the vehicle. Such vehicles cause temptation by showing abundant food and movement with no effort on the part of the traveler, but it is an illusion because there is nothing more to it. Sooner or later, you are going to get bored with nowhere to go. Remember! None of you should ever try to leave this dump. Learn from our experience and enjoy life as it is!’

However, most of the flies laughed at that story, as it appeared ridiculous and nothing more than a crazy talk. In the first place, other flies never noticed any fly moving out of that dump, so how could they even believe it to be true. Anyways, those two flies were disappointed with the journey to such an extent that they were constantly talking against the places beyond the dump. However, as the returning flies were gifted with a touch of awareness, they started applying that aspect of life entirely towards the dump and started educating other flies the ways to gather garbage for their future needs. They warned the other flies that in case vehicles stop bringing food for some unknown reason, they should have enough supply for days to come before finding the alternative food sources. They never realized that such teachings slowly started creating selfishness among the flies and started making them insecure with no trust or sense of sharing towards each other. Consequently, in order to save food for their future needs, some of the flies adopted improper and short cut methods to gather food by stealing from others. They even started to fight for garbage. Justice was gradually losing its hold among the inhabitants of that colony, as stronger flies would snatch food from the weak. The two flies never thought that the onus of that change in behavior of the flies lie with them.

However, the remaining three flies looked towards each other and decided not to return to the same lifestyle again as they already had enough of it.

They thought of the frustrating experiences of the past at the dump where life was just misery. They had nothing else to do except eating, buzzing and copulating from dawn to dusk. They still were interested in traveling. They wanted to have a meaningful life and somehow sayings of the ‘voice’ touched them inwardly. As soon as those thoughts crossed their minds, the door of the car was automatically shut and it sped again along-with the three flies. The journey started again with renewed hopes and intentions. Somehow, a change seemed to have occurred and the remaining flies started feeling an affinity towards the vehicle and that earlier fear of uprooted-ness from their home existed no more. They again started to gaze outside of the vehicle at the horizon. It was a vision where they were focused at one point while changes were continuously happening close by without attracting any attention of the flies. Inside the moving vehicle, it was, as though, movement had no knowledge of its movement for the flies. Every now and then, concentration of such a gaze would be disturbed but with trial and error, it would again be restored. With the advent of evening and approaching darkness, one of the flies out of three could not take those outside changes anymore. She found those continuously changing scenes too much to bear without any sign of reaching anywhere. The only way out for that fly turned out to be nicely arranged sweets. She turned her attention from outside view to the sweets lying inside the car and started enjoying them. Taste seemed much better and refined. Thus, heap of sweets had replaced the heap of garbage for her.

The other two flies were deeply convinced that the ‘voice’ of the vehicle wanted to help them; otherwise they would not have been pulled up from the garbage dump. However, they were yet to understand the unfolding events. As long as they were watching the colours outside, they were fine, but as soon as they were thrown back to themselves, they were back to the same inner dissatisfaction which they had it at the dump. They did not want to go back as they were determined to go ahead. More importantly, they developed a faith in the vehicle as the stories told by the invisible source

touched a chord inside them that could not be ignored. With a renewed strength, they neglected those disturbing thoughts and looked outside again. The evening appeared more beautiful than the afternoon as the colors got deeper and clearer due to less intense effect of the shining sun. While sun was setting, outside view was inflamed with colors. At a turning point, view became extremely beautiful and one of two flies became ecstatic and started dancing. Immediately, the window glass was lowered by itself and the ecstatic fly flew towards the setting sun, rather was pulled out by a beatific vision.

VISION

The summer season has wrapped up its luggage to depart while season of fall is about to arrive. Flowers and leaves, which used to play and dance together on the music played by a subtle breeze on the harp of raindrops, are departing from the garden of love. The carriages of wind are taking them towards the unknown destinations. I have arrived in the garden of love perhaps to kindle the last candles of meeting with the flowers and leaves. I am sad after looking at the scattered treasure of lost celebration. They are the same flowers, which when alive and bloomed on the branches, created a feast of colors and fragrance. Then, multi colored butterflies, which were intoxicated with the wine of kisses used to fly like drunkards in a carefree way with no sense of time and direction. Wherever, hither and thither, just the pretty faces of flowers were inviting them to kiss. Today, it has all been deserted and is badly reminding me of those days of fragrant relationships between the butterflies and flowers. Suddenly, flowers of thoughts bloomed inside me out of nowhere and in the language of fragrance spoke to me:

'Past is a mirage. Whatever has passed is gone! Every flower is familiar with this reality. This is why, a flower is not imprisoned in the past rather enjoys the changing seasons of his life. During the spring season, it plays hide and seek with gliding butterflies. While at the knock of autumn, it surrenders

itself to the dancing wind in search of an unknown destination. Though seems annihilated on surface but in reality a flower never dies. It becomes immortal at the very moment of forming relationship with the butterfly. The death only happens to the 'limitation' that keeps the flower limited to the branch, otherwise with the union of flower with butterfly, actually the static colors of flower floats in the form of colorful butterfly. This is the ascension of a flower where touch of a butterfly makes it so subtle that it transforms into a flying butterfly. Truly speaking, a flower is a potential butterfly ready to be born on wind. Then, those flying colors again descend to touch static colors frozen on branches in the form of flowers and take them to newer heights. This union not only frees the flowers from their limitation but also enrich the butterflies with a rainbow of colors. This game of love and union goes on and on till the autumn arrives and flowers surrender themselves to the wind with a gratitude for letting them enjoy the wonderful growth process. This evolution from a gross plane to a subtle plane happens silently from one end to the other, but between these two cities of silence, a flower lives a life of grandeur with no touch of past or the future.'

There was just one fly left, who despite the eye-catching scenic views on the way continued her journey with a determination to go all the way with the vehicle. Like the other flies, she also had pangs of disappointments but did not get deterred and found out that such negativities were always short lived like a momentary disruption from a great flow of peaceful and beautiful surroundings. However, she felt a strong desire to see the source of the voice that was guiding and helping her all along. She felt a deep gratitude towards the voice, but did not know how to approach it. The voice never entertained any question answer sessions with the flies rather only spoke when it was needed. Third fly was in dilemma as to how to find that source of the voice.

While contemplating on the source of the voice, the fly became drowsy and had a vision:

A DREAM IS A DREAM IS A DREAM

She was flying in a dense forest with two of her friends. After flying for a day and a night, she felt extremely hungry and meanwhile noticed a half eaten animal surrounded by several hyenas. Immediately, hunger surfaced up and along with her friends, she landed up on half eaten animal with the intention of having a feast in such a state of hunger. Food was more than enough for everyone and under the spell of hunger, everyone was deeply absorbed in having his or her share. Flies were getting drowsy with so much food and rest. While enjoying this state, she noticed that one of her friends fell victim to the hyena's moving tongue and immediately was swallowed and disappeared in hyena's mouth. Second fly also experienced the same fate. It was a terrible experience that moved her to the core. She felt extremely afraid of the place and immediately left the corpse of the animal and flew away. As she lost her friends while on the escaping route, she was all by herself in a huge jungle with dance of death everywhere. A feeling of fear became prominent for her as she did not know what to do, where to go but had to fly anyway. She started flying blindly with no sense of direction, but perhaps sense of extreme danger made her conscious enough to move ahead with courage. She kept moving onwards and suddenly the forest ended and began a vast river. She continued moving ahead with the flow of the river. On one side of the river, she noticed a herd of hippopotamus floating by, but the pleasant surprise turned out to be presence of other flies, which were resting on the backs of hippos. She took a sigh of relief by finding her kin, hence joined and started living with them. Several months passed by! One

day, she dozed off and dreamt that a dark cloud arose from one side of the river with lightening and thunder and in a short while turned into a hurricane. Every animal and insect started running for life. It was chaos everywhere, but she noticed a strange phenomenon that her fellow flies were transforming into fishes one by one and slipping from the backs of the hippos into the river. Before, she could make anything out of that, she herself started growing gills and transformed into a fish while losing the power of flying and gaining the power to swim. With that strange development, she slipped into the river without any effort on her part and moved deep into the water towards her safety. It was another world deep into the river with floating plants and rock like turtles. It was an amazing sight but short lived as she noticed hundreds of fishes like her were swimming in one direction hastily for saving themselves from the jaws of a big fish. She joined all the others who were running for their lives, but sucking power of the big fish was too strong to resist and she could not move ahead further, hence along with a whole bunch of fishes ended up in a dark cave like mouth of the big fish. She felt suffocated and gasped for life and felt like dying. Immediately her eyes were opened and she realized at the spur of the moment that a frog who was also sitting at the back of hippo was about to swallow her. She moved away wildly out of the reach of frog's unfolding tongue. Such a narrow escape from a certain death woke her up at the corpse of half eaten animal. Suddenly, she realized a slurping sound close to her that came from Hyena's tongue when he tried to swallow her but intuitively she dodged and flew away escaping just before ending up in hyena's mouth. It was an extremely shocking experience that made her almost hit the ceiling of the vehicle before coming out of dream state. Upon waking up, she

realized the silent and peaceful world inside the vehicle with not even a remote feeling of violence and fear.

As soon as she came back to her senses, she realized the futility of her quest for finding out the source of that voice when she herself did not have any self-knowledge. 'Vision' had conveyed the message to her in such a profound manner about the thinking mind that there remained nothing more to think about.

The colours were getting darker with the setting of the sun and everything seemed to be enveloped in a state of colourlessness. Then, night arrived with its dark tresses. The beautiful colourful visions were gone and there existed no difference between inside and outside. The fly had eyes, but nowhere to see. It was quite a painful experience particularly after enjoying such a colorful perspective of life. The beautiful scenes were simply drowned into a river of darkness and there seemed nothing else to see. The memories of those scenic views were pulling the fly into an unreal world of dreaming but side-by-side reality like a sword was cutting all the threads of imagination for her to face the present in its totality. An unknown fear starts building up from the darkness all around. As fear slowly crept in, darkness seemed to get deeper and after a while, an ominous feeling of approaching death started to take shape. It was too much and emotions welled up within the fly that after leaving her home, friends and relatives, is this darkness the outcome of the journey? Did she leave everything just to die? It tried its best, took a great risk just to be with the vehicle, but everything seemed to be an illusion. Out of this sheer frustration, came a sudden ray of hope. Another reality started dawning at the fly, 'Flies who did not trust the vehicle ended up at the garbage dump. They could not even conceive of the beautiful scenes and delicious sweets, which were made available through the vehicle. Also, the

excitement of speed without any movement on the part of the flies was beyond description.’ At a deeper level, fly had a feeling of gratitude for the vehicle, which had provided so much for nothing in return. The fly could not grasp nature of that relationship. Was it likeness, love or compassion but it was definitely more than an ordinary relationship. She had a gut feeling that the vehicle had always wanted good for all the seeking flies. The stories that occurred through the source of vehicle were turning real imparting an understanding of a silent realm. Each story seemed like a device used by that voice to hit a certain center of understanding. That which could not be said was conveyed through the stories to develop a faculty for experiencing the subtle aspect of life. The core message behind all those stories was to strengthen the listeners to move beyond the gross dimension of reality to its subtle realm.

With this feeling, fear of darkness started disappearing and a deep affinity with the vehicle started to take ground. The vehicle turned out to be the best guide and companion for the fly. With such intense feelings for the vehicle, a surge of strength started happening inside the fly, when fear of darkness simply lost its grip over her. The fly took a deep breath of contentment and suddenly the window of the vehicle opened and a strong gust of wind pulled the fly out. She felt as if she was heading onwards like the vehicle with the fastest speed possible. May be she was the vehicle! May be she and vehicle melted into each other and transformed into an extraordinary high speed! May be just the gust of wind remained. In that darkness, neither was there any fly, nor any vehicle rather just the feeling of an intense speed remained. It was as darkness was flying within the darkness. Then, a ray of light heralded a new dawn and darkness was nowhere to be found.

SUN RISES IN THE EVENING

With the rise of the sun, a man's shadow realized its existence as an independent entity thinking itself to be alive and free and even felt that it could move according to its own will. However, with the passage of time, it started feeling its limitations as various situations and events occurred against its preparations and plans but still the shadow believed that there existed possibilities to change those events to its favour. The shadow was unable to see the man. With the passing of time, changes in its body became noticeable due to movement of the sun. However, it could not figure out why? At midday, when the sun was right at the centre of the sky, shadow had a shocking experience of death as for a moment it was non-existent. When the shadow got back to its senses, it realized for the first time that all other problems of its life were secondary as compared to the possibility of death. It did not want to disappear and loose itself. It started looking for a way to eternal life. It tried hard but felt like moving in a circle reaching nowhere. The shadow was getting restless at every passing moment and gradually became tired and desperate. As evening approached, it realized the futility of the search for an eternal life. Amid that feeling of total disappointment and helplessness, all of a sudden like a bolt of lightning, shadow realized that it was being coloured in the colour of evening. It felt like merging into the evening transcending its tiny personality by breaking all the barriers of self-imprisonment. With that realization, boundaries between the shadow and the evening got dissolved and it felt lightness within and without like a floating white cloud, and that was the time of sunset when the shadow was no more, only its reality existed as a man. It was a hectic day for the man so he went to sleep too.

Everyone was there yet no one was there.

BACK TO THE HEAP:

It is the same heap of garbage where as usual, flies are buzzing like any other day. However, a difference can be noticed as three flies are behaving in an unconventional way. Out of three, first one is collecting pieces of sweets from the heap and arranging those in the form of a vehicle. She is trying to decorate the vehicle with pieces of sweets in various colours. While doing so, she is performing various rituals perhaps to appease the vehicle or herself. Some of the other flies can also be seen here to share some sweets out of that vehicle.

The second fly seems ecstatic and is madly dancing for no obvious reason at all. A crowd of buzzing flies is gathered around her and watching that unusual behaviour with interest. She does not seem to be conscious of anyone around her rather enjoying her dance to the fullest. As her behaviour pattern does not match with the majority of the flies, she exists nothing more than an outcast and soon can be thrown out of the heap.

An aura of mysteriousness pervades the third fly. Her wings are shining with an unknown light that seems to be coming from within. She is sitting at a relatively secluded spot. Flies that get satiated from buzzing and eating usually come to that spot for a small interval of time to relax, but immediately turn back to their instinctual old habits of buzzing and eating. Just now, an extraordinary event has occurred which is beyond the understanding of flies at heap rather they are not capable of noticing a ray of light that has emanated from the wings of the third fly and touched a few flies that could be counted as seven. With the touch of that ray of light, a window to another world seems to have opened for those seven flies. A revolution has happened within and a feeling of dissatisfaction from their current lifestyle is emerging. They want more out of life and do not want to be confined to all day buzzing and eating. Presently, they are sharing their

understanding of life patterns with each other and looking for meaningfulness in their lives by looking beyond the heap of garbage.

Flies of the heap, at times have experienced some unusual events in their lives particularly in relation to those three unusual flies of the heap. Usually, they are too busy to give any importance to such events, however one thing is certain and every fly is ready to vouch for it that none of the three flies have ever gone out of the heap.

EPILOGUE

THE TORCHBEARER

I

Who am I

neither am I a name nor I am a body

I who was confined to myself is already dead

Now there is nothing except light

The same light which one can experience while looking at the Taj Mahal

in the full moon night

which is the fragrance of flowers, the burning heart of a lover

Now I am beyond time and limits

There is no past and future for me

I am a moment to moment reality

I am the speaker and I am the listener

Every face reflects my beauty

O friend this is not the voice of my ego

Listen to me, listen to my silence

This is your own voice

If the earlier part of above poem in *italics* has disturbed the reader to some extent then he needs to read the book again as either he has missed the message of this book or message has missed him somehow. Likewise, title of 'torchbearer' does not focus on anyone in particular, as there cannot exist any specific torchbearer when everyone is carrying his own torch. It is just a matter of self-realization when one is ready to show red light to never ending flow of thoughts arising from the egoistic self. As soon as, he is capable of creating the gaps in the continuity of thought process, he consciously experiences glimpses of the 'present' in its totality. Such momentary experience does open a window, but a person usually falls back due to fear of losing his identification with the past. This is the dilemma that one wants to live 'moment to moment' yet tries to run away from the 'present'. To loose one's identification is like a death experience that one avoids by taking a shelter in his thought based projected personality. An intellectual understanding of this phenomenon is not strong enough to bring any change because it will be like using 'i' to change the 'i'. This is one of the biggest deception of 'i' that it can change itself in order to realize 'I'. It is like fueling the fire with water to keep the flame high. This is why; Seers use indirect methods to bring the seeker to a state of no mind rather a state of thoughtless mind and then a miracle takes place and darkness of ego with its past and future attachments disperses and a luminous presence emanates from an invisible torch that belongs to all and owned by none.

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