

The Game Changer

Yogi & Pragya Mahajan

Author's Note :

When we lose someone close to our heart we feel abandoned as though the light suddenly turned off. We give up hope because we do not see the light at the end of the tunnel. However artists reveal to us the light we do not see. Through their outer projection of beauty they make our inner beauty visible. Our inner beauty is our spirit, ruh or kundalini. We do not see it because our attention is outside but its glow never fades. In a crisis or an outward trauma the work of a realized artist mirrors our inner beauty, and brings joy back in our lives. When the collective spirit was eclipsed the Renaissance artists brought back joy in our lives through reflecting the love of the Feminine Principle. Not just that, a staggering seven hundred years before that the Ajanta artists reflected her compassion in more than 30 caves!

What inspired the Ajanta artists who had never seen the Buddha?

The answer we seek is not outside of us but within. Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi placed in our hands a flashlight that enabled us to see more clearly the passion that inspired them. As we connect to the warm glow of our kundalini its light rivets into the passion of an artist, and takes us to the golden shores where ascetics take life times to reach.

Pragya & Yogi Mahajan

Chapter 1

The room was dimly lit. A spotlight focused on a lone dancer on the floor. The beat grew faster and Jennifer struggled harder to keep up with the tempo. She swirled frantically as if trying to get away from something.

The cocaine smoke from a group in the corner made her dizzy. Mike was having a drink with friends when he noticed the girl with her hair let loose swirling wildly, dancing out of beat. He hastened to her rescue. She collapsed in his arms.”

“Oh I am so sorry, so sorry!” She sobbed.

“You need some fresh air. Lets get outside.”

They stepped out in the night’s inky darkness broken by the gleam of neon lights. Jennifer breathed in the cool air and felt refreshed. After walking several blocks, it started to rain. They took refuge in a pizzeria Mike frequented.

The pizzeria owner cheered on seeing Mike, “Bon Journo!”

Mike slapped him on the back, “Hey old man, when are you retiring?”

“Catch me if you can. People don’t let me retire. They want the best pizza in town!

“I can vouch for that! There isn’t a place with such warm hospitality.” Mike introduced Jennifer. The pizza owner offered them a table near the kitchen so Jennifer could observe him make their pizza.

“I used to be a shy chef and only greeted the people I knew. One day I received a letter from a customer who expressed his thoughts about not being welcomed, especially by me. Since then I have always made an effort to say

hello to everybody. And that changed everything, customers started flooding! Next year I am thinking of opening more outlets in town.”

The owner’s wife protested, “One is enough! I haven’t spent a single birthday at home. But when my daughter was born, I decided I would never miss her birthday or mine. And I’ve managed to stick to that.”

The owner served cappuccinos, “Last Christmas we wanted to close early, but there were so many customers, we didn’t know what to do. My 7-year-old daughter suggested, ‘Dad don’t worry, these people have nowhere to go for Christmas. Let’s make them at home!’”

Mike smiled, “As much as parents instill values and a certain life lessons, children teach us a lot too. Do you cook at home for them?”

“I enjoy cooking for my family when I am at home. We often go to a farmer’s market to pick up the freshest vegetables. I make simple treats like grilled fish or roasted chicken as well as pasta dishes as my kids love them.”

Mike contemplated, “What if you weren’t a chef?”

“I would be an artist. I love art and collect art. It reflects in my restaurant and I have lot of artist friends.”

Mike showed Jennifer his favorite painting at the pizza café and joked that he would one day inherit it in his capacity as a frequent customer. The owner laughed and agreed he could have it, as long he remained loyal. The rain stopped and Mike suggested they walk outside again. They crossed a few office buildings and a closed library. Mike made a mental note to check out the latest art magazines during open hours. He looked at Jennifer and noticed her disinterest in the surroundings. Mike broke the silence, “Are you angry?”

“No.” Jennifer hesitated to discuss her feelings, “I am hurt.”

“I am so sorry.”

“It hurts most when we are cast away by people we love most,” her eyes moistened.

“Want to talk about it?”

“Another time. How about you?”

“Me? I was a curator in Florence. During the war along with other curators, restorers, and collector we tried to save rare art works, and hid them in an old descript church that nobody suspected. Unfortunately the church got bombed. I was so devastated, and I lost everything I lived for. I couldn’t deal with it, and even attempted suicide.

Jennifer lifted her brows, “My goodness!”

“Yeah, but my friends held me back. They suggested a change, and I migrated to America,” continued Mike. “Though I love the electricity of the place, that trauma still remains bottled inside me. I can’t seem to bring it to a closure. But I find some solace in my collection.”

“What do you collect?”

“I look at art the way a lover looks at his beloved. The concept may appeal to my head, but if it does not have a heart, it does not speak to me. I do not stop at the superficiality of the artist; I breathe his passion.”

“Where do you find your stuff?”

"In hunting expeditions, flea markets, garage sales and local antique stores. I avoid auctions, but the luckiest bargains are when ladies are in a hurry to empty a house or an attic, and with a little bit of luck you find a renaissance in the original frame brought by her immigrant ancestors. I love these ladies-my pulse rate lowers, and I can relax.

“Must be fun!” Jennifer commented after seeing Mike’s face light up at the thought of collecting art.

"It's very serious to me. I'm very intense in terms of my feelings. When I see something soulful, an excitement runs through my veins. It's a passion, much like the love felt for a beloved. Such fonts of love are icons of the future; they nurture us and bring back joy in our lives. "

The sky cleared, "If you want to know what I mean, you can have a quick glimpse at my apartment. I live just a block away."

Jennifer hesitated, but curiosity got the better of her. The elevator was not working, and they climbed up a narrow staircase to the fourth floor. The apartment was quite spacious and all the walls were covered with paintings. It was too much to take in a tantalizing glance. Suddenly her attention rested on a dancing figure of a Native American Indian playing a flute, "It looks like he could dance out of that frame any moment. I have a tremendous curiosity about Native symbols. What is the symbol behind the flute?"

"It is the Navajo God, Kokopelli. I got it in Sedona. It was not for sale, and no amount of money could persuade the Navajo chief to part with it. But when a painting speaks to my soul, I go for it. Finally I traded it for my car.

Jennifer's eyes widened, "What a coincidence! The Hindu God Krishna also plays the flute."

Mike gave a mischievous grin, "But the difference is that he makes others dance to his flute!"

Jennifer's eyes sparkled, "I don't believe there are any coincidences in life. I bet there's a connection between the two Gods; one dancing to his flute and the other making others dance to it. I can't tell you how much I'd love to decipher the connection and the message of their magic flutes!"

Chapter 2

Jennifer rested her head on the pillow and scanned the events of the day in her mind. She felt inspired by what she received from Mike, but it stayed in her rational mind, and she knew it would take a long, long time to internalize it. It had to. Gradually her eyelids grew heavy, and she dozed off under the heavy woolen blanket.

She dreamt of magic flutes. A blurred figure of the flute player appeared in a cloud of mist. She tried to fathom its identity. For a split second she thought she saw the silhouette of her dad, and then it escaped. The sound of the flute came through the mist. It sounded like a cry of someone in deep anguish. She woke up haunted by its tilting tune, and the trauma of her dad's sudden death in a car accident returned.

She tried to get out of the bed, but a heavy weight on her left side pulled her down. She called her mom for help, "I had a weird dream of dad and felt his soul was not at peace. It has left me completely shaken."

For a split second Mom's eyes dilated like a cat, and Jennifer caught a dark shadow eclipse her mom. 'Could that explain Mom's failing health?' she wondered. "Mom you must miss dad a lot."

Mom tried to hide her tears, "Yes, it gets lonely without him, and when I miss him a lot, I seek comfort in sitting by his favorite chair and remembering our happy moments. I feel his presence and that makes me feel better. "

She belonged to the Eritrean stock of asylum seekers who had braved the adversities during the Eritrean uprising. She spearheaded the guerillas and had to flee the country. She met her future husband at Woodstock. She was

passing peace candles, when some youngsters overturned a car and set fire to it. Bands of youngster joined the fun and used cigarette lighters to spark bonfires on the stage with tables, tent fabric, boxes - anything that could burn. Hell broke loose and marauding hoards of shirtless youngsters started looting and tearing apart cash machines in search of money. Suddenly, the stage blew up in flames. She saw a musician being buried under the debris of the stage. The fire was about to engulf the debris, when she plunged with her guerilla skills and pulled him out.

They exchanged numbers and kept in constant touch. They connected well, and he wanted to marry her. His parents were opposed to a black spouse. They waited. After she finished her education, her parents wanted her to return to Eretria. He offered a ride to the airport, and instead drove her to the church. They married. Jennifer came a year later.

Jennifer made coffee, "I get a weird feeling he is hovering around us, and unless we detach from him, his soul cannot rest in peace."

"I cannot live without him. When I look at his photo, I find comfort in his eyes."

Jennifer caressed her softly, "For his sake we must leave this behind us."

"I am not ready yet. Maybe when I become stronger."

The light from sailboats was reflecting on the water against the silhouette of a fisherman's cove. There was a little nip in the air.

"I saw Doctor Goodheart the other day. He suggested I move to the hospital for a few tests; nothing serious - just routine."

Jennifer was alarmed but hid her anxiety, and hugged her mom.

The doorbell rang. The neighbor brought a basket of apples from his garden.

Jennifer's mom looked surprised, "Thank you, but I did nothing to deserve such a gift."

"Oh Yes! You did. Whenever I was sick you shared your meal with me and looked after me. I hope these sun kissed apples will remind you of the sun's love, the rain's beauty and the miracle of God, for it was he who made them grow so fine, and it is he who keeps you young."

Mom smiled, "There was a time I held the mirror and would fret over a minor zit. I would do a mirror fast – not look at the mirror for a month. I'd open my eyes a little wider, suck in my cheeks a little and tip my chin down in an effort to look younger. But now I enjoy my age and don't want to hide it. I have realized that one can be dynamic and creative even at ninety, if the spirit is young."

"Looking beautiful comes with many add-on benefits – be it in the job market or in relationships," commented the neighbor. "Obsession with looks is a response to the market reality."

"My mother lived to be ninety six," Jennifer's mom continued. "She led the revolution in Eritrea. At eighty she still cooked for a family of seventeen. We were in awe of her."

The neighbor took leave, "And I am in awe of her daughter! Remember the spirit does not age. In India they say that the spirit is eternal."

The phone rang. "Hey its Mike. I'm going treasure hunting in the morning, would you like to join me."

Jennifer hesitated, but his passion for art was intoxicating, "Would love to."

"Will pick you up at nine."

Chapter 3

The leaves transited to crimson red as they crossed the George Washington Bridge, and though it was autumn the air had the freshness of spring. Mike sped on the New York State highway towards Albany, "You know something, last week I was art hunting at a barn sale. The lady was emptying her attic and threw away her daughter's wooden crib. I found a Barbie doll sleeping there. I tell you the Barbie is the icon of modern times. So many wives want everything that the Barbie has. They even want the same model car she drives!"

Jennifer laughed, "And today where will we find Barbie?"

"Let's check out the ranch sales first."

They turned off the highway at West Point and followed a billboard to a dilapidated ranch. Mike's singularly focused mind scanned the garage sale rapidly, "It doesn't speak to me. The dealers have already raked the place. I detest dealers."

The road winded through large tracts of corn before they parked at the Schenectady flea market. It was perfect timing. The place had just started buzzing. They made their way through knick-knacks, model trains, paper weights, five-and-dime-store toys, copper lunch boxes, and labor saving appliances specifically designed to make house work alluring to women. He chuckled, "The door-to-door salesman carried them in their suitcase and rang the bell when the husband was sure to be away. Then they got the housewives to buy their stuff!"

"Have a look at this ash tray, its trench art, crafted by soldiers out of spent artillery shells and cartridge castings in war time."

He pointed to musical instruments soldered out of used tin cans. "This is an

example of American resourcefulness in the face of poverty."

He bought her a jute handbag, "This was meticulously woven out of sack threads by prison inmates."

Suddenly his attention was drawn to a booth at the end. He patiently rumbled through a pile and fished out a frame covered by a layer of dust. He wiped it clean with his handkerchief. A boyish grin lit his face as the serene face of Madonna and child surfaced beneath the dust. The child sitting on the mother's lap with an innocent expression to ask for milk, and she holds him with one hand, while with the other she supports herself and bends down to give him some. For a long time Mike stood transfixed, drinking in the beauty of her eyes, "Look at her pure eyes, her serene face, her motherly smile..."

He carefully wrapped the painting and seated it like a bride.

Jennifer grabbed bagels with cheese at the nearby stall before they sped to the next sale at Canajoharie.

Chapter 4

The road was rough, and their car broke down. They looked for a garage, but there was none in sight. They tried to hitch a ride. After several hours a friendly face beamed out of a van window, “Need help?”

“Our car broke down. Would you know of a garage?”

He moved some canvases from the front seat to make room, “Hop in; I’ll give you a ride to the nearest garage in Sharon Springs.”

“Thanks, we appreciate your help.”

“I’m Daniello. Where are you guys from?”

Mike and Jennifer introduced themselves.

“We drove from New York, checking out art sales.”

Daniello nodded, “I am just returning from an exhibition of my paintings.”

“Oh. How did it go?”

“Not too good! Contemporary art sells by the brand, and in the mad rush to cash on brands it has become mental, and left its spirit behind.”

Mike nodded, “Artists nurture the spirit of the people, and when their spirit ebbs they inspire it with their passion.”

Daniello remarked, “Passion doesn’t emerge from the external world of trends or the senses organs but from the heart. Even the minutest fraction of creativity emerging from the heart is completely unique.”

Jennifer was curious, “How do you connect with an artist’s passion?”

Mike unwrapped the painting of Madonna, “Let me show you something, then perhaps you will understand.”

Mike pointed to the Madonna’s face.

“Wow! What can I say of her motherly smile. It reminds me of the Mona Lisa.”

Daniello’s eyes lit up, “Leonardo Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa has stayed with us because of the quality of her innocent smile. Leonardo Da Vinci had a childlike passion with which he created this master piece.”

Mike wrapped the painting back carefully and smiled, “There were many episodes of his childlike passion. For instance, when passing by places where birds were being sold, he would often take them out of their cages with his own hands, and after paying the seller; he would set them free, and thus restore their liberty. No wonder the strokes of his brush demonstrated the most beautiful smile, and no one else ever equaled its childlike innocence.”

Jennifer gave a questioning look from the back seat, “I thought childlike innocence was ignorance.”

Daniello looked at her through his rear view mirror and smiled, “There’s a difference between childlike innocence and ignorance. Childlike innocence responds to pure love without expectation. It spontaneously loves without a sense of gaining something out of that love.”

Mike reflected, “You mean when you’re innocent, you don’t apply your intellect to decide things?”

Jennifer interjected, “But what if the quality of innocence is lost?”

Daniello responded, “From childhood the quality of innocence is innate. It may get obscured as the clouds cover the sky, but it is never lost. For instance, after Mona Lisa lost her child she never smiled again, and nor did she cry. One child was brought to her, and when she saw the child the smile returned to her face.”

Daniello slowed as he approached a blind curve. He loved the renaissance artists that depicted the mother and was sad that the Virgin symbol

got neglected overtime.

“Until the end of the fifteenth century Madonna appeared everywhere. Virgin Mary was the continuum of the Feminine Principle, the quintessence of innocence and compassion. Popular movement placed the Virgin on a higher emotional plane than the purely masculine Trinity. Great festivals came into being celebrating the Virgin’s life. Since it posed a threat to the Church, the Church fathers wrote her out of history. But she continued to be a source of inspiration for many artists. The quality of their innocence gave them the openness to wonder about things, to enjoy children, and play with them in childlike mirth.”

Mike added, “And now we have to bring that childlike innocence back on the face of our Mother Earth, and revive the icon of the Madonna.”

Jennifer nodded, “What about animals? I love pets. Animals are innocent. There isn’t any hate in their eyes. Even, if you see a crocodile cracking her eggs, her eyes are pouring out with love.”

Daniello smiled, “You can always find it when you shift your attention from the head to the heart, and I think art could help you in this transition.”

As the sun dipped behind a quaint hamlet, the Canajoharie sky acquired a pinkish hue. Mike held his breath in wonder, “I feel there’s something special about this place.”

Daniello explained, “Canajoharie is sacred Indian Territory. The native Indian chief spoke of a Lady who will come from East, and from whom light appears, and She will have all powers. She will have the medicine to cure the sickness of the American people. There were signs of the White Buffalo to the people of Sioux that she would appear in Canajoharie.”

It was late. The garage had closed, so Daniello invited them home.

Chapter 5

As they climbed up a ravine, they spotted a red roof peep between tall willow trees. Beds of roses appeared in carefully laid patterns before the front porch. Mike was lost in its beauty, “Nature herself is the true mother of art.”

Daniello’s wife, Emily, gave a warm hug and escorted them in.

Mike’s eyes lit up, “Wow! It’s like walking into an art gallery.”

Emily laughed, “We are short of walls!”

Daniello reflected, “Ah, but there are many walls out there, painted invisibly...”

Jennifer followed Emily into the kitchen. A chill wind blew and Daniello stroked the fireplace. Mike couldn’t keep his eyes off a horror painting in the corner depicting a bloodied man with a missing limb, a fire fighter writhing with agony, charred children wailing, cell phones burnt and twisted, and credit cards laden with ash.

Daniello watched Mike look at the painting, and then stepped outside as if trying to let go of something. The cold air brushed his face, and he shuddered. Mike turned around to see Daniello’s distant look and joined him at the deck.

“That painting is intense,” Mike commented in wonder.

“Daniello kept a straight face, “It’s an unfinished painting. I lost my son around the 9/11 attack.”

Mike put a warm hand on his shoulder, “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s a long story. He handled the front desk of a Manhattan hotel. It was frequented by a lot of customers from the mid east. He got involved with a Muslim girl. She gave him a copy of Koran, and he got convinced that it was the answer to

the wrong goings in our society. She invited him to a Friday prayer meeting at her flat. They were very friendly and often invited him for meals. Soon, he became a regular. His relationship became close, and he wanted to marry her. Her father would not consent till he converted to Islam. He agreed without letting us know. The secret buried in his heart distanced him from us, and he came under the influence of the Islamic group. They started using his account for receiving huge amounts from abroad.”

“Where was the money coming from?”

“Mostly Pakistan and Syria.”

“Didn’t he know the purpose behind the transfers?”

“Not really. They said they were for the propagation of Islam. Then one night they brought a large cache of arms to the hotel.”

The FBI got a tip off and raided the hotel. He was implicated. He didn’t want us to get in trouble and pleaded guilty. His 20-year sentence was the statutory minimum under a 2004 plea deal.”

For a long time the pain remained bottled inside me. My family and friends reached out to me, and I was overwhelmed by their love and support. They urged me to accept the pain, recognize and deal with it. Little by little I began opening up, talking and discussing about it with my wife. Then something happened on his birthday. She gave me a gift, “Darling perhaps you could transfer the pain to your canvas and bring it to a closure.”

“It was the last thing on my mind. But gradually the painting started inventing itself. But something was missing still.”

“What?”

“A model that could depict hate was missing from my data base, so I couldn’t express the emotion of hate that emanated from the terrorists who attacked the World trade Centre. I was incapable of imagining that any human

being who believed in God could have possessed a mind so wicked that he could do such a heinous act in his name. It was a betrayal of God, of Allah the merciful, and Allah the compassionate.”

Emily caught them in their conversation and called them for tea. She added, “After much thought I suggested the head of Judas painted by Leonardo Da Vinci in the Last Supper.”

Jennifer commented, “That’s a great idea to depict an evil personality.”

Daniello sighed, “Yes, but I wanted to depict the face of a man who after receiving so much love could have possessed a mind so inhuman as to betray the one who bestowed it. Nevertheless, I decided to find one, and if in the end I couldn’t find anything better, there was always the head of Judas.”

Emily poured tea, “For a long time he studied people with criminal minds, what provoked them, what hardened their hearts to stone.”

Daniello continued, “But as I penetrated the dark winding alleys of the mind, I got lost. Then one day I saw the light at the end of the tunnel and understood what was going on inside me. It gave me a window to the world outside. It allowed me to see more clearly how we become prisoners of our intellect. Our intellect is programmed like a computer. And if the software is corrupted by dogmas, then in that blindness we commit the most heinous crimes. More blood has been shed in the name of God than in the two world wars.”

Mike added, “My only concern is that there should be no bloodshed in the name of God. But I don’t know how that is possible with the new face of war – terrorism. It can strike anywhere; at our front door, backyard, or in our intellect. It defies all norms, and has gone beyond redemption. I truly believe that deep down nobody has a heart of stone, and there is a heart underneath every hard man.”

Daniello continued, “I made an unsuccessful attempt to depict the hate

that provoked the 9/11 terrorists or the ‘Shoe Bomber’ who attempted to detonate explosive materials in his shoe while on board an aircraft, and of Faisal Shahzad, who set off a car bomb in Times Square.

I had heard from my son that some terrorists were locked up at the Guantanamo Jail. So I got in touch with the Superintendent. He said they were under strict security, and it was impossible to arrange an interview. I gave him my number just in case. A week later, he called saying that on the Fourth of July people of the country celebrate their freedom and as a special gesture, the White House has allowed visitors. I lost no time and took the first flight!”

“What was it like?” Asked Jennifer

“The flight was fine,” answered Daniello confused.

“No, no. I mean the prison and meeting the prisoners!”

Daniello continued, “Ah, I was getting to that. Well, the prison cell was dark and dingy and without windows. The only furniture was a bed and a poured concrete stool. The cell door was opaque with a chuckhole for food to pass. The eye of a closed-circuit television camera kept constant surveillance. The terrorist had no access to the outside world and was allowed out of his cell only one hour a day for exercise. He was barred from using e-mail and permitted only three 15-minute phone calls a month – recently increased from two. The rules did not allow physical contact with anyone, and I could only speak to him through a glass window.”

Jennifer passed the scones around, “And what about your search for a model of hatred? Did you find the head of Judas?”

“Yes, but when I peered inside the window of the terrorist’s eyes, the Judas kiss was missing.”

Missing?

“Instead of the Judas Kiss a shadow clouded his eyes that dimmed the light of his innocence.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Our eyes are the windows of our innocence. The clarity of innocence shines as light in our eyes. That light acts like a mirror in which we can see the falsehood hidden within and without. When it is hidden the intellect, it casts a shadow on our innocence and dims the light in our eyes. When we dim our light for someone else to shine, then the whole world becomes dark.”

Mike was curious, “Who could have cast the shadow on that terrorist?”

Daniello responded, “I suspect the shadow was cast by a Jihadi terrorist outfit. Originally the term implied overcoming of the sad being in order to ascend to the awakened state of being. But the Islamic fundamentalists believe that if you die in the name of Islam, you reach Heaven. They insist that those who do not follow Islam are non-believers, and should be converted, and if they do not convert, they ought to be eliminated. Their software is programmed like a one way street and when they see traffic coming from the opposite end, they refuse to give way and collide head on.”

“From the age of ten the suspect I questioned was programmed to believe that he was the chosen one of Allah to destroy the enemies of Islam. Of course foremost among them was America.”

Emily announced dinner. Mike’s mind was preoccupied with the terrorist suspect, and absently loaded his plate with garden fresh greens, cottage cheese, roasted potatoes and homemade bread.

He heard Daniello say, “The terrorist outfit had wired his data base to Jihadi software that prevented him access to that source of clarity. His software did not include feelings, and hence, his emotive side was not alive. His intellect accepted only what pleased his ego, and rejected the emotional quotient. The intellect may dictate the way we think, but it cannot dictate the way we feel. Repeated rejection dried his emotional quotient and dimmed the light in his eyes.

If you look at Michelangelo's Last Judgment you will find a similar sadness clouds the eyes of Our Lady as she helplessly witnesses the great devastation."

Mike handed Daniello a plate, "Michelangelo was a great observer of human emotions and depicted them in such detail and perfection; the proud, the envious, the avaricious, the lustful and the divine. He had penetrated the depth of the spirit through pursuit of truth and self-discipline that seekers achieve through a long time of introspection and meditation. "

Daniello served himself and the conversation moved to the dining table. Jennifer admired the round walnut table with carved leaves running around the diameter and tiny chiseled designs representing a lace curtain. The detailed handwork of the artist moved her. Her ears tuned in to Daniello's words.

"Of course Michelangelo depicted everything to perfection, but behind that perfection he faced several dilemmas. I too am in a dilemma. Before me were two conflicting personalities of the terrorist, and I didn't know which one was his true face- the one whose innocence was covered by the shadow or the one who was innocent. Were I to depict the superimposed face it would not be his true picture, on the other hand his innate innocence was too weak to capture."

Jennifer interjected, "It is one thing to depict emotions and another to deal with them. Michelangelo could resolve his dilemmas with the stroke of his brush; he could simply erase and repaint a character, but my dilemma is about life and death - whether the terrorist should be hanged or sent to a psychiatry rehab. I believe that when a person commits a heinous crime, it is due to some deep-seated psychological disturbance, and hence ought to be treated, but I often wonder if that is the right approach?"

Emily served dessert, "I just stewed some fresh apples from our garden. She poured custard over it, "This enhances the flavor."

Jennifer responded, “We have no words to thank you. You not only took us in but also shared such a wonderful meal.”

Mike added, “Of all the paintings I’ve collected, the memory of this enchanting evening will remain forever etched in the canvas of my heart!”

Emily smiled, “Paintings fade with the wheel of time.”

Mike chuckled, “Only to make space on the wall for the new ones!”

“I guess the old must give way to the new.”

“But their eternal values do not change.”

“Good Night.”

Chapter 6

Daniello was in the barn milking the cows when he spotted a procession going up the hill. Without intending to, he trailed behind. They were young and old, from all nationalities. They were inspired by a force higher than his cognition, and sang joyously 'Jai Mataji'. The blonde girl mentioned they were heading for a thanksgiving ceremony to the Holy Mother, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi.

When they reached atop the hill, they bowed before a Lady in a white sari, and went into deep silence. In a silent communion with her, he felt the heart of his own silence. Her eyes poured with such compassion that it was almost tangible and he spontaneously kissed the hem of her sari and unburdened his pain.

She smiled, "My child! The anger against the terrorist does not allow you to rest in peace. Perhaps if you transfer your anger to the canvas it will make it easier for you to forgive them.

Daniello gazed at the dewdrops evaporating on the blades of grass, "Yes, but it will need a lot of courage."

The Holy Mother caressed him, "Your kundalini will empower you. Her love gives energy. The more you love others, the more energy you will have. A reservoir of love rests within waiting to be tapped."

He asked, "How long does it take to awaken the kundalini?"

The Holy Mother smiled, "If you have an open mind, she will rise instantly! However, to establish her depends on your temperament. If you doubt, then it might take a while. "

Daniello responded, "I guess I need to open my mind."

She gently caressed his head, and he felt a flow curl up his spine. Step by step it untied six knots along his spine, and melted atop his head. It

trickled into every cell of his body and engulfed him in cool vibrations.

“When a drop falls in the ocean it dissolves in it, and you become the ocean.” He heard her say. “You assume the powers of the ocean.”

He remembered his childhood by the shores of the ocean - he mirthfully created sand castles, erased them and rebuilt them again and again, he laughed and easily made friends with other children.

In that childlike innocence he found a master key that contained the keys to all the files. He opened the file on Renaissance artists. It logged him to the great principle behind all creativity. From its prism he saw Leonardo resurrect the love of the spirit in the smile of Mona Lisa. Her smile melted his fixation of depicting the emotion of hate; instead, he was inspired to depict the resurrection of her love.

Next, he moved on to the Impressionist artists. It opened the file on Van Gogh. After a bitter fight with his best friend Gauguin, Van Gogh cut his ear and gave it to him. He drew a parallel with Van Gogh’s anger and his anger against Judas-like shadows that had done him injustice - the village pastor who abused him in childhood and the Jihadi outfit who deceived his son.

He understood that if he allowed his suppressed anger to unleash, it would drive him over the bend like Van Gogh. He prayed to the Holy Mother to melt his anger. She gave him a flash light that unraveled the mystery of the very long burning flames of the candle wicks that El Greco painted atop the heads of the apostles in his painting of the Pentecost. He realized that it was none other than the kundalini atop his head.

His kundalini opened a knot in his forehead and beckoned him to forgive. As soon as he forgave, it set free all the Judas-like shadows. His anger melted, and brought to closure his trauma.

Suddenly a file of creativity opened that had earlier been blocked by

shadows after shadows of anger. Shafts of the early morning sun refracted through the willow trees, and drew the figure of the Rider on the White Horse on the canvas of his mind. He opened his eyes and saw the light in the Holy Mother's eyes and mirrored it in the Rider's eyes, "Now I understand how art can be an instrument of resurrection."

She patted him on the shoulder, "An artist's quest never ends, but when you touch the Perennial Spring you dissolve in it, and become the channel of its love. Then your art spreads joy. You become the art and the artist. Those who never saw the Buddha created Ajanta!"

He remembered hearing about the Ajanta in India- those 32 caves painstakingly hewed out of the hills centuries ago by thousands of artists using nothing more than chisels and hammers to depict the life of Buddha.

He thanked the Holy Mother but her parting words lingered in his mind... "Those who never saw Buddha created Ajanta. He did not have a clue how they did it, but one day he would sure find out!"

Chapter 7

Jennifer struggled in her dreams to come in terms with the reality and woke up with a heavy heart. The sun beamed through her window, and she quickly dressed for breakfast.

Mike was sipping coffee.

“Good morning!” Jennifer waved.

“Ah! Good morning. What a wonderful morning!” He was struck by her pensive mood, “A penny for your thoughts!”

“Oh, it’s nothing much.”

“I believe sharing and talking about pain helps to ease it.”

Jennifer agreed. She poured herself some coffee and sat on the bar stool by the kitchen island, “When we met at the party, I was a bit low. I had just split with my boyfriend after five years. We were planning to get married till I discovered he was having an affair with my best friend! I was devastated, and my heart still aches physically. I tried to drown my sorrow in the bottle, but it didn’t work.”

Mike stroked her hand in comfort; “I get pretty concerned about people’s pain and often end up taking it upon myself. I’ve understood one thing that people need people, and that’s the only healing that works.”

Emily joined in, “Yes, and right now the only person missing is my dear husband, Daniello!”

She prepared breakfast and wondered why Daniello was late. Emily handed plates to Mike and Jennifer, “You have to try our fresh lemon-ricotta pancakes.”

The main door slammed shut, and Emily looked up surprised. Daniello's eyes sparkled unusually as he took quick steps toward them. "Where have you been?" Emily wondered.

"Oh, I had a life turning experience. I was at the barn and saw a procession going uphill and spontaneously followed it. They congregated around an amazing lady addressed as the Holy Mother Shri Mataji."

"Did she speak with you?"

"Yes and guess what? She gave me self realization."

"Self realization?"

It is the awakening of our pristine energy called the kundalini. I felt cool vibrations on my hands when she ignited her."

Mike was excited, "Perhaps she could ease Jennifer's pain."

"Too late. She already left. But wait, we could go through the steps of kundalini awakening together. You have to sit on the Mother Earth to connect with her vibrations.

The group followed his instructions, "Keep both hands on the Mother Earth."

As Jennifer began praying to Mother Earth to suck her negativity, a soothing energy curled up her spine. Scenes after scenes flashed behind her eyes – patterns, clues, a blurred vision of her father leaving her body. The load on her left side eased. Gradually her attention subsumed in an inner axis of silence, and she became thoughtless. In the expanse of the silence she heard her intellect trying to make sense of life and what is beyond, to find a purpose and to bring a shape to human existence. No sooner had she begun pondering than her eyes opened, and she expressed her dilemma.

Daniello advised, "To solve the puzzle of their meaning you have to

solve the puzzle of your origin.”

Jennifer sat on a pillow on the ground and tried to go deeper into the silence. She managed to connect with the flow of her kundalini and observe her intellect ticking without being involved in it. It made her understand that she was apart from it.

She opened her eyes slowly, “The load on my left side has eased and the nagging pain in my heart has vanished. For a while I remained thoughtless in an expanding silence, but then my intellect popped doubts and I lost it. In the midst of doing something my mind jumps to the next thing, and so I’m always in a hurry to move on.”

Daniello observed, “If you run after food, but after having food still go on running then you accelerate your body’s speedometers and your spleen gets hectic.”

Jennifer wondered, “Is that why I do things half way and lose interest? In fact I don’t seem to enjoy doing anything. Like half way through a movie I start thinking of cooking dinner, and in the midst of the dinner start planning my morning meetings. I’m always fighting for space and in the process and become so stressed, absentminded, and irritable.”

Daniello detected a quiver of fear rise in Jennifer’s heart. He connected to her kundalini, and empowered her heart with vibrations.

Jennifer closed her eyes for a minute and frowned. She found Steve in the innermost recess of her being, and she could be no other way. Could love be blown away just by just four words –‘I don't love you’?

She tried to deal with her hurt by closing her heart. Her kundalini gave her a tantalizing glimpse of the nature of her hurt- possessiveness was the heart of her relationship with Steve. Her kundalini beckoned her to nurture her love for Steve

even if he did not love her. As she gave in, something shifted in her heart, and she no longer yearned for Steve's companionship. She wished him well, and sent him cool vibrations. Should their paths cross again, he would find a friend in her.

As the space widened in her heart, it could not help but love. It brimmed with love that could not be contained anymore. Not long after it flowed unhampered by any expectation, and engulfed Daniello, Mike, Emily, the willow tree, and the cows grazing in the fields. Her consciousness singularized with them - a slight movement, a faint thought, even a little shift of attention in one reflected in the other. In that transparency there was no hiding place for secrets.

She felt Mike's presence more than saw it. Mike's eyes were closed. His kundalini gave him a window on his heart block. He was trapped by a bomb blast. He tried to save precious masterpieces of art, but they charred into the leaping flames. Finally he broke through the church window and became thoughtless. The ripples of joy in his heart expanded into an ocean. Just then Jennifer nudged, "We have to get to the garage."

He opened his eyes and whispered, "The light never went out..."

Daniello smiled, "To keep the light on you have to anchor to your kundalini."

Chapter 8

In the morning the mechanic inspected the car, “The ignition wire is burnt out. It will take a couple of hours to fix it.”

Daniello suggested, “We have a long wait. If you like you could allow yourself to roam about unfettered at the art exhibition in the neighborhood where young artists are displaying their works.”

Mike’s face lit up, “You’re just the man after my heart!”

Jennifer spotted a street artist with fading tattoos and skinny jeans sketching portraits in the square. She decided to indulge herself.

In one glance his pale blue eyes zeroed on her profile and engaged her in conversation, “These young artists have no passion. I always tell them that a short life full of passion is better than a long life full of coldness. But they want to get rich overnight, and produce what sells rather than follow their passion. I’ve understood one thing; as long as an artist wants to be rich, he will continue to be poor!”

Jennifer gave a questioning look.

With a flourish of his brush he looked past her, “He will continue to be poor because he will have nothing except money!”

Before she could react, he handed her the sketch. She was spellbound, “Wow! How could you do it in just fifteen minutes?”

The artist shook his head, “No I did it in 70 years.”

Jennifer echoed, “Seventy years?”

He smiled, “Leonardo Da Vinci also labored for 70 years to perfect the Mona Lisa. He carried out anatomical studies, dissecting human beings to observe the principles and the ligatures of the bones, muscles, nerves, veins,

and their movements. He demonstrated this knowledge with such perfection, liveliness, vitality, excellence and grace that his works are inimitable. His study has taught me one thing that inspiration flows from a source beyond the conscious mind.”

The portrait of a farmer on the adjacent wall caught Mike’s eye, “When I see an original it speaks to me.”

Daniello responded, “We think that our ideas are original but in reality they are borrowed from books, school, T.V., newspapers, friends, family or programming. However, original ideas spring from the consciousness of our Kundalini. Let’s check its vibrations.”

Jennifer reported, “I feel hot vibrations on my left side.”

Daniello explained, “His eyes are full of sorrow. Perhaps the artist went into his subconscious. The left side is our subconscious, and expresses our emotions.

Jennifer questioned, “Are vibrations visible?”

Daniello responded, “Vibrations work like a laser beam. If the artist creates from the subconscious or the supra conscious, the vibrations are hot, but if he creates from the super consciousness, then they are cool. Such an artist is a visionary, and his symbols reflect the inner reality.”

“Really?” Jennifer wondered.

“Perhaps if you observe Michelangelo’s Last Judgment, both Celli’s Birth of Venus or Raphael’s School of Athens you will know what I mean.”

Mike nodded, “My heart opens when I see the Mona Lisa.”

Jennifer gave a knowing look, “I feel like I’m living in two different worlds - the one I belong to speaks to my heart; but with the aggressive ones I just want to throw up my hands and yell ‘Stop, don’t touch me.’ It’s like from the heart planet I’m trying to communicate with people of a mental planet.”

Mike laughed, “You mean like the inhabitants of earth trying to communicate

with Mars! I connect with people the same way. It's impossible to share the simple joy of the heart with people who think too much. When they become mental like that, they lose the connection with their heart."

"Jennifer smiled, "That's me! I fell into the trap of the rationale. My job as an investment banker has made me so mental that I count money even in my dreams."

They walked passed several art booths. Jennifer was suddenly drawn by the cool vibrations from the portrait of a milkmaid, "The light and shadow appear to create the perception of motion in an otherwise static situation."

Mike examined it more closely, "The energy of the artist has an incredible intensity. The light reflected in the non-blue areas by drawing blue lines below the eyes indicates the shade as well as the brilliance in her eyes. He has used the technique of light and shadow to cast an unreal, mystical light in her eyes and the shadow seems to suggest something deep hidden behind them, but its precise nature is only darkly implied."

"He has employed an old trick of Rembrandt to juxtapose light with shadow," smiled Daniello. "Rembrandt realized that direct light and cast shadow destroys the representation of true relief. So with great mastery he shrouded the mind of his figures in the mystery of shadow, and then gave just enough light to suggest the pristine energy within."

"What if we turn his trick around and use the light to expose the shadow cast by the Jihadi?" suggested Mike.

Jennifer was enthusiastic, "You mean to expose the shadow in the light of reality?"

Daniello affirmed, "But to dispel the shadow you've got to have the knowledge of the reality."

Jennifer appeared confused, "You mean the knowledge about the Jihadi's

shadow?

“No, silly! Not through the knowledge of the shadow, but through the knowledge of reality, which is the light of the kundalini. When a shadow shrouds our intellect, we are unable to remove it by the intellect, because the intellect cannot see itself.”

Jennifer nodded, “I see what you mean. The light of the kundalini would expose falsehood. The key thing is to keep the light on! And rekindle his eyes.”

Mike felt elated, “Gosh! I would give anything to witness that moment. You’re serious right?”

“I’ve never been more serious in my life! The transformation in our Jihadi friend has started me on a different path.”

“I might ask the Jail Superintendent for an extra pass,” nudged Mike.

Daniello chuckled, “The wheel of time has to turn and go forward.”

Jennifer laughed, “I already hear it churning my mind.”

Chapter 9

Daniello arranged for extra passes. They headed to the prison.

The Jihadi had moved to a closed cell, “After an altercation with another inmate who was trying to bully me I was moved to this segregated cell.”

“Perhaps you would like to share smoothing about the altercation?”

He did not respond.

Daniello attempted to reach him by igniting his kundalini. The trio registered a burning on their left hand.

Mike observed, “The hot vibrations come from the Jihadi software implanted by the terrorist outfit. It’s not allowing his heart to open.”

Daniello responded, “It’s going to be harder than we thought. Perhaps we should think of a way to break through his intellect in order for him to be himself.”

Mike suggested, “Suppose we make up a little game of de-branding everything we think we are.”

“Who’s first?”

Jennifer volunteered.

Mike questioned, “Are you an investment banker?”

She was amused, “No.”

Daniello took the next turn as Jennifer questioned him.

“Are you an artist?”

He shook his head, “No.”

“Are you an art dealer?” She asked Mike.

He answered, “No.”

In the end she turned towards the Jihadi, “Are you a teacher, priest or a

preacher?

The Jihadi mustered courage and took a deep breath, “No.”

Mike took over the questioning, “Are you a Muslim, Jew, Christian or Hindu?”

The Jihadi remained silent for a few minutes and then responded, “I’m a human being.”

“Are you the body?”

The Jihadi questioned, “If I am not the body then, who am I?”

Daniello responded, “The body is governed by the wheel of time; it passes through birth, illness, old age and death. But who witnesses the wheel of time? Einstein answered this question for us, and showed that space and time have no meaning unless there is a conscious observer. This conscious observer is none other than the ‘self’ or the kundalini.”

Daniello moved on to the next question, “Are you the mind?”

The Jihadi protested, “But I carry a mind load of ambition and desires.”

Daniello explained, “You’re right, the mind is loaded with desires, but desire in general is insatiable. When one desire is fulfilled, the next one arises. Supposing there is no desire, then there is no mind.”

The Jihadi was not convinced, “I don’t think it’s possible to off-load desire.”

Daniello responded, “Desires survive on the cusp of thoughts. Supposing you become thoughtless, then you will have no desire.”

The Jihadi questioned, “How can I become thoughtless?”

Mike nodded, “Your kundalini does the job! She sucks all your thoughts and makes you thoughtless.”

“If I become thoughtless, then how can I know I am thoughtless?”

“Your kundalini has a super consciousness that witnesses everything.”

“Hm, you seem to be a mind reader.”

Daniello continued, “Now please affirm that you are not the intellect.”

The Jihadi retorted, “I’m a game player. I have a lot of plans I want to see executed. I need my intellect to help me. So thank you, but I don’t think I can do without it. I quit.”

Daniello pleaded, “Please don’t quit the game half way. It is true that the intellect makes up games, but the games are not the reality. Similarly, it plans into the future, but the future does not exist. It is not anchored in reality. For instance, when Michelangelo finished painting the vault of the chapel, the pope found it too plain and instructed him to embellish the colors with gold. Michelangelo responded, ‘Holy Father, in those days men did not wear gold, and those who are painted were not rich, for they were holy men who despised wealth.’ The pope was not connected and without connection his faith was a myth. Similarly, without connection if you believe in religion, it is a myth.”

“Connection?”

Mike laughed, “Connection with your kundalini man!

The Jihadi looked apprehensive, “You will have to order a very high voltage kundalini to connect a futuristic person like me! You can’t imagine how my intellect fast-forwards everything. I have no control over it. And by the way, if I’m not the body, mind or intellect, then what registers what we want?”

Daniello explained gently, “Our kundalini records everything. For instance when a thief steals, his kundalini knows he is stealing. Likewise if we do something wrong, our kundalini records it.”

The Jihadi questioned, “Does that mean I will lose my freedom to my kundalini?”

Daniello smiled, “Our kundalini loves us very much. The more you give love to others, the more freedom you will have.”

Mike interjected, “Love gives energy. The more you love, the more energy you will get.”

The Jihadi turned sorrowfully, “I don’t know how to love. I was an orphan; a Jihadi outfit took me in and programmed my software with hate.”

Jennifer encouraged, “Your software maybe corrupted by a hate virus, but you are free to get rid of it.”

“How?”

“By forgiving those who don’t follow Islam. Those who hate think that the object of their hate is the worst, and hence ought to be eliminated. Contempt for anybody – people of other faiths, women, the less privileged or the vulnerable blocks is only a mental concept. The intellect is the arbiter of mental concepts. It dictates them, and so can be dictated by them. It tries to impress and hence can be impressed. It maneuvers and hence can be maneuvered. It mesmerizes and hence can be mesmerized. It programs and hence can be programmed, but our kundalini does not dictate, impress, maneuver, mesmerize or program, and so she cannot be bossed, impressed, maneuvered, mesmerized or programmed. She is free and innocent and has her own intelligence.”

The Jihadi was awestruck, “Her own intelligence?”

Daniello explained, “Everything in the universe has its own intelligence, and the intelligence of the kundalini rejuvenates our body’s immune system, she discerns our friends from foes and throws out the foes. But if you use your mental power, then her power subsides.”

“What kind of a power is that?”

“It is the power of unconditional love, and when you connect to it you connect to the consciousness that binds the universe.”

“You mean I can connect to Allah?”

“Precisely, but first you must forgive those who do not follow Islam from your heart.”

The Jihadi’s face twitched, and he placed a hand on his left shoulder. “I feel a weird pain like a knot on the left side of my neck.”

“The guilt collected in your left side neck centre makes your attention wobbly. Daniello put his hand on his neck and transmitted vibrations, “I believe you are not guilty. You had no hand in terrorist plan. Now forget the past. The past does not exist. Be in the present. Don't feel guilty. You are the pure spirit kundalini, and she can never be guilty.”

He reported, “I feel a heavy load pulling me down.”

He heard Daniello’s voice from a distance “The heavy load is none other than the Jihadi software implanted by the terrorist outfit. It cannot stand before the innocence of your kundalini.”

His kundalini opened his heart, and he became like an innocent child. In his childlike wonder, he was in awe of the miracle of creation, and realized there was no such thing as a Muslim, Jew, Christian or Hindu.

As waves of cool vibrations drenched his brain, he saw through the Jihadi game, “Nothing the U.S. did justified the 9/11 attacks, and the conflict between the U.S. and Muslims was neither inevitable nor beneficial to anyone’s interest. It was only in the interest of fanatics, and their interest counters everyone else’s.”

It hit him like a flash of lightening; “Oh Allah, how could I be so blind?”

Daniello responded, “The intellect is like a blind spot that can’t see itself. But the consciousness of the kundalini unravels it.”

Tears of joy streamed down his cheeks, and the hard lines on his face softened into a Mona Lisa like smile. Mike saw the light of the kundalini in his eyes, and his heart jumped with joy, “The important thing is to keep the light on!

“How?”

“By recognizing that the individual life that we call our own is precious only in so far as we accord the same value to the life of all other beings, including beings who oppose our faith.”

The Jail warden began closing the cell window, “Alright, time’s up!”

Daniello waved out, “We are but one spirit in two bodies, and we were born free to enjoy our own beauty and the beauty of others.”

The Jihadi felt his heart open. He waved back, “You’re one hell of a game changer!”

Chapter 10

It had been a weekend of miraculous recovery- Jennifer smoked less, drank less, ate healthier and laughed again. She boarded the airport limousine to Manhattan. A light ocean-bound breeze enveloped her. She closed her eyes and felt connected with the Hudson River. Her flow riveted in its crystalline waves, and she waved out to the pelicans sharing her joy.

A message appeared on her answering machine, ‘Your mom is in the hospital.’

She flew into a tizzy and called Mike, “Hey, its Jennifer. Mom is in the hospital.”

“We’ll pick you up. Daniello is here as well.”

They arrived shortly. Daniello caught Jennifer’s worried glance, “Gosh! You look completely different from the person I saw at the airport just an hour ago.”

Jennifer complained, “It worked pretty well for me until the stress of finding my mom in the hospital got too high, at which point I fell off the wagon.”

Daniello reflected, “I remember the parting words of the Holy Mother, ‘those who never met Buddha created Ajanta’. When I meditated on my kundalini, it gave me a magic window to something bigger than me and started me on a different path. I tried to make the long journey short but discovered that the flow of my kundalini only became sustainable when it was accompanied by something else, and that ingredient was faith.”

Jennifer asked, “You mean faith in God?”

Daniello responded, “God doesn’t have an address, and besides it doesn’t matter by what name you call it. Once you know how to stay connected with

your flow, and believe in it, it spills in every walk of your life.

Mike assured, “I wouldn’t have agreed with Daniello if I hadn’t seen the dim light rekindle in that Jihadi’s eyes from the source of such clarity.”

Jennifer nodded, “I guess if it could rekindle him, it would rekindle Mom with clarity.”

Jennifer’s mom was shivering and gasping for breath. Jennifer asked the nurse to give her oxygen. Gradually her breathing returned to normal, and she curled in the safety of the thick woolen blanket, “I found myself slipping away and would have probably gone if you hadn’t turned on the oxygen. I think it was an overdose of tranquilizers.”

Daniello detected a burning in his left hand and gave her vibrations. A heavy load tugged his left side, and his kundalini tried to disentangle from it. He decided to return to the little game they had made up for the Jihadi, “Let’s have some fun and cheer up. We can play a game of negating everything you think you are.”

Are you the body?

No.

Are you the intellect?

No

Are you the mind?

I think so.

Apart from thoughts there is no such thing as mind. Thoughts come and go, and hence the mind changes with every passing moment. A part of us dies with every second that passes, and we also add something to ourselves every second. You are not the same person you were five years ago or this morning, hence you are not the mind.”

She nodded, “You’re right.”

Daniello smiled, “The Jihadi gave us a hard time, but your mom was so cooperative, and so it would be easier for her kundalini to dislodge the shadow.”

Jennifer’s mom relapsed into a semi sleep state. As she drifted off, she watched a car sped down the highway as the rain came down. Suddenly it skidded over an oil spill. The driver tried to avert a pedestrian and collided head on with a truck. The driver tried to get out of the car, but the doors were locked. He cried out for help but nobody answered. His head collapsed on the dashboard. Jennifer’s mom became alert. She stretched out to get a closer look at the driver’s face but saw only a shadow.

Daniello noticed her confusion. He continued his conversation with Jennifer, “The mind is anxious to absorb and accumulate knowledge, but it lacks discretion and hence accumulates more things than necessary.”

Jennifer nodded, “Like the Jihadi’s mind lacked discretion, and so it absorbed the hate virus.”

Daniello responded, “One important lesson it taught us was to let go and not to hold on to anything or anyone beyond their time. Whether you like it or not, your mom is not willing to accept your father’s death, and so she hasn’t let him go.

Mom understood what he meant and sadly consented. As soon as she decided to let go, her husband’s face flashed past, and the shadow vanished. Cool vibrations shut out the outside world as well as her thoughts and connected her with the stillness and the silence within. It was a zone where she felt complete peace with herself, and the only desire was to love unconditionally and be loved.

The doctor was surprised at her amazing recovery.

Daniello stated, “Possibly your husband was not happy when he died. His spirit is not at peace, and it latched on to your left side channel because of your attachment to him.”

The doctor smiled, "Well, that is an explanation I've never heard. It sounds weird."

Daniello grinned, "It sounds weird because of our ignorance of the dead. Actually our conscious mind knows very little about the dead. Once we bury the dead, we think they are gone. Though the body returns to earth, the soul lives on.

When a person dies in a sudden accident or under traumatic circumstances, his soul is tormented and latches on to the loved ones. It latches on to the body's nervous system like a parasite and interferes with its normal functioning. The interference spurs physical, mental and emotional disorders."

The doctor leafed through some papers and then checked his coat pocket for a pen. He nodded disapprovingly, "Look here, I am a doctor, and it is my job to solicit the confidence of my patients. I don't buy what I don't see."

Daniello handed the doctor a pen from a nearby table, "My good doctor, things are not always what they seem. For instance we see a mirage in the desert and mistake it for a water body. When we see a mountain range, we don't see the other ranges behind it. Behind the ocean there are other oceans. Behind the stars there are other galaxies, and behind the half moon there is a full moon."

Mike added, "Maybe there's something behind our intellect which has escaped our attention because we have allowed our intellect to overshadow it. Maybe we could introspect and examine how far our intellect has estranged us from the truth. The truth could be something so obvious like unconditional love. It is so simple to connect with our own reservoir of unconditional love through an instrument inbuilt in us."

The doctor was not convinced, "I think I'll stick to facts and figures."

Daniello responded, "Too much of facts and figures, too much of reasoning, too much of analyzing, and too much of planning can be a joyless pursuit and makes it impossible for us to believe or hope. The intellect projects in the future,

but the future doesn't exist. We project the future to seek returns, and when the returns diminish, we throw away the project. Inadvertently, we have fallen into a 'use and throw culture.' The law of diminishing returns, caps the elderly like medicine bottles whose date has expired. It doesn't envisage that one day we too will become like them. We see people dying every day, but the intellect does not appreciate that we too will die, and so shouldn't hang on to possessions. We see drunkards falling out of pubs, yet we flock to the same place. Cigarette packs warn that smoking is injurious to health, but the intellect of the smoker pays no heed. Moreover, his intellect tries to justify it.

"Aye, I'll agree to that one!" the doctor joked.

Daniello contined, "There are no limits to the intellect; a thief knows it is wrong to steal, but he uses his intellect to rob a bank. We hear children being sexually abused but don't address the malady. The intellect is not conclusive and does not realize that our own children could be the next victims."

"I think I'll have to give this some thought," the doctor patted Daniello.

Daniello exchanged cards with the doctor and took leave, "Well now that everything is cool, I guess we can be on our way. We have to catch a flight to India late tonight."

"India?"

There was a twinkle in his eyes, "Well, having set off on the trail of faith, my journey won't be complete without discovering the secret behind its greatest miracle – Ajanta. In these we have to look for the missing pieces of ourselves."

Jennifer looked eager, "Well if our good doctor releases mom by this afternoon then perhaps I might follow on your trail. Maybe I could find the missing pieces to fill the gaping holes punched by my runaway intellect!

Mike chuckled, "Intellect and faith make strange bed fellows!"

The doctor retorted, "I would any day choose intellect for a bed fellow than

faith! At least it would assure my bread and happiness.”

Daniello responded, “My good doctor, perhaps you may not realize that happiness and joy are two different things. Happiness is accompanied by its bedfellow unhappiness. Whereas joy is absolute. It does not depend on happiness or unhappiness. Happiness comes from the ego, whereas joy comes from the fragrance of our Kundalini.”

Jennifer reflected, “All my life I’ve enjoyed the comfort of the body, and it has got me nowhere. It’s about time I think about the comfort of my spirit.”

“You got it!” Daniello responded. “It’s one hell of a game changer!”

Chapter 11

The hotel taxi picked them at the Pune airport. The driver edged through a marathon of processions en route to the hotel. Soon they were caught in a procession. Daniello looked out of the window at women donning colorful sari's precariously balancing coconut pots atop their heads. He took the opportunity to sketch a magnificently decorated elephant behind them carrying a palanquin of an elephant headed God bedecked in gold. From the corner of his eye he spotted a young lad dart forward, but before he could duck, he smeared him with vermilion powder.

A group of youngsters danced in mad exultation to blaring music. They joined the lad, "You're welcome to join us."

Daniello was not amused, "No thank you."

Mike chuckled, "There is Chinese saying, 'A ten thousand mile journey starts at the first step.' This is our first step towards faith!

Daniello retorted, "Our first step should not be blind faith but faith enlightened by experience".

The taxi driver explained that it was the final day of an annual 10 day Ganesha festival, and at sunset the Ganesha idol would be immersed in the river.

"Why the elephant head?" enquired Mike.

"Because the elephant is the wisest among animals, and he doesn't develop an ego."

"Why a little boy?"

"Because he represents the principle of our innocence, and when you worship a principle outside, you imbibe its principle inside."

"Hm, it sounds familiar," mused Daniello.

The taxi driver continued, “People of different faiths participate in this festival. If you look closely you will observe Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsis intermingle and play with color.”

“Are there many Muslims in Pune?” enquired Mike

The driver pointed to a bronze statue of a king seated on a horse holding a sword, “It is the legacy of King Shivaji. He taught people of all faiths to live peacefully. Because of him people of all cultures intermingle, and that has made Pune the epicenter of music, art and dance. But that’s not the whole story; by keeping the Mughals at bay he succeeded in preserving the eternal values of our culture.”

They approached the hotel, “I would love to sketch the immersion after a quick bite.”

“The immersions take place around sunset.”

“We will be done long before that.”

The hotel receptionist welcomed them with folded hands, “Namaste!”

The driver revealed, “Namaste is an acknowledgement of the essential divinity within every living being, and is to be likewise reciprocated.”

Tourists thronged the lobby to attend the Festival. Daniello’s attention was drawn by the flock of Japanese tourists who kept clicking photos of almost everything, “I guess you would be out of business with this breed of digital natives.”

Mike added, “They don’t read the nondigital, and I have a problem engaging their attention in my art gallery.”

“These are accelerated times, tech marvels are changing the way we think!”

“The breathlessness of impatience in our time surfaces in everything – from the kind of movies we produce to the way we connect.”

“For the moment my stomach is connecting to the aroma of cumin and garlic coming from the kitchen.”

The driver pointed to the menu card outside the dining room, “It’s the aroma

of Goan fish curry. It is served with rice.”

“Is fish a popular diet?”

“Fish and rice is the staple diet of coastal Maharashtra, but it is catching up in the mainland.”

“What is the staple diet in the mainland?”

“Millet Bhakri with a finely cooked lentil and vegetables.”

“Let’s order both.”

Mike licked his finger, “It’s delicious! The vegetables have a flavor of their own.”

“They are organically grown, and also the Deccan soil is very rich.”

Chapter 12

After a late lunch they made their way through the milling crowds to join the stream of devotees on the riverbank. A sea of humanity queued to immerse their idols.

Daniello was excited, “It is the greatest show on earth. The faith in their eyes speaks to me.”

Mike responded, “Faith seems real when we see it in other people’s eyes, but the problem arises when it is misplaced.”

Daniello smiled, “We can check it out with vibrations. If they are cool, then we are on the right track and if hot, then we are in trouble.”

Mike agreed, “I guess it’s a lot easier when it happens in a community.”

Daniello reflected, “Well where can we find a better example of enlightened faith than in this country where the enlightened faith of a scanty clad lean man, Mohandas Gandhi, moved mountains. If a country that accounted for one fifth of humanity could be moved by faith, that would say something!”

Mike remarked, “But not the intellectuals. It is hard for the intellect to accept faith.”

“You don’t order people to have faith. That would be blind faith. I’m talking about enlightened faith,” Daniello clarified.

“What’s the difference?”

“People saw the ordeals Gandhi faced, how he emerged stronger and compassionate after surmounting every hardship. After he passed that test, it enlightened their faith and inspired their faith in him by which they bonded with him. And as they started seeing themselves as a part of the collective movement, and understood who they were, it brought them closer to understanding that when a core

group has enlightened faith, it sparks an incredible momentum towards collective consciousness.”

“Small things bring big changes!”

As they inched closer to the river, the air became fragrant with sandalwood incense. The womenfolk lit earthen lamps and floated coconuts in the waters in leaf boats. Soon, myriads of lamps lit the river. The ceremony, sacred, heartfelt and grandiose reached its climax. Every member of the procession offered flowers to the Ganesha before lowering it gently and reverentially into the river. The Ganesha idol drifted away amidst cheers of ‘Ganpati Bapa Moria’.

The driver explained, “While bidding sweet adieu to their elder brother, they are urging him to return promptly next year.”

The Ganesha idol disappeared into ripples of concentric waves taking with him the woes of the faithful as they offered a prayer to the river;

“May all that is impure drown in your water,
May all that is pure be blessed in our soul.”

Chapter 13

As they headed to Ajanta, Mike's eyes feasted on the landscape of singing greenery of sugar plantations broken occasionally by the flashes of brilliant scarlet of the forest, the vibrant colors of the turbans, and saris of peasants working in the fields.

The driver narrated, "The sticky black soil of Maharashtra gives the world its sugar. In 518 B.C. when Darius of Persia came here he was surprised to see "the reed which gives honey without bees." This was the Perennial grass- sugar cane. He promptly carried it to Persia."

Mike watched a woman extracting sugar cane juice in the courtyard of a mud hut, "I would love to try the honey of the reed without bees."

Daniello's attention was drawn by the graffiti on the mud hut wall. On a closer look cakes of cow dung were slapped on the wall in irregular patterns.

The farmer bent over a huge cauldron beneath a grove of coconut palms and dug out fresh jaggery.

Mike lapped it up, "This is ambrosia!"

As the greenery transited to an arid landscape, it also transited Daniello's inner landscape within himself.

The driver remarked, "It is more arid than Pune because the monsoon is short lived in this region."

Mike asked, "How come the Buddhist monks chose this arid region for their monasteries?"

The driver responded, "It had the advantage of being near the flourishing trade centre of Paithan or Pratihthana, founded by the Satavahana Kings in 230 BC on the river Godavari. This town, barely 100 kilometers from Ajanta, lay on

the routes of rich merchants and traders travelling from the hinterland to the seaports north of Mumbai, and through the three great passes leading out of Deccan. The mercantile community, prospering on lucrative trade with the west, increasingly extended its patronage to the Buddhist monasteries.”

“When were the Ajanta caves discovered?”

“In 1819 an Indian army officer discovered them by chance while on a tiger hunt. The Ajanta art did not commence until about three and half centuries after Buddha’s lifetime, perhaps around the second century B.C.”

Mike remarked, “That predates the renaissance artists by a staggering 700 hundred years!”

Daniello caught sight of a winding river shimmer in the distance, “A dip in the river would cool us down!”

The driver responded, “It is the Godavari River. We venerate her as the Mother who carries the secrets of all creation in her womb, and many of our most sacred temples stand on her banks.”

As they stepped in the clear, cool running water of the river their attention was drawn to an ash-smeared mendicant meditating under the shade of a mango tree. Children returning from school struck stones to drop the mangoes. A stone accidentally struck the mendicant and he opened his eyes angrily, “Who dare throw a stone at me?”

The children were frightened, “O Holy One, we are very sorry. We threw the stone to drop the mangoes but accidentally it struck you.”

The mendicant’s anger was not appeased, “I will punish you.”

The children pleaded, “O Holy One, we threw the stones at the tree and it gave us mangoes, but you are a holy man, what will you give us?”

The mendicant’s anger abated, “Ask what you want.”

“We only ask to be forgiven.”

The mendicant was pleased, “May you be forgiven both in this world and the next.”

Daniello smiled, “The innocence of children can move mountains!”

The driver paid obeisance to the mendicant.

The mendicant enquired, “Who are these foreigners?”

“They are American tourists going to see Ajanata.”

“May the blessing of Saint Eknath be upon you!”

They took leave of the mendicant. Mike was curious, “Who is Saint Eknath?”

“He was a great saint of Paithan in the sixteenth century. He believed that the ego was born when one identified with being the doer. Hence he preached the path of devotion, where there was no identification with the doer. By the intellect the seekers can gain knowledge but they cannot experience their spirit. Without love there cannot be joy. Every year people flock to his shrine during the time of Paithan yatra.”

“We should not miss this opportunity!”

Not long after they crossed the Godavari River and entered the medieval town of Paithan. They stopped to pay homage to the shrine of the great Maharashtrian saint Eknath.

The entrance to the shrine was through a crowded bazaar, selling flowers, earthen lamps, incense, sweets, wooden toys and saris. Mike was intrigued by the weaves.

The shopkeeper unwrapped a nine-yard sari, “It is called Paithani and traditionally worn at weddings and special ceremonies. The Satavahana king offered a Paithani sari called shawl to the Goddess, and thereafter they came to be known as Shalivahanas.”

“The weavers are very poor but for them weaving is a labor of love. If you

look more closely you can observe how tenderly the pure gold warp threads are interlocked with different colors, somewhat akin to the technique of tapestry, and this creates the same effect on both sides.”

Mike was enthralled, “It speaks to me! Swans, peacocks and parrots so beautiful depicted as on the borders of these saris; I would love to buy one as a gift.”

The weaver said, “It would take anything up to several months to complete it. It is not just laborious; it is a labor of love.”

“Oh, much that I appreciate your labor of love, we are only visiting the shrine of saint Eknath!”

They fell behind the queue outside the shrine. The queue was long and it was hot. Noticing the foreigners the devotees motioned them to skip the queue and led them in. The devotion in their eyes unlocked the perennial spring of unconditional love within Mike and strengthened his faith. It occurred to him that his faith was not superimposed but riveted from a source of unconditional love seated deep within. It was no different from the faith of the devotees assembled in the shrine who had never seen the great Saint Eknath, or the faith of his church congregation back home that had never seen Christ. The message of all incarnations, Christ, Krishna, Buddha or the Prophet Mohammad was unconditional love, and once a seeker experienced it, his faith was enlightened.

Not just that, it gave him the energy that could move mountains. After seeing the real diamond he could not be lured by broken pieces of glass, and hence, all thoughts, intellectual ideas and mind projections faded into insignificance.

Chapter 14

Daniello gasped with child like wonder at the lonely hidden ravine of Ajanta, “Nature is the mother of all art!”

Its enchantment was enhanced by the unexpectedness of meeting the wild semi-circular gorge, at one end of which the Waghora stream sprang from its source. The stream flowed in a series of waterfalls dropping as much as 30 meters. The shimmering water of the rivulet emerged and cut out seven peculiar rocks, and then turned sharply to the left, carving the deep valley on the right into a long horseshoe. Embedded in the almost perpendicular cliff of solid rock, about 80 meters high, were the pillared and sculptured entrances to some 30 caves.

The caves ran along a concave line running from east to west for about 600 meters. The stream turned again at an acute angle towards the left around what appeared to be an impasse. They followed a narrow pathway that wined laboriously to the top and then suddenly opened into the first cave.

Mike stood mesmerized, “The images of female Buddhists remind me of the Madonnas of medieval Christianity, and in that childlike wonder it felt like having stepped into a Bavarian church!”

The guide explained, “Just as the Buddha and his apostles are the central theme in painting the sacred images, the Buddhist shaktis acquired sanctity of their own by eternally renouncing the attainment of Buddha hood in order to remedy the sorrows and agonies of suffering humanity.”

Daniello was deeply absorbed in a minute study of their technique of casting the unreal; the mystical light that made the scared countenances of the Buddha and his followers radiate with a mysterious glow, “They had perfected the technique of light and shadow seven centuries before Rembrandt was born!”

The guide smiled, “As a matter of fact Ajanta was the cradle of this technique. After the Greek invasions in north-west India, the Bactrian armies of Demetrius paved the way for a cultural interaction, and the Greeks learnt this technique from Ajanta, and thereon was adopted by the Romans.”

Daniello responded, “You’re right! The synthesis of the tonal play of the light and shadow is suggestive that Ajanta was perhaps in the vanguard of the Renaissance.”

Mike nodded, “But what is more amazing is the abrupt transformation of mood and expression brought about by a mere twist of line here or a deepening of a tone there.”

The guide pointed to the masterfully drawn beasts, birds and flowers delicately painted on walls. Their peripheral effects were absorbed by the predominantly secular message of the monasteries; the princes in their palaces, royal processions with decorated elephants and horses, hunting scenes, loving couples, shopkeepers, porters with loads sling over their shoulders, ascetics in monasteries, peasants and beggars.

“The leaves and flowers seen here are the Ashoka *Saraca Indica*, a small tree with long green leaves bearing scarlet blossoms which it was said would only flower if kicked by a beautiful woman.”

Daniello observed, “Each time a woman is sketched, a feeling of new experience and excitement appears to run through my veins. The painters seem to have adopted an immortal, transcendental archetype in their portrayal of women. Whether they decorate the palace as they sit in groups like garlands, crowd together in street scenes, embellish the windows by their graceful presence, lightly fly through the air in the form of dancing girls, they radiate sheer joy, and they never lose their dignity, and nowhere are they besmirched or belittled.”

The guide explained, “In the olden days mastery in the art of dancing was invariably considered essential to personal perfection. Without the knowledge of the

science of dancing, the rules of painting could scarcely be understood. The observation of nature and the rules of dancing were indicated as the ultimate resources of the painter.”

The personages painted in Burnt Sienna intrigued Mike, “It is surprising the colors have not faded with the passage of time!”

The guide revealed, “The pigments were absorbed in nearly two centimeters thick plaster on a semi-wet surface, instead of completely dry plaster.”

“How were the pigments made?”

“The pigments were made from minerals extracted from the earth of Ajanta.”

“There must be something special about this earth.”

“You are right. The Satavahana kings who ruled in this region were realized souls, and vibrated the earth. Vibrated colors do not fade. But that’s not the whole story; the paintings project the vibrations of the artists.”

The light shone more brightly in Mike’s eyes, “The vibrations are so powerful that I am lost in the joy of their passion!”

The guide continued, “They did not work for wages. No, it was their humble offering of gratitude to the Buddha. Every stroke of the brush was but a heartfelt prayer of gratitude to the Compassionate One.”

Daniello mused, “Hm, it brings us closer to understanding what inspired them.”

Mike remarked, “As an art collector I can appreciate their mastery of technique.”

The guide responded, “As an artist you may appreciate their technique but to truly appreciate Ajanta you have to go to the heart of their relationship with the spirit. And that relationship was so inspiring that even 30 caves were not enough to contain the ocean of love generated by their spirit.”

Mike mused, “I think it was Plato who said that all we see are shadows of reality on the walls of the caves, while remaining unaware both of the actual figures and the light that shines on them from behind.”

The painting of Mother and Child caught Daniello's attention. As he saw them spontaneously turn and lean forward to offer alms to the Buddha. In that spontaneity there was no giver or receiver, in a sense there was no doer.

The guide explained, "The Mother and Child before the Buddha represent Buddha's wife Yashodhara and their son Rahul.

Daniello felt something shift within him; the flow of his kundalini suddenly rose atop his head, and the words of the Holy Mothers words came to his mind, "Those who did not see Buddha created Ajanta, "Now I understand the holy Mother wanted to communicate the inherent message of faith behind the communicative nature of the creative genius of Ajanta. When the passion of an artist is dedicated not for pleasing the mind but the spirit, his kundalini blesses him with intuition."

"How does that happen?"

"Well," Daniello continued. "Intuition is an instinctive act of comprehension that comes from the kundalini whereas thoughts, art obsessions, moods, depressions and anxieties are a mind reaction."

Mike mused, "You mean to say what is done intellectually is borrowed, whereas what comes from intuition leads to original creativity."

"Precisely!"

Chapter 15

As they stepped outside the cave, a spiky lad carrying tea in earthen tumblers greeted the guide, “You have to try his special Masala Chai.”

The lad heaped Mike’s plate with chilly Pakoras. No sooner had he bit into it, his mouth was on fire.

The guide handed him Masala Chai, “The tea will wash away the chilies.”

The strong Chai concoction of ginger and cardamom neutralized the chilies. Daniello was saying, “Did you notice there was no sadistic realism or obscenity and there were no images shouting out their meaning.”

Mike wiped his face, “I didn’t feel myself being summoned imperiously. Instead, I felt amiably led by a delicate suggestion to distinguish voluntarily, and in a far more fundamental sense, between the subtle and the gross, between myth and reality, between sacred and ritual and between the spirit and the mind.”

Daniello smiled, “What can I say about the lovely ladies of the court with their handmaids, the dancers and the musicians, the devotees, the common women and even beggar girls; they seemed to be drawn by a childlike innocence.”

Mike thoughtfully sipped tea, “The patience of the artists is mind blowing!”

The guide stated, “Curiously enough, most of the Ajanta paintings were created in the period of continued political upheaval and disturbed social conditions which followed the collapse of the empire of Ashoka”

“Ashoka?”

“He was the Constantine of the Buddhist religion. The early caves were built nearly 100 years after his death.”

“Some of the unfinished caves seemed abandoned as though unexpectedly?”

“The creative period of Ajanta’s splendor and brilliance ended as mysteriously as

it had begun. The light, however did not fade before the prophetic and apocalyptic spirit of Ajanta, emerging from the unbounded love and compassion for all sentient beings, was carried to the point of dream-like ecstasy as it crossed India's frontiers."

The group stopped by a painting of a slender Buddha holding a lotus. The guide explained that it depicted Buddha's tender compassion and was one of the most famous of the surviving paintings at Ajanta.

"The Buddha spread the love of the Perennial Spirit in the same way as Krishna, Christ and Prophet Mohammad. You can't imagine how great the love of the Perennial Spirit must be that for centuries it inspired generations after generations of Ajanta artists, and also blessed them with an incredible creative genius!

Not just that; riding on the far-flung waves of Buddhism, the decorative and iconographic prototypes of Ajanta inspired the Buddhist art of the dynasty in China, and that in turn gave linear elegance to Zen art."

Mike moved close to a pillar and looked up at the detailed sculptures depicting Buddha's life. For a moment, he couldn't think and just stared in wonder.

Daniello joined him, "However passionate an artist may be, his ambit of creativity is limited to his conditioning and intellect, but after kundalini awakening, his passion resurrects as devotion, and wires his talent to an infinite source of creativity. In a sense his vision reflects the joy of the kundalini, and thereby spreads her vibrations. And as our friend mentioned those vibrations spread to the landscape paintings of China.

Mike turned thoughtfully, "Hm. And to the flower paintings of Japan."

Daniello reflected, "You know, I think I've come closer to understanding what the Holy Mother meant- kundalini awakening shifts the individual consciousness towards collective consciousness, and it also resurrects the collective Spirit. And when its movement gains momentum, it moves mountains."

Mike asked, "You mean the vibrations are self-perpetuating?"

“You just made my point!”

As the group exited the caves, the guide presented them with a placard bearing an Ajanta inscription;

‘Blossoms are the ornaments of trees,

It is flashes of lightening that adorn the big rain clouds,

The lakes are adorned by lotuses and water lilies with their intoxicated bees;

But virtues brought to perfection are the proper ornaments of living beings.’

Chapter 16

After spending a week at Ajanta, Mike and Daniello felt refreshed. The flight back to New York didn't seem as long, and Daniello vowed to himself that he'd finish his painting.

They decided to meet at Daniello's the next day. He had just completed his painting. Emily was excited for her husband and handed out bowls of dried mulberries and salted almonds.

Daniello uncovered his painting, "An artist expresses in symbols what he cannot articulate."

He pointed at the horse rider in his painting "The symbolic placement of the Rider on the White Horse opens a whole new horizon of liberated energy."

Daniello's hand moved a little further to show the Statue of Liberty painted at a distance, "The Statue of Liberty is a reminder of what our founding fathers fought for. No doubt, liberty ignites the mental plane, but it doesn't ignite our hearts. Our liberated intellect can run wild and leave our spirit behind. Without the electricity of our spirit, liberation has no meaning; our heart says one thing and the head another, and thus we end up hurting others and become joyless.

He smiled as he pointed back at the rider figure in his painting, "If we want joy and beauty to come back in our lives, then we need to go a step further and sync the electricity of both our head and heart, and the Rider on the White Horse symbolizes its new brand of electricity."

Mike was ecstatic, "Wow! You've really caught the electricity of our city! But doesn't the placement of St. John's Rider of the White Horse as the destroyer of the wicked seem a little scary?"

Daniello smiled, “It may appear scary, but the Rider is also the savior of the innocent. We need to discover the source of that innocence and beauty and connect to it. Moreover, between the shift of consciousness from the individual to the collective, there is a time given for our kundalini to wire our energy centers to the mains.”

Mike’s mind flashed back to the intricate carvings at the Ajanta caves, and he reflected, “For the Ajanta artists the idea of beauty was in the symmetry, balance and harmony, which they achieved visually through a mathematical working of proportions, and the human being was central to their discourse.”

Daniello responded, “But our new renaissance takes the idea of perfection a step further, where perfection is not just in body but where our being actually becomes one with an internal state of perfection, within and without. And when the head and the heart, the masculine and the Feminine Principle sync, the spirit manifests perfection. As perfection is attained within, it manifests in perfection outside. The Feminine Principle I speak of is inherent in every aspect of nature and central to the relationship with our spirit.”

Mike noticed a large hardcover book titled, ‘Italian Art,’ on Daniello’s living room table. On its cover was Raphael’s Mother and Child painting. He paused in silent admiration, “The Renaissance artists too were deeply electrified by the Feminine Principle in their paintings, sculptures and architecture.”

Mike flipped through the book and continued, “For instance, the idea behind Leonardo Da Vinci’s Vitruvian man was based on the notion that the human being is made in perfect proportions.”

Daniello nodded, “Our new renaissance is its continuum, and outlines a revival of aesthetics of harmony between the masculine and the Feminine Principle. We are a part of the same cosmic electricity, and our new aesthetic is an experience of the universal. It is the movement from the gross to the subtle, from the physical

to the metaphysical, from the senses to the spirit, towards the centre of silence leading to the absolute truth. As the sacred energy of kundalini rises within us, it creates a new brand of human beings.”

Mike placed the book down and thought about Daniello’s comments. He felt his kundalini dance atop his head to a music his ears did not hear. He strained his ears but realized the music came from a source beyond his sense of hearing. Suddenly the painting of the Navajo Indian God Kokopelli playing the flute flashed before him. It dawned upon him that the flute player symbolized his kundalini, and he was the hollow flute. As the vibrations of his kundalini passed through the hollow flute, everything between his inner being and the world outside fell into place effortlessly and in complete harmony.

His attention became subtler and subtler, and through its prism he saw the innate, the primordial, and the sweeter side of Ajanta that awakened his compassion. His compassion kindled his faith, “I trust your vision of the new human race engendered by the passion of compassion, and I know it does not kindle from blind faith.”

Daniello smiled, “Blind faith is imposed, and ends in madness as in the case of the Jihadi. Whereas, enlightened faith understands, connects, relaxes all the psychological knots, and gives joy. Once you taste its joy, you are unburdened of all baggage and free of all trappings. Not just that, enlightened faith also opens the door of intuitive creativity, which takes an artist a lifetime to unlock.”

Mike’s hands bristled with cool vibrations. He knew his faith would lead him to the source of intuitive creativity. He folded his hands and thanked the spirit of Ajanta for kindling his faith.

