

The Religion  
called  
Pragmatism:

Memoirs of  
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The Religion Called  
*Pragmatism*

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## CHAPTER 3: ALL SET TO LEAVE

**A** dream... Or why would she see herself as a young nomadic tribeswoman running around a strange yet acquainted wilderness. A dream... or a nightmare.... Veena knew no such forest... but her character in the dream seemed to know it. She seemed to have been searching for something. Looked around to see that there were various others searching for it along with her. Reminded her of the Hollywood flick 'Avatar'. This strange agile body, which looked like a lean version of young Veena, contained the conscience of Veena from another dimension. She had never ever jogged in her life, leave it be running at Bolt speeds. They all soon halted to camp at some spot. Veena took the opportunity to speak to an elderly runner.

“Where are we running to?” she said.

“We’re going south... Winter is coming...”  
he said.

The nonchalant pop-culture reference startled Veena “What do you mean? But it seems like you’re searching for something specific? Why so?” Veena inquired.

“Yes we are... In these months... the north is inhabitable and the predators haunt the south. We need to find our old safe habitation. Where the predators are rare yet the land isn’t barren. The river close yet not very close to attract the man-eaters.” He said.

“But... how do you know about the place? Do you do it every year? Do you have a map to such a place?” Veena further questioned.

“Yes, we do... We just cleaned the place back north and are heading to find the one around here... The first house where our learned chieftain shall reside. That is the only *pakka* house we build. Rest are all temporary. That’s the pilgrim lifestyle we have adopted...” he replied.

“Pilgrim... What do you mean?” Veena asked in a curious tone.

“Yes... travelers... migrants... we move as per required. That is why we build these conspicuous tall buildings hoisting our flags so that we know just where to go...” he replied.

“Those first houses.... They sound more like Temples. And you say they are used to know the right location to move to?” Veena inquired.

“Yes... well... you seem a stupid one... learn much. Whoaaa” the man’s verse was interrupted by a humungous tiger jumping on to them. Veena was immediately brought out of sleep.

“Dream Fiction... weird...” she said to herself.

She got up different than her daily monotonous routine and soon went down to find her father in the *Verandah*. The old veteran was reading his daily crisp of news on the wooden chair. He heard Veena walking down and made a call to her “Good Morning Veenu... I have called the gardener today since most of the backyard flower-pots have failed to flower. *Amar* will go along with him

to aid him. There's your regular sugarless red tea on the table".

"*Papa* I would guide the gardener. As such, Amar has some college submissions he needs to work on. And trust me, he really needs to work on them because he hasn't started yet." Veena replied.

Amar was the son of the old Veteran's most trusted orderly, Ram, who had passed away a decade ago due to a road accident. Amar being orphaned (since his mother died in childbirth) Sangram had taken his responsibility on himself. He had been given proper schooling and was pursuing the Liberal Arts Course from a prestigious private College. Veena considered Amar her younger brother and often treated him like her child.

"But won't you be late for the University then?" Sangram said while turning around towards Veena. He was taken aback to see the disciplined and punctual professor standing in her informal attire, giving out the persona of someone unwilling to step outside her house.

"Well this is strange... What happened *beta*?" the old man asked.

“I am thinking of taking a sabbatical *papa*.” Veena replied.

Sangram’s face turned blue-black hearing those words come out from the mouth of the workaholic, methodological, disciplined and borderline robotic woman.

“This is new... perhaps this news... I am so awestruck and elated that I don’t know whether it would be better to ask ‘Why?’ or to celebrate...” Sangram said.

“I really cannot put it all into words... What happened yesterday. I know you must be sympathising with the entire situation and moreover I; but it has given me more ambiguity than injury.” Veena said.

“What do you mean? You can say anything to me *beta*” Sangram said.

“How was she? My mother?” Veena questioned.

Sangram took a moment’s pause, as if lost in a nostalgic amalgamation of reverie and regret.

“She... you know how she was. The peanuts I earned always kept her happy and smiling... till the day the entire Vidhyut incident started. I still have no anguish with him. He is

doing fine I'm sure. But your mother couldn't ever bear the distance. But I know for a fact what she lost in him, she gained in you and even more. You were her source of ultimate happiness, till her last breath. Yes, that hole couldn't be filled but she had something beautiful, someone beautiful inside out who loved her more than any child can love their parent..." Sangram said as he heaved a sigh.

"No *papa*. I was asking about her sister, my birth mother..." Veena said.

"Noori? She was just like Amara, and not just by appearance. The only difference was that she faced multitudes of the challenges that Amara did, which somewhat changed her. Even when she carried you in her womb, she was consistently battling injuries that would kill a normal human being. Her bond with Sherman had created a self-healing mechanism for them... She gathered all her strength for you and summoned it all during your birth. But she couldn't sustain..." Sangram said melancholically.

"Injuries? What kind of injuries?" Veena enquired.



“It is a strange subject to comprehend *beta*.” Sangram said.

“No, I want to know it all... I know they had an inter-community marriage but so did you... What was different for them?” Veena continued.

“Firstly, I was protected by my Uniform. In those dark times, the *Khakhee* had become a symbolism of predominant strength. Nobody could question my doings. But more importantly, I belong to the majority. I am a Hindu. And yes, I do worship and deliver my prayers to all the Gods that I have been told about, and take pride in belonging to my religion, nevertheless, it is an undeniable and conspicuous privilege in this nation. I could protect Amara from the social oppression as well as judgement. But, poor Sherman had no such privilege. There were many factors, as you know, which troubled them. He was declared pariah in his own community. Blockaded for loving someone who supposedly didn't belong. It became worse after my transfer. So many times I had received post-cards from Noori saying their hut was being pelted, burned down even at

more than one instances, they were being assaulted on the roads, nobody sold them anything, at public eateries their food was being spat it. And not just by the two communities involved. Even those who lived ashore resented and scorned them and their Union. They were subjected to all kinds of caste and religion-based hate-crimes... Just like Amara and I, neither of them had forsaken their original faiths. But still, there was no stopping the hate.” Sangram narrated.

“They followed their original faiths till the end? But why? Why follow a God whose followers do all this to you? Why believe in such principles that forced the world to torture them?” Veena asked.

“I don’t know... Maybe they never knew their true religions... Or maybe they did but the others didn’t. Who knows? May their souls ever be together and rest in peace. (Sighed) All about the past, you tell me madam what has caused the agnostic to be so curious about religion. Don’t let those young aggressive lads from your University get to your head. You are fine the way you are. Some

souls don't need God to be Godly and Saintly in their form. Now go and get ready..." Sangram said.

"But I really have sent the notice for the sabbatical..." Veena said. Her face reflected as if Sangram's words had really sent her mind in a stream of introspection and had further strengthened her ambiguity. 'Whom do I support?'; 'Whom should I follow?'; 'Why did they believe in God when God apparently didn't believe in them?'

"Is getting ready always done for work... This is the first time you have given yourself a vacation. It has to start fresh. Even if you are going to sleep the entire day you better do it like it is your first day of your job..." Sangram said in a light-hearted tone.

"*Haha* yes *papa* your wish is my perpetual command." Veena said as she turned towards the inner hall.

"And don't forget to remind the young soldier that his bugle is sounding loud from his college. He better armour himself up if he has not already." Sangram said.

Veena walked across the hall to find Amar standing behind the curtain of the store room.

“Hey you... what are you doing here? Shouldn't you be there in your class by now?” Veena said in a commanding tone.

“*Arre Didi* I was thinking I would take an off today. I am not feeling well” Amar said with a hopeful expression of convincing Veena.

She looked at him for a second and then said “Go Get ready”.

“*Didi* I am serious. You can get the thermometer. I am not lying. I won't be able to go to College in this state” Amar said.

“Is getting ready only done for college?” Veena remarked whimsically. Understanding that she had seen through his obvious excuse, Amar smiled.