

The Religion
called
Pragmatism:

Memoirs of
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Pragmatism

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CHAPTER FIVE: THE CITY OF DREAMS

Ignorance... a quality condescended upon by many... but a dire necessity for the survival of many more. We ignore what doesn't matter to us... and sometimes we ignore what matters most to protect ourselves. We generally tend to ignore the joy of those above us, and the pain of those below us... all so that whatever we possess neither seems less nor more. It is essential for the flourishing of atomic elements. One iota works isolated from the actions and inactions of others. The misleading apparition of the collectiveness of mankind is rebuked by his ignorance, often edging on selfishness; but aren't intelligence, and the ability to uniquely perceive, formulate, create and recall the perfect alibis for this selfishness of ours. Each and Every is naturally selfish because of their intelligence

alone. Our ability to comprehend differently at atleast the molecular level of perception testifies that we art ought to be ignorant of something or the other.

There are many of us who defy this natural ignorance, due to a more prominent trait of dominance. Then come obstruction, hindrance and imposition, the three elements of modern civilisation. When someone's action or inaction directly or indirectly affects us physically, economically or socially, we have the right to discard that ignorance. Nevertheless, when someone's actions or inactions have no affect on our lives, but tend to challenge our innate dominance, then, failing to present alibis for obstructing, hindering or imposing, some of us sculpt certain immaterial belief system out of thin air which in turn is being affected by it all; again, giving a reason to obstruct, hinder and impose. This was, is and will be how the civilisation survives through time. Not evolve though... For evolution, we need ignorance.

Veena and Amar had been the exemplar sibling duo, having little to no secrets from

each other. That is what Veena believed. Amar carried a few secrets. No! Not just his habit of smoking. Although, they were very much related to it. Back in his school days, Amar was a bright and meritorious all-rounder. All thanks to the parenting by Sangram, who had learned it through the ancient art of trial and error, having gone wrong only once; but the virtual flaw existed in his conception and origin. Even though he was raised in a harmonious environment, the world out there wasn't that pleasant for him. He carried the evil of belonging to the selectively and snobbishly despised 'Scheduled Caste'. Yes, his name had created much more trouble for him throughout his life than Veena's did for her. In the country of diversities, factions and collective identifications keep popping up every now and then at every street and corner. Belongingness to different faiths is, ofcourse primary; but even when religions are not dissimilar, people generally try to scrape up information to comprehend the sect and the class of the said person. The society is majorly divided by class, both economically

and socially. It seems as if it gives some sadistic pleasure to the spiritual critiques in finding a reason to call someone different from them; and that difference is called out not just to divide, but to look down upon. Amar had been subjected to lot of casteism in his yet young lifespan. Sometimes a little too much to fit in that short while. He was too obliged towards the Bhagwati family to ever let them know of it; but the truth doesn't take long to announce itself.

A small constable walked inside the Guest resting chamber to inform Veena of the early arrival of her brother by the passenger train. She immediately got up and started asking about his whereabouts. The constable told her that he was waiting outside near the first platform, seemingly ashamed to face Veena. She rushed outside in worry. Reaching there, she found Amar sitting on the bench with his head down on his laps.

“Amar...” Veena said lightly, placing her hand on his shoulder.

He rose his head, showing his dull red eyes sulking in guilt.

“I am sorry *Didi*... I have no excuse for what I did...” Amar said.

Veena had known Amar since his infancy. She knew that it wasn't as simple as an ignorant mistake. She gently sat beside him and asked “What happened Amar? Tell me...”

Amar was trying hard to hold back his tears. He wiped the few droplets that had made through and gazed back at her, taking a moment to grasp the strength to tell her everything.

“I didn't have to... I didn't need to. Not today. But picked up the habit... It was back in school (sighs to gain vocal strength) I am ever indebted to Sir for getting me all the opportunities one could ask for in this world. I was educated in the best school... the biggest school of the city. It sounds like a privilege and indeed it was for me. But... I carried an evil with me. The evil of my birth-caste. An evil I carried amongst the privileged. And that evil takes the shape of a self-destructing demon. It was not very bad in the beginning. You know, we were small...

they were small and so was what they could have done to me. But soon, as we grew up... it kept evolving. Stealing my tiffin soon turned into spitting into it... Excluding me in the classroom changed to locked me inside the toilet... puring water over me to 'clean' the dirt my skin carries naturally changed into dragging me down and throwing mt into the swimming pool. Till when could I have fought back. Being with you all never taught me any societal differences and thus I never had the urge to find any community to belong to. But when I couldn't see anyone who could see the world as I did, from where I did... from the lowest point in earth turning my head up to look at everybody else... then I became desperate to find someone who has felt the same. There was no one in my school. None who belonged to my caste since apparently, they don't belong to such high-class schools. I used to walk home mostly, because the money which you and Sir gave for travel was mostly snatched. There was no teacher, no counsellor... no one who helped me. I turned to the Human Resources Department, and they assured me they would

handle the situation internally. They even insited that I never told you people so that it might not grab media attention. So... one day I was walking home... I was going past this cigarette shop and I overheard two old fellows talking while smoking... about the money problems in their lives and how smoking helps them calm their stress down and helps them concentrate on business and family. I was immediately entangled. I waited on the side for them to finish smoking and the moment they threw down the bud, I discretely went and grabbed it. It had almost gone out and I could take just the one puff. I coughed and coughed like anything... Got a few stares even... a boy in school-uniform with a backpack on his back smoking some. After that, each day, I waited near that or some other cigarette corner for that left out bud... Never had the money to buy one and always hoping that today's drags might reduce today's stress. It never did. I presumed I need a full stick I think. So, I bunked the school one fine week to preserve some cash and went there to buy myself some cigarettes. The seller looked at me in

judgemetn but still sold his stuff. I stood in the corner to smoke one... Nothing happened... I felt a little hazy and my throat started paining a bit. It felt like my insides are burning but nothing happened. I was still thinking about it all. I smoked another one... nothing. And another one... And you know what (cries) Nothing Happened at all... It never could help... I just became habituated to it. It still doesn't help but what can I do? Even yesterday... I was trying to resist but couldn't sleep without it. I went out and stood on the door and kept it in my mouth... but started feeling very guilty doing it because I was with you. I took it out and turned and there was this heavily built man standing beside me. Before even I could plead he started blaming me for smoking. He asked me my name and I told him. He asked me my full name then. I did that. He then asked me my caste... Seeing me reluctant to tell it... he started shouting on me saying "You low caste people... Firstly you infringe upon our reservations in jobs and education... and now you want to usurp our safety as well... How dare you come to the A.C.-3 compartment?" He then took me

down at Vadodara and handed me over to the police there. What reservation did I infringe upon? I couldn't clear the CLAT in the general category... even though I was getting a reserved seat. I didn't take it. Not that I didn't want it... but I wish to be normal in all ways. I want to pursue normally and be recognized normally. I did clear AILET... and when I told a few people about it they presumed I had cleared it in my caste category... Why cannot I be normal? I don't wish to be different. Everywhere... I am considered different. We eat the same, bathe the same, wear the same, know the same, tell the same, live the same... we worship the same... then why do they think us different?"

Veena stood speechless with red, teary eyes. She couldn't contemplate as to how to react to Amar's plight. She herself had a hard time dealing with her identity, but none in the domain of Amar. Amar never had the choice or the benefit of doubt of any side. He had to mandatorily go through the pain of having to bear of his societal status; and there wasn't anything he could have done about it. Veena immediately sat beside Amar

and wiped his tears off. She took hold of Amar's hands and looked him straight in his eyes and said "You are quite strong Amar to have always kept that yourself without giving us a hint of it. You should always remember that you have us to add to that strength of yours and you needn't rely on any material or substance for the same. No one and nothing, especially non-living, can hear you out, talk to you and tell you that you are an excellent human being and have earned rightfully whatever you own. *Papa* just presented opportunities to you. There are so many who overlook and ignore the opportunities presented to them. But you, you never took them for granted. And it is not just because of your roots. It is because that's the way you are. And *Papa* knows it, and so do I. And (smiles) when I say I, I don't mean your sister. I mean a teacher... a professor. You know what they say right, never doubt your professor."

Amar cheered in that moment of psychological connection and smiled back at Veena.

“I am glad that you took so much of oppression head on without changing the way you are. I, myself would have given up long back and so would have anyone you know. Now, if you are going to make your old sister handle the quintols of luggage again, then maybe you would have a lecture from me again. Trust me, I am not known for boring lectures, but that one would definitely be the most boring of all.” Veena said in a composed tone.

Amar got up with a positive expression and went to grab the luggage.

“By the way *Didi*, who said “Never doubt your professor?” Amar asked inquisitively.

“Oh! That... I keep repeating it again and again in my sessions. Although, I am really sceptical of the statement myself (giggles) since there are certain professors out there that require incessant doubt due to their knowledge and the way they became professors in the first place.” Veena said in a whimsical tone.

“Hahahahaha... So, where are we heading? Same old Kochi?” Amar enquired.

“I realised, Kochi is still far away...” Veena said.

“So where then?” Amar asked.

Veena turned and looked at Amar, and heaving a heavy sigh, said “We are going to... Mumbai...”