



*And there I saw:
No dawn, no dusk
No Kalima, no Ram-Ram.*

– Kashmiri Folk Song

He woke up with a start and found himself in naked embrace with his wife, their bodies intertwined, wrinkled sheets strewn all over the bed. He glanced at the illuminated wall-clock. It was 15.76 Unity Time. It took him a few seconds to work out that there were still a couple of hours till sunrise. This conversion from Unity Time to a more local interpretation always irritated him. He turned his glance toward his wife, but it was too dark for him to make out her features. Lifting an arm from over her, he reached for the remote control on the bedside table and directed it toward the suncrystal fixed to the wall. Adjusting the intensity at 1.5, he pressed the on button. The suncrystal began to glow gradually, emitting the solar energy it had absorbed during the day in the form of soft sunshine. The low intensity level bathed the room in an almost sublime twilight. He brushed back the few strands of hair that had fallen across Asmat's face and admired her: this representative of that almost extinct species, the unintermingled race. Her jet-black hair, fair skin, sharply chiselled features

Daze of Unity

○ Syed Anwar Owais

and tall willowy figure were probably as Aryan as that of any female member of that once-widespread race that existed in pre-evolutionary times. But today, in 227 Final Evolution, she was a rarity.

He looked into the bedroom mirror and at the faint reflection within. His pudgy body and his vanishing hairline were little more than a comic contrast to his wife's lithe body. He smiled at his fortune and idly stroked Asmat's cheek.

Then his mind returned to what had been nagging him. He moved away from her and took out a cigarette from the pack he had. He debated lighting it; then decided against doing so in the bedroom. Asmat, like all his friends, had a strong aversion to this recently acquired habit of his and had been surprised to know that such things were still sold. And he, a psychiatrist, taking up smoking. He put on his gown and, switching off the suncrystal, groped and tiptoed his way out of the bedroom. He came out of the house and reached his small garden. Here he settled into a chair and lit the cigarette. The thought that he was polluting the atmosphere bothered him, but not enough to prevent him from enjoying that first deep drag. He allowed himself to brood about his situation, and waited for the sun to rise.

Mental illness had always fascinated him, like all aberrations. He had been a more-than-good student at school – excelling particularly at Aspects of Unity. He used to relish working through the Fallacies of Duality, those apparent paradoxes of

Unity, based on false reasoning, whose flaws students were required to point out. Of course, by the time the youngsters were of school-going age, all of them had been given the Unity Pill. He had reached the Automatic Response Level of seeing duality as an aspect of oneness long before any of his peers. Yet he had been disturbed by mental illness – disturbed by those small paragraphs or scattered chapters mentioning those few, very few, individuals who did not respond to the Unity Pill. But these references dealt only briefly with the permanent regression of these unfortunate people.

After completing school, he had thought of either studying the Philosophical Foundations of Unity or taking up the less intellectual choice of becoming a psychiatrist. His pity for the mentally ill and his keen interest in resolving the anomaly of mental illness had finally swung his mind in favour of the latter. Many of his friends had been disappointed. Now, only a few months after having completed his training, he felt troubled in many ways.

The sun began to rise. As he watched the edge of the golden disc rise from the horizon, he heard the whirring sound of the bedroom curtains being automatically drawn back, announcing dawn to the rooms within. The verdant green of the young *chinar* in the garden began to be visible, the polycoloured flowers began to come alive and the dew readied to merge with the atmosphere; bird calls vied for his attention. Gaia,

beautiful Gaia! He felt proud of being part of her.

“All is one, Zubair!” His wife called from the bedroom window.

“All is one, dear,” he replied, turning back to look at her. He felt glad that he had finished the cigarette.

She had obviously woken up a little while ago and she looked fresh from her bath. She had wrapped a gown around her, her hair was pulled back to form a ponytail. He could almost believe that he was able to pick up whiffs of her smell.

“Up already?” he called, moving to go inside.

“I saw you weren’t in bed, so I got up – didn’t feel like staying in bed. I don’t feel like exercising today.” She smiled mischievously, “Last night was enough.”

That was a thought Zubair had no hesitation in concurring with. He wouldn’t go for his walk either. After his bath, he joined his wife at breakfast.

“Are you going data-collecting today?” he asked her.

“No, I’ve finished.” She looked obviously disappointed. “I’ll feed what I’ve collected into the computer now and work out the eco-system deviations, mostly minor, of our part of Gaia. I’ll be working in my homfice.”

No wonder she’s disappointed, Zubair thought. Her job as an ecobiologist required her to go out frequently to study the flora and fauna of the different parts of Gaia – the cold-sounding ‘data-collecting’ was only the professional term for the close interaction with nature she so loved. Her present assignment was linked to the constant monitoring of the eco-system of Gaia: a mammoth task, in which hundreds of humans were involved.

And what was he, Dr. Zubair Lal, M.D., engaged in? Watching human

misery every day. Either first hand, when he visited the hospital, or by reading the monotonous reports he found on his computermail about more attempts made to alter the dualophrenics’ body chemistry. And the success-rate? Not even worth mentioning. He would certainly press for his own approach, he resolved.

“Will you go to the hospital today?” His wife interrupted his thoughts. He looked up at her and, after a moment’s thought, replied, “Yes, I will.”

He saw the concern on her face and added, “Don’t worry about me. It’s just that grappling with this dualophrenia conundrum isn’t so easy. And, to add to it, my colleagues aren’t too happy with my approach either.”

He felt her hand on his.

“Differences of opinion aren’t bad, Zubair. But surely you shouldn’t be over bothered?”

“I’m not,” he smiled. “Everything will be fine; I promise.”

He got up from his chair and walked toward his homfice – a small study which served as his office, linking him to his colleagues through a wireless computer terminal.

“I’ll work in my homfice for a while and then I’ll make a trip to the hospital,” he said to Asmat, as he shut the door. Once at the terminal, he accessed program mode. A black dot appeared at the left-hand corner of the white screen and, following the movement of his fingers, printed:

RUNLIST OF ESSENCES

The next moment, the asked-for list appeared on the screen, as much as it could hold. The titles were mainly games, easily available in any software shop. But his interest was Essence 42: ‘Pre-Evolutionary Society’.

His fingers typed:

RUN ESSENCE 42

At once the screen was lit up with images. Date and location flashed in the middle of the screen:

10, PRE-EVOLUTION SECTOR 35
(SUBCONTINENT OF INDIA)

The essence, he knew, wasn’t a real record, but merely a three-dimensional reconstruction of the pre-evolution era prepared under the supervision of the Council of Elders. Very little information was available about this sensitive phase of primitive society, when the Final Evolution to Unity was only a decade away. He



had managed to obtain access to this essence only after many importunate requests to the Representative of the Council of Elders. Even then, he had had to go through more than the regular bureaucratic hassles.

He focussed his attention on the images. Reconstructed humans, mostly men, robot-like, raving, shouting from platforms, mouths babbling away. He felt glad that the essence was soundless. Then mobs. Crowds killing each other. Sticks, knives, guns. As always, their robot-like movements bothered him strangely. Even with all our technology, he thought, we still can't produce a convincing human replica. The mobs changed to uniformed men and the knives gave way to what must then have been sophisticated guns. Flags appeared. He watched with disbelief as the human-robots shot, bombed, burned. Then, suddenly, the mushroom clouds appeared. First one; then, in reply, another. Then the screen went blank.

The Ram-Rahim dichotomy, he remembered from school. The precipitation of Unity.

He paused for a moment and then ran the Essence again, adjusting the program to internally vary two initial conditions at their tenth places of decimal value. The platforms changed, the mobs merged with one another and re-emerged. Human-robots inter-changed. New groups emerged: a smaller one, then a bigger one. Minor changes in an essence.

The mushroom clouds were still the result.

He shook his head at their stupidity, and then turned his attention to more professional interests. Though it was more a nagging hunch than a certainty, he increasingly felt that a closer study of pre-evolutionary society – or rather a study of the formation of Unity – was necessary for unravelling the puzzle of dualophrenia.



He took a deep breath, walked out of the room, said goodbye to his wife and got into his glidecar.

He reached the hospital in half-an-hour. He could almost feel the hostility from the two-storied, white building. He greeted the receptionist.

“All is one, Mary.”

“All’n, Dr. Lal,” she replied, barely looking up from her computer-screen. “Nurse has left the reports of your patients’ progress – if you can call it that – in the compufiles; you can access them at any terminal.”

“Thank you,” he said and thought to himself, When you’re down, you’re out.

He didn’t bother to retrieve the reports but walked up the stairs to one of his patients’ rooms.

He opened the door and went in, leaving the door slightly ajar – it could only be opened from the outside.

The patient was a thirty-year-old man called George. A product of several generations of intermingling, his race was impossible to classify. His symptoms had appeared early in life – a few years after the administering of the Unity Pill. His early years at school were marked by a high degree of intelligence, but after these first few years, he had developed an aversion toward studies – in fact, to all social contact. He began to insist that Unity was a lie. The last was a fairly common dualophrenic trait. After heavy doses of the Unity Pill proved ineffective, he had been hospitalised.

When he saw that it was Dr. Lal who had entered, his fear-stricken eyes relaxed a bit; he dragged himself to sit up in his bed.

“I don’t want drugs! My body is mine! Don’t steal my thoughts! I am I and you are you! My mind is! My mind is! They are conspiring to kill us! Save me, Dr. Lal, save me!”

“You won’t be given any drugs,” Zubair assured him. “If only you would agree to psychotherapy...”

“No brain-washing! They’re spies! They want to steal your mind! Save me! Save me!”

Zubair was disappointed. George was still unwilling to enter psychotherapy. There was little point in remaining in the room.

“See you later, George,” he said. “Try to relax and think about what I’ve suggested.”

He stepped out and started to walk to another patient’s room, when the receptionist’s face appeared on the screen on the corridor wall.

“The other doctors are waiting for you in the common room, Dr. Lal. They have a few things to discuss with you.”

He had been expecting this. He sighed and walked to the common room.

He entered to find the others sitting in chairs lined against the walls, waiting for him. Their moods ranged from the sombre to those of open hostility.

“All is one,” Zubair said, looking around.

“All is one, Dr. Lal. Please be seated.”

It was the senior-most, Dr. Fatima, who opened the conversation once Zubair was seated.

“As you know, Dr. Lal, all of us respect your intelligence – your brilliance, even – and we feel happy that you chose to become a psychiatrist when you could have taken other options more suited to your prowess. All of us appreciate the special interest you are showing in chronic dualophrénia. The insights you have come up with so far have been valuable. The patients like and respect you – which is ironic, because your success-rate is among the lowest in our profession.

“But your recent and – er’hm – extraordinary hypothesis that dualophrénia may not have an organic cause, and that patients should hence not have their body-chemistries altered, baffles me. Especially since you know that body-chemistry and mind-states are closely linked. Instead of providing us any evidence for your theorising, you now occupy yourself in asking for classified

information from the Council, so that you can pursue your interests in the formative years of Unity.

“We are doctors, not thinkers, Dr. Lal,” she concluded after a pause.

Zubair smiled a little and said, “I am as aware as you are, Dr. Fatima, that the conventional method of treating dualophrénia is to alter the body chemistry till the patient becomes responsive to the Unity Pill, and to orient therapy along the lines of weakening over-strengthened ego-boundaries. But since you’ve brought up ‘success-rates’, let’s take a look at them. Rarely are ‘cured’ dualophrénics able to function as responsible members of Unity and, oftener than not, they end up as little more than zombies. Instead of approaching the problem from the conventional point of view, why not look at it this way: In the ultimate analysis, what really plagues dualophrénics? Answer: Unity. So perhaps a better understanding of Unity on their part would c u r e them of their malady....”

He held up a hand to stop the protests that were about to erupt “..... and, for that we need to p u t U n i t y

fully in the open – the first twenty-five years of Final Evolution need to be explored.”

Dr. Fatima lifted her hands in resignation, and let them fall to the arms of her chair.

“As you wish, Dr. Lal. My suggestion is that you approach the Council of Elders directly. Only they can give permission to gain access to such information.”

He thanked her and the meeting dispersed. He didn’t feel like completing his round that day and, instead, returned home early, his mind made up to directly approach the Council to grant him full access to the information he needed.

He skipped lunch and, once again, sat down at his computer terminal. In his absence, a request had come from the local school that he prepare a note on the Formation of Unity. He often got such requests because he was known as an amateur expert in the field. He switched the terminal to telecom mode and printed the address:

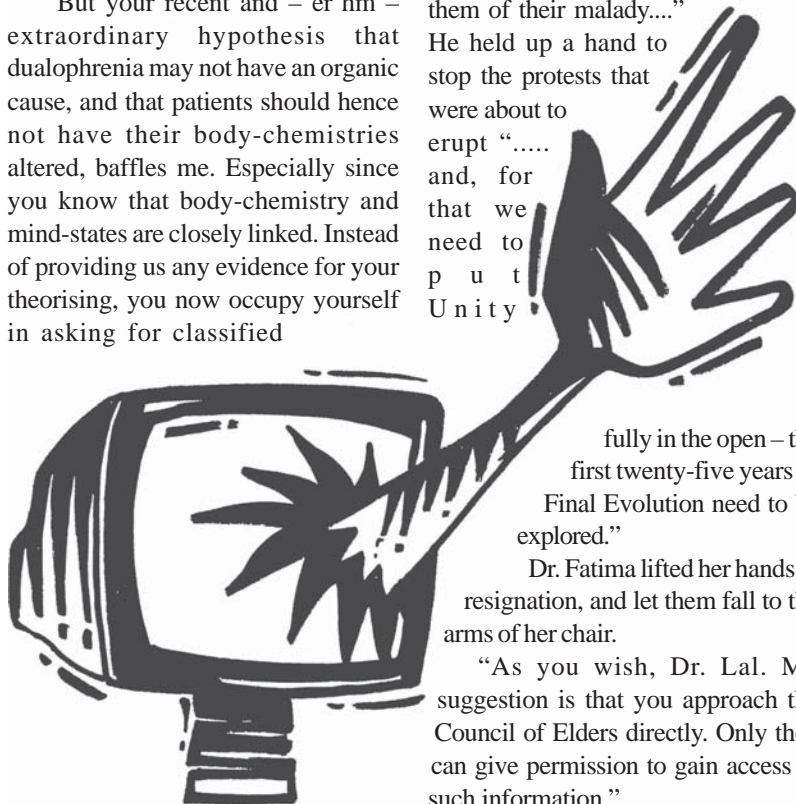
SCHOOL OF GAIA
SECTOR 104/7

He began dictation. The computer translated his speech into level-ten-logic, retrievable by the school’s main computer. The display screen at their end would compensate for his pauses and emphases, and provide the punctuation.

“Note on the Formation of Unity”

“The reason Unity came about is because the world was ready for Final Evolution; historical reasons had overdetermined it. The seeds were sown in the first half of the last century of pre-evolution, known to primitives as the twentieth century.

“The mathematical bases for Unity were laid in Kurt Godel’s Incompleteness Theorem, which demonstrated the limitations of rational thought and hence showed that true Reality lies essentially in the intuition. The theorem is now, of course, a part of elementary mathematics courses. The rise of quantum mechanics also established that a holistic vision of reality was the correct one. Another major happening was the Unification of Physics achieved by Dr. Stephen Wilber, who discovered the Theory of Everything. The other important event was the confirmation of the Big Bang theory, which once again showed that the universe was born



of singularity and demonstrated the essential oneness underlying all things. The official acceptance of the Gaia Theory – first expounded by James Havelock – made humans see that Gaia, then called Earth, is a living entity of which they are a part. The depletion of fuel resources made the passage to the solar age inevitable. Science and ethics were beginning to merge. Toward the end of the century, even the political arrangement of the world had moved from being bipolar to becoming unipolar. In other words, instead of two powerful groups of what were called “nations”, each bent upon destroying the other, one group gained ascendance and exercised a hegemony. That also favoured the formation of Unity.

“The Founding Heroes of Unity were the first to realise that this constellation of historical forces made the coming of Final Evolution inevitable. But they also knew that, historical inevitability notwithstanding, the transition to Unity would be long and difficult. Gaia was run, in those days, by narrow-minded politicians, the heads of the so-called “nations”, who would have scoffed at the idea of Unity. So the Founding Heroes launched a secret mission and infiltrated “governments”, keeping in close contact with each other, hoping against hope that humans would learn from the nuclear nightmare, then abroad across the earth, and evolve toward Unity – and sanity.

“Ironically, while there was a strong movement to build up Unity, there was a sudden regression; “nations” all over the world began to vigorously, often violently, assert “religious”, “ethnic”, and “patriotic” identities. The Founding Heroes began to fear that they might have to take more direct

“One particular area of strife was the Subcontinent of India – now called Sector 35. That part of Gaia had been divided into two warring groups called India and Pakistan. Both these groups had nuclear weapons and use them they did. They acted out a millennia-old conflict: the Ram-Rahim dichotomy, as we call it now. The final ostensible reason was a small piece of land called Kashmir. The resulting misery, fear and chaos forced the Founding Heroes to take direct action – they took charge of the powerful “nations” of the world and declared Unity. The first thing they did was to enforce their military policy on the smaller “nations”. Within a period of only twenty-five years, Final



Evolution was complete. The invention of the Unity Pill, seventy-five years later, made things much easier and today we are all integrated, peaceful members of Unity.

“Thank you, children.”

Having finished his dictation, he rested his head on the back of his chair and closed his eyes. He stayed there a while and, leaving the computer in telecom mode, he printed a new address.

THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS
GAIA CONFIDENTIAL

The addition of that last word ensured that all other terminals in the system were disconnected and only

the Council accessed his message. Carefully, he began to dictate.

“I am Dr. Zubair Lal, a psychiatrist working in sector 104. In my work with dualophrenics, I have been forced to think more deeply about Unity itself. I am convinced that, in order to understand dualophrenia better and help those suffering from it to understand Reality better, I must undertake a closer study of the initial years of Final Evolution.

“I understand these records are classified, but I feel I need them in order to in order to serve Unity better. I have already made a request to the Council Representative of my sector.

“I hope you will consider my request and help me fulfill my duty.”

With that done, he got up from his chair and went to the kitchen. The reply, he thought, would take about a week’s time.

The buzz of the telecom broke into his consciousness and he woke up with a start. He knew at once that it was for him. He looked at his wife, who was still sound asleep; without switching on the suncrystal, he groped his way to his homfice and switched the computer into telecom mode. Resting his hands on the desk, he leaned over the white screen, watching the image in it form. Gradually, a face became visible: silvery hair parted in the middle, ebony skin, a touch of blond in the moustache, serene mongoloid eyes that gave the face an almost childlike aura, yet its maturity was all-too apparent.

“The Head of the Council of Elders himself,” thought Zubair, fascinated by what he saw before him.

The Head of the Council began to speak calmly and slowly.

“I believe it is night in your part of Gaia. I am sorry; but I wanted to get through to you as quickly as I could. We, the Elders, had already heard of your request to your local Council Representative – and I am, of course, aware that you are requesting classified information only to serve Unity better...” Zubair felt the face move closer to him, he read an unstated appeal in its soft eyes. “To study Unity, you would have to take a close look at the final years of pre-evolution. And I have seen those times.

“I have seen those times, Dr. Lal. Actual records, not essences. I have seen the barbarity, the brutality, the utter anarchy. I have seen Gaia raped. I have seen the fat, stupid editors of newspapers – they used to have them in those days – recommending war. You know, of course, what precipitated the formation of Unity? The mutual destruction of two peoples over a small tuft of land called Kashmir.

“The Founding Heroes of Unity had no other option but to take over Gaia. Yes, the take-over was as violent as the background it had emerged from – yes, there was naturally some resistance, the final yelps of a dying animal. But why go back to all that? Why do damage to the memory of the Founding Heroes? Or do you want people to declare Unity a myth, like your psychotics do?

“The past is over, Dr. Lal. This is a confidential call. I trust your intelligence. If you are motivated by compassion, so is Unity.”

“Thank you, Dr. Lal.”

Gradually the face began to fade out, float away. The eyes persisted in Zubair’s memory.

He stood leaning over the screen for a long while.

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POEMS

Don’t Make Such a Fuss

*It was her day of belonging, of being recognised
And my family whispered in the aisles:*

*If you tie those silver bells around her ankles,
She will stay grounded to who she is.
If you line her hair with the red dust of her village,
She will never forget where she came from.*

*If you sit in the shade and watch her turn circles around the
fire,
She will know that life repeats itself regardless of hope.
And if you hang her with heavy golden trinkets
She will remember that everything has its price.*

*I stayed near the back and watched the bride
Take her bloodstained paces around the silk stage:*

*If you decorate her with burdens like those,
She will remain trapped underneath them forever.*

Kindred

*the shy woman eats alone sits alone
steeps her own tea grinds her own beans
quietly snuggles into the fabric of the couch
laughs into her hands shifts her eyes side to side
frowns ashamed when someone catches her whispering her secrets
to guilty furniture and inanimate incarnations
manifestations of her fruitless god*

*the shy woman carries her clothes on her back
and her tears in the seams of her rustling shoes
watches her children grow up to be soundless
voices blown away like ghosts in the wind
watches her husband shellacked on the streets
black as tar smooth as pavement scalding in the sun*

*the shy woman carries her death in her palm
and always walks with her arms outstretched*

Geeta Malik