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A ROSE BETWEEN FRIENDS

It was an autumn day. That morning I had directed a musical circle for children at a school in North York, Ontario. On the way to the bus stop, I stopped to smell the roses on the corner of the street. The lady of the house called out, "Would you like some?" Although the petals were beginning to fall off the flowers, I accepted. The fragrance reminded me of my grandparent's farm, where as a child, I had fallen in love with the same type of roses.

Moments later the woman appeared with a pair of shears. After cutting a bunch of roses, my bus arrived. The driver waited as I returned the cutting shears and thanked the woman. I gave a rose to the bus driver who smiled in return. I then offered a rose to a mother with her child.

Once at the subway, I noticed a woman with a ventilator, which she was using to assist her breathing. When the bus arrived, we both got on. The lady sat in front of me. I took the last rose out of the bag. All that was left was a little bud with three tiny petals, but the fragrance was surprisingly beautiful. I thought she would think I was ridiculous to offer her half of a rose blossom. I said, "This may sound strange but I feel I need to share this rose with you."

Accepting the flower, she said, "It smells incredible!" She held it, enjoying the fragrance, then handed it back to me. I offered it back to her. She said, "It means a lot to you." I said, "I know it means a lot to you too." We went back and forth. "No, it's for you."

"You don't know how much this means to

me. I've just come from the doctor's office and learned that I have terminal cancer," she told me. "Oh my!" I said, "Oh no!"

Tears ran down our faces as we held each other. One stop later, she got off the bus, tears still running down her face, but a little smile at the corners of her mouth. Once home, I put the last little rose petal in a bowl of water. I enjoyed the fragrance that lingered and the memory of a moment of love shared with a stranger.

Yolande Savoie, Ontario

Excerpted from the book, *Conscious Women Conscious Lives: Transformational Stories of Healing Body, Mind and Soul* by Darlene Montgomery. For more information, contact Darlene Montgomery at lifedreams@direct.com.

THIS DREAM CALLED LIFE!

Life is fraud, only death is truth," a short, middle-aged man uttered near a bus stop. Though he was drunk, his crisp Hindi rang in my ears. "Your viveka (power of discrimination) is the real power. Only God is there. Don't go to Rishikesh for that. What you are that I am. What your name is, that is my name too. The 'thing' for which you earn money and the 'thing' you spend money on is 'nothing'. Nothing is everything. Life is fraud, only death is truth," he rambled.

Clearly, he was doubly intoxicated. The liquor made him sway wildly – back and forth. On the other hand, he was also intoxicated by the deeply spiritual messages he was intuiting. It made me introspect.

Isn't this world a mirage? A camel 'sees' water in the desert, rushes forward and finds that there is no water. In the same way, man believes illusory phenomena to be true. We have seen the rising and the setting sun, but no such occurrences exist in reality. We have spotted stars twinkling in the night. But do stars actually twinkle? We can observe the sky to be blue. But the sky has no colour. In fact, there can be no entity called sky because the sky denotes a limitless expanse.

The motion picture in a cinema hall is, alas, only a series of rapidly moving still photographs. A hard stone is actually electrons vibrating at a peculiar frequency. A tiny seed that gives rise to the mighty tree, when broken, reveals nothing. So, what is real – what we see or what actually is? The world of objects that we experience through our senses exists only due to the perceptions created by the mind. The same objects do not exist in the dream state because our senses are inactive in dream. So, aren't these objects of the world unreal?

Even time is illusory. As Albert Einstein famously said, "Put your hand on a hot stove for a minute, and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour, and it seems like a minute. That's Relativity." The perception of time is relative to the perceiver. A butterfly lives for a few days, a dog for some years, and a man for many decades. So, isn't the experience of passage of time different for different creatures?

Perception of time differs even amongst human beings. How will time appear to someone on his deathbed, as opposed to a newborn child? How will time appear to an executive striv-

ing towards a deadline, as opposed to a relaxed security guard in the same office? It is the mind that is creating the time. Past and future are nothing but memories and projections in our mind. Has any human being ever really lived in the past or the future? Even the present is not absolutely real, because it doesn't exist in the dream state.

So, what can be truly 'real' is what is 'eternally' real. Such an 'entity' must be without a beginning or an end. If it has a beginning or an end, then it shall perish. Everything in this world – all objects, all forms, all experiences – have an expiry date. Anything with an expiry date cannot be eternal and hence is just like the dream state. Shouldn't we yearn to go beyond the waking, deep sleep and dream states, and realise that real, non-dual and eternal state beyond these states?

'Life is fraud, only death is truth'. As I reflect on this message by the drunkard, I wonder if he was really the embodiment of a guru, prodding us to be aware and wake up to the deception of this phenomenal existence, the way Lord Dattatreya's 24 gurus taught Him several divine lessons of awakening.

P Venkatesh, VIA E-MAIL