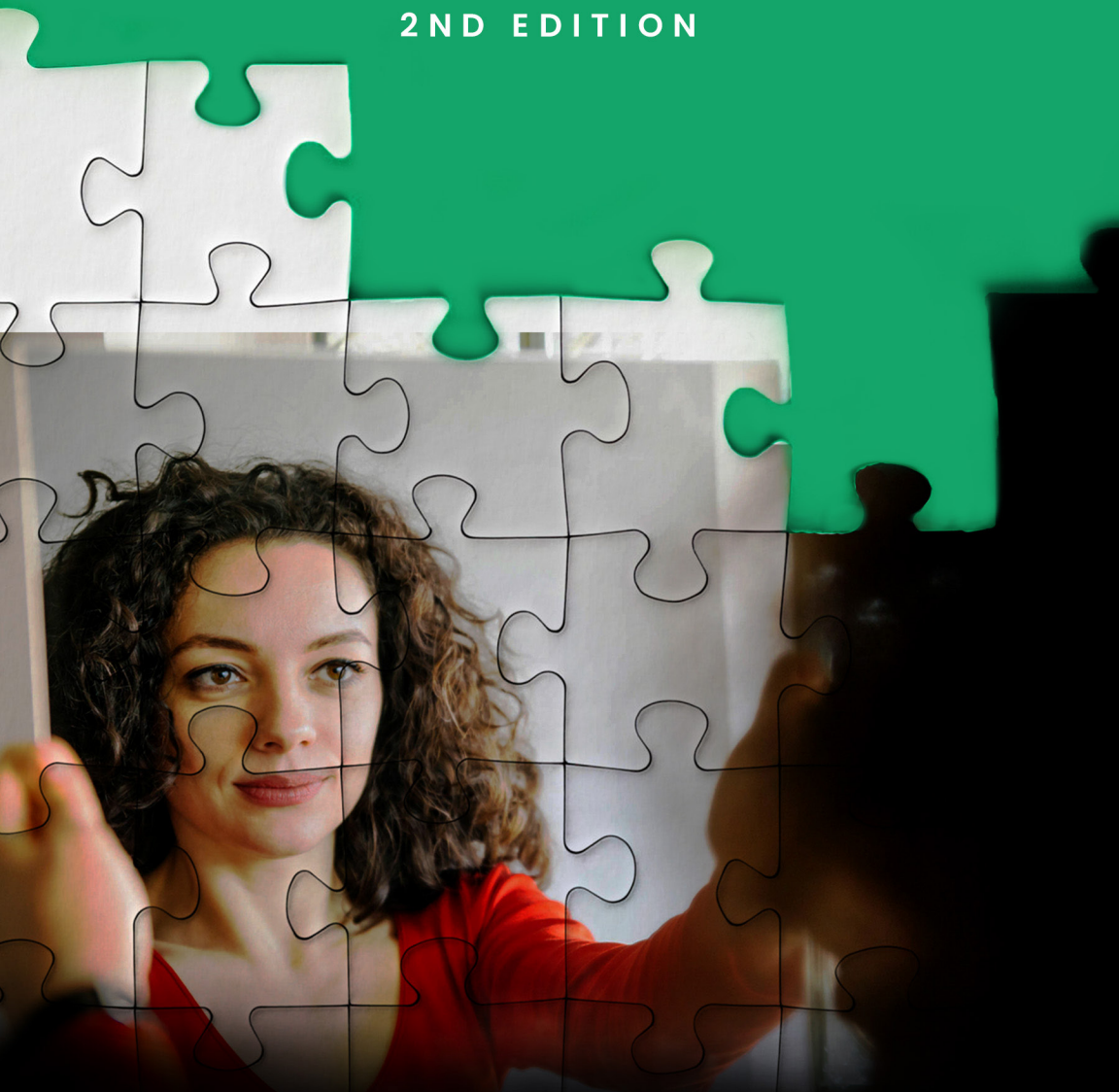


MIRROR MIRROR

TELL ME WHO I AM

2ND EDITION



JACOB EAPEN

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Disclaimer: All names and characters in this book are fictional and do not depict any real persons.

CHAPTER 2

CHANGE AND CRISIS

Understanding Change

I woke up early the next day feeling tired, and my body was sore, but I could not wait for the evening to arrive. I really wanted to meet Albert again and continue the conversation with him. I went into the kitchen and joined my wife, Anne, for breakfast. As I was sipping my coffee, I decided to take the day off and give my body a break from the stress and tension at the office. It also occurred to me I could go for a morning walk and meet up with Albert.

I struggled a little with deciding to take the day off, but I wanted to meet him. When I told Anne I was taking the day off, she seemed surprised but did not press me for a reason. I usually dropped the boys off at school in the morning before I went to work, but at 14 and 15 years of age, I figured they could walk to school that day.

I hurried off with Barkley. When we got to the parking lot, Albert was getting out of his car with Toby.

“Good morning, Albert, how are you?” I said, watching the two dogs wag their tails eagerly as they greeted each other.

“Good morning. I didn’t expect to see you here this morning.” Albert also seemed to be enjoying the dogs’ reunion.

“Well,” I said, “I am feeling tired, so I decided to take the day off and give my body a break. But then I realized I could also catch up with you here this morning.”

“Well, I’m glad to see you.” Albert smiled at the dogs. “We’ll see if we can talk those two into taking it slow.”

“That’d be great.” I motioned for Toby and gave him a pat.

“As I went to bed last night, my mind was still racing through everything we talked about.”

“Did any of it make sense to you?”

“I gave it a lot of thought, and I’m eager to hear more about what you have to say.”

We took the dogs off their leashes and let them run ahead as we picked up the conversation again.

“You know... the word stagnation you mentioned yesterday troubled me all evening,” I said.

“Well, look at people all around us...” He waved his hand as though the trees around us were the people of whom he spoke. “Many people are very unhappy with their lives. There’s a sense that their lives are out of control. Some feel really lost, not having a sense of purpose. Look at what’s happening in the lives of our



partners, children, parents, friends, co-workers, and neighbours. People are unhappy in their personal relationships, with their health, with their financial situations, and so on. Many children are unhappy and unstimulated in the school environment. Unhappiness in the workplace, increasing concerns about the economy, personal security, and the deteriorating environment are just a few areas of dissatisfaction, to name a few.”

I nodded. “Yes, you hardly know where to start these days.”

“Most people know at some level they need to do something about it,” he said, “but they seem unable or unwilling to act upon it. Leaving these sorts of issues unaddressed can inevitably lead to problems in the long run.”

I squeezed my fists for a moment, noticing just a touch of numbness. “Such as?”

“Tension, stress, frustration, depression, which can affect our well-being. In some cases, there’s a sense of futility in just existing from day to day,” he replied.

“I wonder why people can’t seem to do something about it,” I said as I shook my hands loose.

“There are two important factors – one is fear, and the other is a rigid and static way of looking at life,” he replied.

I slowed my pace. “Fear?”



“Let’s examine each one of these factors. Look around, and you’ll see an undercurrent of fear that runs through each aspect of everyday life,” he said.

“Can you explain?” I asked, picking up our original pace again.

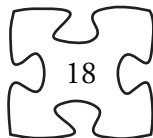
“Take, for instance, work,” he said. “Many people dislike their jobs or aspects of work, so why are they still compelled to do the same job? Many are worried, ‘How will I pay my bills without a job?’ Those on fixed income worry about limited or dwindling finances, ‘What if I run out of money?’ Others worry about failing health, ‘What is going on with my body?’ or faltering relationships, ‘What if I end up all alone?’”

I felt myself nodding slowly again. “Yes, I can see that.”

Albert mirrored my slow nod in sync with me. He seemed encouraged by my continued intrigue. “Can you see how fear influences the choices we make? For example, how many people want to quit their jobs but never do because of what they fear... the fear that there is no other source of income waiting out there?”

“Yes, I suppose.”

“There is more to understand about fear,” he said. “But for now, let’s look at how rigid and static our way of thinking has become.”



“What do you mean?” I felt my voice slightly hesitate.

“Have you noticed the rapid rate at which everything in our world has changed these past few decades?” He looked at the trees as though they knew exactly what he was talking about. “There have been many changes in the economy, the environment, family structure, relationships, the workplace, society, and so on.”

“Yes, I have to say that the world now is not what I grew up in,” I said, remembering my own childhood family life. “But every generation says that.”

“How well do you think you have adapted to all those changes?”

I found myself now looking at the trees as though hoping they’d provide an answer, and then I replied slowly. “I would have to say I’m not entirely comfortable with many of the changes that have occurred. Many changes aren’t very positive, so why would people want to adapt?”

“Whether you consider change positive or negative is a matter of perspective,” he said. “For example, it was not long ago when women were expected to stay home and raise families. But now, many women consider their lives richer because of their ability to work outside the home. On the other hand, some people would argue that this is to blame for faltering relationships and a decline in the quality of family life.”

I paused and pondered, “Hmmm...”

“Change is a constant factor in life. There is nothing anyone can do to stop change when it does happen. We only have two options – either we adapt or get tossed around in it.”

I shook my head. “But some changes can be so disruptive and at times violent that it’s hard to imagine adapting to them.”

“Violence is an undesirable emotional reaction to change,” he replied. “We will talk about this again next time we meet. By adapting, I mean finding out why you are struggling with change and taking measures to resolve your struggles with it.”

“Let me think about that,” I replied, half expecting Albert to stop there. But he continued.

“Many people cannot accept that things are no longer how they used to be, and they dig in their heels.”

“Yes,” I replied slowly. “That is understandable.”

“A lot of what we believe to be ‘truth’ was given to us by our parents, extended family, our teachers, clergy, and society at large. We’ve accepted their beliefs, for the most part, without giving it a second thought. We reason that if it worked for them, surely it must work for me too.”

I laughed softly. “Yes, I can relate to that.”



“In reality, though many people find the status quo no longer works for them, yet they feel locked into it and feel stuck,” he said.

That comment made me slow down a little and look right at him. “Can you elaborate?”

“Have you ever found yourself in those moments of truth,” he asked, “when you realize, ‘but this is not me!’ or ‘this is not for me,’ or ‘there has to be more than this.’”

“Yes, I have,” I replied.

“So, did you act upon it at that time?”

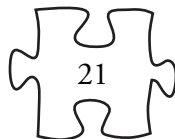
The sound of twigs and old leaves crunched beneath my shoes. I kicked a small pebble off the path. “No,” I muttered. “Obligations, responsibilities...”

“So, can you see that in the end, maintaining the status quo left you feeling unhappy or dissatisfied?”

“I guess so.”

“We tend to put up with the unhappiness and dissatisfaction and ignore the subtle reminders that prompt us to make changes,” he said. “Eventually, though, *change* does occur whether we like it or not, leaving us feeling very unsettled.”

The dogs had been encircling us with their high energy



during our slow pace but now began to slow somewhat after dissipating much of that energy during their playful antics. “Why do things have to change so much?” I asked.

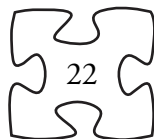
“*Change* is absolutely essential; without it, there would be no growth, and everything would stagnate. It’s our inability to flow with change that causes problems,” he replied.

Barkley trotted to me for a quick reassuring pat on the head and then hurried back to Toby. “Can you explain that a little more?”

Albert took a deep breath of forest air. “When we outgrow an experience, either individually or collectively, there are subtle promptings in the form of dissatisfaction and unhappiness to nudge us to move on. That is what change is about. Often, we ignore these subtle promptings, which eventually turn into major rumblings. This is when *change* sets in. If we continue to ignore the changes and pretend that nothing has changed, then it’s time for a showdown. It becomes crisis time; everything gets kicked out from under us at that point. This is really when we find ourselves at a *crossroads* in life.”

My mind flashed back to that day in the hospital. “Do you think this is what the stranger meant when he whispered to me that I was at a crossroads in my life?”

“Absolutely. Look at the bright side. Our conversation today



has brought you to a place where you are now consciously aware that something is out of balance, and you can take corrective actions to get your life back on track. Remember again that change is inevitable. We can all learn to flow with *change* by adapting rather than fighting it. Later, we will also talk about what we can do to not only turn things around but also learn to thrive through change.”

I felt myself smiling. “I’m interested!”

Albert smiled also. “By the way, there’s another important reason for change that we’ll address in the future.

Meanwhile, it would be good for you to reflect on how change has impacted your life. And without any judgement or condemnation, try to get a sense of the different areas of your life you have ignored and where you feel discontentment or unhappiness. This is the place where you can then begin the process of restoring balance.”

“Yes, I really need to do that,” I said.

Toby and Barkley were now walking close to Albert, and he reached his hand down to them, getting a lick from both. “Remember I said there is more to understanding fear – so let’s talk about that the next time we meet.”

We continued walking down the trail in silence. I was so engrossed in thought that I could recognize the discontentment



and, yes, unhappiness in some areas of my life. I could see how fear repeatedly prevented me from doing something I wanted for myself.

When we got to the parking lot, Albert asked, “Are you up for meeting again tomorrow?”

“Actually, I have a massage appointment after work tomorrow, so how about the day after?” I replied.

“You know I’m here every day with Toby.” He gave Barkley a goodbye pat and climbed into his car after letting Toby into the back seat. As Barkley and I walked home, I wondered about the timing of the stranger’s appearance in my hospital room. I realized that I really was at a crossroads. For the rest of the day, I went over all the events in my life and examined all the choices I had made along the way. I saw patterns of unconscious choices I had made throughout my life. I decided to keep an open mind and continue to hear what Albert had to say.



A trail in the woods. A dog gone astray. A chance meeting with a mysterious stranger.

And so begins James' journey of self-discovery. Following his dog into the forest, James crosses paths – literally – with Albert, a vaguely familiar stranger who seems to understand James' inner struggle. James and Albert agree to meet for a walk the following day, and the next day, and the day after.

Slowly, a new trail emerges into view – a previously unseen path that leads to renewed happiness, personal satisfaction, and well-being. It's a trail, you'll discover, that invites us all.

This book is about each person's quest to create relevance in everyday living. It teaches you how to use your thoughts, emotions, and feelings to interpret and create your own experiences, so that your life reflects what is meaningful to you.

*"Mirror Mirror, Tell Me Who I Am is a creative take on the self-help variety because it shares its information in story form. For readers who are seeking advice on enriching their lives and don't have a lot of time to devote to reading, *Mirror Mirror, Tell Me Who I Am* is a solid choice. Jacob Eapen's book is a good recommendation to those who enjoyed *The Secret* but are seeking more grounding feedback."*

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