

**SEARCHING THE OTHER HALF: THE CONCEPT OF
SOULMATE IN PAULO COELHO'S *BRIDA***

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Abstract:

The concept of Soulmates is a concept widely discussed both in real life and literature. The idea of Soulmate says that Soulmates are two individuals who are bound to each other by an unknown force. These individuals gravitate towards one another and their paths continue to cross until they are one. Many fictional works have incorporated the concept of Soulmates in their plots, *Brida*, the novel under discussion being one of them. The theory of Soulmate also entwines with it the ideas of reincarnation and the multiple ways by which one can recognize the other half. The present paper explores the concept of Soulmate as presented in Paulo Coelho's novel *Brida*. The novel under consideration reveals many ideas about the existence of Soulmates along with ways by which we can get to know the presence of the Soulmate. The book argues that the quest for love and search for perfect partner is really a quest for wholeness. Ideas of reincarnation, magic and witchcraft have also been used in the novel to substantiate the existence of Soulmates in the world and to prove that Soulmate is in reality the other half of a man or woman.

Key words: Soulmate, other half, reincarnation, magic, love, partner.

The Concept: People have believed in the concept of Soulmates for thousands of years. The dictionary defines “Soulmate” as two persons compatible with each other in disposition, point of view or sensitivity; someone for whom you have a deep affinity. This definition explains the basic qualities to be found in Soulmates, but the Soulmate theory goes much deeper than that. It says that a Soulmate is a person with whom one has a deep affinity. This may involve similarity, love, romance, friendship, comfort, intimacy, sexuality, sexual activity, spirituality, compatibility or trust. Soulmates mean that there are two individuals who have been predestined to be together. They usually are portrayed as two individuals who feel they have no place in life and are always out of step and usually feel that they are missing something when they are not with the other. Soulmates magically find one another, find love, usually fall in love at first sight and live happily ever after.

The first reference to the word “Soulmates” was made by Aristophanes at Plato’s *Symposium*. He tells a story about the Gods making the first human beings. They had two heads, four arms and four legs. Zeus became frightened that these new humans were too powerful and could get out of control so he split them in half. They were thus, destined to live their lives looking for the other part of themselves. This idea of Soulmates, rooted in platonic myth was introduced to elucidate the unending quest for wholeness in love.

The ‘Old Testament’ or the Judio- Christian Soulmate theory presents another concept. This theory states that God fashions an androgynous creative containing both sexes (in his own image), which comprises the essence of spirit. God, thus, decides to give this spirit a living soul’ and creates Adam and then his female ‘half’ Eve out of his rib. The New Testament says that humans were once whole but were divided to create its mate. Jesus reminds the Pharisees that God had originally made them: “male and female... for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh... no more twain, but one flesh” (Mathew 19:4-6).

In the Rabbinical literature, the Midrash Soulmate theory states that God originally created Adam ‘two faced’ before deciding to cut him in half into the male and female. Elsewhere it is suggested that Adam was originally androgynous, containing both sexes in one. In Hinduism

Soulmate theory, the universal soul becomes conscious of itself, desire, companionship, and therefore brings forth from its own being the male and the female.

The very acceptance of the term and theory of Soulmates brings in the concept of reincarnation, the belief that a strong bond has existed between two people through incarnation. Reincarnation is the doctrine that says that we evolve spiritually by living as many times as is necessary to achieve perfection. What dies is the physical body and the personality, the soul remains alive. In other words, soul is immortal. It has already experienced many life times and how many more yet to come when we are born, our soul brings with all the knowledge, experience, wisdom and karma, we have gained from previous lifetimes and the qualities that we express are the result of our long lineage of previous lifetimes. The Soulmates do not usually remember any of the intimate details of their previous life time and they do not have any conscious memories of their past lives. It is only the soul that remembers. However, when they meet in a lifetime, their hearts open up and an immediate connection is felt. Each incarnation strengthens and deepens the relationship and finally a state of perfect and total love is reached.

The world of fiction has always explored the concept of Soulmates. William Shakespeare is an excellent example of a writer who has used the concept of Soulmate in his drama, *Romeo and Juliet*. In Act two scene two, there is an indication that Shakespeare considered this tragic pair to be Soulmates. Romeo says, after hearing Juliet call his name:

It is my soul that calls upon my name
How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night,
Like softest music to attending ears!

A.E.W. Mason's *The Three Gentlemen* describes three lifetimes a man and woman shared over two thousand years. The characters in the novel recall their pivotal incidents from their previous incarnations making this a true Soulmate novel. *Many Many Times* by James Riddell describes a passionate affair an engaged man has with his Soulmates. Thus, the world of fiction also realizes the idea of Soulmates.

THE NOVEL: Paulo Coelho's novel *Brida*, the novel under discussion is one with the most enlightening concept of the term Soulmates. The novel explores and furnishes the idea of Soulmate through the journey of Brida. *Brida* is a spectacular and successful novel based on the term story of beautiful Irish girl "Brida" who possesses the "Gift" – (Something that is

necessary in order to pursue magic). At the age of twenty one, she meets the Magus and approaches him to teach her magic: ‘I want to learn about magic’ (12). And the theme of the Soulmate sets in when the Magus looks at her: ‘I must be twice her age’, he thought. And despite this, he knew that he had met his Soulmate” (12). The Magus knew that Brida was his Soulmate and he needed her as she needed him. “She was, after all his Soulmate even if she didn’t know it, even if she was still very young and fascinated by the things and the people of this world”(18). The Magus teaches her the ‘Tradition of Sun’, the first lesson of the Tradition of Sun. As Brida learns the first lesson of the Tradition, she realizes another thing: “I have to be my own Teacher, and that isn’t what I was expecting!”(26). As she left the forest she cried in a loud and joyous voice: ‘There’s one other thing. You’re a very interesting man”(26).

The journey of Brida in the search of the Soulmate had already been initiated by the Magus and now her teacher would be Wicca. Wicca could immediately sense that Brida clearly possessed a Gift. But Wicca needed to know why the Magus of folk had been so interested in her: “The Gift on its own was not enough. If the Magus had been new to Magic, he might have been impressed by the clarity with which the Gift manifested itself in the young woman, but he had lived long enough to know that everyone possesses a Gift. He was wise to such traps”(34).

Wicca inspired a strange respect. Wicca asked Brida to think of her “Soulmate, thus introducing the concept of Soulmate. Brida was surprised at the use of the term Soulmate. “What do you mean “Soulmate”? she asks. “The Soulmate is the first thing people learn about when they want to follow the Tradition of the Moon... Only by understanding the Soul mate can we understand how knowledge can be transmitted over time”(36), Wicca explains. Wicca further explains that we are eternal because we are all manifestations of God and hence we go through many lives and many deaths, emerging out of some unknown place and going towards another equally unknown place. She, then, relates the concept of “reincarnation” to the Soulmate. She explains that in certain reincarnations, we divide into two. The souls undergo division as do crystals and stars, cells and plants. The soul divides in two, and those new souls are in turn transformed into two and so, within a few generations. We are scattered over a large part of the Earth.

Wicca, then, introduces the idea of *Anima Mundi*, the Soul of the World'. *Anima Mundi* is the Latin term for "the soul of the universe". It is a concept or an idea formulated to constitute the existence and operation of an intermediary connection or link, between spirit (or pure thought) and Matter. *Anima Mundi* has a corresponding polar opposite, or correlative referred to as *Animus Dei*. Wicca further explains that if the *Anima mundi* were merely to keep dividing, it would keep growing, but it would also become weaker. That is why, as well as dividing into two, we also find ourselves. And that process of finding ourselves is called Love. Because when a soul divides, it always divides into a male part and female part"(38). As per the concept of *Anima mundi*, this male and female parts are the active factor and the passive factor (something which is worked upon). This active and passive factors are not opposite, but are actually complimentary, and neither can accomplish anything without the other and so are Soulmates – complimentary to each other. Even the Book of Genesis explains it as: "the Soul of Adam was split in two, and Eve was born out of them" (38).

Listening intently to what Wicca has to say about Soulmates, Brida had endless number of queries. 'But how will I know who my Soulmate is?' Brida felt that this was one of the most important questions she had ever asked in life. (38). The answer Wicca provides is 'By taking risks... By risking failure, disappointment, disillusion, but never ceasing in your search for Love. As long as you keep looking, you will triumph in the end"(39). And then Brida questions, that is it possible to meet more than one Soulmate in a life time. Wicca said it was possible. In fact, it is possible to meet three or four Soulmates, because we are many and we are scattered. "The essence of creation is one and one alone'... and that essence is called Love. Love is the force that brings us back together, in order to condense the experience dispersed in many lives and many parts of the world." (39-40). Our lives are strangely connected with our Soulmates. If they are not well, we will suffer, however unconsciously, a portion of their pain. The Soulmate is sure to cross our path, at least once in every incarnation, even if it is for a moment. The moments bring with them a love so intense, that it justifies the rest of our days. Wicca also reveals a surprising fact that most of the believers would deny. She says that it may so happen that "we can also allow our Soulmate to pass us by, without accepting him or her, or even noticing. Then we will need another incarnation in order to find that Soulmate. And because of our selfishness we will be condemned to the worst torture humankind ever invented for itself: loneliness" (40).

Brida was learning magic slowly, but the idea of her Soulmate does not leave her. She feels that finding Soulmate was possible only in fairytales. In fact she is so obsessed with the idea of Soulmate that she starts worrying what would happen if she chose the wrong man. So she decides to invite her boyfriend. The meeting of Brida and her boyfriend adds a new dimension to the idea of Soulmates. They discuss the creation of the universe. Brida questions him: “what are we made of? Where did the atoms that make up our bodies come from?”(46). To which Loren’s, her , boyfriend answers: “they were created along with these stars...everything moved and continues to be transformed. But all the matter that exists in the universe now is the same matter from all those billions of years ago, and not so much as a single atom has been added”(46). And Lorens also confirms that atoms that made up the body of someone who died could be in someone else’s body. So the concept of Soulmate is also treated scientifically in the novel.

The Soulmate belief is also related to the concept of reincarnation as stated above. We find Wicca taking Brida in to a journey of her past. Brida actually encounters her Soulmate who we later on come to know is the “Magus” in this birth. Wicca takes Brida into a completely new world. Brida experiences the feel of reincarnation. She meets Loni, who she feels is a part of her Soulmate. Brida goes to the Magus again for getting the answers which comes in front of her due to Wicca and Magus is happy to see her because Magus knows that she is her Soulmate. Brida keeps on taking and talking to Magus and Wicca for her knowledge quest and the story moves on greatly to the events of actions. We also come to know that the dark night is the only way to grow. The whole of man’s life on the face of the earth can be summed up by that search for his Soulmate. He may pretend to be running after wisdom, money or power but none of that matter. Whatever he achieves will be incomplete if he fails to find his Soulmate. Wicca reveals that with the exception of few creatures who are descended from angels and who need solitude in order to encounter God- the rest of the humanity will only achieve union with God, if at some point , at some moment in their life, they manage to commune with their Soulmate. Wicca says that only when the male knowledge joins with female transformation, then the great magical union is created, and its name is wisdom. Wisdom means both to know and to transform. And then Wicca provides the main *mantra*: “the more you understand yourself, the more you will understand the world. And the closer you will be to your Soulmate”(64).

The Magus also throws some light on the concept of Soulmate. He says “at some point in our lives, we all meet our Soulmate and recognize him or her... if I were not a Magus and couldn’t see the point of light above your left shoulder, it would take a little longer for me to accept you, but you would fight for me, and one day I would see the special light in your eyes. What is reflected here is that Soulmates eventually recognize each other. It may take time- short or long- but sooner or later, they come close to each other. However, there was always a risk, a single risk that one person may meet more than one Soulmate in the same incarnation. Wicca continues to teach Brida the tradition of moon. A number of rituals have been described in the novel which Brida has to perform. But the only thing that Brida has in mind is to find her Soulmate. Brida continues to perform the ritual Wicca had taught her. She keeps the candle always burning and dances to the sound of the world. Brida was progressing in the path of finding a Soulmate. Brida experiences everything with Lorens, yet she wants to be with the Magus. For a moment she thinks that he (Magus) is her Soulmate.

Brida thinks of the many times she had suffered for love, the nights she had lain awake waiting for phone call that never came. That was part of her world, and the world of everyone she knew. That was love, and that was how everyone else searched for their Soulmate since time began, by looking into their eyes, looking for the light called desire. But after getting to learn from the Magus, she began to realize that the tradition of the sun was the only way to deal with love. The tradition of the sun said that love did not require any kind of renunciation. True love allowed each person to follow their own path, knowing that they would never lose touch with their Soulmate.

At the end Brida recognizes and accepts the Magus as her Soulmate. She sees the point of light above his shoulder, the way the Magus said that one could recognize the Soulmate. After so many rituals, so many trials and so many days, Brida finally understands the concept of Soulmate and eventually believes Soulmates are destined to be together even though it may take time.

Conclusion: The novel *Brida* beautifully and elaborately discusses the idea of soulmate and provides an insight into the idea of the existence of Soulmates as well as the need and way to recognize ones Soulmate in the course of life time. It substantiates the fact that love exists across time. It is an extraordinary story that explains that each one of us has a Soulmate whom we loved in the past incarnations and who waits to reunite with us now. With warmth

and wisdom soul meets and explores the spiritual dimension of relationship and find new key and true love.

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