

SIPPING  
**SPIRITUAL-TEA**  
FROM A PARALLEL CUP

**PANKAJ SUDAN**



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-- ♦ --    Revealing **deep matters** in a lighter vein    -- ♦ --

# Dedication

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Dedicated to the cosmic Illusion – Maya, the primordial source of fun that makes a seeker of truth break into a peal of impromptu laughter when he suddenly realizes what a fool he had been made all along. This book is also dedicated to my parents, especially my late father, who taught me how to “see” the fun in everything and how to create it, in the unexciting.

# Acknowledgments

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# Introduction

---

*“My way of joking is to tell the truth.  
That is the funniest joke in the world”.*

*Muhammad Ali*

My firm belief is that learning should never be a *boringly serious matter* but rather a *funnily serious matter*. In the history of mankind, almost all the wise were quite humorous in dealing with people and facing difficult situations but very serious when contemplating higher fields.

When we travel through plains, we can relax and can afford to be a bit casual and sometimes be too mechanical in the sense that we can think about some other matters while the vehicle goes on itself, it is driven by default. But we can not do so while driving in a hilly terrain. Then we must be focused and without a casual mindset. Similarly, higher wisdom demands that we be aware of not only that which is explicit but also of that which is implicit. A mind engaged in the pursuit of self-discovery needs to be well-versed in what is called - parallel thinking, being aware of what is there “in between the lines”, of what the implications of those words are which were intentionally or through oversight, *never spoken*. For example, when you are not telling anything directly, you are “beating around the bush”. We say - “Too many cooks spoil the broth” to convey that if too many people are involved in a task, *it will not be done well*.

Therefore, a proverb uses bold imagery to give advice or tell you something. It is a piece of condensed information. Idioms and proverbs cut off the verbosity and make the content interesting. I have gone further. I have made the content funny. Like the ancient practice of conveying serious higher matters through the use of fables, I have incorporated or infused the characters of donkey, pig, owl, sheep, rat, etc, into the main body of a fact, a truth, a hidden message, mostly giving them a wise and thoughtful stature.

This book is written for the layman who is weary of high-sounding words and is almost put off by the usual philosophical or mystical jargon. What is the purpose of the book? To give a sudden insight to the attentive reader of these fun-filled stories written in a lighter vein, through the narration of carefully planned incidents and the use of certain word triggers. I have also given, for the benefit of the avid reader, a few key points to ponder over at the end of each chapter. These would help the reader to get a clue to grasp the esoteric message contained in them.

To scale a height that has no parallels, one must look beyond the obvious. One must be good at parallel thinking. This book has been divided into two parts. The first part ignites the reader's psychic engine through the carefully planned assortment of funny stories, taking him to the road of parallel thinking, which sometimes would force one to ponder deeply and at other moments might give him a sudden realization of a fact, a truth. The second part is more advanced and gives the reader wings to fly into the unknown skies of different dimensions.

Come on, let's venture into this adventurous expedition.



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# Part-One

# The Crossroads

---

*“Every new beginning comes from some  
other beginning’s end”.*

*-Seneca*

A student asked his teacher, “How not to be depressed when nothing good happens to us? Sir, please tell us how to remain positive when there is a dead end, when the road is blocked, when there is no ray of hope?”

The teacher replied, “Son, come with me for a walk, and during this evening stroll, we will try to find some concrete answers to your questions”.

So the teacher and the student went for a walk. Presently, they came to a crossroads.

The teacher, pointing at the intersection, said, “See, the road through which we have come this far has ended. There is a dead end. That old road is not there anymore. But as you can observe, three more new roads are emerging from the intersection.

It is not just here, it happens all over the world and has happened so in all times. Wherever there would be an intersection, there would be many roads, mostly four roads, one road would end and three new roads would be waiting for you to choose, to tread upon.”



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. There is no such thing as a dead end in a circle. Similarly, when a path ends at a crossroads in your life, new paths sprout from there. You lose something. But in the loss of that, there are invariably hidden potential seeds for new beginnings.
2. A crossroad is always a critical juncture or a point of decision. It may initiate a feeling of confusion or a sense of bewilderment regarding what to do or where to go.
3. Different types of crossroads emerge in life when we are pushed to move from one state or situation to another, and they are almost always difficult on a psychological and emotional level because they put us in unfamiliar territory.
4. A sentence ends at a point known as a full stop, but it is not a full stop always, as a new sentence usually originates after each so-called full stop until everything has been said, what has to be said.
5. We must not lose hope, however insurmountable a situation may appear to be, as there is hardly a peak that has not been conquered by a human spirit.
6. Pessimism is looking at the end, and optimism is the firm knowledge that after each end, there has always been a new beginning. Even if the whole cosmos collapses, a new universe gets created through a Big Bang.

# Truth is there, Where no one expects it

---

*"Happiness doesn't always come from a pursuit.  
Sometimes it comes when we least expect it".*

*Dalai Lama*

*"It is strange, but true, that the most important turning - points of life often  
come at the most unexpected times and in the most unexpected ways".*

*Napoleon Hill*

The parents were there to pick up their wards from school and, before returning, allowed their children to play for a while. A lady said, "It is so strange that the children are so crazy for these monkey bars, swings, and hurdles. What is so engrossing in them?"

The other one said, "These hurdles present them challenges to overcome, and they learn not to be immobilized by the onset of an insurmountable crisis as they conquer heights here. See, how every child wants to sit atop the highest bar?"

The third lady said, "Is not it strange that they conquer hurdles playfully while we grown-ups are bothered and rattled by the problems ? We have lost playfulness".



A rat came out behind a flower pot and uttered, “When you are in the mood of playfulness, can there be truly any lasting hurdle?”

The ladies hearing these words of wisdom saw here and there but could not see anyone. They never expected the words to come from a tiny rat. How could it be?

Wisdom always comes from an unexpected source or happening, or event. Ponder over it.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. Grownups have lost playfulness, which is essentially being one with the act. It is a totality of action of body and mind. When we separate them, we feel tired and see problems. An enthusiast, an alive person, sees the solution in every problem, whereas a weak mind sees the problem in every solution.
2. Ask any child immersed in a high-octane game, “What is the problem in your life, kid ?” And he would shoot back, “Problem? What is that ? I have never heard about it”.
3. Though there are some genuine problems in our lives, a weak mind has a habit of turning every hurdle into a problem. When we lack enthusiasm, we see problems abundantly. A slow-moving wheel gets stuck up in a small pit, but not a fast-moving one.
4. Truth is a very interesting thing. Seek it and you will never find it. Because it can not be found at the “expected” places. It is where no one can expect it to be, as it is beyond the reaches of our thought flights and rational minds’ radars.

# The Joke

---

*“What the joke displays is a switch in perception”.*

*Edward de Bono*

*“Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog.*

*Few people are interested and the frog dies of it”.*

*E.B. White*

There was a roller coaster ride, and those who rode it were laughing uncontrollably. Someone was shrieking in joy, another was throwing his hands in the air, yet another was so dazzled by the release of latent energies that he became quiet, mum. Another was exploding in a burst of roaring laughter with tears in his eyes - the tears that appear when anything is intense.

A squirrel, watching all this bizarre phenomenon of people laughing wildly without any sane reason, asked the other squirrel, “ Are they gone mad or what ? Why are they laughing so deliriously ? We go up and down on this tree, and that also very fast but we never exploded in such a loud behavior. Please pacify my curiosity”.

Another squirrel replied, “When energy is blocked, it waits for an opportunity or condition to be released. The sudden outburst of laughter or a wave of anger in humans can be explained in this way,

and the explosion of a volcano, etc, in nature can also be understood in this light.

When we invest energy and build it up, it seeks its release. Take an example of a joke. When a joke is narrated, some expectation in one direction is built along a storyline, and then suddenly a different situation comes along, throwing the listeners into a “no-where space”, a space where they can grab nothing to hold onto. Like in this roller coaster ride, when the swing suddenly comes down with force, the riders feel they would fall, as they go down faster than they could feel safe or could hold on to something. If there is nothing to hold, nothing to hang to, nothing to cling to, the usualness of a comfort zone, the people laugh.

They laugh when they are, so to speak, derailed. Mind moves on the rails of usual thoughts. When an unknown and unexpected something suddenly happens or is said, the people laugh. Note here - I am saying - suddenly. If a person listening to a joke guesses in advance the coming scenario, or if that is not sudden enough and the person gets time to think about many alternatives, they would not laugh strongly or the laughter would fizz off. A peal of laughter is possible only through a sudden and unexpected turn of events or a story (in a joke).”

A donkey standing nearby said, “I have seen a statue of a laughing Buddha at the house of my owner. A laughing Buddha laughs always because for a Buddha everything is sudden and unexpected, as he doesn’t have a mind that moves linearly like when we flow in thoughts. Moreover, a Buddha sees an illusion woven around him which he knows and others do not. And he laughs unendingly at the tricks played upon him and on everyone by Maya. So the crux of the matter is - don’t remain excessively in the tunnels of useless thoughts. Luckily, we animals are aware of this wisdom but not the man, the so-called wisest creature on the earth”.

And the shrieks and the laughter from the roller coaster continued piercing the silence of the night for many more hours. The animals were not amused.



### Points to ponder:-

1. The human brain remains contentedly happy if the sensory pieces of information travel comfortably within the tunnels of its neurological circuits.
2. If the intensity of such information is very high or it suddenly floods its neural tunnels, it becomes dizzy. It, then, expresses its confusion through laughter or anxiety. So when we are on a roller coaster, the multiplicity of the information plus the inability to feel secure throws us into a burst of irrational laughter.
3. Please note that in laughter, there is a hidden anxiety as well. Laughter is an expression of being unable to hold on to something, of being helpless, of being derailed from well-known rails of experience or knowledge.
4. A joke is a careful setting of words in a story where, at a certain point in time, a *sudden* and *unexpected* turn of events or use of words unfolds.
5. To kill a joke, know beforehand about its final setting. Now there would be no joke. You have taken out of it, its surprise element, its unexpected element. The suddenness of the twist in a joke is also very important, as a slow unfolding of the events

would ready a listener to guess it. The best joke is that in which the end is unsettling. It must be beyond your usual reasoning.

6. One monk once told me about two of his disciples who used to come to his monastery every day for his blessings, but more so for a cup of tea from him, which he used to prepare for all those who visited him. He said, "Those oldies are about to come anytime now. They would poke their horns into my stomach and demand tea. Those old rhinos!" This last word of the monk made me laugh. Why? Because he twisted the normal words 'old men' into 'rhinos'. This suddenness and unexpected imagery threw me off the rails of my usual thoughts.
7. Therefore, laughter is essentially a derailment from the normal tracks of the thought engine.

# Liberation

---

*“It is the truth that liberates not your effort to be free”.*

*Jiddu Krishnamurti*

A monkey was in a cage. He was desperate to get out of it so he pushed the iron walls of the cage, shook them violently, shrieked, jumped here and there, and did everything that he could, but alas! He could not find a way out.

So, exhausted, he relaxed himself, abandoning all impulsive but not very intelligent efforts, and presently lay down on the ground facing upwards. As he lay there in calmness, he realised that the cage had no roof at all.

And in the very next moment, he took a giant leap and lo! He was out of the cage. There is a proverb that comes to mind - a leap of faith.

Please note that in making mindless ‘efforts’ he was not aware of the escape route because he was so engaged, so lost, in the heat of efforts, and when the coolness of quietude descended upon him, he “saw “ the door. *There was no door.* The way out was the higher dimension symbolized here as the roof.



### Points to ponder:-

1. In this world, we function and achieve everything through effort - mental and physical. Anybody who does not do enough or gives their 100%, is considered not a good person, an intelligent person. But this effort is done by self, by the ego, by a wilful doer. In the higher realms of spirituality, this very effort, this very striving, this very activation of the ego is counter-productive. A discovery is never possible through the efforts of 'me' but it happens only when the last vibration of our limited, petty ego has become silent.
2. The monkey in the above story represents a normal, active, human self. It has become aware that it is imprisoned and so it begins to free itself through its "efforts". Nobody tries to be free till he gets to "know" that he is actually in prison. But this prison can not be broken through physical or mental strength, as it is depicted as being tough to crack (iron-walled). No effort can make you free from it. And it has no doors, so there is no possibility even of breaking the door or its lock.
3. Therefore, the monkey abandons all "efforts". Which is the surrender of the ego, the doer. That is symbolized by a monkey lying down on the floor. And there is a realization. The prison has no roof at all, which it could not see so far as it was totally "occupied" in the efforts. When the mind is 'occupied' it is not an empty mind, a spiritual mind, a total mind.
4. The monkey realized that there is no prison, just a "feel" of a prison which is Maya, as it had no roof at all - which implies that the subtle way out is "higher up" - in the higher states of mind, the states of meditation, the states of cosmic unification where a petty ego with its low vibrations and limited vision can

not function. So the monkey gets liberated by jumping through the roof. In simple words, he was free from the virtual prison which appeared real till he had two *physical* eyes, and the above one was the *third eye* which was the door to liberation.



# True Happiness

---

*“Freedom is the real foundation of happiness”.*

*Thich Nhat Hanh*

*“The secret to happiness is freedom...  
And the secret to freedom is courage”*

*Thucydides*

*“Life is hollow without health and freedom.  
To seek one while ignoring the other is folly”.*

*G.Edward Griffin*

A lion in the zoo was getting weaker day by day. All the veterinary doctors treated but nothing happened. His health continued to deteriorate.

A baboon who lived in a nearby cage and who had learned a few words of English from the zoo keeper said to the keeper, “I know what is ailing him and I can cure him. But first, the zoo administration has to decide what is more important to them - their mindset or the life of this lion?”

The zoo keeper replied, “Of course, primarily we are concerned with his survival. Our policies are secondary”.

“Then, in that case, you must immediately release him”, said the baboon emphatically.

After hours of discussion, the zoo authorities decided to release the weak lion in a nearby forest. As he was set free, he began to show the first signs of recovery, which made the authorities puzzled.

Noticing that the lion spoke, “ Don’t be taken aback. I have also learned a few words of your language from that wise baboon. Therefore, I can speak English. Till we are ignorant, we interpret our conveniences and our comforts as our happiness. But as we evolve, we realize that only happiness is in freedom. Freedom to roam within the cage is not actual freedom. True freedom is liberation from all types of cages, outer or inner. Such a freedom is happiness, is the beginning of all sorts of healing which is health”.

And saying these words, the lion, now fully invigorated, took a mighty leap and disappeared into the unknown depths of the jungle.



### **The points to ponder:-**

1. A lion is known as the king of the jungle, like a human being is considered at the helm of biological evolution. The lions kept in the zoo and humans trapped within the whirlpools of compulsive emotions and psychic limitations don't realize that they are imprisoned and so live happily. But as soon as one of them becomes aware of one's condition of being trapped, that one now desperately wants to break free.
2. The weakening of the lion symbolizes his desperation to be free. Once you are desperate for something, any treatment, of any

supposed illness, given to you because of ignorance of the real cause behind the continual weakening of health, would be of no avail. That is what was pointed out by the wise baboon.

3. As the lion was freed, he showed recovery in his health. Therefore, true freedom is the only happiness that would never end, and such happiness that flows within the being, there can not be any disease, as a disease means only an absence of ease (Dis + ease = disease).

# A part of a bike is not a bike

---

*“Love does not dominate, it cultivates”*

*Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe*

A lady said to a monk, “My husband dismisses my emotions as mere meaningless sentiments. He says that he would talk with me, but only when there is some hint of logic in what I speak. He has a certain set of opinions about what should be and what shouldn’t be. He tells me not to talk about useless things. He says if there is a problem, he would solve it, but he would not listen to ‘what others did’ and ‘what happened today’, you know... type of talk.”

The monk called her husband from the crowd and said, “ Dear friend! In my garage, I have two bike tyres. Tyres are the most important aspect of a bike because without them, what would an engine do? After all, the bike has to run solely on them. So sit on them by joining them through a piece of wood and drive in that large field.”

The man was perplexed. He asked, “But without the engine, handles, brakes, fuel, and the rest of the parts, how would I drive it ? It can not be called a bike at all. A bike is not only the tyres but all these as well”.

“There”, said the monk, smiling, “ Now you have practically seen it. Now tell me which part of a bike is meaningless or illogical ?”



### Points to ponder:-

1. Any conflict arises only because of the dominance of one part over another as a whole. As important as IQ (Intelligence Quotient) for a job or the smooth functioning of a setup like teamwork or a family, equally important, if not less, is EQ (Emotional Quotient). There has been a social tendency to value IQ more than EQ, intellect more than emotion, problem-solving more than mutual bonding, etc, the list is endless.
2. When one aspect does not dominate the other aspect, there is no conflict but harmony. The basis of the institution of marriage is the evolution of me and you into us, from a separative self-centered existence to a sensitive consideration of the other. When the other is filling you, your petty selfish *me* peters out like when water is poured into a glass, the air held within goes out. The people with a lot of *air* are of no significance. Whereas water is the essence of life.
3. The ego always craves self-importance and self-righteousness. Love is just the other way around. Think about it. The palace of marriage has to be erected on the solid foundation of love, not over the shaky sand of self-righteousness.
4. When you value others and are aware of the unmissable importance of others, you will never give precedence and importance to your own “ways” over others and disregard others. The other is infinitely more important in your life than your half-cooked, hastily arrived-at, prejudiced ideas.

5. In love, everything is not logical or meaningful as it is beyond a rational brain, and you already knew this when you fell in love ( or you arose in love ?). Your rational brain would never understand that rationality is meant only for survival, problem-solving, and achievements, and all these, though very important, only cater to the fringe, to the superficial part of your existence. As you go deep down, you are enriched by different types of energies, and those energies are not “rational”. Creativity, beauty, love, peace, depth of mind, wisdom, and such things shower their grace on you only when your hair-splitting analytical brain is smilingly put into a “cold storage”. In love, nothing is meaningless in the deepest sense.

# The pigs

---

*“Assumptions are made and most assumptions are wrong”.*

*Albert Einstein*

A man, driving his car on an uphill slope, saw a faqir walking barefoot. A wave of compassion swept his heart and he stopped the car to offer him a lift.

The faqir asked him as he got in the car and, presently, seated in its back seat, “Why did you give me a lift ?” The man at the wheel replied, “Just like that. I did not do it to collect some good karma or to get some so-called spiritual favors from you. Nor did I do it to get some blessings from you. It is just my heart that told me and I complied.”

The faqir asked, “So then you, most of the time, listen to your heart and not to your mind which is the function of your brain ?”

The man replied, “No, it is not so. I listen to my mind mostly, but occasionally I pay heed to my heart like I did today.”

The faqir looking out of the window and watching the high mountains said, “If you listen to your rational mind all the time, you would react fast from the prejudices and all the rest of it. But if you listen to your heart, then, you can not react fast, you would show patience like you show it when you are with your beloved and are dating her. Quick

reactions save us from physical dangers, whereas watchful and calm reactions save us from psychological mishaps. Remember it”.

The man began to ponder over Faqir’s wise and deep words. Presently, the roads became curvy and treacherous as the mountainous region began. Suddenly, a man, jutting out his head from the driver’s window of his car coming from the other direction, yelled “Bloody pigs” at him and the Faqir and whizzed past them at great speed. This man, now quite enraged over his insulting remark, shot back a few expletives and pressed the gas in a fit of anger.

The faqir in the car cautioned him and said, “You are again reacting fast and therefore driving fast. Slow down and be watchful”. And the man reluctantly agreed to Faqir’s words and drove now quite slowly. As he took a blind turn, he saw hordes of pigs on the road.

He pressed on the brakes with all his might and stopped the car to a screeching halt. With his heart pounding with fear, he thanked the faqir for his golden and timely advice.

A pig came near the driver’s window and uttered, “A calm and patient reaction is always better than a mindless explosive reaction”.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. Quick reactions are our default reactions adopted by our existential-level intelligence.
2. They save our time and free our minds and bodies to do other things more mindfully, where a lot of concentration is required.



3. So we react fast when deep thinking is not required when anyone asks our name, residence, locality, address, religion, or nationality. When in a fight, debate or quiz, we are bound to react fast as we can not afford to take too much time.
4. Therefore, quick reactions mean “readymade” reactions. Default reactions. It is as if a middleman was recruited by us who did everything for us. We have outsourced much of our behavior to him.
5. But the problem happens when this middleman does all the work, increases the scope of his authority, and of course, this extra authority given to him is, by whom else but ourselves. This is the root cause of all conflicts and arguments and violence in our homes and society.
6. Many interactions necessitate deep thoughts and careful consideration before our replies. Our prejudices, habits, likes, dislikes, etc that constitute the middle man come in between and react hastily, and the problem starts.
7. The man in the above story reacted immediately, listening to “the pigs” remark and concluded that he and the Faqir were being called pigs. Whereas, the other man passing by them was telling them just to be careful of the hordes of pigs on the road. His good intentions were misinterpreted by this man.
8. Misunderstanding is often the result of a hasty conclusion, which is normally blind, as no one can see “what is” blasting away at a hypersonic speed.

# True Singing

---

*“The only way to do great work is to love what you do”.*

*-Steve Jobs*

A singing bird was in captivity. When it sang, it was fed by its master. If it didn't, no food was given to it. Therefore, it learned to sing for a motive, a reward.

A cuckoo came to it, flying down from a nearby tree and told the bird that its song lacked the song-ness of it and that it was just a noise, nothing more. The bird was quite surprised to hear such a remark because in its mind it sang beautifully.

The cuckoo somehow managed to unlock the cage and set it free. Presently, both flew over a pond where a frog was croaking as there had been a recent rain and the frog was joyous and so happily singing *without a reason*.

The cuckoo pointing at the frog remarked, “When you sing, dance or do any of such activity, these activities must be the expression of an inner joy and not a ploy to grab something instead of that. Any motive makes the song a shrill noise and makes a dance look like a stagger.”

The bird calmly replied, “O wise cuckoo! Had I been free and not a captive, was there any need for me to sing for a motive? In the absence of freedom, a motive, a reward, or a result dictates the creative action.

A free soul sings and dances in joy and a person seeking to encash his skills sings and dances for a petty motive.

If you are doing something and there is some hidden motive in it, are you free? “



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. The purpose of a motive is to stir us into action. Greed and fear are two motives that largely activate all actions in all living beings in the world. Motive begins with the self.
2. People indeed achieve a lot because of motivation but any deed that is the result of an expectation of something in return can not be their “first love” because when love spurs an action, it does not feel desperate for a result. Love is the initiator as well as the result of an action.
3. What you achieve through motivation may be great, but what you do in love is sure to be the greatest. It is the greatest because it is beyond comparison. When you don’t look at the evaluation panel, you merge with your performance. You are one with it. But as you eye the applause, the rewards, the accolades, you strain your performance through the duality created by the self. So true singing essentially is from the freedom of your heart, which is not tied to a desired result.

# A crow knows the truth.

---

*“Prayer is not asking God to do something,  
It’s asking God to help YOU do something”.*

*Dennis Prager*

A crow sitting on a branch of a tree in the verandah of a temple was watching a long queue of devotees making a beeline for the deity’s darshan. It got tired after a while and dozed off soon, and saw a dream. It saw that deity in its dream. It asked the deity, “Lord ! These people love you so much, that’s why they are making such long queues every day to see you and show their respect”.

The deity replied, “No, no. It is not so. The truth is quite different. Just see”.

And the deity manifested himself in his full glory and announced, “Listen, my children. I have been fulfilling your wishes for centuries now. From now onwards, I shall not fulfill any of your wishes. It has been enough now. So you can not ask anything, henceforth, from me, but you still have my benediction and that is you can still worship me, love me, sing bhajans for me, and all that.”

And with these words, the deity disappeared. Within minutes, all the temples of the world were razed to the dust by the angry masses. The

deity, observing all this, said to the crow, “See, what I had told you. Nobody worships me. They are concerned with only their wishes and their fulfilments through me. Nothing else”.

Suddenly then, the crow woke up from his dream. He saw the temple was safe and solid. And there was the same long queue. As usual. But there was a difference now. Now the crow *knew* the truth - the truth of their devotion.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. Humans worship god not for his sake but almost always for their sake. They want to fulfill their wishes and dreams through him, making him the ploy, the means.
2. God is remembered only when we want something from him or we want him to take us out of our impasse, our precarious position, and our problems. Therefore, greed becomes the motivation, the impetus, the propulsion to pray.
3. Another aspect, though to a lesser degree than greed, is fear. We worship him out of fear lest he become angry over us, for not worshipping him or not worshipping him would amount to a sort of blasphemy which would push us towards evil, and we, subsequently, might be thrown into hell.

# The Jungle knife

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*“You never change your life until you step out of your comfort zone, change begins at the end of your comfort zone”.*

*Roy T. Benett*

A man set up a tent in a jungle. He took out the kitchen knife and placed it on the table. Then he took out his multipurpose jungle knife, a strong and sturdy big knife, and proceeded to cut the nylon ropes, a few wooden pieces for the fire, and long bamboo stems to construct a mesh and other items needed for usual camping. The kitchen knife had very limited uses, like cutting vegetables and other edible items, and it could be used alternately as a butter knife too.

During the night, when both the knives were placed together on the table, the kitchen knife said to the other knife, “You are so sharp, but I am not. That’s why you are more valued than me because you can be used in so many ways”.

The jungle knife replied, “You are soft because you have always avoided hard questions asked by life. So you preferred to remain enclosed in your comfort zone. You learn and excel only when you are challenged. You become sharp in understanding and finding solutions only when rubbed against a hard rock. Easy questions give you a false ego that you have mastered something. But the real test is how would you come victorious when you face a new subject like I am asked to cut ropes,

logs, wires, and sometimes even to pierce a rock, which is a totally out-of-syllabus matter”.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. A life lived in secure and comfortable surroundings doesn't get an opportunity to evolve, as evolution in any field happens only through challenges.
2. Like muscles don't get toned up unless exercised, the mental potentials fail to get manifested until life rattles you up. Hurdles are a type of mental gym.
3. You discover only when the current scenario is unsatisfactory and there is an urgency to find a way out.
4. A lump of coal, terrified of pressures and rubbings of the forces surrounding it, can never become a diamond.

# The Idiot

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*“If I make a fool of myself, who cares?  
I’m not frightened by anyone’s perception of me”.*

*Angelina Jolie*

A lion escaped from a circus, and as it scampered through a nearby forest, it saw a donkey blissfully munching on green grass.

The lion said to the donkey, “O Donkey! Tell me one thing. I just escaped from a circus where all types of animals are captured and used. They are instructed and made to act, perform, and dance to the tunes of the ringmaster. When they do what they are supposed to do, they are fed. They are cared for.

But I have never come across any donkey in the circus. I don’t think donkeys have ever been recruited in a circus anywhere. They never were nor would they ever be in the future. Can you shed any light on this issue? How have donkeys managed to remain out of the clutches of the circus companies?”

The donkey gobbled up another mouthful of lush green grass and said, “I am a donkey, and the donkeys are considered unfit to learn anything because they are imagined to be stubborn, dumb, and inflexible in their views. That’s the reason nobody wastes their precious time and resources to train a donkey. Moreover if irritated or stressed, a donkey



can kick anyone's butt who is standing nearby so they are quite unpredictable and dangerous in this regard".

The lion smiled, "Then what is your advice to the other poor animals to avoid being enslaved by the circus companies?"

The donkey replied with a mocking, wry smile on his face, "Be an Idiot".

The lion asked in bewilderment, "What? What did you just say? What is the meaning of it?"

The donkey said, "It means - declare to the world that I value my *independence* more than anything else. I will not sell it, instead of a few morsels of food or for bodily care. Listen to the secret of being an idiot. It is -

I will

Do

It on my

Own

Terms."



### Point to ponder:-

1. When even after repeated efforts, our point of view is not thoroughly understood by the other, like when we are in the process of teaching a child something or instructing an employee about some matter, we become exasperated and

exclaim, “I have been teaching you/ telling you this so many times, but you are such an ass that nothing enters your skull”!

2. Therefore, we presume that an ass or a donkey would fail to follow anything however hard we try to teach it. Hidden beneath this assertion of ours is a solid belief that a donkey does only what it considers befitting to be done. And it would be in no way motivated to leave its line of thought or its adamant decision, which it has decided to act upon. And that a donkey won't listen to others, and it is almost impossible to be trained in any skill of this world (so that humans can use it, exploit it) because it would do anything absolutely on its terms.
3. You are driving a car and honk furiously and continuously to alert it and make it move aside from the middle of the road. What do you think, would a donkey listen and move away from there? Once it has chosen to be at some point on the road, that positioning is now eternal as no power, no cajoling, no force can move it from that place.
4. So haughtiness is considered foolishness. Anyone who can not be taught or molded by society is considered stupid, like a donkey. But we forget to see its fierce, uncompromising, fearless resolve and love for its freedom. It would die but would not renounce its freedom to do things in its own way.
5. Then, is it really stupid? Or is it wise not to sell its freedom and not conform to the stupid whims of others?

# Marriage

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*“Marriage for love may be a bit risky,  
But it is so honest that God can’t help but smile at it”.*

*Jose Billings*

*“Sensual pleasures have the fleeting brilliance of a comet, a happy marriage  
has the tranquillity of a lovely sunset”.*

*Ann Landers*

A girl bowing respectfully to a saint, who had made a hilly cave as his hermitage, said this agitatingly, “Swami ji, I have come here with a burning issue. My parents, who have also come here with me, want me to get married to someone they don’t know, nor do I. The boy was referred to them by some acquaintance, and they have only a faint idea about him. Whether he is a suitable man for me or not is beside the point. The central issue is why I should get married at all. I have come here to ask why one should get married at all. What is the need? After all, I am financially well settled and emotionally quite independent, and so am not much interested in tolerating the idiosyncrasies of a stranger?”

The saint replied, “My dear child! Whether arranged or love marriage, nobody can be fully sure about the other person, like his basic nature, etc, as a display or an ad is mostly quite different from what is delivered.

Now the question is, why should one get married or not get married? What is a marriage? It is a system created by society for emotional evolution. When someone is a bachelor, he/she does everything unilaterally. He/she does not need to adjust to the other, to see the point of view of the other, to be sensitive to the other which is a learning process that is not possible when one is a bachelor, living in a type of narrow selfish tunnel where no emotional adjustment of any kind is required to move on. Of course, there would be differences, fights, arguments, and sulking moments but all these are the vital tools for chiseling a raw rock into a beautiful statue. When the family grows, one learns to live “for the other”. This, in a way, is sort of a forced learning, a forced evolution of the mind which is not so effectively possible for those who don’t get married because we learn only when our comfort zones, our ways of thinking and doing, are challenged.

See, I am sitting in this cave alone. I assume myself to be a great saint because I don’t get angry, don’t get agitated, and so on. But how could I be? There is no possibility of anger here as all the disciples and others adore me, touch my feet, and never dare to oppose or contradict me. So there is not even the remotest chance of my getting upset with anything or anybody. But had there been a wife, surely the situation might have been quite stormy because it is very challenging to “look beyond your ways”. Therefore, marriage provides us with a golden chance to evolve through understanding, through not peeping through the lenses of prejudices, through being sensitive to others’ point of view- all of which facilitates learning- a learning of oneself, a learning of one’s reactions, a learning of one’s mind.

The present generation is terrified to shoulder the responsibility, to adjust, to have patience, to mature through ups and downs, to feel committed, to be tolerant towards others’ imperfections, and to love. Living a life of self-concern is a life devoid of love. It is a very

degenerative type of existence. Impatience and lack of self-confidence in solving the hard questions asked by life, is an offshoots of the modern fast-paced life. Only a mature and intelligent person can say confidently that he is ready to face any test, not a mentally weak one.”

The girl said, “Swamiji, please pardon me for the misinformation. I am already married. I am worried about my sister, who is also here with me. She is the one who is against getting married. The question belonged to her, but being shy, she could not ask it. I wanted your gems of wisdom for my sister, which I could not have given her, the way you explained it all so marvelously. So kindly forgive my mischief.”

The saint smiled and said, “I knew all this before you uttered a single word. I know that the man standing behind you in the crowd is your husband.”

The girl, quite astonished at this disclosure, asked, “Swami ji, how did you know about it?”

The saint replied, “I saw you talking with your husband and noticed that special vibration, that special sweet nothing - talking without words- that happens when you are in love and smile often with no reason and there was a special glow and a natural joy on your face and a gleam in your eyes that I had a “gut feeling” of you being there with your husband and your body language and the question you were asking just didn’t gel, didn’t harmonize. Therefore, I could correctly guess it”.

That girl’s sister turned back and started to move away from the crowd, towards her car. Probably she had made up her mind now to be ready for “the plunge”. She had perhaps understood that life is not to be lived in a self-centered and self-propelled isolation but in a mutually uplifting and evolving relationship.

And just then a cuckoo sang these lines-

“Marriage is a harmony  
of experiment and merriment  
it is a symphony  
of yearning and learning.”



### **Points to ponder;-**

1. The modern fast life is taking its toll on institutions, particularly the institutions of marriage and family.
2. When we vroom fast like a rocket, we look straight. Looking within a tunnel is self-centeredness. While driving fast, we clutch the steering wheel of a car or the handles of a bike, but clutching rigidity is invariably there. So, Generation Z is rigidly self-obsessed. It can not be sensitive to what is around because it lives a fast life. And being insensitive to those around spoils a marriage or a family.
3. The desperadoes in a rat race are not as confident as they are in a never-ending race and are always anxious, so they lack commitment and taking responsibility for anything, of patiently and lovingly, solving the riddles of life.

# A fake world

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*“My fake plants died because I did not pretend to water them”.*

*Mitch Hedberg*

*“People who think they know everything are  
a great annoyance to those of us, who do”.*

*Issac Asimov*

A clinical psychologist came to a Buddhist Lama at a pagoda. The psychologist, paying his obedience to the Lama, said, “I have a hyperactive mind. It makes my life very superficial. I can not stay focused on anything for long. My wife says I should attend some mindfulness courses at a retreat or a monastery.”

The Lama asked him about his profession to which he said that he had treated patients of ADHD mostly.

The Lama told him, “ We monks practice awareness, which calms the restless mind. Because restlessness comes from a short or weak focus. Therefore, when we meditate, our minds are at peace. By the way, I could not comprehend what your profession is. What is this ADHD thing that you treat in others ?”

The psychologist sheepishly grinned and answered, “It means awareness deficiency hyperactivity disease”.

The Lama exclaimed, “Oh, that is the very disease you are afflicted with. How the hell are you treating it in others? Doctor! First, cure yourself”.

Just then, a crane standing on one leg, in a meditational pose, in a pond near the Pagoda, noticed a fish in the water and a fine swoop, grabbed the fish. As it feasted upon it, it uttered, “We should never kill anyone”.



### **Point to ponder:-**

1. We do what we don't say and say what we don't do. There is a big gap between our thoughts and actions.
2. It is a fake world. It continues to be prevalent because people, at large, are content with the outer, the superficial. Only a handful are disillusioned with the masks.



# An unrelated stranger! Who?

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*“We are all connected, to each other biologically,  
To the earth chemically, to the rest of the universe atomically”.*

*Neil Degrasse Tyson*

There was a big crowd in front of the temple. They were waiting for the gates of the temple to be opened. It was now the time. At any moment, they would open. So the expectant crowd was restless and people were jostling in a wave which moved forward and back.

Suddenly a big push made Mr. X fall on the ground, making him quite furious. He quickly bounced back, looking for that reckless fellow who caused it. In anger, he rolled up his sleeves and turned to hit the person standing behind him because logically the push had most probably come from him and no one else. With his raised fist in the air, ready to attack, he felt that the man standing behind him appeared in some way related to him. Then he recognized him. He was a distant relative, and for decades they had not seen each other or interacted. That’s why it took some time to recognize him. Now, what do you think, did Mr. X still carry out his attack? No way.

When you realize that someone is your own, you can’t be rude to them anymore. Is there a person or thing in this universe who is ***not*** related to you “in a deep way”?



### **Point to ponder:-**

1. When we are rude or insensitive to others, it implies that we consider the other an outsider, an unrelated one.
2. We are never benevolent to the unknown. And we are overly tolerant and compassionate to those who, we feel, are one of us.
3. The illusion of separateness is the root cause of the world's sorrows. When we rise to higher dimensions, the visibility improves, and we realize that nobody is *an unknown stranger*.

# At the height you See many paths

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*“I think in many ways narrow-minded  
attitudes lead to extreme thinking”.*

*Dalai Lama*

A monk was a member of a mountaineering expedition team. While climbing a man approached him and asked, “Sir, I have a very radical mindset. This gives me a great deal of trouble. How to eradicate it ?”

The monk said nothing and continued climbing. Once over the top of the mountain, he said, “Listen, when we were in the process of climbing, we knew this to be the only path to climb. But now from here, you can see that there are other paths as well, and a few are even better and shorter. So till we are within a tunnel, a narrow and established path for centuries, we stick to it, and sticking to a narrow path makes us narrow too.

But as we see the other options, we become flexible. So education, traveling, and open-mindedness create the probability of not being tethered to the “known” paths, which diffuses the radicalization of a brain that is eager to learn. So being hooked to an ideology is radicalization, and leaving the tunnel and coming out in the open is

the end of it. Learning is the shattering of the tunnel. When the freshness of “new” comes into the room, the stale and old air leaves it.”



**Points to ponder: -**

1. When one, like that famous *frog in the Well* story, believes that only that much is the world and whatever it does is the only way, radicalization begins to sprout.
2. As one gets to see the other horizons through education or understanding, rigidity gives way to flexibility.
3. A drop of poisonous salt in a small cup of water can kill anyone, but if the cup is replaced with a tub, its poisonous nature gets diluted and no harm can be caused now. If that tub is overturned into an infinite ocean, now it would be a laughable statement to say that it once had any poison therein.
4. There can not be an iota of radicality in the mind wherein there is an immense space that knows no boundaries.

# Seriously Funny

---

*"I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by".*

*Douglas Adams*

*"I used to sell furniture for a living. The trouble was, it was my own".*

*Les Dawson*

A meditation class was going on. An old man was also there who could not find it very engaging and so was throughout the session looking at all sorts of things like the shape and the build of the furniture, the photographs hanging from the wall, the old-fashioned ceiling fan, the stack of books in the almirah which was placed at a corner, the print and the color of the carpet on which he was seated along with others and so on.

He did not quite understand some subtle points mentioned by the speaker, who also conducted the session. He was in no mood to sit long with his eyes closed. In short, he was unable to follow any of the instructions. Whenever the gathering burst into laughter or shook heads in affirmation with the speaker, he also, without any perceptible reason, laughed and shook his head even without having any inkling about what they laughed or agreed to. He felt like a complete outsider as he couldn't gel with the proceedings. He looked quite bored.

As the class ended, he came to the conductor of the session and remarked, " Well, I noticed a lot of people laughing and enjoying your

class. You seem to me a profound teacher but also someone who is *seriously funny*.”

To that the teacher, looking deeply into his eyes, gave a short but cryptic concluding remark, “To be *seriously funny* one must first learn to be *funnily serious*.”

Listening to this remark, a wall lizard fell from the wall of the meditation center, attempting to hold its stomach from aching, as it exploded into a burst of uncontrollable laughter, which none could hear.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. Deep matters like spirituality and philosophy are considered by the general public as tough and therefore boring topics. But the reality can not be any further than this belief.
2. In some previous chapters, it was shown that making a perfect joke or breaking into laughter is the consequence of a sudden and unexpected twist in the sequence of a story or a perception. In meditation or deep insight, a person sees the truth of something suddenly and unexpectedly, therefore, he is always amused as new insights keep on coming, is always laughing within, and is always in a funny state of mind.
3. The core of the being is bliss. That's why it is called - satchidanand or sat (truth), chitta (consciousness), and Anand (bliss). Note that all those who touch this core are always in bliss. All the greatest spiritual masters, throughout the ages, were deeply funny inside.

# Challenges - the charging portals of the brain

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*"Man needs difficulties, they are necessary for health".*

*Carl Gustav Jung*

An employee of a private firm was fired from his job. Dejected and lost in thought, he dragged his feet home. In the midway, he noticed a man praying at the roadside temple.

He saw the man praying to the deity, muttering these words, "O my beloved, kindly give me a few more challenges and please don't try to get things done for me. All this your compassion for me is denting my acumen".

That employee could not believe his ears. He approached the devotee and asked in a surprised voice, "How strange! Everyone prays to god for the eradication of hurdles from their lives and see the fun! You are asking for those very hurdles. Are you in your senses or not?"

The man replied, "See I am an artist. I express myself through sculptures, poems, poetry, and music. My creativity gets spurred when there are challenges otherwise, my brain remains dull. Not only mine, but everybody's brain functions similarly. If the road is straight without twists and turns, without any need to be overtly alert, the brain tends

to fall asleep, which is called highway hypnosis. Our best capabilities and potentialities manifest only when we face hurdles, when there is a deadlock, and a way out is urgently needed. In the absence of hard questions asked by life, the brain becomes complacent and inert. And a lazy brain can not create, can it ?”



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. When there are challenges, there is an inclination to new perspectives, experimentation, and risk-taking. All or any of these can inspire creativity.
2. Swami Vivekananda said, “Dead fish float with the current, but living fish swim against it”. Life is being alive, which we are only when there are challenges. Nobody has ever learned anything worthwhile lying on a bed of roses. Challenges awaken us from an inert slumber.
3. When a stream flows unhindered, it is ignorant about its potential. Once its waters are challenged by restricting its flow, the stream generates electricity.



# An Unending mystery

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*"The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of the art and true science".*

*Albert Einstein*

*"If you examine a butterfly according to the laws of aerodynamics, it shouldn't be able to fly. But the butterfly doesn't know that, so it flies".*

*Howard Schultz*

"I dread the mystery, the uncertain, the unknown", said a terrified rat as it became drenched in torrential rain. There was darkness, lightning, and the dense mist shrouding everything from shrubs to the trees, rendering the visibility to near zero.

A cat jumped from a tree, pounced on the rat and remarked, "I love the mystery so much. What causes immobility in rats, that very thing stirs mobility in cats. A problem for someone is an opportunity for the other".

A trader, who sold wild cats to the zoos, threw a net over the cat and captured it. He said, "What are the survival compulsions for others, are the business openings for traders like me?".

An old python hanging from a tree branch watched all this. It said, "Mystery is that which is still unknown, and so a brain gets terrified with it, like that rat. Or the mind can adore it, worship it like simple

human beings who can be seen everywhere, all over the world, praying, adoring the almighty one in their temples, because we worship that which is beyond us. When it is demystified, we can use it like that cat or the trader.

Science says that there is no such thing as a mystery, and we would bring it to the light, bring it to the open, one day. We would explain everything. But they have failed to do it and would never be able to explain away everything, as anything is only partially in this manifested world and its other part - the remaining subtle, energetic, and unmanifested part- is in other dimensions. So nothing can ever be explained away 'totally'. Therefore, there always was, is, and will be an unexplainable mystery till the end of the world”.



### **Point to ponder:-**

1. Mystery is adversity for some and for others, an opportunity. A horizon that the brain can not touch is a mystery.
2. Mystery dragged within the explaining intellect, remains no more a mystery but becomes an explanation.
3. The problem with each explanation is that, however good an explanation is or how efficiently the explanation gets turned into technology for limited use by human beings, it is never final or perfect. Therefore, there would be a scope of mystery eternally.
4. No human mind can end the mystery completely, though our desperate egos want exactly that. The unending mystery is good for the evolution of the human mind. No mystery, no discovery.

# The hair-splitters

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*“Never argue with stupid people, they will drag you down to their level and then beat you with experience”.*

*Mark Twain*

*“Talk sense to a fool and he calls you foolish”.*

*Euripides*

There was a gathering of some eminent scientists and wise monks. When all of them took their seats in the conference room, a scientist began to speak on a microphone.

He said, “The people in general, who live in a routine mechanical routine, can not analyze as they lack an incisive penetration of a reasoning mind. So they easily become mesmerized, feeling awe and wonder even in those events or things which can be very easily explained away by us”.

Listening to this rant, a monk took out a bright red rose and gave it to the scientist, saying, “Smell it”.

Which he did.

The monk asked, “How was that ?”

The scientist replied, “ It was very good”.

Then the monk took out an exotic sweet ball made of some unknown ingredients and offered it to the scientist who initially hesitated to take it publicly on the stage, but when told that it was a part of some scientific experiment, he ate it. When the monk enquired about its taste, he said that it was unbelievably delicious.

Now the monk took the mike from the scientist and said,

“We could have easily analyzed the chemicals in the aromatic components of the perfume of the rose as well as the chemical compounds, their molecular structure, and all that of the food item I gave to the scientist but such explanations were not of any use or might be a hindrance in enjoying the goodness of the perfume and the unbelievably deliciousness of the food item as remarked such by the scientist himself.

There, slow-toned soothing musical waves are emanating from the veena (the Indian guitar) being played as background music for this meet. If we dissect the tone, the beats, the pitch, the sound band, the frequency of the sound waves, and painstakingly calculate their vibrations in the units of hertz, etc, we would miss the music.

Explanation is not the thing. Explanation can not substitute the savoring, the taste, the feel of the sensations coming in through the senses. Both are poles apart. Explanation is always for the use of the information, but wonder is a totality of feeling. Explanations enrich the knowledge whereas the feeling and grasping of the inputs through the total mind, a sense of wonderful delight, enriches our being, our soul”.

A donkey standing outside the conference hall and listening to all this discussion muttered to itself while munching a fresh stack of green

grass, “Such a verbosity ! You could have simply concluded that all explanations are for the mind and the savoring of such information, in totality, is for the heart. That was it”.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. This chapter is, in a way, a continuation of where the previous chapter ended. Explanations destroy the mystery. Explanations are stacked in the neatly compartmentalized boxes of the brain. They are there for some future use.
2. The feeling of joy, of wonder, of listening to a piece of soul-stirring soothing music, of beauty, of love, all these can not be put or hoarded into those boxes. Explanations are always partial in the sense that they excite only one or two parts of the brain, whereas a wondrous joy fills the whole brain, and music resonates in the whole of the brain (and this is scientifically proven).
3. But we spend a large part of our lives in hair-splitting, in details, in the explanations, in the commentaries, etc, and never venture to dive deep into the realm of pure “feelings”- beyond verbosity.

# The butterfly effect

---

*“Every single thing you do matters. You have been created as one of a kind. You have been created to make a difference. You have within you the power to change the world”.*

*Andy Andrews*

Deep in a forest, a man was sitting on a rock overlooking the valley. Above the rock, there was a weathered and worn-out water tank, linked with a few pipes, put there by the forest authorities, to store water for the nearby settlement. This man had uncombed hair and stubble. He looked in frustration and was smoking profusely. Sometimes his inner thoughts, which were in disarray, came out in the form of a few words from his mouth. He appeared at the moment, talking to himself.

He mumbled, “Not good! Not good. Life has not been good to me. It was I who labored like a donkey, and the credit was taken by Mr. X. He - the ungrateful scoundrel! He did not even thank me for my silence about his fraud to me. Who cares about hard work, honesty, credibility, and loyalty? That thief who joined after me and befriended me got hold of my presentation, and the company rewarded him! Stupid, very stupid, of me for not getting an inkling about his fraudulent and cunning nature beforehand.” And he presently released a big circle of smoke in the air.

Behind that rock was a large banyan tree. Two donkeys were listening to his rant.

One of the two asked the other, “He said that he labored like a donkey. So in a way, he is like us. So let’s help him”.

The other agreed to it readily. Hence, both the donkeys backkicked the brittle walls of that very old water tank with all their might, and lo ! a gush of water exploded from the hole and drenched the man sitting below.

“What the hell ?” screamed the man who was wet now, “You stupid donkeys, why did you do this to me ?”

One of the donkeys clarified, “Gee, we helped you.”

The other donkey said, “Because we saw smoke continuously being emitted from your mouth, we concluded that there was a fire within you, so we wanted to help you”.

The man could not understand what they said because he did not know the donkey language.

An eagle with its very sharp vision and sitting atop a very high deodar tree, uttered, “ Look, chum! All that happened was your own doing. A negative thought is vibrated in the cosmic soup of vibrations, and it attracts similar thoughts or events towards it or the owner of it. This is the law of attraction. If you don’t trust such psychological facts, then there is also quantum physics. Have you heard about the butterfly effect? It is - You initiate one negative or positive process, and the whole day, or sometimes for days, similar events would automatically come into your life. If you curse or are upset, then nature will see to it that many such happenings come to you, which would upset you more. But if you are firmly positive in your disposition, negative events will not touch you”.

But the irony was that the man did not know even the language of an eagle. Now what about you? Have you understood what the eagle, with a sharp vision, wanted to tell? Decide.



### Points to ponder: -

1. The butterfly effect is a part of another famous theory - the theory of chaos, which says that small things, including change, can have much greater impacts and conditions that may alter the outcome.
2. This theory in simple words says, for example, a butterfly flaps its wings in the Amazonian jungle and subsequently a storm ravages Europe.
3. We see this theory happening in every aspect of our lives. A small virus like COVID killed millions of humans within a short period. The largest desert in the world - the Sahara Desert came into existence by the hunting of lions by the Romans centuries ago. A few years back, an Australian news channel reported that the prevalent bad weather in Australia was caused by the small field fires known as “parali” in the state of Punjab, India. Small technological upgrades to iPhones can lead to high sales. Using a reusable straw can help slow climate change. Cloud cover over Kuroko led to Nagasaki being bombed instead. And so on and so on.
4. Let's take one real-life example. You get up in the morning, miffed, and go through morning chores feeling upset. You make a vase fall as you hurry. You go to the car and realize that



you have left the car keys at home. Angrily, you drive fast, as you are late and see the red light, which makes you mad now. You go to the bank and stand in a queue that seems to be stagnant for centuries. The counter clerk is slow or has gone somewhere for a while. And you notice someone jumping the queue and pushing himself ahead. You shout at him only to realize that he turns out to be your boss. You are fired that very day. Now, see the big consequence (of being fired from the job) was the result of a sequence of very long chain of negativity, which began with very small irritability as you got up. You attracted gradually more negativity from the universe on an increasing scale. A small flap of butterfly wings at one place caused a tornado at some far-off place. This is the butterfly effect.

5. So if we begin our day with positivity, it will be magnetized to us manifold in the latter part of the day. A negative vibration can attract a giant negative wave, and we would be left wondering, “O god! Why does this always happen to me?”

# A Non-verbal Talk

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*“Mindfulness is above all the capacity to recognize the presence of an object without taking sides without judging and without craving or despising the object”.*

*Thich Nhat Hanh*

A very famous saint from Punjab, India, went to a village where a lot of priests were minting money in the name of religious practices and rituals, and in the garb of curing various physical, mental, and spiritual illnesses. When they came to know about a new saint who was becoming increasingly popular among the villagers, they were greatly disturbed and worried. Openly, they could not have criticized him as he was impeccably unblemished in his character and wisdom so they decided to tell him to leave the village indirectly, discreetly.

They approached the saint with a large bowl filled with milk up to the brim. Nobody understood the hidden meaning of this dramatic act except the saint, who knew that they were telling him to go away as there was no more space for any new entrant in their cartel, which was depicted through that overflowing milk- bowl. But as he was not a competitor in their cunning and greedy systems, he wanted to assure them to be relaxed, as he had no intention of getting anything from the villagers in return for his teachings. So he asked one of the disciples to bring a few roses to him. He plucked the petals of the rose flowers

and gently put them on the surface of the milk in the bowl. Not a drop spilled. The priests understood it and went away quite relaxed and content now.

And the masses? What happened to them? Nobody ever got an inkling about what conspired between them. For them, all that was just a playfulness between two different spiritual ideologies.



### **Points to ponder:-**

- 1) When someone better than us arrives in our lives, we become apprehensive that they will steal all the limelight, and we become jealous of them. This insecurity and jealousy may lead to doing cunning things or being violent with hatred toward the person who is better off. But in this story, they used a subtle way to highlight their insecurities, which the great saint calmed by putting rose petals over the milk and depicting that he didn't need nor intend to take their piece of cake.
- 2) Great people prefer subtle ways instead of loud methods. Incidents and events of telepathy, parallel thinking, and subtle acts, which seem out of place or unrelated to a common man, mark the lives of such people.
- 3) In the name of religion or some superstitious propaganda, the cunning, the devious, run their shops and are always apprehensive of someone coming there and spoiling their business. So Jesus or Socrates or Galileo is crucified, poisoned, or decimated in some way or the other. A lie has always been uneasy and fearful of the approaching footsteps of truth.

# The Impatience

---

*“Why do they call it rush hour when nothing moves ?”*

*Robin Williams*

*“Prejudice is a great time saver. You can form opinions.*

*Without having to get the facts”.*

*E.B. White*

Many years ago, when I used to teach competitive maths in a few of top top-notch competitive coaching schools in Delhi, one of the main concerns used to be how to make the minds of the students patient and not instantaneously reactive, which they usually are because of their young age and competitive mindset.

The competitive infrastructure of modern times gives importance to speed as it is thought that quickness represents the scale of repetitive practice and therefore knowledge, and a delay represents confusion which means less practice or unclear understanding. Additionally, all the quiz contests, etc, stress the immediacy of replies. All this badly damages the quality of thoughtful and patient responses which causes everyday conflicts and arguments in the future stages of married life. Marriages are seen failing all over the world. One of the many causes of it is possibly what I have written above.

So coming back to the topic, I was always in search of devising certain situations, while teaching usual maths, to incorporate the quality of thoughtfulness and a habit of unhurried responses in them.

One day, as I entered the classroom, I said, “ Listen carefully. I will tell you a new thing today and that is, two and two equals five...”. Immediately whole class began shouting, “No sir, it is incorrect. Two and two become only four and in no way five”.

Then I stood in silence for a minute. Everybody, by this time, had calmed down and listened attentively. I said, “When did I ever tell you that two and two equals five ? I never said it”.

Then all of them, with a smile and excitement of having proven a teacher wrong, shouted, “Yes, sir, you have said so, all of us heard it”.

I held my ground. I said, “Calm down! Listen carefully. When I entered the classroom, I said - Listen carefully. But none of you were listening carefully. I am repeating what I had said then. I had said or was in the process of saying - a two and another two equals to five.... *is a wrong statement.*

But you did not have the patience to listen to it till the end. You reacted even before the completion of my sentence. Now you realize that we both were saying the *same* thing. Your impatient jumping to the conclusion changed one fact into two. Now we appear to contradict each other, whereas we were in agreement with the subject.

The same thing would happen to you when you get married. Your impatience would create an opposing duality, and there would be a conflict that has no authentic basis. So be careful. Always first get the whole picture, complete the picture, and then react, not midway. It is said by the wise that *half knowledge is dangerous*. And you have practically seen it yourself”.

I don't know how many evolved in patience and a holistic approach in their later life, but at least I tried. A teacher can only try. And wait. There is nothing more he can do.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. Our society values speed, so a quick response is construed as knowledge, as a capability. But by doing this, we ignore how the brain functions optimally.
2. The brain has to process hundreds of information in a very short time, so it indulges in filling the gaps, it assumes, or to put it scientifically, it takes an average value. It also assesses the future course of events. So it jumps to conclusions. The brain concluded that the teacher was certainly saying that two and two equals five and that was it. Period. Full stop. The brain of everyone decided that the sentence was complete, whereas it was not.
3. Please note how the brain forecasts an event, and how it presumes. It does so because it has been created specifically for this. There was surely no better and more pragmatic way to process the high load of incoming information without arriving at the average perception. Why do we take averages in our daily lives? Only because it is not possible to read, record, interpret, and understand all the information when there is a mountain of incoming data.

4. Patience means not assuming anything. It is dealing with reality. Patience means going to the very end of information, and going to the very end of anything is arriving at the door of total understanding.

# A kitty Party

---

*“Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else”.*

***Margaret Mead***

A kitty party was arranged in a restaurant by the members of an all-ladies group. The ladies had come dressed beautifully. A few were seated, and others were seen entering one by one. All the heads turned towards the entry whenever a new member arrived. Each lady quickly gazed at the dress, the ornaments, and other accessories worn by the entrant. These important inputs were immediately compared with one's dress, etc. And so a few faces brightened up while some others darkened after the comparisons. But outwardly there was a general show of smiles and excitement.

A lady in a red saree whispered to the one in a purple suit, “See, some of them do not even know how to come to a public place appropriately, and they lack basic dressing sense. Look at that lady in black. She has come wearing sandals instead of heels. How informal!”

A lady pointing to a short dress worn by a young lady remarked to her neighbor, “If you have it in you, you may flaunt it” to which her neighbor remarked, “I have read it somewhere that you must flaunt it if you have it. And you must still flaunt it, even when you don't have it”.



And so, the comparative processes and the unending evaluation of others continued unabated. Still, there was no sign that the party was going to begin soon.

A wall-lizard on the ceiling was watching all this. It asked the other lizard, “After all, when are they going to do for what they have come here to do? Where is the kitty party? The other one said, “You know a sum of money that is collected from a group and used for a particular purpose is called a kitty, and throwing a party for such collection is a kitty party”. The first lizard remarked, “But instead of beginning a kitty, all the ladies are presently lost in catty comments”.

“What is so strange in it?” asked a spider hidden beneath its web at the corner of a wall, “When we address a cat lovingly, we call it - a kitty. Therefore, those who can arrange a kitty party can very legitimately indulge in catty remarks. To be fair, one criticizes others only when one is unsure of oneself or feels inferior. It is human nature. When you want to grab all attention, you would be in constant anxiety not to look any lesser than others”.

Both the wall lizards asked the spider, “O wise spider, please tell us how to get rid of this seed of jealousy because this has the potency to grow into jealousy when the emotions intensify?”

The spider replied calmly, “Only the realization that you are a unique person. That on this earth none has been or is or would be like you. It is a scientific truth that not even two electrons are alike. Therefore, don’t undermine your worth by silly comparisons with others. Instead of these fears, make yourself in some subtle ways indispensable to the other. Know and feel your value. And then none can replace you or value you less. It is a proven *mantra*”.



### Points to ponder:-

1. Making fun of others through spiteful remarks indicates that we are not sure of our uniqueness. To get a virtual and fake feeling of being better than others, people indulge in downsizing others or question their dress sense, mannerisms, ways of presenting themselves, or how they walk or talk.
2. The human mind extracts delight mostly by making fun of others. When there is even a faint whiff of the possibility of others being in an embarrassing situation, we rub our hands in glee. Press them downward and we would feel *high*.
3. It is the ego that strives to be all-important. That's why it constantly seeks to sniff out others' positions in a favorable light.
4. Only when this cunning, scheming ego fades away in a meditative state, then there be a possible end to jealousy and hatred.

# Attention? Ego seeks it.

---

*"All my life, I always wanted to be somebody.  
Now I see that I should have been more specific".*

*Jane Wagner*

It was a very cold winter night. There was a bonfire and people were sitting around it in a circle. Everybody had their hands extended towards the fire, which was burning with a crackling sound. The group of people sitting there was part of a trekking team, so they were well acquainted with each other.

A young girl asked an old man, who was probably the team leader and guide, "Sir, we all seek attention. Do we not? We do all sorts of things to get eyeballs. We laugh loudly or wear weird attire and dress up in fancy ways. Then we express ourselves through music, like the boy who just a few minutes ago played a guitar while singing songs, so he displayed his special capability, we dance or paint or write poems, and so on. And all this is pretty much supported and encouraged by the society as well. All this is in the name of self-expression, which is considered good as it gives us recognition or builds our confidence. All this is ok for me. I don't see any problem with that. But my question is, why is it needed? Why does one's ego need assurance, recognition, support, and evaluation all the time?"

The old man wearing a long jacket with hunter boots, which usually hikers wear, and a felt hat with silver curly long hairs falling up to his shoulders, released a few puffs of smoke from his pipe which he had been smoking for some time now, said, “ I never expected to be asked such a deep question by such a young girl and that also when everyone is tired of hiking all day and feeling half - sleepy. Wonderful !”

A few of the group countered, “ No, sir! We are still alert and energetic enough. Please don’t underestimate us”.

“ There !” remarked the old man, releasing a few more puffs from his pipe, “Ego does not want to be seen as lacking something. It is its characteristic. It wants to appear perfect in all respects, but when it finds that it is not, then it fakes perfection. Have you not seen people hiding their rough surfaces from visitors, relatives, friends, etc, and only showing their smooth surfaces to them?

Once a lady I knew had a scar on her face from the last night's brawl with her husband, but when I asked her what happened, she camouflaged it wonderfully by telling me that she slipped and the corner of a table caused this scar as she fell. Because nobody wants to wash his/her dirty linen in public. She did not want to highlight her husband’s cruelty because that meant that her husband was not a good husband and their marriage was going through a rough patch. She had painted a very rosy picture of her married life and had told everyone to emulate their model of a happy family. All that would go down the drain if the truth came out. Ego is *this*.

Now we come to the girl’s question. Why does the ego need vindication? Why is ego so weak that it needs support from others? See, the answer is so simple, so self-explicit. You are all heating yourself from the warmth of this fire. Are you not? Why are you taking this heat from outside? Because you lack it.

The ego is a very small structure, a virtual structure that is quite unsure about it. Anything limited which is fixed might be sure of itself but not that which is constantly changing, evolving, molding, and adjusting itself, which is a proceed an unending process that can not be sure of itself, as it is relentlessly comparing itself with others, always striving to project itself as a unique entity. Look it in yourself. When you are completely sure of yourself, you don't need input from others, like when you have locked your door before leaving for your workplace, and somebody asks you if you have locked the door, you would confidently say that yes you have. But as soon as doubt creeps into your mind, whether it has been locked or not, you require vindication like validation from your friend saying that he has seen you locking that or your friend shows the video of you locking it, which he just shot for fun. All these proofs are needed when you are unsure.

So we seek attention, we flaunt our vanities or capabilities to extract others' remarks on how well we are looking or how well we are doing. Let a guru or a coach assure us that we are doing great. Our psychological car runs on the fuel of "the opinions or conclusions of others" who, we believe, know better. When many eyeballs look at you, you are thrilled to conclude that you are "somebody" and not a "nobody" indistinguishable from the sea of a faceless crowd. You crave to be distinct, a distinguishable entity from a uniform crowd. This craving for importance is the function of the ego. When there is love, the thirst for self-importance diminishes altogether.

So from now onwards, whenever any of you would see yourself subconsciously seeking the importance of any kind, just remember this night. This night of sitting around a fire and warming yourselves. Had you been feeling very warm inside, you would have never craved the attention of an outside fire. A blazing sun does not take the attention

of heat from any other source. It is *the heat* at its core. Therefore, it gives away heat. When you love, you don't seek attention. You give it."



### Point to ponder:-

1. How can an ego give attention to others when it seeks all the limelight for itself? It can not make others too important as it strives to be all-important.
2. Only in love, the other is given importance. Because only in love self-importance of the ego is extinguished.
3. So, only in love attention is not sought out for oneself, but it is given to the other. Love is giving your totality - the totality of your attention, the totality of your presence, the totality of your being. You fill yourself with the other. Now you, as 'you', are no more. Love is the death of 'me'.
4. Attention without ego or self is devotion. There is now no more a distinction between worldly love and divine love. It is the self-interested ego that creates a world. There is no world when the self is not there. Ponder about it.

# Two dogs

---

*“You can observe a lot by just watching”.*

*Yogi Berra*

A manager of a small firm got down from the metro, lost in thought, and walked very slowly towards the exit of the metro station. He appeared very worried.

Two dogs, sitting at the roadside meat shop, were looking at this man with interest.

One of the two spoke, “Buddy, have you noticed when these humans are brooding over something, they walk slowly? As if they are dragging it?”

The other dog replied, “Surely the body follows the mind because we have noticed it quite often when they suddenly see a near and dear one who was eagerly being awaited or who happened to be there by chance, their feet get springs in them or we can say wings in them and they move fast because their thoughts were racing and their hearts were racing, pounding with excitement. But when they are worried or depressed like this manager, their thoughts are stuck up, are not running but trudging, their bodies move heavily as if under some burden.”

“Oh chum ! You have turned a psychologist cum philosopher just by sitting here in the front of this meat shop, doing nothing but observing the people, the ways of the world”. The first one replied.

The second one said, “I had heard from some wise man that all knowledge comes from observation. So we do that. We can not do anything else, which humans do, like doing stupid things, fighting, back-biting, plotting, being cunning, arguing, taking part in stupid tv debates, worrying irrationally and often unnecessarily, waging wars, destroying whole cities through atom bombs, telling lies, deceiving, being in man-made trauma and giving trauma to others and so on. The list is unending. Then someone tells them to observe, to meditate, to be aware, in short, be like us after all those stupidities for years.”

The first one exclaimed, “They do all sorts of childish things, evil things, and call a person ‘a dog’ who, as per their reasoning, is a lowly creature. What an ego! What a narcissistic attitude !”

The other dog agreed, “They are such toffee-nosed creeps. And look at their arrogance. They label a stubborn, unyielding, and persistent person as a *dogged* personality. Are we stubborn? It is like a thief calling others a thief”.



### Points to ponder: -

1. All the learning, all the discoveries, all the insights, all the solutions to the problems faced by the world - in short, all understanding comes from only one thing, and that is observation. All the books of the world can not improve your understanding if there is no observation side by side. But if you



have this power of astute observation in you, you hardly need any book to evolve.

2. All experiments, all hits and trials, all criminal investigations at the crime scene, and all inferences of a scientific theory solely depend upon this starting point - the observation. And you can not observe with a prejudice, with a previous assumption or idea. The observation has to begin with innocence, with a clean state.
3. The above story also hints at a crucial mind-body interdependence. We can know something about the mind by watching bodily reactions and know about the body's state through knowing what is happening in the mind. Emotions affect the body and the body affects the mind - that is a proven scientific truth.

# The bridge

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*“Emotions can get in the way or get you on the way”.*

*Mavis Mazhura*

A saint was sitting at the bank of a small hilly river with his disciples. They had come to this side of the river from their hermitage a few kilometers down the road. They had crossed the small river by a few makeshift bamboo boats which were just strong enough to negotiate this tiny river.

He told them the famous story of the Greek philosopher Horace whose famous quote was something like - “He, who postpones the hour of living rightly, is like a rustic, who waits for the river to run out before he crosses”.

When the teaching and the story were over, all of them got up and readied themselves to go across the river where a road would take them back to their hermitage.

One of them said, “Master, when we came to this side of the river in the afternoon, the river was lean with only a frail stream of water in it. But now it has swollen as a lot of snow from the mountains above has melted. And it has become a mighty roaring river, terrifying us. Now, how would we return ?”

Another disciple spoke, “Look at our boats anchored there ! Some of them are badly damaged and can not ferry us back in their present conditions”.

Another remarked, “First of all, our decision to come to this side of this stupid river was wrong. It looks like we had selected an inauspicious time in haste to visit here. See, even the thunderous clouds are gathering above us, and the rain is imminent. What a wretched weather !”.

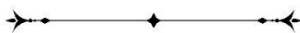
The saint, who was calmly listening to his disciples’ anxious and fearful expressions, said, “So all of you think cursing a river or weather is effective to take you home? Can you cross the river by ridiculing it or pacify the weather by criticizing it? If you can not, then what is the use of it? You can not wish adversity away. Your emotions and knee-jerk reactions would not serve any purpose. Find a way out. And to find a way, the mind must be in a position to think deeply, to explore the probabilities, and for that, it must be first calm, relaxed”.

Hearing such calming remarks, everyone became quiet. They looked around carefully now. Their minds were looking for a “way out”, looking for some solution, which might be there but was presently out of the reach of their probing gaze.

Then a large group of birds flew from the trees and presently sat over something large, built across the breadth of the river, which was not so clearly visible to the group as the evening fog and the tiny droplets rising from the raging river weaved a misty weather.

Suddenly, a disciple shouted, “Oh my god ! There is a bridge over the river, there is a bridge! Come, rush to it”. And soon they crossed the river.

One of the crows perched on the iron bridge remarked, “That ancient rustic of Horace waited for the river to run out before he crossed. And these modern rustics are not even patient and calm to see the bridge, the way out. Both are extremes. One was too lazy to do anything and the other, the modern one, is too anxious to grasp the finer truth - which is this bridge”.



### **Point to ponder:-**

1. When things do not go as planned, are not favorable, or there is a crisis, our first tendency is to curse. To curse almost anything like the weather, others' wrong decisions, governments' policies, inauspicious planetary congregation, etc. We may even curse ourselves too, in neurotic disorders or when in the grip of strong negative emotions. We forget that cursing can not solve anything. It has never.
2. As the mind shifts its attention from the initial knee-jerk cursing or blaming state to now finding a way out from the mess, it becomes calm. And with the relaxation of the mind comes visibility. Now its periphery increases and it can see far. As the mental space enlarges, the solutions begin to appear - those solutions that were hidden behind the restless waves of emotions and their vibrations.
3. As the fog clears, you are pleasantly surprised to notice that the solution was already there from the beginning, and it was you who were unable to see it due to your own disturbed mind.

# The Swans - the birds of love

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*"Comparison is the thief of joy".*

*Theodore Roosevelt*

*"Sunlight entwined us, souls bathed in love".*

*Angie Weiland Crosby*

It was a beautiful lake filled with blue lotuses all around. There was a pair of swans. All of you must have surely seen somewhere that image of two swans swimming together with their necks entwined in the shape of a heart - which has become a nearly universal symbol of love.

The female swan asked her mate, while the necks of both were entwined in the way mentioned above, "Dear, tell me, who is more beautiful, me or that lovely swan dancing there in the lake?"

The male said, "Undoubtedly, it is you, my sweetheart, who is dear to me".

The female asked again, "Ok. Now tell me who is more beautiful - me or those heavenly beautiful blue lotuses there?"

The male replied, "You, my love, only you are. You are above all. You are the only one who has filled my existence, nothing else. You are the most lovely."

The female asked yet again, “Explain this. In both the questions I asked you, I have used this term *more*, but in both the replies of yours, you have deliberately avoided using it. Why? Why are you afraid to compare? Why do you want to skip it?”

The male swan replied, “My dear, in comparison, there is, in a subtle way, a disrespect of love. When you compare, you downsize one of the two, you find some imaginary or real fault in one of them. When you love, you can’t see a “fault” in anyone or anything. Love is a state where there is just extraordinariness, just perfection, just beauty, just love. You can not be unjust to anyone when you are so fully “just”. The root meaning of just is right, proper, fair. And you can’t be unfair in love. So when we compare, we are unfair to the existential truth of someone, though to live in this world, one is forced to compare, to evaluate.

Therefore, dear, you will eternally be dear and beautiful to me for all times to come because there will never be a scope of breaking the oneness of love into the duality of comparison. A human mind likes to inadvertently or willingly slip into this weakness of comparison and evaluation after the short-term initial bout of love. So though humans talk a great deal about love, make endless movies, and produce volumes of literature and architecture depicting love in their lives, it is short-lived. Let those egoic and stupid humans be like that, and come let’s dance.”

As they danced a rat came out of its burrow in which it was busy hoarding various types of edible items for the coming winter and remarked, “What an irony! Humans term a farewell appearance of someone as his/her last swan dance, and when a performance is given just before death or retirement, it is called a swan song. How stupid !”

One of the dancing swans heard what the rat muttered. It replied, “Humans are not, in a way, totally wrong. You come upon this

beautiful state known as love only when you die, when your ego fades away, not before. Hence, our dance, which exhibits love, embodies death, a death of selfish concerns of the ego. So a swan song or dance actually should not be equated with something happening before the final moments of retirement or death, but these must be described as a new way of life after the cessation of the ego. A swan song or dance is a declaration of a triumph of love over the egoic life, which is a sort of death. So a swan song or dance is not to be identified with something *before the end* but should be seen as a transformation with a new vision, a new paradigm shift *after the end* ( end of the old patterns).”



### Points to ponder:-

- 1) The ego or “me” is always full. It is always full of its own goals, wishes, dreams, likes and dislikes, etc. A filled-up cup can not receive anything nor it can give attention to anything that is out of its selfish radar.
- 2) To love, the cup of the mind must be empty. So a clean-up drive of the mind is needed to welcome such a great thing known as love. Cleaning means wiping out what has been, what is a petty limited product of time, which is a stale, rotting thing. This clean-up is called the death of ego. Death here simply means emptiness of time, of everything past.
- 3) When you are occupying the only chair present in your living room, what would you give your guest to sit upon? So you must vacate it for him. If you don’t, the guest will go away.

- 4) Love is the harmony between opposites. Self brings disharmony through its insistence and rigidity. Love is losing the ego, the center, and when a center goes away, its limited periphery disappears as well. It is a mathematical truth.



# Food for thought

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*"There can not be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full".*

*Henry Kissinger*

A young monk and his master were passing through a market. A roadside food stall had attracted a lot of customers, and there was a big crowd of them. They were jostling with each other to push ahead, jumping the queue.

The young monk asked, "Why do I remain constantly enmeshed in the thought network? However hard I try, thoughts just don't seem to go away."

The master looked at a man who was sitting alone on a chair with a table full of different types of foods. Now he was gobbling up a variety of snacks and presently gulped down a large glass of Coke, burped, and instantaneously began gobbling up another meal greedily, as if in a hurry.

The master remarked, "Your mind is also like this glutton. When you feel loneliness, you try to fill that loneliness of your mind by eating profusely. You become a glutton. You can not fill your mind, so you fill your belly. If you can not or do not want to fill your body, you fill your mind. The underlying principle is the same".

A donkey peacefully munching grass uttered, “Let me explain. The emptiness of your mind wants to be filled if you are uneasy with it. So there would be invariably a stream of thoughts, unwanted, uninvited thoughts. But if you are *comfortable* with the emptiness, which happens when you are exploring, finding out something deeply, and earning, then that emptiness is so content that it does not need to gobble up anything in the form of thoughts. A content emptiness is a sort of mental fasting which is neither planned nor enforced.”

The master and his junior could not hear the braying of this donkey, but an eagle, flying above in the blue sky, screeched, “ A thought ! A food ! What a food for thought !”.



### Points to ponder:-

1. Mind can be only in two states - occupied and unoccupied. The occupied state is its predominant state. In it, it is flowing in thoughts, is all the time busy.
2. The unoccupied state is possible when it is in awareness, when it is learning, observing in totality.
3. The former state is a common basal state of mind, concerned with worldly affairs, with our functioning within this virtual but real world. The latter state is concerned with a different dimension of life that can be lived in through this very mind, but only when it is empty, when it is intense when it is observing without a past residue of any information.
4. The mind caught up in incessant thinking feels loneliness even in a crowd, so it is ever engaged in being indulged in one thing

or the other. It is ever restless, galloping from one target to another.

5. A mind, when mature, is a thinking mind, a thoughtful mind that is different from a mind full of thoughts. It is not boring when unengaged, when unoccupied, as it is all the time united with the world around at a subtle level. It is content because it deals with actuality, which is the content of all things. A superficial mind is discontent because it deals with the shadows, with the fleeting aspects of reality.

# The wind blows when The sun is not intense.

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*“Create a gap of no-mind in which you are highly alert and aware but not thinking. This is the essence of the meditation”.*

*Eckhart Tolle*

A man visited a monastery and asked the head monk how to get rid of the constant chattering of his mind, which was sapping out all of his energy. The monk invited him to the prayer hall and told him to sit silently.

After a while, the monk asked him, “Were there any thoughts in your mind when you sat silently?” He replied, “Yes, there were”. Then the monk told him to get up and attend a traditional Buddhist ceremony with fancy dresses and masks and loud trumpets, along with the other instruments. Then the monk said, “Come along,” and both walked into a forest in the middle of which lay this monastery. After a few steps, there was a loud sound, something like a bear’s roar. As soon as the man heard it, he ran backward like a bullet from the gun. A few minutes later, the monk arrived and began to make him relax with soft words and compassionate eyes.

Presently, the monk and the man sat on two chairs facing each other in the garden of the monastery. The monk asked the man, “Were there any thoughts in your mind when you watched the cultural program?” The man said in a weak voice, “No, there were none”. “And were there any thoughts when you ran like a bullet from the jungle?” asked the monk. The man replied again, “No”.

The monk now began to explain, “There were no thoughts when you were at the prayer hall because there were no outer stimuli which could have arrested your attention. When “outer” is powerful like loud colors and loud music, you are unable to think because your mind gets dazzled by the incoming stimuli. So you just could not flow out from there because to flow out, to escape, you need thoughts, but thoughts do not operate in outer stormy stimuli. The fishermen are warned by the government authorities to stay away from venturing out into the stormy sea when the weather is not good. In the last case, there was a possibility of danger. And when there is an urgency of any kind, even then thoughts are frozen. Like when suddenly a wild animal appears near you. Your thinking apparatus just goes out of order. You get into shock. A shock is a temporary suspension of the thinking process.

Now you have faced all three scenarios firsthand. The weak outer sensations or weak inner motivation result in a movement that is thought. When the sun is weak, the wind blows, which is a movement. When you focus, when you are intensely aware, thoughts freeze like in the last case when you were in the woods. So, focus or total participation is the golden secret to emptying the fuel tank of the thought car. Have you got it now? And by the way, no bear roams around in this area.”

The setting sun, behind the forest trees, whispered as it was about to disappear, “There are no weak stimuli for me out there to make me

think, nor am I perturbed by my internal mighty solar flares. I am always intense. Therefore, I am always beyond thinking.”



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. Thinking indicates a weak energy, a channelized energy. Thoughts always flow in the grooves. When the intensity in any system wanes, wave after wave of lower energies (lower energies in the sense that their frequency is high and wavelength is small) begin to flow.
2. The concentration, intensity, and focus, silences such waves in the cosmos as well as in the human mind, as the human mind is just a minuscule spec of the infinite cosmos.
3. Therefore, to silence the incessant chattering of our minds, we should seek a radical transformation of our minds, which comes through mindfulness and a new way of seeing things deeply.

# Be an author, not an authority.

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*“If you think you understand quantum mechanics,  
You don’t understand quantum mechanics”.*

*Richard P. Feynman*

*“A man who wants to lead the orchestra must turn his back on the crowd”.*

*Max Lucado*

A monk was addressing a gathering when he said, “Be an author in your life. An author is someone who discovers something and brings to light that which was not known to others. But refrain from being an authority because authority gives complacency, creates hurdles, though inadvertently, in the path of an independent discovery for the shallow followers.”

“Then who are you? You are wearing the robe of a monk. Are you not yourself an authority too, as you are talking about these matters so assuredly, so confidently?” asked a person from the crowd.

“No, I am just acting like a milestone. A milestone has no authority. It just tells that such and such place is this many kilometers away. Nothing more, nothing less. It does not spoon-feed them, does not give them a chalked-out plan, and does not influence the travelers in any way whatsoever. But you don’t want your guides, masters or gurus to

be like that. Do you? You want to be pampered, told how you are progressing, want to be “made to do certain esoteric activities” by your guru so that you would feel assured in your mind like, “Ah well ! I am doing it rightly. I am on the right path”. Why are you so desperate to be a tethered conformist to everything? Even your scriptures say that a fearful person is unfit to discover the absolute,” asked the young monk.

And he continued, “Therefore, be an author. Discover. You might be wrong. Look again and correct it. After all, that is what learning is. But keep away from all types of psychological or spiritual authorities. A true discoverer discards his prejudices, opinions or conclusions of all kinds because these also constitute his own internal “authorities”. And he must extinguish all types of authorities (of course, not the authority of law). Self-discovery can not be done for you by another, however great. Always remember it.”



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. When you base your perception on any previous knowledge, whether of a guru, of a traditional thought process or even of your own, that becomes an authority because you would base and compare the new truth in the light of the old ideas.
2. An authority is a benchmark, a base to compare new inputs. So we can evaluate the course of things so that we don't go wrong. In worldly affairs, this approach is ok, but not in matters of discovery because discovery can not be influenced, in any way whatsoever, by an established stale idea.



# The Problem of Obedience

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*“Disobedience, the rarest and the most courageous of the virtues is seldom distinguished from neglect, the laziest and commonest of the vices”.*

*George Bernard Shaw*

*“Any idiot can be obedient, in fact, only idiots can be obedient. The person of intelligence is bound to ask, why? - “Why am I supposed to do it ?” And, “Unless I know the reasons and the consequences of it, I am not going to be involved in it”.*

*Osho*

A man was very concerned that his only child did not listen to his advice. So he visited a behavior therapist who disclosed that he was suffering from an identical ailment. Therefore, both decided to visit a wise man living on the outskirts of their city.

They met the wise man who lived like a faqir in a small thatched hut. The man asked him, “ O wise man! Please help both of us who are in the same boat. Our children don’t obey, nor do they listen to our good advice. What can be done?”

The wise man spoke, “When we want to switch on a TV, light, fan, or AC, we use a remote or press a switch. All these are non-living gadgets. Non-living things can be pressurized or compelled. They are ‘used’ for

our interests. Your children are not such non-living gadgets to be used in the way you choose. Is obedience a thing of willingness or compulsion? If it is forced, there is bound to be resistance. Authoritarian governments have always attracted resistance and opposition throughout the history of mankind. Why do you need to make your children obedient like a dog or a robot? Is not it that you want to live your dreams, your ideologies, your opinions regarding how everything has to be done, through them? They have not taken birth for this. As it is famously said by Khalil Gibran, “Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life’s longing for itself. They came through you but not from you, and though they are with you yet they belong not to you”. So why do you want them to conform to your ways ?”

The behavior therapist now came forward and said, “The parents must see them off on the right path. Do you want to say that we must not be strict with them and let them go to the drains?”

The wise man replied, “Of course, you must care for their welfare but not through being strict. I notice you all have become insensitive because of your present fast-paced lifestyle. When you drive fast, your hands on the driving wheel become, naturally, hard or strict as you want to use this term. In a speeding vehicle, you can not relax, and can not look at the beautiful face of your wife or child, otherwise, you would collide with something on the road. Speed makes you insensitive. Others’ point of view is not visible to you as you drive with great speed, looking straight.

What you want can be brought up through love. If you, instead of dictating or compelling others to obey you, make others see the rationale, the reason behind your advice, others would happily agree to comply. See, when you love someone, you don’t compel that person. Moreover, you do automatically, without any resistance, what the other

wishes. Love does not demand obedience. Lovers do everything willingly. Love achieves everything easily and effortlessly, which a compulsive insistence of an ego can never achieve, even with brute force.

Therefore, the question is not how to make them obedient, rather it should be - do you love your child? And if he loves you, he would comply willingly. I give you another example. You drive a car. Do you create a separation between you and the car as you drive it? Of course, you and your car are different things but I am saying when you move the steering wheel, the car turns in that direction and when you press the brake pedal, the car stops. When you press the gas, it speeds up. There is no separation or duality while the action of driving is operational. Driving is not possible if the vehicle doesn't listen to you or you don't listen to it. So while driving, you don't force it. Do you? If its shock absorbers are weak, you drive slowly and carefully. Therefore, the car has to be in harmony with you, and you must also be sensitive to its conditions. That is love. It is not obedience like a car is obeying you or anything as such. There is an understanding. And where there is an understanding, there is no need of compulsion or demand of obedience from any party”.



### Points to ponder:-

1. When you command respect, you don't demand obedience. In respect, obedience more subtly and gently is already embedded.
2. If you painstakingly make your children see the rationale of your advice (not an order), they will willingly conform or follow your command. But the question is of *painstakingly making them*

*see* the rationale, which is patience, which is love, which is wisdom.

3. So when you lack patience, you force it. That is the problem. We force and they revolt and we throw our hands up and exclaim, “This disobedient generation ! What to do with them? They just don’t listen to us”.

# The uncertain next moment

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*“When you love someone, the best you can offer is your presence. How can you love if you are not there”?*

*Thich Nhat Hanh*

*“One day, you will wake up and there won’t be any more time to do the things you’ve always wanted. Do it now”.*

*Paulo Coelho*

A man with his wife visited a monk to get some higher learning. The man began with these words, “O great monk, please give us some insights so that our lives become more meaningful”.

The monk said, “Our day-to-day routine lives are marked by a mad rush, and when you rush, you miss the surroundings. Like when you press the gas and zoom past everything in your car, you are only concerned with your destination, you are unable to see the things around the road. Then you embark on another goal, another destination, and this continues, and you forget that you have a wife and children. There are other things equally significant too. But in concentration, the mind excludes the fringe things. You make one matter dominant, one factor all important, and you live inappropriately because if you incline too much to one side, you are bound to lose balance and fall.”

The man asked, “But to succeed in this fast-paced competitive world, should we not be single-mindedly pursuing our goals ?”

The monk rotated his hands in the air, and then everything started vibrating and began to fade. Everything melted in thin air except that man and the monk.

This unexpected and terrifying turn of events shook the man totally, and he cried, “My wife! My dear wife! Where are you?” And he started running here and there, frantically looking for her.

The monk said calmly, “See, it was bound to happen within a few years. Either you or she was destined to die sooner or later. Then why do you cry? Now go and pursue your cherished dreams and your all-important goals. After all, she was of secondary importance to you. So it is fine that you still have your priority alive. Isn't it ?”

The man screamed, “No ! She was everything to me, my goals were not. After all these goals were meant for her only, to give her a comfortable and monetarily sound happy life”.

The monk replied, “That exactly is my point. If the means acquire all the importance, sometimes we tend to overlook the destination. The money and all that is important, but we must not forget that in the process of amassing it, are we not forgetting that very person for whom all this is being done ?”

Then the monk waved his hands in the air and lo! Everything vibrated and became visible as before. And there was the man's wife standing at the same place as if nothing had happened. She asked him, “What happened ? Why are your eyes brimming with tears ? Please tell me”.

The man ran to her and, embracing her tightly, said, “My beloved. Nothing as such. But in one timeless moment of the truth of impermanence, I have rediscovered my priorities, my love. I was

chasing the targets of my life so frantically that I had overlooked my beautiful and loving wife. This monk has shown a true picture of me in his magic mirror. Today I have learned the true meaning and purpose of life, which is this - Chase your goals wholeheartedly as you must, but never let your loved ones be lost behind the dust storm caused by the hooves of your horses galloping wildly.

Though we have been married for a decade now, I saw your face, as if *for the first time* in my life. The experience of impermanence has taught me that while we chase that which presently *we don't have*, we can't forget to value that which *we still have*."



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. We become indifferent to that which we already possess.
2. The mind is only excited to achieve, to grab new things, to solve new riddles, and to obtain what is yet to be obtained.
3. And we neglect those who are dear to us, who are, if not anymore *now* but once they were, our *everything*.
4. The lesson of impermanence teaches us the value of giving proper attention to those who are with us presently but who knows, might be separated from us suddenly and unexpectedly by the uncertain and fickle life.

# In the library of information

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*"In your thirst for knowledge, Be sure not to drown in all the information".*

*Anthony J. D'Angelo*

*"Any fool can know. The point is to understand".*

*Albert Einstein*

*"A donkey carrying a pile of holy books is still a donkey".*

*A Zen Proverb*

A man went to a library with his pets - a dog and a cat. For the pets, it was a different world. There were millions of books of different colors and sizes stacked up everywhere. The pets noticed a few people silently reading books and sitting on chairs, while others searched for books of their interest from the shelves and the almirahs.

The dog said to the cat, "They are all lost in something. Are they not? Then why do they come here especially? To get lost?"

The cat replied, "No, they are learning something. They are not lost. Actually, if they don't learn, only then would they feel like being lost, lost in the sense of being clueless, directionless".

The dog remarked, "But I don't understand a thing here".



The cat replied, "Of course, you and I would not, because what is here is of a different level and we don't possess the capability to understand it".

Just then, a donkey munching a bundle of green grass happened to pass from there. From the window of the library, he peeked in and heard the last few lines of the conversation between the dog and the cat. He was also carrying a very large load on his back.

Adjusting the load which had inclined to one side as the donkey bent himself to peep in, the donkey brayed, "No, they are not learning about anything but gathering merely information contained in the books. A motorcyclist drives a motorcycle. He knows how to drive it, but he knows not one thing about its internal machinery. A scientist talks about an electron and the quantum field. He knows how to use electrons or a quantum field because he has built quantum computers. But ask him what is that or how does it look and he would start to appear as a damn fool. So all gather knowledge just to function somehow smoothly in this complexity called existence, but they are seldom pretty sure of anything. In science and philosophy, they always begin with a 'how' but eventually settle with 'somehow'."

The master of a donkey, who was accompanying it and was listening to its donkey wisdom, questioned it, "You are finding everyone superficial who has only *workable* knowledge, but then what about you? You don't know a thing about what you are carrying right now. Do you claim to be better at understanding reality than everybody else?"

The donkey answered, " I know only one thing that I know nothing. But this awareness of knowing *nothing* is still better than harboring a false assumption that you know *something*. And as per human assertion, I am not supposed to know anything either. As I am, after all, a stupid donkey."



### **Point to ponder:-**

1. Humans are content with a workable superficial knowledge. That is it. They don't ever feel a need to go deep at the very end of it, to understand something.
2. They live in an information bubble and remain a prisoner in it like a pupa. But you know it well, as I know it, that it is a butterfly. But it would never be a butterfly till it tears away this bubble - the bubble of comfort, the bubble of a workable hypothesis, a workable worldview.

# The sheep who was not sheepish anymore

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*“True originality consists not in a new manner but in a new vision”.*

*Edith Wharton*

A sheep appeared very sad to a donkey standing nearby. The donkey asked the reason for her dismay, to which she replied, “We sheep have acquired a very bad reputation that we can not think independently, that’s why we are often used as an analogy, as an example to educate those human beings who imitate others blindly. They say if one sheep happens to fall into a well, all the sheep because they follow the leader religiously, would fall into the well as no one would ever think independently. Do we do it? I have never followed any sheep into any well or any trench. This is overgeneralization.”

The donkey with a profound and compassionate voice said to the sheep, “Don’t lose heart. Human beings are great imitators themselves. They follow the dead traditions, meaningless rituals, and ignorant but cunning preachers and gurus. They are blinded by beliefs and superstitions. They are also usually blinded by stupid rash emotions in their everyday lives, and the fun is that they cite your example to elucidate blind following.”

Now the sheep became pretty much relaxed and regained her confidence. She asked the donkey, "But they, the humans, consider themselves to be at a higher biological order as well as at a higher intelligence level. Are they so advanced in their mental capacities?"

The donkey replied, "Of course, they are well developed rationally and scientifically, but are very immature and infantile as far as common sense or emotional maturity is concerned. I will give you a very good example.

See, they usually always think rationally when they are alone. But as they become part of a crowd, they instantaneously lose their rationality and immediately get swayed by the basic instincts of destruction and mischief. They may now destroy public property and become unbending and callous to any sane advice. Their philosophers are clueless as to why it happens. Why does a sane person behave insanely when part of a crowd? None of them has solved this dilemma. Listen, my dear sheep! I know what a human does not know and see the irony they call me a donkey, which of course I am, but they have a degrading connotation of this word, which is being an idiot. Whenever they want to insult any human, they call him a donkey. Ok, let me tell you the secret. Only a mind that is alone can discover something or think sanely. As the number increases, the intensity to discover wanes as minds with different degrees of attention and different levels of understanding converge, the basic survival instincts become dominant, which include imitation, the inclination to fight or flight, and dominance of emotions over deep thought. So every member of a crowd imitates and agrees to a mindless decision. This truth even the humans know that discovery is always in aloneness and a crowd is always destructive, but they have never understood why it is so, which I have enlightened you today".

"Cheaters," uttered the sheep in anger and shouted, "They call us imitators, whereas they are so. They imitate everything as soon as they

are born. They imitate their parents and others, imitate movie actors and engage in role-play when they return home after watching a movie, imitate the skills of famous poets, painters, musicians, etc as they begin their hobbies and careers in any of such fields, they steal stories from the movies of other countries and release them dubbing them as original unabashedly, shamelessly. Preachers quote others, never discovering anything themselves. The list is endless. All the humans are thieves and copy-cats and see the ego! They call us imitators. It is too much”.

A rat who was listening patiently to the sheep’s vociferous rant came out of his burrow and remarked, “And humans are very fond of using this term - a sheepish smile when someone is embarrassed because that person has done something wrong or silly. But after hearing your powerful rant, they would think twice about using it ever again, as it is they who are at the receiving end now because as you and dear donkey have shown to the universe, the true imitators of the universe are undoubtedly humans and not sheep anymore”.



### **Point to ponder:-**

1. The moment we are born, we learn through imitation. There can not be any other way of learning when we are very young.
2. Growing up, we imitate, copy, and conform to others. This we call inspiration. All this is workable in the mechanical part of our daily life, but it is useless as soon as we sit down to meditate and discover.
3. Higher realms are touched upon only through originality and not following others’ patterns.

# The Respect

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*“A mind that lives in fear is a dead mind, is a dull mind. It is a mind that can not look, see, hear clearly, directly”.*

*Jiddu Krishnamurti*

A devotee of a very famous saint attended his discourse. He prostrated at the feet of the saint and stood there with folded hands. He was waiting for his instructions. Everyone in the crowd was impressed with his devotion and humility.

The saint sensed the feeling of the crowd and asked devotees to go inside the temple premises and open the doors of the main temple for the evening darshan of the deity by the crowd. Then, as he did that, he told him to sweep and clean the temple floor. He did that. The saint remarked, “All this obedience is only at the physical and a very superficial mental level. It is not true respect. What is that I will show you shortly”.

Then suddenly the saint lifted a wooden basket wrapped with cloth and handed it over to the same devotee, saying, “This is the last work assigned for you today. Take this basket and give it to the man standing outside the gate of this complex. He is wearing a turban and has iron earrings in both of his ears. You would recognize him by his menacingly large mustaches”.

A wave of doubt spread over the devotee's face, and he asked hesitatingly, "Great Swami, What is contained in this basket ? Please let me know. Only then will I be able to carry it safely". And he trembled because his imaginative mind had, by then, imagined something frightful.

The saint replied, " No, no. The moment demands you to trust your master, fully, and the call of obedience is also the same. You would fail in it if you ask again regarding its contents".

The terrified devotee noticed a faint quiver in the basket, and as he felt it, he screamed, "Snake, snake. O my god !" And he, throwing away that basket, scurried away to a safe place that was at a sufficient height from the ground.

The saint now began to speak, "Listen all of you! Come near me. Look at the incident. You considered that fellow to be very respectful. Yes, he was so, *till the emergence of fear.*"

The basket split open as it fell, and a flower garland contained within it dropped to the ground. There was no snake.

A real snake hidden near a heap of broken bricks and shrubs spoke, "Confusion, utter confusion ! The saint says that people forget to respect when in fear. But with me, I see the reverse. People respect me because they fear me. I am the fear".



### Points to ponder:-

1. When I am afraid, I am self-concerned.

2. A terrified ego can not respect anything, nor can a self-righteous one.
3. If I think I am always right then I can't respect others or others' points of view.
4. The display of respect is a social mannerism, but respect is not flaunted through postures or gestures but through letting the "other" fill me so completely that nothing of "me" is left now, which is love, so respect is love.
5. Respect is a relationship. When we write official letters with the opening words like, "In respect of your letter or email dated so and so.." By the word *respect*, we mean *relation*. There can be a meaningful relation only when fake masks of ego are absent.
6. We pay attention to what we respect. An inattentive mind does not respect anything. We give our '*presence*' to what we respect or love. So logically we are *absent* (in the now) when we are drowned in thoughts.



# Rats and Cockroaches

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*“All darkness vanished when I saw the lamp within my heart”.*

*Kabir*

A monk visited a monastery to meet its head monk, who was very famous, far and wide, for his wisdom. The head monk told him to retire for the night as it was quite late and told him to come to him in the morning for a discussion.

As the monk entered his quarter, the electricity in the area went off, and he remained in the dark for a few minutes. Then he remembered that he had a torch with him. When he lit it, he saw a few rats and cockroaches scampering here and there but they froze in the focus of the intense light of the torch and were unable to move now. He then let them go by turning the torch off and slept.

In the morning he came to the head monk, who smiled and told him, “Thoughts are like rats and cockroaches which move freely when *no one* observes *them*. It is exactly so in quantum physics, where an electron moves freely; it can be at any place simultaneously, but as an observer observes it, it freezes, it takes now a certain and fixed path. But you noticed last night that they are pinned down by the intensity of the observation, which is a focused light. Any undesirable entity does not go away until it is intensely observed. But when you are not intense,

that means there is less visibility, they swarm all around. If you are intensely aware of your actions, their subtle roots in your dark subconscious come to light, and now they can not do any mischief. Till you turn on the mental torch, these rats and cockroaches will continue to run amok. They will not go away. They will be recurring in your life, returning at different times and different get-ups again and again.”

“But I let them go away. By turning off the light,” countered the monk.

“You can turn off the light after “pinning them down” which is being conscious of them. Then they are unable to do any mischief. So you can let them go. For example, a rascal roams freely but not so when his crime is “seen” when it comes to light. Now he knows that you *know* that secret about him. You may let him go. But he will not move around now like before. He might go away to another territory,” the head monk said.

The monk folded his hands to the head monk in reverence. As he walked away towards his destination, he saw on his path a few entities on a rock with folded hands, paying him their reverence. For sparing their lives out of compassion, which always comes along with understanding, and not suppressing them. They were those very rats and cockroaches who were there in his quarter last night.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. Thoughts in many avatars appear when the mind is not intense. They gather strength in poor light or visibility.
2. As the intense gaze of observation gathers while in meditation or a discovering mode, thoughts scamper here and there to hide in the dark recesses of the subconscious mind. When the gaze

continues, even such recesses are enlightened, and thoughts now become unable to move.

3. And a non-moving thought ceases to be a thought. This is what is known as *the ending of thoughts*.

# Busy or Be Easy?

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*“When the discontinuous moments are given continuity, knitting them together, you are busy. You feel busy with a process, a trap. Outside the trap of time, there is discontinuity. Being one with a single moment or feeling is being easy”.*

*Pankaj Sudan*

A great master was visited by a monk from a faraway monastery. The master welcomed him and asked about his daily routine. The monk said that he felt caught up in the daily routines and found less time for meditation as he remained busy with numerous daily chores and rituals, etc, at his monastery.

He asked, “Master, what do you do to remain unoccupied here in your monastery?”

The master told him to accompany him for a walk. After a while, he told the monk that they had walked about ten kilometers. That means their feet were continuously engaged in walking without a rest.

The master said, “Look at my words! Ten kilometers! That is what busyness is! Now listen to the way I see it. At any moment, there is just a single step. Freeze frame the moment. There is a single step. If a step remembers the past step or the coming step, there is tiredness, which is an offshoot of busyness. I am never busy. Because I take only one

step at a time. That is it. It is what I call easiness. An easiness of living and being which is wholistic and not fragmented into the previous or later steps.

So, when you are *busy*, tell yourself - *Be easy*. Don't club these two words together. Just remain a frame of existence at any moment. Mastery is a shift from *being busy* to *being easy*. See, this very word *busy* is, in a way, saying to you - *be easy*. But you don't pay heed to it. You mix it and turn *being easy* into *being busy*. I may do one hundred things a day, but I feel that I am doing only one act, only one performance at a time. That is the secret. Being totally one and doing one thing at a time is being unoccupied, is being totally in the present as occupation is always a process and a process is never fully within the present. Therefore, living thus, living without fragmentation, is living abundantly, living beyond time, and when your action is beyond the clutches of time, you can not say that I don't have enough time for meditation or other mundane jobs."

Listening to these words by the master, a monkey climbed down from the tree and stood in front of a wall mirror on the verandah of the monastery and said to the mirror, "You reflect only that which is right there in front of you. It is as simple as that. So you are easy. And? I jumble the time from one branch to the other and then to the other and so on. I am, therefore, hey presto! Very busy".



### Points to ponder:-

1. The self, through our brain, fuses discontinuous and radically different moments into a process.

2. It does so to make the vast reservoir of different information, streaming in every moment, meaningful.
3. Therefore, the brain is unable to live in the moment, in the present, and the now. It functions only through processes. Hence, it turns different information into processes.
4. A fire sprinkler, when rotated, its different frames are amalgamated, and fused to give a feeling of an unbroken, continuous circle, a circle of fire, which, as every science student knows well, doesn't exist in reality. So when you are going through processes of different kinds, for example, a thought process, you are busy.
5. When you are focused, you break the illusion of a process and you see a moment, a single frame of a moment, and then another, and then another - all separate and distinguishable, you shift from being busy to being easy - the easiness of, the simplicity of the truth of the moment. You see now something as it is and not a fake virtual thing like a fire-circle.

# Why A Tortoise Can Never Lose A Race?

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*“If you win the rat race, you’re still a rat”.*

*Lily Tomlin*

*“ Never be in a hurry, do everything quietly and in a calm spirit.*

*Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever,*

*Even if your whole world seems upset”.*

*Saint Francis de Sales*

A tortoise asked a rabbit, “Come, let us race”.

The rabbit laughed loudly and said, “Are you mad? Do you not remember that famous story about the race between a rabbit and a tortoise that has been taught in primary schools all over the world? And you think the rabbits have not learned any lessons from that? Surely now no rabbit, being overly confident, ever takes a nap in mid-race. Nor would I. Are you still interested in it?”

The tortoise said that he still wanted a race like in old times. So they competed in that race and obviously, the rabbit won it comfortably.

The rabbit came with a snobbish air towards the tortoise and said, “So you fool ! What were you thinking ? Were you living in some sort of a fool’s paradise that you will win this time ? No my friend. You can never win it with a rabbit. Never even in a dream”.

The tortoise asked, “ What did you do when you reached the winning post ?”

The rabbit replied, “ Nothing. I slept there as there was nothing for me to do as I had already won and there is never a greater joy for a rabbit to bask in the sun. We are even famous for this.”

The tortoise said, “There ! Again a rabbit slept during a race “.

The rabbit countered immediately, “ No, no. Not during the race but after. There is no harm in taking a victory nap when you have already achieved your target. Why are you so jealous?”

The tortoise replied, “ I am not jealous. You are like a human being. Both believe that a race is a measurement of quanta of time, which means taking less time, which means more speed. And more speed wins. Remember, it is *mere* speed.

But we tortoise believe, no we *know*, that a race is measured not by quantity but by quality. I enjoyed every moment in my race, which you could not, as your focus was only on the target, unlike me, whose focus was on “what sensations were coming in my way”? In other words, I was enjoying every moment that blessed me with the richness of profound perceptions being showered on me from all directions. I was in no hurry. There was no loss. Any loss is just a virtual thing, not a real thing. We tortoises know it. That's why we live for centuries and sometimes up to four hundred years, which you and humans can not. Because both of you are in a perpetual hurry. You breathe fast, think fast, live a fast-paced life, and perish fast.



We are awakened entities. We don't crave sleep. What did you do? You slept like your ancestor. The only difference was that he slept in the mid-race and you at the end of it. But sleep you did. Both of you. You slept because you could not engage your mind which is a sign of an immature mind. An immature mind runs fast to save time but when it has plenty of time, it does not know what to do with it.

Have you not seen humans doing it too? They drive fast, have road rage, fight, and get angry at almost everything, like the way others are driving, the traffic jams, the red lights, the conditions of the roads, etc. They get wild on almost everything. Why? Because they are in a hurry. And after saving a lot of time through fast driving, they now get perplexed by time. The human mind has never understood how to deal with time.

Since time immemorial, one of the biggest dilemmas humans have faced is - what to do with time. How to pass the time? That's why they have a phrase too in their vocabulary - a pastime. Which is any activity or hobby to "pass" the time. This is a problem as the *stuck-up moment* is known as tension, an immovability of the stream of time, which is one of the most serious illnesses of the modern human world.

So to be precise, you sleep because you have no use or application of time, which means you miss a meaning or a purpose that engages you. Though you have won a race from the short-sighted and erroneous formulations about what a race should be, in actuality, it is I, and for that matter, all the tortoises who have ever competed with rabbits, who are winners. You will also come to this conclusion if you see our point of view....."

Suddenly, the tortoise's sentence was interrupted by the loud snores being emitted from the nostrils of the peacefully sleeping rabbit.



### Points to ponder:-

1. The human mind has a superstition that they are short of time. That is the reason all games, races, and competitive tests are based on this golden formula - Do it fast and spend less time. Those who can do it are declared winners as they are deemed capable.
2. It works where a measurement or evaluation is required. Therefore, in games and educational competitions, such things will continue. But it is only a very tiny part of our lives. Life is not only a game or a competition. It is not only quantitative. What about its quality?
3. When we are all the time trying to save time, we have become ignorant and clueless about what to do with that 'saved time'. Therefore, when a mind gets fed up with, becomes distraught with, giving stress on the quantity only, it seeks quality of life which is not in the "more" but in the totality of experience of the being, which marks the beginning of wisdom.
4. So now one is no more interested in winning but in savoring the moment, every moment of his life like the tortoise of the above story. The rabbit represents the fast-paced immature mind, whereas the tortoise is the one who has learned the lesson - the lesson of the art of living. The slow savoring of the moment. If you do it fast, it is not savoring but gulping and gulping anything is neither good for health nor can it open your senses to the fullness of taste.

# Part-Two

# The Illusion

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*"Forgive, O lord, my little jokes on Thee, and I will forgive  
Thy great big joke on me".*

*Robert Frost*

*"The gods too are fond of a joke".*

*Aristotle*

A man entered a forest. He came here for a rest. People call it a forest of illusion. But he does not know that. He has been lost in the forest.

Therefore, he is busy roaming in the beautiful lush green valleys, seeing flowers of many colors, chasing butterflies of different colors and patterns of various kinds in their wings, smelling the particular fragrance of the hilly soil after a recent rain, and the smell coming out of pine trees.

He has a spring in his steps as he walks with an unknown joy and a song on his lips. He is happy. There is a type of happiness in a state of ignorance, in a state of unawareness that you are. Lost.

You can not be aware of the stark reality that you are lost, till you are in the flow - the flow of quick events, smooth, usual events around you. He has lost all memories of the place from which he has come and has also forgotten where he was headed.

You begin to see that you have lost your way when you become aware of, become sensitive to the realization that “you have been lost”. Once you know that you “are” lost, two things happen. One - you immediately lose all interest in the beautiful jungle, to its mesmerizing attractions. Two - you begin to seriously think about ‘the way out’.

So the man in the story has stopped wandering here and there and sat down presently on a rock to ponder, to find out - “the way”.

Soon he understood that the way out was surely not to be found in the paths he had already taken to tread on, otherwise through them he would have already, by now, been out of the woods. So the path to freedom is surely in a “different zone”. And this different zone can be come upon only by excluding all other paths by declaring, “Not this, not this”.

And when all the paths are excluded, what is left is only that path - the right path - which belonged to a horizon never thought or seen hitherto. And this mysterious path was such that he was out of the woods without even “moving” a step. How come?



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. You wonder, how the hell he came out of there, as you read this story? It is not so difficult if you just recall the name of the forest. Therein lies the key.
2. Nobody crosses an illusion by moving in that illusion. Any further movement would still be in the illusion. Therefore, he had to stop totally, and total stoppage of self is when you are fully awake. When you are awake, you don't continue that

which you were engaged in while you were asleep, were seeing a dream.

3. The only way out is *to be aware* of the illusion, to be in the deep silence of the ego. That is the only way.

# The Real Non-Sense

---

*“As soon as you see something, you already start to intellectualize it. As soon as you intellectualize something, it is no longer what you saw”.*

*Shunryu Suzuki*

A donkey said, “I don’t believe in logical reasoning”.

To which a pig remarked, “Exactly that’s why you are called a donkey”.

The donkey said, “Ok, chum, I will show you the fallacy of reasoning. I will first use logical reasoning and then higher philosophical reasoning. Now listen with an abated breath how gloriously I shatter the very foundations of reasoning.”

*“Left is the opposite of right,*

*Right is the opposite of wrong,*

*Therefore, left is wrong.”*

In case you find any fault in my application of reasoning, I can very easily prove it through maths. Consider this -

From the first line, mathematically, it can be written as -

Left = 1/ Right.

Right = 1/ Wrong

So,  $1/\text{Left} = 1/\text{Wrong}$

Which means -

Left = Wrong.....Equation (1)

Now let's go to the next level of reasoning, which is philosophical reasoning -

Putting the conclusion of equation (1) (which is, left =wrong), we get,

*"When left is wrong*

*Then right is right*

*So left is right."*

Again, mathematically, we can write,

Left = wrong ( from equation 1)

Right = Right ( which is obvious because left is wrong )

Therefore,

Left = Right.....Equation (2)

Now by comparing Equation (1) and Equation(2),

We get,

Right = wrong.

Therefore, through reasoning, what comes out is that the left is right and the right is wrong. Which is nonsense in the sense that it is contrary to our common sense. So all logic is nonsense. Only a donkey in its donkey-ness can sense that logic is nonsense."

The pig replied, "What you just proved was faulty logic, and that is nonsense. If your glasses are unclean, your vision will be blurred. The



reality is not blurred, but your instruments are dirty. So logic is perfect, but the way it was used to conclude was incorrect. Therefore, left never equals right or right never equals wrong, as far as logic can see”.

An owl, who was silently listening to all this conversation, spoke, “There is nonsense when proper logic is not applied and there is a perfect sense when it is correctly applied but there is another type of non-sense, a super non-sense, when something vast is tried to measure up like it is nonsense to measure an ocean through a bucket. Great things which are beyond the measuring tapes of the senses seem nonsensical to the common mind. When time and space are transcended, then what is left or right, and what is small or big? Then at that dimension, the left is right, and small is big. There is no right and wrong as such in that dimension”.

Listening to the wisdom of the owl, the donkey exclaimed, “He speaks so wisely, but then why is he called an owl? “

The pig concluded, “Because he is always up there on some tree branch, in another dimension, and so what he says is beyond our logic. So we can talk about nonsense and sense but not that super nonsense that he talks about. After all, from that height of the tree, what he can see, we can not.”

“No, my dear friends !” Said the owl, as he flew away, leaving the twig of the tree down, “We must be in our senses all the time when we are functioning within the world, like all this time I had been sitting on this branch. But when you need to be in touch with the deeper things in your life, you must go beyond your senses and not be tethered to their comforts and limits, like I could fly in the infinite sky only because I let the certainty and logical safety of the branch go. The moment you shake off yourself from the shackles of logic, you will be *seeing*

something, beyond the senses, which I call super non-sense because senses can not comprehend it”.

And the pig said, “Why does the owl call it super nonsense? He could have simply termed it *super sense* to denote that something is beyond the reaches of the senses ?”

The donkey immediately countered, “How can there be ‘something’ beyond senses because all things, there, surely would have lost their *Thing-ness*? Therefore, you must say that there is not a *thing* or nothing beyond senses, logically,” and winked at the pig.

Pondering over this remark of the donkey, both started walking, totally lost in contemplation, and fell into a ditch.

Seeing it, a rat exclaimed, “Oh, you mindless thinkers! Forget about super sense and nonsense. You both don’t seem to have even common sense. How is it that none of you could sense that a ditch is approaching? It seems to me that you have “ditched” awareness of *what* is for the greed of *what could be*. And that is exactly real nonsense”.



### Points to ponder:-

1. The donkey in the story is someone who is not too impressed with intellectual jargon and tries to prove it to be futile in a humorous way. He appears to apply syllogism of logic but in a deliberately erroneous fashion.
2. The pig is who is an advocate of reasoning with strict adherence to its logical systems, which cautions him to use logic properly and not to just prove his stand.

3. Then there is an owl who perches high on a tree branch, which implies that he sees what others fail to see. He points out that irrational interpretations of the senses are the grounds of nonsense, and proper understanding and interpretations of the sensory inputs make our thinking sensible.
4. Then there is another dimension beyond the reaches of the senses, which is the field of super-sense, but humorously, the owl calls it another type of nonsense, as the masses at large don't get to understand it. This super-sense is the field of non-verbal communication, insights, precognitions, remote viewing, and a unifying cosmic consciousness where the thought-birds can not flap their wings, where the reasoning mind is unable to enter.
5. What the owl said was beyond the comprehension of both the donkey and the pig and as they walked being lost in thoughts, because the insightful words of a seer are always attempted to be understood by the logical brain - which is not possible and because of the ensuing awareness fog, they fell into a ditch.
6. This is symbolic. When we are too enmeshed within the thought network, we become absent-minded, which is a sort of falling into a ditch, into a circular thought maze. The rat points out exactly this fact through the words- "You both don't seem to have even common sense".

# The Cubicle

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*"Listening to both sides of a story will convince  
You that there is more to a story than both sides".*

*Frank Tyger*

There was a cubicle to which two children became attracted. Each wanted to enter it and sit on the throne-like seat built within it. So there was an argument as to who had better credentials to enter it.

When one overpowering viewpoint wants to establish itself by decimating other contrary viewpoints, we argue. An argument is always an effort to prove the righteousness of one's held views. When the attachment to one's views becomes intense, there is intolerance.

Their father was meanwhile watching everything with patience. Then he showed them a way. He said if only a person entered it and sat towards one side of the seat, he would only see one view from the window, whether he sat at the left side or at the right side of the seat. As windows were only sideways, the occupant of the seat would be left with no choice but to sit at either end of the seat.

He remarked, "Would it not be better if both go inside the cubicle and occupy both the opposite corners? If only one person enters the cubicle and sits there, he would have to alternate between both windows to have views of both sides. So there would be *time*. There would be *the*

*inconvenience of a cycle* and effort to sit, then stand and go to another side of the window, and then sit again, and then stand and return, and so on. Because outer views are constantly changing as the cubicle is in a constant motion.”

It was not a stationary cubicle. In case both of them sit together at the respective left and right window seats, there would be neither time nor effort as both will see the beauty of the landscapes, the actual “facts” out there simultaneously. They could share their respective perspectives, which would not be possible if they had had only a “one-sided” vision offered by their respective windows. So both going into the cubicle simultaneously would save each other from a lopsided perception. When two are in unison, there is a non-dual perception.

So when someone is aware of both the arguments and their implications, and shows it to the arguing parties, there is the end of the *argument* and there is now instead a beginning of *agreement* which is co-existence, which is love, which comes from an awareness which is seeing the virtual duality fading in a non-dual totality. Only a non-dual awareness can see the duality, and “seeing” the duality from all angles is the ending of that duality, provided it is seen by impartial wisdom, which is an aspect of awareness.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. A sequence is time. A separation is time. Point B coming after point A is time. Time is therefore a division, a partial understanding. Simultaneity is the end of time.

2. So when the children preferred going into the cubicle one after the other, there was the creation of time, of partiality, as one child could sit at only one of the windows of the seat and the other viewpoint was always hidden from his observation. One-sidedness is partiality, incomplete knowledge.
3. Seeing only a particle and thinking that it is all that is, is a fallacy as there is invariably the existence of an anti-particle of it, *somewhere*.
4. Seeing matter is incomplete and a fractured conclusion. Matter is energy inseparably. Our brain can comprehend only one aspect at a time. So seeing both the aspects of anything is true seeing.
5. “Only my view is correct” is a fallacy and the root cause of a family dispute. Truth is that the other’s point of view is as correct, though its correctness is not so visible at the moment, in the given circumstances, or in the heat of a particular type of thinking or mindset. Nothing is ridiculous or fallacious to a loving mind.

# Argument

---

*"I like long walks especially when they are taken by people  
who annoy me".*

*Fred Allen*

The human brain has no concept of being "wrong" in itself. When it errs, even while committing that error, it thinks that it was being correct. It knows about its act being wrong a few moments later when someone else points at it or he through the weight of evidence or logic gets to realize its error. This *righteous* prejudice of the brain is the cause of all conflicts and arguments in a household.

A husband decides to change the existing curtains to green curtains, which he saw this evening in a movie. His wife, coming from her neighbor's house after attending a kitty party there, announces, "Dear, We will change our curtains. And the new color of them is going to be purple, which I saw a few minutes ago at the house where I was partying". The husband reacts, "No, no. Now they would be green". The wife retorted, "Why? Do you think you have a better color sense than me?" And the husband, in a fit of rage, left the room, slamming the door behind him.

The loud thud of the doors terrified a rat that streaked like a tracer bullet under the sofa where it found mice. The rat told the mice, “There are no green curtains.”

And the mice said, “Nor any purple ones”.

The rat said, “No fight is ever for the present, the present curtains, the present issues. Old respective memories transforming into inclinations, randomly picked up by both the warring parties, now wanted to assert themselves. It was not the couple, who fought, but their memories were.”

The mice said, “All those who have ever fought, throughout human history, have always proclaimed that they were invariably the right ones. But a fighting person is never right, because fighting essentially is wrong. So in the tug of war between who is wrong and who is right, both are wrong, because not fighting is the only state, which is right.”

The old curtain, who was calmly listening to this conversation between the rat and the mice, said, “Only an ego wants to be right and is ever in search of somebody else’s wrongdoings but in love both are right and none is wrong because love says that you, my dear are infinitely more valuable to me than my silly ideas. Therefore, both are right in deciding their individual, respective choices. *Freedom to be right* is good but more important is the *right to freedom*. So love is the only right thing and all the fights are wrong”.

A house lizard on the wall said, “Oh, the old curtain is so intelligent, and this stupid couple never valued it and are now even looking to replace it. Of course, it has always been so as someone has aptly said that the things we *already have*, lose their significance as the mind constantly hankers after that which is still out of its possessive reach”.





### Points to ponder:-

1. We argue because of this constant feeling of self-righteousness. Our brain just can not admit its wrongs as it has been wired to turn all flaws, all the gaps in the sensory information, all indecipherable inputs, all wrongs into a correct meaningful something.
2. We stick or adhere to some ideas and then insist on them. We push them forward hard, protect them, justify them. Thus, an argument sprouts.
3. During this argument, we limit our vision to a narrow tunnel and refuse to see others' points of view, which might be equally correct.
4. Even if it is not correct as per our reasoning, the other is *entitled* to deem that thought *correct* as his/her brain works exactly like we and the other's brain was desperately engaged, just like our brain, to conclude correctly from a mess of all sorts of information clear or half - cooked.
5. There can not be an argument or a fight if one sees things in the light of the above truth.
6. Love does not give importance to the importance of one's held beliefs, likes or dislikes, ways of doing things in a particular fashion, mannerisms, prejudices, assumptions, etc. Love doesn't insist. It flows with the moment - the moment filled with the beloved. So love is innocent of any conflict or argument. In love, the difference in opinions does not catapult to a difference in relations. The truth is that love makes no opinions at all.

# Nandi the bull

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*“Before you go into a temple, you must have the quality of Nandi - to simply sit. You are not trying to go to heaven, you are not trying to get this or that - you simply sit”.*

*Sadhguru*

*“Yogis do not aspire to worship god. They aspire instead to dissolve, to become one with divinity”.*

*Sadhguru*

In any Shiva temple in India or abroad, you invariably find a statue of Nandi, the bull of Shiva, facing Shiva's statue or Shiva linga, as if in an eternal wait. It never turns its head in any other direction.

A squirrel chasing another squirrel on a tree trunk in a temple of Shiva came down to Nandi and asked, “Why are you not doing anything? You remain in this unaltered pose for centuries. Why? After all, a wait is only for a fixed period, and even in that one feels tense and immobilized till the object of the wait appears. But you seem calm and relaxed as if there is no hurry. You seem to be in an eternal wait “.

Nandi replied, “I am not waiting for *something to happen*. I am just in a state of being a witness. As I am not waiting in the real sense of the word, there is no expectation, so there is no element of time. I am in

an eternal awareness, not that my wait was eternal. There is no wait for anything. I am observing my master, the Lord Shiva, who is pure awareness himself. I shall not do anything which is of my liking but what the *command of Shiva* is, which is synonymous with what the *demand of the moment* is.”

Hundreds of pilgrims and devotees continued walking past Nandi and the squirrel.

And they continue to this day. They come to the temple not for Shiva but for the fulfillment of their wishes. As their minds are fully occupied with their petty self-concerns, they are unable to listen to the whispers between Nandi and the squirrel.



### Points to ponder:-

1. An aware mind is not in a hurry. It remains a witness. It has no choices or preferences. It is like a mirror. It does not *do* something, but something *happens* through it. In other words, his individual will is not insensitive instead it is passive and has been merged with the collective will of god.
2. When a superfluous mind is momentarily unengaged, it becomes restless, bored, and agitated, but these states of the mind are absent in an aware mind. Nandi, present in every Shiva temple, represents an aware mind, beautifully.
3. Note that it is always focused on Shiva, always facing Shiva - the absolute awareness. This highlights another insight. Only an aware mind can “see” the cosmic awareness, the absolute.

# The joker

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*“The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it,  
Move with it and join the dance”.*

*Alan Watts*

A Buddhist scholar said, “The world is emptiness. There is no such thing as an independent, separate identity. Everything is interdependent, so it is not individual but a collective existence.”

A joker, who happened to be in the audience, asked, “Why are you hanging mid-air between earth and sky, neither here nor there?”

The scholar, enraged by his remark, said angrily, “You fool, Buddhism is all about the ‘middle path’ and not about hanging in mid-air. And I am very well grounded.”

The Joker remarked, “The emptiness or relativity is only here in this temporal world and not beyond it. Why are you so shy to admit that there is a ‘beyond’ on which all existence rests? After all, a fleeting movie can only be played on a constant, stable screen; otherwise, you can not watch the movie. To observe the gliding flow of clouds there must be a non-changing sky in the background. To see any movement, like that of a river or a train, the ground beneath and the surroundings around must be stationary. Therefore, an eternal being is there, call him a god or by any other name, but he has to be admitted into

consideration, though the reasoning mind can not touch it, still “it” is there. It is the “one” from whom all your emptiness and all that has come off.”

The scholar, compelled by his conditioning and rigorous indoctrination of a particular kind, was visibly feeling uneasy. He was now desperately searching for a fitting reply to close off the debate, so he said, “We can not talk about that which is beyond words. Can we ? Beyond time and space, there is nothing, so there is *no one* there”.

The joker broke into an impromptu dance and said, laughing, “Oh ya! Correct. Being such a clever scholar, how could you have missed that subtle clue? My dear sir! Can you say *no one* without the word *one*?. *One* is essentially included in *no one*.”

And as the whole audience joined in the joker’s hilarious dance moves, the scholar, presently being carried away by the sheer force of collective exuberance, said to himself, “Hurrah! Now I’m also feeling like joining this unscholarly dance”.



### **Point to ponder:-**

1. The scholars fight unnecessarily. They don’t fight for truth but for their held beliefs about truth.
2. One, a Buddhist, looks around and says, “It would be sufficient to understand what is here,” and another, a Sanatani Vedic Hindu, looking into a telescope, says, “There is an avalanche which I can see heading towards us, so it is also necessary to look beyond”. “What is” can not be divorced from “what lies

beyond” because what is *beyond* right now is going to impact what is *here*.”

3. Hence, all disputes are the result of looking at only one side of a coin. The truth is that a coin has, both a head and a tail, simultaneously. If we talk about relativity, we must invariably think about the quantum aspect of the matter and the quantum soup. It is not here, it is beyond the sensory reaches of a rational mind.

# An unstoppable cycle

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*"Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it"*

*Confucius*

A car and a cycle were moving on a road.

Suddenly, the car said to the cycle, "Look, what beautiful scenery?"

The cycle replied, "I can not look. Because for me, unlike you, a continuous movement is a must; otherwise, I will lose balance and fall."

The car said, "If that is the case, you will be endlessly trapped in the constantly changing surroundings. You will never be able to focus. You will be enmeshed only in the entertainment tunnel.

Beauty for you is a far cry to behold. Because to behold it you must stop, you must not be carried away by the motion or emotion.

And if you can not see beauty in calmness, you are deprived of joy. That's why you are called a cycle. Because you are constantly within a cycle - a cycle of life and death. True joy is in the freedom from the compulsions. And when you can stop at will, can there be a compulsion?"



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. The universe has an infinite number of cyclic motions at different levels of energy functioning in tandem. The cycle means a constant movement, a constant change, and a constant distraction of variation.
2. Deep awareness is in watching these cycles. When you watch a movement, logically you should not be moving. If you are moving and watching simultaneously, you are not seeing the movement correctly because relativity comes into the picture.
3. Therefore, to see something totally, in its true colors, in its true beauty, one must stop, one must be “present” there. And a mind flowing in thoughts is not present in the “present”.
4. The car in the above story represents a still mind, and the cycle depicts a mind unable to stop as it is restless and can not focus deeply, as the cycle in the above story says that it will fall if it tries to stop. But the car can conveniently bring itself to a halt without falling.



# The Inexhaustible treasure

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*“The world is full of magical things, patiently.  
Waiting for our senses to get sharper”.*

*W.B. Yeats*

A king passing through a village noticed a few children playing. As they saw the king, they ran towards him shouting with joy and wonder. The king pulled the reins of his horse to a halt. When he saw that the children were looking with wonder at his pearls necklace, golden crown, and shining velvet robe, he called them near him and pointed at the big silver boxes placed in a carriage behind him which were overflowing with bejeweled silver and golden ornaments, most probably captured from the treasures of some defeated king.

“Marvelous! Aren't they? Have you ever seen these ornaments with so many precious jewels on them ?” asked the king with pride.

A child came forward and said, “I also have a treasure with me, I think, which is better than yours”.

The king gave a puzzled look to the boy but asked him to show his treasure. The boy pulled out a bottle cap, a coin, a shiny smooth black stone, a feather of a bird, a few dry leaves, a pine flower, and a torn playing card. The boy had collected them because of one or another fascinating qualities about them, like the smoothness, the color, or a

pattern. Anything that captures a child's attention is a source of wonder and joy to him.

The king, seeing all this, burst into a roaring laughter and commented, "What garbage you have collected? Is that your treasure, kid?"

The boy replied, "No sir. This *means a lot to me*, so it can not be called garbage. I derive joy from it because it is *I* who gives value to it, unlike you, whose gems are given their value by some *other persons*, like the gem experts, the goldsmiths, etc. So your joy is defined by others, not mine."

Now the king began to listen with rapt attention as his face bore an expression of joyous surprise. The boy continued, "Moreover, I have more variety than you. There is more to it. If somebody loots your treasure or steals it, it would be you who would feel shattered, not me, if I happened to lose mine. Because I can easily collect another set of such wonderful items. So my treasure is inexhaustible and secured from the dangers of theft."

The king, by now, had alighted from his royal horse and came near the boy and remarked appreciatively, "My dear, for all these years I had a pride in my extraordinary treasures which made *me* feel extraordinary myself. I forgot that joy is never in possessions but in the capability of deriving it from everyday ordinary things and events. Today your words have made me feel like a beggar. I had been a beggar, a royal beggar. I always *lacked something* in my mind, that's why I continuously tried to expand the boundaries of my kingdom, and also the boundaries of my inflated ego. The man who does not have this feeling of lack is a true king."

The boy then gave a parting remark before he resumed his games with his friends, "For you, joy comes through the hoarding of things, which brings in the factors of time and attachment, from the feeling of *owning them*, which is not a true joy like mine. My joy is neither in the

continuity of things nor moments. It sprouts from everything and every moment that presents itself to me. Therefore, it is inexhaustible.”



### **Point to ponder:-**

1. What is derived from the continuity of something is a pleasure, not a joy. Pleasure is created through thoughts, but joy is felt in the totality of being when the mind is unfragmented, whole, and intense.
2. Pleasure comes in company and is never alone. And its inseparable companion is pain. Psychological pain is caused by the probable hurdle to the pleasure, or very short span of the pleasure, or non-realization of the pleasure or degree of the pleasure, which means not turning out exactly the way - it was cherished, it was dreamed.
3. When the pleasure is delayed, there is pain. When it is over, there is pain at its end. Therefore, in pleasure, there is invariably a pain. In joy, pain can not enter. Because joy is not dependent upon thoughts.
4. Pleasure has roots in the past and shoots in the future. So, its stay in the present is very short and negligible. Whereas, joy is a constant movement with each moment, riding on its waves and feeling the thrill of intense “now”. And this NOW never ends.

# Extraordinary

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*“The simple things are also the most extraordinary things,  
And only the wise can see them”.*

*Paulo Coelho*

A seeker of truth asked a monk, “I am very dissatisfied with my life. I try to see loving oneness in every soul but what I see is *defects* in them. I feel that I have failed in my practice of loving-kindness in all beings. Please guide me so that my life becomes meaningful and I stop seeing the shortcomings in everyone”.

The monk replied, “When you scrutinize, you give importance to the parameter, the standard, the criterion, the set rules, and make your beloved the second fiddle. A thought, a dead idea, becomes paramount, and you begin to see the *shortcoming*.”

You see defects in others because you compare a living person with a dead idea. Remove the parameters of *what should* or *should not be*, and the other person becomes extraordinary, as now you see something *extra* in him.

By comparing, you make others seem *short* of the ordinary; that is how a *shortcoming* is created. In a state of non-judgmental love, you see the *extra* in the ordinary, thus making the other *extraordinary*.



### Points to ponder:-

1. When we become “used to” something, we lose the charm, beauty, craze, and extraordinariness of that. Looking at something or someone through, “Oh yes, I know him/her well. He/ she has always been like that” kills that *extra* from the extraordinariness of the person.
2. Love is always seeing with new eyes, not through eyes laced with the dirt of usualness, with the memories of the past. Everything is extraordinary to a child because it does not carry forward past information about those around him.
3. In meditation, when the self fades out, there is a feeling of extraordinariness in everything and every passing moment. Now the mind sees every mundane thing, everyday objects, or people around as extraordinary. It sees bright colors, hues, and energies emanating from all objects which makes it easier to feel the wonder around.
4. To a stale mind ever enmeshed in past debris of bygone things or events, there is left now no wonder or joy anywhere. Even a truly extraordinary thing or event would appear to him as mundane, ordinary, boring. The meaning of the word extraordinary is simply that which we don’t see ordinarily and which is the unusual, beyond the reaches of imagination and expectancy of thoughts.

# Monk and monkey

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*“In oneself lies the whole world and if you know how to look and learn, the door is there and the key is in your hand. Nobody on earth can give you either the key or the door to open, except yourself”.*

*Jiddu Krishnamurti*

A monk was giving a discourse to an audience. There was a big verandah of a temple with a few trees with many squirrels and birds on them.

The monk said, “ We all seek certain things or capabilities in our lives and we get most of them. But the truth is different. It can not be sought in the same way as you seek objects. Objects are limited and within the realm of time and space while truth is neither limited nor is it within time and space. Both statements are the same because anything out of time and space can not have a limit to it.

If we have a formula or a mantra, we expect to get the desired result through it. If we have the key, we assume that we will be able to unlock the lock. But in subtle realms, the key is already inside the lock, and the lock gets opened just by being aware of the lock. So *awareness is the key*”.

A monkey, who was listening to all this attentively, climbing down the tree, asked the monk, “Sir, why am I a monkey and you a monk”?

The monk replied, “Just because you have been chasing the key out there, you are restless due to this chase. You are a monkey. Because your mind is seeking a *key*. I am a monk because I don’t need a key, a formula, a system, or a way to get there. After all, the destination, the path, the lock, and the key are merged in a non-dual way for me. So when you stop chasing the key, you are a monk”.



### Points to ponder:-

1. A spiritual seeker erroneously applies the model of a mechanical world, a world being interpreted through repetitive cycles and happenings, to the spiritual world.
2. A system, a method, a formula, and a key are needed in time and space where there is a gap between things. So, through A, we assume to solve B, through one act we believe to come upon another, through a journey we think that we would reach a decided destination but in the spiritual field, no destination can be decided beforehand.
3. In a repetitive world, practice is paramount as the channels of learning are to be strengthened through repetitions. But in timelessness how would you come upon an earlier state? As there is no such thing as earlier or later in timelessness. Therefore, all systems and keys are meant only for this side of the curtain of time and as we transcend to another side, no such tools prove to be effective there.
4. One more point of caution. There is no such thing as here and there at a deeper level. We use these words only because of

language constraints and because of the way the brain functions. The brain would be at a total loss to comprehend if we say there is something like a *here* and a *there* to denote the world and the subtle timeless field, respectively. In other terminology, we can say that the world is the nirvana or the nirvana is the world.



# The limits of the brain

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*“There are things known and there are things unknown,  
And in between are the doors of perception”.*

*Aldous Huxley*

A neurosurgeon came to see a saint at his ashrama. The surgeon said, “Baba ji, I am a surgeon and know a thing or two about the brain and its functioning. I can dissect it and understand it to some extent but I must say that it is a very mysterious organ and we scientists are still beginning to understand it.

One thing that intrigues me very much about the brain is that it tries to bring order or meaning to the large stock of incoming sensory inputs which are disorderly and mostly meaningless. I think what it does is very much essential for us to live in this world of chaos. But if it was sufficiently perfect, then why are we perpetually in search of meaning in life if meaning is already somehow provided by the human brain, however limited it may be? If it brings order and meaning to our lives, why can not we evolve solely through its power? But the spiritual people claim that to evolve to the higher levels, the brain must be made passive?”

The saint asked the surgeon, “Have you rotated a fire sprinkler during the festival of Diwali? What do you see? A virtual fire circle is perceived

by the brain's faculties, whereas there is no such thing as a fire circle there. Why do you think this is happening?

I will tell you. Because the brain, as I have said, is constantly busy filling up the blanks or giving meaning to the meaningless, it stitches up the separate frames of fire points into a garland of fire. It can not remain with an inexplicable event for long, so it explains that jumbled-up information in its fashion. It can not live at ease in the void, the gap, in the inexplicable state. The truth is inexplicable. It can not be interpreted in terms of some "known" memories or concepts. The fire frames for a microsecond were not under the ambit of the brain's ways. It could not comprehend or make up anything from these fast-changing inputs, therefore, it stitched them up.

The truth of impermanence can not be known by the brain because it turns the discontinued pieces of information into a process, as it can only understand a process but never a fleeting particle event or thing. That is why human beings live as if they are here forever and the world around them with all their near and dear ones will always be like that forever. This is not their fault but a deficiency of the brain, that deficiency which functions as an efficiency to run the affairs of the world marvelously. There is no contradiction in that. One thing is needed *here* but *there* it is useless. To evolve, one must see the gap between the events, between the thoughts, and between the moments. Seeing this gap, this space, is being aware of the transient nature of the world but our brain does not let us see this gap as it engages continuously by stitching the pieces together for our day-to-day functions. And when we see the process out there in the external world, we must not be carried away by the processes inside which are thoughts.

However, the brain can not function without thoughts. Therefore, it has to be passive to evolve. When it is silent, which means it does not see the fire circle, it may have a chance to see the fire points frozen in

time and logically when time is frozen it is eternity. Therefore, the brain does its part to the best of its capabilities to help us function smoothly and meaningfully in the world but as one needs to look beyond, the brain has to be silent and passive. After all, a car is suited if one has to travel from one place to another but it has to be stopped or made passive when one needs to go inside one's home. Going in, it has no use at all.



### Points to ponder:-

- 1) One of the main functions of the brain among other things is the interpretation of the incoming streams of various information per second. Which is too tedious a task for it. So it takes averages. It generalizes. It predicts. And it is not rocket science to infer from it that the brain's interpretations are not one hundred percent correct though pretty workable in this world.
- 2) How can an average, a generalization, or a prediction based on assumed or stored, previous information be correct? However, it is more or less correct regarding those matters or events that are repeatable, which occur at constant and pretty precise time intervals or in a constant format.
- 3) The fun is that at the deeper levels, the brain is also aware of its imperfections. That's the reason it desperately seeks meaning, seeks truth which it believes would not be a generalization but a crude fact, and to come upon a solid fact,

one must remove all that colors or influences a crude fact, like emotions or opinions, etc.

- 4) Therefore, logically speaking, the brain must be passively aware to come to the truth. The brain can not be understood just by dissecting it in a lab or studying it through psychology. It must be understood holistically by not only studying its temporal functions but at the same time, being oblivious to its finer vibrations, which are active in other dimensions also. One must study its functioning in this world and the finer quantum world together.

# Meditation

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*Meditation is not a way of making your mind still.  
It is a way of entering the quiet that is already there”.*

*Deepak Chopra*

*“Meditation is the dissolution of thoughts in Eternal awareness or pure  
consciousness without objectification, knowing without thinking, merging  
finitude in infinity”.*

*Voltaire*

A monk was sitting with the head monk on a rock boulder overlooking a lake. The junior monk asked, “I am still having difficulties in meditation. When I sit silently, letting the sensory inputs in, I flow in thoughts. If I shut them off forcibly, I get a headache. Still, they don’t go away and resurface with more vigor. Please guide what to do?”

The head monk replied, “When we are passive, the sensory inputs come in and they fade as we don’t pay attention to them. The secret is that only those sensations would be recorded which are attended to. All others would be unrecorded.

We record, only when they are named or recognized or classified that they are so and so. Suppose I see something, I cannot classify it as a fruit, a vegetable, or a ball, as there is dense fog. Then it would not

become a memory. But as I say that it was a terrific fog, *something* hidden in the fog was invariably there, and I felt difficulty in ascertaining it and suppose it was very crucial to be identified; in that case, there would be a memory of the incident, though still not of that object. Therefore, memories can be of things and also of events that accompany an emotion with them. All this is part of self-observation.

But still, memories are being formed and thoughts sprout from memories. So it is still not a profound meditation. Go deep and find out what is meditation without a meditator?"

The head monk took a pebble and threw that into the lake horizontally, making it skip the water surface five to six times as it jumped. Both watched it. Then the head monk asked the younger monk, "Did you hear the call of a deer in the woods? A drop or two fell upon us as the dark clouds gathered in the sky, and it was about to rain. Did you notice all that?"

The astonished younger monk said, "No, absolutely not. I was immersed in watching the jumps of the pebble over the water, counting how many times it jumped and how far it traveled. I was busy with all that. You were doing the same, but you could feel other sensory inputs as well. How is that?"

The head monk replied, "As I said earlier, paying attention to a set of sensations causes memory. In other words, concentration causes memory. But awareness does not. Awareness is being *open* to all sorts of sensations simultaneously. I was aware of everything. Though you may be aware of all things, this awareness does not have the quality of particularity. Whereas a memory is always of a particular thing or event. When you see the sun, you have a memory of a particular thing, which is the sun. But when you see the sun, the golden rays of the sun falling on the snowy peaks of the mountains, its rays on the jungle trees with

their leaves sparkling in its light, the stopping of the morning wind as the sun became intense, the warmth you felt on your skin as you walked on a path, the birds beginning to chirp and the whole world rising - you see all this and this not a memory. There is no particular memory.

When you feel one sensation, you focus. When there are multiple sensations and you focus, there is still a faint memory. But if you are fully aware that there is no 'self' active and there is no *one* who is *seeing*, there is no memory. There is then oneness of the object and the subject because you are not particular at that moment. In concentration, you focus, you exclude all other sensations, and you are not aware of them if you didn't notice the call of the deer and the falling of raindrops upon you. Awareness is meditation because it is all-inclusive. The moment you exclude anything, you are fragmented. You are not 'wholistic' at that moment. Meditation is a state of oneness which knows no divisions of any kind".



### Points to ponder:-

1. Meditation is awareness of the world around and within. It can not cut away, restrict, or exclude anything. Because exclusion is limitation and awareness is the melting away of all limits. Concentration is exclusive but awareness is inclusive.
2. When there is totality, there can not be a separating self, thinking self, or a limiting self that is coiled into its self-concerns. Therefore, meditation is participation in everything, with everything. The self doesn't relate to and hence participates with everything at the subtle levels.

3. When participation is total, there can not be any memory. When there is partial combustion, ash is produced, and memories are formed. In a total fire, there is no possibility of any residue or ash being left. When you are in ecstasy or explosive bliss, do you remember clearly what happened in great sequence or detail? You can not.
4. As there is no time in bliss, it is timeless and boundaryless. There cannot be a limit of any kind in the totality of intense perception, so meditation is a journey from timelessness to timelessness. An effort to meditate is the creation of a limit. Therefore, meditation can not be done through an *effort* of any sort. It, like love, just happens unexpectedly.



# There is no authority.

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*“Blind belief in authority is the greatest enemy of truth”*

*Albert Einstein*

A young monk was addressing the audience. He said something weird, and the audience became restless. He said, “To evolve, we must be an author but not have authority”. There was unrest, and the crowd, mainly of “believers”, was quite agitated.

They shouted in a chorus, “O monk! How will we follow someone who has no authority?”

The young monk was unruffled. He asked, “Do you know what being an author is and what the implications of having authority or giving authority to anything or anyone are?”

As the crowd calmed down and began to listen, he continued, “When a person discovers something, brings something from another dimension, sees something that others are not seeing at the moment, and expresses it in some meaningful way, he is an author. An author is someone who has a vision and when this vision is brought to the public, ego enters. The ego wants to encash the power. It wants to assert itself, to dominate and regulate others’ lives. Therefore, authority comes into play. Of course, in the social field, it is useful to have certain authorities like development authorities and the authority of law or a

policeman. However, having a psychological authority is detrimental to one's higher ascent. Still worse and dangerous is having spiritual authorities."

The young monk noticed that the crowd was still perplexed, as the firm grounds on which they had been standing till now, were suddenly taken away from under their feet, the comforting shoulders on which they had been resting their restless and fearful heads were now being removed, their beliefs held intact for centuries were now being challenged.

But the young monk continued, "When you create authority, you stop discovering anymore as that act would be taken care of, you assume, by the authority itself. A guru says, "Outsource doubts, sorrows, and discomforts to me and I will take care of them." But these can never be outsourced. If you are hungry, your tummy would not be filled up by the eating action of someone else or your illness would not go away if the medicine is consumed by your so-called authority."

"But the guru guides us.....", a voice was heard from the crowd.

The monk said, "You can be guided in the dimension of time and space, but not when the journey is beyond. Guidance is always from the past - the previous moment. But the truth has to be discovered anew. If you are 'guided', is that a true discovery? Spirituality is nothing but a continuous discovery of the unknown. And in the pursuit of the *unknown*, a *known* instruction might be a hindrance."



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. When one is exploring something, he has a probability that he will discover something only because he is doing it all by himself. Nobody can discover for you or explore an unknown for you. When you explore or discover, bring something new from another dimension to this dimension, you are an author, but if you wait for others to do it for you, you are looking at an authority.
2. For the spiritual and scientific matters, authority is useless. Rather, authority proves to be a hindrance. More about authority will be discussed in the next chapter - Corruption.

# Corruption

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*“Where there is self-interest, there is the origin of corruption”*

*Jiddu Krishnamurthy*

As a monk finished his evening discourse on a stage specially constructed for the monk’s lecture, along with many other guests on a large public ground, a man from the audience asked his permission to ask something. The monk nodded.

The man asked, “When one looks at the world around, one sees something inflicting the whole world, and that is corruption. Everybody, every department, every institution seems to be corrupt. Anyone who has a power of some sort becomes corrupt in no time. A few years back, I watched a Spider-Man movie that had a dialogue in it about how power corrupts. And the absolute power corrupts absolutely. Then, is there any hope that we would live in a corruption-free world ?”

The monk became silent momentarily and then spoke, “What is corruption? It means an alteration in the state of things as they should be. It means rupturing or breaking from something. We break the trust, the honest and judicial treatment. So we twist things. You break away from the original setup.

Let me explain it in simple terms. I want some work to be done. If I want it to get done “out of the norms,” that means that I want preferential treatment, I must pay something “extra” for that. So payment of illegal money towards the extra treatment or services is corruption. Now we all want VIP treatment. We all want our work done fast and comfortably without hassles by the authorities, so they demand something under the table, and we comply. Both are instruments of corruption. When we have the power to affect the course of certain processes or the lives of people, we become corrupt in the sense that we now demand a return gift for that “benevolence” of ours. So an authority becomes corrupt.

In love, we may go the extra mile, but those who are out of the radar of our compassion are charged for that extra effort. Therefore, ego is the corruption itself. The ego wants importance. It seeks to be seen as a notch above others, as it is special and unique. So it can not be treated “like others”. Therefore, it hates to stand in a queue or to wait for something like a common man. Hence, it starts corrupting the authorities who, in turn, are already prone to it, and are already looking for those extra bucks from anywhere. So it becomes very convenient to be corrupted and to corrupt the other simultaneously.”

The questioner asked, “Then there is no hope to end corruption in the society at all?”

The monk asked, “Why are you thinking of ending it *out there*? Why not begin with yourself? Go deep. When you twist reality or manipulate things to use them for your benefit, you are not being honest. Honesty is presenting what is. It is doing what you are saying. If you behave differently from what you say, you are, in a way, a corrupt person. Then ignorance is also the cause of corruption if you go deeper. What is known to the senses is not there at the fundamental level. Moreover, what the senses see is carried to the brain, which interprets it. If it

interprets it “exactly” as the sensation is, then it is authentic otherwise, it is the corruption of the brain because the brain likes to interpret the new in terms of old, which are prejudices, opinions, likes and dislikes, assumed truths, hastily arrived conclusions, etc. All this is corruption in spiritual fields. So doing what you say, not jumping the queue for preferential treatment, not interpreting the inputs of senses in terms of stored information, being original, uninfluenced, or distorted by the collective - all this is the way of being and remaining free of corruption. When emotional turbulence clouds the intelligence, there is also corruption - the corruption of the factual truth.

We can not reform the collective directly, but if we transform ourselves, the collective is affected by it. So instead of removing corruption from society, which is very complicated, one must strive to be incorruptible oneself. That is the only way.”

As the crowds dispersed after the discourse and the monk was being seen off by his many followers, devotees, and the dignitaries who had assembled there, a politician came rushing to the monk and, folding his hands, said to the monk, “Sir, I hope that you recognize me. Do you remember last year, I visited your monastery and you blessed me? And you know what? I have won the parliamentary election this year. That sparkling red car parked on the roadside is waiting to take you to your monastery. This you can keep at your monastery for your perusal. It is only a small gift from me for your blessings”.

A stray dog, who was closely watching all this, said to the other dog, “Who is more corrupt of the two? The politician or the monk standing on such high moral grounds?”

The other dog replied, “None. Asking for a blessing and accepting a gift can not be called corruption. But giving money or benefits of some kind to get something done is corruption. In a case of corruption,

conditionality is a must, like- “If you do this, I will pay you this much amount, or give me that amount and your work will be done without any hiccups.” But blessing and gifting out of gratitude are voluntary”.



### **Points to ponder:-**

1. When A is used to get B, there is corruption. Here, A means power, position, knowledge, or anything that influences the action which is B. Therefore, authority in psychological matters is corruption but not being an author. The author discovers something, and that is possible only when the ego is absent, but once there is the discovery that is encashed to get accolades, etc, or to manipulate others, then it is corruption fundamentally.
2. So basically corruption is ingrained in the human psyche as it strives to interpret the new in the terms of old, the fresh perception through the sieve of, the filter of, some previous knowledge. The old knowledge influences the new perception. An action without the influence of the old opinions is essentially free from corruption.
3. Seeds of corruption are in the feeling of being important, feeling superior to others. The importance of self demands the importance meted out in the public. “Do my work out of the normal procedure because I am important,” and this is asked of the power source who can do it. So one point of corruption attracts another point of corruption, and this continues.

4. The humble mind can not be corrupt, as humility means having no ego, and no self, and the self is the initiator of corruption. True humility is not conforming to the dictates of the self, not interpreting the new in terms of “what has been”.



# The Waiter

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*“Do not go searching for a Guru. When the pain of ignorance within you becomes a scream, a Guru will come in search of you”.*

*Sadhguru*

*“And then there is me, always waiting for you”.*

*J H Hard*

A tourist who had checked into a beautiful hotel at a hill station. He spent a week there reading various books and being occupied with social media. The waiter served him all three meals in the room, and he never showed up outside. The waiter, out of curiosity, asked him, “Sir, since you checked in here one week ago, you have remained inside throughout. Is there any particular reason for it ?” The man noticed one peculiar thing about the waiter: he was very much concerned about his hygiene, so he always wore a mask. He had worn a white dress with two rows of steel buttons (a dress usually one can find with the waiters wearing it in an expensive 5-star hotel), white gloves, and white headgear. He looked impeccably neat and clean.

The man said, “Nothing special. I came here actually for rest. I usually remain in the vortex of a hectic lifestyle in my hometown. Now I just want to relax and rest. That is the reason of mine staying indoors.”

On the last day, a few hours before he checked out, he came out for a while and thought of exploring the area. He trekked in a forest which was quite dense with a lot of vegetation. There were pines and Deodars, and on their large stems was a thick layer of mosses. The smell of burning wood from a jungle hut down the valley was filling his nostrils. Suddenly, he looked up and was stunned to behold the golden color spreading from the rising sun over the snow-capped peaks. He stood there, immobilized in awe. The movement of time seemed to stop, and a dense silence filled everything from the distant peaks to the valleys below.

As he was in a trance-like state, mesmerized for a few moments, a monk passed by him. Seeing him in an inexplicable wonder and joy, the monk spoke, "Joy is also known as *ecstasy*. That means - *staying out*. Till you stayed in, there was just a faint pleasure derived from man-made things. You were busy there. But as you came out of the prison, the enclosure, the hotel, and also of your mind, you "stood out" from your boring repetitive ego. And standing out of the ego's influence is ecstasy, which is pure joy".

The man came back to his senses from the spell as he listened to such enlightening and wonderful words of the monk. He was in for another shock. There was no monk. He searched here and there for him, frantically, in all directions but could not find him.

When he returned to the hotel, he told the incident about that monk to the waiter. The waiter, hearing his story, patiently said to him, "No such monk, as you have described, lives here. But we have heard from our elders that a master appears only when a student is ready. He lets himself be seen only by those who have the potential to break free but presently are self-enclosed. He, otherwise, remains invisible and nobody, who doesn't need any instructions, ever sees him".

The man loaded his luggage in the boot of his taxi and looked back from the window of the car at the hotel. He thought how lucky he had been to check into this hotel where such extraordinary experiences happened. The wheels of his car began moving, and he looked one last time towards the hotel, the room where he had stayed.

He saw that same waiter in his room through the transparent glass wall. He was changing his dress. As he put down his waiter's white dress with steel buttons, white turban, and white gloves, et al, his inner maroon robe became visible. He was *that monk*.



### Points to ponder:-

1. A mind caught up in the prison of the daily routines gets used to it and no thought waves of breaking free or venturing out splash over it. This habituation or conditioning is inertia. We are more or less satisfied with this jail of *usualness*.
2. Then one among us ventures out for an experiment, for a stroll into the unknown. After one scientific or psychic discovery here and another there, one feels that this is nothing and there is an infinite horizon with inexplicable beauty and joy.
3. In such a state when his mind is ready, a master appears who tells him the meaning of ecstasy, which is stepping out of self, out of restricting thoughts. As the lesson is given and understood, the need for a teacher ends, and the monk or teacher disappears.

4. The waiter says that there is no monk, which means in actuality there is no monk as a different, distinct entity from him. He was the monk but functioned discreetly in this dimension as a common man, a waiter. The word *waiter* is used beautifully in the story as true teachers wait for their prospective and able learners.

# Awareness is not “auto”matic

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*“ If things are happening in our lives, by default, with no conscious participation by us, and we are under the intoxication of a mechanical routine, we can not be said to be aware. Awareness is not automatic”*

*Pankaj Sudan*

Maya Das is an auto driver. Today he is sad, a dejected man. He is sitting at the seashore watching the coming and going waves with indifference. He is seeing the transitory reality as presently a wave blew off a sandcastle made by a child a few minutes ago.

“So uncertain, so sudden, so cruel - everything”, he mutters to himself. His eyes are brimming with tears. The night before, he had lost a valuable thing, a part of his existence, the means of his livelihood - his only possession - his auto rickshaw. Somebody had stolen it. It was everything for him. He worked through it. He slept in it at night. He lived in it. The auto was everything to him.

Maya Das mutters to himself, “My auto was my freedom. The very meaning of this word - auto is that which runs by itself. Being in auto mode means that there is, presently, no need to think or worry about anything; everything will be taken care of automatically. Like in the case of autopilot, things move by themselves. So was my life. Moving by itself, by default. There was no worry for me. Now what would I do”?

The evening sun was going down on the horizon. The darkness was approaching, and the waves became more and more restless and violent. When the mind is dark, the emotions reign supreme. Then there is no voice of reason. With the sun going down, the winds get stronger. It seems that, with the light going off, the reason also goes off.

But there came a reason in the form of hope, a human being, a policeman on duty who approached him. The policeman asked him, "What is your name ? Why are you sitting here at the lonely beach at this odd hour ? And odd here means dark. Because, in the light, there is nothing that can be said odd".

Maya Das, the auto driver, replied as he got up, " Sir, my auto-rickshaw had been lifted by someone. That was my only source of livelihood. Now, right now, I am just unable to think what to do and where to go as that auto was also my home as I used to spend my nights in it."

The policeman said, "Don't worry. I am there. The function of the police or a policy is the same - to safeguard the unprotected. Don't fear. I am there. By the way, why do you people drive an auto? You should drive something that does not have this stupid-sounding word - auto. Because we are the police force- we are the persons who live life on policy, the state policy, the policy of the law, and any policy maker, anyone engaged in sorting things out thoughtfully, intelligently hates this word - auto because auto means automatic, self-sufficient or self-regulatory - a meaning from which a stinking smell of defiance, a sort of parallel authority comes out, giving our sensitive nostrils a terrible time. Oh, don't mind. It is my personal feeling. Anyway, come to my police station tomorrow morning, and then we will find a means to recover it."

Maya Das and the policeman went their separate ways. Maya Das was now searching for a suitable roadside safe area to retire for the night. He soon found one. As he lay there looking at the myriad stars in the sky, he got lost in his musings. "I am seeing what the Latin philosophers wrote hundreds of years ago in the form of a phrase - 'Astra castra, numen lumen' - which means stars are my camp and the god is my lamp. What a wonderful feeling !"

A beggar dozing nearby shouted at him in his sleep, "Shut up your mouth and shut up your mind because when your mind is shut only then your mouth can be shut. So stop seeing things in your mind. If you stop imagining there, there will be silence here" and pointing at his mouth smilingly dozed off again.

Maya Das went down yet again in a different thinking overdrive, "Why am I sad? Is it due to my dependence on my auto or being attached to it? Or both? We become dependent upon anything only because inside we feel an attachment to that thing. I can not do anything, and can not survive without my vehicle, so I am attached and dependent on it. But wait! Is it not with everyone that they can not do without thoughts, which are the vehicles of information or emotions, so everyone is attached? Am I the only one in this scenario? Everybody in this world is. Everybody is attached to their vehicles outside and also to vehicles inside, which are thoughts. Thoughts move them, let them function in this world. Thoughts are their vehicles. They are "nothing" without their thoughts."

The beggar got up angrily as his sleep was broken by the musings of Maya Das. So he kicked him. Then he went down to sleep again, murmuring this to himself, "Stupid fellow, thinking non-stop ! What a stupid thing it is to think ? Everybody is thinking day and night. And they are going nowhere. Just thinking, thinking, thinking".

The road became active. It became alive with the first rays of the sun falling on this part of the globe. Where there is sunlight, there is life, there is activity and movement. The plants, the birds, the animals, and the man - all get up and begin their daily chores. The tea vendors on the road became active, and the daily traffic began flowing. Maya Das got up. It was his first morning as a homeless, auto-less existence. For the first time in his life, he was not getting up from the back seat of his auto. It was a different experience for him. A different experience brings along different emotions also. He was now sad again as his mind was remembering his auto, the sweet memories, the fond memories of a comforting thing.

A few hours later, he was at the police station. The policeman greeted him and said that soon he would be regaining his lost item. He said, "When you were driving an auto, your auto was searching for the prospective commuters or travelers. Now you are searching for your auto, and we both have become seekers. Earlier, you and your autorickshaw were searching the prospective riders and the people, and now you are asking people the whereabouts of your auto; you are taking the help of people to track down your auto. Ain't it funny?"

Maya Das nodded his head but said, "Then is there any other way? Objects chase pleasures, and pleasures chase the objects. A shop searches for customers, and customers search for shops. A lover says, "No one is like her," and the beloved says, "No one is like him". So they like and search for the unknown in each other. Both are right in some way and wrong in another. But the right is short-lived, whereas the wrong lives on after that. Now I am seeing it. The only mistake is the search - the search of infinite in the finite, which is the basis of all human endeavor, all human love, all human enchantment, all human sorrows and disillusionments".

The policeman said very compassionately to Maya Das, "I see you are becoming clear in your understanding. The search is not wrong. But



we must research the search, I mean we must discover, and be aware of, what is implied in all this search. Awareness frees us from all the searches. Now intelligence and mechanical automation are blended, and we realize that infinite includes all the chases of the finite mind within its ambit, so compassion takes over the desiring love, and research takes over the “memory-induced” selfish searches.”

Then as Maya Das stood there speechless in a bubble of joyous astonishment - which comes only when a persistent illusion melts away, the policeman pointed towards a parked auto at the back of the police station and said, “ Go and take your lost auto. It was stolen by, none other than, myself. I did so to put you on this wonderful journey of “auto - search”. You can call it auto -research or atma - gyan, whatever you like”.



### Points to ponder:-

1. This story is highly symbolic. The human mind usually runs on a default mode. We process the information and make a large chunk of that as an autonomous system through conditioning habits, etc. Therefore, the man in the story uses an auto and lives through it. That auto is his everything.
2. Wise ones, who want to see such a person evolve, free him from this dependence by taking away the object of his automation, which is the autorickshaw in this story. Here, the policeman does this act.
3. When our crutches are suddenly taken away, we feel distraught. So the man was restless, and when one is restless, he tends to overthink or overtalk. That's why the beggar in the story advises him to shut up.

4. The new morning suggests a new horizon that opens up for the man, and he now begins to see the facts as they are. And the policeman restores the auto to him. This means that after the realization, the mechanical aspect of the mind continues to function, but the mind as a whole is now in a different zone, a timeless zone.
5. The meaning of auto search is self-discovery, which is pointed out beautifully at the end of the story.