

HUBS that  
**PROVOKE**

*all, rich in merit*  
**Roy T James**



# Hubs That Provoke

Roy T James

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# ALL MY HUBS

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These are some of my views on controversial issues. They may not be fully and unquestionably right, nor will they be a farce, and completely devoid of merit.

## **Roy T James**

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## Chapter 1 Male, Female and Libido – An Oblique View

I shall begin with a short introduction to the state of the art, as far as sex and the genders go.

A man's sex drive is mainly in his head. Two areas of the brain, the cerebral cortex and limbic system, are vital to a man's sex drive and performance. They're so important, the fact is that as far as man is concerned, simply thinking or dreaming about a sexual experience is enough to empower him for a blissful completion. Researchers are finding new evidences of arousal of men caused by imagery and related stimuli, whereas such objects make only marginal changes in women's sexual attitude.

Also many of the statistics and reports show that men tend to have the higher libido. I believe that part of the problem with a lot of the studies (like Johnson & Johnsons) is in the "social stigma's" that have been existing in the past centuries. Even though women nowadays feel more liberated and find it more "appropriate" to express their sexual desires/drives, not much has changed in this regard. The old double-standard stands in a lot of instances, as though possessing some safety cover. For example, one of the most barbaric of all anti female rituals, FGM, is freely practiced in many parts of the world. (I happen to read a supporting letter or article written by a woman, stating how liberating, FGM was for her and how comfortable, it made her feel.)

From our medical knowledge, we identify this difference in libido with women's hormonal balances. Women tend to have extreme highs and lows in estrogen, progesterone, FSH (follicle-stimulating hormone), LH (luteinizing hormone) because of menstruation, where as men's Testosterone, Estradiol, SHBG (Sex Hormone Binding Globulin), PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen), etc. tend to remain fairly constant across the board until midlife. Hence, men also actually have a cycle similar to the woman's monthly cycle (though not as extreme) and they also go through "andropause", the equivalent of menopause, however, this takes the form of a lifetime cycle

Functionally, it is generally accepted that libido in both sexes is equally strong. Men tend to 'show off' this sexual aggressiveness, while women tend to keep a more tongue in cheek libido. Women may be more conservative, and, pickier. It is thus accepted that most women talk of

relationships, while most men talk of sex in general. But there are women who would appear this way as well--overly aggressive. On the whole, it is normal for men to be more aggressive; women will be, but only selectively. And that is why sex-drive is more evident in men.

I think we are way off the mark. From what can be learned by observing other forms of life (described in my book, *The Unsure Male*), not only that there is no aspect of life and living, where females show a capability less than that of male, but also there are instances after instances, where the females show a discernible upper hand, when compared with male.

If that so, how come in the matters concerning sex, human males are being widely attributed with a more aggressive and imposing role, a remarkable deviation from other forms of life? In search of an answer, I started observing the male life style closely, especially those aspects that are unique for males. The answer I found, happen to be quite an intuitive one too. Our bodies are so constituted as to put the benefits of multitasking to full use. We use each and every part of our physique for more than one function. For example, the same organ is used for speaking and for tasting, and so for smiling and for biting, or so for looking and for crying.

As an unintended consequence of this, so far as man is concerned, whenever he does relieve himself, especially when the male anatomy requires him to be in physical contact with the necessary implement throughout the act, the possibility of him being strongly reminded of the other 'task' of this implement, exists. This repeats many a time in a day, that too in an ambience of comparative seclusion and privacy. Stage is set for arousing images to appear with exciting thoughts. As there is no evidence to suggest that the male sex is gifted with additional willpower to counter this, a rather violent and excited disposition could be the result. Those inclined to meaningful vocations of life, like arts, crafts, science, or philosophy, generally vent this as increased productivity (This we reward as long as it is on matters other than sex, while reproaching heavily, if it happens to be connected with sex!), and others, especially those on the fringes of camaraderie, vent this in ill treating women. This, I think, is how aggression came to be associated with men in general.

Here you may be wondering, why men resorted to crimes against women? They could have easily found something less harmful and more likeable to do with women, to act on the images that came up during such occasions as the ones narrated above. However that doesn't happen. That

is because the male sex is severely limited in its ability to do good to the females. Many such occasions in the past (during evolution!) ended up in the male getting severely admonished, whenever he attempted to do something good for the female. (A casual glance at the fate of the male of the species whenever a mating session completes, can show that the male, even now, continues to get reprimanded! Imagine how a constant image of wailing males will act on the male psyche) Therefore, being intelligent, man always resorts to one of the few things he is sure of, the easiest being such types of violence. (This in fact is the main finding of my book)

Naturally, as a reaction at least, when women would have come to giving a fitting reply, they also would have turned aggressive. It did happen or not, we don't know. As there is no evidence to suggest that in the earlier times women weren't forceful in finding their way, we can say, the passive nature of women is a later development. I think women have resigned to a rather submissive role now, because of two reasons. One, as women became experienced in these matters, it became clear to them that all that can be expected from men is nothing more than mere passive, sometimes good, presence. Two, men found it really gratifying to extend assistance to women on all and sundry issues and started volunteering for anything and everything, at the flimsiest of reason. (These days women happen to be found everywhere with a subdued libido and a bashful temperament, as that will encourage the man to volunteer for anything, the woman would find inconvenient to do herself!)

The end result is that, men proudly dumped on themselves, all the tough, uninteresting and dangerous activities of living. And the women chose to stick to the rather less taxing and emotionally rewarding functions of life, tending to home and family. Over the ages, the physique of men and women came to be of different capacity, as all the while, both were exposed to differential loading. (The origins of the hottest issue between the sexes, the suppression of the female sex, can be seen here. In the beginning, both men and women would have been of comparable strength, the women perhaps having more ferocious temperament like the female of all other species. To escape from his fear of free time, men constantly volunteered for all activities of life, and as a result, women would have enjoyed a light, relaxed routine. Over the ages men thus acquired a stronger physique, leading to the present disparity.)

As a permanent solution to our problems, in the case of man, I think it is worth examining the possibility of separating the sexual, and the urinary functions from the very same organ meant for both. And in this, genetic engineering could turn out to be of good use. Perhaps the welcome

changes brought by such an alteration could free the mankind of immense misery. (One such being the possibility that this disparity will get automatically corrected in a few years. As in a few (many?) generations both the male and the female genders will turn out to be of comparable strength and stamina.)

## **Chapter 2 Why do we live as closed societies?**

The very idea of a society should be against human nature. Each member of the human species is vastly different from every other member of his species, having distinct physical and mental makeup with ones own priorities and approach. What is good for one need not be acceptable to every other person, and this, in fact, is what we celebrate as uniqueness or individuality. Therefore, it stands to reason to conclude that the human race will be best served when each and every member of the species grows unhindered in one's individual space or environment.

But what is actually happening is something else. Apart from groups based on age, language, nativity, profession and other naturally identifiable differences, abstract walls like religion, caste or social status and many other artificial differences are constantly rising in our midst, making it impossible to live without being part of a group. Unlike animals who took the natural path of cohabiting in groups as their survival is better ensured when they are organized thus, our species took the unnatural path of organizing themselves into groups. (In fact it is better to consider this as a good assumption, remember, no one has established the survival rate of animals as considerably low or different, when not in groups. We saw them moving in groups, we also saw them fighting against threat, and we put two and two together!) We also overlook the fact that humans can survive better when not in groups. For example, widely dispersing at the sign of danger, is a part of the survival strategy of well trained forces.

This can become much more clear, if we are to examine the 'successes' and 'failures' of human society since the beginning of history. Those that are most often quoted as 'success stories', are the tales of individual brilliance, like those extolling the capabilities of our effort in subjugating the planet and controlling its forces. In stark contrast, almost all the failure stories pertain to natural calamities or human intolerance. It should be clear as daylight, in any such disaster, the loss would have been

much less and easily containable, had not the victims been living as a settlement, well connected to each other and with close interactions.

If we are to scrutinize in earnest, the advances we made and the pitfalls encountered, it is possible to label almost all instances of success as attributable to individual excellence, be it associated with arts, crafts, science, philosophy, exploration, cure or anything else. Take the case of the age of exploration, one of the most successful periods in human history, where almost all the talents that we are proud of, came to fore. The distinct mark left by some of our predecessors, whose spirit of adventure and the desire to face challenge being the singular reason behind such endeavors, is clearly noticeable in the way we identify many countries, places or other entities. In the modern era, there is no invention, discovery, physical things of existence or abstract ideas, which cannot be attributed to some fertile mind.

Disregarding all this, we chose to constrict ourselves into a society. Why?

A closer look at the life and living style of animals can show that the only activity in life, where animals take part as individuals is mating. All other 'chores', be it related to food gathering, or to rest and of recreation are always performed as a group. If so, why is mating restricted to the 'individual sphere' of animals? Why don't they perform this in groups? What is there to prevent animals from partnering with the intention to mate, when they are in groups?

To find an answer to this, let us re-examine mating, closely, breaking down the process into stages, before, after and during the conduct of union. The period before, made noticeable by the plethora of natural enhancements to the females' appearance and form, presumably is to attract the male. The union proper or the exchange of gametes also, is easily noticeable by the short time interval between the end and its beginning. But it is the post mating behavior that deserves further study, as, for animals belonging to whatever species, this phase is made striking by the total transformation, of the female into an epitome of distaste. A few examples shall be:

- The males of the honey bee are led to their death; their genitals drop off inside the queen.

- The male of the spider, black widow, usually dies days after mating, although occasionally he is so weak after mating that he is captured and eaten by the female.



- Among the insect, praying mantis, females devour their partners after mating.

- Female of the cat will scream and then move away immediately on completion of mating, fall down, lick herself furiously, roll around and if Tom doesn't leave the scene promptly or tries to approach her right after mating she will strike out at him.

- The not so friendly demeanor among the female of our canine friends as soon as the male dog completes its mission.

- The female of the lion may mate approximately every 15 minutes when she is in heat, continuously for three days and nights without sleeping, and sometimes with five different males. The males are left physically exhausted as the act is often accompanied by snarling, biting, growling, threats and other forms of violence. Sometimes the female turns and swats the male during dismount.

- Female of one of the most gentle and docile of all animals, deer, show tendencies of violence only on exceptional occasions, the post union unrest being one such occasion.

One thing can be read from this beyond doubt. Animals cannot afford to mate when they are in groups, as the resulting commotion, the post mating fury of large number of females, will not be suitable for happy existence. Also while in groups there are many other activities of mutual involvement that are far more acceptable, to males specially. It is therefore natural that animals choose to form into groups.

I think we blindly followed animals. Having decided to perform the crucial activities of mating in private, we needed to find a reason for doing it so. As human nature posits, we would have found a reason for doing so, in a good abstraction, shyness. Covering ourselves with clothes, which gave rise to a plethora of pastimes like vanity or timidity, and many other signatures of human race, could find its origin here. (I think, we can't withstand the weather now, since our bodies have become used to clothes, is a better argument, than that we started to cover ourselves for escaping from the weather)

In fact for finding a reason to continue our life as a society, we are attributing whatever good that happens with us, to our social life. Also, whatever untoward happens with us, we always want to attribute that to someone from our race. Whereas facts are exactly the opposite!

## Chapter 3 Religion: How a New one Evolve

Religions: a *raison d'être*

No other example, of mankind's quest for the irrational, shall be more descriptive than our journey in theology.

The earliest civilizations chose as gods, everyday objects or beings or other entities occurring naturally. These objects of veneration would not have been successful enough in holding our attention for a considerable period of time, in the defense against destabilizing thoughts, the primary function of any such entity. (That 'the destabilizing thoughts' is an integral part of life, and all that we see as unique to humans is closely related to this, is discussed in one of my books, *The Unsure Male*) This could have been the reason for successive cultures to choose as revered objects and gods, anything that is grand, esoteric and of magnificent proportions. Two things must have happened at this stage. Firstly, with the elapse of time, people would have acquired the necessary skills and the ability to make all these images and other representations at a faster rate, resulting in a larger amount of 'free time'. Secondly, the objects itself, by constant use, would have become part of the daily use implements, the resulting proliferation giving away the novelty value. The essential function of making sure that no time is left for the 'destabilizing' thoughts being compromised thus, and the improvisations having lost their bite to spark fresh, unique thoughts, people would have been on the lookout for something more potent. Thus begins the era of spiritual exploration giving rise to many new religions. Each new religion is nothing but an amalgam of tenets founded on a varied mix of the harsh ones amongst the existing social norms and a few, even harsher ones, newly thought of. Needless to say, the more abstract the tenets, the more long-lasting the effects; the more constricting the rites, the more substantial the crowds.

Bottom of Form

Thus, religion is but an excuse to bypass the rational while immersing oneself in constrictions and impediments. On top of that, religion offers a large structure, a medium in which such restrictions can manifest. And we are able to introduce new constrictions and impediments at will and with ease, that too with no fear of resolution.

In fact every new religion holds sway over the society for certain period of time till the followers start yearning for something more

stringent. This can happen, as, due to frequent use, the existing religious controls might become largely ineffective in keeping the 'destabilizing' thoughts at bay. As one can easily see, the effectiveness of those 'stringent' controls continues to get blunted by familiarity. This will render it powerless to defend against the 'destabilizing' thoughts, creating a void, to be filled by either a different sect of the present religion following more severe controls, or a new religion itself. As all religions are based on controlling the three most potent social 'retardants' that human beings have identified as effective in regulating the severity and order of social transactions, new sect or religion takes shape with differing degree of harshness, in the control and regulation of those very retardants.

The first such force is easily identifiable as fear. The most potent of which, the fear of the unknown, thus occupy the position of 'retarder' number one. Modulating this dread is the primary service that all religions render to us, right from the time of birth. All religions thus exploit this fear to direct humans to organize their lives in a manner suitable for keeping ones interest away from those 'thoughts'. The more effective was religion in shooing away fear, the more free time people must have had, to be troubled again by such 'thoughts'. That would have necessitated suitable entities of varied other forms to garner people's interest.

Thus was born the second such force. The plethora of observances and other repetitive activities that are always associated with a religion constitute this. Each one of these having the potency of occupying certain amount of free time, a large collection of such observances might have been necessitated for incessant support. Over time, these have come to occupy an important position in ones social life as rituals, ceremonies and other formalities as part of a rich cultural heritage.

The third and the most significant force is the part played by religion in providing one with hope, giving everyone a reason to do things as they are accustomed to, by tradition.

As mentioned, a new religion always evolves to fill the vacuum created by the existing one becoming ineffective. In this case, the severity and reach of the new one and its elements are always dependent on how the above steps were embodied in the defunct religion.

## Chapter 4 What makes us do, what we do?

How is it that, while one person is ready to sacrifice his own life for a stranger, another show no qualms in murdering a dear one? What makes us do, what we do?

A survey of available literature points to six fundamental needs that everyone has in common, and all behavior can be simply abstracted as an attempt to meet those six needs. The needs can be identified as, Certainty, the assurance that one can avoid pain and gain pleasure, Uncertainty/Variety, the need one perpetually has for the unknown, change, or new stimuli, Significance, the necessity to feel unique, important, special or needed, Connection/Love, the pleasure of strong feelings of closeness or union with someone or something, Growth, the happiness from the expansion of capacity, capability or understanding, and finally, Contribution, the fulfillment one feels from service, helping, giving and supporting.

Fulfillment can only be achieved by focusing on two spiritual needs, all sagacious words and writings exhort. One such is the need to continuously grow, and two, the need to contribute beyond ourselves in a meaningful way. Like any other living being, humans also have a long list of natural needs and meeting these satisfyingly, is the primary function of life. Therefore we humans have the need to be part of a lot of activities of varying style, content, endurance and strength, each of them meeting a part of ones needs and desires.

But the above discussion does not answer the most pertinent question in this regard. Why is that unlike other forms of life, we humans go after one or a few among their wants at the cost of sacrificing many other needs and conveniences, some of which, even to their peril? What are we striving for? What makes us do, how we do?

We, I think, have been maintaining this as one of the most difficult questions of life. There is no historical figure who did not attempt to answer this, a quick glance into our collection of classics of yesteryears and those of recent times shall easily show. Also, there is no one who did not become a historical entity despite pontificating on this question, a further look at the collection can reveal. It seems this is a question of very serious proportions.

The answer to this question is easily obtained as far as a small baby or child is concerned. Whatever the child does, it shall be to please some of its wants, food or physical comfort or to be freed from discomfort, as can

be observed easily. It is only when the child grows up to be a man or a woman does this answer would seem inadequate. Assuming that we continue to grow as rational beings and act in a manner appropriate for maximizing our level of contentment, we should be at a loss to explain many of the things that grown-ups do, things, capable of causing great harm to their own life. As grown ups, we display a leaning towards potentially dangerous activities as well as taking even ordinary and enjoyable things to its extremes.

A closer examination into our our actions point to the need of revisiting our idea of the rational. Also, its transient nature becomes another feature worth consideration. Taking these into account, when we investigate our doings further, something interesting emerge that can explain much of our behavioral quirks we have been leaving as humor.

Especially in physical world, it is a known fact that everything loses the values attributed to any of its properties, when the property is measured at its extremes. All the relationships, dependencies and other connections are valid or can be reliably predicted, only when they are in a range noticeably away from the respective limits, both the upper limit and the lower one. An analogous relationship can be observed in living beings too, if we are to study the occurrences of emotional expressions, rational transactions or other forms of exchange. Our reactions when we are extremely tired, terribly unhappy, highly excited or full of joy need not be the same as what our reactions would have been, in normal times. As it is a known fact that manifestation of various elements of human nature under duress is prone to large deviations, the propensity to find solace in the 'extremes' of whatever one does can also be considered as one such large deviation. Therefore, human interest for the 'extremes' or the irrational can be attributed to some 'duress', one is perpetually under. The indifference to murder, which is easily acknowledged as one such behavior as well as the eagerness to sacrifice, which is rarely recognized as one, exemplifies such 'extremes'.

In short, all that we do can be better understood if we are to see them either as 'rational' acts or as 'irrational' ones. It should be clear: everything we do in a rational manner is to satisfy some facet of human nature. But a more interesting question in this regard arise. Why do we do irrational things?

In fact unlike other members of the living world, humans have the ability to ascribe emotions to events and occurrences of ones life. They also

possess the wherewithal to indulge in an unlimited number of activities to suit each and every one of the emotions desired. And unlike all other forms of life, humans have been utilizing all these emotions to derive happiness. And he found it convenient to extend these in an irrational manner, (extremes) whenever the need arose keep the thoughts of such 'duress' at bay. Irrational acts are thus of great help in making one forget the 'duress'. (One cannot extend the rational acts indefinitely in this manner, by definition, rational has a logical end. And, the 'duress' might return)

Thus everything we do in an irrational manner, is to free us of unhappy thoughts, by keeping us occupied without a break,.

## **Chapter 5 Unity is strength? Like Hell!**

Since time immemorial we have been spreading the idea that unity is something to strive for. Posters and pictures such as the ones shown play a major part in popularizing this.

I think, to a large extent as a result of such influences, 'unity is strength' has come to be accepted as a maxim, one that permeates into all activities of the society, especially in left leaning states. Quite palpable is the presence of this in organized resistances against real or perceived dangers, which, though detrimental to harmony and peace of the society and many a time horribly destructive in nature, is tolerated by general populace as good examples of the great power of unity.

(Whether this tolerance is worthwhile and, is this 'resistance' yielding something, are questions that need to be examined afresh. If we compared the state of any society before this 'organized resistance' and after a certain time gap, we might find the present state better off. But that doesn't show that the society is not worse off compared to what could have been the present state of the society, had that 'resistance' not taken place. Still we consider 'organized resistance movements' as a good thing. Isn't this another example of our penchant for the irrational?)

The idea that unity is strength, I think originated when some of our ancestors saw around them instances like, say a big animal like lion getting caught in a spider web or, a huge carcass easily moved by a colony of ants, leading them to the idea that when the insignificant things happen in unison, they can change something big. Notably in the instances that

struck them, the result of unification was visibly empowering in nature. And we have come to accept it as an adage applicable to all living beings.

Let us re-examine this aphorism starting with a rather simpler form of life, a plant. Imagine we sow a group of seeds. On germination, if they are planted suitably dispersed with plentiful availability of essential needs like sunlight, water or other nutrients, the seeds are sure to grow into healthy plants or trees that provide good yield. If not, the lack of the basic needs shall cause the plants' growth to be stunted and shall give rise to unhealthy trees, greatly affecting the yield. Such is the case with everything that has life. In the case of plants, the influence of factors other than the generally identified needs of sunlight, air, water and nutrients have already been noticed as significant for healthy growth, the Indian scientist Dr Jagdish Chandra Bose being a pioneer in this field. Also, even before the advent of any such scientific findings or discovery, all the essential parts of farming used to be governed by certain traditional observances, fables and other sayings that more or less is a hidden treasury of logical thoughts and concepts. In short, our approach to plant life is one of rational thinking, where we constantly monitor our performance and are always on the lookout for improvements.

Quite rational also is our approach to the question of breeding and caring for farm animals. The size of such farms, its location, physical composition as well as the techniques employed in raising stock are guided by similar principles. Sufficient importance can be seen to be ascribed to provision of adequate free area or space for each animal to grow unhindered, in addition to plentiful sunlight, fresh air and other natural amenities taking a prime position.

But when it comes to human life, we certainly are deviating from such examples of good logic. Not only that the methods adopted to nurse human babies deviate from the sound techniques of our farms, but also the human parents are showing a clear affinity towards techniques and patterns that are restrictive in nature, even when those are detrimental to happy growth. Forgetting all that we did for facilitating robust growth in other forms of life, we seem to be on an ardent search to find novel ways of augmenting human capability, to offset the loss caused by our restrictive approach! And I think, from a large multitude of such reasoning, inferences and syllogisms floating around in our literary wealth, the maxim 'unity is strength' came to be appropriated to support such a move, to make marginal improvements in our capability without the need to effect any actual improvement in human capacity. In short, unity

generates an apparent feeling of being reinforced, without any real addition to ones strength.

However, in places where the proverb ‘unity is strength’ might be found matching, there are other proverbs like “faith will move mountains’, or ‘practice makes perfect’, which could have been fitting the idea much more aptly. Or why didn’t we think of the benefits of individuality and make an effort to popularize that? Why did we continue to forget the prime position of direction or leadership in the achievement of success? Or why such posters like these are not in wide circulation?

More than that, we still go on with ‘unity is strength’ as a rational maxim, especially in human affairs. Aren’t we continuing with the irrational?

## **Chapter 6 What makes us like, what we like?**

I am asking this question thinking that an answer to this will be of great help in my search for the answer to another question, why is fair or light complexion so much in demand? That it is highly sought after, is quite evident from the proliferation of whitening creams and other such treatments in our society.

In fact, all my efforts to find an answer made it more and more clear to me that, we humans have no special affinity to any shade. Look at our possessions, those living or non living objects that are close to us, and see the more or less equal distribution of these, among all the colors. It can even be said that, it is the different shades of black that more often than not, turns out to be the choice. A casual look at our wares, pets, vehicles or dresses shall be enough to support this.

Why is it that when it comes to humans, that too only in the matters of complexion, we have a leaning towards the lighter one, the fair? More than that, why are we steering away from the dark?

That humans want to be fair complexioned has come to be accepted as a gospel truth, is evident from the plethora of writings available around us, repeatedly reminding each one of the need to be ‘fair’ towards the dark skinned.

Can this be true? Is it possible to have such a natural attraction towards fair or light tone and appearance, one that is strictly limited to the



color of human skin? And in all other cases of living or nonliving objects and their parts, the natural attraction gets distributed uniformly across colors?

The origin and history of word 'fair' indicates that the meaning assumed by that word, in the old writings was mainly for denoting and conveying ideas of attractiveness and intent, rather than any physical attributes. The word thus came to be associated with things that are desirable the most, one can easily gather. Therefore it is easy to propose that 'fair complexion' happened to become something worth longing for, as that was the complexion associated with everything good. Yes, the skin associated with 'fair' became more attractive, as that was the skin of successful people, the luckier ones who lived a luxurious lifestyle, who did lead a fuller life and were visibly happier.

That brings us to the most significant question in this regard, what makes, people from the land associated with the 'fair' skin so worthy of admiration, that too, of such proportions that the others are dying to copy even their appearance?

In fact more than its current nature or even its magnificent looks, what makes something worthy is the belief, the general idea about how it came into being, as Dr. Paul Bloom, Professor, Yale University, writes in his book, *How Pleasure Works*. During experiments, where children were told about things being created either on purpose, with someone working very hard to do them, or by accident, it could be observed that, the very same object became more appealing and valuable even to a three-year-old, when it was told that it was created on purpose, than when the creation was mentioned as accidental. History of good tidings associated with the source of pleasure can add to the sensations emerged or the satisfaction derived, towards augmenting the happy feelings. The vice versa also is true, a negative image can greatly alter the outcome, by leading even the well intended, good entities to unhappiness.

In short, the more attracted we are, by the ambience around an entity, the more determined we are, to possess that entity.

That is the reason. History of 'fair' skinned' land, especially since industrial revolution, adds handsomely to whatever pleasure we derive out of things from that land. And fair complexion is one such 'thing'.

It is clear then, we like, what we like, because we like, the history that comes along. And the same is true for all that we dislike too. This 'history' is the one, we put to effective use in supporting our decision, whether it is to like or to dislike..

That is the reason why we are always wary of our actions, especially of pleasing someone, for, one can never be sure of the expected results taking place. Whereas when it comes to hurting someone, we rarely face the need to worry, the results take place as expected.

## **Chapter 7 In Defense of Terrorism, Defending the Indefensible?**

I think terrorism is the most potent problem facing the human race today, barring perhaps AIDS. And it looks like the world is under threat, the constantly increasing presence of this make it an issue much more urgent, than perhaps AIDS. Over and above the fact that there is no known defense against such wanton violence, some society is always there to support each form of terrorism unlike AIDS, adds to its dreadfulness. Thus each and every form of terrorism is able to garner the support of some state, making it even more difficult to combat.

Of course there can be precautions, but first we have to know its cause. Depending on the source of terror, the general idea of the main contributing factor that is leading to the terror varies. Like, if it is 'red terror', that is economic disparity, if it is religious terror, that is something to do with a faith, and, if it is regional terror, that is oppression. I think we are very happy with an endless list like this, and every time an eruption occurs in our society, we start looking for a cause. And we find something amiss, naturally, in one of the local non uniformities of the society. Notwithstanding the fact that local non-uniformities could be present in any society and those need not, necessarily, lead to anything untoward, we quickly establish that as the cause. A few such reasons are shown here. Does this look right?

Of course it doesn't. One thing interests me. The successful approach, we have been taking so far in finding answer to all the other problems faced by human society, is notable by its absence. Take, for example health problems. We know, cure for a disease is not the same as symptomatic cure. A doctor's success depends on how well he is able to identify the underlying cause and eliminate it. Successful solving of any

problem can be reduced to an exercise of converting the problem to certain general principles, the response to which is known to us. This is true for every profession, separating the apparent from the real, or identifying the significant in a collection of possibilities, is nothing but converting the problem to its abstraction. (One's competence level is in fact a measure of the capability of forming the true abstract representation) Why haven't we adopted such an approach in the case of terrorism?

When we happened to identify a cause and applied whatever medicines we thought as suitable, there should have been some decrease in the severity of terrorism. Otherwise, changes should have been made in our approach, the weapon used to fight against terrorism, till a marked reduction is observed. Of course, in almost all matters, this is our guiding principle, we frequently check whether the path taken is correct or not, it is yielding appropriate results, etc. We then make alterations or corrections to our approach based on such results.

Why aren't we following this pattern? Instead, whatever was the reason we could establish as its cause and, whichever was the path chosen for fighting it, we continue following the same approach relentlessly, having no regard to its efficacy.

Disregarding all that, let us try to find the real reason behind terrorism. As the first step, let us search for its abstraction. What is the aim of terrorism and what do we achieve by that? What is common between terrorism of different hues? A little reflection can teach us that terrorism never achieves any results; it only enables the terrorists to express themselves. Such actions are plenty; they can be broadly grouped by a more understandable term – irrational acts. In fact any act, however irrational, may sometimes result in beneficial outcome, and that is why we hold them with reverence, except the purely violent, disastrous ones.

If we analyze irrational acts further, we can see that all of them are but extreme expressions of some of our basic characters or emotions. And these are almost always recognized. Extremes, of inquisitiveness, celebrations, art, craft or music or other welcome facets of human nature gets acknowledged, most of the times to a very great extent, showered handsomely with awards or other forms of recognition. Except when it pertains to violence, that too only where it is directed specifically against us, we applaud these acts. Thus when one acts rationally, recognition may result only if sufficient care is taken to ensure that a) nobody is put to disadvantage and b) nobody benefits disproportionately. Whereas when it comes to irrational acts, recognition is almost always assured. Other than

the fact that it is more convenient to act rationally, there is nothing attracting us to the rational.

If it is to happen so, that is, if man is to be continue having ones affinity to the irrational, some need of the human life is being met by the irrational? Yes, the need, to be occupied always. Concede, even rational acts will serve the purpose of ‘to be occupied’, but sooner or later such an act will reach its culmination. A rational act, as we already know, sooner or later will end in a result. Whereas, the irrational ones are a boon to mankind, we can continue to be busy with such an act, for ever. Also, there might not even be a result, to bring the act to its natural conclusion.

Thus, the real reason behind terrorism lies in the fact that the ‘irrationality quotient’ of such an act is fairly high. Terrorists are destined to be fully engaged and so are those who fight them. Those supporting them as well as those opposing, can very well engage in many other peripheral activities related to this, like building up public mood to support or oppose terrorists, manufacturing historical justifications for their acts, or devising suitable solutions.

The path to a cure for terrorism therefore should be obvious. And it is a well-defined one too, once we see terrorism as nothing but the irrational form of violence. (In fact violence itself, to a large extent, is but the irrational form of certain harmless physical entertainments, which in normal times, we do enjoy.) Provide ample avenues for expressing ones desire for the irrational, while focusing on ways to control that desire. (One very popular avenue is alcohol, and we are heavily discouraging it, not realizing its usefulness!)

## **Chapter 8 A FEW BASIC DOUBTS**

Should we discard chemical fertilizers or GM crops, and love everything Organic?

The ongoing tussle between the ‘organic crop’ and the contaminated others reminds me of my childhood days in a countryside where I grew up with a good bunch of boys. I was a weak child without the physique and skills necessary to pursue ‘manly’ diversions like climbing trees (We had a

good collection of fruit bearing trees in our vicinity) whereas by brother, who was only a year older, was of good constitution and adept at such activities. Loitering around with friends, whenever we happen to come across a tree with good fruits, I and my friends (who all were of comparable build!) would make an appeal to my brother and his cohorts for a few. My brother with a couple of close buddies would reluctantly agree, climb the tree, pluck some fruits, taste a few, throw down a few less for the waiting crowd and show an unhappy face with loud comments “The fruits are not ripe enough, wait for a few days”. We of course, used to relish whatever that came on our way and wait for the next visit. The same story will be repeated thereafter, I with my ‘weak’ friends managing to do with a few unripe ones, the blanket judgment about the unworthy nature of fruits refraining us from further attempts till subsequent visits.

It took some time for me to realize that this is a perfect plan for the ‘climbers’ to relish and enjoy the fruits for many days to come, without having the need to part with the ‘spoils’.

It should be rather easy to see a parallel. Some societies, for whatever reason, achieved abnormally high levels of food production, posing a threat to their economy. For example, in the 1980s, the U.S. Department of Agriculture was saddled with mountains of surplus cheese, corn and other foods that it socked away in warehouses and even caves. Also, as recently as 2003, the USDA had to buy so much powdered milk to support dairy prices that beleaguered officials shipped some to U.S. ranchers for cattle feed. Having thus reached a position of great disadvantage, isn’t it natural that they would look for ways of limiting their losses while ensuring that such calamities shall not occur again? What better way for ensuring the preceding, than to discourage everyone else from following what they themselves did to land up with this problem of excess. As long as there is no excess with them, others can act as a buffer! (One way it is good; it is better to limit the excess production with one state rather than each and every country producing in excess)

Even assuming that all that is circulated about chemical fertilizers is true, there should be a way to continue its use in an acceptable manner. It is a known fact that, in the medical world, tolerance and resistance to a drug are of great relevance in deciding what medication to use. Also, the tendency to become stale after certain interval of time is present in all styles or techniques, anywhere and everywhere. Why shouldn’t this be extended to chemical fertilizers too? Use such fertilizers for some time, change thereafter to organic manure and such cycles to go on repeating?

Is child labor that bad?

The case of 'child labor' is very interesting. During school years (in the early 1960's) a large scale mobilization of resources, of men, material and related efforts was directed towards national output, mainly of food production, in many countries of the world. We schoolchildren also were roped in and to make our participation a pleasant experience I think, regular lectures were conducted in school, extolling the virtues of all kinds of labor, mostly by some educationist and sometimes by few visiting dignitaries from abroad. They all used to employ the examples of countries like USA, UK, France etc, with emphasis put on the fact that school children in those countries do a lot of small jobs and errands, earn 'pocket money' and does not depend on their parents and guardians for normal expenses connected with their schooling. The state government, to help us in finding such profitable hobbies, even introduced formal training in extra-curricular works for us, during which instructions one could study many of the interesting vocations like photography, metal polishing, clay modeling and others. In fact the slogan in vogue, 'Earn while you learn', was the chief proponent of this idea.

Today, for whatever reason, the very same people who supported such ideas are turning hostile, especially to students, who do anything but their class work. The old slogan too, is being rechristened as 'child labor', to make it look more repugnant than it actually is?

It should not be difficult to see a parallel. Some societies, for whatever reason, achieved certain 'fruits', and in that, what was of greatest help could have been the fact that those societies did direct the entire national wealth or effort towards growth, giving, largely emotional issues and needs like child labor, a go by. (It is a historical fact that quite few of these efforts involved even eugenics, which again, are now frowned upon)

Having thus reached a position of great vantage, it is natural that they would look for ways of preserving their envious status or sustaining their dominance. What better way exist for ensuring the preceding, than to paint the 'fruits' as totally unworthy? To doubly ensure this, they are declaring as inhuman, one of the primary reasons for their success, eugenics. Not only that, there is also total admiration showered on all those who continue with their traditions. (There is no need, I think, to repeat that any 'fruit' can be made to look good and inviting, or, despicable and nauseating, by selecting words or expressions used for describing that, appropriately)

Is 'privatization' a bad Word?

‘Privatize or perish’ seems to be the slogan of the day. The general idea propagated by supporters of privatization is that, infusion of efficiency and skill into the loss making establishments is a certainty, if governmental control is removed, turning the multitudes of ‘loss’ making concerns into asset creators. This has the potential to improve quality and competitive spirit while generating substantial levels of employment, two of the heaviest burdens of any state. Needless to say, this can result in greater or enhanced availability of monetary resources badly needed for the many and different governmental programs for the public good. Is it so? No, I think it is our ‘idea’ about public sector loss, which needs a change.

The losses caused to society by the public sector, instead of seen as a pecuniary loss forcing us to ponder on ways of avoiding it, should rightly be viewed as the price the society has to pay to ensure a healthy and competitive environment for industry and market. And this (aka perfect competition) is an essential requirement if the market or private sector is to deliver the goods. In the absence of this ‘loss making public sector’, there is nothing preventing the private sources in forming groups or cartels to promote self interest, which in no case shall be to promote public good. Therefore, public sector losses should be seen as a small price we pay for our continued welfare.

In fact present questions regarding these losses wouldn’t have been there, had public sector been restricting itself to business areas or industries not conducive to competitive environment. Thus in its rightful domains, for example in such areas as those needing heavy investment, areas having no capacity to promise returns or places heavily restricted by some issues like security, the same sector would have been seen as a facilitator.

Aren’t we irrational then, in blaming the public sector for our woes?

## **Chapter 9 A FEW MORE of MY BASIC DOUBTS**

Why should we have political parties?

The earlier days of democracy would have been great, the vast treasure of ancient literature pointing to unparalleled intellectual wealth, to note one thing we can deduce from the signs left by bygone eras. It is

possible that there was a miniscule group of disgruntled elements who wanted to do something to harm the flourishing society, like we find these days in all our endeavors. It looks like a few of them joined together and formed themselves into a group, calling themselves a 'party'. And since that day democracy has never been the same.

I think, democracy as we follow leaves a lot to be desired, is a well known fact. There is no one who hasn't felt the incongruities of 'party democracy', I suppose, since, improvements are being contemplated for the existing political system of governance in all democratic countries. Otherwise, what is the need to devote a lion's share of governmental efforts, not towards the activities of governance, but in bettering governance?

But it has been so since the earliest days I can remember. I have attended scores of political meetings, where, allocating resources for improving the existing system governance was cited as the most urgent need facing the nation, to justify additional taxes and other expenses. Nowadays also, this remains as a priority area for all governments. It seems we have not been able to improve our system of governance or we failed in identifying the right cause for 'democracies not being able deliver the goods'.

In fact it is the party or party politics that has destroyed the fundamental character of democracy, one that makes it self governance. By unceremoniously negating the primary condition which would have ensured rational decision making at all levels, that all who participate will do so according to their free will, the party system has converted democracy to a maker of 'qualified' decisions. Not only that, it has reduced the function of opposition to one of always opposing the ruling side, a rather meaningless task. As a result of this, in cases where such decisions do not produce the desired effect or lead to a failure, rather than re-examining the decisions, the ruling side can always find an easy excuse, the 'opposition'.

The advantage of party politics is that no failure gets attributed to one party who can gloat in case of success, other party can shoulder all failures with impunity while sharing the glory of success.

What is happening to Politicians?

Politician bashing is a common sight of these days. Whether in west or east, irrespective of presidential, military or democratic dispensation, no country is free of this entertainment. Nowhere else can this be seen



more clearly than in the violent and widespread objections to the continuation of a few privileges, the politicians used to enjoy.

May be as a result of this, politicians in general find the citizens not cooperating enough or disinterested with such an important task as governance. Consequently, they may also find the populace undeserving of a good, trouble free life. A proposal to make voting an essential duty of all citizens, and more or less mandatory, seems to be in the offing.

There are signs that a significant number of citizens do not feel that their concerns are being addressed by the mainstream parties or the political system. There are two main reasons for this. One, from the citizen's side; they confuse government with politicians, which is because they are more easily identifiable with governance. And two, from the politicians' side, they take the rather lighter responsibility of delivering governance, rather than thinking about governance in the abstract, their rightful job. This is because, unlike the past, the best of the generation do not opt for politics as a natural destination.

This is giving rise to a layer of political dissatisfaction amongst members of the majority of people, 'the white working classes' in some countries and, the middle class in some other. An immediate reaction to this, disengagement of a considerable part of the populace from playing their role as citizens, further accentuates it. We need to recognize the role that the well to do, educated and empowered working majority, mostly white collared, should be expected to play. Lower participation in formal democratic processes may not mean disengagement from all forms of politics. On the contrary, it should be seen as warning to alter the political processes appropriately to enable participation of the majority. There could be many methods to see that such a thing happens, rather than forcing a huge populace to tune themselves to certain archaic systems and procedures. This of course, might entail a shift in our basic approach to governance.

For example, many new opportunities exist to collate wants, opinions or desires from a large population if the capability of information technology is put to use. Also, appropriation of resources or other forms of wealth becomes a child's play, that too, with hardly any possibilities of dissatisfaction or mistake, in the face of the computing power made available by the digital revolution. Even the introduction of a new type of governance, 'real time democracy', is possible if all citizens are connected to a central server directing the various elements of government, which is programmed to act on the input from citizens thus connected,

appropriately. Computer programs, in this case, shall be usurping the role of politicians who in turn, can be making a graceful exit!

Just as we saw earlier, how the growth of communication made the profession of 'commission agents' redundant, the strides in IT have the potential to make whatever is left of politicians, fade away. In the interim, quite sharp and rather unexpected reactions can be expected from all politicians, even to events that are not very noteworthy. And some of these, mostly from those who presently are in positions of power, would be of grave consequences. These are but the gasps of a dying profession.

Is it advisable to whip Members of Legislature?

'Whip' in this context, is nothing but a survival tool for the democracy that is severely doped with party politics, a nonlinearity introduced into the heart of the democratic processes of debates and discussions.

In fact in the absence of whip, there is nothing to prevent a legislature house from thinking rationally. Healthy debates and enlightening discussions can always lead to the best scenario or option. This being the approach on all matters of great significance to the countries' welfare, it is unfathomable why a democratic government should fail to meet expectations. Practice of democracy in the ancient world had been spotless, the vast treasure of Greek classics and the clean description of ancient governments, show.

'Whip' brings in, rather a substantial change. By severely constricting expressions of spontaneity of the participants and their involvement, it relegates the heart of democracy, the debates, to a dull affair.

(Problems of democracy do not end there. We are quick to realize that our democratic institutions are not doing their job. Without second thoughts we proclaim, the below par performance of our institutions is an honest reflection of the low quality of our representatives, the ones who constitute such institutions. That puts the 'ball' in the people's court, the blame of course, transferred to the ones who elected the representatives in the first place. People, it should be remembered, can only elect the best of the candidates, and therefore, we need to make whatever changes necessary to make people of caliber choose politics as a natural option. This part need to be analyzed further)

Should we continue with whip? Discontinuing it will, also, as an icing on the cake, put an end to party politics. Of course, another way too exists, to escape from 'whip'. If we make necessary changes to the rules of

governance to stipulate that a government, once elected, will serve its full term of office, unless, a) resigns or b) gets defeated by an explicit motion of no confidence, the 'whip' shall become largely unnecessary. That such an act will make the parliamentary discussions and debates livelier as well as scholarly, and also will be attracting naturally, the cream of intelligentsia, are only the immediate benefits.

## **Chapter 10 Some more of My Doubts**

Do we ever get fed up of our bad habits?

Why is it that some facets of human behavior is free from 'theory of diminishing marginal utility', though this theory is, the rule governing basic human conduct that can explain in full, the process of deriving and enhancing satisfaction? And why such a phenomenon occurs, that too, exclusively in the realm of bad habits?

I think one can safely say that we resort to various actions or activities to satisfy each of our needs, and a few among these happening to be termed as bad habits and a few others, the opposite, is only a temporal view which is susceptible to change. Shouldn't the pattern of deriving contentment be the same, whether we speak of good habits or the bad ones?

Take our enjoyments. All of them come under the purview of this theory. We cannot continue with the same form of enjoyment for indefinite periods of time. If we like some thing, say ice cream, the first cup of which provides us with 100 units of happiness. The next cup shall be able to provide only 80 units of happiness, next, even less and so on till we get 'fed up' of ice cream. The same is true for all matters of personal choice, mode of entertainment, habit or routine. For example, if we are in the habit of drinking tea every morning, we ourselves shall find an excuse for a change once in a while.

But this does not seem to apply for anything we are hooked on to. Whether it is some habits like smoking (a chain smoker), drinking (a habitual drinker), reading (a voracious reader), or anything we enjoy in its extremes, the state of 'being fed up' does not occur. Why?

That brings us to the fundamentals of habits. Everything good we do, is for meeting some demand, be it physical needs of the body or intellectual needs of the mind or both. Some of these may also be termed

as spiritual needs. Whereas, what we consider as bad habits does not fall within the above discussion. If bad habit was intended to satisfy a need, the reduction in marginal utility as discussed above would have taken place, bringing it to a natural stop. That doesn't happen. The very existence of elaborate and widespread arrangements for de-addiction, which can be seen in all societies, is enough to prove this point.

What then is a bad habit? What do bad habits do? Certainly none of our needs is being satisfied by a bad habit. Bad habits in fact are only certain, mainly repetitive, activities that we continue to be busy with, to prevent something else from occupying us. As the chosen activity does not satisfy any of the human needs, no cap occurs to its effectiveness due to 'diminishing marginal utility', and can continue to block those inconvenient thoughts from occupying our mind. As mentioned earlier, avoidance of such thoughts is of paramount importance in maintaining a comfortable state of existence, especially for the male. The widely observed peculiarity, a greater incidence of bad habits among the male of our species, is a silent proof of this. This can now be explained easily. They have more of 'inconvenient thoughts', to escape from.

What can language do?

Language is generally understood as a systematic means of communicating by the use of sounds or conventional symbols. We identify language as something that is closely linked with our life, its existence, consciousness and bliss. We invoke language in all our affairs. Whether to please or to nag, to applaud or to boo or to scold or to acclaim, no other human contraption is of greater avail than language.

However, this is also a fact. Much of the disturbances, hatred and violence or other unpleasant happenings in our midst wouldn't have been there, had our understanding of language been different. Also, our history would have been free of many chapters recounting events of considerable hostility, hatred, pain and suffering, not to mention the good that would have resulted from aiming our effort towards something not so destructive.

What then, is language for, if not for communication?

As a first step towards an answer, assume, there is no language. (By language, I mean a structured system of symbols, with associated rules, grammar etc.) What handicap do we face? What we can't do?

Easily we can see that it is possible to continue with almost all the functions served by languages using some other human capability. Like, for communicating ideas, signs and actions can be of great help. In fact

even when we use language for communicating with others, it is the concurrent use of signs, actions or expressions that ultimately result in conveying the exact meaning. This is true when it comes to expressing, showing or acknowledging emotions as well. Therefore, in the primary sphere of its present use, absence of language need not pose an insurmountable problem.

But we are at a loss, when it comes to, thinking. In the absence of a language it becomes impossible to think, imagine or form a mental picture. Language thus can be identified more appropriately as the medium of thought.

The above inference had also been reached earlier by many philosophers, a notable one being Dr Susanne Langer, who in her books, 'An Introduction to Symbolic Logic' and 'Philosophical Sketches', dwells deeply on the role of language as representation of logic through symbols. In this book, the notable fact that in a sizeable number of Nobel prizes awarded so far, the research work leading to the invention or discovery was conducted using a particular language, German, has been specially mentioned. This is true even for Nobel awardees from countries other than Germany, like USA or UK, who conducted their research in attachment with the 'German' chair of their respective institutions. The author attributes this to the capability of that language in forming new words, expressions, dependencies and the interconnections with significant ease, challenging one constantly with fresh thoughts and ideas.

We are in fact belittling language by terming it merely as a means of communication. By not selecting a language based on its appropriateness as a vehicle of thought and by selecting one based solely on the ease of communication, not only that we are losing whatever good that would have resulted from the involvement of a huge population with cognitive transactions, but also seeding possibilities of collisions and skirmishes, as individual preferences for communication need not be the same for all.

Shouldn't we be more rational?

What also can Freedom of Information do?

I remember during my childhood days, the institutions or business concerns that commanded the greatest respect of society at large were the ones, whose main thrust used to be in finding new markets for products as well as familiarizing a market with new products. In any gathering or assembly, if there were people who were employees of such concerns, commonly called commission agents, the attention they cornered used to be big enough to effectively render all other participants a nonentity.

Reasons were very simple. It was the effort of these companies that enabled one to taste the best of things in life. Like, cheese from Australia, chocolates from Germany or tea from Assam, not to mention the multitude of articles from all over the globe, became a familiar object in other parts of the world thanks to these business houses. Almost every corner of the world having the potential to contribute something special, the position held by these houses continued to remain significant, adding to the aura.

But times changed. Better navigation, faster crafts and ease of communication brought each of the producers as well as the consumers closer than ever before, making the role played by the ‘commission agents’, a redundant one. Some of them continued to cling on to their business by helping people to find markets for a product as well as, products for a market. But with the technological revolution which made both these tasks a child’s play reinforcing their redundancy, it was inevitable that they leave the scene. Those who did not exit gracefully are bearing the brunt of public anger, whenever anything untoward happens in the supply, distribution or consumption of things in a society.

(Naturally, many questionable methods were also needed to be used by such people to remain in the reckoning, which involved either creating a fresh want or a fresh means of gratifying a want, where none existed. The ill effects of such random interventions in a market, notorious for its potential to cause instabilities in supply and demand, is always with us, causing economic upheavals at odd occasions)

A parallel can be found in one of the most celebrated tools of empowerment for the common man, the right to information. In fact ‘right to information’ is relevant only when the information is sought by a person who is aggrieved directly as a consequence of whatever the information may refer to. In all other cases, the role played by the information seeker is quite similar to the one played by the ‘commission agent’ we saw earlier. The relevance of information seeker (The third party, as far as information go!) is dependent on the outlook displayed by the society. In a progressive society, it can be gathered that people will either be capable of looking after their well being or capable of learning to be so. In both these cases, there is no place for the presence of a ‘third party’ with the right to information. The information revolution inevitably will result in them leaving the scene sooner or later, but now is the time to let people train themselves in making their own decisions. Not only that it will enable a graceful exit for the right to information (RTI) activists, but also empower

each and every one of the populace by necessitating greater alertness and involvement in RTI sphere.

(Doubts may be expressed whether the comparison between the monetary gratification received by the commission agent and the 'information' gratification amassed by the RTI activist, can be considered as a proper one. It is. In fact, the RTI activist, by satisfying a superior need as described by Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, in reality ends up gratified much more than a mere commission agent, who by gathering certain wealth or other monetary benefits would have managed to gratify only certain basic, lower ones in the ordered grouping of needs)

Here too, aren't we being irrational in encouraging the unchecked use of RTI?

## **Chapter 11 Mind and matter, what differentiates the two?**

Mind and matter, what differentiates the two?

When Buddha says 'The mind is everything, what you think you become', or when you listen to many other sages who announce rather non-intuitive universal truths, like 'our image of reality as an illusion', what should we gather? Or when we consider that an illusion (called 'maya') originates when we confuse the reality we experience with the physical reality, and 'maya' is the thing-in-itself, what do we mean? Are we to consider that our notion of matter as a solid substance, an abstract entity like the color green, is only a quality, appearing in consciousness? Is it a model of what is "out there", but as with almost every other model, quite unlike what is actually out there? Where do matter end and mind begin? Is it a reversible relationship?

I found this a very interesting challenge, for two reasons. No one in history has achieved greatness, without giving an answer to this question. And there is nobody who did not achieve greatness, after reflecting on the true nature of this question.

But I find myself in a corner, whenever I think of an answer.

In our journey behind the secrets of matter, which I think must be immensely gratifying since a whole lot of us are always on such trips, we are succeeding to reach more and more into the internals of matter. As we go forward with our studies with the internal structure of matter, its

behavior seems to align more and more with that of the spirit. And the line separating the two concepts is becoming rather fuzzy. Terminology may differ, but one of the distinct marks of life, the unpredictability of responses, whether at the same time for the same trigger from different sources, or from the same source for the same trigger at different times, seems to be invading matter in its sub-atomic forms, as well as matter in its living forms.

To illustrate, consider a magnet. If broken into two, we get two small magnets, each having the property of facing north. If we are to go on dividing till we reach the matter in its smallest size for independent existence, each and every one of those particles need not show this property. What we get will be a large number of elementary particles, the majority of which showing the north seeking property of a magnet. And a stronger magnet will yield a greater percentage of particles with such property, the percentage tending to reach hundred, as the strength increases. But if we select a particle at random and examine, it need not be a magnetic one with the property to seek north. The only thing certain about this is that, the greater the strength of the magnet, the higher the probability of the particle being a magnetic one.

Now consider a nonmagnetic material. If we are to go on dividing it till we reach the matter in its smallest size for independent existence, what we get will be a large number of elementary particles, the majority of those not showing the north seeking property of a magnet. But if we select a particle at random and examine, that particle could very well turn out to be a magnetic one with the property to seek north. The only thing certain about this is that, the probability of that particle being from a magnetic material, in the case of non-magnet, will be less than that for a magnet.

As another example of mind-body link, take multiple personality disorder, or dissociative identity disorder. This is a mental condition that's interesting on many levels. Perhaps most intriguing of all is how some sufferers not only exhibit personality and behavior changes as they switch between their different identities, but some also have measurable physiological variations between each persona. For instance, one of a patient's personalities may need eyeglasses and another won't. Or, one identity might be diabetic and another will have perfect health. In such cases, it isn't simply a matter of the patients thinking they need eyeglasses or insulin, their bodies actually go through legitimate alterations, such as differences in intraocular pressure or blood sugar levels, as experiments have shown.



As still another example, take the experiment involving Tibetan monks, where a group allowed physicians to monitor the monk's bodily changes as they engaged in a meditative yoga technique. During the process the monks were cloaked in wet, cold sheets (49 f / 9.4 c) and placed in a 40 f (4.5 c) room. In such conditions, the average person would likely experience uncontrollable shivering and would shortly suffer hypothermia. However, through deep concentration, the monks were able to generate body heat, and within minutes the researchers noticed steam rising from the sheets that were covering the monks. Within an hour, the sheets were completely dry. (<http://listverse.com/2013/05/21/10-amazing-examples-of-mind-over-matter/>)

Thus when we consider a material object in its most basic form of existence, what is seen is the unpredictability of its nature, however well defined was its nature in normal circumstances. Also, the mind is showing certain definite signs, closely associated with matter. Isn't this pointing to a possibility? Material things, when they are in rather elementary forms, are exhibiting unpredictability, well associated with the spirit. Is matter a manifestation of spirit within certain constraints, like physical limits? Or is it that spirit has no role to play when things are beyond those constraints? Is matter a limiting case of spirit or vice versa? Or, as matter and energy are mutually convertible, and if we consider spirit as a form of energy, is matter and spirit, different instances of the same entity?

I think we are crossing milestones while searching for the secrets of matter. We need to begin a new quest for learning the secrets of mind.

## **Chapter 12 The Spiritual and the Material, What is the Difference?**

I am amused by this enigma.

All of us are treasuries of common sense. Or so we think. For I have never come across anyone who seeks more of it. We also hold in abundance, many other virtues of the modern world like adaptability, scientific temper, or open mind, or at least, we try to be so, when confronted with an issue in the material plane. We analyze the issue, weigh alternatives, formulate action plans, monitor performance, learn from

mistakes and update ourselves from the experience gained. If we are not capable enough to do it, we will at least catch others if they are not doing it. And the results are there for all to see, human race is on a progress spree. Every day we learn new things. Much of it in fact ends up in disproving some of our earlier notions, which we have come to accept as normal, and a definite sign that the human race is moving forward, events and occurrences of the material world pointing to a great future.

But, exactly the opposite takes place whenever an issue in the spiritual plane happens to come before us. First and foremost, we seek absolute submission. We also oppose with great vehemence, anyone casting doubts on what we call as our basic tenets. We seem to be quite at ease to continue with our conceptual notions of the middle ages. The more reasonable we are in accommodating changes in any of the 'worldly areas', like scientific development or economic change, the more unreasonable we seem to be, in opposing any deviations in our abstract world, like moral values. The same thing is true, in the case of all natural or unnatural entities that can't be known conclusively to be belonging to the realm of the material. And we are not able to realize this, since we judge our spiritual domain in a different manner. Assessment of ones performance in spiritual affairs is fairly simple; if the results obtained are not favorable enough, the deity was not pleased sufficiently. The onus of getting a favorable intervention being always on the one who is approaching divinity, there is hardly any room for anything else but humble submission. There are no signs of any change, as far as the outlook of our spiritual sphere goes.

We welcome worldly changes like developments in science and technology, and the improvement they bring to our living conditions, however much, the society is shaken by that change. We also adapt to new systems of governance, as harbingers of better things to come. But when it comes to a deviation in our abstract values, like acceptability of same sex marriage, we are quick to portray that as a warning of the imminent end of our race.

When we observe any changes in the appearance, behavior or constitution of living or nonliving objects around us, we generally react in an appropriate way. The aim always will be to find the cause, study, reflect and take appropriate action. Sometimes we go wrong, but on all such occasions, others are welcome to point out our shortcomings or omissions. We also acknowledge, at least partially, the fact that our forefathers would have made quite a few errors in their appreciation of material objects or

phenomena around them. And we get those errors corrected. Thus all things go towards the better, the makings of a happy life.

Whereas when we observe any changes in the appearance, behavior or constitution of our abstract tenets, ceremonies or other conceptual entities, we either react in an unthinking manner or take a dogmatic approach, the aim always being to hide, discredit or kill the cause. We also acknowledge with great vehemence, the infallibility of our forefathers and the need to correct whatever deviations that might have happened to our tenets. The strongest push always reserved for correcting or nullifying any such changes at the earliest.

And we seem to be traveling farther into our dark past. All the progress we have made in our material life coming to its aid, both in accelerating that journey and in camouflaging the true destination. (I think our forefathers forgot about the 'true destination' many generations back, and we have come to accept its disguise, progress, as the true one instead of 'reverting to societal control of the ancients', the ultimate destination. What necessitated such a disguise has been discussed in my book, 'The Unsure Male'. However, for the sake of this discussion, let us consider progress as the true destination of mankind)

This, I think, is a good summary of this dichotomy: the more fastidious (while looking for conclusive proof, say, for a physical phenomenon) we are, in the material plane, the more naïve we turn out to be, in matters spiritual. In fact our natural or initial approach is one of immaturity and lack of good logic on all matters that can't be termed as fully belonging to the material sphere. Or, in other words, on matters that can be termed to be belonging undoubtedly to the material sphere, people are encouraged to approach with an open mind. The cardinal difference between the material and the spiritual is this: we might approach strictly physical entities rationally, but to everything else, we show a rather opinionated face, that too, with a closed mind.

## **Chapter 13 The Spiritual and the Material, Why are they Different?**

Let us closely examine the distinctive features of both the worlds a bit more closely, starting with the spiritual one. The most significant one is this: not only that we are unwilling to question spiritual matters, but also are vehement in our objections to others doing so. (The opposite is true,

for the material world; not only that we are quite happy to question such matters, but also help others doing so) Notwithstanding our objections, if some of those continue with their attempts, they are sure to face the society's wrath. That too, of a scale much beyond the bite of usually expected reactions to the most horrendous crimes. And I think we consider more or less as normal, if that exposes them to large scale violence and death, in addition to public display of anger and hatred. In short, in the spiritual world, those progressive, suffer.

However, when we come to the material world, what we see is something dissimilar. Not only that we are bent upon questioning everything material, but also vigorous in urging others to do so. In spite of this, if some of us fail in making visible progress in research, we are more than willing to supplement their efforts, even if it is at our cost. In short, in the material world, those progressive, flourish.

In fact, what should determine the way we are disposed to think is our own perception of our world. Our idea of the reality around us would have been teaching us to think in terms of black and white, light and dark, up and down or good and bad. And we have been doing so all these while, with the real world as well as abstract thoughts. Now that our ideas of reality are undergoing tremendous changes, mainly owing to results encountered in quantum physics and related research, noticeable changes should have been happening with our abstract notions as well. Like, instead of viewing reality only as black or white, we should be thinking in terms of white, black, and neither white nor black. And our thoughts should have included new vistas of demarcation, like good, bad and neither good nor bad or up, down and neither up nor down.

But that is not happening. Why?

In the material world, I think we approach an issue with an open mind because that is the best way to solve our problem, that is, of getting an answer. And the answer, which could be a new idea or improvement to an existing one, is to meet some need. The fulfillment of this need would have been making our life more comfortable. Realizing that the potential to further our comfort could be hiding in each and every idea, we are always ready to acquire and assimilate any new thought, however outlandish, impractical or laughable.

A good example of such an approach is the way we look after our health. Whenever something untoward happens with our body, we consider it with an open mind. We take services of experts to examine the problem carefully and use whatever is available within our reach to

remove the body part in full or at least in part, and eliminate the root cause. Whereas, when the same thing happens to our mind, we do not examine our mind. Except in cases where the problem experienced by our mind is easily understandable or too obvious, we employ whatever is available within our reach to agitate everything else in our midst in full or at least in part, till the society is completely at home, with the disturbance felt. (Which could even be causing many other 'minds' fall sick!) Just as we are always seen desirous of a sound body, we can also find our efforts constantly make unsound minds.

Why this difference?

The often heard refrain, that spiritual world is beyond the comprehension of man, has been successfully preventing the populace from any kind of research into these peculiarities, notwithstanding the fact that those are too obvious to be overlooked. On the contrary we have been working overtime, that too in a resourceful manner, to locate peculiarities of behavior, even in cases where nothing obvious or noticeable exists, as far as the material world go. We are always ready to dismantle an old theory or formulate a new one, at the flimsiest of reasons. Therefore it is amply clear that from both these worlds, i.e., the spiritual one and the material one, our expectations are vastly different. As far as the spiritual go, we don't seem to be willing to augur a change and, as far as the material world go, there is nothing more welcome than a change. (In one case, a change could indicate to the end of world and in the other, it is a sure sign of progress!)

What can we infer from this?

In the absence of any other indications to the contrary, we can safely conclude that both in the spiritual world and in the material world, all we are aiming is to remain happy or contented. Why are we confronted with two distinct entities, when our aim is only one, that is, to be happy? The most obvious answer is that these two 'worlds' are there to meet two different needs in human's quest for happiness, the spiritual ones generally acknowledged as the more important of the two. And from the above discussion, it becomes clear that spiritual world is there to oversee that facet of the human, which does not appreciate any changes, if one is to remain happy. Similarly, material world may be taking care of that part of the human, where wants and desires need to be constantly on the move, for achieving happiness.

Thus our interaction with the material world enhances our knowledge, making it easier to derive all the benefits that can accrue. We are open minded, receptive and tolerant while interacting with the

material world, as, such an approach helps us in acquiring more knowledge. And as we know more about our world, we can do things also more. More the number of things we do, greater, the happiness we derive.

But what does our interaction with the spiritual world do? As we can easily gather, our interactions with the spiritual world being so designed as to stifle the seeds of change, or that of independent thinking, the most likely result of such interaction will be prevent something that would have resulted from such a broad minded or rational approach to life. What does free thinking lead to? Questions, from questions to answers and so on, to culminate in what can be termed as ‘progressive thought’. Therefore all that we do with the spiritual dimension of our life is to hinder progressive thought, and to hasten ‘reverting to societal control of the ancients’, as we discussed earlier. This makes it clear that we can’t afford to be open minded, receptive or tolerant, while addressing the spiritual world.

## **Chapter 14 The spiritual and the material: what finally, is the takeaway?**

In my other hubs, we have seen that there are certain notable differences between the spiritual and the material. Let us now see, how these particularities manifest and with what effects?

What result do our material and spiritual interactions make?

As far as the material plane is concerned, proliferation of new things, ideas or both can be considered as the immediate effect, given that humans are happy only when they are able to keep themselves completely occupied. Standard approaches like the one shown here have been evolving over time to meet both these needs.

This is leading to a greater number of societal transactions, and new vistas to our aims and ambitions, in addition to the expected betterment of our lifestyle. But as our society adjusts itself to the new things or ideas, random signals or other disturbances that can agitate both the spiritual and the material worlds may emanate. This can be termed as the dormant effect of a new idea or change, when and at what trigger this will happen is entirely unpredictable.

As far as the spiritual plane goes, immediate result can be expected only when the new thing or idea directly impinges on the entity of god.

Like the progress we made in astronomy which dethroned all heavenly bodies from their position of eminence. When this happened years back, we also adapted smartly to those changes by redefining the very nature of god, away from such objects and, more towards the abstract. Such a fundamental change could be happening again, if conducive atmosphere envelopes our society. For example, an important discovery could augur such a radical move, if our notion of 'the abstract' stands to be affected as a consequence of that breakthrough.

Think of our approach to internal or external stimuli.

Whenever we are brought to confront something pleasant, the endearing experience is not enough to satisfy us. We will be on a search, making a threadbare analysis to study all facets of such an experience. Those who give a deeper insight into these stands to get honored also more, providing natural encouragement to such a search, and we value this behavior highly, as scientific temperament. Also, resilience is an asset here; the more comfortable we are with failure, the more the success we stand to attain.

But our approach is not the same, when we experience something unpleasant. Instead of examining the unpleasant events in a similar manner, the primary aim is to exterminate the event, effectively nullifying further analysis. Had we behaved rationally, our efforts would have been to study the manifestation of bitter feelings in detail, to prepare ourselves for the future. A good example of this paradox can be seen in our approach to the study of happiness. Though we know in detail about happiness and its dependency on certain chemicals, our information about unhappiness leaves a lot to be desired. As rational beings, unhappiness should have been subjected to a deeper study than happiness, since that would have given us a greater share of joy. (Reduction in unhappiness, as one can easily gather, is less resource intensive than addition of happiness) Also, in such cases we seem to be waiting for a reason to get upset. Getting a response that is a deviation from the norm, or the exposure to an uncomfortable question, is sufficient to agitate the human society high enough to cause permanent harm. Resilience here is an anathema. The more easily we are upset, the stronger our faith, people applaud.

What does this indicate? This, I think indicates lack of stability. To put it more appropriately, the human society is always in a condition of unstable equilibrium. Because of which, a small or insignificant disturbance is enough to set into motion, a chain of reactions, many of those unpleasant, and with long lasting effects.

We know that the specified behavior of any systems, equipment or machines is valid only within certain operating limit of parameters of interest, known as the linear range. We also know that every system is prone to wayward behavior, due to thermal effects, humidity, vibration etc., and suitable precautions are to be taken to account for this. How do we make sure that a system operates in the linear range of interested parameters? By having an array of special devices, called safeties, incorporated into such systems or devices to prevent it from operating beyond the recommended range, for whatever reason.

I think we are can try the approach we take while introducing stability to physical systems, in the conduct of our life as well.

Such as, the steps we take to balance our daily life. When confronted with a failure, we are able to allay our sense of loss, or in cases of success, we are able to cap our elation from becoming obtrusive to others, thanks to intervention from the another dimension of our life. That is, such interventions make sure that the material part of our life operates within the linear range of the parameters of interest.

Why doesn't it happen in our spiritual world? Why is that whenever a disturbance happen to the spiritual fabric, instead of correcting itself, the disorder threaten to blow up the society? Even in cases of tiny pricks, rather than self-correcting, why do all of those add up to produce a huge ripple?

This is where tolerance comes in. Our reaction to a steady change or a sudden jolt varies depending on what, the change belongs to. Whether belonging to the material world or of the spiritual domain.

- In the material world, we are seen to be 'intolerant' as far as our satisfaction, happiness or welfare go. And we continuously maintain our approach so as to make, the material world itself, external 'disturbances', or both, to align with our good. Here tolerance is our forte.

- In case of spiritual world, we are ready to impose whatever restrictions are necessary to our comfort and wellbeing, and if necessary to external inputs, to ensure that the spiritual world always comes out unscathed. Hence we have to be intolerant, even at our peril.

This indicates that the spiritual and the material are serving two different and rather opposing needs of human life. Material domain can be understood fairly easily as something that can provide for our comfort and safety. But when it comes to spiritual, assuming that here also our welfare



is the one which stands to be benefited, its contribution seems to be as something that will suppress all that can affect our well being.

What does this portend?

The giant strides, mankind has been making in civilizing itself, for the last couple of thousand years, have successfully made a dent on the multi-layered safety cover of our society, the spiritual world. We are not able to be noticing this as each of the impacts was not powerful enough to make a mark. Now we are at a threshold; the combined effect of all those small impacts is reaching a high value, and is poised to render the present spiritual system powerless. That will usher in a change. Till the transformation is complete and we are in receipt of a modified spiritual system incorporating the new ideas of the material world, we can expect a rather tumultuous environment. A marked disharmony between the spiritual world and the material aspirations, I think will be the defining ambience of the coming years.

What can we do?

As noted earlier, our approach to the material world is one with an open mind, where we explore and identify solutions. And we are more or less successful in solving the problems encountered. But our approach to the spiritual world is exactly the opposite, where we wait for solutions to appear. An answer to our troubles with the spiritual world will certainly happen in due course of time. But we can save the mankind from the horrendous days of the intervening period, if only we let natural changes to our spiritual domain to take its course, just as we encourage changes in the material domain.

## **Chapter 15 Why is there Unrest?**

Here we go...

This is not an attempt to question our beliefs. I am sure that almost all of them extend invaluable help by providing us with a silver streak, whenever we find ourselves in darkness. Whether we are affected by the moment, the setting or the environment, or we happen to become anything other than the most contented, these streaks are always there, to protect or console or offer us new hope.

This is an attempt, however, in freshly evaluating the significance of those very streaks, with due attention paid to the rarely acknowledged fact

that every silver lining, serves also as an indicator to a cloud hiding somewhere behind the bright patch. And it is a cloud that we almost always fail to see. This too is true; hardly any attempt has been made to search or locate such apparitions hiding behind the 'beliefs', we humans hold in abundance. Nor we have any idea how, a 'silver streak' metamorphose into a belief. Hence, my limited aim is to have a peep at the other side, of all that we consider closest to our hearts as unique elements of human character.

In fact what prompted me to think in this manner is my experience with physical systems. One of the important properties of any physical system, in fact the property that defines the system, is the relationship between the parameters of interest under different conditions. Like the variation observed in input - output, error - correction, disturbance - stabilization, etc, when values of input change. One important quality common to all systems in this regard is that, this defined relationship is valid only while the parameter of interest varies within a specified limit. And it is a big challenge faced by all engineers, specially, those involved in designing various systems, to make it in such a way that all the components or parts of the system operates within that limit.

When it came to living beings, I found that they are happy and contented as long as the severity of social transactions is within a certain limit, whatever be the nature of such transactions. Also I noticed that considerable disturbance gets associated with their life, wherever the severity of such transactions crossed that limit, whatever be the nature of such transactions. Irrespective of the nature and content of those exchanges, whether of pleasant nature or otherwise, both abundance and scarcity of extreme cases could be seen to be of comparable virtue, in causing visible discomfort. This also is true: nobody has ever doubted the genuineness of the need for such extreme reactions; rather the attention was always on the act, which happened to be in progress. I therefore found it necessary to examine the disorder from a completely different angle.

My attention then went to the most obvious example of this - the turbulence permeating our environment. The destructive effects produced by this could be visible in almost all elements of our society and in any corner of the world. What is in vogue is to attribute such disturbances to one or the other parts of our society, and depending on the time and place of the current instance of unrest, the chosen culprit varies. Sometimes religion is the culprit, which could be wealth in some other cases. From unemployment to overproduction, and from individual avarice to incapable leadership, nothing is there that has not been found as a cause.

This unrest in fact is nothing special (though the popular view may be otherwise!) and are our normal transactions, but of a very high intensity. I could easily notice that, since the earliest days of life, this has more or less become a permanent feature of our world. Many a time it has resulted in wars and other skirmishes, many a time in building empires. Our glories like explorations, discoveries and inventions can't be seen to be independent of its influence.

However, instead of recognizing this simple fact, we have been attributing this turmoil to an unknown force. Sometimes we see this as a result of our sinful life, sometimes, which happens more often, caused by forces external to us, which become the villain in ones depiction of life. Thus, for one who is left leaning, this unrest is due to class struggle and capital is the villain. For a capitalist however, it is caused by insufficient production, the villain becoming the productivity of labor. Also, any of the other common culprits of social disharmony like inter-religious rivalry, caste oppression, male chauvinism or lack of faith in god could become the baddy, for those disposed to other viewpoints.

We are making two mistakes. We are not examining the root cause, the propensity to resort to transactions of the extremes. We are compounding it by directing our efforts to the apparent cause, capital, religion or chauvinism, which, even though is present in every society, need not necessarily affect its state of health.

Thus, beliefs make the human society a turbulent one.

## **Chapter 16 How to kick out intolerance**

Look around. All forms of life other than humans fight within themselves, for no reason or for reasons not easily understood by the humans, and we call it animal like behavior. Humans also fight with each other for reasons they think they understand, and we call it human behavior. The one thing, which is common to both, is the turbulent nature.

This makes our world a tempestuous one. Be it cannibalism of the ancient, life in the dark ages or extremism of the present, wherever one looked, plenty of signs could be seen of unrest. From nation to nation, society to society, place to place and era to era, violent eruption of the citizenry, which we now call intolerance, remains a common sight.

It is evident that everybody is involved, whomsoever one approach in the search for an origin, the dutiful reaction always is to point to someone else from some other group. In the few cases where it is impossible to find such a culprit, the blame gets passed on to a small, misguided part of ones own group. Eras have gone by without causing any fundamental change to this particular character, except for changes in the terminology used to identify the culprits or groups responsible for unrest. Also, there is nobody who doesn't say extremism is bad and should never be tolerated. However it thrives, why?

Having no clue as to the potential regions of search, I began by looking at the reasons that have been already identified in this connection. I found that each and every part of a society has been blamed by someone; if one group of thinkers find poverty as the cause, there is another who accuse overabundance of wealth and its consequence, excessive indulgence, of giving rise to this. Of course blind faith may be cited as the sole reason by some other group of emancipated thinkers, followed by wanton living style, drugs or propaganda. In fact there is nothing left in a society that hasn't been put forth as an answer to this issue. Now having reached a dead end (too many options!), I started to explore afresh by asking myself a question, why aren't you an extremist? Or, why haven't you indulged in a crime, say, of raping a woman? Was it the fear of punishment, which held you back?

It took some thinking, to expose the truth; more than the dread of repercussions or high moral standards, what effectively prevented me from becoming one of those, is the fact that I have been continuously seized of other matters (luckily, even when I am alone!) that successfully blocked such thoughts from coming in. For I engage myself regularly with questions, answers and a myriad of other activities that continuously fill the gap between them, leaving, effectively no time to ponder on other issues. Many of my interests and activities bordering on the irrational, (A rational question cannot engage one for long, sooner or later, some answer will evolve!) these questions keep me occupied perpetually, leaving hardly any space for extreme thoughts to sneak in. My experience with all my friends too, invariably points in the same direction.

That, then, is the reason; there is a dearth of avenues, both for the ones who are capable of finding contentment in intellectual commerce and for the others inclined to worldly pleasures. Had the avenues been available in plenty, they could have kept themselves continuously engaged either, in academic, logical or related affairs, or in worldly entertainment. As an immediate result of this, vacant zones crop up, needless to say, in

both brains that are used to thinking and minds that are disposed to amusements, leaving behind spots that are waiting to be filled. Extreme thoughts, which in reality are nothing but the products of the most basic, commonplace and effortless function (idle-time processing) of the mind, rush to fill that vacuum.

These thoughts are always there with every one, but are normally kept in a dormant state, by a plethora of transactions of varying significance that keeps us perpetually engaged. This can become clearer, if we are to note that it takes no effort to rate something as very bad or useless, as well as extremely good or valuable. In both these cases there is no necessity to reflect, an input intensive function of brain, whereas, one cannot arrive at anything in between, without substantive study or complete analysis on the merits or faults of the matter under consideration. This is the reason why extremism is widely popular; it is as effortless as inaction. Obviously it will be appealing enough to certain groups identifiable by, lack of education or, poverty, who in any case face the absence of wherewithal or the avenues to reflect. The converse also is true; it is the greater opportunities of reflection that keeps extremism away from the well read.

One thing we can do now. Generate and popularize an unending collection of topics to ponder. Those shall keep our minds occupied, making it difficult for other thoughts to sneak in. Not that there aren't any topics at present. The progress we have made so far in various disciplines, like science, linguistics, humanities or arts, have already answered much of the unknowns in each topic, rendering it ineffective as medium of reflection. That is to say, if there are a few rational ones among those topics, those shall disappear early, having met their end by a logical explanation. The irrational ones shall serve for some more time till a new discovery or explanation converts those also to the 'rational'. Thus we can conclude, as long as we continue replenishing the topics, extremism can be kept at bay.

That is what happened. Such transition of an entity from the 'irrational' to the 'rational', severely affected the value of these phenomenon as topics to hold human thought. For example, the apple which fell on Newton removed the 'awe' of falling. Or the step that Armstrong took on the moon, made moon only a little more distant than a faraway place. As a result, both 'moon' and 'falling down' lost its ability to act as topics to think about. (What is the fun in thinking about something we already know?)

If we are to continue in the same vein, all the great strides that the human race have taken since time immemorial can be seen to have effectively rendered scores of 'topics' toothless by now, whereas, only very few new topics get added, severely affecting the society's tempo. What else can the common people do but to resort to using the existing topics again and again? Each such round of reuse, which involves multiple transactions of the mind, like observation, consideration and reflection, is in fact is nothing but sinking deeper into the idea, the topic carries. Obviously each such 'round' adds to the 'bite' of the topics. Thus sets in, a chain reaction, the product of which is generally acknowledged as fanaticism or fundamentalism. This almost always has been leading to unsavory and unpredictable consequences.

I realize that there have been many instances since the big bang when 'miscreants' originated from nowhere and made a splash, questioning the abstract notions that constitute these beliefs. All of them have left their marks, be it in posing fresh challenges to the relevance, raising new doubts about its indispensability or breeding speculations about the continued necessity, of these tenets. Each of those 'offenders', however, had been silenced effectively in a short time, as though these beliefs constitute the foundation on which the very edifice of culture rested. Such instances had been taking place since the beginning of history, with the society always reserving the strictest contemporary measures for these misfits, as can be inferred from the cases of great people, like, Copernicus, whose work, 'On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres' was suspended until it could be corrected of 'movement of Earth' (He died before facing the wrath of the church!), Galileo, who was convicted of grave suspicion of heresy for "following the position of Copernicus, which is contrary to the true sense and authority of Holy Scripture" and Turing, for his sexual preferences.

Human society hasn't changed much, even though the nature and severity of the measures being employed against deviants may have undergone some moderation. This moderation I think has more to do with the convenience of the society in inflicting the punishment, (it has become more civilized!) than, the victim's discomfort while getting punished or any reconsideration regarding the gravity of the 'offense'.

It is interesting to note that, barring a few cases, human society at large has been magnanimous in giving these 'reformers' the freedom necessary for cultivating their thoughts and ideas in the manner they wished. After their time, the society can be seen to be reverting to the

earlier state with great alacrity and force, as though quickly remodeling itself to a favorable position that existed prior to certain unwelcome intrusions. Albania is an excellent example. The Bronze Age socio-legal system known as 'kanun', a collection of stringent rules and regulations with harsh anti-female ambience, is making a fast re-appearance, to the meek submission of the (twenty-first century) society, now that the communist regime which had outlawed these prescripts has been defeated.

The foresight shown by society while keeping with the reforms, by accommodating the 'iconoclasts', in a few cases and, by rejecting them in some others, is certainly not without reason. It needs to be appreciated that society is a sleeping giant. The 'reformer' whose message initiates a few changes here or there (not substantial enough, as perhaps guessed by society!) is ignored by the giant and the disturbances resulting from that end happen to get absorbed in due course of time. But, where the changes initiated are quite a few, the giant gets woken up and those reformers get abruptly removed from scene.

Since time immemorial, the paradigms that played the most crucial role in organizing humans into a society, have been promoting certain type of social transactions while heavily discouraging several others. And some member of society was always there to question this. Except for the few who happened to achieve great success and came to be remembered as social reformers, almost all of them completed their tenures in obscurity and meeting with dishonorable graves. But the fact is that many among them were found reinstated later, that too with much fanfare and show, when the true worth of those questions became apparent. And this should be giving me the strength and willpower for going ahead.

Thus to prevent intolerance, let us popularize pastimes or topics good enough to keep one 'hooked', and without the possibility of an immediate resolution making it redundant. The least we can do is to stop discouraging pastimes!

## **Chapter 17 The Real and the Abstract: Where is the difference?**

Every day we learn new things. Much of it in fact ends up disproving some of our earlier notions and we have come to accept this as a normal thing and a sure sign that we, the human race, is moving forward.

But what surprises me is the vehemence with which we object to anyone casting doubts, on what we call as our basic tenets. The more reasonable we are in accommodating changes in any of the ‘worldly areas’, like scientific development or economic change, the more unreasonable we seem to be, in opposing any deviations in our abstract world, like virtue or honor.

Just as we see worldly changes, like developments in science and technology, improved living conditions or new systems of governance, as a harbinger of better things to come, we renounce any deviations to the abstract values, like our sense of righteous living, as a sure sign of the imminent end of our race.

Why is it so?

When we observe any changes in the appearance, behavior or constitution of living or nonliving objects around us, we generally react in an appropriate way. The aim always will be to find the exact cause, study, reflect and take appropriate action. Sometimes we go wrong, but on all such occasions, people are there to point out our shortcomings or omissions. We also acknowledge, at least partially, the fact that our forefathers would have made quite a few errors in their appreciation of material objects or phenomena around them, and the above approach results in getting those corrected. Thus whether we are careful about it or not, all things go towards the better, ensuring a happy life.

Whereas when we observe any changes in the appearance, behavior or constitution of our abstract tenets, ceremonies or other conceptual entities, we react in an unthinking and uncaring manner, the aim always being to hide, discredit or kill the cause. We also acknowledge with great vehemence, the infallibility of our forefathers and the need to correct whatever deviations that might have happened to our tenets. And the strongest push is always reserved for correcting or nullifying any such changes at the earliest.

Why does it happen that way?

Why do we behave with such telling difference, when confronting the real world and when facing the abstract? (Just to illustrate this difference, take the way we carryout repairs to our material things. It is an established practice to supervise, crosscheck, test, and subject the undertaken work to an independent examination by someone not at all involved with the work, for ensuring that the repair work is done well. Not only that we do not attempt any such examination of our abstract notions and spiritual theories apriori, we vehemently object to anyone making even a passing comment on those.)



In fact, what should be determining the way we are disposed to think is our own perception of the world around us. Our idea of the reality around us would have been teaching us to think in terms of black and white, light and dark, up and down or good and bad. And we have been doing so all these while with our thoughts, real as well as abstract. Now that our ideas of reality are undergoing tremendous changes, mainly owing to results encountered in quantum physics and related research, noticeable changes should have been happening with our abstract notions as well. Like, instead of viewing them only as black or white, we should be thinking in terms of white, black, and neither white nor black. And our thoughts should have included new vistas of demarcation, like good, bad and neither good nor bad or up, down and neither up nor down.

But that is not happening. Why?

People are encouraged to approach the material world, more or less, with an open mind. Why is it that when it comes to topics that are beyond this, we behave in a rather opinionated manner in confronting them, that too, invariably, with a closed mind?

In the material world, I think we approach an issue with an open mind because that is the best way to solve our problem, that is, of getting an answer. And the answer, which could be a new idea or improvement to an existing one, is to meet some need. The fulfillment of this need would have been making our life more comfortable. Realizing that the potential to further our comfort could be hiding in each and every idea, we are always ready to acquire and assimilate any new thought, however outlandish, impractical or laughable.

A good example of such an approach is the way we look after our health. Whenever something untoward happens with our body, we consider it with an open mind.

We take services of experts to examine the problem carefully and use whatever is available within our reach to remove the body part in full or at least in part, and eliminate the root cause. Whereas, when the same thing happens to our mind, we do not examine our mind. In cases where the problem experienced by our mind is easily understandable, we might resort to some medication. But in all other cases, we employ whatever is available within our reach to agitate everything else in our midst in full or at least in part, till the society is completely at home, with the disturbance felt. (Which could be causing many other 'minds' fall sick!) Just as we are

always longing for a sound body, we are bent upon making our minds unsound.

Or think of our approach to internal or external stimuli. Whenever we are brought to confront something pleasant, the endearing experience is not enough to satisfy us. We will be on a search, making a threadbare analysis to study all facets of such an experience. Those who get a deeper insight into these stands to get honored also more, providing a natural encouragement to such a behavior.

But our approach is not the same, when we experience something unpleasant. Instead of examining the unpleasant events in a similar manner, the primary aim is to exterminate the event, effectively nullifying further analysis. Had we behaved rationally, our efforts would have been to study the event in detail to prepare ourselves for the future. A good example of this paradox can be seen in our approach to the study of happiness. Though we know in detail about happiness and its dependency on certain chemicals, our information about unhappiness leaves a lot to be desired. As rational beings, unhappiness should have been subjected to a deeper study than happiness, since that would have given us a greater share of joy. (Reduction in unhappiness is, as we can easily gather, less resource intensive than addition of happiness)

Why is it that we are not able to notice this?

I think, in the unworldly world, we do not approach a question with an open mind. Not only that, we look at spiritual topics particularly with a closed mind. For had we been otherwise, the long list of spiritual concepts we entertain, like the necessity of a creator, or a regulator who needs to be kept happy, wouldn't have survived all these millenniums, with no effective change in its appearance.

If that so, what human need is being satisfied by an unworldly idea that it is able to withstand even the most significant changes in our lifestyle? What need does it serve?

I think the eagerness we show in entertaining unworldly ideas clearly shows that these ideas serve an important need. A probable one is the need to hide some worldly want, the fulfillment of which would have been leaving us extremely uncomfortable. And we are wary of any new such ideas as the loss of the old idea will once again unleash the 'worldly need', and consequently, the discomfort, the old idea was helping us to hide. In such a case, since in every answer there is a possibility of that discomfort relapsing, we cannot afford to face questions in the spiritual domain with

an open mind which could lead to new ideas. And we are wary of any new ideas, as they have the potential to cause fresh discomfort.

That brings me to the most pertinent doubt. How is that we are waiting for a reason to get upset. An expected response we receive showing a deviation from the norm, or, the exposure to an uncomfortable question is enough to agitate the human society high enough to cause permanent harm. What does this indicate?

This, I think indicates lack of stability. To put it more appropriately, the human society is always in a condition of unstable equilibrium. Because of which, a small or insignificant disturbance is enough to set into motion, a chain of reactions, many of those unpleasant, and with long lasting effects.

We know that the specified behavior of any systems, equipments or machines is valid only within certain operating limit, known as the linear range. We also know that every system is prone to wayward behavior, due to thermal effects, humidity, vibration etc., and suitable precautions are to be taken to account for this. How do we make sure that a system operates in the linear range of interested parameters? By having an array of special devices, called safeties, incorporated into such systems or devices to prevent it from operating beyond the recommended range, for whatever reason.

I think we are can try the same approach as the one we use in ensuring stability to physical systems, in all facets of our life.

Already such an approach is visible in some aspects of our daily life. When confronted with a failure, we are able to allay our sense of loss, or in cases of success, we are able to cap our elation from becoming obtrusive to others, thanks to intervention from the spiritual dimension of our life. That is, such interventions make sure that the material part of our life operates within the linear range of the parameters of interest.

Why doesn't it happen in our spiritual world? Why is that whenever a disturbance happen to the spiritual fabric, instead of correcting itself, the disorder threaten to blow up the society? Even in cases of tiny pricks, rather than self-correcting, why do all of those add up to produce a huge ripple?

I think the real and abstract works at tandem, making similar contributions in guiding our life, but in opposite sense. One augments our good feelings or acts against our sad feelings. The other guards against external attacks.

## Chapter 18 Getting Hurt by Words: What is so Special

Getting hurt is as much a liberating experience as a painful one. It is thus possible that we want to get hurt, that too by an easy way, words.

### Getting Hurt by Words: What is so Special

Getting hurt by others' words is a very common issue, and all of us face this in life some time. One can also get hurt in many other ways, and that is also one issue all of us face. But what interest me most is our reactions, for we seem to be having entirely different approaches while facing each of these cases, indicating that there is something more to it.

Let us begin with the latter case and examine a few types of injury and our reactions.

**Injury caused by pets:** Either ones own pet or those of neighbors may sometimes misbehave. But the onus is always on those who choose to play with or approach a pet. We are expected to observe it closely, look for any danger sign and conclusively establish friendliness before proceeding.

**Reaction:** Be more careful in future.

**Injury from machinery:** Sometimes we get hurt or shocked from common household devices like heaters, fans, pumps etc. Most common causes include, a chipped wire, a missing safety cover or broken parts. Some other times it might be a fall or some other injury. But the onus is always on us to ensure that the equipment or device is safe before handling it as well as, exercising care while doing ones chore. Even when we say that the design or construction of the item need to be improved, the prime responsibility of ensuring safety is held as that of the person who got hurt. **Reaction(mild):** Be more careful in future. **Reaction(severe):** You are prohibited from using, handling or doing certain things.

But when we come to the injuries caused by words or actions, these can be considered as part of a bigger group of incidents that lead to abstract damage. Not giving an appropriate response, refusing to acknowledge or welcome, and insubordination, are some of the other acts that can fall into this group.

**Injury caused inappropriate response:** Often we face situations like this, where the difference between the expected reaction and the actual response, hits on our face. **Reaction:** He(She) is affected by something, dissatisfied with you(the injured).

Injury caused by inappropriate approach: This could include all uncomfortable or offending situations, insulting questions and issues like that. Reaction: He(She) is wants to cause you(the injured) hurt.

Now see an interesting twist. In the first case, where injury is caused by external things or actions, the onus is almost always on the injured soul to appropriately raise ones level of caution. In the second case, not only that the blame of misdemeanor is put squarely on the injurer, but also the injured is condoned if any of his action caused the injurer to act in the manner he(she) did. Moreover, in cases where the injured person can't be seen as completely blame free, efforts would be taken by all, to give all kinds of justifications to the disorderly conduct, mostly citing extraneous reasons. And if existing literature on the issue is not enough to supply sufficient reasons in that direction, new studies or research will get underway to provide valid 'excuses' to ratify the behavior of the injured, that is, the right of the injured to get hurt.

This made me think. Why should there be such a difference? When we get hurt by material things, even when there is solid proof indicating to design or material shortcoming, our lack of attention or care, is faulted. Whereas, when the hurt is by words, even when there is genuine proof showing lack of understanding from our side, the other person is faulted for unreasonable, careless or haughty conduct.

I think it is because the idea or the sense transpired by 'hurt' is different in both the cases. In the former, where hurt is from external input, it more or less denotes the classical meaning, something causing permanent damage or destabilizing our state of comfort or both. In the latter, where it is entirely up to one, whether to get affected by the spoken words or not, 'hurt' indicates to personal choice, a decision largely influenced by ones cultural background.

Another fact I could notice in this imbroglio is regarding our potential to learn from experience, which seems to be missing in this case. Learning is part of human nature, and as far as physical world go, we don't get hurt repeatedly in the same manner. (People, who continue to get hurt in the same way is a subject of ridicule!) For, after the first instance itself, either by changing the world around us, or equipping ourselves suitably, we would have prepared ourselves to face the world without harm. How is it that the words, sentiments or expressions capable of causing hurt remain unchanged over eras? Neither the 'offense' contained in the expressions as intended by the user, nor the 'insult' felt by those at the receiving end, have undergone any change. Why?

This indicates to a rather fundamental difference between physical injuries and such abstract wounds. Words can hurt us only when we decide to get hurt, unlike other forms of injuries. That brings us to the most significant question, why should we 'want' to get hurt? What do we gain by getting hurt by words?

I think helpful results might emerge, if we take a few past such occurrences and, analyze what would have been required from us had we didn't get hurt. The very act of 'getting hurt' could be seen to have saved us from many types of extreme inconvenience, like monetary expenses, additional responsibility, or, letting go of something we hold close to us. And in almost all such instances, the 'gain' from the injury more or less balances the unhappiness caused.

That is why we get hurt by words; it is gainful to be so! (Also, some people use this as a tactic for getting what they want) It adds to our defense mechanisms. We can always get hurt, and offer it as a valid reason to act or not to act in a particular way.

## **Chapter 19 Can't we warm up to Global Warming?**

Since 18th century we know, prehistoric climates were different from the modern period. A theory of what can termed "Ice Age" — when glaciers covered Europe and much of North America came in vogue and it was scientifically accepted that the Earth had been subject to a past ice age.

Earth's climate has changed dramatically in the past, apparently in response to natural changes in orbital characteristics and topography (plate tectonics), warmer than at present for most of this time, punctuated by infrequent Ice Ages.

These may have been caused by processes associated with continental drift and greenhouse warming (a result of carbon di oxide production from natural causes like volcanic activity). Now that the prospect of another ice age is staring at us, all nations are in a huddle to devise ways to defeat the change and save our planet. And scary stories of warming climate fill the atmosphere. But there is also, another side to this. The people, I think are generally in the dark about the fact that there are opposing views on the gravity of the problem, especially among scientists. There are many among them, who believe that global warming is benign and natural.

Isn't our fear irrational?

Is the extensive preparations, international conferences, agreements and plans adopted by almost all nations to prepare for an imminent warming, in many cases under pressure, really warranted? Should we arm ourselves so comprehensively for natural variation of our living environment, that too at the cost of many of our conveniences?

Imagine that something like this did happen sometime towards the end of ice age.

Assume it was a well populated world, all inhabitants possessing abundantly, the essential abilities and qualities needed for survival. A small group of enlightened ones joins together. They foresee an imminent change in weather. Putting all their might into use, they manage to assemble a good chunk of concerned citizens to devise, practice and popularize ways to defeat 'global melting'. They search and locate regions of the planet least influenced by the rising temperature and shift their abodes. And quite a few frightened citizens follow suit.

Time goes by. Climate slowly started turning warm. And extensive studies were in progress, issuing regular warnings about this phenomenon. Accordingly, the above mentioned group of concerned citizens had already taken shelter in and around the areas more conducive for escaping from warm climate, like ice clad peaks. Most of others perished, their end coming a little earlier than normal owing to the complexities of weather induced problems.

For those who were in the shelter, the next and subsequent generations had to relocate themselves deeper and deeper into the colder regions of the planet to find comfort amidst the changing climate. Naturally, survival was always at stake for those species as the climate change continued to threaten their habitat. For the others, though they exited rather early, new generations evolved with greater tolerance to warm climate.

Life continued. Millenniums went by. The ones who took shelter among the ice covered peaks, and their progeny, continued their life in rather comfortable manner, thanks to the known surroundings. They evolved into beings who are at ease with such an environment, like polar bears, penguins or Eskimos. Whereas those who continued living in other parts of the planet had a horrendous time, the large scale death and destruction that was always there, making some of them to take shelter with the other group. But many of those who survived have evolved into a rich collection of species that populate the planet today, each of them suited most appropriately for certain instance of the climate, while the transition from ice age to the present, was in progress. As these species

were better suited to the new climate, their numbers swelled, and they started occupying newer pastures and regions to become finally, the conquerors of the planet. One such species, perhaps the most successful of all, came to don the mantle of the queen of all kinds of life, genus Homo.

Now we are again nearing the end of an age.

Should we choose to shelter and save us from the agony of climate change by living under self-imposed restrictions and pressing inconveniences? And let our progeny continue in this world as unsuitable species for their era? Or should we let ourselves go, tacitly agreeing to live at the mercy, of whatever the weather, the coming days might be of? And give an opportunity to our future generations to turn into (say)genus homo++ and continue their life, ruling the world as we do now?

I have read, the worst critic of an artist, is the artist himself. And I think we are behaving like artists. May be we think of human brain as an unnecessary appendage to our physiology. We find it quite pleasurable to criticize whatever we do, invariably terming it as ‘unnatural’. And we find it equally entertaining to applaud whatever happens in the world without human intervention, always calling it natural.

Our urge to picture as artificial and harmful, whatever we do, when contrasted by our readiness to paint as natural and harmless, whatever is caused by other forms of life, only lends support to such a view.

## **Chapter 20 Why do we react the way we react?**

We all know, what controls the reactions of animals to different signals and stimuli appropriate to varying circumstances are the instincts. In the case of humans, because we are rational animals, one more variable enters into play with this, intuition or reason. How does reason manifest? What role does it play in our temperament, our responses?

For the sake of this study at least, let us consider all our actions as just reactions, reactions to instincts or, reactions to somebody else’s actions. (which then can go into a recursive loop - of reactions to, reactions to instincts and, reactions to, reactions to somebody else’s actions)

What controls our reactions?

There are two important parameters associated with every entity (action or our reaction) that shape our response. One is whether the entity



is harmful or not. And the other is cogency; whether the entity is rational or not. Taking these into consideration, there are four possible responses. One, when the entity is harmful as well as rational. Two, when it is not harmful, but rational. Three, when it is harmful, but not rational. And four, when the entity is neither harmful nor rational.

Let us examine each case.

In the first case, where falls almost all experiences and transactions of the material world, we critically examine each such entity. Using the best available resource, we take pains to formulate and deliver an appropriate response. In short, we always react to the harmful and the rational, most fittingly.

Many examples can be cited. The way we confront our health issues, and, the success we have achieved in commanding our planet and exploring the world beyond our skies could easily fit in, as a few appropriate ones. In all these, a rather structured, formal but pragmatic, approach could be easily seen, in effecting a solution to the problem at hand. A casual glance at the way we confront these issues is enough to make this clear.

When we come to the next case, that is entities that are not harmful but rational, unlike the previous case, our response does not follow a predictable path. The variation in our responses also does not show any pattern, or, we do not react to these entities in a fitting manner. A couple of examples can make this clear.

One - Our self destructive approach to the issue of child labor. By practically removing all possibilities of proper engagement with work or work related tasks, we are effectively hindering the overall development of children.

Two - A self defeating style for helping the poor. In our desire to help those involved in traditional, outdated style of living, we end up forcibly making these people continue with the outdated lifestyle. Little do we realize that, as time passes by, it shall become more and more difficult for them to assimilate with the rest of the world.

Three - Our misplaced priorities. By crying hoarse about the imagined destruction of our habitat, we (unknowingly, I think) prevent many futuristic developments from taking place, especially from the areas which need such improvements the most. This in fact will put the future generations at severe handicap in co-existing with the rest of the world, at least as equals. Especially when the borders between societies are getting shrunk on a global scale, this, I think will pose insurmountable difficulties

to our progeny. Tomorrow when the ideas of basic science make a discernible shift from the past, nothing will be there to tie a natural link with those parts of the world which happen to become the contemporary centers of ideas or thoughts of latest knowledge.

Now, let us see how we react to entities that are harmful but not rational. Here we can learn a shocking truth about ourselves; we are always more than eager to accept such entities into our society, that too with hardly any critical examination. In short, in this case also, we do not show a fitting reaction.

For example, an idea that can take root may be about happiness. That human happiness can be achieved by inertia and inaction can be seen to be gaining huge popularity, instead of the idea that we tend to be happiest when we are vitally absorbed in creative pursuits, or when we are devoting ourselves to people or projects outside ourselves.

Another one about human fallibility could find wide acceptability. The idea that we absolutely need something other or stronger or greater than oneself on which to rely -- instead of the idea that it is better to take the associated risks of thinking and acting less dependently.

When it comes to entities that are irrational as well as harmful, we do not show such determined opposition as in the case of entities that are harmful but rational. In no case is such entities summarily rejected. We always try to accommodate them in our society, according them with the greatest reverence such that these are accepted notwithstanding the harm caused. Can we call this a fitting reaction?

For example, we are always seized of the idea that if something is or may be dangerous or fearsome we should be terribly upset and endlessly obsess about it. This prevents us from both confronting it face to face to render it non-dangerous and, when that is not possible, accepting the inevitable.

The last two cases in fact offer a good rationale for the prevalence of mythology and all related concepts, like religion, god or hell, in our day to day life. The whole purpose is to act as a repository of such entities, and these entities, as shown above, adds the necessary irrational content to our lives.

Concede, we are approaching all issues in the material plane logically and with reason. We always compare the actual with the desired, compute corrections wherever necessary, and apply those, to bring the actual to the desired. However these account for only one fourth of human transactions, the rest being of the forms rational and harmful, irrational and harmless as well as irrational and harmful. In all these areas, as our behavior is

guided more by certain irrational interests than by natural propensity, a good part of human transactions lead to unintended consequences, which in many cases could be highly destructive. Therefore, a rather thorough study of human transactions, specifically of those lacking in reason, is necessary to evolve appropriate guidelines. Significantly, since the technique of evolving course corrections differs greatly between the material plane and the other ones, as evinced by the diagrams shown, such a study is essential to ensure our continued welfare.

We are happily living with the thought that humans are rational and are moving towards a great future. Is that so?

## **Chapter 21 The secret of good times, a life of achievement and success**

What is the secret of good times, a life of achievement and success?

Walk into any library. The subject with the most number of titles can be seen to be hovering around success, management of progress or, how to become an achiever. Look closely to find that almost all of this deal with a few essential ingredients of good life and success, an imaginative selection from a rich collection of abstract entities that form part of human culture. Look more closely to find this as nothing but an intelligent combination of certain basic tenets, of course dispersed meaningfully among different titles.

(If, say some time in the future, one is to go through the literary wealth of the twentieth century and thereabouts to make an opinion of people and their lifestyle, the most significant finding shall be this: Twentieth century humans were always obsessed with the idea of success, as though it is not a natural element of life.)

Why is it so difficult for humans to achieve success and be happy in life? One of the earliest to pontificate on such matters, Greek philosopher Plato, has deliberated at length on such questions. If I risk giving a simplified version of his views, it goes like this. In each one of us, abstract

ideas exist that accept, reject, celebrate or enjoy other abstract ideas. For example while facing a question from a child, it is the abstract father who should (ordinarily) respond. If question is from wife, the abstract husband, if it is about certain facet of the republic, the abstract citizen, if it is about enjoyment, the abstract child in one, and so on appropriately take position as the responding form. As long as the idea and the responding form in each of the cases are matched properly, communication and all the ensuing affairs also shall proceed in a smooth manner, ensuring that every transaction reaches its completion and every endeavor ends fruitfully.

From the look of it itself, the above approach can be considered as a wise step towards achievement. All writings on success, all the books about happy life which were prevalent at various instances of time, more or less depend heavily on these findings of Plato. So also is the advance we made in many branches of science dealing with human transactions.

But the matter didn't end there. Our quest for the secrets of success and good life continued regardless. Through many of the expositions of later years, like, Epicurus and pragmatic thought, St Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and the theologians, Machiavelli and the thought that end justifies the means, the relentless search progressed. John Calvin and predestination, Francis Bacon and the need to look beyond what we see, Thomas Hobbes and the need for an equitable society, Descartes and the primacy of free will, John Locke and the desirability of liberalist approach, Leibniz and the thought that man can't have all answers, Voltaire and the love of freedom, David Hume and the significance of rational approach, Rousseau and the importance of personal liberty, Adam Smith and free market, Immanuel Kant and the role of human mind in worldly affairs, Karl Marx and the suppression of classes by classes, Sartre, Camus and the existential existence, as well as Simone de Beauvoir and the feminist onslaught are some of the better known ones to mould our present. Such pontification on philosophical issues is continuing unabated, however at a noticeably reduced scale, as we cross the period of industrial revolution.

Couple of things stand out. In these writings, there is a well discernible slant towards the obscure, as we move away from Plato and advance in time. (Though the 'learned' ones may view this as an indication to the fact that humans are thinking deeper as time moves by, I take this as our desire to move more towards the irrational.) But, as we saw above, after industrial revolution, such approach seems to have taken a hit. I think, as science moved more and more secrets of the nature to our drawing rooms, the topics of discussions naturally took recourse towards

the rational. In place of esoteric topics to hold our interest, as we had to resort to deeper and deeper insight into the newly learned secrets of the universe, each and every part of our daily life became a perfect fit for concentration, devotion and reflection. However, rational topics were found to be grossly unsuitable for these acts, since, sooner or later, an answer originates, effectively putting a stop to further transactions of the intellect. This necessitates, either another topic to ponder or, resorting to deeper consideration (and other intellectual commerce!) of the one already in use. (Concede, deeper insight into anything can result in welcome changes in our life and living, however, certain unwelcome intrusions are also our share. A visible effect of such bombardment is the constant attempt of our society to grapple with these changes. This many a time result in an unforeseen and destructive ambience and send out a rather incorrect message, of a race constantly at war with itself.)

One of the few abstract topics left is the one dealing with achievement, success or good life. Naturally, repeated use of this topic will have to be necessarily proposing different approaches to these issues, each having the potential to result in many books. Some parts of those books may contain findings and recommendations that are appropriate to certain instances of time, place, or the type of people involved.

However, the secret of success, as explained by Plato, still remains the only analysis, valid in all circumstances and at all times, while having applicability in real life.

All that is unpleasant with our world can easily be traced to our longing for success in life, or our objections to someone else's search for the same. Is it that our idea about success is wrong?

## **Chapter 22 Man can't find what is good for him, but as men, they however do**

Man may not be intelligent, but men definitely are

I think we can safely say, the more intelligent one is, the lesser, the quantum of errors committed. In that case, can't how often we err, become a measure of IQ? It seems so, since the popular definition of intelligence takes into account both the ability to learn or understand things or to deal with new or difficult situations (Merriam Webster), and the distinctions

one is aware of about a given concept. Other definitions, like “the ability to learn or understand or to deal with new or trying situations” and “the ability to apply knowledge to manipulate one’s environment or to think abstractly as measured by objective criteria.” also support such a view. This is true even when we observe other areas or aspects of our lives that are distinctly human, such as leadership intelligence, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and positive intelligence, where, to be free of error can be thought to be as a sign of intelligence. Also, none of the commonly occurring sub-domains of intelligence, namely, Visual-spatial Intelligence, Verbal-linguistic Intelligence, Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence, Logical-mathematical Intelligence, Interpersonal Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, Intrapersonal Intelligence, as well as Naturalistic Intelligence can be seen as an exception to this.

And we say, to err is human. (The best selling writing implements at Amazon, are those with eraser attached!) But not to err is something associated with all other forms of life. Does this imply that those are more intelligent than humans?

To answer this question, let us re-examine in earnest, the whole gamut of life and living, both for humans and for all other forms of life. In fact we can safely reduce this rather wide area of search, to just two aspects of living. One, how good or effective is their approach as far as comfort and longevity of life, and two, what is going to be the load on environment and how much of resources get depleted in each generation that can be a measure of the longtime survivability of species.

Now when I look at our life and living, a good bunch of contradictions arise.

Steven Pinker’s bestseller ‘How the Mind Works’ opens with an interesting observation, “animals do not ill treat humans, even when humans are on the wrong side”. On top of it they have to put up with unspeakable aggression from humans, even when they are not on the wrong side. Why don’t we accept the possibility that it is so because animals are more civilized? Just like among us, the more civilized we are, the more accommodating our nature. (We are ready to put up with more assault!)

Or, take child birth. More and more importance is being attributed to unassisted childbirth, both for the comfort of the mother and for

containing the trauma. But all other forms of life already are following this latest finding.

Humans do everything they can to save them from the damage done by natural calamities as well as forms of extreme violence but follow everything in their life style that can harm them. Whereas all other forms of life show a rather resigned approach when it comes to the inevitable but, scrupulously avoid anything and everything except those well established as part of their diet and life style.

During my younger years, both as a student and while employed, I have always noticed a striking alacrity, in each and every one of us towards solving others' problem. The capacity to solve such issues used to be taken as a desired talent and the more incapable one was in doing own job, the keener, the urge shown to correct others. (This urge many a time brought the imaginative in us, to fore. Each of us used to be having quite a good amount of responsibilities on our head, at least some of those which needing urgent attention. All but the essential ones we postpone. And the ones which happened to get served would be in receipt of our attention, till we find an excuse for not continuing with the attempt!)

In short, though no human can look after himself, all humans look after others and hence they survive well, as a species.

This in fact is a good description of human nature. As individuals, we bother about other individuals and, as a group we are worried about other groups, and as a country we are always concerned about other countries. All these either end in close cooperation or result in horrible fight, both of which we do remarkably well, but when it comes to anything in between, we always are found wanting. We are severely error prone, whenever we are left to ourselves.

Can we say, man is not intelligent, but men are?

## **Chapter 23 Is Language, for Communication?**

Among all contraptions man has made, language stands out as the one understood most clearly, and that too in indisputable terms, by each one of us. And it is generally understood as a systematic means of communicating by the use of sounds or conventional symbols. We identify language as something that is closely linked with our life, its existence, our

awareness of its presence and the ultimate delight or achievement. We invoke language in all our affairs. Whether to please or to nag, to applaud or to boo or to scold or to acclaim, no other human contrivance is of greater avail than language.

However, this is also a fact. Much of the disturbances, hatred and violence or other unpleasant happenings in our midst wouldn't have been there, had our understanding of language been different. Also, our history would have been free of many chapters recounting events of considerable hostility between societies, hatred, pain and suffering, not to mention the good that would have resulted from aiming our effort towards something not so destructive.

How else should we recognize the role of language, or rather, what is language for, if not for communication?

As a first step towards an answer, assume, there is no language. (By language, I mean a structured system of symbols, with associated rules, grammar etc.) What handicap do we face? What can't be attempted by us?

It is not difficult to see that it is possible to continue with almost all the functions served by languages using some other human capability. Like for communicating ideas, signs and actions can be of great help. In fact even when we use language for communicating with others, it is the concurrent use of signs, actions or expressions that ultimately result in conveying the exact meaning. This is true when it comes to expressing, showing or acknowledging emotions as well. Therefore, in the primary sphere of its use, absence of language need not pose an insurmountable problem.

But we are at a loss, when it comes to another sphere of its use, an important activity of humans, thinking. In the absence of a language it becomes impossible to think, imagine or form a mental picture. Language thus can be identified more appropriately as the medium in which we think. And it goes without saying, the greater the ability of this medium to enable sublime or worthy thoughts, the more exalted and noble, our notions and beliefs.

The above inference had also been reached earlier by many philosophers, a notable one being Dr Susanne Langer, who in her books, 'An Introduction to Symbolic Logic' and 'Philosophical Sketches', dwells deeply on the role of language as a collection and processing of logic, through symbols. As elaborated in these books, the primary purpose of language is to think. In this book, the notable fact that in a sizeable



number of Nobel prizes awarded so far, the research work leading to the invention or discovery was conducted using a particular language, German, has been specially mentioned. This is true even for Nobel awardees from countries other than Germany, like USA or UK, who conducted their research in attachment with the 'German' chair of their respective institutions. The author attributes this to the capability of that language in forming new words, expressions, dependencies and the interconnections with significant ease, thus bombarding one constantly with fresh thoughts and ideas, the staple diet of all creative thinkers.

Another widely observed peculiarity in connection with language is in the quality and style of ancient writing. Without exception, all historical documents written in all languages and old books contain very difficult grammatical structures, most of them beyond the comprehension of common people. And many of the books hide very complex and obscure ideas within those contents. If those writings were meant to communicate or inform certain ideas to people, none of them would have been like that. Rather, the complex nature of use of language and presentation of ideas is a clear proof that these books would have been meant to keep the learned entertained, leaving them to their deep reverie.

We are in fact belittling language by terming it merely as a means of communication. By not selecting a language based on its appropriateness as a vehicle of thought and by selecting one based solely on the ease of communication, we are making two serious mistakes. One, we are losing whatever good that would have resulted from the involvement of a huge population, in activities involving cognitive transactions. Two, we are seeding possibilities of collisions and skirmishes, as individual preferences for communication need not be the same for all, the results of which, are already visible in our society.

Shouldn't we be more rational in choosing a language, at least for teaching the next generation?

## **Chapter 24 How to Stop Terrorism.**

I know, we, the humans, are a species with great potential. We can very well achieve success in the war against terror, provided, we identify terror, our enemy, correctly.

What is terror? Terror is nothing but a mix of violence and extremism.

Violence is nothing but forms of physical entertainment that remains enjoyable when within limit, gone beyond control. This can happen due to many reasons, like ignorance, wickedness or ulterior motives.

Now what is extremism? I agree, there is no easy answer. And I think the world is in constant grapple with this, as all governments think that they know the answer and take 'appropriate' action, compounding an already complex position.

Let us begin with a definition, since the first step in solving any problem is to define the problem.

Extremism is nothing but taking a good or worthy idea (or an amusement!) to its limits, regardless of unfortunate repercussions, impracticalities, arguments, and feelings to the contrary, and with the intention, not only to confront, but also to eliminate all kinds of opposition to whatever one may choose to identify with. Also, it displays severe intolerance toward all views other than one's own. (In fact the rather stupendous level of its effects is so arresting, we are always letting ourselves forget its humble, friendly and pleasant beginnings)

Except where it involves adoption of means to political ends with total disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others, we are generally happy with extremism. It can in fact be said that as someone of consequence puts it: ".. extremism, in the defense of liberty, is no vice! And let me remind you also that moderation, in the pursuit of justice, is no virtue!" This, I think is what makes extremism part of our society notwithstanding its peril and, sidelines the virtue of temperance, notwithstanding its appeal.

Well, let us see some of the ways people have chosen to hug Extremism.

**Ethno-national Extremism:** It is important to point out that Nationalism in itself need not become extreme- it's just a focus on the nation or national identity, ethnic spirit or some other desirable symbol (think flags, anthems, the World Cup). Ethno-national extremists, however, have a particular idea of what they want in their nations, or how other nations deserve to be treated. Their vision for the nation often means just one identity (which normally excludes other cultures, colors, religions or ideas to them).

Other such movements may be adept at appropriating a mix of color, religion, ethnicity or locale to suit the moment, to remain relevant in a changing world. In the final analysis, any idea or belief can become extreme. Thus, scope exists for Political Extremism, Environmental Extremism, Animal Rights Extremism and many others, limited only by ones imagination. These views may pose a threat to certain groups in society even when not of a violent form.

In short, we should consider extremism as a part of our life, a part which has become uncontrollable due to certain reasons.

Is this right? If it is a part of our life, how did it attain that position? What metabolic need is met by extremism?

Let us go further and look at the different shades and styles of its appearance as well as the reasons for its proliferation. What role, if any, do we play in this?

We are not able to find the exact nature and causes for extremism, because we are yet to make a proper, unequivocal definition itself. To find out when and under what conditions does an abnormal act becomes fit to be termed as extreme, let us study how we respond to abnormal acts and, what reactions we show. For this let us classify all such acts into four groups based on two significant questions, one, whether the act is harmful and two, whether the act is rational. Thus an act can be rational and harmful, or rational but not harmful, or not rational but harmful, or both, not rational and not harmful. Remember an abnormal act can be from any of the four groups, but our response to that act depends on which group, the act belongs to. This is a simplified diagram showing the variations in our response to acts. Abnormal acts that cause the desire to conquer, are the ones leading to extremism.

Take abnormal acts that are rational as well as harmful.

All the progress we made in human history is our efforts in handling such instances appropriately. Examples can be found in the way we conquered health problems, our planet and space or other challenges of science and technology. We are quick to identify abnormal behavior and take suitable action. Every act will be treated in a fitting manner, as long as it belongs to this group. We are quick to confront the issue, condemn it as appropriate and use all our resources to form a suitable reaction, like a new invention.

Take abnormal acts that are rational but, not harmful.

Many of our entertainments, social enjoyments, celebrations fall into this group. There are cases where people have attempted such acts beyond

reasonable limits. However no act will get termed as extremism if it belongs to this group. As long as the abnormal act is not harmful, we are beyond ourselves with accolades, in the form of great prizes, awards or other endearments, instead of identifying those also as another form of excess, say benevolent extremism. Hence acts will not be treated abnormal itself, as long as it belongs to this group. We are quick to detect the act and its harmless nature, and perhaps raise a global (endless) debate on its future to ensure that it is dealt appropriately.

Take abnormal acts that are not rational, and not harmful.

In this case also, as long as it is not harmful, we do not show any opposition. And if such acts happen to be beneficial to society, we are again, beyond ourselves with accolades, in the form of great prizes, awards or other endearments, instead of identifying those also as another form of excess, benevolent extremism, as we saw above. All acts are celebrated, as long as it belongs to this group, as they endear us a lot. Not only that we enjoy such kind of issues but also are according special status of reverence.

Take abnormal acts that are not rational, but harmful.

Especially in this case, we are always eager to find a 'cause' for such acts. If that happen to have a link with religion, we will be competing with each other in 'rationalizing' the act, mostly, as a providential sign. Even when there is no attempt to support, we shall not be opposing this, as long as it remains irrational. At most, we may take some steps to avoid harm, if there is any. Here too, all acts are left untouched, as long as it belongs to this group. We are never disturbed by rational thoughts when we follow such issues in earnest, we ready to overlook inconsistencies and are always in awe of the resulting flutter.

Thus we can easily note that we identify an abnormal act as extremist, only when it results in great and visible harm. If such acts happen to be of actual or potential benefit to society, we are beyond ourselves with accolades. In fact many of the great prizes, awards or other endearments of the world are actually for celebrating such deeds. Right approach would have been to identify these acts also as another form of excess, say benevolent extremism. Instead, we find reasons for celebrating such acts even when those are harmful, as long as the harm is directed to somewhere else but our own backyards. Thus extremism originates in our love for the irrational, and as one can easily see, anything and everything can become irrational, when at either of its extremes, i.e., too much or too less.

To sum up, whenever we are confronted with extreme acts that are also undoubtedly harmful, our reaction depends on whether the acts can

be termed as rational or not. If rational, we use all available efforts in dealing with that issue to its conclusion, mostly to the death of its perpetrators. For example an armed gang, if caught indulging in material pursuit, is swiftly brought to justice.

If irrational, again we are beyond ourselves in searching for a 'cause', and, if the cause can be linked with religion, we will be competing with each other in finding a justification for the 'acts'. For example the armed gang, if caught indulging in the same pursuit but with certain abstract reasons, symbols or signs that can justify the need for material gain (like a command received as a dream), is generally held with great veneration and awe. Rather than bringing to justice, our desire shall be to find a place to accommodate them in our society.

You see, as shown in the diagram, we deal with an abnormal or violent act appropriately, only when it is harmful as well as rational. On all the remaining occasions, we rather encourage such acts leading to greater consequences that beget more such acts. This should explain the ease with which, extremism spreads.

Now we can formulate a defense, and to begin with, let us define extremism as any act that is way beyond its rational limit. To continue, let us discourage all forms of extremism simultaneously, each one, of those involving violence, as well as of other benign forms, dealt appropriately. I find no reason to believe that substantial changes shall not follow.

In short, terrorism, though is rightly identified as the most serious problem affecting the mankind today, is the least understood of all our problems. Once we learn what is behind extremism, making our society safe, is child's play.

## **Chapter 25 How to be Free of Intolerance?**

What is intolerance?

Intolerance is nothing but someone assuming an extreme position on ones propensity to choose a particular alternative. In fact the preference to finding or choosing from a treasure of alternatives is one of the basic elements that separate humans from other forms of life. We humans show this everyday, in whatever we do, and those who are able to choose from a greater amount of alternatives are considered to be leading

a richer life. There is nothing in this world that can't be brought under the purview of subjectivity; variations in taste, color, smell, as well as, physical, chemical or other properties are there in abundance to let man exercise his selection genes! In normal circumstances, this propensity to choose may amount to a liking towards the chosen one and an absence of it, towards all the other ones. Whenever the 'liking' or the 'absence of liking' crosses the rational limit, these metamorphose into 'intolerance', a violent and dangerous form of ones harmless 'tastes'. On other occasions, we celebrate such differences as enriching our cultural diversity, as guardians of values, as harbingers of progress and in the end, elevating the position of our race on the tree of life. This being a part and parcel of our life, it is no wonder that intolerance do find its way into human transactions, whenever the need to go irrational, arise.

What does it do?

In fact intolerance had a part to play in all that took place in human society since its inception. All the inventions and discoveries, all voyages or explorations as well as, acts of love or scourge of war owe its existence to someone's intolerance in its mild form, disagreement or dissatisfaction with the existing. In other words, these can be easily attributed to a great extent to discontentment, of some, few or all the people, of things, beings or their doings. Quite a few times it did lead to something good, many a time, we can say whenever it took to its extreme form, intolerance, to things equally bad. Thus one may say, renaissance is but intolerance to barbarism. Or, industrial revolution is but intolerance to menial life. Like that, intolerance to disease, death or destruction kept on adding all these years to the joy of living.

And wherever it did lead to something good, as in the case of inventions and discoveries since time immemorial, we are beyond ourselves in showering adulation. Even when the result involved large scale destruction and death, as long as we are not the sufferers, we are in awe of such instances. The only time we recognize intolerance as unwelcome, is when it is directly causing great harm, specifically to our society. That too, of a huge value, compared to whatever danger it is causing to rest of the mankind. In all other cases we consider this abnormal behavior as devotion, dedication or hard work. It then, is no real wonder that intolerance has become a part of our life.

What nourishes intolerance?

Let us examine afresh, our attitude towards life. Let us analyze what exactly we do while encouraging or discouraging any of the aspects of our

social life, the transactions we constantly engage in, and other facets of human nature.

All those who make any form of worthwhile contributions to our society are honored with valuables, many a time accompanied by great pomp and show. Even those who exhibit irrational behavior are honored, as long as it is not about something that is of great harm to us. In a few cases we go much beyond that by showering such efforts with awards and other forms of recognition. These honors continuously force us to concentrate more and more on one single aim, overthrowing the natural human tendency of finding amusement anywhere.

Another facet of the human nature that can give rise to intolerance is the way we are disposed to differentiate between entities even in the absence of such contributions. It should not be difficult to see that between the many honors and forms of discrimination there is only a thin line.

Both nurtures intolerance, though called by different names. It then, is no wonder that intolerance continue to remain a part of our life.

Presently, what are we doing?

We are trying to fight intolerance by intolerance. This is not an efficient response as the success of this approach is dependent only on brute force. Whose intolerance is stronger is the one who will eventually win. In all likelihood the struggle between the two will not reach an unmistakable end, making intolerance continue as a part of human life. And history will continue repeating.

Where are we now?

In fact we have reached a situation where anything can become invaluable or worthy of adulation, as long as it is in the extreme. (In fact no ability (or lack of it) or talent is without its use, one can always try for a world record in that!) And as a result of the phenomenal value we have been giving all these years to any trait that is of high intensity, populace is being encouraged to somehow achieve the extremes (read intolerance of the mediocre!).

Both in the form of material benefits and as great name and fame, the good that happened with the great men of the past turned all subsequent generations into seekers of the unattainable. Those gifted among us who are adept to intellectual pursuit, cultivated their intolerance in such paths suitable for scaling great heights of name and fame. Out came Nobel laureates, academicians or scientists, who sowed the seeds of happy living. Some of us took to arts and crafts and a few others happened to have their 'taste' in physical entertainments, all for leading a desirable

life. And out came more people of greatness, like authors, poets, historians, or sportsmen, who are but the pillars of happy living. But finally, when from the remaining ones, the ones fastidious and were tasteful of physical entertainments or jobs, went to the extremes of their 'talents', out came another mighty breed, the practitioners of violence. But in this case, unlike other forms of arts or science, they posed a threat to happy living. Hence, instead of giving recognition, our society marks them out with a meaningful name, the intolerant. In short, the spread of intolerance is not by design, some of us happen to foster that, by accident.

Where do we go from here?

We are already seized of the dangers posed by intolerance, as could be gathered from our all out war against this. Sample poster shown here testifies to this, quite eloquently.

As we saw earlier, the origin of intolerance being closely linked to our nature of 'extolling the extremes', a natural cure for this could be found in 'a fresh impetus to moderation'. Intolerance is nothing but the extremes of quite worthy and desirable qualities like fastidiousness, exactness, or stringency, coupled with an ardent desire to tie ourselves down, to some dogma or the other. The qualities of a meticulous lifestyle as well as single minded dedication are a great boon in the material world, for example in scientific studies, research or medicine. But, not only that these are of no value in spiritual matters, but also there is the danger of it leading to, causing or inciting intolerance.

We can try to eliminate intolerance at the very source. Let us now show a nelson's eye to the superlative, especially if that happens to be at the cost of neglecting any other faculty. I concede, such a move involves a revolutionary change in our outlook and may entail few unthinkable propositions. Like abolition of great honors and medals. Or restructuring them in such a way that only those who excel in moderation stands to be awarded. But I think it is worth the effort. There are no predictable losses and the benefits are uncountable.

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