ISSN 2561-6986

CLOVERLEAF

Journal of Education in Evolvement and All Encompassing Spirituality

Volume 3, Number 1
July 2018

SH EN | Spiritual Heritage Education Network
http://spiritualeducation.org

Cloverleaf
JOURNAL OF EDUCATION IN EVOLVEMENT AND ALL ENCOMPASSING SPIRITUALITY

ISSN 2561-6986

Volume 3, Number 1, July 2018

Founding and Chief Editor: Sami Rafiq

http://cloverleaf.spiritualeducation.org/

Publisher:

SH EN Spiritual Heritage Education Network

http://spiritualeducation.org/

Table of Contents

Publisher's Note 1
Editor's Note 11
Research Articles 15
Gratitude in Islamic Contemplative Ethics 17
Roots Of Unity 33
Differences In Deliberation 39
The Spiritual Journey and Its Hidden Meanings 51
Meditation and Neuroplasticity: The Effects of Meditation on Visual, Auditory and Tactile Attention 61
Personal Reflections 71
One Town, One Heart, Ten Cultures 73
An Old Tradition of Muraqaba or Meditation for restoring 'Peace' in Modern Living 75
Chronological Alteration of Characteristics of the Main Principles in Sāṁkhya Philosophy: An Analysis 81
Joyous Communication 91
Poem - A Blind Crow 95
Our Contributors 99

Publisher's Note

Author:
Dr. Shiv Talwar, President, Spiritual Heritage Education Network Inc.

Education to minimize Individual and Social Disorders

Introduction

This note is intended to make two practical suggestions for policy makers in the field of education. Its purpose is education to minimize disorders, both individual and collective. Human psychology forms the basis for the policy suggestions in this note.

This note is relevant to those societies with diversity of any kind. Policy makers of those societies which are homogenous in all respects but lacking diversity in thought, status, class, gender, color, height, weight, etc. are advised to save time and read no further.

The Structure of the Human Mind

Individual disorders generally are in the areas of physical health, mental health, attention, insight, spiritual intelligence and behaviour. Collective disorders are in the areas of sociology particularly in "us" vs. "them" divisiveness leading to discriminatory behaviour such as racism, bigotry, sexism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, xenophobia, casteism, classism, untouchability etc.

Freud aptly used the metaphor of an iceberg for the structure of the mind: 10% above the surface of the water representing the conscious mind and 90% below the surface representing the subconscious and unconscious.

We all start our existence as a single cell organism with the seed of our unconscious mind being determined by our genetic code. This seed grows as cells divide and the foetus grows. The unconscious mind is more or less developed with the completion of foetal growth. It is our unconscious mind that runs the survival of our body prenatally as an individual being and prepares it for independent existence outside the body of the mother.

At birth, our sensory organs start booting up and we begin to perceive and act. The erstwhile unconscious now starts becoming conscious; subconscious mind is just an intermediate stage.

In our daily lives, we experience wakefulness when we are aware of our conscious mind, a state of dream sleep when the subconscious is active and a state of deep sleep when the only active part of the mind is the unconscious. It is the unconscious, that keeps us alive running the autonomous body functions that must work 24/7.

Every day the life of sense perception surreptitiously develops feelings of multiplicity, limitedness, likes, dislikes and fears in the unconscious mind. These unconscious feelings manifest as natural emotions in the subconscious ready to jump into conscious implementation.

The emotions resulting from the unconscious feelings respectively are: (a) "I" vs. "you" and "us" vs. "them", (b) helplessness while facing life, (c) habits, addictions and appetites, (d) aversions and hate, and (e) frights and phobias.

Such emotions keep us in individual and collective fight or flight. Our individual fight or flight underlies myriad physical and mental disorders, and our collective fight or flight underlies most social disorders.

To resolve our individual and collective disorders, our education must recognise two realities: (1) structure of the mind and (2) strength of the emotions. The present day educational systems worldwide recognise the

conscious mind paying little attention to the unconscious and the subconscious. We must redress this anomaly.

While we educate the conscious mind to build understanding and to counter our natural emotions, our education must also cultivate them deep into our unconscious mind. Mere intellectual understanding resulting from educating the conscious is not strong enough to face the strength of emotions rooted in the mighty unconscious ready to subconsciously spring into action.

We can talk to the conscious mind, but we cannot do so to the unconscious. How then do we attend to the unconscious? We have seen that it is the unconscious that keep us individually and collectively in fight or flight mode that underlies our individual and collective disorders. We can attend to the continuous onslaught of the fight or flight mode by consciously eliciting its opposite effect which is deep relaxation.

How can we consciously elicit relaxation? It is a matter of simple observation that fight or flight mode makes our breath fast but shallow: the severer the experience of fight or flight, the faster and shallower the breath gets. Can we then consciously make our breath slow and deep to relax us? Try it out yourself and see. It is in fact true.

Thus, a simple physiological process of conscious deep breathing gives us the needed control over the fight or flight mode and its individual and collective ravages. The human mind has discovered various mind-body strategies for physiologically deepening the breath.

These strategies must be part of our education system in order to enhance the effectiveness of educating the conscious mind. Otherwise, education is only partially effective in terms of behaviour consistent with our teaching.

Suggestion #1: Educate to Build One Humanity

As you read this post, please remember that the author migrated from India to Canada a number of years ago to settle in the province of Ontario.

Thank you Ontario; you welcomed me. This post is for you! My life in the old country qualifies me to say that diversity can either be a boon or a curse. It enriches if people can see their common thread enabling celebration of mutual differences in its light. Otherwise, it is a curse of strong "us" vs "them" identities eternally jostling, conflicting and even rioting. We can't close our eyes; news are full of it. Fearful of our openness and multiculturalism being hijacked to fragment us, I humbly suggest that Ontario systematically incorporate meaningful teaching of our common ground into our curricula.

Canada is in support of the principles outlined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Is our education in accord with Articles 1, 2 and 26.2 of the UDHR? Canada is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Is our education in accord with Article 29 of this convention? (See addendum for the text of the articles)

The question of our common ground has been challenging great minds of all cultures. Search for it around the globe concluded long ago that an eternal, invisible and therefore unknowable and inexplicable spirit is the common ground of our infinitely diverse universe.

This spiritual wisdom is the foundation of world religion. However, a vast majority of us remain unaware of it, because it is veiled by our faith based doctrinal facades. Faith tends to replace the inexplicable common ground with explicable alternatives without clearly acknowledging the unseen spirit. This expediency explains how the one underlying spirit is seen by faith as multiple culture specific divine beings inescapably eclipsing the spirit and resulting in fragmented humanity.

Science is reason based. In its infancy, it rejected the spiritual wisdom also. Being reason and not faith based, science alienates religious faith. Following its characteristic empirical, verifiable, and objective approach, science too concludes that all matter exists because of an eternal, invisible, unknowable and inexplicable truth of infinite potential it calls energy. Historical alienation between science and religion results in minimizing the scientific wisdom of the underlying oneness of matter as a meaningless triviality.

Because of our persistent inability to see our common ground, human development remains inconsistent with our ancient spiritual wisdom as well as that of modern science.
All wisdom, spiritual and scientific, being a subject of rigour and reason is educational in nature.

Education is meant to examine hidden underlying truths without surrendering integrity to particular points of view. It is time now that the Academy live up to its true calling in the field of humanities and establish the truth of the inexplicable spirit-energy as our unifying common ground.

It must be noted that we cannot study our unseen common ground in itself; we can only study how it interfaces with our existence. It must also be noted that the resulting visualization of our underlying oneness is not an imposition of uniformity of religious practice or expression but an acknowledgement of the core spirituality of our own religions. All human values are included in this visualization and it is no threat to Canada's multiculturalism; we have our religious institutions for specific cultural preservation.

Education in the unifying truth of spirit-energy at all stages of development can dispel the darkness of division. It can establish the importance of critical reason, promote all-inclusive identities, and integrate increasingly diverse Ontarians into a harmonious and coherent Ontario putting it in a position of Canada and world-wide leadership in the field of education in humanities as it already is in other fields.

ADDENDUM

Article 1 of UDHR:
"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Article 2 of UDHR:
"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty."

Article 26.2 of UDHR:

"Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."

Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child:
"Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the

country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilisations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment."

Suggestion #2: Developing a Culture of Health

This idea is about wellness or healthy living. According to a recent national study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, "The prevalence of stress in primary care is high; 60% to 80% of visits may have a stress-related component" [1, references at the end]. Your findings may be no different.

Stress is a behavioural problem. It results from our lack of proper acknowledgement of our unseen common ground leading to interconnected feelings of mutual distrust and fear, insatiable appetites and repulsions. These feelings inescapably lead to a sense of helplessness.

Discriminatory behaviour such as racism, bigotry, sexism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, xenophobia, casteism, classism, untouchability etc. proceed from mutual mistrust and fear [2]. They should have no place in life, but they are there until we can build a culture of one humanity variously expressing our one unseen common ground. The same is true of our greed, appetites, and addictions, our feelings of aversion and hatred and our sense of helplessness when things don't go our way.

How is stress related with our health? Stress causes sympathetic (fast) stimulation of autonomous body and mind activity along with the

release of cortisol in our body. It is excess cortisol that causes stress. It kills us with physical and mental disease. With the accompanying loss of the thinking capacity, it robs us of our learning ability and our very humanity because it is our faculty of thought that distinguishes us from other forms of life. Love and compassion reside in the deepest folds of human faculty of thought.

According to a 2012 report [3] of the American Academy of Pediatrics, toxic levels of stress, in addition to physical and mental disorders, can cause a host of social and economic problems. The report notes that prenatal exposure of the foetus to maternal stress can lead to persistent developmental disorders.
Can we eliminate stress? Not until we eliminate ignorance of our one humanity through our unseen common ground.

Must then we suffer the ravages of stress until we succeed in this enormous educational endeavour? No, not if we learn to be stress resilient. There are many strategies of doing so. A common thread running through all of them is regular elicitation of relaxation response [4].

My favourite strategy of eliciting relaxation response is deep diaphragmatic breathing. We all breathe 24/7 but we breathe without awareness. Deep breathing is deliberate. All it needs is attention. We can easily learn it. We can also easily practice it any time when we are not totally immersed in other pursuits of life.

How can the culture of deep diaphragmatic breathing amount to a culture of health? Deep breathing like other strategies of elicitation of relaxation response causes parasympathetic (slow) stimulation of autonomous body and mind activity with the release of DHEAS in our body neutralising the effects of stress [5], [6].

"Calm down. Take a deep breath", who in the world hasn't heard this admonition?
Develop the culture of deep diaphragmatic breathing. It will amount to a

culture of health. It doesn't break the bank, nor bankrupt the treasury. It is revolutionary. And it reconnects us with our humanity.

REFERENCES

[1] https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1392494

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/11/opinion/sunday/sick-of-racism-literally.html?emc=edit_th_20171112&nl=todaysheadlines&nld=23743059

[3] http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/1/e232

[4] Benson, Herbert and Klipper, Marian Z. "The Relaxation Response". New York: Harper, 2000

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomic_nervous_system#Parasympathetic_division

[6] https://www.stress.org/take-a-deep-breath/

Editor's Note

Author:
Dr. Sami Rafiq

As we come out with the third issue of Cloverleaf some things are worth giving a thought to. The year 2018 has given us all a new hope and a new page for humanity to write its History on. While the rich and privileged made their mark with new houses, new businesses and new achievements, the poor, the under privileged and the refugees of various warring nations continued the same as before torn from their homes, looking forward to safe sanctuary and survival midst homelessness and unforgiving winters. The global community continued to march on the road to material progress and material prosperity while half its population was impoverished, starving and dying in war ravaged or famine ravaged countries.

The question arises as to why the divide and the why the difference between people living on the same Earth. The answer is the same for all such questions namely 'selfishness'. We the people of this Earth have begun to think that all the benedictions are meant for us alone and we should live life enjoying them. So its not just humans, but animals and nature too that are taking the brunt of this selfishness.

The air on the earth becomes more choked and toxic and so do the streams and the oceans.

The resultant climate change has begun to wipe out bio diversity in all its colours and hues.

Thus it is not with a little alarm that we look on the US government as it lifts sanctions on the free and unfettered use of natural fuels and natural energy.

Those of us who are privileged enough to have home and security and a comfortable life have forgotten that all our wealth is our spiritual testing zone. This was the spiritual education that we received from enlightened ones such as Gautam Buddha, Jesus Christ or Prophet Mohammed, that we as guardians of this Earth have received benefits only for own betterment and to improve the lot of others around us. For eventually we will have to bring ourselves to account as to how we spent that wealth. So whenever I see the poor, the homeless and the disenfranchised I feel the lightness of their responsibility as compared to mine.

I could define it another way, if I have earned my prosperity and comfort through my karma through different lives, this is the point where I must let others too share it or it will only turn into gross misery and unhappiness.

This is also relevant to the deep and abiding bond between nature and humanity and alarmingly everywhere there are signs that this relationship too is in peril. There are signs in nature of the fate of humanity and its gross indecencies and its rapacious greed. So the rising of the blood moon may have been a cause for celebration and festivity everywhere or as a spectacle of the beauty of Nature, but for a few of us it it told a different story.

The recent rising of the blood moon in the sky which was also a beautiful eclipse awakened in me the awe of God's created universe. The beautifully crafted moon which hung like a giant orange in the sky which gradually began to eclipse the sun which was peeping out from its edges pointed out to me a cycle of life and nature. There are intermittent cycles of rejuvenation and destruction as the moon eventually shone brighter than ever as if some unearthly force had polished it to a heavenly glow. This helped me to see hope despite all the current state of chaos on the earth in all its painful political, economic and social upheavals as a passing phase which would eventually lead to a better world.

The articles in the current issue too testify to this hope for a better world.

Shiv Talwar in the Editor's note emphasises on the importance for spiritual education for greater unity and harmony in the world.

Atif Khalil in his article "Gratitude in Islamic Contemplative Ethics" dwells on the importance of gratitude for greater prosperity and a more rewarding life.

Rajendra Narain Dubey in his article "Roots of Unity" takes a look at the unity and diversity of life and the root of all existence.

Stephen M. Modell shows how crises can be averted and everlasting peace be found by deliberation between different cultures in his article "Differences of Deliberation"

Simran Parmar in his article on meditation and neuroplasticity takes us into the world of Psychology and how meditation has much to offer in that field.

In my article "The Spiritual Journey and its Hidden Meanings" I have tried to delve into the universal meaning and metaphor of the spiritual journey

Asim Nasir in his article "One Town, One Heart, Ten Cultures" speaks about the cultural unity and diversity in the heart of his hometown Sugarland in Texas bearing out the need to unite for prosperity and progress.

Aneela Azeemi dwells on the importance of meditation in Sufi lore in her article "An Old Tradition of Muraqaba for Restoring 'Peace' in Modern Living"

Debamitra Dey in her article on Sankhya philosophy delves into the realm of sacred Hindu texts to uncover profound philosophical ideas.

Tony Samara in his poetic prose "Joyous Communication" brings out spiritual perceptions to resolve crises in human life.

My poem—-"A Blind Crow" is about a mystical journey

Wishing all our readers a beautiful and inspiring sojourn through this new issue of Cloverleaf.

Sami Rafiq

Editor

Research Articles

This section contains articles which may be classified as research ...

Gratitude in Islamic Contemplative Ethics

Author:
Dr. Atif Khalil

In a well-known Muslim tradition, Muhammad the Prophet of Islam was once asked why he continued to exert himself so tirelessly in his nightly devotional prayers, to the point that his feet had grown swollen, when God had already forgiven him his faults, both of the past and future. "Shall I not be a thankful servant" he famously replied. This story which is frequently cited in literature as an example of gratitude or *shukr*, highlights the central place of gratitude in Muslim piety.

Indeed, the significance that is attached to this virtue is attested to by the fact that faith and belief appear within the ethical worldview of the Qur'an as forms of gratitude, with disbelief and infidelity as corresponding types of ingratitude. Even a cursory survey of the language of the Muslim scripture quickly reveals that the word *kufr* is employed in the text to refer to both disbelief and unthankfulness – that it stands as the antonym of both *iman* and *shukr*. In the words of the Japanese scholar Toshihiko Izutsu, "one and the same word, *kafir*, comes to mean a different thing according to its use as the contrary of *shakir*, 'one who thanks,' or as the contrary of *mu'min,* 'one who believes.' In the first case it means an 'ingrate,' and in the second 'unbeliever.'" The observation leads to his broader conclusion that in Islam, "one of the keynotes of belief is gratitude and thankfulness. And this is the counterpart of the Qur'anic conception of God as the gracious, merciful Lord of men and all beings." The Qur'ān, he adds "never tires of emphasizing the purely gratuitous act of benevolence on the part of Almighty God, which He bestows. In return man owes him the duty of being thankful for his grace and goodness. *Kafir* is a man who does not, would not show any sign of gratitude in his conduct."

The term *kufr*, as Izutsu also points out, did not always connote the idea of disbelief. In pre-Islamic Arabian society it referred simply to

ingratitude towards one's benefactor. With the rise of Islam, the Qur'an came to theologise the term to imply the rejection of divine revelations while also retaining some of its distinctly pre-Scriptural sense as part of the semantic shifts it introduced in the language of the Arabs. It is significant in this light that of all the pre-Islamic values which lay at the disposal of the emerging Arabian religion, it was gratitude and ingratitude, *shukr* and *kufr*, which were selected to function as the pegs around which the key notions of "faith" and "disbelief" would be erected. This alone renders the virtue peculiarly unique within the Islamic tradition – a fact not lost to classical thinkers.

The purpose of this article is to add to our knowledge of gratitude as it is understood in Islam by focusing specifically on its conceptualisation within its contemplative ethical tradition, that is to say, within Sufism. The analysis that follows is divided into five parts. It begins with an overview of the definitions of gratitude in Sufi literature, and then proceeds to examine the psychological obstacles which stand in the way of its cultivation. Finally, it concludes with a brief overview of the consequences or karmic effects of internalising the virtue.

I – What is Gratitude?

Most of the treatments of *shukr* in the Sufi tradition tend to focus, as one finds in the Qur'an, on the human as opposed to the side of gratitude (since God in Muslim scripture is also "grateful" (*shakir/shakur*). The definitions usually have as a common thread a number of motifs the most important of which are recognition of the gift as a gift, an acknowledgment of its origin in God, and finally, the kind of response which the act of divine benefaction should evoke. The definition provided in Qushayri's *Treatise*, an 11th century work, is illustrative: "the reality of gratitude in the eyes of the people of realisation (*ahl al-tahqiq*) is recognition of the blessing from the

Benefactor in a state of humility." Or as Tirmidhi, an early Sufi put it, gratitude is "the joy of the heart over the blessing of your Lord;" it is "the servant's vision of His gift, benevolence, generosity, liberality, compassion, love and kindness." Likewise, Aḥmad Zarruq (d.1493) states that gratitude "is the heart's delight with the Benefactor on account of His blessings, until it spreads out and extends into the limbs."

The focal point of these and other definitions is almost always on God as the *munʿim* or *muʿti,* the Benefactor or Gift-Giver. This is understandable considering the theological nature of the analyses. Gratitude would never be (as it might in more secular treatments of the subject) construed simply as a positive attitude or state with no particular focal point towards which one may direct such feelings. The distinction that A. Walker a contemporary moral philosopher makes between "gratitude" and "gratefulness," with the former being a feeling or gesture one channels in the direction of a particular benefactor and the latter a broader and more encompassing state in which one might be "thankful without being thankful towards anyone" because no such source of the gift can be identified, is, needless to say, more or less non-existent in any theocentric framework. Walker's distinction, also present in contemporary positive psychology, is naturally premised on a certain philosophical view which does not feel compelled to recognise an ultimate benefactor, a benevolent deity that is a profoundly engaged actor in the human drama of existence and the source of life's gifts. Within an Islamic and by extension Sufi religious context, however, such a being naturally stands at the summit of the triangle of gratitude, made up of a *munʿim* (benefactor/gift-giver), *munʿam* (beneficiary/recipient of the gift), and the *niʿma* (blessing/benefaction/gift) which brings the two together. In a non-theistic or deistic framework, on the other hand, the triangle would simply collapse into a line outside of interpersonal (or even inter-sentient) relations.

For Walker, at least, this does not mean that one cannot express one's appreciation when there is no agent behind the gift. This is because gratefulness, for him, is usually accompanied by a desire to make a return, and this is one feature that separates it from merely feeling *glad*:

one wishes to favour another because one has received favour oneself. And so a shipwrecked seaman, to use his example, who has been cast ashore by a wave which rescued him from certain death may display his gratefulness by an act of generosity towards his fellow seamen, the local villagers, or someone else. Nevertheless, in the absence of a clear agent of benefaction to which one can direct feelings of gratefulness, in a continuous state, even Walker would have to concede that such a virtue would likely be more fully cultivated within a theocentric framework which allows one to retrace all of one's blessings to a supreme agent. In fact it could be argued that a person overcome by constant feelings of thankfulness would likely find such a worldview more conducive to the expression and channeling of such feelings. A gift-giver who has singled one out for favour is more likely to elicit feelings of thankfulness than a non-existent or nebulous, vaguely identifiable one.

In an Islamic context, needless to say, the theocentric nature of conceptualisation of gratitude is central. It is so fundamental in character particularly to Sufi inquiries into the virtue, that we encounter a view of gratitude which goes so far as to entirely invert Walker's notion of seeing the gift but not the gift-giver. In a saying attributed to Shibli (d. 946), we read that "gratitude is the vision of the Benefactor, not the blessing." Or as another authority put it, "gratitude is absence from the blessing through the vision of the Benefactor." Definitions of this genre could be clarified and explained by tradition through an appeal to a stratification of gratitude into various levels; at the summit of which stands a state of absorption in God that is so intense and all-consuming that one is no longer conscious of the gift. It is as if the act of benefaction is meant simply to take one to the gift-giver, in whose presence one becomes entirely unconscious of or annihilated from the gift. And so we find in 'Abd Allah Ansari's (d. 1088) *Stations of the Wayfarers* that he identifies Shibli's definition with that of the highest of the three levels of gratitude. In his commentary on Ansari's work, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Qashani (d. 1330) describes the experience of one who stands at the summit of this station in a passage that calls to mind the Plotinian notion of being alone with the Alone: "[It] entails a complete absorption in witnessing Him in [a state of] solitude. It is a station where

there is nothing but the Real alone, where one does not see anything but Him, and in which one witnesses neither blessing nor affliction, because he is, through his witnessing, made entirely oblivious to both himself and another. He does not see anything but the Real alone, for were he to witness another he would not witness the Real alone, and would thereby not be one made solitary (*mufrad*) [through the station in which he stands]."

While most of the treatments of gratitude within Sufi literature seem to acknowledge, at least implicitly, that gratitude at its highest levels involves either a witnessing of the Real alone, or the Real within the gift, with the gift being His own self-disclosure, the focus of Sufi inquiries into *shukr* tends to be on the moral or spiritual psychology of gratitude. That is to say, what should one be grateful for, how might its obstacles be overcome, and how is the virtue to be cultivated and embodied? In other words, what are the rules that should govern the "grammar of gratitude" in the life of the believer? The emphasis within Sufi treatments is by and large on *mu'amala* or praxis, that is to say aiding one to develop this particular quality within herself and to embody it so as to draw closer to God. There is, for the most part, little in these treatments that a pious believer who disagrees with or objects to a metaphysical schema that blurs the distinction between God and the human being can seriously object to.

II – Overcoming Gratitude's Obstacles

A recurring motif within the Qur'an's discussion of *shukr* is the propensity of the human being to be unthankful. This view is not unique to Islam's understanding of human nature. Indeed, Immanuel Kant recognised this tendency when he observed that "man is so notorious

for it that we are not surprised if someone makes an enemy by showing kindness." The Qur'ān itself however does not go into extensive detail as to the reasons for this. Why is the human being so prone to this particular moral fault? Kant himself singles out pride, but his discussion of gratitude centres around interpersonal relations of duty, that is to say, responsibilities which moral agents have towards their human benefactors. The logic of his analysis is not easily transposable towards an analysis of *shukr* in the Qur'ān, which is concerned first and foremost with the divine-human relationship.

Within the Islamic tradition, the most common explanation that was offered for human ingratitude was heedlessness (*ghafla*) and ignorance (*jahl*). In the view of Ibn 'Abbad (d. 1390), it is because of the "extent to which heedlessness has overtaken them" that most people do not realise blessings and are therefore ungrateful for them. Or as 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Qashani put it, "how many an ignorant one is there who receives a blessing but does not count it a blessing." The logic behind this line of thinking is itself implicit within the Qur'ān when it calls to mind human ingratitude alongside God's generous outpouring of gifts.

Abu Ḥamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) explains the psychology behind ingratitude by drawing attention to the fact that as humans we are inclined only to be grateful for those blessings which we feel ourselves to be singled out for, that is to say, blessings that appear unique or specific to us. Our ingratitude for general blessings, on the other hand, that is, those blessings which are distributed to everyone and which accompany us in all of our states, is, for Ghazali at least, the result of extreme ignorance. He provides the example of air, a general blessing of which everyone has a share, to convey his point. This is the kind of blessing an unreflective person might only reckon a blessing if he were choked and then released, locked in a bathhouse with little more than scorching hot air to breath, and then freed, or if he fell to the bottom of a well surrounded by unbearably cold and moist air, and then, by some miracle of chance, was rescued. Only such extreme circumstances would induce him to appreciate the preciousness of an element he might never have given much thought to or enough to be moved to gratitude. The

same could be said if he were temporarily deprived of the sense of sight, hearing, smell, or any other general blessing essential to an overall condition of well-being. The tendency to recognise the value of a blessing only when it is lost therefore has its roots, as noted, in heedlessness and ignorance, since gratitude tends to be postponed to the moment when it disappears, or when it is lost and restored. In view of these considerations, Ghazali encourages one to constantly contemplate those gifts which might be taken for granted but without which the quality of life would be diminished, or worse, made unbearable. This includes being thankful even for the intricate and delicate balance of the world, which allows such blessings to come into existence and make their way to human beings for their own enjoyment and use. Since it is through this balance that divine gifts reach us, it too should be an object of gratitude. Only by actively and consciously reflecting over the most seemingly menial and trivial of life's bounties, therefore, is it possible in Ghazali's eyes for one to cultivate a genuine state of thankfulness and fullfil the obligations of the virtue.

The idea that humans recognise blessings only when they are deprived of them is a recurring motif in the classical literature on *shukr*. The authors who address this topic seem to concur that it is an underlying reality of the human state and part and parcel of the human proclivity towards *ghafla*. Ibn 'Ata Allah (d. 1309) captures the essence of this condition when he declares in one of his aphorisms, that "he who does not recognise a blessing in its presence, realises it in its absence." This is why, as Ibn 'Abbad observes in his commentary, the value of water is only recognised by one overcome by intense thirst in a desert, not by the one standing next to a flowing river, or why an insolent, rebellious son only comes to appreciate his father on the day of his death. It was an awareness of this same tendency that also led Fuḍayl b. 'Iyad (d. 803) to caution, "remain in a constant state of gratitude for blessings, for rarely does a blessing return to a people after it has been lost." Or as Sari al-Saqati (d. 867) put it, "he who does not realise the value of a blessing, is stripped of it from whence he knows not."

One of the methods the Sufi authorities suggest by which one can overcome the tendency towards heedlessness is to observe those who are deprived of the very amenities which one may take for granted. The basis of this idea is itself found in a number of *hadith*s; among them is the tradition in which the Prophet encouraged his disciples to "look at the one who has been given less than you, not at the one who has been given more." The intention behind this advice, as is rather obvious, is to make one more aware of one's blessings by considering the plight of those who are deprived of them. As an illustration of this strategy, Ghazali mentions the story of a man who used to regularly visit hospitals, graveyards and state institutions where punishments were meted out. At the hospitals he would observe the condition of the sick, the diseased, and the decrepit. This would cause him to consider his own health and vitality and move him to thank God. At prisons and other such institutions, he would see legal punishments carried out on bandits, murderers and other such criminals. This would lead him to cherish his own security as well as his freedom from the trials which caused others to turn to lives of crime thus further intensifying his feelings of gratitude. Finally, at graveyards, standing before the graves of the dead, he would reflect over the fact that there is nothing the deceased would want more than to return to life, if even for the span of a day. The sinner, he thought, were he to be given a second chance, would take the opportunity to repent and make amends for all the wrongs he had committed, while the righteous person would use the opportunity to do even more good, having now experienced first-hand the delightful recompense of a life of virtue. These considerations would cause him to thank God even more.

Along similar lines, Ghazali relates the story of Rabi' b. Khaytham who, despite the completeness of his inner vision, sought a way to further strengthen his knowledge of God and deepen his feelings of gratitude. To this end, he would sleep in a grave which he had dug within the courtyard of his own home. Before falling asleep, he would pray, "My Lord, allow me to return, so that I might do good" (Q 23:99-100). Upon awakening and seeing that his prayer had been answered, he would say to himself, "O Rabi'! You have been given what you asked for, so work

until you ask [again] to return, but it will not be granted." While the notion of digging a grave within the vicinity of one's own home may strike the sensibilities of a modern reader as rather extreme, Ghazali's intention is to underscore the importance of consciously and vigorously cultivating *shukr*, so as to make it, through habituation, second-nature. This is particularly because of the ease with which humans fall into a lackadaisical state of mind and become easily incognisant of all that they have been given. Ghazali therefore recommends certain exercises of remembrance to counteract the downward pull of forgetfulness.

Our authors also emphasize the need to be grateful for circumstances which could have been much worse. In his *Etiquettes of the Soul,* Muhasibi (d. 857) counsels that "you should count every trial which comes your way as a blessing because God has sent greater, more severe trials to others." The *shukr* of which he speaks is not necessarily for the trial (*bala'*) itself, but for the blessing in it being greater. The underlying idea is found in the story of the man who wrote to his friend a complaint upon being sent to prison by the sultan. To his own bewilderment, the friend replied, "be grateful to God!" When the man was later subjected to a beating and wrote to his friend again, bemoaning his worsened condition, "be grateful to God!" came the reply. Finally, a Zoroastrian with a gastrointestinal ailment (*mabtun*) was brought into the prison and had his foot chained to that of the man. Whenever he would be forced to make his way to the toilet in the middle of the night, the man would have to accompany him. He wrote again to his friend lamenting his plight, who responded yet again as he had always before, "be grateful to God!" "How long," the man wrote back in frustration, "will you continue to say this (to me)? And what trial could be more severe (than the one I am in)?" "If the belt he wears around his waist was tied around your waist," his friend sagaciously responded, "just as the chain around his foot is tied to your foot, what then would you do?"

Finally, the most valuable of blessings about which our authors never tire of reminding the reader of are religious and spiritual in nature. The Andalusian Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi divides divine gifts into three categories.

"Know O dear friend (*muhibb*)," he writes in the *Purification of Hearts*, "that the blessings over which gratitude is binding are of three kinds: worldly blessings such as health, wealth and children, religious blessings such as knowledge, piety and good words, and (finally) other-worldly blessings such as receiving tremendous rewards for a small amount of devotional worship performed in a momentary, fleeting lifespan." The value attached to the last two of these is found in a story told about Sahl al-Tustari (d. 896). A man once came to him complaining of a thief who had broken into his home and stolen his goods. "Be grateful to God most High," he warned, "for if the thief, the Devil, had entered your heart and corrupted your *tawhid*, what then would you do?" The moral of the story is self-evident, that as long as one retains the gift of faith, all other losses pale in comparison. Along similar lines, Abu 'Uthman al-Hiri (d. 910) observed the difference between the thankfulness of those whose aspirations are noble, lofty, and divine, and those unable to move beyond the most basic concerns of this world. "The gratitude of the common people is for food and clothing," he once said, "while the gratitude of the elect is for spiritual insights which descend into their hearts."

III - The Consequences of Gratitude

Some of the oft recurring themes within treatments of *shukr* in the Sufi tradition are for lack of a better term, the cosmic effects of cultivating the virtue in question. They are a sort of law of cause-and-effect, a kind of divine *sunna* or custom that governs the cosmos and the internalisation and embodiment of gratitude is believed to have certain consequences above and beyond just the transformation of the soul. Another effect of gratitude, at least from the perspective of the tradition, is that it serves to preserve and safeguard bounties. This is one of the reasons why the spiritual authorities encourage *shukr* as a way of protecting divine gifts from being lost. "Blessings are (like) wild beasts,"

said one of the early Muslims, “tie them with the rope of gratitude.” Likewise, ingratitude is believed to have the opposite effect, by rendering one vulnerable to losing those very blessings. As Sahl al-Tustari put it, “he who does not realise the value of blessings, is stripped of them from whence he knows not.” Ibn ‘Ata Allah’s expressed this same notion in one of his aphorisms, when he wrote, “He is who is not grateful for blessings, runs the risk of losing them; (while) he who is grateful for them, ties them down with their own fetters.” Makki offered this line of reasoning as one of the interpretations of the Qur’anic verse, “Verily God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in their own souls.” God only takes away blessings, he argued, after the recipients of those very gifts become ungrateful for them. The internal state of *kufr al-ni‘ma* produces an external effect, namely the vanishing of those very blessings.

Persistent ingratitude coupled with unrestrained, reckless sinfulness may also lead, in more extreme cases, to a proliferation of blessings, but the kind which in fact become the source of one’s misfortunes, unless checked by repentance. In such a state, the recipient of these gifts, under the spell of his own self-importance, deludes himself into thinking that they are the result of his own special place in God’s eyes. After all, why would He privilege him with so many favours? All the while, he does not consider that these gains may, due to his own state, become the source of his downfall through a subtle divine deception (*makr*). This particular condition is described as one of *istidraj*, where the ingrate is led to ruin, through apparent blessings, slowly and gradually, step-by-step, without knowing it. It happens in a manner that is so subtle and elusive that, before he knows it, he stands before his own destruction, even if he only experiences the full brunt of it after death. Zarruq defines this *istidraj* as “a tribulation (*miḥna*) which lies concealed in the gift itself, while there remains no fear of trial (*fitna*).” The basis of this idea is itself found in the Qur’an, when it states, “We shall lead them on, step-by-step (*nastadrijuhum*), from where they know not.” For Zarruq, the fear of *istidraj* spurs the pious and heedful to continuously turn to God in a state of gratitude by employing their blessings for noble and worthy ends. As Ibn ‘Abbad states, “the fear of being brought low, step-by-step

(*istidraj*), through blessings is among the qualities of those of faith. And the absence of this fear alongside persistence offences is among the qualities of the ungrateful ones (*kafirin*)." As noted, *istidraj* is not the result of simply being unmindful of blessings, but a graver and more serious condition of rebellious, sinful ingratitude coupled with a sense of self-importance alongside the delusion that temporal fortunes are the marks of receiving favour from heaven.

Just as ingratitude leads to a loss of fortunes, or the proliferation and transmutation of them into sources of ruin, conversely, gratitude is believed to lead to an increase of blessings. This is why Makki says that "the grateful one is in a state of increase (*al-shakir 'ala mazid*)," that is to say, through thankfulness he opens himself to receive even more divine gifts. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) likewise states that God "has made it (gratitude) a means for drawing more, out of his *fadl*." Or as Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) would state, "[t]o express gratitude is to stalk and ensnare good things. When you hear the sound of gratitude, you will be prepared to give more." The Persian master's words highlight something of the reasoning for why this is the case. When one is genuinely thankful for a gift, the gift-giver is inclined, in the face of a sincere and heartfelt recognition of benefaction, to be even more generous, at least if his/her means afford it. Since his/her gift has been acknowledged and graciously received, she cannot but be moved to bestow more favours. God, or so our authors argue, is no different. When humans are grateful, it is believed that He will give them even more of His limitless bounties. But the underlying basis of this view, that gratitude draws even more gifts, is primarily scriptural. In the Qur'an we read, "if you are grateful, I will *surely* give you more (*la azidannakum*)" (Q 14:7). Makki draws attention to the unique place of gratitude by noting that God does not make as direct a promise in instances which involve His forgiveness (*maghfira*) (Q 5:40), wealth or prosperity (*ighna'*) (Q 9:28), sustenance (*rizq*) (Q 2:212), turning towards the human being (*tawba*) (Q 9:27), or the response to remove an ill (*ijaba*) (Q 6:41). For each of these the divine gift is qualified by "if He wills" or "on whom He wills." But this is not so with *shukr* since He promises, without qualification, to meet gratitude from the human side with an "increase"

from His own side. Ghazali also felt compelled to draw attention to this very point regarding *shukr* in the Qur'ān in his own treatment of the subject – clearly under the influence of Makki — as did Ibn al-Qayyim.

The exact nature of the "increase" (*mazid/ziyada*) was the subject of some debate within the classical exegetical tradition. Makki states that ultimately the nature of the blessing rests on how God sees fit, that no constraint can be imposed on Him on this matter. "The increase," he writes, "lies in the hands of the Benefactor. He determines it as He wills." It may, for Makki, involve a heavenly grace that leads to the development of virtuous character traits (*akhlaq*), or the acquisition of particular kinds of knowledge. While it may also be of a worldly nature, the most coveted of increases, as we would expect from a representative of Islam's inner tradition, are spiritual ones. Makki suggests that the increases may also follow a progression, beginning with an awareness of God as the sole origin of the gift, as one who confers it without the help of a co-partner or intermediary. This may in turn be followed by a more stable state of perpetually witnessing the divine benefactor. As Makki writes, among the most valuable of gifts is "beauty of certainty and witnessing [His] attributes." And the most splendid and cherished of all gifts is the beatific vision, a divine response to the thankful prayers of praise uttered by the newly arrived inhabitants of Paradise. "And by their vision of Me," a tradition has God declare, "I give them more." For Makki every act of gratitude, for each and every blessing, no matter how insignificant, attracts through a kind of cosmic magnetism, an increase from Him, just as every act of ingratitude elicits its opposite. The close relation which Makki draws between *shukr* and *mazid* in fact permeates his entire discussion of gratitude.

Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240) offers one of the most intriguing explanations regarding the promised increase. The Andalusian mystic opens his treatment of gratitude in the *Meccan Revelations*, in the same way as Qushayri in the *Treatise*, by quoting the Qur'anic verse (14:7) which serves as the basis for the idea. He states categorically that gratitude "is a quality which necessitates (the conferring of) an increase from the

mashkur to the *shakir*," that is to say, from the one thanked to the thankful one. After briefly discussing the role which the *ziyada* should play in the divine-human relationship of gratitude, he returns to the theme at the very end of the chapter. It is here that he argues, in contrast to Makki, that there is indeed a constraint, that the recompense for gratitude, the *ziyada*, must be similar in kind to the blessing for which gratitude is shown. In other words, there must be a correlation between the increase that God bestows in return for gratitude, and the gift for which gratitude was shown in the first place. "The verifiers (*muhaqqiqun*) take it," that is to say, the *ziyada*, "to be of the same genus as that which occasioned gratitude. What is not of the same genus is not (for them) the increase that is necessitated by gratitude. No, such blessings fall within the category of the initial gift, not the category of requital (*bab al-jaza'*)." He goes on to state that if the return is not of the same kind or genus, then it is simply another divine gift, not the promised increase. Ibn al-'Arabi acknowledges that the nature of the increase is a matter of debate, but states that the men and women who through their own enlightened states have been able to ascertain matters for themselves know of what we might call the "law of correspondence" which governs the relationship between human gratitude and the increase which follows it. Those who argue otherwise, on the other hand, do so because of "a lack of understanding of the correspondence (*munasaba*) between things which the Wise Judge (*al-ḥakim*) – exalted be He – has chosen." In relation specifically to the question of *shukr*, what Ibn al-'Arabi's position naturally implies is that if one wants to receive a particular kind of gift from God, then he/she should raise himself/herself to give thanks for whatever portion of the gift he/she might already possess, be it wealth, health, knowledge or faith.

It is not surprising to find traces of Ibn al-'Arabi's argument in the earlier tradition. We have for example the statement of Nasrabadhi (d. 977-8), a disciple of Shibli and himself a Sufi master, that "he who is grateful for the gift receives more of the gift while he is who grateful for the Giver receives more of gnosis and love of Him." The remark not only sheds light on the degrees of gratitude, it also demonstrates the idea of

correspondence or *munasaba* outlined above. Ghazali does not broach the particular question of the nature of the *mazid/ziyada* in any detail in his *Book of Patience and Gratitude* of the *Iḥya'*, but he does provide an interpretation of the story from the life of the Prophet with which we opened this essay that seems to illustrate the view that Ibn al-'Arabi would articulate more than a century later. Recall that when the Prophet was asked why he exerted himself so tirelessly in his night vigils, despite having been forgiven his sins, he replied, "shall I not be a grateful slave?" According to Ghazālī, it was as if he said, "shall I not seek more of the (higher) stations?" to which he then adds by way of commentary, "this is because gratitude is a means of (eliciting) *ziyada*, just as God says, 'If you are grateful, I will surely give you more'." Even though the Prophet already stood in a station of proximity, argues Ghazali, he sought to draw even closer to God, and this he did by expressing thanks for the intimacy he already enjoyed in view of his knowledge of the hidden power of gratitude.

Roots Of Unity

Author:
Dr. Rajendra Narain Dubey

Scientists, especially those associated with Physics, have been engaged for a long in finding a particle that forms the basis of every material object in the world. The search has taken them from molecules to atoms to subatomic particles. Further development is expected to lead to discovery of an ultimate particle that is at the root of all existence.

At the same time, Philosophers have been busy in formulating a theory of everything. Such a theory is expected to explain all existing theories and accept them as making part contributions to an understanding of existence.

The question still remains: What is it that makes a person a Scientist or a Philosopher? There is, it seems, no study that examines the Spirit of eminent personalities engaged in finding Ultimate particle or Ultimate theory. A discipline dedicated to such study may be called Spiritual Philosophy of Science, or Spiritual Science of Philosophy.

The world presents a diverse picture. Spiritual Scientists (Seers or Kavi in Vedic tradition) talk of absolute unitary principle in existence. In brief, they are talking about 'unity in diversty'. What lies at the root of unity that displays diversity in manifestation? An attempt is made to describe this point through an example of a circle of unit radius. It involves Algebra, Trigonometry, Geometry, Vectors and both real and complex numbers. Consider first an application of algebra and numbers.

An algebraic equation has an unknown variable symbol on one side whose value must be found to satisfy a given known number on the other side. For example, algebraic equation x=1 is a statement. The statement is true if the unknown variable 'x' is assigned a value of 1. In

that case, x is assumed solution of the equation. In this case, x=1 represents both, equation as well as solution. Equation

$$x^2=1$$

is also a statement. The statement is true if x is assigned values of either +1 or -1. There are thus two solutions of this equation. The solutions are commonly referred to as square roots of unity. A symbolic form of the solution, $x=(1)^{1/2}$, has number 2 in its superscript to emphasize the existence of two solutions. A glimpse of diversity in roots of unity is apparent here. The square root of unity as +1 or -1 presents a pair of opposites in relation to 0 or zero. For geometric representaion, turn to common human observation. People in general know their location. If they are looking at an object, they know the direction of their attention. Consider the location as origin O and use it as a geometric symbol for zero. The direction of observation is used as a reference line. Choose a point A along the line as a geometric representation of number 1. Therefore, OA is a geometric symbol for unity. The symbol used for it in vector analysis is the bold face letter **i**.

Suppose a person standing at O and looking towards A makes a turn to his left or in a counter clockwise direction. A complete turn brings his gaze back to the original direction OA. In trigonometry. a complete turn is represented by a rotation of 2π radians. Half a turn is therefore π and a quarter turn is $\pi/2$. A complete turn is also achieved by combining two half turns of π each. This statement has a mathematical representation in algebraic equation: $2\pi=\pi+\pi$.

Consider R( ) as a mathematical symbol for rotation. In terms of R, R(0), R(π) and R(2π) are symbolic statements for no rotation, half rotation and complete rotation. A complete turn R(2π) rotates OA back to its original position and so does two half turns of π each. The original position implies no rotation. A mathematical form of the statement is $R(2\pi)=R(\pi)R(\pi) =R(0)=1$. A comparison with $x^2=1$ suggests that R(π) is a (square)root of unity; that is $R(\pi)=(1)^{1/2}$, but it cannot have the value of R(0)=1, hence its value must be -1. Following similar logic, it can be said

that two successive quarter rotations of $\pi/2$ each equals half rotation π. That is, $R(\pi)=R(\pi/2)R(\pi/)=-1$. Mathematical form of quarter rotation is therefore square root of -1. That is $R(\pi/2)= (-1)^{1/2} = (1)^{1/4}$ can be considered a symbol for quarter turn in counterclockwise direction. It is not necessary to treat it as an imaginary.

Suppose a complete rotation of OA is achieved in 'n' successive turns in steps of $\theta=2\pi/n$ each. Thus $R(2\pi)=R(n\theta)=(R(\theta))^n=1$. Since the equation $x^n=1$ has solution of the form $x=(1)^{1/n}$, hence $R(\theta)=(1)^{1/n}$ is a symbolic form for the roots of unity. In the special case when $\theta=0$ or 2π, it has value 1, which of course is always a root of unity. Note that during the rotation of OA about the point O, the point A traces a circle of radius '1'. A paradigm shift in the definition of a unit circle follows immediately. Every point on the circumference of a circle of unit radius is in fact geometric representaion of roots of unity. Further, every point on the circumference of a circle of radius 'a' geometrically represents roots of 'a'. This definition can be extended easily to apply to a sphere. All that need to be done is to use the circle obtained due to rotation of OA about O and rotate it about any of its diameter. The logic that has been used to show that points on the circumference of a circle of radius '1' geometrically represent roots of unity can also be used to show that each point on a sphere of radius one is a geometric representation of roots of unity.

The framework of Vector Analysis and Complex Variables can be used to construct a mathametical formula for $R(\theta)$. The ideas from Vector Analysis are taken first. Symbol for unit vector along OA is **i**. Since R is a symbol for rotation and R(0) stands for no rotation, **i** =R(0) **i** . Suppose counter clockwise rotation $R(\theta)$ turns vector **i** into another unit vector **i'**=$R(\theta)$ **i** . Use the vector symbol **j** when the angle of rotation is $\theta=\pi/2$. Thus, **j** =$R(\pi/2)$ **i** . Suppose $\cos\theta$ is the value of projection of or component of **i'** in the direction **i** (along $\theta=0$) and $\sin\theta$ is its projection on **j** (on $\theta=\pi/2$), then

$$\mathbf{i}' = R(\theta)\,\mathbf{i} = (\cos\theta)\,\mathbf{i} + (\sin\theta)\,\mathbf{j} = R(0)\,(\cos\theta)\,\mathbf{i} + R(\pi/2)\,(\sin\theta)\,\mathbf{i}$$

An expression for the symbol of rotation

$$R(\theta) = R(0)\,(\cos\theta) + R(\pi/2)\,(\sin\theta)$$

follows immediately. It is interesting to compare it with a formula in complex variables. For this purpose, use R(0)=1 and the symbol √(-1) for R(π/2) to obtain the formula of complex variables expressed in exponential form:

$$e^{\sqrt{(-1)}\,\theta} = R(\theta) = (\cos\theta) + \sqrt{(-1)}\,(\sin\theta)$$

In complex variables, R(-θ) is considered conjugate to R(θ) and their product yields its magnitude. In the present case, R() is a symbol for numerous positions occupied by the line OA during its rotation. Thus, R(θ)R(-θ)=R(0)=1: Or, in terms of sine and cosine functions,

$$(\sin(\theta))^2 + (\cos(\theta))^2 = R(\theta)\,R(-\theta) = R(0) = 1$$

which is a restatement of Pythagoras Theorem in a different form.

The idea that the roots of unity can be given various mathematical forms has another interesting outcome. In terms of 2π=nθ or θ=2π/n , the relation $R(\theta))^n = R(n\theta)$ can be solved for

$$R(\theta) = R(0)\cos(\theta) + R(\pi/2)\sin(\theta) = (R(0)\cos(2\pi) + R(\pi/2)\sin(2\pi))^{1/n} = (1)^{1/n}$$

for any value of 1. Solution for n=1 is θ=0. One solution for n=2 is θ=0. For the other solution, divide the circle in two equal parts marked by angles θ=0 and θ=π. The two solutions of the square root of unity that correspond to n=2 are therefore R(0)=1 and R(π)=-1. For n=3, divide the circle in three equal parts marked by angles θ=0, θ=2π/3 and θ=4 π/3. Hence R(0), R(2 π/3) and R(4 π/3) are the three cube roots of unity. The four roots of unity for n=4 are R(0), R(π/2), R(π) and R(3π/2) because θ=0, θ=π /2, θ=π and θ=3π/2 divide the circle in four equal parts. It seems possible that roots of unity can be found for any integral value of

n. There is also a possibility that the concept of roots of unity can be extended to Differential Calculus as well. Instead, focus is shifted to a discussion of cocept like Brahman, Jagat and Sansar (often written Samsara) of ancient Indian Philosophy.

Jagat and Sansar are the two words often used in Sanskrit to refer to the world and its objects. In Sanskrit, complex words are often created by a combination of roots. The meaning of the roots is incorporated in the combined word. For example, when root 'ja' implying birth or creation is combined with 'gati' (a variation of 'ga' that implies movement) to form Jagati or Jagat as a symbolic reference for the world and its objects, the implication is clear. For ancient Indian Philosophers, Jagat (the world and its objects) is born or created in movement and is mired in movement. The world is called sansar because everything it contains undergoes cycles of appearance and disppearance; it exhibits a tendency to repeat.

But the ultimate source of all is called Brahman by ancient Indian Philosophers. The meaning of the word Brahman is to grow. The meaning suggests that the world can be interpreted as symbolic representation of the growth of Brahman. Scientists feel that the world is made out of, or has its origin in, sub-atomic particles. They have been trying to find this origin. Philosophers are looking for a theory that describes the path of growth. Indian Philosopher of the Vedic era, called Kavi or Seer-Poet, suggest that existence can be explained in terms of Sat and Asat. Sat is that element of existence which always remains the same. More recent term used for Sat is eternal (sanatan). On other hand, Asat is always in flux relative to Sat. Asat in flux can exhibit multiplicity.

Reconsider the technical part of this presentation. What is a circle or a sphere? Both can be shown as geometric figures. Or, they can be thought of as having a center, multiple radial lines emanating from the center and terminating in multiple points on a surrounding curve or surface. If the radius has value one, then starting point of each radius is zero and at a distance of one is its terminating point. But for a rotating

radius (radius in flux), the terminal point has different mathematical representation when expressed relative to a fixed radius. The fact that each terminal point is a root of unity explains the apparent multiplicity or diversity in what is essentially one. If the radius grows to ‘a’ (recall the meaning of Brahman), each point on the sphere is root of unity multiplied by the value of ‘a’. In this context, the center seems to be a symbolic representation for Sat while radius and its other terminal points indicate the presence of Asat.

Differences In Deliberation

Author:
Dr. Stephen M. Modell

Abstract

Spokespersons for religious denominations have historically been engaged in a process of deliberation about first principles, both institutional (the role of the church) and theological (the role of humanity with respect to the Divine). Since the 1980s religions have not only been challenged to apply their tenets to the dilemmas that new biotechnologies and genetic interventions pose, but to do so in a way that is societally acceptable. This essay explores how deliberative processes have been used to come to agreement, or at the very least mutual respect, in the types of decisions that religion brings to bear in the genetics era. A contrast is made between interpersonal and multi-party deliberative engagement. The measure of success lies in the material change that deliberation can bring about, from raised awareness to new policies to mutual collective action. Deliberation thrusts religion and spirituality into the 21st century and the broader range of dilemmas, from healthcare disparities to global warming, that people of diverse faiths encounter.

Keywords: Religion, Genetics, Ethics, Deliberation

Introduction: Religion and Spirituality as Group Activities

In the aftermath of World War II, many people who had formerly turned to God for inspiration went underground with their faith, or buried it altogether in the rising secularism. The scientific era of the 50s and 60s accelerated the prevailing criticism of the need for more than a material ideology as the challenges posed by burgeoning scientific technologies – atomic, anatomic, and genetic – called into question the ability of religion to supply personal and societal answers about their application. Another two or three decades would be required to show that group deliberation (including people's faith beliefs and religious values on the implications of the science) is needed where the experts can only supply part of the answers.

In my own field of public health, the salutary effects of religion and spirituality have also become manifest. Harold Koenig's review of 16 studies revealed that 14 of them found lower blood pressure among the religiously active (Koenig 2001, 323-4). Mindfulness-based stress reduction, which can be conducted both privately and in a group setting, has been found to influence stress hormonal patterns and increase quality of life measures in cancer patients (Modell 2015, 190-1; Carlson 2004, 460-4). The common denominator in health practice and decision-making is that religion and spirituality are a collective enterprise. Like a fine piece of art or type of food, they are most enriching when shared.

The Axis of Deliberation

Minds need to interconnect to reach an appropriate level of agreement before a new scientific or medical technique can be deployed for even a small number of individuals. Deliberation therefore, occur before group or community exposure to a new intervention takes place. The Latin word *deliberare* has two meanings: to A. "weigh," or B. "consider well." Weighing shows intent to act, though the intent may still be in process, not yet occurring. When consideration of action takes place, often the

more time that is devoted to the process, the more successful the result will be. Deliberate action begins with measured deliberation.

Deliberation has a history in the religious domain, starting with a 2-person relationship, and culminating in an interchange between religious institutions. While the Hassidic mystical thinker Martin Buber in *I and Thou* (Buber 1958, 22-3) stressed that the encounter between two beings is concrete, authentic, free of pretence, and independent of explicit communication, Protestant Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer highlighted both the theological and social nature of the self (Ellison 2016, 78). According to Elliston, "Bonhoeffer's self exists with a multiplicity of 'other' selves. The social in this context means more than a dyadic encounter between a self and an other. It is responsible (for) relating to a *community*" (81).

The notion of "community" is fairly nebulous. In public health circles, it can have a demographic character, such as one's gender or racial-ethnic affiliation, can be related to work or outside affiliations, or refer to one's neighbourhood or a larger network. In the religious context, community often implies the church community. Thus, one often comes across religious dialogical interplays as academic discussions of one theologian, representing a particular set of religious principles, is set against another, espousing a contrasting set of principles (Taylor 2016). More abstractly, it is simply a theoretically occurring discussion with a leader of a particular faith. The dialogue serves a purpose, though, in that it drives the quest for greater understanding in terms of self, world, and faith, and how one should relate to the material world while respecting one's faith. In a broader sense still, e.g., as expressed in the work of Christian existentialist theologian Paul Tillich, dialogue represents an encounter between different religions – it is unshackled from a 1-on-1 encounter between single individuals. Tillich was stymied by his firm conviction in his own Christian faith, yet simultaneously possessing an appreciation that he could not flatly assert its truth over another religious faith. John Foerster indicates, "Tillich has less to say about the question as to 'What is Buddhism?' than about the one as to 'How can Buddhism be brought to bear on the age-old inner-Christian theological

debate?'" (Foerster 1990, 2). Tillich's solution was to allow for a recognition of the theological significance of a system of "alien concepts" within one's own tradition, which compels an inter-religious dialogue through time, i.e., deliberation with another party, even if at first the reference is only from within one's own faith.

Deliberation in the Lifeworld

By "lifeworld" I mean an active, mutual and dynamic co-experience between different parties. Communication, ideally a moving towards mutual understanding, is a necessity. This interaction crosses purely academic boundaries – the dialogue is no longer just in book form, or in the context of an interview. When transcendence above the purely academic occurs, the variety of faiths being invoked become broader than just one category of faith, such as religious faith.

Scientific knowledge can also come under the scope of these broadened dimensions of religion.Some time later when scientists discovered genetic engineering using recombinant DNA technology, huge debates broke out in the media and streets on whether it is moral and ethical to alter the genetic code for utilitarian purposes. Jeremy Rifkin, founder of the Foundation on Economic Trends, led a 100-person strong coalition of religious leaders down Wall Street in New York and up the path to the Chicago Board of Trade to protest the hubris of permanently altering and then patenting the DNA instruction booklet within life forms. I was surprised and delighted to read in one of the Journals of Bioethics accessible at my home institution, the University of Michigan, the suggestion that the companies involved in genetic engineering should have meetings with groups of community members. The goal would be to achieve a form of understanding and possibly work at each other's way of approaching this new technology along the edges, moving closer together on what might be viewed as acceptable. These developments called for people holding a faith in science to meet and reason with people holding to their religious or other moral principles. One can see how valuable deliberation can be, given that genetically

modified food now occupies our farms and is shipped internationally, to the praise of some countries and disdain of others.

A personally meaningful encounter between science and religion took place during an Evolution Revolution ("Evo Revo") night in Flint, Michigan held in March 2010. The event was part of a larger Communities of Colour and Genetics Policy project in which I was involved (Bonham et al. 2009). The evening's activities involved a talk by the project investigator and also student demonstrations (experiments, not marches!), a panel discussion by five community-based organisation leaders, and audience feedback. All this activity revolved around the topic of human similarity and difference by using the science of skin colour as a bridge to explain evolution. On the post-event questionnaire participants indicated a greater understanding of how evolution was related to their health at the evening's end. Still more significant were people's personal responses to what had been discussed in-group about evolution. The number of people who felt "my religious beliefs are compatible with evolution" shifted positively from 14 somewhat / 17 strongly agreeing and 6 somewhat / 7 strongly disagreeing before the event, to 19 somewhat / 24 strongly agreeing and 4 somewhat / 1 strongly disagreeing thereafter. Seventy-seven percent of the participants indicated they would like to see evolution taught this way (using discussion and personally relevant examples, not just by lectures) in the schools. The value of the evening is indicated in the findings of Jon Miller at Michigan State University and his colleagues whose 2005 study showed that 62% of American adults believe God created humans as whole persons without any evolutionary development (Miller et al. 2006, 766). Whether or not, a person is educated in the meaning of evolution can make all the difference in the world. For many medical activities, a huge rift exists between taking restorative action and leaving the outcome to fate, which has a bearing on the maintenance of health.

Extended Deliberation at the Crossroads of Science and Religion

Social justice philosophers advocate a process of "rational democratic deliberation" in decisions about healthcare (Fleck 2006; Gutmann and Thompson 1997). Such deliberation calls for open discussion between stakeholders in which decisions are transparent rather than private. The deliberation can lead to collective action, thus there is the need for participants to state their reasons for holding and espousing a particular belief or personally held value. The full process takes time and can involve multiple gatherings.

To gain a representative sense of what people hold dear, diverse parties should be involved, and the deliberations should occur over time. A prime example of this kind of deliberation would be the "Genetic Frontiers: Challenges for Humanity and Our Religious Traditions" series hosted by the Michigan region National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) at Marygrove College, Detroit between 2002 and 2004 (Modell 2007). Each of the three all-day conferences started with a keynote presentation by a noted theologian. This lead was followed by professional responses from a religious leader and an ethically or religiously attuned M.D. or Ph.D. A panel of four "public respondents," intimately connected with the healthcare system, then spoke. A number of genetic engineering subjects namely genetically modified organisms (GMOs), human embryonic stem cells, human genetic enhancement, and genetic testing – were covered. The findings, as one might expect, were quite profound; relating to human stewardship of the earth and co-creativity with the Divine, and the need for an ethic of unanticipated consequences, and for a fair assessment of results, which people concluded should be judged by impact on the weakest members of society. The day finished with hour-long breakouts, which involved largely congregational attendees and members of the NCCJ, and small group reporting. It is conceivable that a switch in the protocol, giving the lion's share of time to the audience, would have generated a completely different set of points, such as people's personal perception of risk if they or a family member were to experience genetic technology or its impact, and people's feelings about whether a given technology could alter the meaning of what it means to be human. At its outer most

reaches, science impinges upon deep existential questions of universal human importance.

A more recent, exciting development is the “Genomics and Faith” dialogue series hosted by the Center for Public Health and Community Genomics at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. In its first year (2016-17), the monthly series hosted discussion leaders from across campus on topics such as “The Three-Parent Embryo,” “The Role of Religion / Religious Communities in the Promotion of Medical and Genomic Research,” and “The Impact of Gene Editing.” The first twenty minutes of each session consisted of a synopsis of the issues; the remaining hour and a half was straight give-and-take voicing of hopes and concerns by the attendees. Half the participants were from the medical and scientific community; the other half consisted of local religious leaders representing diverse faiths, from Buddhism and Hinduism to Catholicism and Judaism. Many of the speakers permanently joined the group; plans for the second year are to start each session with guidance from a scientist / religious leader pairing. An event open to the general public is scheduled for September 11, 2017 at the Ann Arbor Public Library. This midpoint sharing is critically important. In past gatherings that we have had at the Library and nearby churches, members of the public have been quite vociferous, voicing concerns about whether genetic technology could be used by majoritarian portions of society to dominate marginalised groups, or to increase the number of abortions being performed. The new precision technologies offer at least as many if not more conflicting issues than previously existed.

The dialogues also included two topics that touch on behavioural issues – one dealing with the role of genetics in determining criminal guilt; the other with epigenetics (extrachromosomal influences) and faith. Scientists have shown that an interaction between the low activity monoamine oxidase (MAO-A) genotype and childhood maltreatment results in outcomes such as criminal conviction and aggressive behaviour (Caspi et al. 2002). The scientific finding that reveals genetic causes of aggressive behaviour, calls into question whether criminals showing

aggressive criminal behaviour should be judged in terms of God's mercifulness or God's sense of justice and righteousness (Gold and Applebaum 2014). The epigenetics discussion revolved around issues of societal responsibility. If a child is born into a home where the parents smoke or the household has higher than normal lead levels, does a societal obligation exist to epigenetically test the child and possibly remove the child if he or she is found to be at elevated level of disease risk?

The September Year 1 culminating event is intended to pull themes together and gather wider input from the general public as a prerequisite to consensus building. It is also surprising to see how a given set of issues can pop up elsewhere on campus. At the August 18, 2017 University of Michigan monthly Medical Genetics Conference, a sickle cell disease researcher described the action of an enzyme, demethylase LSD1, which epigenetically (not changing the person's genes; just their activity level) represses a gene involved with the production of fetal hemoglobin. His lab has found that the application of an LSD1 inhibitor, tranylcypromine, removes the suppression and allows for the production of fetal hemoglobin levels high enough to be considered therapeutic in sickle cell mice. LSD1 turns out to be a monoamine oxidase inhibitor. He mentioned that LSD1 "knockout mice" who have lost the function of the enzyme show "scruffy, aggressive behavior that requires careful handling." Imagine the effect on a sickle cell patient receiving an inhibitor of the enzyme for what the investigator suggested would be their entire life! This kind of "epigenetic therapy" deserves to be folded into ongoing discussion about the implications of the new precision genetic technologies.

Educational Implications

Deliberative processes take on increasing meaning as the subject matter comes to be viewed from different angles, bringing different people's values to the fore and allowing them to reach mutual understanding.

This is not to say that a 2-person dialogue cannot have an impact, but the question arises as to whether the effect will fuel further individual "mental" processing, or bring about change at the collective level.

The iterative process of approaching issues at the intersection of science and religion can be awareness raising for those participating. Products of deliberative engagement, whether they exist in the form of summary, descriptive report, or actual recommendations, attain "internal" educational value when they are returned to the participants involved, and "external" educational value when disseminated to professional or policymaking groups that can make a difference in the area under discussion.

Conclusion: The General Value of Group Deliberation

Deliberative processes may not be appropriate for all situations where mutual understanding is needed. Sometimes people, such as those on opposite ends of the religious conservative-liberal spectrum, are simply trying to encounter one another without flying apart. In other circumstances groups of people are attempting to reconcile different intellectual perspectives, which can occur when disparate scientific hypotheses or religious tenets are being compared.

Nonetheless, pure science and pure religion have a tendency to "spill over" into the applied arena. Though this essay has focused on religious views towards burgeoning genetic technology, the year-long "Genetics and Faith" dialogue project has shown that nondenominational spiritual perspectives offer just as much to say about moral guidance in this area as the insights of traditional religions. Values and beliefs within this shared space can be harnessed in deliberations about a wide variety of global concerns – healthcare for all; the threat of war; civil unrest and injustice, and global warming to name a few (Gutmann and Thompson 2014). It would not make sense to hold discussion in these areas to just a single sitting. So much can be unearthed in a more engaging

deliberative process evoking people's inner beliefs. What emerges can have wide educational and material results for those willing to share their faith with each other.

References

Bonham, Vence L., Citrin, Toby, Modell, Stephen M., Franklin, Tene' Hamilton, Bleicher, Esther W.B., Fleck, Leonard M. 2009. "Community-Based Dialogue: Engaging communities of color in the United States' genetics policy conversation" *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 34(3): 325-59.

Buber, Martin. 1958. *I and Thou.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Carlson, Linsa E., Speca, Michael, Patel, Kamala D., Goodey, Eileen. 2004. Mindfullness-Based Stress Reduction in relation to Quality of Life, Mood, Symptoms of Stress and Levels of Cortisol, Dehydroepiandrosterone Sulfate (DHEAS) and Melatonin in Breast and Prostate Cancer Outpatients. *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 29(4): 448-74.

Caspi, Avshalom, McClay, Joseph, Moffitt, Terrie E., Mill, Jonathan, Martin, Judy, Craig, Ian W., Taylor, Alan, Poulton, Richie. 2002. Role of Genotype in the Cycle of Violence in Maltreated Children. *Science* 297(5582): 851-4.

Elliston, Clark J. 2016. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Ethical Self: Christology, ethics, and formation.* Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 77-104.

Fleck, Leonard M. 2006. *Just Caring: Health care rationing and democratic deliberation.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Foerster, John. 1990. "Paul Tillich and Inter-Religious Dialogue." *Modern Theology* 7(1): 1-27.

Gold, Azgad, Appelbaum, Paul S. 2014. “The Inclination to Evil and the Punishment of Crime – from the Bible to behavioral genetics.” *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences* 51(3); 162-8.

Gutmann, Amy, Thompson, Dennis. 1997. "Deliberating about Bioethics.” *Hastings Center Report* 27(3): 38-41.

Gutmann, Amy, Thompson, Dennis. 2004. *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Koenig, Harold G. 2001. Religion and Medicine IV: Religion, physical health, and clinical implications. *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 31(3): 321-36.

Miller, Jon D., Scott, Eugenie C., Okamoto, Shinji. 2006. “Public Acceptance of Evolution. *Science”* 313(5788): 765-6.

Modell, Stephen M. 2007. “Genetic and Reproductive Technologies in the Light of Religious Dialogue.” *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science* 42(1): 163-82.

Taylor, Derek W. 2016. Theological Formation: Dialogical interplay between Barth, Hauerwas, and Bonhoeffer. In: Chandler, Diane J., ed. *The Holy Spirit and Christian Formation: Multidisciplinary perspectives.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 127-43.

Warren, Rueben C., Modell, Stephen M. 2015. “Vital Dimensions: An inquiry into the ultimate foundations of optimal health.” In: Modell, Stephen M. *Philosophical Studies in Medicine and Health.* Toronto: URAM / University of Toronto Press, 176-96.

The Spiritual Journey and Its Hidden Meanings

Author:
Dr. Sami Rafiq

Meditation, prayers and connecting with one's inner soul are some ways of dealing with the stresses of modern life and a prescription for healing as is commonly known, but there are deeper levels to spiritual and emotional enrichment to be found in the writings of enlightened ones about the spiritual journey.

The words of Muinuddin Chishti, a revered thirteenth-century Sufi and great humanitarian, provide us with both a caution and a sound basis for our movement towards a better world:

Love all and hate none.

Mere talk of peace will avail you naught.

Mere talk of God and religion will not take you far.

Bring out all of the latent powers of your being

and reveal the full magnificence of your immortal "self."

Be surcharged with peace and joy,

and scatter these wherever you are and wherever you go.

Be a blazing fire of Truth,

be a beauteous blossom of love,

and be a soothing balm of peace.

With your spiritual light,

dispel the darkness of ignorance;

Dissolve the clouds of discord and war and spread goodwill, peace and harmony among the people.

If one were to wonder where or how such thoughts come about, the answer would lie in being able to reach a higher level of human consciousness.

Human consciousness has been the preoccupation of writers, poets and sufis alike. Psychology may discuss consciousness in analytical or theoretical terms but the sufis be they poets or lovers of the Divine dwell in a world of higher consciousness. The sufis understand this journey towards higher consciousness as mergence with the Divine and their teachings through stories and events not always realistic ones hint at a long and difficult journey towards this state of complete bliss and peace.

The question arises as to what the spiritual journey is in actual. Is it abstract and metaphorical or an actual state of mind? Is it something within religion or something outside religion and does it actually benefit the traveller in some special way?

Spirituality is considered by many psychologists to be an inherent property of the human being (Helminiak,1996; Newberg, D'Aquili, & Rause,2001). Another definition is "an individual's experience of and relationship with a fundamental, nonmaterial aspect of the universe" (Tolan, 2002) (as quoted inWilliam Huitt)

William Huitt goes on to enumerate the benefits of faith, prayer and regular attendance at religious gatherings in the following way:

lower blood pressure (Koenig, 1999),

improved physical health (Koenig, McCullough,Larson,2001; Levin,2001),

healthier lifestyles and less risky behaviour (Koenig,1999),

improved coping ability (Pargament,1997),

less depression (Keonig,1999),

faster healing (Dossey,2002;Koenig,2002)

lower levels of bereavement after the death of a loved one (Walsh,King,Jones, Tookman & Blizard,2002)

a decrease in the fear of death (Ardelt,2000), …

The spiritual journey therefore is a movement of consciousness towards a certain state of mind that is beneficial as illustrated above.

Henry Corbin's book *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* helps us understand the fact that each spiritual journey toward evolvement and healing is unique thus;

In the whole of the universes of this Earth of Truth, for each soul a universe corresponding to that soul has been created." This means that there is no one prescription for wisdom that applies to every person, and that, instead of a collective religion for all, each soul has its own religion, its own particular way of approaching and embracing truth. Each of us experiences Reality in a special and unique way.

Seen from another angle, we could say that Reality is afforded many lenses by which it takes in the richness of life. When we are guided to and trusting in our unique way, our "soul's religion," the full splendor and mystery of existence has an opportunity to reveal itself. (Inayat Khan:4)

The Sufis are unanimous that anyone can reach the state of realisation of light and higher consciousness which has no boundaries.

To make full use of the journey towards spiritual wisdom it is important to see its relevance to modern times.

Azim Jamal brings the Sufi perspective to the modern world by saying,

A Sufi is an instrument or vessel—he takes from God with one hand and gives with another. (Azim Jamal:0)

He goes on to say:

For me, the Sufi is a symbol for a stance towards life, and a perspective about values that we can all learn for use in our daily lives.Sufism represents an ideal of how we can all maintain a spiritual and ethical centre while still pursuing our worldly goals.(Azim Jamal:8)

Azim Jamal brings out the practicality of spiritual education that is one can be spiritually evolved and be living in the everyday world.The call of the soul demands a disciplined way of living life with simplicity and moderation.

In another chapter he sums up:

For the Sufis, meditation is better than sleep, fasting is better than over eating, and observing silence is better than speech. (Azim Jamal:130)

According to the book Emerald Earth:

True spirituality can be known, as Christ said, by its fruits. It is in our hands to use spiritual principles to change the dreamscape of this life, to bring forth an uplifted world. True spirituality should enable us to move away from narrow interpretations of Reality that damage our environment and threaten the continuity of life as we know it. By the very fact that the dream reality we live in is malleable, we can- not

afford to believe ourselves puppets on a string, moved about by fixed definitions of God, chance or destiny. The hope for our world is belief in our power to make a difference, not by grandiose programs but in the day-to-day ecology that begins in our own minds and hearts

The spiritual awakening of heart and soul makes one aware of one's purpose in life and makes one share that wisdom to help others.

According to Asim Jamal ultimately, through the spiritual journey, we gain the capacity to be joyous even in the midst of suffering. We learn not to get completely caught by circumstances—the traffic jam, the noise, the doctor's diag- nosis of an illness. No matter what appears, we know another view that is open and spacious, and that allows us to find an equanimity and peace with our experience, accepting and even appreciating the most difficult of feelings and situations.

In the words of Inayat Khan it is the seeker's attitude that is of utmost importance in the spiritual journey.It is a journey of faith and love failing which, it cannot be accomplished and such a journey of distrust and misgiving does not enrich the traveller in anyway. He illustrates this through the story of the Kalpvriksha or the 'wish fulfilling tree':

For this tree is this whole universe, the miniature of which is one's own self, and there is nothing that you ask that this universe will not answer, for it is the nature of the universe to answer your soul's call. Only, if you ask for the pears, there are pears... if you ask for the rose there will be the rose and its thorns together. And it is the lack of knowledge of this great secret hidden in the heart of the universe which is the only tragedy of life. When a person seeks for something in the universe and he cannot find it, it is not true that it is not there, the fact is that he does not see it. (Inayat Khan:7)

This journey towards self realisation and spiritual evolvement is certainly not a bed of roses but the goal makes it worth while.

The poem titled "The Unbroken" by Rashani highlights the journey towards spiritual enlightenment and freedom, a journey that is filled with pain and strife:

There is a brokenness

out of which comes the unbroken,

a shatteredness

out of which blooms the unshatterable.

There is a sorrow

beyond all grief which leads to joy

and a fragility

out of whose depths emerges strength.

There is a hollow space

too vast for words

through which we pass with each loss,

our of whose darkness

we are sanctioned into being.

There is a cry deeper than all sound

whose serrated edges cut the heart

as we break open to the place inside

which is unbreakable and whole,

while learning to sing.

The poet Mohammad Iqbal in his poetry spoke engagingly about wakening the higher consciousness in order to realise a better world and a balanced personality. He felt that the unawakened consciousness is to blame for the present crises in the modern world.In other words he talked about the development of the spiritual self.

Evelyn Underhill interestingly compares the connection between the inner and outer worlds with a morse code.

The conscious self sits, so to speak, at the receiving end of a telegraph wire.On any other theory than that of mysticism, it is her one channel of communication with the hypothetical “external world.” The receiving instrument registers certain messages.She does not know, and —so long as she remains dependent on that instrument—-never can know, the objects, the reality at the other end of the wire, by which those messages are sent; neither can the messages truly disclose the nature of that object.But she is justified on the whole in accepting them as evidence that something exists beyond herself and her receiving instrument.It is obvious that the structural pecularities of the telegraphic instrument will have exerted a modifying effect upon the message.That which is conveyed as dash and dot, colour and shape, may have been received in a very different form.Therefore this message though it may in a partial sense be relevant to the supposed reality at the other end, can never be adequate to it.There will be fine vibrations which it fails to take up, others which it confuses together. Hence a portion of the message is always lost; or, in other language, there are aspects of the world which we can never know.

In a very lucid manner she conveyed the impossibility of giving an absolute description of higher consciousness and its contents because of

the different levels of understanding between the seeker and the sought.

The writer M. G. Hawking in his notes taken on his journey through the Himalayas has dealt with the idea of the individual consciousness as being a part of the universal or divine consciousness. His book is about a town called “Siddhalaya” which he discovered in the remote Himalayas. He has written about his incredible journey to the psychic and spiritual world of Siddhalaya. Some of the concepts are amazingly familiar to the psychologist Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious which is a source of ideas, imagination and the origin of one’s destiny on the planet.

According to E.H. Palmer the heavens of afterlife are given to each soul in accordance with the degree of evolvement or enlightenment and not on the basis of colour, gender, race, religion or status. He has written about the spiritual beliefs of the Ahl i wahdat a branch of Sufism who insist upon the Universality and Unity of God.

The traveller towards God is shown ten marks that are the mark of followers of truth.These ten points over lap with the spiritual ideas in other religions too.

1. God is to be known first and material objects later.

2. He should be at peace with the world.

3. Charity towards all.Real charity consists in employment of counsel and discipline.

4. Humility which consists in paying due respect to others.

5. Submission and resignation.

6. T rust in God, patience, endurance and perseverance.

7. Freedom from avarice; for avarice is the mother of vice.

8. Contentment.

9. Inoffensiveness.

10. Conviction; for the truth brings conviction with it.(E.H.Palmer:11)

These precepts which direct human beings to be kind, generous, balanced and modest have the power to tackle the root of human suffering. A life of faith lived in detachment from worldly allurements would certainly make a better world. The road to the Divine is same for all as this Sufi perception is echoed in different religions and spiritual movements.

When the soul has reached a stage on enlightenment it gets embedded in a relationship of love not only with other souls but it develops a deep sympathy for the Earth and the planet as a whole.

Satish Kumar in his essay "Three dimensions of Ecology: Soil, Soul and Society" talks about the soil as symbolising man's relation to nature, the soul as symbolising the human relation to the divine and society as symbolising the human relationship to other humans as the basis of peace and harmony in the universe and to save the earth and humanity from extinction thus:

Making peace with ourself is a prerequisite for making peace with the earth.And making peace with ourselves means realising our true nature and being who we are (Satish Kumar:136)

Thus a spiritual journey is one which connects the soul to the Divine but also enriches the soul's bond to humans and the living earth.

References:

Hawking,M.G. 2017. *In the Valley of Supreme Masters The Greatest Knowledge of the Ages.Wisdom.* California:Masters Press.

Jamal,Azim.2010. *The One-Minute Sufi.* New Delhi:Jaico Publishing House.

Kumar, Satish. "Three Dimensions of Ecology:Soil, Soul and Society," in *Spiritual Ecology The Cry of the Earth* Ed., Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee.2013.

Khan Inayat, Pir-O-Murshid. *The Sufi Message of Spiritual Liberty.* Sacred Text 1914,PDF ebook date of reproduction 2015 communitybooks.ebooklibrary.org

Miller,William, Janet C'de Baca.2001. *Quantum Change When Epiphanies and Sudden Insights Transform Ordinary Lives.*New York, London: The Guilford Press.

Norton, Felicia and Charles Smith in *An Emerald Earth from Hazrat Muinuddin Chishti.* in William Begg, "The Holy Biography of Hazrat Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti" (The Hague: East-West Publications, 1977), p. 12.

Norton,Felicia and Charles Smith in *An Emerald Earth from Hazrat Inayat, Khan, "*The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan,."Vol. XIII: The Gathas (Geneva: International Sufi Movement, 1982), p, 112.

Palmer, E.H. *Oriental Mysticism A Treatise on the Sufiistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians.* communitybooks.ebooklibrary.org

Rashani. "The Unbroken." rashani.com

Underhill ,Evelyn. *Mysticism* (Kindle edition).

Meditation and Neuroplasticity: The Effects of Meditation on Visual, Auditory and Tactile Attention

Author:
Simran Parmar

The ability to focus on certain stimuli is known as sustained attention and it is one of the most fundamental units of the human perceptual system. Imagine an individual driving down a busy road in a busy city on a night with bad winter weather. Everywhere in sight there are people walking, cars honking, lights flashing and various smells. The driver sips on a coffee and at the same time is able to pay attention to the road ahead. In fact, all five of the driver's sensory pathways are being activated. It is important to note that the sensory pathway does all of this without being overwhelmed or burning out the nervous system. The driver uses overt attention to focus on the cars directly in front of him and covert attention to look at the cars in his periphery. Not only that, but the driver is also using his divided attention to listen to the radio while still manoeuvring the car around traffic. For many drivers, all of this seems routine and not a difficult task at all. However, a common issue for many is that with age this ability to selectively attend to stimuli degenerates (Madden & Langley, 2007). On the other hand, practices like meditation have been shown to alter neuroplasticity in such a way that the ability to attend to stimuli is preserved and even improved regardless of age. This practice focuses on attending to a single stimulus for sustained periods of time and has shown to improve overall brain functionality. Meditation encourages neuroplasticity by increasing cerebral cortex thickness which leads to improved visual, auditory and tactile attention.

Focusing solely on visual attention, another common scenario can be studied through the lens of the medical field. A nurse is preparing a dose of medication "A" for her patient after she reads the label on the packaging. The nurse delivers a concentration of 0.8% while the label

says to deliver a concentration of 0.08% and this results in the death of the patient. This scenario is a perfect example of inattentional blindness. The failure to read the label is not owing to negligence but rather an overload on the visual cortex. When the visual cortex is overwhelmed with stimuli, it often becomes blind to certain objects in one's visual field. Laboratory experiments show that even brief exposures to meditation are able to reduce inattentional blindness (Schofield et al., 2015). Furthermore, other studies demonstrate that these effects on inattentional blindness go beyond the laboratory and have ecological validity. The effects extend to reduced change blindness, higher levels of concentration and even the ability to perform better on visual selective attention tasks in the presence of invalid cues (Hodgins & Adair, 2010). These effects are all visual perceptual advantages for both drivers and medical practitioners. Researchers have further concluded that the improved visual cortex function in meditators is primarily due to increased cortical thickness in the brain. Over time, due to age and other factors, the cortical thickness of the brain begins to decrease. Lazar et al. (2005) conducted a study in which the researchers demonstrated that cortical thickness in meditators is not only related to the age of the practitioner but also to their experience level. The experiment consisted of 20 participants who were advanced meditators but were not considered monks. They lived normal lives in the US with careers, families, social lives and interests other than meditation. On the other hand, the control group consisted of 15 participants with no meditation or yoga experience and accounted for differences in sex, age, race and education level. Cortical thickness was measured through a magnetization prepared rapid gradient echo imaging system. The results of the experiment showed an increase of thickness in various parts of the cerebral cortex however the the right hemisphere is the most crucial for the perceptual system. The right hemisphere reinforces the perceptual system's vigilance, alertness and sustained attention. It is important to note that this study does not specify whether the variance in thickness was due to vascularity changes, glial volume or arborization per neuron. All three of these are possible factors as to why the results showed an increase in cortical thickness and improved function. However, this study was effective in illustrating that regular meditation

results in neuroplasticity changes in the cerebral cortex, leading to improved levels of attention (Lazar et al. 2005). Likewise, a study done at McGill University revealed similar results when meditators performed better at tasks such as the Rapid Serial Visual Presentation (RSVP) task, showing that meditators are less prone to the attentional blink phenomenon to which many people fall victim. The study showed that this outcome is primarily due to thicker amounts of grey matter throughout the brain. Various MRI tests have proven that with meditation, the left superior frontal gyrus extending to the cingulate gyri have significantly higher levels of absorption due to cortical thickness. Other areas which show higher levels of absorption include the right precuneus, middle frontal gyri, the left supramarginal gyrus and the superior parietal lobule (Duncan et al, 2012). Notably, participants performed better on the Attention Network Test, the Stroop task and the Trail Making task. Furthermore, the study shows that meditation can help reduce cognitive disorders such as ADHD which is common amongst children with lower levels of cortical thickness (Duncan et al., 2012). The evidence shows that meditation not only provides a great advantage in preserving and enhancing attention in the visual perceptual system, but the effects also extend to other sensory pathways such as the auditory system.

With reference to the driving example, the perceptual system has advanced to the point where drivers can listen to the radio while still focusing their attention on the road ahead of them. There are, however, some flaws in the auditory perceptual system as it attends to stimuli. For example, many individuals have been in situations where they are talking to a friend or a colleague and midway through the conversation, they drift off into a phenomenon known as “pseudo-listening”—that is, appearing as if they are paying attention while in fact, they are completely attention-less in the conversation. This is common amongst most people, and due to certain lifestyle choices and other factors, this inability to sustain attention to auditory stimuli can deteriorate even further. A few studies have attempted to use event-related potential (ERP) brain markers and passive auditory mismatch negativity (MMN) to study the effects of meditation and auditory attention. MMN is

scientifically defined as, “an auditory event-related potential that occurs when a sequence of repetitive sounds is interrupted by an occasional ‘oddball’ sound that differs in frequency or duration” (Geyer, 2008, p. 199). MMN is produced in the pre-frontal and temporal areas of the brain and is commonly used to measure functions of the auditory system. One study showed that long-term meditators have a greater sensitivity to sound both during and outside of meditation. The experiment measured three distinct ERPs related to audition: the N1, P2 and P3a. All three of these areas demonstrated greater sensitivity to sound, especially the N1 (Biedermann et al., 2016). Early automatic orientation of attention and early acoustic processing occur in the N1 and P2 (Alcaini et al., 1994; Näätänen & Picton, 1987) while attentional engagement is observed in the P3a (Polich, 2007). This experiment has focused more on the neural responses but there have been other studies which have focused more on the behavioural aspects of auditory attention. One such study used the dichotic listening task to contrast the attention levels of meditators and non-meditators. Participants were asked to listen to various sounds and detect when they heard deviation in the sound. The participants did the experiment before and after a three-month meditation retreat. Response times to the test significantly decreased after the three-month retreat (Lutz et al., 2008). Much of these results are again due to the cortical plasticity of the right hemisphere. Studies have shown reduced auditory attention in patients with right brain hemisphere damage. For example, an experiment conducted in 2005 compared three adult males who suffered right hemisphere damage due to stroke. Reduced auditory attention was consistent amongst all three patients (Hough et al., 2007). Referring to previously mentioned studies such as the ones done by Lazar et al. it can be observed that meditation positively impacts brain plasticity in the right hemisphere. No studies have been done that directly measure the effects of meditation on improved right brain hemisphere plasticity and auditory attention; however, it is likely that such a study would produce similar results to those that observed visual attention. Increased cortical thickness from meditation can be dramatically beneficial for both visual and auditory attention, and similar effects can be observed with tactile attention.

There have been numerous incidents in traffic where drivers have hit the gas instead of the brakes while driving. This is an indication of poor tactile attention while driving. On the other hand, many manual drivers know the amount of tactile attention it requires to gently lift their foot off the clutch and feel the "biting point" where the car begins to push forward. Both of these are examples of why tactile attention is important while driving. Unlike visual and auditory attentions, the brain region responsible for tactile attention is the somatosensory area of the parietal cortex (Burton et al., 1999). Before examining the importance of neuroplasticity in the somatosensory cortex, it is important to understand its function and the issues revolving around its degradation. "The primary somatosensory cortex (S1) plays a critical role in processing afferent somatosensory input and contributes to the integration of sensory and motor signals necessary for skilled movement" (Borich et al., 2015, p. 246). Lesions to the primary somatosensory cortex lead to the complete loss of tactile sense in most areas excluding the face (Taylor & Jones, 1997). To assess whether meditation alters neuroplasticity in the somatosensory cortex, both behavioural and anatomical changes seen in laboratory studies must be considered. Studies have shown that even amateur meditators can experience enhanced tactile attention from brief exposures to body-scan meditation. A University of Manchester laboratory generated an experiment where somatosensory attention was measured in 62 participants before and after a guided body-scan meditation. The results showed that the participants increased their tactile perception, sensitivity, and attention, and showed better somatosensory decision-making (Mirams et al., 2013). All of these effects could prove beneficial in both the manual driving and car braking scenarios. These benefits are not just temporary but also beneficial in the long-run neurologically due to the functional changes in the brain. Studies show that various meditation practices increase activity in the anterior cingulate cortex (Tang et al., 2010). The anterior cingulate cortex is responsible for executive processes which include the ability to pay attention and shift focus from stimulus to stimulus (Diamond, 2012), which once again proves vital in an individual's driving abilities (visually, auditorily and tactically). As for gyrification, MRI tests in meditators show that the

regions associated with the somatosensory pathway—most notably the primary somatosensory cortex—show a drastic increase in gray matter. These results are from meditators with long-term experience, hence, the gyrification properties (Luders et al., 2012). From these studies, it can be stated that meditation causes neuroplasticity changes in the brain which improve tactile attention.

Researchers studying the effects of meditation on neuroplasticity have gathered a great amount of evidence that the practice can aid in improving visual, auditory and tactile attention. The reason for this is primarily due to the benefits of meditation on increasing cortical thickness in various regions of the cerebral cortex. These results demonstrate that meditation can be used as an intervention method when dealing with clinical cases of attention deficits. Individuals with cognitive disorders such as ADHD, where many patients show a high degree of cortical thinning, can benefit from the neuroplasticity effects of meditation. Moreover, even for cortical thinning and loss of function that are the outcome of aging; meditation can be a remarkable way of preserving and enhancing auditory attention. Finally, meditation enhances tactile attention which may be beneficial for tasks such as driving. Cortical thinning and the loss of sensory attention is something which many individuals will encounter in their lifetime but practices such as meditation can take make use of neuroplasticity to reverse the symptoms.

References

Alcaini, M., Giard, M. H., Thévenet, M., & Pernier, J. (1994). Two separate frontal components in the N1 wave of the human auditory evoked response. Psychophysiology, 31(6), 611-615. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8986.1994.tb02354.x

Biedermann, B., Lissa, P. D., Mahajan, Y., Polito, V., Badcock, N., Connors, M. H., . . . Mcarthur, G. (2016). Meditation and auditory

attention: An ERP study of meditators and non-meditators. International Journal of Psychophysiology,109, 63-70. doi:10.1016/j.ijpsycho.2016.09.016

Borich, M., Brodie, S., Gray, W., Ionta, S., & Boyd, L. (2015). Understanding the role of the primary somatosensory cortex: Opportunities for rehabilitation. *Neuropsychologia,79*, 246-255. doi:10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2015.07.007

Burton, H. (1999). Tactile Attention Tasks Enhance Activation in Somatosensory Regions of Parietal Cortex: A Positron Emission Tomography Study. *Cerebral Cortex,9*(7), 662-674. doi:10.1093/cercor/9.7.662

Davidson, R., & Lutz, A. (2008). Buddhas Brain: Neuroplasticity and Meditation [In the Spotlight]. IEEE Signal Processing Magazine, 25(1), 176-174. doi:10.1109/msp.2008.4431873

Diamond, A. (2013). Executive Functions. Annual Review of Psychology,64(1), 135-168. doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143750

Grant, J. A., Duerden, E. G., Courtemanche, J., Cherkasova, M., Duncan, G. H., & Rainville, P. (2013). Cortical thickness, mental absorption and meditative practice: Possible implications for disorders of attention. *Biological Psychology,92*(2), 275-281. doi:10.1016/j.biopsycho.2012.09.007

Hodgins, H. S., & Adair, K. C. (2010). Attentional processes and meditation. *Consciousness and Cognition,19*(4), 872-878. doi:10.1016/j.concog.2010.04.002

Hough, M. S., Givens, G. D., Cranford, J. L., & Downs, R. C. (2007). Behavioural and electrophysiological measures of auditory attention in right hemisphere brain damage. *Aphasiology,21*(9), 831-843. doi:10.1080/02687030600647757

Jones, D. N., Gartlon, J. E., Minassian, A., Perry, W., & Geyer, M. A. (2008). Developing New Drugs for Schizophrenia: From Animals to the Clinic. *Animal and Translational Models for CNS Drug Discovery,*199-261. doi:10.1016/b978-0-12-373861-5.00008-4

Kerr, C. E., Sacchet, M. D., Lazar, S. W., Moore, C. I., & Jones, S. R. (2013). Mindfulness starts with the body: somatosensory attention and top-down modulation of cortical alpha rhythms in mindfulness meditation. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience,7*. doi:10.3389/fnhum.2013.00012

Langley, L. K., & Madden, D. J. (2000). Functional neuroimaging of memory: Implications for cognitive aging. Microscopy Research and Technique,51(1), 75-84. doi:10.1002/1097-0029(20001001)51:1<75::aid-jemt8>3.0.co;2-6

Lazar, S. W., Kerr, C. E., Wasserman, R. H., Gray, J. R., Greve, D. N., Treadway, M. T., . . . Fischl, B. (2005). Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness. NeuroReport, 16(17), 1893-1897. doi:10.1097/01.wnr.0000186598.66243.19

Luders, E., Kurth, F., Mayer, E. A., Toga, A. W., Narr, K. L., & Gaser, C. (2012). The Unique Brain Anatomy of Meditation Practitioners: Alterations in Cortical Gyrification. Frontiers in Human Neuroscience,6. doi:10.3389/fnhum.2012.00034

Mirams, L., Poliakoff, E., Brown, R. J., & Lloyd, D. M. (2013). Brief body-scan meditation practice improves somatosensory perceptual decision making. Consciousness and Cognition,22(1), 348-359. doi:10.1016/j.concog.2012.07.009

Näätänen, R., & Picton, T. (1987). The N1 Wave of the Human Electric and Magnetic Response to Sound: A Review and an Analysis of the Component Structure. Psychophysiology, 24(4), 375-425. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8986.1987.tb00311.x

Polich, J. (2007). Updating P300: An integrative theory of P3a and P3b. Clinical Neurophysiology,118(10), 2128-2148. doi:10.1016/j.clinph.2007.04.019

Schofield, T. P., Creswell, J. D., & Denson, T. F. (2015). Brief mindfulness induction reduces inattentional blindness. *Consciousness and Cognition,37*, 63-70. doi:10.1016/j.concog.2015.08.007

Tang, Y., Lu, Q., Feng, H., Tang, R., & Posner, M. I. (2015). Short-term meditation increases blood flow in anterior cingulate cortex and insula. *Frontiers in Psychology,6*. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00212

Taylor, L. (1997). Effects of lesions invading the postcentral gyrus on somatosensory thresholds on the face. *Neuropsychologia, 35* (7), 953-961. doi:10.1016/s0028-3932(97)00023-7

Personal Reflections

This section contains articles which may be classified as personal reflections ...

One Town, One Heart, Ten Cultures

Author:
Asim Nasir

You would not expect much unity and harmony in a small town, but that is exactly what we have here in Sugar Land, Texas. Although Sugar Land is not exactly small with a population exceeding 88,000 there is certainly the feel of a "small town" within those city lines. One is unlikely to fill gas or get groceries without bumping into someone you went to high school with. There are many different types of people living side by side; like folks who displayed TRUMP lawn ornaments and there are many who vocally opposed him with every ounce of their fibre. There are athletes, fine arts connoisseurs, and working blue-collar people. It is truly one of the most diverse places in America and this is apparent in every corner of the city. So how did Sugar Land get its name? The story begins in 1823, when the pioneer Stephen F. Austin settled 300 American families in modern-day Fort Bend County via a Mexican land grant. In the following decades leading up to the Civil War, sugarcane became the region's bread and butter, and Fort Bend County, and its surrounding counties, collectively became known as the Texas Sugar Bowl. As the years passed, the sugar factory eventually became defunct and was no longer the primary source of money for the city. The old sugar mill sat abandoned and dark; its boom was replaced on either side by oil and gas companies such as Schlumberger and Nalco. Engineering giant Flour built its campus in the heart of the city as well. In this bustling and busy town people still smile at each other and display that southern hospitality that most big cities lack. The city has around six mosques, 15 churches, three Hindu temples, and two synagogues all within a 32-mile radius and at least twice a year there are major interfaith events in town where leaders of various faiths come together to promote unity and togetherness. On November 14th 2017, a church in Sugar Land hosted one the largest interfaith events of the year. Muslims took part in a Jewish dance, Hindus sang alongside Christians, and Buddhists handed out blessings to all. Starting from various dances, to Love-Joy Drummers and even an invocation from the Sojo Circle,

people from all religious backgrounds gathered to put their theological differences aside at the annual event organised by Interfaith Alliance Texas and the church. After the fun, event-goers gathered in the welcome center for a reception that featured food, drinks and dessert from different cultures that were present at the church. With more than ten religious groups taking part in sharing a bit about their beliefs, the event was also a chance to learn something new. A table set up with various faith symbols served as a metaphor that all faiths are welcome in this town — from Christians and Sufis to Jews and Buddhists.

In 2016 when a local cheerleading gym on the same street as Maryam Islamic Center burned down, the first group to step up and donate to the rebuilding was the mosque which demonstrated unity and trust in our neighbors. Take for instance the Hurricane Harvey in Houston and the surrounding areas, which included Sugar Land. With thousands of people displaced and homeless, men and women stood together and lifted one another up from the mud and restored this flooded city back to health and beauty. There was a sense of impending doom as the hours turned into minutes before the storm hit—- but all the communities came together for one common goal. With the Caucasian man who had a TRUMP banner hanging outside his home to the Middle Eastern family who had just arrived to the city, these brave people brought down racial barriers that were stuck in place for countless years to help one another in a time of dire need. We may have our political differences but a cowboy will still pull his truck over to help an old Muslim woman with a flat tire on her Toyota. The community shares one similar sentiment: exposure to other faiths, beliefs, and cultures are an integral part of being an American citizen.

An Old Tradition of Muraqaba or Meditation for restoring 'Peace' in Modern Living

Author:
Aneela Durrani Azeemi

The present age of science and technology is the magnificent creation of the human mind which while adding great comfort and ease to the people's living has simultaneously made him subservient to his own creation. The material approach to life has not only dragged him from his true self but has taken away his most precious thing "Peace". This negative or disturbed human mind has landed him in a world of turmoil, starting at an individual level and rising to the global level in the shape of incurable diseases, mental illness, rising of extremism, terrorism ,war and the natural threats like global warming and calamities

The human being is in search of something and that something missing is his own 'Self' and for peaceful living it is very important to have an inner connection; it necessitates the application of an old traditional skill of 'muraqaba' or meditation for restoring peace. Meditation or 'muraqaba' is the term used for contemplating or focusing the mind on one point and that point unfolds one's own Self. Thus self actualization is the key leading to further connecting to the cosmic consciousness or divinity. Therefore this paper will first attempt to understand the Sufi perspective of divine mystery or cosmic consciousness and its connection with the human mind. Then it would analyse the relationship between mind, body and soul and further explore the use of 'muraqaba' or meditation as a tool to reach the ultimate reality.

Sufism, which is a mystical dimension of Islam, tells us that the universe is a divine mystery; the base of all existence is spirituality present in the shape of energy or light.

All the revealed scriptures testify to this;

The Quran says: “Allah ho Noor us Samawat e Wal Ard” Allah is the light of Heaven and Earth”

Surah e Noor; Ayat 35

The Torah gives evidence that Moses saw light on Mount Sinai.

The Buddha after 40 days of meditation saw light and called it Nirvana or Enlightenment.

This testifies that energy or Divine light is Ultimate Reality.

However, scientific knowledge has also discovered this light in the form of energy and states: “Everything is made up of energy” and according to the law of conservation of energy says “Energy can neither be created nor be destroyed.

If human beings were to focus on our existence they would observe that their lives are revolving around energy. For our survival we humans and all living things need energy, whatever we eat converts into energy and the left over is waste which we excrete.

The human being is considered to be the best creation not because of intellectual capabilities but because of hidden knowledge within, in the form of a spark of light or energy known as spirit or rooh. Therefore a human being is not merely confined to the body of flesh and bones but carries a living microcosm within. Interestingly this “noor” is full of unlimited potential and power and is concealed in all humans as “nuqta e zaat” or an energy code like a chip .To make it more clear we can relate it to the example of a computer, as in the computer we have a chip for built-in programs within the system. In order to use these programs we need to activate this chip otherwise we cannot benefit from any of its programs. The same is the case with a human being, the most sophisticated programmed creation with a reservoir of primordial knowledge called Nuqta e Zaat which needs to be activated. Any human being irrespective of any religion or gender can activate these hidden

energies and can reach Irfan,Nirvan Or Gayan which means enlightenment.

Moreover Sufi knowledge further tells us that the human spirit is the combination of 70,000 layers of energy and each layer has its own significance and potential. These layers are interconnected to the entire cosmic consciousness or Divinity. These layers carry a tinge of negativity in the shape of anger, hate, jealousy and biases whereas the major part of it is positive and full of power. When a soul comes into this world it adopts the body as a medium in the form of a baby and a layer surrounds the baby's consciousness which gets thickened slowly and gradually along with the child's growth . When the human body becomes mature this layer turns into a strong grid commonly referred to as Ego .This is one of the toughest layers; the negative part of this ego is the biggest challenge for the human being to overcome. but on the other hand if the positive side of this ego is focussed upon, it can lead to self actualisation. We can make it more clear by the comparison of carbon and the diamond, just as the carbon layer encircles the radiant diamond in the same way the Ego layer encircles the Soul or Energy.

Proper contemplation helps the soul radiance to emerge and transcend the negative Ego.

History gives evidence that all prophets, sages ,sufis and saints focussed on this inner dimension.

Whosoever can achieve the ability to understand this phenomena can reach the ultimate reality and can become Arif or Allah's friend.This true human being and co-worker in divine administration is known as 'Nizam e Taqween' in sufi terminology.

Hence one such tool which the sufis used and practised for achieving self actualisation is muraqaba or meditation .This practice cleanses the mind of irrelevant thoughts and works on the Ego layer so as to activate the radiant diamond 'nuqta e Zaat'.

Muraqba is an exercise to contemplate and connect to the knowledge of Self or Soul (esoteric knowledge). It is assumed that Muraqaba is simply sitting in some specific pose and merely shutting one's eyes but in fact it is the angel of perception (tarz e fikr) through whom the person doing Muraqaba frees himself or herself from outward (zahir) senses and begins their journey

towards inward senses (batin)This is the most effective way of activating and enhancing sense which turns the dormant senses into a vibrant and awake mode and thus one can explore those forces that are beyond the scope of physical senses. Through this primordial knowledge too can be explored leading to divine wisdom and enlightenment.

Benefits:

Muraqaba has multiple benefits such as physical, psychological and social and first and foremost it improves concentration, immunity and memory.It also helps prevent psychological complications and controls our negative thoughts and emotions thereby by giving us the feeling of serenity and tranquility. Overall we are able to perform well in our daily life whether at work or in a relationship. Healthy minds can restore healthy societies.

Muraqaba is still practiced in all the major religions and is the legacy of all the prophets , sufi, saints and enlightened ones like Respected Buddha, Respected Jesus, Respected Moses, Respected Krishan jee and Prophet Muhammad(PBUH).

Jesus said," Kingdom of God lies inside thee, find it within thyself"

Moses spent forty nights practicing Muraqaba on Mount Sinai.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) practiced Muraqaba in the cave on Mount Hira where he received revelation.

In the Bhagvad Gita, Arjuna said to Krishna:

“You have talked about self-realisation, but I have found my mind to be utterly confused.”

Sri Krishna replied;

“What you are saying is correct, but by using right resources, and through detachment and with continued dhyaan(Muraqaba),a confused mind can be focused”.

Patanjali Maharishi in his book Yoga Savitra has also given details about the exercises of Muraqaba to activate spiritual abilities.

Muraqaba also played a major part in Siddharta Guatama Buddha’s life. In search of truth and reality he spent forty days continuously in Muraqaba under a Bodhi tree in Gaya in India and finally he attained Nirvana or enlightenment. There are eight basic points in the teachings of Buddha and the eighth one is about the purification of thoughts and Muraqaba.

Muraqaba is the practice through which mind can be cleansed and a connection between body and soul can be established which is the source for restoring peace.

References:

1. Azeemi, Hazrat Khwajah Shamsuddin. *Muraqaba -The Art of Sufi Meditation*.

2. Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*.

3.Iqbal,Allama Muhammad. *Asrare Khudi*(Secrets of Self).

Chronological Alteration of Characteristics of the Main Principles in Sāṁkhya Philosophy: An Analysis

Author:
Dr. Debamitra Dey

Introduction:

The synonym of the term philosophy in Sanskrit is '*darśana*'. From the derivation of the term *darśna*, it is denoted that the scriptures which act as a tool to obtain proper world-view, is considered as *darśana*, i.e. philosophy. Any avid reader of Indian Philosophy knows that it is divided into two definite cults, i.e. *Āstika* and *Nāstika*. It is opined that among the *Āstika* cult, Sāṁkhya is the oldest one. The great sage Kapila is considered as the founder of this system.

Scholars opine that the word Sāṁkhya is derived from the term *saṁkhyā* which means number. It is said that as the Sāṁkhya school discusses about twenty five main principles of this world, namely *tattva*, hence the school is stated as Sāṁkhya. According to Amarakoṣa, the term saṁkhyā refers discussion and analysis. In this particular system it is seen that the characteristics of the principles are discussed with great sincerity. Moreover it is also observed that the mutual difference among those principles is defined in a systematic way. As an effect of that the system got the name Sāṁkhya.[1]

In the commentary of the text *Yogasūtra* , the term *prasaṁkhyānaṁ* (synonym of the term *saṁkhyā*) is used to denote obtaining of ultimate knowledge. The commentator of *Yogasūtra*, Vyāsa has also expressed the same view in his commentary.[2] If we accept this explanation of the term *saṁkhyā*, then also the philosophy of Kapila can be entitled as Sāṁkhya because here to obtain the ultimate knowledge,

the proper path is directed by knowing the distinction between two major principles, i.e. *Prakṛti* (matter) and *Puruṣa* (consciousness).

In *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, the first implication of the Sāṁkhya thought is seen. According to the views of Śaṁkarāchārya, there term is used to mean knowledge, " *tatkāraṇaṁ sāṁkhyayogādhigamyaṁ iti vaidikameva tatra jñānaṁ dhyānaṁca sāṁkhyayogaśabdābhyāṁ abhilapyete*".[3] Even in *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā*, the word *sāṁkhya* is used and the commentators, Śrīdharasvāmī and Rāmānuja have explained it as cognition of self (*ātmatattva*) or absolute cognition, "*samyak khyāyate prakāśyate vastutattvamanayā iti saṁkhyā samyagjñānaṁ, tasyāṁ prakaśamānamātmatattvaṁ sāṁkhyamiti*". Śrīdharasvāmī opines that in this context, the word *sāṁkhya* is used in the sense of Sāṁkhya philosophy.[4] It is his view that the actual meaning of the term *saṁkhyā* is the cognition of self distinguished with the concept of the difference between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. It can be added furthermore that though in *Carakasaṁhitā* the word *sāṁkhya* is used to mean profound knower or a person who is able in medicine but the word is used to denote Sāṁkhya thought in some places also.[5]

From the above discussion it is clear that many ancient scriptures of India, such as, *Mahābhārata, Charakasaṁhitā, Manusaṁhitā*, *Bhāgavad Gītā* are all replete with mention of Sāṁkhya. Thus it cannot be refuted that the spread of Sāṁkhya Philosophy was wide from very ancient times. However there is vast difference between the views of Sāṁkhya mentioned in *smṛti-itihāsa* and that we find in later Sāṁkhya scripts. In all those sources, Kapila stands out as the most popular proponent of Sāṁkhya philosophy, though there are doubts about his identity and time. Though the names of Āsuri and Pañcaśikha are found as his disciples but no books written by those two are available. At present the oldest book of Sāṁkhya is *Saṁkhyakārikā*, written by Īśvara Kṛṣṇa. It is a notable feature that unlike other philosophy, Sāṁkhya does not maintain the traditional well organised form.

It is often seen that in case of other schools of Indian philosophy, the sūtragrantha is regarded as the oldest one. The examples of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika can be considered in this regard. But clearly Sāṁkhya departs from this tradition.

The scholars hold this opinion that Kapila's *sūtragrantha* was prepared in 14th century A.D. it is also validated by the fact that the literary works written before 15th Century of other schools of Indian philosophy has never mentioned Kapil's *Sāṁkhyasūtra*. Śaṁkarācārya's commentary on *Brahmasūtra* makes mention of Sāṁkhya but the views expressed there are distinctly different from the views of *Sāṁkhyasūtra*. Also, two most eminent commentators of *Sāṁkhyasūtra*, Aniruddha and Vijñāna Bhikṣu wrote their commentaries in the later part of 15th Century. From these discussions we can say that the time gap between the views of Sāṁkhya as depicted in the *Carakasaṁhitā* (78B.C.) and views expressed in *Saṁkhyakārikā* is more than 200 years. Also the time-gap between *Sāṁkhyakārikā* and *Sāṁkhyasūtra* is more than 1000 years. Hence it is not hard to accept that there should also be changes in the thought-process as well as in perspectives that are reflected in those two books. An effort will be made to identify those changes in the following part of our discussion.[6]

I

In Saṁkhyadarśana, twenty five principles (*pañcaviṁśati tattva*) are accepted. Among them two ultimate principles (*para tattva*) are acknowledged by the Sāṁkhya scholars and they are *Prakṛti* (matter) and *Puruṣa* (conscious self). In *Saṁkhyakārikā*, *prakṛti* is often expressed as *Avyakta* and *Puruṣa* as *Jña*, "*tadviparitaḥ śreyān vyaktāvyaktajñavijñānāt*". In the eleventh *kārikā* of *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, the characteristics of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* have been discussed in an interesting matter.

Triguṇamavivekī visayaḥ sāmānyamacetanaṁ prasavadharmī/

Vyaktaṁ tathā pradhānaṁ tadviparītastathā ca pumān.[7]
(*Sāṁkhyakārikā*, verse-11)

Here we see that all the qualities mentioned in the verse are adjectives of *Prakṛti* and the consistent of the opposite attributes is *Puruṣa*. Now the question arises whether the same characteristics are notable in the oldest sources (such as *Carakasaṁhitā* or *Mahābhārata*) or there are some other kinds of that. In the following section, we will discuss about that.

In *Carakasaṁhitā*, six categories of element are recognized. They are *pañcabhūta* (five core elements of creation) and *cetanā* (consciousness). There the *cetanā* is mentioned as *Purūsa*. Moreover we also find a list of twenty four main principles of creation (*tattva*). They are –ten senses, mind, five kinds of objects cognized by senses, five elements, *ahaṁkāra* (self-sense), *mahat* (intelligence) and *prakṛti* (matter). It is significant that *Puruṣa* does not exist in that list. The famous commentator of *Carakasaṁhitā*, *Cakrapāni* says that "*Prakṛtivyatiriktancodāsīnāṁ puruṣamavyaktatvasādharmyāt avyaktayāṁ prakṛtaveva prakṣipya avyaktaśabdenaiva gṛḥṇāti''*. [8] It means that the unmanifested quality of *Prakṛti* is also a quality of *Puruṣa*, consequently both *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* are expressed here by the term *Prakṛti*. From this discussion, can we reach to this decision that in the oldest form of Sāṁkhya, *Prakṛti* hold a position of prominence than *Puruṣa*? Or we can say it another way that in the previous stages of Sāṁkhya, matter was chosen over consciousness in case of creation.

In *Sāṁkhyakārikā* we find that two main forms of *Prakṛti* , *vyakta* (manifested part) and *avyakta* (unmanifested part) are recognized. In tenth *kārikā* (verse) of *Sāṁkhyakārikā*, the exclusive characteristics of *vyakta* and *avyakta* are explained in this way,

" Hetumadanityamavyapi sakriyamanekāśritaṁ liṅgaṁ/

Sāvayavaṁ paratantraṁ vyaktaṁ viparītamavyaktaṁ".[9]
((*Sāṁkhyakārikā*, verse-10)

It is stated earlier that in the 11th *kārikā*, *vyakta's* characteristics were described in a detailed way but we find that *avyakta's* qualities are never explained. We have to take a glance to *Carakasaṁhitā* to find an answer of this. There these two parts *vyakta* and *avyakta* are mentioned. There the manifested part of the creation (*vyakta*) is mentioned as *Kṣetra* and the unmanifested portion (*avyakta*) is called *Kṣetrajña*. Renowned philosopher S. N. Dashgupta opines that the unmanifested part of *prakṛti* and consciousness (*cetanā*) is synonymous there. Also in the *Mokṣadharma* part of *Mahābhārata*, it is told that the ultimate principle (*paratattva*) is not manifested and it is called as *Puruṣa*.

Contextually a question arises here that in the older stages of Sāṁkhya, was there a single principle namely *avyakta* which was actually an amalgamation of matter and consciousness, i.e. *prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*? To find an answer of this question we may try to look at the theories of Tantra because many scholars have stated that in the earlier stages of Sāṁkhya philosophy, Tantra has played a great part of influence in it. In a similar way with Sāṁkhya, Tantra has accepted two main principles, *Śiva* and *Śakti*. In some particular texts of Tantra, the importance of *Śakti* is found whereas in other texts of Tantra, we see that *Śiva* is given much more significance than *Śakti*. But we have to admit that mostly the impact of *Śakti* is greater there and it is acknowledged there as root-cause of this world. In Tantra, the term *prakṛti* is used as a synonym of *Śakti*. Though it is used as a synonym of it, still it will not be proper to accept that. The reason is, in Tantra, *Śakti* is described as active, qualified with certain qualities and conscious. On the contrary, *prakṛti* is also skilled with three qualities and active but it is never considered as conscious. Interestingly, Tantra has described *Śiva* as both qualified (*saguṇa*) and unqualified (*nirguṇa*) with qualities. Here we find some kind of similarities with the views of *Carakasaṁhitā* and *Mahābhārata* as described before. Finally it is important to note that in Tantra, *nirguṇa Śiva* (unqualified consciousness)is described as different from *prakṛti* (matter) but *saguṇa Śiva* is identified there as *prakṛti* or*Śakti* and referred as *avyakta* (unmanifested one).[10]

Mahābhārata reflects three kinds of opinion regarding the principles of Sāṁkhya. According to the first opinion, the total number of principles of creation is twenty four. There *Puruṣa* is not mentioned separately but it is a part of *avyakta* or sometimes even synonymous with it. In the second opinion, the number of those principles is twenty five. Here it is seen that both *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* are regarded as two different principles. The third view states about twenty six principles and here *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* are distinct and apart from them there is also mention of *Īśvara* (God). According to Dr. S.N. Dashgupta, this is actually an effect of Yoga philosophy. Similarly in *Śāntiparvan* of *Mahābhārata*, we see that there is mention of Nārāyana (Hindu God of Creation) along with *avyakta* or *puruṣa* while describing the theory of creation. Moreover, the characteristics of *Puruṣa* are attributed in the description of Nārāyana. Thus it can be conferred that in the early stages of Sāṁkhya philosophy, the predominant stress was laid on *Prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* comes subtly often as a part of *avyakta* or often as a synonymous term of *avyakta*.[11]

II

In later stages of Sāṁkhya, the manifested (*vyakta*) and the unmanifested (*avyakta*) part of *prakṛti* were recognized and their similarities were also shown but *Puruṣa* was never made a part of the *avyakta*. Later *avyakta* and *prakṛti* was made identical and gradually the attributes of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* were separated in a distinguished way. In the following period of time many commentators were influenced by the views of Vedānta and Yoga and as a result of that and they presented *Prakṛti* as *avidyā* or *māyā*. At that time, *Puruṣa* also becomes similar with *Ātmā*. But their interpretation cannot be accepted because according to Vedānta philosophy, *Ātmā's* singularity (*ekatva*) is recognized. But in Sāṁkhya doctrine, *Puruṣa's* plurality is mentioned by scholars. Again, it would also be incorrect to say that *Prakṛti* and *Avidyā* or *Māyā* is same. The reason is, *Prakṛti* is the root cause of the world and is not perishable but the scholars of Vedanta have admitted that when *tattvajñāna* or *brahmajñāna* (absolute cognition) arises, then *Māyā* or

Avidyā is destroyed. So the difference between *Prakṛti* and *Avidyā* or *Māyā* is quite clear.

Many scholars who are influenced by the western thought have stated that in the early stages, Sāṁkhya was actually a materialist doctrine. In a primitive state, *Prakṛti* was the main principle and *Puruṣa* was included as a principle in the doctrine after a long time. These scholars opine that the word *Puruṣa* depicts soul or consciousness or the conscious soul and in their view *Prakṛti* is nothing but matter. In this regard, they even quote an adjective, i.e. '*jadāṁ'* which denotes unconscious part of matter. Here a question arises that if *prakṛti* is nothing but unconscious matter then how it is possible to accept *Mahat* (intelligence) as an effect of *Prakṛti*? We will try to solve it later.

According to renowned scholar Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, since early Sāṁkhya emphasizes greatly on *Prakṛti* and *Prakṛti* was more prominent than *Puruṣa* then it can be inferred that it reflects that matriarchal social system of that period. In a matriarchal society, men are rather passive or somehow indifferent compare to the role of women. The actual cause of his perception is that two terms, *udāsīna'*(indifferent) and '*akartṛbhāva'* (passive) are used as adjectives of *Puruṣa* in Sāṁkhya. Moreover, the colloquial meanings of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* are women (sometimes nature also) and men. Prof Chattopadhyaya has somehow related these terms '*udāsīna'* or '*akartṛbhāva'* to *Puruṣa* from his own perspective. But it is our opinion that this view of Prof. Chattopadhyaya is over simplistic in nature.[12]

Lastly, we revert back to our previous question that from a modern perspective what would we understand by the two terms *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*? What is their actual meaning? We would like to refer the opinion of Acharya Brajendranath Seal in this aspect as it is proper and commendable. According to him *Prakṛti* is the main and the essential element of the manifested world. However *Prakṛti* itself is not manifested and it contains three qualities—1) *sattva* (essence) 2) *rajas* (energy) and 3) *tamas* (mass). According to him, essence contributes to produce knowledge and it is the main quality of manifestation. Rajas or

energy promotes interest in work and *Tamas* is matter whose manifestation is momentum and it creates obstacle to expression and work.

In the concluding part of this discussion it may be said that *Prakṛti* is the agglomeration of knowledge, actions and obstacles. None of any these three alone can be attributed as the whole characteristic of *Prakṛti*. So it would be wrong to state that *Prakṛti* is nothing but matter. On the other hand if we accept that *Prakṛti* is a culmination of all of these three, then we can easily accept that *Mahat* i.e. intelligence is a formation of *Prakṛti*. For the meaning of the term *Puruṣa*, modern scholar's versions are quite acceptable. The term *Puruṣa* may be explained as individual consciousness which is nothing but pure essence or individual self qualified with consciousness. Some scholars also suggested that the idea of *Jīvātmā* (individual self) as depicted by other schools of Indian philosophy is similar with the idea of *Puruṣa* but it requires another elaborate as well as analytical discussion.[13]

End-Notes:

1. *Bhāratīya Darśan: Āstik o Nāstik Prasthānasamūha*, p. 81-82.
2. See *bhāṣya* of *Yogasūtra*. 2, *pātañjala darśan* , p.6.
3. < >, 5.7 and 5.8.
   See the commentary of Śrīdharasvāmī of *Śrīmadbhāgavadgītā* , *śloka* 5.4 and 5.5.
4. < >, p.217.
   < >, 222-223.
   < >, verse-11.

   AHistory of Indian Philosphy, p.213, see the footnote.

5. < >, verse-10.
   Sāṃkhyadarśaner bibaran, p.71-73.
6. See end-note 5.

7. *Lokāyata Darśana,* Vol.2, p.118.
8. *Positive sciences of Ancient Hindus*, see the discussion regarding Sāṃkhya philosophy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. *A History of Indian Philosophy,* Surendranth Dasgupta, Vol.1*,* reprint, Motilal Banarsidas Private Limited, Delhi, 2004.

Joyous Communication

Author:
Tony Samara

How can we honestly express ourselves when we fear that others will think less of us?

How can we be true to our heart when we fear the reactions of those that we would like to be truthful to?

This is a perfect time to be conscious of a new way of dealing with old situations that no longer serve a purpose in just a few new, simple steps.

"Respond with sensitivity and human warmth to the hopes, and communications of all. Such kindness, can change your life forever."

- Tony Samara -

There is no purpose in creating fear or anger within ourselves or others.

There is no purpose in bringing our heart to a space where joy and light fade into the mundane disappointments and disillusionments that are inevitable when we go down a well-trodden path that leads to nowhere.

However, there *is* a purpose to practice what it means to be free and conscious.

The purpose being that we give less of who we are to the old and move forward to a space that is uniquely in this moment, by focusing on the joy and

freedom of what it means to be conscious of the parts of ourselves that make us uniquely human.

We need to be clear that the old burden no longer needs to be our paradigm, but rather that we have a focus on birthing the new light forever inside of our heart.

Imagine making everyone joyous by changing the structure of confrontational situations!

Some people do not like it when people confront them, or when there is a situation that requires a confrontation as the best way to proceed, and prefer to run away from all such issues.

Instead of looking at confrontation as a challenge that will cause pain, and therefore continuing to practice old ways of avoiding the issue, we can utilise our heartfelt communication in a new way.

Choose to take a deep breath, relax all the muscles in the body and focus on the love and consciousness that comes from the space of being in this moment.

Choose harmonious consciousness, rather than get caught up in the ideas of pain, which are simply based on belief systems from the past, and ideas of possible painful futures, rather than the unique presence of this actual moment.

Joyous communication is the way.

With every aspect of communication, express the joy of what it means to be able to move through this wonderful lesson to a space that brings us closer to the joy of being in deep communication with other wonderful human beings.

Instead of pretending nothing is wrong, or escaping into old patterns and belief systems, which often blow things out of proportion, there are some easy steps we can take to transcend our old selves.

The first step is to completely center ourselves, without uttering any words.

Take a few deep breaths and calm your body into a normal, relaxed state. Take a few moments to analyse what it is that the body is actually feeling in this moment. Notice especially the shoulders, the jaws, the thighs, and the mouth. If they are not relaxed, take a few more moments to consciously feel that these parts of the body are engulfed with the warm sensation of love.

The next step is to observe what the communication is really about. Most of us get caught up in the feelings that are triggered by a communication and hence communicate from the feelings that are triggered, rather than the actual communication. This is called projection, and such communication asks others to react to our projection, as in this way, we can continue a vicious circle of understanding our pain rather than finding freedom and consciousness in each situation.

This may mean dropping criticism, judgment, subtle provocations and sarcasms, expectations, blaming, causing pain or whatever mechanisms, which we normally use to become the pain.

When we are in this free space of observation, we can create thinking that becomes more intelligent and better able to express our deeper communications, which always contain love, compassion, joy and kindness.

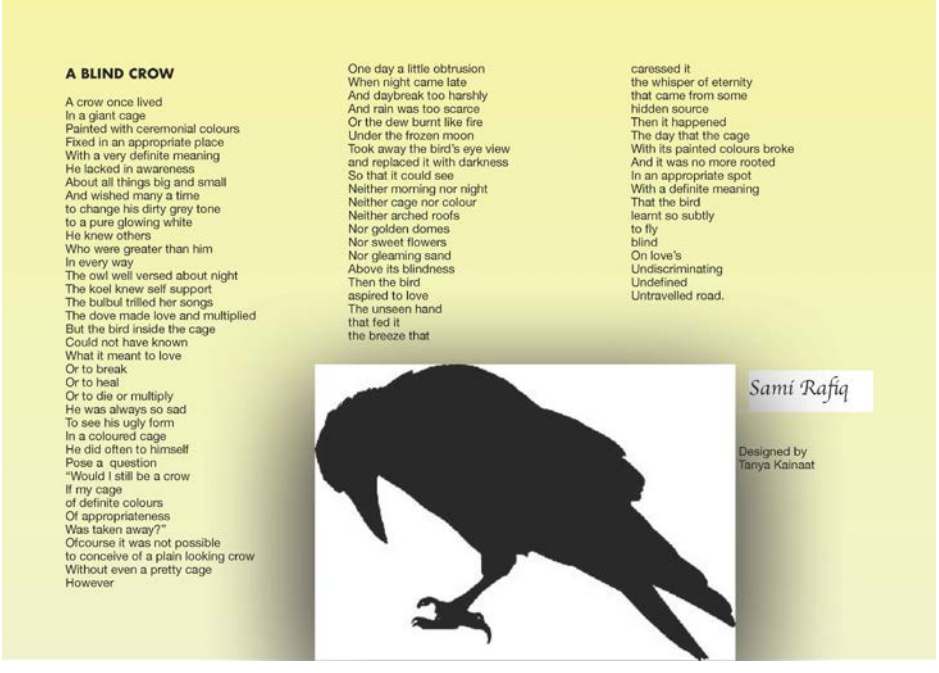
Trust and connect with this depth of consciousness and express and affirm in a positive way, what is wanted from this depth rather than what is not wanted. Make sure that the affirmations are not demands and that they create a space of open embracement that allows everyone to feel the joy of this communication.

Make sure that all communications give rather than take, as giving only comes from a space of abundance and consciousness. From such actions we are giving ourselves opportunities that only come when we are able to hear the wisdom, not only in ourselves but in all that is around.

What a wonderful reality to affirm in all our communications so that every aspect of life becomes more real, more human and more full of compassion for ourselves and all living beings.

Poem - A Blind Crow

Author:
Dr. Sami Rafiq



This presentation of the poem designed by Tanya Kainaat

A crow once lived
In a giant cage
Painted with ceremonial colours
Fixed in an appropriate place
With a very definite meaning
He lacked in awareness

About all things big and small
And wished many a time
to change his dirty grey tone
to a pure glowing white
He knew others
Who were greater than him
In every way
The owl well versed about night
The koel knew self support
The bulbul trilled her songs
The dove made love and multiplied
But the bird inside the cage
Could not have known
What it meant to love
Or to break
Or to heal
Or to die or multiply
He was always so sad
To see his ugly form
In a coloured cage
He did often to himself
Pose a question
Would I still be a crow
If my cage
of definite colours
Of appropriateness
Was taken away?"
Of course it was not possible
to conceive of a plain looking crow
Without even a pretty cage
However

One day a little obtrusion
When night came late
And daybreak too harshly
And rain was too scarce

Or the dew burnt like fire
Under the frozen moon
Took away the bird's eye view
and replaced it with darkness
So that it could see
Neither morning nor night
Neither cage nor colour
Neither arched roofs
Nor golden domes
Nor sweet flowers
Nor gleaming sand
Above its blindness
Then the bird aspired to love
The unseen hand
that fed it
the breeze that
caressed it
the whisper of eternity
that came from some
hidden source
Then it happened
The day that the cage
With its painted colours broke
And it was no more rooted
In an appropriate spot
With a definite meaning
That the bird
learnt so subtly
to fly
blind
On love's
Undiscriminating
Undefined
Untravelled road.

Our Contributors

Azeemi, Aneela is the Executive Director of a non-profit organization in Islamabad, Pakistan called “Sufi Awakening” rendering services to humanity by spreading the message of universal peace and love through spiritual education and meditative practices. In the last 12 years she has hosted weekly and monthly meditative gatherings including class room lectures for different groups to foster healthy and positive communities.

Aneela’s focus is to help humanity through self-awareness and values based education centered on love and compassion affirming the principle of unity in diversity, the only antidote to the evil of hate and terror.

Aneela’s educational background includes degrees and diplomas in psychology, law, social studies, gender studies, public administration, local government and leadership management.

Dey, Dr. Debamitra, M.A., Ph.D., had her graduation and Masters from Jadavpur University. She was awarded University Gold Medal and prestigious Gourinath Sastri Gold Medal for being topper in both courses. Moreover, she was awarded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development of Government of India for her academic brilliance. Further she joined Department of Sanskrit as a Junior Research Fellow and later promoted to the post of Senior Research Fellow. She taught at Lady Brabourne and Bethune College. Currently she is working as Head of the Department, Department of Sanskrit, Durgapur Government College, West Bengal Education Service. She has presented many papers at National and International conferences as well as chaired various

sessions. Till date she has penned four scholarly books and published her articles are in many national and international journals of repute.

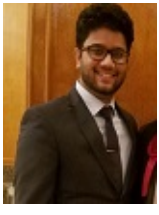
Dubey, Rajendra Narain. (b.1938) Educated in mathematics and civil engineering. With early education in Bihar, India, he was awarded a Ph.D. in civil engineering by the University of Waterloo in Canada. Dr. Dubey's interest in spirituality and Indian Philosophy began in 1977 under the guidance of his guru, Brahmarishi Vishwatma Bawra. He translated two of his guru's books from Hindi into English and is a founding member of Spiritual Heritage Education Network Inc.

Kainaat, Tanya is studying in High School. She is a budding writer.

Dr. Atif Khalil is an Associate Professor at the University of Lethbridge's Department of Religious Studies where he teaches courses on Islamic theology, mysticism, art and world religions. His main area of research lies in Sufi thought, with secondary interests in comparative mysticism, inter-religious relations and medieval philosophy. His articles have appeared in Studies in Religion, the Journal of Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations, Sacred Web, the Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies, Philosophy East and West, and the Muslim World. He is also the author of the forthcoming book, Repentance and the Return to God in Early Sufism. In the summer of 2016, he is scheduled to hold the Ken'an Rifai Distinguished Professorship of Islamic Studies at the Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies at Peking University in China.

Modell, Stephen M. Research and Dissemination Activities Director – Genomics at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. Co-editor of the journal Ultimate Reality and Meaning: Interdisciplinary Studies in

the Philosophy of Understanding (University of Toronto Press). Training in philosophy, medicine, and clinical research design. Dr. Models co-teaches the Health Management and Policy course “Issues in Public Health Genetics.” His work focuses on applying community-based methods to public understanding of science and genetics and the evaluation of such efforts. These projects have impacted diverse educational (middle school to general public), racial-ethnic, and religious denominational groups. Dr. Modell has a strong interest in the philosophical and religious implications of genetic developments and associated areas including aging and healthcare, and in disseminating understanding of the issues posed.



Nasir, Asim is a Business Analyst at a major oil and gas company in Houston. He has a bachelor’s in Supply Chain Management from University of Houston with certifications in Energy Trading and Strategic Sourcing. Asim was born in Kanpur, India and move to Sugar Land, TX (a suburb of Houston) with his family in 2001. In his free time, Asim enjoys long drives, playing basketball, and spending time with his family and friends.

Parmar, Simran: Born in Waterloo, Simran is studying Biomedical Science with a minor in Psychology at the University of Waterloo. He is an executive team member on the University of Waterloo Meditation Explorers Club.

Dr. Sami Rafiq is a professor of English at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India. She is a translator, writer, poet and novelist who celebrates human values.

Sami Rafiq had her education from St. Mary's Convent Naini Tal and Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya, Gwalior. Her undergraduate and graduate studies are from Aligarh Muslim University in India.

She has been a regular contributor of poems, short stories and features to newspapers and journals within India and outside.

Her articles and her novel The Small Town Woman can be read online. She has also translated the poetry collections of Asrarul Haq Majaz and Raghupati Sahay Firaq from Urdu into English.

She has been a regular contributor of poems, short stories and features to newspapers and journals within India and outside. Her articles and her novel The Small Town Woman can be read online. She has also translated the poetry collections of Asrarul Haq Majaz and Raghupati Sahay Firaq from Urdu into English.

She is the founding editor of Cloverleaf: *Journal of Education in Evolvement and All Encompassing Spirituality,* http://cloverleaf.spiritualeducation.org/

Samara, Tony, world-renowned spiritual teacher & author of 16 books, has been sharing deep spiritual work & energy transmission for the evolution of consciousness for over 25 years. Combining meditation, detoxing the body, a plant-based diet & a simple lifestyle, he is best known for how his work touches more deeply than words. http://www.TonySamara.com

Talwar, Shiv. Received his undergraduate degree in civil engineering from the Punjab University, India and his graduate degrees from Lehigh University, USA and the University of Waterloo, Canada. He retired from his career in 1996 and established Spiritual Heritage Education Network Inc. in 2000. He has been serving as its President since its inception. He owes his spiritual education to his parents, his school teachers in India and his mentor, Swami Vishwatma Bawra to whom he is eternally indebted.

SH
EN

All Encompassing Vision