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MUSING MYSTIC MUSINGS: A PSYCHOANALYSIS OF SADHGURU'S INFLUENTIAL
SPIRITUAL DISCOURSES

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ABSTRACT

The written word has the ability to inspire. The stories that we read in the form of anecdotes and poetic prose have the power to challenge our perceptions and shake our belief system. Thus reading books by mystics containing anecdotes and poetic prose in between discourses can have intense implications on the seeker's mind. In the given book by the profound mystic of our times, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, the founder of Isha Foundation, Mystic Musings, a string of questions by his disciples who had enrolled in his spiritual yoga programs and the replies by the mystic has been recorded.

The following paper does not indulge in the psychological study of the seekers' predicament and the solution that they receive. The paper deals with the psychoanalysis of the solutions given. The queries by the seekers are on myriad of topics which range from spiritual to life goals and various other quotidian issues of relationships and workplace concerns. The book falls under the category of Inspirational Literature and aims to inspire through literary terms. In the following paper, an attempt has been made to understand the basis and setting of the answers provided by the master. In lieu of limitations of research papers, only three broad topics have been dealt with. They are Enlightenment, devotion and compassion and treatment of certain animals out of which the first two are the broadest of them all and recurring.

Keywords: Anecdotes, Psychoanalysis, Spiritual, Inspirational Literature

In today's world of rat race where disillusionment, dissatisfaction and depression are common phenomenon, and are endemic and recurrent like common flu; the world needs a panacea. Everybody pops in a pill from time to time whenever we predict the approaching symptoms of imminent lifestyle disorders. In our effort to keep our body working effortlessly, we tend to forget that a healthy mind lives in a healthy body. Keeping a healthy body is difficult due to the unending list of adulterations and pollutants found in our environment that envelops us completely and we are so tangled in the complications provided by them that we become hosts to all sorts of psychological predicaments. Imagine reconciling with your elements to heal naturally just like Hippocrates' ancient approach who has been called the father of medicine in today's world of modern medicine.

Multiple yoga and meditation techniques have been designed by Sadhguru to enhance complete relaxation of the mind and body to activate natural healing. He has combined the ancient techniques to enhance the focus, memory and productivity of the practitioners, relieves their chronic ailments and improves

overall health and imparts a lasting sense of joy, peace and fulfillment. The topic for discussion of the current research paper isn't the psychological and physical benefits reaped by the disciples of Sadhguru but his discourses with his disciples that transgress the physical body and deals with the meta and para –physical. The paper at hand deals with the psychoanalytical criticism of the discourses he has with the seekers and the not the psychological effect it has on them.

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, who has been called a profound mystic of our times in the book *Mystic Musings* which is a collection of words of wisdom of the Master spoken to close disciples over a period of ten years at various occasions and settings. Covering the topics that he seldom addresses otherwise in the public, these words were spoken to foster the growth of those few who had the good fortune of being with him for a long time. He embalms the monotony of the sufferer and provides them poetic solutions in the most amiable way. Short poems by Sadhguru adorn each chapter of the book and Swami Nisarga, a senior swami (celibate apostle) at Isha Yoga Foundation and a former computer specialist from Indian Institute of Sciences writes the brief introductions that follow, as well as the afterword. Here is an example of poetic interlude from the introduction of the book,

'To a disciple who lamented in a poem that he sought to become an eagle in the sky, but only managed to become a hen looking up to the eagle, pat came the reply:

'The hen that you are, how will you know what deceptive ways Grace will descend?'

"It is Grace that brought you here and it is Grace that will deliver"

"I prefer the hen that looks up to the sky than an eagle that flies but always looking down."

"How high is not the Question, but how intense is your longing for the sky."

May you always be in Grace!"

What we see here is that the guru poetically caresses the crushed ego of the seeker/disciple who says that he couldn't achieve his dream of becoming as great as the eagle is taken to be by humans. Instead he belittles upon becoming a hen which is seen to have a rudimentary ego. He hence moans about not being able to rise in ego or in the society. Sadhguru then explains that by being rudimentary in ego he will be able to perceive the grace of god that being of superior ego, he might not be. It was god's grace that he couldn't achieve something that he wanted to but what matters here is the intensity of the longing he has to rise higher.

To another disciple who wanted a reason to follow the master, these verses from a poem by Sadhguru summarize what is typical of Him:

'...I was born like you, I eat like you,
Sleep like you and I will die like you,
But the limited has not limited me,
Life's bondages have not bound me,
As the dance of life progresses,
This space this un-bounded-ness has become
Unbearably sweet,
Become love and reach out
Become Me!'

In many of his discourses to huge gatherings in programs like 'Mystic Eye', 'In the Lap of the Master', and various interviews, Sadhguru has been asked countless times on his being enlightened and its process. Also in the light of the unveiling of proliferated list of sacrilegious godmen and women, many people attendees to such programs are tempted to question Sadhguru's piousness and his sanctity as a master. Hence, to such questioners, he informs poetically that he is not bodily paramount but is not limited to his body. His piety is unbounded by the strings that tie normal human beings as he is enlightened but he calls the normal humans to follow his teachings and be enlightened like him or find the path to enlightenment like him.

1.1 On Enlightenment

What is mesmerizing is the placement and relevance of anecdotes accompanying the answers this teacher provides to the queries of his disciples. They are not necessarily long or elaborate but very apt and precise. Perhaps one of the most frequent queries that consume a seeker's mind are the questions about enlightenment and whether spiritual practices can enlighten them? He tells them that a master is needed to

quicken the process of achieving enlightenment but he can't guarantee it. Having access to the guru is not important as he, as a guru has had initiated more people than he had met in his life. Being with the master is also not easy as he moves you out of your limitations but if the disciple truly incorporates the master's teaching then he can become what he wants in life. To prove that closeness of a master has nothing to do achieving enlightenment; he talks of Ananda Tirtha, the accomplice of Gautam Buddha who never achieved enlightenment despite being close to his master.

'When somebody asked about Ananda Tirtha, who was constantly with Gautama throughout his life and remained unenlightened until the end; when people asked, "This man is with you all the time. Why has nothing happened to him?" In answer, Gautama asks, "Can a spoon taste the soup?"'

(Chapter 2, 'With the One who knows', Page 45)

In another anecdote, he gives an instance from the life of another enlightened being Ramkrishna Paramhansa and his pursuing of his star disciple Naren to the annoyance of other disciples and even his wife. He elaborates that sometimes a potential guru recognizes a raw student in the form of raw diamond and seeks him to make a difference by refining him/her. He says that,

'Ramakrishna Paramahansa [An Ecstatic Saint of the mid-19th century] was deeply attached, or at least it looked like he was deeply attached, to Naren, who was later known as Swami Vivekananda. People around Ramakrishna resented this. Many other people who were always around him, hankered to be with him. Vivekananda was a truant disciple to begin with, overly logical and arrogant. The others were so much more dedicated than he was, but still Ramakrishna sought Vivekananda. Every other day Vivekananda would get angry with Ramakrishna and walk off saying, "I will go back to my college, I have work," and Ramakrishna would go searching for him in the town. This man had never really been in town, but he would go with tears in his eyes, search for him, and then beg him to come back. All the other disciples of Ramakrishna would be deeply offended, "Where is the need for our Guru to run behind some hothead, begging him to come? All of us are here, he can teach us. Why does he go after this fool?" Not only his disciples, but also his wife Sharada was deeply offended. She would ask, "Why Naren all the time? So many people are here, waiting for you. Why do you go after this Naren?" But Ramakrishna knew, without Naren things would not happen. His message would not be taken to the masses. He knew, today these people could be on, tomorrow, they could drop off.' (Chapter 2, 'With the One who knows', Page 45)

To further elaborate how some disciples are different than the others and therefore valued by the master above his/her other disciples despite their jealousy, he mentions King Janaka, who was a Realized being and a disciple of Ashtavakra. Just like Naren, King Janaka was revered by his master making the other disciples question the piety of Ashtavakra. When the disciples asked the master about the basis of differential treatment during a satsang, the master replied that he would come to that later. When the monks ran out to fetch their clothes that were being thieved by monkeys but the king didn't leave the presence of his master when message arrived about his burning palace, the master highlighted the devotion of the king which was above the monks. The monetary worth of the monks' clothes was minuscule in comparison with the king's palace yet the king didn't leave his master's presence.

In his discourses, Sadhguru talks about the cycle of karma and how it can be emptied which is the key to enlightenment. It can be achieved in a variety of lifetimes or just one if only human beings became aware of his action. Awareness, he elaborates is not just alertness on a mental level but on a spiritual level. Awareness that a person has to lose something in order to achieve something, awareness that if you dream to be on the mountain but you are a coconut, you cannot survive on a mountain and awareness that if you are being taken to a mountain where you want to be, the carrier will maltreat you. Depression and suicidal tendencies of our era has an answer in this discourse.

1.2 On Devotion

To a question on differential ways of devotion from times immemorial, he gives examples of the Bhakti Yoga which was the tradition Mira bai who saw god as a partner and others who treated child or kings and even servants. He says that, "They could emote much more easily than they could intellectualize things. They just used their emotions to reach their ultimate nature." He explained how some female saints choose

some male gods as their husband as in India, marriage is evidently an inevitable aspect of a person's life and this was their method of devotion. "The only objective of a devotee is to dissolve into his or her object of devotion. So how they relate to their object of devotion does not really matter."

When a disciple who has been practicing the yoga and meditation formula (known as sadhana) prescribed for complete physical and mental wellbeing as well as for experiencing spiritual bliss, has doubts about his sadhana, Sadhguru talks about hope.

'Where there is hope, there is always fear attached to it about whether it is going to happen or not. When you are hoping for something, when you're looking forward to something happening, the fear or the frustration is waiting just behind...If a person has no hope he is truly blessed, because that person has no fear of failure. Fear of missing out on something is totally not there in a person who doesn't hope...If hope is pushing you, there is an expectation of joy, an expectation of fulfilment, which keeps you going; but as long as hope is there, there is always the fear that it will be shattered.'

(Chapter 2, 'With the One who knows', Pages 58- 59)

Since many people have experienced the divine in myriad ways which is beyond any restrictions of devotion, Sadhguru talks about the difference between experience it with the help of drugs versus with the help of Sadhana. He explains the detrimental effect drugs have on the psychology and chemistry of a person and the ephemeral and destructive nature of the ecstasy produced by them. He says that, "Even before any recording of history happened, people have used drugs on the spiritual path. The *puranas*, mythological texts, say that Shiva himself was the first to use drugs. So it starts from there. Understand that Shiva can contain it, not you." (Page 59) To prove the above statement, he elaborates an anecdote where Shiva drinks gallons of liquor and his disciples follow his example but they get the point when he drinks molten iron and resumes his journey.

1.3 On Compassion for Animals and Importance of Certain Animals

In an interesting question on compassion for the animal kingdom and difference in the reverence of a specific few, he explains that compassion has to be exercised upon every creature big and small. Killing a few animals for food is essential but compassion to them is also mandatory. Sadhguru however explains that in India, killing any and every animal is a criminal offence and stresses on the importance of cows and snakes in India.

'Now the cow is one animal that has human emotions. A cow will shed tears when you have suffering in you. People have very deep relationships with cows in India, and snakes are very sensitive to certain types of energies. Wherever there are meditative situations, or rituals are performed, snakes are drawn there... the snake is at a very significant step in the evolutionary process of the being... It is based on this that in this culture, you are not supposed to kill a snake... Are you aware that a snake always gets a proper burial, like a human burial, because in terms of its being, it is very close to a human being. So killing a snake amounts to murder.' (Chapter 3, 'The Only Bondage', Pages 101-102)

Snakes represent the symbolism of Kundalini which is similar to a snakes coiled stillness and movement and depicts the cosmic energy located at the base of the spine. The word itself means the 'coiled one' and the snakes can sense its energy. Sadhguru explains that every ancient temple that is properly consecrated will have a snake around and he himself is surrounded by snakes. He expresses regret over the negative reputation of snakes in western and Christian tradition because of their debut in Genesis, in Bible. Sadhguru emphasizes that Adam and Eve weren't even aware of their sexual identification and hence there was no possibility of life.

'The snake entered the scene and tempted Eve because he found Eve ... and induced life on this planet...If you believe life on this planet is God's creation, and if the snake has been the agent to induce life on this planet, you tell me whether the snake is the Divine's agent or the Devil's agent (laughs). It must be the Divine's agent, isn't it? Whatever induces life on this planet must be a Divine agent.' (Chapter 3, 'The Only Bondage', Page 102)

Conclusion

These lines by Sadhguru at the beginning of the 1st Chapter, *Seeker's Predicament*, sums up the paper's objective of exploring the discourses he has with the seekers through psychoanalysis.

'From muses and mystics you did hear
Seeming to be the sounds of phantom lands
In ignorance's bind, life-like phantom seems
Oh, creatures of surface, the depths of life will you ever seek.'
(Chapter 1, 'Seeker's Predicament', Page 4)

Sadhguru intends the reader to start a powerful process within, a journey and a pilgrimage into the very core of existence. The topics covered in the book were spoken to foster the growth of those few who had the good fortune of being with him for a long time and have attended the Isha Yoga programs designed by him. Hence in this verse he propounds that people have been hearing about these topics which are spiritual from muses and mystics very much like him and hence phantom as they do not have any lands. He has been merely repeating the words of such muses and mystics himself as the 'you' are bound by ignorance and 'your' life has become a phantom. To this 'you' he addresses as 'the creatures of surface' and asks them if they would ever seek the depths of life, which is on a spiritual level.

The paper has so far analyzed the responses Sadhguru has given to the questions posed by the seekers who were already partakers of his yogic programs and have had or trying to have spiritual experiences. The master has used quotidian examples to exemplify how a common man can attain enlightenment, the varied forms of devotion and how can one choose a form of devotion as well as compassion towards animals and reverence to particular animals. He has not criticized any religion or practice of faith but had quoted the teachings and instances from the life of other spiritual masters such as Ramkrishna Paramhans, Gautam Buddha and Ashtavakra to name a few simply to get the point across. Due to the limited nature of a research paper, substantial research on a colossal scale cannot be done here but the book holds immense potential of further research. In a nutshell, this profound mystic of our times has as a rhetorician and orator weaved magic with the preciseness and jocularity of his anecdotes and poems in responses to his disciples' and interrogators' queries, a collection of which we find in this book.

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