

**Understanding the Real and the Unreal Through Richard Bach's
*Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah***

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ABSTRACT:

Introduction: Men remain mysterious about his existence. The mystery of life and death, happiness or unhappiness, the difference between reality and unreality may perplex man-kind. Modern man is engulfed in mystery. He is not able to distinguish the deceptive nature of the world he is cemented in and the reality. He vacillates between the reality and unreality. These outer appearances seem so real that have attributes of reality.

Discussion: The people are caught up in this mirage of unreality which appears as flecked with many forms and life. The mystery is not solved unless one has an inner urge to find its real nature. This perception of the world which is chased by men hypnotizes and enslaves them. *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah*, first published in the year 1977 encompasses some profound truths of life that inspires millions across the globe. It is a story in which Richard Bach gives an insight into meaning of illusions, the quest of human life, the real and unreal world. The new man is entwined in paradox of two extremes that is the world of duality and non-duality. Man is born in this world and his existence rest on duality which governs his life. The illusion seems to be so potent that appears real to a common man.

Conclusion: The present paper is an attempt to entail some enlightening truths, facts and unveil the mystery about life through Richard Bach's *Illusions*.

KEY WORDS: mystery, real, unreal, existence, illusions, perception

INTRODUCTION:

Richard Bach in *Illusions: The Adventures of Reluctant Messiah*, manifests student-teacher relationship where the student is Richard and the teacher is Donald Shimoda. Donald Shimoda, an advanced soul called as a Messiah, the savior of mankind had delivered thought provoking truths about life which led crowds flock to him in huge number. He quits as a Messiah and leaves people to their own fate as they are only interested in miracles than knowing higher truths that reinforce the idea that everybody has a choice and a freedom to become happy or unhappy. He gave a spiritual flight to Richard. He handed over Bach the Handbook which has no page numbers and opens the page that one is searching for. Bach discusses illusions as: "Listen!" he called across the gulf between us. "This world? And everything in it? Illusions. Richard! Every bit of it illusions! Do you understand that?" (56). When Messiah says Richard that the whole

world is an illusion he looks at him astonishment. He wonders whether the person Roger is not a real man he is seeing, the airplanes, the passengers. He wonders if everything is magical in this world. Richard Bach says:

“Yeah,” was all I could think to say. “Roger on the illusions.” Then they were on him for a ride and it was up to me to find the owner of the field quick and get permission to fly out his cow pasture. The only way to describe the takeoffs and landings the travel air made that day is to tell you that it looked like a fake travel air. As if the plane were really an E-2 Cub, or a helicopter dressed in a travel air costume. Somehow it was a lot easier for me to accept a nine-sixteenths end-wrench floating weightless than to be calm watching that airplane of his lift off the ground with passengers aboard at 30 mph. it is one being to believe in levitation when you see it, it is another thing entirely to believe in miracles.

I kept thinking about what he had said so fiercely. Illusions. Someone had said that before... when I was a kid, learning magic-*magicians* say that! They carefully tell us, “Look, this is not a miracle you are about to see; this is not really magic. What it is, is an effect, it is the illusion of magic.”(56).

The query of Richard Bach could be the query of common man. As Bach says: “If that’s all illusion, Mister Shimoda what is it that is real? And if this life is illusion, why do we live it at all? (64). Everybody wonders what is the reality then? The worldly men see everything through painted glasses; unless the glasses are removed they cannot see the things with clear perception. It is necessary to have a clear view of things if one wants to probe up the veil of unreality. The new age spirituality strives to take men beyond mind, intellect and body. One cannot learn to swim if one takes no pain to learn swimming. If one wants to learn swimming then one must dive into water and experience what it takes to learn. In the same manner one needs to learn from this world though it is transitory, hollow and empty. One must let wisdom shine in the mind to know the real truth hidden behind the illusive world. Life is learning. One is here to gather experiences to know the joy of transcendence. One cannot get a little glimpse of the real world unless one understands and undergoes experiences of this illusive world. The whole world is like a mirage and the individual self is a walker in quest of knowing this mirage.

Osho tries to solve the dilemma of Illusioned men as he suggests:

So remember the second thing; look directly at things as they are. Don’t project, don’t interpret, don’t force your mind upon things. Allow the reality to assert itself, whatsoever it is. This is always good, and however beautiful your dreams they are bad because you are bound on a journey of disillusion. And the sooner you are disillusioned, the better, but once an illusion is gone, immediately you start creating another to replace it. Allow a gap. between two illusions, allow a gap, allow an interval so the reality can be seen. This is very arduous-to look at the reality as it is. It may not be according to your desires. There

is no need for it to be according to your desires. But then you have to live with reality to live in it, -and you are in it! It is better to come to terms with reality than to go deceiving yourself, and you are not aware how you go projecting. Someone says something, and you understand something else. And you base things on your understanding, and then you make a house of cards out of it, you create a palace of cards. It was never said! Something else was meant (24 April, 2019).

The new man is entwined in paradox of two extremes that is the world of duality and non-duality. Man is born in this world and his existence rest on duality which governs his life. The illusion seems to be so potent that appears real to a common man. In sleep one forgets the illusionary world and is at total rest. It is only in the waking state that one identifies with the body and experiences emotions.

The individual soul undergoes the cycle of birth and death before he realizes his true eternal nature. The soul when it takes birth on earth embodied in human form has to play a part or role in between life and death. There may be emotions like pain, pleasure, suffering and happiness in playing the role. These emotions may influence some in the audience whereas others remain untouched by it as they think it is just a movie and it is not real. This can give solace and peace to people who are entwined in suffering when they awaken to the consciousness that life is just a movie.

DISCUSSION

A lack of spiritual insight always caught one in misery. It is body and mind which binds one in fetter. It is a separation from the self that causes all misery. As Kahlil Gibran says: “Verily you are suspended like scales between your sorrow and joy. Only when you are empty are you at stand still and balanced” (37). If one believes that the whole world is like an illusion then why not develop this art of living to acquire a state where one live in complete awareness of true self. Only the enlightened consciousness can propel man kind in new direction. Only the knowledge of the absolute that is non dual can raise one above hurts or pains or happiness or unhappiness. True knowledge shines within the soul.

The question is: how can one endure problems when it falls on human beings? How can one interpret these events in life when it comes in life by chance? How can one reconcile to it without knowing the actual cause? Bach says: “There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its hands. You seek problems because you need their gifts” (57). It is a known fact that one finds the light only after going through the dark. Every problem acts as a growth and furnishes one with experiences. It leads to intellectual growth as well as spiritual growth. It enhances and grows one’s consciousness. It can evoke moral ideals of life like compassion and gratitude. It helps in refining human life. The effects or consequence of any suffering or tragedy lies in individual’s response to a problem or an event. It is only with courage that life’s situation

can be dealt with. When one endures pain and suffering with grit, determination and courage then it takes one beyond the horizon of the temporal world.

A common man needs the will and strength to rise up to the same spiritual heights. Bach says there must occur reciprocation between the disciple and a teacher. When the people are blessed with such a higher soul then should be fit to receive the divine impulse from such a higher soul. As Swami Vivekananda dwells on spiritual growth that takes place between disciple and a Guru as:

That soul from which this impulse comes is called the guru, the teacher, and the soul to which the impulse is conveyed is called the disciple, the student. In order to convey this impulse, in the first place, the soul from which it comes must possess the power of transmitting him, as it were, to another, and in the second place, the object to which it is transmitted must be fit to receive it. The seed must be a living seed, and the field must be ploughed, and when both these conditions are fulfilled, a wonderful growth of religion takes place...These are the real teachers, and these are the real students...When the power that attracts in the receiving soul is full and ripe, the power which answers to that attraction must come (46).

CONCLUSION

People are leading a miserable life in today's world. They are caught up in confusion as they are not able to identify their relationship with the outer world. Unless they make an effort to explore the inner world the outer world cannot be understood. As Bach gives the message through Shimoda's words as: "I wanted to say, for the love of God, if you want freedom and joy so much, can't you see it's not anywhere outside of you? Say you have it, and you have it! Act as if it's yours, and it is! Richard (41). The quest and exploration of oneself can broaden horizon of the self. The study of "Who am I"? is of paramount importance as this awareness pushes one forward to walk the path of Eternity. Of course, there may be rise and fall once the journey is begun. There may spring up feelings of stress and anxiety which may exhaust one's energy. Right order in the world can be established only with right thoughts, feelings and action which should be in sync with supreme energy that influences one's choices and actions. One can attract best situations and circumstances with positive thoughts and opposite by anything negative. It is necessary to heal the inner world and wipe out patches. As Bach reveals: "Every person, all the events of your life are there because you have drawn them there. What you choose to do with them is up to you" (110). In this spiritual walk it is also necessary to walk past the material world. One can retrieve success in this world when one remains detached from its cause and effects. As Bach comments "Negative attachments, Richard. If you really want to remove a cloud from your life, you do not make a big production out of it, you just relax and remove it from your thinking. That's all there is to it." (90). In the course of life one may be afflicted with trauma or loss of loved ones. In such a phase of life one can get a ray of hope from the powerful positive message of Bach as: "What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a

butterfly” (134). It means every end has a fresh beginning. One in spiritual path needs to discover the glory of soul, a Divine spark of God. The learning to discover the true nature of soul takes many lifetimes. As Bach reveals: “You are led through your life time by the inner learning creature, the playful spiritual being that is your real self” (51). Everything shines in this evolved “I”, evolved soul which is above ignorance. As Swami Chidananda clarifies the nature of “I” as:

The statement, “Nothing exists, nothing belongs to me,” dismisses the actuality of all appearances. Once you dismiss the apparent universe and erase it from your consciousness, you turn your attention to yourself, “I am neither mind nor body, I am not the psychological or physical personality. I have no name, no form; immortal self am I. “ In the state of existence that is the non dual state of consciousness, time does not exist. Eternity alone remains-an undivided eternity in which everything is only now. In that now, Being-ness is forever in the present tense. That eternity, that forever-now, is the basis of being. It is the unbroken, continuous stream of consciousness, and that is the basis of your being. It is the substratum upon which, waking, dreaming, sleeping over and over again-come, change and disappear. This cycle of waking, dreaming, sleeping is forever manifesting itself upon that unbroken inner current of eternal consciousness (The Times of India, Feb 2, 2019, p-08).

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