

Journeying towards greater alignment with our 'True Self' (i)



The apples on a tree, they are all the same. Are they? They may feel the same, look the same and even taste the same. However, each apple is different from another. Each apple has a unique story. Each apple has a different place on the tree. If apples on one tree are unique even if they look so similar, how much more, us.

For a start, we look different, sound different and we act different. Beyond these external superficial differences, in the core of each being lies who we truly are. This is our 'True Self'. If we believe in a Creator, this is who we were made to be, who we were meant to be. This is our 'Essence'. This is what makes us truly unique.

What separates us from another is the sum total of how we are innately wired, our values, our personalities, our history, our biology and a whole host of stuff. They include what truly motivate us, what we stand for, what excite us, what disgust us, what we would die for, live for, etc. There may be shades of overlapping in this and that area with this and the other person, but the permutations are endless. Just look at our fingerprints. They may look the same at a glance. Yet at close scrutiny, clear

and unique differences show up.

Besides being wired uniquely, we are also created to exist in communities. We actualise our True Self in the contexts of relationships and communities. We seek out emotional connections from the day we were born. We have emotional needs. We desire intimacy in relationships. We want to be loved unconditionally, to be accepted for who we are and to belong, to be part of a community.

Unfortunately in a fallen world, this is usually where our true self suffers our first setback; in our family of origin, our first community. The significant adults in our lives; our parents, are usually limited in their capacity to offer us what we emotionally need. They are likely to be emotionally deprived themselves, limited in self-awareness, much less have awareness of our emotional needs. They are also often too preoccupied with demands of life to meet our emotional needs. This leads to our emotional void. We subconsciously protest against this lack. Our protests are dismissed as childish tantrums. They are frowned upon. The fear of losing the affection or approval of our parents looms over our needs. Our instinct for survival kicks in. Unconsciously, we repress our emotional needs for the sake of self-preservation. We adapt ourselves to the emotionally impoverished environment. Over time, adapted versions of ourselves begin to emerge.

This 'adapted version of self' will inevitably carry shades of self-doubt, insecurities, self-preservation, fear of man, fear of losing control etc. For some of us, this 'adapted version of self' loses the ability even to connect with our true emotions and our true self. A misalignment has taken place.

Connect-Point

Every one of us suffers from this 'misalignment' to varying degrees. We sometimes catch ourselves doing things that we feel appalled by or ashamed of. In more serious cases, we are perpetually feeling empty or plagued by a feeling that our lives could be better or different. Or we may feel a sense of 'stuckness'. We do not cope well. We make choices that we hate. We cannot get out of the rut. Our lives do not line up with our values and true beliefs. We may believe in staying healthy and yet cannot kick our smoking habit. We value relationships, but find ourselves running away from them all the time.

Call them bad habits, unhealthy coping behaviours, subconscious default mode of operation, poor judgement, lack of wisdom, poor self-management, conditioning or whatever, the source of these signs of misalignment is the same. The root of the issue *is in our brain*. More specifically, what happened in our brain from since our 'adapted version of self' evolved.

Built into our being, besides the emotional needs we mentioned, is also the need to make sense of all we experience. When our emotional needs were unmet, our 'immature self' form wrong beliefs such as: 'I cannot be a person of worth if my needs are ignored and dismissed'. We entertain these thoughts and beliefs of the same theme over and over again. With the brain's efficiency, this constant reinforcement of thought patterns becomes hardwired. The brain begins to automatically generate messages of the same theme, whether it be rejection, fear, shame etc even without our consciously thinking about them. These messages assume a certain power of its own. They drive our behaviour. They make us operate, for instance, out of striving to *prove* (our worth), *protect* (ourselves from further pain), *perform*, seek *perfection* (to earn approval) and *people-please* (to be accepted). Without realising it, we follow whatever is hardwired in our brains to where it wants to take us.

The brain is an inanimate organ. The brain does what it is created to do in the best way it knows how to. Our brain is not us. We are not our brain. In fact, we are its master. It is meant to work for us. Herein lies the hope of change; the hope of aligning ourselves more with our true self. If what



was hardwired into our brain is taking us down a path which we do not want to continue going, we can choose to change the path by altering the hardwiring. Someone rightly said, 'We cannot change something we are not aware of. We cannot make choices if we do not know about the options that exist.' If we become more aware of the automatic messages and where they take us to, if we know of other paths, if we can understand how the hardwiring of the brain comes about, we can attempt to bring about some re-wiring. (*next article*).

Having said that, we have to be realistic. To rewire years of hardwiring and change the way we have been operating in our second nature will mean hard work. It puts us in unfamiliar territories.

Our immaturity, our lack of understanding, took the 'adapted version of self' down the misguided path. We can now choose to acknowledge that. We can determine to take a different path or we can give in to our fears and stay with the familiar. Making such a choice is the privilege of adulthood. Having the courage to choose greater alignment is the hallmark of maturity.

The goal is not complete alignment. No one can or will claim to have arrived at completely aligning themselves with their true self. The aim is to begin the journey. At some point, the change within us will be evident. We will know we have embarked on the right path. We will know we have come home to ourselves. We will be more at peace with ourselves, with others and with the world at large.

Contact Us

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