

THE POWER OF UNIVERSE

LAW OF ATTRACTION, AURA & OTHER MYSTERIES



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WITH COMMENTARY BY DHRUV RATHEE

Foreword

I never really thought about questioning the 'Law of Attraction'. After all, I got what my heart desired. As a teenager, I wished to become a successful YouTuber. And now my dream was fulfilled. But was it because of my hard work or was it because I asked the universe to fulfil this deep desire of mine? To be honest, I had tried both ways. Many books and movies had convinced me that this would work. Now, I could easily go on to claim that manifesting desires and harnessing the power of the universe really work. Much like many other celebrities who have attributed their success to some supernatural power, it would be easy for me to push this idea further and give hope to millions of people. But it would also be doing grave injustice to the truth.

Somewhere inside my head, I always had doubts. How could it really work? What scientific or logical basis does this concept have? A convenient answer to these questions could be - this is beyond science. There are so many things in the world that our current scientific advancements cannot explain, and this is just one of those things. But is it really? Surely, it must make some logical sense at least. Are all our minds connected to some higher power in the universe? A higher power that can influence random events to occur coincidentally in just the right way to benefit us? But then, what about people with conflicting desires-who gets precedence? That about a terrorist who asks the universe for help in carrying out deadly attacks for his misguided ideology? Does the universe assist only the good virtuous people, or does it also help those with malevolent intentions? What about a corrupt politician who seeks the universe's assistance to win an election? Will the power of the universe help him in his malafide intentions?

Vijeta offers some uncomfortable answers through the book. Hence, I urge readers to approach it with an open mind. It's challenging to let go of deeply held beliefs, especially the comforting thought that there's a force in the universe looking out for us.

Realizing that this might not be the case can be shocking, but it's important to face these truths. However, this doesn't mean that all hope is lost. I want to caution our readers not to feel disheartened either. In fact, I believe that true freedom, happiness and progress in our lives can only be achieved after this realization.

While this book debunks certain pseudosciences, it does outline the benefits of spirituality, positive thinking and a proactive mindset. Numerous psychological studies have demonstrated that a positive attitude can significantly influence our lives by shaping our interactions and choices. However, it's crucial to move beyond the egocentric belief that 'I am the center of the universe' or that the universe has a wild interest in my individual life. Recognizing what is within our control and what isn't is a vital step towards better managing our lives. Hope you find this book as eye opening and enjoyable as I did.

- Dhruv Rathe

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The universe conspires for you? - 'The Alchemist' by Paulo Coelho tells us in a prophetic tone that when you want something, the whole universe conspires in order for you to achieve it. Later on, this was used as a dialogue in the Shahrukh Khan-starrer 'Om Shanti Om'. They added a condition that if you desire something 'with all your heart', then the whole universe starts trying for you to reach it.

This is just what people needed. The signals that you receive from nature. And a magical trick to harness the power of the universe for your own benefit. At the end of 'The Alchemist', Santiago finds his treasure. And the writer of the novel also got the treasure. The novel broke all records of sale.

In the film 'Om Shanti Om', Om takes rebirth in a rich household. He becomes a superstar, wins awards, is united with his ladylove in her rebirth. The film was a super hit, and the makers of the film also minted treasure at the box office.

Lack of burning desire? - But did you get any treasure? Whatever you desired with all your heart, did you get it? Or did you desire nothing with all your heart? When all this doesn't work for people, they end up questioning themselves that probably, their desire did not have the requisite conviction. Maybe their desire was not such a burning desire. But think of it.

I want food - All those people starving with hunger, living in misery, does their heart hold no sincere desire to emerge out of poverty?

Wishing you a speedy recovery - People have their sick relatives in the hospital. Do they not want with all their heart that their relatives may get well soon. But do the hospitals not see deaths?

Dreams of stardom - Lakhs of people leave their comfortable household and reach the city of dreams Mumbai in the hopes of being a superstar. They live a life full of struggles there. They live holed up in a rickety apartment in an expensive city. They get pushed around in long queues for auditions.

Obviously they have a desperate desire to be a superstar. Or else why would they take such pains? But how many of them end up being a superstar?

Hungry for power - Many people contest the elections. They do so much of running around. They organize big rallies. Besides these efforts, you can well imagine how much money is drained for all of this. If they do not desire to win the elections with all their heart, why would they take all this trouble? But they lose. On losing, they contest successive elections to register a win. And yet, many of them fail to win again.

Someone is bound to Jose - There are three candidates contesting the elections and all three of them wish to win, but only one of them will emerge as the winner. Why? Because when there are limited slots, some people will win, and others are bound to Jose.

There are two vacancies for a job, but there are a hundred candidates. Let's suppose that 20 of them came to the interview just for fun. Although this is not really a great idea for having fun, yet let's assume that 20 of them are all dressed up for the interview just for fun.

But for the remaining 80, every single cell of their body wants this job. Their survival depends upon it. But there are only two vacancies, and only two people would get the job. Even if the remaining 78 have the same burning desire in their heart.

Ego-centrism pro max - Why did the universe not conspire for all these people? Why did the universe not conspire for you?

Have you ever seen yourself in the mirror? A 5-6 feet tall human; one among 800 crore people in the world; and you want that various galaxies, the whole world, the rivers, the snow of glaciers, waves of the sea, the sand of deserts, the trees of forest, animals and birds, the governments of all nations - all of it should conspire to fulfill your little wish of getting a job or finding a lover?

Has the universe got no other work left to do? To believe in something like this, the person has to be a narcissist of the next level. A person who is a favorite of himself; so occupied with himself, that he is unable to see anything else.

For whose wish did you conspire for - You are also a part of the universe, right? For how many people's desires have you conspired along with the universe? For nobody? But you want everyone to lose their sleep over your desires.

Law of attraction - Australian 'guru' Rhonda Byrne wrote and produced a documentary in 2006. Then she wrote a book 'The Secret'.

She told a secret in the documentary and the book. The 'secret' was beautifully wrapped in pseudo science. This 'secret' saw the egocentrism of imagining yourself to be the centre of universe touching a new high. The secret, Rhonda says, is 'Law of attraction'. Whatever you think about, that is what you'll get. So, surround yourself with the thoughts of that thing.

Law of pseudo-science - Rhonda cites it as law of physics that similar things attract each other. Probably Rhonda bunked her Physics classes at school, because those of us with some basic knowledge of Physics know that like charges repel and opposite charges attract each other. In the same way, North Pole of a magnet attracts the opposite South Pole of another magnet. While similar poles repel each other.

Ask, believe, receive - Rhonda tells three steps.

- Firstly, ask with precision whatever you want. Instead of saying that I want to be wealthy, you have to specify the amount of money you want to earn.
- Then, you have to believe that you have got it. Act as if you have that thing. If you want wealth, then believe that you are rich. If you want to lose weight, then believe that you are fit.

- And the third step is that when the universe gives you that thing, you have to take it. So, the three steps are -Ask, believe, receive.

Victim-blaming - Rhonda goes to the extent of saying that if somebody tells you about their disease, then don't listen to them. Otherwise you also might get that disease. As if this were not shocking enough, Rhonda goes further and says that the people who become a victim of any crime or terrorist attack, it is their mistake itself. How? They must have thought about it some time.

Victim-blaming never got so real. But sadly, readers can digest anything these days. The massive popularity of this book is an evidence of the massive stupidity present in the world. There is an immense lack of scientific temper. Famous TV show Oprah Winfrey had promoted this book on her show without hesitation.

The secret didn't work out for Rhonda - So then, life must be really great for Rhonda, as she can get whatever she wants using her ask-believe-receive 'secret' trick. So, why isn't she the richest person on Earth? Maybe she doesn't want to be the richest person. What does she want?

'The Guardian' published a news item in 20 15 that Rhonda wanted to sell her house for 23.5 million dollar in a real estate sale. But she couldn't manage to do so, and had to reduce the price to 18.8 million dollar. She was asked why her 'secret' did not work. She excused herself saying that she could have sold it for 23.5 million dollar as well, had she given the time and energy for it. But right now, she was busy thinking about other things. Her fans digested this excuse as well.

Secret liquid - The law of attraction is not a discovery of Rhonda Byrne or Paulo Coelho. It has a long history. The story starts with a German doctor Franz Mesmer. In the year 1766, he posited that there is a special kind of liquid between the human body and nature, which is acted upon by the gravitational force of

the planets . In 1755, he negated it himself and now said that it is acted upon by magnet. Thus, 'animal gravitation' got changed to 'animal magnetism'.

He claimed that if there is any obstruction in the flow of this liquid, then the person becomes diseased. That person can be cured by a trained professional, who affects this liquid using a magnet. Such people were called 'magnetizer' or 'mesmerizer'.

Let's probe the claim - In 1784, the king of France Louis XVI set up a royal commission to probe these claims. One of the members of this commission was Benjamin Franklin, who was an American diplomat in France then. Franz Mesmer failed to prove his stuff scientifically in front of this commission. 'Animal magnetism' died a slow death. However, Mesmer's work became the basis for hypnotism. The English word 'mesmerism' is attached with his name.

Cure diseases with your belief - There was a mesmerist in America, who studied and practised 'animal magnetism'. His name was Phineas Quimby. He said that the body is just the house of the mind, and any disease actually occurs from the mind itself . According to him, the reason for this were the presence of a wrong belief in the mind. The cure suggested by him was to open the mind to the wisdom of God. He said that he talks to people, and also replaces their wrong belief with truth using his mind. This is what cures the diseases.

This roguery of treating illness with miracles continues to this day. It was vividly depicted in the Malayalam film 'Trance' directed by Anwar Rasheed. If you like non-fiction, then you could watch many videos on YouTube where bogus baba of various religions are seen doing magical cure of cancer, diabetes and all sorts of diseases.

The thoughtless 'new thought' - The ideas of Phineas Quimby gave rise to the 'New thought' movement. The

Russian mystic Helena Blavatsky was a co-founder of the Theosophical Society. She mentioned 'law of attraction' in her 1877 book 'Isis unveiled'. She let out much frustration on the scientists saying that modern science will have to accept the possibility of miracles.

A detailed form of 'law of attraction' was presented by Prentice Mulford. He was a major figure related to the 'New thought' movement. He wrote a series of essays - 'Your Forces and How to Use Them'. Prentice Mulford also believed that our soul leaves our body during the night and it roams around in various corners of the world.

Other writers of 'New thought' like Henry Wood and Ralph Waldo Trine also wrote about it. According to them, it was not just about curing the diseases, rather it applied to every aspect of life.

Think and Grow Rich - The 20th century saw various books related to it. Napoleon Hill's book 'Think and Grow rich' appeared in 1937. Herein it was described how to convert your desires into wealth.

It was said that the human mind is a form of energy, a part of it being spiritual in nature. When the minds of two people are coordinated in a Spirit of Harmony, the spiritual units of energy of each mind form an affinity. Napoleon Hill also wrote about deciding exactly how much money you wish to make, and then visualizing your life as if you already own this amount of money.

Jesus-powered dreams - Norman Vincent Peale's 1952 book 'The Power of Positive Thinking' tried to give further credence to these whimsical ideas.

Visualize yourself as being successful in your imagination. Speak this line from Bible 10 times everyday that the power which Jesus Christ endows me with, I can achieve anything through it. Repeat 10 times every day that when the Almighty God is with us, then who could be against us. Believe that you are in the hands of God and that you receive power from Him.

Heal your life - In the year 1984, Louise Hay said in her book 'You can heal your life' that having wrong thoughts and beliefs about yourself could lead to migraine, AIDS and eye-related diseases. You can bring in improvements to your body by changing your thoughts. This book was also promoted by Oprah Winfrey.

Catering to the fear of randomness - And finally, we come to where we started. 'The Secret' by Rhonda Byrne. All these books were bestsellers. Think about how much mess has been amassed since the times of Mesmer. And it continues to spread. Why?

Firstly because people are uncomfortable about things that challenge their thought patterns. But if someone appeases their mindset, they love it. This is called confirmation bias.

Secondly, people are so afraid to accept the randomness of the world. It makes them feel anxious to see themselves as a tiny straw in an unstructured world. What comforts them is the narcissistic idea that the universe will conspire for them.

How about taking a step - Actual spirituality can help them navigate through the world, but that is demanding; acquiring knowledge and virtues seems like a daunting task. But this 'spiritual' mumbo-jumbo is a false promise, that is comforting.

People do not work upon their individual self, which is in their control. But they try to control things, which are beyond their control. They do not work hard for themselves. Instead, they try to get the whole universe to work for them.

Signals of the universe - Immersed in self importance, they wait for the universe to send them signals. And guess what, they start seeing the signals. How?

Their ego leads them into self-deceit, where random events are picked by them as signals of the universe meant for them. They start to look for deeper meaning in any random event happening around them.

Plans of the universe - A boy and a girl fall in love. They say that we had to meet. Our match was made in heaven. But then, they go through a break-up. If matches are made in heaven, then where are the break-ups made? They do not want to think about it. They struggle to accept the break-up. Then, they meet some other person, and again, they utter the same words. We are made for each other. We had to meet. Our bond is that of seven births. The universe brought us together.

Seeing positive in everything? - The self -deceit induced by the ego also leads people into optimism. Or shall we say - too much of optimism. A girl is getting late to reach somewhere. She has lost her way.

So she thinks that whoever she meet on the next cross-roads, she will ask that person for directions. She finds a boy standing there and asks him the way. And then she goes. The boy starts thinking that today I must be looking really handsome, and that is why the girl asked me instead of anyone else. The people living in such breezy delusions are quick to find patterns in the randomness.

Laws of nature - The only patterns are in the laws of nature, which is simply called science. As you must be aware that science is not based on individual beliefs. When we do scientific experiments, we get empirical evidence of the pattern. It holds true anytime, anywhere and for anybody. For instance. Newton's law of gravitation or Archimedes' Principle of buoyancy.

Apophenia - Finding non-existent patterns in random stuff is called apophenia. It is the basis of conspiracy theories. It is the basis of superstition. The interesting part here is that people easily mock others' beliefs to be superstition, but for their own superstition, they bring in solemn words like faith and belief .

Conditioning - Sociologist B.F. Skinner undertook a significant experiment in this regard, where he showcased superstition among

pigeons. Some hungry pigeons were kept in a large cage. The pigeons started doing different things.

Some grain was put in the cage. Some pigeon was rotating its neck at this time, while some other was pecking its beak on the cage. After this, the grain was put in the cage at regular intervals. But the pigeons connected the grain with their activity when the grain was put in the first time.

So some pigeon started rotating its neck the same way, while the other started pecking its beak on the cage.

When apophenia crosses the line - It is quite normal for all of us to have some amount of apophenia. Finding patterns has long been humanity's survival tactic. In doing so, sometimes we might brush shoulders with apophenia. But if it goes beyond a level, then it could take the form of deadly mental diseases like neurosis and schizophrenia.

People would start hearing their name in random noise. Some people are laughing, and the person gets paranoid that they are laughing on me; they must be back biting about me. Some people would start seeing a conspiracy against them in random happenings. They lose the difference between reality and imagination.

Story of a genius - A famous example is that of the eminent mathematician John Nash. His life has been depicted in the Hollywood film 'A beautiful mind'. When he was a 21-year old student at Princeton University, Nash wrote a 28-page Ph.D thesis on Game Theory. This gave the world a new model of thinking about competitive games, now referred to as Nash equilibrium. Later on, he made important contributions to the fields of differential geometry, real algebraic geometry and partial differential equations. He won the prestigious Abel Prize and also a Nobel Prize for Economics.

Nash non-equilibrium - Then Nash was 31, he had to be admitted to a hospital. He was diagnosed to be suffering from

paranoid schizophrenia, in which a person loses touch with reality. He sees and hears things, which are not there. The disease had found its roots early on when Nash was doing his research.

As a scientist, his work was to search for patterns, but at a time, Nash started searching patterns in total randomness. The tendency of apophenia had started to go to the next level.

He saw patterns everywhere - The movie shows a scene, where he is trying to find an algorithm in the movement of pigeons on the grass. When he was a professor in MIT, he started to see a pattern that some people are wearing red neckties. He felt that they must belong to some secret organization. International organizations are conspiring against him. Some forces are trying to send him code messages from outer space through the 'New York Times'. Chicago University offered him a position, which he refused saying that he was going to become the emperor of Antarctica. During a lecture, he pointed to a photo of Pope John Paul XXIII on the page cover of 'Life' magazine, and said that it was actually him in disguise. He said that he knows this because 23 is his favourite prime number.

Unbound thought - This sounds to be weird that how could a mathematician become prey to such irrational thought. When a friend asked this later, Nash told that the manner in which he got ideas related to mathematics, the ideas of supernatural beings came to him in the same manner. That's why he took them seriously. He used to feel that rational thought limits a person's connection to the universe.

He would not admit that he was sick even after his diagnosis. He told his friend, "Newman, they are not going to let me out until I'm normal, but that'll never be. I never was."

Obstinacy stems from ego - Instead of facts and logic, irrational thought is based on beliefs. Where do the beliefs lie? They lie in our ego. And hence, irrational thought can make someone totally

obstinate. Even when in hospital, Nash refused to concede that there was anything wrong with him. But to get out of the hospital, he started to pretend to be normal as per others. He thought that as he comes out, he could revert to his form. He called this period as an interval of forced rationality.

On a divine mission - In an interview, he told - "In madness, I thought I had a very important role, and, of course, that includes the messenger-type function. That is a Muslim concept particularly with Muhammad. He's the messenger of Allah So I saw myself as being a messenger or having a special function."

Voices in the head - He used to feel that he could receive the message of God by seeing a special number. He would see any major coincidence as a message from heaven. After a time, he began to hear voices in his head. As he felt that people are conspiring against him, he left America and went to Paris. He roamed in Europe evading people. Many a times, he was forcibly brought to the hospital. He was given injections. He would fear that this might alter his mind.

He made people win-win - At this time, game theory had become an important basis of modern economics. It was being used everywhere - international trade, international relations, monetary policy, merger of corporations, negotiations, strikes, auction, farm subsidy and many other fields. In the centre of all of this was Nash equilibrium. But Nash remained oblivious to all of it.

Too much of pressure - What was the reason that a mathematician got trapped in these delusions? Firstly, his mode of thinking might have been a contributory factor. He had said that there is a relation between not thinking normal and creative thoughts. If he would think too normally, then he didn't get amazing scientific ideas. Secondly, he pointed that his illusory thinking "as also related to his lack of happiness and the burning desire to be famous. He was very proud of himself. He had undertaken immense research by the age of 30, but he was lagging behind by his own standards. He was under heavy pressure of himself.

Relax and think rational - In 1970, he stopped taking medicine. His health started improving around 1980. How? By rooting out the causes of the problem. Firstly, his wife Alicia and his supportive friends took him towards a peaceful life. This built a conducive environment for his recovery.

Secondly, he let go of the irrational thoughts. He challenged the concept of hearing voices in one's head and started ignoring them. His friend Harold Kuhn asked him with astonishment that how he recovered. Nash replied, "I willed it. I decided I was going to think rationally."

In 1994, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics with two others for his contribution to Game theory.

Patterns everywhere - Searching for patterns in randomness is the first stage of the mental illness, and then, the mentally ill person tends to be more apophenic.

Stan looking for non-existent patterns in randomness and you may fall mentally ill. When you would be mentally ill, you would see more of such patterns. Apophenia and the resulting mental illness thus form a vicious cycle.

Lucky charms - Well, let's hope that you don't reach any such stage of mental illness. But even the basic level of apophenia is useless. It is true that such people may suddenly feel charged up on seeing random stuff. For instance. His face shines on seeing a shooting star thinking that this is a signal of good luck. Or if he sees his so-called lucky number anywhere. Such a confident and motivated person might actually perform better.

But the downsides of this approach overshadow the feel good factors. Firstly, there is a false sense of hope. And after some time, it bursts like a bubble. If lucky number tickets could actually win people lotteries, then everyone would have been a millionaire by now.

Unlucky spells - Secondly, such people get agitated on seeing equally random things, like a black cat crossing their path or a

crow cawing on their window sill. If one bad thing happens to them, they feel that their bad time has started. They experience a loss of confidence, which spirals into more loss.

Dark web of irrationality - When the 'law of attraction' does not work for people, does the concept lose credibility in people's minds? No. Because a critique is possible only when people use their rational mind. But here, it is an entire realm of irrationality, where the mind is gathering dust in some remote corner. And hence, when this gimmickry doesn't work for people, they feel that they missed out because of their lack of conviction; they must not have asked with precise details; they did not believe in it with all their heart; they could not focus properly while asking the universe for it.

Negative energy - Or maybe they have some 'negative energy' around them, which becomes an obstruction. Maybe there is a problem with their 'aura'. Besides 'law of attraction', these are some other related premium products, which bogus baba showcase in the shelves of their shops. 'Aura', positive energy, negative energy, vibrations.

The moods of water - There is a bogus baba, who says that without changing the chemical composition of water, you can rearrange the molecular arrangement in such a way that the water will behave in a completely different way. Oh wow! Really? And how would we change the molecular arrangement? By applying some magnetic, electrical, mechanical, chemical force? By freezing or evaporating it? Nah!

Bogus baba elucidates that if he would take a glass of water in his hand and look at it in a certain way, then well-being will come to the person drinking it. Whereas if he looks at it in another way, then the person drinking it will fall sick that night.

Magic of your eyes - This reminds me of a song from the 1996 Bollywood movie 'Dastak' - 'Jadoo bhari aankhon wali suno, tum aise mujh e dekha na karo' (O girl with magical eyes, listen. Do not look at me this way). Lyricist Javed Akhtar wrote it as a romantic song where the hero is singing to the heroine. Little did he know that the magic of eyes which he sees as a metaphor today would be claimed as science by some bogus baba two decades later.

Educated yet irrational - The uneducated followers of bogus baba accept this pseudo-science without an ounce of doubt. But bogus baba has got 'educated' followers as well. They also accept it by citing some pseudo-scientific experiments. Unfortunate it is, but school education doesn't necessarily make us rational and logical enough. In many educated people, it is common to see a lack of genuine curiosity and a quest for truth.

Memory of water - Let's talk about an experiment about water memory which is often cited in this case. It is said that a Nobel prize winning scientist has done this experiment. To debunk this, you need not be a scientist. Only curious and sincere enough to do a Google search.

The idea of the memory of water was given by Jacques Benveniste in the late 1980s. Did he win a Nobel Prize? No, he actually won 2 Ig-Noble prizes in Chemistry. Organized by the scientific humor magazine 'Annals of Improbable Research' (AIR), the Ig-Noble Prizes are a parody of the Nobel Prize.

Principles of Homeopathy - Benveniste was a French immunologist. The story of water memory starts with his support of homeopathy, which is an alternative system of medicine developed in the 1790s by a German doctor called Samuel Hahnemann.

- A central principle of the Homeopathic "treatment" is that "like cures like" - that a substance that causes certain symptoms can also help to remove those symptoms.

- A second central principle is based around a process of dilution and shaking called succussion. Practitioners believe that the more a substance is diluted in this way, the greater would be its power to treat symptoms.

Homeopathy is a pseudo-science - Both these principles aren't consistent with long-accepted scientific principles of how the physical world works.

'Zeher zehar ko kaat_tai hai' (poison kills poison) could be a stunning filmy dialogue for a gangster movie, but in the physical world, we see that love cures hate, water puts out fire, and bases neutralize acids. If you accidentally bite onto a hot & spicy green chilli, you don't eat more chilli to soothe its burn, rather you must have some milk.

Similarly, the principle of dilution increasing the curative power is not just pseudo-scientific but even counter-intuitive. If we mix 8 glasses of water in 1 glass of juice, then does that diluted juice feel more juicy or less juicy? You take an anti-pyretic tablet to counter fever. If you experience higher fever, then you take a slightly higher dosage or less dosage? We see in our everyday lives that more of a substance has more of its effect.

Where are the lab trials - Needless to say that effectiveness of homeopathy has not been proven in laboratory trials, and all the evidence in support of homeopathy is nothing but anecdotal evidence and placebo effect. But nevertheless, Benveniste supported Homeopathy.

Avogadro's limit - The puzzle of dilution increasing the potency stood in front of him. There is a concentration below which a solution becomes so dilute that it is unlikely for any of the original molecules to be present in it. This is defined as Avogadro's limit. This number 6.022×10^{23} denotes the number of molecules in one mole.

Many homeopathic remedies are diluted to a much larger extent. For instance, C30, one of the most popular potencies,

for instance, denotes that the 'mother tincture' has been diluted 30 times in a ratio of 1:100. Accordingly, the overall dilution is 1:100³⁰. At such dilution, it becomes unlikely that there's a single molecule of the original substance remaining in the final remedy. In cases like these, homeopathic remedies consist of nothing but water. So, how could they treat? It sounds quite unreasonable.

Unreasonable vital force - Yeah, Homeopathy's founder Hahnemann had himself described an "unreasonable vital force" to be involved here.

Leaving alone scientific language, he took to Shakespearean language to describe it thus - "The unreasoning life-force, this unintelligent vital force, this blind guide, crude, unreasonable, automatic vital energy cannot, like a skillful surgeon, heal a wound by first intention by co-adapting its gaping edges..... Nay, this unreasonable vital force rashly receives into the body those chronic miasms (psora, syphilis, sycosis), the greatest tormentors of our earthly existence, the source of innumerable diseases, under which humanity groans for hundreds, nay, for thousands of years, and utterly unable to even palliate one of these, this same vital force is utterly incapable of removing such diseases from the organism of its own accord, but suffers them to rankle in the system until death closes the eyes of the sufferer after a long life of sorrow."

Dynamic energy - We must admire the literary excellence of the passage, but if you try to find science or sense in it, you are bound to be disappointed.

Others like George Vithoulkas talked about some secret "dynamic energy", which is contained in a limited form in the original substance. In his book 'The Science of Homeopathy', George writes that when the homeopathic remedies are prepared, the technique of preparation causes the energy to be released "somehow" and get transmitted to the molecules of the solvent.

Water memory - Jacques Benveniste tried to think of some explanation which was less unreasonable than 'vital force' and 'dynamic energy'. And he came up with the concept of water memory. This corresponds to a belief that when the solution is shaken after each dilution, this succussion process makes the original substance leave its imprint on the water.

It went against nature - In support of this claim, Benveniste published a paper in the prestigious scientific journal 'Nature' in June 1988. This led to a major international controversy which is now known as Benveniste affair.

The paper was titled 'Human basophil degranulation triggered by very dilute antiserum against IgE'. Immunoglobulin-E (IgE) is an antibody found only in the body of mammals. It is synthesized by plasma cells. In his paper, Benveniste described the action of very high dilutions of IgE on the degranulation of a type of white blood cells called basophils. Thus he sought to suppon the concept of homeopathy.

Before publication, 'Nature' had certainly asked for the results to be replicated by independent laboratories. And guess what! Four independent laboratories in Canada, Italy, Israel and France had pitched in. So besides Benveniste, we can see 12 other co-authors of this paper.

Let's cross-check - Despite these 4 laboratories being involved, the outlandish nature of the claim was hard to digest. 'Nature' even run an unusual disclaimer to this effect, where the editors expressed their reservations and told that 'Nature' was going to arrange for independent investigators to observe repetitions of the same.

The follow-up investigation team included scientific fraud investigator Walter Stewart, 'Nature' editor John Maddox and James Randi, who had mesmerized people with his magic until the age of 60 and then taken to scientific skepticism. He is famous for his 'One Million Dollar Paranormal Challenge', where people were offered One Million dollar prize money if they

could demonstrate evidence of anything paranormal, supernatural or occult.

Water memory discarded - Under the prying eyes of Stewart, Maddox and Randi, the team of Jacques Benveniste underwent 7 attempts of their experiment. In July 1988 edition, the 'Nature' team discarded Benveniste's claim and stated unintentional bias to be the culprit.

And the winner is.. - But Benveniste stuck to his guns and refused to retract his controversial article. He continued with his experiments. These efforts won him his first Ig-Nobel Prize in 1991 "for his persistent belief that water, H₂O, is an intelligent liquid, and for demonstrating to his satisfaction that water is able to remember events long after all trace of those events has vanished."

Email me that memory - Later on, Benveniste went much further to claim that this 'memory' could be digitized, transmitted over phone lines and internet, and reinscribed into another sample of water to make the same homeopathic solution. This won him his second Ig-Nobel Prize in 1998.

We are not the same bro - But let's be fair to him. His claims were not as ludicrous as those of the bogus baba. He said that when the 'mother tincture' of a substance is put in water, the water remembers the imprint of this solute even after dilutions.

But even Benveniste would have found it laughable that water would start to shudder when bogus baba would look at it in anger. Not to forget that it would then change its molecular arrangement and its physical properties to become harmful to health. And if bogus baba looked at it with love, then the physical properties of water would make it beneficial to health. Even Benveniste would have shuddered to be associated with such extreme level nonsense.

Body memory - Bogus baba also has other variants like body memory. All of us know that memory is one of the functions of our

brain. But bogus baba says that not just the mind has a memory, but even the physical body has a separate memory of its own.

Anyone who paid attention in high school knows that our various senses function with the help of our brain. There are the five main senses - sight, touch, smell, taste, hearing. And some lesser known senses like proprioception (body awareness in space, which allows us to touch our nose with our eyes closed or typing without looking at the keyboard), chronoception (sense of gauging time), temperature, pain, balance etc.

Let's talk about the sense of hearing. The incoming sound signals make the ear drum vibrate, and then, through a series of steps, these vibrations are converted into electrical signals. The auditory nerve carries these electrical signals to the brain, which turns it into a sound that we recognize and understand. There are other aspects involved here like auditory memory, i.e. our brain's ability to store the memory of a sound and recall it when we hear that sound again. Now, what sense would it make to say that the ears have got a separate memory of their own?

Same is the case for the sense of touch. There are several touch receptors in our skin. When we touch something or someone touches us, signals are generated. Through a series of steps, they reach the somato-sensory cortex of our brain, where the signals are translated into a touch perception. Again, it makes no sense to say that body has got any separate memory.

Bogus baba is super hit - Both uneducated and educated people continue to believe in this balderdash. Bogus baba has got Hollywood stars among his fans. He delivers lectures in American universities. A mixture of pseudo-science and pseudo-spirituality is indeed in high demand. This mixture is also used for vibes.

Match my vibe - You would have heard of positive vibes and negative vibes. There are some people, who are soft-spoken,

cheerful and generous in admiring others. "Wherever they go, they light up the mood of the place.

Whereas there are some others who are full of cynicism and self-pity. They are quick to find faults in others. Such people spoil the mood wherever they go. There is nothing unusual about this social phenomenon, where some people exude positive vibes while some others have negative vibes.

Vibrations will enter food and water - But another pseudo-spiritual madam gives it a supernatural twist. She says that either eat in silence or talk some pleasant things while eating. But do not discuss problems at the dining table. Why? Negative vibrations will enter the food.

In another sermon, she admiringly quotes an old woman that if half a glass of water would be kept near them, then they would send that water away and ask for fresh water. Why? Because 10-15 minutes of conversation had gone into that glass of water. She further asserts that whichever house you drink the water from, the state of mind of that house will enter you. She advises to identify people by their vibrations.

Vibrations in physics - Just like 'law of attraction', the word 'vibrations' also features in Physics textbooks. You must have read the chapter on sound. The source of a sound vibrates, bumping into nearby air molecules which in turn bump into their neighbours, and so forth. The air molecules vibrate back and forth. As we discussed that a wave of vibrations travels through the air to the eardrum, which in turn also vibrates.

We are vibrating - Apart from sound vibrations, let me tell you that all living and non-living things vibrate at certain frequencies. But there is nothing positive or negative about these vibrations.

These are not like those vibration graphics in superhero comics, as the pseudo-spiritual madam wants you to believe. I call her pseudo-spiritual because all this pseudo-science is certainly not going to be

of any spiritual help either. Rather it would lead you into an abyss of irrational thinking and subsequent apophenia.

Aura - The next-door neighbour to 'vibrations' is the concept of 'aura'. Some people refer to it as the 'energy field' of a person. Again, 'aura' is a common English word which denotes a certain feeling that surrounds a person or place. There are many factors that subtly play a part in it - the way a person walks, talks, their body language, facial expressions, the way they dress. Some people seem to be welcoming and approachable. Some have an aura of calm and tranquility. Some people are puffed up in airs of arrogance. There is nothing unusual about it, but the pseudo-spiritual teachers give this aura also a supernatural twist.

The goddess of breeze - Let's start from the beginning, when Aura was just a Greek goddess. The goddess of morning breeze.

The word migrated from Greek to Latin, and then to English. Its original meaning remained to be a breeze. Over time, it came to mean a sensation felt by a person under migraine attack or epileptic fits. A third meaning was an atmosphere connected with somebody or something.

Paranormal aura - But now, its popular meaning is something different. The meaning, that was first used towards the end of 19th century. Beyond the confines of science, we heard of an invisible paranormal aura which surrounds a person. Positive or negative aura.

Charles Webster Leadbeater, a bishop in England, popularized this concept in his 1903 book 'Man, Visible and Invisible'. Charles had many other pseudo-scientific ideas in his repository. For instance.

He said that there are many people who have come from Mercury and Mars planet, where they used to live as a shadow. He claimed that he had visited all the planets of the solar system. He said that

he could see inside of an atom using his sixth sense. None of this was taken seriously.

Making of a messiah - Charles connected with the Theosophical Society. In its Madras Headquarters, he met a teenager named Jiddu Krishnamurti, who was adopted by the Theosophical society and raised in the care of Charles Leadbeater and freedom fighter Annie Besant.

The young boy underwent a program of all-round development ranging from sports, exercise, education in academic subjects, religious and spiritual knowledge. He was being prepared to become the world teacher. The new messiah of the world. A new organization was formed specially for him, called the 'Order of the Star in the East'.

Union with the mysticism-- Soon enough, Krishnamurti started delivering lectures throughout the world. Once when he was in California, he experienced a shooting pain in his neck. The pain became a recurrent one. He would lose his appetite. He would feel a dizziness. He called it as a union with the mysticism. He would become silent to emerge out of the pain. These events cast doubts on his becoming a messiah in the near future. It was at this time that his brother died. This loss of his close companion was a tragic moment for Jiddu. He braced himself and in the subsequent days, he sort of metamorphosed into a very calm person.

Truth is a pathless land - Four years later, in Aug 1929, he was delivering a lecture in the Netherlands, when he shocked everyone. He dissolved his 'Order of the Star in the East'. He said that truth is a pathless land, and it could not be approached by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect.

He criticized the very concept of a spiritual teacher and said that he did not desire any followers. Because when people start following a person, they cease to follow the truth. His purpose was neither to found any religion or sect, nor to establish any new theories and new

philosophies. His concern was to set people free from all cages and all fears.

Spirituality is in simplicity - This left Theosophical Society bewildered. Especially Charles felt heavily troubled by this, and said that something had gone wrong in the arrival of the messiah. Nevertheless, Krishnamurti kept on attacking all superstitions. He told people the simplest path of spirituality. He guided them on how to live life. He encouraged people to become aware of their conditioning and then setting themselves free from it. The keyword of his teachings was 'observe'. The observation then needs to be assessed by the logical mind. Krishnamurti stressed that belief has no place in the path of truth. His statement is actually common sense, because personal beliefs vary with each person, and if truth keeps varying, then what son of truth is that!

Truth is a boring road - Krishnamurti delivered lectures throughout the world. His teachings were encapsulated in many books. He is revered as a prominent philosopher. Osho called him the most intelligent person of the last century. But his revolution fell short. All the people in the world could not be liberated as he had desired, because the chronic problem is that people do not want truth at all. Truth is boring to them. They want all the magical mumbo jumbo. They want 'aura'.

Photographs of aura - The idea of aura made a comeback in the 1970s, when it was revived by Rudolf Steiner and Christopher Hills. Aura was also photographed now. Scientists told that what you are calling aura, it is simply the heat radiating from the body, which gets captured in infra-red photography.

Experiments on TV - The pseudo-spiritual guru were called onto a TV program. They were asked to go inside a dark room, which had some human beings and some big mannequins of the same size. The task was to feel the so-called aura, and distinguish between the living humans and the non-living mannequins. They failed to do this on live TV. And until now, no evidence has been found of this

paranormal aura. Nevertheless, concepts like 'aura' have kept on spreading.

'Show me a magic trick' - As we discussed earlier that people do not care for the truth! The truth is that ego must be dropped. That sounds to be a hard thing to do. The truth is - work hard and in the right direction; give some meaning to your life. That sounds boring to people.

But all of this 'aura' stuff sounds enigmatic to them. They want to believe in it, even if this means letting go science and logic. God, soul, ghost, negative energy, positive energy, aura, superstition, rituals, astrology, vastu -all of this is put in a large cauldron and made into a delicious curry. Pseudo-science is the spice of it.

'Spirituality is beyond science' - The 'educated' followers don't revere science, but they don't want to admit this irreverence. The talks of disregarding science makes one sound illiterate. So sometimes, they take joy in the pseudo-science unable to distinguish it from science. Or let's say, not even bothering to do even a Google search to ascertain its scientific validity. And at other times, some axioms come to their help. A popular saying is that that the world of spirituality starts from where science ends. This meaningless disclaimer works as a chronic excuse to avoid all science.

To be or not to be scientific - It is interesting to see that the bogus baba will first use scientific vocabulary like law of attraction, electromagnetic, energy, quantum, dimension, engineering, technology, vibration, research so as to give credibility to his words. And when someone points out that he is peddling pseudo-science, then the followers will say that this 'spirituality' is beyond science.

'Solar eclipse makes food stale' - Thus all the bogus baba go on spewing nonsense without hesitation. Bogus baba tells that at the time of solar eclipse, food goes stale very fast. How do we know it? He does a so-called experiment. Hold a bead necklace over the

food. Some negative energy rising from the food will make the bead necklace turn in opposite direction.

So which all energies are involved in this - cosmic energy, Sun energy, stale food energy? And probably, some energy obtained from the destruction of brain cells.

The truth here is that the Sun is 14.86 crore km away from the Earth. And it won't start emitting a special radiation on any day, just because the moon and the Earth are playing their hide and seek.

As goes for the necklace starting to turn in the other direction, it is simply a case of ideomotor effect - a psychological phenomenon, wherein a subject makes motions unconsciously. However, the bogus baba may be doing this consciously to fool his followers.

Unite the energies - Bogus baba also tells the trick of uniting two energies. He says that if a specific blood vessel is pulled from the body of the husband and a similar one from the body of the wife, and these are tied together with a specific type of raw cotton or raw silk thread under some specific spell, then this auspicious thread helps to unite their 'energies'. And this thread is to be changed every year.

Ego boost is the secret of my energy - Apart from sounding enigmatic, this lecture of pseudo-science has the additional flavor of chauvinism. People love to hear that their traditions are scientific and ahead of the time. This candy of 'our great traditions' provides a heavy boost to the ego. If you can boost people's ego, then oh boy, you have set up your shop.

Not-so-spiritual business - Bogus baba and many other pseudo-spiritual guru like him give you their special tricks to increase your aura and to control it. They give tricks on how to keep away from negative energy and attract positive energy. They give instructions on how to leverage all cosmic energy to work in your favour. Books are written about it, in which 'the secret' is shared with people. Close your eyes. Hold your breath. Raise your hands. Take a deep breath. Focus on the point between the eyes. And

don't forget to buy the amulets on which bogus baba has put his spell.

Pigeon chess - All of this does not even qualify as bad science. In an Amazon.com review for Eugenie Scott's book 'Evolution vs. Creationism', a user Scott D. Weitzenhoffer coined a term 'pigeon chess' for such stuff. He compared bad science with a chess player who is not good at chess. This player makes bad moves; he would lose the game quickly, but at least, he plays the game observing the basic rules of chess.

On the other hand, arguing against pseudo-scientific peddlers is like playing chess with a pigeon. It would simply knock pieces, crap on the chess board, and fly back to its flock claiming victory.

Knock off the mystery - I repeat that these bogus baba are not just pseudo-scientific, rather pseudo spiritual as well, because their nonsense is certainly not going to lift your spirits. Swami Vivekanand had called superstition and mystery mongering as signs of degradation and mental death. He said that there was no mystery in what he taught, and advised that all this false love of mystery should be knocked on the head the first time it comes into your mind.

'Use your unutilized brain power' - Apart from the pseudo-spiritual shops, now we see success coaches in their coat-pants. People are more likely to fall prey to them. They talk about the secret powers of the mind.

A popular idea is that a person uses only 10% of their brain. A likely origin of it is the reserve energy theory of Harvard psychologist William James and his student Boris Sidis in the 1890s. Science fiction writer John Campbell used this fanciful idea in 1932 in one of his short stories. The film 'Lucy' is centered around it, where a girl consumes a secret substance, and the unlocking of her mind gives her superpowers.

People are given an offer by the success coaches, motivation coaches and mindset coaches, that some course or book could help

them tap into the untapped areas of their brain. But is there any truth in this idea? None.

Scientists have long discarded it as a total myth. Our brain is not like a bucket, where you measure the water level. Our brain has a complex structure with several parts. And in doing any task, various parts of the brain are functional at the same time.

'Sharpening your intuition' - There are other mind control programs, which claim that your mind could by itself take you to that place where there would be some "benefit" for you. At times, this is marketed as 'sharpen your intuition', 'rewire your brain', 'programming of the subconscious mind' etc.

It is claimed that when a problem is presented to you, the very first idea which you get in your head as a flash, it is always the correct solution. So a person with average intelligence could also prove to be a wizard at solving problems.

Needless to say that this is obviously not true. There is nothing magical about intuition. Sometimes we have insufficient information or less time to process all the information. So, our unconscious mind rapidly sifts through past experience and cumulative knowledge, and generates an estimate or a conclusion. Since it did not come to us by conscious thinking, many people wonder where this 'inner voice' came from. Some people call it 'gut feeling'.

Secret power of Unconscious mind - An enigmatic offer is made out of it - tap into the 'limitless' power of your unconscious mind. Just as pseudo-science builds a mountain of lies on a foundation of scientific vocabulary, the same technique is seen here. Yes, there are the conscious, subconscious and the unconscious mind. But stop believing that some unlocking of the unconscious mind could make you 'Neo' from 'The matrix' movie.

Choose the right course - This discussion might sound like a warning to avoid all spiritual guru, life coaches and their various programs. But truth be told, I am an ardent advocate of various

courses, seminars, workshops, both offline and online. There is nothing wrong even about programs related to mind and spirituality.

Spirituality and meditation - If you go to an ashram in the midst of nature for a week and do some meditation, it could surely help in some introspection and clearing your mind. It could bring down your stress levels. If it is a genuine spiritual guru, then he or she could also provide some gems of wisdom.

Mind tricks - Same goes for the mind training programs. Surely there are ways in which one could improve their IQ, memory, reasoning ability, creativity, imagination etc. There are now some courses for teaching mentalism, mind reading, mind tricks, that could definitely add some charm to your personality.

Therapy is a good idea - Psychotherapy sessions are a safe, supportive, judgment-free and confidential zone to disentangle the knots of your mind. You could talk to a psychotherapist about your bursts of anger, irrational fears, trust issues, inability to feel emotion and other unhealthy behavior. Also a knowledgeable life coach could offer some sound advice to solve the problems of your life.

Let me add that there is nothing wrong even about commercializing any of it, as the commercial aspect itself gives anything sustainability and outreach.

Respect your mind - But the point here is to segregate the scientific, spiritual and psychological from their pseudo variants. Your brain is not a dustbin. Don't put any trash of lies and superstitions in it.

- Now you already know the pseudo-scientific jargon which could be used to fool you. Try to cross-verify things instead of blindly believing anyone.

- Another alert signal is whenever someone asks you to stop using your logical mind. Any genuine teacher would always encourage you to think for yourself. Buddha said - appo deepo bhava (be your own guiding light). Those who resist logical thinking

and questions are on the lookout for making you their devotee and hence their permanent customer.

- The person who claims that intelligence and wisdom dawned on him from the skies could be a conman in all likelihood.
- Also, exercise caution whenever someone offers to bestow upon you some supernatural, paranormal, psychic superpowers.

The rational options - As we discussed earlier that life is uncertain, the world works in random ways, and this uncertainty makes people anxious. And this is why they fall prey to all this pseudo-scientific and pseudo-spiritual nonsense. What if there were another compass to guide our way? What if our anxiety can be allayed by another medicine, which is not a placebo? Some guidelines that are more rational and definitive.

Set sail to your boat - These guidelines have been laid down for us in some spiritual and philosophical texts. Buddha's eight-fold path is a good example of such guidelines. It would be far-fetched to say that following these teachings, we could become the masters of our destiny, but yes, we could certainly become more sure-footed.

Your action and your reaction - In the game of life, there might be many external players beyond our control, but one of the players is us. In fact, we are a major player in the game of our life. What could we do?

We have the power to take action. We have the power to decide how we react to someone's action. These actions and reactions of ours significantly alter the course of our life amid all the uncertainty of the world. The major criterion here is whether our actions and reactions are mindful, rational and logical, or are we being puppets of the external environment itself.

Write your destiny - In the next ebook, we shall discuss how to imbue our action and reaction with substantial merit. Are we just robots following a programmer's pre-written code, or could we

craft our own destiny? If yes, then how? We shall discuss how we could prevent ourselves from simply being a light straw in the winds of the universe.

You could give your feedback on this book following this link.

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About the author

Vijeta Dahiya is a writer and comedy filmmaker. He has been a content researcher for various YouTube channels for diverse content. He has written over a hundred poems and stories that could be read on his blog 'Utopian moors'. His 274 profound articles on Hindi Quora fetched him the 'Top Writer ' award. His favorite authors are Elvish Yadav, Mohan Rakesh, Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev, and Franz Kafka. His favourite poets are Ghalib, Paiz, Pash, Shiv Batalvi, Dushyant Kumar and Jaun Elia.

He has written, directed and edited four films – Love, Sex aur Dokha, Dararein (feature film), Opri Paraai (Web series) and Take Care (short film).

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