



HOW PEOPLE CAN CHANGE AND WHY THEY DON'T?

A mind model for understanding human conflict

The concept paper that was posted on the conference agenda outlined a grim view of the current human predicament. It also posed the challenge for us to steer events in a practical, positive manner based on Human Values, and Sathya Sai Education.

Let us first consider wherein lies the problem we face and its ultimate cause. If we focus on proximate causes we never solve the problem e.g. give a starving man a food parcel, you feed him only for a day, give him gardening tools and seeds and you feed him for life.

What ultimately controls human behaviour? It is our personal belief system, the story in the individual's mind that determines the individual behaviour. Gerard Diamond in his book 'Collapse' shows how a people's belief system may in the end destroy them and their society. Through our SSEHV program (Educare) we are endeavouring to change the stories or beliefs to induce altruistic behaviour based on the philosophy of Non Duality, the **Oneness** of all existence. Hence we need to consider:

- i How do we change our belief system?
- ii What is the origin of resistance to change?

We are all aware of the law of cause and effect. Our behaviour whether good or bad is the effect. To change our behaviour we must treat the cause. Swami has said

THOUGHTS → FEELINGS → ACTIONS → HABITS → CHARACTER → BEHAVIOUR → DESTINY

Thoughts arise in the mind, so we need to have an understanding of its workings. Swami has given us several models to alert us to the vagaries of the mind. He has described it as a cloth whose woven threads are thoughts, and again as a mad drunken monkey bitten by a scorpion. Swami stated at the 2001 Conference

“First of all the mind should be transformed, then the entire world will be transformed, because the mind forms the basis for the entire world”.

This statement by Swami says it all. The ultimate cause of world problems is the mind of man.

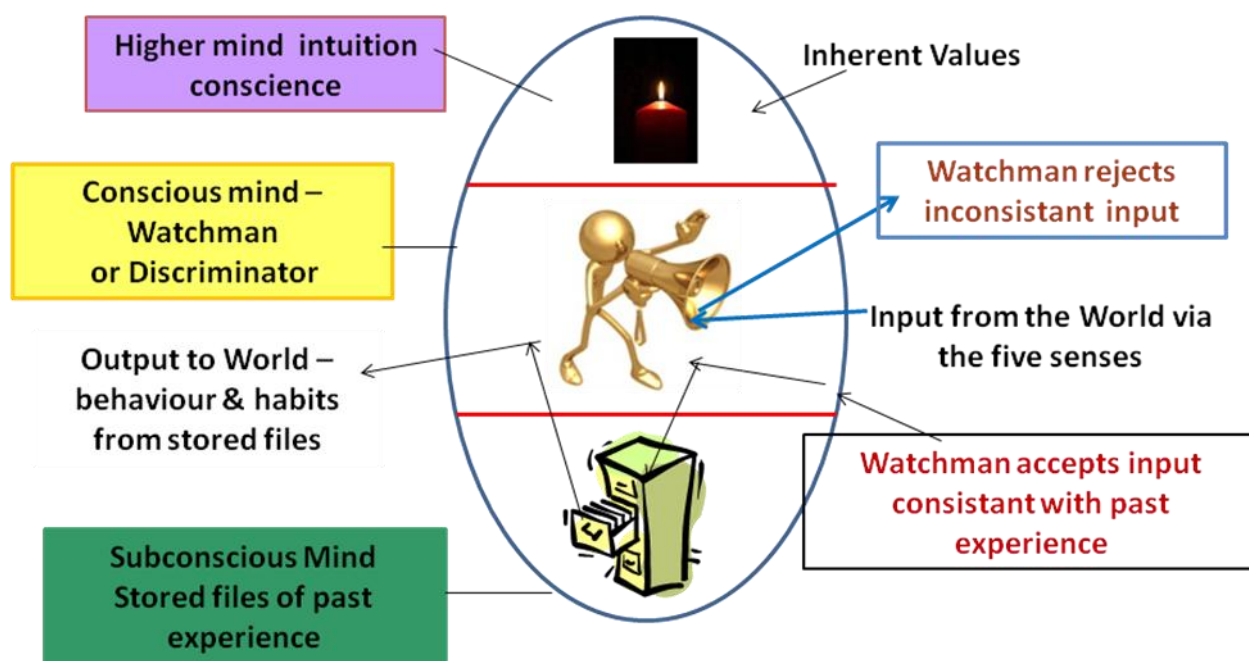
THE THURMAN FLEET MIND MODEL

I want to outline a powerful mind model that gives us insights as to how we can overcome resistance to change and bring about change.

The Thurman Fleet Model partitions the mind into three parts:

THE HIGHER MIND – The source of conscience and intuition
THE CONSCIOUS MIND - The seat of self awareness and awareness of the outer world and environment

THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND - The stored files of all past experience and responses to input from the outer world



“First of all the mind should be transformed then the entire world will be transformed, because the mind forms the basis for the entire world.”

The files relating to past experience and behaviour are constantly reinforced and it these files (stories) that determine our actions and responses to the world.

How does it work? Embedded in the conscious mind is the power of **Discrimination**. This can be imagined as a gate-keeper or watchman who controls the flow of input from the outer world through the 5 senses.

The watchman checks inputs from the outer world for compatibility and consistency. That which is neither compatible nor consistent with our files (story, belief system) is rejected.

The files are retrieved to the conscious mind and manifest as thoughts which lead to actions in the world e.g. standing on someone's toes.

Consider the watchman at the washing machine factory; he checks every truck entering for washing machine parts. One day a load of TV parts arrives. He is not going to let these in.

The belief system that is established in the subconscious with the oversight of this watchman will always act to defeat the experiences needed to change it. The mind is thus a servo-mechanism; it is goal oriented and will always act to preserve the self image (ego).

So we see that change is difficult to invoke. Discrimination operates to reinforce the subconscious image and it is programmed to reject that which is contrary, whether right or wrong. The watchman is immune to logic and reason.

HOW THEN CAN WE CHANGE?

We see then that when people confront each other with contrary ideas, their watchman will not allow any rational discussion. World problems are essentially a clash of belief systems. Head butting and locking horns with those that hold contrary stories is not only futile, but dangerous, as it leads to physical conflict.

The watchman is unmoved by logic or reason.

THE PROBLEM NOW BECOMES: HOW DO WE GET PAST THE WATCHMAN?

In the conference concept paper Pal outlined the importance of integrating Human Values into education in order to bring about a more positive future.

The human predicament can now be re-stated: to change the future we must change destructive belief systems, and to do that we must get past the watchman.

One reason for the success of the EHV program is simply that the teaching techniques are powerful tools in getting past the child's watchman.

For example: the technique of storytelling. The story is the cocoon containing the value, children love stories. In the analogy of the washing machine factory; we can get TV parts past the watchman by packaging them as washing machine parts; which the watchman loves, just as children love stories. Eventually the factory is full of TV parts and one day management decides, let's start making TV's instead of washing machines.

Besides the SSEHV teaching techniques, there are three general processes to bypass the watchman:

We can wear the watchman down by persistence and repetition until a threshold is reached and a new habit is established

The second method relies on distracting the watchman. When we are in a happy mood we are much more receptive to inputs which can change our embedded stories. Happiness is essential for change.

In the third method we rush past the watchman, pushing him aside. This analogy refers to a strong emotional experience which can cause immediate changes to our self image files.

Unfortunately this method is not one that we can control. Strong emotional experiences are unpredictable; they may be uplifting, such as viewing a sunset, or deeply traumatic such as the death of a loved one, but they can force us to change.

By these means human values get past the watchman, old habits are extinguished and new ones established and our old friend, the watchman, the power of discrimination will do his job to preserve the new self image.

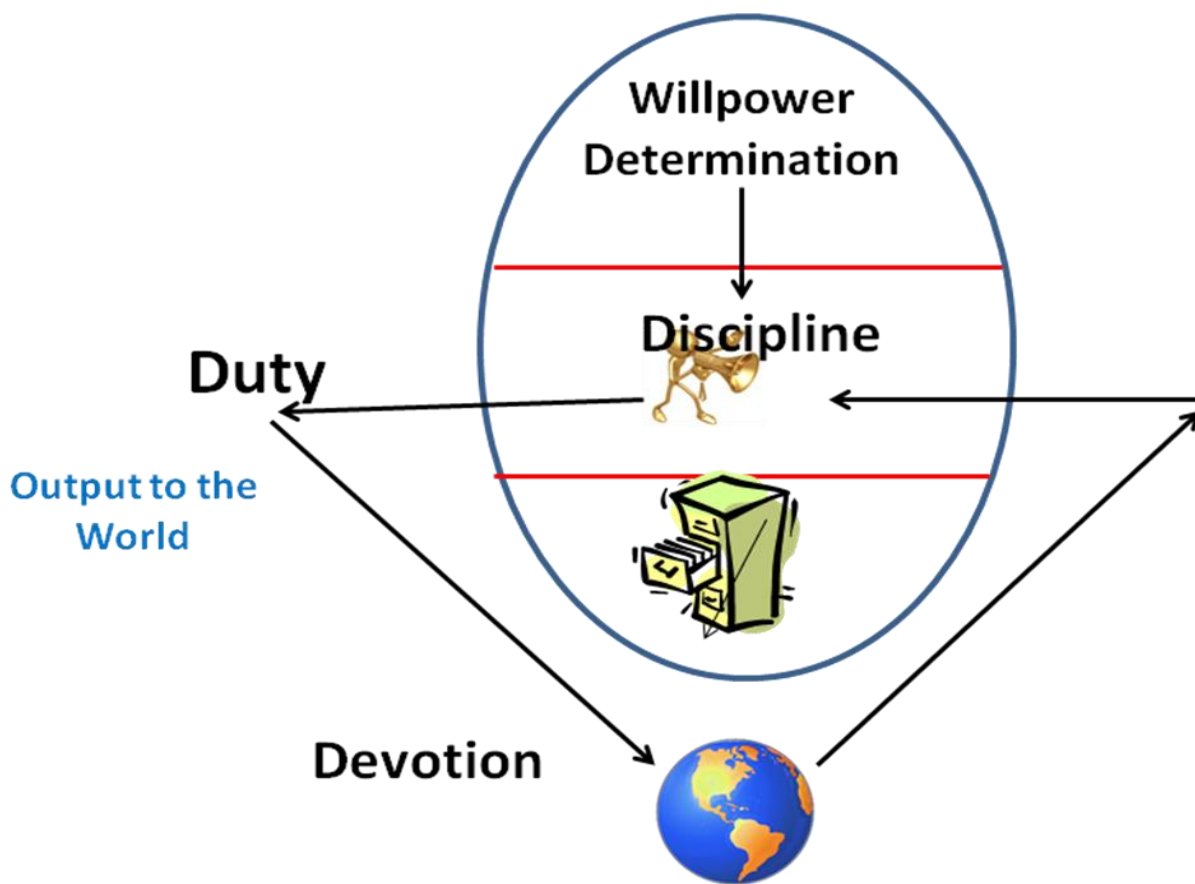
How Then are We to Initiate This Process of Transformation?

We must first become aware of the necessity for change and be confronted by the second D – **Determination**. Without willpower nothing will change in our life, we would have to wait for some acute emotional impact in our life; some disaster, that would force us to change. Swami advises that the first method is best, i.e. steady action, the prolonged relentless process of refining the character.

“You should handle the mind very steadily and slowly, bring it under control. You should never be in haste and use force to control the mind. We make the mind think of God and gradually turn it away from worldly desires.” (*Sadhana, the Inward Path pg:112*)

The mind is a fertile garden. Whatever we plant will grow well. If we plant nothing only weeds will grow.

Determination and discrimination work in concert with the 3rd D, **Discipline**, to steady the mind, leading to steady action in the world which Swami calls **Devotion** or selfless service. We must worship the world and the environment, not with burning candles and rituals but with real actions that will bring the environment back into balance. Rituals are a reminder to take action; Devotion is true direct action.



CONCLUSION:

The Thurman Fleet mind model gives us a framework to understand how learning, habits, character and belief systems are established and how previous learning can exert a powerful resistance to further learning. It gives us understanding as to how we can bypass resistance and hence promote transformation.

This mind model is most important especially for teachers, but also for those who wish to promote Sai Philosophy, because it gives us an understanding as to why there is such resistance to change and alerts us not to inadvertently put obstacles in our own path. . In the SAI ORGANIZATION we are very good at putting obstacles around the Organization. We are not aware of our own watchman.

It explains the origin of major and minor conflict as essentially a clash of stories embedded in the subconscious. Each has their watchman protecting the embedded stories. We must not lock horns with their watchman and provoke him to lock the gate of the mind.

The mind is like a very fertile garden. Whatever we plant will grow well. If we plant nothing only weeds will grow.

Sai Baba sums up what this model implies: “What the head thinks should be critically examined by the heart and the right decision should be carried out by the hands. This should be the primary product of the educational process”.

Constant Integrated Awareness

Harmony of Heart, Head and Hand

In other words our goal is Constant Integrated Awareness, which is none other than Harmony of Heart, Head and Hand.