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heartfulness

How to live simply

DAAJI Yogic Psychology - Awareness & Ignorance

GLENNIE KINDRED Walking With Trees

RAVI VENKATESAN Relationships & Leadership



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Simplify, Simplify, Simplify

Dear readers,

Leonardo da Vinci wrote in one of his notebooks, “Human subtlety will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple or more direct than does nature, because in her inventions nothing is lacking, and nothing is superfluous.” Our love of natural simplicity applies to many things; from beautiful architecture and interior design to the way we arrange our clothes, and to the elegance of a musical composition or mathematical equation. When we see pure simplicity of line or color in art it can take our breath away. The popularity of Marie Kondo’s KonMari method is also testament to our need to remove the clutter. Why do we create complexity in the first place? What causes complexity? How to remove it? We explore these questions in this issue.

This month, Daaji shows us how conscious awareness is directly related to simplicity in his series on Yogic Psychology. Joy Joyce explores farming as the art of the soul; Guy Finley looks at the process of change; Glennie Kindred connects with trees; Rahul Mehrotra encourages us to tune in to both outer and inner nature; and Ravi Venkatesan shares some relationship tips for successful leadership.

Enjoy!

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Also known as Daaji, he is the current Heartfulness Guide. He offers a practical, experiential approach to the evolution of consciousness that is simple, easy to follow, and available to people of all ages and walks of life. Daaji is also a prolific speaker and writer, and his two books, *The Heartfulness Way* and *Designing Destiny*, are both #1 bestsellers..



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Megha Bajaj is an award-winning author whose writing is celebrated across the world. With over 25,000 fans on her Facebook page, and two popular books in her name, she believes her journey as a seeker has just begun.



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focus
simplicity



*Simplicity is the highest goal, achievable
when you have overcome all difficulties.*

Frederic Chopin



the free air OF SIMPLICITY

The greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence.

The greatness of a teacher consists in the simplicity of his language.

Oh, to live even for a day in the full light of freedom, to breathe the free air of simplicity!
Is not that the highest purity?

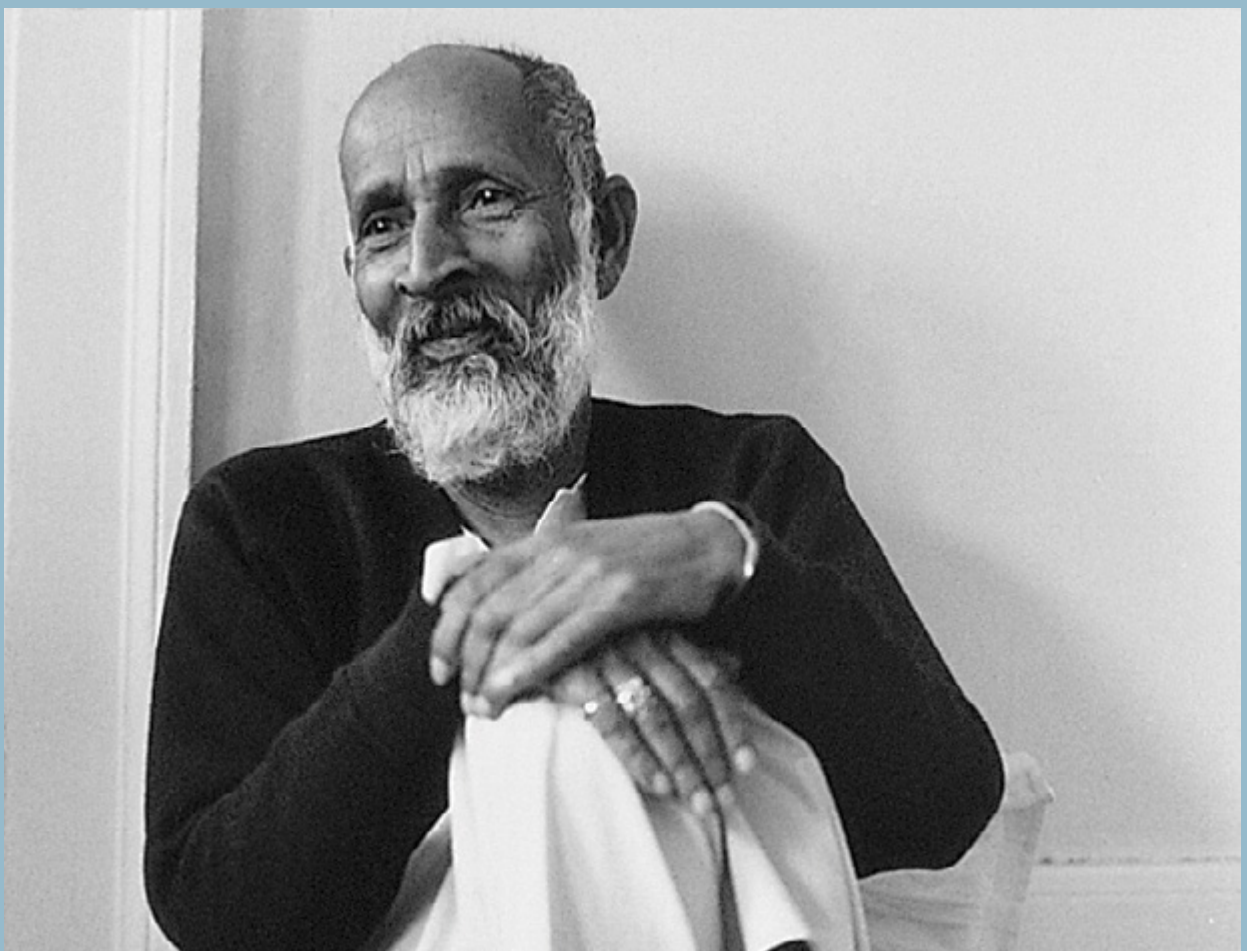
—*Swami Vivekananda*

Sitting for that first meditation session was the most amazing experience I had ever had in my life – it was so profound and proved to me that this system was right for me.

I thought, “If a trainer of the system can transmit like this, imagine what the Guide can do!”

His name was Ram Chandra and he came from Shahjahanpur – and now I was longing to meet him. But I had to wait. I could only visit him during my college vacation almost a year later in 1977. When I reached Shahjahanpur, I found him to be a loving, simple, genuine, down-to-earth person. His utter simplicity amazed me. Just looking at him made me wonder how there could be such purity in a person, such simplicity. His whole being radiated love. And I could feel the Transmission flowing through him all the time. There was never a dull moment, even when he was silent, which he was most of the time. There was always inner communion, and I was busy inside feeling his presence. That was the beginning of my journey with my Guide.

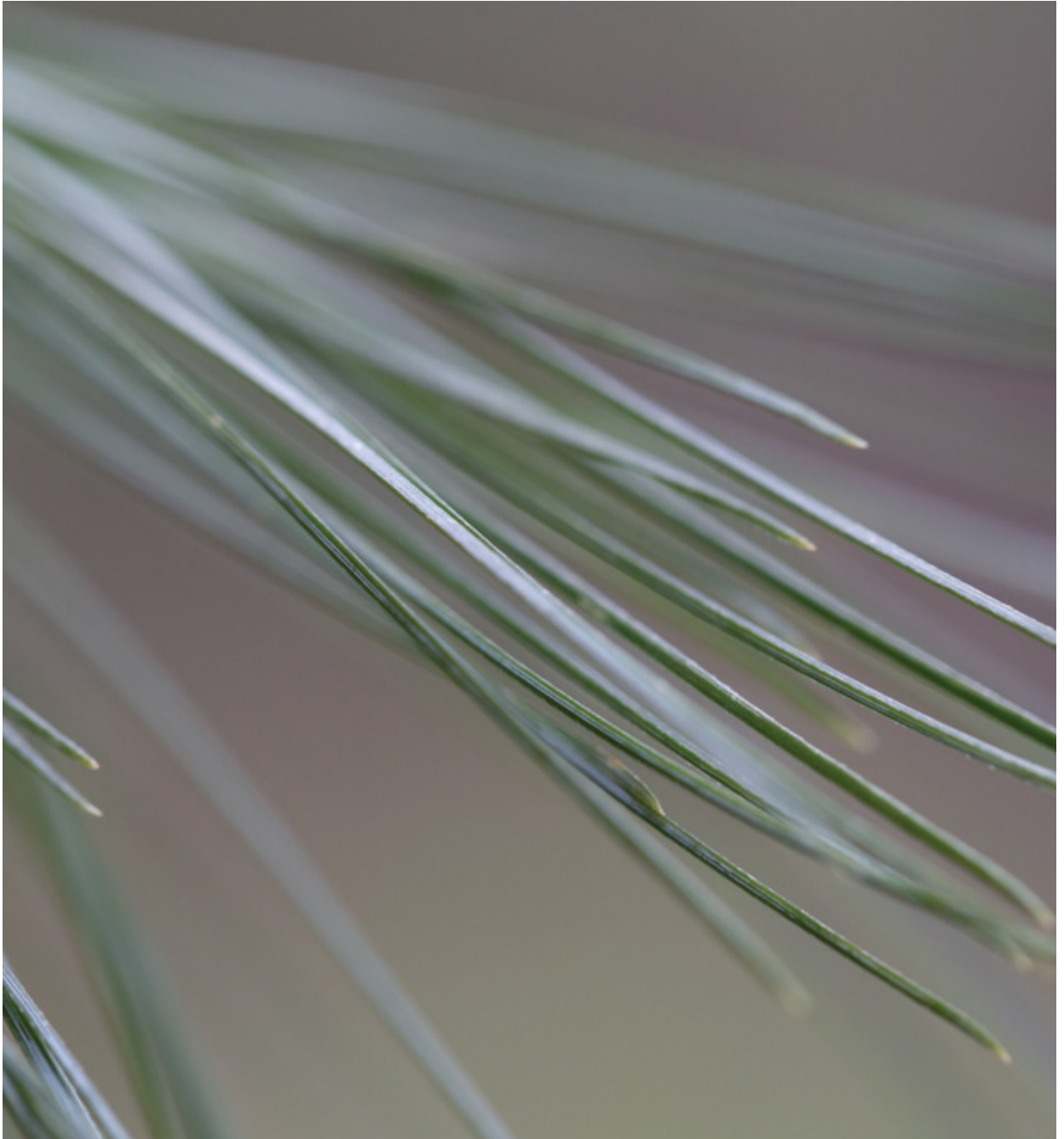
—Daaji



If you are simple you will be able to observe yourself. A complex man cannot observe himself because he is so divided. He has so many things around him: so many desires, so many thoughts, and so many problems arising out of these desires and thoughts. He is continuously in a crowd. It is difficult to attain to self study. Only an austere man eats, sleeps, loves, and that is all. He has ample time and ample energy left to observe, just to be, just to sit and look. And he is so happy. ... Things are so simple that he can do them easily. And simple things have a quality that even while doing them you can study yourself. Complex things are too much for the mind. It gets too involved and fragmentary, and self study becomes impossible. ... You never have enough energy. And without energy there is no possibility of being aware. At the point of low energy, low level energy, you cannot be aware; overflowing energy is needed. An austere man has so much energy left – what to do with this energy? ... You are sitting silently; the energy moves to the subtlest layers – it goes higher and higher, it goes on accumulating, it becomes a pinnacle, a pillar of energy. You can study yourself now. Even the subtlest nuances of your thoughts, emotions, feelings, you can watch.

—Osho





Simplicity is the very essence of Nature. It is the reflection of that which existed in the Absolute in a latent state. It promotes growth. It can be aptly described as the quintessence of the Ultimate. This is in fact the life-substance of Nature.

—Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur



The Path of Simplicity

MICHAEL LEWIN shares his experience and idea on how to bring simplicity into daily life, through lifestyle changes and practices.

*My hut lies in the middle of a dense forest;
Every year the green ivy grows longer.
No news of the affairs of men,
Only the occasional song of a woodcutter.
The sun shines and I mend my robe;
When the moon comes out I read Buddhist poems.
I have nothing to report, my friends
If you want to find the meaning, stop chasing after so
many things.*

—Ryokan (1758 – 1831)



Before you started reading this, what were you doing? Where was your mind attending? Were you concentrating on one particular task, fully focused, giving your best effort? Or were you mentally elsewhere, distracted by a stream of fragmented thoughts, totally unaware of your lack of mindfulness?

If you are anything like me you are probably in the latter category, over-reaching and dissipating your energy, chasing after so many things.

Our preoccupation with doing and achieving is an anxiety that largely accumulates from our exposure to fiercely competitive, economic environments, financially driven market cultures (now increased to global proportions) that constantly strive to maximize material production, performance and consumption at all costs. In the process of busying ourselves with all these activities we can be lost, away from looking deeper into life and from asking those questions that can lead us into enriched understanding, deeper awakening and true liberation.

THE PATH CAN BEGIN THIS VERY MOMENT

Life gets difficult when we try to meet so many expectations, often imposed on us by us. We over-burden ourselves with multiple tasks and end up feeling guilty when we do not accomplish the desired results. Leading a better life, a simplified, saner life, means letting go of so much that preoccupies us unnecessarily. Letting go of that, which we know deep within us, is not essential to our true being.

A new and spiritually enriched life that will take us off to deeper appreciation is only a choice away. So do we continue to cling to our acquisitive, materialistic values and allow ourselves to become over-stressed in a situation that is unsustainable for us, and for the planet, in the long term? Or do we follow the lead of Ryokan and try to simplify our existence to manageable proportions?



THE PATH CAN START HERE

Once, a self-confessed over-worked, over-stressed friend of mine was late for an important meeting. He dashed to his car and headed towards his destination only to find heavy traffic congestion all along the route. He tried to take alternative shortcuts, but to no avail. There seemed to be traffic jams everywhere. At a crawling pace, getting very agitated, he suddenly and for no apparent reason made the decision that he was going to be late.

I like that. He reframed his normal response of anxiety and denial and accepted the reality of a situation he couldn't change. This marked his entry point into a whole new way of thinking, a whole new way of being in the world. His busy lifestyle of trying to juggle so many different things was in sharp focus like never before, and he knew he that he had to trim down his commitments in order to achieve more peace, contentment and easiness in his life. Soon thereafter he started to attend retreats and engage with the pragmatic teachings of Buddhism (*Dharma*).

To reduce our burden of over-achieving, over-reaching and over-stretching we must start somewhere, like my friend. We need to simplify whatever we are doing. This decision then becomes our starting point, our entry into a new life. Instead of making adjustments to keep up with the runaway schedules, timetables, performance targets of a fierce economic culture, the latter may be scaled down and humanized to meet our real needs and desires.

Our lives are precious, our time is precious – greater than the value of the Stock Market's trading or the value of the FT Index.



THE PATH CAN BE MY LIFE, MY LIFE CAN BE THE PATH

We can travel a long way and do many different things, but our deepest happiness is not born from accumulating new experiences. It is born from letting go of what is unnecessary and knowing ourselves to always be at home.

—Sharon Salzberg

'Being at home' is what we should aim for.
A space that allows us to rest mindfully in non-attachment.
A space where contentment and deep happiness abide.
A space that allows healing and restoration to take place.

It seems that everything we touch today has now, now, now wired into it, and unless we challenge our mindsets we may just go on repeating the same old patterns of behavior. We do not have to be driven by turbulent thoughts, which tell us that we must be constantly doing; that rest is lazy and unproductive. On the contrary, rest can quite often be uniquely productive.

Take nature for instance. During the dormant winter months an apple orchard is at rest, but within every tree, right down to its deepest roots, there is a promise of what is to come: the full fruits of its creative cycle. Without that rest there would be no apples to harvest. The latter is simply a product of the former, all expressed in the natural cycle of seasons.

Rest nourishes growth.



The more we can quiet our mind of its restless and neurotic thoughts, the more we open up for a listening to take place. A listening so deep, so still, that we may never be the same again. In Buddhism this is known as *yoniso manasikara*, which means ‘wise attention’.

Letting go creates space for letting in. Ryokan was very much aware of this. That’s why he dedicated his life to the pursuit of simplicity, in order to be able to somehow touch the truth of his existence. How else can we start to touch our truth in a world that provides so many materialistic distractions?

Simplicity means living lightly, and this involves not only watching our consumption levels but also following Earth-friendly strategies for a more sustainable future. Then we can rest knowing that we have done all we can to make this world a better place. Living in harmony with the natural world, paying due respect to its universal gifts, is an imperative that we cannot afford to ignore anymore. And whilst we may not be able to influence global environmental policies, we can at least make certain that we are engaged and committed to doing what we can.

The deeper we venture into simplicity, the deeper we experience a knowing that transcends the rationalistic surface thought that we readily accept as normal. Simplicity helps to focus clarity of vision and insightfulness, bringing us the realization that less is often more. And within this knowledge lies *sacca*, or truth.

*The mystery does not get clearer by repeating the question,
Nor is it bought with going to amazing places.*

*Until you’ve kept your eyes
And your wanting still for fifty years,
You don’t begin to cross over from confusion.*

—Rumi

Journey well. Journey into simplicity.

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<http://www.michaellewin.org/articles/simplicity/path-of-simplicity/>



BIANCA GLAVA shares with us her experience of a Himalayan Retreat, where she was led to discover her real, simple nature, her authentic self.

Life is so amazing and so simple. Yet the most difficult thing is to grasp this very simplicity and purity. We spend so much time complicating our lives, following rules and living in cages created by our own minds, until one day we cannot breathe anymore. We are suffocated by struggle and pain, forsaking our beliefs and obeying others – so much doing and so little being. And when we are unable to live in this illusion anymore, we have a choice: to commit to our truth or watch our soul die.

I think it is all about loving ourselves, and this does not mean that we are being selfish or that we are taking away from anyone else's happiness. On the contrary I think that if we prioritize happiness, it will overflow within us and this light will lead those who live in darkness out of it. We can show others how to be happy through the clarity of our own example, and joy is the only motivating force in this universe that can save us.

FOCUS


A happy life is nothing more than a succession of happy moments, but most of us cannot see the happy moments because we are too busy trying to have a happy life.

I have always wondered: What is my purpose in this world? In the moments spent alone in my Himalayan retreat, I realized that the meaning of life is contained in every single experience and all I have to do is train myself to see beyond. There is no better way to make a difference than letting my own life be a message to the world. There is nothing more that I can do for people than being a living inspiration.

And so I decided to make how I feel the number one priority in my life and happiness my number one goal. If only we could understand a little about how the universe really works. Our life would be so easy, if only we had the courage to trust our soul and let it lead the way. Our purpose may fall into our laps when we are willing to take the risk of living at the mercy of our own joy, letting the Divine take care of the rest. A happy life is nothing more than a succession of happy moments, but most of us cannot see the happy moments because we are too busy trying to have a happy life.



The author enjoying the simplicity of Nature.



We need the strength to transcend rules, be authentic, let our beliefs be our only religion, and be ready to change course whenever we feel the need. We are unhappy because we are not honoring our truth. In our desire to be 'good people' and to belong, we forsake our values; we let illusion conquer our life. To live the life we were meant to live, we have to let joy be the main reason for any decision we make. This is the real freedom of the soul.

By following others we will never come to know excellence. We may at the least lead a mediocre life and live safely till the end, but is life only meant to be lived carefully? I used to live in fear, not letting myself be vulnerable because I thought I had to be strong. I could not afford to lose myself. But now I can clearly see that this is the only way for expansion. We can only find what was once lost, so why not lose ourselves? The more we grow the greater the risk, but are we brave enough to let our world fall apart so that we can build it back anew?

The real opposite of fear is love.

In fear we shrink, we become closed, we doubt.

In love we expand, we open our heart, we trust.

I think it's time to drop all the patterns and start a new way of life, one of rejoicing, love and authenticity. Once we become aware of the full picture and of what we are in reality, it becomes too painful to keep it hidden. There is no other way to live than to be authentic. It's time to realize that the strength taken to stay tightly closed in a bud is more painful than the risk taken to bloom open.

The subtleness and depth of Yoga and meditation are beyond any human expression. More and more I feel that I am not this body, that this human experience is really the journey of my soul, that everything is a perfect and unique design, a Divine unfolding in every single breath. It is all about experience, nothing more. It does not matter how much knowledge we gain. What matters is only our experience and the ability to feel our soul so deeply so as to gain all that we ever need to know.

There is a huge difference between knowing, understanding and really feeling our truth. It is the shortest and guaranteed way. All that we have to do is to go back to our simplest, purest and divine nature. And all it takes for that is time, faith, courage and the willingness to lay down our judgment and step outside the box of our existing knowledge.

The transformational process is not a movement to some other place or time, but it is just a change in the quality of awareness. I didn't search for something specific, and it unfolded exactly as it was meant to be. This is the wonder of just being: that we don't have to do anything, and anything that is revealed is the perfect thing that we need at that very moment.

In simple words, this was a big step forward in the journey towards experiencing my soul and its mysteries. A journey beyond the senses, beyond human nature, that carries me towards the void, towards nothingness and knowledge-less-ness, towards my true essence and the real purpose of life, which is to follow my joy and celebrate each drop of existence.

THOUGHT IN ACTION

*Time is a created thing. To say,
“I don’t have time,” is like saying,
“I don’t want to.”*

Lao Tzu





tuning in

RAHUL MEHROTRA shares his experience as a busy cardiologist with hobbies: bird-watching and meditation.

It has been more than a decade now that working as a cardiologist, watching birds around my house, and practicing meditation have gone on side by side.

There seems to be a whole world to explore in the field of medicine, in the realm of birdlife, and in the world inside us. All it requires is tuning in.



As I go to my terrace and hear the bird calls, spot them with ease and feed them, I realize I am becoming better at it. Discoveries are made: the white eyes, the tailor birds, the spine-tailed green bee-eaters informing us of the much-awaited monsoon rains, and many more.

Birdwatching and meditation are not two separate hobbies. Along with my professional and family life, they are part of a whole, complementing each other. If my meditation makes me calmer, it also makes me more perceptive of the happenings around me. I more meaningfully observe the birds go about their daily business. I realize the value of being regular in feeding them, ensuring the bird feeder and the water bowl are never left empty.

Their biological clocks work perfectly. Birds are there at the same spot and the same time every morning to have their breakfast. How simple a life they lead! The same food over and over, happily accepted. The same schedule – waking up at dawn, flying for food, a whole day of chirping, resting, moving about and going back to rest. In the rainy season they go hungry at times, yet they are happy when it rains: the small puddles on my terrace serve as the house sparrows' bathing pools!

Acceptance comes naturally to them. I should learn from them.

They do not horde or worry for the future. Is that plain stupidity or instinctive faith in the provider? They live in the moment, meeting their needs diligently, with alertness. How do they learn to make the perfect nests? By instinct. With what instincts are we humans born? What is our innate nature? To be peaceful, calm, grateful, joyous and perhaps responsible for the rest of creation.

Birds seem to have so much time during the day. Do they overeat? I wonder as I prepare a lecture on heart disease and the obesity epidemic that is engulfing the world.

Why do I feel so much at ease when I meditate?

I am with that eternal, original me, who does not require any of the props, the sensory inputs. The birds are perhaps in that state all the time, with their original selves, at ease, as they were meant to be.

It is all there inside us, all around us, provided we take interest and tune in.



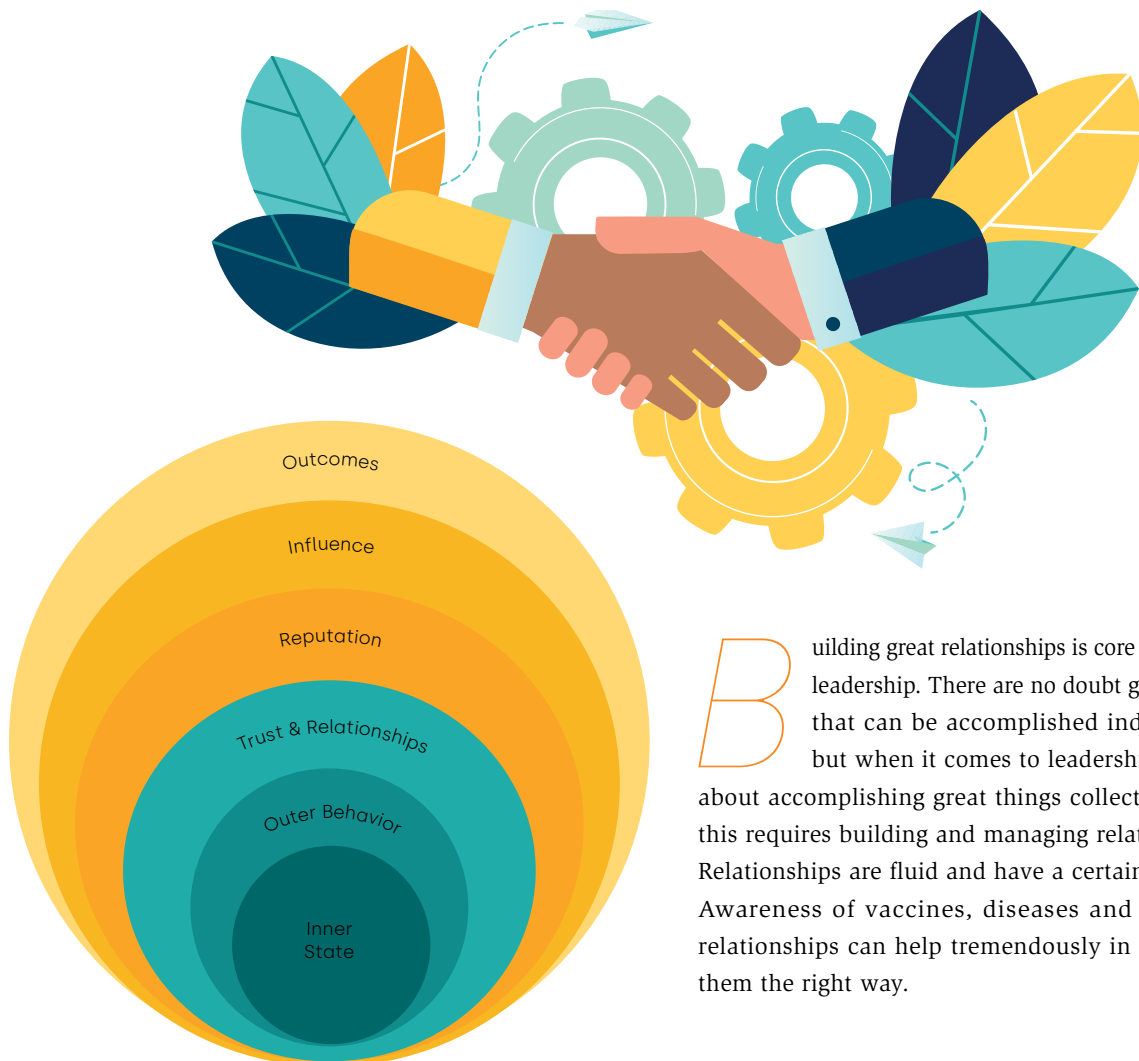
THE HEARTFUL LEADER

- part 4 -

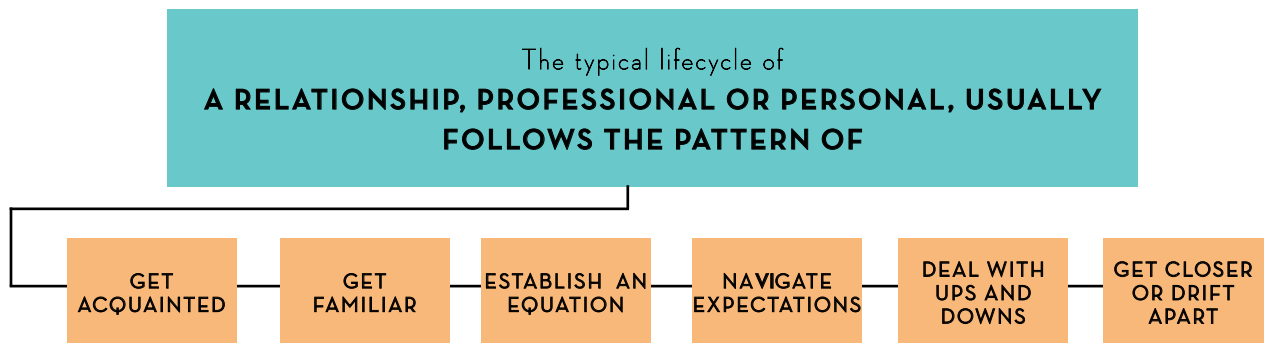
Extraordinary outcomes through inspiration

SUCCEED THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

In previous articles, **RAVI VENKATESAN** introduced the Heartful Leader framework and took a deeper look at Reputation and Trust. In this article he explores the topic of Relationships.



Building great relationships is core to Heartful leadership. There are no doubt great things that can be accomplished individually, but when it comes to leadership, it is all about accomplishing great things collectively, and this requires building and managing relationships. Relationships are fluid and have a certain lifecycle. Awareness of vaccines, diseases and cures for relationships can help tremendously in managing them the right way.



DISEASES

There are many diseases that erode relationships. Here are the main ones:

1. Misunderstanding:

We all run stories in our minds constantly. More often than not, our minds are wired to think through negative scenarios. Call it our inherent survival instinct. For example, observe your thoughts before going to an important business meeting or even a parent teacher meeting at your child's school. You will notice that you are thinking through points and counterpoints that assume the worst from the person with whom you will interact. After this, observe the actual meeting and check how many of the things you anticipated actually came true. Were you negatively biased? While there are some who train themselves to be overly optimistic and positive all the time, most of us suffer from this tendency to think negatively. This predisposition on the part of both parties leads to misunderstanding, which causes poor interactions and eventually damages relationships.

2. Lack of Responsiveness:

Many times we don't respond because we don't have a positive response. We don't realize that a polite and appropriately contextualized negative response is much

better than no response. Think of the times when a friend approached you for donating to a cause and you just avoided her, or when a co-worker asked for some information on something that wasn't a top priority for you and took a long time to collect it. How did you respond, if at all? Many of us take the convenient option of ignoring. Nothing damages a relationship as quickly as non-responsiveness.

3. Contempt:

The old adage "Familiarity breeds contempt" has stood the test of time. It is inevitable and happens with professional as well as personal relationships. It is another major cause of relationship damage.

4. Lack of Respect:

Many times we inadvertently fall into the trap of thinking that as long as we like someone, and have affection for them, respect is optional. It is not! Nothing betrays a lack of respect more than criticism. Observe a person's expressions the next time you criticize an idea or a suggestion from them. You will realize that you just dug a deep relationship hole that you will now have to climb out of.

THOUGHT IN ACTION

VACCINES

Here are some vaccines to prevent these diseases:

1. Empathy:

There is no better relationship vaccine than putting yourself in the other person's shoes. It is one thing to feel empathetic and another to express it. Make sure you do both.

2. Humility:

One of the founders of Heartfulness Meditation, Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, said that no concept of high and low should be there. Someone who treats the janitor the same as the chairman of the board will always be respectful and respected.

3. Interest:

The power of taking genuine interest in people cannot be appreciated enough. In the human condition, we all crave for social connection and affection, and nothing expresses this in a genuine and natural way more than simple interest. Try to notice on Monday morning when someone asks you about your weekend. Mostly this is done in a perfunctory manner with no interest, but some leaders will give your response their full attention and demonstrate real interest in you as a person. This is worth emulating.

4. Engagement:

Relationships are nurtured by investing time. Make it a discipline to meaningfully engage with everyone with whom you want to grow your relationships. Frequency matters more than duration. A 5-minute hallway chat every week is better than a lunch once every 6 months.



CURES

Relationships once damaged, are hard to mend, but not impossible. Here are some cures:

1. Sincere apology followed by action:

This is self-explanatory. Often a damaged relationship carries a sense of blame with it. It doesn't matter whose fault it was. Even if you don't accept responsibility for what went wrong, you can always accept responsibility for letting the relationship suffer. Start there and see what magic can happen.

2. Create opportunities to collaborate:

Especially when a relationship has gone cold due to lack of engagement, it can be re-energized by working together on something. Moving past likes and dislikes is also critical to making this fruitful.

3. Do a favor without expecting anything in return:

It often just takes one little gesture of goodwill, a small favor, a token of appreciation, and the relationship blossoms like a plant that has been ignored for a few days and suddenly received some much-needed water.

4. Ask for help:

Amazingly enough, when a relationship has been damaged, especially due to ego issues, asking the other person for help can often quickly mend it. Doing this automatically raises the other person and they will meet you in the middle.

EXERCISE

Create a list of your two most important professional and personal relationships. Are any of these suffering from the diseases outlined above? If not, apply the vaccines recommended, and if so, apply the cures.

In subsequent articles we will look at how our behaviors lead to trust and relationships. We will also explore how, by managing our inner state, we can work inside out to effortlessly manage the cause and effect chain that leads to great influence and outcomes.



TIME MANAGEMENT

RANGA SAI TEJA DUPATI

Many of us struggle with lack of time. Few know how to use it wisely. They are the ones who are successful, being more productive in every task they take up.

I have struggled a lot with time management, however, recently I've been really fortunate to work under the guidance of people who know how to manage time. One day one of my mentors explained in a very simple and beautiful way:



Plan and segregate all your tasks on a daily basis.



Assign priority to each task.



Every morning, when your mind is fresh and active, start and complete the task that has the highest priority.



Once you finish this task, it will boost your confidence and in turn enable you to take up the next task from the list with more confidence and energy.



When you feel lazy, take up those tasks that do not require too much attention and effort, and once you are ready you can move on to other things.

I observed that by following these simple steps, time can be spent carefully and consciously in a very productive way. Directly and indirectly, this also cultivates the habit of conscious living and alertness.

This video also helps to understand the concept: <https://youtu.be/c6GIVtRaTq4>.

INTENSIFY
FOCUS

BOOST
CONFIDENCE

ENHANCE
INTUITION

SHARPEN
OBSERVATION

STRENGTHEN
MEMORY



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IMMENSE
POTENTIAL

BEYOND THE SCOPE OF OUR IMAGINATION

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● **POTENTIAL**
● and achieve
● **PERSONAL**
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INNERVIEW

*Nature always wears the
colors of the spirit.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson







JOY JOYCE is a novice organic, biodynamic vegetable farmer – a farmer of the soil and an artist. The soil is her palette. Her paint is compost, organic amendments and holistic sprays. Her brushes come in the form of shovels, rakes, pruners and cultivating tools. She shares with us her passion for farming as an art of the soul.

THE ART OF *farming*

Q: Every artist has a unique story. Can you briefly walk us through yours?

My first desire was to become a landscape designer. I studied Ornamental Horticulture in high school. I have art in my blood, be it singing, drawing, crafting or landscaping. My love of being outdoors and working with my two best tools (my hands) gave me the assurance that landscaping was the right path for me. I spent a brief period of time working alongside a landscape designer and realized how much of what they do is behind a drawing board, not in the field. This quickly re-directed my future career path.

In the interim I returned to the restaurant business where I had started when I was 16. Eventually I became a restaurant manager. About five years into my career, my

father passed away from terminal cancer. This shook my world. During his service, my mother placed a token from each of us kids in my father's suit pocket. My token was a small wooden saw that I had painted as a child. On this saw I had painted a farm scene. Soon thereafter I had health challenges of my own and knew I needed to spend more time outdoors and feel Mother Nature's healing presence. I searched Google for days looking for any way I could volunteer in an outdoor setting. I didn't care if it was a nursery, conservation group or farming. I was desperate.

In 2013, I stumbled across Apricot Lane Farms – an organic, biodynamic and regenerative farm – and learned about their garden volunteer program. My first day of volunteering felt like a dream. I couldn't believe such a place existed here on Earth and only a short distance from home. I

INNERVIEW

learned of the connection between soil health and the similarities of our gut microbiome. I continued to volunteer when I had the time, and silently whispered (what I thought was a pipe dream) to the universe, asking that I might be a part of this world-changing endeavor.

In 2014, I received an e-mail from the garden team-lead at Apricot Lane Farms, asking if I was still interested in becoming a farmer. I almost fell off my chair! Without even a thought in my mind I called, set up the interview, accepted the job and then told my husband. Some would have thought me crazy to leave a very stable career path for a farming career. However my loving mother and amazing husband supported me 100%.

I have been blessed to be on a path of learning holistic healing through growing food that is nurtured by healthy soil. In addition, I'm able to utilize my artistic skills through planting and maintaining the garden. The most fundamental part of what I do is overseeing the volunteer program. I meet so many incredible people who are all on a path to finding a deeper connection to life, health and nature. This is priceless. I am a teacher and a student all at the same time. Farming is a lifetime of learning (as is life) and I'm happy to be a lifetime student.

Q: Please tell us about your art. What do you do, make and create? How? Why? What's the message or inspiration? What do you hope people take away from it? What should we know about your artwork?

I am a novice organic, biodynamic vegetable farmer. That being said, truly what I am is a farmer of the soil. The soil is my palette. My paint is compost and organic amendments and holistic sprays. My brushes come in the form of shovels, rakes, pruners and cultivating tools. Most artists (at least graphic) would provide a rough sketch or have a plan before jumping right into the painting. I too have to plan the entire garden in advance, accounting for varieties, heights of different crops, dates to maturity, seasons, row spacing and cost of supplies. There is much to be taken into account, especially the beauty of the garden and nutrition of the food. The post harvest and, of course, the flavor of the food is where you can get a taste (pun intended) of some of my art skills. Whether it is assembling an edible flower pack or an herb bouquet, I pour love into every aspect of what I do! My hope is the food that we grow is nourishing for the body and the soul.





I pour love into every aspect of what I do! My hope is the food that we grow is nourishing for the body and the soul.

And the biodynamic side brings another element into the equation. In a nutshell, biodynamics is seeing the entire farm as a single living and breathing organism. We must work with nature to assist maintaining balance of her ecosystem. For instance, we maintain many native perennial plants as a border around the garden. This border is a natural habitat for beneficial predator insects and pollinators, such as bees, ladybugs, lacewings, earwigs and praying mantis, not to mention it looks absolutely stunning! Think of this border of plants as your immune system. From time to time we all get sick with colds and flu, you name it. But the reason we have an immune system is to defend our bodies and to attack all the bad guys. If our immune system is compromised, this can delay the healing process or worse. However, when we give our bodies what they need with proper nutrition

INNERVIEW

and exercise they should be stable, or at least strong enough to fight against possible intruders. Without these beneficial habitats, we can only hope that these precious creatures will come to our aid in our time of need. I have seen the biodynamic practices and their effects first hand, and can tell you that, while no system is perfect, this is undoubtedly the way nature intended it to be.

To me, farming is an art of the soul. I have met others from many different walks of life who love growing food and gardening. I sense that gardening is an art form for more than artists. Gardening means wanting a connection with life, nature and community. Gardening is about a desire for balance, which requires being observant. So push away the idea that it takes a green thumb to farm and get out there and get dirty! Get connected!

To me, farming is an art of the soul. Gardening means wanting a connection with life, nature and community. Gardening is about a desire for balance, which requires being observant.



Q: How or where can people see your work?
How can people support your work?

Currently, products from Apricot Lane Farms can be found at three farmers markets in LA. On Saturdays we are at Calabasas and on Sundays we are at two locations, Mar Vista and Santa Monica. We send products to Erewhon Natural Food Market, Venice and Santa Monica, in addition to a few restaurants that add our products to their specials, including Pedaler's Fork in Calabasas, Melisse in Santa Monica, Follow Your Heart in Conoga Park, Farmshop in Brentwood, Gjusta and Gjelina. There are also some caterers and private chefs who come directly to the farm to pick up our produce. Chef Laurent Quenieux is one of our biggest supporters, as he uses our produce for many of his pop up dinners at MaMaison. Be sure to attend one of his amazing dinners, as it's a lifetime experience! Miss Kate's uses our products for her catering events and Wild at Heart in Ojai is a small independent food and fermentation company that uses some of our produce for their hot sauces and kombuchas.

I encourage everyone to volunteer in the garden! We have projects for all levels of experience. You will feel as though you are in a different world!

Q: We often hear that being an artist can be lonely. Do you have any advice for those looking to connect with other artists?

I'm not sure that 'lonely' quite describes my experience as an artist. I'm sure you have all heard the saying "It takes a village to raise a child." In my line of work as a farmer, it takes a team to make the dream happen. I would say to those artists who are finding their profession lonely, find a way to branch out and connect with others.

I once invited a co-worker and old friend to start a sketch group. We went to the Ventura Harbor, grabbed our sketchpads and just hung out on the grass sketching whatever our hearts desired: the people walking around, each other, dogs, the harbor. By no means do I consider myself a good sketch artist, but I don't take myself so seriously that I can't have fun trying new things and, best of all, connecting with others.

Sometimes being an artist is overwhelming. There are moments when I have so many ideas in my head, and so many projects I want to tackle, that I literally feel like I may explode. But it's exciting and I am totally and completely blessed to have these abilities. Time has given me a new attitude and outlook on life and I see my talents as the gifts they are.

Q: Please provide any contact information we can share with our readers.

Everyone should check out the Apricot Lane Farms website. It is where I first fell in love with the farm before I even set eyes on it. The short films by farm-owner John Chester are sure to tug at your heartstrings. The photos are breathtaking. And the site will give you more insight into what our farming practices are all about.

www.apricotlanefarms.com/our-media

Reprinted with permission from VoyageLA at http://voyagela.com/interview/meet-joy-joyce/?doing_wp_cron=1550548430.1517159938812255859375



*Far too many people are
looking for the right
person, instead of trying
to be the right person.*

Gloria Steinem



It Changes Everything



Change is
NOW



or
Never

GUY FINLEY

Victory over our own lower nature is now or never.

We can't end conflict later. We can't stop being sad, cruel, angry, scared, or anxious later. Thinking, or hoping, that any destination we have in mind is going to be superior to where we're presently standing is exactly why we're still standing in that same place where we have to hope that some tomorrow will be better.

Later does not exist in reality.

Only to the lower self does the concept of 'later' have any merit. This self-created, false concept of time allows it to create yet another 'you' in another time when you'll be wiser, stronger, and generally superior.

But your higher nature knows for you to experience the miracle of real inner transformation, to step up to a superior life level, you must no longer think in terms of how you'll be next time. It understands, as we must, that a change in nature is immediate; it is now, or it won't be at all.

And so it's imperative to meet each moment of your life with this realization: it's only what you do right now that is the seed of change. And in the endless beauty and mystery of what is the now, this same seed of change is also the seed of a New Self.

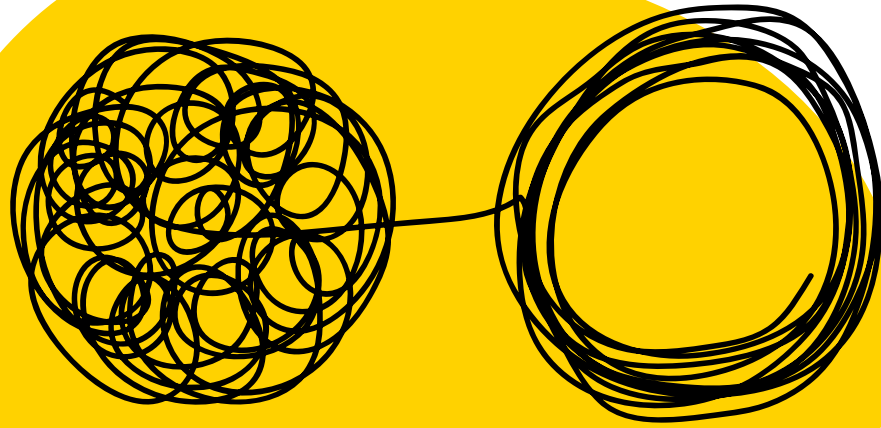
Here's why this is true: If you choose to change right now, then you won't have to worry about how to be different next time!

In fact, choose to change now and your conscious choice for real change in the present moment automatically cancels the need for a better you in a better future. All will be better for you now, which is the only time it really matters!

Make it your moment-to-moment practice to stay awake, and to watch for all the opportunities that your own now presents. Keep your efforts personal, practical, and to the point. If your inner work doesn't transform the whole of your life into a more relaxed, amazing, and uplifting experience, then you're dreaming, not changing.

Your awareness of the power of the present can transform each challenging life moment into a new and true beginning for you. Learning how to use these moments leads to real inner change, which is the same as being in command of your own destiny.

From Guy's 1994 book, *Freedom From The Ties That Bind*, Llewellyn Publications, USA.



About Relationships

MEGHA BAJAJ shares a few tips on building healthy relationships by dealing with emotions in the right way and at the right time.

There is this strange thing that many of us do in relationships. If we didn't do it I believe we would have much better relationships. We displace our emotions from one relationship to other relationships. Does it sound familiar?

Let's say, for example, you have a husband who is very dominating. It's his way or the highway, and you really don't have much choice but to follow him. You have tried speaking to him, you have wept, you have done everything you could, but to no avail. Ultimately you resign to your fate and start finding ways to deal with the issues within, without really letting them out.

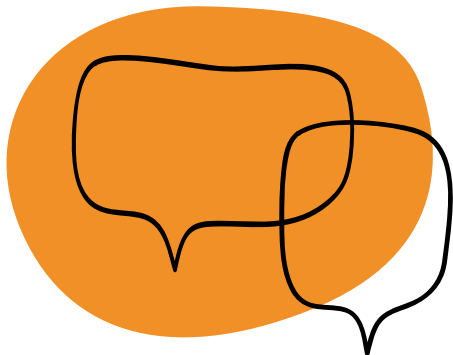
Yet, the nature of emotions is that they are never buried dead, they are buried alive. You can suppress them but not for long. The pain shows up in your body through aches and pains or disease, and it

also expresses itself in other relationships. These are the relationships where you feel the ease that the person won't leave you, or sometimes it is with support staff like house help or drivers. You start behaving like the dominating person in your life, and project your emotions onto others to somehow deal with the pain. It could be your children, or your own parents, or anyone. The emotions from one relationship are displaced to another, and the people who are subjected to them have no clue why you are behaving the way you do – just like the way you keep wondering why your husband cannot be a little more empathetic.

The problem with displacing emotions is just that – they are displaced. In no way does it provide a permanent solution, because somewhere you know that you are not doing the right thing. There is a sense of guilt, a sense of not feeling good enough about yourself, that hinders life from flowing the way it should.

Think of some of your relationships that aren't as beautiful as you want them to be. How do you deal with the negative emotions that you go through in those relationships? What do you do to ease yourself?

Here are some of the positive ways I have realized to deal with the emotions in a dysfunctional relationship:

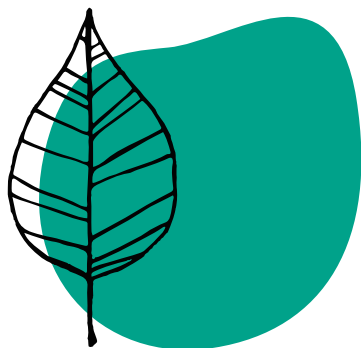


CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

Although most of us may be communicating how we feel with the person concerned, we probably don't do it consistently enough. We express, then let go, believing he or she won't understand. Yet the secret to good relationships is consistent communication. Instead of blaming and saying, "You are ..." say "I feel ...". When you express what you are feeling instead of blaming others, they are a little more open to listening.

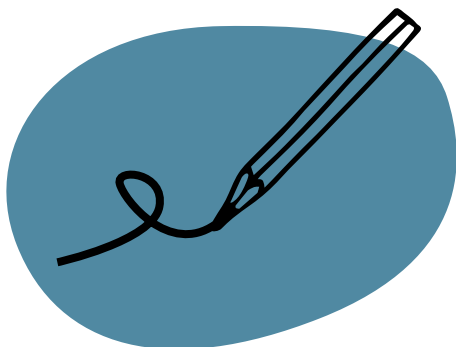
NATURE

Nature absorbs negative emotions like nothing else. Taking a long walk in the garden or near the sea or mountains, as part of your daily life, is bound to help you clear your heart and mind of residual emotions so that they don't form a chain and hurt others into the bargain.



WRITING

There is something incredibly healing about the writing process. Writing helps you to understand all that you are feeling. In a way it is your innermost core on paper and allows you to release and vent emotions that may be burdening your within for God alone knows how long. Writing letters to people who hurt you, whether or not you let them read them, helps you to deal with the emotions within the relationship.



The world is in dire need of better relationships. A lot more love. Compassion. Whether someone is good to us or not, somehow we need to ensure that a lot of good flows from us to the world outside. Break the chain reaction and, in our own way, we will create a better world.



The role of **laughter** in a marriage

ICHAK K. ADIZES

have been observing long-term marriages that seem to be happy marriages, and wondering what it is that keeps them together in this turbulent world we live in, where the divorce rate is high.

I found a common denominator: they laugh a lot. The couples have incredible senses of humor.

Then, I watched some successful executives. The culture in their companies was not as stressed as one would expect. They were really not that sophisticated in their management or leadership either. The common denominator? They had a great sense of humor.

What is going on? Humor disarms.

Laughter is evoked when one exaggerates a phenomenon until it looks ridiculous. The phenomenon has, at its core, something which is true, which is then exaggerated. It becomes like a cartoon. Thus, it is funny.

Humor relaxes. Humor releases negative energy.

If you can laugh at your destiny, you can be happy because nothing is so serious that it calls one to suffer.

I said to myself, "I'd better try that in my marriage." While in the past I would get into an argument with my spouse over something that might become increasingly heated, I now try to see what is funny in it and react in a way that makes her laugh. When I succeed, she laughs and then hugs me.

What in the past was a cause for not speaking to one another for days is now a cause for hugging and laughing, and realizing nothing is worth being in pain over. All problems are laughable if you put your mind to it (I am not referring to tragedies).

If you can laugh at yourself, you can overcome much of the travails of modern life.

Humor relaxes. Humor releases negative energy. If you can laugh at your destiny, you can be happy because nothing is so serious that it calls one to suffer.

It is interesting that most comedians come from minority groups or oppressed groups that survive oppression with laughter. For example, the Jewish people. Yiddish humor is well-known all over the world. The same goes for African Americans.

The more serious you are, the more you take the world as a burden. The more critical you are, the more stress you bring to your life and to your marriage.

It is the same with work. Can you take problems not as crises, but just as problems that can be laughed at? If you can make other people laugh, you can disarm them and remove aggression.

Be careful though. When some people laugh, they are not really laughing. They are actually crying. Laughing is their way to release tension.

Also, be careful with cultural differences. More than once I've had to beg pardon from my audience because I used a joke which was supposed to make a point about the material being presented and I heard the audience gasp. All jokes are culturally based. They do not easily translate from one culture to another. In America and in Scandinavian countries it is not okay to make any jokes at the expense of women. But it is okay to laugh at men. This custom is totally not accepted in Serbia, where jokes about women are accepted but jokes about men are rejected.

Obviously, you have to be very careful and know when to laugh and when not to laugh, such as in tragic moments.

Dare to think, and even more,
dare to share what I think,

Dr Ichak Kalderon Adizes

Reprinted with permission from <http://www.ichakadizes.com/the-role-of-laughter-in-a-marriage/>

be inspired!





*Awareness is like the sun.
When it shines on things,
they are transformed.*

Thich Nhat Hanh

The background of the entire page is an abstract, fluid, and swirling pattern of colors. The top half is dominated by various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue, with white and light grey streaks weaving through them. The bottom half transitions into warm, vibrant orange and yellow tones, also with white and grey streaks. The overall effect is reminiscent of marbled paper or liquid smoke captured in motion.

YOGIC PSYCHOLOGY

PART 5 – AVIDYA

In this series of articles, **DAAJI** explains the fundamental principles of yogic psychology, with its foundation in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. He explains Patanjali's descriptions of the human mind and the various mental imbalances, and furthermore he also gives us solutions to create mental well-being through yogic practices. In this article we start to explore the *kleshas*, the five afflictions to mental well-being. The first of these is *avidya*, meaning ignorance, the mental defect where one is unaware of the most vital and the most essential.

Let's first remind ourselves of the fundamental principle of yogic psychology: that our original inner mental state is one of purity, stillness and *Samadhi*, which is also the ultimate goal of Yoga. It is the pure state of no-vibration that lies at the center of our existence, beyond the field of consciousness. It is the healthy mental state. Yogic psychology has never been based on pathology, but on attaining that pure state, which is the baseline for mental well-being.

This field of no-vibration, no-thingness, or the original void, is present in every fiber of our being. In Yoga we return to that baseline, the ultimate state of the vibration-free stillness. It was our starting point and will eventually also be the ending point of our existence. If we are able to master that state while we are alive, we transcend the need for the cycle of birth and death known as reincarnation, as we go beyond consciousness to something more profound and more beautiful.

In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali codifies the various modifications and vibrations that arise in our field of consciousness; all those things that take us away from the balance and stillness at our center, the soul. The process of refining these modifications is what Yoga is all about.

Up till now, we have explored the basic types of thought patterns or tendencies known as the 5 *vrittis*, which can either be colored or uncolored, i.e. impure or pure. The process of coloring becomes cumulative, however, and leads to negative mental states that eventually become afflictions or obstacles to well-being and further evolution.

Patanjali codifies the various modifications and vibrations that arise in our field of consciousness; all those things that take us away from the balance and stillness at our center, the soul. The process of refining these modifications is what Yoga is all about.

VRITTIS

Instinctive
thought patterns
or tendencies

Pramana – means of right or valid knowledge

Viparyaya – false or wrong knowledge

Vikalpa – fantasy, imagination

Nidra – sleep

Smriti – memory

KLESHAS

Colorings or
impurities in the
thought patterns

Avidya – ignorance, veiling

Asmita – mine-ness, egotism

Raga – attachment, addiction

Dvesha – aversion, repulsion

Abhinivesha – clinging to life, fear of death

VIKSHEPAS

Obstacles and
distractions

Vyadhi – disease, illness

Styana – mental laziness, dullness

Samsaya – doubt, indecision

Pramada – carelessness, negligence, haste

Alasya – laziness, sloth

Avirati – lack of abstaining,
absence of non-attachment

Bhranti-Darshana – false perception

Alabdha-Bhumikatva – failing to attain
stages on the journey

Anavasthitattva – inability to maintain
the stage, instability

VIGHNAS

Disturbances
resulting from
the obstacles

Duhkha – pain, mental and physical

Daurmanasya – despair, depression

Angam-Ejayatva – trembling of the body,
nervousness

Svasa – inhalation (irregular)

Prasvasa – exhalation (irregular)

KLESHAS

There are 5 basic afflictions known as *kleshas*. In Hinduism and Buddhism, the *kleshas* are those negative mental states that cloud the mind and cause suffering and the conditions for suffering to arise. They lead to mental complications and imbalance, preventing us from being centered and contented.

Here is what Patanjali has to say about the *kleshas*:

*2.2: Samadhi bhavana arthah klesha tanu
karana arthash cha*

If your practice is aligned with your goal (*Samadhi*), the obstacles along your path (*kleshas*) will disappear and ultimately you will reach your goal.

*2.3: Avidya asmita raga dvesha abhiniveshah
kleshah*

These obstacles are:

ignorance, lack of awareness (*avidya*);
egotism, identification with the impermanent body
(*asmita*);
likes, pleasure (*raga*);
dislikes, pain (*dvesha*);
clinging to life, fear of death (*abinivesha*).

2.10: Te prati-prasava heyah sukshmah

When *samskaras* are removed,
these afflictions can be
resolved back to their origin.

2.11: Dhyana heyah tad vrittayah

Through meditation, the outer expression of the afflictions disappear.

Along the way to the ultimate goal there may be many other goals, like peace of mind, liberation, development of love and compassion, self-confidence and clarity of mind. The important thing is to be traveling in the right direction – centripetally towards simplicity rather than centrifugally towards complexity.

BE INSPIRED

2.12: *Klesha mulah karma ashayo drishta
adrishta janma vedaniyah*

Whether they are fulfilled in the present or the future,
karmic experiences have their roots in these 5 afflictions.

2.13: *Sati mule tad vipako jatya ayur bhogah*

While the roots, the *samskaras*, remain, karma
manifests in rebirth in the form of station in life,
lifespan, and types of experiences.

2.14: *Te hlada paritapa phalah
punya apunya hetutvat*

Virtue brings pleasure; vice brings pain.

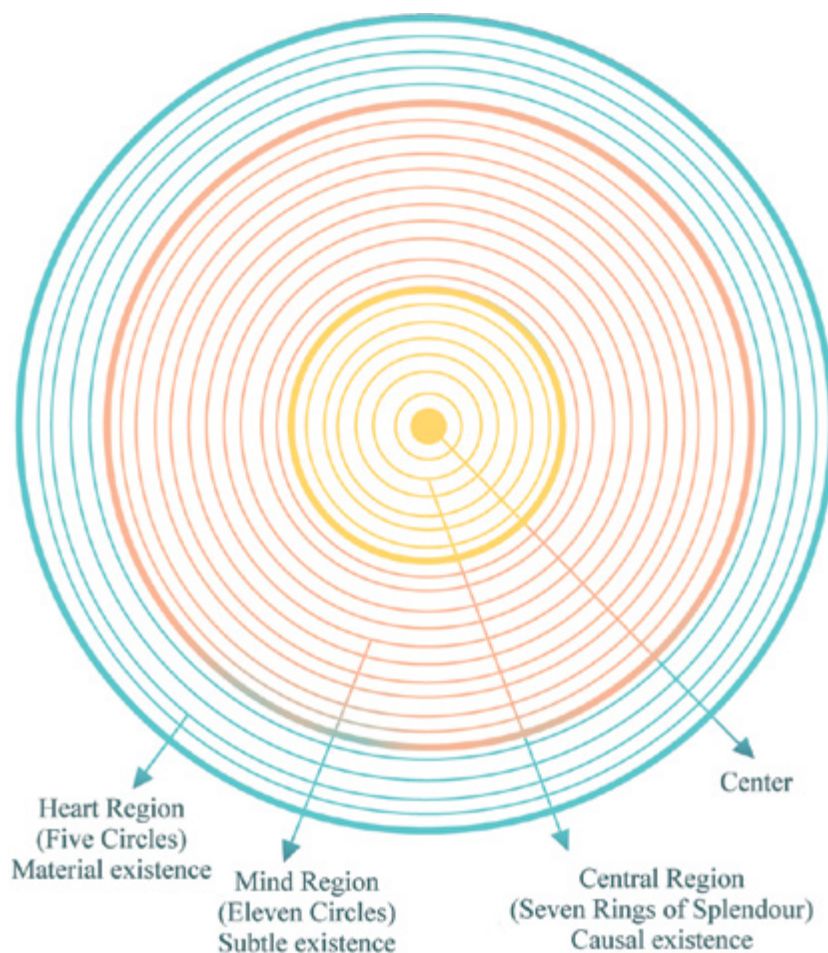
Patanjali starts his discussion on *kleshas* with the importance of having a goal. But not everyone starts a meditation practice with the goal of *Samadhi*, or complete oneness with the original balanced state. So another way of looking at this is: in which direction are we traveling? Along the way to the ultimate goal there may be many other goals, like peace of mind, liberation, development of love and compassion, self-confidence and clarity of mind. The important thing is to be traveling in the right direction – centripetally towards simplicity rather than centrifugally towards complexity.

Patanjali goes on to define the 5 *kleshas* or mental afflictions, and then establish their relationship with the formation of *samskaras*. *Samskara* theory is a critical aspect of yogic science: that impressions or modifications in the field of consciousness result in complex energy patterns being formed, which harden and create *samskaras* over time and through repetition. It is like the process of a track being formed through a forest. First one or two people walk along a particular path, flattening the grass or undergrowth. Others follow the same path until eventually there is a clearly marked track, which is regularly used and may eventually become a thoroughfare and even a road. What started as temporarily flattened grass over time becomes a hardened road.

Similarly, an initial behavior or response, for example fear of the dark, can be reinforced over and over again in a person until it eventually becomes a mental tendency or even a phobia. It has hardened into a *samskara*. Fear of the dark relates to a few of the *kleshas* – first, the fear of death and clinging to life; second, dislike or pain; third, egotism, because of identification with the body and concern for the body; and finally, the ignorance or lack of awareness at the base of the fear. The mind has become colored because of past experience, so that the default response in that person becomes: being in the dark is inherently dangerous.

It is very difficult to completely get rid of *kleshas*, as many of the *samskaras* behind them are formed subconsciously through emotional responses, in this particular example fear. The associated pathways in the nervous system for such responses are not through the cortex of the brain, but directly from the heart to the mammalian brain or amygdala. They are not responses that involve cognitive thinking, but instead subconscious processes that affect us without our conscious control. They can potentially surface at any time. As a result, our need for vigilance is never-ending. It is also why the first two limbs of Ashtanga Yoga, *Yama* and *Niyama*, are so important for our self-development.

Heartfulness has a very effective method for removing *samskaras* that is independent of the neural pathways and parts of the brain involved in their formation. It is known as Heartfulness Cleaning. It was developed in the 1940s by Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (Babuji) as a way to purify the field of consciousness of *samskaras*, so it was not available as a technique when Patanjali wrote the Yoga Sutras. The modern yogic technique of Cleaning has revolutionized Raja Yoga in the last century. It is one of the most potent tools that yogic psychology offers the world, because it works by cleaning the vibrational complexities and impurities in the field of consciousness at the vibrational level, rather than trying to change behavioral patterns, thought processes or the nervous system.



The 23 Rings of Heartfulness Yoga

When we look at how the human system works, generally everything starts from the causal body or soul (the cause of our existence), which then affects the subtle bodies, at the level of the heart-mind, and then this permeates outwards to affect the systems of the physical body, such as the hormonal, nervous and circulatory systems. In fact our human system is like a series of layers from the Center outwards, defined in Heartfulness Yoga by the 5 *koshas*, the 3 bodies and the 23 rings. By working at the subtlest vibrational level of the subtle bodies, Cleaning does not rely on thinking and analysis to remove the roots of afflictions.

Some spiritual teachers, like Osho, have spoken of removing *kleshas* through *prati-prasav* as a process of reabsorbing the behavioral effect back to the cause, by reliving those past experiences that caused the afflictions. He also called this process involution. The reliving involves letting the past surface without judging it, without liking or disliking, while being a witness to the process without getting entangled or affected by anything that surfaces. But it can take forever to reabsorb *samskaric* tendencies back to their source, as the roots may have started many lifetimes ago and be buried very deep in the subconscious mind. And, if we are not careful, sometimes reliving the experience



may cause a reaction in us, so it can actually intensify the *samskara* rather than removing it.

Per contra, Heartfulness Cleaning does not require reliving. It is a higher order of yogic practice. In fact, all the *samskaras* of one lifetime can easily be removed in one session with a Heartfulness trainer, without the person even being aware.

Once the root cause, the *samskaras*, are removed, then it is definitely up to us to refine the associated outer behavioral patterns. That is why all great spiritual teachers have given guidelines for living, for example, the Vedas, Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali's *Yama* and *Niyama*, Buddha's eightfold path, the Ten Commandments of Jesus, the golden rules found in the Quran and the Talmud, and the Ten Maxims of Ram Chandra. For this we need self-study and self-awareness, as discussed below.

Psychologists and psychiatrists also try to change mental and behavioral patterns resulting from the past, in order to cure their patients of mental afflictions and bring about well-being. They do so through behavioral modification

therapies like Gestalt, Transactional Analysis, Integral Therapy, Primal Therapy, psychoanalysis, hypnosis etc. But again, without the removal of the root *samskaras* it will always be a very long and tedious process.

Patanjali tells us that the outer expression of the *kleshas* will disappear through meditation. In meditation, we learn to identify with the source of our existence, the soul, rather than with the body or the mind, so in that sense meditation does help to remove some of these afflictions. Also, in Patanjali's time, yogis meditated for hours and hours every day, and so it may have been possible to remove afflictions through meditation alone, although I doubt it would have worked for most people. Maybe for someone like the Buddha, but how many people had his determination and fortitude for self-study and *tapasya*? In any case, how many of us have time for hours and hours of meditation every day? Thankfully the practices of Yoga have evolved in modern times, and Heartfulness Cleaning can remove the root cause, so there is less need to sit in meditation for hours and hours every day.

*The seeds of our karma
are our samskaras, and
they carry over from one
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patterns draw us to
certain parents, culture,
life experiences etc.*

For all of us, the mind is affected by the accumulation of the past, of *samskaric* patterns and responses that are hardwired into our central nervous system, creating channels that define our thoughts and actions, creating the blueprint for our destiny. Neuroscience also recognizes this. Whatever we have done in the past has formed the habits that determine what we do today and what we do today determines the future. Every thought and every action is self-perpetuating until we remove the root cause.

The seeds of our karma are our *samskaras*, and they carry over from one life to the next by impressing upon the subtle body around the soul. They create vibrational patterns, and so, at the time of conception for the next birth, these vibrational patterns draw us to certain parents, culture, life experiences etc. I have written about this at length in *Designing Destiny*.

And as Patanjali says, virtue brings pleasure and vice brings pain. This is natural cause and effect. To evolve, however, we don't want to be attached to either pleasure or pain, virtue or vice, or any of the other dualities of earthly existence, as they are always two sides of the one coin. Ultimately, where there is pleasure there is pain, just as where there is the brightest light there is the darkest shadow. Duality is part of the physical world and in Yoga we are transcending our temporal physical nature towards our eternal nature. But while we remain rooted in the emotional baggage from the past, this is not possible. Our mind remains an accumulation of the past.

It is worth reflecting on the relationship between *samskaras* and *kleshas*. Here is something to think about: the *kleshas* are an outer expression of the *samskaras* that accumulate in our field of consciousness, and yet *kleshas* also lead to the formation of *samskaras*. So what is needed from our side to cut this cyclical loop?



*A better translation of
avidya is lack of
awareness, as vidya is
possible when there is a
pure canvas of
consciousness upon
which awareness and
perception can work as a
witness.*

AVIDYA

The first of the *kleshas* is *avidya*. Patanjali says:

*2.4: Avidya kshetram uttaresham prasupta tanu
vichchhinn odaranam*

Only through *avidya* are the other afflictions able to
operate, whether they are latent, budding, fully
expressed or overwhelming.

He is saying that *avidya* is the basis of all other afflictions. What is *avidya*? Many people translate it into English as ignorance or lack of knowledge, but here Patanjali is not writing about the knowledge accumulated through learning facts or even through past experience. Actually, accumulating knowledge is only going to complicate rather than purify consciousness. Real *vidya* comes with purity, with the removal of beliefs, prejudices and clutter in the mind. A better translation of *avidya* is lack of awareness, as *vidya* is possible when there is a pure canvas of consciousness upon which awareness and perception can work as a witness. In essence anything that takes us away from centeredness is *avidya* and anything that aids us in moving towards our center is *vidya*.

It is the ignorance resulting from a limited consciousness that creates lack of awareness. So the next question is: What limits consciousness? The coverings of *samskaras* that cloud the purity of our consciousness. And there are two things that are largely responsible for this process of accumulating *samskaras*: desire and ego.

Desire comes from our mental process of judging things according to what we like and want, or dislike and don't want. Desire also arises due to a feeling of lack of things, and due to an overwhelming impression that an object creates in us. Desire de-centers us from our main nature.

Ego is the function of our mind that identifies with and attaches to 'possessions'. When the ego is desireless, i.e. it has no likes and dislikes, when it is only identified with the higher Self, then its purpose is to take us to our ultimate

destination, and it is one of our greatest instrument in fulfilling our duty or *dharma*. But many of us identify with other things – our body, mind, work, children, spouse, culture, country, religion, reputation, and even with material things like our house and car.

So the process of going from *avidya* to *vidya* is the process of divesting all identifications, likes and dislikes, so as to return back to simplicity.

Avidya can manifest at any time, even in experienced yogis, because of cultural beliefs and lifestyle. For example, even very wise and open-minded evolved beings may still hold beliefs because of their backgrounds and cultural experiences at an early age. So it helps to be vigilant about Patanjali's first two limbs of Ashtanga Yoga, *Yama* and *Niyama*, especially the fourth *Niyama* of *swadhyaya* or self-study. Self-study makes us aware of our intentions and actions. We shine light on our thoughts and feelings. We then work on refining our character by bringing those habits and tendencies to light that limit our personalities. Rather than being judgmental, *swadhyaya* is done with self-compassion and is used for continuous improvement and refinement.

Heartfulness facilitates self-study in a number of ways:

- Through Meditation we learn to be the observer so as to become a witness to our inner universe. A few minutes of daily Meditation makes us more and more meditative, the effect of which percolates into our mundane day-to-day activities.
- Whenever any inner stir arises, we are quickly aware and can do what is necessary to remove it through the process of Cleaning. We don't need to be entangled in the emotions of what we see in ourselves.
- We are encouraged to write a journal, so as to sensitize ourselves to our inner world. This way we learn to become a good witness, with self-acceptance and self-compassion, and we are able to change more easily.

- Through Prayerful Connection with our higher Self, we are able to listen to our heart and honor its higher wisdom.
- Through the practice of Constant Remembrance, we remain constantly connected with the wisdom of the higher Self. This provides an inner canvas of consciousness that remains immune to *samskara* formation.

2.5: *Anitya ashuchi duhkha anatmasu nitya shuchi sukha atmakhyatir avidya*

*Avidya is mistaking the temporal to be eternal,
the impure to be pure, the painful to be pleasurable,
and the lower self to be the higher Self,
the soul or Atman.*

Rather than identifying so heavily with the peripheral transitory aspects of life – the body, other ego-identifications, behavioral patterns and emotional afflictions – we learn to identify with the inner aspect of our existence, the eternal soul, the source of all joy and pure consciousness. Awareness allows us to see Reality.

The practices of Heartfulness are designed to do exactly that – to uncover our original state of purity and balance. This is why Yoga has never looked at psychology from the perspective of pathology, because it has always focused on the positive approach of attaining the healthiest mental state possible for human beings, that of *Samadhi*.



STORY OF THE

Sacred Flower

UDAY KUMAR

There is a sacred flower that blooms in the valley of the heart.

In the deepest corner, under the sharpest rocks, enveloped by thorny bushes, this beautiful flower stays hidden, even from the most prying eyes.

It stays shrouded in secrecy and eagerly awaits the summer of grace.

On the rare occasion when it blossoms, its radiant petals glow resplendently. Its sweet fragrance drenches one and all. The most drenched of all is the flower itself.

But beware of your actions!

Every breath of anger smolders its petals. Every glance of prejudice injects poison into its veins. Every jealous thought, every greedy endeavor and every act of competition brutally plucks away at the petals and crushes them. The rocks around the flower are stained with pockmarks of crushed petals.

Each stain is a story of fall, every pockmark a memoir of treachery.

In pain, the flower weeps silently in agony.

Time and again the flower silently endures one crucifixion after another.

Life after life it redeems itself in the hope that, one day, the sun will dawn in the valley of the heart.

This sacred flower is the soul.

Finally, the blessed day comes. The day, when the grace of Transmission touches the flower. The soul comes alive and radiates again. After eons of drought life finds a way.

The journey of love begins.

Every small step along the way enlivens the soul. One step after another and the heart begins to melt away. Small drops of gratitude slowly form a rivulet that begins to chip away at the rocks and wash away the thorns.

Drops merge and the rivulet becomes a raging flood.

The flood of gratitude ennobles love.

A heart full of love grows in reverence.

The reverent heart yields in submission.

In the deepest impulse of submission comes surrender.

The highest pitch of surrender creates merger.

When the heart is melting, thoughts become imbued with love. Thoughts imbued with love become the vectors of Transmission.

When such thoughts become words, they become heart speak.

They resonate with the inner most being of the listener, and then the miracle happens.

Yet another flower blossoms!

In this way meadows after meadows are filled with blossoming flowers.

The simple act of meditation makes all this happen.

Speak with love, think with love, and melt away each moment in gratitude.

Create this flood within and drown in it.

Oh miracle maker! Did you meditate today?

A Deeper Path to Consciousness

VICTOR KANNAN asks: How does the evolution of human consciousness reflect in the way we interact with each other and the world around us?



The River of Time

From time immemorial, from all over the world and in all religions, one of the definitions of God is love. Why is this?

Love creates. Hate destroys. It is easy to understand; we see this in everyday life.

Love is the unifying and ennobling factor of all creation, manifestation, life and existence.

Love is what gives meaning to life, and without meaning life is as good as dead.

Love and meaning provide inspiration and intrinsic motivation to do good things and to even reach to the stars.

Love is at the center of giving and sacrificing.

Love exists when the lover does not.

God has been the domain of religion, as religion is supposed to reconnect us with God. Spirituality develops the relationship with God in a more personal or intrinsic manner. This also means a more conscious lifestyle, adopting certain universal values of what is ethical and nourishing for the soul. We are not bound by dogma and are open-minded to scientifically explore the subtle, using physics to explore metaphysics. Generally it is oriented towards the principle of love and unity, while fully appreciating the diversity of existence.

Unity in Diversity

This is a powerful principle to fathom, and its proper appreciation results in engaging in a path of self-transformation while serving creation. In Turkish, to serve means to adore. When we learn to adore all of creation in its variety and multiplicity, we serve it. A self-transformed person never shuns the society they live in; they are forever grateful for the circumstances that made them.

The idea of unity in diversity speaks to the interconnectedness of all life and its manifest journey. How can we participate and be part of this interconnectedness? How do we beget this sentiment of being interconnected? It is through our consciousness – through feeling, knowing and being. This is the crux of spiritual humanism.



Interconnectedness

The ancient Vedic prayer of *Sarvam Bhavantu Sukhino* (May all be happy) deeply reflects this awareness of the interconnectedness of all. Prayer for everyone and the well-being of everything was part of meditation during the Vedic times, 5,000–10,000 years ago, long before Lord Buddha.

Lord Buddha exemplified the interconnectedness of life on a grand scale. He postulated the theory of reincarnation and the need to achieve eternal life called enlightenment or *Nirvana*, and at the same time he did not forget *dharti*¹, the field of service. He was a model human being: the love and respect he had for all, including his patient waiting for enemies to transform, was the ultimate in compassion, kindness and universal love. While he educated people to live a life befitting acquisition of ascetic wealth and for the purpose of enlightenment, he also realized that this state had to be personally experienced, repeatedly, and that it is beyond faith and hallucination. It is a permanent state of being.

Compassionate Inquiry

The Buddha practiced compassionate inquiry. He questioned everything, but the basis of that inquiry was compassion. This is one of the most revealing and yet less spoken lessons from him. He was humble enough to seek gurus and fearless enough to change them. He was loyal enough to remember everyone gratefully who helped him and compassionate enough to wait for enemies to transform. His passion for finding the solution for human suffering was the most admirable aspect of his life, and his renouncing of his family has to be understood in the context of compassion and generosity for all humanity.

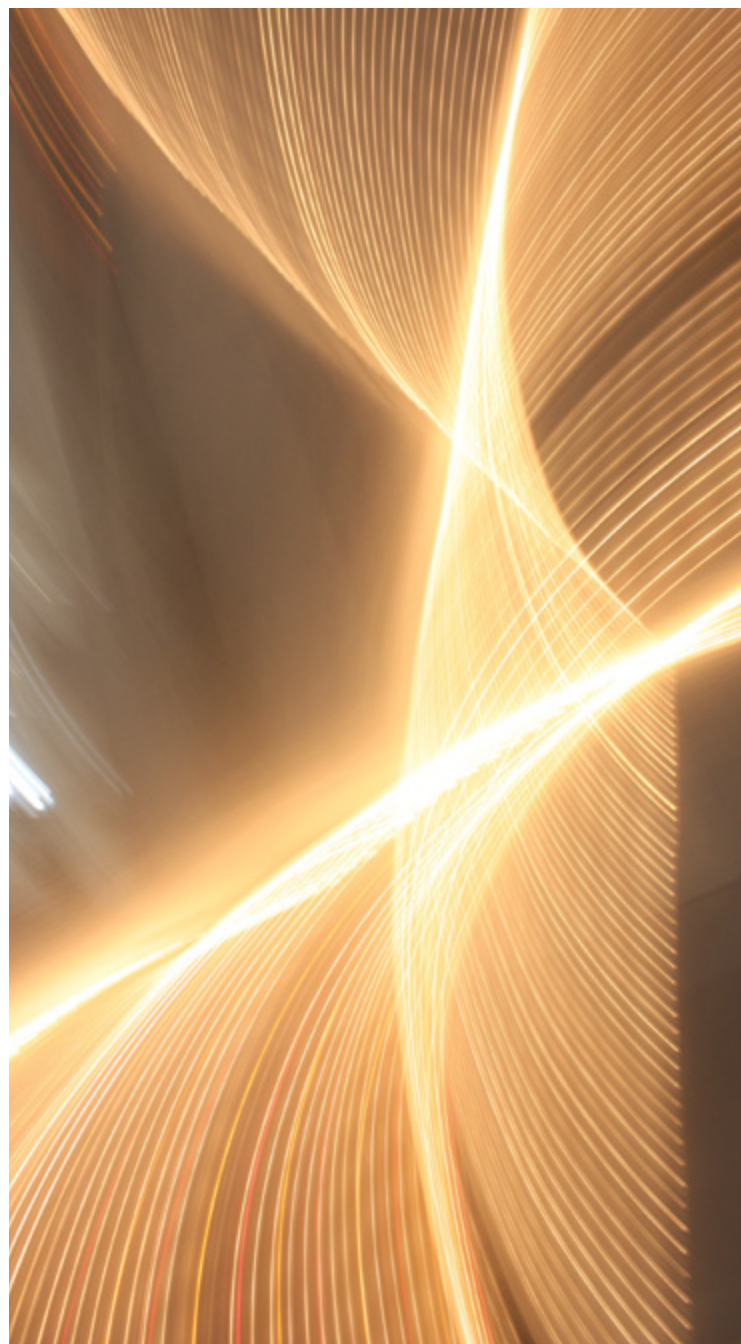
¹ The word *dharti* is the root of *Dharma*. *Dharti* has its origin in *dhru*, which means to uphold one's duty.

Universal Love and Awakening

This sort of unconditional universal love arises from an awakening of a different order and a deep knowledge of the interconnectedness of life. It is the foundation of spirituality, with only human welfare at its heart. Universal love is the ultimate knowledge of an awakened being.

Opposite to this sort of awakened existence of love and compassion is the awkward existence of ignorance. It may at best make one numb and insensitive to suffering. But as long as we have a mind, our conscience is dormant and waiting to confront us one day, and when that happens, awakening begins.

Along with awakening comes pain and suffering, and with the right orientation this very suffering becomes the pathway of spiritual evolution – not for the sake of the awakened, but for the benefit of the entire humankind. This sort of noble suffering is possible only due to the thorough absorption of the knowledge of interconnectedness and the emanating feeling of universal love. Gratitude, generosity, fortitude and forbearance all come from this deep state of being in universal love for that which contains all.



The Masters

2000 years ago, Jesus exalted the need to embrace the same simple human values, like non-judgment, kindness, love, forgiveness and helping fellow humans, as Lord Buddha and others who came before him.

During the first millennia after Jesus, Sufism seems to be the most predominant philosophy of this human approach to spirituality. The turning and returning, the rotating and swirling portrayed in the dance of the Sufis signify this aspect of awakening and journeying towards Oneness. The turning happens when an individual spirit is awakened to an alternate life. The path of selfishness and ignorance is shunned when suffering awakens the conscience. The turn is the starting point of returning, and this returning is full of suffering and demands cheerful acceptance. The only panacea for this suffering is divine love and longing for Oneness. This very suffering provides the material for transformation, while love for all and longing for Oneness provides the direction and speed to achieve that state of inter and inner connectedness.

Another stalwart of spiritual humanism is Swami Vivekananda, who in his short span of 39 years made an incredible impact on humanity. His belief in the indomitable potential of a human being is unparalleled. He says, “What is the individuality of man? Not Tom Brown, but God in man. That is the [true] individuality. The more man has approached that, the more he has given up his false individuality. The more he tries to collect and gain everything [for himself], the less he is an individual. ... We must first understand what is meant by individuality. It is attaining the ideal. You are man now, [or] you are woman. You will change all the time. Can you stop? Do you want to keep your minds as they are now — the angels, hatreds, jealousies, quarrels, all the thousand and one things in the mind? Do you mean to say that you will keep them? ... You cannot stop anywhere... until perfect conquest has been achieved, until you are pure and you are perfect.”

During the same era, we find numerous saints like Ramana Maharishi (1879-1950), Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886), Shri Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh (1873-1931), Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (1899-1983), Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), and Neem Karoli Baba (1900-1973). There have also been so many unknown teachers of caliber, some who could not travel or be discovered by international seekers, but they served the human community they lived and died in.

The lives of these Masters are powerful examples of the two sides of existence, namely, personal evolution while contributing to universal well-being. This is, in a nutshell, the essence of spiritual humanism.

Conscience to Conscious Action

Spiritual humanism encompasses much more than philanthropy. Spiritual humanism embraces the personal and communal aspects of transformation, progress and evolution. Anyone who contributes to serving human beings to ultimately make them free, pure and perfect is a true servant of humanity. Mahatma Gandhi's statement, “Be the change that you wish to see,” implores the personal aspect of this starting point.

At times, service to humanity can be so intoxicating it might become the sole preoccupation. Then the danger of ego cannot be underestimated. But when we adopt a practice such as meditation to evolve our consciousness, then service to humanity becomes pure and all encompassing. It starts with one's own self and extends to serving all humanity and beyond.

Consciousness and Connectedness

As long as there is consciousness there is connectedness, and through this connectedness we learn, grow, move, expand and evolve. A deep understanding of this connectedness makes us compassionate and empathetic, generous and kind.

Thus, the content of this consciousness is our personality: we see ourselves in our thoughts and actions. The world is a mirror of our consciousness, and we can use that mirror to adjust, clean and stay well. Our interconnectedness is also seen through that mirror. What we do comes back to us, since the very nature of interconnectedness is circular. In the giving is receiving.

Spiritual humanism is essentially the field of deep service and a deeper path of evolution of consciousness. They are two sides of the same coin.

The noblest of services is to free people from bondage. In the words of Confucius, it is to teach people how to fish rather than feeding them fish. According to Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, the highest form of service is to inspire and help people expand their consciousness and attain freedom to solve their problem of life.

This is the central theme of the lives of saints and Masters of high order in overall human welfare.



taste *of* life

*Time spent among trees
is never wasted time.*

Katrina Mayer







Walking WITH Trees

In *Walking with Trees*,
GLENNIE KINDRED takes us
on an intimate and profoundly
connecting walk with thirteen
of the UK's native trees.
She leads us into their world
and opens our hearts to
their wonders, their perfection
and their interconnectivity.
Here she focuses on the
otherworldly Alder.

ALDER

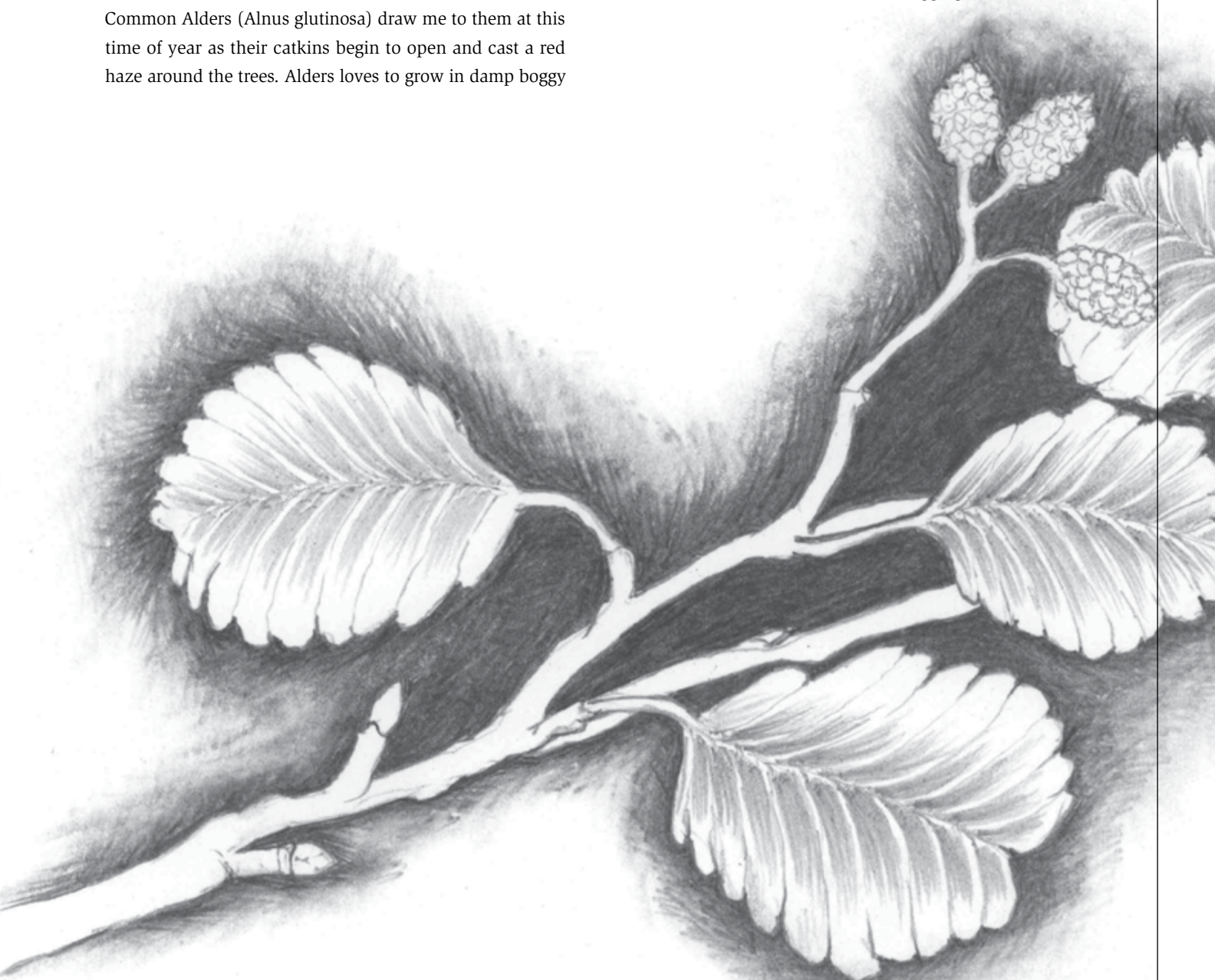


Walking with trees is my delight, my meditation, and my anchor. A daily walk with the trees (not a dog!) helps to deepen my relationship with the natural world around me, and opens my heart, my lungs and my mind. If I give myself the time to stand still with them, their intrinsic tree-wisdom permeates my consciousness. I feel the presence of their deep roots filling the very ground beneath me, and become more aware of the Earth beneath my feet. I breathe more deeply and become more rooted, and more fully present. They help me to find my sense of inner stillness and this guides me to listen more closely to my intuition and the wild edges of my instinctive self. When I am walking with the trees beside me I see a bigger picture, and break free of my old conditioning that would have me believe that I am separate from Nature. With the trees beside me I am reminded of my deep interconnectivity with all life here on our beautiful complex Earth, and I am made whole.

Trees invite us to stand still a while, to soak up their company and share their embedded wisdom and intelligence. By observing their flowers and fruit, the way they grow, their habits and habitat preferences, we absorb and internalize their core characteristics. We also experience them at a subtle, emotional or vibrational level. Where our observations and subliminal experiences meet, a personality, archetype or signature picture emerges. This becomes our guide to a deeper understanding of the trees and what they have to teach us.

Common Alders (*Alnus glutinosa*) draw me to them at this time of year as their catkins begin to open and cast a red haze around the trees. Alders loves to grow in damp boggy

places, such as wet woodland, marshes, and along rivers. As they reclaim these watery lands, they begin a process of transformation and new wild life moves in. Alders are 'pioneer' trees and transformation is at the heart of their signature picture. Although they are short lived, around sixty to seventy years, their lives count, as they can have a big impact on the land and the soil. They will move into ground that is too wet for most other trees, transforming the environment so that other trees and plants can follow. Look out for Alder trees when walking the land, as their presence could mean hidden water or boggy ground.

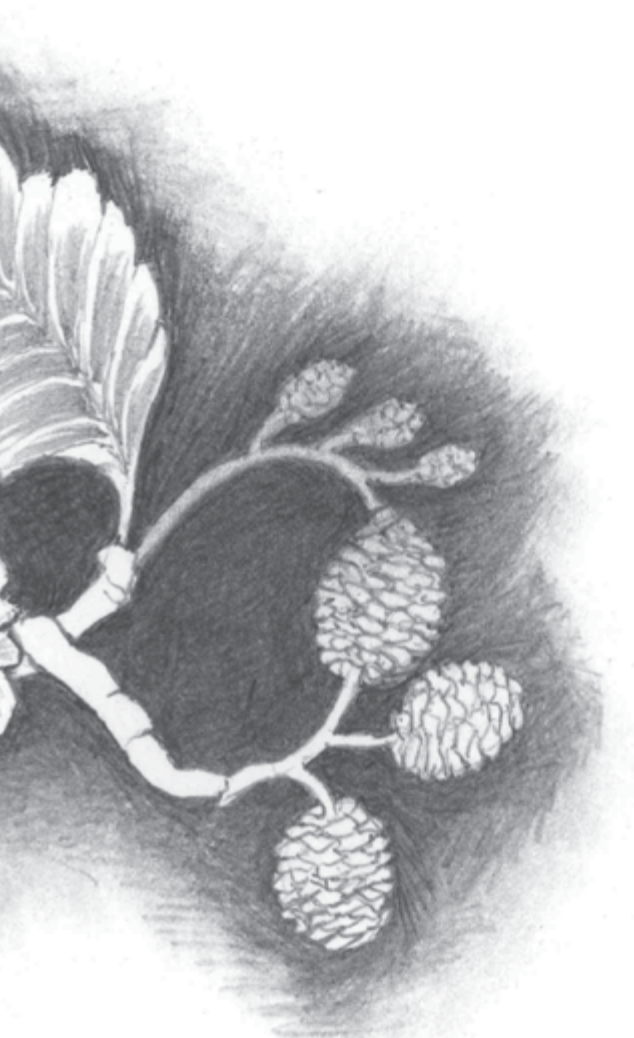


A balanced fusion between our outer and inner modes of intelligence opens us to new levels of awareness and capabilities. We develop a quiet strength, and move into new levels of inclusiveness and a deeper sensitivity and respect for all the interconnected life forms around us.

A lovely piece of woodland local to me is full of Alders, and has several springs running down into it. This makes it difficult to navigate for some of the year because of the excess water running through it. I imagine this was once just a marshy boggy place, and the Alders have been key to creating the mixed woodland we now know and love. It is rich with thriving ecosystems and a wealth of native flora and fauna. It is a testament to the power of Alder trees to transform a landscape.

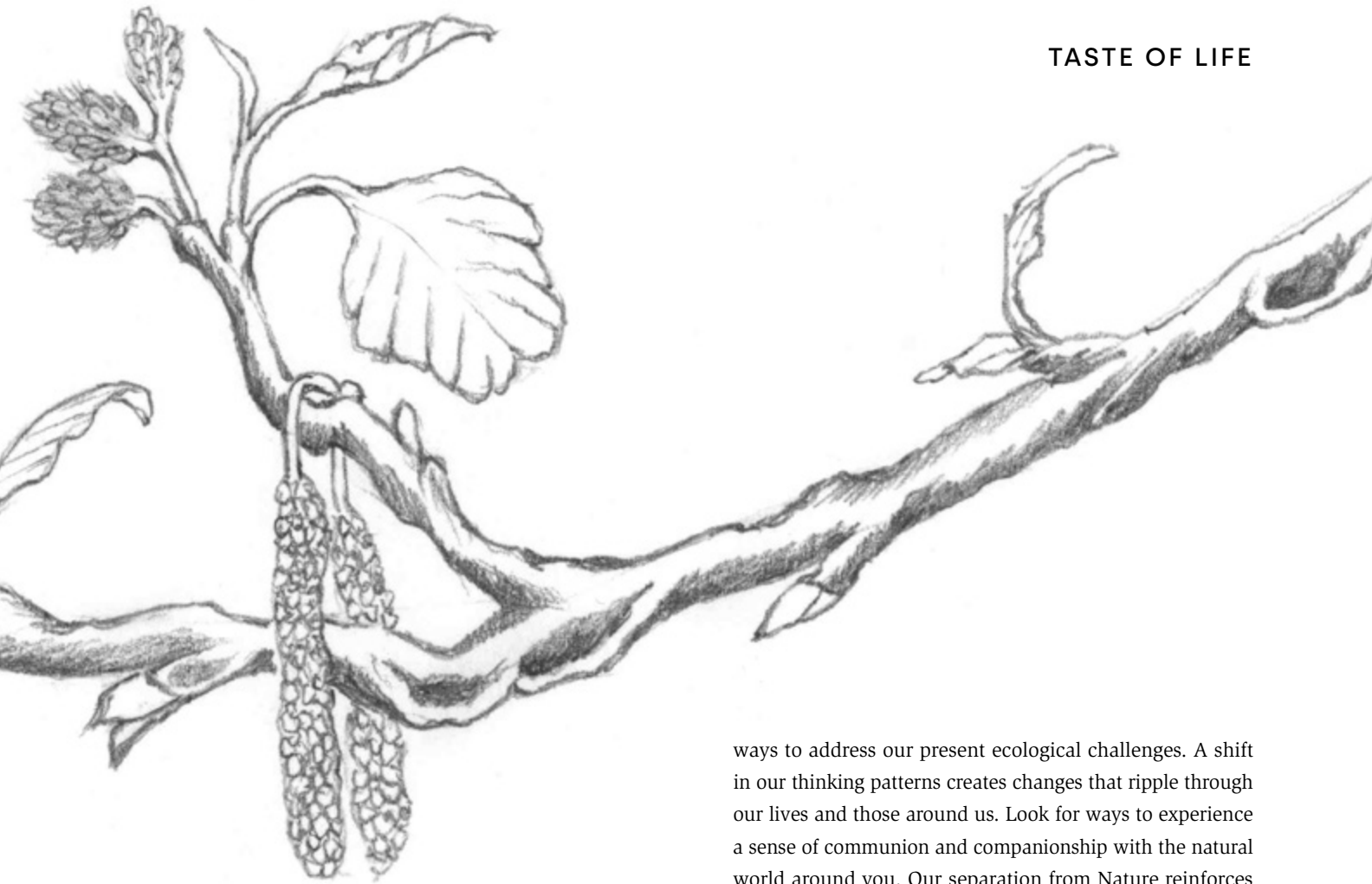
Wet swampy Alder woods or 'carrs' were thought to be places of mystery and otherworldliness. Alder's were known in myth and legend as faerie trees and were protected from being cut down by their association with the *Sidhe* (*Shee* or *Si* in modern Irish). The feeling of otherness these trees evoke is part of their subliminal signature, reminding us to take note of the things we cannot see but can sense and feel, and the importance of what is happening below the surface, beneath our conscious and visual radar. This is our inherent ability to sense and know things. It is not a logical place, but inspirational and alive with instinctive truths. A balanced fusion between our outer and inner modes of intelligence opens us to new levels of awareness and capabilities. We develop a quiet strength, and move into new levels of inclusiveness and a deeper sensitivity and respect for all the interconnected life forms around us.

In legend, the Alder was known as 'a battle-witch amongst trees' and this makes it our ally in these changing times. A battle-witch to me is the eco-activist or eco-warrior, who knows how to work energetically to create change at a subtle level. Learning to work at an energetic level is the foundation of all healing work and transformational change. We can all direct focused positive thoughts and healing energy. All that is needed is the intention to do so and the ability to slow down our breathing and slip into a meditative





Look for ways to experience a sense of communion and companionship with the natural world around you. Our separation from Nature reinforces our legacy of harm and destruction to the Earth. It is time to change the stories we tell ourselves as we begin to experience all life as sentient and interconnected.



state. We can all send healing, protection, and strength to where it is needed. We can put up energetic walls and conjure positive outcomes if we put our collective minds to it, and we can do this from wherever we are on the planet.

Alder wood becomes strong and durable when immersed in water and was used extensively for building bridges over water, thus linking communities together. Look for where you can build bridges and heal separation both in your local and in your broader communities. Be aware of where your thoughts or energy may be negative, blocked or stuck, and work to transform this. Reach out with kindness, cooperation, and generosity.

‘Strengthening what lies beneath the surface’ is a key to Alder’s signature energy, and also a key to creating environmental change. Look beneath the surface for other

ways to address our present ecological challenges. A shift in our thinking patterns creates changes that ripple through our lives and those around us. Look for ways to experience a sense of communion and companionship with the natural world around you. Our separation from Nature reinforces our legacy of harm and destruction to the Earth. It is time to change the stories we tell ourselves as we begin to experience all life as sentient and interconnected.

Look for aspects of your life where you are stuck in the old paradigm of seeing yourself as separate from the natural world around you.

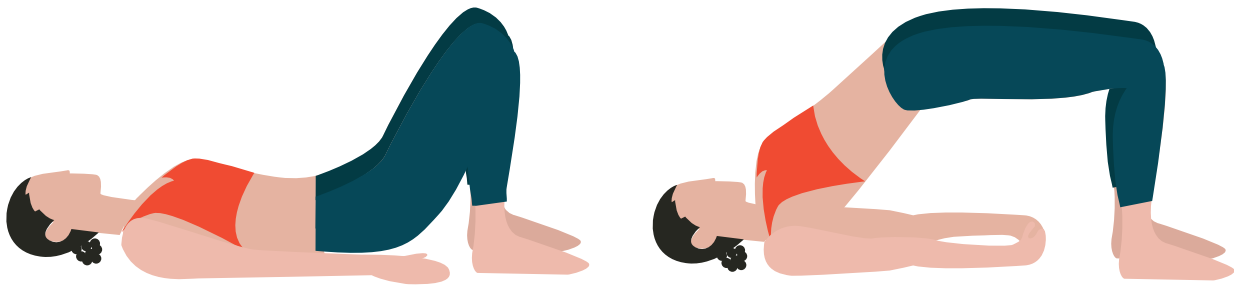
Every day consciously affirm yourself as part of a great big beautiful inter-connected world.

Illustrations and extract from *Walking with Trees* by Glennie Kindred. Available to buy directly from www.glenniekindred.co.uk

Heartfulness Yogasanas

SUPINE POSES

SETHUBANDASANA



Bend your knees and place your feet flat on the ground, slightly apart.

Lift your hips up as much as possible, giving a good arch to the upper back.

Keep your hands and shoulders on the ground. Try to touch your chest to your chin.

Close your eyes.

Breathe in and hold the position.

Hold and stay with gentle long breaths - in and out, six times.

Release your hands, lower your back and return to the relaxation position.

BENEFITS

Stretches the neck, spine and hips.

Massages the abdominal organs and improves digestion.

The abdominal and lumbar muscles are strengthened.

Promotes the suppleness of the spine and wrists.

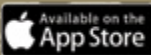
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HEARTFULNESS in schools

Education is undergoing a revolution in India today, as classrooms expand their vision from an academic process of rote learning to include a broader all-round focus on the holistic education and well-being of both teachers and students. [ELIZABETH DENLEY](#) shares some of the work that is being done by the Heartfulness Education Trust in this rapidly evolving field.



In the last three years, Heartfulness Education Trust has developed a noticeable presence in the schools of India. Heartfulness first offered value-based life skills programs for school children in the late 1980s, and since then the program has evolved enormously over the years to the point where, in 2016, it blossomed into a large-scale project to cater to the demands from schools for a more holistic approach to education for both teachers and students.

The Trust was born from the vision that the most effective way to transform society in a generation is to provide

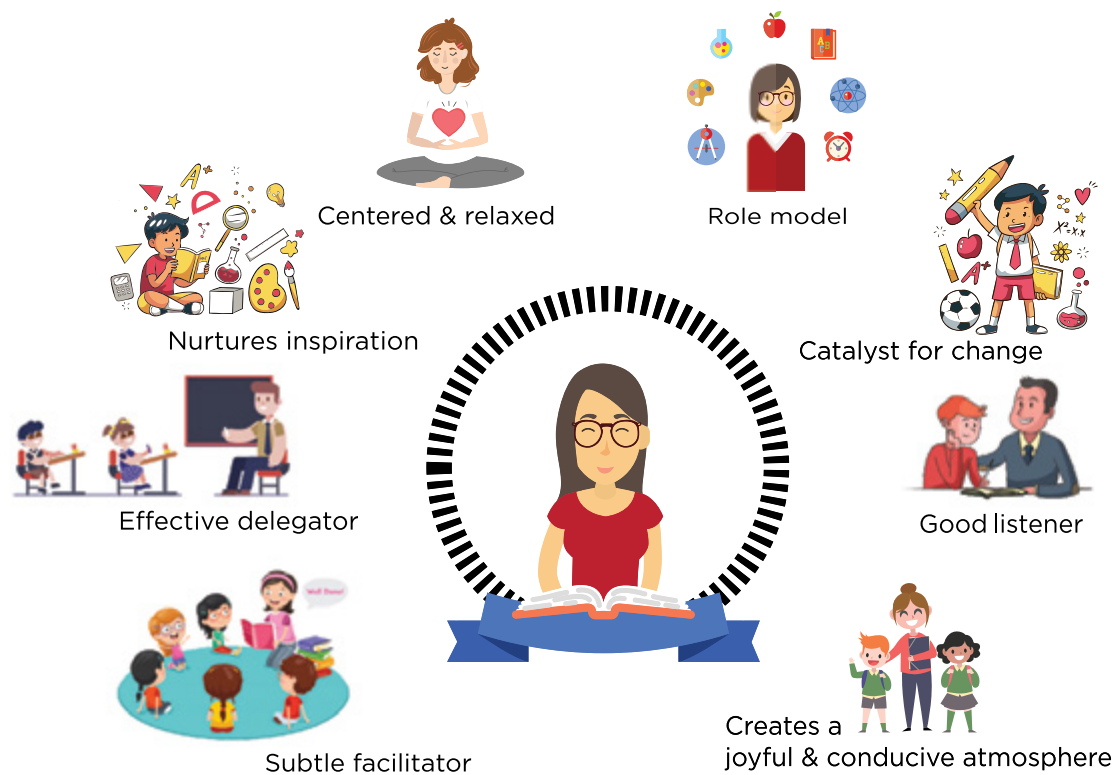
teachers with the opportunity and tools for change, and empower them to transform their students. Here are some of the programs that are offered.

FOR TEACHERS

Heartfulness Teacher Training focuses on the qualities and skills of a heartfelt teacher. So who is a heartfelt teacher?

A Heartful Teacher

A Heartful Teacher will be a role model, one who is inspired amd nurtures inspiration in students. Here are some specific qualities.



GOOD COMMUNICATOR



DELEGATOR



SUBTLE AND INDIRECT



FACILITATOR



GOOD LISTENER



WITNESS



CATALYST FOR CHANGE



POSITIVE THINKING



EVOKING LOVE



RIGHT ENVIRONMENT



CENTERED AND RELAXED



JOYFUL ATMOSPHERE

The program for teachers is called the HEART Program, and is designed to develop the social, emotional and cognitive abilities of teachers. These are important qualities for leaders in today's world. It is a multi-step year-long journey comprised of the following programs:



You can learn more about the HEART Program and each of its components at <https://heartfulness.org/education/training-and-curriculum/>.

FOR STUDENTS

The Heartfulness Way Curriculum for Years 1 to 9

This suite of activities for school children has been designed to engage students in their own growth, bringing emotional and social intelligence as well as confidence and balance through simple lesson plans filled with engaging stories, activities and fun games. These activities were designed by a group of international professionals in the fields of educational pedagogy, value-based learning, occupational health, Mindfulness and Heartfulness. They are based on the 9 universal values defined by the United Nations for 21st century holistic education, and include 25 lessons for each year-group. Lesson plans for teachers and activity books for students are available.



The HELP Program for Years 10 to 12 (Heartfulness – Experience Life's Potential)

The program is a 16-week certificate course on life-skills and values that equip students with Heartfulness practices, knowledge and lifestyle skills for healthy balanced living.



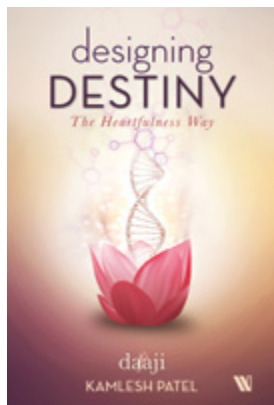


These schools programs are just one facet of the work the Education Trust is doing to provide healthy lifestyles for many groups in the community. To learn more about the Trust's work, and also to find out about upcoming programs, please visit the website at <https://heartfulness.org/education/>.





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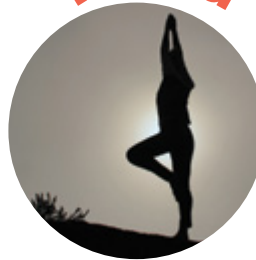
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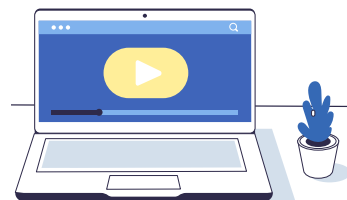
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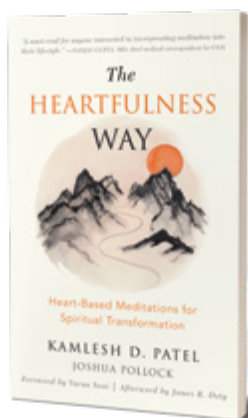
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