

# Heartfulness

Self | Work | Relationships | Inspiration | Vitality | Nature | Children

Daaji on  
**DESTINY & CHOICE**

Dr James Doty on  
**POWER OF HEART**

An exclusive interview with  
**DR VANDANA SHIVA**





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It's a new day,  
a new dawn,  
a new life

Dear readers,

What inspires you to get up in the morning and celebrate life on this beautiful planet? Is it your family, your work, a hobby, a project, or a vision for the future? Where does your time go? To know if your time is in line with your hopes and dreams, list your activities in a week and identify the main ones. How much time did you give each one? How many activities were things you wanted to do, and how many were 'shoulds'?

What are the things you feel are great for your growth, that you enjoy, that inspire you, that put a spring in your step? When was the last time you allowed yourself to do these things? It may have been years since you did some of them!

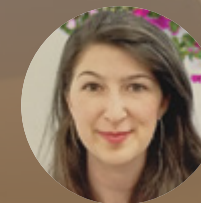
So what would you change? Are you weaving the future of your dreams, or being pulled in other directions by your wishes, fears, habits and the expectations of others? Become a conscious participant in weaving your destiny, and our collective destiny!

In this issue we explore future thinking. Dr Vandana Shiva shares her vision for a sustainable planet, Daaji addresses some basic existential questions about destiny and choices, Rosalind Pearmain asks what gives meaning to life, and Suzi Lula imagines a world in which motherhood is valued and sacred. We hope this issue will stimulate you to participate in our interconnected world in ways that bring forward a new human era.

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Dr Shiva is a force of Nature! She is a scholar, researcher, environmental activist and advisor to governments worldwide, who has helped to draft laws to protect the Earth and the farmers whose livelihoods depend on her bounty. She has also authored over 20 books. She is one of the leaders of the International Forum on Globalization and promotes the traditional practices of sustainable agriculture, biodiversity and indigenous knowledge. She funded the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, which lead to the creation of Navdanya. She has received many prizes and awards for her tireless and inspiring work spanning 50 years.



## *Nitin Govila*



Nitin is the Managing Director of the Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa business area of Serge Ferrari. Based in Singapore, he is also a family man and is actively involved in Heartfulness activities in SE Asia. Nitin has been a Heartfulness practitioner for almost 20 years and a certified trainer for 16 years.

## *Rosalind Pearmain*



Rosalind lives in Abingdon near Oxford, UK, and has worked with groups of all ages during her working life. She has always been interested in how we can change and transform. In recent years she has been teaching psychotherapy and qualitative research and has been a Heartfulness practitioner and trainer since the 1970s.

## *Suzi Lula*

Suzi is a counselor, teacher and inspirational speaker in the field of human transformation, who is inspiring the way people in the West value motherhood. She has received a number of awards in recognition of her contribution to the field of psychology, and founded The Motherhood Evolution, “where thriving mothers raise thriving children”. Suzi is also a composer and pianist, collaborating with Marianne Williamson, Neale Donald Walsch, John Bradshaw and Paul Ferrini, as well as her husband singer-songwriter Jami Lula.



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# HOW OPEN ARE YOU?

## future thinking – the new human era

MEGHANA ANAND and ELIZABETH DENLEY look at what we can learn from our ancients and ask question about what the future holds for the human race.

That time flies is an understatement. Just to make it more interesting, how about trying some time travel?

Do we hear you asking how? Well thought can travel through time in no time. Think of an incident that happened a week ago and you are there. So now, close your eyes and imagine the year 2050. What do you see? Move further forward in time to 3900 AD. How does life on Earth appear in the 40th century? Are you able to conceive of anything? Perhaps, moving back in time will help.

Coming back to the present moment, now move into the past. How far can you trace back human life on Earth? It seems easier to imagine the human race of the past than to conceive of an unknown future, isn't it? Well, maybe the key to our future lies in tracing our ancients.

The study of the origins of the human race is quite fascinating. Most of our present understanding about this subject is based on various theories of evolution and the study of ancient civilizations. The other important field of research that holds

answers to our origins is genetics. Today, genetics and epigenetics are drawing the attention of both material scientists and spiritual scientists alike: the study of our human DNA.

Most theories of evolution endorse the process of natural selection, which is based on changes at the genetic level known as mutation. The physical and behavioral changes in any species have long been attributed to changes in the structure of their DNA. According to Briana Pobiner, an anthropologist who specializes in the study of human origins at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History: "Mutations are basically the raw material on which evolution acts."

But does everything really happen from the physical level? The more recent findings of epigenetics give us an insight, a doorway into the process that leads to genetic mutation, and that process does not start at the physical level so often as at the level of our subtle bodies. Epigeneticists have shown that environment, including the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of parents and everyone else in the surrounding environment affect our genetic make up. How? Take, for example, the development of



a fetus. Environmental factors lead to significant physiological changes, as is documented by Dr Bruce Lipton in his book, *The Biology of Belief*. So we have a fixed pattern of genetics and an overlaying flexible pattern of epigenetics. And it is this flexible pattern that provides a mechanism for our subtle bodies to eventually influence the genetics of our physical body. Mutations are not in fact random events; our future genetic destiny is strongly affected by our thoughts and feelings.

Then add to this the findings of research in the fields of metaphysics, quantum science and broader genetics, for example the work done by Russian geneticists on the spectrum of DNA found in the human body known as ‘junk’ DNA. These are even more intriguing. What if human DNA was originally made up of 12 strands instead of the 2 that exist today? Our ancestors may have been giants, not only physically but also in terms of awakened consciousness. There is a school of thought that says they walked the planet in realization and awareness of their light and origin during a time period that existed well before the ancient civilizations of India, Mesopotamia and Egypt.

These 12 helixes of original DNA have also been associated with 12 chakras of yogic science. The three lower chakras – *mooladhar*, *swadhisthan* and *manipur* – are active in the animal kingdom, but human beings have the possibility of awakening and developing the higher chakras from the heart upwards.

According to Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, above the three lower chakras are 13 more – 5 associated with the heart chakra, and 8 more associated with the cosmic planes and beyond. The awakening of this final 13th higher chakra is the ultimate to which a human being can evolve in terms of consciousness. In other words, it is the pinnacle of human evolution as we know it. The awakening of all the 13 higher chakras is possible in today’s era



Mutations are not in fact random events; our future genetic destiny is strongly affected by our thoughts and feelings.

through Heartfulness Meditation, with the support of Yogic Transmission.

We also know that certain types of meditation have a positive physiological effect on our genetics by supporting the healthy maintenance of the telomeres that cap our chromosomes, and on our epigenetics by alleviating stress and bringing stillness and centeredness. Maybe our double-stranded DNA will eventually evolve into something more like that of our ancestors, or maybe it will simplify into something completely new. So what are we doing about this? What is our vision for our future humanity? Epigenetics show us that our collective consciousness will influence the result.

After all that time travel, when we return to the present, what is it that we can do? For, as the wise often assert, the past is history, the future a mystery, but the ‘present’, the here and now, is a gift.

Openness is perhaps the answer. While talk of the past, the future, theories of evolution and ancestral beings from other worlds may leave us feeling overwhelmed, openness in the present moment fills us with stability and a sense of purpose. When we act in the present, with an open, balanced state of mind, we create a solid foundation for the future.

Meditation on the heart, our center, creates that balance within. It opens our consciousness to dimensions of existence and perceptions that go beyond the five senses. Then that inner condition also radiates into everything we do. The possibilities are infinite. How open are you? ●

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When we act in the present, with an open, balanced state of mind, we create a solid foundation for the future.

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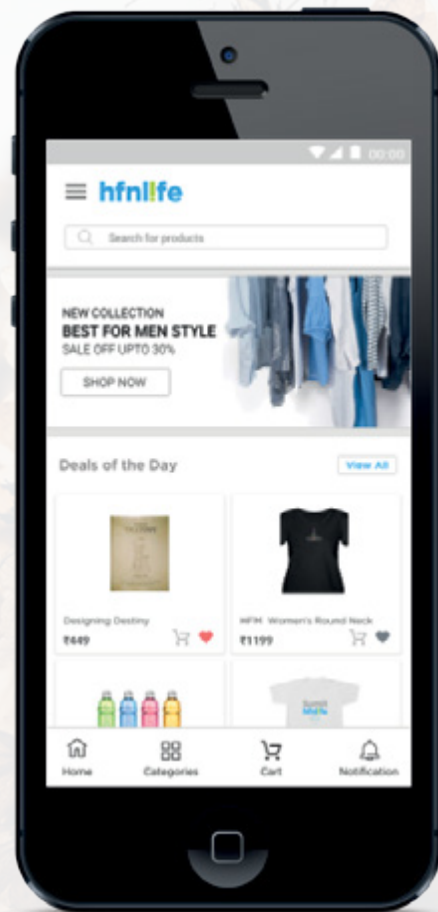
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# Solving CHALLENGES

Challenges in life prepare us for something greater. When untoward things happen we can learn from those moments. Instead of fighting, try to solve those problems without getting frustrated. If we become frustrated, our minds will be disturbed. When the very radar within us is disturbed, there will not be guidance from within and we will not be able to make the right decisions. So when challenges are there, become extra alert in a very nice way. Instead of fighting, invite them.

When we don't accept challenges, we will never understand their purpose. What could they have done for us? Where could they have taken us, to what levels? All these things will be lost the moment we reject difficulties.

Instead, try going through difficulties peacefully, with a quiet heart, with a bold heart, with a lot of courage. When we go through certain situations in life, we emerge stronger than before.

When we don't accept them, we don't learn anything. If we merely accept, we remain a mere human being. If we accept situations joyfully and cheerfully, we discover the beauty that emerges as a result.

This requires a lot of courage and self-confidence – to face life as it comes and move on – and that is how we build our destiny ●

KAMLESH D. PATEL,  
from *Designing Destiny*





# WHAT GIVES meaning to life?

**ROSALIND PEARMAN** shares her experience of what brings meaning, depth and purpose to everyday living.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRANT-RITCHIE

Like so many precious projects on our Earth, in a local small town there exists a wonderful venture that helps young people who have been homeless and are having problems rebuilding their lives. I was invited to participate in a regular session of sharing some experience on what gives meaning to life. What to say?

I could talk about a heart-based meditation called Heartfulness, but what then? On reflection, I am realizing that what has been most important about meditating on the heart has been to steadily discover more ways to feel life and living.

Many people have the idea that meditation leads us into a rather dull state of calm and withdrawal or detachment. Cartoonists often depict meditators as zoning out and floating on a cloud. Suppose it is the very opposite!

The first time I noticed an increased feeling effect, was on my return from a visit to my first teacher in this Heartfulness approach – a man called Babuji. On the plane, I plugged in the most basic kind of earphones of the '70s, and listened in rapture to the music playing. Today sound systems are marketed and sold like temples to music, the electronics endlessly refined and housed within the most exquisite wooden casings, like sculptural masterpieces. But at the end of the day, what good is the most perfect sound system if the person listening has inner distortion created by the turbulence of the stuff of everyday life?

The effect is to muffle and distort our inner ability to listen. It is difficult to be in a pure enough state

to really feel and savor beautiful music. It is not easy to find the capacity to tune in, to expand an inner space to receive, to let the music flow directly and touch us deeply. Yet this is exactly what I found had changed as a result of meditating for a few days and receiving the help of my beloved teacher in cleaning my heart.

When we are moved or touched it can be as if our heart hurts or vibrates. The hardest aspect of being human is that we are faced with such deeply sad or overwhelmingly painful experiences at times. In the short term, we can close our hearts and withdraw from the risk of that pain being repeated. We can go numb or hard or distract ourselves or hide away and try and disappear. I am sure I learned to do all those things to some degree in my earlier life.

Today, it is the very echo of those very painful moments in my heart that helps me connect and resonate every day with other human beings and with life on this planet. A lot more space has been made through the cleaning process. But it is not really empty space – it is a space of resonance. It is like a rock wall of a cave that has been carved out by water and ice and heat and pressure so that it is worn away and smoothed down. Now I feel that the human heart is big enough to hold everything, and to hold it all in compassion and kindness so that it is more bear-able. It is a place of feeling to hold feeling, to allow it to mean more and more, and to stir us more and more deeply. This is the best source of inspiration and creation.

Everything can be felt more – the sky, clouds, trees, colors, light, seasons, forms, living systems,



changes, the elements of water, air, earth and fire, children, the presence of loved ones, conversations and moving about all fill me with a very simple delight and enjoyment. That is, if I keep a daily sense of freshness and newness coming with the meditation practice. They can also be a source of much more subdued softness and comfort in bleaker times. It seems to be a way that the heart is tuned into Nature. There is a simple level of joy or ordinary relief in feeling connected with the world. The heart feels this even in dark times. We are more connected through suffering than anything else.

It is not here a matter of lists of ‘favorite things’ like the song in *The Sound of Music*. Instead, through meditation, our heart shows us that it is like a very extraordinary musical instrument, through which we attune to and amplify the sounds of everyday life. Daaji has described the heart as the center of all the spiritual centers and sub-centers in the human system and field of existence.

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Listening to this extraordinary feeling-heart instrument we can know precisely and subtly what is going on. Everything that seems outside of us in space and time can be felt very precisely within our heart as it affects and impacts us.

---

It seems then that all reflection and experience can be gathered in the heart and felt more and more deeply and widely. In deepening the resonance of any experience we feel more and more stirred, moved and inspired. It is a process of creativity in slow motion as life moves through our field of awareness. Through our heart center we feel its meaning and connection more and more like a song. This can keep reverberating on and on. It can go on being refined and understood, shared and expressed, in each moment. It is our quintessential source of intelligence through refined feeling.

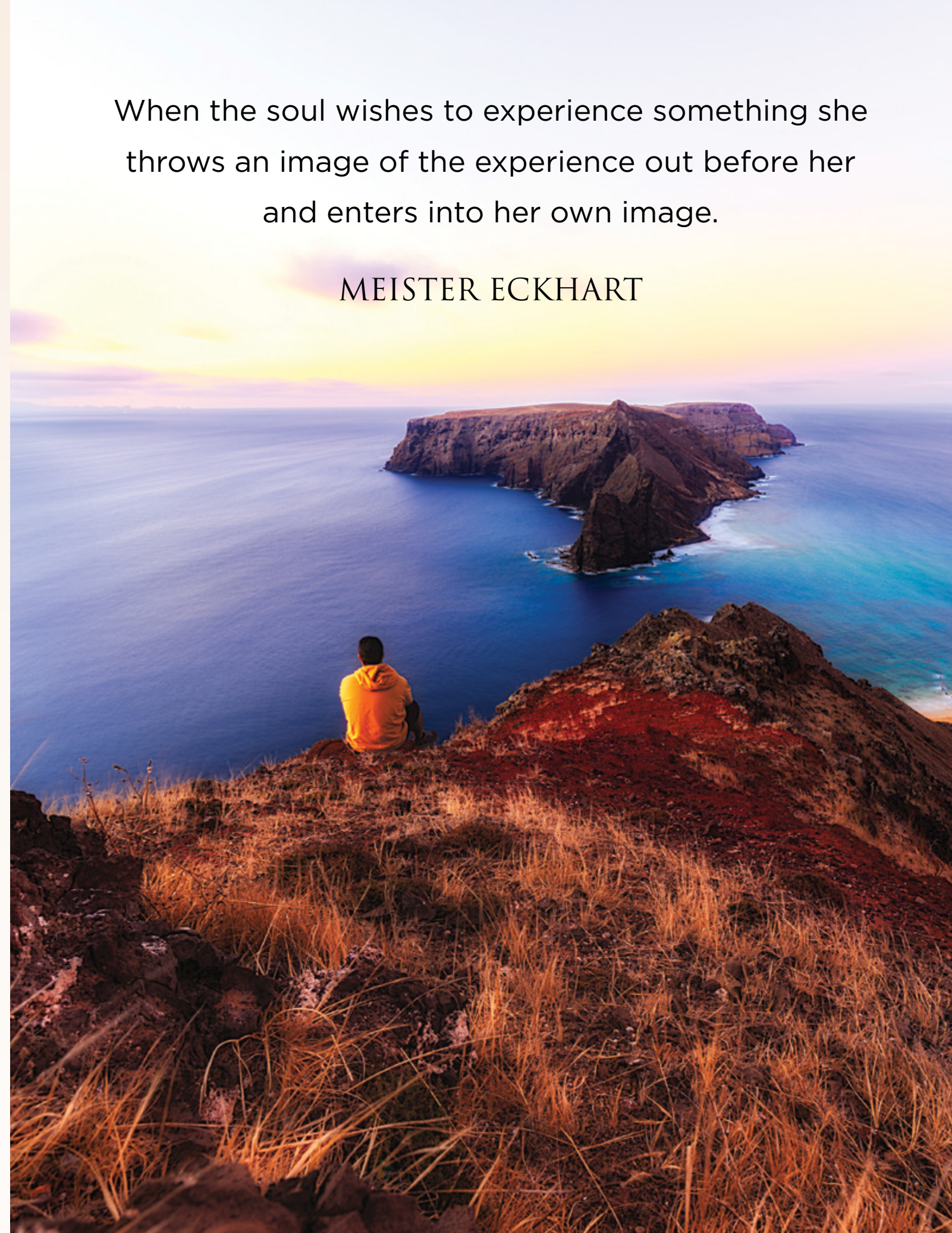
Listening to this extraordinary feeling-heart instrument we can know precisely and subtly what is going on. Everything that seems outside of us in space and time can be felt very precisely within our heart as it affects and impacts us. It is as if the heart gathers the information from the different senses and distills them into a specific sound, a vibration that is moving and meaningful, connecting us to the universal Source of all.

In meditation, the heart feels what it receives from the Source and responds to new notes, new soundless music and infinite beauty from deeper dimensions and worlds... And so it goes on.

That is what gives meaning to life for me ●

When the soul wishes to experience something she throws an image of the experience out before her and enters into her own image.

MEISTER ECKHART





# The heartfelt PRESENTER

## Influence minds and win hearts

In the last 5 articles, [RAVI VENKATESAN](#) has shared ideas about the reasons public speakers fail, the 26 Cs of good communication, body language and voice modulation, the 'power of pause' and the need for presence. In part 6 he focuses on empathy.



Most of us believe that we are very empathetic, but when we are in real-life situations most of us fail miserably in this essential human quality. In the context of public speaking, empathy can make the difference between good and great.

Empathy essentially involves putting yourself in the shoes of your audience: speaking directly to what is of interest to them, conveying what benefits them, and avoiding what is offensive to them. It is the heart of Heartful Presenting. Being empathetic as a speaker will ensure that you speak to the hearts of your audience, not just their brains.

There are 6 Cs that need to be considered:

### 01 CARING

Truly care about your topic as well as your audience.

### 03 CONNECTED

Speak to them as one of them, not at them. Use language to include yourself. Use "us" and "we" instead of "you" and "me".

### 05 CAREFUL

Avoid humor or culturally specific references that may offend.

### 02 COMPASSIONATE

Speak with an understanding of the challenges they face.

### 04 CONTEXTUAL

Know the context within which you are speaking, or set one early.

### 06 CONVERSATIONAL

Your audience will enjoy feeling like they are in a conversation. Use the interactive tools of inquiry-based learning, like asking them questions, pausing after a question for reflection, and asking them to raise their hands. This elicits active listening.

Try the following exercises with a group of friends, to develop empathy while speaking to audiences:

Deliver a eulogy at the funeral of a co-worker. Assume that you didn't know her all that well.

As a senior law enforcement officer, deliver a talk to refugees that have been refused asylum in your country, and have to turn back.

As the mayor of a city that has been devastated by unprecedented flooding, deliver a talk to a group of citizens to remain calm and patient as help arrives.

In each of these cases, don't take more than 3 minutes. Refine and repeat as many times as needed after receiving feedback from your friends on whether you came across as empathetic or not ●



# With Peace On His Shoulders

Managing Director of the Asia-Pacific, Middle-East and Africa business area for Serge Ferrari, [NITIN GOVILA](#) is constantly on the move. But despite very busy days he finds time to recharge his batteries to be in tune with himself. His secret? For 19 years now he's been meditating as an integral part of his life.

After having collaborated for seven years with a French roofing company, Nitin joined Serge Ferrari in 2016, a choice that reflects his desire to meet new challenges in a more extensive geographical area.

"Serge Ferrari stands out by their ability to be active in many market segments and have a desire to function as a local company in the countries where they are established. The Group takes on more and more local people to deal with markets that vary from country to country. The scope covered by the Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa business area means we rub shoulders and deal with various cultures that lead us to aim at both multiple and unique market segments. Such diversity makes work both very interesting and very demanding," he explains.

His first meditation experience dates back to 1998 when one of his sales managers at that time raised his awareness and introduced him to Heartfulness Meditation. This was a discovery that did not occur without questions. "It took me a certain time and understanding to plunge into the first meditation session but I've never regretted making that choice because it turned out to be a very good way to find a balance between my working life and my personal life," says Nitin.



Heartfulness Meditation began in India, and is now practiced in over 130 countries around the world. It is a silent meditation with attention centered on the heart, and it can be practiced anywhere, without excessive requirements.

"There is no dress code, nor a position to respect; just close your eyes and direct your attention to your heart. You can meditate anywhere, at any time, even in a noisy environment, in a plane, in a train, or in the office – whenever you have a moment to spare. Depending how much time you have, you can meditate for a short period of 20 or 30 minutes, or for an hour. It doesn't matter where or how long, it all depends on your willpower," explains Nitin.

As for taking an hour or more each day to meditate, he adds: "Instead of thinking we must take so much time to meditate, we need to reverse the perspective. Meditating enables us to have more time, inasmuch as a mind that has meditated allows us to do everything more efficiently."

During those 19 years of regular practice Nitin has observed many benefits:

"Meditation provides inner peace that ultimately reflects – consciously or not – outwards and is part of our ability to interact with our environment. Meditation improves our concentration. You can really manage to concentrate when your mind is not disturbed. In that respect there is also some serious reasoning to integrate: if meditation is introspective and initially requires effort, we don't concentrate in order to meditate but we meditate to develop the ability to concentrate. At Serge Ferrari, I have considerable responsibilities and so my meditation helps me face up to any problem or react to challenges in that context. That's one of the reasons why I continue with Heartfulness Meditation. And today I cannot do without it."

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Meditation provides inner peace that ultimately reflects

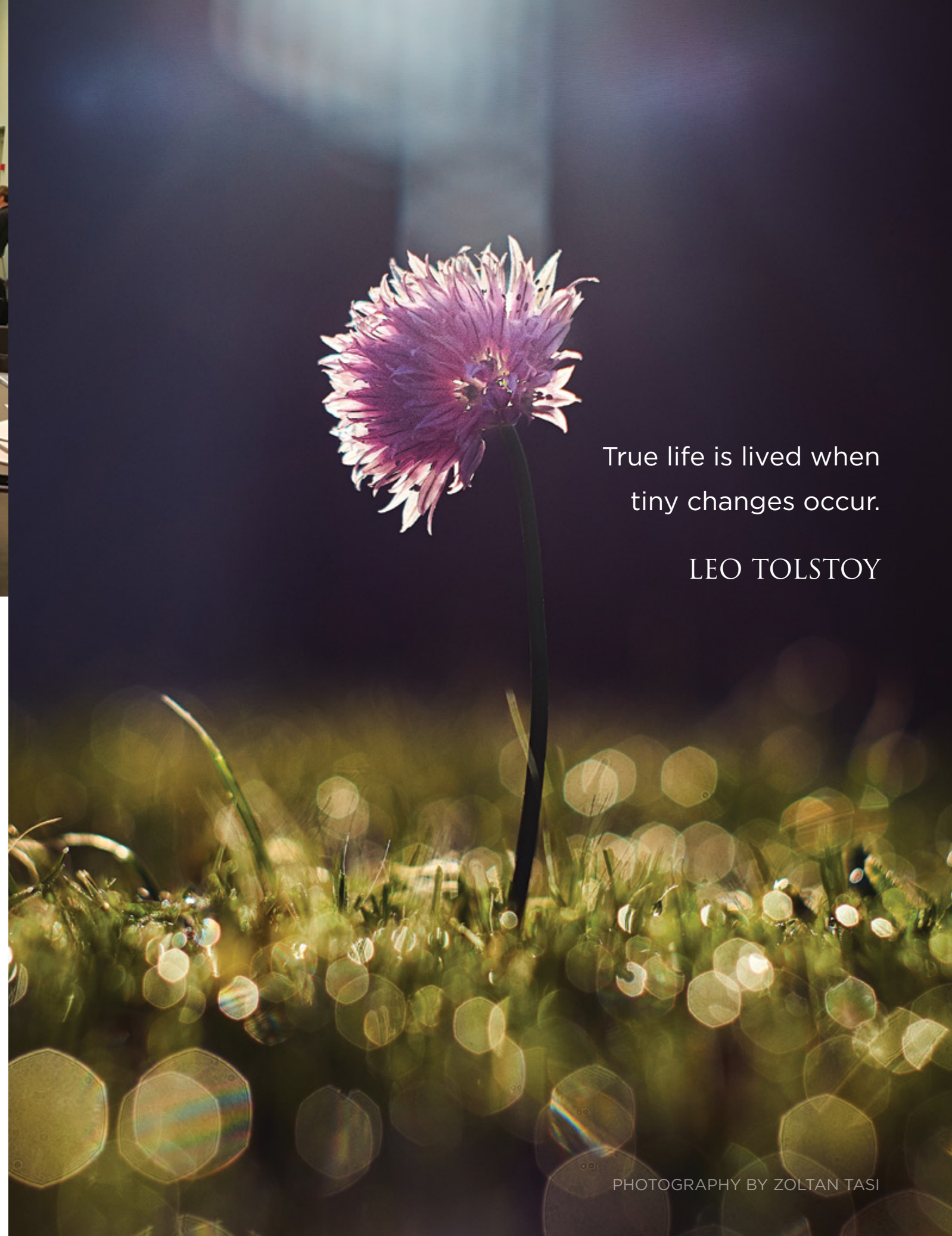
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environment. Meditation  
improves our concentration.

You can really manage to  
concentrate when your mind  
is not disturbed.

---

In 2001, Nitin became a life coach (trainer) for Heartfulness Meditation. In his spare time he accompanies people to discover meditation by giving them some keys to learning. Voluntary coaching satisfies a desire to share with others what he sees as freely accessible kindness. "No money interest motivated that choice. I simply want to exchange with people who would like to understand better what they practice," he explains. "Briefly, as you will have understood, everyone who feels the need can start and use it. All Heartfulness Meditation coaches are volunteers. Likewise, being a coach





True life is lived when  
tiny changes occur.

LEO TOLSTOY

---

At Serge Ferrari, I have considerable responsibilities and so my meditation helps me face up to any problem or react to challenges in that context. That's one of the reasons why I continue with Heartfulness Meditation. And today I cannot do without it.”

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has no hierarchical notion. Those who practice are asked to meditate at their own pace and convenience of time; we lead them all to evolve at their own pace, depending on their own feelings. When I speak for the first time with a beginner, I tell him, “You only need only one thing – your willpower.”

In short, you can understand that all who feel the need are capable of meditating. There's no particular esoteric need or initiation rite liable to stir up skepticism. It's sufficient to want and be ready to dive deep into yourself ●

Reprinted with permission from Serge Ferrari's internal magazine, *Zebu*, printed in English, French and German.



# WHAT

## lights you up?



{Q & A}

IN CONVERSATION WITH  
SUZI LULA

SUZI LULA is a counselor who values motherhood as a spiritual path. Her book, *The Motherhood Evolution*, is helping western women value the feminine principles through their role as mothers. In this interview with EMMA IVATURI, she opens up about her own experience of motherhood and how women can be role models for their children.

**Q** It's so nice to connect with you. Thanks so much for reaching out to Heartfulness Magazine and sharing your perspective with us.

Thank you, I'm also excited. I am happy to get to know you. Your website is fabulous. It's full of so much valuable information and is really inspiring. I loved it.

**Q** Suzi, tell us about yourself.

I am a huge fan of assisting moms to take care of themselves and to redefine what that even means. That's my world, my neighborhood.

**Q** I would love to hear what you've learnt by being a mother.

I think the biggest thing I've learnt is how to create a real intimate connection with my son. I think it is a connection that I have always wanted to have with my parents. So I feel proud about that.

Then to learn that motherhood was harder than I ever thought it would be. You know, I was on a spiritual path, a path of consciousness, well before I became a mother. I had meditated for a long time, so when I had my son I thought it would come easier to me than it did.

---

First I needed to learn how to identify what my needs were, and then to provide for them, and I think that's what led me to the work I do – to recognize that providing for my own needs was not selfish and taking care of myself was not selfish.

---

I think one of the biggest things I've learned is that I also have needs as a mother, because it seemed so easy to look only at my son's needs. First I needed to learn how to identify what my needs were, and then to provide for them, and I think that's what led me to the work I do – to recognize that providing for my own needs was not selfish and taking care of myself was not selfish.

**Q** Do you feel like your previous experience on a spiritual path set you up for success?

I do, because I had the basic skills that I needed. I was an avid meditator, and those skills came in handy. But I think what tripped me up, and what trips many mothers up, were the cultural messages. Because I felt selfish if I took care of myself, it became an 'either-or' thing. Either I took care of my son or I took care of myself. So I kept putting my own needs on the backburner.

It was actually my son who said to me, "Mom, you really need to learn how to smile more. You are always so serious!" That hit me hard and I realized I needed to make some changes if I was to become the 'connected' mom I wanted to be with him.

**Q** How do you feel your relationship with your son has helped you evolve as a person?

Oh my gosh! Completely! To become the mom I wanted to be for him, and the mom he needed me to be, meant resolving the unresolved issues I had. And it stretched me to really redefine what taking care of myself meant, and to recognize that I was longing to feel nourished and nurtured as a person, so that I could show up for him the way I wanted to.



**Q How can mothers find time for themselves in this age of nuclear families and broken families? Can only those people who are well-off have that luxury?**

That is a great question. I think it is another cultural misunderstanding that self-care takes a lot of time and costs a lot of money. So many of my clients are single moms, so their time is definitely of the essence. And we don't have extended families living close by as much as we need to.

I think the biggest thing to recognize is that most of us aren't taught to ask ourselves what truly lights us up in the first place. If we first take the time to connect with what lights us up, then finding the time for self-care only requires us to change our thought patterns. To recognize that I need to find that extra 20 to 30 minutes requires a certain discipline. But when I take a 20-minute walk in the park near my house, my son feels it the instant I return home, because the 'me' that walks in the door is instantly recognizable to him.

What you are asking is so important. It does take a certain amount of time but the pay-off we get by putting ourselves on the map is exponentially expanded. I took such good care of myself while I was pregnant because I thought, "Well, I have this baby inside of me," but then as soon as the baby was born I forgot about me!

**Q Have you seen motherhood evolve in the 21st century? What has stayed the same or changed in the last 50 years and where are we headed?**

I believe that what has stayed the same is what I call 'the guilt epidemic', because as mothers we feel guilty if we take care of ourselves and we feel guilty if we don't. So we are mired in this way of feeling

guilty all the time. Mothers are the untapped spiritual powerhouses of the planet, but we are often exhausted and overwhelmed. If we could end this guilt, I think we would be giving the next generation of children the biggest service we could possibly give.

Imagine if each mom realized, "I am feeling guilty out of a cultural habit," without that being connected with reality. And then imagine us as a group of mothers – I say mothers but it's really women – all coming together and deciding that this guilt is absolutely unnecessary. It adds no value to our lives. Imagine the sheer amount of energy we would have available to us. It would be incredible. It would literally change the world; it would literally change the way we parent.

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**Q Absolutely. That leads into the next question: what do you feel is the importance of the feminine principle in today's world? And how integral to motherhood is that principle?**

I think as women we are waking up to the fact that the masculine paradigm is burning us out and it's not advancing us. Women and mothers have the quality of nurturing and other feminine qualities. We need to be contributing our innate gifts.

You will find as a new mom – and it touches me to even think about this for you – that when we meet our children for the first time, whether it happens biologically or we adopt, whatever way a child comes into our lives, there is this spiritual medium that is unparalleled love. There's something that happens in our hearts that is indescribable.

As mothers we have certain qualities, like "a mother's intuition". We didn't come up with that

phrase for nothing. A mother's intuition is such a powerful feminine quality that often goes untapped. Our intuition, our hearts, and our ability to connect with others and create intimate relationships are such undervalued qualities. The qualities of the feminine can change the world, and they will certainly provide a model for our children of what is really important.

But then it's not 'either-or', right? The masculine paradigm is equally important. It's just that we will awaken in us the feminine qualities and bring the feminine into a masculine-dominated culture. We will enrich our culture, we will enhance our culture, and we will take our culture to the next level. And the same will happen while raising our children – we will include our feminine rather than leaving it out. In many households it's left out altogether because we have such an emphasis on doing; the masculine is more important. Doing the laundry is more important, and taking our kids to ten different activities is more important than having a simple, yet profound, connection with them.



**Q Can you describe more about what you see as the masculine paradigm?**

I think mothers are indoctrinated into a paradigm that tells them that taking their children to many activities after school, focusing on their grades, worrying about what preschools they go to and what colleges they go to are the things that really matter. It teaches our children to look for their sense of worth and value in their ‘doing’, their achievements, rather than their ‘being’ and the kind of person they are. It is externally oriented and very ‘doing’ oriented. We take it for granted that we need to get them into the right preschool, and when they are in elementary school they need to read early.

It’s not that we need to undervalue any of these things; sending children to school is important and finding the right school is important. I am not saying ‘either-or’. What I am saying is that when we become mothers, we get on the hamster wheel of activity, including making sure the house is clean and the dishes are done to the exclusion of our feminine qualities. Then what happens? We are out of balance. We become burnt out, overwhelmed and exhausted, and then we don’t have the bandwidth to have simple kindness, presence and patience

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And we have to make sure that we are not giving importance to all of the ‘doing’ activities to the exclusion of this gift of motherhood that we bring.

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with our children. We raise our voices and do things we swore we would never do.

Being connected with our kids takes a lot of bandwidth. It means being patient. For example, can we expect a little three-year-old with no idea of time to understand that it’s important to be ready at 8 in the morning? Can we expect an eight-year-old who doesn’t care about it to want to brush her teeth? How to have the bandwidth to be connected and have the patience to talk an eight-year-old through the process of brushing her teeth?

As mothers, we do have connectedness and patience within us; we have these feminine qualities. And we have to make sure that we are not giving importance to all of the ‘doing’ activities to the exclusion of this gift of motherhood that we bring. Does that make sense?

**Q Absolutely. It’s a beautiful clarification.**

I feel for moms. I work with moms all day long and I feel for us as a collective group, because we’re trying so hard. We’re trying to keep the house clean and be patient with our kids. Why I am so passionate about self-care is because I feel for moms. I work with many single moms and we’re all just trying to get through the day. I feel for us as a collective group because we’re trying to do such a good job, and it’s almost like we’re trying to do it single-handedly, having thrown away the feminine in favor of the masculine.

That’s why I want to empower mothers to nourish themselves, play music during the day, take time to write a journal, or whatever is their thing. This gift will benefit children more than you could possibly imagine. You know, for an 8-year-old who doesn’t want to brush her teeth, the gift of having a patient mother at the end of the day is priceless.

**Q How do you see young women blossoming so that they can contribute to this direction of humanity, and how can we better prepare them for motherhood?**

At the risk of sounding dramatic, I honestly think we could change the world and our world on that question. And it goes back to being role models for our children – both girls and boys. Just think about it: if a mom models to her daughter that it’s important to take care of herself, then her daughter grows up knowing what she needs and meeting her own needs. If she has the patience to give and serve her daughter, not from her emptiness but from her overflow, then her daughter learns to be kind with herself. If she is kind with herself and knows what her needs are, then she will not succumb to peer pressure. That young girl will feel empowered inside of her own being and have the courage to say, “No,” to the things she does not want. Think on it.

Where boys are concerned, I have a son and I want my son to see a mother who takes care of herself. If he has a partner one day, then he will be that generous man. He needs to see the feminine qualities in his life in order to value them. Then hopefully he will be that kind of man who offers women the dignity to value and care for themselves.

On a different note, I think that if children see their mothers looking after and respecting themselves it will end bullying, because a bully is someone who hasn’t learnt to value themselves and takes it out on others. When a child sees their parents taking care of themselves, they’re going to feel secure about their own needs, and this will create a different culture.

We hear the Dalai Lama say that kindness is religion, but we undervalue this simple kindness and its power. When we take the time to care for ourselves, we connect with the ability to have patience and kindness and compassion for others. When we care for ourselves, we will automatically care for the next person and this can spiral out to caring for our world, caring for humanity. I think the spiral is endless really.

**Q Beautiful. It reminds me of something my mom would always tell me: Give of your light but not of your oil.**

That’s a beautiful principle to live by. I think your mom would have been connected to her light. In these past 50 years, there have been many moms who have been working and being a mom. We need to make sure we are connected through our light so that we are not giving of our oil. That’s a beautiful saying; I have never heard it before.

**Q It’s something that a spiritual friend of hers shared with her.**

**Is there anything more you want to add?**

Only that I really want motherhood to become more visible and more valued on the planet. Thank you so much ●



# CALL FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

The mission of the Heartfulness Institute's research department is to support and facilitate a scientific approach toward contemplative practices and advance our understanding of meditation and consciousness.

The Institute invites grant applications for meditation research from individuals who will conduct independent, empirical, rigorous research. Heartfulness Institute will support grant applications ranging from \$5,000 up to a maximum of \$100,000 on a non-renewable basis.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE HEARTFULNESS RESEARCH GRANTS

Heartfulness Institute teaches meditation and contemplative practices based on Raja Yoga. Heartfulness Research funding is intended to provide resources to support foundational experiments on Heartfulness practices.

These include, but are not limited to, studies investigating behavioral, physiological, metabolic, epigenetic and neurobiological responses to the practice of Heartfulness meditation, through cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on Heartfulness practitioners compared with appropriate control subjects.

We encourage applications from researchers in other contemplative practices who are interested in applying their expertise to study Heartfulness meditation.



Heartfulness Institute  
Research Department

## ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must hold a PhD, MD or equivalent degree and have an official affiliation with a college, university, institute, medical school or other research facility.

## APPLICATIONS

The application should include:

Biosketches/CVs of the principal investigator and collaborators,

Research project description, including specific aims and hypotheses to be tested, experimental design, method of analysis of the data, and the significance and potential impact of the study,

Preliminary Data may be included if available, including data related to other meditation practices. [< 3 pages]

Resources available, budget and justification. [1 page]

## REVIEW PROCESS

We will accept applications for 2017-2018 on a rolling basis. Criteria for evaluation include significance, relevance and impact of the proposed study, applicant's research experience, and appropriateness of budget.

## WHAT IS HEARTFULNESS?

It is a modern-day system of Raja Yoga, using meditation to regulate and balance the mind. Heartfulness is a heart-based meditation practice. To learn more, please visit [www.heartfulness.org](http://www.heartfulness.org).

The basic practices are Heartfulness relaxation, meditation, cleaning and connection with the Source. Weekly individual and group meditation sessions with a trainer (either in person or via the LetsMeditate App) are recommended in order to bring about effective results.

Heartfulness Institute is a non-profit organization founded in 2016 in USA, India, France and Denmark. They are the sister organizations of Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), founded in 1945, and Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation, together present in 130 countries, with 8,000+ certified trainers, serving more than a million meditators.

SRCM is formally associated as a non-governmental organization with the United Nations Department of Public Information and works globally to advance the goals of peace, harmony and sustainability through yoga and meditation.

**PLEASE DIRECT ALL ENQUIRIES TO [RESEARCH@HEARTFULNESS.ORG](mailto:RESEARCH@HEARTFULNESS.ORG).**



## the art of Pretending

SHARADA NATARAJAN retells a wonderful old Chinese tale with an important message on how we can all get along under trying circumstances.

Once upon a time, a young Chinese girl was married and moved into her husband's home in a small village. It was a beautiful village situated in idyllic surroundings of hills and woods. But the young bride soon found herself hating the place, all because of frequent conflicts with her mother-in-law, whom she felt was too interfering. They were always at loggerheads and developed so much hatred towards each other that one day the girl decided she couldn't take it anymore. She planned to put an end to her miseries.



She came to know of an old wise man with healing powers who was living in the foothills. The villagers often went to him for advice and treatment of their mental and physical ills. One day she mustered enough courage and went to meet the old man. She explained her problems to him, saying, "The hatred is suffocating me and I want to eliminate her from my life. Please give me some poison so that I can administer it to her and all my troubles will disappear."

The old man listened patiently and said, "Oh poor girl, I pity you. I will give you a slow-killing poison, because your mother-in-law is of robust health and everyone in the village knows about the strained relations between the two of you. If something were to happen suddenly, the suspicion would fall on you. Here is a decoction made of poisonous herbs. Mix two drops in some liquid and give it to her every day for six months. Then you will see the result."

The girl was a little upset at having to wait for six more months, but also felt relieved that a solution was in sight. She accepted it with gratitude and was about to leave when the wise man stopped her and said, "Here is one piece of advice. As you are going to commit a punishable crime, take precautions not to get caught. The whole thing must look like a natural occurrence. So here is what you must do: from tomorrow, be extremely pleasant to your mother-in-law. Be kind and try to please her in every possible way. Pretend, so that when she dies from the poison you will not be blamed."


The girl hesitated, but then realized the wisdom behind the man's words. She prepared to start her 'drama' in right earnest. The girl did everything to please the old lady, so slowly her mother-in-law also started reciprocating her goodwill. All the petty quarrels and skirmishes vanished and life was becoming joyful for the entire family. She realized that what had started as 'faking' had turned into a reality. As both the women started feeling a strong bondage of love for one another, the girl's conscience started pricking.

She visited the old man again: "I had been foolish and immature to think of committing such a shameful act. Now we both are very fond of each other and I don't want to lose her. Please give me some antidote to the poison."

He smiled and said, "My dear child. I knew you would come one day like this. Love attracts love. When you give love, you will get back only love. Do not worry, my child, what I gave you was not poisonous. No harm will befall her. Go home and be happy."

So perhaps all the formal and customary wishes and greetings we follow in our everyday lives, the gestures of respect, goodwill and hospitality, do have a higher purpose. It is worth thinking about ●



A photograph of two dancers, a man and a woman, performing a synchronized pose on a rooftop. They are both wearing white clothing and have their bodies arched backwards, with their hands near their heads. The man has long dreadlocks and is wearing a rainbow-colored wristband. The woman has long dark hair. They are standing on a paved rooftop surface. In the background is a large, ornate stone building with arched windows and a green-tiled roof. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

We will discover the nature of our particular genius  
when we stop trying to conform to our own or to  
other people's models, learn to be ourselves, and  
allow our natural channel to open.

SHAKTI GAWAIN





# THURSDAY MORNING

ADITI SAXENA

It was 8:29 a.m. on Thursday, 3 August 2017, and I was waiting for the last office bus to arrive. Every morning I see a person sweeping the road, and when I see him I know that I am on time – my bus hasn't arrived yet. He sweeps the road like clockwork every day.

Today, when I reached the stop, he was not sweeping but affectionately caressing two street dogs. Next, he peeped into his shirt pocket and found 20 rupees, and then started looking for some more money in his pants. He found nothing more; just those 20 bucks. He walked towards a shop, looking back at the two wagging tails with a smile, and bought a packet of biscuits.

The entire scene appeared so heart melting. I could see three joyous souls, and then my bus arrived. I hopped in and took a seat from where the beautiful ending of this morning story unfolded in front of me. He fed the dogs with so much love that it filled my heart with prayers and hope that humanity still exists.

What a splendid start to the day: an act of generosity. A simple man not thinking of himself, knowing that he had only 20 rupees. This was an eye opener. Humans are considered to be the wisest beings, taking care of other beings around them, but how often do we feel or get to see this?

Most of us are blessed to have more than 20 rupees, more than what is needed for the day or week. It left me asking myself two questions:

- 1) Have I genuinely tried to extend help to those who need, without being asked?
- 2) Am I sensitive enough to sense this and respond to the call of nature to be a conduit to serve others?

Who was really happy here – the dogs, the sweeper or the observer? Think about it! I was so touched that I couldn't resist writing about it and every time I think of that scene it brings the moment back to me, filling my heart with love and joy.

My role model once said, #DareToThink and #TimeToTakeAction! Youth is the time of promise and effort, the time for change and the time when experienced ones share their wisdom. It is the time when we can chalk out the steps we will take to make it happen, make life happen.

I have taken my first step, have you? ●



# DESTINY & Freedom of Choice

KAMLESH D. PATEL



— Evolution of Consciousness Series —

Sometimes I am caught up in a whirlpool of troubling thoughts: Why do tragedies happen to noble people who are so good? Especially, I have been thinking about the life of Mother Sita from the ancient Indian epic tale, the Ramayana. The Ramayana is the classic hero's journey, as described by Joseph Campbell; a tale of good versus evil, where good eventually triumphs over evil in a great battle. But it is not a 'happily ever after' tale by any means. After being abducted by the evil Ravana, and rescued by her noble husband, the avatar Lord Rama, Mother Sita was then humiliated by him in public and who knows how many times behind closed doors in the palace. Eventually she was exiled to the forest without her husband, and finally swallowed up by Mother Earth.

Swami Vivekananda said about her, "To say that she was pure is a blasphemy. She was purity itself embodied – the most beautiful character that ever lived on Earth." Despite everything that happened in the epic, she did not mind her sufferings or the injustice that was dealt to her. She stayed centred in her Lord. It was a tragic story on par with any of the greatest love stories of world literature. Lord Rama never remarried, always remained faithful to her, and ended his life by voluntarily walking into the Sarayu River.

Now, was this tragedy foretold? None other than the great Saptarishi Vashistha – one of the seven sages – prophesied her marriage to Lord Rama as the perfect match. According to this great Rishi nothing could go wrong, but instead their whole life was packed with misery to the extent that Lord Rama, the 'all-knower', rejected his wife so many times. Philosophers give all sorts of logical reasons and explanations, but nothing satisfies the heart. This fundamental question keeps coming to me – how is it possible that Rishi Vashishta fixed a supposedly perfect marriage and yet so many people suffered, especially the main actors in the epic, Lord Rama and Mother Sita?

Nothing makes any sense until we discover the understanding that Heartfulness gives to us about destiny and the consequences of our choices. And even then, many things are often misunderstood. For example, many people come to a spiritual path and Guide to relinquish all responsibility for their destiny, with the hope that the Guide will somehow wave a magic wand and their lives will become peaceful and harmonious, and all their troubles disappear. Times of crisis are also when most people turn to God, in desperation, with the hope that somehow he will fix their misery. But that is not what this life is about. It is one extreme end of the spectrum of possibilities and is a big misunderstanding.

Our lives are guided by our hearts, and our hearts are constantly changing like the weather, based on our *samskaras* – the impressions, habits, likes and dislikes we have accumulated in the past. But if *samskaras* are everything, if our destinies are everything, if the Gods have decided our

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futures, we would be like robots responding to a program. There would not be any need to take birth after birth; it would have ended a long time back.

Think about this: If our destiny is completely fixed, then why would we need to make choices? And are the choices that we make every day also determined by our destiny? If it were so, then why would we need to be concerned about ethics and the consequences of our actions? Why would we need to relinquish our desires?

Desires create problems; in fact the problems they create are what prevent our evolution. Many of these stem from our *samskaras* that have come from our past, and they trouble us. But what about the desires we create in the present environment? It is these desires that interfere with our destiny.

We always have the freedom to choose. Let me give you an example: say you want an iPhone, can that desire come from the past? There were no iPhones earlier to create that *samskara* in you, so where does your wish come from? It falls into a category of *samskaras* called ‘acquisitiveness’. It could be for an iPhone or a big house or a million dollars. This acquisitiveness in turn creates many other impulses or tendencies. It diverts us from our main destiny.

Going back to the Ramayana, could Lord Rama have chosen differently? Could he have done something for his wife? He could have announced, “I accept her as she is. I have full confidence in her purity,” but he did not. Instead he abandoned her and she was exiled to the forest for a second time, because he was influenced by his people, by their judgments and his sense of duty to them.



He tested Mother Sita’s purity by asking, “You were with Ravana for almost a year. Can you prove that you did nothing wrong?” Why did he ask this? He wanted his people to see and be convinced that the king’s wife was pure. She had no argument, for she knew that she was pure. She could walk through fire with confidence, and prove her sanctity and purity.

She also could have asked Lord Rama, “My beloved, you were also a year away from me. What did you do in the jungle alone?” but she kept quiet; she could not believe it. Lord Rama interrogated Mother Sita publically because of the pressure he felt to please his people. In this case, destiny was altered by the interference of others and the consequences of his choice.

Earlier in the epic there was another instance of interference, this time from family members, leading to the first exile of Rama and Sita. Rama’s father, King Dasharatha, had a younger wife who wanted her son to rule the kingdom instead of Rama. As a result of her influence over her husband, and Rama’s obedience and sense of duty, the couple were exiled to the forest where Ravana kidnapped Sita. Once again we could ask: Could Lord Rama have chosen differently?

In a similar way, we are also not islands. We are influenced by others and decisions are made on our behalf by so many people. Such interference changes destinies. Lord Rama did not have a difficult destiny in his fortune, but others created turbulence and the rest of the epic speaks for itself.

The second avatar of ancient India, Lord Krishna, tried to change people’s notion of duty. He said, “Yes, you must perform your duty as a king, as prescribed,” but hundreds of times during the great epic of the Mahabharata, he told Bhishma, “You are doing the wrong thing by pledging an oath of loyalty to the throne of Hastinapur. There is nothing like loyalty to a kingdom. Our loyalty is to the truth, to *dharma*. Take the side of right.” Bhishma didn’t understand these concepts because he was still living with the old values, with his sense of loyalty to the throne of Hastinapur.

Lord Krishna introduced a great concept: even if you perform a good action, with very noble, pious intentions, if it is done with some motive it will turn out to be a sinful action. Why? Because at the base of it is the desire of gratification for doing something good. This aspect, of doing good things for self-satisfaction, promotes and fuels the ego, and the ego is the biggest culprit that keeps us separate, not only from each other, but also from the Source itself.

Imagine there is a big ocean and we put an earthenware pot in it. It will quickly fill up with water, and the water inside the pot and outside is the same. Imagine balloons floating in the sky – there is air inside and outside, separated by plastic. We are like those earthenware pots and balloons, with our own individual existence immersed in the universal existence. We remain individuals floating in the entire existence, and we are like that because of our own individualized creation, which began with the first separation.



So how can we re-unite with the original Source once again? Heartfulness comes to our rescue with methods to transcend all that separates us, and it gives us a higher purpose to life, the ultimate destiny of re-uniting with the Source.

It is easy to read the following passage from the Bhagavad Gita: “You have the right to work only but never to its fruits. Let not the fruits of action be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction.”<sup>1</sup> We can understand the concept, but it is difficult to implement. Even for simple things like going to a restaurant to have lunch, we must plan; we must decide to walk or drive, choose which way to go, and go in a way that will not disturb the people around us.

The goal of our choices is always in sight, whether it is big or small. It is always there. How can I not think of the fruits before I engage myself in any action? Why would I not think of my higher goal before I attempt to meditate? We practice Heartfulness with this higher goal in mind. Is not the goal the fruit of our actions? We do not forget the result – we keep the goal in mind, and lead a lifestyle suitable for fulfilling that goal. Anything less and we fail. It is the same principle for an athlete, an astronaut or a spiritual seeker.

The fruit of our meditation and lifestyle changes is union with the highest principle – to be one with that Ultimate state. It is only possible when the drop merges with the ocean, and how can the water in the earthenware pot merge in the ocean? When the earthenware pot breaks.

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Our dream is to bring about such oneness, such unity, though we are separate individuals, so that we dissolve into each other, with harmony and mutual respect at the very least. And with this harmony, with this unity, we will trigger a new society.

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The earthenware pot within us is related to consciousness. There is no special entity called the ego that we can pinpoint and say, “The ego is here.” The ego has a lot to do with consciousness. If the sun and other stars were not there in the sky, what would happen? Imagine the color of space before creation; there was utter darkness, no light. The Vedas and Upanishads praise light so much, and that makes sense when we understand light as knowledge, light as Realization, light as understanding, light as a function of consciousness.

And knowledge and understanding are not absolute – they come in stages of enlightenment, as we continue on our inner journey towards a higher destiny. When we meditate for the first

time, the oneness we feel is a certain experience. We feel peace, but that peace at the beginning is different from the peace we feel when entering the Cosmic Region, or the peace we feel at chakra 12. In chakra 2 of the heart region, the peace we feel is very intense, yet the peace we feel at chakra 12 is sublime and so different. There is no contradiction in it, no opposite to it. In the heart region, from chakras 1 to 5, all the worldly polarities or opposites remain. As we move into the cosmic region, there is a unity of a different order, and some time after crossing chakra 8, we can truly appreciate the meaning of *brahmacharya*.

What is *brahmacharya*? One who dwells in Brahman all the time. It has nothing to do with celibacy. We transcend, by unifying the duality of the masculine and feminine currents within, the positive and negative polarities within. Everything settles down and we find absolute oneness from inside, though there may be so many contradictions all around us. Thus the state of *brahmacharya* finds its true meaning when we start dwelling in the cosmic region, *Brahmanda Mandal*.

Sublimating the ego dissolves all barriers so that we can become one with everything. We become one wholesome entity, no longer partisan towards this or that, no longer affected by likes and dislikes, and no longer suffering the gravitational pulls of the heart region. Our dream is to bring about such oneness, such unity, though we are separate individuals, so that we dissolve into each other, with harmony and mutual respect at the very least. And with this harmony, with this unity, we will trigger a new society.

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<sup>1</sup>Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2, verse 47.



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The oneness within us will create oneness all around, just as the world can only be at peace if we are individually at peace. The world may be in a state of unrest, but when each one of us is at peace it is a lot better. And when there are many of us at peace there will be world peace.

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There is a lot of talk about mutation, as mutation is the fastest way of evolution. Whatever genetic pattern we have inherited from our parents is fixed – as fixed as our destiny. But we have freedom of choice to change our destiny, and similarly we can also change our genetic pattern. For example, when we are angry, our thoughts become erratic. What happens to our heart rate? What happens to our blood pressure? All this affects the mind. The mind is not a neutral witness to what happens inside; even the physical structure of the brain is affected.

What happens when we are afraid, depressed or anxious? What happens when we are happy, joyful and inwardly peaceful? What happens to the fetus inside a mother who is reverential,

understanding, wise, peaceful and compassionate? Neurotransmitters are released that promote well-being, so imagine the lasting effects mothers can have, not just by transferring their genetic code to their child, but also by their thoughts and behavior. This is called the science of epigenetics. The effects of the mother's thoughts, the father's thoughts, their behavior, environmental circumstances and television can change everything.

That is why the tradition in India was always to send a pregnant woman to her parents' home. She was happier there, and did not have to work so hard in the fields. She could give creative time, quality time to the child growing inside her, and give birth in familiar, comfortable, loving surroundings. Our elders were wise and scientific, but they made a rule out of it so people would follow, and this became a religious ritual. This is how most rituals came into being.

Although the genes from parents are fixed, the environment plays a major role in the development of a fetus. External things change the epigenetic pattern. Likewise, although our destiny, our fate, our *samskaras* may be fixed, they can also be changed. It depends upon how flexible we are. We have the freedom to choose. And what brings about this flexibility? A mind and heart free of the rigidity of *samskaras* from the past.

If you want your destiny to be oneness, the first step is to be truthful. That is a choice you can make. Whatever you have in your heart, recognize it, become aware of it. It is a simple exercise to start with, and you will soon see how being truthful helps you to evolve so fast.

And if you like meditation, expand the possibilities that meditation can bring by remembering the five vowels – **a, e, i, o, u**. First **acquire** the condition by meditating. Then hold onto it, enrich it, give life to it by remembering it again and again; **enliven** it. Then **imbibe** it in every cell and ultimately in your heart. And then bring about **oneness**; **unite** with the one who gives it to us. It is very simple:

With every meditation,

with every condition that we **acquire**,

we must be able to **enliven** it,

**imbibe** it

and then be **one** with it,

**unite** with it.

The oneness within us will create oneness all around, just as the world can only be at peace if we are individually at peace. The world may be in a state of unrest, but when each one of us is at peace it is a lot better. And when there are many of us at peace there will be world peace. It is sufficient that we change ourselves – that is more than enough. If we try to change the world we will fail. The Heartfulness movement is not about changing the world, but the world will change when people embrace meditation ●

## ABOUT KAMLESH D. PATEL

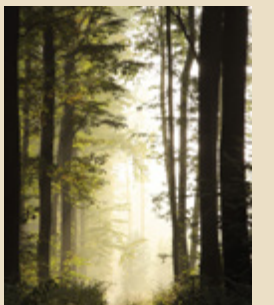
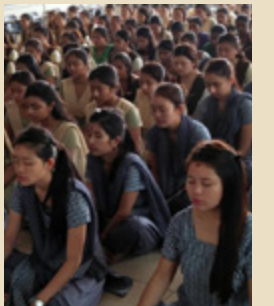
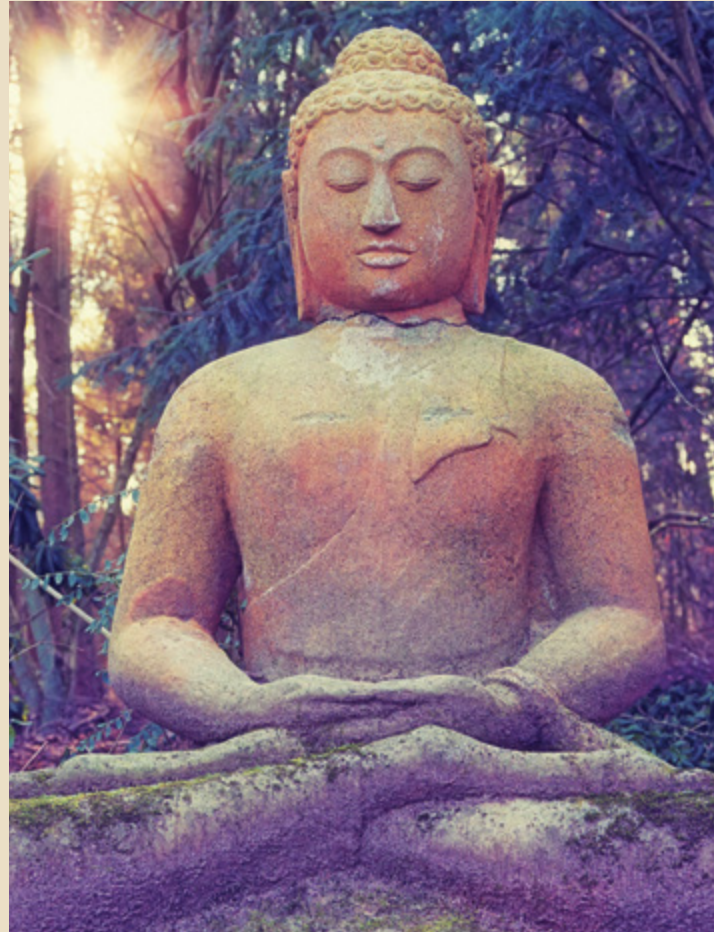
*Kamlesh Patel is the world teacher of Heartfulness, and the fourth spiritual Guide in the Sahaj Marg system of Raja Yoga. He oversees Heartfulness centers and ashrams in over 130 countries, and guides the thousands of certified Heartfulness trainers who are permitted to impart Yogic Transmission under his care.*

*Known to many as Daaji, he is also an innovator and researcher, equally at home in the inner world of spirituality and the outer world of science, blending the two into transcendental research on the evolution of consciousness. He is expanding our understanding of the purpose of human existence to a new level, so necessary at this pivotal time in human history.*



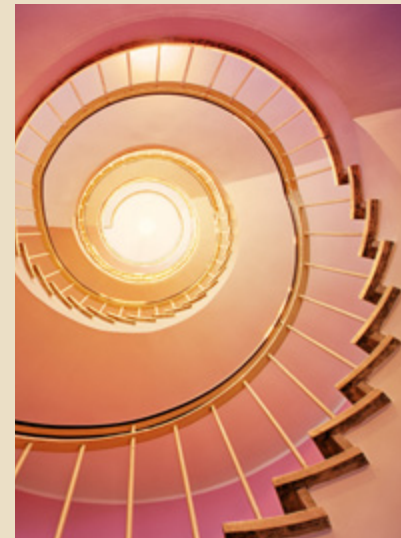


# Meditation



Can there be joy without peace?  
Can there be peace without harmony?  
Can there be harmony without contemplation?  
Can there be contemplation without thinking?  
Can there be focused thinking without meditation?

KAMLESH D. PATEL





# THE JOURNEY FROM PARADISE TO DUALITY AND BACK

BRETT I. COHEN and ELISSA COHEN explore duality and oneness through the creation story of Christianity



PHOTOGRAPHY BY WJAREK / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

In the Judeo-Christian religions, the biblical story of creation is found in the Book of Genesis. Like most creation stories, it is full of magic and symbolism about our origins and the origins of all life. It starts with the sequence of creation, eventually leading to Adam and Eve. The word 'Adam' is from the same root as 'atom', which comes from the Greek *atomos*, meaning indivisible. The word 'Eve' is from the Hebrew root word meaning to breathe or to live. They are created as

the first man and woman on Earth – the ancestors of all human beings. In this worldview humanity is a single family, all descended from a single source.

Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden, a paradise on Earth created by God as a home for his newly created humans. What follows is the separation or 'fall' of Adam and Eve from unified consciousness with God to separation and subsequent existence

in duality. This fall of Adam and Eve into the consciousness of duality was the entry of human beings into the world of suffering, pain and death.

Did you know that this creation story has two narratives? In the first, Adam and Eve are not mentioned by name and are described as being created in God's image, where both male and female were created at the same time. The male and

female were then instructed to multiply and to be stewards over everything that God had created.

In the second narrative, God forms Adam from the dust of the Earth and plants a garden east of Eden in which he places Adam. In this garden God plants beautiful trees that provide good fruit for sustenance. The Tree of Life was in the midst of the garden, as was the Tree of the Knowledge of



good and evil. Adam is told that he may eat the fruit from all of the trees in the garden except for the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. The price to be paid for eating from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil would be death. Eve is then created from one of Adam’s ribs as a helper to Adam.

At this point, Adam and Eve have no knowledge of good and evil and therefore in their nakedness they are unashamed. A cunning serpent then tempts Eve to eat the fruit from the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. The serpent claims that if Eve eats the forbidden fruit she will not die but instead she will become like God and know good and evil. Eve believes that the fruit will make her wise, so she eats the fruit and then gives some of the fruit to Adam. After eating the fruit their eyes are opened. They suddenly identify themselves with their bodies and feel that these bodies are something to be ashamed of, something to hide. This is the birth of fear, shame and sin, marking the separation of consciousness and the

subsequent descent into egotistic consciousness. God curses the serpent, and then banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to begin their lives of pain and toil outside of the garden.

Non-duality has the literal meaning of “not two” and can also be described as “one undivided without a second”, unity with “non-separation” (Katz 2007). The concept of non-duality is found in various religions and spiritual traditions throughout the world (Harvey 2013, Katz 2007, Loy 1988). The ego is part of the conscious mind and is also part of the identity that we consider ourselves to be (Katz 2007, Loy 1988). The ego is also described as an inflated feeling of superiority over others, as well as a feeling of inferiority in relation to others. The ego is also responsible for pleasures and desires as well as aversions. The dissolution of the ego reveals the presence of non-dual consciousness. This leads to a complete loss of subjective self-identity (Katz 2007, Loy 1988). In other words, the transcendence of the ego allows for the awareness of unity consciousness in which One is undivided without a second. This

realization of unity can be considered to be a post-egotistic state, or in other words, the return to paradise.

There is a lot of theological discussion as to why there are two creation narratives. It is interesting that from the outset of the Old Testament the question of duality, as it relates to the reason for the two stories of creation, is aroused. This can be seen as the foreshadowing of the ‘fall’ of human consciousness from non-duality to duality (two), the basis for the entire journey of humanity that is to follow.

The second creation story of Adam and Eve has numerous descriptions of the ‘fall’ from non-duality (unity with God) to duality (separation from God). After eating the fruit, the fall from non-duality to duality begins. Adam and Eve hide from God because they are fearful. These feelings of fear and shame are the first indications that the fall to duality consciousness has happened.

that a dramatic change in their way of relating has happened; a split has occurred. Whereas before there was harmony and unity (paradise), now there is hiding, shame and blame (separation). These personal emotional responses of Adam are due to his developing ego.

The creation story ends with Adam and Eve banished from the Garden of Eden, which is symbolic of their separation and the rise of the ego. They are told they will now have to enter into an existence of suffering, which is the hallmark of separation consciousness in various religious traditions.

The fall of Adam and Eve has been depicted in religious art throughout time, e.g.. Michelangelo’s great work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. In this painting, the contrast of the state of non-dual consciousness and egotistic consciousness, before and after the fall, could not be more evident.

God asks Adam, “Who told you that you are naked?” This indicates that a voice other than God’s had arisen in Adam and God is aware of it. This is the first instance of the voice of the ego in the experience of humanity. God then asks Adam and Eve if they have eaten from the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. Adam blames Eve for their disobedience. This reaction of blaming others shows the rise of egotistical consciousness and duality. It is evident

The journey out of the Garden of Eden is the end of one story but the beginning of another. The possibility of an eventual return to the Garden is left open: the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life in its midst are preserved yet constantly guarded. The question of whether humanity will transcend egotistic consciousness, return home to the Garden of Eden and eat from the Tree of Life is yet to be answered●

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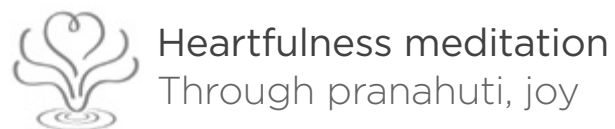
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## Three ways to experience Heartfulness Meditation

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Meditate every morning in the comfort of your own home.

Meditate in a group with friends and colleagues in your organization.

Join the millions who meditate for universal peace and love at 9 p.m. daily for 15 minutes.

### To meditate

Sit comfortably, close your eyes and relax.

Turn your attention inwards and take a moment to observe yourself. Then, gently make a suggestion that the source of light that is already within your heart is attracting you from within.

Do this in a gentle and natural way. There is no need to concentrate. If you find your awareness drifting to other thoughts, gently come back to the idea of the light in your heart.

Feel immersed in the light in your heart, and let yourself become absorbed.

Remain absorbed within this deep silence for as long as you want, until you feel ready to come out.

Afterwards, scan your system and make a note of what you felt and observed. Try to carry that inner connection with you throughout the day.

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Led by

Erin Michelle Threlfall

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# YOU ARE *beautiful*

‘You Are Beautiful’ began in 2002 as a sticker spreading a hopeful message through public art. Our goal? To be a positive force and transmit a simple idea: everyone deserves to feel good. Soon, we were shipping stickers around the globe, in one hundred languages. Since then, our project has actively combatted negativity by distributing millions of stickers, and grown into various large-scale wood installations and murals, as well as collaborations with many designers, students and artists worldwide. Our community-based messages always include your voice, and we invite you to keep sharing hope with our world.











# The Power OF HEART

DR JAMES R. DOTY addresses health care professionals on the capacities we all have as human beings to bring care and compassion to the field of medicine through the power of the human heart.



Caring for others is an extraordinary privilege that's granted to very few, and sometimes we get lost with other aspects of medicine that actually aren't related to caring. So I thank all those who are here and those who by the nature of their profession also care, because fundamentally that's the core of what we really are and that very action, in and of itself, is what defines our humanity.

I am an atheist, actually, but I've had the joy of spending time with some of the greatest spiritual leaders in the world: Amma, Sri Sri Ravishankar, the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, Sadhguru, Eckhart Tolle and others. I have to tell you that the basis for who they are and, frankly, the fundamental basis for every religious and spiritual tradition is Heartfulness. This idea of opening our hearts, of having unconditional love, compassion and caring for others is really at the soul of who we are.

In the modern world we are very distracted. We are a species who probably have the greatest ability to remember the past and also perceive a future, and the very nature of those two qualities fights against our desire to be present. Our true nature is really to be present. And when we are present, it allows us to connect with everyone as they truly are. But this is a challenge in the modern world.

I just want to share with you a thing I do sometimes to be present. I built my house 3 or 4 years ago and in the backyard there's a hardscape made of concrete with large squares. Between the squares there are loose stones.

My wife said to me, "Why are you doing that? Every time someone comes over or the kids play,

all these loose stones will get dislodged."

I looked at her and said, "That's okay."

I'm a sort of perfectionist sometimes so she was very surprised and responded, "I can't believe you're saying that!"

I said, "Well, I'll show you once it is done."

The stones are always getting messed up, so when I come home every day, the first thing I do is to take control of my emotional reaction and then walk around and replace every stone. In some way, this impermanence makes me focus on the present and centers me to interact with my family again. It is similar to the purpose of creating sand mandalas in some traditions, where they spend days on these incredibly beautiful designs and, when they are done, they let go of them instantly.

I also have a modern sculpture of the Buddha in my backyard, and the interesting thing about this statue is that it is headless and it sits holding a glass persimmon. The sculpture reminds me not to get lost in my intellect but to focus on my heart, because that's what often distracts us from our true selves. Also, a persimmon can be very hard and bitter initially, but if we are patient and thoughtful, the fruit becomes soft and sweet. When we reflect on this we understand that suffering, too, is actually a wonderful fruit that allows us to understand our true selves and our true potential as human beings.

Over a period of time, the idea of compassion, Heartfulness and caring for others kept coming forth, and although I always tried to act with that intention I really wanted to do a deeper inquiry. So in 2007-2008 I funded a variety of research projects with a group of neuroscientists and psychologists, to study these behaviors at a deeper level using the

Instead of being reactive, you now act with discernment and are able to incorporate your memories, experiences and things you've learned into decision-making. When you're not stressed or anxious or fearful, you are much more creative and productive.

tools of neuroscience. It became clearly evident that compassion, Heartfulness, kindness and caring not only define who we are as a species, but they are fundamental to our health and well-being.

With the right intention, practices like Heartfulness and the Compassion Cultivation Training, conducted by us at Stanford University, stimulate the vagus nerve that connects to our heart. This results in engagement of the parasympathetic nervous system. When this system is engaged, blood pressure goes down, heart function improves, immune system is boosted, genes that are typically associated with the expression of inflammatory proteins are suppressed, and cortisol levels go down to normal.

Engaging your parasympathetic nervous system also allows the area of your brain that is associated with executive functions to be at its best. Instead of being reactive, you now act with discernment and are able to incorporate your memories, experiences

and things you've learned into decision-making. When you're not stressed or anxious or fearful, you are much more creative and productive.


Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who was imprisoned during the Holocaust, had understood what he calls the pause between a stimulus and a response. It's in the pause that everything happens, because during that pause you understand the nature of reality and act with discernment. Practices that promote altruism and compassion allow for such essential pauses in our lives.

Thus it is evident that these practices not only benefit the individual, but also have a huge impact on a variety of domains. In the education system, they can improve attendance and academic performance. In the healthcare system where we have a crisis of stress, anxiety, burnout, these practices allow us to not be as reactive, to be more thoughtful, to calm ourselves, and to look at others and understand their suffering. In business, they can increase productivity and creativity by decreasing stress and anxiety. Studies show that this, in turn, increases the share value of the company. Incorporating these practices in the field of law and justice can decrease violence and recidivism, and shifts our attitude from policing against the law-breakers to reaching out to help them by recognizing that after all we are like each other.

I hope this has given you a brief understanding of the power we have within ourselves, the power to reach who we truly are, and the power to change every life around us ●

EXCERPTS FROM THE KEYNOTE TALK GIVEN AT THE CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE AT THE FREMONT HEARTFULNESS CENTER, CA, USA, ON 25 FEBRUARY 2017





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



# Roasted root vegetables and walnut cheese

with rosemary peach chutney

## vegetables

**An assortment of colored beets, carrots and white and black radishes**  
**Black mustard seeds**  
**Olive oil**  
**Sea salt**

For a softer texture, peel the vegetables, but for more strength (and fiber!), leave the skin on and gently scrub.

Cut into similarly sized yet irregular pieces to create an interesting and varied look.

Precook the vegetables by steaming for 10 minutes while preheating the oven to 180°C. Place the vegetables on an oven-safe dish. Space the vegetables tightly, but without overlapping. Sprinkle the salt and mustard seeds and covering with a generous amount of olive oil. Stir the vegetables so they are well coated with seasoning.

Cook for 20 minutes just until golden. Remove from oven and cover with a thick cloth.

## walnut cheese

**Option 1, preparing 2 days in advance:**  
**200 g walnuts**  
**30 g quality unpasteurized miso**  
**100 ml mineral water**  
**One sprig of nasturtium (or any other aromatic fresh flower or herb – borage, parsley, sage)**

Soak the walnuts overnight. In the morning, blend with mineral water and miso. Place in a large, clean glass jar.

Let ferment for 12 to 24 hours, at room temperature, just until the mixture is aerated (it will become bubbly and creamier) and a good odor emerges.

Mix in the coarsley chopped herbs.

**Option 2, to prepare the same day, without fermentation**  
**Proceed with the previous recipe and use immediately**

## chutney

**2 large yellow peaches, peeled**  
**1 small red onion**  
**olive oil**  
**1 sprig fresh rosemary**  
**1 c à c coconut sugar (or honey or rapadura...)**  
**1 c à s red wine vinegar (or apple cider)**  
**pinch of salt**

Finely chop the onion and cut peaches in medium pieces. In a small saucepan, sauté the onions in the olive oil, just until soft, but not browned. Add rosemary, stirring briefly. Add the peaches, vinegar, sugar and salt. Let cook over very low heat, covered for 10 minutes, without stirring to avoid damaging the fruits. Remove the cover and allow to reduce for 10 minutes more.

**To find out more about Félicie,**  
visit [felicietocze.fr](http://felicietocze.fr)

## to serve

Place the vegetables on shallow plates, next drop a spoonful of walnut cheese, then on top of that, chunks of peach chutney. Decorate with coarsely chopped nasturtium flowers.



Recipe by **Félicie Tocze**



# turmeric latte

## preparation of turmeric paste

### INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup of turmeric powder  
1/2 tablespoon of ground pepper  
1/2 cup of filtered water

### METHOD

Mix all ingredients in a bowl that is sitting in boiling water of medium strength. After mixing for some minutes you will get a thick paste. Store it in an airtight jar in the refrigerator.

## preparation of turmeric milk

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup of cows milk, coconut milk or almond milk  
1 tablespoon of coconut oil  
1/2 teaspoon of turmeric paste and honey

### METHOD

Mix the milk, coconut oil and turmeric paste in a pot on a low heat. Warm the mixture. Do not let it boil. Add honey at the end if desired.

## benefits

This is an ancient Indian drink. It ensures health and longevity and may even have the ability to kill carcinogenic cells. It may also help against the following diseases: arthritis, back pain, female reproductive imbalances, sleep disorders, depression and stress.

Studies have shown that turmeric acts as an antioxidant, destroys bacteria, viruses and fungi, has anti-inflammatory properties, and contains a multitude of nutrients including protein, fiber, vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin K, sodium, copper, iron, zinc, magnesium and vitamin B3.

Recipe by **Pravan Banda**





# Interconnectedness

{Q & A} IN CONVERSATION WITH  
DR VANDANA SHIVA

**Q** Dr Shiva, you have been working tirelessly for years to bring awareness and change in the field of sustainable agriculture and ecological diversity, in India and around the world. Have we progressed? What are some of your most satisfying achievements to date?

I think the recognition that the Earth is sacred, the rights of all her beings are inviolable, is growing. This is what has inspired me to spend a lifetime in the service of the Earth and defending the rights of those people who depend upon the Earth.

In terms of what are the satisfying achievements, one is saving this valley where we are sitting, which is my birthplace. I returned here<sup>1</sup> because the ministry had asked me to do a study on potential mining in this region, and our study stopped the mining going ahead. It was the first case in India where the Supreme Court ordered that commerce had to stop if it was destructive in taking away people's life support systems.

The work I started to do with saving seeds has been satisfying in and of itself, because seeds are such important teachers of renewability, generosity and diversity, and all of that has guided my work.

Regarding the legal issues, I'm satisfied that having woken up to how seeds were under threat, and starting seed saving, I was able to work with our

government and our parliament to put laws in place that defend the integrity of seed – article 3J of our patent laws. I was asked to help draft the Plant Variety and Farmers' Rights Act so that we have the rights of farmers written in black and white. I was asked to help draft the Biodiversity Act, which makes it an obligation to protect biodiversity.

Then there are the things we started, such as the Community Biodiversity Register, documenting what is there, and all of that is now government policy. I can go to the remotest area and people are collecting this indigenous knowledge.

Then there have been the legal victories against the big giants, for example, our struggle against the patenting of neem. We fought it for 11 years and won. Basmati rice from Dehra Dun was patented by a Texas company, but we had that reversed. The wheat of India was patented by Monsanto and they also had to give up that patent. We were entering a new age of colonialism where instead of grabbing territory and saying, "This is ours," they were now grabbing life, biodiversity, indigenous knowledge and saying, "We are the inventors." And I think we put a brake on that bio-piracy epidemic. It still happens, but it would have been the norm if we hadn't stopped it. It is now the exception.

I think that studying the Green Revolution, when the Punjab erupted in violence and the Bhopal tragedy took place, we've now been able to show that we can grow more food while protecting the



KARL AHNEE / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Earth. We can feed two Indias through ecological farming. Our farmers earn ten times more by not being addicted to poisons.

So each of these things is on the one hand inspired in a deep way by the integrity of the Earth, and on the other hand has also managed to reverse some of the really destructive assumptions of industrial agriculture and the greed associated with industrial globalization.

**Q** Thank you. You are very modest – you didn't mention the international influence you have had. I am aware of your trips to Geneva and your current work with ecocide and the rights of planet Earth, which leads us to the next question: what are the most pressing ecological issues of our time? What are a few practical things that all of us can do to bring change for the better?

I think that the most important ecological issue of our time is to stop this illusion that we are separate from Nature, that we are masters of the Earth, and that we can manipulate the Earth and other beings as we want. Because whatever we do to other creatures, some privileged powerful human beings also do to other human beings.

We have driven other species to extinction a thousand times faster than normal rates. We are also doing so much to drive the human species to extinction with the disasters we have created. But this is not inevitable. We could instead start functioning within the reality that we are members of this Earth family. We are not outside the Earth, we are part of the Earth, and any violence to any strand of the web of life is violence to ourselves. That waking up will help us recognize the limits we must respect, rather than following the illusion of limitless growth. It will help us create a better world for ourselves and others by using less. Because it is

<sup>1</sup>Navdanya Biodiversity Farm, Shisham Bara, Uttarakhand, India



not the case that by predating on the Earth we are having better lives.

The single thing everyone can do is change the way we eat. Eating right is an important step. We are today eating food that is the result of industrial farming. It is nutritionally empty, toxic and uniform, and does not meet the needs of the planet or our own needs. 75% of the ecological destruction on the planet is because of industrial farming and a globalized food system. 75% of the diseases are related to that same food system.

So we need to change our eating to be more conscious, recognizing that we are the food we eat – it is not separate, it is not a commodity, it is not fuel for our body as a machine. We are living, sacred temples, and food is itself a sacred gift. We have to bring that sanctity back. We have an ancient saying, “Anna Brahma,” meaning food is the creator. The creator is embodied in the food.

So in the simple act of eating, we can start protecting the planet, we can start reversing climate change, we can start reversing species extinction, we can start solving the water problems, we can reverse desertification and we can build up our health. And it would be stupid not to take that small step.

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The single thing everyone can do is change the way we eat.

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**Q India is a fast emerging nation with a young population. How can the youth best participate in a new paradigm so they have a hopeful future?**

First, we are not emerging from anything! We are an ancient nation, and the word ‘emerging’ was given to us by the globalized economy, which has treated us as an emerging market for itself. An ancient civilization of 10,000 years doesn’t emerge it evolves. It evolves to the next step.

Now the next step could be a very smudged photocopy of the failed western paradigm of consumerism, resource exploitation, competitiveness and dissatisfaction. It is a paradigm that is designed to destroy work. Youth has no place in that paradigm, because it cannot create work.

How do we make sure that young people in India are able to have a future? I think the first thing is to learn the deep principles of our civilization, of an ecological civilization. To learn from people like Gandhi the dignity of labor, where he would spin cloth as the way to freedom, rather than say, “I am going to be a serf in a giant mill or a giant garment industry.” He recognized that climbing another step in slavery is not progress, but breaking out of a slavery system is liberation.

We need to learn from the Buddha, who was also born in this land, the teaching of compassion. The current economic model teaches us how to be cruel, how to be brutal. And India is living that brutality, whether it is in violence against women, raping 2-year-old babies, or murdering 7-year-old children in school. This is not the India I know. This is an India that has become distorted. It is wasting too many lives. We need to reclaim India. And reclaiming India is where the youth will have a place.

**Q What is your vision for humanity? Where are we headed? How will we get there?**

My vision is that we are human to the extent that we recognize non-human life and our dependence on it. Our humanity does not come from separation. Our humanity does not come from how violent we can be, and how exploitative can we be. That is not being human. Being human means being part of the Earth, having compassion, spreading love.

My dream, first and foremost, is to continue to do what I have done for more than 50 years, but also respond to the new challenges. A brilliant scientist like Stephen Hawking said that either we will be extinct in 100 years or we will escape to other planets. My response to him is, “You guys of science, the powerful ones, have escaped too many times and trampled on too much.”

It is irresponsible to destroy this Earth, to be violent against Mother Earth, and continue that hubris by trying to colonize other planets and calling that a planetary civilization. I would call it the fiction and illusion of planetary imperialism.

What we need to know is the limits that guide us on this planet and respect those planetary boundaries. With this we become more human. The deeper we are in living within the limits of the Earth, living within the limits of social justice, living within the limits of respect for all, the deeper is our humanity. Our civilization knew this in the past, but it has forgotten it, and is now remembering it and joining with other civilizations, including those that have forgotten it for longer. We are all seeking. Not only are we seeking to know how we have a future as a human species, but the future of our human species depends on recognizing that all other species have a right to a future and we do not have a right to extermination, pushing others to extinction.



We have to move from hubris to humility. We have to move from narrowness of the mechanistic mind and the monoculture of the mind to the ecology of the mind, a mind that is part of the whole.

**Q Does spirituality have a role in this paradigm of change? Some people believe that you can only change the world if you change yourself – it all has to come from within through meditation. Having stayed on your farm for the last month, I see a dual way, as there is so much we also need to do to live in community, to grow food, and to regain our connection with the earth. Can you comment on that?**

Well we do meditate out here, but we don’t meditate all the time. I think the crass materialism that came out of greed has created a reaction of spirituality that is defined only as the inner life. But the basic principle of spirituality is to know the interconnectedness – that there is no divide between the inner and the outer. Every violence we do to the Earth comes from a degradation of our own spiritual being. Every aspect of our spiritual being that becomes more conscious stops harm to all others. Just like there is no divide between humans and the Earth, there is no divide between spirituality and material life. Every life is sacred. That’s when true spirituality will be reclaimed ●

INTERVIEWED BY KIM HUGHES



# Some amazing medicinal plants

Ancient, evergreen and symbolic of good health, the Neem is an integral ingredient in the natural, holistic and traditional system of medicine known as Ayurveda. Read about its medicinal properties and other benefits.

## Neem

### botanical name:

Genus: Azadirachta. Species: A. indica and A. juss.

### common names:

Neem, Indian lilac, Margosa tree, miracle tree, nimba, arishtha.

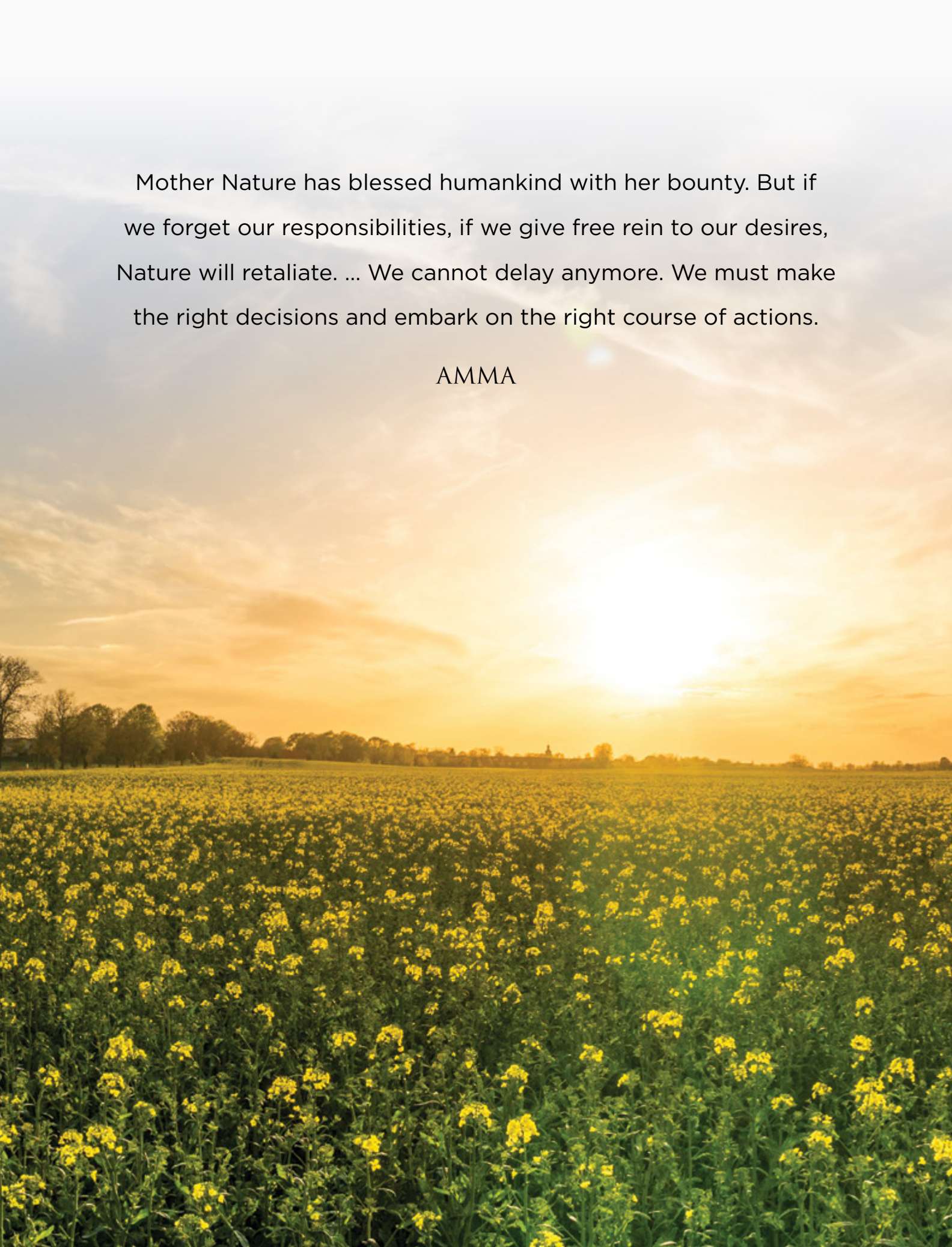
### habitat:

Neem is an evergreen tree that typically grows in tropical and semi-tropical regions, where temperatures are high. It is native to the Indian subcontinent, including India, Pakistan, Burma, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. It also grows along the sandy riverbanks of Australia, the open lands of the Sahara, some islands in the southern part of Iran, and even some regions in the USA. It can tolerate a wide range of temperatures and can survive droughts. Young saplings need protection from cold, frost and shade. The trees thrive when the soil is deep and sandy, but can also survive in rocky, dry and infertile soils.



Mother Nature has blessed humankind with her bounty. But if we forget our responsibilities, if we give free rein to our desires, Nature will retaliate. ... We cannot delay anymore. We must make the right decisions and embark on the right course of actions.

AMMA





# history and mythology:

Neem has been considered sacred and a symbol of health since ancient times. The Vedas describe it as ‘one that cures all ailments’. In Sanskrit it is also known as *arishtha*, meaning ‘perfect, complete and imperishable’, and *nimba*, meaning ‘giver of good health’. In Unani medicine it was called the blessed tree, and the Persian scholars called it the noble or free tree of India.

It carries spiritual significance and there are many stories that tell of its divine origin. According to Hindu mythology, neem was born out of the drops of the nectar of immortality that were sprinkled on Earth by celestial beings known as devas. Another story tells of the time when the sun took shelter in the neem tree to escape from the terrible powers of the demons.

Neem is also regarded as one of the manifestations of the mother goddess, Kali or Durga. In some southern parts of India it is representative of Mariamman, the goddess who wields a neem leaf to strike down all diseases, and in some other regions it is considered to be the abode of Sithala, the goddess of smallpox. Neem is also associated with Dhanvantari, the god of medicine according to the Vedas.

Ancient Hindus believed that planting neem trees would ensure them a passage to heaven, and neem leaves and flowers are still today strung at the entrance of homes to dispel negative energy.

# description:

Neem is an evergreen tree with a lifespan of about 150 to 300 years. It grows very fast and can reach a height of up to 35 to 40 meters. It has a straight trunk with branches that spread widely. The grayish brown bark is rough, hard and scaly. The tree blossoms in spring with small white flowers that emanate a soft fragrance. They yield edible fruits that are oval or round in shape with a thin skin. Neem leaves are quite distinct with their jagged edges.

# plant parts used:

Leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, roots, stem, bark and gum.

# therapeutic uses:

Neem has been used in the preparation of Ayurvedic medicines for at least 4,000 years, and the earliest records of its medicinal properties appear in the ancient texts that form the basis of Ayurveda. It is also a major constituent of Siddha and Unani medicines. An ancient Tamil text says:

*Oh! Damsel of flowing tresses and slender forehead!*  
*Hear you a miracle this!*  
*In this Water hidden in the body*  
*Mix pepper, amla, turmeric and neem.*  
*Soft will your body be;*  
*And dark thine hair on head.*

Neem is popularly known as ‘the village pharmacy’ because of its extensive use by village people. In some African countries it is known as ‘the reliever of 40 health disorders’.

Almost every part of the tree has some medicinal property – antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, antiparasitic, anti-diabetic, contraceptive and sedative. Neem is widely used:

## As a natural air purifier

Neem produces more oxygen than most trees, and the shade it provides is very cool. Having these trees near dwellings is considered beneficial for health.

## As an insect repellent

Neem seed oil is a popular natural repellent. A few drops of this oil are added to the water used to clean floors, in order to keep away bugs and insects.

## In fertilizers and pest control

The residue of seeds, after extracting oil, and powdered leaves and bark are added to the soil as a fertilizer. It increases the organic composition of the soil, prevents the loss of nitrogen in the soil and helps in controlling the population of nematodes in the soil. Parts of neem are used in decoctions to improve the health of cattle and livestock.

## In personal hygiene and cosmetics

In rural India and Africa, neem twigs are widely used instead of toothpaste and toothbrush. People also chew the twigs as the juice increases immunity. Neem is used in a variety of herbal beauty products for its antiseptic and anti-ageing properties. It keeps the skin supple, healthy and free of pimples and acne.

## In cooking

The tender leaves, shoots and flowers of the neem tree are used in food in India, Burma and other countries of Southeast Asia. The leaves are used in tea, which is very bitter and consumed for health benefits. Neem gum is a rich source of protein.

## To prevent and cure various diseases

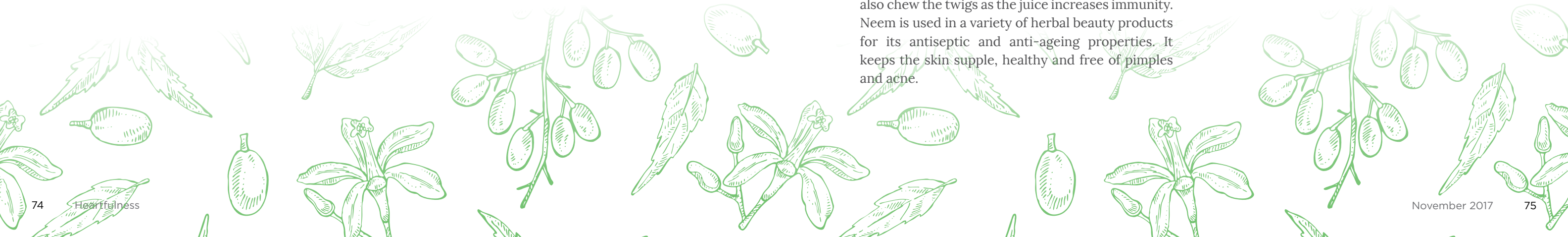
Neem is used to prevent malaria and cholera. The leaves are used to treat chickenpox, dysentery, diarrhea and skin diseases like psoriasis and eczema. The leaves and fruits are also used as a treatment for tuberculosis and heart disease. Neem oil is used to purify blood, regulate the level of blood sugar, improve liver function, and for healthy hair growth. The flowers are used in the preparation of stimulant and stomachic tonics.

While the benefits of neem are manifold, in excess it can be toxic, especially in small children. It can also cause infertility and miscarriage in women.

# current ecology:

Neem grows in abundance in the Indian subcontinent. It helps preserve the ecological balance of the environment and protects it from increases in levels of pollution. Neem can also be successfully used in reforestation and rehabilitating waste lands and degraded ecosystems.

With its rough and tough nature, many health benefits, and its integral role in preserving environment balance, it is no wonder that this miracle tree is considered so vital to Indian culture ●





# The Man with the EMPTY CAPE

– PART 1 –



My little family and I took advantage of the holidays to turn ourselves into explorers. Africa. An expedition to Nigeria to find Lake Chad.

Our SUV was stuck! We continued on foot to find help. Nothing. No one. We thought we were close to Lake Chad and our map showed the village of Blangoua, near the Chari river. But obviously we were lost. A very arid landscape. No trace of a lake. No trace of greenery. Just a few shrubs here and there.

Suddenly, we saw a few straw huts in a small valley in the distance, hidden by acacias and surrounded by ruined fields. The land was hard and packed. No doubt the drought. At the bottom of the hill, the presence of rocks and the sound of lapping let us guess at the runoff of a meager stream of water.

In the dusty hamlet, women sat on mats with their babies. They looked tired. Children were thin, but they looked happy. Disoriented, we heard misery screaming at us: What are you doing here?

The chief of the hamlet welcomed us warmly and explained: "Warriors passed by and took our flock. We have become poor with war, but we offer you hospitality with great pleasure. If you would like to share the meal with us. God has offered us poverty so that we become better."

Over a cup of tea, he added, "A sage Haoussa told us that behind every problem there is a gift. But, instead of waiting for the gift behind the problem, we are sure that the problem is the gift, and we try to make the most of this gift from God. And God really spoils us because he is present in each of our acts. And we manage for the rest."

In turn, we explained our situation. He advised us to sleep there that evening, and told us that the men of the village would help us pull the SUV out of the sand the next morning at dawn.

We offered them our provisions, and shared an improvised meal with everyone. Then the old people began to tell funny stories that made everyone laugh. I asked them how they were getting water so they explained that every morning the women went to fetch water from a valley one kilometer away. "But why don't you go and collect the water from your creek, right here?" A silence ensued. No one dared speak. Then finally the oldest man spoke.

"We do use the water from the creek, but there is very little of it. We use it sparingly. If we used it for all our needs, let alone irrigation, our land would be dry in a month. The trees would no longer have





“This has not always been the case. In fact, for decades people dared not approach him. One day, the bravest of the brave approached him to look at him face-to-face. There was nothing under the cloak! Nothing! The terrified warrior fled never to be seen again. If you went near the hermit, you would see his cloak on his shoulders and that’s all. Nobody talked about him. Everyone feared him. No one knew whether it was a human being, or a djinn. Some said it was a demon, and others a crazy hermit descended from the mountains.

“Were these fantasies? Rumors and gossip to fill the boredom of too many long evenings? The rest of the history of the man with the empty cape will tell us.

“The man without a body continued to be seen sitting on his stone. When we were wealthier, before the war, the women of the village sometimes brought him something to eat – some fruit and Jollof rice they put down a few steps away from him. The man did not turn around, but a voice said, ‘Thank you.’ Then they would respond with a nod, and go back to the field, to the house, or to the care of the animals.

“Then there was the war and the winter of misery. The ruined pastures, missing goats, our decimated poultry farm, and hunger in the belly of children.

water. The insects would not have enough to eat. The birds would also leave and there would be no more pollinated plants and no animals. And, what’s more, it is a sacred place for us because at the edge of the stream there is the man with the empty cape.

“He is a Sufi hermit invisible to our eyes. No one has ever seen his face or his body. In the distance, we see the large black cape covering his stooped shoulders. He is there, sitting on a flat stone, all the time, under the sun and under the moon. It is said that the winds come to whisper the secrets of families to him. No one in the village would dare to disturb the peace of this holy man. We respect him a lot and if we go down to the creek, it is to keep him company in silence and to benefit from his Presence.

“One evening, around the fire, we were talking to the Lefiami family. The father was explaining that their last hen had died that morning, leaving nine thin, little chicks promised to a certain death. We were all quite bothered, and remained silent around the fire. Kalista, the youngest Lefiami, was seated near her father. With her chin resting on her knees, she stared at the flames dancing in the starry night.

“Suddenly she exclaimed, ‘Tomorrow morning I shall go see the man with the empty cape!’ ‘You’re crazy,’ her mother scolded. ‘Imagine that he looks at you and his look turns you to stone, like all those around him! I’m getting chills just thinking of it!’ ‘But he never ate anyone,’ replied Kalista. ‘Why would he hurt me? I just want to talk to him. And moreover, as the proverb says, let us beware of confusing the importance of things with the noise they make.’ ‘There’s no smoke without fire,’ her mother retaliated. ‘Even your aunt Yamina says that it’s a jinn. We shouldn’t make him angry. Everyone says it.’ ‘A fantasy believed by ten million people remains a fantasy,’ challenged Kalista, determined to follow her heart.

“‘Stop it!’ said her father. ‘There is nothing under the cloak. There is no one but the wind.’ ‘Well,’ replied Kalista, ‘What risk is there, if there is nothing? I will bring him our chicks. The hen is dead. They’ll die anyway. Perhaps he will save them?’ Her father nudged her with his foot, grumbling, ‘Go to bed and stop talking rubbish.’

Early the next morning, Kalista put her nine chicks in her basket, and hurtled down the steep slope to the rocks by the stream. She saw the man with the empty cape sitting in the same place. She stopped to catch her breath, calm the beating of her heart, and then advanced cautiously. From behind, she could see his large black cape with its hood.

What was Kalista going to do in this situation? How would the man in the cape react? Was she right in believing in the goodness of life? Was she right not to believe the scary rumors? Or was she really imprudent for not having listened to the advice of her mother and father? Perhaps she would be transformed into a stone statue after all.

You will find out in the next episode what happened to the nine chicks, the young Kalista, and the inhabitants of the village ●

PAPIGUY DE MONTPELLIER  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY GABRIELLE RAJKUMAR





# From **TRASH** to Treasure

How often do you observe the things your family and your local community throw out in the trash? What sort of things can you find? Paper, plastic, food, old furniture, magazines, newspapers, clothes, branches and leaves from the garden? Make a list.

When you have some time, see what you can make from these things in the trash, e.g. sculptures from wood, metal or plastic, hanging mobiles from odds and ends, a recycled paper notebook, a skirt or jacket, compost from food scraps, a patchwork quilt from old pieces of clothing. What else can you think of?

Here is a fun and useful activity:

Collect materials for a 'trash to treasure' project, and also include glue, scissors, sewing equipment, etc. Make sure you wash anything dirty before handling it.

Create artwork or practical items with your recyclable materials.

If you do this with a group of friends, you could display your recycled creations for others to see. Use this opportunity to build awareness in your local community about waste management.

And think about this:

*To eliminate the concept of waste means to design things – products, packaging and systems – from the very beginning on the understanding that waste does not exist.*

–William McDonough

Can you design something really innovative that will reduce waste in your local community? You won't know until you try! Please share your ideas with us at [contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com](mailto:contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com) ●



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