

January 2019

heartfulness

DAAJI
YOGIC PSYCHOLOGY

GIFT ECOLOGY

Nipun Mehta GIVING OURSELVES

Charles Eisenstein LIVING IN THE GIFT

Thierry Casasnovas CHOOSING LIFE & FASTING

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Heartfulness Relaxation



Sit comfortably and close your eyes very softly and very gently.

Let's begin with the toes. Wiggle your toes. Now feel them relax.

Relax your ankles and feet. Feel energy move up from the Earth... through your feet up to your knees relaxing the legs.

Relax your thighs. The energy moves up your legs ... relaxing them.

Now, deeply relax your hips ... stomach ... and waist.

Relax your back. From the top to the bottom the entire back is relaxed.

Relax your chest ... and shoulders. Feel your shoulders simply melting away.

Relax your upper arms. Relax each muscle in your forearms ... your hands ... right up to your fingertips.

Relax your neck muscles. Move your awareness up to your face. Relax your jaw ... mouth ... nose ... eyes and eyelids ... earlobes ... facial muscles ... forehead ... all the way to the top of your head.

Feel how your whole body is now completely relaxed. Scan from top to toe – if any part of the body needs your attention, revisit that organ and ensure that it is relaxed.

Move your attention to your heart. Rest there for a little while. Feel immersed in the love and light in your heart.

Remain still and quiet, and slowly become absorbed in yourself.

Remain absorbed for as long as you want, until you feel ready to come out.

CHOOSING LIFE



Dear readers,

Happy New Year! May it be a blessed year for one and all.

When Peter Denton published his book, *Gift Ecology*, in 2012, he probably had no idea how the concept would spread. Of course, it was not a new concept, but publicizing the term and summarizing the content helped to crystallize a movement. Denton's whole life has changed in unexpected ways since then, and more recently he wrote, "There is no calculation to a gift – how could there be? A true gift is unexpected, unpredicted, something that appears out of nowhere." When we view our very lives as gifts, we change and embrace the possibilities of giving – of ourselves, our talents, our creativity, our resources, including money, without expecting anything in return. In this issue we hear from Nipun Mehta and Charles Eisentein on this very hot topic. They have both been living and championing the Gift Ecology for many years, and share with us their experiences and wisdom.

Another hot topic for 2019 is the simple lifestyle of well-being. Two practices that contribute significantly are meditation and fasting, and in this January issue we focus on both! Thierry Casasnovas shares his amazing story of recovering from death's door to wellness at the age of 33, and the role fasting played in that transformation. Now he is helping others to do the same.

And to top it all off, Daaji starts the New Year with a new series on Yogic Psychology, filled with yogic practices to help us regain mental and emotional health, simplicity and stillness. This will be a groundbreaking series, which you will surely enjoy.

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THIS MONTH



Kamlesh Patel

Known as Daaji, he is the current Heartfulness guide. A yogi with the capacity to transmit *Pranahuti*, he offers a practical, scientific approach to spiritual training in the field of consciousness to millions worldwide.



Ruth Lande Shuman

An award-winning industrial designer and innovator who founded Publicolor, a long-term youth development program, to educate disadvantaged youth and prepare them for jobs: publicolor.org.



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Author and speaker based in North Carolina, USA. His most recent books are *Climate: A New Story* and *The Ascent of Humanity*. He also has an online course, *Living in the Gift*. His work can be found at charleseisenstein.org.



Thierry Casasnovas

The author of many hundreds of YouTube videos on health and nutrition based in part on his personal experience. He started the Regénère movement in France, to help people towards a more natural approach to health and well-being.

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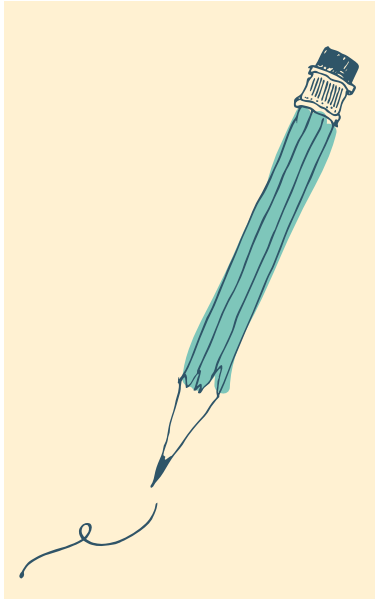
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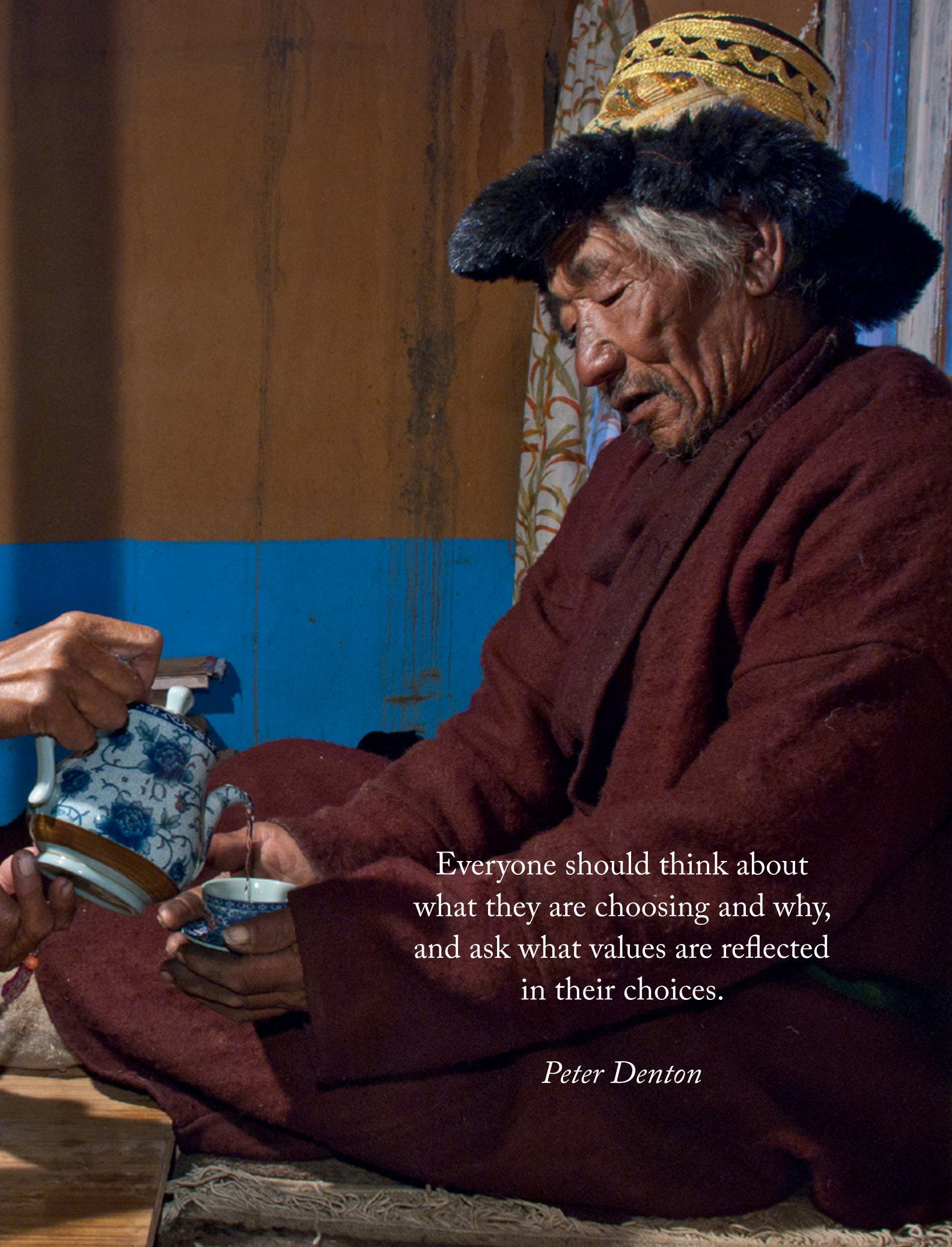
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THE GIFT ECOLOGY





Everyone should think about
what they are choosing and why,
and ask what values are reflected
in their choices.

Peter Denton

Living in the Gift



Nature does not charge us anything for its abundance. Everything in nature is free, a gift. We are part of the same nature, so can we incorporate this principle in our own interpersonal relationships and interactions? **CHARLES EISENSTEIN** reflects on this beautiful principle through his story of Interbeing.

Why does the sun shine?

Is it a random result of coalescing gases igniting nuclear fusion? Or is it in order to give its light and warmth to Life?

Why does the rain fall?

Is it the senseless product of blind chemical processes of evaporation and condensation? Or is it to water Life?

Why do you seek to pour forth your song?

Is it to show off your genetic fitness to attract a mate, or is it to contribute to a more beautiful world?

We may fear those first answers but it is the second that carries the ring of truth.

Every culture, as far as I know, has something that I call a Story of the World. That story is a weave of myths, meanings, narratives, words, symbols, rituals, and agreements that together define the world. That story tells us who we are, how to be a man or a woman, what

Every culture, as far as I know, has something that I call a Story of the World. That story is a weave of myths, meanings, narratives, words, symbols, rituals, and agreements that together define the world. That story tells us who we are, how to be a man or a woman, what is important and valuable, what is real, what is sacred, and what humanity's role and purpose is on Earth.

is important and valuable, what is real, what is sacred, and what humanity's role and purpose is on Earth.

The world's dominant culture, the one called modern, has a story of the world too. I call it the Story of Separation. I won't go too deep into it now, because I bet you already know intuitively what I'm talking about. It is the story that holds us as separate individuals and holds humanity separate from nature.

In the Story of Separation, giving does not come naturally. In fact, that story says our default nature is selfishness, down to the genetic level. If I'm separate from you, then more for me is less for you.

In the Story of Separation, trust does not come naturally either. The world is our adversary, full of other competing separate individuals, human and otherwise, whom we must overcome to have a good life – weeds, germs, the Russians or the Americans, whatever. Beyond that, the forces of nature are adversaries too, because they are utterly random, and the whole universe tends toward entropy. There is no intelligence or purpose outside of ourselves. Therefore, to establish a comfortable human habitation in the world, we must dominate and control these forces, insulate ourselves from them, and harness them to our purposes. That's what the Story of Separation says.

Where in that story is there room for gratitude? Where is there room for gift? In the Story of Separation you basically have to rise above human nature, rise above the way of the world, to be selfless, generous, or altruistic. Becoming a good person, then, involves a sort of conquest, a conquest of self. It is the same domination of nature, this time turned inward.

Now I have to say, this story is quickly becoming obsolete. Even its scientific dimension in genetics, physics, and biology are crumbling. In complexity theory, we understand that order can emerge spontaneously

*In the Story of Interbeing,
life is a gift. The world
and everything in it is a gift.
We did not earn our lives.
We did not earn the sun; it
is not thanks to our hard efforts
that it shines. We did not earn
the ability of plants to grow.
We did not earn water. We
did not earn our conception
or our breath. Our hearts beat
and our livers metabolize
all on their own.
Life is a gift.*

out of chaos, without an external organizing force. In ecology, we understand that the well-being of one is inseparable from the well-being of all. So let me talk about gift, generosity, and gratitude from the perspective of another story, a new and ancient story I like to call Interbeing.

In the Story of Interbeing, life is a gift. The world and everything in it is a gift. We did not earn our lives. We did not earn the sun; it is not thanks to our hard efforts that it shines. We did not earn the ability of plants to grow. We did not earn water. We did not earn our conception or our breath. Our hearts beat and our livers metabolize all on their own. Life is a gift.



What about all those things that did come to you through hard effort? You worked hard for your money perhaps, for your status, for your healthy body. Okay, but from where comes your capacity to work hard? From where comes your creativity, your strength, and your intelligence? Did you earn these too?

When we apprehend these basic truths, gratitude comes naturally. Gratitude is the knowledge of having received, and the consequent desire to give in turn. It is primal. All beings, including human beings, have an unquenchable desire to pour forth their gifts. That is why if you are in a situation where your gifts are not valued, not received, or not useful, you will want to leave that situation, that job or relationship. No matter how much you are being paid, no matter how scared you are to leave the relationship, you're going to want to bust out and develop and express your capacity to give to the world in service of something you care about.

All beings are thus. That is why we should be living in a world of incredible abundance. The fact that modern society has constructed conditions of such pervasive scarcity is an impressive achievement! So much talent, such a rich world. How is it that so many live in insecurity, anxiety, and deprivation? Not even the wealthy are exempt from the fear of it.

Nature is fundamentally abundant, even profligate. I am writing this at my brother's farm. The birds sing all day, pouring forth their song as a gift to the world. Yeah I know about attracting a mate and marking territory, but come on, do they have to sing that much to do that? It is as if they are bursting with the desire to give their song, just like you are. You were born for it, whatever your song is, you were born for it. Do the wild black raspberries here have to taste that good to attract animals to eat them and poop out their seeds? And don't you have that urge too, to do it better than



necessary for the grade, for the boss, for the market? Don't you have to yearn to make art of your work? Don't you have the urge within you to create something beautiful, to expand your capacities to their full potential and express them in service to something magnificent?

You are not alone. Imagine what the world would be if each person were liberated in this desire. Imagine what the world could be if we could sweep away the conditions that conspire to stunt and suppress our gifts. These conditions are political, they are economic, they are ideological, they are relational, they are psychological and they are spiritual. For civilization to transition into an Age of the Gift requires transformation on every level.

*Don't you have to yearn to make
art of your work? Don't you
have the urge within you
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full potential and express them
in service to something
magnificent?*

I've written extensively about the transition on an economic level, but what about the personal, relational, and spiritual? We need to deprogram from the habits of separation and scarcity to reclaim the primal state of gift. I don't think that this happens through personal efforts, motivated by the desire to be a better person. It is rather something that happens to us. It happens, in other words, as a gift.

The transmission vector of that gift is community. Generosity, you may have noticed, is infectious. When you witness generosity, you receive the message, "It is safe to give. It is okay. I'll be okay." Sharing stories and practices of gratitude, of generosity – and of the challenges and setbacks in stepping more deeply into gift – we generate a normalizing field that counteracts social programming toward competition, selfishness, and scarcity.

My small contribution to that 'normalizing field of gift' is an online course called Living in the Gift. While it touches on a few big-picture issues, mostly it is an immersion into the habits of gift, the perceptions of gift, the awareness of abundance, and the experience of gratitude. In doing so, we step outside the New Age abundance-thinking bubble to address the contradictions of our time: between money and love, service and security, community and independence, wealth and inequality.

In case you are wondering, we offer the course itself on a gift model. Any payment is purely voluntary. Nothing is withheld behind a paywall, and there is no 'upselling' to paid programs. One of the habits of Separation, nearly universal in this culture, is to always be on guard against someone seeking to make money from you, to take, to extract. Economics even teaches us that basically, everyone is trying to get the best deal and maximize their rational self-interest. That's the water in which we swim. So as much as I dare, I like to mess with that expectation of extraction.

This small article draws from some of the introductory course material. I hope most of what I've written here seems obvious. My purpose here is to pluck an ancient chord of recognition. It is to invoke a memory, to activate a piece of knowledge long suppressed in the dominant culture but still alive somewhere in all of us. It is simply that life is a gift, that the world is a gift, that the cosmos operates on the principle of gift. Please bathe in your intuitive resonance with this truth. Beneath the cynicism we know: it is all a gift. Gratitude is our native state. Generosity is its maturation. Thank you for keeping the thread of this knowledge alive.

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<https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/living-in-the-gift>


GIFT ECOLOGY & GIFT ECOSYSTEMS



NIPUN MEHTA is one of the founders of ServiceSpace, Karma Kitchen, DailyGood, KindSpring and other organizations that successfully work within the Gift Ecology. From a young age, he was inspired by the need to serve others. Early role models like J. Krishnamurti, Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and Goenka further fuelled that urge so that it has blossomed into a life of joyful, cheerful service. He was the recipient of the Dalai Lama's Unsung Heroes of Compassion Award in 2014, and appointed to President Barack Obama's Council on Poverty and Inequality in 2015. Here Nipun explains his motivation and the principles underlying the Gift Ecology to **ELIZABETH DENLEY**.

 **Hi Nipun. Welcome.**

Hello. Happy to be here.

 **Your whole focus with ServiceSpace, with Karma Kitchen, and all the other projects that you do is around service, seva, around volunteering. It is all about people sharing. What led you to this? How did it all start?**

I was on the journey of success, because that's what everyone expected of you. I mean when you go to high school, you want to go to a good college. When you go to college, you want to join an even better graduation program or get a great job. Once you have a great job, you want a promotion. Once you get a promotion,

another promotion. And I was from Silicon Valley. So it was no longer good enough to just work at a job; you are supposed to start a company. Then, you know, big cars, fancy houses, parties and things – it just seemed endless to me. It was the narrative of accumulation.

I remember in Silicon Valley, in the peak of the dotcom days, there was a billboard by one company that said, "He who dies with the most toys still dies."

The dominant paradigm narrative of success rooted in accumulation just felt hollow. A part of me was saying: Maybe it's not about acquiring a lot; maybe it's about letting go. And I started to let go, bit by bit.


Initially I wanted to give my time. Actually, even before that we would all gather and collect five to ten dollars

and say, “Hey, let’s give.” So I started in that way. Whatever I did I would always involve other people, as that was my tendency. As I gave money, I wanted to give more, so I started giving my time. As I gave time, I wanted to give even more. What could I give? I realized that at some point I just want to give myself.

And the reward was that I was changing myself through the process. I didn’t need any external validation. It wasn’t that I thought, “Oh, look at that, I’ve changed your life.” It was more that the act of generosity was just so transformative and regenerative that the more I gave the more I wanted to give. Love is truly a currency that never runs out. So I tapped into that spirit in myself, and that’s what has continued to propel me.

ServiceSpace was the outcome; it was kind of a ripple effect. We never started an organization: we didn’t know how. We didn’t want to change the world. It was all just this intent of serving to change ourselves, and through that process all these manifestations continued.

We were four people when we started ServiceSpace. It wasn’t even ServiceSpace at that time, just four of us trying to serve. And then, bit by bit, it rippled out. It’s been an amazing journey for me, and I would say that twenty years later I am still rooted in that same idea of ‘give to change myself’. As I do that I feel full of joy, and I just want to give more.

 This also resonates very much with some of the traditions in India. So is there something from your background, from your family? Or is this just a reaction against the Silicon Valley culture?

NM: I wouldn’t say it’s completely a reaction. That’s one parsing of it, and that was an influence, but since childhood I was a spiritual seeker – that’s what drove me. I would always go to the spiritual section of libraries and read books from all kinds of philosophical traditions,

So you have to go from transaction to a field of relationships in which trust will arise. Then the question is: How do we cultivate a field of deep relationships? I think it starts with small acts of service. It’s the small acts of service that bind us, and that connection over time creates deep relationships in which virtue grows.

including esoteric books. Actually, I was fascinated with death; not fascinated, but there were all these question marks.

We build our lives around permanence. We build our identities and say, “This is who I am,” and that certainty is what gives us a kind of strength. And I had my doubts about that whole narrative. Maybe strength could actually come from impermanence? That I’m going to live and die, that I’m changing every moment, is not something to be upset about; it’s something to celebrate. This may be the last time we meet, which means that I should really treat this moment as a holy moment. It took time for me to understand impermanence, because initially there were all these question marks around it, but that helped me.

When I was 17, I went to a hospice and said, “I want to serve.” They said, “By law, you can’t do this at 17. You have to be at least 18.” Then, when I went at 18

they said, “Are you sure? Because you’re going to be with people who are passing away!”

As I served them it helped me prioritize: If you were to die tomorrow, what would you want to be doing today?

And we really don’t know how long we are going to stay. It’s not a switch. I saw that in the people I was with, in the people who would pass away. In their last days they wanted to turn on some switches, but they couldn’t. They wanted to be loving, they wanted to be forgiving, they wanted to be accepting, they wanted to be filled with joy and embrace impermanence, but they couldn’t. So I realized that it’s not a switch that I’m going to turn on at 65 when I retire. You have to do it now. So for me, that ‘nowness’ was very present through that whole process.

 You said you read spiritual literature when you were younger. Who inspired you the most?

Lots of people! I read J. Krishnamurti in my teens, and I love everything he says. He says, “Look, truth is a pathless land.” You can only draw a path between two static points, and truth is constantly changing – it’s emergent, not static. So you can never have a path to truth; you have to live into the truth of each moment. And that just resonated deeply. He was a big inspiration.


At the level of action, Gandhi was a big inspiration for me because I saw him bridge inner transformation with outer service. He was doing this great work in the world, but his journey was really to connect the inner with the outer. You repeatedly saw that in his life. And I thought, “Wow! He didn’t just meditate to be awakened, he didn’t just leave everything. He stayed in that dirty pond to give birth to that lotus and set a remarkable example of the possibility of love for the whole world.”

So they were two of my heroes as I was growing up, and they still are.

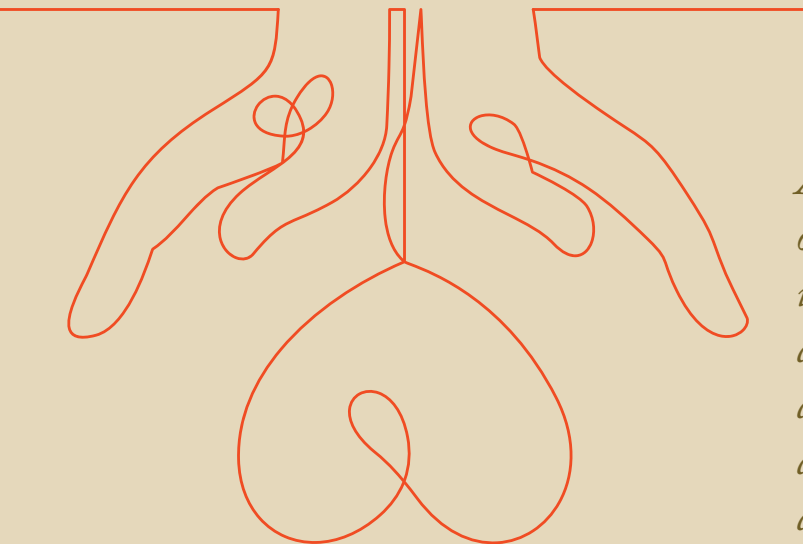
 So out of all this you developed a Gift Ecology. Can you describe it for us?

I’m very inspired by small acts of kindness, small acts of service, because they change us. And what is of paramount importance is that they change us on the inside. So when we do small acts it’s wonderful, but when those small acts get connected, they really start to create a collective force around them. It changes the way in which we behave with each other.

Imagine I’m giving you a shoulder rub, and you are giving a shoulder rub to somebody in front of you, and that person is giving a shoulder rub to somebody in front of them. And if we’re all in a circle, what goes around comes around, right? It isn’t quid pro quo. I do something for you in a certain way, and maybe the person behind me is doing it in a different way for me. So it’s not that I gave this much and I expect this much back. I’m receiving and I’m paying forward with gratitude. If we let go of that transaction in a one-to-one way, what we get is a circle. It’s a shift from direct reciprocity, which is, “I gave you this so you give me this in return,” to indirect reciprocity. And when we engage in indirect reciprocity what we gain are relationships. That’s becomes a gift ecology – a field of myriad relationships of generosity. In such a field, everyone behaves differently, and our shared experiences lead to entirely different outcomes.

 Can you tell us how this works in some of your organizations, say in Karma Kitchen?

I think Karma Kitchen is a great way to understand it. You walk into this restaurant and your check reads ‘zero’. It’s zero because someone before you has paid for you, and you are trusted to pay forward whatever




As a society I think one of our biggest problems right now is that we're disconnected. We're disconnected with ourselves, we're disconnected socially, and we're disconnected systemically. So how do we start to reconnect?

you want for people after you. Will you pay forward? How much will you pay forward? How much is something worth that doesn't have a price tag? What is your relationship to the priceless? In today's culture we do not even have spaces, physical or even internal, to ask such questions. Most of us are just busy looking for price tags, and that's how we determine value.

But here is a space where we change the rules of the game. We trust that we are intrinsically wired to want to connect, to expand in our empathy and to ultimately tap into our compassion, which is what a space like Karma Kitchen does. Because when I receive it, the first thing is, "Wow, I've received something from somebody I don't know!" So there is a sense of gratitude, and then from that gratitude we are paying forward to those after us. And that person will never be able to say "Thank you" back.

So there's a trust, an expansion that happens, and if that is resonant, we say, "Hey, I want to come again." If that lands, we say, "Hey, the meal's market value might be \$5 or \$10, but I want to leave \$20," because we are moved in that way. And this kind of mindset can be applied to anything and any place where there is transaction. You can run a rickshaw in India this way, you can run magazines this way, you can run Yoga

studios this way, you can run medical clinics this way. So many ServiceSpace members have done all that, and it's been amazing to see.


 What are some of the reactions when people discover this feeling? What is it like to be part of this culture?

The most spontaneous response that you see every so often is that someone walks into Karma Kitchen and is just moved to tears. They may not have the faintest idea about the space, but a short explanation is given to them at the door. Then they come and they are held with love, they are served by volunteers. It moves people. In such a context, different kinds of intelligence are awakened. People say things like, "Hey, you know what? I'm going to pay forward and do 21 kindness acts for strangers over the next 21 days, because this is the kind of world I want to see: where we see the good in people, where we value cooperation, where we're connected."

As a society I think one of our biggest problems right now is that we're disconnected. We're disconnected with ourselves, we're disconnected socially, and we're disconnected systemically. So how do we start to

reconnect? That disconnection is very, very costly to society because trust is plummeting by all metrics. No one knows how to solve this problem, because there is no quick fix to trust. It takes many decades to destroy trust, which we have done, and now it's going to take many decades to build it up. Unfortunately all our systems are skewed towards very quick feedback loops, so we aren't able to solve this problem. People don't even trust themselves now, let alone each other and systems.

How do we bring this kind of a capital into greater circulation in our world, so we can increase trust and reconnect with each other? I think generosity is a phenomenal tool to help us to do that.

 So do you think that's why there are high levels of depression and anxiety today, because of a lack of connection?

Yes, that's certainly a big part. Technology promises a lot of things. Facebook is supposed to connect us, but actually it has just cheapened our connections. When I was growing up, I would call my friend on the phone. His mom would pick up, and then I would get to know her too. At graduation you meet the parents of your fellow students. It was a much more multi-dimensional engagement. Now you just post some Happy Birthday message on the wall, and it's almost a chore.

We do have many loose ties in today's culture, but we have lost the deep ties. The Internet has been great for creating many loose ties across broader boundaries, many traditional boundaries. It's great, it's not all bad, but we have lost this capacity for deep ties and deep friendships. As a result we feel alone and that's leading to many upstream problems.

 The gifting ecology must have a gifting ecosystem associated with it. What does that look like? For example, the people who work in

Karma Kitchen, and the way the whole things evolves. Tell us about the continuity.

The Buddha said something very profound: "This is a very long path of awakening. On this very long path there is one key resource that you need."

His attendant, Anand, asked, "You speak a lot about this idea of noble friends. It seems like half of the path is just noble friends."

And Buddha said to him, "No, Anand, it's not half of the path. It's the full path."

So many times, we tend to see the things we do in isolation. We live in a monoculture world.

You look at a farm and say, "What are you growing?" And the cheap easy answer, if you don't have attention, if you want to sound bite everything, is that you say, "I just grow apples."

But actually how do we shift to a polyculture farm where we do have apples and we also have plums and peaches? It's not so easy to just say this or that, it's not binary, it's actually multidimensional.

So many people will speak about a gift economy, but in ServiceSpace, we prefer gift ecology, because ecology is a deeper web with many nodes engaging with many other nodes. It's more of a polyculture, and in a polyculture of relationships, you have incredible resiliency. And in that resiliency, virtues like generosity and kindness and compassion grow. Such virtues cannot be manufactured in a factory, they have to be gardenized. But to grow them, you first need to have that field.

The allure of manufacturing is that you have a recipe: you start here, you apply the recipe, and you take it to scale in a certain predictable period of time. But how to shift from that monoculture mindset to polyculture mindset, and move from manufacturing to gardening? With gardening, you do your work but then you can't say, "Let's bring the tomatoes on Wednesday." Tomatoes will arise when the time ripens.


But if you let go of that transaction in a one-to-one way, what you get is a circle. It's a shift from direct reciprocity, which is, "I gave you this so you give me this in return," to indirect reciprocity. And when we engage in indirect reciprocity what we gain is relationships.

How do we move from that predictability to emergence? Once we understand that virtues grow in a field, we can say, "What are the core elements of the social field?" And that's relationships. So if we have polycultural relationships, we can grow compassion, we can grow generosity, we can grow kindness. If we don't have those multi-dimensional relationships, we will not be able to put these things in circulation.


We actually have sustainable micro gift economies in most families. I don't keep track of how much my dad does for me, or how much I do for my mom. We have a gift economy and we're all very innately familiar with that. It just needs to be embedded in a larger culture, in this polyculture of relationships, so that it grows at its own pace, in different people at different times in different capacities, and we're able to hold all of that.

 So it's in tune with nature as opposed to being imposed.

Yes, you're trusting nature. You are counting on it, because it grows by nature's order and not by your timeline.

 So then you're trusting other human beings in the system, not to judge them, but to allow them to grow in their own way.

Yes.

 How do you manage that process or perhaps you don't manage it? What's the model? How do we move in any group, any family, any organization, from a transactional monoculture-type approach to a gifting ecosystem? How does that transition happen?

The paths from transaction to trust goes through relationships. So if we cultivate such a field of deep relationships, trust will naturally arise. Then the question is: How do we cultivate such a field? I think it starts with small acts of service. It's the small acts of service that create an affinity between us, and that connection over time creates deeper bonds. That's the home for virtue to grow.

Okay, so it's all based on human relationships.

Yes.

To be continued

To learn more <http://nipun.servicespace.org>

VOLUNTEERS

Atiya Amjad

Once I did voluntary service at the Palo Alto Art Center, California, but the purpose was to learn and enrich myself by offering my skills of communicating and organizing a desired guided tour for school children who would visit the art center. This category of volunteering enriched me intellectually, culturally and helped me bond with fellow humans from a totally different environment and psyche.

I also volunteered when I visited the Kala Ashram in Adilabad. This space is a congregation zone of artistic, cultural and socially conscious people, and I usually preferred to help in the kitchen that was run by the artist's wife.

In another instance, during my teenage years, I volunteered to clean the feet of a woman who had developed a fungal infection between her toes. When I was cleaning her feet, the feeling was of being in prayer communicating to God.

Whether there is an agenda or not, different kinds of volunteering have



different values to teach us. At different times, my mindset was quite varied. Sometimes the feeling of gaining was there.

At other times the core of my heart prompted me to serve so as to feel gratitude that my emotions are tuned to feel compassion and empathy for others.

Certainly there is a higher cause that drives my life, which is quite difficult to explain, as it is all experiential. Before I started practicing meditation, my experiences of connection with humanity were quite sporadic. The feeling of oneness would erupt in me, sometimes for a month or maybe many months. This was like a reminder that happened to me in the form of a good book, a film, or a performance. But today, every moment I am mindful of how deeply I am connected to this beautiful world. Now I send loads of blessings to my pet cats, as they have taught me how we are also connected to the animal world. In fact, loving them has increased my compassion for other creatures and expanded the space in my heart.

Varsha Kothari



In the core of my heart I try to do good for others with what little I have, whether it is in my presence, knowledge or money. I might not be able to bring change in individual lives, but making others happy through small deeds means a lot to me.

When I have time I usually go to government schools and organize camps for adolescent girls to educate them about health, hygiene and life skills. I love to hear their stories, which inspire me every day to do what I am doing.

One small act by each individual can bring a positive transformation in the society. The Pay It Forward movement is one step to show care and love for our ecosystem. It's like a mother caring for her children with no expectation, just giving her child the best she can to nurture life.



Narasimha Rao

There is a deeper meaning to life than the mundane routine and it lies in discovering every day that I am deeply connected with everyone and all beings around me. If someone is in pain it pains me, and I feel happy when people are joyful.

I find this external connection deepened by diving deep within myself every day.

I am part of a volunteer research group that helps to scientifically prove simple but profound facts about wellness and health.

I believe in giving without remembering and receiving without forgetting. The joy in gifting anonymously is a wonderful experience, and it touches hearts with gratitude towards the Ultimate. The ego is not flattered and my intention is achieved.

Tanmay Engineer

I have always been curious about the secrets of the universe – how the world functions, people and their motivations. This curiosity drives me to learn and acquire knowledge and understanding of the world. Once I know myself, I can share my understanding with others. I live to be a good example, to inspire others through my thoughts and actions, to be happy and share the happiness and positivity whenever possible.



I actively volunteer in a non-profit organization that spreads peace and universal brotherhood. Being a certified Yoga teacher, I also volunteer in teaching Yoga in my locality and in spreading awareness about the benefits of Yoga and meditation.

I had a first-hand experience of the pay it forward concept when one fine morning I was in queue to collect my breakfast at the drive-through of Starbucks. When I went to the payment window, the vendor told me with a beautiful smile that the driver in front of me had already paid my bill. That incident made my day. I was taken by surprise and kept wondering who it was. I was going through a rough time, and that small gesture of selfless love reminded me that there is still so much positivity in this world. My perspective became positive and motivated for the day ahead.

Soon after I did the same thing for someone else and it didn't stop there! Since then I have started helping people in numerous ways, like filling up change money for someone in the shopping queue or public transport, being more generous to sidewalk beggars and restaurant waiters. I also now give donations to social causes I believe in.

Simple gestures of kindness and generosity can totally change our perspective about people and bring a positive outlook towards life. They bring an attitude of sharing rather than hoarding, giving rather than always taking. We become altruistic and collaborative.

In the field

heartful village life *in Rural India*



PUNIT LALBHAI presents some of the Heartfulness initiatives that are being done in the villages of rural India, where the simple life, hospitality and open hearts are very conducive to heart-based meditation.



Ram Trivedi will surely not fail to talk about the nights he spent at the village temple. He will not mention the discomfort of sleeping on the stone floor, but rather the long discussions he had with the temple Pujari – the discussions that paved the way to being accepted as one of the community. If you travel with Tribhuvan Singh in the villages around Jodhpur, he will ask you to follow his scooter as he leads the way to several houses situated remotely and far from one another. It will typically be late in the evening when the village folk have finished tending their fields. You will meet a family of four or five, who will probably be eagerly waiting for him to arrive and conduct group meditation. After the session, you are sure to be moved by the earnestness of the family's request that you be their guest for the night.

Amrita Trivedi and Jyoti Goswami are also full of stories about their work in the villages around Ahmedabad. They will tell you about how the women of the villages are







taking the lead to bring their communities together to meditate. When you speak to these individuals who are bringing meditation to the people living in parts of rural Gujarat and Rajasthan, you will hear story after inspiring story of simple people, simple living and the beautiful connection between human hearts.

Over a two-year period, these ‘village champions’ have introduced Heartfulness Meditation to more than 30,000 individuals, and of these more than 2,500 continue to meditate on a weekly basis. This has not been easy, as working in villages comes with a unique set of challenges. First, there is the distance. It means extensive travel. Second, there is a prerequisite to build trust. It means spending time with the locals, talking at length about village matters and agriculture, eating together, and most importantly listening. In order to do this well and build strong connections, it is important that the same people visit the same villages frequently. Third, there is the need to train locals to sustain the momentum. Here, the approach of working with the local schools, gaining the trust of the Sarpanch or lead influencers, like temple priests, and identifying locals as future coordinators has been working well.

With approximately 70% of India’s population still living in rural areas, we are developing creative models to support those villagers who want to learn meditation and lead a heartfelt life. The model that our four ‘village champions’ have chosen is to dedicate themselves to this cause fulltime, and their resource and travel needs are covered by corporate sponsorship through CSR funding. Of course, there are other models, and there are many programs happening in different parts of the country, but I suspect that our work is only getting started. The future of meditation in rural India is promising and immensely exciting.





INTERVIEW

You get in life what you have
the courage to ask for.

Oprah Winfrey

Choosing LIFE

Fasting is a bit like becoming wise, withdrawing, letting the inside act silently, secretly. Like a sacred space that is taking shape. Let the body do its work, do not hinder its regenerative work, have confidence, and let go. And to let go is to relax the mind, to put it at rest. This is also what meditation invites us to do, to calm down and to introspect.

When **CELINE FRÉSARD** started watching **THIERRY CASASNOVAS'** videos, her understanding of how the body works led her to draw a parallel between the body and the heart. To work well, the body needs to be cleaned – a cleaning of the cells through detoxification – and well nourished. And the heart, the seat of the soul, also responds to laws because the spiritual heart also requires cleaning and the nourishment of love. From this analogy, she learned that the body and the heart are gateways to deeper layers of Being. Here she interviews Thierry about his life, experiences and discoveries.

Q Hello Thierry. Thank you for welcoming this conversation with such enthusiasm. Could you tell us in a few words about your life and the events that led you to become so passionate about life?

A It is a fairly common story. As a child I was fine and I became an adult who was not well, to the point of almost dying at the age of 33.

The prognosis was clear: there were only a few days left to live, and I was in a state of complete weakness, with tuberculosis, hepatitis and pancreatitis. I had put on 35 kilograms, didn't assimilate anything anymore and threw up everything I ate.

Then there was a surge of life in me. I suddenly wanted to know why I had reached this stage, and especially how I could transcend this completely passive attitude to my health. A world where arbitrariness reigns and makes us powerless is a world in which disease happens in a random way, without anyone being able to do anything about it, and this does not match my worldview. I believe that the world is made up of meaning, laws and principles. By my faith too, I believe that we live in a world structured in a perfect and functional way, so it cannot harbor perversion and arbitrariness; that is impossible.

This need to find meaning in what was happening to me was decisive. You mentioned the parallel between the body and the heart; well I understood that we cannot consider one without the other; we cannot heal the body without including the spiritual, and vice versa.

I was dying, and at first this surge of life was like a dazzling feeling. I think that in a state of great weakness we have moments of hypersensitivity in which we are


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that the more
the body is left to rest,
the more it will
be repaired.”*

open to the more subtle dimensions of ourselves. There was a morning when my brain was literally turned upside down in a quarter of a second, and this is what dawned on me: “If you are in this state, it is because you are dying. And if you are dying, it is because your way of life has led you here to death. Choose practices that lead to life, and you will live!” Many years later I came across this verse from the Bible: “Choose life and you will live.”

It became so obvious what was leading me to death and what would lead me to life. This is how I started to examine my physical life, habits, way of eating and exercising, relationships with others, and spirituality. And I came across something I didn't expect – I discovered life and living.

I became a worshipper of life, in the true sense of the word, in the spiritual sense of the word. My path was built around these questions: What is life? What is needed and what choices can we make to be alive? Because in the end we want to become truly alive, with greater vitality, so that our lives can flourish.

As a scientist, a physicist, I approached this research in a rational way, by observing and experiencing the laws and principles of life. I found extremely simple, obvious, common sense things that changed everything.

 **Can you tell us a little more about these laws that govern the living?**

Yes, they govern all living systems. It is important to know that there is a fundamental difference between the living and the non-living, something that most of the time we do not realize.

We live in a world where we spend more time sitting in the car, in front



of the computer, with a mobile phone in our hands, using machines all the time ... and we start to consider our world through the characteristics of the non-living, while the nature of living beings has totally different characteristics.

For example, a principle of all living beings, whether plants, animals or humans, is homeostasis. This principle alone radically changes the situation, and has incredible power. The principle of homeostasis says that any living system spontaneously returns to a state of equilibrium. The state of equilibrium is the state of better functioning of the organism.

Q In the absence of disturbance...

In any case, disturbance must be reduced. If your body takes two steps forward towards balance, and then four steps back, the result will be two steps back. So disturbances are acceptable, as long as they are reduced for the result to be equilibrium. In any case, any living organism spontaneously returns to a state of equilibrium.

Sometimes people say to me, “Yes, but I have cancer.” In our society, cancer has a poor prognosis – it is the ultimate disease – so they stand

in front of me and say, “How dare you tell me that my body can return to full health!”

So I answer, “Have you ever considered that the tumor may be a mechanism for your body to prevent you from dying, and if the tumor hadn’t been there you would already be dead? Would you consider it? Can you think of it as an adaptive mechanism? It was your body’s last resort to protect you from an internal toxicity it could no longer manage.”

Now, all of a sudden, their outlook is reversed. There is no longer any

need to consider the body as something defective, which must always be repaired by specialists who will give all sorts of things to repair the dysfunctional body. That viewpoint has a kind of disgust for the living, and contempt for creation.

All of a sudden you think to yourself, "In fact, I have something fabulous inside me. There is nothing to understand and nothing to analyze. I just have to obey. Obey what? The principle of the living, which says that the more the body is left to rest, the more it will be repaired. This notion of rest is very important. We often think in relation to machines, and a machine at rest is a machine not used, whereas rest for the living is not that at all.

Think of a muscle: overuse leads to exhaustion and underuse leads to atrophy. We are not machines, so rest for a living being is neither overuse nor underuse, and the living being prospers when rest is used to its fullest extent. It is not leaving it in a corner on a chaise longue to vegetate; it is really using it properly. This is rest on the physical level, and then there is rest on the psychic plane and on the spiritual plane.

What is rest, really? Finding it is also a lifelong adventure. In heart-centered meditation practices, we understand that this is also the peace that we are seeking. And peace and rest are *sine qua non* for life to prosper in us. It is as simple as that. They are absolutely necessary, the


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biological and physiological reality of our body and life. Living beings need peace on the spiritual level, rest on the physical level, and quietude on the mental level, in order to prosper.

When these conditions are met, life explodes in us, just as fire spreads in a pyre if the logs are well arranged. A small flame can become a fire that burns an entire forest, provided it is guided in the right way. The principle of fire is that it will gradually flourish, thanks to small twigs alighting quickly, bringing oxygen. If we start with large logs, the fire will go out very

quickly. So there are principles and rules, and for our life it is exactly the same; if we respect these principles, life thrives in us.

Often my comments are caricatured with, "He has an answer to everything." It is not me who has the answer to everything, it is the body, it is life that has the answer to everything. Because life spontaneously goes towards life; it is the nature of life to go towards life all the time.

 How can we promote a state of balance in this frenetic world? At what pace do we feed that fire? We can't all live in the mountains and drink pure water, can we?

I agree with you, there are steps. In fact, I think the important thing is not the speed at which you walk; the important thing is the direction. And also the manner, as one of the essential dimensions of health is peace and quiet. There is no need to approach these questions in an anxious way, thinking, "I have to renew everything, otherwise I will die," etc.

It depends. There are people whose health is in such a state of deterioration that I tell them, "At this stage, there is nothing to lose. We really need to make radical changes, otherwise the little flame of life in you will soon be reduced to an ember. You don't have too much

time.” For these people, radical reform is needed at the root, but for most people things can be implemented gradually.

There are generally two modes of functioning of living organisms. The first is catabolic, the mode of reaction and adaptation to the environment, in which the body consumes resources and produces waste. The second is rest mode, in which the body repairs itself, goes towards homeostasis, towards the best of itself. In rest mode, the body eliminates waste and everything is cleaned up. The important thing is to maintain a balance between these two modes.

The problem today is that the world has become hyper catabolic, so we no longer have adequate moments of rest. I was thinking about it yesterday: with cell phones, there is no longer a moment when we are alone and bored. We always have something to read, to listen to, to do, to think, to look at, and to call someone back. On the mental level, we are in permanent hyper catabolism, the hyper solicitation of our mind.

The body, too, is constantly in hyper-action: maximum pressure at work, in our daily lives, pressure to earn money, pressure to educate children, anxiety about living conditions, anxiety about the evolution of the world.

The important thing is that we can say to ourselves, “Okay, I understand

that this hyper catabolism is not sustainable in the long term, it is literally stifling life in me, so I will now take a new step every day in the direction of rest.”

For everyone it will be different: one will approach it first on the psychological level, through meditation, for example. I think it is an ideal way to calm the mind, to calm down this kind of delirious pedaling that is constantly spinning in the head and bring it back to the essential. At the heart in particular, it’s just perfect. I am from a Christian culture and Proverbs 4:23 of the Bible says: “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” By meditating on the heart, you meditate on the source of life. It’s not nothing, it’s huge. You are connecting to the source of life.

Then there are those who choose to slow down hyper catabolism by thinking about their diet: “I will make sure that every day my diet is more nutritious, and that it is of better quality.” There are others who will slow down their pace of life. They will choose to work a little less, and have more time with their families.

Everyone will take a step forward in their own way. It is individual because, to put it simply, we each have different ‘causes of death’. For one, it comes from not getting enough sleep; for another, it will be guilt or remorse for things that happened years before; for a third,

*I often ask the people
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in you and around
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you nurture it in
yourself; if you do
good for others, you
do good for yourself.
Do your actions
nourish life?*

it will be indiscriminate eating; for a fourth, it will be to feed anger; and for a fifth it will be to over-train physically, because even too much physical training leads to exhaustion. The principles are universal, but the implementation of these principles in everyone’s life is individual. We must discover and search for what in our lives pulls us towards death and understand exactly how to respond and change.

There’s a word I like very much. It has a strong religious connotation, but I would like to go back to its roots because it is very powerful. That word is repentance. Repentance

means 'changing the direction, the slope'. If you're on the verge of death, you don't have the luxury to just say to yourself, "Okay, I have to slow down a little," you have to completely change the direction, make adjustments. You were following the slope of death, and now you are choosing the slope of life. Go at the speed you want, but choose life under all circumstances.

I often ask the people I meet: Whatever you do, whatever your choices in everyday life, are you nurturing life in you and around you? In fact, if you nurture life in others, you nurture it in yourself; if you do good for others, you do good for yourself. Do your actions nourish life? When you start despising someone in your head, making fun of them, do you feed life, either in yourself or in them? Whenever you feel guilty, do you feed life in yourself or in the other person? Every time you go to bed at two in the morning, after smoking cigarette after cigarette, do you feed life in yourself?

To nurture life, in any given day the result must be favorable to life, otherwise you will go in the direction of death. It's simple but not simplistic.

Q What if you're too tired? It takes powerful energy to move in an upward direction. Even to think in the other direction requires a minimum of energy.



Powerful energy? I don't know. Take my case, for example. I was at the end of the end of physical exhaustion. I think energy is important, but more than energy I needed conviction, a revelation in a way, what I call a turning point in the mind. And if the mind has tilted, the body will follow, even if there is very little energy.

At first, you will go very slowly, but first of all you need this tilting. Look at the living thing, get to know it, understand it and love it, so that all of a sudden there's a change in you: "Now I have the desire to feed life!" Maybe, at first, feeding life will start in a very small way on a daily basis, because we have very little energy, but we will still be on the right track.

For me, this turning point is really important. It is the fundamental difference between a speaker who speaks well and one who touches my heart. We keep talking about the heart after all. Our hearts were touched and it triggered this 'boom', this explosion, after which we never saw the world the same way again. This is what is called a revelation in spiritual terms.

And through this work, I aspire that everyone may experience this revelation – that everyone may discover life in the physical, mental and spiritual realms.

To be continued

To learn more: <https://regenere.org>

DESIGNING DESTINY

The Heartfulness Way

What does destiny mean
in the course of our lives?

What is fixed and
how much can change?

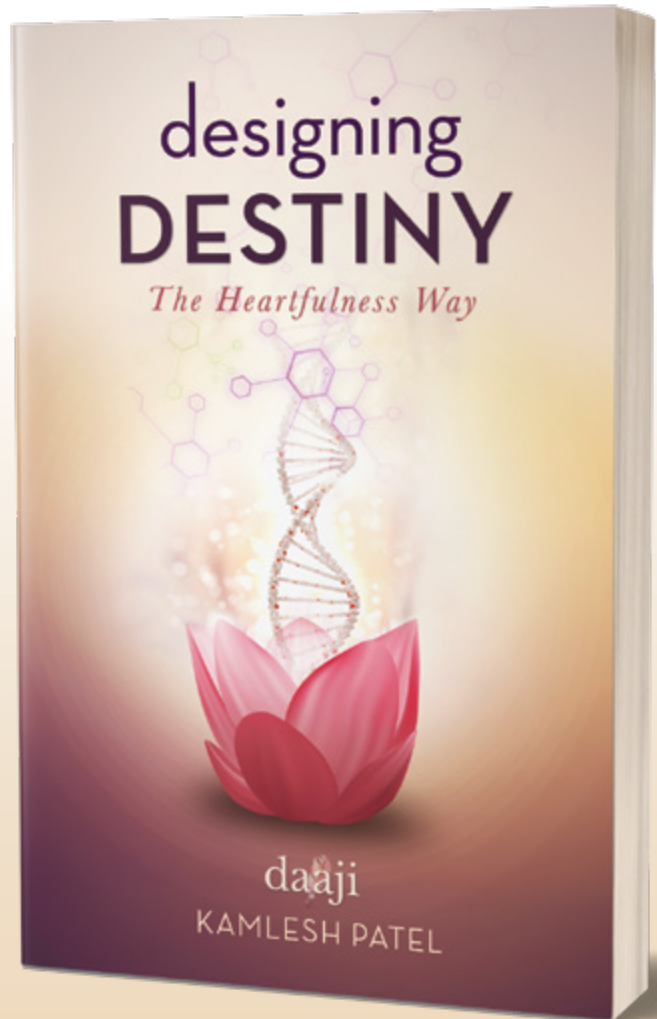
How can we design
our own destiny?

In *Designing Destiny*, the second book in The Heartfulness Way series, Daaji addresses these questions with simple practical wisdom.

He takes us on the next step of the journey – how meditative practices transform us from the inside out, affecting so many aspects of lifestyle, relationships, and overall well-being.

Daaji also shares his fascination with evolution: Which of our various bodies evolve? What is the role of consciousness? How to act in those pivotal moments when life takes a turn and a decision leads us down a certain path? What happens to the soul at the time of birth and death? How do we design our destiny, here and in the afterlife?

Daaji inspires us to believe in ourselves, to solve our challenges, to flourish in the face of difficulties, and to master our emotions. We learn to uncover our true potential and design our destiny.



AVAILABLE JANUARY 2019
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AN EXCERPT FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

"The fundamental question about destiny has always been: What is fixed and what can be changed? Are our lives governed by fate or do we have the free will to choose our destiny? ... Life is lived somewhere in between these two extreme views. It is like genetics. There is a fixed genetic pattern defined by the human genome, as well as a flexible epigenetic component. The basic genetic structure is fixed, but our environment, thoughts and emotions all affect the way our genes express themselves, switching them on and off. Like destiny, genetics is both fixed and flexible. Without this, there would be no evolution!

"What we do today determines our future. What we did in the past has already determined our present. This is how we weave our destiny.

"Each one of us exists in the dimensions of time and space, and we are constantly making our mark in those dimensions by forming impressions in our energy field, creating a signature, a personality, defined by a set of cognates – an individual character or blueprint of our future karma. If we could only remove those impressions, wiping the slate clean, then the karmic blueprint would be erased, removing our limitations and expanding the possibilities of our future destiny. The good news is that those impressions can easily be removed, to clear the energy field and transform our personality and karma. In this book, we will discover how this is done, transforming our lives."



daaji

KAMLESH PATEL

Author

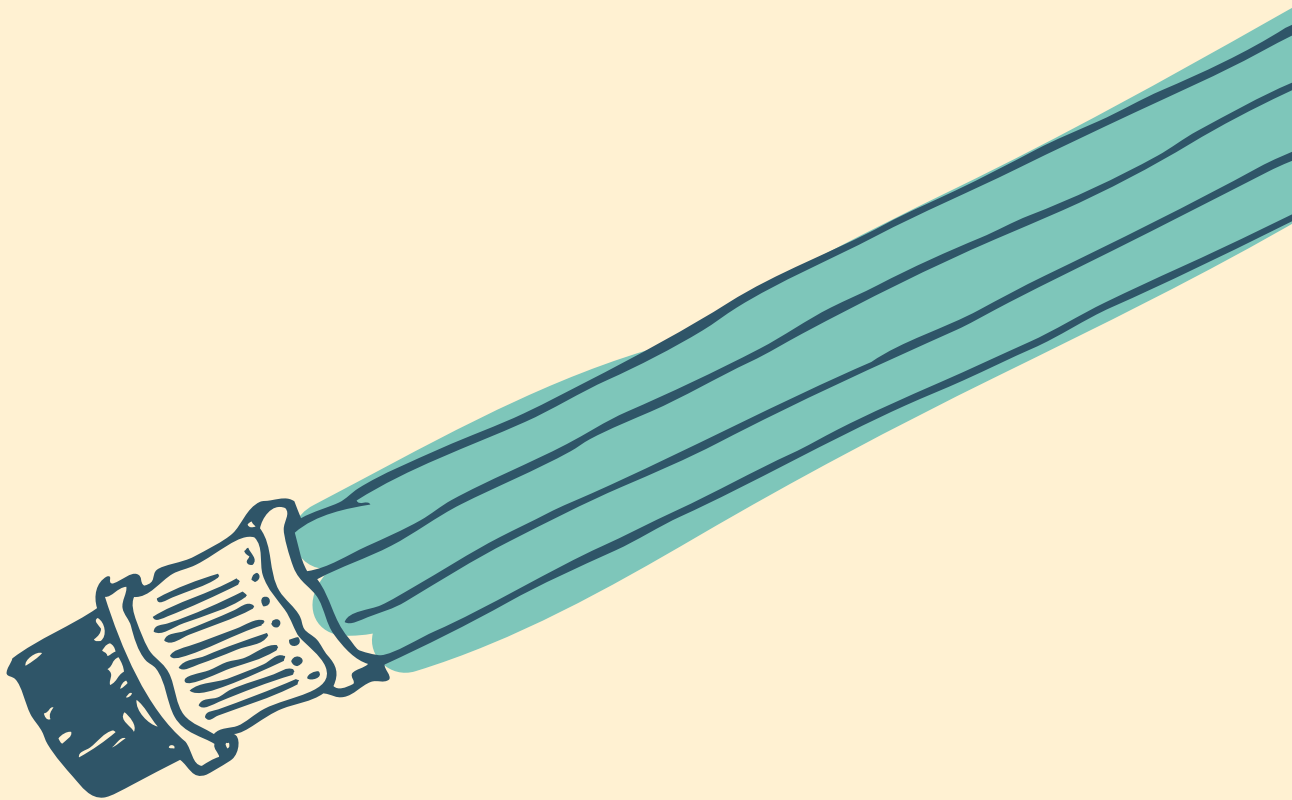
Known widely as Daaji, Kamlesh Patel is an original voice in an ancient tradition. His teachings arise from his personal experience on the path of Heartfulness, while reflecting his deep spirit of enquiry and respect for the world's great spiritual traditions and scientific advancements.

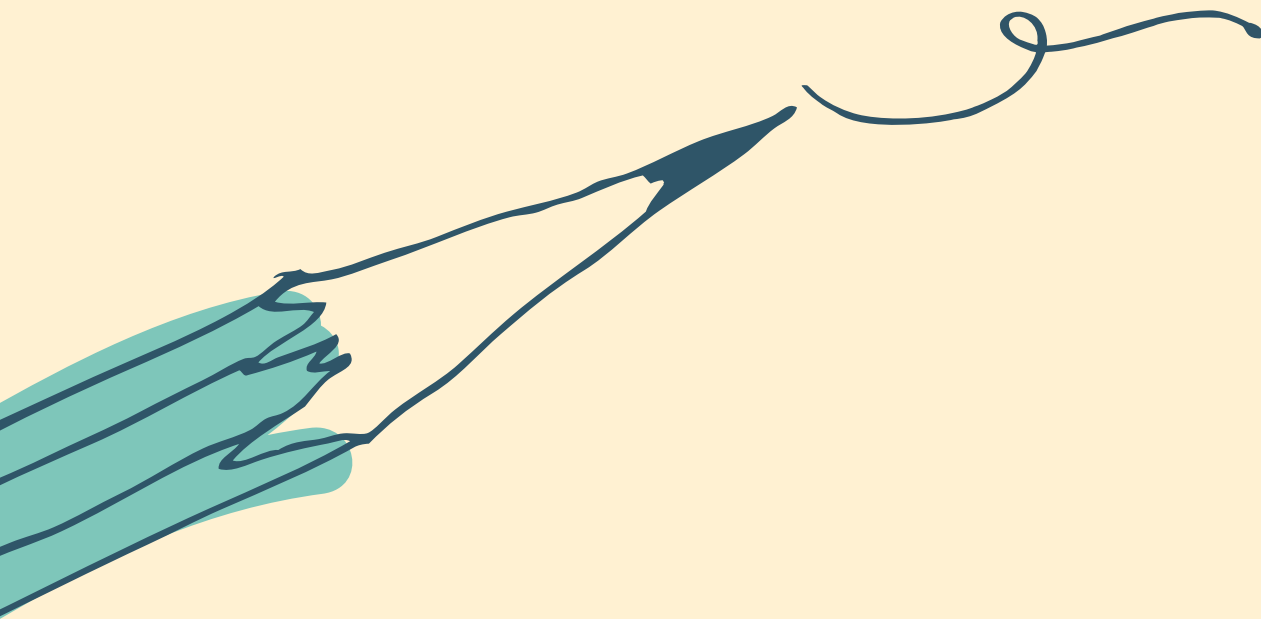
Daaji practiced pharmacy in New York City for over three decades before being named as the successor in a century-old lineage of spiritual masters. Fulfilling the many duties of a modern-day guru, he extends his support to spiritual seekers everywhere.

A self-professed student of spirituality, he devotes much of his time and energy to research in the field of consciousness and spirituality, approaching the subject with scientific methodology – a practical approach that stems from his own experience and mastery in the field.

*"Meditation is a journey
from the complexity of the mind to
the simplicity of the heart."
—Designing Destiny*

IT CHANGES *everything*





I am a little pencil in the hand
of a writing God who is
sending a love letter to the world.


—MOTHER TERESA

CULTIVATING

Leadership


Values – PART 2

KRISH SHANKAR is an Executive Vice President and the Group Head of Human Resource Development at Infosys. Krish has over 30 years of experience and has facilitated organization-wide transformation and capability development, and been instrumental in building a strong talent pool through a series of leadership development initiatives. He is an avid reader, and loves wildlife photography and trekking. A football enthusiast, he is passionate about teaching and exploring new ideas in Human Resources and organization development. In this exclusive interview, he speaks with **V SRINIVASAN** and **SHARAT HEGDE** in his hometown of Bengaluru, India.

 What is your understanding about the role and importance of character from a leader's perspective?

Character is what I would call a set of values that are very strongly expressed. If you were to take three or four values that a person strongly believes in and demonstrates, then that really becomes his or her character. These values are basic, like honesty, transparency and trust. While skills are there, connection with leaders comes from their character, these deeper values. We build trust with people through these values, through the integrity and honesty that we show. And I think they are very important for building relationships, teams and long-term things. They are very important for leaders, because they describe what kind of leader we really are.

Skills are also important. I think both go hand in hand, but if you look at really successful leaders, it's their character that stands out. They may or may not be very successful at work, but they're always well-regarded by people, they're always the ones who people look forward to meeting. If they also have skills, if they are also good at strategic thinking, then they will be good at their jobs also.

 A lot of conventional interventions in organizations emphasize the importance of building role-based capabilities and competencies, etc. Do you feel that the element of character, and its formation and development,



If you're not enjoying what you're doing then look for something else. There is always enough to do, but enjoying your work is more important.

needs attention, or is it something that you expect the candidate to have brought along with them?

A lot of character is formed early on: the family has a lot to do with a person's character. But as people enter organizations, organizations can give them time to reflect on this, and give them good role models, because in the end all of this is through role models. If you look at it, the first job that you have in any company, and the first leaders you interact with, have a big impact on how you think about leaders and leadership. Exposing employees to role models with character helps them, and they say, "Okay, these are the things I want to see in myself." So role models are very, very important.

Character is not formed in a day; it is formed over time. It takes a long time to form, and even longer to change. Though the basic stuff is from your childhood, it can still be shaped as you go along, because your mental model is how you deal with people, your mental model

is how you deal with adversity, your mental world can be shaped over time. It can be sharpened over time. I think character can be developed, and I think leadership development has to focus on the following things: role models, mode of mentorship, time for reflection, feedback, and giving people the opportunity to decide what they want to be, what is it that they want to be known for.

Q What is your advice to young professionals who are at the start of their career today?

Wow, this is the mega question I think. We need to write a complete book on this! Well, I shouldn't be giving you clichés or preaching here. It's very tough, because the world is different today, and people are different. There are a few principles that I will share, and then we'll leave the individuals to decide how to take them forward.

Enjoy what you're doing.

When considering a career path, I would say explore, decide, look around and enjoy what you're doing. If you're not enjoying what you're doing then look for something else. There is always enough to do, but enjoying your work is more important.

Have a measure of what will keep you motivated. What is it that you want to achieve?

A little bit of deeper thinking and road mapping your career is very important. It's difficult to say what you will be doing by a particular time, but at least have a principle of saying: What keeps me happy? What is it that I really want to be doing? What is it in five years from now that I want to be doing for my community, for myself, and for my family?

Take everything you do as a learning opportunity – every job and every activity.


You can keep doing the same things, but if you step back and say, “Okay, what did I learn from it? What can I do better?” then the next time it will be something very different. With every mundane thing that you do, consider it as a learning activity and see how you can improve.

Career is not just work, but a set of mentors, a set of friends, a set of people with whom you want to interact.

Build this right from day one. Have mentors in the company, and mentors outside the company. Have friends in the company, and friends outside. It will give you a fuller understanding of what is happening.

In this day and age there is no one career that you will follow.

I would say that everybody will go through two or three different inflexion points in their career. You may be doing something for five to ten years, and then you may move and do something else. So you've got to be learning and ready for those pivot points, moving around and doing something different.


 **Can you give one example of any initiative that you have launched in a company, for example**

Infosys, which has had a profound impact on people in terms of any of those values we have discussed so far?

One of the things we thought about in Infosys was: How do we get people to connect with their purpose? So about a year or two back we came up with the concept of ‘power teams’. It was a small experiment. We got people to come together as a team and think about what they've loved doing; what they've enjoyed; what they'd like to see for their own learning and development.

We talked and brainstormed, and at the end of it we asked them to give feedback to others in the team on: What are you good at? What will make you great? So the others would say, “Yes, you are good at this, this and this, but by doing this you'll be greater,” which created a real bond among them.

Many of our HR people ran this program across the organization. The idea was to give people time to reflect on what they want, their own development and the purpose of their team, but also at the same time bond with the team. They were exploring how they could really help each other, which they had never done before. It was a small thing that we did to bring a little more focus on themselves, their teams and their purpose.

 **You mentioned that individuals have to reflect on balancing their individual work life, family, serving humanity, and developing their own interests, hobbies and things like that. Do you see organizations taking these ideas and enabling their employees to contribute to social and community causes outside their work?**

Well, there are many! If we just take Infosys, there are many people who are doing things other than work. We have something called Samarpan, which is all about giving people opportunities to do CSR projects. They go to nearby schools and teach. They're part of various clubs. We also have the Samaritans Counseling Network,



where people are trained to be counselors. They learn, they're trained, and they can identify when people are in difficulty.

We found that many people are interested in things other than work. Generally their minds are not fully occupied. There is a cognitive surplus, so they want to do something more. That's why so many people are writing blogs, because they want to express their interests; their minds are working and they're not able to really utilize all of their capacity.

Many organizations are using CSR, and they also have internal clubs and various other initiatives. For example, at Infosys there is a running club. Many people are members, and some are organizers. They're trying and doing something. Many companies are starting clubs and

There is a cognitive surplus, so they want to do something more. That's why so many people are writing blogs, because they want to express their interests; their minds are working and they're not able to really utilize all of their capacity.

activities in their organizations, because they get people together, remove some of the stresses of life, and build a stronger social bonding.

Q Finally, would you like to speak about someone who has been your role model?

I have had many role models during my career. When I was a student at Xavier Labour Research Institute, Father McGrath, one of the founding Fathers, was one such role model. An American Irishman who came to India at an early age and stayed in India for 50 years, he embodied many admirable human qualities and did a lot for the community. He was respected and trusted by the workers of Tata Steel and the local villagers. He was a great listener, not at all pretentious and he valued people.

I also remember one of my first HR Directors at Unilever. When my mother was going through an operation within two weeks of my joining Unilever, he empathetically listened to me and granted me leave with an open heart. He became a mentor to me and even today we are connected and meet. Such people make a big difference to us. They stand out in their humanness, empathy and the fact that they are prepared to invest a lot of time in us.

Thank you so much.

Thank you!



DAYS *without* BURDEN

CHARU SHARMA shares her experience of volunteering for a book launch tour in the UK and the difference it has brought about in her attitude and approach to work itself.

Last summer I had the opportunity of volunteering for the launch and promotion of a book. It started out with administrative work, responding to emails and data entry of guests registering for the various book launch events across the UK. As the event dates drew closer, the fervor increased. Emails were pouring in all the time, and I was also responding to queries through WhatsApp, Facebook and phone calls. Soon I found myself working within a team of volunteers who were doing multiple tasks dealing with the logistics for each venue. It was a network of volunteers functioning smoothly, dedicatedly, quietly (for the most part!) and blissfully.

While glued to my computer with the task of registration, hours blended into days and nights, breakfast-lunch-dinner-teatime sometimes blended into one meal, all of this happening without my noticing it. The one thing that I did feel all along was a continuous Transmission flowing, as uninterrupted as the work that I was doing.

After the book launch tour ended, I sat back and reflected, realizing with astonishment the amount of work I had been able to do tirelessly without so much as thinking about it or my ability to do it. It was something that consciously I would not have had the nerve to take up. I also realized that I had been able to get along beautifully with a large number of volunteers, which again I didn't think myself capable of doing.

These volunteering days without burden changed me permanently. Initially I struggled to get back into regular work after this short, intense period last summer. Now that I've readjusted to working life, I find that I'm handling it in a lighter way and not taking things to heart as I did in the past. I still look for perfection in everything and everyone, but I can see myself expecting it and then I realize that it's my mistake. I am ever thankful for this amazing opportunity to volunteer, and I rejoice at the thought of the many volunteers who avail of such opportunities.

Even as I continue to reflect upon it, these words come to mind:

No burden of anger or justification of an old anger,
nor of owing something to someone,
nor the guilt of a job not done.
Travel each day, lighter than before,
and before you realize it, you are flying.
And this lightness is very bearable, ever enjoyable!
It becomes a state of being.

THE HEART OF A LOVER



*The more you
give of something,
the more of it
you have for
yourself.*

In the material world, we believe that whatever we give diminishes. First, is it true? Second, does the same law apply in the spiritual world? Here, **MEGHA BAJAJ** describes her journey of discovering the secret of abundance in life.

The more you love others, the more love you find in your life. The more you spread happiness, the more it finds you. It's like flowers – when you give roses to someone, your fingers too carry the fragrance.

In the words of the great Rumi, “What you seek is seeking you.”

I could not comprehend the depths of these words earlier. I cannot claim to understand it even now. And yet I feel closer to them.

I had two friends when I was in school. Somewhere across the years we lost touch and my heart craved to feel close to them again, but I was not sure what to do. I have always carried this notion that people should connect with me – and then I would give them all of myself. I would never take the initiative. Must be some kind of defense mechanism I think. So I waited for them to get in touch, but they didn't.

After waiting for years I decided to do it myself. It felt silly waiting for something to happen when I could make it happen. I tried quite a few times, through mails and messages, and while both of them were polite their

responses seemed lukewarm. My usual conditioning would be to move on, but the heart really did feel incomplete without them.

As I started realizing the spiritual laws, and how love is an unconditional quality, not dependent on the other, I started making more attempts. I think initially they didn't know how to respond and remained distant, however, the more I was loving and giving the better I felt about myself, so I continued.

In time, relationships that seemed to have lost all luster began to get re-ignited. We started speaking again, even meeting one-to-one. We realized the depth we felt with one another was indeed something that should not be missed. They started responding to love, and today these two relationships are once again an intimate part of my life. We enrich each other's lives in the most beautiful way.

I realized how important it is to develop the heart of a lover to attract an abundance of love into our lives. By sitting on the edge, hoping and wanting, pining and yearning, nothing happens. We have to drop the defenses, the ego. We have to let go of the set patterns and love like we have never loved before. Whether things change in the outside world or not, it's all about what you start feeling within. You feel rich when you have the heart of a lover. You feel abundant. And the feeling of abundance draws abundance to itself.

I love the feeling of love. And I aim to indulge a lot more in it. You?



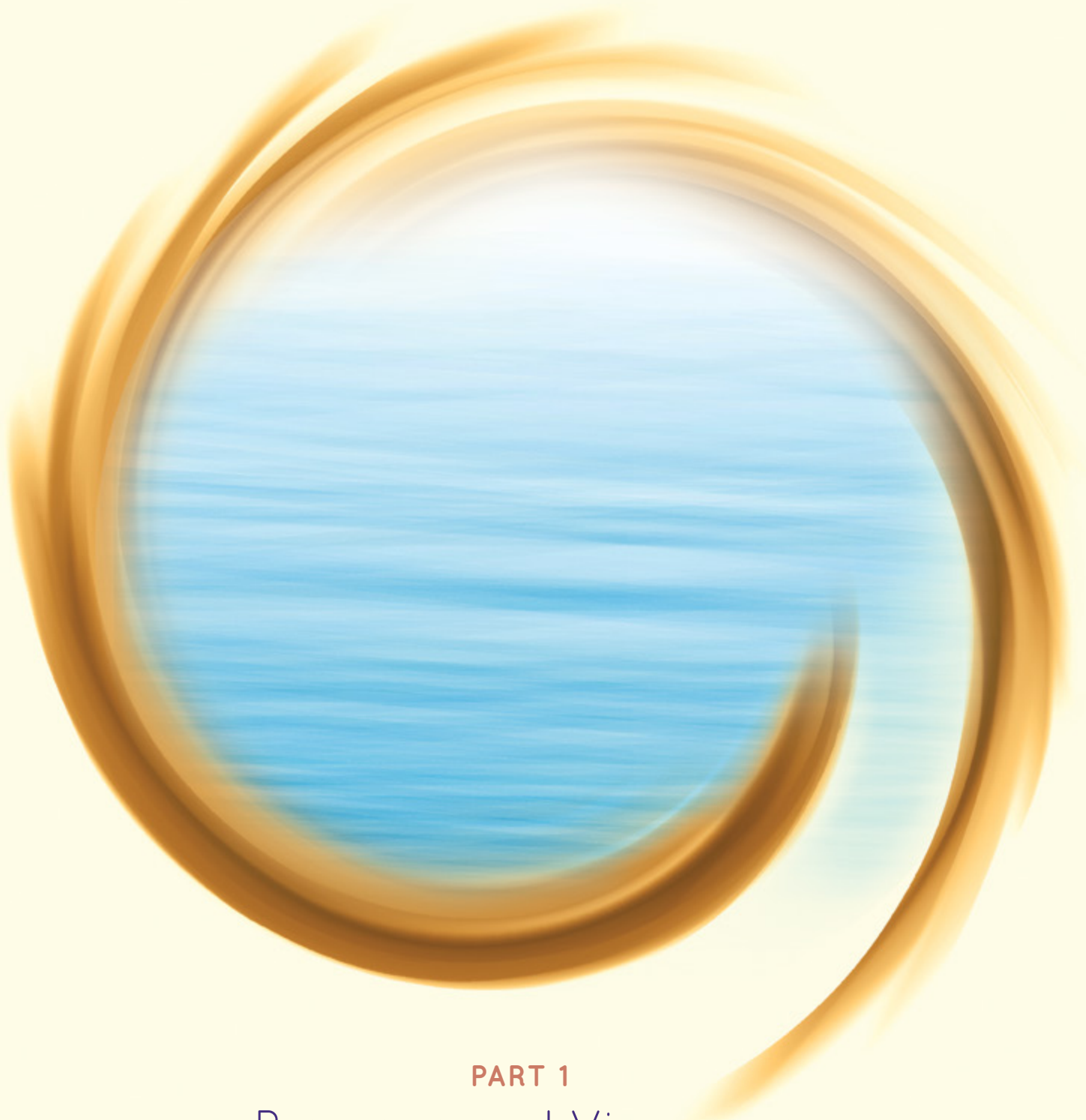
Be Inspired



You are the
UNIVERSE
in ecstatic
MOTION.

RUMI

YOGIC PSYCHOLOGY



PART 1

Pramana and Viparyaya

Have you ever thought to explore psychology through Yoga? It is a vast science of the subtle bodies and the soul, leading us to explore where consciousness stems from, and what causes changes in the field of consciousness. In this series of articles, [DAAJI](#) explains the fundamental basis of yogic psychology, with its foundation in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. He enlightens us on Patanjali's codification of the human mind and the various mental imbalances, and he also gives us solutions to create mental well-being through yogic practices. In this first article of the series, he explores the first two of the mental deviations described by Patanjali.

Patanjali is famous today for giving us Ashtanga Yoga, the eight limbs that define the path of Yoga, and these are beautifully expounded in chapters 2 and 3 of his Yoga Sutras. But his Yoga Sutras contain so much more that is of great benefit to the world, and this is especially true in the field of psychology.

Today many people are plagued by mental disturbance, anxiety and distress, as a result of our complex societies, urban lifestyles, breakdown of relationships, and unnatural way of living that is out of sync with the daily circadian rhythms that are hardwired in our physiology. Circadian rhythms determine our optimal sleep and feeding patterns. Even the metabolism of our cellular energy follows the rhythm of the circadian clock. If we don't follow natural rhythms, our cellular energy levels decline as the mitochondrial network is impaired. Lifestyles with irregular daily rhythms have been linked with various chronic health conditions, such as sleep disorders, obesity, diabetes, depression, bipolar disorder, and seasonal affective disorder. Basically, we are swimming against the current, upstream, when we choose a lifestyle that is out of sync with natural cycles.

Yoga offers much to help us find balance. For this we turn to chapter 1 of the Yoga Sutras, where Patanjali starts by explaining what Yoga is:

1.1 Atha yoga anushasanam

Now, after prior preparation,
comes the discipline of Yoga.

1.2 Yogash chitta vritti nirodhah

Yoga is the cessation of all the modifications
of the mind in the field of consciousness.

First of all, what does Patanjali mean by prior preparation? Generally we enter the path of Yoga only when we are totally frustrated with our minds as they are. We reach a point when we have had some major failures in life, when someone says, "Do Yoga so that you may regain your health," and when we are tired of being addicted to two things – the hopes and expectations we have for the future and the entanglements that bind

us to our past. We no longer want to be slaves of the complexities of our vast subconscious mind and to the weight of the past that fills it.

This very human need to divest the burdens of the mind is also the base of many forms of self-improvement, including western psychology, which also tries to free us from the clutches of our past patterns. This instinct to free the mind and heart of burdens has been at the foundation of religions, philosophies, ethics, psychological disciplines, and also creative art forms like dance, music and painting.

And actually, for those of you who are still interested in developing and improving your mental skills and knowledge, perhaps more preparation is needed before you come to the path of Yoga. Why? Because Yoga is really for those adventurous souls who are ready to embark on a journey beyond the mind to the spiritual center of being. Along the way, the mind and heart are purified, ennobled and become supreme, and this is one of the amazing benefits that Yoga brings, but that is not its purpose.

Patanjali tells us that when we are ready for Yoga, discipline is required, and what is discipline? Discipline means to be a disciple, and for that the most important pre-requisite is an attitude of willingness and openness to learn, to be a student, to accept that 'I don't know', 'I am ignorant'. It requires craving to know the truth, receptivity, humility and a sense of wonder. A disciple remains a restless seeker, seeking to understand the mysteries of the Universe. Without this attitude of discipleship, there is no discipline of Yoga.

This is one of the reasons why all the great sages and saints have praised humility, insignificance and innocence. Without these noble qualities, there is no discipline of Yoga, whereas with these qualities our consciousness is flexible and remains open. Like little children, we return to purity, without all the mental deviations or modifications of the mind.

And what are these modifications of the mind? Patanjali's descriptions and scientific codification of our mental processes are broader in nature than modern behavioral sciences and psychology, for one very important reason: because Patanjali starts with the baseline of the balanced mental state, the original condition. There is no need for interpretation or analysis of this mental state, as it can be perceived by direct experience, scientifically, as the state of no vibration or energy. It is the pure state of no-vibration that lies at the center of our existence, beyond consciousness. This pure state is Patanjali's definition of Yoga, the ultimate state of stillness we aspire to experience. It was our starting point and can be our end point.

Patanjali then goes on to codify the various reasons why modifications and related vibrations arise in our field of consciousness; anything that takes us away from that state of mental balance and stillness.

These mental deviations exist in all of us. While the details may vary from one individual to another, the types of variations are part of the human condition. We can call them psychological deviations because they pull us away from the state of stillness at our spiritual center, the soul. The process of refining and transcending these deviations is what Yoga is all about, as we gradually elevate the mind and eventually go beyond mind.

In this series of articles, we will explore all of the mental modifications that Patanjali describes, and some of the practices that help us transcend them. Yoga is actually the pure science of the inner being, and Patanjali was a scientist of the highest caliber. Unlike most spiritual teachers, he was not mystical. Instead his legacy is based on practical experience. His description of the mental deviations in the Yoga Sutras is really the first written codified treatise on psychology, and as such deserves its due recognition.

Pramana – means of right or valid knowledge

Viparyaya – false or wrong knowledge

Vikalpa – fantasy, imagination

Nidra – sleep

Smriti – memory

VRITTIS

Instinctive
thought patterns
or tendencies

KLESHAS

Colorings or
impurities in the
thoughts patterns

Avidya – ignorance, veiling

Asmita – mine-ness, egotism

Raga – attachment, addiction

Dvesha – aversion, repulsion

Abhinivesha – clinging to life, fear of death

Vyadhi – disease, illness

Styana – mental laziness, dullness

Samsaya – doubt, indecision

Pramada – carelessness, negligence, haste

Alasya – laziness, sloth

Avirati – lack of abstaining,
absence of non-attachment

Bhranti-Darshana – false perception

Alabdha-Bhumikatva – failing to attain
stages on the journey

Anavasthitattva – inability to maintain
the stage, instability

VIKSHEPAS

Obstacles and
distractions

VIGHNAS

Disturbances
resulting from the
obstacles

Dubkha – pain, mental and physical

Daurmanasya – despair, depression

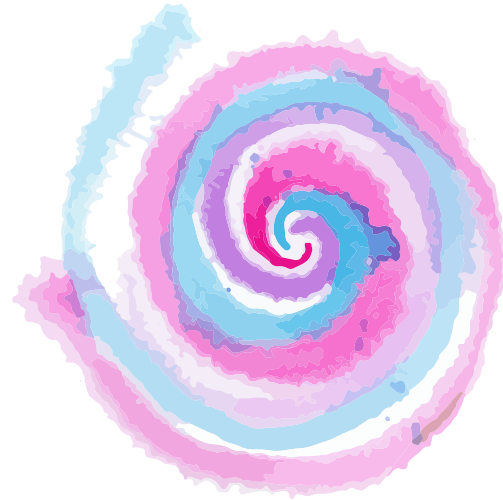
Angam-Ejayatva – trembling of the body, nervousness

Svasa – inhalation (irregular)

Prasvasa – exhalation (irregular)

VRITTIS

Patanjali starts by exploring the five *vrittis*, the types of thought patterns or tendencies. These are the energy patterns we create in the field of our consciousness or *chit*. ‘Whirlpool’ is a literal translation of the word *vritti*, so the *vrittis* are the whirlpools, waves and ripples that form in the field of our consciousness as a result of outside causes. They determine whether our mind is still and calm, or its level of turbulence and ups and downs. These *vrittis* define how we perceive the universe.



If you imagine the field of consciousness as being like an ocean, the waves and currents are the *vrittis*. The more turbulent the ocean, the harder it is to see the ocean floor, which can be equated with the inner Self or soul. The field of consciousness always wants to return to its original state of stillness, but the interplay of senses and tendencies draw us out into experience and emotional reactions, bringing either mental turbulence or equilibrium. So the first step in Yoga is to turn the attention inwards and return to stillness. This is also what brings peace and, ultimately, happiness, which is the quality of the soul. Without this stillness, lasting peace and happiness are not possible.

So Patanjali goes on to explain that:

1.3 *Tada drashtuh svarupe avasthanam*

At that time [of meditation],
the Witness abides in itself,
resting in its own essence, its true nature.

1.4 *Vritti sarupyam itaratra*

At other times, we instead identify with
the modifications of the mind, taking on
the identity of those thought patterns.

So when the waves of the *vrittis* settle and we are calm, as happens during meditation, we see our true nature, whereas at other times we identify with the modifications, e.g. sorrow or fear or excitement. For

example, if you are angry with your boss, because he has accused you unjustly of doing something wrong, will your consciousness be calm and still? Will you be able to think clearly during the day and make wise decisions? And what happens when a child is scared of the teacher in the classroom at school? Can they learn effectively and grasp concepts well? No, it is not possible, because fear blocks the electrical impulses from passing through to the cognitive centers in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain, making learning very difficult. The thinking process of the child cannot function freely.

With the yogic practices of Heartfulness, however, we have the possibility to remove the emotional reactive states from our system and stay resting in the inner Essence throughout the day, even when we are not meditating. We do this by cultivating the techniques of Cleaning and Constant Remembrance, so that our consciousness can remain centered even while we go about normal daily activities and interact with others.

Patanjali describes the *vrittis* as being either colored (*klishhta*) or uncolored (*aklishhta*); in other words, impure versus pure, leading to bondage versus leading to

How are Samskaras Formed?



freedom, and leading to turbulence versus leading to stillness. So the mind can either become a source of bondage or a source of freedom, depending on how we cultivate and train it. Yoga is really only concerned with this one thing: how do we use the mind? Mastery of the mind, cessation of the turbulence in the mind, is Yoga.

Here is Patanjali's description of the five *vrittis*:

1.6 *Pramana viparyaya vikalpa nidra smritayah*

The five varieties of thought patterns are:

right knowledge (*pramana*),
wrong knowledge (*viparyaya*),
fantasy or imagination (*vikalpa*),
deep sleep (*nidra*), and
memory (*smriti*).

Let's first explore the first two of these *vrittis*, *pramana* and *viparyaya*.

RIGHT KNOWLEDGE, WRONG KNOWLEDGE & PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The definitions 'right knowledge' and 'wrong knowledge' do not really do justice to the words *pramana* and *viparyaya*, but there is no equivalent in English. To elaborate these definitions, Patanjali gives us examples.

PRAMANNA

1.7 *Pratyaksha anumana agamah pramanani*

There are three ways of
gaining right knowledge:
by direct perception,
by deduction and inference,
and by the words of those awakened ones
who have knowledge.

So right knowledge, *pramana*, emerges from purity and stillness and leads to freedom. The first form of *pramana* is through direct perception – the absolute knowing that comes in an illuminated mind by awakening the faculty of superconsciousness through spiritual practice. The capacities of the mind are like rays of light; when they are concentrated they illuminate, resulting in direct perception, whereas in most people that faculty of direct perception remains unused, even though it is lying dormant, waiting to be switched on. This knowing through higher wisdom and revelation comes in the state of inner balance, or *Samadhi*, as a result of meditation. In Heartfulness Meditation, this is aided very naturally by *Pranahuti* or Yogic Transmission, which helps us to experience that balanced state.

The second form of *pramana* is through observation and the proof found through the scientific method. This form of *pramana* is not as pure and direct as direct perception, but it is still very valid. As explained by Swami Vivekananda, "In acquiring knowledge we make use of generalizations, and generalization is based upon

That is why we have the practice of Cleaning in Heartfulness, to remove all these impressions that accumulate in our system from past experiences, and also the ones we are creating in the present. Otherwise we are always perceiving ourselves and the world through a distorted consciousness, and as a result we remain prey to illusion or viparyaya.

observation. We first observe facts, then generalize, and then draw conclusions or principles.”

And the third form of *pramana* is through absorbing the teachings of enlightened beings – those who have the capacity of direct perception – and making this knowledge our very own through experience. It saves us time, like passing through a forest on a well-worn path rather than forging our own path. Hence we search for enlightened teachers, read books by them, read the great scriptures of the past and, finally, based on the heart’s signals, we conclude for ourselves.

VIPARYAYA

1.8 Viparyayah mithya jnanam atad rupa pratistham

Wrong knowledge or illusion is false understanding that results from perceiving things as other than what they really are.

The concept of wrong knowledge needs very little explanation; there are so many scientific studies that show how our perception is distorted by drugs and alcohol, by stress, fear, anger, prejudice and other strong emotions, and also by addictions to things like food or sex.

What happens when we are stressed? We go into ‘fight or flight response’ mode. The stress hormones are active, the sympathetic nervous system is primed, and blood shifts to our limbs and to the back part of the brain, in order to heighten survival mode. We need to attack or defend. It is an automatic physiological response. All our energy is directed towards survival, and so the mind cannot be contemplative.

Anything that blurs the clarity and purity of the chakras in the region of the heart will lead us towards wrong knowledge because consciousness is distorted; for example, when the heart is burdened by the impressions from the past, known as *samskaras* in Yoga. It is like putting lenses of colored glass in front of a candle flame – when one lens is placed in front of the flame, it clouds the image of the flame to some extent, but as we add



more and more lenses of different colors, eventually we don't see the flame at all. The lenses are a good analogy for the layers of impressions we accumulate through life's experiences, each one covering more of the light of the *atman* or soul. In fact our ability to perceive with clarity is directly proportional to the purity of our field of consciousness.

That is why we have the practice of Cleaning in Heartfulness, to remove all these impressions that accumulate in our system from past experiences, and also the ones we are creating in the present. Otherwise we are always perceiving ourselves and the world through a distorted consciousness, and as a result we remain prey to illusion or *viparyaya*.

In summary, the comparison of these first two *vruttis*, *pramana* and *viparyaya*, highlights the importance of maintaining a pure field of consciousness. With this comes clarity and discernment, known as *Viveka* in Yoga. It is the opening of the first of the four *Sadhanas* of Yoga, *Sadhana Chatusthaya*. We become capable of receiving knowledge through direct superconscious perception, through unbiased observation, and through the wise teachings of enlightened beings. That is the way of *pramana*.

In today's world, however, most of us are doing just the opposite – we are carrying such a heavy burden of impressions in the subconscious mind that we struggle to follow the way of right knowledge. Instead there is distortion of knowledge, illusion, and that creates an unstable base. Take the example of a mighty elephant. He is conditioned little by little; first he is tied to a tree with a rope, and each time he is tied he feels helpless and stands in one place. Eventually he becomes so conditioned that he no longer believes in his own ability to act, and this mighty elephant can then be tied to a mere plastic chair in the circus, when he could tear the whole tent down if he wished to do so. With this sort of conditioning, we lose the right perspective, unable to witness our own strength.

It is very difficult to be happy, peaceful and make wise decisions when the foundation of perception is shaky. So many of us become frustrated and confused because no matter how hard we try to do the right thing, often things go wrong.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The first step in this journey is to acknowledge our current state, to accept that we are not yet centered in stillness, and that our perception is colored by the tendencies or *vruttis* that we have created in our field of consciousness, leading to *viparyaya*. When we start to experience the discipline of Yoga, through glimpses of inner stillness, we are able to journey towards our own Center of being and experience *pramana* directly. As we further develop this ability, our heart becomes our guiding compass, and we learn to listen to the heart with ever-increasing confidence and joy. Then life takes on a different dimension, as psychologically we experience true well-being.

When we start to experience the discipline of Yoga, through glimpses of inner stillness, we are able to journey towards our own Center of being and experience pramana directly. As we further develop this ability, our heart becomes our guiding compass, and we learn to listen to the heart with ever-increasing confidence and joy. Then life takes on a different dimension, as psychologically we experience true well-being.

Solo Traveler

PRATHIMA BEKKAM takes us on a journey. It is a journey like no other, costs nothing, requires no special planning or luggage, and is filled with treasure.

Are you an itinerant?

Imagine if you could travel to a place where there are so many treasures unseen, unfelt, in no time and with no money! You don't need to invest your time in research or, for that matter, in packing and planning. This is going to be a unique travel, unlike the routine ones. The less you plan the more thrill you will feel, as you will go to a place where you have never explored before.

To start this journey all you need to do is

close your eyes, let go, and dive deep into your heart. You may find yourself in a different dimension.

Rediscover who you are, and rejuvenate yourself, finding what is concealed in the inner core of your heart.

During this beautiful travel you will be infused with love, empathy and compassion. This journey can make you a different person with better insights in no time.

Return back with absolutely no luggage other than your experiences and insights of wisdom.

Make sure you radiate the fragrance of your travel in your daily routine.

So next time when you are stressed or feel like solo traveling, do try this out. After all, it's the most affordable travel ever.

Points of Stillness

ZEBEDEE ALBY inspires us with his experience of literature and meditation practice, especially meditating in a group.

In everyone's life there are difficult times. This is how the medieval Italian poet Dante described his experience :

At the mid-point of the path through life, I found
Myself lost in a wood so dark, the way
Ahead was blotted out. The keening sound
I still make shows how hard it is to say
How harsh and bitter that place felt to me –
Merely to think of it renews the fear –
So bad that death by only a degree
Could possibly be worse.


T.S. Eliot had a similar experience, and he wrote *The Wasteland* as what he later called a personal grumble against his life at that time. He ended that poem repeating the word '*Shantih*' thrice: *Shantih Shantih Shantih*. A word from the Hindu Upanishads, Eliot described its closest meaning as "the peace that passeth understanding".

I did a dissertation on Eliot's poetry for my English degree many, many years ago. At the time I had no idea that eventually I too would find what I needed in Eastern practices and philosophy. And I'm Indian. Eliot also described the idea of the "still point of the turning world" where people are quiet and still while all around them the world whirls.

When I started meditating with a lovely group of people, the thought came that things have actually advanced since Eliot's time. Now the world has developed so that there isn't just one still point, but a connected matrix of still points – in a room, in a country, across the world. A community of such still points in the turning world.

There is a multiplier effect when meditating in a group. And that is one of the things that I need most – to feel that I belong in the world, with other people who feel the same way and have the same needs and inclinations. That is one of the benefits of meditation: there is a readymade community.

*Now the world has developed
so that there isn't just one still
point, but a connected matrix
of still points – in a room, in
a country, across the world. A
community of such still points
in the turning world.*



*I think of my meditations
now as voyages of exploration
and healing, finding strange
new, wonderful things. Now
I have instant access, whenever
I need it, in times of stress
and difficulty at work,
to an inner secret world
that strengthens and
stabilizes me.*

I am still at the early development stage. For a year or so I sat and ‘meditated’, not knowing how it should be done or what I was supposed to feel and experience. I would sit there and think about what had happened to me that day, that week, in my past. I would remember moments and times. I would be sad and occasionally happy. I would think about shopping afterwards and about my dinner. This wasn’t really meditation, but nevertheless I enjoyed it very much. In this hectic world, where we are rushed and harried, quickly moving from one activity and event to the next, it was great to have that half an hour where I could sit still and rest and let things become clear.

Sleep is meant to help us do that, but the modern world impinges on us even in our sleep, so any additional, conscious time given to this can only be beneficial.

I don’t know if the experiences I have during meditation are illusory or real. I am like Thomas the Apostle asking Jesus to show him the wounds inflicted on the Cross before he could believe. All I can conclude is that if they are illusory, then they are useful illusions which help me to live better, harming no one else. In fact it benefits them too, in a halo effect.

I think of my meditations now as voyages of exploration and healing, finding strange new, wonderful things. And this isn’t just a mental experience in my head. Now I have instant access, whenever I need it, in times of stress and difficulty at work, to an inner secret world that strengthens and stabilizes me. Such visits to my inner world tell me that this too shall pass, that things change, that I have endured this type of thing before and I shall do so again. I realize there is an eternal world that welcomes, revitalizes and invigorates me.

William Blake wrote, “Energy is Eternal Delight”. That is my mantra now in a real way. I can tap into that energy whenever I need it. As a result, my world is calmer, less histrionic and less dramatic. When I need it, I just close my eyes and experience that the heart is full of light.

Together as a group, at all our different stages in our personal journeys, in what I believe is our one and only life, we are exploring new things, and it’s exciting and marvelous. Meditation makes us stronger, wiser, lighter and funnier.

Meditation is a beneficial counterforce in this world where the pressure of commerce would exhort us to package and sell it. If we did, each and every one of us would be currency millionaires. Instead we do better and enjoy the millions of blessings we receive in meditation.

Ultimate Gentleness Is the Ultimate Strength



NEGIN MOTAMED throws light on the beauty of the inner Self
– its nature and its role in discernment.

Many of us who are in the process of self-refinement are striving to become more and more gentle and loving; to respond in a state of love rather than fear-based reactions. Sometimes we are unsuccessful. Later, when we review the events and don't feel so good about them, we justify ourselves by

saying that being severe is another godly quality that is needed, just as Shiva had both qualities. So is it just a matter of recognizing the right time for the right response? This complicates things – it brings the mind into the picture to decide on the right response, and the mind never seems to make it simple for us.

Another approach is through the heart, where we develop Godly qualities. Our thinking faculty becomes a field to receive intuition, our intellect evolves into wisdom, and our ego becomes as subtle as possible, so that we are free from self-centeredness, and self-consciousness, and expand into the consciousness of Divinity. We see nothing but the presence of God, inside and outside.

In this state, we are no longer driven by plans to be either gentle or forceful. We are in a state of utmost surrender and acceptance. If applying force is needed from our side, it happens in a natural and intuitive way, without us thinking or planning for it. It is not driven by our ego but by our higher Self in constant communion with the Divine. Love rules it, not defensiveness to protect our ego. Love sees no barrier and separation; love sees all as part of the Divine and does what is needed.

When we see all that comes our way as coming from the Divine, as pure wisdom and as the ultimate good for all, we develop faith and later reach a state of surrender to the Divine. So we go with the flow without the least resistance. In this state, our desires and egotistical motives have vanished. There are no more personal likes and dislikes, no more resistance, and that to me is the ultimate gentleness. I always think of water as a lesson in how the gentle conquers the hard. When water reaches a big rock, it does not fight with it but just finds its way around it, and ultimately rolls the big rock from its place without spending any extra energy to do so. Strength is embedded in gentleness. There is no need to strive for it.

I have been always amazed by how ancient traditions consider our inner Self to be the feminine side of us. According to ancient collective wisdom, we all have a feminine side, our subtler, finer Self; our inner self

*Our task, as Rumi says,
is to remove all our inner
barriers against love; barriers
that separate us from
the Ultimate. To sublimate
our ego and purify our
consciousness more and more.
To immerse ourselves in Godly
remembrance so much so
that the right thoughts, words
and actions emerge in
any situation in a natural
and effortless way. There
is no need to plan to be severe
or to protect. When we dissolve
the ego and remain connected
to the Divine, are we not just
a drop in this vast ocean?*



*So we go with the flow
without the least resistance.
In this state, our desires
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to me is the ultimate
gentleness.*

that represents true strength. There is a tarot card, Strength, which has a picture of an angelic female who has tamed a lion. This card represents our inner Self, which is able to tame our animal nature in its primal form. In fact, the will and passion of our instinctive nature need not be broken but refined and brought to consciousness, so that all levels of creation come into harmony. The persuasive 'forceless force' of the feminine

can nurture and induce cooperation from everyone and everything, stilling disruptive energies by harmonizing differences in the spirit of collective goodwill. That is what the balance between Yin and Yang, Anima and Animus means.

Our task is not in trying to think when to be loving and gentle and when to be severe and tough. Our task, as Rumi says, is to remove all our inner barriers against love; barriers that separate us from the Ultimate. To sublimate our ego and purify our consciousness more and more. To immerse ourselves in Godly remembrance so much so that the right thoughts, words and actions emerge in any situation in a natural and effortless way. There is no need to plan to be severe or to protect. When we dissolve the ego and remain connected to the Divine, are we not just a drop in this vast ocean? Are we not one with all? Are we not feeling already protected and safe? The task is just to dissolve ourselves – *fana*, as they call it in the Sufi tradition.

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The lifeblood of Publicolor

AN ART ESSAY & INTERVIEW

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Publicolor. In 2000 we won one of our country's highest honors, the President's Service Award, from President Clinton for our work with volunteers in the community.

Every year over 1000 volunteers join us as painters on Saturdays in under-resourced schools and community sites. We transform these sites through warm color and thoughtful design. Publicolor paints dignity, respect, inspiration and safety in low-income neighborhoods.

Corporations love to send their employees to paint alongside our students as they see this as a great team-building opportunity. It's also a special way for corporate employees to participate in their company's philanthropy. Publicolor students consistently mention Saturdays as their favorite part of Publicolor, citing getting to meet new people as most special. They cherish learning about new job options and what it takes to succeed. Publicolor's volunteers are treasured role models!

Academic tutors also join us as volunteer leaders of our weekly career exposure workshops, and as mentors for our high school seniors and college freshmen. With the help of our volunteer painters, Publicolor has transformed about 500 sites. With the help of our tutors, 85% of Publicolor students enter college not needing remediation versus 19% of their school peers. Thanks to our mentors, 98% have stayed in college after their freshman year versus 66% at the City University of New York. Since most of Publicolor students are the first in their family to go to college, the encouragement and guidance they receive from our volunteers is invaluable.

For all these reasons, Publicolor treasures our volunteers. We couldn't do what we do without them!



Before/After





Interview with Ruth Lande Shuman, Founder of Publicolor

Q Please share with us the mission of Publicolor.

The mission of Publicolor is to creatively engage high risk, low-income students in their education and prepare them to be productive in the workplace.

Q How did the organization form?

I was very concerned back in the late '80s about the rising dropout rate. All I could think of was the horrible impact that would be on the future of our economy. In another life I had helped develop the Big Apple Circus and was a founding board member. I got to see a lot of schools that had our arts and education program, and many of them were in east Harlem. All of them looked and felt like prisons.

I thought to myself: It's no wonder that kids are dropping out; it's no wonder that parents aren't showing up for parent teacher conferences; I wouldn't go to such a hostile environment. And it's no wonder teachers are burning out. That was the lightbulb moment!

At the same time I had just finished a masters in industrial design at Pratt with a specialty in the psychological effects of color. Color has a huge effect on our attitudes and behaviour. So I thought about putting a paintbrush in the hands of disaffected students – the ones who are at high risk of dropping out. I wanted to teach them the marketable skill of commercial painting, and teach them strong and transferable work habits. And along the way, they would develop a sense of pride and ownership of their school, and start attending school more regularly. Also, if they spend any time with me, they'll get to understand the

importance of education and how that's going to be their path out of poverty.

So I mentioned the idea to the woman who ran the circus' arts and education program. She also ran an educational complex in East Harlem, and she said to me, "Come on in. I want you to paint my whole school." It was a city square block school of five storeys. The project was a huge success. Estee Lauder had wanted to do something in that school and the principal suggested that they meet with me. They loved the idea and they volunteered. We did a lot of prepping with the kids during the week and on weekends. We primed all the hallways, all the stairwells, and then drew thousands of linesm because I had a rather complicated design. Literally, within one day, from Estee Lauder, my friends, the teachers and the principal, we had 350 volunteers and we painted all the public spaces of the school. It was rather extraordinary.

Then the school's Chancellor came by and pulled me aside and said, "This is a catalyst for change. I want you in my schools. I'll send out an RFP for a school beautification program." So I filled out the application with the Department of Education and we won the contract. I took a little time off to set us up as a non profit organization, and then we were!



Then I met with the Deputy Chancellor for Operations who asked me which school did I want, and I told him I wanted his lowest performing school. In the contract I was very specific that I wanted their lowest performing schools. That's how it got started.

Q That's a beautiful story. What were some of the reactions after these drastic changes to the schools?





There was one father who said that it was as if Santa Claus had come and left this gift. It was just so gorgeous. He said something about Santa and his elves, because when he arrived on Monday to drop his son, he couldn't believe what he saw. The whole school was completely transformed. The kids love it.

I have learned – and at first it hurt my feelings – that change is very difficult for many people. For some, their initial reaction was not fantastic. But what I have understood is to give them two weeks to adjust, and almost everybody ends up loving the change. And there are always going to be a few who don't like yellow, or don't like the blue that I chose for the doors. In the end, if we've used any color that the kids and the principal don't particularly like, then we change it.

Q Is there a student who stood out as being especially enabled by the transformation or the mentoring program?

Oh, that's hard, as there are so many. One comes to mind. One of my students is a girl called Cecile, whose mother was very, very sick when she joined our continuum program. She claims it was because of us that she stayed in school and didn't drop out, and she really didn't want to drop out. She went on to college and said that she would have dropped out again after her first year because her mother was so sick. But we gave her a lot of support and explained why college was so important for her and how it would make her mother proud. Her mother passed away after her sophomore year, and she had a mentor who encouraged her to stay in school. She went to one of the top culinary schools in the country and she now has a job working in food services for Google. She also works for us on Saturdays as a site staff member.

There's just one more thing: I remember once we replicated in Pittsburgh and there was a guy at Carnegie who did a study on volunteerism and wrote a piece about

Publicolor. What he and I uncovered is just how much better an employee feels about their company after they've participated in a volunteer program. They take great pride in the fact that their company is volunteering to help X, Y or Z. What we've noticed apart from the pride factor is also the magnificent team building opportunity. We have a lot of feedback about that from volunteers.

Q Thank you so much for your time and sharing with us about Publicolor.

Thank you, my pleasure.

CHICKPEA BURGERS

WITH VEGETABLES



Serves 4 persons

INGREDIENTS

- 1 big onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 bundle of fresh parsley
- 1 handful of basil leaves (optional)
- 1 carrot, grated
- 1 stick celery, finely chopped
- 1 tsp Himalayan salt
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 handful of fresh herbs (or dry)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cayenne pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked rice, rice flour or chickpea flour (preferred)
- 2 cups dry garbanzo beans, soaked for 10 hours, drained and cooked for 45 minutes (keep the cooking water).

MIX THE MAIN INGREDIENTS

In a food processor or blender, pulse all the ingredients except the garbanzo beans and carrots. Mix to combine thoroughly.

Add half of the cooked garbanzo beans and pulse.

Add the rest the garbanzo beans and the carrots. Pulse until it forms a granular paste. Add the cooking water to dilute if necessary.

Place the paste in a bowl and let it stay for 30 minutes in the refrigerator.

SIDE DISH OF GREEN KALE

1 bunch of green kale, chopped and steamed in hot water for 2 to 3 minutes, and rinsed in cold water. You can remove the stems or chop them and use them, too.

SIDE DISH OF RED OR WHITE CABBAGE

Finely chop the cabbage and marinate it in 1 tbsp of cold pressed olive oil and 1 tbsp of lemon juice for 1 hour. Then add a pinch of Himalayan salt.

TURMERIC SAUCE

1 cup cashew nuts, soaked for 3 to 4 hours

1 tbsp grated fresh turmeric (or powder)

1 clove fresh garlic

½ tsp grated ginger

1 fresh chilli

½ lemon zest

1 tsp fresh thyme (or dried)

½ tbsp extra virgin coconut oil or sesame oil (preferred)

4 tsp fresh or dry herbs mixed

1 tsp Himalayan salt

½ to 1 cup of the water in which the garbanzo beans were cooked

Pepper to taste

Blend all ingredients.

Making 6 chickpea burgers with your hands

Pan fry in a skillet with 3 to 5 tbsp extra virgin cold pressed coconut oil for about 2 to 3 minutes on each side, until golden.

OR

Pre-heat the oven to 200 degrees Celsius /400 degrees Fahrenheit. Place the slices on a baking sheet and brush on both sides with coconut oil. Bake for about 20 minutes.

Assemble your plate. Enjoy warm or cold.

TIPS

Use whole salt, not refined salt. Whole salt is rich in many important minerals.

Use cold pressed oils, as it is a healthy way to eat important fats.

Use organic ingredients to avoid pesticides and chemicals.

This is a delicious and nutritious recipe you can serve for lunch or dinner, or take to school or work.

Take the opportunity to prepare your food with joy and love, and let your loving vibrations be a part of this life-giving meal to those whom you love. Thank you Mother Earth for providing us with great food.

All the best, Simonne

Alkaline diet = plant based, organic, low glycemic index and gluten free

Photos & recipes by **Simonne Holm**
www.alkaline-Institute.com



Heartfulness Yogasanas

SUPINE POSTURES

INITIAL SUPINE POSTURE

Lie flat on the back with legs straight and together.

Straighten the arms above the head, biceps touching the ears and palms facing the ceiling.

Close the eyes and relax the whole body.

SUPINE RELAXATION POSTURE

Lie flat on the back with feet at least half a meter apart.

Arms are out to an approximate angle of 45 degrees.

Hands and palms upwards.

Eyes closed.

Focus on the breath.

Relax the whole body.



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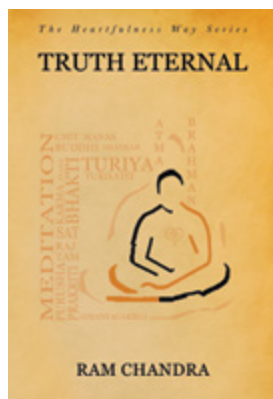
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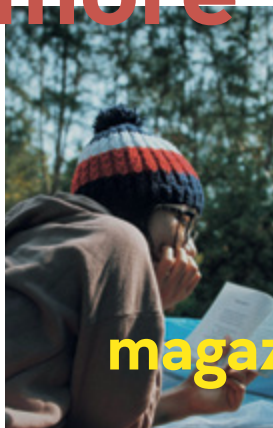
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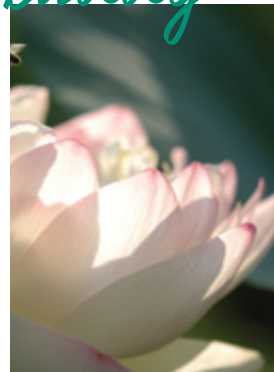


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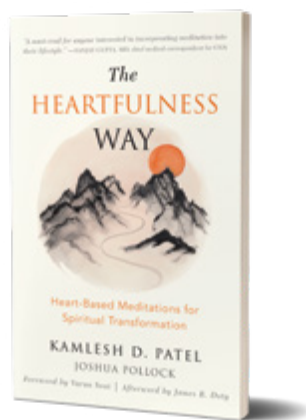
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