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purity weaves destiny



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Attuning ourselves

BE GUIDED
How role models shape our lives

THE WISDOM BRIDGE
Keeping culture alive

International

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Working Together

When we work together, the synergy that happens produces results that are greater than the sum of our individual efforts. This brings joy in learning and working together. In all walks of life we stand on the shoulders of our predecessors. However short or tall they may have stood, we climb higher heights thanks to those that came before us. Whether it is in our family business or in the science of human evolution or anything in between.

It is only wise to learn from others, especially our elders. If we do so effectively we will get a generational lift. This is possible only if we are humble and open enough to learn from our elders.

Elders also learn from young ones, for they learn new skills fast. The young ones teach their grandparents how to set up Facebook and use mobile phones, while the elders tell them stories of epics and world wars. So, the net result is an overall upliftment of knowledge and quality of life. It is a two-way interaction. The intersection of leveraging both the past knowledge and present view produces leaps in progress!

So, we build our families and communities, using the experience of the elderly and the energy and the forward-looking potential of the young, and so it goes. The organisations, cultures and communities that do a good job of this synergistic continuity become better civilisations.

In Yoga and spirituality it is no different. One such possibility exists when families and groups meditate together, for example, young and old, employees and bosses, doctors and their patients. So an age-old system of meditation is offered to all via the new, dynamic and relevant approach of Heartfulness. There is a profound wisdom in it!

We wish you all a very happy and hearty new year, full of joy and wonder!

Victor Kannan,

Director, Heartfulness Institute

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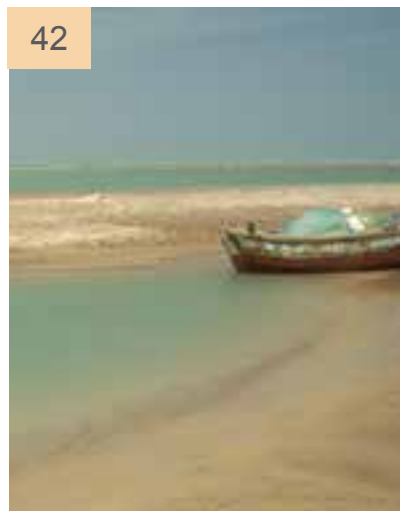
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A Brighter Future

On the 23rd of September 1991, the cover of Time magazine featured E. Linden's article, 'Lost Tribes, Lost Knowledge'. The main caption in the contents page read, "Can Mankind Survive the Loss of Native Culture?" Even then, we were conscious that losing the wisdom and knowledge of our 'elder' sisters and brothers was a dangerous game. Linden wrote:

Over the ages, indigenous peoples have developed innumerable technologies and arts. ... If this knowledge had to be duplicated from scratch, it would beggar the scientific resources of the West. Much of this expertise and wisdom has already disappeared, and, if neglected, most of the remainder could be gone within the next generation.

Until quite recently, few in the developed world cared much about this cultural holocaust. The prevailing attitude has been that Western science, with its powerful analytical tools, has little to learn from tribal knowledge. The developed world's disastrous mismanagement of the environment has somewhat humbled this arrogance, however, and some scientists are beginning to recognise that the world is losing an enormous amount of basic research as indigenous peoples lose their culture and traditions. Scientists may someday be struggling to reconstruct this body of wisdom to secure the developed world's future.

In families, it is often grandparents who provide the wisdom bridge to the young, ensuring continuity and a balanced perspective. Many of our early memories involve the love and wisdom of grandparents. As we grow and venture out into the world our teachers change, but the need for elders always remains, whether in the form of a business mentor, a school teacher, a Tai Chi instructor or a spiritual guide.

Love and wisdom go together. Love and teaching go together. In traditional cultures, the wisdom of elders is valued as precious and sacred. Wisdom is shared word of mouth from generation to generation, through stories and communal activities. Can the same be said for today's urban societies? What are we all doing about this?

Today, can we all take the time to offer heartfelt thanks to our elders? Maybe it can even be the beginning of building the bridge towards a brighter future.

Happy reading,

The Editors



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March 2016



We are all visitors
to this time, this
place. We are just
passing through.
Our purpose here
is to observe, to
learn, to grow, to
love... and then we
return home.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL
SAYING

Inner Beauty

NARENDRA KINI

asks some thought-provoking questions about beauty and the way we see ourselves.



Inner beauty always reflects on the outside. This is something we have all heard time and again. But then, do we spend less time in front of the mirror? Do we still pay attention to outward appearances and draw a lot of conclusions based on those? We have not stopped making external appearances a topic of conversation at most social gatherings – business or otherwise. We still spend a lot of time getting ready for an event, office, function or a party.

Roald Dahl wrote, “You can have a wonky nose and a crooked mouth and a double chin and stick-out teeth, but if you have good thoughts it will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely.”

This makes me wonder what it would be like if the way we lived reflected in our looks. Perhaps we would all try harder to be better people.

What if one day our inner self and physical self were turned inside out? How would that impact our looks and confidence? Would most of us be able to come to terms with what we see?

If we were to develop a visible scar on our skin for every ill intention or negative thought, would we continue to have such thoughts?

If we would lose clumps of hair every time we were mean, would it stop us?

If every time we hurt someone intentionally it added a few pounds to our weight, would we still do it?

Per contra, what if every time we teach a child or feed the needy, or show kindness, we drop some weight around our waist or grow back some hair or lose a wrinkle, would we be more willing?

Roald Dahl wrote, “You can have a wonky nose and a crooked mouth and a double chin and stick-out teeth, but if you have good thoughts it will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely.”

If taking the time to answer children's questions or helping senior citizens needing assistance could reduce signs of ageing, maybe we all would develop patience and kindness.

Looking good has become so important to us that it could inspire us to take steps that we usually would not consider. Maybe if we lived our lives the way Dahl suggests we would be very different people.

I wonder how radically different our priorities, decisions and personalities would be in a world where doing good is rewarded so visibly and tangibly that it becomes second nature.

Often I look in the mirror and wonder if I can confidently say my inner self is better than my reflection. Am I almost at a point where I do not have to look at it to check myself for anything more than the necessary daily activities like shaving, flossing and combing?

There is a short story that could lend its moral to nature's way of working when we are able to see good thoughts and share good thoughts for others also to seed.

There was a farmer who grew excellent quality corn. Every year he won the award for the best corn. One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seeds with his neighbours.

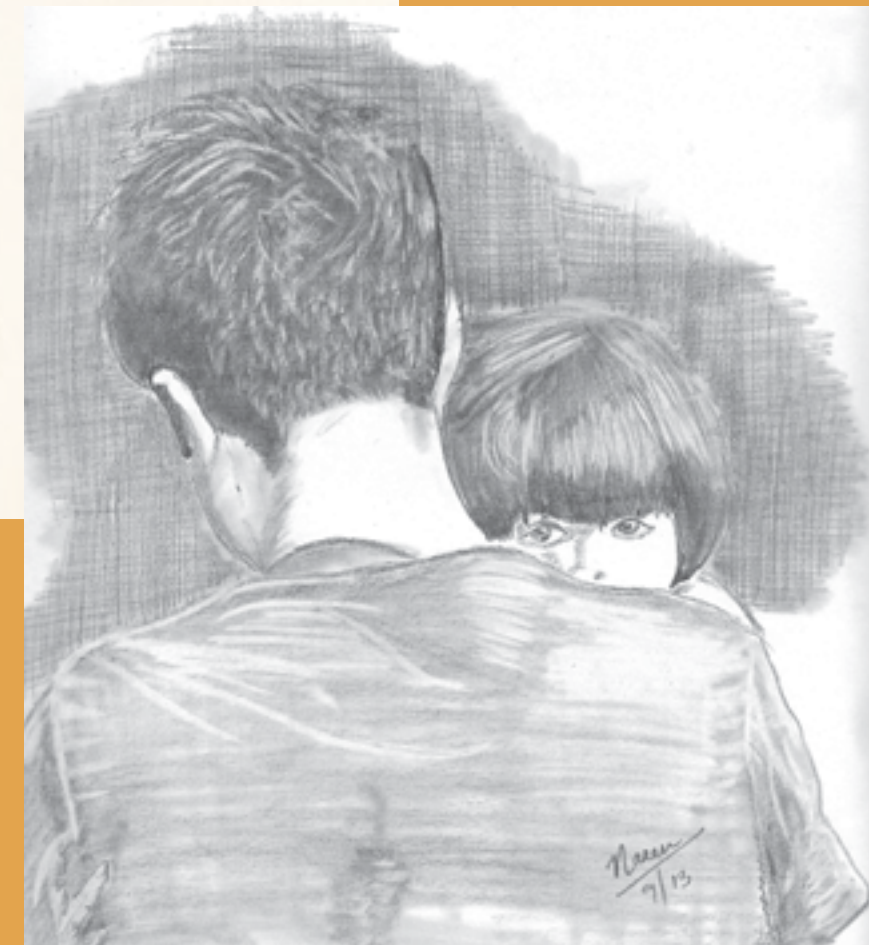
"How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbours when they are entering in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked.

"Why sir," said the farmer, "Don't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbours grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbours grow good corn."

So it is with our lives. Those who want to live meaningfully and well must help enrich the lives of others, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. The quality of response and joy depends on the quality of thoughts and love we share and spread.

And those who choose to be joyful must help others find happiness, for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all ●

So it is with our lives. Those who want to live meaningfully and well must help enrich the lives of others, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. The quality of response and joy depends on the quality of thoughts and love we share and spread.



ARTWORK BY NARENDRA KINI



Maturity

SERGE NICOLAI

What is maturity? How does it manifest in an individual, or in a nation?
This is my take on it.

Maturity is to live from the heart, which is the deeper part of ourselves, rather than living from the head, which is the superficial part of our mind.

Instead of just reacting to fears and desires, mature individuals, or a mature society, act out of their deeper core.

How does this show?

The life of the heart is mainly expressed in

Love & Will

In societies with long spiritual traditions, you will find the majority of people directing their LOVE towards others, at the very least to their families, and their WILL towards themselves, to perfect themselves.

In younger societies, I find the majority of people turning their WILL towards the others, or the world, while directing their LOVE towards themselves, in the pursuit of comfort and self-aggrandisement.

In a nutshell, the mature person sacrifices so that others may live; the immature person enjoys life at the expense of everyone else.

I am not saying the latter is bad. Only that the person is just a child, with a long way to go on the road to express inner nobility ●

The mature person sacrifices so that others may live; the immature person enjoys life at the expense of everyone else.

When it is
obvious that the
goals cannot be
reached, don't
adjust the goals,
adjust the action
steps.

CONFUCIUS



WISDOM IN THE WORKPLACE

Focus on the vision and the money will follow.



Just because something doesn't go as planned, doesn't mean it is useless.



Treat everyone in your workplace as you would want them to treat you. Business is about cooperation.



Success is the result of preparation, inspiration, hard work and learning as you go. Turn the learning into action.



Manage change in your organisation.



Listen to your customers.



It always seems impossible until it's done.



Do more than is required.



Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the wind in your sails, explore and dream.



People are an organisation's greatest asset. Look after them. Appreciate them. Let them take some credit.



WHO IS A LEADER?

What qualities are common among effective leaders? PARIMALA GALIPALLI shares with us some key attributes, compiled from the current research and literature on leadership.

1. LOVE, EMPATHY AND IMPARTIALITY.

A true leader is an embodiment of pure love, empathy and impartiality. In the words of Swami Vivekananda,

He never becomes a leader in whose love there is a consideration of high or low... He whose love knows no end, and never stops to consider high or low, has the whole world lying at his feet.

2. BELIEF IN PRINCIPLES.

All through history, all the great leaders who have succeeded in touching people's hearts have had something in common – they believed strongly in their principles. They all spent long years observing their inner selves, and encountering their spiritual and transcendent beliefs, so that they emerged with the necessary courage and conviction to handle the conflicts and complexities of external hardships and challenges.

3. ATTITUDE OF ENTHUSIASM.

Edmund Szekely has said,

In the highest sense, work is meant to be the servant of man, not the master. It is not so important what shape or form our work may take; what is vitally important is our attitude toward that work. With love and enthusiasm directed towards our work, what was once a chore and hardship now becomes a magical tool to develop, enrich and nourish our lives.

4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

The most effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: they all have “a high degree of Emotional Intelligence”, in the words of Daniel Goleman. His research and other recent studies show that emotional intelligence is an essential quality of effective leaders. He lists five major components of EI at work – self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill. These terms may seem out of sync with the realities of the business world, so is this really possible?

If you look closely, all the components of emotional intelligence that Goleman talks of for effective leadership, in their essence, lead to one root – heart. These qualities are nurtured inside; this state has to be cultivated within and cherished as our innate nature. In the words of Antoine De Saint-Exupéry, in *The Little Prince*,

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.

5. MEDITATION AND SELF-AWARENESS

Goleman says that empathy is the most easily recognised of all the dimensions of emotional intelligence. Through the practice of meditation on the heart we learn to empathise – to consider the feelings of others while making intelligent decisions. Meditation helps us to stay connected within, in balance and in harmony with nature, thus effectively normalising our physical and mental functions. When we are in balance with our inner self, we become more effective in our worldly life.

An ancient Greek aphorism advised us thousands of years ago to “Know thyself.” Meditation helps us to get to the core of who we are, to understand and reflect on our inner dimension, and to know ourselves better and respond accordingly. This is what Goleman calls ‘self-awareness’ and ‘self-regulation,’ where “Self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs and drives.” People who have a high degree of self-awareness recognise how their feelings affect themselves, others and their work. People who observe themselves honestly, who are self-aware, are able to do the same for the organisations they run. Self-regulation naturally follows, as when we know ourselves better, we can make better decisions about our actions as well.

6. CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF TRUST AND FAIRNESS.

Leadership starts first inside the leader; before leaders can master others, they must first master themselves. Lao Tzu instructed leaders to “get your own life in order.” Overall, Lao Tzu’s concepts of leadership are crystallised in the following three things: compassion for all creatures, material simplicity and a sense of modesty. Leaders who can regulate their feelings and impulses, creating an environment of trust and fairness, provide an environment where politics and conflict are reduced, harmony prevails and productivity is therefore higher ●

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Connecting the generations provides the wisdom bridge. Grandparents are very important in the life of a child.

KAMLESH D. PATEL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHAN SWANEPOEL

BE GUIDED



ADITI SAXENA considers the importance of teachers and role models in how we create our destinies and personalities.

Have you ever wondered how we grow as personalities? How does our value system build, ultimately reflecting the same through our actions, behaviour and character?

While I was thinking about this, I went back to my childhood days and saw myself standing there as a third person, observing how this journey of life has been so far. Immediately my heart was filled with gratitude towards my mentors and teachers, without whom I wouldn't be the personality that I am today.

Teachers play a very crucial role. They help in shaping character and also act as role models to achieve those personal goals that they have already walked through.

I had a disciplined and goal-oriented lifestyle as a kid. My Taekwondo trainer and my spiritual guide have both given me the best childhood and fruitful college days by helping me to develop both physical and mental strength to face and accept every one of life's challenges with faith and confidence.

When I look back, I can't imagine a single day without them. It is as if every brick is important in building the wall. Similarly, every effort of theirs has made me more sane and wise. The love they have given is shown in many ways: in the challenges they have made me face, and in the hours of practice for tournaments maintaining a calm and composed stature, even when the opponent wins.

Having a balanced state of mind is of utmost importance to me, and this was being honed through Taekwondo. Moving forward, that is also how I developed a profound interest in meditation with a spiritual teacher; the grounding was being prepared throughout all those years of childhood.

In a physical discipline like Taekwondo, anger, ego, grudges and prejudice can only bring downfall, with which no player can succeed; for when that happens sportsmanship is missing and it is directly linked with mental fitness. I remember that winning tournaments was not difficult when I was mentally fit and free from anger. My Taekwondo teachers helped me develop an attitude of respect towards the opponent and moreover a respect for the opponent's Master.

In all this, I developed the capacity to think out of the box. I learnt to be creative in self-defence techniques, and discovered smart ways to finish off

the match without creating any barrier with the other competitors.

Developing the qualities of brotherhood, care and empathy, respecting each individual – their views, attitude towards situations and people – and still maintaining humility is a never-ending learning process.

All this has helped me to grow in all ways. It has kept me fit, healthy and hearty. I encourage everyone to go out and explore life. Let your teachers guide you and shape you. It is only after going through a lot of moulding and churning that they make us that which we could never imagine ●

Teachers play a very crucial role. They help in shaping character and also act as role models to achieve those personal goals that they have already walked through.

Conscious Parenting

LET A CHILD LISTEN TO HIS HEART

PURNIMA RAMAKRISHNA shares some personal experience about the joys of heart-based parenting.

Yesterday night at bedtime my nine-year-old son said, “I am so happy to be going to school tomorrow.”
I asked, “What is so special tomorrow?”
“We have science lab tomorrow.”
“So why do you like the science lab?”
“There are so many jars with specimens in them, and, if I ask my teacher, she tells me about them again and again. There are different bottles with chemicals and very funny names to pronounce, and my friends and I like to say them aloud and play with the sounds. There are charts and charts of the internal organs of the body, and there is a skeleton too.”
He continued excitedly for half an hour.
Need I say more? My day was made to note his interest in science.

I have always asked myself, what is my goal as a parent, as a mother? What are my duties and responsibilities to my little one? When I gaze at him, with all my love, thoughts fly away. It is like my heart takes over, and my mind stills. And then my parenting obligations do not stand out, only my love does.



What is my goal as a parent, as a mother?
What are my duties and responsibilities to
my little one?



I can let him be that eager science student in the science lab and answer his eager questions patiently. I can let him observe nature and people. I can let a him be curious and feed his curiosity.

I can take him up to the terrace on a starry night and point out the stars. I can get him an amateur telescope and look at the craters in the moon. And we did that. Now he proudly points to the Great Bear constellation. We speak of Indian names too – like this is the Saptharishi constellation, which denotes the seven sages. This has become a ritual, each time we are out in the dark, he feels compelled to search for this constellation. It is interesting to note his enthusiasm.

We can let children see the wonders of Nature. Plant seeds together. See them germinate; observe the buds, how they open up into flowers, and how they wither away. And eventually become sweet fruits instead.

We can show children how people are different, with different languages and colours, residing in different countries. At the same time, we can show them how they all smile the same way, hug the same way, and live as mothers and fathers with babies in a family, in the same way. We can show them differences, yet explain how it all culminates in oneness.

We can tap everyday experiences to show them resilience and grit, when they are hurt physically. And when they lose friends and make new friends, we can show them how to be in a state of acceptance and move on in life. These everyday incidents create deeper understanding in their hearts and minds. And a parent is the best person to do that.

To show your child that the world is a beautiful place with beautiful people is not a major feat. But we also have to show them that other not-so-beautiful elements exist, when they are ready for it. We can

watch the news together for a few minutes, and let them know what is happening in other parts of the world. Business, inventions, war and crime – they all bring growth in a child. Even war can be explained to an older child, and how it can be avoided. Gautama the Buddha's father shielded him from the miseries of life, but eventually he found out, and with a shock. So, problems need not be avoided completely.

We can teach values and morals in everyday life. Let children learn about poverty in poor homes and hence not waste food in the kitchen in their own homes.

I want to be that science teacher from his school whom my son adores so much. I want to teach him as she does, and create wonder and excitement, and fun and joy. I want my son to learn, to open his heart to life. I want him to focus on happiness and contentment over and above the race for success.

I want my son to learn the art of introspection too. I want him to correlate all experiences to deeper understandings. And for that he needs to look within, listen to his heart...

At the same time, I want my son to learn the art of introspection too. I want him to correlate all experiences to deeper understandings. And for that he needs to look within, listen to his heart, follow it with courage and conviction, be responsible and mature.

So many wishes, I have for my nine-year-old son, already!

But when the heart takes over, all of these are fulfilled, and much more beyond my vision and understanding.



Conscious Parenting is not an art or a science. It is that ability in a parent to bring out their child's willingness to listen to his heart, and develop that courage in his heart to do so.

Conscious Parenting means to develop the confidence in a child that no matter what happens their heart will always guide them rightly.

A parent is truly successful when a child grows up to be an adult who is fully content and satisfied with the way he is living his life and fulfilling his goals.

And in this context, I am reminded of this beautiful letter written by a parent to his son's teacher, and often attributed to Abraham Lincoln:

*He will have to learn, I know,
that all men are not just,
all men are not true.
But teach him also that
for every scoundrel there is a hero;
that for every selfish Politician,
there is a dedicated leader...
Teach him for every enemy there is a friend,

Steer him away from envy,
if you can,
teach him the secret of
quiet laughter.

Let him learn early that
the bullies are the easiest to lick...

Teach him, if you can,
the wonder of books...
But also give him quiet time
to ponder the eternal mystery of birds in the sky,
bees in the sun,
and the flowers on a green hillside.

In the school teach him
it is far honourable to fail
than to cheat...
Teach him to have faith
in his own ideas,
even if everyone tells him
they are wrong...
Teach him to be gentle
with gentle people,
and tough with the tough. Try to give my son
the strength not to follow the crowd
when everyone is getting on the band wagon...*

*Teach him to listen to all men...
but teach him also to filter
all he hears on a screen of truth,
and take only the good
that comes through.

Teach him if you can,
how to laugh when he is sad...
Teach him there is no shame in tears,
Teach him to scoff at cynics
and to beware of too much sweetness...
Teach him to sell his brawn
and brain to the highest bidders
but never to put a price-tag
on his heart and soul.

Teach him to close his ears
to a howling mob
and to stand and fight
if he thinks he's right.
Treat him gently, but do not cuddle him,
because only the test
of fire makes fine steel.

Let him have the courage
to be impatient...
let him have the patience to be brave.
Teach him always
to have sublime faith in himself,
because then he will have
sublime faith in mankind.

This is a big order,
but see what you can do...
He is such a fine fellow,
my son! ●*

GRANDPARENTS



Graciousness, Good Humour and Buoyant Spirit

At the age of ninety-five, EMMA HAWLEY's maternal grandmother is as supportive and inspirational as ever.

My maternal grandmother, Nana Flora, has always been a beautiful, supportive presence in my life. As she enters her ninety-fifth year this month, I'm left in awe and gratitude for her graciousness and good humour. Her late husband, Franklin – Frank for short, is always spoken of fondly. Though I never knew him, his memory lives on in the humorous antics my family retells.

Nana always remains vibrant and poised. The way she can easily make conversation with anyone inspires me to stay as open and accepting. She always comments about her own mother and father-in-law: "You would never hear them criticise anyone." This esteem she reflects in her own amiability.



I feel in awe of her buoyant spirit under all circumstances. Her devotion and trust in the triumph of goodness are a legacy I'm proud to inherit.

Nana grew up on a farm in rural Saskatchewan that her father built from the ground up. She rode a horse to a one-room schoolhouse, snow or shine. She lived through the depression, met my grandfather during World War II, and has seen monumental changes around her since her youth.

My mother remembers her sewing their clothes as a child. I remember her agile fingers playing Scott Joplin on her baby grand piano. Then there is the distinct, sweet smell of her house. I can picture her gentle hand movements that punctuate her thoughts.

Though Nana never used a computer, my grandfather was an engineer at IBM when computers took up entire rooms. He is hailed as one of the fathers of computer-aided design. I now work as a graphic artist because of the pioneering he did. His memory lives fondly in her heart; I can feel why she still wears her wedding band over thirty years after his passing. As I type, the solitaire of the engagement ring she passed down to me flashes on my ring finger. She has set a high precedent for a spiritual, loving, laughter-filled marriage, which we have every intention to live up to. When I asked her yesterday if she was looking forward to being a great grandmother, her smile lit up. My heart did too.

The Old Man Who Walks With His Stick In The Air

MEGHANA ANAND's maternal grandfather is still a lively and active member of the household.

Knock, knock...

Who's there?

Circle.

Circle who?

Full circle.

Like beginning to end?

No... back to the beginning.

Each morning, I savour the aroma and the flavour of South Indian filter coffee with my thatha. As I hear the tapping sound of his walking stick on the stairs, I hasten to brew a fresh round of coffee. "Meghana, I can smell fresh coffee! Is it ready?" Thus thatha greets me before he starts his routine for the day.

One of the earliest memories of being with my grandparents is that of riding on an old geared Bajaj scooter, sitting on my nani's lap behind my thatha, as he drove us everywhere in the city – dropping and picking us up from school, visiting the doctor for our routine check-ups, taking us to the park in the evenings, and running household errands. Today I sometimes drop and pick up my eighty-nine year old thatha from the meditation centre every morning and evening on my Honda Activa.



A favourite pastime as a little girl was to solve word puzzles with thatha. He introduced me to the world of the alphabet: solving anagrams, searching for words in a word grid and verbal word games. I inherit my love for language and books from him.

I was brought up by my maternal grandparents from the age of three till I was ten years old in Ahmedabad. The bonding has been natural. While nani was a strick disciplinarian, I enjoyed breaking the rules with thatha. Watching our favourite cartoons, sneaking sweets and savouries behind nani's back – oh, we had a gala time in the company of thatha! But now I also see how nani's adherence to timings and schedules has groomed me in the finer aspects of managing my day-to-day life. The best thing I have learnt from her: never procrastinate. She would insist upon us finishing our school homework first thing after lunch, and then be free for the rest of the day. I would really despise it then, but it has helped me to develop the habit of tackling difficult things first to sail through the easy times – a philosophy that has helped me deal with life's ups and downs.

After nani's passing I have grown especially close to my thatha, and two years back he moved in with us. Initially we had to make a few adjustments to accommodate his routine into our family life; now it feels natural to have him around. The bond seems to have deepened. Many times I lack the patience and understanding in my interactions with him, but more often I am filled with a sense of wonder and inspiration to see him taking each day as it comes, living every moment to the fullest, and doing whatever he likes despite all the odds posed by his ripe old age. I cannot help wondering how life would treat me if at all I get to live to that age!

His daily routine includes morning and evening walks, meditation, television, solving word puzzles, reading books and the newspaper, and tinkering with his collection of antiques that he has preserved over the years. His prized possession is the wristwatch that was gifted to him by his company on the day of his retirement from service, and his face beams like a kid who has won the world whenever he shows it off!

I hesitate to visit his room, as the neatness with which he maintains it puts me to shame. He prides himself to be very independent, and does not like being called or treated as 'old'. People in the neighbourhood know him as 'the old man who walks with his stick in the air'!

These days, I find thatha younger than ever. His mental and physical faculties have definitely withered with time, but he seems to have grown younger in his spirits, in his heart. I have never seen him dull or brooding over anything; he is always positive. With the passing of time, thatha seems to be going back to the Source of his existence. What he means to me is something I am still in the process of discovering. His absence will always remind me of his presence. That life comes full circle is definitely not a myth!





That Bond Of Trust

TILDE MONTAGNOLI reminisces about her maternal grandmother.

I was especially close to my mother's mother. I think because we spent a lot of time with her when we were young, the trust that built was always present. She was not the classic grandmother: she was tall and skinny and very serious about things like duck-shaped shoes when I wanted cowboy boots. You know, she was her own person. We never spoke a lot – we just hugged and sat together. We grew closer after my mother died when I was thirteen, partly because I always looked like her in build, so she gave me a feeling of coherence, of belonging to this family, and also because we moved on together. She would always roll her eyes because I insisted on digging up the painfully unsaid, but it was also unsaid that she appreciated it, that she would take my hand just then and just know. It is that bond of trust that never broke.

I learned from her to make elderflower syrup, to love wool and to buy shoes for my son with lots of space in the front: the simple life. She lived close to the ocean and we would stay on the beach for hours. Visiting her was like a different world in the end, and she would just sit next to me and hold my hand. One thing I have often thought about is that she never asked me what I was doing, she always asked, "How are you?" She never worried about what I had accomplished, but she did care about me not letting anything stand in the way of doing what I wanted. She was that mix of being quiet and a will-driven tank!

My grandmother was presence-less presence. I don't remember her ever interfering or playing with us; she just wanted to sit wherever we were, and stay close to us. I used to think it was a little weird that she wasn't really passionate about music or art or food or sports, like I saw in other adults. But now that I have a child myself I truly appreciate the consciousness she represents in my life. She was never busy doing other things, she was just around in an 'empty' way, kind of like the air between us.

Her own mother died when she was very young and her father remarried a woman with whom she never got along. When she was young she wanted to be a mason, as she was a tomboy, but her father refused and sent her to a housekeeping school. She didn't like it at all and she often remembered how the teachers spoke to her. Later on in life, when she was married with children, she went to university and got a degree in English literature, not because she had to work but because she wanted to. She let us play with the tapes she used for her students, with a woman's voice saying sentences in English over and over again, and she would listen to us say the words. She really loved her job ●



A long bridge with multiple concrete pillars spans a body of water under a twilight sky. In the foreground, a small blue boat with yellow trim is partially visible. The bridge's structure is illuminated by small lights along its length.

THE BRIDGE

A PHOTO ESSAY BY **BHARATH KRISHNA**

In the South of India is a place steeped in the mythology of one of the greatest epic tales known to humanity, the Ramayana. In this tale, Lord Ram rescues his chaste and pure wife Sita from the clutches of the dark lord Ravana of Lanka, and to do so he and his band of heroes build the famous bridge from the Indian mainland through the island of Rameswaram to Lanka.

Legend has it that, after killing Ravana and returning to Rameswaram with Sita, he worshipped Lord Shiva, and a temple was built around this spot. It is a site of pilgrimage for devotees from around the world. The site is also considered sacred because of the confluence of the waters of the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean.

In July 2015, BHARATH KRISHNA visited this unique place. He shares with us his impressions of the beauty, the devastation and the history of the region. Seeing his photos, there is a definite feeling that this place has never really recovered from that epic battle.



For many years I have wanted to come here, as it is near my parent's place. I had seen pictures of the immense bridges from the mainland to the island, but coming here is a different experience. I am impressed by the power of Nature. It is so windy. The wind on the Indira Gandhi Bridge can knock you off if you don't hold tightly to the handrail.



It is also a surreal experience with the calm waters of the Bay of Bengal on one side and the turbulent waves of the Indian Ocean on the other.



Dhanushkodi was a thriving trading centre at the southern tip of the island until a cyclone in 1964 destroyed the town. At one time the train went right to the end of the island, but now Dhanushkodi can only be reached by 4-wheel drive, minivan, or by foot.

I walked all the way to Dhanushkodi, and it was like a dark journey with eagles flying around the ruins of old boats and thorny shrubs that are dotted across the hard, dry, desolate, sandy ground. The locals tell stories with tears in their eyes of the devastation of the 1964 cyclone. Today there is still no electricity in Dhanushkodi. In the evening, the children of the hundred or so families who still live there walk the three kilometres back across the island to their village at the narrow tip.



The town itself is also full of ruins – the old police station, the houses and the shops that now are only full of old memories. There is also the ruin of a church that was built only from shells for this predominantly Christian community.

Still, Nature is beautiful here, and the pristine clear waters of the Bay of Bengal are also home to large rock-like sponges that are strewn all over the sand. The locals tell that during Lord Ram’s time, these ‘stones’ floated after they wrote his name on each one and were thus used to create the famous bridge to Lanka 🍷





Wisdom consists in forestalling events. To learn before the event is the way of the wise man. To prevent the event altogether is the wisdom of the sage. Some of us know the consequences of our actions only after we have acted. Some even know while they are doing it, the result of such action. The wise man knows beforehand, and avoids. That is also discipline.

PARTHASARATHI
RAJAGOPALACHARI

Infinity



ANNE GRAFF

“ *Life is not fixed. It is an endless beginning, from the centre to the periphery, to give form to the spring. To set the nothingness.* ”

Infinity, the Endless, *Ananta* in Sanskrit, *Ayn-Sof* in Hebrew, has become a universal symbol through mathematics. This symbol is called the lemniscate.



Before speaking about it, I invite you to take two coloured pencils, if possible two complementary colours, like red and green, or blue and yellow. Draw first a lemniscate with one of the coloured pencils, then double the first line with the other colour. The two lines have to be close together.

Do it again if necessary until you get a nice two-coloured lemniscate.

Then look at your drawing, and let it speak to you.

Take your time, you have got eternity on your hands!

The lemniscate let me hope that one day I would reach a condition of constant divine remembrance. To be One and manifest both. To have my cake and eat it too!

The centre of the lemniscate is one and the other. Therefore it is also neither this nor that. It is whole and nothingness simultaneously.

The Infinity of all possibilities, coiled in its nothingness, is brooding but springing.

A nothingness matrix guarantees us a renewal never repeated.

It is never definitive, but there is always the certitude of coming back to the source to be reborn.

Life is not fixed. It is an endless beginning, from the centre to the periphery, to give form to the spring. To set the nothingness.

The great danger is not to want to return to the centre. Nothingness, which is elusive, frightens us. In the Occident, we have a civilisation that wants to master everything. Therefore we become tense, we get entangled, we become crystallised and the lifeflow is disturbed, creating a knot.

The middle of the lemniscate is simultaneously the right wing and left wing, and both wings are also either one or the other. They have a dominating external aspect and a dominated internal aspect, which are reversed by going through the centre. Between the two lines is a meeting space. The internal world and the external world are inseparable.

Meditation leads us to the internal world, and material activity to the external world. By meditating

we go from the external wing to the internal wing. By working with matter, physically or intellectually, we should start from the internal wing and go towards the external wing.

Like a mutual enrichment, tirelessly, towards infinity.

Western civilisation's dominant wing is the external world. We have excelled in wanting to model matter. We still have to learn to listen to our heart: the heart-centre, the One. This is the other dimension that take us beyond the limits of our confined, separate condition.

We have to learn to respect the principle of returning and of letting go. The evening return, the winter and the old age withdrawal.

The lemniscate is for me the symbolic expression of what I seek, and that is to be both One and manifested.

Heartfulness is the way. Morning meditation allows me to drink at the Source and to stay linked to the heart all day long. The evening cleaning and even deeper cleaning with transmission allow me to become free from a past that I don't need anymore.

Heartfulness is, in my view, the infinity lemniscate way which springs, takes form and returns to the Source. It is Life ●

THE SCIENCE OF SPIRITUALITY

VIBRATION & COMPATIBILITY

KAMLESH D. PATEL

KAMLESH D. PATEL explores the nature of compatibility, and how this affects our destiny in relationships, at the time of conception and death, and during our own personal evolution.

Compatibility is an extremely superfine concept. It is always about the relationship between two or more subjects. It is about the similarity or difference in vibrational patterns between two subjects. For example, when two musical instruments are in tune with each other, the music is harmonious. When they are out of tune, it is awful to listen to the music performed.

When two subjects are in harmony, when they resonate at the same frequency, there is harmony and similarity. This sort of togetherness is compatibility. It occurs in all aspects of our lives from the most basic physical aspects, like the foods we eat, to more subtle feelings of comfort or discomfort. For example, when you are taking one medication, if by accident you take something that is not compatible with that drug, there is a clash. There is a war inside and you suffer as a result.

Compatibility is also a very important aspect of human relationships. For all of us, the question is how to adjust and be in tune with our spouses. Similarly, as children grow up, their particular tendencies and habits manifest and again we all have to get used to each other. It takes perhaps twenty-five years or more. In families, we either allow entropy to take over and disintegration of the relationships happens, or we fine-tune ourselves over time to the family's idiosyncrasies or vibrational frequency, happily adjusting to each other. It is really up to us. It is just like musicians being in tune with each other to play a beautiful symphony.

With business partners in the workplace, or in a school or college, wherever you are, there is an entire gamut of vibratory levels. You can try to interact with this level and with that level, and many things can be incompatible *per se*. The question is then, how do I make all vibratory levels match with my own?

We can also explore this same concept of compatibility in a more profound way, starting with how we create our own destiny through the processes of conception and death.

THE VIBRATORY LEVEL AT DEATH

During any particular lifetime, we create our own destiny. We make choices that affect our future, we feel guilty because of the things we should and should not have said and done, holding onto these and strengthening our guilt: “If only I had made peace with my father before he passed away,” “If only I had spent more time with my children while they were young,” etc.

Having created that destiny in this life, at the moment of death we reach our own destination accordingly, going to a certain dimension. Perhaps there are infinite dimensions. Where we go is determined by the density surrounding the soul, the vibratory level of the individual soul. According to that vibratory level, the soul finds its corresponding vibratory level in other dimensions we call ‘the other world’ or ‘the world beyond’.

The soul’s vibratory level and the dimension’s vibratory level match like lock and key. That is the natural process. The soul will find its own corresponding vibratory level and dimension accordingly. It fits well and it settles down there. So who is actually deciding this destiny?

Now, the question arises: can you prepare yourself just before the moment of death so as to choose where your soul will go after death? For example, can you completely purify yourself at that moment, so that your vibratory level is in tune with the desired dimension? No, you cannot achieve something at the last moment.

If you read a book just a day before the exam, you may pass, but it is not as good as preparing slowly. With a thorough preparation, even if you do not study the day before the exam it will make no difference, because you are well prepared. Random exams can come any day. Death can come any day. Are we prepared? Are we prepared to face the next dimension? So we should always remain in the purest or finest vibratory level, and that is the feeling of love.

“Death can come any day. Are we prepared? Are we prepared to face the next dimension? So we should always remain in the purest or finest vibratory level, and that is the feeling of love.

VIBRATORY LEVEL AT CONCEPTION

Now what about our entry into this physical world, at the time of conception?

Back in 2000 or 2001, I was visiting my spiritual Master of the Sahaj Marg system of Raja Yoga. I wanted him to clear up the many ideas that were current about the importance of the place of conception of a baby, the place of birth and also the time of delivery, based on which we form astrological charts. So he reminded us of the following story:

In the great epic, the Mahabharata, the wise Rishi Vyas was summoned by the king to be a surrogate father, to impregnate his two queens. In today’s language, he was a sperm donor, because the king could not father children and he wanted a successor for his kingdom. You may already know what happened there.

The first queen was horrified at having to mate with an unkempt rishi, who had come after years of intense meditation. She agreed to do it, but with her eyes closed in disgust so that she did not have to look at him. As a result, the child, Dhritrashtra, the father of the Kauravas, was born blind. That is one story.

When the second queen looked at him, she turned pale with fear. As a result her son, Pandu, was born very pale.

The third mother, a chambermaid, who felt honoured and thought, “It is my fortune that tonight I am going to mate with the great Rishi Vyas,” was an insurance policy in case those two queens didn’t deliver. She felt so honoured and happy to have been chosen that her son, Vidura, was born healthy, brilliant and the wisest of the lot.

When I asked my Master, “Is the place of conception important? Is the time of delivery as important as the place?” he said, “None of this is important.” Then he said, “Think over it.”

We realised that once a child is conceived he has already brought in all the baggage he carries from his own past lives as samskaras. How does it matter afterwards when these samskaras unfold? That means the time of birth is not very important. The load of samskaras is already there, and the soul that is embodied and delivered is already there.

This story from the Mahabharata tells us how the attitude of the women at the moment of conception created the vibratory levels to attract the souls that would fit with their parentage.

Such a beautiful idea emerged from that discussion: it is not the time or place, but the attitude of the couple at the moment of conception that matters. At the moment of conception, based on the vibratory level of those two parents, the soul with that corresponding vibratory level will embed itself, just as at the moment of death our vibratory level decides the corresponding dimension. A soul will descend into the womb that has the specific vibratory level that matches. No place can play a part in it, no time can play a part in it, but the attitude of those two parents will make all the difference. So we are all deciding the destiny of our families at that time.

Like the moment of death, at the moment of conception you cannot manufacture a fine or superfine vibration and say, “Lord please help me, I want a Vivekananda in my family.” It is not going to be there. The preparation has to be years ahead.

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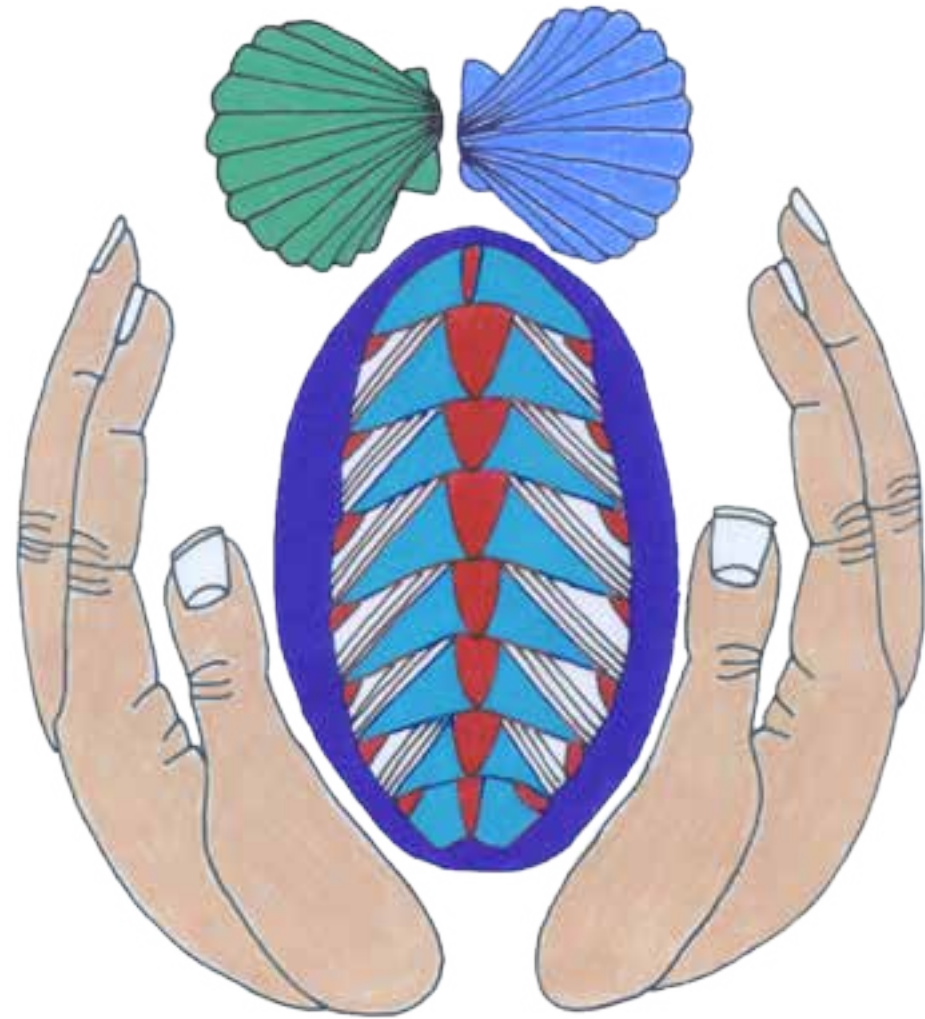
VIBRATORY LEVEL AND MEDITATION

Just as souls are incarnated based on the vibratory level of their parents at the time of conception, likewise, when we invite Divinity into the heart in meditation, as a lover inviting the Beloved, we create a spiritual condition that can be felt right away.

But imagine if you meditate wanting to quickly finish it off because you have pressure to go to the office or to college. Even if you want to do it nicely, you have to rush. What sort of creative condition can you manage to cultivate even when you do meditate in such a rush?

At least those two queens in the Mahabharata were able to conceive one blind child and one pale child. You would not be able to create any condition, because no conception of any condition can be hoped for when you meditate half-heartedly or in a rush. And sometimes a great condition can be created when you do make the time and take care, but if you are not careful it can be lost, like in the early days of pregnancy. This abortion of a spiritual condition happens when you are careless about your lifestyle. You have meditated beautifully, creating a profound condition within, and then afterwards you argue with your spouse or watch a violent movie or the news on the TV, and there goes your profound condition.

So we have to be very careful how we conduct our life, because that is what destiny is all about ●



The Dream Time

Creation myths and stories exist in all cultures and religions around the world. We have always wanted to know from where we came. It was originally an oral tradition of storytelling, so there would have been many versions although the essence was always the same. The stories are symbolic and sacred, and show how the world emerged out of chaos and how the first peoples came into being. They often speak of transformation, both physical and of the spirit, and have deep meaning to the different cultures to which they belong.

The DreamTime presents various creation stories from around the world, illustrating the universality of all human beings and how they define their place in time and history.

The Haida

This creation story is from the Haida, an indigenous tribal group in the Pacific Northwest of Canada on the archipelago of Haida Gwaii, the Queen Charlotte Islands. It is a mystical area of coastal rainforest which is home to many wildlife species. Before the first contact with Europeans, the peoples developed a culture enriched by the abundance of the land and the sea. Human habitation on the islands has been recorded as far back as 13,000 years.

This is one variation of how Raven created the world. To the Haida, Raven was the Bringer of Light. He was the maker of things, the transformer, the healer and the magician. He had other more mischievous attributes – his insatiable curiosity, his innate need to play tricks, and to provoke and meddle with the world and its creatures.

The Haida continue to live on the west coast, on the stormy shores between the land and the sea, honouring their ancestors and traditions.

“Our culture is born of respect, and intimacy with the land and sea and the air around us. Like the forests, the roots of our people are intertwined such that the greatest troubles cannot overcome us. We owe our existence to Haida Gwaii. The living generation accepts the responsibility to ensure that our heritage is passed on to following generations.”

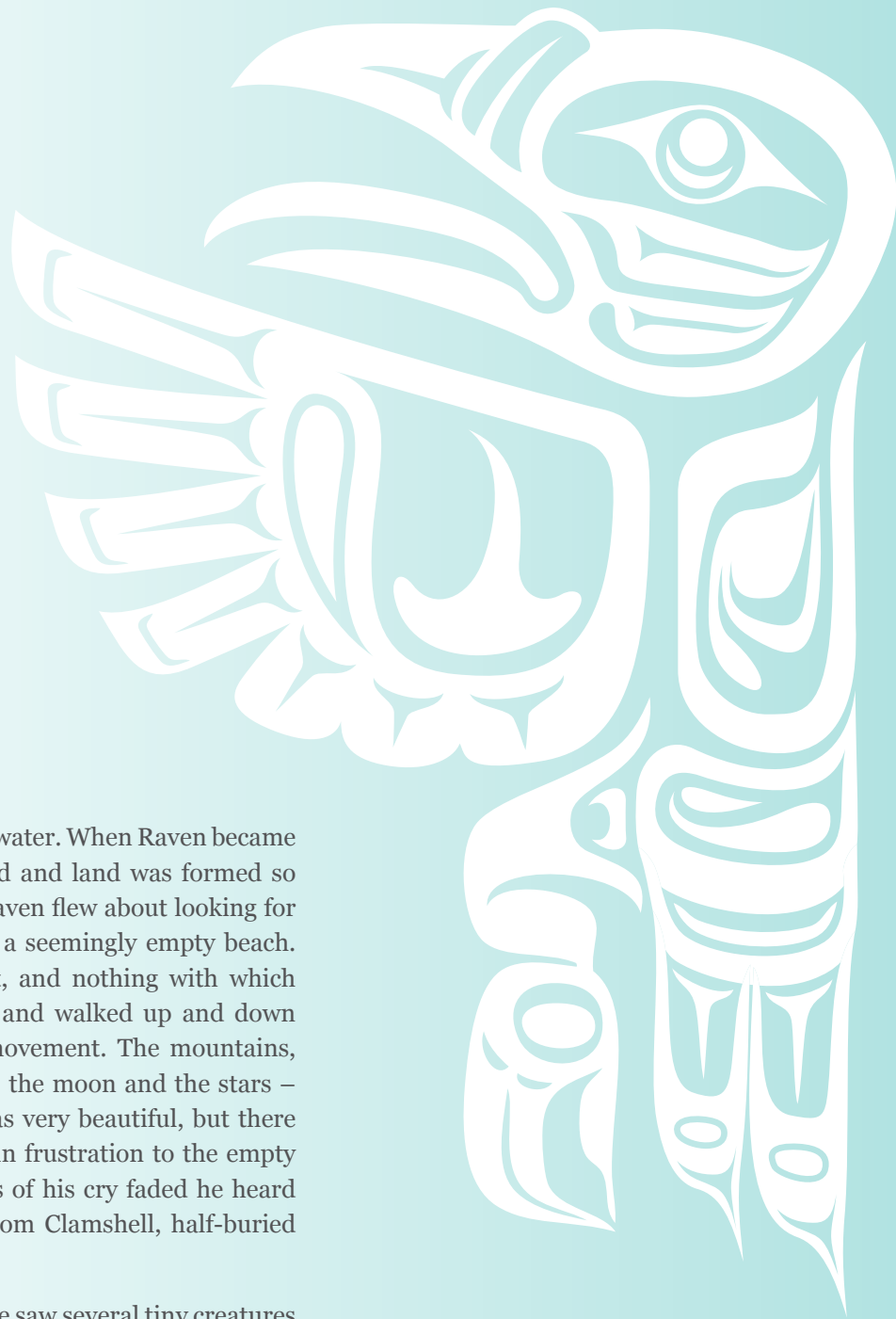
(Council of the Haida Nation)

ILLUSTRATION BY AMANDA ESPY

Raven Creates the World

The world was covered by water. When Raven became hungry the waters receded and land was formed so that he could find food. Raven flew about looking for a place to land and spied a seemingly empty beach. There was nothing to eat, and nothing with which to play tricks. He sighed and walked up and down looking for any sign of movement. The mountains, the land, the sea, the sun, the moon and the stars – all that he had created was very beautiful, but there was no life. He cried out in frustration to the empty sky, but before the echoes of his cry faded he heard strange sounds coming from Clamshell, half-buried in the sand.

Peering into the opening he saw several tiny creatures cowering in fear. He was filled with joy, as here were creatures to play with; he was no longer alone. Now, how to get them out? Here his trickster nature asserted itself and Raven began to sing to Clamshell, thinking to tempt the little creatures out. Raven has two voices – the loud and piercing caaaw-caaaw, and a sweet crooning voice that seems to come from the depths of the sea, or from the caves where the wind is



“Slowly one of
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emerged. It had two legs
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These were the First
People.

born, an irresistible and seductive sound. This is how he sang to Clamshell.

Slowly one of the strange creatures emerged. It had two legs like Raven, arms, pale skin and long black hair on a round head, but no beak and no feathers. These were the First People. Their curiosity aroused, the others slowly emerged.

Raven played with them for a long time, teaching them tricks and enjoying their wonder at this new world. They were very active and would fight with each other as well as help each other. But Raven was easily bored and he soon tired of their ceaseless activity and their helplessness. They were small and fearful and needed looking after and shelter from the sun and the rain. There were only boys, no girls. He was ready to tuck these annoying creatures back in their shell when he had an idea to prolong the fun.

“Somewhere there must be girls,” he thought. “After all, it is the way that there are both females and males

of every creature.” So he began his search. He looked everywhere, under rocks and logs, but he could not find where any girls were hiding. As the tide was reached its lowest point, Raven spied huge Chitons clinging tightly to the rocks. He pried one loose with his beak, and there he found a girl of the First People underneath its shell. Each Chiton held a girl, and they were like the creatures from Clam but soft and round. They were frightened of Raven, and he had difficulty gathering them on his back.

When he brought them to the boys, he thought they would be happy and excited, but to his surprise they ran away, some of them even going back inside Clamshell! The girls were shy and fearful, huddling together and watching the boys with curious eyes. They all became modest and covered their bodies with kelp and seaweed.

The boys also became embarrassed and confused by feelings they had not had before and didn't know what to do. Some began to show off the tricks they had been taught, running and wrestling to get the attention of the girls. Some of the girls overcame their shyness, and from their quick glances the boys were encouraged to approach them. The two groups came together and overcoming all their fears they walked off hand in hand, absorbed in each other.

Raven was amazed as he watched all this unusual behaviour with great interest. The boys were proud, strong and athletic and the girls were soft and gentle. If the boys were rough, there would be tears in the eyes of the girls. Then these tears would bring out the protective instincts in the boys. Their strengths brought balance to each other's weaknesses.

Since then, Raven has been fascinated and never bored, though he may have sometimes regretted bringing the first men and women together. From Clam and Chiton, from the pairings of the First People came the first families. Many generations have succeeded each other, at times with more success than others. Some say that Raven played a big joke on humanity, with the complexity of human relationships of male and female energies that are needed to survive a life on earth ●

STORY RETOLD BY CHRISTINE PRISLAND



Nature does
not hurry, yet
everything is
accomplished.

LAO TZU

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STAS WALENGA

HOPI SPIRITUAL ARK

The Hopi are an ancient Pueblo people who live in northern Arizona in the southwestern United States. The word 'Hopi' means 'one who behaves, who is mannered, civilised, peaceable and polite'.

The wisdom they received over 1,100 years ago from Maasaw, the ancient caretaker of the Earth, is known as the Hopi Spiritual Ark and it contains the following instructions:

MAKE CAREFUL AND WISE CHOICES.

For this you need a pure heart, so that clear and wise choices can be made without confusion.

AVOID TEMPTATION.

Rise above the desires that pull us down.

AVOID PITFALLS.

Easy lifestyles often lead us astray. Modern concepts will not help balance the natural order on Earth and in the universe.

LISTEN TO YOUR ELDERS.

There is much to be learned from Elders and teachers. It is wise to listen and adapt their advice to the current age.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDWARD S. CURTIS

BE SELF-SUFFICIENT.

Let your communities be self-sufficient so that you are not dependent upon artificial means for survival.

PREPARE IN ADVANCE.

Take time to review what has happened and think about what might happen during the coming year. Pray for guidance.

PROTECT THE LAWS OF NATURE AND SPIRIT. RESPECT ALL LIVING THINGS.

We are destroying the link between Nature and Man. The signs of warning are evident in many parts of the world.

We have learned that we cannot communicate with Nature unless our existence and behaviour are in harmony with the will of the great Spirit, and also that he who knows his heart will also find his way in the future.

DON'T TRY TO CONTROL OTHERS.

Trading blame drains our planet of spiritual energy and causes great harm to all land and life. Don't try to control others. The spirit dwells within all of us.

USE ANCIENT TEACHINGS AS A GUIDELINE.

Our ancient teachings are a guideline in order to avoid downfall for our mistakes. The old ones say that we have gone through at least three world catastrophes and each time the world was destroyed by the same error in man.

BE SATISFIED WITH THE PATTERN OF LIFE GIVEN TO US BY OUR GREAT CREATOR.

Be satisfied with the order of our great Creator, whose light brightens the road, so that we can absorb its great wisdom and live like humans ●

LESSONS FROM THE GARDEN

HARVEST AND GRATITUDE

ALANDA GREENE shares her gratitude at the bounty Nature gives at harvest time in her garden, and asks what are we all doing to work with Nature in providing the food we eat.

It's harvest time. Plums are falling from the trees every day. Tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini and beans need daily picking along with the plums, or they become too ripe too quickly. I'm making sauces, soups and stews to freeze, and blanching chard and the last broccoli.

Sometimes it feels overwhelming. A friend phoned a couple of days ago and invited me out to Alberta for a few days. "Sounds wonderful and impossible," I say. I explain about the garden and harvest, but can tell it doesn't make any sense to her. She mutters something, not for the first time, and not without kindness, that I'm a slave to the garden. "It's not meant to be like that, is it?" she offers.



PHOTOGRAPH BY SU JUSTEN

Feeling overwhelmed by all the work needed to deal with harvesting, I can easily forget gratitude for this abundance. I joke sometimes about my reminder to myself, “Remember January. Remember February.” In these cold months when the garden lies quiet under a thick cover of snow, we feast on the bounty of the freezer and the root cellar, on food still rich with colour and flavour and nourishment.

But my gratitude is about more than having food stored in the cellar during winter.

One autumn some years back, I heard on the radio a report of refugees in Somalia, struggling to find food, having migrated through terrible conditions of drought and heat as they sought a place to live where enough food was available to survive.

“Wouldn’t any of those people,” I told myself, “just love to have your problem of too much food to deal with, food that you have in enough abundance to cycle through the seasons until the next harvest?”

A new level of gratitude emerged, for my good fortune in being born in a place where food is so accessible, where land is available, where the climate supports abundance, and where warfare is non-existent.

There’s another dimension to the gratitude for the food that grows here. When the idea was beginning, to build rich and healthy soil, to grow as much as possible right in our own yard, it was also my own contribution to sustainability and what I would call, in the Buddhist ideal, right-livelihood.

There’s another dimension to the gratitude for the food that grows here. When the idea was beginning, to build rich and healthy soil, to grow as much as possible right in our own yard, it was also my own contribution to sustainability and what I would call, in the Buddhist ideal, right-livelihood.





The food industry has become disconnected from the small plots of land surrounding dwellings and villages. Here in Canada, fresh mangos from South America arrive in the cold winter months, lettuce and broccoli from California, avocados from Asia. Packaging and fuel are huge addenda to the food. In a world where we are seriously overtaxing the planet's ecosystems, wasting resources and polluting at an alarming rate, what does one person do?

Growing my own garden is such a small step compared to the enormity of these environmental challenges, but it is still significant. Over the years, I can tally the savings in packaging, fuel, other transportation costs, freshness and vitality.

Measured in a cup for cup or pound for pound comparison of what is saved compared to the big picture of what is being used up, it seems nothing. But small acts are not nothing.

Systems thinking shows that very small behaviours can significantly altar the functioning of very large

Actions taken to support sustainable food production, even on a small level, can make a difference. I am grateful to know this, to have reminders, as I cut and chop onions for another pot of soup.

systems. And Rupert Sheldrake in his work with morphogenetic fields, suggests that the actions of one element of a species can effect other members of the species, even when no contact occurs, even when the members are on another continent.

Sheldrake reports about laboratory tests in the United States where rats learn to negotiate a maze to get a reward of food. The first generation took a long time to learn the maze, while subsequent generations took less time. Strangely, rats in Australia, when meeting the same maze test for the first time, learned it quicker than the first generation of rats had done. Many test situations have been done in many parts of the world that suggest species are connected with each other through a field beyond the physical.

Actions taken to support sustainable food production, even on a small level, can make a difference. I am grateful to know this, to have reminders, as I cut and chop onions for another pot of soup.

Turning my mind to remembrance, to gratitude, I feel it growing. The beauty in the food – these glistening plums of deep maroon, their flesh soft and sweet and juicy; the intensity of colour in the combination of green pepper and red tomato, chopped together in salad.

Being part of this process is a source of delight. Indeed, I get tired sometimes with so much work as the food ripens and follows its schedule, not mine. But there is a lesson in surrender here too. To happily be part of the process that is much beyond my own schedule.

Yes, the harvest requires much effort. But being able to work is a gift and a privilege. I choose to do this work and forgo other pleasures or pastimes. Giving time to remember why, so I don't feel oppressed by the effort required, reminds me year after year why I make this choice. It is not just about remembering January. It is being present right now with all the blessings and benefits given ●

Medi-ta-TŌŌN

Sketches by ARULKUMAR SELVARAJ



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STAR PATTERNS

Choose a night when the moon is dark, so it is easier to see the stars. How will you find out when it is the new moon?

Take a piece of paper and a pencil outside with you and find a comfortable place to be. Invite some friends to join you.

Find a star pattern that you like. These are called constellations. Do you have a favourite star or group of stars? Get to know the names of the common constellations you can see from your place.

Observe the way the stars twinkle. Which ones are brighter? Which ones are blue, or white, or red? Which ones do you like the best? Why?

Nature speaks – when you look at the stars they speak to you. Take some time to figure out what they are saying.



Draw your favourite star pattern on your piece of paper in pencil.

When you go back inside, work on the drawing until you are happy that it is good. Where each star is in the pattern, make a small hole in the paper. You can use a sharp pencil to do this.

You can use black paper, or paint your paper black so it is like the night sky.

When you have punched holes in the paper for all the stars, take a candle or torchlight and put the paper in front of it. Turn the lights out and see your constellation shining in the dark room. You can make posters, cards and sculptures like this ●

The Little Girl

AND THE STAR

“Children have stars as friends. These stars watch over them. If you want to see your star, you do not need to go far into the forest. You can follow it from the window of your bedroom.

Once upon a time there was a little girl called Nathalie. She was often alone at night, waiting for her mom to return home from work. While she was waiting, she would stand by the window and speak to a star, always the same one.

One night, she decided to join her star, to get closer to her. She put on her little red coat and went out into the starry night. She started to walk toward the star, but it moved faster than she did. It was like a game and it made her laugh a lot.

Then she began to run towards the star, stretching out her arms toward it as if to kiss it or melt into it. Her heart was joyful and leapt in the same way that her little legs were jumping over the bushes. She ran and ran behind her star. At each hop, she leapt up to try to touch her beloved star. But when her feet touched the ground again, she could see it moving away.

There was no question of giving up; she had to join the star. She started running faster, as if her little feet had sprouted wings. She was so enraptured by the star that she was literally flying.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY GABRIELLE RAJKUMAR

Breathless by this endless race, she stopped and crouched for a while, holding her sides. It was very dark now, so she hardly could see the tips of her shoes. While catching her breath, she started hearing strange noises. They made her jump and when she looked around her, she realised that she was surrounded by tall dark trees. Her body stiffened with fear, as she was lost. Fear knotted her stomach. It was so dark, so silent. She began to feel cold. Very cold. She pressed her little red coat against her body, but the cold was creeping into her bones. She started shivering now.

"I'm so small! I don't know what to do! Please, help me little star!"

Suddenly she heard creaking branches and footsteps. There! A shadow! Her mind was racing: what if it is a wolf? She began to cry, thinking of her cosy home so far away. Nathalie got up and ran. She ran wildly, further into the darkness of the forest. Crossing a clearing, she saw her star again and it seemed so close to her. Maybe if she could reach for it, her star

would swoop her away, but instead she felt a sudden pain in her ankle and collapsed on the ground.

She looked behind and saw a massive silhouette appear.

"That's larger than a wolf," thought Nathalie. "It looks like a dog!"

She could now clearly see the outline of a large dog, very much like the mountain dogs with nice smiles on their faces. The dog approached her and licked her hands. Its eyes were soft and so full of expression that they almost seemed to speak. It was strange, she felt as if they could understand each other. The dog had a coat as blue as the night, almost black with silver highlights.

With his kind eyes, he seemed to say, "I know you're tired, little girl. Climb on my back, I'll carry you and you can rest."

Nathalie felt reassured. She climbed onto his back and clasped his large blue ears.

Still a little worried, she whispered, "Will you take me back to my home?"

The dog seemed to understand and started running.

"But how does he know the way to my home?" the little girl wondered.

They flew through the forest again, and through some fields, Nathalie bouncing on the dog's back. They went on for a long time and she began to feel safe and almost sleepy. She lost track of time.

Suddenly the blue dog slowed to a halt, as they were standing outside Nathalie's home. A light was on inside and her mother was waiting. Nathalie hugged the dog and ran towards the door. Before pushing the door open, she had a look up at her star. The star winked back at her.

From that day on, whenever Nathalie went to bed, she never forgot to go look at the sky through the window.

Children have stars as friends. These stars watch over them. If you want to see your star, you do not need to go far into the forest. You can follow it from the window of your bedroom. And when you grow up, you will learn how your star is by your side at any time, and how it guides your life.

It is simple; turn your eyes into your heart! At the beginning it will look like the deep dark forest of the story. Whatever the difficulties and while it is dark there, remember the star, remember its light. It is always in your heart ●



Enjoy 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... up your feet 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 the neck muscles. Move your awareness up to your face. Relax the jaws ... mouth ... nose ... eyes ... earlobes ... facial muscles ... forehead ... all the way to the top of your head.

Feel how your whole body is now completely 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.



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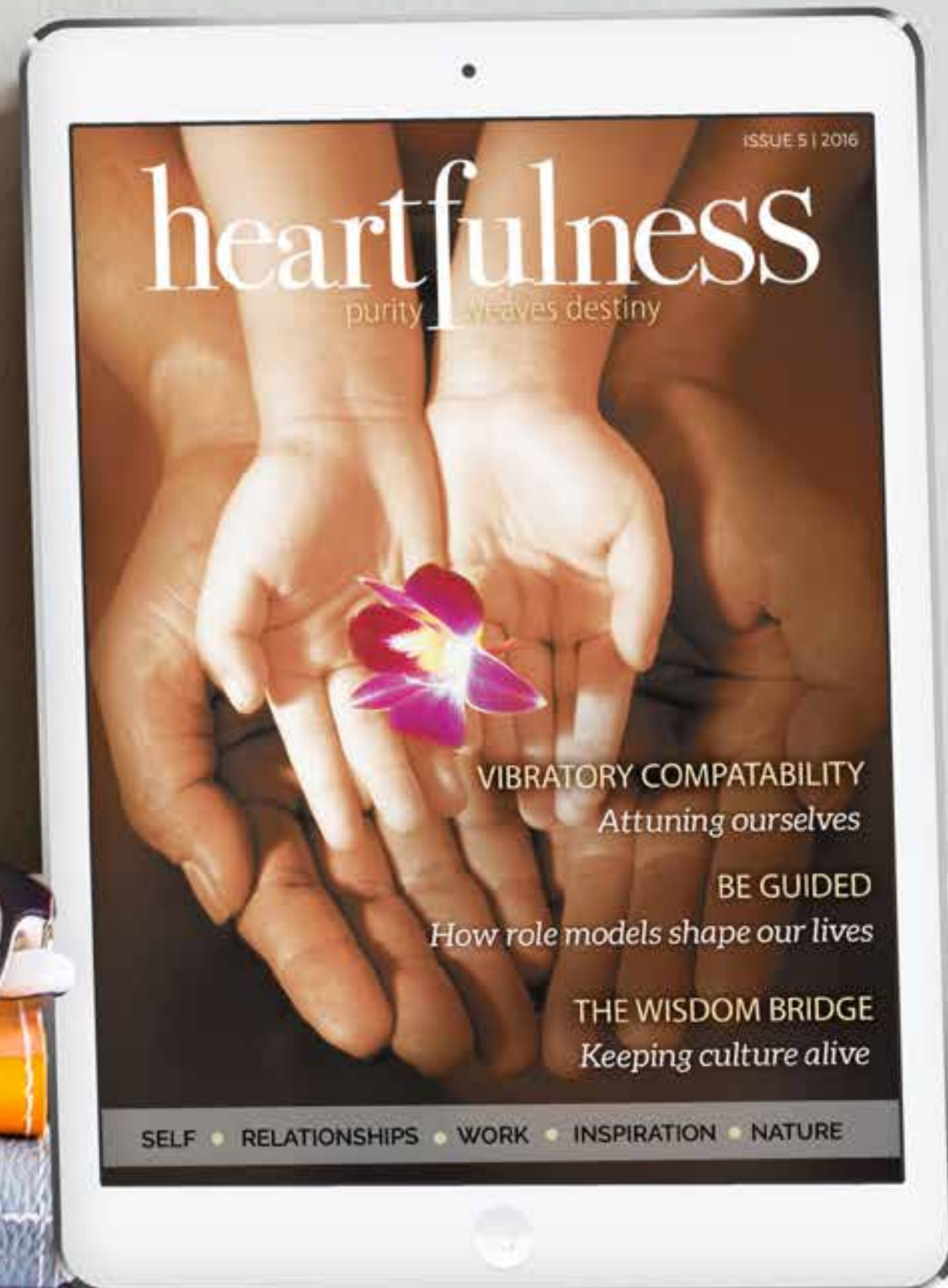
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