

October 2019

heartfulness

purity weaves destiny

*18th
Sustainable
Development
Goal*

A SILENT
REVOLUTION

THE SECRET
OF TREES

YOGIC
PSYCHOLOGY



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A Silent Revolution

Dear readers,

Back in the 1960s and 70s, there was so much hope and vision for change. “Give peace a chance,” “All you need is love,” the environmental movement that promoted iconic books like *Silent Spring* and *The Population Bomb*, and Concert for Bangladesh seemed to bring enough of a culture-shift to take humanity towards a new era of ethical responsibility and a catalyst for change. But it did not sustain. Today we are in a worse fix, despite having Sustainable Development Goals and more than enough information at our fingertips on the Internet. Something else is needed; something more than simply knowing about the problems we have created.

In this edition, the authors have defined what that “something more” is, and addressed the issues practically and simply. Alain Desvigne presents the 18th SDG that is needed to bring about the other 17, Anil Kumar showcases Samunnati, an organization that is bringing a sustainable reality for farming communities across India, Bob Boisture highlights the need for inner change, Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee shares his experience of how to do that and connect with the song of unity, and we learn of the silent revolution reawakening the consciousness of people of all walks of life, including the most remote tribal villagers in all corners of the globe.

In addition, Daaji brings us more on Yogic Psychology, we celebrate the secrets and wisdom of trees, and explore a new brand of conscious heartfelt leadership.

It’s time for a survival shift on all levels. We hope this edition will inspire and help to catalyze that shift.

The editors

contributors



Kamlesh Patel

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



Bob Boisture

Bob has been president of the Fetzer Institute since 2013. Under his leadership, its current mission statement is “helping build the spiritual foundation for a loving world.” Prior to that, Bob spent his career working with nonprofit organizations on strategy development, advocacy, program development, governance, and legal compliance. While practicing law in Washington, DC, he represented a broad range of

foundations and public charities. He has helped to design and lead major national advocacy campaigns involving environmental and health issues and the right of nonprofit organizations to participate in the legislative process.



Glennie Kindred

Glennie is the author of twelve books on Earth wisdom, creating ceremony, native plants and trees and celebrating the Earth’s cycles. She is a much-loved expert on natural lore and Earth traditions and is renowned for her ability to enthuse people with joy, love and wonder for the Earth, to step beyond the everyday into the extraordinary, to tap into the Imaginal Realms within, and to create simple heart-felt ceremony. She is an Earth Restorer and Earth Protector.



Anil Kumar

Anil is the founder of Samunnati, which offers financial, co-financial

and non-financial solutions to marginal, small and medium holders, including farmers, agri enterprises, wholesalers and retailers. Anil has over 28 years of experience in Rural, Retail and Agri Banking, and over the last decade his work has focused on creating newer institutions across the country and operating in the financially excluded markets, with corresponding support structures for their capacity building. Anil has practiced Heartfulness Meditation since 1993. In particular, he works with several NGOs to bring Heartfulness programs to them and build their organizational capabilities.



Alain Desvigne

Alain is a co-founder and CEO of Amarenco Group, a leading European solar photovoltaic infrastructure investment company based in Ireland. His 20-year career has focused on international development and investment in water and low carbon energy infrastructure. Previously, he led Solon France, was a General Manager of Samsung Green Energy, and worked as a Business Unit Director of Engie water portfolio company. He has an MBA from INSEAD and a Master’s degree in Water & Environmental Sciences from ENGEES. He is President of the Heartfulness Institute France.



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it changes everything

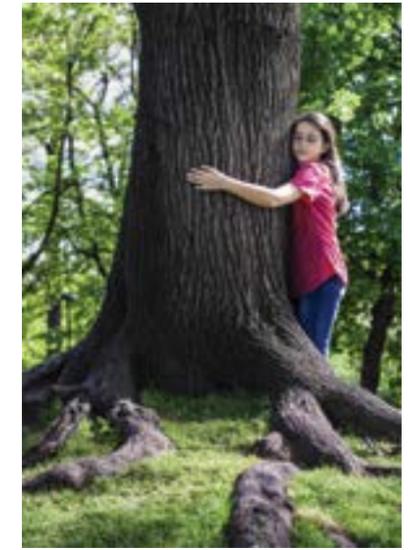
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focus

18th SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOAL

*The key to growth is
the introduction of
higher dimensions of
consciousness into our
awareness.*

LAO TZU

18th SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

ALAIN DESVIGNE asks why we have been so unsuccessful in implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that officially came into force in 2016, and proposes an 18th SDG that will allow us to fulfill all the others. This paper was first presented at the conference for “The Elevation of Consciousness Through Meditation for Global Harmony” in August 2019, at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, India.



The concept of sustainability was popularized in the Brundtland Report, published in 1987. This document, which was also referred to as *Our Common Future*, was elaborated for the United Nations in order to warn the world about the negative environmental consequences of economic development and globalization, with the aim of offering solutions to the problems arising from industrialization and population growth.

The concept of sustainability aims at achieving global well-being for present and future generations. In the report, the means to achieve that goal were provided and detailed around three essential pillars:

1. Environmental protection
2. Social development
3. Economic growth

It was on 1 January 2016, that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit – officially came into force: a call to action to protect the planet and guarantee the global well-being of people.

Although the concept of sustainability was acknowledged by the world community back in the 1980s, and despite the fact that global awareness of sustainable development has been growing over the years, actual tangible results still fall short of any of the set goals.

Why is it so? One possible explanation is our lack of a sense of urgency.

As a species, do we realize that the crisis we face is unprecedented and represents potentially the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced? Do we realize that the impact on each one of us, i.e. individuals, families, communities and ultimately nations, is absolutely key to shaping our collective destiny?

I doubt we do. And why is that so? It seems that our current level of collective consciousness does not allow for this sense of urgency to emerge. Now what if we are actually missing

one core SDG – the fundamental goal that will allow the 17 current goals to manifest?

What if we add “The Evolution of Consciousness” as our very first SDG? My proposal is very simple: it is to add this goal as the 18th SDG to the existing list of 17 SDGs.

Let us imagine for a moment that we reach a level of collective consciousness that is a tipping point in uniting us all in one conscious and sustainable force. The 17 SDGs would automatically become an absolute priority for individuals, organizations and governments. This would secure the stability of our future, environmentally, economically, and socially.

Therefore, identifying and implementing the means to accelerate the evolution of our collective consciousness should be the main task and absolute priority of our current generation.

How can we do this? The main challenge lies with the fact that the expansion of collective consciousness depends on the evolution of each and everyone’s individual consciousness. And in order to undertake the journey of individual consciousness, we need to understand its prerequisites: What drives or inhibits the expansion of individual consciousness?

The evolution of consciousness depends on the evolution of our mind – thinking, intellect and ego. Indeed, our thinking has far more effect on our environment than we could ever

Identifying and implementing the means to accelerate the evolution of our collective consciousness should be the main task and absolute priority of our current generation.

imagine. We are actually constantly polluting the environment with our unregulated thoughts, without actually being conscious of it, and this level of pollution is the major obstacle in the individual and therefore collective evolution of consciousness.

It is easier to grasp intuitively the impact of our thoughts on our inner environment to begin with. Take the simple instance of a moment when we are at rest and let our minds roam. After a while, that will take us to the shores of a memory, perhaps to a joyful moment when we were reunited with a loved one. That simple thought will change our internal environment and raise a new inner state within us, a state of joy. Conversely, that same wandering mind may take us to the shores of a very different memory, the terrible loss of a loved one, leaving us in a state of great sadness. Our inner state will then be a state of sorrow, pain and distress.

Our thoughts are creating, nurturing or destroying our inner environment.

There is an increasing number of scientific publications pointing to the average number of thoughts per day: it seems a human being has on average 10,000 to 70,000 thoughts per day with more than 95% of them being exactly the same as the day before and with more than 80% of them being negative!

These facts are staggering: they illustrate that our inner environment is polluted most of the time by negative and repetitive thoughts. So how can consciousness evolve in such an inner climate?

In contrast, what happens when the mind is still? Take the example of the way we feel when we are plunged into wilderness, into pristine nature unspoiled by human activities: a mountain forest just after it has snowed; deep-sea diving, free diving or scuba diving; the desert around a campfire under a night sky. Are our feelings any different? A deep feeling of completeness emerges within our heart.

When we are engrossed in such external environments, we live a moment of profound completeness. Everyone can share this experience. External nature has the capacity to

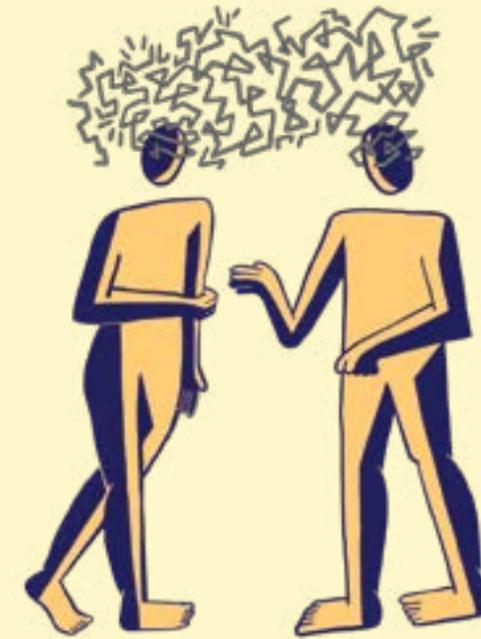
The evolution of consciousness depends on the evolution of our mind – thinking, intellect and ego. Indeed, our thinking has far more effect on our environment than we could ever imagine.

act upon our inner environment. At such times, our inner natural environment is perfectly in tune with the external nature. It is Union Time, a moment when we are one with nature.

External nature has real powers, including the power to silence our thoughts. Thoughts are suspended for a while. We are in a state of wonder, paying attention to what is happening in the moment. We are present.

Meditation, when focused on the heart, and especially when supported by yogic Transmission, has the same power. It uses one simple thought – that the source of light is present within our hearts – and silences all the other thoughts that disturb our natural internal environment. That single thought we sow then creates a state similar to the “pristine,” “preserved,” external nature, a nature we could also label as “perfect.”

And when the mind is perfectly still, we arrive at the state the yogic literature refers to as *Samadhi*. But this is not the end, because various states and dimensions of *Samadhi* start unfolding. There are indeed deeper and deeper levels of *Samadhi* on this journey to the Center of ourselves. While making the journey beyond the stillness of the mind, into the depth of our heart space, our inner environment, expansion of consciousness really takes off. When we reach this inner escape velocity, our consciousness is no longer



pulled by the gravity of thoughts – it is not bound by any thoughts or patterns. It is set free. This is what I personally call the real *moksha*, which is often referred to in the yogic literature.

When we master the technique of meditation, we then learn to master our thoughts during our daily activities. We pursue our daily activities while remaining in a meditative state with open eyes. This is also called *Sahaj Samadhi* or the *Turiyatit* state: we are fully absorbed within and fully aware at the same time, so that our consciousness continuously expands. This is the ultimate goal of the yogi. When we succeed in remaining in a constant meditative state, what happens next?

We master our thinking activities, and the stillness of our inner environment starts affecting our external environment as well. When our thoughts are not under control, if we are angry for instance, even if the anger is not expressed the entire external environment suffers. In contrast, when joy is prevailing in our hearts, or when we are profoundly calm, serene, bathing in a state of profound completeness, our external environment will draw the biggest benefits from it. We experience these effects every day at work and when we come back home in the evening: if we carry an inner environment of joy, our family members and our colleagues reciprocate.

With the world’s population projected to reach 10 billion people in the next decades, there will be on average more than 100 trillion thoughts affecting the global environment every single day! Given that 80% of these thoughts are negative and 95% of them are repetitive, the level of pollution we live in is really alarming! And with such a level of environmental pollution, how can our individual and collective consciousness evolve without a practice to silence the mind?

Imagine for a moment the impact of one person in a state of *Sahaj Samadhi* on the external environment. When other individuals benefit from the joy carried in the depth of the person’s heart, imagine the ripple effect of a being in that community who is constantly expanding their consciousness. Now imagine the ripple effect of a nation on the world when all the citizens of that particular country are in *Sahaj Samadhi*.



Imagine for a moment the impact of one person in a state of Sahaj Samadhi on the external environment. When other individuals benefit from the joy carried in the depth of the person's heart, imagine the ripple effect of a being in that community who is constantly expanding their consciousness. Now imagine the ripple effect of a nation on the world when all the citizens of that particular country are in Sahaj Samadhi.

Austrian Professor Peter Drucker says: "If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." It is relatively easy to assess the ecological footprint and carbon footprint of an individual, an organization or a nation. The indicators used measure the impact of our activities on nature. When these indicators are measured and mapped, we can then identify means and formulate strategies to reduce the footprint thanks to technological developments, energy efficiency improvements, better processes, product management etc.

In the industry in which I operate, it is necessary to specify the carbon footprint of a solar energy infrastructure project presented in a public tender in France. It is a way to ensure

the products and design of the proposed solar power plant will have a minimum ecological impact. And the score of the bid significantly depends on the carbon footprint of a proposed solution.

In the context of thinking activity, however, it is a real challenge! There is unfortunately no indicator that captures and maps what I call the "Thought Footprint." Such an indicator would reveal the impact of human thinking activities on a specific location, a community, and much more. If we could find a way to implement this indicator, we could aim at setting up the ultimate goal of "Zero Thought Footprint" at the individual and community level, as the landmark to reaching the proposed 18th Sustainable Development Goal within our current lifetime.

This is thus an invitation to the whole scientific community to take up the challenge of measuring our thoughts footprint analysis, so that we can pave the way to a sustainable world!

But here comes the good news: we don't need to wait for science to find ways to measure and track this indicator, because we can work towards achieving the proposed 18th SDG here and now, very easily, thanks to the practice of meditation with the support of yogic Transmission. Accessible to all, such a simple practice can help us dive into the depths of our hearts, beyond the stillness of our minds, and take on the journey of perpetual expansion of consciousness, so that one day, undoubtedly very soon, we shall together achieve the other 17 SDGs and thus achieve global well-being for the present and future generations.

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Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL

PART 2

Spirit Is the Foundation for Everything

BOB BOISTURE speaks with **JUDITH NELSON** at the Spirit of Humanity Forum, held in Reykjavik, Iceland on the 1 June 2019. In part 1, he shared with us the vision of the Fetzer Institute, and the need for personal transformation and love to bring about the changes necessary today to address the most pressing issues of humanity and our planet Earth. In part 2, he continues by focusing on how this translates to practical activities in our day-to-day lives.

We're working with one of the biggest civil society umbrella groups in the US that's had a longstanding commitment to support leadership development within civil society. With some encouragement and support from us, they've taken the bold stand that there's a new dimension to leadership development, and it is this inner work. We're working with them to firstly take that message into civil society, but then, necessarily, to begin to build the ecosystem of supports for that inner work. Hopefully that can support, at scale, a rapidly growing number of leaders at the community state, national level.

We're also bringing together faith leaders across the faith spectrum, which in our country also means across the political spectrum, and inviting them to reflect on

why is it that so often their communities have shown up in our public conversation as part of the polarizing dynamic, when surely their faith commitments compel all of them to be part of the reconciling solution. We're working with all communities to change in the context of our next presidential election, with the hope that faith leaders across politics will stand together and say the most urgent priority all of us are compelled to have is reconciliation.

I'm optimistic actually, because I think anybody who is awake and has children or grandchildren, realizes that we can't go on like this. We have to go to a deeper level and recover a shared moral vision of the society we're trying to create. None of us have all the answers. We have to listen to each other; we have to come together.



Whether we're thinking about global leaders at the highest level or each of us as leaders in our daily lives, I think committing to the discipline of daily spiritual practices is actually the most serious work we need to do. That will transform the way we are in all aspects of our life.

Q: Is that how you came to be involved with the Spirit of Humanity Forum? How did that relationship evolve?

Exactly, and that really goes back to the vision of a merging global movement. One of the most important things that needs to happen to accelerate that movement is that we need to find each other. Those of us who are committed to this vision need to find each other and support each other, because there's tremendous empowerment in knowing that we're not alone in this. Together we can support each other and make a difference.

Fetzer has been connected with the Forum since 2014, but this is my first time to be here. I'm taking away new relationships and new energy that are not going to be one-offs. I have committed to a number of people here that we're going to get together and figure out how we can support each other in our work. So that's one thing, the connection.

But now, let's go back to this "Shared Sacred Story" idea that we are creating here. We're creating the language to take this vision out into the world, and I think that's tremendously important. We're creating very open, spacious language, and our vision of this Shared Sacred Story is that it's not one story, it's a meta-narrative, if you will, that has plenty of room for each tradition to tell their version of the sacred story. Also, people who are on this journey but don't identify with one of the major traditions, are in that wonderful place where they can draw on the riches of all the traditions. You can feel it in the freedom of this gathering; we're finding a language that is spacious enough to bring us all to a common ground without any of us having to abandon the depth of our particular story. I think that's a wonderful, exciting thing to be part of.

Q: Humility is a quality that has come through at the Forum, in people like yourself and other speakers. What's your view of that in terms of how we approach all these big problems that are out there in the world?

I think humility is one of the virtues we most need, when you think about these angry fights we're having with each other. What's wonderful here, and I've sensed the same humility, is the discernment. Maybe it's a collective discernment, that each of us has come to whatever wisdom we've come to through our life's journey. In the grand scheme, it's a very particular life journey. The exciting thing we're called to is to open to the richness of everybody else's journey, to realize that we've got to create this new world together, and that none of us has all the answers. There's also humility in relation to the cosmos and the transcendent. We realize that there's something at work here that's so much larger than any of us. We have to stand in awe, reverence and humility in the face of this cosmic movement through love towards love. There's no room for ego, I think there's only room for gratitude.

Q: You spoke this morning about what world leaders could be doing to be different in their approach. Can you expand on that?



I think it has to start inside of each of us as individuals, and for all world leaders in creating the culture. Our fundamental challenge is we're stuck in a culture that encourages us to engage from a place of ego and separation and fear, and the real challenge for us individually and collectively is to shift to engaging each other and the world from a place of wholeness and all-centeredness and love. That's hard. It's not just waking up one morning and saying, "I'm going to be a more loving individual." It's in strengthening the muscle that really helps us when we face the tough choice of deciding to commit to the solution that's in the interests of the whole, rather than a particular interest.

All of the great spiritual traditions confront that core human challenge, and they've developed spiritual practices and communities that can support us as individuals, whatever path we're on. And for people who don't live within one of the traditions, but are on a spiritual path, they also can draw on those resources to support their own spiritual journey. Whether we're thinking about global leaders at the highest level or each of us as leaders in our daily lives, I think committing to the discipline of daily spiritual practices is actually the most serious work we need to do. That will transform the way we are in all aspects of our life.

Q: Are you happy to share a bit about what you do to interiorize and to keep yourself going?

Yes. I grew up and lived in the Christian tradition where, as a very young child, I was taught that God is love, we're all children of God, and we're here to love. That all landed with me at a young age, so since adolescence I've approached life as a meditation on what it means to love in this moment, in this situation. I have a practice of prayer, I do a lot of meditation walking reflection, writing reflection, but I always joke that my most important spiritual practice is marriage! I think it's in those intimate places where we're most challenged to overcome our own ego and our self, and really commit to the flourishing of another. We have a wonderful opportunity in intimate



relationships, whether it's marriage or our work setting, to approach it as a continuing practice of love. How can I bring as much love into this situation as I can? I have found that a very life-giving way of approaching things.

Q: You're describing something very practical and in touch with living in the real world, rather than perhaps an old-fashioned expectation that people have to go away somewhere else. Would you agree with that?

Yes, but I'm also big on going away. Time out in the natural world is tremendously renewing, but I think it's finding the way to link that inner cultivation with practical action. That is where we grow, because it's that back and forth between meeting the tough situations that all of us face in our daily life. It is hard to always meet people with the commitment of love, so going off and reflecting on how we did and what we can do

better is helpful. As a person of faith, connecting with that something greater empowers us all to love. I don't think it's either-or, I think it's both. Finding the way to weave that into our busy lives is a challenge, but even if you can steal five minutes to find a quiet place, I find that tremendously life-giving.

Q: That balance between spiritual and practical daily life.

Yes. We don't love people in the abstract. We love them in how we treat them. We nurture our ability to love by going deep within ourselves, because we connect with something much deeper that calls us to love.

Q: Young people are very much at the forefront of the world at the moment and world change. Do you have any advice or guidance that you want to share with them?

Any words of hope?

I am inspired by the global movement of young people that is really challenging us to care about the environment, to care about peace. I guess the one thing I'd say is that the most life-giving thing any of us can do is to commit to this greater call. From my own experience, having made that commitment, I've been blessed to find wonderful people to work with, experiencing the gratification of being part of positive change. It's a gift to ourselves to make that commitment.

Q: How do you share this vision with your grandchildren?

Given their young ages, just by loving them. Growing up being loved is the most precious thing that can happen to a child. Hopefully I've grown into some real wisdom in my later years that I didn't have when I was parenting the first time around. So one of the things I'm excited about is finding the right way to share with them. Another exciting opportunity for me personally is that my oldest son, who grew up in the Christian tradition, has married a wonderful Indian-American woman whose tradition is Hinduism. So, how can their two little boys grow up in the richness of both traditions?

To answer your question, I haven't figured it out yet, but that's one of the wonderful challenges of this stage in my life as a grandparent.

Q: The quality of love has always been a mystery to me, because people's interpretation and understanding of love can be very different. There can even be a rather selfish approach to love. So how do you define your version of love?

In the relationship between the lover and the beloved, in its deepest form, what is it that we want? I think there are two things. We want the deepest possible communion with that person. The Irish have a beautiful expression

We don't love people in the abstract. We love them in how we treat them. We nurture our ability to love by going deep within ourselves, because we connect with something much deeper that calls us to love.

"*Anam cara*," meaning soul friend. We want to be soul friends. The second thing is that we want the beloved to flourish.

I used an example at a personal level, but it's just as true at the societal level. In our country we don't have nearly enough social commitment to early childhood development. I can't personally be in loving communion with all the children in America, as with my grandchildren, but I can take that same sense of affection and ask, "How can I help create the social systems that can support the flourishing of all of those children?" It's not soft and it's not abstract. It's something we can operationalize.

I wrote a paper a number of years ago, largely for myself, with the title "Love as the Organizing Principle for Life." We can apply that working definition of a desire for the deepest communion and commitment to the flourishing of others across all the dimensions of life. That's my take on love.

A Silent Revolution

IN THE HEARTLAND OF INDIA

A photo essay in rural Telangana

Members of the Heartfulness Media Team traveled with DAAJI to rural Telangana on the Deccan Plateau, to document the meditation sessions he has been conducting with the villagers in Mahbubnagar District. Here **MONU SINGH** treats us to just a glimpse of the silent revolution that is sweeping the villages of India through meditation programs in the heartland of the country.

Clean air, green farms, simple hearts and village life ... it sounds so idyllic, but rural life in India can be very difficult. Here are some snippets from conversations with eight local villagers in Mahbubnagar District, about their lives before starting meditation and how Heartfulness has transformed them.

Elderly lady: "I had so many fears about finances, family matters. I used to fear seeing everybody, I was scared of everything."

Potter: "I was always scared that other people may harm me."

Farmer: "It has been a long time since I slept well."

Mother: "I would get very angry without realizing it."

Elderly gentleman: "I was losing my confidence."

Mother: "I don't know how to change."

During our conversations, they said that in the past they tended to solve their problems only with their minds, and using the mind they were stressed. They came to understand that they could try a different approach. They all decided to try meditation, with the hope that the mind would also follow the direction of the heart.



Potter: "When I would see the picture of Shiva, he was in a meditative pose. I would ask myself, 'What is God doing?'"

Elderly lady: "We used to do what everyone did, puja etc."

Husband of a married couple: "People used to say that meditation is only needed once you are old, so why do you want to do it now?"

Potter: "I never really understood what meditation was."

These villagers learnt about meditation, experimented and had experiences in meditation. After a while, they also shared the changes they found in themselves.

Second elderly gentleman: "When I make the suggestion that there is Divine Light in the heart, I feel like a bird escaping the cage and flying freely. I do not know what happens after that."





Potter: "After I started meditating, I lost most of my fears."
 Elderly lady: "Even when there is a problem, we don't feel its presence."
 Potter: "I started noticing everybody around me after I started meditating."
 Shopkeeper: "After starting meditation I felt many changes and began to develop myself."
 First elderly gentleman: "Now I can do a lot of things with courage."
 The mother: "Anger has decreased to a great extent."
 Farmer: "I have been sleeping peacefully ever since I started meditating."
 Husband: "We will be peaceful only with meditation. We will develop mentally, and the family will become peaceful too."

Elderly lady: "When we are meditating there is no need for fear."
 Potter: "You will not get the same happiness anywhere in the world that you get from meditation. Happiness is within us. The only



way to be happy is to meditate. It is inside us. That's all."
 Elderly lady: "Meditation need not be restricted only to our families or a few of us."
 Husband: "Everybody needs meditation."

*One lamp lights another lamp.
 One heart inspires another heart.
 From one house to another.
 From one village to another.*

Elderly lady: "Now it is the heart's turn."

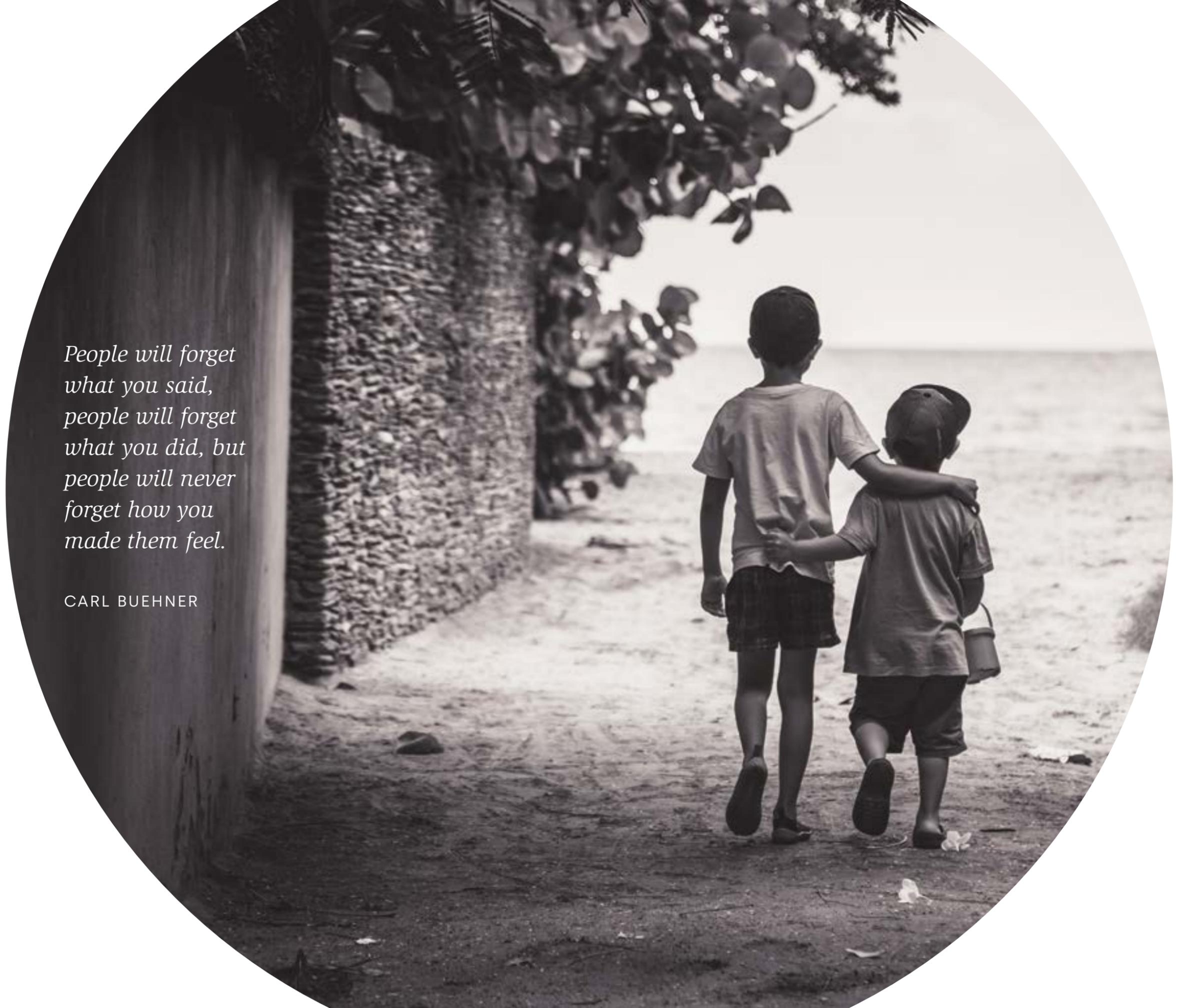
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPJFnqeVVG4>

Photos by the HEARTFULNESS MEDIA TEAM

Thought in action

*People will forget
what you said,
people will forget
what you did, but
people will never
forget how you
made them feel.*

CARL BUEHNER



LEADERSHIP FROM THE HEART

Part 1

Is there a way to move from a survival mindset to a growth mindset?

Do we understand how human beings evolve their competencies?

Are we clear on the role of Emotional Intelligence in leadership?

Does the heart have a role to play in sharpening our leadership skills?

In this series of articles, **PRAKASH SESHADRI** takes the reader on a journey from survival mode to a mature leadership model, by sharpening Emotional and Heartful Quotients, and using examples of the challenges that an individual and organization undergo.

Often leadership is thought to be a skill that is only relevant for those with fancy titles and the responsibility for managing large group of people. But leadership is required for all of us, regardless of the role we play at work, at home, in the society or any other place of interaction. Each individual has the ability to make a difference if they can “sharpen the saw” on their ability to empathize and interact with other fellow human beings. The art and science of leadership has evolved over the last decades, thanks to management gurus and their books and lectures etc. In the recent past we have seen increased involvement of Mindfulness in making leadership more empathetic. But very little has been written about the role of the heart in leadership, even though it plays a very important role in most critical decisions that organizations and individuals make on a daily basis.

Survival Instincts

Let us begin with a story of a lion and a deer. One morning, there was a hungry lion on the prowl. He had to run with all his might to catch the deer, else he would die of starvation. The same morning, there was a deer out crisscrossing the landscape of the forest. To avoid being in the jaws and paws of the lion, the deer was constantly changing her trajectory to survive.

What is the substance of the story? The entire thing boils down to survival. Whether you are a deer or a lion, you must run.

If you are a business leader still waiting for a successful moment, think twice: Have you been running the show like a lion or a deer? It is not the force with which you run that counts, it is the attitude that makes all the difference. Drawing a parallel between this animal story and what we do as humans, if we ask who the lion would be in our office environment, generally it would be the boss. Who are the deer? Usually the employees. And what are the parallel survival instincts in organizations? They are quarterly-based targets, performance pressures, productivity pressures, research etc. My personal observation going back to the 1980s and 90s is that even though the most successful corporate or a fortune 500 company had back-to-back quarters of great performance, a single poor performance in the subsequent quarter led to layoffs. This still prevails today.



The Pressure of Survival and Productivity

Wherever we go for corporate engagements, there's a standard tone: "I am highly stressed," "I have a lot of pressure," "My boss is at my throat," "I have huge targets to achieve." A cross section of employees who have been living through similar ordeals have decided to draw the curtains on their lucrative careers to settle for relatively quieter jobs. The reason? Cut-throat competition and stress, the silent killer responsible for many lives. No one is immortal, so why the struggle? The so-called corporate hierarchy is pushing each one to the brink with unrealistic expectations and goals created by every fabric of society, be it the boss, manager, family or yourself. In

my last 34 years of experience I have realized that this thread of hierarchy is inscrutable.

Let's face it, as long as we are at this place, we must run the human race. There are many questions that arise:

- How do we face it?
- What set of skills, knowledge and capabilities are needed to scale up in an organization structure?
- How to be more productive in order to be successful?
- How to achieve expertise?
- How to seize new opportunities?
- How to deliver value to customers?

The Competency Spectrum

The human survival instinct is reflected in the concept of core competencies, which is a very simple model to build core competencies (Broadwell, 1969; Hamel & Prahalad, 1990). You start with Unconscious Incompetency (UI) then move on to Conscious Incompetency (CI), then to Conscious Competency (CC), and finally to Unconscious Competency (UC).

Let me illustrate with an example. There is a family living in a big apartment complex with a swimming pool. When the parents are not aware, the toddler finds her way out of the house, sees other people moving on top of the water from one end to another, slides into the water but can't swim. Fortunately, the child is saved. After six months she starts speaking and yet has a fancy to do what the elders are doing. All in all, the child never knew that she has to learn to float on top of the water.

In the CK Prahalad model, this is called Unconscious Incompetency, when are are ignorant, when we are not even aware that we are not aware.

This is what happens to many employees when they are pushed down by severe work pressure, or when there is a new technology to be learnt, or a new framework to be developed. They are exposed to unconscious incompetency. They don't know that they don't know.

Now, when the toddler starts to speak, she expresses her interest in going to the pool. Her father tells her that she has to learn to swim. So now she has moved from UI to Conscious Incompetency. She knows that she has to learn to swim, but she doesn't yet know swimming. So Conscious Incompetency is when we are aware that we are not aware. When a task is assigned to an employee, they are aware they cannot do it and move to CI.

Now let's consider performance measures, such as goals. If my goal, by the age of 10, is to become the under 10

state swimming champion, then I have to learn the art of swimming. This is termed the "conscious building process of acquiring knowledge and putting that knowledge into practice." The knowledge that we get through books is not enough; we consciously and consistently put our acquired knowledge into practice so that it becomes our expertise and we implicitly achieve goals.

This process of developing competency in a conscious manner is what Professor Prahalad called Conscious Competency (CC).

For example, you are driving on an unfamiliar road and in an unfamiliar vehicle, which has a new driving system that you have never used. The moment you get into the car, you start checking out the driving system, its settings etc. You also load the maps to check the route in advance. Now you are in high alert mode as the vehicle and the roads are not familiar. This is akin to the process of competency building. When you need to build a competency, you need to be sure of the skills you need and also be conscious of building that competency. Hence the term Conscious Competency (CC).

If these stages are understood by training managers, HR managers and the leadership team, then they will be able to delegate and choose the skilled personnel to implement tasks who can achieve their goals.

Lastly, we move into the ultimate aspect, Unconscious Competency (UC), where everything happens automatically and unconsciously, like your breath – effortless and seamless – because of mastering knowledge and skills to perfection.

This is how Professor Prahalad introduces core competencies into any organization, bringing harmony between multiple resources and skills to make it unique.

To be continued

THE HEARTFUL LEADER

- part 9

Extraordinary outcomes through inspiration

LEVERAGING TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS
TO CREATE REPUTATIONS AND INFLUENCE

In previous articles **RAVI VENKATESAN** introduced the Heartful Leader framework and explored Reputation, Trust & Relationships and Outer Behavior. He then explored how we can manage our inner state to create specific behavior shifts, and how to consistently build trust and relationships by doing this. In this article he looks at leveraging the trust and relationships that we've built through consistent positive behavior shifts, which are a result of managing our inner state more effectively.



Reputation and influence are where “rubber meets the road.” They give us the ability to generate outcomes needed for the organizations we serve.

In part 2 of this series we discussed the components of reputation and also discussed strategies to manage these, and how to rebuild reputations when needed. Here are the key components:

REPUTATION

AWARENESS
(they know who you are)

VALUES
(they know what you stand for)

EXPERTISE
(they know what you can do)



Now let's look at a scenario where inside-out Heartful Leadership can create a different kind of reputation and, consequently, Influence.

Jonathan worked at a medical equipment manufacturer as the General Manager over the Diagnostic Equipment business division. He had a reputation within the organization for being a no-nonsense hard driving leader, who would achieve results at all costs: a strict disciplinarian with staunch loyalists, who got rid of everyone else from his management team. Most of the line managers and staff seldom heard from him, except when something went wrong, and he was known to fire people quickly if they did not get him expected results.

Jonathan was recently assigned to run a new software division for his company. Kumar, the VP of Engineering at the software division candidly expressed his concerns to Sheila, the company Chief HR Officer. He said, "Jonathan is a great leader and has achieved wonderful results for the company, but he will be a disaster running the software business. He has an old school leadership approach that is suitable for manufacturing but not for software. Our engineers work flexible hours, expect a lot of perks, are used to taking breaks and playing games at the workplace, and also stay late and meet deadlines when needed. It is a different culture, and unfortunately Jonathan's reputation precedes him."

After much consideration and discussions with the CEO, Sheila had Jonathan go through a crash course on Heartful Leadership, especially "inside-out management," to create a new reputation for himself as he approached his new role. Instead of straightaway bringing him on board as the GM of this business, he was brought on in an advisory capacity, and introduced to the team as someone who will be a consultant on improving profitability and market position. Kumar was taken into confidence to help rebuild Jonathan's reputation. He personally empowered Kumar to provide him very candid feedback if he saw him demonstrate controlling or dictatorial behavior in any meeting or interaction. Jonathan spent the next 12 weeks interacting with most of the managers, engineers and leaders of the software business without exercising any authority or control.

At times he caught himself feeling angry at how "democratic" and hence slow the decision-making process was. He was also frustrated with the work culture of remote work, which he felt led to a sense of entitlement. However, he managed his inner state effectively to keep coming back to neutral. He demonstrated extremely collaborative behavior, and quickly established a solid level of trust with most of the leaders. He also developed a great personal rapport with Kumar, who was actually surprised at how differently he felt about Jonathan after getting to know him as a person.

The combination of trust and relationships led to Jonathan's reputation at the software division being that of someone who is open-minded, always listens keenly, assumes positive intent, and builds consensus. When his new role as GM of this division was announced, the team was completely energized, and welcomed the decision. He had also built enough influence with the team by this time, which made his job easier, when making much needed changes.

This sort of rebuilding of a reputation is hard and takes consistent work over a period of time. It requires a disciplined approach of managing one's inner state and hence outer behavior. This builds trust and relationships that lead to the desired reputation, and consequently influence, without even the need for authority.

What sort of reputation would you like to develop over the next 60 to 90 days? Are you happy with your current reputation? Explore how a process of inside-out Heartful Leadership can result in a positive shift for you.



INNERVIEW

For our life one law is valid — the law of love, which brings the highest happiness to every individual as well as to all mankind.

LEO TOLSTOY



In 2014, ANIL KUMAR left a successful career in banking to become the founder and CEO of Samunnati. Inspired by ancient Indian principles, the Bhoodan Movement of Vinobe Bhave, the UN sustainable development goals and climate-smart agriculture, Samunnati has undertaken a new role in defining the way the smallholder farmers of India are able to do business and work together in their communities. Here Anil speaks with ELIZABETH DENLEY about how Samunnati started, how it has grown, and what are the next steps.

model that we call a value chain financial model, focused on agriculture. In this endeavor, all the stakeholders benefit by what we are building, so that the activity grows collectively. Hence, the ultimate beneficiary is the smallholder farmer.

Samunnati has two objectives: One is to make value chains in which we operate at a higher equilibrium, which means we increase the throughput, the velocity of transactions. Thereby, the increased demand in those value chains make markets work for smallholder farmers. If you apply the principle of economics, we operate on both the supply side and demand side dynamics of the value chain. Rather than focusing only on supply side dynamics, increasing production, we first work with increasing the demand, and bring that increased demand to the suppliers. In other words, we have taken the market lead approach to agriculture.

Q: You have been doing this now for about five years. How is it working?

We have had a great journey so far in these five years, and we are the only entity in India doing this at the moment. Being a pioneer, we have the first-mover advantage, but we also learn at our own cost. The best thing at Samunnati is that the team has the ability to adapt based on learnings. From where we started to where we are now has been a phenomenal journey, and, that too, in a space like agriculture which is considered to be very risky when it comes to funding.

Q: So tell us, how did you start?

Well, I would say it started. I have been part of the journey, part of this flowing stream like a leaf that floats along in the current.

I started my career in banking in a rural branch. Rural and agriculture are two sides of the same coin. It was a government bank in rural Andhra Pradesh, Kurnool district, in a backward village called Belagal.

Q: Anil, welcome. You have been on a long and very inspiring journey, starting off in the mainstream business world and ending up somewhere quite different. Can you tell us about Samunnati?

Samunnati is a Sanskrit word, made up of *sam* and *unnati*. *Sam* means “collective, together, all encompassing,” and *unnati* means “growth, elevation, prosperity,” so Samunnati stands for collective growth, collective prosperity, collective elevation. We have designed a

Samunnati

INNERVIEW

In 1996, I joined ICICI Bank as the 442nd employee. The bank was new, we all were enthusiastic, and in 2000 I became a branch manager and was involved in setting up three branches in various markets. In 2004 I took a sabbatical, and went to Manila in the Philippines to do my Masters, and that's when I was exposed to financial inclusion. One of the modules I took was "Inspirational Leadership," and that module touched me a lot. I realized that there was a reason I was exposed to rural and retail banking. Why not use my banking skills exactly as Professor Muhammad Yunus did to bring banking to people who don't have access to banking services, to do something meaningful?

I returned to India in 2005, to help set up a new strategy team at ICICI's head office in Bombay, the Microfinance Institution Development team, with a mandate to work with NGOs, co-operatives and microfinance institutions across India, so that they would grow and serve millions of people. During the two years the team was in place, ICICI partnered with around 240 microfinance institutions. In 2007, the bank sent me to Chennai to be the founding trustee of IFMR trust. IFMR had two major vehicles in financial inclusion, and one was small finance banking, now called Kshetriya Gramin Financial Services (KGFS), for which I was the group CEO. We set up six local financial institutions in the span of 6 years.

In 2014, I decided to go solo and focus on agriculture. While financial services are important, they are not sufficient in isolation. The households in remote rural areas are not operating in a vacuum but within an ecosystem, and that ecosystem is usually dependent on one or two major agri value chains. If the households are to be impacted positively, we have to go at least two levels above in the value chain and de-risk the economic activity they are engaged in.

Q: Can you please explain to us how that works, because it seems to me that it is the crux of why Samunnati has been so successful.



As an example, take Tanjore in Tamil Nadu. 80% of the people are dependent on rice paddy as a crop. If the paddy crop fails, the entire economy will not have cash, whereas when the paddy does very well the entire economy is booming.

None of this is in the control of a small farmer. It is something that needs to be evaluated at the activity level. It is that which led us to look at the activity, and at the components of the value chain – the producer, the aggregator, the processor, the wholesaler – to see what makes this activity succeed and what are the weak links. Can we plug the weak links so that we can de-risk the farmers?

99.99% of people are honest and creditworthy. The only time they are not able to repay their debts is when their crop fails. As a banker, if I want my money back, I have to play a role in de-risking their cash flow. The risk management philosophy of Samunnati is to de-risk our customers' risk. There lies our risk management.

We work with them. Unlike traditional lenders, we don't take collateral, we don't take financial statements, and we don't look at past history. We look at the transaction per se. If the transaction is bankable, if the transaction is genuine, we fund. We have people who have borrowed from us for the very first time, and others who have borrowed from us without any hard collateral, because collateral is only a deterrent, it cannot create cash flow.

These are fundamental changes we have brought. We underwrite by working with the borrowers like partners.

Q: Most farmers in India don't own land, so they don't have an asset as collateral for the bank.

There are two or three fundamental things that come in the way of agriculture attracting bank credit. One is the fragmented landholding, which is getting more fragmented by the day. The landholdings are really small, which means it is not economically viable to mechanize agriculture to reduce the cost of cultivation.

Second, 60% of Indian small farmers are tenant farmers, and there are no formal leases. They are oral leases. So the farmer cannot get a loan because he does not own the land.

So we work with farmer collectives. And these collectives, which are associations, societies, co-ops or farmer producer organizations, represent the collective interest. Our entire financing structure is around the activity called farming rather than the ownership of the farm.

Q: It's a massive shift.

Huge. I was actually ridiculed when I started Samunnati. People asked, "Will this entity focus only on agriculture and nothing else?" Because every investor had this Bollywood formula: you lend for agriculture, the farmer invests in the crop, the rain god fails, the crop fails, then the farmer takes extreme steps, and you lose money. But nobody realizes that agriculture is a sector. Crop loan is only one sliver of agriculture. Pre-harvest is a huge segment and post-harvest is also a huge segment. Once the crop is harvested, the rain god has no role to play. The risks associated with post-harvest are storage and price, both of which can be managed. There is no production uncertainty there.

So the first four or five months went into educating people that agriculture is a sector. The risk that everyone is afraid of is just one sliver, and we are not looking at taking that risk at this point in time. The real risk with agriculture is that bad loans are due to bad product design rather than anything to do with activity. Still today, 80% of the Indian population is directly or indirectly associated with agriculture. They are rational people. If it were so risky, why would such a huge population still do it?

Today we employ 315 people, and last year we disbursed close to 2,000 crores [280 million USD] in loans.

Q: In what parts of India are you working?

We are in 14 states, working with around 500 co-ops, and around 2 million farmers. We also work with around



700 agri enterprises on the demand side. We lend around 200 crores [28 million USD] a month now.

Q: In India there are many suicides amongst farmers. Have you seen any change because of what you are able to offer people? Do you see a more hopeful economy?

We see many changes in the economic activity in the villages where we operate. More importantly, we see changes at a psychological level. Incidentally, while it was not designed this way, 70% of our clients are women, and we see the huge psychological confidence that they bring to economic activities. And the confidence

What are the values behind this?

They are integral to the business. It is not that I have to be conscious of being ethical. It is simply the way we do business. Samunnati exists to make the market work for smallholder farmers.

We have embarked on the AMLA approach. Amla is the Indian gooseberry, which is a fruit that has all six tastes, including bitter and tart. AMLA stands for Aggregation, Market Linkage and Advisory Services. Finance is an integral part of all three. We are a non-bank finance company, so the primary role that we play is finance, but finance is only a means for us, not an end. Unless we are adding value to the client, we don't need to exist.

We have taken the approach of being an internal player in the value chain. We have clients who have not borrowed from us, but take market linkage from us. The starting point could be advisory services, for example, "You have pink bollworm in your cotton crop. You may have to spray this product to protect your crop." That is one dimension. Another is, "Can you as a group of farmers come together for your collective benefit?" which is what aggregation is all about.

So finance is only a means; but an important means. Without finance, a lot of these initiatives don't work. Time and again we keep reminding ourselves why we exist. What is the purpose of our organization? What is the way we do business? And we have worked very closely with the Adizes Institute. Every senior member of Samunnati has gone through Adizes training. Every Monday morning we have a half-hour meeting where we read the purpose statement of why we exist. The beacon light is: Do we love the objective for which we exist?

Personally, I feel that Samunnati as an economic initiative is part of a universal plan. I just play a role in it. People are coming together as team members, investors are coming together to support the initiative, we are stitching our partnerships with USAID, the Gates Foundation, and Rabobank. These are entities that want to do meaningful

comes because they are doing what they are good at, whether it is adding one more cow to their backyard or starting vegetable cultivation. And some of the women are processing their produce. One essential ingredient that was missing, that we bring, is working capital.

If they are given the ability not to sell when they don't need to sell, they can do wonders.

Q: This type of farming model has a very strong ethical base. Because you are working with co-ops, you are bringing farmers together, so there is strength and the ability to work with collective distribution, storage etc.



work. To give a philosophical twist, it's a plan. It is happening.

Q: Looking at projecting this into the future, living in a world of uncertainty because of climate change and a lot of difficulties, how do you see Samunnati playing a role in bringing about sustainable agriculture?

One of the biggest realizations for me in the last 11 to 12 years is that farmers are very rational and responsible people. They know the perils of irresponsible use of pesticides and fertilizers; they know what it takes to take care of their land; they know how farming needs to be done responsibly. But what comes in the way is the here and now requirements. If you apply Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are basic and safety needs. We can't expect farmers to sacrifice putting a square meal on the table for their children. They cannot afford to compromise on their production.

Once you understand their needs, and bring in tools so that their needs are not compromised, farmers are open to taking up responsible agricultural practices like organic agriculture, integrated pest management, soil conservation

practices, and water conservation. Otherwise they find it difficult because they are so vulnerable economically. One bad crop could push them back to poverty.

So we first have to understand empathetically that it is their need that is pushing them to these farming practices. Without value judgement or prejudice, we address that need and then help them to move over. We have seen many collectives looking at processing, moving from inorganic to organic, moving from one commercial crop to a bunch of crops, and moving to integrated farming.

We are working with multilateral agencies, for example, USAID on agroforestry. In this program, USAID guarantees our loans to those farmer collectives that maintain the green cover and plant more trees, in case they default.

We are also working on integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, as 9 out of the 17 SDGs fall under climate-smart agriculture. Agriculture is indeed is one of the biggest contributors to carbon emissions, so we can play an important role in reducing the carbon footprint.

Q: Because you are de-risking.

Correct. De-risking the activity without putting the actors at risk, because they have the basic needs to survive.

Q: So does this have a ripple effect in rural communities, say in children's education? You already mentioned the empowerment of women. What is the effect in the 500 co-ops where you are working?

First and foremost, we see children going to school rather than working on the farms. We see youth remaining in their villages rather than leaving for work. We see more than one crop being cultivated.

At Samunnati, we have three impact metrics:

Can the cost of cultivation come down or not?

Can we increase productivity? There are three sub-dimensions: value per unit, number of units per asset, more assets under use.

What is the member engagement in our farmer collectives? Once the collective becomes stronger, we look at the next step – the community connect initiative. Our community

connect initiative teams run animal welfare camps, awareness programs on conserving water bodies, the importance of rainwater harvesting, the importance of primary health etc. In fact we have a center of excellence, a 40-acre experimental farm, where we have all the processes from cows to the processing unit for milk. We also have organic fields and variety trials.

This facility can train 100 students at a time, including entrepreneurial programs for youth. It has been running for the last three years and is associated with Acharya Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan Movement. We work with around 50,000 farmer families and we run entrepreneurial programs for them. The idea is: Rather than an external entity going into the village, can we create an entrepreneur from the village, who can work for the collective welfare of the farmers in a Samunnati way?

Q: Anil, where do you see this headed in 5 years time?

Well, three or four dimensions aspirationally:

One, Samunnati becomes big and demonstrates to the larger finance world that agriculture as an activity, and



the farmer as an actor, are creditworthy entities. It is a credible proposition to lend and many mainstream entities start looking at making their capital available to farming as an activity.

If we can inspire ten or twenty more Samunnatis to come to the Indian market that would be fantastic, because the unmet demand is so huge. Whatever we do, even if it is 10 or 20 billion dollars, is still a rounding error.

Three, how do we leverage technology to build multiple products that can change the way a farmer does farming?

There is a lot already happening. We have satellite imagery giving us real-time pictures of what is happening on the farm, and the ability to reach out to the farmer to take precautionary steps based on what is happening elsewhere with the same crop. We can work to change the behavior of what to grow, when to grow, and how to grow, depending on demand and supply dynamics.

Post-harvest is a huge universe again. Can we invite the commodity exchanges to play a role in hedging the price risk for farmers? Can we encourage larger players? Can we procure from the farm gate with traceability? And the nirvana moment will be when you and I eat, knowing

what we are getting, knowing which person toiled to grow the food, and being grateful for it. That is when the entire continuum is complete. There are many entities playing a role in making this happen.

Also, we have been cashless and paperless from day 1. It lends us the nonlinearity to grow fast, to inspire many more Samunnatis to come.

Q: Finally, if somebody wants to contribute, even if they are sitting in an apartment in a city, or in another part of the world, what can they do?

A lot. Share what they know of agriculture practices elsewhere; help with their understanding of how mainstream financial markets work; do an internship with us. Many universities are looking to send their students. We work with the agri universities, we have interns, and we do campus recruitment. We also run fellowship programs, which we want to expand.

Making sure that agriculture is as mainstream as possible is one of our core purposes. It is not just good to do it, it is a necessity. Anyone who is interested in contributing is welcome. Thank you very much.

Photos courtesy of SAMUNNATI

THE
Brighter Minds Enriching Young Minds
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we invite you to come experience
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FINE-TUNED SENSE OF OBSERVATION & INTUITION



it changes
everything

*Real change will only happen when we
fall in love with our planet.*

THICH NHAT HANH



Inner Alchemy

LAURIE BUCHANAN

A very basic explanation of alchemy is that it transforms something common into something special. Derived from the Arabic word *al-kimia*, alchemy can be either a practice or a way of life:

As a practice, the focus of this ancient art is an attempt to change base metals into gold, making the alchemist outwardly rich, leading to financial gain.

As a way of life, the focus is on living with intention, achieving wisdom, and doing the work it takes to become a little more enlightened every day, making the alchemist inwardly rich, leading to inner wealth.

Alchemy as a way of life often includes clearing our clutter – internal and external – and letting go of things that no longer serve us well. This creates balance and space, a place that nurtures contentment, which I believe is true success.

Inner alchemy, or personal transformation, occurs at different times and speeds for everyone:

- Early, quick, and dynamic
- Late, slow, and measured
- Somewhere in-between

One of the things that can have the greatest impact on our internal landscape is sorrow. It doesn't discriminate; it is non-biased. Transcending all differences, it affects people of every age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, education, socioeconomic status, spiritual tradition, culture, and political stance. It's part of the human experience, so no one is immune.

Sorrow is born from loss. Its razor-sharp blade cuts through the heart – the seat of our emotions – whether we've lost our job, our home, a limb, an opportunity, or a loved one.

Some of the world's most beautiful artwork and literature come from deep places of pain and suffering. But prolonged or unrelenting sorrow, despair and hopelessness, can destroy.

Happiness is a feeling. It fluctuates based on external circumstances. It's temporary, fleeting at best. For instance, we check the mailbox and find a notice from the tax office informing us that we owe a considerable sum in back taxes. For most people, their happiness level would plunge. On the flip side, we check the mailbox and find an unexpected refund check and our happiness level soars.

Happiness can also be a result of manufactured merriment such as going to the circus, watching a funny movie, or attending a party.

Different than happiness, when our lens through which we view life, our perspective, is governed from the inside out, the external pressures fall away and we experience joy.

Joy is a state of being. It is inexplicable peace even in the midst of turmoil. Joy is internal, and when nurtured and encouraged, it becomes resident, abiding, regardless of external circumstances.

There are people who suffer tremendous personal devastation yet retain a state of joy, inexplicable peace. Viktor Frankl is a perfect example. As a Viennese Jew, he was interned by the Germans for more than three years, but being confined by the narrow boundaries of a concentration camp didn't rob him of joy. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, he wrote, "In some way, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice."

Joy is our inner response to meaning, to hope. Cultivating and maintaining our inner garden eases the struggle that

exists along life's path, and with the passage of time, sorrow can amazingly transform into colorful blooms of love, forgiveness, humor, contentment, gratitude, and a renewed sense of purpose.

Life is an expression of the choices we make, with each choice serving to transform us – subtle or obvious – body, mind, and spirit.

What area of your life could use a touch of alchemy?

If our hearts are ready for anything, we can open to our inevitable losses, and to the depths of our sorrow. We can grieve our lost loves, our lost youth, our lost health, our lost capacities. This is part of our humanness, part of the expression of our love for life.

—Tara Brach

Illustrations by JASMEE RATHOD

Silence and Compassion



LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE explores the beauty of silence and the need of the hour for love and compassion. He invites us to listen to the song of unity, and embrace a world waiting to be born.

1. How can we reconnect with our deeper selves, our essential nature?

There are many ways to reconnect with our essential nature. Any spiritual practice, prayer or meditation that takes us beneath the surface of our daily life, beneath the clutter of the mind and the demands of the outer world, can be a place of reconnection, a place where we can rest inwardly and be nourished by the deeper roots of our being. And if we need an added ingredient to help us in this work, silence is most valuable, especially in today's world where noise surrounds us more and more. To learn to be present in an inner and outer silence is a doorway to what is real within ourselves and in the world around us.

And as our world appears to spin more and more out of balance – temperatures and sea levels rising, species depleted – there is a pressing need to return to a this deep place, a place of belonging where real healing and transformation can take place. Returning to our essential self, we may find a balance resurfacing from deep within, a balance that reconnects and restores us, and also allows us to contribute in unseen ways.

One of Carl Jung's favorite stories was The Rainmaker, in which a world out of balance, in a time of drought and suffering, was healed not through activity but through a rainmaker retiring to a hut in silence. Three days later the rain came and the drought was over. When he was asked how he brought the rain, he replied, "Oh, I can explain that. I come from another country where things are in order. Here they are out of order, they are not as they should be by the ordinance of heaven. Therefore the whole country is not in Tao, and I am also not in the natural order of things because I am in a disordered country.

"So I had to wait three days until I was back in Tao, and then naturally the rain came."

If we are to participate creatively in these toxic times, to bring rain to a land where the inner and outer wells have run dry, first we need to be present "in another country where things are in order." And this "other country" is not so far away. It can be found in the Earth beneath our feet, and in the space between the in-breath and the out-breath where the soul is present. But first we need to reconnect, to return to this place of balance. And the simplest way is through stillness and silence.

Silence draws us inward, away from the clutter and distractions of our outer life, to the deeper roots of our being. Here our soul nourishes us, here we can be replenished, and here we can help replenish our world. The Earth is dying from the ravages of our culture, of our materialistic nightmare that pollutes the air we breathe, the water we drink, and starves our soul from its natural connection to the sacred. In the silence we can drink deeply

of the waters of life that are still pure, we can commune with the primal forces of nature, we can return to what is sacred and essential to our life and to the life of the Earth.

Here, in this "other country," the air is not toxic, and the miasma of today's world in this post-truth era is not blurring our vision. The laughter of children rings true. Stillness is here, and the seasons are in balance. Every in-breath and out-breath is sacred. The breath, the soul, the Earth and its seasons, are linked together, nourished by each other. It is a time to heal.

Sitting here at my window, I look out onto the wetlands. I watch the tides rise and fall, the sun red in the morning, sometimes breaking through the mist. Traffic may pass on the road just beneath me, the early morning milk truck, but the silence remains. As I get older I am less and less drawn to activity, more of me remains in stillness, sensing the Earth, watching the birds at my birdfeeder – I love the woodpecker with his bright red crest. Now it is springtime, apple and cherry blossoms already carpeting the ground.



2. How can we create or reimagine a more compassionate world from within the current structures?

There is a world waiting to be born, a world founded upon cooperation rather than competition, a world that honors all life in its diversity and wonder. A compassionate world in which we return to what is simple and essential and remember the "Original Instructions" given to our ancestors and held by Indigenous Wisdom Keepers about "how to get long with all of creation." And this world, which seems so different to the broken structures of today's divisive and exploitative culture, is not so far away. It is a world seen through the eyes, the consciousness of oneness, rather than the consciousness of separation. It is a simple shift from "me" to "we."

Oneness holds the essential vision that we are one living, interconnected ecosystem – a living Earth that supports and nourishes all of its inhabitants. If we acknowledge and honor this simple reality, we can begin to participate in the vital work of healing our fractured and ravaged world and embrace a living unity that is our human heritage. This is the opportunity that is being offered to us, even as its dark twin is constellating the dynamics of nationalism, tribalism, isolationism, and all the other regressive forces that try to divide us.

Oneness is not a metaphysical idea but something essential and ordinary. It is in every breath, in the wing-beat of every butterfly, in every piece of garbage left on city streets. This oneness is life – life no longer experienced solely through the fragmented vision of the ego, through the distortions of our culture, but known within the heart, felt in the soul. This oneness is the heartbeat of life. It is for each of us to live and celebrate this oneness, to participate in its beauty and wonder. And through our awareness, and actions born of this awareness, we can help to reconnect our world with its original nature.

There are many ways to experience and participate in this living oneness. But if I have learned anything after half a century of spiritual practice, it is the power of love. Love comes in so many forms and expressions. There are the simple acts of loving kindness towards friends and family, members of our community, or strangers. Love reaches across boundaries, expressing what is most essential and human: what unites rather than divides. "Small things with great love," are more potent and powerful than we realize, because they reconnect us with the spiritual roots of life and its transformative and healing energies. Because life is an expression of love, each act of love is a participation and gift to the whole.

Cooking a meal with love and care, listening to another's troubles with an open heart, touching your lover's body with tenderness, or going deep in prayer until you merge in love's infinite ocean – in all these acts, we live the love

that unites us. And through our loving, we nourish life in unseen ways.

And at this time of ecological crisis, as we are tearing apart the fragile web of life, there is a vital need for us to love the Earth, to bring her into our hearts and prayers. We have a spiritual as well as a physical responsibility for "our common home," and she is calling out to us, crying for our help and healing."

We need to reawaken to the power of love in the world. It is our love for the Earth that will heal what we have desecrated, that will guide us through this wasteland and help us to bring light back into our darkening world. Love links us all together in the most mysterious ways, and love can guide our hearts and hands. The central note of love is oneness. Love speaks the language of oneness, of unity rather than separation.

In the words of Thich Nhat Hanh: "Real change will only happen when we fall in love with our planet. Only love can show us how to live in harmony with nature and with each other and save us from the devastating effects of environmental destruction and climate change."

Love can open us to our deep participation in the life of the whole; it can teach us once again how to listen to life, feel life's heartbeat, sense its soul. It can open us to the sacred within all of creation and can reconnect us with our primal knowing that the Divine is present in everything – in every breath, every stone, every animate and inanimate thing. In the oneness of love, everything is included, and everything is sacred.

And from there, we can begin to respond. We cannot return to the sim
let love gi
of life. We

an individual level affects the global environment, both outer and inner. We can learn how to live in a more sustainable way, according to a deeper understanding of sustainability that rests on an acknowledgment of the sacred within creation. We can live more simply, saying no to unnecessary material things in our outer lives. We can also work inwardly to heal the spiritual imbalance in the world. Our individual conscious awareness of the sacred within creation reconnects the split between spirit and matter within our own soul. Also, because we are so much more a part of the spiritual body of the Earth than we realize, within the soul of the world.



Love is the most powerful force in the universe. Love draws us back to love, love uncovers love, love makes us whole, and love takes us Home. In the depths of the soul we are loved by God. This is the deepest secret of being human, the bond of love that is at the core of our being and belongs to all that exists. And the more we live this love, the more we give ourselves to this mystery that is both human and divine, the more fully we participate in life as it really is, in its wonder and moment-by-moment revelation.

Love and care – care for each other, care for the Earth – are the simplest and most valuable human qualities. And love belongs to oneness. We know this in our human relationships, how love draws us closer, and in its most intimate moments we can experience physical union with another. It can also awaken us to the awareness that we are one human family, even as our rulers become more authoritarian, our politics more divisive. And on the deepest level, love can reconnect us with our essential unity with all of life, with the Earth herself.

The Earth is a living oneness born from love, being remade by love each instant. And we can be part of its spiritual transformation, its awakening. The Earth is waiting and needing our participation. It has been wounded by our greed and exploitation, and by our forgetfulness of its sacred nature. It needs us to remember and reconnect, to live the oneness that is our true nature. And love is the simplest key to this oneness, this remembrance. Love is the most ordinary, simplest, and most direct way to uncover what is real – the innermost secrets of life. It is at the root of all that exists, as well as in every bud breaking open at springtime, every fruit ripening in fall.

Love will remind us that we are a part of life, and that we belong to each other and to this living, suffering planet. Love will reconnect us to the sacred ways known to our ancestors, as well as awaken us to new ways to be with each other and the Earth. We just need to say, “Yes,” to this mystery within our own hearts, to open to the link of love that unites us all, that is woven into the web of life. And then we will uncover the love affair that is life itself and hear the song of unity as it comes alive in our hearts and the heart of the world.



Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee Ph.D. is a Sufi teacher and author. In recent years the focus of his writing and teaching has been on spiritual responsibility in our present time of global crisis, and an awakening global consciousness of oneness. More recently he has written about the feminine, and the emerging subject of Spiritual Ecology (www.workingwithoneness.org). He has been interviewed by Oprah Winfrey on Super Soul Sunday, and featured on the Global Spirit series shown on PBS. His most recent book is *Including the Earth in Our Prayers*.



be inspired

*The unexamined
life is not
worth living.*

SOCRATES

YOGIC PSYCHOLOGY

PART 10

VIKSHEPAS: ALABDHA-BHUMIKATVA AND ANAVASTHITATVANI FOMO AND DIGITAL DISTRACTION

DAAJI continues his series on the fundamental principles of psychology, with its foundation in the ancient wisdom of Yoga, as compiled in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. He starts from the pure consciousness that is the basis of a healthy human mind, and then proceeds to explain how the various mental imbalances arise. Furthermore, he gives us solutions to regain mental well-being through yogic practices. In this article he continues to explore the *vikshepas*, the obstacles to mental well-being and balance that underpin so many of the maladies of modern humanity. In this article, Daaji focuses on *alabdha-bhumikatva* and *anavasthitatvani*, as well as two modern maladies that didn't exist when Patanjali was alive – FOMO and digital distraction.

VIKSHEPAS

Patanjali described the obstacles as:

*1.30: Vyadhi styana samsaya pramada-alasya-avirati
bhrantidarsana-alabdha-bhumikatva-
anavasthitatvani citta-vikshepah te antarayah*

Vyadhi – Disease

Styana – Languor, mental dullness, apathy

Samsaya – Dilemma, indecision

Pramada – Carelessness, haste, indifference

Alasya – Laziness, sloth

Avirati – Absence of non-attachment, sensuality

Bhrantidarsana – False perception, blindness

*Alabdha-bhumikatva – Not attaining the destination
or stage, lack of determination, and*

*Anavasthitatvani – Instability,
not retaining the condition*

*These are the obstacles on the path that distract
the mind.*

We can add:

*Fear of missing out (FOMO), and
Digital distraction.*

In this article we will focus on the last four *vikshepas*.

ALABDHA-BHUMIKATVA & ANAVASTHITATVANI

Alabdha-bhumikatva is the obstacle where we are not able to attain the next stage or level in the spiritual journey, and *anavasthitatvani* is the failure to retain a stage once it has been given. There can be many reasons for these two obstacles. They may occur because of lack of interest, lack of determination, a feeling of impotency, or because we are not able to refine our character in order to maintain the spiritual level. Especially at the higher spiritual stages, such a profound level of humility, nobility of character and dependency on a capable Master are required, as acceptance and self-transcendence are vital for progress. We need constant help from the Master to refine ourselves in order to become eligible to enter and retain these stages.

How do we work to overcome these two obstacles? The first thing is to understand that our potency comes through our connection with the Source, with God, through the heart. Individually we are impotent islands, whereas once we are connected with the Source, our full potential is realized; we are connected to the source of life itself. The easiest way to stay connected with the Source is to associate with a Master of the highest caliber, who can transmit the essence of *pranahuti* from the Source itself. The spiritual journey is only a way to expose more and more of that connection by uncovering the layers that keep us separate.

VRITTIS

Instinctive thought patterns or tendencies

Pramana – means of right or valid knowledge
Viparyaya – false or wrong knowledge
Vikalpa – fantasy, imagination
Nidra – sleep
Smriti – memory

KLESHAS

Colorings or impurities in the thought patterns

Avidya – ignorance, veiling
Asmita – mine-ness, egotism
Raga – attachment, addiction
Dvesha – aversion, repulsion
Abhinivesha – clinging to life, fear of death

VIKSHEPAS

Obstacles and distractions

Vyadhi – disease, illness
Styana – mental laziness, dullness
Samsaya – dilemma, 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
Anavasthitatvani – inability to maintain the stage, instability

VIGHNAS

Disturbances resulting from the obstacles

Duhkha – pain, mental and physical
Daurmanasya – despair, depression
Angam-Ejayatva – trembling of the body, nervousness
Svasa – inhalation (irregular)
Prasvasa – exhalation (irregular)

Prayer and meditation are both ways we evoke and maintain that connection.

The second thing is to understand that spiritual progress is not linear; it proceeds with a natural rise and fall. At each stage of the journey, i.e. at each chakra, point or knot, there is a sequence of experiences, which is beautifully explained by Ram Chandra in his books, *Towards Infinity* and *Voice Real*:

1. “On entering into every successive knot, there is a slight feeling of heaviness in the mind, on account of which people often discontinue the practice. But if we take into consideration that every attack of illness is followed by the restoration of good health, we will be better encouraged to attempt a crossing of the knots.”
2. After this heaviness comes “a peculiar state, awakening within the mind a consciousness of the divine force, pervading all over.”
3. Next, as we become more attuned to the new stage, we experience “a divine state prevailing everywhere, and everything absorbed in its remembrance.”
4. But this does not last. As we merge more and more with the new stage, there is “neither feeling of the divine force nor that of remembrance, but only a feeling of negation.”
5. Eventually, “everything is gone. No impression upon the heart, not even that of existence.”

So when we progress to enter a new chakra or knot, there will always be a feeling of discomfort and restlessness, just as when we move location in our worldly life there is change and upheaval. Only once we settle into the new environment does our consciousness open up to a higher level of awareness, and then we start to experience Divinity from that higher level. This is a joyful and blissful experience, and we feel that we have moved forward. If we continue to progress, we become so merged in that level that it becomes a part of us, and then we lose awareness of its

very existence. It is now in our subconscious mind, and there is only a sense of negation or nothingness remaining. Eventually even that is gone.

But there is a trap in this cycle. Generally we like the blissful “high” periods, and assume they mean progress, while we associate the stages of restlessness and nothingness in this sequence with a lack of progress, or even a regression. We become disheartened without understanding the bigger picture.

Attachment to bliss can be a big hindrance for us: When we feel so blissful, we want to live in that state forever, and the idea of moving away from bliss often creates resistance. There is the possibility of infinite expansion at each chakra, but it is horizontal expansion. It is better to move even one inch into a higher dimension than expand infinitely at a lower level. That’s why it requires an effort even to move one inch and most of us fail to understand the significance of that little effort in moving further.

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Meditation allows us to introspect and evaluate ourselves. Cleaning removes the root samskaras that result in behavioral habits and tendencies. Prayer gives us a way to connect with the Divine and submit our weaknesses and faults so that we can change. Every day we can recalibrate and follow a path of continuous improvement. It is a simple solution to one of the most difficult problems facing human beings since time immemorial.

Swami Vivekananda describes it thus: “Some days or weeks when you are practicing the mind will be calm and easily concentrated, and you will find yourself progressing fast. All of a sudden the progress will stop one day, and you will find yourself, as it were, stranded. Persevere. All progress proceeds by rise and fall.”

So courage and faith are required to avoid losing hope and focus in this process. If we keep starting and stopping, nothing is possible, because our neural pathways need the automatism of regular practice to become so well established that our new level of consciousness becomes habitual, automatic, and subconscious. Why is there such a need? It is so that our conscious mind is freed up to learn new things at a conscious level. Unless and until this habitual nature is established, any activity remains conscious and incomplete. Once it becomes subconscious, we have fully imbibed and become one with any spiritual stage. That is why it helps so much to have one goal, and to keep reminding ourselves that we need to reach that goal even if the journey is difficult at times.

But perhaps the biggest reason we are victims of *alabdha-bhumikatva* and *anavasthitatvani* is our inability to change our character and behavior. As a result, we don't retain a spiritual level even if a capable Master takes us there. Often we are not even cognizant of the character traits that pull

us backwards. And even when we are, we may think that we have changed, but then a stressful situation takes us back into old habits again. This is such a common problem that nature, in her generosity, has given us each other as mirrors. We see this in everyday life: anything that annoys us in another person is what we need to work upon in ourselves. Without a noble character, spiritual progress is of no use. Swami Vivekananda has described it beautifully: “Stages do nothing at the time of death. Moderation is required and that is lacking everywhere. Spirituality alone can do nothing. It must go side by side with morality.”

This aspect of psychology is why *Yama* and *Niyama* are the first two steps in Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga. *Yama* is the removal of all unwanted qualities, and *Niyama* is the integration of noble qualities in the refinement of our lifestyle. And in Heartfulness we have so much help with both these steps. Meditation allows us to introspect and evaluate ourselves. Cleaning removes the root *samskaras* that result in behavioral habits and tendencies. Prayer gives us a way to connect with the Divine and submit our weaknesses and faults so that we can change. Every day we can recalibrate and follow a path of continuous improvement. It is a simple solution to one of the most difficult problems facing human beings since time immemorial.



FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) & DIGITAL DISTRACTION

These last two *vikshepas* have been added to Patanjali's list, as they have only surfaced as serious obstacles to progress in the modern era.

FOMO is described by researchers as “the uneasy and sometimes all-consuming feeling that you're missing out, that your peers are doing, knowing about, or in possession of more or something better than you.” It is exacerbated

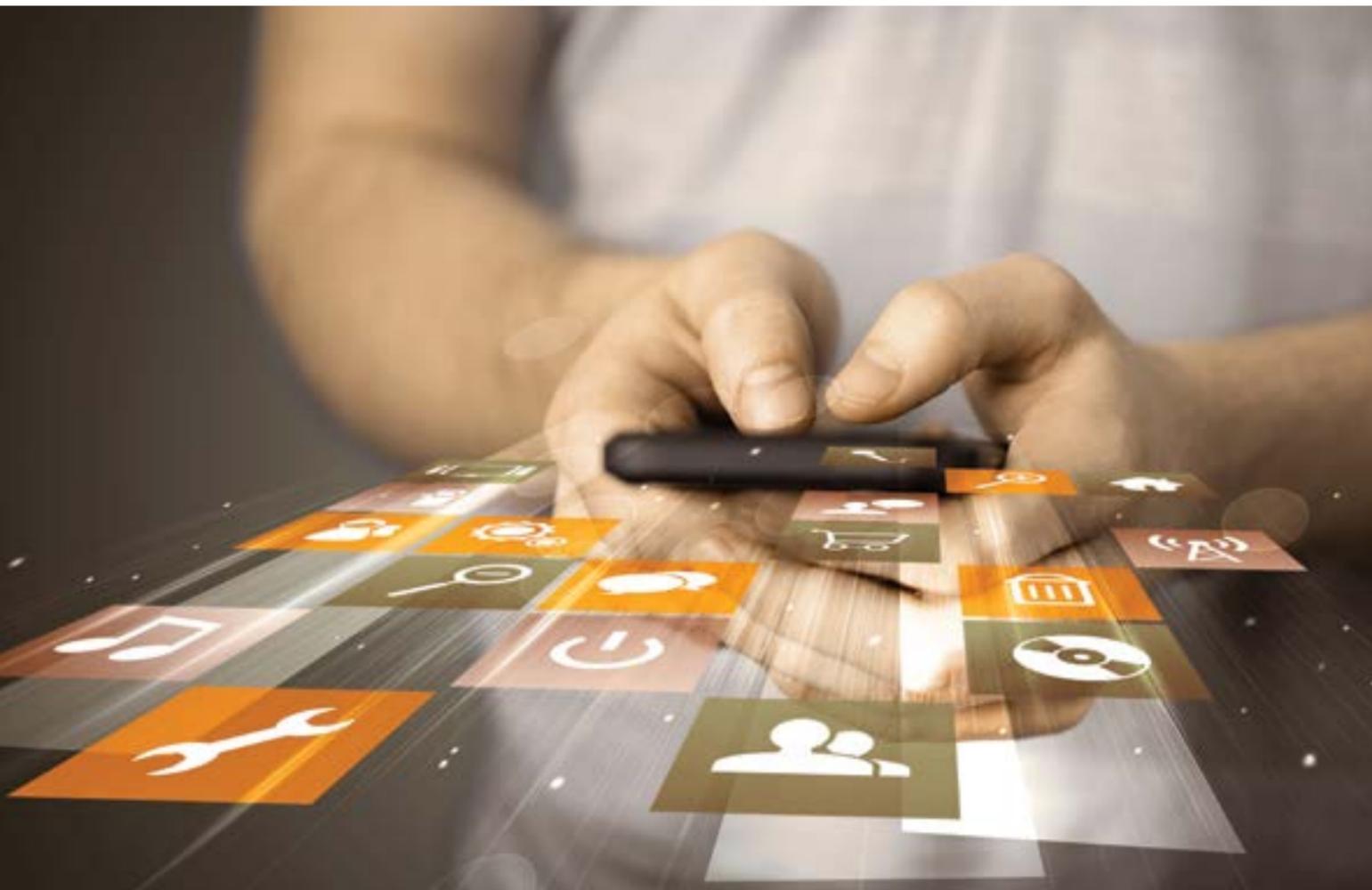
by the fact that we live in a world of WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and constant news on our smartphones. It is a fear that others are living a better life, and having more fun, and stems from a sense of envy leading to a feeling of helplessness. Advertisers have always preyed on this insecurity, by inviting us to buy products that will enhance our sense of belonging – those “Can't miss out experiences,” be it a new car, a bigger house, the latest kitchen products, the newest smartphone or the latest fashions. FOMO is not new, it has been around for centuries, but it has become more obvious since the advent of social media. The first scientific studies were done by a marketing strategist, Dr.

Dan Herman, in 1996, and the acronym FOMO was coined by Patrick McGinness in 2004 in *The Harbus*. Since then, it has been studied more and more frequently as a modern phenomenon.

Social media are both a cause and effect of FOMO, which is characterized by a desire to be connected with what others are doing. Social media feed this *vikshepa*. We could even say that social media are the modern opium of the people. They are so addictive. Unfortunately, social media post the highlights of people's lives, so we are always comparing our own lives with the best of others. People show their best side on social media, or a sensationalist

side to get attention. It is a biased view of life; it is not reality. And we compare ourselves to that, and it becomes an unfortunate competition.

FOMO is associated with all walks of life, ages and genders, and is a very real and common feeling in today's world, stemming from insecurity and a feeling of lack, and sometimes leading to physiological symptoms and behaviors. Many sufferers are simply overwhelmed by the amount of information needed to "keep up" with current activities and trends. FOMO is also associated with a negative effect on overall mood and life satisfaction.



Finding that inner contentment is actually very simple – meditate, go within and experience the connection. With Transmission it is even easier, as Transmission is the connection. Hence, Heartfulness Meditation is a natural antidote to FOMO.

Where does this lack really come from? You may blame social media, but is it really the culprit? In fact, the fundamental sense of lack is an inner lack – a lack of inner contentment, of inner connection, of not belonging. Someone who is able to connect with their own Source – the Source that gives us life – every day, every hour, every moment, becomes contented with their own being, irrespective of what others have or do. There is a sense of confidence and courage to live in the world without competition and comparison with others, without succumbing to peer pressure or media pressure.

Finding that inner contentment is actually very simple – meditate, go within and experience the connection. With Transmission it is even easier, as Transmission is the connection. Hence, Heartfulness Meditation is a natural antidote to FOMO.

FOMO has become inextricably linked with the digital era, and digital gadgets provide their own problems. First there is the amount of time people spend watching screens instead of communicating face-to-face with others, playing sports, reading books, going for walks, or simply being in nature. The classic is when you go to a restaurant and see four people sitting at a table for dinner, all on their individual smartphones instead of talking together.

Second is the radiation associated with these gadgets. Electromagnetic technology is an integral part of our lives – Wi-Fi, the Internet, Bluetooth, mobile phones, computers, tablets, microwave ovens, medical equipment, and all the other man-made sources of electromagnetic radiation in our environment. Today we know much more about their effects. In 2011, WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer announced it was classifying electromagnetic fields from mobile phones and other sources as "possibly carcinogenic to humans" and advised everyone to adopt safety measures to reduce exposure.

There is now a field of research known as bioelectromagnetics and authorities in many European countries recommend that their citizens use hands-free to decrease radiation to the head, keep mobile phones away from the body, and do not use a mobile phone in a car without an external antenna.

Our subtle body is our energetic body which has its own electromagnetic field created by the negative and positive polarity of charge. As a result, the subtle body is affected by other energy fields in the environment, for example, the build up of positive ions in the atmosphere before a thunderstorm creates restlessness, while the release of negative ions once the storm arrives brings relief.

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In nature, everything is in a state of dynamic balance, with complementary energy flows switching like alternating current throughout the day. The same sort of alternating pattern is seen in the complementary sympathetic and parasympathetic currents associated with the *Surya* and *Chandra Nadis* in our bodies, where at times one predominates, then the current switches so that the other predominates. Then there are the main inflection points at sunrise and sunset, the stationary points, where the turn of the flow is more prominent, like the turning of the tide. We see these patterns of polarity at the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels, whether in the planetary movements or in particles at the atomic movement.

When we add man-made EMFs to our environment, they interact with our natural EMFs. So the stronger the man-made EMF technologies in our environment, the more likely they are to affect us. Some people get headaches, rashes, nausea and nervous complaints. The effects happen first at the level of the subtle body, the energy field, and eventually filter down to the physical body.

A few years back, a group of schoolgirls in Denmark did an experiment. They were experiencing difficulty concentrating in school, and when they slept with the phone next to their head they sometimes also experienced difficulty sleeping. They took 400 watercress seeds and placed them in twelve trays: six in a room without radiation, and six in the next room with two Wi-Fi routers. The seeds were given the same amount of water and the same conditions of light. After twelve days the cress seeds next to the router did not grow so well, and some of them mutated and died.

The experiment drew international attention and scientists replicated it with controls, other experimental variables and using other plants. I have tried it using mung bean seeds in four different environments with astounding results, as follows:



MEDITATION ROOM

I would suggest that every child do this experiment, so they can see for themselves the effect that radiation has on living organisms. One of the Danish students said after finishing their experiment, “None of us sleep with the mobile next to the bed anymore. Either the phone is put far away, or it is put in another room. And the computer is always off.”

Here are a few simple things that will help to reduce this *vikshepa*:

- Turn off Wi-Fi when it is not in use, and at night during sleep,
- Use your mobile phone in the car only when necessary, and don't charge the phone in the car,
- Keep your mobile phone in a bag, not in your pocket against your body,
- Switch Bluetooth on only when needed,
- Keep your phone away from your bed at night, and
- Don't give small children phones to play with.



RADIATION ROOM

Digital technologies have revolutionized our global network, but today many of us are dependent on them to the point of addiction. The radiation they emit is harmful to health because of its effect on our subtle bodies, our consciousness, and only time will tell the long-term effects of constant use.

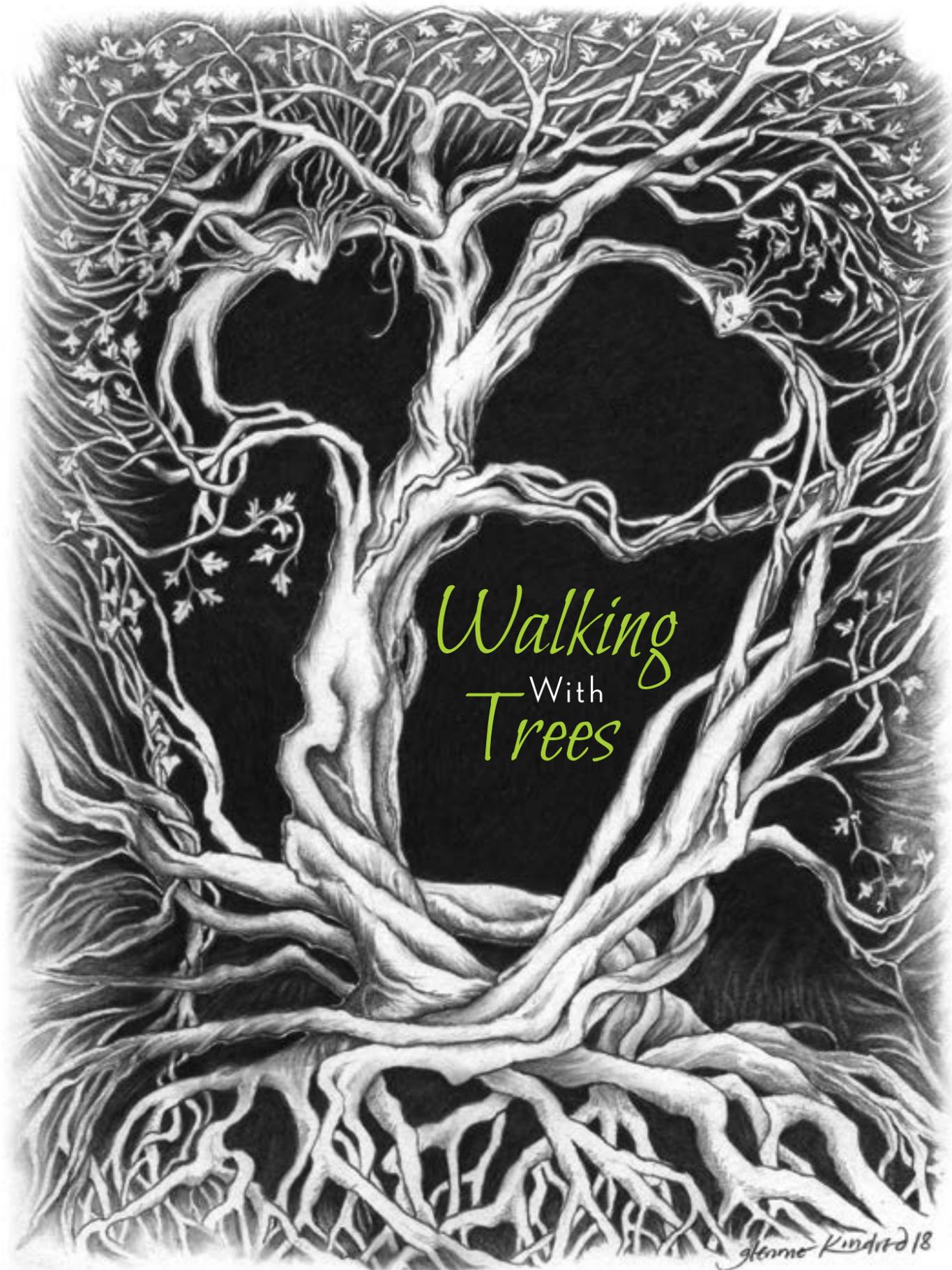
Today we look back at the ancient Romans and wonder why they were so foolish as to use lead utensils for cooking, resulting in lead poisoning. We look back at the 20th century and wonder why so many people smoked cigarettes. Will the people of the twenty-third century look back at us with the same disbelief in our rampant and unregulated use of digital technologies?



Taste of Life

Trees are our wise teachers and our steadfast allies in these changing times.

GLENNIE KINDRED



GLENNIE KINDRED loves trees. Here she inspires us to experience for ourselves how trees teach us, help us expand our consciousness, and evoke a sense of wonder for all life on Earth.

*I went to the woods
And became aware of myself*

*As I walked alone
I watched the untested parts of myself
Awaken,
And heard my inner voice
Alive and true.*

And I built a bridge across...

*I welcomed the bright sureness of my instincts,
Followed the stirrings of my intuition,
Reached out with my heart to touch the trees around me,*

*I went to the woods and Time slipped...
And in that moment
I was at One with all of the life around me.*

I became aware of myself as part of this wonder...

*And the trees seemed to stir,
And welcomed me in...*

iving my life close to the natural world is part of who I am, and more than once I have found myself standing at the edge of conditioning to sense an awareness of something more ... a sense of communion and communication between myself and the plants and the trees, and an absolute certainty of the interconnectedness and sentience of all life.

Trees are beautifully present, complex beings, deeply connected with the natural world around them, and the flow of the year's seasonal cycles. They are totally intrinsic to present life on Earth. They store and utilize vast amounts of carbon from our atmosphere, and are the co-creators of our weather system and climate. These great water-lovers draw up water from below the ground, and fill our air with the circulating waters of life, bringing many beneficial nutrients to the surface from deep within the Earth. They generate the oxygen-rich air that all of us air-breathing creatures need to breathe. We breathe with them and because of them. Their out-breath is our in-breath. They literally give us life.

I can honestly say I am in love with trees. They fill me with delight and awe in equal measure. I collect their leaves, blossom and fruit for my medicine cupboard and they gift me with layer upon layer of medicine for my soul. Being in their presence nurtures me, and the more sensitive and open I become to their sentience, the more levels of interaction and communication we exchange.

Trees create an interface, and can be experienced through all our senses. They help us to expand into parts of ourselves that lie at the edges of our consciousness. When I am walking with the trees beside me I feel complete. Their wild beauty opens my heart and can move me to profound joy, and sometimes to tears. When I stand with them I breathe more deeply and become more rooted, and more fully present in the here and now. They help me to slow down and to find my sense of inner stillness. This guides me to listen more closely to my intuition and the wild edges of my instinctive self. I am forever grateful for their blessed presence in my life. ...

*Trees create an interface,
and can be experienced
through all our senses.
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lie at the edges of our
consciousness.*

As we celebrate, grow, plant and interact with the trees, we re-find our sense of unity with all life on Earth. The trees teach us. We learn from them; grow and expand, regenerate and deepen, as their wisdom permeates through to our depths and helps change us from the inside.

As we open ourselves to the belief that everything is flowing in interconnected relationship with each other, our consciousness naturally expands, and we find that there is a lot more going on within us, and in the natural world around us, than we have been conditioned to believe.

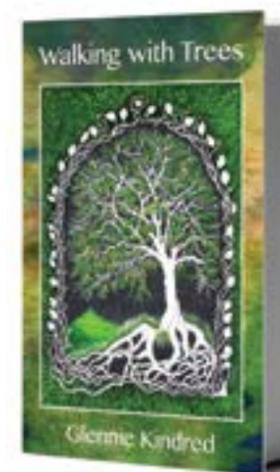
As we expand into our interconnectivity, we change, and our relationship with the Earth undergoes a dramatic shift as we realize that her well-being is our own well-being. We naturally become Earth allies and Earth protectors and live our lives in ways that



help the Earth to restore her equilibrium – and this in turn helps us to restore our own.

The movement towards caring for our unique and beautifully astounding Earth grows every day, and this gives me hope for the future. I know that I am just one of many people making this journey, and I align myself, my kinship and my heart with all the people who love the Earth as I do, who are redefining themselves as one many interconnected complex intelligent life-forms sharing the Earth's resources; who are filled with a deep desire to help the Earth restore and heal the damage we have done. Each one of us has our own strengths and parts to play as we collectively do what we can to bring about intelligent compassionate change. Together, our many actions, both overt and subtle, are creating the great transformation of our time.

Trees are our wise teachers and our steadfast allies in these changing times, as we learn to walk this new path of co-operation and co-creation with all of life. In *Walking With Trees*, I invite you to dive in and deepen your roots, to arrive in the world of trees with a benevolence that creates more benevolence, a willingness for enchantment, and an openness to rediscover a sense of wonder for this precious gift of life.

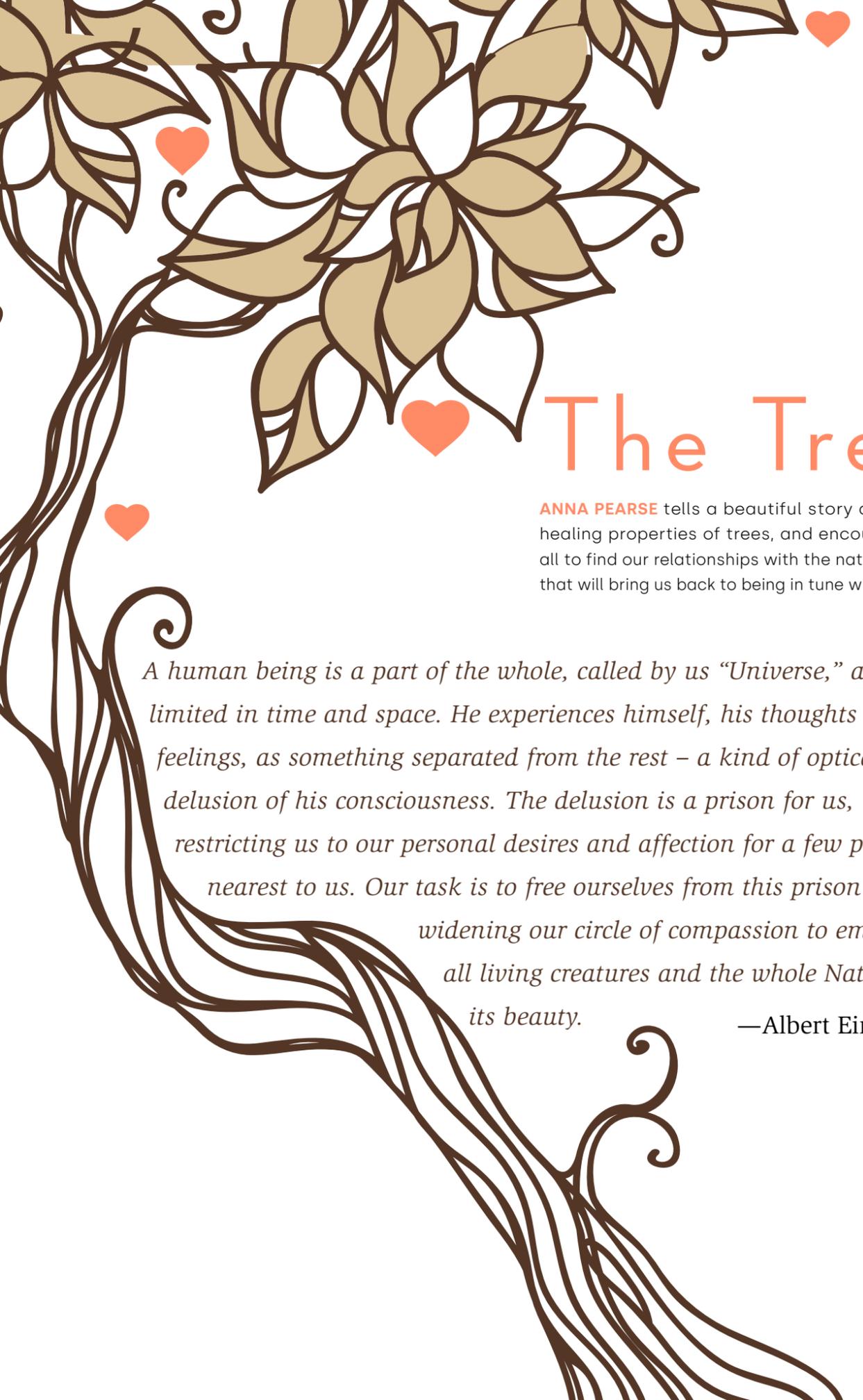


*Together, our many
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From the Preface of Glennie Kindred's latest book *Walking With Trees*. Reprinted with permission from the author.

Illustrations by GLENNIE KINDRED





The Tree

ANNA PEARSE tells a beautiful story about the healing properties of trees, and encourages us all to find our relationships with the natural world that will bring us back to being in tune with Nature.

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. The delusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task is to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole Nature in its beauty.

—Albert Einstein

Sometimes it requires our extreme vulnerability to feel our oneness with the universe. Desperation can serve to open the doors of perception. Nature is always there, all around us, but our normal way is to isolate ourselves within our individuality rather than feeling that we are part of something much greater, beyond our understanding, which we can only wonder at. But she is always there – as this simple story about a human being, imprisoned by their thoughts, shows.

She had been signed off work with stress, and now here she was on this dismal autumn day walking through the park, unable to see her way forward. Her thinking was circular, repetitive, bringing her back each time to that same feeling of hopelessness and weakness. She felt she was being exploited at her work, but that no one in her work place wanted to know. They just wanted her to get on with it. And maybe it was true what her manager had said to her – that she just wasn't up to it. And she couldn't face that judgment. Who could she talk to? There was no one who understood, no one who had the patience to listen.

Her pace slowed as she walked off the path and onto the grass, already feeling some comfort there from the softness of the earth and the smell of damp earth. Here was a tree and she was walking towards it. Slowing right down, she noticed a large bump in the trunk around which the bark had grown, and it was just the right height to sit on. She sat and leaned her back against the rough bark. It felt right and natural to sit like that, with the back of her head also in contact with the bark.

After a while she realized that time was passing, and she felt no need to move on. Her thoughts seemed to have lost their weight and heaviness in the presence of this simple comfort. She could feel within her back the life force of the tree and something within her back was answering it. She was rooted, too, and taking her strength from the Earth, which was always there, sustaining all life. There was an energy within her flowing upwards like there was at the core of the tree. It was bringing nutrients and knowledge up from the dark Earth into the sky. The strength of

There is a seed of wisdom planted within her that this is a general lesson about all of Nature and our part within it.

this resonance calmed her at a deep level where there were no words.

After some time (who knows how long), she got up. She walked away from the tree feeling like a living being. Everything had changed! The colors around her had resumed their brightness. She had the strength to go on. A door had been opened within her that would be opened again and again. And eventually would stay open. She would always remember this day with reverence.

Years have passed. From time to time she goes back to visit the tree, takes others with her and tells them the story. They stroll around it, touch it, take photos, picnic around it. One time she went with love in her heart, and was shocked to the core at what she saw. All the branches had been cut back to the trunk and were lying round it. She felt pain for the tree, and then this was immediately followed by the thought that it meant she also would die soon.

But the tree was not dead. It had received drastic intervention to save its life by those who care for this park and the trees in it. There was a big lesson for her in that too. And the following spring she saw it with all its bright green leaves growing close to its bark.

She has formed a strong bond with this particular tree, which over the years has taught her so much. Although she focuses her affection on this specific tree, there is a seed of wisdom planted within her that this is a general lesson about all of Nature and our part within it.



The Secret of Trees

DAAJI shares some thoughts on the benefits we receive from trees, and how important they are to our life on Earth.

Once upon a time, it so happened that a great sage from the early 20th century, Ram Chandra, visited a village in the tribal area of Rawati in the Malwa district of present-day Madhya Pradesh in India. He was so enamoured of the place, because it reminded him of the ancient ashram of the saint Kakabhushundi. Whoever entered that ashram felt a sense of liberation.



After going there, Ram Chandra wrote, “The natural beauty and the innocent people of the village were the attractions. I liked this place very much and felt I should stay there forever. ... I was eager to make my dream come true of building an ashram like that of Kakabhushundi. Such places have a better capacity to absorb feelings and Transmission than people do, and can retain them for a longer period. As a result, whoever goes there cannot but be influenced. This is the reason why even today this place looks like Brindavan. Even if one looks at it from the traditional angle, one can do better *sadhana* here than in other places.”

Trees retain spiritual charge as it is given, without any disturbance. They are like vibration banks.

So in 2007 I went looking for this village, now called Raoti. The moment I reached the nearby railway station I could see that there were hardly any trees around for hundreds of hectares; most of them had been cut down. Imagine how much greener it would have been back then! As I reached the village, I noticed a stream that had almost dried up, and on the banks were beautiful trees, including

a huge banyan tree with a giant canopy. The thought arose that Lalaji must have visited this very spot, so I sat there and felt immensely benefited.

What is so special about trees? First, they retain spiritual charge for a longer period than humans, because we have consciousness of a different order. We have the possibility of wilfully evolving, and also of falling down. We can improve or destroy. Trees retain spiritual charge as it is given, without any disturbance. They are like vibration banks. So future generations also benefit, as trees do not deplete the spiritual charge. Trees do not go backwards in the field of evolution, but they also do not evolve wilfully. It is this lack of will that protects the charge once infused in them.

When the heart is filled with love, tenderness, softness and suppleness, we become so creative and so adaptable. We then naturally care for the rest of creation.

Also, certain trees grow tall and sturdy, like mahogany, oak and acacia. They cannot easily be cut, as their wood is strong. Compare them to chikoo, apricot, apple, plum, guava, jamun, fig and mango, which are tender, and yield the most beautiful fruits. During the summer season, you will see mango trees laden with so many fruits that the branches bend to almost touch the ground. In contrast, sturdier trees with hard wood cannot bend and do not have praiseworthy fruits.

Such mighty trees can easily be destroyed by a tornado, but look at a humble blade of grass! Similarly, it is the softness of the heart that makes it yield with reverence, and humility has a chance to sing the song of sweetness. What can a bitter and arrogant heart sing? It can only hurt others.

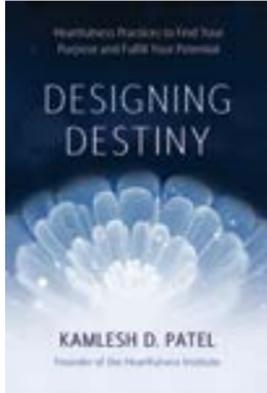
At the human level, it is worthwhile observing men and women. Women are loving and tender, both physically and emotionally. Love fosters tenderness, whereas arrogance and ego foster harshness. Women keep the species going through their tenderness and love; come what may, they go through life with acceptance. It is their inherent nature, bestowed lavishly on them by God.

When the heart is filled with love, tenderness, softness and suppleness, we become so creative and so adaptable. We then naturally care for the rest of creation. Heartfulness Meditation enhances these qualities, especially love. It is because of love that we can accept, and acceptance is a nobler quality than tolerance. Peace is the natural outcome in such a heart. And where there is peace, there is happiness.

Watercolor paintings by FABIO KOHLER



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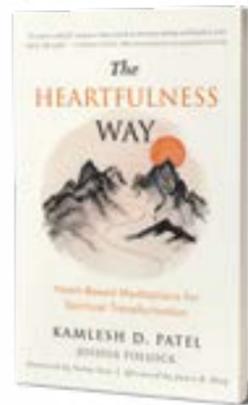
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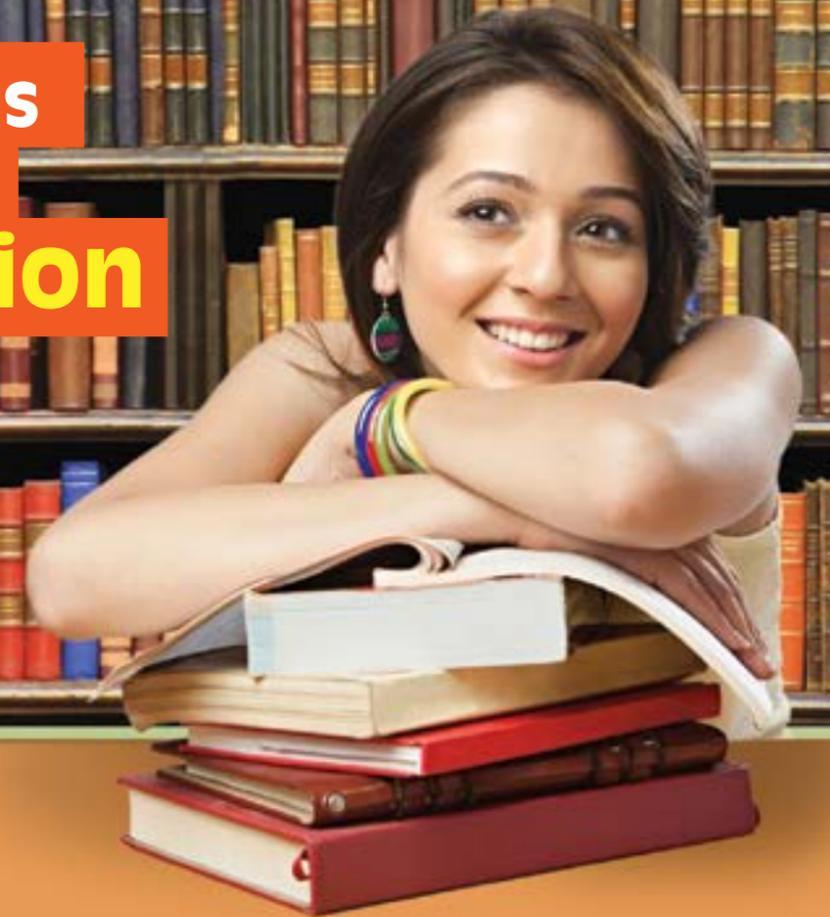
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