

heartfulness

purity weaves destiny

Generosity

DAAJI

**The Magic of
Trees**

PETER

WOHLLEBEN

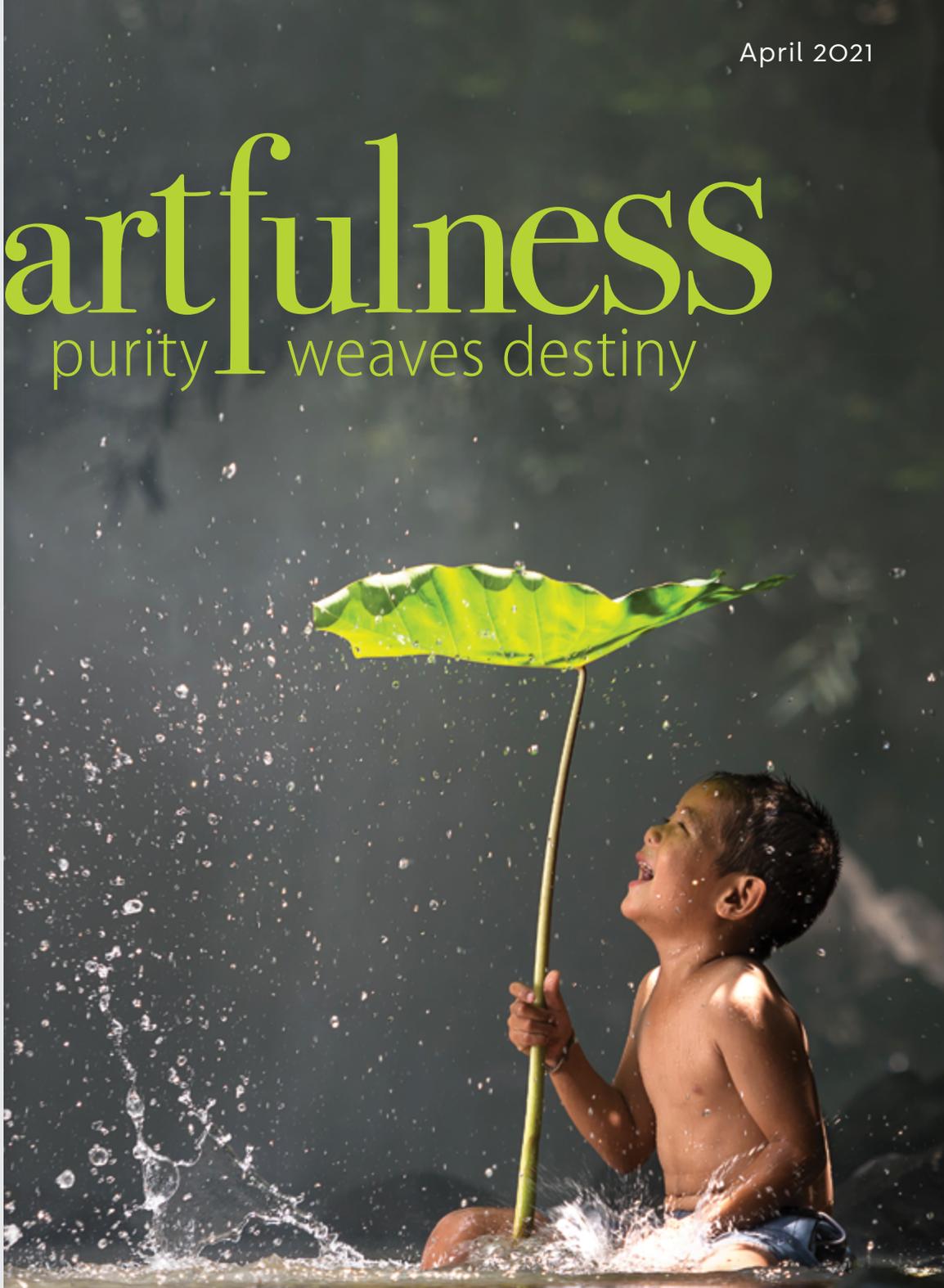
Silver

MIRIAM HANID

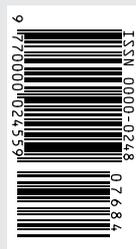
Nature Warrior

BACHI SINGH

BISHT



Loving
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Writers — Dr. Ichak Adizes, Daaji, Alanda Greene, Sam Rapoport, Margaret Schenkman, Ravi Venkatesan

Interviewees — Bachi Singh Bisht, Miriam Hanid, Peter Wohlleben

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CONTRIBUTIONS

contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com

ADVERTISING

advertising@heartfulnessmagazine.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

subscriptions@heartfulnessmagazine.com

www.heartfulnessmagazine.com/subscriptions

EDITOR — Neeraj Kumar

PRINTED BY — Sunil Kumar

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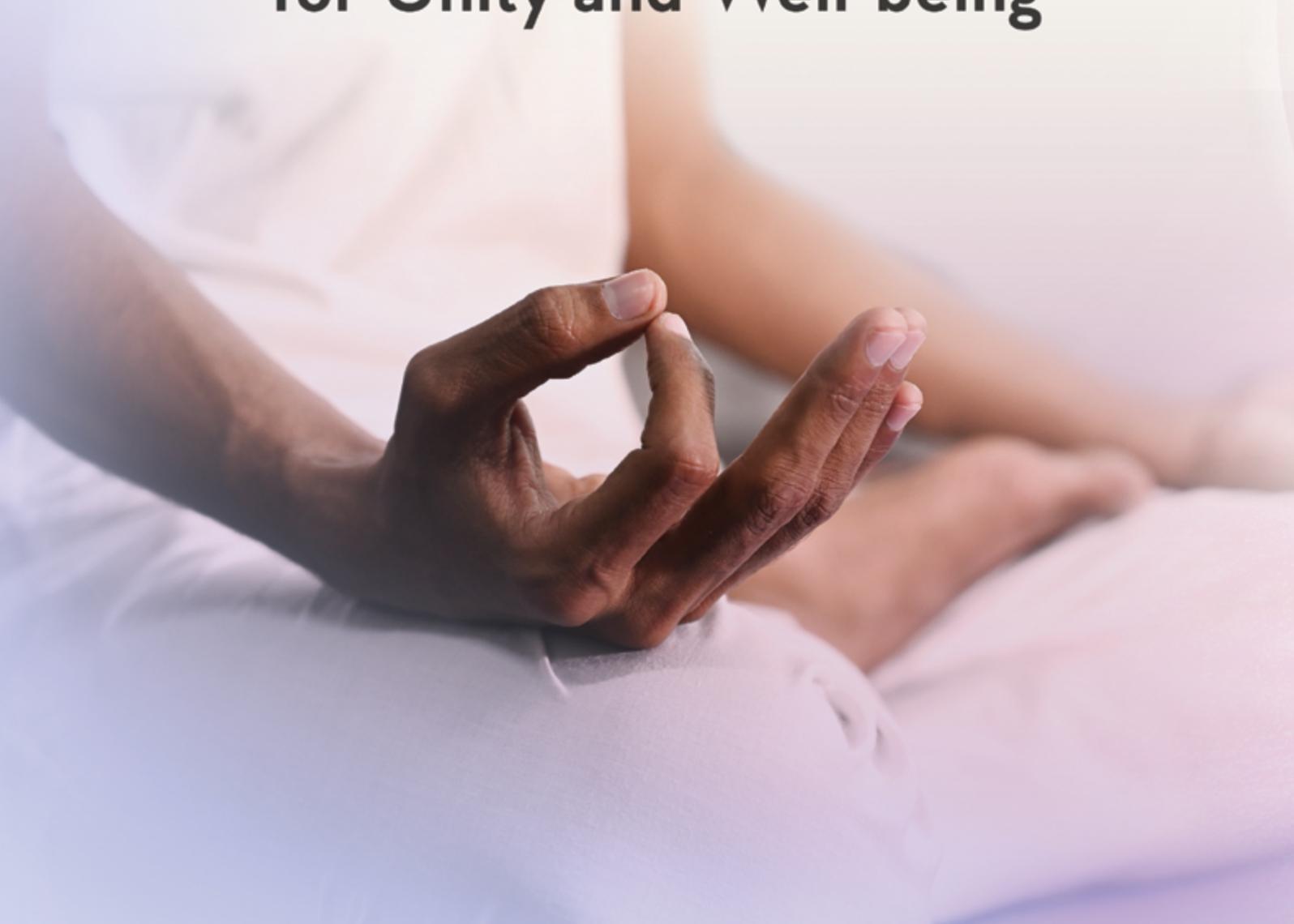
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Dear readers,

During the last year, human movement has been restricted allowing our environments to partially recover and flourish in unexpected ways. So, in this edition, we celebrate our planet's richness and beauty and explore ways in which we can better coexist with all forms of life.

In his series on habits, Daaji addresses the spectrum of behavior from stealing to generosity. Peter Wohlleben shares his lifelong observations as a forester on the amazing ways trees can feel, communicate and support each other, and the need for us to consider ecosystems rather than individual species. "Nature warrior" Bachi Singh Bisht reminds us of our duty in relationship to the natural world. Miriam Hanid's work in silver displays the inspiration from the movement of water and the Earth's unbound beauty. Sam Rapoport explores the delights of finding Nature in his backyard and Margaret Schenkman reminds us of the need to simplify our lives to be in tune with Nature.

Ichak Adizes highlights the importance of a daily meditation practice to engender love, and Ravi Venkatesan lauds this inner practice for honing our "super-sensing" ability. Alanda Greene ends her pilgrimage to ancient Japanese temples a lot wiser than when she started, and Ramya Sriram pulls it all together in a simple joyful cartoon.

We always look forward to your feedback,
The editors

contributors



DAAJI

Daaji 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.



PETER WOHLLEBEN

Peter is a forester in the best sense of the word – protecting the ancient forests of Germany rather than logging them. He is the author of a number of books, including *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate* – Discoveries from a Secret World, which was a New York Times bestseller. His latest book, *The Heartbeat of Trees: Embracing Our Ancient Bonds with Forests and Nature*, will be released in June 2021.



DR. ICHAK ADIZES

Dr. Ichak Adizes is widely acknowledged as one of the world's leading management experts. He has received 21 honorary doctorates and is the author of 27 books that have been translated into 36 languages. Dr. Adizes is recognized by *Leadership Excellence Journal* as one of the top thirty thought leaders of America.



MIRIAM HANID

Miriam has been working as a professional silversmith since 2008, creating pieces for private clients and public commissions, including the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, Eton College, New College Oxford, The Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Museum of Wales. Her work has been exhibited in numerous exhibitions internationally, including in the UK, Germany, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Finland.



BACHI SINGH BISHT

Bachi has established a name for himself in bird and tiger conservation in India, especially at the Jim Corbett National Park in the Himalayas. He has 30 years of experience and has conducted workshops in the forests of Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. He has also traveled to East Africa including Masai Mara to study the wildlife.

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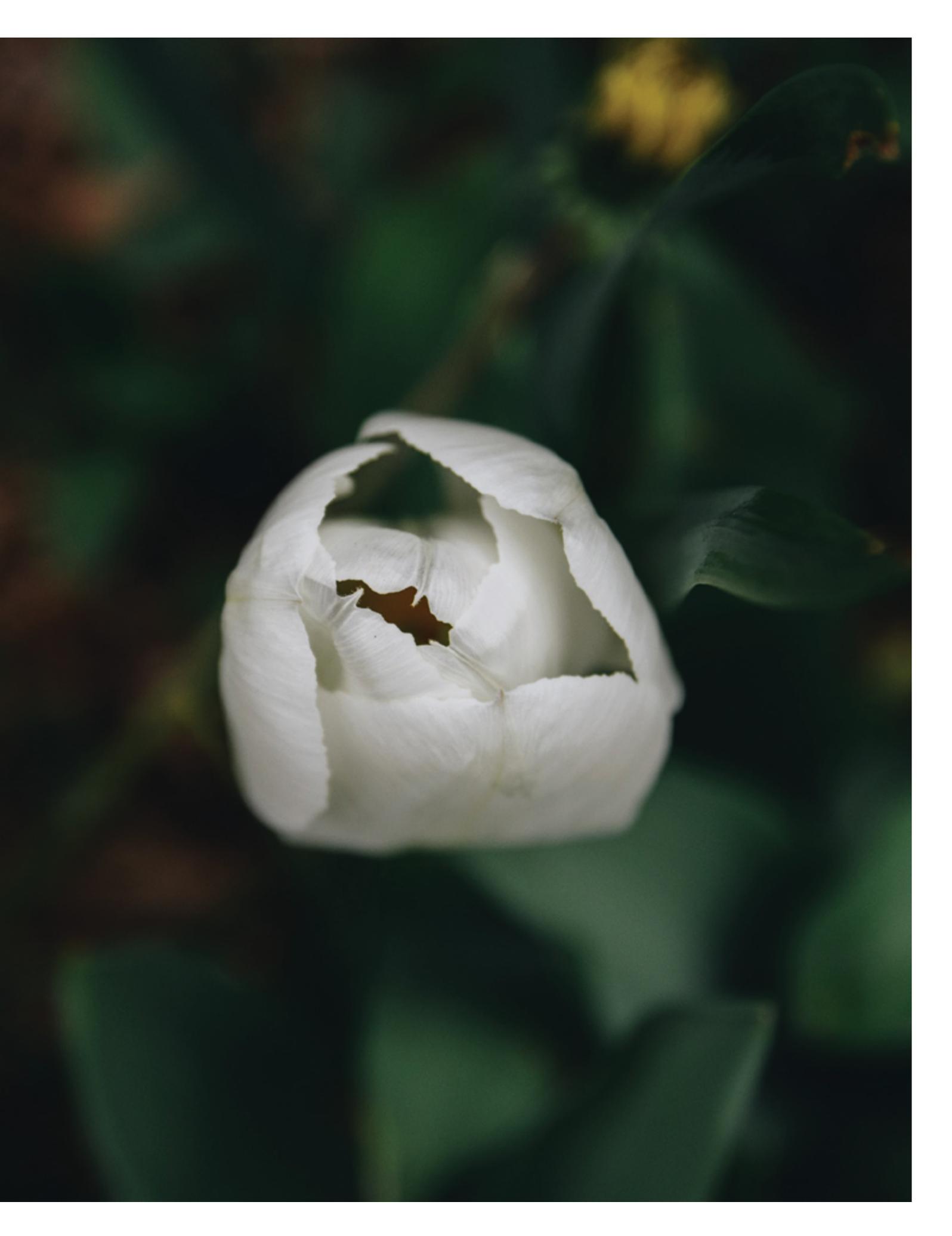
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Adopt the pace of nature:
her secret is patience.

RALPH WALDO
EMERSON

loving nature
focus



T Our bond with Trees





PETER WOHLLEBEN is a forester in the best sense of the word. He is the author of a number of books, including *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate – Discoveries from a Secret World*, which was a New York Times bestseller. His latest book, *The Heartbeat of Trees: Embracing Our Ancient Bonds with Forests and Nature*, will be released in June 2021. Here, he is interviewed by **ELIZABETH DENLEY** about his work with forests and what inspires him about the natural world.

Q: Hello Peter.

PW: Hi, good to see you.

Q: Having read your books, today I would like to learn about you: What has inspired you to follow this path of being in tune with nature, with trees in particular, and where did it all start?

Where did it start? I really don't know, because I grew up for the first few years in Bonn, the former capital of Germany, and when I was five we moved to a little town outside of Bonn, where there was nature. My brother and two sisters are not very interested in nature, so I am the green sheep of the family. When I was eight, I collected money for the WWF, I was interested in the songs of whales, I had bugs and spiders in glass jars in my room, and all kinds of stuff like that. I was always very interested in nature, but not especially in trees.

I became interested in trees after school, when I thought about studying biology. I heard that the German Forest Commission was searching for students, and thought, "Okay, a forester is something like a tree-keeper; perhaps that's the perfect way to connect with nature," and it turned out to be the wrong way. A forester is more like a tree butcher, and it is getting worse every day in Germany. We now have the biggest tree felling ever at the moment, something like an "end of time" scenario, even though the Forest Commission has always declared to care for the forest and support nature.

When the pain is too strong, we are not able to decide anything, and plants do the same thing in stress situations. They produce pain-suppressing substances, and that is a very strong hint that plants are also conscious and that they are able to feel pain.

I think it is the same in Australia as it is in Germany, where the foresters say they are logging wood for the benefit of nature, not for money. They say that the forest needs renewable growth of young trees, as they are better for the climate. But I realized that this was a problem very soon after leaving university, so I tried to change the way of treating the forest.

Nowadays, people say, “Ah, you are not a forester anymore.”

I say, “Yes, now more than ever, because I am protecting forests as they should be, not harvesting timber anymore.”

I try to protect as many forests as possible. In Germany we had very old beech forests, and among all the beech forests we have only about three per mille left. That is almost nothing. Germans are very good in giving advice to other countries on how to protect their forests, but their own are in a very bad state.

Q: So, you've moved in a very different direction. Reading your books, I was very inspired by the science of how trees communicate, how they interact with each other, and how they interact with humans. So, what was the progression? Going from forester to caring for forests is one thing, but you're now looking at how trees interact with each other and the world. Tell us about that. How did that evolve?

I think I was always interested in real nature, and that caused problems. After finishing university, when I was responsible for a woodland, I thought, “Why should I fell these old mother trees, and what should they be good for?” and “What are we doing with all those pesticides?” So, that started very early. But the real turning point was the establishment of a burial forest, where a person could choose to be buried in an urn at the foot of a tree.

Some of the people who chose trees as living gravestones said things like, “Oh, I like this tree. It is bent. It looks a bit like my life.” As a forester, I would immediately answer, “Oh no! That’s an ugly tree.”

Why? Because it was not good for the sawmill. So, with those people I learnt to regain the right view on trees. As a forester, you learn to judge trees as raw material, based on how much their timber is worth, but with the people who were choosing trees as grave sites, I learnt to look at forests again in the way I looked at forests when I was a child.

And then I discovered that there are living stumps in this forest supported by the surrounding trees. These 400- to 500-year-old stumps continue to live without any green leaves. So I asked, “How can they still be living?” Then I asked myself many questions, and

started to research. I asked other scientists about the consciousness of trees, and if trees are able to feel pain. Then, some research was done by a scientist at the University of Bonn, which was regarded as a little bit esoteric. Actually, it was very strong science – besides which, esoteric is not a bad thing.

The researcher found out that plants and trees are really able to feel pain, and that's one of the topics in my new book. Pain may be a reflex. For example, when insects bite the bark of a tree, we can measure an electrical signal in the tree. Can we call that a defensive reaction pain? We don't know. But we do know that plants and trees are able to produce pain-suppressing substances. We also do that in certain situations, when we have big stress, and when pain disturbs our mind.

When the pain is too strong, we are not able to decide anything, and plants do the same thing in stress situations. They produce pain-suppressing substances, and that is a very strong hint that plants are also conscious and that they are able to feel pain. Now, that is a sacrilege, because the next question we often hear is, "Then, what should vegetarians eat?" But that is not the point. It is just a surprise that plants are nearer to us than we thought, and the categories – animals, plants,

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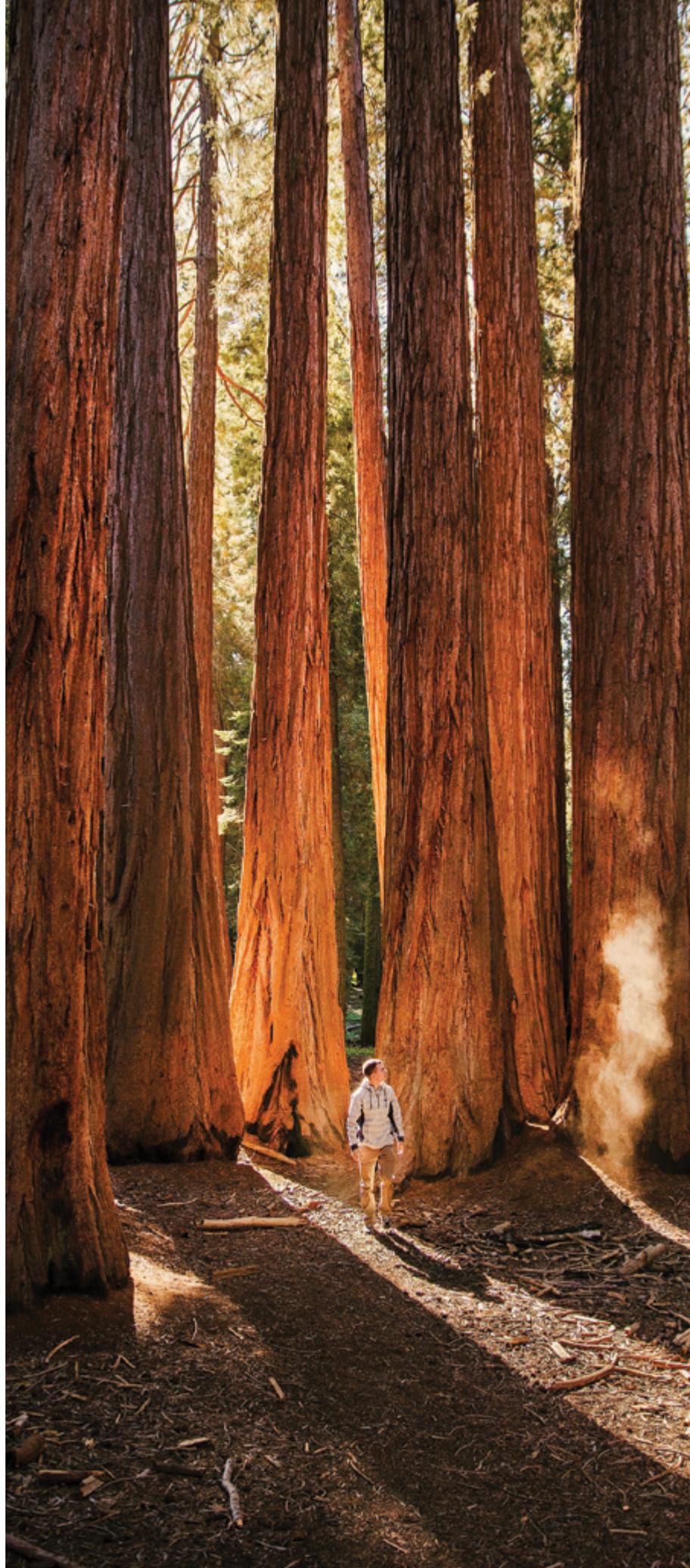




Photo credit: KEN SHONO

humans – are made by scientists to sort nature, but they have nothing to do with how much worth living beings have, and how living beings are able to feel and to work together with other beings. So, the dividing line between animals and plants is falling at the moment.

Q: From the perspective of yogic science, there is the classification of the three bodies – the physical body, the subtle body, which is consciousness, mind, etc., and the causal body or soul. All three bodies exist from the mineral kingdom up to the animal kingdom, including

humans. And the differences lie in how separate those bodies can be. In a stone or rock, for example, the three bodies are very closely bound, whereas in plants they can be more separate. We see this in the way plants can respond to sunlight, or close their leaves with touch, and all sorts of other sensitivities. In animals, the three bodies are more separate again, to the extent that in human beings and maybe other animal species, the mental body can move out of the physical body. For example, when we dream, or when I am here in Australia,

thinking of you in Germany, and my mind is with you there.

So, for yogis, consciousness is in everything, even in atoms. It is how much flexibility or separation there is from the physical body, and how expanded consciousness is, that varies from one type of organism to another. It is interesting that science now is also seeing that all living beings have consciousness in some way. Plants' consciousness may not be like ours, but what's fascinating is that plants are able to store, utilize and hold

atmosphere, because they harness energy and don't dissipate it the way humans do. That is why you can have a beautiful sacred grove of trees, which feels so lovely, because the trees harness the good vibes from the atmosphere and hold them much better than we can. It's quite fascinating.

Yes. What interests me most is, "What is really important for our life?" I think plants can feel pain. I think they can feel much more, also, but pain is what we can scientifically detect very easily. We know that animals feel love, pain, and other things. I think the main difference is intelligence, but intelligence is not the most important thing in our life. If you ask anyone, they will tell you, "The most important thing is love, to be happy." This is to do with our emotions, and our emotions have nothing to do with intelligence. Trees won't write books, probably because they don't need them, and perhaps because they are not able to. But it doesn't matter. Trees feel and they care for each other. You know, plants even respond to experiments like the dogs of the scientist, Pavlov, who rang the bell and the dogs salivated. You can do similar experiments with peas. They are able to learn in such complex ways, and they are plants.

We know that trees care for each other and nowadays we also know

about epigenetics. Just as we pass learned experiences to our children, trees are able to do the same thing. We know from recent research that seedlings know exactly how to deal with new conditions, and that is very good news in times of climate change. Trees are constantly learning – lifelong learning. So, for example, when a 1000-year-old oak makes seedlings, those seedlings have the experience from the parent's 1000 years. They are able to change their way of living so that they can survive in new conditions. Unfortunately, nowadays, foresters don't give the trees time to learn, and that's not good. In Germany, they say, "Those beech trees are dying," and I am saying, "No, they are learning. Let them be. Don't disturb them by cutting the older

trees from their communities. Don't strip those family banks. Let them learn." We create hard times for trees, but they are able to deal with it. There is also new research from Germany and Russia, showing that trees can cool down their surrounding landscape by up to 15 degrees Celsius. They can actively create rain. And right now we are suffering from heat and drought. Trees are able to bring the thermostat down and bring the rain back, which is what we need. The only thing they need is peace. They don't need chainsaws. That is the solution. It is so easy.

Q: You have mentioned climate change. With animal species, we are in the middle of a mass extinction. Is the same thing happening with plants, or are

We are suffering from heat and drought. Trees are able to bring the thermostat down and bring the rain back, which is what we need. The only thing they need is peace. They don't need chainsaws. That is the solution. It is so easy.

I love to see how slow a forest is. There are so many little hints to show you how slow forests are, how slow trees are. They don't like to be in the fast lane. You discover all this when you walk through a forest which is unstripped, and that is when you see many little lovely things.

plants able to weather the situation better?

The thing is, we don't know exactly what is happening with animals. For example, we work with an entomologist who is researching insects. He says that in Germany only 25% of the insects have been well researched and 75% have not been researched, so we don't know if they will go extinct or not, because we have so little insight. And with plants it is even worse, because what are plants worth? In most people's eyes they are just plants, as insects are just insects. We look only at mammals – “Oh, they are very important” – but insects are also important; bacteria are also important. There are so many things that we haven't discovered.

So I would say that, yes, we see the same phenomena. But because we don't know what's going on, we shouldn't concentrate on single species, like rhinos or elephants; we should focus instead on the big ecosystems. And I think that's also happening. We have various politicians saying that 30 to 50% of the landscape (most say 50%) on Earth needs to be protected, without human interference, to rescue all those species, because we don't know what we are going to lose. I think we will also lose many plant species.

Q: Hopefully, humanity will change its attitude going

forward. Can we now turn a little bit away from this very hot topic, to know something of your personal experience and your stories? What have you discovered working with trees, working with forests? What inspires you about your work?

I am always curious to look at how trees behave. For example, it is said that cherries can't grow in the shade. And then I see an old forest, a protected area, with big beech trees that create the deepest shade you can image, and underneath those beech trees there are cherry trees growing. And they shouldn't do that according to scientists. I love discoveries like that. You see, the scientists are wrong; cherry trees don't need sunlight, they only need to be left alone, without our disturbance. That's the point. Another thing I discovered was how slowly young beech seedlings grow. You can see little knots on their branches, and when you count those knots, which are like year-rings in timber, you discover that these seedlings of twenty to thirty centimeters in height are about thirty years old. You can estimate that a tree of two to four meters in height is about 150 years, and they are waiting for their chance to grow up. They have to wait until their mother-tree dies, and that may be another two or three centuries. I love to see how slow a forest is. There are so many little hints to show you how slow forests are, how slow trees







are. They don't like to be in the fast lane. You discover all this when you walk through a forest which is unstripped, and that is when you see many little lovely things.

Q: So, they have patience, waiting for the right time.

Yes, they are just waiting for their chance. And there is also good news: You get forests back everywhere as long as you let them come. For example, we have a tennis court here in the neighboring village. In the last three years, we have had a very bad drought in Germany, very hot summers, the highest temperatures every, many months with nearly no rain, and so many forests have suffered. And this tennis court in the sun is the worst place for trees. During those three years, because no one cared for the tennis court, it has become full of young trees. We don't know where they get their water from. It is the driest place around, but it is fenced in so no one gets in. And there are ten different tree species and they are healthy. Forests come back everywhere. You just have to let them grow.

Q: This is obviously a key message. If we are going to change, it's got to come from education, from early childhood, so, what would you do with children? What would you suggest to educationists to bring about a shift in our consciousness towards trees?

There are many different things. For example, I also write children's books, and the newest book will be released in two weeks. I write books for children from age two years up, for different age groups, and the main topic of these books is to go out and experience trees yourself. I founded a forest academy here in the neighboring village, and we go out with the children. We don't teach them which tree species these are, we teach them what the trees are doing, and that the public is the caretaker of the forest. And the public for us includes the children, because children count. And we tell them what their possibilities of influence are.

For example, we teach them that they can be very loud in a forest, because that is very relaxing for animals. When children are shouting loudly, then the animals know that there are no hunters approaching, so they can relax. I love things like that. For me it's important that the children feel well, and say, "It's like a big living room for us. That is our real living room, where we belong." The biggest problem is always when they are with their parents. After ten minutes, the parents say, "Hurry up, we have to go and continue our hike." We say, "No. It's a hike for children. If the children want to stay at the same place for two hours, it's fine."

Q: Are your books for children translated into English, Peter?



We are so strongly connected with nature. We just have to sharpen our senses, and then we can connect with nature, understand nature better, and receive more health benefits.

I think we have so far translated three into English.

Q: Can you send me the names of those books? Normally, I live in India, at the Heartfulness headquarters. It is a 1,400 acre property called Kanha Shanti Vanam, which means forest of peace. And we have a school there, where children come from all over the world. You would love it. Six years ago the land was barren, but we now have rainforests growing, and we've planted half a million trees. As you mentioned, trees create their own microclimate. They create rain, they rejuvenate the water table. It's incredible that in six years this place, which was completely barren, has over seventy bird species and is full of forests. The children are out in nature all the time, and I would love to give them your books. The German government is working with us, so it is also a German language school, and we will be able to give them your original books in German as well as the English translations.

I can give you the titles. One is called *Can You Hear the Trees Talking?* It is for the middle age group. Another is *Peter and the Tree Children*, a picture book of a squirrel which has no family, and discovers that trees have families. At the end of the book, he is adopted by the forest as his family.

Q: Lovely! Let's finish up with your new book for adults that will be released in June – *The Heartbeat of Trees*. Tell us what inspired it, and what will readers discover in it?

There are some new discoveries about trees, and the title gives a hint about that direction – how trees are able to circulate water. For me, what is even more important is the question: Have we lost the bond with nature? Many people say that humans can't hear as well as animals, we can't smell as well as animals, and so on. But we are so strongly connected with nature. We just have to sharpen our senses, and then we can connect with nature, understand nature better, and receive more health benefits. The book circles around both themes, with many examples of how strongly we are connected, how important it is to save nature, and to understand that we are still a very strong part of nature. In general, we are not destroyers of nature. It is just a question of how we behave when we are out.

Q: I am hoping everybody will read it. It is so good to see the science supporting this viewpoint.

There is hope. I am really convinced that in the next five or ten years we will see a turn in these things. I am really optimistic

that we are able to deal with climate change, to stop it. But for that we need the help of nature. The most important thing is to let natural forests come back, to let nature come back. In my opinion, it's not about coal and not about oil, but about meat. That's the most important thing. The massive meat consumption is the main climate driver, and most people don't want to hear it, because it is easier to buy a car with less gas consumption than to reduce meat consumption. That's the main topic, but we will see the change. Perhaps because of the COVID-19 crisis, it is gaining

momentum, because most people are thinking about what they are doing.

Q: Thank you kindly, Peter. I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation.

Thank you, Elizabeth, it was really a pleasure to talk with you.





NATURE WARRIOR

BACHI SINGH BISHT is a Nature Warrior from the North of India. Here he shares his wisdom with **RAJESH MENON** about how we can live in tune with the natural world, and what is our role in caring for and conserving nature.

Q: Tell us about how your passion for nature and conservation arose. Did it start from childhood?

My mother told me that we used to live in a hut under a Gutel tree (Trewia Nudiflora). That's where I was born. I was brought up in a village surrounded by thick jungle. Until the 10th Standard, I went to a school located at the edge of the jungle near an ancient canal. I feel these natural surroundings had

a great impact on me during my childhood. This is how my love for nature arose.

Q: Tell us about the work you do now?

I became a nature guide, or "Nature Warrior" as my friends call me, in the early '90s. I have managed wildlife lodges across Uttarakhand, Central India, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, sharing my knowledge of birds

wildlife, and the conservation of nature with others. Whenever opportunity presents itself, I am called by wildlife training institutes and environmental education institutes (both government and private) as a resource person, trainer, motivator, subject expert, and as a Yoga instructor based on nature therapy. Right now, I work as a freelance Nature Warrior and provide services wherever my inner self takes me in preserving nature.





FOCUS

Q: How do you advise that we educate our children about caring for the planet and relating to all living species?

Using our five senses properly, sincerely and honestly. The most important is to use our moral and civic sense properly to avoid much of the nonsense going around the world toward nature. Being honest to one's own inner self will improve our inner connection with nature. Being disciplined and adhering to moral values in every single act of our daily lives will make us better human beings. Keeping ourselves sensitive to all beings will keep us responsible and humble towards nature.



Q: What advice can you give to adults about social responsibility toward nature?

Keeping a mental, physical and moral balance, respecting women and the elderly, and love and care for young ones will go a long way. Every human being is made up of the five elements: earth, water, air, fire and sky. As adults, we have to have the right understanding of the true meaning of all these five elements and value them at the minutest level.



Q: Tell us about Jim Corbett National Park. Are there enough places like this in India to act as a refuge for natural wildlife? What more can we do?

Jim Corbett National Park is one of the oldest in Asia, and the biodiversity here is unmatched. Here, the tiger has one of the highest density populations in the Indian subcontinent. India has

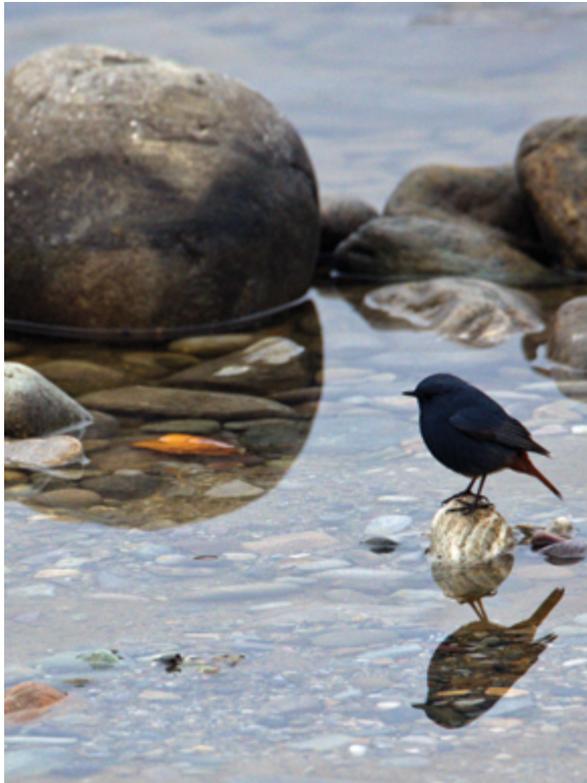




more than fifty tiger reserves now, and tiger conservation projects contribute toward their increasing numbers.

Our responsibility as individuals and the collective society is to conserve nature. Rather than talking and writing, we need to act. Here and now.

Photography by RAJESH MENON





Thought in Action

Learning
who you are
is what you are
here to do.

R. J. PALACIO





Why I Meditate

DR. ICHAK ADIZES shares his passion for meditation, and explains why he meditates, how it benefits him in day-to-day life, and the importance of love, which arises from meditation.

Physics tells us that when the Big Bang happened, time and space started, which means that what existed before the Big Bang had no time or space limits. It was infinite. Likewise, love has no time nor space limits. Love is what created everything.

Imagine any act of creation: a musician writing music, a painter painting, or an entrepreneur starting a company. What makes them write music, paint, or start a company is love. They love what they are creating, or they would not do it. Behind all creations is love.

Babies grow stronger with love and are underweight and sickly looking if denied love. All organic systems grow better with love: flowers and trees, not to mention dogs, cats, or horses. Notice how love gives you energy and hate leaves you exhausted? Notice how people in love look younger and people who hate look old? Look at a little baby. When it meets an unknown person, it's either going to cry or it is going to smile. For few seconds, the baby is watching this foreign person and tries to decide, should I cry, or should I stretch my hands to that person to be hugged? How does a baby decide? It's sensing: Is there love in the other person or not?

Opening our hearts and spreading love, I believe, is essential if humanity is going to survive. Unless we open our hearts and engage love in our behavior, Nazi Germany will turn out not to have been a fluke of history but a preamble of what is to come: strength and brain with no heart. It is imperative for humanity to work diligently, continuously, and doggedly in opening our hearts and centering love

It is imperative for humanity to work diligently, continuously, and doggedly in opening our hearts and centering love as the driving force in our behavior.

as the driving force in our behavior. And that is where Heartfulness Meditation (www.heartfulness.org) comes to play a serious role where we focus on our heart and search for light which is infinite, with no space or time limits. We focus on love.

In my meditation, I seek the feeling of love spreading through my body. Love yourself and feel love beyond yourself. Eventually you will lose any sensation as if asleep without being asleep. You are nowhere and everywhere. You are now part of infinity.

Heartfulness says we find infinite love in the silence of meditation. Why? Have you ever fallen in love or felt love in a noisy railway station or airport, late for your departure? Do you find love in noisy, deafening music? Probably not. We fall in love when we are at peace, when we are walking on the beach at sunset. When our energy is united into one big core. When there is noise, we get distracted, and distraction disintegrates us. It is an antithesis to love, which is total integration. Note that Moses found God in the desert.

THOUGHT IN ACTION

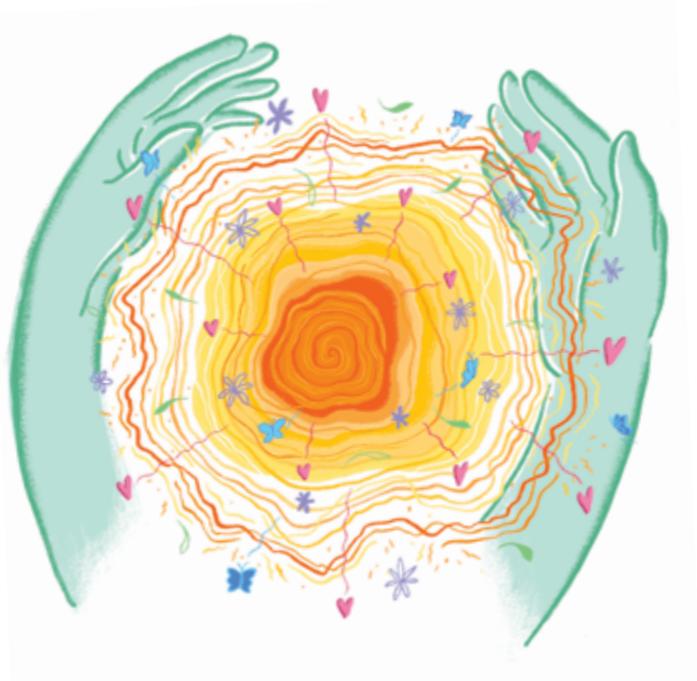
Notice that Buddha was enlightened sitting under a tree in solitude. Mohammed got his insights about God in the Saudi desert where silence reigns. You will not find spiritual inspiration in a noisy airport.

During meditation, there will be temptations to scratch our nose or hand. For instance, to move a leg, or thoughts will cross our minds. These are temptations to take a detour from feeling love. And this reflects the reality of life. It is not easy to love. There are endless temptations to feel rejection, anger, and sometimes even hate.

In Heartfulness Meditation we are allowed to scratch if that is what the body asks for, observe thoughts without getting attached to them, and go promptly back to meditation, to feeling love. In Heartfulness Meditation we are practicing not to allow those tests, those distractions, to ruin our feeling of the infinite, our connection to the sublime.

The second ingredient of Heartfulness is the practice of Cleaning, where we imagine for a few minutes at the end of the day how all the experiences we had that day – experiences that undermine love – evaporate through our backs like vapor. If we don't expel them every day, they accumulate and develop into negative feelings that displace love.

Practice the routine, and with time it becomes our personality, and we will not need to work to recall the feeling of love anymore. It will be who we are.



We need to free ourselves from shame, from self-judgment, from accusations; we need to love ourselves and from there love all those who God loves, and since He created it all, we aim to love it all too.

The third component of Heartfulness practice is, throughout the day, to constantly remind ourselves to maintain the meditative state. To me that means recalling that feeling of love generated during meditation. And if we practice it continually, eventually it will become a routine. Practice the routine, and with time it becomes our personality, and we will not need to work to recall the feeling of love anymore. It will be who we are.

Just thinking and feeling,
Dr. Ichak Kalderon Adizes,
Founder of Adizes Institute

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL

AS YOU EAT SO YOU THINK



EAT
BETTER.
THINK
BETTER.

**GET THE RIGHT FOOD
FOR THE SOUL**

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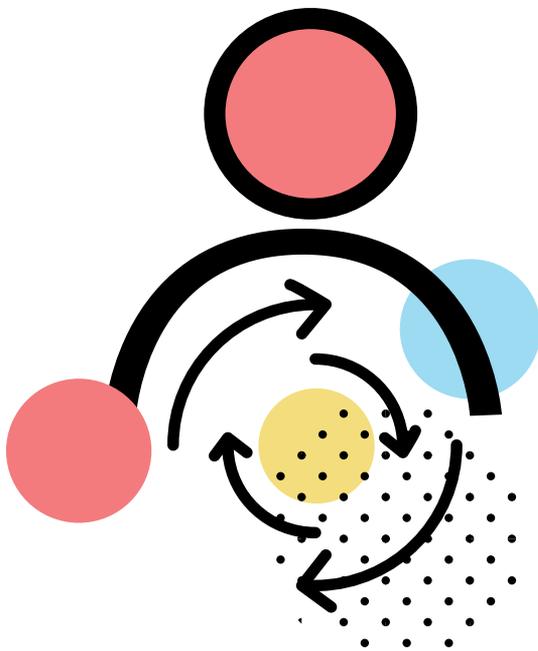
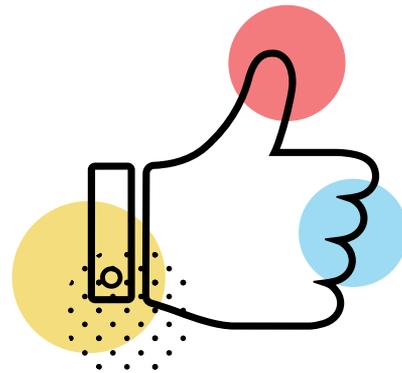
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THE HEARTFUL INNOVATOR

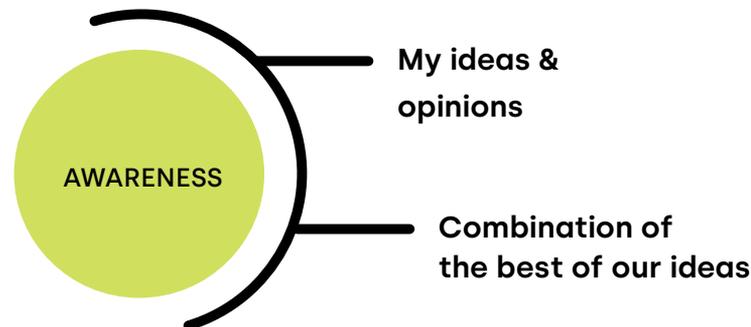
– PART 4

In the previous articles, **RAVI VENKATESAN** outlined 4 key aspects of the “inner state” that we want to fine tune to become Heartful Innovators. He explored the role of the intellect and the ego, and their transformation in enabling innovation. In this article he explores the role our awareness plays in innovation.



I've always been fascinated by how the cameras in the latest smartphones are able to capture videos and take pictures that are way better than even professional cameras from a few years ago. The “secret sauce” of course is the software running on these phones, and not the hardware. This software powered by what is called machine learning (a subcategory of artificial intelligence) is able to make adjustments to what is captured and improve it in many ways.

What is interesting is that we have similar processes that operate within the human being. Let's take just one of our senses, for example. Our vision actually is much poorer than we perceive it to be. The fovea, which is 1% of our visual field at the very center, has high resolution and can resolve several thousand dots in this area. This is very high resolution, but the area is very small. If you hold



out your thumb and stretch your arm, the area of your thumbnail is about your fovea. Even though this fovea is only 1%, our brain's visual cortex devotes 50% to inputs from this area. So why don't we see everything except this small area in a blurry manner?

What happens is that just as the software on our smartphone is enhancing the images in real time, based on artificial intelligence, our mind enhances the images coming from our peripheral vision. For example, as you come to a room for the first time, your eyes scan various parts of the room. Your mind builds a mental model rapidly. Once this is done, even though your eyes are seeing a very small portion of the room clearly, and the rest of it fuzzily through your peripheral vision, your mind creates the impression that you are seeing the entire room clearly. In a way what you see is an illusion!

Surprising, isn't it! The observation that our mind is able to enhance our senses and perception in this manner opens up many other possibilities for us.

The concepts of consciousness and levels of consciousness often appear elusive and esoteric. A simple way to look at it is simply as the degree of awareness. In other words, the higher the consciousness level, the more heightened the degree of awareness. And what is this awareness really? It is our perception of everything internal

and external. The inputs can come from the senses for anything external, or from within the mind for anything internal. The perception of this input by the mind is what we refer to as awareness. Remember that this perception is not exactly the input, but an illusion created by the mind, based on that input. The word illusion can feel negative, but in this case it is positive. In fact, it helps us navigate the world effectively. For example, if the power goes out and you need to walk to the next room to grab a flashlight, you can envision the path from where you are to the next room, and carefully walk in the darkness avoiding obstacles. Your mind is creating an illusion that lets you see without light, and helps you navigate.

In a similar manner if we raise our level of consciousness, and achieve very heightened awareness, then we are able to perceive many things in a natural and sometimes magical manner. We "see" things that others don't see, we "hear" things that others don't hear, we "feel" things that others don't feel. This ability of "super-sensing" becomes a strategic weapon for an innovator. So how can we develop it?

Inner practices that help us raise our level of consciousness are the most effective way to do this. In the next article we will explore this link between levels of consciousness and heightened awareness further, along with some concrete practices to achieve this.



I N N E R V I E W

Winter is not the death of the life cycle,
but its crucible. It's a time for reflection
and recuperation, for slow replenishment,
for putting your house in order.

Doing these deeply unfashionable things
– slowing down, letting your spare time
expand, getting enough sleep, resting –
is a radical act now, but it's essential.

KATHERINE MAY

SILVER



MIRIAM HANID is an artist silversmith. In 2016, she was interviewed by **ROSALIND PEARMAN** for Heartfulness Magazine about her art and her motivations. Five years later, they catch up again about Miriam's journey, and where her art has taken her.

Miriam preparing to chase Radiance

Q: The last time that we reflected on your work it was [2016](#). Looking at your website, you have been so busy since then, continuing to create so many exquisite works of sheer beauty. How have you sustained this output?

Wow, time flies! Thank you, it's always nice to receive good feedback about my work! Many factors come to mind about how I have sustained my output, but I would say the main ones are rest, motivation, and beauty. While these words may not seem to be closely linked, they all work together for me. It is extremely difficult to be motivated without proper rest. Working at an optimal level, the best possible, work seems more like play and the end of the day comes as a surprise. The work is so enjoyable, and one is completely absorbed in it. I believe that leads to great rest.

As the days and months pass, when reflecting on my career so far I often look back on the most productive times with much amazement. But I have found myself overlooking the times of non-doing – those necessary inner periods when I'm just resting, relaxing and absorbing all that is going on. I now know that these are the opportunities where inspirational seeds can poke



their heads above the surface to see what the conditions are like for growth. If my motivation is replenished (more on that later), and I can nourish those seeds, I can catch many new ideas for silver pieces, textures, forms and patterns which then come into being.

Working in precious metal is laborious, particularly chasing and engraving, my two signature techniques. The metal demands care, attention, and precision at every step. Nothing can be rushed, or it ends up taking longer to correct mistakes.

The driving force behind any work, whether the physical sculpting of the silver, or planning and designing, is undoubtedly motivation. There are countless books on how to find your “why power,” the reason why you do what you do. If the mental or emotional “why” is strong, the physical work will fall into place and become easier. To brighten up someone’s spirit, to give a gift of hope, to surpass my past performance, to thank the universe and all the people in it for all the things I’ve learned so far, and to express them in a creative expression of gratitude, I find

INTERVIEW



From Left to right:
Miriam Chasing Cascade Jug
Working on Inifintude
Miriam chasing Cascade Jug
Interns - Sana and Julius working

myself going back to my why at times of difficulty. It is hard to put into words, but I think this is where beauty comes in. The expression and gift of beauty is probably my biggest why.

John O'Donohue writes in his book, *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace*, "When we feel and know and touch the beautiful, we feel that we are at one with ourselves – because in some subtle and secret way, beauty meets the needs of the soul. The Earth is full of concealed beauty," and all we are doing in art is revealing it from the depths of our consciousness – and perhaps from the universal consciousness.

Q: Evidently, you continue to be inspired so much by the forces of nature, especially water, but we can see that you are also interested in many forms and patterns that you observe around you.

I think the inspirations that attract me change and go through seasons. I feel I can always draw on water with its never-ending variety of forms and patterns, encompassing energy and movement which echoes the great flow of love all around us. I also like this to birth in different shapes and matters – those of botanical forms such as leaves, buds and flowers, wood, earth, stone and ice. I have realized more and more that the manner in which a subject is represented in any work is where the real

richness lies. The clues around the subject, how it has been carefully and lovingly shaped and shaded, as well as represented or considered in the overall design, speaks volumes about what the artist is actually communicating with the receiver.

Q: I can see that Japanese traditional forms, such as Manga, are also resonant for your own work and giving you a new direction. Can you say more about how you came to this?

I have always loved oriental art, from the time I studied it in my A levels and the influence it had on Art Nouveau, to coming across beautiful woodblock prints and books such as *The Grammar of Chinese Ornament*, which has many visual motifs which excite me and subconsciously feed into my work.

When writing my latest blog post, "[Oriental Inspired Works](#)," I explored pen and ink Manga with a natural theme after my creative communication assistant, Emma, suggested I look into it. I came across many striking examples of exquisite mark making, which I found very inspirational. I can see these feeding into my use of hand engraving, which uses a series of lines to create different visual effects on silver.

Q: Recently, there were some lovely BBC TV programs by the art historian James Fox about Japanese art. He pointed out how Japanese artists and craftsmen show a reverence and care for the materials they shape; for example, saws and planes are pulled rather than pushed across the wood by a master carpenter. They revere

Miriam working on Infinitude



the spirit of the material they are working with, demonstrating the beauty of the humble and everyday object. I was wondering, do any of these strike a chord with you, too?

I haven't seen this series, but will definitely watch it. It sounds fascinating and seems a very natural way to work with the materials, which are so precious to us as craftspeople. Reverence and care are also very important to me when working with a precious metal – listening to it by observing the signs of stress and tension, and respecting these whilst being aware that the metal can be worked to its limit if treated with respect.

The Flower of Love Tumbler was a piece where I tried to stretch the metal a bit further than normal, and I'm very pleased with the result. I plan to continue in this way, refining as I go, and hopefully pushing more boundaries. There comes a point where it takes great motivation and vision to keep going. It is easy to stop and settle for what the piece may be at that moment, but I feel staying true to one's own vision is important. This might equally entail knowing when to stop.

Q: You mention the significance of simplicity.

This has become an element in my designs all by itself. Looking at my



work, one may think that it is far from simple, however, an object can be meticulously worked by hand and also be simple in design. That is what I aim to achieve, not adding anything unnecessary other than the inherent theme which runs through the piece. Many of my pieces are quite busy, yet I aim to imbue each piece with a

unified feeling so that the piece is inherently harmonious.

The chasing or engraving often follows the same trajectory of the initial shape of the silver piece, and they work in tandem with its nature rather than having a different flow. I feel this is the same for simple living, and it



From left to right:
Golden Sands
Earth Spoon
Mountain Incense Burner
Fierce Grace



Miriam Hanid

is one of the great insights of Heartfulness – to be plain, simple, and thus in tune with nature. For example, as the sun rises, we also rise; as it sets, we rest. We are in harmony.

Q: Are there any pieces you have been making that are most valued by you?





From Left to Right:
Golden Sands
Flower of Love
Cascade Loving Cup Lid





Yes, the Cascade Loving Cup, which was my major commission for 2020 and was delivered in October, in between the lockdowns in the UK. A commission for the Clothworkers' Company of London, the cup evokes a swirling piece of cloth and is deeply chased with draped fabric and yarn fibres. The piece took 800 to 1000 hours of chasing, working the metal from the inside and outside in order to achieve the depth. I collaborated with a fellow silversmith, Jenny Edge, who developed the design of the handles and made them. Working together resulted in this key aspect of the design, and a much more dynamic piece than I could have achieved on my own, particularly as Jenny's specialty is anticlastic raising, by which the inner curves of the handles were formed. It meant she could bring a movement and synergy to the handles which complemented my chasing. The turned wooden models and maquettes made by my father, an engineer, also greatly help the realization of my designs.

The Mountain Incense Burner is another commission that I look back on with particular joy. After my Union Centrepiece was exhibited in the "Masterpieces of British Silver: Highlights from the Victoria and Albert Museum" in Hong Kong, a client who saw it asked me to design and make an incense burner. I really loved researching the mountainous terrain, the flora and fauna of rural

Chinese landscapes in order to design the chasing on this piece. It is one of my most intricate pieces to date, and took considerable time to create. It remains one of my favourites.

Q: I see that you have also been hosting interns. How did you find that?

It was a great summer of 2019, and looking back I value it even more! I really enjoyed the vitality, determination and enthusiasm of my two young students, Sana and Julius, from Paris and Vienna respectively. They asked to come and learn silversmithing and chasing from me, in two-month and one-month internships. Their aptitude and curiosity to learn and apply the techniques to their own work was really refreshing, and I really enjoyed having them in the workshop. We made a road trip to see the master engraver, Malcolm Appleby, in Scotland, and had a great time at a hand engraving symposium there. I have many fond memories of creating, designing, experimenting and sharing.

Q: How does Heartfulness affect your work?

I would say that the practices of Heartfulness enhance my connection to my work, and transform it from something merely physical into a day-to-day and lifelong passion and personal





practice. This cannot be put into words, but I would attempt to describe the process by saying, “If Heartfulness were not there, I would not be able to see in order to create.”

The inspirational people I’ve met through Heartfulness seminars and groups in the UK and around the world form a network of creative connections with beauty of spirit as a running theme. The exceptional talent and enthusiasm for their work of many Heartfulness practitioners – whatever form that work may take – has inspired and nurtured me throughout my career and life so far.

I should also say something about the times I find it difficult to carry on, when I feel depleted, tired, lacking in vision or clarity, or just can’t see the point of my work anymore. It’s my own regular Heartfulness practice that always reveals a helpful insight



From Left to Right:
Infinite
Cascade Loving Cup
Hostas
Cascade Jug

Arjun Anand



Elements Caddy Spoons

about the situation. That daily silent time with my Self brings forth new inspiration, energy, resources, and clarity. It supports my adventure in life generally, which then undoubtedly influences my silversmithing practice with a fresh perspective. This cannot be underestimated. It also confirms that without rest, motivation and beauty, I question whether any of my work would exist in the way it does today.

I found this quote, which is from *The Creative Fire* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés: “Because there must be a decline and a time of utter stillness, creativity can never be paradisaical. It can never be utopia wherein it just flows and flows and flows with no maintenance, with no waiting periods. In everything manifest, there is vibrancy then decline followed by restoration.”

Q: What next?

The effect of the current pandemic has marginally reduced my commissions, so, whilst working on various silver projects at a more relaxed speed, I have enjoyed exploring new techniques, working on a building conversion project with my father, spending more time supporting Heartfulness practitioners through various online programs and virtual meditation sessions, reading and gathering new inspiration.

I have also been having a slower pace of life, which, as I mentioned earlier, is very necessary. Thankfully, I have been fortunate to have consistent income from my work, which is very encouraging. My next project will be a Roses Beaker, as part of a collection of four beakers on the theme of the

four nations of the UK – a concept which my client is commissioning from four different silversmiths. The climbing roses will be chased in my usual style and softly gilded with gold fading out from the centre of each flower.

In the long term, my husband and I have always dreamed of setting up a center where people can come to retreat from their busy lives, learn silversmithing and experience the rural beauty of Suffolk. It would be a creative sabbatical and a retreat from technology. I’m looking forward to seeing what unfolds in the years to come and to exploring how we can bring this project into being in order to provide a space where interested people can slow down and open up the ground for inspirational seeds to grow.

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JULIA CAMERON

Illustration by LAKSHMI GADDAM

Outdoors

SAM RAPOPORT has always loved the Great Outdoors, but thanks to COVID and a new friend, he discovers how to appreciate Nature closer to home, even in his own backyard. It also had an impact on his own inner world, the Great Inner Space.



found my favorite T-shirt in a thrift store, faded red with swooping ski-town font “Explore the Great Outdoors,” an outline of snow-capped mountains looming over a pine forest and a winding road. This was the iconography of Nature with a capital “N” that I worshipped, as I took pilgrimages through the breathtaking valleys of Glacier National Park, the desert canyons of Zion, and the thick woods of the Cohutta Wilderness. In my mind, Nature was always pristine, always “out there” away from the city of Atlanta where I lived. Hiking was about trudging through miles of monotonous Southeastern forest to reach a stunning mountain top view or swimming hole. Whether it was a river valley or hilltop, North Georgia or suburban park, the woods in between me and my destination always blended together: brown, boring, peppered with trees. That is, until I met Kathryn.

Kathryn ran a nonprofit in Atlanta called EcoAddendum, which focused on showing residents the value of the ecosystem around them and taking action to protect it. She took the outdoors club I ran at my university for nature walks in nearby parks and showed us how to identify native trees by their leaves, their bark, the sheen of their acorns. She pointed out invasive species that, if left unchecked, would smother every other plant in sight and wreak havoc on the entire ecosystem. Armed with snippers and shovels, trees choked by English Ivy and wetlands covered head to toe in Japanese Chaff Flower became battlefields in the fight for biodiversity. Previously uniformly unremarkable terrain turned into a narrative of diverse microbiomes, of floodplains and upslopes, sunny sides, and watersheds. Fallen fences and towering oak trees told tales of farmers living there centuries ago, clearing a pasture for their livestock but leaving the oak tree, providing shade before air conditioning and acorns for the pigs to forage.

Just as the natural world around me changed by the day and week and season, so too did my inner world. Putting myself in the beauty of the world below my feet and in front of my eyes allowed me to leave the whirlwind inside my head, if only for the time it takes to watch the winged fruit of a maple spiral to the ground.

There were oaks older than our Declaration of Independence, older than borders and nations and steam engines. Steep slopes that prevented farmers from ever tilling the land, leaving the old-growth soils intact, and harboring rare species like Trillium and wild ginger that only spread their offspring on the backs of ants, traveling only meters over the course of decades. If the soil was disturbed, these sensitive species would die off, and would never be able to return nor escape to new lands – ants have a hard time outrunning a bulldozer.

Hearts a bustin’, we learned to love these wild places. Accessible but irreplaceable, these old-growth forest remnants were right in our



backyards, yet from a surface glance would be indistinguishable from any other backwoods. I recognized the diversity and beauty of these hidden old growth treasures, and at the same time, discovered a greater appreciation for my own backyard. From my lawn, I harvested Plantago, a salve for burns and bug bites, and not bad in a salad. I foraged for blackberries down the street, bringing home buckets laden with sweet summer treats for my neighbors and myself.

That same urge for exploration previously made me upset about visiting the same space twice: If there were so many amazing things to see in the world, why would I waste my time on somewhere I've already been? A global pandemic combined

with looking through Kathryn's eyes allowed me to change that view. Over the course of the past year, I've walked the same blocks of my neighborhood thousands of times and run the same loop through Piedmont Park dozens and dozens of mornings. I have come to realize that just as two forests are never the same, a walk through the woods is never the same twice.

When I was in the mindset of noticing, of slow appreciation, I found so many wonderful joys of life in front of me: A family reunion of mushrooms after the rain, the slow maturing of my neighbor's fig tree, the gorgeous carpet of redbud blossoms on the sidewalk growing thicker by the week. Beauty and awe are not a function of how spectacular the

Exploring the Great Outdoors can bring joy and amazement, but so too can exploring the Great Inward space of ourselves.

sight is, but an internal matter of awareness and appreciation. Just as the natural world around me changed by the day and week and season, so too did my inner world. Putting myself in the beauty of the world below my feet and in front of my eyes allowed me to leave the whirlwind inside my head, if only for the time it takes to watch the winged fruit of a maple spiral to the ground.

I found there was no longer a great divide between the Great Outdoors and the world outside my back door, both boasting tremendous tulip poplars and the scurrying of squirrels. Exploring the Great Outdoors can bring joy and amazement, but so too can exploring the Great Inward space of ourselves. If you ever find that on a thrift store T-shirt, please, please let me know.

Illustrations by ARATI SHEDDE



In Tune
with
Nature

MARGARET SCHENKMAN is a nature lover, who has also learnt to embrace her inner nature through meditation. Here she explores the path of bringing balance and harmony between the inner and the outer worlds, and thus going further along the path to being in tune with Nature.

Growing up, I loved being outdoors – rolling in the grass, climbing trees, even playing in the mud. When I was six, my brothers and I tried to dig to China, and what a mess that created! When I was thirteen, my family moved to a small farm where we grew almost all of our food. I milked cows, raised sheep, and worked in the gardens. I spent hours outdoors, learning to recognize the different trees by their leaves as well as the flowers and insects that inhabited the farm. As years passed, I became an avid hiker, often hiking barefoot; I loved the feel of the Earth. One year I hiked to the bottom of the Grand Canyon barefoot, because the boots I had brought were new and rubbing blisters. All in all, I could have described myself as a nature lover.

In my 30s, I was challenged by a debilitating health condition that brought my outdoors exploration to a sudden halt and opened up a spiritual journey through the practices of Heartfulness. This journey

led to an inner exploration of Nature that was even more fascinating than the nature around me.

Early in my spiritual journey, I found the Ten Principles of Heartful Living. The fourth principle is to “simplify life to be identical with Nature.” When I first started thinking about this principle years ago, I was truly puzzled. I needed to renovate my garage and wondered, “Does that mean I shouldn’t put in an automatic door opener?” I didn’t think that was what this principle was suggesting, any more than I should live in a tent in the woods. But I wasn’t entirely sure.

So what was this principle all about? Clearly, it must be deeper than it appeared on the surface.

Through the teachings of Heartfulness, I have come to appreciate the relationship between Nature and vibration, and to understand how together they can lead to “oneness” amongst all people. Daaji once explained that we each transmit our vibration to the universe. I have come to understand that it is through our vibratory state that we can be simple and identical with Nature.

This idea of a vibratory state was alien to me when I began exploring my inner nature. Over time, I realized that the idea of the vibratory state is easily appreciated when we walk into a room in which people have been arguing – we feel the heaviness that the vibrations create in the atmosphere. Think of the familiar adage, “You could cut the air with a

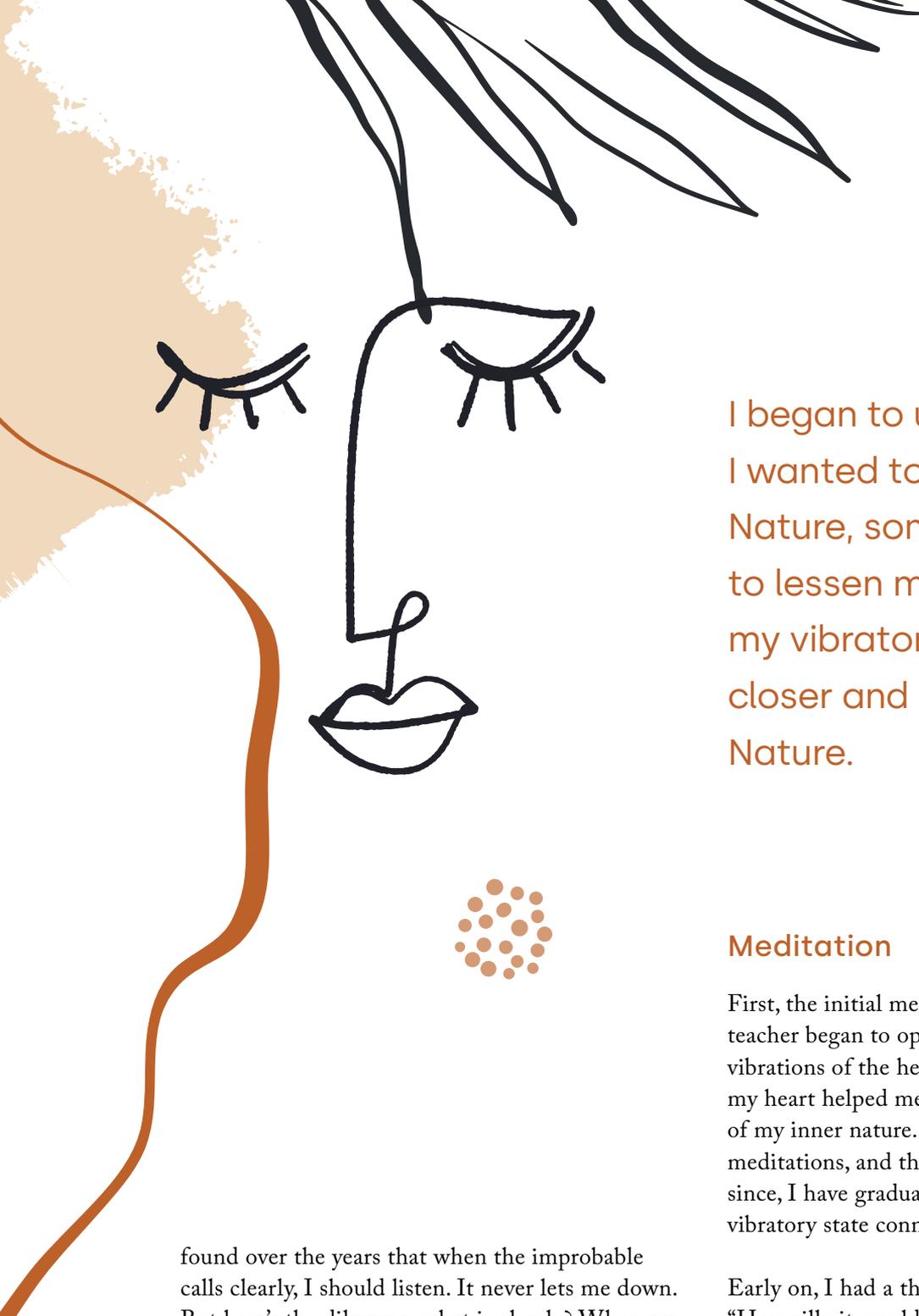
knife.” Conversely, when we walk into the home of someone who lives a peaceful life, we feel the peace that pervades. Whether we are aware consciously or unconsciously, that awareness is there.

By studying the philosophy behind this principle of simplifying life to be identical with Nature, I began to appreciate that there is a natural vibration or current flowing in all of us. This vibration is layered over by the vibrations that we have set up for ourselves. Those latter vibrations are heavier, laden with our thoughts, wants, and desires, making it difficult to find the original vibration of Nature. I began to understand that if I wanted to be identical with Nature, somehow I needed to lessen my desires so that my vibratory state came closer and closer to that of Nature.

Through the teachings of Heartfulness, I have come to appreciate the relationship between Nature and vibration, and to understand how together they can lead to “oneness” amongst all people.

Over the years, I have begun to see that I make choices every day; some of them lead me away from Nature, and some allow me to flow in a natural way. I have also observed that the choices which lead me away from Nature make my life more complicated. I can almost always get what I “want” if I try hard enough. For example, in my teens my brother had taken up working in gold. He made some lovely earrings and a pendant for my mother. I was jealous and desperately wanted him to make something for me. He made a small figurine of a man playing the violin, so I badgered him until he gave it to me so that I could wear it on a chain around my neck. To this day, I have it but can’t wear it – perhaps in shame at having insisted that he give it to me. I asked him to take it back many years later, but he would not. It is patently clear to me now how far that behavior led me away from Nature’s vibration. It was clearly not directed by a higher vibration, but by a desire, originating from a world view created by my own mind.

I find instances throughout my life in which I powered through to get what I wanted, without considering whether it was what I needed; I find a myriad of judgmental behaviors, of thoughtless acts. In each instance, I pursued what was contrary to the subtle vibration of Nature. I also find instances where my decisions appear to have been in tune with Nature’s plan for me; decisions that led to actions which flowed easily and filled me with great satisfaction. My choice of career was one such decision. After many years of education in one field, I began a new course of study on what seemed like a whim, which took me in the natural direction of my aptitudes and interests. I have



I began to understand that if I wanted to be identical with Nature, somehow I needed to lessen my desires so that my vibratory state came closer and closer to that of Nature.

Meditation

First, the initial meditations with my spiritual teacher began to open an awareness of the vibrations of the heart. The connection with my heart helped me to develop an awareness of my inner nature. In the silence of those first meditations, and through many more meditations since, I have gradually become deeply aware of the vibratory state connecting my heart with all hearts.

Early on, I had a thought during a meditation, “How silly it would be if my toes thought they were separate entities from the rest of me.” I saw this as a metaphor for my own creation not being the whole story, as if I was not part of the whole. In other words, when I am deeply connected with the vibratory state of the whole, I am no longer a toe existing as a separate entity. I become one with my inner nature.

found over the years that when the improbable calls clearly, I should listen. It never lets me down. But here’s the dilemma: what is clearly? When am I hearing a vibration from my heart, and when is it from my mind, my thought?

I have found that one way to truly hear the subtle vibration of the heart is to engage in the practices of Heartfulness. Three aspects of Heartfulness have helped me greatly in this endeavor:

Just as nature has an infinite variety – of colors of flowers, of animals from the smallest mouse to the greatest lion – so, too, do humans.

Cleaning

A second tool in the path to oneness with Nature is the process of Cleaning, which helps to remove impressions created through the experience of living. This is accomplished in two ways: by meditating with a trainer, when the vibrations are gradually cleared away, even if they have been accumulating for a very long time; and by doing individual cleaning daily to remove complexities accumulated during the day.

I picture these complexities as vibratory densities that have taken on a life of their own. If I leave them on their own, they become more and more entangled and alive. They become their own truth, a very limited truth. By cleaning the impressions

away each day, I can appreciate life's experiences without the narrow perception of my "self" and the world in which I live. And, importantly, I can better hear the vibration of Nature within.

Cooperation

The third critical component is cooperation. My first spiritual teacher, Chariji, impressed upon me the importance of cooperation. For a long time, I did not understand the depth of meaning of this word. I equated cooperation with doing the meditation practice diligently. Over time, I came to appreciate that the meditation could change my awareness of my inner self, but only cooperation could change behaviors that hold me tightly to that expression of my self. I needed to let go of old habits, old thoughts, and old patterns of behavior, in order to stop propagating those vibrational densities that were keeping me separate from the vibration of Nature.

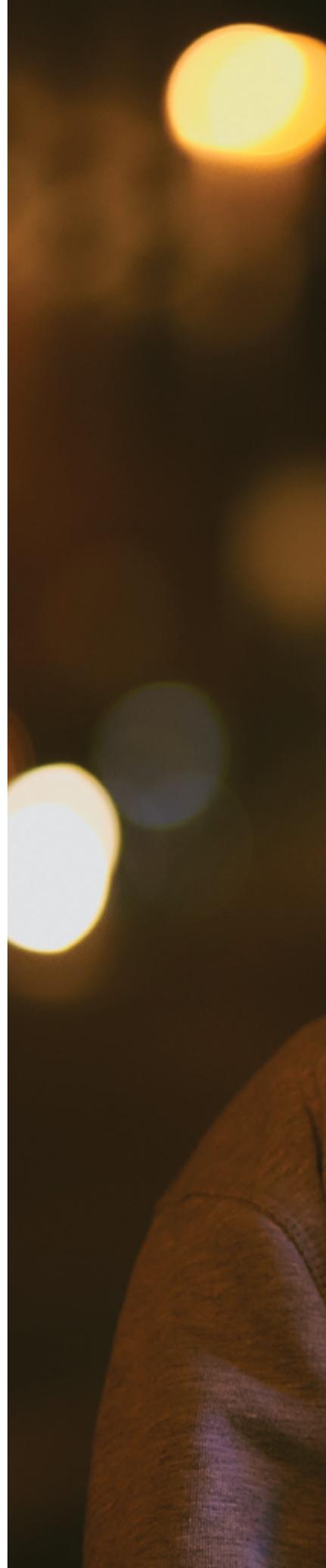
In fact, all the Heartfulness practices have been necessary on my journey toward identity with Nature, especially meditating to better see my inner self, cleaning of vibrational densities that have accumulated over a lifetime, and cooperation to let go of those behaviors that create new vibrational densities.

For a time, I thought that identity with Nature might mean losing my personality. Instead, I have found that meditation helps me understand my personality from a broader perspective. Just as nature has an infinite variety – of colors of flowers, of animals from the smallest mouse to the greatest lion – so, too, do humans. People come with a variety of temperaments, different strengths and skill sets, and from different cultures. People come with different personalities. At the same time, there is uniformity in Nature in terms of the fundamental vibratory state, a state of complete acceptance of all. The challenge is to embrace diversity, while gradually vibrating more and more with the uniformity of Nature.

be inspired

Sometimes the longest journey
we make is the sixteen inches
from our heads to our heart.

ELENA AVILA







Generosity & Not Stealing

The Art of Removing and Creating Habits

PART 4

Last month, **DAAJI** explored the yogic wisdom around creating the habit of truth and authenticity, by studying the second *Yama*, known as *satya*. Now, in part 4, he focuses on the third *Yama* – *asteya*, meaning to remove the habit of stealing and taking anything that is not ours.

Previously, we have explored *ahimsa*, the removal of all forms of violence, forcefulness and imposition in our character, and *satya*, the removal of the programs of falsity that prevent us from being authentic and truthful. This month we explore the third *Yama*, *asteya*, the removal of the habit of stealing from our lifestyle. Initially, this seems so simple and straightforward – most of us would say, “I don’t steal” – but when we go into this *Yama* in depth, we realize that it impacts many aspects of our life.

What does it mean to steal from others?

Stealing is taking something without permission or legal or moral right. The obvious examples of stealing are the theft of another person’s property, their possessions, or their intellectual property, but there are so many ways we steal from each other and from our environment. For example, our current environmental crisis, including climate change and the mass extinction of species, is a result of us not following this third *Yama*; we treat our planet Earth as a resource to be pillaged without restraint.

A little study highlights the fact that non-stealing is an important principle in all cultural traditions and religions. For example:

In the Jewish and Christian traditions, three of the ten commandments relate to *asteya*:

Thou shalt not steal.
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s spouse.
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s goods.

Of the five precepts of Taoism, the second is:

No stealing.
Lao Tzu said, “The precept against stealing is: Don’t take anything that we don’t own and is

not given to us, whether it belongs to someone or not.”

The second precept of Buddhism is:

Theft is prohibited along with related activities such as fraud and forgery; basically, taking anything that is not given.

The Greek philosopher Plato says:

“He who steals a little, steals with the same wish as he who steals much, but with less power.”

The German philosopher Emmanuel Kant proposes:

There are human duties that conform to unconditional moral laws, including:

Never lie.
Never cheat.
Never steal.

Kant thinks that lying, cheating and stealing all involve treating someone or something else as a mere means to an end. This is a central notion in his approach to ethics.

The Harvard Law Professor, Michael Sandel, challenges us with thought-provoking ethical dilemmas around stealing, which we will explore later. He also summarizes the different philosophies on the ethics of stealing, and groups them into two fundamental classes. The first is a totalitarian approach, which is concerned with maximizing the welfare of all and bringing the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. Within this framework, the legendary heroic outlaw Robin Hood stole from the rich and gave to the poor. He redistributed wealth in a society where there was a great class divide.

The second is the rights-based approach, which depends upon the fundamental belief in individual rights and individual freedom. In this view, Robin Hood had no right to steal from the rich, no matter how oppressive they were in keeping working people in poverty. Sandel says that there is another view, which transcends both these – that civic virtue and the common good matter much more.

Osho challenges us even further, asking us to examine our own behavior, and saying that most of us are stealing most of the time. It may not be money, land or possessions – we also steal other people’s thoughts and words. He goes so far as to say that most of our knowledge and opinions are stolen.



Osho also agrees with Plato when he says, “The act of theft is total. If I steal two cents, then I am just as much a thief as when I steal two hundred thousand.” He points out that in our society different types of theft have different consequences – some theft lands the thief in jail, whereas clever thieves who are part of the establishment continually get away with thieving. He makes a very bold statement: Our modern societies are based upon theft and corruption. If Osho is correct, then we have to examine the fundamental fabric of our tendencies and habits very carefully.

The first Guide of Heartfulness, Lalaji, says, “Taking more than what is rightful is also stealing. If we hoard something that is not useful in the present, but we keep it for the future, that is also stealing, because it may be useful and necessary to someone else when it is useless to us. Collecting for the future more than is necessary for the present is also stealing.”

And finally, Swami Vivekananda writes, “Receiving is just as bad as stealing, because when receiving gifts the mind is acted upon by the giver, destroying the independence of the mind of the receiver.”

It all goes to show that this third *Yama* has much wider implications in our lives than it first seems.

Stealing thoughts

There is a very sweet story about my first Guide, Babuji, which shows how we steal the thoughts of others. In his autobiography, Babuji writes, “I became interested in philosophy and began to think out the problems in my own way. It was at the age of fifteen or sixteen that I wanted to read philosophical books. I ordered Mill’s *Utilitarianism* and went through a few pages of the book. A thought arose in my mind that if I studied such

books, I would write their thoughts as quotations, and originality would be lost. I closed the book, put it aside, and developed my own thinking.”

The implication of this is that our education system is based on stolen learning. It depends primarily on book knowledge and rote learning from a very early age. Can we say that this is wrong? Not necessarily. Borrowed knowledge is often very helpful, like when a parent teaches a child not to cross the road without looking both ways first. When we read great thoughts from others and imbibe them, is it so very wrong? Not at all, but we need to ask ourselves, “How am I using that borrowed knowledge?” There is a clear distinction between understanding what others are teaching so that we can learn from them, and simply stealing their thoughts. The first involves discernment and verification, whereas the second is blind. It pays to ask, “Am I cognizant of the extent of the stealing in my life?”

For example, what will you do with the thoughts presented in this article? Ideally, any thoughts I am sharing with you are catalysts for reflection, introspection, experimentation and observation, so that you can decide for yourself whether you agree or not. They should evoke your own experience and knowledge. Otherwise, like Babuji, perhaps it is better to remain original.

Stealing identity

Another type of stealing is when we aspire to become like another person to the extent that we are no longer authentic. As with education, we teach this habit to children from a very young age. Parents and teachers often tell children, “Become like Mother Mary,” or “Become noble like Lord Rama,” or “You should aspire to be rich and successful like Warren Buffet or Mukesh Ambani.” They may all be wonderful role models, but what

By letting go of the pulls and pushes of prejudices, worldly worries, sensuality and passion, guilt and shame, we come to a state of equilibrium and balance where we are no longer buffeted by wishes and desires.

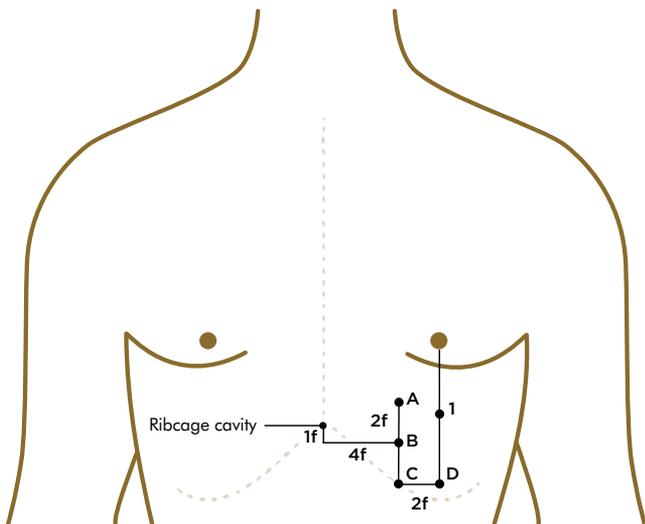
about the original purpose of that child’s soul? We teach children to deny their own authenticity, their own *satya*, and to steal the identities of others. We are indirectly telling them that they are not worthy as they are, trusting their own heart, whereas when children are allowed to be authentic their inner self shines forth, and they develop self-acceptance without the need to steal thoughts, feelings, personalities and behaviors from others.

Many major industries rely on our compulsion to steal from others, for example the world of fashion and designer clothes relies on us wanting to look like someone else so that we feel we belong. Even in spiritual organizations, if the leader adopts a certain dress code or grows a beard, others automatically copy and adopt the same. We want to be like someone else, and have what they have – preferably someone we admire – so we feel good about ourselves. One of my associates once told me a story about an incident that happened when she was a small girl. A friend at school used to stroke her arm. When she asked, “Why do you keep doing that?” the other little girl responded, “So that whatever you have rubs off on me.” These are all manifestations of a stealing consciousness.

How can we transcend the habit of stealing?

Stealing arises because of the feeling of inadequacy that “What I am and what I have is not enough.” In some cases it is a genuine need, as when a person steals food for their family’s survival. In other cases it is desire-based or because of a psychological compulsion like kleptomania. Instead, let’s imagine for a moment that all we need is being given to us; we lack nothing. Would we then be interested in stealing from others? This inner acceptance that we lack nothing is the state of contentment known as *santosh* in Sanskrit, which is so highly valued in Yoga.

We first encounter it when we master the journey of Chakra 1 of the Heart Region with the help of a capable Guide. By letting go of the pulls and pushes of prejudices, worldly worries, sensuality and passion, guilt and shame, we come to a state of equilibrium and balance where we are no longer buffeted by wishes and desires. This preliminary state of acceptance is known as *Vairagya*, and it is one of the four main pillars that lead us to the goal of Yoga.



Chakra 1 of the Heart Region

SADHANA CHATUSHTAYA

Four-fold spiritual practice for progress towards the goal

Viveka

Discernment

Vairagya

Detachment

Shat-Sampatti

Spiritual Attainments

Mumukshutva

To Seek Liberation

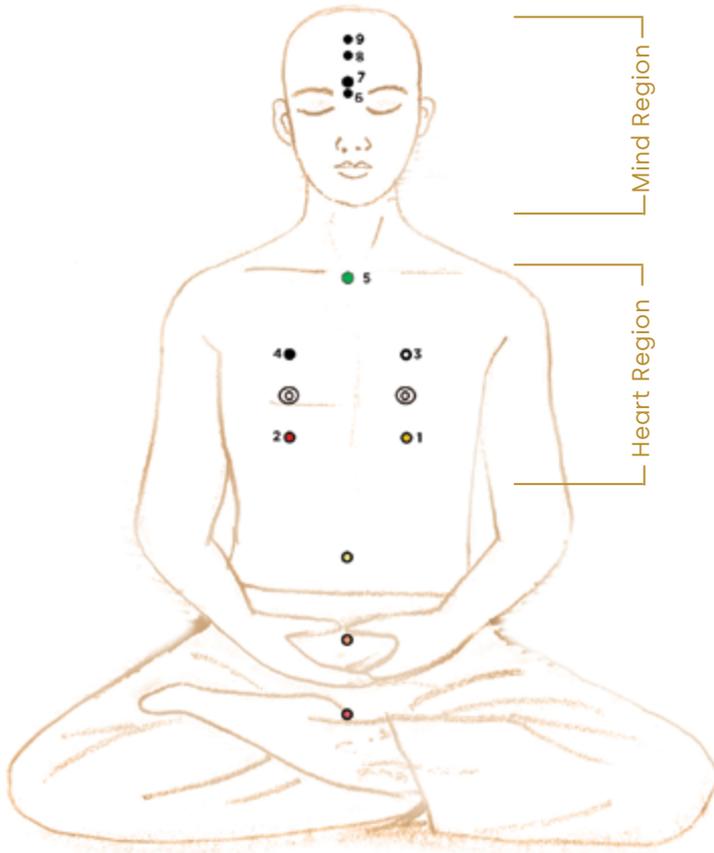
Sutras that we need to do a spiritual practice – *abhyas* – as well as to live in a state of *Vairagya*.

Experiencing the sequence of *Yamas* so far, we also learn that when we are able to master *ahimsa* and *satya*, filling our hearts with love and truth, honesty will naturally manifest in everything we think and do. Our very presence will set the moral compass of everyone around us. In fact, stealing is a kind of violence, and it is also dishonest, so by cultivating both non-violence and truthfulness we will naturally cultivate *asteya*. We will have no interest in coveting or stealing anything.

Generosity

But is *asteya* enough on its own? Not taking from others or hurting them is only the beginning. We also need to climb higher to the next level of expression of this principle – that of developing generosity and a giving nature. For example, if we are empathetic, compassionate and loving our presence will be of greater value. Others will be comforted. We will give more than we receive, and in that respect we will become progressively more in tune with Nature.

In spiritual terminology, generosity of the heart is associated with completing the awakening of the chakras of the Heart Region and embarking upon the awakening of the chakras of the Mind Region. This is already a high stage of spiritual advancement, which requires practice and the support of yogic Transmission and a capable Guide. In fact, it is almost impossible for someone without such support to reach this stage. So, for our societies to become non-stealing in nature, it is incumbent on us as individuals in those societies to take up a spiritual practice that allows us to develop the true generosity of a giving nature.



As we journey further, we eventually encounter an even lighter state of desirelessness known as *Uparati*, which no longer carries the weight of running away from worldly things. Here there are no longer any pushes and pulls. The soul is now untethered from the ballast of worldly charms and attachments. In this subtle state of acceptance and contentment, where is the need to steal?

How do we arrive at this extraordinarily carefree state? Only a practical approach can bring this about, which is why Patanjali tells us in his Yoga



One basic principle is to give more than you receive, and another is to do everything in life without force, violence or imposition. These qualities shine through in a person who has evolved through spiritual practice and self-study.

Such a level of generosity is often illuminated through stories. Here is one such story about a sage and a thief:

A thief once broke into a sage's humble hut in the dead of night, but after entering he was dismayed to see that there was nothing to steal. The sage woke with the noise but pretended to still be asleep, lying still and watching what was happening. He soon realized that the poor thief had nothing, so he quietly dropped his blanket onto the floor so that the thief could take it away.

From that time onward, every evening before going to bed the sage offered a simple thought that, "All my possessions are common property." This way, if any thief came to his home again, they would not be guilty of theft. The sage was generous-hearted. He not only felt for the thief, he also did what he could to help him. This attitude goes beyond

If we are empathetic, compassionate and loving our presence will be of greater value. Others will be comforted. We will give more than we receive, and in that respect we will become progressively more in tune with Nature.

simple *asteya* to that higher perspective where the intention is to remove the need for thieving in the first place through generosity.

Is *asteya* always the right thing to do?

In his book, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*, Professor Michael Sandel asks, "Is it all right to steal a drug that your child needs to survive?" This highlights the fact that there can be situations where there is an ethical dilemma around stealing, for example stealing food and clothing to help starving children. Generally, most people accept that saving human life is a higher principle even than *asteya*, bringing into play the idea of an ethical hierarchy. How to decide what is the right thing to do in such situations?

Any ethical dilemma will have its own specific circumstances, so we can only arrive at the best solution by listening to the heart with a clear mind. This capacity for heart-based discernment and wisdom is known as *Viveka*, and it also develops through meditative practices. Like *Vairagya*, it is one of the four main pillars that lead to the goal of Yoga. Both *Viveka* and *Vairagya* depend upon

spiritual practice, which results in moderation of desires and refinement of the ego. We lose *Viveka* under the spell of egotism, remaining adamant about our personal views. Similarly, strong desires and a lack of moderation also blur our capacity for *Viveka*.

In summary

I hope that these few thoughts offered on the topic of *asteya* will encourage you to examine your own life and see where you are on this spectrum of giving to receiving to stealing. One basic principle is to give more than you receive, and another is to do everything in life without force, violence or imposition. These qualities shine through in a person who has evolved through spiritual practice and self-study. Such a person develops that exquisite level of character that automatically attracts us and makes us feel so joyful and wonderful to be in their company.

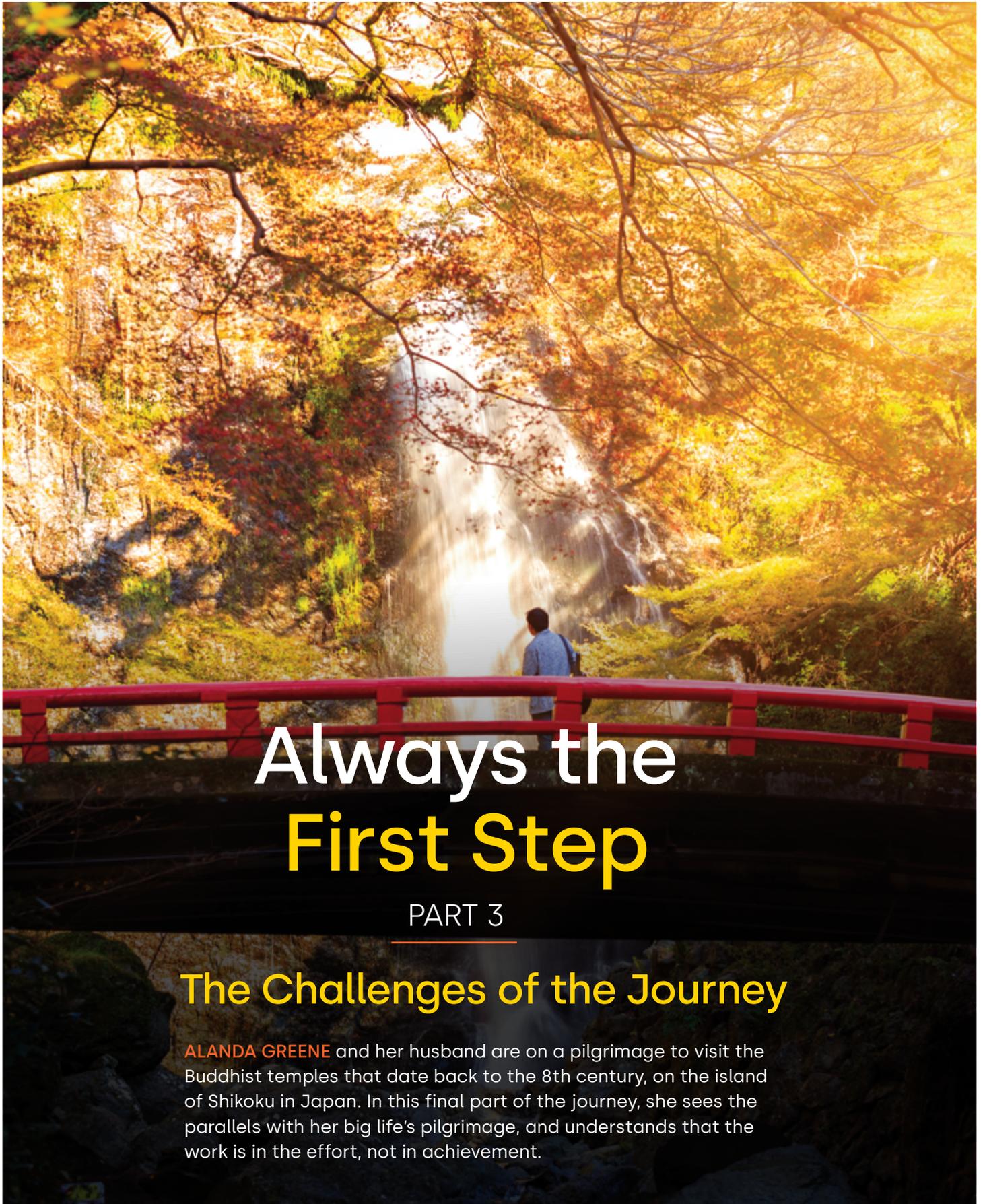
taste of life





When setting out
on a journey do not
seek advice from
someone who never
left home.

RUMI



Always the First Step

PART 3

The Challenges of the Journey

ALANDA GREENE and her husband are on a pilgrimage to visit the Buddhist temples that date back to the 8th century, on the island of Shikoku in Japan. In this final part of the journey, she sees the parallels with her big life's pilgrimage, and understands that the work is in the effort, not in achievement.

The Buddha taught the Eightfold Path as a means to be free of the innate suffering of the unawakened existence. “Right effort” is one fold of the Eight. Did Kobo Daishi teach about right effort when he wandered around Shikoku? If he did, what did he say about this striving? If we, on our small pilgrimage, begin to choose only the temples in the countryside, only the temples we like, what is determining our action then? I think of the ancient yogic teachings that counsel freedom from the limitation and control of likes and dislikes. When we open the can of worms of likes and dislikes, a whole host of wiggly interferences ensues.

I recognize that I want certainty. If I stay focused on my goal of completing the pilgrimage and visiting all the temples, I can muster the drive and determination to complete this. It’s not that I don’t feel the presence of distractions, hounding me like homeless dogs sniffing for a handout. If I’ve lost the ideal of getting to all the temples, what will hold back the temptation of, say, laziness? Because, in fact, we are truly exhausted every evening and there is no denying the appeal of taking a day to soak in one of the many natural hot springs on the island. I feel the wiggly mass of likes and dislikes that congeal into tempting thoughts of choosing the most comfortable and aesthetically pleasing routes. I hear the panting at my heels of the distraction dogs, who conjure images of historic castles, museums, and galleries. “This is it, isn’t it?” I tell myself. Without the goad of success in completing this pilgrimage, I fear my ability to sustain my commitment. I don’t trust myself.

There’s an old tradition in Japanese pottery making. Deliberately flaw the piece. Don’t let the temptation for perfection enter into it. Give the work the best effort possible, then make it “less than.” I used to think this was a message about not expecting perfection in this life, about acknowledging that this is not a perfect world. Now I wonder if the practice is to challenge the aspect that wants it perfect and, if it isn’t, well, what point is there to keep on striving? The work is in the effort, not in achieving some concept about a goal.

I grasp this about pottery making; feel less convinced about pilgrimage making. I hum lines from a Leonard Cohen song: “Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack, a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.” “Yeah, right!” I mutter

Now I wonder if the practice is to challenge the aspect that wants it perfect and, if it isn't, well, what point is there to keep on striving? The work is in the effort, not in achieving some concept about a goal.



More challenges present themselves over the days, but these become less bothersome because they are so compensated by the goodwill and assistance we receive on our journey. I begin to have a profound and heartfelt appreciation for the positive kindness we meet over and over.

to myself. But a pottery bowl doesn't hold its soup very well if it's cracked, does it?

Each day as I walk, I ponder and question this theme. I wanted to visit all the temples, wanted that sense of completion. That goal had to be relinquished. Okay, I tell myself, I'll come back another time by myself and do it. But I know it's a lie. Surrender can feel like such a cheap and easy out.

I do want certainty. These signposts and little red arrows are fabulous. We are learning where to look for them, how to find the clues that tell us where the path is. We encounter astonishing help every day. I realize I want that kind of certainty in the big pilgrimage also. When I struggle with decisions, endeavor to understand what right action is, I have longed for the red arrow of certainty to appear. If the heavens don't part with the message written clearly in a language that I know, couldn't there at least be granite posts with signs I can figure out?

Maybe it's a matter of faith, I consider. Never once have I doubted the truth of the red arrows on this route. I trust those pilgrims who went before. In

daily life, my mind does not recognize or accept the signs so easily. When walking on Shikoku, I go where the arrow points. When walking in my regular life, I sometimes don't like where the arrow points and don't want to recognize it as an arrow. But not to be too harsh on myself, usually it doesn't even look like an arrow. If the Divine wants me to go a certain way, wouldn't it make sense to use a signal I can clearly understand?

More challenges present themselves over the days, but these become less bothersome because they are so compensated by the goodwill and assistance we receive on our journey. I begin to have a profound and heartfelt appreciation for the positive kindness we meet over and over. People go out of their way to help us. We don't recognize the bus we need, so someone runs out of a ticket booth and hails down the bus, asking the driver to make sure we get off at the right place. It rains, we have no umbrella, a kindly woman in a shop makes us wait while she finds one in the back of her store and insists we take it. An English-speaking man appears from nowhere when we are lost and looking for the small inn where we have reservations. After he takes us there, he explains our vegetarian dietary needs to the owners, and we avoid the discomfort



Photo Credit: SUGAR FRESH 1 / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

of being served the fish that other guests eat. We ask directions to a lost temple, and a woman clears out her back seat and drives us. Same thing when looking a few days later for a train station. We meet helpful and cheerful people.

I cannot help recalling the times in other countries when I blundered, didn't know protocol or language, went the wrong way, and met the rolled eyes, impatient sighs, long-suffering looks of pained bother, or the very loud and then louder explanations that suggest I am dense or hard of hearing. I resolve to be kinder. More helpful. Positive.

This feels like one clear message from the pilgrimage. Be kind. Be helpful. But what about striving? What about goals? What about right effort? I count up the stamps from the temples visited so far. It doesn't look good. At least as far as numbers go. We might get to sixty of them.

The days are getting cooler and the maples are beginning to turn, transforming the forested mountains to shades of red, orange and gold. The beauty of our daily walks has me feeling like Mole in Kenneth Grahame's book, *The Wind in the Willows*, when Rat took him out in the boat in spring. "It's too much, Ratty. Too much."

Sometimes it feels like my heart can't hold this much beauty as we walk along ridges, follow cascading blue rivers, find temples high in the clouds. Then the next day, the same thing – different form, same breath-catching beauty. I begin to forget about how many temples. We just get to what we can each day.

As days pass, I recognize one more difference between this pilgrimage and the big life one. We have a specific departure date whose presence I feel looming. It's hard to be in the timeless moment of now, when I need to keep track of the date we

This feels like one clear message from the pilgrimage. Be kind. Be helpful.

need to be at Osaka airport. But these maples and the mountain trails give moments.

In the big pilgrimage, I don't have a specified departure date. Not one I've been told about, anyway. I have no ticket with a flight and gate number. Kobo Daishi is reported to have announced his date of death, set his will in order, left clear instructions for his successor, and the day before he died he helped complete his portrait that a disciple was painting.

I live the big pilgrimage with the unarticulated assumption that my departure date is a long time in the future. Unexpected deaths of family, friends, and neighbors reveal the unreliability of this assumption. "You just never know," we who gather to acknowledge the passing of a life nod to each other. "You just can't put things off." I don't want to put things off. The fact is I don't know my time of death the way the Daishi did, the way I accept the certainty of my ticket from Japan.

The final temple we visit is in fact Number 88, Okuboji, but it is the sixtieth of my count. We climb over a mountain and down to the temple, a mountain once forbidden to women, where the Daishi changed the restriction – a reminder that enlightenment is available in this lifetime, to female and male alike. The climb is long, steep, and cold, but it's the beauty that is breathtaking. I didn't think we could experience anything yet more



beautiful than the routes of the previous days, but I was wrong.

We visit this temple. I bid farewell to Kobo Daishi at the enormous stone statue at the front gate, say prayers of thanks and farewell at the Main and Daishi Halls. I wait for a sense of completion, finality. An insight. There is no red arrow that points to understanding. Later, we wait for the bus down the mountain to the train station, lean against a stone wall where a small patch of the late day sun warms it, and eat Japanese oranges gifted from a young man about to depart by motorcycle. "So, this is it," I muse. The last temple.

The pilgrimage ended. Is it finished, with all those unvisited temples around the island? Do I yet understand the meaning of pilgrimage? Do I know what impelled me to do this?

The guide map said it only mattered if I took the first step. This much I do understand, from walking this island where Buddhism saturates the land and where the sense of eternal presence leaks through everywhere. It leaks out of the bowl to the always now and every step is a first step. It only matters that I make it, one first step after the other. This much I understand. This is enough.

SOMEWHERE, RIGHT NOW

AN ORCA LEAPS OUT OF THE WATERS



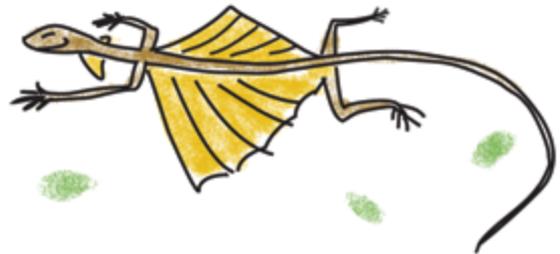
A BABY SEA TURTLE CRAWLS TOWARDS THE SEA



A KINGFISHER SPOTS A GOOD MEAL



A LIZARD GLIDES IN THE AIR

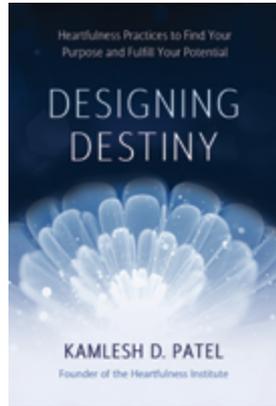


A SNAIL MAKES GOOD PROGRESS



NEW LIFE PUSHES FORWARD





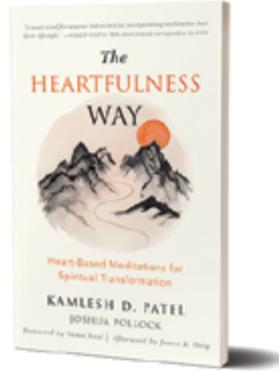
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HEARTSAPP

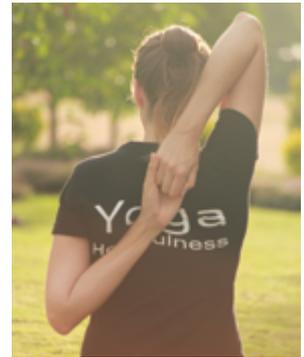


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The Food Forest Project



The Yatra Garden

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