

# heartfulness

purity **I** weaves destiny

**P.V. SINDHU**

Poise Under  
Pressure

**MICHEL LECLERCQ**

DECATHLON  
- Spreading  
Happiness

**DAAJI**


The Science of  
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# Sport

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# The Talent, Skill And Integrity Of Good Sport

Dear readers,

Sport has been an integral part of human society since before recorded history. Games and competitions have provided the opportunity for athletes to excel, for spectators to be entertained, and for teamwork to develop. A good sportsperson can't play half-heartedly, and an outstanding sportsperson plays even more than whole-heartedly – their whole being is in a state of flow, totally absorbed in their sport with single-focus.

What is required to reach such heights of excellence? Discipline, intention, and hard work, for sure, and also a set of qualities that give spice to the endeavor – love, passion and enthusiasm. Meditation helps to cultivate all of these qualities, to focus the mind and open the heart to the fullest potentiality. A good sportsperson then manifests this potentiality mentally, emotionally and physically.

In this edition, we hear from the recent Alpine Ski World Cup in La Thuile, Italy, and the Italian National Basketball Artists in New York City, where Heartfulness was a sponsoring partner, and certified trainers offered meditation and relaxation practices to athletes, coaches and spectators. We also have exclusive interviews with P.V. Sindhu, the current women's World Badminton Champion, and Michel Leclercq, the founder of the DECATHLON Group, the most successful sporting goods retailer.

In addition, Daaji's fourth article in the series, "A User's Guide to Living", explores the science behind setting goals, as well as the ultimate goal of human existence, and other authors share their ideas on the secret of success and how to make the most out of failure. Integrity is a theme that runs through all of these articles, and integrity is a function of integration. In this era of game-fixing and sledging, we would like to take the time to honor those sportsmen and sportswomen who demonstrate the utmost integrity, and who shine in their respective fields as a result.

All the best,  
The editors

## CREATIVE TEAM

*Editorial Team* — Meghana Anand, Elizabeth Denley, Emma Ivaturi, Vanessa Patel, Mamata Venkat

*Design & Art* — Emma Ivaturi, Uma Maheswari, Rahul Singh Parmar, Ananya Patel, Jasmeem Rathod, Ramya Sriram

*Writers* — Ichak Adizes, Giuseppe Dottorini, Paulo Lezzelle, Ruben Montagnoli, Kamlesh Patel, Madhusudan Reddy, Sylvie Berti Rossi, Mamata Venkat, Ravi Venkatesan, Bhamini Shree

*Interviewees* — Michel Leclercq, Mary Gordon, P.V. Sindhu

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

[contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com](mailto:contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com)

## ADVERTISING

[advertising@heartfulnessmagazine.com](mailto:advertising@heartfulnessmagazine.com)

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

[subscriptions@heartfulnessmagazine.com](mailto:subscriptions@heartfulnessmagazine.com)  
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# contributors



## KAMLESH PATEL

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



## MICHEL LECLERCQ

Michel is a French businessman, who is the founder and 40% owner of the DECATHLON Group, the world's largest sporting goods retailer. He is married with four children, and lives in Lille, France. His wife, Marie-Claude Leclercq, is a psychotherapist, and represents the family on the council of the DECATHLON Foundation, which was founded in 2005.



## MARY GORDON

Mary is an award-winning social entrepreneur, educator, author, child advocate and parenting expert. In 1996 she created the Roots of Empathy program, which is now offered in many countries, and in 2005 she created the Seeds of Empathy program for 3 to 5-year-olds in childcare. She is also the founder of Canada's first and largest school-based Parenting and Family Literacy Centres. Mary speaks and consults to governments, educational organizations, and public institutions, including the World Health Organization, the Skoll World Forum, and the United Nations.



## P.V. SINDHU

P.V. Sindhu is a professional badminton player. She has won medals at multiple tournaments, including the Olympics, and a gold at the 2019 World Championships. She is also the recipient of the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna sporting honor, and both the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan civilian awards in India.



## RAVI VENKATESAN

Ravi lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and is currently Head of Innovation at Bakkt. He is also a regular public speaker and public speaking coach. He has been a Heartfulness meditator for over 20 years and is passionate about applying meditation lessons to improve workplace relationships and productivity.

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# THE AUDI FIS ALPINE Ski World Cup



In La Thuile, Italy, the Audi FIS Alpine Ski World Cup was held from 29 February to 1 March 2020. Here, **SYLVIE BERTI ROSSI** and **RUBEN MONTAGNOLI** share their experience as Heartfulness trainers at the event.

In the heart of the Alps, a few minutes from Mont Blanc's shining glaciers, the Heartfulness team gathered for three days of snow and joy in La Thuile, a town in the Aosta Valley of northern Italy. We were supporting the athletes, teams, and the general public at the Alpine Ski World Cup, as an official partner, in what turned out to be a special time in the history of international ski events.







We provided special support for the ski teams in their hotels, offering the experience of Heartfulness Relaxation and Meditation practices. We were also able to present Heartfulness activities and values through various press conferences and presentations, social activities, and interactions with the public.

Some of the athletes had been practicing Heartfulness for some time. One of them, Frederica Brignone, the winner of the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup 2020, shared her positive experience in an interview published in the newspaper *La Stampa* on 12 March. She said that thanks to this meditation she had reached a state of grace that made her more conscious.

The shadow of COVID-19 virus threatened to impact the World Cup event one week beforehand, so the organizing committee, along with the regional authorities and the International Ski Federation, opted for a safety protocol imposing a reduction in the number of people in and around the event.

Despite these restrictions, 66 athletes from 24 countries gathered late on Friday afternoon to compete on the most technically challenging ski slope of the circuit of the women's World Cup. Neither the virus nor fifty centimeters of new snowfall could stop the competition on Saturday morning, when the Austrian rookie Nina Ortlieb won all



the races, taking the lead from the local champion, Federica Brignone of Italy. Later, Corinne Suter of Switzerland went on to win the Crystal Globe in the downhill category.

Meanwhile, around 30 volunteers offered Heartfulness practices in the local hotels for both tourists and fans. In the stadium, the Heartfulness Lounge was situated at the finishing line of the course, and VIPs from the corporate world were able to experience what Heartfulness can offer individuals and organizations. Despite the difficult conditions, the adaptability, flexibility, and calm approach of our volunteers exemplified our social media tag for the event, #howwedocalm.

Our volunteer trainers were able to teach Heartfulness practices to athletes, journalists, coaches, physiotherapists, staff, and teams, as well as to members of the organizing committee, thousands of fans, skiers and tourists, and the Heartfulness Corporate Team shared a daily meditation



program with VIP guests, including partners and sponsors, helping them to deepen their experience.

As an official partner of the event, we also presented the newly released Italian version of *The Heartfulness Way* (published by Mondadori) to the media and

guests gathered in the Montana Lodge Hotel.

Alain Desvigne, President of the Heartfulness Institute, France, spoke about the link between sport and meditation: “Although at first view, meditation and sport don’t seem directly connected, as meditation is about ‘not doing’ and sport is about perfect action, today the link between meditation and sport is well established. Sporting teams and athletes are turning increasingly to meditation and Yoga to help improve their performance. Indeed they need to increase their focus and emotional balance amidst the pressures of highly competitive environments. Meditation also helps them to integrate all aspects of their busy, often stressful lives, supporting them before, during, and after the race.

“Athletes have to prepare their minds in order to reach their peak performance. Heartfulness meditative practices are easy to learn, and help people develop an effortlessly focused mind. In fact, the goal of meditation is to create a permanent meditative state, whatever the circumstances.

“That brings us to the second step, the race. Meditation is basically a technique which helps to create a state where the mind is focused without effort. You are 100% present in the here and

now. If you watched the women who were racing today closely on the screen, the level of presence they had when they were racing is exactly that meditative state. When you race down a slope at 130 km/hour, you don’t have time to analyze. It is the inner stillness with full focus that allows you to grasp the situation.

“And the third step, after the race, we call the recovery period. The body is exhausted. And this is where we find another benefit of meditation: It gives you the ability to reconnect, to recover, to refresh, revitalize and rejuvenate yourself, so as to regain inner strength.

“Heartfulness offers meditation on the heart; and there is a direct link between the inner condition of the heart and our state of mind. As we say, ‘When the heart is at peace, the mind is at rest.’ Heartfulness allows the mind and the heart to be in tune and work together.

“Why are we here, in this context of sport? It’s not only to help athletes reach their peak performance. In fact, the core values of sport are very close to the values of Heartfulness. If you look back at the original spirit of the Olympic Games, it was about creating a peaceful world, a better world, a harmonious world. It was about bringing everyone together. That’s where sport and Heartfulness meet.”

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## SPORT, EXCELLENCE AND JOY

### GIUSEPPE DOTTORINI

recently travelled to New York with the Italian National Basketball Artists to participate, as well as to offer Heartfulness Relaxation and Meditation to all the players, coaches and spectators, of the Italian Brands Basketball League. He shares the experience of combining relaxation and meditation practices before each game of the competition.

The month of February marked the beginning of a collaboration between Heartfulness and the Italian National Basketball Artists, when we flew to New York with the team for the opening game of the Italian Brands Basketball League (IBBL)

It all began with Simone Barazzotto, President of IBBL, who had the idea of launching a “never-ending basketball tournament” in New York, involving the National Basketball Artists. They are a team of former professional players, journalists, actors, singers and others from the world of entertainment, and they compete with other teams representing brands from around the world wanting to expand their business in the United States.

Heartfulness joined the initiative as a partner with the aim of bringing its own special contribution to an event rooted in the values of sport, excellence and joy. Not only did Heartfulness send a team, but also offered players and spectators a relaxation session and a few minutes of meditation at the beginning of each event. The purpose was to create a feeling of unity and to bring a subtle inner awareness to the competition.

The inaugural event took place on February 5, at the Barclays Center in the heart of Brooklyn, home to the NBA league team, the Nets. The match was between the Italian National Basketball Artists and an All Star team from the brands that have joined the initiative.



Before the starting whistle, all the players gathered in a circle in the center of the court and were led through guided Heartfulness Relaxation and Meditation. It only took a few seconds to create a sensation of well-being and to bring a sense of oneness to a group of individuals from completely different worlds.

For almost all it was a first experience of this kind. Many came from backgrounds that might seem the very antithesis of meditation! There was radio DJ, Ringo, a well-known Italian with a pure rock soul, who confessed that in those few minutes he became so relaxed that he felt he could fall asleep!

There was Pippo Palmieri, director of a very successful

radio program (Lo Zoo Di 105), who went as far as to say that the link between meditation and sport “is something that must absolutely be there, because meditation leads you to have total control of body and mind.” He also confided that “in those few minutes, I understood how to visualize some things. I immersed myself in that moment of absolute relaxation and sincerely managed to find benefit.”

Some asked to meditate with a trainer again in the following days. One of them was Chris McNealy, former NBA player from the New York Knicks and several European clubs. After his first individual meditation, he told us, “It was a beautiful experience that I’d never had

before. During the meditation I no longer felt my body. I had the experience of being present, not knowing where, but knowing I was there, with thoughts coming in and going out, and not feeling any discomfort. It was an experience that from now on in my life I should like to practice regularly.”

The next round of the tournament will take place in New York at the end of May, when it is expected that further teams will join. Everyone felt that this initiative has great potential, as it offers a winning combination of sporting excellence and a joyful atmosphere, blended by the subtle condition created by Heartfulness.



# focus

A GOOD SPORT

Talent wins games, but  
teamwork and intelligence  
win championships.

MICHAEL JORDAN

# The Beauty of SPORT

**PAULO LEZZELLE** looks at the noble value sport has as a human endeavor, and how we can all benefit from the quest for well-being, aspiration and continuous improvement.

Since time immemorial, through the expression of our bodies, humans have sought a way to transcend the mere physical and athletic aspects in an effort to perceive their inner resources. This quest for higher levels of self-knowledge has always been there, more or less conscious at different degrees.

The Olympic Games, born from the ancient Greek philosophy, are just an example, maybe the highest in the symbolic sense. The same could be said about the noble tradition of the martial arts of the Far East, or the relatively recent tradition of sports connected to the conquest of mountains.

In any kind of sport, there has certainly always been a latent aspiration to draw the best out of ourselves, and thus reach a sort of realization. In this context, it seems that the word “expression” goes hand in hand with the word “aspiration.” We could say that sport is that very activity which allows us to express ourselves in a full, powerful, and genuine

way, the prime impulse being aspiration.

Through the body, we go inside into an abstract dimension. And through this we emerge out again to improve our performance in the physical field. It is a perpetual work of osmosis, where the planes compenetrates and dialogue to find the balance of all forces. And this is but one of the beauties of sport.

Sport is a living thing – more than living! Despite the level of performance, be it a weekend amateur or a professional, sport awakens vital and beneficial energies in every sense: physically, mentally, and emotionally. There is likely no other activity in the material plane that can produce such a sense of well-being as sport can





do. And this can be experienced in any sport, the choices being very vast.

Together with music, sport is a show that gives true and beautiful emotions. Empathizing with high-level athletes is easy, because it is absolutely clear that what comes to our perception is much more than a mere run or a goal or a winning shot.

Real admiration is then aroused in us, an admiration for intangible qualities that now come true in concrete form, either seen on the screen or live.

How we would like to feel the same in our own way!

In essence, sport is like a mirror, and is a very powerful instrument of growth which can open up to a learning process that goes on and on and on. Sport is one of the few situations where we cannot bluff, because the results speak for themselves! It is just an inexorable truth and it applies to any level concerned.

Sport compels us to take stock of what we are and humbly come

to terms with it. It's all there: What is your potential? How can you express your potential? What are your shortcomings? What motivates you to persevere?

To go beyond limits doesn't necessarily mean breaking records. Not at all! That is not the real goal of all efforts. Anybody can exceed a limit, not the one pre-fixed by some standards or by a specimen, but their own, whatever that is. That's where the real challenge lies, and it's a wonderful, exciting, intriguing, funny, and evolutionary challenge. That's where sport acquires its noble value.

When we witness a great performance, where the outcome is determined by such noble qualities more than physical prowess, then it becomes clear from where it all starts – the heart. Be it a team or single sport, it is always the same energy which really makes the difference. Courage, strength, perseverance, trust, introspection, generosity, group spirit, selflessness – all of these qualities come from the heart.



# POISE



## UNDER PRESSURE

Youth icon, sportswoman, and multi-award recipient, **P.V. SINDHU** has many national and international titles under her belt, the latest being the 2019 World Badminton Championships. A never-say-never attitude, a magnetic smile and twinkling eyes, she is an epitome of humbleness and graceful poise. Here she speaks with **SATYA SAHAY** at the inauguration of the P.V. Sindhu Badminton Academy at the Lalaji Memorial Omega International School in Chennai.

Q: I'm very grateful and super excited to have a heart-to-heart conversation with you.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here at LMOIS in Chennai, where I'm coming for the first time to inaugurate this new badminton facility that is named after me. I hope that those youngsters you take up badminton will come here to practice and train hard, and in future be more successful.

Q: You have ignited so many lives by being who you are, and you have inspired so many girls to take up sports and dream of reaching the same heights. This is an encouragement and support to them all.

Thank you so much. It's nice to be told that, but it's not just my hard work; it's a lot of people's hard work who have supported me. My parents have been very supportive, and my coach, and I'm thankful to them. Parents' support is much needed by anyone who gets into sports; it's not just a few months of hard work, but years of hard work, and success is not immediate. But with hard work you will definitely get there. Not only in sports, but in other things like studies, ups and downs are always there. Some might find success early and some find it late, but there's a process and it will take time. You have to be patient and you have to believe in yourself.

Q: So, tell us a little about your childhood and upbringing.

I started playing badminton at the age of eight-and-a-half, just for fun, and when I started I never thought I'd become an Olympic medalist or a World Champion. My parents are volleyball players and they always supported me with whatever sport I wanted to do. Step by step, I got better. My mom and dad guided me, because they knew how it was coming from a sports background





The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi with the Rio Olympic Silver Medal Winner & Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Awardee of 2016, Indian shuttler P.V. Sindhu, in New Delhi on August 28, 2016.  
Image credits: Wikimedia Commons

and the experiences they had faced. Even now, whenever I play and make a few mistakes here and there, they tell me, “You need to do this,” or “You need to do that.” That helped me in improving my game and I’m very thankful to them.

**Q: What were the values in your family? Are there any qualities that you are grateful for?**

As I said, hard work is one of the most important things, because you won’t achieve success so easily. You have to keep working hard. Also, whenever I would lose – you know there are always ups and

downs – I learnt never to think it’s over, there’s always a next time. When I lost, obviously I would feel sad, but my parents would say, “There’s always a next time.”

**Q: So how do you cope with failure in an individual sport where you’re not part of a team?**

It’s not only in individual sports, but also in team sports, every player feels sad or bad whenever they lose a match or come up with failure. But failure doesn’t mean it’s over, and you learn a lot from your loss. The next time you face that same opponent, you won’t make the same mistakes again. It’s not that you shouldn’t lose, that you always have to win, because that can’t happen. So, you have to be strong and you have to come back stronger to face the next challenge.

**Q.: And how do you cope with winning?**

Winning is always a very positive thing. You feel happy, you are motivated, and it’s important that you stay grounded and be aware that you won’t keep winning every time. You can’t become overconfident because that will lead to something else. You can be happy with your win, and the next time you face the same

opponent you have to give 100% to the game. In badminton there are a lot of strategies, and every time you play the game changes. So you have to be mentally and physically strong.

**Q: How did you discover your ability as a sports person? Was it easy to follow your passion?**

It wasn't easy, but at the same time I really enjoyed it. I think you need to enjoy sports; you need to enjoy whatever you do. It shouldn't be a forced thing where you're playing and winning for someone else. You need to feel happy doing it. It wasn't easy, and there were times when I kept losing, and people started asking me, "What's happening?" But then I came back much stronger, and I gave the answer to them with my racket. Criticism always comes, so don't take it to heart, and let it go. You have to think what's good for you and not spoil your mental condition.

**Q: Is there any routine or act that you do before big matches?**

It's very important to take proper rest. You practice all the time, but before a match you can't exhaust yourself. So to feel fresh and rested is important. Before any match the preparation is to get to

know your opponent, what her strategies are, and how to play against her. And in case Plan A doesn't work, you need to have a Plan B, and to decide on the court in the spur of the moment, under pressure, in a matter of seconds. That is crucial.

**Q: And is there anything that you feel brings you luck?**

I believe in God. There's no lucky action, or any such thing, and I do believe that on a particular day whoever plays better wins. I've taken up Heartfulness practices, which really help me, and they have made a huge difference. There were times when I got angry with myself, when I lost points in a match, and I didn't know what I was doing. But with this practice, I now find those answers within myself. I keep calm and keep going, which is very important when you're playing long matches and feeling impatient. For example, when you're leading by seven points and eager to finish, it's important to close your eyes for a few seconds and get ready. These small changes help you a lot to stay focused and calm.

**Q: What does it take to become a great sportsperson? How much of it is talent, how much attitude and hard work?**

Hard work is one of the most important things, because you won't achieve success so easily. You have to keep working hard.



Meditation makes a huge difference when you're on court. It makes you feel in control when you're impatient and under pressure; it calms you down. Nothing else comes into your mind.

It is not any one thing; you need everything in equal parts. It's like a chain, where you need to have determination, the right attitude, hard work, and also talent. It's connected and everything together makes a champion. You also need to be grounded when you taste success; that's important.

**Q: How do you maintain your graceful poise under pressure?**

Every player faces pressure, and that is when you need to just keep going, keep calm. People want me to win, the expectations are always there, there are responsibilities. That is when you think, "I need to win." So it's very important to bear in mind that you're not playing for other people; it's for yourself. And when you go on court and give one hundred percent and win, it's for yourself and for the people too, for the country. If you let others' expectations affect your mind, that brings extra pressure on you.

**Q: Would you say that meditation has helped you maintain your balance, and has kept you centered?**

Definitely. It's a process and it takes time. Slowly I understood its effect. It makes a huge difference when you're on court. It makes you feel in control when you're impatient and under pressure; it calms you down. Nothing else comes into your mind. You're able to just play your game. Otherwise, when you're at game point, when you're leading and about to finish a match, you have this anxiety, "What's next?" So meditation keeps you going until the end. That's been my personal experience. Every individual has a different mindset, has a different experience, and with me, I've seen a big change. I used to get angry whenever I lost points or when I was losing, but now that has reduced a lot. I'm able to keep calm.

**Q: Who has helped you along the way in your career. Who are your mentors?**

Of course, my parents and my coach. They've been very, very supportive, especially through the hard times. My parents have made a lot of sacrifices and I'm very appreciative. The stadium where I trained was very far from where we lived, so we had to shift house so we could be near the academy. My mom and dad took early retirement from their jobs, so they could travel with me wherever I went, and mentor me constantly. Still today, whenever I go home tired, my mom cooks what I like to eat. All that really matters and helps me a lot.

**Q: What guidance can you offer young people who want to follow their dreams?**

A lot of youngsters are taking up sports as a career, so I would say to them, "Enjoy your sport. Winning and losing is secondary. Follow your passion. It's very important to play your heart out and do your best."

To parents, I'd say, "Fully support your child in whatever sport they are playing. Your child has to want to play that sport. It's not enough to put them in an academy and expect them to perform well, just because it has produced top players. It doesn't work like that. Everyone has a different talent and ability, and it's important to know your children's needs when giving support."

**Q: They need constant nurturing.**

Yes. Joining an academy doesn't make you a world class player. It requires much more; it takes time, too, during which you need parents' support and encouragement.

**Q: How important is mental health in sports?**

In any sport it's important to keep yourself both physically and mentally fit. If you're physically fit but mentally not strong, that won't work, and vice versa. If you're not mentally prepared, you'll go and play blindly. At some point, suddenly you'll go blank and won't know what to do next in your game. Mentally you need to be very, very fit, so you're aware of what's happening within you and what needs to be changed.

Doing meditation won't necessarily bring you success and let you beat the world, but you're doing it for yourself, for your heart. You get clarity through that. But that's not the reason for doing meditation. You need to feel good within yourself, you need to understand and agree with the inner you, and use it in a positive way. When you start meditating, you start getting that clarity in your life. It helps you go with the flow. It has made a big difference in my personal life.

**Q: Now we have some rapid fire questions where you answer with one word within a few seconds. What does the following stand for you? Happiness.**

Life. Happiness is life.

**Q: True success.**

Hard work.

**Q: Would you say hard work is success in itself?**

You are working hard with yourself and that is a critical condition. Success is not just to beat everyone and win. Success is step-by-step with what you're achieving gradually.

**Q: One thing you do when you are stressed out.**



I just sit and think. I also meditate.

**Q: 'Sindhu' as a brand stands for:**

I would like to see me at the top of the world.

**Q: Youth.**

Youth stands for youth. There's nothing that we can't do if we set our minds to it.

**Q: Cheeky moment in school. Any breaking rules?**

No, I was a very good student.

**Q: Who inspires you the most?**

My parents are my inspiration. They were both volleyball players, and they worked hard at it

too. And the sacrifices they have made mean a lot. Earlier on, their support meant defending my choice of career and my chosen sport. They believed in me from the start and that is why they inspire me.

**Q: Your message to school students who wish to pursue success?**

It's very important for students to start any sport at the grassroots level. Exercise is important. Keep fit. Spend one or two hours every day doing exercise or playing a sport.

**Q: Thank you for having such an open-hearted conversation with me, inspiring all of us to follow our dreams fearlessly. On behalf of everyone here I wish you continued success at the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. All the best.**



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# THE HEARTFUL STRATEGIST

## PART 3



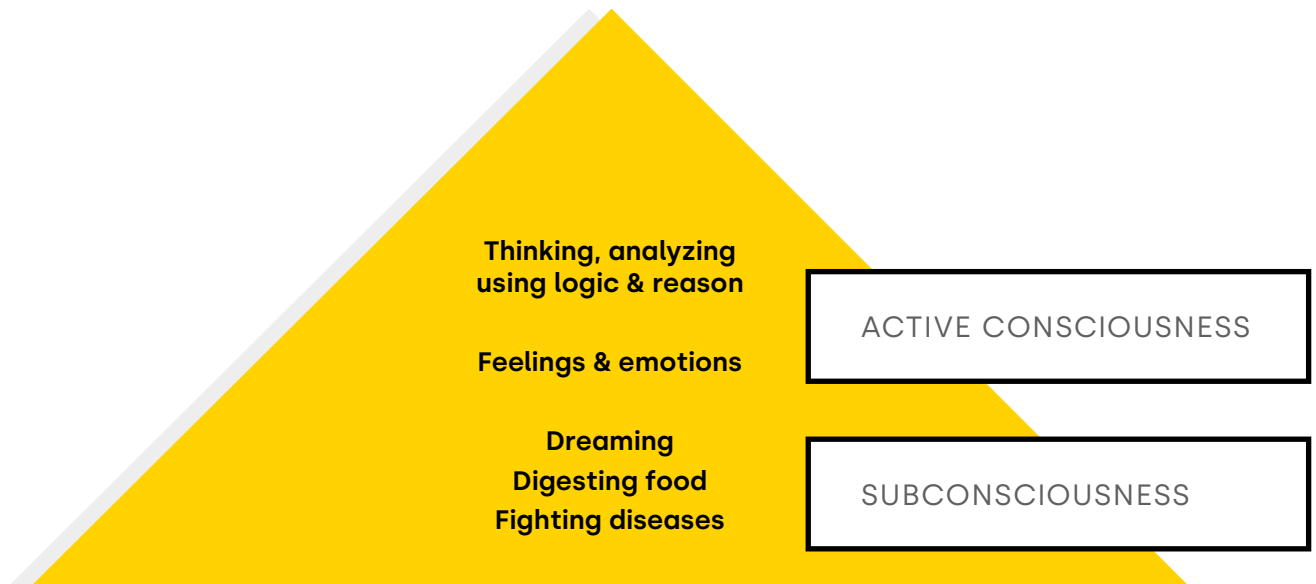
In the first two articles of the series, **RAVI VENKATESAN** introduced the Heartful Strategist framework and explored 3 examples that illustrate how consciousness levels of individuals flowed out into choices that had consequences. We saw how these led to outcomes that impacted a broad ecosystem. Here, we start exploring how a Heartful Strategist can work on their consciousness in order to make the best choices.

There are many definitions of consciousness, the simplest one being “the state of being awake and aware of one’s surroundings.” Another one I like is, “the fact of awareness by the mind of itself and the world.”

While these definitions provide a starting point, consciousness is much more nuanced and has many states. Some of these are within the limits of awareness and some are beyond. At a simple level we use the general term “unconscious” for anything that is not conscious. Subconsciousness is the term used for states of consciousness that are below the conscious level, and superconsciousness is used for states that are above active consciousness.

Another way to present it is that the state of consciousness we are aware of is “active consciousness” and states beyond awareness are sub- and superconsciousness. Though consciousness belongs to the mental and not the

physical plane, at a physical level we can measure brain activity related to states of consciousness. For example, Delta waves (0.5 to 3 Hz) are associated with subconscious functions like regulating heart rate and digestion, whereas Gamma waves (25 to 100 Hz) are associated with active consciousness and high-level cognitive tasks.



There is also an aspect of the unconscious mind from where intuition and inspiration originate. We can think of this as super-unconsciousness or simply superconsciousness.

Swami Vivekananda, a 19<sup>th</sup> century mystic who spoke a lot about consciousness, said that active consciousness was like a thin film, sandwiched between an ocean of superconsciousness and an ocean of subconsciousness. The measurement of brainwave frequencies has now scientifically established this. More than 80% of our brain activity is associated with activities that are unconscious, not our active consciousness. You can also think of active consciousness as just the tip of the iceberg. In fact, how our active consciousness

works is also influenced, to a very large extent, by what lies beneath.

As we go through life, we continuously gather impressions through our conscious and unconscious interactions with the world, as well as the multifarious thoughts that are part of our minds. These impressions sink into our subconscious and start collecting and forming a residue. This residue creates patterns in how we think, react, analyze, and feel. It prevents our consciousness from being free and expansive.

As an experiment, you can take a “consciousness snapshot” by answering the following questions for yourself:

## THOUGHT IN ACTION

1. What are your strongest likes and dislikes?
2. What is your strongest desire?
3. What do you feel guilty about or regret?
4. What do you want more of?
5. What is making you restless?
6. What is creating anger in you?
7. What are you afraid of?

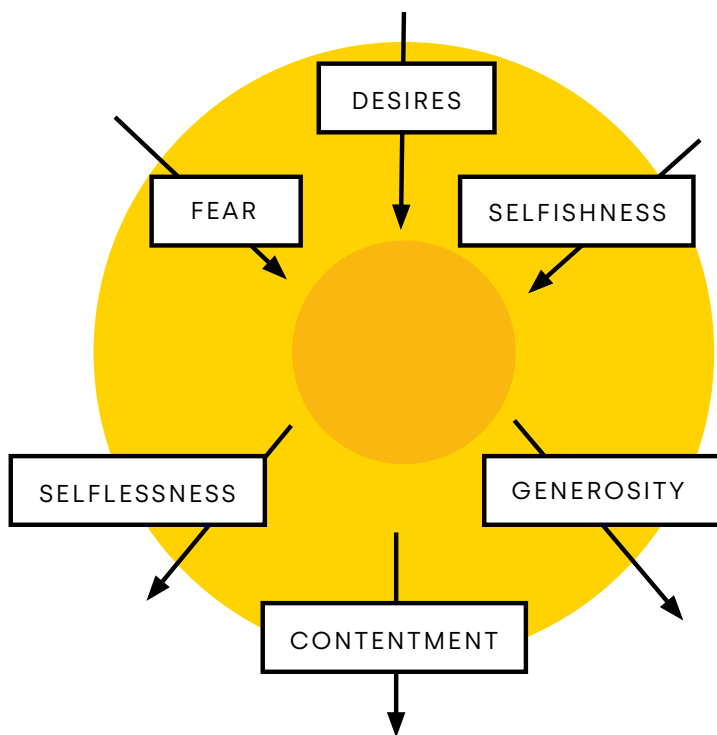
The answers will give you insights into the effect of past impressions on your psyche. They limit our consciousness, and hence limit the choices we

make. Note that the answers to these questions give you insights into what is lurking at a subconscious level.

When we make a strategic choice, we often have a perspective that is either broad or narrow. This is based on our consciousness level. For example, we might be thinking of just ourselves, or of our team, our organization, our community, our country, or maybe the entire humanity! We saw in the previous article in this series how Pope Benedict made a choice that reflected a very broad consciousness level.

So, what is it that limits our consciousness? The main factors are Fear, Desires, and Selfishness.

What is it that can broaden and allow our consciousness to expand? The main factors are Contentment, Selflessness and Generosity.



In subsequent articles we'll explore those practices that eliminate the factors that limit our consciousness and develop those factors that allow it to expand.

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# *Leave It Behind* THE BASELINE

MAMATA VENKAT has learnt a lot about herself from playing tennis. Especially, it taught her how to let go of imperfections and move forward in a healthy way towards continuous improvement in all aspects of life.





was twelve years old the first time I stepped onto a tennis court, reluctantly encouraged by both my mom and my cousin to take up the sport as a way to strengthen my college eligibility and build my stamina, and also face my aversion of trying new things.

*Fun fact: I'm not good at trying new things.*

I was skeptical, stubborn, and totally terrified as I walked onto the court for the first time, gripping my dad's dinky old Head racket in my right hand and my water bottle in the other. And when coach Kent smacked that first ball at me and my return shot embarrassingly soared way over to the other side of the court, I became even more determined to hate tennis and prove that my mom and cousin were wrong.

*Spoiler alert: I fell in love with tennis.*

Tennis carried me through my teenage years, giving me a sense of confidence that came from feeling strong. When I started playing high school tennis, it also fostered a camaraderie amongst girls my age during a period when we wrongly thought we needed to compete with one another. And I just loved being on the court. I loved inhaling the smell of brand new tennis balls, hearing the sound of the racket smacking a forehand or a volley across the net. I loved the feel of my feet zigzagging across the court as I moved to hit my opponent's spin-serve, the high-fives that my doubles partner and I would share when we won game, set, match. To this day, a tennis court always feels like home.

But I had one major problem on the court: I had trouble letting go.

Raise your hand if you're really hard on yourself. So it's not just me, right? Okay, good.

Consistency is key when playing tennis – after all, it's the only way to keep a match going, to challenge your opponent and wear them down enough that you might have a shot (no pun intended) at winning the point. For the most part I was good at being consistent. But there were also many moments when I'd miss a serve, hit the ball into the net, smack a shot out, or just plain miss the ball completely. And of course, I had to move on to the next shot, while my mind was focused on the error I had made. Mentally, I would beat myself up, wondering why that shot hadn't been perfect, or why I still wasn't a good tennis player after all these years. And immediately, my performance would decline. As a (mostly) doubles player, that mentality not only affected my game, but also my partner's, who had to spend her energy lifting me up and picking up my slack because I was having trouble recovering.

And here's the thing: I would do this in nearly every area of my life! Whether I made an innocuous error at work, said something that unintentionally hurt a friend or family member, or missed a shot on the court, all I did was hold on to that 'mistake', which kept me stuck in my head, filled me with anxiety, and ultimately made it very difficult for me to move forward. It has only been in the last year that I have learned to cut myself some slack. But I still have days when I allow myself to worry too much, even though I know I haven't done anything wrong.

I've done some digging in the last couple of years to try and understand why I'm so hard on myself.

The more I recognize that and give myself grace, the healthier my relationship is with myself, and the stronger my relationships are with the people I care about the most.

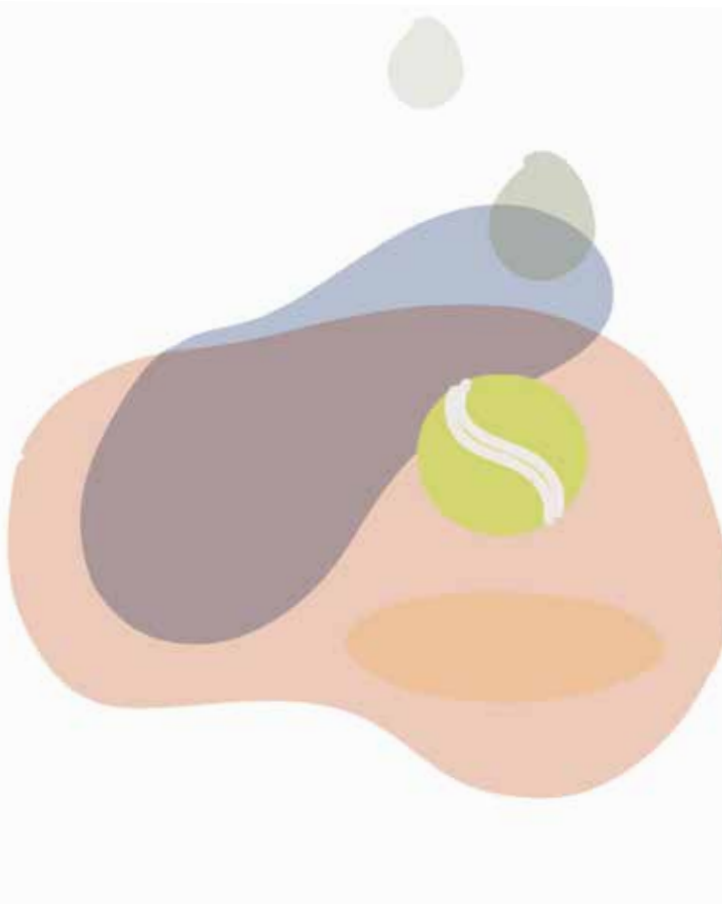
I realized that it is because I expect nothing less than perfection from myself in everything. The problem with setting such high expectations is that, more often than not, I and the people around me will end up disappointed.

To help me overcome this problem on the court, my mom would remind me of how Maria Sharapova handled blunders. She would walk behind the baseline, adjust her racket strings, tuck her hair behind her ears, then walk back to the baseline with renewed resolve. She left her mistake behind the baseline and kept moving.

“And that,” my mom would say to me, “is the only way you’re going to win.”

Applying that mentality improved my tennis game significantly, but it’s also a metaphor that is relevant to all aspects of life as I work on not being so hard on myself. I can already see vast improvements. But I’m human. I’m going to make mistakes. I am not always going to be the perfect person, daughter, sister, best friend, acquaintance, worker, or meditator. The more I recognize that and give myself grace, the healthier my relationship is with myself, and the stronger my relationships are with the people I care about the most.

All of us are doing our best, but giving ourselves grace even when we slip really helps. Let’s keep lifting one another up.



# SUCCESS

## IS TO HAVE SUCCESSFUL FAILURES

**DR ICHAK ADIZES** is a change guru. He has mastered the art of navigating the ups and downs that life brings us as individuals, families and organizations. Here he shares some simple ideas on the importance of failure and mistakes in the learning process.

Life is never smooth and free of troubles. Life is change, and change produces new challenges one needs to address. To address them, one needs to make decisions in situations of uncertainty, and the implementation of such decisions is risky.

Thus, change spells: problems.

So?

I, for one, have never heard of a person who overcame all problems without ever making a mistake. Even God admits to making mistakes by bringing on the flood; God admits to being powerless to make us all righteous, thus the flood was the wrong decision and God makes a covenant to never repeat that mistake again, and since God admits of being forgetful he brings the rainbow to remind him to stop the rain (Genesis 6:9-9:19). To me, God has such incredible human characteristics, so who is this human who is better than God and never makes a mistake? We consider mistakes to be failures because we assume our decisions should have succeeded in meeting our expectations.

Since life (change) produces a string of problems and their solutions are often mistakes, one can say life is full of failures.

Right?

Not so.

It depends on how you handle failures. If you brood, accuse and judge yourself for being a failure, then you are right. You are a failure. You failed yourself. You were the victim, the prosecutor, and the judge, all in one.

Real success depends on how successfully you handle your failures. Success is not how little you fall. It is how fast you get up. Getting up means that each problem, each failure, is an invitation to learn something you did not know before, thus your mistake.

The more you learn from mistakes, the wiser you become. The wiser you become, the fewer mistakes you will repeat. A fool who thinks he or she wise is the ignorant one; a wise person who thinks he or she is ignorant is the wise one. Thinking you are wise and thus there is nothing more to learn is what makes you an ignoramus. A person who admits that he or she is ignorant and is constantly learning is the wise person. And how do you really learn? By experience, and that means not being afraid to make mistakes, as long as *you learn from them*.

Just thinking,  
Ichak Kalderon Adizes

<https://www.ichakadizes.com/success-is-to-have-successful-failures/>

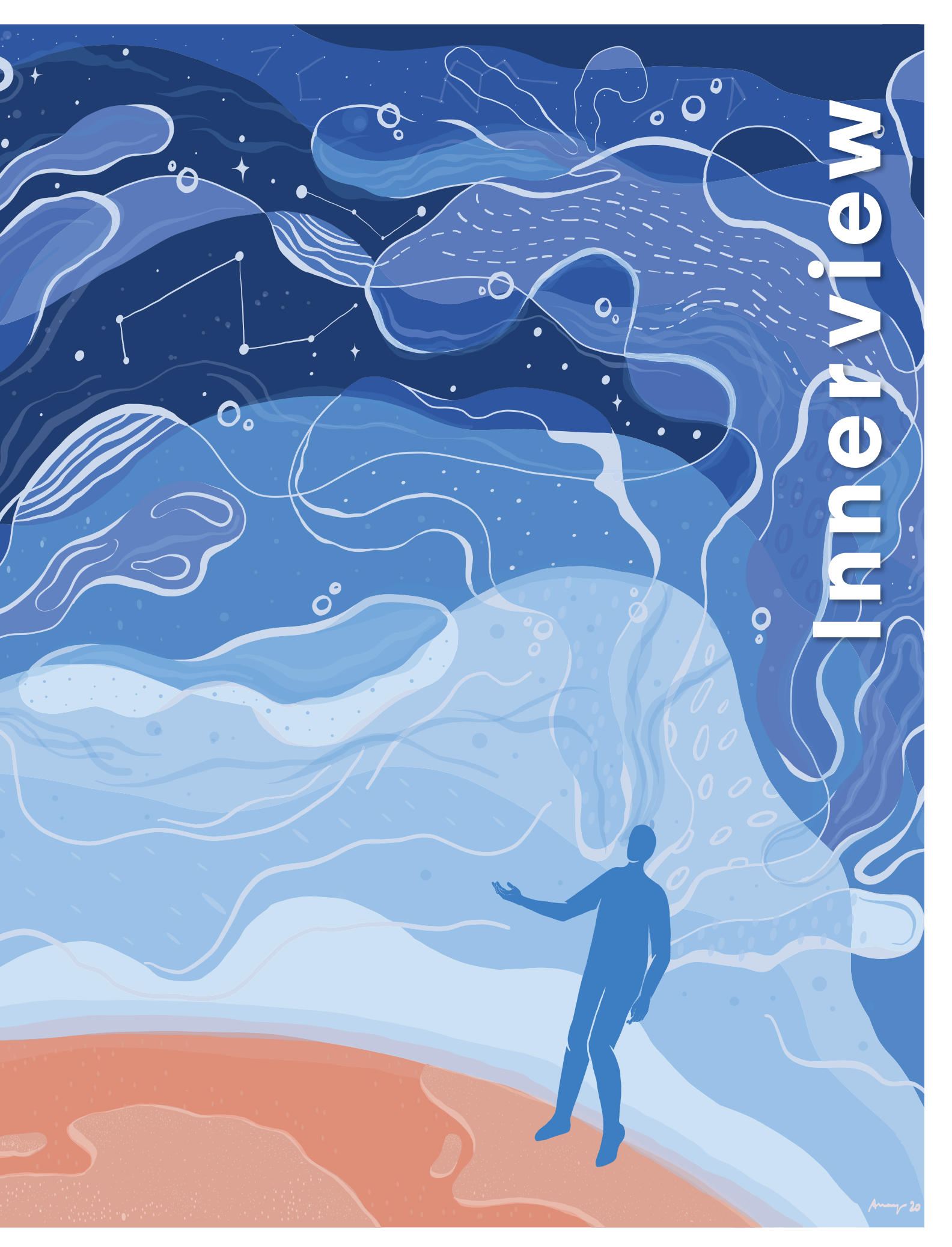


The only sustainable approach in an interdependent world is mutual benefit which includes regard for the other person.

STEVEN COVEY



# Inner view



# Spreading Happiness

In this exclusive interview, **MICHEL LECLERCQ**, the founder of DECATHLON, speaks with **CHRISTINE MOLLE**. DECATHLON is the world's largest sporting goods retailer, and has over 1,400 sports shops in 47 countries. Michel's motto for DECATHLON is, "The pleasures and the benefits of sport for the greatest number."



Q: Bonjour Michel. What would you like to speak about today?

I am more a man of action than reflection. Sometimes I compare myself to Lucky Luke, because I tend to think after I act. But I also like the fact that the company has a vision. Vision feeds on past actions. I can recognize the meaning of my life by looking in the rear view mirror. So, what I see in the mirror of the past I project forward into new projects; I project myself. If a new project



## INNERVIEW

makes sense to me, it becomes an additional freedom. If it does not make sense to me, it becomes a constraint.

I like to be a free man, so I like it when projects make sense to me. I also like it when the people with whom I am associated in these projects can be free; it is important that the majority of the people who are associated with any project share the meaning of the project. If they share the vision, then they share the “why” and they will be free to invent the “how.”

I really like to reflect on how to support as many people as possible to find meaning in their life in their professional activities.

**Q: What values have been important to you in your professional life?**

For me sharing is important. The company must bring happiness to people, and for this it is important to share with my collaborators the meaning embodied in the products and in the organizations.

The company must be empowering, liberating, as a result of sharing the meaning. And in this I assume the consequences of the decisions I make, and the collaborators too.





A standing man is better than a lying man.

My current conviction is management by meaning, by “why.” Before there was the leader, the referent now is the meaning. It is the embodied sense. If it is embodied by parents, teachers, or bosses, that’s fine, but management by managers is out of date. We have to manage by meaning, by why, not by how (how = money).

**Q: You say that business must bring meaning and happiness to people. What do you mean by that? What is happiness for you?**

Shared happiness is greatly amplified. Do not confuse pleasure with happiness. Pleasure is fleeting, more superficial. Happiness is a state that lasts.

My definition of happiness is that I live better, and I act in line with the meaning of my life. At that moment I feel happy. While eating chocolate and drinking red wine I have fun, whereas feeling useful to others gives me a lot of happiness. It is what many people have told me in the workshops I have run on meaning in companies, with workers and students: 80 to

90% of the people I meet say they feel happy when they are useful to other people.

If money and shareholder enrichment are the goals of the business, then the business will be built, it will be run, and it will be made up of mercenaries who will obey orders when they have an interest. If the company has a humanistic, generous sense, then the collaborators will have a mission, and then the business will be much more dynamic, creative, and empowering. It will deserve the trust of its users and its customers. And the results will be much better. So the capitalists will find themselves there.

I am wary of saying this, because I risk attracting those cheats who use the search for the common good, ethics, ecology, etc. only to make more money for themselves. That would not be ideal, but it would still be better than using amoral methods like polluting the planet etc., even if the motivation is money.

So I try to testify to this in the workshops that I run, within a framework known as “Happier People” that I created three years ago after retiring. This is the last business I have developed.

**Q: In 1961, when you were 22 years old, you worked at Auchan as a butcher. You had stopped studying engineering. What was your motivation?**

40 years ago, large-scale distribution started with the motivation of low prices to give purchasing power to the greatest number of people. It was the need of the time.

I was recruited to Auchan in 1961. The meaning of the company was “to improve the quality of life of the working classes of workers in the factories of Roubaix.”

My uncle Gérard was the President of Auchan, and his son Gérard was the general manager. They both visited very regularly and reminded us of the meaning of what we were doing: “Allow workers and the lower classes in the city of Roubaix to improve their quality of life.” My friends with whom I worked and I were very mobilized by this sentiment. I had a lot of autonomy and responsibilities because the meaning was very clear and I shared it.

**Q: In 1976 you opened your first Decathlon store. What led you to do that?**

I had been fired! I was made redundant and I succeeded in transforming a difficulty into an opportunity. Suddenly, the second company in which I worked was DECATHLON. At first the meaning was not very explicit, and it had to unfold gradually as the business developed, to as to be able to bring it to life from a distance. And now the meaning is expressed in the phrase “Sport for everyone.” In French, we said: “The pleasures and the benefits of sport for the greatest number.”

The success of DECATHLON is due to this shared sense which allows freedom and autonomy of direction. I do give direction, but from a distance to very autonomous people who know their profession, without

micromanaging them: “To allow the pleasures and the benefits of sport for the greatest number,” without applying precise instructions. It gives our people a lot of autonomy and a lot of energy.

When we have a strong sense of the company’s purpose, the rebound is much less difficult because we are not only focused on the “doing” but also on the “why.” If we have difficulties, if we get stuck in the “how,” we find energy through the “why,” which is much more permanent than the how: Why? For whom?

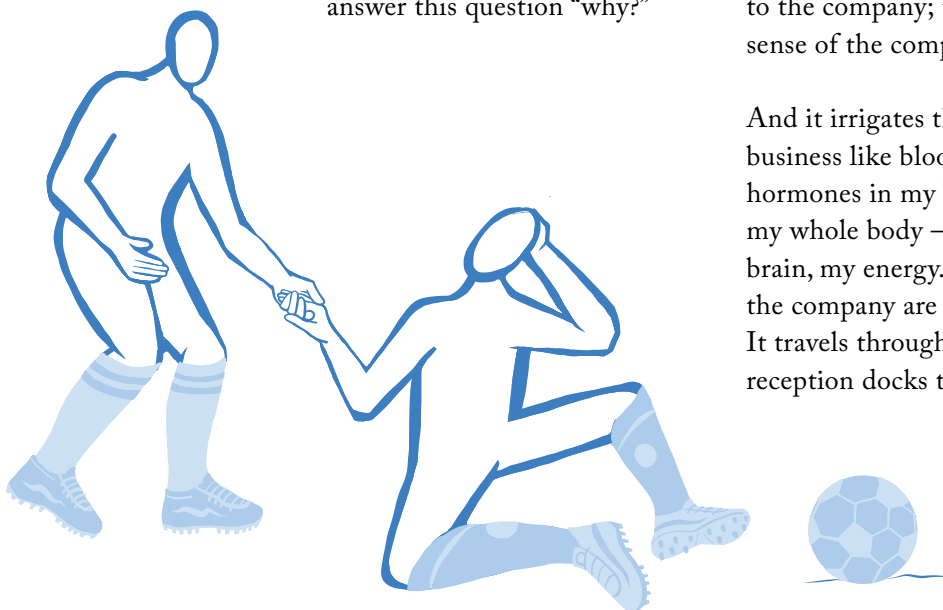
The process of asking why is sometimes difficult, while it is easy to answer, “For whom?” For example, people in internships answer, “So that my children, my wife, and my friends are happy.” This makes it easier to answer this question “why?”

**Q: In 1986 you started to design and produce DECATHLON sporting goods. What was your motivation?**

It was a strategy, a “how,” but it was still important. I didn’t conceptualize it until afterwards. I’m thinking about it even more right now, because there are struggling companies that are performing worse than before – companies that have lost their soul a little in my opinion. I think money has become far too important in these businesses.

DECATHLON is revived by the “why” conveyed by the products – the meaning is conveyed by the products. Products that are our own brand, designed by us, under responsible subcontracting, convey a why which is specific to the company; they convey a sense of the company.

And it irrigates the whole business like blood. The hormones in my blood irrigate my whole body – my heart, my brain, my energy. The blood of the company are our products. It travels throughout, from the reception docks to the shipping



docks to the checkout counters in our stores.

Employees who handle cigarettes will not have the same mindset as employees who put soccer balls on shelves, because cigarettes are harmful whereas soccer balls are beneficial products. As a result, our employees have more sustainable energy, to manufacture, to transport, to present on the shelves, and to dispatch to the warehouse, because they are working with soccer balls and not cigarettes. This is what I try to testify about in the workshops about “Happier people.”



**Q: What do you think is most important in today's world?**

I don't want to talk about the world today, as my responsibility is these companies and those who work in the companies. I have ideas about the world today, but I don't have the expertise to talk about it.

I hope that, by my action, DECATHLON has a beneficial influence on those who work there and on the environment, its customers, and shareholders.

If the collaborators, the customers, the users of the products, the environment, the citizens who are around

the sites of establishment are winners, the company will have excellent results and the shareholders in turn will be winners. My belief is that shareholders should come last, not first, otherwise it's called a financialized company and, in the long run, it doesn't interest employees to work there.

**Q: What have been your inner resources? How have you kept your balance?**

The etymology of motivation comes from same root as motor, or action. I'm someone in action – not for myself, but for others. I like to help others. For example, I am a heterodidact – I learn from others rather than being self-taught.

**Q: What vision do you have for the future of companies facing the challenges of global warming?**

At DECATHLON, sustainability and global warming have a huge influence on the employees I meet. For example, spraying of cotton causes pollution, uses a lot of water etc. There is a collective consciousness that is being created. Global warming will also have positive consequences, depending on the country. We look at what is happening, and the opportunities for rebound. We look to difficulty as a source of progress. We are working on it intensively.



**Q: What place does family have in your life?**

100%, everything. These various aspects of a person's life are not added, they have a multiplying effect. A person who is happy in their personal life will also be happy in their professional life and vice versa. There's no opposition. You shouldn't sacrifice one for the other.

**Q: You are 80 years old and you have started a new business, a training center. Can you tell us your motivation?**

It is a training center so that more people can be happier.

It's a direction, not a target, not a goal. Happiness is not quantifiable. How to find the meaning of life in our professional activities? Shared happiness is amplified. Pleasure is different from happiness. Pleasure is more fleeting, more superficial. Happiness lasts. I invented a definition that suits me: "I live better, I act in line with the meaning of my life, so I feel happy."

**Q: What would you say to young people today?**

To try to make your environment and their friends happier. May all the people around you be happy.

**Q: What words of wisdom would you like to share?**

I'm not a sage, that's not my thing. I can just say that money should not be the goal of any business. What seems important to me is love – love for the other. It's always been the way of the world. What's important does not change. It is acting for the good of the other, not just wishing for it.

**Q: Thank you for your openness and for this moment of sharing.**



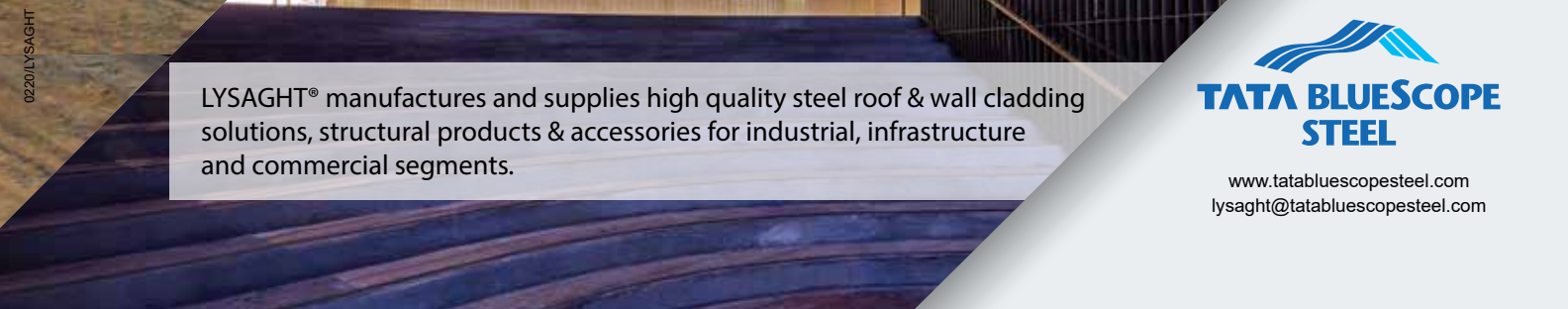
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*it changes  
everything*

Attention is the  
rarest and purest  
form of generosity.

**SIMONE WEIL**



# *Roots of Empathy*

## PART 3

This is the final part of **MARY GORDON'S** interview with **JUDITH NELSON** at the Spirit of Humanity Forum in Iceland in 2019. Mary speaks about the role of educators, and the emotional life of children. She provides an inspirational focus for educators regarding the educational priorities that are needed for a future humanity.

In Roots of Empathy, we measure what we treasure, and we treasure children's emotional lives. We don't care what they know, we care what they feel: it's important to let children tell you how they feel. The emotional life of the child is their real life, because in a baby's brain emotions and cognition are inextricably linked; you can't tease them apart. And, as children grow older, while the sections of the brain deal differently with emotion and cognition, there is a direct relationship between our emotions and what we pay attention to.

We completely pay attention to our emotions. If you've got a negative emotion happening, you can't learn. In order to learn, you have to make sure that your emotions are positive. That's why we ask, "How are you feeling today?" We don't try to change what they feel, but it is like embedded professional development for the classroom teacher when our person comes in and says, "Good morning kids." This is for



Favorite teachers  
are not the best  
teachers, they're  
the best  
"reachers." They're  
the people who  
get you, they're  
the people who  
knew you were in  
their class even if  
you weren't the  
smartest student.  
They appreciated  
you for who you  
were.

the pre- or post-family visit, not when the mommy and baby are there, when we're asking, "How's the baby feeling?"

So, if the kids do this (thumbs up), the teacher can do a quick scan of the room and see that the kids are in good form. But if there are some who do this (thumbs neutral), you really have to consider what's going on with them, as you can't teach a child who's in neutral. If there are a lot of them, you've got to pack up your lesson plan and start listening to the children: "So tell me, how was it today on your way to school? Would you like to share with someone how your day is going so far?" And, you know, if you ask authentically, children will tell you authentically.

It changes teaching practice when teachers realize that a worried child can't learn. When they're sad, sick or lonely, they can't learn anything. Children

who are depressed are sad, sick and lonely. So, this idea of teaching people versus teaching mathematics is an important thing. And what is it to be a person? It is to feel. And if you're not feeling, you don't have to be deliriously happy, but you have to be present. There is an armada of broken hearts in every classroom – we know the statistics.

Why don't we realize that we have to start the day checking in with children? You can't make everything better, but if you can acknowledge how they're feeling, they already feel 'felt.' Favorite teachers are not the best teachers, they're the best "reachers." They're the people who get you, they're the people who knew you were in their class even if you weren't the smartest student. They appreciated you for who you were.

Education has lost that because we're into competition. It's



competition for jobs, no? Look at jobs – we’re going to do twenty jobs over a lifetime, so what job? The job is to be a good human being. Actually, it’s important to be happy, as the Dalai Lama would say. Now I’m not saying we should all pack our bags and go off to happy land, but to be a human being is to be able to connect with others. And this crisis of connection we’re in, if we don’t help children identify how they feel so that they can

connect to one another, we’ve really missed the boat.

I really advocate helping teachers take an approach to teaching that I call “attachment-aware teaching,” realizing that every child in your class has had some kind of secure or insecure attachment. If they have had a secure attachment, they’ll be ready to learn, they’ll be resilient, they’ll deal with the blows in life. If they’ve had ambivalent,



avoidant, or other kinds of attachment relationships, they won't have an innate capacity to deal with the tidal wave of troubles that might come to them.

Teachers can have this in the back of their mind, to say to themselves, "Okay," instead of, "What's wrong with you?" Children communicate how they're feeling with their behavior, so if the teacher can just think, "What's happened to make you so nasty today? What's happened so you make my life a misery? What's happened so that you're disrupting class?" because no child decides to be a "bad actor," it's just that they can't deal with how they feel.

If teachers had insight into the emotional vulnerability of children – just as through the baby and parent relationship we show how a baby becomes who they are – they would realize that it's through love. Children are predisposed through particular ways of being, but without that reference back and forth to mommy or daddy, they don't know how to respond. Every time a baby falls down or cries, the first thing they do is look for their mother to see, "How am I doing? Should I be crying, or should I go back and try and walk again?" That's what a secure attachment relation is – checking in to see, "Am I good to go?"

And if nobody gives you that, you never know. So, you have no anchor, you have no security blanket in your life, and the children who are in trouble are those children. The security blanket in life is the attachment relationship, and how many children have no relationship with their parents as they get older? It's a tragedy.

**Q: What you describe sounds so much like respecting the individual students' feelings and noticing them, instead of having education for the sake of the establishment.**

Yes, and what are the ultimate goals of education? If it's to produce architects, engineers, doctors etc., if they are without humanity they won't do a good job. Is it to produce moral human beings who are ready to contribute to life, and who can be mutually respectful and have the capacity to care? The ethic of care is so overlooked.

There are two parts to empathy: There's cognitive empathy and affective empathy. Cognitive empathy is perspective-taking and that's the first stage of any conflict resolution. If you don't have that, forget it. Forget peace in the Middle East. But if you don't have affective empathy, the human part which is our emotions, you don't really

I think the secret to ending all the "-isms" in the world, the secret to peaceful coexistence, is to be able to see the humanity in the other. And this Spirit of Humanity, this beautiful concept, is based on empathy.



Many people define empathy as just cognitive empathy, but our definition of empathy is both affective and cognitive together.

have empathy at all. With cognitive empathy you can still be a sociopath, because you have a skill where you can resonate with the perspective of another person. But if you don't have the ethic of care, it may be a destructive thing. So many people define empathy as just cognitive empathy, but our definition of empathy is both affective and cognitive together. Very often confused with compassion and sympathy, whereas sympathy is uni-dimensional, it's the ability to feel sorry.

There's a lot of divergence of opinion around the relationship between compassion and empathy, and about the definitions of compassion and empathy, so everybody makes them up. I have shared mine, but I don't think they are any better than others, and certainly there's no one opinion on it. I do believe, however, that you must have empathy in order to act compassionately. And empathy to me is also a verb. Being an armchair empath is no good at all; there has to be a motor.

The beautiful thing about children is that they're endlessly empathic once they realize that skill of being able to understand how another person feels and to feel with them. It's a lifelong gift, and it cannot be taught. Everybody thinks you can teach empathy, but you can't teach empathy. It's caught, not taught. If you are around people who demonstrate empathy without saying, "This is empathic behavior," who are just empathic, or if you see examples of kindness in people you love, that's how you will develop these positive things.

You know, there are so many ridiculous things people do, like having flash cards for empathy, or saying, "We're going to talk about empathy this week." It's totally meaningless. It's better than nothing, I suppose, but the big things in life are not developed through instruction. It's done by construction – meaningful human construction – not instruction. In fact, there's very little in life we learn through instruction. It's only the higher-level things and, basically, those we could probably learn on our own. If you can't be with someone and learn from someone, you can't really be a constructive, contributing human being.

So, I think our schools really need to shake themselves up and

The beautiful thing about children is that they're endlessly empathic once they realize that skill of being able to understand how another person feels and to feel with them. It's a lifelong gift, and it cannot be taught.

ask, "What are we doing here?" Imagine having the privilege of being with a child five or six hours a day, five days a week. It's an incredible gift. That's more than their parents have.

I used to be a teacher, and I think we're highly accountable. It's the reason why when teachers ask Roots of Empathy into their classroom, I say, "Okay, but we need to do research." They say, "No, no, we know you're grand," but I say, "We need to do research." Every single person involved with the program, every child who can write, does an evaluation, critiques the program every year; every child, every volunteer mother, every volunteer instructor, and the classroom teacher who hosts it. Then we do formal research, which is the white jacket, peer reviewed, scientific, independent, published research, which tells us if we're doing what we think we're doing. But I have to say, what I listen to the deepest is what the children tell us. That's when I change.

We're always updating our curriculum. Take cyber bullying, for example; if we don't have cyber bullying in our programs, we're not addressing the current situation of children, because the landscape of childhood changes all the time. It's not very good at the minute, but children don't



I think the trip from the mind to the heart is a short journey, and the fuller the heart the bigger the head.

change; they've always been the same. They might sound more sophisticated because they use Elon Musk words like parking cars in space, and all that, but their emotional vulnerability, their essence, the beauty of childhood doesn't change.

Children are under more stress than ever before, and I don't think we're listening hard enough to what they are telling us through their behavior. The children who are on Ritalin, for having Attention Deficit Disorder, have been given a prescription so that the adults can keep sane, and it stunts and blunts the children's growth. A lot of what we're doing is medicating children instead of changing their environment, because resilience is not about what's in you, it's about what's around you. You can bring it into you, but if it's not around you how can you become resilient? You're not born with it, you know.

In many places you'll hear people say, "Oh, you've gotta have grit." That's the nastiest four-letter word I've ever heard. It's blaming children for not having grit. "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Change the record." It's like saying to an abused woman, "Why don't you just leave? How stupid can you be? Just leave." It's not understanding where that person is coming from, not understanding the impact of abuse.

And to say to a child who's been brought up in adversity, who's witnessed violence at home, "You just have to have grit," is a denial of the fact that we all have different journeys. And we expect even results, even in kindergarten. Everybody is held to the same measure, but the measure is not the measure of personhood. The measure is something easy to measure, but it's no measure of humanity, it's no measure of kindness, it's no measure of empathy or emotional depth. There's only the measure of what we're able to measure.

Who cares if you know your colors, or your 123s, or your ABCs? What you really need when you start kindergarten is to be able to ask for help, to be able to make friends, to be able to learn; and the readiness to learn is grounded in being well-loved.

So, what kind of world are we creating? We measure children up, and we put them in categories – "You're in the Bluebird Group" – and everyone knows that's the slow readers, right? So, we categorize children without ever really thinking, "Who are these little people?"

I just can't get over the gift that parents give. They deliver their baby, their miracle, and they keep hearing how bad they are at stuff, or how they were acting out, or

"You're not doing a good enough job at home," all of these kinds of things that instead of building up the family just knock it down. So, I hope educators come to the Spirit of Humanity forum. I hope educators hear about your brand of humanity and realize that if we don't recognize the humanity of every child in education, we've not done our job.

**Q: Why did you say that Heartfulness is a nice name?**

**A:** I love the word "Heartfulness," and to call an organization "Heartfulness" is to embody your values, because we're not just our minds – our hearts inform our minds. And if we don't have a full heart, we won't have the full capacity to use our skills and our brains in a constructive way. I think the trip from the mind to the heart is a short journey, and the fuller the heart the bigger the head. So, I just feel it's such a warm name.

The first thing children draw when they learn to draw is hearts. They put hearts everywhere. It's not just little girls. When they write

little love notes – "Daddy I love you" – they draw a heart. Nobody tells them to do that. So, from the youngest age, children draw hearts because we all can relate, and the heart is not just a beating pump, the heart is our humanity, and that's why I like your name.



# The Secret of Success

MADHUSUDAN REDDY

explores how success comes through discipline,  
and provides simple effective ways of  
cultivating that discipline in daily life.



Beautiful dreams, pure thoughts, a simple personality, and sustained self-confidence are important qualities of every successful person in this world. But beyond these qualities, that which guides every human life, from the most famous to the simplest, is discipline. In this era, when the world has become a global village, the stark reality is that we are witnessing a progressive deterioration of discipline, discrimination, and values.

Today's children are tomorrow's citizens, and youth is the backbone of any country. Are our student communities and youth losing their vitality?

Nature is the first school of any human being, and teaches so many lessons in life: for example, the skill of a spider in weaving its web; the patience of ants in constructing an anthill; and the way a mother bird teaches her babies to fly. Behind all this is discipline-filled action. There is no life that does not involve discipline. Rewards, awards, and accolades are not the things that make us recognized by this world. If Sachin Tendulkar and Lionel Messi have such huge fan followings today, it is because their personal discipline has made them who they are.

Some people argue that success can be achieved through talent without discipline, but that sort of success is temporary. So if discipline is critical to reach the shores of success, why do we lack it? Here are some thoughts:

1. Our lack of meaningful relationships in this age of the nuclear family, single-parent families, and internet-based living.
2. Our education system is mostly confined to book-reading and churning out students as

rank-producing machines. We have not yet developed a value-based education policy, although the UN has done so and people are now waking up to the need for it.

3. Many youth have gone headlong into the addictive culture of social media, ragging, drugs, alcohol, and sex, forgetting their goals and aspirations.
4. Where respect for mothers, fathers, and teachers was earlier cherished, they are no longer automatically respected. They need to earn respect. Everything is being challenged.

Every day we read about so many crimes in our newspapers: students attacked by acid, others who are victims of ragging etc., and all these actions are symptomatic of a lack of discipline and respect for others. Students come to the cities to become IAS or IPS officers, but they forget their goals, having no thought for their parents' hardships. They are attracted to the open urban culture, but even if society needs to change, is it the best way?

Think about it. If you try to demonstrate against corruption, as an ordinary person, nobody will listen to you. If you give instructions as a disciplined officer, however, things can happen in no time. It is discipline that made Gandhi a Mahatma in the eyes of the world. Edison was a successful person because of discipline.

A boy who had a newspaper run went on to become Abdul Kalam, the President of India. Discipline was vital to their success.

Discipline is not just for securing success in examinations, but it is the prime quality to achieve anything in life. Here are some ways to cultivate that discipline:

1. Let your everyday routine start with discipline. Say you plan to wake up every day at 4:30 a.m. For two days, you wake up with the help of an alarm. On the third day, make a commitment to automatically wake up at 4.30 a.m. without the help of the alarm.
2. Time is of the essence. Recognize how much time you are wasting, and work to make the most out of every minute in a day.
3. Time cannot be saved like money and needs to be utilized properly.
4. Reduce your dependency on distractions. Examples of these include the 5 Cs: Cinema, Cricket, Cable, Chatting, and Cell phone.
5. We are the product of the people with whom we surround ourselves. It is important to be with people who motivate us to be our best.

Forget about your weaknesses. Keep trying. If there are no results, don't feel disappointed. Even if success is late, the happiness that comes out of it is everlasting. Even if the path is full of thorns, overcome them with your efforts; forget about problems when you are on the way to achieve. The world itself will be following you, glorifying you.

All the best.





# Agriculture

Ho Ya

# Construction

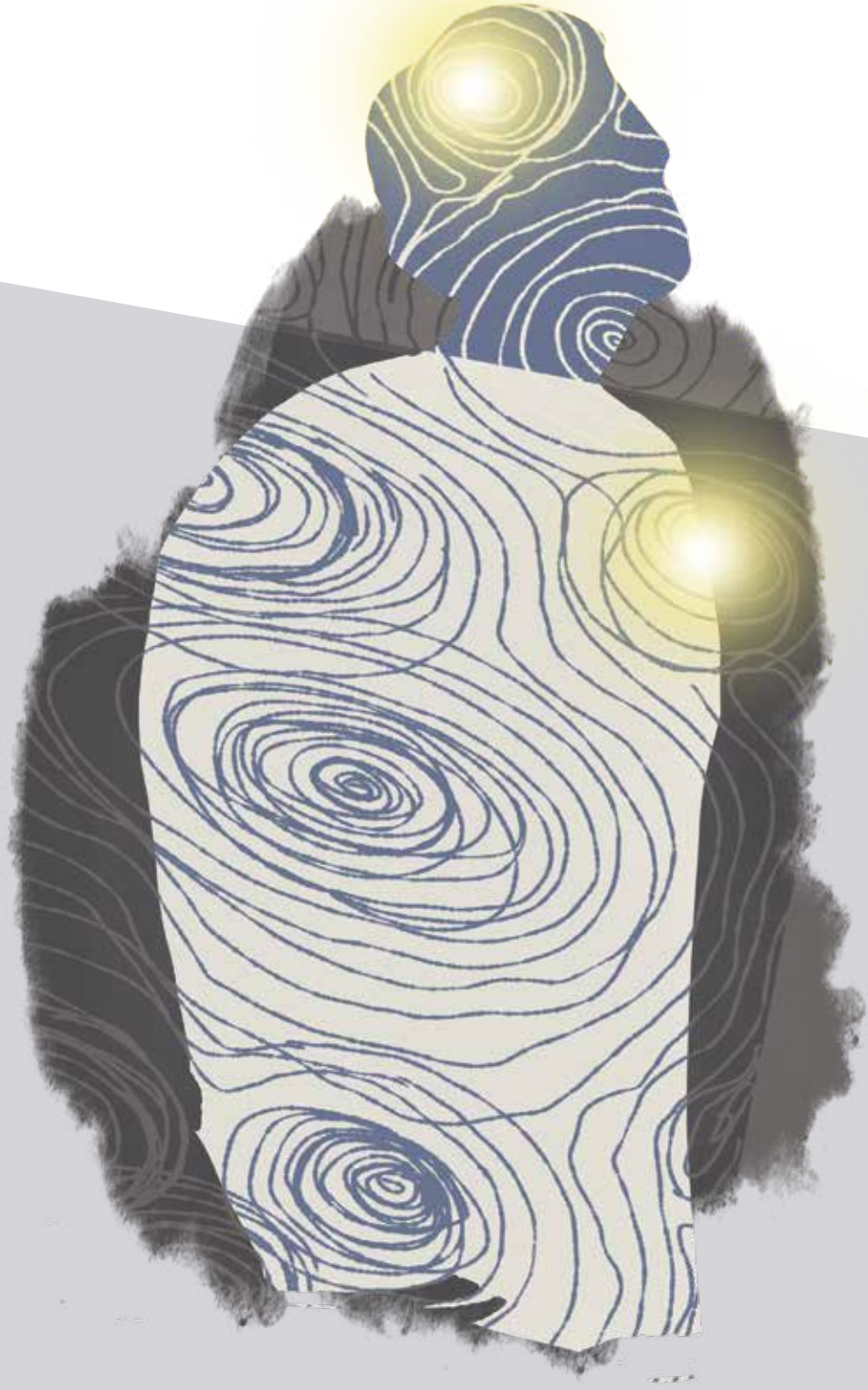
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# BEINSPIRED

It is very essential for everyone to fix their thought, at the very outset, upon the goal they have to attain, so that their thought and will may pave their way up to it.

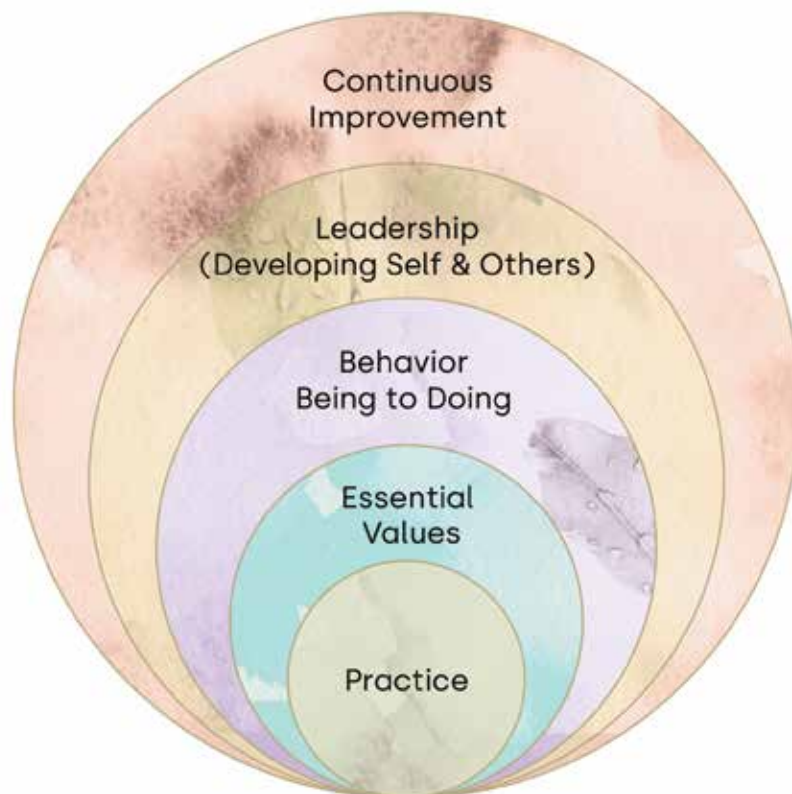
RAM CHANDRA

# A User's Guide to Living

## Part 4

### WHAT IS YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL IN LIFE?

**DAAJI** continues his series on daily living and human transformation. In this article, he introduces the third universal principle of the user's guide – the science of goal-setting, and of connecting with our life's ultimate purpose.



Within the five elements are ten universal principles:

### *The Practice*

1

Create a daily morning meditation practice scientifically

2

Fill your heart with love before starting meditation and before sleeping

3

Fix your goal and do not rest until you attain it

### *Essential values*

4

Live simply to be in tune with Nature

5

Be truthful & accept challenges as being for your betterment

### *Behavior Being to Doing*

6

Know everyone as one, treating them equally & harmoniously

7

Do not seek revenge for the wrongs done by others, instead always be grateful

8

Honor the resources you are given as sacred, with an attitude of purity, including food and money

### *Leadership*

9

Become a role model by inspiring love and sacredness in others. Accept the richness of their diversity, while also accepting that we are all one

### *Continuous Improvement*

10

Introspect daily before bedtime, so as to correct your faults and avoid making the same mistake twice

In his much celebrated book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, published in 1989, Stephen Covey outlines habit #2, “Begin with the end in mind.” This habit is the ability to envision in your mind what you really want, or want to be, even though you cannot presently see it with your eyes. In the yogic literature, this ability to imagine and visualize a goal is known as *kalpana*. It is based on the principle that what you create in your mind is what finally manifests in your life. Per contra, if you do not consciously envision what you want to be, then you will be shaped by the influence of others and the environment around you.

Covey’s book has had a huge impact on how individuals and companies proactively set their goals and work towards fulfilling them. But the scope of their goal setting is limited to achievements and values in the worldly domain.

It is easy to observe that when we don’t fix our goals, no matter what the endeavor, we may fail to reach the mark. Often, we mistake an intermediate stage as the final destination, or we get sidetracked. Those of us who have clear goals are more likely to succeed than those who do not.

In today’s world, this seems so obvious, but when Babuji wrote his book in the 1940s, it was not well understood in the context of modern management theory. In fact, it was not until 1960 that some of the nascent theories related to goal-setting were published. Contrast this with the ancient traditions, such as Yoga and the Vedic literature: Swami Vivekananda was famous for his statement, “Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached,” and his inspiration for this statement is thought to have come from chapter 1.3.14 of the Katha Upanishad, in which Lord Yama is teaching Nachiketa the methods of Yoga. The idea of single-pointed attention has been one of the fundamental principles of Yoga since time immemorial, as Yoga is a goal-focused way of life. Plato also describes the goal-directed nature of the soul of reason in

his book, *The Republic*, and Aristotle’s view is, “First, have a definite, clear practical ideal; a goal, an objective. Second, have the necessary means to achieve your ends; wisdom, money, materials, and methods. Third, adjust all your means to that end.”

In the last four decades, research in the fields of management and psychology has corroborated this correlation between goal-setting and performance. When we have a clear goal we are energized, and we have purpose and direction. This creates the motivation we need to keep going when we face the inevitable obstacles and challenges. In short, people with goals are more likely to go farther than people without them.

Babuji came to similar conclusions through his own experience and intuition, but that was not all. His idea of setting a goal went a step further. It encompassed all the dimensions of existence, not just the physical world. He talked about the highest goal of human life, and his guidance is summarized as follows:

#### Principle 3:

Fix your Goal, which is  
complete oneness with God.  
Rest not till the ideal is achieved.

Here we will explore this ultimate Goal of human life, and see what happens when we adopt it for ourselves, and what it takes to reach that state.

### *The importance of fixing the Goal*

To become aware of such an all-encompassing Goal requires knowledge and discernment about the purpose of human life, and it is surely not what many of us are looking for when we start meditating. Actually, many of us embark on a spiritual quest for more immediate needs, like





feeling peaceful, removing the heavy burden of emotional turmoil, and learning to manage our thoughts. And that is all fine, because our goals keep changing. Initially, we are often focused on the periphery of our being – our physical existence and the associated momentary pleasures of the body. The causes of pleasure and happiness for a child are different than the causes of pleasure for a teenager, a young adult, a middle-aged person and an elderly person.

When we develop more of an attraction towards the heart and mind – the subtle bodies – we start to long for inner happiness instead of just pleasure seeking, and later on we long for the bliss we experience in meditation. Of course, pleasures are needed in life, happiness is needed, and bliss is needed, but when we are attracted by the causal body, the soul, we are less and less interested in all these things. We go beyond pleasure, happiness and bliss, into the non-bliss state of nothingness

that is associated with the Source. That pure, sublime state is difficult to describe, as there is no weight and no quality to it at all.

This journey to attain subtler and subtler states requires purposeful awareness and consciousness of where we are headed, which is also called *Jnana Yoga*. But knowledge alone is not enough. It is like lighting a candle or turning on the light; the purpose is only to do things, like reading, cooking, or eating dinner. Similarly, we enlighten ourselves with knowledge in order to do things. Knowledge is for that purpose; it has no significance without being put to use.

When we keep our goals in view, our efforts are intensified enough to ensure success. When we fix our thought on a particular goal, the thought itself becomes an intention, powered by our interest and longing, and that helps to pave the way to it.

We can use the metaphor of a boat to explain this idea. A life without a goal is like a boat without a rudder or a helm. Without applying the helm in the direction of the destination, the boat is unlikely to reach there. For our own inner development, what is that helm? It is our strong interest, longing and determination, along with the willpower and confidence to navigate the eddies and current that are obstacles along the way. This helm-steering involves doing something, the action of *Karma Yoga*. And here the ‘doing’ involves the Heartfulness practices and lifestyle principles.

The third ingredient is enthusiasm – the vitality and passion that develops in a seeker to continue on the journey toward their goal. This is also known as love and devotion, or *Bhakti Yoga*. Without the inspiration and soothing effect of love and devotion, the journey would be dry, unforgiving and lifeless. Love propels us forward and upward. It ignites the fire of transcendence.

So setting our sights on the ultimate Goal involves the three great streams of Yoga: *Karma Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga*, and *Bhakti Yoga*.

This raises another big question:

## What is the ultimate goal of human life?

Sages, scientists, religious leaders, philosophers and thought leaders have tried to answer this question throughout human history, along with a few related questions:

Who am I?

Why am I here?

What is the purpose of my existence?

Where did I come from, and where will I go afterward?

The answers to these age-old questions are not only linked to what happens during this lifetime, but are also inextricably linked to what happens before, after, and beyond this physical existence. Some belief systems promote the idea of heaven and hell, while others teach that we will keep being reincarnated until all our karmic debts are paid, and then we will be liberated. Other people believe that there is nothing before or after this life.

Babuji created an entirely new paradigm. He started by asking a simple question, “What is that one thing, having which we will have everything?”

It is not wealth, or power, or fame, or knowledge, or even love and happiness, but the source of all those things. And what is the source of everything? It is the source of creation itself; that which we call the Source or the Ultimate. If we have that, we have everything. And it is possible to attain it in this lifetime.

This begs another question, “What is complete oneness with the Source?” We can substitute “the Source” with various terms – the Real, God, the Absolute, the Ultimate, and the Center – to describe the changeless state that existed before creation. Everything emanated from it. All creation is a manifestation of that oneness. There is creation and dissolution, evolution and involution, expansion and contraction, but the Source remains as it is, changeless.

This idea can also be explained through quantum physics. If everything in creation is energy and vibration, then nothing within that sphere is really created or destroyed. There are only different levels of vibration. And everything emanates from the Source, which is beyond vibration, and in perfect balance. The fundamental substratum of existence is consciousness. Consciousness is the field of Being. All beings are at different levels of vibration of consciousness. We can, therefore, trace



our way back to the Source, first via the mastery of consciousness, then via the mastery of the potentiality that lies at the base of consciousness, and eventually we may reach the absolute state of oneness with the Source. These three stages or regions of existence of the human being were classified by Babuji in terms of our spiritual anatomy as the Heart Region, the Mind Region and the Central Region, in his book *Efficacy of Raja Yoga*.

And Babuji also created a method by which we are able to refine and expand our consciousness through the journey of the thirteen chakras of these three regions, in order to realize that ultimate Goal, oneness with the Source. He outlined this journey in another of his books, *Towards Infinity*. All this may sound like science fiction, but it can be experienced by anyone who is willing to try it.

So fixing the Goal is the first step in completing this journey.

### What happens when we fix our goal?

When we fix our attention on this Goal of oneness with the Source, with interest and longing, it creates a stir in the Infinite and the divine starts moving towards us. Think of a lover and her beloved. The beloved first hears the call of the lover. Once the relationship is established, the lover and the beloved move towards oneness, until finally the merge is permanent and lasting. This demonstrates the importance of *Bhakti Yoga* in the journey. But this merge is just the preparation! Our swimming in the infinite ocean now starts, and this brings us to the realm of Reality. Here we are free of all the miasmas of the world, but we still have to go farther to reach the final destination.



### What is the key to success?

First, we must fix the Goal. Next, in order to arrive at Realization, we need to create an intense longing for the Goal. It starts with an intention, which creates the initial momentum, and which in turn promotes our efforts. Our interest goes on increasing as we gain a deeper understanding of the Goal and we begin to get a taste of its magnitude. Eventually it develops into a deep longing.

Our pursuit of the Goal is an integrated approach involving the heart and the mind. Longing is created in the heart while determination is generated in the mind. In other words, the heart creates the pull while the mind creates the push. The strength of our will and our confidence help us navigate obstacles, and the will is strengthened by applying it through the practices. Confidence also grows with practice. In short, the secret of success has three elements: Consistent practice, clear

intention, and intense longing – again, *Karma Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga*, and *Bhakti Yoga*.

When we adopt these three things, the tendencies of the mind are diverted towards the Goal with sincerity and intensity. All our mental faculties now work together as one powerful stream, instead of being fragmented into multiple channels. This develops with consistent practice.

### *In summary*

Those of you who are familiar with these 10 principles know that each one stands on its own as well as forming part of a whole, just like the pearls in a necklace. There is no hierarchy here; each one is equally important. Yet I would like to say that this third principle is one of the most difficult to explain, for in it is contained the entire philosophy of Heartfulness in its essence. It is only as a result of consistent practice that we may truly experience and understand the purpose of fixing the Goal.

Many people ask about the difference between prayer (principle 2) and fixing the Goal (principle 3). In fact they are intricately connected. We establish a connection with the Source when we practice the prayer. When we pray just before meditation, we are offering a deep cry from the bottom of our hearts, and that has the power to summon the Source towards us. Fixing the Goal is a conscious process of keeping that connection alive and allowing it to be enlivened more and more. It is an all-consuming longing, like falling in love multiplied a million times.

When the Goal is foremost in our mind, all other desires drop off, all other attachments lose their intensity, and all expectations vanish. Everything else in our lives is absorbed within this central longing. It is not that we do not value our other worldly relationships and aspects of our lives. They



are also there, and they are greatly enriched by the love and potential that develop in us as we journey onward. In fact the worldly riches are embellished by making these 10 principles a part of our life.

But our focus shifts: The central purpose of our existence takes center stage, and all tendencies of the mind are diverted towards it with full vigor. There is extreme impatience and restlessness until the Goal is achieved. That is what it takes to achieve that state.

At this juncture you might ask, “What do I do after I fix the Goal?” I can only answer it from my own experience. Once I fixed the Goal, I continued to practice tirelessly, and left it to my Master.

There are three apparent paradoxes that are worth exploring here:

The first involves the guidance we are given by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. While Babuji tells us to fix our Goal and rest not until it is achieved, Lord Krishna tells us that while we are entitled to fix our Goal, and we have a right to the actions we perform to attain that Goal, we have no right to the Goal itself – the results of our actions are in the hands of God. This concept leads us to another principle that is of great importance on the spiritual journey, that of acceptance of everything that happens along the way. We do our part, and cooperate to the best of our ability, but the timing of events and milestones is not in our hands. There can be no transaction between God and us, and we can only proceed onward by accepting this fact with a yielding heart overflowing with humility. It is what it is. Anyway, the whole of life is governed by the same principle.

The second paradox is this: An even more abstract concept to grasp is that the Goal is also a receding Goal, a never-ending Goal, an infinite Goal. How to understand that we fix a Goal that is not finite? Instead, we approach it asymptotically. To offer a hint here, this paradox is one of the many reasons why the Master is so important in our journey. He represents the Goal that cannot otherwise be adequately defined.

No one can really grasp or understand the Goal that has Infinity at its base. The only way to experience it is through the feeling of incrementally refined consciousness.

And the third and related paradox is this: We may have fixed the ultimate Goal of human life, but what about the immediate goal of today? We live in the world, where the two wings of our existence – the material and spiritual – must be taken care of. Whatever comes our way in the moment is our immediate goal, for example, we may want to get rid of stress and have peace. Then, as we enjoy

more and more peace, it will lead to the loosening of attachments, or greater compassion, empathy and generosity of heart. Each stage leads to the next, and the next, and so on. Finally, we are able to perceive the difference between the pure state of consciousness and perceived awareness. Having arrived at a such a pure state of consciousness, we are ready to embark upon the base that supports consciousness. At this highest level, purity reigns supreme.

Purity enhances self-awareness with reverence. It demands nothing. In turn, it keeps our senses in check. As a result, we arrive at single-pointedness and total clarity, because the senses don't interfere any more. Such a focused mind allows contemplation that results in harmony. It is in this field of harmony that we can cultivate true happiness.

Throughout this incremental journey, even the immediate spiritual goal may not be visible. It is like climbing a mountain through a forest – we cannot always see how far we have come and where we are going. It is only when we reach a vantage point, like a lookout, that we can see back to where we have come from, and get a glimpse of the peak we are headed for. So one way to manage this process of goal-setting for our spiritual journey, is to appreciate what has been given to us in every meditation, absorb it and digest it, and expand it further until we become one with it. In that sense, our goal doesn't exist in the future at all, it is here and now. And that requires cultivating extreme receptivity in our hearts.

I wish you every success in your journey to the Goal.

# Taste of Life





Mystery is at the  
heart of creativity.  
That, and surprise.

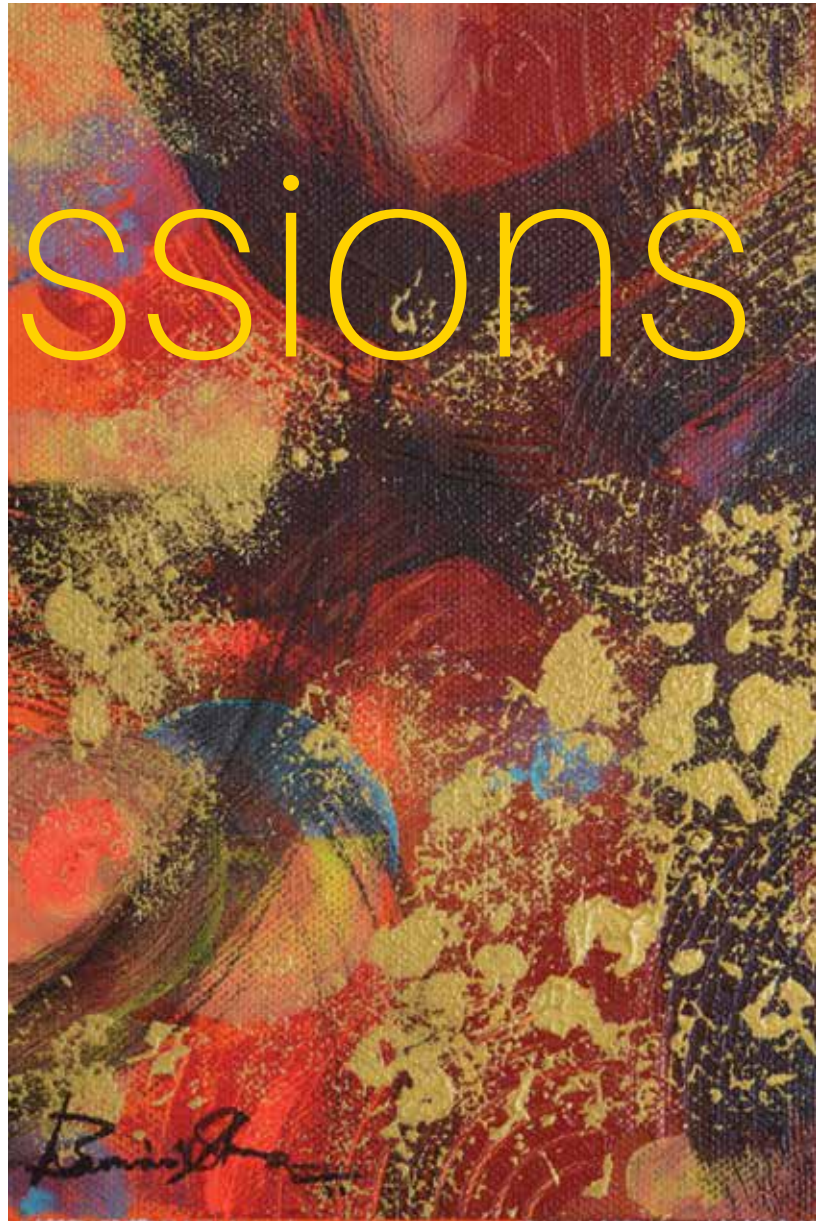
JULIA CAMERON

# Expressions

In this delightful interview, **BHAMINI SHREE** shares her journey of expression through painting – both Madhubani folk art and abstract painting – with **MEGHANA ANAND**. Through art, gradually she was able to manage her depression, expand her self-expression, and also develop her art as a career.



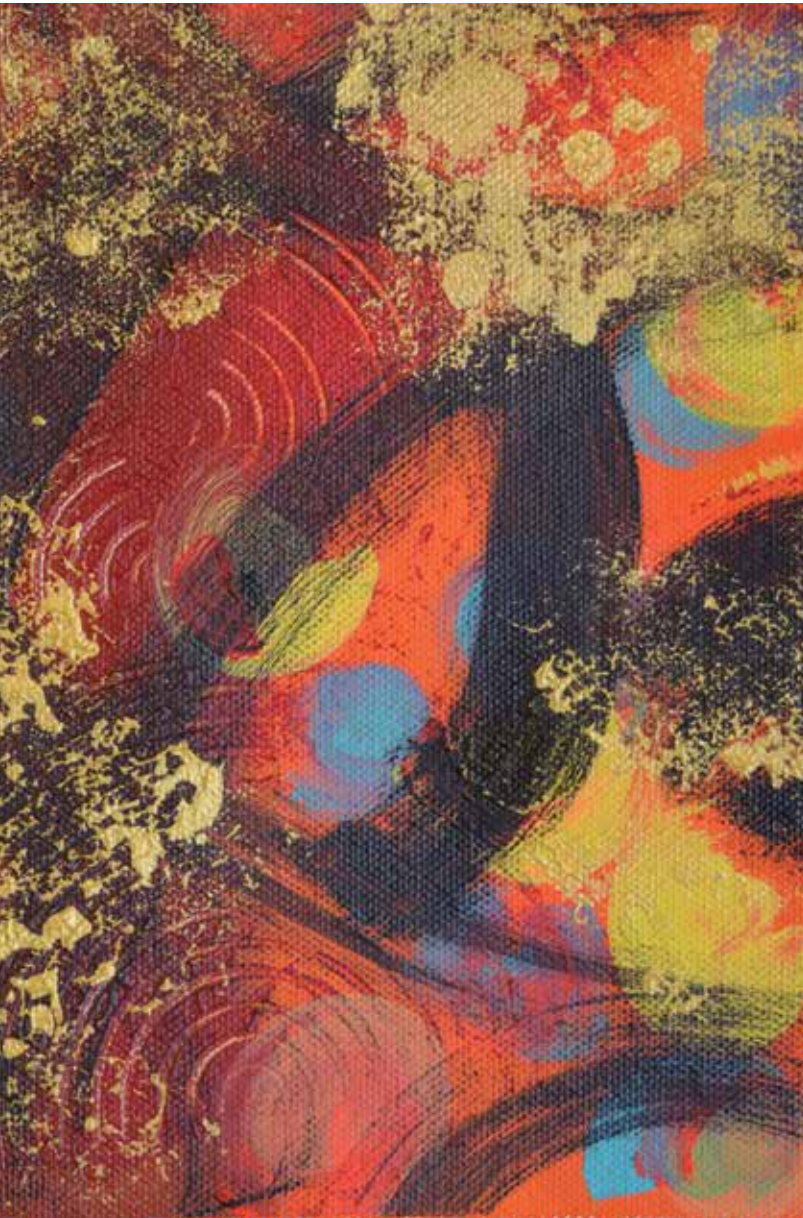
Bhamini is an artist based out of Hyderabad, originally from Bihar. She is passionate about speaking up for causes like women empowerment, equality and mental health through her artwork. With a decade of experience in Madhubani Painting and Abstract Expressionism, she believes that art is a form of therapy that helps not only express and teach the art of perseverance and discipline but also acts as meditation to enhance patience and concentration.



**Q:** Hi Bhamini. Tell us about yourself. How did your journey with art begin?

When I was in grade 8 or 9, I was diagnosed with depression. After that I started doodling. Then, one fine day when nothing was working out and I had a lot in my head and could not express it at all, my mom gave me a canvas and colors and said, “Whatever comes to your mind, start painting.” And that is how I started. I learnt Bihari





Madhubani painting from my aunt. She taught me the basics and I became interested in that. That is one part.

The other part is that I have always been very vocal about what I think is right and wrong. All of us have our own understanding of what is right and wrong, and there are no fixed parameters, which is why it's a mess. I was very vocal about women's rights, freedom, being liberated, the equality

of all genders – and I was spiritual more than religious. Right now I don't follow any religion; I am a spiritual person. So that is what I started expressing through my art.

Later I did an MBA. I thought I would never be able to pursue art as a career; that I wouldn't be able to meet ends. How was I going to live on my own, unless I had some other form of support? The truth, according to me, is that you can't. That's how the condition of art is in our country right now – it's not recognized.

So I told myself, "Okay, let's see what happens!" I did my MBA, and took a job in Hyderabad. I was still emotionally and mentally not well, and I just couldn't express myself. In the corporate space, every day was a challenge, and I would wait to go home and paint whatever was in my head. There was so much I wanted to express.

I am not good at expressing myself in words, and that was creating a lot of hindrance, because in the corporate sphere you have to behave in a certain way. It was a pressure, so I didn't want to do it anymore. I was also passionate about fashion design, so I planned my own online boutique. That's how I started a life as an entrepreneur.

I never thought I would take up art as my sole profession; but my boutique business did not do very well, so that broke me down and I had to introspect upon what I really wanted to do with my life. After a few trials, I understood that the best thing to do is what I loved the most. And I just loved colors. I wanted to express what is right. I wanted to stand for expression in any form, in whatever way I chose. I had to express myself, otherwise it was chaotic inside my head.

And as a woman I want to do something whereby, even if I am not directly leading people or changing their lives, I still create some change through my art. So right now I bring out the

## TASTE OF LIFE

perspectives of women, the viewpoints of women, through abstract painting. Basically I use two forms of painting: one is abstract painting, and the second is Madhubani painting.

Madhubani is because I am from Bihar, and I really like the colors in Madhubani paintings. Without a word they speak so much. It's just beautiful. If your entire room is white and you have just one Madhubani painting on the wall, it brings color to the entire room and says so much. And the deities in the paintings are not to be worshipped, they are to be adored, which is why I really like this form of art.

In the abstract expressions, the major themes are about the mind, the soul, and how women see the world. I am not objectifying womanhood, but painting strong women, and who they are. So even if I paint nudity, it's not about showing a sex object. It's about the confidence and the freedom she feels in being a woman. We are true beings when we don't cover ourselves. Clothes are a symbol of covering, so when there are no clothes that's who she is. She's fat, she's slim, she's fair, she's dark, she's a woman and she's beautiful.

I also paint the mind because I've experienced the way the mind works very closely. It can be chaotic; it can be beautiful.

**Q: This makes a lot of sense in today's times, especially when young people are struggling to express their minds and hearts. How did your art help you come out of the state of depression that you were in during your teens? How did you find your way in life?**

When we go through a mental ailment of any sort, we usually talk to psychiatrists or psychologists because we just don't know what's happening inside. It's so suffocating that we can't think, we



can't talk, we can't be ourselves, we can't do our daily conduct.

There are a lot of things that art opens us to. The first is the choice of colors. When we paint, the colors that we choose show our current state of mind. When I am extremely angry, I would rather paint something related to fire, something blank, or something which may not necessarily be very vibrant but shows my state of mind. When I paint only because I am in the mood for painting, when I paint because I am happy and have nothing else to do, I paint something bluish. When I am



creative and I think I have a lot of ideas, I paint something orange-ish, golden and purple also – a lot more colors. So the choice of colors in painting shows my state of mind.

Art is infinite. Expression in the form of lines, in the form of squares, in the form of just eyes or just lips, or books, or the empty road, or a tree, or the sun, or fire, or the flow of the river, or just a woman, or the relationship between two women – expression can be anything. So when you are able to express yourself to the other, and hear the other being, it becomes your canvas. That's your shoulder.

When you're able to express it, the pressure inside your brain subsides to some extent. Bit by bit it comes down, because it's all about the fact that you can't say what you want to say. You don't know what's there inside and you need somebody to help you out. And when you know what's happening inside you, you are capable and strong enough to take care of yourself.

In the olden days, too, there might have been people undergoing depression. But when there were no psychologists or doctors to help them come out of that state, how were they able to do it? So it's all in the mind – the strength, the weakness, the fragility, the vulnerability – it's all about the mind. It's all about training your mind.

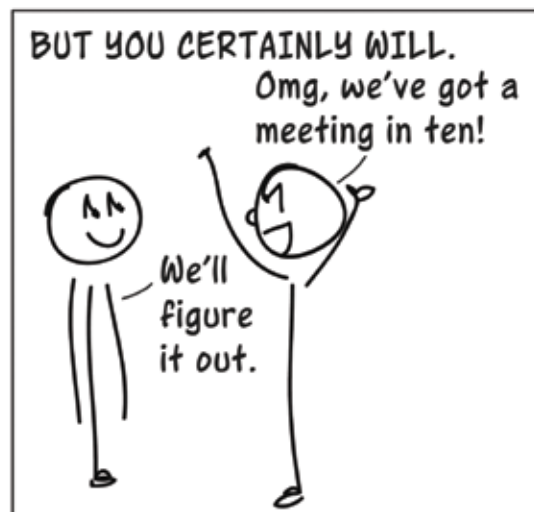
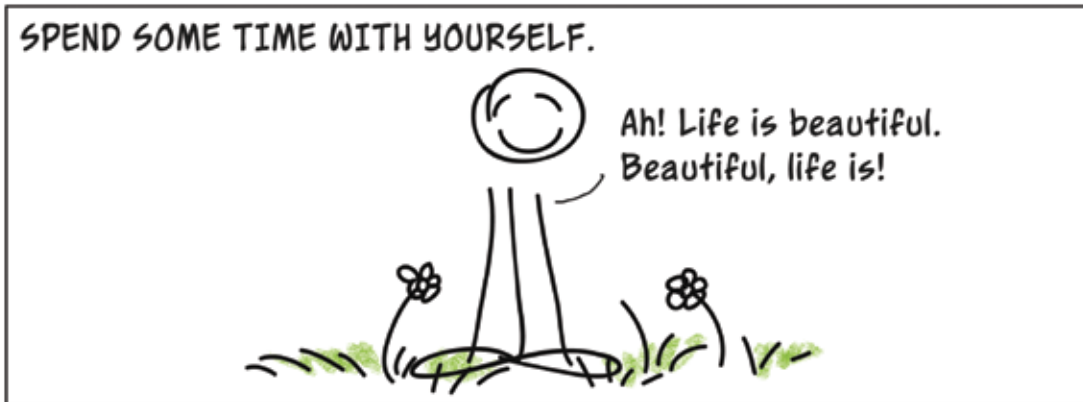
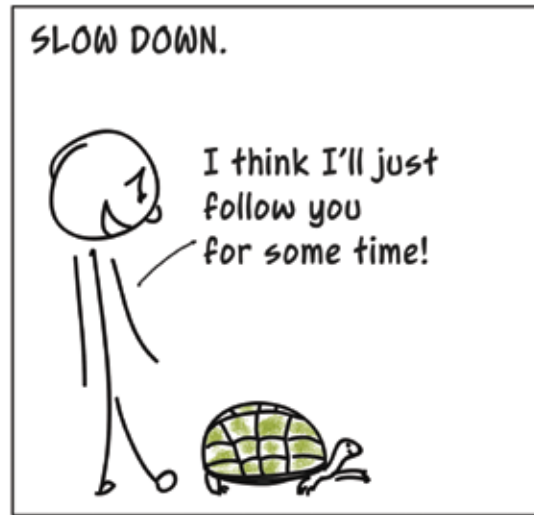
So art is one way to deal with depression or any kind of mental ailment, even loneliness. In fact, for elderly people, if their eyesight is good, I would recommend them to be involved in art, because it gives them company in their lonely times. The elderly are the loneliest people on earth today. So they have something to look forward to, they can talk to the painting. Paintings can really talk to you. They show you a mirror and talk to you.

When you paint folk art, like Madhubani, it requires a lot of perseverance, a lot of patience, so you have to be calm and patient and let go. If there are slight flaws, you need to remain calm and say to yourself, "There is still hope. I can improvise this painting later." So gradually, with due practice, it proves to be a very good form of meditation.

In fact I have noticed that when my mind is blocked and there is nothing coming up, when I sit down to paint, it calms me down. It gives me a lot of space and time to think, and I don't act weirdly or abnormally at that time. I am quiet, I am calm, and I train my brain that way. I may not consciously do this, but subconsciously this is how it happens.

To be continued.

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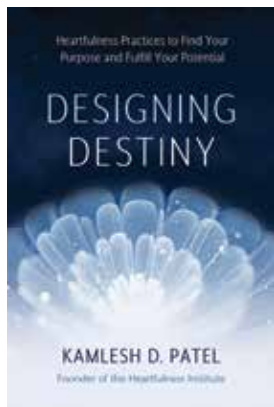
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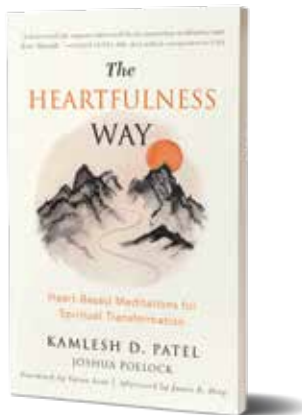


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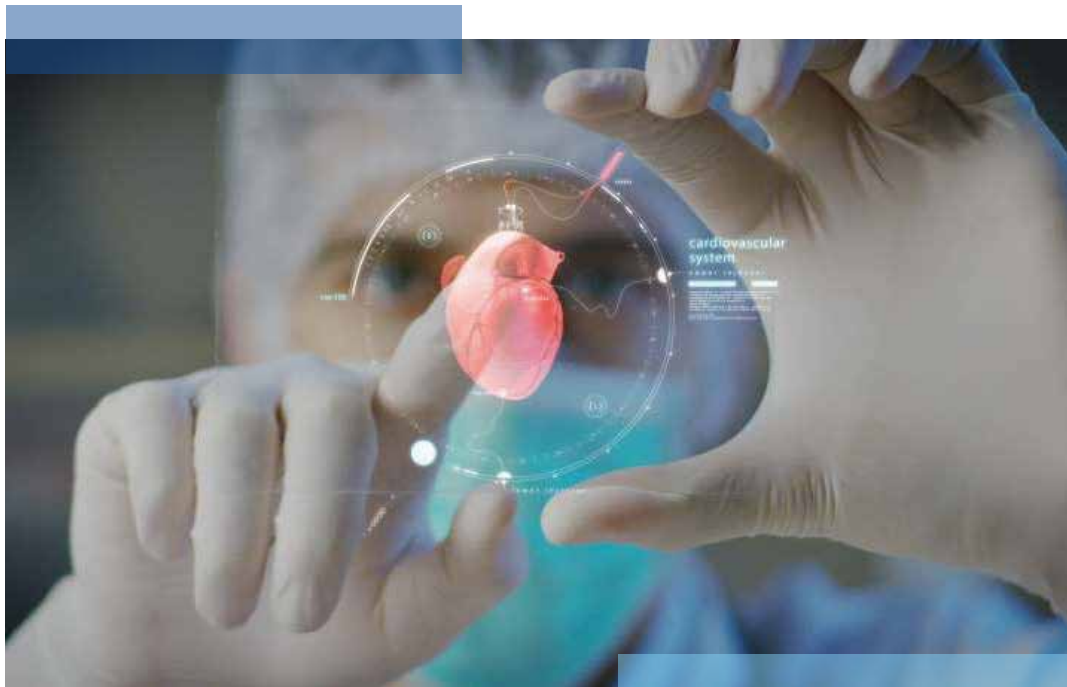




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