

April 2022

heartfulness

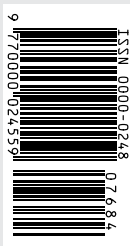
advancing in love

Caring for
Mother Earth
DAAJI

The Evolutionary
Impulse
TAMI SIMON

The Resource
Curse
AMITAV GHOSH

The Peace
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Taking Care
of the Planet

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ISSN 2455-7684

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RK PRINT HOUSE, H.No.11-6-759,
3rd Floor, Anand Complex, Lakdikapul,
Hyderabad, Telangana, 500004, India.

PUBLISHER — Sunil Kumar representing
Heartfulness Education Trust
13-110, Kanha Shanti Vanam,
Kanha Village, Nandigama Mandal,
Ranga Reddy District, Telangana, 509325, India.

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When Will We Start to Care for Our Mother?

“If you don’t cry deep, hard tears for the state of this planet and all of the people on it, you don’t yet understand the problem. And once you get to that place, the only thing that can bring you out of that kind of darkness is belief in something greater than yourself. And for me, it is that spiritual connection. For me, it is understanding a greater purpose. And then your job becomes less about passing a piece of legislation and more about making a better world. ... I mean, what do we have to lose? Well, we’re going to lose everything.”

Colette Bichon Battle

Dear readers,

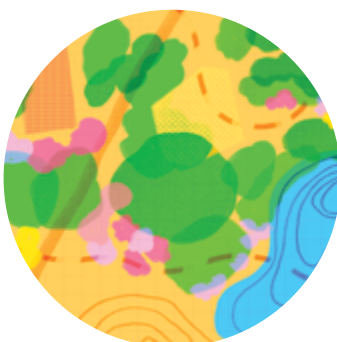
We have all been shocked by the events taking place in Ukraine. And there are other wars and conflicts, like the war in the Yemen since 2014, which the UN describes as the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. At a time when the world needs humanity to come together, instead we are confronted with war. It feels like humanity has finally gone mad. We can pray for sanity to return.

Earth Day falls on April 22 every year, and this year the theme is “Invest in Our Planet. What Will You Do?” But our current crisis will not be solved by investment, nor will it be solved by science. Our planetary crisis is a moral issue. After 53 years of existence, Earth Day is no longer about bringing awareness on one day a year, and here at Heartfulness Magazine we echo those sentiments in the most practical way, through our Heartfulness Green Movement, and through the inner activism of contemplative practices. You can read more about those activities in this edition and on our website.

This month we feature celebrated author Amitav Ghosh, peace-maker William Ury, spiritual ecologist Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, neuroscientist Thomas Bruhn, sustainability veteran Charlotte Dufour, management consultant Ichak Adizes, Heartfulness Green officer, V. Ramakantha, and artist Christian Macketanz.

We are also delighted to feature part 2 of the inspiring interview with Tami Simon of Sounds True, who talks of ways businesses can adapt to changing paradigms, and Daaji gives us practical ways to shift our mindset to take care of Mother Earth.

Happy reading!
The editors



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DAAJI

Daaji is the Heartfulness Guide. He is an innovator and researcher, equally at home in the fields of spirituality, science, and the evolution of consciousness. He has taken our understanding of human potential to a new level.



TAMI SIMON

Tami is the founder of multimedia platform Sounds True and the educational program *The Inner MBA*. Tami has grown Sounds True into North America's leading publisher of spoken-word spiritual teachings, operating on Integral principles.



CHARLOTTE DUFOUR

Charlotte has worked for over 20 years in the field of international cooperation. Today, she is an independent consultant, works with the 4DS group, and bridges Yoga with sustainable development through her social enterprises Narayan, Listening Inspires, and the Listening to the Earth campaign.



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Thomas is a physicist at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Potsdam, Germany. He is a researcher and a bridge builder, helping experts and change-makers from all sectors of society to come together to explore the topic of sustainability, listen to each other, and develop solutions.



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Dr. Adizes is a leading management expert. He has received 21 honorary doctorates and is the author of 27 books that have been translated into 36 languages. He is recognized as one of the top thirty thought leaders of America.



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Co-founder of Harvard's Program on Negotiation, William is one of the world's leading experts on negotiation and mediation. He is currently a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Harvard Negotiation Project.

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Self-Care

Each one of us matters, has a role to play, and makes a difference. Each one of us must take responsibility for our own lives, and above all, show respect and love for living things around us, especially each other.

JANE GOODALL

Illustration by ANANYA PATEL

Be Open
to what comes
Your Way



CHARLOTTE DUFOUR is a veteran in the fields of international cooperation and sustainable food systems. Here she is interviewed by **KALPANA SAI** of the Heartfulness Institute about the role of Yoga and spirituality in her own mental health and wellness, sharing tips from her experience.

Q: There are a lot of perspectives on when Yoga should be practiced, specifically, the time of the day. What is your take on this?

I'm tempted to say everybody should work based on what suits them. I like to do it in the morning before my meditation. I find Yoga to be a preparation for meditation, in terms of feeling the energy flow more smoothly in your body, so that you can go deeper within, while calming the mind.

You can be very creative about how you fit Yoga into the day. I find with my own practices that I so love it when I can have a long session, but the reality of my schedules is not always that. So, I'm constantly reminding myself that five minutes is better than

nothing. The bare minimum is three pairs of sun salutations. It takes five to ten minutes, but it makes a big difference. So, adaptation to our schedules is quite good.

Q: How did you inspire yourself to have a dedicated practice? How did you become consistent? And what are some things we can do consistently to show up for ourselves and enhance our well-being, physically, and especially, mentally and emotionally?

Well, it's not easy. Yoga does take time and discipline. Willpower is a very important element of the spiritual journey. Quoting Yogananda, "The stronger the will, the stronger the energy." He talked about this inner battle. Of course, the ego will do everything

to distract you from meditation. Everything else will be a priority.

The first important thing is the environment. I find it much easier when I'm living alone and completely a master of my time. I think it's harder when you have a family. I really admire mothers with children who continue to practice. You eventually understand that the environment is stronger than willpower. So, it's about finding the right environment and the right community of friends that support you in your practice.

I also regularly go back to our ashram, as it is easy to dive deep into the practice and remember how much I love it. It's hard to do alone. I would say regularity and good company. Sometimes you

I think a big part of bringing Yoga in a daily routine is to stop and breathe. For example, take five minutes before a meeting to do a few yogic breathing exercises.

need to go through a phase where you lose your practice. I confess, in recent weeks I very much lost it, and I was not well. I was not even aware of the tensions I had, but as I started practicing Hatha Yoga, it was like, “Oh!” Then, when I started opening up to what my body actually feels like when it’s well, I was more aware of what’s bad for me, in terms of diet and breathing. I think a big part of bringing Yoga in a daily routine is to stop and breathe. For example, take five minutes before a meeting to do a few yogic breathing exercises.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add? What are other things we can focus

on, especially, after the repercussions of the pandemic?

You mentioned physical disease, and that’s where the other paths of Yoga are. I read a book that explains how many of the physical illnesses we have happen when one of our soul wounds is activated. When you are able to identify how a particular event has reactivated a wound, you can address it. I remember one time my lower back got stuck, and I observed, “This seems to be around the second chakra. What does this mean? Okay, X is probably what triggered this back pain.” So, on one hand I worked on the Yoga postures, to open up the energy flows and bring the second chakra back into balance, and on the other hand I also worked on the emotional trigger for the back pain. I think this is why we say Yoga is very much about consciousness, awareness, and self-awareness.

Q: I agree. A lot of people talk about awareness as the first step to just knowing, because once “you know,” everything else seems to fall into place organically. In a more general sense, what kind of advice would you give someone who is trying to build a spiritual connection with themselves, or embark on a journey of self-acceptance, self-love, or just wanting to have a relationship with themselves?

Well, the answer is so personal. I would say, be open to the cues, because when you start wanting to engage in this journey the universe is responsive. You’ll start having a conversation with somebody who gives you an idea or a book. A turning point for me was when somebody shared a book that opened my mind to the idea of reincarnation, souls coming and going, and life having a purpose. But it was later that I found the path of Yoga. So, there were little seeds along the way. When I finally arrived for the self-healing course in Ananda Yoga, it was an incredibly moving moment for me, especially when I found myself in a temple with pictures of all these masters, and reading Jesus.

I am moved even thinking about that moment because I felt it was waiting for me. And I think we have an image that Yogananda shares, “It’s good to try the water from different wells; they all go down the same source, the same aquifer.” Once you find the one

Yoga is very much about consciousness, awareness, and self-awareness.



that feels right for you, stick with it and go deep. There's being open to what comes your way. What resonates? Where does your heart open? You might retrospectively recognize the signs.

For example, I had such an interest, but at first I hesitated to practice Kriya Yoga as taught by Yogananda. I asked myself, "Do I

go into that practice? It's a certain commitment," but I was starting to meet people out of the blue from completely unexpected sources who were either doing it or who gave me a book that mentioned it. So, be aware of the signs. Listen to your heart. You know. And if you are having a challenge in your life – be it a personal one, like a divorce or an illness – that

might be a cue that it's a good time to search. I'm so grateful to live in this great time of spiritual opening.

To be continued.

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL

A Sustainable MINDSET

THOMAS BRUHN is a physicist at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Potsdam, Germany. He is a researcher and a bridge builder, helping experts and change-makers from all sectors of society to come together to explore the topic of sustainability, listen to each other, and develop solutions.

In part 1 of his conversation with **JUDITH NELSON** at the Spirit of Humanity Forum in Reykjavik, Iceland, he talks about the walking holiday he had after finishing his studies, and how it informed his perspectives on nature and sustainability.

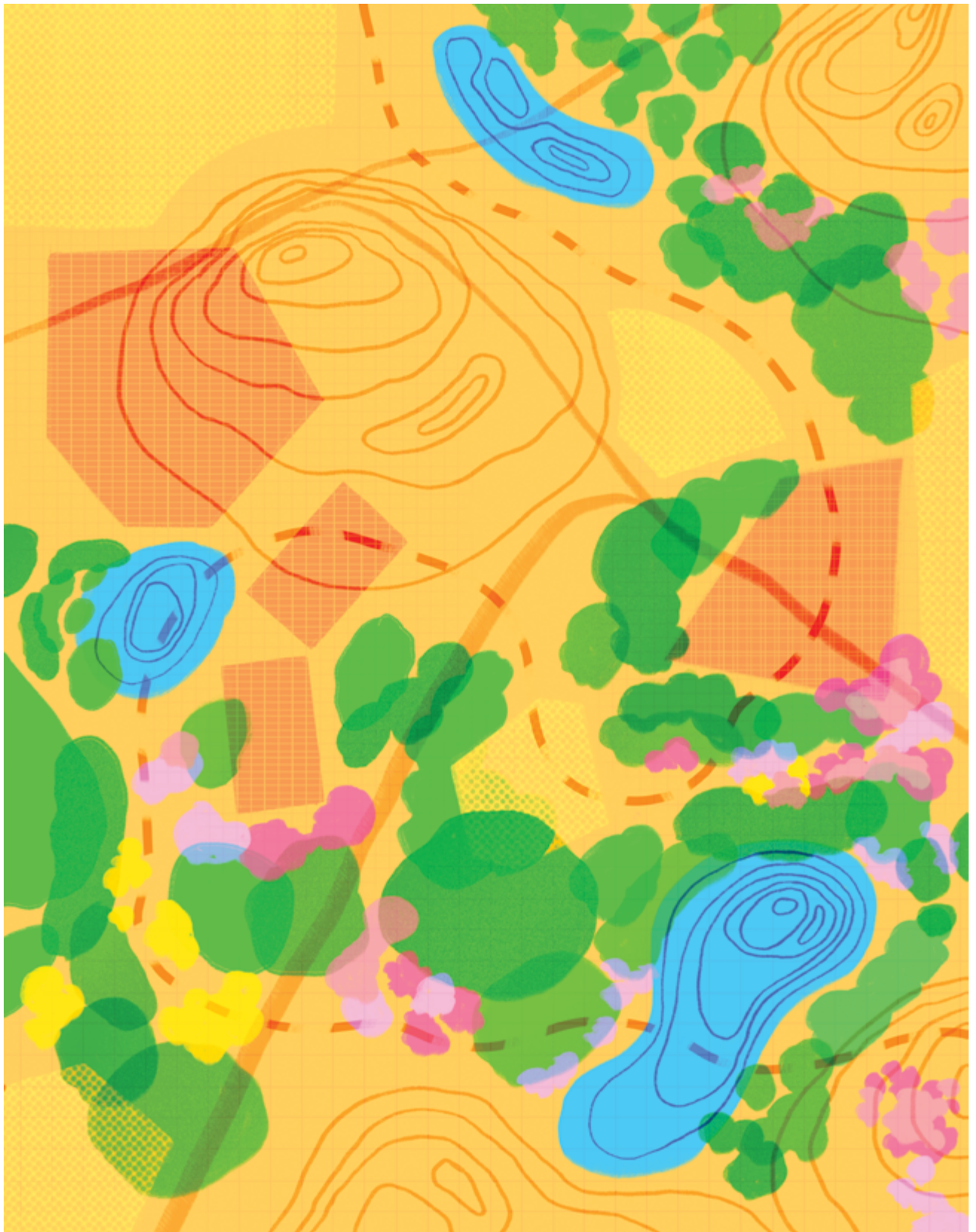
Q: I was intrigued by some of the content of your session this morning, particularly when you talked about your walk, where you went from a mindset of “think, think, think” and “work, work, work” to something very different. Can you explain more?

That transformation came after I completed my diploma thesis. It was an intense phase of working, where I had little space for myself. Originally, I had huge plans after my studies like, “I’ll go to the Himalayas, or the Rocky Mountains, or the Andes,” but I didn’t have time to organize anything. I ended up packing a very small bag and started to walk in Germany. I only had a plan for the first three days, because there was a place I had been in my youth with my parents, and I thought, “That’s a nice place to start.” There is a place in the very south of Germany and I had intense

memories of that place. I thought I would like to end up there.

When I started walking, I realized how long it took for me to calm down, certainly a whole week. All sorts of things came to mind – music, songs, inner voices. I thought of my diploma thesis. Was there something I had done wrong? Because I was walking and I was on my own, I could observe and allow everything to be as silly as it seemed.

I wrote everything down in a diary, but the real beauty was the experience of transformation throughout that journey. I learned to let go of planning and I enjoyed that so much. In fact, it was like a pilgrimage. The less I planned, the more I was surprised at what happened. There were such beautiful encounters. Each of them was very small and insignificant.



SELF-CARE

Along that road, there was one thing that everybody told me: “Oh, you must see that particular place.” But that was the least touching experience of the whole journey because it was loaded with expectation and planning. Everything that happened when I let go of planning was such a blissful experience. So, it’s the best type of holiday I have had!

I didn’t take a tent with me, so I really didn’t know where I would sleep. Maybe everything would be occupied, maybe I would have to hitch-hike a little bit. Right after that pilgrimage, I met my wife. For years, I told her about this kind of traveling, and she said, “Yeah, sounds nice, but I don’t know, especially not knowing where I’m going to sleep.” Five years later, we did a similar trip together. Doing it as a couple was such a profound experience of letting go and trusting whatever comes up. So that’s the story of that experience. [Laughs]

Q: You also talked about needing a lot less than we think we do. Can you expand on that?

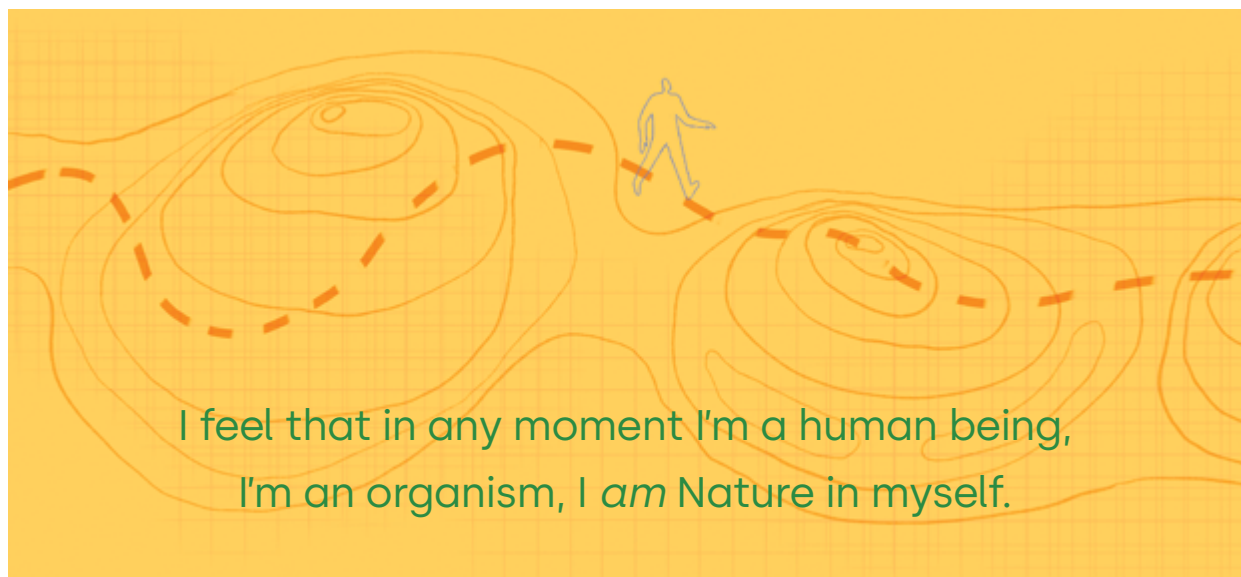
Yes. I was carrying so little, but by the end of my travels I realized there was so much I took with me that I didn’t need. Even food. I needed less and less

Everything that happened when I let go of planning was such a blissful experience.

food during the trip. You might expect that hiking is intense for the body, so you would need a lot of food, but no, it was less and less.

By the end, I didn’t even need any kind of impulses from the surrounding environment. It was not like I was taking a specific path to have perfect experiences. It was just, “Okay, I’m on the road, walking, and that satisfies everything I need.”

Because I hadn’t had that experience before, I didn’t know whether I’d return after a week, or my mind might go crazy without the usual needs – distractions or calling people. In the first week I had my phone with me and I did call quite a few people just to connect, or just to let my parents know that I was okay. Even all that communication dissolved throughout the travel. That was very beautiful as well.





Q: The other very interesting thing in your talk was your positivity and your sense of not being separate from Nature. Could you explain a bit more?

That's a weird paradox within myself. On the one hand, I don't feel disconnected from Nature, but I grew up in an industrialized society and I work in a concrete building, and so forth. So, I feel I'm not as connected with Nature all the time as I am when I'm walking through a forest. At the same time, I feel that in any moment I'm a human being, I'm an organism, I *am* Nature in myself. I often wonder if the experience of "I am Nature" is not so much about the environment that I'm in as it is about the Nature that I experience in my own


being, actions, and in my relationships with people and with everything around me. So, I can be alive in any context, you could say.

A relationship with Nature, for me, doesn't necessarily mean trying to find the perfect, pristine, non-human Nature out there and thinking, "Now I'm in Nature." No, I *am* Nature in any moment ... learning to be Nature.

To be continued.

We thank our partner, the Spirit of Humanity Forum, for facilitating this interview.

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL



Never doubt that
a small group
of thoughtful,
committed citizens
can change the
world. Indeed, it is
the only thing that
ever has.

MARGARET MEAD



inspiration.

The background is a vibrant blue water surface with white concentric circles and pink flowers. The circles are of varying sizes and are scattered across the frame. Three pink flowers are visible: one in the lower center, one in the lower left, and one in the middle right. The overall aesthetic is clean and serene.

The Planet Was There Before Us and Will Be There After Us

DAAJI shares how caring for Mother Earth begins with eliminating thought pollution from the mind and nurturing the attitudes of love and reverence. When love and reverence are there, will we intentionally hurt anyone or anything, especially our Mother Earth?

Here is a sobering fact: Homo sapiens (modern-day human beings) appeared on Earth around 130,000 years ago, whereas our planet is around 4.5 billion years old. This means we've been here for about 0.000028% of the Earth's existence.

Yet, in this remarkably short period, we've contributed to global warming that has heated the oceans by the equivalent of dropping one atomic bomb into the ocean every second for the past 150 years¹. Each second, one Hiroshima bomb dropped in the oceans.

How long will nature tolerate our transgressions?

Cataclysms like tsunamis, wildfires, and hurricanes, don't judge individuals and selectively punish. They are blunt and brutal. Reversing climate change is not an act of altruism towards the

planet. It's our *only* option for survival.

You may have heard of the example of a frog in a bowl of heating water. The frog enjoys the warmth but doesn't realize the water is getting warmer. Eventually, the water gets hot enough to kill the frog.

But it's not entirely true. In real life, when the water becomes too hot, the frog realizes the danger and jumps out of the bowl. The frog is wise enough and knows when to jump. We may not have the time to jump, and we have *nowhere* to jump.

The story of Easter Island, famous for its monolithic stone sculptures, is a cautionary tale. Most ethnologists believe that Easter Island was once rich in vegetation and resources, but the tribes on the island plundered them. They cut down all the trees and fought over resources. The soil eroded

into the seas, the birds left the island, and the fish moved to new waters. People kept fighting and most of them died of starvation. Easter Island is still there, but the human societies disappeared.

If my tone sounds alarmist, it is an alarming time.

Not too long ago, I was reading an industry report that said that there are 100 companies (including state-owned enterprises) that contribute to 70% of all the emissions globally. The simple solution, one would say, is to shut them down. But a simplistic solution to a complicated problem is usually wrong or idealistic.

The economy, jobs, national security, and human rights are a web of knots woven into the climate challenge. You pull at one and others get squeezed too. So, we need comprehensive policymaking, cleaner technologies, reduced

¹ *The Guardian*, Damian Carrington Environment Editor: "Global warming of oceans equivalent to an atomic bomb per second." <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/07/global-warming-of-oceans-equivalent-to-an-atomic-bomb-per-second>

INSPIRATION

consumption, equitable allocation of resources, and a unified effort amongst nations.

But all these steps take time. So, in the meanwhile, what can *we* do to help?

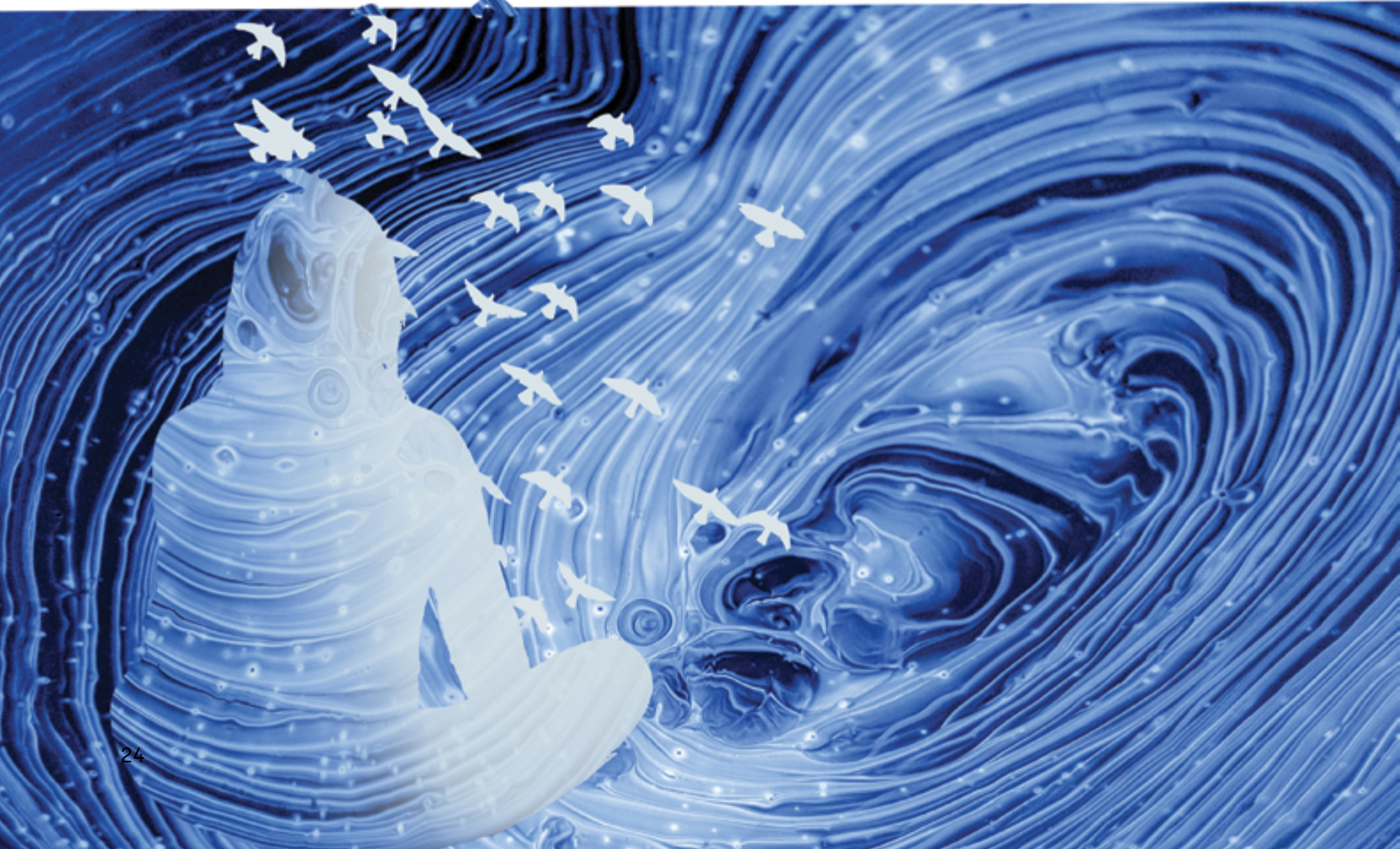
As individuals, families, and communities, we play an important role in caring for Mother Earth. Society changes not because of policies or bills.

Change happens because people change, behaviors change. When I say, *enough*, I will do something, then change begins.

Start with the Self: the Principles of Yama and Mother Earth

The problems of the environment underscore a much deeper problem facing humanity – that of *thought pollution*. When conflicting thoughts and emotions muddle our thinking, our minds become imbalanced, and confusion sets in. An unbalanced mind finds it hard to make wise decisions. For example, a doctor without balance may misdiagnose;

Society changes not because of policies or bills. Change happens because people change, behaviors change. When I say, enough, I will do something, then change begins.





an industrialist without balance may put short-term profit over the highest good. When our inner climate is polluted, we destroy the source that nourishes us.

I grew up in a village near Surat in Gujarat, India. I have seen how the chemical industries in the region spewed effluents to a point where the groundwater became brown and fizzy like Soda. The smog from the factories was so persistent that wearing masks was the norm for most workers. Can you imagine a mindful, conscious industrialist allowing toxic effluents to be released into the water?

Yoga offers us some solutions to fixing thought pollution. Maharishi Patanjali's eightfold yoga system is a path to human

perfection. On this path, we develop attitudes that ennoble us and benefit those around us, especially the planet.

The beginning step of Yoga is *Yama*. The practice of *Yama* blesses us with four key attitudes. These are *honesty*, *truthfulness*, *moderation*, and *non-possessiveness*. Let's look at these attitudes in pairs, starting with "honesty and truthfulness."

When we are honest and truthful, will our conscience allow us to act irresponsibly? A company with honest and truthful leadership will not take shortcuts like fudging environmental tests or cutting corners with effluent treatment. The purity inside will not allow the hypocrisy of saying something and doing something else.

Moderation means balance of all senses and faculties; nothing more or less than needed for the purpose.

Now, let's look at the second pair of values, "moderation and non-possessiveness."

Moderation means balance of all senses and faculties; nothing more or less than needed for the purpose. Today, moderation is generally disturbed, and



We realize that the trees, the birds, and the fishes all have the same life force flowing through them, all droplets of the same ocean of life. The *interconnectedness* of existence helps us of develop love and reverence toward all creation.

rampant over-consumption is the result. In a consumption-driven economy, the consumer decides what, how much, and when. Cultivating moderation will rein in over-consumption, conserve the planet's resources, and help families save more money.

Lack of moderation also leads to hoarding, for example, when the wealthiest countries in the world hoard stockpiles of food and vaccines while entire continents go without. Individuals, communities, nations hoarding resources and monopolizing the gifts of Mother Earth will reduce only when non-possessiveness develops in hearts.

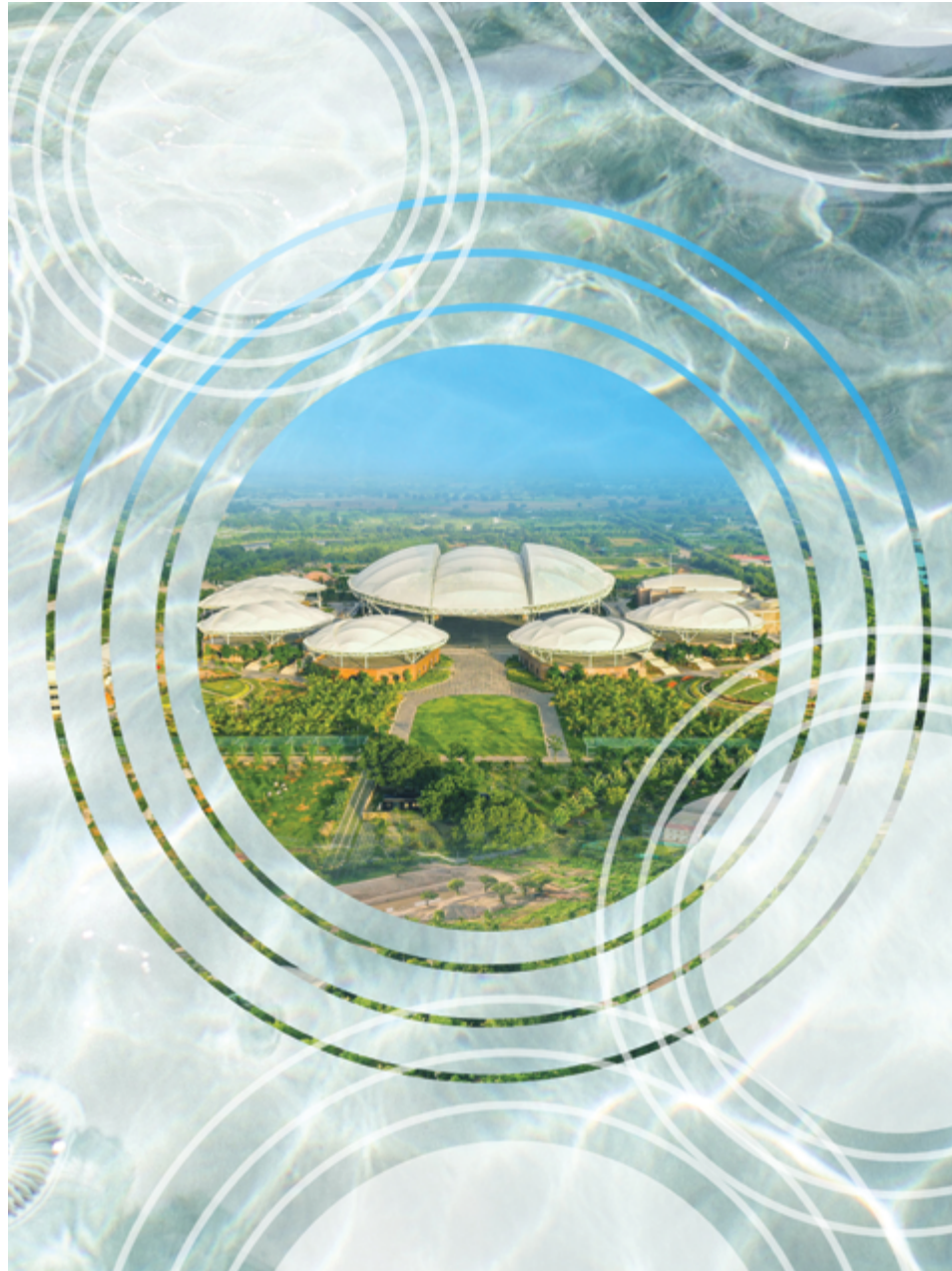
A regular practice of meditation reins in thought pollution and creates an inner environment conducive to following *Yama*. We realize that the trees, the birds, and the fishes all have the same life force flowing through them, all droplets of the same ocean of life. The *interconnectedness* of existence helps us to develop love and reverence toward all creation. How can we hurt something we love? How can we disrespect something we revere? As a result, we imbibe non-violence, which is the fifth attitude of *Yama*. But the non-violence is of a higher order because now it's not just about not hurting creation. Its about caring and nurturing it.

Our circle of conscience grows, and we care more and more. We mold our lifestyle to walk the Earth with a loving kindness. We consume less; the packaging waste from online orders pricks us; drinking from plastic water bottles pinches us. When such hearts assume leadership roles in companies, governments, and civic agencies, their decisions will reflect how much they care for the planet.

Green shoots of change

It takes only a generation to witness such a shift. Some of you may think this to be a pipedream, the optimistic musings of an old man. But consider what we have achieved in Kanha Shanti Vanam in a handful of years. We took an arid landscape chiseled out of the granite of the Deccan Plateau and transformed it into a lush ecological paradise. At Kanha, we preserve indigenous plants, offer workshops to upskill farmers, and operate cottage industries of oils, honey, and seeds. Our goal is to build a sustainable economy, offer jobs, and create a community that lives in harmony with nature.

The project started with meditative minds coming together. When there was nothing on these lands, we *first* built a temporary structure so people



INSPIRATION

could meditate. And from this inner activism came environmental change. Today, nestled in the leafy foliage of Kanha, is the world's largest meditation hall. So, if the example of Easter Island scares you, let the example of Kanha inspire you.

Similar to Kanha, across the world conscious communities are bringing together Indigenous knowledge, grass roots action, and the latest technologies to transform how we care for the Earth. Take the case of the Yugal Mangi Forest rangers in Outback Australia. For millennia, the Indigenous tribes have practiced patch burning, traditional “control

burning” that creates greener pastures, diverse wildlife, and prevents large-scale wildfires. The rangers teamed up with Indigenous elders to develop a fire calendar that includes the latest maps, weather data, and traditional knowledge of the seasons. Similar initiatives are underway in the US, where the Indigenous tribes are training firefighters in the art of preventive fires.

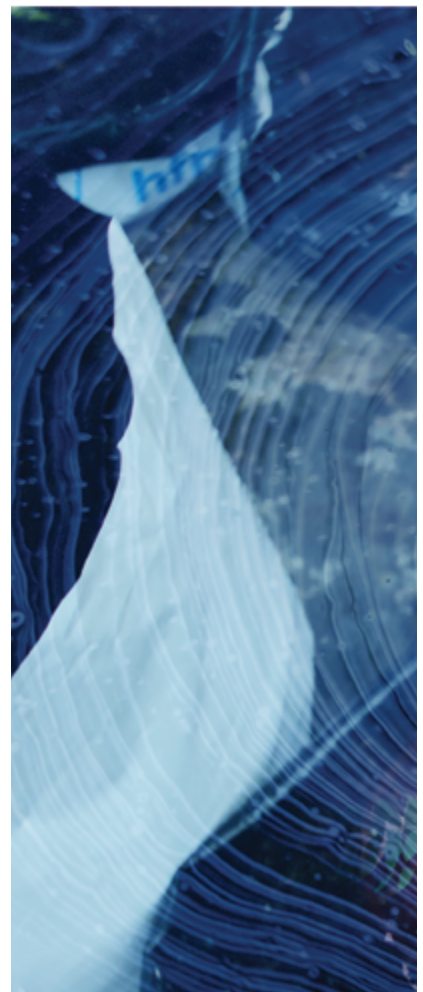
Where to begin?

As you think of your role in taking care of Mother Earth, begin from the heart. Let the goodness you create within become dynamic

in your actions outside. Don't underestimate the impact of your actions because big change comes from small steps.

I remember a few years ago in India, the monsoons arrived much later than expected. That summer was brutal, and we had thousands of small trees all over Kanha precariously hanging in the balance. There wasn't enough water to go around, and it was only a matter of weeks before the saplings would die. So, visitors who came to meditate brought cans and bottles of water with them in their vehicles. They would drive to the farthest corners and water the saplings. Hundreds

As you think of your role in taking care of Mother Earth, begin from the heart. Let the goodness you create within become dynamic in your actions outside. Don't underestimate the impact of your actions because big change comes from small steps.





of visitors each day started bringing water with them. You may wonder, what can a few bottles of water do? Each small effort gave the plants the extra week or two they needed before the rains arrived.

Keep taking small steps to become a better child of Mother Earth. She takes care of us, and we can do our bit in caring for her.

Small Changes You Can Make

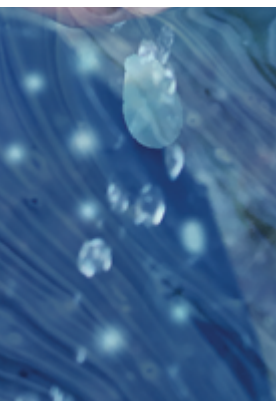
1. Reduce, reuse, recycle, rethink, recover – the 5 Rs.

For example,

- ✦ Avoid impulse online buying. Keep adding items to your cart and order once or twice a month. You will save on packaging materials and emissions from the delivery.
- ✦ When you travel, invest in a good water bottle to carry with you. Try to reduce buying bottled water.
- ✦ Stick to short showers and turn off the lights when not needed.

2. Teach children the idea of *Yama* early in life.

3. Meditate to free your mind of thought pollution.







In most workplaces there is huge imagination, but it's usually practical imagination that's dedicated to productivity and looking at the bottom line. When they stand back a little and see that the spirit and soul dimensions are not luxury items, but the very origins and sources which will enable everything to flow and unfold in a new way, then they realize that the invisible world is a secret, hidden resource that can be released and excavated for the huge resources of spirit, guidance, for areas of ourselves that we've forgotten.



JOHN O'DONOHUE



workplace



The Inner MBA

PART 2

TAMI SIMON is the founder of multimedia platform, Sounds True, and the educational program *The Inner MBA*. Tami has grown Sounds True into North America's leading publisher of spoken-word spiritual teachings, and one of the world's very first organizations to operate along genuinely integral principles, with the emphasis on "multiple bottom lines" of purpose, profit, people, and planet. In part 2 of an interview with **EMILIE MOGENSEN**, she speaks about the competitive instinct, celebrating the successes of others through the practice of sympathetic joy, and what it means to be human.

Q: You talked about your competitive side in another interview. It resonated with me in terms of entrepreneurship, as we are often rather competitive people by nature. When you are a spiritual seeker and you are running a rather big business in the USA, having to look out for competing companies I assume, is there a conflict here?

Well, I want to be 100% truthful with you, Emilie. I think this is a growing edge for me. I am not there yet. I'm in the middle of working this whole thing out myself. One thing I know is that there is a healthy and an unhealthy side to competitiveness in me. The healthy side pushes me to constantly innovate, to go for extreme excellence, to always be inventing, and always a step ahead. So, it's a creative force and that's good. I think the negative side is when I compare myself with other people. There is something about that which isn't true, and it isn't helpful. Everyone has a right to express their best.

The Inner MBA program at Sounds True is a nine-month immersive training program. Lately, we added Spencer Sherman to our faculty,

who teaches the inner mastery of money. It's about bringing *dharmic* meditative principles together with the world of money.

I learned from him a practice rooted in Buddhism, which you can apply in business and as a competitive person. I noticed a huge transformation through this practice. It's "sympathetic joy," which is one of the heavenly abodes. You practice sympathetic joy when other people have terrific successes. When your business competitors have huge successes, a lot more money to work with, or they get a huge account; or when someone writes a New York Times Bestseller while you're still working on your book; practice actually feeling their joy as if it were your own. You can take this even further and imagine their success becoming bigger! Imagine their face on the cover of a huge magazine, and so on.

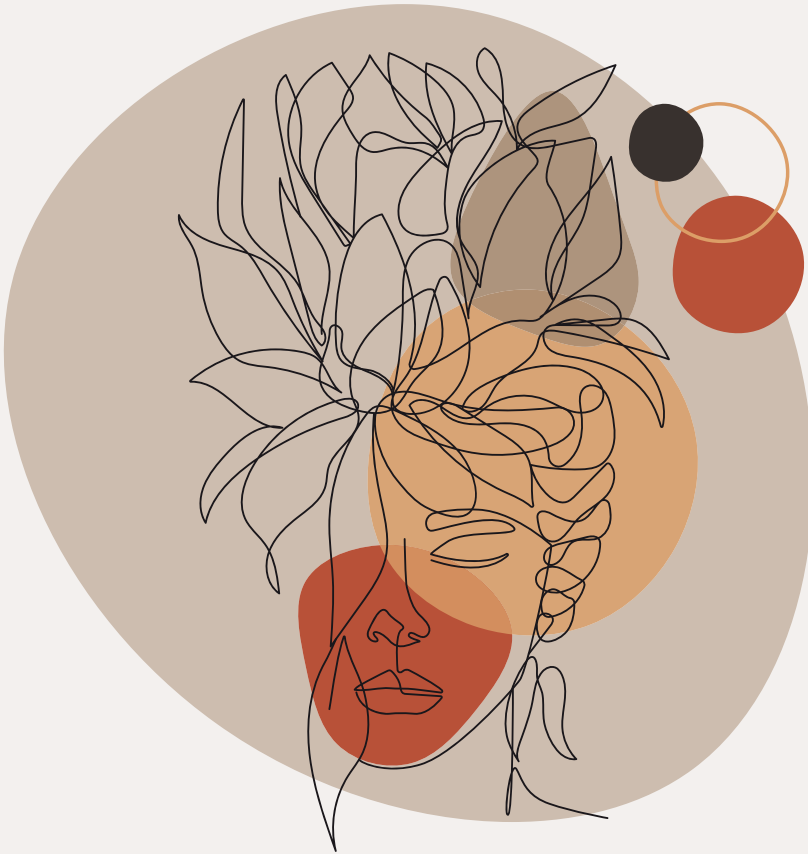
It always felt wrong when I was feeling the negative competitive side of myself. I was a spiritual practitioner but not wishing others well. It always felt fishy somehow, not coherent. I have a strong competitive side to my nature, so I wasn't feeling very aligned within.



When I started the sympathetic joy practice, I felt much freer. I was like, "OMG! That's the antidote for me." When I do it, I feel freer and more creative. I'm in my own creative flow, and also not operating at a low vibrational level of not wishing well for other people, which is against everything I stand for and believe.

Q: I am a student at *The Inner MBA*. It's a fantastic program. How did this co-creation between four organizations (Sounds True, Wisdom 2.0, LinkedIn, and Mindful NYU) come into the world?

I started seeing more and more businesses saying, "If we can



I thought we needed a community, a program to help people become aware of this inner voice, speak to it, and have the courage to re-create the world of business, so it's not a separate world from the values of their inner world.

get our employees to practice Mindfulness meditation, they will be less emotionally reactive, they will potentially have more innovative ideas, they will feel a sense of well-being at work, etc. This is wonderful.”

As you start getting in touch with the inner realm, which we can call the soul's voice, you get into a soul-liberating process. You might just do a simple breath practice, but before you know it, in the depth of your being, voices you haven't heard for so long start speaking to you. When that happens, you need your worklife to be congruent with the values, the callings, and the creativity of your inner life. A lack of congruence makes you crazy until you address it.

That's why I thought we needed a community, a program to help people become aware of this inner voice, speak to it, and have the courage to re-create the world of business, so it's not a separate world from the values of their inner world.

One of the instructors of *The Inner MBA* is a woman named Lisa Lahey, who is a professor from Harvard. She says, “One of the things you need for success is a high level of challenge and a high level of support. You need people to talk to, affirmations, community.” So, we tried to create

a program having both challenge and support.

Q: I heard you talk about the “dominant culture” in another interview and it made me think about the massive shift we are in as a collective. I hope we all know what the dominant culture has done to our planet and to humans. How do you see and experience this evolutionary paradigm shift?

I think it’s a great turning point. Another word for dominant culture could be “conventional culture.” I think a lot of us buy into convention for good reasons. We want to be accepted, we want other people to like us, we want to survive and fit in. We don’t want to be “weirdos”, so we try to be successful in conventional terms. The conventional framework is so crushing, and we see the results in our society in so many forms, including environmental destruction. We see the output of that conventional worldview, and at some level, it’s not truly working for any of us. We may not have reasonable air quality in the future, so it’s not working unless you have a bubble with an oxygen tank inside to walk around in.

There is an evolutionary pressure that we’re a part of. Some of us might be on the early adopter side of it, and some of us might be coming a little later, but we’re

all getting there. We *have* to get there!

This is a strong thing to say, but we’re one being. We are all life-breathing together, so we are all feeling this evolutionary impulse moving through us. I think one of the early discoveries we have on the spiritual path is that we’re a part of an interdependent web. It doesn’t take much meditation, or being silent for very long, and tuning into the space around you, to feel connected with people, with the whole world -- the sun, the sky, and the earth. It doesn’t take a lot of meditation to sense that inner connection. It’s not a miraculous discovery that only a few great mystics have.

This subtle sensing is available to all of us. We can feel an

other person at the other side of the world, right when they are sending us an email. We have the capacity to be so tuned in to the interconnected web we are a part of. And when we get it inside ourselves, we don’t want to work in conventional structures that ignore that.

To say it’s okay for me to gain when other people don’t have anything, that they are not part of this web, that they are separate and different, and my gain can happen at their expense – you can’t work that way after having the experience that all life is breathing together. At least I can’t. To me that would be a type of cognitive dissonance that doesn’t feel sane. We have to reinvent our businesses and organizations in a way that is reflective of that deep inner bodily





The universe is always creating and expressing and growing in love, growing in expansion. And it's going to come through you with the next, the next, and the next – the next way to bring more love to more people.

knowing of our interdependence. And we can do it!

It's honoring all the stakeholders – our customers, our investors, our employees. I would go so far as to say honoring the future. We hear about 7 Generations, and we take it even further at Sounds True when I say honoring all the stakeholders – the ideas themselves! We honor the great wisdom traditions and their teachings as living beings.

Q: Beautiful! So, in terms of business and entrepreneurship, we should honor everything as stakeholders, not only the traditional shareholders who put financial capital into the business. What do you feel if I say spiritual capital?

Well, it's our own inner unlimited strength, capacity, love, our soul's voice. It's who we are in our essence. Our Buddha nature, if you will, is the greatest set of capacities any of us possess. In fact, we don't possess it; it's something we are. And when we know that's what we are, we have an unlimited amount of resiliency.

People talk about being resilient, but when you know in your soul who and what you are, you also know that you're going to be given the next set of instructions you need. Of course! The universe is

always creating and expressing and growing in love, growing in expansion. And it's going to come through you with the next, the next, and the next – the next way to bring more love to more people. And you can rest in that and know that.

Q: I love your interview with Michael Singer about living in a state of surrender. So, is that what we must bring into our businesses?

I hear in your question the idea of separating who we are in our personal space (someone who surrenders) and then being someone different when we are in the business world. When we are in the meditation retreat, we are one way, but in business, we will pick up these old conventional ways, the old mindset, because that's business. I completely dispute that framework – this whole idea of two worlds. No, there is *one* world. It's everywhere we are, this soul resource. Why would we make ourselves small and selfish at work – overly mental and strategic? Why would we do this when we have available to us this powerful creative soul force that is always expressing through us. Why not tap into that all the time?

To be continued.

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Why We Are Not Responsible Toward the Environment



DR. ICHAK ADIZES is an expert in change management for organizations. Here he shares some of the reasons why companies are not changing their actions in relation to the environment, even though everyone knows we are facing an environmental crisis. He also offers simple solutions that will bring change.

At the February 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos, the founder and president of the Forum criticized the economic theory and business practice that view shareholders as the clients of a business organization, the ones for whom the organization exists to provide returns on their investments. He believes this is an outdated theory. Organizations should have more than one entity to satisfy: community needs, worker welfare, and social responsibility should all be goals as well.

This is not a new idea. There has been an awakening in the population at large that sees profit, exclusive profit growth, as evil. Organizations should act responsibly toward the environment and society, which could mean agreeing to limit profits that the company produces if they are at the expense of those interests.

I believe that these emerging theories and statements are valid and legitimate, but they will remain theories. Condoning profit orientation per se will not work. *The existent power structure of the system* will continue to direct behavior toward profit orientation, albeit with some philanthropic contributions and lip service to social responsibility.

If you want to change the course of a motorboat, it is not enough to stand on the deck, look at the map, and point in a new direction. Nothing will happen until you change the relative power of the left engine versus the right engine. I believe these new eco-political theories of social responsibility will remain on paper because the power structure – the dynamics of the economic system – has not changed.

I have known many CEOs who are truly socially responsible souls.

They are concerned about the environment. They are worried about what is happening to society and would like to see change. As leaders of public multinational companies, however, they have to satisfy Wall Street or risk being replaced by their board of directors and shareholders.

Shareholders in the public market are loyal to nothing but to the return on their investment. If the earnings per share are below what is expected, the stock price will go down. In the blink of an eye, shareholders will sell their shares and buy into a company that shows better earnings. Thus, even if the CEO intends to limit profits to be more socially and environmentally responsible, they will not stay in power if a competitor performs better financially. They will be replaced.

In privately owned companies, pride plays a significant role,

WORKPLACE

especially in small companies. They are part of the community. The founder will not take actions that will make them lose face in the community. The community will not support their business. As a member of the community, they want to be appreciated and respected. So, they are community-oriented, philanthropic, and supportive of their clients to assure themselves that the quality of the product they provide does not shame them within their community.

I suggest that this does not apply to large, multinational companies where the CEO might live in Scottsdale, New York, but the companies they manage are in India, Australia, or scattered throughout the US. If top management of those companies pollutes, they are not polluting their own backyard. They do not

pollute the water, air, and earth where their children live. They are polluting faraway places, where their sense of loyalty to the local community is questionable. I believe that they don't feel any limitation to pursue earnings per share and shine in the stock market. But there is a catch. The executive in India, suffering pollution from an American company, may be polluting the living space of a community in Europe, the company stationed in Europe polluting communities in Australia, Australian companies polluting the US, and so on.

The global spread of business interests diminishes the pressure on CEOs and their boards to be community-oriented and environmentally responsible, and the pressure to earn money is more permissible. So even if CEOs intend on being responsible,

they don't because they must pay attention to Wall Street expectations.

For socially responsible behavior to take hold, all businesses would have to agree not to pollute one another's countries, and investors would have to change why they buy stock in the market.

The zeal to make companies socially responsible will not work until we change the orientation and the rules by which businesses operate – rules that indicate stock price and profitability are the measurements for promotion and rewards.

True, there are investors who invest exclusively in companies called Impact Enterprises, which are socially responsible, but this is too little and too late to make a difference. Climate change and

If we want to change the behavior of businesses to correspond to their declared intentions and do it in a timely way, we need to change the power structure of how capital is mobilized, used, and returned to investors.



pollution will destroy civilization as we know it. If we want to change the behavior of businesses to correspond to their declared intentions and do it in a timely way, we need to change the power structure of how capital is mobilized, used, and returned to investors.

We have to rethink the role of Wall Street and stock exchanges. We have to rethink the composition of boards of directors.

Boards should not exclusively be representatives for the owners. I have been recommending for years to put artists on boards of directors, because true artists, by and large, are socially conscious and not materialistically oriented. They can represent the global interest of the community in which the enterprise operates. I would put religious leaders and intellectuals on the board to balance the power structure that currently favors stockholders. That

is just one example of changing the reward and power systems before we can change behavior. Changing goals is fine, but in itself it is like trying to lose weight without changing our eating habits.

Just thinking and feeling,
Ichak Kalderon Adizes

<https://www.ichakadizes.com/post/why-we-are-not-socially-responsible>







relationships

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

ANNE FRANK

Photograph by MONA MISHRA
at Kanha Shanti Vanam

Join the Peace Games

WILLIAM URY is an author, anthropologist, and one of the world's leading negotiators and mediators. He has spent his life building bridges in conflict situations and teaching other people how to do the same. His book, *Getting to Yes*, is a worldwide bestseller, translated into thirty-five languages. This is part 3 of an interview conducted by **GUILA CLARA KESSOUS** and **JULIAN PÉLABÈRE** on the occasion of the 2021 United Nations and NERA Humanity Prize, which was awarded to William for his efforts in promoting innovative thinking to change the world for a better future, to help us better understand what is negotiation, and how we can all live together for a better life, a better future.

GCK: William, you have already mentioned BB3 – balcony, bridge, and third side. Is that your advice to bring more peace within ourselves and in our relationship with others? Is BB3 the magic formula? Do you have any advice you could give us?

Well, first of all, in the last forty-five years since I started *Getting to Yes*, the biggest lesson I have learned is that to influence others we first need to learn how to

influence ourselves. We keep thinking that we want to change the minds of others, but it starts right here. The single biggest obstacle for me in my personal life, or for me to get what I need to satisfy my interests, is not the difficult person on the other side of the table. It's not the difficult person in life, as difficult as that person might be. It's right here. The most difficult person is the person we look at in the mirror every single morning, and that's a

lot of what going to the balcony is about.

There is a saying, "When you are angry, you'll make the best speech you ever regret," and I think that's very true. Human beings naturally get frustrated and angry, and say things that they later regret. That happens a lot in conflict. Gandhi noticed this and he said, "An eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind." So, learn the ability not to react. Neuroscientists tell us

it takes about ninety seconds for any emotion like anger or fear to go through your system. Learn to pause, a little bit of silence.

There is an interesting study done by one of my colleagues on negotiation, where they studied different groups and measured the number of pauses in the conversation. That was it. There was a direct correlation between the number of pauses, how collaborative the process was, and how successful the outcome was.

So just slow down. We live in a very fast world. We need to pause. We need to go to the balcony. We need to take some time for ourselves.

Take emails, for example. When you get an email or a text that makes you irritated, the temptation is to hit the reply button and get it out of your system. Then the whole thing escalates, right? There is a balcony button on the screen that we never use, called “save as draft.” Write it out, save it as a draft, then go to the balcony, meditate, go for a walk, have a coffee with a friend, sleep on it, and then go back and look at that message. You’re going to hit “delete.” And then you’re going to pick up the phone and you’re going to talk to that person or, even better, listen to that person because that’s the



Photograph by METIN OZER

The biggest lesson I have learned is that to influence others we first need to learn how to influence ourselves. We keep thinking that we want to change the minds of others, but it starts right here.

RELATIONSHIPS

key in negotiation. We think of negotiation as talking, but successful negotiation is more about listening.

So, learn to pause, learn to listen effectively, learn to listen not just from your perspective. The hard thing is to listen from the other side's perspective, to put yourself in their shoes, in their frame of reference. If we can learn to do that, then I think that's the secret of success for negotiation.

GCK: What can you share with us about your balcony, William? What is your way to find peace? Do you have a style of peace-making for yourself?

We think of negotiation as talking, but successful negotiation is more about listening.

Well, Guila, it's a good question. You know, when I was a boy of six, I moved from the United States to the Swiss Alps for a year. I fell in love with mountains. Nowadays I live in Colorado, which is like Switzerland in the US.

The mountains are my personal balcony.

I travel around the world, to Afghanistan, to the Middle East, to Korea, but I come back here to the mountains. The mountains have been here for tens of millions of years. I get perspective. Going out for a walk in the mountains is my way of regenerating myself in this world of conflicts. That's my personal balcony: taking a walk, nature, beauty.

There is nothing like beauty to give a little bit of hope. There are so many problems, and it is so easy to fall into despair. Beauty awakens the heart again, brings a sense of wonder, and then it

Original photograph by ANTENNA



gives you the strength to go back into the fray, fight the good fight, transform conflicts, because it's never-ending. This game never ends, but it's a game in which everyone can benefit, as opposed to the usual games like sports where someone wins and everyone else loses. This is a game where everyone benefits, not just us but our children, our grandchildren, and successive generations.

JP: I really love what you say about looking for a third win, and how negotiation is not like sport with a winner and losers. Can you give us more clues to understand what is winning in negotiation?

Thank you, Julien. To me, winning a negotiation is satisfying your interest. Your interests are your deep desires, your aspirations, your concerns, your fears, and, in the end, it's basic needs. Every human being has a few basic needs: a basic need for well-being (to put food on the table for your family and so on); for security and safety; for some kind of recognition, some sense of autonomy and dignity, right? So, to me that's success. Success is when there is dignity for everyone, well-being for everyone, and a sense of safety for everyone. That's the goal of negotiation – to meet the basic needs. You may not always get everything you say you want – you know everyone says, “I want this sum of money, I

want that territory” – but the basic needs are met.

Let me give you an example. About two decades ago, I was involved in mediating with a Swiss institution. It was a conflict in Indonesia, a civil war that had been going on for decades over the Province of Aceh.

I was sitting in Geneva with the leaders of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), and I said, “You've been fighting for over thirty years for independence. What do you want? What's the purpose of the negotiation?”

“We want independence – that's what we want.”

Success is when there is dignity for everyone, well-being for everyone, and a sense of safety for everyone. That's the goal of negotiation – to meet the basic needs.

“Okay, I got it. Why do you want independence? What's independence going to give you?”

I can tell you, around that table in Geneva there was silence. They didn't quite know how to answer that question. They knew what their position was – independence – but they hadn't thought through what they really wanted independence for.

I asked, “Is it because of economics? Do you want control over your natural resources? Is it political? Do you want a seat at the United Nations? Is it symbolic? Is it that you want autonomy for your culture, so that your children can go to school in your own language? What does independence mean to you?”

The truth is, they realized that militarily they were never going to defeat the Indonesian army, so the question was: Could they meet the interests for which they were fighting without necessarily getting independence? They could still keep the dream of independence. Five years later, they reached an agreement that gave them full political autonomy. The leaders of the GAM became the Governor and the Vice-Governor of the Province. In the parliament, in the province, their own language was respected. They gained control over their natural resources. Did they get



Original photograph by PRISCILLA DU PREEZ

independence? No. But their basic needs were beginning to be addressed, and the basic needs of the people were addressed. That's really the purpose of negotiation.

GCK: This notion of meaning is extremely important. Do you think this willingness of meaning is also something that we have to look for in a world of Covid? We know it's going to be a spiral, and we know that there will be a lot of violence.

Things will also be complicated regarding security, and for our children and children's children. So, would you say this notion of meaning is the most important to keep, no matter what conflict or negotiation we are going through?

There is a basic human need for meaning. People want their lives to be meaningful, and to me that's one of the great opportunities with peace-making – to redefine what

gives meaning to our lives. It used to be that war gave people's lives meaning. Can peace give people's lives even more meaning?

We can make that happen. That's why we have the peace-making profession, the negotiation profession. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there has been a race between human beings' technological genius to devise weapons of incredible destructiveness that could put an end to all of life on Earth, and our moral, emotional, political, and social capacities to find ways to live together and create meaning together.

Creating meaning is the great challenge, the ongoing challenge we face today. How do we make peace genuinely meaningful and not just some kind of an abstract thing? It goes back to your first question Guila, it's in the game of the impossible yes¹. Let me give you a dream here: What if we had (in addition to the Olympic

¹In part 1 of this interview in the February 2022 edition, William Ury said, "I think of peace-making as being the impossible yes. It may seem impossible, but it is actually a whole series of yeses over time, because the game of conflict is not a final game. It's not a win-lose final game. It's an infinite game. It goes on. Relationships go on."

Games) the Peace Games, in which teams were organized around the world to resolve the world's toughest conflicts? They would not be competing with each other but against the challenge of these impossible conflicts. It would be a league, like a league of nations ... call it a league of possibilists. There would be teams playing and working with each other. I really think we could transform these impossible conflicts. That's what the world needs – peace games. There were war games, and now we need peace games. That would bring meaning to people. People love to play games, so may we all join this league of possibilists!

GCK: I am in! You're right in saying that playfulness needs to be there, because even if people want meaning, they don't want sad meaning. They want joyful meaning. They want objective meaning. They want dynamism and the willingness to live. Living is also a way not only to make efforts, but also progress, with people flourishing – *Getting to Yes* with happiness.

William, I want to thank you so very much for these very precious moments we have spent together. It has been a great pleasure to have you as a speaker. Julien and I were very honored that you accepted this prize, and we would like

What if we had the Peace Games, in which teams were organized around the world to resolve the world's toughest conflicts? They would not be competing with each other but against the challenge of these impossible conflicts. It would be a league, like a league of nations ... call it a league of possibilists.

to thank our great host, the Center for Executive Education at the University of Peace. We would like to thank our sponsor, Heartfulness, and their event "Connecting for Peace," together with Institut NERA and UNESCO Artists for Peace. So, thank you for talking to us so sincerely from the heart. We wish you all the very best.

What can we do to help you continue in this wonderful direction that you are taking us?

Join me in forming this league of possibilists. Let's play these peace games and let's tackle the world's problems. It would give me joy to welcome you all into this league.

GCK: Definitely. You heard Professor William Ury. We are all invited to this possibilist movement that he is creating for more peace in the world. Please join him. Thank you again William.

My pleasure. Thank you all. *Un grand plaisir. Merci. Infiniment.*



The Earth is what we
all have in common.

WENDELL BERRY

environment

The Resource Curse



AMITAV GHOSH is one of the world's most celebrated and awarded authors and thinkers.

In conversation with **TARA KHANDELWAL** and **MICHELLE D'COSTA**, he talks about his latest book, *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, a non-fiction story highlighting the origins of our current climate crisis.

Thank you for your very generous words of welcome.

TK: Your latest book, *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, weaves history, colonialism, migration, superstition, and much more, to tell us an origin story of our current climate crisis. As a millennial, I am really interested in this very urgent issue. Why did you choose the lens of the nutmeg to tell this story?

The story of the nutmeg I take as an analogy for what is happening in the world right now. The nutmeg tree was a miraculous plant that existed only on the tiny Banda Islands and their surroundings in the Maluku province of Indonesia. For millennia, the nutmeg tree brought wealth and prosperity to these islands and the islanders. They became great entrepreneurs sailing across the Indian Ocean. Ultimately, the Dutch arrived and wanted to gain complete control of the nutmeg trade. So,

what did they do? They wiped out the islanders.

The islanders were destroyed because of their miraculous tree.

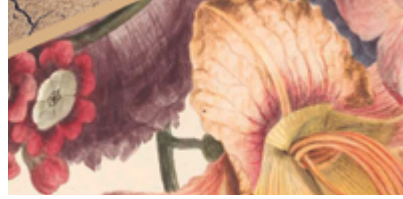
It is an analogy for what has happened to our planet. We were given a beautiful planet full of all kinds of miraculous things. And now we have set about destroying this gift. The story of the nutmeg and the Banda Islands is one of the earliest examples of what's now known as the resource curse, that is, a resource that ultimately creates devastation around it. Another example is oil in Iraq or Libya. In the same way, the vast gifts of the Earth have now been exploited to the point where the whole Earth is becoming subject to the resource curse.

MDC: That's really heartbreaking. I will never see the nutmeg in the same way again after reading your book. The first chapter is one of my favorites,

because you talk about how one small incident of a lamp falling changes the course of history. You were haunted by this particular incident while you were writing the book in Brooklyn during the pandemic amidst all the ambulance sirens. Will you please narrate this story to our listeners? And what did it feel like writing this book in the middle of the pandemic?

It was a very strange time. You've lived through the pandemic, so you will be aware how strange it was. Everything was changing in the world. New York City, especially Brooklyn, is a very lively, vivacious place, and suddenly everything went quiet. On the street you could hear a dog bark from blocks away, except for when the ambulances were racing through. And that was happening all through the night and day. My house is not very far from one of Brooklyn's largest hospitals, and outside there were refrigerated trucks for all the bodies of the dead.

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It was a very eerie time of great fear, as you will remember from your own experience.

I had been planning to write this book for a long time, and just as the lockdown started, I began work on what ultimately became *The Nutmeg's Curse*. Very little is actually known about what happened in the Banda Islands in those days. I first learned about it from a very short book by an American historian, Willard A. Hanna, *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*. That's where I read about the lamp that fell in Selamon on the night of April 21, 1621. It really caught my attention and I thought, "How does the falling of a lamp lead to this calamity?" I wanted to see what had happened in greater detail, and I discovered that the only book that addresses this history was written by a Dutch archivist, J.A. Van der Chijs, published in Dutch in 1886.

I discovered this when, on impulse, I did a Google search and found a pdf of the book. I printed it, but it was in Dutch so I couldn't read it. On another impulse, I typed some of the Dutch sentences into a translation app. Then mysteriously, miraculously, something comprehensible appeared. I began to spend hours, days, typing in paragraph after paragraph, page after page of this Dutch book until I was able to piece it together with some help.

TK: I love the way you describe this in the book. Was this

the most challenging part of researching this book, not having access to the language?

It was so frustrating, but I've dealt with many languages and I didn't allow myself to be intimidated. I thought, "If I persevere I'll be able to do it."

MDC: I think it's also an intellectual challenge that pushes you forward in a way.

Your book addresses some of the many violent ways in which Europeans have invaded places and impacted their original inhabitants. One shocking fact I learned was how the Lord Chancellor of England, Sir Francis Bacon, justified the massacres on the islands as having been willed by God. So, what did you discover when researching this book that was really shocking to you?

When I got into the historical sources about what had happened during the colonization of the Americas, the scale of the violence was absolutely unbelievable. Between 70% and 90% of the Indigenous populations were wiped out through extraordinary orgies of violence. What happened in the 16th and 17th centuries in the Americas was quite unprecedented. The scale of that violence really has no match anywhere, honestly.

But I think it's important to understand that climate change, the way that it is unfolding, is also a kind of violence. It's the kind of mediated violence that has also unfolded in the Americas. The violence of the Americas was of a particular type; it was not like the Second World War where people were killed with machine guns – that technology didn't exist back then. In fact, a large part of the violence of the colonization of the Americas unfolded via the environment. Environmental changes wiped out people's ways of life. The environment itself became an instrument of violence. And this is what we are seeing today; the environment has again become an instrument of violence.

For example, the people in Bengal are losing their lands, losing their livelihoods, to rising waters and intensifying cyclones. Climate





But I think it's important to understand that climate change, the way that it is unfolding, is also a kind of violence.

ENVIRONMENT

change is not merely a thing of greenhouse gas emissions and policy decisions. Climate change is a kind of war. We're confronting a form of ecological violence.

TK: And it's so visceral, the changes that people deal with on a day-to-day basis. I'm really interested in the way you wrote about climate – this paradigm shift. It made me think very differently. You said that literature needs to change the way climate is written about. Michelle and I were trying to think of books in which climate is front and center or the plot vehicle. In all the books we came up with, either the genre was dystopian or it was self-help or non-fiction, like Bill Gates' latest book, which gives suggestions like a manual. Yours was such an interesting paradigm shift. So, can you tell us how you feel fiction should address climate change? You mentioned that one way is to give voice to non-human entities. Can you elaborate on that?

Yes. The problem that arose in the 17th century is that the Earth came to be thought of as dead by elite westerners. Over time, across the world, people accepted this view. Farmers and fishermen don't accept this view, nor do the *Adivasis* [Indigenous communities in India]. For them the Earth is alive and filled with many kinds of beings – *Adivasis* think of forests as





Adivasis think of forests as living beings, and now we know that forests are living beings. But you can't compensate for the loss of forests by planting trees somewhere else, because a forest interconnects the multiple species and entities.



living beings, and now we know that forests are living beings. But you can't compensate for the loss of forests by planting trees somewhere else, because a forest interconnects the multiple species and entities.

For me, the most difficult challenge facing us today is to do with ethics – what our ancestors

did, what you read in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and so on. Those texts are filled with the voices of non-human beings of many kinds. The Mahabharata begins with snakes, and they are an important part of the Mahabharata. That is the greatest challenge facing us today – how we write about non-human beings of various kinds. In modern Indian literature there are writers

who are giving agency and voice to these non-human elements.

MDC: Yes, another *Adivasi* writer I'm reminded of is Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar. I absolutely love his writing, his stories are full of nature, everything comes to life. You don't usually see that in stories that are set in urban spaces.

You have addressed climate through fiction in your book, *Gun Island*, and through your non-fiction. So, what are the takeaways you want your readers to go away with about climate from fiction versus nonfiction, because they are two very different forms?

They are different, but they're also not so different. *Gun Island* is a novel while *The Nutmeg's Curse* is non-fiction, but in many ways there is a huge overlap. In *Gun Island* I wrote about migrants who are instances of the crisis, and I've written about the migration crisis in *The Nutmeg's Curse*. They are interconnected in many ways. In order to really write productively about our situation, we have to forget some of these ironclad distinctions that were made in the past between fiction and non-fiction, and so on. There was always a lot of overlap between these genres.

A famous example is the work of Herman Melville. Melville used huge amounts of non-fiction in his

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work. He was an ethnographer, so *Moby Dick* is filled with information about whales. In fact, the whole story is based on an historical incident. I think we are going to have to loosen the boundaries as we go ahead.

TK: Your research also involves speaking to travelers, climate refugees. You've spoken about Bangladeshi migrants who move to places like Italy because of climate conditions in the Bengal region. Could you share an anecdote about this? What kind of things were foremost in their minds? What were they running from?

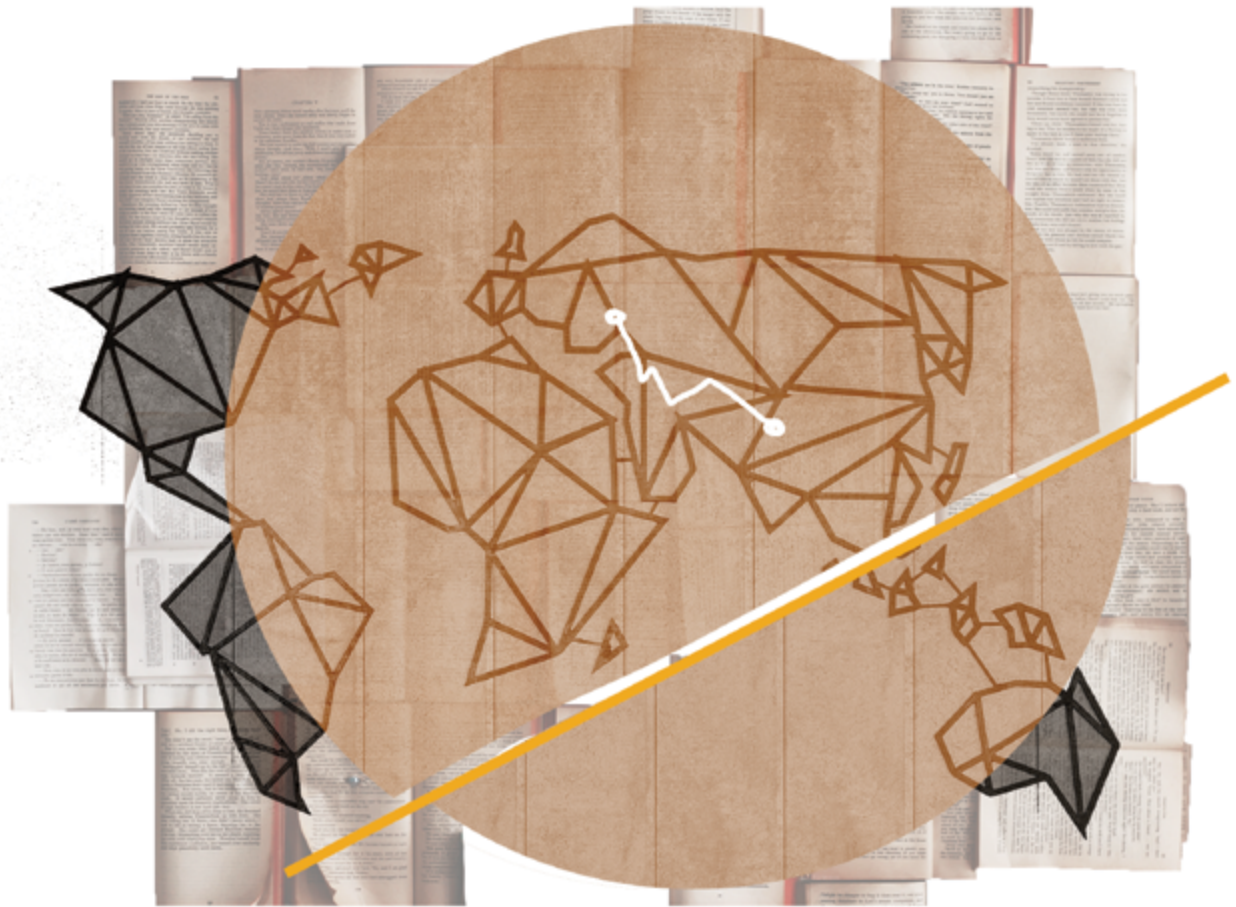
Well, I met many Bangladeshi migrants who told me the stories of how they left. Often, agriculture had become impossible in their villages, because of the erratic rainfall, because of changes in the seasons, and so on. That's increasingly the case across the world. Many of them were forced to leave because of those reasons, but if I asked them, "Are you a climate migrant?" none of them would accept that.

I was very struck by that because Bangladeshis are well educated about climate issues. The Bangladesh government and many NGOs in Bangladesh disseminate a lot of

information. We would do well to study what Bangladesh has been doing in terms of both education and resilience measures.

It was very interesting talking to these guys. I would say, "Are you a climate migrant?" and they would say, "No," because it wasn't just climate. It was as Margaret Atwood said, "It's not just climate change, it's everything change." There were political difficulties, family issues, and so on. In these Italian migrant camps, there were lots of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, but very few Indians. I think the Indians who have been displaced by climate





tend to migrate within India, except for the Punjabis. They are migrating on a large scale now, abandoning their lands. Other than that, most migration tends to be toward Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, or the West Coast.

One story I particularly remember was of a young Pakistani boy from a farming family in the Punjab. I was speaking to him in Rome, and

he had fought with his father. It happens all the time, everywhere. At any other time, he probably would have gone off to another village, or to a relative, and spent a few weeks there. Sooner or later, his father would have said, “Son, please come back,” and he would have gone back. In his case, he was sulking and he went to the railway station. There he met up with a group of migrants who were making their way to

Europe and he fell in with them. He made this incredible journey, half walking, from Pakistan to Iran, then crossing Iran to Turkey, where he was shot at by Turkish soldiers. From there he finally ended up in Rome. This is one of the ways in which the world has really changed.

TK: I just can't wrap my head around that story! You know, I recently reread your book, *The*

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Hungry Tide. It's amazing the way you brought the Sundarbans to life. You have also depicted the Sundarbans in other books like *Jungle Nama* and *Gun Island*. How have things changed in your portrayal of the Sundarbans from *The Hungry Tide* to *Gun Island*?

The Sundarbans is a landscape and ecology that is being absolutely devastated. Each of the cyclones that has hit the Sundarbans in the last ten years since *The Hungry Tide*

has made the situation incredibly dire for the people there, much more than I imagined. Cyclone Aila was a devastating blow to many people, and every year it's gotten worse. Cyclone Amfan in 2020 was completely devastating – a lot of the reclaimed land, which was fertile, rice producing, was submerged under seawater. Those lands may not be cultivable again for years. Many people have lost their livelihoods.

MDC: Yes, it feels like a dystopian world, but unfortunately it is our

reality, and it is something that we can't escape.

TK: On that note, thank you so much for being here today and talking to us, sharing your insights. The books you've written have changed the way I think, and they've added a lot to my life. Thank you.

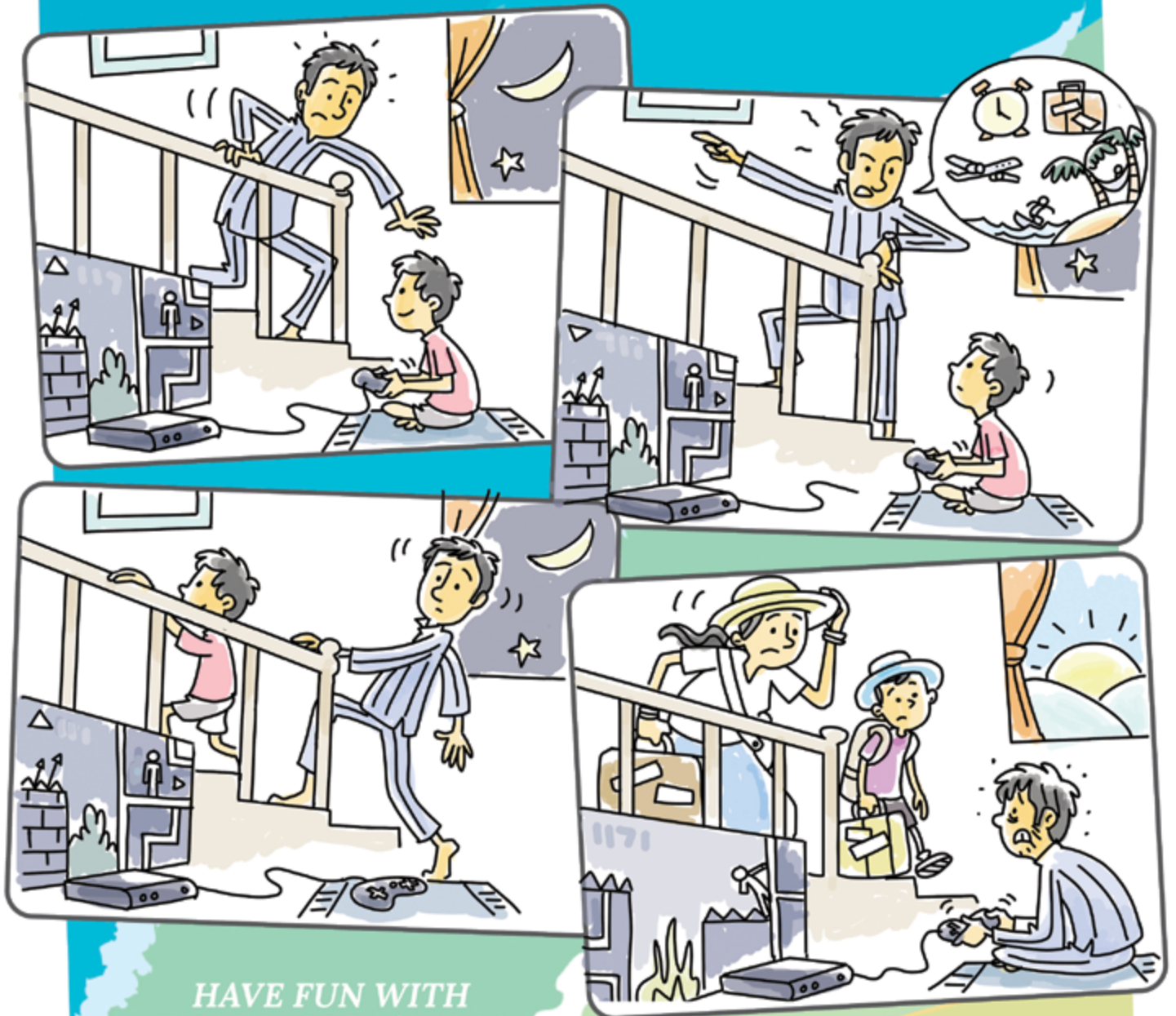
That's wonderful to know. Thank you very, very much.

To listen to the original podcast 'Books and Beyond with Bound', please go to <https://boundindia.com/books-and-beyond-podcast/>



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WATCHING RIVER OTTERS:

Visioning a Life-Sustaining Future

LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE is a Sufi and spiritual ecologist who is passionate about the sacredness of the Earth and the oneness of all beings. Here he discusses our current environmental crisis in the light of problems and solutions, and initiates a call to action to contribute to a brighter future.



Walking in the wetlands I encounter a family of river otters playing in the water, then, sliding their sleek bodies onto the land, they tumble over each other in the sand, as a blue heron watches nearby. In their primal world there is neither truth nor falsehood, just life present, unfractured.

Once, long ago, we walked in this landscape, were part of this ecology of place. With songs and prayers, dances and dreams we were also alive in life's wholeness. But today our human world is not like this, its consciousness long lost, held only by a few Indigenous people and others who live close to the Earth. And in recent years social media has increased the noise of discord and distortions, half-truths, falsehoods, and conspiracy theories. Our collective consciousness has become fractured, different voices shouting while the planet burns.

And yet, even as our patterns of disbelief poison the Earth, the land, the sea, and the air, even as we deny our responsibility for the coming catastrophe of climate change, or in some ways, more dangerously, think that we can "green the economy," continuing our fantasy of eternal economic growth, this landscape is still present. It can be heard in every dawn chorus, seen in the "v" of geese flying south, in the fox found curled asleep in my garden. The Earth has not forgotten what is real, even if we are increasingly lost. Buds still break open in springtime, leaves turn golden in autumn. And our bodies still awake every morning into this world, even if our minds are quickly caught in other patterns. While our attention is

drawn to our smartphones, sunlight filters through the clouds.

And in our hearts there is a thread that connects it all together – the heart that knows the meaning of love and companionship, care and community. Our hearts can recognize the simple magic in birdsong, the essential beauty of a sunrise, the joy of a child's laughter. Our hearts have not forgotten that we are all a part of one living community, bonded together since the very beginning, since the early days when we walked and played, sang and dreamed in harmony with the Earth and its magical nature. That thread is still present, even if it is covered over by the confusions of today, by our materialistic dreams, even by contemporary techniques that promote well-being. Like the otters playing in the water, it is too simple to be caught in distortion, too primal to be fractured. It can be found in the most ordinary things, a bowl of soup cooked with love and attention, a few kind words exchanged with friends or strangers.

Science has presented us with the basic truths of the coming ecological catastrophe: Together with a warming planet it has documented an insect apocalypse and oceans filling with plastic. If we are to survive together with the Earth we have to recognize that our present way of life is unsustainable, and act from this knowing to reduce carbon emissions and stop destroying wild places.

But we also have to find the thread that connects back with a deeper truth, a knowing older than our rational mind. Sadly, because so much of



our response comes from the same rational consciousness and its technological inventions that created these patterns of distortion, even though this landscape is all around us, it is difficult to reconnect, “to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time.”

With so many voices clamoring for our attention, to whom do we listen, and more important, whom do we trust? A few fundamental truths are becoming more and more self-evident: The interconnected and interdependent nature of the biosphere, and how we are all a part of this living wholeness; how our present dream of material prosperity is destroying the environment at an accelerating rate, causing ecocide as it tears at the fragile web of life that supports us all; how governments and big corporations are too addicted to the present ideology of progress and profit to effect real change, instead increasing economic and social divisiveness; how the voices of young people who are crying out for a future being stolen, and suffering the very real trauma of climate anxiety,

are more attuned to the moment than those in positions of power.

Those of us who have looked through the cracks in our present civilization know that it is over, past its use-by date, but also that possibilities for radical change and transformation are present, like green shoots amidst a dying wasteland. It is possible that this century will be one of increasing insecurity, disturbance, chaos, even social breakdown, and then out of this a new civilization will gradually emerge a civilization that will emerge organically in harmony with nature. Quite different to now. This Great Unraveling that can lead to a Great Turning has the potential to return us to a life-sustaining culture that once again recognizes how all of creation is sacred. And now is the time to begin planting seeds for this transformation, seeds that can germinate in the darkness and difficulties of the coming years and belong to the foundations for a future seven generations or more.

Those alive today may never see this emerging civilization, but like the cathedral builders of the Middle Ages who laid their foundation stones knowing that it could be many generations,

even centuries, before their buildings would be completed, this should not deter us. We have the opportunity to lay the foundations for a way of life more aligned with the deeper truths of the Earth and our own sacred nature. And I believe a simple step into this landscape, which is always present, though hidden by today's world of clicks and memes, will help us find what we need. It is a place where we all belong.

Watching the river otters playing, tumbling over each other in such intimacy, I know that there is a deeper truth to our journey together with the Earth, a truth older than any belief or ideology, and far from the discords of today. It does not offer a solution to today's problems, because it is too simple and radical. It is a doorway into a way of being with each other and the Earth that carries the secrets of our shared existence, where we are a part of a living tapestry that stretches to the stars and beyond. And it is here, all around us, present in the most ordinary things.

Illustrations by ARATI SHEDDE

It is a doorway into a way of being with each other and the Earth that carries the secrets of our shared existence, where we are a part of a living tapestry that stretches to the stars and beyond.



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Seeds of Trust


Team Hawaii
Hawaii, USA 

Team Hawaii has leaned into their composting expertise to find healthier solutions to process local waste. They compost cardboard and food waste collected from the community and give them food boxes in return.



A Greener Future

Qwakanda uses their diverse skillset to activate plots of land used as dumpsites into thriving vegetable gardens. These spaces help ensure food security for their community while employing and providing food for many people through their initiative.

Qwakanda
Qwa Qwa, South Africa 



School Spirit

Canarias Siempre Viva
Canary Islands, Spain



In the Canary Islands, the land is at high risk of desertification. Canarias Siempre Viva has engaged 20 local schools and their students to compost food waste. They enrich the soil with the resulting compost planting trees and produce for the school kitchens.



Waste to Wealth



Waste disposal is a major problem in Vadodara, leading to growing landfills and urban dumpsites. Vadaavarán Collective has trained and employed local women to raise awareness and collect food waste from households, vendors and eateries in their neighbourhoods. The waste is composted within the area and then packaged for selling and planting.

Vadaavarán Collective
Vadodara, India



From High-Tech to Low-Carbon

While tech parks take over the city, Bangalore Climate Action Collective has partnered with local government to create one of the city's first composting parks. They engage their community in the process and positive impact of composting wet waste while providing employment for informal labour.

Bangalore Climate Action Collective
Bangalore, India



Head in the Game

A group of athletes working part-time in a catering company, SEED began collecting and composting the tonnes of food waste being thrown away at work. They now employ young people to collect waste, compost and grow food in support of the most vulnerable in their communities.

Sports for Education & Environment
Development (SEED)

Visakhapatnam, India



Annadata Suraksha Abhiyaan

A tailor-made insurance initiative to financially secure farmers and growers against farming risks.

Samunnati has launched this campaign to provide insurance for over 50,000 smallholder farmers who are part of its FPOOnEXT program. In the coming year, Samunnati plans to extend this insurance benefit to over 200,000 farmers by amplifying their crowdsourcing campaign in partnership with other ecosystem players.

It is estimated that an average of 2,080 agricultural accidents occur daily, resulting in around 120 fatalities. It goes without saying that damage to the farmers also affects their dependents. With low price realization from their farming business, it becomes even more difficult for the farmers to take care of the hospital expenses and their dependents during these events. Hence, farmers need access to tailor-made insurance coverage. Sadly, for most rural Indians, access to clean drinking water, children's education, and marriage

are still priorities, so many remain unconvinced about the benefits of taking out insurance and are unwilling to pay for it.

Through the Annadata Suraksha Abhiyaan, Samunnati's vision is to insure Indian farmers against the vulnerabilities and risks associated with farming, as well as drive more awareness and adoption of insurance among India's agrarian communities. The insurance will initially provide coverage up to 50,000 Indian Rupees for each farmer and will be offered free of cost via the FPOOnEXT platform. It shall cover over a dozen risks, such as accidental death, permanent or partial disablement, accident and hospitalization, fractures, burns, vector borne diseases, and emergency ambulance charges. Children's education and marriage expenses have also been included in the insurance.

Samunnati will act as the facilitator and the promoter of the Annadata Suraksha Abhiyaan, with NAFPO as a supporting partner and a Sattva as implementation partner. It will be launched on 2 October, Gandhi's birth anniversary, as a small tribute to the "Father of the Nation," who set an example by addressing the most needy and vulnerable. Choosing to lead by example, and with the support of its employees, Samunnati has initiated funding the insurance premium of 10,000 farmers for their initial cover. Over the next few months, the plan is to expand the coverage to at least 200,000 farmers. With this campaign, Samunnati's vision is to create a national movement to help free India farmers from the risks that hinder them in their day-to-day life.





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creativity and possibility.

BELL HOOKS

Artwork by CHRISTIAN MACKENTANZ

A STORY OF *Everlasting Love*

V. RAMAKANTHA retells the legend of Savithri and Satyavan, which is centered around the Banyan tree, also known as the Tree of Life in India. The story is accompanied by a beautiful mural by the German artist, **CHRISTIAN MACKENTANZ**.

The Banyan tree is an evergreen fig which is known in Hindu mythology as the wish-fulfilling tree and the tree of life and fertility.

Every year, in many parts of India, the festival of Vat Purnima¹ is observed. During those three days, women fast and pray for the well-being of their husbands, as they walk around a chosen Banyan tree and tie a thread around its trunk. This festival is associated with the legend of Savithri.

¹ Vat Purnima usually falls on the 13th, 14th, and 15th days in the month of Jestha (May–June) of the Hindu calendar.

The legend of Savithri

The noble king Aswapati reigned over Madra, a prosperous country. As the years rolled by, worry gripped his mind, for he had no children. With the aim of seeking a boon, Aswapati undertook austerities and prayed to the goddess Savithri to appear before him. After eighteen years of penance, one fine day the goddess Savithri appeared and offered to grant the king a favor.

When Aswapati asked for many sons worthy of his lineage, the goddess Savithri smiled and said that he would soon beget a daughter of great energy. Saying so, she disappeared. Soon, the king's

CREATIVITY

wife had a daughter, and he named her Savithri in honor of the goddess who had bestowed the gift.

When she came of age, Savithri resembled a celestial being, but she also possessed such a burning splendor that no man came forward to marry her. Ultimately, her exasperated father Aswapati told Savithri to find a partner for herself. Taking her father's words as a command, Savithri set forth on a journey to find her life partner.

In a distant forest, Savithri came upon a handsome young woodcutter. He was graceful in limb, tall, broad-shouldered, gifted with the strength of mad elephants, and free from fear or affliction. He had sparkling eyes and great sensitivity. It was love at first sight.

His name was Satyavan, and he was just as happy to see this extraordinarily beautiful princess. He was unaffected by her burning aura, and they talked for hours. Satyavan told Savithri that he was passing through a lean period, but he took her



to his hut and introduced her to his parents. His father, Dyumatsena, was an old man who had lost his kingdom and been blinded in both eyes. On being introduced to his ageing mother, Savithri figured out that she was in the company of saintly people. Savithri returned to the palace to tell her father that she had found her life partner.

The sage Narada was with her father, and told Savithri that she was making a terrible mistake. He foretold that Satyavan was destined to die exactly one year after the marriage. Despite the warning, and the knowledge of impending catastrophe, Savithri chose Satyavan to be her husband.

Living deep inside the forest, the couple led a minimalistic but blissful life, however the words of sage Narada were ever-present in the mind of Savithri, and as one year drew near, realizing that her husband would die in four days' time, Savithri took to fasting.







On the day Satyavan was expected to die, Savithri followed him into the jungle and watched over him as he worked. A moment came when Satyavan felt exhausted and lay down under a Banyan tree. Savithri gently placed his head on her lap and stayed alert. Suddenly, she felt the presence of a large being of bluish hue clad in red attire, his head decked with a diadem. Savithri gently placed Satyavan's head on the ground, stood up, and after salutations inquired who it was. It was indeed Yama, the Lord of death.

Yama did not stand on formality. He took the soul and subtle bodies of Satyavan in his noose and started his journey towards the region inhabited by the Pitris, a heavenly destination for the departed soul of Satyavan. Sad but determined, Savithri ran behind Lord Yama and followed her husband's soul. Seeing Savithri following him, Lord Yama asked Savithri to return to where she belonged and make arrangements for the funeral of her husband.

Savithri offered great eulogies to the shining divinity in Lord Yama.



With folded hands she said, “O, son of Vaivasvan the great, you are the dispenser of justice. Snatching away the life of my youthful husband, who was leading a virtuous life on Earth, can in no way be considered an act of kindness on your part. Please have mercy on me and my husband’s ageing parents. Please spare my husband’s life or else take me also to the land of the dead.”

Lord Yama is known to treat the virtuous with respect and sinners with rudeness. Savithri’s humility and wise words pleased the god of death.

He said, “You are virtuous, so you could behold me with your eyes,” said Yama. “You are ascetic, so you could follow me where no mortal could travel. I agree that Satyavan was indeed an ocean of noble qualities, and my assistants could

not seize his soul. Hence, I am here.” Lord Yama then concluded, “As your time has not yet come, you cannot come to the land of the dead. Nevertheless, I am pleased with you. You may ask a favor of me – anything except the return of your husband.”

Savithri asked that her father-in-law, Dyumatsena, regain his eyesight. Lord Yama happily

granted her wish and asked her to return to Earth and not tire herself further. On the path taken by Lord Yama there was no shade where Savithri could rest, and no foods with which she could satiate her hunger, however, she pursued her soulmate Satyavan, much to the frustration of the god of death.

Upon Lord Yama again asking her to return, Savithri spoke of the duty and responsibility of a virtuous wife and explained what compelled her to follow him. The logic in her reply mightily pleased Lord Yama. He granted her a second favor, except the life of Satyavan. Savithri asked that her father-in-law regain his throne. Yama granted her wish and appreciated her all the more for her selflessness.

Never suspecting that a human could continue to follow him, Lord Yama proceeded without glancing backward. Savithri followed him to where twelve suns blazed. There was no water to quench her thirst, but nevertheless she followed with sheer determination. When Lord Yama noticed her presence for the third time, he advised her to return to the material world, telling her that she had come too far, but Savithri had something special to say which surprised Lord Yama. He realized that he was happy to be interacting with the virtuous Savithri. He offered her yet

another favor, except the life of her husband, and this time Savithri asked that her father be granted a hundred sons. Lord Yama had no difficulty in granting that wish.

Savithri then followed Lord Yama beyond the Vaitarani River, the mere sight of which inspires misery. Unmindful of the hostile environment and the torments of her body, Savithri kept pace with Lord Yama.

Lord Yama could not believe that Savithri was still following him. Yet again, he paused and looked at her with great astonishment,

mockingly saying, “You want your husband back on Earth?” and letting out a loud laugh that was like thunder in the sky. “Most of humanity does not know the divine laws that govern life, death, the aftermath of death, and the reincarnations of souls. No one seems to have time to reflect on those things.” Lord Yama concluded, “Divine laws are strict and unsparing. It would be wise to go back where you still have a role to play.”

With all humility, Savithri pointed out that Lord Yama was carrying out his duty as a functionary of





Gently remind your husband that he should not forget the other world while living in this sensory world; that giving a small portion of each day to spiritual sadhana will beget him an eternal life of bliss.

Nature, but that his heart was not in his deeds. She wondered if he could have some say in this business. Bemused Yama, who had started enjoying this conversation with Savithri, pondered over what she said and had to agree with her logic. He was merely carrying out tasks dictated by Nature, and he was surprised that no one till now had requested that he intervene in the tasks he carried out automatically. Appreciating her unique perspective, Lord Yama granted her yet another favor, except for Satyavan's life. Savithri expressed her gratitude. This time, she asked to be the mother of one hundred children, to which Lord Yama agreed; soon he realized the implication of this gift.

The company of Savithri, her devotion to her husband, and her wise words impressed Lord Yama beyond measure. He told Savithri that intellect and willpower are the two most distinctive characteristics of human beings, that they are rare even among gods and angels, and that Savithri had utilized both for the good. He granted her the life of Satyavan, and then blessed the couple with an enjoyable earthly existence for a further four hundred years. Love was overflowing in the heart of Lord Yama.

Before departing, he addressed Savithri with compassion saying, "Once in a while, gently remind

your husband that he should not forget the other world while living in this sensory world; that giving a small portion of each day to spiritual sadhana will beget him an eternal life of bliss. You,” concluded Yama, “do not need any advice.”

Lord Yama happily returned to his abode. When Savithri returned to the Banyan tree, Satyavan’s body came back to life. Savithri had chosen to confront her destiny, and she was successful in weaving it through her indomitable will.

The Banyan tree plays a very small role in this story, which comes from the epic Mahabharata. However, it takes a great deal of strength to give birth to one hundred children, and we may conjecture that the banyan tree played a role in this. Since time immemorial, Indian women have used different parts of the banyan tree for gynecological issues, so the connection between Savithri and the banyan tree becomes a little clearer. During the Vat Purnima festival, eating a shoot apex of the Banyan tree is an integral part of the ritual performed by the women of India. It is also a ritual that heralds the importance of the Banyan tree in their lives.

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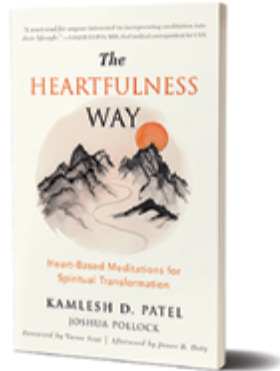
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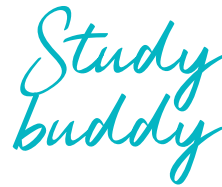


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