

heartfulness

purity weaves destiny

The Habit of Peace
and Compassion

DAAJI

Toward Zero
and Beyond

ALAIN DESVIGNE

The Soundscape
of Music

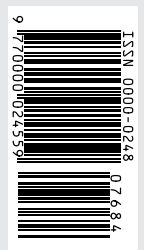
SHUBHENDRA RAO
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Self-care in the
Midst of Crisis

TRACIE PAPE



Simplicity is
The New Reality



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Simplicity is the New Reality

Dear readers,

With a vaccine for the novel coronavirus on the horizon, many of us are taking it to mean a turning point, a sign of recovery and resuming our old way of life. But what have we learnt from the last year's experience, and what will we retain and integrate into our "back to normal" life? Surely the need to simplify is one of the most important lessons of the last year, and this edition is all about simplification and letting go of unnecessary complexities.

This month, Daaji shares practical tips on creating habits of peace and compassion, while Alain Desvigne talks about creating an inner climate change. François Boudierlique explores eco-farming as a way to move from a "taking" to a "giving" mindset, and Tracie Pape outlines the value of self-care and self-compassion while making sense of the pandemic. We continue with the second part of Shubhendra Rao and Saskia Rao-de Haas' innovative approach to music and its importance for holistic growth in children. Dr. Ichak Adizes continues with part 2 of his article on turning crisis into opportunity, while Megha Bajaj calls upon intuition to guide us and enhance our relationships. Alanda Greene embarks on a pilgrimage to 8th century Japanese temples, and we discover the wonderful birdlife of Kanha Shanti Vanam through Rajesh Menon's vibrant photographs.

Happy reading,
The editors

contributors



DAAJI

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



ALAIN DESVIGNE

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



DR. ICHAK ADIZES

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

SASKIA RAO-DE HAAS AND SHUBHENDRA RAO



Composer and performer, Pandit Shubhendra Rao, is ranked amongst the key soloists of India, who lived with Pandit Ravi Shankar for over 10 years, assisting him in concerts and compositions around the world. He is a musical ambassador a natural ability to bridge cultures across the world. His wife, Saskia Rao-de Haas is a cellist and composer, originally from the Netherlands, who has enriched North Indian classical music with the Indian cello, as well as being an accomplished western classical cellist. She studied with Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia as well as at CODARTS and the University of Amsterdam.

MEGHA BAJAJ

Megha is an award-winning author of several acclaimed books, including *Thank You, Cancer, I Inspire*, and *Happiness in the Age of Ambition*. She is also a film writer and educator, and the co-founder of Miraaya Holistic Growth Center, a premier and one-of-a-kind organization whose "soul" purpose is to prepare children to be life-ready and not just exam-ready. Her writings are soothing and inspiring in a way that touches and evokes responses from deep within.



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focus

Our goal of life is the final stage
where we are nearest to
the superactive center or zero.

BABUJI



Toward Zero and Beyond



ALAIN DESVIGNE is the CEO of a leading solar company, the Amarenco Group. He strives to contribute to sustainability in every field of life. Here he explores the nature of reducing and minimalizing our use of resources in the world, by working on our reaction emissions and inner climate changes.

What has led us to this point?

The Industrial Revolution marks a major turning point in the history of the world. Indeed, almost every aspect of daily life was influenced in some way. The population growth and GDP per capita had been broadly stable for thousands of years, and suddenly the average income and the size of the human population began to exhibit unprecedented growth during this new era. However, it is a growth that we acknowledge now, 200 years later, as being harmful to the overall fragile balance of Nature.

The unsustainable model of development associated with the Industrial Revolution has led us to where we are today – a “house on fire.” But how could the trajectory of one single species succeed in hijacking the journey of millions of others and even jeopardize life itself?

The core underlying principle of the Industrial Revolution was based on more, more and more. Adding new basic materials, chiefly iron and steel, adding the use of new energy sources, including fuels and motive power such as coal and petroleum, adding new machines ... The list goes on and on to lead us to the ever-increasing accumulation of carbon and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, more growth, more shareholder value, etc.

Can we simply reverse the problem?

Thus, at first glance, unravelling the devastating effect of the past seems very simple. The answer lies in fixing the source of the problem that created it: we just need more of less and less! Less of harmful sources of energy, less of harmful lifestyles, less of harmful pollution, etc. In short, less of anything that is contributing to an unsustainable model of development.

This is why the mantra these days of every conscious leader, including conscious policy makers, is to set “zero objectives” – zero emissions, zero carbon economy, zero carbon footprint, zero waste, zero environmental impact, zero pollution, zero poverty, zero hunger, zero unemployment, etc. Zero objectives are promoted everywhere as the path to restoring the original balance, to re-establishing a model of development that preserves life and contributes to well-being, starting with ours, not only for the current generations but for all upcoming ones.

Having said that, resetting the current trajectory is extremely challenging.

To begin with, it requires huge amounts of capital. Net emissions have grown by 40% over the past 30 years. Meeting the 2015 Paris Agreement goal related to climate change will necessitate a 90%

Zero objectives are promoted everywhere as the path to restoring the original balance, to re-establishing a model of development that preserves life and contributes to well-being. Having said that, resetting the current trajectory is extremely challenging.

fall of carbon emissions from the current COVID-struck levels over the next 30 years. Meanwhile, the world's human population is expected to rise by two billion, and the gross product may triple over the same period. In practice, with our global economy still generating over 80 to 85% of its energy consumption from fossil fuels, the transition away from fossil fuels will require \$1.5 trillion extra annual investment in the power system alone, according to the International Energy Agency. That is more or less 1% of today's global GDP.

The good news is that the outbreak of COVID-19 has proven to be a major turning point for ESG1 investing (ESG1 is the highest rating a company can achieve for strategy that considers Environmental, Social and Governance ratings alongside traditional financial metrics). Sustainable funds attracted record inflows in 2020 amid the market turmoil, according to data from Morningstar, and many of these funds have outperformed the broader market for the year. Also, some industry leaders of polluting technologies are moving away from their original business practices. For instance, Toshiba and Siemens both announced they were moving away from coal in November 2020. Toshiba is committed not to take any new

construction orders for coal-fired power plants, while Siemens stated it would stop selling turbines for new coal-fired facilities.

Unfortunately, this is very far from being enough.

The "21st Century Power" edition of *The Economist* (October 2020) confirms that all current and planned investments drastically fall short of what is needed to keep temperatures within 2°C of pre-industrial levels, let alone the 1.5°C required to limit the environmental, economic and political turmoil of climate change.

Our belief systems are making us dumb

So what is missing? Why is the required change not taking place, or, let's say, not fast enough?

When I was doing my MBA at INSEAD, back in 2007, one of my favorite classes was "The Social Psychology of Management," conducted by Professor Allan M. Filipowicz. I still remember an article he shared with us called "Beliefs That Make Smart People Dumb."¹ Carol Dweck identifies both the beliefs that make smart people dumb and the more adaptive beliefs that make people smarter. Beliefs that make smart people dumb include the belief that intellectual ability is

Beliefs that make smart people dumb include the belief that intellectual ability is fixed, that current performance measures long-term potential, and that people who are truly gifted don't need effort for their achievements.

¹Dweck, C.S., 2002. "Beliefs That Make Smart People Dumb," in *Why Smart People Can Be So Stupid*. Ed. R. J. Sternberg, pp. 24–41. Yale University Press, USA.



fixed, that current performance measures long-term potential, and that people who are truly gifted don't need effort for their achievements. More adaptive beliefs include that intellectual potential can be developed, that current performance simply tells you where you are and what you need to do now, and the belief that everyone needs sustained effort to realize their potential.

We can apply these principles to everything related to change management. It is our own belief system that is the first obstacle, and that obstacle is definitely not a small one! When we talk about changing ourselves rather than changing others and our external environment, there is immediate resistance from within. We react and fight with all possible

arguments: "I am just a drop in the ocean, so why should I change?" or "How can my own change really make a difference?"

So the first belief we need to remove from our database is that we are who we are, and we can't do anything about it. And the first belief we need to add to our database is that every change does

make a difference, because the ocean is made of drops!

When we don't change beliefs, we are destined to fail individually and, therefore, collectively.

While Dweck's article focuses on the belief that our intellectual potential is fixed, the same misconception extends to our emotional structure, our mental patterns, and our habits and lifestyle. In short, our whole character! The most amazing thing is that we have no problem believing that it is within our power to change our external environment, including other people in our lives, like our children. In fact, we spend so much time trying to change them! Isn't it funny that we believe we have more control over the outside than what is inside us?

Change begins within

If the old adage is right, that "change begins with me," and change starts with changing my own belief system, where to begin? Assuming we have successfully understood the fact that we can truly "in-power" ourselves to change, then we have the capacity to impact our inner climate as much as we are impacting our external climate.

When we look at the nature of our relationships, and the decisions we make or don't make, resulting

in action and inaction, they are all the result of our inner fabric. Thus, changing our inner fabric leads to fundamental changes in how we make decisions, and the way we navigate relationships. This ultimately is translated into our actions and how we build human rapport. Our personal inner changes impact all the people with whom we are connected, and this is how the world is constantly evolving, for better or worse!

If we are to start owning this inner transformation, my personal take on the very first step is the following: We need to start by curbing our reaction emissions. That is a bold statement given that many of you may not initially see the correlation between climate protection and curbing reaction emissions!

Reaction emissions

Reactions are expressions of our untrained ego. Every time we react to a situation, it is the noise the ego makes because the "I" is reacting. The moment the "I" reacts, we lose our natural state of balance. Losing balance creates a separation from the original state. And because of the inner climate change caused by a reaction, we usually end up emitting reactions around us which impact the climate of our relationships like a butterfly effect.

Every time we react to a situation, it is the noise the ego makes because the "I" is reacting. The moment the "I" reacts, we lose our natural state of balance.



How many times have we felt miserable after our negative reaction affected someone dear to us, such as a family member, a friend or a colleague? Every time we react negatively with someone we love, we fall into the trap set by the ego. The inner trigger resulting from an external input ends up being a major climatic event, which alters the balance of the relationship with the person we love. We end up with regret and remorse, but still we continue with the same pattern again and again.

At first, a reaction to any situation creates bubbles within, which then convert into waves when they reach the surface. The waves can be simple ripples on the surface of the water, or they can turn into a tsunami if the reaction taking place within becomes an inner earthquake.

The need to pause

My experience with reaction management, with varying levels of success, is to avoid the bubbles reaching the surface by pausing. That pause is the critical element in tackling a reaction. It gives time for my heart to identify the appropriate response to the external situation. Instead of a devastating ego-driven reaction, I shift my focus towards a heart-driven response. And this pause can be a few seconds or minutes, or even a few days sometimes!



Zero reaction

The next level is to develop the capacity of not letting even one bubble form. That's the ultimate goal. We can call it a "zero reaction emissions" goal, implying a "zero reaction footprint."

Zero reaction requires absolute nothingness within, absolute vacuity. It is only when we have achieved that state of nothingness within that we are able to welcome any input cheerfully as there is nothing within to react upon.

When is this possible? When the ego is totally subdued. When it takes the backseat. "I" still exists, but the heart takes the front seat. To reach and maintain such a state 24 hours every day is a life goal, for sure, but we need to start somewhere and be fully convinced that we can get there one day.

What I have personally learnt in this journey toward a zero reaction footprint is one very precious lesson: To bring my ego to a state of constant awe so that it is completely subjugated by the heart's wisdom. Step by step, when I give the heart the chance to respond and take decisions, and observe the result, I am filled with wonder and accept to "in-power" it more and more: "Yes, please do respond because you have much more wisdom than I have." The

more we give our heart a chance to guide and notice its capacity to make the appropriate responses and decisions, the more we learn to trust the heart and the more we let it run the show.

Beyond zero

And then what? Is there more to it? Does anything exist beyond zero?

High up in the Eastern Himalayas is one of the greenest countries in the world. The Kingdom of Bhutan has not only achieved zero carbon emissions but is already carbon negative, meaning that it takes more greenhouse gases from the atmosphere than it emits. Sandwiched between China and India, Bhutan spans approximately 14,800 square miles, with vast woodlands covering approximately 70% of the country that act as a natural carbon sink. With around 750,000 people, Bhutan removes nearly three times as much CO₂ as it produces.

So when we reach a constant zero reaction footprint, I do believe we can go even beyond and become reaction sinks. We can develop the heart so that we absorb reaction emissions from others with whom we interact.

Possibilities

But back to the bold statement: How are carbon and reaction sinks related to each other?

A life where the ego is cheerfully “in-powering” the heart to take the front seat is an integrative life, an inclusive life. It is a life in which the responses we make, the decisions we take, and the actions we carry out are not based on reactions but on the wisdom of the heart. This means they come from the highest planes of consciousness. This applies equally to situations where our families are involved, our communities, the organizations we lead, or the governments we run.

Now imagine the world we could shape! Thanks to the ripple effect of responses to situations and interactions with others, as well as decisions we take as leaders of organizations and nations, what if we are able to remain balanced and thus fully inclusive with such an approach? We would find new and creative solutions to our current global and local challenges without the unnecessary pollution of our untamed egos. We could nurture relationships with each other, including nations, based on trust and respect, thus yielding sustainable collective peace. We could integrate in our decision-

making long-term shareholder value and GDP growth with all the other dimensions that are at stake to preserve life today and tomorrow, thus yielding sustainable prosperity for all.

The possibilities arising from such a shift of approach towards life itself are only limited by our capacity to transform our old inner fabric. So the only question that we are left with is the following one: Are we willing to try it out and convert imagination into action?

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL



Giving More, Taking Less

FRANÇOIS BOUDERLIQUE

learnt about the basic principle of Nature – to give more than you take – when he left a high-powered banking job in Paris to live and farm in Kutch, India. He realized that his understanding of eco-farming was colored by his past and he needed to open his eyes to a new reality.

For the last ten years I have been fascinated by Permaculture, a new way of considering farming processes starting from organic farming to integrated eco-housing, water systems, etc. My grandfather was a farmer, and I spent most of my childhood with him witnessing his extraordinary capacities to do things by himself, whether it was constructing an entire house to

repairing a simple electrical device, maintaining his car, etc.

When I stepped out of a city lifestyle in Paris to live in rural India in 2014, I was hoping to create a more conducive lifestyle suited to my spiritual quest, practicing Heartfulness Meditation, which I have done for the last three decades. I believed at that time that the natural

environment would do the trick, and being in tune with Mother Earth would facilitate my soul-searching experience.

Looking back at those six years, I realize that the real shift has been in my own perception of what eco-farming is. I believed in organic products, and many techniques which would enable me to thrive in the field of producing, taking advantage of the “trendy” ecological movement in a more sustainable manner.

The problem is that when we are born in a cultural environment where everything is about “taking,” the mindset is totally opposite to the “living” environment of Nature, where everything is about caring,

sharing and exchanging. Natural systems cooperate, whereas the knowledge of modern agriculture is about taking more, increasing yields and harvest. I should admit it to myself – 20 years in the banking industry had made me an expert taker. I was literally excelling at taking my six-digit salary!

Fortunately for me, the farm was situated next to a Rabari community in Kutch, Gujarat, where life was all about living and sharing first when taking from Nature. It was a natural offshoot of a “liver community” based on Indian traditional farming. The sense of property is different. A shepherd would enter my property after the harvesting

season, without permission, taking water from my farm when the local village bore well was dysfunctional. This was natural and not questioned.

Soon enough, I understood that the real meaning of eco-farming was about acquiring the knowledge of how to care, versus technology and systems that are designed to take.

Caring for the wellness of the community comes first, then the land, the eco-system, elaborating long term solutions where healthy food grows in a sustainable manner.

So the real move for me was not to sit with birds and trees looking

I believed at that time that the natural environment would do the trick, and being in tune with Mother Earth would facilitate my soul-searching experience.





at a nice sunset, but to step out of my comfort zone of coming from a taker community, in which I had been conditioned. I was learning how to blend my lifestyle with a “liver community,” which was totally alien to my previous set-up and knowledge, based on how to take.

Recently, it made me think even about the meaning of spirituality and the spiritual field. What if spirituality is about a knowledge of the capacity to live, to care, versus the capacity to take? You see how the word “taking” has invaded our

language and our so-called modern life? From taking a decision, to taking the time to do something, or even taking care of somebody or something.

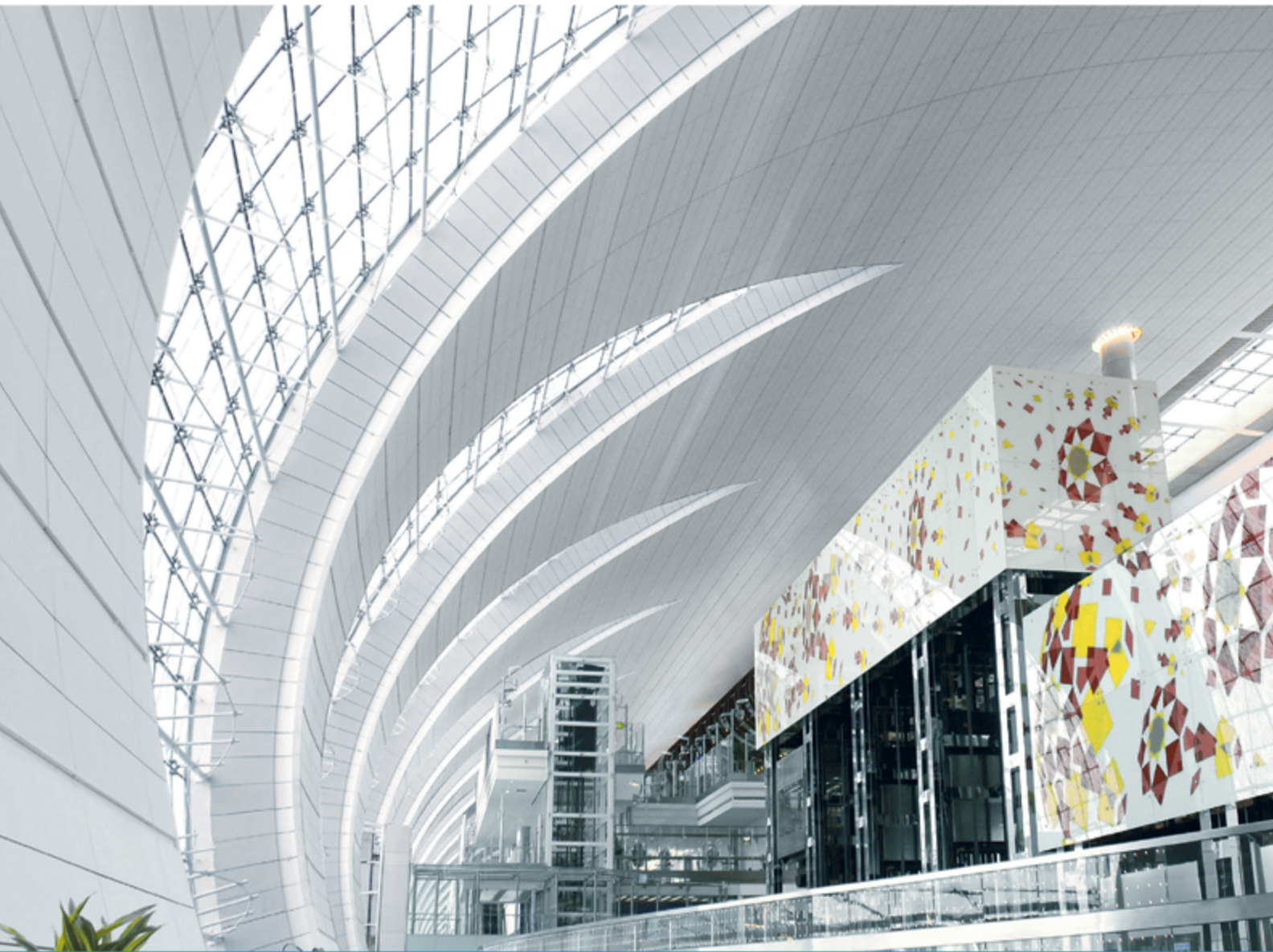
If we agree to this new definition, the realm of the Spirit will encompass all our activities, something which I experienced by farming within a “liver community” where caring is a natural way of life.

So friends, why not step into the field of knowledge based on how to care, while taking for ourselves

only our due share in the process of caring? Life becomes simple and natural. If we become students of this type of knowledge, whether it is in farming or any other field, and excel in caring, we will become in the process part of Spirit, which lives and gives first. Trust me, I experienced it on my farm. What will follow in the most natural way is that we don’t have to strategize how to take anymore, because we are receiving more and more with less and less effort!

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The Rainforest Project



The Deccan Plateau Project



The Food Forest Project



The Yatra Garden



Thought in Action

Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth
“thrown in”: aim at Earth and
you will get neither.

C.S. LEWIS

TURNING CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY:

The Leadership Challenge

PART 2

DR. ICHAK ADIZES gave the keynote address at the IEDC Annual Presidents' Forum at the Bled School of Management, Slovenia, on October 9, 2020. He shared insights with the foremost global management thinkers of today about how to manage change, crisis, and use integration as a tool for survival and continuous improvement. In part 1, Dr. Adizes explored the processes of change, disintegration, the lifecycles of companies, countries and individuals, and the need for integration. In part 2, he sheds light on how companies can survive the economic crisis that has resulted with the COVID pandemic, through integration. He also highlights the key integrators - the heart, love, mutual trust and respect, the right people and the right decision-making processes.



How do you manage your company in a time of crisis, at this time of COVID? That is in the control of the leaders of the company.

It is an opportunity for you to reintegrate your company. At other times, you are busy fighting fires. You have to take care of your clients and your market. You have to deal with financial problems. Now, the market out there is sleepy or hibernating. You have all the time in the world to fix everything in your company. This is the time to get your top management together and say, “All right, what are our problems? What should we do to fix the company, so that when COVID is over we are stronger than we were before the crisis?”

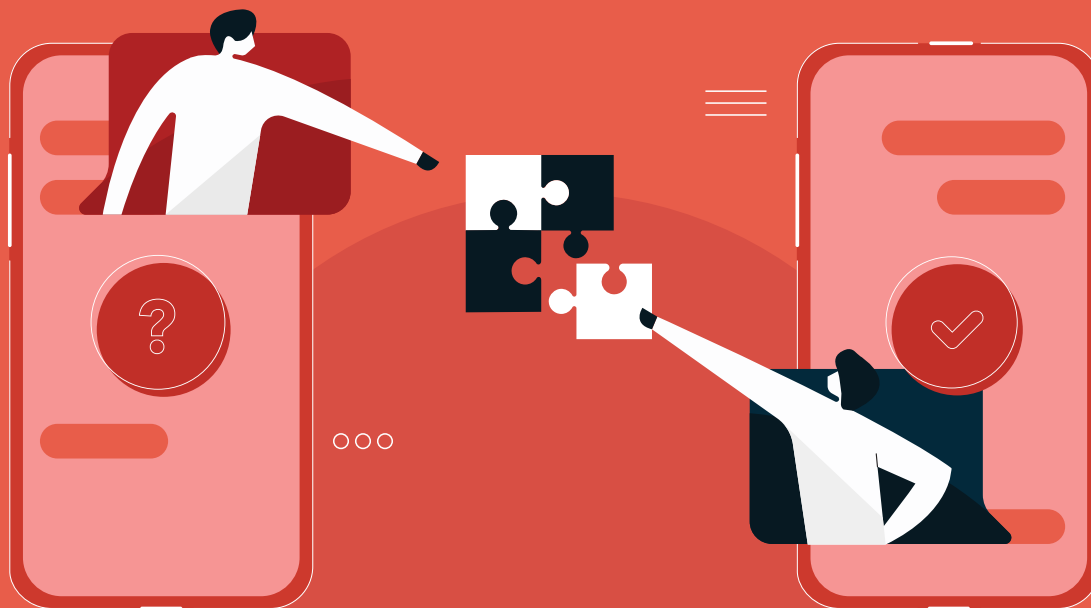
Here is an analogy. You want to go play golf. You have been dreaming about this weekend, when you will play an incredible golf game. You get up in the morning and you see wind and rain. It is terrible weather and you cannot go out and play golf. You have two choices. One is to sit and curse the day. The other is to use the free time that you have to fix your house, do the paperwork that you have been ignoring for a long time, or fix the faucet. When the rain is over, you will have a better house than you did before. By the way, I am using this COVID opportunity to fix my body. I am replacing my knee caps, having my eyes operated for cataracts, and having dental work done. By the time the pandemic is over, there is going to be a new Ichak Adizes. What else can I do?

Instead of reintegrating, some companies are doing just the opposite, pushing the disintegration further. Some country leaders are doing that, too. They are making the wrong decisions and the wrong judgment. They are looking at the wrong

compass. An example of this is a company that fires 30% of the labor force to “solve” the crisis. It looks good on paper. It is now doing fine financially. What is this analogous to? You get on the scale and see that you are 15 kilos overweight. What is your solution? Cut off one leg. Then you look at the scale and you see that you have achieved a fantastic result. Your weight is optimal. So, you must be very healthy since the numbers look good. That is what some consulting firms advise by the way. They will tell you to cut expenses across the board. But you may not just be cutting fat. You may be cutting muscle. The numbers may look good but the company is agonizing. It is coming out of the COVID crisis weaker than it was before. Your people are scared and upset and the company culture has gone to hell. What did you do?

So, what should you do? If you want to lose weight, lose weight from the whole body, not from just one part. What does that mean? Why not share jobs? Some people can work three days, while other people work the other three days of the week. In that way, we all take a salary cut. All of us. And

**Integrate, do not
disintegrate. Whenever
you have a problem,
think about
reintegration.**



the president takes the biggest salary cut, while the secretary takes the smallest. So, we all suffer together. Integrate, do not disintegrate. Whenever you have a problem, think about reintegration.

What is absolute integration? What is the highest level of integration that you can imagine? It is called “love.” When you love, there is no time and space. You can love somebody who has already died. You can still be in love. There is no time limitation. There is no space limitation, either. The other person is thousands of miles away but you are still in love.

A child comes home from school. The mother looks at him and asks, “What happened?” The child has not said a word, but the mother feels that something has happened. Another mother calls her son who is five thousand kilometers away. She says, “What is wrong, son?”

“Why, mother, how do you know?”
She says, “I just couldn’t sleep last night. I felt it.”

What is going on? Love. Love knows no boundaries. You are one and the same with the other person. Your pain is my pain. In fact, my pain can be twice as great as yours. And when you are happy, I am twice as happy. Love has a multiplication effect. That is why you get a lot of energy when you love. You are full of energy. Vice versa, when you hate, you lose energy.

Look at young people in love, or people of any age – they can be 80 years old. If they are in love, they are full of sparks and they look young. They are full of energy. And look at people who hate. They look old. They are like a squeezed lemon. Once I gave a lecture to 5,000 medical doctors at the Anti-Aging Academy in Las Vegas. What could I tell them about anti-aging when I am not a medical

doctor? They were talking about chemicals, and vitamins, and supplements, and physical exercises, and saunas. My presentation was about love. Do you want to feel young? Never mind what age you are. Just love. Do you love your spouse? Do you love your children? Do you love your house and your car? Do you love your shirt? Do you love your clients, your employees, anything? The more love there is in your life, the longer you will live. Love extends life. It may not extend it chronologically but it does it experientially. You live your life better.

So, what should you do in your company during this COVID pandemic? How about some love? If you fire your people to make the numbers look good, is that loving?

There is a researcher who says that some cancers can be treated with love. Do not reject your cancer. Do not attack it. Just love it. It is part of you. And do you know what? It disappears. Not all of them, but some do. He has proved that it works. This also applies to a country. In a period of crisis and major disintegration, you need major love.

And what is integration? What is love? Why is it so important now? Let us go beyond COVID to understand its importance. Let us look at the history of humankind. Let us start from the very beginning, when we were chimpanzees; the strongest one was the king of the clan. Then, we became nomadic hunters; the strongest hunter was the leader. Then, we settled down and became an agricultural society; the person with the greatest number of sheep and cows was the leader. What is the common denominator? Muscle. Strength. Possession. Colonialism enhanced this striving for more possession. It was an extension of this trend. More was considered better. This is reflected also in people's diets. When I was young, people who were fat were admired. Women were expected to be bulky. It denoted success.

What is absolute integration? What is the highest level of integration that you can imagine? It is called "love." When you love, there is no time and space.

Then came the Industrial Revolution. And what has come into play? Brain. That is what is important today. You have to use your brain much more than before. You have to plan, organize, and systematize. And what happened after the industrial society? Today, we live in a post-industrial society. It is an information society where brains are the most important asset. Muscles have lost their importance.

The largest taxi company in the world does not own a single taxi. It has no muscle. What does it own? Computers. Information. What is that company called? Uber. The largest hotel chain in the world does not own a single hotel. What does it have? Computers and information. What is it called? Airbnb. What are Facebook, Google, and Amazon doing? Accumulating information. They are enhancing their brains, not their muscles.

But this is also on its way out. Artificial intelligence is replacing it. They are going to replace our brains. There are rumors that at some

What is a symbol of love?

The heart. A diamond. Why a diamond? Because it is the most integrated substance there is. And love is integration.

So, what company is going to be successful in the future, beyond data management? The one that has integration as a lifestyle.

point they will put a chip in your brain and you will not need to talk anymore. There is going to be chip-to-chip communication. You connect your chip to the cloud and you access all the information up there. There is this thing in the sky telling you what to do. It has already started by the way. In the war between Lebanon and Israel, one of the problems was that the generals were not at the firing line. They were using computers to decide what to do. They put their data in the computer and it told them which alternative was best. Oops.

So, what will the future look like? What is the future? The heart. Integration.

What is a symbol of love? The heart. A diamond. Why a diamond? Because it is the most integrated substance there is. And love is integration.

So, what company is going to be successful in the future, beyond data management? The one that has integration as a lifestyle.

By the way, look at my fingers. The pointing one denotes masculine energy. You wave it to issue commands and control people. I am not talking about sex organs; I am talking about energy. A woman can be very masculine and a man can be very feminine, but as a convention, I am using the term “man” for masculine energy and “woman” for feminine energy.

Who works from the heart, to work together, to bring the family together? Who talks from the heart? Women make a house a home. There is a reason why they are coming to the front of companies and countries. It is time for feminine energy. It is time for integrated energy. I tell the women who think that the way to be successful is to be more like a man, “Do not do that! Be a woman. That is your strength. That is what the world needs now.” We need energy from the heart. We need to be different together. We need feminine and masculine energy together. We need both. A family contains both energies, masculine and feminine.

Next: We put the palms of our hands together to pray. And what is that? Another example of integration. The right hand is related to the left hemisphere of the brain, and the left one is connected to the right hemisphere. We put our hands together and we pray to God to keep us together because we are falling apart: “Keep me together, my family together. Keep the world together.”

And how do we achieve that in a company? I have found that it takes mutual trust and respect. It is the same in a marriage and in a country. Mutual trust and respect. I cannot cover everything here,



but here is the bottom line: There is no love if there is no mutual respect and trust. There is no integration without these. There is no peace without them. In Hebrew, the word for peace is “shalom.” It means “united, integrated wholeness.” When there is peace there is wholeness.

You need a culture in your company of mutual trust and respect. Do not let COVID destroy that. Do not let COVID destroy your country.

How do you do that? You need a common mission and shared values. You need an organizational structure where people do not step on each other’s toes. You need a disciplined decision-making process. You need to collaborate rather than judge each other and offend each other. You have to trust and respect the people you work with. If you have the right people and the right decision-making processes, you will be successful.

You have a compass. See where the star is: Are you enhancing mutual trust and respect or destroying it? Not only inside the company but also outside, with your suppliers, clients, and community. That is the driving force. That is how you should be managing all the time, especially in a time of crisis.

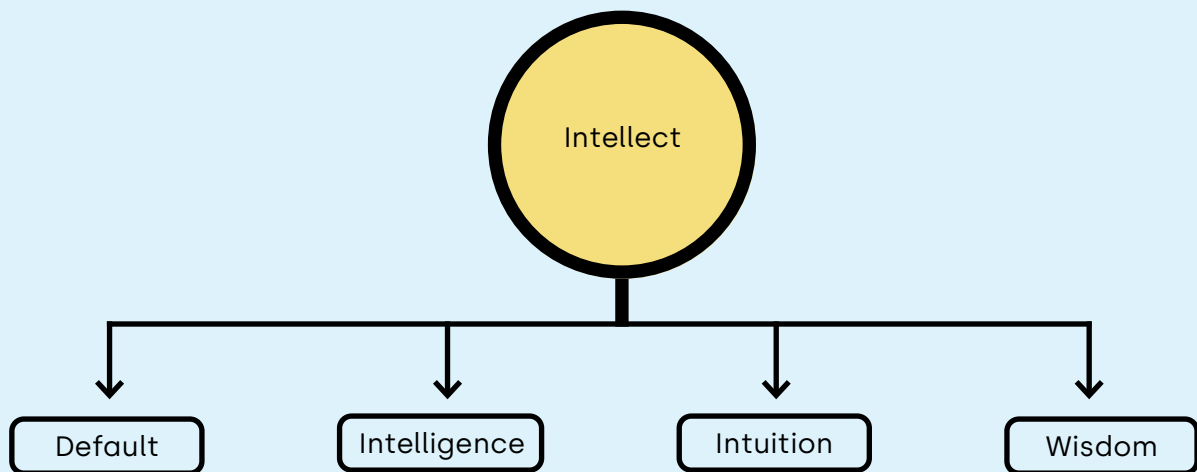
I thank you. Shalom.

Excerpts from a presentation made to the Presidents Forum at IEDC, Bled School of Management, Slovenia, October 9, 2020.

THE HEARTFUL INNOVATOR – PART 2



In his previous article, **RAVI VENKATESAN** introduced the concept of changing the “observer” or the innovator, in order to get exponential shifts in results. He also outlined 4 key aspects of the “inner state” that we want to fine-tune. In this article, he explores the role of the intellect and how it plays into innovation.



Let's take an example of a specific innovation: Portraying 3-dimensional imagery in 2-dimensional media. This is what makes amazing visual feasts like the Avengers movies or Star Wars come alive. If we trace the origins of this innovation, it leads us to the discovery and mastery of what is called "linear perspective" by a famous architect of the Renaissance period, Filippo Brunelleschi. He systematically studied exactly how and why objects, buildings, and landscapes change and lines appear to change shape when seen from a distance or from different angles. He then used this to develop a system of depicting them in paintings with striking similarity. The application of the intellect is obvious in this example. What is more interesting is how he came upon this idea to begin with. He seems to have not only applied his intellect in an intelligent manner, but also intuitively understood the impact his hypothesis could have.

Let's take some other examples. Archimedes observed the level of water in a tub rising as he got in, and converted this observation to experiments

that became the foundations of many innovations, like the Archimedes screw, still used for pumping liquids. Newton's innovation of using reflecting mirrors rather than refracting lenses led to smaller telescopes and clearer images. Marie Curie's innovation in using mobile X-ray machines during World War I saved many lives.

In all of these cases, there was a shift in the intellect, somehow leading it to a refined or developed state. There is no doubt that these were intelligent women and men, but what drove them to be able to "sense" something that others could not? What led to that "eureka" or "aha" moment for them? In some cases, many of these moments?

If we study some of their habits, a few clues emerge. Einstein would sleep for 10 hours a day (1.5 times the average person today). Newton would isolate himself in retreats, including one where he discovered gravity.

Somehow, allowing a state of deep relaxation to set in seems to allow the intellect to shift into

Allowing a state of deep relaxation to set in seems to allow the intellect to shift into intelligence, and open to become intuition.

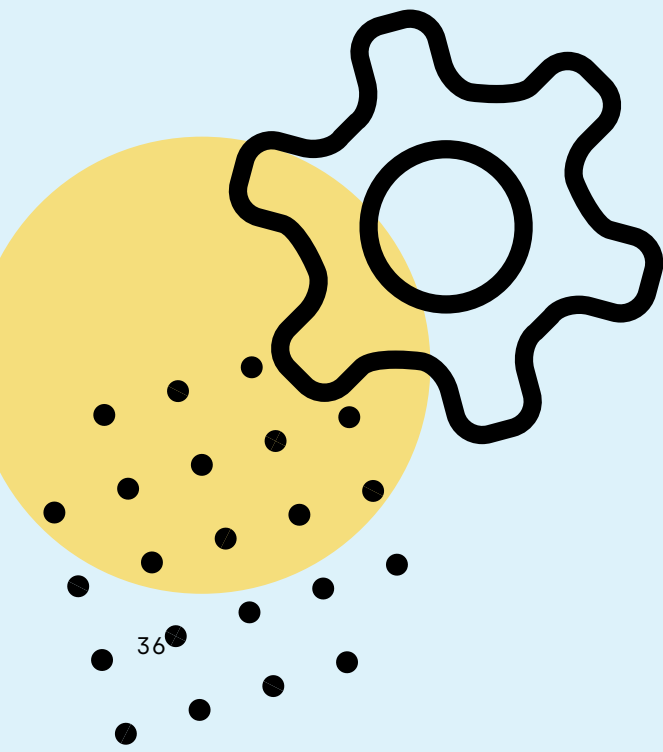
intelligence, and open to become intuition. In modern times, many companies have started meditation programs to allow employees to combat stress and relax. An interesting side effect is that the companies like Google, Microsoft, Salesforce etc., which have such programs, seem to also be some of the most innovative companies. Is this a coincidence, or is there more to it?

The proof of the pudding is always in the eating. So, let's try this experiment. Over the next few days, reserve five to ten minutes every evening

to simply relax. You can use a routine like the Heartfulness Relaxation, available on the heartfulness.org website to guide you through this. Recall and park any problems you have prior to starting this. At the end of the relaxation see if any new, innovative ideas emerge. You will start developing the habit of refining your intellect and allowing intuition to emerge more effortlessly.

The big prize in refining the intellect is beyond intuition. It is "wisdom," which allows not just clever innovations to emerge, but innovations that are beneficial to humanity. This state comes through the repeated practice of refining the intellect through meditative practices like Heartfulness. The transformation of the intellect into wisdom is one of the natural results of such a practice. Intelligence and intuition are shifts that happen along the way.

In subsequent articles we'll explore shifts in other key aspects of our inner state that contribute to innovation.



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NIKOLA TESLA



The soundscape of music

PART 2

In this exclusive interview, which is featured in two parts, **SASKIA** and **SHUBHENDRA RAO** speak with **V. SRINIVASAN**. In part 2, they speak about the role of music in education, and how to bring music into the lives of children.

Q: I would like you to share about your value-based education program, the Sangeet4All (S4A) initiative. What is your ethos on how music should blend into the curriculum, even this idea of value-based music education? What are the pillars that you have tried to imbue in your program?

Shubhendra: I think music is one of the most under-used subjects in the field of education. Not just now, but always. In the olden days, in the *guru-shikshak parampara* way of learning, it was a holistic education where a child got to experience so many different things, until we learnt to institutionalize education. By doing that, we cut the wings of creativity. It wanted everybody to be at a certain average when nobody is average, nobody should be average. There are various degrees – not to say someone is higher than the other, everybody is equal in a certain way, but not in the equal way that institutional education brings you.

So, this is where we wanted to make the change with S4A. The period from 0 to 9 years of age in every child's life is the most important phase. That is when 70% of your life's learning is embedded. The seeds are put in at that age – 9 months before the child enters this world until about age 8 or 9, depending on where you're growing up. In today's world I would say 7 or 8, whereas in previous ages we could even push that to 10 or 12. Nowadays, there's so much information that children lose their childhood too early. Take our son Ishaan. We had gone to meet my guru, Pandit Ravishankar, over lunch and at the end of 3 to 4 hours they were singing together.

Guruji was more than 80 and our son was a two year old, but what he said that day is so important for us. He said, "*Beta heera to tha hi* [this child is a diamond], but make sure he remains a child as long as possible." So, even when he was 19 he was still a child. All the great people never lose their childlike enthusiasm to learn, to experience.



So, in S4A we bring that in very strongly from the time the child enters the regular school. Before that, we don't have access to the child, and so we want to make sure that every child gets that seed of music, and what music brings to that child for the rest of their life.

Saskia: Yes, that's the very idea of it. We're very arrogant as adults to think that when we talk to a child, giving a lot of information, that they actually internalize it. They choose what they want to know; it's not up to us, really. They're ready when they're ready to walk, to talk, to do anything. Our job is to provide the opportunities and they can choose from the pool of experience. That's how children learn when they're young.

From a philosophical and inspirational point of view I believe that, but also very practically. My mother, my aunts, my grandmothers were either Montessori or Waldorf teachers, and a lot of emphasis in those approaches is put on play, on imitation, on absorption. I find a very interesting parallel between those philosophies and the way children learn traditional music patterns. They're not going to sit down when they are two or three years old. They're playing. Our Ishaan was playing with his Lego blocks while we were practicing *Raga Bhairava*, and at some point we would say to him, "This is *Raga Bhairava*, see? Let's sing it once." And he would sing it once and go back to playing. It was not a 40-minute structured music class. It was just part of his life, his surroundings, and that's how he picked it up.

We want to take that approach in S4A, so when we go into a school we change the entire musical fiber of that school. What is the music they play in their assemblies? What is the music they dance to? It helps the teachers; it's not that music has to stay in the music room. It's also not that if you have a French class, you learn *Sur le pont d'Avignon*

in the music class. No, not at all. There should be a complete approach to musical creativity in the school environment, and music starts literally with what is sound.

How does a child respond and interact audibly with their surroundings? What types of trees, what types of birds? And from that, what are the different instruments? What is the raga for the time of the day? Take them through how classical music has been built. And we get feedback – like this young girl telling her mom on their morning walk, "I think we should listen to Raga Bhairava because it's early morning." And the mother was like, "We've never listened to this." It's beautiful to see. Or a child recognizing a *surbahar*¹. And these are young children, five or six years old, and they have that connection.

If they become musicians, great, but they are already musicians because every living being is musical. So, again, we take it away from only being a performing art. It's a wonderful experience to enjoy a concert, but it's a very limited approach if we only look at that. We need a much more holistic approach to music and bring that into the life of a child. Interestingly, the traditional learning process goes past that as well. Then, you have a much larger pool of children who have a connection with music. What if we made a mistake in teaching small children how to read and write? They don't start with Shakespeare in Grade 1. Similarly, children need to start with, "What is sound?" They don't start with the absolute basics, which would let children slowly grow into it.

Our children were born with that because we lived that way, but if you're not from a musical family then this information gets lost. Then it becomes that much harder for the child to connect with music, especially classical music, for the simple reason that there is too little exposure to it. And

¹ A bass sitar



when there is exposure to it, it's often high-handed difficult music. They are supposed to sit still for two hours. And if they want to practice, they are supposed to tie their hair to the ceiling – there's a lot of fear that comes into it. Whereas you want a joyful experience.

Shubhendra: Once the joyful experience is there at that age, say from ages 2 to 9, then there has to be a change, in the teenage years. That's when they're discovering themselves and the world. I strongly believe that teenage years means to rebel. You do exactly the opposite of what you're supposed to do, whether from parents or from society. But once you've seen it all, done it all, in your late 20s, 30s and 40s, your best memories are of your childhood. The nostalgia that brings a smile to your face is when you remember your childhood.

The songs that you learned at that age, the teachers who taught you, everything comes back, and you have a smile. That is why we feel S4A is important in building a connection with music. Of course, our approach is with Indian classical music, and the whole world of spirituality and of connecting with your soul. Someone has said, "You never teach a child; you learn from a child."

Saskia: I think every parent can relate to that [laughing].

Q: Both of you have been intensely connected with music over several decades, as musicians and music teachers. How has that journey influenced your own personal evolution? How do you think you have changed as human beings as a result of this path?

Saskia: I think the change for me has been a bit more dramatic, because I was born in a small village in Holland with a view of windmills, cows, the flat fields, and a canal with small rowing boats



in front of our house. Now, I live in a city of 20 million people, more than in my entire country. Clearly, this music is pretty powerful [laughing].

Shubhendra: And to add to that, as a joke of course, I make fun that pepper is found to be too spicy in Holland and here is a Dutch lady who can chomp on green chili!

Saskia: For me there are two evolutions, and they are connected. One is as a musician, because I'm a cellist and I play Indian classical music. Until now,

the cello was not used much in Indian music and this shows the evolution in music. During my first lesson, I was sitting on a chair as all cellists do, and my guru was sitting on the floor. And you don't need to be very sensitive to understand that it's not the right equation to learn. So, I needed to adapt to the music culture. I changed my playing style.

So, there was a huge change at around the age of nineteen to twenty when I came in touch with this music and slowly got drawn into it. I made sure I could sit on the floor and then worked on the

instrument. I had an Indian cello built for me by a wonderful person in Holland.

The other life lesson, which I hold very dear, is from my guru Hari Prasad Chaurasia, who said, “Don’t play like a flute, or a sitar, or a vocalist. Find your own style, whichever one.” So that is the path and the journey. Find your own voice, and always check if you have it. In music you have a lot of freedom, but it’s a hard-earned feeling. You need to put in a lot of practice if you want to reach a certain level. You need to put in the hours if you want to get anywhere, and after that the freedom is there for improvising, understanding more and more. It’s just following that light of what Baba said. That’s my own personal journey.

Shubhendra: For me, I knew nothing else. It was very smooth in a way, in the choice. It was not smooth in the execution. Music is the only thing I know, although I was good in other things.

Saskia: Good in everything else. He was an A student at school in all subjects, and sports, and the sitar.

Shubhendra: I never thought I’d become a doctor. For me, this was my journey, my calling. This path was there and I just had to walk on it, and the most important thing was discipline.

I think discipline in any sphere is important. Like spirituality, it is important to build that discipline. That is the backbone on which everything else is built. The hours of practice build discipline, and also physical strength and inner strength to be able to overcome any doubts or obstacles. Maybe I’m practicing something and I’m not able to get it at this moment, but my inner strength tells me I need to practice it a hundred more times, and the one hundred and first time it becomes better, until it becomes a part of everything else. That comes with practice.

And that practice, whether it’s through music or it’s a life lesson, is the ultimate guru, the knowledge. After a certain point, the guru is a perception in your mind. He or she is a part of your whole being. For me, my guru has not physically been there for the last 8 to 10 years, but I know he’s there with me in every moment. The strength that you derive from that relationship is so strong, and this is all self-realization. A guru can mean something quite different for Saskia, something different to you.

Saskia: You’ve learned from the most famous Indian musician of all times. It would be really interesting to hear a bit more about that.

Shubhendra: Perhaps he was the most famous Indian musician, and unparalleled in anything and

"Find your own style, whichever one." So that is
the path and the journey. Find your own voice,
and always check if you have it.

To be a child always,
and to be utterly and
truly humble to the
bigger picture of music.
Music is knowledge,
and I believe my guru
was a servant of
knowledge.

everything. I was with him throughout my life, and for a certain period experiencing and living with the master in that elevated *guru-shishya parampara* 24/7, 365 days of the year, breathing the music he taught, imbibing it and making it my own, and then giving it my color. Eventually, whatever music you play has to be yours. That's what the guru also says: Teaching is just 20%, while 80% is your effort. To have travelled with him around the world, to have performed together, sat on the same stage, and learned in front of five to ten thousand people, I wish I could relive it again and again and again.

Q: This is very wonderful to hear. When you look at your own life, your personal growth, values and character, what aspects were most profoundly nurtured in you because of your master – your development as a human being and as a musician?

Shubhendra: To be a child always, and to be utterly and truly humble to the bigger picture of music.

Music is knowledge, and I believe my guru was a servant of knowledge. Even at the age of 91, when I met him he said, "I wish I were twenty years younger! What my mind is telling me to do, my body can't keep up. I wish my body would respond, because now I'm seeing music in a way that I could not see twenty years ago." This is Pandit Ravi Shankar at 91. That humility and dedication to music, to knowledge, to learn and share – that for me is the biggest learning.

Q: I would love to hear your message for our youth. A lot of youngsters today love to play music, they love to sing, but whether it's practical to make music their career depends on the ecosystem around them – their parents and educators. We all love music, but we also feel that very few people make it to the top. What would be your guidance for youngsters? What are the clues that help them realize there's something big here?

Saskia: We are approached very often by young people saying they want to make music their profession. First, we need to understand what it is they want out of this. Most of them want to perform on stage. How much time does that take – one hour per week, two hours? It's not much. To be a musician is to live your music, and that is the reason you practice. You can't perform all the time unless you're a hotel musician playing in the lobby, but even then you're practicing.

A performing artist is only going to be part of who you are as a musician. Now, what do you want to do with the other 99% of your time? That is the question you need to answer. Do you want to practice really hard so you are a performing artist full-time, or do you also want to teach? Do you want to write about music? Do you want to compose as well? Do you want to go into music technology? What is that 99% going to look like?





That is the question to be answered by people in the music profession, because I think most kids have the wrong picture of what it entails.

Shubhendra: They just see the final product. They don't see our hard work; they're not privy to that. But whether it's music or anything else, I think you should just follow your passion.

Saskia: Absolutely. Anybody who wants to ask us this question in person, please write to us. I'm not joking, because anyone who has this question in their heart, we want to see how we can help them. However, being an Instagram success with thousands of followers, playing two chords on your piano might not be a perfect start for a profession. Look at the music. If you really love music, that's all it takes. Sometimes kids confuse fame with musicianship. Even with popular music, you need a high level of expertise, you need to practice, you need to listen to your fears, you need to listen to the music you want to play and be creative with it. You need to live your art, whatever style of music you want to follow.

Q: Living your art is such a wonderful thought. In this context, do you have a message for parents, because they are after all a part of the ecosystem?

Shubhendra: Please allow them to follow their passion.

Saskia: That, and if they're not good at maths don't send them to maths tuition, send them to music class. Music literally has the power to build brain cells, and that is something every parent who's interested in the academic success of their children should know. Apart from the complete joy, it is now proven that children who do music seriously score higher overall in all subjects. They get into good colleges, but most of all the learning that

Music is not just about performing, it's also about educating. It's a unifying force, which is also about evolving spiritually.

happens from a young age when they're learning music is really important. Also, let them listen to the music they like when they are studying; research has shown that this helps them to focus in class.

Shubhendra: And remember, reality shows are not music. They're not creating musicians there. This is a question we get asked a lot: "How soon can my child be on stage? Will it take three months?" By the sixth month the parent is frustrated that their child is not yet on stage. The child is not frustrated.

Saskia: It's the same message – 99% versus 1%. Most of the time we're not on stage. It's not that we have our mattress and pillow on stage somewhere. It's a small percentage of our life, just like a professional athlete. Are they competing 24/7? No! Mostly they are training.

Shubhendra: That's why the Olympic Games come once in every four years. You prepare for four years to go to the Olympics, but to be a musician on stage should you be there in two to four months? That perception should change. Music is not just about performing, it's also about educating. It's

a unifying force, which is also about evolving spiritually.

Saskia: One last word for parents of young children – sing with and to your child, because to your child you sound better than Lata Mangeshkar or any great singer. Why? Because you're sharing with them. If you sing with them, that is when music starts.

Q: And after all these years on this journey, what drives you further?

Shubhendra: It's a lifetime thing. If at the age of 91 Pandit Ravi Shankar can say what he did, we're mere children in the world of music. Sangeet4All is a mission for us to bring about the necessary change that we feel will help future generations.

Q: Thank you both. This gives us a rich perspective and a great learning. I wish you all the joy and fulfilment on this path. I can see that you're touching so many hearts, inspiring people in your own quiet, anonymous way. As you rightly said, 99% of the time is spent in sadhana, behind the scenes, and that's where I feel the real alchemy is happening.

Saskia & Shubhendra: Thank you.



Illustration by ARATI SHEDDE



The intuitive mind is a sacred gift.

ALBERT EINSTEIN



it changes
everything

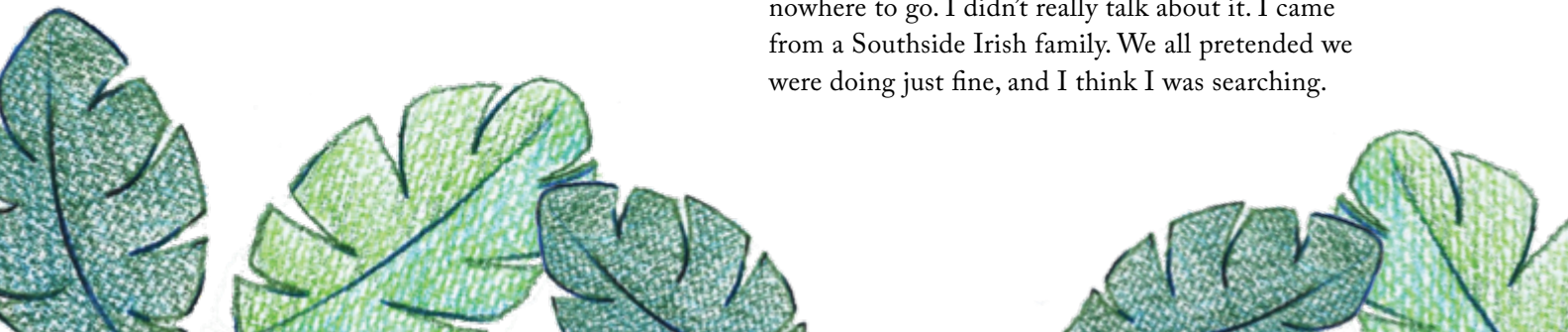


SELF-CARE in the Midst of Crisis

TRACIE PAPE shares her ideas and experience with **MAMATA VENKAT** on the importance of acknowledging feelings and practicing self-care and self-compassion during the pandemic and beyond.

Q: Hello Tracie. We've had many conversations in the past, and I'm really glad for them. Looking back, I can pinpoint very significant moments that were turning points for me. They were often preceded by negative moments, but they all led to where I am right now. What was a transformative moment in your life that really shaped your values, your ideals, that helped you to grow and evolve, and that led you to where you are right now?

When I was twenty I lost my mom, and I really struggled with mental health following that loss. You know, there is a definition of grief: love with nowhere to go. I didn't really talk about it. I came from a Southside Irish family. We all pretended we were doing just fine, and I think I was searching.



When I was in the Peace Corps, I was struggling although I had an incredible time, and then I went to India and learned how to meditate. And talking to my mom in her final days, she shared a gift with me – that everything we need is within us. It was really a guiding light. I think in those years I suffered mostly in silence, and I think maybe that is why I chose a career in mental health – to destigmatize it, to allow us to talk about what we're struggling with. Once you open up, it helps, and you feel like you're not alone.

There was uncertainty figuring out what was important to me and how I wanted to live my life. In retrospect, I think it was a defining event for me. Nothing is certain, loss can happen, especially now.

Q: I can imagine that the stigma surrounding mental health back then probably made it really difficult to figure out how best to manage it.

And there are different cultures and different families. Southside Irish families really don't talk a lot about feelings, but I've found that every culture has its own stigmas or biases, and we're really just facets of the same stone of suffering. There is so much similarity, and we all feel it is unique to us.

Q: Was meditation the only tool that helped you, or were there other tools that you used during that period?

Meditation helped me a lot, and as I've grown I've expanded what I use to help ground me, to cope. Meditation is important, but I also have a whole toolbox of things.

Q: It's like a cocktail of tools we can utilize. Aside from meditation, I go to therapy, I call friends, I sing, I try to exercise. I have a long list

I suffered mostly in silence, and I think maybe that is why I chose a career in mental health – to destigmatize it, to allow us to talk about what we're struggling with. Once you open up, it helps, and you feel like you're not alone.

of things that have helped me. What are some tools that have helped the most?

I love calling it a cocktail! It's much better than a toolkit.

There are so many things that we can do. Right now, in the face of uncertainty, I think we are all riding the waves of anxiety. Whether we're worried about our personal safety, or that of those we love, or strangers, when anxiety is heightened our muscles tense and our breathing gets shallow. It's really hard to feel grounded in that state.

I was a slow convert to breathing. Breathing is a miraculous way to reduce anxiety. There are two simple tools that I use and teach: The first is triangle breathing. You do a three or four count inhale, three or four count pause or exhale, and then a three or four count exhale or pause. And



The first is triangle breathing. You do a three or four count inhale, three or four count pause or exhale, and then a three or four count exhale or pause. And doing that every hour, you reset, you relax your muscles.

doing that every hour, you reset, you relax your muscles. You can't have an anxiety attack in a relaxed body. So if you feel tension somewhere, breathe and imagine that tension going out when you breathe. The Navy Seals really like boxed breathing, which is a three or four count inhale, three or four count pause, three or four count exhale. So those are simple techniques that we can do when we're riding the wave of anxiety or fear.

Another one that I really like is progressive muscle relaxation, and you can find videos on YouTube to guide you through. Start with the muscles in your feet. Tighten them for ten seconds, then relax for six. Go through your whole body, and when you're done there will be a much deeper sense of relaxation. It's an excellent one to do before bed.

Q: I also like something that we have in Heartfulness called Left Nostril Breathing, where you close your right nostril with your thumb, and breathe in and out ten times through your left nostril. It activates your parasympathetic nervous system, so it reduces stress and anxiety, allowing you to be in a relaxed state. Like you said, you can't have an anxiety attack or feel those moments of panic when your body is relaxed.

That's another great one. There are so many tools.

Q: What are some other ones that you recommend?

Those are the physical ones, because what helps when you're stressed is that you want to relax your muscle body. I really like one that's called "Mindfulness of Present Emotion." It is stepping back, noticing what you're feeling. If I feel fear or anxiety, I notice it without judgment. I notice



that I feel really afraid and allow that. Sometimes our breath gets shallow, our muscles tighten, we don't know what we're feeling, we plow through and maybe rush through something. So relax, then notice what you're feeling.

That's the bridge to my two favorite skills that are more state-of-being skills: self-compassion and gratitude. Kristin Neff and Tara Brach talk about how important it is to be as kind to ourselves as we are to others. We're very often worried about other people, but we're hard on ourselves. We would never say the things to other people that we say to ourselves: "Why am I so stressed?" "Why am I not getting things done?" Allowing the same compassion that we offer to others to ourselves, and remembering to be grateful, really help with anxiety and help us feel connected.

But we have to go through the other steps to get there. When you're feeling anxious, you're like, "What do I have to feel grateful for?" Once you relax and settle down, and are kind to yourself, almost always something will pop up.

Q: I still struggle with self-compassion. Why do you think we can be compassionate toward others but not to ourselves? Especially for those of us in our twenties, this is a period of learning and growth, so we should be allowing ourselves to make mistakes and grow from them. Yet I expect perfection from myself.

I can only speculate. It's so common. I think that for high-achieving young adults, there is a strong belief that being hard on yourself is what leads to success. We live in a very competitive, individualistic society. Also, sometimes we want to beat ourselves up before somebody else does. It's really surprising how universal it is. When you ask people about their negative self-talk, it just flows out of their mouths. It's just as mean as if I say it

to you or say it to me. Self-compassion is really important, and then we have it to give to others.

Q: What are the ways you have learned to speak to yourself in a loving way?

I still struggle with it. Tara Brach talks about a second arrow. For example, I may feel something uncomfortable, or make a mistake, or wish something was different about my life. I can be mindful of my current emotions, and wish something was different; but I can also shoot that second arrow – that there is something inherently wrong with me because of it. That's when I freeze. So be aware of judging your areas of growth. As human beings, we all have things we want to change, mistakes we've made. But when we judge ourselves, or feel guilty about it, we freeze. So be careful of that second arrow.

Q: I have worked hard over the last several months to separate "I made a mistake" from "There is something wrong with me." I've recognized that they are mutually exclusive.

When you're feeling anxious, you're like, "What do I have to feel grateful for?" Once you relax and settle down, and are kind to yourself, almost always something will pop up.

IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Just because I made a mistake doesn't mean I'm fundamentally incorrect as a human being. Once I recognized that, I was able to overcome that step of anxiety. Now, when I make a mistake, I turn red with shame for a second, but then I'm able to say, "You know what? It's okay. Tomorrow is another day, and we can keep going." But it's still challenging. No matter how old we are, we're still going to be hard on ourselves.

It's like a cage we build for ourselves. If we make a mistake, or struggle, or want something to be different in our lives, when we fuse it with the thought that there is something unlovable about us, something fundamentally wrong, it is impossible to create change. So many people suffer in silence with that solidified fear or negative belief about themselves. Once we start talking about it, we realize how common it is. We are lovable despite our flaws.

Brené Brown speaks to the idea that because we all struggle we connect through vulnerability. Yet we are so afraid to share this vulnerability. I think our friendship developed because we shared our vulnerability, despite an age difference and different phases of life. It felt like such an

authentic connection, because we were saying, "I'm really struggling, I need help, I feel alone."

Q: That's what I love about our relationship. You are a beautiful mom with two incredible kids, and I am twenty-eight and still trying to figure out my life. We've still found connection. We've still found this ability to relate to one another.

What's been incredible, especially over the last few months with coronavirus, is how many people have reconnected because they are dealing with mental health struggles. They've seen the way others have opened up, and they've been able to say, "I'm going through this, too. Can I talk to you about it?" It's been a wonderful bonding experience. I feel closer to so many people in my life.

That's exactly what has happened to me also. I have had the courage to bridge friendships where maybe there was a gap, or talk about things that were uncomfortable. Somehow, when you connect with someone else, there are no "shoulds." This is a lifelong journey, and we really are in it together. When we connect with each other, there is freedom to be ourselves, to love ourselves, and to realize there is healing in that connection.

Q: Absolutely. Writing in a journal has been helpful for me, because I'm writing to myself. And of course, bouncing thoughts off others, finding ways to relate. We may have different stories, but there are many similarities that keep us more connected than we realize.

That's one thing that is coming from the coronavirus. We're all in the same situation. We're sheltering in place for safety, and for the safety of loved ones and strangers. A lot of us are scared, then we have moments of courage. And we're re-evaluating what's important to us. It's a really important time to reflect. What are the things that





When we connect with each other, there is freedom to be ourselves, to love ourselves, and to realize there is healing in that connection.

really matter? Our connections to ourselves and to others.

Q: There are so many things that I didn't realize I took for granted until the coronavirus hit. I'm at home with my family, and I haven't been able to hug my parents, grandparents or brother. When I was in New York, taking the subway to see my best friend was a scary thing, because I didn't know who on the train might have the virus. Taking a walk, going to see my friends

who live a couple of minutes away ... those little things that I've taken for granted have pulled me closer to the people I love. It's encouraged me to reach out to people with whom I had rocky relationships. This is not the time for hatred or malice, or any sort of blockage toward anybody.

It's an opportunity for growth. Any conflict, any challenge, any negative thoughts I have are an opportunity to really look at myself and see what they're about. Keeping a curiosity to any experience or conflict with someone is "Mindfulness of Present Emotion." Instead of trying to control it, try to be curious with your emotion, and with what's going on with others. Also be very forgiving, because everyone is going to have moments when they're really struggling.

Q: How can we help the people we love who might be far away?

It's a beautiful question – one I have been thinking about. At first, I was thinking of the other person and how to be supportive. The more I reflected on

I was thinking of the other person and how to be supportive. The more I reflected on the question, I realized that when we take care of ourselves, when we're grounded, then they aren't worried about us. Then, when we reach out to talk to them, we're grounded, we're present.

the question, I realized that when we take care of ourselves, when we're grounded, then they aren't worried about us. Then, when we reach out to talk to them, we're grounded, we're present. They may need validation. Validation goes so far: "I hear that you're struggling. This must be really hard. I'm feeling with you."

And then there is direct communication. Ask the question, "What do you need?" It could be something physical, or it could be just showing up for them, saying, "I love you. I'm thinking about you." I think we take for granted sometimes just how significant these small gestures can be.

Q: Tracie, thank you so much for opening up and sharing your story, and for sharing some beneficial tips that are helpful for this unique period and beyond.

It was my pleasure.



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Developing Intuition



MEGHA BAJAJ shares some simple tips on how to develop the capacity for intuition, which can be cultivated in daily life.

For as long as I can remember, I have been an intuitive person. Whether it has been choosing people to work with, or projects to undertake, intuition has helped tremendously. Intuition is nothing but a hunch, a feeling, which may not necessarily be based on facts. You see someone, and you just know they are going to play an integral role in your life. You see another person and the caution blinkers go ballistic. “Stay away, stay away,” a siren rings in your head, for no particular reason. You just know that a certain person is going to call you on a particular day. All these are instances of intuition.

So while some people are highly intuitive and base much of their decision making on it, others are not. I have been asking myself: How can I make my intuition more powerful, and how can I develop it further?

Some answers that I have discovered are:

First, the more the mind is quiet, the more intuition works. When the mind is a drunken monkey, running helter-skelter, objectivity cannot be attained. There is so much activity going on in the mind that the whispers of intuition go unnoticed. So, to begin with, using meditation to calm the mind and prepare it to develop intuitive powers seems a must.

Second, I have come to realize that when I am in a sway of emotions, intuition doesn't work. When I have very strong likes, dislikes, intense mood swings, it becomes difficult for the faculty of intuition to guide me. Emotions

are all encompassing – and when we are feeling something, it once again becomes difficult to remain neutral and to hear the intuitive mind. A calm, emotion-free mind seems to be the first step towards beginning to tap the power of intuition.

Third, I believe, is openness. Sometimes what the intuitive mind is trying to tell us goes beyond our conscious mind. Say we meet someone and the conscious mind feels everything is great. The person looks fine, speaks well, and in every way seems to be a great fit for whatever it is that we are looking for. And yet, something within doesn't seem completely “right,” or “in place.” The intuitive mind is connected to the cosmos and knows – way beyond – what the conscious mind does. So it is important for us to be open and accepting to views contrary to what seems obvious. Only with this openness, can the intuitive mind really speak to us.

Last but not least, there are some psychic ways to develop our intuitive powers. The human body has a number of chakras and the third eye chakra, the *Ajna* (between the eyes), is considered to be the one connected to intuition. The sound OM is associated with balancing this chakra. When we focus between the eyes and chant OM, we activate the intuition center and allow more energy to flow there.

Intuition is a wonderful tool to have. It guides. It protects. Developing this could make relationships, decision-making and hence life itself a more beautiful process. I have a hunch that you are going to agree!





be inspired

The challenge is how to develop
compassion right along with clear seeing.

PEMA CHÖDRÖN



Peace & Compassion

The Art of Removing and Creating Habits

PART 2

Last month, **DAAJI** introduced us to ways to change our behavior patterns and habits according to the wisdom and practices of Yoga – traditionally known as the *Yamas* and *Niyamas*. This month he focuses on the first *Yama*, known as *ahimsa* or non-violence.

In the field where PEACE prevails

It fascinates me to read some of our ancient texts and realize that the wise people of those times understood human nature so well. For example, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are just as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago. Does that mean humanity is still at the same level of evolution as it was during Patanjali's times? Patanjali starts his treatise on the eight limbs of Yoga with the *Yamas*, and the very first *Yama* is *ahimsa*, which means to cultivate the habit of non-violence. If you reflect on that for a moment – that the first step in Yoga is to remove violence, aggression, and any other habits that hurt other living beings, from our nature – you will realize that this is our starting point for becoming human.

It somehow resonates with the golden rule, which simply put is, "Treat others the way you would like to be treated." Saying it a bit differently, "Don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you." Apply this simple principle to non-violence, truthfulness, compassion, prejudice, empathy, love, anger, hatred, etc.

Non-violence has been an aspiration of many wise people from all cultures for thousands of years, and still we have not mastered it collectively. What would a world look like where there is no violence? Most people will agree that it would be such a beautiful vision. The question is: How do we arrive at that stage? And is it even feasible in today's uncertain times? In fact, it is precisely during such unstable, uncertain times that it is important to cultivate the habit of non-violence, in order to build a better future for our children, grandchildren, and all other living beings. And it all starts with inner peace.

Creating the field for peace

Peace is not something that happens by talking about it, writing about it, or attending peace rallies. It requires a regular daily practice – a method that removes the inner obstacles to peace, the inner causes of violence, and helps us to go deeper within to find the stillness at the center of our being. Peace is always to be found at our center; it is our inner nature. It simply needs to be uncovered and nurtured.

So, what are the obstacles we need to remove to arrive at peace? They are the mental deviations we accumulate in the field of our consciousness, and they create heaviness, complexity, and emotional turbulence. They have been described in detail in the series on Yogic Psychology in 2019 in Heartfulness Magazine. Until we remove these complexities, collectively known as the *samskaras*, it is difficult to feel peaceful, because they form whirlpools, knots of energy, that disturb our inner balance. These vibrational knots lead to specific programming of our subconscious minds and hardwiring of our nervous system along specific neural pathways. This process leads to habit formation, and we know from science that it takes regular repetition to form a new habit through this process, which all starts with the intention of a thought.

Such subconscious programming has developed over millions of years for our survival, and has many positive purposes. Imagine if you did not

It all starts with
inner peace.

have programs to prevent you from walking onto a road full of traffic, jumping off a high cliff, or putting your hand into a fire. Without the automatic habitual responses of the subconscious mind, we would neither thrive nor survive. Also, imagine if you had to read a book or drive a car without the automatic programs that allow you to read without thinking about every letter and every word, or multitask while you are driving. But there are many subconscious programs that are not useful, even though they originally formed because of repetitive experience that may have been relevant at the time. It is those programs that keep us stuck in useless habits.

Take, for example, a person who is too scared to express a difference of opinion in a work meeting, even though they have something very valid to contribute. They may have developed a fear of expressing differences of opinion in early childhood, because they did not learn to do so in a healthy respectful way. They kept quiet, agreeing with others, in order to stay safe and maintain harmony. We all have fears, attitudes, emotional reactions, and other behaviors because of our past experiences. They determine our habits, which is why it takes more than just knowledge to remove them.

Why are we not able to be peaceful all the time?

One of the most important programs we have wired into our hormonal and autonomic nervous systems is the “fight or flight” response, also known as the stress response. This activation of the sympathetic nervous system is designed to put us on high alert whenever there is a threat or danger, and so it generally overrides our sense of peace and calm. Whether we respond by fighting, fleeing, or even freezing, the associated emotional reactions

If we are to cultivate feelings of contentment, benevolence and compassion, we need to learn to master our reactivity to whatever triggers the stress response.

in us when our consciousness is disturbed are often anger, fear, sadness, self-pity, anxiety or depression. This is especially true in today’s world where most triggers are not actually life-threatening, but are of an emotional nature; for example, a work colleague is a bully, a spouse is insensitive, or a friend disappoints us.

In addition, in our urban environments, the fight or flight response is almost perpetually switched on due to the bombardment of noise pollution, light pollution at night, chemical pollution, electromagnetic pollution, and human thought pollution. So when our personal challenges and relationship issues are added to these environmental triggers, the baseline level of stress that we feel can be overwhelming. In that chronic state, is it any wonder it is so difficult to feel peaceful and non-violent?

So, if we are to cultivate feelings of contentment, benevolence and compassion, we need to learn to master our reactivity to whatever triggers the stress response. For that, we need to look into our heart in order to respond differently to the triggers,

both external and internal. The wonderful thing is that those higher faculties of discernment naturally evolve through Heartfulness practices. In a sense, we can say that we rise above our biological drives and function from a higher level of consciousness. We develop greater mastery over the triggers. This transcendence is very much associated with the field of practice of the *Yamas* and *Niyamas*.

Swami Vivekananda said this in another way: “Man is not to regard nature as his goal, but something higher.” Babuji also alluded to the same concept in his statement that in spirituality we are moving from “animal man” to “human man” to “divine man.”

How will this happen? It starts with the heart. The heart is the balancing midpoint in our system and the seat of the soul, and when we meditate on the heart, gently turning our attention to the soul, we learn to transcend the reactivity that may happen at lower levels of consciousness. The lower chakras that are associated with the more animalistic instinctual responses no longer govern our behavior. And once we have journeyed through the chakras of the Heart Region, under the guidance of a true spiritual Master, we can say that we have transcended “animal man” to become “human man,” mastering our emotions and functioning from a higher plane of consciousness.

But the first step is to purify the field of consciousness through which we respond to the world around us, by removing all the complexities and impurities. When we are burdened with so many subconscious programs resulting from all the complexities and impurities we have accumulated, threats will always be perceived. Per contra, the purer our consciousness, the greater our level of discernment; it goes up proportionally. When we can rise above reactivity, when we can pause, the



When we can rise above reactivity, when we can pause, the wisdom of the heart can truly guide our responses and decisions.

wisdom of the heart can truly guide our responses and decisions.

Heartfulness practices create the habits of peace and compassion

In practical terms, it is Heartfulness Cleaning that purifies consciousness. Without purification, we don't remove the complexities that are the root cause of the subconscious programs, and it is very difficult to change our patterns of habitual response.

This doesn't mean that we no longer need the fight or flight response – that response is there for our survival. For example, if a fire is threatening your home, you need to act to save your family. What changes is that a purified meditative mind will respond only when it is truly needed, and it will also respond in a more refined way, rather than reactively.

It is through Heartfulness Meditation that we learn to pause, so that the soul can witness and respond through the heart's wisdom in any situation. And through Prayer we develop the habit of resting in the soul's realm, and the heart becomes vacuumized so that the flow of the current of Divinity can fill our being. A simple analogy is the flow of current from positive to negative in telegraphy. We may still be aware of fear, anger or anxiety, as they are useful emotions. They alert us to the need to respond or change. But

how we respond, how we use those emotions for positive change, for the betterment of all, is life-transforming. We are able to master them so that they take us forward, rather than keeping us locked into patterns of emotional turbulence, conflict and violence.

By violence, I don't just mean physical violence – it can be emotional violence, passive-aggressive behavior, and resentment in the case of a person who feels victimized. Violence can also be expressed through withdrawal. Anything that hurts another being can be included in this umbrella of violence.

A degree of mastery over these emotions comes from regular meditative practices, which refine the mind so that it responds from a progressively higher and higher plane of awareness. The mind works best when it is guided by the wisdom of a pure heart. In fact, even the regions of the brain that are activated are different.

One of the main catalysts to bring about this mastery over our reactivity is yogic Transmission. Why is it so? For this we need to first remind ourselves of our human anatomy.

The three bodies

We have a physical body made of matter. We also have a subtle body, known as the astral or mental body, which is made up of energy, vibration,



thinking and feeling. It is what we also know as the field of consciousness of the heart and mind. Our third body, the causal body or the cause of our existence, is the soul. The soul is associated with the absolute state of nothingness, the substratum of existence. It is pure, unchanging and immutable.

When we identify mostly with the physical body, then it is easy to be surrounded by threats in day-to-day life, because our physical being is constantly being bombarded and may not be in a state of full health and well-being. By the way, the part of the mind that creates this sense of identity is the ego, *ahankara* in Yoga. When we identify mostly with the subtle body – our thoughts, feelings, emotions, intellect, knowledge, and ego – we will also be susceptible to threats in day-to-day life, because our minds and hearts are also constantly being bombarded, even more than our physical bodies. Think of the emotional upheaval created by an argument with your partner, your teenage child, or a work colleague, and you will understand how destabilizing this can be to the peace of mind of all the individuals involved. This is also why we have a stress epidemic in the 21st century, which is clinically affecting the mental health of more than 10% of the world's population according to the World Economic Forum.

Now, let's compare this with what happens when we identify with the soul, which we do when we have a spiritual goal, and when we acknowledge that we are souls having a human experience in the world. Then, something very different happens. The soul is the still, peaceful center of our being, like the eye of a tornado. Swami Vivekananda spoke so beautifully about this shift of attention in his lecture called "Nature and Man," which you can find in his Complete Works, Volume 6. He says, "The whole process of evolution is the soul's struggle to manifest itself. It is a constant struggle against nature."



We are firmly grounded in that stillness where we find peace, joy, love and contentment. There is no longer a need to look for those qualities outside; instead, we tap into them at the center of our being.

I would say it a little differently, as in today's Yoga we have a way to reduce the struggle: Thanks to Transmission, when we very gently turn our attention toward the soul by meditating on the heart and through prayer, it is naturally pulled inward, and a prayerful receptive inner state is created in the heart. Transmission allows us to rest in the center, so that outer turbulence does not destabilize our inner condition. We are firmly grounded in that stillness where we find peace, joy, love and contentment. There is no longer a need to look for those qualities outside; instead, we tap into them at the center of our being. Then, we share them with others – we become “givers” rather than “takers” – radiating peace, joy, love and contentment into the world, bringing solace and peace to others. We carry the fragrance of Divinity with us wherever we go.

Love leads to compassion

So, Yoga begins with love. The fundamental divine law that governs life is “Love all.” And we cultivate love by connecting with the soul, and nourishing the soul through Transmission. If the idea of hurting anyone or anything remains in our hearts, we will fail at the first step itself. Our Heartfulness practices help us to transcend violence in all its forms. This is the essence of *ahimsa*.

But I feel that there is something more to *ahimsa*. While it is good not to hurt others, that is just the removal of the negative state of violence. How about cultivating the positive state? There is a greater need to live in such a way that others are also comforted and supported with compassion and love.

When we truly love, where is the question of being violent or hurting others? When we truly love, we are ready to sacrifice our comforts, our possessions

It is only when love is self-seeking that it will destroy, and that is not compassion but passion. The difference is this: passion is the manifestation of a desire-driven ego, whereas compassion is the manifestation of the soul directing our life through a pure open heart.

and ultimately ourselves. In fact, the whole idea of sacrifice does not even enter our awareness. Is this not true compassion? It is only when love is self-seeking that it will destroy, and that is not compassion but passion. The difference is this: passion is the manifestation of a desire-driven ego, whereas compassion is the manifestation of the soul directing our life through a pure open heart.

So, to realize this first vow of a seeker, *ahimsa*, our awareness needs to expand to embrace the soul's existence. The more we nurture the soul through Transmission and meditative practices, the more we will become compassionate, loving, joyful and peaceful. Then, all that remains to be done is to remove the obstacles along the path that pull us off course – our desires and personas of the ego – so that we can soar into the sky of divinity and realize our true purpose. In a sense, everything is encapsulated in this first step of Yoga.



Taste of Life



As we've lost this idea of pilgrimage,
we've lost this idea of human beings
walking for a very, very long time.
It does change you.

ROBYN DAVIDSON



Always the First Step

PART 1

Sustaining the Pilgrimage

ALANDA GREENE and her husband are on a pilgrimage to visit the Buddhist temples that date back to the 8th century on the island of Shikoku in Japan. The journey is as much about learning to let go of expectations and maintaining harmony as it is about visiting the temples!

A few words on the side bar of a guide map reassure me: “It doesn’t matter where you begin the pilgrimage. It only matters that you take the first step.”

Presumably, it matters that I take the second step as well, since I’ve already made the first step just by getting to Shikoku, the smallest of Japan’s four main islands.

I’ve persevered to get this far in order to do a pilgrimage that I know little about and can’t explain my motivation for doing.

“I’ve always wanted to,” I stammer, when asked why I’m doing this, “ever since I read about it in a book some years back. Just a line, really, but it set something off in my mind.”

Then I’d try to change the subject and talk about my fondness for Japan, or how my husband is coming with me but adamantly proclaims, “I’m not doing any pilgrimage. I’m just going on a hike.” I like that line and steer the conversation to its humor or its vague portent of challenge. But sometimes the questioner would not be put off track.

“Why are you interested in a Japanese pilgrimage? Are you Buddhist?”

No, no, I explain, and then backtrack. It’s not that I’m not Buddhist or that I am Buddhist. This gets worse as I try to clarify my motivation. Pretty soon the listener is convinced I’m actually heading off on a spy mission to Chechnya, or at least that’s my take on the quizzical expression that looks back at me.

So I talk about the beauty of Japanese temples, landscapes, gardens and statues, because it’s

what I can talk about. How I like to walk. There are 88 sacred temples on the pilgrimage that circumnavigates the island. It has a rich history dating back to the 8th century when a Zen monk born on Shikoku wandered, built bridges, made roads, established temples, and spread the teachings of Buddhism. At this point, I go back to talking about enjoying walking through the Japanese land, because I’ve pretty well reached the end of my beginner’s knowledge. What the pilgrimage will mean and my knowledge of its background will have to unfold through the process of doing.

At the first temple, I realize that although I may not understand the why of the pilgrimage, I do understand that I have chosen a purpose and a direction. I realize that I want to complete this pilgrimage, want to visit each of the 88 temples, and that I am beginning at the first and will end at the last. This realization becomes clear that first day because I discover my husband does not share this purpose.

“It doesn’t matter if we get to every temple,” he announces. “This isn’t about that. It’s about enjoying the journey.”

How can I explain that it matters a great deal to me, when I can’t even explain why I want to do this in the first place? I begin to think about this journey as a mini-version of the greater pilgrimage of life: we start out and we journey to the end. Yes, it’s true, what’s in between is what matters. It’s the journey, the quality of the journey. But I see at the same time that if I do not have a purpose, a direction determined by that purpose, then the journey itself becomes meaningless. It’s the



purpose that defines my choices. I'm walking the narrow paved road along a back street of the city of Tokushima, on the way to Gokurakuji, Temple Two. This purpose, I reason, is what guides me to choose this alley to the left, where an exquisitely shaped pine arches over a driveway, and not the alley to the right, where an exquisite stone lantern sits at a house entrance.

I recall the old folk tale of a young girl walking a road that forks in front of her. At the fork sits an old woman.

"Which road should I take?" the girl asks.

"Where are you going?" asks the old woman.

"I don't really know," the girl answers.

"Then it doesn't really matter."

How do I sort out what matters without a goal?

How do I release striving and still hold to purpose?

"We don't have to only go to temples," my husband Sonni continues. "There's so much we could see on this island, now that we're here. Besides, there's no way we're going to get to all of them. We just don't have time."

I keep my lips tight and decide this is not the time to say anything out loud. But my silent thoughts protest loudly. "I didn't come here to go sightseeing. We could get to all the temples if we really wanted because then we would really try.

We start out and we journey to the end. Yes, it's true, what's in between is what matters. It's the journey, the quality of the journey. But I see at the same time that if I do not have a purpose, a direction determined by that purpose, then the journey itself becomes meaningless.

Maybe there isn't time to walk to all the temples, but we can find transport."

Is it still a pilgrimage if I don't do the whole thing? What is a pilgrimage anyway? All these years I've heard and used the word. Suddenly its meaning is vague. Foggy like the low clouds that dollop mountains in the distance.

That first day we miss the turn off to temples four and five, Dainichiji and Jizoji. We've walked and walked many kilometers already, pavement kilometers, and we're a long way past where we needed to turn. Our feet ache. I notice my husband is grumpy. I suspect he notices the same of me. "We don't have time to go back," he says. "It will take too long. We can miss those two."

Only the first day and the plan is ruined. My efforts will come to nothing. I muse about the

wisdom of having a travel companion who doesn't share my goals. So what if we have to backtrack? I suggest getting a bus. He'll have none of it. I breathe deeply. This is like the learning of the Japanese martial art Aikido, I tell myself. You set out and move with what unfolds, harmonize rather than oppose the energy that comes into play. Okay, I re-evaluate. This isn't about getting it all perfect or not missing a temple, because then it's all ruined. Sort of like my friend who kept quitting smoking, but then she'd have one cigarette and that was it. Whole effort sabotaged. She'd be smoking steady for months until the next attempt to stop began. The whole plan isn't ruined I affirm. I'm still putting one foot in front of the other. I'm walking dead tired along this path from temple to temple, with two visits missing. That's all. Get the facts in line, girl.

As I walk, I think about how this plays out on the big pilgrimage – life. We choose a purpose, set out in a direction, and things happen that we don't expect. Then what? Do I give up? Get petulant? Disheartened? Divorced? How do I realign with my direction when things throw me off track? How do I sustain the freshness of yet another first step when my ideal is already compromised? I think about how many times in my life I gave up, dropped an aim, a goal, because I believed I'd messed up and felt like a failure, so that there wasn't any point in keeping going. How did I manage to feel like a failure before I was even twenty? Or was it fifteen? Twelve? So I walk, I breathe, I release those temples, but I am still determined to visit 86 of them.

To be continued.

The Birds of Kanha



Sun bird

A PHOTO ESSAY



Red wattled lapwing

RAJESH MENON is a photographer from Delhi, who specializes in images from nature. Here he shares some of the beautiful birds of Kanha Shanti Vanam, the 1300 acre property outside Hyderabad, India, that is the international headquarters of the Heartfulness Institute. It is also a green sanctuary.

It all began with Daaji announcing retreats in Kanha Shanti Vanam during the pandemic. Keeping COVID-19 in mind, everyone who visited Kanha during this period was required to do a two-week quarantine, which could also be used as a spiritual retreat. Registering for the September period, a dear friend and I decided to drive to Kanha from Delhi, for reasons of safety.

Right after the quarantine retreat period, Daaji asked me to photograph the birds of Kanha. One

thing that still baffles me is how he knew that I had come prepared with a 600 millimeter tele zoom lens.

So began my wonderful journey into the life of the birds in Kanha. Five years ago, it was a barren dry land. The place has been totally transformed and is now a thriving ecosystem of trees, shrubs, herbs and organic farms, including rare and endangered species, rainforest trees and medicinal gardens.

Following the birds around Kanha, I discovered their daily routine. The tiny and the mighty all have a daily routine. It was beautiful to be one with them, following them, observing them, inspired by their total surrender to all other natural forces.

The best observed were the Shikra falcon couple, who shared a neem tree. One interesting fact about

falcons in general is that the female of the species is bigger than the male. The hunt of the black-winged kite showed me just how concentrated its approach was. The little tailor birds, sunbirds, bulbuls and the weaver birds were also fascinating.

I shared great camaraderie with my fellow photographers on our early morning trips following the birds. Brotherhood is made forever.

A word of caution: It is not easy to leave Kanha. The songs of the birds will charm you to come back. I am counting the days when I can be back in Kanha again.

A dear friend, who is an avid birdwatcher, mentioned that there are now 70 species of birds in Kanha. I have only seen and photographed around 30 species, so naturally I can't wait to see the rest!



Shikra falcon (male)



Booted warbler



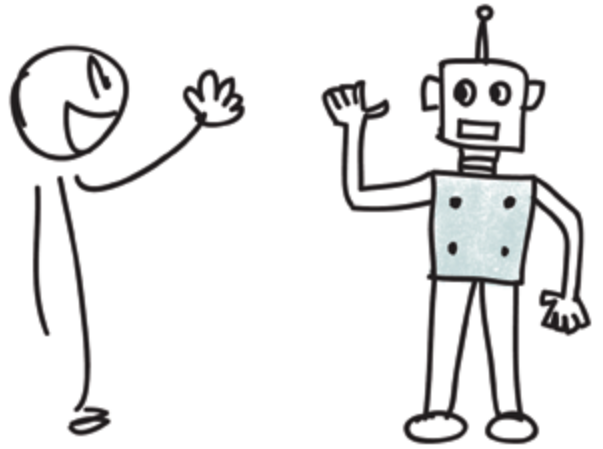
Shikra falcon (female)

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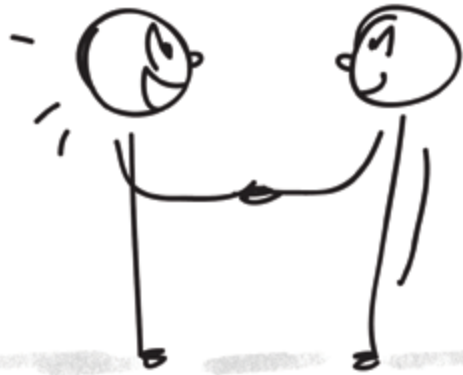
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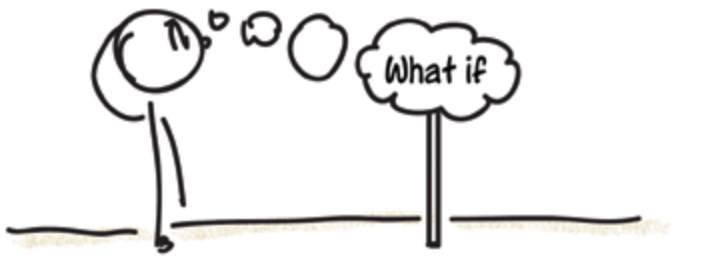
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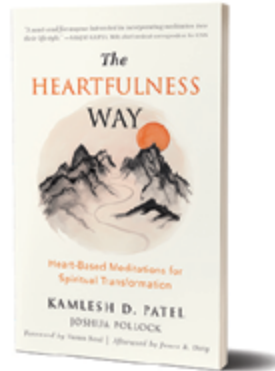
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