

July 2021

heartfulness

purity weaves destiny

Purity
DAAJI

The Pandemic of
the Separate Self

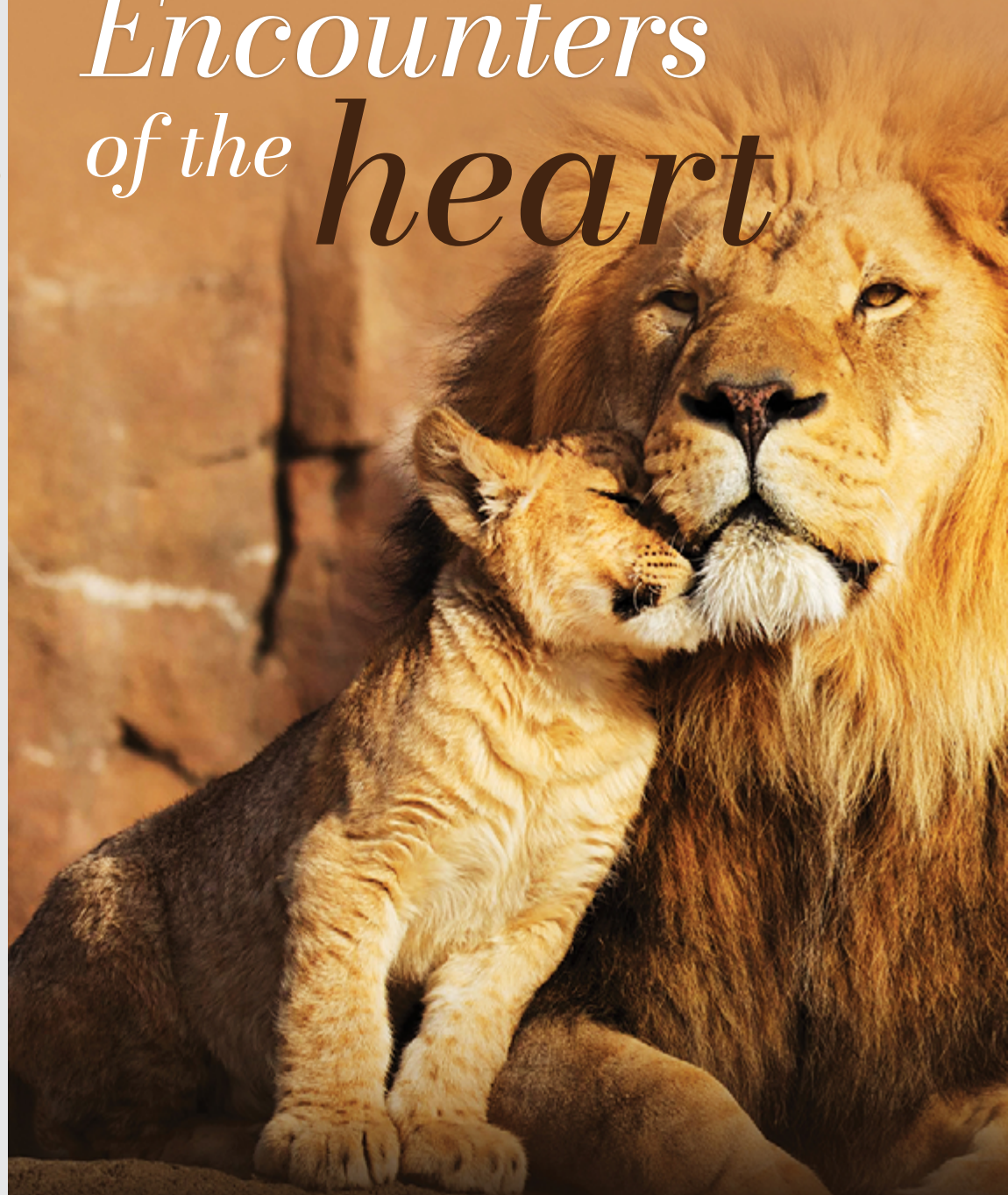
DAN SIEGEL

The Convergence
of Psychology and
Spirituality

TOBIN HART

Hope
NARENDRA KINI

Encounters of the heart



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Stories of loss and resilience



Dear readers,

Our world is at an interesting place where no one is unaffected by the coronavirus, and in this edition we give voice to people who are experiencing the deep realities of the pandemic. Through their stories of loss, community, and resilience, we see glimpses of how to navigate our new present and future.

In other content, Dan Siegel addresses a different but equally devastating pandemic – that of the separate self. Dr. Ichak Adizes shares his thoughts on how to manage feelings. Tobin Hart continues to explore the bridge between psychology and spirituality, Elisabeth Boudier and Birgit Dürr continue with their discussion of neuro-development in children, Ravi Venkatesan continues his series on the Heartful Innovator, and Paolo Lezzelle on Heartfulness Sport. Sarah Naylor talks about the impactful nature of a simple pause. Narendra Kini shares some beautiful art to inspire hope, and Daaji explores the value of purity.

We hope you are staying safe and well.

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. Two of his books, *The Heartfulness Way* and *Designing Destiny*, are #1 bestsellers.



DANIEL SIEGEL

Dr. Siegel is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, the co-director of the Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA, and the Executive Director of the Mindsight Institute, for the development of mindsight, insight, empathy, and integration in individuals, families, and communities. He is the author of five New York Times bestsellers and is the founding editor for the Norton Professional Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology.



NARENDRA KINI

Narendra lives in California and is a serial entrepreneur. He is passionate about physical, emotional, and mental well-being, arriving at the spiritual to get centered and creative. He loves music, writing, painting and sketching, and is a regular speaker at various corporations on topics of meditation, compassion and inner transformation, using heart-based meditation practice. He has created a piece of art every day for the last six years, and select pieces are auctioned off to support non-profit causes for humanity, sustainability and the environment.

TOBIN HART



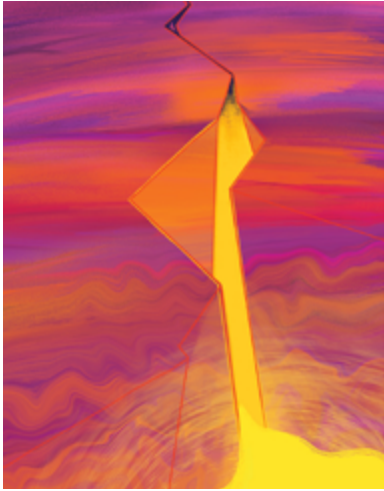
Tobin is a professor in the University of West Georgia's Humanistic, Transpersonal and Critical Psychology program, and co-founder of the ChildSpirit Institute, a non-profit educational and research hub exploring and nurturing the spirituality of children and adults. His work explores human consciousness at the nexus of spirituality, psychology, and education. His recent books include: *The Four Virtues*, *The Integrative Mind: Transformative Education for a World on Fire*, *Spiritual Knowing*, *From Information to Transformation: Education for the Evolution of Consciousness*, *Transpersonal Knowing: Exploring the Horizon of Consciousness*, and *The Secret Spiritual World of Children*.

ELISABETH BOUDERLIQUE & BIRGIT DÜRR



Elisabeth is an occupational medicine specialist, who helps people with neurodevelopmental disorders at her clinic in the south of France. She is also a Montessori classroom director for children aged 3 to 6, and for special needs children. Birgit is a general practitioner from Germany, who also specializes in neurodevelopmental disorders. She has completed diplomas in homeopathy, TCM nutrition, and other body therapies, focusing on therapies that have a neuro-integrative approach. Both are also trainers of Brighter Minds, a program for cognitive development in children.

inside



thought in action

How to Manage Feelings

Dr. Ichak Adizes

24



focus:

Encounters of the
Heart

The Pandemic of the Separate Self

Interview with Dan Siegel

10

Stories of Loss and Resilience

*Fiona Neary
Kashish Kalwani
Shanthi Venkat
Simmi Valecha
Sarala Upadhya*

18



The Heartful Innovator - Part 7

Ravi Venkatesan

27

innerview

How We Know - Part 2

Interview with Tobin Hart

34



be inspired

The Art of Removing and Creating Habits - Part 7

Daaji

56



it changes everything

Neuro-development in Children - Part 2

Interview with Elisabeth Boudierlique and Birgit Dürr

44

The Magic of Pausing

Sarah Naylor

50



taste of life

Heartfulness Sport - Part 3

Paolo Lezzelle

66

Hope

Art Essay by Naren Kini

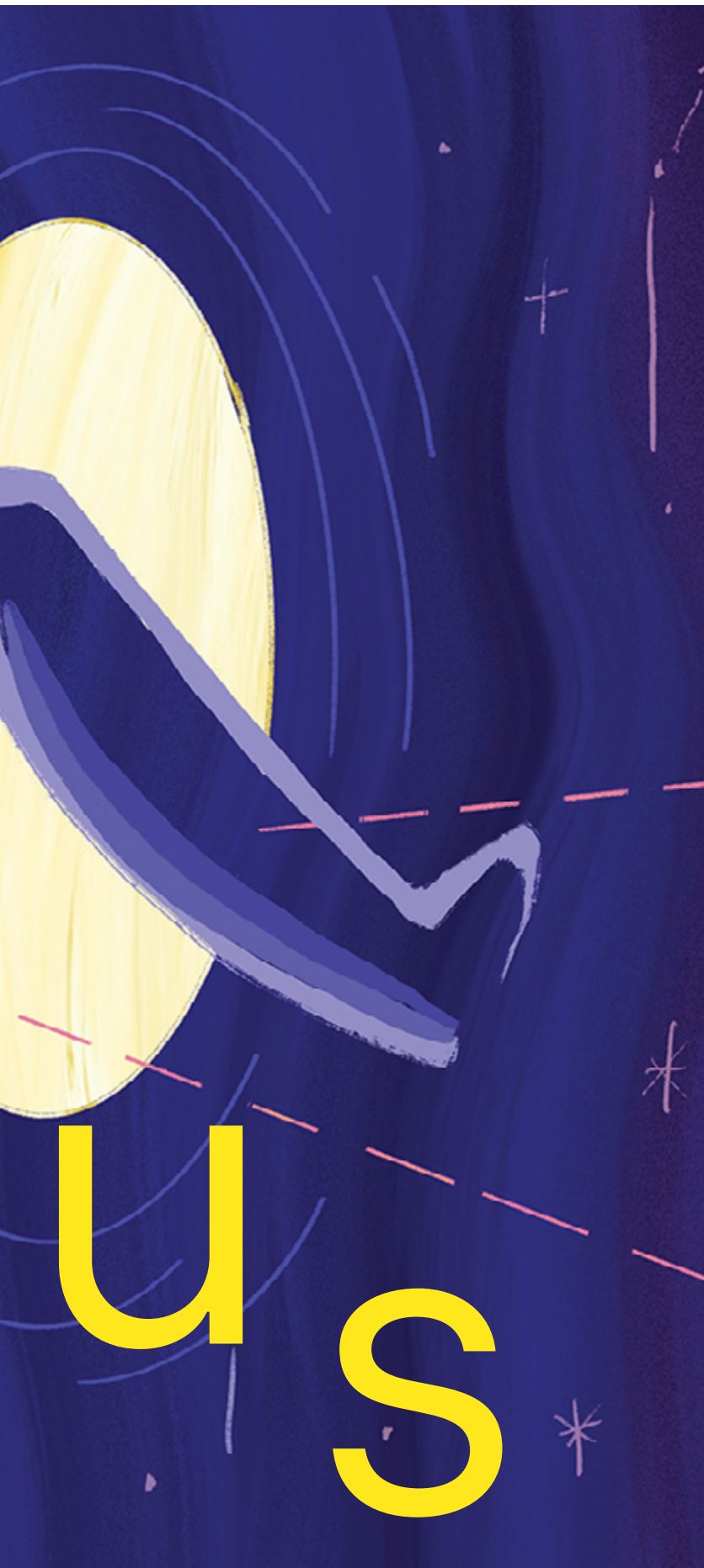
70

Stories and Objects

Art Essay by N. Divya

76





ENCOUNTERS OF THE HEART

Crises are points of power, though it may not seem so at the time.

KABIR BEDI

Illustration by ANANYA PATEL

The Pandemic of the Separate Self

– PART 1

DAN SIEGEL is a clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine and executive director of the Mindsight Institute. Here he speaks to **UDAY KUMAR** about creating a kinder, more compassionate world, the lyrics of Leonard Cohen, and the other pandemics that are worthy of our attention right now during Covid times.

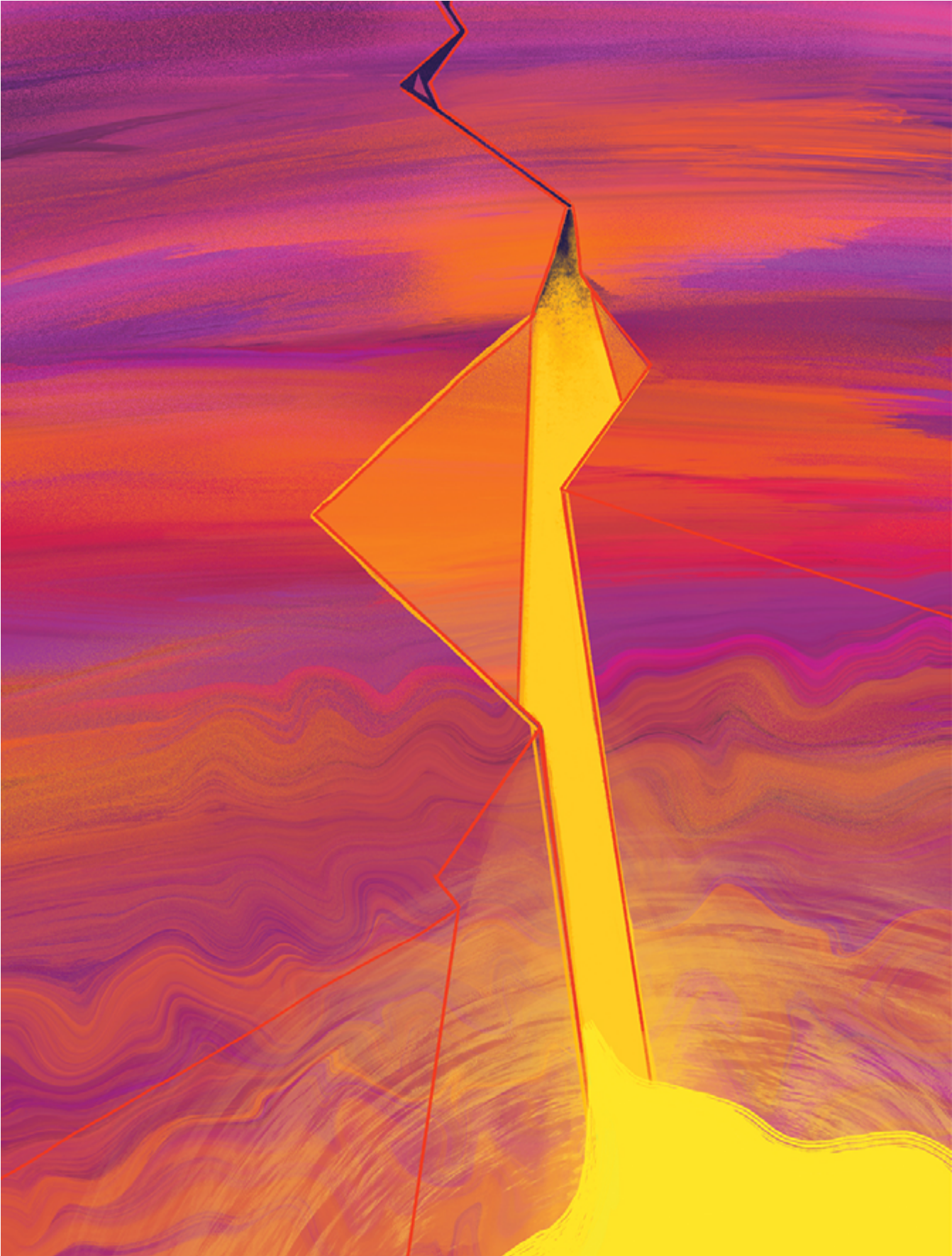
Q: Hi Dan. For the longest time I have wanted to reach out to you. Especially in the current times in which we are living, people are seeking so much help. If you could talk a little bit about your work, I think that would be a good place to get started.

You know, the notion of bringing science into how we live our individual lives, how we live as families and communities, how we live as nations, and how we live as a human family on Earth, offers the opportunity to think deeply across many different disciplines of science, and then ask the questions: Why are we here at all on the planet? While we're here, what can we do to try and create a kinder, more compassionate world?

I think everything I've been doing professionally has been to take my background as a scientist, who's also trained as a physician, and then think deeply in my particular field of psychiatry – how

the mind develops – so as to ask questions like, “How has the human mind been shaped by modern culture?” and “How might that be affecting our relationships with each other, and also our relationships with the broader world of living beings, which you can simply call nature?”

So, if I have to summarize all that scientific exploration, it resonates with ancient spiritual teachings, even though that's not my background. It would be that the human mind constructs categories and concepts, and then uses words and symbols to say things like, “Who are you?” “Who am I?” “What's the Self?” Our modern culture has created an atmosphere of knowledge that's probably very different from how we originally evolved to live in community. In many ways, it has us living in isolation from one another – not just because we're in a viral pandemic, but because there is a pandemic of misunderstanding of what the Self is.



If you ask almost anyone, anywhere in the world (I had the chance to do this in the olden days when we could travel), “Where is your Self?”, they will point to their body. Sometimes they point to their heart, sometimes they point to their head, but they’re pointing to their body. What I always find fascinating about that is that the “Self” is the center of gravity of your identity, of your experience, and it also shapes your experience of belonging. If you think that the Self is only in your body, then you’re going to be very vulnerable to feeling disconnected, like an entity that can be separated from everything else.

That view of the separate Self, the “solo Self,” is a teaching of modern times. Sometimes it is very subtle, and sometimes it’s more extreme, especially with social media. In either case, it’s very toxic. I think the lie of the separate Self is making us feel alone and lonely. It’s making individuals and families somehow feel like they’re isolated. Then, in the larger community, there is an incredible sense of anxiety, depression, despair, and even increasing suicidality, that’s made worse with the viral pandemic. When you’re trying to live a life as if the Self is only in your body, then everything is revolving around you, as if you are a noun rather than an unfolding verb-like set of processes.

Even if you think about Heartfulness and the feeling of love, if you view the Self as a noun-like separate thing, you will think, “Well, are you going to love me, and am I going to love you?” rather than thinking there is a universal life force of love that comes through the heart, through the body, and connects us with other people, the planet, and nature. When you live that way, it’s very different. It’s more like candlelight. If you see someone whose candle wick is not lit, you lean over and light it; it doesn’t take anything away from the

light of your flame. Instead, people live more like they are coins: “If I give you my coin, then I’m not going to have it anymore, so I’m not going to give it to you.”

There’s a big difference between seeing yourself as a verb-like unfolding event, like the flame of a candle, and seeing yourself as an entity, like a coin, in which case you say, “Well, I’m going to hold on to mine.” So it isn’t just, “Well, who cares if you think the Self is in the body,” because that makes you think you’re a noun, and you treat love like a commodity to hold like a coin rather than release like a flame.

Q: From a scientific viewpoint, you have arrived at the wisdom of spirituality. It's a fascinating explanation for me, because I come from the other end of the spectrum where I have been taught that my Self is part of a larger universal Self. There are all these individual Selves, but there is uniformity because we are all connected with the same Source. And that aids the feeling of pervasive brotherhood, pervasive love. From that standpoint, love is more like, "I don't love, but I become love." It's my state of being that I radiate. In Heartfulness, the whole idea is that this essence of love is what you experience in meditation, as a result of Transmission. At the end of the day, the loneliness and lack of connection people are feeling arise because of the inability to feel connected with one another. And I read a lot about that in your work.

You mentioned the pandemic, so I am tempted to ask: Amongst all the negatives we've heard from the pandemic, have you seen any positives, any green shoots? What should we take away from this time?



Our modern culture has created an atmosphere of knowledge that's probably very different from how we originally evolved to live in community. In many ways, it has us living in isolation from one another – not just because we're in a viral pandemic, but because there is a pandemic of misunderstanding of what the Self is.

There's a very powerful song by the songwriter and poet Leonard Cohen called Anthem. There's a verse in that song that goes like this:

“Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.”

What Cohen was offering us was the idea that there is no such thing as perfection; bringing the light, bringing the love in comes from the challenges we have. I think the pandemic has revealed many cracks. Now, how are we approaching this moment as a humanity, where a virus has gone around the world and shut down our human lives in many ways? There's a concern

Those four pandemics – lack of cooperation in dealing with a viral pandemic, social injustice and racism, misinformation and polarization, and environmental destruction – are all either caused or made worse by the fifth pandemic, which is the pandemic of the separate Self.

over how we're going to do it. The pandemic is ending lives and also ending livelihoods, and I'm sure we'll have many surges to come.

I think the way we deal with the viral pandemic has to do with our cooperation. I was in the state of Texas at the moment when the governor said, “I'm going to remove all restrictions and regulations about mask-wearing, because you individual citizens should determine your own fate.” When I heard this, I thought it's exactly speaking to what the United States of America has been accused of by anthropologists – the most individualistic place on the planet. That statement is such a violation of what a community needs to do in collaboration to realize that it isn't just that your fate is in your own hands. No, it's in our collective identity as a collective “we.” So, what you could call “linear thinking” rather than “systems thinking” from a scientific point of view is the vulnerability of the viral pandemic.

There are several other pandemics that are worth mentioning. One is the pandemic of racism and social injustice, where people are mistreated for prejudicial notions of who's the in-group and who's the out-group or not even human. And so we see lots of murders of people of color in the United States. Let's just name racism and social injustice as a pandemic all around the world.

Then there's the pandemic of misinformation, and the polarization that's happening in little bubbles of knowledge. That also comes from people having the very limited view of a separate Self, the solo Self. It's true of racism, too, because you can have a solo Self that's plural – “Only people with skin color like mine, beliefs like mine, nationalities like mine.”





We have to chart a new path forward, leaning on indigenous teachings and spiritual teachings, so that when we weave them together with science they teach us to be of service.

There's a fourth pandemic of environmental destruction, where human identity has excessively differentiated itself from our place in nature. So, instead of the teachings you spoke about, of being a part of a larger whole, you think, "Oh, we're humans, and we're better than the rest of the species. Let's treat Earth like a trash can. Who cares!"

So those four pandemics – lack of cooperation in dealing with a viral pandemic, social injustice and racism, misinformation and polarization, and environmental destruction – are all either caused or made worse by the fifth pandemic, which is the pandemic of the separate Self.

Of course, the viral pandemic is leading to so much suffering. It's terrible. At the same time, it's a crack in the system that we need to see not just as a crisis and an emergency, but also as an opportunity to reimagine our understanding of the mind, how the human mind has constructed a solo Self view of identity that restricts our belonging. We can use this as a moment to say, "We can't continue with business as usual." If we can shut down travel and all of the polluting so rapidly because of a viral pandemic, why not take that same approach to the other pandemics? Let's name what the deep problem really is, which either makes it worse or makes it happen in the first place. It is the lie of the separate Self – the toxic, even lethal lie of the separate solo Self.

What is the good news? The human mind, which constructs identity, has created what Einstein called an optic delusion of consciousness and the sociobiologist E.O. Wilson calls an illusion. Whether it's a psychotic belief or an erroneous belief, or a mistaken perception, either way it's

wrong. We need to listen to these scientists and say, "Okay, if it's wrong, and we've been living a collective human life here on Earth with wrong beliefs and perceptions, why not take a deep breath during the pandemic and take this opportunity to realize the true nature of the Self, which is not just in the body. It's actually an inner Self."

But you also have a relational self that is connected to others, even people who don't look like you, and other species. We're a part of all of nature. So, as terrible as the pandemic is, it's a moment of pause in which we can say, "We cannot go on with business as usual." We have to chart a new path forward, leaning on indigenous teachings and spiritual teachings, so that when we weave them together with science they teach us to be of service.

We have spirituality, science, and service. And we can each contribute to that in many different ways. I think there needs to be a turning, which the great Joanna Macey (a beautiful teacher who is now 92) talks about as the Great Turning. What she means by that is a turning of the way we see how we're conducting our lives so that it becomes regenerative of the world, and compassionate instead of just competitive. If you want to compete with something, let's compete with the world's challenges, so that when we beat the challenges everybody benefits.

Q: My teacher, Daaji, says that while survival of the fittest may apply in the overall scheme of survival, human beings evolve only through cooperation.

Totally. We've forgotten that.

To be continued.

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL

STORIES OF LOSS AND RESILIENCE

The last year has seen many of us grieving the loss of loved ones and looking for strength amidst tragedy. Here are a few stories from readers of Heartfulness Magazine about their experiences.

Resilience in the Time of Covid

FIONA NEARY

This past year has been riddled with new and difficult experiences for everyone on the planet. Some days have seemed very dark, and it can be hard to find the strength to push through. I have been fortunate to live with my parents while safely continuing my education online. I believe resilience lies in hope for the brighter days ahead. I have found a few things that have helped me to feel grounded and sanguine amidst this global pandemic.

My mom and I often walk our dog together and we love to talk about possibilities for the future, no matter how unlikely they may seem. I think dreaming and imagining the best-case-scenario for our lives is very important, because it is easy to get caught up in current circumstances or relive past failures. These conversations helped me to stay in a growth mindset, along with my meditation practice. During these walks, we notice the mosses,



the strange mushrooms on logs, trillium flowers in the spring ... all these reminders that life has a way of moving forward despite a long winter. Last month, the new growth in our flowerbeds froze completely, and I worried that the bleeding hearts would not blossom. But the next day, they thawed! Now we have beautiful pink heart-shaped flowers.

By observing nature, whether hiking or painting a landscape, I have always felt more at ease and resilient, with infinite wonders to contemplate.



What Is in the Air?

KASHISH KALWANI

I keep hearing it everywhere. The virus is in the air now. The sickness is in the air.

It's a risky affair. The air is limitless. It cannot be contained. What do I do then?

I lost a friend, then my grandmother, and then a teacher. How do you speak to someone who has lost a loved one? How do I allow myself to feel grief? How do I feel comfortable with the idea that my biggest contribution is to get vaccinated and stay at home?

What is my intention of being resilient and staying grateful in a time like this? Does intention precede action? Should I plunge into the action of being resilient and practice gratitude, and let the intention speak for itself?

I acted.

1. I picked up paintbrushes again. They had gathered a fine layer of dust by years of lying around packed in a cupboard. I am no artist, but I painted 25 postcards. I rearranged

sensational words of newspaper articles to form meaningful phrases.

2. My family and I have an unspoken agreement to watch a movie together. It's quality time where we're all in it together.
3. I'm capturing everything in short videos. Life has slowed down, yet the days seem to blur into the same routine and uncertainty. I capture the mother bird feeding her chicks, the drops of rain falling from the roof, my father brewing masala chai for my mother – the casual magic of the day. Suddenly, every moment seems magical and filled with stories, if you allow your imagination to go wild.
4. Meditation has become an anchor, which seems the only non-negotiable thing from my earlier routine. It existed before, exists now, and will exist in the future. I am grateful for this anchor in a rough ocean filled with waves of emotions.
5. Finally, I write love letters to myself. I wish to give myself the same empathy, time, space, and love as I give to others.

From sickness in the air, I wish to anchor the idea of "love is in the air." Resilience and gratitude follow.





People You Take for Granted

SHANTHI VENKAT

Like many South Asian immigrants living in the United States, my parents lived in India with my brother. I visited them in January 2020, right before the pandemic hit. In January 2021, both my parents got Covid. My mom passed away within a couple of days. My dad suffered with Covid complications and passed away in April.

Parents are the reason for our existence in this world. Almost all of us feel that our parents will live forever until the day comes when they are no longer with us. I don't think I will ever have closure, as I did not see them physically when they passed on.

There will always be a void when I think of my parents' home, which is now empty.

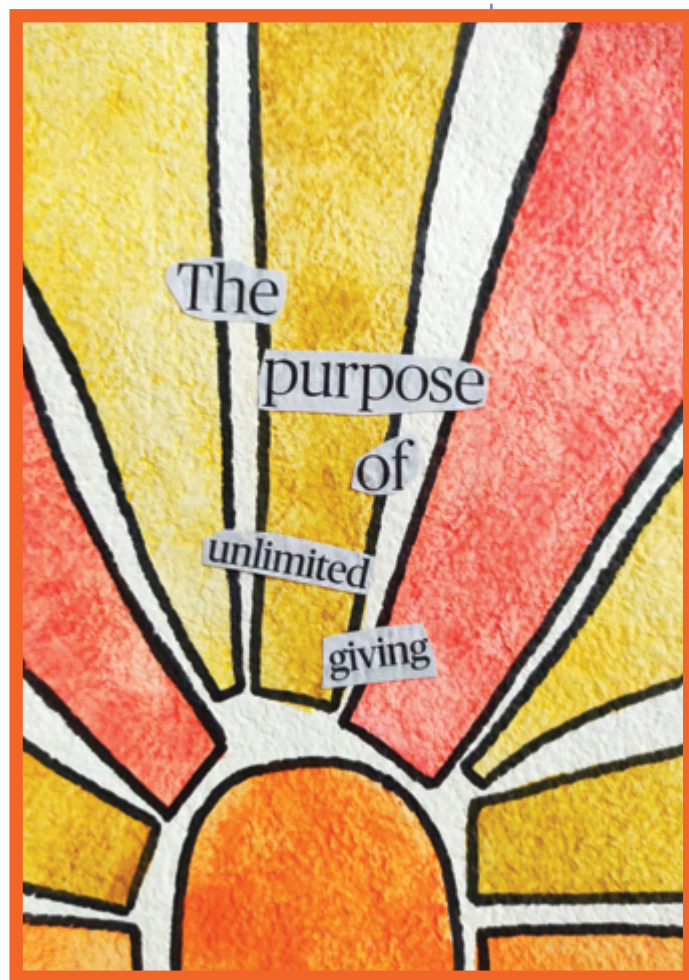
The Pure Joy of Existence

SIMMI VALECHA

Life is beautiful. Its beauty is coded in the ancient wisdom of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. The shift from misery to happiness is not about achieving or gaining something. It's simply about being awakened to our own truth. All our lives we identify with our titles and our bodies – big and small, beautiful and ugly, old and young – and we feel a distinction in ourselves from others. We feel either superior or inferior to others, we categorize ourselves into different classes, colors, nations, belief systems, ideologies ... the list is endless. It's only when the ego dissolves that we experience unity with our higher Self and bliss prevails. Once we're awakened to our own light the shift happens. We realize that we are pure consciousness experiencing only a part of our eternal existence in this physical dimension.

Today's pandemic has delivered this message to us too profoundly. The need of the hour is to rebuild the connection with our own Self and our environment, too. Do you remember the last time the full moon in the sky amazed you, or a beautiful wildflower caught your attention? It's not only an invisible virus that is powerful; the tiny joys of our lives conceal within them an unfathomable potential to awaken our healing.

We receive what we seek authentically and radiate vibrantly. Let's seek and receive blessings today. And that will happen once we cherish what we already have. Our surroundings, the house we live in, the work we do, our own healthy physical bodies, and our relationships. Let's appreciate these and count our blessings today. When we listen to our inner whispers we discover that so much within is healed.





The Beauty of Impermanence

See how the last yellow leaf fell and was swirled away?
And the tiny root that peeped out of the hard nut!

See the white expanse of freshly fallen snow?
And the hope of spring just a little below the slush!

See that tiny little movement even in a mountain?
And a tiny little stillness in the flowing river!

That is the real beauty.
That is the beauty of Nature.

SARALA UPADHYA

Illustrations by KASHISH KALWANI



A smile makes you a master of yourself.

THICH NHAT HANH



HOW TO MANAGE FEELINGS:

Form-Function Interdependence

DR. ICHAK ADIZES explores the relationship between feelings and breath, and feelings and posture. He looks at their interdependence, and how to use this awareness to improve our state of being and our level of happiness, as well as the analogous functionality of organizations.

You can detect how a person is feeling by their breathing. Please try the following exercises so you can experience what I am trying to communicate:

First, take a deep breath, inhaling slowly. Now exhale quickly. Repeat several times. How do you feel? You are probably feeling angry. The faster you breathe like this, the angrier you get.

Next, try the opposite breathing technique: inhale quickly, exhale slowly. Repeat several times. How do you feel? You're relaxing, right?

Next, try breathing with a fast inhalation and fast exhalation. Do you feel panic?

Finally, inhale slowly and exhale slowly. You are sleepy or very relaxed.

If you want to control your emotions, first be aware of your breath. If you feel angry, change how you are breathing. Change from a slow inhalation and fast exhalation to fast inhalation and slow exhalation. Notice that your anger is subsiding.

If you are anxious, change your breathing to a slow inhale and exhale. Your panic will slowly diminish.

If our feelings impact how we breathe, manipulating our breath should change how we feel. Breathing and feeling are interdependent.

Dr. Ida Rolf, the founder of Rolfing massage, discovered a similar relationship between posture and feelings. When we are worried, depressed, or insecure, our shoulders slouch. In talk therapy, as the therapist tries to improve how we feel, we eventually straighten our shoulders. It takes time to see improvement. Rolf took the opposite approach. She straightened the posture by massaging the fascia that developed between the muscles and bones in the shoulders by slouching. Stand up

straight and, voilà, something interesting happens. You feel better about yourself. You are not as depressed.

Process impacts structure, but structure impacts process, too. Or in other words, function impacts form in the long run, and form impacts function in the short run.

I understand it through an analogy: a riverbank controls how a river flows, but, over time, the flow of the river also affects the structure of the riverbank.

Riverbanks are formed over a long period of time, whereas the structure of the riverbanks immediately impacts the flow of the river. The short run impacts the long run, in the long run.





If you are going to balance your life, you need to change and address what is really of value to you. Since success is from the inside out and not from the outside in.

Likewise, the long-run impacts the short-run, in the short run.

By changing the riverbank, we can change how the river flows. By changing the structure, we can change how the water flows.

By strengthening the shoulders of a person so that they stand up straight, we change how the person feels. How we breathe changes how we feel, too.

In the Adizes theory and practice of managing change, we can change strategy by changing organizational structure. Trying to implement a new strategy with an old organizational structure is like trying to redirect the flow of the river within the old riverbank.

You need to change the riverbanks first. By changing the riverbank first, you redirect the flow of the river, which, in the long-run, will reinforce and possibly adjust the initial riverbanks you developed.

If you want to know how a person feels right now, watch them breathe. If you want to know how they have been feeling for some time, watch their posture or walk.

If you want to know which strategy a company is really following, analyze its organizational structure.

If you want to disrupt the strategy in your company, you first need to disrupt its structure.

Just thinking and feeling,
Ichak Kalderon Adizes

<https://www.ichakadizes.com/post/how-to-control-feelings-form-function-interdependence>

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL

THE HEARTFUL INNOVATOR

– PART 7

Disruptive Innovation through Inner Transformation

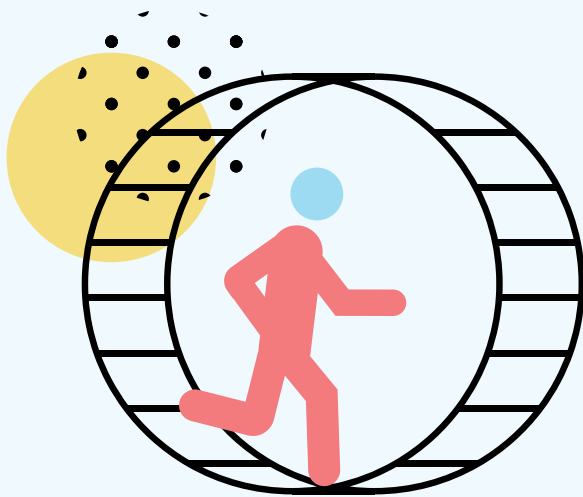
In the previous articles, [RAVI VENKATESAN](#) outlined 4 key aspects of the "inner state" that we want to fine tune to become Heartful Innovators. He explored the roles of the Intellect, Ego, Mind, and Awareness, and their transformation in enabling innovation. He also explored ways to overcome fear, uncertainty, and doubt, collectively known as FUD, which form the main barriers to innovation. In this article we'll explore stress, another major barrier to innovation, and methods to counter it.



Two key autonomic nervous systems in humans are important to understand:

1. The Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) – This prepares the body for potential danger. It leads to a fight-or-flight response, and
2. The Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS) – This brings the body back to a relaxed state and calms down the mind. It leads to a rest-and-digest response.

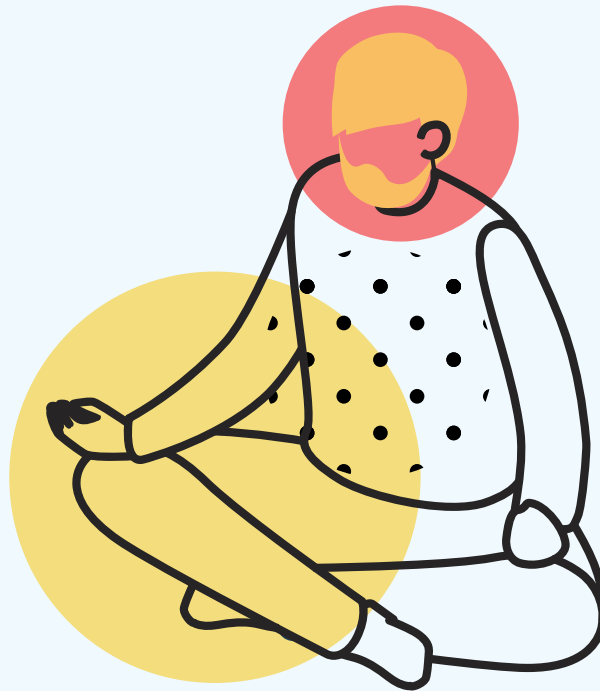
The process of innovation cannot even begin, let alone reach the peak of its potential, in an individual who is stressed out, with their SNS active.



To understand why, let's trace the stress response. Consider the example of Jake, a business executive. He was copied on a nasty complaint that went to his boss, right before he was about to have a 1x1 meeting with her to go over his strategy to enter a new market. Jake's amygdala, the part of his brain that handles emotions, sends a signal to his hypothalamus (the command center of the brain), which results in his entire system being put on alert. In other words, fight-or-flight mode. As this happens there are several consequences. The hormone epinephrine (adrenalin) is pumped into his bloodstream. Pulse rate and blood pressure go up. Breathing becomes more rapid. Adrenal glands release cortisol. Tunnel vision and impairment of cognitive processes occurs. In this state, Jake cannot even "think straight," let alone think innovatively. Jake goes into the meeting in a disoriented state of mind. He sounds incoherent and unclear and frustrates his boss even further. She asks him to calm himself down and come back with a clearer articulation of his strategy.

The average adult goes through several such incidents a day, and over time they find themselves under chronic stress. They feel like they are running hard to stay in the same place, almost like a mouse on a flywheel.

How to break out of this trap? For anyone aspiring to be an innovator, it is essential to find ways to activate the PNS, which puts the body in rest-and-digest mode instead of fight-or-flight mode, and reverses the effects of activating the SNS. Here are three great methods to do this:



1. Left nostril breathing.

Pause and take 8 to 10 deep and long breaths with your left nostril by closing your right nostril using your thumb. Repeat this a couple of times if needed. You will find that it has an instant calming effect. It is a very simple tool; however, it is very powerful in activating the PNS. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ol8RPO27FkI>

Try these practices during the next week. You can use the left nostril breathing in any situation, at home or at work. It is essential to develop the ability to recognize when your SNS has been activated and to counter it by activating the PNS. This will not only help you become a Heartful Innovator, but also help with your mental and physical health by combating chronic stress.

2. Heartfulness Relaxation.

This technique systematically lets you calm yourself down and unwind any stress that is present in your body and mind. You can access this practice here: <https://youtu.be/rmwqL34FCjA>.

The process of innovation cannot even begin, let alone reach the peak of its potential, in an individual who is stressed out, with their SNS active.

3. Heartfulness Meditation.

This technique will put you in a much deeper state of calm and allow for insights and innovations to emerge naturally from within. You can access this practice here: <https://youtu.be/gDCIb-yjNdQ>.

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innerview

How might it feel to be
fully present in every
moment all of the time?

JOYCE RACHELLE

How we know

PART 2



TOBIN HART is a humanistic transpersonal psychologist, professor in the University of West Georgia's Humanistic, Transpersonal and Critical Psychology program, and co-founder of the ChildSpirit Institute. In this three-part series, he is interviewed by **VICTOR KANNAN**, Director of the Heartfulness Institute USA, and in part 2 they focus on Tobin's book, as well as presence, wisdom and the heart.

Q: So, Tobin, in your book you basically talk about presence, heart, wisdom and creation as four virtues. In each of these, you also add and talk about other things. For example, in presence, you talk about the beautiful, the sensing, the focusing, the witnessing, and the opening.

Can we dig a little bit deeper into this one particular virtue of presence? And then see how that is perhaps the most important starting point in one's life?

Sure. In the West, the most enduring depiction of the good life is captured with the words “the good, the true and the beautiful.” So, for me, I was surprised to see those tracked with each of these things that you mentioned, and we’ll add another one, too.

Presence, for example, really tracks with beauty. So the extent to which we’re present to another or present to the world, is the extent to which the world opens to us. And in that opening, we find and hear things (and people) as beautiful. To really sit with and see somebody beyond their persona and beyond their actions, we find that they have this incredible quality of luminosity. We get the

sense of feeling a soul. What comes out of that is often a sense of love and a sense of beauty.

I have a friend who was on a mission to be with people on death row, years ago. Those people had committed horrific crimes, there was really little doubt of that. At some point my friend stopped trying to preach anything, convert anyone, or change anything. Instead, he simply was present to these inmates, listening to them to see who they were. What really surprised him was that when he really allowed himself to lose his own agenda and just be with each person, their soul poured out and their beauty was revealed. It shocked him how much he felt love for them, despite what they had done. In his being present for them, they were able to be present for themselves and begin to feel a glimpse of their own divinity. This is how he described it. It’s magic in some way.

It’s so simple, yet we come in with an agenda that we’re trying to get something from this encounter rather than being there, and we lose something. While an agenda can be a good motivator, a good starting point, it can also cover deeper experience – whether that is to get my walk in today, my 10,000 steps, or whatever else it is. It’s a good motivator but we can lose the opportunity of presence if we



don't leave the goal behind and be present in what we're doing. If we can't suspend the surface goal or agenda, whether it's meeting a death row inmate or going for a walk, beauty stays in the background. It's not there in the same way.

Q: So presence is to be present to the extent that we can appreciate the other.

I think that appreciation is both an outcome and also a portal – to lead with curiosity and to move into contact with the other to see who they are. It's what Martin Buber would call an "I–thou" relationship, and through it appreciation emerges organically.

Q: So the quality of time spent in the encounter is one way to look at presence, right?

Yes, I think quality is the right word for this. I remember one time when my wife had to go out of the country. I had our two little kids and my work, and I was also filling in for some of her work. I was overwhelmed. I remember the first night putting the kids to bed and sort of shouting with frustration, "Okay, just go to sleep now!"

I was overwhelmed, and after realizing the energy I was giving out, I basically said to myself, "Oh, this is awful. I love my kids. I love chance, but

I'm hating this. So what can I drop away? What's really the priority here?" I hadn't let go of my self-imposed agenda of "I want to get this done this week. I want to finish that." I finally calculated what I absolutely had to take care of during that week, and just let everything else go. I ended up having the most glorious week with my kids. I fell more deeply in love with them than ever before. As you said, it was the quality of time spent and a change in commitment and priority.

Q: So how do you recognize that you are not present, even though you're physically there? What are the tools and techniques that we can use to recognize and remedy the patterns of non-engaging presence?

I think one of the most powerful ways is through the body. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, for example, says that if you change how you think about something, it will change how you feel. Other folks have gone a different way, for example, Eugene Gendlin created something called Focusing. He discovered that in psychotherapy it wasn't simply insight, but also a felt sense that helps make change and growth happen. We know

insight is helpful, but it's not the same thing as when you have a felt sense, that is, a bodily sense of meaning. That's when change actually happens in therapy, for example. It becomes embodied.

One of the trailheads toward presence is to increase embodiment; increase awareness of subtle cues in our heart, in our mouth, and in our gut. For example, we know that the enteric nervous system (the gut brain) is full of neuropeptides and their receptor sites. We used to think they were only in the brain. We understand that they're involved with thinking. We discovered in the '80s that they're also in the gut and throughout the body. So the whole body is this thinking, feeling being. Even to make a distinction between thought and feeling is very difficult. This felt sense is our constant available touchstone to check in to see how present we are, and what we're present to.

For example, if I say, "Wow, something isn't right," and "I feel a little tension in my abdomen. What's that about?", that's the trailhead to follow so that I can be present to myself in order to be present to something else.

The extent to which we're present to another or present to the world, is the extent to which the world opens to us. And in that opening, we find and hear things (and people) as beautiful.



Other times, things come from the outside; we're grabbed by beauty, or by something unexpected. Toward the end of his life, after he had had a couple of heart attacks, Maslow had what he called plateau experiences, instead of peak experience. He began to talk about presence. He said that in that state you get stabbed by things, by babies, by flowers, by beautiful things, and just the very act of living. It's this idea that the outside creates this real resonance if we're open to it in some way.

Q: So, that's where he probably says that beauty kills, right?

Kills the separate Self. Yes.

Q: You also talk about the heart. You assigned the beautiful to presence, the good to the heart, and the true to wisdom. The heart is also a place of enormous duality and emotion, right?

Yes.


Q: So both pain and suffering as well as good and kindness are all in the heart. How do you feel the heart through the duality of emotion? I ask this because most of us are trying to avoid pain and seek pleasure. How do we make sure that the heart – either as an instrument or as an organ of feeling – can navigate through these dualities and also become either a tool or an indicator for how we are leading our lives?

When you mentioned connecting as part of the heart, if I take "the good" with the connection, how do we connect to the good, while also recognizing the connection to the bad and the impact of that?

That's a big question, isn't it?

What I see is that the heart is not discriminant. It's here just to feel and to love. It's about compassion, it's about empathy. It's about connecting. This may be a more limited notion than your use of the word "heart" or "heartfulness." But for me, to be in the world, and to feel it in some way, are essential to bringing wisdom into this life. We can only do that by first really encountering the heart as fully as we can. Then we have a chance not to be consumed by feelings, but to be able to be with them in a way that is transformative.

In the United States, we have this thing called "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." It's a mixed bag, right? These days we have an expectation that if we're not happy, if we're not doing something that we're happy about, something's wrong with us. So it becomes a value. That's an imposition. It can really throw us off course. People indulge in moments of pleasure, for example, to find happiness, or they try to make a lot of money to find happiness. I would say that, instead of that pursuit of happiness, the goal is the pursuit of fullness in some way. We all want to feel good rather than jealous; we want to feel playful rather than overly serious. But putting feelings into



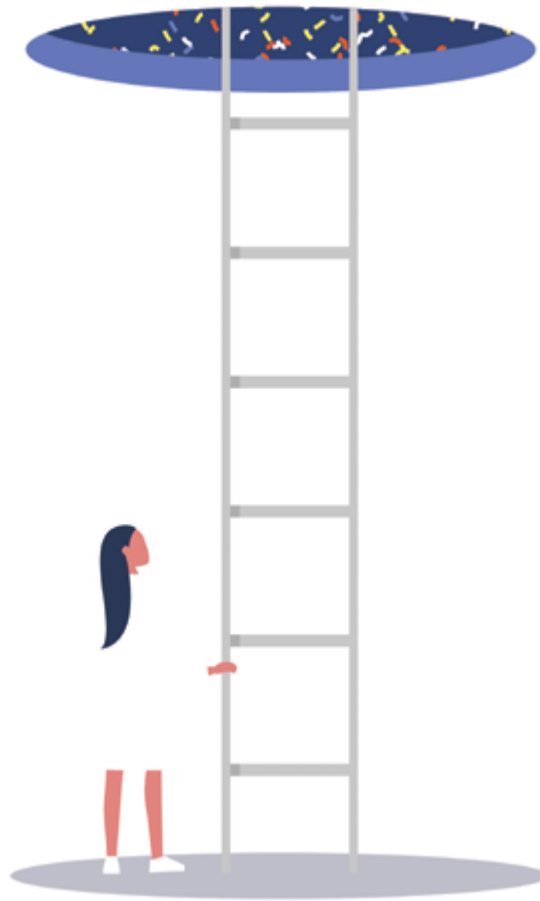
categories of good versus bad, which is a fashion these days in psychology, really sets us up for an oppositional adversarial relationship to ourselves. I would argue that we've created an opponent, and the opponent is us. So, instead, the question might be, "How can I have a sense of welcoming them all?"

Rumi has a wonderful poem that many people know as "The Guest House." Essentially he says to welcome all feelings, "a joy, a depression, a meanness," and then, "The dark thought, the shame, the malice"... invite them in. Be grateful for whoever comes, for each has been sent as a guide from beyond." They're just feelings. They're just here, leading us somewhere, to pay attention, inviting us to be present with them, welcoming them all, rather than having prejudice for one or another. There's a sense of, "Ah, okay, what do you have to show me? Can I be with that?"

What this implies is that there's another order of awareness and capacity to be with this and have equanimity, balance and even joy in this. Usually the way we define happiness is that we feel happy when something good happens, whereas the etymological meaning of the word "joy" is an exaltation of spirit. Joy means an exaltation of spirit.

So remarkable people have an undercurrent of joy, even an undercurrent of equanimity, even when they're in the midst of darkness and despair. They may be desperately sad, but still there's

Remarkable people have an undercurrent of joy, even an undercurrent of equanimity, even when they're in the midst of darkness and despair. They may be desperately sad, but still there's something else that they tap into or stand in. It's a place of rest. It's a place of steadiness.



Often, our minds construct things in a certain way, because our family and our culture construct things in a certain way. We believe that this is the way it is. But wisdom really believes in the possibility of all things. It's this radical ability to step beyond the frame we're in to see it from a greater height from within the heart.

something else that they tap into or stand in. It's a place of rest. It's a place of steadiness. It's a place of clarity that says, "Yes, yes, this human world is indeed about all these ups and downs, this roller coaster ride, and it's so easy to fall down any one of these holes, pleasure or pain. But from this other position, we can see that it's bigger than that." We see that fundamentally there's the possibility of equanimity and joy.

Q: Nice. So, this is wisdom, right? Is it something we can cultivate or are we born with it?

Well in Zen, they tell us to have a beginner's mind. In the Book of Matthew in the Bible, the instructions are to turn and become like a little child; only then shall you enter the Kingdom of Heaven. So there's something about this presence of being that seems to be tied to wisdom.

Wisdom doesn't come through calculation. It doesn't come through shrewdness. Those things may be intelligence and they may be really useful for life, but I would argue that wisdom comes from something else. It comes from being in rapport with the mystery of reality.

We can recognize that it involves a couple of different things. For example, Aquinas, who's influential in Western spiritual thought, said that wisdom involves what he called "the virtue of

gnome," which means higher discernment or seeing into the heart of something. There is some way that the mind of a child sometimes sees into the heart of something, or can instantly grasp the emotional reality. If somebody is in pain, even though they are denying it, the child gets it; they see something present. Rather than shrewdness or calculation, it involves a capacity, a willingness and an ability to enter in with wonder, with radical openness, seeing from a greater height, seeing into the heart of something.

Can we cultivate it? Well, cultivating heart and cultivating presence lead to this. One of my favorite things about wisdom is the capacity for possibility. Often, our minds construct things in a certain way, because our family and our culture construct things in a certain way. We believe that this is the way it is. But wisdom really believes in the possibility of all things. It's this radical ability to step beyond the frame we're in to see it from a greater height from within the heart.

Sometimes great spiritual guides, great discoverers, inventors, and others have these moments. We're so conditioned by our surroundings, by our worldview, by our family, and by our experience, that it's hard to leave the gravitational pull of that conditioning in order to get another point of view. And yet wisdom engenders and enables another possibility; always another possibility.

it changes
everything

The final stage of
wisdom is becoming a
kid again.

MAXIME LAGACÉ



Neuro-development in Children

- Part 2

DR. ELISABETH BOUDERLIQUE and DR. BIRGIT DÜRR have specialized in behavioral disorders in children from a neurodevelopmental perspective. They were interviewed by PURNIMA RAMAKRISHNA for World Mental Health Day, October 2020, and in part 2 they explore reflexes, the brain hemispheres, and creating rhythm in the brain.



BD: The two most important aspects of supporting the development of the brain are integrating primitive reflexes through motor exercises and stimulating the underdeveloped hemisphere, mainly with sensory stimulation.

If there is no damage or pathology in the brain, if it is an electrical imbalance, it can be corrected. And when the imbalance in the brain is corrected, all of the other imbalances are most often corrected as well.

Q: Primitive reflexes. Can you tell us more about their role in brain development?

EB: Primitive reflexes are automatic, stereotypical

movements essential for the development in the womb and during the baby's first months. They are part of a normal pediatrician's examination. These primitive reflexes develop in the brainstem before birth and contribute to the development of the nervous system. They help the baby to come out of the birth canal and are the foundation necessary for the baby's development. They are essential for survival during the first weeks of life. These reflexes allow the baby to interact with the world and thus contribute to the development of their brain. Most of these primitive reflexes are integrated (meaning we don't see them anymore) during the first year of life, as a more complex part of the brain takes control.

The most common primitive reflexes are:

- Fear Paralysis Reflex
- Tonic Labyrinthine Reflex
- Asymmetric Tonic Neck Reflex
- Moro Reflex
- Spinal Galant
- Symmetric Tonic Neck Reflex
- Babinski Reflex
- Palmar Grasp
- Rooting /Sucking
- Snout Reflex

These reflexes, which persist beyond the first year of life, are called "persistent primitive reflexes." They can affect normal neurological development, and therefore be the cause of a multitude of symptoms, including learning difficulties and behavioral issues. There are simple exercises that can help to integrate them.

IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

I will give you one example, because most people know the Moro Reflex. If you make a loud noise, the baby will suddenly open their arms and close them again. If this reflex persists for too long, it becomes the root of many symptoms, such as impulsive behavior, hypersensitivity to light, sound or sudden movement, dislike of change, difficulty with new or stimulating experiences, chronic anxiety, uncontrollable flushing when embarrassed or nervous, mood swings, and aggressive outbursts. This reflex can persist even in an adult, so it is important to look for these primitive reflexes.

I won't go into too much detail about brain development, but it's important to remember that the brain develops from the bottom up, meaning from the brainstem to the cortex, and then the cortex regulates everything from top to bottom. So, it's important to help the brain develop from the bottom up, by integrating the primitive reflexes which are located in the brainstem.

Q: Can you tell us more about the hemispheres?

BD: That's a good question, because

to understand what is happening in the brain of a child with neurodevelopmental issues, we have to understand the different functions or tasks of the two hemispheres.

The right hemisphere is online first. It sees the big picture. It is there to protect us. It is cautious. The right brain is responsible for non-verbal communication, which is at the core of socialization. It forms relationships. It is able to read between the lines. The right hemisphere learns subconsciously, implicitly. We don't form conscious memories in the first three years of life. That's what we call "childhood amnesia." It is responsible for reading comprehension and mathematical reasoning. It deals also with gross motor skills. It is responsible for long-term, non-rewarded, sustained attention, like a hunter waiting for hours for his

prey. It also deals with withdrawal behavior and negative emotions, such as fear, guilt, and shame. The right hemisphere will down-regulate our immune system.

The left hemisphere sees details, like the individual trees in a forest. It is all about "why." For example, if you think of a child that is 2 or 3 years old, looking at small animals on the ground and asking, "Why this?" It deals with fine motor skills. It is the logical, sequential brain, looking for patterns. It is responsible for reading words, spelling, and basic arithmetic. The left hemisphere forms conscious memories. It deals with approach behavior and emotions, such as anger, surprise, and happiness. It is the hemisphere that is naturally impulsive, or even compulsive or obsessive. It is responsible for short-term, goal-directed, reward-reinforced attention. Video



games will stimulate or even overstimulate the left side of the brain.

As an analogy, imagine a car going downhill. When you remove your foot from the brake, the car goes forward by itself. Think of the right hemisphere as the brake. If there is not enough “brake,” the left hemisphere will start automatically.

Q: Can you give us a concrete example, so that we can understand what happens with a child who has ADHD?

EB: A child diagnosed with ADHD usually has underdeveloped, under-integrated networks in the right hemisphere. The child will present symptoms related to right-hemisphere delay and a left hemisphere that is too strong. The child can be hyperactive, obsessive, compulsive, and overly focused on details, not paying attention to the big picture. They like to do things over and over again. They can have tics – motor tics and vocal tics. A strong left brain will be responsible for anger outbursts and hypersensitivity to sound, especially high frequency sounds, so you can see the child covering their ears when there is too much noise. The symptoms related to a low activity on the right hemisphere will be poor, long-term sustained attention, and poor non-verbal communication, so



they will have difficulty picking up on facial emotions and social cues. The child can also have poor mathematical reasoning skills, and difficulty comprehending what they are reading. The right brain will not play its role of inhibition, so the heart rate can be high, and the immune response will be too strong with food sensitivities and environmental allergies, for example.

This imbalance will persist throughout the person’s whole life and this is why there are epidemics in these issues in the adult population. A child will not grow out of these issues, but may just express them in a different way as an adult. The imbalance will still

be there. It is not a coincidence that 1 out of 5 children have some kind of learning or behavioral issue, and 1 out of 5 adults have some kind of mental issue.

Q: My next question follows on from this. Could you expand on the connection between a brain imbalance and the effect it has on the overall health of a person?

BD: Almost all kids with developmental imbalances not only struggle in school with learning and behavior, but suffer from other health issues as well. In this context, it is interesting to look at the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE Study),

IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

which is one of the largest investigations ever conducted to assess the association between childhood exposure to traumatic stressors and health and well-being later on in life.

The story started with a study at an obesity clinic in California in the early '90s. People were there to lose weight and after some time 50% of people dropped out. The interesting thing was that the people who dropped out were the people who had the best results, meaning they were losing weight. So the researchers asked why. What they found when they interviewed these people was that the majority had experienced abuse in childhood. After that, they investigated more than 17,000 patients about their experience of childhood trauma. There were about ten adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that played a major role in health later on in life – emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, emotional neglect, exposure to domestic violence, and household mental illness, to mention a few.

They also found that there was a correlation between the number of ACEs a person had experienced and the chance of poor outcomes later in life. When they followed people during later life, they saw that they were 400 to 1200% more likely to struggle with health-related issues like diabetes,



cancer, depression, heart disease, autoimmune issues and earlier death.

So what is the relationship between a child having an ACE and a child with a neurological developmental delay? They both have disrupted neurodevelopment. When a child is neglected or abused, neurological development is disrupted. Whether a child has a delay in neurodevelopment due to an ACE or for the other reasons we mentioned before, it always has an impact on social, emotional, and cognitive development, and a severe impact on the whole body

and overall health. This leads to an increased risk of developing chronic diseases.

To round off the picture of this topic, we would like to read to you from Dr. Melillo's book, *Reconnected Kids: The Symphony of the Brain*.

EB: Dr. Melillo wrote: "Think of the brain as if it was an orchestra, with thoughts and actions as the notes that change moment to moment to create a musical

composition. When the conductor, which is the brain, directs the musicians, which are the neurons, to use their instruments, which are the synapses, to create music, which are thoughts and actions, the music begins to play.

“Sometimes the conductor signals the right side to play louder while he tones down the left side. The key to both sides playing beautiful music together is that each musician must not only play the right notes but must play them at precisely the right time. This ebb and flow must be perfectly timed. A musician might miss a beat and

subsequently, the two sides will get out of harmony.

“We know it is not the instrument which is broken. The musicians just need more practice and encouragement. We are trying to find the networks in the brain which are malfunctioning and we are stimulating them so they get back in rhythm with the rest of the brain.”

Q: Thank you Elisabeth and Birgit.

Watch the full webinar here:
<https://youtu.be/AvEB65sAHiU>

"We know it is not the instrument which is broken. The musicians just need more practice and encouragement. We are trying to find the networks in the brain which are malfunctioning and we are stimulating them so they get back in rhythm with the rest of the brain."



July 2021



The Magic of PAUSING

SARAH NAYLOR shares her personal emotional journey from poor self-esteem and negativity to love, confidence, clarity and purpose in life. The wonderful thing is the ease with which it has happened.





Over the years I've been practicing Heartfulness, I've experienced countless positive changes in myself, which others have noticed and commented upon. I've gone from being fearful and depressed to generally happy and relaxed. From feeling lost and muddled, with poor self-esteem, I've developed confidence and clarity. A life which felt rather lonely and pointless now feels filled with love and purpose. The amazing thing is

that I don't seem to have done very much to enjoy these benefits.

There is a popular belief that in order to change yourself and clear negative traits and behavioral patterns, you need to roll up your sleeves and work hard, devoting time, analysis and willpower. It's almost as though you are a sculptor dissatisfied with your work, and you have to chip and carve away at yourself to smooth off rough corners and reshape

certain unattractive parts of yourself. It takes effort, sweat and tears.

With Heartfulness it is different. As we practice the simple components of Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer, old patterns and unhelpful behaviors simply dissolve and fall away – at times without us even noticing. Aside from these practices, all that is really required is our attention and

IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

willingness to look at ourselves honestly.

Taking a few moments each night to review my day from a calm and heart-centered place, I see that moments of discomfort and failure generally spring from one simple cause: reacting with the ego, rather than responding from my heart. Something happens. I react with like, dislike or fear, which often prompts me to take misguided action. Sometimes my ego feels threatened by criticism

Either way, the cure is simple. Pause. Connect with my heart. Allow whatever is happening just to be – including any discomfort I may feel about it. Instead of action, do nothing, and notice what is unfolding inside me.

or a comment, and I try to resist the truth by arguing and making a case to show myself in a better light.

Either way, the cure is simple. Pause. Connect with my heart. Allow whatever is happening just to be – including any discomfort I

may feel about it. Instead of action, do nothing, and notice what is unfolding inside me.

The magic of pausing and accepting instead of reacting has made the most dramatic and profound change to my personal relationships and family life.



Others relax and become more receptive. There is more connection and more love. Arguments are avoided. My teenage daughter tells me something. I feel like reacting with a lecture, with fear, with defensiveness. I pause. Love flows into the space I've allowed. She feels it. She listens to what comes from that place of acceptance and love in a way she never listened to "Mum nagging."

I find doing this both harder than I expected and incredibly liberating. When we receive criticism instead of going on the defensive, or when we allow something to be without demanding it be different, it can be surprisingly painful. We confront the gap between what we wish for and what actually is. We are trying to avoid feeling this pain when we attempt to change others and hide aspects of ourselves, whereas allowing ourselves to experience reality opens up a walled off, "stuck" old part of ourselves. Another layer of "baggage" comes up to be cleaned away, and there is inner progress. Instead of having to work at changing myself, it is as though I am in the hands of a master sculptor. The more I stop resisting and trying to change things myself, the more effortlessly I am remolded into something more beautiful and useful.

Our desire to be comfortable and have things a certain way denies

reality and takes an investment of energy and action. It's a relief to stop this futile effort. To replace the fruitless "doing" with the restful "nothing," and to get such rich results from it seems nothing short of amazing.

I believe that therapeutic intervention can be wonderfully

helpful at times to unravel and clear specific emotional issues, in the same way that using particular herbs or foods can support good health. However, the simple Heartfulness practices hold a secret key to extraordinary personal transformation, no matter how ordinary, flawed, or lacking in willpower we think we are.







be inspired

Habits change into
character.

OVID



Purity

THE ART OF REMOVING AND CREATING HABITS

PART 7

DAAJI continues his series on refining habits, in the light of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga and current scientific and yogic principles and practices. Last month, he explored the final *Yama*, the virtue of *aparigraha*, which means the removal of possessiveness, greed, and focus on material gain. This month he moves to the *Niyamas* – those positive habits that are worth cultivating in order to live a contented life, starting with the first *Niyama* of purity or *shaucha*.

Good and bad habits

By now, if you have been following this series and the practices that promote *Yama*, you may have already let go of many negative habits and tendencies, and cleared complexities from your system. *Yama* is the removal of all the “don’ts,” such as violence and dishonesty, and that is one aspect of working with habits. The other aspect is to cultivate the “dos,” the *Niyamas*, those positive habits that will take our lifestyle to another level.

The *Niyamas* help us to intensify life itself and radiate goodness and beauty into the world around us – the fragrance of purity, simplicity, compassion and universal love. The *Niyamas* fill our hearts with noble qualities. They help us to refine ourselves toward subtler and subtler states, both inner and

outer. They lead to a lifestyle that is in tune with Nature, and thus they are regenerative. And that is exactly what humanity and our planet need right now.

In essence, *Niyama* is about cultivating positive habits so that both our minds and bodies are in sync with the highest universal principles. In Nature we see tremendous order, and the higher the goal the greater the order required.

What are those five positive habits that propel us forward?

Shaucha – purity of body and mind
Santosh – contentment and inner happiness
Tapas – penance or removal of impurities
Swadhyaya – study of the self
Ishwar pranidhan – surrender to God

The *Niyamas* fill our hearts with noble qualities. They help us to refine ourselves toward subtler and subtler states, both inner and outer. They lead to a lifestyle that is in tune with Nature, and thus they are regenerative. And that is exactly what humanity and our planet need right now.

Niyamas



Purity of body and mind

The first *Niyama* is *shaucha*, purity of body and mind, and it is a natural outcome of perfecting the *Yamas*. In fact, the *Niyamas* follow on naturally from the *Yamas*, as the removal of unwanted complexities and impurities leads to simplicity and purity. The instant you start thinking of any negative habit, like an angry reaction or hurting another person, you move to impurity; the instant you start thinking of coveting someone or something, you move to impurity.

Many people today have a negative reaction to the idea of purity, probably due to its association with puritanism linked with rigidity, or perhaps because of other religious overtones, but in Yoga purity is not a moral concept, it is a science. It is the science of maintaining both the body and the mind in pristine condition, as you would do with your clothes, your car, and your home. We like our homes to be clean, just as we like to drink clean

water and breathe clean air. We want purity in the outer environment, and yet we often allow garbage to accumulate in our inner environment. We happily accept the need to wash our hands or take a shower after returning home under the current Covid-19 pandemic. Leaving our shoes at the doorstep is another visionary move of the elders in India, as is not allowing sick people or strangers into our kitchens. Of course, it can go too far; even when another person is healthy, some orthodox religious people do not allow them to touch food if they are of a lower status.

To my heart, purity is the essence of inner transformation. My own teacher, Babuji, gave a very important message in 1982, toward the end of his life, and in it he said that purity weaves our destiny with the Ultimate. That is a very profound statement, and highlights the importance of purity.

Swami Vivekananda once said, “The sages have said that there are two sorts of purification –

external and internal. The purification of the body by water, earth or other materials is the external purification, as bathing etc. Purification of the mind by truth, and by all the other virtues, is what is called internal purification. Both are necessary. It is not sufficient that a man should be internally pure and externally dirty. When both are not attainable the internal purity is the better, but no one will be a Yogi until he has both.”¹

Happiness and mental well-being

What are the qualities that develop as a result of mental purity? In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali defines four of them. The first is happiness – inner purity leads to happiness. How? When our consciousness is pure we can easily connect with the center of our being, the soul, where we find true inner happiness. The first Heartfulness Guide, Lalaji, wrote, “The causal body or the soul is the instrument of joy. Nay! It is joy itself, and cannot exist without bliss and happiness.”

It is important to understand this: Happiness does not come from the body or the mind. It comes from the soul.

When we meditate every morning, we connect with the center of our being through the heart, and this is aided by Transmission. Transmission nourishes the soul, just as food nourishes the physical body and problem-solving nourishes the mind. By nourishing the soul, Transmission promotes joy and happiness in our lives. And as we awaken to progressively deeper spiritual dimensions of existence, we experience subtler and subtler levels of joy and happiness. It is not that we stop caring for the body and mind, but we simply

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lose interest in their charms. Both body and mind are vehicles for our life here and for our evolution, but they no longer limit our existence.

Our understanding of beauty also changes. Beauty becomes an outer expression of inner purity, not of skin color, the shape of a face or body, or the level of intelligence or thinking capacity. All prejudice drops off as a result. The soul is our common connection with the Divine. Everyone is beautiful when we look into their hearts, beyond the qualities and characteristics of their bodies and minds. When we view ourselves and others from this inner perspective, there can be no prejudice and no hatred. In fact, all the *Yamas* become automatic.

Think about what this means: It is only through purity that we will attain real peace and harmony in this world. Until that time, people will continue

Swami Vivekananda, *Raja Yoga*, Chapter 8, 'Raja Yoga in Brief'.



to define themselves by their bodily characteristics, like skin color, sexual preference, and outer appearance, or by their mental and emotional characteristics, like mental health, intelligence, problem-solving ability, emotional maturity, belief systems, etc. They will remain boxed within their compartments and only see the differences between themselves and others.

When people went to visit my Guide, Babuji, he didn't look at their faces or their clothes, or anything external. He wasn't interested in their level of education or their religion or their status. Instead, he looked into their hearts, and knew everything about them by the signature of their inner world. In the early '70s, the first seekers from the West traveled to meet him in northern India, and many of them said that in his company they felt pure love. They were accepted for themselves,

and it was such a liberating experience. His innocent lack of judgment, and his capacity to love and accept universally, were natural outcomes of his purity. Such a refreshing state of openness and love was untainted by pre-conditioned beliefs and thinking patterns. Of course, that does not mean we dress without consideration for the people with whom we interact. What we wear reflects our attitude toward others.

Concentration

Second, inner purity leads to concentration. This is a simple one to understand. When we are primarily focused on the body and/or the mind, all the processes of the body and mind draw our attention. The senses are active, thoughts distract us, and emotions control our moods and behavior. We may

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have a deluge of thoughts and feelings every time we close our eyes to meditate. When the field of our consciousness is not purified, we are burdened with all sorts of complexities, for example, worry, anxiety, restlessness, anger, fear, confusion, guilt, shame and grief, depression, excitement, and passion, just to name a few. When that same field of consciousness is purified, there is stillness, peace and contentment. We can then concentrate our attention easily, because nothing deviates us from what is in front of us. There is clarity instead of confusion.

There is a story about Swami Vivekananda that demonstrates this very well. He once visited a famous Sanskrit scholar in the West, Professor Paul Deussen, who was famous for translating the ancient Vedic texts. A book arrived one day, and Vivekananda asked if he could read it. After a short time he returned it, and Deussen wondered how Vivekananda could have possibly read it given how long it was and how detailed were the

contents. It took Deussen days to go through the book before he could ask Vivekananda questions about the contents, and every question he asked was answered perfectly.

Deussen was dumbfounded, and asked Vivekananda, “How is it possible?”

Vivekananda explained that when you study through the body, concentration is not possible. In contrast, when you are not bound by the body, your consciousness can soar, and it can be directly in contact with the book. Then, even half an hour is enough to imbibe the meaning. There are so many other stories about Vivekananda’s ability to “read” books in no time at all, including stories of him sleeping with a book under his pillow and being able to relay all the contents of the book the next morning.

Here is another story about concentration, this time involving Babuji. In 1972 he traveled to the West to meet the growing number of seekers from Europe and North America who were coming to him for guidance. In London, his hosts organized a meeting with a famous physicist of the day, who at first was a little dismissive of Babuji. How could such a simple uneducated person from India understand the world of physics?

At one point they were discussing atoms, and after a silence Babuji described the structure of an atom in detail, including some of the smallest particles that scientists had not yet discovered. The physicist was astounded. How could Babuji know all this? Babuji’s answer was very simple: “I penetrated into matter and this is what I found.” Such a level of concentration and direct perception is only possible with a pure consciousness.



Mastery of the senses

Third, inner purity leads to mastery of the senses or *Pratyahara*, the fifth limb of Ashtanga Yoga. Every time we meditate, we prepare ourselves beforehand by turning our attention inward, away from the outer pull of the senses and into the heart. This process will only really be successful, however, when our hearts are pure. Otherwise we will remain distracted by the complexities and impurities arising in our field of consciousness as thoughts, feelings and outer distractions. When our focus is truly on the center of our being, the senses lose their potency. This mastery of the senses is the result of mental purity.

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As we become progressively purer and lighter as a result of our spiritual practices, we start to see changes in our outer lifestyle also.

Fitness for Self-Realization

Finally, Patanjali tells us that inner purity gives us the mental fitness for Self-Realization. The contentment, concentration, calmness, compassion, courage, clarity of purpose, and mastery of the senses that are awakened in our hearts through purity, prepare us for Self-Realization. Realization is not possible without such a preparation, which requires discipline and intense interest, as well as the support of a capable Guide.

How do we purify our consciousness?

The answer to this question is so simple: We remove all the impurities that have accumulated in our inner environment – in our consciousness. In earlier times, mystics and yogis attempted to do this through very difficult practices and penances. Thankfully, in the modern era, there has been astounding progress in the science of Yoga, and in the practices that are available to remove impurities from the field of consciousness. These impurities are known as *samskaras*. The simplest and most effective of these is the Heartfulness Cleaning practice. Cleaning is done every evening

so as to remove the “mental and emotional dirt” that accumulates during the day, just as taking a bath removes dirt from the physical body. It is a practical method, so its effects can only be known through experience. I suggest you try it and see how it purifies and simplifies your state of mind. You will feel light, contented and carefree at the end of the day.

The result: a better destiny

As we become progressively purer and lighter as a result of our spiritual practices, we start to see changes in our outer lifestyle also. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, and the habits we have will slowly adjust to our level of lightness. We do need to be aware of this process, however, and allow the changes to happen rather than staying stuck in outdated obsolete patterns of behavior. It is all about letting go of anything that no longer serves us. As a result of this inner purification, our character and lifestyle change, and thus our destiny changes. There is a complete transformation when purity permeates every level of our being from the inside out.



We must accept finite disappointment,
but never lose infinite hope.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

taste of life

Heartfulness Sport

– PART 3



What I Call “Mine”

PAOLO LEZZELLE draws simple parallels between the Heartfulness system and sport, in this article focusing primarily on authenticity and creativity.

“Education is that which remains, if one has forgotten everything he learned at school.”

quoted by Albert Einstein

A story

In my personal opinion John McEnroe has been the greatest tennis genius of all time, superior even to Roger Federer. McEnroe didn't play better tennis than Federer, which is quite impossible, but his game was so original, unpredictable, creative and extraordinarily talented, that no one was ever able to imitate him. In contrast, in the course of time many Federer imitators have appeared on the scene, some of them very highly ranked, while Federer remained the most successful and elegant player. Nonetheless, John, that quick-tempered brat from New York, was simply unique.

After a fast escalation to become the top seed in tennis, and after keeping that position for some years, John got a little lost in the meanderings of life and went down the ladder. His friend and epic rival, Bjorn Borg, had quit the scene at quite a

young age and in the meantime true war machines were emerging, like Ivan Lendl, who based their strength on extremely strict programs for athletic training, diet, concentration, and care for all aspects of the game. All this was relatively new for the '80s. In sport in general, there was still a lot of space for a level of lightness, for a kind of poetry, and for moral values to be upheld. The world of sport was full of human stories that maybe today would sound ridiculous. Since those days everything has slowly degraded, but this is another subject.

When our friend John tried to take back the throne, he was unprepared for the new wave of merciless competitors. He realized that he was short of the mark in aspects of the game where others now surpassed him, and this included the planning of yearly tournaments. So he made a resolution to follow the way of hard training: gym workouts, diet, strict life conduct, and all that the task required.

He climbed back, but not as much as he wished. Not to number one. He was still one of the best players in the world, but he was unable to pass a certain threshold. Things being as they were, he

realized that the harsh regime wasn't meant for him and he decided to follow his instinct. So he went back to hamburgers, fish and chips with beer, and a schedule of tournaments chosen among the cities of the world he enjoyed. He restarted to play his beloved guitar. He also restarted to quarrel with umpires and opponents whenever he felt like it. Last, but not least, as part of the show, some racquets were smashed on the ground when he lost points. Within a few months he was back on top.

Ladies and gentlemen, John McEnroe!

Love what you do

The world of sport is replete with such stories. After all, all the themes are a hint to one thing: You can study as much as you wish, you can be committed, you can train hard and cover all your shirts with sweat, but there will always be two parameters that matter more than anything else:

Number one, enjoy and love what you do.

Number two, whatever you learn has to become intimately yours, so much interiorized and mastered that you can even dare to break the classic technical and tactical standards of action and display something that belongs to you and you alone. Only then will you have the right to call what you know and do "mine."

I'm lucky to be friends with an athletics trainer who has trained top tennis players and football teams like Milan and Juventus. One day I asked him what it is above all that determines change and improvement in a specific performance. I've asked the same question to many good trainers, but his answer pleased me the most.

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In short, he explained that even though it may seem that an exhausting amount of repetition will give good results, it is not really so. Why? Because if the very change we are struggling for is not known as “good and pleasant” within our personal neurological map, it will not work. As a result, in a difficult moment of a match (or trial), we will return to old patterns because they are the ones we know better. The old style gives us a sense of confidence, notwithstanding the fact that we know it isn’t the most effective.

In other words, Ivan Lendl’s harsh training, while giving results, will not work if it is not heartily welcomed and enjoyed. It was good for him but not for others. Rather, it may be better to do less, possibly in a more creative way. We must always take into account the charge of stress and frustration that any kind of activity brings with it. It could even suppress the talent of a youth who is by nature more delicate and less bold than others, who may require longer to emerge, with more emotional experience in the sporting field.

What is mine

This topic of what is “mine” in sport brings us straight to another field, where “I” and “mine” have a fundamental value, but not an egotistic value – the field of spirituality. If meditating with great fervor was enough, if following a master blindly was enough, if participating in important events was enough, we could all have been masters a long time ago! Obviously it’s not like that, and it shall never be like that. Unfortunately, we need to repeat the very same things before we understand. We need to go off course, to boast uselessly, and to get confused. We also need to deceive ourselves into believing that all the efforts we have made – often with admirable tenacity – were not so great, because perhaps they were not lived in true joy, passion and love.

In a sense it’s like saying, “Well, I did a lot, but it was not my way, it was not really me.” I think this is why the great Masters are always able to surprise us and puzzle us. In their behavior there is never a dogmatic, static truth, but whatever they do they can absolutely call it “mine.”



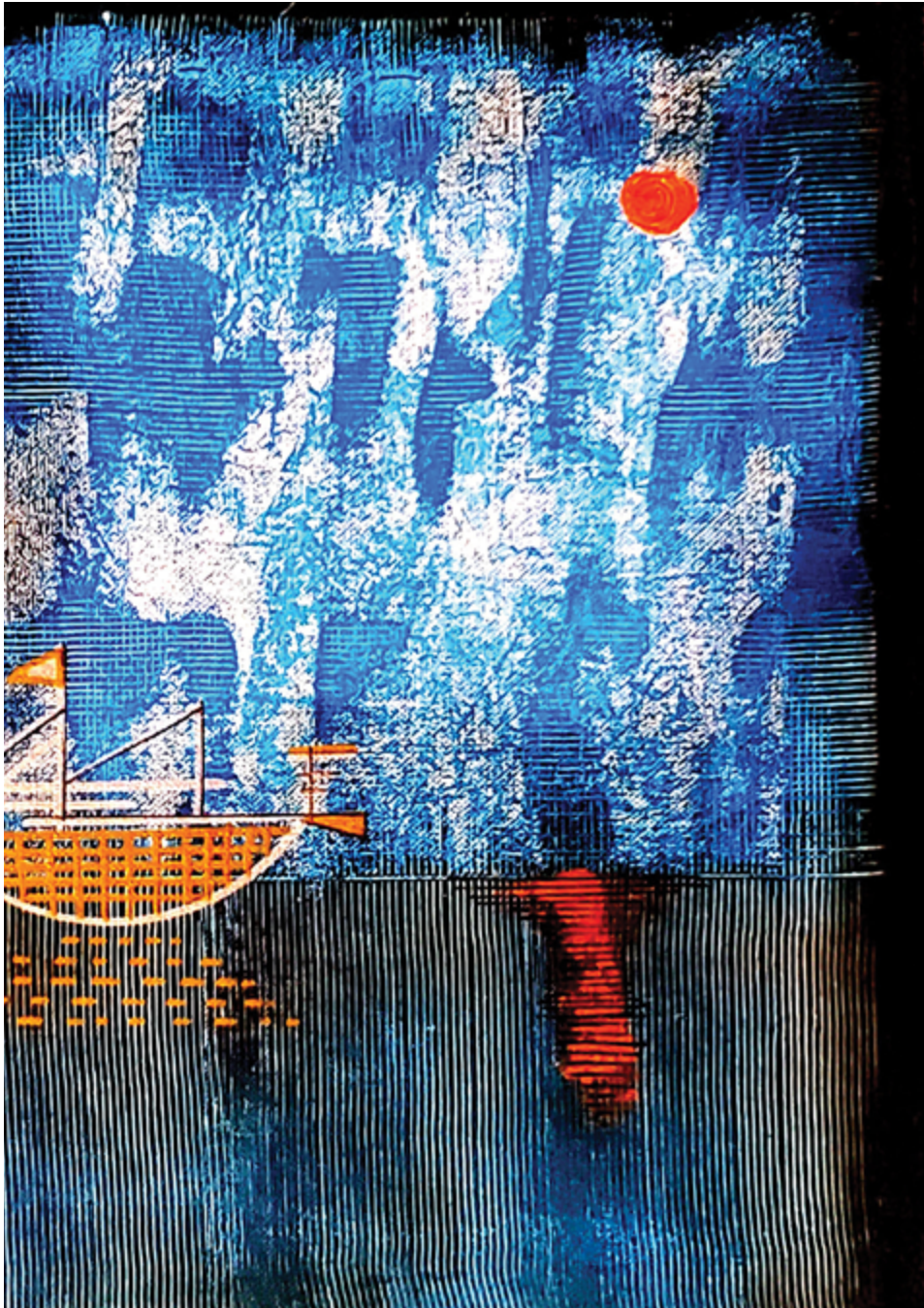
HOPE

Art Essay by **NAREN KINI**



HOPE FOR TRANSFORMATION

Nobility of the soul requires cultivating. This opportunity is granted to wise hearts every day. Many wise hearts are now dispersed across the world. This is a good thing. We need not despair for humanity; it already possesses the seeds of the future.



HOPE FOR THE GOAL

“On a day when the wind is perfect, the sail just needs to open and the world is full of beauty. Today is such a day.”

—Rumi



HOPE FOR GUIDANCE

The meaning of *diksha* is initiation, and one definition is “Induction into a new realm of awareness and practice by a teacher or trainer through the bestowing of blessings and the transmission of *prana*.” It denotes a deepening connection with the Source.



HOPE FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICE

“And he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together.”

—Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*



HOPE TO MEET

HOPE FOR THE PLANET:

The simple Mantra *Om Shree Gaia Ma* calls for the healing of Mother Earth.

It will align you with the feeling of gratitude and the elements of Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Spirit. It is powerful in cultivating your intuitive communication with Nature, and it serves to rebalance the energy of the collective consciousness toward that of wholeness, peace, and abundance.



I offer all of my prayers to thee, my respect and gratitude, and may this be a conscious oath to protect you and to honor you as I recognize the great need for your healing.

May your fields be rich and your soil fertile, and may they be sown and reaped with care.

May your mountains attest to your splendor and strength and your valleys hum with the lullaby of your receptive embrace.

May your oceans, waters, rivers, and glaciers be pure and nourishing, as the life-blood of the planet.

May your air be clean and free of toxins so that all may breathe deeply and fully the great life-force.

May your turning invoke an understanding of all cyclical things in nature; of growth and decay, of planting and harvest, of karmic cycles; and that as we give, so do we receive.

May your children learn to care for you and love you, and teach their children the same.

You are the Earth, and I am your child.

So it is!

Stories and Objects

Art Essay by N. DIVYA

During my initial years in Baroda, I observed the city with excitement and curiosity, noticing multiple mundane and routine activities. As I walked through the streets and *gullis* of the old city, I came across vehicles that often carried people's whole existence, with objects bursting from them. I observed homes that flowed into one another, where personal household items appeared precisely arranged. I saw how regular daily second-hand objects are given a new life, sorted, organized and displayed on streets. It was these observations that led me to my interest in the significance of objects.









Something as ordinary as a chair holds numerous associations, and has the potential to open up endless tales. In these paintings, chairs are similar to portraits, distinctive and revealing. The tightness of the cane can depict the intricacies of relationships, and the slouch of a cushion holds the residue of time. A broken chair – a life cut short. A ripened orange chair – held within the ribs of one's body. An old wooden chair – worn out, yet strong and still resilient.

Personal stories and objects share something. They both exist beyond the tangible and hold memories as their fundamental core. It is within these spaces that I wish to trace my world.

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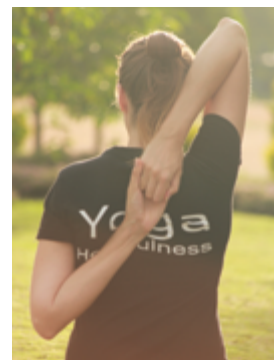
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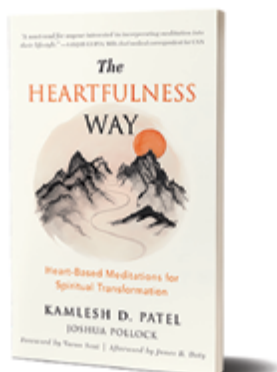
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