

November 2021

heartfulness

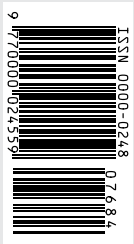
advancing in love

The Ultimate
Habit
DAAJI

The New
Storytelling
WAKANYI
HOFFMAN

How Does
Light Affect
Our Moods?
SATCHIN PANDA

How to Deal
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Editorial Team — Elizabeth Denley, Emma Ivaturi, Kashish Kalwani, Vanessa Patel, Christine Prisland, Mamata Venkat

Design & Art — Jyoti Bhatt, Santanu Chatterjee, Lakshmi Gaddam, Uma Maheswari, Jasmee Mudgal, Ananya Patel, Arati Shedde, Ramya Sriram

Photography — Nikhil Dhawan, Mona Mishra, Heartfulness Media Team

Writers — Ichak Adizes, Shelly Burgess, Daaji, Elizabeth Denley, Theophile l'Ancien, Mamata Venkat, Ravi Venkatesan

Interviewees — Jyoti Bhatt, Wakanyi Hoffman, Satchin Panda

ISSN 2455-7684

CONTRIBUTIONS

contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com

ADVERTISING

advertising@heartfulnessmagazine.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

subscriptions@heartfulnessmagazine.com

www.heartfulnessmagazine.com/subscriptions

EDITOR — Neeraj Kumar

PRINTED BY — Sunil Kumar

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

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

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Spotlight on Self-care



Dear readers,

A wise adage tells us to treat others the way we want to be treated. Even when we think we are treating others with kindness, compassion, empathy, and love, is this truly genuine? Only when we treat ourselves the same way.

Self-care doesn't stop with our physical bodies. It encompasses mental, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. How we speak to ourselves, how we nurture our inner cracks and bruises, how we connect with our inner truth. How do we create habits of self-care?

This month, our contributors share their unique journeys of self-love and inner connection through stories, letters, poetry, and solutions – all offering immense wisdom. Daaji continues his series with the ultimate habit. Wakanyi Hoffman shares her Kikuyu storytelling traditions, Satchin Panda examines how light affects our moods and when we eat matters as much as what we eat, Shelly Burgess opens up about self-rejuvenation during the pandemic, and Elizabeth Denley shares tips on how to manage our human imperfection and vulnerability. We continue with part two of Jyoti Bhatt's amazing life of art, celebrate self-compassion through Mamata Venkat's poetry, and learn to deal with anger and enemies in the ongoing dialogue between Theo the Elder and Theo the Younger. Ichak Adizes admits his biggest challenge when it comes to acceptance, Ravi Venkatesan addresses how to share innovative ideas with others, and Ramya Sriram reminds us why it matters to say it out loud!

We hope our contributors inspire you to connect more deeply with your own inner voice and each other.

Happy reading!
The editors

Illustration by LAKSHMI GADDAM

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.



WAKANYI HOFFMAN

Wakanyi is a Global Education Specialist, writer, editor, storyteller, and founder of the [African Folktales Project](#). The theme of peaceful, cross-cultural cooperation is a common thread in her writing and personal life. For more than a decade she has lived in 7 countries, on 3 continents, as a global nomad, developing a rich intercultural intelligence built upon her training as a journalist.



SATCHIN PANDA

Dr. Panda is a leading expert in the field of circadian rhythm research. He is Associate Professor at the Regulatory Lab at the Salk Institute, a Pew Scholar, and a recipient of the Dana Foundation Award in Brain and Immune System Imaging. His book, *The Circadian Code: Lose Weight, Supercharge Your Energy, and Transform Your Health from Morning to Midnight*, is helping people around the world to align their lifestyles with these daily cycles, having a dramatic effect on their health.

JYOTI BHATT



Jyoti is a celebrated artist, best known for his work in painting, printmaking, and his photographic documentation of rural Indian culture and folk art. He studied art in North America and Europe before returning to India and founding the “Baroda School” of Indian art. His etchings, intaglios, and screen prints combine the traditional and the modern. His work is displayed in The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Smithsonian in Washington D.C., The British Museum, London, and The Museum of Art & Photography, Bangalore. He was awarded the Padma Shri in India in 2019, the 1967 Gold Medal at the Biennale of Prints in Italy, and many other awards, including five Lifetime Achievement Awards.

SHELLY BURGESS



Shelly Burgess is a longtime Heartfulness practitioner and a Heartfulness trainer. She has taught physics for the past twenty-four years at a suburban Midwestern high school where she serves as chair of the science department. She’s a wife and the mother to two very active teenagers. When free time exists, she likes to read, bike, and hike.

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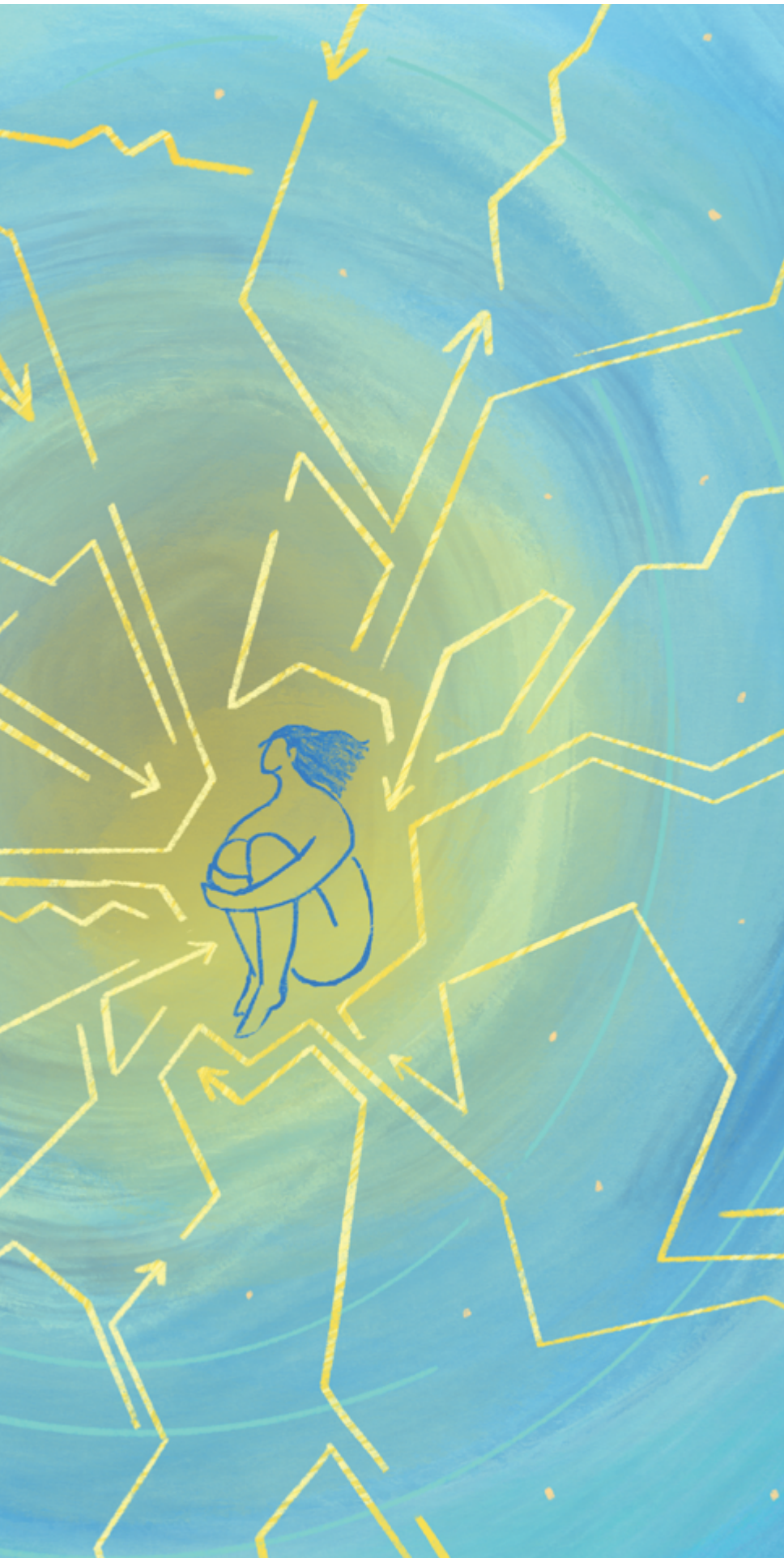
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Focus:

**Self-acceptance &
self-compassion**



Self-compassion
is simply giving
the same kindness
to ourselves that
we would give to
others.

**CHRISTOPHER
GERMER**

Illustration by ANANYA PATEL



Rediscovering
MY PURPOSE

SHELLY BURGESS is a high school physics teacher and a meditation trainer. Here, she tells her story about losing sight of her purpose in the midst of the Covid pandemic, and how positive intention renewed her focus and allowed her to accept the last year through a lens of self-compassion, grace, and optimism.

We've all had challenges since the pandemic began. Some challenges have certainly been greater than others, but we've all had our share of struggles and pain. An effective meditation practice can help us immensely with such life stressors. I know this, of course. I've been practicing Heartfulness for thirty years, so of course I was primed to ride out pandemic turbulence with a good measure of serenity and grace ... except that I did a terrible job of meditating for over a year.

It's embarrassing, but I am admitting this for a reason. Let's first rewind, so I can tell

you why my terrible job of meditating led me to one of the most important revelations of my life.

Allow me to introduce myself. I am a mother of two active teens, a wife, and a daughter. Like many women, I work hard at home to make life nice for my loved ones. I also teach advanced high school physics to teens with serious college aspirations. In a normal school year, I run myself ragged trying to give my children their best start in life and care for my family, while also striving to provide a world-class education to the hundred or so students who count on me at school. My responsibilities are pretty demanding, but my

Heartfulness practice keeps me balanced, and I also enjoy sharing meditation with others as a trainer. I'm busy, but it works.

Enter 2020, which was a period of upheaval. I make no suggestion that my pain has been anywhere near what others have suffered, but as the pandemic began I struggled. My children switched to online learning while I switched to online teaching. In one room, I led my classes through Zoom, and during breaks I checked on my kids and tried to keep them as motivated and happy as possible. So began the daily cycle. In order to give my own kids my all, while

I raise my children and serve my family with love in line with my spiritual goal. I serve my students with care in line with my spiritual goal. I serve the hearts of those I encounter, and in doing so, my own heart grows in purity.

providing a superior education to my students, I was working longer and longer hours. While transitioning a lab course to a digital format, encouraging my suffering students, and holding my family together, I had less and less steam to keep myself running. Slowly my meditation practice began to erode. When I sat in the evenings to meditate, it felt like I had nothing left to set my meditation in motion because I had let myself become so run down.

When my alarm went off in the morning so I could meditate before work, I couldn't get up. I needed sleep. As the school year went on, and my workload and my family's needs compounded, I slept fewer and fewer hours and had less and less to give. My meditation practice became a skin-and-bones version of its former self, but I had so much to do to serve others, what choice did I have, right?

Three weeks before the school year ended, I was concerned that I couldn't make it. I felt as if a panic attack was lurking around every corner, but I pushed. By this time, I felt that my spiritual condition was really run down, a shadow of its former state. This added to my anxiety. I love meditation. I love what it does for me. Now, not only had I not

used it to get through the school year, but I felt like I had slid backward. My heart no longer felt like a glowing sanctuary. It felt like a racing heartbeat. It was distressing. Had I damaged myself physically? Yes, definitely. My body had lots of ways of telling me. Had I damaged myself spiritually? This was a real worry.

Heartfulness offers us ten universal principles to help navigate life's challenges in an ennobling way. The third principle suggests that we set a goal of the highest spiritual attainment. In a normal year, I think about this all the time. It helps me frame everything I do within that higher purpose. I raise my children and serve my family with love in line with my spiritual goal. I serve my students with care in line with my spiritual goal. I serve the hearts of those I encounter, and in doing so, my own heart grows in purity. At least, that's the way it is in a normal year.

This year? It took until May to realize that I had been serving the wrong master, so to speak. My goals had become mundane: "I have to write multiple versions of this test to make it fairer, in case kids try to cheat." "I have to come up with a way for students to run this experiment at home



When I serve them in tune with my spiritual goal, I do a better job – I am more loving and more balanced. The self-care that comes with my meditation practice allows me to be better in all my roles, and better to myself.

The main point is that I realized I don't want to ever give myself wounds again. I love my practice. It keeps me balanced and takes me to my goal.

using household tools, and then create an online format for them to post their data." "I have to hang out with my kids while they do their homework so they feel supported." "I have to cook dinner and do laundry!"

Ah ... the pressing immediacy of meeting responsibilities. I had allowed this to become my goal.

I didn't even see it coming.

By not attending well enough to my heart, by not balancing my mind regularly enough through meditation, by letting myself become so mentally exhausted that I got sidetracked from my goal, I "served the wrong master." For a year. And where it led me was not good at all. I could barely even tap into that glowing goodness that was formerly an ever-present reservoir in my heart.

Well, the story would have had a terrible ending if I had stopped

there and given up! And who wants a lousy ending to a story? So now comes the good stuff!

First, I dived back into my daily practice, along with lots and lots of positive suggestions. The good news: I can tell I'm rebounding. The bad news: I still have a way to go. The bottom line: There's always hope.

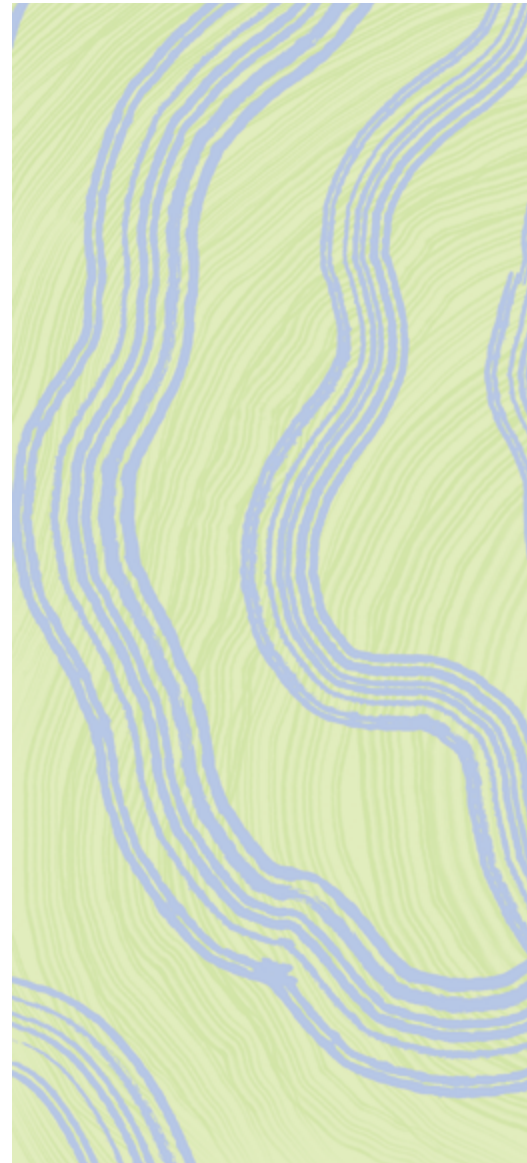
Second, I'm proof that Heartfulness works, because when I let my practice and my goal slip, I saw the dark side of losing sight of them.

And that leads to my huge revelation: Third, serve the right master, remember my goal. When I do this, everything else falls into balance. Losing sight of it led me down a dark path. Returning my focus has offered me a way back.

Does that mean I should not serve my family and my students? Not at all. In fact, when I serve them in

tune with my spiritual goal, I do a better job – I am more loving and more balanced. The self-care that comes with my meditation practice allows me to be better in all my roles, and better to myself.

One last little gem popped into my memory as I re-established





my practice. A doozy of a positive suggestion came to me, and it has made a huge difference. Decades ago, a Heartfulness meditator known as sister Kasturi said something to someone, and eventually it reached my ears many years later. She told this person that we can do spiritual work in

the past. In other words, if we make suggestions in the present, we can reset our past selves. Wild, right?

So I sat down and tried it. I made the mental suggestion in May that all along, throughout the school year, I had been serving everyone

heartfully, in tune with my goal. The amazing thing was that as I made this positive suggestion I could feel pieces of the past year shifting back into balance, like a mixed-up puzzle where the pieces assemble themselves. I was resetting my goal for my past self. I felt it working. So cool. So wonderful. So grateful.

What is the moral of this story? Let's be clear that I do not believe there's a "get out of jail free" card if I just redouble my efforts and make positive suggestions from the present to my past self. This is not the lesson, although I am grateful that I've found what I needed to heal my wounds. The main point is that I realized I don't want to ever give myself wounds again. I love my practice. It keeps me balanced and takes me to my goal. Like Dorothy says at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, "I'm not going to leave here ever, ever again." I'm lucky to have this nice moral to my story, because it could have been much worse. I have pretty good grounds for feeling optimistic, and I'm grateful to be home.

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL

Self-acceptance

ELIZABETH DENLEY has been a student of both science and spirituality all her life. Trained as a scientist, she turned her field of inquiry and research skills to the field of meditation and spirituality after starting the Heartfulness practices in the late 80s. Here she shares some thoughts on the importance of self-acceptance.



Our modern societies are not conducive to self-acceptance, self-compassion, and self-love. Marketers and advertisers are ever-ready to convince us that we “need” so many different things to be acceptable, whether it be clothes and cosmetics, health, happiness In fact, more than ever before we are surrounded by unspoken social norms about what is acceptable and what is not, and we are coerced into longing for things that are not us. The fashion industry is based on this longing. So is our healthcare system. So is our education system. So is religion. We are constantly being told that we need certain things in order to be good enough, but we are not encouraged to discover what those things are for ourselves.

A lifetime of striving to feel comfortable in my own skin has been a journey of ups and downs, and even today there are moments of dread when I still feel

inadequate, a failure, and totally out of sorts with myself. But an inner sense of contentment and stability has gradually grown over the years, and this article is about that journey.

Why is self-acceptance important?

First, let me start by saying that self-acceptance is not about wanting to stay the same. A healthy life of continuous improvement is very important to me. In fact, self-acceptance is a fundamental pre-requisite for personal transformation – to be able to look inside, accept my flaws, work toward something nobler, and uncover the beauty within. This takes courage.

Most of our habits – both mental-emotional and behavioral – are a result of subconscious patterns that have been there since early childhood. Whether we accept that they arose only during this

life or that they have also come from previous lives doesn't really matter. They are from the past. They are wired into our neural circuitry from a time that we can no longer change. Many of us blame our families, our societies, and our circumstances for these patterns. Many of us also feel shame or guilt at the things that have stunted our emotional well-being. We remain victims of the past. There is a hidden world of woundedness within, so that when current circumstances mirror the past, we react in the same patterns, often out of fear. It is hard to feel self-acceptance in those moments.

Fortunately or unfortunately – whichever way you want to look at it – we are all in the same boat! No one is immune from this state of human imperfection and vulnerability because of our life experience. Our parents were not perfect in the way they raised us, our extended families are not perfect, our communities and



It is easy to accept ourselves when things are going well. It is in moments of despair or disappointment, when challenges are staring us in the face, that we need to call on an inner reserve of self-acceptance and self-love.

societies are far from perfect. Even the great sages and saints of the past were not perfect. We glorify them, but their lives were filled with imperfections. What to do? Stay wallowing in self-pity, or become aggressive and lash out? Until we come to some level of acceptance of our own past and how it has shaped who we are, we have not reached adulthood, no matter our age.

And what is the underlying basis of the problem? Expectation. We

are taught to expect from the word go. As a result, we develop desires – the desire to do what brings pleasure, success, and happiness, and the desire to avoid what brings pain, failure, and disappointment. So, when things go wrong, we don't always have the resilience to go through hardship graciously. When that sinking feeling engulfs the heart, we go into a black hole. Yet we all know that life will bring us a mixture of pleasure and pain, success and failure, happiness and disappointment. No one is immune from that, no matter how successful they may appear.

How to?

It is easy to accept ourselves when things are going well. It is in moments of despair or disappointment, when challenges are staring us in the face, that we need to call on an inner reserve of self-acceptance and self-love. How to do this? Most of us need practice, because we have forgotten the art of self-love – it has been drummed out of us, and it needs to be revived. And before self-love and self-compassion are even possible, we first need self-acceptance.

This is where my spiritual practice has helped so much. It is in the heart that I feel heartache, and once I learned to meditate on the heart, dive deep into the heart, and remove the complexities and

entanglements of the past from my heart, I could feel such lightness and carefreeness that I knew self-acceptance was possible. Suddenly there was light. Suddenly there was hope.

Was it like a magic wand, where all the heartache was gone? Yes and no. Definitely there was a huge shift from that first moment I sat with a Heartfulness trainer to meditate. It was an immediate turning point. But life goes on, and the onward journey is full of ups and downs, like any journey. Dislodging expectations and dislodging the ego's attachments are a constant companion – the process of continuous improvement toward a perfection that is always beyond reach, no matter how far we go. That is evolution, the nature of physical existence. Perfection is not possible in this dimension.

What to do?

The turning point can come at any age in life. I was in my thirties when it happened. But what if we could offer this to future generations from preconception onward? What if we could immerse our children in love to the extent that they accept themselves and all their imperfections, so that they can better navigate the ups and downs in life without it being such a struggle? What if they understood

Self-acceptance is a prerequisite to accepting others. Acceptance of others is a prerequisite to overcoming prejudice and creating harmony. Harmony is a prerequisite to peace and unity, and peace and unity are prerequisites to humanity's future.

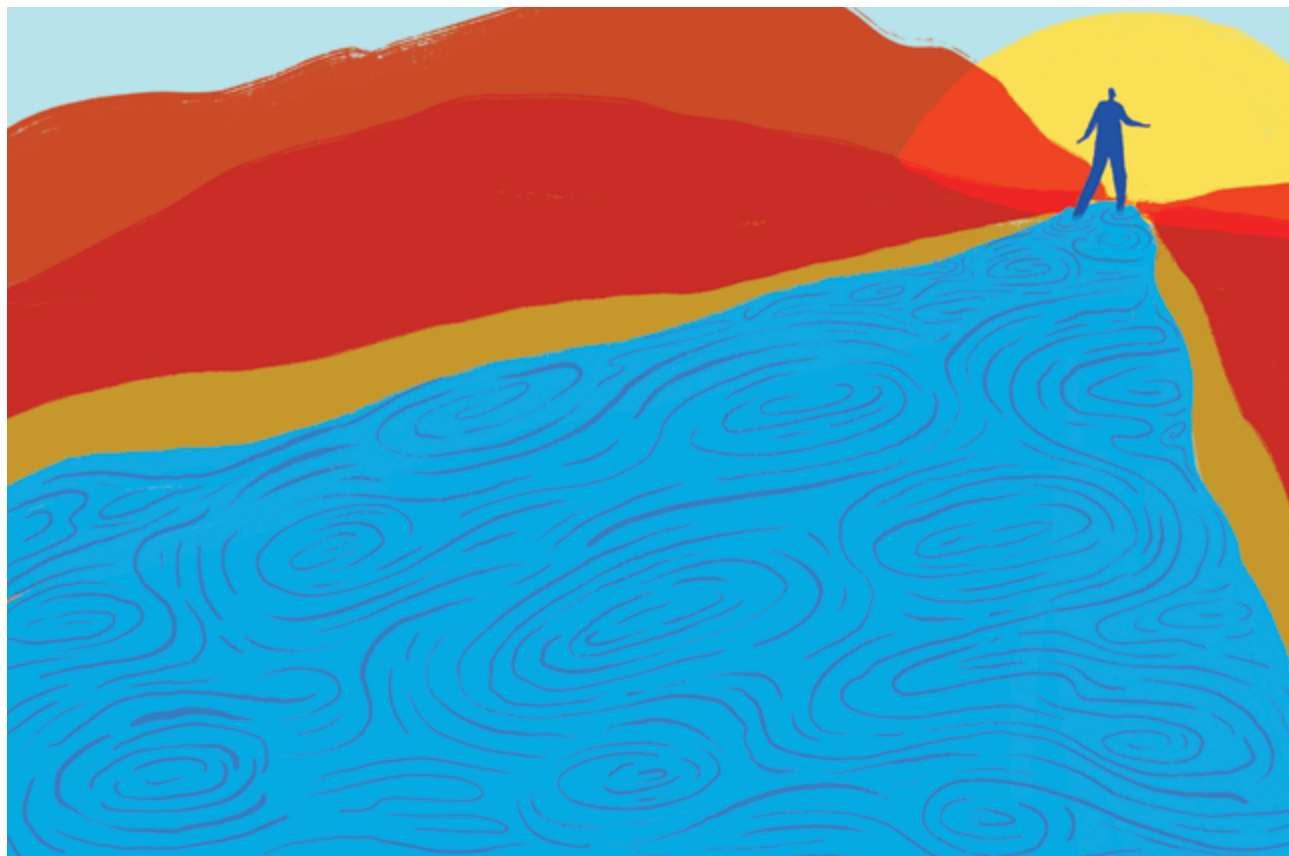


the purpose of the ups and downs? What if they could go through this journey with a light and joyous approach?

All that is possible if we first prepare ourselves. We cannot expect others to do it for us. Self-acceptance goes hand in hand with many other qualities, but it is fundamental to those other qualities unfolding.

It reminds me of something that happened in 1998 when I was visiting my spiritual teacher, Chariji, in India. A group of us were sitting with him on Marina Beach in Chennai one evening as the sun was setting, and he mentioned that the current era is very important for the spiritual progress of humanity because the Transmission¹ is of a quality that has not been seen for 5,000 years

¹Transmission removes the inner complexities or knots in our energy field, so that the spiritual centers or chakras are cleaned and illuminated. Transmission removes the obstacles on the journey to the Source and makes meditation truly dynamic. ... You can think of it as original, cosmic energy or divine essence flowing from the Guide into the hearts of seekers." Daaji, from *Designing Destiny*.



and will not be seen again for another 10,000 years.

One of the Europeans asked, “So Chariji, how can we best make use of this gift?”

He replied, “There are three things you can do:

Satsangh with the Guide,
Give more than you receive, and
Self-acceptance.”

It was a surprise for most of us that he said “self-acceptance” in that moment. In fact, it was a wake-up call to realize just how fundamental it is to humanity’s future. Self-acceptance is a prerequisite to accepting

others. Acceptance of others is a prerequisite to overcoming prejudice and creating harmony. Harmony is a prerequisite to peace and unity, and peace and unity are prerequisites to humanity’s future.

Start simply, in the heart. Create belonging and inclusivity within you. Immerse yourself in the ocean of peace within yourself, through meditation, and then let it radiate outward from you into your world. Realize that none of us are supposed to go through this journey alone. Every day is a new dawn, every dawn is a new hope, and together we will create

a culture of belonging and unity where all are accepted. In this egregore of love and acceptance, our human potential will lift to a whole new level that we can only imagine right now.

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL



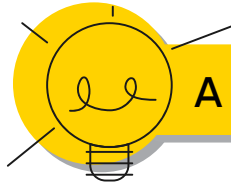
thought in **action**



The privilege of a
lifetime is being who
you are.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

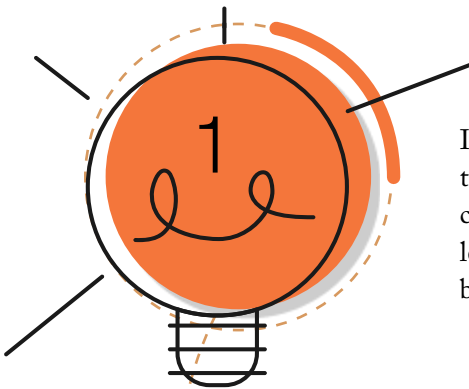
Photo by MONA MISHRA



The Heartful Innovator

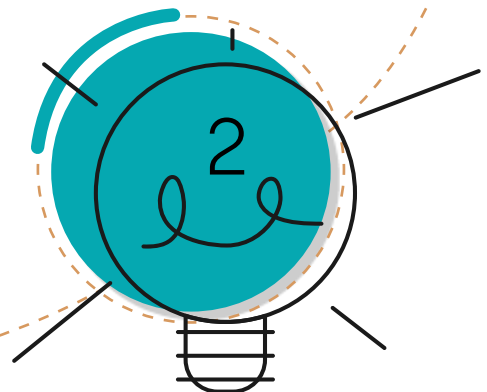
– Part 10

In this series, **RAVI VENKATESAN** has shared tips on how to fine tune our “inner state” to become Heartful Innovators. He has also addressed ways to overcome barriers to innovation like stress and fear, discussed enablers of innovation, like imagination and courage, and described how we can articulate ideas and influence others effectively. In this final article of the series, he summarizes the 10 key ideas introduced in this series, so that we can use them as a toolkit to innovate. You can refer back to the earlier articles for more details on each of these.



It is important to change ourselves from within rather than just trying to change our actions if we are to change the results. This is known as second order learning in ontological coaching, and is considered to be the way to achieve exponentially better results.

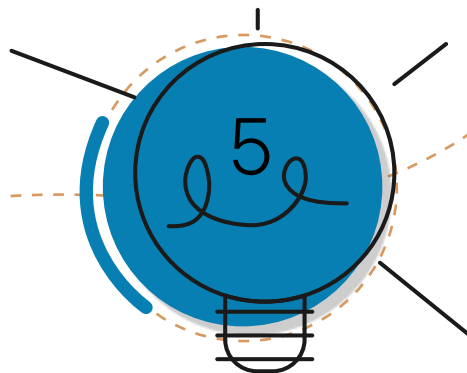
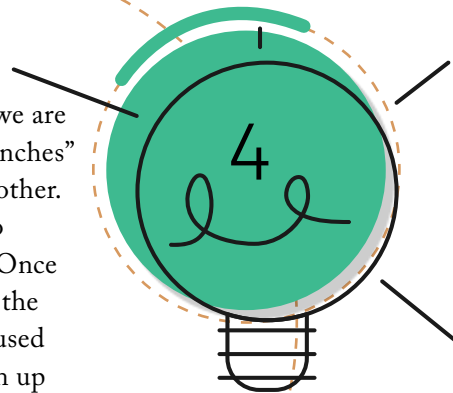
Changing ourselves involves changing our inner state. The way we can achieve this change for ourselves is through creating shifts to certain aspects of our inner state. These include our mind, intellect, ego, and awareness.



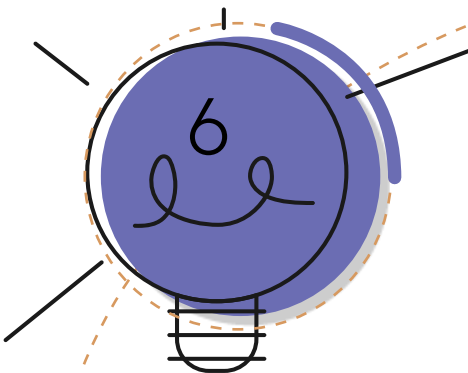


Our intellect can evolve from a default state to intelligence, intuition, and eventually wisdom. Based on reviewing the lives of the greatest innovators, there is a correlation between these shifts and being able to relax deeply and effectively.

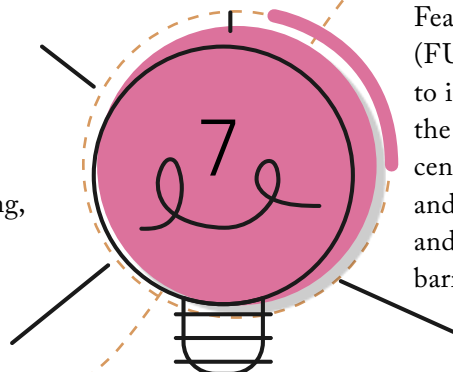
The best innovations emerge when we are able to bring our ideas and “slow hunches” together and bounce them off each other. The barrier to this is the state of ego where we feel like we “know it all.” Once we get past this and make a shift in the state of our ego, from being me-focused to we-focused, innovative ideas open up naturally to us.



The degree of awareness that we have is usually restricted to active consciousness, but as we learn how to expand this to tap into the subconscious and superconscious levels, we are able to develop this ability to “super sense” solutions to problems and come up with very innovative ideas. Meditative practices greatly help develop this degree of awareness.

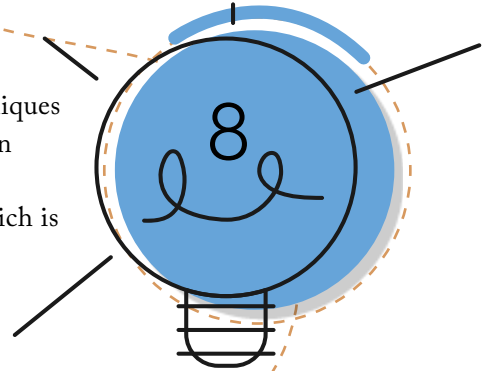


What we refer to as the mind-heart is really a vibrational field with our thoughts at one end and our feelings and emotions at the other. In modern times most of us tend to stay in our headspace and entangled with thoughts. Many of these thoughts are not purposeful, but are just repeats of yesterday’s thoughts; in other words noise that consumes our mental bandwidth. By learning how to balance thinking and feeling, and the in-between state of sensing, we access a wider range of using our mental faculties to solve problems and be innovative.

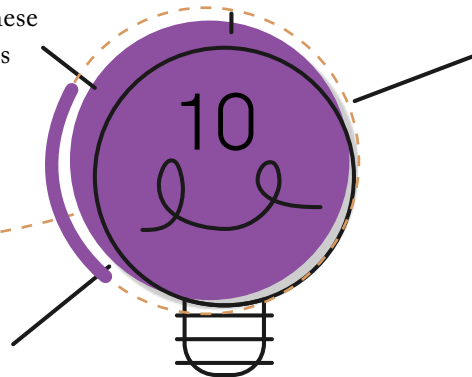
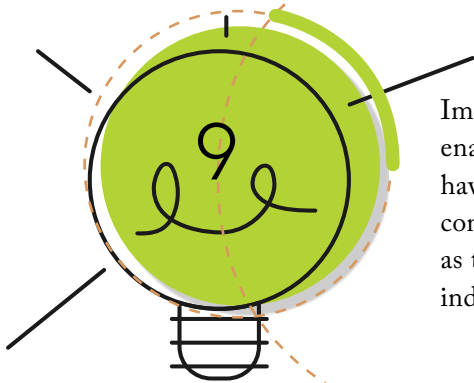


Fear, uncertainty, and doubt (FUD) are the biggest barriers to innovation. Developing the habits of being calm and centered, positive thinking, and witnessing our emotions and feelings can counter these barriers effectively.

Stress is also a major barrier to innovation. Using techniques like left nostril breathing, relaxation, and meditation can counter this by activating the parasympathetic nervous system rather than the sympathetic nervous system, which is active during the stress response.



Imagination and courage are key enablers of innovation, however, both have dark sides when they go out of control. Learning how to use these as tools with the right balance is indispensable to innovation.



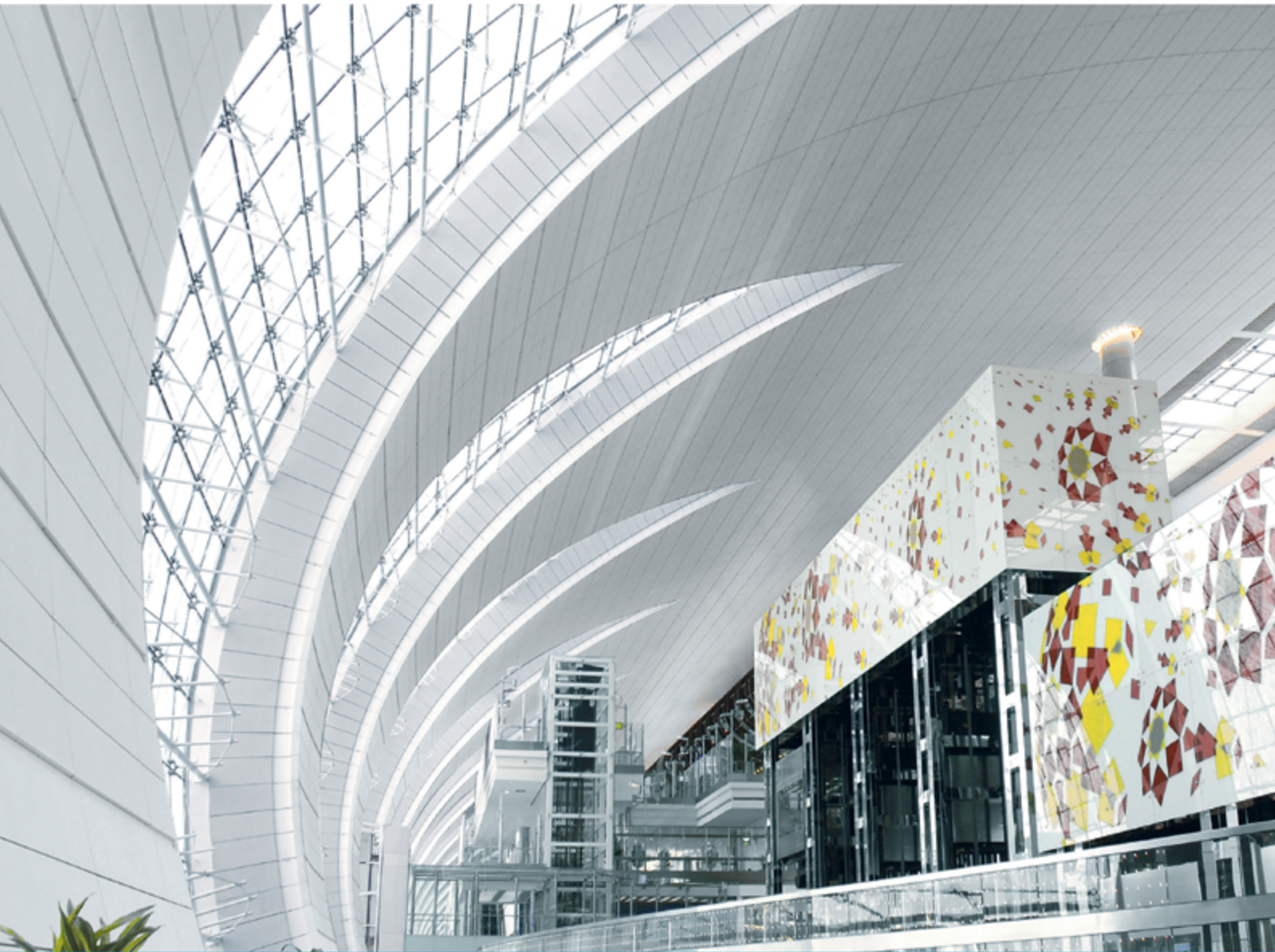
Being a Heartful Innovator is as much about expressing ideas and influencing others to rally behind them, as it is about coming up with great ideas. A 3-step process to do this is to tell a story to illustrate the problem or opportunity, paint a picture for the future state where this problem is solved, and express optimism.

What is the key to developing your heartful innovation muscle? Do an honest self-assessment and maintain a journal of improvements that you make across all 10 ideas. Over time they will become second nature.

Good luck with all the incredible innovations you will create!

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MY BIGGEST

Challenge

DR ICHAK ADIZES tackles the tricky topic of acceptance as the starting point for change, especially self-acceptance. He reminds us that without self-acceptance things generally get worse rather than better.

My biggest challenge is to practice what I preach. My whole life has been dedicated to developing, documenting, and training others to practice mutual trust and respect. And that means first and foremost, accepting other people's differences. This is very easy to understand but difficult to practice. People annoy me when they think, act, or react differently than how I want them to.

When I get annoyed with people, the first word that comes to mind is "Why?" "Why don't you ... ? Why are you doing this, or acting like that or ... ?" There's no end to the "why's" and it is not strange that there are no satisfactory answers. My frustrations are most acute towards people who are closest to me. Let's start with my children. "Why



do you ... ? Why don't you ... ?" Why, why, why!
And usually, there are no good answers that satisfy me.

Even closer to me than my children is my wife. In this case, the roles are reversed. It seems that God has sent her to this world to "fix" me. To change me. From her perspective, everything I do needs to be improved or changed. She claims, although I am not fully aware of it, that I do the same to her.

There is one person who is even closer to me than my children and my wife. It is me. I have endless self-talk that I should do this and not that, that I did not do what I should have done, etc. If you suffer from not accepting peoples' differences easily, do the following exercise. Go to a busy main street in the city where you live. Get yourself a window seat in a restaurant facing the street. Watch people eat, talk, walk, laugh, etc. Just watch them. Do not talk to them. Do not ask questions about why they are talking, eating, or acting the way they are. Just watch them. You may find that you are not upset about their behavior. Why not? Because in this experiment you accept them the way they are.

Now, compare this experience with what happens when you watch people you are close to, let's say members of your family. Oops! Now you are getting emotional, having reactions, and that word "why" is starting to pester you. You are not as indifferent, detached, and relaxed as you were before, right? Here, you have a prejudice about how they should behave. You are starting to judge because they are a part of you, and you of them. You may become subconsciously concerned that their unacceptable behavior reflects on you. And so, you are no longer indifferent.



Do your best to change what is, without criticism, without judging, without eating your heart out. Just observe, breathe, and realize how interesting the differences are. Do what you can to change, but without raising your voice and blood pressure, and let it go.



There is no end to personal improvement, but for real growth to happen, one must start with self-acceptance.

For some people, it is easier to live in a foreign country than in the country where they were born or grew up. In a foreign country, they do not care how those “others” behave. In the country you identify with, the pain and criticism are ongoing. We grow up when we accept our parents. When we stop fighting them, stop blaming them for our own faults, and realize they did the best they could and that is all there is to it. Growing up is not an issue of chronological age but of how fast you learn to accept others, starting with accepting yourself, your wife, your children, your parents, your siblings, and the inconsiderate driver who cut you off yesterday.

What is, is. Do your best to change what is, without criticism, without judging, without eating your heart out. Just observe, breathe, and realize how interesting the differences are. Do what you can to change, but without raising your voice and blood pressure, and let it go. When you feel the start of self-criticism, just note it and ask yourself: Can I do better next time? If the answer is yes, great. If not, accept it, at least for now, until the situation changes. Maybe you will change, too.

There is no end to personal improvement, but for real growth to happen, one must start with self-acceptance. Rejecting yourself or others for not being what you wish them to be is the best predictive variable that the problem or discomfort will probably not get better and will likely get worse.

Just thinking and feeling,
Ichak Kalderon Adizes

<https://www.ichakadizes.com/post/my-biggest-challenge>



TO BE IN YOUR
CHILDREN'S MEMORIES

TOMORROW

YOU HAVE TO BE IN THEIR LIVES

TODAY

DISCOVER THE ART
OF BEING PRESENT
IN THE MOMENT

A *Brighter
Minds* Enriching
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innerview

The goal of fasting
is inner unity.

THOMAS MERTON

Illustration by UMA MAHESWARI







THE BIOLOGY OF TIME – PART 2

DR. SATCHIN PANDA is a leading expert in the field of circadian rhythm research. He is Associate Professor in the Regulatory Lab at the Salk Institute, a Pew Scholar, and a recipient of the Dana Foundation Award in Brain and Immune System Imaging. His book, *The Circadian Code*, has helped many people to regain their energy, sleep well and lose weight. Here he is interviewed by **UDAY KUMAR** on how he developed the ideas in his book, and what inspired his research.

Q: Regarding the point you mentioned about sleep and sleep discipline, I have an Android phone and although I never knew anything about the blue light filter somehow I would turn it on and it would feel softer on my eyes. Then I came across your research. How did you go toward this side of research and what triggered this whole curiosity and life changing discovery?

For a very long time, animals and humans have reset their brain clocks in response to light. Then there are many blind people who cannot see, cannot even see the headline of the New York Times, but when they travel from one place to another place, they can readjust their clock to the new time zone, just like normal people. But then there are other types of blind people who have lost both their eyes because of surgery or an accident, and they cannot reset their clock. That means there must be a light sensor in the eye, which is not for seeing, but may be essential for sensing.

So, that clue was there for almost 50 years, and everybody was

trying to figure out where this light sensor is. Then, after the human genome project, it became easier to look for it because we had the information. That's how we stumbled on the melanopsin photoreceptor. If you remove the melanopsin gene in a mouse, it cannot sense light accurately, and cannot reset its clock. It takes a very long time to reset at scale.

Then we figured out that it's a blue light sensing protein – it senses blue light. That makes sense because during the daytime we have a lot of blue light in sunlight. So, we are designed to sense that blue light and become a lot more alert during the day. At night-time we don't need blue light because it keeps us alert. Candlelight and firelight don't have too much blue light. So, we are designed to see more blue light in the daytime and less blue light at night.

Unfortunately, nowadays, what has happened is that opticians want us to have a blue light coating, which is actually not the right thing to do. You need blue light during the daytime, whereas you don't need blue light at night. So, it's better

to have two pairs of glasses. If you don't get enough blue light during the daytime, you can become depressed. Cell phone tracking data show that we spend more than 87% of our time indoors, and most of our indoor lighting is not good. In my living room, I might have 250 to 300 lux of light, whereas on a cloudy day in New Jersey, outside there will be 10,000 lux. Right now, where you're sitting, since you're away from your window, you may be sitting in 200 lux. Out of that, blue light is a small fraction. If you filter out the blue light, then of course you may not get so much eye strain from looking at the screen, but you will not get the upliftment that you get from going outside.

The second aspect is that most opticians are selling blue light filtering glasses. But is it filtering enough that is biologically significant? The answer is no. Most blue light blocking glasses that people are buying filter out maybe 5 to 10%. It is like you're standing outside, and you feel it's too much sun, and you get a transparent umbrella and hold it. So, in most cases it's 5%. The glasses that



really filter out blue light will look orange. Only orange and other spectra will go through, since blue is filtered out, so we see them as orange or even red. The real blue light filtering glasses are orange, yellow or red.

Some people who get migraines will benefit from filtering out blue light when they go out, but they'll also benefit just from wearing sunglasses, because that will filter out a lot of light, including daylight. At night-time, for people who cannot sleep easily, and cannot control the lighting, the real blue light filtering glasses do help. For example, somebody

working in a grocery store, whose shift ends at 10 p.m. or midnight, who comes home completely jazzed up because of the light and cannot asleep, will benefit if they wear the blue light filter glasses for one or two hours before the shift ends. That will help. So, there are specific cases where they're more effective, while there are many cases where people are just paying for nothing because there is no benefit that is significant.

Q: Here are my \$20 glasses from Amazon! [chuckles]

Maybe you'll get some placebo effect.

Q: Exactly! It's placebo and now I totally know it!

Just look at the glasses, do they actually look slightly yellow or orange? If so, then you know.

Q: I think a lot of families will find this advice helpful because, with homeschooling, designing an ergonomic workspace for kids has become more important than for grownups. There's just so much that they have to do with this new change.

The other aspect of your research, which I have started implementing, is time restricted eating. Is it the same as intermittent fasting, or is it different? I like time restricted eating better.

In the scientific literature, intermittent fasting is a broad term, because it just means doing something intermittently. It goes back to the research on calorie restriction: When caloric intake in mice is reduced by 20 to 40% then the mice live longer. That led to the idea that we should restrict calories, but then it is not easy to restrict calories every day, so they came up with the idea that we should eat every other day: There is a diet called the "Every Other Day Diet." And then it was discovered that people who didn't eat for two

Some people who get migraines will benefit from filtering out blue light when they go out, but they'll also benefit just from wearing sunglasses, because that will filter out a lot of light, including daylight.

days out of seven might get similar benefits, and that people who eat less than 1000 kilocalories for five days in a row every two months also get some benefit.

So, all of these are intermittent not continuous. That's why they lump them together as intermittent fasting. But the word "fasting" repels people who would benefit, like people who have diabetes. They are told by their physicians that they should not fast, because they may become hypoglycemic. In our clinical study, we tell them that they can simply choose their 10 hours, and they can eat whatever they're currently eating, then they say, "Yes we can do it." If we tell them that "You have to fast for 14 or 16 hours," then psychologically it becomes difficult.

Q: Again, the positive reinforcement that you spoke about earlier: What is the message that helps a person take a positive step forward? I love the idea of time restricted eating. What you also showed is that it's not about how much or what, but it's the time you eat, the discipline, that makes a lot of difference.

It was a Japanese scientist who got the Nobel Prize for autophagy and there was a lot of conversation about the

positive benefits of fasting and how it helps with autophagy. So, in the Indian context, there is the idea of *Ekadashi*. I think our ancients knew the benefits of fasting.

In the Indian culture there is weekly fasting, which is similar to intermittent fasting. Two days in a week you fast, and that gives similar benefits. Reducing calories for several hours over a couple of days does give a lot of benefit.

Q: Is there any research on the benefits of fasting on emotional stability? I was reading some yogic literature where a person who was irritable was told by his teacher to eat less in the evenings, that it would help him. So, I'm just wondering if scientific research also shows any correlation between emotional poise and restricted eating.

Yes, we anecdotally hear that people who have anxiety benefit from this and can avoid a panic attack. And I think in the book I describe how there is a hormone that is passively broken down in the gut that causes panic attacks. So when that hormone is managed, it may no longer cause anxiety.

But what is interesting is the history of fasting, I don't



When we fast, the brain and the rest of our nervous system go through changes because they're exposed to ketones as an energy source. For mice with certain neurological diseases, like Huntington's Disease, time restricted eating helps them to sleep better, and their activities are much better. At the same time, for depression and other conditions, bright daylight is still the best antidepressant and it's plentiful and free.

remember where I saw it, perhaps in a documentary, where Dr. Valter Longo talks about fasting. Another interesting thing was done by Russian scientists who were doing some experiments to try to figure out how to improve the health of institutionalized patients with depression and bipolar syndrome. There was a very difficult patient who was bipolar, and one day he said, “I’m not going to eat.” The warden gave up and said, “Okay, if you’re not going to eat, don’t eat. I’m not going to force feed you.” They used to force feed the patients, but instead he decided, “Okay, until he begs for food, we’re not giving it.” So, the patient went without food and just had water for six days or even longer.

After that, he came back completely cured and said, “Well, I feel much better! I’m ready to leave as I’m completely normal.” The physician warden, who was a little curious, wondered, “Was it the fasting or did something else happen?” So he tried this experiment on many other patients with emotional problems, and found that fasting actually helped a lot of them, not all. So, in Russia, a lot of the experiments on fasting and health started from emotional health.

When we fast, the brain and the rest of our nervous system go through changes because they’re exposed to ketones as an energy source. For mice with certain neurological diseases, like Huntington’s Disease, time restricted eating helps them to sleep better, and their activities are much better. At the same time, for depression and other conditions, bright daylight is still the best antidepressant and it’s plentiful and free. A lot of people don’t go outside enough. Because I wear my light sensing watch I see how

The foundations of day-to-day physical health are also three factors: sleep, nutrition, and physical activity.



In the pursuit of perfection, we should not give up what is good now.

much light I am exposed to, and if I don't make an effort, even in San Diego, California, I don't get as much as I should. If you think about it, most of the time we are indoors, we have curtains or blinds on the windows, and we are not always sitting next to a window. Then, as soon as we go out of the house, we put on sunglasses and get into the car.

So, we are never actually exposed to much daylight. Daylight is very useful in reducing depression and people in Nordic countries know this, so they even pay to sit in a brightly lit room, with 10,000 lux of light, as an antidepressant. At Geneva airport, also, there are light rooms where you can pay to sit.

Q: I remember when I first came to the USA, I was in Virginia in the winter. Inside the house, with incandescent light, I would feel almost claustrophobic by evening. I had to step out, take a walk, and sit in the sun. It took me a good two to three years to acclimatize myself to the change in lighting. When we bought our current house we added extra windows. I didn't realize it when I had it, but when I didn't have it I knew immediately.

Any parting words that you want to share with our readers, especially during Covid times?

Sanitation and social distancing will help prevent the virus from getting into our bodies, but to



improve resilience we need a good circadian rhythm. Then, even if we get the virus we may not become too sick. For example, among NFL and NBA team players, there is no death for those who tested positive. All these elite athletes have a very strict regimen – how much sleep they get, their exercise regime, and they’re always outside practicing. That’s a clear example of a cohort of nearly 1000 people who had the same rate of infection as the general public, but no one went to hospital.

Paying attention to sleep activity, nutrition, and being outside builds up resilience, so that even if you test positive you may not die.

This is a direct effect, and there’s also another indirect effect. People with diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure often have a more severe form of Covid, but we also know that time restricted eating can help reduce the severity of these chronic diseases, so indirectly a circadian lifestyle will also reduce the risk of suffering from the virus.

Q: Sir, thank you so much for all the great work you are doing.

Thank you. Have a nice day.

Q: You too! Bye.







everything

Greed subsumes love and compassion; living simply makes room for them.

BELL HOOKS

it changes

The New Storytelling:

We Are All Indigenous

Global Citizens

– Part 2

WAKANYI HOFFMAN is a Global Education Specialist and founder of the African Folktales Project. In Part 2 of her interview with **SARA BUBBER**, Wakanyi shares the value of storytelling, passing down wisdom through generations, her Kikuyu culture, and how we are all indigenous global citizens.

Q: A lot of change has taken place from previous times to modern times. But one thing that really stands out as central in this dialogue is storytelling. What is the role of stories in the transfer of wisdom?

That could be another session, couldn't it? Storytelling is a living thing. It is who we are. We tell stories using all forms of communication: Through song, through dance, through nonverbal communication, we use the art of storytelling to communicate our feelings, our ideas, our fears, and our concerns. And so, the role of storytelling in communicating wisdom is central.

Children are like sponges: They are very good at receiving a story, and then interpreting it for

themselves and reenacting it. Whenever I hold a storytelling session with a group of children, I will hear the story later on from another child who was not part of the group, because that story was shared. That's clearly the way we've always passed down knowledge. Even in schools, whenever I speak to educators, especially teachers involved in global citizenship education, every single discipline that children are taught in school, whether it is mathematics or science or music or art, is a form of storytelling. If children imagine it as a story, there's a lot more retention; that has been scientifically proven.

The role of storytelling in passing down wisdom is key to understanding how to do it, and there is no one way that is better than another. Take



We can use any space in which human beings are gathering to tell stories. We need to open up our minds to what is available to us, and get excited that we can scale the process of telling stories with these tools.

oral storytelling – I could claim that stories are best told orally, but that’s just one way in which indigenous communities have done it. Now we have other tools, and we can use the digital tools we have. We can use any space in which human beings are gathering to tell stories. We need to open up our minds to what is available to us, and get excited that we can scale the process of telling stories with these tools.

Q: Storytelling has been going on for a long time in oral form. We'd like to know about the oral traditions of Africa.

There are so many! I think I will focus on my own culture. I come from a tribe known as the Kikuyu people of Kenya. The communities of the Kikuyu are based around the mountain region. We border the Masai and other tribes, and there’s a lot of

intermarriage. My maternal grandfather was part Masai, so there’s a bit of Masai blood in me.

Some of the oral traditions are reflective of this intermarriage and intercultural exchange, but there are also certain ways of the Kikuyu I can speak to, for example, the oral tradition around naming. We name our children after ancestors; for example, my name, Wakanyi, is my maternal grandmother’s name, and she was named after either her maternal grandmother or paternal grandmother. It really depends on the line and the birth order. I’m the last born, and the second daughter of my mom. My sister is named after my father’s mother. That’s one of the very strict traditions of the Kikuyu culture. You know the birth order and you also know if it’s from your mother’s side or your father’s side.

There’s a creation myth: The first Kikuyu that settled around Mount Kenya climbed up the mountain. From there, he experienced a spiritual awakening by encountering the God of the Kikuyu, and he was presented with a wife. The wife then bore nine daughters, and the nine daughters started the Kikuyu’s nine tribes. We are all descendants of those nine tribes. Depending on your name and your clan, you can trace your ancestors back to one of those daughters.

There’s also a tradition of building houses, which is an interesting one. According to the Kikuyu, a house – a round hut – had to be built in a day. That doesn’t happen anymore, but in the olden times, each hut was built from morning till evening. A lot of organizing had to go on to complete the task. The reason? An incomplete house could invite the wrong kind of energy, evil spirits. To avoid them, you had to build your house, move into it immediately, and begin living in it. Then you’d have the blessing of the right kind of spirits.

Our indigenous cultures are so important, and we need to honor their importance to this world. They provide the map to show us where we've come from, and where we're heading.

There are a lot of stories around ancestors, and how the ancestors live with us, in us, and around us. There's a lot of respect for ancestors who have departed, as well as rules and ideas about how not to upset the ancestors. You cannot invoke certain names or people in any old way. You must pay your respects to certain people that have passed before you. And the naming culture also has a lot to do with respecting those who have left, and showing the continuation of life, in a reincarnation kind of way.

A lot of traditions are still practiced within modern Kikuyu culture, such as traditions around marriage. When you get engaged, you go back to your home and stay, and perform a ceremony, which is basically a marriage ceremony, before you do the formal modern wedding ceremony.



We're all living on the same planet. We are experiencing the same changes, and the same landscape, on the whole, and we breathe the same air. So, I think it is important for us to understand that we are called to work together as indigenous citizens of this planet.

Q: As you were talking, it reminded me so much of the similarities in my culture, like what you said about naming. In India, the first son in many cultures is named after the paternal grandfather. Regarding marriage, you cannot marry someone from a certain village because they are your brothers. You should marry someone from seven villages away. These traditions are still followed – the ones with ancestors that live on, and the rites after death, also continue.

As you were talking, the thought that came that these stories are unifying. There are so many things that are similar: The folktales are similar, the rituals are similar, and we all feel a sort of brotherhood. We resonate with each other. The whole circle of storytelling is complete.

I agree completely. Which is why we need to start embracing the idea that we are all indigenous to this world. Our indigenous cultures are so important, and we need to honor their importance to this world. They provide the map to show us where we've come from, and where we're heading. If we ignore this, it's like taking off to sea without a compass. We don't know where we're going.

It's not to say that we need to be like they used to be, or that they are better than us. There's no "us" and "them." We're all one. Like you say, there are so many similarities that bring us together. There are more similarities than there are differences, and the reason for that is because we have originated from the same kind of indigenous populations. The way to bridge that gap is to tell our stories. And when we find a point of difference, that's an opportunity to recall a story that might bring about the connection.

It makes me excited to hear that within Indian cultures there are similarities to my own Kikuyu culture. And I know this is true for my own people back in Kenya, where there are 50 to 60 tribes.

Within those tribes, there are many ways in which we are interconnected, but we tend to differentiate ourselves based on something as abstract as language. When we overcome the language barrier, we discover that we've all intermarried.

We obviously share some of these ideas and ways of being. Ultimately, we're all living on the same planet. We are experiencing the same changes, and the same landscape, on the whole, and we breathe

the same air. So, I think it is important for us to understand that we are called to work together as indigenous citizens of this planet.

Q: I'm so happy to end on the note that stories connect, and we are all indigenous to this planet. Thank you so much for talking with us today. It was wonderful to have you.

It was my pleasure. I hope that we get to talk again sometime soon!

Illustrations by SANTANU CHATTERJEE





HOW TO DEAL WITH ANGER AND ENEMIES

In their ongoing dialogues, **THEOPHILE THE ELDER** and **THEO THE YOUNGER** continue to explore aspects of human behavior and self-development. Here they discuss some strategies for dealing with enemies, injustice, and managing anger.

That morning, Theo was very agitated. He had hardly sat facing his friend when he started sharing his problem.

Theo: I have been developing intense anger all these years, due to a neighbor who harmed my family and me. I hate him and I can't help it.

Theophile the Elder looked at him, quite amazed.

Theo: Yes, I know. But it's all about his wicked, twisted, and unfair behavior. I feel as if he were a piece of chewing gum stuck on the sole of my shoe. I can't get rid of it. As soon as I see the man, or even when I think of him, my anger is back.

Elder: You are going to make yourself sick!

Theo: I'm already sick. My stomach hurts, there are moments when I feel oppressed, and I often have a headache.

Elder: According to Chinese Medicine, the Liver Fire is what gives you such symptoms. They are caused by anger and resentment. Let's explore it further. In your case, what happened?

The old man needed more information.

Theo: I went to court to assess my rights.

Elder: And did you win the legal fight against your adversary?

Theo: Legally it was a win, but he did not pay enough for my liking, considering all the harm he had done to me.

Elder: So, the fight is still on. Your neighbor has succeeded in crossing your barriers and he is now partly occupying your inner space. You may also be in his mind since you won the case against him. He probably hates you. Your anger is what provides access to his anger. Through your mental and emotional attitudes, you have opened a way for him to penetrate within you. So now he can overrun you, reach your heart and plague your life.

Theo: You make it sound like war!

Elder: Currently, you are effectively in a constant state of war, so you'd better live it as a warrior would. This book, *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, is traditional literature in China, and it is still in use in colleges in many countries, since strategy

IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

is first and foremost simple psychology.

For example, making the enemy General angry is a clever trick, as it will destabilize him and confuse his mind, so that he won't be able to clearly see the way the battle is unfolding, or devise sustainable strategies. Being angry, he will tend to charge ahead and seek revenge at all costs. Therefore, his engagement will be weak based on his own self-delusion, boldness, and temerity. Some people may call it courage; but, in fact, an enemy is more easily defeated once you have provoked their anger and thus opened a breach.

Theo: But I have won!

Elder: Do you really think so?

The Elder marked a pause while Theo seemed to be thinking the matter over.

Elder: You have not won the emotional and the mental war. Once a warrior has won or lost the war, he agrees that the war has ended. He has no more enemy. He is at peace. He is ready for another battle whenever it may come. Meanwhile, he practices peacefully.



You have not won the emotional and the mental war. Once a warrior has won or lost the war, he agrees that the war has ended. He has no more enemy. He is at peace. He is ready for another battle whenever it may come. Meanwhile, he practices peacefully.



The problem is that your head and your emotions are going on fighting, which cuts you off from your heart. It might be tragic for you and your balance. Basically, your neighbor has highlighted for you a significant weakness that still abides in yourself.

Theo: So now you are going to ask me to be very grateful to him, I guess.

Elder [smiling]: That's almost it! In fact, you can thank the Divine who let you see that weakness, the tendency you still have, and who gave you an opportunity to correct it. Your neighbor is a mere indicator for you. The strength of your recurrent emotions is only a sign, a symptom of that weakness within you.

Theo: But he was proven wrong!

Theo was now irritated.

Elder: So? You won, didn't you? Justice was done. Then why should you continue the war? I'm sorry to tell you, but that weakness of yours will be used against you by your enemy or by any other person. Any serious adversary will easily defeat you.

Theo: I don't think so. I am strong and intelligent enough to know how to defend myself.

Next you are going to tell me all about love again, aren't you?

Elder: I might.

Silence

Elder: Isn't that what we've already done on many occasions in the past?

The old man marked a pause again and remained quietly focused on his hotheaded friend.

Theo: The warrior instinct is in you. That is another way to approach the Divine, but it is a demanding one. Arjuna is a good example in the Bhagavad Gita.

But Theo's anger was not soothed yet.

Theo: I'd like to plague his life just as he has plagued mine. That's a fair return, isn't it?

The Elder tries to temper him.

Elder: Let us keep calm, shall we? Some families have carried on their hatred through generations. Sometimes, they even forgot the root cause of such hatred, but their war has become a tradition and the families will hate each other forever.

Theo [sulking]: So now you see me as a dunce.

The old man smiled and mocked his young friend.

Elder: More or less!

In fact, you can thank the Divine who let you see that weakness, the tendency you still have, and who gave you an opportunity to correct it. Your neighbor is a mere indicator for you. The strength of your recurrent emotions is only a sign, a symptom of that weakness within you.



IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Theo: Well, now, do tell me, what would you do in this kind of situation?

Elder: I would take all necessary action to address it, on the purely practical side. Then, once it is done, I would forget all about it. Life is great, so it's really worth living it completely, enjoying all the gifts it offers.

Theo: And what of the difficulties, the problems entailed?

Elder: I deal with them as best as I can. See what Marcus Aurelius used to say about it:

“Accept the things to which fate binds you, and love the

people with whom fate brings you together, but do so with all your heart.”

Then, I am happy under all circumstances, at least, almost all of them.

The old man realized that Theo's anger was one of the oldest and most enduring forms of anger. So, he did not insist. Instead, he decided to think over all they had been talking about that day. Before leaving his young friend, he offered one more suggestion.

Elder: Theo, an enemy is supposed to be fought on the battlefield. Once the war has ended, he is no longer an enemy. That is sheer chivalry, an art that

Lord Krishna taught to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita.

Looking very thoughtful, Theo watched Theophile the Elder as he was leaving, after having invited his young friend to stay calm and serene.

An excerpt from *Dialogues with Theophile the Elder*

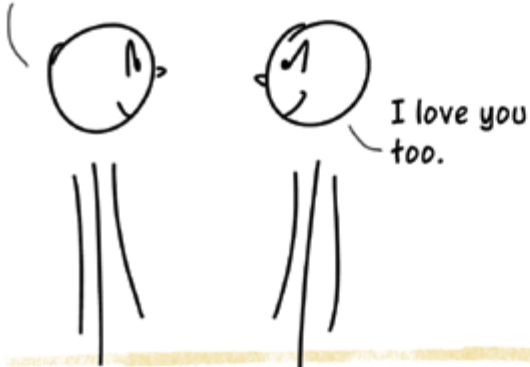
<https://theophilelancien.org/en/anger-enemy/>



SAYING IT OUT LOUD

MAYBE IT'S AWKWARD TO PUT IT IN WORDS.... BUT IT'S ALSO UPLIFTING

So, er... you know I love you...



MAYBE THEY DON'T EXPECT IT... BUT THEY WILL REMEMBER IT FOR A LONG TIME

You're the best!



MAYBE YOU'RE TOUCHED BY A STRANGER'S WORDS... MAYBE YOUR WORDS WILL ENCOURAGE THEM

You made my day!



MAYBE YOU HATE HAVING TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE... BUT YOU WILL BE GLAD YOU DID

I'm so sorry.

Me too.



MAYBE YOU'RE TOO BUSY, TOO TIRED... BUT A FEW MINUTES CAN MAKE UP FOR YEARS

I'm so glad you called...



MAYBE YOU DON'T FEEL THE NEED TO SAY IT... BUT THAT'S ALL THEY WANT TO HEAR.

I'm here... for you!



Friendship with oneself is all important,
because without it one cannot be friends
with anyone else in the world.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

be inspired



Into The Great Unknown

THE ART OF REMOVING AND CREATING HABITS

PART 11

DAAJI continues his series on refining habits, this month sharing his insights on the final *Niyama* known as *Ishwar Pranidhan*, which is often translated as "surrender to God." What does it mean? How can we understand both God and surrender? And why is surrender to God the ultimate habit?



Yoga in action

Let's start by reminding ourselves of the three *Niyamas* that make up Kriya Yoga, the Yoga of action – *tapas*, *swadhyaya* and the third and final one, *Ishwar pranidhan*, the most mysterious and puzzling of all. *Ishwar pranidhan* is generally translated into English as “surrender to God,” or sometimes “God-awareness.” It is puzzling, not the least because God is such an elusive principle to most of us, and also because the idea of surrender often suggests the removal of personal freedom.

Only in this last of the ten *Yamas* and *Niyamas* does Patanjali speak of God – Ishwar. Up till now, the focus has been on self-awareness, self-improvement, behavior, and purifying consciousness. That has all been a preparation. Throughout this preparation, we have moved from self-centeredness and selfishness to selflessness, from “me to we.” Now we take the next step, from “we to Thou.” This is a significant shift in consciousness, a quantum leap into the realm of God where even “we” no longer exists.

God is the great unknown

You may be wondering what God we are talking about here, because God has as many meanings as there are people. In Yoga, God is the great unknown, beyond qualities, beyond comprehension. Everything that is describable or definable has qualities, and while God is also present within the world of qualities, the quality-less state that is beyond definition is really the realm of God. There are other words that are also used for the same divine principle – the Source, the Ultimate, the Absolute.

Remember the state of *nirodha* or complete stillness we spoke about earlier in this series? That cessation of mental activity in the mind, the ultimate state of Yoga, is also the key to God-awareness. *Nirodha* and *Ishwar pranidhan* are intertwined. The next question is: How to get there? The approach needed is the “surrender” part.

The purpose of surrender

When we look at the idea of surrender from a worldly perspective, it can be quite distasteful, because it means to “submit to an authority,” or “to give in,” often with a sense of being forced to do so. The ego generally doesn’t respond well to that. We see this even in the best of relationships when we are asked to give in to the wishes of the other person. Who does this easily, willingly, and cheerfully? People who have fallen madly in love. They are very capable of surrender – they will do anything for the happiness of the other person. Generally it doesn’t last, however, as the ego eventually starts to make itself heard and the lover becomes aware of their own wishes. Most of us have to learn how to let go and give in, which is why family life is such a wonderful training ground for spirituality!

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From the spiritual viewpoint, surrender has a very positive significance, just as it does when we are madly in love. Love is a powerful flame. When love is there, surrender does not require any force or coercion. It is something that happens to us; it is not a thought or an action in itself. “Surrender” in this context is not a verb, as it is in the English language. “I” cannot surrender. It happens to us without our active participation and knowledge. In fact, if a person thinks they have surrendered, it is a sure sign they haven’t!

This beautiful state of acceptance, of being held, protected, and supported, is known as *saranagati* in

Yoga. With it comes a carefree willingness to hand over the reins to that infinite “something” that is bigger than all of us. We belong to the whole, and we acknowledge that we are a small part of it. We choose to cooperate and go with the flow rather than seeing ourselves as separate, or needing to control and dictate terms.

Saranagati is positive. It means to willingly search out those things that are favorable for our evolution, and to feel God in our hearts. Utmost faith is the foundation, and all our actions are done in the spirit of service to the greater good.

We naturally feel insignificant (there is no need for false humility), we approach life with an attitude of continuous improvement, and we experience the sacred in all existence. It is liberating!

When we offer all the fruits of our work to God, we are at peace. We take neither credit nor blame unto ourselves, because both credit and blame are surrendered to God.

Ishwar pranidhan is the ultimate habit. It requires us to rest in God-awareness in everything we feel, think, and do, in constant osmosis with God. The easiest way is through acceptance and surrender. Whether we are awake or asleep, aware or unaware, active or passive, we try to remain in this state, and this practice is known as constant remembrance in Heartfulness.

This state can only be experienced when the ego is refined to such an extent that all that is left of it is a sense of identity without coloring, energy, or charge. How do we reach this stage? On our spiritual journey, when we journey through the Heart Region, we learn to master our emotions and desires. After this, we journey through the Mind Region, and it is here that the process of ego refinement really accelerates. As we move from one chakra to the next with the help of our Guide, gradually there is less and less of “me,” then less and less of “we,” until eventually only God is left. God’s presence is felt only in our absence. This is what the word *pranidhan* is all about. *Nidhan* means “an empty space,” or “annihilation,” and *pra* means “with intensity.” *Pranidhan* signifies “the void filled with intensity.” This is the realm of God.

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We meditate so that we learn to experience this state – meditation is the mother of constant remembrance. Once we learn to hold it, we are then free of the entanglements caused by all the mental and emotional complexities and impurities that otherwise distort our existence. We are free.

Both wonder and worship are involved in *Ishwar pranidhan*. How is it possible to combine them? By meditating on the heart, so that we experience God directly within us.





How to engage with the great unknown?

As P.Y. Deshpande points out in his book, *The Authentic Yoga*, there are two fundamental psychological urges in human beings. The first is a sense of wonder, which gives rise to the spirit of inquiry underpinning the sciences and philosophy. The second is a sense of worship or awe for that which lies beyond knowledge and comprehension, which is denoted by the word “God.” This sense leads to mystical experiences that are similar across all cultures and eras.

The sense of wonder is more mental while the sense of worship is more feeling-based. They are not completely distinct, but they are certainly distinguishable. Together they make up our human psychology – mind and heart – and when they become polarized it results in a split. You could say that our modern societies, having separated science

and religion, have developed split personalities, and this is known as polarization. The two are meant to be complementary and integrated.

Both wonder and worship are involved in *Ishtar pranidhan*. How is it possible to combine them? By meditating on the heart, so that we experience God directly within us. God remains the great unknown, undefinable, quality-less, yet at the same time God is within our experience. Both inquiry and worship are unified in this act of meditation on the Divinity in the heart, where we experience the state of *nirodha*, the void of *Samadhi*, with the support of Transmission. We are in osmosis with God, and the result is perfect *Samadhi*.

Surrender to God is the habit to eclipse all other habits

When we have studied ourselves, purified ourselves, and refined ourselves, surrender is very simple. In fact, true surrender is possible only when we have done all these things. It is the ultimate habit, the culmination of the other habits. At the same time, when we make an effort to cultivate this habit, all the others naturally start to fall into place. This is where Transmission has such an impact – it is the essence of pure love. It takes us directly to a state of surrendered awareness of God, even when we have not yet mastered all the other habits. The catch? It is then up to us to mold our behavior so that we are capable of holding that experience for longer and longer periods until eventually it becomes constant.

Like Jedi knights, we need to become worthy of surrendering to God. We cannot surrender by the will and effort of the ego. Instead, when we immerse ourselves in God through meditation with



Like Jedi knights, we need to become worthy of surrendering to God. We cannot surrender by the will and effort of the ego. Instead, when we immerse ourselves in God through meditation with Transmission, and study ourselves so that we let go of unwanted habits and cultivate noble habits, eventually the ego dissolves into purity, its essence. We become that vast emptiness of the Ultimate. God-Realization and Self-Realization are one and the same thing.

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The great saint Kabir wrote beautiful poetry about this. In one poem he says,

*Narrow is the lane of love.
Two will never fit.
When I was, the Beloved was not.
Now He is; I am not.*

Rumi also wrote about it, for example,

*If in thirst you drink water from a cup,
you see God in it.
Those who are not in love with God
will see only their own faces in it.*

Both poets are describing the state of surrender where the “I” has disappeared. It seems so far away from our world that is in crisis because human beings are still so I-focused, where many have not even reached the state of we-consciousness of human brotherhood. Yet beyond the “we” is “Thou,” the beginning of the realm of God. This is where we embark upon the journey into the great unknown – before that, everything is preparation.

There is a story about the Buddha that illustrates this very well. For many years he struggled to attain enlightenment through self-effort. He tried

everything. He once said, “Who knows what sorts of austerity and penance were undergone by me in expectation of even a trace of the fragrance of the state of *Nirvana*. At long last, the state I had long cherished was achieved. How much time it took, and after how many days the desired goal was acquired! I practiced a lot, underwent so many troubles, fought against the rush of irrelevant thoughts, and cleaned off shrubs and bushes.”

Ultimately, it was when he relaxed his efforts, when he surrendered, that he experienced enlightenment. His efforts were the preparation; he became the Buddha when he let go and surrendered: “It was then that the light of Realization came to my fortune. On arriving at it, all obstructions dropped off. Calmness then prevailed in the mind, and there was immense peace all over. To tell the truth, that is the fragrance of pure *Nirvana*.”

If you explore the inner world of enlightened beings like the Buddha, you will find the void – infinite space and stillness. Babuji describes it as “more and more of less and less.” The roots of enlightenment arise from absolute surrender. Through letting go, through surrender, comes the realization of God. But that is not the end. Ultimately, when there is oneness, unity, and merger, all the above simply dissolves.

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RUMI

Photo by MONA MISHRA



AN ART ESSAY

Beyond Traditional **and Modern**

Part 2

JYOTI BHATT is a celebrated and awarded artist, best known for his work in painting and printmaking, as well as his photographic accounts of rural Indian culture and folk art. He and his colleagues founded the “Baroda School” of Indian art. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2019 and has been honoured with 5 Lifetime Achievement Awards. In August 2021 he had a conversation with **ANANYA PATEL**, musing about his life and his art. Excerpts from that conversation are presented in this 2-part series, along with some of his work.





My wife Jyotsna inspired me from the beginning. I have been told that I have depicted her in all the female figures in my paintings and prints. This may not be 100% right, but there's something to it. I was in New York on a Fulbright scholarship when I got a three-month grant to travel in the US. She came with me and we got married. It was in 1966. We had no idea how to run a family or anything. We learned to help each other. I would listen to what she had to say, and she would listen to me, but without any special or forced effort. It was a collaboration. The only thing was that work should continue.

We then returned to Baroda, where I had a teaching job and she completed her post graduate diploma and started teaching. Very few of our brilliant female students got the opportunity to continue with their art, and I didn't want her to worry about running the house.

We have to throw away something, so it's best to select something that is best, or something that is important enough to tell us about the past.





When I was photographing I would go away for long periods, so she took all the responsibility of managing the home and looking after our daughter. I'm sure when I was away there were problems, but she never mentioned any of them to me. Often we think that not coming in the way of each other itself is a great help.

If I say I am not worried about my work not lasting, then I am lying to myself. Naturally, if my work lasts it's fine, but is it really necessary? If people go on creating more and more work, then it will grow and nature will be unable to bear our mistakes. We have to throw away something, so it's best to select something that is best, or something that is important enough to tell us about the past.

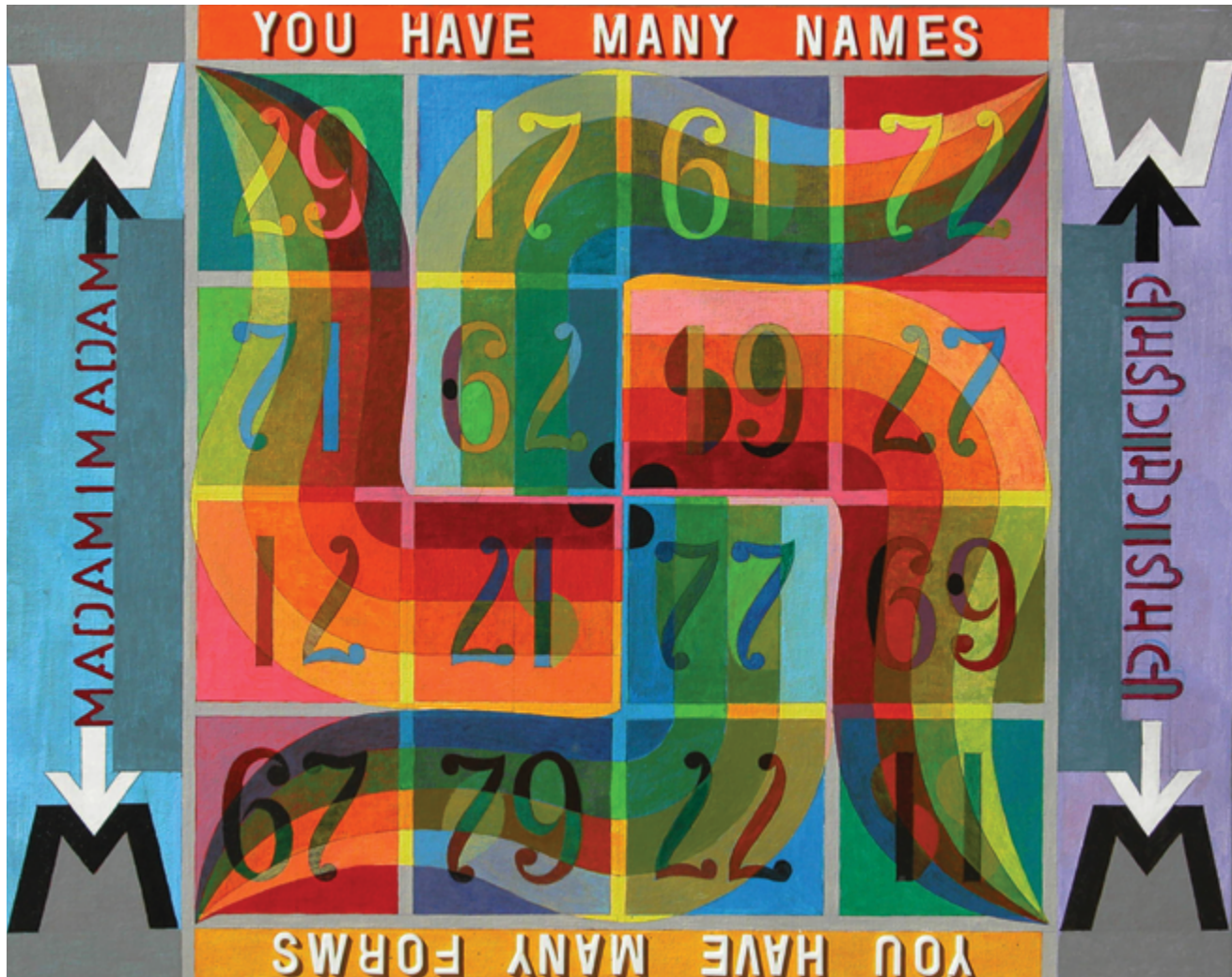
In Indian philosophy, we have three gods: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Brahma's duty is to create. Vishnu's job is to look after the world created by Brahma, and Shiva has to destroy. Only then can the cycle continue. Many of our traditions, like Rangoli, have this same cycle. You make it every day, and in the evening you remove it. The next day you make a new one. The art object doesn't last, but art lasts. I'll be happy if my work inspires somebody to make art, instead of just preserving it. If it is preserved, subconsciously, I may like it, although I may not like to admit that.

I have used written words in my work along with painted images. This is something I had seen in the embroidery in Saurashtra when I was young. They make two types of embroidery – one is decorative and the other is narrative. Ram, Lakshman, and Sita are depicted, but all the figures look alike, so they would write the names next to them. What they were unable to show visually, they would write. The same thing was done in miniature paintings in Rajasthan. Sometimes the script was even more important than the image. The same thing happened in Europe in Byzantine art and the Christian tradition.



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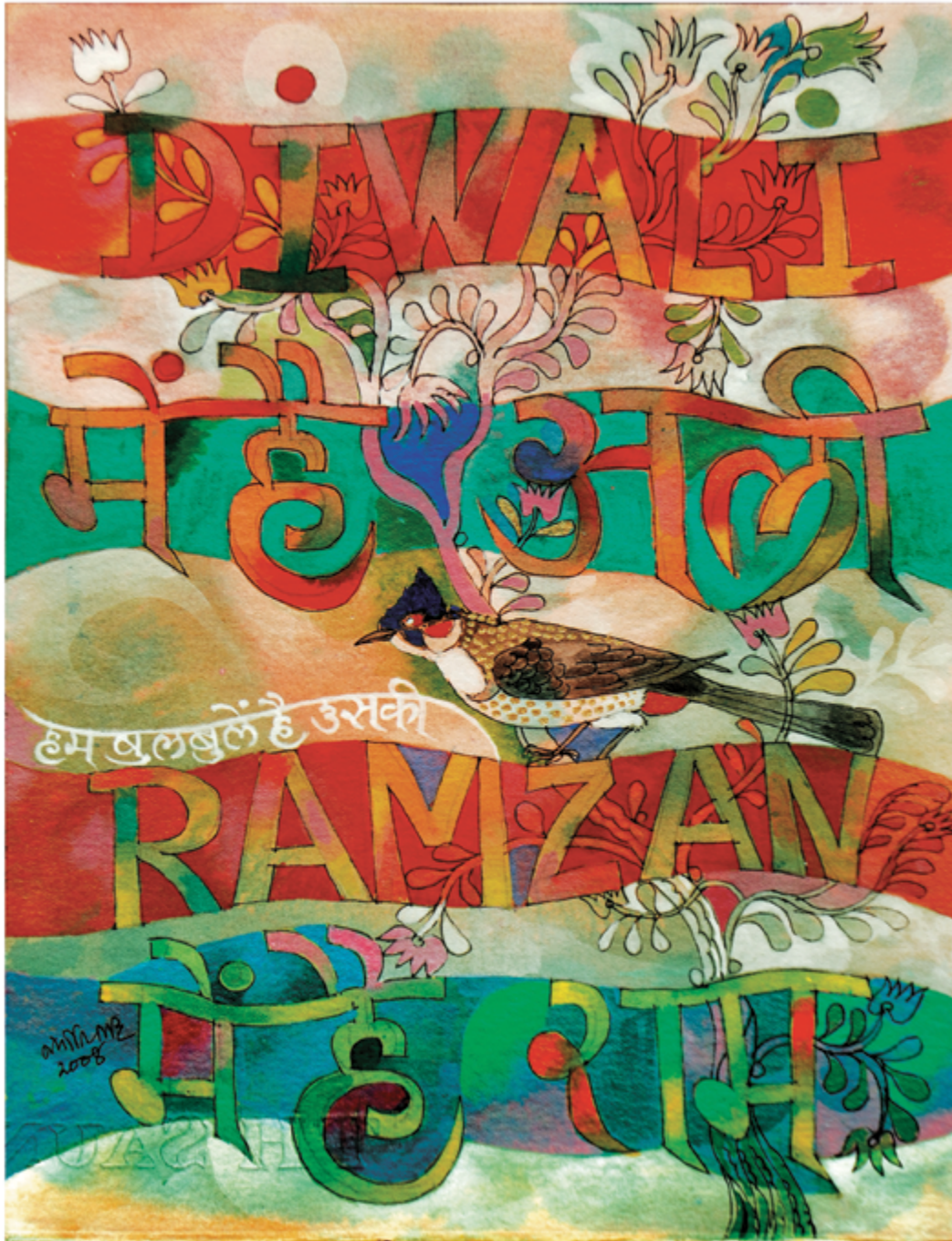




I started doing the same thing; I would write names. Later, I realized that letters also have very interesting forms in calligraphy. So I started adding them as a visual element. If you are unable to read, you can still see, and it becomes part of the painting.

Then there is the influence of television and advertising. We might see news about an avalanche in the Himalayas showing up next to an ad for a restaurant – two odd things. The images that we see nowadays are mostly combinations of shapes and written text. So I also started adding that to my work. Whenever I was travelling, I would notice what was written on the back of rickshaws and trucks. It's so fun!





If I add a line like that to my own painting it may make you laugh a little, it may confuse you, or excite you to find out the meaning. On a rickshaw I once saw “Diwali” written in English and then in Hindi: “*mai hai Ali.*” Below it was “Ramzan” written again in English and then in Hindi: “*mai hai Ram.*”

People give so many lectures about this, but this simple rickshaw driver had a better sense, that is very relevant to our present day problems. And I have used that line in many of my works, with no direct connection. If there was a nice space somewhere I would put it in.

If some idea comes, I try to see if it works instead of debating beforehand whether it will work. Do it and see. Instead of why, I ask why not?

Artworks by JYOTI BHATT

oh, there i am — lost

years ago,
i began
a very long game
of hide and seek.
i looked in every nook
and i scavenged every cranny
to try and find
where i might have been hidden.

i thought i was concealed
behind the fast-fading
highs of success.
i was adamant
that i existed
in the hearts of those
who never stayed.

in my blackest state of loneliness
i had given up all hope,
and believed I was lost for good.
in that dungeon of rock bottom
a voice that sounded
suspiciously like my own
made its way through the cracks
of my beat up, battered soul.

kindly, but firmly
she whispered to my heart:
“my dear, you have
looked everywhere,
when all along,
you were here.”



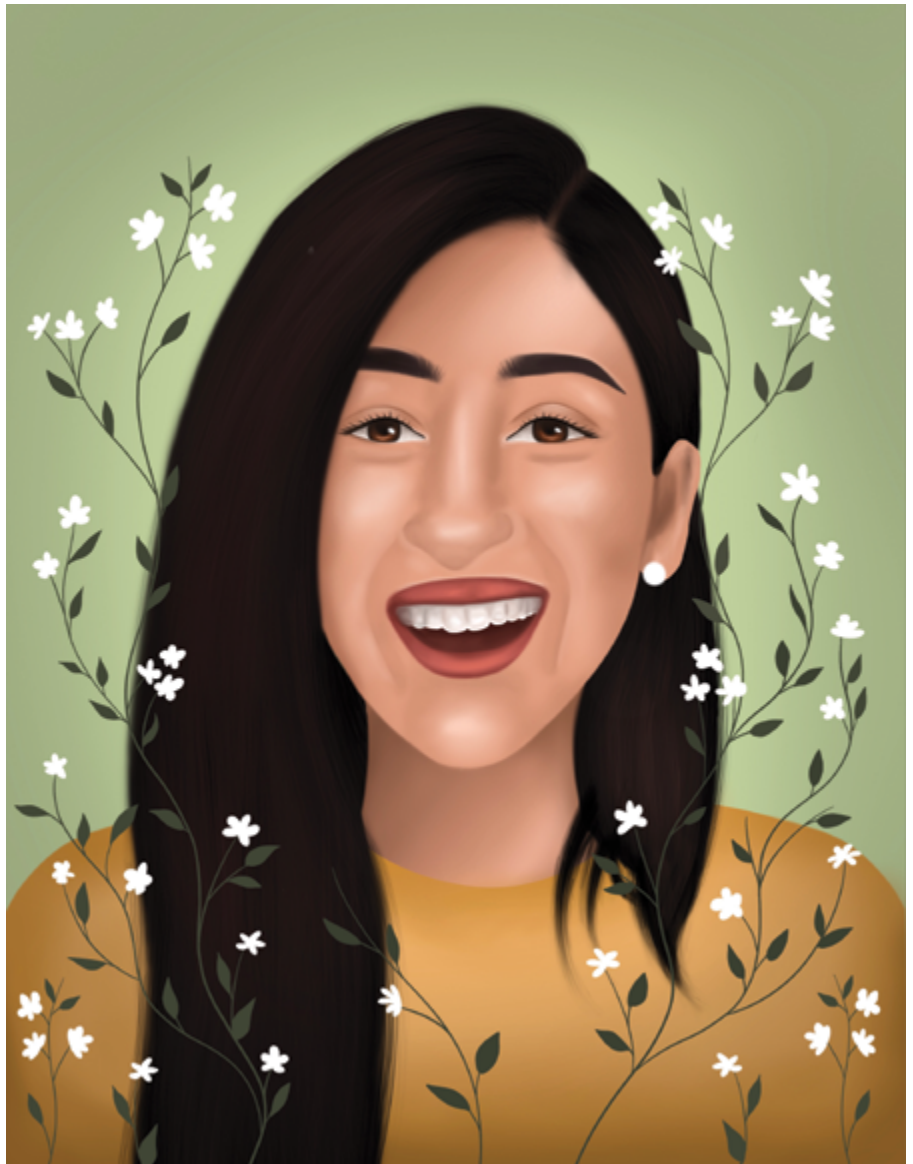
oh, there i am — found

a few days ago
 i glanced into the mirror
 and was surprised to find
 a stranger peering back at me.
 who was this girl
 eyes bright with joy,
 smile full with excitement,
 spine straight with confidence,
 spirit strong with conviction?

those brown eyes
 are shaped like mine.
 and that smile
 belongs to me.
 when she stretches her spine
 i grow taller.
 the more she speaks
 my spirit grows bolder.

the deeper i go
 the more i am surprised
 to find
 i was never going to be found
 in any nook or cranny
 i was hiding in me
 all along.

MAMATA VENKAT



Illustrations by LAKSHMI GADDAM



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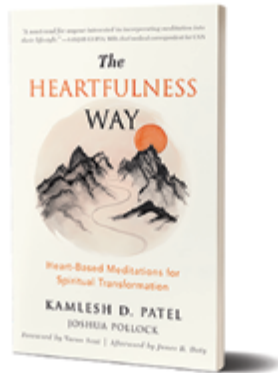
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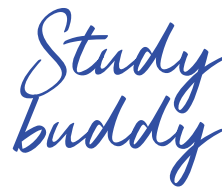


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