

WHY WE VALUE FREEDOM

Heartfulness

Self | Work | Relationships | Inspiration | Vitality | Nature | Children

THE MARCH TO FREEDOM

Daaji explores the ultimate freedom

THE HEARTFUL PRESENTER

Ravi Venkatesan on how to influence minds and win hearts

CRYPTIK

Spiritual awareness through public art

ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN

Terran Daily shares some simple practical tips





EVERY EDUCATED CHILD IS ANOTHER POSSIBILITY TO CHANGE THE WORLD

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FLIGHT OF THE *Limitless*

Dear readers,

Each of us is limitless in our potential. Then what is it that binds us and stops us from soaring? When we swim against the current in a river we struggle, whereas when we let go and allow ourselves to be carried by the flow, it is liberating. Most of the struggle that we face in life is because we swim upstream - we resist what life brings us. When we let go and accept situations as they come, we are liberated from so much hardship.

In this issue, we explore various aspects of freedom. Daaji's article takes us on the march to freedom, in order to satisfy the craving of the soul. In the nature section, the lotus exemplifies how to remain cheerful in the face of adversities and live unaffected by our surroundings, and in a similar way one young writer explores how reactions and expectations have hampered his happiness, and another about how developing acceptance in her family life has helped her to grow. And we hear from the great Swami Vivekananda about the one universal cry for freedom.

Thought creates and covers the distance between bondage and freedom. In Richard Bach's book of the same name, Jonathan Livingston Seagull tells one of his students: "You have the freedom to be yourself, your true self, here and now, and nothing can stand in your way." "Are you saying I can fly?" "I say you are free."

We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we have enjoyed compiling it.

The Editors



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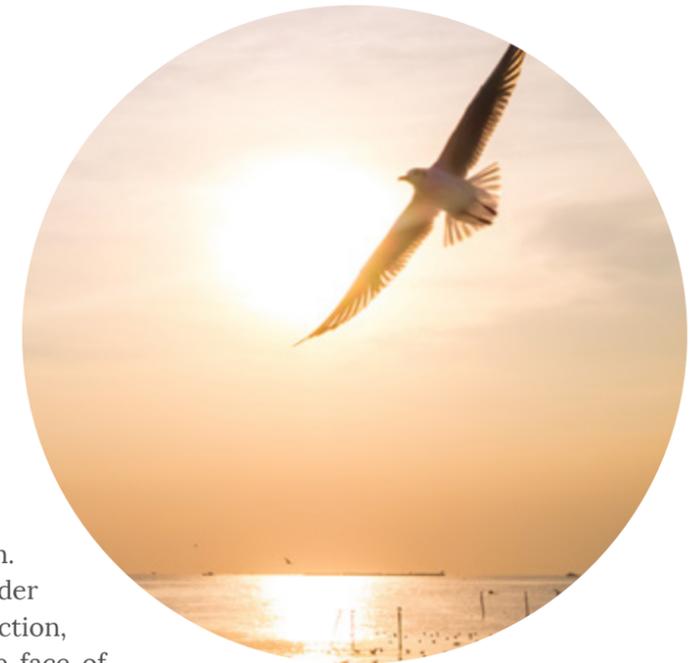
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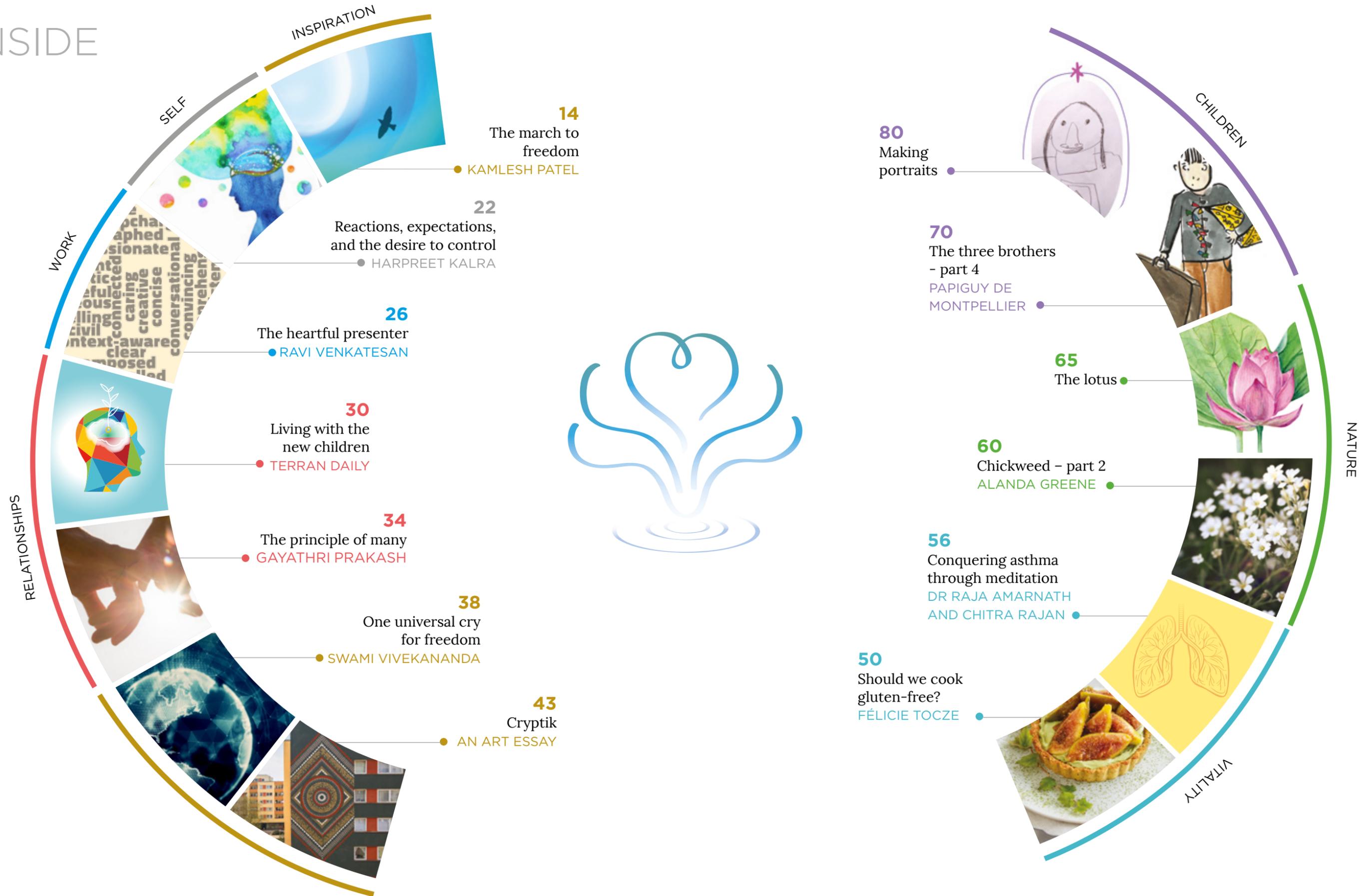


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Volume 2 Issue 7, July 2017

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As a consultant and a chef supporting healthy eating, Félicie proposes creative and tasty vegetarian recipes inspired by her many travels, designed to satisfy our each and every senses. She shares her expertise by teaching groups or individuals, and provides a chef or home catering service on demand. All her activities are inspired by a holistic approach, supported by the belief that healthy food should definitely be made more attractive.



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Heartfulness

Through meditation, calm

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TO MEDITATE

Sit comfortably, close your eyes and relax.

Turn your attention inwards and take a moment to observe yourself. Then, gently make a suggestion that the source of light that is already within your heart is attracting you from within.

Do this in a gentle and natural way. There is no need to concentrate. If you find your awareness drifting to other thoughts, gently come back to the idea of the light in your heart.

Feel immersed in the light in your heart, and let yourself become absorbed.

Remain absorbed within this deep silence for as long as you want, until you feel ready to come out.

Afterwards, scan your system and make a note of what you felt and observed. Try to carry that inner connection with you throughout the day.

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When you have found a master, then there is no need to worship any other god: you have found your god. All other gods are dead. When Jesus is alive, Jesus is God: in the great temple of Jerusalem there is nobody - it is empty. When Buddha is alive, then Buddha is God: then he is the temple and he is the Teertha - then the Kashi is empty and the Giranar is just a rocky place. Whenever there is a living master, God has chosen to be present there.

OSHO, FROM *DIVINE MELODY*,
CHAPTER 5



THE MARCH TO *Freedom*



KAMLESH PATEL takes us on a journey – the ultimate journey to freedom. In the process he explains why freedom is of such importance to humans worldwide.

• Evolution of Consciousness Series •

If we study history, we realize that there are some fundamental principles and values that the peoples of all cultures, backgrounds and walks of life have considered important. We can call them universal principles. One of the most highly valued is freedom.

In the words of Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, “The natural yearning of the soul is to be free from bondage.” This yearning or craving for freedom is the core of our human purpose. You could say, in fact, that the march to freedom is our true human purpose.

But what freedom is Ram Chandra talking about in this statement? Is it the license to do whatever we want on this earth for our own happiness, at the expense of other people, other species and our environment? The ancient Greek philosopher Plato said “No”, and argued that with freedom comes a responsibility to align our choices with goodness. In the 17th century, John Milton said the same thing. In the teachings of all religions, philosophies and spiritual traditions, we find the idea of choosing what is right over what is pleasurable. The Buddha’s noble eightfold path is based on the same premise, as are the ethical precepts of Yoga – *yama* and *niyama* – and the Ten Commandments of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

So let’s explore further Ram Chandra’s statement, “The natural yearning of the soul is to be free from bondage.” What bondage? What is the bondage

of the soul? All throughout this series on the evolution of consciousness we have been very close to this theme. The evolution of consciousness is the expansion that comes step-by-step, as we transcend the bondages of the soul. We have explored the three bodies of a human being: the soul is at the center of our existence, and then there are coverings around the soul. There are an infinite number of coverings around the soul, all of which can become heavy with complexities and impurities.

Our real march to freedom is to purify these coverings so that they no longer bind the soul. To let the soul be free of all heaviness, so it can soar and become one with the universal soul we call the Divine or God. To live in universal consciousness.

This march to freedom is the spiritual journey, and there is a map to give us guidance and directions. This map is the spiritual anatomy of the human system. In earlier articles of this series we started to explore spiritual anatomy, but now we will explore it in more depth.

Many of you will have heard of *chakras*, which are often described as centers of concentrated energy in the human system. The traditional view is that there are 7 main *chakras*: the root *chakra* at the base of the spine, the sacral *chakra* just below the navel, the solar plexus *chakra* in the upper abdomen, the heart *chakra*, the throat *chakra*, the brow *chakra* and the crown *chakra* at the top of the head.

TRADITIONAL CHAKRAS

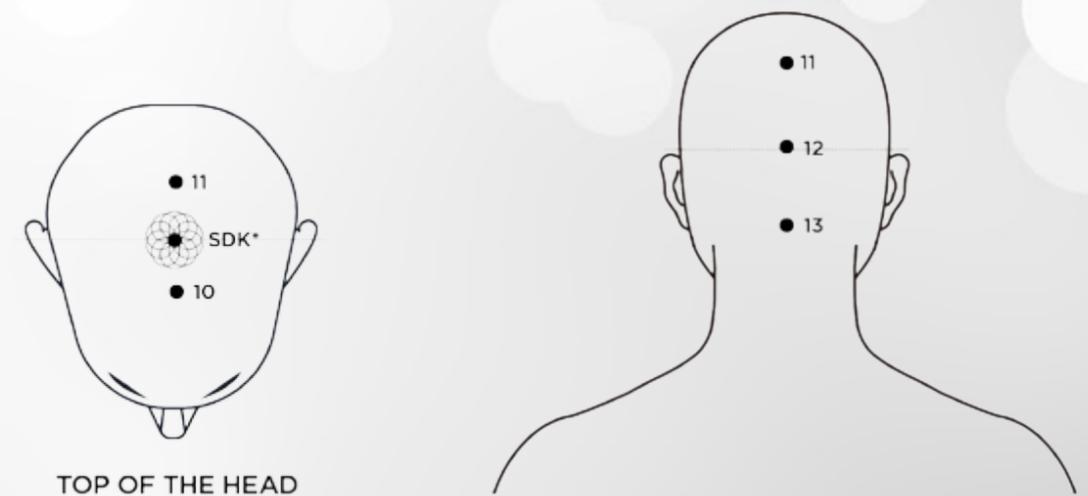
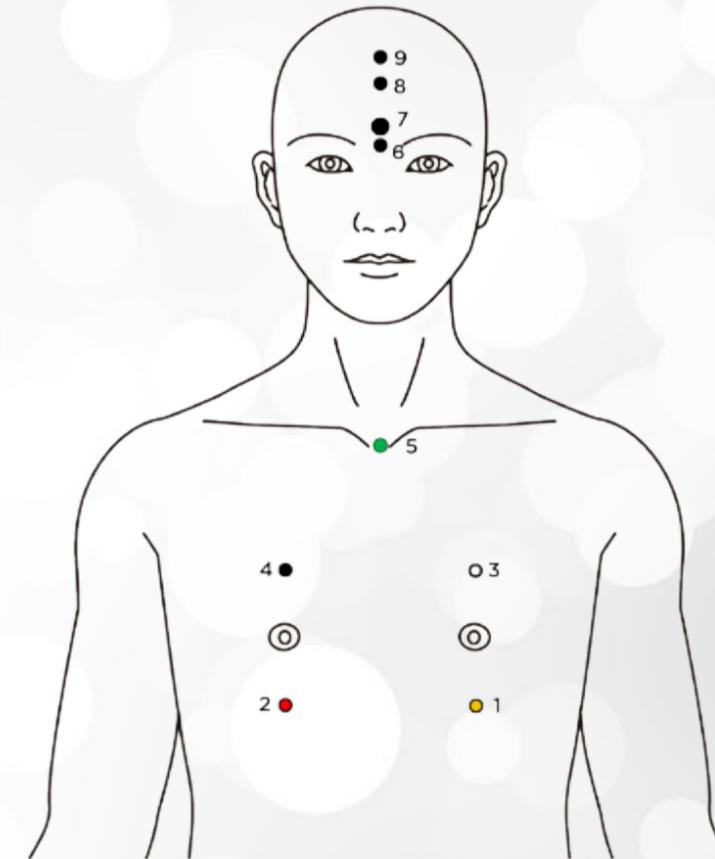


- Sahasrara dal kamal - Thousand - petaled Lotus
- Ajna - Third Eye Chakra
- Vishuddhi - Throat Chakra
- Anahata - Heart Chakra
- Manipura - Navel Chakra
- Svadhisthana - Sacral Chakra
- Muladhara - Root Chakra

But we now know that the spiritual anatomy of a human being is made up of many more *chakras* than these 7, and that they extend to the occipital prominence at the back of the head.

The 3 lower *chakras* are common to all higher animal species, while human beings also have the possibility of awakening and developing the capacity of the *chakras* from the heart upwards. These 13 *chakras* are shown in this image:

LOCATION OF THE CHAKRAS FROM THE HEART TO THE CENTRAL REGION



SDK : Sahasra dal kamal

The heart *chakra* is not just one star; it is a constellation of many stars, and the 5 major ones belong to the 5 elements that manifest throughout the universe – earth, air, fire, water and ether, also known as *akash* or space. Our bodies are also made from those 5 elements, which are present in the heart *chakra*, starting with *chakra* 1 of the heart, which has the qualities of earth dominant. The other four elements exist here to a lesser degree. *Chakra* 1 is on the lower left side of the chest near the physical heart.

Chakra 2 is the soul *chakra* on the lower right side of the chest. It has the quality of space or *akasha* dominating. *Chakra* 3 is where the fire element dominates, on the upper left side of the chest. *Chakra* 4 is where the water element dominates, on the upper right side of the chest, and *chakra* 5 is at the throat and has the air element dominating. All of this is within the Heart Region or *Pind Pradesh*, and it is a vast region in itself.

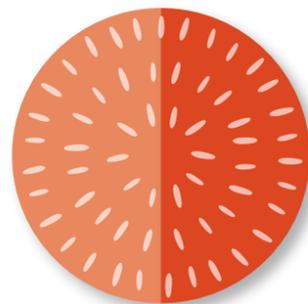
Through the practice of Heartfulness, the first step is to purify and awaken these 5 *chakras* of the *Pind Pradesh* so that consciousness can expand through this vast region.

What does this mean for us? One thing it means is that we learn to purify and master the feeling side of life. We can clear away the overlays of emotional distortion around the soul that color our perception, so that purity, wisdom and clarity become our natural state of being. We develop the confidence to listen to the heart. Our lives become simpler and purer.



On this journey through the Heart Region, at *chakra* 1 we learn to work with our likes and dislikes, with the pull of our desires, including worldly worries, greed and jealousy, resentment and self-pity, sensuality and lust, guilt and shame. When we master these emotions, as a result of purifying and traversing *chakra* 1, a natural feeling of contentment and lightness develops. The beautiful thing about the earth element at *chakra* 1 is that it supports and allows everything. It is utterly accepting, without judgment. For instance, the earth will allow a murder to take place and when it does there is no earthquake. The earth does not swallow up the murderer. We walk on Mother Earth and she tolerates our weight. We can create a beautiful garden or burn the garden, and all is witnessed by the earth. She tolerates us. She accepts us. She is like a mother to us.

When a person develops this quality, at its pinnacle that person becomes like a mother, becoming so loving and accepting of everything.



Chakra 2 is the spiritual heart. At *chakra* 2 we experience the feelings of peace, lightness, stillness, and the bliss of the soul. Compassion reaches its zenith here. At first it is difficult to integrate this experience with daily life, as the feelings are so enticing that all we want to do is meditate and stay in that state of peace. On one side, there is immense calmness and peace, and on the other side a very subtle level of yearning to move onwards. Gradually, as we journey through *chakra* 2 and balance *chakras* 1 and 2, we learn to be both grounded in the earthly plane and soar in space at the same time. We start

to integrate matter and spirit in our lives.

This creates our base for moving onwards to the upper *chakras* in the chest area where we encounter the other elements – fire, water and air. Fire is vital energy, and at *chakra* 3 we dive deeper into this element.



Fire purifies. When you see gold ore heated up it is purified to produce gold. If you heat ice, what happens? It melts – it becomes water, which then becomes steam, powerful enough to move locomotive engines. Let's focus on these two principles of fire: purifying and melting. What is the solidity that melts in us? When we interact with people, sometimes we are vibrant and feel like moving and at other times we don't feel like doing anything, we are frozen. It is just this. When the fire of love is there, we can move easily because love makes things easier and better. It is difficult to move around with complexities and heaviness.

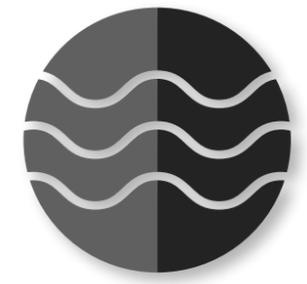
Fire has another quality. Even when you keep a match or a lighter pointing downwards, the fire will always rise upwards. Our love, the fire of love, must ascend. When we talk of ascension we always talk of divinity. Love connects us with our Source and with the Guide who is leading us to our Source, and so love facilitates our march to freedom.

At *chakra* 3 we learn to use love and anger so that both are transformative guiding emotions for the

onward journey. Anger in its pure form is also for our benefit, as it alerts us to the fact that something is wrong, and reminds us to change our tendencies and behaviors to continue on the right path. As we feel the inner friction we know something needs refining.

So at this *chakra*, the purifying effect of fire helps us to transform so that we evoke love in others. What is being transformed in us? The worst in us is being transformed; things like hatred. It is transformed into love, and that's what helps us to ascend. Fire helps us to melt our heart. Here true devotion develops and true love develops. We don't have to pretend to be in love, as we cannot help but love. Love becomes our very nature.

When anger and love are directed elsewhere, when their focus is outwards towards other people and things, these two emotions can drag us into entanglements and complexities, creating a diversion and causing emotional turbulence. That is not to say we should not love in a worldly sense, or that we should not utilize anger to improve ourselves in a worldly sense, but it is important to keep the field of consciousness clear and pure, as opposed to muddying it with turbulent emotions. Hence we have the process of cleaning in Heartfulness – to refresh and rejuvenate the field of consciousness, to purify the subtle body on a daily basis.



Moving to *chakra* 4, what does the water element evoke in us? Water has a very soothing and tranquil

In our journey through the Heart Region, we purify all these feelings. Each one has its purpose and we learn how to use them constructively for our onward evolution. Once we have traversed the *chakras* in the Heart Region, the journey then continues into higher and higher realms. To go further, the important quality that we need is generosity. Generosity of heart is able to drop the differences, the opposites or the *dwandwas*, and is able to discern things with just the right perspective.

or emotional turbulence exists in the heart, the air element manifests this confusion and illusion. When confusion is present, it means that we must pause and wait until the confusion has shifted and the heart is able to truly guide us with clarity.

In our journey through the Heart Region, we purify all these feelings. Each one has its purpose and we learn how to use them constructively for our onward evolution. Once we have traversed the *chakras* in the Heart Region, the journey then continues into higher and higher realms. To go further, the important quality that we need is generosity. Generosity of heart is able to drop the differences, the opposites or the *dwandwas*, and is able to discern things with just the right perspective.

Transcending this *Pind Pradesh* means going beyond this earthly plane of existence to the Mind Region, and finally beyond the Mind Region to the Central Region. We will explore these regions next time in the quest to understand more of the march to freedom ●

Kamlesh Patel is the world teacher of Heartfulness, and the fourth spiritual Guide in the Sahaj Marg system of Raja Yoga. He oversees Heartfulness centers and ashrams in over 130 countries, and guides the thousands of certified Heartfulness trainers who are permitted to impart Yogic Transmission under his care.

Known to many as Daaji, he is also an innovator and researcher, equally at home in the inner world of spirituality and the outer world of science, blending the two into transcendental research on the evolution of consciousness. He is expanding our understanding of the purpose of human existence to a new level, so necessary at this pivotal time in human history.

effect. It refreshes our mind and soothes our heart. The state that we experienced with fire, always restless to love, now becomes quieter. The intensity of love is reduced considerably. Love becomes like a deep flowing river towards the Source. It is less expressive and more inwardly transporting. The emotional excitement of love found at *chakra 3* is ennobled when it combines with the water element and becomes subtler.

that could be reckless. It keeps us on track, if you like, in its pure form. But when it is weighed down with impressions, fear can become negative and crippling.

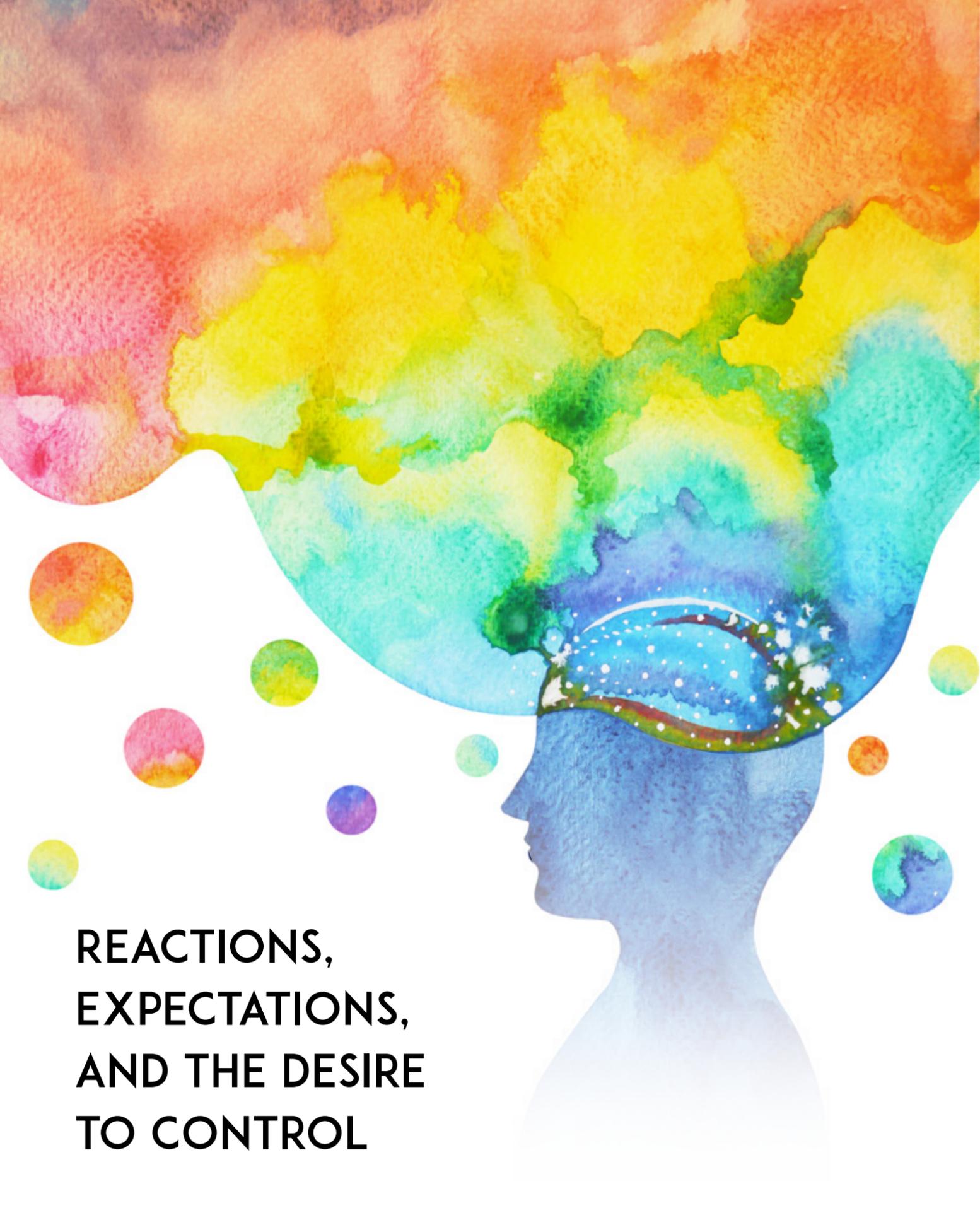


Strength develops from within as love flows deeper, and this manifests at *chakra 4* as courage and confidence in everything that we do. Courage is very beneficial when a healthy level of humility and concern for others is present, but when it is reckless and ego-driven it can be destructive.

At *chakra 4* we also experience and learn to master fear. Let's say you are all alone on the ocean and there are thirty-foot waves, you will feel afraid. Fear balances courage, preventing us from doing things

Chakra 5 is dominated by the air element, and has qualities of lightness, clarity and intelligence. Air is always in flux – we don't know which direction it is heading. In the same way, our mind, our moods, our emotions also keep on fluctuating. At *chakra 5* there can be a lot of illusion. When heaviness





REACTIONS, EXPECTATIONS, AND THE DESIRE TO CONTROL

HARPREET KALRA takes us along with him on his journey to find the perfect meditation. Along the way he understands much more about life and how to live it, and the need to let go.

One cold wintry early morning, after meditating, I was quietly contemplative. Not that this contemplation was something new, but on that day it was different. My quiet contemplation was laced with disappointment about why I was not able to pull off a perfect meditation.

Most spiritual guides and world meditation teachers have time and again mentioned that one perfect meditation is enough to help us dive fully within and realize our true inner potential. Yet, after years of meditation I have not been able to pull it off. That perfect meditation still eluded me. Unable to find an answer, I left for work.

It was a busy day, packed with meetings and presentations. Around 7:30 p.m., after wrapping up, I started my drive back home. Seeing the red light at the traffic signal, I stopped. As time passed a sense of annoyance tinged my system, “Why is it not turning green?” I murmured.

Eventually the signal turned green and I felt relief, but just when I was about to hit the accelerator I realized the car in front of me was not moving. My relief was short-lived and I started to honk and mutter. In some time the car moved. Shortly I followed and quickly overtook the car; not before giving the driver a staring glance.

While I continued to drive, all the events of the day flashed in front of me one by one, like bubbles dancing in free air. Soon an understanding gripped me. There was a common thread through my thoughts, feelings and behavior. The thread of reaction.

I was reacting all the time.

When we completely lose the desire to control any outcome, the tendency of the mind to expect also ceases to exist. We can then achieve a perfect meditation.

It was not that I was not earlier aware of my reactions, but this time the understanding pervaded my entire being in one stroke. There was something different. The heart and mind both accepted the need to change and stop reacting, unlike on previous instances when one was not in sync with the other.

It further occurred to me that all my reactions were rooted in the disappointment of my unmet expectations. I was expecting from almost anything and everything in my radar – from myself, from friends and family, from colleagues, from acquaintances and strangers, from life events and circumstances, from God ... the list was endless.

The stronger the expectation, the greater was the disappointment at it not being met, resulting in reaction and frustration. During my college days, when I had faced a particular criticism from a friend, I managed to brush it off, but months later, when I faced a similar criticism from my father, I struggled to deal with it as my expectation from him was different.

I concurred that expectation was the real culprit!

“But what did that have to do with a perfect meditation?” I pondered. Slowly another understanding pervaded my being.

Expectation is rooted in the desire to control.

I was aware of many definitions of meditation: meditation is the art of awareness; meditation is thinking continuously of one thought; meditation is diving deep within oneself, etc. The one which always resonated with me the most is: meditation is the art of letting go of control. That instant I realized why.

In meditation, we practice this art of letting go of control. If we carefully analyse the nature of the thoughts that pull us out, that stop us from deep diving within ourselves fully, we will soon realize that they have the same thread. For example, a desire for a preferred outcome, such as “I should get this job,” “I should get promoted,” “My boss should appreciate my work and not criticise me,” “My son should get admission in the best school,” etc.

I realized that in meditation, as we set out to relinquish these desires for preferred outcomes, we start oscillating between being at peace with any outcome and latching onto a specific outcome desired by us. With time, as the desire to control the outcome weakens, the quality of meditation starts improving. We increasingly stay connected with our inner self and are less pulled out.

I understood that day that when we completely lose the desire to control any outcome, the tendency of the mind to expect also ceases to exist. We can then achieve a perfect meditation. But not without relinquishing the desire for a perfect meditation! ●



None can love freedom heartily, but good men;
the rest love not freedom, but licence.

JOHN MILTON

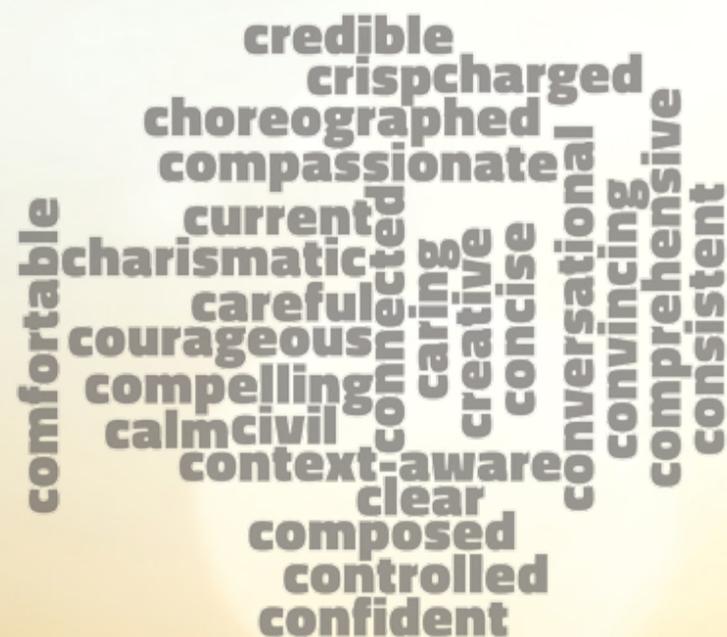
The heartfelt PRESENTER

Influence minds and win hearts

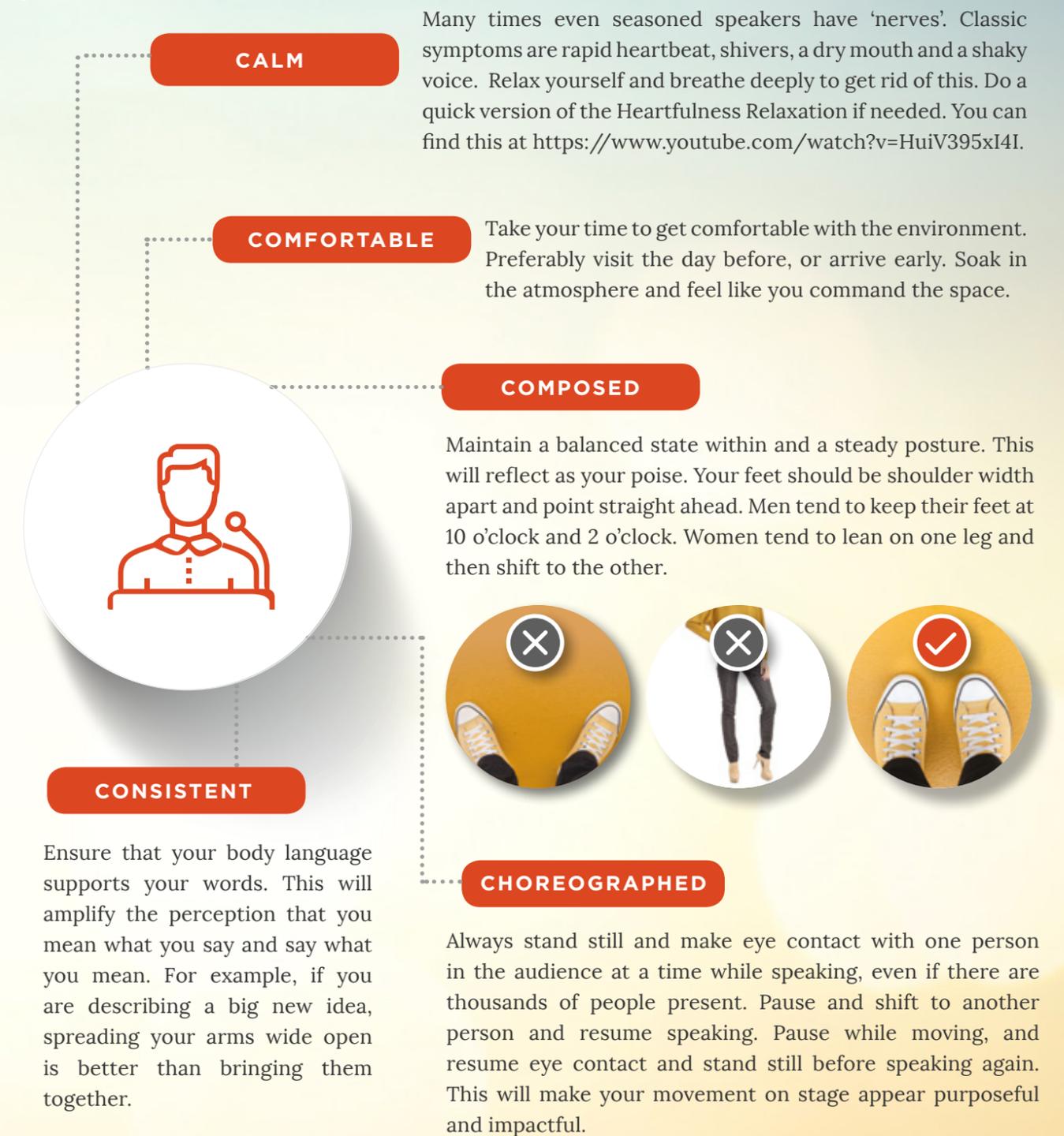
Last month **RAVI VENKATESAN** started by sharing his understanding of why speakers fail. In Part 2 of the series he shares the aspects of communication we need to explore in order to refine and improve our presentation skills, focusing on body language.

Here are the 27 Cs categorized under 5 focus areas:

- BODY LANGUAGE** - calm, comfortable, composed, choreographed and consistent
- VOICE MODULATION** - clear, crisp, controlled, civil, and charged
- PRESENCE** - confident, credible, current, charismatic and courageous
- EMPATHY** - caring, compassionate, connected, context-aware, careful and conversational
- IMPACT** - concise, compelling, creative, convincing and comprehensive



Let's dive deeper into body language. Research shows that body language accounts for 55% of all communication. Non-verbal expression makes a very significant difference to the impact of your presentation.



In the next article, we'll dive deeper into voice modulation. Till then have fun practicing these techniques to refine your body language ●



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Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.

KAHLIL GIBRAN



LIVING WITH THE New Children

Watering What You Want to Grow

TERRAN DAILY shares more of her professional wisdom as a pediatric occupational therapist on how to encourage and support the best behavior possible from your children.

“Stop whining!” “How many times do I have to tell you not to grab things from your sister?” “Don’t tell me you forgot your school bag again!” “Why can’t you just do your homework without me having to nag you about it?”

Life in most families with children is peppered with a certain amount of scolding, but when scolding becomes the most frequent way of communicating and the child’s behaviors are getting worse rather than better, something needs to change.

Think of family life as a garden for a moment, with children’s various behaviors as plants and the attention you give each behavior as water. What

plants do you want to grow? I’m guessing you want behaviors that are harmonious, responsible, respectful and happy to grow, right? So the trick is to shower attention on positive behaviors, helping them to grow, while at the same time paying as little attention as possible to the negative behaviors until they wither and finally die out. It makes sense, right? But is it easy? No, at least not at first.

In last month’s article, we talked about clearly defining behavior goals and ‘watering’ desired behaviors with incentives that we have agreed upon with the children. But there are also a lot of other ways to water positive behavior. Here are a few strategies.

BE CLEAR WHAT YOU WANT

Before we can water any behaviors we want to grow, we have to be clear what they are. And unfortunately, it’s often much easier to know what we don’t want than what we do want.

One way to gain some clarity is to write down your child’s behaviors that most drive you crazy or worry you. Then beside each behavior, write what you would prefer the child to do instead. For example, “Nia grabs playthings from Ana,” becomes “Nia asks Ana for the plaything then waits to see if Ana will give it to her. If Ana will not give it to her, she finds something else to do, or asks an adult to help.”

If the children are old enough, it can be useful and fun to involve them with this activity. Choose one or two of the behaviors on your list, and the children can help problem solve what they can do instead of the problem behavior. Maybe the child can draw a picture of him or herself doing the new behavior. You can hang the picture on the wall and encourage other family members to notice and comment on it to the child. “Oh, I love seeing that picture of you and Ana playing peacefully.”

ENCOURAGE POSITIVE VALUES



Next, you can think about what positive values are behind the behaviors you are wishing for your child to develop and write those down too. Using the example of Nia and Ana above, the positive values might be peace, harmony, patience and sharing. Can you think of others? Then look for stories or historical examples that highlight those

values, and read or talk about them with your children during the week. Your children and you together could make illustrated posters for each value and post those on the walls along with their pictures. Giving this kind of attention to positive values is a powerful way of watering them. The whole family can get involved.

CATCH YOUR CHILD DOING SOMETHING RIGHT



Now comes your challenge! This is not only about your children changing! You have to retrain yourself to notice your children doing things you're glad they are doing, even little things. Comment on it. Express your appreciation.

Review your list of behaviors you'd like your children to develop and think about what baby steps they might take in that direction. If you see them doing even a little bit of what you'd like, comment on it. Express your appreciation.

In the example above, while Ana and Nia are playing, maybe Nia says in a somewhat threatening voice, "Ana, give me that toy!" Granted, that's not exactly what you'd like to see, but at least she is talking to Ana instead of just grabbing. You could go over to them – rather quickly before things can escalate – and say, "Nia, I'm so glad you're talking to Ana instead of just grabbing the toy. Now, can you think of a really nice way to ask her for the toy?" You have watered Nia's baby step toward peaceful and respectful behavior and helping her move in the right direction.

Another time, Nia might manage the whole behavior you'd like. She might come to you and say, "Ana won't share! I asked her but she won't give me the toy!" She has done exactly what you have asked – come to an adult instead of grabbing, so it's time to celebrate. "Oh Nia, I'm so happy you came to me instead of grabbing."

STARVING THE WEEDS



Paying as little attention as possible to the behaviors you don't want can be just as challenging as noticing the behaviors you do want. If something your child is doing could harm them, another person, or someone's property, then you must intervene, and that requires paying at least some attention. You can still be neutral though, protecting people and property without becoming angry or scolding. For example, if Nia and Ana begin physically fighting, you will need to find safe places for both of them to calm down so that you can all talk about the situation together.

Often though, problem behavior is just inconvenient or irritating rather than dangerous. An example might be Ana and Nia's brother Vash, who frequently forgets to bring home his school bag. You're exasperated, but want to think of an alternative to scolding, since that doesn't work anyway.

Maybe you can make Vash a star chart to mark the days he does remember his bag, and he can earn a reward when he remembers his bag 10 times. On the days he forgets you can encourage him with, "Oh well, I'm sure you'll remember tomorrow. Now how can we find out what you need to do for homework tonight?"

Watering what you want takes practice, and when you are tired or frustrated you won't always succeed. Encourage yourself, just like the children, for taking even baby steps in the right direction. Go easy and find support if you can, from your spouse, other parents, or a professional. Your child's school or doctor may be able to help. I hope that with some perseverance, you will find your family beginning to grow a fine garden of harmony, responsibility, respect and happiness ●

FURTHER EXPLORATION

1. *How to Use Positive Reinforcement for Children*, on the New Kids Center website: <http://www.newkidscenter.com/Positive-Reinforcement-for-Children.html>
2. Nelson, J. et al, 2007. *Positive Discipline A-Z: 1001 Solutions to Everyday Parenting Problems*, 3rd Edition, Three Rivers Press, Random House, Inc. USA.
3. Tillman, D. and D. Hsu, 2001. *Living Values Activities for Children Ages 3-7*, Health Communications, Inc. USA.
4. Miller, J.C., 1998. *10 Minute Life Lessons for Kids: 52 Fun and Simple Games and Activities to Teach Your Child Honesty, Trust, Love, and Other Important Values*, HarperCollins, USA.

The Principle of *Many*



GAYATHRI PRAKASH speaks about the changes she has gone through after marriage – leaving her own family and living with her husband’s family, who have different traditions. Confronting her prejudices and expectations, she is learning acceptance and to see the beauty in diversity.

Very often I wonder what life would have been like if my family were not on a spiritual path and us kids were not born into that way of life.

Very often I come across people who speak of different beliefs. Somewhere the undercurrents of all these belief systems unify. So I would like to touch upon this point in particular because I believe that this is the principal of all belief systems.

When a person consciously remembers to hold on to this principle called ‘Love’ at every instance of his life, without any expectations, it will slowly change him from within. When that change happens it will reflect outwards into the world through his eyes. Eventually it becomes a habit that gives the soul satisfaction.

I must first write more about myself, and how my life’s stability lies in the openness that has been created by my family and their way of life. I, Gayathri Prakash, am a naturally stubborn and sensitive being. I see many spirited young people my age being the same.

After my wedding, I stumbled upon difficulties that I made sure I complicated as much as possible. Simply saying “Yes” and “No” bore new meaning for me. My level of acceptance was a tad lower than I could accept myself. My husband spoke from his heart all the time and there was something in him that I do not find in many of us today, not limited to age or sex. He was always non-expectant, accepting everything that came his way without even flinching.

What is this expectation that all of us have? I speak to a lot of my friends and they are very reluctant to get married. And one of the many reasons I hear often is, “Gayathri, you are lucky to be married into a family that is similar to yours, but it is not the same everywhere.” A part of this I understand, because the family I married into follow a spiritual path similar to mine.

Coming back to the reluctance to engage, the way I see it is that our expectations are far beyond satisfaction levels. These expectations are complications the human mind creates. For instance a behavior that was accepted at my parents’ home is difficult to accept at my husband’s family home. We create such barriers

in our minds. Isn't this the time for us to let our hearts think and our minds feel?

I very often make the mistake of judging a situation without knowing the full picture, and time and again I have been warned by my husband that I am jumping to conclusions. But what to do then? Now I sit down and reflect on what I have done. I must tell you that I always do this with an open heart and a mind. And if I am able to rationalize my decision I explain it, but if I am unable to rationalize I accept that I have made a mistake and apologize for the same.

My husband's family has become more open and more progressive in the way they think, thanks to their spiritual practice. This came as a pleasant surprise to me, because my mind was closed to the fact that I had married into a family that would give me enough freedom to do what I wanted and encourage me to be the person I wish to be. For instance, when I questioned some ritualistic Hindu practices, they were open to hearing my point of view in healthy conversations. As for encouragement, when I spoke to my husband about starting a business, he was immediately thrilled and helped me. And I was backed and encouraged by the entire family. They give me equal and sometimes more opportunities. But why did I not see it before?

Ego.

Most of us are slaves to this part of the mind that mediates between the conscious and the unconscious. While ego is a person's identity, it is 'mind made' and usually a character given to the physical body. Rarely do we associate our identity with the soul.

How open are we to refine ourselves?

Between transitions from one space to another, the mind works a number of times faster, creating a defense structure for whatever is to come. The attraction of negative thoughts is not inherited, but the removal of these negative thoughts is inherited from the teachings of our parents who have sown that seed of acceptance.

In the world today each family, each system, and each individual is attached to a system of belief. It could be a spiritual path, a religious path, or an atheistic path. But each of these inevitably leans on love. Giving love is something that is inculcated within each of us from the roots. Educating us to be more open to what is to come.

When a person consciously remembers to hold on to this principle called 'Love' at every instance of his life, without any expectations, it will slowly change him from within. When that change happens it will reflect outwards into the world through his eyes. Eventually it becomes a habit that gives the soul satisfaction. I will tell you one last thing: our hearts are bound by the roots of our existence, so if we pay enough attention to our own we help uncomplicate the virtues we pass on to generations to come.

The goal is one and the path is Love – the Principle of Many ●



Let my love, like sunshine, surround you
and yet give you illumined freedom.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

ONE UNIVERSAL CRY For Freedom

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA explores the nature of the soul and freedom, and shares his vision on how to bring about that freedom through meditation.

All nature is crying
through all the atoms
for one thing – its
perfect freedom.

I am going to present to you my idea of practical religion. We hear all around us about practical religion, and analysing all that we find that it can be brought down to one concept – charity to our fellow beings. Is that all of religion?

What is the goal of life? Is this world the goal of life? Nothing more? Are we to be just what we are, nothing more? Is man to be a machine which runs smoothly without a hitch anywhere? Are all the sufferings he experiences today all he can have, and doesn't he want anything more?

The highest dream of many religions is the world. ... The vast majority of people are dreaming of the time when there will be no more disease, sickness, poverty, or misery of any kind. They will have a good time all around. Practical religion, therefore, simply means, "Clean the streets! Make it nice!" We see how all enjoy it.

Is enjoyment the goal of life? Were it so, it would be a tremendous mistake to become a man at all. What man can enjoy a meal with more gusto than a dog or cat? Go to a menagerie and see the wild animals tearing the flesh from the bone. Go back and become a bird! ... What a mistake then to become a man! Vain have been my years – hundreds of years – of struggle only to become the man of sense-enjoyments. ...

What is the goal of it all? Can senses ever be the goal? Can enjoyment of pleasure ever be the goal? Can this life ever be the goal of the soul? ... If that is the fate of man, that he is going to be only the perfected machine, it would just mean that we go back to being trees and stones and things like that. Did you ever hear a cow tell a lie or see a tree steal? They are perfect machines. They do not make mistakes. They live in a world where everything is finished. ...

What is the ideal of religion, then, if this cannot be practical religion? And it certainly cannot be. What are we here for? We are here for freedom, for knowledge. We want to know in order to make ourselves free. That is our life: one universal cry for freedom .

What is the reason the plant grows from the seed, overturning the ground and raising itself up to the skies? What is the offering for the earth from the sun? What is your life? The same struggle for freedom. Nature is trying all around to suppress us, and the soul wants to express itself. The struggle with nature is going on. Many things will be crushed and broken in this struggle for freedom. That is your real misery. Large masses of dust and dirt must be raised on the battlefield. Nature says, "I will conquer." The soul says, "I must be the conqueror." Nature says, "Wait! I will give you a little enjoyment to keep you quiet." The soul enjoys a little, becomes deluded a moment, but the next moment it cries for freedom again. Have you

marked the eternal cry going on through the ages in every breast? We are deceived by poverty. We become wealthy and are deceived with wealth. We are ignorant. We read and learn and are deceived with knowledge. No man is ever satisfied. That is the cause of misery, but it is also the cause of all blessing. That is the sure sign. How can you be satisfied with this world? ... If tomorrow this world becomes heaven, we will say, "Take this away. Give us something else."

The infinite human soul can never be satisfied but by the Infinite itself ... Infinite desire can only be satisfied by infinite knowledge – nothing short of that. Worlds will come and go. What of that? The soul lives and forever expands. Worlds must come into the soul. Worlds must disappear in the soul like drops in the ocean. And this world to become the goal of the soul! If we have common sense, we cannot be satisfied, though this has been the theme of the poets in all the ages, always telling us to be satisfied. And nobody has been satisfied yet! Millions of prophets have told us, "Be satisfied with

What are we here for?

We are here for freedom, for knowledge. We want to know in order to make ourselves free. That is our life: one universal cry for freedom .

your lot”; poets sing. We have told ourselves to be quiet and satisfied, yet we are not. It is the design of the Eternal that there is nothing in this world to satisfy my soul, nothing in the heavens above, and nothing beneath. Before the desire of my soul, the stars and the worlds, upper and lower, the whole universe, is but a hateful disease, nothing but that. That is the meaning. Everything is an evil unless that is the meaning. Every desire is evil unless that is the meaning, unless you understand its true importance, its goal. All nature is crying through all the atoms for one thing – its perfect freedom.

What is practical religion, then? To get to that state – freedom, the attainment of freedom. And this world, if it helps us on to that goal, is all right; if not, if it begins to bind one more layer on the thousands already there, it becomes an evil. Possessions, learning, beauty, everything else – as long as they help us to that goal, they are of practical value. When they have ceased helping us on to that goal of freedom, they are a positive danger. What is practical religion, then? Utilize the things of this world and the next just for one goal – the attainment of freedom. Every

enjoyment, every ounce of pleasure is to be bought by the expenditure of the infinite heart and mind combined.

... You may pray all the time, read all the scriptures in the world, and worship all the gods there are, but unless you realize the soul there is no freedom. Not talking, theorising, argumentation, but realization. That I call practical religion.

This truth about the soul is first to be heard. If you have heard it, think about it. Once you have done that, meditate upon it. No more vain arguments! Satisfy yourself once that you are the infinite spirit. If that is true, it must be nonsense that you are the body. You are the Self, and that must be realized. Spirit must see itself as spirit. Now the spirit is seeing itself as body. That must stop. The moment you begin to realize that, you are released. ...

The spirit must be realized, and that is practical religion. ... The Kingdom of Heaven is within us. He is there. He is the soul of all souls. See Him in your own soul. That is practical religion. That is freedom. Let us ask each other how much we are advanced in that: how much we are worshippers of the body, or real believers in God, the spirit; how much we believe ourselves to be spirit. That is selfless. That is freedom. That is real worship. Realize yourself. That is all there is to do. Know yourself as you are – infinite spirit. That is practical religion. Everything else is impractical, for everything else will vanish. That alone will never vanish. It is eternal. Hospitals will tumble down. Railroad givers will all die. This earth will be blown to pieces, suns wiped out. The soul endureth forever. ...

Therefore to realise the spirit as spirit is practical religion. Everything else is good so far as it leads to this one grand idea. That realization is to

be attained by renunciation, by meditation – renunciation of all the senses, cutting the knots, the chains that bind us down to matter. ... What is meditation? Meditation is the power that enables us to resist all this. ...

How is it to be attained? In a dozen different ways. Each temperament has its own way. But this is the general principle: get hold of the mind. The mind is like a lake, and every stone that drops into it raises waves. These waves do not let us see what we are. The full moon is reflected in the water of the lake, but the surface is so disturbed that we do not see the reflection clearly. Let it be calm. Do not let nature raise the wave. Keep quiet, and then after a little while she will give you up. Then we know what we are. God is there already, but the mind is so agitated, always running after the senses. You close the senses and yet you whirl and whirl about. Just this moment I think I am all right and I will meditate upon God, and then my mind goes to London in one minute. And if I pull it away from there, it goes to New York to think about the things I have done there in the past. These waves are to be stopped by the power of meditation. ...

In the long run this power of meditation separates us from the body, and then the soul knows itself as it is – the unborn, the deathless, and birthless being. No more is there any misery, no more births upon this earth, no more evolution. The soul knows itself as having ever been perfect and free ●

Excerpts from the talk, ‘The Practice of Religion’, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4



CRYPTIK ART ESSAY

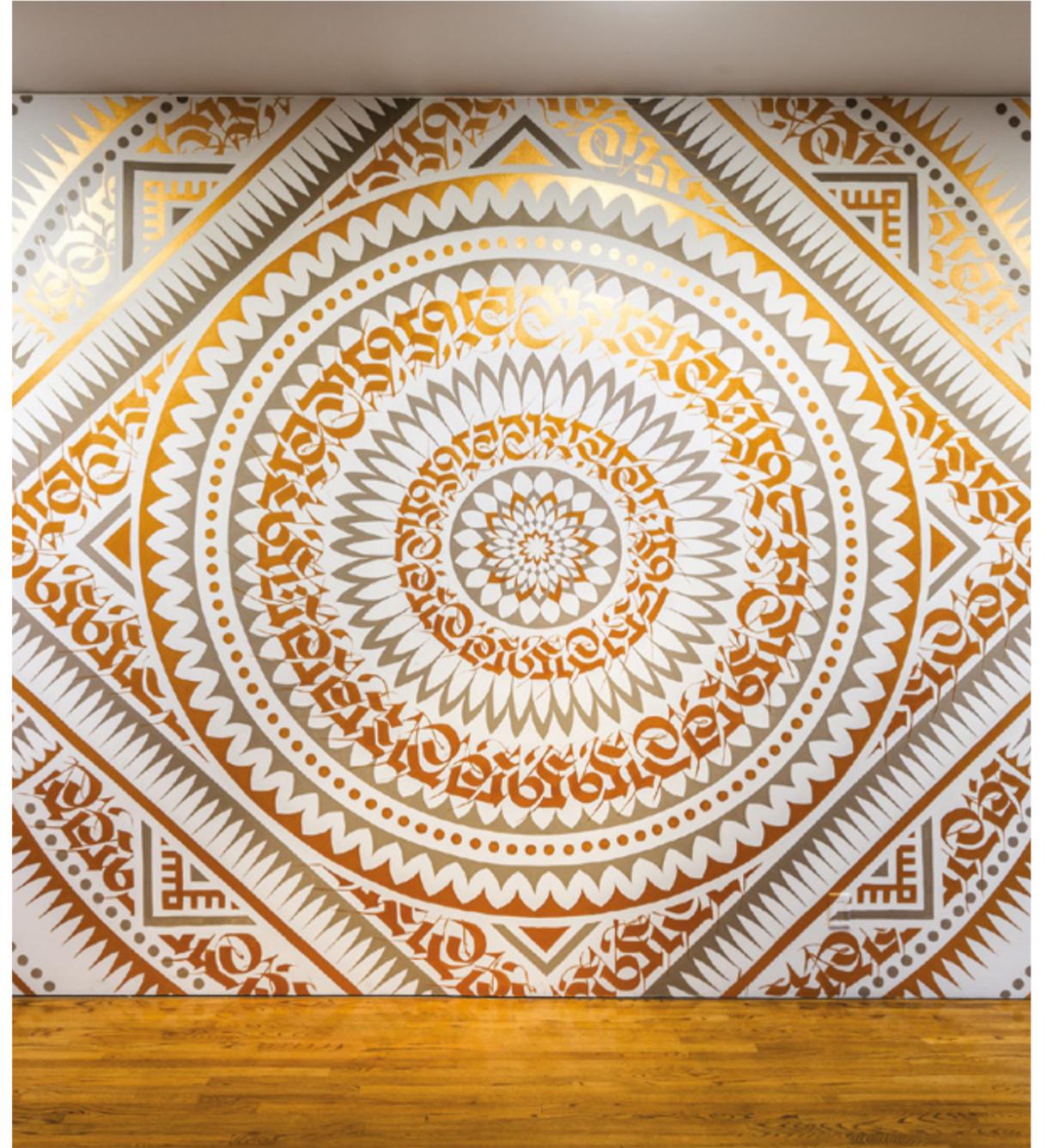
The Cryptik Movement is dedicated to helping humanity evolve towards greater awareness and understanding through public art. The purpose of the Movement is to facilitate the development of a deeper, more meaningful philosophy of life; one that encompasses many ideologies, philosophies, and belief systems in order to help us better understand our connection to one another, the planet and the universe.

Cryptik's Mantradas are an exploration of how art can be used as a tool for meditation, introspection and trance induction, each one adorned with sacred mantras and prayers in hopes of bringing blessings and positive karma to all who view it. These Mantradas are cosmic diagrams that remind us of our relation to the infinite and serve as a gateway to a world that extends beyond our material reality. Inspired by the sacred science of the ancient Egyptians, as well as the practice and creation of Tibetan sand mandalas, this collection reflects the long forgotten wisdom of our ancestors.

“The mandala is an archetypal image whose occurrence is attested throughout the ages. It signifies the wholeness of the Self. This circular image represents the wholeness of the psychic ground or, to put it in mythic terms, the divinity incarnate in man.”

- Carl Jung







“Cryptik creates from a palette of wonder, where all science, math, and true art spring from equal mystery. His is a clear-eyed art practice of more questions asked than answered. The Southern Californian creative’s intricate, almost trance-inducing works – be they on mammoth walls, slap stickers, or hanging art – find voice in images of spiritual universality. By his hand, Eastern philosophical thought and mantras hypnotically merge with the black letter bombing of cholo writing. The ancient and the sacred marry in a modern quest – through art – for conscious awakening and awareness” ●

- Jamie Maleszka, <https://massappeal.com/cryptik-interview-scope-miami-beach-2015/>



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANDON SHIGETA



Should we cook gluten-free?

Nowadays, talk about gluten-free cooking might sound trendy – an announcement of a diet that will magically resolve all society's problems. In fact, it is just an answer to a current reality: that there is now too much gluten in our daily food, particularly in wheat, given the rapidly modified processes it goes through in order to answer the growing demands from an increasingly squeezed population eager for immediate gains.

In the following article, **FÉLICIE TOCZE** shows us how delicious gluten-free cooking can be. She leads us through a journey of discovery of all the tastes, flavors and textures of gluten-free ingredients and invites us to develop our creativity and explore them with enjoyment and inventiveness.

Gluten is a composite of storage proteins found in wheat and other grains, and we can be intolerant of some or all of these proteins, depending on the sensitivity of our systems. Often we feel lighter after removing gluten altogether or after removing only modern wheat from our diets.

There are two negative responses to the absorption of gluten: first, an allergic reaction involving the body's immune system, and the second being more akin to intolerance. The former requires a totally gluten-free diet, and the second a limit of our consumption of cereals and to better select them, so as to improve digestion and ease the suffering gluten can cause.

I started to explore gluten-free cooking the moment I became aware of the important role of wheat in our diet. I became interested to learn about other cereals that could replace it, and realized that without wheat I not

only felt physically better but my cooking was also considerably enriched. That is a point on which I would like to insist as a cook. Actually, I am not an adept in gluten-free food, but like many other people who want to understand gluten intolerance, I explored the available literature on the topic. That is how I developed a way of cooking without gluten, thus offering valuable alternatives to those who need it.

A list of all available cereals shows that there are many more gluten-free cereals than cereals containing gluten. What our ancestors and so many other populations around the world ate shows how much we have narrowed the potential richness of our food. In order to easily remember which cereals contain gluten, we can use the acronym BROW, for Barley, Rye, Oats and Wheat (all varieties).

A good choice of gluten-free cereals is offered to us:

All kinds of rice – there is an impressive number, each kind having its specific taste and culinary characteristics. Try the Italian black rice, with its rich nutty flavor and the many antioxidants it contains. It has a chewy texture, at once moist and crunchy.

Millet – many varieties are grown, and are particularly popular in France in the Vendée region, where people use millet to make tasty desserts.

Buckwheat – found in Brittany where it makes the base of the famous Breton wafers and pancakes. It also constitutes the Slavs' gruel, the Polish roasted grits (*Kasha*), and it is used to make comforting soups.

Quinoa – the Andean and French varieties of quinoa can either be black, red or cream-colored.

Maize – there are all sorts of varieties and colors in the world, including a Peruvian delicious purple corn.

Amaranth – commonly referred to as pigweed, this small pseudo-grain is rich in minerals, proteins and amino acids and, when added to other cereals,

it gives them an incomparably creamy texture. To such an impressive list, we can add all the plants that do not belong to the cereal families or the pseudo-cereals, like quinoa, buckwheat and amaranth, though they play a similar role for giving a substantial binding aspect to certain cooking preparations. Here I am talking about chestnut, coconut, oil seeds and fruits, roots and tubers such as Kuzu root, cassava, potatoes, etc., and also legumes. Now that we have all the winning cards, we just have to start playing in order to learn the rules for each one of these ingredients, as they all have their own aroma and taste characteristics. Then we can make use of their specificities.

On a daily basis, I am on an almost entirely gluten-free diet, because I do appreciate the flavors such ingredients can offer. Here are a few suggestions, quick and easy to put into practice, for a gluten-free day:

BREAKFAST:

Toasted rice flakes or millet flakes with cinnamon and white almond cream,
Buckwheat pancakes with an egg and sprouts,
Rice-quinoa bread and peanut butter, with white miso and parsley, and
Buckwheat granola crunch with hazelnuts and chocolate chips.

AN 'ON THE RUN' MEAL:

Nori maki with round semi-milled rice,
A bowl of Japanese-style miso soup with soba (buckwheat) noodles,
Risotto,
Gnocchi with fresh tomato sauce,
Vegetable pie in a buckwheat pastry dough, and
Rice and chickpeas.

DESSERTS:

Chestnut flour cake,
Buckwheat and arrowroot biscuits,

Coconut macaroons, and Creamed rice.

Regional and international traditional recipes are a great source of inspiration. There is the famous Indian, Thai, Iranian or Spanish dish of rice, and the Italian or Corsican polenta.

If you explore, you will find a lot of recipes explaining how to use these products which are new to you. For instance, when I discovered how to make millet chapattis in India, or how to make tortillas in Mexico, it helped me integrate techniques I now use with the ingredients I find in my own environment. That is why I really enjoy these culinary explorations!

It is sometimes during a casual conversation that we grasp an idea that will change our habits: for example, for breakfast try some buckwheat bread instead of white bread. It is certainly denser but it is also very tasty.

I associate cooking with a table of flavors, textures and colors, which all comply with the idea of health. First, as we are cooking, we can savor with our senses of sight, smell, touch and taste. Then we eat to satisfy vital needs, and we are lucky enough to have a marvelous range of ingredients we can use in a variety of ways, without any constraints, because there are no rules but only beautiful ideas.

Cooking is a game as well as an art, an area of freedom and free expression we can all have in order to stay healthy. We all know within ourselves what is good for us. We all received our share of that intelligence concerning adequate food, and retrieving it only depends on us. The path is not necessarily easy, but we still have the right and the possibility to choose that path.



SOME REFERENCES ABOUT COOKING AND EATING OUT 'GLUTEN-FREE':

bacididamaglutentfree.com is an Italian website: the author is a happy gourmet and she shares with us some good addresses as well as her discoveries.

A totally Gluten Free Diet, by Clea. Laplage Editors.

95°C Magazine – high vitality recipes for steamed cooking, by Marion Kaplan.

Many restaurants display menus with gluten-free alternatives. My favourite ones in Paris are Soya, Sol Semilla, Café Pinson and Néo Bento.

A gluten-free bakery? There is one in Paris: Chambelland.

In my books, *Japonism and Healthy Cooking in Keeping With the 5 Seasons*, you will find many recipes and tips for cooking gluten-free and enjoying it, including an easy-to-make recipe for homemade buckwheat bread.

A Taste of Life

~ MATCHA TARTS ~



200g/8oz gluten-free pure oat flakes
150g/6oz coco flour
150g/6oz coco-palm-olive oil or 75g/3oz olive oil
A dash of salt

INGREDIENTS FOR DOUGH

400g/16oz silken tofu
200g/8oz lacto-fermented tofu
2 tablespoons Agave syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla liquid
1 full teaspoon Matcha powder,
Olive, coco or nut oil

INGREDIENTS FOR CREAM

TO KNEAD THE DOUGH

Place the flakes in a food processor, and use the small metal blade. Turn the flakes into fine flour. Add the coco flour, salt and oil. Pulse briefly to combine. When you obtain a sanded paste, add the syrup and continue to process until the dough forms a tacky ball. Divide the ball into smaller balls fitting your pie pans. Cut out cooking paper circles larger than the pans and line the pans with them. Fill the dough in the pans. Heat in a 175° C pre-heated oven for 15 minutes, until golden brown. Take it out of the oven and allow to cool.

MAKING THE CREAM

Finely stir together all these ingredients into a cream and put it into the fridge.

FRUITS

Choose ripe seasonal fruit and cut them into bite-sized pieces. Heat a frying pan – a cast iron pan is the best choice. Put it on medium heat. When it is hot enough, drizzle with oil and briefly fry the fruit until tender. Remove from heat.

At serving time, tap the tarts gently out of the pans and spread the cream onto them. Sprinkle with a little more Matcha powder and top with the fruit. Serve immediately ●



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WHAT IS CANCER AND HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH IT ?

led by
MS SAMARA MAHINDRA

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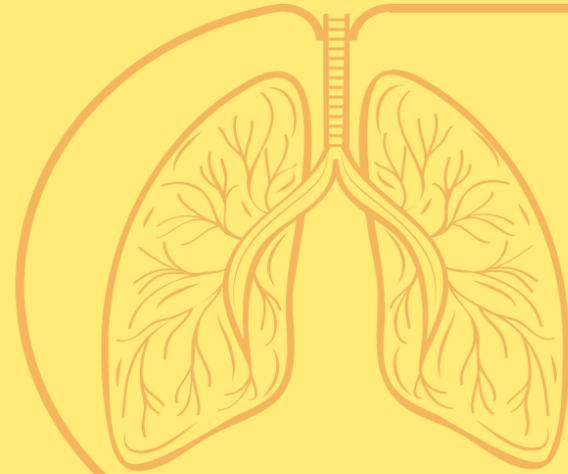
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The importance of understanding how cancer manifests in the body will give you the tools and resources to know how to deal with it. How does cancer begin and progress? The two most important words when it comes to cancer - immunity and inflammation. What are they and how do they affect cancer and healing? What is integrative healing and a holistic approach? How do the mind, body and nutrition play their parts?

Samara Mahindra will explain how to manage cancer with an integrative approach.



Conquering Asthma THROUGH MEDITATION



DR RAJA AMARNATH and
CHITRA RAJAN talk about
the science of relaxation
and meditation and how
they help asthma patients to
regain a quality of life that
supports a normal lifestyle.

Emotions influence breathing. Balance your emotions...
you will breathe better.
- Anonymous

The beginning and end of life is breath. We die if we cannot breathe even for a few minutes. Breathing is vital for maintaining life by giving oxygen and removing toxins from the blood.

Asthma, a chronic inflammatory disease, that restricts air flow in the airways of lungs, is an age-old disease. In ancient times, the Egyptians recorded the use of inhalers to treat restricted breathing.

The use of the herb ephedra to treat asthma-like symptoms is prevalent in traditional Chinese medicine. Asthma comes from the Greek verb *aazien*, which means to pant, to exhale with an open mouth, to have sharp breath.

ASTHMA & ALLERGIES

Asthma is generally triggered by allergens in the environment, physical exertion, infection and changes in weather, temperature or mental stress.

Not all people are prone to this disease. It so happens that among a group of people, one person who is allergic may have coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness, etc., and the next person is less affected by these things while breathing the same air.

EMOTIONAL STRESS WORSENS ASTHMA

Emotional stress is the main contributor to the worsening of asthma symptoms for most people. Constriction of air passages is made worse by panic or anxiety attacks.

Scientists have documented a range of stressful events that have been associated with asthma symptoms. These include school exams, public speaking, family conflict, public disasters, and exposure to violence. Work pressure, anxiety due to impending layoff, high stake job interviews and deals, and financial worries are also some of the common asthma triggers.

The most distressing symptom of asthma is a sense of suffocation resulting in panic attacks. Over a period of time, this develops into the fear of not being able to lead a normal life. These negative and limiting thoughts drive asthma sufferers to give up on their pursuits in life.

During periods of stress and anxiety, asthma attacks occur more frequently and asthma control is challenging.

Medical conditions such as obesity, heart and lung diseases, low immunity and lack of sleep are also stress triggers for asthma.

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES TO PREVENT ASTHMA ATTACKS

Asthma is a chronic recurring disease that requires long-term management. As in the case of any other chronic disease, it's preferable to minimise the use of medications as over time they lead to undesirable side effects and dependency. Lifestyle modification is increasingly being advocated as a complementary treatment to pharmacological remedies. These include:

Identification of the cause of stress and resolution through self-help or professional advice

Delegation of responsibility

Exercising to burn the effects of stress and

The practice of proper breathing and relaxation techniques.

When an asthmatic experiences breathing difficulty and panic attack, the stomach muscles tighten increasing the workload on the body. The most effective way to stabilize breathing in such situations is to relax as much as possible.

BREATHING BETTER THROUGH RELAXATION AND MEDITATION

The act of relaxing your whole body and mind is often used as an asthma breathing technique to teach asthmatics how to breathe properly.

Through relaxation, you are letting all the uneasiness in the body go for the moment. To do this, focus on your breathing, spending at least a minute starting out simply observing your

Our breath is literally our life force. It is therefore vital that we seek to restore the rhythm of breathing through the assimilation of physical, mental and emotional energies within us.

breathing and feeling the passage of air through your body as it goes in your nostrils and throat to when you exhale through your mouth. In this way, you won't have to purposely slow down your breathing; it slows down on its own.

Relaxation techniques encourage slow and more controlled breathing. To make a healthy breathing pattern a habit, be mindful of the way you breathe at all times.

Meditation is also an effective tool to thwart asthma attacks. During meditation the physical body goes into a state of deep relaxation. It is a wakeful state similar to deep sleep, and this is medically termed the 'relaxation response'. As the body progressively relaxes, the air passages open and breathing becomes easy. This helps in overcoming panic.

By teaching us to regulate the mind, meditation enables us to focus voluntarily and take control.

With practice, we can intentionally relax the body and breathe deeply even at the onset of a panic attack.

These techniques of relaxing and regulating the mind, will also give a boost to our energy levels, facilitating better sleep and directly reducing stress.

RELIEVING ANXIETY AND STRESS THROUGH MEDITATION

Anxiety is an outcome of asthma, particularly in young people. When psychological distress accompanies asthma, there is financial and productivity loss. Meditation is useful in treating depression, because it regulates the whirlwind of negative thoughts and removes the need to ruminate and brood over problems. It also helps in promoting attention. Among young smokers with asthma, meditation is used as a tool for controlling substance addiction.

The regular practice of meditation has helped women in prevention and management of asthma attacks during periods of hormonal imbalance, when they are likely to have strong emotional swings such as fear, apprehension, anxiety, exhilaration and anger.

Among elderly patients with asthma, anxiety, depression, loneliness, fear of death and lack of psychosocial support from their families contribute to the worsening of symptoms. Research shows positive outcomes in elderly patients with asthma by the regulation of the automatic nervous system through meditation practices.

HEARTFULNESS –A SIMPLE METHOD

There is compelling evidence to recommend meditation as a complementary therapy to treat asthma. Meditation is also useful in reorienting our lifestyle, and this improves adherence to a long-term treatment. The crux here is the need for a very simple, easy-to-practise form of meditation that is suited to a modern day lifestyle, is capable of providing instant relief and can be practised anywhere. Heartfulness Meditation ticks all these boxes. In Heartfulness, regulation of mind happens by gently turning one's attention to the heart. Regular practice of meditating on the heart helps us reduce thoughts and balance emotions without any force. A healthy human body follows the rhythms of nature. Its life-supporting rhythm is breathing. Every minute we breathe is an affirmation of our desire to continue to live. Our breath is literally our life force. It is therefore vital that we seek to restore the rhythm of breathing through the assimilation of physical, mental and emotional energies within us ●

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Chickweed – part 2

ALANDA GREENE continues to share what she has learnt from her experiences of weeding her garden and her inner garden of tendencies and character traits, and how the resulting inner reflection promotes beneficial growth.



I value daily written reflection greatly, the process of giving time to look over the day and consider my actions, words and thoughts. I know this is essential to maintaining awareness of what I am doing, developing my ability to see into my life, to catch where I am missing clues, not listening. I know the value of it and still there are times I avoid

it. Too busy or forgetful or too tired; I find excuses. And I find ways to counter them. Sometimes. It's an obstacle. It's human. I don't need to get into the drama of how flawed I am.

I can trace this approach of excuse making and find it turns up in many places, the way chickweed's filamentous strands wind through so many areas of the garden. I can dissipate my energy by getting dragged down in self-recrimination, as if I'm the only human around that makes excuses, in embarrassment that I do this when I know better, in wanting to avoid this recognition as if it will appear like a flashing sign attached to my forehead and all the world will read: excuse-maker. Or procrastinator.

I don't particularly like meeting this aspect in myself because it doesn't fit with my efforts to be competent, capable and reliable. In many areas, these are good descriptors of my actions. But not the whole story. Procrastination turns up in the places on the edge of my capabilities, the way chickweed concentrates at the edges of some garden beds, where I am more likely to overlook it.

I follow the strands of chickweed that radiate from the root, twisting and spreading through clumps of lettuce, moving far away from where it emerges from the soil. In a similar way, I examine the irritation that arises in me. Maybe it's about impatiently voiced words directed at me, or what I deem a petty or inconsiderate action.

It can stay that way, as a reaction to someone else's wrong, or I can follow it as it twists to reveal my unmet expectations, concepts about how things are supposed to be. This then winds further into ideas of how I am supposed to be and am not, what is required to be worthwhile, and what is required

to be worthy. This ends up a long way from the annoyance that began this examination, just as the chickweed's ground source, where I can finally get hold of the root, is a good distance from where I noticed its leaves poking between carrot fronds.

When I try to pull it, it often breaks off, a knowing feeling in my fingers that tells me it is underground for a while but will emerge again. And I'll try again

I often find, when tracking to the source of a behavior I wish to transform, that it is located somewhere else than what it first appears to be. And often it leads me to concepts about self-worth and being good enough: good enough to live up to my ideas of how I have to be in order to be acceptable.

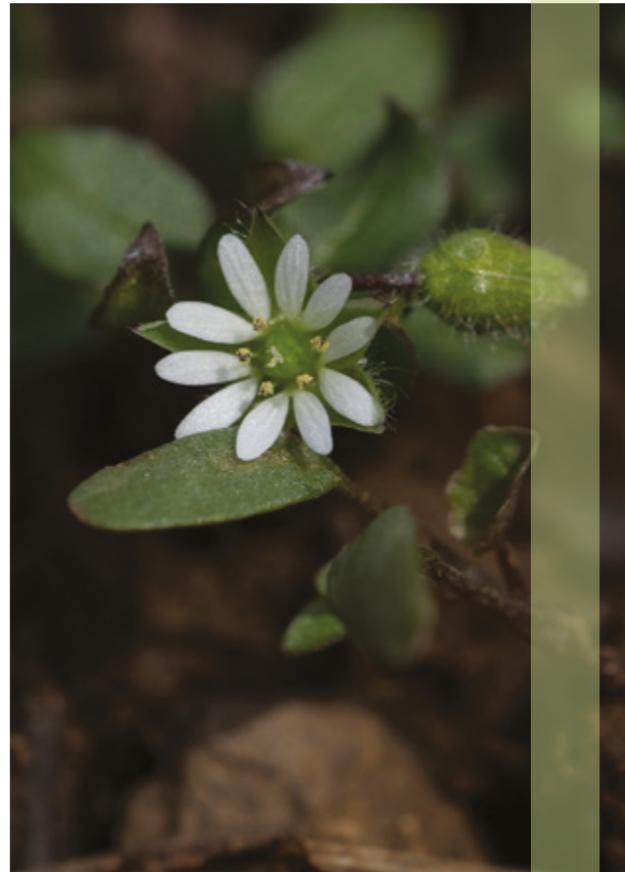
To whom? To what? There's a whole network of underground root systems in these weeds, in me, and in the garden.

to get the whole thing. I often find, when tracking to the source of a behavior I wish to transform, that it is located somewhere else than what it first appears to be. And often it leads me to concepts about self-worth and being good enough: good enough to live up to my ideas of how I have to be in order to be acceptable. To whom? To what? There's a whole network of underground root systems in these weeds, in me, and in the garden.

Chickweed is actually a plant whose leaves and stems are healthy for us. It makes a nutritious tea, is helpful in cooling inflammation, promotes weight loss and is an effective spring tonic to build blood. It just isn't helpful in the vegetable growing areas. Neither are the many concepts and ideas that I was taught at home, at school, and in the school playground. They may have once been helpful ideas about ways of being, but they twisted into the wrong places. I know I have to gently identify their source and make my best efforts to eradicate them. And when they turn up again, I make efforts again, without any self-condemnation for finding this fault active once more, this behavior that I thought was gone.

When chickweed turns up again and again it's the nature of the plant, so I don't feel that there is something wrong. My work is to remove it where it causes problems. I don't really expect chickweed to be gone, given its nature to thrive, and so it's easy to accept as just the work of gardening. There is no drama in finding it and removing it. Similarly, energy doesn't need to be wasted when I recognize tendencies that I thought were gone appearing again. Just do what needs doing. Weed what needs weeding.

Rumi said, "Out beyond your ideas of right and wrong, there is a field. I'll meet you there." Some



have interpreted this as meaning that right and wrong are just human constructs to control societies and people; that it doesn't matter what we do or don't do, as long as we don't label it. I don't think this is correct. Right action matters. But getting caught in being right or being wrong limits my growth. Weeds aren't wrong, but they have to go from the vegetable bed, because they choke growth or deny the plants I have nurtured their chance to flourish. There are characteristics that I wish to strengthen and support, to develop the potential of this life. Therefore, I need to identify and remove what stands in the way of that growth and unfolding. It's not right or wrong. It's about what I want in my life. What I want my garden to grow.

One of the techniques I have learned for finding the root of the chickweed is to pull on the branch

That's the clue. And, if I follow where this resistance leads, it will reveal those hidden aspects of the harder-to-find sources of the visible behavior.

that I find, not enough to break it but enough to feel the tautness on the strand. Then I feel for that resistance among the other plants and follow it to the soil, then try to extract the root. It's much the same when trying to follow a trait to its source in my own being: I notice where my resistance is. That's the clue. And, if I follow where this resistance leads, it will reveal those hidden aspects of the harder-to-find sources of the visible behavior.

When I keep tracking the webs of chickweed stem and foliage, I get closer to its source, often a long way and in a different direction from where I anticipated finding it. When I track a particular tendency, habit, characteristic, I also often find it in a place different from where I first thought it was.

For example, irritation with what another said turns out to be rooted in my avoidance of speaking up and expressing clearly my own thoughts and feelings. Especially feelings in the moment. It's a family, cultural trait and has its positive aspect, because from experience I've learned to avoid speaking out when it's my anger, irritation or frustration that becomes the message. Sort of

like trying to rip out the clump of chickweed in a forceful grab and pull. It does a lot of damage to the adjoining plants or flowers. But tracking carefully and speaking with clarity about my position often dissipates my annoyance, regardless of what the other person has said. The issue is not quite what I first thought. The chickweed is never quite where it first appears.

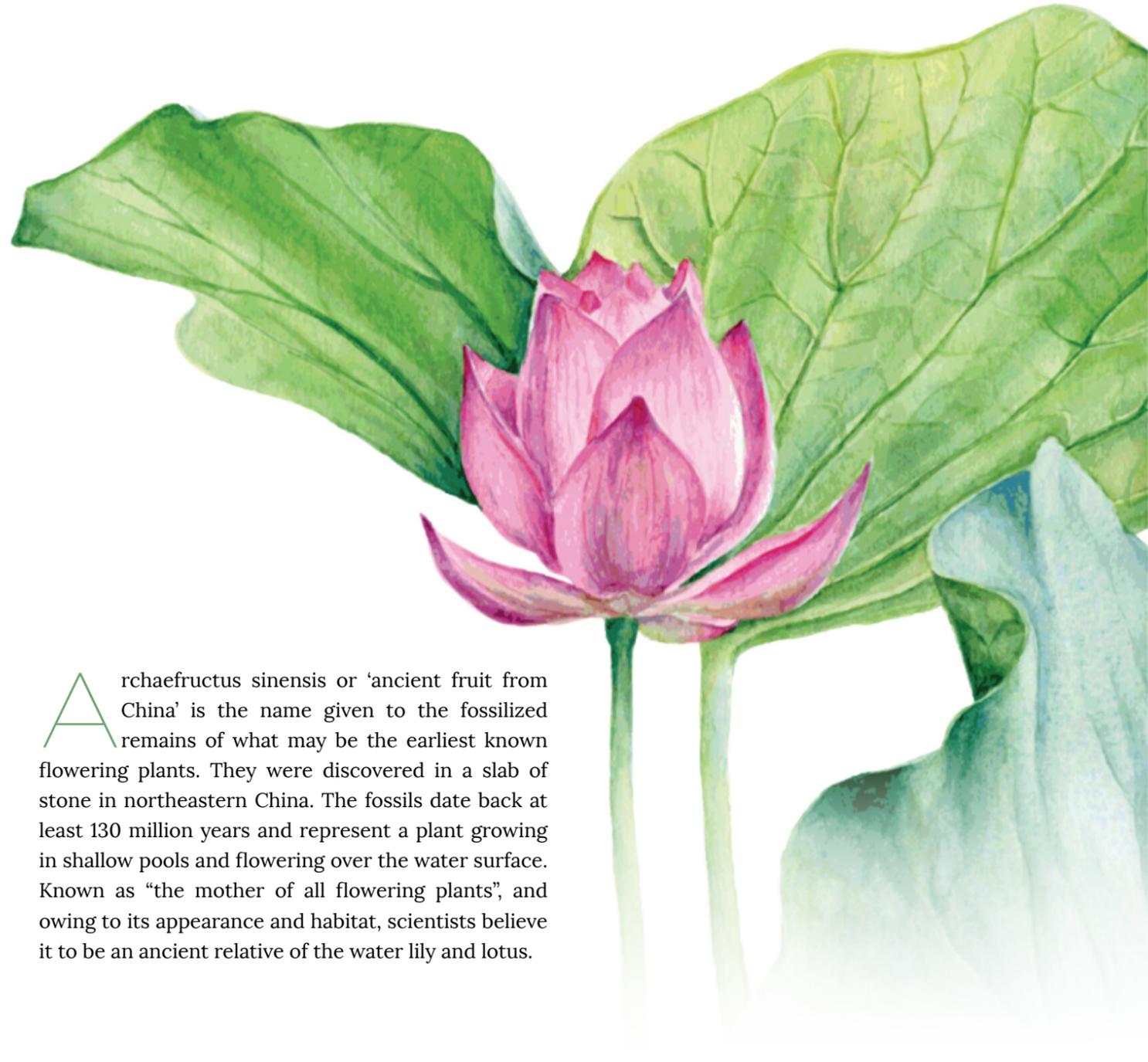
Except when it's very small. That's the best time to catch and remove it. It's the easiest to avoid, because it's so little and easily put off or overlooked. It is so easy to leave these small things that nuzzle at me, until they aren't small anymore and then require a great deal more effort.

Tracking to the source leads me to the roots, which spread beneath the soil in a web that mirrors the above ground branching. The reward in persisting with this weed removal in myself is that it invariably leads me to the ground of my being. I find myself centered in my heart, recognizing the big picture of my garden life, the ongoing process and cycling, and a peaceful, willing acceptance of the role I play in this process. It's not my garden and not my life. Both of them are expressions of one life. The experience, over and over, of that perception and feeling is the work of gardening ●

Some amazing medicinal plants

In this series, we present medicinal plants from all the continents on Earth, this time featuring the Lotus.

the lotus



Archaefructus sinensis or 'ancient fruit from China' is the name given to the fossilized remains of what may be the earliest known flowering plants. They were discovered in a slab of stone in northeastern China. The fossils date back at least 130 million years and represent a plant growing in shallow pools and flowering over the water surface. Known as "the mother of all flowering plants", and owing to its appearance and habitat, scientists believe it to be an ancient relative of the water lily and lotus.

botanical name:

Genus: Nelumbo. Species: Nelumbo nucifera.

common names:

Lotus, Indian lotus, sacred lotus, bean of India, Egyptian bean. The lotus is the national flower of India and Vietnam.

habitat:

An aquatic perennial, it thrives in a warm temperate to tropical climate. It is native to South Asia and Northeast Australia, and is commonly cultivated in water gardens in India, China, Vietnam, Japan, Malaysia, New Guinea and Queensland, Australia.

mythology:

The lotus flower is associated with the creation myths of Hindu and Egyptian mythology. According to the Puranas, Brahma emerged out of a magnificent lotus that sprung from the navel of Lord Vishnu who was resting on the endless coils of a giant cobra on the surface of a vast ocean that existed before space and time.

Upon Lord Vishnu's command, Brahma created the world. Similarly, Egyptian legend says that a giant lotus called Seshen emerged from the primordial waters of Nun, which in turn brought forth the Sun God who created life. While several Hindu and Egyptian gods and goddesses and Gautama the Buddha are associated with the lotus flower, the flower also has a deeper mystical symbolism.

The petals of the flower close at sunset and open with the touch of the sun rays, representing our journey through the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge.

As the lotus emerges from the muddy waters and spurts upwards, despite having its roots in the mud, we can rise above our material desires and aspire for spiritual enlightenment even as we continue to live in the world and fulfill our worldly duties.

Symbolically the lotus represents creation, rebirth, purity, beauty, freedom, wisdom and spiritual enlightenment.

The flower blooms and blossoms in a murky environment, which shows us the way to live and thrive in this world unaffected by our surroundings. In the same way water drops are repelled by the lotus leaves and flowers, a Self-realized person remains free from the fears and temptations of the world.

Symbolically the lotus represents creation, rebirth, purity, beauty, freedom, wisdom and spiritual enlightenment.

in yoga:

The lotus is also a sacred symbol in Yoga and it represents the energy centers of our body, known as chakras. The heart, especially, is believed to be like a closed lotus flower that opens to its fullest potential through practice and perseverance in the spiritual field. The crown chakra, the highest of all the chakras, is also known as *sahasra-dal-kamal*, which means 'lotus of a thousand petals'. *Padmasana*, or the lotus position, is mostly recommended for meditation as it straightens and stabilizes the spine which aligns the chakras. This position also facilitates control over rhythmic breathing patterns in the human system.

description:

The lotus can grow to a height of 150 centimeters and spread 3 meters horizontally. The flowers are commonly pink and white. The plant favors low salinity and thrives in freshwater wetlands. It prefers warm sunlight and does not bloom during winter, flowering mainly between July and September in the northern hemisphere and from

October to April in the southern hemisphere. The lifespan of a lotus flower is 3 to 4 days, with the petals opening in the morning and closing by late afternoon.

The roots of the plant are firmly affixed in the mud, and the stems are long to which the leaves are attached. These long stems contain air spaces that maintain the plant's buoyancy on water. The flowers are always above the water surface.

The lotus flower produces heat to attract pollinators, which is just one aspect of its complicated pollination process. The plant is usually pollinated by flower beetles and sometimes by bees.

plants parts used:

Petals, seeds, stamen, leaves and roots.

therapeutic uses:

Various parts of the lotus plant have been used in Ayurveda and ancient Chinese medicine. Sushruta, an ancient Indian physician and the main author of the treatise of *The Compendium of Sushruta (Sushruta-samhita)* around 600 BCE, is known to have used the lotus stalk as a probe in surgical procedures of that era.

Lotus seeds help in treating high blood pressure and diarrhea. They contain proteins, carbohydrates and minerals like calcium, phosphorus and potassium. The embryo of the seed also contains a medicinal compound that is an isoquinoline alkaloid, which helps in reducing blood pressure and dealing with hypertension.

The petals contain calcium and iron, which aid in blood clotting and dealing with summer heat. Symptoms of thirst and inflammation in the body can be managed by drinking a decoction of lotus tea.

The ancients used lotus leaves to wrap the body of a person having fever. Even today they are considered to be one of the best home remedies to deal with summer heat. The leaves are also known to strengthen the liver, cure stomach ailments and rejuvenate a person's energy.

The lotus stamen has astringent properties that benefit both the kidney and the heart. It can be used to treat frequent urination and bleeding of the uterus.

The medicinal properties of the roots and rhizomes of the lotus plant are owing to the presence of flavonoids and quercetin. They are highly beneficial in controlling bleeding and relieving the human system of toxins. The roots are rich in dietary fiber and are used in the preparation of several mouthwatering dishes.

current ecology:

The lotus is food for several species in the food chain. The leaves provide shelter to many aquatic species and, like many water plants, it also cleanses and replenishes the waters in which it lives.

With its therapeutic properties, mystical connotations and 'bloom against all odds' nature, the lotus is a thriving species of the plant kingdom ●



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The Three Brothers

PART 4:

In the previous episode, the three Canfield brothers took the trains that would take them from Montpellier to Marvejols in the Lozère district of southern France. Polo had told the story of his dog's faithful friendship, Jack had told them how he had recovered his golden speech, and Danny described how he had been in search of sighs, but he had some more stories in store.

“Tickets please,” requested the collector on the train.
“How long is it to Marvejols, please?” asked Polo.
“Well, at least another three hours, and don't forget to change when we arrive at La Bastide.”
“Thank you, sir,” responded Polo.



“So, Danny, now you can tell us what happened after you left. You had a kite then, so what did you do with it?”

“Yeah, that was a strange kite! It took me as far as California. But before telling you how I got there, I'd like to tell you what happened to me once in high school.

“I left the boarding school in Montpellier, to go to a Vocational School in the North of France. I crossed the whole country by train with that bulky kite in my luggage. The school was in Lille, and that is where I met my friend P'tit Louis. One day, he invited me to spend the weekend at his home. We were both fourteen then. He lived at the end of the world, in a windy place, so I took my kite with me.

“His parents lived in the country, not far from a small town called Titsynthe. There were in fact two towns, located on both sides of a canal and connected by a



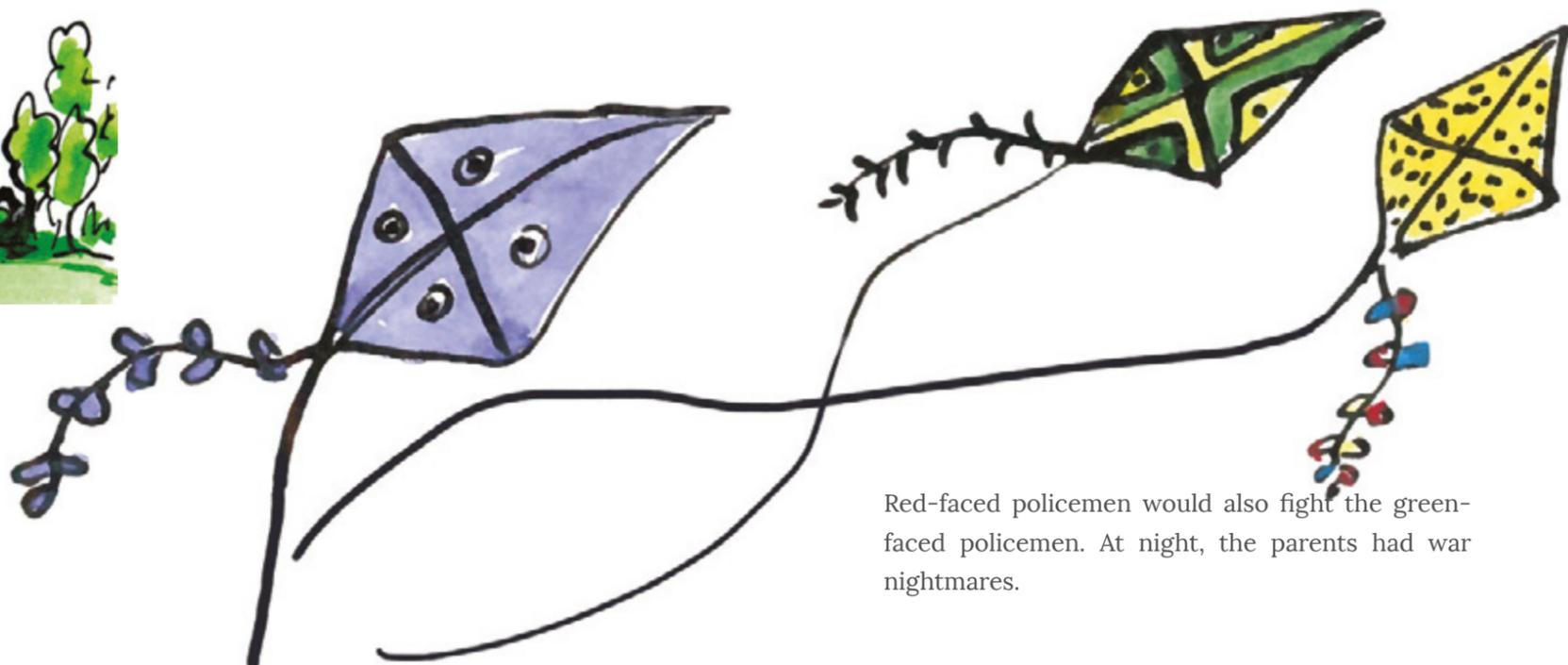


long iron bridge. On one side there was Titsynthe, and on the other Pinsol-on-the-Sea. All the people in Titsynthe had red faces and talked loudly, with rather rough frightening voices. The people from Pinsol had greenish faces and a nasal way of speaking. When they talked all together on the bus, it sounded like a strange rock concert of muted trumpets and bass guitars.

“Being from Titsynthe, P’tit Louis was a red-faced boy. He introduced me to his friend Till who was from Pinsol and had a greenish face. We used to fly the kite over the canal.

“One day, I asked them, ‘Why are there greenish faces on one side of the canal and red ones on the other side?’

Then P’tit Louis told me an incredible story that happened there when he was young. At the time, the city was called 'Yellow Dunes' and it included the houses on both sides of the canal. The green- and red-faced people lived together, in the same areas. P’tit Louis and Till were neighbors and went to the same school. Their families would often picnic together and the boys were inseparable friends, sharing many activities: playing ball, reading, lying on the grass to watch the clouds,



Red-faced policemen would also fight the green-faced policemen. At night, the parents had war nightmares.

chasing butterflies, singing while biking, whistling with the birds, drawing, and flying their kites high in the sky. They had a peaceful happy childhood. Having a friend means your life takes on all sorts of colors.

So, the big chiefs decided that the people would no longer live together. They halved the town of Yellow Dunes. The canal would become a frontier never to be crossed, and they built a wall in the middle of the bridge – a very high wall, so that nobody could cross over. Many people had to leave their houses and change sides, losing their jobs and friends in the wake.

“One day, a violent argument broke out between a red-faced man and a green-faced man. The red-faced man was so angry that he became redder still. He screamed like a fire siren, his bulging eyes flashed with anger, and he then decided that all the green-faced people were his enemies. His anger was so strong that it gave rise to more anger, so in a month's time the red-faced men were fighting the green-faced men in the streets, in the banks, in the parks and in the shops. Children were kept at home and stopped going to school. Their parents said that going out was too dangerous, so the kids cried a lot.

“Some important people tried to calm down the two sides, but to no avail. Tensions grew. The red-faced people could not stand the green-faced people, and vice versa. They did not want to live in the same area anymore, they would not take the same buses, nor would they go to the same shops.





“P’tit Louis’ parents were sad to have to part from their neighbors. All these people of goodwill had to part. P’tit Louis had a broken heart now that his friend was on the other side.

“When he went to school in the morning, he would meet only red-faced people, and in school all the children were red. They did not agree at all with what was happening. They liked so much having friends of all colors. Why shouldn’t they appreciate all the colors? Why shouldn’t they accept others as they are?

Uncle Remy, who had lost one of his arms during WW2, enjoyed saying, ‘Each one of your hands has different specific fingers, and that is what makes your hands work properly.’ So now, what could they do?

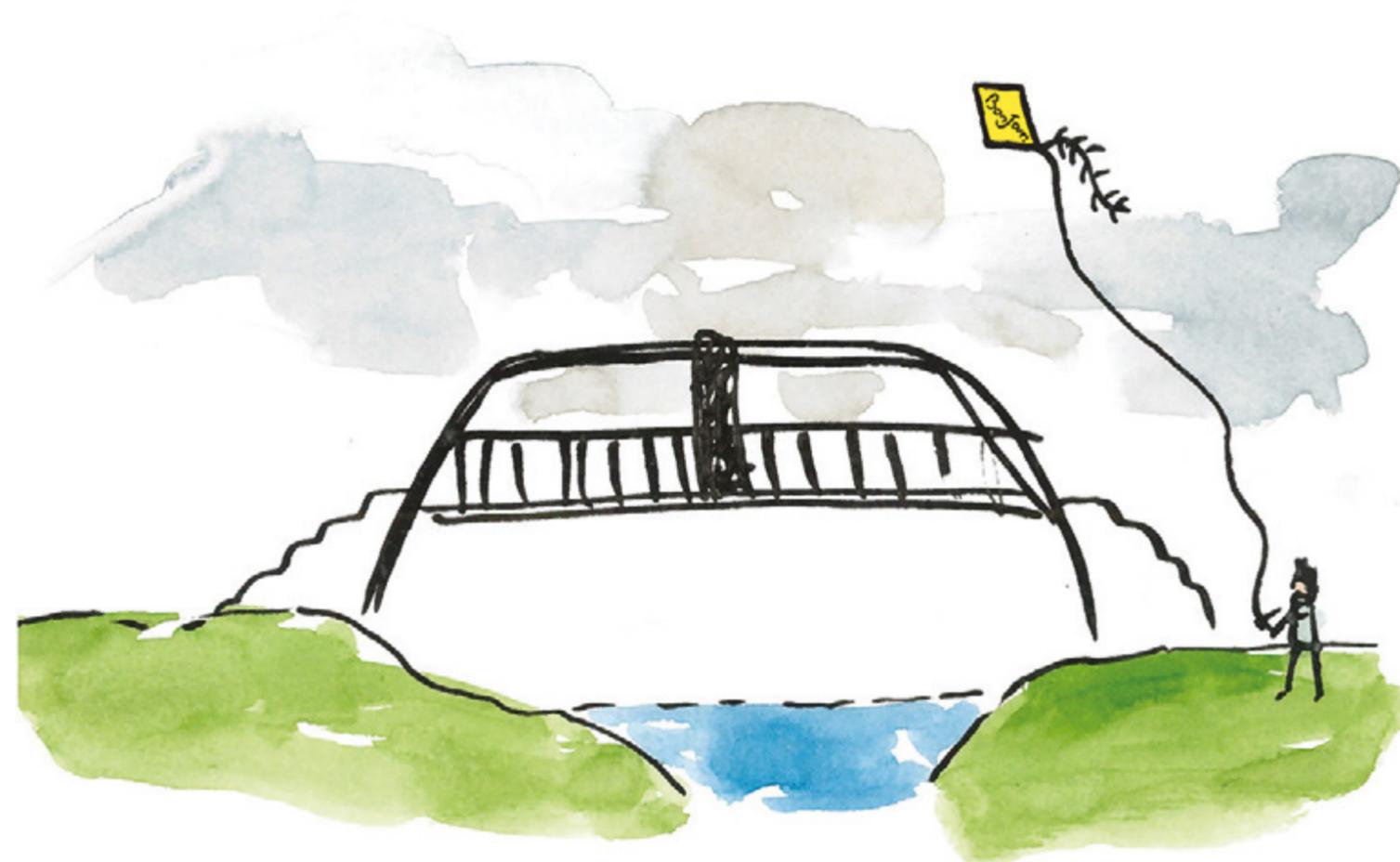


“P’tit Louis would sit by the canal and watch the windows in the buildings on the other side. He could imagine the people behind the windows. He looked for some sign from Till. What was he doing?”

“One day, seagulls were flying in the wind, to and fro and over the canal, which made him think, ‘A shame we can’t fly! Then we could cross over the canal and play with our friends on the other side.’”

That is when an idea came to his mind: he would build a kite to communicate with Till on the other side of the wall. He could not fly, but at least he could send messages to his friend that he kept thinking of him, and with their kites they could play together in the sky.

“No sooner said than done! P’tit Louis built a very big rainbow-colored kite. He asked his mother to write the word ‘Hello’ on it. Every day, after school, he went by the canal to fly his kite. Three days went by with no response. On the fourth day, some red-faced children arrived with their own kites of all colors and flew them together with his. But there was still no response from the other side of the canal. On the sixth day, the first kites flown by the green-faced children appeared in the grey sky. The children had got the message and they were now exchanging friendly words and tidings in the sky. It was fantastic! P’tit Louis went back there every day. But he still had not heard from Till.



“So he finally came back home, very disappointed.

His father noticed it and explained, ‘Son, the sky is grey in this part of France, because it is fraught with human moods. But if you look carefully, there are many shades of grey, from dark to bright. That would not be possible if there was not a light behind it all. That light is the sun, and the sun always continues to reflect itself on the moon, even when it is dark. It is always there, waiting. Then, occasionally, the grey veils fray out and fade away, and there comes the sun, winking at us and warming our skin. That is what we must do. Wait for the right moment, let the disturbances clear away and just be there, with all that warmth in our hearts and the light in our souls. Sometimes, it seems far too long to wait. We would like the sun to be there, presto, but if you accept the fact that there are some colors and a sun behind the grey clouds, then you can wait and hope. And after all, Till might be busy making a new kite.’”





“The ninth day was a Saturday. That morning, P’tit Louis’ mother woke him up with a big smile and told him to go outside and see what was going on. Not only one but thousands of kites of all shades were flying over the canal. They said ‘Hello’ to him and to all the red-faced boys and girls. He spotted Till’s kite and ran to get his own. The red children ran from everywhere with their kites, too. The sky was soon swarming with many colors, leaving no room for the grey clouds, no room for anger, and no room for quarrels. In that sky, there was only the huge smile of a child.

“Then he remembered the words, ‘Having a friend colors your life.’ If we whole-heartedly accept and make our level best to get on well with others, there is no reason why we should argue and get mad.

“Several years later, the people decided to pull down the wall. Whether they were from Pinsol or Titsynthe, they could now cross the bridge again. It was still not as it was before, not yet anyway, because wounds of the heart do not heal fast. So now, every year, on the second Saturday of the month of October, the children from both towns gather by the canal and fly their kites to tint the sky with their multi-colored smiles.”



“La Bastide! La Bastide! All change! The connection to Marvejols and Clermont Ferrand is on Platform 2. The train will leave in twenty minutes,” called the ticket collector.

“That’s it,” Danny said. “It’s the end of my story about the kites for peace ●”

To be continued ...

Story by Papiguy de Montpellier
Illustrations by Juliette Alay





MAKING PORTRAITS



Art by Maja Bruun-Smidt

Is there someone whose face you would love to draw or paint? It can be someone you know or someone you don't know. Either find the person and ask if you can paint them, or use a photo of the person. What matters is that the face of the person should attract you in some way, and make you feel something.

Look carefully at the face, how it is composed, including all the smaller details. Also, connect with your heart and look at the face with a defocused view. When we have a defocused view, we are able to see the full picture. To have a defocused view, have one eye turned outside on what you are doing, and one eye inside in contact with your heart. Then start your painting or drawing of the portrait. Do not judge your work; just stay openhearted.

When your portrait is finished, you can choose to ask your art piece: "If you could talk to me, what would you tell me?"

There is often a 'message' in our artwork. It could be something like, "Listen inside," or "What are your dreams?" Enjoy! ●

Photos and text by Anne-Grethe Kousgaard

Painted portrait by Maja Bruun-Smidt, 18 years, Denmark



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