

November 2019

# heartfulness

purity weaves destiny

## Where History Intersects with Myth

AN INTERVIEW  
WITH ASHWIN SANGHI

## Yogic Psychology

DAAJI

## Food

DAAJI  
LUKE COUTINHO  
LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE  
GRAINNE KELLIHER



[www.heartfulnessmagazine.com](http://www.heartfulnessmagazine.com)

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## Food

Dear readers,

All of us need food to maintain life. For those who are starving, it is a matter of survival. For those who are overfed or eating unhealthy food, it is a cause of chronic disease. For those who approach food with the senses, it is about pleasure and desire. For those who want physical and mental well-being, it is about healthy food choices. For those who want to evolve to higher and higher planes of existence, it is about eating food with a vibrational resonance to match their higher purpose.

We all have our own relationship with food, based on our past experience, our immediate environment, and our purpose. There is fast food and slow food. There is *sattvik*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* food. Food is love. Food is comfort. Food is nourishment. And yet millions of people today still do not have enough to eat, despite the FAO being established by the United Nations 73 years ago. Food security is a big issue; there is famine amid plenty.

Against this background, we hear from Luke Coutinho on “we are what we eat.” We hear from Daaji on the universal principles of food. We learn about Ayurvedic principles of eating, and how to trust our own bodies in selecting food types. We explore the Airfield Estate that is teaching hundreds of thousands of people to connect with the way food is grown, and Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee shares his journey of learning to cook with love.

Daaji's also concludes his series on Yogic Psychology with an article on the common symptoms of mental imbalance, and solutions to regaining mental health. And that is not all ...

Enjoy!

The editors

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**Kamlesh Patel**

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



**Grainne Kelliher**

Grainne is the CEO of Airfield Estate in Dublin, Ireland. Airfield was home to the Overend family since 1894, and was left in trust to the people of Ireland by the trailblazing Overend sisters, Letitia and Namoi, in 1974. Today it's a social and charitable hub, investing in people and reaching every corner of the community to inspire and enable people to make better food choices – better for health, better value for money, and better for the environment.



**Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee**

Llewellyn is the founder of The Golden Sufi Center. Author of several books, he has specialized in the area of dream work, integrating the ancient Sufi approach with modern psychology. Since 2000 his focus has been on spiritual responsibility in our present era and awakening the global consciousness of oneness. He has written about the feminine, the world soul and spiritual ecology. He has been interviewed by Oprah Winfrey on SuperSoul Sunday, and featured on the Global Spirit series on PBS.



**Luke Coutinho**

Luke is a Holistic Lifestyle Coach in the field of Integrative Medicine. He uses a holistic approach towards prevention, weight and disease management with expertise in cancer care. His programs are personalised according to lifestyle and revolve

around the 4 pillars of good health: quality sleep, balanced nutrition, emotional detox and adequate exercise. He works with doctors who are continuously involved in research on both prevention and recovery. His global practice involves clients from the US, UK, Europe, India, the Middle East, the Far East and Australia.



**Ashwin Sanghi**

Ashwin is a writer in the fiction-thriller genre. He is the author of best-selling novels *The Rozabal Line*, *Chanakya's Chant*, *The Krishna Key*, *The Sialkot Saga* and *Keepers of the Kalachakra*. His books are based on mythological and theological themes. He is one of India's best-selling conspiracy fiction writers and is an author of the new era of retelling Indian history or mythology in a contemporary context. Forbes India has included him in their Celebrity 100 list.



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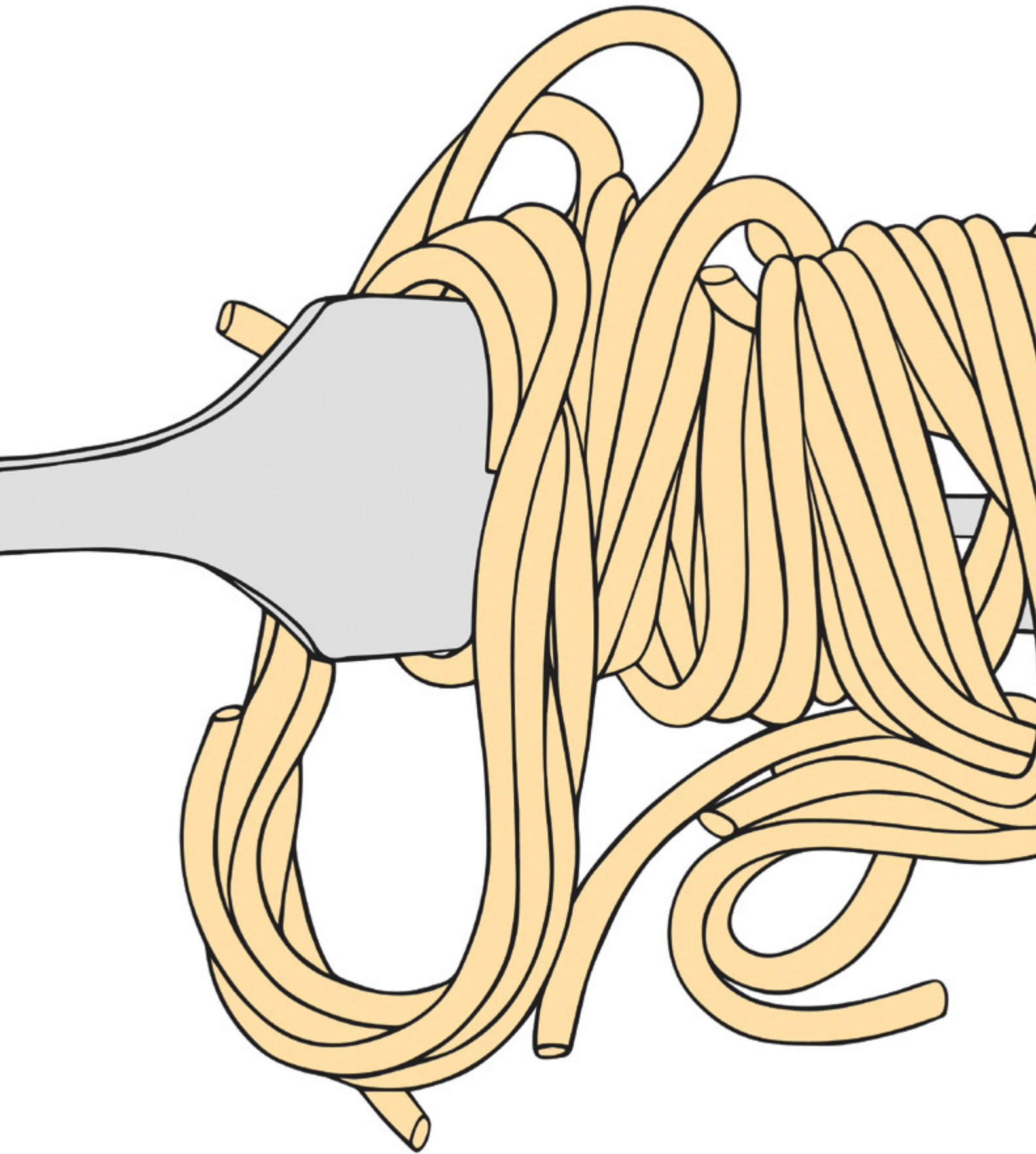
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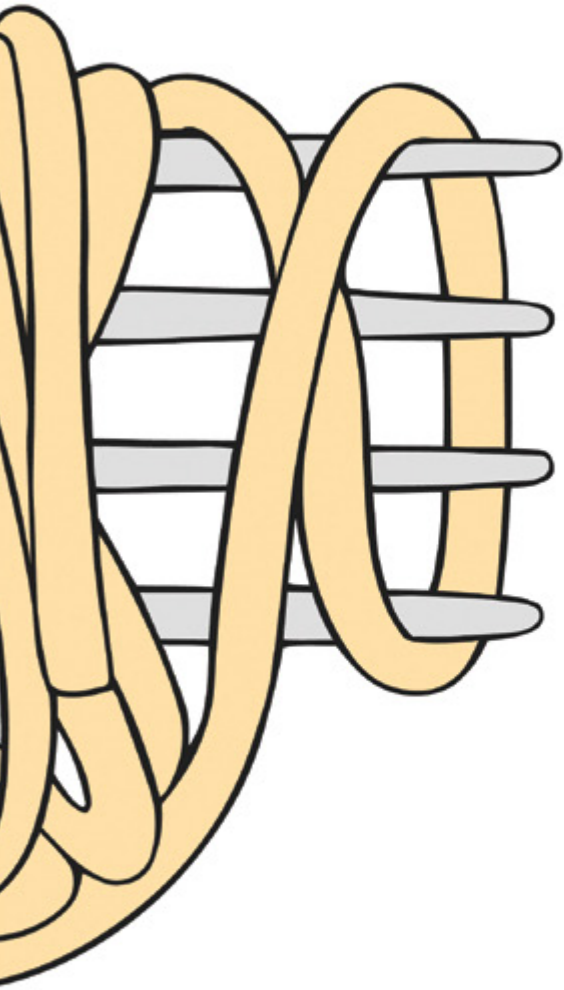
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# FOCUS: *food*

*The purer the food, the  
better the mettle;  
the purer the mettle, the  
better the memory.*

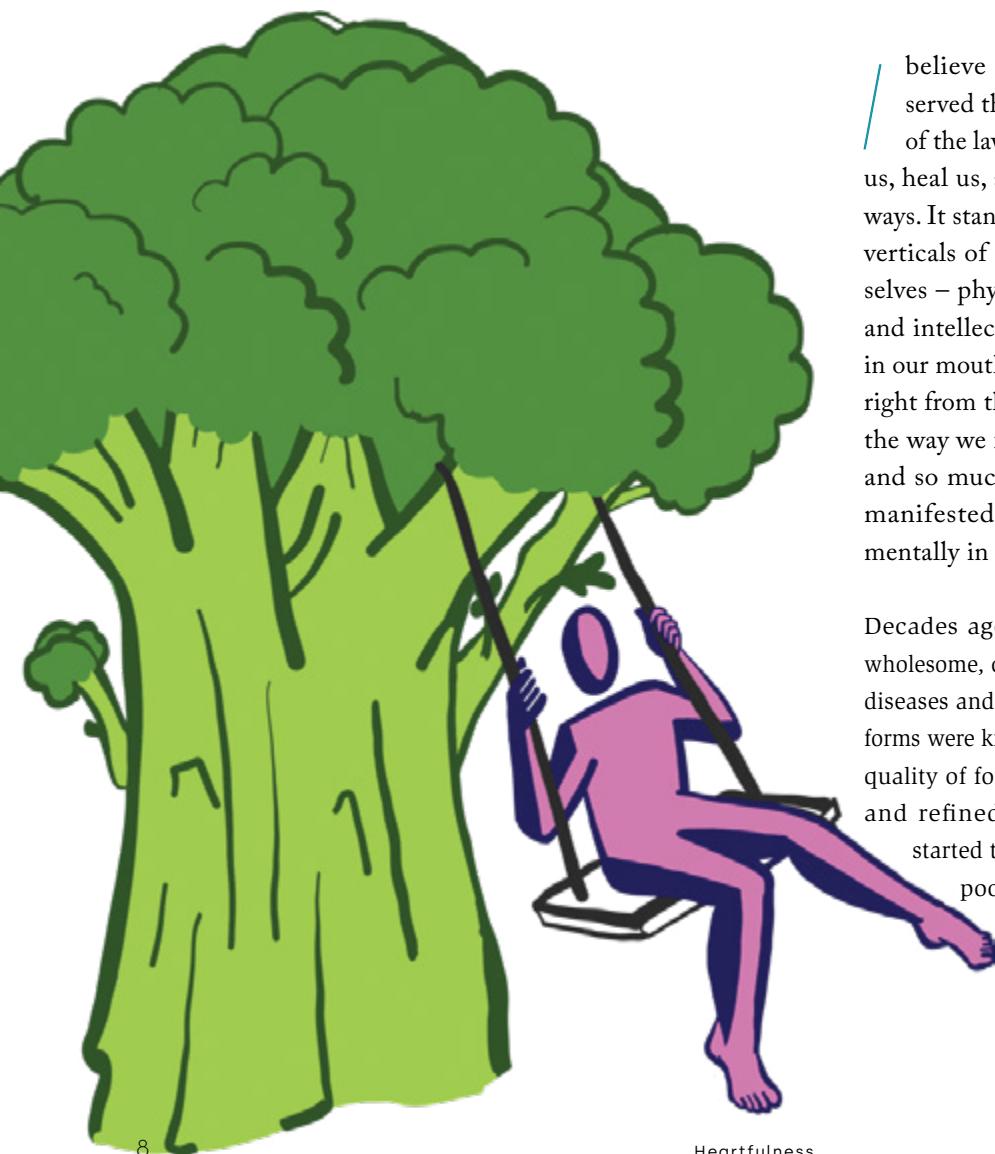
CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

# WE ARE *what we eat*

**LUKE COUTINHO** is a holistic lifestyle coach, practicing in the field of Integrative Medicine. Here he shares his experiences and knowledge of how what we eat makes a difference to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

believe that right nutrition, cooked and served the right way, within the framework of the laws of nature, has the ability to shape us, heal us, and prevent problems in so many ways. It stands to be one of the most important verticals of holistic health. Each of us have 5 selves – physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and intellectual – and everything that we put in our mouths helps shape each of these selves; right from the way we look, think and speak to the way we fight or prevent illnesses, age, feel, and so much more. What we eat is not only manifested physically in our body but also mentally in our thoughts.

Decades ago, when food was much cleaner, wholesome, closer to nature, and naturally grown, diseases and mental stress were rarer and milder forms were known. With the gradual decline in the quality of food and the prevalence of processed and refined foods in every home, we also started to see a gradual increase in diseases, poor immunity, skin and hair health, infertility, metabolic conditions, obesity and emotional ill health. Yes, there are other factors





responsible, but nutrition has a major role to play. “Food is medicine” – not just for our body but also our emotional health.

Food is information to our genes. Right from our birth, till today, the kind of nutrition that has gone into us has helped shape who we are today. It’s possible that you could have grown up to be a totally different individual if the kind of food you ate was any different – for the good or bad. This is also why lifestyle plays a huge role, even though certain diseases are known to be genetic. It takes a wrong lifestyle, including nutrition, to activate a bad gene and allow that gene’s expression.

Foods contain energy, and the right kind of food is what fuels every cell the right way. While a clean and wholesome diet contains highly vibrational foods, processed, putrid, burnt, refined foods are low vibrational foods. This impacts every aspect of our body, mind and spirit. This fact was also known by our ancients, as the ancient yogic texts talk about three types of food – *Sattvik*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic*. Many people have reported how their anger, frustration, mood, focus or concentration improved the moment they shifted to clean eating. Their prayers and spiritual practice were also enhanced, and meditation went deeper with cleaner eating habits. This is also why a heavy, greasy meal at a restaurant leaves you feeling sluggish the next day. Food is meant to energize and fuel you, not drain and rob you of energy.

### FOOD AND IMMUNITY

The right food can feed our immune system and the wrong food can cripple our immunity. Immunity, being the first and last line of defense, is the most important barrier we have against diseases. Why do most ancient remedies for curing a fever, cold, cough, flu, headache, stomach ache, or any physical suffering, revolve around food as the first step? Because food heals us, right from a spice or herb to various concoctions and dishes.





### FOOD SHAPES THE QUALITY OF OUR THOUGHTS

Foods not only make you look and feel differently but can also impact your thinking, personality and character. There is a direct link between food and mood. Our body relies on nutrition to manufacture the right number of neurotransmitters and hormones that make us feel good. Certain foods can stimulate emotions like anger, frustration, anxiety, grogginess, while other foods help you feel calmer, composed, grounded etc.

Why do kids (or even adults for that matter) who consume a lot of sugary foods end up being more cranky, restless and hyper? It's because that's what sugar does to our body and brain. It lights up brain activity just like any other psychoactive drug.

Food also impacts our libido and sexual desire in a huge way.

### FOOD AND SLEEP

Certain foods have the ability to calm us down, making the process of drifting off to sleep much easier, e.g. magnesium-rich foods. Other foods can act as potent stimulants. They wake up our mind, make us jittery and anxious, and give us an uphill task to fall sleep.

### FOOD AND OUR SKIN, HAIR AND NAILS

Skin, hair and nails are also made up of cells, and the health of our skin, hair and nails depends on the quality of nutrition reaching these cells. It's an inside out approach. Acne, skin allergies, early onset of wrinkles, hair greying, brittle nails, hair fall and thinning, can speak volumes about the kind of food the person is eating. Sometimes, ensuring enough intake of biotin-rich foods is enough to fix a hair fall issue. No amount of creams, lotions, conditioners and serums will help if the foundation of health, i.e. food, is not on point. The right nutrition makes it possible to have that glow on the skin, lustrous hair and strong nails.



### FOOD AND PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

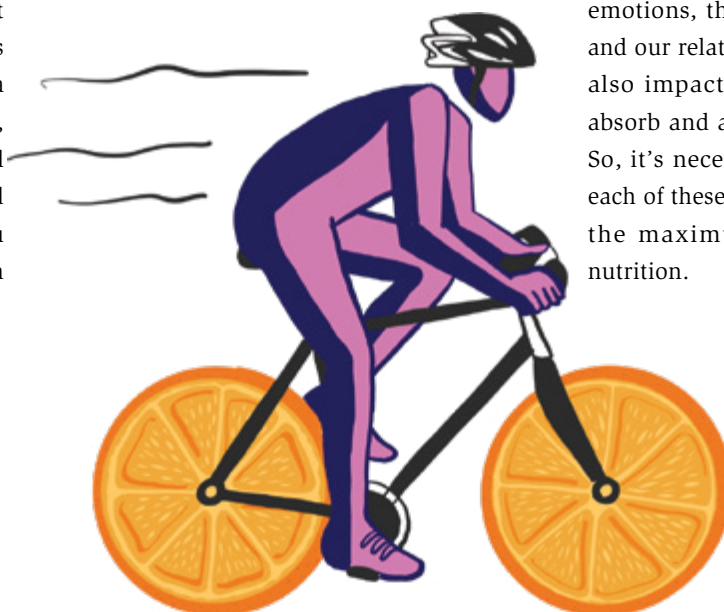
While physical appearance is multifactorial, food can largely determine your body shape. A pot belly could mean one is overdoing sugar, high fructose corn syrup, alcohol, foods rich in bad fats etc. And it doesn't always have to be fat; sometimes wrong foods can also result in a bloated belly. Contrary to that, give your body the right kind of exercise, sleep, nutrition and stable mental health, and you will work yourself towards a strong and lean body.

### FOOD AND MIND

Your food choices are the most influential variables that you can control when it comes to health, vitality, and functionality of your brain. When it comes to nourishing the brain, improving cognitive skills, enhancing memory, managing brain disorders like dementia, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and ADHD, food is given huge importance.

### FOOD AND EXERCISE

Food is energy that fuels trillions of cells in our body. Lack of energy leads to fatigue, and that can largely impact not only the quality of a workout but also the motivation to exercise. Yes, there are fake forms of energy like sugar, caffeine and other stimulants, but what we are talking about is real cellular energy.



So, the next time you reach out for something to eat, know that it's about more than fulfilling your hunger. What you eat reflects who you are and vice versa. It is possible that with a quality, balanced, wholesome nutritional plan, your body will gain the ability to manage diabetes, fatty liver, thyroid conditions, hormonal imbalances, cancers, depression, autoimmune diseases, and getting off statins and other meds (keeping doctors in the loop) with a lot more ease. It may or may not take away the disease, but it will surely help steer you in the right direction. After all, good food has always been used as medicine and most of the best medicines can be found in food.

Having said that, what we eat is just half the story. How we eat, how much we eat, our emotions, thoughts, feelings, and our relationship with food also impact how we digest, absorb and assimilate a meal. So, it's necessary to focus on each of these aspects to extract the maximum worth from nutrition.

# Food as *Prana*

**DAAJI** brings another angle to our relationship with food. It is not only for physical and mental health and well-being; it can also nurture our spiritual growth if we understand the science of vibrational compatibility and resonance.

There is a universal principle that offers us great insight into our relationship with food: Anything coming directly from Nature is pure, because its basis is purity. Over millennia, this principle has led thinkers to have a special regard for the value of food in our lives. And in particular, those who were interested in spiritual evolution developed a deep respect for the role of food. Here are some of the important concepts:

**FIRST**, there is the matter of hygiene. Food needs to be grown, stored and cooked cleanly in a proper manner. This is common to all cultures and is not only restricted to those people who are interested in spiritual growth. What comes from Nature is pure, but we can contaminate it if we disrupt the purity during the process of growing, picking, storing, processing, cooking and eating.

**SECOND**, if the food is also *sattvik* in nature, and prepared in the remembrance and love of God, its effect on the human system will be surprising. *Sattvik* food is light, fresh, simple and subtle. It is vegetarian. Meat may be good for physical strength, but it is heavier food, bringing heavier energies to the system. And not all vegetarian food is *sattvik* either. Choosing a *sattvik* diet is about the vibration of the food, which also depends on our vibration. The lighter and purer the vibration, the more it will resonate with subtler spiritual states. There is a good analogy in the physical realm: babies are given



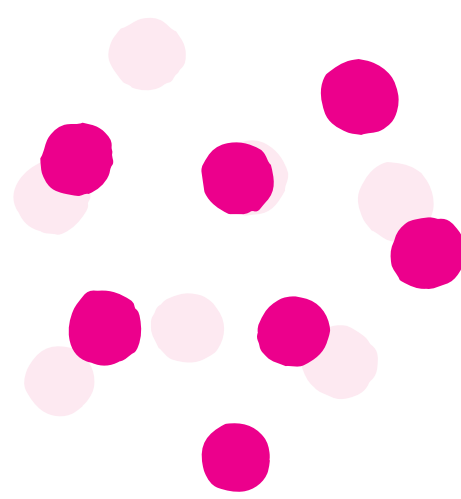
light food suitable for their developmental stage, and the elderly also eat less and lighter food than young adults. Food needs to match the activities and disposition of a person – it is all a matter of vibrational compatibility, of resonance.

**THIRD**, if food is also eaten while a person is in a meditative state, it will cure all kinds of spiritual diseases and remove many things that hinder spiritual progress. Does this mean we pray or say Grace before eating? Not necessarily. Both are fine, and may connect us with the Divine before we start to eat, but it is important to retain an inner meditative connection throughout the meal. It is more effective to feel and experience the divine vibration of the food rather than simply thinking it is there. This makes a world of difference.

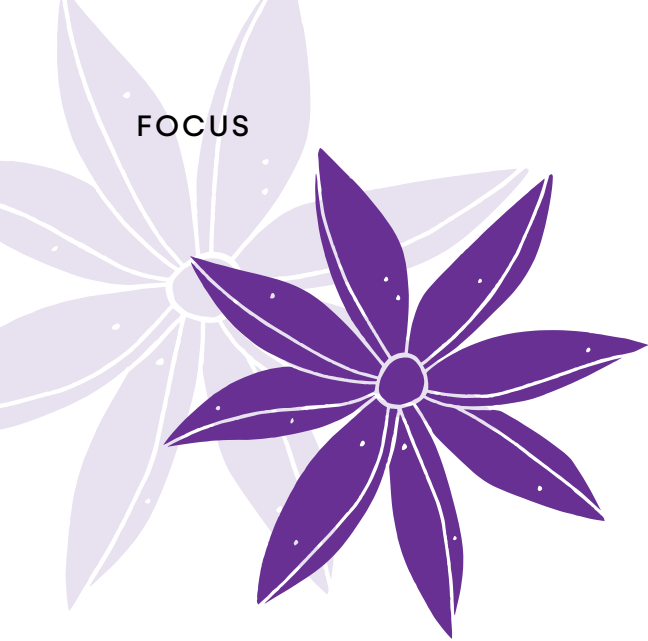
**FOURTH**, be happy to eat whatever food we receive in constant awareness of Divinity. In other words, food can be divinized through intention. This is what is really meant by a *sattvik* approach to eating. Whether we are given pasta or biriyani for dinner, whether we prefer the taste and smell of one or the other, we are no longer concerned about the senses – the taste, the smell, the touch, and the look of the food – because we feel the essence of Divinity in the food we are eating. Eventually we will not even be conscious of doing so, as after some time this approach will become an automatic subconscious attitude. But first we have to consciously train ourselves to become like that.

When our underlying awareness is with Divinity at the time of eating, the effect filters down into the food, so that it enters our body and begins to spread all through our arteries and veins. We are making the best use of Nature's pure energy from outside, and the atoms of the body are purified as a result. The impulse of our intention combines with the food, promoting physical, mental and spiritual health.

Contrast this with a mealtime that is stressful, for example, when there is an argument at the dinner table. When we are fearful, angry or stressed, the vibrations that



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are negatively carried in the food also affect our whole system. And when the digested food goes to all the cells, the effect is also negative. If we avoid arguments and tension at mealtimes, waiting for a better moment, it will have a great impact on our overall health.

Food is our main source of *prana* or energy, as once the food is broken down through digestion the energy that is released into the system is utilized for the body's chemical processes. How subtle and pure are the vibrations of the *prana* that we take into our system when we eat? Do they match the subtle vibrations of the spiritual states we are trying to absorb through meditation?

This leads to another topic. Imagine for a moment the following scene:

There is a beautiful stillness in the atmosphere after a group meditation, as a young bride and groom stand facing each other on their wedding day. It is a joyous occasion where they garland each other with rose garlands, and then gently place spiritually charged rings on each other's fingers. Then they each receive a small piece of a special sweet to place in each other's mouth from their spiritual Guide.

This is no ordinary sweet; it has been divinized, so it is fully charged with the subtlest essence. It is known as *prasad*. Even the minutest amount will bring spiritual well-being and joy to the receiver. The two young people start their married life by offering each other this gift.

Afterwards, they share the *prasad* with the guests who have come to celebrate with them, and take some home for others who could not make it.

Special days of celebration call for special offerings. We celebrate marriages, births and other milestones by offering heartfelt and joyous prayers, accompanied by the distribution of food and gifts. This tradition exists in all cultures, religions and ethnic groups, as a way of sharing joy, first with the Divine, and then with everyone else.

There are so many examples, such as the sacramental bread of the Eucharist, holy water, sweets, cakes, flower offerings etc. Even customs that are today secular in nature find their roots in earlier sacred offerings. For example, the tradition of lighting candles on a birthday cake is said to have come from the ancient Greeks, who would make round cakes to honor Artemis, the goddess of the moon. The lit candles on the cake represented the glow of the moon, and the smoke from the blown-out candles carried their prayers and wishes to the goddess in the sky.

When offering *prasad*, attitude matters: not the outer ritual but the inner condition and attitude, and how it is actually done. The best attitude is one of complete love and reverence, with humility and innocence. In this way, there is osmosis between the offering and the one to whom it is offered. That is what gives *prasad* its joyous quality and reverence: something that is in osmosis with God can then be shared with all.

People often follow a lot of cultural etiquette when distributing *prasad*, and in today's world this may appear too ritualistic and anachronistic. But if we explore the science behind the etiquette, we find a purpose that is rooted in precise scientific principles.

In India, *prasad* is always offered and received with the right hand. When we study the physiology of the human body, we discover that the right side of the body is primarily controlled by the left hemisphere of the brain, and the left side of the body is primarily controlled by the right hemisphere of the brain. Also, our autonomic nervous

system is made up of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. When the sympathetic nervous system is stimulated, our body becomes more active and excited, and endorphins and cortisol levels increase. In contrast, when the parasympathetic nervous system is activated, our body relaxes and calms down, reducing our endorphin and cortisol levels.

There is something called Cerebral Hemispheric Laterality<sup>1</sup>, where each hemisphere of the brain is connected to one of these autonomic nervous systems. When we stimulate the right hemisphere of the brain it invokes the parasympathetic nervous system, and when we stimulate the left hemisphere of the brain it invokes the sympathetic nervous system. So when we use our left hand, it stimulates the right hemisphere of the brain, which is connected to the parasympathetic nervous system, so we feel calmer<sup>2</sup>.

What happens when we give *prasad*? Our attitude for the occasion is joyful and we want to remain active and excited, which happens when we give from the right hand, connected to the left side of the brain and the sympathetic nervous system. When we receive *prasad*, the tradition is also to take it with the right hand, which resonates with the sympathetic response so that we can reciprocate the feeling of joy of the giver.

There is another aspect of scientific and spiritual significance around *prasad*: only a very small quantity is offered and eaten. This is so that what little is given will remain in the body rather than being excreted, helping to purify the whole system.

If we wish it to be so, everything we eat may become an offering of *prasad*. This way, the moment of taking food will be one more activity that purifies and ennobles our consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup>Robin, M., 2002. *A Physiological Handbook for Teachers of Yogasana*, Fenestra Books, USA

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25035609>

# Which Foods Are Right For You?

**MELANIE PHILIPPIDES** inspires us to listen to our hearts and follow the body's innate wisdom about what foods it needs and what it doesn't need.





There is so much information available at our fingertips to guide us towards healing, but there are also so many diets out there that it is often hard to discern which one is right for you. So here are some tips:

### **ALWAYS LISTEN TO YOUR BODY**

Your body has its own innate wisdom about what foods you should, and shouldn't eat right now. No one – no doctor, no physician, no therapist – knows you better than you know yourself. You have an infinite source of knowledge within you that is easily accessible. Practicing meditation and being mindful is key: when we quiet our minds, we can listen to what our instincts are telling us about the food we are putting in our mouths. Take a moment to be still and ask yourself what foods are right for you, right now. Being mindful also helps us to realize what our true cravings are, whether they are helping us or whether these cravings just fulfill an ego-driven desire for comfort.

### **LET LABELS GUIDE YOU BUT NOT DEFINE YOU**

Try not to fall into the trap of letting your diet define who you are. The cells in our body are always dying and regenerating. Our bodies are always changing. So it makes sense that at different times in our lives we may need different foods. If you are guided to a certain way of eating, whether it is vegetarian, vegan, paleo, raw food etc., be mindful of how you feel with this new lifestyle and also be mindful of when it is time to change.

### **THE BIGGEST RISKS HAVE THE BIGGEST PAY OFFS**

It is easy to just add certain foods to your diet in the hope that it will make all the difference, but the optimal diet for you may require you to let go of things that are stopping you from being well. Your health will only go so far if you keep adding things, without removing what is causing the problem in the first place. So listen not only to what your body needs to eat, but also what you need to let go of. Trust that the biggest risks have the biggest pay offs. Seeing change as hard will make it hard. Learn to view change as easy and exciting and it will be. Change your thoughts; change your world.

### **EAT WITH LOVE FOR YOURSELF. EXERCISE WITH LOVE FOR YOURSELF.**

The energy of love is so powerful that it can overcome the fear of change. When you truly learn to love yourself, you will naturally be guided towards eating for longevity and for optimal health, and your outward appearance will reflect this. You will be at the weight that is best for you. You will look your best. That is because your body will be nourished, and it will show. You know what's best.

*Disclaimer: This is the opinion of the author, and is not a substitute for medical guidance when required.*

# THINGS TO BE GRATEFUL FOR

UPLIFTING CONVERSATIONS



SLOW DAYS



A SUPPORT SYSTEM



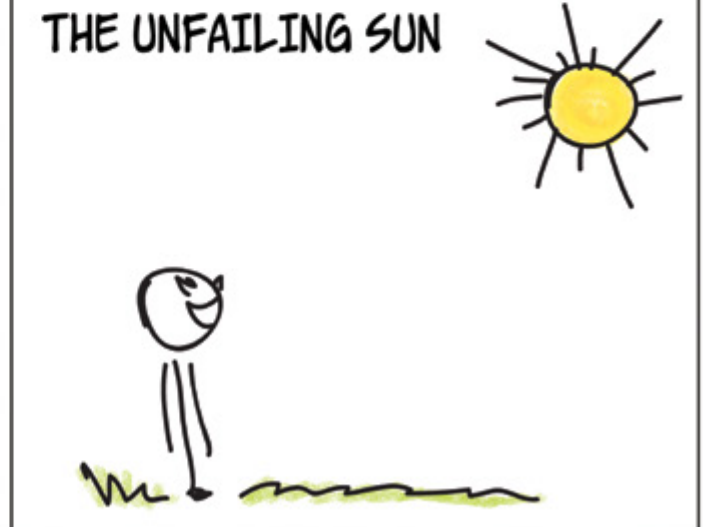
THE MAGIC OF MUSIC



THE WINDS OF CHANGE



THE UNFAILING SUN

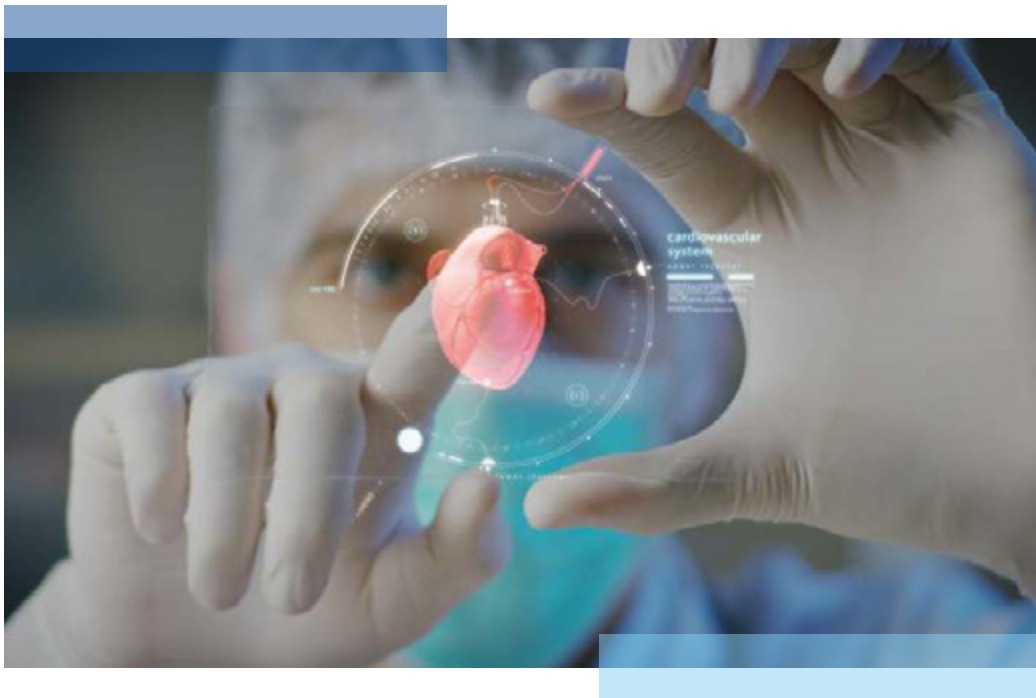




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# Celebrate Meditation

On 7 September 2019, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center was host to a mega meditation event, known as a *Dhyantsav*, the first of its kind in North America.

There have been dozens of Dhyantsavs across the Indian subcontinent during 2019, and many meditation practitioners in the West have watched in wonder as hundreds of thousands of newcomers have experienced Heartfulness Meditation for the first time.

In Sanskrit, *dhyant* means meditation and *antsav* is a celebration with the element of an offering. Recently, we were able to host the first Dhyantsav in North America at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJ PAC) in Newark. It was the perfect venue, and reservations skyrocketed as the date approached. In the spirit of offering the practices of Heartfulness, our team came together to share these simple and effective practices with the local community in an impactful way.



Over a thousand locals joined us on the day. The hall was abuzz with anticipation of an eventful afternoon as the lights dimmed. The program began with a musical invocation by Pavan Benjamin, an American saxophonist and bansuri flute player, who performed a magical flute raga to set the tone for the event.



Following this, Keith Mitchell shared his transformative story. Keith is a motivational speaker, yoga master, mindfulness coach, and meditation guru. In his former life, Keith was a professional football player of the highest caliber. He received several accolades including being chosen to play in the first Pro Bowl and named an All-Pro player. When a severe, spinal injury ended his career, he turned to the power of breath and meditation. Thus began his path of self-awareness, personal growth, and helping others to achieve the same. He has traveled the world, coaching people in the craft of mindfulness, the practice of yoga, the art of meditation, and the importance of self-realization.

He encouraged all of us to reflect on our breath, explaining that for years he had no idea what happens when we breathe. He first learned conscious breathing in the hospital after suffering a spinal contusion, when a nurse gave him the opportunity to focus on sustaining life from his breath, allowing Keith to learn to transcend the victim mentality.

He reflected on how, despite his material attainments, he still felt internal misery. At that point in his life, he had to rediscover himself without the identity of his successful football career. Through meditation he realized he had a choice – to be the victor not the victim, irrespective of circumstances.





Omi Vaidya, an American actor well known for his roles in Hollywood and Bollywood, introduced the concept of strengthening the hemispheres of the brain, leading to greater perception. Using these insights, he introduced the students of Brighter Minds to demonstrate some of the perceptive abilities they've cultivated from their training.

The young people stole the show, first demonstrating tricky cross-brain exercises before showing us the perceptive power of the mind. With audience volunteers standing onstage, the children demonstrated clear perception despite being blindfolded. Their display included identifying colored balls by touch, even hidden within an opaque sack, ordering cards by color, solving a Rubik's cube, and accurately reading sentences a volunteer wrote – all while blindfolded!

The event also coincided with the North American release of the latest book of Kamlesh Patel, *Designing Destiny*, which was available in the lobby during intermission.

Dr. Jay Thimmapuram, an Internal Medicine physician at WellSpan York Hospital in Pennsylvania, shared his key research findings on Heartfulness Meditation. He reflected on how our modern lifestyle leads from



uncontrolled thoughts to uncontrolled emotions, spiraling into uncontrolled circumstances. He described how, in meditation, the brain goes through the same refreshing brain states as when we sleep; and how the deepest states of rest and relaxation can occur within 10 to 15 minutes, in comparison with the 60 to 90 minutes generally needed in sleep to get to the same brainwave patterns.

He has offered Heartfulness Meditation to physicians, nurses and house staff at his hospital. These medical professionals had a positive experience with the meditation, and it has reduced burnout and improved emotional wellness. Heartfulness Meditation even affected the structure of chromosomes in subjects, increasing the length of the cap-like structures called telomeres. Longer telomeres have an association with health and longevity. Stress can shorten telomeres. Dr. Jay measured telomere length before and after the meditation study to find that the telomere length increased in the group that meditated.

The Dhyantsav concluded with a practical experience of Heartfulness Relaxation and Meditation with Transmission, guided by trainer, Emma Ivaturi. In the profound silence, hundreds of hearts resonated together, turning to the Source of Light within. All the participants were given simple ways to continue their meditation practice, connect with local trainers, and use the HeartsApp to meditate whenever and wherever they like.

*Thought in action*





*We are all  
brethren,  
connected  
intellectually,  
morally and  
spiritually.*

RAM CHANDRA





# LEADERSHIP FROM THE HEART

## Part 2

In part 2, **PRAKASH SESHADRI** takes the reader from survival mode to a mature leadership model, by sharpening Emotional and Spiritual Quotients through the practices of meditation, introspection and inquiry.

*Is there a way to move from a survival mindset to a growth mindset?*

*Do we understand how human beings evolve their competencies?*

*Are we clear on the role of Emotional Intelligence in leadership?*

*Does the heart have a role to play in sharpening our leadership skills?*

## *Challenges to Graduating Up the Competency Spectrum*

Why is that some people do not learn fast, and what stops them? I was reading an interesting article recently, in which it was suggested that everyone in the world who has ever been born or will be born has the same hardware as Albert Einstein or Newton, and our brains are also wired in a similar manner. Einstein could achieve so much in his lifetime, but most of us are ineffective though we have the same set of capabilities. What is the difference? For hardware to work efficiently we need software and unfortunately people are never taught how to build it. I may buy readymade Windows or Mac software and install it, and it works. But how do I write my own code, build my own operating system, or write my own app? These are the biggest challenges. Today we cannot build our own software because we are not inquisitive; we have lost the ability to ask questions. Every question you ask can be replaced by a higher level of questioning, which will expand your consciousness, your state of being and your awareness.

The second biggest challenge is to look within and introspect, and we do not make the time to do so, so we have lost the art of introspection. Looking within with

distractions is very different from looking within without distractions. So it brings us back to the competency model. We need to develop these tools. Like the Lion and the Deer story, we humans are also busy with our survival, and we do not have the time to hit the pause button, to spend time asking questions, and to introspect. In fact, 99.99% of the time many of us are in perennial survival mode. Realizing that is the first step: we are moving from Unconscious Incompetency to Conscious Incompetency mode.

Is all corporate work related to survival? 99.99% of the time no. It's all about growth, inclusion, collaboration and compassion. It's about getting people together. We need teamwork and, yet, when the team comes together, what do we do? The survival instinct, the "fight or flight" instinct, takes over. At a leadership level, this survival instinct is embedded in us as power. In most organizations, people are in fight or run-away mode. All the key decisions are with one or two people at the top, while others are free to take a tea break or a lunch break, but by afternoon they have to accomplish the targets given.

The fight or flight instinct is associated with the older parts the brain as a survival mechanism, and it usually generates an emotional response. But where does the root of that emotion come from? It has been scientifically shown that feelings and emotions are generated in the heart, which is why we call a person cold- or warm-hearted, but we never say a cold-minded person. When



a leader leads with true feelings emanating from the heart, leading to mutual, respectful engagement and creative work involvement, they build trust and respect and take the business further. Such a leader is respected and loved. Employees open up, feeling safe and appreciated, without much being said.

It is commonly understood that communication is 10% data and 90% feeling. For example, when an HR person is listening to an employee sharing their woes and grievances, it helps if they are empathetic and compassionate and relate to the person's mindset. The same holds true with a customer; we want to instill in them a feeling of security and trust. To develop these skills, we have to go deep within our hearts and connect to our inner self, invoking the connection between the mind and the heart. When we can do that, we deem to be a leader – one who has the ability to listen and empathize.

But generally, either we are talking, or, while others are talking, we are busy getting ready to respond. We are unable to listen while we are creating our own response. For a leader, it's of paramount importance to still the mind. It becomes so still that whatever the other person is saying is amplified by itself and multiplies by itself.

The second essential quality of a leader is to suspend prejudice. While conversing with someone, do not see through a predefined set of filters based on past experiences. We put everyone in multiple slots and make judgments about them even before we meet them.

## *The Role of Meditation*

A successful leader develops stillness of the mind by calming and subsiding thoughts. A successful leader also stops being prejudiced, instead developing a motherly attitude and understanding. We can intensify our concern and affection for our employees, in spite of their recurring mistakes. We can step into their shoes and feel their mindset without an air of prejudice. That kind of essential bonding can be acquired in abundance through the practice of meditation.

Meditation brings down the reactive instinct, even in catastrophic situations. But how many life and death situations do we face in a normal day? Not many. Instead we activate the fight or flight response regularly for smaller things, because our system still responds the same way. For example, if someone snatches your water bottle, do you react and get agitated, or are you polite and let them take it as a courtesy? Once the response is triggered, with the release of hormones, it can take from one minute to 45 minutes to calm down, depending on our physiology. Now here is the warning bell: when we are emotional and feeling stressed, it is better not to talk, not to decide, and not to react.

It was beautifully put up by a speaker in a leadership lecture recently: the Ramayana would not have happened if King Dasharatha had been silent when Kaikeyi put her hand in the chariot wheel. He granted her two boons and one thing led to another, then another, and the Ramayana happened. Even when Dhobi told Rama, “Your wife is not chaste,” what did Rama do? Abolished her to the forest. What do these incidents teach us? Don’t take any decision in a state of impulse. Allow your system to calm down, and the best way to do that is to turn your external focus to an internal focus. To attain a peaceful state, take up meditation, although the outcome will depend on your level of interest, intention and the intensity with which you practice.



So, let’s go back to the Lion and the Deer story. There is a famous quotation: “People don’t care how much you know, till they know how much you care.” A true leader understands the pulse of their employees. As years pass by, their technical know-how may come to a standstill, but their ability to manage people cannot fall down, otherwise it’s over. Their ability to manage people comes from their ability to understand them through the heart, and also accept their faults. Nobody is perfect, neither you nor I. We may indulge in presenting a perfect demeanor externally, but we are aware of our internal challenges. I can say with certainty that over a period of time it’s quite easy to scale up to the next level of leadership, emanating from the heart.

What did the lion and the deer learn? They learnt to co-exist. It is possible.

# THE HEARTFUL LEADER

- part 10

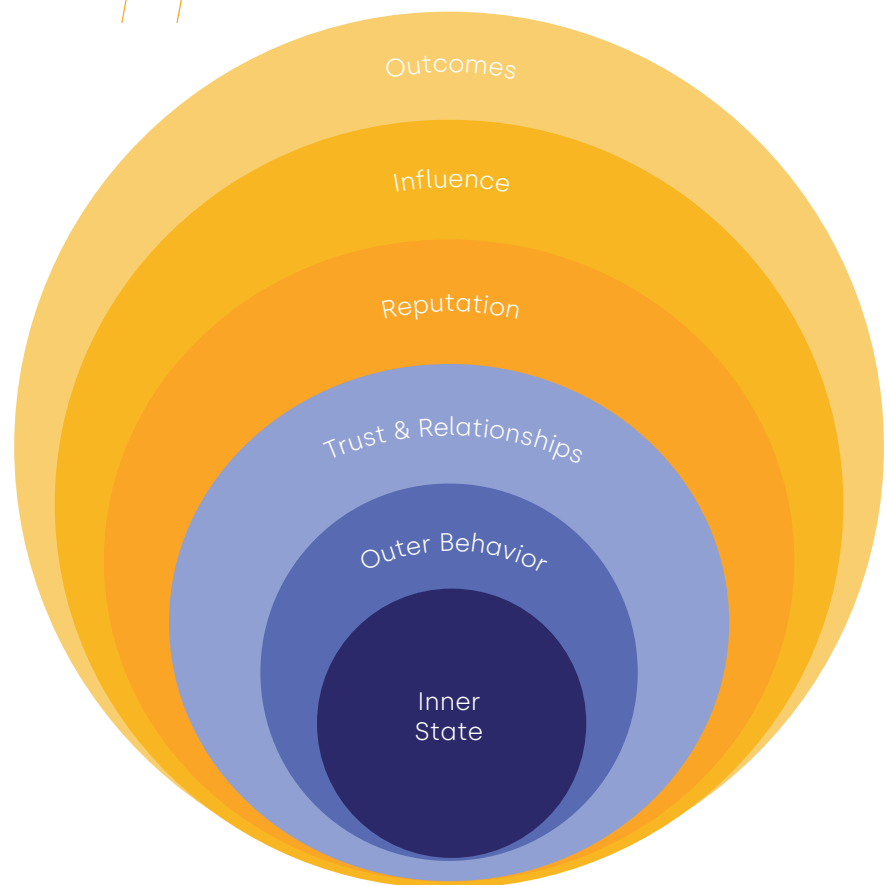
*Extraordinary outcomes through inspiration*

## INFLUENCE AND OUTCOMES

In previous articles **RAVI VENKATESAN** introduced the Heartful Leader framework and explored Reputation, Trust & Relationships and Outer Behavior. He explored how to manage our inner state to create specific behavioral shifts, and how to consistently build trust and relationships by doing this. He also explored how reputations are formed through trust and relationships, and eventually create influence that lets us generate required outcomes.

In this final article on the series we will cover some practical pointers on how to apply this framework and evolve with it. After all, Heartful Leadership is not a one and done thing, but rather a lifelong pursuit.

Here is the framework again:





## Dig deeper when things are tough

Almost anyone can be on their best behavior when things are going great. Business is rolling in, promotions are easy, your boss is happy with you, and your colleagues think you walk on water. The “real person” shows up when the going gets tough. This is when observing your inner state, making shifts that reflect in a positive outer behavior, become most important.

## Trust is earned in two ways

The obvious way is by doing what we say we will do. The less obvious one is by taking responsibility for mistakes and failures.

## Relationships are already there

A lot of times we put significant effort in building relationships and look at the world as divided into people we know and those who are strangers to us. The founder of Heartfulness, Ram Chandra, says, “We are all connected intellectually and morally.” This is a simple sentence but loaded with meaning.

I have often observed that when I feel someone is not a stranger, their behavior towards me becomes familiar, cordial, and, more often than not, amicable. Negotiations become easy, an understanding develops, which might usually take much longer. Next time you head into a meeting with people you think you don’t know, have this idea of being connected in mind and see what happens.

## Value your reputation

I cannot stress enough how precious reputations are. Even the best of us will always be targets for criticism and slander. Sometimes our reputation can be sullied maliciously without us being at fault. These are things we can't control, however, it behooves us to be alert to what we can control. Most of this is our conversation. Can we always be polite, civil, respectful and balanced? This is key to building and maintaining a reputation.

## Watch for the reverse effects

Just as inner state impacts outer behavior, which impacts trust and relationships, which impacts reputations, which impacts influence, which leads to outcomes, there is a reverse cycle. Misuse of influence and creating negative outcomes can harm reputations, which can damage trust and relationships, which can create bad behaviors. This can penetrate and spoil our inner state creating excessive ambition, restlessness, anger, anxiety and lack of clarity. If we let our inner state be spoiled, then we are lost.





## Use feedback to review and refine

Pick any aspect of this framework you would like to work on. For example, you might pick an outer behavior, like the tendency to interrupt when someone else is speaking, or the tendency to put down ideas from someone else. As you go on a journey to correct this outer behavior, by adjusting your inner state, ask a colleague to observe you in meetings and give you candid feedback. Are you making the required shift or not? This can be very valuable in holding you accountable to the change you desire.



## It starts with contentment

Contentment is a rare quality in corporate life. It is almost viewed as weak and the opposite of ambition. Corporate leaders are now trained to develop “killer instinct” and high ambition. People give talks about how if it doesn’t hurt then you don’t have ambition. What are we really trying to achieve? There is a huge difference between aspiration and ambition. Aspiration is the desire to achieve excellence. It is beyond the individual self, it is noble, and it is without compromising on achievement orientation. Ambition on the other hand tends to be about “me and mine.” If we can shift from ambition to aspiration by sowing the seeds of contentment in our heart, then we will trigger the positive cycle discussed in the 7th article of this series:



This will lead to the right behaviors, and eventually the best outcomes.

I wish you all the best in practicing these principles of Heartful Leadership and look forward to times when we see more and more heartful leaders in our corporate lives.

*Follow your bliss and  
doors will open where  
there were no doors before.*

JOSEPH CAMPBELL





*immerview*

# Where History Intersects with Myth

## PART 1

**ASHWIN SANGHI** is an Indian author in the intersecting genre of mythology, fiction and thriller. Here he is interviewed by RUDY SINGH at Kanha Shanti Vanam about his formative influences, what brought him to writing, and the gray area intersecting mythology and history. In Part 2, the conversation will also move to his own work and in particular his latest books.



Q: Welcome to Kanha Shanti Vanam. What are your first impressions of this place?

I am absolutely fascinated by my surroundings. Before I arrived here I didn't know the scale of Kanha Shanti Vanam. It has been an incredible experience not just because of the infrastructure, which is obviously still coming up, but even what is there is world-class. More importantly, I think what is fascinating is just the amazing environment that you have created.

I am told that you have planted something like 300,000 trees and plants in this place, which was barren land. That the water-table is changing because of the number of reservoirs and the rainwater harvesting that is being done here. The fact that this place is energy self-sufficient because of the number of solar panels that are used. And of course the fact that there have been so many trees that have been translocated, or transplanted, here from other road-widening projects etc.

So when you add all of it up, it makes for a fascinating place. And then of course when you factor in Daaji and his vibrations, and the vibrations of all those people who happen to be here meditating, it's a magical experience. So to sum up: it's a magical place.

Q: Ashwin, I read that when you first started writing, you faced almost 40 rejections for your work, and then you decided to self-publish. Now most of us have a terrible time handling rejection. How did you handle that phase?

Well, I think one of the problems in today's world is that we don't teach youngsters to cope with failure. And I think failure is a very important learning tool. And I think what we need to understand is how do we motivate ourselves to keep plodding on. When a child falls down while he is learning to walk, he doesn't think, "Well, maybe this is not for me." He just gets up and walks. He makes an attempt to walk and finally he learns how to walk. But we don't do that in later life; we seem to get affected every time we fall down.

In front of my desk I had this bulletin board, which had a series of numbers: 12, 18, 30, 34, 38, so on and so forth. When people would come to my study they would wonder what those numbers were.

Well, 12 was the number of times that the first book in the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling was rejected by publishers. 18 was the number of times that *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* was rejected. 30 was the number of times that the first novel by Stephen King, *Carrie*, was rejected. 34 was the number of times that *Chicken Soup for the Soul* was rejected. 38 was the number of times that *Gone with the Wind* was rejected.

So I used to psyche myself into believing that I would be a better author than all of them because I was getting rejected more. It's almost a way of psyching yourself to plod on, and I think that is a very important skill that we need to be imparting to our youngsters.

*I think failure is a very important learning tool.  
And I think what we need to understand is how  
do we motivate ourselves to keep plodding on.*

## INNERVIEW

Q: That is wonderful. So your first book, *The Rozabal Line*, is based on the hypothesis that Jesus came to India and lived here after he survived the crucifixion. How did that topic come up? How did you decide to take that route?

Actually I genuinely have come to believe that it's the other way round. We, as writers or storytellers, think that we are going out searching for a story, but really stories come searching for us, because that story wants to be told.

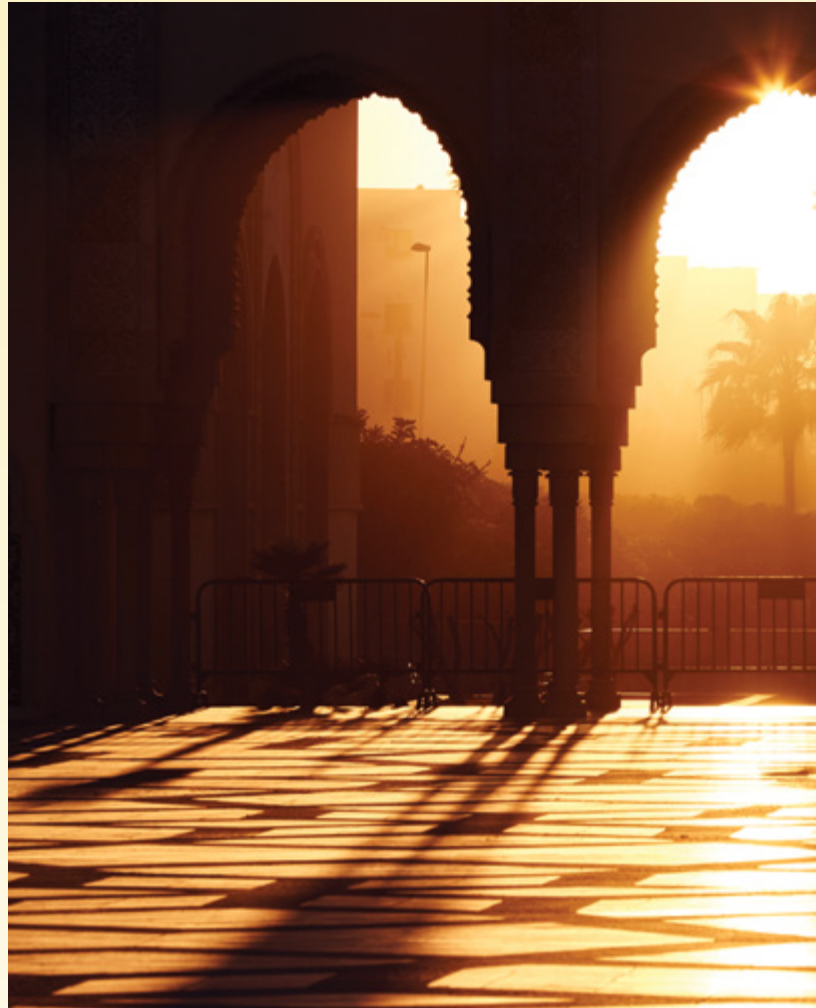
I happened to be in Srinagar sometime around 2002, attending the wedding of a very dear friend. This was of course the time of peak militancy in Srinagar, so there were road blocks and military check-posts every few yards. I was feeling so completely cooped up in my hotel room and I told my driver, "You have to get me out of here and take me to some place."

He said, "Well, I can take you to a very interesting tomb."

So we landed up in the heart of Srinagar, the old part of Srinagar, known as the Khanyar district. And in the heart of this district there is a very unassuming structure. Records indicate that some structure has stood there ever since 124 AD. So something or other has been there on that spot for the last 2,000 odd years. And the person buried there is a Muslim Pir, whose name was Nasiruddin. His was an Islamic burial site from around the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century, with the head pointing towards Mecca.

But there was another grave, which was of an older provenance, underneath that of Nasiruddin. It went back to the origin of the tomb, which was almost 500 years before the advent of Islam. And it was an east-west burial, which is the direction in which the ancient Jews buried their dead. Outside the tomb was a metallic plate, which showed the carving of human feet, with marks indicating the points at which the nails of a crucifixion would have been hammered.

I was completely blown away and fascinated by the story, and I spent the next two years researching that story,



not because I wanted to write the book, but because I was obsessed with the story. At the end of two years, my wife told me, "Listen, it has become painful to have a conversation with you, because this is the only thing we talk about. You need to get this out of your system." And that's how I got the idea of writing a book. It never started out with the idea of writing a book.

Q: Wow. And in your books of course you use a lot of tales that are rooted in mythology. How much does that have to do with your upbringing?

I grew up in an environment where we were surrounded by stories. I had my Daadi [paternal grandmother], who used to narrate stories to me from the Ramayana



*We, as writers or storytellers, think that we are going out searching for a story, but really stories come searching for us, because that story wants to be told.*

and Mahabharata. Then there was my Nana [maternal grandfather], who was a terrific storyteller, and he liberally would mix fact and fiction when narrating his stories, which made them even more interesting. His elder brother, whom we called Majle Nanaji, because he was the middle brother, had the habit of sending me a book every week to read. So at a very young age I was exposed to reading. And of course I had to read each book within a certain time frame and reply to him with a letter telling him what I'd read, and why I liked it or disliked it.

That entire habit of being surrounded by stories was very much there, as a result of which I think at heart I'm not a writer, I'm not a screenplay writer, I'm not a lyricist, I'm not a playwright, I'm just a storyteller, and that's

what I love doing. So even when I'm sitting having a conversation, I will find something the person will say that will inspire a story. And then I'm very quick to make a note of it, because I don't want the idea to dissolve into thin air.

And of course while all these meaningful books were coming from my maternal granduncle, there was also a set of books coming from my mother, and those were always paperbacks, thrillers – the latest Jeffery Archer, the latest Sidney Sheldon, the latest Irving Wallace, the latest Arthur Hailey. On the one hand I was getting all this philosophy, mythology, science, religion and theology coming to me from my grandparents, and then there was the style of a fast-paced novel coming to me from my

## INNERVIEW

mother. So a lot of what you see in my storytelling is a combination of those two streams of books.

**Q: Do you think this style of writing has brought a new generation of readers to literature? A lot of people were disillusioned with the way history was written, and a lot of youngsters would find history a very boring subject.**

Yes of course. I grew up in a school where history was taught in an exceedingly boring fashion. The other part of it is that, to a very great extent, our history is just ... It was the novelist George Santayana who said, "History is a pack of lies about events that never happened, written by people who were never there." On the other hand, Churchill said, "History is always written by the victors." So it's a version of events.

The problem is, when you talk about history as a version of events, it means we should also be exposed to alternative versions of those events. For example, in India we learn about the Great Rebellion of 1857, whereas the average English child learns about the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 – the same event, but very, very different perspectives. To a certain extent I have no problem if you want to teach the so-called Aryan Migration theory or the Aryan Invasion theory, but also teach the Saraswati Civilization along with it, or the Out-of-India theory as an alternative hypothesis, because all of these are at their core precisely that – theories.

So my effort has basically been to correct the narrative, and hopefully as these alternative narratives emerge within popular culture, within popular fiction, then eventually researchers, scholars and historians will







*I believe that myths are far more honest. It was C.S. Lewis who said that a myth is imagination that reveals the truth. At least a myth doesn't have pretensions of being a factual record. A myth does not attempt to be a statement of fact. And I believe that there is that wonderful zone, which is the overlap between history and myth.*

have to update their research and bring them into the academic mainstream.

Q: It's wonderful that you mention that, because within the Waldorf education system they actually start teaching children myths. They teach them the world of mythology and it's only after Grade 5 that they start them on history.

And to a very great extent I believe that myths are far more honest. It was C.S. Lewis who said that a myth is imagination that reveals the truth. At least a myth doesn't have pretensions of being a factual record. A myth does not attempt to be a statement of fact. And I believe that there is that wonderful zone, which is the overlap between history and myth.

*To be continued.*



*Food brings people  
together on many  
different levels. It's  
nourishment of the soul  
and body: it's truly love.*

GIADA DE LAURENTIIS

*it changes  
everything*





# Cooking With Love

In this article, **LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE** ignites our sense of wonder with his personal experiences of a deepening relationship with food over the course of his life. He also offers us some valuable tips in "The Practice of Cooking with Love."

*Let dharma be the same as food,  
and let food be the same as dharma ...*

*This food is the fulfillment  
that is the joy of dharma and  
the delight of meditation.*

## *Dogen*

When I was in my teens and began to practice meditation, I also learned to cook. I have an instinctual belief that to prepare and cook one's food with attention is an essential part of spiritual life that provides a necessary ingredient for the journey. When Dogen, the founder of the Soto Zen school, went to China to rediscover the roots of Zen, his most instructive meeting was with an old monk who was the chief cook of the monastery, who rebuked him for not understanding that cooking was a spiritual practice.

Maybe it was this ancient tradition that returned when, along with meditation, I learned to chop vegetables and bake stoneground bread. I had been brought up without any consciousness of food, in the English style of cooking, in which cabbage is boiled for twenty minutes until all

the goodness has long gone. With my chopping board, knives and wok, I learned to bring attention to cooking and eating. It was also an excellent silent rebellion against my middle class family background. While everyone was eating their Sunday lunch of roast beef and roast potatoes, I was sitting at the same table eating a bowl of rice and vegetables with chopsticks!

I learned to cook with awareness, with a sense that food is not just something we eat but also part of a spiritual practice, a sense that cooking and meditation go together, bringing outer and inner purity. Through being attentive to the preparation of our food, we bring an awareness into a basic substance and sustenance of life. Just as being aware of the breath is central to spiritual life, reconnecting us with life's essence, so is the simple art of cooking. What is more

## IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

satisfying than a bowl of rice and vegetables that you have prepared and cooked with attention – what is a greater gift to a visitor and friend?

Then one day in my late twenties, I discovered something very different about cooking. My teacher invited me to a meal she had cooked, simple Indian fritters with rice and chutney. And I tasted love. I had never known that one can taste love, but after that meal my understanding of cooking changed completely. Yes, attention as one chops the vegetables, as one stirs the pot, is vital, but there is another ingredient that adds a totally different dimension to a meal – love.

If in my childhood there was little consciousness about food, there was no awareness of love. And to be given a plate of fritters and rice in which love was the central ingredient and the main taste was revolutionary. Even the idea that one can taste love was something altogether new. Other people may have known this all their lives, known the sweetness of a cake that comes not just from the sugar, but it opened worlds to me.



Is there a technique for cooking with love? I do not know, except that it happens. Maybe it happens when, as with the old cook who taught Dogen, cooking becomes one's "practice of the Way." My teacher had studied with a Sufi master in India and learned the secrets of love, and how to work with love. Her cooking was an expression of her training and practice. But from this one meal I learned something so simple and wonderful: that one can put love into food that then nourishes both the body and the soul. This new ingredient now became central to my cooking.

There are wonderful spiritual practices for cooking. One can cook with mindfulness and attention, as in the Zen tradition. One can say a *mantra* or *dhikr* when one prepares a meal, so that the food is infused with remembrance of God. But love is a simple expression of the heart. It does not require special training, only an awareness and offering of the love in one's heart. And the food responds. The food knows that it is loved and it passes on this gift to the one who enjoys the food. A deep sharing then takes place, as if an ancient magic is part of the meal.

So now, when I cook, I remember that meal of rice and fritters, I remember love. Of course sometimes I just make and eat an omelet, grill a piece of fish, and maybe I am not even consciously attentive. But if I am present in my heart as well as my fingers, then love can be present, love can be the secret ingredient of a meal. This is one of the reasons I rarely eat at restaurants. The food may taste good, but this central ingredient is hardly ever present; something essential is missing. And love is what speaks to us, both on a cellular level and in the soul. It nourishes our body on all levels.

How to cook with love is for each of us to discover, because our heart is unique to each of us, just as the song of our soul is unique to each of us. And yet love is also the primary substance of life; it connects us with the divine Source of all that exists. And for me, one meal cooked with love was an experience of a lifetime. Forty years later I can still taste it.

# THE PRACTICE of COOKING with LOVE



*Food and love are two of the most vital forms of human nourishment. Combining them is a simple but essential practice.*

*Love is alive. It is so much more than just the feeling we call love; it is the animating force of life, working according to principles far vaster than our own lives. When we feel it moving, most of us try to grab on to it or chase after it, make it our own. But it is the very nature of love to move and flow. The more it flows, the more it serves. It grows as it is given.*

*Cooking with love is natural, because through cooking we give. Cooking and serving food are two of the most ancient and basic human gifts. We serve those who eat the food with the Earth's sustenance – Its gift – as well as with our time, effort, care, and attention. Through this gift we are in turn given the opportunity to consciously reconnect with the foundation of life.*



## *To practice cooking with love,*

begin with the trust and confidence that love is accessible and can be worked with. Without this fundamental understanding, love will not be drawn in, cannot season, or nourish. Cultivate the trust that love is always available to an open heart, and that through our loving attention we can create ways for love to flow.



## *As you prepare to cook,*

let your heart open to love. Let yourself feel – love comes in on feeling. A simple way to begin to access love in the kitchen is to cook for people you love – your friends, your family, your partner, the person you're in love with – allowing your feeling for them to infuse the process. We experience love most familiarly in the love we feel for others and from others, the feelings of affinity and affection or passion that bind human beings together. Even if you are cooking just for yourself, you can bring love in, drawing on the same kindness and compassion of love that you would bring to others. This love is not self-regard, but a real, needed nourishment for the body and soul.

## *As love animates all of life,*

it is not limited to our love for one another and ourselves. It can be found everywhere, in everything. It is abundantly present in the ingredients we use in our cooking, and we can access it simply through bringing our open attention to them as we work. Begin by slowing down – don't rush. Give yourself time and space to cook. Look closely at the ingredients you are using. Consciously touch and smell them. Recognize the bright beauty of the carrot; the symmetry of a cauliflower; the mysterious, universal swirl of a fiddlehead; the simple wonder of an egg. Breathe in the scent of the herbs and be conscious of their unique properties – how one can revive your liver and another soothe your stomach. Imagine the cow, buffalo, or chicken in the meat, milk, cheese, or eggs you are cooking, acknowledging the living animal whose life has become part of your food. Feel the love from the Earth that has made all this bounty available to you.





## The love that gives life

to all things also comes alive through your hands. It is accessible through the simple awareness and care you bring to chopping the vegetables, stirring the pot. As you work, bring the feeling from your heart into your hands, from your hands into the food. Love is alive; it wants to flow, and through your attention you can participate in directing its flow.



## Be attentive to the offering

that this act of cooking is. As you pepper the stew to refine the taste, be aware that you are creating something to give, to feed, and share. Reaffirm the fundamental generosity of the Earth – how it not only keeps us alive but gives us pleasure and enjoyment through our senses of smell and taste, and how through cooking you are participating in that generosity.



In our modern world we have almost entirely lost this direct relationship with food. But food links us together and to the Earth, and cooking can help us become more conscious of this essential gift of love. Everything that is part of cooking – from the fire of the stove and the herbs we season with, to the water or wine we pour – invites us to consciously participate in this circle of life that both gives and receives. The more we recognize that we are part of this wholeness, not separate from it, the more love can flow with and through us.

The world needs love. It needs love to flow like water, to be breathed like oxygen. Love can be savored, as it nourishes us in hidden ways. Love is like a key ingredient in a recipe that only the grandmothers remember. And yet it is here with us, waiting to be used, simple – like salt on the shelf. It is the most fundamental ingredient of all of life.



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*Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices  
to Reawaken the Sacred  
in Everyday Life.*

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The Golden Sufi Center,  
Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee & Hilary Hart.



# *CONNECT WITH Land and Food*

Winner of the Irish Tourism Industry Award for Best Food and Beverage Experience in 2017, the Airfield Estate in Dublin, Ireland, tries to connect visitors to farming and agriculture through food. Spanning 38 acres, the working farm, gardens, restaurant and estate aim to inspire people to refresh their connection with food and the land it comes from. **KATHERINE WALLA** of Food Tank had the opportunity to talk to **GRAINNE KELLIHER**, the CEO of Airfield, about her work to expand the Airfield Estate's impact through new programs, techniques and offerings.



**Q: What inspired the educational working farm?**

The Overend Family originally owned and operated the Estate as a working farm. The family produced food self-reliantly and maintained a prize Jersey herd. The family was very charitable and played an important role addressing food-related challenges of their time. For example, in the early 1920s, they supplied pasteurized milk to clean milk depots in Dublin, reducing infant mortality. In 1974, the Overends established a charitable trust leaving their farm, gardens, and surrounding properties to the Irish people for educational and recreational purposes. We honor their wishes, continuing what they started by addressing food challenges of our time in an innovative and engaging way.

Our relationship with food is clearly in trouble – many don't think to look past the shelves in the supermarkets for food. We have lost our connection with food, where it comes from, its seasonal nature, what it takes to produce, and how precious it is. The Estate aims to reconnect people with the land and the food it produces, teaching them greater empathy for food, and benefiting their health and the environment.

**Q: As an educational working farm, what is Airfield doing specifically to change the way visitors look at the food system and their daily food experiences?**

We lead a number of educational programs and activities that encourage our visitors to engage with the food system. We teach visitors about the real outdoors, giving them the opportunity to milk cows, feed animals, collect eggs, and plant and harvest food. We deliver educational programs to 10,000 school children each year and engage with local universities on food research, bio-diversity education, farm safety, and food production.

For visitors less interested in a hands-on farm experience, they can experience the Estate through eating at Overends Restaurant, which serves produce straight from the farm. To provide an impactful experience, we have created our own food rules within the restaurant called GLAS, the Gaelic word for Green. This acronym stands for:

**G**o with the seasons,  
**L**ocal produce,  
**A**void food waste, and  
**S**ustainably produced ingredients.

This is not an easy route for us to take, but we believe it is the right one. Annually, we offer festivals and events for visitors seeking a special experience. Our Festival of Food incorporates themes of waste, seasonality, recycling, climate, nutrition, health, and unique food experiences. The Woolpalooza showcases the production processes of sheep

## IT CHANGES EVERYTHING

products such as shearing, sheep dog trials, and cottage pie making. Our Food Series conferences generate debate, discussion, and dialogue around food-related topics. And, we have pop-up events such as Trash Bash Suppers and Nose to Tail dining experiences that highlight and rethink food waste.

On a daily basis, we post informative signs around the Estate explaining the energy and time required to produce and use up calories from food. We want visitors to understand their food and how their food choices impact people, the planet, and their pocket.

**Q: Have there been obstacles in maintaining Airfield's values of heritage and tradition amidst modernizing farming techniques?**

We proudly use more natural farming methods integrated with new equipment and technology. Our aim is to show a snapshot of Irish agriculture and how it operates. Airfield uses an organic fruit and vegetable production system and a Best Practice system for meat, milk, and eggs. This demonstrates that traditional and natural farming methods and newer farming equipment and agricultural technology both have a place in Irish agriculture. We show how farming responsibly, efficiently and productively will improve the land for the next generation.

**Q: Airfield was renovated in 2014. What new features have you added to the farm since this renovation, and how would you evaluate the impact they've made?**

We now welcome over 150,000 visitors to the farm on an annual basis. We offer additional public courses on wellness, cooking, foraging and gardening. The renovations benefit visitors, teaching them even more about farming and growing processes, seasonality, and sustainability. The new farmyard allows visitors to view processes like milking, pasteurization, births and animal feeding, and it is designed with walking paths that allow visitors to see the farm animals.

Three acres of food gardens showcase innovative and traditional methods of food production. We use poly-tunnels to grow fruit and vegetables for the restaurant and have expanded our biodiversity efforts, planting more than 3,000 native trees in a woodland setting.

**Q: What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced in developing Airfield?**

Our biggest challenge is convincing visitors to adopt sustainable food habits after they leave the farm. We want to have a lasting impact on them by reconnecting them

with their food and the land it comes from. We strive to change the way our visitors engage with the food system and hope they develop a better understanding of the impact their food choices have on their health and the environment. We hope their experience here leads to deeper behavioral changes, but we understand this is a challenging transition that takes time.

**Q:** If you could select one lesson for visitors to take away from Airfield to inspire change in the local food system, what would it be?

That they take away an empathy and understanding of where their food comes from and the human and environmental input required to produce it. Furthermore, visitors should treat food like the precious resource it is. We want them to see that Ireland produces some of the best food in the world thanks to its amazing natural resources, weather, soil, and farmers.

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be inspired

*Personal transformation can and does have global effects. As we go, so goes the world, for the world is us. The revolution that will save the world is ultimately a personal one.*

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON



The background is an abstract watercolor composition. It features a rich palette of colors including deep blues, purples, and magentas, with a central area of lighter, almost white, tones. The colors are blended and layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. Small, shimmering gold or bronze particles are scattered throughout, particularly in the central and upper right areas, adding a textured, ethereal quality to the overall design.

# YOGIC PSYCHOLOGY

PART 11

VIGHNAS AND SOLUTIONS



This is the last article by **DAAJI** in his series on the fundamental principles of psychology, with its foundation in the ancient wisdom of Yoga, as compiled in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, and supported by the modern methods of Heartfulness. So far, DAAJI started the journey from pure consciousness, the foundation of a healthy mind, and then proceeded to explain how the various mental imbalances arise. Along the way, he has also given us solutions to regain mental well-being using the Heartfulness practices. In this article he explores the *vighnas*, the 5 conditions that accompany and are symptomatic of the obstacles and distractions. These *vighnas* are so evident in modern humanity – pain, anxiety, depression and despair, as well as problems with irregular breathing and nervous disorders. In fact, the World Health Organization has said that these symptoms are the epidemic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Finally, DAAJI explains to us how simple daily practices of meditation can dissolve all these imbalances, leading to a focused mind, which in turn leads to a contemplative mind, which in turn leads to harmony and peace, ultimately allowing joy to express itself.

## VIGHNAS

**R**emember for a moment that the base of your consciousness is pure and still. When you have some time, perhaps this evening when you have wound down from the day, or early in the morning when the surroundings are also still, take a few minutes to dive deep within your heart and find that stillness. And then, during the day, witness for yourself what prevents you from being in that peaceful state all the time. Once we remove all the complexities, our inner nature returns to that peace and stillness. Meditation propels our consciousness towards the core of our being. It is the Center of our existence, and it is present at the center of every atom in our body. Yoga is a journey back home to that state of mental well-being, by removing all the patterning, conditioning, complexities and impurities in our field of consciousness. In short, meditation stills our mind.

In this series, we first explored the normal everyday workings of the human mind within the field of consciousness – the 5 *vrittis* or tendencies – and how they create patterns and conditioning. The *vrittis* can either be pure, fostering well-being, health and spiritual growth, or colored, creating entanglement, pulling us towards complexity and impurity. From there we explored the next layer of complexity – the 5 *kleshas*, the colorings or mental afflictions that take us further away from our center of poise, thus leading to imbalance and suffering.

## VRITTIS

Instinctive  
thought patterns  
or tendencies

*Pramana* – means of right or valid knowledge  
*Viparyaya* – false or wrong knowledge  
*Vikalpa* – fantasy, imagination  
*Nidra* – sleep  
*Smriti* – memory

## KLESHAS

Colorings or  
impurities in the  
thought patterns

*Avidya* – ignorance, veiling  
*Asmita* – mine-ness, egotism  
*Raga* – attachment, addiction  
*Dvesha* – aversion, repulsion  
*Abhinivesha* – clinging to life, fear of death

## VIKSHEPAS

Obstacles and  
distractions

*Vyadhi* – disease, illness  
*Styana* – mental laziness, dullness  
*Samsaya* – dilemma, indecision  
*Pramada* – carelessness, negligence, haste  
*Alasya* – laziness, sloth  
*Avirati* – lack of abstaining,  
absence of non-attachment  
*Bhranti-Darshana* – false perception  
*Alabdha-Bhumikatva* – failing to attain  
stages on the journey  
*Anavasthitatvani* – inability to maintain the stage, instability  
FOMO  
Digital distraction  
Guilt and shame

## VIGHNAS

Disturbances  
resulting from  
the obstacles

*Duhkha* – pain, mental and physical  
*Daurmanasya* – despair, depression  
*Angam-Ejayatva* – trembling of the body,  
nervousness  
*Svasa* – inhalation (irregular)  
*Prasvasa* – exhalation (irregular)

Then we explored how we move even further away from our still center, into the realm of entropy, complexity and instability, as we become more and more entangled in those patterns and afflictions that play out in our life. At this stage, these patterns and habits become obstacles and distractions to our ongoing spiritual journey; they are known as the *vikshepas*. And accompanying these *vikshepas* are the 5 *vighnas*, the outer symptoms of un-wellness that are presented to health practitioners, psychiatrists and healing centers worldwide.

These 5 *vighnas* are the chronic diseases of our world! Stress, worry, emotional pain, anxiety and depression are a normal part of life for many people. The statistics on people taking antidepressants, painkillers, sleep medication, as well as self-medicating with illegal drugs and alcohol; the number of suicides; the incidence of chronic lifestyle-related diseases, like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, strokes and cancer, are all overwhelming. They are so common that we no longer see them as abnormal. Nor do we realize how much our lifestyles are out of sync with the circadian (daily) rhythms that are hardwired into our physiology.

These daily rhythms determine our optimal sleep and eating patterns. Even the metabolism of our cellular energy follows the rhythm of the circadian clock. When we don't sync with natural rhythms, the mitochondrial network is compromised and our cellular energy levels decline. Lifestyles with irregular daily rhythms have been linked with sleep disorders, obesity, diabetes, depression, bipolar disorder, and seasonal affective disorder. Basically, we are swimming upstream against the current in a lifestyle that is out of sync with nature.

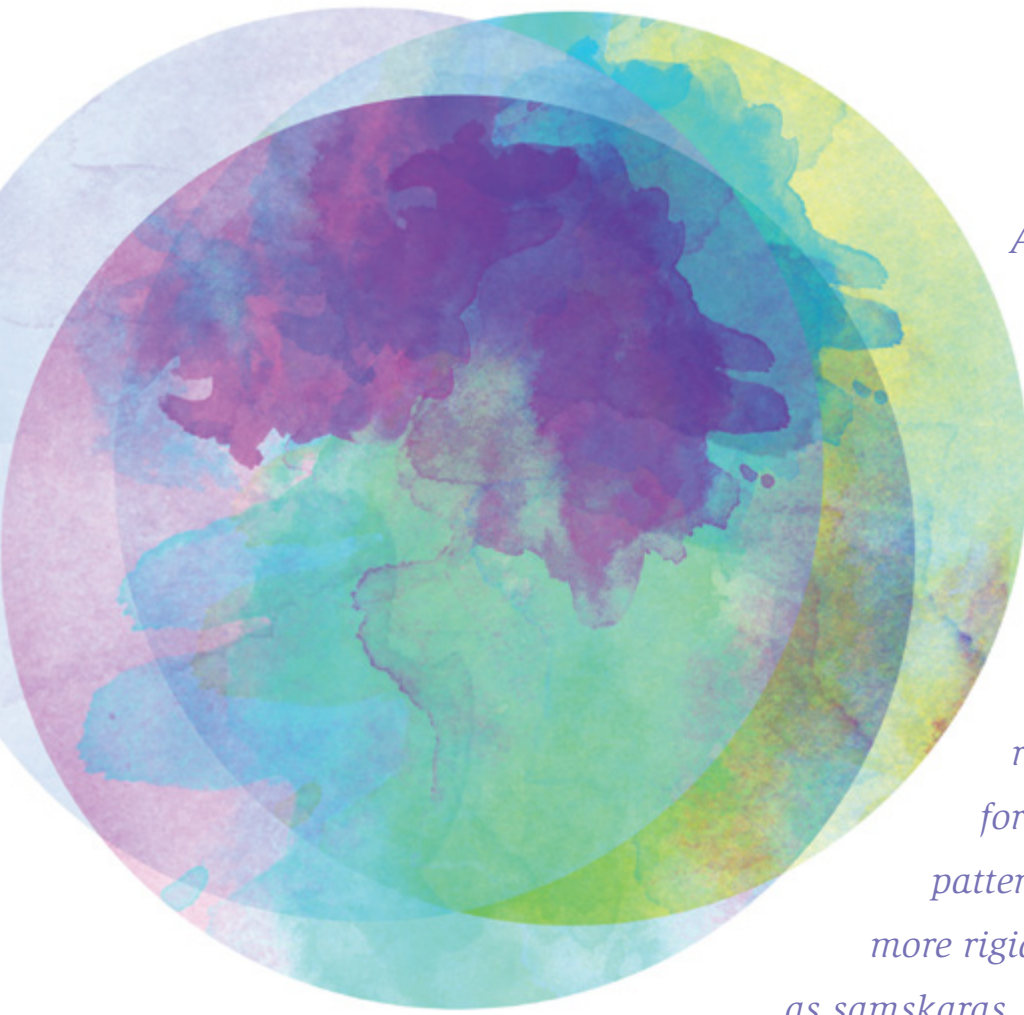
This list of modern symptoms is no different from Patanjali's description thousands of years ago of the 5 *vighnas* that accompany the *vikshepas*. Patanjali's Sutra says:

*1.31: Dukha daurmanasya angam-ejayatva svasa prasvasa vikshepasahabhuvah*

Mental and physical pain, anguish and grief, despair and depression, trembling of the body and nervousness, and irregular inhalation and exhalation, are the conditions that accompany the distractions of the mind. These are the obstacles on the path that distract the mind.

Back in Patanjali's time, these symptoms were not so commonplace, although the ancient tales like the Odyssey and the Mahabharata show us that they were certainly present back then. Today, however, the *vighnas* along with the *vikshepas* are the health concern of our era. In a sense, we have reached an overburdened level of mental complexity and heaviness that requires something radical to bring us back to health and balance.

Difficulties, traumas and suffering are nothing new. In fact, many people today are more comfortable than humans have ever been in the past, but as a consequence our resilience to cope with difficulties seems to be lower than ever. A good analogy is a pair of scissors: we are so saturated with pleasure that we have become numb, like scissors that have become blunt through overuse, whereas our intolerance of pain is like super sharp scissors that cut our emotional heart, because we do everything possible to avoid pain.



*Any thought, emotion or action can lead to a vibrational impression in the field of consciousness, and when those impressions are repeated, habits form, creating fixed patterns, which become more rigid and solid over time as samskaras.*

## **COMPLEXITIES & IMPURITIES: HOW DO THEY FORM & HOW DO THEY AFFECT US?**

In earlier editions of Heartfulness Magazine, I described the spiritual anatomy of a human being, with its physical, subtle and causal bodies, its chakra system, and its sheaths known as the *koshas*. I have also described how we create complexities and impurities that accumulate at various points in this spiritual anatomy, in the field of consciousness, through conditioning. They accumulate as a result of repeated patterns of feeling, emotion and thought, and these in turn lead to repetitive actions. Actions become habits, creating patterns of behavior that become more and more fixed over time, forming impressions in the subtle body. These impressions are known as *samskaras*.

As the old English proverb says:

Sow a thought and reap an action,  
Sow an action and reap a habit,  
Sow a habit and reap a character,  
Sow a character and reap a destiny.

Swami Vivekananda describes this process in his book, *Jnana Yoga*: “Suppose I go into the street and see a dog. How do I know it is a dog? I refer it to my mind, and in my mind are groups of all my past experiences, arranged and pigeon-holed, as it were. As soon as a new impression comes, I take it up and refer it to some of the old pigeon-holes, and as soon as I find a group of the same impressions already existing, I place it in that group, and I am satisfied. I know it is a dog, because it coincides with the impressions already there.

*How to free ourselves from such a burden? Heartfulness offers a simple, highly effective set of methods to remove these layers and thus reduce the lifestyle maladies that characterize our modern societies.*

“When I do not find the cognates of this new experience inside, I become dissatisfied. When, not finding the cognates of an impression, we become dissatisfied, this state of the mind is called ‘ignorance’; but, when, finding the cognates of an impression already existing, we become satisfied, this is called ‘knowledge’. When one apple fell, men became dissatisfied. Then gradually they found out the group. What was the group they found? That all apples fall, so they called it ‘gravitation’. Now we see that without a fund of already existing experiences, any new experience would be impossible, for there would be nothing to which to refer the new impression.”<sup>1</sup>

Any thought, emotion or action can lead to a vibrational impression in the field of consciousness, and when those impressions are repeated, habits form, creating fixed patterns, which become more rigid and solid over time as *samskaras*. The forces of soul can bend under the burden of *samskaras*. These *samskaras* are the roots of the karmic blueprint of our conditioning. Unless we remove them, we stay trapped in their patterns and we cannot break free, no matter how much we may want to change.

When we combine this understanding with Patanjali’s descriptions of *vrittis*, *kleshas*, *vikshepas* and *vighnas*, we see how the layers of *samskaras* form over time, creating emotional heaviness and dysfunction.

How to free ourselves from such a burden? Heartfulness offers a simple, highly effective set of methods to remove these layers and thus reduce the lifestyle maladies that characterize our modern societies. What leads to an anxious mind or a depressed mind? An anxious mind is one without peace, without stillness, always turbulent with disturbances and emotional turmoil. It is symptomatic of a restless field of consciousness, which is like an ocean in a storm, always churning, always reacting, addicted to the highs and lows.

Other symptoms include nervousness, trembling and shaking of the body, and shallow and irregular breathing, sometimes manifesting as panic attacks. Try keeping your breathing calm and deep when you are feeling stressed or emotional. It is difficult, but you can use simple breathing techniques to help you calm down.

## SOLUTIONS

Our journey in Yoga is to return to the purity and simplicity of consciousness at the Center of our being, and as we divest more and more layers, our mental and emotional state lightens progressively. It is not a linear progression but a spiral progression.

The Heartfulness practices each have an important role to play in this, and most vital to the removal of impressions

<sup>1</sup> Vivekananda, Swami, 1899. *Jnana Yoga*, chapter 12, ‘The Cosmos, The Microcosm’. Vedanta Press, USA.

## BE INSPIRED

is the practice of de-conditioning we know as Cleaning. When we sit for Cleaning in the evening, we unload the impressions of the day and create a vacuum in the heart, similar to the way taking a bath washes away dirt from the physical body.

What is being purified? Consciousness, and this has a ripple effect on our perception, bringing clarity, understanding and wisdom. Pure consciousness can more easily make wise choices. In fact, Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh once said, “The soul of a human being will be clean in proportion to the power of discrimination they possess.” The purer the heart, the more wisdom flourishes.

Cleaning is complemented by Heartfulness Meditation. Over time, as a result of meditating in the morning with Transmission, we learn to absorb and carry the depths and fragrance of the meditative state with us throughout our daily activities. In a sense, we are meditating with eyes open, and this creates a field of protection, preventing emotional reactions and judgments, and thus preventing the formation of *samskaras*. And so the need for Cleaning gradually diminishes and becomes more need-based, as we master the art of remaining meditative during all our activities.

Heartfulness Prayer at bedtime connects us with divine love, helping us to sleep in a deeply profound state, and also allowing us to go deeper in meditation the next morning. When we are flooded with so much love, we naturally

have more resilience, and we also prefer to stay connected rather than being pulled to the periphery of our being by the highs and lows of a reactive consciousness.

And so, as we interweave these three practices of Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer every day, our consciousness is always being recalibrated to remember its pure state, which is our constant reference point for mental well-being. This we call constant remembrance.

In the older yogic texts, the *vikshepas* and *vighnas* were mostly seen as temporary obstacles to spiritual progress, rather than maladies in the general sense as they are often viewed today. Here we will explore both worldviews, to shed more light on how we can work with them going forward.

Patanjali offers the following solutions to all these mental imbalances in his Sutras:

*1.32: Tat pratisedhartham eka tattva abhyasah*

To remedy this, practice meditation on one principle

Bringing the mind to one object for some time will dismantle all these obstacles. As the purpose of Yoga is oneness with the Ultimate Being, the object taken up for meditation is complete oneness with God, so that all distractions are removed. Any other object than the Ultimate is itself in flux, and so would not be helpful in this endeavor.

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In this context, in Yoga it has always been considered very normal for *vikshepas* and *vighnas* to come to most people from time to time along the journey, and the guidance of yogis has been not to mind them when they come, just to keep on practicing, as they will eventually pass. This is true for both mental and physical symptoms, including nervous shaking. It is not that we bury our heads in the sand in an attempt to avoid the presence of obstacles, but rather that we do not indulge in giving too much energy and attention to them.

When Patanjali was alive, there was no yogic process of Transmission or Cleaning, which are both practices introduced by Heartfulness in the last 100 or so years. Both Transmission and Cleaning facilitate and accelerate the

process of evolution: Transmission gently draws our attention inward to the object of meditation, taking us deeper and deeper through the dimensions of consciousness to the Center itself; Cleaning removes the obstacles, the *vikshepas* and *vighnas*, along the way. Both these practices help to reduce the effects of the *vikshepas* and *vighnas* significantly.

In current mainstream society, however, both in the East and the West, the *vikshepas* and *vighnas* are not just seen as temporary obstacles to be dissolved and transcended; they have themselves become the focus of our attention. Pick up any newspaper, popular magazine or scientific journal and you will find articles on stress, depression, anxiety, suicide, addiction, pain management, or anger management. Culturally, we are focusing our attention on

## BE INSPIRED



these modern maladies with such intensity that we are going deeper and deeper into them, and it doesn't seem to be helping. It is like watering the weeds that are choking a garden instead of just letting them die and only watering the plants you want to thrive. It is our choice where we focus our attention – energy flows where attention goes.

So, what if we shift our focus to the real goal of human life, the soul at the Center of our existence, instead of on the obstacles? Would we have the mental health epidemic we have today? Our focus has moved to the periphery and our energies are directed towards the obstacles themselves. As a result, they are magnifying rather than disappearing.

This is not to dismiss the suffering of all those people who are unwell, whose lives are painful, who feel hopeless, and who may see their life as not worth living. Their pain is real. It is just to say that with a shift in perception, with a shift in purpose, with a shift in consciousness, with a different education and training, we can start to heal these problems.

Imagine what will happen when our collective worldview starts perceiving a higher human purpose. Everything will change. All the obstacles will take a back seat and remain simply that – obstacles along the way. They may still need to be overcome, but they will no longer be center stage in our existence. Perhaps that is why Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur famously said, “No country or nation will survive without spirituality as its base, and every nation must sooner or later adopt the same course if she wants to maintain her very existence.” All it takes is a shift of focus towards the higher purpose of human existence once a day in meditation. Such a shift is life changing.

*1.33: Maitri karuna upeksanam sukha dukha punya apunya visayanam bhavanatah chitta prasadanam*

Consciousness is pacified by cultivating attitudes of friendship towards everyone, mercy and compassion towards those who are suffering, joy towards those who are virtuous, and indifference towards those who are evil.



*Before the current era, Yoga gave us the philosophy to know what was needed to reach the highest states of consciousness, and express the full divine potential of a human being. But now, in this current era, a set of simple practices has been gifted to humanity, for one and all to reach those same states. That is the promise of Heartfulness.*

This next sutra is also life-changing if it is understood and followed. In fact, most of our difficulties in daily life come from not following the guidance found in this sutra. It is a vast topic on human relationships, which we cannot cover here, but, as a hint, I can share this much: A meditative mind is always compassionate. A compassionate heart gives birth to finer qualities, like cheerfulness and friendliness. And such a heart avoids making judgments and remains indifferent toward wickedness, evil and badness. The underlying divine laws of Nature associated with this sutra are very well described in Ram Chandra's book, *Commentary on the Ten Maxims of Sahaj Marg*.<sup>2</sup>

Following this, Patanjali then offers various additional ways to pacify consciousness, given that one practice may not suit everyone, but he does not offer any guidance or methods on how to do them. Actually, it is very difficult to find specific methods in any of the yogic literature, as they were generally handed down by word of mouth from Guru to disciple.

It is only in the most recent yogic era, since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Ram Chandra distilled the Heartfulness practices from all the yogic methods available from ancient times onwards, and made these available to everyone, that we now have a set of practices that can solve our problem of consciousness. It is for this reason that Heartfulness is able to heal humanity, by removing the obstacles to mental well-being that plague our modern world.

Before the current era, Yoga gave us the philosophy to know what was needed to reach the highest states of consciousness, and express the full divine potential of a human being. But now, in this current era, a set of simple practices has been gifted to humanity, for one and all to reach those same states. That is the promise of Heartfulness.

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<sup>2</sup> Ram Chandra, 2019. *Commentary on the Ten Maxims of Sahaj Marg*. Shri Ram Chandra Mission, India.





# Taste of Life

*Those who stop  
dreaming are lost.*

Australian  
Aboriginal  
Proverb

# ON THE GO

## From the Travel Bag of a Solo Biker

**SUHAS RAMAKRISHNAN** is a quintessential biker, who loves to venture on his beloved Harley. In one of his recent expeditions, he finds inspiration at the famous Uluru in Central Australia. Through one of the most punishing deserts on Earth, this expedition is as much about courage as it is about perseverance and unwavering self-belief. Suhas also shares some valuable tips, especially for those bitten by the solo travel bug.

More often than not, we tend to forget that we need to venture out into the open, which helps us have a different perspective to life!

Mid-last year, while I was flying out of Australia, I looked down from my window and saw this glorious red rock glowing in the late afternoon light. It planted the seed in my head of traveling to Uluru on my Harley. In my last solo expedition from Sydney to Perth, between the East and West Coasts of Australia, I had covered a distance of approximately 7,000 kms. But this time it was going to be over 8,000 kms of the unforgiving Australian desert. I slowly started working towards it, as each and every detail of my journey needed to be laid out and meticulously planned.

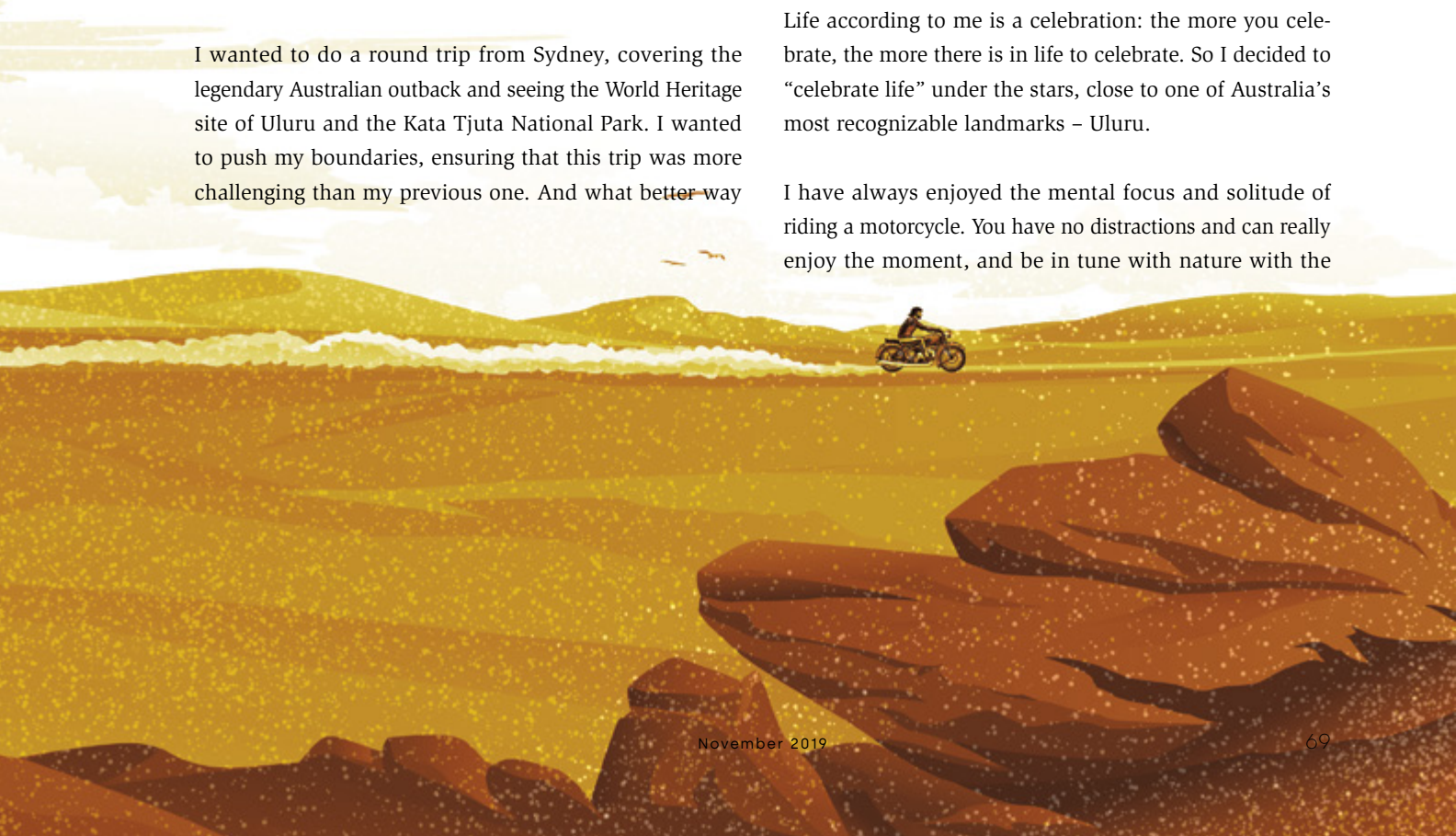
I wanted to do a round trip from Sydney, covering the legendary Australian outback and seeing the World Heritage site of Uluru and the Kata Tjuta National Park. I wanted to push my boundaries, ensuring that this trip was more challenging than my previous one. And what better way



to do it than being alone on the road, with my bike, in the middle of nowhere!

Life according to me is a celebration: the more you celebrate, the more there is in life to celebrate. So I decided to “celebrate life” under the stars, close to one of Australia’s most recognizable landmarks – Uluru.

I have always enjoyed the mental focus and solitude of riding a motorcycle. You have no distractions and can really enjoy the moment, and be in tune with nature with the





pleasure of living in the here and now. Riding a motorcycle enables the perfect relationship between rhythmic movement and internal stillness, drawing out the physical force like no other.

I had named this trip “The Mile Muncher” from the day I started working on it, as I was going to have to travel an average of 500 kilometers on a daily basis. In my previous ride, I only had to ride from east to west, but this trip covered all four directions, starting west from Sydney, going

north from Port Augusta in South Australia, traveling east from Tennent Creek in the Northern Territory, and south from Rockhampton in Queensland back to Sydney. The total distance was 8,312 kms (5,165 miles) spanning 17 days.

I was told before I embarked on the expedition, by a few seasoned travelers, that some stretches were really dangerous owing to the cross winds that are a normal occurrence in the deserts of central Australian. Along with



the winds were the ever-present and iconic road trains, without which the roads are pretty much empty. I also geared up for the frequent sand storms, thanks to the mining that happens all through the desert. Along the track were the usual mix of kangaroos, emus, camels, livestock and birds of prey, especially the famous wedge-tailed eagle, which has an approximate wing span of 9 metres when in flight.

Every single ride that I've completed till now has taught me some important life lessons, the most important one being that not everything goes according to plan, and how ever much you plan, things happen which are outside your control and comfort zone. The only way to get out of sticky situations is to fall back on those lessons that are forcibly

*Sometimes you find yourself in the middle of nowhere, and sometimes in the middle of nowhere you find yourself!*



## TASTE OF LIFE

taught. Like they say “Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment.” So there is always something to celebrate in every situation, as it teaches us to reach new heights in whatever we are trying to accomplish.

I didn't do too many things different this time around, just kept it simple. Laying out all the particulars and planning the travel to the finest detail provided the foundation on which the broader aspects of my ride were built. Once the route was finalized, I started planning accommodation and also making sure there were enough places to see nearby after each day's ride.

More than the physical effort that it takes on these kinds of expeditions, I would say the effort is psychological, as the mind tends to always look for negatives in every situation. This particular phase during my preparation was more challenging. Staying positive through the days of build-up and focusing only on one goal, which was to come back home safe and sound with a lifetime's worth of memories, was among the things I did before embarking on my ride.

### Here are some tips that may come handy while solo traveling:

**Always keep an open mind** for whatever situation you might get into.

**Never lose focus of the goal**, no matter the adversity. Even if you lose a couple of battles in between, make sure the war is won at the end, because when you are on the road not everything goes according to plan and you need to be very flexible and do whatever it takes to reach the next milestone.

**Set yourself a target or an assignment each day**, as this keeps every single day interesting. After the completion of that task, the sense of accomplishment will make you feel more connected and fulfilled, and you will be more motivated for the subsequent day's travel. This is a very important mental exercise, especially while traveling solo, as you are likely to lack motivation as a result of missing human connection.





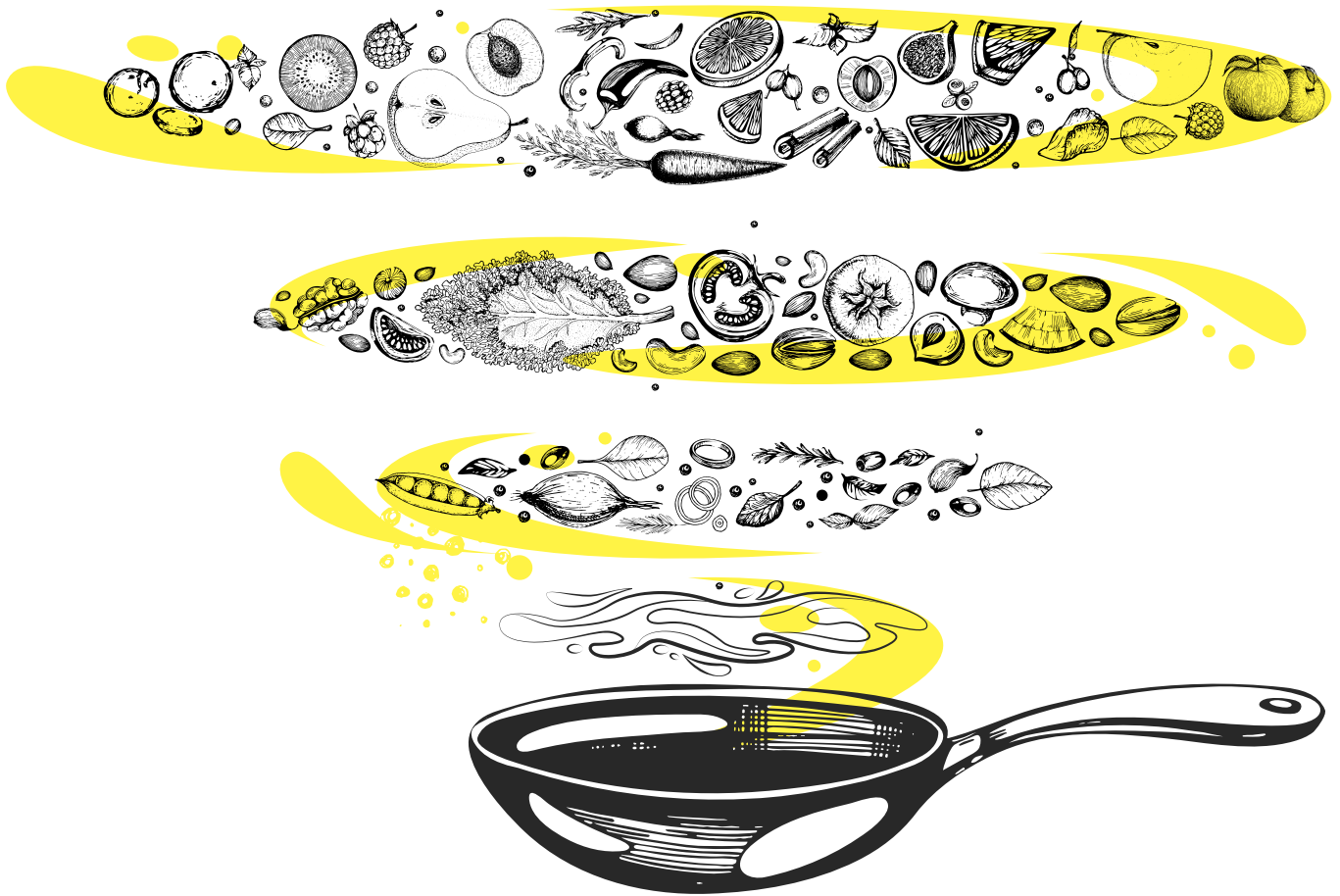


Last but not least, **solo travel gives you the space to think and deal with stuff like self-doubt and emotional baggage**, that you inadvertently tend to push to the back seat while trying to get on with your normal life. I think it is a great catch-up time with your own self, which invariably results in more clarity in your life.

Nonetheless, travelling is like a drug: sometimes you find yourself in the middle of nowhere, and sometimes in the middle of nowhere you find yourself!

Adapted from an interview originally published at <http://www.bohotraveller.com>.

Read the full interview at <https://www.bohotraveller.com/blog-global/insanity-revisited-solo-biking-expedition-on-the-worlds-harshes-desert-australia>



# Fall Eating

**MEREDITH KLEIN** gives us an Ayurvedic perspective on how to balance both the mind and body through the foods we eat. In particular, she focuses on the nature of *vata*, which is particularly susceptible to imbalance during the autumn months, currently experienced in the Northern Hemisphere.

*Vata is ruled by the elements of air and space; the creative, generative energy of life*

Could the food on your plate stand between you and a peaceful mind?

The ancient science of Ayurveda says absolutely! In understanding our bodies and minds to be subject to the same energetic patterns as everything else in the universe, when we feel scattered, erratic, and particularly busy in the mind, we are suffering from an excess of *vata* energy. *Vata* is ruled by the elements of air and space; the creative, generative energy of life. Physically it manifests in conditions characterized by dryness, irregularity and lightness, including insomnia, constipation and chapped skin. In the mind, *vata* is experienced as quick-moving thoughts, inability to focus, and excessive anxiety.

During the fall or autumn, we are particularly susceptible to *vata* imbalance, but given the pace of modern life and its many competing demands, I find that just about everyone I encounter has some amount of work to do to pacify *vata*.

At its heart, Ayurveda is fundamentally a science of balance. Any time we detect an excess of a particular energetic quality, we treat it by inviting in the opposite qualities. One of the best ways to overcome imbalance is through diet, since we eat several times a day. Every meal becomes an opportunity to make wise choices that help restore us to a place of optimal balance and wellness.

When you find yourself experiencing the overwhelm of a racing mind, or subject to physical conditions that reflect the qualities mentioned, consider these guidelines when choosing what to consume:

- 1 Choose foods that are warm and moist. Stews, *dahls* and soups are optimal choices, as is anything else that requires a bowl rather than a plate. Raw salads, smoothies and dry foods like cookies, crackers and toast can throw us further out of balance. If you do eat these things, consider using warming spices like ginger, cinnamon or cloves in dressings or spreads that can accompany your meals.



## TASTE OF LIFE

2 Favor foods that are sweet or slightly sour. The sweet and sour tastes are recognized in Ayurveda to be *vata*-balancing. Avoid sweetness in the form of refined sugars and choose foods that are naturally sweet. Consider introducing these flavors via condiments to accompany your meals, like chutneys. Fruit is most balancing when cooked (see the recipe below).

3 Eat near the earth. Foods that grow in the soil – potatoes, beets, parsnips and other root vegetables – are inherently grounding, as are the numerous winter squash varieties that grow on ground-level vines.

4 Eat meals you prepare yourself. The simple act of cooking can be a very grounding exercise, and in preparing your own food you can take responsibility for tailoring it in ways you will most enjoy, and that will provide the maximum healing effects.

This easy *vata*-balancing recipe makes for a healthy dessert or a tasty topping for warm breakfast cereals.

*Preparing your own food  
you can take  
responsibility for  
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will provide the  
maximum healing  
effects.*



# Warm Fruit Compote

## Ingredients:

- 2 large green apples, peeled and diced into  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch pieces
- 2 pears, peeled and diced into  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch pieces
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup dried prunes (or other dried fruit of your choice)
- $\frac{1}{8}$  cup golden raisins
- Half a vanilla bean pod (optional)



## Preparation:

- Place all ingredients in a saucepan and add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water.
- Bring water to the boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to a gentle simmer.
- Cover the pot and let fruit cook 15 to 20 minutes, until soft but not mushy.
- Serve immediately.
- Leftovers can be refrigerated and reheated.



# Naukasana



## STEPS:

- Lie flat on the stomach with legs straight and the soles pointing upwards.
- Bring legs and feet together and stretch hands straight in front of the head.
- While inhaling raise the hands, head, chest and legs simultaneously as high as possible.
- Keep the legs straight without folding the knees and hands straight without folding the elbows.
- Balance the whole-body weight on the stomach.
- Close the eyes.
- Hold and stay with gentle, long breaths-in and out for six times.
- Breathe out, and while exhaling slowly release the posture and relax in *Makarasana*.

## BENEFITS:

- Relieves the body from stiffness and back pain; and spine attains flexibility with regular practice.
- Helps to strengthen the abdominal muscles and reduce abdominal fat.
- Muscles of the back, abdomen, neck, shoulders, hip, knees and arms become stronger.

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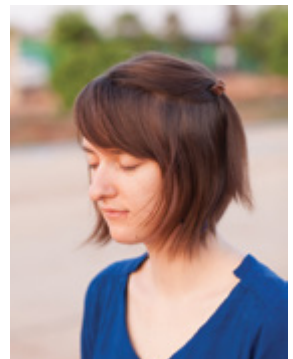
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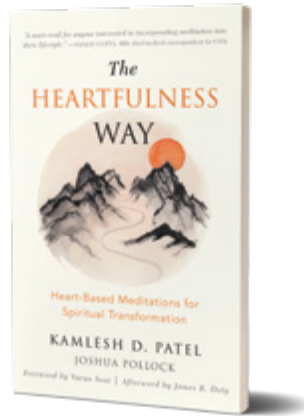
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