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# heartfulness

purity weaves destiny

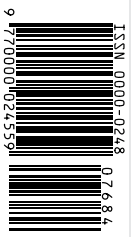
When Discord  
Leads to  
Harmony  
**DAAJI**

AI & Spiritual Life  
**LLEWELYN  
VAUGHAN-LEE**

Patterns of the  
Infinite  
**DILLON FORTE**



# Harmony



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“

My heart was in a cage. My life was a long struggle to find happiness, to overcome fear, and to find love I had lost. I did not give up, and that is what my story is about.

—ICHAK K. ADIZES

”



## Presenting a wonderful life journey written by Dr. Ichak K. Adizes

Seeing every challenge as an opportunity for growth, Dr. Ichak Adizes moved beyond a childhood marked by imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp and immigration to an unfamiliar country to discover the benefits of opening his heart.

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### Foreword by Daaji



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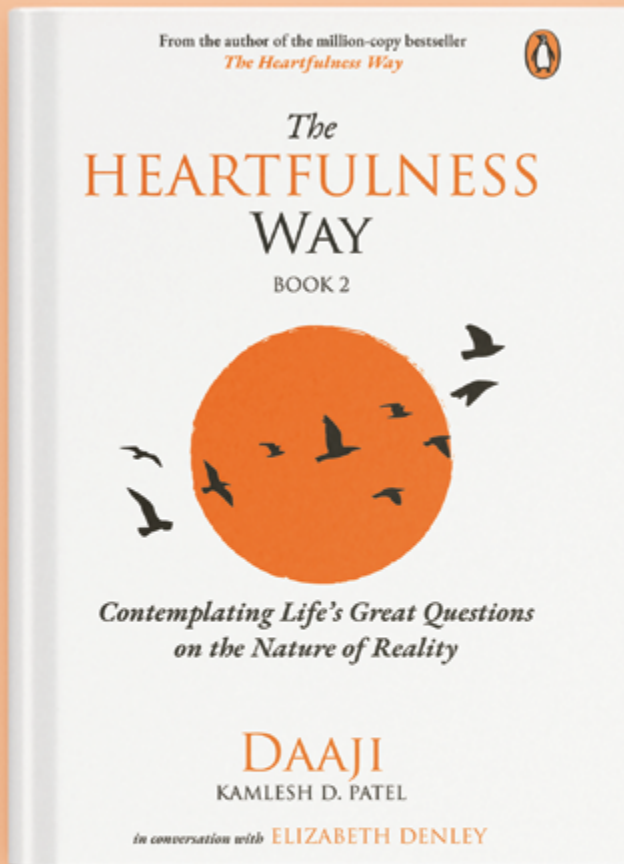


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*The Heartfulness Way*

# *The* HEARTFULNESS WAY, BOOK 2

*Contemplating Life's Great Questions on the Nature of Reality*



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Daaji,  
*Author,*  
*Global Guide of*  
*Heartfulness*



Elizabeth Denley  
*Author,*  
*Spiritual Trainer in*  
*Heartfulness*

In *The Heartfulness Way*, Book 2, Daaji continues with the conversational format that he used so effectively in the previous volume, this time with Elizabeth Denley. Daaji takes us through the journey of expanding consciousness to the ultimate realization of the purpose of human life.

Essentially, *The Heartfulness Way*, Book 2 is a guidebook for any of us wishing to transform from our current state, with all our beliefs, limitations, fears and weaknesses, in order to realize happiness, balance and our full potential in this very lifetime.

Daaji outlines the approach required, which is clear and practical, maps out the journey and provides the practices and tools needed. He sheds light on the obstacles and the solutions to help us overcome them. His approach is simple and experiential and can be practiced by anyone with interest and willingness while working and living a normal family life.

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**heartfulness**  
purity weaves destiny



Dear readers,

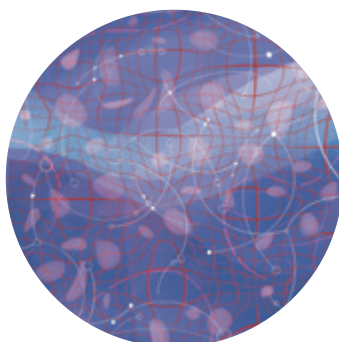
Harmony is often understood as the absence of disturbance. When things feel settled, we take that steadiness as a sign that all is well. Yet the contributors in this month's issue suggest that discomfort and harmony are not always opposites.

Daaji compares inner discomfort to a bone that has healed crookedly and must be reset—painful, but necessary for proper healing. Mamata Subramanyam discovers something similar: her habit of accommodating the people in her life—avoiding conflict and suppressing her own needs—was meant to create harmony, but it produced a fragile peace that silently bred resentment. Can it truly be called harmony if it depends on our needs and feelings being pushed down or left unspoken? Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee raises a related concern about AI-powered spiritual tools that offer on-demand meditations and personalized guidance. They promise an artificial harmony, devoid of the inner work that real harmony requires.

In seeking harmony, are we settling for an artificial calm while avoiding what real harmony requires? After all, there may be a deeper harmony waiting to emerge.

As always, we look forward to your submissions at [contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com](mailto:contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com).

Happy reading,  
The Editors



Heartfulness

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Clark Powell is first a poet. An award-winning columnist, he has been published in *Southern Living*, *Yoga International*, and regional newspapers. He is the author of *Sabaj Marg Companion*. Clark has known breakdowns and breakthroughs, long silences and sudden grace. He is still writing.



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Purnima is a UN award winning writer and blogger. She is the recipient of the BlogHER International Activist Award, 2013, and one of five senior editors of the World Moms Network. She is a practitioner and trainer of Heartfulness Meditation, and on the *Heartfulness Magazine* editorial team.

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## RUBY CARMEN

Ruby is a Heartfulness trainer, tutor, mentor, and sometimes writer. She has an M.Ed. in Education and Psychology from the University of Cambridge, and has worked in community and mental health. She is passionate about volunteering, service, meditation, languages, and finding beauty in the world around her.

*self-care*

“Be in harmony,  
yet be different.”

**CONFUCIUS**



A glass bottle is tilted, pouring water into a glass. The glass contains water, a slice of lime, and fresh mint leaves. The scene is set on a wooden surface with more lime slices and mint leaves scattered around. In the background, a person is blurred, suggesting a social or fitness setting.

# **START WITH Hydration**

Building a Self-Care Routine from the Inside Out

**CHLOE POWELL** explores how daily hydration supports the body's natural harmony—and offers practical ways to make it a habit.

Every successful self-care journey begins with a single, foundational step. While many focus on managing stress or improving fitness, the most powerful starting point is often overlooked: hydration. Water is the fuel for your body's most critical functions, impacting everything from your energy levels and mood to your skin's complexion. By choosing to build a self-care routine around this essential element, you are taking control of your well-being in the most direct way possible. Here's how you can start this transformative journey.

### The Importance of Hydration

Water is an integral part of the human body. In fact, it makes up about sixty percent of the body on average.<sup>1</sup> The exact number can change depending on age and hydration levels. For instance, you can release water through perspiration, especially in warmer climates or when exercising.

Unfortunately, it is said that 75% of Americans face chronic dehydration and struggle with rehydration.<sup>2</sup> It's critical to replenish this resource in your body, as it's responsible for protecting the

spinal cord and lubricating the joints. It also helps remove toxins through urination.

### The Benefits of Staying Hydrated

Staying hydrated has a host of benefits, from improving energy levels to supporting weight loss. Making this simple change is a powerful act of self-care that can create positive change across all aspects of your well-being.

Staying hydrated has a host of benefits, from improving energy levels to supporting weight loss. Making this simple change is a powerful act of self-care that can create positive change across all aspects of your well-being.



### Improved Energy Levels

If you're ever feeling groggy, dehydration could be the culprit. Even mild dehydration can impact your brain's function, leading to fatigue and a lack of focus. Staying hydrated is key to maintaining energy levels throughout the day.<sup>3</sup> It can even address problems like indigestion and bloating that can make you feel sick.

### Increased Mindfulness

Hydrating typically requires a little awareness. You need to recognize your thirst and make time in your day to rehydrate intentionally. By creating a self-care routine around it, you can practice more mindfulness.

The next time you get a glass of water, pay attention to the sensory details, like the cool glass in your hand, the sound of the water pouring, and the sensation of it quenching your thirst. For those few seconds, focus only on the act of drinking. This simple practice pulls you out of stressful thought loops and anchors you firmly in the present moment, acting as a small reset button for your mind.

### Optimized Physical Performance

With better energy levels from hydration, you'll find yourself much more recharged to engage in exercise or other activities. A clear mind can also contribute to a sharper and more precise movement, which is ideal when you're trying to avoid injuries.

## Supported Weight Loss

Water can be a powerful tool for weight loss. Drinking it right before meals is associated with reduced appetite, and there's also evidence that swapping high-calorie beverages for regular water can help with weight loss.<sup>4</sup>

## Enhanced Complexion

Hydration is most impactful on your internal system, but there are signs that it's also working on the outside. Since water helps flush out toxins, it may help manage acne and blemishes.<sup>5</sup> Further research is needed to confirm this, so you still need to work on adding moisture to the outer layers of your skin through other methods, such as moisturizer.

## How to Create a Hydrating Self-Care Routine

Building a hydrating self-care routine requires intentional thought. Here are some steps that can help.

### ◆ DRINK WATER THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Some people wait until they get thirsty to have a glass of water, but that usually means they're already dehydrated. Ideally, you should prevent dehydration from occurring in the first place. Consider setting regular reminders on your phone to drink water. You can also keep a reusable water bottle right next to you.

### ◆ INCORPORATE WATER-RICH FOOD

Water is the best source of hydration, but there are other ways to boost your intake. For example, watermelon and strawberries both have ninety-one percent water content, though you can also opt for other foods like cantaloupe, peaches, and oranges.<sup>6</sup>

Hydrating typically requires a little awareness. You need to recognize your thirst and make time in your day to rehydrate intentionally. By creating a self-care routine around it, you can practice more mindfulness.





For the best results, you can eat these water-rich foods as they are. However, you can also add them to a smoothie or mix them into other dishes to help balance sodium from other foods.

#### ✦ *LIMIT DEHYDRATING DRINKS*

Improving your hydration levels can also mean steering clear of the more dehydrating options in your diet. It's best to limit or remove caffeinated or alcoholic beverages from your rotation. You should also be wary of sugary drinks, such as sodas. If you want something to cleanse the palate, consider a naturally sweet, water-rich fruit.

#### ✦ *INCORPORATE ELECTROLYTES*

Swap out dehydrating beverages for electrolyte drinks. These are great for boosting energy while improving hydration. Plus, they're pretty easy to make at home with one-quarter to one-half teaspoon of salt per four cups of water, some citrus juice, and a little sugar or sweetener.

#### ✦ *AVOID HOT SHOWERS OR BATHS*

Taking a nice hot shower can be a relaxing self-care session. However, it's best to limit the time you spend taking them, as hot showers can break down the natural water content and barrier of your skin.<sup>7</sup> Dryness and irritation are a pain to deal with.

The same goes for hot baths. If you do want to take some time in the bathroom, do these only occasionally and opt for warm or lukewarm water when possible.

#### ✦ *AVOID HIGH TEMPERATURES*

Heat, in general, isn't ideal for maintaining your hydration levels. Hot climates can make you sweat and dehydrate you. Remember to take breaks in the shade or opt to stay in a cool place. If you're



working out or doing manual labor, remember to rehydrate. Running gels are available that provide electrolyte replenishment on the go, but a sip of water is still ideal.

## Feel Refreshed Inside and Out

Staying hydrated is a simple yet effective self-care goal. Even just a few changes can make you feel so much more revitalized. Remember that consistency is more important than perfection, so be patient with yourself as you build these new habits. The ultimate goal is to create a routine that nourishes your body and makes you feel good. Pick your favorite habits from the lineup and upgrade your routine.

Read more by Chloe Powell at *Revivalist Magazine*: <https://revivalist.com/>



<sup>1</sup> "What Percentage of the Human Body Is Water?" *Medical News Today*, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/what-percentage-of-the-human-body-is-water>.

<sup>2</sup> "5 Steps on How to Stay Hydrated," *Rocky Mountain IV Medics*, <https://rockymountainivmedics.com/5-steps-on-how-to-stay-hydrated/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Refreshing Lemon Water Benefits," *Revivalist*, <https://revivalist.com/refreshing-lemon-water-benefits/>.

<sup>4</sup> "Does Drinking Water Before Meals Really Help You Lose Weight?" *Harvard Health Publishing*, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/does-drinking-water-before-meals-really-help-you-lose-weight-202402203018>.

<sup>5</sup> "Does Drinking Water Help Acne?" *Healthline*, <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/does-drinking-water-help-acne>.

<sup>6</sup> "19 Hydrating Foods," *Healthline*, <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/19-hydrating-foods>.

<sup>7</sup> "Electrolyte Drink Recipe," *Utah State University Extension*, <https://extension.usu.edu/createbetterhealth/blog/electrolytedrinkrecipe>.





*inspiration*

“He who lives in harmony with himself lives in harmony with the universe.”

**MARCUS AURELIUS**

# Buddhism and Heartfulness

## A Dialogue on Compassion, Wisdom, and Spiritual Unity

**THE VENERABLE GESHE DORJI DAMDUL** in conversation with **PURNIMA RAMAKRISHNAN** reflects on the shared aim of spiritual traditions, revealing how harmony arises when the illusion of separation falls away.

Purnima Ramakrishnan: Namaste, Geshe La. Thank you for joining us for the consecration of the descendant of the Mahabodhi tree.<sup>1</sup> We are very happy to welcome you back to Kanha Shanti Vanam. After the Global Spirituality Mahotsav, this must feel like a return.<sup>2</sup> How does it feel to be here again?

Geshe Dorji Damdul: It is extremely healing and peaceful to be here. I learned that the space is close to 2,000 acres. It is like a huge town built with the blessings of Daaji. When you enter the campus, you feel you are in a very different world. The moment you come here, you sense oneness. There is an intense feeling of coming back home.

Purnima: At the Global Spirituality Mahotsav, many traditions came together. You spoke there, and I sensed a deep resonance between Heartfulness and Buddhism. How do you see that relationship?

Geshe Dorji Damdul: In fact, if I am not too presumptuous, I would say that if someone fully understands Heartfulness and then encounters the Buddhist tradition, they may feel, “This is actually Heartfulness.” And someone from the



Buddhist tradition who comes to Heartfulness and observes it—even just by looking at the demeanor of Daaji—they may feel, “This is Buddhism.”

In a way, I would say that whatever tradition one follows, we must keep in mind that the goal and the means should not be mixed up. The goal and the means are not the same! For example, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Bahá’í, and Buddhism—all traditions—evolved in different locales and at different times. Each adopted its own means to reach the goal. *But the goal is one.*



The goal is that there should be no fighting, no discrimination, no bullying. Everyone should feel joy, happiness, and peace. When someone is falling, others should be there to lift that person up. This is the goal of all religions.

The problem is that when people go to extremes—fundamentalism or fanaticism—they begin to identify with the means itself. They see the religion as the ultimate end. They forget the goal, and then they fight.

Purnima: So, religion is a means, not an end!

Geshe Dorji Damdul: Yes. The goal of all religions is to create harmony and peace in the world. But that peace is sometimes disrupted in the name of religion. When you come here to Heartfulness, you see that anyone who follows Daaji embraces others—there is no pushing. That is something very precious.

The goal is that there should be no fighting, no discrimination, no bullying. Everyone should feel joy, happiness, and peace. When someone is falling, others should be there to lift that person up. This is the goal of all religions.



During the Global Spirituality Mahotsav, when I felt this ambience of Heartfulness and listened to Daaji's address—in the presence of four to six million people—I could see the beauty, warmth, and embracing nature in him.

I spoke to the people who invited me and suggested that such great visionary leaders—driven by compassion—should come together. For example, if Mahatma Gandhi were alive today, I would work very hard to bring such great minds together—to strive for harmony and real peace, not just peace in words.

What is the proof that it is possible? Just come to Heartfulness. Here, people feel oneness. When such great minds come together, no doubt the world will become very different.

Purnima: You spoke about a shared goal across traditions. That brings to mind the *Heart Sutra*:

"Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form."  
In Heartfulness, Babuji Maharaj spoke of our journey toward nothingness. Do you see a connection there?

Geshe Dorji Damdul: You picked up the heart—and then Heartfulness. Heart and Heartfulness.

Let us think of two mothers. Both mothers have intense love for their child. The child wants to become a Nobel laureate in physics.

One mother knows physics very well—relativity theory, quantum physics, quantum entanglement, all these concepts—thoroughly. The second mother loves the child just as much, but does not know physics at all. Although she loves the child deeply and wants the dream to come true, she is helpless. She does not have the wisdom to guide the child to the fulfillment of that aspiration.

In the case of the first mother, the heart is supported by knowledge. Because she has both love and wisdom, the child reaches the culmination of the aspiration—perhaps even becoming a Nobel laureate.

This is Heartfulness: when compassion is guided by wisdom, the heart becomes full.

From that point of view, I see the *Heart Sutra* in it. When it says, “Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form. Form is not other than emptiness, and emptiness is not other than form,” it is telling us how to make the heart full—how to guide the heart through wisdom.

Babuji Maharaj said that everything goes into emptiness as a goal. This has deep meaning. The *Heart Sutra* says, “form is emptiness” and “emptiness is form,” like two sides of the same coin.

Form here means dependent origination: how things arise depending mutually on one another. Nothing exists independently. “Empty” means empty of *independent* existence.

Why do conflicts and fights happen? Because we feel independent from one another. We do not care about others because we think we are separate. This attitude is ignorance. It is the illusion that you are independent from me, and I am independent from you.

Albert Einstein called this an optical delusion—the sense of division between “you” and “I.” He suggested that to overcome this delusion, we must expand the circle of compassion and recognize our interdependence.

So again, compassion, when guided by wisdom, becomes whole. It embraces everyone. That is Heartfulness.

COVID-19 taught us this very clearly. Even powerful nations and their rulers—kings, prime ministers, presidents—were not independent. If you close your borders entirely to protect yourself, your economy collapses. If you open them, the virus spreads. You cannot protect yourself unless you understand that we are interdependent. Protecting weaker countries protects you as well.

This is the wisdom needed to make the heart full. It should not remain confined to a small circle. It must extend to all human beings, all animals, the environment, the whole world.

So when the *Heart Sutra* says, “Form is emptiness,” it helps dissolve destructive emotions—craving, greed, anger—because we see there is no independent self.

And when it says, “Emptiness is form,” we see that forms do exist—but in mutual dependence.

From that point of view, I see the Heart Sutra in it. When it says, “Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form. Form is not other than emptiness, and emptiness is not other than form,” it is telling us how to make the heart full—how to guide the heart through wisdom.

## INSPIRATION

From that understanding, empathy, affection, compassion, and joy arise.

“Form is emptiness”: destructive emotions dissolve.

“Emptiness is form”: constructive qualities grow.

This is the essence of the *Heart Sutra*. Destructive emotions are reduced, and compassion expands to embrace all living beings on Earth—including the environment.

Purnima: When you spoke about compassion expanding, I was reminded of ripples—how one act touches another, and then another.

That brought to mind the mantra *om mani padme hum*. I once heard it described as the “jewel in the lotus,” with compassion arising when the lotus of the heart blooms. In Heartfulness, we pray for the collective evolution of humanity—especially through our nightly prayer.

There seems to be resonance here. Could you speak about this mantra and its meaning?

Geshe Dorji Damdul: This is beautiful. Even the phrase “collective evolution of humanity” is so powerful.

*Om mani padme hum* is the mantra of the Buddha of Compassion—Avalokiteshvara. In Chinese tradition, this presence appears as the female Quan Yin. In Tibetan Buddhism, which descends from Nalanda in India, it manifests in male form as Avalokiteshvara.

Om is shared across Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. It is composed of A-U-M, symbolizing body, speech, and mind.

What is to be awakened? The evolution of body, speech, and mind—what some may call perfect consciousness.

How do we evolve toward that? Through the jewel—*mani*.

The jewel symbolizes compassion. Just as a wish-fulfilling gem answers aspirations, a good heart fulfills our deepest wish—to be happy and to help others be happy. Even physical and mental well-being are strengthened through compassion. This is *mani*.

But compassion alone is not enough. It must be guided.

*Padme*—from *padma*, the lotus. The lotus grows in mud but remains unstained. Wisdom arises in ordinary human beings, yet when directed properly by a qualified guide, it remains pure. Wisdom is what allows compassion to become full.

And then *hum*—this signifies the inseparability of heart and wisdom. They must not operate in isolation. They must function together, individually and collectively.

Destructive emotions  
are reduced, and  
compassion expands  
to embrace all living  
beings on Earth—  
including the  
environment.



When compassion is limited to “my group,” it is incomplete. True Heartfulness must extend to the whole world.

Daaji is also working in this way. This land, this 2,000 acres, is not for himself. It is for all who appreciate Heartfulness. That is something we must learn.

*Purnima: You spoke about leaders shaping people—not creating followers but shaping hearts. Could you elaborate?*

*Geshe Dorji Damdul: One thing we must learn from great teachers—Daaji, Raji Ji, His Holiness—is this: when a leader has a truly good heart guided by intelligence, transformation happens.*

When I come to this ashram, I do not feel like an outsider. People embrace you with natural smiles. They are not forced. They are pure.

How does this happen? They are not all born from one mother. It is because of the wisdom given by the guide—Daaji—and his two teachers. His Holiness is another extraordinary example.

This is what is required: a leader with vision for the larger good and a heart of compassion. When those two are united, people change. The followers begin to reflect that same heart and vision.

It becomes like a ripple effect—a chain reaction. It expands until there are no “others” or “enemies” left. Everyone becomes “us.”

## INSPIRATION

In many situations, anger leads to retaliation. “You hurt us; we will hurt you.” Hatred fuels more hatred. But under wise leadership, a different path is possible.

His Holiness has often said that allowing anger to dominate is a failure. Instead, we must be practical. What can be done, we do. We go for the Middle Way—a win-win approach. Not, “We will punish you; we will kill you.” There should be no attitude like that.

When I look at history, I see how one person can transform millions. One leader can reshape a society. Here, too, in Heartfulness, I see people smiling—and that influence comes from one person, Daaji Ji. World leaders should learn from figures like Daaji Ji and His Holiness: compassion guided by wisdom. If that combination governed nations, trillions of dollars spent on warfare could be redirected toward human flourishing.

Purnima: When you spoke about how one person can influence many, I was reminded of something Babuji Maharaj once said: “I do not create disciples, I create masters.” Visionary leaders do not create followers—they awaken others to the same vision and heart.

As we conclude, may I invite you to share your closing thoughts?

GDD: India is an amazing country. It has produced great masters from many traditions—Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism. Then, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, and here we have Daaji. These are extraordinary figures.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama often says that wherever he travels, he speaks of India as the land of *abimsa*.<sup>3</sup> He promotes India to the world for its profound spiritual heritage and the values it can offer humanity.

This is what is required: a leader with vision for the larger good and a heart of compassion. When those two are united, people change. The followers begin to reflect that same heart and vision.

It becomes like a ripple effect—a chain reaction. It expands until there are no “others” or “enemies” left. Everyone becomes “us.”

The world today is deprived of these qualities. His Holiness serves as an ambassador of India in this sense.

I remember him saying, “My body has survived on Indian *rajma dal*, and my brain has survived on Indian Nalanda philosophy—psychology, metaphysics, and logic.” In that way, he considers himself a son of India.

So what I am saying is this: great leaders like His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Mahatma Gandhi, and Daaji are products of this land. People—both leaders and citizens—can learn from them.



Purnima: Thank you, Geshe La. It has been an honor speaking with you. We hope to welcome you again to Kanha Shanti Vanam!

GDD: Thank you. It is truly my honor to visit this center. It is a beautiful place. You enter—and you feel peace.

I have been observing the smiles. One smile, two smiles—you can find that anywhere. But here, across this 2,000-acre campus, you see only smiles. They are contagious, very beautiful. It is amazing!

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<sup>1</sup> The Mahabodhi tree refers to the sacred fig tree in Bodh Gaya under which Siddhartha Gautama is believed to have attained enlightenment. The tree at Kanha Shanti Vanam is a descendant of that original tree.

<sup>2</sup> The Global Spirituality Mahotsav was an international meeting of spiritual leaders and traditions held at Kanha Shanti Vanam in 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Ahimsa: A Sanskrit term meaning non-violence or non-harming—an ethical principle in Indian traditions that calls for compassion and refraining from harm in thought, word, and action.



## When Discord Leads to Harmony

DAAJI, in conversation with [APOORVA PATEL](#), discusses harmony and the role of discomfort in inner realignment.

Apoorva Patel: Technology is now so accessible that we are all in constant touch with each other, and yet there seems to be an unfortunate imbalance and lack of harmony amongst people.

Daaji: Have you sat in a room full of cell phones ringing without pause? Contact without connection is like this. The noise is tremendous, yet no real conversation occurs.

The ancient teaching on *sangha*, association, reveals something crucial here.<sup>1</sup> We become what we associate with. The mind takes on the coloring of whatever it touches repeatedly. In previous centuries, a person's *sangha* was limited to a few dozen people and a stable environment. Today, in a single hour of scrolling, we encounter hundreds of minds, thousands of images, countless vibrations, most engineered to provoke strong emotions because strong emotions drive engagement.

*Whispers from the Brighter World* speaks directly to this: “Today’s man is saturated with all kinds of information which his spiritual being does not need. The heart has more precise needs, known only to it.”<sup>2</sup>

The problem is not the contact itself. The problem is that our contact is horizontal when it should be vertical. We reach endlessly outward to other humans while neglecting the inward reach toward our own depths. And here is the paradox: *only by going deep within ourselves can we truly meet another*. Two surfaces rubbing against each other create friction; two depths recognizing each other create resonance.

**Apoorva:** So is constant contact actually counterproductive?

**Daaji:** That is certainly the case when it replaces rather than supports inner contact. When every moment of silence is immediately filled with a notification, when every space of solitude is invaded by a screen, we lose the very ground from which genuine harmony could arise.

The Sahaj Marg approach offers a remedy: morning meditation that establishes us in our center before we engage the world, evening cleaning that releases the impressions accumulated through the day’s associations, and bedtime prayer that reorients the heart toward its Source.<sup>3</sup> These practices create a vertical axis. And from this axis, our horizontal connections transform.

The deeper you descend into yourself, the closer you come to others. On the surface, there is only a crowd. In the depths, you meet yourself.

The problem is not the contact itself. The problem is that our contact is horizontal when it should be vertical. We reach endlessly outward to other humans while neglecting the inward reach toward our own depths.

**Apoorva:** In the Ten Maxims, we are advised to simplify our lives and be in tune with nature. How can we make the first inner shift towards this?<sup>4</sup>

**Daaji:** Simplicity is what remains when complexity has been seen through.

There are two kinds of simplicity. The first is the simplicity of the child who has not yet encountered complexity. This simplicity is innocent, beautiful, but fragile. The moment complexity arrives, it shatters. The second is the simplicity of the sage who has passed through every complexity and emerged on the other side, carrying nothing unnecessary. This simplicity is unshakeable because it has been tested.



The path to the second simplicity runs through, not around, the complications of life. We cannot pretend we have not been conditioned by a complex world. We cannot simply decide to be simple. The layers of complexity must be acknowledged, examined, and released.

This is where the evening cleaning practice becomes essential. Each day leaves impressions: desires, reactions, opinions, and judgments. These impressions create complexity and noise, drowning out the soul's natural harmony. The cleaning practice, done sincerely each evening, removes the day's accumulation before it solidifies into permanent patterns.

As for being in tune with nature, consider what "nature" truly means. The word comes from a root meaning "birth" or "origin." To be in tune with nature is to be in tune with one's origin, one's source, one's essential being. And the essential being is simple. What creates complexity is the *samskaras*, the accumulated impressions.

The first inner shift happens when you stop adding to the existing pile of *samskaras*. Before you can simplify, you must stop complicating. This means becoming aware of each moment's additions: the unnecessary reaction, the compulsive opinion, the automatic judgment. You do not even need to fight these. You need only see them. What is seen clearly begins to lose its power.

One Whisper counsels: "Open wide this window onto beauty and divine peace; there reside harmony and perfect joy." The window is already there. It has merely been covered by accumulated complications. Remove them, and the harmony that was always present reveals itself.

Apoorva: When we face new challenges, it tends to cause inner discomfort. Is this a sign of disharmony, or is it a doorway to deeper alignment?

Daaji: There is an insight from the Sahaj Marg tradition that cuts through a common spiritual misunderstanding: A Master who never causes discomfort is not truly loving; he is merely being agreeable. We often imagine that the path should feel good, that progress should be comfortable, that the Master should always make us feel soothed and validated. This is the ego's version of spirituality, and it leads nowhere.

Consider what happens when a bone is broken and heals crookedly. To set it right, it must be rebroken. This is painful. It is also necessary. The pain is not a sign that something is going wrong; it indicates that something is going right, that the misalignment is being corrected.

The ego has healed crookedly over lifetimes. Its structures, though dysfunctional, feel familiar. When genuine guidance begins to realign these structures, the ego protests. It calls the pain "disharmony" and is suspicious of the guidance. It looks for an easier path.

Apoorva: When the ego reacts like this, how do we understand that reaction? Is it simply rebellion?

Daaji: There is a distinction to be made here. Ego rebellion is resistance born from the ego's discomfort with growth. The ego does not want to change, to be exposed, or to surrender its imagined autonomy. When genuine guidance threatens the ego, the ego rebels.

Principled resistance is different. It arises when what is being offered is genuinely opposed to growth, when guidance becomes exploitation, when teaching contradicts itself, or when questioning is forbidden.

How to tell the difference? Ask yourself: Is this discomfort arising because my smallness is being stretched into something larger? Or is this discomfort arising because my integrity is being violated? The first discomfort is the growing pain of expansion. The second is the alarm bell of genuine harm.

The field must be plowed before it can be planted. The plowing disturbs the earth. This disturbance is necessary for the harvest. Discomfort that

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## INSPIRATION

serves growth is not disharmony. It is harmony arriving through an unfamiliar door.

*Apoorva: Now, for those who meditate, would you say that the 9 p.m. prayer is the first step in making individual harmony lead to world harmony?*<sup>5</sup>

*Daaji: The 9 p.m. prayer is a quiet revolution—so quiet it might be missed entirely.*

Consider what happens at that hour across time zones around the world. Practitioners pause in whatever they are doing and hold a single thought: *all people, all beings, are being blessed with love and devotion, and that the real faith is growing in all of them.* This is not a prayer for one's own benefit. This is not even a prayer for fellow practitioners. This is a prayer for *all beings*, including those who have never heard of the path, those who might reject it if they did, those who actively work against the light.

The Whispers describe “wires of light surrounding the Earth.” These are not metaphors for the spiritually advanced. They are the invisible infrastructure of collective aspiration, strengthened each time a sincere heart turns toward the welfare of all.

The genius of this practice lies in its universality. It does not demand conversion or adherence to a particular belief. It wishes for something that every tradition, every philosophy, every sincere seeker would recognize as good: being “blessed with love and devotion” and developing “real faith.” It trusts that a heart blessed with these qualities will find its own way to the Divine, through its own door, in its own time.

Individual harmony and world harmony are not two separate achievements. They are one fabric seen from two perspectives. When you purify your own heart, you purify a node in an infinite

The Whispers describe “wires of light surrounding the Earth.” These are not metaphors for the spiritually advanced. They are the invisible infrastructure of collective aspiration, strengthened each time a sincere heart turns toward the welfare of all.

network. The vibration reverberates through all connected nodes. The Sahaj Marg teaching is clear: your practice matters far more than you know. When you skip your evening cleaning because “what difference does it make?” you forget the invisible connections.

Every time you sit at 9 p.m., you are sitting for all those connected to you, seen and unseen. This is not to pressure, but to encourage. Your small effort has cosmic significance.

The prayer transforms the practitioner as much as it serves the world. It expands the heart's circumference nightly, training it to hold more, to include more, to love more widely.



Apoorva: Is that also the way to put into action the principle of “Love Him who loves all”?

Daaji: This phrase, “Love Him who loves all,” coined by Babuji, contains an entire spiritual philosophy in five words.

The direct approach to universal love is almost impossible. Can we love eight billion people with proper love? Can we love three billion? Can we love one billion, truly and completely? The heart’s capacity seems limited, and the demand seems infinite.

Babuji’s phrase offers a different approach. Instead of trying to love all beings directly, we love the One who already loves all. And through that love, by a kind of spiritual mathematics that transcends ordinary arithmetic, our love reaches everyone.

Think of it this way: if you wish to water a thousand branches, you do not carry water to each branch individually. You water the root. The root distributes to every branch naturally, effortlessly, and completely. The Divine is the root. When you love the Divine, you are watering the root of all existence.

This is why the Sahaj Marg tradition emphasizes meditation on the heart, the seat of the Divine within. When you sit in the morning and assume the presence of divine light in your heart, you are connecting directly to the Source that sustains all beings. Your love for this inner presence is simultaneously love for everything it sustains.

The practical implication is liberating. You do not need to manufacture feelings of love for strangers, for enemies, for the difficult people in your life. You need only deepen your love for the One. And as that love deepens, a strange thing happens: you begin to see the One in everyone. The stranger

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becomes less strange. The enemy becomes less threatening. The difficult person becomes more bearable. You are seeing through them to what they truly are, beneath the surface personality.

*Apoorva: In your own life, was there ever a time when you sought inner harmony? When did it turn from an idea to a lived experience?*

*Daaji: To be honest with you, I had no idea of any sort of discord within. The feelings of a lack of harmony never arose.*

This is perhaps the more common beginning and the more honest one. Most seekers do not start from a state of conscious discord. They start from a kind of comfortable numbness, a life that seems adequate, a self that appears reasonably functional. The feelings of disharmony never arise because there is no reference point for what harmony truly is. A person who has always breathed polluted air does not know they are missing freshness. A person whose sight has always been blurry does not know their vision is impaired.

The Whispers speak to this precisely: “If humans knew, what wouldn’t they give to complete the steps and enjoy this peace!” The phrase “if humans knew” is crucial. They do not know. They do not know what they are missing. They do not feel the absence because they have never tasted the presence.

This is the peculiar nature of spiritual obscuration. The very thing that clouds our perception also clouds our ability to perceive that we are clouded. Consider a person who has been carrying a heavy load on their back since childhood. The weight has become so familiar that it no longer registers as weight. The muscles have adapted. The posture has adjusted. The heaviness has become normal. Only when the load is finally set down does the person gasp and say, “I had no idea I was carrying so much.”



This is precisely what happens through the nightly cleaning process. You sit down feeling ordinary. Nothing particularly wrong. You begin the process, imagining complexities flowing out, heaviness departing. And when you open your eyes, something has shifted. There is a lightness you did not know was missing—a clarity you did not know was obscured. The recognition is retrospective. Only after tasting genuine harmony do you realize what you were living in before.

The journey, then, is not from felt disharmony to harmony. It is from unconscious separation to unity, from not knowing what you lack to realizing what was always yours.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sangha* is a Sanskrit term meaning association or community.

<sup>2</sup> *Whispers from the Brighter World*, messages received through intercommunication from elevated souls.

<sup>3</sup> Evening cleaning is a core Sahaj Marg practice for removing the day's accumulated impressions.

<sup>4</sup> The Ten Maxims are ten guiding principles of Sahaj Marg for spiritual aspirants.

<sup>5</sup> The 9 p.m. prayer, a universal prayer for the spiritual uplift of all (distinct from the bedtime prayer).

# AI & Spiritual Life: A Simple Reflection

**LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE** examines AI's growing influence on spiritual life and questions whether it supports—or distracts—from the search for meaning.

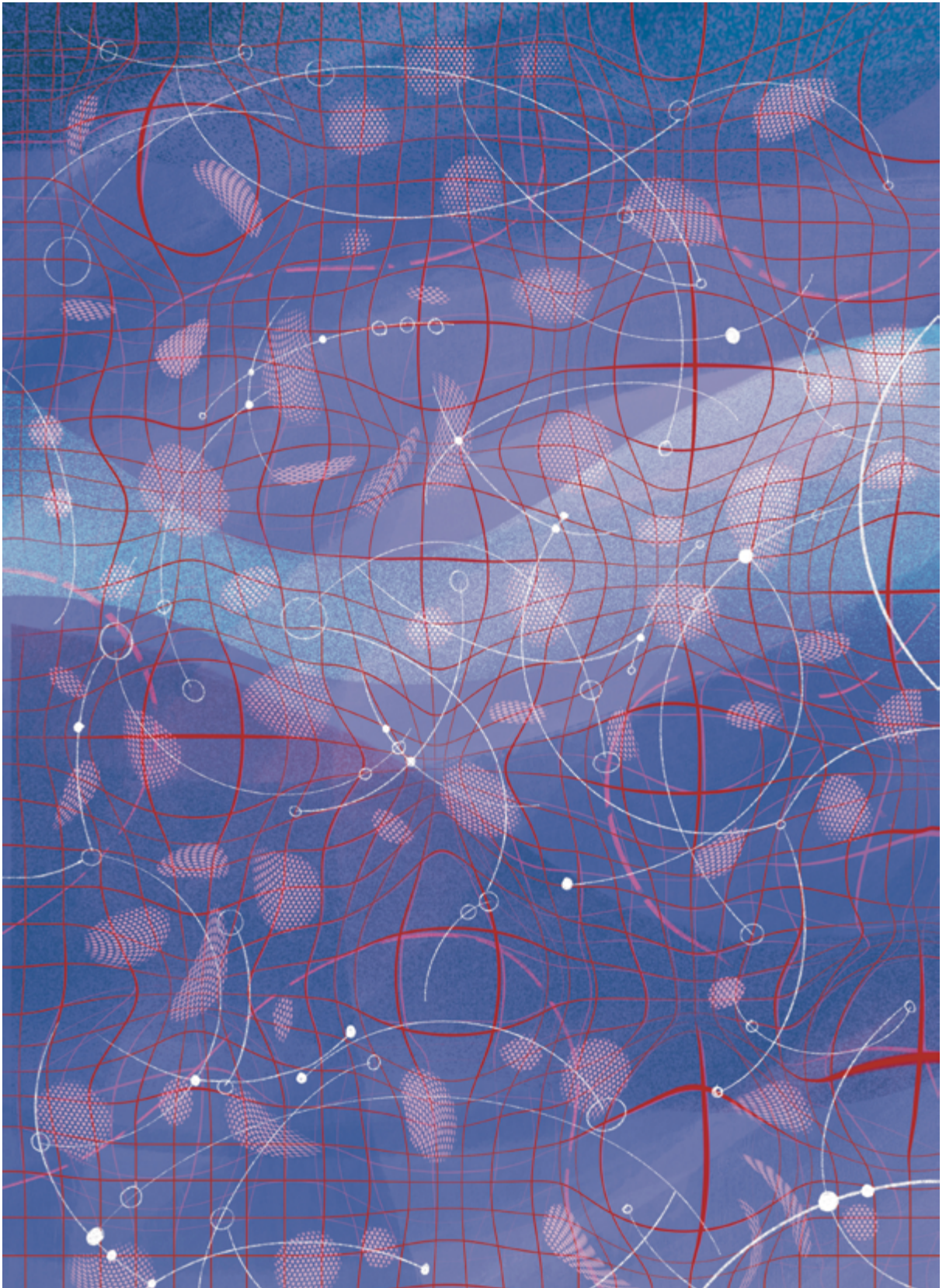
Artificial Intelligence is becoming increasingly pervasive in everyday life. Some people are using AI for spiritual guidance, and there are even AI spiritual guru avatars that provide personalized on-demand meditations, counsel, and even self-initiation and spiritual blessings. The question we need to ask is: do AI and spiritual growth really intersect, or is this another illusion distracting us from inner life and real change?

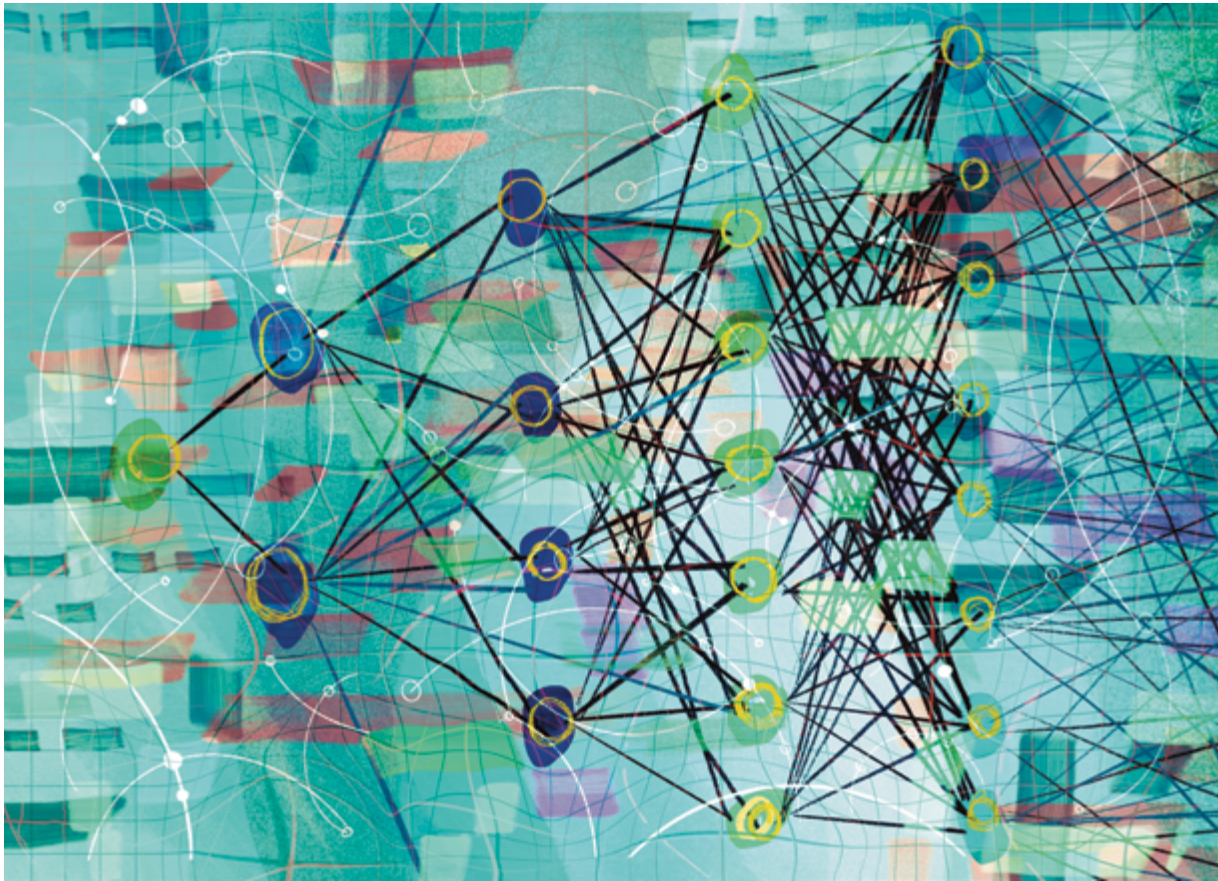
AI works by learning patterns from vast amounts of data, largely sourced from the internet, to make predictions or generate content. It belongs to the mental/informational plane and comes from an accumulation of past thoughts, ideas, images, and patterns to which it can give us access. It can organize these thoughts, rearrange them, and appear to give us insight, but it always comes from the past.

Spiritual life, however, is about going beyond the mind and its constant stream of thoughts, either into a state of pure awareness, the now, or into

the divine love we can experience through the heart. It returns us from the ego's illusory sense of a separate self to the unity of true nature. The spiritual path can even take us beyond, into the primal emptiness that underlies creation, the Absence experienced through an empty mind, or love's infinite ocean in which our individual self and all thoughts dissolve.

Spiritual life offers us the direct experience of stillness, emptiness, and love, rather than the constant chatter of the mind and its distractions. And through this inner experience, we become open to change, real change that comes from within, from a higher dimension, rather than the accumulated information of the mind and the conditioned patterns of the ego. **Real change only comes from within**, and from a spiritual perspective, this means from the Divine, the Self, soul, or *atman*—the eternal dimension of our being. Meditation, stilling the mind, watching the breath, or focusing on the heart, is a way to give us access to this inner dimension. In contrast, AI belongs to the past, to an accumulation of





past thoughts, images, and ideas, and as such is a distraction from real change and the inner work required.

AI may be described as “faster than the human brain,” but this comes from a limited understanding of our human potential and our ability to access the higher mind. The higher mind is the consciousness of the Self, which functions on the plane of unity, and is therefore much quicker than the rational mind, which functions on the plane of duality (the separation of subject and object). Referred to as *bodhichitta*, or “awakened mind” in Buddhism, the higher mind recognizes the inherent unity and interconnections in all things, and is not limited by the constrictions of past and future. Essentially, it functions outside of time.

In Sufism, this awakened mind is described as the consciousness of the heart, which is the locus of our divine nature. The heart both sees and knows the truth inherent in all things, the unity of being to which we belong, and the patterns of transformation which are part of our true nature. Through the consciousness of the heart, we can access our divine Self and live from this center of our being, guided from within.

The question then is how much AI is a distraction in our world today. We live in a time of deep uncertainty and cultural and ecological crisis. What may be most needed is not more technology, but more **love, care, and responsibility**—for one another and for the Earth. These qualities are central to spiritual life, yet they sit uneasily alongside technologies that

require vast energy and water use and expanding data centers. And while the hype around AI says it will bring transformative change, reshaping our world, it does not introduce **a new quality of consciousness**, which is vitally needed at this time. In this sense, it is a distraction from the need for real change, the change that can help bring our civilization back into balance with the natural world that sustains us. It promises a technological future. Yet anyone who has seen through the cracks in our present civilization

knows that technology cannot save us; rather, it is at the root of much of the polycrisis that confronts us.

AI reflects a civilization increasingly disconnected from its inner life, without the roots needed to nourish or sustain us. There are few signs that AI is leading us back to what is simple, essential, and deeply human. To simply state: AI has neither heart nor soul—qualities that belong to the essence of our human nature, and give true meaning and purpose to life.

We need to return our awareness to the living Earth, what I have called “a deep ecology of consciousness,” so that we can create a sustainable future for seven generations or more. AI, by its very nature, can only recreate past patterns and thus encourages us to overidentify with a way of thinking that has become globally self-destructive. AI may enable us to gather information, but it cannot help us to make the changes that are so desperately needed. In fact, it may seduce us into avoiding deeper inquiry, while the vast sums of money and attention being poured into its development could be much better spent on the social and environmental polycrisis that confronts us.

Spiritual life is a journey beyond the mind into the deeper dimensions of ourselves, whether understood as a state of pure awareness or an immersion in divine love. It is a turning from the mind to the heart, from the ego to the soul or Self. And through this inner change, we can learn to be of service in the outer world. As Thich Nhat Hanh beautifully said, “Real change will only happen when we fall in love with the planet.” No machine can do that for us. That work remains deeply, quietly human.

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL





# Workplace

“When we create harmony in our minds  
and hearts, we will find it in our lives.  
The inner creates the outer. Always.”

LOUISE HAY



**The Art of  
Decision Making:  
Balancing the Head  
and the Heart**

ICHAK ADIZES discusses how balancing logic and emotion leads to more harmonious decisions in business and relationships.

As a business consultant and relationship expert, I have seen time and again how the art of decision-making can make or break individuals, couples, and businesses. In today's fast-paced world, we often face complex choices that require careful consideration. In my years of experience and research, I have come to believe that the most effective decision-making process involves consulting both the head and the heart, and in a certain order.

When it comes to decision-making, the head represents our logical and analytical side. It is where we process information, analyze data, and weigh pros and

cons. It is the voice of reason that guides us with rationality and practicality. However, decision-making based solely on logic and analysis can sometimes lead to narrow perspectives and missed opportunities.

On the other hand, the heart represents our emotional and intuitive side. It is where we process our values, emotions, and inner wisdom. It is the source of our intuition and gut feelings. The heart helps us connect with our deeper purpose and our sense of right and wrong. Ignoring the heart in decision-making can lead to decisions that lack authenticity and alignment with our core values.

So, my approach to decision-making is to consult my heart first: does the problem need to be addressed, or am I just acting out of a hurt ego? Should I address the problem, or maybe I am taking over and dominating the decision-making process unnecessarily? Ask your heart how it feels about getting involved in analyzing and solving the problem. If the response is positive, move to the head now, where we gather and process information logically and come to a logical analysis of the problem or its solution. Next, step back to the heart. We need to consult the heart, where we tap into our emotions, values, and intuition. How do we feel about our conclusions? It is like

The heart represents our emotional and intuitive side. It is where we process our values, emotions, and inner wisdom. It is the source of our intuition and gut feelings. The heart helps us connect with our deeper purpose and our sense of right and wrong.

consulting our intuition. This balanced approach allows us to make decisions that are not only grounded in reason but aligned with our values and emotions.

Let me illustrate this concept with an example from the business world. In a recent case study, a company was considering a merger to expand its market share. The head, represented by the management team, was enthusiastic about the financial benefits and growth potential. However, they ignored the heart,

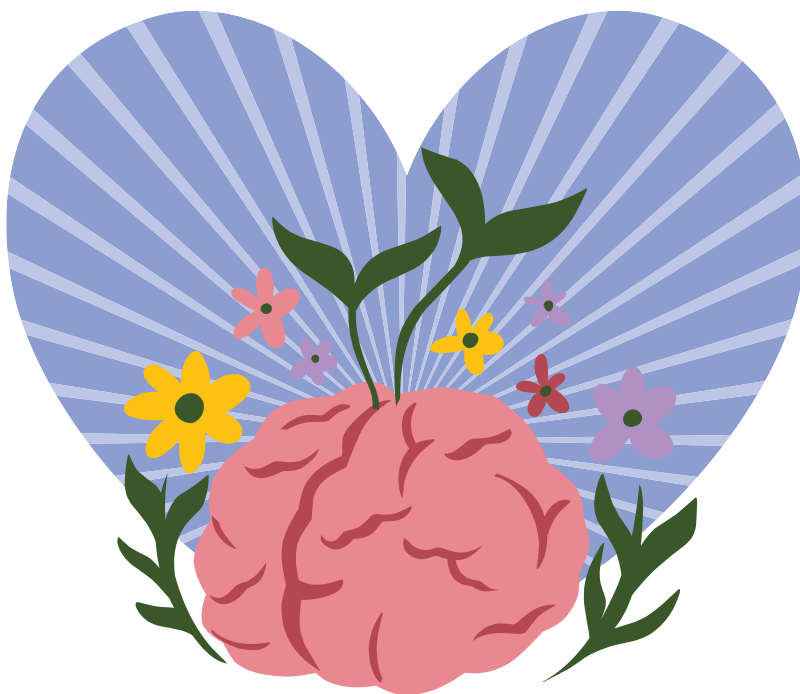
which represented the concerns of the employees and customers who valued the company's unique culture and identity. As a result, after the merger, the company faced significant cultural clashes and employee turnover, leading to a decline in customer loyalty and ultimately, financial losses. This could have been avoided if they had consulted both their head and their heart in their decision-making.

The heart is also a powerful tool in personal relationships. Many

couples make decisions based solely on practicality or societal expectations, without considering their emotions and values. For instance, a couple might decide to move to a different city for a job opportunity without fully considering the emotional impact on their relationship and family. This can lead to strain and dissatisfaction in the relationship, as their heart's desires and values were not fully taken into account.

Incorporating heartfulness meditation into our decision-making process can be a valuable tool. Heartfulness meditation is a practice that helps us connect with our heart's wisdom and develop emotional intelligence. It involves sitting in silence and turning our attention to the heart while experiencing feelings of love, compassion, and gratitude. This practice allows us to access our inner guidance and align our decisions with our heart's desires and values.

As Daaji, the Heartfulness guide, once said, "The heart is the epicenter of our being. It is the core of our existence. Our minds are like a river, and our hearts are like the ocean. Everything that flows into our minds must pass through our hearts." This quote beautifully captures the essence of consulting the heart in our decision-making process.



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# HEARTFUL MIND

with **Daaji**



**"My wish is that this series can help you lead a life guided by the heart. Let's embark on this journey together, you won't regret "**

**- Daaji**

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**heartfulness**  
purity weaves destiny

**UR**  
L I F E



**experience**

*relationships*

“I can do things you cannot,  
you can do things I cannot;  
together we can do great things.”

**MOTHER TERESA**





**Do You Want to Be Around Me  
Just Because  
I'm Nice?**

**MAMATA SUBRAMANYAM** reflects on how her identity as a “nice” person concealed patterns of self-erasure, and how confronting these patterns marked the start of real growth.

On a sunny, cold New York City day nearly ten years ago, I was comfortably seated on the gray sofa in my therapist’s Union Square office, left foot folded underneath me and an overpriced Starbucks hot chocolate cup in my right hand. I was only two-ish months into therapy at that point, a recommendation encouraged by my work manager after her observation that my intense anxiety was directly impeding my ability to work and the quality of that work.

My therapist—a soft-spoken, curly-haired Indian-American woman who started every session asking me, “So how are you doing today?”—had been gentle and

patient with me as I spent our first eight weeks together responding to her question with the same stories of traumas and triggers and the struggles of balancing being both Indian and American that I had relayed to my closest friends for several years; this time, however, I was hopeful that by sharing these stories with a professional, I would finally be released of the heaviness I had been carrying for so long.

Up until that point, my therapist didn’t challenge my venting too much, instead validating my emotions or helping me identify pain points I had yet to discover myself. I was growing comfortable with this, and expected the session on this particular day to be similar,

when my therapist threw in a bit of a plot twist with a question:

“What is the characteristic of yourself you are most proud of?” she asked.

“I’m a nice person,” I said automatically.

“*Nice?*” she repeated back to me, her voice suddenly underscored with a bit of disgust. “Who wants to be known as nice?”

I was at first taken aback by her abrupt directness. Then, I was offended. After all, being “nice” was one of the qualities of myself I was most proud of, only second to my empathetic nature. I was glad to be the friend that people

I genuinely believed that the only way to satisfy that internal need was through external validation. And patterns—even when we have the most acute awareness of them—are hard to break.

turned to when they needed an objective, judgment-free zone. I was the listening ear, sans advice, offering friends and family space to let out their feelings without guiding them in any one direction unless asked. Really, I was a pure Hufflepuff, based on the several Hogwarts Sorting House quizzes I had taken over the years: caring, kind, and loyal to a tee.

That niceness showed up in my professional life as well—in doing just as I was told, in keeping my opinions to myself, in the results of my Myers-Briggs or other personality tests that often set my colored dot on the *way*-other end of the chart than most of my teammates—according to the tests, I was all heart, no logic. This aligned with what I believed to be all I offered as a person, in any setting.

More than anything, I felt like I *had* to be nice, like it was the morally correct thing to do. I was abiding by the Golden Rule taught to us in kindergarten: treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. Wasn't I doing the right thing, abiding by it? I thought so.

*"She doesn't even know what she's talking about,"* I thought to myself as I walked out of my therapist's office later that day, Starbucks cup tepid and half-full. *"There is nothing wrong with being nice."*

As the week went on, however, I noticed that my therapist's question unlocked an awareness in me that hadn't been there before: while my niceness was distributed to everyone, it was often shared in surplus with people who took it for granted or whose attention I craved the most. I gradually became aware that I would push my own needs down further in the name of empathy and kindness to accommodate the people I believed should reciprocate that kindness, hoping that by meeting their needs, they would recognize my worth and value in their lives. The more the kindness wasn't reciprocated, the more I would make myself smaller to fit, and the more resentment and anger I would feel when my actions went unnoticed. That anger and resentment would build, bubbling inside me like a closed-capped, shaken-up soda bottle: ready to explode if opened, but always

capped shut because I was too afraid of losing the wrong people to let those emotions out.

Even then, I subconsciously understood that, while my kindness was well-intended, it was also rooted in a need that I couldn't satisfy for myself, on my own: a need to be seen, needed, valued, and loved. I genuinely believed that the only way to satisfy that internal need was through external validation. And patterns—even when we have the most acute awareness of them—are hard to break. Despite that growing awareness, I continued to put myself through what felt like an unsolvable cycle: people-pleasing, minimizing myself, and building up deep layers of anger that I'm still working through because I couldn't value myself enough to stand up for myself.

It's a pattern I'm still working on breaking today, all these years later. To break it, I needed to *want* to break it, which meant unwinding nearly thirty years of a personality I thought I needed to be valuable, so I could become the woman I had always dreamed of being.



I have leaned into it even more in recent years, purple-penning my way through a problem or conflict to a solution that feels best to me.

These days, I have been leaning into:

1. **Journaling:** Writing has always been a cathartic outlet, and I have leaned into it even more in recent years, purple-penning my way through a problem or conflict to a solution that feels best to me.
2. **Having an accountability buddy:** When I feel unable to set a boundary against the people-pleasing tendency, I ask my husband or a close friend to remind me to maintain it.
3. **Trying new things:** Pushing myself out of my comfort zone helps me get to know myself better, understand what I enjoy, and gain clarity on who I want to be.

I also recently began presence-based coaching, which combines mindfulness, somatic awareness, and neuroscience for self-discovery with someone I deeply trust. I shared with her the story of how my therapist treated my response about being nice with so much disdain. My coach reminded me that “nice” and “kind” are words that define how we interact mostly with other people, not common terms for how we engage with ourselves.

## RELATIONSHIPS

I am seeing the rewards of the work. I am more self-aware of both my flaws and my draws. I am not as quick to fall back into my people-pleasing tendencies. I reflect on what feels best for me before responding to someone else. I feel surrounded by people who value me for *me*, not for what I can offer them. It's a good start.

These days, my answer to the question, "What is the characteristic of yourself you are most proud of?" would probably vary, depending on the day. On some days, I would probably still say that my kindness and empathy are now reinforced by stronger boundaries. On other days, I would say resilience, my ability to bounce back and keep trying even after failure. Recently, I retook the Hogwarts Sorting House quiz and was surprised to find a new result: Ravenclaw, curious, witty, insightful.

I hope I never lose the ability to be nice, empathetic, and kind to others. I still very much believe that those are essential qualities that will keep us all connected, as the world continues to feel even more disconnected. But I hope I continue to lean into the discomfort of growth, that I never fall back into the pattern of staying stagnant in what feels more comfortable. The work to get through the harder parts to reach my truest self is not always easy. The reward of that work, however, is starting to feel worth it.



The work to get through the harder parts to reach my truest self is not always easy. The reward of that work, however, is starting to feel worth it.

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*enrichment*

“Adopt the pace of nature.  
Her secret is patience.”

RALPH WALDO EMERSON





**Peel,  
Eat,  
Repeat!**

**B. RATHINASABAPATHY** and **ANANTHENNI SREENATH** celebrate the cultural, ecological, and spiritual richness of the banana plant, revealing how this humble fruit embodies sustainability, abundance, and harmony with nature.

**P**acked with energy, rich in nutrients, and naturally delicious, bananas are a widely valued and versatile food. From bustling local markets to supermarket shelves, this humble yellow fruit is loved across the world. Whether eaten fresh, blended into smoothies, or used in desserts, bananas are a rich source of potassium, fiber, and essential vitamins. In India, bananas are more than just a fruit; they are deeply tied to the nation's culture, spirituality, and traditions. India is one of the largest banana producers globally, growing hundreds of varieties, each unique in flavor and use. From temple offerings to ayurvedic healing, the banana plant stands as a symbol of prosperity and divinity.

Sacred in Hindu tradition, the banana plant represents auspiciousness, fertility, and abundance. Its leaves and fruits

are used in weddings, festivals, and rituals to invite blessings. Bananas are also offered to deities like Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi as symbols of devotion and purity.

In ayurveda, bananas are valued for their nourishing and balancing properties. Eaten during fasting, they provide energy and aid digestion. They are also associated with practices that support digestion and balance within the body.

### Diverse Banana Varieties and Their Cultural Significance in India

The banana plant is an exceptional example of sustainability, as every part of it is useful. Eating food served on banana leaves, a practice common across India and Southeast Asia, embodies ecological and spiritual harmony. The leaves are naturally waterproof

and non-porous, easy to clean, and resistant to bacteria and other harmful microorganisms, making them among the cleanest natural plates available. Unlike plastic or metal, banana leaves do not leach harmful chemicals when in contact with hot food. After use, they decompose quickly, enriching the soil with organic nutrients and offering a biodegradable, eco-friendly alternative to disposable tableware.

The stem, another valuable part of the plant, is consumed as a fiber-rich vegetable known for its detoxifying properties; its extract is traditionally used to help reduce the risk of kidney stones. The flower, used in curries and stir-fries, is packed with medicinal benefits, while the peel is often fed to cattle or composted, contributing to soil health.



Eating food served on banana leaves, a practice common across India and Southeast Asia, embodies ecological and spiritual harmony.

### Heartfulness and Sustainable Banana Cultivation

At the Heartfulness Institute, sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation are core values. Integrating banana plantations into agroforestry systems enhances soil fertility, supports carbon sequestration, and provides nutrient-rich food for surrounding communities. Within spiritual gardens and meditation spaces, banana plants add natural beauty and serenity while offering cooling shade.

Beyond their agricultural value, bananas symbolize purity, prosperity, and spiritual abundance. In Hindu and Buddhist traditions, banana leaves represent auspiciousness and are used in rituals, weddings, and

festive feasts as offerings to the Divine. Serving food on banana leaves during ceremonies signifies respect and sanctity.

### Grand Nine (G9) Variety

The Grand Nine, or G9, is the most widely cultivated banana variety in India and a major export crop. Known for its large size, sweet flavor, and long shelf life, it is grown extensively across Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat. This variety has transformed the banana industry through its high yield and commercial value.

### Poovan Variety

Poovan is cherished across South India, especially in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, where it holds a place in traditional sweets and religious

offerings. It has a slightly sour-sweet flavor and a firm texture, making it both distinctive and versatile in culinary use.

### Nendran Variety

Often hailed as the “King of Kerala,” the Nendran variety is known for its versatility, particularly in banana chips and steamed preparations. Rich in beta-carotene and fiber, it can be consumed both raw and ripe.

### Rasthali Variety (Silk Banana)

Renowned for its silky texture and distinctive aroma, the Rasthali variety is widely used in sweets, milk-based dishes, and baby food. Its soft consistency and rich flavor make it especially prized in southern regions.

## BANANA RIPENESS CHART



From nourishing the body to enriching the soul, from sacred traditions to modern eco-conscious practices, this humble plant embodies the ideals of harmony, resilience, and abundance, values that beautifully align with the Heartfulness way of life.

### Monthan Variety

Monthan is a starchy banana variety commonly used as a vegetable in South Indian cuisine. It is valued for its fiber content and its role in traditional dietary practices.

### Lal Kela Variety (Red Banana)

The Lal Kela variety, grown mainly in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka, is known for its reddish-purple skin and creamy sweetness. It is rich in antioxidants, vitamin C, and iron.

### Mysore Banana Variety

Small but widely consumed, the Mysore Banana variety is found across Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It contains high natural sugars

and is often eaten as a convenient source of energy.

### Karpooravalli Variety

A well-known South Indian variety, the Karpooravalli variety is valued for its aroma and traditional medicinal use, particularly in addressing colds and digestive issues.

### More Than a Fruit

As we move toward a sustainable future, the banana plant serves as a reminder of nature's generosity and wisdom. From nourishing the body to its role in cultural and spiritual traditions, this humble plant reflects a way of living that values balance, continuity, and thoughtful use of natural resources.



*creativity*

“You can always edit a bad page.  
You can’t edit a blank page.”

**JODI PICOULT**



# Patterns of the Infinite

## How Sacred Geometry Connects the Cosmos, Human Creation, and the Body

Tattoo artist DILLON FORTE considers the universality of geometric patterns, found at every scale from the cosmic to the microscopic, and how they reflect a harmony inherent in nature.

Sacred geometry is more than a visual language. It is a way of understanding the universe and our place within it. Long before I began tattooing, I was drawn to symbols, patterns, ancient cultures, and the structures within the universe that seem to express something profound about existence. Sacred geometry sits at the crossroads of art, mathematics, spirituality, and science. It shapes not only my work as an artist but also my worldview.

My work as a designer and professional tattoo artist is rooted in the metaphysical dimension of art and the sacred geometric patterns that

permeate nature. I combine blackwork and dotwork techniques to create geometric and mandala-inspired tattoos with deep intentionality. Each piece is custom, and I collaborate closely with every client to create something that feels truly personal and spiritual. My fascination with the universe, the natural world, and the interconnectedness revealed by sacred geometry continually inspires me. For me, the process is inherently spiritual, and many clients are drawn to this work for similar reasons. While everyone approaches tattooing with their own intentions and stories, over time, I've built a community that resonates with and appreciates the energy and meaning behind my creations.

What, then, makes sacred geometry special? At its core, sacred geometry encompasses the geometric patterns and ratios that recur throughout nature and the cosmos. These shapes are not mere products of human imagination—they are discoveries, revealing geometry's direct





relationship to the world around us. From the spiraling arms of galaxies to the growth patterns of plants, from the symmetry of snowflakes to the structure of DNA, geometry weaves through the fabric of reality. Ancient civilizations recognized this, using these forms to articulate their understanding of creation, balance, and harmony. References to the power of geometric shapes appear in architecture, spiritual traditions, and even the Bible. Sacred geometry holds a universal appeal, connecting us across cultures and beliefs.

Among the most elemental symbols is the circle, representing unity, wholeness, and infinity. From the circle, more intricate forms are born. The Flower of Life—an ancient pattern composed of overlapping circles—stands as one of the most universally recognized symbols in sacred

geometry. It appears in temples, manuscripts, and artwork across civilizations that never interacted. This recurrence suggests these patterns are not merely cultural artifacts, but expressions of universal truths.

For me, sacred geometry reveals itself most clearly in the mathematical ratios that govern natural growth—especially the Fibonacci sequence and the golden ratio. Once you begin to notice, these patterns emerge everywhere: in seashells, hurricanes, tree branches, and the proportions of the human body. When ancient builders employed these principles, they were doing more than constructing buildings—they were aligning their creations with the same forces that shape the universe. The human body, too, adheres to these patterns: from the spiral structure of DNA to the ratios present in our faces, hands, and skeletal systems. Fractal patterns appear in our fingerprints and in the ways we grow and heal. To me, this reinforces the idea that we are not separate from sacred geometry, but living embodiments of it—built from the same foundational designs that shape galaxies, plants, and ancient structures.

Some of the most striking examples of sacred geometry appear in ancient architecture, particularly the pyramids of Egypt. People often focus on their engineering, but their geometric and astronomical alignments are equally significant. The Great Pyramid embodies precise proportions connected to planetary measurements and the cardinal directions. It was conceived not just as a monument, but as a tangible expression of cosmic order. As the only surviving wonder of the ancient world, the pyramids at Giza still inspire awe with their accuracy and their placement at what is thought to be the geographic center of Earth's landmass. Their alignment with the cardinal points remains more precise than any structure built since. I had the privilege of tattooing three dots on myself inside the King's



Chamber, symbolizing the pyramids' alignment with the Orion star system—a deeply personal and humbling experience.

This same understanding is evident in the temples of India, where mandalas serve as blueprints for entire structures. These sacred spaces were conceived as three-dimensional meditations, with every proportion and pathway guiding visitors from the external world toward deeper inner awareness. Moving through them feels intentional, almost like walking through a spiritual process. Geometry aligns the body, mind, and environment, transforming the structure into a tool for contemplation rather than mere spectacle.

A similar mindset is evident in Gothic cathedrals across Europe, where geometric ratios and symmetry shaped everything from floor plans to vaulted ceilings. Elements such as rose windows were crafted using precise mathematical patterns intended to draw the eye upward and evoke a sense of transcendence. What has always fascinated me is how these builders recognized that geometry could profoundly shape the experience of a space. Sacred geometry was never merely decorative—it served as a deliberate language to create resonance, balance, and a deeper sense of connection for all who entered.







In modern architecture and design, I believe we are beginning to revisit these principles. Many contemporary designers are once again embracing natural proportions, symmetry, and modular forms. Whether consciously or not, spaces that evoke feelings of calm, inspiration, or timelessness often rest upon the same geometric foundations that have endured for millennia.

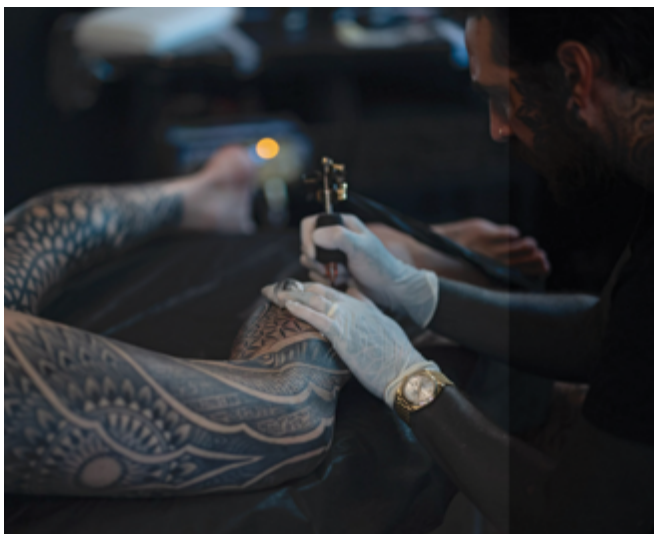
I see this resurgence happening in art all around me. Artists from diverse disciplines are using sacred geometry to bridge the ancient and the futuristic. These patterns move easily across media, from digital art to sculpture, murals, and large-scale installations. On a subconscious level, sacred geometry resonates deeply. Even when the math or history behind a design is unknown, people still feel compelled by it, and that innate attraction is profoundly powerful to me.



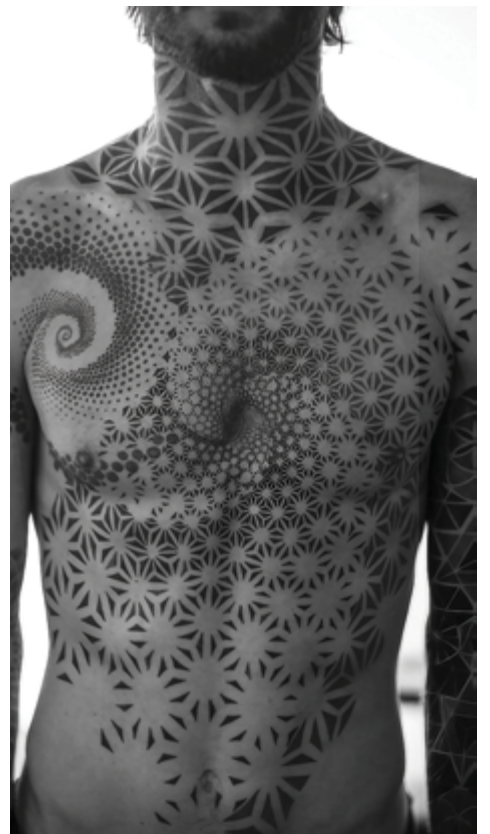
With Usher, a client whose tattoo incorporates sacred geometry—inspired design.

Tattooing is, for me, one of the most intimate ways to engage with sacred geometry. Unlike architecture or large-scale artworks, tattoos inhabit the body itself. Since the human form is already governed by geometric ratios, sacred geometry—when thoughtfully applied—naturally enhances and harmonizes with anatomy, rather than opposing it.

When I tattoo sacred geometry, everything centers on precision, intention, and reverence for the form. These designs allow no margin for error—a single line even slightly out of place can disrupt the entire pattern. This level of exactness demands complete focus and discipline, which, for me, contributes to the meditative nature of the process. Many clients seek not only visually striking tattoos but also the deeper significance behind them. Sacred geometry tattoos often symbolize transformation, balance, protection, or connection to something greater than oneself. The act of receiving such a tattoo becomes a ritual—a moment of intention and self-reflection.









Sacred geometry also emerges in various facets of modern design, from fashion and product development to branding. Logos structured around geometric ratios often appear more balanced and timeless. Patterns drawn from nature translate seamlessly into textiles and wearable art. Even in technology, user interfaces frequently rely on symmetry and proportion to create experiences that feel intuitive and harmonious.

What unites all of this is the understanding that good design is never arbitrary. When geometry aligns with natural principles, it simply feels right. It communicates on a deeper level, without needing explanation. I believe sacred geometry persists because it reminds us of our place within something vast and interconnected. In a world that can feel chaotic and fragmented, these patterns offer a sense of order and meaning. They embody a universal language that transcends culture, time, and medium.

As an artist, my aim is not to blindly replicate ancient symbols, but to honor their essence while allowing them to evolve. Sacred geometry is not a relic of the past—it is alive, adapting to new contexts, technologies, and forms of expression.

Whether carved into stone, built into a cathedral, inked onto skin, or rendered digitally, sacred geometry continues to fulfill its enduring purpose. It connects us to the rhythms of nature, the architecture of the universe, and the profound patterns that shape our lives.

For me, working with sacred geometry is both an artistic practice and a personal philosophy—a reminder that art has the power to align us with something timeless. When design is rooted in universal principles, it does more than decorate—it restores our sense of place within the whole.

Website: [www.dillonfortetattoo.com](http://www.dillonfortetattoo.com)

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# Poem for the Depressed

CLARK POWELL

Beneath your chair gravity  
reverses itself at the center  
of the earth! Why mope,  
knowing this or that  
nobody in space is worried  
about what worries you?  
Cheer up! Think  
how ceilings are shaped  
like floors, think  
of words like mango.

Remember golf balls, and how  
when you cut them  
they ran atomically  
across the rug  
unwrinkling their little cores  
in a frenzy of rubber bands?

Out there somewhere  
a recess bell is about to ring  
right now  
and a diver deep in some sea  
depressurizes, and rises,  
and probably a just-born kangaroo  
worms  
through miles of fur  
toward a pouch, and makes it.

This is for you:  
stop reading  
and go outside.  
In winter trees are plans in the sky.

*children*

“Learning to stand in somebody  
else’s shoes, to see through their eyes,  
that’s how peace begins.”

**BARACK OBAMA**



# How Setanta Became Cu Cullen

**RUBY CARMEN** traces how courage, consequence, and commitment forged a hero whose name would echo through time.

A very long time ago, in ancient Ireland, in the time of many fine warriors and gods and goddesses, there lived a young lad by the name of Setanta.<sup>1</sup> But history—nay, legend—now remembers him by another name: Cu Cullen.<sup>2</sup>

Let me tell you now, this lad has an interesting backstory. It is said that he was the son of the sun god Lugh and a mortal woman. From early boyhood, he was recognized as having immense strength and supernatural powers. He was considered handsome of face and intelligent too.

This lad, Setanta, was the nephew of the king of Ulster, Conor mac Nessa.<sup>3</sup> And like many young lads, he loved to play sports, in particular, the ancient sport of hurling.<sup>4</sup>

Setanta longed to join the warriors, in particular the Red Branch Knights of Ulster, and there was a school, or training camp, for this purpose. His parents were not too keen on him becoming a warrior, it seemed, and tried to persuade him not to go to this school.

To further complicate matters, there was a prophecy by a druid that the young Setanta



overheard—and it was this: if a person took up arms on a particular day, he or she would have eternal glory and fame, but that person’s life would be short-lived. Setanta, in his enthusiasm and high spirits, willingly accepted this and embraced this druid’s prophecy, becoming Cu Cullen of legend.

King Conor mac Nessa was impressed by Setanta’s skill in fighting and hurling and gave permission for him to train as a warrior with the Red Branch Knights. Some time passed, and Setanta grew stronger and became skilled in strategy. He even went to Scotland to receive training from a famous warrior woman, the fearless Scathach!<sup>5</sup>

One evening, Setanta’s uncle, the king, invited him to the castle for a feast given for the grand Chieftain Cullen. After a long day of hurling and training, Setanta arrived at the castle at dusk. The shadows of the trees and valleys danced on the landscape, and the golden evening light glistened playfully on his cloak. He could hear the birds’ call and caught sight of a crow in the nearby bush. In his hand, he held his hurley tightly. It was only then that he came face to face with a fierce and exceptionally tall guard dog, an Irish wolfhound no less. The wolfhound bared his fangs, growling and ready to attack, for the creature was trained to defend and protect the Chieftain Cullen from harm and intruders. Instantly and in self-defense, Setanta hit the wolfhound using his hurley and sliotar, fatally wounding the animal.





On hearing all this commotion, King Conor and the Chieftain Cullen left their feasting and came outside only to discover Setanta standing there. When the chieftain saw what had happened to his dear wolfhound, he was full of sorrow. His face crumpled, he asked in disbelief, “What have you done, lad?” By contrast, the king was quietly pleased to see his nephew safe and well, unharmed by the wolfhound.

“Forgive me, sir, the hound attacked as I arrived to feast with you, and the king...” His voice trailed off, unable to complete his sentence as words would not suffice. Remorsefully, Setanta knelt down in front of Chieftain Cullen. In that moment, he knew what he must do. There and then, he made an oath, a true promise to the chieftain:

“I, Setanta, swear to take the place of your hound, to protect you and your property until you have no more need of me.”

And he made good on his word, sleeping at the door of Chieftain Cullen’s home, sleeping lightly, with only one eye open, circling the perimeter of the property all through the night. He would remain there until a wolfhound pup became fully grown to replace him! It was from then on that the young lad, Setanta, became Cu Cullen, meaning “Hound of Cullen.” And the rest, they say, is legend!

AI-generated images

<sup>1</sup> Setanta is the anglicized form of *Sétanta*, the birth name of Cu Cullen.

<sup>2</sup> Cu Cullen is the anglicized form of *Cú Chulainn*, meaning “Hound of Culann” in Irish.

<sup>3</sup> Conor mac Nessa is the anglicized form of *Conchobar mac Nessa*, a legendary king of Ulster.

<sup>4</sup> Hurling is a 3,000-year-old Irish field sport, often described as the world’s fastest game. It is played with a wooden stick called a hurley and a small ball called a sliotar.

<sup>5</sup> Scathach is the anglicized form of *Scáthach*, a legendary warrior woman of Scotland whose name means “shadow.” She is associated with guiding fallen warriors to the Celtic underworld.



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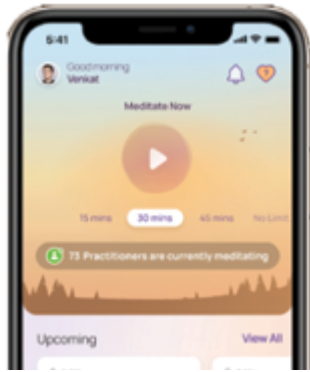
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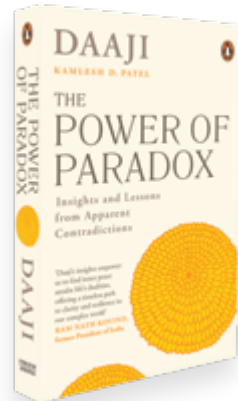
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