

# heartfulness

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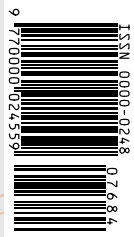
The Heart of  
Silence  
**DAAJI**

Sankalpa: The  
Method Within  
the Method  
**N.S. NAGARAJA  
& JOSHUA  
POLLOCK**

Silence  
**LLEWELLYN  
VAUGHAN-LEE**



# Silence



“

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

”



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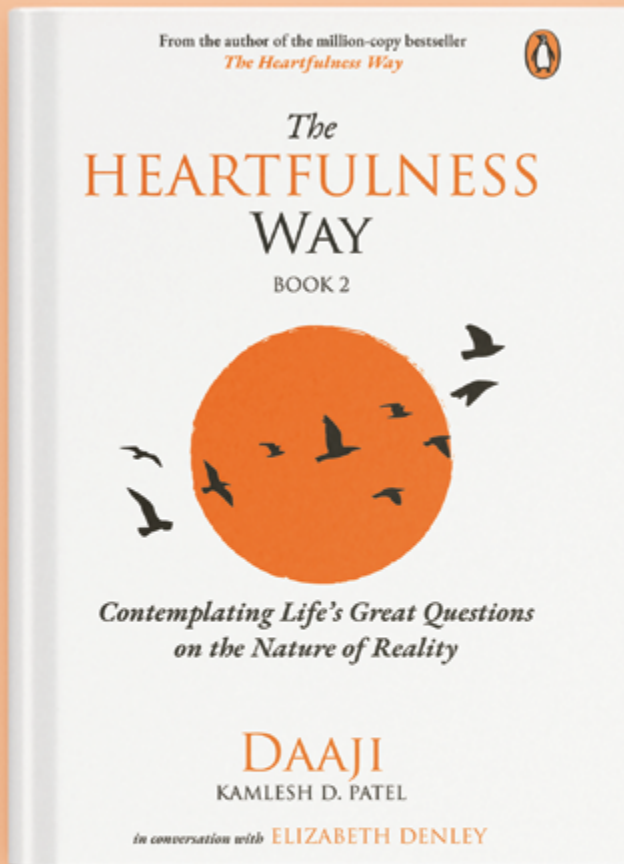


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*Global Guide of*  
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Elizabeth Denley  
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In *The Heartfulness Way*, Book 2, Daaji continues with the conversational format that he used so effectively 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.

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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



# *Silence*

Dear readers,

Silence is not only an absence of sound or thought. This issue explores silence in its many depths: the silence we try to create, the silence that comes unbidden, and the silence that lies beyond both.

In “Silence,” Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee reflects on 50 years of companionship with silence as an inner state, exploring its emptiness, space, and hidden presence.

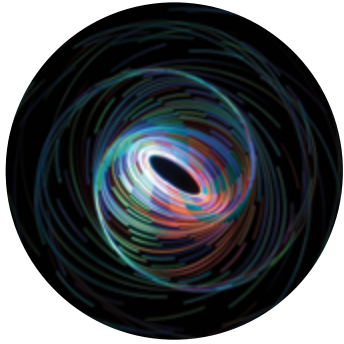
In “The Heart of Silence,” Daaji recounts a story from Chariji’s early days with Babuji: expecting words of instruction, Chariji heard only the soft bubbling of a hookah, and later came to understand Babuji’s silence as the teaching itself. Daaji goes on to distinguish two inner silences. One, we impose by force of will, by holding the mind still. The other arrives uninvited, as a gift.

And in a letter from August 1976, reprinted in this issue, Babuji describes inner silence as the seat on which Silence stands.

We welcome your reflections, experiences, and other submissions. Please visit <https://heartfulness.org/magazine/contribute> or scan the QR code below.

Happy reading,  
The editors





Heartfulness

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## SHRI RAM CHANDRA OF SHAHJAHANPUR

Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (1899-1983), affectionately known as Babuji, was a revolutionary spiritual scientist and philosopher. He was the founder of the present-day system of Raja Yoga meditation known as Heartfulness.



## DAAJI

Daaji is the Heartfulness Guide. He is an innovator and researcher, equally at home in the fields of spirituality, science, and the study of consciousness. His work opens new pathways for understanding and experiencing human potential.



## N.S. NAGARAJA

NSN is founder and CEO at Sensei Technologies. He has been practicing Heartfulness meditation for 20+ years and is deeply interested in the science of spirituality, software architecture, and design philosophies. He also works with Brighter Minds© to develop tools and techniques to enhance cognitive skills, especially for children.



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Joshua Pollock is co-author of *The Heartfulness Way*, an international bestseller available in twenty languages, and Editor-in-Chief of *Heartfulness Magazine*. He has also performed as a featured violinist on numerous Bollywood film scores by composer A.R. Rahman.



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Dr. Adizes is a leading management expert. He has received 21 honorary doctorates and is the author of 27 books that have been translated into 36 languages. He is recognized as one of the top 30 thought leaders of America.



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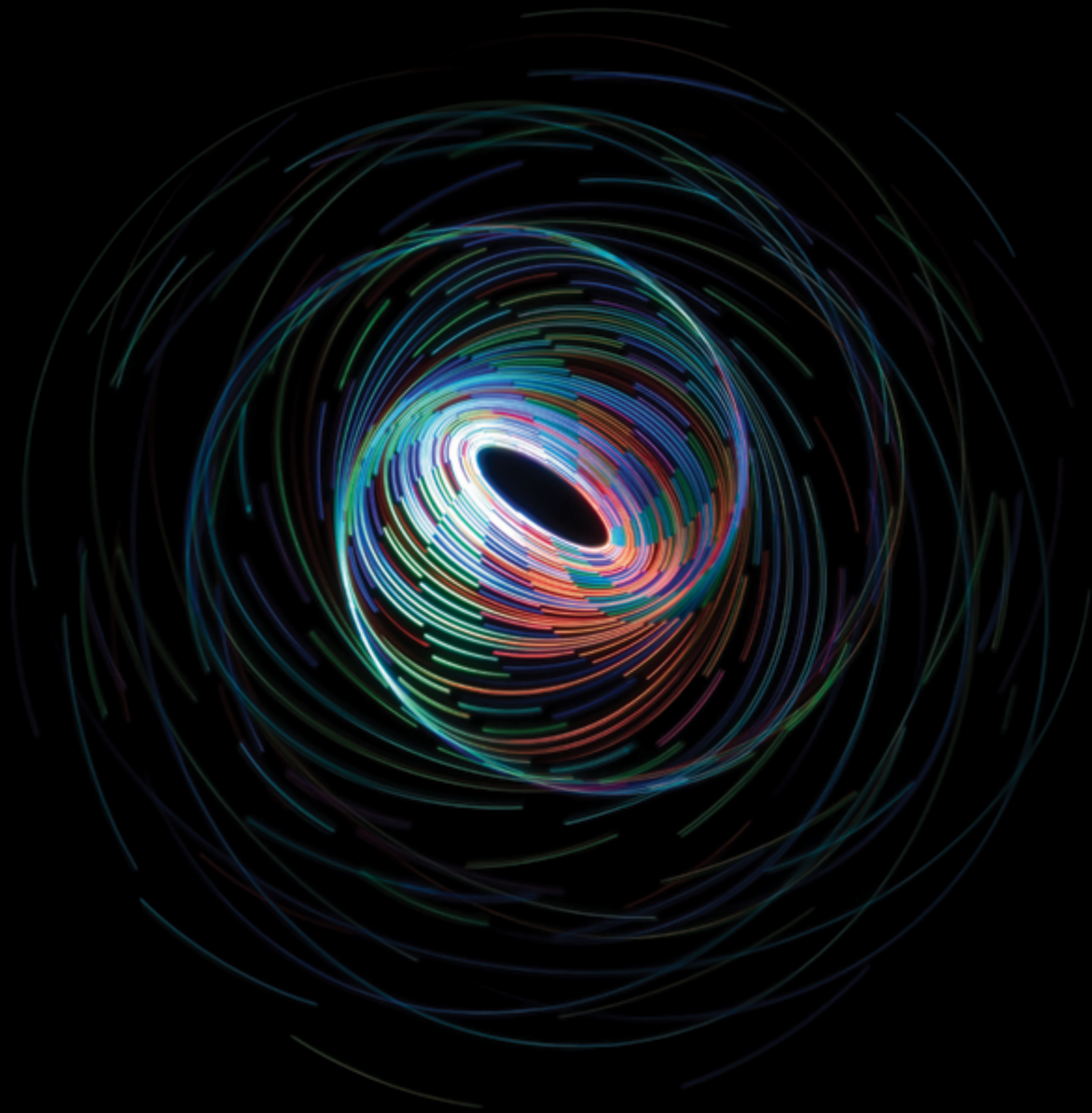
Mamata couples mental health and meditation with her passion for storytelling, using Instagram as a space to build community. Her 2016 TEDx presentation has been viewed over 2.7 million times. She is currently a freelance social media and content manager, and an editor and writer for *Heartfulness Magazine*.

# practice

“The more regularly and the more deeply you meditate, the sooner you will find yourself acting always from a center of inner peace.”

**J. DONALD WALTERS**





# SANKALPA

## The Method Within the Method

The first of two articles on sankalpa, the opening principle of the SACRED framework, explores how thought, intention, and will become the seeker's inner instrument for spiritual change.

BY **N.S. NAGARAJA** AND **JOSHUA POLLOCK**

Spiritual practice aims at a change of condition. We pray, meditate, contemplate, or worship because we seek a change in orientation, consciousness, character, or relation with the Divine. A method gives form to such aspirations. But the change sought through practice depends on two actions: the seeker must offer something from within, and the Divine must act. *Sankalpa* is the seeker's inner instrument for initiating that process. It uses what is already present within us—intention, thought, and will—and yokes that inner movement with divine action.

It is said that seekers would sometimes approach Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh [Lalaji], the first Heartfulness Guide, asking for help with their personal defects. After hearing their difficulty, he would offer no advice and prescribe no method. He would simply ask, “*Accha?*”—“Yes?”—and the defect would disappear.<sup>1</sup>

The Hindi word “*accha*” cannot explain such a result. It is an ordinary word, spoken every day. What mattered was the *sankalpa* behind the word.

In spiritual practice, we use many techniques—meditation, prayer, contemplation, worship, or others—but their effect depends on *sankalpa*. Whatever practice we take up, *sankalpa* is the primary instrument available to us: it is the method within the method.

To understand *sankalpa*, we can begin with the word itself. Etymologically, it contains two elements: *san*, meaning “with” or “together,” and *kalpa*, meaning vow. But the meaning of Sanskrit words often exceeds the sum of their parts. To uncover the broader meaning of *sankalpa*, we begin with *kalpa*.

Our thoughts do not move at random; they follow the heart's intention. Speech and action are born of thought, but thought itself is born of intention. Intention is the motive force behind both thought and action. Thought moves as the heart intends.

In Heartfulness, the heart is understood as the deeper aspect of the mind. Intention belongs to the heart, thought appears at the surface. Their relationship is therefore not symmetrical. Intention directs, thought follows. Intention is active, thought receives its direction and takes form accordingly. Yet more than one intention may be present in the heart.

Daaji once recalled a moment with Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur [Babuji] on a cold December morning. Babuji scratched a line across his hand with his fingernail. The cold made it show as a white mark on his skin. "This is a water canal," he said. Then he scratched another line branching

In Heartfulness, the heart is understood as the deeper aspect of the mind. Intention belongs to the heart; thought appears at the surface. Their relationship is therefore not symmetrical. Intention directs; thought follows. Intention is active; thought receives its direction and takes form accordingly.

off from the first. "Fifty percent of the power is reduced." He added a third, pointing out that the power had reduced further still.

When water remains in a single channel, its force is concentrated. When the channel branches, the current divides, and the original current's power is reduced. Each new branch reduces what the original carried.

Every intention carries a force. When intentions multiply, the force divides among them, and its power is drained—as Daaji has observed, like a phone with too many applications running at once. But when the heart's intention is gathered into one single direction, the full force of the person is behind it. This is will. Will, at its highest pitch, is resolve. When resolve becomes so firm that no doubt remains—"it will be done"—it has the character of a vow. This is *kalpa*.

An individual utilizes their personal will—force according to their own understanding and condition. Even when its channels are unified, it still works through the seeker's preference, limitation, desire, fear, or attachment to a particular result. A person may be fully resolved to finish a task, defend a position, gain recognition, win an argument, or prove a point. Such resolve can accomplish a result, but it does not necessarily invite the change of condition for which spiritual practice is undertaken.

No one can confer the divine nature upon oneself—or anyone else—by personal will alone.

This is why *kalpa* must be understood through the Sanskrit prefix *san*, meaning "with" or "together." In forming a *sankalpa*, the individual joins their individual will with the Divine Will. The motive arising from the individual's present condition adjusts itself to the higher, divine motive. The individual mind is no longer the source from which the work proceeds, but the



instrument through which the Divine Will may act.

The same sense is present in the word yoga. Yoga means union with God, where the individual will is yoked to Divine Will. The individual will remains active, but it no longer acts from its own separate center. Divine Will leads, and individual will cooperates.

When thought, intention, and will-force come together in this way, the sankalpa is not an assertion of personal power. It becomes a prayerful offering, strengthened by unity of purpose and free from hesitation, divided attention, or competing motives.

To cooperate with Divine Will, we need faith. Otherwise, we fall back on our own capacity and begin to see only our limitations: limited knowledge, purity, power, foresight, and control over results. Then the thought “It will be done” loses force, because our reliance has shifted from Divine back to ourselves.

Babuji once said, “If you want to poison the will, have doubts.” Doubt poisons the will by introducing an opposing movement to the thought being formed. The individual may hold the thought, “It will be done,” while also wondering, “Can this really happen?” The will behind the thought is divided. Doubt applies a contradictory force, and the sankalpa may even be canceled.

Faith allows the will to remain active without making the person responsible for fulfilling the sankalpa's aim. The sankalpa is formed as a humble suggestion that such-and-such may occur, submitted to the Divine. The inner act is offered, and the result is surrendered. The Bhagavad Gita expresses this clearly: "It is in action alone that you have a claim, never at any time to the fruits of such action."<sup>2</sup> In sankalpa, our only claim is to the inner act itself: forming the sankalpa and offering it. The result, or fruit, of that *sankalpa* is surrendered; it belongs to the Divine Will.

The individual does not dictate the manner, timing, visible form, or exact scope of fulfillment. The sankalpa itself indicates the intended condition, but leaves room for the Divine Will to fulfill it in just the right way. Because the result is surrendered, sankalpa naturally takes the form of a suggestion—rather than a demand.

### How to Form a Sankalpa

Sankalpa can be formed for our own inner development or for another's. In either case, the method of formation is the same. As an example, we may offer the simple suggestion, "May love develop in this person's heart." The words give shape to the suggestion, and the heart offers it prayerfully.

After offering a sankalpa to God, we should remain sensitive to the heart's response. At times, the sankalpa we have formed may not feel quite right, or the heart may feel pulled toward a different suggestion. In such cases, we should follow the heart. The first sankalpa may have reflected our own limited perspective, while the heart receives a hint from above that the work needs to proceed in another direction. To surrender the sankalpa is also to remain open to such correction. When this happens, it is perfectly all right to revise the sankalpa and offer it to God.

The sankalpa is formed as a humble suggestion that such-and-such may occur, submitted to the Divine. The inner act is offered, and the result is surrendered.

Having formed the sankalpa, we then continue to rest our attention upon it. In *Reality at Dawn*, Babuji explains the key principle through the example of miseries and afflictions. The more attentive we are toward them, the stronger they grow by the effect of our thought. If we cease supplying them with our attention, "they will begin to wither away like unwatered plants."<sup>3</sup>

The example concerns miseries, but the principle is broader: attention intensifies the effect of what it attends to. In the example above, we do not place attention on the person's lack of love, for example, or on the question of whether the sankalpa will be successful. Rather, we rest attention on the sankalpa itself: love developing in that person's heart. Our positive attention thereby nurtures the intended effect. And because the suggestion has been offered prayerfully, it is not carried by one's personal power alone; the divine current charges the thought with its creative power, which carries the suggested condition toward expression.

But what does it mean to rest our attention upon the sankalpa? It means patiently waiting for the intended effect to emerge. In forming the sankalpa, we knocked upon the door. Now



We gather thought and intention into  
one inward suggestion, hold it with a  
prayerful heart, and entrust its  
fulfillment to the Divine Will.

we wait for an answer. We do not keep knocking by repeating the sankalpa's words like a mantra, or through any other mental technique. Patient waiting means remaining receptive until the intended effect becomes perceptible to the heart, in the form of feeling. At first, nothing may be felt. Still, the heart remains open and receptive. We simply wait.

If our attention drifts, we do not form the sankalpa again and again. The sankalpa is already active. Instead, we simply reconnect with it at the level of feeling, with the heart, and resume our patient waiting. Gradually, the intended effect takes form, and we begin to sense the effect.

Sankalpa can now be understood in practical terms: we gather thought and intention into one inward suggestion, hold it with a prayerful heart, and entrust its fulfillment to the Divine Will.

Yet a further question remains: how can one person's sankalpa carry little force, while another's carries extraordinary power? The answer depends on two factors: the subtlety of the sankalpa and the inner development of the one who forms it—a subject that will be taken up in the next article.

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FROM HEARTFULNESS INSTITUTE

The Heartfulness Institute is a global not-for-profit offering heart-based meditation, a yogic practice for inner well-being and collective harmony.

<https://heartfulness.org/global/>



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<sup>1</sup> Ram Chandra, quoted and discussed in Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari, *A Preceptor's Guide* (Chennai: Shri Ram Chandra Mission, 2003), 292.

<sup>2</sup> Bhagavad Gita 2.47; authors' rendering, informed by Graham Schweig and Winthrop Sargeant.

<sup>3</sup> Ram Chandra, *Reality at Dawn*, in *Complete Works of Ram Chandra*, vol. 1 (Chennai: Shri Ram Chandra Mission, 2009), 36.

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# guidance

“The yielding heart attracts grace,  
happiness, cheerfulness and joy,  
which in turn builds relationships.”

**DAAJI**





# The Heart of Silence

Meditation on the heart leads the restless mind beyond imposed stillness into received silence, revealing silence not as emptiness but as an inner source of peace, beauty, love, and shared spiritual presence.

BY DAAJI

A young seeker once traveled to Shahjahanpur with great expectations. He had read about Babuji, heard stories of being in his presence, and was ready to receive a teaching that would change his life. He sat beside Babuji for nearly two hours.

What he heard—all that he heard—was the gentle sound of the hookah.

The smoke rose and curled. Babuji puffed quietly. The world outside moved on with its noise. And in that small room, two human beings sat together, with nothing between them but the soft bubbling of water in a pipe.

That young seeker was Chariji. He used to tell this story often, and he would laugh as he remembered

it. He had gone seeking words. He found something else. And in time, he understood that this something else was not the absence of teaching. It was the teaching itself.

“Silence is intolerable,” Chariji once confessed. “We cannot be silent. We cannot be in silence. Two things which we have to learn.” A striking honesty from a man who had spent decades in the presence of masters. Even for him, silence was a country whose passport had to be earned.

What is it about silence that we find so difficult? And what is it that the Masters keep pointing toward when they ask us to enter it?



There are two silences. This is a distinction I often return to, because once it is understood, a great deal becomes clear.

The first silence is the one we impose. We sit down, close our eyes, and try by gentle will to quieten the mind. We tell our thoughts to stop. We push them away. We hold ourselves rigid. Something does become quiet, but it is the quiet of a hand pressed firmly over a mouth. Beneath the surface, the noise continues, often more agitated than before. The yogi, by long discipline and practice, can compel a kind of stillness in himself. It is real, but it is enforced.

The second silence is the one we receive. It descends. It arrives like a guest we never invited, and yet

The second silence is the one we receive. It descends. It arrives like a guest we never invited, and yet it seems to have known the way to our door before we did. The devotee accepts it as a gift. It comes down like grace.

it seems to have known the way to our door before we did. The devotee accepts it as a gift. It comes down like grace. When you meet the Divine in person, not as an idea but as a living thing, you cannot speak. The breath almost stops. Time stops. Everything stops except the knowledge that you are in the presence of something so vast that you can only be quiet.

Vasishtha, instructing the young Rama, drew the same distinction in words I find unforgettable. “The silence of the ascetic who forces stillness is like the muteness of a wooden idol. But the silence of the liberated soul is true. He walks through the world with no fear, no longing, and no disturbance inside him.”

One silence is performed. The other is real. And here lies a small mystery to which we shall have to return. How does the performed silence become the real one? How does our discipline ripen into grace?



Let us look first at what science has been learning about the noisy mind, because the picture that emerges is remarkably close to what our tradition has always said.

In 2001, Marcus Raichle and colleagues at Washington University published a paper that helped reshape how scientists understand the resting brain. They described an organized pattern of brain activity that appears when we are awake but not engaged in an attention-demanding task, and they called it a “default mode” of brain function. When we are not solving a problem or attending to some outer task, the brain does not simply rest. The mind turns inward. It replays old memories. It rehearses conversations that may never happen. It writes and rewrites the story of who we are, what others think of us, and where we stand in the imagined hierarchy of life.<sup>1</sup>

In contemporary neuroscience, the default mode network is closely associated with this kind of self-referential mental activity: the inward stream of memory, anticipation, comparison, worry,

and self-narration that continues when attention is not absorbed in a task.

What Raichle described in the language of brain regions, Patanjali had already named in a single line, millennia earlier: *yogas chitta vritti nirodhab*.<sup>2</sup> Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. The chitta vritti, that ceaseless spinning of the mind-stuff, is this very movement: the mind turning inward, replaying memory, rehearsing imagined conversations, and continually rebuilding the story of “I” and “mine.” In modern neuroscience, this movement is studied through the default mode network. And the quieting of this movement, what Patanjali called yoga, corresponds closely with what brain scanners have observed in experienced meditators: reduced activity in regions associated with self-referential thought and mind-wandering.<sup>3</sup>

That finding comes from research by Judson Brewer and colleagues at Yale, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, which found reduced activity in key regions of the



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default mode network, including the medial prefrontal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex. From a meditator's perspective, this quieting is not deprivation or loss. It is experienced as an expansion of awareness, an intimacy with existence, a sense of being more fully alive than the mind's self-enclosed narration had ever allowed. Silence, then, is not empty. It is overflowing with something that the noise was blocking.



And now we come to the passage that, more than any other, has gathered for me the meaning of all this.

On the morning of May 21, 2003, Babuji communicated from the Brighter World a message that begins with words I have carried in my heart ever since I first read them.

In the very heart of silence, there is beauty, that which cannot disappoint you beyond your daily qualms. It exists unadulterated. Being of divine nature, nothing can alter it. Draw from this incomparable source; let your heart drink from it and get stronger, to better face this life, which weighs heavily on you.

Read those lines slowly. Read them again. This is not a description of an external place. It is the

geography of your own interior, mapped by one who has walked there.

*In the very heart of silence, there is beauty.* Not the absence we feared. Not the void we tried to escape from by switching on the television or scrolling through another feed. A beauty. Unadulterated. Of divine nature. Nothing can alter it.

Everything so far has been leading us to this recognition: silence is not deprivation. Silence is the heart's own kingdom, the place where what can never be lost has always been kept safe. The reason most human lives feel weighed down is not that life is heavy. It is because we have not yet learned to

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draw from the source that exists, untouched, at the center of our own being.

Babuji continues in the same message:

In the heart of silence there is peace, which is communicated to the soul, adorned with divine graces, exhorting it to love.

Peace communicates itself. The soul, in this peace, finds itself adorned. And from this adornment arises love. Love not as effort, not as decision, not as something we summon up by an act of will. Love, as what naturally arises when the heart has finally drunk from its own source.



How does one drink from such a source? How does the enforced silence become the received one?

An earlier message, from November 1, 2001, gives the instruction in three simple words. *Plunge into yourself.* Babuji writes:

Plunge into yourself inside the heart of silence and rejuvenate yourself. Is this place not the supreme refuge? Is everything therein not love and beauty?

Notice the verb. Not “examine yourself.” Not “analyze yourself.” *Plunge.* As one plunges into deep water with no hesitation or rehearsal. The mind cannot plunge. The mind reaches the edge of the cliff and starts calculating distances. Only the heart plunges.

And once one plunges, what happens to the noise of the world?

In another message, from November 15, 2002, Babuji answers this question with precision:

The pervading noise does not matter; doesn't this contact take place in another space?

The meeting between the heart and its source does not occur on the level where the noise lives. The noise can continue. Traffic can pass. Children can call out. Phones can ring. None of this reaches the place where the contact happens. The room within has no windows that open onto the street.

I remember my own first return from Shahjahanpur in 1977. My friend and I had spent time near Babuji and were now on our way back. We boarded the train at five minutes past midnight. We reached Delhi at about half past five in the morning. Through the entire night, tears streamed down my face. I could not stop them, and I had no wish to. The train rattled. Passengers slept and woke. The world performed its usual choreography of motion and announcement. And in the middle of all that, a young man sat by the window with closed eyes, weeping in a silence untouched by the station calls and movement around him.

That, I think, is the silence Babuji is pointing to. It is not the silence of an empty room. It is the silence of a room overflowing with a presence that cannot be heard by the ears, only by the heart.



The HeartMath Institute has reported that the human heart generates an electromagnetic field measurable several feet from the body. When a person enters a state of inner coherence, characterized by appreciation, contentment, and stillness, the heart's rhythms become more ordered and synchronize more closely with the brain. HeartMath researchers have also explored how these coherent rhythms may register in the physiological activity of others nearby, even without their awareness. What our tradition has always called the radiance of *satsang* may therefore have a measurable biophysical dimension.<sup>5,6</sup>

This gives us another way to understand why sitting near someone in deep meditation calms us, even when no word is exchanged. Two silences are meeting. And what is it that they meet in? The Mandukya Upanishad, in Mantra 7, gives this ground a name. It speaks of *turiya*, the fourth state, beyond waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, and describes it as *prapanchopashamam, shantam, shivam, advaitam*—the cessation of all phenomenal manifestation, peaceful, auspicious, without a second (non-dual).<sup>7</sup> This is not a state one enters by leaving the others behind. It is the silent ground from which waking, dreaming, and sleep themselves arise. When two hearts sit together, and the chatter of their minds gradually settles, what



remains is not really two silences. It is the one *turiya* in which both are eternally grounded, if only briefly recognized.

This is also why group meditation has been understood from the beginning as a sharing of conditions. The Master's silence enters ours. Ours opens further to receive it. And in that meeting, what was always within is gradually revealed. The enforced silence, sustained patiently through the years, slowly thins.

One day, without ceremony, we find ourselves on the other side of it. The yogi has become the devotee. The discipline has ripened into grace.



If there is one prayer worth carrying into the day, I think it is this: that we might learn to be a little more silent, because silence is the door. Behind that door is the room Babuji described, where beauty exists unadulterated, where



When two hearts  
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grounded, if only  
briefly recognized.

peace communicates itself, where  
love arises without our having to  
manufacture it.

The world will not stop being  
noisy. Phones will not stop ringing.  
The mind will not, by any decree  
of ours, suddenly fall silent. None  
of that must change. The contact,  
as Babuji said, happens in another  
space. We have only to remember  
that the door is there. We have  
only to plunge.

When we do, however briefly, we  
discover that the silence is not  
waiting to be created; it is waiting  
to be recognized. It has been the  
most patient guest in our house,  
sitting unseen at our own table all  
these years, holding open for us a  
place we had forgotten was ours.




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FROM DAAJI

Daaji is the Heartfulness Guide  
and president of Shri Ram Chandra  
Mission.

daaji.org




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Translation adapted by the author.

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<sup>4</sup> *Whispers from the Brighter  
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<sup>5</sup> HeartMath Institute, "Energetic  
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<sup>6</sup> satsang (satsangh): Spiritual  
assembly; being with reality.

<sup>7</sup> Mandukya Upanishad 7.  
Translation adapted by the author.



# *Silence* in Silence

In this August 2, 1976 letter, **SHRI RAM CHANDRA** of Shahjahanpur [BABUJI] reflects on silence as an inner spiritual condition, the lightness that comes from removing tension, and the way thoughts in meditation lose their force when attention no longer feeds them.

August 2, 1976

My Dear Poray,

Received your affectionate letter, we are bound by “yes” or “no.” But we do not know where to apply “yes” or where to apply “no.” This thing comes from the experience and experience comes from the experiment. When you think of anything in the affirmative way, it is explained. Further on, if we speak “no” for certain things then “no” is explained. When the tension is caused, detention goes. When the tension goes, detention is there, which is not so heavy but still it is something. When both are gone, that can be called the stage of Silence or the partial vacuum. There is no total vacuum, but we want to have as much as is possible. Total vacuum is God alone. When we merge in Divinity, the state of vacuum begins to dissolve itself, till it comes to the nearest. I think the subject is something other than that of your letter, but it gives some knowledge of the Absolute.

Silence is a part of a few grains of spirituality and not the reality itself. If we want to explain it we can say that “silence in silence,” as I have written to you before, is nearer to God. That means silence is itself the seat on which Silence stands. It can be shown practically and that you can do well. Just have an idea and thing will start. Sahaj Marg is a practical method for Realization and by practice alone we can interpret silence. There are so many worms outside, which our naked eye cannot see but they are there. So, silence is there in abstract form, though we may not be able to see it. It can be seen by constant practice. This is other way of explaining the same thing.

“So, by the prayer, we go from outside noise to outside silence. By the cleaning we go from outside silence to inside silence. Internal darkness is an inside noise coming from the tension of the body and of the mind. Removing tension makes a vacuum.” It does not sound well. By prayer we come nearer to our goal because we come in contact with the Being. There are two things, a goal of life and you yourself. Now, that yourself wants to merge in its Real Essence hence we derive benefits. If we remove all these things coming in, you will develop only hypnotic power. The same things give you Nectar if methodically done and the same proves harmful if it is not methodical. The method you know already.

Removing the tension means growing lighter, not creating the vacuum. That is a sort of change toward good. State of transperance is not a state of totally devoid of limitations, because there is something which allows you to peep into it.

Thoughts during meditation are just like the children playing on the road. When your attention is not toward thought, they are ineffective and are of no value. Thoughts do not disturb you, but you feel disturbed. The best way to get rid of them, you have yourself said. They rise for the sake of fall. They are leaving their field. Waiting for the Divinity to come in, it is our system that we want to be away from all things not necessary. Point “B” given in my book *Efficacy of Raja Yoga* is the homeland of impressions. When the force of meditation tears off veil of the heart, these thoughts are attracted because of a little bit of vacuum, which is there. When thoughts arise you feel disturbance. So the thoughts do not meddle with you. You meddle with them.

With blessing to all of you,

Yours affectionately,  
Ram Chandra

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FROM HEARTFULNESS INSTITUTE

The Heartfulness Institute is a global not-for-profit offering heart-based meditation, a yogic practice for inner well-being and collective harmony.

<https://heartfulness.org/global/>







# *When the Mind Learns to Rest:* **Heartfulness Meditation and the Science of Better Sleep**

A clinical study of chronic insomnia explores Heartfulness meditation for better sleep, showing how Heartfulness practices may improve sleep quality, calm the nervous system, and ease emotional burden.

BY DR. JAYARAM THIMMAPURAM

“**S**leep is that golden chain that ties health and our bodies together.”  
—Thomas Dekker

We live in illuminated cities that never truly darken, surrounded by constant stimulation, digital interruptions, emotional overload, and relentless schedules. Millions lie awake at night staring at ceilings, replaying conversations, worrying about tomorrow, or simply longing for the peace of rest that once came naturally. In fact, sleep has stealthily become one of humanity’s greatest struggles.

Imagine not being able to sleep well for months and sometimes years. Insomnia is no longer an occasional inconvenience. It has become a modern epidemic.

While working with patients with chronic insomnia, my colleagues and I found that night begins with hope and ends with frustration. They may fall asleep only to awaken repeatedly. Others cannot quiet the stream of thoughts racing through the mind. Some wake at three a.m. and never return to sleep again. Over time, we found that their exhaustion spills into every corner of life, emotions become fragile,

relationships strain, and even physical health begins to suffer.

Modern medicine has developed numerous treatments for insomnia, yet many remain imperfect. Sleeping pills may provide temporary relief, but they often carry unwanted side effects, dependency risks, morning grogginess, or diminishing effectiveness over time. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) remains one of the most effective non-pharmacological therapies, but it can be difficult to access, time-intensive, and is associated with high dropout rates.



This growing crisis has led scientists and clinicians to ask an important question:

Can the mind itself learn to rest again naturally?

Our study, published in *the Journal of Community Hospital Internal Medicine Perspectives*, explored this question through the practice of Heartfulness meditation.<sup>1</sup> It is a simple, heart-based meditative system designed to cultivate inner balance, emotional lightness, and mental calmness. The results were remarkable.

### **The Hidden Burden of Sleeplessness**

Chronic insomnia affects approximately ten percent of adults and is especially common among women and older adults. Beyond fatigue, insomnia is closely associated with anxiety, depression, irritability, impaired memory, and reduced work performance. Economically, insomnia costs the United States workforce billions of dollars annually in lost productivity.

Yet insomnia is rarely only about sleep.

Modern neuroscience increasingly recognizes that emotional distress, unresolved mental tension, hyperarousal, and persistent cognitive activity all play major roles in preventing restorative rest. The brain remains “on,” even when the body desperately longs for sleep.

Many insomnia sufferers describe the same paradox:

“I am tired, but I cannot rest.”

This is where meditative practices can be helpful.



Participants gently relaxed their bodies from head to toe, then rested their attention softly within the heart. Rather than concentrating forcefully or trying to suppress thoughts, they learned to adopt an effortless inward awareness.

Mindfulness-based practices have already demonstrated positive effects on sleep quality. However, the Heartfulness approach adds a unique dimension of not only calming the mind through meditation, but also consciously releasing the emotional burden accumulated throughout the day.

The study enrolled adults suffering from chronic insomnia in an eight-week Heartfulness meditation program combined with sleep hygiene education.

Participants practiced:

- Morning Heartfulness relaxation and meditation
- Evening rejuvenation practices to let go of emotional burdens
- Short bedtime relaxation session
- Weekly guided meditation sessions with a trainer

The meditation itself was beautifully simple.

Participants gently relaxed their bodies from head to toe, then rested their attention softly within the heart. Rather than concentrating forcefully or trying to suppress thoughts, they learned to adopt an effortless inward awareness.

In the evening, participants practiced “cleaning”—imagining stress, emotional heaviness, and

The Heartfulness approach adds a unique dimension of not only calming the mind through meditation, but also consciously releasing the emotional burden accumulated throughout the day.

mental complexities leaving the system like smoke or vapor, replaced by lightness and purity. At bedtime, they used the Heartfulness relaxation technique and drifted off to sleep, resting their attention in the space of love and compassion within their hearts.

The study measured outcomes using the Insomnia Severity Index (ISI), a validated clinical tool widely used in sleep medicine.

The average ISI score before the meditation program was 20.9.

After eight weeks of Heartfulness practice, the average score dropped to 10.4.

This represented a statistically significant improvement.

A reduction of more than 8 points on the ISI is generally considered

a “marked improvement” clinically. Participants in this study improved by an average of 10.5 points.

For many individuals, this meant the difference between severe insomnia and mild or sub-threshold symptoms. Many individuals reported how they were able to sleep much more deeply and for longer periods. While working with sleep specialists and practicing Heartfulness, many were able to either reduce or stop their sleeping medications. For any medication adjustments, we recommend following the guidance of sleep specialists or medical providers.

While the results were very encouraging, we also explored how Heartfulness could improve sleep.

Science is still uncovering the precise mechanisms, but several possibilities emerge.



### 1. Reducing Hyperarousal

Insomnia is often characterized by excessive mental and emotional activation. The nervous system remains in a heightened state even during bedtime. Heartfulness meditation may help quiet this hypervigilance by shifting the autonomic nervous system toward a state of relaxation.

### 2. Emotional Regulation

One of the most unique aspects of Heartfulness is rejuvenation. It is an intentional process of letting go of emotional residue from the day.

Modern neuroscience suggests that insomnia sufferers may struggle to downregulate emotional distress effectively. Emotional memories and unresolved mental impressions may remain active during the night.

The rejuvenation practice appears to gently address this emotional carryover.



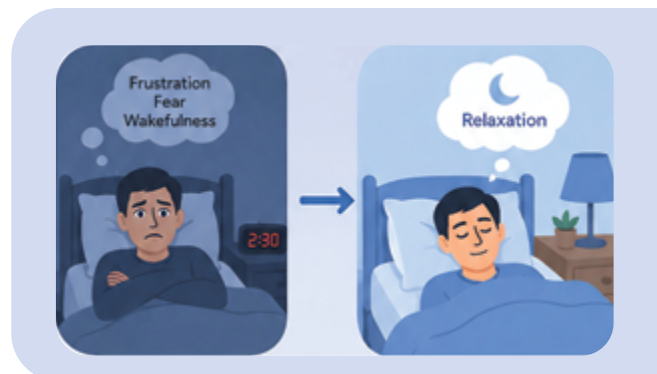
### 3. Creating Inner Safety

Sleep requires surrender.

The brain must perceive safety before it allows deep rest. Meditation may help cultivate an inner environment of calmness, acceptance, and trust that favors restorative sleep.

### 4. Conditioning the Brain Toward Rest

Over time, insomnia itself becomes conditioned. The bed becomes associated with frustration, fear, and wakefulness. Heartfulness practices may gradually retrain the nervous system to associate bedtime with relaxation rather than struggle.



## The Heart and Sleep

Ancient traditions have long connected the heart with inner peace and restoration. Modern medicine now recognizes that emotional states profoundly influence sleep architecture, hormonal regulation, inflammation, and autonomic balance.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of Heartfulness meditation is its emphasis on the heart as the center of attention.

Rather than concentrating solely on the intellect or thoughts, practitioners rest awareness in the heart, often leading to a softer, quieter inner experience.

As the study authors, we feel that Heartfulness meditation is:

- Easy to incorporate into daily life
- Cost-effective
- Free of significant side effects
- Accessible without special equipment

Some limitations included the study's relatively small size, lack of a control group, and inclusion of individuals who voluntarily chose to meditate—factors that future randomized trials should address.

Yet despite these limitations, the findings are deeply encouraging.

In a world increasingly dependent on external solutions, this study reminds us that healing capacities may already exist within human consciousness itself. Sleep is one of nature's most sacred repair mechanisms. In the silence of the heart, sleep may once again become natural.

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### FROM HEARTFULNESS RESEARCH

Heartfulness Research studies the effects of meditation from both neuroscientific and qualitative perspectives.

[heartfulnessinstitute.org/research/](https://heartfulnessinstitute.org/research/)




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### REFERENCE:

Thimmapuram J, Yommer D, Tudor L, Bell T, Dumitrescu C, Davis R. Heartfulness meditation improves sleep in chronic insomnia. *J Community Hosp Intern Med Perspect.* 2020;10(1):10-15.

# wellness

“Caring for your body, mind, and spirit is your greatest and grandest responsibility. It’s about listening to the needs of your soul and then honoring them.”

**KRISTI LING**



# How Present Can I Be?

A yoga teacher reflects on how asana practice deepens when the pursuit of progress gives way to breath awareness, embodied presence, steadiness, ease, and conscious living.

BY VIDHYA S. VIJAYAN



When I first began asana practice, my body moved with ease. Flexibility was never a challenge for me. Most postures came naturally, and I found deep joy in exploring them. I would move from one asana to another with curiosity, trying, learning, and going deeper. There was excitement in discovering what the body could do, and over time, that naturally led me toward more advanced postures.

This felt like growth—like progress—and in many ways, it was. Yet, without realizing it, my practice slowly became centered around *activity*: doing more, going deeper, reaching the next posture.

Nothing in my body was hindering me. There was no discomfort forcing me to slow down. Everything felt perfectly smooth. Perhaps that is why I did not notice what my practice was lacking. I was moving through the asanas but not fully embodying them.

At that time, I knew how to assume a posture, hold it, and transition out of it. But I had not yet learned how to live in a posture with awareness, sensitivity, and breath. My attention was often on where I was going next rather than on what was unfolding in the present.

Looking back, I realize this pattern was not limited to yoga alone. Nor was I alone in this. Many of us live, moving from one task to another and from one achievement to the next, constantly progressing, but rarely allowing ourselves to fully inhabit the present moment. We become so focused on movement that we lose touch with presence.

The shift in my journey began when my teacher introduced me to the Krishnamacharya tradition. To be honest, the transition was not comfortable. For a period of time, I felt as though I had lost something. The certainty with which I had previously approached my practice and my teaching was now shaken. I had never experienced such a lack of confidence.

This new approach was asking me to *unlearn* what I thought I knew for sure. Not superficial things, but deeper assumptions and attitudes I had carried for years.

Adding more knowledge is easy; learning to see differently is a challenge!

I remained in that space of uncertainty for a long time. But gradually, instead of resisting it, I began to surrender. I allowed myself to become a student again.

“Many of us live, moving from one task to another and from one achievement to the next, constantly progressing, but rarely allowing ourselves to fully inhabit the present moment.”

That is when the practice began to reveal its depth.

I began to understand what it means to truly breathe in an asana, not as a separate technique, but as something inseparable from the movement itself. I began to recognize the importance of preparation: how we must prepare not only the body but also the mind as we enter any posture. I discovered the value of pauses—the silent spaces between the movements where observation deepens and awareness becomes clearer.

Even the way I understood sequencing began to change. I



learned how one posture prepares the body for the next, how counterposes restore balance, and how thoughtful progression creates steadiness and avoids strain.

These were not mere technical learnings; they reflected a deeper intelligence intrinsic to the practice itself, supporting not only the body but also the *mind* and inner state.

The moment I began understanding the essence of this approach, it no longer felt as though I had to choose between what I had learned before and what I was learning now. Integration happened naturally. What I had learned earlier did not lose its value. Rather, my flexibility, familiarity with postures, and experience of movement all found a deeper foundation through my new awareness.

Gradually, Patanjali's words, *sthirā sukham āsanam* [posture should be steady and comfortable], began revealing themselves to me in a new way.<sup>1</sup>

For years, I had understood this sutra in its simplest sense: an asana should feel steady and comfortable. But through my new understanding, I began to sense that Patanjali was pointing toward something far deeper than physical posture.

How often do we move through life with neither steadiness nor comfort, always rushing, reaching for what's coming next, and carrying tension, even in moments of rest?

I began to understand that steadiness is not simply the ability to hold the body still. It is the ability to remain present within ourselves. I understood that

"Awareness changes the quality of everything. A complex asana may look refined from the outside, but without attention, it remains superficial. At the same time, even the simplest movement can become deeply transformative when approached with presence."

comfort is not merely physical ease, but the sense of connection that arises when breath, attention, and awareness come together.

Over time, I began to experience this balance when I wasn't on the mat. I found it in the way I spoke, the way I listened, the way I responded to uncertainty, and even in the way I held silence. To move through life with both steadiness and ease is itself a practice. Perhaps this is what asana practice was trying to teach me all along.

Awareness changes the quality of everything. A complex asana may look refined from the outside, but without attention, it remains superficial. At the same time, even the simplest movement can become deeply transformative when approached with presence.

This understanding extends far beyond yoga. In many areas of life, we are taught to value progress, achievement, speed, and outward growth. Rarely are we taught how to pause, observe, and fully experience what is happening within us. Yet without that awareness, even success can begin to feel empty.

Today, whether I practice a simple posture or an advanced one, the question is no longer, "How far can I go?" Instead, it is, "How present can I be here?"

That question continues to change my relationship with practice and with life. It suggests that the real purpose of practice may not be mastery. Perhaps it is learning how to be fully present in our own experience—even in our failures.

Asana practice is where this learning began, and I continue learning it each time I return to the mat, one breath at a time.

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FROM THE HEARTFULNESS YOGA ACADEMY

Heartfulness Yoga Academy offers accredited, tradition-rooted programs that integrate asanas, pranayama, and Heartfulness Meditation with Yogic Transmission for a holistic approach to yoga.

[yogaacademy.heartfulness.org](http://yogaacademy.heartfulness.org)




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<sup>1</sup> Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra* 2.46, translation adapted by the author.



The Space  
that Heals

## ***The Space That Heals***

Where Tradition Meets Modern Science  
for Holistic Well-Being

Integrative wellness unites modern medicine with traditional wellness practices such as yoga, meditation, mindful eating, sleep awareness, and stress management to support prevention, emotional balance, nervous system balance, and holistic well-being.

BY DR. SAMEERA

Life moves quickly. Between work, responsibilities, and daily routines, we keep moving forward without really noticing how we feel. A little fatigue becomes normal, sleep gets delayed, and meals become irregular. The body begins to feel stiff, while the mind stays busy even after the day ends.

Healthcare today is evolving beyond simply treating illness. People are increasingly seeking ways to stay healthy, improve their lifestyles, and achieve balance in both body and mind.

Despite advances in medical technology and access to health information, lifestyle disorders such as diabetes, obesity, stress, sleep disturbances, and chronic fatigue continue to rise. This has created a growing awareness that true well-being depends not only on medical treatment, but also on daily habits, emotional health, and overall lifestyle.

This is where the concept of *integrative wellness* becomes critical.

### **Bringing Two Systems Together**

Integrative wellness combines the strengths of modern medicine with traditional wellness practices. Rather than seeing them as separate or opposing systems, it focuses on how both can work

together to support long-term health.

Modern medicine plays a crucial role in diagnosis, emergency care, surgery, and disease management. Traditional wellness systems focus more on prevention, healthy routines, mindful eating, movement, emotional balance, and inner well-being.

Today, science is increasingly exploring what traditional systems have emphasized for centuries—that lifestyle, stress, sleep, and food habits have a major impact on health outcomes.

This integration creates a more complete and human-centered approach to healthcare.

### Why Integration Matters Today

Many modern health conditions are closely linked to how people live their daily lives. Irregular eating habits, lack of physical activity, emotional stress, poor sleep, and constant mental pressure gradually affect overall health.

Integrative wellness places strong emphasis on prevention and sustainable lifestyle practices.

For example, health is not only about *what* we eat, but also *when* we eat. The body functions according to natural biological rhythms. Digestion and metabolism tend to work more

efficiently during the daytime, while nighttime is meant more for repair, recovery, and rest.

Emotional health is equally important. Chronic stress can influence sleep, digestion, blood pressure, immunity, and physical energy. Increasingly, healthcare is recognizing that physical and mental well-being are deeply interconnected.

### The Growing Importance of Inner Wellness

Another important shift in healthcare today is the recognition of inner well-being.

Practices such as yoga, meditation, breath awareness, and mindfulness are increasingly being explored for their role in supporting relaxation, emotional resilience, and nervous system balance.

Integrative wellness therefore looks at the individual as a whole—body, mind, and inner state—rather than focusing only on isolated symptoms.

### A More Balanced Future of Healthcare

Integrative wellness does not replace modern medicine, nor does it rely only on traditional practices. Instead, it encourages collaboration between the two.

Modern science offers powerful diagnostic and treatment tools,

while traditional wellness systems emphasize prevention, balance, and conscious living. Together, they help create a more sustainable and balanced approach to health.

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FROM WELLNESS BY HEARTFULNESS

Wellness by Heartfulness offers integrative care across Ayurveda, Naturopathy, Yoga, Heartfulness Meditation, and a range of complementary therapies, personalized under qualified physicians and healers.

[wellnessbyheartfulness.com](http://wellnessbyheartfulness.com)

Our Website



About Us



feature

“Differentiating things, demarcating  
the line of difference...  
this alone is knowledge,  
which is the characteristic of the mind.”

**BABUJI**





# Silence

Silence becomes an inner state of love and listening, opening the heart to the mystery that is within creation and beyond it.

BY LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE

When I was 19, I met a white-haired Russian lady who had just returned from India, where she had been trained by a Sufi master. He belonged to the Naqshbandi order, known as the silent Sufis because they do all their practices in silence, unlike other orders, which practice a vocal *dhikr* and may use music or dance.<sup>1</sup> As he explained to her, “We go to the Absolute Truth in Silence, for it can be found only in silence and it is Silence.” Sitting in her small

North London room beside the train tracks, I was able to rest in this silence and sense a love I had never known existed.

For the past 50 years, silence has been my companion. In these, my later years, I have retired from life’s outer activities, drawn deeper and deeper into seclusion. Watching the tides rise and fall in the wetlands outside my window, taking my early morning walk in the lagoon where I meet a Great Blue Heron, its long,

curved neck searching for fish, I am present in a world where the sounds are of egrets squawking, coyotes calling to each other, or geese passing overhead. And beneath this is a landscape of silence.

I have learned how this silence is singing with love. There is love that exists in forms, sounds, and activities—we feel its presence in beauty, and are touched by its joy. But there is also love present in emptiness, in silence, in space—a love that

does not require recognition, that just is. The mystic is absorbed by this love that at once takes her into the infinite and grounds her in the web of life, for silence is an open passageway between the worlds. Through spiritual practices like meditation or watching the breath, we become familiar with this silence. It happens quite naturally that we dwell in silence, for silence pervades the depths into which the mystic dives again and again. This silence is undefined and speaks to us of the undefined vistas of our own being, and the greater mystery that pervades everything.

For the mystic, silence is not the opposite of sound, but an inner state of being that takes one far beyond the mind, and its endless chatter, into the deeper dimensions of being that are found within the heart and soul. Through our practice, we move from the world of outer activity and the distractions of the “ten thousand things” into a radically different inner dimension. At the beginning, it can be helpful to meditate in a place of outer silence, where the noise of the world does not disturb our practice; but then we are drawn deeper, into an inner silence and emptiness.

This inner space of quiet allows us to listen with our inner perception, with a heart attuned

to love, or for the Buddhist, with a consciousness empty of form. Listening is born of silence, and for the Sufi, for the lover of God, this listening of the heart allows us to hear life’s inner story—not the ego’s desires or attachments, its demands of success or failure, but the love story that runs through creation, the unfolding mystery within and around us. Rumi describes this receptive awareness:

Make everything in you an ear, each atom of your being, and you will hear at every moment what the Source is whispering to you, just to you and for you, without any need for my words or anyone else’s. You are—we all are—the beloved of the Beloved, and in every moment, in every event of your life, the Beloved is whispering to you exactly what you need to hear and know. Who can ever explain this miracle? It simply is. Listen, and you will discover it every passing moment. Listen, and your whole life will become a conversation in thought and act between you and Him, directly, wordlessly, now and always.<sup>2</sup>

Without a quality of inner quiet, we would be unable to hear this continual unfolding of life’s deeper truth, this self-revelation of God. This can also

be understood as listening to the still, small voice of God, a voice that resonates at a higher frequency than the mind, that belongs to the dimension of the Self rather than the senses and the ego. If we are to live a guided life, this is the voice that guides, and the clearer our mind, the deeper the silence, the more we are able to be guided from within.

My first practice, before I met my Sufi teacher, was the empty mind meditation of the Zen monk, and this thread has also been present over the years, weaving its texture into my inner and outer life. For the Zen monk, inner silence does not turn him away from the outer world but allows him to experience it more clearly,

If we are to live a guided life, this is the voice that guides, and the clearer our mind, the deeper the silence, the more we are able to be guided from within.

leading to *satori*, in which one can experience one's own true nature and the true nature of the world around. It is a moment-by-moment revelation in which everything is seen with the immediacy of the first time: the strawberry tasted in its sweetness without comparison, the spider's web glimpsed in its beautiful fragility. In this state everything is complete in itself, is the dharma completely alive. This is poignantly expressed in the Zen poem:

A monk asked the Zen master Fuketsu: "Without speaking, without silence, how can you express the truth?"

Fuketsu observed: "I always remember springtime in southern China. The birds sing among innumerable kinds of fragrant flowers."<sup>3</sup>

Whether listening to the inner voice of our Beloved, or seeing the Buddha nature of a leaf swirling in the wind, we have moved into a quality of life that is mostly hidden amidst the noise and clamor of today's world. But it is always present, existing outside time in the secret garden of the soul, in what is innermost in our own heart and our awakened consciousness, and fully present in the world around us, if we are able to see, to listen.



In recent years, I have spent many hours alone in nature, especially in the early morning when silence can be almost tangible. And listening carefully, I have come to hear life's deeper rhythm, what I have called "the song of the heart of the world." This world is not as we think; it is made from a substance that is not of atoms or particles, and in its depths, there is a hidden song. At some moments in

my life, I have touched this substance, caught a line of this song. It reminds me of the first day, when the beauty and wonder of creation are being born.

But the mystic is drawn even deeper, into a silence and emptiness that is before and after creation. In Ch'an Buddhism, empty mind is Absence itself, that is, the

consciousness which is the generative tissue of the Cosmos or the Tao. From this primal silence and emptiness all of life arises and returns, even as it remains clear and empty.

For the Sufi mystic, this is when the “journey to God” becomes the “journey in God,” in which we are drawn deeper and deeper into the love and emptiness that is the true home of the mystic; we are melted, merged into this “like sugar in water.” It is also described in Christian mysticism as “the dark silence in which all lovers lose themselves.”

This silence is deeper than any sound, and it is only understood as silence because it cannot be heard by the senses or even the inner ear. It is unborn and undying, the texture behind and within creation, which the Sufis call the Beloved. It is the undifferentiated Essence, and yet its light and love are within every cell of creation and found directly within the heart. It is at the root of all mystical experience, as expressed many centuries ago in the Upanishads:

There is something beyond  
our mind,  
which abides in silence  
within our mind.  
It is the supreme mystery  
beyond thought.

Let one’s mind and subtle  
spirit rest upon that  
and nothing else...

When the mind is silent,  
beyond distraction,  
then it can enter into a  
world  
which is far beyond the  
mind.

—*Maitreya Upanishad*<sup>4</sup>

For the mystic, deepening states of meditation are an absorption into this mystery, this placeless place, this stateless state. There are no words to describe it except that there comes a knowing that one has been taken far beyond oneself, beyond the fragile ego, into limitless dimensions of love and light, where the mind cannot reach, but a thread is left in one’s consciousness. This thread remains as a connection to this enduring and life-sustaining emptiness, and from it arises a way to live that is both simple and profound. I have found it as a way of being that allows life to unfold around me, in which I am both present and absent, similar to the Taoist practice of *wu-wei*, actionless action. It is best expressed in a traditional Zen saying:

Sitting silently  
doing nothing  
Spring comes  
and the grass grows by itself.<sup>5</sup>

To learn more, visit:  
[goldensufi.org](http://goldensufi.org).



<sup>1</sup> *Dhikr* is the repetition of a sacred word or phrase. It may be silent or spoken, according to its respective tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Light upon Light: Inspirations from Rumi*, translated and adapted by Andrew Harvey (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1996), p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Mumon Ekai, “Without Words, Without Silence,” case 24 in *The Gateless Gate*, trans. Nyogen Senzaki and Paul Reps (1934).

<sup>4</sup> *Maitri Upanishad* 6.19, 6.24, adapted from *The Upanishads*, trans. Juan Mascará (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), 101–103.

<sup>5</sup> Traditional Zen saying, in Victor Sōgen Hori, trans., *Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Kōan Practice* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 395, no. 10.177.

# children

“The activities that are the easiest, cheapest, and most fun to do – such as singing, playing games, reading, storytelling, and just talking and listening – are also the best for child development.”

**JEROME SINGER**





# Ghillie Dhu

A retelling of the Scottish folk tale of Ghillie Dhu, the gentle forest guardian who guides a lost child home and leaves behind a lasting memory of kindness.

BY RUBY CARMEN

In the timeless time of myth, in the northwest Highlands of Scotland, there lived a forest spirit, a guardian of the forests and glens. Even today, he is known as Ghillie Dhu.<sup>1</sup>

Some say that once he was, in fact, a human boy who was adopted by the fairy folk or *na daoine sìthe*.<sup>2</sup> Later in life, he lived in the forests of the highlands in exile after the Queen of the Fairies banished him for disobeying her orders. Ghillie Dhu was known to be shy and kind, existing between the two worlds but belonging in the forest he protected. Indeed, in his costume of moss and leaves, human folks rarely saw him, though the sensitive ones felt his protective presence in the woods of oak and birch.

There was a village nearby Loch Gairloch, and oftentimes the grandmothers would tell tales of the fairy folk, mixed with warnings of wandering alone in the forest. One young girl who grew up listening to these stories was Jessie MacRae.

One summer's day, when the weather was bright and fine, Jessie, in her determination and curiosity, decided that she would go to the forest and forage for berries, as the brambles and huckleberries were growing plentifully there. She had asked her younger brother to come with her, and he flatly refused, promising not to tell their mother with a solemn pinkie promise. Jessie set off with a heather-hued woolen shawl and a wee basket for her berries. Her freckled face was set with single-mindedness and a dose of courage, for she was a free spirit who loved being in the peace and calm of the forest walls.

And oh, it was so beautiful there! As she entered the forest, she felt truly transported into the world of the fairy folk. The sunlight streamed down magically through the treetops, dancing playfully across the flora, especially the wildflowers that swayed softly in the gentle breeze. The air felt so fresh; Jessie breathed deeply and began to sing sweetly to herself. Some curious woodland creatures stopped in their tracks and noticed her song. Jessie sang the lullaby "Tha Mi Sgìth," also known as the fairy song.<sup>3</sup>

Much to her delight, Jessie found an abundance of berries, munching gleefully on some as she went, her lips colored by the tart blackberries. She filled her basket to the brim with berries to bring them back for her family.





Just like this, time passed without her notice, and suddenly, it seemed that dusk was approaching with that golden light that wraps its arms around you. “Time to go home now,” she said firmly to herself with a slight sigh.

Jessie began walking back to her village when she realized that she had lost her bearings. She checked the direction of the sun, the skyline, and the position of the trees, but instead of certainty, she felt confusion. After some wandering, she felt even more uncertain of her way. In her mind, she said, “I have lost my way; what will happen now?” Confusion gave way to despair, and Jessie sat down at the foot of an old oak tree, tears of frustration welling up in her cornflower-blue-eyes. She put her head on her lap.

It was then that Ghillie Dhu appeared, rustling in his moss-covered cloak and asked, “What troubles you, child?” Jessie did not answer. Her chin wobbled, and tears spilled down her cheeks. Then, Jessie looked up and saw the soft, friendly brown eyes of the forest spirit. She steadied herself and replied, “Sir, I am lost. I can’t find my way home.” Ghillie Dhu, in a reassuring voice, responded, “Fear not, child, I will guide you home.” Jessie nodded, noticing the kindness in his tone and the concern in his eyes. She was unafraid.

With a dimpled smile, Ghillie Dhu asked her, “Tell me, where is your home? Is it the village by the loch?” Jessie affirmed with a nod. As they made their way through the forest, the light beginning to fade, the bluebells marking the way, the birds, animals, trees, and flowers seemed to

bow down to Ghillie Dhu with reverence. They walked in comfortable silence until Jessie, who was full of curiosity, asked him, “Who are your people?”<sup>4</sup> The question hung in the coolness of the evening air. “Well, I belong here, child,” he said in a matter-of-fact manner. “The sithe cared for me as their kin.”

The shining stars and the moon, too, guided them on their path until they reached the gates. Jessie felt her heart burst full of gratitude for Ghillie Dhu’s kindness and care. She turned around to tell him so, the moonlight touching her face now, but he was already gone, into the shadows. Into the night sky, Jessie whispered, “Thank you, I won’t forget you.” And she never did. When she was grown and became a mother herself, she told the tale of Ghillie Dhu to her children and, in turn, her grandchildren. Today, I tell you this story

from long ago, so that the kindness of the forest guardian is never forgotten.

<sup>1</sup> Ghillie comes from the Scottish Gaelic *gille*, meaning “servant” or “attendant.” Dubh means “black” or “dark.”

<sup>2</sup> *Na daoine sithe*, pronounced: nuh duh-nya she-huh can be translated as “the peaceful people” or “good folk,” sometimes just *sithe*, pronounced “she.” It’s important to note that fairies go by different names but always respectfully so.

<sup>3</sup> If you would like to learn her song, see LearnGaelic, “Tha mi sgith,” LearnGaelic.scot, <https://learngaelic.scot/littlebylittle/songs/sgith/index.jsp>.

<sup>4</sup> In Scottish Gaelic, one does not ask, “Where are you from?” Instead, one asks, “Who are your people?”



AI-generated images

# leadership

“Before becoming a leader, we must first cultivate leadership within ourselves.”

DAAJI





# Formula for Success

Sustainable business success depends on balancing external market responsiveness with the internal cohesion needed to preserve organizational energy, adapt effectively, and avoid the conflicts that undermine growth.

BY DR. ICHAK ADIZES

Success in business, whether measured by profit margins, return on investment, market share, or other metrics, can be understood as a delicate balance between two key factors: external integration and internal cohesion.

External Integration: This facet pertains to aligning the

organization's capabilities with the ever-evolving demands of the marketplace. It begins by assessing your organization's strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, you must discern the current and future market needs and endeavor to bridge this gap using your existing or yet-to-be-developed capabilities.

Internal Cohesion: This is the vital counterbalance to external integration and relates to the efficient utilization of energy within the organization. It encompasses minimizing internal misunderstandings, quelling rumors, resolving conflicts, and fostering an environment built on mutual trust and respect.

**Mutual Respect:** Mutual respect is fundamental to making informed decisions, particularly in complex, information-rich environments. In such scenarios, senior individuals often lack a comprehensive grasp of all necessary information. Thus, they must exchange knowledge and insights with other knowledgeable participants to arrive at sound decisions that align with market demands. When mutual respect is present, knowledge and information flow freely, leading to synergy and better decision-making.

**Mutual Trust:** For the successful implementation of decisions, mutual trust is indispensable. Team members must believe that their contributions will be rewarded, even if there is a time delay between their input and the eventual reward. There must be trust that there is a common interest. Trust is the glue that encourages individuals to invest their energy and effort in realizing organizational goals.

So, why does this formula predict success? We can draw

inspiration from physics, where energy is conserved. Any energy squandered due to internal disintegration, stemming from a lack of mutual respect and trust, becomes unavailable for handling the competitive forces in the marketplace.

Consider this scenario: A company possesses groundbreaking technology, a market ripe with demand, and ample investment opportunities. Yet, despite having all the essential ingredients for success, the company faces





"The key to sustainable success lies in perpetually reinforcing internal cohesion, ensuring that no energy is wasted, and that it remains available for external integration."

Focusing solely on external success can be a reason for eventual failure.

The key to sustainable success lies in perpetually reinforcing internal cohesion, ensuring that no energy is wasted, and that it remains available for external integration. In essence, strategic planning alone is insufficient. To thrive in today's dynamic business landscape, companies must maintain a delicate equilibrium between internal harmony and external responsiveness.

bankruptcy. The root cause? Internal conflicts among partners drained the organization's energy, preventing the efficient deployment of resources to harness their technology and meet market demands. Time was squandered, and competitors seized the opportunity.

Expanding our perspective to a temporal dimension, we see that as marketplace needs evolve, organizations must adapt

their capabilities. This requires internal adjustments, such as revising marketing strategies or modifying production processes. In such transitions, the relevance of information systems and the skill sets of individuals may also shift. Failure to manage these internal adaptations can lead to disintegration, resulting in wasted energy that cannot be directed toward external integration. Eventually, this may culminate in the organization's downfall.

the

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with **Daaji**



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“We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors,  
we borrow it from our children.”

**NATIVE AMERICAN PROVERB**

# Our Home Needs Our Help

Climate change calls us beyond sustainability toward regeneration, inviting us to restore damaged ecosystems, examine the greed and disconnection behind environmental harm, and cultivate the inner transformation needed for collective action.

**ANANYA S. RAO, PhD**

IN CONVERSATION WITH **MAMATA SUBRAMANYAM**

**Q:** Climate news can feel overwhelming these days! What is one story from the climate regeneration movement that gives you hope?

**A:** Much of the climate news today can feel disheartening and discouraging. Climate anxiety has become especially common among young people, who are understandably worried about the future they will inherit.

I try to stay aware of positive climate stories from around the world, because they remind us that regeneration is already happening. I came across a story from Brazil

about how, thanks to rewilding efforts, blue-and-yellow macaws have returned to the skies over Rio for the first time in more than 200 years. In Japan, researchers have developed a plant-based plastic that could help reduce plastic pollution if it can be scaled. Chile is developing vast wildlife corridors across thousands of kilometers. The UK has reached its lowest emissions level in more than 100 years, largely because of investment in wind energy. Even the ozone layer is showing signs of recovery.

In India, the Aravalli restoration project is another hopeful sign.

What I appreciate is that the effort is not only about planting trees. It is about ecological restoration: bringing back forests where forests belong, grasslands where grasslands belong, maintaining the uniqueness of the different forest types, and restoring degraded landscapes according to their natural character.

What gives me hope is the range of actions now taking place, from renewable energy and ecological restoration to ordinary citizens cleaning beaches, rivers, and neighborhoods, and I hope that others reading about them would feel the same hope.

Personally, I have been involved with Forests by Heartfulness, a mega-greening initiative of Heartfulness Institute. What is important about this work is that it is not simply tree planting. It offers a model for large-scale ecological restoration, conservation of rare and endangered species, and regeneration of damaged landscapes.

One of the most recent projects we have taken up is near Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh, in the heart of the new capital. The project focuses on ex situ conservation—protecting rainforest species outside their natural habitats—and on protecting species listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.

**Q: These stories are reassuring, but the larger climate picture can feel overwhelming. At a high level, how is the planet doing right now?**

**A:** The planet’s systems are under severe strain, and the effects are being felt by humans, animals, plants, and entire ecosystems. We are living through what scientists describe as the sixth mass extinction. The Anthropocene, this era in which human activity has become a planetary force, is witnessing species loss at an alarming rate. Every three hours, one species is pushed to the brink of extinction.

Planetary boundaries are the limits within which Earth’s

systems can remain stable and supportive of life. They include climate change, biodiversity loss, freshwater use, ocean acidification, and the condition of the ozone layer. There are nine planetary boundaries. Last year, scientists at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research reported that seven of them had been crossed, meaning that human activity is pushing Earth’s systems beyond safe limits. Freshwater systems are under stress. Chemical pollution, microplastics, and changes in soil and water quality are affecting ecosystems. Ocean acidification is also increasing. These are not isolated problems; they are signs that the basic systems supporting life are being strained.



As climate scientists, we work with future scenarios. These are not simple predictions; they are models based on different emissions pathways. We ask: What happens if the world continues business as usual? What happens under a low-emissions pathway? What happens under a mid-level or high-emissions pathway?

Earlier reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change worked with scenarios known as Representative Concentration Pathways [RCPs]. These pathways describe different levels of radiative forcing, which is one way scientists estimate the additional warming pressure that human activity places on the climate system. RCP 2.6 represented a lower-emissions pathway, RCP 4.5 a mid-range pathway, and RCP 8.5 a high-emissions pathway.

"When thought is polluted, action becomes polluted. When thought becomes clearer, action can also change."

Recently, I came across an article saying that RCP 8.5 is no longer a useful way to describe the most likely future. For someone who works with climate modeling, that is a sobering realization. It means that some of the assumptions behind earlier modeling need to be revisited, and that our scientific frameworks must keep pace with how rapidly the world is changing.

This is one of the saddest things I've come across because it calls into question some of the assumptions that have shaped years of modeling work. In layperson's terms, the dire consequences once projected from human activity may pale in comparison with what could now be unfolding.

**Q:** The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals gave the world a framework for 2030. It is clear that we have to think even further ahead. Are there new goals we should now be aiming for?

**A:** The Sustainable Development Goals gave countries a shared development framework for 2030. Many nations have aligned their development plans with them, but there is now a growing sense that we need a deeper shift.

Sustainability asks us to reduce harm and live within planetary limits. Regeneration goes further: it asks us to restore damaged

ecosystems, renew the conditions for life, and help the Earth recover its own vitality. So, we must move from sustainability toward regeneration. Whether that means regenerative farming or regenerative practices in general, everything needs to be more focused on regeneration. I think that's a more future-forward approach to the goals.

I am especially interested in the idea of Global Flourishing Goals. The phrase itself points to an important shift: development should not be measured solely by economic growth, but by whether people, communities, and ecosystems are able to flourish. This term, Global Flourishing Goals, sounds so beautiful to me. The Institute I was working with earlier, UNESCO's Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, has also developed a flourishing framework for what it means for human beings to flourish. Is it possible without environmental flourishing? These flourishing goals, in fact, bring about the interconnectedness of human beings with the environment, with all the other creatures inhabiting the planet. So, in that sense, it's a comprehensive and holistic approach to development.

Another aspect of this Global Flourishing Framework would also be looking deeply into human



well-being to understand what it means for a human being to flourish. It will then become very necessary to focus on internal work that human beings need to undertake. I strongly believe that unless change happens at the individual level, we will never be able to create change at the global level.

**Q:** What climate issue feels most pressing to you now, and what

kind of action is needed from individuals, communities, and institutions?

**A:** Every issue related to climate change is of prime importance, especially today, when many of us sit in air-conditioned rooms. When we step outside, we realize how extreme the planet's climate has become. In May, we experienced thunderstorms in Delhi, which are expected, but

this time they were beyond the normal range. At the same time, erratic weather brought snowfall to Kashmir in the Himalayas, spoiling the apple crop and affecting agriculture. Farmers are among the worst affected by such erratic weather.

What would be the most pressing issue? To me, the most urgent issue is the mindset behind the crisis. We cannot solve climate



change only with technology if the same patterns of consumption, separation, greed, and indifference continue.

We all know there is enough evidence scientifically. There is enough evidence without looking at science. You just need to step out of your houses, and you can, through experience, very well know that there's something



not okay with the climate of the planet.

When that is the reality, how do you approach this problem? Is it going to be your responsibility, something that's going to affect you, your children, your family, your neighborhood, your city?

The awareness that needs to come is this: what is happening outside us has arisen from the way we think. When thought is polluted, action becomes polluted. When thought becomes clearer, action can also change. Governments and institutions have major responsibilities, but individuals and communities also have roles to play. I'm not suggesting that individuals should carry this responsibility while governments stand aside.

I'm not stating that individuals should make all the changes while the governments don't work on it.

The realization has to happen at every level: individual, community, municipal, national, and global. Each one of us bears responsibility. Can you make that shift? Can you make that difference?

Ultimately, thought pollution is the cause of all other forms of pollution. Thought pollution is a term coined by Daaji, the guide of Heartfulness. What is thought pollution? It is the ego, greed, and jealousy that have brought the planet to its current grim state. Unless this thought pollution is addressed, we cannot take a step forward without falling backward again. Practices such as Heartfulness cleaning help us let go of inner heaviness and complexity, creating more clarity in the heart and mind. Meditation deepens our connection with ourselves. From that connection comes clarity, and from clarity comes the courage to act. These Heartfulness practices are one

"Sustainability asks us to reduce harm and live within planetary limits. Regeneration goes further: it asks us to restore damaged ecosystems, renew the conditions for life, and help the Earth recover its own vitality."

part of the solution for addressing thought pollution and restoring balance.

**Q: What worries you most when you look at the current state of the world?**

**A:** I have a daily exposure to climate data, including current data, data on the past 100 years, and projections for future scenarios. What worries me most is that many people still do not feel the urgency of action.

It's not about creating panic, but it's also not about waiting for things to change in the next 20-30 years. The action must happen right away, right now, and that kind of urgency is not seen in people.

**"The crisis is rooted in disconnection. Restoring connection—with ourselves, with one another, and with the natural world—is essential to restoring balance to the planet."**

The main thing that I would say is needed to make this action come about is inherent kindness. Kindness expands the circle of concern. It helps us feel the suffering of other people, other species, and the planet itself.

With all the war we are seeing, the emissions produced by war are staggering. We rarely speak about this aspect of war: its cost to the planet, and what it reveals about our lack of kindness toward other beings.

**Q: Beyond familiar personal actions like recycling and reducing food waste, how can individuals with no climate background contribute to regeneration at a larger scale?**

**A:** Yes, at an individual level. Recycling, using reusable bottles, upcycling, and reducing food waste all matter. But I think now is the time to scale up, even as an individual with no climate experience.

Start where you live. In an apartment complex or neighborhood, people can form a committee to work on food waste segregation, e-waste recycling, composting, plastic and paper recycling, and partnerships with local organizations. From there, the effort can expand to the block level, the municipal corporation, the city administration, and even state-level policy conversations. When people organize locally and

represent their communities, small actions can begin to influence larger decisions.

**Q: We began with hope, and I would like to end there. What gives you hope now?**

**A:** Around the world, people are waking up more toward interconnectedness. The reliance of the human species on everything else around us, whether it is the birds, the bees, the animals, or just the plants around us.

I think there has been a little more awareness over the last two or three years, especially after COVID, which forced many people to pause and notice their surroundings. Some began gardening, growing food, or reconnecting with the natural world. And although most of us have gone back to our regular lives without much of a change, there is still a large section of humanity that is much more aware of everything that's happening around. That awareness is bringing about a lot more action.

Many IT professionals or people with a regular job have quit their profession and are moving back to the villages, moving back to their childhood homes to try and regenerate the land, work with the soil, make their hands dirty, grow something, live more sustainably, just because they want to feel the difference that they make to this

whole situation, and that is very heartening to see.

Initiatives such as Forests by Heartfulness also give me hope because they show that ecological restoration can be practical, organized, and rooted in care for rare and endangered species. Over 2,000 acres of forest have been rewilded in Madhya Pradesh, the largest state of India, and in Gujarat, we are taking up the Aravalli work ourselves, thanks to Daaji’s vision. These projects focus not only on saving rare, endangered, and threatened plant species, but also on propagating them. He is also doing this with the help of tissue culture,

developing protocols for some extremely rare plant species, including those with far fewer than 100 individuals remaining in the wild. These efforts help me stay positive about where humanity may be heading. When we develop a deeper connection with ourselves, we begin to feel a deeper responsibility toward everything around us. When this connection deepens, nobody needs to tell us to take action or make a difference to the planet. It becomes a felt duty.

The crisis is rooted in disconnection. Restoring connection—with ourselves, with one another, and with the natural

world—is essential to restoring balance to the planet.

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FROM FORESTS BY HEARTFULNESS

Forests by Heartfulness nurtures and protects native, endemic, and endangered plant species through expert-guided nurseries, plantation drives, long-term monitoring, and community participation.

<https://heartfulness.org/forests/>



# reader voices

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”

HELEN KELLER





# A Prayer for Light

BY NEGIN M. KHORASANI

Oh light, so elusive, so sublime!  
A fragrance from beyond  
How subtle your sight on a thin layer of ice,  
Or the wings of a dragonfly,  
How magical the hues you create on the cotton of clouds,  
How shimmering your reflection on the lake,  
How beautiful the cyclamen wrapped in your subtle silk,  
Your elusive, untouchable presence,  
Grows the glamour of everything in our world,  
Glow in the eyes of everyone you behold!  
I cannot take my eyes off you,  
Our world would be so dull and dark, so empty without you!  
With you, oh light, our eyes are worthwhile, our days so bright!



# Center

BY NEGIN M. KHORASANI

I sit at the corner, silently  
Look at the Center, eagerly  
Waiting for you, patiently  
Until one day you connect with the Center,  
This empty, silent, vast space; within!  
This endless patience that invites us to get in...  
To arrive at,  
To realize that,  
“It’s the space between the bars that cages the tiger!”  
And “it’s the silence between the notes that makes the music!”  
Once we all arrive at this space,  
We have returned home.  
The journey ends,  
The circle completes.  
Not with a big bang,  
But with a simple, soft, silence...

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Polarity



Gitopadesh



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**All Knowledge Stems From the Heart**



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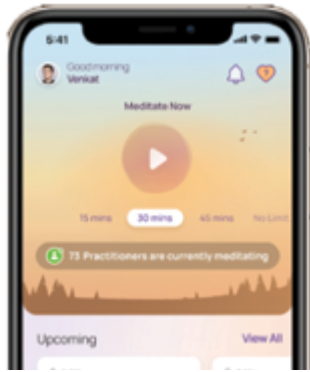
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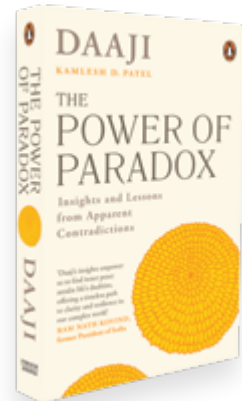


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by Daaji

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<https://hfn.li/pop>

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[designingdestiny.com](http://designingdestiny.com)

[theheartfulnessway.com](http://theheartfulnessway.com)

[spiritualanatomy.com](http://spiritualanatomy.com)

[thewisdombridge.com](http://thewisdombridge.com)



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In these 3 online masterclasses, you will learn the practical benefits of meditation and other yogic practices. Masterclasses are available online each day after you sign up and accessible throughout the day.

[heartfulness.org/masterclass](http://heartfulness.org/masterclass)

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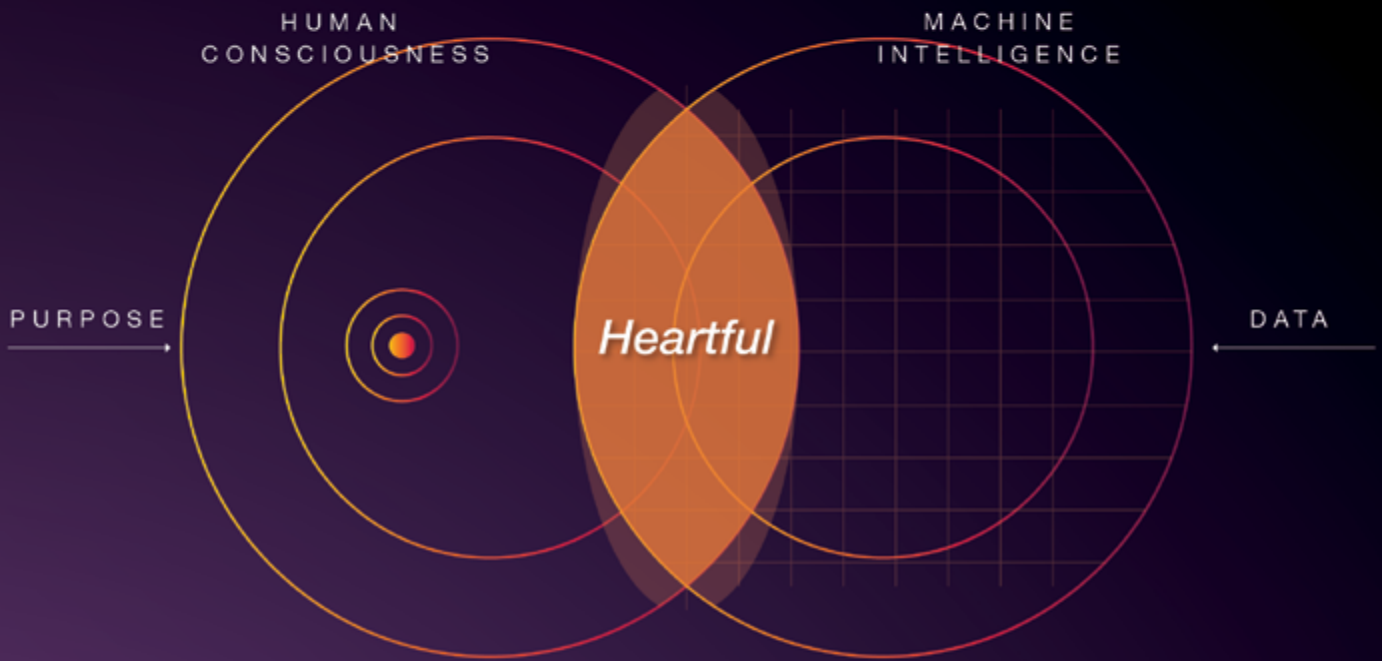
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AI that doesn't just think,  
*it understands.*