

OCTOBER 2025

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A Group  
Meditation

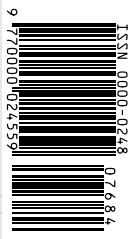
DAAJI

Life Lessons  
from a Dog  
and her Ball

STEPHEN  
MURPHY-  
SHIGEMATSU

Virtual  
Intelligence

CHARLES  
EISENSTEIN



*Meditating  
Together*

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“

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

—ICHAK K. ADIZES

”

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

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

Dr. Adizes's personal story is more than a string of external events that propelled him through adversity after adversity to become the insightful, compassionate person he is today. It is also a map of his journey into a heart which, like the accordion that he played to earn a living and put himself through school, ultimately expanded and opened up to the universal truths that connect us all in our humanity.

The Accordion Player is a compelling account of a remarkable life — an unvarnished view of a man whose decision to recognize the value of change and creative conflict allowed him to love. His story reveals the enduring human ability to turn possibility into reality.

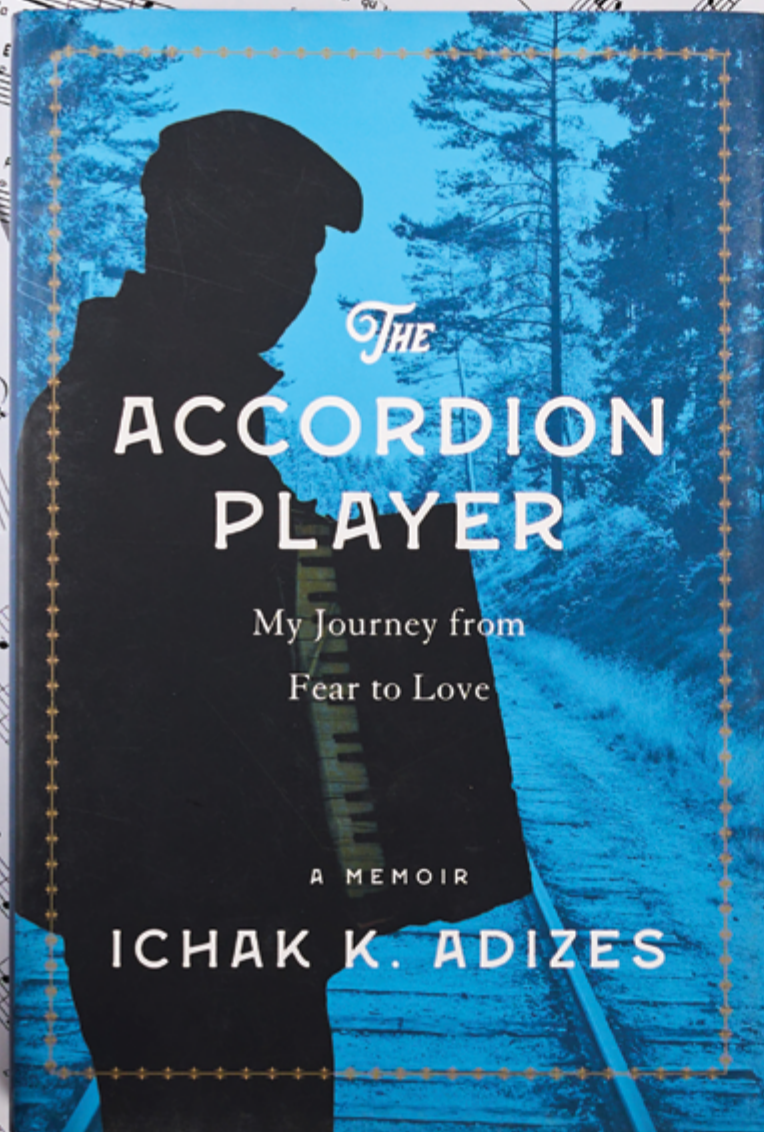
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## Foreword by Daaji

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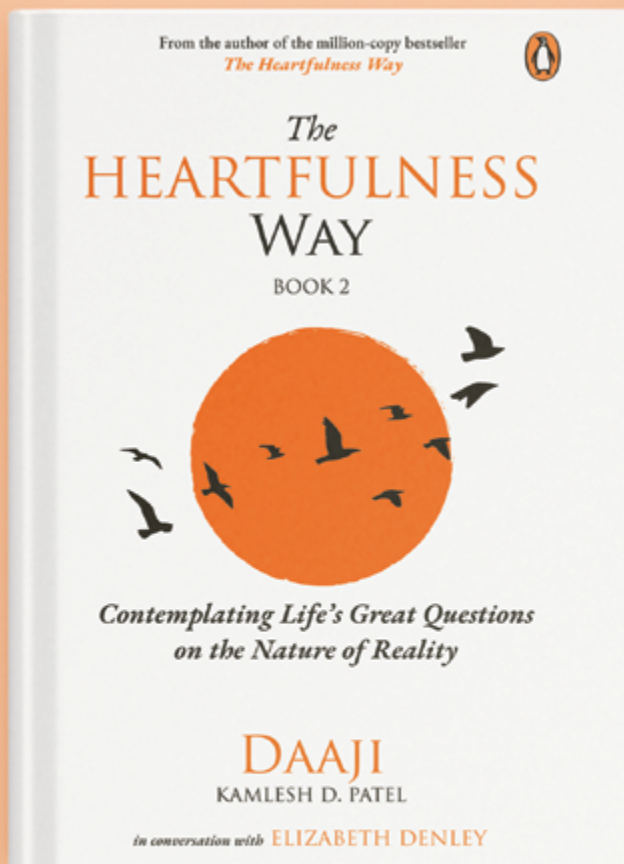


**NEW RELEASE**

From the author of the million-copy bestseller  
*The Heartfulness Way*

# *The* HEARTFULNESS WAY, BOOK 2

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



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



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

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

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

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



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**heartfulness**  
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## Meditating Together

Dear readers,

This month, we explore the profound experience of meditating together—how our individual practice deepens when woven into the collective, and how group meditation creates a field of consciousness that extends far beyond the moments we sit in silence.

This issue's contributors share diverse perspectives on connection, wisdom, and transformation. Daaji reflects on the power of group meditation and collective spiritual consciousness. Nalini Rajesh shares journaling as a tool for spiritual integration. Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu discovers wisdom in playing fetch with his dog Lucy. Ravi Venkatesan explores heartfelt listening. Uday Kumar examines the word "*hukum*" and how it opens the heart. Charles Eisenstein writes on virtual intelligence. Maureen Hitipeuw explores devotion as action. B. Rathinasabapathy reveals the sacred Krishna Buttercup Tree. Sarala Upadhyaya reflects on creating a new world from within. Sangeeta Prasad and Vanessa Patel discuss healing through art therapy, and Ruby Carmen retells the story of King Solomon's listening heart.

Next month, we will explore the ways we receive divine blessings—through Grace, Yogic Transmission (*pranabuti*), *shaktipat*, and *prana pratishtha*. We would love to hear from you! Please share your articles, contributions, and feedback at [contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com](mailto:contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com).

Happy reading!  
The editors





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## CHARLES EISENSTEIN

Charles is a writer, philosopher, speaker and pioneer, who has been exploring the need for society's transformation for some years now. He has focused light on our economic, social and political systems, and the need for us to move from a paradigm of separation to that of interbeing. His work can be found at [charleseisenstein.org](http://charleseisenstein.org).



## MAUREEN HITIPEUW

Maureen Hitipeuw is a community builder, speaker, and advocate for women's empowerment. She is the founder of Single Moms Indonesia, a national community providing support, training, and advocacy for single mothers. As one of Indonesia's first Meta Certified Community Managers, Maureen was selected as Her World Indonesia Woman of the Year in 2024.



## RAVI VENKATESAN

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Rathinasabapathy is an ecologist who has led significant ecological projects, e.g., the restoration of Adyar Eco Park, the conservation of the endangered Rudraksha tree, and numerous plantation and greening efforts across the Western Ghats and East Coast. He has authored 15 books and over 55 research papers.



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## SARALA UPADHYA

Dr. Upadhya has a PhD and previously worked in a professional engineering college at Bangalore University, enjoying her time of mutual learning with her students and colleagues. She is a Heartfulness trainer, and feels that much joy and wisdom in life can be found by connecting with others through everyday moments and being open to learning from them.



## NALINI RAJESH

Nalini Rajesh is a transformation coach and Heartfulness meditation trainer. Through her initiative, Transformatrix—The Soul Studio, she facilitates journaling circles, quantum resonance trainings, and women's workshops. Her work focuses on grounding awareness, integrating emotions, and helping seekers embody inner growth with clarity, compassion, and balance in daily life.



## SANGEETA PRASAD

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# self-care

“Go into yourself and view the depths  
from which your life springs;  
there at the source you will find the answer...”

**RAINER MARIA RILKE**







# *The Forgotten* **ART OF JOURNALING**

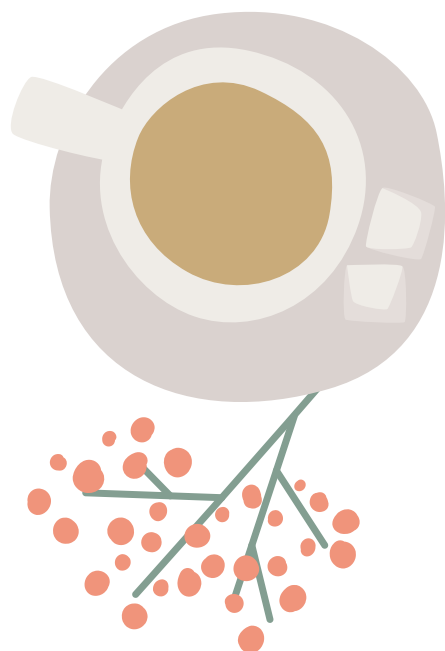
*Journaling as Awareness,  
Grounding, and Reflection*

**NALINI RAJESH** shares how journaling serves as a powerful tool for self-discovery and spiritual integration in this excerpt from her upcoming book, *The Ink Within*.

In a world where speaking is louder than sensing and sharing is quicker than self-reflection, a quiet practice waits almost forgotten: *journaling*.

Through seasons of stillness, resistance, and discovery, I have learned that journaling goes beyond therapy—it is a ritual that grounds me, an anchor for my soul, and the one place I can hear what I cannot speak aloud.

When pen meets page, the swirls in the mind start taking shape. Thoughts become clearer, feelings softer, and insights find their words. Something in us exhales as our fleeting thoughts and feelings become embodied.



Through seasons of stillness, resistance, and discovery, I have learned that journaling goes beyond therapy—it is a ritual that grounds me, an anchor for my soul, and the one place I can hear what I cannot speak aloud.

### Journaling as Awareness

Much of life happens beneath the surface. We react, repeat, and carry emotions we cannot name—and they quietly shape our choices. Journaling slows this current and brings it into the light.

I noticed this in myself: the days I resisted writing were the days I was closest to my truth. On the page, what I avoided—an ache, a fear, a restless loop—revealed itself. And in naming it, the grip loosened.

Science affirms this. Naming an emotion calms the amygdala, the brain's alarm center. Writing activates the prefrontal cortex, the seat of reflection and wise choice. In short, journaling helps us shift from automatic reaction to conscious response.

A single sentence—"I feel restless"—can change everything. Once written, restlessness is no longer consuming; it is witnessed as something separate from oneself. A new awareness is born.

### Journaling as Grounding

Inner experiences can feel vast—deep stillness, sudden clarity, or strong emotion. Without grounding, they may fade or leave us unsettled.

For me, journaling became the way to hold them. Subtle experiences no longer slipped away; they were anchored, seen, and allowed to positively shape me. It is like lightning: When high voltage strikes, we need an earthing or grounding wire to carry the current safely into the ground. Without it, the energy can become destructive. Psychology describes journaling in this way—as a safe discharge, like releasing extra electricity from an overloaded system. It prevents emotional buildup.

At the same time, journaling grounds higher inspirations. When divine guidance or a sudden spark arrives, writing ensures it is not lost. What could remain fleeting takes form as language, memory, and direction.

Thus, journaling steadies both our emotional residue and our subtle inspirations. It carries what feels heavy and anchors what feels light.

### Journaling as Reflection

More than awareness and grounding, journaling is a mirror—not for the face we show the world, but for the truths we carry within.

It showed me how easily I could speak of peace while avoiding discomfort, or claim calmness while deeper feelings lingered without

acknowledgement. On the page, these patterns became visible.

Reflection gives us a process map. It records the starting point—how we actually felt in a given moment—and allows us to see what shifted and where we reached, whether in meditation, inner work, or daily life. This continuity deepens honesty and self-awareness.



Reflection is not unkind criticism, but compassionate seeing. The journal does not judge or rush us. It simply holds space for whatever arises. Over time, this space becomes sacred. It prevents spiritual bypass—the tendency to use spiritual practices to avoid facing difficult emotions or shadow aspects—and invites integration instead.

### A Final Word

Journaling is not merely an act of recording one's life. It is a tool to integrate one's life.

Awareness brings the unconscious into light.

Grounding gives form to the subtle.

Reflection connects the starting point, process, and destination.

Without journaling, even elevated experiences may inspire briefly, yet fail to transform daily living. With journaling, however, growth becomes embodied. What is received in silence becomes anchored in expression. What we discover within can be carried into choices, relationships, and action.

Therefore, journaling is not a luxury but a necessity. For anyone walking an evolutionary path—whether through meditation, self-inquiry, or other practices—it becomes an essential bridge. It ensures that what is glimpsed inwardly is also lived outwardly.

Journaling is the link between inner work and outer living—the forgotten art that makes our journey whole.



### Three Journaling Prompts for Daily Use

**For awareness:** “Right now, I feel...” Write for 5 minutes without editing.

**For grounding:** After meditation or silence, note what arose, what stayed, and what questions remain.

**For reflection:** At the end of the day, write one reaction you had and inquire what was beneath it.

Just a few lines each day can shift awareness from fleeting experience to embodied growth.





*inspiration*

“What lies behind us and  
what lies before us are tiny matters  
compared to what lies within us.”

**RALPH WALDO EMERSON**



# A Spiritual Gathering: The Magic of Group Meditation

**DAAJI** explores the transformative power of group meditation and the phenomenon of collective spiritual consciousness in creating positive change that extends far beyond individual practice.

## The Holy Journey Starts at Home

Our preparation for *satsang* (group meditation) begins the night before arriving at the sacred location, as you retire to bed. If you wish to wake up early enough to complete your meditation without rushing, set your intention before going to sleep. When you find it difficult to wake at the

desired hour, seek divine assistance and declare, “I am unable to wake up in time; please help.”

The trainers conducting group meditation will find great benefit in taking an individual sitting either the day before or a few hours before the group *satsang*.

This kind of preparation ahead of time is what the *Bhagavad Gita*

calls *shraddha* (faith and respect). The holy book instructs us that anything we do with deep faith will yield the best results. In Gujarat, there is a devotional song in which the devotee asks Lord Krishna to come to their home, saying, “I will make you forget your Vaikunth Dham”—your divine abode. When we invite our spiritual guide’s attention, his Transmission (*pranahuti*),

through these kinds of feelings, our meditation shifts from being routine to being revelatory.

This preparatory phase is supported by scientific research. Neuroscientists have discovered that anticipation stimulates the prefrontal cortex, preparing our neural pathways for more profound experiences. Just thinking about meditating the night before starts small changes in our bodies that make us more open.

Take your time when you wake up. Our practical sense says, “If you have to leave at eight, try to get up at five.” Then you can conclude your meditation in a way that brings you happiness and move on with your day. This three-hour window provides ample time to prepare your body, mind, and spirit.

### Getting to the Sacred Space

The trip to the spiritual gathering becomes part of the practice. We go from the everyday to the holy as we travel. The Upanishads speak of *antahkarana shuddhi*, which means purifying the inner instrument. We naturally become inwardly clean when we shift our focus from worldly to spiritual things during our journey.

Inner culture demands, “In holy places like these, we must mind our thoughts and lead them in the right direction.” You shouldn’t get angry or lose your temper. Also, take care to avoid sensual passions at this time. Because these things can ruin the meditative mood. Every thought we have changes the field we are about to enter.

### Collective Consciousness and Social Environment

Emotional environments deeply affect people’s minds. Why do some countries stay peaceful while others are always on edge? How does this affect how minds work and what they do?

We witness this truth daily: Society is not just the sum of its parts; it is the sum of its parts multiplied—it is the effect of our personal relationships on a larger scale. Everything that happens to one person will be visible in society at large.

Think about the signs you can see of violent speech and feelings of exclusion. When fear, anger, and division are the main topics of public conversation, mental illness, violence, and social fragmentation all go up. Spiritual wisdom suggests that society goes to war because people are tense, often fighting with themselves, and are consumed by anger and rage.

The Upanishads speak of *antahkarana shuddhi*, which means purifying the inner instrument. We naturally become inwardly clean when we shift our focus from worldly to spiritual things during our journey.



## INSPIRATION

On the other hand, we observe greater social harmony, the emergence of new ideas, and higher levels of well-being in societies that promote peace, compassion, and unity. The emotional environment can influence the neural pathways of the people who live there. Epigenetic research suggests that stress can alter how genes are expressed in populations, while safe and supportive environments may promote beneficial changes.

Collective consciousness has measurable effects on biology. Brain scans show that people who live in violent places have heightened amygdala activity and reduced prefrontal cortex activity. On the other hand, individuals residing in peaceful environments tend to exhibit better emotional regulation and neural integration.

We can see that the causes of wars and the roots of all social decline are in the minds of each person. To change society, we need to change the minds of the individuals that compose it. This is where spiritual gatherings become essential tools for collective change.

### The Égréгоре Phenomenon

Consider how this knowledge applies to the effect of group gatherings that elevate satsang attendees beyond ordinary peace. If adverse group environments



can harm your mind and genetics, consider how powerful positive spiritual *égrégores* can be.

“Égrégores” is the collective consciousness that emerges when people gather with a shared purpose. It possesses the quality of being more effective than just the sum of its parts.

Égrégores is not just an idea; its effects can be experienced. Our daily experiences demonstrate this: when a large number of people who share the same thought come together to meditate, the effect is not just additive; it becomes exponential. The language of modern physics, with terms such as coherent fields and quantum entanglement, provides ways to understand these collective experiences.

When we gather for spiritual assembly, we create an emotional and energetic space that not only brings peace but also elevates people to higher levels of consciousness. This positive égrégores counters negative influences in society by creating pockets of higher consciousness that expand outward and heal the collective wounds.

### The Master as a Coherence Catalyst

Something special happens when a realized master leads a spiritual

gathering. The master's presence is akin to a “strange attractor” in chaos theory—it organizes the entire system. The master's consciousness creates coherence in everyone present, just like a tuning fork that brings other instruments into harmony.

Science reveals some fascinating similarities. Studies have shown that the electromagnetic field generated by the heart is approximately 60 times stronger than that generated by the brain. The heart's field extends several feet beyond the body. Research suggests that when people meditate together, their heart rate variability patterns may become more coherent, and can influence the physiological states of participants.

Physicists might refer to the master as a “biological laser.” Spiritual teachings suggest that just as a laser can make other light-sensitive materials coherent, the master's refined energy field affects the fields of people nearby. Through resonance and proximity, the scattered energy emissions of students begin to align with the master's coherent frequency.

### The Dissolution of Individual Boundaries

A significant change occurs during group meditation. This change reflects what Vedantic texts call

Égrégores is not just an idea; its effects can be experienced. Our daily experiences demonstrate this: when a large number of people who share the same thought come together to meditate, the effect is not just additive; it becomes exponential.

Group meditation is essential because it attracts divine energy in a unique manner. In spiritual gatherings, the Transmission creates a field of grace. This Transmission is not mere vibration; it is a directed spiritual force.

*aikya* (oneness): the boundaries between individual and collective consciousness begin to dissolve. Like a dancer who becomes one with the rhythm, practitioners find that the meditation is no longer solely their own but part of a larger flow that encompasses all participants.

The lines that separate one person's consciousness from another's disappear, creating what could be called a phase transition, like individual drops of water merging into a flowing stream. At this point, the group's thoughts and feelings become more organized.

#### The Field of Transmission

A key aspect of spiritual development is individual practice, which is performed at home by yourself. However, group meditation is just as essential because it attracts divine energy in a unique manner. In spiritual gatherings, the yogic transmission creates a field of grace. This transmission is not mere vibration; it is a directed spiritual force.

Many people assume that transmission occurs automatically when you're with a holy person, but that's just the radiation of fine vibrations emanating from them, which makes you feel calm and peaceful for a short time. transmission, on the other hand, catalyzes spiritual growth.

Its first and almost immediate effect is to provide peace and calmness that is hard to put into words. This meditative experience gently reminds us of the original Homeland to which we feel called to return.

#### The Irreplaceable Value of Physical Presence

Being together in person creates a special energy field. Our energy fields interact directly when we sit in the same room together. The electromagnetic field produced by group meditation is real—it forms a living cathedral of consciousness.

In-person presence fosters cooperation, creating tangible spiritual work. The combined breath, the shared silence, and aligned hearts all work together to create an *égrégoire* of great depth. When like-minded individuals gather in a sacred space, the atmosphere becomes charged with spiritual energy.

#### The Remote Connection: Making Things More Accessible

Remote attendance makes it easier for everyone to attend spiritual events. People who are sick, elderly, far away, or caring for family can still participate. Divine grace flows through whatever channels we open with sincere hearts. However, consider the







## INSPIRATION

absurdity of a seeker on the ninth floor of a building requesting a remote meditation session from a trainer just four floors below! Such convenience-seeking undermines the very commitment that makes meditation effective.

Virtual satsang demands more from the participants. Without the natural support of group energy, individuals need to work harder to remain focused. This challenge can strengthen essential spiritual capacities. Remote practitioners often develop remarkable concentration, as they must overcome distractions from their immediate environment.

Technology is a modern *yantra*, or sacred tool. If you treat the screen with respect, it becomes a window to the holy. Many people report having profound experiences during remote sessions, which indicates that consciousness extends beyond physical limits.

### A Hybrid Approach: Best of Both Worlds

Spiritual wisdom suggests a balanced approach to living. Whenever possible, attend satsang in person to receive the full blessing of being with others. When you cannot travel, use remote options to maintain continuity. This balanced approach contributes to an unbroken chain of practice.



Regular remote attendance between physical meetings helps sustain the spiritual energy. It maintains a strong link to the *sangha* (spiritual community). Do not let a week go by without connecting to the collective field, either in person or remotely.

A remote participant who is fully present adds more than a physical attendee who is distracted. As the saying goes, energy flows where attention goes. Even from a distance, your focused presence adds to the collective reservoir.

### The Living Meditation

During group meditation, participants' meditations merge to create a unified field of consciousness. This collective phenomenon creates a shared mental and spiritual atmosphere generated by the group's intention. In sacred spaces like churches, temples, or meditation halls, this collective energy typically embodies reverence and devotion.

We all add to and take from this shared field as we sit together. This circle, this practice, this exploration—it's not just for us. We're creating a collective influence that affects the broader field of consciousness. Every time we sit together and feel connected, we establish a field that facilitates similar experiences for others.

### The Critical Post-Meditation Period

The time immediately following group meditation is critical. If you hurry to get to work or rush around right after meditating, you can easily lose that state. The condition you meditated for an hour to achieve can quickly disappear.

But something protective happens in the collective field. The *égrécore* continues to hold and care for participants even after the formal meditation has ended. During these gatherings, practitioners often enter unique states of being as special conditions emerge. Every time you notice this shift and feel something inside, try to hold on to that experience.

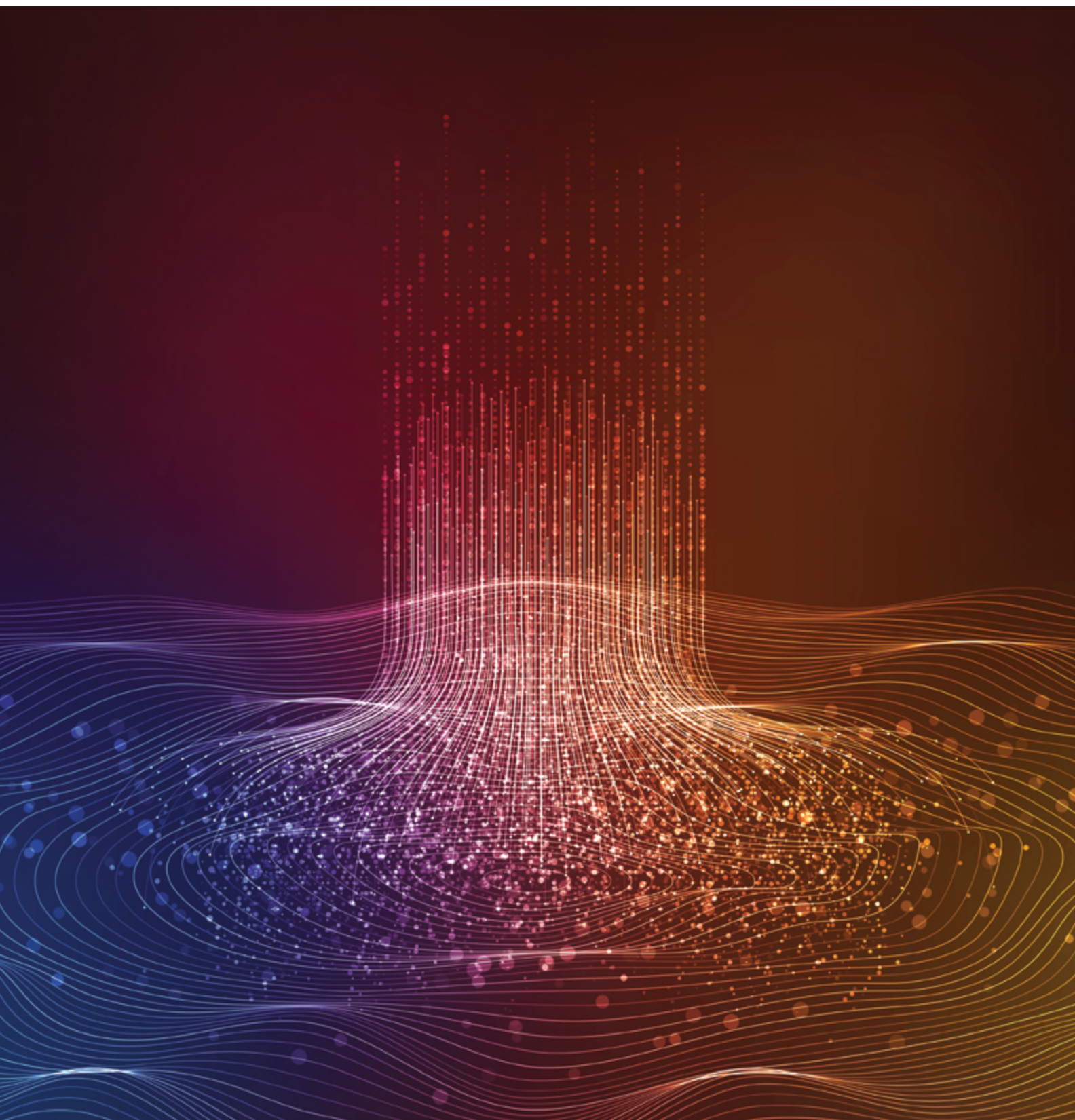
### Enjoying the Group Nectar

In groups, the experience of spiritual states takes on new dimensions. The *égrécore* creates a consciousness greenhouse where the collective field protects and nurtures each person's experiences.

Skillful meditation helps us maintain and nurture the state we receive during meditation throughout the day. This allows us to steady and deepen the mind to an even greater level. In group meditation, it is easier to maintain the meditative state because the

In groups, the experience of spiritual states takes on new dimensions. The *égrécore* creates a consciousness greenhouse where the collective field protects and nurtures each person's experiences.





group's energy helps each person stay centered.

### The Ripple Effect: From Assembly to Society

A spiritual gathering sends out waves that go far beyond the gathering itself. The *égrécore* that formed during group meditation continues to affect the subtle atmosphere, even making it easier for people who meditate in the future to reach higher states.

This is why sacred places have such powerful atmospheres. By meditating in the same spot repeatedly, we sanctify that place, creating a dedicated space for meditation. Such an atmosphere is full of peace and holiness—light, refined, and pure.

Adverse collective environments can harm entire countries, while a positive spiritual *égrécore* can heal and transform societies. Each spiritual group becomes a beacon of consciousness, radiating coherence into the surrounding environment. Those who participate in this become living transmitters of this higher frequency, which has an impact on their families, workplaces, and communities.

### Integration and Change

As we return to our daily lives, we carry with us not only our own experiences but also a part of the collective field. The *égrécore* continues to work within the people who were present, deepening the transformation that began during the assembly.

The masters teach that souls are drawn to each other, coming together to create a pure gem that deserves to be treasured appropriately. Each spiritual gathering strengthens this jewel of collective consciousness, making the path easier for everyone who truly seeks it.

### The Main Goal

A spiritual gathering serves a purpose that extends beyond individual benefit. We are part of what the Vedic seers called *loka sangraha* (the welfare of all beings) through the realities of *égrécore* and collective consciousness.

Your individual thoughts and beliefs, combined with those of everyone else on the planet, create a vast collective influence that shapes the reality we experience. When we come together for spiritual reasons, we help raise the level of human consciousness itself.

A spiritual assembly is an alchemical process that brings together individual consciousness, the collective field, and divine grace to create a transformation that extends beyond the immediate gathering. When we prepare properly, adopt the right attitude, and integrate what we receive from meditation, we become co-creators in the great work of spiritual evolution.

In a world full of violence, division, and trauma, spiritual gatherings offer more than just peace of mind. They create coherent fields of consciousness that can heal individuals, transform societies, and elevate the human experience. Every sincere participant becomes part of the larger organism of awakened consciousness.

May each spiritual gathering help us all move closer to the Ultimate, and may the *égrécore* of awakening grow stronger, helping all beings on their path to realization. May these pockets of higher consciousness expand until they cover the whole world.



# Life Lessons from a Dog and her Ball

**STEPHEN MURPHY-SHIGEMATSU** discovers profound spiritual insights in the simple act of playing fetch with his dog Lucy, exploring the difficult art of letting go and the courage required to surrender what we love most.

Lucy wants to chase the ball. And she wants me to throw it. But there's just one problem—she doesn't want to give me the ball.

At first, she didn't want to bring it back. After a while, she learned how to do that. But then she didn't want to give it up. She would even drop it, but as soon as I reached for it, she would pick it up and walk away with it. She would repeat this strange act of ambivalence several times. If I showed indifference, she might lose her concentration and leave it unguarded, and I would pick it up, throw it, and she would chase it, and the whole thing would start all over again.





While Lucy chews on the ball, I have nothing to do, so I am deep in thought. I'm a human psychologist, not a dog psychologist, and I'm not sure what's going on inside her head, but if it's anything like mine and yours, I would say she's ambivalent. She wants to give up the ball, and she doesn't want to give up the ball. To get the fun of chasing the ball, she has to surrender the ball—giving up the very thing she wants. That's a dilemma that leads to the strange action of keeping the ball away from me and preventing the very thing she wants from happening.

Perhaps it's like breathing. You want breath, but once you breathe, you only get more breath by first letting go of what you have. Then your lungs are empty and ready for some new breath.

Or maybe it's like love. We want love and may find it, but lose love if we become attached to it. In preschool, I taught the children to sing: "Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more." Lucy has a great heart, so I think she understands this about love. She gives her love freely, and it expands synergistically.

But balls baffle her, bringing out her materialistic nature and sense of scarcity. She needs to know that she already has enough—you only need one ball to play the game.

Lucy is learning that to get, you have to give. We love certain things and people, but all things must pass, everything changes, and we suffer losses. How do you let go of what you love? Letting go of what we desire most is the hardest lesson to learn, whether

Letting go is ceasing to cling to anything—a person, a pet, a thing, a moment, a desire. It's a conscious decision to live now, to give up forcing, resisting, or struggling. It's allowing things to be as they are without becoming attached to them, and finding something even more powerful and meaningful.

it's something from the past or something imagined in the future. Yet to live, we have to keep loving and losing.

Letting go is ceasing to cling to anything—a person, a pet, a thing, a moment, a desire. It's a conscious decision to live now, to give up forcing, resisting, or struggling. It's allowing things to be as they are without becoming attached to them, and finding something even more powerful and meaningful.

I tell Lucy that she can accept reality, surrender to what's



The truth of spirituality is that we can experience release only if we let go. The paradox of surrender begins with the acceptance that we are not in control of anything. When we are ready to let go of our illusions and pretensions, we can surrender, letting in reality.

happening, and trust that everything will be alright—that no matter what happens, she will be able to deal with it. I encourage her to move on with patience, receptiveness, and openness to the reality that change not only occurs through action but also springs from acceptance. I assure her that things are good now and can become even better.

I think I understand Lucy's dilemma, as I, too, struggle to let go of what I love the most. Letting go of what she has, she relinquishes a certainty for an uncertainty. Letting go takes a lot of courage, but it's within her power, and she has to trust that once she lets go, happiness will come very quickly. If she can drop her craving for the ball—for having the ball forever—she can flow with the movement of life.

She may die a little every time she gives up the ball, but she's born again every time she runs for it and receives it.

Isn't this the most extraordinary mystical insight? The truth of spirituality is that we can experience release only if we let go. The paradox of surrender begins with the acceptance that we are not in control of anything. When we are ready to let go of our illusions and pretensions, we can surrender, letting in reality.

Letting go means breaking down resistance to reality and surrendering the demand for certainty; releasing oneself from the bonds of fear and possessiveness. Difficulties arise for Lucy because of her attachment to the ball, her fear of being without it, and her belief

that it is an essential part of herself.

I believe that she can get over it by trusting in the game of life. I know that if she gives it up, she will receive even greater joy from chasing it, at least as long as I can keep throwing it. I can help her by rewarding her consistently with another toss. Gradually, she'll learn detachment. But ultimately, it's up to her.

We're learning together as we play this game of life. I'm a human, and lost in thoughts. I reflect on things probably more than she does. Lucy's a dog; she just wants to play, eat, and love. She stares at me, then at the ball, wiggling with anticipation, so I snap out of my thoughts, toss the ball, and smile as I watch her chase it with pure delight.





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# Workplace

“Most people do not listen  
with the intent to understand;  
they listen with the intent to reply.”

STEPHEN R. COVEY





## Bringing it all together

### The Heartful Listener – Part Seven

CEO and Heartfulness meditation trainer **RAVI VENKATESAN** continues his Heartful Listener series with Part Seven, weaving together the framework into a practical ninety-day transformation plan for developing listening as a lived practice.

As with anything important, *listening* is meant to be lived—not theorized. You can cultivate presence, empathy, or reflective behaviors, but unless they are expressed consistently in the real world—in moments of tension, in diverse settings, with people who challenge you—the work remains incomplete.

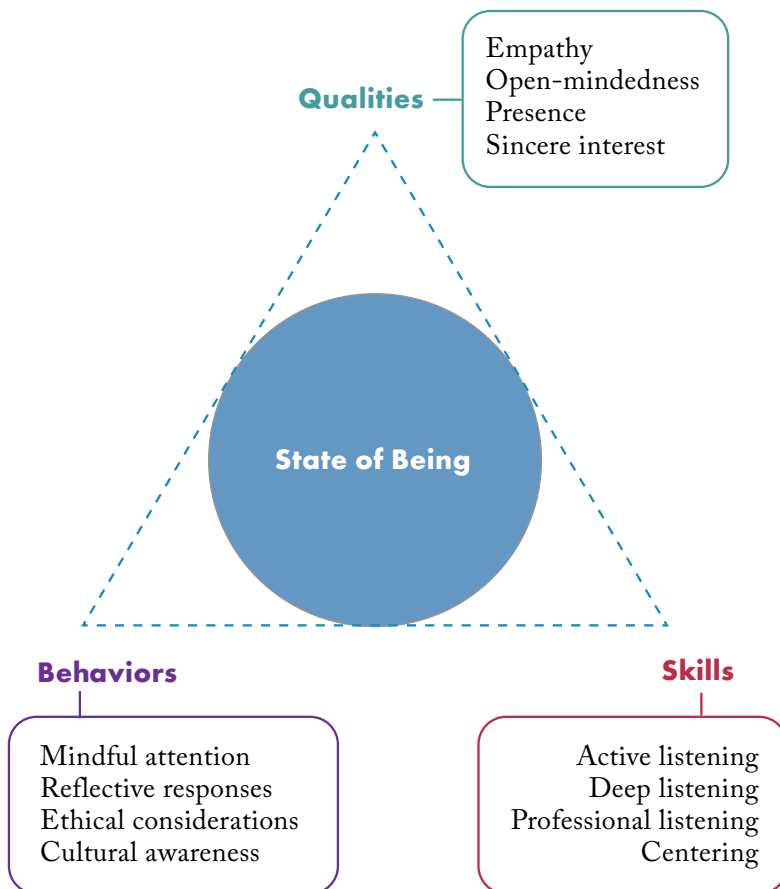
In this final part of the Heartful Listener series, we weave together States of Being, Core Qualities, Behavioral Expressions, and Learned Skills into a living practice—with practical tools and a ninety-day blueprint.

Let’s review key elements that we learnt in the last six articles.

Here is the framework we’ve learnt on being a Heartful Listener:

State of Being (inner state) ⇌ Qualities ⇌ Behaviors ⇌ Skills

| Dimension      | Elements                                                                           |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| State of Being | Calmness, Neutrality, Regulated Inner State                                        |
| Qualities      | Empathy, Open-mindedness, Presence, Sincere Interest                               |
| Behaviors      | Mindful Attention, Reflective Responses, Ethical Consideration, Cultural Awareness |
| Skills         | Active Listening, Deep Listening, Professional Listening, Centering                |





## WORKPLACE

Here are lessons from the Case Studies we reviewed—Listening in Action

1. Jimmy Carter at Camp David—Deep + Professional + Centered.
2. Angela Merkel's consensus craft—Professional + Mindful Attention.
3. Nelson Mandela's dignity—Mindful Attention + Sincere Interest.
4. Mr. Rogers' transformative empathy— Presence + Empathy.
5. Barack Obama in grief— Presence + Empathy + Ethics.

6. Satya Nadella's global cue— Cultural Awareness + Open-Mindedness.

Let's translate all this into a thirty-sixty-ninety-day actionable Transformation Plan

### Days one–thirty: Build Awareness & Inner Calm

- Practice 1 min of centering before each conversation
- Notice urge to interrupt
- Journal which qualities you engaged

### Days thirty-one–sixty: Integrate Qualities & Behaviors

- Practice mindful attention daily
- Reflective responses in journaling
- Ask cultural check-in questions weekly

### Days sixty-one–ninety: Hone Professional & Deep Listening

- Synthesize in meetings
- Invite feedback on your listening
- Apply Self-Grading Grid weekly
- Self-Assessment Framework

Use this one–five grid weekly to rate your growth across dimensions. Ideally log your progress every week as you track your ninety-day journey.

| Inner Quality          | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Active Listening       |   |   |   |   |
| Deep Listening         |   |   |   |   |
| Professional Listening |   |   |   |   |
| Centering              |   |   |   |   |

| DIMENSION                     | 1                       | 3                      | 3                                |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Centering</b>              | reactive                | mostly steady          | grounded throughout              |
| <b>Empathy</b>                | rushed to reply         | caught surface details | picked up some tone              |
| <b>Open-Mindedness</b>        | injected personal views | focused on self        | listened but missed patterns     |
| <b>Presence</b>               | reactive                | slightly anxious       | tried to stay calm               |
| <b>Mindful Attention</b>      | multitasks              | fewer breaks           | undivided attention              |
| <b>Reflective Response</b>    | advises                 | paraphrases            | mirrors meaning + emotion        |
| <b>Ethics</b>                 | overshares              | asks sometimes         | always seeks consent             |
| <b>Cultural Awareness</b>     | defaults to self        | checks once            | adapts fluently                  |
| <b>Active Listening</b>       | interrupts              | summarizes             | summarizes + checks meaning      |
| <b>Deep Listening</b>         | fixes fast              | tolerates pauses       | hears the unsaid                 |
| <b>Professional Listening</b> | opinion-led             | captures views         | synthesizes patterns & tradeoffs |

## HEARTFUL LISTENER FRAMEWORK



### INNER STATE



### QUALITIES



Empathy



Presence



Open-  
Mindedness



Sincere  
Interest



### BEHAVIORS



Mindful  
Attention



Reflective  
Response



Ethical  
Considerations



Cultural  
Awareness

## Closing the Loop with Mark Milton

In Part One, Mark Milton from education4peace reminded us: “Listening is a superpower. It heals, builds bridges, and transforms relationships. But we rarely teach it.”

This series operationalizes his invitation: center the self, embody the qualities, enact the behaviors, train the skills. Let’s wrap up with a printable deskside reference sheet that you can use to become a Heartful Listener.



Deskside Reference Sheet—The Heartful  
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**All Knowledge Stems From the Heart**

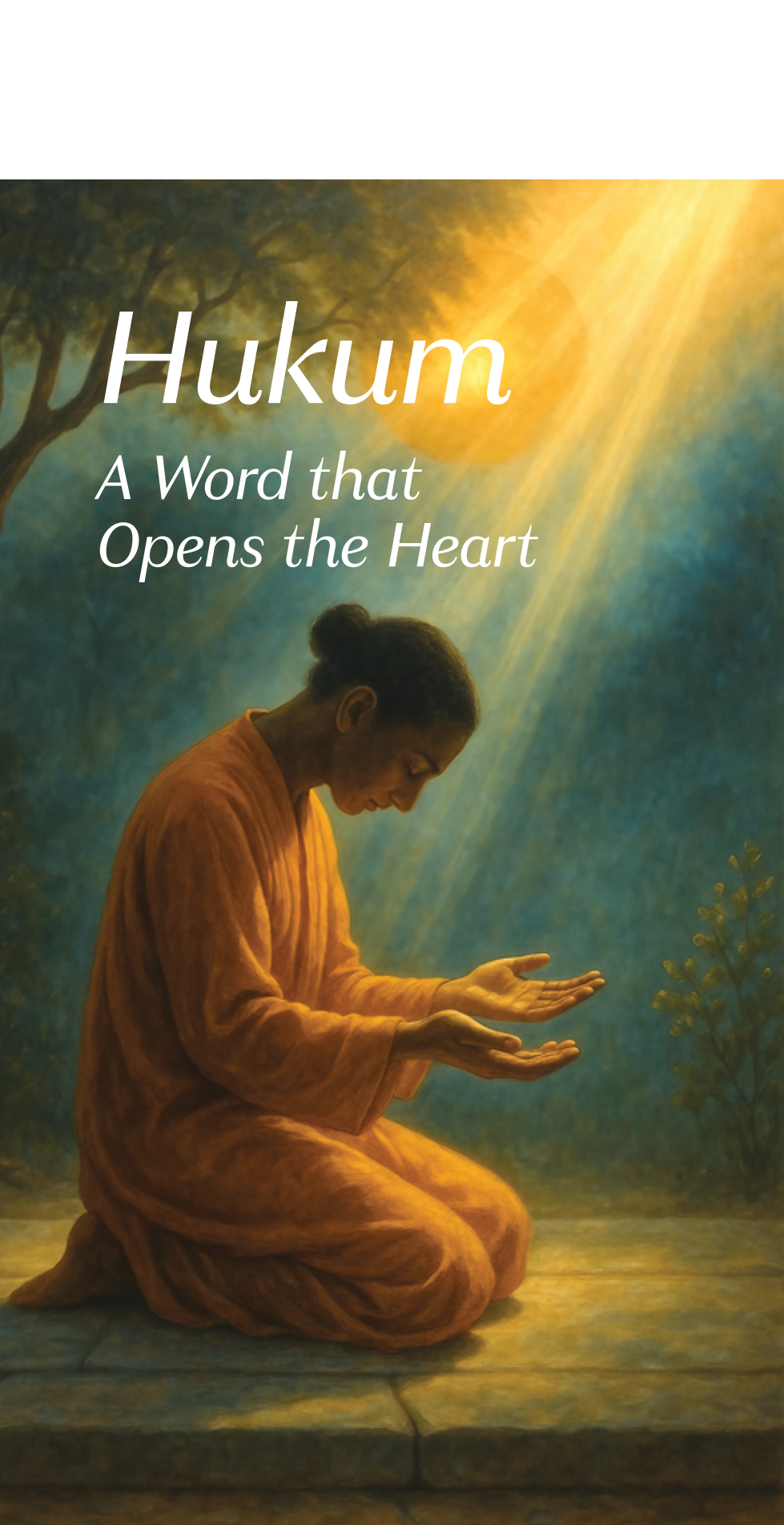


# *relationships*

“The meeting of two personalities  
is like the contact of two chemical substances:  
if there is any reaction, both are transformed.”

**CARL GUSTAV JUNG**





# Hukum

## A Word that Opens the Heart

UDAY KUMAR explores how a simple word of respect reveals the deeper mysteries of spiritual authority and humility.

During this morning's *Dil Se with Daaji* online session, something profound unfolded within what seemed like a simple conversation. An MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Rajasthan addressed Daaji as *hukum*. Daaji, in his characteristic humility, addressed him back with the same word. The exchange was brief, yet its sound lingered. The syllables rolled out softly, like a bell tone that continues to vibrate long after the bell itself is still. The word *hukum* carried a reverence, a resonance that touched something beyond language.

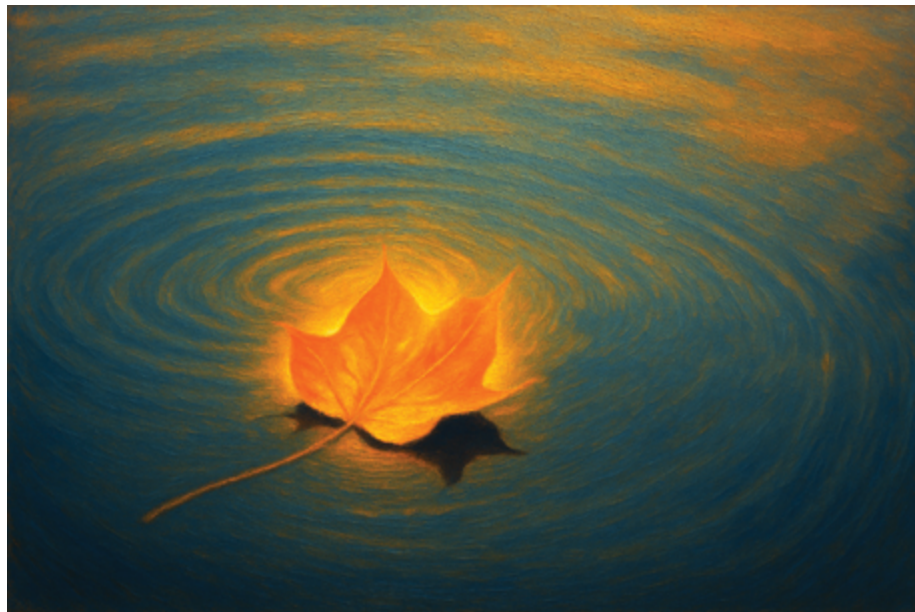
This feeling compelled me to explore what *hukum* truly meant. I looked it up and found that in Rajasthan, saying "*Tharo hukum*," signifies deep respect, not a mere submission to power. It means "Your wish carries weight because I honor you." As I would learn, the word "*hukum*" has traveled across lands and cultures, bearing the fragrance of authority blended with blessing.



A few weeks ago, in his write-up *Guardians of the Sacred*, Daaji reminded us that the path to the Divine requires both authenticity and etiquette. The smallest gestures of reverence prepare the heart. How we sit, how we greet, and how we speak to one another all reveal the sincerity of our approach. This refinement of conduct, our *akhlaaq*, is not formality. It is the language of love, the way we create space for the sacred both outside and inside. Without *akhlaaq*, *hukum* can feel like a command imposed upon us. With *akhlaaq*, it becomes a blessing received with grace.

In the spiritual sense, *hukum* has always carried this deeper resonance. In Sufi traditions, *hukm-i-ilahi* is the divine decree, the will of God that guides creation. In the Heartfulness tradition, the *ajna* chakra is known as the seat of power distribution, and above it begins the vast para-cosmic region, the first glimmer of the divine realm. In such higher realms, command is no longer an external order. It is a light that guides the soul toward higher regions, like a halo from within that shows us the way.

When Daaji was addressed as “*hukum*” and he returned the word, I felt that something greater was revealed. It was not one giving an order and the other obeying. It was a circle of honor, an exchange where humility and dignity met in perfect balance. True authority



is rooted in humility, and true humility carries an authority that needs no assertion.

The Guardians of the Sacred remind us that every gesture in the Master’s presence, every act of self-restraint and courtesy, helps keep the inner shrine pure. Etiquette in sacred space is not an outer show but a way of guarding the atmosphere of the heart, where the true Master dwells. *Hukum* then is not fulfilled through blind obedience, but through conduct that honors this sacred atmosphere within and around us.

It is a sound that holds both command and blessing, both authority and surrender. A word that reminds us that when wisdom speaks, the heart listens, and when the heart listens, life takes its proper course. In that listening, we discover not only the decree of the

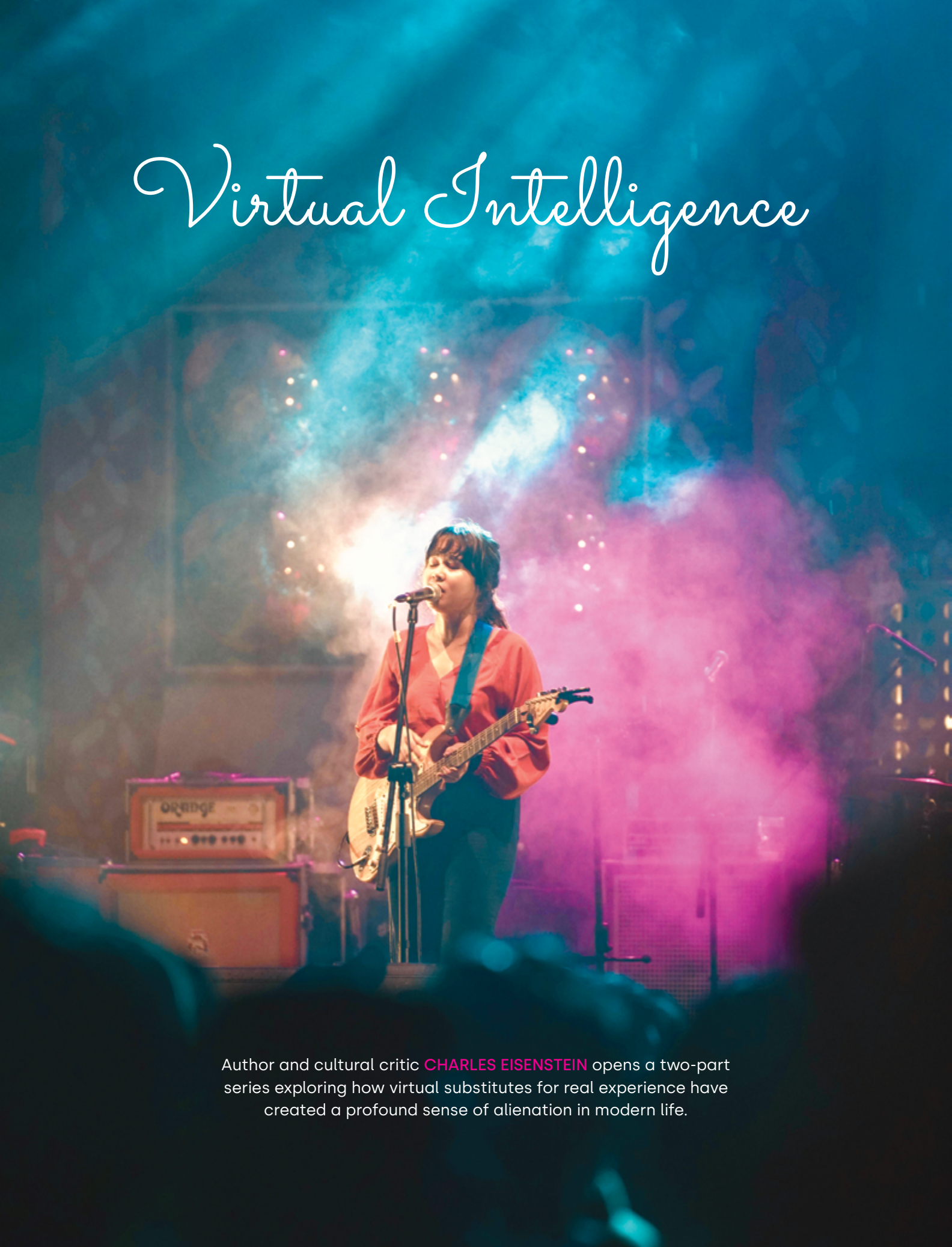
Divine, but also the deep assurance that we belong to Him.

In the end, *hukum* is less about command and more about remembrance. It is a reminder that the heart opens most when it bows to wisdom and belongs to love. And when that bowing is clothed in *akhlaaq*, it becomes our way of guarding the sacred, keeping the heart as a holy place where the Beloved feels at home.

It is a reminder  
that the heart  
opens most  
when it bows to  
wisdom and  
belongs to love.



# Virtual Intelligence

A full-page background image of a musician performing on stage. The musician is a woman with dark hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, playing a light-colored electric guitar and singing into a microphone. The stage is bathed in vibrant blue and purple light, with thick smoke or fog filling the air. In the background, there are string lights and a large screen. To the left, an orange amplifier is visible. The overall mood is artistic and atmospheric.

Author and cultural critic **CHARLES EISENSTEIN** opens a two-part series exploring how virtual substitutes for real experience have created a profound sense of alienation in modern life.

Anyone who has attended a great concert will agree that recorded music can never replicate the experience of a live performance. Yet the essential difference is hard to pin down. It isn't just a matter of being together with other people. You could gather a thousand people in front of giant speakers and play a recorded album, and it wouldn't be anything like a live concert.

The essential and irreplaceable element of great live music is that the band is singing to the audience—to *this* audience, in *this* moment. The music is the vector of a unique, personal communication. To be sure, sometimes the band gives a rote performance, oblivious to the audience response; invariably, the audience feels at least a tinge of disappointment. The band wasn't on today, they might think. But

The essential and irreplaceable element of great live music is that the band is singing to the audience—to *this* audience, in *this* moment. The music is the vector of a unique, personal communication.

at its best, live performers are in a dialogue with the audience, responding to their energy, playing differently than ever before or since. Both band and audience remember a great concert fondly, and what makes a concert great isn't a premier sound system or the musicians' technical accuracy. Hand the recording of that performance to someone else, listening at a different place and time, and the effect may not be the same.

"You had to be there," we say.

A mere century or two ago, all music was performed live. Singing in the pub. A lover's serenade. A lullaby. Gathering after dinner around the piano. Work songs in the field. Children's songs on the playground. Operas, chamber music, barbershop quartets, church choirs, symphony orchestras. In each of these circumstances,



someone was playing or singing to someone else.

Today, such experiences are a rare dish in the musical diet of modern society. That diet does not nourish the human being. It fosters a kind of confusion, even a sense of betrayal. A million years of experience says, “Someone is singing to me.” There must be a band inside the radio, but no. The song was sung at a place and time completely disconnected from me. And so, I feel a little cheated.

Please don’t misinterpret this to mean that we shouldn’t listen to recorded music. It can entertain, give joy and inspiration, generate emotions, or evoke memories. Indeed, it is better than no music at all. However, when it supplants live music, life empties just a little bit more than it already has in the modern world. It empties of

reality. When someone plays live, even if it is just my son practicing his scales, the loop from source to ear and back to source—there he is!—is complete. What my ear tells me is here, is actually here. I am not “hearing things.”

One might call recorded music “virtual music.” It has all the auditory appearance of music, but no instruments are being played, nor are any notes being sung. This is all the more true for music produced with synthesizers. Not only is there no hand strumming the guitar right now, there never was.

What’s true of music is true of all recorded sound. As I write this, I am toggling my attention sometimes to the crickets chirping outside my window. My ear follows them out into the night. Would my

experience be any different if I were listening to a recording of crickets? The difference might be indistinguishable to the human ear, except that crickets don’t chirp the same way all the time but speed up or slow down according to the temperature and other variables. The practiced ear might notice different tones early or late in the season, or after a rain. And real crickets stop chirping when some person or animal draws close. A careful listener can learn a lot about what’s going on outside from listening to crickets. That experience embeds the listener more deeply in the world, immersing them in a matrix of connections. One can “close the loop” by going outside and finding the cricket.

High-fidelity recordings are available of the sounds of the Amazon rainforest. It is as if you



are in the middle of the jungle—but you are not. The operative words here are “as if.” As if you are in the jungle. Your ears tell you you are there. Listen, a jaguar is prowling close. But no, it isn’t. When I listen to such recordings, something holds me back from full immersion—the same instinct, perhaps, that makes me wary of internet scammers. One senses the presence of a lie.

All of the foregoing applies equally to images. I treated this topic in depth in an earlier essay, “Intelligence in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” an homage to Walter Benjamin. Watching YouTube, the eye tells us, “There is a kitten there.” Look, it bats a ping-pong ball. But there is no kitten. This was, of course, true of oil paintings as well, but the painting itself remained a unique physical object. (One could also, before recording technology, mimic sounds.) In any case, with computer-generated images and video, what we see on screen is not merely separated in space and time from ourselves; it never existed in the first place. The eye tells us one thing (kitten), while reason tells us something else (no kitten).

Through AV recording technology, and even more through generative AI, we learn a habit of distancing ourselves from what we see and hear. These are among the senses that establish our presence in the world. It’s no wonder so many people feel lost here.

## Immersion in a world of virtual sounds and images induces feelings of alienation and loneliness.

The person who lives in an environment of ubiquitous deceit learns not to trust anything. This lack of trust has dire political and psychological consequences. A serious political consequence is that we no longer trust photographic or video evidence of crimes against humanity. That distrust endows the crimes with a shield that allows them to proceed in full view of the public. Automatically, we discount whatever we see on screen, knowing on some level that it isn’t real—in the sense that there is no kitten cavorting right there; that whatever we are seeing isn’t happening right now. (Or, in the case of computer-generated images, happening at all.) We have, in other words, grown inured to whatever the screen is telling us.

That habit originates quite sensibly, since most of the violence and drama we witness on screens is indeed unreal. If we took all those TV gun battles and car chases as real, they would fry our nerves. So we discount them—discounting

along with them images and stories that are real. The eye and ear cannot easily distinguish which is which. They all present the same. That habit of discounting digitally transmitted information makes the public relatively unresponsive to horrifying events. It has been habituated to assume, unconsciously, that this isn’t really happening.

Immersion in a world of virtual sounds and images induces feelings of alienation and loneliness. When we see and hear things that are not there, a dreadful “de-realization” ensues, in which one wonders, “Maybe I am not really here either.” It isn’t usually an explicit thought; it is a feeling, a sense of phoniness and meaninglessness, of living in a simulation. Naturally, we stop caring about what happens to something that isn’t real anyway.

It’s not just mass-produced sounds and images that contribute to modern de-realization. The mass production of commodities preceded and prefigured them. As with a recorded sound, a commodity, as a standard, generic object, carries no visible trace of the social labor that formed it. It comes as if from nowhere, detached from its history and the social and ecological effects of its production. There is no story attached to it, except maybe where you bought it and how much it cost.



## RELATIONSHIPS

Before the industrial era, material objects were also vectors of relationship. Either you made it yourself from local materials, or someone made it for you, someone with whom you were connected in many other ways. Economic relations were interwoven with social relations. Food, clothing, and everything created by human hands circulated in gift networks, anchoring giver and receiver into a web of relationship. They confirmed: you are here. You are connected to the world—a participant, not just a consumer. You are part of the web. Objects that appear out of nowhere, through Amazon’s one-click purchasing, do not connect you to a human being, a place, or a community.

The commodity thus bears a kind of unreality. Despite its material solidity, it contributes to a pervasive sense of phoniness. Here it is, yet no one actually made it *for me*. It is a material object that appears without undergoing any visible process of material production. Here is an exquisitely intricate design on a dinner plate, yet no artist painted it, not at any rate on *this* plate. Subjectively, it has no history, no relations, mirroring the loss of “aura” that Walter Benjamin ascribed to mechanically reproduced artwork, and mirroring also the scripted performances of those who occupy society’s standardized roles. Such roles are impersonal. Their occupants seem not to

be real people, in the same way as commodities seem not to be real objects. Therefore, cultural sensitives like J.D. Salinger were able to identify phoniness as a defining feature of modern society some 70 years ago, well before the age of computer-generated sounds and images.

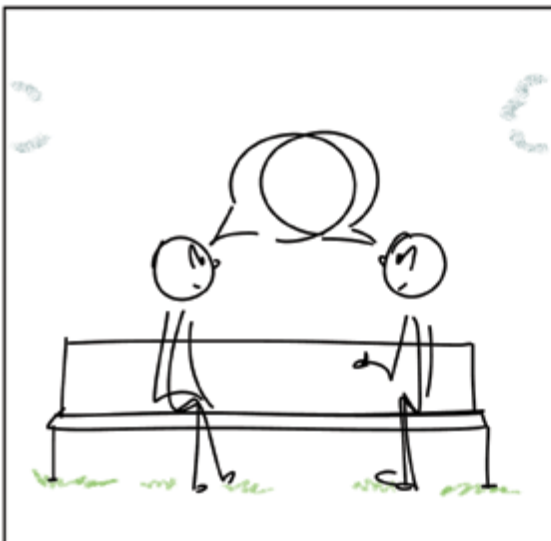
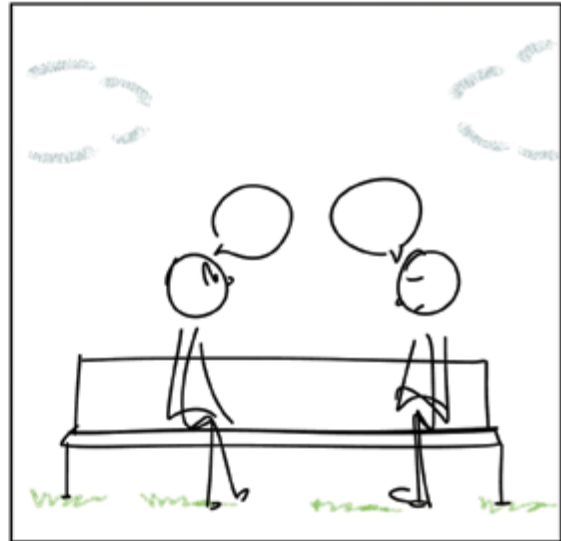
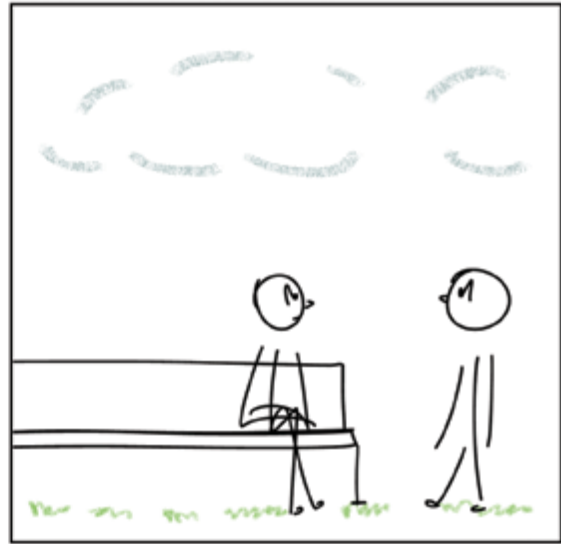
Today, we have not only machine-produced objects, sounds, and images, but machine-produced personalities as well. The AI chatbot gives every impression that a human being is writing or speaking to you, hearing you, responding to you, understanding

you, feeling you, and being there with you. Underneath the words, though, no one is feeling anything. Appearance and reality diverge yet again, and in the end, we are left grasping electrons.

**Editor’s Note:** In next month’s issue, Eisenstein examines how these patterns of virtual substitution reach their most intimate and potentially dangerous form in artificial intelligence, where machines not only simulate music or images but also simulate the experience of being understood, cared for, and known by another conscious being.



# MENTAL HEALTH





# *devotion is action*

**MAUREEN HITIPEUW** reflects on founding Single Moms Indonesia and learning that devotion isn't a feeling but a daily choice to show up for others.

I never planned for this path. There was no grand vision, but just a single, painful moment when I looked for a support group for single mothers in Indonesia—and found nothing. That absence stayed with me. When I eventually met a few other single mothers, I realized that *maybe I could create what I once needed*.

I started a Facebook group (now Meta). At first, it was just two friends. We had no agenda or roadmap, but only a willingness to act—along with a kind of devotion I didn't have a name for yet.

That simple action was the beginning. Today, it has grown into a community of over 11,600

women, known as “Single Moms Indonesia.” But back then, it was just a longing to connect, giving birth to a gesture of service.

This journey has asked a lot of me: To show up, listen, and grow consistently. There were no templates for what we were building. I learned on my feet. I fumbled and questioned myself. But every time I felt small or unsure, life would offer a gentle nudge forward, a message that this work mattered and was necessary. I began to understand this as karma—doing what must be done, without clinging to results.

Along the way, I've stumbled into spaces that shaped me

further. In 2020, I joined a global community leadership program offered by Meta. I didn't see myself as a “leader,” but the training, mentorship, and support helped me realize that community building was an opportunity to serve.

Of course, action without reflection can lead us astray. So reflection has been essential—a constant teacher. I've blogged through grief, processed pain in paragraphs, and shared pieces of my story before feeling ready to do so. Through that act of writing, I began to understand myself and others more meaningfully. I didn't set out to become wiser, but over time, living through questions such

as, “Who am I now?” and “What can I give?” has offered unexpected answers.

To me, devotion is love expressed through commitment and service—a choice we return to daily. I’ve come to believe that *devotion is action*. It’s showing up, even when it’s hard. It’s answering messages at midnight. It’s holding space, even when you feel empty yourself.

The women in my community have become my greatest teachers. I’ve watched them rise from ashes, whisper their way through darkness, and show up repeatedly for their children and themselves. These women have taught me that healing, forgiveness, and beginning again are the greatest strengths. That sacred love, expressed through motherhood and selfhood, perfectly illustrates that devotion is action.

There was one specific moment when I realized that my purpose was to serve. A recently divorced mother posted in our group. She was on the verge of suicide. The community wrapped around her, holding her virtually. And she lived. Today, she’s thriving and finishing her master’s degree. *That*, to me, is grace. *That* is why I keep showing up.

I recognize that this journey is not mine alone. I call it grace or guidance—call it by any name—but it’s about being faithful to

what’s in front of you. To anyone standing at a turning point—lost, grieving, or uncertain—this is what I know: You don’t need to have the whole map. Just take the next small step. That small act itself will guide you, and over time, you’ll find that even your deepest pain might become the soil for something sacred.

“Devotion is action” begins each day with the decision to show up, heart open and hands steady, for whoever needs that space.

To me, devotion is love expressed through commitment and service—a choice we return to daily. I’ve come to believe that *devotion is action*.







# *enivnment*

“When we try to pick out  
anything by itself,  
we find it hitched to  
everything else in the Universe.”

**JOHN MUIR**



# The Krishna Buttercup Tree

## A Sacred Symbol of Devotion and Conservation

**B. RATHINASABAPATHY** and **VIJAYA NARESH JUTURU** share how the Heartfulness Institute is preserving a tree steeped in legend and ecological significance.

**A**mong India's sacred trees, few carry a story as tender as the Krishna Buttercup Tree. Its leaves, folded like tiny cups, are believed to have once held butter lovingly taken by young Lord Krishna. A tree with a legend etched in its leaves, it continues to inspire devotion, ecological respect, and conservation efforts to this day.

### A Legend Written in Leaves

The Krishna Buttercup Tree (*Ficus krishnae*) is a unique species of fig, celebrated for its spiritually evocative leaf structure. Each leaf forms a natural cup or pouch—a feature deeply intertwined with Hindu mythology. According to popular lore, young Lord

Krishna once stole butter and, to avoid being caught, hid it in a curled leaf. This legend gave rise to the tree's name and its affectionate moniker: the buttercup tree. This story has kept

the tree sacred for centuries, and its curled leaf is regarded as a divine signature—a living relic of Lord Krishna's playful devotion.

### A Tree Struggling to Survive

Unlike many other fig species, *Ficus krishnae* faces unique biological constraints that make natural regeneration extremely difficult. Studies have shown that only about 10% of seedlings grown from its seeds remain true to type, while nearly 90% revert to the common *Ficus benghalensis*. This means that even when seeds germinate, the chances of preserving the unique identity of *Ficus krishnae* are very low.

Additionally, the species relies on specialized pollinators, whose decline further disrupts its reproductive cycle. These compounded biological constraints place the tree at high risk of vanishing from its natural landscapes.



## Conservation at Heartfulness Tree Conservation Center

To safeguard this culturally and ecologically significant species, the Heartfulness Institute, through the Heartfulness Tree Conservation Center, has undertaken extensive research on clonal propagation techniques. Propagation methods such as stem cuttings, air-layering, and tissue culture were systematically attempted to overcome the limitations of natural seed-based reproduction. Among these, tissue culture emerged as the most effective and reliable approach. Years of dedicated experimentation have enabled the development of robust protocols that ensure not only high survival and multiplication rates but also the preservation of the true genetic identity of *Ficus krishnae* in every sapling produced. As a result, hundreds of healthy saplings have been successfully raised at the center, a significant proportion of which are being distributed across diverse regions under our ex situ conservation programs. These efforts represent a critical step toward ensuring the long-term survival and restoration of this rare and culturally revered species. Beyond conserving a single rare tree, this work embodies the harmony between science and spirituality—protecting biodiversity while honoring cultural heritage.



Krishna Fig leaf—front and back, revealing its divine scoop, said to cradle Lord Krishna's butter.

## Why This Tree Matters

Conserving *Ficus krishnae* is not just about protecting one species. It represents a broader message about the delicate balance between nature and culture, science and spirituality. Every threatened species lost is a thread removed from the intricate web of biodiversity, weakening ecosystems and diminishing cultural heritage.

At Heartfulness Institute, we believe conservation is both a scientific responsibility and a spiritual duty. Through our work with *Ficus krishnae*, we aim to set an example of how modern propagation techniques, combined

with cultural wisdom, can address the challenges of conserving rare and threatened species.

Beyond conserving a single rare tree, this work embodies the harmony between science and spirituality—protecting biodiversity while honoring cultural heritage.





Krishna Fig—Planted in devotion (2021) nurtured by time, now a sacred shelter of grace (2025).



### A Tree Worthy of Worship and Wisdom

Krishna Buttercup Tree reminds us that every leaf can tell a story—in this case, a divine tale with ecological urgency. It connects the ancient with the future, myth with science, and devotion with action. May the curled leaf of *Ficus religiosa* inspire us to protect not only our sacred stories, but also the ecosystems that hold them.

The Krishna Buttercup Tree is more than a botanical rarity. It is a living link between myth and ecology, faith and responsibility. More than a tree, it is a story. A place where devotion meets conservation, and every leaf whispers a timeless bond between nature and faith.



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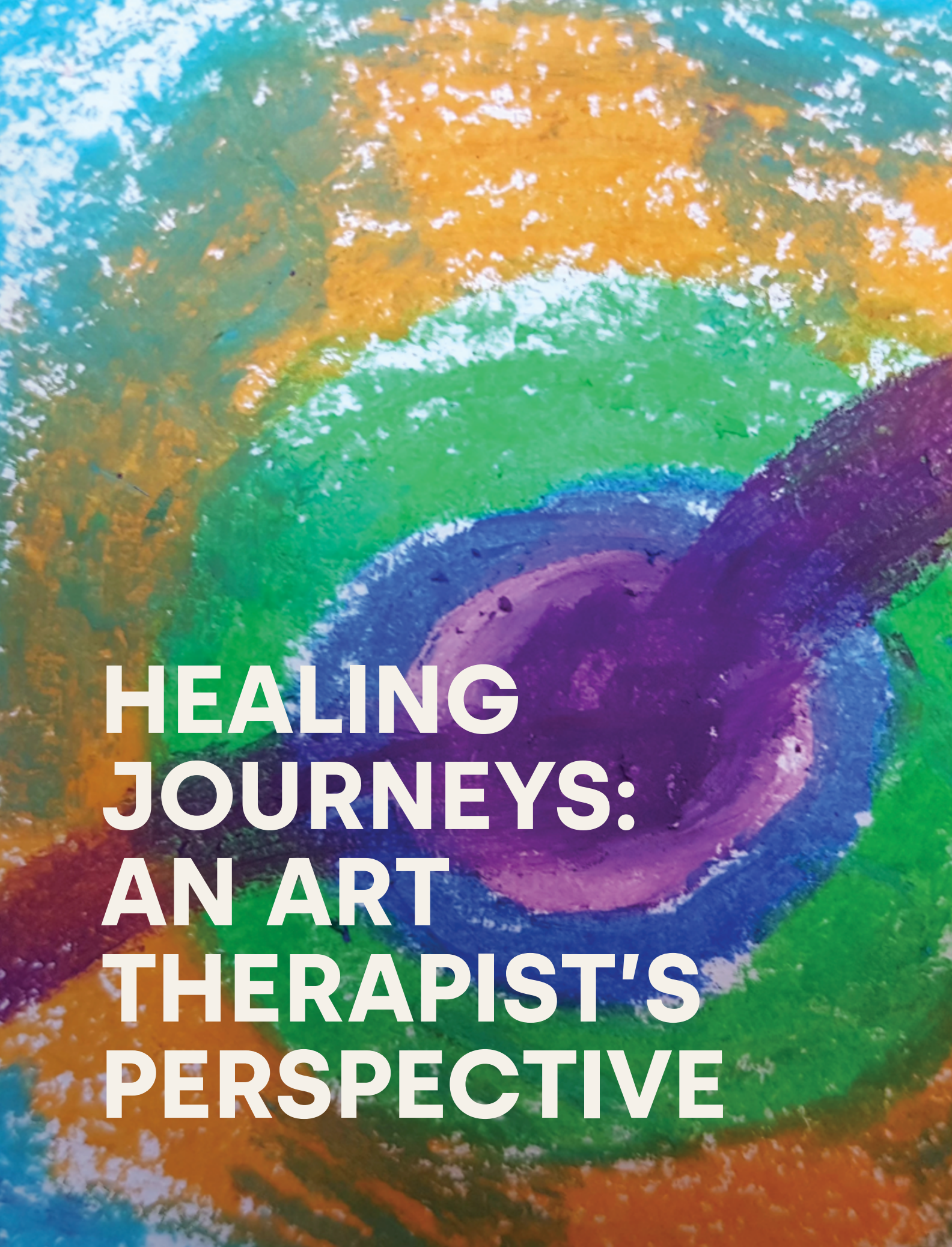


*creativity*

“You can’t use up creativity.  
The more you use,  
the more you have.”

**MAYA ANGELOU**





# **HEALING JOURNEYS: AN ART THERAPIST'S PERSPECTIVE**





VANESSA PATEL speaks with art therapist SANGEETA PRASAD about how creative expression becomes a language for what's difficult to express—from children working through trauma to adults navigating pain, change, and the complexities of mental health—and why making art is a fundamental human need.

Q: What brought you to art therapy?

I grew up in Chennai, India, where my mother ran a wonderful kindergarten school. The arts were always highly encouraged there, and I was always surrounded by children, education, and the arts. At college, in addition to my fine arts degree, I also completed one year of visual communication, and I realized I wanted to do something more—something that involved people and art.

To escape the humid heat of Chennai, I would frequently visit the beautiful, air-conditioned American Library [now the American Center]. And there I came across a book by Edith Kramer, a pioneer in art therapy who worked with children with special needs. I started reading it and I knew: this is what I wanted to learn more about.

I went on to study fine arts and then art therapy at George Washington University in 1985. My intention was to return to India and establish a special education school, as there was nothing like it at the time. I began by setting up a resource room at Bambino, my mother's school, where we worked with children with autism, developmental delays, hyperactivity, and ADHD. At that time, these conditions were not well understood.

Q: How did you identify these children without the diagnostic tools we have today?

It was more from observing behaviors—when a child didn't want to come into school, or they were very anxious. My mother knew how to handle them. I implemented art therapy techniques I'd learned working with what they called at that time “emotionally disturbed

children”—children with emotional issues, trauma, and some children on the spectrum. Having that background in abnormal psychology helped me understand how to work with them better.

We hired a teacher to work with the children using different methods from those in the regular classrooms, while also integrating them into the regular classrooms. I did art therapy and worked alongside the families.

After getting married, I returned to the U.S. to settle. The teacher who started with me at Bambino went on to establish a special education school in Chennai and continues to work with children with special needs.

Q: What's the difference between a regular art class and an art therapy session?

That's an excellent question. In an art class, you're very product-oriented and skill-oriented—you need to learn how to mix watercolors, perspective drawing, and your intention is really the product. In art therapy, the intention is the process. It's okay for a child to scribble; in fact, we encourage that to help creative thinking.

Art can be used in many different ways—as a diagnostic tool, depending on what the person expresses, or for honing fine motor and gross motor skills. Our training helps us understand emotional expressions. Each one of us chooses different colors and different ways of expressing ourselves visually through art.

Q: So it's really about understanding a person without them providing the words?

It's a combination. Sometimes, it could be only the artwork—a person might come in and take something, expressing themselves without having the words to say it. And sometimes it's a combination of the two.

Q: For somebody who's undergone trauma, how long does it typically take to connect with them using art therapy?

It depends. I have clients who have come to me for more than five years. In hospitals, we have short-term and long-term clients; it's different in schools—it really depends on the setting. We also work in oncology units, utilizing art to manage pain.

Just the other day, I had a session with a client struggling with severe pain, anxiety, and depression. When I asked her to imagine what the pain was like and to draw it out, she drew a fish that had been badly scarred, with blood all around. She said, “My pain is like that.

I love fish. They're so beautiful, but my fish has gone.” She was able to express her pain.

When she drew it and saw it, we then talked in metaphor about what would help this fish. What are some things that could help? This allowed her to put the problem outside of herself and step back to see it. We discussed what causes these wounds and whether there was anything she could do to make the fish stronger.

Q: That's really beautiful. You're providing a safe space where there's a lot of trust involved. Maybe that's one reason clients keep coming back—it's a place where they can really be themselves or discover who they really are.

In art therapy, the  
intention is the process.



Right, absolutely. Sometimes they'll stop coming, feel better, and then, after some time, if they need support again, they come back. That's not a bad thing, because they need the support. They know what helps them. It's a safe place for them to talk about these things.

**Q: What techniques do you use?**

It depends on the person. With the client I just mentioned, I used visualization as a means of understanding her pain. With one client who is an adult but functioning like an eight-year-old, I focus on fine motor and gross motor skills. We've started a weaving project to improve left-hand-right-hand coordination. Sometimes I'll do an art activity where she has to draw how she's feeling about something that happened during the week, because she can be very impulsive and doesn't know how to handle change.

We employ various techniques tailored to the client's specific needs. Art is so versatile. We offer a diverse range of materials, including pencils, paints, clay, found objects, and natural elements. I utilize many of the materials we find and collect in nature in the art room. Recycled materials, things that people consider trash—we're always collecting them.

**Q: That's incredible creativity. Can you talk about your books?**

I have two books out. One is *Creative Expression: Say it with Art*, written in India in 2008, mainly for teachers. I have now uploaded a PDF to my website and am making it freely accessible to teachers. The other is *Using Art Therapy With Diverse Populations*, where each chapter focuses on working with a different population, such as



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asylum seekers, prisoners, and various age groups. We have about twenty-seven authors contributing.

Our therapists can work in a variety of settings, including community centers, hospitals, and schools, with all age groups, using relevant techniques. That's why training is essential. I have to emphasize that because a lot of people think that because they're artists, they can do art therapy. But art therapy is a mental health profession. It requires a master's level program—two to three years of very intense training with internships. There are also PhD programs where research is being conducted on how the arts have been utilized in indigenous populations. From prehistoric times, we see art being used on

cave walls as a means of expression. The arts have always played a crucial role.

**Q:** So training typically involves art, education, and psychology?

Yes, all three components. A lot of psychology and counseling techniques. In the U.S., it typically takes two to three years, depending on the program, and we usually recommend working with at least two populations under supervision. Currently, I teach at the Maharashtra Institute of Technology in Pune, India, where I helped design and launch a hybrid program. I still conduct supervision there, so our students work in various settings and we provide them with opportunities to discuss the challenges they face.





She said, “Art fosters self-expression, as the need to visually communicate is deeply ingrained within us.”



I utilize many of the materials we find and collect in nature in the art room. Recycled materials, things that people consider trash—we're always collecting them.

Q: You seem to have a very holistic approach to mental health. Would you say that's something that's becoming increasingly necessary?

I think so. Medication is not the only solution. We need a multifaceted approach. When a person comes with an issue—trauma, developmental delays, life changes, a divorce—you want different tools for that person. Along with art therapy, I use a lot of mindfulness meditation. I've been trained as a mindful meditation teacher and have my own practice. I find the combination of mindfulness and art a wonderful mix.

Neuroscience is another passion of mine. If we understand the brain and the body, as well as the connections between them, that can really help us understand where our client is coming from and provide them with different tools to work with.

Q: I loved reading about the spiritual perspective in your work. I'm also a trainer in Heartfulness meditation, and sometimes after a meditation session, people want to sit and talk, and your role is simply to listen. You take it to the next level with your art therapy training.

It's really wonderful because in the schools I'm involved in, it's become so apparent that children really need another means of expression. And art therapy provides one of those tools.









## CREATIVITY

Q: You've also used this in prisons. How does that help with rehabilitation?

There's a wonderful art therapist named Dave Gussak who has done a lot of work and research into how art therapy can be used in settings where there can be a lot of aggression, where people come wounded, and where there are angry outbursts. There's a lot of trauma, and then there's re-traumatization happening within a prison.

One artwork that Dave shared in his book is from an inmate who collected M&Ms, and using M&Ms and water, they did amazing paintings.

Art therapy can be used to help calm them down and improve their communication, leading to better understanding. Many people end up in prison because they have mental health issues. Helping them work through some of this can aid in rehabilitation. It needs specialized training and experience because it's a unique place of work—you can't use many art materials in that setting. No scissors, no glue. You have to be very vigilant.

Despite these restrictions, people have continued to create art. One artwork that Dave shared in his book is from an inmate who collected M&Ms, and using M&Ms and water, they did amazing paintings.



Q: So they used the dye from the M&Ms as paint. How ingenious!

Yes, it says so much about the creativity of that person being in prison with limited resources. Art fosters self-expression, as the need to visually communicate is deeply ingrained within us.

Q: Like a primal need to connect with the outer world and express what you are.

Right. And it also facilitates a connection to the inner world. Like meditation, there's that inner and outer connection.

Q: That's a lovely, hopeful note to end with. Thank you very much for your time.

Thanks for the opportunity.

*For more information, visit [sangeetaprasad.com](http://sangeetaprasad.com)*





# Creating a New World

**SARALA UPADHYA** reflects on the profound experience of confinement—from astronauts stranded on the International Space Station to our own yearning for freedom—and explores how ancient wisdom and modern spirituality guide us toward creating a new world rooted in interconnectedness, compassion, and universal belonging.

When astronauts Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore were stranded on the International Space Station for months, they lived in a confined space, coping with limited movements and other activities that we usually take for granted on Earth. How many times must they have longed to return to Mother Earth, a free world filled with love and belonging?

Our situation—living on Earth while yearning to return to our true home, our ultimate spiritual source—may be similar to what astronauts have experienced during their space missions. I often contemplate the real meaning of “freedom.” Is it the freedom of physical movement or the ability to travel on a mental plane at speeds exceeding that of light? I start thinking whether “freedom” means simply being free from emotional

baggage. Is freedom merely the removal of impressions through the Heartfulness practice of Cleaning—those accumulated emotional residues, both remembered and forgotten? Does freedom mean having no more desires to hinder our progress toward our ultimate spiritual goal? Is there another world we can slide into to enjoy that freedom?

Then, there is also the unimaginable situation we are facing in various parts of our world. Will we ever be able to break off the shackles of grief, anger, hatred, greed, violence, passion, and resentment that surround us? Are peace, love, faith, and other positive feelings now beyond our reach in this world?

Just as I was groping around in darkness with all my thoughts and imaginings like a lost child, this message from Babuji’s *Commentary on the Ten Maxims* (Maxim Six)

came to me as a guiding light:

*“This world is in fact a reflection of the other world. When this one is molded properly, its effect extends on to the other world whose reflection it is, and that too will begin to get purified. This will greatly smoothen our task and help us further in the attainment of the Ideal. Our success here will lead to our success there.”*

—Babuji



### The Web of Interconnectedness

Interconnectedness is the key principle in creating a new world characterized by compassion, love, and acceptance, among many other human qualities. It is fundamental to all religions and spiritual traditions around the world.

The Upanishads, foundational texts of Indian philosophy, describe the interconnectedness between the Creator and all that exists in creation. “*sarvam khalvidam brahman*,” found in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (3.14.1), states that everything—living beings, non-living things, and everything that one can imagine to be present in this Universe—is

The lesson is simple: we don’t need to escape to another world to find freedom. The “other world” Babuji describes represents the subtle inner realms that exist within us. By purifying ourselves here in this material world, we simultaneously purify and access those higher realms within. The freedom we are craving is not far away—it is right here. The notion of separateness

that I once imagined is an illusion. This world and those inner worlds are interconnected from the beginning. Through faith and love, we purify ourselves in this world, and as we do, differences fade away and we find ourselves at home right here. Once we accept that we do not have to go anywhere to find this freedom, we can also see the joy of creating and living in the new world within our reach.



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a manifestation of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality.

There are many such statements found in other Upanishads that reflect the deep spiritual truth of interconnectedness realized, sustained, and strengthened by meditations on that “Oneness.” The beauty of this idea extends beyond the relationship between the Universal and the individual; it spreads, expands, and influences all those around us as well. The *Maha Upanishad* expresses this as “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (6.71-73), introducing the principle of universal family.

The *Bhagavad Gita* offers this wondrous description of interconnectedness:

*sarva-bhūta-stham ātmānam  
sarva-bhūtāni ca ātmani  
ikṣate yoga-yuktātmā  
sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ* (6.25)

“The yogi who has a balanced view perceives the Universal Presence in all individual beings. He is also able to perceive all individual beings in that Universal Presence.”

Therefore, a “balanced view” is essential for a correct understanding and appreciation of the intricate web of connections that binds us all. Our thoughts, actions, and feelings all have a profound influence on others as

well, and this is the foundational stone needed to create a new world based on love, compassion, and acceptance among all beings.

### Wisdom from Ancient China

No geographical or cultural boundaries can contain the thoughts shared by Laozi, also known as Lao Tzu, a legendary figure in Chinese philosophy. He has recorded his profound insights in his text, *Tao Te Ching*, which translates to “The Book of the Way and Its Virtue.” His philosophy, known as Taoism, is celebrated globally for its wisdom,

emphasizing simplicity and humility. Laozi teaches that human actions should align with nature, following the natural order of the universe. Actions should be taken effortlessly, maintaining balance with everything around us, including all forms of animate and inanimate creations.





If we direct our actions toward nurturing the entire ecosystem, we will take a significant step toward creating a more sustainable and better world.

Arne Næss, a Norwegian philosopher, explored the connection between the self and the environment. He talks about the “ecological self,” which is recognized after casting aside egotistical thinking. The ecological self operates in harmony with the natural world, always considering itself an integral part of it. Næss’s ideas align well with the concept of *Atman*, the universal Self. This alignment naturally fosters a sense of belonging—we are part of a universal family that includes everything around us.

### Building the New World Within

Having read all the above narrations and findings of many seekers and thinkers, have you recognized the powerful progression involved in shaping a new world for ourselves? It’s a journey worth embracing. First, we acknowledge the need for change and the stagnation that comes from being trapped in our current state of existence. This inner calling for freedom pushes us to break free from the bonds of repetitive actions. Next, we begin to explore, drawing on both ancient and contemporary wisdom, to discover where this new world

### Western Voices on Unity

In his book *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau shares a profound statement based on his own experiences: “I am a part of all that I have met.” This statement highlights Thoreau’s conviction in the profound connection between humans and their environment. He advocated for a simple life and encouraged observing the natural rhythms around us. A better understanding of our place within the larger web of existence helps us honor and respect it.

may lie—one that offers the freedom we seek.

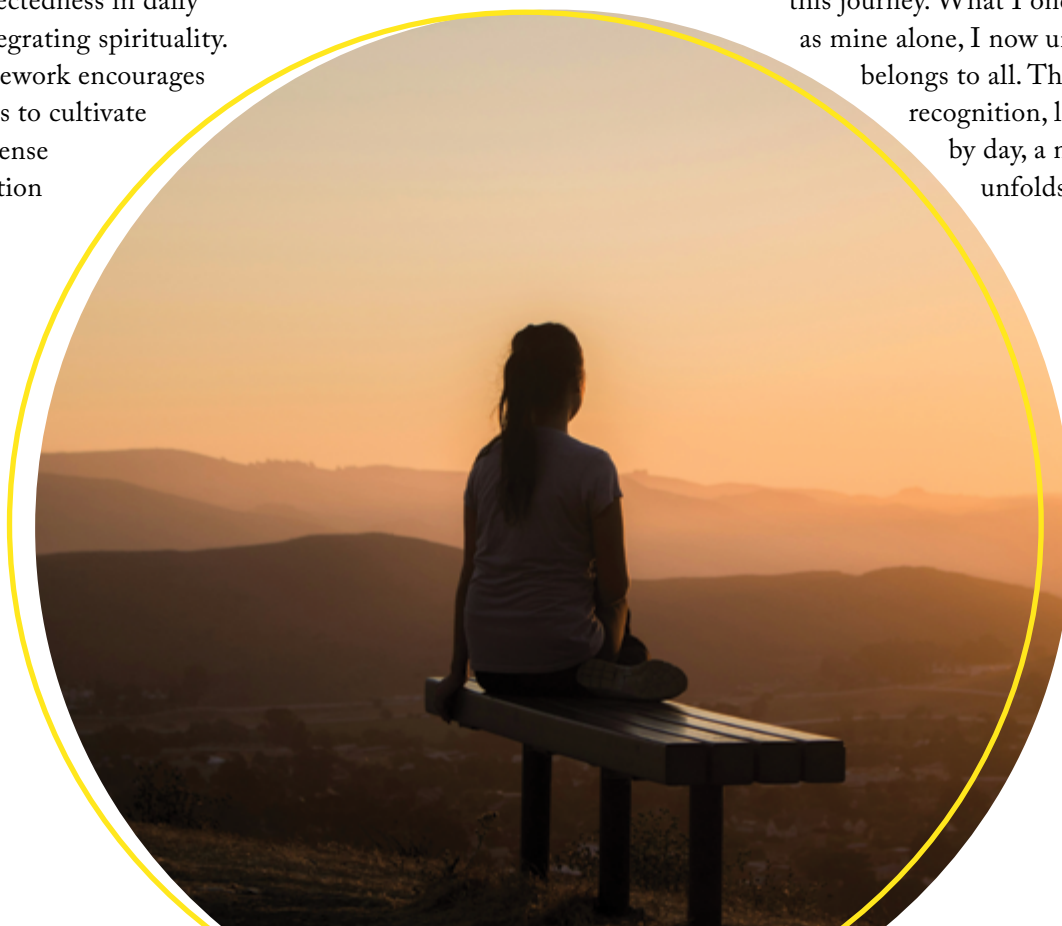
Returning to Pujya Babuji's teachings, we come to understand that we have the capacity to bring forth the beautiful world to which we aspire. The "Ideal" in this new world is not an abstract concept but an attainable state, reached by following natural principles of living. Maintaining a steadfast focus on understanding and implementing Babuji's "Ideal" state is not only necessary but essential. This commitment requires meditation, self-reflection, and making course corrections whenever needed.

The Heartfulness approach, emphasized by Daaji, offers practical methods to foster interconnectedness in daily life by integrating spirituality. This framework encourages individuals to cultivate a deeper sense of connection

Inner purification involves shaping one's attitudes, thoughts, and actions to align with Universal principles of compassion, love, and harmonious living.

with themselves, others, and the world around them. Inner purification involves shaping one's attitudes, thoughts, and actions to align with Universal principles of compassion, love, and harmonious living. The reflection of our actions and attitudes in the material world influences the spiritual dimensions, guiding us closer to this "Ideal" state. Breaking down the barriers of individualism and the feelings of separateness is essential for fostering universal brotherhood. By incorporating these methods into everyday activities, we can enhance our spiritual practice and ultimately create a more cohesive and harmonious existence.

The practice of Heartfulness Meditation has guided me through this journey. What I once claimed as mine alone, I now understand belongs to all. Through this recognition, lived day by day, a new world unfolds.







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### Eligibility

**Age:** 8–18 years

Basic badminton knowledge required



## Shantaben International Cricket Academy for Girls

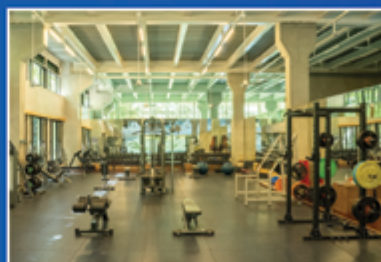
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Comfortable and well-maintained accommodations for athletes.
- **Equipment Requirement**  
Players must bring their own sporting equipment.
- **Admissions Through Trials Only**  
Enrollment is based strictly on selection in performance trials.

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*children*

“What is essential is  
invisible to the eye.”

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY



# THE LISTENING HEART

## *King Solomon's Gift and Judgment*



**RUBY CARMEN** retells the biblical story of King Solomon, who asked God for a listening heart and became known for his exceptional wisdom.

Many centuries ago, in the ancient kingdom of the Israelites, there lived King Solomon, the beloved son of King David and Queen Bathsheba. When Solomon was born, Nathan the prophet blessed him with the special name “Jedidiah,” meaning “Beloved of the Lord.”

As King David’s life drew to a close, he called his son to him. Holding Solomon’s hands, he spoke softly and with urgency, “Listen to me, my son! My time to leave this world has come. Be strong, be brave, be courageous, and be devoted to the Lord completely. Remember to walk with the Lord every moment of your life, with all your heart and all your soul. The Lord will lead you and your people to peace and prosperity.”



After King David's death, Solomon became King. King Solomon and his royal advisors went to offer prayers in the city of Gibeon. In prayer, being both humble and sincere of heart, Solomon sought divine guidance as to how he could best rule his people and the land. That night, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said to him, "My child, ask me for whatever your heart desires." In the presence of the Divine, Solomon was deeply moved and felt spiritually uplifted. He knew that the Divine had appeared before him for a greater, higher purpose and responded to the Lord with special attention.

In an attitude of humility, Solomon spoke, "O Lord, I am blessed to receive your love and generosity. Your divine grace was showered on my Father until his last moments, and now you have chosen me to sit on the throne and rule over your people. How may I fulfill this task when I am nothing but an inexperienced and immature child? How can I meet the needs of my people and solve their problems?" King Solomon recognized that only the Lord has the ability to realize the needs of every soul.

Humbly, Solomon voiced his heart's desire to the Divine: "O Lord, give me a listening heart so that I may follow your path, so that I may serve you and humanity. May I have the ability to hear the



real voice, which is found in the depths of the heart—the real voice, that small still voice that tries to make itself heard but often cannot because of the noise and clutter of the mind.”

On hearing Solomon's words, the Lord was pleased. "You could have asked me for riches, for more land, for fame and glory, for a long life,

for victory over your enemies, but you did not. You asked me for a listening heart. With great joy, I grant you this wish: a listening heart, a heart that seeks wisdom and knowledge that may know right from wrong." The Lord continued, "You have asked for a listening heart, not for yourself but so that you can serve me and do my work. Solomon, you will be the



"O Lord, give me a listening heart so that I may follow your path, so that I may serve you and humanity. May I have the ability to hear the real voice, which is found in the depths of the heart—the real voice, that small still voice that tries to make itself heard but often cannot because of the noise and clutter of the mind."

wisest among men! Never before was there a human being as wise as you, and never will there be anyone to compare to you. The people will remember you for years to come."

The divine gift soon revealed its power. One day in the royal court, the King was approached by two mothers seeking justice. Each held a baby in her arms—one alive, the other dead. The first woman addressed the King, "Your Majesty! May I speak? We live in the same house. We were alone when I gave birth to my child." With tears pouring down her face, she continued, "Three days after my baby was born, at midnight, this woman (pointing at the other) gave birth to her child. When I awoke the next morning, she told me that my baby had died in his sleep and that her baby was healthy." She went on, "Seeing the baby in my bed had died, I was brokenhearted. Then I looked closely at the face of the baby and realized it was not mine! The child she is holding in her arms is mine. She must have taken my baby from me in my sleep, and now I have this dead child."

King Solomon looked closely at the other woman with piercing, questioning eyes. The second woman spoke, denying what the first woman had said and claiming that the opposite was true. She declared that the first woman was, in fact, a liar, that she was simply





The other woman stood unmoved as if she were made of stone and said, “Your Majesty, your judgment is correct. Cut the child in two, if I cannot have the child, then she cannot have the child either!”

The wise King stood up from his throne and swiftly made his way towards the guard holding the baby. Solomon roared, “Put the sword down now! By Divine Grace, I have heard the voice of the true mother!” In the royal court, there was a stunned silence at the King’s announcement. King Solomon spoke surely, “No Mother would ever agree to have her child killed and cut in two. A Mother’s love is a selfless love. The first woman was willing to give up her child so that he could live. She is the real mother!” The King declared. Let the child be given back to her!” The first woman, the real mother, was joyfully reunited with her baby.

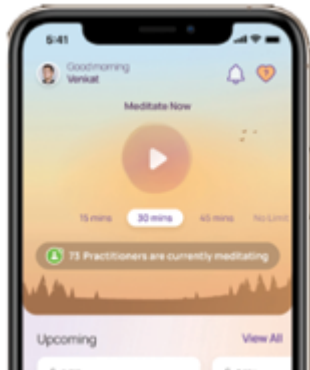
trying to take her baby from her. There stood in the royal court two mothers, both in tears, each calling the other a liar. With no witnesses and no evidence, how could the King determine who the real mother was? It seemed to be an impossible task.

The King called on his guard for a sword, announcing to all in the royal court, “There is only one child and two Mothers. How can I give a child to one Mother and

then deny the other?” Summoning his guard, in a sad and solemn voice, he gave the order, “Cut the living boy in half now, and give one half to the first woman and the other to the second!” Almost immediately, as the guard took the baby boy to carry out the order, the first woman cried out, “Please, please, stop! Do not kill this child! I confess! The child is not mine, please let him live and be with his natural mother!”





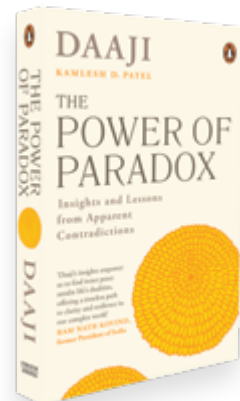


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An aerial photograph of the New York City skyline at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the city. The Empire State Building is prominent in the center, and other skyscrapers are visible in the background. The water of the harbor is visible in the distance.

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