

May 2020

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Earth

Adapting to a new
field of action

Rising to a higher
consciousness


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Charles Eisenstein,
Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee,
Ichak Adizes,
and more*

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*From Emergency
to Emergence*





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From Emergency to Emergence

Dear readers,

We are currently undergoing a worldwide transformation in our lifestyle and experiencing a quieter planet. We are on the cusp of adapting to a new way of being. There are no doubt tragedies resulting from the coronavirus that require our attention – those we read about every day in the news. Here, our authors share their ideas about adaptation, evolution and where we are headed. How will the phoenix rise from the ashes of our old civilization into a higher consciousness?

In this edition, Daaji, Charles Eisenstein, Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, Ichak Adizes, Emma Ivaturi, Sanjay Sehgal, Mamata Venkat, Elisabeth Hower, Terran Daily and Ramya Sriram create a vision for the future, and describe the practicalities of daily life during this paradigm shift of humanity.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda when he wrote to the people of Calcutta in *The Plague Manifesto* of 1898, “The Mother of the Universe is herself the support of the helpless. The Mother is assuring us, ‘Fear not! Fear not!’” Now is the time for fearlessness, courage, faith, and adaptation to a new field of action.

Enjoy reading!

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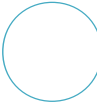


On the positive side,
I know for us,
it's forced us to continue
to sit down with each other,
have real conversations,
really ask questions and figure out
how to keep ourselves occupied
without just TV or computers.

MICHELLE OBAMA

From Emergency to Emergence

DAAJI shares some thoughts and practical tips on how we can do our very best during the current coronavirus pandemic, in order to move from a state of emergency to a state of emergence.

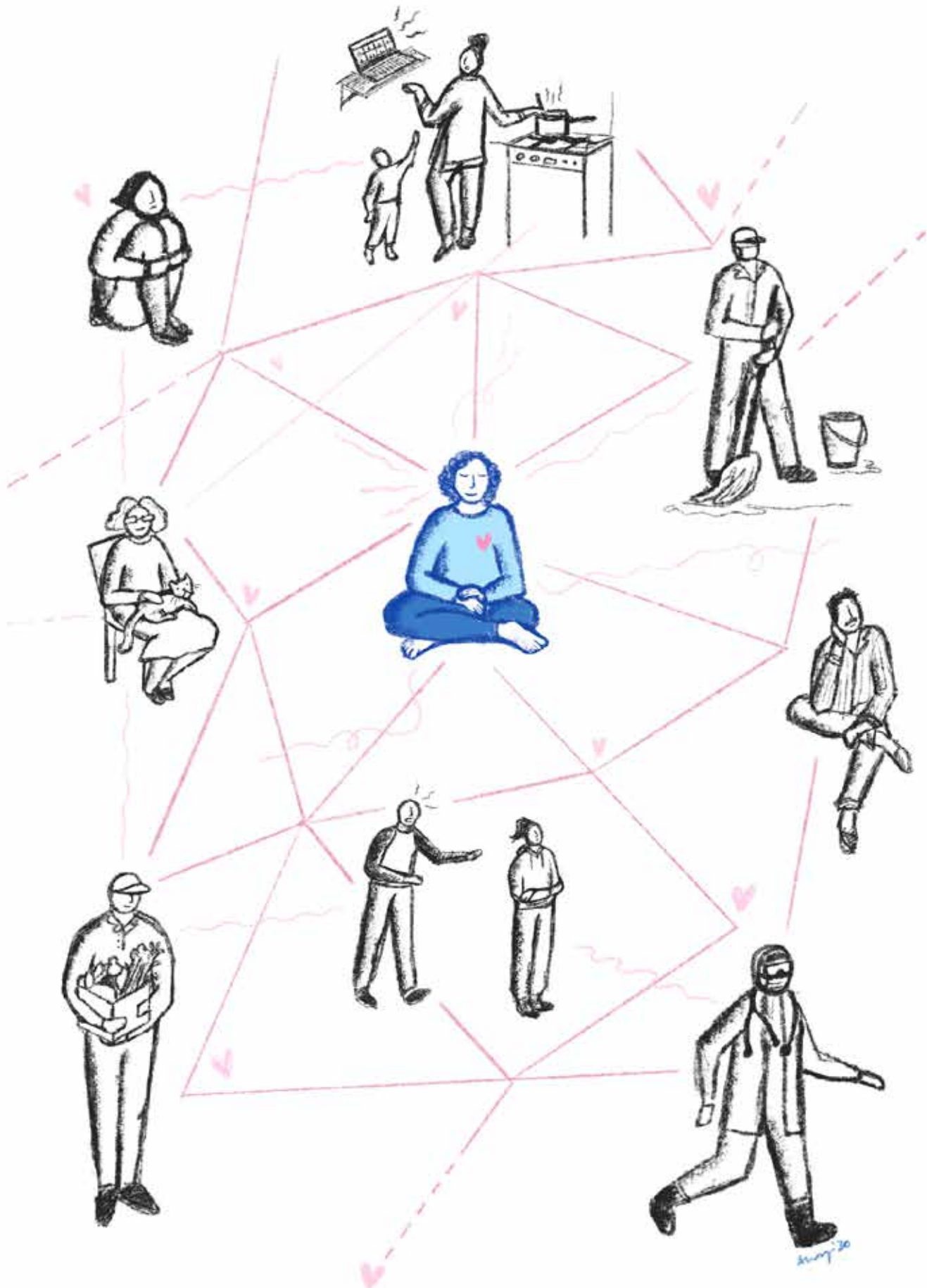
 Our societies are undergoing rapid change right now, and despite the hardships and suffering all around, we are seeing many hopeful signs: The wealthy donating to the poor, governments supporting their citizens, families and neighbors sharing food and time with each other. We are finding time for humanness and for re-evaluating priorities. Most of us are slowing down, remembering what it is like to appreciate the little things in life and value the sacred. Today, people are praying for the world who have never prayed in their lives before.

It is a rare opportunity to pause, to slow down, and to witness ourselves. This pause also gives us the chance to ask: What do we need to change in our behavior, right now, in order to move forward?

Creating connection

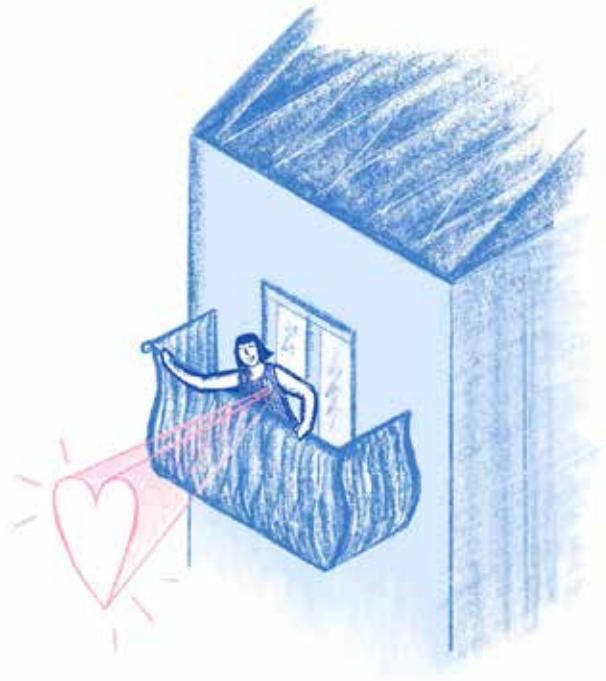
Because of corona, we are having to practice physical distancing, so how can we enrich our sense of connection without physical contact? Our basic instinct is to touch, so the lack of physical contact, or being separated from loved ones, can be very upsetting at first. But the best way to compensate for this lack is to develop a heart-to-heart connection with others. The beauty of this heart-to-heart connection is that it works across any distance; we can send love to anyone anywhere anytime. And it can be so subtle, so intimate, and so tender, as it is a communion at the level of the subtle body, the level of vibration and resonance. Here is a simple way to connect:

Sit comfortably and gently close your eyes. Bring the person you wish to send love to in front of you. Feel your heart connecting to their heart. Gently send love and care to the person from your heart to their heart. Feel connected. Do this for a few minutes. Stay connected at this deep level as often as you like, for as long as you like.



Emotional intelligence and resilience

Another phenomenon we are hearing about at the moment is the opposite of distancing: Conflicts among family members who are confined at home together. No doubt there will be some friction when we are all living in close quarters, but why is it so difficult for us to tolerate each other? Why are we unable to accept each other the way we are? Now that we are spending time together, maybe this is the opportunity to accept one another's imperfections and taunts, and develop greater emotional intelligence and resilience – to rise to the challenge. Although today our human community is globally connected, many of us are lonelier than ever, so why not remove loneliness by strengthening those family ties which we so often take for granted?



We can spend precious time with loved ones and share knowledge with our children and grandchildren. In earlier times, families would tell stories in the evenings, read books together, and share skills. This is a time to work on our lifestyle choices: Internet-based technologies may be great, but our health will also benefit if we take breaks from screen time and the associated radiation. Reach out to others in simple ways. Enjoy a song together, meditate together, watch a movie, prepare and eat meals together, and tell each other jokes. The togetherness, joy and humor we feel will dissolve many stresses.

Emergence

And when we stay connected within our hearts, prayerfully, our prayers join with the echoes of the prayers of others, and we create a higher vibration of love all around us, soothing the sadness that many are feeling right now. When our consciousness remains pure through a meditative practice, it dissolves the negative thought pollution that is prevalent everywhere.

There are so many simple habits that will help sustain us, such as conserving food and groceries, fasting, and being careful about finances. We can help the elderly, and those who are less fortunate. We can be kind to others, and volunteer in our communities. We can do the many forgotten household tasks, like spring cleaning, fixing and mending things etc. We can explore our creativity and develop healthier lifestyle habits, cook meals at home, practice breathing exercises to build immunity, meditate and exercise. We can learn new skills. We can create a new daily routine, that will be so beneficial and reassuring.

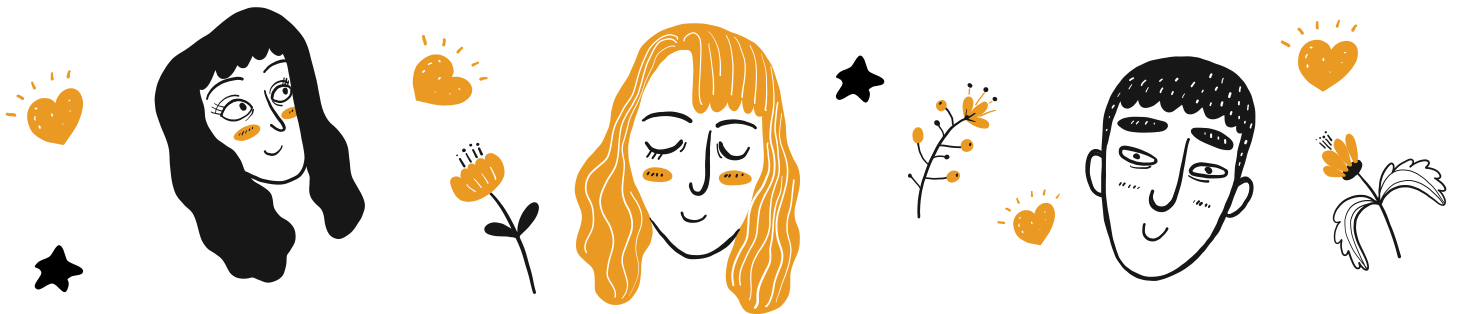
Most importantly, if we are going to emerge from the corona crisis with a nobler, more sustainable way of living, we can use this time to reflect, accept and adapt to new ways. That requires a focused mind and a peaceful heart. And how can we experience such focus and peace? Through meditation.

Take refuge from the external turbulence. Dive deep within your heart into stillness. Doing this will protect your energetic structure, and give you a sense of well-being and balance, even if it is not a remedy for everything. The new era in human history that is emerging right now is the era of the heart, so let's enjoy the ride!



A New Vocation

EMMA IVATURI shares some ideas on how we can make ripples of change in the world, through a silent revolution of hearts joining together around the world. We have the opportunity now to discover how connected we really are!



"Don't fear to keep your heart wide open. The world needs love. You know it, my child. What better and what more can you do, now that you know how much this energy can change the world? You have confirmations of this too: these vibrations form a wire-mesh surrounding the Earth.

"Nothing is lost, believe me; the heart's impulses represent a force in this world. May they spread in you as well as in each one of you. Maintain thoughts of love; cultivate them in your heart, as you would do for very rare and invaluable plants. They cannot die in this world. They gather and form a powerful égrégore. Become aware of this power of yours. In this aspect also, future times will prove the soundness of our comments. It will be used in a precise way and in proportions that you cannot imagine, since its action is boundless. By itself, this force can transform the world and achieve a revolution, in the best sense of the word.

"We repeat ourselves: the world is moving towards new times, and you will have to adapt. We are preparing you through these messages. Our way is helping you greatly in this respect; you partake of this spirit. Be confident and blessed."

Babuji

Whispers from The Brighter World, Vol. 3., 2001



How often when we meet a new person do we open with, “So what do you do?” There’s an inherent tension behind our answer. We have unconsciously absorbed the premise that what we do to make money makes us who we are. The premise that our job not only colors our being, but also must make a mark on the world, adds yet another layer to this inner strain. Yet so many of us look for work not to dazzle new people at parties, but simply to make a living and help raise our families.

During this unique time, many cannot perform their jobs or even find themselves suddenly unemployed. We have all been asked to remain at home, to take a step back. We now have an opportunity to re-evaluate premises about who we are, what we value, and how our lives and the world may continue to function in the future.

In the midst of new stressors, haven’t many of us have reconnected to oft neglected spaces in our heart? We have found ourselves being perhaps a bit more generous than usual, and a bit more thrilled at a passing smile from a stranger after days alone at home. We have found glimpses of trust. We have found ways to stay connected despite being physically distant.

Most events and gatherings have become remote as we tune in to conference calls and live video meetings. Heartfulness centers around the world have begun to conduct group meditations in this way. There’s a trend that significantly more people are meditating and learn these simple and effective practices. Are these the newcomers joining merely because it’s suddenly more convenient and they have more time on their hand? Or perhaps because in these times so many of us have begun to reconnect to the value of inner-attunement?

At some point we may ask ourselves what then we can do besides staying at home to help “flatten the curve”? We have begun to share our stories, our humor, our art and inspiration. And more of us have turned to practices like meditation to refine our being and expand our capacity to love.

Gandhi’s entreaty to “Be the change you wish to see in the world” may just be the launch point for many of us. And how better to change ourselves than with contemplative practice? Meditation gives us the tools to clear our past impressions





Surely as more and more people learn to meditate and practice with ever-increasing devotedness, we will see ripples, nay waves, of change across the world.

and free ourselves from hardened habits. We feel more lightness, joy and innate trust. Its benefits are immediate, long-term and innumerable.

Yet there is another profound aspect of meditation that goes beyond mere self-improvement and inner evolution. It is in our collective evolution that we uncover meditation's full potency. Currently we witness our interdependency more fully when we realize the fragility of our economic and social structures in these challenging times. How much more connected are we in unknown ways?

We are beginning to better understand how our bodies emit electromagnetic vibrations. Studies, like those of the HeartMath Institute, show us the potency with which we affect each other and the immense electromagnetic effects of the heart. But beyond the intellectual reaffirmation, we feel intimately how much the love emanating from another can touch us, changing the course of our lives forever.

When we meditate, we refine our inner vibration. We expand our consciousness. We cultivate love. When we meditate in a group – physically in one place or virtually – we expand that vibration exponentially. How much, then, could the Earth's electromagnetic field be affected

as we expand our own? How much could subtle shifts in greater and greater numbers of human hearts and minds change, perhaps, even the course of history?

We may then consider meditation, the art of deeply cultivating and widely expanding love, as a revolutionary act. Every moment I spend doing these uplifting practices makes an indelible mark on the world. Surely as more and more people learn to meditate and practice with ever-increasing devotedness, we will see ripples, nay waves, of change across the world.

So irrespective of whether we have work considered “essential,” have the privilege to still be able to work remotely, find ourselves unemployed, or find ourselves suddenly with way more to do with the kids at home all day, we can make the most of the enormous shift we've been gifted. We have the opportunity to make global change through introspective practice our new mission. And, whatever we end up doing to make a living, we can make love our new vocation.



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Faced with threats to
our health and well-being,
it is natural to feel
anxiety and fear.
Nevertheless, I take great
solace in the following wise
advice to examine
the problems before us:
If there is something
to be done – do it,
without any need to worry;
if there's nothing to be done,
worrying about it further
will not help.

HIS HOLINESS,
THE DALAI LAMA



THE CORONATION

CHARLES EISENSTEIN

March 2020

CHARLES EISENSTEIN examines our current world in COVID-19 crisis, and looks at the questions we need to ask ourselves so that we can move forward into a new society. Here we offer excerpts from Charles' essay. You can read the full story at <https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/the-coronation/>.

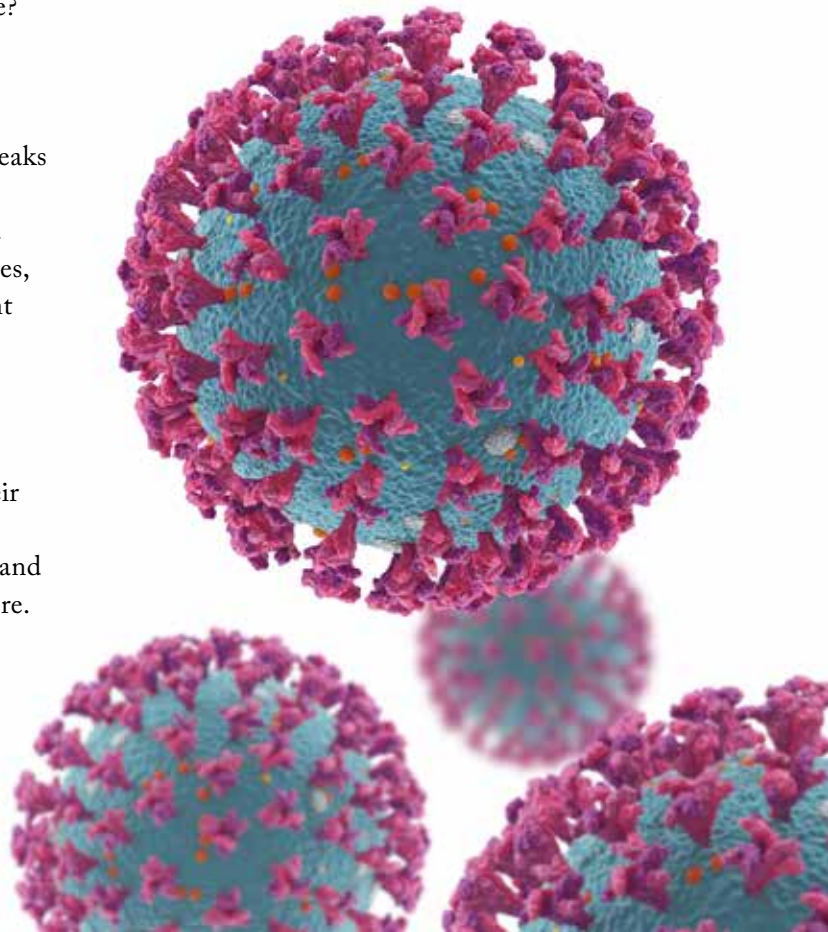
For years, normality has been stretched nearly to its breaking point, a rope pulled tighter and tighter, waiting for a nip of the black swan's beak to snap it in two. Now that the rope has snapped, do we tie its ends back together, or shall we undo its dangling braids still further, to see what we might weave from them?

COVID-19 is showing us that when humanity is united in common cause, phenomenally rapid change is possible. None of the world's problems are technically difficult to solve; they originate in human disagreement. In coherency, humanity's creative powers are boundless. A few months ago, a proposal to halt commercial air travel would have seemed preposterous. Likewise for the radical changes we are making in our social behavior, economy, and the role of government in our lives. COVID demonstrates the power of our collective will when we agree on what is important. What else might we achieve in coherency? What do we want to achieve, and what world shall we create? That is always the next question when anyone awakens to their power.

COVID-19 is like a rehab intervention that breaks the addictive hold of normality. To interrupt a habit is to make it visible; it is to turn it from a compulsion to a choice. When the crisis subsides, we might have occasion to ask whether we want to return to normal, or whether there might be something we've seen during this break in the routines that we want to bring into the future.

We might ask, after so many have lost their jobs, whether all of them are the jobs the world most needs, and whether our labor and creativity would be better applied elsewhere.

COVID-19 is showing us that when humanity is united in common cause, phenomenally rapid change is possible.





We might ask, having done without it for a while, whether we really need so much air travel, Disneyworld vacations, or trade shows.

What parts of the economy will we want to restore, and what parts might we choose to let go of?

And on a darker note, what among the things that are being taken away right now – civil liberties, freedom of assembly, sovereignty over our bodies, in-person gatherings, hugs, handshakes, and public life – might we need to exert intentional political and personal will to restore?

For most of my life, I've had the feeling that humanity was nearing a crossroads. Always, the crisis, the collapse, the break was imminent, just around the bend, but it didn't come and it didn't come. Imagine walking a road, and up ahead you

see it, you see the crossroads. It's just over the hill, around the bend, past the woods. Cresting the hill, you see you were mistaken, it was a mirage, it was farther away than you thought. You keep walking. Sometimes it comes into view, sometimes it disappears from sight and it seems like this road goes on forever. Maybe there isn't a crossroads. No, there it is again! Always it is almost here. Never is it here.

Now, all of a sudden, we go around a bend and here it is. We stop, hardly able to believe that now it is happening, hardly able to believe, after years of confinement to the road of our predecessors, that now we finally have a choice. We are right to stop, stunned at the newness of our situation. Because of the hundred paths that radiate out in front of us, some lead in the same direction we've already been headed. Some lead to hell on earth. And some lead to a world more healed and more beautiful than we ever dared believe to be possible.

I write these words with the aim of standing here with you – bewildered, scared maybe, yet also with a sense of new possibility – at this point of diverging paths. Let us gaze down some of them and see where they lead.

* * *

I heard this story last week from a friend. She was in a grocery store and saw a woman sobbing in the aisle. Flouting social distancing rules, she went to the woman and gave her a hug. “Thank you,” the woman said. “That is the first time anyone has hugged me for ten days.”

Going without hugs for a few weeks seems a small price to pay if it will stem an epidemic that could take millions of lives. There is a strong argument for social distancing in the near term, to prevent a sudden surge of COVID cases from overwhelming the medical system. I would like to put that argument in a larger context, especially as we look to the long term. Lest we institutionalize distancing and re-engineer society around it, let us be aware of what choice we are making and why.

The same goes for the other changes happening around the coronavirus epidemic. Some commentators have observed how it plays neatly into an agenda of totalitarian control. A frightened public accepts abridgments of civil liberties that are otherwise hard to justify, such as the tracking of everyone’s movements at all times, forcible medical treatment, involuntary quarantine, restrictions on travel and the freedom of assembly, censorship of what the authorities deem to be disinformation, suspension of habeas corpus, and military policing of civilians. Many of these were underway before COVID-19; since its advent, they have been irresistible.



COVID-19 is like a rehab intervention that breaks the addictive hold of normality. To interrupt a habit is to make it visible; it is to turn it from a compulsion to a choice.

Let us ask why we are able to unify our collective will to stem this virus, but not to address other grave threats to humanity. Why, until now, has society been so frozen in its existing trajectory?

The same goes for the automation of commerce; the transition from participation in sports and entertainment to remote viewing; the migration of life from public to private spaces; the transition away from place-based schools toward online education, the decline of bricks-and-mortar stores, and the movement of human work and leisure onto screens. COVID-19 is accelerating pre-existing trends, political, economic, and social.

While all the above are, in the short term, justified on the grounds of flattening the curve (the epidemiological growth curve), we are also hearing a lot about a “new normal”; that is to say, the changes may not be temporary. Since the threat of infectious disease, like the threat of terrorism, never goes away, control measures can easily become permanent. If we were going in this direction anyway, the current justification must be part of a deeper impulse.

I will analyze this impulse in two parts: the reflex of control, and the war on death. Thus understood, an initiatory opportunity emerges, one that we are seeing already in the form of the solidarity, compassion, and care that COVID-19 has inspired.



The reflex of control

At the current writing, official statistics say that about 25,000 people have died from COVID-19. By the time it runs its course, the death toll could be ten times or a hundred times bigger, or even, if the most alarming guesses are right, a thousand times bigger. Each one of these people has loved ones, family and friends. Compassion and conscience call us to do what we can to avert unnecessary tragedy. This is personal for me: my own infinitely dear but frail mother is among the most vulnerable to a disease that kills mostly the aged and the infirm. ...

Whether the final global death toll is 50,000 or 500,000 or 5 million, let's look at some other numbers to get some perspective. My point is



not that COVID isn't so bad and we shouldn't do anything. Bear with me.

Last year, according to the FAO, five million children worldwide died of hunger (among 162 million who are stunted and 51 million who are wasted). That is 200 times more people than have died so far from COVID-19, yet no government has declared a state of emergency or asked that we radically alter our way of life to save them.

Nor do we see a comparable level of alarm and action around suicide – the mere tip of an iceberg of despair and depression – which kills over a million people a year globally and 50,000 in the USA.

Or drug overdoses, which kill 70,000 in the USA, the autoimmunity epidemic, which affects 23.5 million (NIH figure) to 50 million (AARDA), or obesity, which afflicts well over 100 million. Why, for that matter, are we not in a frenzy about averting nuclear Armageddon or ecological collapse, but, to the contrary, pursue choices that magnify those very dangers?

Please, the point here is not that we haven't changed our ways to stop children from starving, so we shouldn't change them for COVID either. It is the contrary: If we can change so radically for COVID-19, we can do it for these other conditions too. Let us ask why we are able to unify our collective will to stem this virus, but not to address other grave threats to humanity. Why, until now, has society been so frozen in its existing trajectory?

The answer is revealing. Simply, in the face of world hunger, addiction, autoimmunity, suicide, or ecological collapse, we as a society do not know what to do. Our go-to crisis responses, all of which are some version of control, aren't very effective in addressing these conditions. Now along comes a contagious epidemic, and finally we can spring into action. It is a crisis for which control works: quarantines, lockdowns, isolation, hand-washing; control of movement, control of information, control of our bodies. That makes COVID a convenient receptacle for our inchoate fears, a place to channel our growing sense of helplessness in the face of the changes overtaking the world. COVID-19 is a threat that we know how to meet. Unlike so many of our other fears, COVID-19 offers a plan. ...

What is truth?

Because COVID-19 seems to justify so many items on the totalitarian wish list, there are those who believe it to be a deliberate power play. It is not my purpose to advance that theory nor to debunk it. ... The one thing I have learned through the course of this emergency is that I don't really know what is happening.

I don't see how anyone can amidst the seething farrago of news, fake news, rumors, suppressed information, conspiracy theories, propaganda, and politicized narratives that fill the Internet. I wish a lot more people would embrace not knowing. I say that both to those who embrace the dominant narrative, as well as to those who hew to dissenting ones. What information might we be blocking out, in order to maintain the integrity of our viewpoints? Let's be humble in our beliefs: it is a matter of life and death.

The war on death

My 7-year-old son hasn't seen or played with another child for two weeks. Millions of others are in the same boat. Most would agree that a month without social interaction for all those children is a reasonable sacrifice to save a million lives. But how about to save 100,000 lives? And what if the sacrifice is not for a month but for a year? Five years? Different people will have different opinions on that, according to their underlying values.

Let's replace the foregoing questions with something more personal, that pierces the inhuman utilitarian thinking that turns people into statistics and sacrifices some of them for something else. The relevant question for me is: Would I ask all the nation's children to forego play for a season, if it would reduce my mother's risk of dying, or for that matter, my own risk? Or I might ask: Would I decree the end of human hugging and handshakes,



if it would save my own life? This is not to devalue mom's life or my own, both of which are precious. I am grateful for every day she is still with us. But these questions bring up deep issues. What is the right way to live? What is the right way to die?

The answer to such questions, whether asked on behalf of oneself or on behalf of society at large, depends on how we hold death and how much we value play, touch, and togetherness, along with civil liberties and personal freedom. There is no easy formula to balance these values. ...

The mantra "safety first" comes from a value system that makes survival top priority, and that depreciates other values like fun, adventure, play, and the challenging of limits. Other cultures had different priorities. For instance, many traditional and indigenous cultures are much less protective of children, as documented in Jean Liedloff's classic, *The Continuum Concept*. They allow them risks and responsibilities that would seem insane to most modern people, believing that this is necessary for children to develop self-reliance and good judgment. I think most modern people, especially younger people, retain some of this inherent willingness to sacrifice safety in order to live life fully. ...

I asked a friend, a medical doctor who has spent time with the Q'ero in Peru, whether the Q'ero would (if they could) intubate someone to prolong their life. "Of course not," she said. "They would summon the shaman to help him die well." Dying well (which isn't necessarily the same as dying painlessly) is not much in today's medical vocabulary. No hospital records are kept on whether patients die well. That would not be counted as a positive outcome. In the world of the separate self, death is the ultimate catastrophe.

Understanding the self as a locus of consciousness in a matrix of relationship, one no longer searches for an enemy as the key to understanding every problem, but looks instead for imbalances in relationships. The war on death gives way to the quest to live well and fully, and we see that fear of death is actually fear of life.

On the other side of the fear,
we can see the love that
death liberates. Let it pour
forth. Let it saturate the soil
of our culture and fill its
aquifers so that it seeps up
through the cracks of our
crusted institutions, our
systems, and our habits.

But is it? Consider this perspective from Dr. Lissa Rankin: “Not all of us would want to be in an ICU, isolated from loved ones with a machine breathing for us, at risk of dying alone – even if it means they might increase their chance of survival. Some of us might rather be held in the arms of loved ones at home, even if that means our time has come. ... Remember, death is no ending. Death is going home.”

When the self is understood as relational, interdependent, even inter-existent, then it bleeds over into the other, and the other bleeds over into the self. Understanding the self as a locus of consciousness in a matrix of relationship, one no longer searches for an enemy as the key to understanding every problem, but looks instead for imbalances in relationships. The war on death gives way to the quest to live well and fully, and we see that fear of death is actually fear of life. How much of life will we forego to stay safe?

... The assumption that public policy should seek to minimize the number of deaths is nearly beyond question, a goal to which other values like play, freedom, etc. are subordinate. COVID-19 offers occasion to broaden that view. Yes, let us hold life sacred, more sacred than ever. Death teaches us that. Let us hold each person, young or old, sick or well, as the sacred, precious, beloved being that they are. And in the circle of our hearts, let us make room for other sacred values too. To hold life sacred is not just to live long, it is to live well and right and fully.

Like all fear, the fear around the coronavirus hints at what might lie beyond it. Anyone who has experienced the passing of someone close knows that death is a portal to love. COVID-19 has elevated death to prominence in the consciousness of a society that denies it. On the other side of the fear, we can see the love that death liberates. Let it pour forth. Let it saturate the soil of our culture and fill its aquifers so that it seeps up through the cracks of our crusted institutions, our systems, and our habits. Some of these may die too.

What world shall we live in?

How much of life do we want to sacrifice at the altar of security? If it keeps us safer, do we want to live in a world where human beings never congregate? ... COVID-19 will eventually subside, but the threat of infectious disease is permanent. Our response to it sets a course for the future. Public life, communal life, the life of shared physicality has been dwindling over several generations. Instead of shopping at stores, we get things delivered to our homes. Instead of packs of kids playing outside, we have play dates and digital adventures. Instead of the public square, we



have the online forum. Do we want to continue to insulate ourselves still further from each other and the world? ...

To reduce the risk of another pandemic, shall we choose to live in a society without hugs, handshakes, and high-fives, forever more? Shall we choose to live in a society where we no longer gather en masse? Shall the concert, the sports competition, and the festival be a thing of the past? Shall children no longer play with other children? Shall all human contact be mediated by computers and masks? No more dance classes, no more karate classes, no more conferences, no more churches? Is death reduction to be the standard by which to measure progress? Does human advancement mean separation? Is this the future?

The same question applies to the administrative tools required to control the movement of people and the flow of information. ... For the first time in history, the technological means exist to realize such a vision, at least in the developed world (for example, using cellphone location data to enforce social distancing; see also here). After a bumpy transition, we could live in a society where nearly all of life happens online: shopping, meeting, entertainment, socializing, working, even dating. Is that what we want? How many lives saved is that worth? ... After thousands of years, millions of years, of touch, contact, and togetherness, is the pinnacle of human progress to be that we cease such activities because they are too risky?

Life is community

The paradox of the program of control is that its progress rarely advances us any closer to its goal. Despite security systems in almost every upper middle class home, people are no less anxious or insecure than they were a generation ago. Despite elaborate security measures, the schools are not seeing fewer mass shootings. Despite phenomenal progress in medical technology, people have if anything become less healthy over the past thirty years, as chronic disease has proliferated and life expectancy stagnated and, in the USA and Britain, started to decline.

The measures being instituted to control COVID-19, likewise, may end up causing more suffering and death than they prevent. Minimizing deaths means minimizing the deaths that we know how to predict and measure. It is impossible to

measure the added deaths that might come from isolation-induced depression, for instance, or the despair caused by unemployment, or the lowered immunity and deterioration in health that chronic fear can cause. Loneliness and lack of social contact have been shown to increase inflammation, depression, dementia. According to Lissa Rankin, M.D., air pollution increases the risk of dying by 6%, obesity by 23%, alcohol abuse by 37%, and loneliness by 45%. ...

Even in diseases like COVID-19, in which we can name a pathogenic virus, matters are not so simple as a war between virus and victim. There is an alternative to the germ theory of disease that holds germs to be part of a larger process. When conditions are right, they multiply in the body, sometimes killing the host, but also, potentially, improving the conditions that accommodated them to begin with, for example by cleaning out



accumulated toxic debris via mucus discharge, or (metaphorically speaking) burning them up with fever. Sometimes called “terrain theory,” it says that germs are more symptom than cause of disease. As one meme explains it: “Your fish is sick. Germ theory: isolate the fish. Terrain theory: clean the tank.” ...

As the statistics I offered earlier on autoimmunity, obesity, etc. indicate, America and the modern world in general are facing a health crisis. Is the answer to do what we’ve been doing, only more thoroughly? The response so far to COVID has been to double down on the orthodoxy and sweep unconventional practices and dissenting viewpoints aside. Another response would be to widen our lens and examine the entire system, including who pays for it, how access is granted, and how research is funded, but also expanding out to include marginal fields like herbal medicine, functional medicine, and energy medicine. Perhaps we can take this opportunity to reevaluate prevailing theories of illness, health, and the body. Yes, let’s protect the sickened fish as best we can right now, but maybe next time we won’t have to isolate and drug so many fish, if we can clean the tank.

The Coronation

There is an alternative to the paradise of perfect control that our civilization has so long pursued, and that recedes as fast as our progress, like a mirage on the horizon. Yes, we can proceed as before, down the path toward greater insulation, isolation, domination, and separation. We can normalize heightened levels of separation and control, believe that they are necessary to keep us safe, and accept a world in which we are afraid to be near each other. Or we can take advantage of this pause, this break in normal, to turn onto a path of reunion, of holism, of the restoring of lost

We can take advantage of this pause, this break in normal, to turn onto a path of reunion, of holism, of the restoring of lost connections, of the repair of community and the rejoining of the web of life.

connections, of the repair of community and the rejoining of the web of life.

Do we double down on protecting the separate self, or do we accept the invitation into a world where all of us are in this together? It isn’t just in medicine we encounter this question: it visits us politically, economically, and in our personal lives as well. Take for example the issue of hoarding, which embodies the idea, “There won’t be enough for everyone, so I am going to make sure there is enough for me.” Another response might be, “Some don’t have enough, so I will share what I have with them.” Are we to be survivalists or helpers? What is life for?

On a larger scale, people are asking questions that have until now lurked on activist margins. What should we do about the homeless? What should we do about the people in prisons? In Third World slums? What should we do about the unemployed? What about all the hotel maids, the Uber drivers, the plumbers and janitors and bus drivers and cashiers who cannot work from home? And so now, finally, ideas like student debt relief and universal basic income are blossoming. “How do we protect those susceptible to COVID?” invites us into “How do we care for vulnerable people in general?”

That is the impulse that stirs in us, regardless of our opinions about COVID’s severity, origin, or best policy to address it. It is saying, let’s get serious about taking care of each other. Let’s remember how precious we all are and how precious life is. Let’s take inventory of our civilization, strip it down to its studs, and see if we can build one more beautiful.

As COVID stirs our compassion, more and more of us realize that we don’t want to go back to a normal so sorely lacking it. We have the opportunity now to forge a new, more compassionate normal.

Hopeful signs abound that this is happening. The United States government has unleashed hundreds of billions of dollars in direct payments to families. Donald Trump has put a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions. Both these developments embody the principle of caring for the vulnerable.

From all over the world we hear stories of solidarity and healing. One friend described sending \$100 each to ten strangers who were in dire need. My son, who until a few days ago worked at Dunkin’ Donuts, said people were tipping at five times the normal rate – and these



are working class people, many of them Hispanic truck drivers, who are economically insecure themselves. Doctors, nurses, and “essential workers” in other professions risk their lives to serve the public. ...

As Rebecca Solnit describes in her marvelous book, *A Paradise Built in Hell*, disaster often liberates solidarity. A more beautiful world shimmers just beneath the surface, bobbing up whenever the systems that hold it underwater loosen their grip.

For a long time we, as a collective, have stood helpless in the face of an ever-sickening society. Whether it is declining health, decaying infrastructure, depression, suicide, addiction, ecological degradation, or concentration of wealth, the symptoms of civilizational malaise in the developed world are plain to see, but we have been stuck in the systems and patterns that cause them. Now, COVID has gifted us a reset.



The time of Reunion is here. Every act of compassion, kindness, courage, or generosity heals us from the story of separation, because is assures both actor and witness that we are in this together.

A million forking paths lie before us. Universal basic income could mean an end to economic insecurity and the flowering of creativity as millions are freed from the work that COVID has shown us is less necessary than we thought. Or it could mean, with the decimation of small businesses, dependency on the state for a stipend that comes with strict conditions. The crisis could usher in totalitarianism or solidarity; medical martial law or a holistic renaissance; greater fear of the microbial world, or greater resiliency in participation in it; permanent norms of social distancing, or a renewed desire to come together.

What can guide us, as individuals and as a society, as we walk the garden of forking paths? At each junction, we can be aware of what we follow: fear or love, self-preservation or generosity. Shall we live in fear and build a society based on it? Shall we live to preserve our separate selves? Shall we use the crisis as a weapon against our political enemies? These are not all-or-nothing questions,

all fear or all love. It is that a next step into love lies before us. It feels daring, but not reckless. It treasures life, while accepting death. And it trusts that with each step, the next will become visible.

Please don't think that choosing love over fear can be accomplished solely through an act of will, and that fear too can be conquered like a virus. ... Fear, along with addiction, depression, and a host of physical ills, flourishes in a terrain of separation and trauma: inherited trauma, childhood trauma, violence, war, abuse, neglect, shame, punishment, poverty, and the muted, normalized trauma that affects nearly everyone who lives in a monetized economy, undergoes modern schooling, or lives without community or connection to place. This terrain can be changed, by trauma healing on a personal level, by systemic change toward a more compassionate society, and by transforming the basic narrative of separation: the separate self in a world of other, me separate from you, humanity separate from nature.

To be alone is a primal fear, and modern society has rendered us more and more alone. But the time of Reunion is here. Every act of compassion, kindness, courage, or generosity heals us from the story of separation, because it assures both actor and witness that we are in this together.

I will conclude by invoking one more dimension of the relationship between humans and viruses. Viruses are integral to evolution, not just of humans but of all eukaryotes. Viruses can transfer DNA from organism to organism, sometimes inserting it into the germline (where it becomes heritable). Known as horizontal gene transfer, this is a primary mechanism of evolution, allowing life

to evolve together much faster than is possible through random mutation. As Lynn Margulis once put it, we are our viruses.

And now let me venture into speculative territory. Perhaps the great diseases of civilization have quickened our biological and cultural evolution, bestowing key genetic information and offering both individual and collective initiation. Could the current pandemic be just that? Novel RNA codes are spreading from human to human, imbuing us with new genetic information; at the same time, we are receiving other esoteric “codes” that ride the back of the biological ones, disrupting our narratives and systems in the same way that an



The coronation marks the emergence of the unconscious into consciousness, the crystallization of chaos into order, the transcendence of compulsion into choice. We become the rulers of that which had ruled us. The new world order that conspiracy theorists fear is a shadow of the glorious possibility available to sovereign beings.

illness disrupts bodily physiology. The phenomenon follows the template of initiation: separation from normality, followed by a dilemma, breakdown, or ordeal, followed (if it is to be complete) by reintegration and celebration.

Now the question arises: Initiation into what? What is the specific nature and purpose of this initiation? The popular name for the pandemic offers a clue: coronavirus. A corona is a crown. “Novel coronavirus pandemic” means “a new coronation for all.”

Already we can feel the power of who we might become. A true sovereign does not run in fear from life or from death. A true sovereign does not dominate and conquer (that is a shadow archetype, the Tyrant). The true sovereign serves the people, serves life, and respects the sovereignty of all people. The coronation marks the emergence of the unconscious into consciousness, the crystallization of chaos into order, the transcendence of compulsion into choice. We become the rulers

of that which had ruled us. The new world order that conspiracy theorists fear is a shadow of the glorious possibility available to sovereign beings. No longer the vassals of fear, we can bring order to the kingdom and build an intentional society on the love already shining through the cracks of the world of separation.

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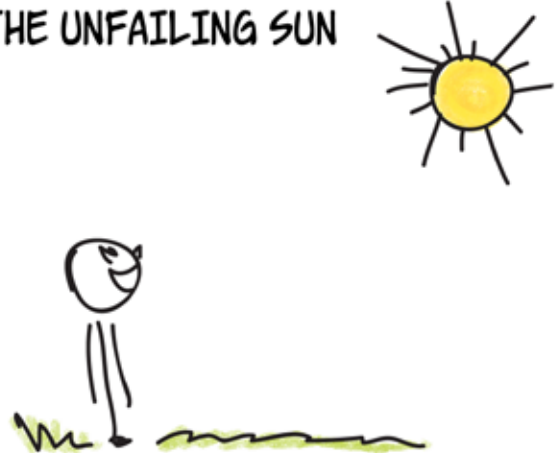
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THE UNFAILING SUN



Open Towards Love



Illustrations by JASMEE RATHOD

LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE explores love in the time of coronavirus, and how those of us with a spiritual practice can turn the results into action, bringing care and compassion into our communities.

Suddenly we are all thrown together into a time of anxiety, fear for the health of family, friends, loved ones and neighbors, and for the economic distress caused by this pandemic. While some countries have a strong safety net, many live pay-check to pay-check, or even day-to-day, the rickshaw driver without customers having nothing to feed his family. This is the reality of the global crisis we are all encountering. It is also a testing time for those of us who are fortunate to be rooted in a spiritual practice, faced with the simple opportunity to open towards love rather than contract into fear.

There is a story that when the Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan were sweeping across Central Asia, destroying cities, massacring the population, fearful dervishes ran to the great mystic Shams, the teacher of Rumi, shouting, "The Mongols are coming, the Mongols are coming!" He calmly replied,

"I have been teaching you to be a duck, now swim." For those of us drawn to the path of love, now is the opportunity to put our practice into action, to bring care and compassion into our communities, rather than being caught in the collective patterns of anxiety or panic that are swirling around us. This pandemic has taught us that we are all one, no one is separate, no countries or borders can limit the spread of the virus. Rather we have to respond from a place of shared humanity, helping and supporting each other.

The most common sense response to the virus has been to self-isolate, to close everything except essential services. Isolation is the oldest and most tested way to prevent the spread of a disease. In the Middle Ages in Europe whole cities were quarantined to prevent the spread of the plague. It is vital that as far as possible we practice social distancing. But rather than any sense of

isolation is the knowing that we are all in this together, that it is part of our shared journey together with each other and with the Earth. And the power of our love can serve as a balance to the darkness of fear, to the forces that can so easily contract us.

And in the strength of our love and our shared journey we can use this crisis as an opportunity, a moment to step back from the daily demands, the busyness of our outer life. With so many stores and businesses closed, we experience our life reduced to what is essential, and when this pandemic is over, can we continue with a voluntary simplicity, no longer caught in the addictions of consumerism? We can recognize that the Earth is sending us a message, that it is out of balance and needs our love and care and attention. We are all part of one interdependent living being, ancient beyond our understanding.

Love and care – care for each other, care for the Earth – are the simplest and most valuable human qualities. And love belongs to oneness.

We can no longer afford to pollute it with our ceaseless desires, filling the air with carbon emissions, the oceans with plastic.

If there is a light in this present crisis, it is in the air pollution plunging across China; ducks, fish, and clear waters returning to the canals of Venice. And possibly the shock of the pandemic will warn us of the danger of denying science, of waiting until it is too late. Maybe we can finally recognize that the imbalance of the Earth can and will affect us all, suddenly, unexpectedly.

We know this in our human relationships, how love draws us closer, and in its most intimate moments we can experience physical union with another. It can also awaken us to the awareness that we are one human family, and on the deepest level love can reconnect us with our essential unity with all life, with the Earth herself.

Love will remind us that we are a part of life – that we belong to each other and to this living, suffering planet. We just need to say “yes” to this mystery within our own hearts, to open to the link of love that unites us all, that is woven into the web of life. Only from this place of

living oneness can we support each other in this crisis and then walk into a future that recognizes, feels, the sacred nature of all that exists, and so help to bring our world back into balance. We can emerge from this pandemic with a deeper sense of our shared humanity and our love for our

common home, its mystery and wonder. Or we can remain stranded on the desolate shores of materialism, as in a supermarket where the shelves are increasingly empty.





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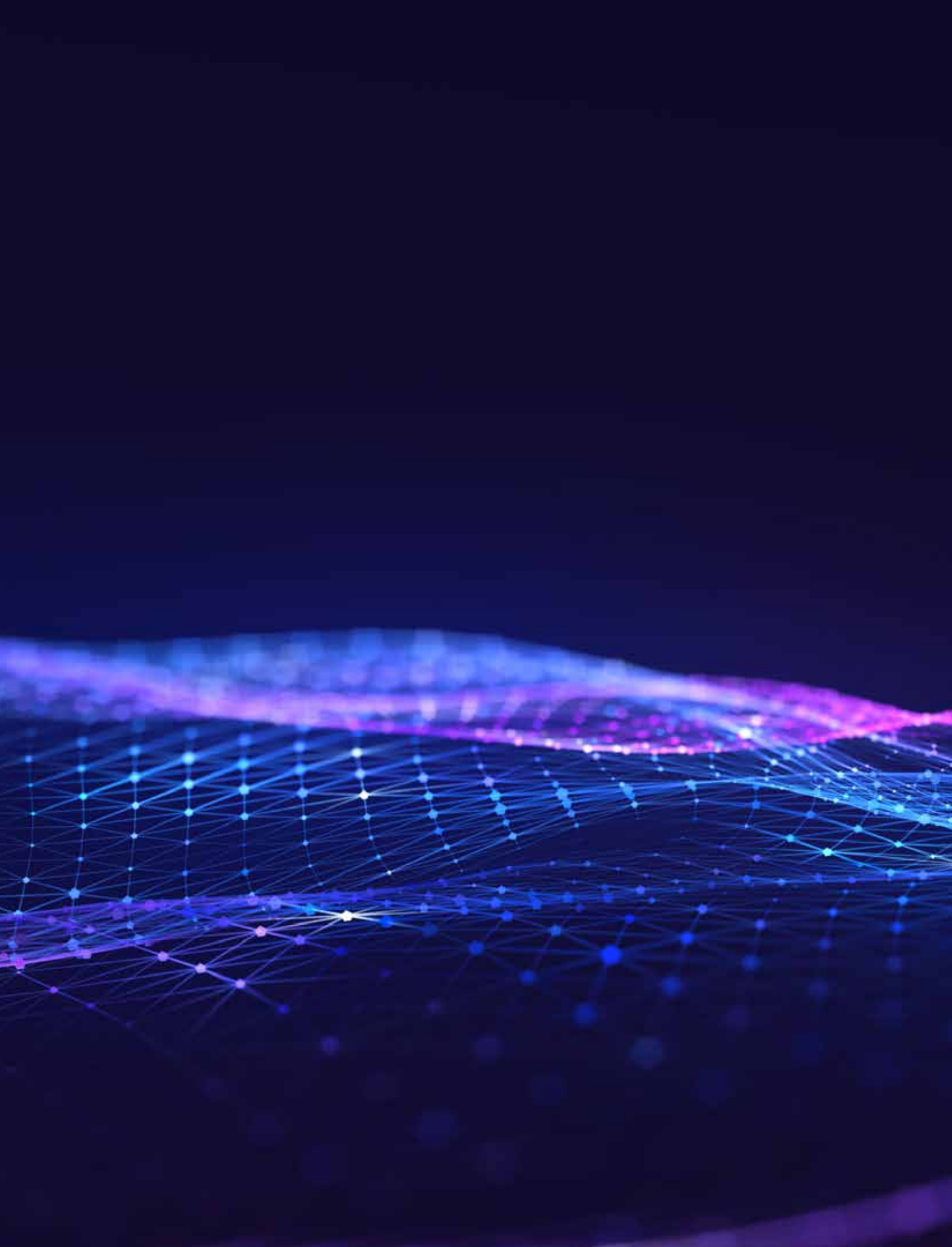
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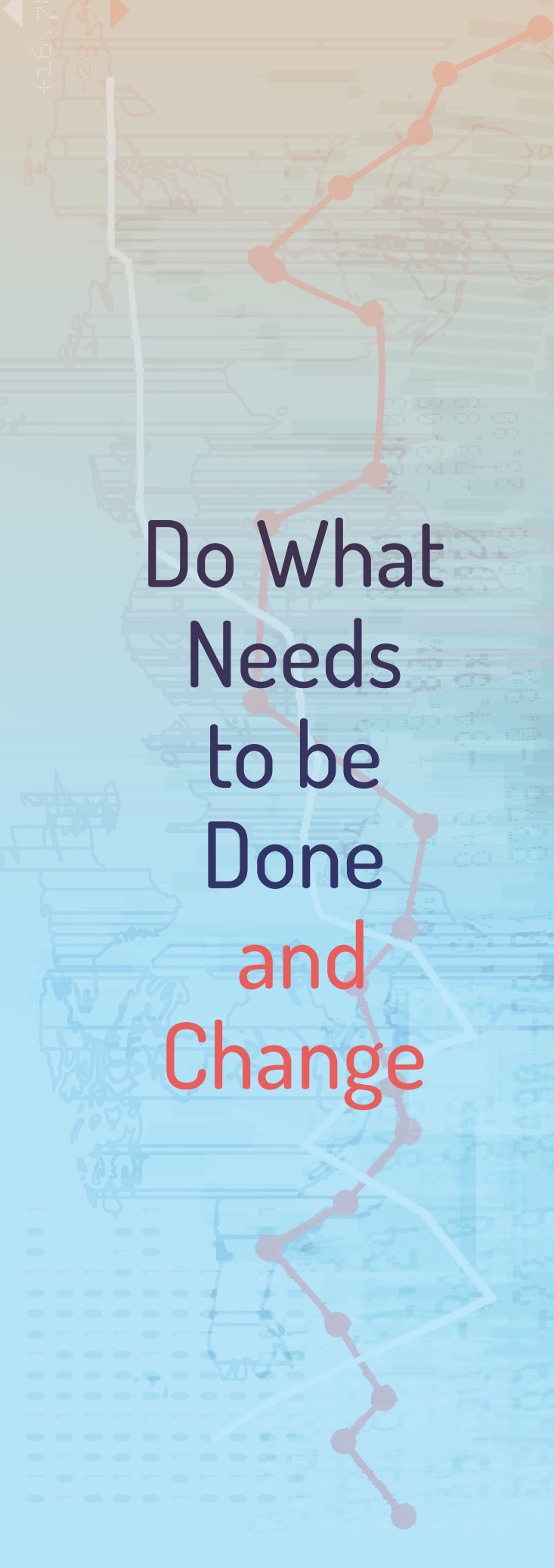




We are caught in an inescapable network
of mutuality, tied in a single garment of
destiny. Whatever affects one directly,
affects all indirectly.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.





Do What Needs to be Done and Change

The guru of change management, **DR ICHAK ADIZES**, shares some thoughts on how to make the most of the current world crisis and prepare for the future – as individuals, families, companies, nationals and humanity as a whole.

Humanity is facing a major challenge with the coronavirus crisis. It is estimated that millions of people might die worldwide. Beyond those who will die, scientists predict there will be many more millions of sick people who will not be productive for some time, until they recuperate.

This prediction is based on the estimate that between 50 to 70% of the population will get sick, out of which 80% will have a mild flu-like sickness, 17% will be very sick and hospitalized but will recover, and only 3% will die. They will be those with compromised health and the old.

One does not have to be a rocket scientist to realize that 20% of the population of any country going to hospital will lead to the collapse of the health delivery system, and it will be a challenge to bury or cremate 3% of the country's population.

But that's not all.



With 80% sick, 17% feeling like they will die any minute, and 3% actually dying, it will cause a major reduction in active customers and, thus, consumption. When people experience fear, they are not inclined to separate themselves from their cash. Furthermore, people sheltering at home to avoid getting sick will lead to a stoppage in factory production and delivery from logistics companies. As revenues shrink, companies are going to fire part of their workforce, and all these changes cumulatively will cause the health crisis to result in an economic crisis, heading to recession and predictably depression. Ah, not necessarily so, some might say. The government and the central bank will pump cash into the market to stimulate the economy, as they have done in the US in trillions of dollars.

This will not work because, no matter how much money is pumped in, only a small portion will be spent on the truly indispensable items like food and medicine. People will put the rest under the mattress, and companies in the bank. Why? Fear of the unknown. More money will not bring about more spending. What drives consumption is not how much money you have but how confident you feel, how safe you feel. But when the coronavirus is defeated, that money will eventually be used to buy and invest. It will be put to use. Just imagine those so far unused trillions of dollars entering the market all of a sudden. Potential outcome: serious inflation; The money is already in the market to be used, while to increase supply will take time. While inflation might rule the nest, the government, by now in serious national deficit for pumping those



trillions of dollars into the market, will have to increase taxes.

Welcome to the next serious crisis.

As the economic crisis worsens, people in the lower strata of society will suffer the most. There will be social unrest, making the health and economic crises become a social crisis too. The ensuing unrest will call for strong government intervention and regulation, that some liberal-oriented people will consider anti-democratic and too authoritarian, bordering on dictatorship. That will make the medical-economic-social crisis into a political one as well. The coronavirus crisis is an earthquake of major magnitude which, inevitably, will have

its aftershocks. This might last a few years, so the coronavirus is not the only challenge we have.

I hope and pray I am totally or even partially wrong. I would rather be laughed at for being so pessimistic. But in case I am even partially right, the question that should concern us is: What are we supposed to do in the light of such dire predictions?

In times of crisis, cash is king. Watch your cash. Cut fixed expenses and postpone variable expenses. But be careful not to produce side effects which are worse than the disease you are trying to control. What are they?

The biggest and most important asset a company has is not money. You can borrow. Bring investors. Postpone paying. It is not technology. If you have money you can buy or develop technology. It is not people. You can get new and better people if you are unhappy with the ones you have. It is human energy. Human energy is fixed. There are only 24 hours in a day. Period. The more you waste it, the less you have to use for functional purposes.

Now note that the more integrated a company is, the less energy is lost trying to make things work. In a disintegrated company, energy is lost internally and thus less is available to achieve results in the external environment. The more disintegrated the company is, the less energy it has to compete, to satisfy clients, to adapt to the market, to manage technological, social, legal and other changes that the company does not control and needs to deal with.

Okay, so, we want integration, but how to go about it you might ask?

Observe your culture. Do you have a culture where people trust and respect each other, especially those who lead? Positive constructive culture is the

most difficult to develop and the easiest to lose. Thus, while cutting fixed and postponing variable costs, pay attention not to destroy your culture, to cause disrespect and mistrust. Do not fire people. Instead, cut everybody's salary, and not equally either. From the best paid cut the most, starting with yourself. Postpone paying suppliers, but be sure you are fair – you don't want to cause their bankruptcy. Do the best you can for yourself, but pay heed to how it impacts others.

What else?

With the work burden down, this is your opportunity to fix and improve how your company operates. Now is the time to have meetings, even daily, using apps that enable distant communication. It is analogous to a person who loves playing golf, who dreams of playing on Saturday. Saturday comes and it's raining cats and dogs. No way to play golf. What should he do? One alternative is to sit and watch TV and feel miserable. The other is to fix the faucet, clean the house, do the administrative work he had no time to do when he was busy chasing work. When the rain stops his house will be in better shape than it was when the rain started.

Do the same with your company. Unite the company to work on the internal organizational environment while the outside is frozen. This is your opportunity to improve. To shine. While your competition is watching TV and feeling miserable, while your competition is suffering from the internal struggles and fighting caused by the pressures of the crisis, unite your company, polish your company to be the best diamond it can be. The diamond is the hardest mineral there is, and the hardest means the most integrated. And guess who will be better equipped to compete in the market place when the crisis is over?



The same applies to personal and family life. You might be in a closed, small compartment, the whole family, or just you and your spouse, or even you and yourself. There are two choices: polish the diamond or disintegrate. The crisis is a test. How strong are you as a person? How strong is the family? The marriage?

As a person how do you polish yourself to be a diamond? Meditate. Meditation unites. Integrates. Your heart is one, only one. Your mind is left, right, front and bottom, and whatever else, and you suffer a lot listening only to your mind, because the mind argues with itself all the time. The heart unites. You are at peace when you listen to your heart, and Heartfulness Meditation does exactly that.

The purpose of meditation is not to avoid panic or to fill the time that the coronavirus has freed by taking you out of work. The free time should be welcomed as a great gift to be a better person. A more together person. A better together family, company and society.

Stop the mad rush for more, more and more of more, as if more is better. Change direction. Change the lifestyle to better is more. Better health, better education, better protection of the environment. Better international cooperation. Better protection of family sanctity. Better dedication to spiritual growth rather than to bank accounts. Better quality of life rather than standard of living; they are not the same.

As a matter of fact, may I suggest that in the last hundred years our standard of living has gone up but our quality of life has gone down. Our ancestors were happier than we are. See for yourself. The more developed the country, the more therapists and life coaches and divorces there are per capita. We are materialistically and technologically way better off, but miserable. Our ancestors were poor but relatively happy. They



The purpose of meditation is not to avoid panic or to fill the time that the coronavirus has freed by taking you out of work. The free time should be welcomed as a great gift to be a better person. A more together person. A better together family, company and society.



had time to enjoy life. We struggle with having a balanced life.

This coronavirus crisis is reminding us what life is really all about. Sitting quarantined we have to face ourselves and ask a very valid point: What have we done to our little world we live in? To our environment. To our family. To our country. To our own health. What the hell was the crazy dash to catch the rainbow all about? What kind of a world are we leaving for our children and grandchildren to inherit? Is the answer in finding a way to move to Mars, Mr. Musk? Or rather slow down, change direction and fix the Earth?

We should each review our priorities as a person, as a family, as a company and as a society. Should

Nature is giving us repeated warnings. And like a good parent, if we do not listen, it increases the punishment until we do hear the message and do what needs to be done and change.


the real goal of a leader of any country be to be the biggest and strongest, and be the leader of the world, or is it to make that country the best place to live, the healthiest place to live, the most peaceful place to live and raise children? And exactly the same applies to being a CEO or a parent. What is really, really, really important?

I pray and hope that the massive crisis we are experiencing will call for a paradigm shift in how we work and manage, how our economic and political systems operate, and how we can be more human, rather than continue to be an organism that is in the process of accumulating planned perishable assets, destroys the physical and social environment it lives in, and, in doing so, brings an irreversible doomsday on humanity.

Coronavirus is not the end. It is the beginning. Like SARS was not the end. Nature is giving us repeated warnings. And like a good parent, if we do not listen, it increases the punishment until we do hear the message and do what needs to be done and change.

Sincerely,
[Dr Ichak Kalderon Adizes](#)

WHAT LIES BEYOND CORONA?



SANJAY SEHGAL, CEO of MSys Technologies, looks to the future. How are we preparing now for what is to come after the corona crisis passes? And what do we need to learn about ourselves in order to create a “new normal” that is a better future?

BC and AD

For many of us, life is now defined by BC and AD: Before Corona and After its Disappearance. And like most people I can't wait for AD.

Even as I write this, it hurts my heart to think how far we've come since the beginning of this year, and we haven't even reached the midpoint yet!

We are progressively realizing that power, beauty and money are worthless, and can't buy what's truly important. Maybe God is sending us a strong message that we are his guests, not his masters.

As the lockdown stretches on, we've arrived at that trying period where the novelty of being confined at home has started to wear off. My days have begun to blur into each other, with the same routine (or lack of one), anxiously checking on the latest updates concerning the viral spread. But I've begun thinking about what fate lies ahead in the wake of this pandemic. It is a crucial time, I feel, to reflect on, “Where will we be in six months, a year, or a few years from now?” And there are two aspects to this – our lifestyle and the economy.

In AD, there are numerous possible futures

All of these futures depend upon how we respond to the pandemic and its economic aftermath. As the virus has spread its wings, it's affected more than 175 countries, and, so far, has dented the global economy by an estimated \$2 to 3 trillion. In my view, its effects will be more pervasive, and we are probably just seeing the tip of the iceberg that will snowball into something much larger. With that, I see hope of a rebirth, where we work together to rebuild a better world.

The last quarter has seen the most brutal global equity collapse since the Great Depression. Retail sales have dropped, unemployment has reached record highs, and some industries may never be the same again:

Economically, Covid-19 has expedited and deepened the expected economic downturn in many countries. Sectors like travel, hospitality, manufacturing, IT etc. are already feeling the burn from the outbreak.

Politically, the outbreak is highlighting the

fact that most countries are placing their own security and well-being first, thereby decreasing trust in the various multinational organizations and pacts.

Lockdown is placing pressure on the global economy, making some world leaders call for an ease of lockdown measures in lieu of a serious recession.

Socially, however, COVID-19 will hopefully show us that we can absorb shocks and be stronger for it, as a global community. This is an important lesson that needs to be relearned by every generation.

What will the world look like after the crisis?

Someone once said that a crisis can make you better, but only with the right mindset.

We are now seeing solidarity among citizens of every country: 80 to 90% are currently favoring extended lockdowns, and governments are assisting those in need. So perhaps we are headed for a better normal in AD. As this new normal emerges, local production and all related technologies will gain speed. Entrepreneurial spirit will be

tapped more than ever, when many businesses will be functioning as if they are new – functioning like startups.

At the same time, governments will have to repair their self-image in the public's eyes. Harder measures to curb fake news and foreign information operations will become the standard, both during normal and crisis times. There will be better infrastructure in place for emergencies, and organizations will be better prepared for people to work from home at a moment's notice. There will be more pressure on governments to prepare for a rising demand in medical and social facilities, rather than a focus on nuclear weapons and defense. This is surely a welcome change.

I also anticipate the speed of recovery will be much faster than anyone can imagine right now. Bureaucracy will be reduced, all because everyone has joined together in their efforts towards a better future.

Even though there will be economic hardship, business conditions will improve eventually, by overcoming fear, negativity and other roadblocks.

It is a tough lesson for us to learn, that we know so little about ourselves. But learn we must, and quickly, for we need time to build a better future, and we must buy that time through the pursuit of knowledge.

A vertical illustration on the left side of the page shows a building facade with several balconies. On the balconies, there are stylized figures of people in various poses: some sitting, some standing, and one with a bicycle. The illustration is done in a sketchy, expressive style with black outlines and yellow and brown washes. The text 'Together is exactly what we need to be' is written in a cursive font, with 'Together' in purple and the rest in orange.

Together is exactly what we need to be

MAMATA VENKAT mourns the devastating effect of the virus in New York City, yet is completely moved by the way we are all stepping up and taking care of each other. It is showing us what we take for granted, and how much we value the simple things in life.

I'll be completely honest. I stared at a blank Word document for a long time as I tried to compose my thoughts to write this. How can anyone even begin to describe the way the world feels right now? The coronavirus has robbed all of us of any semblance of normalcy. The majority of us are now indefinitely locked down in our homes, while our brave healthcare researchers and

workers, including my incredible parents and the majority of my family, risk their lives day in and day out to do their normal day jobs and also treat the overwhelming wave of patients battling the coronavirus, and also frantically solidify a cure to end what has to be the most challenging era of fear and uncertainty that most of us have ever faced.

Sometimes I feel like we are living in a dystopian novel, trapped in an alternate universe without an exit route. Each day, the news becomes increasingly darker and ambiguous, not providing us with any relief of when this situation might end as each country takes every measure possible to curb the spread of this virus. Colleges and universities have moved online for the rest of the year; malls and movie theatres are shut down indefinitely. Business after business takes hit after hit. And social distancing has made many of us feel lonelier than ever: friends and family can only see one another over video chat, if at all, increasing anxiety and depression rates as people get the call to self-isolate and work from home.

My beautiful New York City is currently the epicenter of what feels like a bio-war. Doctors and nurses live away from their families as they work themselves to the bone; hospital beds are running out so fast that the lush green lawns of Central Park are now dotted with white medical tents so healthcare facilities can have more treatment centers for patients; and Times Square, with all of its Broadway shows closed indefinitely and its people-less lanes, is the quietest it has ever been. I don't know when my home is every going to feel like home again.

This virus has been a rude awakening of all of the things I take for granted: the simplicity of going to the grocery store; taking the Subway to visit my best friend; going to concerts; hugging my mom. I recognize my privilege during this time: I am lucky enough to be safely nestled at home with my family, to be able to work from home, and to take walks and get fresh air when I need it. So many of us aren't so lucky.


Many of our friends, family members, neighbors, acquaintances, and even enemies and strangers are struggling right now. People have lost jobs, lost homes, and heartbreakingly lost loved ones. Self-quarantine and social distancing have literally uprooted so many lives. But in a time when all of us could theoretically only be looking out for ourselves, I am completely moved by the way we are stepping up for one another.

I was scrolling through Twitter the other day when I read a tweet that at first absolutely broke my heart, but then filled me with so much joy and hope. A man was celebrating his 67th birthday, but because of the coronavirus he was forced to isolate and celebrate alone. When he posted on Twitter asking for a few birthday wishes, the world stepped up, not only showering him with well-wishes and happy returns,





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but also asking him for his address so that they could send him birthday cards and balloons and treats so that he didn't have to celebrate by himself. I burst into tears when I read the responses to this man's tweet.

There have been so many other wonderful moments of kindness, community, and generosity just like this one. People are sewing masks and personal protective equipment for the doctors, nurses, and medical professionals who are risking their lives on the frontline every day to fight the virus. Communities are supporting their local small businesses and restaurants, and those restaurants are turning into grocery stores in order to provide food for people who are struggling financially. CEOs and other business heads are cutting their salaries in half or more to ensure that their employees can keep working.

I have seen people express their grief over losing their job on social media, only to have hundreds of people immediately respond to them with temporary job opportunities to help them pay the bills. Health and wellness businesses have moved their operations online, allowing people to take classes online for free or at discounted rates.

Friends and family members are reaching out to one another to check in so that people feel a little less alone. People are standing out on their balconies applauding our healthcare workers, or singing with one another, creating irrevocable bonds with strangers they probably never thought they'd meet.

We are all directly impacted by the spread of this virus, and yet, we are all stepping up and taking care of one another. These moments of positivity, these sweet acts of kindness, stand out to me more than any grim statistic or news piece. In a time in when the majority of us cannot be together physically, the global community has come together to say that 'together' is exactly what we need to be.



A more refined *Humanity*

DR. V. RAMAKANTHA is a former Indian Forest Service officer and member of the Green Kanha Initiative at the Heartfulness Community's Meditation Center at Kanha Shanti Vanam in India. Having spent most of his working life living in forests and jungles, in tune with the natural world, his slant on our current corona crisis is steeped in nature and also in the stories and traditions of ancient India.

While people around the world are worried that shaking hands, hugging and kissing might help spread the virus, the Indian traditional greeting of 'Namaste' comes in handy. Even Prince Charles and President Trump have popularized it as a fashionable corona greeting!

When we fold our hands in greeting, it is to communicate that "You and I are one and the same, sparks of the same Divinity; and I salute the Divinity within you." When the world appreciates this greeting with folded hands, it is likely to stay even after the threat of the virus vanishes.

The slowdown and shut down of activities we are facing also offer us an opportunity to



ponder over some basic issues. There has never been a paucity of wise people, sages and philosophers around the globe who can influence society by their reflections on the purpose and goal of human life. Ancient Indian literature, about which I am familiar, is replete with

analyses, stories and metaphors concerning the transient nature of human life on Earth. Also, Indians, like other Asians, stand out in having no compunction in talking about life and death in the same breath! In a way, this nonchalant attitude helps us deal with the corona crisis.

Here, the story of 'The Woman and the Buddha' is worth recounting. A grief stricken woman approached Buddha and pleaded that he should bring back her husband, who had died. The Compassionate One pondered for a while, and said that he would help her, but she had to first bring a fistful of mustard seeds from a home where there was no death. The lady was pleased with the offer of help. She went looking for the mustard seeds. Wherever

Photographs by Josh Bulriss

she went, she was told that there was a death in the family. She eventually discovered the truth that death is inevitable. In helping her to discover the truth for herself, Lord Buddha expressed his compassion.

There is another piece of great perception in the epic Mahabharata:

In this cauldron fashioned from illusion, with the sun as fire, day and night as kindling wood, the months and seasons as the ladle for stirring, Time (or Death) cooks all beings. This is the simple truth!

The first thing that we may try to do is not to be obsessively worried about death. Fear in the heart of a human being is damaging. It attracts other emotions, like prejudice, hatred and anger, and leads to an

imbalanced life. Undue worry and excessive fear affect the body and the mind adversely, and can even be the premature cause of death itself. Is there a way to overcome the fear of death? Yes there is.

Though it is too naïve to believe that reading literature about the ephemeral nature of human existence will help us overcome the fear, such an understanding may propel us to explore the field of consciousness, and embark on the path of a meditative practice.

It has been my personal experience during the past 25 years that Heartfulness practices have helped me to bring my turbulent mind to stillness and calm. This form of meditation, aided by yogic Transmission, has enabled me to overcome the primordial

fear of death that is inherent in almost all of us. Cessation of the turbulence of the mind is Yoga. When we turn our attention inward, meditate, and achieve stillness of the mind, we experience peace, and ultimately joy, which is the quality of the soul. Through such meditative practices, an awareness dawns within us that we are in a body, but we are beyond the body. We have a mind but we are beyond the mind. Once we experience the immaculate joy stemming from meditative practices, in a mysterious way the fear starts losing its grip on us.

The very first blessing that comes our way through yogic practices is *Viveka* – the discriminative ability. It is imperative that all of us must be cautious during a medical crisis such as this, taking all the precautions available on the WHO website and through national and local public health authorities.

Those of us suffering from any type of cold, cough, fever, body ache and similar symptoms ought to stay at home, avoid public gatherings, and refrain from travel unless absolutely essential. Those of us who are lucky enough to have regulated minds through meditative practices will not unduly worry about attending to our duties and responsibilities in the face of the pandemic. If travelling



is unavoidable, we will embark on it with all the necessary precautions (this is specifically for those who are privileged to help their fellow beings, offering essential services).

One last thing. In the past five decades or so, many of us have been feeling that the world is running too fast for our comfort. Many of us have had everything but time! In our anxiety to earn a living, to make a career for ourselves, and for many other reasons, we have been deeply engrossed in so many activities that there was no time even to breathe. It is a metaphor, but literally true also, that an expert in *Pranayama* would have no guilt in declaring that most of humanity does not even know how to breathe! In the face of the spread of coronavirus, the world has not only slowed down, but quite a few of us would vouch that it has stopped. Staying indoors, we have so much time that we do not know what to do with it.

I have a proposition to make. Siddhartha was a prince in India, who was a normal human being like any one of us. He wanted to find the truth about human existence, and took refuge in a dense jungle and meditated. After many years of *tapasya*, he came back from the forests as the Enlightened One to show the way to the confused world. And the world could not



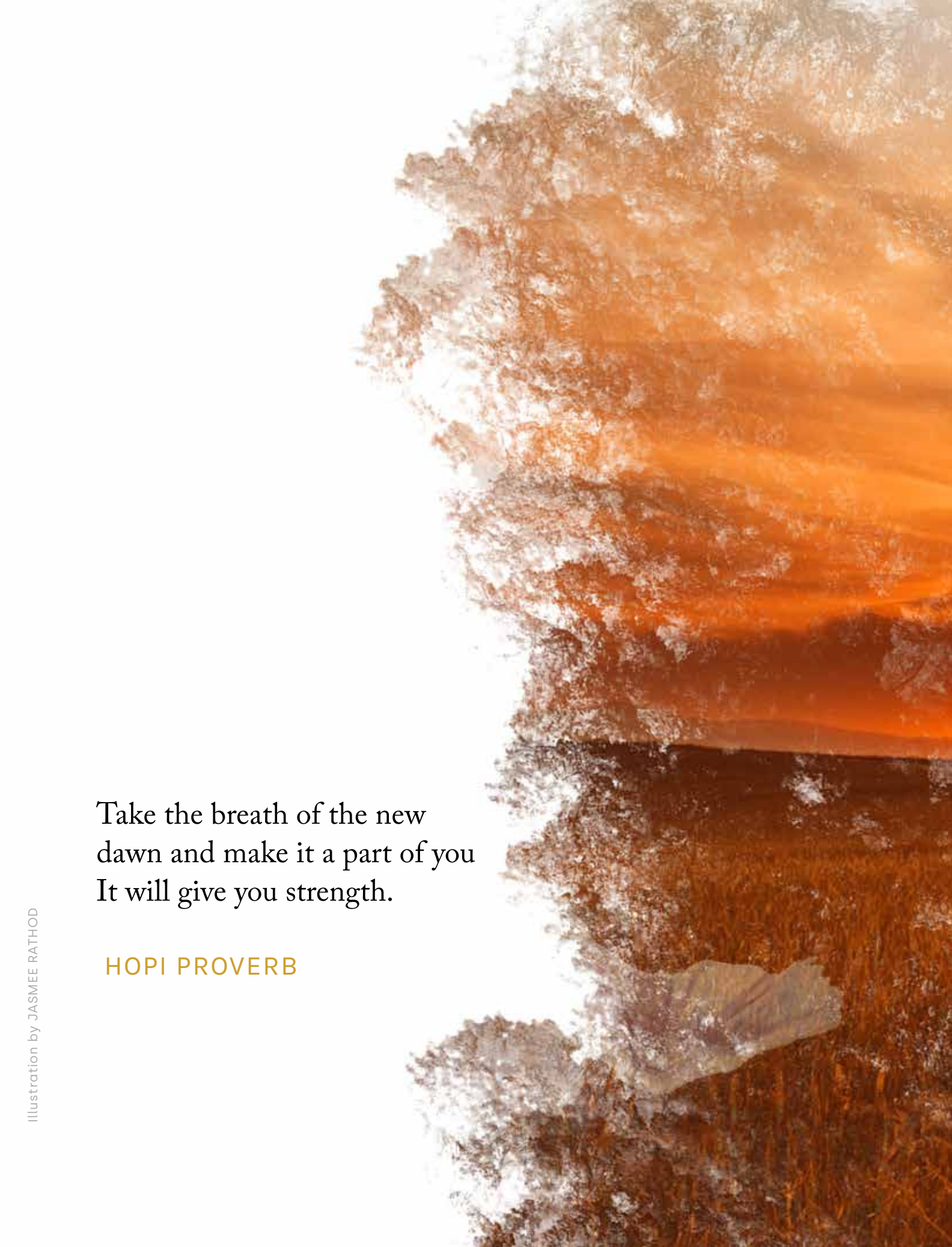
forget him and his teachings. If an ordinary human being by the name of Siddhartha could become the Buddha, the worship worthy, can we not explore that possibility?

It is said in the yogic literature that when we meditate we transcend Time; we transcend Space. If that is so, when Time cannot catch us, how then can it cook us? If you have time on your hands, please consider making a journey towards inner evolution and enlightenment. You will soon figure out that there is much more to human existence than meets the eye.

Every adversity offers an opportunity; we become

more sensitive to the miseries of others; we understand that one day we too will need the compassion of our fellow beings, as well as their assistance; we learn to stick together, and it is softening our hearts.

Some of the WhatsApp messages I receive these days are beautiful. People are voicing concern over the insensitivity of humanity, which has been blind to the generosity of this planet that is graced with many assets. Probably, this calamity is a prelude for a more just humanity, one that is more refined than that of the past.



Take the breath of the new
dawn and make it a part of you
It will give you strength.

HOPI PROVERB



A User's Guide to Living

Part -5

LEARNING TO SIMPLIFY LIFE



DAAJI continues his series on everyday living, introducing the fourth universal principle of the User's Guide – to live simply to be identical with Nature. Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing us to recalibrate our lifestyle, and for many of us that means simplifying our lives in ways that we could not have imagined even a few weeks ago. This fourth principle will help us to visualize our way forward and be creative in the ways we adapt to current circumstances.

The two wings of a bird

Before moving to the fourth principle, let's pause for a moment to see how far we have come. In the earlier articles of the User's Guide, we explored Principles 1 to 3 about the spiritual practices of meditation and prayer, and the ultimate goal of existence.

The remaining seven principles cover other aspects of daily life, relating to activities and interactions with others. Authentic progress includes both the worldly and the spiritual dimensions of existence, because they are not separate, and Babuji uses the analogy, "Spirituality and materiality are like the two wings of a bird. A bird cannot fly with one wing alone."

This statement of Babuji is often misinterpreted, according to the particular disposition of the reader. For example, some take it to mean that material success and spiritual success coexist, so that they can conveniently justify their material desires, pleasures and indulgences that are not in tune with spiritual progress. Some go to the other extreme, diving into spirituality in order to escape the human side of life, believing that their god or guru will somehow wave a magic wand and come to the rescue whenever there is a problem.

It reminds me of one of Aesop's fables about a man from Athens, who was going on a long sea journey when his ship was wrecked in a terrifying storm. He managed to escape from the sinking vessel with a few others, and they all held on to planks of wood from the shipwreck to stay afloat. There was an island nearby, so most of the survivors started swimming towards the shore, but the man from Athens did not.

Instead, he started praying to the goddess Athena, "Please rescue me from this terrible situation. I promise I will build a temple in your honor if I

survive this."

As he was pleading thus, a sailor swam by and called out, "Pray to Athena by all means, but also start swimming if you want to survive!"

What happens when we rely on the spiritual dimension to solve worldly issues? In the early 1980s, the psychologist John Welwood coined the term "spiritual bypassing" to describe a phenomenon he observed in many meditators – that they use spiritual practices and beliefs to avoid dealing with unresolved emotional and psychological issues. Today, this term is commonly used in the West for behavior that results in a conceptual, one-sided kind of spirituality, where one pole of life is elevated at the expense of the other, and subconscious tendencies are not dealt with at all. Welwood observed this wreaking havoc in people's lives, especially in relationships. Spirituality becomes some sort of escapism to avoid the challenges of worldly life.

Today this is common, with the mushrooming number of teachers offering fast-food spirituality, but it is nothing new. In Babuji's lifetime he also encountered a wide spectrum of spiritual paths and practices, and lamented that many so-called gurus were merely parroting scriptures and techniques without having the necessary caliber, expertise and experience to guide their followers towards the Goal. He also came across paths that prescribed austerity and isolation, where practitioners ran away from the psychological and interpersonal dimensions of being. Both extremes miss the point. Babuji realized that a genuine spiritual path has to support the personal, interpersonal and transpersonal levels of being.

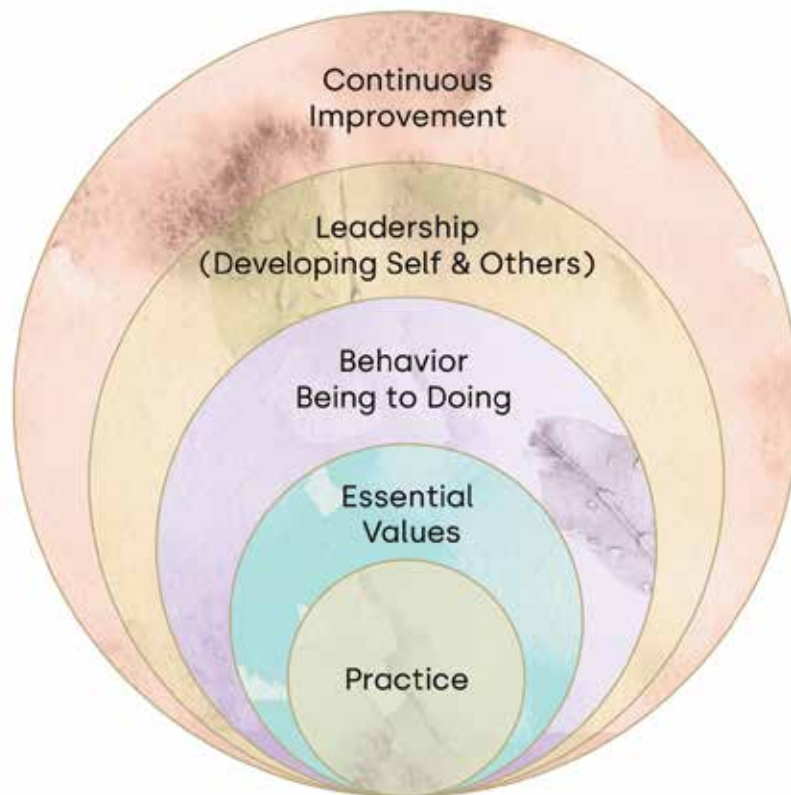
His analogy of a bird needing two wings to fly also has another meaning: As we progress spiritually, our material life becomes more and more charged with the finer vibrations of our spiritual essence. As a result, our growth in both spheres integrates to be in tune with our divine Nature. In fact, we develop

as a complete human being in order to soar on both wings, with the heart functioning like the tail of the bird, guiding us forward.

So what is this human aspect all about? We have multiple dimensions or layers of being – our physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions – and each one affects all the others. Our aim is to bring these dimensions into a holistic and dynamic oneness. From a quantum perspective, these dimensions are energy sheaths that become progressively subtler as we move from the outer to the inner – from form to formlessness; from matter, to energy, to Absolute. In Yoga, they are also known as sheaths, the *koshas* of our system. We cannot ignore any of them in our journey to the Goal. They are all part of the oneness of our being in different states of vibration.

Principles 1 to 3 focus on our spiritual practice and purpose. In Heartfulness, the practice includes Meditation with Transmission in the morning, Cleaning in the evening, and Prayer at bedtime. There are also additional practices, such as Point A Meditation to develop universal harmony and brotherhood, Point B Cleaning to manage and moderate sensual energy, and a Universal Prayer for Peace. Together, they regulate the mind, purify the heart, and help us to expand our consciousness as we journey through the chakras.

But what about the remaining 22 or 23 hours of the day, which we spend with our family and friends, working or studying, enjoying hobbies, recreational activities, and sleeping? Are we conscious of how our inner state expresses outwardly in our behavior at those times? This brings us to the next set of Principles, which help us to develop a lifestyle in tune with our inner growth.



Within the five elements are ten universal principles:

The Practice

1

Create a daily morning meditation practice scientifically

2

Fill your heart with love before starting meditation and before sleeping

3

Fix your goal and do not rest until you attain it

Essential values

4

Live simply to be in tune with Nature

5

Be truthful & accept challenges as being for your betterment

Behavior Being to Doing

6

Know everyone as one, treating them equally & harmoniously

7

Do not seek revenge for the wrongs done by others, instead always be grateful

8

Honor the resources you are given as sacred, with an attitude of purity, including food and money

Leadership

9

Become a role model by inspiring love and sacredness in others. Accept the richness of their diversity, while also accepting that we are all one

Continuous Improvement

10

Introspect daily before bedtime, so as to correct your faults and avoid making the same mistake twice

Simplicity

The first of these, Principle 4, is about the essential value of simplicity:

Principle 4:

Simplify your life so as to be identical with Nature.

This value follows directly from Principle 3 – when we are in tune with the Goal, complete oneness with God, our life simplifies across all dimensions. God is ultimate simplicity, so the only methods that will take us there are the simplest methods. When we are not in tune with this Goal, our own creation leads to complexity. The minute we are able to let go of our own creation, magic can happen! That is why so much importance is given to acceptance and



surrender in spiritual systems. Surrender is the key to simplification. So how can we work with this value of simplicity to transform ourselves from the inside out?

Enter the belief system

We have three bodies – the physical body, the subtle body and the causal body. The causal body is our soul, our eternal essence. The field that emanates from and surrounds the causal body is the subtle body field of our pure consciousness (*chit*). And the other subtle bodies – including the ego (*ahankar*), the intellect (*buddhi*) and the contemplative mind (*manas*) – are functions within this field of consciousness.

The ego is our individual identity, and in its original form it is simply that – a plain identity without any preconceptions or attachments. As a function of the mind, it is our impetus to manifest things, and is thus associated with our energy sheath, our *pranamaya kosha*. Without it we would not be able to think, act, or be interested in anything. But as complexities develop within our field of consciousness, the ego hooks on to these complexities, distorting its purity of identification. We start to identify with various things – our principles, our beliefs, our culture and conditioning, our ambitions, as well as the roles we play, e.g. husband, wife, mother, father and CEO, and also our qualities, e.g. intelligent, stupid, kind, creative etc. We even go so far as to identify with our belongings and possessions, e.g. our house or car, jewelry or bank balance. All these things define our belief system. Whether we know it or not, our attitudes and actions emanate from the belief system, so if we really want to change our attitudes and actions, we need to change our belief system.

The birth of the belief system

How has the belief system formed? It has accumulated over time, as a result of our thoughts, feelings and reactions to circumstances that have created impressions in our subtle field of consciousness – those layers of complexity or knots that we call *samskaras*. They create the belief system in which we are enmeshed. Our thought has the same power as the original thought that led to the creation of the universe, and within this macrocosm of the universe we exist as tiny microcosms with our own customized individual creations.

The big difference, apart from scale, is that the seeds of our individual creation are the impressions or *samskaras* that have been laid down in our subtle field of consciousness. They form a unique individual blueprint at the level of the subtle body, just as our fingerprints have a unique blueprint at the physical level. Impressions are responsible for the emotional heaviness, turbulence and entanglements we experience. This complex network of our own making is also affected by external circumstances and the environment.

The continuous interplay of our network with that of others determines our personality and character, resulting in our habits and tendencies. From a neurological perspective, we say that our patterns are hardwired into our neural pathways. From a psychological perspective, they are defined by our psycho-emotional subconscious world. This includes those parts of ourselves of which we are ashamed, that we repress, disown, neglect, hate and bury deep, hidden from view. They lurk behind the veil of our consciousness, ever ready to explode if we are not able to address them skillfully. From the metaphysical perspective, it is this complex network that shrouds the true divine Nature of our existence. Thus we are trapped in a prison of our own making.

What is our true Nature?

Simplicity is our essential original Nature – and simplicity also means purity of consciousness. It is the reflection of that which existed in latent form before creation. It is the base of existence, where stillness and silence prevail. It exists beyond the shores of thought, beyond consciousness, and beyond form. It is that very origin from which all forms burst forth into existence.

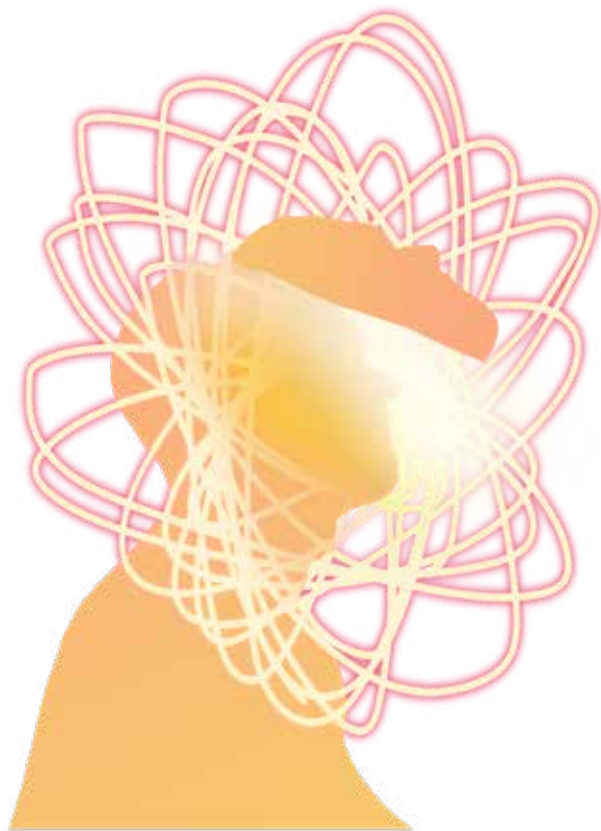


When we go back to that state beyond creation, it does not just mean going back in time; it means to dissolve into the singularity and beyond. It sounds like science fiction, but it is possible. Babuji showed us the way, through the channel that runs all the way to the origin. It is the same channel through which we have descended; all that we have to do is to retrace our steps.

It is like rewinding a ball of yarn that has been tangled up by a small child playing. Imagine that we are helping a tiny little ant find its way back

to the beginning of the yarn. We have to carefully remove all the kinks and knots and straighten it all up, “shattering our own individual network.”

But before that can happen, we have to reverse the flow of our intention and attention from the outward pull of greater and greater complexity, diversity and entropy, to the inward pull of simplicity, purity and unity. We realign ourselves with the centripetal flow toward Oneness, toward God. Can we do this alone? No. It requires help from a fellow traveler who has already experienced that Oneness.



It's not so simple

This concept of simplicity may appear to be very simple, but it is not so simple to apply it in our lives. Why is it so? Because until the veils of complexity are removed we have no experience of simplicity. It is like climbing a mountain through forests and gullies; until we reach the peak we cannot appreciate the level to which we have come and the view. Most of us start meditating without a full understanding of what it really entails. There is something in us that is tugging or pulling from inside. At this stage we are a *seeker*. At some point we find a trainer who volunteers to teach us how to meditate, and we become a *student*. We usually have many concerns and questions, and if we successfully navigate them we move to the stage of being a *novice* practitioner. We experience inner transformation and the vastness of our metaphysical universe and realize that there is a lot more to meditating than we originally thought. So we graduate to the level of a *committed* practitioner, with a daily habit of practice, and here our inner journey begins.

At this stage we begin to get a glimpse of the work of the Guide, but it is not until we become an *adept* practitioner that we start to really develop faith in him, accept him with all our being, and fully surrender to him. This requires transcendence of the ego.

And while we willingly take help from the Guide for our onward journey, our part in this development is to refine our character and behavior – the human side of life. Spiritual growth is the work of the Guide, and character development is our work. Both have to go hand in hand for us to grow. Actually, it is character that is the foundation for spirituality. Real expansion happens only when there is both vertical growth and horizontal growth in proportion to each other.

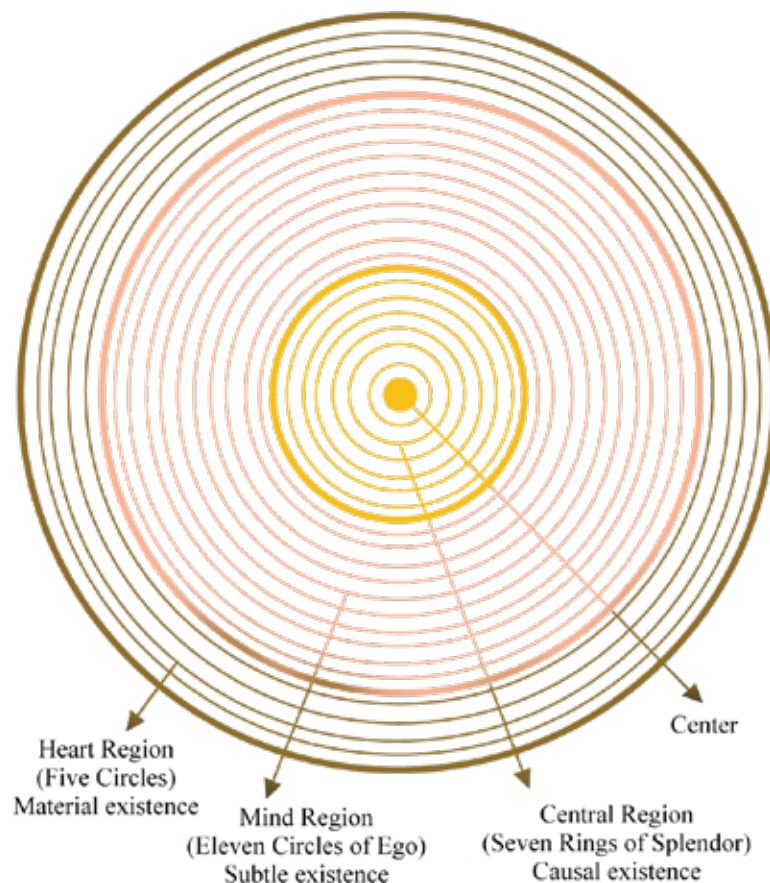
Ego is not the enemy. It is a great instrument, a great friend.

The word “ego” was popularized by the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, and his colleagues in the early 20th century, although it has been described for many thousands of years in the yogic literature as one of the subtle bodies, *ahankar*, as described above. This subject is so vast that it is not possible to cover here, but suffice it to say that the science of the ego was explored in depth by the ancient sages of the East, and that exploration has evolved even more deeply during the last 150 years

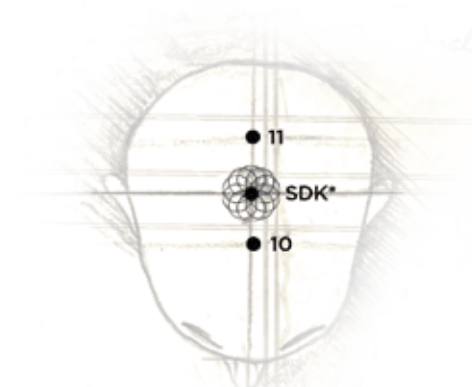
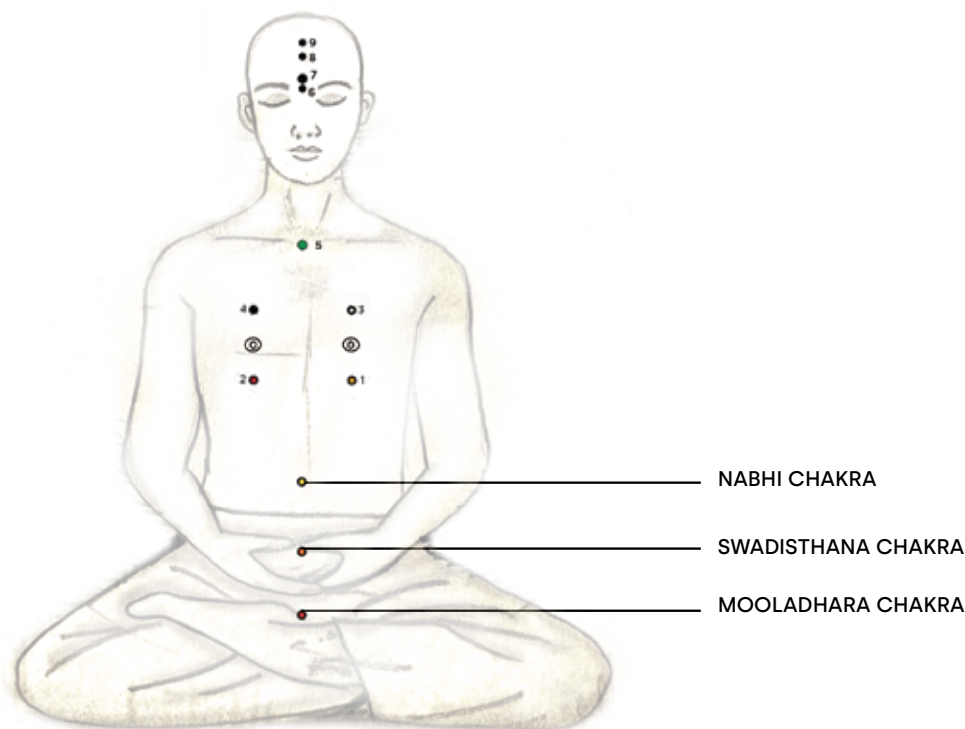
by yogis – during roughly the same period as Freud and western psychology has taken up the topic in earnest.

Yoga describes *ahankar* as one of the subtle bodies, one of the functions of the mind, the identity that the soul as the self takes to navigate this earthly domain. It cannot be destroyed, nor should it be, as our very existence as individuals depends on it.

In the spiritual journey, the ego is refined and purified, stage by stage, and its major refinement is associated with chakras 6 to 12 of the Mind Region, also defining the “rings of ego.” All this is laid out beautifully in Babuji’s books *Reality at Dawn* and *Towards Infinity*.



The 23 Rings of Heartfulness Yoga



*SDK - SAHASRARA DAL KAMAL



As we refine the ego, our ever-changing perspective is just like that of the mountaineer climbing up to the peak. In fact, until we reach a certain elevation in our spiritual journey, we are not able to let go and manifest the capacity for surrender that results in simplicity. That particular elevation is known as chakra 9 in our spiritual anatomy, associated with the region of *Prapanna*. We can even say that this stage is the real beginning of the process of simplification, which continues to refine as we progress further; chakra 9 it is still nowhere near the ultimate state of simplicity.

At chakra 9, we start to really cooperate with the work of the Guide, cultivating those behaviors and habits that support his efforts to shatter the network. Such habits are outlined in the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali – removing unwanted tendencies through *Yama*, cultivating noble qualities through *Niyama*, good posture through *Asana*, balancing the energetic body through *Pranayama*, regulating the senses through *Pratyahara*, simplifying thoughts to a single focus on the Goal through *Dharana*,

regulating the mind from thought to feeling to becoming to being to non-being through *Dhyana*, and arriving at the original state of *Samadhi*. Another way of presenting the same aspects is through these 10 Principles that originated in Babuji's Ten Maxims; they contain the same content in a more modern context. Of course, Babuji also gave us practical solutions, so there are Heartfulness practices and meditations for all these aspects, which are described in detail in the literature of Heartfulness.

Weaving our destiny with purity and simplicity

The latent power that was present at the time of creation is present in us, too, although generally it is trapped in the cocoon of our own creation. By rekindling it, and using it in the right way, we can attain our Goal. In Babuji's words, we can "try to re-own the latent power that is the very quintessence of Nature, by breaking up the network interwoven by yourself. Taking up as the ideal the simplicity of Nature, which is before everybody's view, we may set to work for the attainment of the Goal in a way that all senses, having merged, may become synonymous with that which remains after the fading away of previous impressions."

Spiritual practice is all about purification of the subtle bodies. And the necessary parallel in our character refinement is simplification, the removal of behavioral complexities. Patanjali says the same thing in his Yoga Sutras, when he explains that our arrival at the stillness of the latent state is the result of two things – our practice (known as *abhyas*) and our ability to let go of all of our desires and wishes (the state known as *vairagya*):

1.12: Abhyasa vairagyabhyam tat nirodhah

The *vrittis* are stilled through spiritual practice and the letting go of all the mental colorings.

Through our practice and the removal of unwanted complexities (*Yama*), we start to resonate with the Absolute state, the original state of stillness. Restlessness disappears. In Babuji's words, "we must go on reducing activities, shaking off all superfluities that have entered our being, for the purpose of shattering our individual network and assuming the purest state we have finally to acquire." As we simplify our life, and resonate with our divine Nature, we become purer and purer.

Babuji gave a beautiful message to some of his associates in 1982.¹

"We are all brethren connected intellectually, morally and spiritually – the main goal of human life. This and that have gone now. There remains the purity alone in all His work and environment which weaves the spiritual destiny of the Being with the Ultimate."

Once again he speaks of our spiritual connection as the main goal of human life. "This and that" refers to duality, to the opposites of material existence – good and bad, right and wrong, dark and light etc. So we eventually go beyond the opposites; we transcend the dualities of worldly existence where purity starts dawning more often.

¹ Ram Chandra, 2009. *Complete Works of Ram Chandra*, Volume 3. Shri Ram Chandra Mission, India.

Simplicity in action

These are hints of what we need to do. It is our work to take these hints and apply them in our day-to-day life. The message of Principle 4 is to simplify our life so as to be identical with our divine Nature, so let's see how we may apply this in our life.

OUTER NATURE

Living a life that is in tune with the natural world around us means resonating with it, being in tune with the rhythms of nature, and not hurting any living being without cause. Humans are the only living organisms that swim upstream against the current of the rhythms of nature. We can re-establish our harmonious relationship with nature when we simplify our habits of eating, sleeping, exercising, breathing, and every aspect of life to be in tune with natural cycles. Listening to our heart, as well as our body and its messages, will also help us be attuned to nature.

There are also other principles and rules that govern nature. For example, there is plenty of diversity in nature. Being open, accepting diversity, and seeing the unity in diversity are lessons we can learn from nature. Also, nature gives without holding back; it does not hoard. When we are generous and share our gifts with others, we are in tune with nature. And emulating nature's contentment and serenity is another way of being in tune.

It is also our duty to respect and protect nature, rather than exploiting it. Activities that increase pollution, climate change, the elimination and harming of other species, and the exploitation and mistreatment of various races of people are to be avoided if we want to be in tune with nature.

One way to do this is to live within our means and keep reducing our so-called needs. Many people adopt an extravagant life style to impress others and increase their status in society. Having reasonable comfort is a genuine need, however, any kind of extravagance is the need of the ego. This can be avoided, and our current world situation is challenging us to do this.

INNER NATURE

Then there is our inner divine Nature, simplicity being its essence. Purity, humility, calmness, poise, joy and surrender go hand in hand with the simple life, and the result is innocence, which is the final condition we arrive at.

Some final thoughts

In conclusion, I would like to say that we have to work with both wings simultaneously to achieve real growth. The work of shattering our individual network, and dissolving the tendencies of the mind, is the spiritual work of the Guide. He initiates the journey of our soul, loosens the knots in our subtle field of consciousness, and takes us up, chakra by chakra, so that our consciousness can continue to expand toward the Goal. This is inner work. Each time we meditate, we experience new conditions. In this regard, our work is to practice meticulously while surrendering to his boundless wisdom and love.

MY ULTIMATE VERSION

Per contra, for the human worldly dimension, the primary responsibility is ours, even though he also guides us in this realm as best he can. It is about continuously becoming a better version of ourselves. Can we imagine for a moment how we would like



to see ourselves in a year from now? Or when we are breathing our last, how will we present ourselves to God?

With modern technology, each product has multiple versions, for example Apple iOS version 12, version 14; and certain older applications will not work on the later version. What about our ultimate version? What would I like to see as “Kamlesh version 5,000,” my ultimate form, my ultimate inner being? Does it match with my present state of being? If not, what changes do I need to make, so that I come a little closer to the version I am dreaming of?

When we are meditating, or spending some quiet time, we can ask ourselves: What am I becoming? How would I like to see myself? Think of the personalities of great beings, and try to understand those personalities from their essence, from the qualitative point of view. Let’s see how we all can evolve qualitatively.

The first step is to remove all the complexities and impurities from our system. Then to recognize, understand and refine the nature of our ego. Our beliefs are those to which our ego has attached its identity, and our belief system is a sum total of all our conditioning which includes our assumptions, worldviews and psycho-emotional states. And how do we transform our belief system? First and foremost, by attuning it to our Goal, to the essence of our inner Nature – simplicity – and keeping it in our view as a vision.

This is reinforced by managing our senses, creating new habits and regulating our tendencies. Micro-practices like Point A Meditation and Point B Cleaning are essential to support this process of transformation. Most importantly, we learn to internalize the conditions we receive during meditation, so that every day we create a better version of ourselves. Also, we develop intimacy with those parts of ourselves that we have suppressed and disowned, including the shadow elements. Our greatest ally is our own awareness, shedding light on all that we are without judgment. There is nothing to hide, there is nothing to be ashamed of, for we know that we are enough, we are complete and loved.

To sum up, we are not merely human beings learning to evolve spiritually, we are spiritual beings waking up in human form, learning to become fully human.



ELISABETH HOWER is like many other young people in the US who have found themselves suddenly out of work and wondering how to navigate the new landscape of their lives. Here she shares her experience of Day 7 of quarantine.

It is Sunday night. Jobless and quarantined, I am sitting at my rickety kitchen table. A flea market find, painted haphazardly with a thin coat of faded white, as if the paint itself was sepia-toned. It was chipped when I bought it, that was part of the charm, and it's become more charming over the years with use and a scandalous absence of coasters. I've got two pots of vegetables on the stove. I should have gallons of stock by the end, if I don't let the gentle lullaby of the simmer send me to sleep first. Phoebe, my little dog who's recently been living her best life

since Mom is home all the time, sniffs the air optimistically. It is my Day 7.

I began wearing make up again on Day 4 because of how tired I looked in the mirror; it reminded me too much of the economy. I curled my hair on Day 5, but couldn't justify using hairspray. Down the road I'll take a look at why I need make up and a hair wand to achieve my "normal," but for now, in this new landscape, I'm taking it one step at a time. Sure, an acoustic Joshua Radin playing in the background perhaps feels

I can be thankful for the pauses.
For the slowdown. For the time to
question my old normal and new.
To daydream, create, catch up
with old friends, let go of petty
grievances, look inward at
shadows long ignored.

especially obvious, as does my glass
of brandy. Sue the new virus. I'm
adjusting.

I'm out of work, like thousands
of us. Adjusting to that, too.
Humbled and applying for aid.
Rationing my food to reduce
the number of required trips to
the grocery store. In moments of
optimism, I reflect on my time
spent living in France in my
20s. So inconceivable was it to
me that stores would be closed
on a Sunday. I'd been living in
New York, where everything is
accessible at any hour of the day
or night. And then there was
Amazon Prime, which changed
things yet again. But then, in
France, I began to love Sundays. I
began to love Saturday evenings,

because it buzzed with the
anticipation – was I prepared?
Did I have everything I needed
for the following day? I had to
acclimate, and found the beauty
in the surrender of the slower
pace. My mind wandered more,
my imagination nourished by the
boredom, rather than dulled by
it. I actually felt rested for the
following week.

Little did I know.

This is not a dreamy Sunday.
Most stores are closed. Every day.
It's not entirely clear when that
will change. There are real issues
of survival, and we haven't even
reached the apex of this thing. We
are living in a science-fiction film.
I'm having moments of panic. I'm

having moments of peace. But I
am mostly just doing what I can.
Preparing for dozens of Sundays.
Isolating. Cooking. Washing.
Zoom-ing. And also taking breaks
from all that. From the doing.
Accepting a slow descent into
stillness. Into silence. Into a new
– albeit hopefully temporary –
normal.

Mother Earth is bringing us to
our knees. It's the closest thing to
an act of God that I've seen in my
lifetime.

My phone is six years old. Eighty
in phone years. The keyboard is
so buggy it often takes fifteen
minutes to write a text. It freezes.
It shuts down at will. It must be in
the exact right position to charge,
so temperamental it has become in
its twilight years. If things really
hit the fan, I need a new one. So I
hopped on the phone to Adele at
T-Mobile and set about choosing
a new one. She was patient with
me for a solid 45 minutes, as I
kept reading reviews and waffling
between two models in real time.
And then, what color? (Oh, the
banality of our focus in times of
strife.) "Take your time," she said,
"I'm the same way when I try on
new clothes." I could have kissed
her through the phone.

When we were through, and she
read her script, "Is there anything
else I can assist you with today?" I
couldn't help myself. The world is
so stressed right now, I began. We
are all tense. We are all on edge,

and gripping. You are so kind, and I cannot tell you how much I appreciate that kindness.

Adele paused. She agreed. Told me where she was located. The feeling there was the same. “You are such a happy person,” she said, much to my surprise. “This is the only way through. To fight for our happiness, and keep spreading it.” I started to cry. “Don’t cry,” Adele implored, “Just keep fighting for your happiness.”

I don’t know what will happen next. Or how I’ll survive if this thing lasts as long as it potentially could. And I’m very aware that I’m in a better position than

most. But speaking to Adele, I am reconsidering my goals for this time. More, “How can I assist?” and less “Will I be okay?” The latter query won’t go away, at least for a while, but the former goes a long way in soothing it.

Phoebe has requested I stop staring at a screen, as I promised a half an hour ago. I’ve been gazing blankly, hoping a plan for “the fight for happiness” would appear, as if from General Patton himself. But this will take some time. In the moments between, I can be thankful for the pauses. For the slowdown. For the time to question my old normal and new. To daydream, create, catch

up with old friends, let go of petty grievances, look inward at shadows long ignored.

Mostly, I’m hoping this is a time we can all notice the details. The scuffed table. The downcast looks at Trader Joe’s. The hopeful ones, too. If we can all see each other a bit more, and do what we can, there might just be a way out of this, after all.

Elisabeth is a writer, actress and clown. She grew up in rural Pennsylvania, but has also lived in New York and Paris before her current home of Los Angeles. You can read more of her work, and learn more about her at elisabethhower.net.



LIFE'S GOOD

INHALE, EXHALE



INHALE, EXHALE



INHALE, EXHALE



INHALE, EXHALE



INHALE, EXHALE



LIFE'S GOOD





THE COLOR OF (CHILDREN

TERRAN DAILY

One day God was enjoying the beautiful world He had set in motion.

He loved the sky, sometimes pure blue with white clouds.

Sometimes filled with gray clouds that turned to rain falling from the sky.

"What a good idea!" He thought when he saw the yellow sun lighting and warming the earth.

"And another good idea!" when he saw the silver moon shedding its gentle light in the night sky.

He loved the plants with their many colors – green, yellow and red leaves; tree trunks shiny gray or deep mottled brown.

Flowers of red, orange, yellow, blue and purple.

"I love all this," He thought. "And yet something is missing."

"I know, the world needs children! But what color should these children be?"

"Blue like the sky?"

"Green like the leaves?"

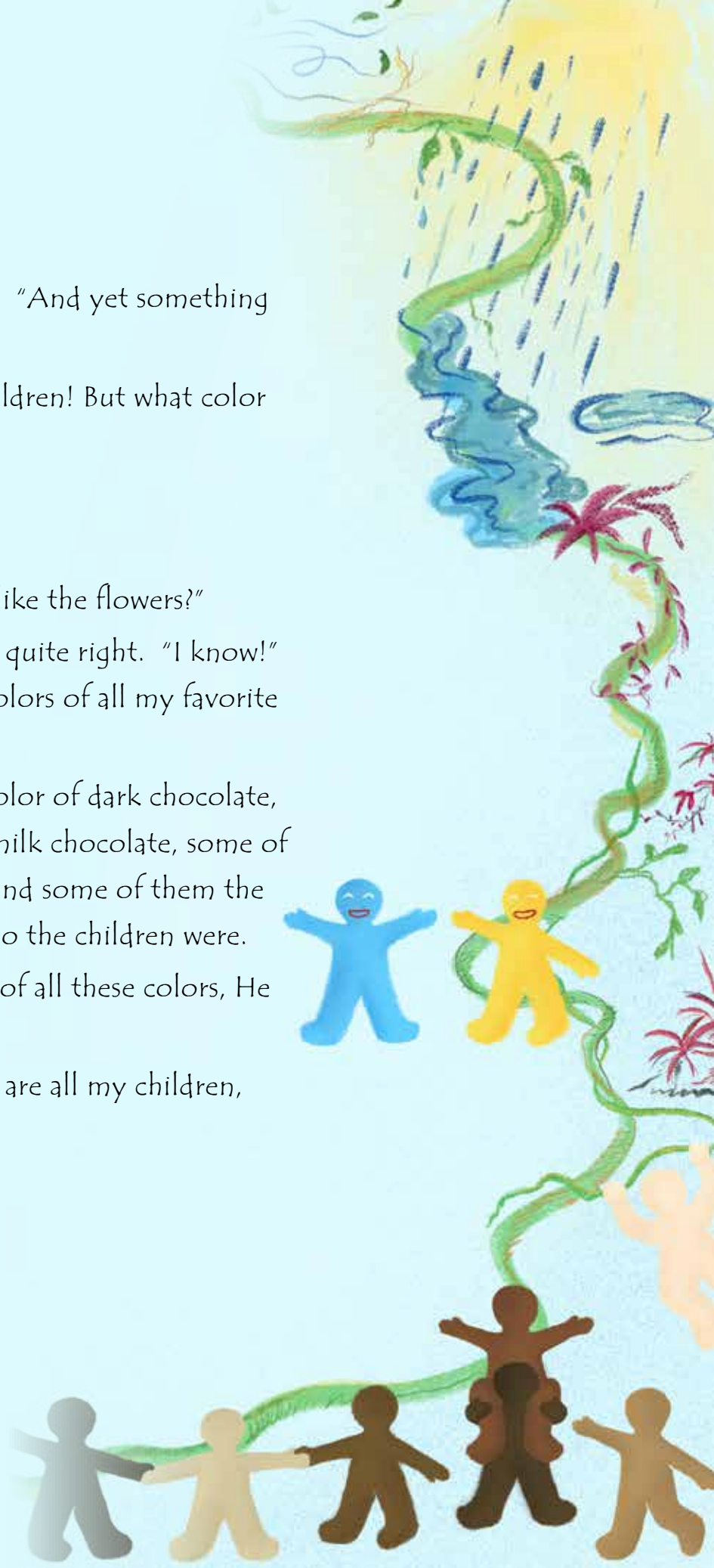
"Orange, purple and yellow like the flowers?"

None of those ideas seemed quite right. "I know!" He said. "Let them be the colors of all my favorite candies!"

"Some of them can be the color of dark chocolate, some of them the color of milk chocolate, some of them the color of caramel, and some of them the color of vanilla taffy." And so the children were.

When God saw the children of all these colors, He was very happy.

"They are all beautiful. They are all my children, and I love them, every one."





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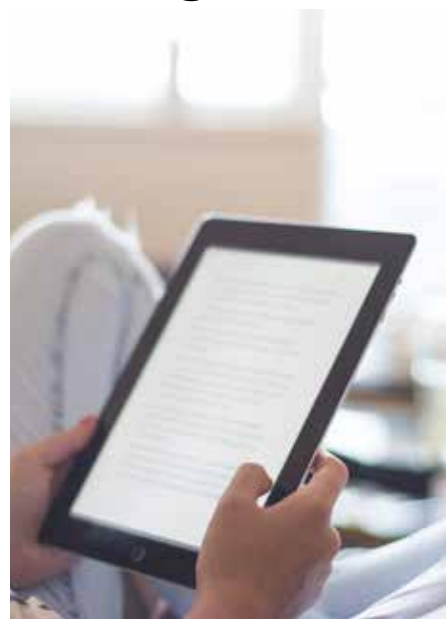


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