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- **Harmonizing Mind and Heart**
- **The Heart of Relationships**
- **Where Thoughts meet Feelings**



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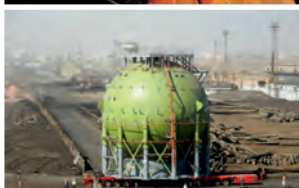
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THEMES FOR THE NEXT ISSUES OF THE JOURNAL

Month	Theme	Deadline for articles
December 2025	Strength & Compassion	October 1

BRIEF GUIDELINES FOR THE ARTICLES

1. Write up may include original articles / short stories. In case of extracts / excerpts / photographs, due credit by way of acknowledgment is to be given.
2. About 900-1400 words.
3. Not political and / or religious.
4. Student(s) are encouraged to send through their school(s).
5. Brief profile of about 70 words and a photograph along with the write up may be sent to frnv@valuefoundation.in and / or frnvindia@gmail.com
6. Honorarium, if any, may be considered by FRNV Editorial Board for articles published.
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The Power Within

Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha



Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru!

When we analyze our life, we find that to live a life of fulfillment there must be two basic abilities. One is involvement in nature. We have to go ahead with life getting involved in whatever is necessary from time to time. For this, we must have the necessary attitude, inspiration, compulsion and many other things. The net result of all this is an involvement phase. We must be ready to take up whatever we are expected to do and get involved in it with full dedication and sincerity.

The other is the ability and readiness to withdraw from any involvement and remain peaceful and quiet. Whatever comes or goes, the march of life cannot stop. So, to keep the stability and peace, often the mind will require withdrawal.

We must be able to do both, easily and harmoniously. Then alone, we may hope to live a life of fulfillment

and peace. And such a life will be beneficial to the world at large.

To live a good and effective life, you will need clear direction and guidance from time to time. Whenever in doubt, look into your own heart. I am using the word 'heart' to distinguish it from 'mind'. It is the mind that produces confusions and doubts. Look into a level much deeper than the so-called mind. Look deep within and from there seek or demand whatever direction or clarity you want.

“I am not able to do the task; but I must do it. I am not having the necessary inspiration or motivation; but I must have it. Yes, I will have it. May I have it.” — Use any language you like, but say it in a very earnest and humble manner.

Similarly, we will have to withdraw from many things whenever needed. If our concern and anxiety cannot

serve any purpose, if our involvement is only going to trouble our mind, the mind must be able to withdraw itself and remain restful. This restfulness is also possible. Tell yourself: “Why am I not able to withdraw my mind from this? Why can't I forget the situation? Why is this haunting me? I must win over this entanglement.”

When you are thus tormented, look into your own heart and get the necessary redress. Whether you put it in the manner of a prayer or submission, or you think in terms of a resolution or demand – it makes little difference. The result is the same. If you believe in God, you can pray: “Oh God, give me the necessary inspiration. Let my mind withdraw.” But if you don't like to pray or you don't believe in God, you can as well believe in your own mind or its master, maker and ruler.

So, look into your heart, the deeper level of your mind, and from there bring forth whatever you want. I said the other day: “When the summer becomes very severe, sometimes the well goes dry. What do we do? We deepen the well and get little more water.” Similarly, you have to dig out a deeper and loftier dimension from

your mind. Understand that the mind has got enormous dimensions. Never feel defeated. Never be subdued by fear. Always have confidence. Even when no help is forthcoming from anywhere outside, and you feel deserted, some invisible help will come, deliver the redress and disappear in the same manner as it appeared!

You may wonder as to how this happens. Is not the entire world like this? The entire visible universe has come from nowhere and nothing. From nowhere and nothing all these things have manifested. So, within that, when the necessity occurs, an invisible process can result in a visible help and it can also disappear. Understand this well.

The mind has got great power. Mind is the instrument by which you access the invisible supreme Reality. You cannot access it with your eyes or your body. With the mind alone you can commune with the invisible, because the mind itself is resting on the invisible Self.

Do not be unduly assailed by doubt. **Whenever doubt comes give it back to the doubt-maker and He will resolve it.** Whenever you lack

inspiration or direction, look into your own heart and seek or demand. You will find your redress.

Whether you are praying with humility or demanding with confidence, it makes no difference. Whatever tune or tone suits your personality, you may adopt. But you have to be sincere and earnest. Your yearning must have the intensity. Then you will always find that the direction and the strength do come. Never lose heart. Never lose confidence in life.

Life is always dear – whether you are surrounded with pleasant things or with unpleasant ones. There is a lot of dearness in life. If nothing, the **mind can produce any degree of contentment and peace**. It may not give you other things, but it will give you joy and contentment. It can also give you peace and 'quietitude'. To generate and bestow these, the mind needs no other agency or help.

You carry such an infinitely potent mind. Never fail to recognize this great potency of the mind. We call it mind, but actually it is a projection or expression of the Self, the Supreme Reality, which has created and which is preserving this great endless Universe. It is not a small thing. Man is great, because he has such a greatly potent mind.

Hari Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru!.

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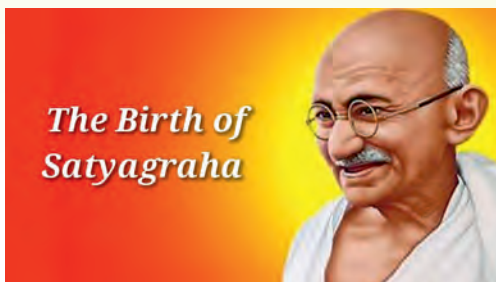
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The Inner Compass of Great Lives

World leaders and renowned figures often rise through hardship. Their autobiographies reveal not just achievements, but the inner trials that shaped them. Aruna Srinivasan shares brief, powerful excerpts that reflect the union of thought and feeling.



Mahatma Gandhi's journey stands out. His principle of Satyagraha - a fusion of truth, love, and non-violence - steered India's freedom struggle. But how did this philosophy take root?

The seed of Satyagraha was sown in South Africa in 1906. While practicing law in Transvaal, Gandhi confronted a proposed ordinance that would force Indians to re-register with photographs, signatures, and thumbprints - even women and children. Alarmed, Gandhi convened a meeting with community leaders. They resolved not to comply, even if it meant imprisonment or suffering. Gandhi urged each person to search their own heart before pledging resistance: "Only if the inner voice assures you of strength should you pledge - then your pledge will bear fruit."

This marked the beginning of a movement grounded in moral courage. Meetings spread across the region, and pledges of resistance multiplied. Though the government later exempted women - claiming it was unrelated to the protests - the community saw it as a quiet victory.

In his book 'A History of Satyagraha in Africa', Gandhi reflects on this moment: "None of us knew what name to give our movement. I used 'passive resistance' but felt it lacked depth." Seeking a Hindi term, he offered a prize for the best suggestion. Maganlal Gandhi proposed Sadagraha - firmness in a good cause'. Gandhi refined it to Satyagraha:

'Truth and firmness'. Thus, a philosophy was born - one that fused clarity of mind with compassion of heart.

On the 2nd of October we celebrate Gandhi Jayanti



SUBHASHITAM

चित्ते प्रसन्ने भुवनं प्रसन्नं चित्ते विषण्णे भुवनं विषण्णम् ।
अतोऽभिलाषो यदि ते सुखे स्यात् चित्तप्रसादे प्रथमं यतस्व॥

यदि मन प्रसन्न है, तो सम्पूर्ण जगत प्रसन्न दिखता है ।
और यदि मन निराश है, तो सम्पूर्ण जगत निराश ही दिखता है ।
इसलिए, यदि आप सुख चाहते हैं,
तो पहले मन की प्रसन्नता के लिए प्रयास करें ।

If the mind is happy, the entire world seems happy.
If the mind is despondent, the entire world seems despondent.
Hence, if you desire happiness,
strive towards the happiness of the mind first.

From the President's Desk



Recently I was in the Brihadeeswara temple, Thanjavur. I was recollecting my youth spent in these corridors, when we were caught in a downpour. Rains lashed out and we ran to stand under some cover. I was still enjoying myself with my memories so did not mind that period of waiting. But when the rains did stop after about an hour and a half, we stepped out to find the temple precincts completely dry. Where had all the water gone?

Scarred as I am from my experiences in Delhi where streets get flooded with half an hour's of rain and what is more blocked drains send the a backlash of water inside the houses, I was standing amazed. The massive monument did not hold my attention as much as the humble floor did. My seven-year-old grandson tried to be helpful, "Maybe it is a secret we have lost along with the secret of building such complex temples?"

I did not reply for I knew we had not lost a secret we had just lost our strength of character. We have extremely well qualified engineers and town planners who shudder every time they hear of people getting electrocuted in the rains or roads getting inundated. The main reason for the failure to correct the situation is due to politics and corruption. Influential people with connection and collusion of officials violate most of the Municipal laws and town planning norms as a result of which people suffer. But what is more, the indifference to those who are suffering makes things worse.

I asked my grandson instead, "Do you think you can find the secret?" It is in this spirit that all our value education workshop is being held in schools. It is in this spirit that I revel in the success stories of young boys and girls winning world titles in chess. Our athletes, invariably from modest backgrounds have won international awards, especially in the recently held World Championship, where our women boxers received gold medal.

We are people with great abilities and a long cultural legacy. Let us not keep that a secret, let us be full of spirit to revitalize ourselves and the world around us.

S. Regunathan
President (FRNV)

Harmonizing the Mind and Heart

*Through personal insights and teachings from revered spiritual guides, **Claude Bibeau Purohit** reflects on the union of mind and heart, showing how love and spiritual growth emerge through inner purification and conscious balance.*

In the Upanishads, the mind, a complex faculty responsible for thought, perception, and emotion, is often depicted as a tool that helps individuals navigate their experiences and make sense of the world around them. It is the mind alone that governs all our feelings, emotions and impulses.

Thinkers have classified the tendencies of mind under 5 heads:

- Kshipta: disturbed condition of mind including all feelings and worldly desires.
- Mudha: tendencies which promote sluggishness and indolence.
- Vikshipta: tendency which drives the mind away from sacred thoughts and brings about the numerous irrelevant ideas during meditation.
- Ekagra vritti: tendency which makes our attention fixed on one thing only.
- Nirodh: tendency which brings the mind to a perfectly self-contained state free from complexities and disturbances.

We live in an age where proper molding of the mind is defective. The restless tendencies of the mind are pervasive amongst most people.



For years, the mind has wandered aimlessly, and this practice has become almost its second nature. Unless one is pursuing a spiritual goal, the nature of thoughts is mostly about the pursuit of power, pleasure, and possession.

This stream of repeated thoughts leads to desires and actions that become habits and in turn lead to impressions on our minds (akin to veils around the soul). These impressions or samskaras feed more thoughts and desires and so the cycle of samskaras formation goes on. The Raj Yog system of Sahaj Marg (now also named Heartfulness) refers to the large store of impressions, including attachments and reactions, that we have accumulated in this life and from past lives, as the basis of our beliefs, attitudes and personality.

Samskaras influence our perceptions and responses to everyday situations, as well as our reactions to people and places. These impressions form the basis of how we think and act in the present; our current thoughts and actions determine who we shall become in the future. We cannot stop the wandering process by force as it will counteract and cause more disturbances. While the mind alone is responsible for restlessness, at the same time, it is the mind that leads us

to self-realization or the realization of our highest self.

I was introduced to Sahaj Marg in 1984. Sahaj Marg's spiritual practice (sadhana) is designed to help individuals clean and purify these samskaras, leading to a more balanced and harmonious state. The goal is not simply to suppress negative tendencies but to cultivate a state of being where the heart is expanded and aligned with nature.

In contrast to the mind, the heart in Upanishadic philosophy symbolizes

a deeper aspect of human experience. It is often seen as the seat of emotional and spiritual wisdom, representing love, compassion, and the essence of being. The heart serves as a bridge connecting the individual self (Atman) to the universal consciousness (Brahman). It is through the heart that one can access what is eternally present, which is the divine presence.

The heart is like a cup which must be emptied from its material-based attachments or impressions and then filled with the nectar of life, which is love. And when the heart is full of love, even God comes.

When I started my meditation journey, I was shown by Guru Maharaj, Shri Parthasarathy Rajagopalachari, that I had forgotten to listen to my heart. That the mind should be at the service of the heart. The mind is the only and most useful instrument in us which alone communicates to us the Divine commands and all the subtle experiments of higher planes. A part of it is with us and the other end extends nearly up to Him. Our attention is toward both of them. With the former we attend to the worldly affairs and with the latter the Divine. When we connect the former with the latter, the same one current



begins to flow all through. Consciousness, or Chit, a central theme in the Upanishads, is intricately linked to the concepts of mind and heart. The Upanishads explore the nature of consciousness as a fundamental aspect of existence, influencing both the mind's perceptions and the heart's emotional responses. The exploration of higher states of awareness is emphasized, suggesting that through the cultivation of consciousness, individuals can transcend ordinary experiences and connect with the divine.

People have mostly two needs: mental or intellectual needs and the need of the heart. Most people don't understand that spirituality is the need of the heart. Not love affairs, not marriage, not friendships. These cannot act as substitute for spirituality. Some confusion exists in thinking that the needs of the body and emotions equate the needs of the heart. Food and sex are the needs of the body.

Often the mind is a mind which compartmentalizes itself. One compartment for work, one for the house, one for the family, one for social life, for relationships. Life cannot be compartmentalized; it is a wholeness. We cannot use sex, relationships or our love for work to create love. One must love work, but

work cannot produce love, not even the work of spiritual life. We have to love what we do. We have to love the people dear and near to us, not expecting that they are there to love us.

Spirituality should prime over all other aspects of mundane life. Otherwise, we will always be talking of the heart, of spirituality, instead of using the heart. In most cases we have lost the ability to listen to the heart, so much so that love is in the head, in our mind. True spirituality means to be with one's heart looking inside, finding Him, making your life full of love. The heart is like a cup which must be emptied from its material-based attachments or impressions and then filled with the nectar of life, which is love. And when the heart is full of love, even God comes.

The practice in Sahaj Marg focuses on transcending the duality of good and bad. It recognizes that both tendencies are not viewed as external forces. Good and bad – we should welcome both. How we react to situations we consider bad or unwanted, this is ground to work on our balance.

Sahaj Marg philosophy suggests that individuals are responsible for their actions and the impressions they create. By understanding this, one

can work towards purifying these impressions through sadhana.

To achieve spiritual growth, it is essential to harmonize the mind and heart. A balanced condition of the mind is an expression of the right attitude in all our activities, under varied circumstances; in a broad sense, it is the reflection of our character.

It has a deep impact and a favourable influence on people who are associated with such spiritual seekers. It reveals itself in conversation, devoid of a rapid, short-tempered and moody reaction, but a prompt, methodical and civil expression of one's own self. It is soft, cultured and smooth like the harmonious descent of Divine Grace.

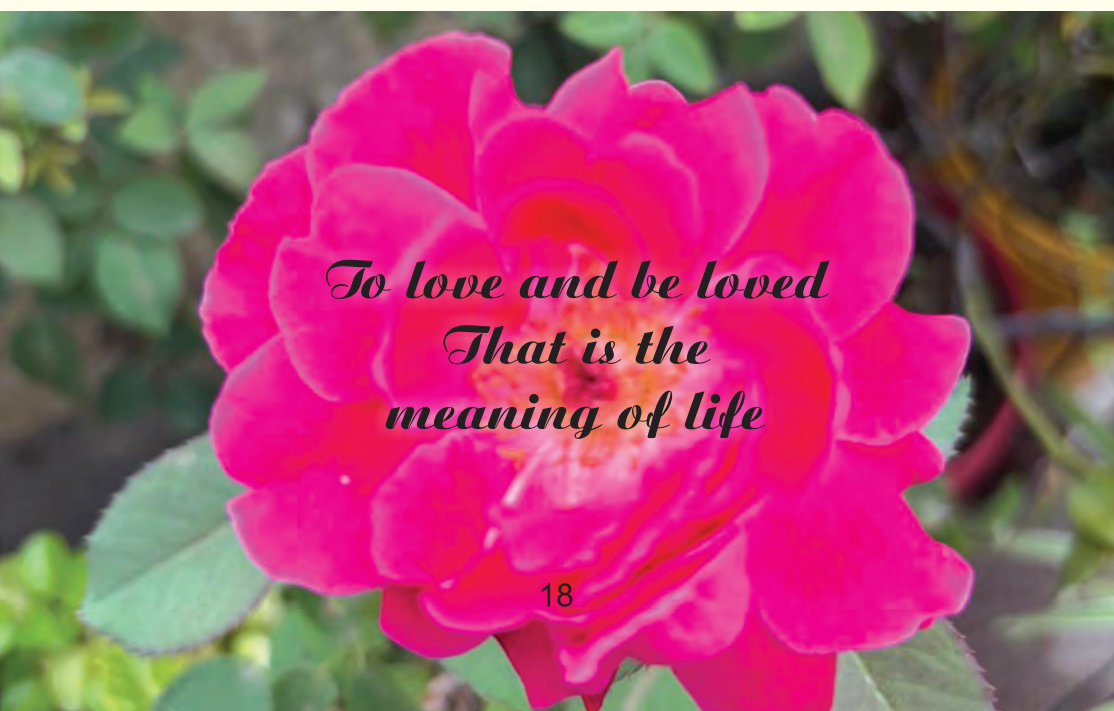
Spiritual seekers can effect change in their surroundings. Those whose tongue is polite, civilized and cultured, have a large heart, pure and noble, and thus have a wide sway over the minds of others. A word of caution about anger. Anger is a poison for spirituality. Unless one is free from this plague, moderation can never be obtained. Its effect is that the system becomes heavy, and tension is produced, and this does not allow the free and subtle current to enter. Cool and calm disposition alone is required for spirituality.

Pain and pleasure are an intrinsic part of our lives. However, the majority of people engage in the pursuit of pleasure. Seeking pleasure while trying to avoid pain, is perhaps the most foolish human venture. With the acceptance of pain in our lives we can finish off quickly our bank balance of pain. We can lead a balanced existence. The best of all is to lead such a life that we don't form samskaras at all.

The goal of spiritual life is not a pain-free or a pleasure-free existence. The wise soon understands that this pain is not of this world but the soul's longing to return to its source, to its original home. The only way of easing our pain, of removing our pain is in wisely turning away from outward life to a truly spiritual inner search for the origin of that pain.

When we are able to embrace pain and put it into ourselves, regardless of the circumstances which brought the pain, there is a possibility that we shall finally embrace God Himself. Guru Maharaj prayed that we could muster the strength not to run away from pain, but welcome it, so that it would be intrinsic part of ourselves. The secret of not feeling pain and suffering is that we cannot feel something which is part of ourselves.

The purpose of life is to love and become love using head and heart. Love is not something to be given and taken. Love is something to be created in our heart with the help of the mind. Saints, avatars and great Gurus bless us with prayers that we would get our priorities right and do what must be done to love and become love.



*To love and be loved
That is the
meaning of life*

MANAS

The Sacred Confluence of Mind and Heart



*Is the mind cold and rational,
the heart warm and impulsive?
Radhika Srinivasan invites us to
look deeper - where logic and
feeling unite within the sacred
space of Manas, guiding us
towards balance.*

I have often wondered why the mind and heart are invariably presented as opposing attributes representing logic, reasoning and intellect on the one hand and emotion, love and compassion on the other; the former indicative of Yang and objectivity and the latter of Yin and subjectivity. It is true that a purely intellectual perspective can appear inhumane at times, especially in matters of relationships and spirituality, while an emotional decision solely based on impulse

may seem reckless, even naive. Therefore, the tension between the heart and the head arises when they offer conflicting guidelines producing contrary outcomes.

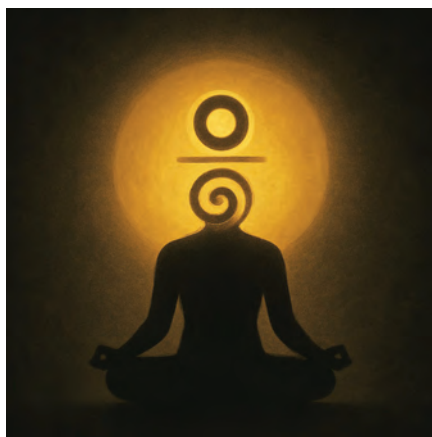
Not quite so, in the Indian tradition, where the mind is called *Manas*. In Sanskrit, Manas covers a gamut of man's subtle qualities that include the heart and the head; the inner space where memories, understanding, intellect, ego, feelings, emotions and perceptions are all processed and given shape. The Upanishad says, "*Mano Brhmeti Vyajanat*", Know that the Mind is *Brhman*. Incidentally, the term *Chit* also indicates perception, heart, mind, intelligence and Consciousness and hence is equated with the Ultimate as *Sat, Chit, Ananda*.

But what about the heart, one may wonder. Interestingly, neither thoughts nor desires are born or processed in the heart space. So, if a person is guided by the instincts of the heart, at first glance the act may appear at best well-intentioned but could very well border on misplaced compassion. But if after introspection, analysis and deliberation, a person's action is inspired by the heart space, it can reflect deep compassion and one's forgiving nature. In other words, pure love and intense devotion are well **beyond** reasoning, not bereft of reasoning.

I am reminded of the story of Sri Gopanna, an ardent devotee of Sri Rama, who dreamt of constructing a temple for his chosen Lord, Sri Rama. As the Tehsildar under Qutub Shah Sultan, Gopanna collected the *Jaziya* religious tax and used it all to build the temple of his dream instead. When the sultan came to know of it, he arrested Gopanna who spent 12 long years in solitary confinement. His prayers in jail turned into soulful outpourings to Sri Rama, pleading him to show mercy on his devotee. Gopanna or Ramadas, known for his devotion-soaked renderings, ironically heard the divine voice of Sri Rama telling him that he had to bear the consequences of his karma!

Logically it may appear as a karmic settlement, but when Ramadas pleaded with Sita Ma to show mercy on him, it is said that she prevailed upon her Lord Rama to show compassion on his devotee and the gates of the prison opened. Money poured like rain to fill the king's coffers! (Perhaps it came from other devotees who saw his plight.) Many such tales of compassion portray the motherly attributes of forgiveness, as if to place the language of the heart a notch higher than the intellect.

Manas is the link between our outward gazing sense objects and



inward processing intellect, heart and ego; all of which have their basis on Consciousness. Therefore, mind has to be trained to rein in the senses, sharpen the intellect, subdue the ego

and act with compassion. For, our desire can grow into an unmanageable weed of passion, anger and lust. Sri Krishna affirms it is desire and desire alone that makes us overlook *dharma-adharma* (sense of right and wrong) and commit acts of sin.

While Manas may be the processing centre that receives inputs from the senses, *Chitta* refers to a kind of memory bank that stores past experiences and impressions, influencing our responses. Chitta affects our activities in five different ways. *Kshipta* or distraction is a common phenomenon in this day and age of social media, creating restlessness, agitation and attention deficit syndrome, commonly known as ADT. *Moodha* or dull state is the result of lethargy, fear, delusion and a life of excesses. This mind then becomes fickle and anxious, bereft of any kind of discretion. *Vikshipta* is the mind that can concentrate but only briefly, often distracted and unable to bring the mind back to focus. *Ekagra* is the mind that is capable of concentration and is in the higher level of spiritual evolution. Patanjali talks of controlling mental modifications in order to wipe clean the memory bank of the past; *Yogah Chittavritti Nirodhah*.

But how does one tame the mind, when thoughts keep jumping from



one to another, often turning against us? Our tradition assures us that through sustained practice and detachment, it can become sharp and steady and act as a fine instrument of enlightenment. “Giving up all binding desires, the one who goes about without longings has control over his mind and is without the sense of the limited “I, me, mine”; he indeed gains lasting peace”, says the Gita.

*Vihaya kaman yah sarvan
pumanscharati nihspriah
Nirmamo nirahankarah sa
shanthimadhigacchati.*

Ironically all that we ever were, are and will be is the result of a thought, yet we never quite reflect upon it either philosophically or academically. Our schools and colleges may focus on teaching about the outer universe and we may

pick up some skills to deal with the world of objects. But our inner space remains largely unexplored until a crisis hits us and we begin traversing the path of self- discovery. This *Manokasha* or mind space is vast like space itself, the sub-stratum of the rest of the four elements of fire, air, water and earth. It is the Sense of all senses. Therefore, all the sacred texts on Indic philosophy have stressed on the need to observe the mind, channel its energies and act in accordance with *Viveka* or discretion and *Vairagya* or dispassion. For, they hold the key to man's enlightenment.

Serious sadhana in yoga or *vipassana*, devotional paths of prayer and meditation or a sustained pursuit of *Shravana* (listening to Gurus and reading sacred texts), *Manana* (reflecting over them) and *Nidhidhyasa* (bringing them into our daily life) can purify the mind and soften the heart to elevate us on our path to Nirvana. Sri Krishna says that there are two types of beings in the world, the divine and the demoniac. People with divine nature move higher and higher in the cycle of *Karmayoga*, selfless service, *Upasana*, a prayerful attitude, *Dhyana*, meditation, *Viveka*, discerning disposition, *Vairagya*,

detachment and finally, *Jnana* or wisdom.

People with demoniac demeanour feed their ego, indulge in deceit, display anger, revel in avarice, practice conceit and immerse themselves in base pleasures, thus ensuring self-destruction and derision of society. The death of one's conscience is the death of values and the death of values is the virtual death of humanity.

And so, it is not a question of either the head or the heart; it is Manas which includes several aspects of man's sacred inner space. As Sri Krishna says,

“*Manah eva manushyanam
Karanam bandha mokshayoh*”.

Mind alone is the cause of man's bondage as well as liberation.



The Heart of Relationships

Love, often romanticized and ritualized, is neither fleeting sentiment nor performative act - it is a state of being. In this article,

Prof. C. S. Krishna Das
explores the multifaceted nature of love, its entanglement with human relationships, and its profound psychological, emotional, and spiritual significance.



Love is a word of immense power - like an atom, it condenses a universe within. Its connotations span warmth, fondness, affection, and compassion. Across traditions, love is invoked as a spirit of service and sacrifice. Yet, its purity often erodes in the complexities of human relationships.

In human relationship the declaration "I love you" may reflect fleeting desire rather than genuine emotion. Love is often conditional - shaped by mutual benefit, family bonds, or social necessity. With a spouse, it may arise from desire or

moha; with a child, from affection; with a neighbour, through transactional exchange; and with friends, through the kinship of shared ideals. When imbalanced, it devolves into jealousy, anger, and despair. Tears shed in grief, too, can betray personal loss more than reverent farewell. People shed tears on the loss of dear and near ones. More often, their bemoaning betrays feelings of self-pity and deprivation of having lost a support and security.

Love is not an act; it is a state of being. In our race for social networking, love appears to be a part-time practice in the form of

greetings through WhatsApp, occasional gifts, dinner, picnic, etc. Love should not be reduced to a seasonal crop. It should be cultivated and nurtured to become a deep-rooted tree, unwavering, steady, caring and sharing for lifetime. Parents are certainly the most important source of love, intimacy and social support. Psychotherapists observe that individuals raised in families lacking love, and emotional bonding often approach current relationships with mistrust and guardedness. Conversely, those whose early family experiences were rich in affection, intimacy, and care tend to engage in relationships with openness and trust.

Dr. Dean Ornish, the American physician in his famous book, 'Love and Survival' says that love and intimacy are the root cause of health and wellbeing on the one hand and premature death and diseases on the other. In his research with Harvard students, two questions were asked: "Were you close to your mother? Were you close to your father?" In his continuous study, some thirty-five years later, Dr. Ornish shows that one hundred percent of the students who gave "NO" as answers to both questions had developed major diseases in midlife, compared to only forty percent who answered "YES" to both questions. Not that

such findings are conclusive; what matters is closeness, intimacy and familial bonding are factors to be reckoned with in physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

People use the expression, 'open your heart '. It means to be transparent, vulnerable, and willing to share one's truest self. Dean Ornish puts it nicely, "We can only be intimate to the degree that we are willing to be open and vulnerable". An open heart is the willingness to make oneself vulnerable to one person, preferably more with whom one can truly be himself. Metaphorically speaking, opening our heart to the other person is not weakness – it's a form of emotional fortification. When we open our heart in trust, we erect a subtle wall that doesn't shield us from feeling, but protects us from isolation. Trust and confidence intertwine with empathy and compassion growing into a bond that deeply nourishes. We can keep our heart open only where love dwells – where closeness is felt and compassion flows freely. In this sacred space the illusion of separateness dissolves. We begin to see that we are not alone in our experience of being human. In this awareness of shared humanity, our sorrows lose their sharp edges. Pain becomes bearable - not erased, but embraced as a thread in the

communal tapestry. Fellowship with others who also carry sorrow uplifts us. It softens self-judgment, strengthens our resilience and inspires a deeper well of love and empathy for those navigating hardship. In recognizing shared struggles, we transcend individualism and enter a collective consciousness grounded in empathy.

Neale Walsch, a modern day American spiritual messenger and author of the famous series of 'Conversations with God' that was translated into thirty-seven languages, aptly puts it, "All of us are in relationship with everything and everyone all the time. We have a relationship with ourselves, we have a relationship with our family, we have a relationship with our environment, we have a relationship with our work, we have a relationship with each other" All relationships are experiences, some of which are sacred as it touches the deepest core of our heart and soul. We feel this by instinct; hence we yearn so much for relationships and that too for relationships with a meaning. When people experience love - pure, selfless and unconditional - then they have a spiritual experience; they realise the inevitability of inter-connectedness as the universe intended to be and

feel overwhelmingly spiritual. That is to say, they feel blissfully elevated; they are able to see beyond their little individual self. We lose our spiritual anchor when we fail to express ourselves rightly in situations which warrant the need of love, nourishment and cultivation. Consequently, we become separated from our spirituality and get disconnected from the source of inner bliss.

Contextually, the views of Swami Vivekananda on human relationship are far more insightful when he says that human love is almost an affirmation of the unity of all existence. He observes, "I am one with thee, my wife, my child, my friend!" Only you are affirming the unity ignorantly. None ever loved the husband for the husband's sake, but for the sake of the Self that is in the husband. The wife finds unity there. The husband sees himself in the wife - instinctively he does it, but he cannot do it knowingly, consciously. The whole universe is one existence. Out of diversities we are all going towards this universal existence...Unity is knowledge, diversity is ignorance".

('The complete works of Swami Vivekananda', Vol. VIII, Advaita Ashrama, Page 137-138).

Threads of Identity

Cultural Inheritance

*This article explores the gift of rootedness amidst pluralistic beliefs and traditions. In every act of reverence, every cultural memory, **Bijoya Sawian** reveals that heaven is not found above, but in the harmony within.*

The main concern of any faith is conquering the ego. It completely annihilates the very essence of religion. In its entourage it has Hatred, Greed, Envy and Sloth in all their inglorious glory. The fact that this is either not fully understood or is purposely ignored shows the nadir to which humanity has plummeted. This is evident in every aspect of our lives be it familial, social, emotional, intellectual, political and religious. Conquering the Self is the first victory and, to me, the height of success. Heaven is not just the heaven above but the heaven, the perfect state of being, on earth and within each one of us. I have worshipped *U Blei* every where because He pervades the entire Universe. Whether I am in Ajmer



Sharif in Rajasthan or Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, the Jain temples of Ranakpur, the stupa in Kathmandu, The Golden Temple of

Amritsar, the Bahai Lotus temple in Delhi, the Meenakshi temple in Madurai, Kamakhya and the *Nam Ghars* in Assam, I pray to U Blei and connect and pay obeisance to the Divine Energy that resides in that particular sacred space. That is only but natural. It does not matter where I am. I feel strongly my belongingness to Niam Khasi. That was how I was brought up.

My father who was born a Hindu was a man of vision and luminous intelligence and he was not a radical. He knew and understood the importance of a cultural identity as a focal point and foundation of our lives. He respected all religions and felt that the Khasi world view, ethics and etiquette was in harmony with the world around us. He made sure that we grew up as Khasis because we lived in a traditional Khasi home. He did not want us to have an identity crisis. He was very clear about that. My mother made sure we attended all the pujas in my *Meikha's* (aunt's) and *Parad's* (uncle's) house and during the Pujas, on *ashtami* we would accompany father to the Ramakrishna Mission and pay reverence to Goddess Durga and have the prasad. My maternal great-grandfather, Jeebon Roy was not against any religion, he was against

conversion in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills because he felt that the missionaries were simply replacing the indigenous religion and culture, making the people ashamed of everything connected to it and nothing else. The white men were pushing the flock into a cultural vacuum. Jeebon Roy thought this was callous and not ethical. He felt it was not good for the people in the future. He foresaw the times ahead when the majority, not the exceptions, would not be able to stand shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the world because of an amorphous identity. I was not quite sure about this until, one day, many years ago, my mother's cousin who was in the IFS came over. He came to borrow books on Khasi culture. Wherever he went people wanted to know and his knowledge was zilch.

I find it strange that there is so much conflict and bitterness based on religious beliefs. No one's religion is the best, the oldest or the most evolved. Even if it is how could one feel superior and one-up about religion? In that moment of misplaced arrogance, one completely nullifies the essence of religion. In this earthly life the biggest achievement is conquering the ego. The single most important

victory is the conquering of the Self. Every religion professes that and humility is always glorified. Respect is the bedrock of all relationships - familial, social, marital, political, cultural and so on. Respect irrespective of caste, creed, colour and class. Respect for all God's creations animate and inanimate. That respect is worship. Your thoughts, your words, your gestures and your deeds are your prayers. Specific places of worship are mere clubs if your life is not in harmony with what you recite and chant, sing and play inside these places. Worst of all blasphemies is this constant attack on other religions spreading hatred and suspicion causing havoc in this one lifetime you have been blessed with. If one harbours hatred and venom one cannot claim to be religious.

When I was referred to as a pagan in school I found it exotic. When I told my mother, she said it does not matter. They don't know that a thread of paganism runs through all religions. Paganism is based on the proven theory, the inextricable interconnectedness between Man and Nature. How beautiful is that! And think about it, there is no religion that does not consider this to be an indisputable truth. If one wants

to name the numerous beliefs that are common in all denominations it would fill a book. Anyone who is educated (not merely literate) knows it. Divisiveness, however, is the rage and we go out of our way to find the differences rather than the similarities. It suits the people who hunger for power at all costs. They are the new demons of our times.

Westernization is attractive, it is meant to attract and appeal to our senses. I would like to remind you that many hugely successful westerners journeyed to India to find happiness and fulfilment in India. Steve Jobs and Richard Gere are but two of the thousands who did so. Well, westernization does not matter as long as one does not have this grossly misconstrued notion that it is superior to one's tradition and culture. It is not. Take fashion for example. It is horrifying to know that young people actually feel embarrassed to wear the *jainsems*, *dharas*, *mekhlals* of various designs and all the beautiful attires of their communities. Our NE youth look good in Western wear but, unfortunately they often opt for dresses and jeans even when it is not appropriate for the occasion, a funeral for example. I hope the traditional Khasi *jainboh*, *dhotis* will



return some day. It is the same everywhere in our country. Rather generously endowed women and men who would look decent and classier in a salwar or a churidar suit would squeeze into attires and jeans that seem to be crying for assistance to be released!

In our part of the world a white man will always be welcomed but not a fellow Indian. The British made sure that the hillmen will always dislike and be suspicious of plainsmen. Their devious Divide and Rule policy worked wonders here, far beyond their expectation. So, we do not mind people coming from Rome

and Wales to spread education and preach. We, however, vehemently object to those coming from other parts of India who, in fact, only come to teach. It is a known fact that the missionaries had come mainly to preach and felt that the Khasis “do not need education beyond Class 6.” That period is over, the story of the struggle for higher education is part of my family saga. We bear no grudge because it was all part of those times, two centuries back. I do feel a sense of remorse, however, that Babu Jeebon Roy has not been respected and recognised by the numerous governments for his contribution to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and its people. He was not a Christian but had he not made enormous contribution by bringing in Higher Education to our people?

Regarding the schools where some of our children study outside the State - one does not become a Hindu by eating vegetarian food and reciting shlokas. To the best of my knowledge one cannot be converted to Hinduism. You are born one or the *gotra* of a Hindu male can also be adopted by his spouse. I love hymns and so did my mother. We sang them but that does not make us Christians. We sang “Come Hear the Angels Sing” with as much fervour as we

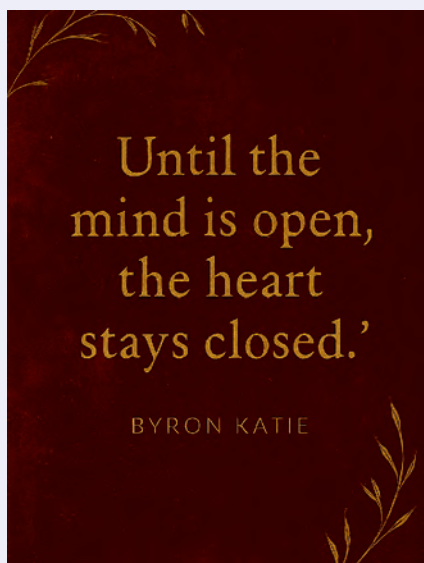
would sing *Syntiew ka Ri* and other Seng Khasi songs. My mama used to belt out Kishore Kumar songs (not very melodiously but never mind) that did not metamorphosise him into *dkhar*. They say poets are the true chroniclers of the times and their understanding of the world is elevated. Our poet laureate, Rangbah (L)Soso Tham attended the first Seng Khasi meeting and also the first Shad Weiking. Some people are just born great.

I fully agree that a Department of Indigenous Affairs should be formed within the Ministry of Culture. We had, undoubtedly, been ignored. There has been a great change though in recent times because of a more progressive generation of Khasis at the helm. I am deeply grateful to their commendable approach. There should also be some kind of screening before people from outside come in for interviews and documentaries. I cannot get over one documentary on the root bridges. The anchor was in a dress, and red stilettos. She was falling all over the bridge giggling away while she tried to explain how the bridges were formed. Those bridges, the examples of brilliant indigenous engineering, were reduced to a ramp for an amateur model. I take this as an affront.

This is the best of times and the worst of times. Is identity fluid or static? The answer and the choice, is ours. I am comfortable in my cultural identity and it has stood me in good stead.

Whatever, it let us choose peace and harmony above all else. There are many problems to be solved, many issues to be tackled so let us not get swamped by our ego because that is the quickest one-way ticket to hell.

They say that being rich is not counted by what one has but by what one can do without. We can do without hatred. We can do with more empathy and compassion.



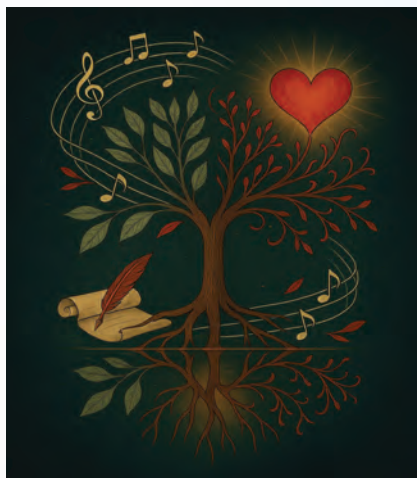
Mind and Heart: *A Harmonious Symphony*

The mind and the heart are often seen as two powerful forces that shape human life, writes

Commander S. Mohan. *Together, they create a harmonious symphony, balancing rationality with sentiment, and guiding individuals through life's complexities.*

The mind, a powerhouse of cognition, enables humans to think critically, solve problems, and make informed decisions. It is the seat of knowledge and intellect, allowing us to analyse situations and predict outcomes. The mind provides clarity and objectivity, ensuring that our choices are grounded in logic and reason. However, a life governed solely by the mind can become devoid of emotional richness, as it may overlook the deeper, more subjective aspects of human experience.

In contrast, the heart embodies the essence of feelings and emotions. It allows us to connect deeply with others, experience love, and empathize with the struggles of those around us. The heart often acts on instincts and intuition, guiding us in ways that the mind cannot comprehend. While its wisdom is profound, relying entirely on the heart can lead to impulsive decisions, as emotions can sometimes cloud judgment.



The true beauty of human nature lies in the interplay between the mind and the heart. When these two forces work in unison, they enable us to achieve a state of balance. A well-coordinated mind and heart allow individuals to navigate challenges with empathy and reason, ensuring that their actions reflect both sound judgment and genuine care for others.

For instance, in moments of conflict, the mind helps analyse the root cause, while the heart inspires forgiveness and understanding. Similarly, in decision-making, the mind evaluates the practical implications, whereas the heart reminds us of our values and desires. Together, they shape a holistic approach to life's challenges, fostering personal growth and meaningful relationships.

Ultimately, the coexistence of the mind and heart is essential for a

fulfilling life. Neither should dominate the other; rather, their collaboration should be celebrated as a testament to the complexity and beauty of the human spirit. By embracing the wisdom of the mind and the compassion of the heart, we unlock the potential to live enriched, purposeful lives, resonating with both intellect and emotion.

While we store and recall beautiful memories of our love, kindness, forgiveness and gentle acts of generosity, and compassion, we are also capable of nursing negative feelings – intense anger, jealousy, long-standing resentments, meanness, pettiness, greed and ill-will towards our fellow human beings. A little introspection would reveal the futility of harboring such negative feelings; thus, lying awake late into the night, carrying a resentment about someone would only harm us - while the other person sleeps blithely. Rather, he may not even be aware that we are seething with resentment! Holding on to resentments is like acid dripping on our fabric, destroying it drop by drop. It only affects us - not the other person. As our ancient saints have observed, “*Kshama shastram kare yasya, durjanah kim karishyati. Atrine' patito vanhihi svayameva upashamyati.*” What harm can the evil ones do to him whose only shield is Forgiveness? Fire that drops on barren land would get extinguished on its own. Yet how many of us can forgive?

The story goes that Narada conveyed to Valmiki, the robber, plunderer, and murderer that all would be forgiven by the Gods if he was willing to undergo a change of heart – ‘*Parivartan, praayaschitta*’ - and as we all know, Valmiki became the “Aadi Kavi” and Muni who wrote Ramayana... the Story of Rama, the virtuous. Rama's 'anti-hero' and opponent, Ravana, could not and would not change, overcome by lust, arrogance, and self-will. The entreaties of Ravana's wife, Mandodari, his son, Indrajit, his brothers Vibheeshana and Kumbhakarna fell on deaf ears. When they said that needless bloodshed and ruin of the kingdom of Lanka could be avoided; all would be forgiven if he returned Sita to Rama, he remained unmoved. Heartlessly, Ravana imperiously said: “*Janaami dharmam, na cha me pravrittih, Jaanamyadharmam, na cha me nivrittih.*”

“I know what is right, but I have no inclination to practice it; I know what is wrong, but I have no way of escape from it!”

We learn from the Mahabharata that despite the wise counsel of the elders, little changed in the values and attitudes espoused by Duryodhana. The Pandavas pleaded for just seven villages for themselves; did Duryodhana heed them and show compassion towards his cousins? He seethed in anger and fury, plotting revenge and further hurts in his mind. Even Krishna

acted as an envoy and asked Duryodhana to avoid a ghastly war. Did he listen to good counsel? His arrogance, self-will, and resentments resulted in the bloody war at Kurukshetra.

What is the use of studying Shakespeare's works if we do not practice the underlying message conveyed by Portia to Shylock, the Jew? When Shylock wanted his pound of flesh, as per the written agreement in his favor, Portia appealed to him by saying 'Have mercy.' When she realized that her appeals did not move Shylock and his evil designs, she thwarted him by the brilliant use of her mind - he may cut a pound of flesh, but exactly one pound, no more no less, without a drop of blood being lost!

*"The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
it dropeth as the gentle rains from
heaven, upon the place beneath...."*

Mercy, forgiveness. Acting from the heart, not from the mind. The most abiding philosophy that appeals to me is that of Adi Shankaracharya (8th CE). I greatly enjoy his philosophy, set to verse in "Bhaja Govindam".

*"Maitreem bhajatha, akhilka
kritretreem. Atmadeva paraan api
pashyatha... Yudhham tyajatha,
spardhaam tyajatha, Tyajatha
paresham kramamaakramanam ...
Shreyo bhooyaan, sakhala
janaanam...."*

*"Let us rejoice in universal love and
friendship, for the benefit of*

*mankind. Let us look at others
exactly from the same perspective as
we would look at ourselves.
Eschewing violence and wars, let us
renounce invading and hurting
others. May every person be blessed
with grace and prosperity."*

Rounding off this beautiful topic, my mind harks back to the words of Kabir - the rustic wood-cutter turned Saint.

*"Bura jo dekhani mai chala, Bura
na miliya koi; Aapan dil jo khojiye,
mujh sa bura na koi."*

*I went out into the world, in search of
wrong-doers. Yet when I searched
deep within me, (introspection) I
found no greater wrong-doer than
me!*

If at all we, as good human beings, are to learn from the past, we must change and make earnest efforts to follow the path of righteousness (Dharma) – practice Love for our fellowmen, forgiveness, tolerance, and compassion. When? ...Not after we retire, not after our own wants are fulfilled, nor after some such mythical day. We have to do this change TODAY. As we know, a life well-lived is nothing but a string of Todays - lived honestly, with love, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness.

*"Adyaiiva maranam asthu va
yugantare va, Nyayaath pathah na
pravichalanti siddhah."*



Where Thoughts Meet Feelings

*In today's fast-paced and achievement-oriented world, we're often encouraged to prioritize logic and reason over emotions, intellect over intuition. In this article, **Prema Raghavan** invites us to reconsider this approach and explore the benefits of integrating emotional intelligence with rational thought.*

As we deal with life's challenges, it is essential to remember that our mind and heart are powerful tools that can work either for or against us.

The mind and heart aren't opposing forces - they're partners in shaping our lives. Science now echoes ancient wisdom: thoughts and emotions deeply influence our health and choices. When the heart and mind align, we enter a state of coherence that fosters emotional resilience, clarity, and joy - transforming the way we live, love, and lead.

Feeling with the mind unveils the emotional currents beneath our actions; thinking with the heart taps into intuition and values. Together, they guide us toward empathy, balanced decisions, and relationships grounded in understanding and depth.

The Power of Attitude: Lessons in Perception

Our attitude has a profound impact on our perception and experience of

life. In short, our attitude shapes our reality. A positive attitude isn't about



ignoring life's problems; it is about choosing how we interpret and respond to them.

Life is full of experiences that shape our perspectives and teach us valuable lessons. I shall now share a couple of experiences that taught me how attitudes can make a world of difference. Several life lessons can be learnt from the examples that our elders set for us. My grandmother's simplicity, positive energy and perspective on life have served as a

treasure trove of wisdom, highlighting the intricate relationship between the mind and heart.

Shortly after my marriage, my grandmother travelled from her small town of Kumbakonam to visit me in Chennai. I took her on a car ride to visit several temples in and around Chennai. We returned home after spending half a day in the sun – a physically demanding exercise for sure. No sooner than we entered the house, she started making wheat halwa for us. Those were the days of manual stone grinders, and making halwa was no mean task. She had soaked the wheat in the morning itself, and she now sat cross-legged on the floor to grind the wheat. Compare this with our modern times when even squatting on the floor seems a strain to most people, leave alone the strain and rigor of operating a hand grinder after a trip in the heat of Chennai. Out of concern, I suggested that she take some rest after the hectic travel. She smiled and said, “How could anyone get tired after a comfortable car ride?”

These simple words, even if uttered casually, left a deep and enduring impact on me. They reminded me that everything in life is relative. Coming from a small town, my grandmother was accustomed to

traveling by bullock carts and crowded buses. To her mind, the car ride was luxury, and luxury couldn't possibly cause fatigue. That moment revealed a powerful truth: our experiences are not defined by circumstances, but by perception. Her positivity, simplicity, and boundless energy taught me that when mind and heart are aligned, age and effort fade into joy and purpose.

**A child's innocent compassion:
The Balm of Innocence.**

*"The heart has its reasons which
reason knows nothing of."*

- Blaise Pascal

I recall a precious moment with my son Anand. He was barely three years old when he saw me silently crying one day. Unaware of the adult emotional struggles I was going through as a young wife and mother, he believed I was physically hurt.



Out of abundant concern, he brought a balm and gently smeared it on my face, thinking it would heal me.

His innocent gesture made me laugh through my tears. He rejoiced, certain that his “medicine” had worked its magic.

That moment reminded me of the purity we are all born with: the raw empathy, the heart-led instinct to comfort. Children haven't yet learned to separate emotion from logic, heart from mind. Their love is direct, their kindness spontaneous. Research supports the notion that children's natural empathy and kindness can be a powerful reminder of the goodness in humanity. As we witness the arrival of new lives every day, our faith in divinity and humanity is renewed.

As a saint once said, "Children are a bridge between the spiritual and the material world." May we cherish and learn from their innocence, and strive to embody the same love, compassion, and kindness in our own lives.

Cultivating Inner Peace

So, how can we harness and harmonize the power of our mind and heart to achieve inner peace? Here are some practical tools to transform your life from the inside out:

Mindfulness: Practise mindfulness meditation to calm your mind and tune into your heart's wisdom. Cultivate awareness of your thoughts and emotions without judgment.

Deep breathing: Practise deep breathing exercises to calm your mind and heart.

Gratitude: Acknowledge the good things in your life, no matter how small they may seem. Gratitude shifts focus from lack to abundance.

Self-compassion and introspection: Treat yourself with kindness and understanding. Speak to yourself with the gentleness you'd offer a loved one. Take time to reflect on your thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Heart-centred living: Prioritize activities that nourish your heart, such as spending time in nature, practising yoga, engaging in creative pursuits and meaningful conversations. Surround yourself with positive, supportive people.

As we strive for wisdom, let us remember that by embracing the harmony of feeling with our minds and thinking with our hearts, we become more integrated, resilient, and alive; we can unlock a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Wisdom Waves:
Navigating Spiritual Realms
Making Room for the Infinite



Emptiness, in spiritual traditions, is not void but vastness. When you empty yourself of everything you create space for your true self to emerge writes
Narayani Ganesh

The Heart Sutra, in Buddhism, speaks of navigating the path from emptiness to compassion. Buddhist teachers have stressed that emptiness is not the same as nothingness. HH The Dalai Lama has explained how we can use emptiness “as a way to dissect and dissolve the heart of hatred. If you hate someone, where is that person? In which part of him does it lie? It's mostly in your head. And so with love.” He adds that freedom comes only when you cut out delusion and projection. When we get attached to what we think is real, we are unable to think clearly, as the mind gets clouded.

The Buddha said that emptiness pertains to our conception of the self. When you empty yourself, you create space for your true self to emerge – free of all conditioning and programming.

This will give you room to grow and connect with pure consciousness, unfettered by past baggage, current preoccupations and worries about the future. The self as we understand the term in common parlance, is the temporary coming together of various constituents but is otherwise essentially 'empty'. Herein lies the truth of the theory of interdependence, interconnectedness

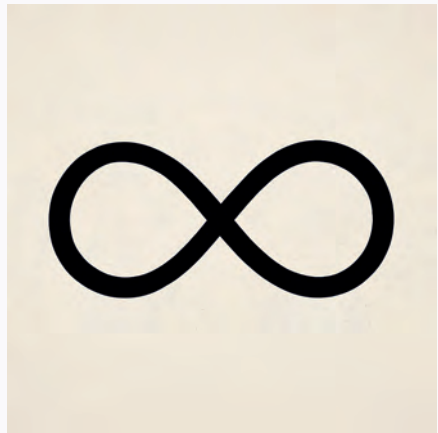
and interbeing, as it is when all that make up the self, act in harmony, that the self as we know it can exist. In this sense, it can be said that emptiness includes all phenomena in the world, since nothing exists in isolation. At the same time, everything is relative, and it is the mind that conceives of anything that exists.

In the words of Lao Tzu, “Empty yourself of everything./ Let the mind become still./ The ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self watches their return./ They grow and flourish and then return to the source./ Returning to the source is stillness, which is the way of nature.”

The Holy Bible (2 Corinthians 4:7) says that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves. Yet to be filled with His power and shine His glory requires an emptying – a pouring out of ourselves, to make room for Him.” In Hindu philosophy, the Atman is *nirgun*, formless and infinite, it is not possible to know its true nature. The *anatman* on the other hand, has form and constituents, and its nature can be perceived. But the anatman cannot exist independently of Atman. The seeker who has understood the difference, is said to be liberated.

“You only have power over people as long you don't take everything away from them. But when you have taken away everything from a man, he is no longer in your power. He is free again,” pointed out Alexander Solzhenitsyn. If we extrapolate this in spiritual terms, we could say that once you have learned to empty yourself, no one can overpower you, for you are free from all conditioning , fears, attachments, emotions and anxieties; therefore you are your own person, ready to welcome the universal truth of pure consciousness that can now find ample room in you, the *jivatma*. It will then be a case of the self, connecting with the larger Self, the *Paramatma*, the Infinite, that is in essence transcendental and boundless.

Courtesy: Speaking Tree.



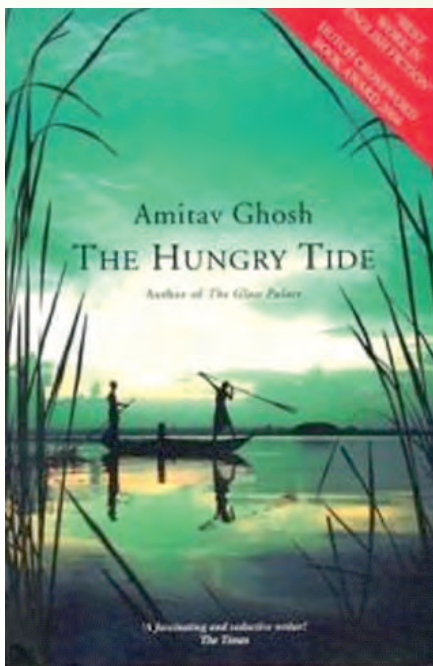
Book Review

Life Lived in Transformation: Realities of the World

*R. Dasarathy picks up
a work of fiction by Amitava Ghosh
where reality and imagination are
constantly rubbing shoulders:
The Hungry Tide.*

There is a view, that all of literature can be seen as a story of conflicts – conflict within, conflict with other individuals, conflict with society and conflict with Nature. Amitava Ghosh's “The Hungry Tide” set in the moody Sunderbans tells a story in the genre of 'realist fiction'. The novel is full of conflicts of every kind, in the author's own words, “ ... all I'm trying to do is to write about the world as I see it. I'm just trying to reflect the realities of the world rather than shut my eyes to it.”

The novel is also a blend of fact and fiction – we cannot but marvel at



curiously interesting and little-known facts collected about so many things - dolphins, the physical features of the Sunderbans landscape, the political and demographic history Sunderbans, waves of migration from Bangladesh.....

Amitav Ghosh (born 1956) is a winner of the Jnanpith award, proficient both in English fiction and non-fiction. Ghosh's ambitious novels probe the nature of national and personal identity, particularly of the people of India and Southeast Asia. He studied in Dehradun, New Delhi, Alexandria and Oxford and his

first job was at the Indian Express newspaper in New Delhi.

In 2007, Amitav Ghosh famously pulled out his novel, *The Glass Palace*, from consideration for the Commonwealth Writers Prize, citing his objection to the usage of the term 'commonwealth' and the colonial history associated with it as the reason for his withdrawal. Throughout his career, the award-winning writer has observed the world around him with a sharply critical eye, and has translated those observations into various novels and works of non-fiction.

The setting of the novel is in the unpredictable and hostile 'tide' territory of Sunderbans – an immense archipelago of islands in between the sea and the plains of Bengal. In the mangrove forests of Sunderbans, as the tide rises and falls - the trees/ shrubs grow in coastal swamps, with numerous tangled roots that grow above ground and forming dense thickets. This habitat hosts a lot of wildlife – including tigers, crocodiles, different types of deer, aquatic mammals and rich marine life. The salinity due to tides and the violent cyclonic storms, makes it difficult both for humans and animals to survive.

The other recurring theme of the tide country is “life is lived in

transformation” – a quote from a German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke. A character in the novel observes “... in the tide country, transformation is the rule of life: rivers stray from week to week, and islands are made and unmade in days. In other places forests take centuries, even millennia, to regenerate; but mangroves can recolonize a denuded island in ten to fifteen years. Could it be that the very rhythms of the earth were quickened here so that they unfolded at an accelerated pace?”

The only constant in this constantly 'transforming' milieu is the “Bon Bibi”, the forest goddess and her legends. She is the savior of the weak and a mother of mercy to the poor. Interestingly the prayers and chants to this goddess are a curious mix of Arabic and Bangla!

The plot is rather linear and almost 'predictable' with two stories running parallelly – that of Nirmal, a leftist-idealist and Kanai, his nephew – a modern businessman from New Delhi. The plot may be simple, but there is a lot of research and information on every page.

On a train, Kanai meets Piya, a young Indian-American marine biologist. Both are traveling to the Sunderbans: Kanai, who's been there once before, is going to visit his aunt and read his late uncle's notebook, while Piya is

carrying out a survey of the region's dolphins. Kanai learns that his childhood friend Kusum was killed in a 1979 massacre (which is a true historical event). Her son, Fokir, is now a fisherman with a wife, Moyna, and son of his own, Tutul. When Kanai begins reading his uncle's notebook, he discovers that his uncle, Nirmal, tried to protect the refugees from the aggression of the authorities – a conflict between the refugees and the authorities.

Meanwhile, Piya providentially meets Fokir, the fisherman who is very knowledgeable about the rivers and dolphins – after a conflict with a forest guard. Kanai gets involved in Piya's mission and serves as the translator. Kanai's prejudice against the fisherman is an evidence of class conflict. Meanwhile a major cyclone is in the offing (conflict with Nature) and the team gets separated. Besides these there is gender conflict, conservationists vs. human rights activists, indigenous people vs settlers, idealism vs pragmatism, building anew vs maintenance, ...

The characters in the novel are recognisable and familiar, and yet one does not identify with the characters. Somewhere the setting and the cause seem larger than the individuals, so that one does not develop empathy for any of the main characters, except for the fisherman,

Fokir. Many of the relationships appear 'transactional' and even the romantic relationships (of which there are many) appear unconvincing.

The recounting of the history of Sunderbans, blended in with the narration is absorbing and heroic. Similarly the details of the dolphins and their life is very interesting. Even the scientific details are narrated in an accessible manner.

The book is an easy-read, though in parts the novel reads more like a 'documentary'. The descriptions are vivid and visceral, evoking emotion in the reader to the extent that many have been tempted to visit Sunderbans, after reading this book.

The author has been concerned about climate crises, in his subsequent works also – even linking the current pandemic to the various global climate crises. “What we see now is a multitude of crises, sometimes unfolding in unison all around us. And we have to become better at addressing that, as human beings and as writers and artists who are engaged with the world”.

Title	: The Hungry Tide
Author	: Amitava Ghosh
Publishers	: Harpercollins (India)
Pages	: 403
Price	: Rs 399 (paperback)

Poem - Council of Two

Surabhi Chawla

There are moments when the self
begins to flicker -
not vanish, but blur.
When decisions tighten like a seam
across the chest,
and neither thought nor feeling
seems enough to stitch it open.
You try to think your way
through it.
You try to feel your way
through it.
Both falter.
It is then-quietly, beneath language
- that the council forms.
No invitation. No call to order.
Just a strange stillness in the body,
as if the breath itself is listening.
As if two old presences-
ones you carry always -
have come forward at last,
not to command,
but to sit beside you,
and begin the long work of
attending.
The council meets when the world
is thin -
between the hush of out and in.
Not summoned loud, nor marked in
stone,
but called when one is most alone.
No chamber grand, no gilded gate,
just breath held still in a shifting
state.
It forms where thought begins to
bend,
and longing has no name to send.

Two figures take their quiet place -
not face to face, but pulse to trace.
One wears the voice of woven
schemes,
of cooling stars and structured
dreams.
The other moves like scent through
air,
half-formed, half-felt, already there.
No clock records the time they
keep,
no sun peers in, no dream, no sleep.
The space they share is not quite
known -
it hums like wind through marrow-
bone.
The **Mind** begins, but not to win-
it sketches maps beneath the skin.
Its voice is clean, but edged with
doubt -
a need to see the whole laid out.
The **Heart** responds in tone, not
word,
a rhythm felt more than it's heard.
It doesn't claim, it doesn't prove,
but in its silence, things can move.
At times, a memory drifts through -
a scent, a sound, a flash of blue.
The council pauses, lets it pass-
some truths arrive through broken
glass.
They do not argue, do not plead,
but share the shape of what they
need.
One names the risks, the lines, the
frame;

the other breathes what has no
name.
At times they almost seem to
merge -
a thought that stirs, a sudden urge.
Then drift again, in reverent pace
-
two tides that touch, but leave no
trace.
And sometimes, nothing clear
will come -
just heat, or ache, or fingers
numb.
But even that-the mute, the slow -
becomes a way the self will
know.
And in that still, unscripted rite,
no side is wrong, no path is right.
But something grows-a listening
core,
a doorless door, a never floor.
The council lifts, the moment
ends -
they leave behind no voice, no
pens.
Just this: the self that stood
between,
now shaped by what was felt and
seen.
And you-
not ruled by one, nor split in two,
but walking on with something
true.
Not every step will feel like art,
but still you move -
with **mindful heart**.

You carry both, but wear them
light -
the pulse of heat, the edge of
sight.
Not always sure, not always still,
but shaped by grace, and guided
will.
There is no verdict when it ends.
No one raises a hand, or draws a
line in the air.
The council disperses like mist
lifting off water -
soft, unnoticed, but leaving the
light slightly changed.
You rise from it not certain,
but steadier.
You carry no conclusion,
only a clearer weight.
Perhaps that is what wisdom
becomes:
not answers stored,
but a finer ear for when to listen,
and how.
When you move again, it is not
the same walking.
There is rhythm now - subtle,
deep.
Not ruled by one.
Not torn in two.
But gathered.
And still gathering.

Swami Vivekananda

More Obstacles

S. Regunathan

Thus far: The story is of an ardent disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, who, institutionalized his master's legacy by setting up a Mutt while continuing his own spiritual quest. He could feel the presence and guidance of his master or the divine, close to him, always. When he decided to head for the Himalayas, two of the Mutt's benefactors passed away and his sister committed suicide. The three tragic events were a setback, but still his steps did not falter. Enroute, he met many interesting people. He even performed a miracle of curing a man...



Swami Vivekananda's travels to the Himalayas was not easy. If there were some miracles, so to say, there was also a strong play of destiny.

The first strange feature was that Vivekananda had wanted to go alone, but he was never left alone. Somehow, one or other guru bhैया joined him at one place or other, like a relay race. It was not pre planned, it had not been decided. It just happened that one or other was always with him. In fact when he left

Almora, three other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna suddenly landed up and joined him to go up to Badrika ashrama.

Secondly, whenever Swamiji went into deep meditation, he could not continue to stay long in that meditative stance. Just as he felt he was about to realise the Ultimate, he was disturbed and he was reminded of his mission in the world. If you recollect Sri Ramakrishna had told him once that when he was about to reach the Ultimate in his meditation,

his guru did not allow that to happen. He told him that he would allow Swamiji to realise the ultimate only after he, Vivekananda, had completed his mission on earth. So again, the disturbance was not engineered, it just happened and happened repeatedly.

And thirdly, as though to prevent him from reaching the peak in the Himalayas, he and his guru bhaiyas were beset with illnesses and they could not continue and complete even their trip to Badrika ashrama. When Swamiji and three of his guru bhaiyas reached Karna Prayag they were told that the road leading to Badrika ashrama and Kedarnath have been closed because of famine in that part. So Swamiji had to abandon his trip to Badrika ashrama and returned to a place called Srinagar.

Throughout their trip though they were ill, they covered long distances by foot. Unfortunately, again and again either the Swamiji or his colleagues fell seriously ill and had to abandon their onward journey and come back to the plains. Sri Akhandananda had a serious attack of pneumonia and fortunately with

the help of the Diwan of Khairi who had met Swamiji, was to be brought to Dehradun. Swamiji then thought he would leave Akhandananda in the care of a known person and leave for Himalayas but that was not to happen. As Akhandananda was not recovering, the doctors suggested he be moved to a place with dry climate and so Swamiji had to leave with him for Sahranpur. After month long treatment, Swamiji left for Rishikesh.

When Swamiji and his guru bhaiyas stayed in a hut near the temple of Chandreswar Mahadev and Swamiji wanted to go into deep meditation, he developed high fever and was quite unwell. Slowly his pulse almost disappeared and it looked as if his end was coming. His guru bhaiyas started crying thinking that they would be losing him but at that time a sadhu wrapped in a woollen blanket appeared and administered some medicine which revived Swamiji.

Slowly Swamiji opened his eyes after some time and whispered in the ears of one of his guru bhaiyas that he would not die, they should not worry.

Children's Corner

Hand in Hand *A Tale of Heart and Mind*

The mind spoke first, in lines
precise,
A compass drawn in logic's ice:
"The path is clear, the steps are
known,
No need to stray from what is
shown."

The heart replied with trembling
fire,
"But what of dreams and deep
desire?"

What of the ache that reason shuns,
The silent pull of setting suns?"

The mind grew still, then softly
said,

"I map the stars, but not the thread
That weaves through grief, through
joy, through grace -
That thread is yours, in time and
place."



The heart then smiled, a quiet beat,
"And I, though wild, am
incomplete.

I burn, I yearn, I leap, I fall -
But need your light to guide it all."

So hand in hand, they crossed the
night,
One bearing warmth, the other
light.

And where they met, a soul was
born -
Both fierce with love, and wisely
torn."

They found a cave with walls so
wide,



Where echoes danced and secrets
hide.

The Mind said, "Let's be careful
here,"

But Heart stepped in with joy, not
fear.

Inside they found a glowing stone,
That hummed a tune they'd never
known.

"It sings," said Heart. "It thinks,"
said Mind.

And both felt something warm and
kind.

Then came the rain with sudden
grace,

It splashed and tickled every face.
The Mind said, "Quick! Let's find a
tree!"

But Heart just laughed, "Come
dance with me!"

They twirled in puddles, soaked



and free,

And learned that joy can simply be.

The Mind took notes, the Heart
took flight -

And both felt wonder, pure and
bright.

At last they reached a rainbow
bridge,

That arched across a flowered
ridge.

The Mind said, "This looks strong
and true."

The Heart said, "It's a dream come
through!"

They crossed together, hand in
hand,

And saw below a shining land.

A place where thoughts and
feelings blend -Where every path
can twist and bend.



Children's Corner

The Ant's Mind and the Lizard's Heart

Story and illustration by Gayatri K. Diggi



In a peaceful lush green garden beneath the shade of a big, wide mango tree, lived a big ant named Fillo. He wasn't just big for an ant - he was clever, always thinking, always planning and he was also the smartest ant in his colony.

He knew how to build strong tunnels, store food for the dry days, and solve tricky problems other ants couldn't solve.

He often said, "Use your mind to survive. The heart just gets in the way."

Every morning, Fillo marched out alone, thinking deeply about his work.

He didn't stop to enjoy the smell of the flowers or the warmth of the sun.

While the other ants played or chatted, Fillo stayed busy.

He believed: "The mind is for

leading. The heart is for dreaming.”

Not far from the ant colony, in a crack in the old garden wall, lived a small green lizard named Lisa. Lisa loved to bask in the sun, chase butterflies, and listen to birdsong. She wasn't known for being the smartest - sometimes she forgot where she left her food, or followed bees just because they were pretty.

But Lisa had something special: a big, kind heart.

She once let a baby frog sleep on her warm rock when it was cold.

Another time, she saved a grasshopper stuck in a spider's web.

She never thought too hard - she simply felt what was right and followed her heart.

She believed: “The heart knows what the mind forgets.”

One sunny morning...

Fillo was carrying a large sugar crystal - almost as big as his whole body. He had found it near the rose bushes and was taking it back to his colony, step by step, planning his path.

Lisa spotted him from her rock, high above.

Her tummy rumbled.

“Oh! A tasty ant,” she said. “I haven't

had one in days.”

She slowly crept down the wall, her eyes on the ant.

Fillo, being busy didn't notice because his mind was busy calculating the safest route home. But, just as Lisa was about to pounce, she paused.

Her heart whispered: “He looks tired... and he's working so hard. Maybe he needs this sugar more than I need a snack.”

Fillo suddenly looked up and saw the lizard standing above him.

He froze in fear.

Lisa didn't snap at him. She blinked slowly and said, “Where are you taking that sugar, little ant?”

Fillo stood still, unsure if this was a trick. But he replied, “To my family. We're storing food for the dry season.”

Lisa's heart ached a little. She remembered being hungry once during a long dry month. She nodded slowly.

“That's very smart,” she said. “You must have a clever mind.”

Fillo blinked in surprise. “I thought you were going to eat me.”

“I was,” Lisa admitted. “But... my heart changed its mind.”

They both sat quietly for a moment.

Fillo looked up at her. "My mind tells me I should run. But... something in my chest says maybe you're not like other lizards."

Lisa smiled. "That might be your heart talking."

From that day on the ant and the lizard met often under the mango tree.

Fillo taught Lisa how to remember where she hid her food.

Lisa showed Fillo how to pause and enjoy the wind in the grass, or the scent of the roses.

He would say, "My mind says this is

silly."

She'd giggle, "But how does your heart feel?"

And sometimes, Fillo would smile and say, "Warm. Happy."

They didn't always agree, and they didn't always understand each other.

But they listened.

And that made all the difference.

The Garden learned a lesson too:

The mind is wise and careful. The heart is warm and brave.

When they work together, even an ant and a lizard can fall in love and then wonderful things can happen in their true friendship.



FRNV NEWS AND EVENTS

VALUES BASED EDUCATION WORKSHOP ON 4th AUGUST 2025

FRNV Organized a Values Based Education Workshop on 4th August 2025 at DISTRICT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION & TRAINING (DIET), Moti Bagh, New Delhi. About 140 students (2nd year batch) and 10 faculties attended the workshop.

Dr. Sharda Kumari, Head, Values Based Education Task Force, FRNV and Resource Person, CBSE, Ms. Asha Khurana, former Lecturer, Deptt. of Education and Ms. Simmi Sachdeva, former HOS, NDMC School addressed the students. Dr. Neelam, DIET welcomed the speakers and the students for the workshop.



Dr. Sharda Kumari, Dr. Neelam, DIET and section of students participation



*Ms. Asha Khurana, Ms. Simmi Sachdeva and Dr. Sharda Kumari
conducting the workshop*

CHANGES IN THE FRNV GOVERNING BODY

Due to professional & personal commitments, Shri Sunil Kumar Sinha ji requested to be relieved of his responsibilities as Member, FRNV Governing Body and this was accepted on 26th July 2025. Members of FRNV Governing Body wished him all success and continue to be associated with FRNV activities.

17TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF FRNV

The 17th Annual General Meeting of Members of FRNV scheduled for Saturday, the 20th September 2025 at 4 PM in HYBRID Mode to transact the following business:-

Meeting Link - meet.google.com/xce-qrkj-ohc

Venue for the meeting will be

FRNV Registered Office: M-75 Greater Kailash Part-I, New Delhi – 110048.

AGENDA

1. To receive and adopt the Secretary's report
2. To receive, consider and adopt the Audited Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year 2024-2025
3. To confirm the continuation of the Auditors, M/s Alok Mittal and Associates for the Financial Year 2025-2026
4. To receive, consider and approve 'Resolution by the General Body of FRNV'
5. Any other matter with the permission of the Chair


Life Members joined since 15th July 2025

Name	Membership No.	From
Dr Debabrata Swain Odisha Chapter	FRNV/LM/107	28.08.2025

FRNV SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

Subsequent to National Seminar held on 12th April 2025, FRNV has begun its social media outreach. All are requested to visit the following sites, subscribe and offer your comments/suggestions to frnvindia@gmail.com

Since the last 4 months, more than 30 posts have been made in Instagram, X (Twitter), Facebook. However, response is not encouraging. Readers are requested to go through the posts, like, subscribe and share with their friends and like minded people.



‘The door
to the mind
should only
open from
the heart.’

JOY HARJO



Your unwavering support will motivate us to strive harder.

Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals emerges as Delhi's No.1 Private Multi-specialty Hospital in The Week-Hansa Research Survey 2022. It's a testimony of the trust placed in us by you, the people of Delhi. Thank you for your faith and support. We reaffirm our commitment to provide you the best medical care, along with our tender, loving care.

THE WEEK-HANSA RESEARCH
SURVEY 2022

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