

# The Joyful Talisman

COURSEBOOK ON  
*human values*



Vedabhyas Kundu  
Munazah Shah



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# **The Joyful Talisman Course Book on Human Values** **Vedabhyas Kundu & Munazah Shah**

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## ***Foreword***

This book that now opens to the world, *The JoyfulTalisman Course Book on Human Values*, is much more than an educational resource or a course book. It is the living, practical continuation of the profound message that Vedabhyas Kundu and Munazah Shah shared in their first work: *The JoyfulTalisman: Conversations on Human Values for a JoyfulWorld*.

In that first book, the authors invited us to reflect on the values that sustain life in harmony: truth, nonviolence, compassion, humility, and respect. Through their thoughts and perspectives, culture, and spirituality, they opened a path of awareness for readers around the world to turn inwards, self-reflect and self-introspect. As with every meaningful and beautiful seed, those ideas began to seek continuity: they needed to become tangible proposals, ready to be lived out in schools, families, and communities.

This course book answers that call with clarity, beauty, and commitment. Here, values are not just named and discussed—they are practiced. They become action, dialogue, gestures, play, and collective projects. Joy, present in both the books, is not shown as a fleeting emotion, but as an ethical value, a vital compass, and a powerful driving force for change.

I am deeply moved to have been named among those who supported and helped bring this new step to life. In addition, I feel there is an invisible thread connecting all of us who believe in the power of education to transform the

world—a diverse, international, and passionate network that plants the seeds of human values where they are needed the most.

I have had the privilege of witnessing how this JoyfulTalisman has come to life in schools and communities across Africa, Asia, and the Americas—touching the lives of children, youth, educators, parents, and community leaders. I am certain this new book, which has been developed as an accompanying course book will continue its journey, sowing peace, awareness, and commitment in many more hearts.

My invitation is simple yet profound: explore these pages freely, adapt each activity to your reality, share, reflect, and transform. Because wherever a girl discovers her voice, a young person chooses empathy, or a teacher educates with kindness, the JoyfulTalisman is at work. I can definitely tell you that those small acts... truly changes and transforms the world.

**Marta Lescano**

President, Fundación FEPAIS

Executive Director of Education

Global Peace Let's Talk  
International



## ***Letter by A R Patil***

**Dear Munazah and Vedabhyas,**

In an era where the essence of human values is more than often overshadowed by material pursuits, The JoyfulTalisman Course Book on Human Values shines as a guiding beacon of enlightenment. With profound respect and admiration, I extend heartfelt congratulations to both of you for your exceptional dedication in bringing forth this invaluable treasure—an intellectual and emotional masterpiece that has the power to awaken hearts and transform societies.

This course book is not merely a collection of ideas; it is an invitation to self-discovery, urging every individual to recognize their inner radiance through meaningful activities. It embodies the wisdom cherished by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Dr Maria Montessori, and Mahatma Gandhi, who envisioned education not as a mere transfer of knowledge, but as the nurturing of human character—an elevation of the soul towards harmony, compassion, and truth. Dr Radhakrishnan beautifully reminded us that education must inspire individuals to rise beyond intellectual pursuits and embrace wisdom that binds humanity together.

The JoyfulTalisman framework breathes life into these profound ideals, guiding individuals through mindful reflection, emotional resilience, and the unbreakable bond of human interdependence. In fostering nonviolent and

solidarity footprints, this book transforms everyday actions into instruments of kindness, reinforcing the belief that selfless service is the highest expression of human values.

True leadership is born when the wisdom of the heart aligns with the intellect of the mind. This masterpiece empowers every reader—whether an educator, policymaker, or visionary—to integrate ethical consciousness into their lives, creating ripples of positive change in families, communities, and nations. By embracing its message, we can rekindle the spirit of universal humanhood, ensuring that future generations inherit not only knowledge but also the wisdom to lead with love, compassion, and kindness.

May The JoyfulTalisman Course Book find its way into the hands of all seekers of truth, lighting the path towards a world where human values reign supreme. With deep admiration, I commend both of you for your unwavering commitment to uplifting souls and fostering a future rich with empathy and understanding.

Let this work stand as a milestone in human evolution, where education becomes the instrument of peace, and wisdom illuminates the path of collective harmony.

With warm regards,

**A R Patil**

(A R Patil is a senior Gandhian,  
Chairman of Belgaum Integrated  
Development Society, and  
Secretary of Gurudev  
Rabindranath Tagore  
Foundation)

## Acknowledgement

*"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others." - Cicero*

Expression of gratitude is an important dimension of our concept of JoyfulTalisman. We need to make efforts to identify individuals and situations and express our thanks to all of them because of whom we could contribute our bit for humanity.

At the outset, we would like to share our profound thanks for Prof Marta Lescano who actually nudged us to work on this course book. Without her constant motivation and inspiration, we could not have put this together in such a short time. We also thank her for promoting the concept of JoyfulTalisman to spread human values at an international level.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the Chairperson of Global Peace Let's Talk, Dr H C Nikki de Pina for her efforts to initiate the course based on JoyfulTalisman. We sincerely believe that the JoyfulTalisman Certificate Course on Human Values can be an important catalyst to promote values amongst people, especially young people across the world.

We would like to thank senior Gandhians, Prof N Radhakrishnan and Prof Anoop Swaroop for constant guidance and motivation. They decided to organize a series of e-discussions on the JoyfulTalisman and its different dimensions.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Prof Indira Dasgupta Cherukuri for going through the entire course book and giving vital suggestions and inputs. We thank our friend, Mr A R Patil for the beautiful and motivating letter he wrote to us after going through this course book.

Finally, the course book could not have been a reality without the efforts of Mr Mohammad Faizan and his team in Naamak Publications. They are committed to Gandhian principles and are always ready to publish books related to the Mahatma and the values that he propagated.

## Introduction

In the chaotic world that we live in today, many of us are suffering from varying degrees of inner conflicts, conflicts with our fellow beings, and conflicts with nature. Because of these, we start seeing the world from a negative lens. The constant negative energy, which emanates from these conflicts and negatives, affects our wellbeing and happiness.

Further, the mad race to achieve everything albeit through short cuts is putting enormous pressure on young people. As a result, there is a steady abandonment of ethical and moral values. For many, this abandonment of values is the new normal and they think it is no longer important so long as they are able to achieve their own individual goals disregarding the concerns of others. They are not averse to browbeat others to move forward for their self-aggrandizement.

It is in this backdrop we initiated our mission to promote human values through our concept of JoyfulTalisman. As per our framework of JoyfulTalisman, if we as individuals inculcate the essential human values, not only will we experience inner peace, but also contribute towards mutual and peaceful co-existence. Imbibing the framework of JoyfulTalisman will not only transform our inner ecosystem, but also have a positive influence in other ecosystems like families, institutions, and the society.

To start with, we put together a book, The JoyfulTalisman: Conversations on Human Values for a Joyful World. Both of us have been writing together using the genre of conversations. We believe dialogues and conversations are significant ways to share ideas and knowledge and it has been the method in different cultural traditions around the world. This book was first in the series to promote our mission of

JoyfulTalisman. Mahatma Gandhi's Talisman is the inspiration behind our concept of JoyfulTalisman.

Here let us share the Talisman of the Mahatma:

*"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [woman] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her]. Will he [she] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [her] to a control over his [her] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?"*

*Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away."*

- One of the last notes left behind by Gandhi in 1948, expressing his deepest social thoughts.

Source: Mahatma Gandhi - The Last Phase, Vol. II (1958), p.65

We feel the Mahatma's Talisman echoes one of the highest of human values and virtues, which inspires and motivates individuals to reach out and work for the last person in the society. Definitely, we feel the inculcation of this value, which propels us to care and serve others, brings in inner satisfaction, relieves us of our inner impurities, and helps contributing to not only our well-being but also of others. It reminds us about the principles of our shared humanity. Here we remember the Mahatma's pertinent quote in Bapu Ka Ashirwad that there is not a single moment in life when man cannot serve. Further the inherent link of the self and the spirit of service has been beautifully captured by the Mahatma when he said, "Self-realization I hold to be impossible without service of and identification with the poorest." (Young India, 21-10-1926,)

Ever since we wrote the book, there has been enormous interest amongst different cross-section of the society. Most feel that there is erosion of values and there is an emergent need to reinvigorate these so that we encourage a value-based mutual co-existent society. Otherwise, they feel the unethical principles, which many individuals rely on, and their tryst to shortcuts to achieve everything could finish the ethos of our societies. It is in this backdrop we strongly believe that promoting the pillars of JoyfulTalisman are an important endeavour to challenge this erosion of values. We also believe that if we are able to nudge individuals to reflect and revisit these values, they will appreciate their significance. It could further nudge them to nurture and value these in their daily lives.

Our book was translated into Spanish by Prof Marta Lescano, President of the FEPAIS Foundation (Educational Sources for Social Integration), Buenos Aires, Argentina. Then Prof Lescano took the initiative to start a course - The JoyfulTalisman Certificate Course on Human Values. We express our deep gratitude to Prof Lescano for this honour and we acknowledge it as an appreciation of our efforts to work on human values.

Prof Lescano then nudged us to develop this accompanying course book as she said creative and innovative activities were needed to be shared with children and young people so that they get the wherewithal to inculcate these values as part of their daily habits. The interest in JoyfulTalisman as a concept continued as Dr Nikki De Pina, Chairperson, Global Peace Let's Talk also decided to initiate the JoyfulTalisman course on human values in English.

We sincerely believe that promotion of human values is the need of the hour in every society across the world. Without inculcation of these values would further sink into the abyss, something what Mahatma Gandhi had warned long back in his seminal book, Hind Swaraj. We sincerely hope that this mission to promote human values through our concept of

JoyfulTalisman will be able to act as a catalyst in this endeavour and facilitate dialogues and discussions on the civilizational values, which the Mahatma had always underlined.

The world today is at crossroads amidst complex forms of polycrisis at different levels; hence, we sincerely believe that our efforts to promote human values should be akin to conquering Mount Everest- indomitable courage, infinite determination, incredible patience and perseverance, resilience, inner strength, creativity, and amazing faith in one's ability.

We look forward to your suggestions and inputs on this course book so that we can improve in our subsequent editions.

We sincerely hope that teachers, trainers, all those who are interested in promoting human values can use this course book. Here we want to point out that in many of the exercises that we have suggested there are related application sheets in the annexure. Also, we have included several explanatory notes in the form of conversations of some of the concepts in the annexure. We recommend all to go through these application sheets and conversations in the annexure for greater clarity.

**Vedabhyas Kundu | Munazah Shah**



## **Objectives of the Course Book**

In our endeavour to promote practical ideas to nurture the human values, which are part of our concept of JoyfulTalisman, we have developed this course book. Many of these ideas stemmed from the different workshops we have been conducting on human values and related fields. Also, many perspectives and concepts cropped up during discussions with different stakeholders. These different ideas helped in the assimilation of the activities that we could suggest in this course book.

The overarching objectives of this course book are:

1. To develop experiential understanding of different human values and how we can nurture them in our daily lives
2. To appreciate how different human values contributes to our harmonious coexistence
3. To develop critical reflection on different values and how it can be part of our ecosystems



## Chapter 1

# **Understanding the different Pillars of JoyfulTalisman for Human Values**

In our book, we have discussed through our conversations the key elements of our concept of JoyfulTalisman. Through this course book, we will be suggesting some interesting and creative activities which young people can be motivated to do to help assimilate the principles of human values in their lives.

We can describe a value as an important principle or quality, which an individual holds highly, it may differ from individual to individual. An individual will have a set of values, a family may together reflect a set of values collectively, and then there could be a set of values, which a society could aspire to promote. We strongly believe that not only these values need to be nurtured but also should be an integral part of our ecosystems be it in our families, institutions or the society. Here, we would like to underline that the inculcation of these values have to start from our inner ecosystem.

As Mahatma Gandhi had underlined the importance of self-purification, turning inwards is critical in our tryst to realize the power of nurturing human values. This is the first pillar of our JoyfulTalisman. We sincerely believe that without turning inwards and cleansing our inner impurities; it would be difficult to practice the values. If we remain in our inner prisons and make no attempt to come out of it or rely on the negatives that encompasses, we can never be happy. This is the central idea of our concept of JoyfulTalisman.

In our book, we have clearly underlined this fact, “So it is very clear that our framework of JoyfulTalisman has to start from within, we need to begin by tuning inwards. It is only when we prepare ourselves inwardly to live a life of integrity and nurture human values with utmost sincerity, we can be genuinely happy and contributes towards our well-being.”

Having turned inwards, and in the path towards our inner transformation, the second pillar of JoyfulTalisman is human interdependence literacy. Unless we realize the deep interconnections not only with other human beings, but also with nature and other living beings, we will never be able to realize the goals of nurturing human values.

Human interdependence literacy is more important today in the backdrop of serious concerns related to biodiversity loss, climate change and the constant competition with other human beings leading to disputes and conflicts. Mahatma Gandhi had rightly said there is enough for everyone’s need but not enough for everyone’s greed. By being human interdependent literate, we will be able to appreciate the significance of our shared humanity. In our book, we introduced the concept of human interdependent literacy as a key element of 21st century life skill education. Our aim right from schools should be to make children human interdependent literate. We sincerely feel that much of the erosion of human values can be countered by the principles of human interdependence literacy.

The third pillar of JoyfulTalisman is the centrality of practicing nonviolence. Nonviolence is not just the avoidance of violence; it is a much wider and deeper concept, which needs to be assimilated in the real sense. Through our book and this course book, we are encouraged on how we can measure our nonviolent footprints. Nonviolence education, which has to start from within us, is important for resilience and growth as a human being. It is a necessary trait to be practiced for inner transformation.

There are wide dimensions of the art and science of nonviolence, which needs to be nurtured as part of our daily habits. When we are in a position to self-reflect and self-introspect the extent of our nonviolent action, we will realize how this contributes to our joyfulness and overall wellbeing. In this course book, we will try to indulge in activities and initiatives, which will help us, measure our own nonviolent footprints.

Close to the idea of nonviolent footprints, is another concept we introduced in our book, solidarity footprints. We firmly believe that we all need to nurture the spirit of solidarity if we have to realize the goals of our shared humanity. Solidarity has to start from our families, and then it has to be the spirit, which should govern our institutions, society and final at the global level. Also, in continuation to our idea of human interdependence literacy, solidarity should be with nature and all other living beings. At a time when right from our families, institutions and society are facing divisions, spurt in individualization leading to self-aggrandizement, we need to revisit the principles of solidarity.

During our wide conversations with people across the inter-generational spectrum, we realized how the spirit of solidarity not just in families, but also in our institutions and the society is declining. Hence, it is significant that we encourage individuals to measure their own acts of solidarity. We should work to see and self-reflect on how much spirit of solidarity we possess.

Finally, we feel the act of turning inwards, being human interdependent literate, and the ability to measure our nonviolent and solidarity footprints will act as a trigger to care for others in the society and volunteer for different concerns. In our framework of JoyfulTalisman, we sincerely believe that the more generous and caring we are for others, we will experience inner satisfaction, happiness and joy.

Peace apostles like Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Thich Nhat Hanh, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Daisaku Ikeda, and many others have inspired many of the activities that we have been able to share in this course book. There are several significant ideas, which these apostles of peace have already shared. We all can commit to take a leaf from the views and actions of these masters and integrate these principles for a joyful world where we practice the human values, which they stood for.

*I believe that the sum total of the energy of mankind is not to bring us down but to lift us up, and that is the result of the definite, if unconscious, working of the law of love. –*  
Mahatma Gandhi, Young India 12-11-31

## *Chapter 2*

### **Turning Inwards**

#### **Objectives**

##### **This chapter aims:**

- To explore different elements that can help us to turn inwards
- To explore the myriad initiatives that can be taken to help us turn inwards
- To developing understanding of the power of turning inwards

In our book, we have discussed how the majority of us are devoid of the understanding of the essence of turning inwards. In our Epilogue, we pointed out, “We think most of our problems are the result of exterior issues and phenomenon, little do we realize how critical is our inner self. Through our conversations, we realized the criticality of turning inwards for our genuine happiness and a joyful world. We realized we need to turn inwards to decipher ourselves on who we are, focus on our mind and heart and understand our true self.”

Further, in our book we argued that without turning inwards, we will remain in our inner prisons and continue with our inner battles. Most of us are either not aware or live in self-denial on the importance of turning inwards. As we are

turning inwards, we need to learn the skills of self-love, self-kindness, self-empathy and self-compassion.

Developing a profound ability to practice loving kindness emanates from our ability to turn inwards. In fact, we devoted an entire conversation on the essence of loving kindness in the book. We firmly believe following our talks with a large number of individuals, including young people that practicing loving kindness is key for a joyful and peaceful world.

The overarching goal of these practices is inner peace. We have been discussing these with a large number of people especially young people and how these are important elements to achieve inner peace. Its centrality is reflected by an interview of ours with two young students. Please see *Annexure 1* for this.

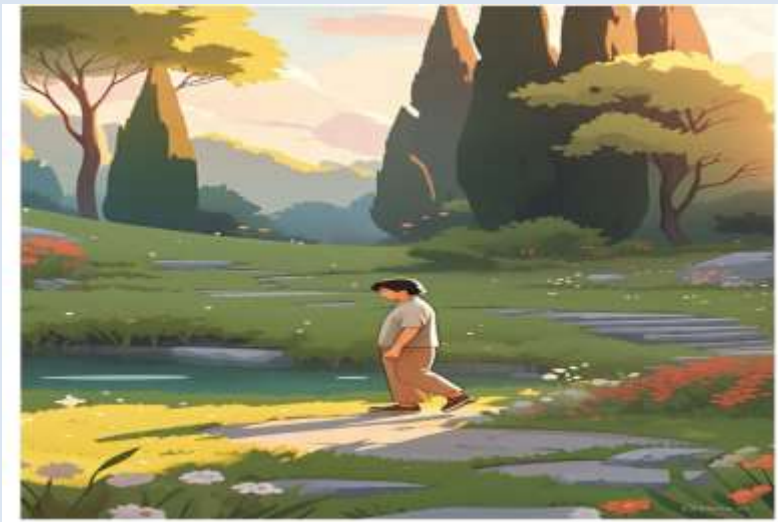
## **Activities**

One of the keys to achieving inner calmness is by enhancing concentration, focused approach, developing observation power and appreciating the positive things. To realize the objectives of our framework of JoyfulTalisman, we firmly believe that each one of us should aim to practice being like an ocean. We must remember that waves will come and go, but the ocean will remain. We must try to practice how we can develop inner resilience so that we remain calm and stable even when the waves of life, waves of hatred, waves of anger, waves of greed and jealousy come and go. Let us try some activities that would take us to that state of stability and resilience.



## **Lesson I**

### **Mindful Walking**



In many of our workshops that we have engaged with students, we have encouraged the practice of Mindful Walking. Our own experience suggests that Mindful Walking is a powerful mindfulness practice. During Mindful Walking, we are integrating a physical activity, i.e., walking with mindfulness, i.e., bringing awareness to the present moment. Mindful Walking has benefits by contributing to both physical and mental health. Our experience of doing this activity with students suggests it helps in enlivening them. Further, it helps in improving their mood, reducing stress and anxiety. Please see Annexure 11 for the relevant application sheet of this exercise.

#### **The Method**

1. Students can be encouraged to do a 15-20 minutes mindful walk.
2. It can be done in a park, playground, or in a good open space.

3. Before we start, we do a deep breathing exercise with them.
4. We ask them on how they are feeling in terms of how they are feeling, and what is their emotional state
5. When we start walking we tell them that they are to walk slower than they usually do.
6. We request them to concentrate on their walking, how they feel and how they are taking their steps.
7. We ask the students to look at the footsteps touching the ground; this requires concentration. We generally do not give credence on how we are walking.
8. In the initial stages when we learn how to take a mindful walk, it is possible that you get distracted. Various kinds of things keep coming to our mind, like about our career, relationships, etc. In fact it is normal as most of us are not attuned to such levels of concentration, observation, and awareness. We start our mindful walking all over again.
9. In the beginning, we ask our students to observe the following while walking:
  - a) Pay attention to all that we see during the course of the walk. Many times while we have done this exercise in the morning, students talk about the dewdrops in the leaves. Most of them in today's urban centric society tell that they had never observed dewdrops in leaves before.
  - b) We ask the students to pay deep attention to what they hear. If we are doing Mindful Walking in a park or in a natural environment, students talk of the chirping of birds.
  - c) We ask the students whether they can experience some sense of smell.
  - e) The students are asked to be observant on touch and experience the sense of touch. Here they are asked how they feel when their feet touch the ground.

f) They are further asked to note if they are feeling anything in their face, for example they can reflect on the sunrays, on the air that is blowing, etc.

g) Finally, even if students are in a familiarized environment, they are asked to appreciate and describe something unique they might have seen which they had not seen earlier, its shape and colour.

10) After the Mindful Walking exercise, we organize discussions on how the students felt both physically and mentally. They are asked to reflect on how exercise was different from normal walking.

## **Lesson II**

### **Practicing Self-Compassion**

In our framework, we have underlined the need to practice self-compassion as an important factor for our growth mindset. When we are practicing self-compassion, we are enhancing our emotional well-being, which means we are increasing our own self-esteem and self-worth. In the process, we are reducing the space for the need for external validation as we have genuine understanding of ourselves as an individual. Also, when we practice self-compassion, we are evoking our skills of empathy and nurturing deep understanding towards others. This plays a pivotal role in building relationships. It is the foundation for practicing compassion towards others.

We have been talking with many participants in different workshops. They share how they are able to handle anxiety and depression and reduce stress by practicing self-compassion. We come to realize this important point in life:

When we start to look at our failures and setbacks with kindness and understanding, and we practice self-compassion, we will develop resilience.

In this era of serious competition and the likelihood of adverse situations, all of us need to develop inner resilience. We have realized self-compassion is an important tool, which encourages a growth mindset and helps us to see our failures and mistakes as new opportunities to learn and act. All these further help us overcome the fear of failures and ensure that we remain focused on the path of what we want to do in life. Self-compassion helps us to strengthen and deepen our relationships. Also, when we become regular practitioners of self-compassion; we tend to be more forgiving.

Linked to self-compassion, is self-kindness. Unless we learn to be kind towards ourselves, it would be difficult to practice kindness towards others. Self-kindness is an integral part of the broader idea of self-compassion. It is essentially understanding oneself and forgiving oneself especially in difficult situations or when we make mistakes. To us self-compassion is a more encompassing concept as it actually covers all situations involving our self-worth. On the other hand, self-kindness is essentially a personal treatment when we are suffering or feeling low.

Unless we start practicing self-compassion and self-kindness, it may not be easy to nurture these. Due to different reasons like low self-esteem, inner criticism, etc we find it challenging to practice these. So let us see some exercises that we could consider learning and enhancing our practice of self-kindness and self-compassion.

### ***1) Practicing self-compassion through reflection exercise***

A) Sit in silence for some time and think of the last time you made a mistake. This is a reflection exercise. The participants

should sit in a quiet place so that they can reflect without any disturbance.

B) So, when you start recalling about the last time you made a mistake, did you become your own bitterest critic? What were the different thoughts that started coming to your mind?

C) Many times, we criticize ourselves by saying we are not worthy and not good enough. We become judgmental with ourselves. We suffer from self-guilt. Did you also think like this? Did these feelings prevent you from practicing kindness? Write these reflections in a sheet of paper.

D) Now go back to the past situation again and let us see how we can overcome those situations and nurture self-kindness:

a. In situations when you are low in your self-esteem, and self-worth and doubting yourself, try and recognize different negative thoughts that come to your mind. Write them down.

b. Then analyze these negative thoughts. Think critically if these thoughts were actually true, is there any reality behind these, or they are in any way helpful. This step is actually to scrutinize the negative thoughts.

c. Once we have analyzed the negative thoughts, it is time to replace these with positive ideas. Thinking critically will help us replace the negative thoughts with more realistic positive thoughts.

Here we would like to share how in our study on nonviolent intrapersonal communication, we engaged with those in traumas and in the lowest ebb of their lives with nonviolent communication. Our effort was to transform the negative energies into positive self-talk and all dimensions of intrapersonal communication. After almost a month, the change in these individuals was transformative.

It is important to practice nonviolent intrapersonal communication as part of our endeavour to nurture self-compassion and self-kindness.

d. Think about your best friend. Think of one of the most difficult times s/he was experiencing. Probably with your deep compassion and understanding, you would have tried to help her/him. Write down these thoughts for your friend with which you tried to help her/him. In fact, write the different approaches you might have taken to take them out of the difficult situation.

e. Now try to apply the same compassion and understanding on yourself. Think of yourself as your best friend. Try to treat yourself with that same deep respect that you would do to your close friend.

Also going by the same principles with which you would reach out and try to help your friend, how will you talk to yourself in a difficult situation? How will you treat yourself? What would be the different approaches you would take to take you out of the difficult situation? Will it be self-criticism and self-guilt or self-love and self-kindness? Reflect on how you will help yourself.

f. Try to connect with your own needs and feelings and practice self-care. There are many unmet needs of ours, which makes us to behave in a certain way, which may not be positive.

g. You could compliment and appreciate yourself for a good thing that you might have done; it will boost your motivation.

## **2. Practicing self-compassion through journaling-writing a Soul Journal**



A) Now, let us practice self-compassion through our writings. It is a useful exercise and can help us connect with ourselves deeply. We have been advocating journaling as a useful method in many issues like anger management, enhancing our circle of gratitude, etc. Here we are advocating that you share your reflections in a Soul Journal, which means you are connecting to yourself to expand your self-awareness, self-compassion and indulge in self-love.

In the initial stages of our work on inner transformation, we realized the importance of journaling. We believe journaling helps in promoting self-reflection, self-introspection, emotional processing and regulation, and enhancement of our personhood. We termed this endeavour to self-reflect and self-introspect as the voice of the soul. Hence, we decided to call the journal, which we said could help us to reflect on a variety of issues, which we would be exploring in this course book, Soul Journal. You could take a notebook for maintaining the Soul Journal or even make it digitally. (Read *Annexure 20* for more details)

For developing self-compassion, you could do the following reflection exercise:

B) In a quiet place, reflect on one imperfection of yours. Do you feel insecure about this imperfection? Sit in silence and think for some time about this imperfection.

Reflect on the emotions that come as you think about this imperfection, what do you think about this? What kind of negative feelings come up in your mind?

Write about these emotions and the negative feelings that are coming in your Soul Journal with utmost sincerity. Remember you do not have to share these with anybody; these are for your own deep reflections and self-introspection.

C) Continue to do this for a month and reflect on the changes you feel on how you handle negative feelings. Have you been able to expand your sphere of self-compassion? Does this exercise help you in your trust for inner transformation?

### ***3. Write a letter to yourself***

Writing a letter to oneself is a very effective exercise. Please refer to *Annexure 12* for relevant application sheets for this exercise.

A) In our workshops to promote self-compassion, we request our participants to write a letter to themselves as someone who is our closest friend and how they care about us.

B) If our closest friend is in trouble or having problems, we will attend to her/him with deep compassion, kindness and empathy. We will try to reach out to her/him and see what we can do to help her/him come out of the situation and the suffering. This is what we will write to ourselves – how through deep compassion and kindness we can alleviate our sufferings and come out of the difficult situation.

C) Come back and revisit the letter after some time. Reflect on whether you feel the spirit of compassion, whether you feel the soothing and caring sensation.



#### ***4. Exercises to change our negative self-talk***

A) In this exercise, recall the last time you indulged in negative self-talk. Do a deep reflection on this. Again, you will need a quiet and calm place to think and reflect.

Think carefully on the different words, and phrases you used as part of the self-talk. Also, think about the tone you used. Usually, we do not give much credence to such things minutely; we tend to overlook how we talked to ourselves or the words that we used for ourselves. We are sure this will be the case with you. This is the reason it would take deep reflection to decipher the words, phrases, and tone. Initially you might find it challenging especially at the emotional level analyzing how you treated yourself and how you talked to yourself.

B) The next task is now to learn how we can reframe our negative self-talk. This according to our experience is one of the most challenging tasks. In trauma or in difficult situations, it is not easy to remain calm and talk to oneself in a positive tone using positive words and phrases.

Here we suggest that you sit in silence for a while, take a pause and reflect with the spirit of compassion and kindness. This will help you to focus on the positive, reframe the way you have berated yourself.

C) Let us share with you an example. For instance, you have committed a blunder. Normally, most of us would yell at ourselves and say, “How can I let this happen, this is atrocious.” However, when we are practicing self-compassion, we will reframe it as, “I am after all a human being, and I am bound to make mistakes. But let me learn from this blunder.”

During the session, we suggest that you make a list of your usual negative self-talk when you are in a difficult situation. Next, against your own inner negativities, start reframing them using the spirit of compassion and positivity. Learn to

use phrases, which strengthen your inner resilience and keep on motivating you. Mark the differences.

## **Lesson III**

### **Practicing Loving Kindness**

In our book, we have delved on the significance of practicing loving kindness and its critical role in dissolving our inner conflicts and helping us experience inner peace. In the book, we have quoted the Vietnamese Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh who has beautifully described what exactly loving-kindness is. He says:

The first element of true love is loving kindness. The essence of loving kindness is being able to offer happiness. You can be the sunshine for another person. You cannot offer happiness until you have it for yourself. So build a home inside by accepting yourself and learning to love and heal yourself. Learn how to practice mindfulness in such a way that you can create moments of happiness and joy for your own nourishment. Then you have something to offer the other person. (<https://tnhmeditation.org/loving-kindness/>)

By being compassionate to our self and others, we are promoting loving kindness. When we learn to love and heal ourselves, we are being compassionate to ourselves.

As we have done in the exercises above, the more we practice self-kindness and self-compassion, we will be promoting loving kindness. When we are self-compassionate, we are wishing for our own well-being at both the inner level and the outer level. In *Annexure 2*, we are sharing an important insight on why young people need to be encouraged to practice loving kindness.

### ***1) Visualization exercise***

A) To realize the essence of loving kindness, let us do an exercise. Find a calm and serene place to do this visualization exercise. Visualize someone who is very close to you. Think and reflect on the warmth you have in your relationship with that individual; think of the feelings of affection and the deep emotional connection.

B) Next, do the same exercise with yourself. Think of yourself being your closest friend. Think of the deep connection you have with your inner self, and the relationship you have with yourself. Think and reflect on the emotional bond that you share with yourself.

C) Lastly, think of a person who according to you is difficult to engage with and you might be having a difficult relationship with her/him. Can you think of having the same feelings towards this person like that you had for someone close to you or with your own self? Reflect on this.

## **Lesson IV**

### **Removing Junk Mail from our mind and heart**



We firmly believe that if we are to develop inner strength and remain calm like the ocean, we have to practice removing junk mail from our inner systems. The junk mail- the unnecessary thoughts and ideas keep on coming to us like waves and are accumulated. The result for many of us is we keep being swayed away by these junk mails, and get into a state of anxiety and stress. These mails hurt us, offend us and are a contributory factor in wasting our time.

In today's hyper technological environment where we are ingesting a surfeit of messages- both wanted and unwanted, there is an emergent need to develop skills to filter and remove these junk mails. However, it is a challenge and needs constant work and ingenuity to remove the unwanted, which causes trouble for us. Let us explore the different ways in which we can start removing junk mails.

### ***1) Practicing Solitude for a Joyful World***

During our conversation in the book, we have discussed the importance of solitude for a joyful world. We firmly believe that practicing solitude helps us to focus our thoughts and ideas and is an important element in our tryst to filter the junk mails and remove them. We had stressed in our chapter:

Periods of solitude are definitely extremely important for our self-realization and understanding of who we are. Most of us do not have a clear understanding of who we are and what we want to do in our life.

Further, we had contended that practicing solitude rejuvenates us and helps in our inner transformation.

We had described solitude as an act, which we do out of our own free-will and helps in our self-realization, self-introspection, and development of constructive thoughts. Here are some exercises through which we can practice solitude:

### **i) Paying attention on one's feelings**

A) In today's world, there is a lot of distraction. We suggest that each one of us could start our day with sometime of complete silence centering on ourselves. Just give yourself 10-12 minutes.

B) This is the time you can pay attention to your feelings and thoughts. Try to understand these feelings, acknowledge them and try to process them without trying to distract yourself.

C) Continue doing it for a month. You will see the difference after this. Possibly, you could record the difference in your Soul Journal.

### **ii) Mindful Routines**

A) We suggest mindful routines to practice solitude.

B) We have already discussed mindful walking above.

C) Another significant method to practice solitude is mindful eating. Many youngsters across the world are now addicted to using smartphones while eating, this distracts their concentration and makes it difficult to savour the food they are taking.

We should try to remain silent, and focused while eating. When we are eating, let us focus on the food that we are eating; reflect on the contribution of farmers, shopkeepers, and our mothers who might have cooked the food for us. Think and savor the taste and smell of the food that we are taking.

Practicing mindfulness is an important approach to experience solitude.

### **iii) Cultivating hobbies**

It is important to cultivate hobbies to distract our mind and practice solitude. Reflect on your hobby and delineate how it helps you to remain focused and be with yourself.

Cultivating hobbies should not be something you are doing out of pressure; instead you should enjoy it and help in de-stressing yourself.

In a training workshop, we can encourage participants to share their views on how by cultivating hobbies, they are able to improve their emotional and mental health, enhance their self-esteem and self-worth, give them the wherewithal for their self-discovery, and most importantly help in stress reduction.

iv) These are just suggestive activities for practicing solitude, which can help us to turn inwards. There are many more. Jot down different activities, which can help you to practice solitude. Share with your peers and reflect on their benefits.

### ***2) Cyber fasting as a strategy to remove unwanted thoughts***



For greater understanding of cyber fasting as a powerful strategy of de-addiction from the internet and smartphones, and to limit the ingesting of unwanted thoughts and ideas, we request our readers to read a conversation of ours in *Annexure 3*.

We sincerely believe that for a joyful world, which promotes deeper connections amongst individuals and their genuine happiness, we must encourage cyber fasting as a strategy at a global level. It will not only work as a potion for smart phone and Internet addiction, it will genuinely contribute to our physical and mental well-being. It will definitely help in removing the junk mails from our mind ecosystem.

Cyberfasting to us, in today's hypertechnological society is an essential pillar of our concept of JoyfulTalisman, human values for a joyful world. It needs to be an important life-skill to be practiced in this age where technology has penetrated every aspect of our lives.

Besides, we feel logging- off can also contribute to both inner and outer peace. We invite institutions and individuals to organize campaigns and events, which encourages cyber-fasting.

### **i)Group Discussion**

A) Form a dialogue circle.

B) Initiate a group discussion on the significance of cyberfasting. During discussion, bring out the points on how you will motivate others to also practice cyberfasting.

C) After going through our conversation on cyberfasting, try to practice cyberfasting for atleast sometime during the week. Reflect on how you feel. Can you increase your time to do cyberfasting?

D) Develop an action plan on how to make cyberfasting popular.

## **ii)Cyberfasting in our homes**

A) Share the key points of cyberfasting and its benefits to your family members. Discuss with them the different ways members of the family can practice cyberfasting.

B) Encourage family time especially during dinner as a means to promote cyberfasting.

C) After a month of practicing cyberfasting, share with your peers its benefits.

## **Lesson V**

### **Practicing Inner Discipline**

An important dimension of turning inwards is to practice inner discipline. Inner discipline entails how we regulate and control the self by ourselves and not by any external elements. There are times when we over react or get unnecessarily overwhelmed by different situations. For inner calmness, we need to train ourselves to practice inner discipline. Strong inner discipline will help us to resist our short- term urges, greed, and impulses. Here are the words of Mahatma Gandhi, which serves as the guiding posts for practicing inner discipline:

Let us now see what our duty is to ourselves. Let us take, first, our private habits, which are unknown to all but ourselves. We are responsible for them since they affect our character; but this is not all. We are responsible for them also because they affect others. Every person ought to control his own impulses, and keep his soul as well as body clean. 'Tell me,' says a great man, 'what a man's private habits are and I shall tell you what he is or will be.'... Arguing along these lines and keeping one's instincts pure, one should further consider how to put them to use. One ought to



have a fixed aim in life. If we do not discover our life's purposes, and keep steadily to the course, we shall be swept along like a rudderless ship on the high seas; we shall falter on the [moral] path. Man's highest duty in life is to serve mankind and take his share in bettering its condition. This is true worship-true prayer.... Let us consider the matter in some detail. We ought constantly to examine whether our way of life tends to improve human life or to worsen it. Thus, the merchant should ask himself whether, in transacting a business, he is cheating himself or another. The lawyer and the physician, acting according to this standard, will give more thought to their client or patient than to their fees. The mother in rearing her child would proceed very cautiously lest she should spoil the child out of misguided by these considerations and do his duty. The result of all this would be that, if the worker fulfills his function in conformity with the moral ideal, he would be deemed better and higher than the wealthy merchant, physician or lawyer who lives without any discipline. The worker would be the true coin and those selfish men, even though more intelligent or wealthy, would be counterfeit. This further shows that any man, whatever his place in life, has the power to fulfill this aim. A man's value depends upon his way of life, not his status. One's way of life is not to be judged by one's visible outward actions, but by one's inner leanings.

-Ethical Religion by Mahatma Gandhi

Here are some simple activities, which can help us practice inner discipline:

### ***1) Enhancing our self-awareness***

The first step to practice inner discipline is to enhance our self-awareness. When we say we are self-aware, we are being conscious of our thoughts, actions, and emotions. A developed self-awareness means we are fully aware of who we are, what

are our strengths and weaknesses, what skills we have, and what our value system is. (Also, see *Annexure 13* for relevant application sheet)

A) One of the fundamental things that we suggest our participants to increase their self-awareness is to do an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses.

B) To do the analysis of our strengths and weaknesses, participants need to take a chart paper; they can also use their notebooks. This again is a deep reflection exercise.

C) While we start this SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), the first questions we ask is:

- How do you differentiate between who you are and who the world expects you to be?
- There might be a certain truth about you, which you yourself have not been acknowledging. Which are these truths, which you have been avoiding to acknowledge? What are the reasons for not acknowledging these truths? What might change if you acknowledge these truths about yourself?
- If someone close to you were to describe your inner self — not your roles — what would they say?

D) Following these general questions, let us start analyzing our strengths. Every one of us thinks we have some skills and traits, which gives us an advantage. These are our strengths. As part of the exercise, we ask the participants to reflect on the following:

- Think and reflect on some unique capabilities and skills you might have.
- Then reflect on the strengths others might think you may have? Who are these individuals and what relationships do they have with you?

- Is there any skill you think you have better than those around you?

E) Similarly, we ask the participants on the different weaknesses they think they have. The participants are asked to reflect on the following:

- Reflect on the different weaknesses you think you have. Further, reflect on how these weaknesses have put you into a disadvantageous position on different occasions.
- Reflect on the different areas, which others might think you have weaknesses. Who are these individuals and what relationships do you have with them?
- What are the skills you think others, who are around you, are having better than you?
- Reflect on the steps you would like to take to overcome these weaknesses.

F) The third dimension is to reflect and see how we can act on the opportunities that might be available. These are essentially the external factors that could contribute to our success. We ask the participants to reflect on the available opportunities that are there at the moment and how they could make use of these for their benefit.

G) Finally, it is time to consider possible threats. Problems and difficulties in our lives do not come by telling us nor do we wish that they came. But at times, we can reflect and think on the possibilities; these can be anything- our studies, exams, career goals, what do we want to do in our life, or any other thing. We could spare some time to reflect on what we can do to mitigate these possible threats.

H) There are different other exercises to enhance our self-awareness. Research, put them together and discuss with your peers. A self-aware individual is likely to remain focused, and practice inner discipline.

## ***2) Developing capacities of Delayed Gratification***

You want a new pair of sports shoes. You cannot wait for it even though your parents are saying that they will get you shortly. You try to push them to the brink. Similarly, there may be situations when you want a thing instantly without having any patience to wait for it. It could also be something like a reward. For instance, we are doing something and we need reward and success instantly. We do not have the patience or perseverance to try and possibly do something better.

Short cuts and acting on our impulses may not get us the desired results; but we do not have the required patience and inner discipline to wait for what we want. When we are running for instant gratification, we are lacking in self-control, there is a decrease in attention span, there is difficulty in self-regulation, there is an increase in anxiety and stress, and less motivation. We have been talking to many individuals on the ill effects of instant gratification; more than often they underscore how values are sacrificed when we run to get or achieve things through short cuts.

In simple terms, we lack the skill of delayed gratification. We can describe delayed gratification as our capacity to resist the temptations of trying to get instant reward or pleasure; instead having the skills of inner discipline to look at a holistic picture and work to get something more long-lasting. In today's world of crass materialism, it may not be easy to practice delayed gratification, but we need to strive to bring a change in our behaviour. We believe that when individuals learn the art and science of practicing delayed gratification, they may not sacrifice the foundation of basic human values.

For practicing delayed gratification, here are some exercises that can be nurtured:

i) Cyberfasting: Young people these days are over attuned to scrolling their smartphone. They want instant gratification

by scrolling contents. As discussed above and in Annexure 3, initiating young people to the habit of cyberfasting will enhance their skills of delayed gratification, enable them to be more patient and develop inner discipline.

ii) Mindful routines as discussed above are another method to enhance our inner discipline helping us to practice delayed gratification.

iii) Practicing delayed gratification through journaling

Remember the concept of Soul Journal we had introduced earlier. We firmly believe that instead of taking up very big steps to practice delayed gratification, small practical steps need to be taken as part of our daily habits.

In the Soul Journal, make a table and write on the different instances when we want instant gratification. Then in one column write its benefits and in another its weaknesses. In the fourth column, write the possible action you could take to practice delayed gratification. Finally, in the fifth column, try to think of the possible benefits you might accrue if you practiced delayed gratification. This exercise requires deep reflection and introspection.

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Cases of Instant Gratification</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>How can I practice Delayed Gratification?</b>	<b>Possible Benefits of practicing Delayed Gratification</b>

### **3) Dialogue Circle**

In a dialogue circle discuss the key points from the excerpts of Mahatma Gandhi's views as shared above from Ethical

Religion. How these points do helps us to develop inner discipline?

## **Lesson VI**

### **Developing Courage to do good for Humankind**

In our book, *The Joyful Tasliman: Conversations on Human Values for a Joyful World*, we have discussed how each one of us frequently get in situations of a predicament of whether we take an arduous path to do good or resort to unethical short cuts. In this context, we had pointed out:

Our life is a battlefield, often involved in an onerous fight between oneself or externally between the good and the bad. Many times, in difficult situations, unable to stand to our ethical and moral principles, we get swayed away towards aligning ourselves with the bad which only aims to promote toxicity, hatred and harm others. We simply do not have the courage to disassociate with the bad and tread the path of righteousness with valor. We more than often find ourselves in quagmire, a quick, easy solution aligning with the bad for our own self-aggrandizement or the arduous path to steadfastly side with the good. This is a predicament all of us find ourselves in all the time.

We discussed the importance of mustering courage to strive to do things, which are ethically and morally correct. In this regard, we pointed out:

If we as individuals want to do good for humankind, we have to nurture the right courage, reach the depth of our ethical and moral values and virtues and abstain from shallowness and shortcuts. We have to work incessantly to develop our courage to help others and make them happy- this should be an important mission of our lives.

We further stressed:

We believe that each one of us should strive to be authentic and true to ourselves as it is a form of courage which can help in aligning our values and convictions to the goodness of others and humankind. Then comes another difficult area, which entails standing by our own beliefs. Do we have the courage to speak up when there is a difficult situation or someone is doing things that are ethically and morally incorrect? When we are able to do this, even in a small way, we think, we are actually developing courage and integrity.

How do we develop courage to try to remain ethically and morally correct? Maintaining one's integrity even in difficult situations is a challenge and can only be practiced when there is inner discipline and inner strength. Please read interviews with two young students in this aspect in *Annexure 4*. Further, let us do the following exercises to develop courage and inner strength.

### **1) Exploring one's inner strength**

A) One may read and explore how someone has done an act of courage, but it may be difficult to reflect on one's own courage. This exercise is meant to reflect on one's own values, which are a source of courage.

B) Here again a quiet place is needed for one to reflect. Participants should have adequate time for deep reflection.

C) In your notebook, reflect and write on five core values that you think you have.

D) Reflect on each one of them separately and write on how these values are sources of your strength.

E) Reflect if any one of these values that you think you have had been a source of you losing out. How did you feel then? Did you feel that abandoning this value would contribute to your self-aggrandizement?

F) Reflect if any of these values have put you ahead of others in terms of ethical and moral standards. How did you feel then? Share some unique experiences in this regard.

G) None of us is perfect in this world. Next, try to reflect on some negative values that you think you have. What has been the impact of practicing these negative values? Share some experiences in this regard.

G) After these reflection exercises, organize a group discussion on the importance of ethical and moral values and how these are sources of inner strength and courage.

## **2) Uncovering your authentic self**

A) Finding out our authentic self is critical for developing our inner strength and being courageous to stand for ethical and moral issues.

B) When we are talking about authenticity, it means we are honest and true to our real self. Authenticity happens when what we really believe actually matches with our behaviour, speech, attitude and body language; we are not practicing double standards.

C) For this exercise, take a notebook and find a secluded spot for deep reflection and introspection. Think of the last time you felt you were not authentic- possibly, you did contrary to what you stand for. Reflect and write on the circumstances when you did something opposite to the human values you stand for. What exactly did you do in that situation?

D) Reflect and write on the feelings and emotions that made you feel you were not authentic; something, which made you realize that you were not your real self on that occasion.

E) Reflect and write in points on why you think you might have behaved in an inauthentic way. What were the different reasons that triggered you to do this- individuals, place,



situation (all external reasons) and/or worry , fear, was judgmental, unclear assumption( internal reasons). Reflect on the detailed insights.

F) Now that you have reflected on how you acted in an inauthentic way, think of yourself again in the same situation. How would you act now? Will it be different from the last time? Do you think this reflection exercise helps you to uncover your authentic self?

## **Lesson VII**

### **Patience, an important pathway to enhance our inner strength**



Most of us get perturbed or irritated if we are not able to get what we want in a short time. In other words, we lack the necessary patience to handle the situation and expect to get everything as ‘fireworks’. However, life is not so simple. When we are talking of turning inwards in our framework of JoyfulTalisman, the ability to practice patience is an important dimension.

There are many who might believe that patience is passive. They feel that those who show patience lack the firepower. Those who use their firepower, even at the cost of browbeating others to go at the top are considered superior. We think it is an inversion of our value systems. Day in and day out we find individuals who even with a small disappointment, a brief difficult situation, or a difficult conversation, makes them get

angry. They do not have the patience to maneuver and negotiate the challenging situation. We always seem to be in a hurry and experience suggests that more than often all these lead us to become unhappy. If we do not have the patience to handle disruptions in our lives, we will continue to suffer and remain insecure.

It is in this backdrop that it is important to practice the art and science of patience. Eknath Easwaran in his beautiful book, *Patience: A Little Book of Inner Strength* has aptly underlined:

As we gain some mastery in the practice of patience and kindness, interesting developments take place in the mind. Resentments and hostilities that used to torment us will be getting weaker; yet they will still be present. It is a peculiar position. You find a little resentment, a little sympathy – a curious mix.

For example, suppose somebody is rude to you. You do not like the person, but you do not dislike him, either - a great advance from your previous attitude. You may feel hostile for a moment, but you know that hostility no longer has the power to push you into doing or saying something you will regret. And because you know you are in control, that experience will leave no residue of resentment in your mind. I don't mean you will like that person, not at first - in fact, for five minutes or so you may positively dislike him. But afterward you say to yourself, "Oh, the fellow comes from a broken home, went to a rough school, fell in with the wrong company; that's why he has become like that." Once you know you can transform negative feelings in this way, you have won a great victory.

Easwaran has aptly captured how nurturing patience can transform negative feelings. Patience gives us strength as peace scholar Daisaku Ikeda says 'with love and patience, nothing is impossible'.

Now let us discuss some exercises, which can help us cultivate patience. We feel that when we start reflecting on the triggers due to which we become impatient, when we are able to acknowledge ourselves the reasons of our impatience, and write in our Soul Journal about our feelings, emotions, and expressions, we can cultivate patience.

### ***1) Delving on the triggers of impatience***

Most of the times we fail to acknowledge the triggers that are the reason for our impatience. It is important to identify these triggers.

A) The aim is to identify the triggers, which promote impatience. In this reflection exercise, find a silent space for yourself. Recall and reflect on the different occasions when you got impatient. As you recollect, try to reflect on the different physical sensations, feelings, and emotions that you might have experienced. Try to delineate the different triggers, which might have been responsible for those emotions, and feelings.

Next, as parts of this exercise reflect on the steps you need to take to practice patience in such situations if they happen again.

B) Now, try to reflect on the different individuals who are responsible for you to become impatient. Try to analyze their attitude and behaviour, which makes you feel impatient. How have you been engaging with them? How do you want to engage with them? How do you respond to them?

C) Further, reflect on what would be your attitude and behaviour, which would evoke greater patience. How do you think you would be able to bring a change in this attitude and behaviour?

### ***2) Thinking critically on the benefits of patience***

A) Let us go back to our Soul Journal.

B) Think critically and reflect on why patience is important for you. Write as many points as possible for greater clarity.

C) Next, write on the important benefits of being patient. It would be useful to recall and record instances in the past when you showed patience and how it helped.

E) Try to reflect when you think it is okay to be impatient. What are these occasions and how do you respond to such situations?

F) Do you think a deep understanding of the importance of patience can help you to respond to different situations? Please share your views.

## **Lesson VIII**

### **Managing Anger Constructively**



Getting angry is an organic part of our lives. Each one of us at some point or the other gets angry for a variety of reasons. It is a natural experience, which involves our feelings, emotions, attitude, and behaviour. We might get angry from both internal and external factors. For instance, if we are facing some personal problems and are in turmoil, we are most likely to get angry. On the other hand, the behaviour of others,

which might be hurting us, could make us angry. The key, however, is how we manage anger.

For realization of human values, constructive management of anger is critical. Many of the problems we encounter in life are a result of poor anger management. We are unable to identify the right triggers which are making us to get angry. Unless we are able to identify the triggers, we cannot handle issues of anger constructively. Please see our conversation which talks about the JoyfulTalisman approach to anger management in *Annexure 19*.

Let us try out some simple exercises for constructive anger management.

### **i) Mindful Routines**

We had introduced mindful routines in Lesson IV: Removing Junk Mail from our mind and heart. Through mindful practices and routines that encourage mindfulness, we can experience inner calmness and develop the ability to handle anger triggers constructively.

### **ii) Anger Journal**

Though we have not done any scientific study ourselves on how anger journal helps us with the necessary skills to manage anger positively, there are numerous writings and studies in this regard. A portion of your Soul Journal could be used to write your daily anger journal. In fact, in different workshops, we suggest that participants write their Gratitude Journal on one side and their Anger Journal on the other side. From the experience of several individuals whom we encouraged to write daily, writing these side by side gives enormous positivity.

In the Anger Journal, while retiring to bed, try to write the following:

1. How many times during the day do you get angry?

2. What caused the triggers? Try to self-reflect as clearly as possible on these triggers.
3. Try to go deep into the root causes of these triggers. Who were the individuals, if any, who were the cause of these triggers?
4. What was your reaction to these triggers? How did you express your emotions and feelings?
5. How did your anger affect you? Reflect on the impact in terms of your body, mind, and spirit.
6. How did the anger affect others around you? What were their possible feelings, emotions, and reactions?
7. As you are involved in deep self-reflection and self-introspection, think if you were in a similar situation now, whether you would have reacted differently or not.

There was a group of students with whom we worked on anger management and encouraged them to write their daily Anger Journal. Before starting the exercise, we took a detailed note of each one of them on the common causes of their anger, what kind of emotions and feelings were involved, and how they handled anger issues. After a month, when we went back to them they reported that they were able to handle anger issues more constructively.

## *Chapter 3*

### **Being Human Interdependent Literate**



#### **Objectives**

##### **This chapter aim:**

- To develop broad understanding of the essence of human interdependence literacy
- To appreciate the importance of human interdependence literacy for a joyful living and take up initiatives in this regard
- To integrate the idea of human interdependence literacy in different settings

In the world today where there are conflicts at different levels-human & human conflicts, human & nature conflicts, and human & other living beings conflicts, there is an urgent need to be human interdependent literate. In our book, we had introduced the concept of human interdependent literacy. We argued it is an important pillar of JoyfulTalisman.

To us, human interdependence literacy is a 21st century skill that all need to possess to be able to negotiate differences not only with other human beings, but also learn to live harmoniously with nature and other living beings.

Essentially, human interdependence means our deep sense of connections with not only other human beings, but also nature and all other living beings. As discussed in the backdrop of the incessant conflicts between human beings, and between human-nature and other living beings, the philosophy of human interdependence is central to the resolution of these conflicts.

The Vietnamese Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh succinctly explains the essence of human interdependence or inter-being, “Your happiness and the happiness of other species inter-are. If you are healthy, if you are happy, then other forms of life can profit from you. If you are sick, if you suffer, then other species will have to suffer with you.”

Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi had said, “My ethics not only permit me to claim but require me to own kinship with not merely the ape but the horse and the sheep, the lion and the leopard, the snake and the scorpion. The hard ethics which rule my life, and I hold ought to rule that of every man and woman, imposes this unilateral obligation upon us.” (Young India, 8-7-1926)

In fact, the central idea of Mahatma Gandhi’s nonviolence is the essence of human interdependence. Mahatma Gandhi believed in the Cosmo centric nature of human beings where they are only one part of the whole universe and it is a



fundamental pillar of his idea of nonviolence. This deep understanding of the Cosmo centric nature should be the guiding force behind our relationships with other human beings, nature and other living beings. It is only then we can genuinely challenge the great forces of fragmentation.

Mahatma Gandhi's idea of interdependence can be further encapsulated from the following idea:

Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency. Man is a social being. Without interrelation with society, he cannot realize his oneness with the universe or suppress his egotism. His social interdependence enables him to test his faith and to prove himself on the touchstone of reality. If man were so placed or could place himself as to be absolutely above all dependent on his fellow beings he would become so proud and arrogant as to be a veritable burden and nuisance to the world. Dependence on society teaches him the lesson of humanity. - (The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi)

Nobel Laureate, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in his book, *The Relation of the Individual to the Universe*, *Sadhana: The Realization of Life* (1913) encapsulates the relation of the individual with the Universe by underlining how our traditions emphasized the harmony between the two. He makes an important point regarding the phenomenon when individuals were truly in harmony with nature. He notes, "The great fact is that we are in harmony with nature; that man can think because his thoughts are in harmony with things; that he can use the forces of nature for his own purpose only because his power is in harmony with the power which is universal."

Indeed, John Muir had so pertinently written in 'My First Summer in the Sierra', "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it is hitched to everything else in the universe."

Now let us revisit what we understand by human interdependence literacy. The following is the explanation of this term we had introduced in our book, *The JoyfulTalisman: Conversations on Human Values for a Joyful World*:

Developing critical capacities to not only understand and assimilate the deep meaning of human interdependence, but also be able to act on its principles in our daily lives. It also means how we enhance our cognitive capabilities to comprehend the complexities involved in the micro and macro dimensions of the phenomenon of human interdependence and contribute to its realization at all levels of our life and society. It also entails developing our traditional, indigenous and cultural knowledge, which underlined the essence of human interdependence. It is only then we will be able to promote peaceful coexistence in its real sense.

We strongly believe that when we are thinking of human interdependence literacy, it has to start from our own inner self, realizing and acting on the essential unity of our ‘inner inter-relationship’.

Also, as we learn from Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, the idea of human interdependence literacy hinges on the fact that the harmony between human-nature-all other beings is not just a feeling but dynamic action. This action and feeling has to be part of our consciousness, only then we can challenge the forces of divisiveness and disruptions. The exercises that we are suggesting are a clarion call for action to realizing the goals of human interdependence literacy.

Please read a detailed account of our concept of Human Interdependence Literacy in *Annexure 5*.

Taking forward this explanation of human interdependence literacy, let us delve on some creative exercises:

## **Lesson I**

### **Conversation series on the importance of human interdependence**

Both of us have been putting together different books and work using the conversational style of writing. We find it an interesting style where those reading our work find them in the form of conversations. The aim is also to make complex issues simple through dialogues and conversations.

In this exercise, we suggest you put together a small conversation series on the importance of human interdependence and peaceful co-existence. Please find an application sheet of this exercise in *Annexure 14 & 15*.

#### ***i) Group Discussion with friends/peers***

Get together in a conversation with some friends/peers on why developing sensitivity on human interdependence is important.

For the group discussion, read the materials we have provided in Annexure 5, do some research and develop 4-5 important points for conversation.

#### ***ii) Conversation with those having opposite views from you***

Reach out to someone who might have diametrically different views from you. Engage her/him in a conversation on human interdependence. What are the different points, which emerge from this conversation?

***iii) Imaginary conversation with your favourite flower/tree***



A) This is an exercise, which enhances your critical and deep thinking abilities. Think about your favourite flower/tree. What are its important attributes because of which it is your favourite flower/tree?

B) Write an imaginary conversation with the flower/tree. What are the key points that need to be highlighted which stresses on the principle of human interdependence? Share your views with the favourite flower/tree on how much you are dependent on it.

D) Next, think of yourself as the favourite flower/tree. Imagine a human being interacting with you. What would you

all be sharing with her/him? How will you describe your importance in the ecosystem?

***iv) Imaginary conversation with your favourite bird/animal***



A) Now, think about your favourite bird/animal. What are the important attributes because of which it is your favourite bird/animal?

B) Write an imaginary conversation with the bird/animal. What are the key points that need to be highlighted which stresses on the principle of human interdependence? Share your views with your favourite bird/animal on how much you are dependent on it.

C) Next, think of yourself as the favourite bird/animal. Imagine a human being interacting with you. What would you all be sharing with her/him? What will you tell her/him about your importance in the entire ecosystem?

## **Lesson II**

### **Deep Respect for all**

The idea of human interdependence starts from the basic level- deep respect for each other. This has to be expanded to our respect for the environment and all other living beings. In fact, we have to respect the dignity of all- whether other human beings, nature, or other living beings. Of course, at the fundamental level, it starts with having deep respect for ourselves. If we do not have respect for ourselves, it would be difficult to extend genuine respect for others. Here is what Mahatma Gandhi had pointed out on this significant idea:

Another may answer that the duty is to have sympathy and fraternal regard for others. A third may answer that it is to revere parents, care for one's wife and children, and acquit oneself well with brother, sister or friend. Alongside of all these virtues, it is also a part of my duty to respect myself even as I respect others. As long as I do not understand myself, how shall I understand others? And how shall I respect one whom I do not know? Many hold the view that the obligation of proper conduct arises [only] in relation to others and that, in the absence of contact with others, one may do just as one pleases. He who holds these views does not know what he says. In this world none can, with impunity, act as he pleases. –Ethical Religion by Mahatma Gandhi

Now, let us try out some activities to practice genuine respect for all.

i) Reflect in your scrapbook:

A) When was the last time you showed disrespect to someone you know? What do you plan to do to connect with that person again?

B) What were the reasons that triggered disrespect for this particular person?

ii) What are the ways you can show respect for birds and animals around your house and institution? How can you create awareness on the need to respect nature, birds, and animals amongst your friends?

iii) Explore the significance of self-respect. Critically reflect how being respectful to one self helps in respecting others.

### **Lesson III**

#### **Our Responsibility towards Mother Earth**

Further, as stewards of Mother Earth, we not only need to have deep respect for nature and all its living creatures, we are actually responsible for their well-being too. In our book, we have, through our conversation, delved on the deeper meaning of responsibility. We discussed philosopher, Jiddu Krishnamurti's perspective on responsibility. On this, we have argued, "This takes our understanding of responsibility to a higher plane of ethical and moral values when he says that we are the world. As rightly pointed out, we should be mindful of the fact that we do not limit ourselves to the narrow confines of just being responsible towards ourselves or our immediate peers."

Further, we underlined, "Jiddu Krishnamurti's prescriptions of responsibility underline the essence of human interdependence or the essential unity of human beings. This approach to the idea of responsibility is important more than ever before in the context of the growing concerns like climate

change, environmental degradation, water crisis, food shortages, and intra and inter-state conflicts.”

i) Based on this understanding of respect and responsibility, make a table and list on what all you as a steward of Mother Earth can do and what action you can take for these.

Try to make some sketches/cartoons/comics on these. These can be displayed in your institutions for generating awareness on our responsibilities towards our planet. For Application Sheet please see *Annexure 16*.

S.No.	What can I do to protect Mother Earth and its inhabitants?	Specific action that can be taken by you

ii)Group Discussion

Organize a focus group discussion on the theme of Respect and Responsibility towards Mother Earth. Capture the different perspectives of students.

## **Lesson IV**

### **Go on a nature trail.**

We believe that by going on a nature trail, we can observe and experience the deep nature of our interconnectedness. It will help us come face to face with many nuances of nature, which we had not known before. So through this exercise let us explore the depth of our interconnectedness with nature and other living beings.

i) Decide on the place you want to go for a nature trail.



ii) Feel and enjoy nature and its myriad creations. As part of the process to develop experiential understanding of nature and its creation, try to communicate with the three plants you like the most. How do you feel? Share your thoughts in the Soul Journal.

iii) Similarly, communicate with a few birds. Feel and enjoy their chirping. How do you feel? Share your thoughts in the Soul Journal.

iv) Letter from a tree to a human being: Letter writing is a unique skill, which helps you to connect with those to whom you are writing the letter. Writing a letter from your heart to someone you care for is an exhilarating experience. In this exercise, think of yourself as a tree. Write a letter from the tree to human beings. Reflect on the key points you want to communicate to human beings.

You care about human beings but you are hurt by the way, human beings are destroying trees and other natural habitats. Reflect on these points in your letter.

v) Letter from a bird to a human being: Think of yourself as a bird. Write a letter from the bird to human beings. Due to uncontrolled human activities, birds like you are losing their habitats. Reflecting on these key points while writing the letter highlighted your concern and suggestions to humankind.

## **Lesson V**

### **Analyzing our deep interconnections**

#### ***i) Delving on our interconnections between human-nature-other living beings***

A) This is an exercise where you are required to think critically, reflect, analyze and sketch. It is meant to analyze our deep interconnections, as mostly we are not attuned to think deeply about human interdependence.

B) Think about your favourite food. Reflect deeply on how it reached you. Think about the contribution of all including the plant/tree, the farmers who worked hard to yield the produce, those who took the crop/vegetable from the farm to the centre where all produce are brought together. Think of the truck drivers, and other workers who put the produce in trucks, etc. Think of all others in this chain critically including your mother who might have made the food for you. Make a detailed flowchart of the involvement of everyone in the chain. Write on the interconnectedness of each one of those who were involved in the process of getting you the food. Imagine 1-2 of those in this chain who are not there in this cycle. What impact would it have made to you?

C) Next, write 1-2 lines each expressing your gratitude to all in the chain who made it possible to get your favourite food on your table. Please share your feelings and emotions about these connections.

## **Lesson VI**

### **Research and Collecting examples**

i) Do some in-depth research and put together examples of the interdependent nature of our relationships- right from human-to-human connections and human-nature-all other living beings connections? What do we learn from them? There are innumerable examples across the world where communities co-exist beautifully with nature and other living beings. Through this exercise, we can develop a knowledge base on these unique cases of coexistence. Share these examples with your friends and organize group discussions on the finer lessons learnt.

ii) Make some videos/reels out of these, which will highlight your understanding of the importance of human interdependence. Share these with your friends and others.

## **Lesson VII**

### **Developing Communication Action Plan**

i) A communication action plan is a plan that is developed to create awareness about a particular issue using different tools and strategies of communication. For more insights, see *Annexure 10*.

A) In this exercise, we will have to develop a communication action plan to promote the concept of human interdependence literacy. Through this exercise develop a simple communication plan and initiate a programme to promote human interdependence literacy in your area/institution. All tools of communication- from the traditional media like wallpaper, posters, etc. to new media including the advanced social media platforms are to be part of the action plan.

B) Before developing the action plan, it is important to delve on the 4 W's and 1 H. This would entail:

a) Why do we want to communicate the significance of human interdependence? Or what is our purpose for this communication action plan?

b) The next question, which needs to be addressed, is to whom do we want to communicate? Alternatively, who is our audience/stakeholder?

c) Next, we have to delve into what we want to communicate? Or what is our message for our audience?

d) The next question we have to answer is how do we want to communicate our message? Or what are the channels of communication we have to employ to reach out to our audience?

e) Finally, we have to delve on whom should we contact and what we need to do to actually be able to use these channels of communication? If we have decided on the

channels of communication we can use, we need to know the people we need to approach to use these channels of communication.

C) When we have dealt with the above questions and answers, we can develop a flow chart highlighting the steps of our communication action plan.

D) The communication action plan has to involve the approach both in our institutions and in the community. It should deal right from group communication to use of different tools of social media.

E) Finally, promote the concept of human interdependence literacy through your communication action plan and record the impact amongst different stakeholders after one month.

## **Lesson VIII**

### **Adopting minimalism and a sustainable lifestyle**

A key requirement to nurture the spirit of human interdependence is adoption of minimalism and a sustainable lifestyle. In our book, we have underlined that minimalism is not just about decluttering, it is actually a lifestyle that helps us to connect with the purpose of our lives and strive to make it more meaningful. We stressed that ‘both simplicity and minimalism is not about deprivation, it is also about making value-added choices of developing deep connections with nature and environment and practicing sustainability’. We have quoted Satish Kumar from his book, *Elegant Simplicity*:

“When I speak of simplicity I don’t mean a life of deprivation, hair-shirt living or hardship. I believe in a good life, in beautiful things, in arts and crafts, and in sufficiency. I believe in joy and celebration. This is why I put the word ‘elegant’ before ‘simplicity’. Simplicity is and should be elegant. We all need and should have a comfortable and pleasant life. But at the moment our complicated lives are no longer comfortable. We are

sacrificing comfort for the sake of convenience, and the pursuit of convenience has led us astray.”

Adopting a sustainable lifestyle is crucial today as it addresses important environmental challenges like climate change, depletion of precious resources, and other concerns. Adoption of sustainable lifestyle entails making positive and conscious choices while minimizing the negative impact on our planet. Please read an interview with two young students on the importance of minimalism and simplicity in Annexure 6. Let us try to do some activities, which can encourage adoption of a sustainable lifestyle.

### ***i) Water Conservation***



A) Conserving water is important for nurturing a sustainable lifestyle. Do detailed water audit in your home.

B) For doing audits, check all taps and pipes and report any leakages etc. Check if you or any member of your family has

the habit of leaving the taps open. Try to analyze your daily water consumption. Do you or any other family member's habit result in water wastage in the home? What are the ways you can stop this wastage of water?

C) Do you have facilities for rainwater harvesting in your house? Discuss the importance of rainwater harvesting in your institution and in the neighbourhood. Do some research on the general methods of rainwater harvesting in your area? Which is the method, which is used most prominently and why?

D) What are the other ways you can conserve water? Do research and share with your friends. Develop an action plan to conserve water in your home and in your institution.

## ***ii) Conservation of Energy***

A) Making a habit to conserve energy is an important dimension of sustainable lifestyle. In this context, first do an energy audit in your home. For this look at the different appliances used, find out if some of them are consuming more energy due to some faults. Try to find out if there are any energy leaks in your house, evaluate the lighting system and see if you are using old incandescent bulbs instead of energy-efficient bulbs or tubes.

B) Do you and your family members switch off lights/fans/air-conditioners, etc when not used? If not, try to make this into a habit in your home.

C) Have you tried using renewable energy sources like solar panels in your home?

D) Develop an action plan on how you will minimize energy consumption in your home and institution.

### ***iii) Developing a Kitchen Garden***



By developing a kitchen garden, we not only promote sustainable lifestyle; it is a great way to reduce stress and help us be with nature. It is always greatly satisfying to cook food from vegetables we might have grown ourselves. For both children and adults, it is an exhilarating experience, which many across the world take up with utmost sincerity. For the promotion of sustainable lifestyle, individuals could be motivated to develop kitchen gardens even in the smallest possible space.

A) Even if you have a small space, try and develop a kitchen garden in your home.

B) Appropriate location is very important. The area should get adequate sunshine and have adequate water facilities.

C) Having well-draining soil, which is rich and fertile, is important.

D) Organic compost and manure needs to be added in the soil to improve its fertility. We can enrich the quality of our produce and increase productivity when we improve the soil fertility. Use your kitchen scraps in the garden to enrich the soil. Food scraps including vegetable peels, fruit rinds, etc are great material for making organic waste.



We suggest that in one corner of the kitchen garden make a compost pile.

E) Decide on the type of vegetables you want to grow. It depends on your climate, growing conditions and interest.



#### ***iv) Waste Management***

Managing waste in the house constructively is extremely important. More than often, we tend to discard things even if they can be used. After discarding, we end up purchasing the same thing again.

A) Use the principle of 3 R's – reduce, reuse and recycle in your home.

B) Make a checklist of all that you have in your house- clothes, and other materials. Analyze if you need any of these in the near future, if not make a determination to avoid unnecessary purchase.

C) Further, make a checklist of things, which you do not need anymore. Are you planning to throw them out? Revisit your plan. For instance, can you think of reusing your old clothes as



rag? Or if you have clothes which are reasonably in good condition, can you think of giving them to the homeless? Make a list of all such things.

D) Find out in your neighbourhood the avenues to recycle waste like paper, metallic-like scraps etc. Make a list of all such possibilities.

***v) Initiate an awareness campaign in your institution/neighbourhood on the importance of simplicity, minimalism and adopting a sustainable lifestyle***

A) Awareness campaigns help in giving visibility to the cause we are working on.

B) If we have to start a campaign to motivate students to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, firstly, we should gather information on the current information and knowledge on the subject.

C) We then define the goals of our campaign and what we want to achieve through this initiative.

D) We will then work out the target audience. In this case, not only students, but teachers and parents too will be the target audience.

E) Work out the communication channels you will use- posters, plays, digital media, etc. It should have a mix of communication channels.

F) Develop some compelling messages and media products like reels, etc. Try some storytelling. Messages should be clear, with clarity and concise.

G) Develop a community where you can engage regularly with the messages so that some changes in attitude and behaviour is possible.

*“Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own - indeed to embrace the whole of creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. Recognizing that sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible is an idea whose time has come”*

**– Wangari Maathai**

## Chapter 4

### Measuring our Nonviolent Footprints

#### Objectives

#### This chapter aim:

- To explore the different elements to measure our nonviolent footprints
- To appreciate how nonviolence contributes to our joyfulness and happiness
- To promote the concept of nonviolent footprints for harmonious coexistence

*Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is, no doubt, a part of ahimsa. But it is its least expression. The principle of ahimsa is hurt by every evil thought, undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by our holding on to what the world needs.” – Mahatma Gandhi (From Yeravda Mandir)*

Some years back the children and young people associated with The Peace Gong, a young people’s media literacy group took up the initiative to develop the concept of nonviolent footprints. Akin to the concept of carbon footprints, the youngsters felt that in the midst of increasing toxicity around our lives and society, it was imperative to motivate individuals to measure their nonviolent footprints. The young people felt that by assessing their acts of nonviolence during the course of

the day, individuals could actually measure their nonviolent footprints.

It is a noble concept and we felt that this idea of nonviolent footprints definitely is a pillar of JoyfulTalisman. We feel that the capacity to be able to measure our own nonviolent footprints will contribute to our inner peace. The measure of nonviolent footprints starts from ourselves; it entails simple things like how we treat others, our attitude and behaviour. When we are conscious of our nonviolent action- right from our inner level to outer interactions, it would contribute towards happiness and joy.

Here is an explanation of nonviolent footprints, which was given by the young people involved with the Peace Gong:

Humans cannot deny their role in the uprising of global violence. They also cannot blame it on only several people- the spread of violence shows that we all have played a role in contributing to the gruesome state of the world today. The idea of the Nonviolent Footprint is ingenious as it will enable us to see the impact we can make. Often, we think that an action has minimal value and thus refrain from doing it but Nonviolent Footprint stresses on how even the smallest of actions can lead to a bigger action. It reminds us of our responsibility and accountability to Mother Earth and to other humans because we live in a shared space and each of us has equal ownership in resources. In our earnest journey in the search of nonviolence, no one is more powerful than the other. As we think of Nonviolent Footprints, we think of the Earth as a gigantic sheet of white fabric laid out and children, adults and senior citizens walk all over it, leaving their colorful footprints. So colorful that the black spots can be seen no more.”

We have tried to take forward the idea of nonviolent footprints in our concept of the JoyfulTalisman. We believe that when we enhance our nonviolent footprints, we will experience fewer

conflicts in our lives. Conflicts and discords are part of our lives but how we handle them is the key. Incorporating values of nonviolence helps us to resolve many of these unnecessary concerns. Let us delineate the different elements for measuring our nonviolent footprints.

## **Lesson I**

### **Human Interdependence Literacy:**

We have already discussed at length the idea of human interdependence literacy. Sensitivity towards the significance of human interdependence and acting on it is an important dimension when we measure our nonviolent footprints.

## **Lesson II**

### **Mahatma Gandhi's five pillars of nonviolence:**

The need to permeate Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolence in all aspects of our lives assumes importance given the disruptions that we are facing-right from our personal level to family and society. Eknath Easwaran in *Family Satyagraha* has aptly captured this significance. He notes:

One of the main features of satyagraha, as we have seen, is its "open-endedness," its capacity to adapt creatively to new contexts while adhering to its irreducible principles of truth and nonviolence. This flexibility has never been more important than today, when the challenges we face are so different from those Gandhi confronted. Merely to imitate the forms of Gandhi's political campaigns, such as strikes and demonstrations, would tragically limit satyagraha to the narrow context of political reform. The crises that threaten our lives today are not so much political as spiritual: personal and social matters of alienation, isolation, and increasing polarization between men and women, old and young. Consequently, our times

require a determined movement towards nonviolence and unity in our families and communities.

The grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Arun Gandhi in his book, *The Gift of Anger* beautifully describes the Mahatma's five pillars of nonviolence. These five pillars of Gandhi's nonviolence offer a significant guiding post for the concept of nonviolent footprints. Let us try to look at these:

### ***1) Respect:***

It is one of the fundamental elements of practicing nonviolence. In our book, we have underlined it as of utmost importance. We stressed, taking a leaf from Mahatma Gandhi, "We agree that how we treat others, whether we compromise with the dignity of others or not may be an individual affair, but it is important to underline that no individual has the right to disrespect others or try to compromise with their dignity. To us, this is unacceptable and totally against humanity and human ethos."

We further pointed out in our chapter:

We need to create awareness that by identifying the 'human' in others, we are promoting our own human values and hence helping ourselves in our well-being and happiness. We all must realize that when we recognize the dignity of an individual it results in mutual recognition and mutual respect. If I treat you with respect and recognize your dignity, it is likely that you may reciprocate. Also, our aim should be to respect the divinity of all individuals. If we puncture the ego of others or hurt them, we can never gain their goodwill. Here we believe that we need to start from ourselves. We must learn to self-respect ourselves; we think it is the starting point. Also, we need to look at our own inner conflicts. Unless we resolve our own inner conflicts, we will tend to keep on demeaning others out of our own frustrations. It definitely can never

contribute to our well-being and goodwill. For this, we need to learn to listen to our little inner voice- our conscience.

Here are some suggested exercises to practice deep reverence and promote mutual respect for all:

***i) Exploring the significance of reverence for life***

Here is an excerpt from Albert Schweitzer's essay, Teaching Reverence for Life:

The ethics of reverence for life requires that all of us somehow and in something shall act as men toward other men. Those who in their occupations have nothing to give as men to other men, and who possess nothing else they can give away, must sacrifice some of their time and leisure, no matter how sparse it may be. Choose an avocation, the ethics of reverence for life commands – an inconspicuous, perhaps a secret avocation. Open your eyes and seek another human being in need of a little time, a little friendliness, a little company, a little work. It may be a lonely, embittered, sick, or an awkward person for whom you can do something, to whom you can mean something. Perhaps it will be an old person or a child. Or else a good cause needs volunteer workers, people who can give up a free evening or run errands. Who can list all the uses to which that precious working capital called man can be put! Do not lose heart, even if you must wait a bit before finding the right thing, even if you must make several attempts

A) Discuss this excerpt in detail.

B) Discuss how this dimension of having deep reverence for life is an important pillar of living joyfully and our happiness.

## ***ii) Skit highlighting the importance of respect for all***

A) Initiate a discussion in the group on the importance of respecting all.

B) Discuss stories, which give us lessons on respect.

D) Develop story ideas on the theme

E) Put together a small skit

F) Organize a performance to highlight how important it is to respect all

Develop a small skit, which evokes the essence of respect for all.

## ***iii) Journaling on the reasons for respecting others***

A) Go back to the Soul Journal that we had suggested right at the beginning of this course book.

B) Reflect on the people for whom you have deep respect. What are the different ways in which you have been showing your respect for them?

C) After all, we are human beings. There may be people for whom we may not have respect. Many of them might have tried to hurt you or harm you. Can you think of forgiving them and leave the animosity behind? What are the ways you think you can engage with them in the future? There could be possibilities of trust deficit. So, what could be the ways of re-establishing the trust with those individuals?

## ***iv) Dialogue Circle on our core values***

A) It is important to revisit and reinvigorate our core values. For this, participants can come together and organize a dialogue circle.



B) Discuss the different core human values that need to be inculcated for a peaceful and harmonious coexistence.

C) Discuss critically the different pathways on how young people can practice deep reverence for all lives.

## **2) Understanding**

The second pillar of Gandhian nonviolence is understanding. When we practice respect for others, it becomes easier to understand others and their viewpoints. Without understanding others and their views, we could encourage divisiveness and disruptions. There could be problems in relationships. Therefore, understanding is an important ingredient to act nonviolently. It is when we develop the skills of correct understanding, we can positively engage with others, and be more flexible in our approach.

The Mahatma had said that anger and intolerance were the enemies of correct understanding. Further, J K Rowling in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire had pointed out, “Understanding is the first step to acceptance, and only with acceptance can there be recovery.”

### ***i) Dialogue Circle***

In the dialogue circle, discuss the important ways you can further understand each other. What are the challenges and how can we overcome these? What do you think are the important elements, which can be said to be the foundation of our understanding of other individuals and their views?

Further, discuss in the Dialogue Circle how understanding leads to widening of our perspectives and look at things from multiple angles.

## ***ii) Reflections on understanding your bitterest opponent***

Think of your bitterest opponent. What are the different points on which you differ with that person? Have you ever tried to understand her/him and her/his perspective? Share your reflections.

## **3) Acceptance**

Acceptance is a positive trait; it is the third pillar of Gandhian nonviolence. It has two dimensions. One is when you respect others, and understand their views; you tend to accept their position positively. In disputes, we often find individuals not ready to accept others' positions due to ego. The other dimension of acceptance is how we develop resilience to accept the situation in which we find ourselves. For example, say we have not done well in the exam. Either we cry and fret about our failure or we have the resilience to face and accept the situation. Accepting the position, we are in and then working out a plan of action to get out of the situation will help us to remain positive.

To us, acceptance is a positive quality that every individual should strive to develop as it helps us to nurture the capacity to acknowledge both the good and bad. When we are accepting the situation that we are in, we are actually accepting the challenges as a natural process of life; in turn, we are enhancing our resilience. We believe that acceptance is important for our mental health, and contributes to our inner peace and happiness. It contributes to the enhancement of our personhood.

The significance of acceptance has been aptly captured in the book, *Lasting Happiness in a Changing World: The Book of Joy* by His Holiness The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams (2016; Avery):

So many of the causes of suffering come from our reacting to the people, places, things, and

circumstances in our lives, rather than accepting them. When we react, we stay locked in judgment and criticism, anxiety and despair, even denial and addiction. It is impossible to experience joy when we are stuck this way. Acceptance is the sword that cuts through all of this resistance, allowing us to relax, to see clearly, and to respond appropriately.

Now, let us try some exercises to develop understanding of the importance of acceptance.

***i) Accepting position of someone you do not agree with***

A) In a silent place, reflect on the last time you had a feud with a friend.

B) What were the reasons? What were your arguments? What were her/his arguments?

C) The friend is not flexible and is adamant that her/his position is the correct one and yours is wrong. How do you handle the situation? How easy or difficult is it to accept her/his position?

***ii) Accepting a difficult situation***

A) Go back to your Soul Journal. Journaling helps us to practice self-reflection and self-introspection.

B) Reflect on the last time you were in a difficult situation. Write on how you had reacted in that situation. What were your emotions and feelings? Was it positive or negative? If negative, reflect on how you could have probably reacted to make you remain positive and look for solutions?

***iii) Accepting a difficult situation when you made a mistake***

A) Go back to your Soul Journal.

B) Reflect on a situation when you had made a mistake. What did you do on that occasion?

C) Did you criticize yourself when you realize your mistake? What did you say to yourself? Reflect, think and write if you could have reacted differently.

D) Do you think forgiving yourself would have made you more positive and helped you to move on? We have already discussed self-compassion; do you think self-compassion can help us to accept ourselves- with our strengths, weaknesses and frailties?

#### ***iv) Writing Positive Affirmations***



For practicing acceptance, one of the effective strategies that we have been suggesting is to write positive affirmations. Writing positive affirmations helps us to evoke positive energy

and positive space to act. Positive affirmations help us to reframe the negative thoughts and ideas.

A) You can practice the habit of writing positive affirmations in your Soul Journal.

B) Essentially, when we are writing a positive affirmation, we are transforming a negative belief into a positive belief. So, if you are struggling to become a writer, your affirmation should be 'I am a successful writer'. You should not try to fret that 'I will never be able to become a writer.

C) Please, remember that your affirmations should always be in the present tense. In fact, you should try to use the present continuous tense as much as possible. So when you are writing, 'I am a successful writer', you are evoking the right kind of spirit within you and it is like a trigger for you to commit yourself to work incessantly towards your avowed goal.

D) Your affirmations should be focused and there should be no ambiguity about these.

E) It is also important to make the affirmations concise and clear. The key is to make it a habit to keep on repeating your affirmations. If they are focused, concise and clear, it would be easy to repeat them without any difficulty.

F) It is critical to write the affirmations with utmost sincerity and dedication. We suggest that you dedicate some time every day to write these affirmations; these could be along with the gratitude journal you might be writing every day. It is also suggested that you could write these either right in the morning after you get up or at the time of retiring to bed.

G) Writing positive affirmations means you are encouraging positive energy. Therefore, for this we suggest that you find a calm and serene environment to write your affirmations. It will help you to remain focused.

H) While writing your positive affirmations, you will be working out the right slot and time, we suggest that in addition you could find different places in your home, phone, etc., where you paste them. It will help you to repeat the affirmations and you will keep being reminded of them.

#### **4) Appreciation**

Positive appreciation of the people, nature, other living beings, and the environment around us gives us the strength to remain hopeful, and helps to be constructive. It is the fifth pillar of Gandhian nonviolence.

We need to create an environment of positive appreciation not only in our families, institutions, but also in the entire society. It will help in promoting positive energy and positive emotions. It can strengthen our mental focus and contribute to social cohesion. With this positive energy, we will remain hopeful and see light even when there is darkness around. In our book, *The JoyfulTalisman: Conversations on Human Values for a Joyful World*, we have described hope like a magician's wand, which helps in the realization of our dreams.

Let us try these exercises to understand the deeper importance of appreciation.

##### ***i)Complement Circle***

A) Organize a complement circle having more than three participants at least.

B) During this session, each member can share his or her genuine appreciation of the other person. They talk about the goodness they see in the other person and what they learn from each other.

C) Reflect on how such a complement circle helps in building positive appreciation.

## ***ii) Positive appreciation during a negative situation***

A) Reflect on a negative situation you found yourself in. How did this situation affect you?

B) In the second step, try to reframe it. Is there anything positive you can learn from this situation? After your reframe reflect on the small positive things you can appreciate which probably you were missing earlier.

## **5) Compassion**

*“A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.” – Albert Einstein*



The fifth pillar of Gandhian nonviolence is compassion. Compassion is trying to understand the sufferings of others and trying our best to alleviate it. In our book, we pointed out, “To us compassion is the deep recognition of the fundamental connectedness of all life and nature- the essence of human interdependence. We also felt that in order to be compassionate, we need to practice the art of forgiveness, relieve ourselves of negative emotions and let go of resentments. But first and foremost, we need to learn to practice self-compassion.”

We further stressed, “When we think of compassion, it is not just having the awareness of another individual, nature or other beings’ sufferings. It entails a benevolent emotional response to this suffering and a deep desire to help relieve this suffering.”

Eknath Easwaran in his book, *The Compassionate Universe* underlines how being trustees of Mother Earth and practicing compassion can lead to a sustainable and harmonious world. Easwaran talks about how all beings in the planet are interconnected and hence he says should be treated with compassion.

Please see *Annexure 17* for the Application Sheet.

Let us do some simple activities to widen our circle of compassion.

### ***i) Doing acts of kindness***

Kindness is an important virtue that helps us to expand our circle of compassion. In this exercise:

A) Develop a checklist of the different ways you have been practicing kindness. Are you practicing kindness towards yourself? How many times in a week do you practice kindness towards others? What has been the impact of these acts of kindness on you?



B) Now, try to make a new list of how you can enhance these acts of kindness. Try to reflect on how these new acts can make a difference in your immediate surroundings.

C) Reflect how these random acts of kindness help you to be more compassionate. Discuss these amongst your peers and share your unique experiences.

**ii) Discussion and analysis of real stories of compassion** (Please see application sheet in *Annexure 13*)

A) Organize a Dialogue Circle. In this circle, discuss real stories, which evoke the spirit of compassion. Reflect on these and discuss how you can practice compassion. Discuss the impact of such acts of compassion in the society.

B) Next, in the dialogue circle, discuss a few people whom you have met who act and inspire acts of compassion. What do you learn from them?

**iii) Engaging with individuals/others compassionately**

A) Find a quiet place for you to reflect.

B) Think of three people in the past fortnight who you think you should have engaged with compassionately. How did you behave with them? What made you behave with them in that particular manner?

C) Next, reflect that if you get another chance, how you would behave with them and reach out to them. Share your views on how you will use compassion to engage with them.

D) Now, think of the trees/plants/birds/animals around you. How can you engage with them with compassion? Share your experience of engaging compassionately with the trees/plants/birds/animals.

E) Think about our environment. How can you be with nature compassionately? Share your elaborate points on this.

#### ***iv) Developing Role Plays***

Role-plays are a powerful method to highlight issues. As you have already discussed different stories of compassion, develop a role-play on its importance.

The five pillars of Gandhian nonviolence discussed above are important measures of nonviolent footprints. Based on the discussions above, try producing a small play, which can be written and enacted.

### **Lesson III**

#### **Importance of Gratitude**

We feel the practice of gratitude is an extremely important dimension of measuring our nonviolent footprints. Are we in the habit of expressing thanks to those who might have helped either directly or indirectly? The depth of gratitude is explained in the book, *Lasting Happiness in a Changing World: The Book of Joy* by His Holiness The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams (2016; Avery). It notes:

Gratitude is the recognition of all that holds us in the web of life and all that has made it possible to have the life that we have and the moment that we are experiencing. Thanksgiving is a natural response to life and may be the only way to savor it.

On the essence of gratitude, it further notes, “It moves us away from the narrow-minded focus on fault and lack and to the wider perspective of benefit and abundance.”

We feel that when we get into the practice of expressing gratitude, we will be able to balance our thoughts between what is good and right and not just on the bad things. Otherwise, many of us have the tendency to be hooked only to the negative things. Gratitude makes us positive. We should

realize how we should be grateful for every moment we are here in this Earth.

Let us practice these exercises to develop the importance of gratitude in our lives.

### ***i) Human Interdependence Literacy and Gratitude***

Let us go back to Lesson V in the chapter on Human Interdependence Literacy where we discussed the essence to make deeper connections. You must have written 1-2 lines expressing gratitude to all those who made it possible for your favourite food to come to your table. Reflect on your feelings after you put together these lines of gratitude.

### ***ii) Gratitude Network***

In our book *The Joyful Talisman*, we discussed the need to encourage Gratitude Networks in our neighbourhood. We had said Gratitude Networks helps neighbours connect with each other, give them the opportunity to thank each other for the small help anyone was doing for the other. Try to initiate a Gratitude Network in your community where you have the space to express thanks to individuals or groups who might be helping you in some way or the other.

Gratitude Network in your Schools/Institutions

- A) Discuss the importance of gratitude in your classroom
- B) Discuss its importance with students in other classes and teachers
- C) Take the lead and form the Gratitude Network. In this network, as students report different acts of kindness and compassion for other peers, others reciprocate with thanksgiving.
- D) Make some posters/flyers on the importance of gratitude and the need to nurture kindness and compassion, and put them up in different places in the school/institution.

## Gratitude Network in your Neighbourhood

A) There may be individuals in your locality who might be going out of their way to help others. However, there may not be spaces where they are being thanked for their efforts. Try to create a network in your neighbourhood where such individuals are thanked for their altruistic work. It helps to create a deep bond amongst neighbours.

### ***iii) Writing a Gratitude Journal***



A) Go back to your Soul Journal. Keep a space to write your expressions of gratitude. We recommend that when you are ready to go to bed, spare 10 minutes and do deep reflection. In

this, reflect on the people you met during the course of the day. There were many who may have helped you either directly or indirectly. Write a few lines expressing your gratitude towards them.

B) Also, there may be people who may have berated you or have done something wrong to you. Can you think of expressing your gratitude towards them? Do you think we can learn from someone who might have berated us or done something wrong to us? Does it help us to become more resilient and positive?

C) Further, while expressing gratitude, reflect on the situations or circumstances during the course of the day from which either you have benefitted or have learnt something. Expressing gratitude for the situation or circumstances is equally important.

D) Continue writing the gratitude journal for a month and see the difference in your attitude and thoughts. Here is the suggested format of your daily Gratitude Notes, which you could write while retiring to bed. You can write while you get up in the morning too:

- Write at least five important points for which you are grateful during the course of the day. These could be more depending on your experiences during the day.
- Write about the people you are grateful for and why.
- Write about the challenges you faced during the course of the day and what you learnt from them. Remember we are expressing our gratitude to these challenges and it helps us to remember positive.
- Finally, it is important to practice self-care and self-love. So, in your note, write: - Today I want to love myself because:

## **Lesson IV**

### **Forgiveness**

One of the most powerful expressions of forgiveness can be attributed to former South African President, Dr Nelson Mandela who said, “As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.”

Even after being in prison for 27 years of his life, Dr Mandela had the inner strength and resilience to forgive those who were responsible for his imprisonment. Forgiveness needs inner power of letting go and moving forward. It requires inner strength to not retaliate to someone who might have done wrong to us. It means releasing our resentment, bitterness, and hatred.

Day in and day out, many of us tend to take the route of revenge when someone insults us, humiliates us, or attacks us. For a majority of us it is challenging to let go of these negative behaviours. Not letting go will coerce us to what Dr Mandela had said, “I would still be in prison.” Yes, we will remain in our inner prison fretting on what someone has done to us. The positive approach is to try to genuinely forgive the other person and continue our journey; this is an important pillar of nonviolent footprints. Can we measure on how we have forgiven the person who might have done something wrong to us?

Mforndip Oru Ben, has encapsulated this aspect of forgiveness in his chapter, ‘What do we learn from Mahatma Gandhi's Communication of Forgiveness?’ (In Vedabhyas Kundu edited. Applying Gandhian Communication Principles in the 21st Century):

In fact, after some period of time, we decide to forgive and learn to let go of whatever had happened. The ill-will we may be nursing is slowly replaced by good will and we no longer yearn for anything bad for the person

who might have wronged us. We no longer are thinking of ourselves as a victim nor are we having the negative energy around us. When we have decided to forgive, we are getting our power back; we no longer are investing our energy or emotions on a person we have a grudge with. We are now free and can invest the same energy into something more constructive. Also, when we are free from the negative energy, we might be able to see the same person from a different perspective. Then we might start revisiting our dispositions and attitudes towards the person who might have harmed us. Our mind now becomes calmer. In this context, we can say that forgiveness could be explained as an internal process; it can be characterized by a change of heart

Forgiveness is an important dimension of Gandhian nonviolence. On forgiveness, Mahatma Gandhi had said, “But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. Forgiveness adorns a soldier.” (Young India, 11-8-1920) Here he further says, “A definite forgiveness would, therefore, mean a definite recognition of our strength. With enlightened forgiveness must come a mighty wave of strength in us, which would make it impossible for a Dyer and a Frank Johnson to heap affront on India's devoted head.”

Let us try out these exercises to develop our skills of forgiveness.

### ***i) Forgiveness Letter***

A) Go to a quiet place and recall a person who might have done wrong to you. Reflect deeply on what exactly happened and how the act of that person affects you. What were your reactions to this act at that time? Reflect on your emotions and feelings.

B) Reflect on the time span that has elapsed since the incident. What are the feelings and emotions about the person now who

had done wrong to him? Do you have the same level of anger/ill-feelings towards her/him even now? Or has it changed since the incident happened?

C) Do you think the person can be forgiven? If not, what do you feel about her/him? Do you desire to take revenge? Or do you think it is important to let go and forgive that person?

D) As forgiveness and reconciliation are important to move forward in life, write a letter to that person expressing your feelings and emotions while also acknowledging how hurt you are.

### ***ii) Forgiveness through empathy***

A) We feel empathy can be an important strategy to be adopted for forgiving others.

B) Once again, reflect on the incident when someone might have done wrong to you. Now reflect and put yourself in the shoes of the person who might have hurt you or humiliated you. Try to understand that person's perspective.

C) Connect with the needs of the person at the deepest level trying to understand what could be the causes, which made the person treat you like that. This has deeper implications and we suggest the following:

- Reflect on the incident and about the person who might have hurt you in silence, in solitude.
- Recollect the feelings you had when the incident happened. Try to revisit the feelings fully. Try to distinguish the feelings between physical and emotional. Was there a connection between the physical and emotional feelings?
- Now as we have mentioned above, put yourself in the shoes of that person and try to analyze the situation from that person's perspective.



- What are your feelings and what do you learn when you put yourself in that person's shoes? As you start connecting with their needs, try to understand deeply what had happened because of which they might have behaved with you in that hurtful manner. Imagine the different possibilities, which might have made them behave in that manner.
- Try once again to reflect on whether now you are in a position to forgive that person. What are your feelings now? Do you have the requisite inner strength to let go of what had happened?
- None of us is perfect in the world and everyone makes mistakes. We are human beings after all. Does this exercise help you to see that person as a human being now and not as an adversary?

## **Lesson V**

### **Importance of the means and the ends**

*More than often, we tend to ignore the means to achieve our ends or results. We sometimes ignore the fact that we are unethical or trying to browbeat others to reach our goals. This is violence. In the framework of nonviolence, there is equal importance of the ends and the means. Use of unethical shortcuts to achieve something is violence. Mahatma Gandhi was one of the greatest proponents of the equal significance of the means and the ends. He said, "I do not believe in short-violent-cuts to success.... However much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes ... .For experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence. Even if my belief is a fond delusion, it will be admitted that it is a fascinating delusion." (Mind of Mahatma Gandhi)*

Further, in his seminal work, *Hind Swaraj*, Mahatma Gandhi writes, “The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree, and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree.”

The Mahatma gives us a caveat that wrong means actually leads to wrong ends. In this context, he said, “Impure means result in an impure end... One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach Truth. Are not Non-violence and Truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'No'. Non-violence is embedded in Truth and vice versa. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other. Read the coin either way. The spelling of words will be different. The value is the same. This blessed state is unattainable without perfect purity. Harbors impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you.” (Harijan, July 13, 1947)

It is in this backdrop, we firmly believe that in our measure of nonviolent footprints, the importance of the means and the ends has to be understood in its deepest sense and acted upon with genuine sincerity. We feel that once we get into the habit of using ethical and pure methods in pursuit of our goals, we will be able to avoid unnecessary stress. This is a significant dimension of JoyfulTalisman.

## **Exercises**

### ***i) Discussion through Dialogue Circle***

A) Organize a Dialogue Circle to discuss the significance of the means and ends. What are the general perspectives of the participants?

B) Reflect on the challenges of adhering to the principles of giving equal importance of the means and the ends.

### ***ii) Self-reflection***



Reflect on an instance when you probably used unethical means to achieve your goal. What were the different things you did which you think were unethical? What are your feelings now as you recollect the instance? Would you do something different now to get to the same goal?

## **Lesson VI**

### **Nonviolent Communication**

Communication is a central pillar to our harmonious coexistence. Toxic or unhealthy communication leads to disruptions in relationships and even conflicts. Further, use of toxic communication can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. It is in this context, nonviolent communication is extremely important. While our nurturing of nonviolent communication is an important measure of nonviolent footprints, it is an extremely important dimension of our concept of JoyfulTalisman. The more we use nonviolent communication as part of our daily communication ethos; right from the intrapersonal level, we will avoid unnecessary stress. This also includes our interpersonal level, group communication, and in all our institutions. Its use contributes to our happiness and joy, and our wellbeing.

Nonviolent communication is a holistic communication approach, which underscores the significance of human interconnectedness. It encompasses our intrapersonal communication, communication with others, communication in the society at large, communication with nature and communication with other living beings. Its premise is that in the event of a dysfunctional communication whether it is a destructive self-communication, interactions with others, in the society, with nature or with other living beings, there would be disruptions in our relationships. (Kundu, 2022)

An expansive explanation of nonviolent communication has been given by senior Gandhian, Natwar Thakkar who underlines the importance of being nonviolent communication literate in today's world to be able to negotiate the challenges of divisiveness and toxicity in our communicative efforts. He explains it as (Kundu, 2018):

To me nonviolent communication literacy would mean how our communication efforts should be nonviolent; how our ability and capacity to communicate not only with ourselves but with our family and society be nonviolent in all aspects and overall, how the entire process of communication whether between individuals, groups, communities and the world at large should be nonviolent in nature. This would entail a deep understanding of the art and science of nonviolence and its centrality in all our daily actions. It's not just verbal and nonverbal communication, nonviolent communication literacy would also include whether our thoughts and ideas are nonviolent or not. This would also mean how we can get rid of our preconceived notions of individuals or groups with whom we want to communicate and stop evaluating them to suit our own ideas. More than often, we are attuned to think in terms of moralistic judgments, which may be our own constructions. By developing a deep understanding of the art and science of nonviolence and integrating it in our communication

practices, we could get over with biased and moralistic judgments; this in turn could contribute to emotional bridge building.

Here are some of the elements of nonviolent communication (Kundu, 2020):

- Nonviolent Communication means complete lack of violence in the way we communicate with others.
- Significance of nonviolent intrapersonal communication- its use in our self-talk, inner dialogues and imagined interactions.
- Use of appropriate and positive language
- Expansion of emotional vocabulary
- Avoiding stereotypes in our communication efforts
- Avoid moralistic judgement
- Avoid negative evaluative language
- Role of mutual respect in communication
- The power of empathy
- Strong belief in the power of compassion
- Connecting with needs of others
- Importance of flexibility in our communication
- Practicing active and deep listening skills
- Expressing gratitude

Please read some articles you would like to read for greater insights into nonviolent communication:

a) Exploring the Gandhian Model of Nonviolent Communication and its Significance:

<https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/Gandhian-model-of-nonviolent-communication.php>

b) Exploring the Centrality of Nonviolent Communication for Resolution of Conflicts and a Culture of Peace:

<https://www.transcend.org/tms/2023/09/exploring-the-centrality-of-nonviolent-communication-for-resolution-of-conflicts-and-a-culture-of->

peace/?fbclid=IwAR3PR38GPDm8Mw6kgQYBdjfUdvf-  
RWcIfgfaQZiivMPuLl25B5tl-4s1I6o

c) Exploring the Role of Nonviolent Intrapersonal Communication in Enhancing our Self-Concept for Evolution of Responsible Citizenship

<https://revistas.uniminuto.edu/index.php/med/article/view/3434/3588>

Now let us attempt some exercises to expand our understanding of nonviolent communication and its importance.

### ***i) Reflection through Dialogue Circle***

A) In your dialogue circle, please discuss the significance of Mahatma Gandhi's 5-pillars of nonviolence (respect, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, and compassion) as discussed above in the context of our daily communication. Discuss how these pillars when they become part of our communication helps in strengthening relationships. (See Annexure 9 for greater understanding)

B) Continuing your discussion on the five-pillars, reflect on why the 5-pillars of Gandhian nonviolence are important in any family communication ecosystem.

### ***ii) Reflection Exercise on conflict resolution through mediation***

A) Reflect on a conflict that had happened in your institution. How was that conflict resolved?

B) Imagine you have been asked to mediate to resolve the conflict. Reflect critically on how you would have used the 5-pillars of Gandhian nonviolence and the different elements of nonviolent communication in mediating the conflict. Write the specific elements of nonviolent communication that you would be using as part of your communicative efforts in resolving the conflict.

C) Next, develop a role-play with your friends on the importance of nonviolent communication in conflict resolution and enact it to highlight its importance.

### ***iii) Integrate nonviolent communication in the communication strategy of our institution***

A) It is a group work. In order to integrate nonviolent communication in the communication strategy of your organization, develop the framework first. Then in this overall framework, integrate how different elements of nonviolent communication can be vital for a harmonious ecosystem.

B) Identify the strength, weaknesses, opportunity, and threats in the existing communication ecosystem. What are the points where there can be issues of conflicts?

C) After the analysis, develop a new communication strategy for your institution. See Annexure 6 for guidance on how to develop a communication strategy. The new communication strategy should incorporate the different elements of nonviolent communication in each stage.

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## ***Lesson VII***

## ***Critical analysis of films/documentaries/books on nonviolence and nonviolent movements***

To develop greater understanding of the importance and power of nonviolence, it would be pertinent if participants are motivated to do critical analysis of different films/documentaries/books. It would help to widen one's perspectives on different dimensions and ideas of nonviolence. Please see Annexure 18 for Application Sheet.

i) Make a list of five films on nonviolence. It could include documentaries like *The Power of Nonviolence* or films like Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*. Analyze these films and the lessons learnt on nonviolence. How can you incorporate their learnings in your daily life?

ii) Download atleast five books on nonviolence. Read these books and analyze them. Write the key learnings from these books, which can be applied in our daily lives, in our institutions, and in our society. For instance, the insightful book, *The Power of Nonviolence* by Richard B Gregg can be downloaded from:

<https://civilresistance.info/sites/default/files/thepowerofnonviolence0206.pdf>

iii) Research and please make a list of at least three important nonviolent movements across the world. Do a critical analysis of these movements. What are the key lessons learnt?



## *Chapter 5*

### **Measuring our Solidarity Footprints**

#### **Objectives**

##### **The chapter aims:**

- To develop practical understanding of the significance of human solidarity
- To explore different principles of human solidarity through exercises and activities
- To explore how solidarity footprints can contribute towards a joyful living and well-being

In our book, *The JoyfulTalisman: Conversations on Human Values for a Joyful World* we have introduced the concept of solidarity footprints, which we say is an important pillar of JoyfulTalisman. In the book, we underlined the significance of human solidarity and how it is an essential principle for peaceful coexistence. In our chapter on solidarity footprints, we noted, “It is also important to remember how the virtue of solidarity takes us to the path where the idea of human interdependence is aimed at promoting peace and goodness of all in all communities across the world.”

Further, we also affirmed how the assimilation of the values of genuine solidarity can help in the eradication of those niggles which creep in due to our differences and prevent us from living as one human family. We stressed on how genuine and deep feelings of solidarity can be a option for individuals,

communities and countries to work together for the common good.

On the importance of human solidarity, we further pointed out in our book:

Here we should stress that the value of solidarity necessitates that we start recognizing others as 'human beings' first and not get into the trap of stereotypes and labels. Every human being deserves to be treated with respect. Also, irrespective of our differences in sex, race, ethnicity, nationality and ideologies, we should treat everyone equally. When we start seeing others equally and with respect, we will not see them as someone who is different from us. We will start seeing them as sisters, brothers, and friends. As egalitarian individuals, I think it should be our moral obligation to work for the advancement of our shared humanity and this is why the spirit of solidarity becomes critical. Here I would like to underline the essence of love, compassion and kindness, which are important principles of human solidarity.

It is in this backdrop, we suggested the idea of solidarity footprints to self-measure and self-reflect on whether our actions encouraged and promoted the idea of solidarity with others. Our act of solidarity starts from our families, in our institutions, in our neighbourhood, the immediate community around us, and finally at the global level. The spirit of solidarity enables us to develop deeper connections with others. Here are the different elements we suggested for measuring our solidarity footprints:

- Mutuality,
- Deep respect for each other including nature and other living beings,
- Empathy,
- Kindness,

- Compassion,
- The scale of our affinity bias,
- The ability to use the strategy of nonviolent communication for deeper connections,
- The ability to do common good,
- Encouragement and promotion of altruism in the society
- Human dignity, and
- Equality

Let us try these exercises to develop our spirit of solidarity:

***i) Organizing a cleanliness drive to encourage the spirit of solidarity***

- A) Discuss in your neighbourhood the importance of undertaking a cleanliness drive.
- B) Bring together children, youth and adults in your neighbourhood for the drive.
- C) Motivate all to bring snacks etc.
- D) After the cleanliness drive involving all, get together to have the snacks.
- E) This is a powerful strategy of working together and then having food together. Such initiatives promote the spirit of solidarity; it can promote greater engagement amongst neighbours in a community.

***ii) Students Brigade for Senior Citizens***

- A) In many places, senior citizens are left to fend for themselves with no one to care for them.
- B) Along with your friends, find out about senior citizens in your neighbourhood. Find out who all needs support and what kind of support. There may be some who may be needing companionship; others may need some medical help, etc.
- C) Once the details are worked out, develop a roster on who can do what and how.
- D) Initiate the student's brigade for senior citizens as an intergenerational endeavor to promote solidarity.

### ***iii) Solidarity Ambassadors***

A) In your institution, together with your friends, try to initiate an appreciation platform where individuals who do some acts of humanism are recognized and appreciated by those around.

B) Appreciation Platform will motivate and encourage others to take up acts of humanism and compassion. Share these stories with others.

C) Can we designate such individuals as Solidarity Ambassadors?

D) Organize events on different international days involving the Solidarity Ambassadors. These could include International Volunteers Day (December 5), International Peace Day (September 21), International Day of Nonviolence (October 2), International Human Solidarity Day (December 20), etc. Organizing such events helps in encouraging the spirit of solidarity. Other occasional events like poetry programmes on the theme of solidarity can be organized to promote its significance.

E) Involve the Solidarity Ambassadors to initiate a solidarity circle in your institution and in your neighbourhood where anyone who needs help can be reached out and helped.

### ***iv) Developing spirit of solidarity through constructive criticism***

As we are all different human beings, it is imperative that we have different perspectives. It does not mean we will start fighting if someone is opposed to our views and ideas. We firmly believe that we can develop our spirit of solidarity by being able to engage in constructive criticism. Constructive criticism does not mean that we are not devaluing the views of the other person or humiliating her/him. In fact, it is exactly the opposite. It is coming up with a suggestion, which may be different from the other but with the intention of supporting and not resenting the other.

For constructive criticism, we should aim to avoid being judgmental. We should avoid toxic communication while indulging in constructive criticism; instead, we should use the strategy of nonviolent communication. Constructive criticism does not mean demeaning the views of others; in fact it is motivating and aimed at supporting the other person.

A) Reflect on a situation when a friend has committed a mistake. How will you use the strategy of constructive criticism to help her/him understand her/his mistake? Does it help in strengthening the bond with this friend?

B) Organize a Dialogue Circle on how constructive criticism actually contributes to the spirit of solidarity.



## *Chapter 6*

### **Volunteerism and Caring for Others**

#### **Objectives**

##### **This chapter aims**

- To appreciate the importance of volunteerism for a joyful living and well-being
- To appreciate how caring for others and volunteering helps in both inward and outward change

The different pillars of JoyfulTalisman that we have discussed so far – turning inwards, human interdependence literacy, measuring our nonviolent footprints, and measuring our solidarity footprints- all takes us to the spirit of volunteerism, and caring for others. We feel the spirit of caring for others or our altruistic behaviour is an outgrowth of our inner transformation, inculcation of the principles of human interdependence, our deep faith in the idea of nonviolence and human solidarity. All these elements act as a catalyst to volunteer and care for others. The deep compassion, the spirit of human interdependence and solidarity propels us to go and work for say the homeless or the persons with disability. These also nudge us to develop the habit of generosity and reflect pro-social behaviour.

Volunteering is a distinct human characteristic. It is a socio-psychological bridge connecting the self and the individual consciousness to the collective consciousness of the community. On the one hand, it is an expression of free will of an individual, while on the other; it is an expression of a certain set of values imbibed from society values that enable an individual to locate herself or himself in relation to others (Kundu, 2006, 2010 & 2012).

Volunteering can be either a conscious or an unconscious act. A large number of human beings unconsciously volunteer in some way or the other almost every day. Such unconscious acts of volunteering play an important foundation in the formation and survival of various processes of socio-cultural institutions. The conscious act of volunteering is often defined by socially and culturally evolved values. Therefore, when a person helps an elderly woman cross a busy road or feeds the hungry, all these acts are defined by a set of socially evolved values (Kundu, 2006, 2010 & 2012).

In this context, Mahatma Gandhi had said, “Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make not only for our own happiness, but that of the world at large.”

The socio-psychological need of every human being for a sense of belonging in relation to the other forms the basis of volunteering. The need for a sense of belonging also arises from the need for emotional well-being and for a socio-cultural identity. The need also propels human beings to go beyond the self to reach out to people and nature (Kundu, 2006, 2010 & 2012).

There are several studies, which show how stress can be reduced when we volunteer, and take care of others. Our endeavor to give back to society contributes to our inner satisfaction. When we volunteer for a cause, say the



environment, it gives us a lot of self-fulfillment. When we are doing some act of generosity, taking care of others, and being of use to someone in need, we are cultivating joy and happiness. All these altruistic actions and efforts make us realize the real purpose of our lives.

Volunteering can be long term, for instance if an individual is volunteering for an environmental movement. It might take a long time to bear the fruits of action. Action programmes and advocacy initiatives also take a long time for realization of the goal. Volunteering can be a short-term effort when for instance you volunteer for a juvenile home giving the inmates' fortnight training in yoga. Further, if you volunteer for an event, say a blood donation camp, it can be described as episodic volunteering. Your effort is limited to just the event.

Let us recollect what Mahatma Gandhi had pointed out, "Voluntary service of others demands the best of which one is capable, and must take precedence over service of self. In fact, the pure devotee consecrates himself to the service of humanity without any reservation whatsoever."

We have been working and engaging with numerous volunteers over the years. Talking and conversing with volunteers have made us realize the following:

Volunteering is a powerful strategy for both our inner and outer growth. When we are caring for others, it gratifies us. Volunteering enriches us both emotionally and mentally. Over the years through innumerable stories we have realized how volunteering and caring for others helps in reduction of stress, combats depression and anxiety, and in anger management. A large number of individuals shared how their low self-esteem transformed into positive and enhanced self-esteem when they started to volunteer. Volunteering helps us to overcome our insecurities and help develop multiple perspectives on different issues.

Volunteering and caring for others is connected to increased resilience. Also, when we develop our own inner resilience, we can help others develop their resilience and the ability to negotiate difficult situations. When we care for others, we are on the path towards enhancing our inner strength, realizing our self-worth, and contributing to the growth of our personhood.

Here we are reminded of these beautiful lines of His Holiness The Dalai Lama who noted, “The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater our own sense of well-being becomes. Cultivating a close, warm-hearted feeling for others automatically puts the mind at ease. This helps remove whatever fears or insecurities we may have and gives us the strength to cope with any obstacles we encounter. It is the ultimate source of success in life.”

It is in this backdrop, we firmly believe that volunteering and caring for others leads us to become happy- both at the inner and outer level. It is also a source of joy and bliss with an amazing sense of realization that we are useful for someone or for some important cause. Finally, we strongly think that volunteering and caring for others will help individuals find the true purpose and meaning of their life.

So, it is important to motivate and encourage volunteering and the spirit of caring for others amongst all- right from childhood to senior citizens. Let us through these exercises explore how we can promote the spirit of volunteering.

## **Lesson 1**

### **Volunteering in the community**

A) Make a list of organizations in your area, which work, for the persons with disabilities or other groups where individuals can volunteer.

B) Visit the organizations where you would like to volunteer. Try to understand their volunteer requirements, the type of

volunteering work that can be done, the time commitment, etc.

C) Work out the specific details of how you can contribute to the organization.

## **Lesson 2**

### **Volunteering for the Environment**



A) An important area of volunteering is for the environment. It could start from a simple plantation drive to take up the cause of destruction of habitats or other natural resources

B) Through a dialogue circle, discuss the different issues and concerns of the environment in your area. Chalk out the practical work that can be done in this regard.

C) Develop a team and then put together an action plan on the different activities that can be initiated in your area to protect the environment.

### **Lesson 3**

#### **Research on volunteering**

A) Reflect on the different volunteering activities that you might have taken up either consciously or unconsciously. What has motivated you to volunteer? How does it affect your mind, behaviour, attitude towards life, and general well-being?

B) Do a small research of your peers. Find out the different volunteering work they might have done. What were the motivating factors behind their volunteering work? What did they think was the impact of their efforts? What was the impact on them as they volunteered?

C) Interview individuals who volunteer regularly for a cause. Try to understand their motivation. Ask them about their unique experiences as volunteers and if they have some interesting stories to share. Ask them about their feelings, both inward and outward.

D) Put together case studies of some global best practices in volunteering. Write and discuss the key learnings from these best practices.

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## ***ANNEXURE - 1***

### **In search for our Inner Peace: A Youth Perspective**

*You can observe how little space you have inwardly; we are overcrowded with noise, chattering, endless memories, images, symbols, opinions, knowledge, crammed full of secondhand things. There is no space there at all; therefore there is no freedom. And without this space, in which there is no boundary, the mind is incapable of finding out, of coming upon that immeasurable reality.- Jiddu Krishnamurti*

Krishnamurti is so profound when he points out the chaos inside- the inner turmoil created by images, noise, chattering, opinions, acrimony, and so many other unnecessary things. A very large number of us are in a state of constant inner chaos, which limits our potential and ability to contribute towards constructive activities. The inner chaos is directly proportional to our stress, anxiety and variety of different mental health issues.

We sincerely believe that most of us fail to explore inner peace as the turbulence that we experience on the surface intimidates us. Also, we believe that we do not need to go to a mountain or a lonely sea-shore to experience inner peace. There too, we might be experiencing turbulence. On the other hand, even in a busy marketplace we might be at peace within ourselves.

In this conversation to get a youth perspective to inner peace, we converse with Anushka Sharma a third year student of Miranda House, Delhi University and the President of the College's Gandhi Study Circle and its Vice President, Purvi Saini, also a third year student.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Anushka and Purvi, I recollect this apt quote of Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso for this conversation. He said, "Without inner peace, outer peace is impossible. We all wish for world peace, but world peace will never be achieved unless we first establish peace within our own minds. We can send so-called 'peacekeeping forces' into areas of conflict, but peace cannot be imposed from the outside with guns. Only by creating peace within our own mind and helping others to do the same can we hope to achieve peace in this world." Here, we would like to have your insights on how to negotiate the inner chaos that Jiddu Krishnamurti was talking about? Also, given the modern distractions like materialism and extreme pressures to perform, what are ways we can work for our inner peace?

**Anushka Sharma:** In my opinion, negotiating inner chaos begins with self-awareness. I strongly believe that we need to recognize how external influences create noise within us and disturb our mental equilibrium.

Practicing mindfulness and meditation can help create that essential inner space and help us realize our true essence. By being self-aware and self-conscious, we can restore our mental resilience and strength and become more mindful. For example, many of us are aware how different mindfulness apps have become popular for this very reason.

Sir, also I think by simplifying our commitments and focusing on our core values, we can navigate modern distractions and discover that inner peace is not far-fetched; it is something we can cultivate daily.

**Purvi Saini:** Sir, the quote of Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso rightly mentioned that outer peace is impossible without having inner peace. In addition, according to me, achieving inner peace requires self-awareness, right actions, contentment, spirituality, and gratitude.

Self-awareness is important in understanding our own thoughts and emotions, allowing us to connect with our inner self. For me, inner peace comes from knowing that I am not harming anyone, and I feel reassured that everything I do is seen and validated by a supreme power. This understanding helps me to stay calm and not worry about unnecessary things.

In today's world full of distractions, it's easy to get lost in external pressures, but building a connection with the divine deepens our connection with ourselves. We are so busy that we often neglect our inner voice, creating chaos both within and outside.

To achieve true peace, we should avoid doing things that might lead to regret and focus on our karma, especially in this student phase of life.

It is also important to practice gratitude for everything we have, as it keeps us content and grounded. By avoiding unnecessary gossip and judgment, we prevent unnecessary chaos in our lives. Finally, connecting with nature, as Mahatma Gandhi suggested, helps us nurture self-awareness and find a deeper sense of peace.

**Munazah Shah:** Vedabhyas and I have been working on how we can be happy and joyful if we nurture different human values. One of the significant human values that needs to be nurtured is compassion. In our numerous work, we have been talking about the idea of human interdependence and the essentiality of being human interdependence literate in today's world. We also believe that human independence is also linked to the need to be compassionate to not only other



human beings, but also nature and other living beings. Anushka and Purvi, we would like to know your insights on how human interdependence, literacy and compassion are important elements for realizing inner peace?

**Anushka Sharma:** Madam, I believe human interdependence literacy is crucial because it highlights our interconnectedness, association and alignment with humans, living creatures and the world around us.

When we embrace compassion, gratitude, selflessness in our actions for both others, and ourselves we create an environment that nurtures inner peace, harmony and bliss.

A contemporary example is the youth-led climate movement, where compassion for the planet drives collective action. By fostering compassion, we dissolve isolation and judgment, enhancing our sense of community and tranquility. This gives a sense of self-satisfaction and accomplishment to us. It creates a sense of belonging and above all peace.

It not only strengthens core humanist values but also helps in building a resilient community of kind, considerate and empathetic individuals in the society.

**Purvi Saini:** Human interdependence literacy is about understanding how to be self-reliant while still being mindful of our impact on others and the environment. True interdependence means acting in ways that are compassionate and considerate of the people, animals, and nature around us.

Compassion helps us to connect with others and the world in a meaningful way. When we combine interdependence with kindness and understanding, we create a balance and promote peaceful coexistence. This balance allows us to live freely while contributing positively to the world. This, in turn, leads to inner peace because we know we are living responsibly, in harmony with both our surroundings and ourselves.



**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Taking our conversation forward, what do you think are the ways in which our inner peace helps in enhancing and strengthening our relationships- not only with our own self but also with others.

**Anushka Sharma:** I personally feel inner peace serves as the foundation for healthy relationships, as it allows us to engage with others from a place of authenticity and calmness.

When we are at peace within ourselves, we become more empathetic, kind, self-exploratory and patient, facilitating deeper and meaningful connections not only with the world around us, but also most importantly with ourselves.

An example in this regard is the collaborative spirit that emerged during the pandemic, where people came together to support one another despite challenges.

As we nurture our own inner tranquility, we not only strengthen our self-relationship but also create a ripple effect, enhancing the quality of our interactions with everyone around us.

I certainly feel that a person who feels at peace with himself or herself radiates positive energy and attracts the same.

**Purvi Saini:** Inner peace helps us build better relationships with ourselves and others because it makes us more calm, patient, and understanding.

I believe that when we are at peace, we are less likely to react negatively to challenges, and we become more compassionate and accepting. We stop worrying about the outcomes and focus more on our actions. This strengthens our connection with ourselves and with others. We stop expecting much in return. We stop getting affected by feelings like jealousy and hatred. Someone would start accepting love from others only when they are truly at peace and in love with their own selves.

By being calm, we communicate better, handle conflicts with care, and create a positive environment that nurtures healthy and meaningful connections.

**Munazah Shah:** Anushka and Purvi, how do you think our pursuit for inner peace helps in our own growth, development of our personhood and enhancement of our self-awareness? Please share your thoughts with our readers?

**Anushka Sharma:** The pursuit of inner peace is intrinsically tied to our personal growth and self-awareness. By engaging in reflective practices, we unearth our true values and desires, leading to a more authentic existence.

For instance, Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* illustrates how finding purpose amidst chaos can transform us. Exploring and Embracing our inner self and the world that lies inside us enhances our understanding of our motivations, aspirations and decisions which is crucial for building a resilient , self-aware and self-conscious identity.

Inner peace is the crucial step to strike a chord with the 'inner and the divine us'.

By being at peace with our inner selves, we try to associate ourselves with the divine consciousness that helps us become more spiritually sound.

**Purvi Saini:** Amidst the chaos, we often ignore our own feelings and emotions. In addition, while searching for the peace outside, we often end up feeling exhausted. This is where the realization of inner peace hits.

Inner peace helps us to self-reflect, introspect and know ourselves better.

It manages our emotions so that we can respond calmly to challenges rather than reacting impulsively. Finding inner peace clears away distractions, giving us clarity to focus on our goals and make better decisions.

It enhances our relationships with others, as we become more understanding and compassionate, supporting our overall personal development.

This way we can clearly say that the journey towards inner peace leads to our growth and development and makes us a better and a self-aware human being.

**Munazah Shah and Vedabhyas Kundu:** Both of us sincerely believe that the more we volunteer and serve others, the greater will be our inner satisfaction and contribute to our inner peace. As young leaders, how will you motivate your peers and friends to volunteer for constructive work, which can act as a catalyst for their inner peace?

**Anushka Sharma:** To inspire my peers to engage in constructive work, I believe in leading by example and highlighting the transformative power of service. Volunteering offers not only an opportunity to give back but also a chance to experience the joy of collective action.

We should organize informational workshops that showcase the skills gained through volunteering. We could invite speakers from local non-profits, which can be effective in understanding concepts.

Establishing a volunteer recognition program to formally acknowledge contributions can foster pride and motivate others.

Collaborating with academic programs to integrate service learning into the curriculum can enhance participation by providing practical experience alongside academic credit.

Finally, highlighting real-world impact through testimonials from beneficiaries will inspire my peers to get involved and make a meaningful difference at the grassroots level.

By implementing these strategies, we can cultivate a culture of service that enriches our lives and benefits our community in an enriching and meaningful manner.

**Purvi Saini:** Serving those in need is in itself the path to inner peace. The more we volunteer and help others, the more satisfaction we get.

As young leaders, we should even encourage our friends to get involved in constructive work by emphasizing that service is one of the greatest forms of help that leads to inner peace.

We all know how good it feels when we help someone in need or teach something to others. This feeling is the foundation of inner peace. It gives us true satisfaction, knowing that we are making a positive change in someone's life.

Volunteering is about choosing to help, not being forced to do it.

As youngsters, we should all be part of voluntary organizations that work for a good cause because the joy we feel after doing something good is the true inner peace we are searching for.

Just seeing a smile on the person's face we helped can make a difference in our whole mood. Seeing others happy will make us internally happy.

## **ANNEXURE - 2**

### **Loving-kindness as pillar of JoyfulTalisman**

#### **Encouraging Young People to practice Loving-Kindness for a Joyful World**

It is almost every day that we are fed with messages of hostility, intolerance, lack of respect for each other, compromising the dignity of others, hatred and toxic ecosystems from around the world. Such negativities start right from the family level whether it entails hostility and bitter fight between couples or between different family members. It then expands to all those who we know to our institutions and then to the society at large. This vicious cycle is leading many of us to nurture deep ill will towards others, and nurturing of deep hostilities and toxicities. The ever-increasing cycle of conflict we see around us is a result of these hostilities and toxicities.

In an endeavor to explore more, we started talking to a large number of people, especially young people on these concerns. Many of these young people talked about how the accumulation of negativities, insecurities and the ever-increasing pressure to achieve everything through short cuts was leading to feelings of hostilities towards others, and the tendency to be unmindful of others' sufferings. When we are suffering ourselves from within, we are not able to unlock the inner prison and come out of our own inner toxic ecosystem, how can we nurture love and kindness towards others? We

realized after talking to a large number of young people that the increasing hyper technological and material-oriented ecosystems are leading to a love and kindness deficit. This needs to be reversed if we are to be happy and make this world joyful. It is significant for not only our own well-being but for our collective well-being.

It is in this backdrop that our framework of JoyfulTalisman becomes significant. If the love and kindness deficit has to be reversed, we have to work with individuals, especially young people, many of whom are in disarray. Practicing loving-kindness is an important pillar of JoyfulTalisman and today's conversation hinges on this pillar. What are the ways we can encourage young people to practice loving-kindness and how they themselves can promote it amongst their peers? Let us explore this through this conversation.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** The Vietnamese Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh has beautifully described what exactly is loving-kindness and it can be the guiding principle on how we can encourage young people around the world to practice it for a joyful world. He says, "The first element of true love is loving kindness. The essence of loving kindness is being able to offer happiness. You can be the sunshine for another person. You cannot offer happiness until you have it for yourself. So build a home inside by accepting yourself and learning to love and heal yourself. Learn how to practice mindfulness in such a way that you can create moments of happiness and joy for your own nourishment. Then you have something to offer the other person." (<https://tnhmeditation.org/loving-kindness/>)

Munazah, as we talked to young people from different backgrounds, you will agree that there was a realization that for most of them there was an urgent need of inner healing. The turmoil inside- the triggers are both internal and external leads to inner consternation. This then gets reflected in their interactions and actions with their peers and others. We came to the realization of how most of these young people were suffering from inside and had no notion of concepts such as

self-love and self-kindness. So, as Thich Nhat Hanh said, how can we build a good home inside by accepting ourselves?

**Munazah Shah:** Yes, Vedabhyas from the experiences which some of these young people shared with us, it was clear that majority of them were attributing their sufferings to others-whether those known to them or others who they thought as their enemy. But, Vedabhyas let us recollect on when we started talking deeply to some of these young people, they started discerning that most of the sufferings can be attributed to their own actions and interactions. These actions and interactions are sometimes done consciously or unconsciously- but at the end results in our own suffering and for those who are around us.

Also, Vedabhyas through these talks we also realized that when for example an individual gets abused, their dignity compromised or is mentally harmed, the violence that generates within starts eating up their positive mental space. This triggers further inner violence which starts getting reflected externally also. This expansion of inner violence and inner consternation and its reflection will not only have to be contained but also transformed into positivity. It is a challenge and practicing loving-kindness is a powerful strategy that needs to be encouraged; it definitely is a powerful strategy of our framework of JoyfulTalisman.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** You are correct Munazah. Through our interactions we also realized how nursing hatred and anger towards others even those who may be opposed to us destroys our happiness and well-being. It denies us to live joyfully. It is through the practice of loving-kindness that we can realize the sufferings of others, why they are behaving in a wrongful way and that they probably need more help than us. These are important steps to unlock our inner prison.

Munazah, as we read diverse literature, we learn that to practice loving-kindness, we must start with ourselves. We must first learn to love ourselves and be kind to ourselves. I

think all of us should stop being judgmental to ourselves-negative traits such as ‘nothing good can happen to me’, ‘I am not capable of anything’, ‘I always make blunders’ should be avoided. We should encourage nonviolent intrapersonal communication. The positive and healthy self-talk and inner dialogues will contribute to our inner peace and hence contribute towards practicing self-love. Also, Munazah, we should learn to forgive ourselves, trust ourselves and value our own worth. Here training in nonviolent intrapersonal communication helps as we start making positive affirmations like ‘I definitely can do this’, ‘I am totally capable of doing this’.

Further, Munazah, I think we all should start training in mindfulness so that we remain alert in the present moment and develop deep awareness of what is going on around us. Mindfulness is a powerful strategy to practice self-love and self-compassion. Also, here I think most of us are fighting with ourselves to reach the lofty goals we have set up for ourselves; many times the fight can be debilitating if we are not able to reach it. Modern day pressures draw us to fight to achieve our goals at any cost, even if it entails using unethical means. For practicing self-love, let us get into the habit of celebrating our small victories which are achieved through the principles of human values. It is nourishing and a potion for self-love.

**Munazah Shah:** Yes Vedabhyas, the problem is majority of us do not know how to be kind to ourselves. As we put ourselves to the violence and rigors of achieving everything not only at our own cost but also of others, we are torturing ourselves. I agree with you that when we are valuing ourselves and developing deep recognition of our worth, we are practicing self-kindness. Here Vedabhyas, I think we should start to recognize our own needs and discern on how to meet these. We need to treat ourselves with empathy and compassion so that we develop a feeling of who we are and understand ourselves in a better manner. The oft used phrase, ‘know thyself’ is definitely a practice of love and kindness. When we start looking deeply into ourselves, we will be able to



accept ourselves- it entails both our sufferings and also our happiness. We must start accepting ourselves as we are. Then only we will be able to accept the other person as she or he is.

Also, Vedabhyas, to my mind when we start practicing self-love, self-compassion and self-kindness, we cultivate positive emotions. We will see the decline of negative emotions like anger, frustration, fear or anxiety. Our perspectives will start changing towards a more positive one. Here I would like to point out that the more we start loving ourselves, and practice compassion and kindness, we will start loving others and nurture the same compassion and kindness towards them.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Here Munazah, I think we should share how assimilating the five pillars of Gandhian nonviolence in its truest sense can help us to cultivate loving-kindness. The five pillars are: respect, understanding, acceptance, appreciation and compassion. We have to start with ourselves-respect ourselves and then be able to respect others; understand ourselves and then we will be able to understand others; accept our diverse perspectives and ourselves and then will be able to accept others and their perspectives. Further, we should learn to appreciate ourselves and recognize our self-worth and only then be able to appreciate others. Similarly, we have talked about the essence of self-compassion earlier. When we treat ourselves with compassion, we will be able to treat others with compassion and make them feel happy and joyful. This in turn will make us happy and joyful.

**Munazah Shah:** Vedabhyas, I sincerely believe that by practicing loving-kindness we will be able to bridge with others emotionally and be able to strengthen our relationships. When we have positive feelings towards others, we are actually creating a positive and loving ecosystem around us. Vedabhyas, to my mind, can actually help us in navigating difficult situations and difficult relationships with greater compassion, thereby promoting forgiveness and reconciliation.

## **Conclusion**

We sincerely believe practicing loving-kindness has the power of liberating us and those around us from unhappiness and negativities. It is a powerful strategy for our happiness and joyfulness. It is definitely an important pillar of our framework of JoyfulTalisman. We strongly feel that loving-kindness can not only contribute to our own inner transformation and build inner resilience; it surely is a guiding post of our collective well-being.

Let us all think of kindness as our strength, as a symbol of love, courage and wisdom. Let us appreciate the good in ourselves, as it would help us to look at the good in others. While we search for the real happiness within ourselves, let us work with others in finding their own happiness. We also believe that each one of us should aim to practice the art and science of expressing gratitude. It not only helps us remain positive and lifts our spirits but also is a step to practice loving-kindness.

We also feel that acts of volunteerism for the good of others and even small acts of altruism helps us in our endeavor to practice loving-kindness. One of the pitfalls is when we are attuned to speak ill of others. Let us forget this regressive practice, instead try to search for goodness in others. It is the best way to practice loving-kindness.

As we conclude, we call upon all including the vibrant youth across the world to spread the message and deep philosophy of loving-kindness and practice themselves. We should use all means right from face-to-face interactions, group work and training sessions. Most importantly in this hyper technological age, which is seeing the advent of Artificial Intelligence, we should use all digital means available to initiate a global campaign to promote loving-kindness as a lighthouse for a JOYFUL WORLD.

## **ANNEXURE - 3**

### **Let us Encourage Cyberfasting for a Joyful World**

The excessive love and addiction for smart phones especially amongst the younger generation is leading to Inexplicable situations. More than often we find a young person crossing the road using the mobile virtually unconcerned about the moving traffic. Whether in metros, buses, or while eating at home or in a restaurant, individuals remain glued to their smartphones unmindful of people around them. Also the majority of the individuals are unaware of the ill-effects of smartphone addiction and the toll it takes on our physical or mental health.

While children and adolescents are always at high risk of ending up being smart phone addicts, a situation wherein they become fidgety if their phone is not with them or they are not browsing it, numerous studies show how such addictions lead to negative addiction. Numerous studies suggest how the over dependency on gadgets leads to anxiety and depression, besides other mental health issues.

Just reflect on the time you were glued to your mobile browsing through your social media handle or seeing a movie through Netflix at night. You were feeling sleepy yet fighting the sleep to see the movie. Probably well after midnight, when you have finished seeing the movie and your eyes red due to the overexposure, you try to go to sleep. However, you will realize that the urge to sleep which was bothering you was no longer there. Different research suggests that the 'blue-ish' emitted by these electronic devices disrupts the normal sleep pattern. Well, this issue of sleeping disorder is not the only problem we might face due to over exposure and addiction to

our smartphones and the almost complete dependency on the Internet. There are several others, which include: lower concentration, creativity blocks, aggravated attention deficit, stress, loneliness, insecurity, impaired relationships, different psychological disorders and even reduced level of cognition.

Definitely, we think this addiction to smartphones and the over-dependence on the Internet is a global pandemic and needs urgent attention. There are several synonymous terms, which have evolved for Internet addiction. These include cyberspace addiction, online addiction, net addiction, Internet addiction disorder and high Internet dependence. While there are groups around the world which are trying to find solutions to limit the use of smartphones and reduce Internet addiction amongst individuals, especially young people, we will in this conversation focus on cyber fasting.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Munazah, let us first share with all the concepts of cyber fasting and how it evolved. To mark the 148th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the children and youth group, The Peace Gong initiated cyber-fasting to encourage individuals to limit the use of their smartphones, log off from their virtual world and enjoy the world around them. It was a brainchild of Prof T K Thomas, a veteran media educationist and one of the founders of The Peace Gong. Since time immemorial, fasting has been considered as an apt remedy for a variety of issues like weight control, blood sugar control and several other medical concerns. It is also considered as an important ingredient for cleansing our bodies, a strategy for relaxation and healing. It has always played an important role in different cultures and religions across the world.

The aim of cyber-fasting according to The Peace Gong was to encourage individuals to completely log off from their smartphones and the virtual world for a specific period. Initially, it was encouraged to do cyber- fasting during Gandhi Jayanti (October 2, International Day of Nonviolence), Martyrdom Day (January 30) and a few other important days

associated with Mahatma Gandhi. The concept of cyber fasting was a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi who used the strategy of fasting for self-purification and to raise his voice for truth and nonviolence. During the course of India's freedom struggle, he resorted to fasting for several causes to promote peace and harmony.

**Munazah Shah:** Definitely, Vedabhyas, cyber fasting if promoted at different forums right from our schools, colleges, and in different institutions can have positive effect to nullify the negative impact of the pandemic that the world presently is facing. This pandemic of overuse of smartphones, Internet, and other electronic devices is now a global public health concern. A recent study on how Internet addiction affects the behaviour and development of adolescents by the University College London points out, "There was an overall decrease in the functional connectivity in the parts of the brain involved in active thinking (the executive control network). These changes were found to lead to addictive behaviours and tendencies in adolescents, as well as behaviour changes associated with intellectual ability, physical coordination, mental health and development."

(<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2024/jun/internet-addiction-affects-behaviour-and-development-adolescents>)

It is in this backdrop, we must promote cyber-fasting. It is extremely critical given the enormous amount of information and toxic messages that keep on being accumulated in our mind due to our addiction to smartphones and the Internet. In this context, it would be apt to remember the Mahatma who had written in his Autobiography, "Fasting and similar discipline is, therefore, one of the means to the end of self-restraint, but it is not all, and if physical fasting is not accompanied by mental fasting, it is bound to end in hypocrisy and disaster."

So Vedabhyas, we must promote cyber-fasting as a form of both physical and mental fasting which has major health benefits for us. When we are doing cyber-fasting, we are

limiting the use of our eyes seeing the screen, our shoulders as we are not using our smartphones or other electronic devices, and we are not sitting or lying continuously glued to the mobile. It definitely helps in our physical well-being. Moreover, as during cyber-fasting, we are not uploading junk messages, junk information and toxic resources in our brain; it helps in our mental well-being.

Vedabhyas, let us shape events and campaigns to make cyber-fasting a smart thing to do today which contributes to our joy, happiness and well-being.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** I totally agree with you Munazah. The idea and importance of cyber-fasting can be made popular in schools, colleges and other institutions. At a time when the intricate relationships in families are being disrupted due to overuse of smartphones and the Internet, Munazah, I think we could start by promoting the concept at the family levels. Let us motivate families to shun their devices while eating, and encourage them to spend time together. Recently, I was having a conversation with Prof Biplab Loho Choudhury, Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan in this regard. He was concerned at the poor level of communication amongst family members today. Father goes one way, mother in another opposite direction, and children in the totally reverse direction. Even on Sundays, family members, if they are at home, prefer to remain glued in their smartphones and browse their favourite social media handles or see movies, etc.

**Munazah Shah:** So Vedabhyas, in order to promote cyber-fasting as an in-thing for individuals who give primacy to their well-being and happiness let us try to do the following:

- Connect with schools and other educational institutions with a flyer. We can encourage young people to take pledge to do cyber-fasting.
- Motivate institutions to do special events where individuals come together, have fun and take up in talks but refrain from using their smartphones during the event.

- Encourage people to take up the practice of journaling for self-reflection, self-introspection and expression of gratitude instead of browsing their smartphones. This is a powerful strategy of mental fasting.
- Encouraging people to take up cyber-fasting on special days like The Peace Gong motivated individuals to do it on days associated with Mahatma Gandhi.
- Recognize the efforts of individuals and institutions that encourage and promote cyber-fasting.

## **ANNEXURE- 4**

### **Exploring the importance of Integrity today**

One of the significant areas of concern in our modern society today is erosion of integrity, ethical and moral values. It can be observed in almost all segments of our society. This is having a detrimental effect damaging the very foundation of our societies, starting from our families.

It is an important quality to imbibe and influence personal relationships, helps us in our endeavor and promotes cohesion in the society. We firmly believe that when our integrity is compromised, individuals can become dishonest and untrustworthy. Individuals of all age groups seem to be under scanner on the question of integrity. To discuss various ideas and dimensions of integrity, ethical and moral values, in this conversation we converse with Shrutika Ghildiyal and Navjot Bal. Shrutika is a third year student of Mata Sundari College, Delhi University and President of the Gandhi Study Circle of the College. Navjot is a second year student of the same college and Vice President of the Gandhi Study Circle.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Shrutika and Navjot, to us integrity is something which can be explained as an individual having strong moral principles and someone who can be trustworthy. It also reflects honesty and truthfulness. Usually, people with integrity are expected to treat others with respect. Please share your views on integrity and how it is important in a world today, which is seeing rising conflicts, disruptions, and polarizations. How do you think living a life of integrity helps in our overall well-being?



**Shrutika:** According to me, integrity is a fundamental quality that involves honesty and trustworthiness, treating others with respect. I sincerely believe that integrity is directly linked to harmony and overall well-being. Individuals can contribute to a more positive and harmonious society by giving someone respect and making them feel that they are also a part of a society and they have an inherent right to make decisions because every human being has their own opinion and perspective regarding every issue.

**Navjot:** Sir, in my eyes integrity not only means being undivided but also mutual respect and keeping the concern of wellbeing of others as a priority. When a person lives a life of integrity, we understand the hardships of others, which promote a harmonious coexistence. Integrity in my eyes also means alignment of actions with our beliefs and values. It makes us a more confident person and promotes happiness along with fulfillment.

**Munazah Shah:** Navjot and Shrutika, in the course of our work we realize that the value given to integrity seems to be on the decline and that too very fast. In fact, we feel the downward spiral is more due to cutthroat competition, self-aggrandizement and mad rush towards materialistic pleasures. It is also due to increasing individualism. Please share your views on this rapid decline in integrity amongst different sections of our society.

**Shrutika:** Ma'am, according to me, to address the decline in integrity, it is essential to promote values such as honesty, fairness, empathy, and responsibility. This can be achieved through:

- a) Education and Awareness: Educating individuals about the importance of integrity and the negative consequences of unethical behavior.
- b) Ethical Leadership: Encouraging ethical leadership and role models in all sectors of society.

c) **Community Building:** Fostering a sense of community and shared values to promote cooperation and trust.

d) **Policy Reforms:** Implementing policies and regulations that support ethical behavior and discourage unethical practices.

By addressing these factors and promoting a culture of integrity, we can work towards reversing the downward spiral and creating a more just and equitable society.

**Navjot:** Ma'am it is true that competition and other factors are reducing integrity amongst different sections of society. However, I strongly feel that the idea of integrity can never come to an end so long humankind exists; we must understand the inherent nature of human interdependence. No matter how much evil is practiced in society, it is the law of nature when a large number of individuals come together to bring out the best for others and ourselves in terms of values. As youngsters, I believe we can promote integrity by practicing it amongst ourselves at the individual level in every possible way.

**Munazah and Vedabhyas:** Well friends, both of you represent the Gandhi Study Circle of your College. In your views, how can nurturing of Gandhian values help us to be individuals with strong integrity? Please share your perspectives on how we can encourage and promote Gandhian values amongst young people so that they develop themselves into individuals with high integrity?

**Shrutika:** I appreciate each point of everyone who is sharing his or her opinions with us!

We as a youth have the power to change honestly, to believe in sincerity, to live fearlessly and that is what integrity actually means.

**Navjot:** I strongly believe that:

Mahatma Gandhi's life serves as a testament to the power of integrity. His unwavering commitment to truth, nonviolence, simplicity, self-discipline, and stewardship inspired millions to fight for justice and equality. By embodying these values, Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated that living with integrity is not only a moral imperative but also a practical means of achieving positive social change.

His legacy continues to resonate today, reminding us of the importance of living authentically, acting with compassion, and striving for a more just and equitable world. Bapu's teachings offer timeless wisdom that can guide individuals and societies toward a more harmonious and fulfilling future.

## **ANNEXURE - 5**

### **Human Interdependence Literacy: The path to nurture peaceful ecosystems to challenge fragmentation and divisiveness**

Aaron Cramer's (2022) insightful article on what could be the strategies to resolve interconnected global challenges in a fragmented world delves on the role of different forces of 'great fragmentation' which are fueling 'deep societal divisions and inequalities' leading to conflicts and violence. While we see across societies around the world the ever-growing deep divisions and inequalities, Cramer underlines some of the critical shared challenges which almost every society is facing. These includes : a) a just and inclusive energy transition to limit global warming to under 2°C; b) preservation of nature and ecosystems, including food systems, so people thrive; c) action to address income inequality; d) replacing systems thwarting racial and gender equity; e) protection of human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Cramer argues that each force of fragmentation is powerful. The rise of hypertechnological ecosystems are amplifying disinformation and spreading narratives of hatred. Cramer (2022) further points out, "There is then environmental collapse that exacerbates social tensions and political polarization, democratic decline, and geopolitical splits that drive a wedge between and within countries. In addition,

social changes that reflect both important progress and powerful backlash and rising economic precarity and inequity further fragment societies”. Further, when there is interconnection between these forces of fragmentation, it becomes even more challenging to overcome such forces.

In the backdrop of the above arguments on how deep forces of fragmentation are exacerbating conflicts and narratives of divisions and intolerance, it is pertinent to explore different innovative approaches to promote the spirit of interdependence, promotion of solidarity footprints, coalition-building, and collaborative efforts.

One of the approaches that we are encouraging at different levels is developing our critical capacities to become human interdependent literate. This Conversation will delve at length how skills of human interdependent literacy can be a mantra to challenge the forces of fragmentation and divisiveness from the deepest levels.

**Munazah Shah:** Vedabhyas, as we start this conversation, it would be worthwhile to share about our work on human interdependence literacy. Both of us could put together our concept of human interdependence literacy in our book, *The Joyful Talisman: Conversations on Human Values for a Joyful World*. Also as we start our exploration on how it helps to challenge the forces of fragmentation and divisiveness while countering the forces of hatred and intolerance, we would like to underline that spirit of being human interdependent literate has to start from the individual level then expand to family level, institutional level and finally to the societal level. In our book, we described our understanding of human interdependence literacy as:

Developing critical capacities to not only understand and assimilate the deep meaning of human interdependence, but also be able to act on its principles in our daily lives. It also means how we enhance our cognitive capabilities to comprehend the complexities involved in the micro and macro

dimensions of the phenomenon of human interdependence and contribute to its realization at all levels of our life and society. It also entails developing our traditional, indigenous and cultural knowledge, which underlined the essence of human interdependence. It is only then we will be able to promote peaceful coexistence in its real sense.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Munazah, in view of the expansion of the forces of fragmentation across the world, I think we should expand our understanding of human interdependence literacy. Human interdependence literacy is an important pillar of our concept of JoyfulTalisman, the set of human values that we need to nurture to be able to remain happy and joyful. Also, as we are trying to promote the essence of human interdependence literacy as a pillar to negotiate the challenges of fragmentation, divisiveness and erosion of values which binds us together, it is imperative that we should expand this concept.

Further Munazah, I strongly believe that human interdependence manifests across significant domains of psychology, notably one among them is evolutionary psychology, which delves into the impact of natural selection on human behavior and cognition. As we know Munazah, the evolutionary perspective to psychology helps us to make the assumption on how many of our core behaviours and the way we process information are essential the result of evolution.

According to Buller (2005), “Human nature consists of a set of psychological adaptations that are presumed to be universal among, and unique to, human beings.” Further, if we read different writings of evolutionary psychologists we will find how it provides profound insights into the central role of fundamental human dynamics like cooperation, social bonding, and group dynamics, shedding light on their indispensable contribution to the intricate tapestry of human interdependence.

Evolutionary psychologists talk about how humans have developed a propensity to establish social bonds and engage in cooperation due to the advantageous outcomes these behaviors offer for survival and reproduction. This is evident by gazing examples across history, collaborative efforts within groups have facilitated the acquisition of resources, safeguarded against predators, and ensured the care and upbringing of offspring.

Moreover, evolutionary psychology underscores the significance of kin selection, a concept where individuals are inclined to assist relatives due to the shared genetic material. This notion elucidates why humans frequently prioritize the welfare of family members and close kin, as it aligns with evolutionary imperatives to propagate shared genetic traits through familial support and protection.

To me human interdependence transcends individual relationships and encompasses the wide canvas of collaborating and working together in groups, while having the deep sense of being dependent on one another. According to evolutionary psychology, humans have evolved to establish cohesive groups marked by shared norms, values, and cooperation, thereby bolstering survival and reproductive success through collective effort and mutual support.

By providing intriguing insights into the evolution of morality and trust, which are believed to have evolved because they promote cooperation and collaboration and reduce conflict, the field of evolutionary psychology, also is trying to argue on the essence of human interdependence.

Munazah, to my mind in essence, evolutionary psychology serves as a foundational tool for exploring the profound origins of human interdependence and elucidating the intricate processes that have sculpted our social fabric across epochs.

Another area of psychology, which I think is crucial in our understanding of human interdependence literacy, is environmental psychology. According to the Journal of Environmental Psychology, the whole area of environmental psychology can be defined as:

“The scientific study of the transactions and interrelationships between people and their physical surroundings (including built and natural environments, the use and abuse of nature and natural resources, and sustainability-related behavior).” (<https://positivepsychology.com/environmental-psychology/>)

Hence, we can understand environmental psychology as the interplay between the people and their environment. In this field, we can explore how the environment affects us, how we can make use of our knowledge of the environment and it is for our well-being- not just the well-being of human beings, but also the nature and other living beings. Further, this field of environmental psychology can help us to improve our relationship with the world around us.

This field of psychology integrates cultural diversity into its exploration of how individuals interact with their surroundings, investigating the ways in which diverse cultural norms and values contribute to the shaping of interdependence patterns leading to interesting observations on human interdependence.

As we start exploring the convergence of environmental psychology and human interdependence, we begin to acquire a deeper understanding of the intricate interactions among individuals, communities, and their surroundings. Such comprehension is pivotal for advancing sustainable approaches, nurturing resilient communities, and enriching human well-being in the face of rapid global transformations.

Environmental psychologists emphasize the crucial importance of cooperation, mutual aid, and community resilience in facing challenges. This interdependence among



individuals becomes especially evident during crises, as people unite to offer support and rejuvenate impacted communities, serving as a notable illustration of human reliance on one another.

Positive Psychology serves yet another psychological discipline intricately connected to human interdependence. In the realm of human interdependence, positive psychology as a discipline investigates the elements that foster human flourishing and well-being. It acknowledges the significance of social connections, relationships, and community support in enhancing both individual and collective happiness and thriving.

Positive psychology underscores the importance of meaningful social connections and relationships in nurturing happiness and well-being. Studies indicate that robust social bonds enhance life satisfaction and resilience, highlighting the interconnectedness of human happiness.

It additionally recognizes the essential function of social support networks in difficult circumstances and periods of stress. The existence of a supportive community boosts individuals' capacity to manage challenges and cultivates mental resilience, underscoring the crucial significance of human interdependence in nurturing general well-being.

It explores the advantages of altruism and prosocial behavior, benefiting not only the recipient but also the giver. Acts of kindness, generosity, and cooperation bolster social connections and cultivate a feeling of interconnectedness among individuals, resulting in enhanced overall well-being.

The insights gleaned from various branches of psychology underscore the fundamental importance of human interdependence in our world. They underscore the necessity for unity among individuals to ensure not only their own well-being but also the survival of the entire human species. Munazah, this is why I firmly believe that both of us are apt to

promote the idea of human interdependence literacy especially in a world that we are living in today.

**Munazah Shah:** Vedabhyas, you have rightly pointed out the realization of the significance of essential unity of human beings in our pursuit to be human interdependence literate. The core is the realization that I cannot gain while I make others suffer- whether other human beings, nature or other living beings. Here Mahatma Gandhi articulates the importance of the essential unity of human beings as he notes, “I do not believe...that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in advaita, I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that life's. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. (Young India, 4-12-1924)

Mahatma Gandhi believed in the Cosmo centric nature of human beings where they are only one part of the whole universe and it is a fundamental pillar of his idea of nonviolence. This deep understanding of the Cosmo centric nature should be the guiding force behind our relationships with other human beings, nature and other living beings. It is only then we can genuinely challenge the great forces of fragmentation.

Here Vedabhyas, I am reminded of Chief Seattle who in a reply in 1854 when he was offered by the then American President for a big area of American Indians land:

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them? Every part of the earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap, which courses through the trees, carries the memories of the red man. The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk

among the stars. Our dead never forget their beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the body heat of the pony and man – all belong to the same family.

Vedabhyas, this reply of Chief Seattle underlines the importance of human interdependence in its truest sense and is all-encompassing.

Further, from your perspectives from the different psychological strands, we can definitely underline that our concept of human interdependence literacy definitely is an important contributory factor towards our social and emotional well-being.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Munazah, here, let me share with you the perspectives of Nobel laureate, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore (1913) who encapsulates the relation of the individual with the Universe by underlining how the Indian traditions emphasizes the harmony between the two. Tagore makes an important point regarding the phenomenon when individuals were truly in harmony with nature. He notes, “The great fact is that we are in harmony with nature; that man can think because his thoughts are in harmony with things; that he can use the forces of nature for his own purpose only because his power is in harmony with the power which is universal.”

Munazah, in our tryst to construct the understanding of human interdependence literacy to counter the forces of fragmentation, we have to further understand from Tagore the essence of inter-relationship between all in the universe. In the context of Indian tradition and culture, Tagore points out (1913):

The fundamental unity of creation was not simply & philosophical speculation for India; it was her life-object to realize this great harmony in feeling and in action. With

meditation and service, with a regulation of her life, she cultivated her consciousness in such a way that everything had a spiritual meaning to her. The earth, water and light, fruits and flowers, to her were not merely physical phenomena to be turned to use and then left aside. They were necessary to her in the attainment of her ideal of perfection, as every note is necessary to the completeness of the symphony. India intuitively felt that the essential fact of this world has a vital meaning for us; we have to be fully alive to it and establish a conscious relation with it, not merely impelled by scientific curiosity or greed of material advantage, but realizing it in the spirit of sympathy, with a large feeling of joy and peace.”

Elsewhere, Tagore was talking about the essential unity of the ‘inner inter-relationship’.

So Munazah, I think when we are thinking of human interdependence literacy, it has to start from our own inner self, realizing and acting on the essential unity of our ‘inner inter-relationship’. Also, as we learn from Tagore, the idea of human interdependence literacy hinges on the fact that the harmony between human-nature-all other beings is not just a feeling but dynamic action. This action and feeling has to be part of our consciousness, only then we can challenge the forces of divisiveness.

Also, Munazah, I think much of the problems of divisiveness and narratives of fragmentation that we see today are a result of complete lack of understanding of the essential unity of our inner inter-relationship and that with others. The result is creation of negative and toxic ecosystems- at both the inner level and outer level, which then starts to glorify the divisiveness and deep fragmentation. This to my mind is the starting point of the evolution of violent conflicts.

**Munazah Shah:** Vedabhyas, you have rightly pointed out on the essence of the unity inner inter-relationship for evolution of positive ecosystems. This type of inner environment is urgently needed and offers a solution to cleanse the negative

and toxic ecosystems in which we unfortunately find ourselves residing. In response to such circumstances, it becomes imperative to promote positive shifts in human behavior, aiming to mitigate excessive greed through a diverse range of strategies.

In our book, *The Joyful Talisman: Conversations on Human Values for a Joyful World*, we have underlined the significance of nurturing values like loving kindness, compassion, nonviolence, gratitude, and responsibility among individuals which can play a pivotal role in fostering positive changes in human behavior to deter excessive greed. Vedabhyas, I think by nurturing these qualities, individuals become more attuned to the effects of their actions on others, cultivating a greater sense of responsibility for the overall welfare of society.

Moreover, instilling ethical values and moral principles across educational institutions, workplaces, and communities can cultivate integrity and accountability among individuals. This guidance encourages individuals to prioritize principles of fairness, honesty, and altruism over self-centered pursuits, fostering positive changes in behavior and discouraging excessive greed.

Emphasizing the benefits of cooperation, loving kindness and collaboration, rather than competition, can in addition reorient individuals' focus from pursuing individual gain to advancing the prosperity of the collective. This shift in perspective reduces the propensity for behaviors driven by greed.

Additionally, fostering habits of gratitude and contentment can enable individuals to acknowledge and value the abundance present in their lives, thereby diminishing the urge for excessive accumulation and nurturing a sense of fulfillment and appreciation for what they already possess.

Also, Vedabhyas, by advocating for the values of empathy, love, kindness, gratitude and compassion, societies can

endeavor to alleviate the detrimental impacts of greed and cultivate a culture characterized by generosity, empathy, and mutual assistance. This, in turn, can precipitate favorable shifts in human behavior and create a society of human interdependent literate people with recognition of mutual reliance among individuals and communities.

Vedabhyas, to my mind, in a world characterized by high human interdependence literacy, individuals wouldn't simply grasp these concepts—they'd actively integrate them into their daily routines, decision-making, and interactions to foster collaboration, cooperation, loving kindness, and sustainable behaviors leading to a more compassionate, empathetic and progressive world.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Definitely, Munazah the nurturing of empathy, love, kindness, gratitude and compassion are essential pillars of our endeavours to be human interdependent literate. They are key ingredients for us to measure our nonviolent footprints. Also, to my mind another important feature of human interdependence literacy should be our critical abilities to be able to resolve conflicts constructively and as Mahatma Gandhi underlined finish the antagonism not the antagonists. If we have to celebrate the essential unity of all human beings in the real sense, I think all conflicts should aim at transformation of relationships and not erosion of relationships. The transformation of the heart in the real sense should be an important pillar of human interdependence literacy.

Further, our idea of human interdependence literacy should enable us to practice the ancient Indian aphorism taken from the Chapter 6 of the Maha Upanishad, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in its real sense and spirit. It means the world is one family. In the backdrop of the fragmentation and divisiveness that we discussed, nurturing the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam has become a global necessity. It reflects the idea of global citizenship, cross-cultural understanding, develops deep respect for each other's culture

and traditions, and paves way for deep engagement between global citizens on issues confronting our planet collaboratively.

Here, Munazah, while we are trying to put together the essential elements and pillars of human interdependence literacy, what is needed is to promote it right from school level. The spirit of human interdependence literacy should be able to percolate in institutions like families, the places where we study or work, in businesses and in the society at large. Then only we would be able to realize the actual benefits of being a human interdependent literate person. How do you think we should work to realize this goal of a human interdependent literate world? What framework would you suggest to be able to percolate this idea at different levels of our society?

**Munazah Shah:** You have posed some pertinent queries, Vedabhyas. Realizing the goal of a human interdependent literate world may necessitate a multifaceted approach encompassing aspects such as awareness, education, technology, culture, and societal values. Initiatives like launching educational campaigns tailored for schools, universities, and communities could play a pivotal role in instilling the principles of human interdependence. These efforts might involve curriculum enhancements, hosting workshops, seminars, and engaging in interactive learning activities. This approach will help foster an understanding of the concept of human interdependent literacy starting from the grassroots level.

Additionally, launching collaborative projects that engage a range of stakeholders, including governments, voluntary organizations, businesses, and civil society organizations, can extend the reach of the concept by addressing global challenges through the lens of interdependence.

Teaming up with media outlets and harnessing the power of the digital media to raise awareness through various channels

such as articles, documentaries, interviews, and social media campaigns can be instrumental.

Furthermore, leveraging digital platforms and online communities to disseminate information, resources, and success stories pertaining to human interdependence literacy can be impactful. Developing compelling content such as videos, podcasts, and info graphics can help broaden the reach and engage a wider audience.

Moreover, involving young people in discussions and activities that underscore the significance of comprehending interconnectedness and nurturing global citizenship can be crucial. Empowering youth to advocate for positive change within their communities and on a broader scale can catalyze impactful transformations and can serve as a catalyst for integrating the concept of human interdependence literacy into society.

Another significant avenue involves facilitating cultural exchange programs and intercultural dialogue to foster mutual understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives. By highlighting the shared humanity that transcends geographical, cultural, and ideological boundaries, we can further promote the concept of human interdependence literacy in society.

Moreover, proponents of policies at the local, national, and international levels can prioritize cooperation, solidarity, and sustainable development while also underscoring the advantages of policies that foster inclusive growth and tackle systemic inequalities.

Lastly, maintaining continuous communication and engagement with stakeholders to sustain discussions about human interdependence is undeniably a critical aspect that cannot be overlooked and needs to be taken right from the local level to the global level.



By implementing these strategies and nurturing a collective comprehension of human interdependence, we can cultivate a more interconnected and resilient global community and tackle shared challenges while striving towards our common objectives of furthering a culture of peace and nonviolence.

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## **ANNEXURE - 6**

### **Why do we need to promote minimalism and simplicity amongst young people?**

*“There is no greatness where there is no simplicity, goodness, and truth.” -Leo Tolstoy, 1828*

At a time when we are witnessing one of the greatest challenges of climate change and environmental degradation in the history of humankind, the essence of a minimalistic and simple lifestyle comes to the fore. There are many of us who keep on acquiring item after item even if we do not need, also there are many who simply are passionate to keep on purchasing things even if they don't need it. This passion to acquire things, which we do not even need, is a strain on our limited resources, contributes to environmental degradation, and plays the role of a catalyst to accelerate climate change. Mahatma Gandhi describes this as the mentality of thieves.

Mahatma Gandhi notes, “I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use and keep it I thief it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no more dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality, so long we are thieving. (M. K. Gandhi - Book – Trusteeship)

Unfortunately, a very large number of people on this planet today are suffering from such a mentality of thieves. It is one

of the greatest challenges of our time to motivate and promote the realization that minimalism and simplicity not only contributes to our happiness but also limits our exploitation of Mother Earth.

To understand the importance of minimalism and simplicity from a youth perspective, we converse with Harshita Pal, a third year student of Kamla Nehru College, Delhi University and President of its Gandhi Study Circle along with Kritika Yadav, the Vice President.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Harshita & Kritika, when we think of minimalism, it is essentially an intentional way of living with only the things we really need to lead a comfortable life. Minimalism and simplicity actually entails removal of distractions of the extra possessions that we have and which we genuinely do not need. A very large number of young people think it is important to compete with their peers and friends in acquiring things even if they do not end up actually using them. How do we promote awareness and encourage youth engagement with the idea of minimalism and simplicity? How as student leaders can you promote these significant ideas of today's age?

**Harshita Pal:** Sir, unfortunately a large number of young people today generally indulge in buying more and more things even if they do not necessarily need them. Definitely, they want to outdo each other in terms of acquiring new material possessions. To motivate young people on the importance of simplicity and minimalism, student change leaders who are committed to this philosophy will have to take the lead by first uncluttering themselves.

As student leaders who have chosen to work on Gandhian lines, we should ourselves indulge in buying less and living a simple life. Bapu has rightly said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Furthermore, students like us need to be catalysts by showing other young people their consumption footprints. We have to create awareness amongst the masses

how an unnecessary rush for material possessions could actually destroy our future.

**Kritika Yadav:** I totally agree with Harshita. Firstly, I think we have to change ourselves and embrace a minimalistic approach in our day-to-day life. Only then, we can effectively motivate others to embrace simplicity. Peer motivation is very important. Initially we may think that simplicity and minimalism will make us outdated and even difficult to practice, but if we are committed, we will eventually be able to adopt it. Another thing we can do is to conduct donation drives regularly, which will help in collecting unwanted things from others and donating them to those in need. Here I would like to share with you the concept of Walls of Kindness. Here in a public place, a space is created in the wall after coloring it beautifully where people anonymously donate their unused clothes, shoes, utensils etc. Those who are in need of these items, people who may be homeless or extremely poor, could collect these items by remaining anonymous. It is a powerful example of kindness and practice of minimalism.

**Munazah Shah:** Vedabhyas is talking of distractions and cluttered environment due to the consumerist culture. A very large number of young people suffer from stress and anxiety in their tryst to acquire more. They seem to have a one-point agenda to have possessions that are more material. In this backdrop, how do you think we can enhance mental well-being by embracing minimalism and simplicity?

**Harshita Pal:** Madam, today the consumerist culture is promoted in a big way by the media. Different forms of media messages with which we are continuously bombarded with, whether through direct advertisements or through indirect persuasion, leads many of us to buy different products. These constant bombardments of strong persuasive messages to buy a particular product lead us to become stressed; moreover, we are stressed if someone known to us has already bought the product.

For e.g., suppose you want to buy I- Phone 13, and you are very much stressed about buying it; we might end up actually getting it. After a month or so, if another new model comes in the market and our friend gets it, we again become stressed about possessing it.

Have you ever seen small kids cry over one of their favourite things in their childhood? Then what happens when they grow up? They don't even look at it; in fact they mostly forget that they ever possessed such an item. I strongly feel that by living a simple and minimalistic life, we feel a sense of pride that we are using less resources. When we make it part of our life process, we will stop getting stressed that we have to immediately get something new which has come in the market.

**Kritika Yadav:** Yes, I agree with Harshita that the media plays a significant role in increasing consumerism among young people. Everyone is in a race to follow new trends. It can be considered as normal; in fact, those who do not follow these trends are considered backward. Hence, we become stressed in order to comply with the fast-changing trends. The serious need to compete with our friends in terms of the latest fashion trend, for instance, can contribute to our mental ill health.

But, if we make simplicity and minimalism part of our life process we will no longer have mental health issues vis-à-vis the need to comply with the latest trend and take possession of the newest brand in the market. Furthermore, a clutter-free environment can reduce anxiety and feelings of getting overwhelmed with new gadgets. It also decreases distractions and helps in maintaining focus. We can take the example of Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, who always wears a grey T-shirt to reduce distractions and boost productivity in his work.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** Harshita and Kritika, what kind of impact do you think we can have in our social interactions and

relationships by adopting minimalism and simplicity as our way of living?

**Harshita Pal:** Sir, I think we have a lot of expectations, envy and competition from our fellow beings. I think by adopting minimalism and simplicity, we will expect less from others and we will not be jealous of others. Also, jealousy pushes us to become mean, belittle others, harm others or take part in unethical practices. Being a simple human, will not bring these thoughts to one's mind.

**Kritika Yadav:** Sir, I think minimalism will surely help in forming deeper connections and fostering authenticity in our personality and perspectives. People often fake their personalities to fit in the society. A minimalist approach can encourage empathy and understanding for others, leading to genuine interactions and relationships.

**Munazah Shah:** What do you think are the main obstacles and challenges of adopting a minimalistic way of life? What are the different ways you think we can overcome them?

**Harshita Pal:** I think the main obstacles to adopting a minimalistic way of life are as follows:-

1. Youth nowadays are conscious about their identity. They worry so much about their class in society.
2. Due to the human tendency to show off their standard in the society, it is more than often difficult to motivate young people to adopt simplicity and minimalism.
3. Detachment from desires is very difficult. I think it is easier to talk about it but challenging to put into practice especially when different forms of persuasive messages from companies and social media platforms constantly bombard us.

Different ways to overcome them:-

1. By stopping worrying about what you possess and what others possess.
2. By not worrying about how others will see you or think about you.

**Kritika Yadav:** Madam, I think Harshita has beautifully explained your question. Besides, there's a popular term commonly used in this generation called FOMO, which stands for Fear Of Missing Out. Young people use this term when they are unable to experience something trending on social media. As a result, low self-esteem and depression have become common among young people. We can only be able to overcome it through self-awareness and practicing gratitude for what we have, instead of focusing on what we cannot control.

## **ANNEXURE - 7**

### **Five simple axioms of nonviolence as according to Mahatma Gandhi**

- a) Non-violence implies as complete self-purification as is humanly possible.
- b) Man for man the strength of non-violence is in exact proportion to the ability, not the will, of the nonviolent person to inflict violence.
- c) Non-violence is without exception superior to violence, i. e. the power at the disposal of a nonviolent person is always greater than he would have if he was violent.
- d) There is no such thing -as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat.
- e) The ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory - if such a term may be used of non-violence. In reality, where there is no sense of defeat, there is no sense of victory.

-Harijan, 12-10-1935



## **ANNEXURE - 8**

### **Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Six Principles of Nonviolence**

Principle one: Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people. It is active nonviolent resistance to evil. It is aggressive spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

Principle two: Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding. The result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation. The purpose of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community.

Principle three: Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people. Nonviolence recognizes that evildoers are also victims and are not evil people. The nonviolent resister seeks to defeat evil, not people.

Principle four: Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform. Nonviolence accepts suffering without retaliation. Unearned suffering is redemptive and has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities.

Principle five: Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate. Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as the body. Nonviolent love is spontaneous, unmotivated, unselfish and creative.

Principle six: Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice. The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win. Nonviolence believes that God is a God of justice.

(<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/six-principles-of-nonviolence/>)

## **ANNEXURE - 9**

### **Excerpts from the book, Towards a Positive Communication Ecosystem: A Primer on Nonviolent Communication by Vedabhyas Kundu, Mansi Sharma and Ishita Thapliyal**

Let us try to understand the five-pillars of Gandhian nonviolence in the context of communication:

In the context of communication, when there is mutual respect, interactions are likely to be positive and productive. We are likely to enjoy such interactions. If there is a lack of respect, interactions are likely to be unproductive and even stressful.

Mutual respect leads to greater understanding. Many times, we find that our inability to understand others' points of view leads to mistrust and disputes. However, when we have respect for someone, even if there is a misunderstanding, we can get over it without getting into a messy fight.

Mutual respect makes it easier for individuals who are interacting to listen deeply to each other. It shows that those who are communicating are genuinely interested in understanding each other and are not delving into manipulation. Also, mutual understanding in the communicative process helps in greater collaboration and cooperation.

When we have mutual respect and mutual understanding, it is easier to accept each other's position. As human beings, each

of us is likely to have different perspectives and opinions. Much of the problem arises where we get trapped in taking an egoistic stand. However, respect and understanding help us accept each other's position.

At a time when there is so much negativity around us and, very easily, we can get entrapped in a whirlpool of negative energies, it is significant that we learn to appreciate the positive things around us. You may be angry, but if you pause and see the beautiful flowers outside, your anger is likely to get reduced. Think of the positive things happening in your lives and you will realize how you can get over the negative energies. Positive appreciation leads to positive energy and it, in turn, leads to positive and healthy communication.

Similarly, the fifth pillar of Gandhian nonviolence is compassion. Compassion helps us to understand the sufferings of others and try to alleviate it. By being compassionate, we can make deeper connections and greater engagement. It can help us overcome the differences between individuals through love and affection.

We must remember that by imbibing the above five pillars, we will be able to inculcate positive attitude and behaviour. The negativity that often surrounds us will diminish and we will evolve as individuals and as a society at large. Negative and violent relationships cannot help in building a homogenous family or society; it is only positivity and nonviolent action that can promote social cohesion and our collective well-being.

## **ANNEXURE - 10**

### **Simple Steps to develop a Communication Strategy**

- 1) Do a SWOT analysis of the current communication ecosystem in your organization. Write the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This is true for both the internal communication ecosystem and external communication system. If your institution is a school, then look at the communication ecosystem in the classroom, in playgrounds, in school canteens, the communication between students and teachers, between teachers, and between teachers and management. For external communication, look at communication with parents, and with other stakeholders.
- 2) Now, put together the communication objectives in each segment like classrooms, playgrounds, canteen, etc. The objectives should be concise, clear, easy to understand, and specific.
- 3) Then define the target audience for each segment. For instance if we are developing a classroom communication strategy, the audience are the students and teachers.
- 4) Following this, work out the key messages that need to be taken to each target audience in each segment. Further, you need to work out how these messages need to be constructed so that it results in a harmonious communication ecosystem. The lessons learnt from the SWOT needs to be incorporated while developing the communication strategy.
- 5) Also, the different types of communication channels that are to be used should be worked out in a focused manner. For instance, in external communication with parents, channels like email and WhatsApp can be used. The aim would be

greater engagement with the parents so that they are in the loop on what their wards are doing and their progress.

## **ANNEXURE - 11**

### **Chapter 2, Lesson 1**

#### **Application Sheet for Mindful Walking**

Suggested Age Group: 10+

Duration: 40 minutes

Materials: Open Space

Suggested Steps:

- a) Start with breathing exercise: 3 minutes
- b) Reflection by a few participants on how they are feeling, and what is their emotional state: 5 minutes
- c) Walk slowly, silently with concentration: 15-20 minutes
- d) Participants observe their footsteps, different sounds, physical sensations, smell, and their thoughts
- e) Participants come and assemble silently: 2 minutes
- f) Reflection exercise on what the participants felt: 10 minutes
- i) What did I feel during the walk? Any difference from normal walking routines?
- ii) Is there anything unique I saw, heard, felt or smelt?
- g) Closing lesson: I am like an ocean who has learnt to remain calm and resilient even when there are waves.

## **ANNEXURE- 12**

### **Chapter 2, Lesson 2**

#### **Application Sheet**

### **Practicing Self-Compassion through writing letter to oneself**

Age group: 14+

Duration: 30 minutes

Material Required : Papers, space like hall/classroom, etc for writing by participants

Suggested Steps:

a) Reflect on a difficult situation you were in and you needed help from someone closest to you. What were your concerns, emotions and feelings? - 5 minutes

b) Write a letter to yourself. It should be like writing to your closest friend who is in trouble and needs your support including emotional help. 15 minutes

c) After five minutes, revisit the letter that you had written. How do you feel reading the letter? Do you feel the spirit of compassion? – 5 minutes

Closing lesson: When I treat myself as my closest friend for whom I have the deepest love and compassion, I can practice self-compassion.

## **ANNEXURE - 13**

### **Chapter 2, Lesson V**

#### **Application Sheet**

### **Practicing Inner Discipline through enhanced self-awareness**

Age Group: 15+

Duration: 45 minutes

Material Required: Chart Papers, Hall/classroom for putting together the chart papers and discussions

Suggested Steps:

- a) Discussion on self-awareness
- b) Write 3-4 unique skills and strengths you think you have.
- c) Write at least three strengths others may think you have. Who are these individuals?
- d) Write 3-4 weaknesses you think you have.
- e) Write at least three weaknesses others may think you have. Who are these individuals?
- f) Write possible steps you would want to take to overcome these weaknesses.
- g) Reflect on the possible opportunities in life you have and how you can use them.

h) Reflect on the possible threats including disruptions in career goals, etc. Reflect on how you can overcome these threats.

Closing lesson: When I have a greater degree of self-awareness, I can practice better inner discipline.



## **ANNEXURE- 14**

### **Chapter 3, Lesson 1**

#### **Application Sheet**

### **Conversation series on the importance of human interdependence**

Age Group: 12+

Duration: 45 minutes

Material Required: Notebook and a pen, Open natural space

Suggested Steps:

- a) Go near your favourite tree/plant and reflect on why you like it.
- b) Write an imaginary conversation with it on how much dependent you and others are on it.
- c) Write and appreciate how important it is in the ecosystem in this conversation.

## **ANNEXURE - 15**

### **Chapter 3, Lesson 1**

#### **Application Sheet**

### **Conversation series on the importance of human interdependence**

Age Group: 12+

Duration: 45 minutes

Material Required: Notebook and a pen, Open natural space

Suggested Steps:

- a) Go near your favourite bird/animal and reflect on why you like it.
- b) Write an imaginary conversation with it on how much dependent you and others are on it.
- c) Write and appreciate how important it is in the ecosystem in this conversation.

## **ANNEXURE - 16**

### **Chapter 3, Lesson III**

#### **Application Sheet**

### **Our Responsibility towards Mother Earth**

Age Group: 12+

Duration 1.5 hours

Material Required: Notebook, chart papers drawing papers, colours

Suggested Steps:

a) Start with group discussions on ‘As a steward of Mother Earth what can I do to protect it?’

b) Next, there would be individual exercises where every participant will put together the following in the chart paper:

S.No What can I do to protect Mother Earth and its inhabitants? Specific action that can be taken by you

c) Make some relevant sketches/comics strips/cartoons/posters.

d) Presentation by the participants.

# **ANNEXURE - 17**

## **Chapter 4, Lesson II**

### **Application Sheet**

## **Discussion and analysis of real stories of compassion**

Age Group: 12+

Duration: 1.5 hours

Material needed: Place for group discussion and role play

- a) Organize a dialogue circle.
- b) The theme of dialogue is on real stories of compassion and how these impact individuals and society.
- c) Discuss how these stories motivate you to practice compassion.
- d) Discuss about people around you whose acts of compassion inspire you.
- e) Break into groups.
- f) Discuss story ideas for role plays. Develop the role plays.
- g) Stage the role plays for greater understanding of the importance of compassion.

## **ANNEXURE - 18**

### **Chapter 4, Lesson VII**

#### **Application Sheet**

### **Critical analysis of films/documentaries/books on nonviolence and nonviolent movements**

Material required: Access to the film, a projector or any other device where participants can see the film

- a) For example let us do critical analysis of the film, Gandhi
- b) First see the entire film.
- c) Write details of the film. For instance, it was a film made in 1982 on the life of Mahatma Gandhi. The film was directed and produced by Richard Attenborough. It starred Ben Kingsley in the title role.
- d) Outline the main ideas of the film.
- e) Outline the different technical aspects of the film like cinematography etc.
- f) Discuss the different characters of the film.
- g) Discuss the main character of the film, Here for example, Gandhi. Discuss what you have learnt about the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi from the film.
- h) Discuss the different historical events highlighted in the film.
- i) Finally, share if the film has inspired you and whether the film has achieved its goal in telling to the world about the life and message of Mahatma Gandhi.

## **ANNEXURE - 19**

### **The JoyfulTalisman Approach to Anger Management**

Getting angry is an organic part of our lives. Each of us, at some point or another, gets angry for a variety of reasons. It is a natural experience, which involves our feelings, emotions, attitude, and behaviour. We might get angry from both internal and external factors. For instance, if we are facing some personal problems and are in turmoil, we are most likely to get angry. On the other hand, the behaviour of others, which might be hurting us, could make us angry. The key, however, is how we manage anger.

There are many who are unable to manage their anger. They then suffer; it can range from disruptions in relationships to hurting oneself due to stress. The inability to control and manage anger can lead to serious health issues like increased heart disease, high blood pressure, weakened immune system, depression, and anxiety. Modern-day pressures make it challenging to manage anger constructively. So, in this conversation of ours, we are trying to share with you the JoyfulTalisman approach to anger management. We have developed the framework of JoyfulTalisman where we stress how, by nurturing different human values; we can live a joyful life.

As we start this conversation, we are reminded of this apt quote of Thich Nhat Hanh, who said:

When we get angry, we suffer. If you really understand that, you also will be able to understand that when the other person is angry, it means that she is suffering. When someone insults you or behaves violently towards you, you have to be

intelligent enough to see that the person suffers from his own violence and anger. But we tend to forget. We think that we are the only one that suffers, and the other person is our oppressor. This is enough to make anger arise, and to strengthen our desire to punish. We want to punish the other person because we suffer. Then, we have anger in us; we have violence in us, just as they do. When we see that our suffering and anger are no different from their suffering and anger, we will behave more compassionately. So understanding the other is understanding yourself, and understanding yourself is understanding the other person. Everything must begin with you.

**Munazah Shah:** Vedabhyas, as everyone of us gets angry at some point in time, it is important to understand at the basic level what causes anger. We should try to decipher the triggers or the root causes of our getting angry, a common emotion. The whole effort of managing anger starts from deciphering these root causes. Let us look at some of these common causes or triggers. Many of us tend to get angry when we are in a stressful condition, unable to handle the pressures and stress. Then, when we start seeing ourselves in a muddle, in a situation where we are experiencing failure, the triggers of anger creep in, as we are not able to reconcile our failure. There are times we start getting frustrated for a variety of reasons; these then act as triggers for our anger. If we feel someone or a group of people unfairly treats us, we start getting angry. A feeling of being attacked or disrespected is a trigger for our anger. In addition, there could be a situation when we want something desperately and we are not getting it, which could be an alibi for us to get angry. Further, various mental health conditions can lead to triggers of anger.

While different studies show how anger impacts our mind, body, and spirit, it also disrupts our decision-making abilities. Most of us might have experienced that when we are angry, it clouds our judgment; we start looking at things from a narrow prism and forget the bigger picture.

Here, Vedabhyas, I think we must point out that anger can range from minor annoyance to something which can be described as full-blown rage. Also, we should point out that not all anger is unhealthy. If it is not destructive and managed constructively, it can be used for a positive purpose.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** You have said it aptly that not all anger is unhealthy. Munazah, I remember these beautiful lines from the book, *The Gift of Anger* by the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Arun Gandhi, “Use your anger for good. Anger to people is like gas to the automobile - it fuels you to move forward and get to a better place. Without it, we would not be motivated to rise to a challenge. It is an energy that compels us to define what is just and unjust.” Keeping this positive aspect of anger in mind, our aim should be to manage unhealthy anger constructively. Here, our framework of JoyfulTalisman can be useful.

The first pillar of JoyfulTalisman gives individuals the wherewithal to handle triggers of anger calmly- it is the importance of turning inwards. Munazah, if you recollect, we have mentioned in our course book, *The JoyfulTalisman Course book*, “If we remain in our inner prisons and make no attempt to come out of them or rely on the negatives that encompass, we can never be happy.” Turning inwards means we are experiencing inner peace, we have enhanced self-awareness, we are practicing loving kindness, self-compassion, and self-empathy.

Now, Munazah, if we go through the triggers of anger you have mentioned, we will find how turning inwards will help us remain balanced in even a difficult situation. When we have enhanced self-awareness and practice self-compassion and self-empathy, even if we find ourselves in a muddle, we will be resilient enough to handle it. Also, when we can turn inwards, in a difficult conversation or if someone is trying to hurt you, you will respond calmly and not escalate the disruption with your anger.



Munazah, when we can turn inwards, we will be able to do deeper introspection of the root cause of our anger and develop a constructive response. We will be able to regulate our emotions, find healthy outlets to express our anger, and use de-escalation techniques.

**Munazah Shah:** Vedabhyas, you have beautifully captured how by turning inwards, we will be able to deeply reflect on the triggers of anger and respond to it constructively. The next pillar, which is important for addressing issues of anger, is human interdependence. Day in and day out, we encounter both known and unknown people, because of whom we tend to get angry. There may be a friend who might have teased us or told us something, because of which we overreact. We might become violent during a situation of road rage. We may get angry over a stranger who tries to jump the queue even though we have been standing in line for a long time. How do we react to such situations? Do we respond in the same way as the other person has done, in the same tone and tenor? Responding back in the same tone or even in a harsher manner is definitely going to escalate the situation.

Vedabhyas, if you remember, one person who was taking our session on nonviolent communication once shared his experience. He would get out of his vehicle and become violent even in a small case of someone just touching his car. He shared how many times he and the other driver who was involved in the incident would spend hours, including visiting the police station. This was an escalation of tension. He mentioned how, after he took part in the workshop on nonviolent communication, an important aspect of JoyfulTalisman, he changed his stance. He said he would now come out if there was a small incident; instead of hurling abuse, he would just smile. This helped in de-escalating the situation. Turning inwards and realizing the essence of human interdependence will make us respond in a balanced way.

Similarly, say if we are arguing with a vegetable vendor regarding rates, if we are human interdependent literate, we

will appreciate the importance of the vendor in helping us with our vegetables. Our reaction to his argument will then be different and not aggressive. Further, I believe that by being human interdependent literate, we will be more balanced and calmer as we reflect on our deep interdependence with other individuals, nature, and other living beings.

**Vedabhyas Kundu:** You have rightly shared the experience of the individual who used to hurl abuses at the slightest instance of someone else's car touching his. The experience he shared about how time was lost in the escalation of the dispute reminds me of this beautiful quote of Thich Nhat Hanh, who said in *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames*, "When you say something really unkind, when you do something in retaliation your anger increases. You make the other person suffer, and he will try hard to say or to do something back to get relief from his suffering. That is how conflict escalates."

The next important dimension of our concept of JoyfulTalisman is how we measure our nonviolent footprints. The more we practice nonviolence in all aspects of our lives, the more we will be calmer and respond to difficult situations constructively. The five pillars of Gandhian nonviolence—respect, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, and compassion form an integral part of our efforts to measure our nonviolent footprints. Further, the importance of forgiveness, gratitude, and love form the principles with which we can measure our nonviolent footprints. Now, if we carefully examine these dimensions, we will see how these help us negotiate with the triggers of anger. For instance, deep nurturing of the five pillars will help us navigate disagreements with someone and will help in de-escalation. As we turn inwards and realize the importance of measuring nonviolent footprints, we will be able to trigger feelings of disapproval or criticism, feelings of helplessness and being ignored, and unjust treatment.

Here, I would like to underline the importance of practicing nonviolent communication, both at the intrapersonal and

interpersonal levels, as a powerful strategy to manage anger. Getting attuned to using nonviolent communication at the intrapersonal level makes our self-talk and inner dialogues calmer; it helps us to remain composed. Similarly, nonviolent communication at the interpersonal level helps us to articulate arguments in a positive frame instead of a negative and toxic frame.

The other pillar of JoyfulTalisman is volunteering and caring for others. We sincerely believe that volunteering is a great stress buster and helps us see the positives in even difficult situations. Further, the habit of caring for others will make us more compassionate and empathetic. It can be an important strategy in anger management.

## Conclusion

*“It is not that I do not get angry. I don't give vent to my anger. I cultivate the quality of patience as angerlessness, and generally speaking, I succeed. But I only control my anger when it comes. How I find it possible to control it would be a useless question, for it is a habit that everyone must cultivate and must succeed in forming by constant practice.”* – Mahatma Gandhi.

Arun Gandhi, in his book, *The Gift of Anger*, writes how the Mahatma told him to maintain an anger journal for managing one's anger. We have underlined the importance of journaling as an important vehicle for reflection and self-introspection in our book, *The JoyfulTalisman Course Book on Human Values*. There, we introduced our concept of Soul Journal. The anger journal can be part of the Soul Journal. We have been motivating many individuals to maintain an anger journal, especially those who feel they get very angry even with the slightest triggers. We tell them to self-reflect in the journal every day while retiring to bed:

1. How many times during the day do you get angry?

2. What caused the triggers? Try to self-reflect as clearly as possible on these triggers.
3. Try to go deep into the root causes of these triggers. Who were the individuals, if any, who were the cause of these triggers?
4. What was your reaction to these triggers? How did you express your emotions and feelings?
5. How did your anger affect you? Reflect on the impact in terms of your body, mind, and spirit.
6. How did the anger affect others around you? What were their possible feelings, emotions, and reactions?
7. As you are involved in deep self-reflection and self-introspection, think if you were in a similar situation now, whether you would have reacted differently or not.

Though we have not done any scientific study, the experiences of individuals whom we were able to motivate suggest that there is a definitive change in how they manage their anger when they get into the practice of maintaining an anger journal regularly. Further, the mindful routines that we discussed in our Course Book helped individuals in the constructive management of anger.

## **ANNEXURE- 20**

### **The JoyfulTalisman Approach to Inner Growth and Inner Transformation through Soul Journal**

In the initial stages of our work on inner transformation, we realized the importance of journaling. We believe journaling helps in promoting self-reflection, self-introspection, emotional processing and regulation, and enhancement of our personhood. We termed this endeavour to self-reflect and self-introspect as the voice of the soul. Taking a leaf from this, we introduced our concept of Soul Journal in this Course book on Human Values.

We have conceptualized the framework of JoyfulTalisman, which underlines how, by imbuing human values, we can live joyfully and peacefully. It is inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's Talisman, which we believe is a powerful guidepost for human values. The framework teaches that true happiness begins within, nurtured through loving kindness, compassion, self-respect, and awareness of our interconnectedness. By living our values and reflecting on our actions, we can reduce harm and conflicts, strengthen bonds, and create peace. Inner joy radiates outward, inspiring love, empathy, and harmony in the world.

As turning inwards and the journey for inner growth and inner transformation are significant pillars of JoyfulTalisman, we strongly advocate the reflective practice of writing a Soul Journal. We do not claim that the concept of Soul Journal is

new, nor that we have created it. Several luminaries have been talking about the need for journaling. What we have tried to do is to develop the JoyfulTalisman approach to Soul Journaling. It is designed to foster inner harmony and a means to come out of our inner prison. It aims to encourage self-realization and alignment with human values, which, for us, is the key. It underlines the importance of self-purification and constructive and healthy inner communication. Through the process of journaling, we propose that individuals embark upon an inner journey to understand, heal, and elevate their thoughts, intentions, and actions. In this Course book, we have shared a large number of exercises that lead to a process of deep reflection and deep self-introspection.

### **Key Components of Writing the Soul Journal**

**Self-Purification:** We feel that we need to revisit and examine our thoughts, words, and deeds to cultivate deep respect for all, humility, and compassion. This is an important area to practice inner discipline.

**Alignment of Mind and Word:** This is extremely important, as more often than not, we falter in this area. There is a mismatch between our thoughts, our words, and our actions. So, through the Soul Journal, we can self-reflect and introspect on whether our actions are consistent with our inner values. We feel that by journaling, we can reflect on the times we have spoken and acted with authenticity, and the occasions when there was a disconnect.

**Awareness and Deep Reflection:** It is important to nurture the practice of listening deeply to our inner voice. There is a need to keenly observe the insights that we can assimilate, the aspirations, and areas of personal growth and enhancement of our personhood that surface during this contemplative practice.

**Practicing honesty while writing about our emotions:**

We strongly feel emotional honesty is extremely important. We should sincerely try to share our true feelings, struggles, and hopes in our Soul Journal. We feel that the honest self-dialogue can aid in the healing process and in inner transformation.

**Developing Spiritual Insight:** Doing exercises to become human interdependence literate is important. It will help in the contemplation of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings and nature. In the Soul Journal, reflect on how you can promote unity and peace, both internally and externally.

**Practicing affirmation:** Example: - Through self-reflection and honest expression, I am nurturing my soul's journey towards peace, joy, and unity.

While we have shared detailed exercises to be reflected in this Course book, here are key prompts that we can write in our Soul Journal:

**(The Pillar of Turning Inwards)**

- i. What all did I learn about myself today?
- ii. How and when did I practice self-compassion, self-love, and loving kindness today?
- iii. What did I do today to align my thoughts, words, and actions with peace and kindness?
- iv. What passions or negative emotions surfaced today? How did I respond?

**(The Pillar of Human Interdependence Literacy)**

- i. What did I do today to contribute towards the goals of human interdependence? What were my experiences?

- ii. In what ways can I deepen my respect for all beings and nature?

**(The Pillar of measuring our Nonviolent Footprints)**

- i. When and where did I embody nonviolence today? What were the experiences?
- ii. How did I resolve conflicts today- both internally and externally?

**(The Pillar of Measure our Solidarity Footprints)**

- i. How did I stand in solidarity with others today? What was my experience? How were the reactions of those with whom I stood in solidarity?
- ii. Did I appreciate diversity and promote unity?

**(The Pillar of Caring for Others)**

- i. What were the different instances when I cared for others today?
- ii. What acts of compassion brought joy to others and me? What were my feelings?



# The JoyfulTalisman

Coursebook on Human Values

The JoyfulTalisman, authored by Vedabhyas Kundu and Munazah Shah, is a transformative book that delves into personal and spiritual growth through ethical and moral values and positivity. This remarkable work guides readers on a journey toward self-discovery and well-being, blending philosophical insights with practical strategies. With each chapter, the book transitions smoothly from insightful theories to actionable wisdom, creating a powerful impact on readers' perspectives on life for a joyful world. Vedabhyas and Munazah emphasize the transformative power of joy as a central force for achieving balance, resilience, and inner peace.

The uniqueness of the book is its conversational style of highlighting the importance of a positive mindset and human values. With a clear and accessible style, the book moves beyond mere advice, actively empowering readers to cultivate positivity in their daily lives.

**This book is dedicated to the girl child. All royalties that will accrue to this book will go for the education of the poor girl child.**



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