

Swanvesha

MAY 2026

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“What has become clear to you
since we last met?”

–Ralph Waldo Emerson



WELCOME TO SWANVESHA

Swanvesha (Swa-Anvesha, Sanskrit for Self-Inquiry) offers insights, stories, and actionable strategies to help leaders grow and adapt in an ever-changing world. Stay informed, inspired, and lead with purpose.

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WELCOME NOTES

We have “Open Doors” in many towns and cities in May. This allows people to visit many places; they may not have visited and may never visit. If we keep our faculties open, they also open minds and possibilities. With this hope, I present to you this month’s newsletter. Under ***Musings***, I share the way our minds take bits of information and concludes and how a small step can help us get a better picture. In ***Novella***, I am stepping into unfamiliar territories. Exploring what to do when you see other people internalize and not emot. Finally, in ***Corporate Culture***, I am making an uncomfortable claim that hope is evil. I hope this month’s theme and articles find space in your minds and enhance your growth.

I am an Executive and Leadership Coach. Connect with me on my website www.swanvesha.com for more resources or write to me at swanvesha@gmail.com. Happy reading.

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Musings



THE TASTE YOU CAN'T NAME



On a Friday evening, you decide to try something a little different. You're at a French restaurant with a friend, scanning the menu, when the waiter suggests '*Asperges à la Sauce Hollandaise*'. It sounds familiar enough—nothing too risky—so you go with it.

When the dish arrives, you take your first bite. Something catches your attention. It's peppery, but not quite. There's a mild heat, layered with something floral... almost fruity. You pause. Take another bite. Then a third. You know the taste—but you can't quite place it.

You ask your friend. They try it and say, with the ease of someone who recognizes it, "*It's pepper.*"

"Yes," you say, "*but there's something more. And it's subtle.*" The waiter, passing by, overhears and smiles. "*It's pink pepper.*"

It's a small moment, but it reveals something deeper about how we understand the world. The same dish, the same bite—yet three very different levels of clarity. One still searching. One recognizing a part and settling into certainty. And one that sees the full picture, shaped by experience.

We often move between these states more than we realize. Curiosity leads us to explore. Partial recognition gives us confidence—sometimes too quickly. And deeper understanding, when it comes, often looks deceptively simple. It is not about being right or wrong. It is in knowing which part of the picture we are seeing—and how much of it we might still be missing.

This partly comes from how our attention often works in fragments—we catch a detail, a note, a reference, and our mind completes the rest. We rarely hold the whole experience at once. We assemble it, and once assembled, it becomes our conclusion. So perhaps the way to ensure that we get a better picture is to hold our conclusions a little longer, stay curious a little longer, and allow space for the possibility that there is more in the dish—and in the moment—than what we have already named.

In many ways, this is what self-inquiry asks of us—not to rush to conclusions, but to become more aware of how we arrive at them.

Image created by Gemini AI



I met someone recently who, by all measures, was a strong leader—articulate, composed, and confident in presence. But when they mentioned that in times of crisis, they internalise, it felt out of character. However, the way they said it was honest, like they had lived that moment.

This is fascinating because it is new to me. I am aware of how to externalise—in words, in gestures, in visible release. But what intrigued me was how people who internalize eventually process and release it.

So, I explored this further. Turns out, a few things happen behind the scenes. With inward processing, what looks calm on the surface can carry depth and duration we don't immediately see.

- For some, the moment is held, almost paused. The reaction is not denied, just delayed. It is revisited later—turned over, examined, sometimes even re-lived—with a clarity the immediacy of the situation does not allow
- For others, the processing happens in fragments. A thought here, a feeling there. It surfaces in quieter moments—during a walk, in conversation, or in silence. What seemed contained begins to take shape.
- And then there are times when it doesn't fully resolve. It stays beneath the surface—not visible in the moment but not entirely gone. It shows up later—not as the original frustration, but as something harder to trace.

But the exploration brought me to an all too familiar point. *"How do people respond, when they read the situation?"* I have been told to manage my emotions, and I still struggle to do so at times. And I am sure the people who internalise have been told to emote more. This is because we tend to respond to what is visible in the moment as if it represents the full internal reality. As I learnt from this exploration, control and processing are often mistaken for the same thing. What looks like control may simply be processing that has not yet surfaced.

What I found out is that best "solution" is to simply give space. By not responding immediately, we allow processing to complete itself. It is not that the other person is unaware of their emotions—it is that awareness and expression do not always move at the same speed. So, if we can simply be there, without doing anything, we bring more value than anything we say or do. In the end, respecting someone's process is less about whether they internalise or externalize emotions, and more about not confusing expression with understanding.

Corporate Culture



HOPE – EVIL HOPE

Hope is one of the most celebrated human emotions. Every one of us carries it in different measures. It is spoken of, as strength, as resilience, as something that keeps us going. Stories, myths, and films have elevated it to something sacred. And yet, hope carries something far less examined.

Hope is always about a future we want to see. It may feel present, but it never belongs here. Its object is always ahead—something better, something yet to arrive. And in holding on to that, something shifts. The present is no longer where we stand. It becomes something we move through.

Actions are no longer complete in themselves. They are done in service of something else. The current moment loses its weight. It is managed, endured, or bypassed—because something else is expected in the future

The present becomes temporary, even when it is all we have. The future is no longer open—it becomes a fixed point, something that must happen, something that justifies everything that came before it. And once that fixation sets in, every path begins to bend toward it.

And our life is defined by where we are and what we want to achieve? Sometimes it works. Many times, it doesn't. When it fails, we soften it. Reframe it. Explain it away. And then we move on—to another version of the future. Another hope. And the worst cruelty of hope in this repetition. It refuses to let us be defeated gracefully. Even when reality has already spoken, it keeps us attached to what could still happen.

This is not a philosophical problem. It is a practical one. In organizations, we do not build on hope. We plan. We assess risk. We define controls. We measure progress. But in our own careers, we do the opposite.

"I hope my performance gets noticed."

"I hope this leads to a promotion."

"I hope my manager sees my value."

Hope replaces clarity. A better question, often used in coaching, is far simpler: **What is in your control?**

That question demands action. Hope does not. Hope shifts responsibility to something outside us—timing, perception, decisions made by others. It places effort in the present, but the outcome in a future we do not control. And that is precisely why it is dangerous. Hope indeed is evil. It places our hard work and determination in the hands of something that does not exist yet—and may never arrive.

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Hasta Luego



THANK YOU

Thank you very much for reading my newsletter. I hope you enjoyed it.

Somewhere between writing these pieces, I ordered a dish and confidently said, “I know this taste.” The waiter smiled and said, “We’ll see.”

I decided not to argue with him. I had already assembled my conclusion.

Stay curious.

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