

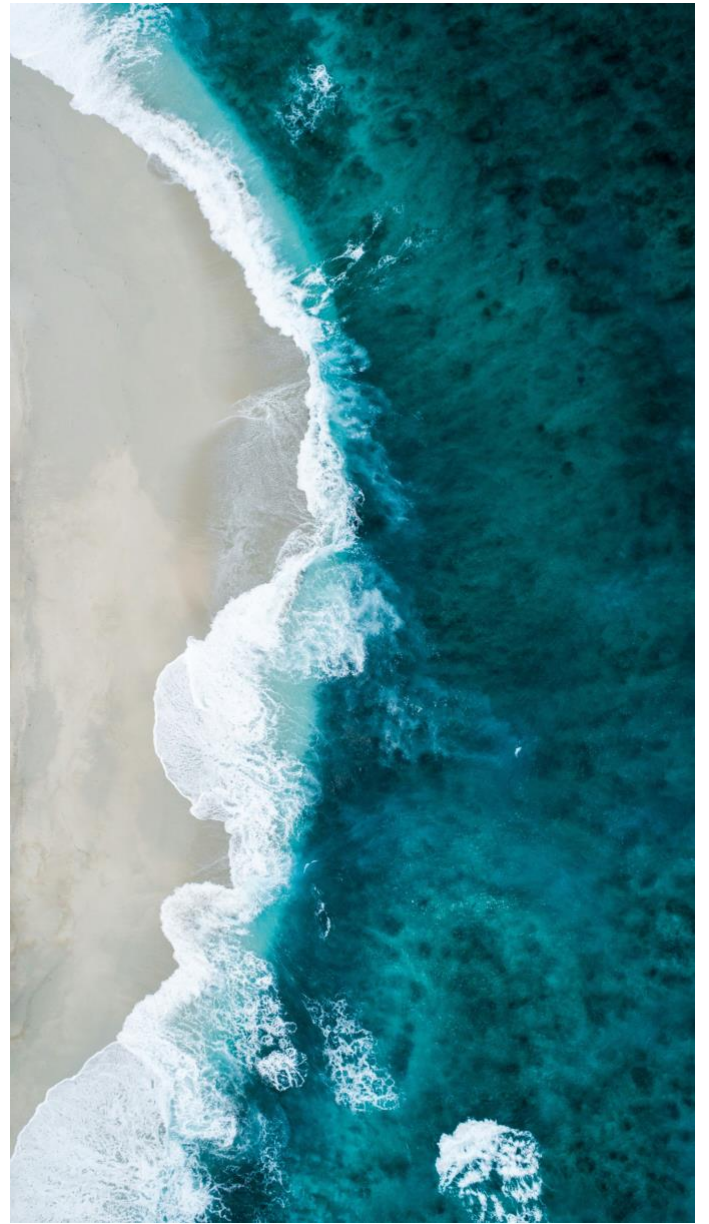
Swanvesha

AUGUST 2026

◇	<u>TALLY HO</u> Welcome notes	PG. 2
◇	<u>MUSINGS</u> Valbhipur	PG. 3
◇	<u>NOVELLA</u> Projection	PG. 4
◇	<u>CORPORATE CULTURE</u> Judgement	PG. 5
◇	<u>HASTA LUEGO</u> Thank you	PG. 6

Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.

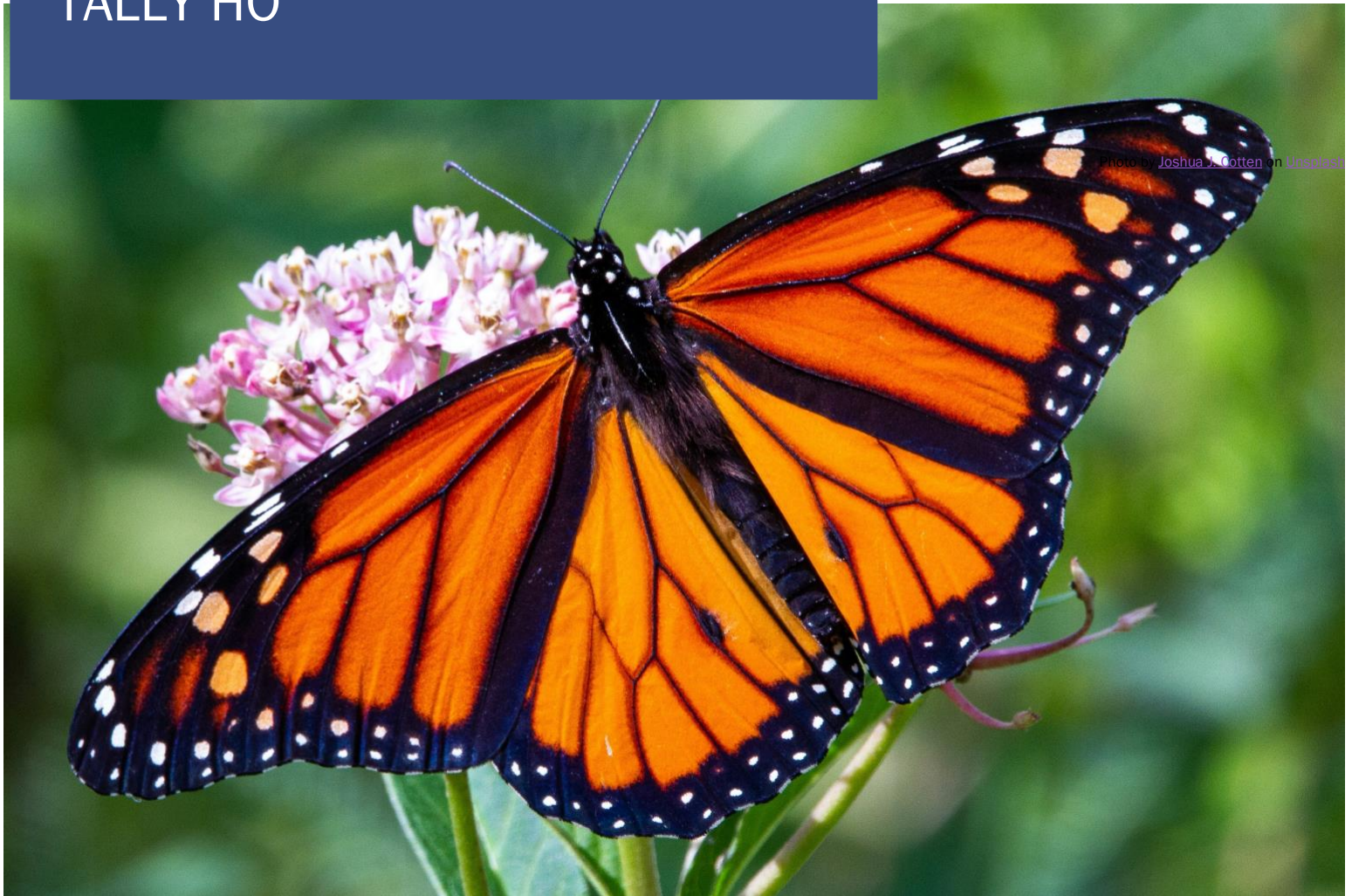
–Voltaire



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.

Photo by [Shifaaz shamoon](#) on [Unsplash](#)



WELCOME NOTES

August is named after Augustus Caesar, whose name later became a word associated with dignity, respect, and authority. But authority is not just about position. It is about judgment. The best leaders are not the ones who react the fastest, speak the most, or make decisions based on what is immediately visible. They are the ones who ask:

- *Does this need to be said?*
- *Did I understand what was actually meant?*
- *Can I trust the information I am using to decide?*

This month, I explore these 3 questions. Under **Musings**, I share the story of my Economics Lecturer and his life experience, on the importance of words In **Novella**, a Zen story about how 2 people can infer different meaning from the same conversation. Finally, in **Corporate Culture**, a real incident about how questioning the data makes so much sense, when you have to make a decision.

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.

Musings



VALBHIPUR

I had an Economics Lecturer in my First Year of College: Mr. D K Oza. In the very first lecture, he started with this: *"My name is D K Oza and I am from Valbhipur, a portal village near Bhavnagar."* By portal village, he meant a village that was also a port. Then he would follow it up with an anecdote from his life.

"Years ago, I had an interview with the Civil Services Board, and I introduced myself in the exact same way. One of the panelists asked me a follow-up question:

'As you are from a portal village, can you tell me how many types of ports are there?'"

Mr. Oza would stop here and tell us that he did not know the answer. After a few seconds, he replied honestly. The panelist explained that there were two types of ports—natural and man-made. Then Mr. Oza would describe what happened next. He could not get the fact that he missed that answer out of his head. For the next thirty minutes, he fumbled, lost his flow, went off track, and ultimately blew the interview.

He concluded by saying that the extra **padding**, I used, *'a portal village'* cost me a place in the Civil Services.

We all have our own "Valbhipur" moments every day. Usually, nobody notices, because everyone has their own Valbhipur. But there are times, when people are paying attention to every word you say: making a presentation, speaking in front of an audience, having a dialogue on an important topic, or appearing for an interview. During these moments, one extra word can take you down a rabbit hole. For example, in interviews, many of us use phrases like *"I led the project, though the team did most of the heavy lifting,"* which invites a follow-up *"Oh, so you didn't actually own the delivery?"* Now you are defending your choice of words and a strong example of fitment that you had used loses its fizz.

High-stakes communication requires intentional editing. When you find yourself adding protective padding, uninvited caveats, or defensive qualifiers, pause and strip them back: There are two simple shifts that can help you communicate with more clarity and confidence.

- **Own your baseline:** If you are stating a fact, a core strength, or a strategic viewpoint, state it cleanly without conversational scaffolding.
- **Stop handing out bait:** Don't hand your audience an unsolicited thread to pull unless you actually want to spend the next ten minutes unravelling it.

The words we choose do not just communicate our thoughts. **They dictate the outcomes too.**

Image created by Gemini AI



In life, we seldom see things clearly. What is astonishing is that in the midst of everyone's prejudices, things still get done and people find alignment and meaning. There is a story about a monk who called himself the "Master of Silence." He was a total fraud who had no real understanding. To sell his fake Zen, he hired two eloquent attendant monks to answer questions for him, while he sat there entirely mute to look inscrutable.

One day, during the absence of his two attendants, a pilgrim monk came to him and asked: "*Master, what is the Buddha?*" Not knowing what to do or to answer, in his confusion he could only look desperately round in all directions — east and west, here and there — for the missing attendants.

The pilgrim monk, apparently satisfied, then asked him: "*What is the dharma?*" He could not answer this question either, so he first looked up at the ceiling and then down at the floor, calling for help from heaven and hell. The monk nodded in appreciation and asked: "*What is Zen?*" Now the Master of Silence could do nothing but close his eyes.

Finally, the monk asked: "*What is blessing?*" In desperation, the Master of Silence helplessly spread his hands to the questioner as a sign of surrender. But the pilgrim was very pleased and satisfied with this interview. He left the 'Master' and set out again on his journey.

On the road the pilgrim met the attendant monks and began telling them enthusiastically what an enlightened being this Master of silence was. He said: "*I asked him what Buddha is. He immediately turned his face to the east and then to the west, implying that human beings are always looking for Buddha here and there, but actually Buddha is not to be found outside. I then asked him what the dharma is. He looked up and down, meaning that the truth of dharma is a totality of equalness and there being no discrimination. In answering my question as to what Zen was, he simply closed his eyes and said nothing, meaning it cannot be said but only realised inward. Finally, in answering my last question, 'What is the blessing?' he stretched out his arms and showed both his hands to me. This implied that he was stretching out his helping hands to guide sentient beings with his blessings. Oh, what an enlightened Zen Master! How profound is his teaching!*"

When the attendant monks returned, the 'Master of Silence' scolded them thus: "Where have you been all this time? A while ago I was embarrassed to death, and almost ruined, by an inquisitive pilgrim!"

The next time you find meaning or answers from others' words, remember, it's only your Projection.

Corporate Culture



JUDGEMENT

In 1872, two prospectors named Philip Arnold and John Slack walked into a San Francisco bank carrying a heavy leather bag filled with raw diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. They claimed they had discovered a secret, incredibly rich diamond field in the American West and needed a safe place to store their wealth.

Word spread like wildfire through the financial district. At the height of the Gilded Age, America was desperate to find its own mineral wealth to rival European empires.

Instead of immediately jumping to conclusions, a group of the country's most elite and supposedly sharpest businessmen—including industrialist **Charles Tiffany** (founder of Tiffany & Co.) and bank founders—grew intensely curious.

Eager to verify the claim before anyone else, they dispatched a team of prominent mining experts to inspect the site. The prospectors led the experts on a blindfolded, multi-day journey deep into an undisclosed, rugged wilderness. Once there, the experts were left to dig with their own bare hands—and within minutes, they literally struck diamonds and precious stones sitting right on the surface of the soil. It felt effortless. Convinced by physical evidence, the elite syndicate handed over **\$650,000 in cash** (tens of millions today) to buy a stake in the claim and prepared to float a massive public mining corporation on Wall Street.

Then the Truth emerged. The entire operation was a complete, meticulously engineered fraud. Arnold and Slack had traveled to London shortly before the scam, purchased about \$20,000 worth of raw, industrial-grade uncut diamonds and gemstones and literally **salted an ordinary patch of desert land** by kneeling down and scattering the stones into anthills and crevices.

The conspiracy only unraveled because a quiet, methodical geologist named **Clarence King** noticed a fatal flaw: the site contained both diamonds and rubies sitting right next to each other in the exact same soil layer. Geologically, that was impossible. Diamonds require extreme mantle pressure to form, while rubies require entirely different mineral environments. Nature never mixes them together like playground gravel.

King rushed back to the site, exposed the scam just as the Wall Street public offering was about to launch, and saved the American financial market from a catastrophic bubble. Arnold fled with his cash, and the elite investors were left holding a bag of dirt.

The most interesting part of this story is not that two prospectors managed to deceive some of America's wealthiest businessmen. It is that they did not fool them with clever arguments. They fooled them with evidence.

Good judgement is not about collecting evidence. It is questioning whether the evidence itself makes sense.

Image created by Gemini AI

Hasta Luego



THANK YOU

Thank you very much for reading my newsletter. I hope you enjoyed it. This Corpspeak word is Agency

When you hear this, *"Let's not bog down the executive team with peer reviews or baseline data; we need to give leadership the agency to believe whatever makes the Q3 forecast look revolutionary."*

What it means is *"The leadership will decide based on their guts"*

What is your inference for Agency?

Image created by Gemini AI