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Up Front

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Susanna and Puran Bair

founded IAM Heart to bring the message of the heart to the public through a professional and scientific approach. Photo by Kris Hanning. **See story, page 16** >>>

They ♥ Meditation

“IN OUR MEDITATION, YOU DO NOT TURN OFF YOUR MIND, YOU TURN ON YOUR HEART,” says Puran Bair. Puran and his wife Susanna are co-founders of the Institute of Applied Meditation on the Heart (IAM Heart), co-founders of the IAM University of the Heart and teachers of Heart Rhythm Meditation.

“The way we meditate is a very different approach; you focus on breath in all meditation, but we also listen for the rhythm or beat of the heart,” says Susanna. “It is easy to do — and it really works.”

According to the Bairs, meditation is an experience of heightened energy and consciousness, it is not zoning out or escaping. “It is a rehearsal for how you could be,” says Puran. “In the meditative state, you can see yourself doing a great thing. Then go out and do it!”

“At IAM Heart, our work is so practical, and applying it to life makes a difference. Our meditation can help people with health, relationships and accomplishments.”

Puran and Susanna first met in 1984 at a meditation camp 10,000 feet up in the French Alps; they were married in 1991. Between the two of them they have five grown children and six grandchildren. They currently have no pets, but their remote Tucson home (also the IAM Heart headquarters) is about as close to nature as you can get.

“Living here is like living in the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum,” Susanna laughs. On their property, they are likely to encounter snakes, fox, deer — even an occasional mountain lion. The views from their home are incredible, with specific spots from which they watch the sun rise and set each day.

Puran and Susanna moved to Tucson about eight years ago. “We were living in Ipswich, Massachusetts, and had the feeling we needed to move to make our meditation school take off,” Puran says. They meditated to determine where to live. “We divided the United States into four quadrants and the strongest energy we felt was in the Southwest.”

“When something makes you shiver, that is your heart talking,” adds Susanna.



Susanna and Puran Bair, co-founders of IAM Heart. Photo by Kris Hanning.

“When the voice says to you, ‘Move to Tucson,’ you know it is right.”

Susanna was born in Hungary and raised in Austria. Growing up, “I always wanted to help people, and I was interested in learning how a human being worked,” she recalls. “If you get to the soul, you get to the source. I studied psychology, but was disappointed not to learn about the soul.” She turned to performing in street theater and was soon working as an actress in Vienna. She also served as the director of the Women’s Experimental Theater in Switzerland, then moved to New York City. But at the time, her accent limited the acting roles available to her.

While in New York, she learned about meditation and how to access the heart and soul. “That turned my life around,” she says. She earned a master of arts in counseling psychology at Antioch University in

New Hampshire and had a private counseling practice for 19 years.

Puran grew up in Pennsylvania, where he was interested in both the mystical and the scientific. He received his M.S. degree in computer science from the University of Pennsylvania and has worked in computer science research, environmental energy and financial services. He has a patent in wind power, and a patent pending in high-speed composting. “My challenge has been to integrate my deep spiritual beliefs and my scientific understanding,” he says. “It all came together when we started our school.”

Puran and Susanna founded IAM Heart in 1988 to bring the message of the heart to the public through a professional and scientific approach. Heart Rhythm Meditation is designed to help people physically, emotionally and spiritually. “Do you want to be happy? Give happiness to others and

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it will come back to you. Give courage away and you become courageous.”

Puran and Susanna lead 30 to 40 seminars a year, and they are very involved in their IAM University of the Heart, a spiritual school that offers a two-year program. They also put on webinars and host retreats. “When we do a retreat, it is not a silent retreat,” Susanna says with a laugh. “People are energized.”

They have co-authored three books: *Living from the Heart*, *Energize Your Heart*, and *Follow Your Heart*. Susanna also writes a blog for *The Huffington Post*. “We work endlessly,” says Puran.

“Our work gives us a purpose in our lives,” Susanna reflects. “We love to collaborate and are each other’s inspiration.”

When not working, the couple enjoys singing, dancing and whirling (picture yourself spinning around and around with your arms outstretched — and not getting dizzy).

Susanna has been traveling the country this year leading “The Invincible Heart” seminar tour and retreat. “I find the challenges of today are intense,” she relates. “How do we make health, work and relationships work? You access the resource of your heart. Invincible means we tap our heart into an energy that makes it possible for us to deal with any condition and any situation in life.”

On the tour, Susanna teaches four steps to make your heart invincible:

Celebrate your life and be grateful.

Be vulnerable.

Create what you love in life. Have you been laid off or lost your job? Ask yourself what you would love to do, and then do it.

Listen to the voice of your heart.

“We say the heart knows things the mind doesn’t,” Puran says. “Listen from your heart and speak from your heart.”

The Bairs, who meditate for about an hour a day, say that meditating in the morning before your day gets started is the best time to do it. In Heart Rhythm Meditation, you are taught to breathe in for eight heartbeats and breathe out for eight heartbeats, coordinating these two internal clocks.

Looking ahead, Puran would like Heart Rhythm Meditation to become the best-known method of meditation, while Susanna’s goal is to have a “vibrant center.” “Today there are yoga studios — someday there will be heart meditation centers,” Puran concludes.

For more information on the Bairs and IAM Heart, visit www.IAMheart.org or call (520) 299-2170. — *Wendy Sweet*