

**Oona Shambhavi D'mello | India & US**

Individual | Sister | Daughter | Sustainability Learning  
Leader  
Lead: CEO of MySustainOnline



Oona Shambhavi D'mello is an artist, OD practitioner and agent of social impact. Oona's mission is to impact the lives of people, serving their personal and professional growth, the wellbeing of their ecosystems and the health of the planet, with appreciative language being a key facet to promote human and social sustainability.

Her passion for expression is curated to promote "art can heal" firsthand. Oona's purpose is to promote human and social sustainability by inspiring leaders, organizational ecosystems and communities to create sustainable impact for our planet.

**Satyashiv D'mello | India & US**

Individual | Brother | Son | Social Sustainability Leader  
Lead: Human & Social Sustainability at Conscious  
Development



Satyashiv leads DEIB (diversity, equity, inclusion and belongingness) and social sustainability at Conscious Development, and is the founder of YouUbuntu. His vision is to inculcate the paradigm of YouUbuntu through the maxim, "I am because we are". Through his work, Satyashiv integrates positive psychology, metaphysics, organisational development, learning sciences and coaching to evoke higher order thinking and positive action towards a flourishing planet.

**Preeti D'mello | US**

Individual | Wife | Mother | Diversity & Inclusion Thought  
Leader, Futurist and Coach  
Lead: VP, Global Head: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and  
LeaD Academy at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)



Preeti is inspired by the motto "inclusion without exception" at TCS, and is responsible for the ongoing systemic transformation in the leadership, diversity, equity and inclusion ecosystem at TCS. With thirty years of experience, Preeti brings a grounded, practical and strengths-based orientation to organizational development and leadership as well as mentoring and coaching, leveraging her experience and understanding of human nature to evolve effective turnarounds for personal, business and leadership challenges.

# Shop Talk at the Dinner Table: AI in family systems that work together

How we are on the inside is how we experience the outside. A joyous heart and clear mind make many a barrier breachable. An exhausted heart and an angry mind make even the good moments inconsequential. But what determines whether it is joy or exhaustion that commands our hearts and minds? The most significant determinant, as far as civilisation goes is – relationships: the relationship with oneself, relationships with others, a relationship with nature and all that is unseen.

Debatably, a significant marker of our evolution is the ability of human relationships to work with cohesion and alignment, and value one another in times of homeostasis and hyper-complexity.

This is a learned awareness. As individuals, a family and colleagues with different capacities, we have learned much from our interpersonal relationships, a long-written code within the blueprint of our intimate family system that was delightfully brought to life by David Cooperrider through the power of Appreciative Inquiry.

Our story is unique – we are a family of practitioners that hold the same goal of meaningful and sustainable change in systems, often by applying AI in different contexts. Not only do we share a common goal, but also come together professionally: we work together, both informally and within an organisational structure.

Valuing diversity of thought, open conversations and safe dialogue along with honest and vulnerable introspection has been a keen and consistent aspect of our family and team cultures, with a core alignment to and practice of AI, both the philosophy and process.

By leveraging the wisdom and process of AI through exploration and discussion, trial and error, empathy, compassion and failing forward, we have honed some traits of healthy and effective interpersonal systems that we have tried and tested at home and work. Here are some of our insights:

**Bosco D'mello | India & US**

Individual | Husband | Father | Leadership Thought  
Leader & Coach

Lead: Leadership Capital & Organizational  
Development at Conscious Development



Bosco established Conscious Development with a singular purpose: to enable individuals to bridge the gap between who they are and who they can be. He has been a partner to leadership in the USA, India and Singapore in leadership capital development, diversity and culture, and executive coaching. He supports the vertical development of leaders through the integration of inner and outer life, connects them to their potential, and elevates how they think and work. Bosco supplements his professional commitments with his passion – teaching – as visiting faculty member at institutions including Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and SP Jain School of Global Management.

*Diversity of thought is the gateway to evolution.*

*Often, the challenge is identifying which moment is most appropriate for which strength.*

## 1. Diversity of thoughts and ideas

In a family, it is often assumed that everyone thinks the same way. Is it because we believe that people who have lived together, share genetic traits and environmental influences, are the same? Is this assumed sameness the foundation of safety which must exist in a family (in our case, often family plus colleagues)?

We think not. Yes, members of a family are alike and often share many common views. AND YET members of families and teams can also value diversity of thought because sameness is not the foundation of safety; trust is. (In fact, sameness can result in inertia, which in many spiritual schools of thought is regarded as synonymous with death).

A different perspective need not be seen as an opposing one. There is value in that which makes us different, a value that can be life-giving to groups and systems only if we abandon our assumption that sameness is a strength.

Diversity of thought is the gateway to evolution. Whether it be around the dinner table or conference room, diversity of thought is the recipe for positive disruption and innovation, a known pathway to stay ahead of the competition. Once leveraged, diversity of thought allows groups to have a multifaceted world view and strategic approach to solving problems, road mapping the future, and collaborating effectively.

## 2. Variety of strengths

With this diversity of thoughts and ideas also comes a variety of strengths. Even though we may share similar “nature and nurture”, we have individual stories that are ripe with different contexts, ecosystems and experiences that have influenced our operating systems and given birth to different strengths.

Leveraging the collaborative and interdependent nature of human systems, which is clearly visible in Appreciative Inquiry, is the foundation of how family and workplace systems like our own can and should value different strengths.

Often, the challenge is identifying which moment is most appropriate for which strength. At this point, a deeply democratic conversation, governed by discovering what has worked in the past, collectively envisioning the future, and co-creating a design strategy and process, helps us make an informed decision and commitment together as a family and/or team at the workplace.

*Tapping into diversity demands that power be shared.*

Knowing that “there are many ways up the mountain” fills the group’s minds and hearts with hope, joy and togetherness, effectively preparing us to act in the spirit of collaboration.

### 3. Shared power and interpersonal respect

Every system has a power dynamic, often fixed and undisputable unless unforeseen events intervene. Even within groups that share genetic coding, beliefs, values and environments, diversity exists – of thought, experiences, ideas and strengths. Tapping into this diversity demands that power be shared. Power in this context isn’t the ability to exercise force over the other; rather, it is the ability to take the stage and share one’s ideas, and have access to a circle of influence to enable real change.

Within a family and at a workplace, diversity demands that power be claimed and shared equally so that everyone can offer their thoughts, ideas and strengths for the benefit of the entire system.

This may seem utopian to some – can power really be shared willingly? Yes, it can. By leveraging open communication, curiosity and honesty, founded on provocative open-ended questions, the diversity of thought in a room becomes apparent, especially since we share a common desire for interpersonal respect.

Power, shared fairly and equally, balances giving and taking, energises circles of influence by valuing different expertise, and enables frameworks that seek out individual and group responsibility and accountability. Additionally, interpersonal respect further encourages diversity of thought, open communication, intentional leadership, ownership and accountability.

### 4. Curiosity and friendship

*We all aspire to be seen, heard, valued and loved.*

When starting to explore relationships and what makes us come together, we soon realise there is a common thread running through us all. It may have a different colour or texture and we may imagine it differently, yet there is always a common denominator. We all aspire to be seen, heard, valued and loved. These simple words require complex efforts, yet if we look through the fog of this complexity, we notice that all of these are achievable through friendship.

We have often found that AI sessions start with everyone – almost instantaneously – establishing friendship. It is usually an outcome of having a common goal, contributing and making an impact – or just being a part of a group. From our research and reflection, the basis of this friendship is a

genuine curiosity to know more about others, which paves the path for powerful exploration and designing the way ahead.

*Curiosity is a powerful enabler of connection.*

Curiosity is a powerful enabler of connection, psychological safety, creativity and innovation, progress, and friendship. Understanding what matters to one another, listening with the intention of understanding rather than the intent to respond, displaying courage and vulnerability by sharing one's own story, and valuing differences as a pathway to "blue sky thinking" are all agents of sustainable growth, whether it be around the dinner table or in the conference room.

#### 5. Alignment of passions

In a group that plans to stay together – a family or a team – it is essential to be aligned on shared values, principles, passions and purposes. The beauty of true alignment is that it is entirely co-created. True alignment is the output of each individual sharing what matters to them, their aspirations for the group and how they can employ their strengths to play a part in achieving this goal.

*Alignment is built on safety and curiosity.*

We may think, can diversity of thought and alignment co-exist? Yes, it can, and must. Neither of the two must be threatened by the other. Alignment amongst members is in no way meant to imply rigidity and inertia. In fact, true alignment is built on safety and curiosity, so that any contributing member can offer their diversity of thought without raising anxiety over threatening the progress of the entire group.

With alignment comes momentum. Only once members of a family, team or organisation are aligned as active contributors on their values and goals will there be observable momentum between individuals and in projects.

#### 6. Individual and shared accountability

The purpose of accountability is not to have someone to blame, but rather to commit to something that is initiated, to trust in one's ability to achieve the goal, to use every task as a container to fail forward, to solicit collaboration whenever needed, and to celebrate the effort that led to success.

*Accountability must be a matter of excitement rather than potential risk.*

In a family and a team, accountability must be a matter of excitement rather than potential risk. In today's world of work, accountability feels like a big and scary word that creates pressure, stress and psychological exhaustion.

"One for all, and all for one" is the axiom that has filled our shared experiences with a sense of community and safety. Each person acts toward the benefit and

success of the group, and the group works towards the benefit and success of any individual within it. This axiom celebrates the innate trust in everyone's capacity to do well, flourish, and learn well if we fail.

Professionals, teams and organisations have much to unlearn and relearn when it comes to accountability and how to apply it as a tool to generate effort and inspire everyone's best self.

All the above insights are somewhat simultaneous and iterative when put into action. Relationships are at the core of any human function and are the determinators of long-term joy and effectiveness. We have much to think about when it comes to the nature of how our relationships develop – do they enable us to show up as our authentic and best selves, or do they compel us to fit the mould and play-act so that we can have a seat at the table?

Dinner tables and conference rooms are potent with the potential to do good, learn from our mistakes, dream big, shed all apprehension, garner momentum, and rest and restart so that we can live well and make a difference.

*Dinner tables and conference rooms are potent with the potential to do good.*



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