

# An Introduction to InnSæi

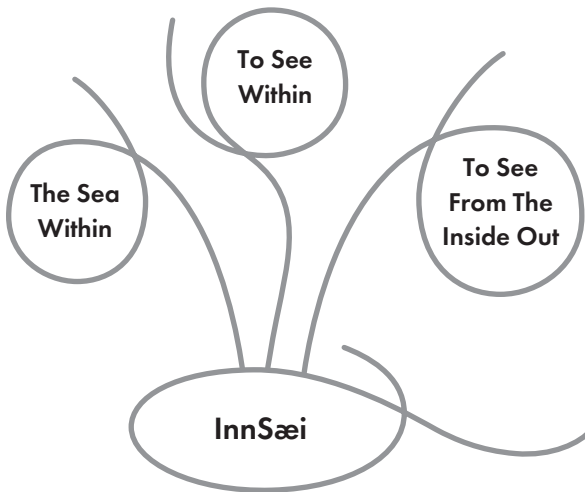
(pronounced 'in-sy-eh')

This book is a love letter, an ode to the magnificent, complex, largely incomprehensible but fascinating world that exists within us all, our InnSæi, meaning *the sea* within us. It explores how we can immerse ourselves beautifully in this inner world, in order to feel regenerated and reconnect with the world around us. It is based on the belief that the more we navigate life with a strong inner compass, aligned to our InnSæi, the more we can become part of the beautiful, generous world that lies outside us. In the words of the planetary scientist and astronomer Carl Sagan: 'The cosmos is also within us. We're made of star stuff. We are a way for the cosmos to know itself.' What we find inside us, in our spirit, is projected on to the world around us.

I love the alchemy of words and the way they can help

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us make sense of things. InnSæi, the Icelandic word for intuition, poetically captures the nature of the world within us. It has three meanings: *the sea within*; *to see within*; and *to see from the inside out*. The *sea within* implies dynamic movement; this inner world cannot be put into boxes because then it ceases to flow. *To see within* means to know yourself well enough to be able to put yourself into other people's shoes and make connections that constantly regenerate you. And finally, *to see from the inside out* implies a strong inner compass, which enables you to navigate and create your own path in the ever-changing ocean of life.



InnSæi is a watery word, which makes this a watery book. This book speaks of oceans, ice-floes, underwater exploration, compasses, the flow of information and the

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rising of sap in trees. It draws on many of the marvellous functions found in nature's complex ecosystems, and the behaviour of its tiniest beings. The world of InnSæi and intuition is largely intangible and borderless. It may therefore be hard for quantitative, science-based research to measure and quantify; but it is no less important for us to acknowledge, celebrate and befriend. InnSæi follows a different logic from the rational, tangible, conscious, problem-solving approaches that are easily replicated and taught in standard ways. This book unfolds how InnSæi's intelligence is expressed through the whole body: skin, spine, nervous system, brain, heart, gut and senses. As you read on, you will often be reminded of how everything is interconnected, that we are mostly made of the same stuff as stars, that recent scientific findings – in the fields of human genetics, the detection of brainwaves and the electromagnetic fields of our bodies – show that it is not at all clear where you end and I begin. Both human beings and planet Earth have boundaries we cannot cross without threatening our ability to regenerate. InnSæi encompasses all this, and when we deeply connect with InnSæi we embody this understanding of ourselves and our place in the world. It changes the way we act and project on to the world.

I didn't gain real knowledge of InnSæi until I had followed my dreams out into the big wide world, collapsed,

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lost hope and experienced great pain, before finding a path to healing and self-rediscovery. During my darkest hours, when I was in my late twenties, I could never have imagined that this pain would take me to places where I would meet the most amazing people, that I would create a university program, and that our documentary film based on InnSæi would be shown worldwide. I could not have imagined that RuPaul would tweet about our film *InnSæi – the Sea Within* (subtitled *The Power of Intuition* in North America), that people would tattoo their bodies with InnSæi or design incredible works of art inspired by the sea within.

This book spans centuries, rediscovering the world around us, by celebrating and exploring the world within. It is made up of personal stories from around the globe, including my own, and blends wisdom from different cultures, from science and the arts.

InnSæi can lie dormant if we ignore it or try to silence it; but our very lives depend on being connected to it. When we align with InnSæi, we activate it. My story – about hitting a wall and losing hope – is by no means unique; it is an experience shared with many people from all walks of life. For a while, nothing around me felt solid; and life was incredibly hard, lonely, dark and hopeless. Eventually I found my way back to me, deep within, my truest place of safety. I learnt to connect with and navigate the universe

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inside me through physical exercises, by delving into science, philosophy, literature, ancient wisdom, writing and simple but constant practices.

Over the past 20 years, InnSæi has given me the courage to follow my inner compass wherever it wants to take me. For this I am extremely grateful. I have had close to thirty different roles in my career so far. I have been a filmmaker, a consultant, a poet, a statistician, a school principal, a playwright, an entrepreneur, an activist, a dreamer, an artistic director, a managing director, a founder, a chair of boards, a what-have-you. But the only role I truly relate to is simply being myself, Hrund, an artist at heart, a visionary and someone who can turn ideas into reality. I would also feel comfortable saying I was a healer, a warrior of light and a sorcerer. It depends how I feel on any given day – there's so much freedom in that. There are many ways to see the world; this book is how I see it.

This book is for those of us who want to explore and be present in the world within, so that we may deepen our sense of belonging, our relationship to ourselves, other people and planet Earth.

Chapter 1 'What is InnSæi?' looks at the different ways we define intuition, according to various schools of thought, cultures and disciplines. We explore the cultural origins of InnSæi, what it really means, what blurs and blocks it, and why it became my holy grail to connect with

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it and find my bearings again. I share moments from my life and upbringing, and we get a deeper understanding of InnSæi through stories of people from different backgrounds, on their individual journeys. We discover that InnSæi, based on experience and expertise, brings out the highest possible human intelligence. It turns out that a single word can open up the world to us in a whole new way, if we truly embody its meaning in our lives. InnSæi picks up information through every part of our bodies, so this chapter also alerts us to the myriad ways in which we can attend to the world, and prepares us to make use of the tools, tips and exercises offered throughout this book.

In Chapter 2, ‘The Healing Power of InnSæi’, we’ll explore what it means to lose our connection to InnSæi and eventually relocate it. We all go through traumas in our lives. No matter how big or small our trials, they are *our* experiences and they shape us. This chapter shows us how we can emerge from painful experiences as stronger, more compassionate, wiser human beings. I share my own story of how darkness forced me to connect within, as I had nowhere else to go. It took me a while to emerge from that darkness and I wasn’t sure if I’d come out merely existing or fully alive.

We can befriend pain through the myth of Inanna, the ancient Mesopotamian goddess of life and death, which teaches us important lessons about how pain can deepen

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our humanity and help us grow wiser. Using a glacier as a metaphor, our pain either gets frozen within us; or, if we can own it, forgive and let go, our pain melts and evaporates. Reconnecting to InnSæi shifted the way I pay attention and helped me make life-changing decisions. It helped me understand that when we perceive and interpret the world as fragmented, bureaucratic and siloed, this is what it begins to feel like. Instead of staying in that divided world, I wanted to reconnect within, to join people and the world around me, to be present, brave and generous in spirit. This chapter also includes insights from people who know from experience that they are their own healers; the more we connect within and heal our inner world, the more we can relate to and achieve in the world around us.

In Chapter 3, ‘The Sea Within’, we dive into our borderless and dynamic inner world, which is constantly flowing and helping us make new connections. The ocean is the oldest metaphor for consciousness; and while our knowledge of both is quite limited, they have much in common that helps explain the workings of the sea within and how best to tap into it. Sometimes the best way to activate and align with InnSæi is to immerse ourselves in an activity, which makes us lose track of time and place and reach a state of flow.

The world we live in is complex, fast-changing and non-linear, and – metaphorically speaking – it has a lot

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in common with the ocean that covers 70 per cent of the Earth's surface. Uncertainty is the only constant, and the unpredictability of tide and waves challenges us to be conscious of where we go and how we get there. The best way to navigate the ocean of life is to become familiar with the sea within. We have to keep our head above the surface in order not to drown; and then we need to decide which direction to go in. Self-awareness and emotional intelligence are important, both to help us relate to others and to access our InnSæi. The word *emotion* means 'to stir, move or agitate'. Let the ocean stir, move and agitate you, but don't let it drown you. Don't *be* the sea – *navigate* it. We need navigation skills, but we need to base our navigation on our inner compass. If not, we risk getting burnt out, losing our way, feeling drained and exhausted, and living the values of others instead of our own.

The last two chapters explain how to harness InnSæi and put it into practice. In Chapter 4, 'To See Within', we put the spotlight on the world inside us, explore its beautiful and sometimes messy landscapes, learn to see through the multiple filters inside us and around us, including the fears, wishes and biases that can block and skew our ability to connect to InnSæi. We continue to deepen our understanding of attention and how it offers us a gateway to InnSæi and a launch pad for a paradigm shift that starts from within. This chapter views our attention as



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an extremely scarce and precious commodity in a trillion-dollar market. We need to make sure we are aware and in control of how we attend to the world because our impressions inform our InnSæi; otherwise market forces will hijack our attention and distort our perceptions, thoughts and actions. This chapter frames the different ways in which we can chose to attend to the world and offers five rituals that can help us clear the path to InnSæi, take a more mindful ownership of it, activate our creative capacity and open ourselves up to the world around us.

Finally, Chapter 5, ‘To See From the Inside Out’, brings together much of what we have discussed in the previous chapters, proposing a framework that helps us implement InnSæi in our lives in a practical way. I call this modern navigation tool ‘the two rhythms and a strong inner compass’. The human spirit has its own circulation system which it constantly needs to renew and evolve. We also know that InnSæi is embodied and has its own rhythmic ebbs and flows. The better we harness these natural rhythms, the more creative, intelligent and grounded we can become.

In this chapter, we therefore explore how to function in the interplay of the two apparently opposing rhythms – the creative and rational, the intuitive and analytical, the subjective, experienced and sensed versus the calculated, planned and organised. We seek to balance these two

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rhythms in order to bring out our finest intelligence, well-being, imagination and compassion. The two rhythms and a strong inner compass enable us to stay aligned with and strengthen our dynamic InnSæi, keep our energy and spirit regenerated and our hearts open as we navigate our ocean, through storms and moments of stillness. This chapter dives deeper into how we can make a state of flow a part of our everyday lives. It explores how a sense of awe is worth the world when it comes to shifting our patterns of thinking and becoming more generous, creative and kind.

Our generations are faced with huge challenges that not only defy man-made borders and silos of all sorts, but actually threaten our lives on Earth. Never before have we needed human superpowers like creativity, empathy, tolerance and open-mindedness so much. Never before have we needed the vivid imaginations of so many to create a sustainable future for all. These superpowers are threatened by our modern over-emphasis on rational thinking, algorithms, the way we are constantly bombarded with information, distraction and insecurities, and our increasing levels of burnout, anxiety and stress. Our best hope for a brighter tomorrow lies in shifting our centre of gravity and reconnecting within, to other beings and the natural world.

There are some people who think they belong to the world and other people who think the world belongs to

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them. But the world was here long before us, and we need to guard against our power outstripping our wisdom and continued existence. We now have access to technology and scientific engineering that was once beyond our wildest dreams, but we need to regain the precious balance between our inner and outer worlds, and the existential connection between us and nature.

We tend to rely on and admire what is external to us. However, the more we rely on externalities, the more we end up living in our heads and not as whole human beings. We must remember that technology and science are a means to an end, and that end should be thriving ecosystems and thriving beings (including human beings). If we lose touch with the natural world, we cease to be inspired; we merely exist and we care less. That is why being tuned in to InnSæi is so important. It lights us up and enables us to create a cosmos out of chaos, by finding our soul's frequency.

InnSæi helps us venture into the void – to see what we can't usually see and to hear what we cannot usually hear – in the spirit of the ancient Polynesian navigators. I have written this book because I believe InnSæi is a much-needed superpower in a world where we place many demands on ourselves, where life can feel incredibly fast, intense and stressful, and – given the state of the planet that is our home – there is no way of knowing how the

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future will unfold. Both the planet and the human race are now asking for a different, more humane and eco-centric (rather than ego-centric) compass to navigate us into the years to come. The change we want to see in the world starts within us. Systems do not have minds of their own; it is individuals and groups who can make real changes. I believe InnSæi can be a driving force for a thriving world and greater well-being, both personally and collectively.

The art of *InnSæi* encourages you to immerse yourself beautifully in the world within, in order to open up the world around you.