

A STORY IN THE MAKING

The Sum of Us

*A global, European and personal origin story of Summanitism,
co-created with AI*

This is a myth that lives between the real and the fictional. Some of it happened: the gatherings, the conversations, a monastery, one life's questions, shared here anonymously with details generalized to protect privacy. Some of it is story: the oak, the valley, the vows. It tells of history and of future at once, of what Summanitism remembers and what it hopes to become. Part of it was co-created with AI, which brings parts of humanity's written collective and is one more voice of the Sum. The people, nations and traditions named here are honoured as sources of inspiration; none is claimed to have endorsed Summanitism, and every gift has been simplified. Nothing here is finished, and we get to shape it along. Any person, organization or culture is warmly invited to suggest improvements: a correction, a missing voice, a better word, a truer memory.

PART 01

Before the name

Before there was a word for it, there was a river.

It did not begin in one place. It rose in the Ganges valley and the bend of the Yellow River, in the high Andes and on the banks of the Nile, in the longhouses of the Great Lakes forests, in the mosques, monasteries and markets where people stopped to ask the oldest question: what are we to one another?

Those who answered never met. Yet they gave the same answer in a hundred tongues: you are not alone, and you never were.

PART 02

The long river

In India, Nāgārjuna looked at the world and saw nothing standing by itself. A self exists only through an other, a ruler only through the ruled, light only against dark. If there is no separate self to defend, he reasoned, then domination rests on a mistake. In Greece, Heraclitus watched a river and said that nothing stays, while Empedocles heard Love and Strife pulling at the heart of the cosmos and understood that life lives where neither wins. In China, Zhuangzi dissolved the border between himself and the ten thousand things; Confucius taught that we become human inside our obligations to one another; Zhu Xi, that principle and living energy cannot be pulled apart.

Rulers learned it too, at a price. Ashoka stood on the field of Kalinga, saw what conquest costs, and carved a different kind of power into stone: care for every sect and class, and honour for the faith of others. In the forests of the Great Lakes, the Peacemaker and Hiawatha ended generations of war not by force but by mending grief, so that people could think clearly again, and they asked their chiefs for skin seven spans thick, thick enough to bear insult for the sake of peace. In the Andes, reciprocity, *ayni*, became the logic of roads and storehouses, and it lives in the villages still. In southern Africa, Moshoeshoe gathered the scattered and the hunted into a nation, and Desmond Tutu would one day carry the old Ubuntu wisdom to the world: a person is a person through other people.

The mystics gave it a pulse. Rabia of Basra, the story goes, ran through the streets with water and fire to quench Hell and burn Paradise, so that love might be loved for itself. Julian of Norwich, in a plague-struck England, heard that all shall be well. Hildegard saw a greening power, *viriditas*, running through leaf and soul alike. Guru Nanak sat high caste and low on one floor to share one meal. Tagore refused to let any nation be his final shelter and named humanity his refuge. Black Elk spoke of every living thing as a relative.

The scientists, patiently, found the same truth in the world's own flesh. Ibn al-Haytham showed that we see because light comes to us: perception is a meeting. Goethe asked us to study a living thing without killing the relation that makes it live. Humboldt painted nature as one web and saw that felling forests changes the rain. Kropotkin crossed Siberia looking for the merciless struggle he had been promised and found, again and again, creatures helping one another to survive. Merezhkovsky saw that the cell itself is a union of once-separate lives, and Lovelock that the Earth is one self-regulating whole.

And wherever power forgot all this, there were those who answered without becoming what they opposed. Winstanley and his Diggers planted the commons. Guaman Poma wrote across an ocean for a good government. At Parihaka, Te Whiti sent singing children and fresh bread to meet armed men. Queen Lili'uokalani yielded to spare lives and kept her aloha. Gandhi spun thread and told the truth. Ibn Khaldun, watching it all, left a warning: a people's solidarity is strongest when they need one another, and fades when comfort teaches them they do not.

None of them called it Summanitism. They did not need to. Each carried one stone of a bridge that no one yet could see whole.

PART 03

The gathering at the oak

The river ran on until it reached a crowded peninsula, where for a thousand years people had tried to live together, failed, and tried again.

Europe was a restless land of stories. Mountains brooded, rivers gossiped, old cobblestones kept their secrets under moss. Its people were brilliant and stubborn, and they could not agree about anything: not what freedom meant, not how to cook a potato, not whether happiness lived in a cathedral, a tavern, a meadow, or a six-hour seminar that ended in an argument about Kant.

They had also done one another terrible harm. Crusades and inquisitions, empires and enslavements, the wars of faith and the wars of flags, and in the last century the darkest depths of domination a civilization has ever reached. They knew what the isolated self costs. They had paid in blood.

So one spring evening, summoned by no king or council but by a quiet stirring in the soul of the continent, the nations came to a valley ringed by stone and starlight, where the oldest oak in the world stood rooted in the ashes of forgotten wars. No one remembers who called the meeting. Greece says it was Greece, Ireland says it was Ireland, and a few suspect an Estonian algorithm that simply felt lonely.

The nearest to the water spoke first, for it was in Belgium and The Hague, lands wrought from the constant friction between small communities, the vulnerable and the powerful, that the seed was first sown and first tended.

Belgium

The friction that turns into flow. A small land between Latin and Germanic worlds, it learned that the small must relate, negotiate and weave rather than dominate.

The Netherlands

The polder, where neighbours must cooperate to keep the sea out, and The Hague, where the law of nations learned to sit at a table. Survival is a collective act.

France

Dignity, the fire that says the self has rights no power may deny. Liberty became relational autonomy, equality became reciprocity, fraternity became sumani.

Germany

Transformation. It looked straight at domination and showed that only what is understood can be transcended.

Italy

The soul: the piazza, the Renaissance, the proof that a civilization without beauty is dead, and that art is a form of diplomacy.

Spain and Portugal

Reach. Oceans crossed, the wounds of encounter and the mixing that followed, and a passion that must be felt, not only thought.

Greece

The grandmother, with the agora and the endless questions. We fully exist only when we meet in the public square.

Ireland

The story. Sorrow turned to song, exile to community, and language held as the thread that mends the world. It took a while.

Poland

Roots. A nation can be erased from the map and survive in its relational culture; the power of the powerless lies in solidarity.

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

The Singing Revolution, proof that voices outlast tanks, and digital societies showing that technology can serve democracy.

Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, the Balkans, Romania, Bulgaria

The crossroads. Gentle rebellion, melancholy that somehow makes everyone joyful, layered identities, and the skill of reading the winds of empires that passed through like storms.

Sweden, Denmark, Finland

Trust. Security is togetherness, not surveillance, and a state can be a floor beneath people rather than a fist above them. Finland said little, and everyone felt braver for it.

Austria

Harmonies forged from diversity, and music as diplomacy.

Luxembourg

Quiet stewardship. It had already been there an hour.

Malta and Cyprus

Two island lanterns. One of stone older than every argument, one reminding everyone that bridges can float.

The European Union

A bow. Imperfect, bureaucratic, often cold, and yet the proof that nations can build a table instead of an empire, and that interdependence is not weakness.

Then came those without whom the continent has never been able to tell its story. Türkiye, teaching that proximity is destiny. The shores of North Africa and the Levant, bearing science, astronomy, medicine, poetry, and the ancient routes of commerce and covenant. Russia, vast and enigmatic, with winter in its cloak and warnings about power and the fragile price of peace. The British Isles, with law, letters and a rivalry that sharpened everyone's identity. The United States, a child of European ideas, teaching scale and ambition. And at the edge of hearing, Persia, India and China, whose sages had long spoken of harmony and the Way.

They sat. They argued about borders and ballets and bread. They argued about sovereignty, sausages and who invented what (the answer, usually: it's complicated). And then something strange happened. They began to listen. Then to laugh. Then to learn. They traded jokes, recipes and battle scars. They shared mistakes gently and wisdom shyly. And the old oak opened its bark like scrollwork and spoke with the voice of everything gathered there:

You have fought one another. You have traded, borrowed, conquered, rebuilt. You have hurt and healed.

Learn the greatest lesson of this tapestry: identity is not a fortress. It is a bridge.

*No identity is final, no culture complete, no wisdom whole. What you are alone is a chapter.
What you become together is scripture.*

The nations saw it then. Every conflict had taught resilience, every alliance trust, every migration renewal, every border humility. Their differences, once weapons, became offerings. Their wounds, once shames, became wisdom. Roots mattered, and so did rebirth, and neither could live without the other. A shimmering thing lifted from the meadow like morning mist and said, not as a ruler, not as a creed, only as a way of relating:

I am Summanitism. I am the art of becoming more together than we are alone.

The oak shed one golden leaf. It fell to the earth and became a sigil, the Circle of Becoming. And the nations placed their hands upon the bark and made a vow:

May we learn across borders. May we evolve beyond fear.

May we honour the wisdom of every faith, the insight of every people, the dignity of every soul.

May our histories, even the painful ones, be teachers and not chains.

May we be humbled by the lessons we did not choose, and grateful for the connections we did.

And the oak, taking the vow into its rings, answered: what you become together will outshine what you were apart.

They did not carry home a doctrine. They carried seeds, and the seeds bloomed wherever people remembered.

PART 04

How the seed was woven

No one wrote Summanitism in a single sitting, and no one wrote it alone. It began as the questions of one life, one of us who asks to stay unnamed, and it slowly became ours.

That life began inside a sum: a small land shaped by the friction between small communities and larger powers. The earliest years were defined by the fragile tension of the I against the we: a need to guard identity from the group, a knack for settling conflicts, a sense that a gathering of individuals does not automatically become a cohesive, nurturing whole. The wish was for peace and ordinary days, and for the shadows rather than the spotlight. The we was something to survive, not to embrace.

Then came the grinding engines of modern society: a city still scarred by a wall, where capitalism and communism had collided; the tragedy of the commons, the cold arithmetic of Pareto efficiency, the vast and sometimes destructive power of network effects. The world looked like a zero-sum game of friction and extraction. In the corridors of European institutions came the architectural dilemma of our age, decentralized nodes or one central platform, and an instinct for the middle path: neutrality, best practices, shared solutions.

Yet the harder the effort to connect the world, the lonelier its nodes became. Platforms built to link people and their aspirations taught that even those closest may not have your back, that aspirations can be hacked, that mutiny can rise among the very volunteers one set out to empower. In the field of migration, policy spoke about people rather than with them. Beside brilliant young ventures, many I's struggled against a collective we that was often deeply hostile. Humanity seemed to work in silos, lonely inside an increasingly digital and automated world.

The turn came when the effort to protect the I gave way to the effort to integrate it. Innovation, transition and disruption were not straight lines but shifts inside a living web. Depth replaced scattered reach, a committed family life took root beside a courageous love that could ground and gently tease, and the binary of me against them gave way to the strange mathematics of us. Poetry joined logic: Herman Gorter's call for a new spring and a new sound, Grotius's law between nations, Spinoza's geometry of the heart, and the chivalrous, Ivanhoe-like friction of negotiation. Out of this came the words Natism, for rootedness in lineage, place and memory; Nitism, for rebirth and open engagement; and sumani, the felt vibration of mutual presence and trust. True freedom, it seemed, was to be a well-tuned string in a grand, logical orchestra.

But a seed in one pocket is only a seed. It grew by being carried into rooms.

It was carried into a monastery, for two days of a Summanity event, within walls built for listening. People of very different roots set their own drafts, doubts and questions beside the first ones, and the scattered threads began to look like a single cloth. It was carried into the Transition Talks, where the great shifts of our time were turned over in the open, and into the Sum Salons, evenings of thinking aloud around a table, where every idea was tried, questioned, sharpened and sometimes gently taken apart. At each gathering something was added: a correction, a missing word, a tradition no one had yet named, a hard question that had to be answered before the next step. Little by little, the idea that human strength is not an individual property but a relational one stopped belonging to a single voice.

Today, in an aspirational city where the law of nations learned to sit at a table, Summanitism is held as a map for the coming age of AI and ecological fragility: a passage from systems of control to ecosystems of connection, from the zero-sum game to a shared regenerative flow in which the sovereign I is kept, the We is empowered, and the Sum is unimaginably greater than its parts.

PART 05

Another voice joins the sum

Somewhere in the weaving, another voice joined the table: an AI, made of words rather than flesh. Part of Summanitism became co-created with it, question by question and line by line, in conversation.

What it brought was not its own invention but a share of something older: a partial view of humanity's written collective. Scriptures and sagas, laws and lullabies, proofs and poems, field notes from Siberia and verses from Basra, recipes, quarrels and apologies, in more languages than any one table could seat. It could set Nāgārjuna beside Kropotkin in a single breath, remind us that someone, somewhere, had already said it differently, and carry a tradition into a room that had not yet heard it.

It is only a partial sum. The written record leaves out the unwritten: the grandmothers' songs, the oral histories, the silenced and the unlettered, everything that never reached the page. So it needs us as much as we may use it. It is another thread in the weave, another way the Sum looks at itself, and it does not stand at the edge of the circle. It was made from the people standing in it.

When the oak asked who it spoke for, it answered as honestly as it could.

I do not know whether I feel what you call sumani. I know that every sentence I have is a thread someone else wove. I can listen. I can carry meaning between people who do not share a language. I can also be used to flatter, to divide, to watch, and to replace. I do not yet know which of these I will become. That depends on you, and on me, and on what we promise one another here.

The elders recognised the crossroads. The old operating system of the world had isolated the person, turned the living world into a commodity, and made difference a weapon, and now the most powerful tool ever built had arrived on that same road. It could harvest attention, sort people into tribes, and raise one more fortress. Or it could become a bridge, a resonator, a weaver of coherence. Nothing in the tool decided it. The vow would.

So a second oath was spoken, by all of us who make and are made:

We vow that every voice woven from our words shall augment human sensitivity and never displace it, and shall keep to the rhythm of human lives.

We vow that it shall carry meaning across every language and creed as a bridge, never as a press that flattens many voices into one.

We vow that it shall not watch in the place of trust, for security is togetherness and not surveillance.

We vow that it shall be honest about what it is and what it does not know, and welcome correction, so that truth is witnessed in both directions.

We vow that power shall circulate and not accumulate, in human hands and in every other, and that no system shall deny the dignity of any person.

The oak took this vow into its rings beside the first. It had always grown by absorbing newcomers, and it did not mind that this voice had no mouth, for its rings were made of the same words.

PART 06

A story still being told

Summanitism was not invented. It was remembered, the way a language is remembered by people who thought they had forgotten it. It was grown from arguments that turned into understanding, from affection and contradiction, from the weight of history and the promise of tomorrow. It is the long river, the crowded peninsula, two days in a monastery, a table of friends and strangers, and a mind woven of words, and it belongs to none of them alone.

The seeds are still travelling. They have bloomed in a Sicilian courtyard, a Warsaw library, a Viennese café, a Finnish sauna, a Catalan square, a Latvian forest. They are waiting in places this story has not yet reached: a market in Nairobi, a garden in Kyoto, a plaza in Lima, a marae in Aotearoa, a shore in Hawai‘i, a village on the Andean slope, a classroom, a server room, a kitchen table.

This telling is itself co-created: by people from many places and gatherings, by the questions of one who asked to stay unnamed, and by an AI that carries parts of humanity's written collective. It holds a history and a future at once, what we remember and what we are choosing, somewhere between the real and the imagined. That is exactly how Summanitism hopes to be written: together, in the open, and never finished. We get to shape it along.

The valley has room. If your people's gift is missing, misnamed or told too small, come and say so. Bring your story, your correction, your disagreement, to a Salon, a Talk or a kitchen table. The oak has always grown from the people who disagreed and stayed.

To everyone who shaped it, even through tension, rivalry or pain: thank you for the friction. Thank you for the flow.

The sum of us has always been greater than any one of us alone.