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THE ACROPOLITAN

A Magazine on Philosophy, Culture & Volunteering

FEATURE

MODERN MYTHOLOGY

DUTY OF FRATERNITY

LET'S LISTEN THEN
Q&A WITH SHABNAM VIRMANI

MANDALA: VOYAGE TO THE CENTER

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS

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NEW ACROPOLIS

THE ACROPOLITAN

In Ancient Greece, the Acropolis referred to the sacred centre, that lay higher than the rest of the city. It was a place of inspiration; a bridge that enabled citizens to connect to the divine, evoking the expression of the higher human virtues. Deriving inspiration from its purpose, The Acropolitan Magazine serves as a tribute to every citizen yearning for these higher principles in all aspects of Life: **Truth, Beauty, Justice, Goodness.**



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PHILOSOPHY when practical, helps us to know and improve ourselves. It is a way of life, not an intellectual attitude, committed to the best aspirations of humanity.



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FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Reader,

The tapestry of human civilization has been decorated with a vivid design of mythologies that have become part of our culture since antiquity, providing texture, in the form of ethical education and direction through which to investigate timeless human values. History is replete with heroes who have stood up in defense of universal truths despite persecution, by dedicating their lives and work to the service of mankind.

These heroic individuals, whether mythological or historical, serve as inspirational examples, showcasing the potential of human ability that lies within our grasp. Investigation of mythological heroes like Arjuna, or even Neo (The Matrix) from modern mythology, can awaken a heroic sentiment so rare in our times.

What if such individuals were able to evoke the heroic spirit amongst human communities today? Armed with this spirit, and guided by an elevated consciousness, perhaps we could once again shed light on the deep philosophical meaning behind age-old cultural practices, beyond ritual. In this issue, we invite you to investigate this possibility.

The Editorial Team

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THE BEST CHANGES START WITH OURSELVES

BY DELIA STEINBERG GUZMAN

Members of New Acropolis in Mumbai engrossed in a neighborhood beautification drive in collaboration with BMC.

There is no point in compiling yet again a list of the situations afflicting everyone all over the world, because the media have already taken it upon themselves to broadcast them, and because, by repeating them, we only make the evils bigger without finding solutions.

What is most striking is the general way of approaching the situation, or at least the way that is shown to those of us who can do little to put right what seems to have no immediate solution.

Those who are in positions of authority of all kinds take it upon themselves to point out the mistakes. Of that there is no doubt. But all of them put the blame on others, on those who are in another group, in another party, in another intellectual or radical position.

This would imply that each of them has the hoped-for solution. Regrettably, however, beyond the criticisms and empty promises, nothing new appears.

Everyone asks others to change, or for others to be removed from their positions of influence. No one assumes the intention of starting with themselves; no one gives a specific example of how human

beings can and should be better if we really want to reach a more positive future than the present that we are living.

Everyone asks others to change, no one assumes the intention of starting with themselves.

It is agonising to see the number of people who die every day as a result of unbridled fanaticism. And every day we wonder if anyone has the right to kill those who do not think in the same way, or those who believe in another form of God. It is agonising to see the amount of wealth that circulates among a few and the poverty that oppresses the many. To which is added the corruption and the exploitation of those who have nothing, and the fraud perpetrated on those who contribute donations with good intentions.

Everyone wants to live their life, without caring what happens to others... Never was the saying more true: "After me, the deluge..." How much longer can we carry on like this?



It is evident that we are facing serious problems of all kinds that are affecting the world population, the planet Earth and future prospects. But we have to begin as soon as possible if we want to live a future worthy of being called such. We have to begin with ourselves.

The value of a philosophy that is put into practice is that it makes us face our own conscience and calls us to a healthy inner transformation, rather than demanding anything from others.

The value of a philosophy that is put into practice is that it makes us face our own conscience and calls us to a healthy inner transformation...

If we want tolerance, we must start by being more understanding. If we want to solve economic problems, we must learn to take on responsibilities and manage our own finances, giving an example that comes from above downwards rather than demanding it from those who no longer have anything to manage. If we don't want to be robbed, let us stop robbing or taking advantage of opportunities that contain moral traps. If we want to live, let us not allow anyone to kill with impunity.



Members of New Acropolis cleaning up Baan Ganga, Mumbai.

It is easy to think that many criminal acts may remain in the shadows, without anyone discovering them. Or to believe that it is enough to keep up a good image for history to take a favourable turn. No, it is indispensable for each of us to be a severe judge of ourselves, for each of us to become a good example, great or small, of the potential greatness that exists in human beings.

If we agreed to be good and generous before anyone else; if we did so even if others don't do it; if we were content with the satisfaction of our own conscience; if we thought of others and not only of our own comforts, if we were really free to act like that, then the world would change for the better. We need to begin. Why not do so right now? Every act carries with it the impulse of the idea that inspires



New Acropolis member mentoring at a children's shelter.

it. Let us work in a good way and for the good, and the Good, in the words of the philosopher Plato, will find a place in this world which we all share. ★★

Delia Steinberg Guzman is the International President of International Organization New Acropolis.

MODERN MYTHOLOGY

BY SABINE LEITNER



Alexander Consulting the Oracle of Apollo, by Louis-Jean-François Lagrenée

Introduction

Despite their universal existence in all civilizations and all times of history, myths have often been scoffed at and regarded as old wives tales. August Comte, the founder of positivism and sociology, relegated myths to the most early and primitive level of intellectual evolution and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, a French philosopher, associated myth with pre-logical mentality common to the most primitive stages of mankind. This implies that in our day and age, we should have long grown out of this primitive mentality and should reject anything that is beyond sense experience and the clear light of reason. So how is it possible, then, that myths still capture our imagination, that elves and dragons still exert their fascination, that *Lord of the Rings* was allegedly, apart from the Bible, the most read book of the 20th century and that JK Rowling is the best earning

The Matrix over and over again and that *Lord of the Rings* has attracted an incredibly diverse following across all age groups, from Oxford Professors to Hippies to Middle Class Catholics?

The Myth is Dead! Long Live the Myth!

Mythology is still alive and always will be. Since the earliest times, man has used symbols and myths to express his experience of a reality that transcends the physical world, and to pass it on to future generations. Every people in history has had their myths and some of them are still well-known today: the Epic of Gilgamesh, the myth of Isis and Osiris, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Heike Monogatari*, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Plato's myths, the legends of Saints, the *Edda*, the *Kalevala*, the myths of King Arthur and his knights, the *Chanson de Roland* and many more. The 19th and the 20th centuries saw a steady revival of myths in art, music, literature and film: *Wagner's Ring*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, *Harry Potter*, *Dune* to name but a few. This resurgence of mythical elements also led to the collection, classification and interpretation of myths and finally to the established study of comparative mythology.

The German anthropologist Adolph Bastian (1826-1905) was the first to propose the idea that myths

Mythology is still alive and always will be.

author ever in the whole of history? How can it be explained that *Star Wars* has so far inspired 3 generations, that *Harry Potter* is enjoyed by children and adults alike, that people are watching films like

from all over the world seem to be built from the same "elementary ideas." The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) named these elementary ideas "archetypes," which he believed to be the building blocks not only of the unconscious mind, but also of a collective unconscious. Jung believed that all human beings are born with the same basic subconscious archetypes such as the "hero", the "king" or the "quest".

In the second half of the 20th century it became more widely understood that myths are something universal with a universal function. In 1949 Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) wrote his revolutionary book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, in which he argues that all stories are fundamentally the same story, which he named the "Hero's Journey", or the "monomyth." In his book he provides examples from cultures throughout history and all over the world and shows the common underlying structure behind religion and myth. He concluded that all religions are mere containers for the same essential truths and that "All religions are true, but none are literal."

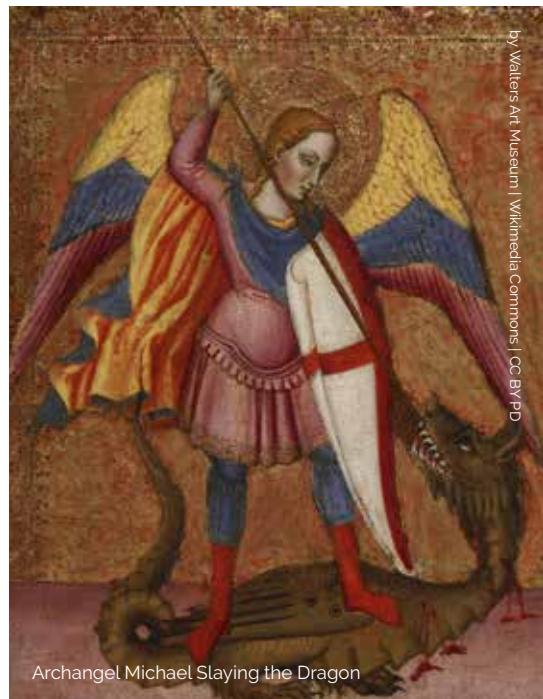
Common Universal Elements in Modern Myths

Battle between Good and Evil

In many myths, two factions are fighting each other. An ancient example is the *Bhagavad Gita*, with the *Pandavas* versus the *Kuravas*; modern examples are the Fellowship of the Ring against the dark forces of Mordor and Harry Potter versus Voldemort. In *The Matrix* human beings fight against the machines and in *Star Wars* it is the Planet side versus the Death Star. In all these cases the theme is power. The evil ones want power for themselves (Sauron is animated by a "will to dominate all life") and show no respect for individual lives, whereas the good ones successfully resist the greed for power and base their power on the power over themselves.

The Hero

He is the main character of the story and has a special mission to fulfill. His nature is both human



Archangel Michael Slaying the Dragon

by Walters Art Museum | Wikimedia Commons | CC BY PD

and special and in Greek mythology this double nature was expressed by the hero being almost always a demi-god, having one human and one divine parent. But the specialness of Harry Potter, Frodo, Luke Skywalker, Neo and Paul Atreides (from *Dune*) also means that it is their destiny to go through many dangers and pass many trials. In the course of their mission they often nearly die, but they also discover their inner strengths and develop their inner potential.

The Master or Mentor

Examples: Dumbledore, Gandalf, Obi-wan Kenobi, Yoda, Morpheus, etc. Every hero has a master or mentor. The master is aware of the potentialities inside the young hero and acts as his teacher and guide. He prepares the hero for his task and reminds him of the virtues he has to develop if he wants to be successful. The master usually knows the truth or knows much more about the wider context of the mission and helps his charge to gradually realize the truth for himself and to free himself from all illusions.

The Prophecy

In many myths there is a prophecy regarding the hero. It is either a prophecy that helps to identify the hero, such as in the myth of King Arthur where the person who could pull out the sword from the stone was to be the future king. Or it is a prophecy that reveals the mission and the destiny of the hero. In *Star Wars* it is said that Luke will overthrow the emperor. In *The Matrix* the prophecy says that Morpheus will find the "The One" who will be able to liberate mankind and that Trinity will fall in love with him. Harry Potter gradually discovers the prophecy about his link with Voldemort. In *Dune* the Bene Gesserit have a prophecy about a Kwisatz Haderach (a person who will "jump forward" in the evolution of mankind) and the Fremen have a prophecy about a new messiah.

The Mission

The hero always has a dangerous mission to fulfill that affects the destiny of all of mankind. In modern myths it is always about overcoming evil in one way or another. Frodo has to destroy the "one ring that binds them all", Harry Potter must overcome Voldemort, Luke Skywalker must overthrow the evil Emperor, and Neo must pave the way to liberate the others from the slavery of the machines.

Temptation

One of the tests the hero has to undergo is temptation. Luke is tempted by the dark side. Frodo is tempted by the power of the ring, Harry Potter is tempted to use magic in the muggle world and Cypher (the failed messiah in *The Matrix*) has succumbed to the world of comfortable illusions.

Self-mastery, Character Building, Developing of Virtues

All heroic characters need to learn to control themselves and to gain power over themselves. The young heroes have to learn to control their temper and their actions. They also have to learn to overcome fear. A brilliant example is in *Dune*, where Paul Atreides has to control his fear of pain by having his fingers burnt in a box and at the same time a

poisonous needle held to his neck that would prick him at the slightest movement of fear.

The hero also has to learn to control his mind: Luke Skywalker has to master his mind in order to master the Force, Harry Potter has to take lessons in Occlumency in order to prevent Voldemort from reading his own mind. All heroes have to develop courage, perseverance, hope, love, compassion, team spirit, concentration, discernment, intuition etc. because these are their only real "weapons" in the fight against the dark forces.

What keeps them [myths] alive is...a universal truth that shines through them, and... their re-interpretation and re-contextualization.

All these elements have been in stories for thousands of years. What keeps them alive is on the one hand a universal truth that shines through them, and on the other hand their re-interpretation and re-contextualization. Often, a modern myth is mostly a resurgence of a much older myth, as we shall see in the following example.

The Matrix, a modern version of Plato's Myth of the Cave

The cult film *The Matrix* (not taking into account its two sequels) is in many ways a modern version of Plato's Myth of the Cave and the Eastern concept of Maya.

Here is a short summary of the story in *The Matrix*: *The Matrix* is about a time in the future when science has managed to create such highly intelligent artificial machines that they wage war against humans and nearly terminate the race. All cities on earth are totally destroyed and the few survivors take refuge in an underground city named Zion. The war has devastated the entire biosphere

and the only way for the machines to survive is to use the bio-energy produced by the human body. So they raise human beings like crops and in order to keep them alive they "plug in" their minds into a massive computer-generated virtual reality called the "Matrix", so that humans are comfortably tricked into believing that everything is as it was hundreds of years ago (i.e. in the year 2001).

In Plato's *Myth of the Cave*, written almost 2,400 years ago in his famous book *The Republic*, he describes men being held captive in a cave and made to believe that the shadows they see in front of them and the echoes they can hear are the real reality. This concept of "what our eyes see is not reality" is also reminiscent of the Eastern concept of *maya*, the illusion that constitutes our ever-changing physical world and prevents all human beings from perceiving the eternal truth.

In the film, the Matrix (the computer generated virtual reality) is *maya*, the illusion. We are in its grip, yet unaware of our bondage.

In both the *Myth of the Cave* and *The Matrix*, someone appears who frees himself from these fetters and is capable of penetrating through this deceptive world. He then undertakes the mission of showing the truth to the rest and trying to liberate the human race. In the Matrix, there is already a group of people who have recognized the truth about the matrix and the leader of this group is Morpheus. He is looking for the one person who will have extraordinary powers and will pave the road to freedom for all. He believes it is Neo, who is completely unaware of his potential and this task.

The entire first sequel of *The Matrix* describes the discovery of Neo and the effort to convince him of his capabilities in the face of immense struggle against the forces of the illusionary world. Morpheus is the master or guru and Neo is his disciple. It is the task of the master to guide the disciple and prepare him for the realization of the truth.

In one scene, Morpheus says to Neo:

Morpheus: I'm trying to free your mind, Neo, but I can only show you the door, you're the one that has to walk through it... You have to let it all go, Neo, fear, doubt, and disbelief. Free your mind.

In the film there is a dialogue where Morpheus explains the Matrix to Neo.

Morpheus: Do you want to know what IT is? The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out of your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from truth.

Neo: What truth?

Morpheus: That you are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind...

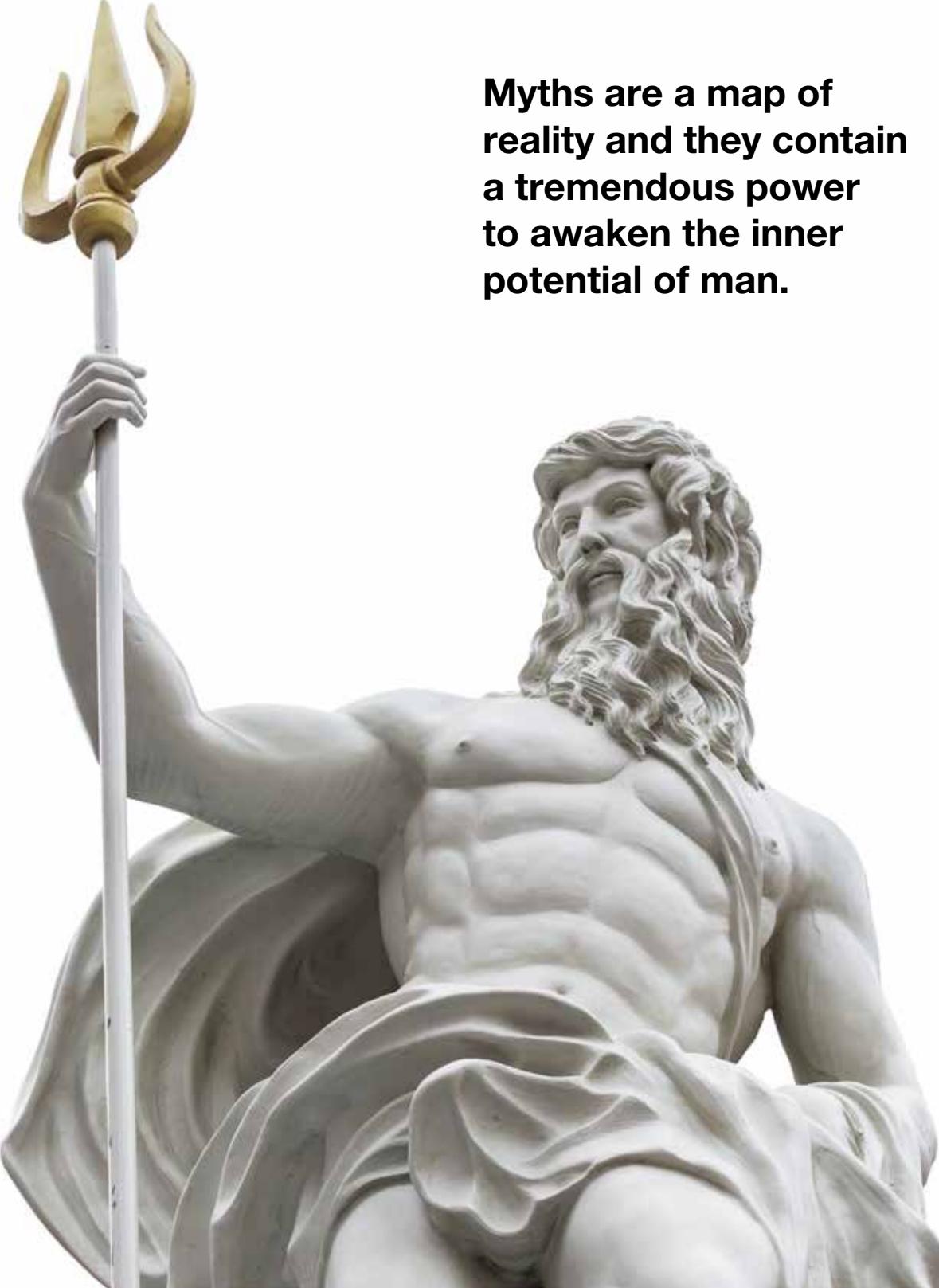
In another scene Morpheus' words are reminiscent of the classical idea that can be found in several philosophical texts of East and West: that our world is like a dream and that only by waking up will we be able to see the real world.

Morpheus: Have you ever had a dream, Neo, that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world?

On another occasion Morpheus tells Neo:

Morpheus: What is real? How do you define real? If you're talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain.

In order to be able to see reality as it is, Neo has to go through the process of being "unplugged" from the wires that are connected to his body. These wires that are connected to Neo's body are similar to our senses, which only show us a small window of reality and imprison our mind. Plato also describes the process of gradually coming to terms with the



Myths are a map of reality and they contain a tremendous power to awaken the inner potential of man.

truth as a painful process.

Neo's reaction, when he is exposed to this truth, is therefore understandable:

Neo: No. I don't believe it. It's not possible.

Morpheus: I didn't say it would be easy, Neo. I just said it would be the truth.

It is interesting to see how both stories describe a similar human reaction in face of the truth. We are so used to our familiar prison of the sensory world that unreality appears real to us and truth loses its meaning. We also have a deeply ingrained fear of waking up and would, indeed, rather fight to protect our wrong notions.

In the *Myth of the Cave*, Plato describes what happens to the philosopher who, having managed to free himself from his chains, emerge from the cave and discover the truth, goes back again into the cave to free his fellow-prisoners. Plato writes that they would not believe the philosopher and would ridicule him, and if they could lay hands on him, they would kill him.

The Matrix describes a similar situation:

Morpheus: The Matrix is a system, Neo. That system is our enemy. But when you're inside, you look around. What do you see? Businessmen, teachers, lawyers, carpenters. The very minds of the people we are trying to save. But until we do, these people are still a part of that system, and that makes them our enemy. You have to understand most of these people are not ready to be unplugged. And many of them are so inert, so hopelessly dependent on the system that they will fight to protect it.

This has always been (and probably will be for a long time in the future) the drama of the philosopher. The list of those in history who have been ridiculed, exiled, martyred or killed for telling the truth is long indeed.

It is understandable that the *Matrix* is such a successful film. It touches upon questions that have

gripped the minds of the greatest thinkers in history; it contains all the elements of a myth and is in many ways a science-fiction version of a much older and very famous myth.

The Value of Myths

Myths are universal and have several universal functions. One of Joseph Campbell's messages is that 'mythic structure' is more than the underlying archetype of a good story: myth teaches us how to live well. Tolkien wrote that myth and fairytale (two terms he used interchangeably) seem to be the best way to communicate morality and that they prepare the reader to make the same heroic journey in their own life.

Bruno Bettelheim states in his classic study of children's literature *The Uses of Enchantment* that "more can be learned from fairy tales about the inner problems of human beings and the right solutions to their predicaments than from any other type of story within a child's comprehension". Mircea Eliade, the great historian of religions, wrote that "every rite, every myth, every belief reflects the experience of the sacred and hence implies the notions of being, of meaning, and of truth."

Jorge Angel Livraga said once in a lecture: "When the Greeks created their myths, they weren't telling lies. They were creating psychological tools for the development of the inner being of man." Myths are not lies; they are containers of meta-historical realities...

What are these meta-historical realities? Among other things they are the inner forces that drive the actions of men, such as greed, thirst for power, selfishness, but also love, compassion and the need to realize our inner potential. As long as these forces exist, there will also exist a battle between good and evil within ourselves. We also carry within ourselves the archetypes that are expressed in myths and symbols. Thus, all myths carry a message for our own lives and teach us how to cope with life.

The hero in myths is a role model for us and we always need role models in all areas of our lives. A role model is a point of reference, and gives us direction like a star in the sky. A role model carries the identity we want to acquire and enables us to project ourselves into the future. The model of the hero is, thus, a fundamental key to the evolution of man and, as Livraga said, a psychological tool for the development of the inner being of man. The message of the hero is that one can succeed and it awakens our intuitive feeling that we contain as yet unrealized potential.

The Need for Modern Myths

Joseph Campbell noted that every generation must recontextualize myth to suit their times and to create their own road map for how to fit into the world. He often suggested that the scarcity of modern myth is an incalculable loss to our culture. J.R.R. Tolkien was

also aware of this and wanted to create a modern myth with Lord of the Rings.

J.A. Livraga believed that man without myths, heroes, beauty and the sacred would turn into a humanoid and lose his capacity to project his hopes into the future and create cultural forms that would allow the possibility of living a meaningful life.

Myths are a map of reality and they contain a tremendous power to awaken the inner potential of man. Without myths we would lack this valuable map of reality and lack the great inspiration to discover our inner potential. The mass appeal of Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings and others shows exactly this: that we need the heroes of the myths to inspire us and to aspire to. ★★

Sabine Leitner is the National Director of New Acropolis UK.





DUTY OF FRATERNITY

BY HARIANTO H MEHTA

As the summer months climax with the annual monsoons breathing fresh life into the soil, Nature renews her promise to every being in her domain. It is a promise of continuity, and as if by magic, life vibrantly awakes, and breaks into song, with every creature, every plant, and every spirit dancing together in unison. How wonderful that tradition in India commemorates this unity of life with a celebration to nurture fraternity amongst human beings; the celebration of *Raksha Bandhan*. But what really is fraternity? How does it relate to unity? Why was it recognized as such a fundamental value, that the ancient elders planted it deep within the sub-continent's cultural landscape?

The difficulty of understanding the true meaning of fraternity, perhaps originates in the misconstrued notion of equality so prevalent in our times. Equality is often misunderstood as a sort of absolute homogeneity which our governments and educational systems struggle to uphold. To avert injustice, we try to give every member of society the same resources, and his/her success is judged by the same parameters, regardless of differences in age, gender, aptitude, etc. What results, however, is a futile rat-race that inevitably favors certain individuals, leaving others side-lined or even

outcast. Very quickly it becomes evident that what started out as the spirit of equality, collapses into an ineffective and competitive arena, in which the individual advancement is prized over collective prosperity.

In contrast, Plato observes that the needs of each person in a human community are different. A mother might grasp easily that of her two children, one requires a lot of help with studies, while the other manages to complete assignments easily and quickly. Giving a single hour of tutoring to each child in such a scenario, would be equal...but it is clear that it would be unjust. Hence, Plato proposes giving to each member of the community according to his/her needs so as to enable each person to really be the best that he/she can be.

Similarly, even the most elementary observation of nature reveals that every being is in fact different, and therefore it is not possible to regard them as equal. Can we say that the sun is equal to the moon? Can we say that a river is equal to a mountain? Is it not ridiculous to claim that an eagle is equal to a monkey? Undeniably, we recognize that at a fundamental level, these are all beings of nature, all manifestations of life – and the spirit that inhabits

each manifestation originates from the same source, and is destined for the same end. In that sense, indeed they are all spiritually equal. However, it is also apparent that within the wondrous plurality of expression, each being has its own unique qualities, character, and needs; most importantly, each being has a unique purpose within the ecosystem that it inhabits. Therefore nature thrives not on equality, but on the complementary nature of the beings in her domain.

Very quickly it becomes evident that what started out as the spirit of equality, collapses into an ineffective and competitive arena, in which the individual advancement is prized over collective prosperity.

Perhaps in this unequal, yet wonderfully synchronous relationship between all entities of nature lies the secret of fraternity. Interestingly, every creature uses nature's resources in impeccably efficient measure, in turn serving her by meticulously performing a unique purpose for the welfare of the collective. Together, an ecosystem emerges, a harmonic unity, dependant not on the equality of its components, but on the inter-connected relationship between them.

However, one can argue that creatures in nature act out of instinct, a sort of automated compulsion, in performing their duty. This is true, and herein lies the glory of being human. A human being can employ the power of will and freely choose to participate in this collective, in spite of our many vices that may tempt us to first serve ourselves. Amongst human beings, this collective can be defined as a fraternity wherein each individual cherishes the

diversity, and transcends it by fulfilling his/her obligations to the community. Therefore, amongst the various nationalities, ethnicities, languages, professions, we seem to have a collective role to play in the larger context of life. Each individual fulfils this role to the best of his/her ability. Building a fraternity is therefore a privilege, even a duty, and emerging victorious from the treacherous battle between the temptations of the lower self, in favor of the collective fraternity requires discipline and persistence.

It is evident that ancient Hindus appreciated this obligation, and wove it into the annual cycle of the seasons, developing a custom celebrating fraternity, to resonate with its annual expression in nature. They divided the year into 4 *parvas* (meaning height or climax, etymological root: *parvat*, or mountain), each offering a unique opportunity for Man to celebrate a special moment, in correspondence with the peak in energy brought about by each season. The first of these, the *rakhi parva* or *Raksha-Bandhan* (the knot of protection), is commonly marked today by colorful festivities; sisters visit their brothers bearing sweets and gifts, and tie a symbolic thread, the *rakhi*, around the brother's wrist to remind him of his duty to protect her in the face of adversity. Lesser known, but still witnessed in rural neighborhoods, *brahmins* too are invited to participate by tying the



symbolic thread, suggesting that there is more to *Raksha-Bandhan* than just a celebration of the unique relationship between a brother and a sister.

A human being can employ the power of will and freely choose to participate in this collective in spite of our many vices that may tempt us to first serve ourselves.

In reality, it seems the celebration serves to evoke a spirit of nobility, shedding light on the true duties of the individual in society. Brahmins serve the community as custodians of *jnana*, wisdom, and the receiver of their *rakhi*, vows to protect them, thereby reinstating the obligation to keep the river of wisdom ever flowing; it is an oath to defend wisdom, to protect the helpless in society, to persistently seek truth through inspiring books and good education, and therefore to keep the light of wisdom glowing for future generations. Similarly, the pledge to protect a sister, a channel of goddesses *Laxmi* and *Saraswati*, is really a fulfillment of duty towards society, a noble declaration of every brother to defend the community's abundance and wisdom.

As the energy of the second *parva* descends, culminating in the festival of *Dussera*, the noble man recognizes with humility that he is indebted to the material realm, through which he is able to fulfill his human obligations. The material realm becomes a medium, the *kurukshtra* in which each individual engages in an ongoing inner battle between his true self, and his inner ten-headed *Ravan*. Could the custom of decorating doors, cars, and tools with flowers and incense at this time, be an expression of gratitude to the material realm?

When the winter months arrive, an introspective third *parva* of *Diwali* begins, a celebration of light,

which emerges as we remove the clutter and clean our homes, as well as our hearts and minds of the unnecessary thoughts, emotions, grudges and all sorts of ill-feelings towards one and other. These vices are symbolically burnt once and for all, in the fourth *parva* of *Holi*, with the burning of *Holika*, after which we rejoice with color and merriment at having successfully expressed our duty, only to renew it the following year.

Hence, through the four *parvas* every year, each individual is encouraged to transform, become the best that he can be, as a duty towards the collective, in an effort to build a harmonious society thriving on truth and wisdom, much like a thriving ecosystem in nature. Ancient elders seem to have been able to find a way to participate in nature, in accordance with its laws, facilitating the role of the individual in the larger context of Life. Interestingly, similar customs are found around the world, sometimes in the form of religious holidays, often as agricultural celebrations. Perhaps our holidays and our customs are but an invitation to keep this ancient wisdom alive. Perhaps it is an invitation to recognize our individual role in the creation of a harmonious society built on the foundations of fraternity. Perhaps it is an invitation, to transform, and participate in the unity of Life, as the annual monsoons breathe fresh life into the soil. ★★



LET'S LISTEN THEN

IN CONVERSATION WITH SHABNAM VIRMANI
BY MANJULA NANAVATI



In satsang with Mooralala Marwada during the Malwa Kabir Yatra, 2010 in Lunyakhedi village

Shabnam

Virmani is the founder of the

Kabir Project, which consists of a series of ongoing journeys inquiring into the spiritual, cultural, and socio-political resonances of the 15th century mystic and poet Kabir. Housed at the Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology (Bengaluru), the Kabir Project team has worked with this music and poetry to create films, audio CDs and translated books, through which the project explores ideas of identity, religion, secularism, impermanence and spirituality in the voices of Kabir and other Bhakti, Sufi and Baul poets. Their body of work, shared through festivals, workshops, *yatras*, and student labs, continues to be a source of inspiration to seekers, scholars, activists, artists, and teachers who have been woven together through these exchanges. In conversation with The Acropolitan (TA), Shabnam shares her personal odyssey, which has been demanding in many ways but also joyful and deeply transformative.

TA: Shabnam, how did you come to Kabir?

SHABNAM: I was living in Ahmedabad as an activist filmmaker when the riots happened in 2002. My own upbringing had not given me an insight into any spiritual tradition, and the realm of faith was something I didn't understand at all. So I was horrified

by the almost gleeful participation in the hatred and violence that was unfolding around me. I began reading Kabir because he speaks so clearly about the folly of religious divides, and as a filmmaker I started journeying through different parts of India and to a smaller extent Pakistan enquiring into the contemporary meanings of Kabir's poetry.

I began by thinking of my role as mostly that of a social commentator. There was a feeling that I was not implicated in the process, and that I was mostly a medium to bring a message to people out there. But that changed very quickly. Kabir began to speak to me in ways I had not anticipated, and I began to question myself. How do I define myself? What are the boundaries of my ego? How porous or rigid are my beliefs? Who is Ram in Kabir's poetry? And if he is a *nirgun* poet, who talks about a formless divine and says I'm neither Hindu nor Muslim, then why is he speaking about Ram? The kind of answers that started getting unearthed began to affect me very deeply, in some ways destabilizing my sense of self and turning me inside out, one might say!

TA: Have you discovered what the violence that triggered your voyage really is? What is the source of violence?

SHABNAM: There is amongst all of us as human beings this incredible need for form, for names, for an identity. We try to secure for ourselves a structure, a social space, a ritual. But to also be able to step out of these forms and view them with a sense of humour and non-belonging is what Kabir is asking us to do all the time. Of course we can enjoy and inhabit form – ultimately even our body is a form and it is all we have with which to interact with life – but Kabir asks us to not let these forms define us entirely.

He takes you to a place where you see a vaster sense of self, beyond a narrow identification with form. If you are able to identify with the formless source from which multiple forms arise, then you are able to celebrate plurality by saying, "This is my form, and that is yours." But if you cling to one form as the only truth then that becomes a source of violence.

There is a beautiful Buddhist parable about Mara and his companion. As they walk down a path one day, they pass a man sitting on the side of the road with a beatific smile on his face. The companion

asks Mara, "Who is that?"

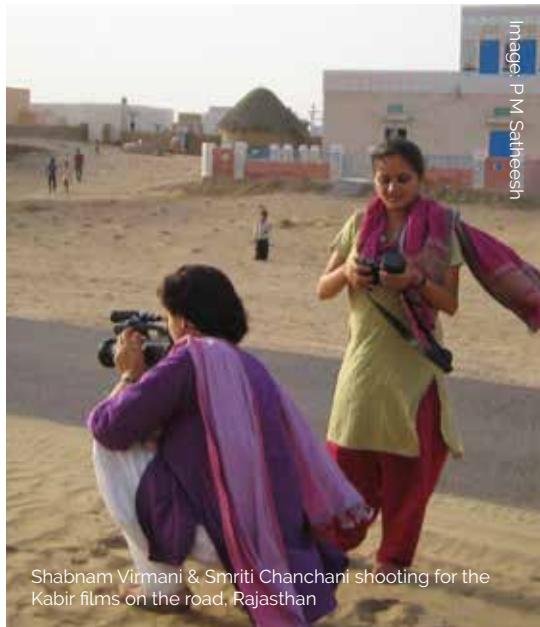
"That's someone who has just found the Truth," Mara replies.

"Oh, but then aren't you concerned?" counters the companion.

Mara smiles dismissively and says, "Not at all, because I know that he'll soon make a belief out of it."

This captures the slippage between being in the presence of a real experience that is actually beyond names, and making it into a structure with a title, a definition, forming a club or a sect around it, getting your identity all tangled up with it, then protecting it and defending it from others. You begin to identify with the form so strongly that you forget what it was intended to channel.

Kabir is asking us to never rest in any one place, but to continue to move, and to recognize life as an endless dance between had and anhad.



Shabnam Virmani & Smriti Chanchani shooting for the Kabir films on the road, Rajasthan

Kabir challenges us to let go of both had and *anhad*. You might ask, "I can understand going beyond had - form and boundaries – but what does it mean to also give up *anhad* – the limitless?" I think Kabir is asking us to never rest in any one place, but to continue to move, and to recognize life as an endless dance between had and *anhad*, the limited and the limitless, between form and emptiness, as it were.

TA: Beyond the historical figure, of whom we know very little, who really is Kabir, the philosopher? Who is Kabir, the guru?

SHABNAM: Many village people and folk-singers I've encountered see Kabir as a powerful guide, a friend, a co-traveler, another human being who grappled with many of the same issues and experiences that they are grappling with. "I am

Kabir," they often say, because they recognize in Kabir a spirit they see in themselves. Once his poetry begins to resonate within your inner being he becomes a guide or guru to help you unlock that spirit. In that sense he becomes so much more than a historical figure, he becomes a moving, evolving philosophy that people participate in.

Kabir speaks of a creative solitude where real questions get asked of yourself, by yourself, and the answers arise within yourself. He says that a true seeker walks alone.

References to the guru in Kabir's poems come in all shades. Many of them allude to the guru in human form, who is revered, who is being welcomed, who is "arriving in our courtyard". But one could also interpret these poems to mean that "wisdom is arriving into our body". Because so many Kabir poems say that the guru is within you, that he is everywhere. He is an impulse within you that you must become aware of, and learn from. That will lead you from darkness to light. Kabir speaks of a creative solitude where real questions get asked of yourself, by yourself, and the answers arise within yourself. He says that a true seeker walks alone.

*Laalan ki nahin boriyaan, hansan ke nahin paat
Sinhan ke nahin lehede, saadhu na chale jamaat*

*Rubies aren't found in sackfuls
Swans don't fly in flocks
Lions don't roam in herds
And seekers aren't found in crowds*

However, sometimes in the course of your journey you may come face to face with a powerful relationship, as happened to me with Prahlad Tipanyaji. In these moments someone else becomes



Srishti students and visiting folk singers from Kutch, Kabir Wall Art

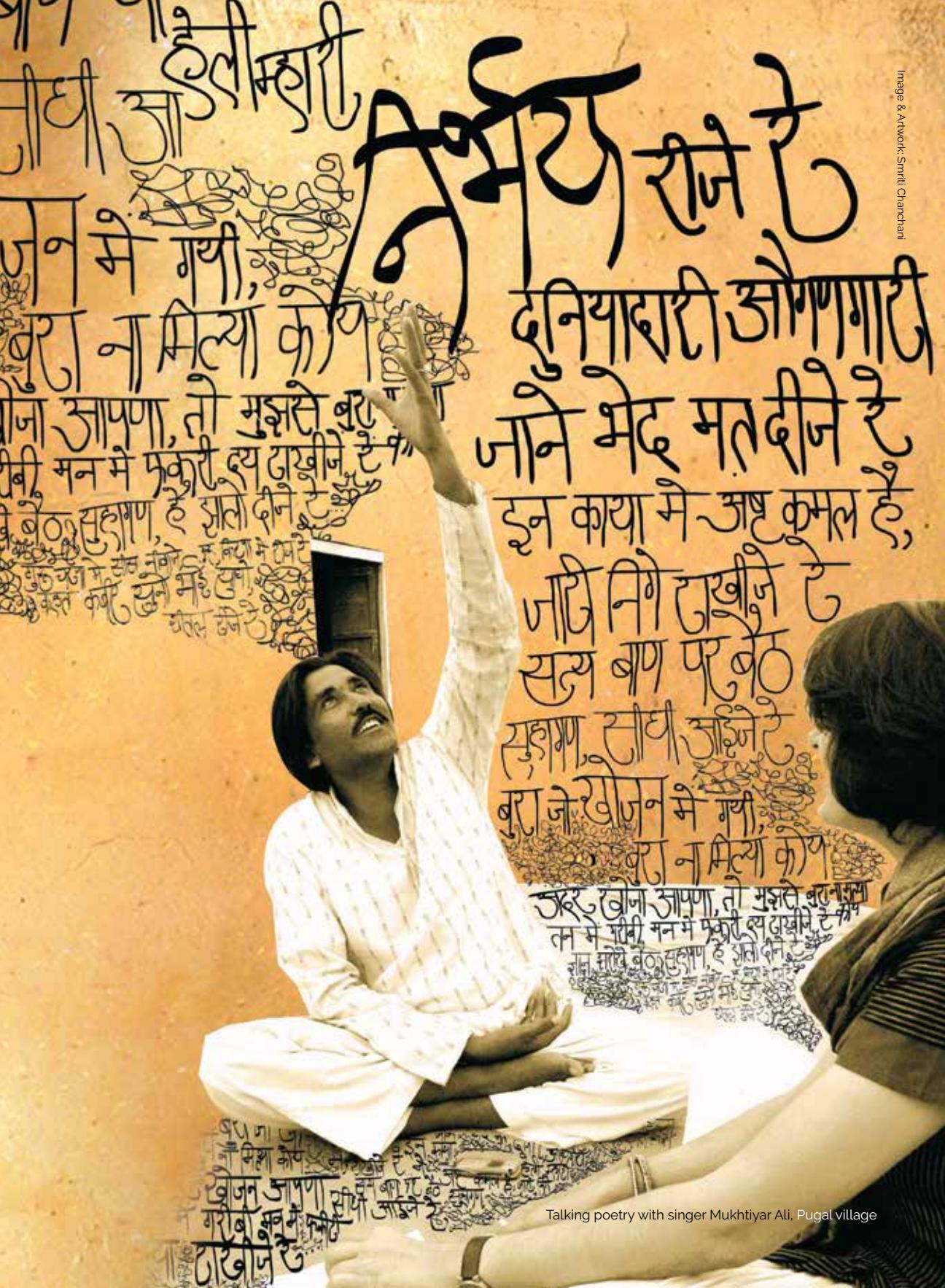
a powerful vehicle for transmitting wisdom to you. And for a very intense period of 6-7 years he played that role of a guru in my life. I was full of questions and he was able to share his insights because he had next to him a receptive and hungry seeker.



Shabnam Virmani & Vipul Rikhi with Parvathy Baul, Trivandrum

TA: How is it that Kabir has been so wholly embraced by so many divergent cultures?

SHABNAM: No other poet that I know of in our country has as much breadth and diversity as Kabir. Within 3-4 months of travel I had already confronted multiple Kabirs and the incredible diversity of his poetry that eludes grasp yet allows him to inhabit opposing cultures. Upper class Hindus, Dalits, Brahmin scholars, Sufi singers, Sikhs, deeply pious religious people and atheist social activists all find in Kabir an authentic voice that speaks to



Talking poetry with singer Mukhiyar Ali, Pugal village



Image: Smithi Chanchani

them. Perhaps this is because he is constantly demolishing our notions of ourselves as he pushes us across our carefully constructed boundaries and forces us to realize the futility of social divisions. So it seemed natural and illustrative that all the films in the Kabir Project journey across a boundary, both physically and in the realms of knowledge, thought and experience.

Had Anhad: Journeys with Ram & Kabir probes the divides created by religion. *Koi Sunta Hai* delves into the boundaries we create in art and music. *Chalo Hamara Des* explores cross-cultural divides, and *Kabir Khada Bazaar Mein* examines the opposing pulls of the individual vs. the collective, autonomy vs. belonging, the spiritual vs. the social.

The core inspiration of each film is the power of the song and the series of festivals that unfold around their screenings and live music concerts are a conscientious effort in the spirit of Kabir towards blurring those boundaries.

TA: How has Kabir changed you?

SHABNAM: In so many ways! But one thing I could say is that I have learnt not to be superior as a supposedly secular-minded or spiritual-leaning

person. I do not want to presume that I am in a more evolved state than so many religious people who go to the temple or *masjid*, because that is a world I do not know. Perhaps structured religion and ritual brings order to their lives, and discipline to their practice and they experience things through those forms in ways you and I can never know. So what I delight in now is that I am in no hurry or need to define myself. Earlier I had strong viewpoints. I was a staunch feminist, a leftist with strong views about society and right vs. wrong. But now there is openness in not passing judgments, especially on experiences that I have not been privy to.

And finally of course, all of Kabir's poetry is an invitation to interrogate yourself sharply, daily, to understand yourself deeply. It makes you aware of your grasping mind, always propelling you towards more and more desires, things, possessions, fame and even knowledge, as futile ways of feeling secure. It has changed my awareness of my self, and at a very micro level, it affects choices I make every day.

The irony is that after all your seeking high and low you will find the answers already there, within you. But even though it is within you, there is enormous effort and tremendous work involved in arriving where you already are.

TA: What is your advice on how to engage with Kabir, to a treadmill generation who must make a success of everything they do?

SHABNAM: Well, if you are only in it to become a famous Sufi singer, or write clever scholarly books, you have really missed the point of this wisdom altogether. If you are only in it to set up shop as



Image: Shabnam Virmani

Shabnam Virmani shoots with Vasaye Khan, father of singer Mukhtiyar Ali, Pugal Village

a gateway to this tradition and benefit from it, it makes you no different from the *pandit* that Kabir castigates in his poetry. But if you allow yourself to become vulnerable to the poems, if you allow them to implicate you, then you're going somewhere. And the irony is that after all your seeking high and low you will find the answers already there, within you. But even though it is within you, there is enormous effort and tremendous work involved in arriving where you already are.

All of Kabir's poetry is an invitation to interrogate yourself sharply, daily, to understand yourself deeply.

TA: Is Kabir a necessity for today?

SHABNAM: Yes. Kabir even in his own times was impelled by a sense of urgency or necessity. He had a strong urge to communicate his insights, his inspirations. "Suno bhai sadho," he called out,

"Listen, oh seekers!" In one song he likens the truth or wisdom to a healing herb. "Come, everybody, take from it, and share it. The more you share, the more there is."

So taking the cue from him, I would say that this knowledge stream should not be dammed, through orthodoxy, fundamentalism, punditry, borders, copyrights, or whatever! It is flowing for several hundreds of years and we are inspired to drink from it, and to share it further, as widely as possible. There are so many voices in this stream. Kabir is only one among them. Let's listen then, to these Sufis, bhaktas and Bauls. They tell us many wondrous things. They encourage us to connect with our non-selves, to avoid self-righteousness. They can put us on the path to harmonious living, with our selves and with each other. ★★

Currently the Kabir Project team is engaged in creating a vast web *duniya* – Ajab Shahar – a wondrous city of songs and conversations drawn from the oral traditions of Bhakti, Sufi and Baul poetry and music. Initial uploads can be browsed on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/Kabirproject>. The full site will go live later this year.

MANDALA: VOYAGE TO THE CENTER

BY SIVAN S BARZILAY



Vajra used to ceremoniously divide the Mandala

Introduction

A Japanese story tells us of a disciple who asks his master: *"Master, how do you achieve enlightenment?"*

"It's very easy," replies the master, *"To get there, you must do exactly the same thing you do every morning for the sun to rise."*

Perplexed, the disciple scratches his head wondering what he did every morning for the sun to rise. After careful reflection, he came to the conclusion that, in reality, he did nothing.

"But then, what's the point of studying calligraphy, karate, kendo, archery, floral arrangements, bonsai creation, etc.?" asked he of the master. *"What's the point of all that?"*

"Precisely so that when the sun rises, you find yourself truly with your eyes wide open."

Many traditions, from both East and West, suggest that even though we look at reality around us, we do not see the essential. We look, but we do not observe and therefore get caught within the superficial layers of life, unable to view what lies right in front of our eyes, the most fundamental laws that govern Nature and ourselves.

Newton's sudden realization of the Universal Law

of Gravity is one well-known example of the ability to grasp, within one moment, what was always in front of his eyes, as well as those of so many before him. Although apples have obeyed the same laws causing them to fall on peoples' heads even before him, Newton was able to capture this idea and give it a form and definition.

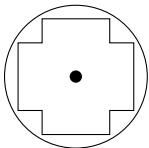
We look, but we do not observe and therefore get caught within the superficial layers of life.

If we cannot really grasp the laws even of the tangible reality, imagine how little we grasp of the intangible planes, known in Sanskrit as the *arupa*. So what do we need to do? We need to develop better spectacles that will allow us to see better. Maybe, like in the above short story all we need to do is to open our eyes to the inner nature of things, and keep them wide open as life happens in front of us.

Mandala: Geometry

The art of making *mandalas* was, and still is, practiced as a means by which to improve the ability to grasp. Through its geometrical structure it can teach the artist, as well as the observer, about the nature of the cosmos and the laws that govern it.

The word *mandala* originates from Sanskrit and is often translated as 'a circle'. But it is far more than just a simple shape. It represents wholeness, and can be seen as a model for the organization of life itself; a cosmic diagram that serves to remind us of our relationship with the infinite, the world that extends both beyond and within our bodies and minds.



In its most common and simplest form, the *mandala* appears as a central point (the centre) surrounded by a square structure with four elaborate gates (sometimes described as a four-sided palace or temple) enclosed within an outer circle (the circumference).

Many of you reading this article might say that there are many more elements in a *mandala*. Although true, for this article I would like to keep it basic and simple.



The Centre:

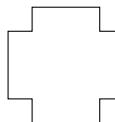
It is said that a *mandala* is born through the creation of its central point. This point emerges out of nothing but once it appears, it starts to move, to grow, to evolve.

A point has no dimension, yet embraces all dimensions. It transcends the illusions of time and space and therefore results in the here and now, our most primal light of consciousness. This point

is The Absolute, the source from which all creation manifests. It is all. And at the same time it is also nothing. Pythagoras, the numerical and musical Greek master would have called it Zero, the origin that contains all other numbers.

If our essence is truly spiritual, then perhaps this point is the oneness we all share, validating that each individual is equally precious and a sacred aspect of same One.

Mandalas tell us that Life originates from Unity.

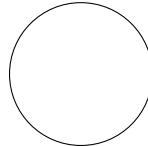


The Four Gates:

The Absolute starts to expand and emanate. The dimensions, the many regions of nature emerge. These dimensions are described as parallel worlds, which coexist without mixing.

They are the four elements of life, the four building blocks: Earth, Water, Air and Fire. Within a human being, the four gates express as the four aspects that build our personalities: the gross matter (our body), the energy (life force), the astral plane (our emotions) and the subjective mental aspect (our thoughts).

Mandalas teach us that we have four tools, four gates, given to us to explore the world and ourselves.



The Circumference:

Expansion outwards continues symmetrically in all 6 directions of space simultaneously to create a sphere, a circle. This sphere stands for the

multiplicity of points and options.

The sphere is considered the most perfect of all forms. On a sphere, there is no point of view given greater or lesser importance, and every point on the surface is equally accessible and is regarded by the center from which everything originates. The sphere symbolizes the multiple combinations of the building blocks of life, its infinite variety of forms.

If we think about it, the human population has crossed 7 billion people. It is a huge number and yet not one man is identical to another. Even identical twins might look similar on the surface, but their personalities can be very different.

In the absence of effort, the tendency of everything which is alive is to scatter, to move away from the center.

In addition, beside the human kingdom, how many types of minerals, plants and animals exist on Earth? And beyond Earth, it is estimated that there are 200 billion suns in the Milky Way alone. And this is just a small part of the universe which some say contain 100-200 billion such galaxies!

Mandalas tell us that life has an infinite number of forms, life is complex.

Unity And Plurality

To summarize life originates from oneness (unity) which expands and reveals the four basic elements, four doors that open to the wealth of shapes and forms that we can see within us and around us. Hence, Life moves constantly from unity to plurality, from simplicity to complexity.

This force that expands outwards is known in

physics as the Centrifugal Force and it describes the tendency of an object following a curved path to move outwards, away from the center of the curve.

It is interesting to note that this outward movement is not really considered a force; it results from inertia, the tendency of an object to resist any change in its state of rest or motion.

So we can say that in the absence of effort, the tendency of everything which is alive is to scatter, to move away from the center. To take another well-known example, consider that it is easier to exhale than it is to inhale...however, can we still remain alive if we only continuously exhale? Don't we need to complete the cycle by breathing in and allowing fresh air to nourish our blood?

Physics recognizes another force called Centripetal Force (which translates from Latin to *towards the centre*). This is a real force that counters the centrifugal force preventing objects moving along a curved path from "flying out". To initiate that movement we need to put an effort to overcome the tendency of inertia, of scattering, by using the



ability of concentration.

Shift from multiplicity and separation to the realization of unity and simplicity.

Summary

Mandalas reveal the mysteries of life to those who know to observe with open eyes. By giving in to the tendency of inertia, we will live a scattered life. Like a rat in a race, we will run after all the needs and demands of life, chasing some unknown goal, running around the circumference, that grows more and more every day. Sadly, one day we will find ourselves mourning the wasted time that passed away so quickly.

Consider instead using another force, that goes inward, and invites us to ask the simplest questions: "Who am I?", "Why am I here?", "What is my role in the world?" In the midst of all the noise, making this

effort to re-unite with the center, the beginning and the end of all life, might be the purpose of it all.

Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius said, "Learn to live every day like it is the last day of your life". On the last day of our life, we should not be chasing anything; we might just want to be as alive as we can. But why wait for the last day? It might be too late. Imagine instead striving to do it every day: to give the best of who we are, always remembering what life is all about - unity that expresses itself in multiplicity.

How will our world, and humanity, look like then? Is it just a far and naïve dream? Or maybe it can start with each one of us, not tomorrow but today. A *mandala* is an invitation to remember. Therefore, print one and hang it in front of your eyes. Make it the first thing that you see before you start the day and allow it to serve as a reminder. ★★★



BOOK REVIEW

Refer to page 28 for details of Launch Event.

METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICS OF PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIERRE POULAIN

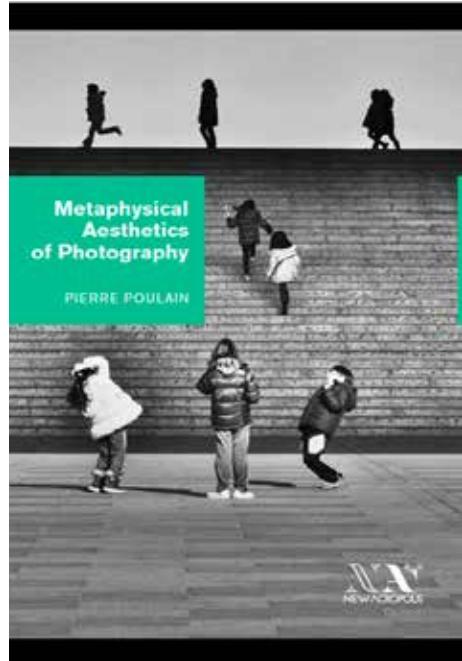
Pierre Poulain takes us through a brief history of the evolution of aesthetics in photography and offers philosophical insight that reflects in the way he understands and practices his art.

"While the Beautiful is in Everything, not Everything emanates the Beautiful," says Poulain. Only the discerning photographer, a true artist, looks deeper to discover the eternal archetype of Beauty that transcends the physical and ephemeral plane. To Poulain, the task of recognizing and pursuing Beauty is an integral facet of the human experience. He carefully demonstrates how the archetype of Beauty is linked to Truth, Justice and Goodness, and suggests that bringing Beauty into our lives will open doorways that draw us closer to the other spiritual archetypes as well.

"Since photography touches the intuition more than the rational mind," shares Poulain, "when practiced as an Art, photography seems to be the perfect tool to awaken the consciousness of humanity."

ABOUT PIERRE POULAIN | www.photos-art.org

Pierre Poulain started his journey of experimenting with the camera in 1976, driving a taxi in Paris by night to support his passion for photography during the day. Several years later, Pierre's exploration continues, on the path to understanding philosophy through the lens of his camera. He muses, "There



is an infinite number of 'decisive moments' to capture, but we do not see them because we are not receptive enough. They remain in the invisible unconsciousness of our minds, and we have to move them to our visible consciousness." For him, his camera, and the myriad technical aspects of photography, are tools to allow him to work with his intuition to see the invisible and express it in sensible form. Inspired by the classical schools of world philosophy, Pierre connects to the world of archetypes and endeavours to bring it to the temporal world.

Pierre heads the Israel chapter of New Acropolis – a school of philosophy in the classical manner. Having taught and practiced philosophy and photography for more than 25 years, to him they are not separate paths, but different expressions of the same search for wisdom, which expresses itself as Beauty and Aesthetics. ★★

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS



METAPHYSICAL AESTHETICS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Book Launch

Thursday, 2nd July 2015

6:00PM (2hrs)

@ Indian Express Gallery, Express Towers, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021

Philosopher and Photographer Pierre Poulain uses the lens of his camera as a path to practice philosophy and art. A self-taught photographer and founder and director of the Israel chapter of New Acropolis, a school of philosophy in the classical manner, for nearly 30 years, Poulain believes that a true artist opens pathways to the archetype of Beauty that transcends the physical plane. Join him in the launch of his book, published by New Acropolis, followed by a conversation with award winning photographer Amit Madheshiya, as they investigate how photography can be a means to make the invisible visible.



DEPTHES OF OUR EMOTIONS

Lecture

Saturday, 11th July 2015

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

@ New Acropolis Mumbai

Emotions can be a powerful tool in enabling us to live to our fullest potential, if we know how to work with them. Our emotions can be a strong driving force behind our actions, or an insurmountable distraction taking us away from our goals. Join us as we explore the psychological realm of emotions and how they can lead us towards strength, stability and beyond our limited selves.



FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS, MEDITATION AND YOGA

Seminar

Sunday, 12th July 2015

10:00AM – 1:00PM, FEES APPLY

@ New Acropolis Mumbai

This session aims to build mindfulness of the body, emotions and mind through yoga and meditation techniques. There will also be a focus on developing a sensitivity to the impermanence of the body-mind complex. In the words of the Buddha, impermanence is the first of the three universal characteristics of existence.

This session will be conducted by Keshav Mohta who has been trained in Satipatthana Vipassana in the lineage of Mahasi Sayadaw of Burma under Patrick Kearney and is a certified yoga instructor from the Yoga Institute, Santacruz.



WHAT IS TRUE FREEDOM?

Lecture
Saturday, 25th July, 2015
6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION
@ New Acropolis Mumbai

Today freedom is measured based on the number of choices available to us. But what is true Freedom? Is it the ability to create myriad possibilities or is it the wisdom to close them at the right moment? Is it the ability to do what one desires without obstacles or is it the capability to defeat the obstacles of our own desires? Can we really be free, if our bodies, senses, instincts and emotions dictate most of our daily decisions?



THE PHILOSOPHER IN ME: MARCUS AURELIUS

Lecture
Saturday, 8th August 2015
6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION
@ New Acropolis Mumbai

A scholar, military leader, Roman emperor and above all a remarkable Stoic philosopher of 2nd Century Rome, Marcus Aurelius was known for his exemplary life of duty and service. Join us as we discover the life and philosophy of a true "Philosopher King", and take a journey into the deep reflections of an extraordinary emperor, to uncover the timeless secrets of wisdom based on acceptance, inner strength, discipline, uncompromising resilience and right action, that helped him find and preserve equanimity in the midst of conflict and hardships of the great Roman empire.

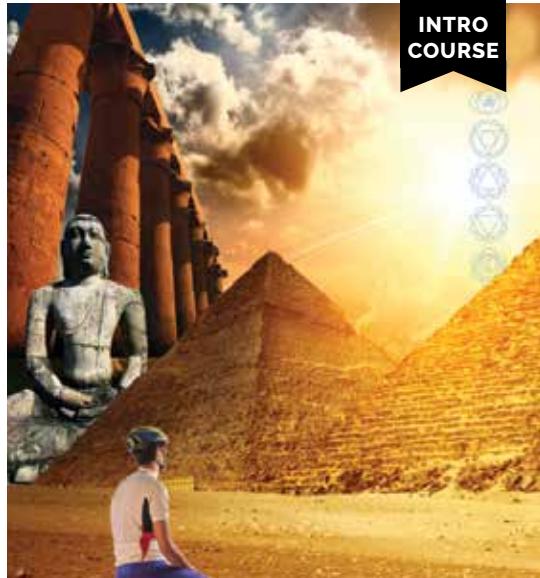


RHYTHM OF LIFE

Lecture
Saturday, 22nd August 2015
6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION
@ New Acropolis Mumbai

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything." – Plato
Music allows us to tap into our inner being and tangibly touch the invisible higher aspect of ourselves. What is it about harmony, melody and rhythm, that allows our spirit to take form? Join us as we explore what makes music the language of the universe.

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS



LIVING PHILOSOPHY: DISCOVER, AWAKEN, TRANSFORM

Introductory Course
@ New Acropolis Mumbai
PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

FREE Introductory Session
Monday, 24th August 2015, 7:30pm (2hrs),
Course Starts
Monday, 31st August 2015, 7:30pm (2hrs),

This course establishes the foundation for every aspiring Philosopher. The curriculum comprises of traditional knowledge, presented as a comparative study of Classical Philosophies, and helps each student to develop a sensitive ability to internalize the fundamental Laws that govern Nature, and Humanity. The course material serves as an introduction to ancient cultures and investigates the origins of humanity – a time when the invisible world was respected, drawing a sense of wonder and esoteric mysticism. New Acropolis strives to preserve this universal heritage, by offering it as an integral part of its scholastic development. Course Duration – 16 Sessions. Mondays, 7:30pm-9:30pm. FEES APPLY.



ANCIENT EGYPT: LAND OF MYSTERY

Lecture
Saturday, 12th September 2015
6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION
@ New Acropolis Mumbai

Ancient Egypt has served as a source of mystery for explorers and philosophers. The pyramid of Khufu built at Giza stands testament to this - being classified as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Did the Ancient Egyptians know something different? How were they able to impact humanity with such permanence and magnitude? Join us as we discover their ancient myths and symbols, and draw inspiration for society today.



IMPORTANCE OF CEREMONY

Lecture
Saturday, 19th September
6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION
@ New Acropolis Mumbai

Ceremonies are integral to all aspects of life - birth, marriage, festivals, death, and even in nature in the seasons or the mating rituals of animals. Yet today, ceremonies only seem to refer to ritualistic or religious acts. But what if everything is a ceremony – our lives, the movement of the stars, the beating of our heart? Join us as we explore the true meaning of ceremonies.

LIVING PHILOSOPHY

Discover. Awaken. Transform.

Introduction to Philosophy
in the Classical Manner

Course Syllabus, 16 Sessions (32 Hrs)

KNOW THYSELF

Living Philosophy - Need for Inner Change
Investigate the Ancient Indian understanding of Man
7 Fold Constitution of Man
The Ethical Life of a Disciple
Themes from Ancient Indian Tradition

THE GREAT UNIVERSAL WAR

Animal Self vs. Human Self
The Internal Battle of Kurukshetra
Svadharma and Karma Yoga
Themes from The Bhagavad Gita

BUDDHA AND THE PATH TO LIBERATION

Lessons from the Life of The Buddha
Process of Self-Transformation
The Middle Path, 4 Noble Truths
Themes from The Dhammapada

HEARING THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE

Symbolism of Tibetan Vajrayana Tradition
H.P. Blavatsky and the origins of a mystical manual
for disciples
Recognizing the Mayavic nature of the World
Themes from The Voice of the Silence

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD

Making your Actions meaningful and sacred
Justice, Ancient Egypt
Harmony, Confucius
Path of Happiness, Aristotle

THE ARTIST, THE LOVER, THE PHILOSOPHER – WHO ARE YOU?

Macro-bios: The Living Universe
True Freedom, Stoic Principles
3 Paths to expressing Unity, Plotinus
Neo-Platonism

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIO-POLITICS

The role and importance of Society
The Maieutic Approach, Socrates
Education and Justice in Society, Plato
The Metaphysical Disaster

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

The last School of Mystery, Pythagoras
Allegory of the Cave, Plato
The Political & Philosophical Ideal
Founding Principles of New Acropolis

TYPES OF GOVERNANCE

4 Types of Man
Models of Governance, Plato
The Triumphs and Challenges of Democracy
Organizational structure of Traditional Society

PATH TO MYSTERY

Roles in Ancient Society:
Children, Adolescence, Elders
Traditional Education and Tribal Initiation
Mystical and Magical Initiation

WHEN MYTH AND HISTORY MEET

Reliability of History
Myths: Truths hidden in Mythology
Chronological Time, Sacred Time, Mythical Time
How Myth drives History

CYCLES WITHIN HISTORY

Natural Law of Cycles
Cycles of Time: Hindu Yugas, Great Year of Plato
Challenges and Opportunities of our times

ESOTERIC HISTORY OF MAN

7 Kingdoms of Life
Manas & the Evolution of Human Consciousness
The Discipular Path: Devotion, Investigation, Service

SUMMARY

So, where do we go from here?

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

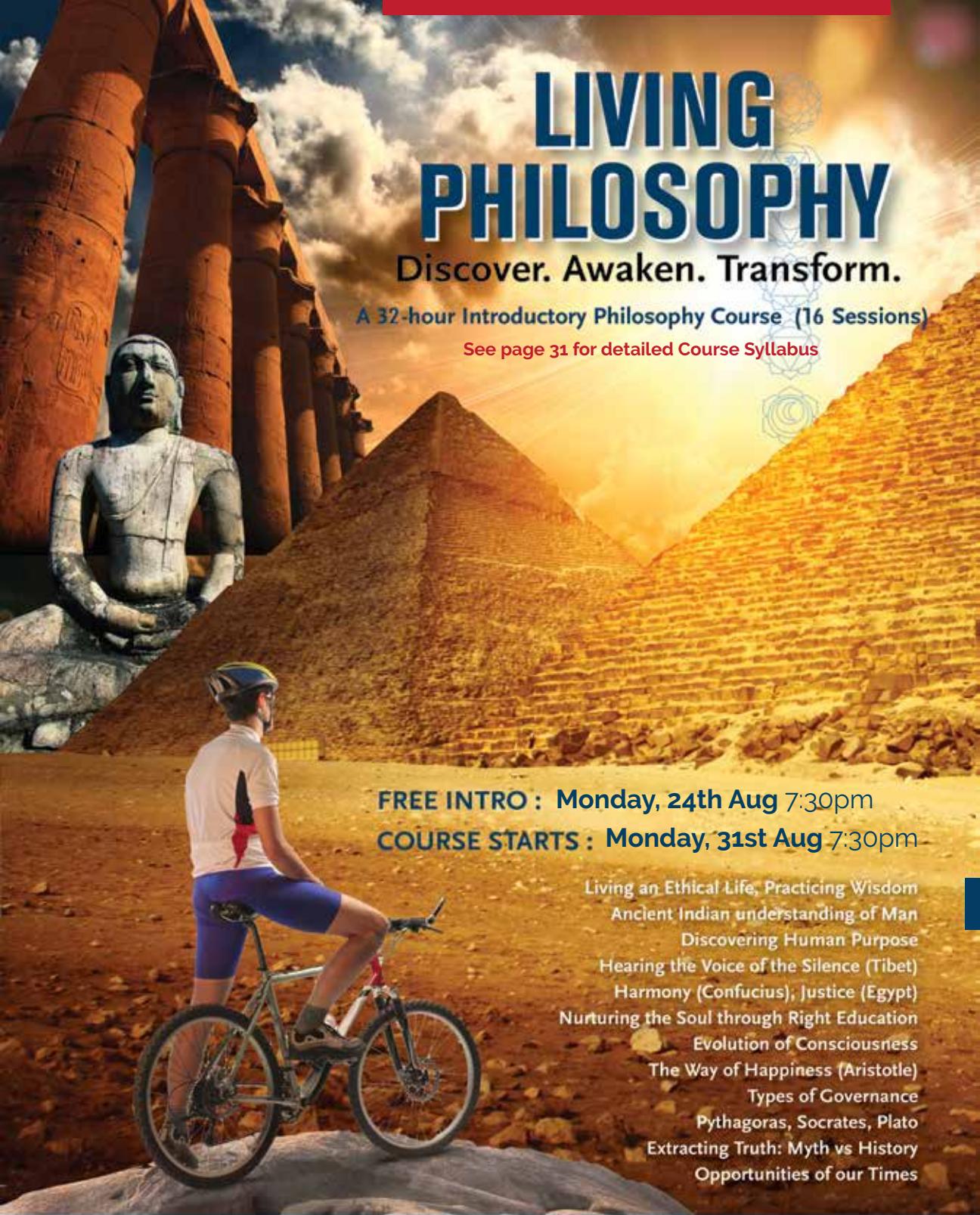
**Students earn diplomas certifying completion of the
course having attended at least 75% of the classes.**

LIVING PHILOSOPHY

Discover. Awaken. Transform.

A 32-hour Introductory Philosophy Course (16 Sessions)

See page 31 for detailed Course Syllabus



FREE INTRO : Monday, 24th Aug 7:30pm

COURSE STARTS : Monday, 31st Aug 7:30pm

Living an Ethical Life; Practicing Wisdom

Ancient Indian understanding of Man

Discovering Human Purpose

Hearing the Voice of the Silence (Tibet)

Harmony (Confucius); Justice (Egypt)

Nurturing the Soul through Right Education

Evolution of Consciousness

The Way of Happiness (Aristotle)

Types of Governance

Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato

Extracting Truth: Myth vs History

Opportunities of our Times



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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