



JAN - MAR 2016

THE ACROPOLITAN

A Magazine on Philosophy, Culture & Volunteering

FEATURE

REVIVAL OF THE RENAISSANCE

PHILOSOPHY IN THE BOARDROOM

URBAN HEROES

IN SEARCH OF EXCALIBUR

MUST WE LIVE IN STRESS

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS



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.**



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.



CULTURE broadens our understanding of life, and fosters a spirit of mutual respect and solidarity, strengthening human dignity and facilitating harmonious coexistence.



VOLUNTEERING is the natural expression of a spirit of union with life and humanity, which manifests in the practice of values such as unselfishness, commitment and striving for the common good.



PHILOSOPHY

CULTURE

VOLUNTEERING



FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Reader,

The start of a new year is a good time to introspect and re-consider the direction our lives have taken. For many, the dreams and aspirations of our youth become but obscure distant memories, that fade away with each passing year.

But there exist among us a few unsung heroes, who muster up the courage to truly live the adventure of life, and embark upon an ethical voyage in search of an inner Excalibur, yearning to express the noblest of virtues in every realm of life – not by escaping into isolation, but by emerging victorious from the battles of daily life.

Classical traditions have suggested that this nobility is in fact the true nature of Man. It was revived during the European Renaissance. And perhaps we can once again revive it today! We invite you this year, to Discover it, Awaken its principles that lie eternally within us, and participate in Transforming our world.

The Editorial Team

CONTENTS

www.acropolis.org.in



Philosophy In The Boardroom

by Kurush Dordi

05

COVER FEATURE

Revival of The Renaissance

by Yaron Barzilay

Compiled by Manjula Nanavati

09

Urban Heroes

In Conversation with

Nusrat & Afzal Khatri

by Manjula Nanavati

13

In Search of Excalibur

by Hariant H Mehta

17

Must We Live In Stress?

by Ilanit Adar-Matoki

21

The Eternal Sun

by Janki Shah

25

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS

28



THE ACROPOLITAN

January - March 2016
Volume 3 - Issue 1

Production costs of this magazine supported by Vedanta Group.

Images used on this page are attributed in respective articles.



Editorial Department

Editor-in-Chief: Yaron Barzilay

Editorial Team:

Kurush Dordi, Manjula

Nanavati, Bhavna Tripathi Roy,

Delip Jain, Gayatri Panjabhi

Publication & Production

Hariant H Mehta

Art Department

Graphic Design:

Janki Shah, Neha Mehta

Printed by Vinay Arts

New Acropolis

Cultural Organization (India)

Yaron Barzilay

National Director

A-0 Connaught Mansions

Opp. Colaba Post Office

Colaba, Mumbai 400005

Tel: +91 22 3192 0515

Email: info@acropolis.org.in

Web: www.acropolis.org.in

The Acopolitan is published in India, by New Acropolis Cultural Organization. Reprints of individual articles are obtainable on application to the editor. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.



One of the world's largest diversified natural resources companies

India's market leader in most of the commodities it operates in

Operated ~27% of India's Crude Oil production in FY 2015

World's largest zinc miner and second largest integrated zinc producer

Contributed ₹28,280 crore to exchequer

One of the largest private sector employer with 81,000+ direct & indirect employees

Industry leadership for base metals, as per Platts 2015

Community outreach program reaching 3.98 million

Unlocking the potential for a sustainable future

At Vedanta, we continue to create value for all our stakeholders, providing equal opportunities for all with care for environment in India and across the world. Our culture of Zero Harm in operations delivers excellence and care for Planet and People.

VEDANTA Ltd.- aluminium | power | sesa iron ore | sterlite copper



MALCO Energy Limited



Zinc International



PHILOSOPHY IN THE BOARDROOM

BY KURUSH DORDI



When we look around our world today we see an evident change in the last 50 years. Since the post-war reconstruction era that drove mass industrialisation and development of the economies of Western Europe and America, the focus has gradually shifted to developing economies and the flow of wealth has started reaching the shores of lesser developed nations who have started making rapid economic progress. With this progress however, also come some pitfalls; some so grave that they resulted in the recent burst of the economic bubble. Amongst other examples, we have seen the domino-effect of the subprime crisis, and are witnessing an ailing Eurozone.

Technology has advanced exponentially. In the 1960's I would have handwritten this article or used a typewriter, and relied on access to a library as my reference point rather than the internet. Corporate businesses have grown, and the list of Fortune 500 companies has seen significant shuffling, with companies elbowing each other to grow by leaps and bounds. Pressure from shareholders has increased, forcing businesses to demonstrate more profitability, sometimes fuelling unethical practices, corporate fraud and

cases of corruption initiated in the boardroom. A global economic crime survey conducted in 2014 by global consulting firm PWC reported that one in every three organisations reports being hit by an economic crime. (1) And we ask ourselves, "Where and when will this greed stop?

Philosophy drives an inner search, causing the questioner to refuse to accept any dogma.

These recent developments reiterate the need for philosophy to be introduced into boardrooms and businesses. Whether one refers to biographies of the world's most famous business tycoons, or to research conducted by Ivy League business schools, it is consistently shown that the business empires that have grown from fledgling set ups have been built through resilience and persistence of inspired leadership. But above all, was a firm grounding in philosophical principles; honesty, integrity, a deep sense of social responsibility and care for the environment.

Unfortunately today someone admitting he has a degree in philosophy might be laughed at or perhaps he might even be chased out of the boardroom, in the same way that a scientist who claimed that the earth revolved around the sun would have been chased and executed during the Middle Ages.

But we must look at what philosophy truly is, beyond a mere academic subject with little applicable value. If taught and practiced in the true sense, it could change the way we live and do business. Philosophy in its basic sense is the love for wisdom. I repeat... wisdom...not love for knowledge. This means that the first pillar of philosophy is practicality and the ability to effectively apply knowledge, which allows it to transform into wisdom. It is almost like having a knife and deciding what one chooses to do with it. In the hands of a skilled surgeon this would have the potential of saving a life on an operation table, while in the hands of an extremist it has the potential of destroying life.

The first thing that philosophy promotes, even if in just an academic sense, is to think, to ask questions: why, when, how, what if? When one starts to ask the right questions the search for the right answers follows suit. Through this, Philosophy drives an inner search, causing the questioner to refuse to accept any dogma just because everyone else says so.



Let's look to the example of Apple, which in the past few years has been repeatedly rated as the world's

leading innovative company. Founder Steve Jobs is known to have pushed designers, developers and his top team to begin projects with the question: "Why do we want to do this?" Finding answers to these questions eventually led to some of the most innovative products made by Apple. In a sense, the answer, the vision, already existed within Jobs's team. All he had to do was to extract it, in order to give it expression, much like the Socratic method of extracting truth that was believed to be innate in each human being. The philosophical premise of a company, thus extracted, becomes the platform upon which to discuss new ideas and encourage innovation.

If organisations are able to extract the essence of what drives its people it will be able to harness the full potential of their creativity and effort.

Stoic philosophy is a great example of practical guidance on a fulfilling way of life, of happiness and of efficiency. The Stoics presented their philosophy based on self-control, meeting hardships as a way by which to grow, and accepting the fact that there are things beyond ones control, which one cannot change. Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius is said to have lived his life, even as a Ceasar, adhering to stoic principles, as evident in his memoirs *Meditations* (7.54):

"Everywhere, at each moment, you have the option
• To accept this even with humility.
• To treat this person as he should be treated.
• To approach this thought with care, so that nothing irrational creeps in."

Clearly, these principles are applicable even in our own times. Today, however, a professional

Management Guru or Productivity Consultant is paid outrageous sums simply to re-package and present these timeless values.

Dealing with business problems by aligning to a company's vision and values is also what we may call in business terminology the 'culture' of an organisation. Intrinsic values that the firm has developed and sustained throughout its history, becomes the 'normal' way of doing things. When the work culture addresses principles such as equality, fairness, honesty, corporate social responsibility, community development, and inclusiveness of all stakeholders, in the long run it often overcomes adversity. Yes, company board rooms can make detailed strategic plans, but as shared by Peter Drucker, "Culture eats Strategy for breakfast."

As a business professional in the boardroom, one is expected to deal with hardships that come with the peaks and troughs of a business life cycle, with the ripple effect of the economic scenario, labour issues, and supply/demand dynamics. In business school one is taught to plan for backup scenarios, and be resilient. In most cases, it is well within the ability of the leadership to pull a company through economic crises. Examples such as Lee Iacocca of Chrysler, or Isaac Perlmutter of Marvel Comics, demonstrate steely grit and determination. Circumstances may change, but the conviction that what they were doing was right eventually saw them through and created business turnarounds that are being taught as case studies in business schools.

Perhaps this unrelenting devotion is not unlike that of Socrates, who even at the age of seventy refused to give in to fabricated accusations of impiety. Even in the face of the capital punishment, he is said to have remained steadfast to his principles and in his integrity. As if resonating with this sentiment in his own time, Marcus Aurelius reflects on the need "to be like the rock that the waves keep crashing over. It stands unmoved and the raging of the sea falls still around it." (2)



Plato wrote that "there will be no end to the troubles of states, or of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands." (3) Since the kings of our capitalist world are our business men, perhaps it necessitates that we revive philosophy in light of commerce.

Philosophy can foster a deeper understanding of oneself as a human being; his purpose and his role as part of a larger collective. Through this understanding, one can begin the investigation of timeless ethics, justice, and the common good. The classical understanding of ethics is said to require unity of thought and action, regardless of external circumstances. Standing by ethical principles, many leaders choose to do the right thing, even when times are tough and it may cost the business its bottom line. A former Tata Group chairman once explained that the group decided not to refloat an airline as they refused to pay bribes for getting the necessary clearances.

In July 2007, a former Global Banking CEO Charles Prince defended his bank during the subprime crisis by saying, "As long as the music is playing,

you've got to get up and dance...We're still dancing." I sometimes smile to myself and ask, if he had a philosopher as his personal advisor maybe things could have been different. Alain de Botton, writer and director of The School of Life, suggests that although it may seem that business today is distanced from philosophy, large corporations should consider looking at appointing philosophers to company boards. These philosophers would guide product innovation, and customer relations from an emotional, psychological, or even spiritual standpoint. (4)

We must realize that isolated efforts will not change the world. What is needed first is individual change, each and every one of us, employees and business leaders.

Aristotle's work and ideas around leading a fulfilling life are similar to what today is spoken of as motivational theories based on Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivators. Alain de Botton in a podcast with Tim Ferris on Fourhourworkweek.com said, "We're not very good at understanding what it is that we really want. We're extremely prone to latch onto suggestions from the outside world." One needs to ask the question: what is it that I want to achieve from my business? A depth of reflection in response might drive the way businesses are run and may guide its strategy, its ideals and culture. If organisations are able to extract the essence of what drives its people it will be able to harness the full potential of their creativity and effort.

Finally, it is relevant also to highlight Aristotle's views on excellence: "Excellence is never an accident. It

is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny." (5) Good intention without action is fruitless, while lack of intelligence leads to a waste of resources, costing both time and money. So the right balance of intention, effort and intelligent execution leads to business excellence as well. As Steve Jobs put it, "I want to put a ding in the Universe...Being the richest man in the cemetery doesn't matter to me. Going to bed at night saying we've done something wonderful, that's what matters to me". (6)

Today unfortunately, the philosopher-businessperson is an extremely rare combination. Most company boardroom leaders operate on an accounting year basis which may not necessarily take into account factors beyond the balance sheet. Today, at least in India, corporate social responsibility has become almost mandatory, and companies must change the way they respond to different issues like climate change and sustainable sourcing of raw materials. But we must realize that isolated efforts will not change the world. What is needed first is individual change, each and every one of us, employees and business leaders. Only such an inner change, resulting in a transformed attitude towards life, will cause a reassessment of our priorities. When leaders and business owners become philosophers, their choices will be guided by philosophical and ethical principles. And perhaps then, our duties to the planet will gain priority over shareholder value. ★★

Bibliography

1. PWC. *Global Economic Crime Survey*. <<http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/services/advisory/consulting/forensics/economic-crime-survey.html>> 2014.
2. Aurelius, Marcus. *Meditations*. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks>>
3. Plato. *The Republic*, Second Edition. Translated by Lee, Desmond. Penguin Classics. London, 2007.
4. de Botton, Alain. *The case for putting philosophers into company boardrooms*. Financial Times. <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a688be46-714d-11e3-8f92-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3tz01aT5n>> Jan 2014.
5. Aristotle. <<http://elusivelife.net/inspiration/quotes/quote-of-the-day-aristotle-on-destiny>>
6. Jobs, Steve. <https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Steve_Jobs>

REVIVAL OF THE RENAISSANCE

BY YARON BARZILAY
 COMPILED BY MANJULA NANAVATI



This article is a compilation of themes based on a lecture presented by Yaron Barzilay, National Director of New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India), in commemoration of UNESCO endorsed World Philosophy Day, celebrated each year as a way to "reaffirm the power of Philosophy to change the world by enabling us to change ourselves." This presentation took place on 19th November 2015, at the Indian Express Gallery (Express Towers, Nariman Point. Mumbai).

Philosophy is an approach to life, a search for a way to try to live a little bit better, a little bit truer, everyday. But by what moral standards should we judge our actions?

There is a difference between being immoral, and being amoral. Amoral means that there is no recognition of right and wrong and therefore you cannot act according to what is right. Immoral presumes that you do recognize right from wrong, yet choose not to live in accordance with this.

In my opinion, today we live in an immoral world, because we have an abundance of information that we refuse to act on. We know the effect we have on nature, we know the destruction that weapons can cause, and we know that what we do today will affect the lives of our children tomorrow; yet there is a great gap between knowledge and action.

What is required to fill this gap?

A change is needed. For centuries this change has been material and technological. What is needed, however, is a far more fundamental change, a metamorphosis from within. If we must "be the change we want to see in the world" then we must effect an inner transformation, an inner revival.

According to Aristotle, the goal of all human activity is happiness. Buddha postulated much the same thing from a different perspective when he said that suffering pushes us forward in our search for happiness. They both asserted that this crucial objective could only be attended to through an inner investigation, and that neglecting internal development would be tantamount to neglecting everything that was essential.

However, life pulls us outward in many directions all the time. The chase after the material is so ingrained, that it happens subconsciously, almost without our participation, with the result that, even if we do want to change intrinsically, we must want it strongly enough to suppress all the forces that exist in our external life.

Can philosophy bring about such a change? The best example I can give you is of the Renaissance.

The Renaissance was a philosophical movement that blossomed in Europe from the 14th to the 16th century and irrefutably changed the world. In a relatively short span of approximately 200 years, Europe leaped out of the Dark Ages, a time of dogma, suppression and fear, into light. It was as if a magical wand had awakened the world. Science, Art, Music, Politics, Astronomy, and Philosophy, all saw tremendous blossoming. Most importantly, the force of imagination was set free, and endless possibilities lay open for Man, in recognition of man's limitless potential.

Renaissance Men adopted the idea of a comparative method of study, not limiting themselves to any one tradition or faculty, in order to investigate and discern between what is essential and what is nonessential.

History attributes many external factors to this magnificent revival, including political and financial patronage of the arts, the fall of Constantinople, the crusades, the discovery of the New World etc. However, in my opinion that would be devaluing the ability of the visionary men who spear-headed this revolution. I suggest they did it by digging into the inner well of Consciousness, deep within themselves. The impetus came from consciousness, not external factors and they knew they were making history.

The Italian Renaissance Poet Petrarch wrote, *"As for you, should you survive me for a long time, which I sincerely hope and wish with all my soul, better times are perhaps ahead of you. Our present forgetfulness and this slumber will not last forever. The clouds will be dispelled and our successors will be able to return to the blossom of the pure light of ancient times."*



This was the central idea of the Renaissance. It was essential to awaken what was forgotten, echoing the ancient Greek tradition that spoke of the need to be awakened to who we really are. The idea was not new, it was a revival of an idea that had existed in antiquity, but was given a new form. Much like the idea of reincarnation that believes that when the soul reincarnates, it takes a new shape but its essence remains the same.

Perhaps today, we too need to be awakened from our sleep, to rediscover what is essential, searching not outside but within ourselves, in our past, and in our roots. Perhaps reviving some measure of the philosophy of the Renaissance is the key to rediscovering ourselves.

The spirit of the Renaissance was a complex inter-related combination of many timeless concepts:

Universal Wisdom

Renaissance Men adopted the idea of a comparative method of study, not limiting themselves to any one tradition or faculty, in order to investigate and discern between what is essential and what is nonessential. The example of Leonardo Da Vinci demonstrates this investigation. A Painter, Sculptor,

Scientist, Inventor, and Philosopher, he was the quintessential Renaissance Man, whose many brilliant talents could not be defined by any one faculty alone, but by a philosophical approach to life: an aspiration to engage with the flowering of the human spirit.

Man was regarded as obligated to effect change, as a partner in creation, as an ambassador of the Gods. Man's primary objective was to take responsibility for his role in nature.

Moreover, Renaissance Men believed that if you see your tradition as the only truth or the ultimate truth, you would never be open to something else. Therefore, it was encouraged to engage with philosophy, art, culture, science, and religion. They revered Hermes Trismegistus of Egypt, Zoroaster of Persia, Plato of Greece, the Jewish Kabbalists and many others; wisdom was not limited by time and place and so they embraced the ability to learn from all. This gave rise to the revival of the notion of a Universal Man (spiritually immortal) living in accordance with the principles of Universal Wisdom. This was in stark contrast to the Middle Age system of thought, which was characterized by materialism, separation and plurality.

Philosophy in Action

During the Middle Ages man's role was considered to be that of a passive spectator, obedient and unquestioning, in a fixed and unchanging world. With the advent of the Renaissance, man was regarded as obligated to effect change, as a partner in creation, as an ambassador of the Gods. Man's primary objective was to take responsibility for his role in nature, and all study and investigation was meant to serve this goal; not to accumulate

knowledge, but to implement it. We must respect wisdom with practice, not only with words.

Inner Man

Renaissance Men fought against the illusion that 'what I see in the mirror is what I am'. Marsilio Ficino, who was the head of the re-established Platonic Academy patronized by the Medici Family, spoke of the human soul as having two wills: a will to drop downwards like stone, and the will to rise upwards like fire that gives light and rises towards the divine. This opposition of tendencies, one pulling us down and the other pushing upward, results in a constant inner battle, a battle in which we are free to exercise a choice. As Pico della Mirandola wrote in his masterpiece *Oration On The Dignity Of Man*, God said to Man, *"I have placed you in the middle of this world so that you can better understand all that is in it. We have made you neither celestial nor terrestrial, neither mortal nor immortal, so that as the free supreme model and sculptor of yourself, you can sculpt yourself into the shape which you have chosen."*



Man as a Mirror of the World

The Temple of Apollo at Delphi is said to have had an oft-quoted inscription: *"Know thyself and Thou shalt know the World and the Gods."* In the Renaissance, man was once again considered a microcosm of the universe, the macrocosm. This gave man dignity, importance, and value in his ability to engage with life. The Renaissance philosophers believed that

everything in nature has a valuable role. Man as the most evolved aspect of nature was uniquely capable of, and carried the responsibility, of the greatest role; specifically to maintain the harmony of the earth. Man was a powerful and creative partner in the universe and neglecting that charge could lead to the destruction of our world.

Rebirth

The Renaissance did not arise by chance. Nor did it start with a clean state, a *tabula rasa*. Renaissance means revival; diving deep into the past, to revive ancient traditions and archetypes, or essential principles of life. By breathing life into these ancient traditions they knew they were creating something new that would blossom and flourish. It was akin to extracting some seeds from the past, planting them in the present and allowing them to create a future.

If man is to re-create, then perhaps his most important creation is the re-creation of himself. While death is a natural process that comes before a re-birth maybe there are other ways to renew ourselves, to renew the forces within us. But in order to do so, we need to conquer ourselves. This again is a familiar concept from many ancient cultures; an inner journey that pushes you to encounter yourself, leading to a deeper experience of mystery.

"Man is a being of wonder, worthy of respect and esteem, who assumes the nature of God as if he were himself a God."

This was the aspiration of the Renaissance; to move closer and closer to the center, to effect change, to conquer the real self, in order to be re-born and become a better human being.

If man is to re-create, then perhaps his most important creation is the re-creation of himself. While death is a natural process that comes before a re-birth maybe there are other ways to renew ourselves, to renew the forces within us.

And perhaps, we too can follow their example today. Perhaps the real goal of philosophy is to touch this inner timeless wisdom; to build an inner Acropolis, an inner Hastinapur or Jerusalem - the idea of a divine city above, or the city within, that gives direction towards building an ethical and philosophical life, which inspires us to live every day with the aspiration for change and growth.

Let us not be part of the herd. Dare to live the adventure of Life; only then do you truly live, rather than merely survive. The real mystery of life is the mystery within us, and philosophy is a way to rediscover and revive that mystery within ourselves. ★★★





Modern

scientific research lends credence to the notion that our universe is an inter-dependant, profoundly unified system, infused with an immense amount of energy. Quantum physicists have proven that matter at a molecular level, far from being inert, is an active agent constantly making choices between alternate possibilities. James Lovelock's Gaia Theory, which has gathered considerable support among Earth Scientists, holds that "the Earth's physical and biological processes are inextricably connected to form a self regulating, essentially sentient system."

These startling insights are transforming our view of reality, and our comprehension of human identity. The earth is not just our home. It is an inextricable part of us. We are an inseparable, living part of a mysterious and magnificent living universe. Consequently, our every action has ethical consequences and enormous reverberations as the scope of our empathy and compassion broadens to include all creation.

Nusrat and Afzal Khatri left a thriving packaging business and a comfortable life in America to return to India and found themselves responding

to this perspective. Focusing on preservation of the environment, they began organizing clean up drives and planting saplings in the housing society in which they lived, before slowly expanding to the rest of their neighborhood. For the last six years they have been teaching at schools and colleges, converting local dump yards into lush gardens, and winning numerous Eco awards, including the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar in 2007, India's highest Environment Conservation award. Here are excerpts from our conversation.

THE ACROPOLITAN (TA): What made you decide to change the tracks of your lives so dramatically?

NUSRAT: When God has given you everything then you begin to think 'what can I do in return?' People thought we were mad to leave such a good life in America and return to India.

AFZAL: When we sold the business, we had no idea what exactly we were going to do in India. But we realized immediately that though our building was very nice, the surroundings were very dirty.

NUSRAT: Unknowingly, we are all guilty of committing a grave sin by not segregating our

garbage. By allowing rag pickers to sift through it, to separate and salvage the things they can sell, through which they earn barely enough to feed themselves, we are in effect telling them "you need to fill your stomach, here, rifle through my garbage".

AFZAL: We need to be more sensitive. We have developed a total immunity to these situations in our country. We have wrong notions that kitchen waste is filthy, that garbage is negativity, so just throw it out of my house. In fact all biodegradable garbage will naturally convert to soil. It is a natural & essential process to renew the earth.

NUSRAT: And it can be accomplished easily and with dignity. We talk about philosophy & spirituality but if you don't put it into practice then what's the use of that knowledge. There must be harmony between your thoughts, your words and your action.

AFZAL: So we decided we must act.

Nature puts no price tag on her benevolence: sunlight, water, oxygen, without which no species can survive. But because it is free, we just don't respect it.

NUSRAT: Our streets were so full of debris that you could not even see the pavement. We hired four laborers whom we paid ourselves, and in three days we had picked up all the trash and put it on one side for the Bombay Municipal Corporation to pick up. When we phoned the BMC Officer he couldn't believe his ears when we told him that we had cleaned up the street and all he had to do was just send a truck to take it away.

AFZAL: Nusrat took lessons in horticulture. I began learning about composting and how to convert waste into wealth. I soon realized that

each of the buildings in our complex produces 150kg of garbage that ultimately finds its way to a dumping yard. There it putrefies, releasing toxins like methane (which is much more harmful than carbon dioxide). With rainfall and liquefaction these toxins seep into the earth and into our oceans destroying life.

NUSRAT: We started raising awareness in our building, educating and converting everyone slowly. We built two composting pits and planted over twelve hundred varieties of plants. Our building became *zero garbage*, everything was either put into the composting pit, or set aside for the rag pickers for recycling.

AFZAL: Our society won numerous eco awards. We then moved to the neighboring buildings, teaching them and helping them to build composting pits and maintain their gardens. We organized clean-up drives of our street. We worked with the resident doctors at Sion Hospital to facilitate removal of garbage. We began converting dumping grounds into beautiful gardens. The Samta Nagar Police Station was one of our biggest challenges. When we first saw the one-and-a-half acre plot it was a field of filth; thermacol, cloth, plastic, broken glass, rusted metal, wood, sawdust. I almost lost heart. But we asked the Principal of Thakur College if she would send us 20 volunteers. Instead she sent us 40 children everyday for 3 hours. It took us three and a half months of steady work just to clear the surface of the land. When we started digging and planting, even more garbage was unearthed.

TA: Today, six years later I'm looking around at a Paradise. Such a profusion of lush plants, flowers, trees, butterflies...

AFZAL: Yes, it is not just a garden; it is a bio-diversity park. When we first began planting we had only crows for company. Today we have documented 34 species of birds, 37 species of butterflies, 12 species of spiders, and many other life forms that call this place home.



TA: There is scientific evidence that plants can feel emotions and can sense emotions within us. Do you believe they can?

AFZAL: One hundred percent YES! We communicate. Birds and animals communicate with each other. And so do plants.

NUSRAT: Once one of the oldest and largest trees in this garden fell down in a storm. It crushed and damaged some plants that it fell on, but you won't believe what we saw when we arrived that morning. In this huge garden, all the plants, from one end to the other were limp, and sagging. Even the ones far away, untouched by the fall were all wilted and drooping. It was as if they were in pain, and bowing in mourning, as we mourn for a much loved or revered older family member. I could so clearly see the grief they were feeling and my eyes filled with tears.

AFZAL: This lasted for 2 days. Then all the plants and flowers slowly perked up and came back to normal.

TA: Tell us what you might have learnt from the experience of working so closely with nature.

NUSRAT: We are learning how to live life from Nature's Laws. Life is but a reflection of nature.

AFZAL: Nature teaches you all the time, in her every action, but unfortunately we are not listening.

We don't know how to learn. We don't comprehend her value. Nature puts no price tag on her benevolence: sunlight, water, oxygen, without which no species can survive. But because it is free, we just don't respect it. In theory we talk about global warming, but in practice we continue to arrogantly destroy our planet.

And all of us are interconnected. If one species dies out, the ripple effect causes chaos everywhere. Nature is one, seamless, interconnected Being that we are a tiny part of.

NUSRAT: Nature gives unconditionally and abundantly. She gives us food, water, shelter and air.

AFZAL: Plants and trees absorb the toxins we produce. They are natural sound barriers. They give us remedies for all illnesses.

NUSRAT: They entertain us with their color, fragrance and beauty. Do you know that if you cut off a branch 3, 4 or 5 more grow in its place? It's as if nature is saying to us, even if you harm me, I will continue to give to you. She is truly a saint.

Frank Lloyd Wright said, "I believe in God, but I spell it N-A-T-U-R-E."

AFZAL: There is another quote by Hubert Reeves - "Man is the most insane species. He worships an invisible God and slaughters a visible nature, without realizing that this nature he slaughters is the invisible God he worships".

We are part of nature and she is part of us. There are 1.8 million identified species on this planet. Man is just one of them. And all of us are interconnected. If one species dies out, the ripple effect causes chaos everywhere. Nature is one, seamless, inter-connected Being that we are a tiny part of.

NUSRAT: Once you understand nature, once you can connect with the wonder that she is, once you love nature enough to want to nurture and protect her, then you must sensitize others also.

AFZAL: The need of the hour is education. And this park is a font of information. That is why we building societies, rotary clubs, and foreign delegations are contacting us. But most importantly we must teach our children how man and nature are totally linked. So we bring children, from kindergarten onwards, here to help them understand the importance of trees, of rivers, of all life. Textbooks, theories and discussions can achieve nothing unless backed up with practical, on-the-ground experience. It is not enough to learn that dump yards can be turned into life-supporting habitats...it is far more crucial to realize that ignorance and apathy will turn our forests and oceans into garbage-dumps.

TA: What is your advice on the most practical way we can contribute to our environment?

AFZAL: In one sentence - eliminate toxins in the environment by solid waste management, and help generate more oxygen by planting more trees.

NUSRAT: People ask us all the time, 'Do you know of a plot of land anywhere that we can adopt?' And I always say there is no need to go so far away. Right here on your doorstep there is something waiting for you to do. Wherever you are, clean up the area. See to it there are no broken stones, dangerous open manholes. Call the BMC if you need to. Don't leave it for someone else to do. And if you have to spend a few hundred rupees...well then, buy one less T-shirt, go to one less movie.

AFZAL: Small acts can make a big difference. We were in Agra to see the Taj Mahal. I passed through the security gate at the entrance and turned around to see Nusrat not moving. The security guard motioned her to move forward and she said, "There is so much dirt here. I am not moving till we all clean it up." And she started picking up the litter.

NUSRAT: I told them "This beautiful monument is India's pride. Foreigners come from so far away to admire it and we cannot even look after it at a basic level. Shame on all of us!"

AFZAL: By this time the head of security arrived with all his men to assess this situation. Immediately, with the security personnel and the people waiting in line behind us, in 15 minutes all the wrappers, banana skins, plastic bottles, photo rolls were all gone.

You see we must not just think. We must say it, and act on it ourselves. We need to set an example. Change requires a chain of actions, but without aggression, without conflict.

NUSRAT: It is very easy. You have to realize that you, even alone can make a difference. Wherever you are, plant saplings. We can give you free cuttings. Wherever you can, plant indigenous trees: Champa, Sontaka, Madhumalti. And be inspired by words of Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam. "I had a sparrow as a pet, but it flew away. Then I had a squirrel, but it ran away. I planted a tree, and they both came back." ★★★

IN SEARCH OF EXCALIBUR

BY HARIANTO H MEHTA



Like all mythology, that of illustrious King Arthur has endured the test of time, transmitting essential eternal values that serve to inspire human civilizations of all ages. From its tale, it is not always easy to demarcate between elements of documented history and magical folklore, but perhaps in this very enigmatic characteristic lies the motivation to investigate and extract its essence to apply in our own times.

next king. Unaware, Arthur fulfils this prophecy, and is propelled to seize his destiny by ascending the English throne, to give rise to an unprecedented golden age of prosperity and culture, fuelled by values of knightly courtesy and heroic deeds. They were glorious times of chivalry, when Knights and Ladies are said to have devoted themselves to express noble virtues such as loyalty, self-control, generosity, compassion, mercy, justice, and honor.

If we are to change the legacy we leave to the future, we are faced with the need to change ourselves; become once again Knights and Ladies, so that our world may once again blossom.

Although of direct royal lineage, it is said that young Arthur was raised in secrecy by Merlin the Wizard, a great teacher. After the death of King Uther Pendragon the absence of an heir resulted in a period of dissent and instability. Merlin prophesized that he who was able to draw out a majestic magical sword, called the Excalibur, from a stone in which it was embedded, should be rightfully crowned the

How wonderful if an Excalibur were to be found today, to give impetus to such a golden age in our own times? Where might we find it? And how might its destiny unfold to manifest in our world? Notwithstanding the remarkable technological progress we have nurtured over the past hundred years, we must wonder...have our advancements helped improve the human condition? Are we today better human beings...happier, or wiser, than in the past? And if we find ourselves hesitant to answer, I suggest that somewhere, in the course of history, perhaps we lost sight of what this progress was meant to serve. The values that steered King Arthur's kingdom seem to have sunk into obscurity, leaving us in an ethical vacuum, a sort of free-for-all, where each one fends for himself, most often at the cost of another, regardless of any obligation to the collective. If we are to change the legacy we leave

to the future, we are faced with the need to change ourselves; become once again Knights and Ladies, so that our world may once again blossom.

History books and fairy tales alike, paint a vivid picture of a Knight, dressed in shining armor, atop a handsome white horse. A model of aesthetics and decorum, expert in the arts of combat, and a master of his sword, a Knight's primary duty required him to protect the kingdom's subject against all injustice. It is interesting to note that the symbolism of a noble-warrior-hero responsible for the welfare of a just society is not unique to medieval European folklore. Its presence is found in a wide array of ancient mythological traditions, and suggests a persistent inner state of battle, in which the Knight first dedicates himself to continuously defeat his own internal enemies, the many vices, to emerge victorious from an inner ethical battle. This inner victory manifests externally in the sheen of his armor, evocative of the sheen of the Knight's character; adherence to chivalrous virtues such as loyalty, justice and honor, an endeavor to be the very best that the Knight can be.

As if in paradox with this warrior spirit is the gentle courtesy that a Knight or Lady extended in each interaction. The most iconic imagery that demonstrates this is of a Knight leaping off his horse, removing his cape to cover a puddle so that a



Lady might cross it without the slightest discomfort. Perhaps the custom of pulling out a chair from under a table, or opening a door for a woman, originates from this courtesy. Today these practices often feel unnatural, and are sometimes ridiculed. Feminists might even perceive it as being disrespectful. But it is imperative to consider that these displays of courtesy were meant to be a natural expression of an inner courteous state of mind. The word 'courtesy' connotes the behavior befitting the court, the arena in which every member of the nobility conducted him/herself with formality, requiring attention and awareness; not because of the value of the formality itself, but because the expressed conduct was a natural reflection of a virtuous and courteous character. It follows that such courtesy would extend to all realms of life, beyond the court.

While the action itself might change and take different expression with each passing generation, we must remain committed to inner ethical progress, inner depth; that is what differentiates us, and truly makes us human.

Social norms today have radically changed, and formality is often frowned upon as being artificial or inauthentic. This is ok. With it, however, we seem also to have lost the attention and awareness of how we conduct ourselves; what we say, how we say it, how we behave, etc. Perhaps this is unjustified. Represented by the ancient symbol of the double-sided axe, or the sword of Arthurian legend, attentive external practice naturally deepens the internal ethical state of a human being, while progressive inner work naturally expresses itself in action. Hence, while the action itself might change and take different expression with each passing generation, we must remain committed

to inner ethical progress, inner depth; that is what differentiates us, and truly makes us human. To this end, there might be value in reviving ancient customs that can aid our ethical development, which in turn, will likely make us more courteous, and improve the way we interact with each other, and with our surroundings.



King Arthur's court comprised of legendary Knights and Ladies who set off on heroic missions, sometimes requiring brute masculine strength, and sometimes involving finer feminine sensitivities. Conquests and achievements at these missions are a source of great inspiration for us, however, we might easily be captivated by their glamour and dream about victory, and fantasize mighty achievements. It is possible that our individual destinies might yield such victories. But it is only wishful thinking if in reality we shy away from, or are defeated by, our own daily challenges. We may dream about solving world hunger, but are too lazy to fill even a glass of water for ourselves. We may imagine a country governed by an ethical leader, but are too weak to stand up against a bullying hooligan. A hero's heroism depends not on the glory of his destiny, but on his overcoming humble challenges on a daily basis, that direct his destiny towards glory. In that sense, one might say that a true Knight or Lady, is most defined by his nobility. Just as a noble metal such as gold resists oxidation,

and is able to consistently maintain its shining allure, so too a true nobleman's, or noblewoman's, actions are said to remain always heroically untarnished.

The learning we derive from the tradition of Knights and Ladies may seem too demanding, even unrealistic today. Certainly it is unlikely that any impending revolution might suddenly visibly alter the course of history. But we must remember the teaching imparted in the Bhagawad Gita, which states that we must act without attachment towards the fruits of our actions. We must act because it is the right thing to do. We might see our reality transform in our own lifetime. Or it might take several generations. It doesn't matter. What matters is the deliberate contribution towards it, which will be immortalized in the legacy we leave behind. What matters is uniting our best intentions with real efficient actions.

Anyone can win a battle with access to the very best weapons. Forging these weapons, however, is the destiny of just a few.

What is exhilarating is that this unity depends entirely on each of us; on the powerful force of Will, unique to human beings, which resides in our innermost chamber of consciousness. Although weighed down under external pressures like fear and weakness, when unleashed it can preside over every other force. But as with Arthur's decisive grip on the Excalibur, it requires resolve, persistence, and hard work. And it requires mastery over oneself, victory over daily ethical battles, each an opportunity to grow, learn, and evolve. In the process itself lies the glory befitting a legendary Knight or Lady. Because anyone can win a battle with access to the very best weapons. Forging these weapons, however, is the destiny of just a few. ★★

MUST WE LIVE IN STRESS?

BY ILANIT ADAR-MATOKI



Every period in life, as in the life of a society as a whole, can be characterized through different aspects: social, economic, scientific, educational, and others. Every period is different from the previous one and from the following one, because everything changes with time.

If we consider the socio-psychological perspective of the current period, we can say that one of its characteristics is STRESS. This is not the momentary natural tension that appears when we face new situations, or when making decisions. Nor is it the excitement felt before a significant and important event or a big project. This is a long lasting inner state of pressure that causes an imbalance, an almost constant state of life.

The word 'stress' as a description of a state of mind originated in the 1930's by Hans Selye, a doctor of Austro-Hungarian origin. Up until then the word was only used in the field of physics, in order to describe the external force exerted on matter, causing movement as result. This demonstrates that the experience of psychological stress is a relatively new phenomenon, a result of a certain lifestyle.

It seems that in recent years, the man of the era of smartphones, tablets, and the countless gadgets and applications, is on a super-fast racetrack, the starting point of which he does not recall, nor is its aim always clear, because it's possible that the track may be circular. In any case, it seems that the acceleration of technology has been a significant factor in the acceleration of inner tension, and the feeling that one must run forward and close a certain gap, imaginary or not.

Let us look at what transpired before the technological era. On one hand there was more simplicity in the everyday conduct of the individual. The proximity to nature and the cultivation of land forced the individual to engage in a limited number of actions that were often repetitive. This simplicity surely influenced the way of thinking and the natural and harmonic connection with the environment. On the other hand the individual worked harder. Great effort and energy was required to work in manual jobs; moving things, getting around on foot, or conveying messages from place to place. The time needed to perform these operations was long as well.

With the gradual entry of technology, it seems that almost every human action had found a

replacement in the form of a device or a machine. The different domestic appliances can help shorten the time in which we deal with housework, using vehicles we can cross through countries within a few hours, and with social media messages we can convey information we need to deliver quickly.

Today we can say that the physical effort required to operate most of these activities is small, and often comes down to a touch of a button. If we had imagined this situation tens or hundreds of years ago, we would think it would bring a situation with more convenience, efficiency, tranquility, serenity and happiness, since there is no need to tire or strain too much to get a particular thing, and you can have time to do the truly important things in Life.

But is that the case? Have the solutions that we invented indeed advanced the human being?

Sometimes a process can take time, just like a seed that requires time and the appropriate conditions in order to become a tree.

It is great that technology added a lot of convenience and efficiency in the basic levels of our existence but can we really say that with these technological developments Life has become more peaceful? Less stressful? Or that the individual has more time and availability, being less busy and preoccupied? And where is the happiness that some companies continually promise us when we buy one of their new products?

If we isolate a certain device or product, we will find many advantages for making our lives simpler and more comfortable, as well as great satisfaction,

which is the result of its immediate benefit. The satisfaction, for example, of sending an e-mail to make things happen, or the satisfaction of receiving a product or some information by a push of a button, something that would have taken us months to look for without the Internet. But if we look at the whole and possibly deeper picture, which lasts beyond the momentary pleasure, which penetrates the inner effects of this technology, we see a situation that must be addressed.

It seems that the penetration of devices into our lives and their use is not the problem in itself, since the purpose is often good. The principal problem is the new types of perceptions, or ways of thought, as well as new lifestyles that perhaps without realizing have entered into our lives together with technology. These perceptions can be dangerous, like everything else that is out of balance.

Let's consider some of these perceptions that we have assimilated in recent years: one of the most popular modern perceptions is the need for speed and the necessity of constant innovation. The upgrading pace of the various devices has increased and, with it, the need to constantly renew and replace the product. It is common today to replace cellphones every year or two and a laptop every two or three.

Ostensibly, this seems positive because if it is possible to make a better device in terms of technology so why not upgrade it?

But what is the price that we have to pay? The rapid production rate, the need to keep up with it and not to be left behind, has penetrated our lives and is expressed in various forms such as: thinking quickly, reacting quickly, acting quickly in order to solve problems faster and so on.

The experience of living life as a race has penetrated us to the point where perhaps we have lost some of that ancient wisdom that relates to understanding

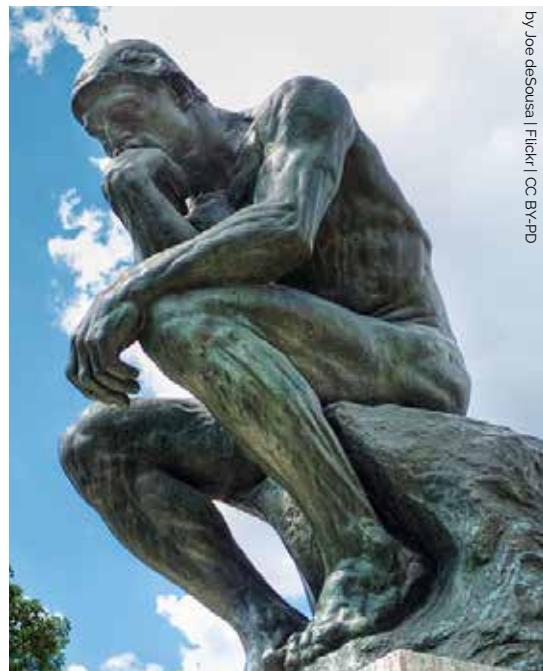
life, and to the fact that sometimes a process can take time, just like a seed that requires time and the appropriate conditions in order to become a tree.

Another common concept is that we have no time. Man is usually very busy. In general, to be busy and active is a good thing and indicates a type of health and vitality, but the problem is when a person uses the word 'busy', he is in fact meaning to say 'preoccupied'.

To be preoccupied is to be concerned; it is a situation in which even if you have physical time, the mental or emotional preoccupation causes the illusion that you do not have it. If you could give plants or animals the opportunity to express themselves would they also complain about the lack of time to fulfill their duties? And perhaps in the same manner, if the individual first and foremost sets his goal to become a human being, then he will always have time, since there is no limit to the possibility of expressing human virtues such as beauty, patience, attentiveness and generosity.

Another modern concept, no less popular than its predecessors, is that the more a person consumes, the happier he will be. Technological progress along with the prevailing economic system – capitalism – engendered a great illusion: man always lacks something in order to be happy. Therefore, to fill the void one must always purchase the newest product, encouraging companies to produce more and newer products. In the framework of this vicious cycle, a question appears: when will a person have everything he needs? Perhaps we need to seek this feeling of fulfillment elsewhere? Perhaps breaking the rules of the game will accelerate the need to seek individual and stable happiness within oneself?

The previous conception brings with it the notion that one has to be the best. After all, if one wants to be able to purchase more one must earn more, to improve one's social status and climb up the social ladder. But does being the best require us



by Joe de Souza | Flickr | CC BY-PD

to be the most ethical and moral? If this were the case, we would now be living in a moral and ethical society with principles of integrity and truth. Today, in order to be better, the individual needs to enter a competitive race against the friends with whom he works. In many cases the motor for this kind of action will be fear of failure or staying behind.

In light of the above, one can see easily how modern man is sucked into a situation of daily stress that affects the different aspects of his life.

How can we change this?

If stress is a state of imbalance, the answer lies in restoring balance and harmony. This does not mean that we should ignore the developments of recent years, to give up the progress and go back to the Stone Age or Iron Age, but to relearn the difference between ends and means, and to revive the principles and wisdom we have somewhat lost.

For example, one of the basic laws of nature is the law of order and harmony. In Nature things are well

organized, everything has its place and knows its duty: from plants and animals, to mountains and seas, to the sky and the stars. There is harmony, correct relationships, mutual respect, a melody that creates life. Man is an additional life form, which is part of the whole fabric. How, then, must he act to contribute to harmony and not to violate it?

In the repository of human wisdom as reflected in the literature of different cultures (the Indian Mahabharata, the Analects of Confucius, The Buddhist Dhammapada and many others), can be found a principle of life which is the 'Middle Path'. The Middle Path guides a person to maintain inner balance within the movement that life brings with it; how to live without falling into one of the extremes of more or less, spiritual or material, indulgence or abstinence.



Contemporary reality can also obey the law of the Middle Path if we take into account a few things:

- To note misconceptions that penetrate our lives, and know how to neutralize them through good education.
- To remember and educate that no tool or device can provide the profound happiness which we long for. At the same time strive to find the inner joy that is not dependent on anything.
- To develop, but not only technologically, also in terms of values and morality.
- To dare to control weaknesses, to put limits and know when to use and when not to use a certain

device or tool.

- To learn about creativity and initiative not only in order to think about the latest product, but to break mental concepts that have accumulated and to build healthier ones.

The Middle Path is the intelligent action that does not ignore the moral aspect of the action, and looks for ways to address not only the basic needs of man, but also his natural yearning to grow towards the good, the beautiful, the just and the true.

The Middle Path is the intelligent action that does not ignore the moral aspect of the action, and looks for ways to address not only the basic needs of man, but also his natural yearning to grow towards the good, the beautiful, the just and the true.

Is the Middle Path the answer to life without stress? Yes and no. If by 'stress' you mean the unhealthy stress that arises from an incorrect way of life that has infiltrated our lives, then the answer is yes. By removing misconceptions, and instilling education of more correct concepts, it is possible. But if the intent of the word 'stress' is the right tension that keeps a human being alive and alert, similar to the correct tension that permits a string to produce a sound, then the answer is no. Since the correct tension is itself a reflection of the Middle Path. ★★

Manit Adar-Matoki is the National Director of New Acropolis (South Korea).

THE ETERNAL SUN

BY JANKI SHAH



"All that exists was born from Surya, the God of Gods. Of what is and has been and is to be, and what moves or remains still – Surya alone is the source and the end."

-Rig Veda

Almost every ancient culture thought it important to somehow preserve, communicate and transmit mythology related to this supreme God from generation to generation. *Amon* in Egypt, *Apollo* in Greece, *Surya* in India, *Amaterasu* in Japan, *Xihe* in China, *Mithra* in Mesopotamia, *Huitzilopochtlí* for the Aztec, *Malakbel* in Arabia, to mention a few. It was imperative for civilizations to pass on this wisdom that was received from ancestors to future generations; by doing so they became a link in a long chain that connected humanity to the eternal wisdom of the past, as well as the future. Today most of us look at mythology as mere stories of fantastic characters to entertain the young. Some of us dig a little deeper to unveil the morals and life lessons that lay waiting to be unraveled. Maybe we could dig even deeper and unveil some relevance to our role as human beings – in the current scenario of the 21st century. Perhaps even get a peek into the mysteries of the human being and the universe and

some questions like: Who am I? Where do I come from? What is my purpose?

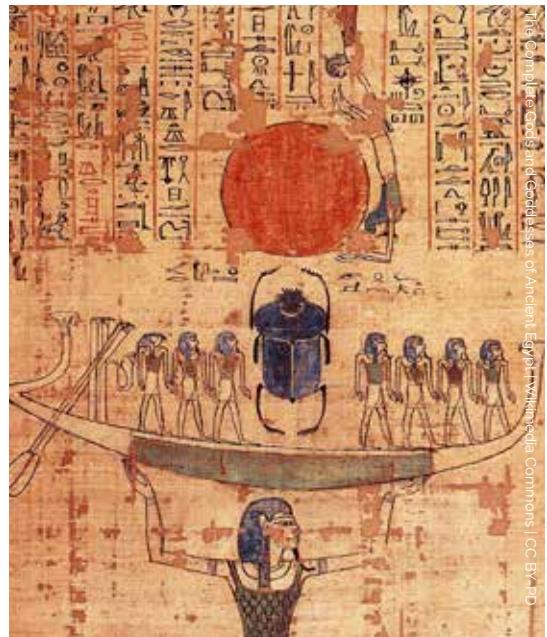
The sun is the generator of all life on earth. Since the dawn of time, humanity has instinctively related to the sun as the fundamental source. It is a symbol of truth, of the Supreme Being that embodies justice and equality, wisdom and enlightenment, renewal and rebirth. Numerous religious rituals, social rites, festivals and traditions we see today can be traced back to the ancient worship of the Sun. Many ancient monuments like the pyramids in Egypt, the Stonehenge in England, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Konark in India offer us a glimpse of the connection that these civilizations had with the Sun and the celestial beings. As in nature, the symbolism of the sun is omnipresent in all aspects of life – whether be it art, architecture, sport, literature, dance, music, folklore, philosophy, religion or festivals.

For Australian aborigines, *Gnowee*, a solar goddess was once a woman who lived upon the earth at a time when it was eternally dark, and people could only move about with the aid of bark torches. One day she left her little boy sleeping while she went out to dig for yams. *Gnowee* wandered so far that she reached the end of the earth, passed under it

and emerged on the other side. Not knowing where she was, she could not find her little boy anywhere, so she climbed into the sky with her great bark torch to get a clearer view. She still wanders the sky to this day, everyday, lighting the whole world with her torch as she continues to search for her lost son.

It was imperative for civilizations to pass on this wisdom that was received from ancestors to future generations; by doing so they became a link in a long chain that connected humanity to the eternal wisdom of the past, as well as the future.

The theme of the voyage of the sun appears in various myths across civilizations. The Sun's circular, cyclical journey from east to west, day after day symbolized cycles of life and death through light and darkness, wakefulness and sleep, of consciousness and unconsciousness. Its seemingly repetitive action brings to the world a new dawn every day. Each time with higher consciousness, with new learnings experienced with each passing day. A new opportunity to be awakened from sleep. Another opportunity to lead a life of higher consciousness. We can also see these cycles as generosity and compassion of the Universe – patiently giving all



beings opportunities again and again to learn, to grow, to walk forward – one small step at a time.

Ancient Egyptians attentively watched the Sun's daily round, which they represented in the form of *Kephri* – a scarab beetle carrying a resplendent solar disk – indicating the potential of a human being, traversing cycles of life and death with the inspiration of the sun as the supreme example of rebirth. The scarab, or dung beetle, is very much connected to the earth but with persistence and consistency, it achieves its potential eventually – literally sprouting wings, flying off towards the celestial and becoming one with the divine. Like the famous sentence attributed to Plato, "Man you are God, but you forgot." It's the duty of a human being to go through this 'death' of identifying with the temporary aspects of himself, the body and personality, and be 'reborn', by discovering and identifying with his higher aspects...to uncover the eternal soul that is truly us, and then live life in accordance to that wisdom.

"He who dwells in man and who dwells in the sun is one and the same." - Upanishad

During the Roman Empire, this voyage of the sun was more than just the beginning and an end of a journey. The festival of *Sol Invictus*, the victory of the Unconquered Sun was celebrated on the winter solstice - the "rebirth" of the sun after the darkest night of the year.

Since the dawn of time, humanity has instinctively related to the sun as the fundamental source. It is a symbol of truth, of the Supreme Being that embodies justice and equality, wisdom and enlightenment, renewal and rebirth.

We see that ancient Egyptians paid homage to the sun by burying their dead with heads towards the west – where the sun 'dies' each evening, implying that they saw the sun being 'reborn' every morning.



Similarly, they didn't see the physical death of a human being as the final destination of his journey but just another station on his long voyage called life. Sun-related rituals were also performed in order to 'encourage and assist' the sun when it seemed to 'hesitate and waver' at the turn of the seasons (solstices) and to quell the fear that it might be extinguished during an eclipse. The *Ojibwe* tribe in North America and the *Sencis* from Eastern

Peru shoot burning arrows at the Sun in order to rekindle its darkening orb during an eclipse, and another tribe in North America erects and dances around a central pole symbolizing the sun's power. In some agricultural communities in south east Asia, the *Cadak* ceremony is still performed, in which a man hooked to a tall pole swings around it as an act of magic in order to help the Sun move from its position in the constellation of Sagittarius to the constellation of Capricorn. In French villages in the Thur and Thann valleys, nine feet tall towers of fire are built in order to provide the sun with sufficient energy, enabling it to resume its journey around the earth during the critical periods before changing its direction from the longest night of December 21st, to the shortest on June 21st. A 'helping hand' during midsummer's day is similarly extended in the Baltics by ceremonially jumping over the fires.

We can also see these cycles as generosity and compassion of the Universe – patiently giving all beings opportunities again and again to learn, to grow, to walk forward – one small step at a time.

These, and numerous other customs, may be considered primitive traditions of simple folk, or they might offer an understanding that these civilizations had about the role of man in the larger scheme of things; the recognition that without the help and effort of humanity, of each individual, even the sun, the great giver of life, will not be able to express its duty to the fullest. Let us allow the mythology and symbolism of the Sun to inspire us to know ourselves, to know our role as individuals and as humanity. ★★

Bibliography

Singh, Madanjeet. *The Sun in Myth and Art*. Thames and Hudson. London, GB. (1993).

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS

www.acropolis.org.in



by woodleywonderworks | Flickr | CC BY 2.0

SECRETS FOR A WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Philosophy Café @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 9th January 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

In a fast paced world of increasing connectivity, how can we maintain meaningful connections with people around us?



by Josef Grunig | Flickr | CC BY-SA 2.0

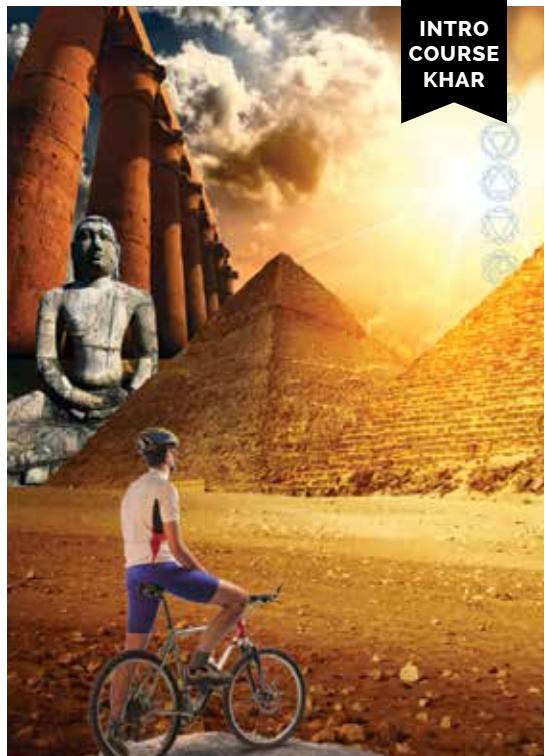
KARMA, DESTINY, & FREE WILL

Lecture @ Khar

Saturday, 9th January 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Is Man ultimately bound by Destiny? Or is he entirely Free? This question has preoccupied human beings. Join us as we investigate Karma and Dharma, and extract their relevance to daily life.



INTRO COURSE KHAR

LIVING PHILOSOPHY: DISCOVER, AWAKEN, TRANSFORM

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Course @ Khar

FREE INTRO:

Wed, 27th Jan 2016, 7:30PM (2hrs)

Course Starts:

Wed, 3rd Feb 2016, 7:30PM (2hrs)

This course establishes the foundation for every aspiring Philosopher by presenting a comparative study of Classical Philosophies, and helping students to develop a sensitivity towards the fundamental Laws that govern Nature and Humanity. In an attempt to preserve this universal heritage, the course serves as an introduction to ancient cultures and investigates the origins of humanity – a time of wonder and mysticism when the invisible world was respected. Course Duration – 16 Sessions. FEES APPLY.

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS

www.acropolis.org.in



DEVELOPING A VICTORIOUS ATTITUDE

Lecture @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 30th January 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

The Buddha leaves us profound observations and timeless practical solutions to life problems. How might we apply his teachings to our urban context to gain victory over our everyday challenges?



OVERCOMING FEARS

Workshop @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 6th February 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

How can we learn to better work with the potentially debilitating emotion of fear, and allow ourselves to lead freer and fuller lives.



CONCENTRATION AND INNER AWAKENING

Lecture @ Khar

Saturday, 30th January 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Concentration is an essential ingredient of a fulfilling life. Through Tibetan iconography, we shall investigate how to cultivate this human ability. For the first time in Khar, presentation by National Director of New Acropolis, Mr. Yaron Barzilay.



BUILDING A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS SOCIETY

Lecture @ Khar

Saturday, 13th February 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

By introducing the notion of Gross National Happiness, the Bhutanese government has taken on the difficult task of measuring happiness, as the primary benchmark for good governance. What is happiness really? And how might we become happier today?

COLABA (MAIN CENTER)

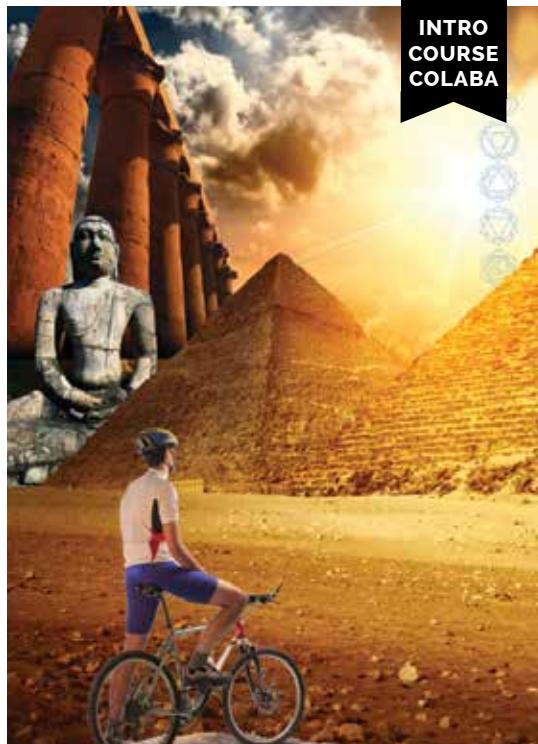
A-0 Ground Fl, Connaught Mansion,
Colaba (Opp. Colaba Post Office),
Mumbai

T: 022 3192 0515

KHAR

Ashray, 2nd Floor, 19th Rd,
Anand Vihar Society, Khar (W),
Mumbai

T: +91 98330 33239



LIVING PHILOSOPHY: DISCOVER, AWAKEN, TRANSFORM

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Course @ Colaba (Main Centre)

FREE INTRO:

Tuesday, 16th Feb 2016, 7:30PM (2hrs)

Course Starts:

Tuesday, 23rd Feb 2016, 7:30PM (2hrs)

This course establishes the foundation for every aspiring Philosopher by presenting a comparative study of Classical Philosophies, and helping students to develop a sensitivity towards the fundamental Laws that govern Nature and Humanity. In an attempt to preserve this universal heritage, the course serves as an introduction to ancient cultures and investigates the origins of humanity – a time of wonder and mysticism when the invisible world was respected. Course Duration – 16 Sessions. FEES APPLY.



COURAGE TO LISTEN TO THE INNER VOICE

Lecture @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 20th February 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

With the numerous voices pulling us in many directions, how can we learn to listen to our own inner voice and fulfill our purpose? Presentation by National Director of New Acropolis, Mr. Yaron Barzilay.



BECOMING A SMART VOLUNTEER

Lecture @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 27th February 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

So much selfless work is being done to address ecology, education, and social upliftment. Yet, viable holistic solutions remain elusive. What does it really mean to be a volunteer? How might we become efficient changemakers?

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS

www.acropolis.org.in



GOD: THE UNMATCHED INVENTOR

Lecture @ Khar

Saturday, 27th February 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Nature combines beauty, economy and functionality in such ingenious ways that innumerable human 'inventions' originate and are inspired by her innovations. Are these coincidence or creative design? How might our role fit in?



TIMELESS PRINCIPLES OF HAPPINESS

Lecture @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 12th March 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

The search for happiness is universal, yet the more we seek it the more it seems to evade us. What are some tools to help us discover everlasting happiness?



POWER OF TWO HANDS

Lecture

Saturday, 12th March 2016

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

New Acropolis @ Khar

"Everyone thinks of changing the world but no one thinks of changing himself" - Leo Tolstoy. Can an individual really contribute towards changing our world? Join us as we explore how we can be the change we wish to see.



PAPYRUS OF ANI - LIFE JOURNEY BEYOND DEATH

Lecture @ Express Gallery, Express Towers.
Nariman Point, Mumbai

Wednesday, 16th March 2016

7:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

This fascinating Ancient Egyptian pictographic text describes the voyage of the soul beyond the material world, offering insight into the role of Man, in life and in death. How might its themes be relevant to us today?

VOLUNTEERING INITIATIVES AT NEW ACROPOLIS



New Acropolis members clean up Ban Ganga, an ancient water tank fed by a freshwater spring said to have emerged as Laxman, brother of Lord Ram, shot an arrow into the ground.



New Acropolis Volunteers hard at work beautifying a neglected Colaba lane.



Project completed with support from BMC and Colaba Residents Association.

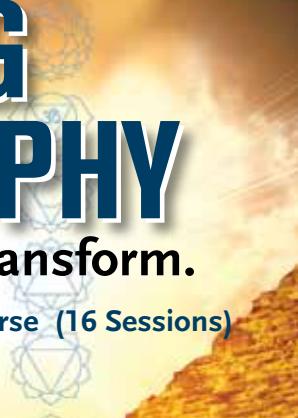


Guests spinning New Acropolis' Wheel of Virtue to inspire the expression of virtues amongst Mumbaiites.

LIVING PHILOSOPHY

Discover. Awaken. Transform.

A 32-hour Introductory Philosophy Course (16 Sessions)



Free Into Course Starts
27th Jan 3rd Feb
16th Feb 23rd Feb

KHAR: Wednesday, 7:30pm
COLABA: Tuesday, 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

CALL

+91.22.3192.0515 | info@acropolis.org.in | www.acropolis.org.in

EMAIL

VISIT

Main Center: A-0 Connaught Mansions. Opp. Colaba Post Office. Colaba, Mumbai.