

A large, out-of-focus photograph of a person's head and shoulders. The person is wearing a dark blue hooded garment and a white cloth wrapped around their head like a turban. They are holding a long, thin torch or staff vertically in front of them, with a bright flame at the top. The background is dark and indistinct.

JUL - SEP 2017

THEACROPOLITAN

A Magazine on Philosophy, Culture & Volunteering

FEATURE

THE ANXIETIES OF YOUTH

KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE

YEARNING FOR CHANGE

ENCOUNTERING THE MIND
THROUGH ASHTANGA YOGA

RE-HUMANIZING CORPORATE CULTURE

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS





Celebrating **60 Years of Fraternity**

International Organization New Acropolis – **15th July 2017**

Together we Build a New and Better World for a New and Better Humanity.

FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Reader,

Jubilant and rejuvenated, New Acropolis's 60th year anniversary is a joyful re-affirmation of the glorious dream to build a new and better world. To manifest this dream, idealists through history have embarked upon inner journeys that unfold from the deep yearning for change, a change that might unleash our true individual and collective potentials, fuel our inner flame, and empower each aspirant of this joyous path to serve by taking decisive

steps up the stairway towards our eternal spiritual identities.

We take this momentous opportunity to break free from our fears and anxieties, to dare to encounter the frontiers of our minds, so that we may once again seize our own humanity. To live philosophy, is to Discover, Awaken, and Transform!

Harianto Mehta, Editor.

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THE LITTLE PRINCE: A JOURNEY INWARDS

BY KRUTIKA MEHTA



Most ancient traditions seem to share a dominant myth that revolves around a long and arduous journey with the hero facing danger or death, overcoming obstacles, before accomplishing his purposeful goal and returning home. Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, among others, viewed some of these heroes even as gods. Hercules and Arjuna are examples of such heroes who, while fighting monumental challenges, grew in stature, and unlocked their true potential. Perhaps like these heroes, we too are on our own journey to discover our own potential. Perhaps in this journey lie the hidden answers to questions about the meaning and purpose of our lives!

Antoine De Saint Exupery's *The Little Prince* is a beautiful and moving fable of a prince who embarks on a journey to find the answers to universal questions about human existence. Profound ideas from his book, invite the reader to embark on a similar voyage.

"I am who I am and I have the need to be."

"What matters most are the simple pleasures so abundant that we can all enjoy them... Happiness doesn't lie in the objects we gather around us. To find it all we need to do is open our eyes."

To decode these ideas, we begin to investigate the idea that to truly grow as a human being, one must undertake an investigative inward journey deep within ourselves. It is only then that we will be able to answer the greatest of all questions – "Who am I?" Perhaps, the true being that I am, is beyond habits and external conditioning, which usually define our identities. To know who I am, is to go beyond these superficial definitions, to find an eternal aspect, one's true potential, perhaps the source of true happiness and joy.

But how should we begin this demanding and baffling journey?

"It's a question of discipline... When you've finished washing and cleaning each morning you must tend to your planet."

Our growth cannot come from isolating ourselves, disconnecting from the world. We need to engage with our planet, the "here and now", with the challenges that we are born to which might present themselves in personal relationships, jobs, social obligations, etc. To engage with life, one needs to work with discipline and responsibility. Exupery recognizes that 'tending' to these challenges are

exactly the opportunities that might reveal what we are ready to learn, in order to grow one step closer to our potentials, the inner Little Prince.

Soon the little Prince encounters a fox:

"Please...tame me," he [the fox] said. "What does that mean...tame?" asked the little prince. "It means 'to create ties,'" answered the fox.

In a metaphorical manner, the author alludes to the need to tame our animalistic desires and tendencies, such that we are able to establish "ties". When we create ties, we create inter-dependence, and free ourselves of personal and animalistic motivations. In doing so, we take responsibility to engage with someone or something by investing ourselves wholly, free of personal subjectivities. This brings to mind the ancient Egyptian concept of *neter* - to give meaning to each act we do. Nothing remains casual; it can be as simple as cutting a vegetable or as complex as writing a research paper. To give meaning, one must be in the moment and give undivided attention to what one is doing.

The fox said, "To me you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you on your part, have no need of me. To you I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world...the only things you learn to love are the things you tame."

The fox here reiterates for the reader, through his own example, why the rose on his planet was so special for the Little Prince. It was only after the prince had seen a bush full of roses that he realized that even though all the roses looked the same, his rose was the most beautiful. The fact that he had cared for her, and nurtured her, made her unique and gave his relationship a special meaning.

This applies also to our relationships, whether with people or with our principles. Ties founded on insecurity are fragile, but when based on unconditional love, absent fear, they become strong and meaningful. Likewise, our relationship with life is what we bring to it. If we are fearful, it will give us circumstances that will oblige us to engage with fear, giving us many opportunities to learn and grow out of that fear. But can we face our challenges heroically? Or do we run from circumstances that threaten to destabilize us? Establishing ties, bringing meaning and justice to every act takes effort – but it is the beginning of an inward journey that will help us introspect, reflect, know ourselves and slowly uncover our hidden potential.

'Tending' to these challenges are exactly the opportunities that might reveal what we are ready to learn, in order to grow one step closer to our potentials, the inner Little Prince.

"And now here's my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye... The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or touched, they are felt with the heart."

What is essential is always invisible to the eye. It can't be felt through our senses. It needs to be experienced and lived.

What is this miracle called life? What is it about nature that speaks so deeply and compellingly to something within us? When the setting sun splashes violet and pink across the evening sky, when a field of flowers in full bloom, each lifting its dancing head to look heavenwards, when the boughs of fruit trees grow heavier each day with ripening fruit - what is the mysterious ingredient that captivates our spirit? This

mysterious ingredient lies beyond our subjective senses; it cannot be captured by our knowledge or our opinions. Perhaps, it is through an intuitive process that we must grasp this strong, albeit subtle, force of life which weaves itself through the universe. Nature is governed by a set of laws, which also apply to us, because we are also a part of nature.

"What makes the desert beautiful," said the little prince, "is that somewhere it hides a well..."

Ancient Greeks spoke of *nous*, the Brahminic tradition teaches of *arupa*. When two schools of thought, one eastern and one western, geographically and culturally diverse, speak about the same idea, perhaps we are talking about a universal truth – the existence of a realm beyond the tangible plane wherein lie the archetypes of Truth, Beauty, and Justice – the source of all things in the material world. But how do we begin our personal search for this realm?

"A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it bearing within him the image of a cathedral."

What can connect us to something greater than ourselves is our imagination. When we imagine, and act on our imagination, we give shape to abstract, intangible ideas. Imagination is the tool that helps us experience the invisible within us. It helps us tap into our hidden potential and allows us to see the essential in ourselves. But to bridge the gap between imagination and the invisible realm, one must use the force of Will, in order to act, to manifest the idea.

The choice is always ours: To Be or Not to Be? To embark on this inner investigative journey that requires effort, and pushing of our personal limitations? Or to stay safely ignorant in our comfort zones? To pick up our bow and fight the Just war like Arjun, or to withdraw from the battle of life with all

the opportunities for growth it offers? To pick the red pill like Neo in the Matrix, or the blue pill that returns us to a comatose ignorance?

To express our potential, we must pick the heroic choice; to strive steadfastly in our search for the essential, to see our challenges not as tasks but as opportunities, to bring meaning to life in every act, to seek Truth, and to aspire to connect with the invisible both within ourselves, and in the universe.



"..he took my hand. But he was still a little anxious. You were wrong to come. You'll suffer. I'll look as if I am dead and that won't be true. You understand. It's too far. I can't take this body with me, it's too heavy."

We are not separate from nature. We are an integral part of it. And like the trees that shed their leaves every winter so that a rebirth can take place every spring, so too we have our own cycle – the cycle of life and death. Perhaps we too shed our bodies in preparation for a rebirth so that our journey continues...the only difference is that man's destiny awaits him in the eternal invisible world of the archetypes. And even though we are uncertain of what lies ahead, in daring to push forward lies our glory.

"By the light of the moon I gazed at that pale forehead, the closed eyes, those locks of hair trembling in the wind. What I am looking at is only a shell. What's most important is invisible." ★★

YEARNING FOR CHANGE

BY YARON BARZILAY



There are many in the world today who are yearning for change. They want to see the world change, to become capable of addressing the current burning issues; capable not only of spotting the problems, but also to offer valid solutions and, above all, to materialize them.

It really doesn't take much to list the main issues the world at large is facing today, and those which we may face very shortly. There might be even greater problems which are as yet not so visible, but might be the root for what is more easily seen. Among them we may suggest ignorance and materialism for example.

Global organizations, such as the United Nations with its various dedicated committees, sometimes seem to serve a different agenda than that which they were originally created for, or are simply unable to agree on the necessary direct action. Issues such as the water crises, global warming, the growing number of devastating arms and poverty, to name but a few, are left with no answer at all. We are destroying the world with our own hands, while those who have the power often seem to cynically deny these matters.

There are, of course, numerous individuals and organizations that are doing wonderful dedicated work to address these problems, though it often seems that their efforts are not enough to root them out as we continue to face the same issues, sometimes with even greater gravity.

We cannot fall to despair as we simply do not have the privilege to do so. Nor would it be very philosophical to lose hope and faith in the human capacity to grow and overcome challenges. The love of wisdom underlines an everlasting possibility to move forward and upward. Hope forever remains in Pandora's Box, always within man's reach. But hope alone will not redeem the world if humanity remains idle, unwilling to change.

Perhaps the attempt to change the world by forming new frameworks, new global organizations that might agree and act in the right direction, is not sufficient. It is needed, no doubt. But is it enough? Can we really change the world for the better by relying on new agreements to be signed and followed while man himself, who is the very cause of most of the world's troubles, remains the same? Can we really agree to act together as one and implement even the most obvious needful steps? In

today's global world, can a real solution be applied only in parts of the world, while others resist?

Are we to wait until a real calamity hits, a catastrophe, at such a scale that we will not have any choice but to act? Or maybe we shall finally unite to confront some ill seeking aliens, as often suggested by Hollywood screen writers. Well, such action would result from having greatly suffered; not from our intelligence, our ability to foresee and guide. Yet the urgency to act is actual and real.

It is quite clear that Gandhi's words about being the change we wish to see in the world truly resonates with a solid truth. We cannot demand the world to change, without ourselves becoming the change we seek. Rather than focusing exclusively on external global solutions, we must also pay attention to our own individual ability to change, perhaps giving it even greater importance, because again, what's the use of having a perfect system in place, if the man that runs it remains the same?

It goes without saying that by "to be the change" we mean: for the better...of course, if we want to change the world, unless we are extremely fanatic, it is for the better. Yet, it is important to clarify this for ourselves, because a change just for the sake of change, can lead us to a much worse situation. We must find a direction, forward and upward, and through us, the world around us. In the words of Prof. Jorge Ángel Livraga, the founder of New Acropolis, we seek a new and better world, by new and better human beings.

Can we imagine ourselves better? Not more of the same, with some additional gadgets, technology and stricter laws. But better - with new virtues and abilities, higher awareness, closer to the archetypes of Justice, Truth, Beauty and Goodness, as spoken of by Plato and many other respected philosophers. Are we able to imagine ourselves with the virtues we are yet to awaken? Do we have faith in ourselves, in our common destiny as humanity? Is how we see ourselves today, all we are capable of being? Not to have, but to be...

Can't we imagine ourselves better? If we can, we already perceive what we are to become and, therefore, are linked to it. Our task then, is to walk the path towards it, to act everyday in the light of what we already know to be right deep within, and invite anyone who is willing to listen, anyone who shares in this yearning for change in himself, and in the world.

This is not an instant solution, if such a solution exists at all, nor is it easy...but it is a valid solution - maybe the only valid direction to take. It seems that wherever man is, there is a complexity, nothing is really so simple. But there is always reason for hope because essentially Man, as all the ancient traditions explain, is much more than flesh and bones that simply disappear into the void; Man, they say, is also a spiritual being, a transient stage towards unimaginable glory, a bridge between heaven and earth, spirit and matter.

Philosophy, as a way of life, has a wonderful and precious contribution to make. It brings us closer to the eternal archetypes of life and thus makes us more alive. It helps us to perceive in our own capacity, that life has a direction and a purpose... it moves and evolves. One may call it *Dharma*, another might call it destiny, a meaning, or a path. Philosophy shows us the way which we must follow, the change we wish for. It helps us discover that we always carry with us hope in the box, much more important than all the evils we might be carrying. It is a light that clears all shadows. It is for us to be that hope for the world. To be a philosopher is to be an idealist, a man of virtue.

Some may argue that philosophy is un-practical. Others say that it is the only practical solution. It is definitely a wonderful adventure – one that stands for the banner of change – to change ourselves for the new, and the better...to look upwards for change, as profound change always comes from above. ★★★

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KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE

BY KURUSH DORDI



As the Sun rises over the horizon and fills the sky with its magical light, a 2000 year old ritual is performed daily in the few remaining Zoroastrian temples of Mumbai. The priest performs a ceremony (5 times each day), tending to the flames of the consecrated fire, offering fragrant sandalwood and incense while reciting ancient texts venerating the holy fire, ringing a bell nine times, rejecting evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds. Such veneration of fire, however, is not distinct to the Zoroastrian community. Many cultures around the world have worshipped fire in different manners over millennia.

Sitting around a campfire on a dark night watching the flames rise upwards, emits a reassuring warmth. But a rampaging fire in all its fury drives fear into our hearts. Overcoming fear and fascination for this element, human beings have observed volcanic eruptions and lightning that strikes the earth with awe and respect, resulting in the veneration the element of fire as a gift of the gods. Harnessing the power of fire for human benefit was an important milestone in anthropological history.

Interestingly eight of the ten books of the *Rig Veda* start with a song in praise of *Agni*/the god of Fire.

An ancient Greek myth speaks of Prometheus, who disobeyed Zeus's decree, stole fire from the chariot of the Sun god Helios and gave it to man as a gift. This act of compassion, in the interest of Man's progress bore grave consequences and he is said to suffer a terrible punishment for his actions. The international Olympic Games commemorate this theft of fire in the lighting and consecration of the Olympic flame with the help of the Sun's rays.

Ancient pantheism was an expression of a deep way of life that celebrated the profound connection between Man and the universe.

On a different continent, an Aztec myth speaks of the god Nanahuatl who jumped into a fire, sacrificing himself to become the Sun, to set into motion the beginning of the fifth age.

And more recently, fire played an important purifying role in medieval alchemy that employed a special oven, the *Atano*, a symbol of transmutation of a substance into a different element.

Today, we look upon these civilisations as backward or primitive, superstitious in their understanding of life.

However, perhaps ancient pantheism was but an expression of a deep way of life that celebrated the profound connection between Man and the Universe. So too, perhaps the element Fire has a deeper meaning symbolized by, and manifesting in, the physical fire that we see. As a symbol, it allows us to discover the invisible and essential aspect of reality that transcends the transient illusion of form.



Ancient esoterism seems to emphasise the value of the mental fire, said to bring about intelligence and the capability of objectively discerning between the essential and the superficial, much like the physical fire which produces heat and purifies a substance. In the same way mental fire is said to burn away the unessential leaving behind the pure essence.

"O Ahura Mazda, the most beneficent spirit and the bestower of good things in return for prayers! Do Thou purify me (i.e keep me away from wicked deeds), owing to (my) gentleness (or humility) do Thou grant me strength, on account of righteousness bestow upon (me) mighty power (and) on account of (my) good thoughts grant me supremacy." (3) (Zend Avesta, Atash Niyaesh – Homage to Fire)

Fire in Zoroastrianism plays a vital role. Zarathushtra, in his prophetic revelation, gave Fire a universal role

and metaphysical meaning. *Atash* (Fire) is called *Asha Vahishta*, Cosmic Fire or Divine Essence of *Ahura Mazda* (the Supreme Being) which resides in every atom of the Universe. It is the source of all creation and is equated with *Ahura Mazda*'s own Inner Divine Light, which crosses the limits of time and space. The fire which we see is simply the physical manifestation of this Divine Light and it is considered to be the son of *Ahura Mazda* sent to the Earth to move creation forward towards its final goal.

Hence, Fire in Zoroastrian theology is a symbol of an inner flame that is honoured through the physical medium of the flames that burn in the fire temples, and is a medium to reach out to the Divine, reaching always upwards to unity.

Fire then, refers to the inner illumination through which God bestows wisdom and courage to man. One prayer which devout Zoroastrians recite every day reads: "Who will, O wise One, give me protection, when the deceitful threatens to harm me, other than your Fire and Mind?"

The sacred hymns composed by Zarathushtra speak of the mental fire, "The happiness You grant has been promised...through Your mental fire and righteousness." The words for "mental fire and righteousness" in Avestan are *mainyu athra-cha asha-cha* which literally mean "through mind, through fire, and through *Asha* (righteousness)." [Yasna, Ch31.3] The universal laws of *Asha* govern and bring order to material existence and refer to the individual's ethical choice, to align thoughts, words and deeds; principled, honest, beneficent, ordered, lawful living.

Today such consecrated fires are housed in Fire temples or sacred structures known as *Dar-e-Meher*. *Dar* etymologically originates from Avesta, *dvara*, (Sanskrit: *dvara*, German: *Thor*, English: Door) and *Meher* refers to *Mithra* who in Zoroastrian angelology, is the *Yazata* presiding over light and justice. So the term literally means 'the door of light.'

Each of these temples consists of a fire consecrated through carefully conducted ceremonies conducted by priests, meant to unleash the spiritual energy of the fire. The highest grade of such temples maintain a fire that comprises sixteen different types of fire, and is dedicated to *Verethraghna* (Archangel of Victory) and is called *Atash Bahram*.

Fire in Zoroastrian theology is a symbol of an inner flame that is honoured through the physical medium of the flames that burn in the fire temples, and is a medium to reach out to the divine, reaching always upwards to unity.

All fires are regarded as warriors, fighting for the preservation of creation against the forces of darkness, not just on the physical plane. Having undergone the ceremonial purification each fire acts as a talisman against the force of ignorance. As per Zoroastrian tradition, mankind thus shares with the angelic divinities the great common purpose of gradually overcoming evil and restoring the world to its original perfect state. The glorious moment when this will be achieved is called *Frasho-kereti* a term which can be interpreted as 'Healing' or 'Renovation'.

In the 10th Century C.E., the ancestors of the Parsis left their motherland Iran and landed in Sanjan, (Gujarat, India) in order to preserve their religion. After establishing themselves for a few years they sought to establish a house of worship, *Atash Behram* (Fire of Victory). Having arrived in India lacking the ceremonial apparatus required, they sent high ranking priests to Khorasan (Iran) who brought on foot the ritual apparatus (*Aalaat*) to be used for the consecration.

The rituals formulated for the consecration of fires appears in the ancient scriptures called *Vendidad*, 8th *Pargarad* (73-96), where it is prescribed that fires used by different tradesmen be collected, ceremonially purified, and then enthroned.

The 16 fires are collected from:

- 1) Fire from the pyre of a burning corpse
- 2) Fire used by a dyer
- 3) Fire from the house of a king or ruling authority
- 4) Fire from the potter's house
- 5) Fire from a brick maker's hearth
- 6) Fire of a fakir or an ascetic house
- 7) Fire from goldsmith's hearth
- 8) Fire used in a mint
- 9) Fire from an ironsmith's hearth
- 10) Fire from an armourer's hearth
- 11) Fire from a baker's house
- 12) Fire from hearth of a brewer or distiller
- 13) Fire from a soldier or traveller's house
- 14) Fire from a shepherd's house
- 15) Fire from the house of any Zoroastrian
- 16) Fire produced by atmospheric lightning

Each of these fires represents a different cosmic energy, to which it is linked through electro-magnetic currents, or invisible thermal waves, said to be generated by the spiritual alchemy of the consecration rituals. For instance, fire from a brick maker's kiln is linked to the cosmic energy of *Atash-e Spenisht* (Fire of the Earth). Similarly a goldsmith's fire is linked to *Atash-e Burzin Mehr* (Fire of the Radiant Sun). A consecrated goldsmith's fire is believed to magnetically attract the Energy *Burzin Mehr* which resides in the core of the Sun. An *Atash Bahram* therefore, is a spiritual receptacle of cosmic energies.

Flames from each of the above fires are collected, and purified through elaborate ceremonies. To do so, a small pit is dug into the ground, open to the wind, called a *Pahadia*, in which each of the fires will be placed. By its side, and in the windward direction, another pit is dug, heaped with myrrh, frankincense,

and sandalwood shavings. The heat and the blaze of the fire from the first pit, is carried by the wind and ignites the heap of the combustible materials in the 2nd pit. This process is called 'passing through one *Pahadīa*'. Each type of fire must be passed through a prescribed number of *Pahadias*. For example, the fire of lightning is passed through 90 times before it can be used. Fire from the hearth of the brick maker is purified 75 times before it can be used. The final total of all the purification iterations is a staggering 1128! Additional consecration rituals are performed once all 16 purified fires are co-mingled for its further enthronement. (5)



The innermost chamber, the Sanctum Sanctorum, of the Fire Temple where the sacred fire is to be enthroned must also be consecrated. That consecration ceremony lasts three days. Through the use of *Manthravani* chants, and through the dynamics of heat, conduction, sound, magnetism through fire, water, metal, the spiritual purity of the officiating priests and environment, and other occult aspects, these earthly fires are believed to release their corresponding cosmic energies which previously lay dormant.

The Sacred Fire, once enthroned, is metaphorically similar to a king's court, wherein the king presides over his spiritual jurisdiction. The stone slab on which the fire stands, is considered the throne (Persian: *Takht*). Its ceiling in the form of a dome, is reminiscent of the celestial. From that dome

hangs a tray, spoken of as the crown (Persian: *Ta*) of the Sacred Fire, the symbolic representation of a spiritual ruler. Spears, swords and cow headed maces adorn the walls of the inner chamber, signifying man's obligation to fight moral evils and vices, with the help of the spiritual weapons of Truth to emerge triumphant.

The resulting fire, the *Atash Padshah* (Emperor), is venerated as a Divine Being with an energy and consciousness and is perceived as the actual presence of the life animating principle of *Asha*, Truth. It denotes wisdom, and dispels the darkness of ignorance, and bearer of warmth and the light of order and cosmic intelligence. Devotees reverently apply its ash to the forehead to invigorate themselves towards the path of Truth.

In times when our own inner fire simmers ever so faintly, let us blow the bellows with all our might, that the flames might rise stronger.

In times when our own inner fire simmers ever so faintly, let us blow the bellows with all our might, that the flames might rise stronger. Where we face ignorance let us blow wisdom. Where we face hate let us blow love. Where we face despair let us blow hope. And where we face fear, let us blow courage. All will be well and we can sleep, rest assured no matter how dark the night, if our inner flame is kept alive. ★★

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THE ANXIETIES OF YOUTH

BY DELIA STEINBERG GUZMAN



It is not easy to define youth. Even if we do a lot of research, we will find that different authors throughout time have not been able to agree on an exact definition. Moreover, the concept of youth is so rich and varied in its meanings, so flexible and extraordinary, that it is impossible to find an objective, concrete and synthetic way of defining it.

As philosophers, we have enormous faith in youth and great hope in that future world that we speak about so often and of which we say so many things. We think that, deep down, none of us have ever stopped being young and, for one reason or another, have never stopped having certain anxieties either and, even though those anxieties may be more or less youthful, their roots are to be found in the same problems and in similar circumstances.

In general terms, we can accept what some people say about youth: that it is an intermediate state between childhood and maturity.

It is indeed an intermediate state, but not a unique or definitive one. It is, however, a very special state, because it emerges from the so-called "sweet unconsciousness of childhood" to enter almost at once into a sudden and immediate awakening

to the inner, emotional, intellectual, physical and psychological realities that occur at this stage, which, however natural they may be, still have a strong impact on the personality of the young person.

When we speak about youth, we cannot speak solely and exclusively about those physical changes that occur and that mark the transition from childhood to adolescence; we also have to speak about other, very deep, associated changes, both psychological and mental.

If we listen to what the ancient traditional doctrines have to say, we would also have to consider that the change that arises in youth not only relates to an awakening of the psyche and the mind, but also to a re-emergence of the Self, that sleeping Higher Self which comes from the depths of time and needs a special moment in life to awaken and manifest itself. We do not agree with those who say that youth begins with puberty, with sexual maturity. Nor should we make youth end when maturity appears and the human being becomes an adult. If this were so, we should ask ourselves when that maturity begins. Or does youth actually continue for much longer, not in its positive aspects, but rather in the negative ones, such as a lack of maturity in knowing what one wants?

So we see that we can't impose limits. As the richness of the human being is infinite and the multiple expressions of human evolution are infinite, it is impossible to limit ourselves to strict definitions.

There is something of a new birth about youth; it is like being born again, even if one is still in a physical body that is expressed in a material and concrete form.

There is something about youth which is like opening one's eyes to a new way of life, and it brings with it all the anxiety that this implies: having to face a new way of life. It is as if we were being born, but this time we are doing it alone, absolutely alone, because we feel that we are going to have to deal with all the anxiety of that new birth on our own.

Like every new state, this new youth to which one has just been born appears to be unstable, insecure and restless. It needs to put its roots down and can't find where to do it. And that is the reason behind the anxiety we are referring to.

We can approach this anxiety from two points of view: there is a normal and logical anxiety, the one that is proper of growth, of the development of this human being who is born again when he stops being a child; it includes all the processes that are dealt with by conventional psychology. Another aspect that we are enormously interested in is the "other" anxiety, the one that is not so natural and proper of youth; it is the one that is brought about by the world around us with all its problems, and that is less natural and more overwhelming for the personality of the young person. Let's start with the first one.

The psychology of the last hundred and fifty years tells us that youth cannot only be understood in terms of certain physiological and hormonal changes, important as they may be; other elements have to be taken into account, which are very typical and characteristic of this age and are of a psychological, intellectual and moral nature.

Strangely, this psychology always approaches all the changes of youth as if they were pathological and abnormal. These changes are so many, so great and so important, that the young person must feel as though he is ill, and that what is happening to him is terrible.

The first thing a young person experiences is the need to assert a new personality. Suddenly, new concepts have to be expressed and there are no means available to do so. As a result, he has to strengthen the parts of himself that, although they appear childish, are the first ones that will enable him to express his young personality. There is a rejection of everything that has made up his previous world, because it is identified with childhood, with being small, not thinking, not feeling; consequently, everything that went before is bad and has to be left aside, rejected.



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Included within that general rejection is the destruction of the image that the young person had of his or her parents; they are no longer the mum and dad in whom the child can seek refuge, nor are they the support they had once been; and when this image has been destroyed, then the image of all adults, the immediate family and all those who used to be a support network also collapses; everything that had been loved until that moment is now hated.

In the young person there is no middle ground: all the love that was expressed towards the parents

is now turned towards new leaders. There are new aspects that have to fill the vacuum that has just been created and this awakens an enormous anxiety in the young person.

The figures of the teacher, or the priest, or the slightly older friend, or some political leader, now become larger. Sometimes young people seek support in fictitious leaders of their own invention, who represent the ideal, the archetypal and the perfect. Sometimes they become attached to historical figures who represent all that the young person would like to be and all his love is given over to them. But deep down, it is all about filling a hole. At the same time, this produces an enormous melancholy and nostalgia for that childish world that has slipped out of his grasp and will never return.

In this first stage, the young person has a great propensity for inner sadness. He feels that he has lost a world, but no one can explain it to him. He feels that he has just been born into another world, but in that other world nobody understands him. That sadness which is so private, so deep, never manifests externally; at the most, there is just a hint of melancholy. On the outside he displays an exaggerated cheerfulness, which is completely fictitious, with strident laughter and out of place attitudes, or shows of aggression or an exaggerated vitality which forces aggression to appear.

The young person also attacks his parents because he blames them for the loss of that world, and with a little sense of guilt he expects the parents to attack him as well, which he feels happens immediately. And here begins a chain reaction with a long succession of anxieties, misunderstandings, with daily arguments, constant confrontations and the fact of not being able to live together in harmony with those who until recently formed a closed and wonderful nucleus.

Faced with this situation, the young person responds in many different ways. One of these

is the awakening of metaphysical ideas, which is very characteristic of youth; not in the sense of a perfectly elaborated philosophical metaphysics, but something simpler. The young person begins to ask himself, for the first time, what life and death are about. And he realises that he is not eternal, that he is within time, that he has grown and changed, that he will continue to grow and change and that he will disappear. And then he asks himself about what there is beyond.

Together with these metaphysical ideas, other ideas of a moral order appear. The young person is usually very strict at first, and in a way and with a morality that is very much his own and very personal, very rigid, especially towards others, but to some extent, also towards himself. If this were well directed, we would have the beginnings of a process that could gradually unravel the anxieties of youth and make them disappear. Unfortunately, however, it doesn't happen like this and these first metaphysical and moral impulses usually just provoke among close family and relatives a contemptuous smile or some rather cruel mockery, that will cause very deep wounds in the young person.

From the intellectual point of view, several very different things can occur. Either the young person lets himself go completely, and we find those young people who were brilliant before and all of a sudden they stagnate and begin to fail in their studies; or the opposite happens to them, and they discover an ideal form of escape in their studies and try to intellectualise the whole problem they are going through, finding a wonderful path in the world of ideas and being able to describe everything that is happening within them in great detail. In this second case, they develop a great fondness for dialectics, without caring whether the ideas they are defending are true or not. They want to argue, to assert themselves, to demonstrate strength and ability. This makes them really happy.

Another typical reaction in young people is a certain egotism that psychologists call narcissism. They want to focus on themselves, to find all the answers in themselves, wanting to be original at all costs because to be oneself requires to be different from others and even to be somewhat eccentric. There is a need to attract attention, which can often be seen in basic things, such as fashion. But it is a very special kind of eccentricity, as it is intended to irritate adults a little. Moreover, it requires the approval of other young people in a similar situation, resulting in the creation of tribe-like groups.

There is one positive element in this period of youth, which is the awakening of friendship, even if it is painful and not taken advantage of enough. Maybe this is the only period in one's life when one really knows what true friendship is. The friendships of youth are glorious, they are the only ones where everything is wonderful, where there is an ideal and extraordinary trust, where the friend is everything: an escape, a relief from inner problems, and also – because this type of friendship develops in a field which does not express itself in negative or morbid ways – it is almost like a trial run for what will later on become love. The friend is the moral support. And beyond these individual experiences of friendship, young people sometimes find another escape, that of the group, which they become part of because they need to feel strong and because they need the approval of those around them, because it is very difficult to walk alone.

According to the findings of psychology, the interests of young people are many and very varied. They tend to be interested in everything, but not for any length of time: they start something today and by tomorrow it is left aside; many things get started and almost none of them get finished. What is important is to be in motion, but they are not really interested in anything; there is a total apathy, because young people have to respond to an excess of stimulus from the family or from those around them, who are constantly throwing advice and

recommendations at them about what to do or what not to do; so their behaviour is a defence reaction.

Generally, the problem is that young people are simply young and anxious. It is difficult to understand, but it is a reality.

Now let us consider another aspect. Our world, our anxious world, makes a bad situation worse by adding its own anxieties to the anxieties of youth. We will now list some of the elements that enormously aggravate the situation of the young person.

As philosophers, we should perhaps begin with the problem that we consider to be the most detrimental, the worst of all, which is the wrong approach of the educational system, a system that does not take the nature of young people into account, but is completely stereotyped and only focuses on the studies themselves, but not on the human being who is going to receive them or implement them. The result is either that adults send young people out, without any preparation whatsoever, into a cruel and competitive world where they feel totally incapable of fending for themselves, or else they overprotect them and keep them constantly trapped, preventing them from testing their strength and going out into that world where, sooner or later, they will have to make their way. Either by excess or deficiency, the young person ends up with an inadequate education and is unable to express himself in the world.

Generally speaking, adults tend to make the typical mistake of reproaching young people by telling them that they are no longer children, but that they are not yet mature either, which is equivalent to telling them that they are nobody. Today there is a lot of talk of marginalisation, but it is we who unintentionally marginalise young people, because they no longer know what they are any more. And sometimes it is just one step from being psychologically marginalised to turning to crime. It is about stepping across a line which can sometimes be quite thin.

Initially it is only the moral authority of the parents that is questioned, but in the end, all forms of authority are thrown into doubt, with the result that social life becomes practically impossible and the young person no longer recognises or has any respect for anything at all. And as if this were not enough, this situation is cruelly exploited by advertisers, who take advantage of the natural enthusiasm of young people, who can so easily hate and love and embark on great adventures. All this is exploited by a shameless advertising industry, which promotes fads and fashions, ranging from clothes to anarchic lifestyles, from drugs to atheism, from the tactics of personal irresponsibility to the rejection of any established order.

But it is good to realise that the revolution has to begin with oneself; by applying oneself to work, to one's own responsibility and to a healthy ambition that will be a constant force propelling us forward.

Healthy young people cannot be exploited. So they have to be promised a thousand and one impossible parades that will never be attained; and even if they are, the young will continue to feel anxiety and continue to be fertile soil for more of this anxiety-inducing advertising, creating more young people who don't know what to do with their lives.

As if this were not enough, there are the natural responses of young people, which should not surprise us in the least. Nowadays, a couldn't-care-less attitude is in vogue, and this is natural, because this apparent indifference is no more than a cry of desperation, a way of saying "what can I do?" When a young person looks for a job, he is asked for experience. The young person wants to be better, wants to be different, wants to achieve an ideal,

wants to have a family, but he is only able to do this if his parents give him space. If not, he will have to wait a long time, not knowing what he will do or when. Even if he decides to study, in most cases he won't have the opportunity of applying what he has learnt and later on he will have to take any job he can, just to earn a living and feed himself.

In addition to this anxiety, another one appears: youth begins to fade and the young person begins to realise that he has done absolutely nothing. In these circumstances, the couldn't-care-less attitude becomes the logical response. It is also logical that these young people will turn to protesting, whether in a passive and sterile way or aggressively and violently. And there are also statistics that tell of the "solution" to this fruitless search, which is the deliberate ending of one's own life.

Previously, when surveys were carried out on young people regarding what aspects of life they were most interested in, the most popular results were aesthetic values, moral values, metaphysical needs and religious concerns. Nowadays, polls show that in the first place come personal well-being, money, love, and only then some more abstract questions. But the main things that are highlighted are security, a quiet life and well-being.

Do they really feel that way, or have young people been pressurised into thinking and feeling like this?

It makes one wonder whether the great dreams of youth have died. We think not, but they are very difficult to find, and it is very difficult to get a young person to admit to what his great dreams are, as the poll experts claim that young people don't usually tell the truth.

We are inclined to believe that these great dreams are there, but one has to know how to find them. These are the dreams that would eliminate anxiety little by little, but in order for that to happen they need to become reality. There is not one young

person who, on the physical level, does not like beauty. There is not one young person who would reject harmony or good taste. So when they reject these things, it is as a protest, not because they have no love for the aesthetic, the beautiful and the pleasing. The other way in which this rejection is expressed is by "spitting in the face of what one can't have". All young people love health and like to feel strong, and yet they ruin their health and damage their own bodies. It is a form of rejection which is due to the belief that in the end there is nothing for them to do.

Young people can deny it on the outside, but deep down they all have pure and noble feelings. Nobody likes feelings that are constantly changing, that exist today, but will be gone tomorrow, that keep us in a permanent state of distress, anxiety and uneasiness. Every young person dreams of eternity. Every young person has a special place for the concept of love, even if they don't want to admit it. Every young person dreams of things that are clean, pure, bright and wonderful, even if they refuse to recognise it.

Anarchy and disorder exist, but they are forms of anguish. There isn't a young person who, intellectually, is not searching for wisdom. Curiosity, the desire to investigate, to know more and more things, is something typical of youth. It is like an unstoppable urge to penetrate all the secrets of the world.

Young people want to know, but this is difficult, because sometimes one has to start by removing veils, destroying ignorance and lighting torches in the midst of the darkness. Sometimes one has to discover that science not only destroys, but it also builds, that research brings us closer to the innermost laws of Nature, that science fiction is not enough to fill up all of our time, but that there are authentic laws that can be known without descending into fiction. Sometimes one has to destroy false concepts and discover all the beauty that there is in art, with authentic messages,

and clear away those other parades that one is supposed to accept, often because it is fashionable to do so. Sometimes it is necessary to show young people that it is not that they are atheists, but rather that they have nothing good or noble around them that they can believe in, and that even the image or idea of God has been bastardised and defiled. Sometimes one has to teach young people that they have to begin by recovering faith in themselves, so that then they can progressively climb step by step up the ladder of faith in all things until they reach God.

Who has not wanted or does not want to change the world? Who has not dreamt of that constant revolution that could allow us to sweep away everything bad and all injustices?

But it is good to realise that the revolution has to begin with oneself; by applying oneself to work, to one's own responsibility and to a healthy ambition that will be a constant force propelling us forward. But this ambition should not be one of rejection, but one that is filled with an increasing respect for others.

There is not a single young person who does not dream of happiness. Happiness exists and is not simply material or instinctive satisfaction, but something more that we continue to dream about, without knowing exactly where we are going to find it. The Stoics used to say that absolute happiness is not to be found on this Earth, but nonetheless, we can find it, day by day, if we learn to search with perseverance, with patience, with discernment, knowing how to distinguish what is good for us from what is not.

There isn't a single young person who doesn't dream of freedom either, of the possibility of flying, because freedom for a young person is not about doing any old thing, but knowing what it is he wants to do, and where he wants to get to with what he is doing. There isn't a single young person who doesn't dream of that inner freedom for which there are no limits, for which not even death exists.

The big question we could now ask is whether there are still any young people left? Or are we doomed to see just children with adult faces? Is it not increasingly frightening to see in our little ones a look that is too deep for their age, or a seriousness that includes reproach, from the very first moments of their life? We also have adults dressed as teenagers who have not been able to overcome the anxieties of youth. It is necessary to overcome that perpetual duality in which young people, in particular, live, because they have to respond both to the functions of their animal instincts and to their more sublime dreams, conscious on the one hand that they are capable of achieving feats comparable to those found in great books, and on the other hand that they can also be beasts crawling on the ground.



We must put an end to that struggle. But to put an end to a struggle, there is no other solution than to fight. In an old and sacred text from the ancient East – the *Bhagavad Gita* – there is an ideal man called Arjuna, who finds himself at the precise moment of this battle. He is just about to start fighting and has to make a decision there and then. He suffers desperately. Arjuna's anguish 5,000 years ago however, is no different from the anguish seen in the current works on psychology: it is the same despair.

Arjuna has his whole animal and instinctive world on one side of him, while on the other side are all

his sublime aspirations, the greatest and best part of himself. He has to decide, to choose, to break with the intermediate state, with instability; he has to pass the definitive test.

When, in ancient civilisations, young people were subjected to tests before being accepted as adults in society, there were good reasons for doing this. It was not just about the performance of empty rituals, but the undergoing of some special kinds of tests. They were the tests of "daring" and "deciding"; they were about the moment of battle, of choice, of putting discernment into practice. "Dare and you will surely be victorious".

Within the mistakes that have pointed out as being the root causes of the anxieties of youth lie the answers that we are looking for. One only has to turn these mistakes around, give them an opposite meaning and turn them into solutions. Solutions of all kinds, from spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical and biological solutions to real, practical and concrete solutions.

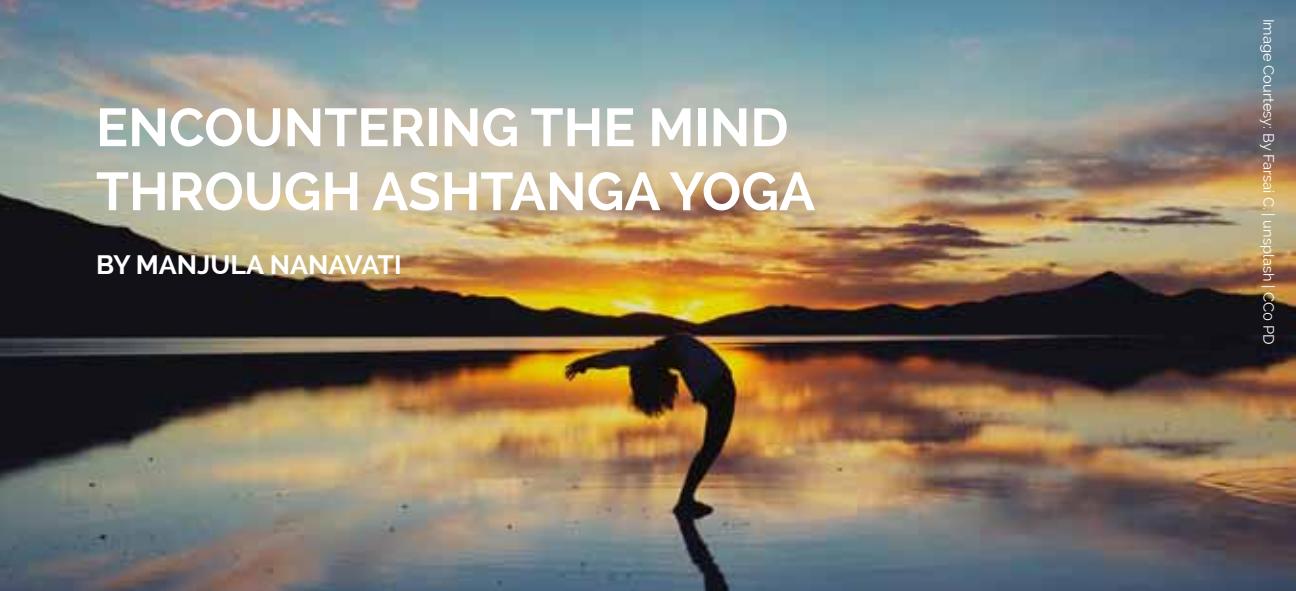
We have to remember something very important, and this is that, beyond all the anxieties that young people have, the greatest potentials are to be found in youth; and that, in order to be young, one doesn't need to have a young body, for there is also an eternal youth, the Youth of the Soul, which has the ability to manifest itself whenever there is still the ability to dream and whenever there is still the ability to put those dreams into practice.

We should also remember that a person is young, eternally young and free from anxiety when, with dreams and the strength to hold on to those dreams, they learn to walk with a Torch, an old and familiar Torch that the human beings of yesterday, and those of today and those of all times, call Hope – the Hope of Youth, rather than the anxieties of youth.

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ENCOUNTERING THE MIND THROUGH ASHTANGA YOGA

BY MANJULA NANAVATI



"When the senses are stilled, when the mind is at rest, when the intellect wavers not - then say the wise, is reached the highest stage. This steady control of the senses and mind is defined as Yoga. He who attains it is free from delusion."

- Kathopanishad (1)

All the greatest spiritual teachers have spoken abound the need for man to awaken, to pursue a shift of consciousness. Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Plato all offered a clear, discernible path of spiritual growth towards a more meaningful life, which begins by recognizing and operating from a higher aspect within us, separate from our personality which is controlled by prejudices, fears, subjective emotions and egoistic thoughts. Beyond the religious customs that subsequently developed, these ancient traditions speak of Discipleship; an ardent and persevering path of constant self-development which illuminates man's potential. Likewise, emerging from the ancient tradition of the Indian sub-continent, *yoga*, if understood in entirety, also offers a discipular path leading to self-knowledge, transmutation and truth.

Yoga is one of six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, collectively called *shad darshana*, all of which are rooted in the *Vedas*. *Darshana*

means 'sight' or 'vision', and that the Hindu word for philosophy is *darshana* is telling. It implies that far from being an intellectual pursuit, Indian philosophy is experiential: truth must be witnessed, experienced, and then honored through action. The *shad darshana* are six ways of approaching Truth, of 'seeing' the ultimate reality of unity, *yoga* laying particular emphasis on meditation and contemplation.

Maharishi Patanjali was the first to compile and codify 196 short, pithy and cryptic aphorisms that make up the *Yoga Sutras*. Their seeming ambiguity perhaps has a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, it serves as a deliberate invitation to draw a serious aspirant to delve deeper, through his own personal investigation and practice, to unveil the many subtle nuances of the subject. But it is also likely that precise words are acutely limiting in their ability to describe the abstract concepts of the mind's innermost functioning. Patanjali's work, enormously influential in his own time, is perhaps even more relevant today due to the general tendency to think of *yoga* as just another fitness regime aimed at developing a healthy body, ignoring its far more expansive scope, its far loftier goal, and when practiced correctly, its power to transform our entire way of life.

In Sanskrit the word *yoga* means 'to join', or 'to unite', and is a reference to the ultimate goal of the union of the individual soul with the Universal Soul. The *Vedas* teach that we are all an integral part of an infinite, omniscient consciousness, with all the essence of the divine potential within us. But our ignorance, fear, and attachments veil this knowledge. The aim of life, therefore, is to lift this veil and self-realize – to re-unite with our true identity. Like countless other discipular traditions, *Yoga* offers a method, through the cultivation of an ethical life, to bridge the gap between our good intentions and our practical actions. In order to do this the disciple is educated to discipline his instinctive, reactionary personality and change his identification from the external and material, to an eternal, internal, spiritual reality.



1.2 *Yogash chitta vritti nirodha*

"*Yoga* is the restraining of the fluctuations of the consciousness." (2)

Patanjali details the fluctuations and oscillations of the mind that disrupt our consciousness, and describes *ashtanga yoga* (8 limbs of *yoga*) as the means of fostering restraint. Interestingly, these 8 principles are not rungs of a ladder, or stages that follow one another in succession. BKS Iyengar compares them to the petals of a flower; although each petal contains the essence of the

flower, the flower is itself far greater than the sum of its parts.

It is perhaps of value to draw attention to the fact that before any presentation of *asanas* and *pranayama*, Patanjali first highlights the need for an ethical code of conduct, the first two limbs of *ashtanga*: *yama* and *niyama*. Together they foster man's ethical alignment to Nature's laws, but also guide his personal discipline to tame the desirous lower self so as to perceive reality free of subjective conditioning. Hence, while *yama* and *niyama* escort the disciple to transcend his animalistic instincts, *asana* (Posture), *pranayama* (Breath Modulation), and *pratyahara* (Withdrawal of Senses) fosters a healthy body and inner awareness, leading to the stillness of the scattered mind. These are followed by *dharana* (Concentration), *dhyan* (Meditation), and *samadhi* (Super-consciousness, Liberation) which turn the compass inwards as the search for ultimate realization is continually fine-tuned.

Yama

Conduct fostering alignment to Laws of Life

<i>Ahimsa</i>	Non-violence
<i>Satya</i>	Truth
<i>Asteya</i>	Non-stealing
<i>Brahmacharya</i>	Continence
<i>Aparigraha</i>	Non-covetousness

Niyama

Conduct fostering the purity of the Individual

<i>Saucha</i>	Cleanliness
<i>Santosa</i>	Contentment
<i>Tapas</i>	Austerity
<i>SVadhyaya</i>	Study of scriptures and the self
<i>Isvara pranidhana</i>	Surrender to God

Together these ten principles are interactive and complementary; following the principles of *yama* bring about *niyama*, and practicing the *niyama* are meant to inculcate the discipline needed to adhere to *yama*.

II.47 Prayatna saithilya ananta samapattibhyam

"Perfection in an *asana* is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached." (2)

Just as it is important to have a clean and sturdy vessel, in order to carry water, so too is the need for a healthy body as an able receptacle for a sharp consciousness, an imperative aspect of discipular formation. Yoga offers an intricate system of *asana* (Posture) and *pranayama* (Breath Modulation) meant to mold the body and breath into a vehicle to enter the mind.

Beyond the religious customs that subsequently developed, these ancient traditions speak of Discipleship; an ardent and persevering path of constant self-development which illuminates man's potential.

Asana postures exercise every muscle, organ, nerve and gland in the body, directing consciousness experientially to parts of the body that we are rarely attentive to. It is said, that as the technique improves and the pose is deepened with discipline and attention, a corresponding change in the way the pose 'feels' is experienced, not just physically but mentally. Years of meticulous and rigorous practice of adjustment and re-calibration to reach just the *right* tension is the reason that *yoga* has the power to dramatically restructure our being. It is why *asanas* are not mere gymnastics, and when applied in the same measure to all the limbs of *ashtanga*, why *pranayama* rises beyond deep breathing, *dharana* is not just a technique, and *yama* and *niyama* remain not aspirational theoretical constructs but become deeply transformative experiences.

II.52 Tatah ksiyate prakasa avaranam

"*Pranayama* removes the veil covering the light of Knowledge." (2)

Prana is the energizing principle that vitalizes the gross body, indeed all of life. *Ayama* means extension and expansion. Similar to *asanas* for the physical body, *pranayama* enables regulation of the energetic body through control of the breath. The direct causal connection between our breathing and our mental state is well documented. Exciting the emotions desires, cravings and aversions heighten the rate of respiration, whereas deliberately controlling the breath serves to help keep the mind centered and amplified emotions at bay.

I.12 Abhyasa vairagyabham tannirodhah

"Practice [abhyas] and freedom from desires [vairagya] are the means to still the movements of consciousness." (2)

Patanjali says that *yoga* rests on the 2 pillars of disciplined practice and detachment, both of which must go hand in hand. The first four principles of *ashtanga* (*yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*) emphasize *abhyas*, defined as assiduous, zealous, persevering practice. The other four principles (*pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*) emphasize *vairagya*, detachment or renunciation. *Abhyas* is a positive, expansive, generative energy causing an outward centrifugal force. However, emphasis on external practice alone poses the danger that the mind, ego, and senses will run astray, and turn outward towards the material world. The practitioner might easily get caught up in the *doing*, rather than the *being*. Hence, *vairagya*, or renunciation, is imperative, which corresponding to an inward, centripetal force - an equal and opposite force applied to protect the practitioner, turning him inward, fostering independence from sensory stimulation.

What then must a disciple renounce? It is noteworthy that the *yogis* of ancient India were not expected to

renounce the world. On the contrary, they were an essential and integral part of society, often guiding the governance of the state. Isolation or severance of external ties alone cannot suffice, because if this were so, then prisoners undergoing deprivation in solitary confinement would be 'evolved' upon their release. Renunciation implies a positive disengagement of one who uses his will to do the internal work necessary to be able to discriminate between that which is transitory and that which is immutable. The opportunity of our times therefore, lies not in running off to the mountains or jungles, so often disguised or misunderstood as renunciation. Our world today needs idealists to effect change, modern *yogis* if you will, who can lead humanity, escorting it one step closer towards evolution. However, it is only possible to lead others, if one is able to lead oneself. Renunciation in this context is the discriminative discernment, the detachment that allows one to be free from the allure of transitory worldly pleasure, without isolation from the world. This is renunciation, not of the action itself, but of the attraction to the fruits of the action.

II.43 *Kaya indriya siddhih asuddhiksayat tapasah*
"Tapas (self-discipline) burns away impurities and kindles the sparks of divinity." (2)

In the *Yoga Sutras*, *tapas* is variously translated as austerity, self-discipline, and fervor. *Tapas* can be understood as a sort of purifying fire that burns away preconceptions, antipathy, and doubts, leaving clarity to grasp the Truth. It is the double-sided axe so often alluded to in discipular traditions that can be used to strengthen our morality, build conviction, and commitment. The aspiring disciple purifies himself by facing his limitations, and dares to push the boundaries of his material, emotional, and mental comforts. The crucial role of *tapas* is brought out by BKS Iyengar in a remarkable commentary: "Ahimsa (non-violence) cannot properly be understood without reference to *tapas*. *Tapas* is the inner *himsa* (violence) by which we create the possibility of outer *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa*

cannot exist alone. Mahatma Gandhi would never have been able to summon up the implacable peacefulness which moved an empire, without his ruthless attitude towards his own self. Violence is perhaps too strong a word for *tapas*, but it is a burning zeal and austerity, an unflagging hardness of attitude towards oneself, which makes possible compassion and forgiveness towards others." (2)



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The *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali are a treasure of the human heritage – an invaluable documentation of one of the many discipular traditions developed by ancient wisdom to help Man discover and reveal his potential, elevate his consciousness, and illuminate his ability to interact with Truth. Just as Krishna's discourse to Arjuna allowed him to plainly recognize his righteous duty and the path he must take, Patanjali's seminal work speaks to us in a secular language, giving us practical tools to navigate our lives in accordance with Universal Truths, by opening up a spiritual doorway through which we might access the subtleties of our inscrutable minds.

"Yoga is an art, a science, a philosophy. It touches the life of every man at every level - physical, mental, spiritual - and it is a practical method for making one's life purposeful, useful and noble." ★★

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CLASSICAL DANCE: A STAIRWAY TO SPIRITUALITY

BY PURBASHA GHOSH



Vaidehi Kulkarni's Kuchipudi recital at New Acropolis (Mumbai, India). May 2017.

In our perpetual pursuit of the perceived definition of success, our minds and bodies are incessantly engaged in surface level occupations; being 'busy' appears to be a natural choice to satiate our voracious material and intellectual needs. Nevertheless, somewhere a higher center within us remains starved and an intense yearning to unite with something larger than our individual selves is palpable. Despite material abundance, technological advance and unrestrained liberties, the overwhelming spiritual vacuum is incontrovertible. True, there are fleeting instances in which we do manage to establish an evanescent connection with the spiritual realm. However, the avenues to approach that elusive higher dimension that lies deep within, in a more sustained manner, appear abstract. To address this prevalent emptiness it is worthwhile for a seeker to explore the few unequivocal portals that facilitate such transitions.

A philosopher endeavors to bridge the chasm between the finite material and the infinite transcendental by his incessant love of wisdom. His voyage is characterized by an evolution of consciousness. Since art has often been acknowledged as a vehicle of transition to the

sublime realm, it is of immense intrigue for a philosopher to explore an artist's way to bridge this existential dualism.

Somewhere a higher center within us remains starved and an intense yearning to unite with something larger than our individual selves is palpable.

Any art form can serve as a channel to invoke that innate and essential aspect of our existence. We address that aspect by a plethora of nomenclature: the higher dimension, the spiritual, the invisible and infinite, the Divine, God and so on. This article investigates a specific form of art - namely classical dance. Wikipedia defines dance as *a sequence of purposefully selected human movement, which has aesthetic as well as symbolic significance*. Classical dance in particular, emphasizes reviving the classical - the timeless or the eternal center which is inherent within us. While our contemporary perception of dance sometimes regards it as a mere frolic at worst and a medium of expression, even catharsis at best, we often fail to recognize

this performing art form as a potential stairway to ascend to a higher realm of consciousness.

The meditative aspect of classical dance is universally recognized. Being centered is of the essence in this art-form and the attention of the dancer has no margin for the slightest incoherence. It is crucial to focus on several faculties simultaneously, namely the gestures, expressions, postures, movements, rhythm and the musical recital. Mindfulness is of colossal consequence in conjuring a meticulous synergy amongst the several elements that constitute dance. Thus practicing classical dance could also offer an antidote to the scattering distractions of our lives.

Dance also involves conquering inhibitions, the anxiety of being rejected, inviting the dancer to realign his/her point of perspective from outside, to within. While the stage provides a preliminary platform for the dancer to combat the reticence and it serves as an impetus to propel the performer out of his/her comfort zone, one needs to be cautious to not be overtly reliant on it. The true purpose of dance is not to entreat the attention of the beholder, although this is a natural consequence. Instead the classical dancer aspires to focus attention inwards so intensely, that it might empower him/her to channelize an elevated element of consciousness to the ephemeral. Thus a real dancer is driven by *giving* and not *receiving*.

Attaining such an altitude of consciousness and tranquil composure of mind and body is not an overnight metamorphosis. It involves years of patient and persistent practice, overcoming the monotony of repetition, acute fatigue, the vicissitudes of mood, and the temptation of distractions that offer instant gratification. As philosophers and seekers of truth we too learn to challenge our comfort zones in all aspects of our lives, try to steer clear of distractions and are constantly vigilant for the treacherous voices emerging from the personality that mask our higher potential.

In reality, beyond the superficial dichotomy in the ways of a dancer and of a philosopher, there lies a poetic alliteration between the ultimate purpose of dance and philosophy. According to Plato, an artist is also a philosopher; both seek the ultimate veracity. Only, each uses a different device. Classical dance attempts to reach out to the divine through the archetype of beauty, while the philosopher seeks the same transcendental dimension through an investigative journey motivated by the love of truth.



This hypothesis is substantiated by the significance of temple dance rituals, customary in ancient India, which are representative of reverence to the divine. This past May, the philosophers' fraternity at New Acropolis (Mumbai, India) had an opportunity to host and witness this sublime side of Indian Classical Dance in an enchanting Kuchipudi dance recital by the eminent Vaidehi Kulkarni.

Vaidehi introduced Kuchipudi as one of the eight major Indian classical dance forms, developed on the foundations of Bharat Muni's *Natya Shastra*, the holy grail of Indian performing arts. Its roots can be traced back to the village of Kanchelapuram in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh in Southern

India. At first performed exclusively by men, it originated as a sacred offering to venerate the deities in temples.

Alluding to the unique charms of Kuchipudi, Vaidehi emphasized that the art of drama is pivotal to this dance-form. The three key constituents of Kuchipudi are:

Nritta – demonstrates the artist's technique, and comprises a rhythmic and symphonic amalgamation of pace, movement and coordination.

Nritya – entails slower dance routines replete with emotions evoked through facial expressions and hand gestures.

Natya – is the enactment wherein dance movements establish characters and portray a mythological narrative.

In addition, gestures, facial expressions, melodious Carnatic music, together with the ornaments and costumes are all integral elements that unite in scrupulous synchronization. These come together in complex movements, like high jumps and brisk turns which are characteristic of Kuchipudi. Lip syncing to the music brings the narrative alive to the audience. Sequences customarily commence with a Divine invocation, and comprise sub-sequences of technical dance display and portrayals of mythological narratives.

A solo performer often role-plays multiple characters in Kuchipudi and it is critical that he/she do justice to enliven each part played. This subtly alludes to the various roles a human being plays in life – like that of a child, spouse, parent, professional, citizen, among others. Perhaps this is a veiled reference we can draw inspiration from, in embodying our parts fully and justly in the act of life, in an enhanced and balanced manner.

As Vaidehi enacted mythology through dance, linguistic barriers were eliminated by her expressions, gestures, postures and movements. It was fascinating that many young members of the

audience who had no earlier exposure to classical dance, expressed that they were enthralled by the performance.

Vaidehi's remarkable journey began at the tender age of five when she experimented with Kathak and Bharatnatyam, until she discovered her true calling - Kuchipudi. At the age of ten, on a visit to Chennai, a family acquaintance accompanied her to the renowned Kuchipudi Art Academy, where young Vaidehi "fell in love with" the dance form. With her mother and sister, she relocated to Chennai to pursue this intense albeit newfound love. Hailing from Nashik, (Maharashtra, India) at first she struggled with language and an undercurrent of prejudice, in her perusal of a South Indian dance form. Her absolute commitment notwithstanding, it was enormously challenging for the Kathak and Bharatnatyam trained Vaidehi to adapt to Kuchipudi and there arrived a point about one year into her sojourn when she considered quitting this audacious adventure. This juncture marked a turning point; an inexplicable energy within her reversed her equation with the dance form.

Classical dance attempts to reach out to the divine through the archetype of beauty, while the philosopher seeks the same transcendental dimension through an investigative journey motivated by the love of truth.

Miraculously, almost overnight, she recalls, that she began to feel at home with Kuchipudi and there was a perceptible transformation in her adeptness at it. It was as if the essence of the dance form was finally absorbed in her. There was no looking back for this precocious child and her determination

and devotion succeeded to surmount the many impediments along the way.

To this day, the accomplished dancer is not dissuaded from seeking further improvement and she routinely visits her teacher in Bengaluru in her endeavor to further refine her dexterity in dance. Her journey is motivational for the philosopher, who quests for truth, overcoming setbacks, and dispelling complacency regardless of the magnitude of advancements made along the way.



Years of arduous discipline, unwavering esteem for her teachers, determination and sacrifices by her parents find rewarding expression in Vaidehi's performances today. She no longer distinguishes between dance and other aspects of her life and explains that dance has percolated into her life so deeply, and her surrender to this art-form is so complete, that dance has become her life. She says that she literally dances away her challenges and that it is a source of strength, a conduit of catharsis, as well as a medium of communication with audiences.

Kuchipudi has transformed Vaidehi's life and now she hopes to give back to the art that helped her evolve as a human being. It perturbs her that Kuchipudi is not as popular as its illustrious cousins Bharatnatyam and Kathak, and that many fail to recognize it as a distinct form. Alongside her teacher Smt. Manju Bhargavi from Bengaluru, she intends to contribute to its outreach to expand its recognition, by establishing institutes of Kuchipudi that would adhere to the principles of the ancient *guru-shishya parampara*, the master-disciple tradition. Vaidehi exhorts the youth of today to take pride in the Indian heritage and revive the ancient art forms.

Skeptics amongst us might dismiss classical dance as archaic. Connoisseurs may delight in its exotic visual dimension. Others who are pedantic may marvel at its technical sophistication. This article is a humble effort to invite the reader to unravel classical dance, beyond the apparent. Classical implies *timeless* and thus classical dance is as potent today as it was a thousand years ago to invoke the spiritual essence that lies within us, if one is but willing to delve deep into it. Plato had famously cited, "*Man you are God but you forgot*," referring to the memory of the timeless spirit in us that unites us with the eternal and omniscient cosmic intelligence. Classical dance is potentially a medium to revive that elusive memory. When the narrative of music, the intent and attention of the dancer, and the acuity of skill confluence ceremoniously with the right attitude of the observer at the opportune moment - something magical might unfold. Perhaps this magic is the reminiscence of the soul.

The esoteric traditions suggest that we all have this innate spark. Each may fuel its flame differently. There is no single panacea to the spiritual void we experience intermittently, but classical dance warrants being explored in order to rekindle the sacred light, the memory of the soul, intrinsic to our existence. ★★

RE-HUMANIZING CORPORATE CULTURE

BY VASANT SANZGIRI



Most people working in organizations are familiar with the Human Resources Department. It is the single point of contact for an employee – through the processes of Recruitment, On-boarding, Training, Integration, Appraisals, Growth, and even the Exit Interview. Since the HR Department comprises a team of people that interacts with employees, it would seem appropriate to expect that they would demonstrate a natural sensitivity towards each individual in the organization. But is this really the case? It is ironic that HR, instead, is seen as the 'baddy' in the organization, creating bottlenecks, and being insensitive towards fellow employees and their issues. Why does this happen? Are the HR folk not 'human'? Are they not employees as well? Why does this split personality seem to characterize HR Departments?

The genesis of this conundrum goes back to the post-industrial revolution era, with the birth of the idea that human beings are considered resources, cogs in the wheels of the industrial and economic machine, as introduced by Adam Smith in his seminal work *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith mentions, "the most important substantive proposition in all of economics is that, under

competition, owners of resources (for example labour, land, and capital) will use them most profitably...". People, here described as labour, are just another resource to be used as a tool to generate profit. After a series of many euphemistic iterations such as "Staff Welfare", or "Personnel Management", Smith's work might have given rise to the term most widely used today: Human Resources.

Resources are company assets that must be maintained, cataloged, and put to efficient use in a way that they prove their worth. Each machine in a production unit is meant to perform a specific task. When it doesn't function properly it is repaired, or replaced; every resource, therefore, is expendable. When people are looked at as resources, they too are dehumanized and treated like machines when they don't perform as expected; their personal circumstances, emotional cycles, and external obligations are blind-sighted. Furthermore, people begin to see themselves as simple cogs, assigned to mechanical functions; and rather than contribute towards their full potential, they do just enough to get away with, without getting fired!

I believe human beings are the most evolved beings on the planet. The esoteric tradition offers

that the complexity of our physical form is but a manifestation of an evolved spiritual consciousness. We have complex emotional, physical, and mental systems that must be understood and nurtured in order to facilitate our ultimate goal of self-actualization. Maslow in his seminal work on the Hierarchy of Needs identified the natural needs experienced by all human beings regardless of social, racial, or economic context. The highest need, or motivation, he speaks of is the need for self-actualization. Perhaps this can be described as the need to fulfill one's potential. Evidently, most organizations seem simply to fulfill the lower needs of its employees - with financial compensation to satisfy the most basic physiological needs, and sometimes medical/life insurance that might address the security needs. The pursuit of higher needs takes a back seat.

To operate under the conventional wisdom that most people work for money alone, and hence incentivize them with huge bonuses and salary packages, is both short-sighted and shallow.

Let's examine the collateral damage of this treatment. Fearful of losing one's livelihood, at a company that demands 100%, may sometimes result in neglect on the home front, and threatens the fabric of the family unit. Time spent with the family, or with the community reduces significantly. Children see their parents mostly over the weekends - parents are asleep when the child goes to school, and the child is already asleep when the parents return home.

The resulting guilt is dealt with by meeting unreasonable demands of the child instantly

and disproportionately. For example, aspirational vacations are characterized by exotic locations and five-star hotels. Values are imbibed through television programs or left at the behest of babysitters and neighbours, who may lack the genuine concern for the child's wellbeing. All this inculcates an ethical code far removed from those of earlier generations; a culture of instant gratification that becomes the dominant value system that shapes young individuals, which affects expectation in all aspects of life, including from the organization they work in.

But if the HR department were to ensure a work-life balance, we might revive the idea of holidays as the annual opportunity to spend time with grandparents, cousins, and the extended family? In my youth, I remember it had facilitated the assimilation of culture and values, unique to each family or community.

Many organizations perpetrate and perpetuate the give-100% culture, showing little concern for the natural need for self-actualization. But this previously popular profit-focused paradigm that neglects to nurture individual potential, and fails to value the higher needs of individuals, is now facing a crisis. According to a Gallup Poll, only 31.5% of U.S. employees are engaged and thriving. Yet the corollary to that fact is not that the others are lazy, but that perhaps their disconnectedness stems from feeling unsupported and disempowered at work. They don't feel valued, and have no clear direction and purpose.

However, things are changing. The IT revolution is at the forefront of creating new kinds of jobs and the competition to hire the best talent available in the market has intensified. This has led to people having more job options, placing them in a position to ask for what they want; more control over their time, flexible hours, the option to work from home, a work-life balance...in short, they want to work for companies that invest in their development - not just technical, but development as a human being.

All this points to the inherent pull an individual has to fulfill other, higher needs. Organizations that respond to this need succeed in creating an inspiring work environment that wins the respect and loyalty of its workforce. To operate under the conventional wisdom that most people work for money alone, and hence incentivize them with huge bonuses and salary packages, is both short-sighted and shallow.



Image Courtesy: By adobeStock | pixabay | CC0 PD

Re-humanizing Business

Setting goals towards profitability and shareholder value is a necessary part of any business strategy. But does this necessarily need to be at odds with the need to support human values? Vineet Nayar of HCL Technologies shares from his experience that when people feel that their efforts are supported by the management's desire to see them succeed, they will be naturally aligned with achieving success. Employees should be treated as partners in generating economic activity. Unlike resources like fixed assets, people increase in value through support and recognition. No price can be attached to their human effort, loyalty, and innovative drives! The new mantra doing the rounds is, "Employees [not customers] First!"

Another way to deal with this issue lies in understanding the reasons why some people are super successful. How do those who have achieved honor and esteem in their profession create an almost spiritual experience for themselves and for those who work with them? Let's look at different walks of life – musicians, artists, dancers, athletes who have excelled in their field. Has money been a motivator for them to achieve excellence? At best, money is a tool, a means, but can never be the goal. At a musical or dance performance, a truly devoted artist performs for his/her love for the art, with little consideration of material benefit, and strives to take the audience into a magical realm. It has often been said that Tendulkar never played for money; he loved the sport and all he wanted was to excel at it!

To enable them to innovate, to be their most creative and productive selves, employees need to be motivated by demonstrating that their work is meaningful, and that it is connected to a common, higher purpose. When organizations can acknowledge employees' strengths and support their growth, employees are motivated to perform to the best of their potential, benefiting all those around him in an ever-widening ripple effect: the family, community, society.

Some Japanese companies are an excellent example of recognizing and addressing the human needs of its employees. The work day in some such companies begins with physical exercises. Emphasis is laid on the importance of planning the work efficiently, to avoid unreasonable timelines and stressful deliverables. Opportunities are created to foster sharing of feelings and experiences. The value of keeping the workplace

clean and tidy is deliberately fostered, as is respect for all the tools and equipment. Results are measured against agreed standards, and small improvements are continuously acknowledged.

As an HR professional, I believe that fulfilment in the workplace starts by engaging with team members, and motivating them towards a shared collective purpose, beyond profit...for example, a construction company that honestly claims, "Work with us to build our nation!" Valuing their opinions and personal needs, and supporting their efforts so they are engaged with their work further contributes. Human resource functions including hiring, transitioning, training, and communication, when aligned to the above philosophy, might consistently give employees the tools to succeed in which ever job they do, making sure that people are in the most suited positions. Instead of being concerned about the cost for training and updating practices, we need to consider the cost of under-utilizing or losing valuable employees. Doing HR right translates to gratified employees, motivated with the freedom to communicate and innovate, facilitating a cooperative community, rather than

a competitive race. I suspect this might result in happier employees, lower personnel turnover, and a better return on investment for the organization - all likely to result in satisfied customers and growth for the business. It's a win for all concerned.

Organizations, especially the HR function, can play a pivotal role in culture building, inculcating a work ethos that highlights the collective spirit for which each person works, and must actively participate in the development of employees. In doing so, we can make an enormous contribution to the development of society. Perhaps it is our obligation to our planet that we invest in human development. This is true Corporate Social Responsibility. It can be done, and it must be done. ★★

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"Yoga is a mirror to look at ourselves from within" – B.K.S. Iyengar



As spiritual beings, we have an innate need to get to know ourselves, our real selves.

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ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE - THEATRE BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT

Lecture -Workshop @ Colaba (Main Centre)
Saturday, 1st July 2017
6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

In any form of theatre, actors enact roles and adopt characters. Don't we also wear many masks in life, playing many roles? Through some basics of theatre, we will explore the manner in which we might do justice to the many roles that we play in life.



EARTH – BEYOND SCIENCE

Interactive Talk @ Colaba (Main Centre)
Saturday, 29th July 2017
6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

The Human Being has a very intimate connection with the Earth, our home. But do we truly understand this relationship? Beyond the wonders of nature, is there something more? In this talk we will explore the bounty of our planet which is meaningful for our lives today, giving us a firmer grasp of who we are and why we refer to the planet as "Mother Earth".



I'M A VOLUNTEER – WHAT'S YOUR SUPERPOWER?

Interactive Talk @ Khar
Saturday, 8th July 2017
6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

How do we contribute towards a better world when the problems of the world seem too big to surmount? Change is always challenging. The Volunteer that sets out to make a change is indeed a "Superhero" that gives us hope for miraculous change! We will see together, what lies at the core of the Spirit of Volunteering? How can we cause sustainable change to build a better tomorrow!



WHAT'S ON YOUR "BUCKET LIST"?

Interactive Talk @ Khar
Saturday, 29th July 2017
6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

What do you have on your must-do list? The movie "The Bucket List" asks – What does it really mean to live life to the fullest? Technology should save us time, but instead we seem to be busier. In this talk, we look at the human journey, our tryst with time, and how to build a meaningful "Bucket List" in our pursuit of happiness.

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WHAT IS BIOMIMICRY – INSPIRED BY NATURE

Interactive Talk @ Colaba (Main Centre)

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In our age of technology and rapid scientific advances, Biomimicry has become popular for disruptive innovation. Biomimicry suggests that there is a secret to the workings of nature that man can use to inspire better design, architecture, and engineering. A full circle back to nature? In this talk, we will explore fascinating secrets of nature. Perhaps they are better known to us than we imagine!

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LOOK WHO'S TALKING – COMMUNICATION IN 21ST CENTURY

Interactive Talk @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 19th August 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

In the world of speedy connections, we have more advanced means to communicate than ever before. It helps to build relationships with our friends, family, and with every other human being. How we communicate is key to the meaning we are able to bring to these relationships, and in our lives. The new communication trends of the 21st century need a deeper sense of education!



A TIMELESS JOURNEY THROUGH SACRED ARCHITECTURE

Interactive Talk @ Khar

Saturday, 5th August 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

The Great Pyramids, Stonehenge, Angkor Wat, and many other such magnificent monuments are our legacy. Is the glory of these monuments limited to what we see? Or are they capsules of wisdom waiting to be unravelled? Perhaps they capture an astonishing understanding of the Universe. Through this presentation, we will journey through the tenets of Sacred Architecture that might have some implication for us today.

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THE ART OF WAR – DEVELOP THE LEADER IN YOU

Interactive Talk @ Khar

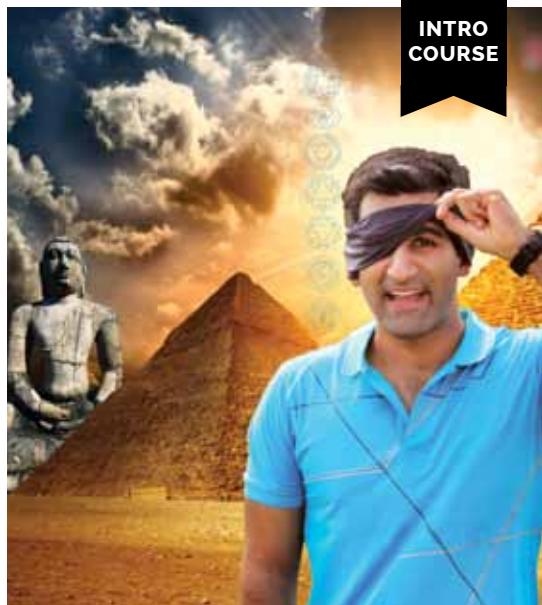
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"He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight" – Sun Tzu. What about great men changed the courses of history? As true leaders they had mastered the art of leading their own lives, guiding by personal example! With teachings from the Mahabharata and The Art of War we might learn how to recognize and lead ourselves in the battle of everyday life.

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This is a 16-week introductory course on practical philosophy that establishes the basic foundation of every aspiring Philosopher. The course weaves a journey through a comparative study of principles of Eastern and Western Civilization, to develop sensitivity towards the eternal principles of life. Together we will explore the Mystery that is hidden in life and what it means to be a philosopher. The course is to inspire you to ask the great questions of life, and to give you tools to face personal and collective challenges.



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THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE RAGA

Guided Indian Classical Music Appreciation @ **Khar**

Saturday, 2nd September 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Listening to an invigorating "morning raga" can inspire even the musically illiterate. What is it about music that can touch our hearts? In this guided music appreciation, we explore some nuances of the language of Indian classical music, to unravel something about the rhythm of nature and life!



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LIFE - A DELICATE BALANCE

Interactive Talk @ **Colaba (Main Centre)**

Saturday, 9th September

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

We find ourselves fraught with the challenge and opportunity to choose, evaluate and prioritize at every step. We face circumstances in life which demand our response. How do we balance our lives and make better choices? To seek harmony is natural for each human being. This talk looks at how we can bring inner harmony to balance the many contradictions of our lives! To be presented by the National Director of New Acropolis Cultural Organization, Mr. Yaron Barzilay.

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FAQS OF LIFE - TEACHINGS OF THE GREAT TEACHERS!

Interactive Talk @ Khar

Saturday, 9th September 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

In our journey through life we often ask fundamental questions about our purpose, and life's ultimate meaning. If only there was someone to answer these Frequently Asked Questions. We will see how these questions sparked the investigation of wise men through the ages who sought answers, leaving for us a wealth of experience!

BEING BEAUTIFUL – PHILOSOPHY AND FASHION

Interactive Talk @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 16th September 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

What really is Beauty? Aren't we touched by the beauty of a flower, or the beauty of a profound poem? Many cultures refer to a timeless beauty, such as the beauty that is expressed in fashion. We question if beauty is subject to opinion, and if it changes with time. In this talk, we will examine timeless beauty and see how we might express and sustain Beauty as human beings.



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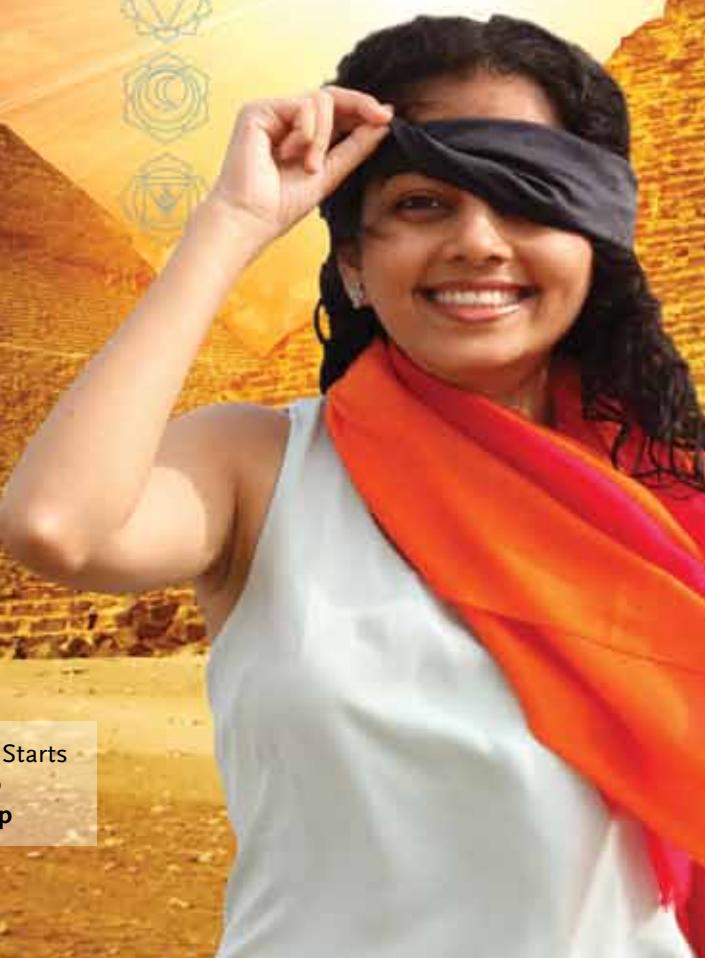
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