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THE ACROPOLITAN

A Magazine on Philosophy, Culture & Volunteering

FEATURE

INTERFERENCE: AN OPTION OR A NECESSITY?

EMPOWERING REAL CHANGE

THE POWER OF SYMBOLS

ULYSSES: THE MISSION TO
RETURN HOME

THE WAY OF THE ARTIST

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS


NEW ACROPOLIS





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THE ACROPOLITAN

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



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



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



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



FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Reader,

As we look out to the horizon, and drink the gentle beams of the tropical spring sun, a mysterious thirst remains unquenched; the parched throat yearns for nectar, unsatiated by the material comforts that emerge from the industrialized advancements made through humanity's recent past. It's as if an inner voice whispers that there must be something more - beyond the race for comforts, fame, financial gain, and successful careers.

Perhaps this whispering voice functions like an inner ethical compass, directing the path to our true home, our true state of being, characterized by beauty, harmony, fraternity, and collective wellbeing. Individuals since the beginning of time have dared to embark on this voyage; some by unraveling clues that lay waiting to be revealed in the natural world of symbols, some in their attempt to grasp and express beauty as in the way of an artist, and some who are compelled to engage with society, to empower individuals to effect real sustainable change in the way we choose to live our lives.

Some might insist that we must allow life to play itself out. And sometimes, this is true. But there are also times that need us to interfere and take responsibility for initiating change. What an adventure it might be to find this balance - and to return home! To truly Discover ourselves. To Awaken our potential. And to Transform our world.

Harianto H Mehta, Editor

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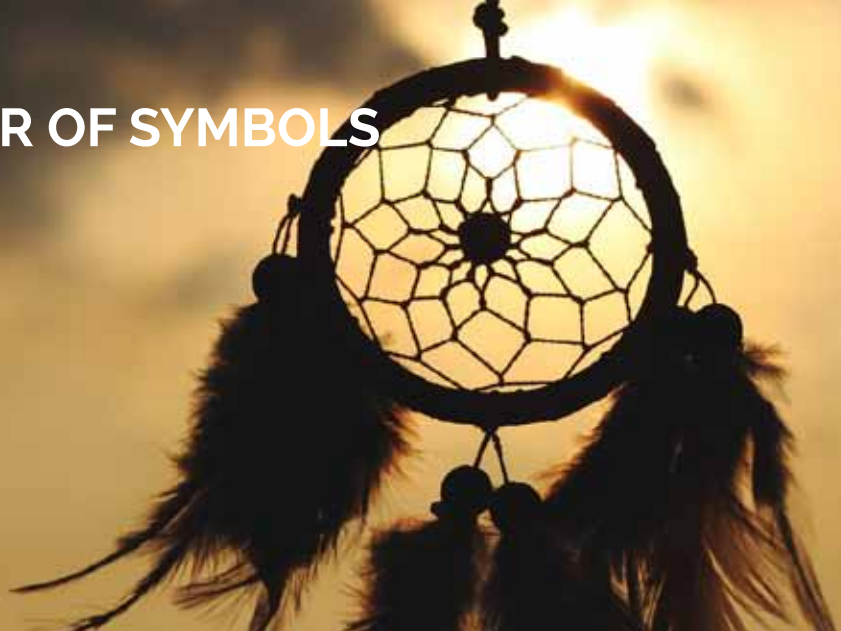
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THE POWER OF SYMBOLS

BY ALEX WARREN



Native American Dream Catcher

Symbols hold a powerful attraction for people. Even today, in an age in which materialistic perspectives rule human thought, many ancient symbols such as the ankh, the yin/yang, American Indian designs, pyramids, and many other symbols are quite popular in jewelry and in the home. Why do symbols of the ancient civilizations continue to be an integral part of our society, even to the point that corporations use them in commercials, movies, logos, in television documentaries, etc.?

This article focuses on sacred symbols, symbols which contain and represent something metaphysical, and mentions some of the reasons that symbols hold so much fascination.



The Giza Pyramids (Ancient Egypt)

Image Courtesy/ by David McEwan | pixels | CC0

Symbology, the study of symbols, sounds like a very complicated subject, but interestingly enough, you already have some knowledge about it, and maybe a little intuition, because, as alluded to above, you are surrounded by, use and wear symbols every day.

The best type of symbol is the symbol which transmits most purely that which it is reflecting and keeps almost nothing for itself.

The word symbol means something which contains something else. A symbol transmits something, a symbol reflects something, and it has been said that the best type of symbol is the symbol which transmits most purely that which it is reflecting and keeps almost nothing for itself.

There is a very interesting idea that is fundamental to understanding symbolism, symbology or symbols themselves, and that is that everything that you see in the material world has a counterpart in the invisible world. This is not a new theory. This concept was present in all the ancient civilizations.

A close-up photograph of a golden hand, likely a statue of a Tibetan Buddhist deity, holding a vajra (Dorje). The hand is positioned with the index finger pointing upwards and the thumb pointing downwards, a gesture known as the 'varada mudra'. The vajra is a complex, ornate golden object with a central shaft and multiple tiers of flared, lotus-like petals. The background is a solid, vibrant blue. The lighting highlights the metallic texture and intricate details of the golden hand and vajra.

For example, when you see a sphere, that is the manifestation of the idea of the sphere. Have you ever seen a perfect equilateral triangle? Or a perfect square? Or a perfect circle? No, you haven't, because they can't be created in the manifested world. No matter what perfect circle or perfect equilateral triangle or perfect square or perfect line or perfect rectangle you show me, we can find an imperfection. No matter how perfect you make it, there will always be some imperfection.

This concept of an idea incarnated is the basis for the understanding of what a symbol is. A symbol is "metaphysical." It goes beyond the physical realm. If you observe the Universe, you will realize that the whole Universe is a symbol. There is incredible Beauty in the Universe, and when you start to examine it, and try to understand it, you will realize that it is a symbol of Something beyond.

One of the first things that you have to do if you want to understand symbols, is to get out this world, even if only a little. You have to ascend a little, just like if you want to see what surrounds you, you climb a tree or a pyramid or a mountain - so you can see further.

**To study the language of
the symbols is to learn
about Nature, to learn
about the laws which rule
the Universe.**

If you are stuck in your own cultural perspective, in other words, if the only perspective you are able to perceive is your own, which was shaped by the society, the culture, the religion or politics in which you were raised, then everything is always going to look foreign. You are not going to be able to see symbols or understand symbols; you are just going to see foreign looking things. So one of the first things we have to do is to try to understand sincerely and that requires us to go a little higher, and take a little bit higher perspective, a little more subtle understanding, a little more in-depth understanding.

In order to get a little better glimpse of this lost science known as symbology, let's take as an example a symbol which is quite popular these days: the Ankh. By any chance, are you wearing one right now? It looks like a circle or an oval sitting on top of a capital "T". Why is the Ankh a perennial favorite in jewelry, etc.? It is interesting that the Ankh, which hasn't had a living religion associated with it for a couple of thousand years, is so popular today.



The ankh is from Ancient Egypt. In the temples of the Ancient Egyptians, it is found in the hands of the Gods. It signifies Eternal Life. It is called the Key of Life, and is the key to the Mysteries of Nature. It is used to open doors between the visible and the invisible worlds. As it regards the individual human being, it refers to the difference between physical existence and spiritual existence.

The ancients believed that everything has a soul. Plants, animals, even stars have souls, very great souls. The soul of a chicken is obviously not the same as the soul of a human (although the behavior of some humans these days does make you wonder sometimes).

According to the Ancient Egyptians, the purpose of life is Spiritual Evolution. Incarnation is a learning process, a big classroom. The ankh represents

the opening of the door between physical life and spiritual life. However, entering that world requires purification and education: purification to get rid of false attitudes and misunderstandings that prevent us from realizing our full potential, and education to bring out the virtues and gifts that are latent. Thus you are a symbol, you are a symbol of your own Spirit.

Finally, we can analyze the composition of the ankh, although we will probably miss something important, just like a chemical analysis of the human body wouldn't tell us much about the person which inhabits it. The ankh is a combination of two symbols, a circle, and a T or Tau cross. The circle represents perfection, the spiritual world or Eternity.

The ankh represents the opening of the door between physical life and spiritual life. However, entering that world requires purification and education: purification to get rid of false attitudes and misunderstandings that prevent us from realizing our full potential, and education to bring out the virtues and gifts that are latent.

The cross represents Spirit incarnated, or the Manifest World. It's the combination of the vertical line and the horizontal line. The horizontal line is yin. Yin is the place where life can take place. The vertical line is Yang, like a Solar Ray coming down. In order to have life you have to have those two things, you have to have a womb, Mother

Earth, where life can take place and you have to have an impulse of life. The horizontal line is like the surface of the sea and the vertical line is like a lightning bolt. These two combine to form the cross, or in the case of the ankh, the Tau, on which the circle sits. Technically, the fact that the ankh is the combination of two sacred symbols makes it an emblem.



To study the language of the symbols is to learn about Nature, to learn about the laws which rule the Universe. The ankh is one of many, many symbols which were meant to instruct and to assist the spiritual evolution of the human being, or to record some historical lesson for educational purposes. In addition to these, there are unique symbols and emblems which represent schools of thought or religions. The hieroglyphs and ideograms of all ancient civilizations are also symbols.

Nature is also full of symbols. A flower, the geometric patterns in the veins of a leaf, the markings on an animal or insect, the constellations in the nighttime sky; all these are symbols. How about your dreams, your aspirations and the work you do throughout a lifetime, might not these also be symbols? They are. We live in a world of symbols.

Can sacred symbols help us? Yes, they can remind us of our invisible part. They can remind us that we have an immortal soul. And in many cases, if they are rendered beautifully, they can inspire us. But wisdom is far more powerful than any symbol or amulet. Wisdom is the real ankh, the key to the invisible dimensions, the key that unlocks so many doors.

The best way to learn the secrets of the symbols is to follow that ancient Greek recommendation, "Know Thyself" which is equivalent to learning the secret behind one of the greatest symbols of all: the Human Being, Symbol of the Immortal Soul and Symbol of the Universe. ★★★



EMPOWERING REAL CHANGE

BY PURBASHA GHOSH



Few amongst us can deny a ubiquitous yearning for change - socially, politically, ecologically, spiritually and a myriad other dimensions. Unfortunately, this longing seldom manifests beyond vehemently voicing the already well-recognised need for change or deluging the social media space with our postulates of it. Real change, nevertheless, continues to elude us. Intimidated by the apparently enormous effort essential to effect change, we succumb to our instinctive resistance to change resigning to an endless array of excuses - resorting to blaming destiny, external circumstances, or political situations, among others.

Noble intentions notwithstanding, it is unambiguous that quick fix solutions are often ineffectual to cause real change and the widespread superficial, fragmented approach is not sustainable over any consequential duration. The unsuccessful attempts towards realizing real changes are seldom investigated constructively, beyond the surface. Instead, we give in to our inherent tendency to despair. And this atmosphere of hopelessness discourages our further endeavours towards change and aggravates the situation into a vicious cycle. The situation is redolent of the maxim "the pathway to hell is paved by good intentions".

To break free of the shackles of circumstantial constraints and corrosive despondency that paralyze our potential to initiate change, it is worthwhile to examine the works of a few who have overcome trammelling challenges to do their part to participate in creating real and sustainable change. This past January, New Acropolis Cultural Organization hosted an insightful panel discussion, at the Express Gallery at Nariman Point (Mumbai), bringing together three engines of effectual change in diverse arenas. Sonam Wangchuk, Zarina Screwvala and Yaron Barzilay.

Intimidated by the apparently enormous effort essential to effect change, we succumb to our instinctive resistance to change resigning to an endless array of excuses.

SONAM WANGCHUK

Sonam Wangchuk (Founder - SECMOL, HIAL), is a name synonymous with revolutionary change

in the landscape of education and sustainability, in Ladakh. This unassuming 2016 Rolex Award Laureate has leveraged his vocation as a mechanical engineer, persistently over the past three decades, to spearhead innovation at SECMOL (Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh), working alongside students, in projects such as low cost passive solar powered buildings and the ice stupa artificial glacier project for efficient fresh water harvesting. His latest undertaking is the founding of HIAL (Himalayan Institute of Alternatives in Ladakh), aimed at transforming education to go beyond chalk, talk and paper. Instead, his vision is to foster hands-on application of knowledge. Sonam confesses to being a "victim of the prevalent education system" and goes as far as allegorising the government education system as "sixteen years of captive listening".

Sonam Wangchuk had a cheerful childhood amidst mountains, rivers, forests and wildlife in a pristine, secluded village of just four households in Ladakh. He considers himself fortunate to have been able to escape the regimens of structured schooling



until he was eight and half years old. Despite the late onset of formal schooling, Sonam's most impressionable, pre-school years were profuse with learning, absorbing real-time, what many of this generation know only from the pages of a textbook. He cites the subsequent formal schooling program as a setback that inhibited the realization of the real potential of his formative years. Sonam who remained perplexed for most of his schooling years, was left enchanted, by a chapter on Optics in Grade XI, and his fascination propelled him to pursue Mechanical Engineering, despite strong discouragement from his father due



Sonam Wangchuk on the site of the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives in Ladakh.

Image Courtesy: Sonam Wangchuk

to lack of employment opportunities. As a result, resolute Sonam ventured to earn the cost of his own engineering education by offering Science and Mathematics tutoring to school students, at which time he came face to face with the lamentable state of the government schooling system.

He was troubled by the rampant failure of bright young minds to score passing marks in school examinations, and the irrelevance of the syllabus to the isolated Ladhaki context. At an age when most teenagers and young adults engage in fantasizing of high flying careers, Sonam surmised that it is vital that he contributes to "where he was needed rather than chase what he needed". Thus, while Engineering remained his first love, educational reform was a louder cry, a calling that was irrepressible.

His incessant efforts to overhaul the methods of imparting education payed off and the proportion of students failing matriculation plummeted to 25% from an absurd 95%. The results though encouraging, were not satisfactory to Sonam, who subsequently launched a school especially for students who were rejected by conventional schools, due to recurrent failures. Now, equipped with decades of experience in educational reform, his next stop is HIAL, a university to educate and empower students to address the need for sustainable change, congruent to the temporal and geographical context. Sonam has pledged his entire prize, conferred by the prestigious Rolex Foundation, as seed funding towards this vision.

ZARINA SCREWVALA

Zarina Screwvala (Co- founder – UTV, Swades Foundation), pioneered the television revolution in India. Her illustrious multi award adorned career, spanning a quarter of a century, has made her a household name. After divesting from UTV, Zarina embarked upon an ambitious dream of "lifting a million people out of poverty over the next ten years." Meticulously, an area of over 3000 square kilometres in South Raigad (Maharashtra, India) was

delineated, and a talented team was assembled to manifest the vision through accessible schooling, vocational education, elementary healthcare, gainful engagement and sustainable capacity building. That was the conception of Swades Foundation, and the rest as they say was history.



While contending with the unnerving possibility of divesting from UTV five years ago, Zarina Screwvala serendipitously chanced upon a school of philosophy called New Acropolis. She fondly reminisces an epiphany, as she stumbled upon a quote in a non-descript nook of the school: "When you let go of who you are, you become what you might be." Astonished by its pertinence to her predicament, it propelled her to confront the real reason of her reluctance to dissociate with UTV as an underlying fear, or insecurity; the prospect of letting go of her life's work petrified her. By acknowledging the need to conquer this anxiety, she parted ways from UTV in just one week.

It is of immense importance that an individual's choices are aligned with the source of meaning and happiness in life.

As she deliberated over her options post-UTV, Zarina sportingly leapt into the formidable and ambitious philanthropic vision of "lifting a million people out of



Zarina Screwvala in the field in one of the many villages adopted by Swades

poverty," suggested by her husband Ronnie. The Screwvala duo travelled extensively through the next year, traversing the length and breadth of rural India, confronting the real face of poverty and its brutal severity, in their attempt to comprehend the magnitude of the problem and to ascertain feasible approaches to combat it. Contrary to popular perception, they discovered that poverty originated in the mind, that "poverty is the death of aspirations".

Therefore, Swades seeks to empower the underprivileged, to uplift themselves out of poverty. She is cognizant that "there is no silver bullet to poverty alleviation." It requires a total and holistic involvement, and emphasises the need to have an innovative exit strategy as one of the key constituents of any sustainable philanthropic undertaking.

Her painstaking efforts have started bearing fruits and she beams as she recounts the everyday heroes of her project: A widow who learnt sewing, seamstressing her way out of poverty and emanating the skill and confidence to fellow women; A teacher that volunteers two months of his time to an annual grade X resident coaching program, prior to crucial board exams; An elementary healthcare worker whose vigilant care has saved countless

lives due to prudent and timely intervention. Slow but surefooted *Swades* has come a long way and inches closer towards realising its vision.

Today, Zarina is conscious of the wonderful alliteration between her twin passions - *philanthropy* and *philosophy*. They refer to the *love of people* and the *love of wisdom* respectively, complement each other beautifully, allowing for the exoteric and the esoteric worlds of an individual to blend seamlessly and purposefully.

YARON BARZILAY

Yaron Barzilay (National Director – New Acropolis Cultural Organization) is a specialist of Eastern and Western philosophy and has authored several investigative works through his two decade long journey, related to practical philosophy, exploring timeless universal concepts relevant and applicable in daily life. After the success as head of the branch of New Acropolis in Jerusalem, he seized the opportunity to found New Acropolis in India. Under his leadership, NA spearheads numerous initiatives to foster social and ecological responsibility demonstrating that philosophy, in contrast to the prevalent notion of being a strictly intellectual faculty, has the ability to bring about intense, real and sustainable change.



Yaron Barzilay

After completing his obligatory national service in his native Israel, Yaron Barzilay worked to gather money for a much anticipated visit to India, that he dreamed of a child. Expecting a spiritual awakening, he remembers being disappointed with the chaos of Mumbai, vowing never to return. As providence would have it, Mumbai has been his home for the last decade and today he is in love with the city. After his India sojourn, Yaron returned to Israel and took up a tv production assignment, where by happenstance, while producing a show about spirituality, he found his teacher, the National Director of New Acropolis in Israel. The momentous meeting soon lead to the realization that the perpetual feeling in his heart, that there was something missing, the relentless search for that elusive element, was his quest for meaning.

He was enchanted that in New Acropolis, no answers were imposed on him; instead he was encouraged to ask questions and reassured that his search was legitimate. He explains that the word Acropolis translates to 'the higher city'. Across ancient civilizations, it was customary to first establish the centre of a city, the seat of the sacred, on higher ground; the rest of the city was built peripheral to the consecrated citadel – demonstrating the aspiration that everyday activities be pivoted to a spiritual center. Therefore, New Acropolis is a metaphor to revive that aspiration for a higher direction, which Yaron explains, is intrinsic to every individual and fundamental to the human experience. This eternal pursuit for truth, beauty, justice, goodness is an essential element of life. Minus these virtues, life is devoid of meaning. He conjects that meaning and direction are the two crucial elements that are vital to accomplishing and empowering real change.

EMPOWER CHANGE

Their stories unequivocally are an inspiring start towards an elementary comprehension of the effective approaches to empower consequential sustainable change but the attempt would be futile, if one falls short of investigating the various challenges and obstacles likely encountered in such a pursuit.



Yaron Barzilay with member volunteers from New Acropolis.

Sonam Wangchuk traces these impediments to the thoughtless and insensitive onslaught of the environment since the Industrial revolution. He cites statistics to substantiate the outrageous eradication of wildlife, their numbers dwindled to half, in diametric contrast to the explosive growth of human population, in the past forty years. The solution, according to Sonam, rests in starting small: educating individuals, in remote villages and then disseminating the changes outwards to a wider sphere. He alludes to the importance of pausing and introspecting on the direction to which our activities are propelling our planet, underscoring the dire need for human civilization to learn to distinguish between cleverness and wisdom. He explains cleverness as the attitude that when you can do something, you do it because you can. Instead, wisdom implies that "you can do many things, but you would choose not do many of those, and do only certain things...Our future lies in human beings choosing what they want to do, rather than be blown to what they can do."

Cleverness as the attitude that when you can do something, you do it because you can. Instead, wisdom implies that "you can do many things, but you would choose not do many of those, and do only certain things... Our future lies in human beings choosing what they want to do, rather than be blown to what they can do."

Zarina Screwvala echoes with Sonam on choosing wisely, adding that the widespread feeling of disconnectedness emerges from the loss of meaning in contemporary times. The Zoroastrian emblem of the *Farohar* that depicts the human

obligation to choose is her favorite insignia to substantiate her opinion. She believes that it is of immense importance that an individual's choices are aligned with the source of meaning and happiness in life.

Yaron Barzilay offers a philosophical take on the barriers that we encounter. He refers to the idea of Post-Truth, selected by the Oxford Dictionary as the 2016 Word of the Year. He elaborates that it indicates the enormous erosion of meaning and direction of life, and expresses dismay at the suggestion that Truth is no longer considered relevant or consequential. This is preposterous and contrary to the legacy and wisdom of our ancestors who bequeathed us the profound aphorism *Satyamevayate* - Truth alone triumphs. Yaron identifies that the greatest challenge is that the human race today, associates so much significance to the external superficialities that the ties with the inner self stand severed. He reminds us that the word "education" has Latin origins that meant "to draw out" from within. The irony of this, when compared to the present day system of education, where much of the discourses are imposed exogenously, is inescapable. He cautions that only the truth is sustainable, concurring with Sonam that there is no superficial mass solution; that genuine lasting change, originates at the individual level.

Zarina offers further insight into specifics of the endemic and systemic difficulties that beget despondency and despair. She ascertains that it stems from cynicism - the anxiety that our attempts to change with be rendered futile. But she equates cynicism to an abysmal form of mental poverty. While partnering with corporate and government organizations to advance the outreach of her philanthropic venture she learnt that beyond the apparent clash of business interests and Corporate Social Responsibility, as recently mandated legally, there lies synergy and sustainability. And it is reassuring that Corporate India recognizes

this mutual symbiosis, and takes this obligatory responsibility seriously with genuine benevolent intentions. There is a similar fraught relationship between Government agencies and rural poverty alleviation. According to her, it is not the lack of vision but the flawed methodologies that result in the deplorable state of affairs and the colossal trust deficit that exists between the benefactor and the intended beneficiaries of government schemes. She also accentuates that the role of an NGO like Swades is to bridge this trust deficit.

Sonam insists on the possibility of capitalizing on the structure of the education system. He articulates that in its present avatar, the education system doesn't instill a culture of making informed prudent choices. It is the need of the hour for our system to empower youth to make choices. The normative, regimental approach of instructive discourses is detrimental to inculcating this ability to choose. Thus reconstructing the system must begin at the very root and encourage the students to make responsible choices, averting injurious imprints on the environment and going a step forward to nurture it.

New Acropolis is a metaphor to revive that aspiration for a higher direction, which Yaron explains, is intrinsic to every individual and fundamental to the human experience.

Yaron maintains that there is a need to be pragmatic about anticipations from external sources and that profound change must be fostered at the individual level. In his opinion, philosophy is an avenue to define and discipline oneself, to recognize one's own individuality, in contrast to identifying with the personality, the ever-changing masks. In what may appear to be a paradox, the degree of connectedness to one's inner self

closely correlates to his empathy towards others, he explains. And he insists that one's individuality reverberates with the ethics he identifies with, not the ones mandated by social or legal statutes, but the ones he believes to be right in all his integrity. He disparages the culture of instant gratification as fueling the insatiable appetite for superficial and material pursuits, drifting the individuals focus from his inner compass. One's efforts to accomplish change is successful only when the recognition for the need for change arises from this inner sanctum and is directed by the inner compass.



The "Empowering Real Change" panel discussion with a packed audience. (Jan 2017)

Professor Jorge Angel Livraga, the founder of International Organization New Acropolis, once made an insightful observation: "The more you think about the other, the less you think about yourself". Perhaps, there lies the true ability to choose to love, and to care about, others. Philosophy, philanthropy and wisdom. In an interesting way these three champions of change bring together, in sublime synergy, an inner search which is responded to by actual action. And, could there be a better place to begin than as indicated by the Father of our nation, "Be the change you want to see in the world?" ★★★

A recording of the panel discussion is available to view at <http://acropolis.org.in/2017/01/12/panel-discussion-on-empowering-real-change-2/>



*Sadly, the Just and the True,
just like the Beautiful and the
Good, are not always present
in the seeds of our societies;
but they are in the human heart
and in its spirit.*

Pierre Poulain

INTERFERENCE: AN OPTION OR A NECESSITY?

BY PIERRE POULAIN

Image Courtesy: by smahel | pxbay | CC0-PD

As a street photographer I have the opportunity to travel worldwide, to present exhibitions, to present various photography workshops, and of course to take new photographs.

From those travels there is a photograph I have always presented in my last few workshops. I use it to illustrate a "dynamic composition", which is a composition with a lot of visual elements, allowing a dynamic lecture of the photograph. This particular photograph is not an outstanding example of such a composition, but I use it to explain an ethical concept, and to initiate a dialog with the workshop participants about whether or not it is necessary for the photographer to be involved in a situation - in this case, it was at a street event. I would like to enlarge this example to our ethical rights and obligations, as human beings...not only as photographers.

The photograph I use to illustrate this article was taken in the summer of 2010 on the banks of the Thames, in London. It shows on the left a couple of gypsy musicians, and some children who might be coming back from school (it was around 14:00, mid day time), deliberately walking over the hat that was used by the musicians to collect money; they were making loud noises, laughing and singing, to

disturb the musicians. On the right other people are walking away, indifferent to the event, paying no attention to what had occurred beside them. Well, this may be my interpretation, and looking at the photograph we may consider that the 2 people walking on the right are indeed unaware of the situation. But the photograph must be placed again in its temporal context: about half an hour before, in another part of London, I was walking with a friend - and my camera - and a man, apparently quite drunk, fell to the ground about 10 meters from me. Instinctively I approached him to see if he needed any help. My British friend stopped me and told me not to touch him; not to interfere, that it was his right to be drunk and fall...

Of course I did approach him (but I did not touch him), talked to him, and as he regained consciousness and claimed he did not want any help, I left him after a few minutes. But I did not forget the remark of my friend. When I saw, later the same day, the scene with the musicians, I vividly recalled the previous situation with the drunk guy and a question awoke in my mind: Is there a limit to the right amount of interference toward individuals? Is it right never to interfere? Must we always interfere? Or are there criteria we could use to know when we should

not interfere, when we may interfere or when we must interfere?

The attitude of separation is not Just - as Justice and Truth are, from a philosophical perspective, different expressions of the same archetypal concept. It is not Just because it is not True, and it is not True because it does not correspond to a natural human ethical need.

The first thing to consider is that using criteria consciously - not mechanically - is never the easiest solution, but it may be the most human one; the best, and from a philosophical aspect, the only one. It is always easier to hide ourselves behind "iron rules" and declare that in no circumstances, may we break the rules. This may apply to the rule "never to interfere" or the contrary, "always interfere".



The first proposition leads to a grotesque caricature of the "British phlegm" and to the justification of the non-interference, which in reality is a poor excuse for avoiding natural human relationships with other people. It maintains the unnatural separation that people are experiencing in modern life, especially in large urban towns. In those cities everyone is living with thousands of souls around, a non-stop

noise, but one may feel even more alone than if he was living in a little house, in the country, surrounded by trees and with the closest neighbor living some kilometers away. To survive, some wear a psychological and mental armor which isolate them from people around, and because they consider this isolation as protection, they will do anything to maintain it; including finding a moral justification for the isolation.

But let us remember what is said, for example, in Buddhist philosophy; the "illusion of separation" is the worst of all illusions. It is said to be an illusion because it is not True. This does not mean that separation and isolation do not exist. Obviously they do: we experience them. It means that the attitude of separation is not Just - as Justice and Truth are, from a philosophical perspective, different expressions of the same archetypal concept. It is not Just because it is not True, and it is not True because it does not correspond to a natural human ethical need. We may fall into the trap to think we may survive better if we separate from other human beings, but this will only reinforce the Ego in all its negative aspects: egoism and egocentrism. We may survive...but the price we will pay is the sacrifice of some the most important human values: generosity and empathy for others, the ability to consider oneself as part of Humanity, and hence to relate to other human beings as brothers and sisters. As I said, we may survive...but not live.

The second proposition, the opposite one, is not better: it is to consider that we always have the right, and even more, the necessity, the obligation, to interfere in other peoples' lives - to "adjust" it and correct it according to what seems just and good to us. It is to consider that the differences should be canceled, that if something is good for us, then it must be good for all and thus it is our moral obligation to "show the Truth". This conception leads usually to a missionary attitude, whether in the field of religious or ideological understanding. It emphasizes a fanatical way of considering other



human beings, other cultures, and in general perceives human differences as wrong, and gives an apparent moral justification to an arbitrary reduction of all the differences. This is the justification used by all dictators and tyrannies, when they explain that they have to "educate" - or "re-educate" - the people "for their own good", or when they are not just trying to eliminate them brutally as it is occurring now in Syria, and when at the same time most of the Occidental countries are hiding under the justification of non-interference. (Well, they talk...but they don't act).

As philosophers, we have to consider not only religious, political or economical factors, but must first consider the human factor, and... THINK. Think and feel. Open our intelligence and our sentiments, and become able, in any place, and at any moment, to determine what is JUST and what is RIGHT.

The only human attitude resides - as always in philosophy - in the middle. Not in the extremes. This means that sometimes we shall have to interfere in a situation, and sometimes not. It means that there is no easy answer written in advance which could apply to any situation. It means that every decision

has to be taken consciously, and that we are responsible for our decisions and actions. We have to consider at every moment the situation in entirety. As philosophers, we have to consider not only religious, political or economical factors, but must first consider the human factor, and... THINK. Think and feel. Open our intelligence and our sentiments, and become able, in any place, and at any moment, to determine what is JUST and what is RIGHT.

In general, it will not be easy. Nor will it be the most widely recognized or understood attitude. Sadly, the Just and the True, just like the Beautiful and the Good, are not always present in the seeds of our societies; but they are in the human heart and in its spirit. The ability to recognize them and to act according to these eternal values makes us what we really are: just humans - A dynamic bridge between the separation and the reduction of the differences. And this makes us the Guardians of these Differences, being able to respect them without judging them. Between the attitudes consisting of falling into the trap of isolation at any price, and the opposite consisting of reducing by force all the differences, there is a wide space for humanity: this is the place for every philosopher, for every lover of wisdom, for every real human being to conquer. This is a place for a better life, and this place is in our heart: it waits for us to discover it. ★★★

Pierre Poulain is the founder of New Acropolis in Israel, and was its National Director until 2016. Today he is the Coordinator of Countries for the regions including Asia, Africa, and Oceania.

ULYSSES: THE MISSION TO RETURN HOME

BY SIVAN BARZILAY



Are you familiar with those moments when it seems that life is talking to you, sending you some message, a direction? In the beginning, it might not seem very clear but with some extra observation and deeper investigation you become able to view the connection.

And so, a few weeks ago, the name Ulysses came to my life. It landed on me with no prior announcement, as if it wanted to tell me something, give me some message. I was not aware of this name before, but could guess that it was from Roman or Greek mythology. Indeed, based on some short investigation, I learnt that it is the Roman name of the Greek hero Odysseus, the main character of the famous Odyssey.

Most importantly, the story of Ulysses describes the voyage of returning home. In his story, the journey back home is accompanied by many difficulties, dangers. It is not a simple path.

Why did this story come to me all of a sudden? Am I also in a similar process of returning home? And how should I understand it better? My questions about home have arisen quite often in the last few years. I was born in Israel and have always felt very

connected to it and to my family. But at some point in my life I had to leave it in order to fulfill a greater dream, more Human. Anyone that has had to leave his homeland, his country, knows that it is not a simple thing to do. Today, after 10 years I feel much more at ease with my new location, but I know that the search for home is not yet complete. It is much greater and more profound than only a geographic location. Home is a place within us, beyond space and time, and Ulysses is here to help me reflect on it and remember.

The Beginning of the Voyage

Ulysses, or his better known Greek counterpart, Odysseus, was the king of a very special island named Ithaca. Ithaca was known to be prosperous under his rule and his wife- Penelope, had given birth to a baby boy; it seemed as if his life was peaceful and good. Hence when the kings of the Greek city-states arrived to Ithaca to request Ulysses to join them in the war against Troy, he did not easily agree and tried deceiving them by playing mad... he walked on the beach dressed only in his underwear, drawing a plough, sowing seeds of salt in the sand. The deception didn't hold for long. Left with no choice, he had to join them. Within a few days, he left Ithaca to begin his journey to Troy.

This is not the only story that starts with the mention of a hero who tries to run away from his destiny... it is very clear that any change we seek in our life requires that we step out of the known comfort zone. At first, we don't want to do it. We find reasons to avoid movement, to avoid the effort. We know that it is needed for our growth but our mind plays tricks on us. We try to deceive life, to silence this voice inside of us that wants to be courageous and adventurous, by giving all kinds of excuses and justifications, sometimes as ridiculous as sowing salt in the sand; yet we believe in it. It might work for a short while but eventually in some way or another, life will make us move.

Home is a place within us, beyond space and time.

Plato, in his allegory of the cave, describes us: chained from the moment we are born, unable to move our legs, hands, or neck, so that we are always looking at the same things in the same way. There is a beautiful quote by Einstein that says, "If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got." So when life calls you, you need to move. Any resistance will just cause suffering and, as in Plato's allegory, when you start to move, you will see that all these "chains" are easy to break.

Going back to our story, the war against Troy lasted ten years. And Ulysses plays a very important role. He was the one who came up with the idea of the famous Trojan Horse. Being convinced that it is a gift from the Gods, the Trojans agreed to allow the huge crafted horse to enter through the armored gates of the city without knowing that inside were hidden dozens of soldiers. In this intelligent way, the kings were able, at last, to conquer Troy.

After 10 years finally Ulysses would return to his beloved homeland and to his people. It seems that the story has reached its happy end; tragically, however,

the story only just begins. His voyage home takes another 10 years and is known in the famous Iliad as "Nostos", which means "the long journey home".

To Ithaca - The Journey

In his journey, Ulysses travels by sea, visiting many islands and goes through many challenges. He fights against monsters, stands against temptations, takes difficult decisions...but most importantly, along the journey he never forgets his home - Ithaca, the goal of the mythical adventure.

Stories and Poems have been written about Ithaca, the legendary place which symbolizes one's life goal; the place that we yearn to reach, the climax of our dreams, the meaning of our life. It is the place that is familiar to our heart. Some traditions might call it heaven, describing us as the fallen angels. Other traditions call it the place of light, where you can see beyond all illusions. We might call it home, a kind of compass that always shows us the right direction in life.

One might want to read more about this place. Interestingly, the goal itself is never described in length; the emphasis is on the journey itself.

In one famous poem, written by Constantine P. Cavafy (1911), he says:

"When you set out for Ithaca
ask that your way be long,
full of adventure, full of instruction.
The Laistrygonians and the Cyclops,
angry Poseidon - do not fear them:
such as these you will never find
as long as your thought is lofty, as long as a rare
emotion touch your spirit and your body.
The Laistrygonians and the Cyclops,
angry Poseidon - you will not meet them
unless you carry them in your soul,
unless your soul raise them up before you." [1]

If you notice, the poem starts with the word "when".

Maybe it is just a matter of time before we all set out on this journey. But when you do decide to embark, ask for it to be long and full of adventure. Don't search for the short cuts and the easy ways out. Instead give yourself fully to the journey and know that all the challenges that you will meet on your way are just reflections of what you have inside of you. Welcome them since they will reveal to you the greatest enigma of all, the enigma of yourself.

The real home lies within us and it is related to our ability to reflect and develop our inner life. To be Human is to be rich, not with possessions but with Human Virtues and capabilities.

Observe your envy in order to let go of it, your anger in order to control it, your lack of discipline in order to develop one, your tendency to separate yourself from others in order to develop fraternity and your need to be loved in order to learn to love unconditionally...the journey back home is but a mirror of fire; an invitation to "know thyself" as was inscribed on the facade of the temple at Delphi.



All the secrets are inside of us and thus the journey home is never outside. It doesn't matter if we are in our homeland or not, if we are in a big house or in a tent. The real home lies within us and it is related to



our ability to reflect and develop our inner life. To be Human is to be rich, not with possessions but with Human Virtues and capabilities. When our inner home is full of light, when our windows and doors are always open and fresh air and love reside inside, we are becoming rich.

The poem ends with:

"Better it last for years,
so that when you reach the island you are old,
rich with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to give you wealth.
Ithaka gave you a splendid journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She hasn't anything else to give you." [1]

How Should We Prepare for the Journey?

A child like curiosity, an uncorrupted spirit that refuses to withdraw when it experiences a challenge, a great intelligence to always find ways to advance forward, a yearning heart longing for the familiar home which was lost, a humorous attitude and courageous mind.

The story of Ulysses is a great allegory of man's life-journey. To be the hero of our life, to search and seek wisdom and truth, even in times of great winds which push us away from the shore. To always be on the path as much as we can, with dedication and seriousness. To keep walking home...

Thank you Ulysses for the inspiration. ★★★

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HARMONY AND THE ART OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP

BY RAN KREMER



A wise man once said, "One close real friend is better than ten distant and estranged brothers." Does true and unconditioned comradeship still exist in the 21st century? How different is real friendship from having casual friends or from "Facebook Friends"? Can this kind of lasting and profound friendship be found? How and where?

There are many kinds of friendships, some casual, some romantic, some are pleasant like flowers that bloom for a day or like a summer cloud, but some rare ones are as firm as an oak. These rare relationships do not depend on passing needs or on momentary interests.

The quest for this relationship can be compared to the holy grail of human relationships. Our path at New Acropolis is a constant search towards the metaphysical values. This quest is also the path towards true and sustainable friendship. We call this a "Philosophical Friendship".

Here we are guided by the wisdom of the New Acropolis Worldwide President, Delia Steinberg Guzman, when she writes about Philosophical Friendship, "It is what makes it possible for two

persons to try to know each other, to comprehend each other, through the knowledge of their own self. It is what makes respect, patience, and constancy to be born. It is the one that forgives but also corrects and the one that encourages each one to be better each time so they deserve the friend."

True Philosophical Friendship is an outcome of developing inner harmony. This harmony may then expand to encompass a relationship and harmonize it. Once a certain level of harmony is achieved, the relationship can become profound and transcend beyond circumstances or challenges.

Harmony in Latin is Concordia, which translates to, "with (one) heart." The Ancient Romans worshiped a goddess named Concordia, who embodied like-mindedness.

Harmony is created when there is Concord between different aspects of one's life. It is integration and balance. Harmony is when different parts of myself are "playing" different notes that come together as one melody!

The challenges on the path to harmony in our lives come with Discordia which is caused by Dissonance. Dissonance is imbalance and disintegration. When

one aspect of our life "steals the show". When one part takes over in an unproportionate manner thus creating imbalance with the other aspects of life. This imbalance is seen when one cannot integrate between, for example the personal, the career, the family and the more philosophical or altruistic engagements.

Discordia is also created when we allow ourselves to be indifferent, or when we are in conflict.

Discordia is created by the parts of the personality which cause conflict or disconnection and eventually become a force of separation.

The Buddha described separation as the greatest illusion of all! We can say that separation is the force directly in opposition to the force of Love.



Image Courtesy: by Nandini Kumar
pexels / CCo

Harmony that is manifested over a period of time turns into an unbreakable and invincible Unity. In ancient Greece the concept Homonoia represented the value of "Order and Unity". It means "being of one mind together" or "Union of hearts" (Wikipedia). Unity is the supreme value of all. Living Unity is being closer to the Atman, the Aum.

"A harmonious chord is the ability to work together, to know how to relate our actions to the actions of others, not in a dissonant confrontation, but in an advantageous integration.

Once again, Union depends on our will, and undoubtedly on our love for people, our love for reaching mutual agreement, and the intelligence to achieve that end.

Unity will be the consequence. If selfishness, pride and the desire to stand out above others with or without merit prevail, there can never be unity, because each person will be focused on themselves and always trying to put others down." – Delia Steinberg Guzman, President – New Acropolis International Organization

Once an individual finds the path to inner harmony and starts walking on it, he or she is ready for real coexistence. One can connect and develop harmonious relationships or Philosophical Friendship. These friendships build real and lasting fraternity among human beings. And this fraternity enables people to truly know each other with patience and forgiveness. They motivate each other to better themselves, making it worth the effort, and cherish this kind of friendship.

To be a real friend means to be able to give more than to receive, to be devoted and serve each other rather than expecting to be served or wait for an applause for what we have done.

Philosophical friendships can transcend time, age, demography, life's circumstances and even pain, sorrow and tough personal life situations. It is the kind of relationship that can be the future of human relationship, it is the foundation for building a new and better world. The Philosophical Comradeship we are committed to build has the potential to become an eternal path creating bonds between our souls. May these bonds live long, even beyond Death.

As many of our loyal readers know, we at New Acropolis, are in a relentless and constant search for everlasting and metaphysical values. These values are a firm ground for us, aspiring philosophers, in a fleeting and transient world.

We are on a grand journey in search of the Good, the Beautiful, the True and the Just. ★★★

Ran Kremer is the National Director of New Acropolis Cultural Association, based in Bangalore. This article was previously published in The Clarion Call (Vol1:Issue 4, Apr-Jun 2016).

THE WAY OF THE ARTIST

BY SHRADDHA SHETTY

"Beauty is truth's smile, when she beholds her own face in a perfect mirror." (1)

How would you define art? Usually, it is described as a form which is pleasing to the eyes. We call this form 'beautiful'. Is beauty then related only to the sense of sight, motivated by the viewer's feeling at the moment of viewing? Or is there such a thing as absolute Beauty, which is beyond subjective feelings of that moment, grasped by an inner sight, which remains beautiful, whether the viewer appreciates it or not; like a beautiful sunrise, or a lotus flower. Many religions speak of such Beauty as an eternal value, an archetype, one among many expressions of the principles of an objective unchanging reality, unbound by space and time, beyond the ever-changing subjective reality. If such absolute beauty exists, it becomes an aspect of reality, of truth, which unites despite differences in moods, fashion, culture, nationality, skin color, or gender.

"We try to realize the essential unity of the world with the conscious soul of man; we learn to perceive the unity held together by the one eternal spirit whose power creates the earth, the sky, the stars and at the same time irradiates our mind." (2)

Art, in the classical tradition, is said to inspire the practitioner to grasp this unchanging, metaphysical realm of absolute beauty and harmony, and transmit it in the form of a painting, a sculpture, theatre, or poetry. This realm is the abode of the gods; of perfection and of limitless possibilities. For the admirer, to be awakened to this infinite truth, is to experience a deep need to move towards it, always higher, to become better than we are now, a little more truthful, a little more beautiful, to bring to expression what previously lay latent in our potential. Sometimes evoked by the symbols used in the art-form that reveal a hidden truth, it might also be the sublime aesthetics which awaken the need for beauty and harmony. Hence, art becomes a bridge which connects the unchanging reality, the eternal aspect of life, to the transient world, through the use of a support. For a soul in quest of wisdom, a real piece of art acts as a signpost, pointing the seeker towards unity.

"This I know that often when I sang, and drummed and danced, I found my eternity." (3)

A true artist therefore has a very crucial dual role. He has to rise to the window for a glimpse of this eternity and then climb back down to find a way to transmit his experience to those who are unaware

of the window, or the eternal possibilities that lay beyond it; to urge them to climb up to gain this experience for themselves.

Art, in the classical tradition, is said to inspire the practitioner to grasp this unchanging, metaphysical realm of absolute beauty and harmony, and transmit it in the form of a painting, a sculpture, theatre, or poetry.

Perhaps Rabindranath Tagore's greatness lies in his ability to express this sense of infinity in the realm of the finite, through his vast body of literary works, by seeking profound depth and richness in seemingly mundane things. He is credited as a crucial impetus in bringing about a cultural renaissance in India, reviving a sense of purpose behind art as a means to give expression to the spirit.

"The artist is the lover of nature; therefore is her slave and her master." (4)

Written in colloquial Bengali, and sometimes translated into English, his work dwells in themes of naturalism, mysticism, and philosophical insight. It is evident, that nature aroused in him a sense of wonder, perhaps motivating him to explore her enigmas in great depth. Wise men in the past have spoken of Nature as full of mysteries, revealed only to those that align to her laws. Nature was, therefore, never merely a backdrop for his work; its presence was vital.

The Earth is described as a nourishing mother, the sky as a witness, trees as givers, a sapling as a deity, and human beings as a humble part of this family; an interdependent Unity, based on mutual cooperation and respect. Beyond the forest,

animals, and minerals, human beings are regarded as integral part of Nature, as are the gods; she is the underlying inherent law of life.

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and saw that service was joy." (6)

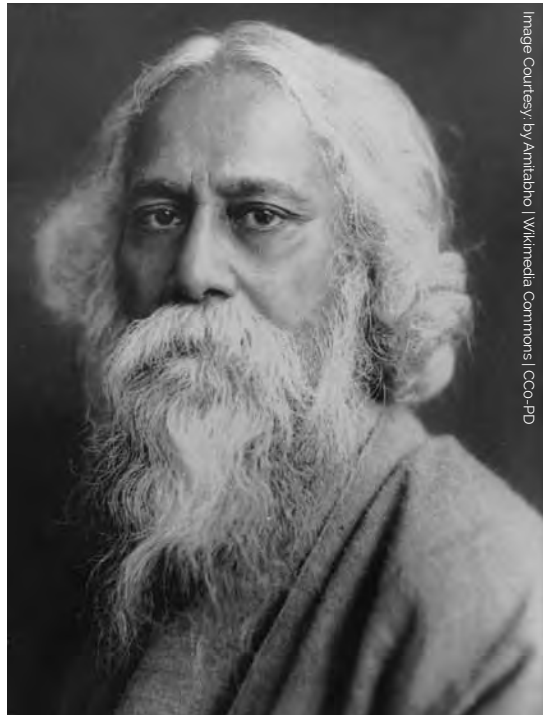


Image Courtesy by Antiaho | Wikimedia Commons | CC0-PD

Tagore was a mystic poet who dared to dream; but we cannot say that he was disconnected from day-to-day reality. He was devoted to social reform, and was an example of a truly free man who followed Ideals, unshackled by habits or societal conventions. One example of this attitude was his rejection of the conventional classroom-style education. In 1901, he established a school in Shantiniketan, where traditional values, cultural revival, and unity were placed at the center. He was not fearful of the consequences, and was not ambitious for awards, but steadily worked towards the fruition of his vision. As recognition of his work, he became the first Asian poet to win a noble prize in 1913, and was subsequently knighted in 1915. In

1919, however, Tagore withdrew from knighthood, in response to the injustice of the Jalianwala Bagh massacre in Northern India.

"Everything comes to us that belongs to us, if we create the capacity to receive it." (2)

What enabled him to become a bridge between the realm of the spirit and matter? Perhaps Tagore allowed his mind to become a blank canvas on which nature could paint her vibrant colors. He became transparent, aspiring for simplicity, by taming the personal likes and dislikes, desires, and judgments - in order to be able to receive. But how does one do this? Should we run away, into ascetism? The world seems to condition our minds, and a seeker might therefore look to escape. Clearly it is far more difficult to guard the light of truth, when society seems to walk in the opposite direction. But perhaps herein lies the artist's true purpose. In his noble prize acceptance speech, Tagore spoke of the time that he faced this dilemma. He spoke of a time when he was in isolation in nature:

"I was an obscure individual in those days. My name was hardly known outside my own province, but I was quite content with that obscurity, which protected me from the curiosity of crowds. And then came a time when my heartfelt a longing to come out of that solitude and do some work for my fellow beings, and not merely give shape to my dreams and meditate deeply on the problems of life, but try to give expression to my ideas through some definite work, definitive service." (5)

This is a call to idealists, to be unafraid, and persevere to honour the noble ideals, related to the spirit. It is a call to be in the world, but not be of the world. We need to be able to see beyond our limited subjective thoughts, fears and gains, so that we may learn to serve. We must take inspiration from the great artists and carry forward their work through any profession we do.

Can we all become artists in life, or is it a faculty for just a few? If the goal of an artist is to transmit beauty through form, then perhaps this is a call to action for everyone. Each of us has a physical form that we are born with, which we can maintain with attention and aesthetics. We also have feelings and thoughts, which we constantly direct and shape. And although they have a far subtler form these feelings and thoughts too can be beautiful, inspired, directed towards the best of our potential, and in service of all. Ultimately, it depends on us.

Tagore's work acts like a bridge, but ultimately we need to put the effort to walk over and cross to bring to life the unlimited world of noble values.

"You can't cross the sea by merely standing and staring at the water." (7)

We can become purposeful artists if we learn to harmonize our minds, our emotions and our actions and align them with eternal truths of our lives. We can express beauty, harmony, and unity, through any profession: as a doctor, as a banker, as a housewife or as a student. We can choose to be true artists who can bridge to the beautiful.

"There is ugliness in the distorted expression of beauty in our life, and in our art, which comes from our imperfect realisation of Truth. To a certain extent we can set our life against the law of truth, which is in us, and which is in all, and likewise we can give rise to ugliness by going counter to the eternal law of harmony which is everywhere." (2)

★★★

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LET'S PLAY SOME CHESS

BY AGOSTINO DOMINICI



Although I have never been a chess player I have always been fascinated by the various elements which constitute this game. Looking at the black and white chess board or the shapes of the various pieces I feel as if something very old and mysterious has been hidden behind those symbols. The origins of this game are not so clear, but it is well known that board games can be found all over the ancient world with records which stretch back as far as 5,000 years ago (i.e. in Egypt). It is very likely that the "ancestor" of this beloved board game was from the East and most likely from India. We also know of its connection with war, military strategies and the Kshatriya (warrior) caste. As India has always been associated with metaphysical teachings I wanted to see what symbolic connections could be found in this game.

One of the Sanskrit names for chess is Chaturanga, which means, four-limbs or four-membered. In Indian metaphysics the number four is very holy and we find names like: Chaturveda (4 Vedas), Chaturyuga (4 world ages), Chaturvarna (4 castes), etc. There are also references to a four-handed chess called Chaturaji which derives from the word Chaturmaharajikas (4 great kings). This game was

played by four players with pieces in four colours. The pieces included in the four-players chess are: the King, the Elephant (which in the modern chess has become the Bishop), the Horse, the Boat (now the Castle) and the Pawns.

It is very likely that the "ancestor" of this beloved board game was from the East and most likely from India. We also know of its connection with war, military strategies and the Kshatriya (warrior) caste.

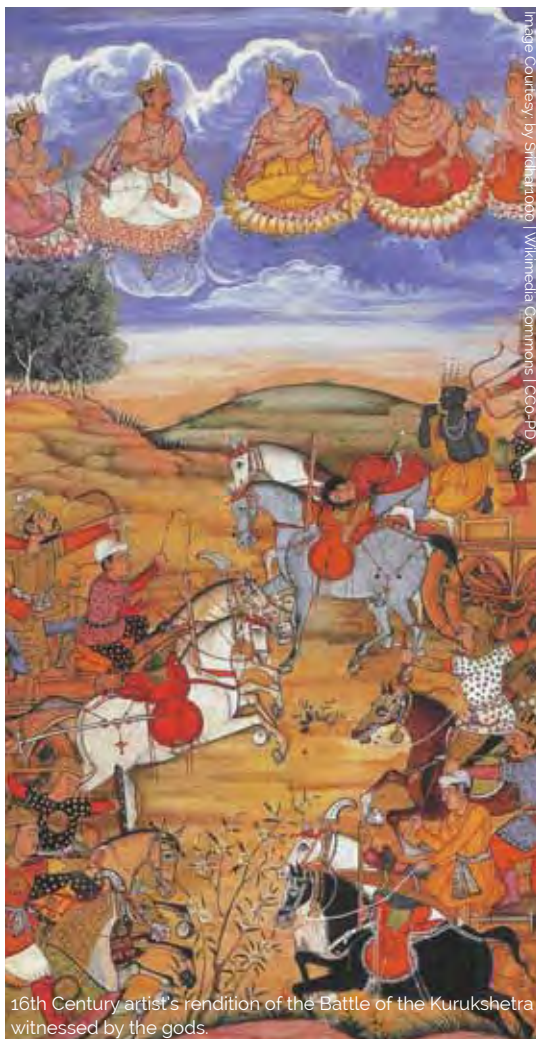
The arrangement of the pieces reveals the four cardinal directions (East=Green=Spring, South=Red=Summer, West=Black=Autumn and North= White or Yellow=Winter) of the manifested space or the visible world (symbolised by the square-shaped board), where the various "forms" and energies of life (symbolised by the pieces) interact and "play" together the drama of life. Each colour and each cardinal direction is obviously linked to an Element

(Fire, Air, Water and Earth) where each group is a host of Elementals headed by its chief Deva (God) or King (see Buddhist mythology of the four kings). The fifth "direction", and its corresponding element (Akasha in Sanskrit), resides in the centre of the board. Those four groups of pieces can also be interpreted as the four seasons (the pieces were moved in a rotatory direction, analogous to the movement of the sun – starting with the green pieces), the four castes and the four kingdoms of Nature. The movement of the four camps (groups of pieces) symbolizes cyclical transformation and the spinning of the Wheel of Law (Dharmacakra in the Buddhist tradition).

In a different interpretation, within each coloured group we find again the four elements (Boat/Castle=Earth, Horse=Water, Elephant/Bishop=Air and King=Fire), the four castes (Shudras=Earth, Water=Vaishyas, Air=Brahmins and Fire=Kshatriyas) and a fourfold constitution of Man (Earth=Physical, Water=Energetic, Air=Emotional and Fire=Mental). Without going into too much detail, leaving to you the task of working out other interesting correspondences, let us now take a closer look at our "modern" chess (see fig. 2). I put the word "modern" in brackets because it's not so clear which of the two versions is older, it might well be that the two players chess is even older than the one just described.

The chess board is made up of 64 (8 X 8) black and white squares. In India this is the form of the most important of the Vastu Purusha Mandala – the Maduka Mandala, which symbolises the metaphysical plan of a building. It can be interpreted as the building or the body (or rather, the "form") of Man (archetypically considered – see Adam Kadmon in the western tradition) or the Microcosm (in this respect, see Vitruvius and Leonardo Da Vinci). 64, as with the number of hexagrams in the I Ching, thus symbolises all the existential possibilities of a human being and the various stages necessary to fulfil the Archetype Man. The number 8 is the symbol of infinity, like the symbol of the circle, and is related to an entire Aeon or cycle of being. Therefore this mandala can also be interpreted as the complete form of a World or a Cosmos.

On the chess board, the squares are alternatively black and white, representing the eternal play of the Yin and Yang polarities, as well as the "image" of the world and of Man (if we include the chessmen) in its fundamental duality. The chess board has now become a "battlefield" (the Kurukshetra of the Bhagavad-Gita). The combat which takes place, between the two sets of pieces, in its most universal meaning, is the combat of the Devas with the Asuras, of the "angels" with the "demons", of the Pandavas with the Kuravas. On a more practical level, this



16th Century artist's rendition of the Battle of the Kurukshetra witnessed by the gods.



Image Courtesy/ by Los Angeles County Museum of Art | Wikimedia Commons
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Women playing a Game of Chess (Rajasthan, India, circa 1700)

represents either the everyday battle we fight against external foes (even what we call loved ones) or the battle of our lower/animal nature with our higher/divine nature. These are the two forms of the "holy war"; the "lesser holy war" and the "greater holy war" mentioned in the Koran as well as in the Bhagavad-Gita.

On the chess board, the squares are alternatively black and white, representing the eternal play of the Yin and Yang polarities, as well as the "image" of the world and of Man (if we include the chessmen) in its fundamental duality.

If the significance of the different chessmen is transposed into the metaphysical domain, in the light of what we have also mentioned about the elements, the King becomes Akasha-Spirit, the Queen (which in the original version was the Minister or King's counsellor) becomes Fire-Mind-Manas, the Bishop is Air-Emotional and so on.

Their movements correspond to different ways of realizing and actualizing the cosmic as well as the earthly possibilities represented by the chessboard. In this respect, it is interesting to note, for instance, how much freedom of movement has been given to the Queen, stressing the western-mental approach to life. It is also interesting that the King (Spirit or Soul) cannot be killed, but can be imprisoned.

I think that one question will surely arise in the reader's mind: what about the pawns? They are the slow movement of ordinary man who will eventually conquer the stage of Mind (become the Queen), but also the various stages of "natural" evolution (i.e. the evolution of the Elemental world). They are also functions or aspects of Man in continuous development and therefore they move only forward.

In the current state of affairs, I think that the game of chess has become a bit too "logical" and "dry", so I hope that with this short article I have ignited in you a kind of symbolic imagination and have emphasized the need, today more than ever, for contemplation and intuition. I vividly invite you to study other symbolic treasures which can be found in the game of chess as well as in many other old games. ★★★

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS

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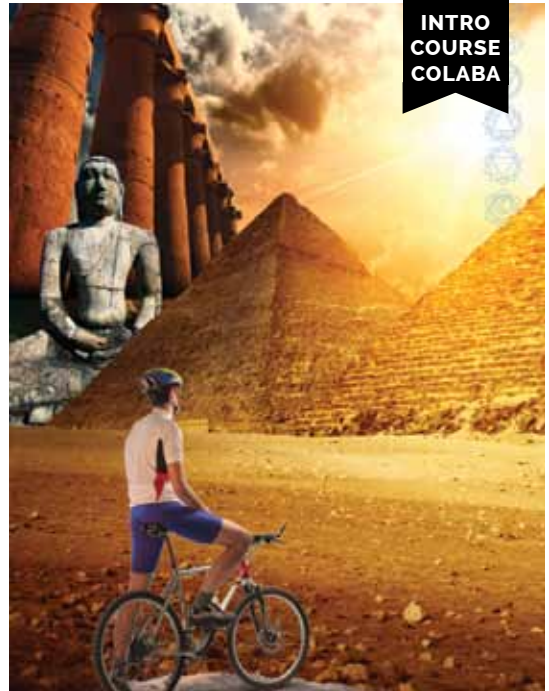
KALIYUGA – THE GIFT OF OPPORTUNITY!

Lecture @ **Colaba (Main Centre)**

Saturday, 1st April, 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Kaliyuga, known as the Dark Age, seems to spell doom and disaster. But perhaps this is our very chance to shine, because even the dimmest light illuminates and dispels darkness. Join us as we explore the characteristics of our times and how we can take responsibility and seize the unsuspecting opportunities that lie before us.



**INTRO
COURSE
COLABA**

LIVING PHILOSOPHY: DISCOVER, AWAKEN, TRANSFORM

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Course @ **Colaba (Main Centre)**

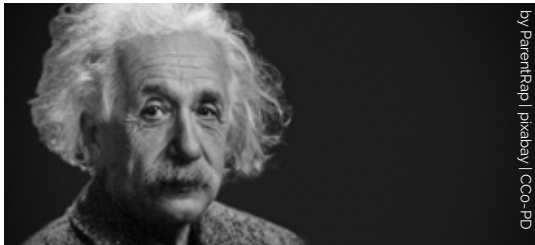
FREE INTRO: **Monday, 3rd April 2017**

FREE INTRO: **Monday, 10th April 2017**

Course Starts: **Monday, 17th April 2017**

7:30PM (2hrs)

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



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EINSTEIN: A WORLD OF WONDER

Lecture @ **Colaba (Main Centre)**

Saturday, 8th April, 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

"He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand wrapped in awe, is as good as dead," said Einstein. What made it possible for Einstein to have so many breakthroughs in one lifetime? Join us for a special evening as we explore the driving force between Einstein's lifelong search for truth and his immense respect for the mysteries of life.

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS

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THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI

Lecture @ Khar

Saturday, 8th April, 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Far from being violent or bloodthirsty savages, it is said that the actions of the Samurai were governed by strict codes of conduct, founded on human principles such as fraternity, courage and discipline. Join us as we explore how their warrior spirit can inspire us in our own battles of daily life.



by Masrur Marzvi Malavi | Wikimedia Commons

AN EVENING WITH RUMI

Guided Discussion @ Khar

Saturday, 22nd April 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

"Love is the astrolabe of God's mysteries," said Rumi. What about the force of love brings us closer to unity? How can we learn to manifest love in our lives? Join us as we voyage through Rumi's poetry to gain insight into our potential.



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TWELVE SENSES

Lecture @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 6th May 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

We relate to our world through our senses. While we recognise five senses today, Anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner speaks of seven additional senses through which we experience the world. Which are these Twelve Senses? Join us as we explore how we can relate to our environment with more depth. Lecture by Curative Eurythmist Dilnawaz Bana. Hosted at New Acropolis.

COLABA (MAIN CENTER)

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KHAR

Ashray, 2nd Floor, 19th Rd,
Between 13th Road and Khar-Danda Road,
Khar (W), Mumbai

T: +91 98330 33239



ACCEPTING OUR DIFFERENCES. ACCEPTING OURSELVES.

Lecture @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 13th May 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

In a world filled with increasingly diverse opinions, beliefs and cultures, how can we live in harmony, celebrating our differences? Join us as we explore the strength of unity that lies in coming together without the need to be the same.



COLOUR PSYCHOLOGY

Lecture @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 27th May 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Colours naturally affect human behaviour, and evoke instinctive feelings in the human psyche. Although colour preferences are subjective, Colour Psychology investigates the ability of each colour to trigger collective emotional, mental and physical responses from Man. Let's discover how different civilizations have experimented with colour.



DEEPEN YOUR CONCENTRATION, IMPROVE YOUR LIFE!

Workshop @ Khar

Saturday, 13th May 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Are you ruled by 30-second commercials and stories told in 140 characters? Do you find half-baked ideas leave you jumping from one half-done project to another? Join us in a practical workshop to discover how we can learn to guide our own concentration and bring more focus and depth in our lives.



ART OF HUMOR

Lecture @ Khar

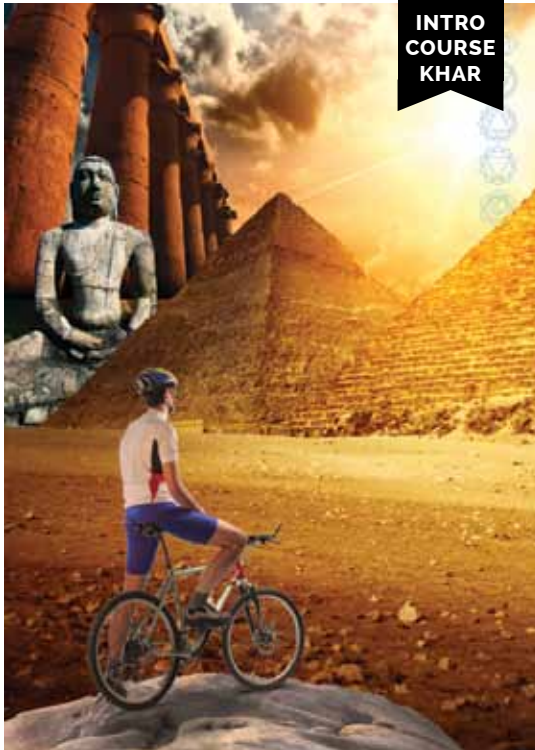
Saturday, 27th May 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

"A day without laughter is a day wasted." –Charlie Chaplin.
The words 'spirituel' in French, and 'spiritoso' in Italian, have two meanings: spiritual, and witty or humorous. When we begin to understand some of the deeper Truths about Life, we come to realize that the big deal we make of issues driven by our personalities, deserve light hearted laughter, rather than stress or anger!

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS

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INTRO
COURSE
KHAR



AN EVENING WITH TAGORE

Guided Discussion @ Colaba (Main Centre)

Saturday, 10th June 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Rabindranath Tagore - the man with a thousand words who captured the essence of existence with such simplicity. Join us for a journey with Tagore as we explore his works and rethink our perceptions on challenges, love, war and happiness.

LIVING PHILOSOPHY: DISCOVER, AWAKEN, TRANSFORM

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Course @ Khar

FREE INTRO: **Thursday, 8th June 2017**

Course Starts: **Thursday, 15th June 2017**

7:30PM (2hrs)

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



MINDFUL LIVING

Lecture @ Khar

Saturday, 10th June 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Does our mind dictate our thoughts or do we allow our life to be dictated by our mind? Join us for a workshop to explore the importance of attention, working with habits and multi tasking in a fast world.



By Hartwig HKD | Flickr | CC BY-ND 2.0

JOURNEY BEYOND DEATH

Lecture @ **Colaba (Main Centre)**

Saturday, 17th June 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

Is death the end of life? Or might it be the beginning of a more meaningful one? Join us as we explore the mysteries of life and death and how they might help us bring more meaning to our lives today. To be presented by Mr. Yaron Barzilay, National Director of New Acropolis Cultural Organization.



HUMAN BEING OR HUMAN DOING?

Lecture @ **Khar**

Saturday, 17th June 2017

6:00PM (2hrs), FREE ADMISSION

We find it all too easy to get caught up in our day-to-day tasks and routines, that we often forget to live! But what does it mean to live as a human being? Join us as we explore how we can dare to live and bring more vibrancy and meaning into our lives.



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	Free Into	Course Starts
COLABA: Monday, 7:30pm	3rd/10th Apr	17th Apr
KHAR: Thursday, 7:30pm	8th Jun	15th Jun

Living an Ethical Life, Practicing Wisdom
Ancient Indian understanding of Man
Discovering Human Purpose
Hearing the Voice of the Silence (Tibet)
Harmony (Confucius), Justice (Egypt)
Nurturing the Soul through Right Education
Evolution of Consciousness
The Way of Happiness (Aristotle)
Types of Governance
Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato
Extracting Truth: Myth vs History
Opportunities of our Times