

ACROPOLIS

Vol 3, Issue 3 | April - June 2019



On the Cover:

'Nostalgia & Innocence'

In this edition:

Mandala: Voyage to the Centre

In conversation with Roopa Pai

Best of Human Potential through Sports

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ABOUT

On the cover: 'Nostalgia & Innocence'

Summer is a month of intense heat but also of childhood chapters. Many of us have fond memories of summer breaks from school involving grandmother's house, paper boats in puddles, candies and television sets, Ambassador cars and the open winding lanes of the city. This cover aims to connect us back to a time of innocence and nostalgia to be able to discover what we could learn from our own childhood experiences.

ACROPOLIS

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Celebrating Spring and Holi at New Acropolis, Bangalore

Dear Reader,

Summer is here, and is making its presence felt! April and May bear the peak of the summer heat in Bangalore, and come June, we will see the spells of rain that offer welcome relief and joy to people, animals and trees alike. All in all, summer is a time of the peaking of external expression and movement in nature. And if it is so in nature, so it is in man too. If we are to connect with the cycles of nature and the seasons, as many ancient cultures did for large parts of human history, summer would be the time of the peak of external activity, the coming to fruition of projects and undertakings in our lives. We see this expression and movement in abundance in school-going children, during their summer vacations! While the grown-ups evade the heat by staying indoors, there's no stopping the children from running about and playing outside!

In this edition of ACROPOLIS, we have a beautiful collection of articles, featuring an interview with the delightful Roopa Pai, author of many children's books; we look at how we can bring change through the coming together of Idealism, philosophy and volunteering; for sport fans, this summer is a particularly exciting time with the cricket world cup commencing in May, and football leagues across countries reaching a climax - we take the opportunity to look at how sport can reveal the best of human potential; and to help maintain the centre as a constant axis of stability and a reference point we can always look to amidst all the flurry of movement in life, we have a beautiful article and a calming activity about the symbolism of the Mandala.

We wish you a happy summer of joy and expression.

Happy reading!

Anand Baskaran

Editor - ACROPOLIS

Caterpillar and Butterfly: Remember the big picture

Shashwati Balasubramanian



Come summer, the vivid colours in the blooming flowers are matched by the dash of colour in the wings of the many butterflies that visit them. Inspired by the Butterfly as a symbol of transformation, New Acropolis Bangalore created a public art installation at the Rangoli Metro boulevard on MG Road.



The center of the Butterfly Effect installation, is a heart made of hundreds of butterflies, which is a symbol of Love and Hope. What does each butterfly do to make the beautiful heart, come to life? It simply has to be itself and to bloom, in its own place and particular circumstances.

What does it mean for a human being to bloom? It is to be able to express the best in ourselves. We bloom, or express our deepest abilities when we touch inspiration and connect to the timeless values, in a simple natural way. This is what it means to simply be who we truly are. Each of us is unique and beautiful in our own special way - Butterflies of different brilliant hues.

But there are times when we feel lost, frustrated and unhappy. In these moments we feel overwhelmed with life. We struggle to accept our situation and look outwards to seek out who or what we can blame. We resist and suffer greatly, and question everything - our own choices, our commitments and our abilities and finally in the process we lose our axis and with it our strength and conviction. These moments are the opposite of inspiration.

The difference in view between the two states is the one between the view of the caterpillar, who crawls on the ground and the beautiful butterfly who soars above all of this, spreading his wings merrily so that they catch and reflect the sunlight.

In times when we feel low and disconnected it is good to remember this, and in these moments to consciously raise our consciousness to look at the bigger picture, the 'Why' behind our actions. This can help us go beyond the immediate challenges while propelling us forward.

“ Each of us is unique and beautiful in our own special way -
Butterflies of different brilliant hues. ”

And from a multitude of individual inspired moments will come the larger change, the blooming of values at the collective level.

The next time you are passing by MG Road, do make a stopover at the Rangoli Metro Art boulevard and visit the Butterfly Effect Installation to be inspired by the magic of butterflies and the possibility of each of us bringing change!



Mandala: Voyage to the Centre

Sivan Barzilay



INTRODUCTION

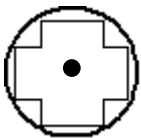
A traditional Japanese story speaks of a disciple who once asked his master how one could achieve enlightenment. The master suggested in a matter of fact manner, that he must do exactly the same thing he did every morning for the sun to rise. After much pondering, the confused disciple went back to his master to confess that in reality he did not do anything to help the sun to rise every day...and that since that is so, he could not understand the reason to study calligraphy, karate, kendo, archery, floral arrangements, and the art of bonsai. With a gentle smile, the master replied, "Precisely so that when the sun rises, you find yourself truly with your eyes wide open."

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

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

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

MANDALA: GEOMETRY



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



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

In its most common and simplest form, the mandala appears as a central point (the centre) surrounded by a square structure with four elaborate gates (sometimes described as a four-sided palace or temple) enclosed within an outer circle (the circumference). Many of you reading this article might say that there are many more elements in a mandala. Although true, for this article I would like to keep it basic and simple.

The Centre:



It is said that a mandala is born through the creation of its central point. This point emerges out of nothing but once it appears, it starts to move, to grow, to evolve. A point has no dimension, yet embraces all dimensions. It transcends the illusions of time and space and therefore results in the here and now, our most primal light of consciousness. This point is The Absolute, the source from which all creation manifests. It is all. And at the same time it is also nothing. Pythagoras, the numerical and musical Greek master would have called it Zero, the origin that contains all other numbers.

If our essence is truly spiritual, then perhaps this point is the oneness we all share, validating that each individual is equally precious and a sacred aspect of same One. **Mandalas tell us that Life originates from Unity.**

The Four Gates:



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

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

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

The Circumference:



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



Mandalas tell us that Life originates from Unity.



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

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

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

UNITY AND PLURALITY

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

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

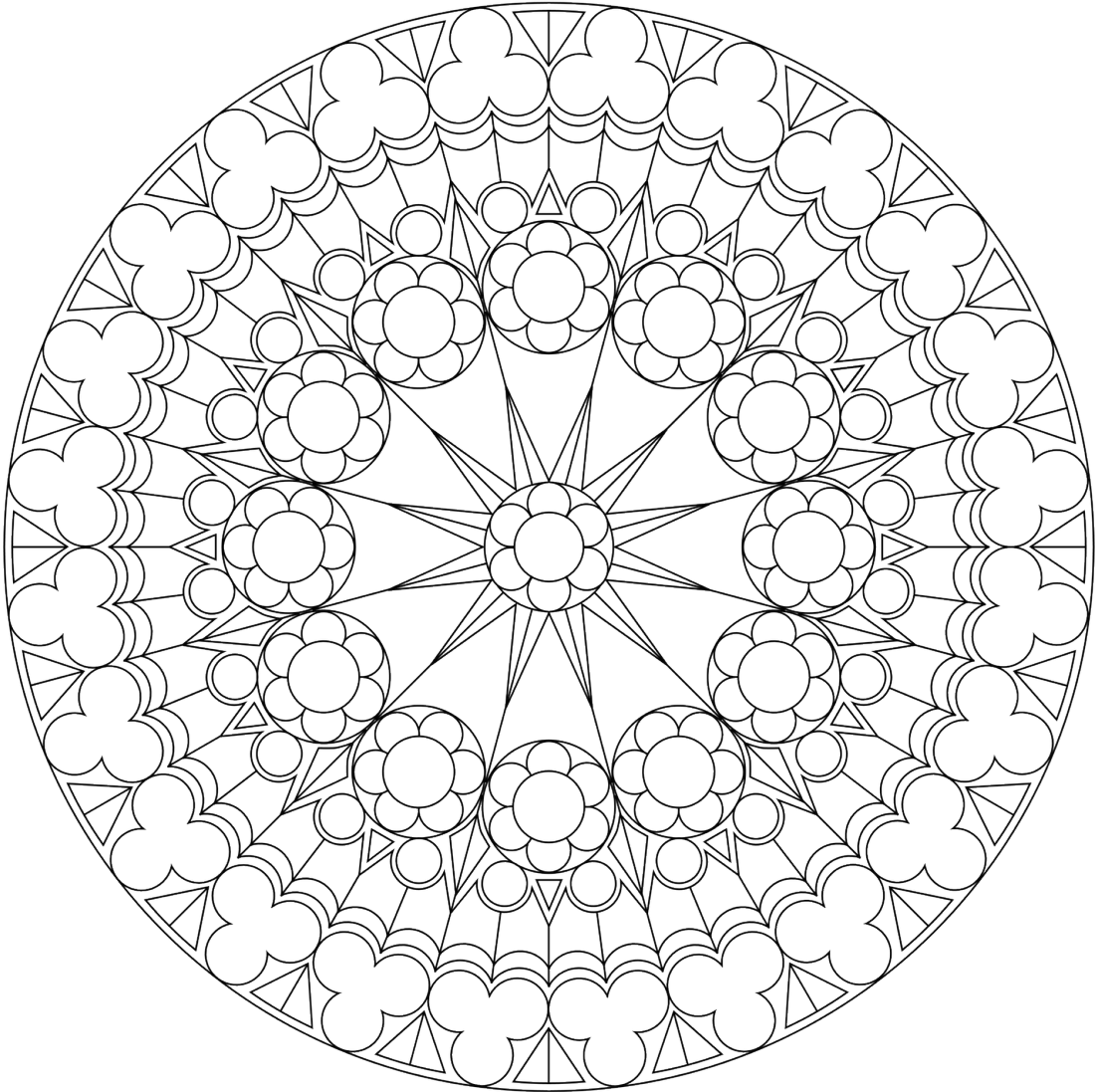
SUMMARY

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

Consider instead using another force, that goes inward, and invites us to ask the simplest questions: “Who am I?”, “Why am I here?”, “What is my role in the world?” In the midst of all the noise, making this effort to re-unite with the center, the beginning and the end of all life, might be the purpose of it all.

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

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



You will need: a set of crayons or colour pencils.

Start by observing the mandala and its details - the shapes, the patterns and their repetition, the elements. Gradually, let go of any analysis, concentrate gently, and try to be present to the activity. Take the opportunity to calm your thoughts and feelings, and then imagine the colours you would like to apply to the Mandala.

Once you have done this, pick up the crayon / pencil, and start with the centre of the Mandala. From here, colour in the rest of the Mandala, while practicing being present and mindful. Enjoy!



Photoblog: The Awakening to a Vocation

Pierre Poulain



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When we are young, we often don't know what we would like to become as we grow older. Kids usually dream of being firemen, policemen, adventurers or maybe "super-heroes". Those are dreams about what seem to be leading a meaningful life, with purpose.

Later we become more realistic and we put the dream aside. We try to stay open to opportunities, but in the end most of us are making a living off something which does not entirely match the dreams and aspirations of our youth.

But sometimes a real vocation is revealed, a need for something very specific. To aspire to be an artist is just one example of such a situation.

A vocation follows an Archetype, a need for an Ideal of essential value, such as Beauty, Justice, Goodness, Truth... To fulfill a vocation is the opportunity to live the need of the soul on a daily basis and it allows the one who does it to feel fully alive and not just to settle for surviving.

Never undermine someone else's search for their vocation, even if you don't understand it. Respect the dream of other people, and don't try to impose your own vision of the world on them. Always help the vocation to be realized. A dream becoming true reality is one of the best things that can happen to anyone in this world.



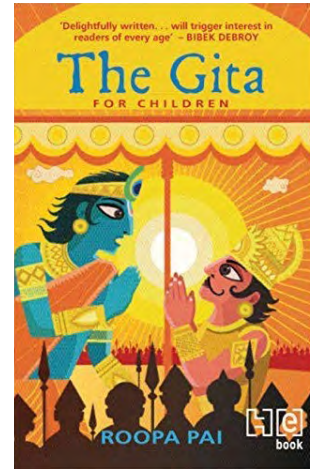
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Pierre Poulain is a philosopher and a renowned international photographer. In 1986, he founded the New Acropolis School of Philosophy in Israel and later on, in many other countries. Pierre blogs at www.photos-art.org

Ancient wisdom for the child [and grown-up] of today: In conversation with author Roopa Pai

Interviewed by Namrata Shenoy and Manju P Barhanpure



Often introduced as 'A computer engineer who always knew she wanted to write for children', Roopa Pai is the author of the national bestseller 'The Gita for Children' and India's first fantasy-adventure series for children in English, 'Taranauts', among over 20 other books for children. Also the co-founder of Bangalore Walks, Roopa talks to the ACROPOLIS team about her work and approach to books and life, and gives us a glimpse into her world of writing.

ACROPOLIS: To begin with, could you tell us a little about why you decided to become a writer, and specifically a writer for children?

Roopa Pai: I have no idea how, but I always knew that I wanted to be a writer. When I was very little, I used to write down little pieces of verse about things I saw around me. When I returned from a family holiday or a school trip, I would write a little journal about it. I realized quite early that my preferred mode of expression was through writing. Enid Blyton, Russian books for children (there used to be a lot of those around in my childhood), and Amar Chitra Katha formed the bedrock of my early reading.

When I was about 13, I got introduced by chance to a magazine called 'Target' and fell head over heels in love with it. That refined my writing ambitions further - I wanted to grow up and write Indian stories for Indian children. By 14 or 15, I knew that I wanted, more than anything, to be part of this magazine. And then, in one of those detours one makes through life, I ended up studying engineering.

On a personal trip to Manali soon after I had received my degree, I stopped in Delhi for the specific purpose of going to the Target office and applying for a job. One editorial position had providentially opened up a week before I walked in, and I got the job!

My editor at Target was Vatsala Kaul. She honed my writing skills, and taught me that writing for children carries more responsibility than writing for adults, and that I should not let any of my personal biases come through to my readers. After working in Target for two and a half years, I relocated to London and was away from Bangalore for 12 years. In 2004, I returned home for good and started 'BangaloreWalks' with my husband. Four years later, out of the blue, I got a call from Vatsala – she had just taken over as publishing director of children's books at Hachette India and wanted me to write for her.



That was how ‘Taranauts’, ‘The Gita for Children’, my new book ‘The Vedas and Upanishads for Children’, and a teenage life-skills book called ‘Ready!’ came to be. Somewhere on this amazing journey, I began to believe that I was being guided by destiny.

ACROPOLIS: You pick subjects that are complex like science and philosophy, and you simplify them for children. Is there a specific process that you follow?

Roopa Pai: I pick subjects that I myself am intrigued by, but have little expertise in, because I like challenging myself – it keeps things fresh for me, and I end up learning a lot and seeing connections between what are apparently very different disciplines. I believe it helps to go into a new subject with a child’s curiosity, but without the accompanying fear of an exam to clear. As for the process, I treat writing as a conversation – I imagine that I am explaining the fascinating things I have just discovered to a young, curious someone in front of me. That’s why my writing tends to have a lot of ‘Why do you think this happened?’ ‘What do you think is the truth?’ and ‘How come?’

In terms of language, in my experience, children are aspirational and like to be challenged, which is why I am not afraid of using big words, while keeping my tone accessible. When unfamiliar words are used in context, children are very adept at figuring out their meaning. In ‘The Gita for Children’, I used two kinds of language – while retelling the text, I used classical language, so that readers never lost sight of the fact that this was an ancient text; but for the lessons at the end of each chapter, I used everyday language so that they would connect with the philosophy and see how they could use it in their lives. My own philosophy is to treat each book I write as a self-development exercise.

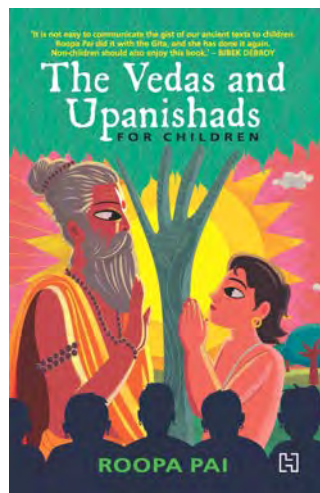
ACROPOLIS: As a school of practical philosophy, the Bhagavad Gita is one of the texts that we at New Acropolis work with and are inspired by. If you were to summarize the Gita as a body of work, and the one thing that personally had the most profound impact on you, what would that be?

Roopa Pai: Overall, I see the Gita as the world’s oldest self-help book. The immortal conversation between Krishna and Arjuna is really the conversation between your own confusion about how to live your life in this world to the best of your potential, and how to be content and at peace while doing it.

I think what made the biggest impression on me was Krishna’s ruthlessness in not letting Arjuna escape his responsibility. Whenever I’m facing a moral dilemma myself, I try to ask myself, ‘In this situation, what is my dharma?’ And I try not to give myself an escape route.

The other idea was that of the Sthitaprajnya – the ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ person. There are things in this world that you have control over – like your effort – and things that you do not have control over, like their outcome. Realising this, give 100% where effort is concerned, and give up trying to control the outcome, and you will become a sthitaprajnya! It is the ultimate recipe for a content life.

The third idea that influenced me deeply was that people have different ‘natures’. The trick to contentment is to recognise what your nature is, by introspection and reflection, and then stay true to it. Once I had internalised this, I began to see that different people’s approach to life had a lot to do with their ‘nature’ and their own past experiences. It helped me become less judgmental of those who did not see the world the way I did, and more compassionate.



Whenever I'm facing a moral dilemma myself, I try to ask myself, 'In this situation, what is my dharma?' And I try not to give myself an escape route.



And of course, I loved how, at the very end of the conversation, Krishna does not instruct Arjuna on what he must do – he leaves the choice to him. That liberty to make the choice, and then own the consequences of that choice, is both liberating and terrifying, but there is no other way to live. All these ideas, and more, have been expanded by reading the Upanishads now. It's beautiful!

ACROPOLIS: When it comes to any creative pursuit, there is a notion that the creative life is that of being reclusive. What would you advise young creators on the creative process? What is your approach to creativity in general?

Roopa Pai: I get asked a lot of times if I have ever faced 'writer's block', and I always say "No, never". I think, once again, it all comes down to taking responsibility. Like Krishna was on Arjuna, you have to be very hard on yourself when it comes to responsibility. When people ask me what my Muse or inspiration is, I tell them that the only Muse that works for me is a looming deadline! I think discipline is the best friend of any creative person. If you have discipline, the wild and beautiful horses of your creativity will be reined in and given direction, and manifest themselves in the most optimal way.

ACROPOLIS: What do you enjoy most about writing? What is the one thing that sparks joy for you?

Roopa Pai: The immersiveness of it. I think in the last ten years I have written around 20 books, but what has kept me prolific is the fact that I only have between 9 am and 3 pm each day to work. The pressure is on to sit down and finish as much as I can within this time. This enables immersiveness and focus, which makes for productivity.

I also love the research part of my work – I think I enjoy it more than the writing itself. The writing is the result of the research, but if I didn't have a book to write I would not have done the research!



ACROPOLIS: All of your books are for children, but a lot of adults also enjoy them. We say we have a child inside each of us and that you need to keep the child alive. How do you think you have kept the child alive in you?

Roopa Pai: I think I have kept the child in me alive simply by being curious about the world around me, and by trying to have as few preconceived notions about things before trying them for myself. Sadly, even well-meaning parents kill their children's natural curiosity by pushing them towards certain ideas, careers, and ways of being, even in something as fundamental as the books they read. When parents ask me how they should choose books for their child, my stock answer is, "Do not... instead, surround them with books and let them pick what they want."

So be curious - the world is endlessly fascinating! And consider everyone and everything around you a teacher – there is something to learn from everyone.

ACROPOLIS: You mentioned how 'BangaloreWalks' began, and you are still associated with it. What is your approach to history?

Roopa Pai: When you read history as a series of connected events, then your perspective on today's world becomes very different because this is not something in isolation. The Bhagavad Gita tells us that there is no right or wrong action - there are only actions and their consequences. So, when you start seeing history as a series of choices and consequences, it is a huge life lesson on how to view the world - instead of seeing one as the aggressor and the other as the victim, you begin to see how the victim also made choices that led him or her to a particular consequence. History helps us to see that there is no bad and good, just different considerations and motivations. Once you understand that, it is difficult to hate 'the other'.

ACROPOLIS: New Acropolis is centred around promoting universal fraternity, which acknowledges that beyond all that separates us, there is something universal that unites us. How do you advocate for the message of equality and diversity to children through your books?

Roopa Pai: It is very crucial to my thinking and writing that there is no thing as the other. In the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads, they talk about seeing a bit of yourself in every other creature, and seeing a bit of every other creature in yourself, which leads to the demolition of the feeling of 'otherness'.

My 2017 book 'Ready!: 99 Must-Have Skills for the World-Conquering Teenager' is inspired by the Scouts and Guides movement. It has 99 challenges to be cracked, and 24 merit badges to be won. One of the badges is the 'Interpreter' badge, where an 'Interpreter' is defined as someone who brings two communities together. The four challenges for an interpreter are

- (1) to learn about another religion,
- (2) to learn a new Indian language,
- (3) to learn ISL – or Indian Sign Language – which is used by the hearing-impaired in India and
- (4) to learn the language of a particular dance form, say, Bharatanatyam.

I put these particular challenges into the Interpreter Badge because I believe hatred and fear are caused mostly by ignorance, and one way to break the vicious cycle is to inform yourself about the so-called 'other'. Once you understand your enemy, it is difficult to hate them!

Best of the Human Potential through Sports

Kurush Dordi



The year is 1936. The Olympic Games in Munich are underway and Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of Germany, publicly comments, “The sportive, knightly battle awakens the best human characteristics. It doesn’t separate, but unites, the combatants in understanding and respect. It also helps to connect the countries in the spirit of peace. That’s why the Olympic flame should never die.” Behind this facade of unity, however, was the hope that the superiority of the ‘pure’ Aryan blood race would be definitively showcased.

In this context, German Lutz Long, set an Olympic record on his way to qualifying for the Long Jump finals. African American Jesse Owens had fouled on his first two attempts and was staring at a disqualification on the third. Before he made his stride, Long walked up to him and suggested he pre-mark his take-off spot a couple of inches before the foul line thus ensuring that he would miss the foul line and at least qualify. Owens took his advice and cleared the jump to qualify for the finals; he went on to win the gold, eventually setting a new world record. The lap of honour after the jump in the finals by Owens and Long, became a beacon of triumph of the Olympic spirit over racial differences. Speaking to journalists over the years, Owens described, “It took a lot of courage for him to befriend me in front of Hitler.”

The Olympics, have produced some memorable moments of great sportsmanship and fraternity illustrating the victory of the human spirit. As is summarised by the Olympic motto, “Citius, Altius, Fortius”, which translates to “Faster, Higher, Stronger”, every athlete aspires for the best of the human potential. When a sportsman wins, the victory is not just owing to a particular skill that has been practiced for many years; the victory also celebrates the hardships and the breakthroughs of barriers that enabled the athlete to reach the podium. It is victory of the mind over the body when a marathon runner crosses the finish line. The victory of a boxer lies in his determination, as he rises every time he is knocked down. It is a victory of team spirit, when a crew team paddles in unison towards victory. And it is a victory of harmony when synchronised swimmers execute a routine with grace and poise. Sport is thus a medium through which to manifest the inner strength of character; virtues that collectively as human beings we aspire for, but perhaps find it difficult to express in our day-to-day lives.

Plato suggests that beyond the prize and glory, the true celebration of spirit is the motivation towards excellence that emerges from will (internal) rather than competition (external). Many tournaments traditionally end with the ceremonial handshake signifying the basic respect for opponents as competitors, fellow human beings, each sharing in the aspiration for perfection. And respectful admiration of this mutual aspiration is honoured as more valuable than personal victory.



“
*Not every opponent can be defeated always.
And therefore, perseverance; accepting failure as a part of life.*
”

Cross country skier Anton Gafarov was nearing the end of the Men's sprint at the semi-final in the Sochi Winter Olympics 2014 when he suffered a bad fall that damaged his ski blade. Not one to give up, even though he had already failed to qualify, he was keen to finish the race in front of his home team. He continued, only for his ski to snap. Waiting in the wings, the Canadian team coach Justin Wadsworth raced onto the track with a spare and personally replaced Gafarov's broken ski saying, "I wanted him to have dignity as he crossed the finish line!" In our times, when man is fighting man in the most insane ways, sports provide us an arena to come together and put differences aside.

One defining aspect of the spirit of sport is the importance attributed to ethics. At the 1932 Games in Los Angeles, 21-year old British fencer Judy Guinness was on her way to a gold medal, when she walked up to the judges and informed them that they had twice failed to deduct her score; her opponent Austrian Ellen Preis had actually touched her twice. Guinness therefore relinquished the win and accepted the silver instead.

Such exemplary ethics can be witnessed in cricket as well. Several batsmen are known to have simply walked off the pitch, even if the umpire missed identifying a minor nick to ball on the way for a caught behind. In doing so, ethical sportsmen admirably honour truth above personal glory. Although not always clearly evident, this requires a great deal of courage. And athletes therefore are role models who showcase ethics, fair play, and honesty.

As the sports industry has matured, and with big money now involved in most sports around the world, however, we see a sharp fall of ethics, with cases of substance abuse, 'doping', and match fixing scandals surfacing. The motivation in sport has sadly fallen to personal victory, driven by monetary rewards and superficial fame making what once used to be a ceremonial celebration of the human spirit into just another materially driven business.

Greece, considered the mother of classical philosophy, attached great significance to the relationship between sports and philosophy. Plato exhorted that a good education must develop virtue in man; gymnastics and sports are essential components of education which, beyond physical fitness, develop the value of fortitude. It is also evident that through sports, one develops self-confidence and morality.

Besides sportsmanship, sport ingrains values that go beyond the development of physical excellence: discipline, perseverance, hard work and acceptance.

Discipline is fostered through a regime of training, controlled diet, and perseverance. Not every match can be won always. Not every opponent can be defeated always. And therefore, perseverance; accepting failure as a part of life. Rather than discouragement, they can become opportunities that motivate constant improvement; training harder, practicing longer, repeated battling of inner challenges.



Sportspersons, for example, often imply that the only real way to attain victory is to overcome fear of defeat. As Olympic gymnast Nadia Comaneci once said “I don’t run away from a challenge because I am afraid. Instead, I run toward it because the only way to escape fear is to trample it beneath your feet,” she said. The external expression of excellence on the field is therefore a reflection of inner strength of character.

For this reason, many organisations today rely on sports based activities when conducting workshops to develop leadership and teamwork. Such exercises highlight the value of working together to extract the power of the collective. In order to do so, each team is led by a captain who possesses special skills and is therefore best suited to lead. And yet, in spite of stellar individual feats, only a collective team effort enables a win or loss. As part of this pyramidalic hierarchy, the captain gives the team motivation and direction, but each team member is an essential and integral participant. Each individual within the team has a specific role to play, each strives for excellence in this role, which affects the entire team’s performance. In cricket for instance, we have seen many defeats in spite of stellar batting by individuals such as Sachin Tendulkar; as a collective, the team could not outplay the opposition.

Today in the age of multi-million dollar sponsorships, politics in sport, sport for money and for glory, perhaps its true value remains in its ability to foster harmony and the expression of the human spirit. Long after the music of the national anthems end after the presentation ceremony, what lingers is the sentiment of the best of the human potential; always Faster, Higher, and Stronger.

Idealism, Philosophy, Volunteering – Three Pathways for Change

Gilad Sommer



Many of us wish to change the world. But how can it be done? First of all, it is obvious we are not just seeking to change the world – the world is changing anyhow, regardless of what we do. The ancient philosophers wisely stated that the only permanent thing in the world is change. In reality, it is not change we seek, it is a certain, positive, change – a diversion of the river's flow, an orientation towards a brighter future for humanity.

Second, none of us by ourselves can really make a meaningful impact. Although we are all familiar with names of great people who have motivated great historical changes, great people are few and exceptional. That is why they are great. Notwithstanding, even these great people did not work alone. They were a tip of an iceberg, the peak of a mountain, but never an isolated island.

So what are the pathways to make this change happen?

- We must be idealists, because only an idealist can imagine a better world.
 - We must be philosophers, because only a lover of wisdom, free of subjectivity and prejudice, can find the right means to realize one's ideals.
 - We must be volunteers, because this new world will not be built by thoughts, prayers or wishes, but only by action – action realized freely, efficiently and with the best intentions.
- Let's explore these pathways a little bit more in depth.

Idealism

An Idealist intuitively feels the gap between what is and what can be. An idealist sees with the heart, imagines a possible future – dreams of a better world. Idealism was the bread and water of Socrates, Plato and the classical philosophy schools, it was at the root of the Renaissance, the United States, and the civil rights movements. It is at the heart of every fighter for justice and every true artist and religious leader. Without Idealism there is no progress. Progress not in the sense of new technologies, but in the true sense of human progress – self-knowledge and self-realization.

Philosophy

Philosophy is the love of wisdom. The philosopher aspires to recognize truth and to live by it. Philosophy is the opposite of dogma and prejudice. A philosopher never gets attached to opinions, putting knowledge under the constant test of reality and the inner spotlight of reason. Just like Socrates, philosophers are the gadflies of society, always pointing out the falseness, and at the same time they give an example of an ethical life.



Volunteering

Volunteering today is conceived as an act done without monetary compensation, but the origin of the word is the latin voluntarius, which means of one's free will, and refers to an action that is taken voluntarily – whether one is paid for it or not is of secondary importance. But in order to act of our own free will, we must first free our will. Acting out of a desire for compensation, of a desire to be liked, out of fear, flattery or coercion, are just a few examples of how our will can be enslaved by the lower aspects of our nature.

An Integrated Approach

Idealism, Philosophy, Volunteering – these three pathways must be integrated to achieve useful, positive and long-lasting results. To be an idealist without the reflections of philosophy, is a recipe for fanaticism. Many fanatics may actually intuit the archetypal-spiritual realities, and in their core want to make the world a better place, but without the reflection and inner investigation of philosophy, their efforts are tainted by their own personal inclinations, preconceptions and prejudice. They do not examine their beliefs in the light of reason, and therefore their image of a better world becomes a reflection of their own subjective imaginings and past-experiences.

When joined with philosophy, Idealism acknowledges that the first and most important change must take place within ourselves. We can't ask others to do what we ourselves cannot. We dream of world peace, but are unable to make peace with our neighbours or our parents. We speak against violence and for acceptance, but woe to the person who disagrees with us. We speak for compassion towards animals, but treat our fellow human beings with contempt.

Making a change in the world is like making a ripple in the water, it begins in the center, and the center for each one of us is always our selves. Volunteering without philosophy is also useless, as it becomes a sisyphian task, like a doctor who repeatedly treats the symptoms but is never able to treat the disease. This is how we get endless wars on hunger, poverty, drugs and war itself, which never seem to go anywhere or to make real progress.

When great leaders such as the Buddha or Jesus, Martin Luther King, or Mahatma Gandhi, sought to help humanity, they tried to transmit certain knowledge to help people understand themselves and live better, in other words, they taught philosophy. It is always better to teach an hungry man to fish, than to give him fish.

Finally, Idealism and philosophy without volunteering, is like a soul without a body. Without volunteering, idealism and philosophy remain a good-willed, but impractical, approach to life. It doesn't lead to any practical results and remains no more than fanciful daydreams. The power of the mind is certain, but we cannot think our way towards a better world. In the history of humanity, no positive change has ever taken place without the efficient action of good-willed individuals, groups and communities, who knew how to integrate Idealism, Philosophy and Volunteering.



PHILOSOPHY

CULTURE

VOLUNTEERING

New Acropolis is an international non-profit volunteer-run organization, having a philosophical, cultural and social approach. It was founded in 1957 as a school of Practical Philosophy in the Classical Style, to promote the ideal of timeless values towards human development.

In over 60 countries where New Acropolis is present, this vision is implemented through an eclectic range of teachings, practices and activities, inspired by Classics of both Western and Eastern global cultures and ancient civilizations. Our programs, based on philosophy that is practical and active, combine theoretical and practical education with expressions in the fields of Philosophy, Culture and Volunteering. With over 20,000 volunteers of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and social levels, New Acropolis emphasizes principles of Coexistence, Fraternity and mutual collaboration beyond cultural, sexual, or religious differences.

We at New Acropolis all over the World are greatly Inspired also by the timeless principles of the Ancient Classical Indian Cultures, Arts and Philosophies. New Acropolis in India, same as in all our centres worldwide, seeks to take inspiration, knowledge and best practices from the rich artistic, Spiritual and cultural human heritage in order to enhance both individual and collective human development.

PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy, when it is practical, is educational. It helps us to know ourselves and to improve ourselves. To be a philosopher is a way of life committed to the best aspirations of humanity.

NEW ACROPOLIS, BANGALORE



Interactive book reading: An evening with the Little Prince, to take valuable philosophical lessons and inspiration for life from this timeless little book



Demeter Project: A 2-month project comprising expressions of Health, Music and Humour in a woman's life, to strengthen friendship, self-discovery and leadership

NEW ACROPOLIS AROUND THE GLOBE



Coffee-philosophizing (Santa Cruz, Bolivia): Talk-Discussion to share ideas and advice not to fall into the "prison of time" based on Stoic philosophy

CULTURE

The practice of human values is the basis for a model of active and participative culture, which brings out the qualities of each person, broadens the horizons of the mind and opens the human being up to all the expressions of the spirit.

NEW ACROPOLIS, BANGALORE



Itadakimasu - I gratefully receive: A workshop at the New Acropolis main centre on cooking authentic Japanese cuisine



10 years in Bangalore: Celebrating our 10th anniversary with a celebration with all who have been a part of the journey of NA - Bangalore

NEW ACROPOLIS AROUND THE GLOBE



'Touch, Please!' (Bosnia & Herzegovina): A tactile exhibition for the blind and visually impaired, presenting reduced replicas of archaeological collections of cultural and historical heritage

VOLUNTEERING

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.

NEW ACROPOLIS, BANGALORE



Upcycled Terrace Garden: Students of the Living Philosophy course upcycling discarded rubber tyres to host a vegetable garden



The Secret Gardener: A community ecology initiative to invite the people of Bangalore to nurture tree bed gardens in their neighbourhoods

NEW ACROPOLIS AROUND THE GLOBE



New Acropolis at the United Nations: New Acropolis Chile was invited to present in the 57th Session of the Commission for Social Development of the United Nations. Video available at: <http://bit.ly/NA-at-UN>

Schedule of Events at New Acropolis, Bangalore

April to June 2019



APRIL



INDIRANAGAR

TALK & GUIDED EXERCISES **Seeking simplicity**

Date: April 13th (Saturday)
Time: 6:30 to 8:30 PM

If only life were simple!
The world of the 21st century seems to be very complicated indeed. Where does the complexity lie? What enables some to thrive in the most complicated situations, while others in the same situation fall into webs of confusion? The key might lie in the ability of the individual to find simplicity regardless the circumstances. Join us as we explore this theme of simplifying towards the essential, with some simple but profound philosophical ideas and practical tools.



JAYANAGAR

TALK & GUIDED EXERCISES **Snake, Jaguar, Eagle: Symbolism of the Ancient Americas**

Date: April 20th (Saturday)
Time: 6:30 to 8:30 PM

Across the vast continents of the Americas flourished many pre-historic civilizations. What we know of their way of life is not only thoroughly fascinating, but they also hold certain keys to a more meaningful life. In this talk, we explore the symbolism and wisdom of these civilisations - like the symbols of the Snake, Jaguar and Eagle - and look at the relevance of these in our lives in the 21st century.



JAYANAGAR

TALK & GUIDED EXERCISES **Living Beyond our Boundaries**

Date: April 27th (Saturday)
Time: 6:30 to 8:30 PM

In our day-to-day lives, we find ourselves on many occasions stuck with limitations. While it often feels like we can do nothing about them, cultures across the ancient world point out that the human being is capable of transcending limitations. A little magic of Imagination can help us see farther than the most advanced telescope. If truly, there is nothing impossible, how do we break the ceiling of our limitations and make it possible to experience greater freedom and happiness?

Schedule of Events at New Acropolis, Bangalore

April to June 2019



MAY



JAYANAGAR

15 WEEK COURSE Living Philosophy

Course starts: May 1st
(Wednesday)

Time: 7:30 to 9:30 PM

Introductory Sessions: April 17th
and 24th (Wednesdays)

Time: 7:30 to 8:30 PM

A 15-week Foundation course in Practical Philosophy that brings teachings of the major ancient civilisations from east to west.

Aimed to foster an active philosophical approach to our daily life, the weekly-once classes and practical sessions will uncover the keys to inner growth and leading a more meaningful and significant life.



INDIRANAGAR

TALK & GUIDED EXERCISES Snake, Jaguar, Eagle: Symbolism of the Ancient Americas

Date: May 4th (Saturday)

Time: 6:30 to 8:30 PM

Across the vast continents of the Americas flourished many pre-historic civilizations. What we know of their way of life is not only thoroughly fascinating, but they also hold certain keys to a more meaningful life. In this talk, we explore the symbolism and wisdom of these civilisations - like the symbols of the Snake, Jaguar and Eagle - and look at the relevance of these in our lives in the 21st century.



JAYANAGAR

TALK & GUIDED EXERCISES Two Chinese Masters : the Wisdom of Confucius and Lao Tsu

Date: May 25th (Saturday)

Time: 5:30 to 7:30 PM

From the land of ancient China has come a wealth of culture and philosophy, the intrigue and practicality of which has endured through centuries.

Confucius' teachings emphasize the values of order and harmony in society, and the role of the individual in bringing these. Lao Tsu's enigmatic and poetic wisdom speaks of simplicity, harmony and one's true nature. In this talk, we approach ancient Chinese wisdom and draw inspiration and concrete tools that we can apply in our lives today.

Schedule of Events at New Acropolis, Bangalore

April to June 2019



JUNE



INDIRANAGAR

TALK & GUIDED EXERCISES **Two Chinese Masters : the Wisdom of Confucius and Lao Tsu**

Date: June 8th (Saturday)
Time: 6:30 to 8:30 PM

From the land of ancient China has come a wealth of culture and philosophy, the intrigue and practicality of which has endured through centuries.

Confucius' teachings emphasize the values of order and harmony in society, and the role of the individual in bringing these. Lao Tsu's enigmatic and poetic wisdom speaks of simplicity, harmony and one's true nature. In this talk, we approach ancient Chinese wisdom and draw inspiration and concrete tools that we can apply in our lives today.



JAYANAGAR

TALK & GUIDED EXERCISES **Seeking simplicity**

Date: June 15th (Saturday)
Time: 6:30 to 8:30 PM

If only life were simple!
The world of the 21st century seems to be very complicated indeed. Where does the complexity lie? What enables some to thrive in the most complicated situations, while others in the same situation fall into webs of confusion? The key might lie in the ability of the individual to find simplicity regardless the circumstances. Join us as we explore this theme of simplifying towards the essential, with some simple but profound philosophical ideas and practical tools.



INDIRANAGAR

TALK & GUIDED EXERCISES **Living Beyond our Boundaries**

Date: June 29th (Saturday)
Time: 6:30 to 8:30 PM

In our day-to-day lives, we find ourselves on many occasions stuck with limitations. While it often feels like we can do nothing about them, cultures across the ancient world point out that the human being is capable of transcending limitations. A little magic of Imagination can help us see farther than the most advanced telescope. If truly, there is nothing impossible, how do we break the ceiling of our limitations and make it possible to experience greater freedom and happiness?

LIVING PHILOSOPHY

To Discover. To Awaken. To Transform.



Living Philosophy is a foundation course in Practical Philosophy offered at New Acropolis that brings philosophical teachings of the major ancient civilisations from east to west- from Confucius to Plato, from Tibetan Buddhism to Ancient Egypt. Aimed to foster an active philosophical approach to our daily life, the weekly-once classes will uncover the keys to inner growth and wisdom towards leading a much more meaningful and significant life. Each Living Philosophy program runs over a period of 15 weeks, with classes held once a week. Course syllabus as below:

PART 1: ETHICS (Man & the Self)



Know Thyself

- Living an ethical life – a key to happiness
- The Ancient Greek and Ancient Indian understanding of the Human being
- Identifying the transient and the eternal within us
- Living Philosophy – need for Inner Change



The Inner Voice & the Mysteries of Ancient Tibet

- Wisdom from the Vajrayana tradition (Tibetan Buddhism)
- Recognising the illusory nature of the material world
- The importance of choice and inner identity
- H.P. Blavatsky and themes from the Voice of the Silence



The Peaceful Warrior

- The ancient Indian concept of Swadharma and its importance in human life
- The inner battle of Kurukshetra
- Karma Yoga and the right Action – tools of the Peaceful warrior
- Themes from the Bhagavad Gita and their relevance in today's world



The awakening of consciousness – tools from ancient Greco-Roman philosophy

- The need and the means to elevation of consciousness
- True freedom and principles of Stoic Philosophy from Ancient Rome
- 3 paths to Unity – teachings of Plotinus
- The path to Happiness through virtues – teachings of Aristotle



Liberation - Inspiration from the Buddha

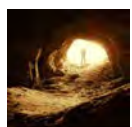
- Lessons from the life of the Buddha
- The overcoming of suffering and the process of Self-transformation
- The middle path and the 4 Noble Truths
- Key teachings from the Dhammapada



Destiny and Inner order – Wisdom from Egypt and China

- Justice, Order and Virtue as important everyday tools
- Concept of Justice - ancient Egypt
- The connection between individual ethics and a harmonious society
- Harmony and human relationships - the wisdom of Confucius

PART 2: SOCIO-POLITICS (Man & Society)



Ethical Leadership

- The connection between individual development and social order
- The art of living together in harmony
- Plato's allegory of the cave
- The Philosopher and the Leader
- Ethical leadership and the concept of Justice



From Philosophy to Mystery

- Roles in ancient society: Childhood, Adolescence, Elders
- The role of education in human evolution; education in traditional societies
- The mysteries of nature; Tribal and Alchemical initiation
- Philosophy as a bridge to higher consciousness and to the Mysteries



The Essence of Ethical Politics & Governance

- The 4 archetypes of man
- Various models of governance; the nature and challenges of Democracy
- The school of Pythagoras in ancient Greece
- The Philosophical and Political ideal
- Principles of New Acropolis



Know Thyself: Practical Seminar

- Philosophy in action – an experiential session of practical psychological exercises, combined with Social-Ecological and Artistic activities, that strengthen the learning process of Know Thyself and Sociopolitics.

PART 3: THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY (Man & the World)



Myth & History

- Myths: Truths hidden in mythology
- Chronological time, Sacred time and Mythical time
- How Myth drives History



The Wheel of Life

- Cycles of Time : ancient Indian idea of Yugas
- The ancient Greek concept of “great year” by Plato
- The Kaliyug and the Age of Aquarius – challenges and opportunities of our times



The Divine Spark in Man- Evolution & Destiny of Humanity

- What does it mean to be the human being of today?
- The 7 Kingdoms of Life according to esoteric philosophy
- The evolution of human consciousness; Where do we go from here?
- The ancient Greek myth of Prometheus



Summary

- A synthesis of the key teachings of the course, and a glimpse into the path ahead of advanced practical philosophy courses at New Acropolis

Note:

- The sessions comprise of lecture and practical experiential exercises
- 3 of the sessions across Part 2 and Part 3 of Living Philosophy include Socratic Café - interactive group dialogues

COURSE DATES

Jayanagar - May 2019 batch (Wednesdays)

Course starts: 1st May, Wednesday
Duration: 15 weeks | 1 class per week
 (7:30 to 9:30 PM every Wednesday)

Free introductory sessions:
 17th April and 24th April, 7:30 to 8:30 PM

Indiranagar - July 2019 batch (Tuesdays)

Course starts: 16th July, Tuesday
Duration: 15 weeks | 1 class per week
 (7:30 to 9:30 PM every Tuesday)

Free introductory sessions:
 2nd July and 9th July, 7:30 to 8:30 PM

LIVING PHILOSOPHY

A Practical Philosophy Course To Discover. To Awaken. To Transform

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www.acropolis.org.in | info@newacropolis.in | +91 96638 04871

To register please visit www.acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy. Course fee applicable.

NA
PHILOSOPHY · CULTURE · VOLUNTEERING
NEW ACROPOLIS



JAYANAGAR

Batch 1 (Wednesdays): May 1, 2019

7:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Free Intro Sessions: April 17 & April 24

New Acropolis (Jayanagar), #264, 7th Cross,
1st Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore 560011

INDIRANAGAR

Batch 2 (Tuesdays): July 16, 2019

7:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Free Intro Sessions: July 2 & July 9

New Acropolis (Indiranagar), #261, 6th Cross,
Indiranagar, 1st Phase, Bangalore 560038