

# ACROPOLIS

Vol 4, Issue 1 | Summer edition 2020

## A New and Meaningful Response

### In This Edition

Response in times of crisis

A conversation with Philosophers

The fool is the custodian of reality

Heart tunes

Our fraternal net



## On the Cover:

### A new and meaningful response

Recently I came across a beautiful quote by author and illustrator Lisa Congdon: "Being creative in times of stress is like running in hot, humid weather. It's possible. It just takes more effort." This is something we have witnessed during these past few weeks. Being forced to stay within the walls of our homes has on one hand created anxiety and uncertainty. On the other hand, there have been people who have harnessed this time to express a side of themselves they had long forgotten and undervalued. The cover is a tribute to bringing together all those aspects of ourselves, like weaving different threads into one fabric. This is what stressful times need, now more than ever. Beauty and reflection in order to create a new and meaningful response towards the future.

~ Namrata Shenoy, member at New Acropolis Bangalore

## Acropolis

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### ACROPOLIS

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## IN THIS EDITION

**04**

RESPONSE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

**08**

A CONVERSATION WITH  
ACROPOLITANS

**12**

HEART TUNES - SOOTHING MELODIES  
FOR A WORLD IN CRISIS

**14**

OUR FRATERNAL NET

**15**

THE FOOL IS THE CUSTODIAN  
OF REALITY

**17**

PHOTO BLOG: THE PATH IS  
EVERYWHERE

**19**

THE LITTLE PRICE: A  
JOURNEY INWARDS

## Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

The current time, perhaps more intensely than any time in recent history is reminding us of the duality of human nature. Times of big crisis like these can on one hand bring the unconscious out of us - indifference, separatism, lack of leadership; and on the other hand the best out of us - our ability to to be generous, caring, enthusiastically putting the interests of others before us, and looking to solve problems.

The human being needs to choose and take ownership of his/her response. The choice between consciousness and unconsciousness is yours, and with it the full responsibility of it. Are you going to use this crisis as an opportunity to bring out the best version of yourself? You decide.

**Ankit Jain**

Editor - Acropolis

# Response in times of Crisis

Anand Baskaran

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Across the globe, we are all living through interesting times, and these unique times are certainly powerful – both in our lives, as well as in human history. From different corners, across multiple forums, I am sure each of us has in the recent weeks and months heard others or indeed ourselves, say: “What a year 2020 has been!”

The memory of human experience seems to be warped towards magnifying what is current and in the recent past. People’s minds over the past few months have been clearly dominated by the impact of the global pandemic, the damage as well as the steps taken to deal with it.

Already, the tumult just preceding that seems to have been forgotten – for instance, on the international stage, the raging bushfires in Australia that appeared indomitable until it seemed like nature herself had to step in to mitigate the fires through rain – and even subsequent floods! And closer home, the great unrest, protests and incidents of violence on the streets of India.

If we zoom out on the timescale, this decade has been one of much global unrest in the social-political realm, from the Arab Spring to protests and dissent in South America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, to name a few. If we add other significant and even ground-breaking local and global developments, both desirable and less so, the list is indeed a long one. And this is just a miniscule part of human history!

Whether in the case of this pandemic, in any of the examples above, or other moments of significance and difficulty in our lives individually and collectively, one thing stands to reason: there is a need to act and to choose. **There is a need to respond.**

This article seeks to present a philosophical response that is comprised of building strength, discernment and arises from a stable and a deeper place rather than an instant reaction to the situation.

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## **To live or to survive?**

While we hope indeed that the current global situation will not become more dire, we can also learn from history and philosophy about human nature in such situations.

At times when one feels hopeless and trapped by circumstances, the strong instinct for self-preservation takes control and pushes the individual towards extreme feats on one hand, but stifles our morality and conscience on the other, as fear takes control and drives our reactions. This could manifest as cutting corners in regard to the ethics and altruism, in the interest of securing the interests of ourselves and those closest to us, at any cost to others around us.

Yet, this is not the only possible way of action. We have historical as well as current examples of altruism, self-sacrifice and leadership in the most trying times. In these kinds of situations, we don't *have* to merely survive - we can choose to live.

Survival is defined in the dictionary as 'the state or fact of continuing to live or exist, typically in spite of an accident, ordeal, or difficult circumstances'. Tellingly however, if we look at life holistically, beyond just the physical and material, we discover that to survive at any cost is not the avoidance of death, it is the avoidance of life! It is running away from the opportunity to live fully. When we choose Life, we are allowing something that is connected to the *essential* human nature, to the virtues like altruism, compassion and dignity to manifest and find expression.

One meaningful way to express being alive is to look at the times and see it differently, and respond to it consciously after deep consideration to the whole, not just to the immediate situation, which is in most cases, only the metaphorical tip of the iceberg.

## **The opportunity in crisis**

As difficult as crises can be, at the individual, social and global levels, it offers us opportunities to learn. We could say that the suffering and loss we experience in any crisis is a 'learning fee' that we pay. Almost inevitably, all of us pay this learning fee, yet not everyone takes the learning! To do so requires us to go through the crisis consciously, with our eyes open.



*It is a time to give real value to things that  
matter the most: human virtues*



The response to the current situation demands physical isolation. But this time can also become a time of revelation for the individual; a time of solitude not easily possible before. It is a good time to find the pleasure of paying attention to the little things; simple actions which in earlier days might have seemed like a waste of our precious time. It is an opportunity to develop the ability to deepen our thinking, and it is a time to give real value to the things that matter the most: human virtues.

### **Beyond Protest, a Response**

Often at the societal level, changes made (or indeed, a lack of movement towards change) have been met with reactions from individuals and groups in the form of protest.

While protest has its role in society, it comes with the risk that the very act of choosing a side can easily allow us to fall into the illusion of seeing only two extreme and contrary approaches, rather than an altogether alternative narrative that actually considers the nuances of the situation.

What is needed is an investigation to really examine the situation holistically, and an ability to offer real solutions. This comes from a place beyond protest. While seemingly well-intentioned, when we participate in demonstrations, we are voicing a subjective opinion. Beyond our inclinations and backgrounds lies the realm of objectivity, the connection to which is essential in order to bring genuine lasting solutions. To discover this, we need to look deeply within and discover what makes us human: our search for happiness, our recognition of goodness, truth and beauty, our inherent nature to be generous and compassionate. This universal human aspect is what strengthens us, and this is what is well worth fighting for.

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## A Time for Philosophy

To be a philosopher is to embrace life with all its beauty and all its challenges. It is to bring one's best to the fore even when the body, mind and emotions pull us towards withdrawing from facing our challenges.

It is to see the world and reality with "good eyes" that seek to identify the opportunity in every crisis, the best in each human being and human group, and discern the essential from the superficial. It is to awaken our deep virtues and love for what is just and beautiful, as a response to difficulty and crisis. In these difficult times that call upon us to respond, it is time to awaken the philosopher in each of us.

To be a philosopher is to act with common sense. A philosopher is not dimmed by opinion and 'the constant dance of outer forms', but develops an inner compass to help us navigate today's world.

We cannot change the situation that we are in right now. But we can definitely learn from it, and discern between what should really matter to us, and what does not deserve to consume our time as it may have up until now. This is a time that permits, and even demands, real reflection. In such moments when fear and panic easily spread, it is for us to discover the strength of our inner tranquillity, based on the stability of our consciousness.

The current crisis will pass, as everything passes. We can focus on using the time to invest in what is essential to us, in the permanent things. To strengthen ourselves thus will indeed be an apt response to the crisis.



*In these difficult times that call upon us to respond, it is time to awaken the philosopher in each of us.*





# A conversation with Philosophers:

Suchita Tirkey and Surekha Deepak

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**Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?**

**Suchita:** I have always been intrigued with the wonders of life and the beauty of living a life with a purpose. My quest for meaning brought me to New Acropolis where I began my philosophical journey 11 years ago, and when I discovered philosophy can be a way of life. I am deeply moved by the power of philosophy that when practiced in our lives, enables a certain magic and wisdom to experience the fullness of being alive. As a volunteer and a teacher of philosophy at New Acropolis, I seek to bring all that I learn into the reality of my own life experiences and help share with those who seek to explore philosophy as a way of life.



**Surekha:** The question about identity is not an easy one to answer. But will try to give a sense of what I believe in, and what is important for me. I have for a long time been looking for answers to question that bother most of us, the meaning of it all, does life have a purpose, why should I do or not do something, right and wrong, injustice, is there something more than what we see as matter...well you get the general idea. In the search for answers I did read a lot and eventually it lead me to exploring science, politics, religion and then philosophy, finally to New Acropolis. I have been learning, practicing and teaching philosophy for close to 10 years now. Don't have all the answers yet but I do feel that I am on the way, step by step through small discoveries and ways to practice them in daily life.

**Could you share with us some of the philosophical ideas you are most connected to and work with?**

**Suchita:** One of the best things about working with Philosophy is that it brings the opportunity to explore, introspect and practice some of the timeless wisdom teachings that remain eternal yet accessible even today. The one philosophical idea, rather the goal of philosophy itself, that I strongly connect to is the idea of transformation and inner change. Everything in nature changes, growing to its next stage in the evolution cycle- be it a seed breaking ground to grow into a sapling, or a larva into a butterfly. Change not only in its form, but in its essence, in its very identity.



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Everything has the potential to change and to grow and the human being is no exception to that law. I think secretly we all desire change even within ourselves- to become a better person, to shed our old habits and patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. To be more 'good', more happy, more calm... and to practice all the values or ideas we so passionately believe in, but are not always able to manifest in our lives. For us humans, change is a gradual process of growth of our human consciousness- little by little- with a little more conviction, a little more effort, and a little more practice. Every experience, lived with consciousness, nudges us to grow slowly towards our highest potential and transform into being the best version of ourselves that we are all capable of. But there has to be an active effort towards this fulfilment of ourselves. The other philosophical teaching that I have found myself to recognize deeply is the work with the value of generosity and service.

We constantly see around us the need to build a better world- not just in the plane of the material things, but we see the psychological, social crisis and very importantly the spiritual crisis that needs addressing. For a philosopher, the search and practice of wisdom can only find fulfilment when we develop a generous spirit and compassion towards others through our acts of service. It is to be a philosopher not only at heart, within myself and in my limited world of introspection and contemplation, but in constructive action of giving. When I inhale wisdom, it becomes necessary to exhale wisdom out into the world..to exhale with generosity and love, and spread light in order to inspire, grow, and nourish others. To offer oneself in service of creating good in the world that is desperately in need of it. The words of N. Sriram, convey it beautifully : *"We must learn to give ourselves in service, in all places and in all manner needed and possible."*

**Surekha:** The ideas from the Gita which give direction and answers to many questions we are grappling with even today. Most of it is extremely practical advice, whether it is about discrimination - viveka, duty, karma yoga or knowledge, the importance of being in control to be able to direct life instead of being swept along by things that happen to us. I am also very inspired by the Buddhist traditions. Ideas of compassion and love as tools to overcome Dukha. The Dalai Lama said kindness is, in fact, the path to happiness, not getting all that one wishes for. The idea that we are integrally a part of humanity and not to think of oneself as separate. Ideas from Plato and the stoics on carrying on and not falling prey to any difficulties that may crop up. On being able to differentiate between the temporary the more lasting.



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The fascinating myths full of insights on the nature and meaning of life. What I find most interesting is despite all the seeming differences in the language and even forms, they seem to be telling us the same things, that matter is not ultimate, there is more than what we see and experience in our daily lives. And of course they tell us of ways to expand consciousness to benefit ourselves as well as the world around us. Another idea that comes across very strongly is that we are all connected and we depend on each other for our welfare and happiness. To know that we are not alone, to truly understand and practice this, especially when things are not easy. This is the path of the philosopher.

**How does this philosophy enable you to work actively when the reality/circumstances around becomes challenging?**

**Suchita:** Philosophy has a close relationship with challenges. In challenging times, for me philosophy, with all that it encompasses and enables, becomes an active tool to work with. Foremost, it serves as a solid anchor to ground myself to in stormy waters. An unshakable, firm foundation to stand on. Practically it means to hold on to the understanding of the very nature of life with its ups and downs and seek inner stability and strength. No matter what course life flows in, there is always an essence behind every experience that we need to recognize. Every challenge comes to teach us something about life and importantly about ourselves. Secondly it serves as a compass to navigate myself through the crisis with objectivity and clarity, giving a direction. I believe that challenges are placed on our path to help us to meet our own limitations, providing us an opportunity to connect to the resilient and wise warrior within us in the face of crisis. In times of such crisis I often meditate to seek tranquility within and connect to the inherent wisdom within and practice even more fiercely the tools of persistence, courage, patience and the right action.

**Surekha:** Philosophy most importantly gives me perspective and options about the way in which I look at what we are experiencing. It does seem to be a time of division, of extremes. We are divided by ideology, by class, by religion, by even the sense of entitlement, but most of all by our biases. As a humanity our response has become less tolerant, less accepting and less willing to make the effort needed to work towards a resolution. The stance is hardening and all of us being provoked to taking a side and becoming rigid with it, especially when we see 'wrong' and injustice.



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Philosophical ideas can show us the way to look for responses to these problems rather than react and join the game, inflaming the already tense situation. A philosophical education can help us find ways of remembering the what is really important. For instance the education at New Acropolis as it takes us through various civilizations and time gives us keys and tools we can work with. We always will have challenges, some at a personal level and others at the level of our community, right now the challenge seems global. Philosophy helps find an axis. Like in the story of Kabir. Kabir watches the grain being ground in a 'Chakki' or hand mill. He feels the pain of the grains and runs to his teacher and asks to be saved. The teacher asks him to go towards the center. If we can find this inner axis we do not have to be crushed by circumstances. To be able to look at the truth – to find ways of even recognizing what is important. Is the party and the mall crucial to us. Can we use that time to find what can bring more meaning and purpose to life. We can use this opportunity for introspection – let go of some practices. Maybe find a way to pollute less, find ways to live more ethically, to remember what is important is not limited to the material world.

**Any specific tips you could share with us based on your experience, to work with challenging times such as the one we are collectively facing right now? How do you see the times we are living in? What is the way forward?**

**Suchita:** In these special times, when the magnitude and scale of the challenge we face is unprecedented (in our lifetimes at least), I think it is important to identify what it means for each of us individually. It is only through individual action that we can express a collective action. While all of us are trying our best to respond to the situation in many different ways, the source of the action and response comes from what we practice inside us. We can only give what we have. Hence if I am anxious, fearful, isolated, then that is what I will bring to the world around me. But if I am strong, calm, and compassionate, I will enable to bring this inner light of strength and love to others around me. Our action and external responses will be a reflection of our inner emotional and mental state. While on one hand we face darkness, chaos, fear and negativity, on the other hand there exists light, strength, beauty and hope, it maybe hard to see them in these times, but they exist. Question is what do you choose for yourself and eventually to bring to others. From this place of inner nourishment, build fortitude and compassion that you can contribute to the human fraternity. Each of us have a role to give a little of ourselves to the other.. to be in service whatever that may mean for us. Important is to stay a part of the fraternity.



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We are all connected in this beautiful web of life - yes with common suffering at the moment, but also with common values of strength and love that we can all share, practice and experience. Between you and I and the whole human fraternity, I think we can find enough light, fortitude and strength only if we can love enough to care for each other.

**Surekha:** Firstly to strengthen one self. To move away from fear and the sense of paralysis to make oneself capable of giving and influencing. More and more of us realize that we do not want to go back to the way things were. An idea would be to recognize that what we are experiencing today will change the course of the future. From moving at a breakneck speed and constant movement, a need for constant and almost instant gratification, to a space of enforced quiet and separation. A time and space where all of what we did take for granted is no longer available to us. The response has been fear, uncertainty, for many a time where our more basic instincts take over. As a humanity we are in a place to CHOOSE to make these changes to the way we do things in the future. This enforced pause can be used as a time to recalibrate and work towards building a more humane and compassionate world. We can move away from conflict and work to building something that is sustainable and build a better civilization that focuses on what is important. An important way forward is again to educate so people can make the right choices towards this movement. Else there is a danger of moving towards more authoritarian regimes and more control and less equitable distribution of resources.



*Philosophical ideas can show us the way to look for responses to these problems rather than react and join the game, inflaming the already tense situation*





# Heart Tunes - Soothing melodies for a world in crisis

Shashwati Balasubramanian

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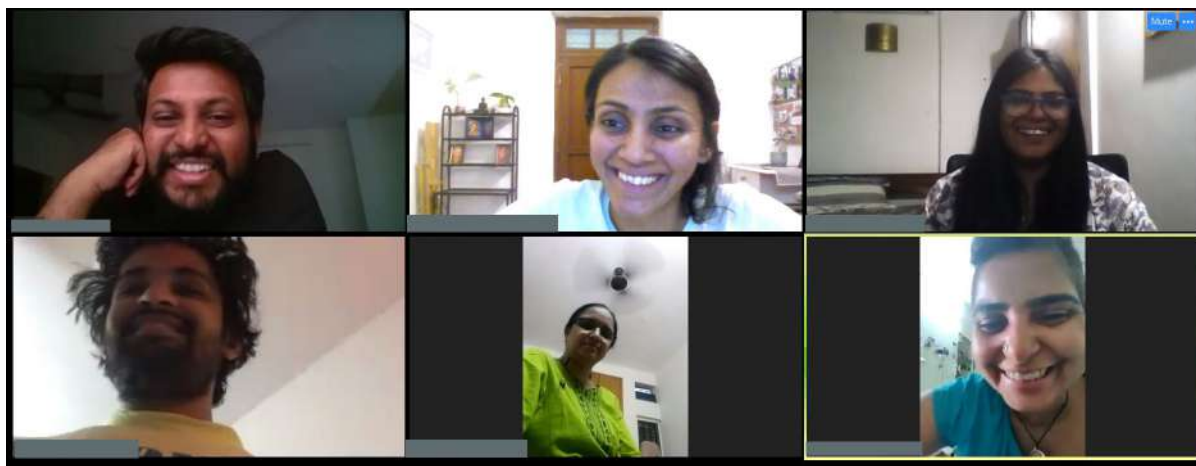


Like creative communities across the world today, Dhvani, the Music and Performing Arts department of New Acropolis, Bengaluru has been very busy during this period of lock down, creating ways to enable our community to express what they are going through as well as to help keep our spirits up!

Heart Tunes is an initiative started in both the branches of New Acropolis in Bangalore, that brings a daily dose of musical inspiration to the Acropolitan community. Everyday we feature a song, specially offered by one of our members. Being a community of philosophers, each song is accompanied by a philosophical reflection. The response we got is overwhelming!

What makes this initiative special is that the places that people draw inspiration from in these times are many and very varied – from evergreen Bollywood songs, to classical western compositions, from evening ragas on the sarod to old American classics. Nowadays, every morning many of us eagerly await to receive the Heart Tunes feature of the day, and even more so to read the nugget of wisdom that comes along with it, straight from the heart. You are welcome to enjoy our Heart Tunes Spotify playlist here: <https://spoti.fi/3fCEA7Z>

Another beautiful experience created by Dhvani is 'Towards Stillness – A Journey through Movement'. Movement and Stillness – both two sides of the same coin, and both inseparably connected. In this activity Dhvani members took the participants through a set of very simple movement exercises related to Balance and Stability that evolved from one of our Dhvani member's years of experience dancing the Tango! Working with very slow and mindful movements, the goal is to become fully aware and attentive to the physical body while creating balance in the body both externally as well as within.



The Dhwani team

What do music and the arts offer us in times of crisis such as the one we are living through today as a humanity? Perhaps it offers us a way to reaffirm our connection to each other and a way to stay hopeful. And, to remind us that the morning that follows a dark stormy night is always delicate and fresh with the promise of a new beginning.



*Working with very slow and mindful movements, the goal is to become fully aware and attentive to the physical body while creating balance in the body both externally as well as within.*





# Our Fraternal Net

Sejal Ajmera

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We should have contact every day with the beauty that restores our dignity and makes us feel greater and better. –Delia Steinberg Guzman

At New Acropolis, we work strongly with the pillars of Philosophy, Volunteering and Culture. These pillars support us and show us the path. They are our reminders and the guiding lights through not only the difficult times but also our daily life. They give a definition to the path to take and the choices we make.

Volunteering can be said to be the work of introspection as well as outward expression. The work of introspection we will do within will reflect naturally to the world. This inner work we do by working on our inner strengths is where we can bring our value to the world. This work of introspection, as well as expression, grows stronger when we share it to build a stronger community. The more we express our strengths the stronger they will grow.

With the desire to be able to share what we have learnt with our community and share the inner strength we have built, New Acropolis volunteers have embarked on many projects. One among them is to see how we can support the more vulnerable populations through these times. This is support that goes beyond and above the act of providing and is about the act of enabling people to live richer lives. This support is not just at the physical level but also about connecting with others and letting them know we are there for them, we care for them. It is about creating a fraternal net through which we can strengthen each other and create a community. When we give we also receive.

Many elderly live alone at home. In these times when they are among the most susceptible population, they are also advised to not go out too much which might make them feel disconnected from the world. One of the projects volunteers from New Acropolis have started is to address this need and also support our elders in feeling connected with the beauty around them.

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The aim of this project is to be able to support our active elderly in their quest to constantly grow even when restricted to staying at home, to be able to share the beauty in the world with them. It is important that they know that we are there for them and that we can also support their growth.

We call them regularly and check in on them. We talk with them and learn from them. We gain from their experiences. We share our lives with them and encourage them to be brave and alive. We listen to them. We laugh with them and share jokes with them. We support them to use technology to ease their lives in these times.

**If you know of any elderly person who would benefit or like for us to call do reach out to us via email at [info@newacropolis.in](mailto:info@newacropolis.in) or call us at 9036040443.** We would be very happy to connect with them and strengthen our community.



Image by PublicDomainPictures from Pixabay



# The Fool is the Custodian of Reality

Vivek Divekar

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The present times have placed before humanity a challenge with a far reaching impact on our survival and growth. The immediate consequence of this challenge is the constraint on physical freedom. The patterns of regularity have been drastically shaken. But, if rightly engaged, the isolation can become an opportunity. It has opened up a space for many of us and we can find time to engage in reflection and contemplation.

Reading is always an inspiring way to help with reflection. Here is some inspiration for contemplation from a very famous Kannada poem, and is often taught in schools. While the title of the poem calls it the "the words of a foolish person", the poem essentially reveals thoughts drawn from deep philosophical roots. The narrator of the poem - who calls himself a fool - is able to perceive reality, and share it with us.

Manku Thimanna Kagga was written by **Devanahalli Venkataramanaiah Gundappa**, (DVG). DVG was a writer, poet, journalist and a well-known philosopher. The Kagga was written in old Kannada, and roughly it translates as "The ramblings of Thimma";, who is 'manku' or dull. The author himself referred to this poem as '**a foggy fools farrago**'.

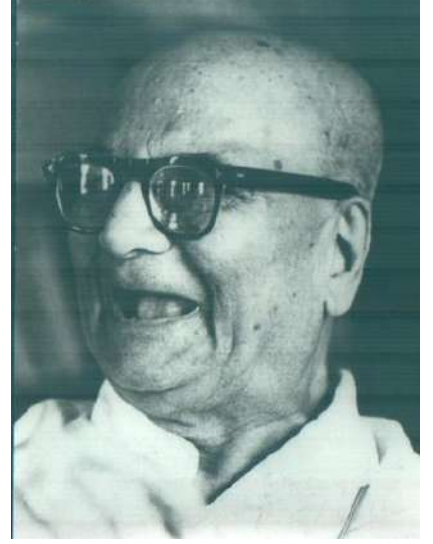
The Kagga has 945 verses and each verse can be read stand-alone and contains within itself a full measure of meaningful learning. The book has **four chapters** - based on these themes **Antharanga** (Inner world), **Jeevanadhi** (River of Life), **Chaithanya** (Spirit) and **Neethisutragalu** (Moral rules). The categorisation is based on the commonness of the message delivered in the verses.

The verses are written using simple words, easily read and understood. However, encased within is profound wisdom beyond measure. The verses give expression to the rich experiences of a noble personality. These verses encourage one to contemplate the deeper questions of life and explore the path of reality. DVG explores the ever-changing and complex nature of the world, advises a path of balance and his works are an attempt to point us towards the Ultimate Truth.

Here are two verses from the kagga and the corresponding translation in English for you to enjoy:

Hullaagu BettadaDi, manege malligeyaagu  
Kallaagu kashtagaLa maLe vidhi suriye  
Bella sakkareyaagu deena durbalaringe  
EllaroLagondaagu Mankuthimma

ಹುಲ್ಲಾಗು ಬೆಟ್ಟದಡಿ, ಮನೆಗೆ ಮಲ್ಲಿಗೆಯಾಗು ।  
ಕಲ್ಲಾಗು ಕಷ್ಟಗಳ ಮಳೆಯ ವಿಧಿ ಸುರಿಯೇ ॥  
ಬೆಲ್ಲ ಸಕ್ಕರೆಯಾಗು ದೀನ ದುರ್ಬಲರಿಗೆ ।  
ಎಲ್ಲರೊಳಗೊಂದಾಗು ಮಂಕುತಿಮ್ಮ ॥



Be a (gentle) blade of grass at the foot of mountain, and jasmine flower at home,  
Be (strong) like a rock when fate pours (torrential) rains of difficulties on you,  
Be sweet like sugar and jaggery to the poor and weak,  
Be one among all, Mankuthimma.

malagi Odugana kaihottigeyu niddeyali  
kaLachi bILvudu; pakva phalavantu taruvim  
iLeya sambandhagaLu sankalpa niyamagaLu  
saDiluvuvu bAL mAge – Mankutimma

ಮಲಗಿದೋದುಗನ ಕೈಹೊತ್ತಿಗೆಯು ನಿದ್ಡೆಯಲಿ ।  
ಕಳಚಿ ಬೀಳ್ವುದು; ಪಕ್ವಫಲವಂತು ತರುವಿಂ ॥  
ಇಳಿಯ ಸಂಬಂಧಗಳು ಸಂಕಲ್ಪನಿಯಮಗಳು ।  
ಸಡಿಲುವುವು ಬಾಳ್ ಮಾಗೆ – ಮಂಕುತಿಮ್ಮ ॥

If a person lies down and reads a book, sleep will slowly take over and the book will slip from his hand.

Similarly, when ripe a fruit shall fall down by itself.

Just like that, when one accumulates enough experience in life he will drop all association with this world,

the goals, the rules – everything will dissolve, Mankutimma.

Original: Manku Thimmana Kagga, by DVG. Verses Transliteration, Kannada script and Translation from open-source.



# The Path is Everywhere

Pierre Poulain

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There is a path we can imagine.... not any path, but the One Path of Liberation, the Path of Evolution, of Illumination. Whatever the name we choose might be, I am referring to the Path which begins low, amongst the shadows of ignorance, and leads to light and wisdom, towards the peak of the highest possible levels of consciousness.

When one tries to represent this Path, it would usually be by a glorious landscape, and the culmination would be the peak of a great mountain- perhaps similar to Mount Everest.

But we don't need to travel to the Himalayas to find the Path. It is always here, around us... inside us. Even in the darkest places, in the heart of our cities. If we look closely, even under an artificial light, we shall perceive a reflection of the Path, notice a spark which can remind us that this Path should be followed by everyone, anywhere... and at any time.



Pierre Poulain is a philosopher and a renowned international photographer. In 1986, he founded the New Acropolis School of Philosophy in Israel. Pierre Poulain's latest exhibition titled 'Photosophy' will be presented in Bangalore in 2020.

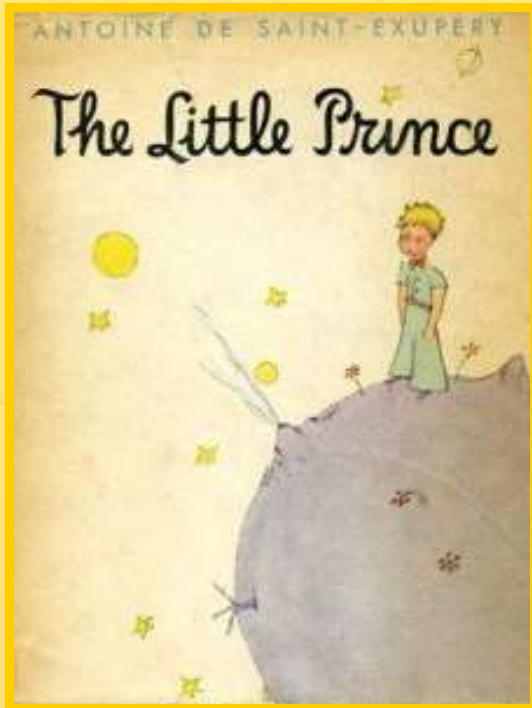
For more information on the artist and his work, please visit [www.photos-art.org/](http://www.photos-art.org/)

# The Little Prince: A Journey Inwards

Krutika Mehta

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Image By Antoine de Saint-Exupery | Wikimedia Commons | CC BY PD



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

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

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

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

But how should we begin this demanding and baffling journey?

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

Our growth cannot come from isolating ourselves, disconnecting from the world. We need to engage with our planet, the "here & now", with the challenges that we are born to which might present themselves in personal relationships, jobs, social obligations, etc. To engage with life, one needs to work with discipline and responsibility. Exupery recognizes that 'tending' to these challenges are exactly the opportunities that might reveal what we are ready to learn, in order to grow one step closer to our potentials, the inner Little Prince.

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



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



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

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

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

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



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





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

What is essential is always invisible to the eye. It can't be felt through our senses. It needs to be experienced and lived. What is this miracle called life? What is it about nature that speaks so deeply and compellingly to something within us? When the setting sun splashes violet and pink across the evening sky, when a field of flowers in full bloom, each lifting its dancing head to look heavenwards, when the boughs of fruit trees grow heavier each day with ripening fruit – what is the mysterious ingredient that captivates our spirit?

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

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

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

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

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

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The choice is always ours: To Be or Not to Be? To embark on this inner investigative journey that requires effort, and pushing of our personal limitations? Or to stay safely ignorant in our comfort zones? To pick up our bow and fight the Just war like Arjun, or to withdraw from the battle of life with all the opportunities for growth it offers? To pick the red pill like Neo in the Matrix, or the blue pill that returns us to a comatose ignorance?

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

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

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

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



# Events in June 2020

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## Unveiling the language of Symbols

**Date and Time:** 6th June, Saturday, 5:30 to 7:00 PM

Ancient symbols such as the Egyptian Ankh or the Yin yang from ancient China played an important role in civilisations across the world, and draw our attention even today. What wisdom can we extract from this ancient and universal language of symbols, and how can they help us discover deeper meaning and purpose in our own lives?

Online session: Talk and Q&A.

Click here to register for the session:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZ0ldOivqjorHtfCwOmIF28R43AWk2Y8GY6v>

*Registration is mandatory to attend. No. of participants limited on first come first serve basis*

For more information, reach out to us at [info@newacropolis.in](mailto:info@newacropolis.in) | 9663804871

# Events in June

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## Tick Tock : the wisdom of working with time

**Date and Time:** 20th June, Saturday, 5:30 to 7:00 PM

From the rush of deadlines and the hectic pace of life in big cities, to relating to history and planning for the future, we all relate to time at different levels. Beyond the quest for efficiency and time management lie more profound ways to understand the nature and laws of time. This talk explores some simple and profound ideas from the wisdom of ancient cultures to build a wiser and practical relationship with time, which opens doors to a more meaningful life.

Online session: Talk and Q&A.

Click here to register for the session:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZwucOuqpjgvGdal0WlgZUcgxcfhAGlZZxS7>

*Registration is mandatory to attend. No. of participants limited on first come first serve basis*

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LIVING  
PHILOSOPHY

# Practical Philosophy Course

Discover Awaken Transform

A 16-week foundation course in Practical Philosophy that brings the wisdom of ancient Eastern and Western philosophies to inspire us to lead more harmonious lives in today's times. When Philosophy is practical, it is educational, helping us to know ourselves and to improve ourselves.

The course touches different practical, universal and timeless concepts of life from the wisdom of civilizations of the ancient world, with the perspective of how these can become practical tools to make a profound, lasting difference in our lives.



**Duration: 16 weeks | 1 class per week (7:30 to 9:30 PM )**

For details on upcoming batches, refer to [our website here](#)



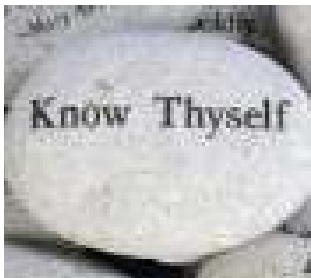


## SYLLABUS

Living Philosophy is a 16-week course in Practical Philosophy that brings the wisdom of ancient eastern and western philosophies to inspire us and help us lead more harmonious lives in today's times.

Through these sessions (1 session of 2 hours per week), the course touches different practical, universal and timeless concepts of life from the wisdom of cultures and civilizations of the ancient world, with the perspective of how these can become practical tools to make a profound, lasting difference in our lives today. The syllabus follows:

### 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 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





### **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



### **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 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



### **Destiny and Inner order – Wisdom from Egypt and China**

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



# About New Acropolis

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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 Culture, 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.