

A Magazine on Philosophy, Culture & Volunteering

THE ACROPOLITAN

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Music and I

FEATURE

**The Darshanas: Six Schools
of Indian Philosophy**

**A Parent's Search for
New Education**



FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Reader,

Around the world, mythology and fairytales capture the reality of the universal human quest; sometimes in search of unspeakable treasure, sometimes to unite with a charming prince or rescue a maiden. Almost always, the narrative includes the surpassing of challenges to reveal the heroic and victorious potential of the protagonist, as if reflecting the extraordinary strength that lies within each of our own hearts, if we but dare to unshackle the chains that hold us back.

Wise men and women of the past have repeatedly highlighted the important role of education to discover this inner potential; illuminating virtues such as independence, benevolence, courage, and commitment to what is Good and Just. Because ultimately, for the philosopher it is clear that this is the real enduring gift that humanity needs, if we are to fulfill the responsibility to give rise to a new and better world.

A new and better world must consist of new and better human beings; individuals who have harmonized with the "music of the celestial spheres", as wise Pythagoras might have called it. Through a diversity of symbols and practices, which at times might even seem contradictory, schools of philosophy have emerged through history, seeking living answers to the questions of purpose, destiny, and the meaning of Life. Let us together begin to unravel the clues they have left us. Let us together Discover, Awaken, and Transform.

Harianto H Mehta
Editor



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THE STORY OF CINDERELLA – AN INNER VOYAGE

By Akanksha Sanghi

I recently had the opportunity to investigate my all-time favourite fairytale, *Cinderella*, in a new light. I realised that we can in fact extract very practical principles to apply in our daily lives. But for this, we need to look at the story that we are so familiar with, through a new lens, leaving behind our preconceived notions for a moment. I began to slowly peel off layers, to attempt to read between the lines, and to grasp the symbolism deeply embedded in the characters and plot.

The popular and moral message of this tale illustrates the timeless value of the Victory of Good over Evil, meant to inspire right conduct amongst children. Ultimately the kind-hearted and helpful Cinderella is victorious despite all the obstacles from her stepmother and sisters, usually regarded as the symbols of evil. However, it is evident that the story contains another more mystical message as well, depicting the voyage of a philosopher seeking Wisdom; it is perhaps the voyage of every human being, of each one aspiring for his/her Prince, our true human potential to become the best version of ourselves.



To embark on this voyage, the tale seems to emphasize the importance of the right preparation. In the beginning of the story, Cinderella is depicted as constantly working and cleaning. To me, work symbolises discipline and order which are basic but essential tools; there is a need to organise our thoughts and emotions which are usually stained with egoistical elements. Cleaning symbolises a very significant step of the inner process of purification; cleaning away vices and desires to create room for something new and better, a step closer to our potential. With cleaning and order, we are able to see a bit more clearly, more objectively. And we might hear an inner subtle voice yearning to fulfil a lasting and meaningful purpose, beyond subjective and transient gains.

Cleaning symbolises a very significant step of the inner process of purification; cleaning away vices and desires to create room for something new and better, a step closer to our potential.

Cinderella's two step sisters perhaps signify the illusion of duality that we may become blinded by. We often see things as black or white, separate, at one extreme or another. Good or Bad. Life or Death. Light or Darkness. However, Life cannot be reduced to such



simplistic either-ors. And when our logical minds create elaborate lists of pros and cons to deduce a line of action, we often find ourselves stuck, overcome by doubt, because another inner voice directs us differently. Like our logical minds, Cinderella's step sisters were jealous and calculative; they did everything they could to sabotage her. Each one of us experiences jealousy, envy, and the voices of the ego. When we allow these vices to lead us, we act in a manner that deep down we know is incorrect. Sometimes these pulls are so strong, that we take wrong decisions, hurting others and ourselves in the process. However, we must remember that we can always choose to bring light and raise ourselves to see things from a more elevated and altruistic point of view, and act by values of justice and goodness, rather than relative and limited notions of right and wrong.

Despite her evil step sisters, Cinderella chose to rise above the trying circumstances to remain good, kind and truthful – to be virtuous. As victims of circumstance, and slaves to

the ego, we don't always recognise that we are always free to choose – to respond with compassion, generosity and love – even when we feel angry, hurt, and impatient...even when we are in a bad mood. With every choice, we purify ourselves further, and take a tiny step closer to becoming better.

Cinderella also had to deal with her stepmother who tests her constantly, giving her a seemingly endless list of challenging tasks, each more difficult than the previous. Perhaps the stepmother symbolises Life itself, which offers us obstacles and challenges in various forms and magnitudes that we need to surpass to emerge victorious, stronger, and happier. In that sense, mystically speaking, the stepmother might be regarded as a great and compassionate Teacher, because without her challenges, Cinderella might never have had the opportunity to fulfil her destiny. It is up to us whether we face these challenges as victims, feeling sorry for ourselves,

Life cannot be reduced to such simplistic either-ors. And when our logical minds create elaborate lists of pros and cons to deduce a line of action, we often find ourselves stuck, overcome by doubt, because another inner voices directs us differently.

or if we persevere through them, with the spirit of victory, as did Cinderella.

From the moment that Cinderella is informed of the opportunity to meet the Prince, her destiny, she marched onward no matter what came her way. With help from a fairy godmother who appears out of nowhere, perhaps representative of our own Will, within minutes Cinderella is dressed in a beautiful gown and glass slippers, and everyday items are transformed, like the pumpkin that becomes a carriage, to facilitate her union. Perhaps every human being is ultimately in search of a Prince; some call it happiness, others may call it the search for meaning or purpose, and some may call it the fulfilment of potential. When we make the effort to uplift and purify ourselves with the goal of actualizing this search, the clarity and stability of our Will is perhaps our single most important strength.

The sparkling glass slipper, which Cinderella leaves behind, to me symbolises a mystical momentary glimpse of that destiny. Its memory is the inner proof of that destiny, which becomes the motor for the daily effort to actualize it fully. We must but persevere, and the Prince will himself eventually come seeking us. As was with Cinderella, the tough but compassionate Teacher that we call Life will never stop testing us, giving us opportunities to purify, and surpass our current condition... to take steps towards new possibilities.

I realised therefore, that Cinderella and the Prince are One. The Prince symbolises Cinderella's potential; to unite with her destiny is the beautiful inner voyage. Like Cinderella, can we too strive towards our own true

potentials, to be the best human beings that we can really be, despite all the challenges and circumstances that life deals us? Can we strive to act from the inherent goodness that lies within all of us, no matter what the circumstances, to become masters of our own happiness? Can our virtues defeat the vices of our material selves? Can we choose to march through life with the spirit of Victory, rather than as victims? ∞∞

Perhaps every human being is ultimately in search of a Prince; some call it happiness, others may call it the search for meaning or purpose, and some may call it the fulfilment of potential.



THE PHILOSOPHY OF BENEVOLENCE

By Julian Scott





Having a true heart, one does not stray from oneself, by which he means one's inherent sense of right and wrong. These qualities are instilled in us since birth

I am referring with this title to the life and work of a Chinese philosopher called Mengzi, or Mencius, as the Latinized version of his name is written. Born in Zou province around 371 BC, he lived in a period known as 'The Warring States', which lasted from 481 to 221 BC. It was probably as a result of seeing much cruelty and much suffering among the people of the time that Mencius promoted his philosophy of benevolence.

Mencius was a devoted follower of Confucius, and while the concept of benevolence (*ren or jen*) is a key part of Confucius's teachings, it takes on particular importance in the philosophy of Mencius. Two of his sayings give us an idea of this: 'The benevolent man has no match.' And, 'All that is expected of a gentleman is benevolence.' Seeing the injustices of the time, he comes to the same conclusion as his master: if the rulers were model examples of what a human being should be, 'the whole world would follow', as Confucius poetically puts it in *The Analects*.

There are four factors in the make up of the model human being in Confucianism: Benevolence (*ren*), Rightness (*yi*), Propriety (*li*) and Moral Wisdom (*zhi*). However, in Mencius – the book containing a record of conversations with the philosopher –

Mencius concedes that most people, if deprived of basic necessities, will forget about rightness and benevolence and try to save themselves. The 'gentleman', however – the Junzi or person of noble and cultivated character – will continue to adhere to the good, even in the most difficult circumstances.

there is a particular emphasis on the first two: 'All that matters is that there should be benevolence and rightness.'

Benevolence is also translated as 'human-heartedness' and Mencius often refers to the 'true heart', which could be said to be a combination of benevolence and rightness. Having a true heart, one naturally feels compassion for others. He gives an example of how this is innate in human beings, saying that anyone who found a child who had fallen into a well would naturally try to rescue him. Secondly, having a true heart, one does not stray from oneself, by which he means one's inherent sense of right and wrong. These qualities are instilled in us since birth by 'Heaven' (*Tian*), which is roughly equivalent to the Western concept of God.

Importantly, Mencius, like Confucius, believed that the human being is essentially good. He counteracts the argument of another philosopher, Kao-tzu or Gaozi, who declared: 'Men's nature is like a current of water. If you open a channel for the current to the east, it will flow east. If you open a channel to the west, it will flow west. Men's nature makes no distinction between the good and the not good, just as water makes no distinction between east and west.' Master Meng (Mencius) replied, 'Water can be trusted not to make a distinction between east and west; but is this so in relation to up and down? Men's natural tendency towards goodness is like the water's tendency to find the lower level. Now if, for example, you strike the water and make it leap up, it is possible to force it over your head... But this surely is not the nature of water, and it is only if force is applied that it acts in this way. That men can be made to do evil is due to their nature also being like this.'

However, Mencius concedes that most people, if deprived of basic necessities, will forget about rightness and benevolence and try to save themselves. The 'gentleman', however – the *Junzi* or person of noble and cultivated character – will continue to adhere to the good, even in the most difficult circumstances. In one of the many conversations that make up Mencius, the sage puts it like this: 'Those who make an effort only when there is a King Wen [one of China's most venerated



kings, 1100–1050 BCI are ordinary men. Outstanding men make the effort even without a King Wen.'

Mencius was from a noble family and could easily (as was also the case with Plato) have entered politics as a career. However, apart from a brief period serving as an official in the state of Ch'i, he spent most of his time travelling, offering wise advice to various rulers on government by *ren* (human-heartedness). Although he was championing an unpopular cause, he was fearless in speaking his mind to men of power and was regarded with great respect at many Chinese courts. In one of the conversations recorded in Mencius, for example, he criticizes a ruler for taking pity on an ox being led to sacrifice and yet fails to take pity on people suffering injustice in his kingdom.

Here are some examples of the advice he gave to princes on humane government: 'Practise benevolent government towards the people, reduce punishment and taxation...'

Summing up his teachings on this matter, the Encyclopaedia Britannica states: 'He worked out a definite program to attain economic sufficiency for the common people. He also advocated light taxes, free trade, conservation of natural resources, welfare measures for the old and disadvantaged, and more nearly equal sharing of wealth.'

One ruler asked him: 'Through what can the Empire be united?'

Mencius: 'Through unity.'

'Who can unite it?'

Mencius: 'One who is not fond of killing can unite it.'

And, in another conversation:

'How virtuous must a man be before he can become a true king?'

Mencius: 'He becomes a true king by bringing peace to the people... If you shared your enjoyment [parks, music, etc.] with the people, you would be a true king.'

And finally: 'When good and wise men are in high office and able men are employed, a ruler [should] take advantage of times of peace to explain the laws to the people... [But] a ruler

The function of the ruler is to serve the people, and not the other way round. 'The people are the most important element in a nation; the spirits of the land and grain come next; the sovereign counts for the least.'

who takes advantage of times of peace to indulge in pleasure and indolence is courting disaster.'

All this comes down to Mencius's view that the function of the ruler is to serve the people, and not the other way round. 'The people are the most important element in a nation; the spirits of the land and grain come next; the sovereign counts for the least.'

If, on the other hand, people think in terms of profit, then everything is doomed from the outset, because in the end, everyone from the ruler downwards will put themselves first and no one will think of the good of the whole.

Unfortunately, however, the advice of Mencius fell on deaf ears, and other more cynical or simplistic philosophies found greater favour with the ruling princes. As a result, following the example of his master, Confucius, he became disappointed with 'preaching in the desert' and devoted his last years to the instruction of his pupils.

Remarkably, his efforts finally gave fruit – more than 1000 years later – when his work was given 'canonical' status by the Neo-Confucianists of the Song dynasty (AD 960-1279) and, 'for the last 1000 years, Mencius has been revered among the Chinese people as the cofounder of Confucianism, second only to Confucius himself.' ∞∞



AN ENDURING GIFT: Q&A WITH SUDHA MURTY

Interview by New Acropolis Culture Circle
Compiled by Bhushan Dabir



Philanthropy can be a bridge between the ideal of fraternity and its material manifestation. Imagining a better world, with a greater sense of fraternity is intuitively appealing to many. Yet, to make a personal sacrifice in order to create that better world, is the choice that we make less often than is needed.

In this light, it is relevant to ask - what drives one to share with that urgent sense of duty? Does one need money and power to be a philanthropist? What is the relationship between our choices and our identity?

Gentle and inspiring, Sudha Murty's life throws light on to these very questions and the principle of fraternity shines brightly through her choices and actions.

Born in 1950 in Shiggaon, in Karnataka, Sudha ji graduated as a gold medalist from both her Bachelor's and Master's programs, and started her career as an engineer with TELCO, becoming the first woman to be employed by that company. Later, she became a college professor, brought up her two children, and contributed – both financially and professionally – to building the fledgling Infosys which has today become a software behemoth.

In 1996, she started the Infosys Foundation. As its Chairperson she has handled 16 national disasters in the last 24 years, established over 60000 libraries, built 16000 public toilets as well as 2300 houses for flood affected people, apart from running several initiatives for poverty alleviation and women's empowerment.

An author of more than 30 books, which have sold over 3 million copies, she has received 9 honorary doctorates, several literary awards, and was honoured with the Padmashree in 2006.

She lives by the belief that *generosity of a few is hope for millions*. She recently shared a collage of anecdotes and experiences with the Friends of New Acropolis Culture Circle. The following is an extract of that dialogue



Philanthropy means love for your fellow human being. It is a mindset, an attitude. It has nothing to do with money.

New Acropolis Culture Circle (NACC): In the foreword of your beautiful book, *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read*, you describe being brought up in a village without telephones, CDs, or music systems. You say, "The only luxury was books." And you speak about how your grandfather would tell you stories under the twinkling stars. As an author yourself, Sudha ji what is the great importance of stories in our life?

Sudha ji: Well, if I tell you – you should speak the truth, you should work hard...and if I go on giving a sermon like that, you will get bored. But, if I convert that into a story? Then, the same message, you will *never* forget. That's because all human beings enjoy listening to stories.

Also, storytelling helps you a lot in creative thinking. For example, in my childhood, in the evenings after dinner, very often my grandfather would tell us stories from...say... *Bhagwata*, something about Krishna. He would describe to us, that Krishna had lotus eyes and he was dark in complexion... *Shantakaaram Bhujangshayanam Padmanabham*. I could imagine Krishna the way I wanted to; tall, handsome, dark skinned. One's imagination is boundless. So, my imagination too grew a lot in listening to those stories and I learnt the art of putting any message in the form of a story, which is enchanting, easy to understand, and difficult to forget.

NACC: In the book *The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk*, you say, "We cannot choose the community or religion that we are born into. So, we should never think that our community is our identity." Sudhaji what do you believe, is the true identity of a human being?

Sudha ji: A good character is the true identity of a human being. Why was Krishna respected? Is it because he was the son of Devaki and Yashoda? Is it because he was the husband of the beautiful Rukmini? They say none of these are true identities. *Krishnaha swayam Krishnaha*. What you are, is what you are. It is not because you are somebody's wife or husband. It is not because of the money you have. On the outside, it may be that these things create your identity; but inside, your true identity is defined by the way you behave with people who are less privileged than you are, especially when

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they are in difficulty. That is what shows who you truly are. And I have always believed that this is what God... or whatever or whomsoever you believe has made you... has made you to be; to be a good human being. This is more important than the religion you are born into. You have to be born into one religion or another, one family or another, isn't it? And depending on that, you will have some particular name and you will be brought up in that particular atmosphere. But, inside - you should be a good human being. I often tell my children - what you achieve is not important to me; but you must be good human beings. And that means to work hard, to be truthful and compassionate. These are the qualities of a good human being.

NACC: That naturally begs the question - what is needed to be a good human being? In *The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk* you tell us that "One doesn't need money to help people." So what really do you need to help another human being?

Sudha ji: First and foremost, you should love your fellow human beings. The Latin word Philanthropy means love for your fellow human being. Particularly, when you find that others are in some difficulty, you should want to look for ways in which you can help them. It is a mindset, an attitude. It has nothing to do with money. And this is not taught in college, this cannot be taught through books and it cannot be not taught anywhere else but at one's own home. One learns this from elders. As a child, you observe how they behave with people.

NACC: We wish to understand, what are the values or principles that one follows as a philanthropist?

Sudha ji: Well, everybody has a different way. I can tell you, what I follow.

Firstly, I really do not care what people say about me - good or bad - it doesn't matter to me. What people say depends on their way of looking at me. But, what I am inside, only I know.

Secondly, when I help people in my work, I don't expect anything in return. On the contrary, I thank them as they have given me an opportunity to help.

This money is not yours. You are only a treasurer of the money and this money should go back to the society.

Thirdly, I always keep in mind that there is a way to live. We never aimed to make lot of money in life. We worked passionately, we worked for our joy. Money came... like a jackpot. So I wondered: why did God give me money? There are so many people who are smarter than me, who work harder than me. Why then, did I get this money? I felt it is a signal from God: look, you are an honest person. This money is not yours. You are only a treasurer of the money and this money should go back to the society.

NACC: I believe you actually did teach your grandmother to read, as the title of your book suggests, didn't you? Please tell us about it.

Sudha ji: Yes! My grandmother was extremely bright, but she never went to school. She could not read and write. So, I used to read to her. Every Wednesday, a magazine would arrive and I used to read to her a particular series known as *Kaashiyatre*, about an old woman who wanted to go to Benaras. Once, on a Monday, I went to another village for a wedding and I had planned to come back on Tuesday evening. But, you know...we were a lot of cousins together and we were having a wonderful time...so I came back on Friday. When I returned home, my grandmother started crying. She told me – “The magazine arrived. I wanted to read...but I could not read. I touched the pages with my fingers and I wished my hands could read.”



She had decided. At that time, she was 62 years old and I was 12 years old. She asked me, “Will you help me? I want to learn the alphabet and learn to read”. I said, “Awwa, you are old! Do you want to go to school?”. She said, “No, I am not going to school. You are going to teach me at home...I will work hard.” And thus, I became her teacher. I was quite hard on my student. I would tell her to read passages, write something down 20 times, recite something else 15 times... and she would do everything! Within 3 months, she learnt to read and write! Soon thereafter, came the day of Saraswati Pooja. It is a day of thanksgiving to the goddess of learning. Awwa called me that day, and she got a chair for me to sit. She handed me a gift. And...absolutely unexpectedly, she touched my feet. I was so scared! Elders are never

For
learning,
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supposed to touch youngsters' feet. It is not correct. I said, "Awwa, what are you doing?" She explained. "I am not touching your feet as my granddaughter... I am touching the feet of my teacher." A Teacher is the one who takes from *ajnana*, darkness or no knowledge, to good knowledge or *paripoorna*. Thus, my grandmother taught me the greatest lesson – that, for learning, age is no bar. The day you stop learning you become old.

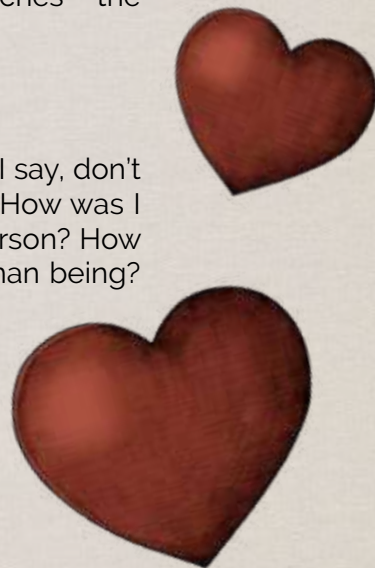
NACC: That lesson is truly an enduring gift. And that, Sudha ji takes us to *Three Thousand Stiches*; the book in which you speak of the best gift you ever got. Do tell us about it.

Sudha ji: When I was a young woman, I started working for sex workers' rehabilitation and in the beginning it was quite difficult to gain their confidence. The first few times they threw slippers and tomatoes at me. Pimps threatened to break my knees...all sorts of things! My father told me, "In your life if you can rehabilitate 10 people, I will die a happy man." For the first few years, the success rate was in single digits and it was extremely frustrating. Many a times, I felt, I can't do this, but I continued to try. After 18 years, when 3000 of them had begun a new life, they wanted to thank me. When we met, they said, "Akka, you gave us so much in life – affection, confidence, rehabilitation, bank guarantee... we want to give you a gift. So, this is a quilt we have made. Each one of us has put in one stitch, so there are three thousand stitches... and whenever you use it, we will be with you. And that is what I call the 'Three thousand stitches' – the best gift in my life!

NACC: Sudha ji, truly, you are a special human being!

Sudha ji: You know, I am a very ordinary person! I say, don't compete with anybody. Compete with yourself. How was I yesterday and how am I today? Am I a better person? How should I improve? How should I be a better human being? That's all I have. ∞∞

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"Truth is one. Sages call it by different names."

- Rig Veda

THE DARSHANAS: SIX SCHOOLS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

By Manjula Nanavati

The six *darshanas* are philosophical systems, or schools of thought, that take their authority from the Vedas. As implied by the meaning of the word *darshana*, to see or to experience, the six disciplines offer unique points of view, six separate windows from which to observe and comprehend Life, six seemingly disparate paths leading towards the one Ultimate Reality through the removal of ignorance of the nature of existence, liberation from suffering, and the attainment of enlightenment.

Each *darshana* is scientific in approach, with a doctrine based on logic and critical arguments. Each has an epistemology (theory of knowledge), a cosmogony (theory of creation), a metaphysical view of reality that could be theistic or atheistic, a strong ethical framework, and tools to validate and substantiate the system.

Each *darshana* was codified by a founding sage, who also composed explanatory verses, *sutras*, to elucidate its meaning, to serve as a guide or manual towards the recognition of a higher, more meaningful life. Accordingly, these six important philosophical texts are:

- *Sankhya Sutras* of Kapila
- *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali
- *Nyaya Sutras* of Gautama
- *Vaisheshika Sutras* of Kanada
- *Mimamsa Sutras* of Jaimini
- *Brahma Sutras* (also called *Vedanta Sutras*) of Badarayana

The word *sutra* means *thread* or *string*, implying that they bind together in written form, a previously oral tradition. More prosaically, the

The six disciplines offer unique points of view, six separate windows from which to observe and comprehend Life, six seemingly disparate paths leading towards the one Ultimate Reality through the removal of ignorance of the nature of existence, liberation from suffering, and the attainment of enlightenment.

sutras were first written on leaves which were then bound together with string. Whatever the origin of the term, the *sutra* is a series of aphorisms that contains a thought, an idea, a statement or an argument expressed in a brief, condensed phrase, dense with meaning, and therefore open to different interpretations. For this reason, the *darshanas* have traditionally required scholarly attention to be unveiled, in contrast to the Indian epics, which dispensed wisdom in a more accessible manner.

Any attempt to explain the substance and significance of each of these schools in a few paragraphs would not do justice to the depth of complexity and crest of insight that they encompass. It is my humble endeavour to encapsulate in a brief thumbnail sketch, a few distinguishing features of each that I

have managed to extract, hoping that it will perhaps invite readers to delve further into an enlightening investigation of their own. To that end, *The Six Systems Of Indian Philosophy* by Sain Dass Aeri, from which the backbone of this article was gleaned, is an illuminating read.

SANKHYA



Artist's representation of Kapila, author of Sankhya Sutras

"Reflection is to be aware of what one knows, or what one does not know." (Aeri)

Sankhya attempts to understand the cosmos through reason and logic. One of its main threads is Unity and the interdependence of our universe, which was not created by any external force, such as a God. Instead, this system speaks of two eternal entities in the universe, having no beginning or end; they are *Prakriti* or Infinite Unconsciousness (nature, matter in potential), and *Purusha*, or Infinite Consciousness (spirit). *Prakriti* when manifest is changeable, while *Purusha* is unchangeable. Creation begins when *Purusha* and *Prakriti* come closer together. At a point these two elements begin to move away from each other, hence resulting in a continuous alternating cycle of transformation and dissolution.

Human suffering is understood to be a result of the inability to discern between the changeable and unchangeable, between the transitory and the eternal. The path of liberation from pain is therefore through discriminatory knowledge and reflection. All religious practices, rituals, sacrifices, devotion, meditation, etc. can provide temporary respite, but only reason and right

knowledge can lead to the Truth of the Self, of Life, and of the Ultimate Reality. **Even an ethical life only facilitates this journey, but is not enough by itself. The solution lies only in the ability to discriminate our empirical self from our essential real self, between the perishable and the imperishable.**

Human suffering is understood to be a result of the inability to discern between the changeable and unchangeable, between the transitory and the eternal.

Thus, Sankhya was the first Indian school of thought to prioritize the human faculty of reason to find answers to the metaphysical questions of life. It did not depend on a God to help find a way out of pain and suffering, nor to provide ready-made answers to the questions about the creation and destruction of the world. Therefore, in its origination, the classic Sankhya is considered by some to be atheistic.



Classical representation of Patanjali, author of Yoga Sutras

YOGA

"To understand the ultimate supreme reality as it is, rather than as we want it to be, we need a mind which is calm, clear and unbiased." (Aeri)

"God's grace is a great help, a great aid but the final onus is on our individual efforts. The final responsibility is always on us, not on God." (Aeri)

Because Sankhya and Yoga share similar epistemologies they are sometimes combined together into Sankhya-Yoga, yet there are fundamental differences between the two. The most important of which is that, while Sankhya believes in knowledge as a means to liberation, Patanjali taught that through Yoga, this could be achieved by restraining the mind, leading an ethical life, combined with a firm belief in the grace of God.

Today Yoga has become synonymous with the postures or *asanas* that emphasize only the physical aspect. Patanjali's Yoga, however, was conceived of as a physiological, spiritual, and philosophical system, comprising eight limbs. The first four – *Yama* (abstinences), *Niyama* (injunctions), *Asana* (postures), and *Pranayama* (breath control) were concerned with perfecting the practitioner's physiological form. The other four – *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses) *Dharana* (concentration) *Dhyana* (contemplation) and *Samadhi* (oneness, integration), were designed to perfect the inner state. In this manner moving slowly from the outside, into the depths of an inner world, the seeker can be led to a state of tranquility. Each component was not an end in itself, but only a means to the final aim of Yoga, which is *Moksha*.

Patanjali listed various obstacles that could hinder progress, such as the products of our mind and temperament. He suggested two ways to deal with them: the steadfast practice of virtues, and reflection, which encompasses observing our behavior and enquiring into the why of it.

According to Patanjali, with the increasing discovery of the real self, a process called *Vairagya* (non-attachment) is naturally set in motion. A word of caution must be noted here. It is not the aim of Yoga to engender a lack of interest in pleasure, or in life itself. **Vairagya can be understood as “enjoying pleasure as a witness rather than as a participant.” (Aeri) It is the expression of a calm, stable, serene mind, and at that stage when one is no longer controlled by the mind, true freedom has been achieved.**

NYAYA

“God can be experienced, not known through logic.” (Aeri)

In a broad sense Nyaya means a process of reasoning or syllogistic reasoning based on logic. In popular usage Nyaya also means justice. The Nyaya texts are a study of formal logic, but ultimately their focus, like every other Indian philosophical system, is Life. The Nyaya school of thought asserts that human suffering is a product of erroneous knowledge and Gautama, the author of the *Nyaya Sutras*, developed a theory of fallacy as a means to identify errors in the logical progression of thought. He believed that while the aim of life is to seek everlasting happiness, one has to first prove to oneself beyond doubt, that such a state of reality exists, and then uncover the processes that can be used to grasp it.

While Nyaya discusses different kinds of proofs of validity including perception, inference, comparison and verbal testimony, it upholds that the best is intuition, knowledge that does not rely

on reason or any external logic. It is "knowledge whose instrumental cause is not knowledge," but is something you deeply and directly know. (Aeri) The aim of Nyaya is to gain moksha through true knowledge, or higher, supreme knowledge. This is the knowledge that can discriminate between right and wrong, between what is disputable and indisputable, between the particular and the universal, between the body and soul.

As the tradition of logic is attributed to Aristotle by some in western Philosophy, Gautama is credited with systematizing the rules of logic in Indian Philosophy. His work on syllogisms and causation theory parallels Aristotle's and his Theory of Fallacy is used in some measure by all Indian philosophies. He is said to be the first to subject the universal questions of human existence to a logical, critical, scientific methodology and he is also credited for providing a logical rationale to interpret the *Vedas* and the sacrificial religious practices contained in them.

VAISHESHEKA

"Salvation (Moksha) is not a journey to another world; it is a realization of our original nature and detachment from action." (Aeri)

Nyaya and Vaisheshika share similar metaphysics and borrowed liberally from each other. Therefore, even though they evolved as separate disciplines, they are often fused together and called Nyaya-Vaisheshika. **Vaisheshika elaborates that within every object there is a certain inherent, irreducible quality which is Vishesh (particular) and which distinguishes it from all other objects. It is the essence of that substance.** Kanada, the author of *Vaisheshika Sutras* was also known as Kanabhaska, the atom eater, because of his work on the smallest particles of the universe which he called *Paramanu* (*parama*: most distant, and *anu*: very small.) Today his work is recognized as a rudimentary form of Atomic theory. Some of his ideas are very similar to his contemporary, the Greek philosopher



Democritus known as the founder of Atomic theory. Though there are differences in their hypotheses, both Democritus and Kanada believed that the atom was the smallest, indivisible, imperceptible part of a substance and that atoms could neither be created nor destroyed.

Vaisheshika believes that since atoms are eternal, the universe made up of atoms is eternal also. Castles may perish but stones remain. Elements may disappear, but their atoms will remain, to recombine in an endless process. Just as the western world's first scientists were ancient philosophers investigating nature and life, so also Kanada's system, known for its insights in Naturalism and Physics allowed for a practical approach to life and its primary purpose, salvation. Vaisheshika endorsed the idea that we must follow the message of the *Vedas* to lead an ethical life. **Every action attaches merits and demerits to the soul according to the law of Karma. These merits and demerits, combined with an unseen moral power guided by God, imparts motion to atoms leading to the creation of circumstances in which the individual soul experiences the justice of the law.** Liberation lies in the cessation of deeds and actions that create *Karma*, which is only possible through detachment in the action. Vaisheshika emphasizes the value of knowledge from the world of experience as the path to moksha or salvation.

PURVA MIMAMSA

"Meanings of words come alive only through action, not through explanation." (Aeri)

When confronted with a choice, we have the freedom to act, but once a choice is made, the law of Karma is set in motion. This continues eternally in a cycle of action and consequence, over incarnations. Liberation comes only when the soul no more has the need or desire to act.

The word *mimamsa* means a reflection, investigation, or analysis. In the context of this *darshana*, it refers to the enquiry into the nature of *Dharma*, or a code of conduct in its ritualistic, ceremonial, and sacrificial sense. It is said that during this time the increasing authority of the priestly class and their multitudinous interpretations of the 'correct' rules of rituals resulted in a majoritarian backlash. Buddhism in particular questioned the validity of meaningless rituals devoid of a logical or philosophical basis. Jaimini studied and investigated the practices of the time, examined their objectives, and prepared a valid philosophical rationale for them. He believed that the *Vedas* were eternal and the Vedic rituals, combined with an ethical life, was the way to Salvation.

Because the *Vedas* were handed down orally the relationships between the word, the sound, and the meaning were considered to



be critical. **Mimamsa believed that words carry meaning, but only sentences carry knowledge, and that all valid knowledge must result in a duty to act.** Practitioners

of this stream were concerned with the idea of the highest good and contended that it was the result of ethical actions. Since, this was the subject matter of the Vedas, it was critical to properly understand and interpret its words. Mimamsa scholars investigated the philosophy of language, and how human beings learn and communicate knowledge across generations. They delved deeply into semantics and linguistics and considered the purpose of language was to clearly prescribe the right.

By connecting Dharma to Vedic religious practices, the Mimamsa school of thought became in time the backbone of the Hindu way of life. According to Jaimini, *Dharma* is an imperative carrying Vedic authority. Human beings cannot escape the compulsion of *Dharma*. When confronted with a choice, we have the freedom to act, but once a choice is made, the law of *Karma* is set in motion. This

continues eternally in a cycle of action and consequence, over incarnations. Liberation comes only when the soul no more has the need or desire to act.

Is this concept of an action-less state possible on earth? Mimamsa believes that the cycle of birth and death may continue even when one attains *Moksha*, but the soul with no motives, desires or needs enjoys its pure natural uncontaminated state.

UTTARA MIMAMSA OR VEDANTA

While Purva Mimamsa focused on the kind of actions we should do, Uttara Mimamsa gave us the philosophical foundation behind our actions. Also called *Vedanta*, from *anta* meaning end, implying that it comprised the essence of the wisdom of the Vedas, it stressed a contemplative life of reflection and meditation.

The *Brahma Sutras* were authored by Badarayana and its central message is that there is only one Supreme Truth, one Ultimate Reality called *Brahman*. To know or realize

Brahman is the most important goal of life. *Brahma-Vidya* is the knowledge of *Brahman*: to know what is, what exists, and what does not exist. Its four principal tenets are expressed in four widely quoted aphorisms:

<i>Aham Braham asmi</i>	I am <i>Brahman</i>
<i>Ayam atma Brahma</i>	This atma is <i>Brahman</i>
<i>Tat tvam asi</i>	Thou art that
<i>Sarvam</i>	All that is <i>Brahman</i>
<i>khalvidam Brahma</i>	



Adi Shankara with disciples, By Raja Ravi Varma

According to Badrayana everything is *Brahman*. Atma and *Brahma* are qualitatively the same. **God and this world are not**

separate, although this is not clear to us due to ignorance. By meditating deeply, through a life of reflection, one can pierce the veils of Maya to understand the true nature of Brahman.

Though the *Brahma Sutra* texts are complex, ambiguous, and seemingly contradictory, at least 10 different schools of Vedanta find their roots here. The most distinguished and acclaimed of Indian philosophers of this school are Adi Shankara, credited with the spread of *Advaita Vedanta*, and Ramanuja, the chief proponent of *Visishta Advaita Vedanta*. Their writings and commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras*, still influential today, contributed towards the popularization of this philosophical system.

CONCLUSION

The extraordinary diversity of ideas contained in the *Vedas* is staggering. Scholars have found verses within it that support Monism, Monotheism, Polytheism, Pantheism and even Atheism. This speaks eloquently of a long and ancient practice of open-mindedness, tolerance and objectivity, and that fundamentally these are all perhaps different perspectives to a singular reality. While each *darshana* accepted the authority of the *Vedas*, it was not a blind acceptance. The authors used a rigorous validating process, subjecting each assumption to deep analysis and stringent rules of logic and linguistics, before perfecting the system of thought. In their early years, the codified *darshanas* were characterized by healthy arguments and refutations debated by the various schools. This served to clarify

and strengthen each codex with the result that the six *darshanas* give us six uniquely different, but coherent systems to use, to holistically understand life.

But above all, each *darshana* begins with the firm belief that a spiritual temperament is a pre-requisite to fathom the nature of Life. Perhaps this implies that life's truth cannot be fully comprehended by reason alone. To be able to achieve a deeper understanding, there is a need to adhere to the Vedic injunction to know ourselves as a call to look deeper within, to purify and push one's mind into the mysteries, beyond the domain of mere intellect, so as to be able to see the Truth, as it is. ॐ

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The extraordinary diversity of ideas contained in the Vedas is staggering. Scholars have found verses within it that support Monism, Monotheism, Polytheism, Pantheism and even Atheism. This speaks eloquently of a long and ancient practice of open-mindedness, tolerance and objectivity, and that fundamentally these are all perhaps different perspectives to a singular reality.



UNSHACKLING MY CHAINS

By Sukesh Motwani

In my younger years, I would often wonder about the idea of enlightenment. There has been a fascination about how I could ever reach a point where my mind would merge into, or become united with, the Cosmic Mind; to acquire, to realise, or to experience, what some might call, the ultimate Truth.

But I was advised: Spiritually elevating yourself is about dropping ideas about the self... it is not about adding or acquiring. On the contrary, it is about knowing what you are NOT. Hence the only way ahead is to Know Thyself. If you seek sincerely, look deeply at your personality's filters, your attachments and fears, and you shall know better that *what you perceive to be you, is not you*; and you shall walk in the direction of true freedom.

I struggled with this. What does Freedom mean? Through a study of philosophy I encountered the true meaning of freedom in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*.

In this work, Plato warns that we are like shackled cave dwellers, entertained and transfixed by the illusory shadows projected onto the cave wall, which we believe to be the entirety of human existence; the desire to acquire more, of entertaining and gratifying

It took me time to understand the difference between attachment and a genuine sense of love that guards and nurtures the inner freedom of all involved.

our senses, seeking validation and honour, to name but a few of the illusions. But one brave cave dweller dares to break free from the chains...he turns around...and walks towards the blinding light of the sun outside the cave. As the eyes adjust to the bright and beautiful reality outside the cave, the true nature of the Self and of Reality, there is a need for the person to return to the cave, to lead others towards the Truth, despite the persecution and ridicule from others in the cave. They are conditioned to reject any other possibility, but the shadowy 'reality' created by the masters of the cave, whose interest it is to keep the masses bound and ignorant.


My struggle to identify the nature of the chains that bind me to the cave, and to break free, has begun. Over the years, I have struggled with many attachments and fears in this glorious pursuit. And for many years I suffered, as a victim, not realizing that I just had to dare to exercise this freedom.

The loss of a high-profile job at the peak of my career had brought me down, psychologically and financially, several years ago. I began to realise the deep addiction I had to my own self-image; how dependent I was on the appearances of financial status and professional success! Hence I understood more clearly that my perception of myself was always through the eyes of others. I realised then, and now all the more, that I cannot walk towards freedom, as long as I allow myself to keep trying to 'live' up to accepted norms of external achievements or materialistic

success, or as long as I yearn to appear 'cool'. This had begun a process of gradually letting go of the search for validation. I am, however, thankful for that challenging year in retrospect, because it led me to the question of my freedom, and of what gave me true happiness. Today I no longer choose to run after the image of a hugely successful entrepreneur. Instead, my interest is directed to excel in my creativity, in light of the impact of my actions as a storyteller; to find ways help create a better sense of fraternity, and human values.

My personal relationships have also bound me. My mother's death had left me shaken, for example, and I realised after years of grieving that attachments will take their time to wear off, but I made the effort to divert my attention from clinging to memories and nostalgic craving by directing my energy instead towards embodying the higher attributes and virtues that I found inspiring in her. Rather than grieve, I became more grateful for the impact of her life on me.

I also recollect how I once allowed another unhealthy relationship to continue because I feared rejection and loneliness. I introspected on how I ended up looking at intimate equations as our possessions, more as a trophy for validating our own lower egos, even when the equation may not serve any kind of evolutionary growth. Evidently, each of my relationships reflects the state of my own emotional well-being. If my ego feels superior or inferior in an area, a healthy relationship would reflect it to me, and give me an opportunity to investigate and surpass such patterns of my personality. It took me time to understand the difference between attachment and a genuine sense of love that guards and nurtures the inner freedom of all involved.



***Karma will keep throwing
challenges my way,
inviting me to burn the
delusional identification
with the personality,
seeking impulsive
pleasure, validation and
all that the ego desires.
But I shall thrive with each
defeat of the personality.***

I find more chains when I go through my social media feed, reflect on my consumerist desires, and my need to buy better and feel better... It reveals how scared I am to lose the only world I know: the world of my desires, attachments, fears, social pressures, tensions, ambitions, worries, guilt, with moments of pleasure, excitement, relief.

The philosophical path, however, teaches me to organize these voices, give them each the right place, the right time and the right measure. I find that this enables me to listen to the guidance of a softer but persistent voice, which brings me back to aligning with the order of life. I realise that I have to keep asking myself which aspect of my personality needs to feel better, or feels threatened. There will be lower impulses to which I may succumb many times, but with each misstep I can exercise the ability to choose another response. While I continue to have aspirations I should never be enslaved by desire.

Similarly, I remind myself that most of my anxieties are actually negative fantasies that deter me from calmly handling my responses in the present. And I practice the quietening of the emotional voices and direct my energy instead towards finding my inner centre, my harmonious balance.

I know that my life could be brief and trivial. But I also realize that it offers me the opportunity to recognize all those elements that are holding me back from finding deeper meaning, beyond the external chaos. For years, I have wondered about the revered German philosopher and writer Rainer Maria Rilke's line, "The purpose of life is to be defeated by greater and greater things." I guess that it means that karma will keep throwing challenges my way, inviting me to burn the delusional identification with the

***For many years I suffered,
as a victim, not realizing
that I just had to dare to
exercise this freedom.***

personality, seeking impulsive pleasure, validation and all that the ego desires. But I shall thrive with each defeat of the personality. Each wound, without the need to glorify it, may have sent me in a direction which has further pushed me to find my personality's place in the universal scheme of things and if I continue to use my intelligence and identify with a higher aspect within me, then I humbly believe that the process of unshackling my chains has begun.

I identify with Philosophy, a love of wisdom, around which to centre my Life. As all the planets revolve around the Sun, I strive to play my roles and prioritize my desires around this centre. That I feel is the idea of true freedom; the acceptance that my human identity is a process of becoming. Each one of us is a soul, shackled to a body experiencing the illusory joys and sorrows to realize the mortality of the body, to reveal the deep courage with which to transcend it. And from this centre emerge my choices and actions; the freedom to choose my response each moment, inspired by Beauty, Courtesy and Goodness, rather than to submit to vice. This is what is helping me gently unshackle my chains. ☯☯

PUBLIC EVENTS **NEW ACROPOLIS INDIA**

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Webinar

6:00 - 7:15 pm

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COULD'VE, WOULD'VE, SHOULD'VE... TURNING INTENTION INTO ACTION

In the rush of day-to-day actions, we often lose sight of our dreams and goals, ending up being driven by circumstances or decisions of others. Join us as we explore how we can direct our lives with more authenticity and purpose.

**Sat
17 Jul**

Interactive
Talk

6:00 - 7:15 pm

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THE MIND: OUR BEST FRIEND OR WORST ENEMY?

Many of our thoughts may not be helpful to us – some, in fact, could become the very roadblocks that we struggle to overcome. And yet, when used in a more productive way, the mind can be a potent force. How do we turn this powerful tool into an ally? Let's explore at this free talk.

Number of participants limited to allow for an interactive session, registration will be on first-come-first-serve basis. Please attend with your video on, to enable a meaningful discussion.

**Sat
7 Aug**

Panel
Discussion

6:00 - 7:15 pm

[Register Here](#)



ABOVE ALL BE GOOD: A STOIC GUIDE TO A MEANINGFUL LIFE

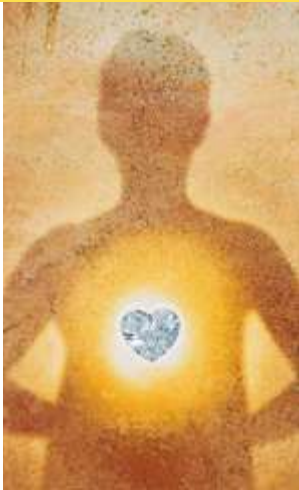
The Stoic philosophers were known for their ability to remain serene and choose wisely, despite their circumstances. Join us in a panel discussion as we explore practical lessons from the Stoics, to learn how we can live with more meaning and clarity in our uncertain times today.

PUBLIC EVENTS **NEW ACROPOLIS INDIA**

**Sat
21 Aug**

Webinar
6:00 - 7:15 pm

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THE DIAMOND PATH TO TRANSFORMING THE HEART

The diamond is a universal symbol of purity, clarity, durability and perfection. According to some traditions, it is associated with the energy of the Sun, and also represents the human possibility of transformation and evolution. Similarly, the Heart symbolises a centre of transformation, a means to connect with life's Wisdom through one's own effort. Both these symbols therefore represent a path for human development. In this talk, the Director of New Acropolis India will explore how these two symbols can offer powerful aid to the adventurer and seeker of Truth.

An Inspired Life: Event Series

This event series draws inspiration from the life of individuals who have positively impacted human history, to discover how can we live with more courage, clarity and wonder in our times today.

**Sat
4 Sept**

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6:00 - 7:15 pm

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WHAT YOU SEEK IS SEEKING YOU: CELEBRATING RUMI

Artist, mystic, lover, Rumi's poetry has touched the hearts of people across time and geography. What can we learn from Rumi's life and words, that can allow us to live with more meaning and courage in our times today?

**Sat
25 Sept**

Webinar
6:00 - 7:15 pm

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SOCRATES: A LIFE OF TRUTH AND COURAGE

It was Socrates' uncompromising dedication to standing for Truth, even at the cost of his own life, that allowed his simple and clear teachings to continue to influence us even today. What can Socrates teach us about living fearlessly and authentically in the face of our own challenges?

PUBLIC EVENTS **NEW ACROPOLIS PUNE**

**Sat
3 Jul**

Online Event
6:00 - 7:15 pm

Register Here



THE HERCULES WITHIN ME

Half man-half god, this hero of Ancient Greece is said to represent the archetype of the human being, having fulfilled his purpose by overcoming challenges. Perhaps the story of his trials is a window into the glorious potential of each one of us today.

**Sat
14 Aug**

Online Event
6:00 - 7:15 pm

Register Here



KARMA, DESTINY AND FREE WILL

"Life is like a game of cards. The hand you are dealt is determinism; the way you play it is free will." – Jawaharlal Nehru.

Are we ultimately bound by Destiny? Or are we entirely free? This question has preoccupied human beings since ancient times, but is arguably one of the most misunderstood philosophical subjects. Join us as we investigate these laws of life, and extract their relevance to daily life.

**Sat
25 Aug**

Online Event
7:30 - 8:45 pm

Register Here



DARING TO CHOOSE

Our choices determine how happy or satisfied we are in our life. How do we make truly meaningful choices in life? Join us as we explore how daring to choose can be a secret to true freedom!

PUBLIC EVENTS **NEW ACROPOLIS PUNE**

**Sat
11 Sept**

Online Event
6:00 - 7:15 pm

[Register Here](#)



By Henning Westerkamp / Pixabay

BUILDING UNITY THROUGH UBUNTU

Ubuntu is a Zulu word that literally translates to "I am because we are". It speaks of an interconnected web of life in which we have a humble yet integral role, as humans. How can we ensure that our individual actions make a positive impact to the whole?

**Sat
18 Sept**

Online Event
6:00 - 7:15 pm

[Register Here](#)



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THE POWER OF PERSEVERANCE

When things start falling apart, we tend to give up. Anyone who has ever succeeded to bring a positive change has done so in spite of multiple failures. What could enable us to dust ourselves up and jump back and persevere to make progress? Join us as we explore some practical tools.



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*"Music has
taught and made
me, it is a prayer
for me; Sacred."*

REKHA BHARADWAJ
Indian Classical Singer

"Sacred Geometry, is our way of accessing divine knowledge in a scientific and rational way, a way to understand nature, and the divine code."

ADAM WILLIAMSON
Sculptor, Geometer, Calligrapher



MUSIC AND I

By Kurush Dordi



Today we live in a world dominated by thousands of music streaming apps catering to a variety of genres. Although Pop, Rock, Jazz, Hip hop, and Electronic Dance Music are all popular, for me Western Classical Music is the shining jewel of the treasure box. It has its own language, awakens emotions, and rehabilitates me when times are not so easy. But what I think makes it stand out is that it touches my soul and allows me to glimpse ideals and virtues that I may not ordinarily experience in my life: sentiments such as indomitable bravery, extraordinary heroism, or deep compassion. Listening to a piano sonata is often enough for me to find revitalising energy, inspiration, and comfort.

I believe that classical music transcends the language of words and affects the inner Self, to help us transform ourselves. It allows us to bring out our best from deep within. To me classical music allows me to anchor myself, and is my way of regaining my centre. I use it at certain times of the day to inspire me, to break free from the stress of work, or the monotony of routine. When I need to concentrate, for example, the rising melodies of Mozart's Concerto No 23 push me to focus. Within classical pieces of music are embedded moments of beauty, idealism, and power that we can tune into if we engage with it more actively, listening not only with our ears, but with our hearts.

Qualities such as tension, suspense, and climatic buildup can usually be recognized in the way the sounds and notes are combined to produce the mechanics of the music – melody, pitch, volume, etc. What is possible to experience in addition, is largely metaphysical. It is when we start *feeling* the life in the music, when we correlate to the expression that the composer is trying to project through a piece, that we naturally develop a sympathy or resonance with it. In a music hall many a perceptive listener has therefore been moved to tears over a violinist performing a solo rendition. This expressiveness, a high emotion or sentiment, is one of the key directions the conductor provides the orchestra through his hands and body language.



The Conductor

Many professional orchestras comprise highly accomplished and celebrated musicians. We may ask therefore, if they really need a Conductor at all. Perhaps the answer to this question can be found in the mysterious relationship between a Master and Disciple.

Tradition suggests that every Disciple needs a Master. While the Disciple may conquer certain virtues through discipline, the Master helps orient the disciple to walk in the right direction, with the correct use of those virtues, to discover the magic of the Path. Similarly, the role of any great conductor is to help the orchestra deliver rich, full, sumptuous, well blended sound by directing the manner in which each musician's skill is manifested.

This brings us to the parallels between music and our own lives. As conductors of our own lives, we are responsible for leading and orchestrating our own responsibilities, priorities, dreams and duties.

Order

Many traditions describe the human being as a complex structure constituted of various tools, or instruments, including the physical body, the energetic body, an emotional plane, the mental, and others more subtle. Each of these instruments has a voice, each has its needs, and each a role which is distinctive, serving a specific purpose, contributing to the music of our lives.

Each element without the conductor becomes a rogue musician who forgets he is part of a whole, playing his own tune, not caring whether the volume is appropriate or the tone is as intended, creating disorder, and discord. Just as a conductor, therefore, we too are responsible to bring order to our own lives, harmonizing the various elements, and directing them toward an archetype, without which our lives too would be reduced to cacophony. It is perhaps no coincidence that many ancient traditions depict divine figures with a musical instrument, perhaps to symbolise mastery over these instruments as a divine quality.

Rhythm allows movement, allows endurance, and allows for a sustainable tension despite the high and low notes in life.

Rhythm

Musically speaking, Rhythm is a pattern of regular or irregular pulses in music. Without a good sense of rhythm even a good musician can get lost and quickly go out of sync with the rest of the orchestra. The right stroke on the humble triangle can make it stand out in an orchestra of over a hundred musicians, and a drum maestro will know exactly when to unleash his power and when to lower intensity. This is applicable to our lives too; whether it is the rhythm of the day and night, or the seasons, or any of the various other rhythms we might observe around us, it is essential that we are in sync. Rhythm allows movement, allows endurance, and allows for a sustainable tension despite the high and low notes in life. Rhythm can change, to adjust to the changes in circumstance, but the need for continuous rhythm always remains.

Sentiment

Any piece of music evokes a message, a sentiment, that the composer was trying to convey. One such example is Beethoven's famous 3rd Symphony simply called *Eroica* or *Heroism*. Originally this piece was dedicated to Napoleon in admiration for his anti-monarchical sentiments after the French Revolution, and it has the power to elevate and inspire the listener. Our lives too can be led to evoke sentiments; courage in the face of challenges, or compassion in the face of injustice. The attitude with which we face the circumstances of life can be driven by these timeless sentiments. Is it not after all that most of us derive inspiration from the manner in which great heroes live their own lives?

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Tension

Another important concept relevant to the correct harmonization of the above components is the need for each instrument to be tuned correctly. In the case of string instruments for example, the right tension is key to produce a pure note. Too tight and the strings would snap, too loose and there will be no music. A master violinist may have a million dollar Stradivarius, but unless the tuning pegs calibrate the strings to perfect pitch, it will not perform.

Like a musical score produced and written with meticulous perseverance, we too must create a plan that synchronises our own internal orchestra towards a finality, a real purpose. Like music, it will demand discipline, commitment, and steadfastness in order to be perfected, just as silver needs constant polishing to keep it shining.

Every musician no matter how brilliant in his own right, is never content with his own performance; he always seeks to improve and become better, not only for himself, but so that the entire orchestra can reach its highest potential. We too can strive every day to stretch ourselves just a bit more, to discover the unfamiliar, and dare the untried, to reveal new heights of our own potentials. Just as the tiny triangle can make the most flawless and distinctive contribution to a complex symphony, each of us can bring our own unique area of strength to contribute to the music of life. The conductor may have a baton at his disposal to guide the orchestra, but most important is the intention to bring the music to life. We must realise that the music we create of our own life, is but one score of music, that must work harmoniously with all of nature to deliver the symphony we call Life. ∞

Classical music allows me to anchor myself, and is my way of regaining my centre. I use it at certain times of the day to inspire me, to break free from the stress of work, or the monotony of routine.

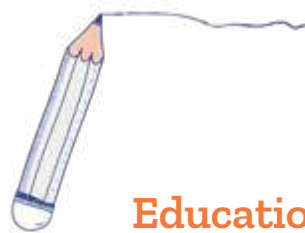


A PARENT'S SEARCH FOR NEW EDUCATION

By Riddhi Patel

What is it about a musician or a doctor that makes him more than a simple technician, one that has developed an expert ability to discharge a particular skill? Beyond the mechanics of these professions, we may find a sincere pursuit of something higher; values such as Beauty, Harmony and Goodness. This came to light for me when I started looking for schools for my children; it was clear for me that practical experience and confidence in these values superseded everything else. I realized also, that education is a key component in *every* aspect of a child's life. At home, with the family, the child learns by way of example set by the adults. Additionally, it was important for me that my children learn from the vastness of nature, that they are not the centre of the world; that instead they are themselves an integral part of nature. It was important for me that they arrive at the question of their own role in the diverse and beautiful orchestra of life. What then was to be the role of the school I selected as they came of age?

Interestingly, such a philosophical orientation as an axis of education is an age-old tradition. In the ancient Gurukuls, for example, students would live under a master's guidance, to cultivate a holistic way of life beyond just skill building. Today, however, it seems that the academic system offered in most schools serves primarily to prepare a child for a successful career, to make money, as the prime priority. For me, many of the challenges of our world today are a result of this materialistic premise. Therefore there was a need for me to find a way to include a philosophical perspective early in my children's life, without which I was concerned that they may not learn how to be good human beings, driven by human values.



Education can be more personalized, creative and fun, keeping the child's needs in mind. Ultimately, it must cultivate an attitude of curiosity, awaken a love for learning, and the courage to dare to unravel the mysteries of life independently.



In my observation, children are very intuitive. It is due to conditioning and external pressure that many don't ever have the chance to bring out their true nature. If given a chance and left alone to explore on their own, I have observed that they learn a lot from nature and this learning stays with them, as it comes out of their own realization from a personal investigation and connection with the world. It is as if we just need to stop interfering with too many instructions and expectations; let their own curiosity and creativity flow.

Unfortunately today children are often driven by the insecurity and anxiety of their parents to get a seat in a reputed school, or to be better than another kid, etc. This forces them to attend various classes robbing the child of time and space to absorb and assimilate the knowledge s/he receives, to reflect on it, practically apply, experiment and connect it to his own life.

To determine the role of a school then, let us start with the investigation of the root of the word 'education', which comes from the Latin word *educere*, which literally means *to bring out from within*. This implies that instead of molding from the outside by gathering endless amounts of information, we need to shed the unnecessary for the potential to come out. And so, I expected a school to be able to pay attention to the need and potential of each child. Different age groups have different needs as per the natural development of a child. In addition, some might have an affinity towards the arts, while others towards building or engineering. A school must allow the child to explore his own gifts, and also challenge those faculties that perhaps require more effort. For example, if a child is very good at math and struggling with music, then the teacher

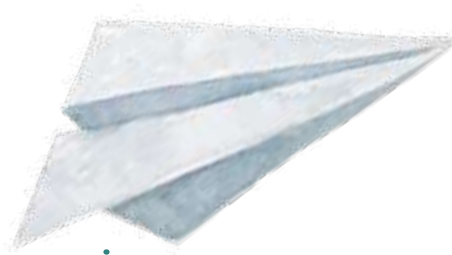


A school must allow the child to explore his own gifts, and also challenge those faculties that perhaps require more effort.

could bring math into the music lesson by way of counting the claps and setting the rhythm in such a way that the child ends up loving music because of the math in it, thereby bridging the gap between seemingly different subjects for a single holistic education. In this way, education can be more personalized, creative and fun, keeping the child's needs in mind. Ultimately, it must cultivate an attitude of curiosity, awaken a love for learning, and the courage to dare to unravel the mysteries of life independently.

I don't believe that this can be achieved if the pressure of examinations and the fear of competition are the driving forces in the classroom. Instead, we must foster competition only with oneself, to drive each one to be better than he/she was yesterday and enrich the education by way of cultivating human values. It is my hope that my children will enter the world equipped with self-confidence based on the discovery of their own inner strengths. It is clear that the future is going to remain uncertain; it is important that they are not trained only for specific professions, but are able to adapt to whatever the circumstances may demand with humility and grace. ∞∞

Instead of molding from the outside by gathering endless amounts of information, we need to shed the unnecessary for the potential to come out.



NEWS SPOTLIGHT

● Free Webinars



Finding Stability within Change (May 2021)

The session explored the challenge of maintaining stability in the face of ever changing circumstances. The lecturer suggested an introspection to the root of instability, factors that cause us to resist internal change and in turn make it difficult to adapt to change.

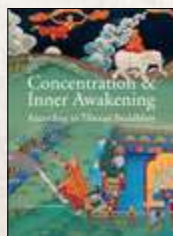
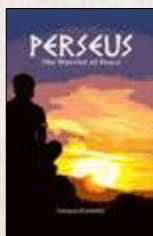
The speaker shared suggestions on how to strengthen our inner identity, prioritizing human values over societal roles and pursuing the path of wisdom.

Art of Concentration (May 2021)

This presentation highlighted the important role of concentration as described in Tibetan Buddhism, as a tool to fight the impulsive and scattered nature of our times, in order to bring more focus and depth to life.

Book Discussion Series: Let's Live

In this series of book discussions, a specially curated selection of books became the backdrop to explore various philosophical principles that might help us live more meaningful lives. Subjects included mastery over oneself through the art of concentration, heroism in navigating day-to-day battles, and virtues such as Goodness as an approach to daily life, as emphasised by the Stoics.



● Philosophy ● Culture ● Volunteering

● Sacred Geometry – Understanding Nature's Language (Mar 2021)

New Acropolis Culture Circle hosted calligrapher, geometer and stone/wood carver, Adam Williamsons for an exploration of patterns found in art, architecture and nature, as a means to understand nature in a deeper way.



● Exploring Music; East and West (Apr 2021)



As part of an ongoing investigation of culture, New Acropolis Culture Circle hosted two evenings of music online. Together with western classical piano performances, Prof. Fali Pavri of Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, explored parallels between music and Life. At another occasion, singer Radhika Sood Nayak mesmerized with her renditions of a repertoire comprising Punjabi sufi masters such as Hazratbal Sultan Bahu and Bulleh Shah. Through song, she explored the human search to re-unite with the Divine.

● Earth Day 2021 (Apr 2021)

Despite the lockdown in Mumbai, member volunteers marked Earth Day 2021 by hosting an online Home Ecology Seminar attended by over 70 participants. The talk offered practical steps that each one can take at home, to bring about small, but essential change. Themes included garbage management and segregation, home composting, and economical water consumption. The speakers suggested that only when we are able to see ourselves as an integral part of nature, will we recognise our role and fulfil our responsibility within Earth's ecosystem.

New Acropolis branches around the world marked Earth Day 2021. A snapshot of activities:



Online seminar on bringing small changes in our homes - composting, garbage management and water consumption tips. (India)



Building a community garden. (Seoul, South Korea)



Ecological pond to support local wildlife. (Melbourne, Australia)



Nature trails and cleaning of Horshim forest. (Rishon Lezion, Israel)



Hydro-morphological and physio-chemical inspection to track river health. (Barcelona, Spain)



Hydro-morphological and physio-chemical inspection to track river health. (Barcelona, Spain)

● A Plateful of Love (May 2021)

Members and Volunteers signed up to make free, nutritious, home cooked meals, to assist and support homes in which family members are impacted by Covid19. 700 meals have been delivered to 110 individuals across Mumbai.



thank YOU VOLUNTEERS & DONORS

A PLATEFUL OF LOVE

We could serve many platefuls of love with your support and help.

- 700 Meals served to 110 Individuals
- 67 Volunteers & Donors involved

We pause this initiative as Mumbai breathes easy

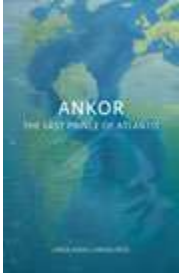
AN INITIATIVE BY NEW ACROPOLIS



PRESENTING NEW EDITIONS OF BOOKS

by **Prof. Jorge Angel Livraga Rizzi**

Founder of International Organization New Acropolis



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A young chemist, Pablo Simón, a member of a Hermetic Lodge of Catholics, is working in obscurity with the brotherhood, to preserve the wisdom of the ages. Being forced to flee his town to escape from the Holy Office, sets him off on a journey. Read his story, as he follows his destiny and continues in the footsteps of his master Giordano Bruno and so many other philosophers of the 16th century, victims of the ignorance and fanaticism of their age.

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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.



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.



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.



VOLUNTEERING



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