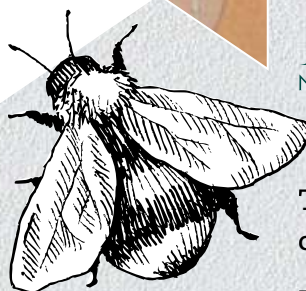
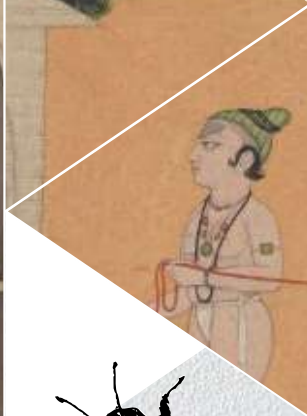


A Magazine on Philosophy, Culture & Volunteering

# THE ACROPOLITAN

JUL  
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**NA**  
NEW ACROPOLIS

The Gurukul Tradition  
of Ancient India

The Role of  
Shakespearean  
Tragedies in Society

**FEATURE**

Bee-ing Human

The Art of Losing







# FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Reader,

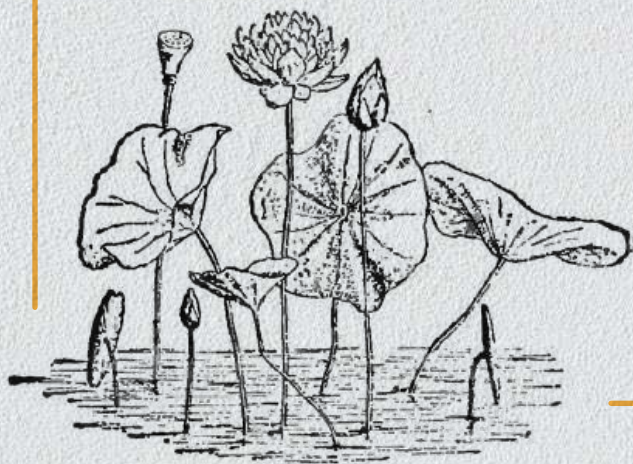
Today, while we may seem to be connected to the whole world through internet and social media, we perhaps live more isolated than ever before from life, nature, and even each other. In the consequent uncertainty, often we let our lives pass by, ignoring a nagging sense of discontent. Even worse, we rush to fill the void with the pursuit of more fleeting material goals. Some of us may wonder though, if there is more to life.

If we look to nature, we will see that everything, even a small bee, has a role to play in the web of life. It follows that we too, as an integral part of this nature, would have a purpose, a role. Unlike the bees though, we have a choice. We can keep drifting along with our circumstances, or we can seek our *swadharma*, and give a meaningful direction to our life. Mythologies across different traditions have alluded to such an internal conflict within the human being that we must engage in.

Education too, traditionally, was the means to prepare us for this, to bring forth the potential within us, to develop the human being to become capable of perceiving more of the Truth, of Life. Therefore, to do justice to the opportunity we have had to be born as a human being, we need to take purposeful steps, to find our place in life.

To truly experience the human existence, we must dare...to Discover, Awaken, Transform.

**Malini Nair**  
Editor





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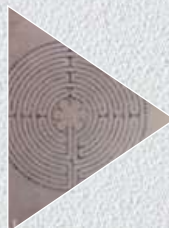


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# THE GURUKUL TRADITION OF ANCIENT INDIA



By Manjula Nanavati





Indian philosophy holds that the universe is not confined to what is apparent to our sense perceptions, and that the Ultimate Reality is veiled from us, by a curtain that maroons us in ignorance and illusion. Accordingly, the main purpose of education in ancient India was to pierce this curtain in order to experience the realization of what lies beyond what the mind infers through the physical sense organs, and to develop the mind to become a suitable channel to aid, rather than hinder, this process.

Learning was therefore, a sacred duty, prized and pursued not as an accumulation of theoretical knowledge, but as a means of self-realization.

One of the platforms through which this unique concept of education was disseminated was through the ancient Indian Gurukul tradition. The term *Gurukul* comes from *Guru*, meaning teacher and *kul*, meaning extended family or home. All pupils left their parental home and were assimilated into the Guru's household for the entire duration of their schooling. The commencement of this crucial phase in a child's life was sanctified by a ceremony at the age of about 8, signifying a new birth. From that moment on, the *Guru* took complete responsibility for the pupil who was known as *Dvija*, or twice-born.

***Learning was therefore, a sacred duty, prized and pursued not as an accumulation of theoretical knowledge, but as a means of self-realization.***

The Guru determined the course of study and its schedule of delivery, from a diverse and comprehensive curriculum: the knowledge of the 4 Vedas and Upanishads, Mathematics, Economics, Astrology, Language and Grammar, Dialectics, Theology, Politics, Military Science, Fine Arts, Medicine, Yoga, Martial arts, Archery.<sup>(1)</sup> In addition, where appropriate, vocational skills were taught and apprenticeships undertaken. The emphasis was always on helping each student evolve the strengths that would sustain him through the challenges of life, whether hardship or kingship, and each student progressed at his own pace as assessed by the Guru. Continued acceptance depended on the



pupil demonstrating steadfast discipline, unimpeachable conduct and irreproachable moral strength. No fees were exchanged, nor was there a specified duration of study. Instead, when the Guru indicated that the student was ready to leave, a gift of homage was customarily offered as *Guru dakshina*.

Integral to this structure was the active part students were expected to take in the chores that supported the hermitage. The first duty of the day was to collect firewood to keep the sacred fire burning, symbolic of enkindling the mind. It was quite customary for a pupil seeking acceptance to approach the Guru with a bundle of firewood in his arms, signifying his willingness and allegiance. Other assignments included common domestic tasks, always designed to purify the ego and promote self-reliance. These hermitages were often secluded deep in the midst of nature, where the sylvan solitude encouraged the flowering of a connection between Man and the Earth. Class routines and tasks coincided with the cycles of nature emphasizing the idea of man as an intricate part of the web of life. (2)

***Even up to the 8th century AD it was considered sacrilege to reduce the Vedas to writing, for education was not recognized as merely the ability to read, write and understand, but something to be realized and assimilated as an organic part of oneself.***

The Guru imparted not only his knowledge but his values, ethics and the way of life. This close and intimate relationship built between Guru and *shishya* became a sacred bond and a vital hallmark of Gurukul education, enabling the student to imbibe intangible elements too subtle to be articulated: the teacher's deep-rooted attitudes, his innate intentions, the essence of his methods and the spirit of his life and work.

Because the heart of this system was the teacher, pupils belonged not to the abstraction of an institution, but to the Guru, who was accorded worshipful respect, as exemplified in the epics, literature, and poetry. Many shlokas of the Vedas deified the teacher, as *Acharya Devo Bhava (Taittiriya Upanishad)*,



acknowledging them as living repositories of preserved knowledge, tradition, culture, and insight.

***Education then was the training of controlling the mind, so as to be able to dive deep into the depths of our inner awareness, while remaining unaffected by the allure or aversions of the illusive, material world. It was a source of illumination.***

For thousands of years this legacy was transmitted through the oral tradition, in the *Guruparampara* system of a succession of pupils and teachers forming an unbroken chain through the generations. Even up to the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD it was considered sacrilege to reduce the Vedas to writing, for education was not recognized as merely the ability to read, write and understand, but something to be realized and assimilated as an organic part of oneself. Accordingly, the Gurukuls employed a unique method of teaching that, as mentioned in the Upanishads, consisted of 3 steps. (1)

**SRAVANA** was the process of listening to the words of the teacher. The medium of the Vedas was the sutra a condensed sentence or verse, compressed with meaning and open to interpretation. Additionally, it was considered that sound itself carried power, so that the sound and rhythm of the verse, and the ensuing vibration, carried potency and meaning to be directly internalized.

**MANANA**, the next step, was a process of deliberation and reflection on the subject, comprising discussion, debate and arguments as a





big part of the process. However, this would merely result in intellectual understanding and reasoned conviction. Only the third step could complete the process required for true learning.

**NIDIDHYANASANA** is the realization of the Truth through meditation. The Upanishads describe preliminary exercises for training in contemplation called *Upasanas*, which if practised rigorously would lead to the "consciousness of the One, undisturbed by the slightest consciousness of the many". (1)

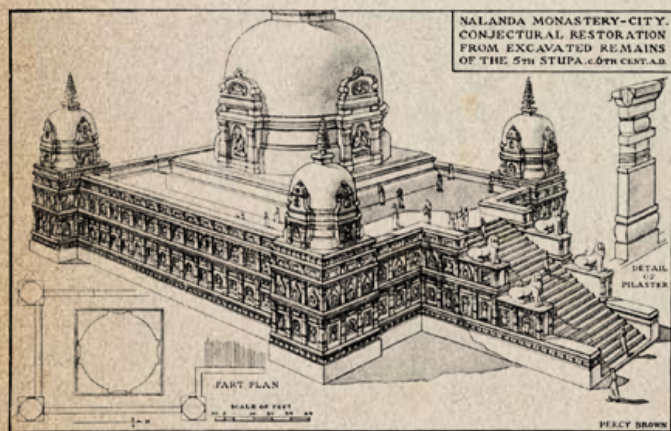
*These hermitages were often secluded deep in the midst of nature, where the sylvan solitude encouraged the flowering of a connection between Man and the Earth. Class routines and tasks coincided with the cycles of nature emphasizing the idea of man as an intricate part of the web of life.*

With this as the foremost objective, the study of the subjects became but different vehicles for perceiving the truth. Its focus was on the principle of knowing, rather than knowledge; of perceiving the truth, rather than mere logical understanding of it, and its method was Yoga: "the art and science of the construction of the self through discipline and meditation."(1)

Education then was the training of controlling the mind, so as to be able to dive deep into the depths of our inner awareness,

while remaining unaffected by the allure or aversions of the illusive, material world. It was a source of illumination.

The Gurukul system slowly became firmly entrenched all over India due to the support provided by the kingdom, in accordance with ancient practise. Thus upkeep, the feeding and clothing of pupils,





and the Guru's requirements were all adequately commissioned, ensuring that even families with very little means were able to send their children to a Gurukul. This vibrant tradition continued to flourish even alongside India's widely celebrated and prestigious universities of higher learning. Takshila founded in 1000 BCE, and Nalanda founded in 500 AD, amongst many others, attracted scholars from all over the world, who braved the dangers of arduous travel, for the privilege of studying under highly revered teachers and sages of the time.

***Continued acceptance depended on the pupil demonstrating steadfast discipline, unimpeachable conduct and irreproachable moral strength.***

By 1830 when the British commissioned its collectors to collate data on the number and type of education offered through the subcontinent, Thomas Munro reported that "there were 1,00,000 village schools in Bengal and Bihar alone. The epics, reading, writing, arithmetic and more were being taught".<sup>(2)</sup> Surveyor William Adams has written that "he could not recollect studying in his village school in Scotland anything that had more direct bearing upon daily life than what was taught in the humbler village schools of Bengal."<sup>(2)</sup> These reports spoke of dedicated teachers, a method of imparting knowledge without violence, and high attendance all round.


However, with the Colonial patronage of the founding of schools expressly to provide a western education to a cadre of Indian clerks required to run the British bureaucracy, and the withdrawal of the grants that supported indigenous education, this unique vernacular legacy began to slowly disintegrate.<sup>(3)</sup>

Today, in most institutions of academic excellence all over the world, the terms **holistic education, experiential learning, student-centric instruction and transformational education** are thrust forward as modern





and progressive methods. But these very concepts were already the heart of the Gurukul system that took root in India around 5000 BCE. Unfortunately, however, in a consumerist society, education runs the risk of becoming a product, with coaching class 'gurus' selling a service for a fee, to stressed students and their anxious and often overburdened parents. It is evident that the role of a teacher as a lamplighter of Truth has been devalued, and many reputed schools and colleges are seen as primarily hunting-grounds for human resources to feed international corporate empires.

Is there a balance to be found between these two contrasting ideologies that might be better suited for our future? Dare we imagine an innovative and open-minded approach? I suggest that we must... for a society that loses its teachers, loses itself. If the core purpose of education must once more be oriented toward discovering the true meaning of being human, perhaps pupils at all scholarly institutions today, and society at large, would have much to gain from a hybrid system that could combine modern infrastructure and technological teaching aids, with some of the age old principles of the venerable Gurukul tradition: one that upheld the value of forging an ethical life above worldly success, strengthened the sacred connection between man and nature, instilled the value of the preservation of a cultural heritage, and encouraged the blossoming of a spiritual awareness, that helped to lift the veil, to experience glimpses of the eternal, infinite Truth. 

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# BEE-ING HUMAN

By Sangeeta Iyer





*"If the bee disappeared off the face of the Earth,  
man would only have four years left to live."*

This startling revelation often attributed to the physicist and Nobel laureate, Albert Einstein <sup>(1)</sup>, although it has been hotly debated<sup>(2)</sup>, opens our eyes to how essential bees are – as, perhaps, is each and every species – in the delicate balance of interdependent life. The above statement is said to have been made in the context of 'colony collapse disorder (CCD)', a mysterious disease that swept across the US and European honeybee hives.<sup>(1)</sup> Realizing how important bees are to our very existence, let us dive deeper into what makes them so special.

### Diversity and heritage

Broadly, there are seven families of bees (it appears that seven is a key number, which echoes in the colours of the rainbow, notes of music, days of the week, and so on) – each with many thousands of species under their banner.

The genus *Apis* or honeybees themselves include seven species. They are eusocial, meaning that each colony consists of one reproductive female bee and thousands of worker bees. Honey is not just sweet in taste, it has medicinal properties, too. Ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans had ways of harvesting honey and storing it in sealed containers, since honey is possibly the only food that doesn't spoil. The oldest honey ever found was still edible after 5,000 years.<sup>(3)</sup>

The diversity of bees is similar to that of humans in a way – we, too, are made up of various





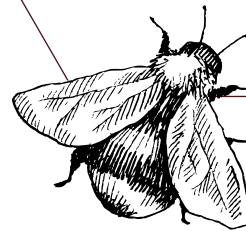
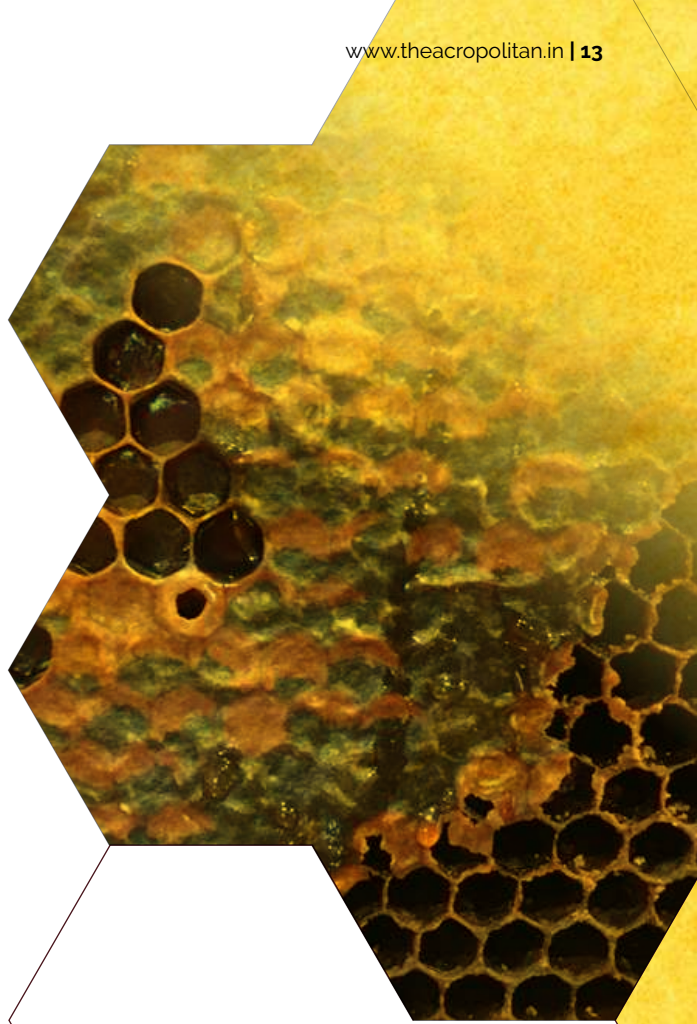
racess. Yet, while we may harp on the differences between us – of race, religion, social status, community, gender, even the football team that we support – at the end of the day, we're all humans. Therefore, in terms of the evolution of our species, perhaps we are all heading in the same direction even if we don't realize it. A common purpose, perhaps; something that drives us towards peeling off layer after layer of who we are *not*, to reveal the shining diamond of who we are, deep within our souls.

## Adapting and evolving

Bees have adapted and evolved over millions of years. Researchers know this from the fossilized specimens of bees that have been preserved in the resin of trees or are now formed into semi-precious gemstones. One such bee specimen has been found fossilized in a 100-million-year-old piece of amber from Myanmar.<sup>(4)</sup>

Since most life-forms appear to have evolved over time, it shows us that no form is final, however perfect it seems; there is always room for improvement. We are all a work in progress. As humans, we've come a long way, but perhaps there is still a long way to go – and why not look forward to the adventure? It means that we can be a lot better than we are now!

However, not all adaptation is ideal, especially when brought about by circumstances enforced by man. If you've heard of the term 'killer bee', it refers to a species created by the transportation and intermingling of highly aggressive non-native bees from Africa, with European ones, in order to breed better honeybees. The European honeybees that had been selectively bred to be docile, soon



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adopted the characteristics of the African honeybees, which were far more aggressive, probably as a defense mechanism against predators. This experiment eventually backfired but the queen bees were accidentally released and spread to parts of South America and the USA. The Museum of the Earth states, "The story of "killer bees" shows the dramatic consequences of moving species around the world without considering the risks." I think we realize that Nature is a vast, intelligent and wonderful design – beyond grasp or description. But when man tampers with Nature and tries to manipulate it to his own advantage, errors occur – and we end up living with the consequences.

### Knowing their purpose

Perhaps the most common image in our minds is that of "busy bees" buzzing around, gathering nectar and making honey. But different kinds of bees have different purposes. Solitary bees (which form over 75% of the bee population) build nests which they defend, lay eggs in and raise their offspring alone. Sometimes, they die even before the offspring have emerged. This seems like such a graceful exit, having fulfilled one's role – and makes me realize how much we hold on to what is "mine"! With a fierce possessiveness, as if the people we love are going to be ours forever. If we could live with the grace of the solitary bee, we would be able to move on without clinging to what we consider our legacy. Having played our part in the chain of life, we can leave the rest to the others to take forward – passing the baton, knowing that there are others equally capable, if not more so, to continue the work we have begun.

## Nature is a vast, intelligent and wonderful design – beyond grasp or description.

Conversely, there are brood parasites who leave it to others to do all the work. They lay their eggs in others' nests, and when this parasite larva hatches, it aims to kill the host offspring and consume the pollen that was meant for them. A battle for survival ensues. What we can take from this, perhaps, is that





we need challenges to grow. Circumstances that seem difficult could be just the thing we need, to leap higher than the hurdle in front of us. Those whom we perceive as "difficult people" could be exactly the opponents that make us sharpen our swords and gear up for a battle and meet the "enemy" head-on.

Perhaps that is why evil exists at all, in the world. Seth challenged Osiris, and Osiris went on to become God of the underworld...Mara challenged the Buddha – and the Buddha awakened to powers beyond imagination. The Kauravas challenged the Pandavas. Deafness and blindness challenged Helen Keller. Foreign rule challenged Mahatma Gandhi. The list is endless. Each one drew to the full height of his or her spirit and became someone whom, unchallenged, they may never have blossomed into being.

Another interesting tidbit about bees, is that they follow a distinctive division of labour. In each nest, there is a hierarchy within which each one has a role – for instance, some are egg-layers, others are foragers. Each one's role has a dual purpose: to help them grow and to benefit the beehive. As Marcus Aurelius said: 'What is good for the beehive is good for the bee.' As a society of humans, when we are led by people geared to thinking of the greater good over their own personal interests, we are more likely to develop our inner potential to be good and just, inspired by them.

Among the bees, new colonies begin when a

single female constructs a nest and lays eggs in it. We, too, need someone to sow the seed and begin a new colony in a similar way. Our teachers. Leaders. Pioneers who forge new paths. Protected by such leaders, nourished by their experience, we are then inspired to fly and form a nest on the next tree where other humans are waiting to hatch into their purpose. To share forward what we have received, humbly, to the best of our ability, as an example of someone who can grow, being less influenced by external expectations and more driven by an inner aspiration to know who we really are and what our purpose is, in life. Knowing that in this vast fabric of time and space, what I choose to do today, can have an impact on future generations - and is therefore, a great responsibility that I bear, to choose correctly for the beehive that sustains all of us.

### Symbiotic give and take

Pollen is the primary source of protein for bees, and when they shake flowers with their feelers for the flower to release its pollen, it sticks to their bodies and they then carry this back to the nest. Sometimes, they also carry it in their 'honey stomach'. Bees also consume floral oils and suck nectar from flowers. Their mouths have evolved different shapes, based on which flowers they prefer.<sup>(5)</sup>



# No form of life simply takes; they all give as well.

However, this is not a one-way process of consumption. Bees are some of the greatest pollinators on the planet and are crucial for the survival of many crops. Fruits, vegetables, nuts, spices and coffee depend on bees to keep them thriving. Bees are even named based on the crops they pollinate, like squash bees, blueberry bees, alfalfa bees, apple bees and so on.

This principle of symbiosis in Nature is inspiring, indeed. No form of life simply takes; they all give as well. Trees take in sunlight and nourishment from the soil, and give us oxygen. Whales stir up oceans when they surface to breathe, in order to churn up marine life such that there is always enough for other species to feed on, at different depths of the ocean. The Sun gives us light and warmth endlessly, and holds the planets together in a loving embrace. As Hafiz eloquently said: 'The Sun never says to the earth 'you owe me.' Look what happens with a love like that – it lights up the whole sky.'

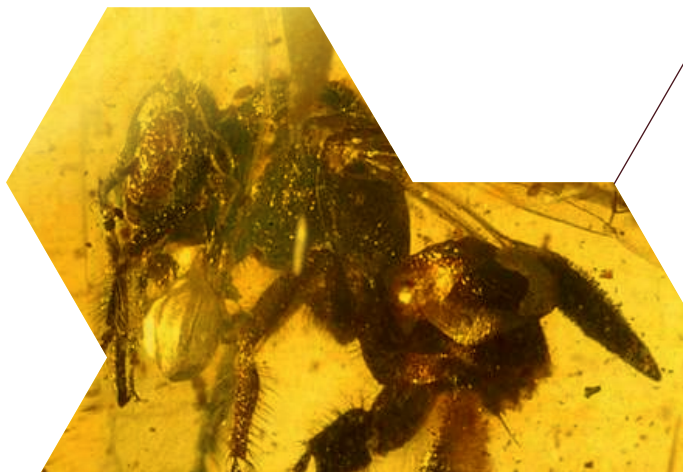
While every other species appears to have something to offer the rest of the ecosystem, what about us? What do we offer to this wonderful world that gives us so much? Perhaps the most significant thing we can do is to transmit across time, the gems of wisdom and principles of life to live by, that we have been privileged to discover.

Treasures of wisdom that give us an insight into who we are and what our purpose is, in this magnificent creation called Life.

## Preserving what is of value

While we do recognize the importance of each and every species – taking bees as an example – perhaps we are not yet adept enough at recognizing the value of preserving such treasures of Nature. Some of the greatest threats to the survival of bees as a species, are pesticides, long-distance transportation of bee colonies and the erosion of their natural habitat.<sup>(6)</sup> In other words, *man*.

Perhaps it is easier to find a solution to reduce further endangering of bees; 'build a wildflower garden', advises Museum of the Earth.<sup>(7)</sup> However, it may take us a lot more wisdom to find solutions to reduce the dangers to man's survival – not just in body, but more importantly, in spirit. To ensure that values survive selfish and separatist motives. To make religion stop dividing and start uniting people, as the etymology of the word, 'religare' implies was its original role. To ensure that education truly brings forth from within the wisdom that already exists in the nucleus of our being.







## Finding a way home

It is also interesting to see how bees build nests in a variety of places, using various kinds of materials. There are ground nesters that dig into the soil up to 10 feet deep. Wood and pith nesters, who make their homes in branches and stems. Carpenter bees specialize in nesting in the trim of houses, barns and sheds, while architect bees construct free-standing nests from resin, mud, stones, plant fibres and animal fur. Cavity nesters like honeybees and bumblebees, build nests in cavities in the hollows of trees or readymade abandoned rodent burrows. Thanks to man-made litter, bees now make their nests with plastic and straws as well.<sup>(8)</sup>

This shows us that perhaps we can be more eco-friendly in our approach to the building materials we choose for our homes. Tall glass towers that let in daylight also need continuous air-conditioning and leave a large carbon footprint in the bargain. Yes, more homes are turning to solar power for heating, but perhaps a lot more can be done, with conscious choice rather than following style trends by default, without any consideration to their impact on the environment.

Especially since a home means a lot to us – it is seen to be a safe and secure place in which to bring up our young, no matter what our species. And yet, as human beings, at some point, some of us realize that our material homes only house our bodies. Perhaps there is another home, a less material one, to which something within us longs to return to, someday.

The behaviour of bees seems to echo this search and return. When they set out to forage



for food, they need to be able to return to the right nest. To learn the way back home, they fly an "orientation flight"<sup>(8)</sup>, flying backwards facing the nest and zig-zagging, tracking every arc and loop as they do so and storing it in their memory. They also learn the nearest landmarks, to be able to re-locate their nest on return.

This to me is a sign of an inkling some of us have, that there is a true home that we belong to and yearn to return to...what Plato calls 'the reminiscence of the soul.' – Perhaps reminding us of the home traditions refer to as God or Divinity or the Source or Life. In order to be able to return to this, we will need to learn to navigate our way back. What can help us hugely are the road maps left by various philosophers across the ages, that show us the way back to our source. XXX

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# THE ROLE OF SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDIES IN SOCIETY

By Akanksha Sanghi





Today, we often think of theatre as merely a form of "entertainment" or "fiction", yet in many ancient traditions such as Greek, Indian, and Egyptian, theatre played a very important role in society. It was considered to be educational, even mystical, with the aim of allowing people to connect to some invisible, intangible principles of life – perhaps a glimpse into the mysteries of life. Theatre was embedded with life lessons, left up to the audience to unveil and extract – to learn from and apply practically to one's life. It was meant to be a tool to a higher purpose: to bring meaning and transformation into our lives.

Shakespeare's theatre continued to play this role in the Elizabethan era, and today, 400 years after his death, his plays form part of the Literature curriculum in many famous Academic institutions across the globe. Some of his famous works, translated in various languages, continue to be adapted, enacted and televised, perhaps indicating that they hold timeless values, principles and important lessons which are still relevant for society today.

Theatre was typically classified into 3 categories, namely Comedy, Drama & Tragedy. The word tragedy was derived from the Greek word *tragoidia*. *Tragedy* specifically played a very significant role in Greek theatre and continued to do so with Shakespeare. *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* to mention a few, are some of his famous tragedies. The aim of tragedy theatre was to so involve the audience in the story, that by personally touching each one, and allowing them not to feel alone, they would come to the realization that their pain and suffering is not unique to them, but in fact universal. It was a tool to understand the cause of the anguish, in ourselves, and each other, and therefore to begin the healing process in the search for the solution.

The narrative of the Tragedy was used to examine how suffering and pain is usually a factor of behaviour, choices, states of mind, and external circumstances that impact both oneself and others. Shakespeare, through his work, touches upon all the various, intricate aspects of human nature that we struggle to



# THEATRE WAS EMBEDDED WITH LIFE LESSONS, LEFT UP TO THE AUDIENCE TO UNVEIL AND EXTRACT TO LEARN FROM AND APPLY PRACTICALLY TO ONE'S LIFE.

understand and deal with – our uncontrolled emotions, our conflicting thoughts, our burgeoning egos and insecurities, and the need/dependency for approval of the society in which we live – some of the very reasons today for the disharmony, discord, struggle and strife that we see around us. Through his plays he, together with his audience, explored the depth and impact of some of the potent driving forces that shape human relationships: love, hate, jealousy, envy, greed, ambition, power and many more.

An analysis of Shakespeare's tragedies typically reveals some standard elements, a few of which we will speak about in this article.

**The Hero** - The central character is usually a tragic hero, whose choices or weaknesses lead to his downfall. All heroes possess some admirable and valiant qualities, such as bravery, compassion and integrity. But, a lapse in judgement, a moral failing or an overpowering flaw, however momentary, results in an action that has disastrous consequences. A classic example of this is one of Shakespeare's most famous plays, which has inspired many adaptations both in theatre and cinema, *Othello*. Othello is a great and respected general in Venice, yet being from North Africa he is also an outsider. He has married Desdemona in secret and without her father Brabantio's (the Venetian Senator's) consent.

Eventually, Othello kills his beloved wife and himself due to his own insecurities (that were triggered by Iago, an officer who was jealous of Othello and was plotting his downfall throughout) that lead him to falsely believe in her infidelity. He realised his grave misjudgement only after he had killed her.

Othello's deep-rooted insecurity as indicated in the lines below was ultimately the cause of the tragic end to what could have been a beautiful love story:

*"Rude am I in my speech,  
And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace:  
And little of this great world can I speak,  
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle...  
Haply, for I am black"*

While others on the contrary thought very highly of Othello:

*"The noblemen of Venice:  
...the warlike Moor Othello...  
...brave Othello..."*





The Hero in Shakespeare's plays is a good man, honest, and usually in a position to positively influence others – however, just like all of us, he is not perfect. He struggles with insecurities, flaws, difficult circumstances and so on. Perhaps it is the story of each one of us, and it is up to us to extract the practical and relevant lessons with a little personal reflection. Do we sometimes allow our doubts, insecurities, and other such emotions to get the better of us, to outshine the goodness, kindness and compassion that we all have, resulting in a negative impact not only in our own lives, but on those around us? Does this then have a cascading effect on our relationships, on those that we love, and on the life we choose for ourselves? Perhaps, through the examples of some of Shakespeare's heroes, we can learn to become more aware when we make choices, of what and who we allow to influence us. Can we learn to allow our inner compass, our virtues, to guide our decisions rather than the strong pull of the various voices that we all

have – the whirlwind of emotions, thoughts and opinions that often confuse us and divert us from what we know from within is true?

**Tragic Flaw** - A tragic flaw is a character trait that triggers the hero's defeat. The flaw is usually a limitation they possess, a strong tendency of the character that influences his decisions, often to make the wrong one, which ultimately leads to his downfall. For instance, the title character in *Macbeth* has the tragic flaw of unbridled ambition, which drives him to join forces with his power-hungry wife and attempts to murder the king. While in many instances, Macbeth has doubts and reservations about the murder – his ambitious nature and influence of his even more ambitious wife ultimately outweighs his reservations – leading to his own death.

In *Julius Caesar*, it is said that his arrogance was the tragic flaw that ultimately led to him being assassinated. While Julius Caesar was considered to be a great King, his flaw was that he thought he was invincible.

His famous lines indicate that he never listened to advice even from his well-wishers and eventually he ignores every sign of conspiracy that was presented to him.

*"I rather tell thee what is to be feared  
Than what I fear, for always I am Caesar.  
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,  
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him."*

It is perhaps referred to as "a tragic" flaw because, even though it is a trait that sometimes we are well aware of, we do not make the effort to work with it and overcome it. It is eventually the trait that holds us back, causing discord in our relationships and disharmony in our life. Perhaps, through the tragedies of *Macbeth* & *Julius Caesar*, we



can begin to recognize that these flaws are within us too and perhaps holding us back from our true potential. Perhaps we can learn to identify and accept our flaws accurately, because only then can we make the effort required to work on overcoming them, only then is there the possibility that we can course-correct, thus preventing us from making choices that may lead to unfavourable situations in our lives.

**Internal Conflict** - Internal conflict is one of the most essential elements in a Shakespearean tragedy. It refers to the confusion in the mind of the hero. The tragic hero always faces a critical/ethical dilemma. It perhaps urges us to contemplate on this question – do we really have a choice? We see that in Othello, had his trust and love for Desdemona been at the heart of his decision he would have likely made a different choice, thus leading to much more favourable consequences. Instead, in the moment of decision, his deep-rooted insecurities took over. Perhaps a lesson for all of us – when we are faced with ethical dilemmas, can we choose what we know is right/ true from within? When flooded with the influence of

emotions and confusion, can we pause and respond when we are calmer and stable again?

Similarly, could Julius Caesar have avoided his fate, had he chosen differently? If he chose to listen to the soothsayer's warning "Beware the ides of March" as well as the warnings from his well-wishers and wife. Instead, he thought that if he did not go, it would reflect his fear and weakness.

We see this reference to internal conflict in various mythologies as well, be it in the Indian tradition - Arjun's dilemma in the Mahabharata, the ancient Greek hero, Hercules or Gilgamesh – the ancient Mesopotamian Hero. Upon reflection, we can perhaps find that this inner conflict recurs constantly within us – the conflict between knowing what we need to do, and doing it. The conflict between doing what is true, good, right vs what is convenient, feels good and comfortable. The conflict of responding with kindness, compassion and empathy as against impatience, intolerance and anger. In general, in our daily choices, conflicts between our inner moral compass which is often subtle and not so easy to listen to, and the louder voices of our desires,

**DO WE SOMETIMES ALLOW OUR DOUBTS, INSECURITIES, AND OTHER SUCH EMOTIONS TO GET THE BETTER OF US, TO OUTSHINE THE GOODNESS, KINDNESS AND COMPASSION THAT WE ALL HAVE, RESULTING IN A NEGATIVE IMPACT NOT ONLY IN OUR OWN LIVES, BUT ON THOSE AROUND US?**



attachments and habits that pull us in various directions, often clouding our judgement.

What can we do in the face of these debilitating conflicts? Perhaps by watching the lives of his tragic heroes derail so completely, Shakespeare is exhorting us to not give into either the arrogance (Julius Caesar), the despair and insecurity (Othello) or the helplessness that allows others to make decisions for you (Macbeth). Perhaps we must recognize that an internal conflict is a clarion call to action, the action of looking deeply within to understand clearly the motor that is driving each end of the conflict and then to be able to choose always the path that leads towards the just action, the right action, without looking for reward.

We can therefore see that theatre, much like other art forms such as dance, music etc. have many layers of learnings, and it is up to the audience to extract for themselves what they can, according to their level of consciousness, and their needs and circumstances. We can

use theatre simply as a form of entertainment, or as something more, a tool for reflection and investigation, to bring about change within us, to extract some universal principles that could, in helping us make better choices, allow us to take a small step forward in our own evolution.

To investigate what we can relate to as we read or watch Shakespearean theatre – are we very different from the protagonists or can we find some similarities? Do we behave in the same way or are we able to see their mistakes and learn from them, so we make better choices in our own life?  $\triangle\triangle\triangle$

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 Literature Study Guides: <https://www.supersummary.com/>



**WHEN WE ARE FACED  
WITH ETHICAL DILEMMAS,  
CAN WE CHOOSE WHAT  
WE KNOW IS RIGHT/ TRUE  
FROM WITHIN?**

# NEWS SPOTLIGHT

► Philosophy ► Culture ► Volunteering

Here are some of the highlights of the various activities organized by New Acropolis across Mumbai and Pune, over March, April, and May.

## ► PHILOSOPHY

**The search for Wisdom and Truth**



Interactive talks around the theme of LIVE AUTHENTICALLY endeavored to demonstrate the importance of Concentration and Focus to bring stability into our lives (KNOW YOURSELF), as well as a sense of spirituality based on ancient timeless principles (EGYPT: THE SEARCH FOR MEANING).



Taking a cue from 3 of the most remarkable minds of our times, 2 events were hosted: A lively panel discussion (WAY OF THE HEART) centered around Buddha's Eight-fold Path and the Socratic Method of dialogue and introspection, investigated how these two great philosophers of the East and West respectively, can teach us how to live courageously and compassionately today, and an interactive presentation (LEONARDO DA VINCI) invited members to renew themselves in an Inner Rebirth inspired by one who epitomized the very Spirit of Renaissance.

## ► CULTURE

**Diverse expressions of timeless human values**

A heritage walk (DISCOVERING BANGANGA), organized by New Acropolis Culture Circle to learn about the history and myths surrounding the Banganga Water Tank and the Shiva Temple in Mumbai, highlighted the importance of the role that mythology can play in our lives.

Padma Bhushan Dr Farrokh Udwardia spoke to members (MY THOUGHTS ON MEDICINE) about how the arts, culture and other humanities could help provide a more holistic approach to the practice of Medicine.





In CELEBRATING BOOKS, some teachers & senior members of New Acropolis shared from books that have brought meaning to their lives. The diverse range of books selected, including Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice' and 'Macbeth', the poem 'Rashmi Rathi' by Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, one of India's national poets, 'Ankor, the last Prince of Atlantis' by Jorge Angel Livraga Rizzi, the founder and first president of the International Organisation New Acropolis, 'The Little Prince' by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, selected poems by Mary Oliver and 'Philosophy for Living' by Delia Steinberg Guzman, Honorary President of International Organisation New Acropolis.



## ► VOLUNTEERING

### To Be the Change

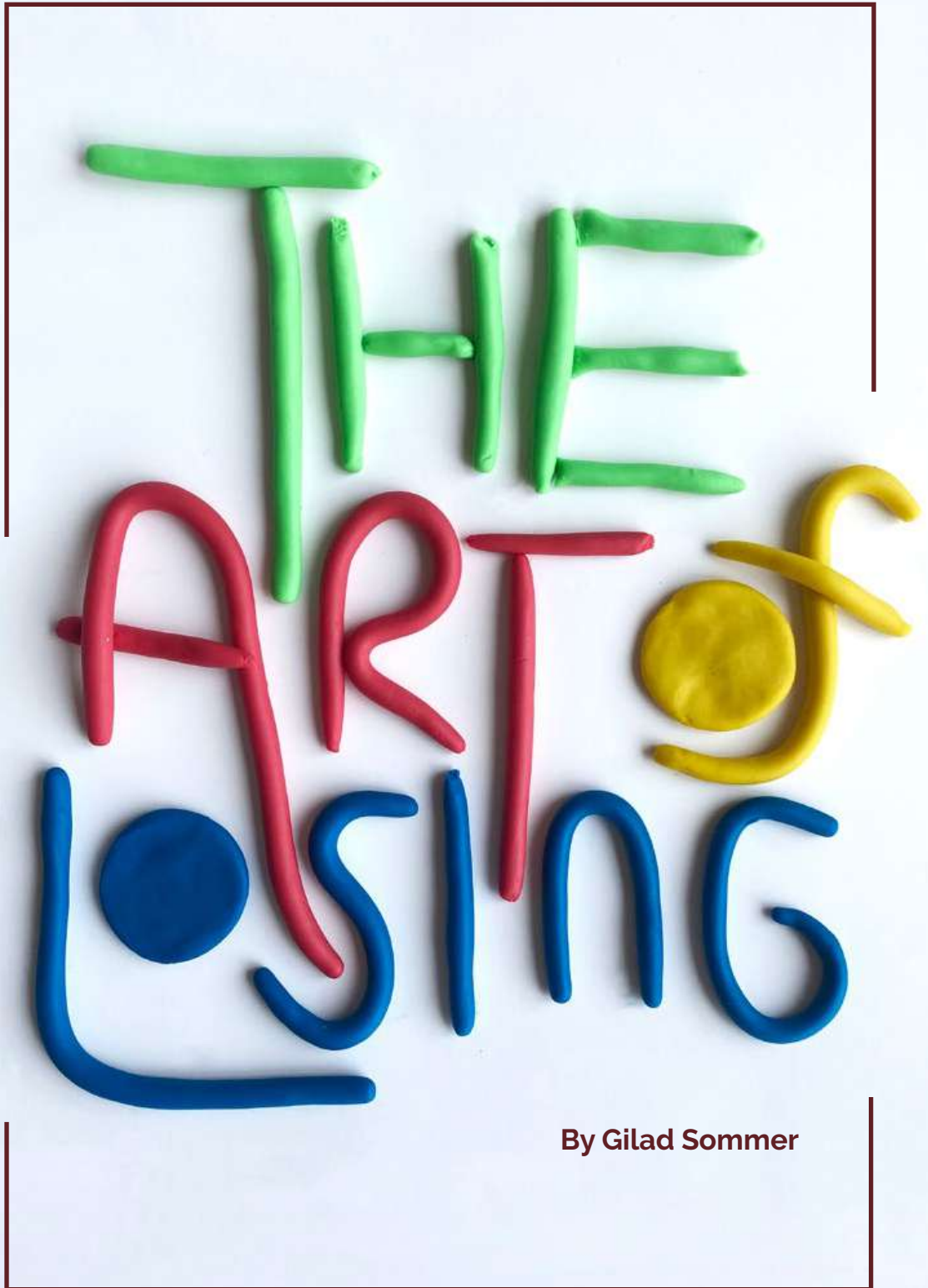
As part of an international series of celebrations hosted by New Acropolis in over 60 countries, to honour International Mother Earth Day members were invited to an overnight trip to Manav Bustan, an 11-acre center in the midst of nature where volunteers from both Mumbai and Pune participated in sapling planting, composting as well as learning about the role we can play to enhance the harmony between us and our planet. In conjunction with this, National Director New



Acropolis India (North), Yaron Barzilay, in an interactive talk (THE EARTH AND I) reminded us of the deeply interdependent and interconnected relationship between man and nature and how to meet the ensuing challenges.



To know more about activities or participate in our public events [click here](#).



By Gilad Sommer



*"Wherever you fly, you'll be best of the best.  
Wherever you go, you will top all the rest.  
Except when you don't.  
Because, sometimes, you won't."  
(Dr. Seuss, "Oh, the places you'll go")*

Everybody likes to be a winner;  
Nobody wants to be a loser.  
We all dream of ourselves conquering the trials of life,  
winning every game and competition, being the best of  
the best.

And yet, whatever field we may practice or dabble in, there  
is always going to be someone better than us – now or in the  
future –, there's always going to be a goal we cannot reach, a  
circumstance that topples us, at least temporarily.

We will all certainly go through experiences of losing – being  
passed over for a position, being rejected by a love interest,  
failing an exam, or simply losing a game.

Whether we want to accept it or not, losing is a part of life.

As philosophers, we can ask ourselves: if losing is a part of  
life, can it be so bad? Can we learn something from losing?  
And, is it possible to lose well?

In the history of our language, we find the phrase "poor loser",  
meaning, one who takes defeat with bad grace.

Interestingly, the term grace is also associated with being  
a good loser, as in a graceful or gracious loser. The word  
grace brings up the ideas of elegance and dignity. A gracious  
person is not ruffled by difficulties, has poise, and expresses  
humility. A good loser, then, is someone who takes their loss  
in a graceful way, with equanimity and humility.

**As philosophers,  
we can ask  
ourselves: if losing  
is a part of life,  
can it be so bad?  
Can we learn  
something from  
losing? And, is  
it possible to  
lose well?**



When we lose, however, we can feel shame and frustration; we sometimes want to scream and climb the walls. The shame and frustration of losing, in fact, have nothing to do with the person or circumstance which defeated us, it is our inner resistance to accept the fact that we are not perfect and that we need to continue and train ourselves; It is a resistance to the fact that in this lifetime we may not be able to achieve everything we dream of. But when we let go of that resistance, we discover, as Emerson said, that "To finish the moment, to find the journey's end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom." In other words, the journey is more important than the destination.

*If we don't know  
how to lose, we  
will not know how  
to win, we will not  
be able to enjoy  
life in its fullness.*


To lose means to come face to face with our limitations, whether temporary or permanent, it is a humbling experience that teaches us to find our place in life, to recognize everything we still need to conquer. To win, one must lose many times.

To lose is to be humbled.

A loser who is not humbled, is humiliated.

A loser who is truly humbled, awakens a sense of respect.

If we don't know how to lose, we will not know how to win, we will not be able to enjoy life in its fullness.

After all, knowing how to lose is to win a victory over oneself. 







## **New Acropolis Culture Circle is back with in-person events!**

Join our celebration of culture with a philosophical essence through interactive & intimate monthly events, held mainly at our centre in Colaba, Mumbai.

Call us at **98335 64706** to subscribe!

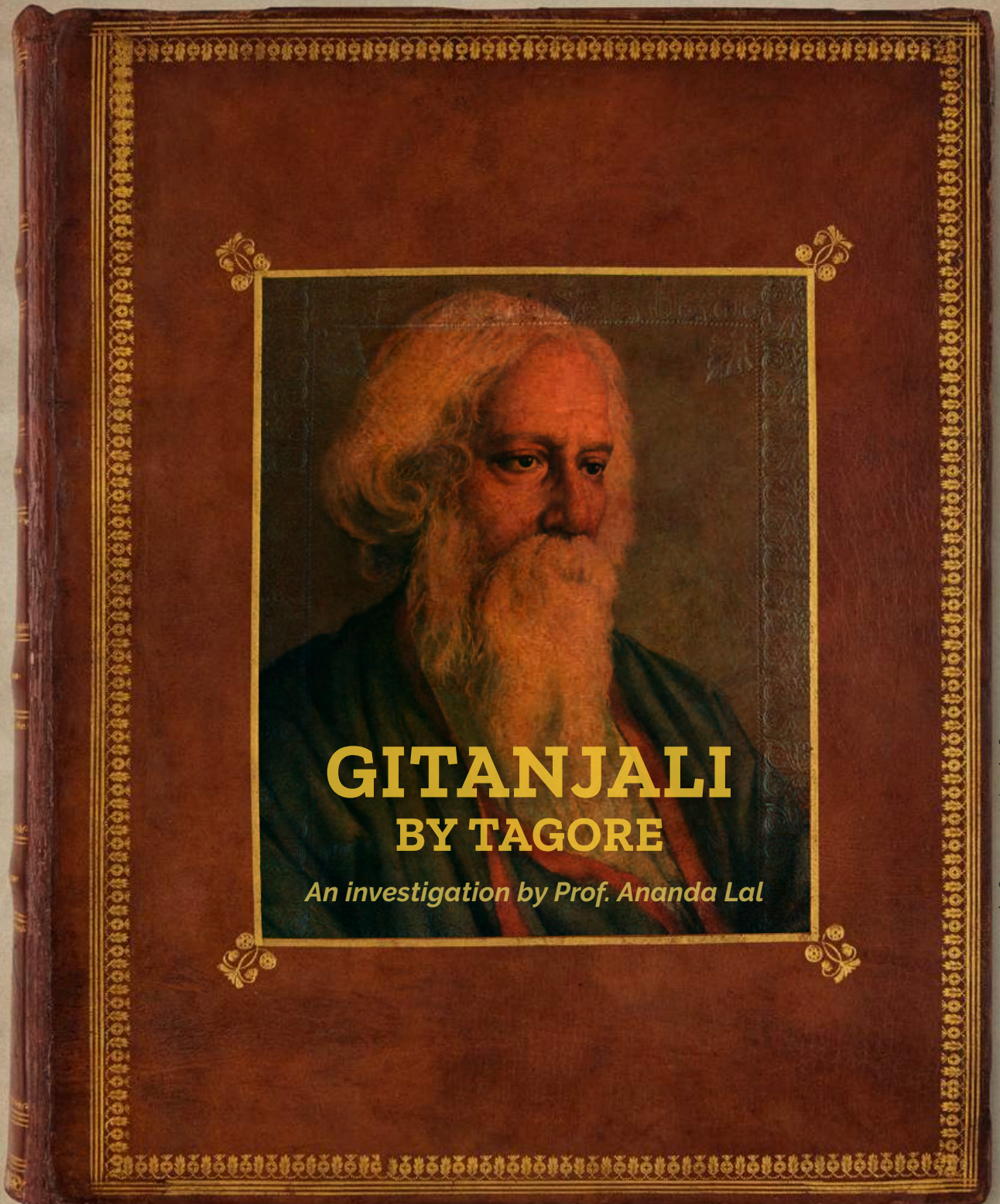
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Come join our  
celebration of culture with  
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On 29th March 2021, The New Acropolis Culture Circle conducted an online session on Rabindranath Tagore's Nobel Prize-winning work *Gitanjali*, with Prof. Ananda Lal. The professor's doctoral thesis had become the first English book exclusively on Tagorean drama, titled *Rabindranath Tagore: Three Plays*, in 1987. He sang, recited and shared his investigation of Tagore's *Gitanjali*, highlighting that Tagore propounded a practical faith, his manifesto of ethical action coming from the strong conviction in a universal God while suggesting that only through our actions could we own responsibility towards ourselves and others.

**Below is a synthesis of the conversation.**



One often notices within our society that we hero-worship our great iconic heroes in cultural, artistic and intellectual spaces but we don't actually read their works or practise the ideals they espoused. Investigating *Gitanjali* can catalyse a deep personal transformation. This book reflects the immense wisdom and true renaissance quality of Tagore's genius and multifaceted personality.

The original *Gitanjali* was written and published in 1910, consisting of 157 poems and songs in the Bengali text. The significant context worth putting forth is that between 1902 and 1907 Tagore suffered four major bereavements in his immediate family: his wife passed away at a relatively young age in 1902; his 12-year-old daughter in 1903; 1905 saw the death of his father whom he was immensely close to; and in 1907 his youngest son died. These traumatic events appear to have been the trigger for the immense seeking of the truth and the focus on deep spirituality in *Gitanjali*. Furthermore, since his youngest years, Tagore had been a member of Brahmo Samaj, one of the reformist movements within Hinduism in

the 19th century. He later developed a strong attraction to Buddhism. As a voracious reader, he had also read a lot on Christianity. All this influenced his works.

In the two years he took to write the poems he also composed music to the majority of them. The literal meaning of the word *gitanjali* means "song offerings", of a devotional nature. And while listening to them, we realize how the beauty of the music transcends that of poetry. Tagore was deeply inspired not just by Vedic hymns, classical songs and kirtans in the Hindu tradition, but his songs (Rabindra-sangeet) also owe melodies to Baul folksongs from countryside Bengal. A syncretic denomination of minstrels, Bauls sing travelling from village to village; they draw their faith from Sufism and Vaishnavism and believe in their conviction of a direct

***The literal meaning of the word gitanjali means "song offerings", of a devotional nature.***





hotline from one's heart to God. Tagore even borrowed from devotional songs as far apart as Sikh bhajans and Carnatic songs.

In his English *Gitanjali*, however, he took only 53 from his original 157 lyrics and added another 50 from his other publications. So, the English *Gitanjali* of 103 songs is not a close equivalent to the original Bengali, and is also a creative translation in prose poetry. Tagore shared these transcreations in 1912 as a manuscript with his friend William Rothenstein in London. Rothenstein's circle was so overwhelmed by the poems in this manuscript that they decided to publish it that very year in 1912 and, surprisingly in 1913,

the Nobel Prize committee awarded him the Prize for Literature, the first ever to go to a non-European. *Gitanjali* accorded Tagore an iconic status across the world. His poetry evoked, universally, a deep connection with the beauty of the ideal and the invisible divine, especially at a time when the West had moved away from spirituality in their quest for modernity.

Tagore once rhetorically asked, "*Can you squeeze me behind any one religious boundary?*" reflecting his belief in a universal idea of God without conforming to an esoteric religious identity. It is this extremely secular idea of faith that Tagore lived by. He hardly ever mentioned any "God" by name, but rather as a supreme spiritual force that compels us to act rightly. His need for a practical faith and a deeply ethical life is reflected in Verse 4:

*"Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.*

*I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.*

*I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.*

*And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act."*

Verse 11 in his English *Gitanjali* is pertinent to our times:

*"Leave this chanting and singing and*





**He hardly ever mentioned any "God" by name, but rather as a supreme spiritual force that compels us to act rightly.**

any designated location.

Song 4 in Bengali Gitanjali opens with this couplet (in my translation):

*"It is not my prayer that you protect me from danger!*

*May I remain fearless at times of danger!"*

*telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!*

*He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust.*

*Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil! ...*

*Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow."*

I would term this as deeply empathetic, advocating a sense of worship that celebrates humanity all around us and dismisses the entire idea of being able to worship only inside a particular building. One worships with the people who are labouring around us, without any inhibitions, without needing

The song celebrates this approach of fearlessness, not pleading to the supreme power as one conventionally does in prayer, but focusing on the virtue of fearlessness, as Gandhiji would say, to strive to be the change that one wants to see.

Verse 29 of the English version tells us about the dangers of self-absorption:

*"He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon. I am ever busy building this wall all around; and as this wall goes up into the sky day by day I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow.*

*I take pride in this great wall, and I plaster it with dust and sand lest a least hole should be left in this name; and for all the care I take I lose sight of my true being."*

All philosophies have always propounded, "Drop the desire for fame, drop the ego!" The wall-building is the metaphor for building the ego, the desire for fame.





Verse 31 is in the form of a dialogue. One person says:

*"Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you?"*

*"It was my master", said the prisoner. "I thought I could outdo everybody in the world in wealth and power, and I amassed in my own treasure-house, the money due to my king.*

*(Tagore used the terms 'King' and 'Master' for the Supreme force) When sleep overcame me, I lay upon the bed that was for my lord, and on waking up I found I was a prisoner in my own treasure house."*

*"Prisoner, tell me who was it that wrought this unbreakable chain?"*

*"It was I," said the prisoner, "who forged this chain very carefully. I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive leaving me in a freedom undisturbed. Thus night and day I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel*

*hard strokes. When at last the work was done and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found that it held me in its grip."*

Tagore always criticized power and materialism for its own sake. The more one accumulates treasures, and the more one amasses all the power in the world, one is actually chained.

The poem 106 in Bengali gives us Tagore's idea of India as a great land that integrated in its sacredness so many cultures and religions. Here is my translation:

No one knows whose call made streams of so many populations

Come from where on turbulent currents, lose themselves in an ocean.

Here Aryans, here non-Aryans, here Dravidians, Chinese—

Sakas, Huns, Pathans, Mughals dissolved in one body.

The doors open to the West today, All bring gifts from there,

Give and take, meet and merge, no one turns to leave—

On this seashore of India's great humanity.

Come O Aryans, come non-Aryans, Hindus, Muslims.

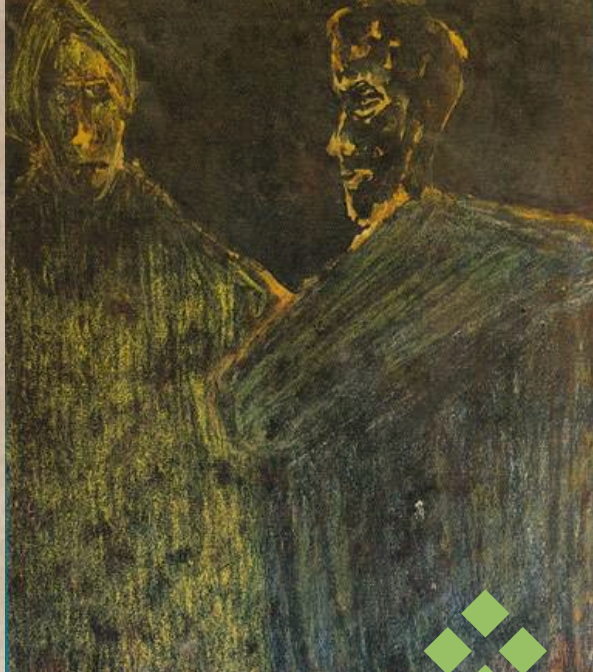
Come today, come you English, come, come Christians.

Come Brahmins, cleanse the mind, hold the hands of everyone.

Come O fallen, may the load of all insult be undone.

Come, come to Ma's consecration quick, The auspicious pitcher hasn't yet filled With pilgrim-water sanctified by the touch of everybody—





Today on the seashore of India's great humanity.

In 1911, Tagore wrote what eventually became India's National Anthem, where he incorporated the above idea, but addressed to God. Most Indians don't know the second stanza, which goes something like this (in my translation, trying to preserve the original rhyming pattern):

Hearing your call always proclaimed – your noble maxim,  
Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, Parsi, Christian, Muslim,  
East and West arrived  
To your throne's side  
A necklace of love to create.  
Victory to the Mover of people's unity, God of India's fate!

Tagore also celebrated the idea of a global citizen or, more philosophically speaking, the idea of fraternity beyond any distinction of nationality, religion, culture and race. He

**Tagore also celebrated the idea of a global citizen or, more philosophically speaking, the idea of fraternity beyond any distinction of nationality, religion, culture and race.**

propagated internationalism, or humanism taken to the global level. Thus, Verse 63 in the English Gitanjali:

*"Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger. ...*

*When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut. Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one in the play of the many."*

*Gitanjali* contains so many dimensions. Verse 52, strikingly different, is an ode to the strength or Shakti that the feminine force needs to manifest:

*"The morning bird twitters and asks, 'Woman, what hast thou got?' No, it is no flower, nor spices, nor vase of perfumed water—it is thy dreadful sword.*

*I sit and muse in wonder, what gift is this of thine. I can find no place where to hide it. I am ashamed to wear it, frail as I am, and it hurts me when I press it to my bosom. Yet shall I bear in my heart this honour of the burden of pain, this gift of thine.*

*... Thy sword is with me to cut asunder my*





**Deeply engaged with nature, with the environment, he celebrated the advent of different seasons with festivals for the students in Santiniketan.**

*bonds, and there shall be no fear left for me in the world.*

*From now I leave off all petty decorations. Lord of my heart, no more shall there be for me waiting and weeping in corners, no more coyness and sweetness of demeanour. Thou hast given me thy sword for adornment. No more doll's decorations for me!"*

His call to women to take up the sword does not imply a fight in the literal sense – the

message being, not to be meek or submissive at all, which is deeply inspiring considering the stereotype of women more than a century ago.

Tagore was one of the earliest pioneers of the green movement in India. Deeply engaged with nature, with the environment, he celebrated the advent of different seasons with festivals for the students in Santiniketan. Spring was for him a celebration of the rejuvenation of the year, with colour, life, love, and renewal. He always played on the paradoxical relationship between *Arupa*, the formless, which in India is just one of the names of the Supreme, and that of the multitude of forms, or *rupa*. The moment we enclose that Supreme power in just one form, it's necessarily incomplete. Tagore celebrated the paradox of how, spiritually speaking, *Arupa* is omnipresent, yet we physically see only the multitudes of *rupa* all around us. But through nature's beauty, we can actually see the immanence of Godhead right in front of us.

Tagore's poetry expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to be born as a human being, the absolute celebration of being invited to experience human existence, so one must make the most of it. In one of his pieces on the beauty of birth, Verse 61, he serenely asks from where the smile on a sleeping baby's face comes, while the English Gitanjali ends with several poems about death. So, from birth to death, Tagore is ready to embrace all, because both are part of life. Death is not sorrow, but a continuation of Life. I end with his Verse 95:

*"I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life.*

*What was the power that made me open out*





**Tagore's poetry expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to be born as a human being, the absolute celebration of being invited to experience human existence.**

*into this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at midnight!*

*When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother.*

*Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.*

*The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation."*





# PUBLIC EVENTS **NEW ACROPOLIS MUMBAI**

## Live Adventurously: Event Series

Join us for a series of three interactive events to explore how we can bring courage and authenticity into our daily lives.

**Sat**

**23 July**

Interactive  
Talk

**6pm (2 hrs)**

[Register Here](#)



### ARTIST, DREAMER, WARRIOR: CREATING AN IMPACT IN OUR WORLD TODAY

As individuals, we are naturally influenced by our surroundings, but can one individual truly create an impact in our world? Together, we will explore the path of practical philosophy as a way to better ourselves and the world around us, by awakening the artist, dreamer and warrior within!

**Sat**

**30 July**

Interactive  
Talk

**6 pm (2 hrs)**

[Register Here](#)



### THE WARRIOR-GENTLEMAN'S SEARCH FOR SUCCESS

Is there a way for a man to transform into a Knight or Gentleman, characterised by virtue and courtesy? Together, let's dare to redefine the meaning of Success as living a life of truth and authenticity, and learn to face today's uncertainty, insecurities and social expectations, with courage and clarity.

**Fri**

**12 Aug**

Interactive  
Talk

**7:30pm (2 hrs)**

[Register Here](#)



### SAMURAI SPIRIT FOR THE EVERYDAY HERO

The Samurai warriors of Japan were fearless opponents, not because of their physical strength, but because their way of life demanded they develop virtues like courage, compassion and self-control. How can we face our daily challenges with the inner strength and stability of the Samurai?

PUBLIC EVENTS **NEW ACROPOLIS MUMBAI****Sat  
3 Sep**Practical  
Workshop**6pm (2 hrs)**[Register Here](#)**ART OF CONCENTRATION:  
LEARNING TO LIVE FULLY**

It is all too easy to get swept away by the expanding to-do lists and the constant rush against time, that we lose our ability to bring our most precious contribution to our actions and interactions – our presence! Through practical exercises, we will explore how developing the art of concentration can allow us to bring more depth, focus and stability to daily living.

**Sat  
24 Sep**Interactive  
Talk**6pm (2 hrs)**[Register Here](#)**LET'S TALK ABOUT HAPPINESS!**

The search for happiness has always been a fundamental human goal, yet it often seems to elude us. Is happiness a utopic idea or is it possible to encounter, even in the face of challenges? Together, we will explore practical tools on how we can bring more contentment to our daily lives.



## PUBLIC EVENTS **NEW ACROPOLIS PUNE**

**Sat**  
**9 July**

Interactive  
Talk

**6pm (2 hrs)**

[Register Here](#)



### **ARTIST, DREAMER, WARRIOR: CREATING AN IMPACT IN OUR WORLD TODAY**

As individuals, we are naturally influenced by our surroundings, but can one individual truly create an impact in our world? Together, we will explore the path of practical philosophy as a way to better ourselves and the world around us, by awakening the artist, dreamer and warrior within!

**Sun**  
**24 July**

Interactive  
Talk

**6pm (2 hrs)**

[Register Here](#)



### **NAVIGATING CHALLENGES THE STOIC WAY**

'Of things, some are in our power and others are not,' said Epictetus. In a world of turbulent change, what can help us navigate through challenging times? Let us draw some inspiration from the Stoics, to have a direction and guide for our lives, towards inner adventure and meaning. **Talk conducted by Director of New Acropolis India, Yaron Barzilay.**

**Fri**

**5 Aug**

Interactive  
Talk

**7:30pm (2 hrs)**

[Register Here](#)



### **BEING A KNIGHT IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Knights, much beyond their horses and armours, exemplified qualities such as courage in the face of uncertainty, kindness in the face of challenges, and loyalty in the face of external pressure or expectations. What can we learn from their spirit of adventure, to live with more daring and integrity in our times today?

PUBLIC EVENTS **NEW ACROPOLIS PUNE**

**Sat  
10 Sep**

Interactive  
Talk

**6pm (2 hrs)**

**Register Here**



## **SLAYING YOUR INNER DRAGONS: LESSONS FROM MYTHOLOGY**

Whether it was Saint George slaying the dragon, Theseus subduing the Minotaur, or Durga defeating Mahishasura, beasts from mythology perhaps symbolize dragons of fear, anger or greed within us as human beings. The clues, then, as to how to overpower them, would also come from mythology. Let us explore some legends to learn how to slay our inner dragons and live more heroic lives.

**Sat  
24 Sep**

Interactive  
Talk

**6pm (2 hrs)**

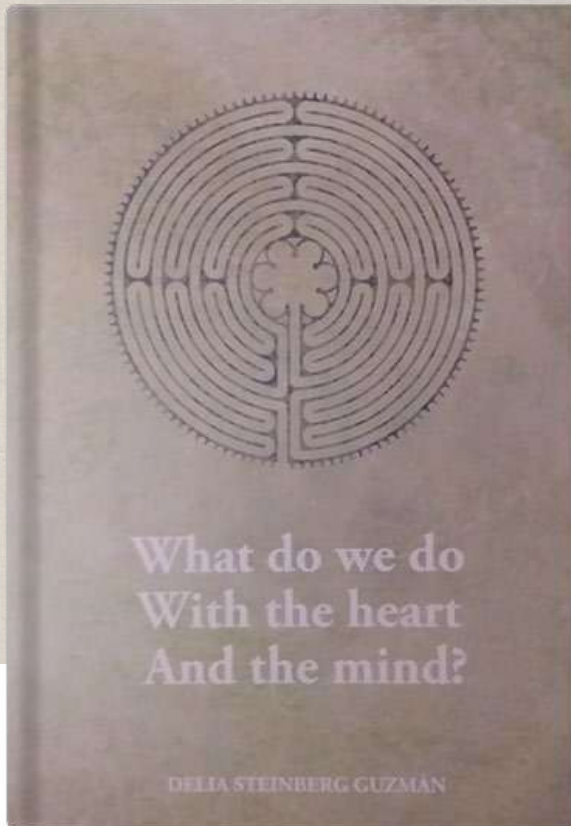
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## **FORMING A BETTER SOCIETY: INSPIRATION FROM PLATO**

While we often think of ways in which society should be better, but what is our role in making it so? Plato's ideas in his work 'The Republic' could inspire us to create a just society based on just individuals who actively contribute to its betterment. Since being a citizen implies having both rights and responsibilities, let us explore how we can give and take justly, to make society better.





## **BOOK RECOMMENDATION**

# **WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE HEART AND THE MIND?**

**By Delia Steinberg Guzmán**

Like the explorers of old who tried to trace routes into the unknown, relying on the stories of those who have crossed the same route before them, we will do well to be guided by the findings of those who have been able to make their way before us, indicating a course to orient our own adventure. In these pages, Delia Steinberg Guzman has distilled the essence of her life experiences, and like in the ancient myths, has given us the thread which allows us to reach the centre of the labyrinth, which is another way of saying, the center of ourselves.

At times, in our confusion, we seek to understand why the results we pursue slip through our fingers, or we don't know to interpret the contradictions that overwhelm us, as we dig inside, sensing that our feelings are pulling us to one direction and our reason to another. Our author, aware of this reality, helps us decipher their more universal meanings and through them conducts us to the intuition of a possible meaning for life and things.

## GIVING MEANING TO OUR STEPS

**By Delia Steinberg Guzmán**

Among many other psychological diseases, our time is witness to frequent crises of indecisiveness and confusion in people. Many are those who let their lives slip by in a constant state of dissatisfaction, produced by not knowing what to do or how to do it in order achieve effective results.

To escape this emptiness, there are those who throw themselves into particular activities, hoping that these will give a purpose to their lives. Thus, they make their studies or their job their salvation, little realizing that the situation has its roots, without a doubt, deep within the individuals themselves. All practical activities are valueless if the person who performs them is unaware of the reasons behind his or her actions.

We always have to ask ourselves why we are doing things and what is the direction in which we are going. Why we are doing things: because we should know the real usefulness of the things we do. Everything that is aimed purely at filling a void or covering up some anxiety will not produce the desired results. Once the period that has been artificially filled, merely for the purpose of running away from ourselves, is over, the restlessness and confusion will return.

Let us take the case of someone who believes they have chosen the wrong vocation or activity and looks for another to remedy the mistake, only to find themselves in the same psychological state again soon afterwards.

The blame will be put on those who teach us, on society for not making room for the many types of work we could do, but – without failing to recognize that this may sometimes be true – most of the time the fault lies in not knowing why we do things, and doing them without knowing what we want to achieve.

Why we are doing things: do I want to know more, to improve myself internally, to grow psychologically, to master a subject in order to apply it to some specific work, to help others? Or, in the simplest of cases, do I want to make more money, to buy the things I need, to be able to travel...? Why?: this question cannot be absent, but the answer must also be provided, as long as it is not “to fill the time.” The purpose of our actions should always be practical, applicable, and have a meaning which can fill gaps and needs in the world and within ourselves.

Where are we going? Whenever we move, we should have a marked, clear and well defined direction in front of us. The “why” gives us an aim, and the “where to” shows us the steps to be taken and the direction of the path to be followed, so that they will lead us towards the proposed goal. Without direction, our actions run the risk of becoming lost in some hole in space and time, increasing our anxiety when we realize that we are unable to achieve concrete goals.

When a person defines where they are going, they also establish the means to get there, because knowing the end point provides the ability to obtain the appropriate tools.



**THE ACROPOLITAN**  
July - September 2022  
Volume 9 - Issue 3

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PAN: AADCN2407J  
CIN: Ug2412MH2010NPL200490  
80G Cert: CIT(E)/80G/2062/  
2016-17 (6/2/17)

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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



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.



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