



FEB | MAR  
2025

# THE ACROPOLITAN

A Magazine on  
Philosophy, Culture  
& Volunteering

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## FEATURE

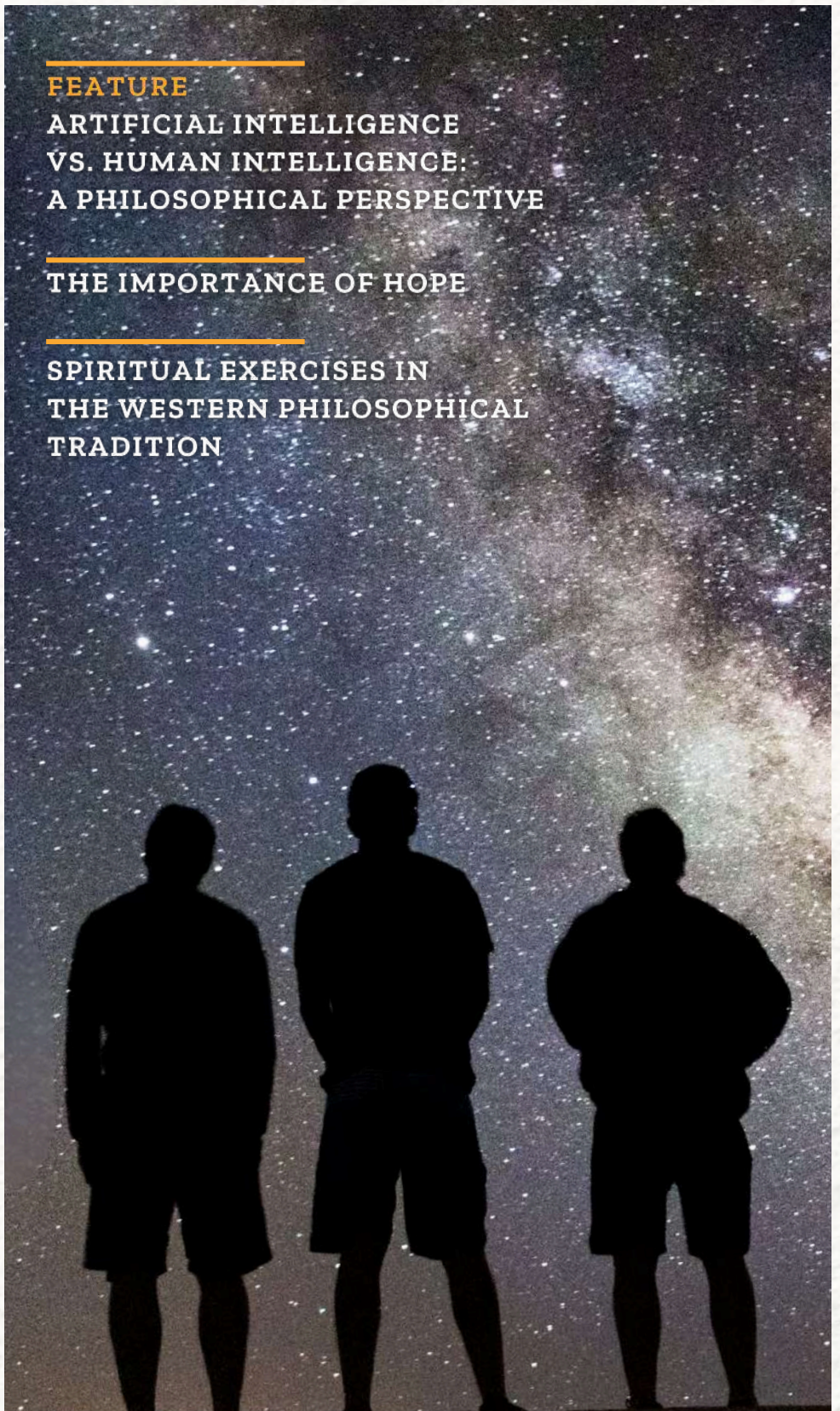
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE  
VS. HUMAN INTELLIGENCE:  
A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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THE IMPORTANCE OF HOPE

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SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN  
THE WESTERN PHILOSOPHICAL  
TRADITION





# Note from the Editor

Dear Reader,

As we step into 2025, the timeless invitation of philosophy calls us once more—to embark on a voyage of self-discovery and a deeper understanding of life itself. This issue of *The Acropolitan* explores themes that inspire us to reflect on what it means to truly live with insight and meaning.

Artificial Intelligence, with all its incredible potential, compels us to rethink human intelligence. Are we merely problem-solving machines, or are we, as Plato reminds us, beings of divine origin, capable of bridging the individual and the universal? Ancient wisdom suggests that the mysteries of the universe—and of ourselves—can be unraveled through the journey of self-evolution.

The Jatakas, meanwhile, offer reflections on karma and virtue, encouraging us to draw wisdom from past experiences to inform present actions and future growth. They challenge us to engage with life's challenges as opportunities to learn and grow, rather than rushing past them in search of quick fixes. This aligns seamlessly with the idea of hope—not as passive optimism, but as an active choice to move toward the light, one step at a time.

Discipline, too, emerges as a vital thread in this exploration. It is not merely an external imposition but a conscious choice that strengthens our will, stabilizes our emotions, and grants us the freedom to act in alignment with what we know to be right.

Philosophy in the classical manner has been a method of inner transformation—a means to master ourselves, and connect with the universe. These themes unite in a simple yet profound call: to embrace philosophy as a way of life.

May these reflections inspire you to explore the mysteries within and embark on a year of meaningful growth.

Malini Nair  
Editor

# Table of Contents

## The Importance of Hope

SHRADDHA SHETTY

4

## Artificial Intelligence vs. Human Intelligence: A Philosophical Perspective

YARON BARZILAY

8



## Jatakas: The Eternal Interplay between Virtue and Karma

MALINI NAIR

15



We are Whole

20

## Spiritual Exercises in the Western Philosophical Tradition

JULIAN SCOTT

24

## The Joy of Discipline

ZARINA SCREWVALA

30



CELEBRATING  
WORLD  
PHILOSOPHY  
DAY  
BUILDING  
UNITY  
THROUGH  
DIVERSITY

36

# The Importance of Hope



By Shraddha Shetty

The story of Pandora is an ancient Greek myth of which many different versions exist. The one written by Hesiod in the 7th century BCE, tells of Zeus, angered by the Titan Prometheus, who gave the gift of fire to humankind, was determined to exact retribution not only from Prometheus, but from all of humanity. Zeus forges a beautiful maiden Pandora, and sends her into the world with a closed box, telling her not to open it. Overcome by curiosity and naivety, Pandora does so, releasing all manner of evil and strife into the world... Envy, Avarice, Poverty, Ignorance etc. Appalled, Pandora quickly shuts the box, but the only thing that remains inside is Hope. Another version suggests, that inside the box were all the virtues that could have blessed humanity, and all that flew back to the heavens, except Hope, that remained on earth.

The myth can be interpreted in many ways: as a cautionary tale of the curiosity and desire for knowledge, which can have both positive and negative consequences. But perhaps the Greeks also wanted to remind us that when darkness sets in, it is still possible to build whatever is lost, if only we do not lose Hope.

Why is hope so important? It comes from the Latin verb '*sperare*' which has multiple meanings: to hope, to prosper, to thrive; implying that if a person is hopeful, there is a possibility of living and thriving and moving towards abundance.

***"Hope is a good  
breakfast but it is  
a bad supper."  
-Francis Bacon***



The rainbow is an enduring symbol of hope in many cultures; the Bible tells us that God sent one to Noah after the flood to signify the end of the flood, as a promise of new beginnings; the idea that this perfect arc in the sky begins in one place but ends in another is symbolic of a bridge between this world, and the celestial realm, the present and the future, a promise of better things to come. Yet hope is not just optimism or the fantasy of wishful thinking; it is when you actually see, or imagine the light at the end of a tunnel and actively begin to move towards it. One cannot sit at one end of a dark tunnel and wait for the light to come to you. You must make a choice, and begin the work needed, here and now, towards a new and better future.

*"Hope is a good breakfast but it is a bad supper."* - Francis Bacon

One of the most striking examples of this is Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, who was interned for three years in four different concentration camps during World War II. The degradation and inhumanity he witnessed and suffered, deeply affected his understanding of the meaning of human life. He found that those who did not lose their sense of purpose were able to survive better than those who had completely lost hope. At the end of the war, he returned to Vienna, became head of neurology at a Vienna hospital and founded a school of psychotherapy that posits search for life's meaning as a central human motivational force.

In his famous book *Man's Search for Meaning*, he says, *"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."* This implies that a critical human choice we all have, in any circumstance no matter how dire, is our response: and whether we respond with an attitude of hope or despair, will determine how successfully we emerge from the trial.

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***Hope is not just optimism or the fantasy of wishful thinking; it is when you actually see, or imagine the light at the end of a tunnel and actively begin to move towards it.***

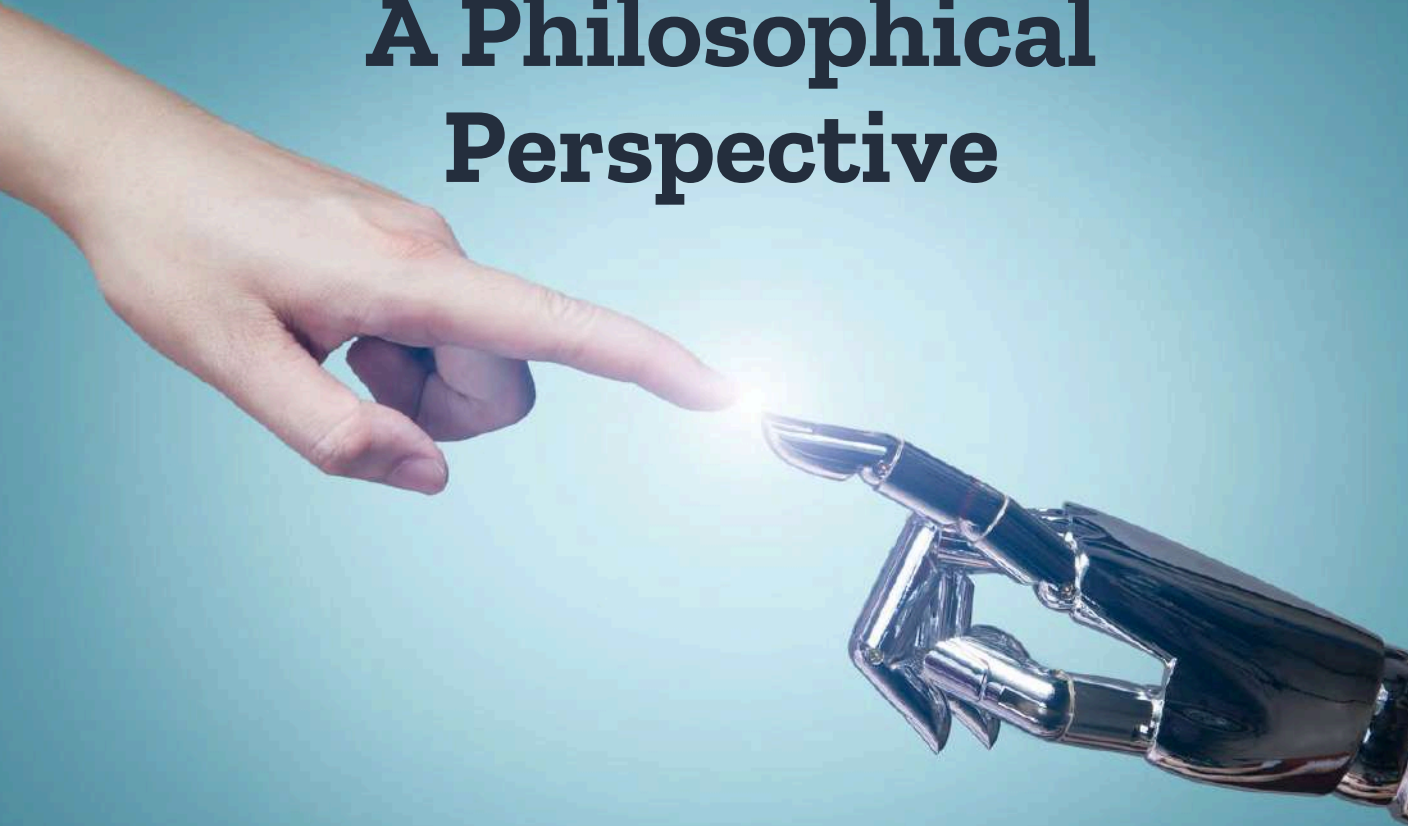
Another inspiring example of how hope can fuel determination and perseverance, is that of Nelson Mandela: imprisoned for 27 years on Robben Island, he faced inhuman conditions and hard labour, meant to break his resolve. Yet he refused to give up hope for the future and continued fighting to achieve equality for all people in South Africa. After his release he negotiated an end to apartheid, became South Africa's first democratically elected president, and the personification of rising above adversity.

These are living examples of how the power of hope combined with resilience, and inner strength, can contribute to the victory of the spirit over the physical. No matter how severe and brutal the circumstances, yet both Frankl and Mandela were able prevail, fulfil their purpose, and ultimately thrive.

How can we apply hope in our everyday challenges? By never losing sight of where we want to reach; by using our circumstances to strengthen our will in order to find our way towards the light; by unrelenting inner work towards what we consider as right, regardless of when we may reach the goal; and by borrowing the seeds of happiness from the future, to sow them today.

"Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." - Václav Havel ✨

# **Artificial Intelligence vs. Human Intelligence: A Philosophical Perspective**



**By Yaron Barzilay**



When writing this article, artificial intelligence (AI) has been one of the most spoken-about topics worldwide for a while, with equally mixed views of great excitement and heavy concern, as it is a significant disruptor already involved in almost every aspect of our lives. While a wide range of incredible possibilities is opening up before us, presenting what seems to be the tip of the iceberg of AI's potential impact in the near and far future, many voice grave concerns about its various dangerous implications, from massive unemployment, serious ethical consequences or political manipulations, to even a catastrophic outcome of existential threat to the human race.



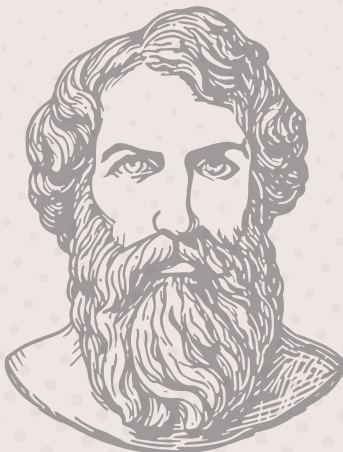
***AI is a prominent protagonist in both utopian and dystopian theories, raising practical, ethical and philosophical questions about where we are heading from here...***

Many known figures, such as the historian Prof. Noah Harari, scientists, developers, governments and private institutions, speak of the urgent need to regulate AI's evolution before drastic consequences occur. AI is a prominent protagonist in both utopian and dystopian theories, raising practical, ethical and philosophical questions about where we are heading from here, as it is already intertwined in many aspects of our lives; no speculation here seems to be a careless exaggeration. Like a magic wand, artificial intelligence opens up a new world of possibilities in every field into which it is integrated. At the same time, it opens the door to real dangers of loss of control and destruction. As it becomes a close and intimate part of our lives, it seems that in a short time, if not already, it will be difficult to imagine our life without it. Here is precisely why we must pay close attention to it. Like any tool, it can positively or negatively affect us, depending on our ability to understand and control it. A knife, for example, a hammer or an axe, can be used to save lives, open paths, build and construct, just as they can kill and destroy. This is obvious and indicates the fault is not in the tool itself but the use we make of it; it can be said of any tool, be it a nail, a car or a gun—they are tools meant to serve a purpose, which we must be aware of and able to control. AI is no different in essence, but nevertheless, a question is often raised about the very nature of this tool and the relationship it forms with us.



As this hot topic will likely continue to become more intense, this short article does not aim to present arguments about its pros and cons. Still, given the magnitude of AI's influence, which is often presented as a "simulation of human intelligence," a "superhuman," or a "superintelligence," we should also raise philosophical questions about its possible implications for our self-determination as human beings.

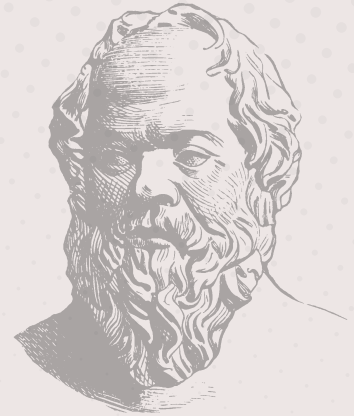
Suppose we attribute intelligent capacity to an essential computer-based capability; don't we risk losing touch with a very special characteristic of our human nature and, with it, miss viewing ourselves as a mystery yet to be discovered, a perspective that appears to be common among most human traditions, when discussing philosophically the nature of the human being? Can the famous phrase engraved on the temple of Apollo in ancient Delphi that forever echoes, "Man, know thyself", be confused with a learning machine that seemingly surpasses our ability and may confuse us to lose the path to a higher consciousness that is directly linked to our own intelligence, on understanding ourselves, others and all things? And we mustn't neglect to remember the value of what seems to have been the full expression of the phrase mentioned above: *"Know thyself, and you will know the universe and the gods."*



When Plato speaks of recollection (reminiscence, anamnesis) leading to a possibility of raising our awareness to a source of knowledge that is not derived from sensory experiences but rather from insight into eternal truths and the divine archetypes, does it not imply a particular use of our intelligence that no algorithm, however sophisticated it may be, can access, as it touches the very core definition of humans and their eternal souls? This isn't a mere semantic play with the definition of intelligence but one that deals with the very meaning of human life as a path towards awakening our true potential and identity.

Let us imagine the great Socrates conducting a dialogue with artificial intelligence, aiming to awaken an inner truth within it while applying his method of Maieutics; surely, it would be an interesting conversation. But, will Socrates succeed in giving birth to the immortal soul as he might have intended if we deduce such intention from the teachings of his brightest disciple, Plato?

For the ancient Greeks, Nous is associated with the higher capability of the mind and the human soul and, much beyond the later definition of the term, is a bridge to connect with the profound reality and the universal above the individual.



On the importance of the Socratic method of dialect and its effect on the Nous, we can learn from the writings of anthropologist and philosopher Fernand Schwartz: *"Through dialectics as a method allowing the intelligence (in Greek, Nous), the seat of our immortality, to perceive the truth residing in the "heavens" (the world of ideas) and to apply and practice the good on earth (the sensible world), Socrates provides a philosophical framework for the ancient Greek belief in the dual movement of the soul, a true bridge between heaven and earth. He offers a practical form for those who wish to live by elevating their soul and acting in accordance with their innermost conviction."*

The Turing test is a well-known evaluation proposed by mathematician Alan Turing in 1950, aimed at determining whether a computer is capable of thinking. It involves a series of questions conducted remotely, requiring human and computer responses. If the computer's answers closely resemble a human's and are perceived as such by the examiner, it is suggested to be able to demonstrate a capacity for intelligence. Turing further predicted that by the year 2000, computers could pass such tests with a 30% chance. His test is still used as a reference today, though there are arguments about whether such a test can really identify a machine's intelligence.



The question of how we define human intelligence is critical here, as it differentiates how we perceive ourselves, especially in front of what many may regard as superintelligence in computers, which transcends humans, hence missing exploring the real potential of intelligence in humans.

In his books, Prof. Noah Harari addresses the confusion between the terms consciousness and intelligence, describing intelligence that is entirely independent of consciousness. He emphasises computers' ability to make independent decisions and refers to this as the essence of the artificial intelligence revolution.

This article does not dispute the possible implications and consequences of artificial ability, regardless of whether it is conscious. However, the context of intelligence and human consciousness is significant for the concern raised here and the confusion that may arise in our self-perception and understanding of human intelligence. The question of how we shall consider intelligence in humans is essential and delicate. Even if we accept the possibilities of various types of intelligence, we should pay close attention to what human intelligence entails, as suggested by multiple philosophical traditions, to avoid missing something that is of great importance.



***Even if we accept the possibilities of various types of intelligence, we should pay close attention to what human intelligence entails...***

Indian philosophy, for example, describes Manas as the base of the higher vehicles of Man, forming part of a trinity of a higher consciousness capability, such as Intuition (Buddhi) and Will (Atma). This trinity is the higher Ego in humans, the Individu of the Greek, our true identity, differentiated from the lower body, the transient persona. Manas, or intelligence, is the main promotor of the human constitution as it connects with the higher faculties and realities that allow man to know himself. It is described as a pure higher mind compared with the lower mind or Kama Manas, the mind of desires, a calculative and subjective mind incapable of true sight. Human Intelligence is seen as capable of discernment between the real and the unreal, a quality

referred to in Sanskrit as Viveka, allegorically symbolised by the Kalahansa bird that can separate milk from a mixture of milk & water. According to these ancient teachings, this ability of discernment is strongly linked with intuition, a state of consciousness and perception rather than a rational or intellectual understanding.

It is helpful here to remember that the word intelligence comes from the Latin “inter (to choose) legere (between)”; therefore, it means to collect or gather, which implies discernment, hence a dynamic and vertical view of life, rather than a horizontal comparison of data and algorithm. A discernment that applies to the development of a philosophical state of mind.

In Sanskrit and other Proto-Indo-European languages, Manas is closely associated with the term used for human beings. This highlights the essential role of this faculty in distinguishing man from all others. The universal symbolism of Fire is often associated with the higher mind, which offers a significant meaning to the famous myth of Prometheus, who gave humans the gift of fire stolen from the gods.

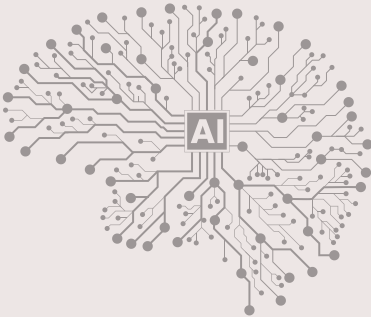


A careful discernment is therefore also needed when trying to observe the quality of intelligence itself. Before describing it as a quality that can be obtained artificially, we need to observe how intelligence has been presented to us by the most remarkable seekers of wisdom, philosophers and traditions across continents and time, asking ourselves if we will not mislead ourselves on a matter of great importance – knowing ourselves and our purpose on this planet, by associating intelligence with a machine. It may be better to use a different term and attribution altogether, but it isn’t just a matter of semantics simplification, but one that genuinely carries a substantial meaning.

Undoubtedly, AI has tremendous potential to aid humanity in ways we hardly imagine today. It can improve our lives in many ways and even offer us an opportunity to reclaim what

our intelligence means for us and how it differentiates us from animals or machines to oppose the implication of the great *confusion of identities* we see today. Are there capabilities within us that are unique to human beings that we can develop and discover? Are we so familiar with our latent potential that we can forget the wonder of living the marvelous adventure of life, which is not only to find out what is outside of ourselves but what is internal to each of us? If we carefully pay attention to the teachings of the great philosopher Plato, for example, he tells us that we are of the divine, the world of the gods is our origin, and that reclamation of our own true identity is our destiny. The path goes through our own intelligence and should not be confused with rationalism or intellectualism, which are yet part of the lower qualities of the mind.

**Ancient wisdom traditions ... indicate that human beings and the world we inhabit are mysteries to discover.**

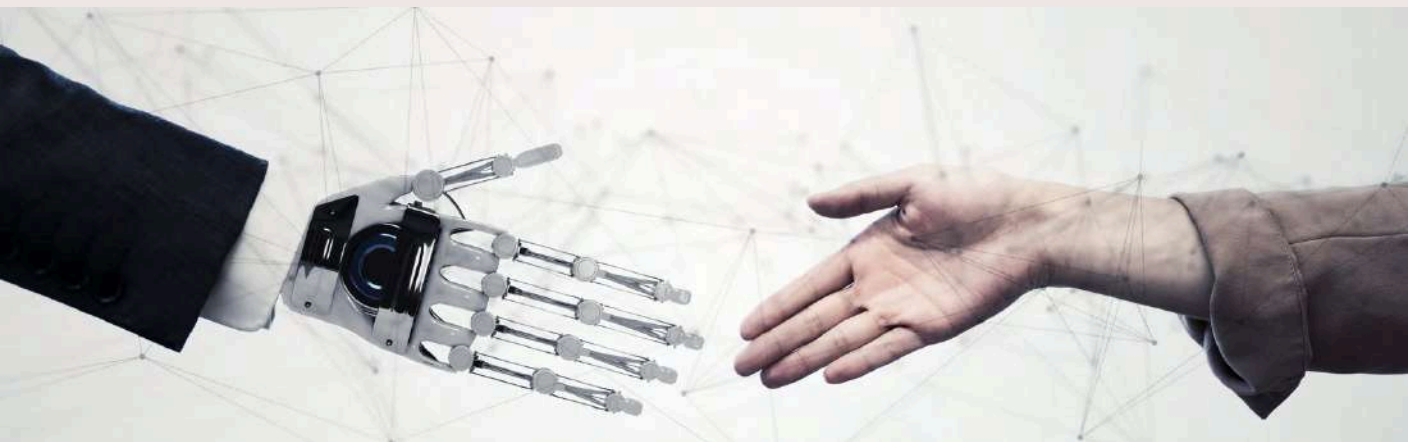


Ancient wisdom traditions encourage us to follow the path of self-evolution. They indicate that human beings and the world we inhabit are mysteries to discover. AI, as a tool, can help us refocus our attention on the potent possibilities of our intelligence, which can offer us great blessings. Here, too, a choice based on discernment, that is, human intelligence, is required.



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# **Jatakas:** The Eternal Interplay between Virtue and Karma

By Malini Nair



*Jataka* in Sanskrit means birth stories. The Jatakas are a collection of over 500 stories that recount the past lives of Siddhartha Gautama, the being destined to become the Buddha. These tales, preserved in the Pali Canon and dated between 300 BCE and 400 CE, are an integral part of Buddhist literature, encompassing profound moral and spiritual teachings expressed simply and directly, making it widely accessible.

Far from being mere fables, the Jatakas invite us to reflect on the eternal interplay between karma and virtue. They encourage us to recognize how our actions shape not only our future but also the broader world around us. The Bodhisattva's teachings, passed down through these stories, are not confined to ancient times; they continue to resonate today, urging us to make virtuous choices that have the potential to create a more compassionate and enlightened world.

Each story offers a glimpse into the Bodhisattva's journey across lifetimes, cultivating the virtues known in Mahayana Buddhism as the Six Paramitas: generosity (*dāna*), ethics (*śīla*), patience (*kṣānti*), effort (*vīrya*), meditation

## Each story offers a glimpse into the Bodhisattva's journey across lifetimes.

(*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). These virtues are not merely ideals to be admired from afar; they are practical qualities that we are encouraged to embody on our own spiritual path. They purify the mind, gradually leading us toward liberation and enlightenment.

Throughout these stories, virtues like generosity, ethics, and patience manifest in ways that highlight the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of mindful action. For example, the Vessantara Jataka offers a poignant depiction of generosity, where King Vessantara gives away everything he has, even his family, driven by a deep commitment to spiritual growth and the well-being of others. His willingness to sacrifice everything for the greater good speaks to the profound





power of giving without attachment or expectation.

Similarly, the Campeyya Jataka shows us the strength that comes from living according to ethical principles, even when faced with great temptation and difficulty. In this tale, the Bodhisattva reborn as a serpent king, holds steadfast to a life of integrity and righteousness, ensuring peace and security for himself and his kingdom. His example reminds us that our ethical conduct is the foundation upon which we build a stable and harmonious life.

Patience, too, is a virtue that is continually emphasized. In the Mahajanaka Jataka, the Bodhisattva, as Prince Mahajanaka, faces the hardships of being shipwrecked at sea. Despite the overwhelming challenges, his determination never wavers, and he endures with quiet resolve, teaching us that patience is not just about waiting but about maintaining inner strength and clarity during life's trials.

The Jatakas also emphasize the power of sustained effort. In the Bhisma Jataka, the Bodhisattva is reborn as the warrior

Bhisma. Despite suffering immense physical pain, Bhisma remains steadfast in his commitment to justice, refusing to abandon his mission. His example highlights that true effort is not just about striving toward personal goals but about enduring adversity to uphold one's values. This story teaches that the quality of effort required for righteousness transcends comfort and ease, often demanding perseverance despite suffering. It reminds us that true effort is a relentless pursuit of what is right, regardless of personal cost or external hardship.

## **Our ethical conduct is the foundation upon which we build a stable and harmonious life.**

Meditation plays a crucial role in the Jatakas as well, as the Bodhisattva seeks to cultivate mindfulness and inner clarity. In the Sakra Jataka, the Bodhisattva



meditates deeply in the forest, achieving spiritual insight that enables him to act with compassion and wisdom. Through meditation, we learn to turn inward and find the clarity needed to make decisions that benefit not just ourselves but all beings around us.

Finally, wisdom, or *prajñā*, is the culmination of the Bodhisattva's journey.

**The Jatakas remind us that life is not a series of events to endure but a sequence of opportunities to reflect, learn, and evolve.**

It is through wisdom that the Bodhisattva, in various lifetimes, sees the true nature of reality. In the Miga Jataka, for instance, the Bodhisattva, as a deer, uses his wisdom to save his life when confronted by a hunter. By recognizing the impermanence of life, he acts with compassion, offering a profound lesson in how wisdom leads to more compassionate and understanding actions, even in the face of danger.

The Jatakas serve as a mirror, reflecting the challenges we all face in our own lives. These stories do not just teach us virtues; they encourage us to reflect on how these virtues manifest in our daily lives and shape our spiritual journeys. Through the Bodhisattva's example, we are invited to cultivate generosity, ethics, patience, effort, meditation, and wisdom, not as distant ideals, but as practical qualities that we can apply in our own lives.

Moreover, the recurring theme of the Buddha's ability to recall his past lives



offers us a reminder that our past actions are not forgotten—they shape our present and future. The Buddha’s gift of memory was not about nostalgia, but about reflection—drawing wisdom from past experiences to inform present actions and future growth. Similarly, in our own lives, memory can serve as a tool for self-reflection. When we face challenges or setbacks, we might consider them not as obstacles, but as opportunities to learn and grow.

Reflecting on the Jatakas, we might ask ourselves: Are we aware of how our choices today will shape our future? Do we approach life’s challenges as opportunities to learn, or do we rush through them in search of quick fixes?

Living in alignment with our values then becomes not about following a strict set of rules, but about using each moment to shape our own path, learning from the wisdom of the past, and growing with each step. The Jatakas remind us that life is not a series of events to endure but a sequence of opportunities to reflect, learn, and evolve. Every choice we make

contributes not only to our personal growth but to the broader world we live in.

It’s an ongoing process—one small step at a time. The beauty of the Jatakas is that they don’t tell us what to do, but invite us to explore, reflect, and find our own way, grounded in wisdom and compassion. So, as we move forward, perhaps the question isn’t about finding the “right” answers, but about staying open to the lessons each day has to offer. ✦✦

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# We are Whole

*Shared on the stage of World Philosophy Day, 'We Are Whole' - a spoken poetry was written and performed by members of New Acropolis. It's a poem which shares that regardless of all the separation we see, harmony can exist, but it must be through us.*



## Differences

All I notice are differences! (...let me say that again...)  
All I notice are differences...  
There's conflict all around.  
It's layered with lies...  
just no common ground.

Difference in thought  
leading to painful distaste.  
I can't even connect with my neighbour  
I can't, communicate.

I grew up with comparisons  
From art vs science to boys vs girls.  
One *obviously* better than the other.  
As if they were from, different worlds.

Nothing seems to have changed.

I still feel stuck in this world of comparisons.  
But this world is my own.  
My needs vs wants to my comforts vs truth  
...these are seeds, that I have sown.

None of this feels natural  
I'm scattered, losing control  
I feel so separate within  
I need to be whole.



## Diversity

If light was just white,  
There'd be no rainbow,

What would be red and what would be green?  
What about the blues and ohhh.... the yellows!

Sweaters on mountains, and slippers by the beach  
Scent of a roast... Would I even taste a peach?

Who would you be and who would I?  
If we were all the same, colored in the same dye.

What would we speak about? When would we muse?

If each moment was the same, would time even be of use?

Hmm... yeah,

To see the lights and darks as they are,  
For what is a picture without its contrasts,

A movement between these shades,  
A dance that liberates.

Open your heart to the endless textures of life,  
Choose what to highlight and let yourself shine.



# Unity

For soul and matter exist in sync  
And heart and mind wish to align within  
Like branches gathering to the mighty trunk  
Why compare when our roots touch the same sun?

Like the arrow that brings together archer and bow  
Like the torch that brings together bearer and woe  
It is our dharma that aligns within and without  
It is our willingness to choose what we endure throughout

It is our ability to see past missing links  
Past selfish wins and separate things  
Past country borders and ignorant eyes  
So we can live together this one life

Because it is possible!  
Like our connection to the womb we drew from  
With each breath we unite with a life that gives  
With hope and drive and a heart that forgives  
All we need is love to live, to experience and evolve with - that is philosophy!

To bridge the gaps that we naturally see  
Built with gratitude, courage and generosity  
For without them who would we be?  
Because Unity in diversity will forever exist  
But it is we who must continue to actively persist



# **Spiritual Exercises in the Western Philosophical Tradition**

**By Julian Scott**

A silhouette of a person with their arms raised in a gesture of praise or joy, set against a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise over a mountainous landscape. The sun is a large, glowing orb in the center of the sky, casting a warm, golden light across the scene. The person's arms are spread wide, and their hands are open, palms facing up. The background shows rolling hills and mountains, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a soft, atmospheric glow.



**...Philosophy was often compared to the training that athletes had to undergo in order to compete in the Olympic games.**



Although modern philosophy is mainly an intellectual pursuit, it has had immense impact on the shaping of our world. The philosophy of Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626) was largely responsible for the current scientific worldview and the explosion of technology; Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) schematized the foundations of a theory of linear progress in history that has dominated the Western worldview since the 19th century to this day; and the philosophies of Hobbes (1588 – 1679) and Hume (1711 – 1776) promoted the idea of a lack of free will in human beings, whom they saw as being at the mercy of their passions, an idea which also continues to be prevalent nowadays. But modern philosophy has not been seen as a method for the transformation of the human being; in other words, it cannot save us from our unruly passions and convert us into serene sages at one with ourselves and the universe. In the world of ancient Greece and Rome, however, this was precisely the goal of philosophy: not only the transformation of our vision of the world, but also the metamorphosis of our personality, as Pierre Hadot [1] expressed it. As such a transformation is no easy matter, all the Greco-Roman philosophical schools had a series of what Hadot calls “spiritual exercises” to achieve this aim.

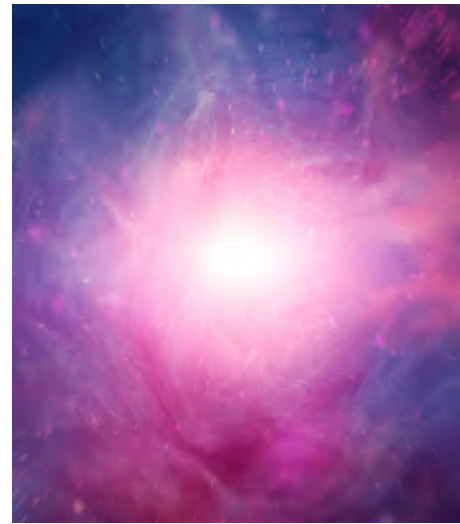
What is the meaning of spiritual exercises? The term probably originates in the *exercitia spiritualia* of St Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit religious order in the 16th Century. But Ignatius himself developed these exercises on the basis of early Christian philosophy, which in turn derived from the exercises already existing in the philosophical schools of antiquity, where they were referred to under the general term *askesis*, from which we have the word “asceticism”. The Greek and Roman spiritual exercises were not exclusively “ascetic” in the modern sense, however, as we shall see. This modern meaning of the word ‘asceticism’ arose from a Christian, mainly monastic application of the concept.

So what were the spiritual exercises of the ancient philosophical schools, and would they still be useful for a spiritual seeker of today?

For the ancients, the chief cause of suffering and disorder in man and the world were the passions (anger, greed, lust, etc.). Consequently, philosophy was seen as a therapy for the passions and its aim was to bring about a state of calm in the human soul. Consequently, one of the main spiritual exercises was to cultivate this inner calm. How did they propose to achieve it? First of all, by transforming the way we see the world. Ordinarily, we give great importance to the acquisition of wealth and fame. Our society today is still based on such criteria. But as Socrates says in *The Apology* (Plato's account of the trial and death of Socrates): "Are you not ashamed that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible, and similarly with reputation and honour, and give no attention or thought to truth or thought, or the perfection of your soul?"

To counteract this tendency in the human being, Plato proposed philosophy as a "training for death". In other words, in the knowledge that we will all die some day, we should prepare ourselves to live without a body, and this would mean dedicating ourselves to the intangible things of the soul.

One of the main exercises in all philosophical schools was therefore to practise "disidentifying" (to use a modern term) from our senses and freeing ourselves from what they called the "slavery of the desires", which force us to act in ways we don't actually want to. The Platonic exercise par excellence consisted in "separating the soul as much as possible from the body and accustoming itself to... concentrate itself until it is completely independent." [2] (Socrates himself was an excellent example of such detachment, showing an ability to withstand heat and cold, pleasure and pain, while he pursued his philosophical investigations within himself, as we find described in Plato's *Symposium*).



**For the ancients, the chief cause of suffering and disorder in man and the world were the passions (anger, greed, lust, etc.). Consequently, philosophy was seen as a therapy for the passions...**

A further fruit of this training is that it enables the philosopher to free himself from his subjective points of view (which result from his subjection to his personal likes and dislikes, fears and desires) and rise to a more objective and universal perspective. This also helps us to see things in proportion: if you realise that as individuals and even as humanity, we are only a tiny and fairly insignificant part of reality, then we will not be so fazed by all the joys, sorrows and vicissitudes of human existence.

This attitude results from another type of spiritual exercise, which is the meditation on the nature of reality and one's own place in it. Unlike many of the modern philosophers, the ancients did not think of such meditation as a purely intellectual exercise, since it must also be practised in everyday situations in order to be validated. These philosophers were not "armchair thinkers": Socrates, for example, was tried in court and sentenced to death. He remained calm, cheerful and even humorous, both in court and as he awaited death in his prison cell. And Plato was once sold into slavery (but subsequently ransomed by a friend). None of them had an easy life, and philosophy was often compared to the training that athletes had to undergo in order to compete in the Olympic games. Indeed, in ancient Greece, philosophy was actually taught in the gymnasium.

**The Stoic philosophers particularly recommended continuous vigilance and presence of mind, a self-awareness that never sleeps, and concentration on the present moment.**





Philo of Alexandria, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher of the 1st century BC, made a list of different spiritual exercises used in the philosophical schools of his time. These included: thorough investigation, reading, meditations, listening, attention, self-mastery, indifference to indifferent things, therapies of the passions, remembrance of good things and accomplishment of duties.

The Stoic philosophers particularly recommended continuous vigilance and presence of mind, a self-awareness that never sleeps, and concentration on the present moment. They, and other schools before and after them, recommended reflecting at the beginning of the day on what awaited them and how they would respond to it; followed by an examination of conscience at the end of the day in order to pursue a path of continual self-improvement. Some schools also recommended examining one's dreams, and even controlling them, as well as preparing oneself for sleep by calming the passions and awakening the rational faculty with "excellent discourses".

In short, we can see that all these exercises were a natural part of "philosophy as a way of life". They recognize the mind of man and its importance – the need to think things through for ourselves – as well as the need for regular practice and implementation of our moral values and principles, and the need to see ourselves as part of a greater whole which is governed by a "universal reason" or intelligence.

***One of the main exercises in all philosophical schools was therefore to practise "disidentifying" (to use a modern term) from our senses and freeing ourselves from what they called the "slavery of the desires" ...***

The Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus (204/5 – 270 A.D.) described three stages of the philosophical path towards what he called The Good (the highest good that man can conceive): “We are instructed about it by analogies, negations... (the thinking-understanding process). We are led towards it by purifications, virtues... (virtue seen as a means of detaching ourselves from the senses) and ascents into the intelligible world” (the mystical states of ecstasy experienced by Plotinus himself).

These spiritual exercises are truly timeless and can definitely be practised with beneficial results today. They allow us to rise up to the “life of the objective spirit”, as Pierre Hadot puts it, while keeping our feet on the ground, improving ourselves day by day and maintaining an increasingly strong sense of connection with the rest of nature and the universe, of which we are a part. ✨ ✨

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[2] Plato's *Phaedo* 67c.



# **The Joy of Discipline**



**By Zarina Screwvalla**

You may ask what joy can discipline bring? Doesn't discipline suggest a rigid, regimented life? Evoking images of hard work, full of rules and regulations enforced by others that you reluctantly follow? Perhaps, we can learn more if we ask ourselves: Is discipline something that comes from outside? Or from our own will and choices? And where does the joy come? This article examines Discipline and its accompanying Joy from various perspectives.

### **Is discipline natural or does it need to be learnt?**

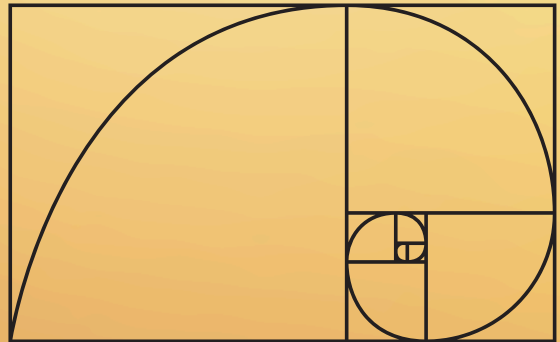
We can take some hints from the etymological roots of the word. The word 'discipline' originates from the Latin *discipulus* meaning pupil and *disciplina* which is a multifaceted word meaning knowledge, order, self-control. It's derived from the root word *discere*, which means to learn.

*Discere* meaning to learn, gives us a hint to the question. When we are young, we tend to learn discipline by observation and practice, demonstrated by the good example of our parents, teachers or other elders. As we grow and practise discipline in the various aspects of life, we begin to see the results of our discipline, and it becomes more ingrained in us.

Kathak dancer, Aditi Bhagwad explains to us that discipline allows her to practise till it flows like blood in the veins, until it becomes a natural part of her art. So

human beings have a choice – to practise discipline or not.

When we look at nature there seems to be an inherent discipline manifesting as order; an underlying intelligent order determined by laws, resulting in harmony, efficiency, and beauty. The mysterious Fibonacci sequence for example, is expressed in myriad aspects of nature, from the whirling spirals of a sunflower's florets to ocean waves, to spiral galaxies. The strict proportion between the numbers gives rise to order, beauty and allows for growth in an efficient way.



In her book *Philosophy for Living*, Delia Steinberg Guzman says "*Order is not a human invention. The whole of nature moves according to a visible rhythm that is the reflection of an order, of a law.*" We can see this in the ebb and flow of the oceans, in the seasons.

We can take inspiration from the way the planets move around the sun, from their perfectly tuned rhythm and harmony with each other, which allows for life to flow in

a particular direction. Delia continues, *"When someone leads an ordered life, they are simply following the dictates of nature"*.

Delia also says, *"If human beings develop in an ordered way their progress will be more marked and they will have fewer problems. Not because the problems don't exist, but because they will be able to find workable solutions within the order in which they move"*.

An example. In November 2023, we witnessed the gruelling rescue efforts of 41 workers who were trapped for 17 days in the Silkyara tunnel in North India. Hope often seemed dim but Dr Rohit Gondwal, who was overseeing their mental counselling outside the tunnel, commended the workers for maintaining calm and "displaying the highest order of discipline." An article in a leading newspaper explained how this played a pivotal role in their own rescue. No doubt this discipline resulted in a great joy! (1)

### **Can anything worthwhile be achieved without discipline?**

Let us consider the world of the Arts for inspiration. For many years New Acropolis, India has offered cultural events with a philosophical essence, investigating Culture as a means to build and share human values. Dhruwad exponent, Chintan Upadhyay shared with us, the experience of his rigorous daily practise of *Swar Sadhana*





which he, like many Indian classical singers, usually start at around 4am every morning. Many artists trained in the classical tradition, often speak of the discipline of the daily practise, as one of the core values they learnt through their art, and in turn it is this practice that allows them to master their art.

Similarly, if we wish to form, mould and build ourselves, we too need the constancy of daily practise. For example, if I have a tendency towards anger and decide I want to overcome it, I need to understand what causes of anger are in me and be on guard when these appear. And then resist this tendency when I notice it arising. None of this can be done without daily discipline.

Discipline allows us to persist when things go wrong. Which they inevitably will. Discipline allows us to keep going and try again in another way. Only then can we taste the joy of a sweet victory, born of our own daily effort.

### **What is the role of a strict framework of rules in discipline?**

We can again look at this from the point of a classically trained singer. Discipline allows the artist to follow the strict framework of rules of his or her art. For example, in music, there are only seven notes within which every artist must compose or perform. This is true of western and Indian music. Within these there are strict rules of music in the

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classical arts from multiple traditions. Tara Kini, classical Hindustani singer, and educator explained that the more the rules, the more classical a form becomes. She believes it is the framework of rules that builds the discipline and concentration needed to apply oneself in one's art. So interestingly: we need to build the discipline to follow the framework of rules and in return the framework serves to guide us to further build our discipline.

One may wonder why do the classical arts need the framework of rules at all? Many artists have explained that this strict framework of rules allows the tradition to evolve, while keeping its essence intact. This resonates with those who practise

within a philosophical framework as well. Strict boundaries form the basis within which to perform various kinds of inner and outer work, experimenting and learning, while keeping the essence, the purpose unchanged.

**What about the creative process? Doesn't this strict discipline of following rules inhibit creativity and freedom?**

The artists don't think so. This strict framework provides clear boundaries, within which an almost infinite variety and

development is possible. Chintan Upadhyay observed that no two performances of Indian Classical music, will ever be the same. It is within the boundaries of a strict framework, that the artist gains the freedom to create his or her own art. The beauty of the world is thus enriched through discipline and structure.

Thespian, singer and movie star, Julie Andrews said *"Some people regard discipline as a chore. For me, it is a kind of order that sets me free to fly."*

Freedom or its absence depends on the form discipline takes. At the most basic level we have discipline which is enforced on us from the outside. If it goes against our own will or what we believe is right, then it is a kind of tyranny. On the other hand, when we choose to discipline ourselves, we begin to see that discipline brings not only joy, but also an essential freedom. The freedom to respond to life in an appropriate manner. Discipline helps us to control our personality with its innumerable impulses, desires, likes and dislikes. We now begin to gain the stability to act as we know to be right. This is a wonderful kind of freedom.

We can ask ourselves: what is the framework I wish to build for myself in order to be free to fly? In order to fulfil the purpose of my life, to live with meaning, service, and Joy?



## Ethics, Service and Discipline

It seems discipline can be applied to everything we do in life – for good or bad. We need discipline to become a good athlete, a ballet dancer or pianist. We need it to be a good mother, in order to arrive at work every day despite tiredness or moods. On the other hand, it is also true that even Hitlers' SS performed their terrible deeds with some form of discipline. However, cruelty & oppression are not a part of the discipline we speak of here. What interests us is a higher discipline, practised to inculcate human values in order to be of service to the world. Disciplined behaviour when it is directed by ethics, when it aligns with values and virtues, with what is Good, True, Beautiful and Just, it serves the good of all. So, to be of Service, discipline needs an ethical base. And this perhaps is the highest form of discipline.

***“Some people regard discipline as a chore. For me, it is a kind of order that sets me free to fly.” - Julie Andrews***



**Where is the Joy of Discipline to be found? In the actual practise of discipline or in the results that follow?**

Perhaps both. But if we can learn to find joy in the actual practise of discipline, it is a wonderful thing. We cannot really control the result of our actions, but we can learn to control our own inner action and build the persistence and constancy required to free ourselves from the pulls of our opinions, preferences and untamed impulses, enabling us to build the philosophical values and virtues. With each instance of resistance, discipline, and will that we practise, there is a Joy. The joy of victory.

The great philosopher of ancient Greece, Plato said, “For a man to conquer himself is the first and noblest of all victories.” ✨

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WORLD  
PHILOSOPHY  
DAY

# CELEBRATING WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY: BUILDING UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY



Compiled by *The Acropolitan Editorial Team*

By establishing World Philosophy Day, UNESCO has underlined the enduring value of Philosophy as a discipline that can transform individuals & societies, by developing critical thinking, & responding to the various moral and social challenges facing the world today. New Acropolis International celebrated this day with the theme **Building Unity through Diversity**, in over 500 branches across 50 countries. In Mumbai and Pune, panel discussions were held on philosophy's role in bridging fields like art, science, business, education, dance, and philanthropy; at the National Gallery of Modern Art and Deccan Gymkhana respectively, with members of diverse group of professions and thinkers coming together to exchange & understand each other's viewpoints. An audience of over 200 gathered in Mumbai and over 130 gather in Pune to celebrate this day.

**Mumbai's panel included Yaron Barzilay**, Philosopher & National Director of New Acropolis India (North); **Mandakini Trivedi**, dancer, choreographer and cultural educator; **Amish Tripathi**, celebrated author, media personality, broadcaster & former diplomat; **Inakshi Sobti**, CEO Asia Society (Indian Centre); and **Lobsang Phuntsok**, former monk & Founder President of Jhamtse Gatsal children's community.



Below, in their own words, are excerpts from the stimulating discussion by the members of the panel, who brought their diverse backgrounds and varied world views to their observations.

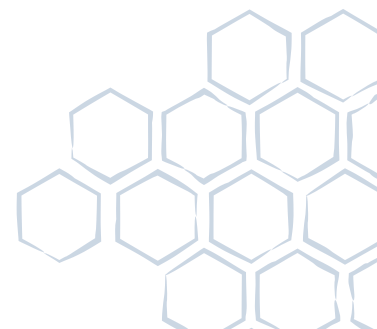
Head of New Acropolis Mumbai, **Sivan Barzilay**, introduced the topic and set the tone for the discussion by observing, “The degree of development of an ecosystem is defined by the value of its diversity. All the parts that make up the system contribute to its wholeness, and its unity depends on the links between its parts. A human society with diversity is capable of responding to various challenges, as long as all the parts orient themselves to unity. Unity though diversity translates into many domains. Today, perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing us is how ONE and DIVERSITY can create a peaceful co-existence. Towards this goal, over the last 68 years, New Acropolis around the globe has helped forge co-existence & build hope for a greater future.”

**MANDAKINI TRIVEDI**, *exponent of the classical Indian dance Mohiniattam, has performed at prestigious dance festivals in India & abroad. Her chief work is in understanding & teaching the art of Indian dance as a transcendental form rooted in subtle yogic principles. She has received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for her contribution to Mohiniattam, and has established an institution where she imparts training to young dancers.*

MANDAKINI: I think every aspect of life comes from your particular world view. Entertainment is an expression of a capitalist world view. It is meant to lull the senses, the mind and the consciousness. It is an escape that people are looking for. But the Classical Arts stem from a transcendental world view of life, the purpose of which is to transcend the ego and the personal. These arts are Non-Personal. Their forms are extremely stylized and their content is Myths and stories, that take me away from myself but addresses the universal.



The degree of development of an ecosystem is defined by the value of its diversity.



What unites everything is *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*: that which is truth has to be beautiful, that which is auspicious is for the upliftment of the human being. The purpose of these arts is to move from outward to inward, from personal to non-personal, from lower to higher, from gross to subtle.

Transcendental gives the impression that it looks away from the world. On the contrary, it says look within. Beauty is already there, in nature, around you, and within you and the Classical Arts are systematically crafted to take you away from the personal, and put you in the space where the personal does not exist, so you can perceive beauty.

**AMISH TRIPATHI** gave up a highly successful career as banker and has become one of the fastest selling authors in Indian Publishing. His subject is Indian Mythology, and his books have been translated into over 20 Indian & International languages. He has hosted documentaries for Discovery TV, served as Minister of culture in the UK, and was the youngest Director of the Nehru Centre. Amish continues to tell stories rooted in Ancient Indian Culture, while making them relevant and inspirational for contemporary Indian youth.



AMISH: One of the key learnings of our theme today is that every culture has its own tradition to pass on. The difference between Mythology driven cultures and History driven cultures is that in the former there is no one, unquestioned way of living because mythology gives you many different contexts. For example, Ram said “follow all the laws”, yet does Krishna follow the laws? I have tried to show different models of heroism in my books, Ram, Krishna, Shiva, Sita. In our tradition there is no one path. We have multiple gods and different archetypes which all work for different times.

Balance is needed, within individuals, and within societies. Our Hindu tradition speaks of the law of *Dharma* as beyond religion, as that which balances, *Artha* is power, and wealth. Our religion has a goddess of wealth, yet she holds a pot that is tilted forward with gold dropping out of it, meaning balance lies in earning your wealth & spreading it.

*Kama* is not eroticism, it is the sensual pleasure of all the arts, but with balance. They are divine, enjoy them but don't get obsessed with them. The balance of all 3 lead to *Moksh*, freedom from the cycle of birth & death. And this balance naturally emerges in cultures that are Mythology driven, that celebrate different points of view.



Don't lose your roots, but be open to all forms because there is something to learn from everyone you meet, and every culture you experience.





There is a dissolving of differences, a realisation that we are all in this together, that we all have similar journeys & similar challenges, and this epiphany of solidarity and unity is what is so important.

In a broader perspective, what is philosophy and wisdom if not applied to your own life. All of us have our own way of life. I am a Hindu, but I will search for truth in any system of thought. Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism or Jainism are all wonderful philosophies, and we must be open to different points of views. And if you can look at diverse thoughts, diverse cultural and religious experiences, you will find something that will help you. That is unity through diversity. Don't lose your roots, but be open to all forms because there is something to learn from everyone you meet, and every culture you experience.

**INAKSHI SOBTI** is the Chief Executive Officer of Asia Society (India Centre). Inakshi curates public & private programmes and community initiatives to present a range of perspectives on Modern South Asia, across business, geopolitics and the Arts. Asia Society seeks to enhance dialogue, encourage creative expression & generate new ideas across India, Asia & its relationship to the larger world.

INAKSHI: The fundamental idea of the Asia Society is that we are all part of an integrated whole. To wholly understand a people you of course need geopolitical and economic context, but the arts & culture are an important platform for dialogue because we all share commonalities in food, history, inter-sections in languages and arts as well as various challenges confronting us. The realisation that development cannot happen in isolation, because we are all interlinked, and that co-existence is essential, means that we need to build a community across the sub-continent so that we can







reconcile our history unfettered from the shackles that have held us back, and really work in conjunction together.

I find that contemporary challenges expressed through the arts connect in a far stronger & deeper way than any academic panel can communicate. So, I work with diverse communities and networks in what we call “caravans” and at the end of an exhausting day when we are all sitting around together, there is a dissolving of differences, a realisation that we are all in this together, that we all have similar journeys & similar challenges, and this epiphany of solidarity and unity is what is so important.

**LOBSANG PHUNTSOK**, a former Buddhist Monk and an internationally recognised figure in the field of transformative learning and social entrepreneurship, left his life as a spiritual teacher in the US and returned to India to set up a children's community, Jhamtse Gatsal, which translates to Garden of Love & Compassion. It is a loving, learning environment for vulnerable children that teaches an integrated model of educating the heart, mind & body. He has received several prestigious awards for his work.

LOBSANG: Basically there are 2 extreme kinds of people who become monks – extremely enlightened or extremely naughty and unhappy – like me. I tried to commit suicide a number of times in childhood, so my grand-parents sent me to a monastery to save my life.



My biggest contribution to the world would be, if I can be more loving, more giving, and more compassionate.



Today, modern education is about accumulating something new. In a monastery it is not about adding, but about letting go of something that you have been holding on to that has been making you unhappy. The focus is on 'unbecoming' and it's been my honour to have the opportunity to study one of the most profound philosophies of the world: Buddhism teaches the idea of letting go of the non-essentials so as to experience the essential, to find the essence of life, and I wanted to make this education available to non-monks and non-nuns also, the education of the Heart.

Today, a huge problem is a modern disease I call Compassion Deficit Disorder. There is 'convenient' compassion, which is to alleviate guilt, and there is 'inconvenient compassion', which is when you give of yourself, something that means a lot to you, something that is hard to give, and that is inconvenient compassion, and it is this re-education of the Heart that we have to reintroduce into the country. My biggest contribution to the world would be, if I can be more loving, more giving, and more compassionate.

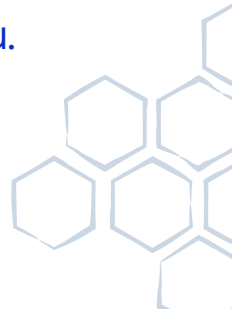


**YARON BARZILAY** is an Acropolitan Philosopher who has dedicated his life to philosophical pursuits. As the founder and director of New Acropolis India (North) he has spearheaded the expansion of the Mumbai branch, overseen the establishment of a Pune branch, and Manav Bustan (which translates to a Garden of Humanity) in the rural area of Raigarh, Maharashtra. All 3 establishments are committed to promoting culture and the spirit of volunteering, through various community building initiatives, as well as offering the invitation to reflect & introspect about ourselves, our relationship with each other, and the universe.

YARON: In our studies we engage & explore various traditions, East & West, and we try to learn how human beings saw themselves, their world, and the meaning of life. It is not about reviving what was in the past but aspiring to the best we can, in our relationships with ourselves, each other and with nature. What is essential is a Human Renaissance, the key to which is human development. And for this we cannot revive ourselves from the outside alone. On this path of Philosophy, ethics has an essential role. But the concept of ethics & values is misunderstood as Do's and Don'ts. Ethics is not what is imposed on you. It is what impels you, an inspiration that comes from within you. As Gandhiji said, "We must BE the change we want to see in this world."



the concept of ethics & values is misunderstood as Do's and Don'ts. Ethics is not what is imposed on you. It is what impels you, an inspiration that comes from within you.





We can't make everyone the same, we need to celebrate the diversity but not lose the unity. To respect the diversity and respect the deeper connection we have with one another. This is to transcend the personality, to see the other.

We understand philosophy as a state of mind & heart: *Sophia* means wisdom, and wisdom is not knowledge, like truth is not information. Wisdom includes a movement forward & upward. *Philo* is love, which is a movement towards unity. It is not intellectual, love is what brings us closer, and so it resonates with a movement of life.

The ideas of Unity and Diversity sound contradictory but I prefer to think of them as complementary. Everything in our universe expresses in duality, in polarity. The word universe, has within it, unity & diversity. And if the human being is a microcosm of the macrocosm, then we too embody both these concepts.

Life is unity & diversity at the same time. It needs to be brought into practical co-existence. We can't make everyone the same, we need to celebrate the diversity but not lose the unity. To respect the diversity and respect the deeper connection we have with one another. This is to transcend the personality, to see the other. It is the essential foundation of empathy.

The highest experience one can have is the experience of unity with life, but to interact with unity I need to open my inner eye, to see with the heart, to build the bridge between *roopa* and *arooka*, so that, as Rumi says, we begin to realize, "We are not a drop in the ocean, but the ocean in a drop".



**Pune's panel included Dr. Shraddha Shetty**, Philosopher and Branch Manager of New Acropolis Pune; **Dr. Bhushan Patwardhan**, Biomedical Scientist; **Pt. Uday Bhawalkar**, Dhrupad artist, Founder of Swarkul; and **Zarina Screwvala**, Philanthropist, Co-founder of Swades Foundation.

***DR. SHRADDHA SHETTY** is the branch manager of New Acropolis Pune which she founded in 2018. As the branch manager, she has collaborated with several institutions like Jeevit nadi, Oikos, Visda etc. to mark the significance of Philosophy, Culture and Volunteering, led many workshops and talks on Eastern and Western philosophies related to Bhagwad Gita, Tibetan Buddhism, ancient Egyptian symbolism and Greek Philosophy to name a few. She is a professional M.D.S Orthodontist who has been practicing for the last 14 years and she currently works at Ruby Hall Hospital and its branches.*

DR. SHRADDHA: We all are born, and we encounter life. In the visible realm, we have a lot of circumstances, and situations; life happens to everyone. So, one doesn't have to be an intellectual because circumstances are part of everyone's life. And that's true for all human beings, right? So, when you encounter life, there is the mind that questions – Why this way and why not that way? Why do some people like this and some people like that? There are questions related to the causes of things. At some point in life, I think everyone has these questions. You want to understand a little more than what is the most apparent answer. You want to go deeper in your understanding. Then, another criterion is that you need to have an open mind. If you are in love with wanting to know the truth, then you don't stop, even when the answer doesn't fit into what you would like to hear. You go deeper because you love something, you want to know. And if you do, how do you know any of the answers? You can, first of all, try borrowing ideas. When you borrow ideas, you don't really know them because it's not yours. So, what do you do? Just like in science, you work with a hypothesis. This may help you understand what could be the reason for things. And then



If you are in love with wanting to know the truth, then you don't stop, even when the answer doesn't fit into what you would like to hear.



you take that idea and you experiment with it. And then you come to some sort of analysis-based conscious learning from the application of things. And then you extract something, and then you go back to your inner reflections. With this, you keep an inner life alive so that you can balance your outer life. We need to have an inner life and we need to have an outer life. The idea of philosophy therefore is for anyone who has life. And we consider ourselves alive. Everyone has a mind. Everyone has circumstances. We can really come to some kind of a clarity for our own life and continue to build on this. I think this is being human, and philosophy is very much a part of being human in my view.

**DR. BHUSHAN PATWARDHAN**, a biomedical scientist, has made significant contributions to traditional medicine research, higher education, and institutional governance. With 2 US and 8 Indian patents, he serves as National Research Professor - Ayush for India's Ministry of Ayush and Ayush India lead for WHO's Global Traditional Medicine Centre. Dr Patwardhan's scholarly books 'Integrative Approaches for Health' and 'Innovative Approaches to Drug Discovery' both published by Academic Press Elsevier have received excellent reviews. His recent book 'Genome to Om' speaks about the evolving journey of Modern Science to Meta-Science.





now is the time to take a pause, look back, and make a mid-course correction for universal well-being, which is the purpose of science.

DR. BHUSHAN: What is the purpose of science? If science is trying to understand nature, philosophy is understanding the nature of that nature. In our Bharatiya Gyan Parampara, we have a concept of Gyan, which we can probably equate with information or knowledge, simple knowledge. Second is Vigyan. Vigyan is Vishesh Gyan. So, if you excel in a certain part of that, it becomes science. Something is beyond that. This is Pragyan. And I must tell you that in science, the majority of discoveries have not come only from experimentation in the laboratory. They come through intuition. Friedrich Gauss, one of the most eminent self-taught mathematicians, said that what he derived, he knew already. And he worked backward to prove what he knew. The same thing is true with Ramanujan. Einstein also accepted this.

Although modern science has made great progress, for what purpose are we using it? We are using today's modern science mostly to satisfy ego, greed, and profit. For whom are today's scientists working? Business? Or for people? These questions are extremely important. Is it going in the right direction? We are challenging the trajectory that modern science has taken today and saying that now is the time to take a pause, look back, and make a mid-course correction for universal well-being, which is the purpose of science.

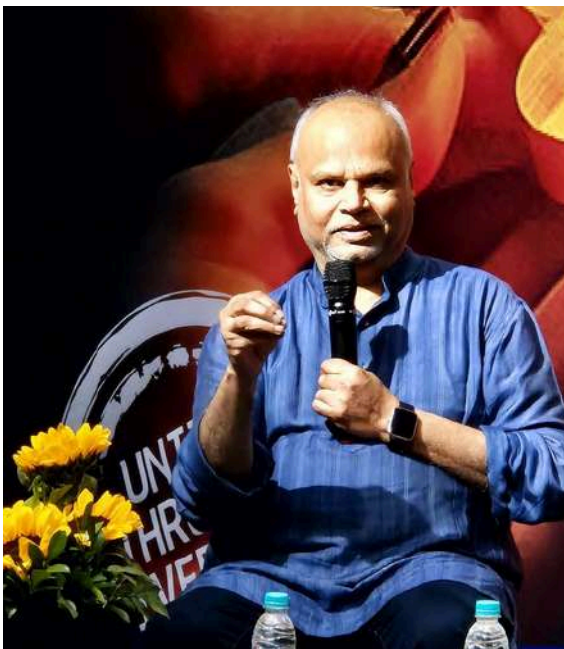
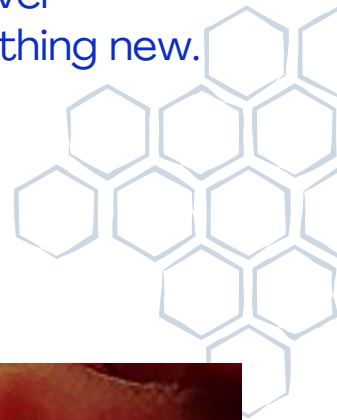
**PT. UDAY BHAWALKAR**, is among the foremost Dhrupad vocalists and has been a strong force in its growing recognition, popularity and resurgence, worldwide. Dhrupad is a living and evolving classical music tradition in which Uday has developed a unique style deeply embedded in raga, ras and bhaav. Pt. Uday spent over 12 years studying and living in the traditional guru-shishya parampara with Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar (Vocal) and Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar (Rudra-Veena), the towering pillars of the Dhrupad tradition. Pt. Uday founded the Swarkul foundation which in essence is a residential Gurukul for fully dedicated Dhrupad students to learn, practice, develop and become an accomplished Dhrupad musician.

PT. UDAY: You are always in search of betterment in whatever you do. I've been performing for over 40 years now, but every concert is different. After every concert, many times, I couldn't sleep for 3-4 hours because I would keep thinking about – what happened today? Where I made mistakes? Where I could have been better? What my state of mind was? What was I thinking? It's a learning process. Every concert is a learning process. Every concert, you look for betterment. But again, there is no guarantee that the next concert will be good because I'm thinking for three hours tonight. Even if I make a mistake, it's not a problem. But I will never stop, and I will not be afraid. That's the path of art – there is no destination. The whole life is a journey in art and music. It's a journey where every moment, every day, you are enjoying, and every day you discover something new.

In music, the *swara*, the *raga*, and *laya* – which means the tempo – these three things themselves are a mystery. When you are in search of mystery, or you are trying to touch the mystery, or you are trying to find yourself in that mysterious world you are touching upon, you are learning the philosophies in there.



The whole life is a journey in art and music... where every moment, every day, you are enjoying, and every day you discover something new.





**ZARINA SCREWVALA** is an Indian entrepreneur and philanthropist. She is currently the Managing Trustee of Swades Foundation, a foundation dedicated to Rural Empowerment in India. With 300+ strong teams and 1000+ volunteers at the Swades Foundation, her organization strives hard to find and execute solutions to the multiple challenges Rural India faces. Swades work encapsulates sections of rural Maharashtra and is currently focused on the districts of Raigad and Nashik. Zarina is also an active member of New Acropolis Mumbai and heads the New Acropolis Culture Circle Mumbai.

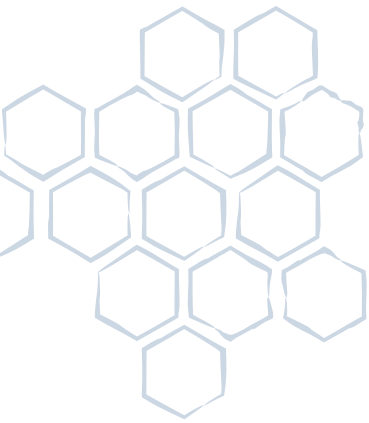
ZARINA: Philanthropy and philosophy share a common word, philos, which is love. I think in the end, whether it's the arts or it's religion or it's science or it's philanthropy or it's philosophy, it's about understanding the nature of love.

When we started Swades, we had over 1,000 villages where we were working in six blocks of Raigad district in Maharashtra. I began to realize that though it looked very good from the outside, something was terribly wrong. And I owe this realization to our study of philosophy – that the changes we were trying to make were very external. The real



I think in the end, whether it's the arts or it's religion or it's science or it's philanthropy or it's philosophy, it's about understanding the nature of love.





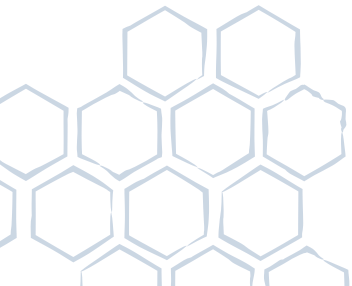
changes that we needed to make in our community had to come from their hearts and minds. So, we made a very brave decision to stop working for eight months. During this time, we continued with basic work but re-evaluated our approach entirely. This led to the creation of the Village Development Committees, which are now the lighthouses of the village. They are the ones who volunteer, roughly 10 or 12 people – men, women, youth, in certain proportions, and we invite them to come and learn how to change their own lives. We didn't want anyone to be dependent and asking and taking. Now they're generous. They share their knowledge and they're our deepest inspiration for all that we do really.

**Dr. Shraddha** concluded: We've had lovely discussions with individuals who have a goal or are inspired by understanding the mystery of life. The goal of philosophy itself is also not the end. It also has a goal to explore the mysteries of life. Anyone who began to explore this, was inquisitive about the mysteries of life, about the beauty that exists in the cosmos, about the beauty that exists in the human beings. It is idea of uniting - Yoga is something that we also speak about, Pt. Uday spoke about, Dr. Bhushan spoke about, everyone speaks about it, it's quite a known word, but it isn't just physical asanas. I resonate in my mind with an idea, but my feelings, they don't support it, because it's uncomfortable. And eventually I'm not able to bring the idea to action because it's very broken in between my ideas, my feelings, and my actions. There isn't any yoga inside of me.





When the individuals who are scientists or artists or philanthropists, ... are elevated through values, virtues, learning, open-mindedness, inquiry, love for the mystery, for wisdom, for what is true, what could be true, when an individual is elevated, then in whichever field you may work, you will make an impact.



Pyramid has been a beautiful symbol, across traditions. In fact, any sacred architecture, whether a temple or a mosque or any of these, will have the structure of a dome like a pyramid. Pyramid also is a structure which was built by the ancient Egyptians, but not only by them. It is said that, it also symbolizes this concept of a man, a human being. The word pyramid comes from 'pyre' which means fire, which is also this idea of elevation. The idea that the base is wider and you move towards a common goal. It's the idea from plurality towards unity, from diversity towards unity.

A human being thus is able to elevate through art, or through scientific inquiry, or through philosophical inquiry in the day-to-day life or through philanthropy, or anything. If a human being is able to elevate and find that one voice which resonates with you the most and from that meaningful place, if one is able to bring it back to all the aspects of your life, then that human being becomes a pyramid, a symbol. The expression of science is not the same as the expression of arts, nor same as the expression of philanthropy. These are different expressions. Each one has its unique space. When the individuals who are scientists or artists or philanthropists, when they themselves are elevated through values, virtues, learning, open-mindedness, inquiry, love for the mystery, for wisdom, for what is true, what could be true, when an individual is elevated, then in whichever field you may work, you will make an impact. And any person who will come in contact with this will be inspired and will want to elevate himself.

The goal is to move towards the betterment of everyone in my view. If, this is the goal, we can learn to have mutual respect towards different expressions and mutual collaboration between the different expressions. It's like the pyramid. The four faces of the pyramid are not the same. Yet, but when you climb up, you come closer to each other. To understand this idea, we need to be small pyramids and there's a civilization which is the bigger pyramid. Yes, this is the idea of unity through diversity. ✦✦

# NEWS SPOTLIGHT

Among the varied activities conducted by New Acropolis Mumbai and Pune the last quarter, the spotlight fell on the celebrations for **World Philosophy Day**. New Acropolis India (North) marked World Philosophy Day on November 21 and 29, 2024, with engaging events in Pune and Mumbai respectively, under the theme "Building Unity Through Diversity." In this issue is featured a detailed article for your reading.

**The Indian EXPRESS**  
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

## World Philosophy Day: 'There's no one path', says author Amish Tripathi on models of heroism in Indian mythology

Amish Tripathi was among the speakers at a panel discussion on 'Unity through Diversity' organised by New Acropolis, Mumbai to celebrate World Philosophy Day 2024 on Friday.

Written by **Hena Khundelekar**  
Mumbai | November 30, 2024 14:46 IST



Amish Tripathi, Mandakini Trivedi and Yaron Barzilay at a panel discussion on "Unity through Diversity" organised by New Acropolis Mumbai to celebrate World Philosophy Day 2024

**PUNE PULSE**

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## World Philosophy Day To Be Celebrated On November 21 By New Acropolis Pune

By Pune Pulse | November 21, 2024



**PHILOSOPHY BUILDING UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY**

**PANEL DISCUSSION**

As an individual strives to create diversity, unity with his or her own Greek thought means something. But in the modern-day scenario, there aren't only leaders, other humans and nations. This project presents a chapter that will probably work for the attainment of all.

Join us this World Philosophy Day on World Acropolis Pune Online Streaming Event with Dr. Shradha Shetty, who will be a speaker, and a panel discussion on how Philosophy can help bring unity through diversity.

**Dr. Shradha Shetty**  
Branch Manager  
New Acropolis Pune

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Branch Manager  
New Acropolis Pune

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New Acropolis Pune


**Dr. Shradha Shetty**  
Branch Manager  
New Acropolis Pune

**THE FREE PRESS JOURNAL**

## World Philosophy Day 2024: New Acropolis Mumbai Explores 'Unity Through Diversity' At NGMA Event

To celebrate World Philosophy Day 2024, New Acropolis Mumbai on Friday brought together five stalwarts for an evening of enriching discussion at the National Gallery of Modern Art, The Mumbai event saw around 200 participants who enjoyed spoken poetry and discussions on how philosophy can help us understand and build unity through diversity, offering a path to bring out the best in us.

Pragya Patel | Updated: Saturday, November 30, 2024, 11:17 PM IST



World Philosophy Day 2024: Parents discuss 'Unity Through Diversity' at NGMA, Mumbai | HRP Photo

**fever 94.3**  
HAPPENING HAT

## RJ Meenal interacts with New Acropolis Pune on World Philosophy Day

Nov. 21, 2024 (Thursday)

RJ Meenal from Fever 94.3 FM Pune hosted Dr. Shradha Shetty (Branch Manager of New Acropolis Pune) to speak about World Philosophy Day on her Fever Breakfast Show.



In December 2024, **Traveling Beyond: Explorations with New Acropolis India** launched its second adventure of the year, offering a unique philosophical journey to Ancient Egypt. Guided by an expert Egyptologist and an instructor from New Acropolis teaching symbolism, for members and friends of New Acropolis, this journey was more than just a tour of ancient monuments; it was an opportunity to reflect on the wisdom of the past and consider how it can continue to inspire and guide us in the present day.



## PHILOSOPHY

*"He who lives in harmony with himself, lives in harmony with the universe."*

- Marcus Aurelius

In Mumbai, a talk on **Stoicism and the Pursuit of Virtue** highlighted wisdom from Marcus Aurelius. Founded in ancient Greece, Stoicism emphasizes the importance of living with integrity, virtue, and harmony, no matter the external circumstances. Philosopher, Doctor and Branch Manager of Pune, Shraddha Shetty presented an illuminating talk on **Restoring Health through Equilibrium**, which explored the symbol of Caduceus, and how to develop balance not just in our physical bodies, but also in our thoughts, emotions and everyday choices.



In Pune, **Harmonious Coexistence** focused on the interconnectedness of nature, highlighting how every element, no matter how small, plays a vital role in the ecological balance. Another engaging talk **Bringing Ethics in Action - Lessons from Samurai** explored the timeless Importance of ethics in all professions and how to act with honour regardless of external circumstances."



The **18th Birthday of New Acropolis, India** was celebrated by members coming together to honour this special occasion. The Pune branch, vividly decorated with rangoli and lights hosted National Director Yaron Barzilay who spoke about the importance of building a philosophical companionship as a means for aspiring philosophers to support each other. At the Mumbai main centre, members presented a variety of performances through music, art, poetry, and a shadow play all using the theme of a seed transforming into a tree, as a metaphor for the growth and evolution of our school through the years.



Through an interactive talk on **The Art of Being Present: Wisdom from Haiku Poetry** participants explored how the essence of Haiku lies in its present perfect tense emphasising the Importance of Now. At the end, participants were invited to write a Haiku poem using the core principles of Brevity, Depth and Unity.



**CULTURE**

*"Art and culture are not just frills, but crucial elements of human life."*

*- Daniel Libeskind*

New Acropolis Culture Circle organized a guided viewing of an international exhibition of Ancient Sculptures, at the Chatrapati Shivaji Vastu Sangrahalaya. The comparisons of the myths and symbols depicted by artists and sculptors across many ancient eastern and western civilizations, showcased the similarities and interconnectedness of these diverse cultures that fostered a deeper understanding of the universal values of our human heritage.





## VOLUNTEERING

*"No one is more cherished in this world than someone who lightens the burden of another."*  
- Joseph Addison

**A Blood Donation Drive** in collaboration with Masina hospital was hosted at our Colaba centre, and volunteers gave of themselves generously and wholeheartedly to replenish the blood bank, effecting a profound impact on the lives of those in need.



## Volunteers Seminar at Manav Bustan

56 volunteers of New Acropolis India North, celebrated the International Volunteer Day at the rural centre of New Acropolis India (North) - Manav Bustan, in Mangaon, Maharashtra over the weekend of December 7 and 8, 2024. This annual seminar for active volunteers from Mumbai and Pune, is a deeply awaited weekend because it gives the volunteers a special opportunity to learn, serve and bond together over two days. Activities included classes by the National Director, practicing active philosophy collectively, comprehending the ecological work done, respecting the sacredness of the Forest, beautiful evening walks by the river, collaborative fraternity over seva, music and joy over dinner and a campfire. Each active volunteer contributed with immense enthusiasm and love to make this annual weekend a deeply memorable experience of imbibing philosophy and experiencing what a collective spirit can achieve.



# Living PHILOSOPHY

**16 Week Foundation Course** | For Philosophy as a Way of Life

## KNOW MORE ABOUT THE COURSE

Visit the website:

**[www.livingphilosophy.in](http://www.livingphilosophy.in)**

### PUNE

Free Intro: Tue 11 Feb, 7:30-9:30pm ([Register Here](#))

Course Begins: Tue 4 March, 7:30-9:30pm

Venue: Pune Branch, Row House No. E-6,

Gera Classics Condominium, Next to St. Meera's college,

Koregaon park road, Pune, Maharashtra 411001

Connect on WhatsApp:+91 9284263882

### MUMBAI

Free Intro: Tue 11 Feb, 7:30-9:30pm ([Register Here](#))

Tue 25 Feb, 7:30-9:30pm ([Register Here](#))

Course Begins: Tue 4 March, 7:30-9:30pm

Venue: Eclipse Wellbeing Hub & School,

902, #9th Floor, Linking Road. Santacruz , Mumbai, 400054

Connect on WhatsApp:+91 9769291908



**Sat  
8 Feb**

Free Event

**6 pm (2 hrs)  
at Mumbai Centre  
(Colaba)**

[Register Here](#)



## **A SEARCH FOR MEANING BEYOND THE VISIBLE**

*Inspired by Plato's Allegory of the Cave*

Plato suggests that we live our daily lives enchanted by illusory shadows inside a cave. What about our reality is an illusion? How might one break free from the ignorance of illusions to find Truth – about the Self, and about the meaning of Life? Join us as we explore the timeless teachings from Plato's Allegory of the Cave about finding a Path to Wisdom, and discovering a meaningful purpose in life.

## **IN SANTACRUZ W, MUMBAI**

**Tue 11 Feb  
&  
Tue 25 Feb**

Free Talk

**7:30 pm (2 hrs)  
at Eclipse Wellbeing  
Hub & School,  
Santacruz W**

[Register for 11 Feb](#)

[Register for 25 Feb](#)



## **FREE INTRODUCTION TO LIVING PHILOSOPHY COURSE**

**2 hours once a week | 16 weeks**

**Discover Philosophy as a Way of Life**

Living Philosophy is an opportunity to discover ourselves and the world around us. With the insights of ancient philosophies and human wisdom put into practice in everyday life. Extract practical tools through the course to learn to live with more meaning, depth and sustained happiness. Explore the path of inner change as a key to actively contribute towards building a better world.

Register for one of the free introduction sessions to learn more about the course!

For more details: <https://livingphilosophy.in>

## PUBLIC EVENTS NEW ACROPOLIS PUNE

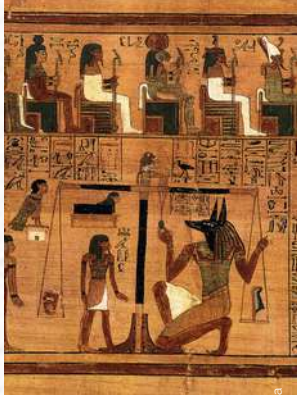
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**Sat  
8 Feb**

Philosophical  
Talk

**6 pm (2 hrs)  
at Pune Branch**

[Register Here](#)



### **WAY OF THE HEART – KEYS FROM ANCIENT EGYPT**

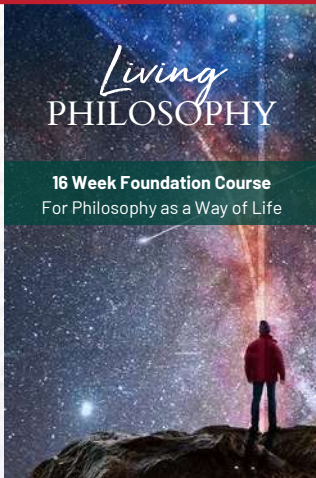
From the wisdom of the Egyptian tradition, a striking visual called “The trial of the Heart” uncovers valuable and practical keys on how to live a meaningful and ethical life. Join us to discover the mysteries of ancient Egypt and be inspired to follow the Way of the Heart!

**Tue  
11 Feb**

Free  
Introduction

**7:30 pm (2 hrs)  
at Pune Branch**

[Register for 28 Jan](#)  
[Register for 11 Feb](#)



### **FREE INTRODUCTION TO LIVING PHILOSOPHY COURSE**

**2 hours once a week | 16 weeks  
Discover Philosophy as a Way of Life**

Living Philosophy is an opportunity to discover ourselves and the world around us, with the insights of ancient philosophies and human wisdom put into practice in everyday life. Extract practical tools through the course to learn to live with more freedom and sustained happiness. Explore the path of inner change as a key to actively contribute towards building a better world.

**This event is a Free Introduction to learn more about what this course offers. Hope to see you at either one of the sessions.** For more details: <https://livingphilosophy.in>

# PUBLIC EVENTS NEW ACROPOLIS PUNE

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**Sat  
1 Mar**

Philosophical  
Talk

**6 pm (2 hrs)  
at Pune Branch**

[Register Here](#)



Canva & New Acropolis

## HOMER'S ODYSSEY: A TIMELESS VOYAGE OF SELF-DISCOVERY

The great adventure of the Greek hero Odysseus, is a profound journey of self-discovery and personal transformation that awaits each of us, when we are able to face the triumphs and trials of our daily lives with courage and a desire to grow.

The talk will be conducted by **Acropolitian Philosopher and National Director of New Acropolis India (North), Yaron Barzilay**, during which we will draw inspiration from this epic and set out on a quest to discover how we can bring more meaning and purpose to our everyday choices and actions.

**Sat  
8 Mar**

Philosophical  
Talk

**6 pm (2 hrs)  
at Pune Branch**

[Register Here](#)



Wikimedia Commons

## RESTORING HEALTH THROUGH EQUILIBRIUM

The Caduceus is a symbol representing dynamic equilibrium. In Greek mythology, the Caduceus was the staff given to Hermes by Apollo. Maybe there is a key towards healing that we can learn from its symbolism. What if we could learn this art of balance, not just within our physical bodies, but also within the opposing pulls within our psyche, and eventually between our deepest ideas and sentiments and our outer choices?

Dis – ease which manifests in our bodies, perhaps gives us a clue on what within us we need to pay attention to, what we need to bring back in proportion, in order for us to regain our equilibrium and therefore our health.

**THE ACROPOLITAN**  
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**Editorial Department**  
Editor: Malini Nair  
Editorial Team: Manjula Nanavati, Sukesh Motwani, Sofia Udaipuri, Niyamat Chimthanawala, Aradhana Mehta, Ambuj Dixit, Manasi Thacker, Neha Mehta

**New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India)**  
Yaron Barzilay  
National Director  
A-0 Connaught Mansion  
Opp. Colaba Post Office Colaba,  
Mumbai 400005  
Tel: +91 9653295816  
Email: [mumbai@acropolis.org](mailto:mumbai@acropolis.org)  
Web: [www.acropolis.org.in](http://www.acropolis.org.in)

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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.

## OUR CENTERS

### MUMBAI (CENTRE)

A-0 Ground Floor, Connaught  
Mansion, Opp. Colaba Post Office,  
Colaba, Mumbai, Maharashtra 400005

Tel: +91 96532 95816

### PUNE (BRANCH)

Row house No. E-6, Gera Classics  
Condominium Next to St. Meera  
College, Koregaon Park Road Pune,  
Maharashtra 411001

Tel: +91 92842 63882

### MANAV BUSTAN (RURAL CENTRE)

Tamhane Tarf Goregaon,  
Raigad District,  
Maharashtra

Tel: +91 98330 33239

