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THE ACROPOLITAN

A Magazine on Philosophy, Culture & Volunteering

FEATURE

Onset of a New Golden Age
A Stoic Guide to Our Emotions
The Secret Truth of Ceremony
Driving Down the Foodmiles
Schedule of Public Events





PHILOSOPHY

CULTURE

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THE ACROPOLITAN

In Ancient Greece, the Acropolis referred to the sacred centre, that lay higher than the rest of the city. It was a place of inspiration; a bridge that enabled citizens to connect to the divine, evoking the expression of the higher human virtues. Deriving inspiration from its purpose, The Acropolitan Magazine serves as a tribute to every citizen yearning for these higher principles in all aspects of Life: **Truth, Beauty, Justice, Goodness.**

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PHILOSOPHY when practical, helps us to know and improve ourselves. It is a way of life, not an intellectual attitude, committed to the best aspirations of humanity.



CULTURE broadens our understanding of life, and fosters a spirit of mutual respect and solidarity, strengthening human dignity and facilitating harmonious coexistence.



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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From The Editorial Desk

Dear Reader,

As life blooms all around, singing the arrival of the Spring, the philosopher can't help but be mesmerized by the beauty with which Nature adorns herself. It is as if She is celebrating the departure of the old, by rejuvenating, and colorfully extending her invitation to a renewed order. How delightful that around the globe, human civilizations were able to find ways to be able to participate in this moment of transition, through festivals such as *holi* or *purim*. Although different in the way they are celebrated, each of these holidays symbolize the chaotic scattering of the old, clearing the way for the arrival of the new.

It is an opportunity for us to deepen our investigation of life! Whether by traveling across continents to explore enchanting corners of the Amazon rainforest, or even just the simple run to the convenience store around the corner, to pick up your favorite snack – each can be enriching, insightful, and transformative – if only we dare to live every moment with more meaning, depth, consciousness. In doing so, perhaps we might stumble upon our own potential for generosity, for compassion, for justice – virtues that formed the very spirit of chivalry that enabled man to govern himself, rather than be enslaved by erratic emotions and thoughts.

Let us use the blossoming of life as the impulse to nurture the blossoming of human virtue. Let us empower ourselves to pave the way for the onset of a new Golden Age. Let us dare to Discover, Awaken, and Transform.

Hariato H Mehta. *Editor.*

Life Lessons from the Amazon

By Trishya Screwvala

"Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better."
- Albert Einstein

The brief time that I recently spent in Peru's southern Amazon Forest, really opened my heart to the beauty and infinite wisdom that nature has to offer. The potent combination of heat and humidity makes the Amazon the largest rainforest on Earth, with over four hundred billion trees, 16000 different species, growing in the region¹. The unpredictable murky river, and the dense tree cover that envelops the jungle renders the forest floor almost completely dark. It gave me the impression that beyond the obvious abundance of life, the unique biosphere contained deep mysteries, revealed only to the traveler willing to embark on an inward journey.

A four-hour boat ride and a short hike through the thick foliage brought us to what would be our home for a few days; a rustic but comfortable lodge unobtrusively and elegantly constructed with organic materials from the region. Electricity was completely solar-powered, which meant it was limited to just a few hours a day, and all toiletries and cleaning products were organic, ensuring as close to a zero-carbon-footprint as possible. Our shutterless room was completely exposed to the environment, and I must admit that the first night was angst-ridden; just a bed net protecting me from the noisy forest that echoed the loud cries of cicadas, and the eerie bellowing of howler monkeys. My imagination ran wild..which deadly creature might be crawling underneath my bed?

However, my fear was replaced with awe when we made our way through the dense jungle at the crack of dawn the next morning. The forest was teeming with life. I was overwhelmed by the sheer variety of trees that stood side-by-side, each with their own unique survival mechanism, individually



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hosting mini-ecospheres of lichens, reptiles, insects, monkeys, and dotted with magnificent red macaws and other exotic birds endemic to the region. I deeply sensed the immense spirit of the place and the oneness of all life. And I was struck by the fact that even in solitude, I was not alone. For a moment, I became one with the soaring Harpy Eagle, and the gigantic Kapok tree, with its expansive roots firmly in the ground that enable it to grow endlessly upwards, towards the sky.

Every resident plant, insect and animal plays an essential role in the Amazon. The tiny termite reprocesses dead wood to help plants maintain healthy roots. The elusive puma keeps the population of animals lower down in the food chain in check. Observing the countless life forms of the forest living together in harmony, it was amazing to see this inherent interconnectedness of life expressed; to realize that perhaps we are all a part of something much larger than our own individual selves. I couldn't help but wonder that if every plant, every insect, every bird and every animal had a specific purpose as part of the collective ecosystem, maybe human beings also have a role to play in nature!

Beyond the obvious
abundance of life, the
unique biosphere
contained deep mysteries,
revealed only to the
traveler willing to embark
on an inward journey.



Interestingly, indigenous Amazonian tribes are deeply reverent towards nature, and this is deliberately nurtured from the very instant a child is brought into this world. Immediately after birth the baby is lowered into a pit dug into the earth, so that it is first greeted by *Pachamama*, the Andean deity related to Mother Earth. Then, the nutrition-rich placenta of the human mother is buried into the pit, symbolically connecting the two mothers and enriching the earth². What a stark contrast if we were to compare this with modern hospitals, where babies are born in sterile rooms, and are separated from their mothers, who are often numbed by painkillers.

Looking at such earth-honoring traditions of many of the Amazonian tribes, it became increasingly clear that we might have forgotten our place as human beings today. Local tribes created and built products that were meant to serve for just a short time, such that they eventually returned to nature – mud houses, dugout canoes, hammocks made of vines, etc. This is in complete contrast to our world, where we have moved towards consumption-based “developed”

societies, creating nature-annihilating industries, manufacturing indestructible goods. It was eye-opening to discover that this need to create mundane products that last goes against a key principle of nature – the impermanence of life. In our ignorance, not only are we destroying nature but we fail to grasp what it means to live in harmony with its principles.

Beguiling though her beauty is, the Amazon is also a strict and unyielding teacher. Despite the initial discomfort of adjusting to the unfamiliar and seemingly unprotected environment, I was forced to transcend my fears and uneasiness - my need to constantly stay clean in the extremely hot and humid conditions, or my desperate attempt to maintain my distance from the unfamiliar creatures of the forest. When I was finally able to surrender and let go of my fears, I discovered the revitalizing effect of living as a humble part of the vast symphony of nature, rather than trying to conquer or dominate it. I had the beautiful and very visceral realization that we too are a part of this vivid web of life; but that what prevents us from living this unity with life is our own inconsolable need for control, and tendency to put up boundaries of separation.

Could it be perhaps, that the more separate our lives are from nature - from who we are - the more this force of separation and destruction seems to manifest in human society - through depression, suicide, divorce, stress and anxiety?

Perhaps it is time to investigate our role and reconsider our purpose as human beings. Should "development" be confined to industrialization and accumulating wealth alone? Do we need to broaden our definition of "prosperity" to encompass more than just financial gain? Perhaps we might begin to face present-day ecological and social crises by recognizing and humbly acknowledging our deep dependence on Pachamama...remembering that she is the great source of life, and that it is our obligation to live in harmony with her, to protect rather than exploit her. ★★★

1. Amazon Rainforest is home to 16,000 tree species, estimate suggests, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/oct/18/amazon-rainforest-tree-species-estimate>, The Guardian, 18 Oct 2013

2 Beery, Itzhak. Shamanic Healing: Traditional Medicine for a Modern World. Pub Destiny Books, Vermont, USA. 2017. 3



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A Stoic Guide to Our Emotions

By Gilad Sommer

National Director of New Acropolis in the USA, North-Central.

Part I –

Can We Trust Our Feelings?

Human beings are often said to be rational creatures, but in reality we are very much emotional creatures as well. More often than not, history is a showcase of tragic actions taken by human beings overcome by their passions. And apart from these grand-scale dramas, our everyday life is full of instances where the right thing is sacrificed for the sake of the urge, the ego, the instinct.

In great theatrical tragedies, such as the Shakespearean *King Lear* or *Romeo and Juliet*, the passionate actions taken by the protagonists lead to an unfortunate chain of events of betrayal and death.

This is the fate of characters in great dramas, but how many times have the small dramas of our everyday life developed in negative ways because of our lack of control? How many times have our passionate actions led us to a deep, dark hole?

In our pursuit of pleasures, we sometimes lose sight of the beauty all around us.

In order to develop the necessary mastery over our emotions, the Stoics recommended we should observe and understand them first, deconstruct them by recognizing their true nature. In their writings we find a startling analysis, almost a system, of the various emotions and their causes.

At the center of their psychological teachings we find the concept of *Pathos*, the unhealthy passions, agitations of the soul that are contrary to reason or nature. Those are the emotions which lead us to act against our nature, and against our best interest. It is interesting that the Greeks used the same word *Pathos* (πάθος) to indicate both passion, and suffering. Today we use this Greek root in the words 'Pathology' (the study of suffering), and 'Apathy' (the lack of passion).

The Stoics, beginning with Zeno and Hecato, divide the passions to four groups¹:

1. Epithumia – Craving or strong desire

A desire to possess something that holds an **apparent** gain for us. Anger, for example is an expression of craving, defined as the desire for punishing the person thought to have inflicted an undeserved injury.

2. Phobos – Fear

A belief of threatening evil which **seems** to the subject of it insupportable. Some examples are fear of disgrace and the fear of impending work.

3. Hêdonê – Pleasure

Newly formed **belief** of present good, and the subject thinks it right to feel enraptured [14]. Malice is one type of such pleasure, which is the enjoyment of another's ills.

4. Lupê – Sorrow (form of suffering)

A newly formed **belief** of present evil, the subject of which thinks it right to feel depression and shrinking of soul. Envy, a distress caused by another person's prosperity, is a form of irrational sorrow.



As can be seen, the passions are based on appearances, that is, on our interpretation of reality. They result from false value judgments.

Objective reality makes an impression (*Phantasia*) on our souls. This impression feeds the passion and causes us to react.

The philosopher aims to reflect (*Dianoia*) on the true nature of these impressions, and guided by the inner *Hegemonikon*, our ruling part, to act according to true value judgments.

The philosopher is vigilant, observes within, and is not led by impressions. He chooses to act according to reason.

For example, we may feel craving for a certain object, thinking it will be good for us. Yet we all know that many times we crave for things that are clearly not good for us, i.e. junk food or other addictions. In that sense, we are acting against our best interest, that is, we are acting irrationally. On the other hand, there are many things we dislike or fear, yet may be good for us in the long term.

This is what the Buddhist and Greek philosophers defined as the greatest evil – ignorance. That is, the false perception that what is good is bad and vice versa. The poison is seen as a blessing, and the blessing as poison.

We cannot trust our feelings so long as they are not purified by the light of reason. The aim is to release ourselves from the effect of ignorance-based passions, and to nurture the positive sentiments of the sage – joy, caution and wishing.

Part II – The Sentiments of the Sage

Despite the popular conception of the Stoics, in their writings, the ideal sage is not portrayed as a cold, apathetic person. By reflecting on the good and the bad, and on the true nature of things, the sage develops natural, rational sentiments – *Hai Eupatheiai*, literally, the good passions.

These are: Wish, Caution and Joy.

Joy [*Chara*], the counterpart of pleasure – rational elation.

Caution [*Eulabeia*], the counterpart of fear – rational avoidance.

Wishing [*Boulesis*], the counterpart of craving – rational appetite.

The philosopher should use utmost caution to avoid putting his soul at risk, that is, to let his soul sink into the abyss of immorality and impurity.

Joy [Charal]

If pleasure is caused by an irrational and ignorant perception, rational elation is brought forth by the enjoyment of that which is proper to the human being.

This is the joy of contemplating the ideas, of seeing the beauty of nature, of acting in the light of reason and wisdom.

In our pursuit of pleasures, we sometimes lose sight of the beauty all around us. What can we really pursue that is more beautiful than the blue skies? Richer than the human being? Deeper and more interesting than our own selves?

In the words of Marcus Aurelius: "Very little is needed to make a happy life, it is all within yourself."

Caution [Eulabeial]

Plato defined courage as recognizing what we should be afraid of, and what we shouldn't be afraid of.

Ideally the philosopher's rational outlook should allow him to avoid all fear, but if the philosopher should avoid all fear, then where does caution come into the picture?

To avoid unnecessary dangers and hindrances, but above all to avoid the dangers of the soul.

Socrates said that a man should have more fear to cause injustice than to be treated unjustly. The health and purity of the soul are at least as important as that of the body.

The philosopher should use utmost caution to avoid putting his soul at risk, that is, to let his soul sink into the abyss of immorality and impurity. It is a subtle form of caution, but the most rational, as it is occupied with taking care of that which is constant, rational and natural. Having caution in regards to the physical survival of the body, which is temporary in any case, is only second to the spiritual survival of the soul.

This means to know ourselves, to recognize those things, whether external or internal, that drag us down, pollute our soul, make us lose our center, and to avoid these things as much as possible.

The stronger we are inside, the more resistant we can be to negative external influences. But we also need to know our "trial threshold", as Jorge Livraga called it – to have the humility to know which things are beyond our mastery of ourselves, and are better to avoid completely.

This is what the Buddhist and Greek philosophers defined as the greatest evil – ignorance. That is, the false perception that what is good is bad and vice versa. The poison is seen as a blessing, and the blessing as poison.

Wishing [Boulesis]

The popular saying “be careful what you wish for” refers to irrational craving – that what we wish for may not always be what is good for us or others.

However, while the philosopher should avoid irrational craving, this shouldn't be replaced with apathetic, idle, and purposeless living.

Wishing, or *Boulesis*, is a rational appetite, it is the pursuit of the things that are truly good, for you and for everybody: the virtues, the excellent completion of your duties, the wish to improve the lives of those around you and on which you are responsible.

The meditations of Marcus Aurelius and the books of Seneca are full of these everyday wishes, which are a constant motivation for improvement and realization.

And this leads us to another question: Should one's good life come on the expense of others? In a highly competitive society like ours, one's success means another's failure. If I get a job, another hundred lose it. In a competitive society there are winners and there are losers.

This is the law of the jungle.

It is interesting, however, that the word compete originates in the Latin *competere*, which means to strive together.

Will humanity ever establish a society where one's victory does not mean another's defeat? Where one's strength does not mean another's weakness? Where one's good life does not mean another's miserable one?

So far, we haven't been able to achieve that. Maybe we've been wishing for the wrong things?

In the spirit of the Stoics, we can only answer that everything is natural. And as in nature, everything will balance out eventually. ★★★

1. English definitions are based on the translation of Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* by J. E. King.

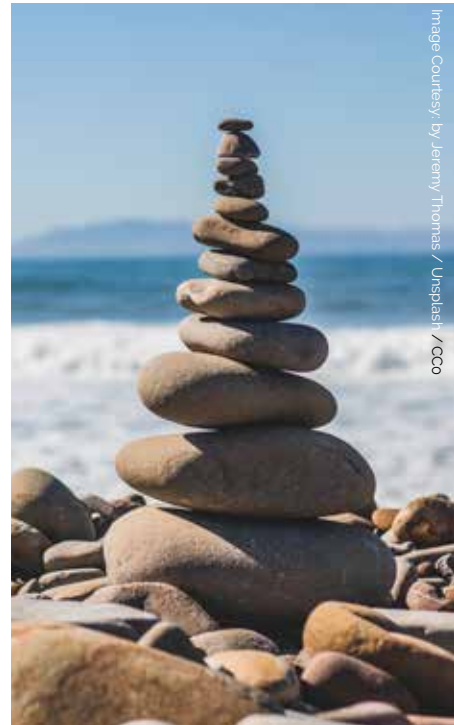


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Onset of a New Golden Age

Q&A With Pierre Poulain
By Manjula Nanavati



Pierre Poulain

At 61, Pierre Poulain exudes an integral energy. His stance is erect, as if poised for action, his eyes curious and attentive, and his speech swift and voluble.

As a Philosopher-Photographer, he combines both seemingly unrelated disciplines seamlessly. He founded New Acropolis in Israel in 1986, and has taught philosophy ever since. Today, as Regional Director he oversees New Acropolis work through the Asia-Africa-Oceania areas, while also finding the enthusiasm and passion to exhibit his photography work, and is invited to present lectures all over the world.

"Philosophy for me is what reveals the meaning of life," he says, "and Photography allows me to approach and transmit this meaning through Beauty as an aspect of Truth."

Over the last few years Pierre has added one more feather to his cap; that of writing. The Acropolitan Magazine met with this indefatigable, multi-talented, eloquent dynamo to discuss his newest book *After the Fall, History Continues...* which he describes as "a practical manual for the people of today living through these new Middle Ages."

Here are excerpts from our conversation.

THE ACROPOLITAN: Your book talks about a decline in civilization. If we were to imagine a new Golden Age, how would you envision this?

PIERRE POULAIN: All over the world, in spite of differing ideologies, religions, political systems and cultures, I think that the problem is the same. Today's civilization is purely materialistic, driven by economic benefit, and indoctrinates people accordingly. What is lacking is the ability to give central importance to human development.

My dream is of a civilization in which human beings are the heart, not one in

which human beings are exploited to serve specific personal interests. Therefore, we need a society that serves the real needs of the human being, the evolution of human consciousness. This does not exist today. But we do find examples of this vision in ancient esoteric traditions, both in the East and West.

It is this vision of a Golden Age, that we should do our best to recapture; we must do all that we can to transform our way of life so that we can come as close as possible to it. It may be strange for me to say this, but I must add that I don't think we can accomplish this in totality, because perfection is always beyond the reach of Man. But we can do a lot to approach it, because the distance that exists between it and our present reality is so enormous, that I'm convinced that even just reducing this gap would be a large step in the right direction.

TA: This is a beautiful vision for our future. But what might we practically do today to accomplish this?

POULAIN: I think the answer lies firstly in philosophy, and then in the concrete, daily application of philosophy. What does philosophy really mean? When studying philosophy at university, one is taught about philosophers, their ideas, and the history of philosophy. But you do not really learn to *be* a philosopher. Even having a doctorate in philosophy doesn't mean that the person acts and lives in accordance with his knowledge.

Philosophy is not the accumulation of knowledge. Philosophy is the love of wisdom. And wisdom is the real heart of life; to know how to live in the right way. It is not something that you can learn to do if you don't have the need for it.

It is a need to follow your heart, your *swadharna*; to become what you really are meant to be, distinctive and individual. We have to encourage people to understand their own *swadharna* and to find the courage to embrace it. This does not really happen today because we live in a world that imposes uniformity.

For a Philosopher, it is not enough to survive through the rat race of life. He has a need to truly live. And this becomes a way of life.

TA: What can we do to guard against 'cultivating the enslavement of our own ignorance' as you describe in your book?

In his Allegory of the Cave, Plato speaks of the lords of the cave, and the chained prisoners, where the chains represent our attachments. But among these prisoners, are a few who extricate themselves from their bonds and dare to exit the cave, out towards the light of the sun, the source of life, consciousness. This is a metaphor of the philosophical process of inquiry. Thereafter, there are also those who return to the Cave, in order to transmit the newfound knowledge they gained outside. You could say that it was their *swadharna* to discover and communicate the Truth.



Image Courtesy: by niu niu / Unsplash / CCO



Image Courtesy/ by Matteo Vistocco / Unsplash / CCO

Life is evolution. Evolution is movement. And movement is transmission. Transmission is essential as it creates space, in which to receive more, another step forward in evolution.

TA: This process seems totally abstract. How then might we transmit this experience in a tangible way?

POULAIN: There are many ways in which to transmit this; among them are Politics and Art. However we must understand these terms correctly.

The Politician is the one that understands the meaning of life and his life's quest is to organize society and culture in accordance with the laws of nature; based on the essential enduring reality, rather than temporary ideology. If you organize human civilization around something temporary then you perpetuate illusion, *maya*. True Politics is the governance of the *polis* (Greek: city) in an ethical and just manner.

We believe we are living in the midst of equality and democracy. But I think the real equality, the real justice, is the right that each individual has to really be who he/she really is; to allow and encourage each one to fulfill his/her own needs. The problem with the modern concept of democracy is that it has lost the concept of *swadharma*, resulting in the notion that everyone must be treated equally. While I do think we must equally provide everyone with the opportunity to fulfill their needs, I do not think everyone has the same needs. And it would be tyranny to force somebody to be something that he is not.

A pertinent example, is the problem of gender equality, and the women's liberation movement. We cannot deny the existence of biological differences, emotional differences, differences in the way we deal with people, situations, etc. But this does not mean that one way is better than the other. It's just a different perspective, another way to find solutions. Both are equally valid, and we need to respect both. Forcing a certain behavior on one gender would be disrespecting their natural identity.

The ideal society therefore would be one that allows each citizen an opportunity to nurture his/her individual abilities, and possibilities, rather than providing the exact same thing to everyone. So, this is the way of the politician.

But you also have the way of the Artist. And just as Politics encompasses justice, Art deals with beauty. Life, light, and wisdom are harmony, and harmony is beauty. Some people will instinctively react more to beauty than to justice. So to transmit philosophy through Beauty and Harmony is another way. This is the task of the Artist.

But just like politics cannot be about a personal ideology, art too cannot be personal. Both the Politician and the Artist, have to be transparent. They have to put aside their own subjectivity and become the vessel of this light, a *vahan*, of

this universal understanding.

Whether through Politics or Art, you must transmit only what exists objectively. You must transmit what IS; not your emotion, nor your ideology. Because Politics is not about *my* opinion; its real function is to help us discover the truth of life. Art is not what I think of beauty; it is to help us discover the harmony and beauty of life.

Our world needs just a few philosophers that return to the cave as real Artists/Politicians - real leaders and real mystics - and it will be enough to begin to change the way our civilization is headed, and to bridge the distance between what we have today, and the reality of a Golden Age.

TA: Caught up between the challenges of survival and living what can the individual really do?

POULAIN: You cannot expect to be able to do more than you can. But you should not do less than you can. People spend a lifetime making money, and never reach the point where they think they have enough. We waste our time simply trying to survive.

Firstly, you need to understand that you are not who you think you are. You identify with your personality (from Greek *persona*: mask) so completely that you believe that you and your personality are one and the same. But it is only a mask; it is not *you*. And this mask has a multitude of needs and desires. Without awareness of another true and higher, internal identity, obviously you will spend all your time trying to serve the needs of the mask.

This is our paramount task: to be our true self. Because that is the only real way you can contribute to making a difference. In doing so, you become an example - one that people will look at and say, "It's possible! *There* is somebody who is alive, evolving, with a sense of joy and purpose." It doesn't mean that such a person does not have difficulties. He/she too has to deal with the world: a job, a family, studies, taxes, etc. But he is not enslaved by these things. It doesn't cause him to lose his center, his happiness, his consciousness. "Wow...I want to be like that!" And this is what each one of us can do. Everyone is important. Each one has his role to play to make a difference.

When I first found a person like that, it was a shock for me because, for the first time in front of me was somebody I intuitively knew was not talking about something he had read...but that he really knew, from his heart, from the way that he lived. It was no longer about words, it was about being...like the sun, that says nothing, but is so obviously the source of all light and life.



Image Courtesy: by sasint / pixabay / CCO

TA: We live in a very logical, rational world, where everything is valued and measured, and every theory must have proof. Yet you emphasize the need for 'the intelligence of the heart'. What do you mean by that? Is the intelligence of the mind not good enough?

Yes. We are in what I would call a 'rationally limited' society. The rational mind is a tool that we use. Its purpose is to capture ideas, formulate concepts, make them visible, and transform them from the realm of imagination to the realm of reality. Using words we can link ideas and concepts together and build a logical process. Our rational minds help us to organize ourselves, our world, and our life. But I think the problem is that we try to use the rational mind to discern between right and wrong. Bear in mind that the ability to organize something logically, doesn't make it either right, or wrong.

It's enough to witness a political discussion in any parliament around the world today; politicians will have a logical argument to make a certain case and others will have another equally valid argument to make the reverse claim. Justice today has become the same. It has become a parody, based on the argument of lawyers.

Instead, we need what I call the 'intelligence of the heart'. This intelligence is also a process of the mind, but it is of the higher mind. In India this is known as *manas*. The biggest difference is that the rational process is a process in linear time: you build something one argument at a time. It relates to the reality which is in movement, which appears and disappears at moments in time. This is called the *maya*, the illusion. Because of this, every truth which is born from a rational process is a momentary truth, a temporary truth.

Real intelligence, the 'intelligence of the heart', is to understand what is permanent. To do so, one of the tools we have, though it is not the only one, is the heart, which works with life and with love.

When enslaved by the intellect, you will lose the intuition. When you put intellect aside, the heart will open - but you cannot intellectually be sure of this. And this is fantastic: it seems difficult...but it is so easy. It only seems difficult because of the kind of materialistic education we have all received, that trains us to rely on intellectual proofs.

TA: Then, for a new and better world, we need a new and better education. How might we cultivate the ability to go beyond the rational enslavement that we have created for ourselves?

POULAIN: The goal of education should be more than just trying to impart knowledge. Technical or professional knowledge can, of course, be useful. But only after children have already built for themselves a moral and ethical axis.

To be ethical means that you do not lie to your true nature. All the different aspects of your being - who are you, what you think, what you feel, what you do - must be aligned, and must serve your true reality, your true self, instead of serving external needs, or societal norms.

Sometimes along the way, we face some moral or ethical challenges. For example, I try to respect the law of any country I am visiting. But I will do so only

up to the point that this law does not come into conflict with my own ethic. As a philosopher, I will not accept any law which obligates me to act in a way that I consider unethical.

TA: You've dedicated your book to your teacher, who you call your spiritual father. India has an ancient tradition of the master-disciple bond. But today there is a resistance, because of so many bad examples in recent years. When speaking of your own investigation and discovery, what is the role of a Master?

POULAIN: You don't follow *someone*. You follow the path. The path is the same because *dharma* is one for all humanity. We have one reality, one cosmos, we share the same universe and we share the same goal; evolution.

I understand a master as somebody that is one step ahead of you on the evolutionary path. Not two steps, because that would be too large a distance, and it will not be possible for you to imagine being so far ahead. If it's just one step, you can imagine yourself reaching there. And when you move forward, he will also have moved forward - so there will always be this aspirational gap.

Secondly, a real master will never tell you what to do. He will just *be*. Like the sun. And by being he will show you what you can be. Like a mirror. In this manner, he helps you to understand the direction of the path.

Lastly, the master is the living proof that your own evolution is real and possible. So you do not follow someone. You conquer yourself and become the path.

A master will lead someone in a way such that he/she will discover the answers - because if life is One then the answer will also be One. Therefore, you cannot *give* wisdom. You can only encourage, provoke, or incite others to follow the same path so that they will discover it themselves. When they truly absorb it, when it truly transforms them, when they live it, then they have become the path and an inspiration for us all. ★★★



Pierre Poulain teaches a photography workshop.

The Esoteric Aspect of Chivalry

By Julian Scott

First published in New Acropolis bi-monthly magazine (UK) Issue 27, March-April 2018

The word 'chivalry' comes from the French 'chevalier', which means 'knight' or 'horseman'. Symbolically, the horse represents the body and its associated energies and emotions, while the rider represents the higher self of the human being, the best and noblest part of ourselves. The knight is not perfect, but is on a path towards perfection. Hence the trials that all knights go through. They sometimes fail, especially in the phase of the Quest of the Holy Grail, and sometimes they get another opportunity and then partially or wholly succeed. In the view of esoteric philosophy, the human being is perfectible; indeed, our destiny as human beings is to develop the divine part of ourselves. All this was symbolized in the esoteric art par excellence, namely alchemy: the transmutation of the man of lead (earthly, heavy and opaque) into the man of gold (shining, incorruptible, pure and endlessly giving like the sun). It is therefore not surprising that we will find many traces of alchemy in the tales of chivalry. As J.E. Cirlot says, "Knighthood should be seen, then, as a superior kind of pedagogy helping to bring about the transmutation of natural man (steedless) into spiritual man."

In the view of esoteric philosophy, the human being is perfectible; indeed, our destiny as human beings is to develop the divine part of ourselves.

The hallmark of chivalry is nobility – not of blood, but of character. And what is nobility of character but the mastery of one's lower traits by the higher, not giving in to base impulses, always striving for the good? In this sense, it is not only a product of the European Middle Ages, but a universal ethical vision. However, chivalry is best known as a medieval phenomenon, with a historical aspect and mythological aspect.

Historically, the ideal of chivalry arose after the fall of the Roman Empire, in response to the increasing barbarism of the Dark Ages. This was the setting for the legend of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, which is widely accepted as having some basis in historical fact. As

Ramon Llull writes in his classic Book of the Order of Chivalry, "There was once no charity, loyalty, justice or truth in the world. Enmity, disloyalty, injustice and falsehood came into being... [and when this happened] justice sought to recov-

er its honour." Thus, chivalry comes to restore justice, harmony and truth in an unjust and brutal world. The peak moment of the popular revival of chivalry, however, came around the twelfth century. Most scholars agree that it was inspired by the Islamic world, at that time a flourishing civilisation, which the medieval Europeans encountered through the Crusades.

From around this time came a massive revival and popularisation of the "Arthurian cycle" of stories, based on older sources but now put into literary form. The typical knight goes through trials and difficulties, often in the context of magical adventures, where he has to overcome impossible odds.

One example of this is the story of Sir Lancelot and the Dolorous Garde. This is the name of a castle which is under a curse. Many knights have attempted to lift the curse but none has succeeded. The test consists in having to fight his way through three gates, each of which is defended by ten knights. Lancelot (in this tale known as the White Knight) only succeeds because he has the help of a damsel who has been sent to his aid by the Lady of the Lake. She gives him three shields which will double, triple and quadruple his strength when it is failing.

Usually, in these stories, and in mythology in general, the damsel represents some higher element of the soul, a spiritual element which can help us in our hour of need. It is represented as a damsel, or virgin, to symbolise the purity of the spiritual element.

Then a strange and mysterious figure appears: Brandin, the "Copper Knight", the ruler of the Dolorous Garde. He appears on a wall, disturbed by Lancelot's success and, leaning over too far, falls on top of one of his own knights, killing him. Why copper? Each of the metals has a part to play in the alchemical process and is associated with one of the planets, in this case Venus. The symbolism of alchemy is highly complex and I will not attempt to decipher it here, but this "Copper Knight" is too incongruous to be anything but alchemical.

Finally, Lancelot triumphs and is led to a cemetery where the failed knights are buried. There he is shown a metal slab (metal again!). On lifting it he finds out the name of his true father, i.e. his real identity. In other words, the end of all these trials is to discover who we truly are – a question which I think many of us would love to be able to answer.

There are many such strange stories in the Arthurian legends. In the story of Parzival, by Wolfram von Eschenbach, at one point the hero finds himself in a room in a castle, when suddenly the floor begins to rotate. It gets faster and faster until he has to cling on for dear life in order to avoid being dashed against the wall. In some accounts of the trials to which candidates for Initiation were subjected, the trial of the rotating floor is not uncommon. In another Lancelot story, he has to cross a "sword-bridge" over an abyss, at the end of which two lions are waiting to devour him. His love for Guinevere (the spiritual soul?) gives him the courage to cross this painful bridge. But when he arrives at the other side, fully expecting

Chivalry was not only about external battles and adventures, but also, and perhaps most importantly, about the inner battle between the higher and lower selves of the human being.



Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons contributors. "File:Codex Manesse Ulrich von Liechtenstein.jpg - Wikimedia Commons: the free media repository" (accessed March 17, 2018).

to have to fight the lions, he finds that they have vanished; they were only magical illusions needed to try his courage. How many of our fears are illusions, created by our own minds?

There are also many intriguing images associated with chivalry. The one shown opposite, from the Manasse Codex, shows a female figure with an arrow and a flaming torch above the head of

the mounted knight. The figure almost certainly represents Venus (sometimes shown in alchemical texts with the "arrow of the secret fire"), the inspiration for the courage of the knight. Below his horse is a kind of watery (inner/astral?) world in which two demon-like figures – or one demon and one man – are battling each other, the demon pointing the arrow and the man, or other demon, defending himself with his shield. This illustrates the fact that chivalry was not only about external battles and adventures, but also, and perhaps most importantly, about the inner battle between the higher and lower selves of the human being.

Ramon Llull states that the virtues of the knight (his inner conquests) are more important than his physical prowess: "Therefore the knight who practises these things that pertain to the Order of Chivalry with respect to the body but does not practise those virtues that pertain to Chivalry with respect to the soul is not a friend of the Order of Chivalry."

There is also a rich symbolism of colours, again associated with alchemy. In Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Sir Tristram fights in a tournament and on different days and times arrives dressed in different colours, particularly green, black and red (generally in that order). Several authors believe that this is not just "for atmosphere", but is related to the stages of the alchemical work. These could be: green – the universal solvent, as in the Green Lion; black – the *nigredo* phase associated with "germination in darkness", and red – the *rubedo* phase, associated with the final stage of the work, or "exaltation".

And what is the goal of alchemy? The Philosopher's Stone, which symbolises the achievement of all powers, the mastery over oneself and nature; the power to heal, to make whole and even to prolong life. It is interesting, then, to note that in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal*, the Holy Grail is described not as a chalice but as a stone. The Grail, like a cauldron of plenty, has the power to nourish endlessly and, if the right questions are asked, to heal the King (the Self) and the Kingdom (the World).

Thus, to have a vision of the Holy Grail is equivalent to achieving the Philosopher's Stone. And to get to that goal, the knight must become absolutely pure, like Sir Galahad. In the view of the esoteric philosophy, this is not impossible. It is the fruit of a long labour of purification, symbolised by the trials and adventures of the knight. ★★★



**Where Spring, the Lord of the Seasons
by Kabir**

*Where Spring, the lord of the seasons, reigneth,
there the Unstruck Music sounds of itself,
There the streams of light flow in all directions;
Few are the men who can cross to that shore!*

*There, where millions of Krishnas stand with hands folded,
Where millions of Vishnus bow their heads,
Where millions of Brahmas are reading the Vedas,
Where millions of Shivas are lost in contemplation,
Where millions of Indras dwell in the sky,
Where the demi-gods and the munis are unnumbered,
Where millions of Saraswatis, Goddess of Music, play on the veena
There is my Lord self-revealed:
and the scent of sandal and flowers dwells in those deeps.*

From *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*
Translated by Rabindranath Tagore, Evelyn Underbill
Published by Macmillan and Co., Limited, London, 1915.



The Secret Truth of Ceremony

By Zarina Screwvala

Last year we had a very special gathering of philosophers in Mumbai, and I had the privilege of looking after the meals for this wonderful event. A volunteer was helping me and I remember, as we started our first tasting of the many meals to come, she said, "Let's make this tasting a ceremony!" Suddenly the whole atmosphere changed. We took our spoons from the chef with attention and care, and slowly scooped up the dish at the same time. We smiled as we put it into our mouths, savoured the wonderful cooking and declared it excellent! The chef was delighted as indeed were all who watched. A mundane task was turned into a memorable and meaningful one. What a joy!

Ceremonies are conducted all around us, everyday: The lighting of the Olympic torch, the opening ceremony of football games, the singing of a National Anthem, graduation ceremonies, ceremonies at birth, marriage and death, etc. Human beings have marked special moments through the use of ceremonies since times immemorial. But what if perhaps we were able to make every moment special?

A ceremony is a moment
in time and space, which
is filled with meaning,
with the sacred, with what
the ancient Egyptians
called Neter, for those
who participate and those
who behold it.

The Japanese have created ceremonies for a host of seemingly insignificant aspects of daily life. There is a ceremony called *Hanami*, to observe the exquisite cherry blossom tree, which blooms for just one week of the year, in order to cultivate an appreciation of the impermanence of life. In *Sumi-e*, the ancient art of brush painting, art becomes ceremonial as it is performed with consummate skill and years of meditative practice, meant to deepen the understanding of the essential as opposed to the non-essential. The now famous tea ceremony also demonstrates how the day-to-day can be imbued with intention and significance by consciously bringing the best of oneself to the simplest and perhaps most ordinary of tasks, thus lifting ourselves out of the mundane, and into the meaningful for a few precious moments. Perhaps, we would say, this is how we should live every moment of our whole life.

But what fundamentally is a ceremony? A ceremony is a moment in time and space, which is filled with meaning, with the sacred, with what the ancient Egyptians called *Neter*, for those who participate and those who behold it. How might we bring meaning to our actions, and to our lives? Perhaps we might add conscious purpose to our every thought, word or deed, and perform our day to day actions with Truth, Beauty and Goodness. But the fact is we are not yet ready for it; it would take too much effort to put that much concentration and attention into every moment of our lives. Hence the ancient traditions found a way to do so within a deliberately limited construct of time and space, within which to elevate our consciousness through the use of our will. And then, as if by magic, mundane matter is imbued with Spirit. It becomes an active, moving, three-dimensional symbol created by the consciousness of those who lead the ceremony and those who follow it. In this manner, ancient traditions accessed what they called sacred time – an alternate dimension of time, which acts as a bridge, connecting the transient realm with the eternal, the domain of the gods. While ancient cultures differed in the specific details of how they performed their ceremonies, it is difficult to think of any human culture, through the millennia, that did not use ceremonies as an intrinsic part of living life with meaning.

In performing ceremonies, one might say that the Ancients invited the Gods, the Ideals, to participate among us as we mark special moments and spaces. Ceremonies create sacred spaces for the Divine, here on Earth. The ancient wise man did not plead with the Gods to give him all that he wanted; instead, the wise man always asked to be blessed with the ideals, the divine qualities; they asked to be bestowed with Goodness, Truth, Beauty and Justice, not just for themselves but for all living beings. So we can say that ceremonies serve two purposes: to invite Divinity to be a part of our Life and at the same time to raise our consciousness up towards the realm of the divine. Thus a ceremony is a bridge that can connect us with the sacred. If we can achieve this, even for the briefest moment, we might undergo profound transformation.

One might wonder then, is there an ideal way to perform a ceremony? The ancients knew that everything in nature can be used to add value and significance to a ceremony – that the elements in the right combination created the force of meaning that was needed at that time and place. Colours, stones, music, words of power, water, fire, flowers, fragrance, the use of potent symbols, the location of the temple, and the time of day, month or year all add value and meaning. But above all, the Ancients knew that it is our own consciousness that truly makes it a ceremony in the real sense of connecting with the Essence, with the Divine

In today's world it is perhaps fashionable to scoff at the very mention of a ceremony, writing it off as mere formality, or even superstitious ritual. In fact, we pride ourselves in dismissing them or worse, are cynical and disrespectful when we do participate. We go through the motions without connecting



Image Courtesy by Creative Market / pixels / CC0

with the essence. Wedding vows, baptism rites, or even standing for the national anthem before a film begins at the cinema – how much of it do we really mean? The shallowness of materialism touches and often consumes each of us. The very concept of spiritual growth is mocked and we have allowed the new gods of material wealth to take over our lives, giving value to the external material things we accumulate, that will sooner or later be discarded. What we can see and taste and touch. And because these are external things that we value and set as our goals – more money, a bigger home or car – they will inevitably be lost to us. Thus the very things we value, our very goals, bring us pain and suffering.

It seems that all beings
in Nature participate
ceremoniously as part of
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the ancients recognised
that the Universe itself
performs ceremonies, or
rather the universe itself
unfolds ceremoniously.

Today we perform ceremonies to mark special occasions at which we ask for the blessings of the gods. We ask for good health, happiness, success, and material wealth. Sometimes we even bargain with the gods: "If you help me win this contract, then I will donate a brick of gold to your temple." The Ancients would perhaps be bewildered by how we perform ceremony today.

This loss of the value and meaning would perhaps be tolerable if it were merely a human invention. And yet, each of us, at some point or other, have been moved by the beauty of the setting Sun, a moment which seems inexplicably potent with *Neter*, sacredness. We see that animals have their own ceremonies; all birds sing at the rising of the Sun. Plants unfurl new shoots in springtime. The four seasons mark the ceremonial cycles of time on Earth. It seems that all beings in Nature participate ceremoniously as part of Life. Indeed it seems that the ancients recognised that

the Universe itself performs ceremonies, or rather the universe itself unfolds ceremoniously. And therefore it is not surprising that ancient civilizations endeavoured to participate as well. It is said that Stonehenge was built by the ancients to mark and celebrate the Summer Solstice. That the Great Pyramid at Giza, the temples at Teotihuacan and Machu Picchu are built as replicas of the Celestial on Earth, in order to invite these divine energies to the Earth. To be a bridge between the terrestrial and the celestial.

As students of Philosophy, as seekers of wisdom, what can we do with this sacred knowledge? Perhaps, we can make our own lives ceremonial. Perhaps we can learn to recognise that every aspect, every moment of our day-to-day lives can be imbued with meaning, attention and consciousness. How can we wake up in the morning, with the beauty and joy of the sunrise? How might we make and drink our coffee with appreciation and gratitude? With what energy do we enter our workplace and our homes? How do we make our words sacred, meaningful by filling them with truth and kindness? And finally, how might we die with grace and dignity, like the setting Sun...to the sound of birdsong, filled with awareness, beauty and the joy of knowing that we have truly lived! For then, we might discover that in truth, there is no Death. There is only Life. And Life itself is the greatest ceremony of all. ★★★

*The world has enough to
support every man's needs, but
not even one man's greed.*

M. K. Gandhi



Driving Down the Foodmiles

By Ubai Husein

Every living being on this planet, from the mineral to plants, animals, and man, has a role to play in maintaining the fine balance of our ecosystem. If even one of these does not play its part, it will cause an imbalance that affects the whole. Today, when we look at our planet and the destruction we are causing to it, our response is usually emotional; evoking anger, frustration, despair and helplessness against some seemingly greater force that is beyond our control. The emotion will motivate a response, to do something about it, which will remain until one is taken over by some other personal matter that takes greater precedence. Eventually this leads to the acceptance that this is the way things are, and that we must learn to deal with it as part of life, rather than actually do something about it.

The environmental crisis is looked at as a collection of global and regional problems caused by an invisible mass of people. And the solution, it is often thought, should also come from there. Very rarely do we really step back and think about our own role as individuals, in the context of society, or our environment. Rarely do we remind ourselves that this 'invisible mass' of society is made up of individuals like you and I. Whether we accept it or not, each of us is contributing to the unsustainable use of natural resources available on our planet. Hence, any change we wish to see needs to come from within us, first.

Ecological action today is usually a reaction to personal difficulties that we might be facing. Often, this is triggered by scarcity of resources available for one's own consumption, or for that of future generations. Short term solutions are found; however, they often only treat a symptom. We fail to understand the root of the problem itself. Humbly I suggest, as a simple first step, that we become a little more mindful of our own consumption patterns.

This little exercise is worth trying out: grab a pack of biscuits from the nearby kirana store, preferably one that you like, or used to like as child, and sit down with a few

There is a concept called 'food miles' which refers to the distance each food item is transported over, through its journey from producer to consumer. It is used as a unit of measure of the fuel consumed through any item's entire lifecycle.



minutes of quiet time. Open your packet of biscuits and eat one or two. Enjoy the flavour, the crumbly texture, the aroma, and reminisce all the times you have enjoyed this biscuit in the past. Consider what it is about this biscuit that makes it your favourite. Now while enjoying yet another piece, turn the packet around and look at its ingredients. Usually we do this in order to check on the amount of sugar, fat, and calories...let's try not to focus on the apparent health benefits of the biscuit for a moment... so that it does not take away from the enjoyment we were experiencing a moment ago. Rather, take a look at the list of ingredients and think about the journey of each of these items.

Where was it grown? Hopefully there is some natural product in the list...so start with that. At which factory were the ingredients combined? How far did it have to travel to get to the kirana store at which you bought it?

There is a concept called 'food miles' which refers to the distance each food item is transported over, through its journey from producer to consumer. It is used as a unit of measure of the fuel consumed through any item's entire lifecycle.

Let us start with the grain, usually wheat, in the form of maida or flour. If manufactured in India, the wheat usually comes from farms in the North, around Punjab and Haryana. Give a thought to the farmer and his family who were responsible for planting the seeds, the labour of the bullocks or the tractor that tilled the field, the effort invested in watering the crop, and the sun that shone on the wheat field to prepare the plant to finally yield its golden kernels of wheat. Think of the process of harvesting the grain, the threshing against stone to separate the grain from the stock, the collection of all the grain into gunny bags, which were then transported from the farm to the local mandi, being brought, sold and transported until it makes its way along with several hundred other such gunny bags from several hundred other farms... eventually to the doorstep of the factory where the biscuit is manufactured.



A moment of gratitude to the farmers...for growing the grain.

And that was just the flour. Think about the other natural ingredients in biscuits. Sugar is typically grown in parts of UP and Bihar, or Southern Maharashtra. Cocoa is cultivated at estates in Africa or South America. Nuts come either from California, Turkey or around Kashmir, Pakistan or Afghanistan. Each ingredient has gone through the process of cultivation, harvest, processing and transportation.

Return to the factory where all the ingredients are assembled, neatly lined up, ready to be combined into nice gooey dough. Think of the factory workers who helped cart the large gunny bags to empty them into industrial mixers. And also the machinery operators standing watch to make sure all the ingredients are added in the required quantities. Give a moment of thought to all the people involved in designing and making the machinery; completely hands-free machinery that is able to mix with precision, and reproduce identically shaped biscuits. Then think about the fire that baked these to crispy perfection and the packaging process that turned out neat little individual wrappers, like the one you are holding in your hand, and then into larger cartons to be shipped and transported to kirana shops across the country.

In addition, consider at each stage the fuel consumed, the electricity employed, and the infrastructure utilised...all this overwhelming usage of resources, just to ensure that you can walk down the road to find a packet of your favourite biscuit, that tastes the same every single time you open its plastic wrapper. Consider also the disposal systems required for the plastic wrappers; garbage collectors and waste segregator trucks, landfills...

To put this in context, consider that we are 7 billion people on the planet, each consuming thousands of different items during our lifetime: food, clothes, electronics, etc. We are already consuming about 25% more renewable natural resources than the planet can replenish. If the population reaches 9 billion by 2050, we will be using the biological capacity of two Earths, warns WWF. Scarcity of resources is already plaguing our planet.



As we become more conscious, we become humbler and more connected to the web of life that we are so integrally woven into.

805 million people worldwide do not have enough food to eat. But the problem is not the lack of food. Instead, there is a tremendous waste of resources from the point of production through to consumption. Large surpluses of grain rot in warehouses in one part of the globe while thousands are dying of hunger in another part of the globe. The needy don't have the resources to buy and no one sees the profit in charity. The poorest 10% account for just 0.5% of resources consumed, while the wealthiest 10% account for 59%. Resource use and pollution could be cut in half if the richest 700 million (10%) chose to live at the average global standard of living. The top 20% of the population which is responsible for 80% of the consumption of natural resources are the ones living in major urban cities across the world; I don't think we need to go too far in order to save our planet.

M.K. Gandhi had once stated, *"The world has enough to support every man's needs, but not even one man's greed."*

Perhaps if we are more conscious of our own consumption as individuals, and as societies, we might be able to alleviate the shortage of resources and control the destruction we are causing to our planet.

Where does one begin? Start with the day-to-day, with the little things that you consume daily; the food you eat, the clothes you wear, the cleaning supplies that you use, the garbage that you generate, the modes of transport you use to commute; within each

of these there lies an opportunity to reduce the footprint we leave on our environment. As we become more conscious, we become humbler and more connected to the web of life that we are so integrally woven into. Rather than being a parasite that only takes with no consideration of its host, might we become custodians of this planet?

In my opinion man's purpose is to harmonize with nature and work with her, instead of breaking her laws. It is a role of support and responsibility, never of destruction and exploitation, and maybe in this lies one of the profound secrets to our own happiness and evolution as a species. ★★★



Schedule Of Public Events

www.acropolis.org.in

COLABA

Interactive Discussion

7 APR
SATURDAY
 6-8 PM
 Free Admission



by Patrick Hendry / Unsplash / CCO

The Secret of a Work–Life Balance

Do you feel that you work too hard and neglect other aspects of your life? Welcome to the club! Thousands of us work long hours, running the rat race which just doesn't lead to a happier and fulfilling life.

You may ask others how they do it. But their way is not always relevant to our life! Like every balance, even this one is an individual process which one needs to find for oneself. How do we start to ask the right questions that lead us to answer this important question?

We invite you for an interesting discussion conducted by a philosopher with many years of work experience, who based on many trials and falls, has finally been able to extract some fundamental observation on this topic.

KHAR

Talk

7 APR
SATURDAY
 6-8 PM
 Free Admission



by asier_relampagoestudio / Freepik / CCO

Luck at your Fingertips

Often things just seem to fall into place. At other times, even the most meticulous hard work yields no results. Yet wise men through the ages remind us that truly, there are no coincidences!

What if there exists a way to communicate with life, guide our lives and thereby attract luck to come our way?

Schedule Of Public Events

www.acropolis.org.in

COLABA

Talk

21 APR
SATURDAY
6-8 PM
Free Admission



by rawpixel / pixabay / CCO

The Art of Human Relationships

Our daily encounters with parents, spouses, bosses, children and even strangers shape our daily feelings, thoughts and moods much more than we are conscious of, or can imagine!

Learning how to develop and maintain human relationships is valuable for much more than just our career and or personal life, but perhaps can help us grow as Humans Beings to make the world a better place for us all!

Join us to explore the art of building and maintaining lasting human connections and the practice of living more meaningful life.

KHAR

Talk

21 APR
SATURDAY
6-8 PM
Free Admission



Wikimedia Commons contributors. "Fleisch alchemist in his laboratory, Oil painting by a follower o' Wellcome L00160651.jpg", Wikimedia Commons

Alchemy: The Art of Transformation

Science today doesn't take seriously the ancient science of Alchemy which is reduced to trickery, meaningless symbols and foolish attempts to turn lead into gold.

But hidden under the layers of dust and carried forward through the ancient traditions, is Alchemy, an art and science that explored the unchanging laws of nature. In its principles lie secrets, formulas which guide the human being to the art of truly living a meaningful life!

Join us as we explore the human need for transformation and how this formed the essence of the ancient practice of Alchemy.

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KHAR

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Khar (W), Mumbai
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KHAR

Talk
12 MAY
SATURDAY
6-8 PM
Free Admission



by Daniel Schwien / Wikipedia / CC BY-SA 4.0

The Mysteries of the Mayan

What do we know about the mysterious Mayan civilization? What lies under the relics of this civilization who had a highly developed architectural, mathematical, and astronomical understanding?

Their advanced understanding of the universe continues to amaze us even today! What did they know which we might have forgotten?

Join us to explore this fascinating civilization, their perception of the world, of time and of the role of man.

COLABA

Talk
19 MAY
SATURDAY
6-8 PM
Free Admission



by confused_lme / pixabay / CC0

The Courage to Lead - Leading Ourselves

"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves." -Lao Tzu

In a world of rapid change and constant ethical challenges, have we almost given up hope for a leadership that will enable us to build a better tomorrow? Maybe we need to ask ourselves, who is a true leader and where will he/she come from?

Or maybe the answer lies closer home, maybe that leader is us!

Schedule Of Public Events

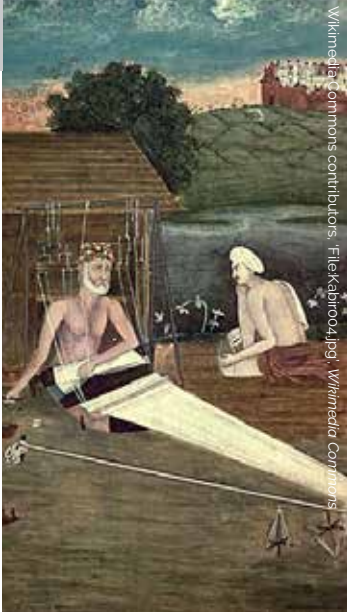
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KHAR

Talk

**19 MAY
SATURDAY**

6-8 PM
Free Admission



Wikimedia commons contributors: File:Kabir04.jpg, Wikimedia Commons

Kabir – Poet and Philosopher

Kabir, the 15th Century poet and mystic wrote couplets that weave together the core of Bhakti and Sufi ideas. He used the medium of 'dohas' written in everyday language to share his profound insights with everyone.

As we trace the life of Kabir, we see a journey fraught with contradiction. The historical accounts of his life are uncertain and scholars differ in their claims of his religious lineage. Yet the simplicity with which Kabir's dohas speak of the truth, highlight his deep and clear philosophical journey. We will attempt to explore together Kabir's legacy and the serenity and simplicity of the man behind this beautiful poetry.

COLABA

Talk

**26 MAY
SATURDAY**

6-8 PM
Free Admission



by Free-Photos / pixabay / CC0

Karma, Destiny and Free Will

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

Is Man ultimately bound by Destiny? Or is he entirely free? This question has preoccupied human beings since ancient times, but is arguably one of the most misunderstood philosophical subjects.

Join us as we investigate these laws of life, and extract their relevance to daily life.

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COLABA

Open House

28 MAY

Course Starts

4 JUN**MONDAY****7:30-9:30 PM**PRE-REGISTRATION
REQUIRED

Living Philosophy: Discover, Awaken, Transform

This is a 15-week introductory course on practical philosophy that establishes the basic foundation of every aspiring Philosopher. The course weaves a journey through a comparative study of principles of Eastern and Western Civilization, to develop sensitivity towards the eternal principles of life.

Together we will explore the Mystery that is hidden in life and what it means to be a philosopher. The course is to inspire you to ask the great questions of life, and to give you tools to face personal and collective challenges.

Testimonials:

“The LP course is a real awakening. You learn from various cultures like ancient Egypt, Greece, China, India...and your eyes are opened to essential insights from around the world. But the most significant journey is the one you make within yourself, inspired by these teachings.” –Sangeeta Iyer

“New Acropolis’ Living Philosophy course opened my mind and heart to a whole new way of viewing the world and living life. It brought back a sense of wonder, meaning and purpose, and showed me that each one of us can be so much more than what we limit ourselves to.” –Trishya Screwvala

“After joining this course, I had a different perspective towards life. The ancient myths and wisdom, which were just stories for me till then, slowly started making sense and I started connecting them with my own life. This gave me a glimpse of how much I need to work on my internal growth, in order to become a better person. This course was the ignition to change the course of my life. :)” –Samarth Shetty

Topics:

1. Know Thyself
2. The Great Universal War
3. Buddha and the Path to Liberation
4. Hearing the Voice of the Silence
5. Practical Principles from the Ancient World
6. The Artist, The Lover, The Philosopher – Who are you?
7. Introduction to Socio-Politics
8. The Allegory of the Cave
9. Types of Governance
10. Path to Mystery
11. When Myth and History meet
12. Cycles within History
13. Esoteric History of Man

Schedule Of Public Events

www.acropolis.org.in

COLABA

Discussion and Q&A

2 JUN
SATURDAY
6-8 PM
Free Admission



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Rethinking Education

"Once you stop learning, you start dying." - Albert Einstein

Traditional wisdom suggests that the process of education is not to add knowledge, but to bring out what lies latent within the human being.

We spend an evening with Mr. Yaron Barzilay, the National Director of New Acropolis in India who pursues philosophy as a way of life!

Join us to discuss what the essential aspects of education are, and draw on his experience to understand what is the right education to bring about transformation towards a better tomorrow!

KHAR

Talk

2 JUN
SATURDAY
6-8 PM
Free Admission



Journey Beyond Death

If reincarnation is a true reality, why can't we remember?

When exactly is the "End"? Is death the end of life? Or might it be the beginning of a more meaningful one?

We find that many ancient cultures dealt with death as an integral part of life, with clues as to how to navigate this enigma!

It might be a question of "life and death" and a guide to the way we should conduct our life!

COLABA (MAIN CENTER)

A-0 Ground Fl, Connaught Mansion,
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Mumbai
T: +91 22 2216 3712

KHAR

Ashray, 2nd Floor, 19th Rd,
Between 13th Road and Khar-Danda Road,
Khar (W), Mumbai
T: +91 98330 33239

COLABA

Talk

30 JUN
SATURDAY
6-8 PM
Free Admission



Leonardo da Vinci - The Philosopher

Was Leonardo da Vinci a scientist, architect, mechanic, painter, sculptor, a multi talented individual?

Or was Leonardo da Vinci in fact a spiritual giant, a man of timeless value who studied the humanities, mathematics, geometry, astronomy and much more; An ideal of a true Philosopher and true Renaissance Man!

Join us as we explore greatness of Nature and Man through the works of Da Vinci, trying to draw a valuable lesson from his approach towards life!

KHAR

Talk

30 JUN
SATURDAY
6-8 PM
Free Admission



Sacred Geometry

"Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better," -Albert Einstein.

It is suggested that Nature is governed by Laws that can be recognized through the infinite geometrical patterns that appear on her canvas.

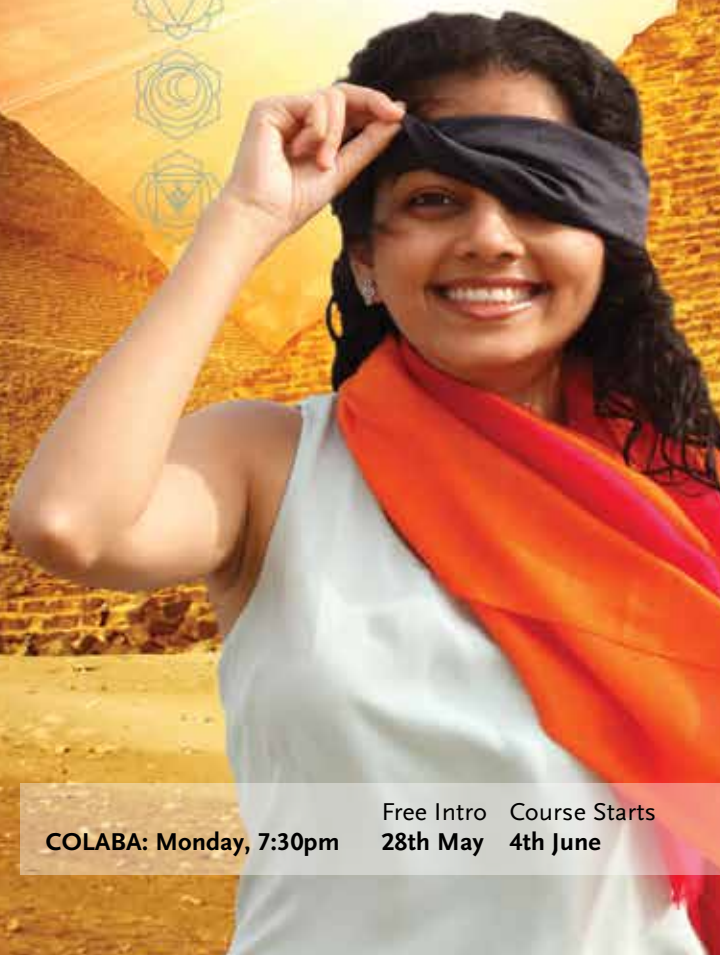
Philosopher-Mathematician Pythagoras observed numbers as forces of nature and mathematics as a magical means by which to interact with Life itself!

Could an understanding of mathematics and geometry really be a key to understanding Life? Join us as we attempt to untangle this mystery.

LIVING PHILOSOPHY

Discover. Awaken. Transform.

A 30-hour Introductory Philosophy Course (15 Sessions)



COLABA: Monday, 7:30pm Free Intro Course Starts
28th May 4th June



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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