

THE ADVENTURE OF LIVING PHILOSOPHY

By Trishya Screwvala



Wall Painting, Colaba, Mumbai



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*"I turned to Philosophy
 to Find my Purpose and it
 Helped me Answer Life's
 Biggest Questions"*;
 edited by Divya Sethu.

When I left home for college, there was a certain clarity with which I had my life planned out — my career, lifestyle, personal ambitions.

But by the time I graduated, I had far more questions than I had answers. Prompted by an insistent inner voice, I couldn't help but wonder — is this really what life is all about? I started to question what I truly valued, what success meant to me, and how I could live a more meaningful life.

It was then that I chanced upon a flyer of a school of practical philosophy called New Acropolis.

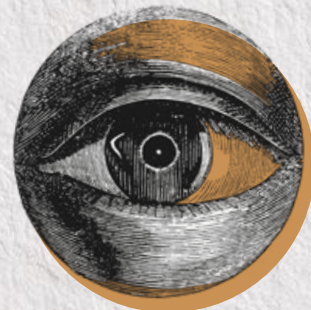
Its Mumbai centre was located just down the road from where I had grown up, but for years, I'd been unaware of its existence. Perhaps life reveals its gifts when we are ready to receive them.

Since then, the ten-year philosophical journey I embarked on has completely changed the way I looked at life.

The inherent wisdom in life

New Acropolis is present in over 60 countries across the globe.

New Acropolis India alone hosts over 2,000 hours of classes, activities, workshops and discussions every year, dedicated to investigating ancient wisdom across civilisations from the East and West. Here, the purpose



is not to learn about philosophers and their philosophies, but to apply universal principles from our shared human heritage in order to live better today and build a better future.

To me, philosophy had always seemed like a theoretical and impractical field of study. But little did I know that the ancient Greek schools of Plato and Pythagoras were always meant to be 'schools of life'. Far from intellectually debating ideas and concepts, they were centred around *living* them.

The philosophical journey is essentially about — discovering the wisdom inherent in *life* and in ourselves, through our own experiences.



The name 'Acropolis' itself refers to the "higher city within us", an idea not so different from 'Hastinapura', which translates to city of elephants and can symbolically be understood as the city of wisdom in the Indian tradition.

This, I learnt, is what the philosophical journey is essentially about — discovering the wisdom inherent in life and in ourselves, through our own experiences. It is not without reason that UNESCO, in 2002, created World Philosophy Day, an occasion dedicated to reviving the value and importance of philosophy in improving our world today, by enabling us as individuals to improve ourselves.



Philosophy in action

We often look for external solutions to mitigate the challenges of our times, be it our current climate crisis or the rise in divisiveness and war.

Yet philosophers from many traditions constantly remind us that we cannot change society or our systems without changing *the heart* of the systems first, which can only start with ourselves.

To volunteer is to simply play our rightful role in the world that we inhabit, and it can remind us that we are part of something much larger than our individual selves.

Can we expect to solve environmental issues without changing the way we interact with nature? Can we expect to live in a just and compassionate society if we don't know how to recognise the forces of separation and prejudice that exist within us?

Here lies the power of philosophy — it enables us to realise that each one of us is part of the challenges we see in our world, and that we all have the potential to be part of the solution.



Building Breakwaters for Saplings, Mumbai.

However, as I learned early in New Acropolis, good intentions alone are not enough. In fact, philosophy without action is not philosophy at all. This is why volunteering forms a core pillar of all activities, with all centres managed and run completely by volunteers.

In an ever-changing world, philosophy can allow us to discover a deeper, stabler, and truer reality of ourselves and our world.



New Acropolis India engages in over 600 hours of ecological, social and humanitarian activities, focusing on fostering individual responsibility towards oneself, society, and nature. Activities include mangrove clean ups, tree plantation drives, wall-painting and beautification activities, blood donation drives, and other community-driven initiatives.

Yet, I discovered that truly volunteering is more than giving back to society for a few hours in a week. Its power lies in aspiring to bring this spirit of service and generosity into all our daily choices and actions.

Volunteering is, therefore, philosophy in action.

It is a practice that continues to teach me to overcome my own selfishness and put the needs of others over my own comfort and preferences. To volunteer is to simply play our rightful role in the world that we inhabit, and it can remind us that we are part of something much larger than our individual selves.

Illustration by rawpixel.com | Image by New Acropolis India



Mangrove Restoration & Awareness, Mumbai.


'Who am I?'

In an ever-changing world, philosophy can allow us to discover a deeper, stabler, and truer reality of ourselves and our world.

Questions such as "Who am I?" and "Is there a purpose to life?" have been explored by wise men and women across traditions and can offer some light on how we can live with more authenticity and independence, taking charge and directing our lives in the light of what we choose to value.

Therefore, philosophy gives me hope. It shows me that if we are able to give more emphasis to the common humanity in each of us, to what unites us over what separates us, it can change the way we live, interact, and view ourselves and each other.

The pursuit of philosophy has given me the gift to see my life as a continuous learning process, to search for the lesson in every circumstance, whether positive or painful.

I am truly grateful to be part of a community of aspiring philosophers who come together from different walks of life — with different strengths and challenges — all in the common pursuit of bringing the best of ourselves to each day and humbly leaving our world a little better than we found it. 



Trishya speaking on World Philosophy Day, Mumbai.

