

Towards 150 Years
of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi



New Acropolis Presents

EMPOWERING **REAL** CHANGE

Leadership for a Better World **Resolution**

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New Acropolis Presents

EMPOWERING *REAL* CHANGE

**Leadership
for a
Better World
Resolution**

New Acropolis Cultural Organization is an independent member of an International non-profit association (IONA), represented in over 60 countries across the world.

IONA promotes an ideal of timeless values to contribute to individual and collective evolution. Its associative structure guarantees respect for the diversity, autonomy and initiative of each of its member associations. Its operational structure enables it to act independently of all political, religious or financial interests.

We have always tried to understand the expression of all cultures, past and present, to discover the roots of their works of art, scientific advances, religious experiences and social and human projects through Philosophy, Culture and Volunteering. With inspiration from the timeless principles of the Indian tradition, New Acropolis India, works with a specific focus to rediscover India's rich artistic, scientific and human heritage and offer it as a vital contribution to collective human progress relevant to our times today.

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.



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.



CULTURE

VOLUNTEER



Volunteering is the natural 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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“Truth alone will endure, all the rest will be swept away before the tide of time.” M. K. Gandhi

In the Light of Truth

By Yaron Barzilay

Curator, *Empowering Real Change*

Director, *New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India)*



Our recent times are characterized by a phenomenon due to which we may refer to it as a Post Truth Era. Not only are the differences between the real and unreal fewer, and less clear, but they are regarded as irrelevant. This seems to be yet another inevitable step downward in postmodernist thinking, and it deserves our attention and reflection as it seems to be yet another warning sign for what is yet to come. In a world so heavily bombarded by an overwhelming quantity of information and stimulation, with a constant increase in speed and movement, it seems almost natural to adopt an indifferent approach to what we read, hear or see; it is very easy to develop a general apathy towards the world around us, where real life tragedies are folded together with entertainment, and the boundary between fact and fiction disappears.

Truth is a familiar word to all. Yet it may be most elusive of all. We often use the word, but how little we know of it; what does truth really mean? What is truth?

If we refer to an absolute all-embracing truth, or the timeless omnipresent reality, we may never really get to know it. Instead we are only able to grasp glimpses of relative truths. Yet, there must be some correlation between what we refer to as relative and absolute for one who walks on a path towards a definite destiny. It may be a direct path towards the goal. Or it may be twisted and curved. But the general direction should be clear. In order to move on a path, one needs to leave one's current position, one's relative perspective. But it is also essential to know that one needs to move forward and upward, not backward nor downward. To pursue



relative truths, which are not merely a result of intellectual debate, but extracted from reflection, experience and inner conviction, depends on the recognition of the existence of a larger objective truth. The pursuit of truth, or wisdom, is a fundamental quality of any real philosopher; it acts as an inner compass that enables a certain level of orientation. It fills the heart with the great joy of self-validation and of making great discoveries. Above all, it allows the seeker to become an integral part of a much greater life, which we may refer to as Nature in the broader sense of the word.

A world without truth; what does it mean? Or better said, what does it mean that the world does not accept truth as reality? Well, evidently we see it manifest around us rapidly. A world without truth is a world without direction, not upwards, nor downwards. With such a loss of direction can there be any valid source of hope, or a possibility to confidently imagine the betterment of humanity? Without truth in our life, can we speak of ethics at all? Can there be any good or bad, any virtues? Can we speak of aesthetics and harmony without the base of an objective truth? Can there be any valid meaning at all?

In India, the ancient Upanishads continue to remind us: "Truth Alone Triumphs." Mahatma Gandhi resonates with this fundamental when he says, "Truth alone will endure, all the rest will be swept away before the tide of time." Can we utter the word *Sustainability* without referring to Reality as the underlying Truth?

And here we are...in a post truth world; confused

and inclined to fall apart. A real direction is needed; a search for a higher perspective. It may not save us from making many mistakes. But if our search is sincere, we will have a good reason to learn and correct ourselves.

What does it mean to live in the light of truth, a relative truth? It means that it is necessary to recognize the relativity of what you perceive today. It shows you how little you know and how much more there is to know. One has to be humble in the light of truth. How can we presume that we know a definite fact, when we can see how relative our perceptions are? But, this is *already* a truth to behold! It is to find meaning in truth, because how can anything be really meaningful without it? What is the value of a wishful aim when reality stands? It is like molding sand palaces on the seashore, that the waves wash away, as if laughing at our attempt to create our own reality, a fantasy.

To pursue truth is to remain alert, by observing your own distortions, prejudices, assumptions, judgments, desires and rejections...anything that colors your vision from seeing things as they are, as clearly as you can. Such a pursuit leads you to know yourself, by removing layers of what you are not, the masks of false identities. The pursuit of truth is therefore a means of self-discovery, a necessary step towards self fulfillment and real confidence. It is to discern between the real and the unreal, imagination and fantasy, the good and bad, which expresses real intelligence, which is not at all synonymous with intellectuality. The pursuit of truth demands attention to what you say, and how you say it. It develops the inclination of being truthful, and

To be able to change and move on the upward path of consciousness is to rediscover what has already been learned by those we consider wise. It is to echo with life and the universe, and to feel that we are an integral part of it, as we have always been, although we know a mere fraction of what it is.

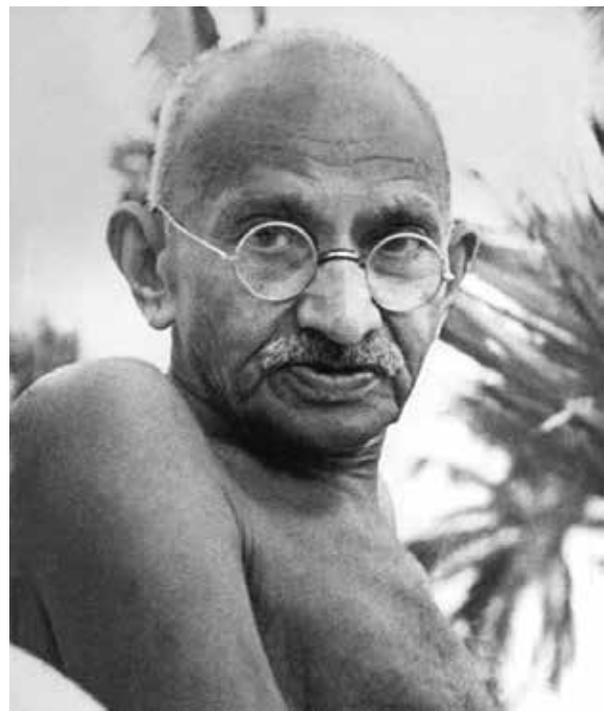
with it, an inclination towards the Just and the Beautiful. And as has already been thought by great philosophers such as Plato, it is also the pursuit of Goodness, not only outside of us as an ideal of life, but also the need to Be Good.

We may discover only fractions of the total reality, reflections. We may only discover how little we really know. But in this smallest discovery lies real greatness, the ability to open our minds and hearts towards the world around us. We may grasp but only little truths, and remain ever ready to replace them with further discoveries. But we must follow what we already know today if we are sincere in our search. That is the base of our ethics today, and the source of a great joy. To be able to change and move on the upward path of consciousness is to rediscover what has already been learned by those we consider wise. It is to echo with life and the universe, and to feel that we are an integral part of it, as we have always been, although we know a mere fraction of what it is.

It is to walk, while becoming and realizing yourself. It is to live, beyond mere survival. We may collect only very little truths on our path. But they can and should change us profoundly. Even knowing what we do not really know can direct our life. You may discover the purpose of life. Great! Then follow it. You may not know the purpose of life. Wonderful. Then what are you waiting for? Search for it! Am I going to vanish at the end of this life, with the end of my physical body? Are the numerous teachings about the immortality of the soul real? You don't know? The little truth is that between both

possibilities lies a significant difference in the meaning of life. To live but only one life, without any continuation means what really? On the other hand, if I am an immortal soul, in one of its many incarnations, I am definitely not the one I recognize today. In order to live with deeper meaning, I must align myself with who I really am. It is not a matter of belief, but of realization and conviction, a discovery that demands from me a sincere effort in the pursuit of the real.

Real philosophy, an approach towards life, with a keen need to discover and follow truth in action, not just in words, seems to be the need of the hour. What is lacking today points exactly to what is needed. If untruth is depicted as darkness, what we need is light. The pursuit of truth is therefore to place ourselves under the light. Truth, as elusive as it may seem, is our precious compass. If we honor it, we shall always find our way back.



National Committee Marks Gandhi's 150th Birth Anniversary

On 2nd May 2018, The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, chaired the first meeting of the National Committee for the Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

At the meeting, President Kovind stressed that Mahatma Gandhi does not belong to India alone. He remains one of India's greatest gifts to humankind and his name finds resonance across the continents. Mahatma Gandhi was the most influential Indian of the 20th century. He was the inspiration for our largely non-violent, inclusive and democratic freedom struggle. He remains the ethical benchmark against which we test public men and women, political ideas and government policies, and the hopes and wishes of our country and our people. His legacy is so rich and so wide that we cannot do justice to it if we were to meet for a few days, let alone a few hours.

The President said that the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi is more than a celebration of a great life and a remembrance of history. Gandhiji himself would have wanted it to be a moment of renewal, of making a fresh commitment to the goals of a just, honest and fair society – at home and abroad. The Mahatma is our past, he is our present and he is also our future. So many of the themes and ideas he spoke and wrote of – some of them far ahead of their time – are even more relevant today. The President said that when we work for an India free of caste and religious prejudice, we invoke Gandhiji. When we strive towards Swachh Bharat, and a cleaner and more hygienic India, we invoke Gandhiji. When we speak of

the rights of women and children and of civil liberties of small and disadvantaged groups, we invoke Gandhiji. When we talk of the health and well-being of the Indian farmer and the Indian village, we invoke Gandhiji. When we strive for energy access for the last village and the last home, we invoke Gandhiji. When we build capacities in solar and renewable energy, we invoke Gandhiji. When we battle climate change and promote green, eco-friendly living, we invoke Gandhiji. And what is sustainable development if not an expansion of Gandhiji's simple mantra: "The earth has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed."

The President said that it is for this reason that the 150th Birth Anniversary Commemoration has world-wide meaning. Let us elevate this to a global celebration, using platforms such as the United Nations and other multilateral organisations. The focus should not just be on events, but on tangible, actionable legacies that will make a difference to the lives of ordinary people – wherever they may be.



Messages of Support



Honorable Prime Minister of India SHRI NARENDRA MODI

I am pleased to learn that a conference on the theme “**Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World**” is being organized by the New Acropolis Cultural Organisation on the occasion of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

When the country was yearning for freedom, Mahatma Gandhi developed a collective sense of purpose among the people. Such was the commitment to the ideals of freedom, that every action, task or endeavour performed was dedicated to the nation. In using the charkha, keeping surroundings clean, making salt - in every task Bapu inculcated a national consciousness.

One of the firm beliefs of Mahatma Gandhi was that, it is only through a ‘Swachh Bharat’ (Clean India) that we can ensure a ‘Samridh Bharat’ (Prosperous India). It is a matter of pride that, today, the nation is walking in his footsteps with immense vigour and hope. Due to widescale participation of people, cleanliness has become a mass movement.

We, as a nation, must come together to fulfil our collective destiny. To build a New India of opportunity, economic development and social empowerment, leadership is crucial.

Mahatma Gandhi showed that effective leadership combines the power of example and action. Acting upon ideals and leading by example is the best form of leadership. It fills me immense hope and happiness to see the young generation coming forward to take the lead in ushering a social transformation.

I appreciate the efforts of the New Acropolis Cultural Organization in providing a platform to develop leadership for a better world, inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.

I am positive that the conference will be instrumental in leveraging the strength of quintessential Indian ideals that Bapu symbolised.

I convey my best wishes to the organisers and hope that the conference attains its goals.





Honorable Chief Minister of Maharashtra SHRI DEVENDRA FADNAVIS

Today we are member of global culture in which socio-cultural environment is being radically transformed. Our cultural horizon today embraces almost all the planet. Societies have become less and less mono- cultural. Different cultures are developing in such a way that it is no longer possible to think of adaptation of a homogeneous environment.

Globalization can lead us to cut throat competitions, rejection of even one's own valuable culture and traditions. It can also contribute to a new cooperative human society, a more caring and compassionate human being. The right attitude towards globalization can serve as a vehicle for promotion of inter-connectivity and interdependence.

A healthy happy society is one in which all its members feel included and do not feel that they are excluded from the processes of the society because of their colour, culture, caste, religion, gender or community.

We must understand that our own life and long term peace, prosperity and happiness is endangered if societies are not build on inclusivity. Peace and security are facing new challenges that could have negative implications if we do not address them positively.

On this backdrop, it is praiseworthy that New Acropolis Cultural Organisation is celebrating 150th Birth Anniversary of Rashtra Pita Mahatma Gandhi and to mark the celebration, an event with the theme, **Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World** has been organized.

I congratulate New Acropolis Cultural Organisation to have taken this initiative as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhiji's legacy and I wish all success in their future initiatives also.





His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

I am pleased to know that this conference, **Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World**, is being hosted to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth. I consider myself a follower of Gandhiji. On my first visit to India in 1956, I visited Rajghat and was deeply moved as I prayed on the banks of the Yamuna. I wondered what wise counsel Gandhiji might have given me. And then, one winter upon my return to Tibet, I had a dream in which I was meeting the Mahatma.



Ever since, Gandhiji's engagement in ancient Indian wisdom has been a great inspiration to me. One of my life commitments is to do whatever possible to spread the message of Ahimsa and Karuna. Regrettably, I feel that we are facing a moral crisis caused by our society's over-emphasis on wealth and material development, at the expense of our basic human need for kindness, compassion and concern for others. In order for our younger generations to possess these vital positive values it is essential that our education system teach these qualities to help them become happy people with happy families living together in a happy society.

We must appreciate the oneness of humanity and the responsibility that each of us has in promoting it. An educational framework that encourages people to develop inner values is essential and must be done in a secular way so that followers of all faith traditions are included, as well as the growing number of those who do not hold to a particular religious belief; all want happiness and all want to be free of suffering, whether they follow a religion or not.

I am committed to reviving interest in ancient Indian thought, as I believe this can be of immense value in transforming our destructive emotions and promoting basic inner qualities. As necessary as physical hygiene is to maintaining our physical fitness, cultivating emotional hygiene and learning to tackle our destructive emotions is essential to mental fitness. In this connection, elements of ancient Indian wisdom can be immensely helpful. India is unique in possessing the potential to combine its ancient knowledge with modern education in order to develop peace of mind. I'm encouraged by the growing interest that I find among young Indians who will hopefully contribute to the holistic development of applying ancient Indian techniques to bring about a positive state of mind, in this country and eventually throughout the world.

I hope that these ideas can be discussed during your conference and that they might be incorporated into your activities. This would, I believe, be a meaningful way of paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi.



National Gandhi Museum

"I am happy to know that New Acropolis Cultural Organization will be organizing an event on **"Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World"** on 15th December in Mumbai in honour of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

...We need to take a fresh look at his methods and principles for Peace and Harmony which are desperately needed today in a politically and morally degenerated India and the world.

...I am very happy that New Acropolis Cultural Organization is taking a right step towards Empowering the people. Because Gandhi belongs to the people.



Gandhi Research Foundation

The optimized response to life that Mahatma Gandhi proposed gives us hope. Be it his concepts such as Swaraj (conscientious living of individuals), Sarvodaya (searching one's welfare in everyone else), Swadeshi (neighbourhood organic relationship), Khadi (mutual/reciprocal sustenance), communal harmony (tolerance to diversity), nayee talim (learning the art of inclusive living), all these based on fervent adherence to truth and nonviolence... brought about a new awakening. His 'Satyagraha' emerged as a holistic way of conducting human affairs in a manner both the victor and the vanquished end up equally gaining life.

I am sure this conference of learned thinkers and creative activists will deliberate upon the most crucial questions humanity face and propose a way forward to ensure a life that is equitable and just not only for humans but every life of all time.



Sevagram Ashram

Humanity is standing on the edge of a serious crisis. Social fabric is corroded, and our aspirations are on the rise. Nature is showing resenting symptoms. So alternative to the present is to be searched.

Gandhi seems to be a positive answer. Hence relevance of Truth and Nonviolence has increased.

Personally, I appreciate your efforts to expand the Gandhi legacy beyond the barriers.



Minal Bajaj, Bajaj Foundation

We are extremely happy to support your initiative **"Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World"** on the occasion of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

While we continue to draw inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi's iconic life and leadership characterised by the quest for Truth, we in 'Bajaj Group' for over several decades have been and continue to be involved in meaningful welfare initiatives that distinctively impact the quality of life of the weaker section of the society – the poorest living in thousands of villages that are in the hinterland of our country.

It all goes back to the time of our group patriarch Shri. Jamnalalji Bajaj, whose life was greatly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and between them they shared a special bond & Gandhiji adopted him as his fifth son.

"Whenever I wrote wealthy men becoming trustees of their wealth for the common good, I had always this 'merchant prince' principally in mind". Mahatma Gandhi while referring to Jamnalalji.

Gandhiji's & Jamnalalji's philosophy has stood the test of time with Bajaj Group & has been taken forward successfully by Shri Kamalnayan Bajaj & Shri Ramkrishna Bajaj & now spearheaded by Shri Rahul Bajaj.

Thus, for society however, Bajaj Group is more than a corporate identity. It is a catalyst for social empowerment. It is the reason behind the smile that lights up a million faces. As they say, giving is truly having. We try to reach out with a sense of purpose to those with distressed lives & show them a future that they never believed existed for them.

Niraj and I along with the Bajaj family, congratulate 'New Acropolis' for their commendable efforts in taking Gandhiji's ideals forward by providing a platform to develop 'Leadership for a Better World' & Spreading his messages through this conference across 60 countries.

We wish 'New Acropolis' all success.



Pheroza Godrej

Gandhiji was not only the Father of our Nation, he was one of the great thinkers of all time. He was constantly experimenting with Truth and these experiments led him to propagate certain principles that have survived the test of time. Gandhiji believed that through self-reliance, and an able leadership, we could acquire self-respect and national pride. Gandhiji has set the true example of great leadership for our youth. Our youth needs to emulate his golden teachings for a better world -- “The history of the world is full of men who rose to leadership, by sheer force of self-confidence, bravery and tenacity” and “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

My good wishes for the success of the programme, and while the New Acropolis grows from strength to strength, may those at the realm leave deeply embedded footprints so that those who follow will continue the good work.



Harsh Mariwala, Marico

I think events like this are important because they bring like minded people together and celebrate what India has to offer to the world as you are doing by creating a publication and ensuring the main messages discussed during the event reach 1000's of people in over 60 countries. I am also glad you are working to inspire the young people to the idea of ethical leadership and I think this is much needed today.

I commend you and your team at New Acropolis, for your excellent efforts to promote and celebrate Indian culture and values.



Harsh Goenka, RPG Foundation

Like you, I believe, that India has a formidable heritage of values, aesthetics, art and culture and I commend you and New Acropolis for fostering our timeless heritage and very importantly making it practical and relevant to India today.

I am also especially delighted that you are creating a means to share this heritage with the world by publishing the key messages of the conference across 60 countries.



Ratan N. Tata, Tata Trusts

The Mahatma's impact on successive generations of the Tata Leadership is deep and enduring. It is far beyond the support that Sir Ratan Tata extended to his movement, between 1909 and 1913, in Natal, South Africa.

In the Mahatma, we saw an unflinching commitment to equality, the dare to be unconventional, and never giving up on principles.

In our sphere of operations, we have attempted to practice these, as a business organization, every pursuit of the Tata Group has been aimed at nation-building to create equality for India vis-à-vis the rest of the world. As a philanthropy, the Tata Trusts are striving to facilitate equality for every individual in accessing opportunities. This is at the root of our work in the country's villages, so dear to the Mahatma, be it in education, health, nutrition, sanitation, or livelihood generation.

In all this, our inspiration comes from the Mahatma. As we embark upon celebrating his 150th Birth Anniversary, in Tata, we have no doubt in our mind that we have to ensure access for all for the life they desire, be bold to try new paths and, above all, to always adhere to doing the right thing.

I wish New Acropolis all success in rekindling the Mahatma's beliefs among all of us.

Satish Kumar, Schumacher College

If we wish to create a sustainable and joyful future for humanity, we need to bring about real change in our world view, in our consciousness, and in our way of life. We need to live in harmony with nature, we need to establish a world order based on social justice and we need to embrace the spiritual values of truth, love and compassion.

In order to accomplish such a transformation and bring about a holistic perspective, we need a new kind of leadership emerging from grass roots level and based in the principle of selfless service.

NEW ACROPOLIS CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

EMPOWER REAL CHANGE: LEADERSHIP FOR A BETTER WORLD

CONFERENCE RESOLUTION

Affirming the need of real change, holistic and sustainable, one that permeates all aspects of daily life, because the material and technological progress that is continually being made seems unable by itself to enrich individuals with meaning and fulfillment,

Recognizing that such a systemic change must include the empowerment of individuals, especially the youth, by fostering the sense of commitment and self-confidence to impact, and ability to contribute to, collective progress, driven not by material productivity or consumption, but by collective happiness and prosperity,

Concerned that many young people in our times fall to a sense of hopelessness, unable to imagine a new and better world, New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India) believes that this unease originates in the fundamental lack of meaning and purpose in life, comprising a sense of separation between individuals within society, and with the world at large,

Observing that real change necessitates real and courageous leadership, motivated by the pursuit of Truth, and the ability to lead by example by leading oneself, in the fields of Education, Ecology, Governance, Business, among others,

Inspired by Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi, on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary, New Acropolis recognized his exemplary leadership, by hosting the day-long conference titled “Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World”, taking inspiration from his iconic life and legacy characterized by a relentless pursuit of Truth, as a key for real change in our world today,

Offering support and contribution to the Government of India initiative that has decided

to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi, at the national and international levels, to propagate his message; a National Committee headed by Hon’ble President of India has been constituted for this purpose, and includes Hon’ble Vice-President, Hon’ble Prime Minister, Chief Ministers of all states of the country, representatives from across the political spectrum, Gandhians, thinkers, and eminent persons from all walks of life,

Using this opportunity to rediscover India’s rich philosophical and human heritage, in order to offer it as vital contribution to collective human progress,

Having brought together distinguished changemakers from different walks of life at this conference, the initiative served to foster dialogue, and acknowledge their admirable work, through the sharing of their journeys and experiences,

Having received messages of support congratulating New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India) and reiterating the pressing need to re-examine the legacy of Gandhi to extract applicable leadership principles relevant to our times from Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Maharashtra Shri Devendra Fadnavis, and His Holiness The Dalai Lama,

Further welcoming endorsements from notable institutions such as National Gandhi Museum, Gandhi Research Foundation, Sevagram Ashram Pratishtan, and noteworthy individuals including Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus (Grameen Bank), Satish Kumar (Schumacher College), Minal Bajaj (Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation) Sir Ratan Tata (Tata Trusts), Phiroza Godrej, Harsh Mariwala (Marico), Harsh Goenka (RPG Foundation), among others,

New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India)

01. Concludes the conference titled “Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World” and reaffirms the commitment to work towards Gandhi’s goal of building a just, honest, and fair human society;
02. Congratulates the distinguished panelists of the conference, who have demonstrated by example the ability to lead, with the courage to forge ahead despite personal, individual and systemic challenges, transforming the desperate need of change, into glorious hope;
03. Commits to an ongoing exploration of India’s cultural roots, from which to extract and revive the archetypal values that were the foundation of the ancient Indian civilization, as direction and guidance for our future;
04. Promotes the worldview defined in the Indian Heritage as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, the interconnected Earth Family, and the role of each individual as a trustee of the planet committed to the sustainable practices that nurture the planet;
05. Endorses the need to revive civilization, one in which humanity shares a unity of destiny, with a deep understanding of human duties and responsibilities, learning from the errors of the past, by applying philosophy, the love and pursuit of wisdom and truth, to everyday life, giving priority to harmony and collective progress, over separation and survival. To do so, there is a need to re-establish a sense of individual responsibility towards the collective, and the courage to open the heart, and live at peace with one’s conscience;
06. Highlights that beyond their political implication, the Gandhian principles of *swaraj* and *sarvodaya* are philosophical ideals relevant and applicable to our present times. *Swaraj* calls for the ability to rule over oneself, the ability to live with ethical boundaries, from which emerges the foundation of freedom and responsible citizenship. *Sarvodaya* requires the recognition that the pursuit of truth must be inclusive and holistic, for all people, in all spheres; and that it must be taken as a duty, individually and collectively;
07. Encourages the use of a system of education that cultivates the ‘heart’, built to facilitate personal transformation, through practical, real, and inclusive methods, fostering interdependent and collective progress, rather than competition;
08. Recognizes the positive impact that business and commerce can have towards creating sustainable change, both as non-profit as well as for-profit enterprises, when creative solutions respond to objectively identified challenges;
09. Invites associate organizations worldwide to mark this anniversary by investigating Gandhi’s legacy, by organizing cultural activities, conferences, and exhibitions to explore his important contributions, and extract practical solutions to address the challenges of our times;
10. New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India) requests the board of the governing body of the International Organization New Acropolis (IONA) to propose within its annual General Declaration that there be a point of support for the events held by the IONA in different associate countries on the occasion of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi.

Schedule of Sessions

EMPOWERING *REAL* CHANGE

15th December, 2018

Taj President by Vivanta, Mumbai

The conference brought together esteemed change-makers who have been striving to make a better world through tireless work in their various fields such as Education, Philosophy, Ecology, Anthropology, Governance, Microfinance and Corporate Responsibility.

9:30am–10:00am	Registration
10:00am–10:40am	Empowering Real Change: The Vision Opening Address by YARON BARZILAY
10:45am–11:35am	Transformation Through Education Panel Discussion: SONAM WANGCHUK & ANU AGA <i>Re-imagining education as a means for sustainable development</i>
11.35am–11.55am	Coffee Break
11.55pm–12.45pm	Envisioning a Model Society Panel Discussion: DR. SAAMDU CHETRI & DR. TRIDIP SUHRUD <i>A vision for a just society in light of Gandhiji's ideas and Bhutan's GNH index</i>
12:45am–1:35pm	Responsible Business Panel Discussion: RONNIE SCREWVALA & CHETNA GALA SINHA <i>Exploring the role of business beyond profit</i>
1:35pm–2.20pm	Lunch
2:20pm–2:50pm	Seeking Truth: A Musical Performance Featuring Maatibaani, with Folk Singer Mooralala Marwada
2.50pm–3.20pm	Reconnecting With Nature In Conversation with DR. VANDANA SHIVA <i>Recognising our inherent interdependence with our ecosphere</i>
3.20pm–3:40pm	Coffee Break
3:40pm–4:40pm	Becoming the Change Panel Discussion: FERNAND SCHWARZ & PIERRE POULAIN <i>The path of the Warrior of Peace to transform oneself and the world, as outlined by both authors in their most recent books</i>
4:40pm–5:00pm	Leadership For a Better Tomorrow: Resolution

THE VISION OPENING ADDRESS

Yaron Barzilay

Curator, *Empowering Real Change*

Director, *New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India)*



Faced with today's many challenges, which may lead us towards an abyss, how can we not hear the call and notice the great opportunity? Because challenges do not necessarily lead us to an abyss; they can also lead to the sky. The choice is always ours; it is always within our power.

Today's conference is already the 3rd *Empowering Real Change* event that New Acropolis has organised in Mumbai.

This year we choose to relate the idea of Real Change with the concept of '*Leadership for a Better World*' as Leadership is definitely needed in order to promote a positive change. Above all we need to lead ourselves...before leading others.

We are not looking to adopt only a sense of doing, just to silence our conscience for a while. We really want to know how we can look for a Real and Sustainable change. How can we make things Better? We therefore need to look at it from a fresh philosophical point of view and even dare to speak of the pursuit of Truth and Wisdom, as it is equally vital to act in order to be a philosopher.

If philosophy is the love of wisdom, it is also the love of the Good, the Beautiful and the Just, as expressed by Plato and other philosophers. "Truth is the first thing to be sought for, and Beauty and Goodness will then be added unto you," said Mahatma Gandhi. Can one search for the Good, without *Doing* good, without *Being* good?

Such was the vision, 60 years ago, of Prof. Livraga, the founder of New Acropolis, speaking of a New and Better world, by new and better Human Beings. And it continues to be a living inspiration for many men and women today.

Know Thyself is a fundamental principle of philosophy. It is about the discovery of the Self, of the World around us. It's about mindfulness, awareness, purpose, joy, ethic and right action. It is therefore but natural, that we connect the idea of Empowering Real Change to the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, to be marked in October of next year. Who else can better represent the idea of Leadership in the pursuit of Truth? How many openly shared with us their personal experiments with Truth? How many leaders spoke about their own life as the message that they want to leave behind to others?

In India, the ancient Upanishads continue to remind us: "Truth Alone Triumphs." Mahatma Gandhi resonates with this fundamental when he says: "Truth alone will endure, all the rest will be swept away before the tide of time."



Can we utter the word *Sustainability* without referring to reality as the underlying Truth? At a time in which ‘post-truth’ and ‘false news’ have become too commonly used words, it is precisely for this reason why we speak today about the need of a REAL Change, based on the Pursuit of Truth, philosophy, of what is real.

A real direction is needed...a search for a higher perspective. It may not save us from making many mistakes. But if our search is sincere, we will be ready to learn and correct ourselves. It is exactly for this reason why we look at Gandhi as a source of inspiration, of Leadership for a Better World, just as he has been to so many people in India, and all over the world.

In our conference today we wish to learn from our wonderful speakers, who are themselves leaders and change makers in various fields. What does it take to make a positive change? What did they learn from their own experience? Not only what needs to be done...but maybe much more, what needs to be, what does one need to Be? How to aspire for and inspire a positive and sustainable change around us? What should be the right approach to take?

We are going to conclude the conference today with learning that New Acropolis wishes to share with affiliate associations in more than 60 countries; with close to 500 centres across the world and many thousands of volunteers and participants. We would like invite them to follow the same, and mark together with us this Special Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and his most relevant example of philosophical leadership, so much needed in today’s world.

It is without doubt that our world needs a change. We need the change. We need to change. Many see this as well. But how exactly should it be expressed? As a social, educational, or economical change? Should we pass new laws and enforce stricter rules to guard nature, to guard the animals, the climate, to foster a more ecological approach? Will all of these be enough? It seems that the list of challenges only grows, as does the variety of proposed remedies. Can the world be a better

place without the aspiration of each individual to be better? We have means today that we have never had before. But despite this, hunger and disease have not disappeared from our world, and certainly neither has greed.

Clearly, progress and technology do not necessarily serve just causes. We are aware of the increasing power of technology, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and data collection systems. These are all means that can indeed enable humanity to march forward, but they also present a great danger, which seems much more real in the absence of guided responsibility and any real ethic. Can the world be a better place without the aspiration of each individual to be better? Is a real positive change possible without a change in Man, his Consciousness, his approach towards Himself and the World around him?

Even the question of such an approach towards a positive change, the need to discern between what is right and what is less right, seems to be rejected today.

There is a general denial of the very existence of Truth, of a universal reality, one that is inclusive and an objective one, that we must refer to in order to build sustainable structures; In a world so heavily bombarded by an overwhelming quantity of information and stimulation, with a constant increase in speed and movement, it seems almost natural to adopt an indifferent approach to what we read, hear or see; it is very easy to develop a general apathy towards the world around us, where real life tragedies are folded together with entertainment, and the boundary between fact and fiction disappears.

A world without Truth is a world without direction, without meaning, without goals, and without concrete values. Certainly such a world is incapable of dealing with crises. Or maybe on the contrary, it amplifies them and might even be the central cause of them.

If we find the main cause of the great crisis within Man, it also must follow that within us also lies the solution, the ability to become

what we would like to see in the world. The goal is therefore, the revival of Man.

Such is exactly the philosophical way of life; a living philosophy that is expressed in action and in being, and in the good that we assimilate into ourselves. It is a way by which the hands act in harmony with the heart and with the mind, in service, devotion, and tireless learning. The philosophical education teaches us that essentially we are in a state of unity with life... life which beats through the whole universe. We ourselves are an active force of life; therefore a real force of change, a force of Hope.

A real direction is needed...a search for a higher perspective. It may not save us from making many mistakes. But if our search is sincere, we will be ready to learn and correct ourselves.

Faced with today's many challenges, which may lead us towards an abyss, how can we not hear the call and notice the great opportunity? Because challenges do not necessarily lead us to an abyss; they can also lead to the sky. The choice is always ours; it is always within our power. Nobody can really take away from us this ability to choose, to respond, and to take charge of the history that we are part of. Philosophy can build bridges between the past and the future. It enables a real transformation of the heart, the necessary passage from egoism to altruism, and the ability to embrace the other.

It demands the development of a better economy, education, science, technology,

political engagement, art, culture and society as a whole. It, in fact, breathes a new life into each of these vital aspects and leads a real revolution, because a revolution of awareness, perception and purpose is really needed!

Philosophy, the love of wisdom, can offer the possibility of real change, within us and within the world; the possibility of renewal and revival. It can transform a desperate need, into glorious hope. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "A seeker after truth, a follower of the law of Love, cannot hold anything against tomorrow." Like the main hero in Plato's Allegory of the Cave - Gandhiji is a searcher for the light of the sun outside the cave of shadows and illusion - while at the same time struggling to serve the others who are still inside. This represents the ideal of the Philosopher-Politician, in the most Noble sense of the word.

It is interesting to note that perhaps the most globally known quotation of Gandhi, "Be the change you wish to see in the world", may have never have been said by him...Therefore, we didn't attribute it to him here [and you didn't hear me saying it...]. Nevertheless, it is such a suitable description of what touches so many hearts all over the world - an inspiration from Gandhi - of what comes out so strongly from his thoughts and actions. To Dare to Be the Change you wish to see - so simple and yet so strong and correct!

Our aim today, in this conference, is not to suggest to become a Gandhian follower... It is in any case the personal take of each individual to decide what to follow. But yes, we do want to revive the spirit of daring to offer a change. Change through our own personal example, through our own life, change to foster a Leadership for a Better World. Through today's panel we would like to explore different angles of educational, economical, social, ecological and philosophical approaches that go beyond dry solutions. We are searching for a practical attitude that considers a real sustainable change. I wish all of us to have a wonderful day today, to enjoy, full with inspiration! Thank you.

ENVISIONING A MODEL SOCIETY

Dr. Saamdu Chetri & Dr. Tridip Suhrud
Moderated by Dipti Sanzgiri



We are, by and large, truthful people; all of us are capable of truth, all of us are capable of truth in large measures. And it's not about petty lying that we're talking about. It's not about rule breaking that we're talking about. We know the right from wrong in every instance. What we lack is the capacity sometimes to act upon that knowledge.

Dipti Sanzgiri: When we talk about empowering real change, normally the immediate association is with change in the society, because that impacts us directly. And perhaps today more than ever, the need for exploring ideas that can help us bring about this change is acute. Therefore we really look forward to getting some practical insights and input from both of you.

Dr. Chetri, Gandhiji wrote in his book *Hind Swaraj* about the malaise of modern civilization. Today the whole world is obsessed with materialistic growth and GDP seems to be the benchmark for measuring the growth and development of humanity. In that context, the Gross National Happiness index has emerged as a very unusual way of measuring growth in the society. Please tell us: what is this model of measuring happiness and harmony in society?

Dr. Saamdu Chetri: My introduction is incomplete if I do not say that I was born in a cow shed and was brought up with animals as I grew up. So I come from a very remote part of the country...As Dipti mentioned GDP today is the conventional measure for economic development and when our King was as young as 16 years old he realized that the ultimate goal of every human being was to be happy. And he thought, what could be the things that can make people happy? So when just 16 years old, his father expired and he started to go to every home to ask the people in Bhutan, what can I do to make you happy? And of course, everybody said, "Oh great King, whatever you bring to us... we will be happy." He said, "That's not the right way. You need to have your autonomy. You need to be, you need to practice and pursue your own happiness. I cannot give you happiness." And he realized that there were different things that were required for human beings to be happy.

As opposed to the material world, where there is so much of production and consumption, so much of waste; he realized that this waste was so high that if he copied this model of economic development for the country, Bhutan would be wiped out within no time. I think the other great

thing that Bhutan had was isolation, and we had the choice to grow, looking at the world as an example. We could build ourselves on this concept. He propounded, actually here in Mumbai in 1979, when he was travelling back after a meeting in Havana about the non-aligned movement, when a young journalist asked him, what is the GDP of your country? You know a small country, up on the Himalayas...and he said that for me and my country, Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product.

To be happy in our country, we are taught right from our childhood to be content with what you have. That's the first stage of our understanding of the self. So we try to not pursue something that's beyond us, before we accept what we have.

Now just to give you a simple example, Gross Domestic Product can grow in an unhealthy Society. It can also grow with unhealthy ecology. When you destroy ecology, GDP grows. When you are unhealthy, GDP grows. When you have too many alcoholics, smokers, drug abusers, GDP seems to grow. But what about the happiness of the people, of society? Therefore, the concept was developed over time, and we started to live with it. But the world didn't believe that we lived with it. And the question came,

how do we measure it? And we said, we don't measure it. And it was in 1998, that Bhutan was invited to a regional summit in Seoul, where our former prime minister Jigme Thinley spoke, for the first time outside Bhutan, about the concept of Gross National Happiness.

After that, the UN actually gave us support money to work on the concept of developing measures for Gross National Happiness. Today we do measure it. Please understand that the concept of Gross National Happiness is very individual; it is a choice. We cannot measure happiness, and we do not measure happiness. So let me make it very clear. In the concept of Gross National Happiness, the happiness we measure comes from serving others, living in harmony with nature, and realizing your own inner potential. That's what we mean by happiness in GNH.

Therefore we came up with nine domains of GNH which you can google to find out. It's simple: Good Governance or Self-governance, Time use, Psychological well-being, Community

vitality, Cultural resilience and diversity, Living standards, Health, Education, and your connection with Ecology. These are the nine domains that are very much required to bring a balance between the spiritual needs of a person and the material needs of a person.

We say that if you have below 50% of the conditions within these nine domains, then you are not happy. But if you have between 50% to 65% of the conditions in these nine domains we rate that person as being narrowly happy. If the person is between 66% to 76% of the domains then we tag the person as being extensively happy. And if the person has more than 77% we say that s/he has more than enough conditions to pursue his or her own happiness, and so s/he is deeply happy. So that's how we try to measure it.

It's not a responsibility of the government. Of the 33 indicators, 16 are individual and family responsibilities, and 6 of them are community responsibilities. If you live in a community, we



believe that this Gross National Happiness concept can bring you a holistic approach, it can bring you a collective approach, it can bring you an equitable approach, a sustainable approach in the whole mechanism of development.

We do not consider development for the sake of development. I'll give you an example. When Vietnam was wiped out after 30 years of war by the Americans, it was left at Ground Zero. On 30th April 2013, they celebrated 40 years of independence, or their growth. And Bhutan is already on the line for last 60 years. If I compare Bhutan with Vietnam, we stand nowhere in terms of technology and infrastructure. But what we still own, or have, is happiness, which Vietnam does not. Of course, I do not say that we do not need development. We do need development. But how much, is the big question that arises here.

To be happy in our country, we are taught right from our childhood to be content with what you have. That's the first stage of our understanding

of the self. So we try to not pursue something that's beyond us, before we accept what we have. We learn to accept that very thing. And every Bhutanese lives with an abundance of relationships, whether it's within the family, within the collective community, or be it with nature; no Bhutanese would cut a tree without praying to it, or planting ten more than he would harvest. So he would never dig anything out; even when taking a plant out, he would say that I need you, forgive me, I need you. He would also pray at a waterhole, if there's a spring coming out. You would sit there, and pray for the water.

Because we know that, like in India, you say *bhagawan* [Sanskrit: God]; *bha* stands for *Bhoomi* [Sanskrit: Earth], *ga* for *Gagan* [Sanskrit: Sky, Heaven], and there is *aa* in between which is *Agni*, the fire, *wa* for *Vayu* [Sanskrit: Wind] and *na* for *Neer*, water. We are these five elements of nature, and nature is in us, and we are in nature.

In fact quantum physics proves that 91% of all frog genes are within us. 70% of banana genes



are in us. A quarter of rice genes are in us. You can continue. 46% of fruit fly genes are in us. The whole of nature is in us. 75% of water is contained in us. And if we cannot be compassionate to any of these things, how can you be compassionate to yourself? And when you are able to be compassionate to yourself, then you are able to be compassionate to the whole world. That's how we look. And the spirituality that we define is to be compassionate, and to serve others.

Dipti Sanzgiri: Gandhiji, in his book *Hind Swaraj*, describes an India of his dreams. Among many things that are compiled in it, are two thoughts. One is *Swaraj*, self-rule, not only of an independent nation, but also the ability of man to master the mind that he has. And also the concept of *Sarvodaya*, which is growth and prosperity for all. If you were to draw a picture of Gandhi's dream nation, a just society, using these ideas, what would it look like? Can you tell us about it?

Dr. Tridip Suhrud: To be very honest, I don't know. But let's look at what these two terms mean and see whether they make sense to us today. The word *Swaraj* is usually seen as independence. It's not. In *Hind Swaraj* he thinks of *Swaraj* in two ways; both as self-rule, but also rule over ourselves. Now, what is this capacity to rule ourselves is the question. And that's what he spoke about. What is the notion of limits that we work with? Because self-rule requires the notion of limits, the notion of boundaries, a deep understanding of who we are and where we wish to be, without which the idea of independence is untenable. It's not about each unto herself or himself. It's each recognizing the boundaries within which we need to function, from which would emerge a notion of citizenship, from which would emerge the notion of our responsibility to fellow citizens; whether it comes as corporate social responsibility, whether it comes as philanthropy, whether it comes as charity, or trusteeship. But there is a responsibility. From there would come the idea of the public sphere; what kind of public sphere do we want? Do we want a public sphere that recognizes our self-will? So, the notion of *Swaraj* is much larger, or was much larger, than what mere political independence would suggest.

And the word *Sarvodaya* has a very interesting history. Picture this: a young man going on a train. A friend comes to the Durban railway station to drop him off and says, "Read this... it's a long journey, trains are slow - on time, but they're slow - overnight..." And that's Ruskin's *Unto This Last* given to the young Gandhi. It comes from the *Parable of the Vineyard* from the New Testament.

As a person he draws you to him, not because of his gifts which are apparent, but this deep flawed human being that is constantly struggling with himself, constantly struggling with us, constantly struggling with the Empire, but largely with himself.

And Gandhi is struck by what the *Parable of the Vineyard* and *Unto This Last* meant. And he decided, like everything else, he needed to share it with people. How do you share it? One - that you practice it, and which led to the establishment the first ashram-like community in South Africa called Phoenix. The origins of the ashram actually lie in that book called *Unto This Last*. But then he decided to translate it, and he was a very self-confident translator - unlike me; I'm very faithful to the text. Gandhi was not. Gandhi made the text his own and did things with it. And he changed it; it's no longer John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. It's Gandhi's *Sarvodaya*.



Now *Unto This Last* would actually be translated in Gujarati as *Antyodaya*, of the last person. Gandhi says that it's not of the last person only. It is of *Sarvodaya*, of *all* people. But not just all people...in every sphere. *Sarva-Udaya*. It's not about one aspect of our life that we need *Udaya* [Sanskrit: Ascent] of, what we call, all aspects of our lives, both collective, as also personal, that we need *Udaya* of.

So if you put together *Sarvodaya* and *Swaraj*, the capacity for self-governance and this desire to have a kind of blooming of all of us, in all spheres of our life, we would have a very different society. We would have a very different country. We would be a very different people. Now, is that what we want? We don't know. We have chosen a path, and that's a path of our making. And is this path reversible? Is it irreversible? These are the questions that we need to ask. What are the kinds of limits that we want? To say, "Oh let's go the Gandhian way," I think is not possible without a very serious debate in our economy,

in our society, in our polity, because it might actually need fundamental questions

Dipti Sanzgiri: In that context, Gandhiji dedicated his whole life to the pursuit of truth. He actually lived it, as we said, as experiments of his life, in all the spheres of his life. And today in this post modernist world, the idea of following truth almost seems impractical and utopic. What were his practical arguments, from his personal example, that we can use to make this idea of the pursuit of truth real for us today?

Dr. Tridip Suhrud: Well, I know of the argument that truth is under large questions. But I get up every morning, and I look at myself in the mirror. And I do recognize myself as Tridip Suhrud. If I did not, if I denied that truth, I would be what you would call clinically schizophrenic.

Dipti Sanzgiri: But who is that Tridip Suhrud?

Dr. Tridip Suhrud: So that's the question that we need to ask. And what aspects do I recognize of myself. But do I first deny myself? To say that there is no truth, or that there is no possibility of truth, is to actually have a society which is deeply schizophrenic. If that's where we want to be...be my guest. Because then we would not recognize ourselves, we would not recognize the community that we part of, the nations that we are part of, or not part of. So that's One.

Two: this is not an abstract notion. We are, by and large, truthful people; all of us are capable of truth, all of us are capable of truth in large measures. And it's not about petty lying that we're talking about. It's not about rule-breaking that we're talking about. We know right from wrong in every instance. What we lack is the capacity sometimes to act upon that knowledge. Now, all of us know that something is wrong. Sometimes we do not have the wherewithal to act upon it. I think that's the importance of somebody like Gandhi and somebody like the Dalai Lama, who spoke very beautifully about his debt to Gandhi in that letter. What is he saying? It is really the capacity to act upon the recognition of right and wrong which makes us a better person, a better and just society. That's why. So I think Gandhi's great contribution to India, and to the rest of us, is not about the idea of truth, only. It's also the idea of fearlessness, it's *Abhaya*. This fear incapacitates you, makes us completely incapable of acting, thinking, doing right in all instances. So Gandhi's great experiment is not necessarily about truth. It's about to acquire the capacity to act upon the recognition of that truth, and to do so in each instance. And that's really where the challenge arises. Because we do see a lot that impinges upon our conscience, which makes us uneasy. But sometimes we lack either the will, the capacity, the wherewithal, or even the right action. So that's really, I think, far more essential.

Dipti Sanzgiri: **Dr. Chetri, it's very inspiring and heartening to note that compassion and altruism are part of the measures of the Gross National Happiness Index and the holistic model that you talked about, where there is a role of each - the individual, the community**

and the state. How does it practically work out in the way it is implemented? How do you ensure that it's happening?

Dr. Saamdu Chetri: Coming to this concept of truth, what we have started doing, is that as we begin with education, already in the school system, of the so-called *Sanskaras*, the values. These values are lived in schools now in Bhutan because we realize that education today makes people very competitive, very shrewd, very selfish. And we need to change the patterns of education.

I'm not talking about the syllabus. But I'm talking about parents out here, who want their children to be somebody they are not born for. And we push them so hard that by the time they are 12 to 14 years old, they are already in depression, in anxiety, and on antidepressant drugs. So what kind of future? We really live in a very paradoxical world. We want our children to be happy, but they are already on antidepressant drugs by the age of 14-15. So what kind of future are we really transacting for ourselves? The greed that we live with today...the World Bank measures 1.6 times the bio capacity we consume today. In other words, we are kind of, in debt to our children and grandchildren. How can we overcome this whole concept? By bringing values in the education system.

So what we generally do is...culture plays a very big role. And I just was googling here on my mobile; I'll just read this out for you. This is an address by Lord T.B. Macaulay to the British Parliament on 2nd February 1835, and here is an extract from there: "I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a begger, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage. And therefore I propose that we replace her old ancient education system, a culture. For if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good, and greater than their own, they will lose their self esteem, their native culture. And they will become what

we want them to be, a truly dominated nation.”

So look at what kind of education we are considering for ourselves here. So we try to bring the values in children: how do they manage their time? How do they bring trust within their own families, within their own communities? This becomes very essential.

So if we actually want a better world, and a leader for a better world, let's start looking for flawed people who are ready to admit to their flaws...leaders like that.

I have an abbreviation for the word LOVE. I say, “Live On Values Everyday”. And if you learn to live on these values every day, that's the love, the foundation of everything on which there are four pillars that get nurtured. I have also abbreviation for these four pillars; I call them RICH. ‘R’ stands for Relationships. When you're able to build a relationship with yourself, and with others. ‘I’ for Integrity; what you speak, you do. What you do, you say. Or, to be very truthful. ‘C’ stands for Compassion. Often education teaches us to have self esteem. In Maslowe's hierarchical law, they say you have to self actualize, or have self esteem. These are wrong, totally. When you climb a mountain, when you're on the top of the mountain, what is next? You have to descend down, or you have to remain there. That's self esteem; you will always fall short of it. But if you are self-compassionate, both of these are with you, whether it's self-esteem or self-compassion. This is very important for us to understand ourselves. When you are self-compassionate, then you understand others because you know.

Like sir [Dr. Tridip Suhrud] just mentioned, many of us stand in front of the mirror, and say, “You guy! Who are you? Why are you here? What is your purpose in life?” I don't think we ask these kinds of things to the person that we see in the mirror by which to create a pathway in our brains like Mahatma Gandhi did. He had a vision statement that said, “I live. I'll defeat all untruth with truth.” That was the first statement he made. The second one he made was, “I will not fear anybody, except God.” Likewise he had four or five statements. And we can all be the change we want in others, by just creating these values within us. If you get up in the morning and say, “I have 24 hours in front of me. What do I do with the 2 Gs: Gratitude and Giving? What do I do today? You create a pathway if you repeat this everyday, over 22 days or so. Neuro-scientists talk about neuro-plasticity; you can create a pathway in your mind and you will see the world as you believe. Because you have created that image in your mind. So compassion is very important.

‘H’ that stands for Humanity. When you have humanity, that's of course caring, serving others. I'll give you an example: three years ago I had an opportunity to speak at the House of Commons in the British Parliament. And as I took off from Delhi on British Airways the first general announcement that came was, “If you donate one pound, you're going to feed a very hungry and cold child in remote England.” I thought I heard wrong. So I fished out of the seat pocket to read, and it was true! Then I thought about England, whose empire was so large that the Sun never set. And they have made so much wealth. Today it's begging? I didn't compare the wealth of England with my little country, and I thought: Wow a 100000th part of it could not even be the wealth of my country. And I felt very rich, because if we see a hungry and cold child in Bhutan's streets, the first thing that everybody nice does is to go to find out what is the problem with that child. He takes the responsibility of that child until we find a solution. So we still care. We still share. This is very important. [Applause] And when you build on this, the roof of trust automatically comes. So LOVE, RICH, and Trust; they work together. So try and bring this love unconditionally to everybody.

Let me just say something about time-use. We sensitize all these areas very much. We ask, in fact children: Do you trust your family? Do you love them? Do they love you? Do they care for you? How much care do you give them? Do you care for yourself? All these questions are very relevant in our education system here.

But let me tell you something. How does the world use time? This is, I think, very paramount here. There was a research done in America; if you average the whole world, the life expectancy comes to about 78 years. In these 78 years, we sleep for 28 years of our lifetime. 10 years of our lifetime we're chasing for more and more, greed-based. We don't share but we try to earn more and more, only chase material side of life. It's only 6 years of life that we give for our self grooming and education. 4 years of our life we are eating and drinking only. 6 years of our life we are busy in house chores – cleaning, washing ourselves. 2 years of our life we are shopping only. 2 years of our life we are traveling, commuting, and getting jammed in traffic. Now, on an average, 4 years of our life we give on social media. And if you just take India out, it is seven years of your life that you spend behind social media. Then you'll wonder, and now the paradox comes: how much time do you give to your children? Both parents

working, your children get values from your nanny - what values does that child get from a nanny? You spend only 1.5 years of your lifetime for your child, who you call the future of the nation. When you add all this together, you only have left 10 to 12 years of your life expectancy. You know now that you are old, you are retired, you want to live better and longer, so all that you have earned, in ten years now you're going to throw behind a doctor, running to cure yourself, and buy more medication as I am doing now. Is that the life we want to create for everybody? You can change that right here and now. That's the change that Mahatma Gandhi is talking about.

Dipti Sanzgiri: You did mention about culture and there is in GNH a lot of focus on revival of the old traditions. What would you say is the significance of reviving the roots and the traditions for the modern world?

Dr. Saamdu Chetri: Culture plays such a big role. Culture actually is the basis for our existence. And Bhutan has been very very lucky because we were never colonized and we lived in isolation. So we try to carry on with our culture. Today, when anyone goes to Bhutan, you'll see everybody smiling, everybody very happy. Simply because we still live with an



abundance of our culture. And this culture that we talk about, which is very much a part of the Indian cultural heritage, can be revived. You should not react like the Australians; if you ask an Australian - what is your culture? They start scratching their head and thinking: where do I come from in the first place? So there they have lost it totally. But in India you can still revive everything because of the diversity that you have of the languages - I don't know, something like 2000 something languages that you speak. There's so much of value but every Indian you ask: What is your dream? Oh America - that's the Indian dream. And today you should appreciate the CEO of Google, Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Microsoft...all these guys who have done wonders are Indians. They are chasing their dream for somebody else. The same thing can be changed back in India here and I think we should ask our prime ministers of India to look into this kind of thing and give them the possibility to work here.

The mind has gone so far away. Sorry - I'm just derouting a little bit - because it's very interesting. Today's artificial intelligence; what are they doing? They have created a very small drone that can land in the middle of your palm. It can be fed with information of me, with my photograph, my name, where I live...everything. And it contains three grams of explosives. Now I just trigger it to go and

hit Saamdu. It just goes. Nothing can stop it; not running trains. It will come and hide somewhere in my house. If I have changed my face in the meantime, like if I had an accident and I had surgery, so my face changed a bit, - so it will come and hide and start watching me. It's not the same face. Address is right. So it's watching me. The moment Dipti comes in and says, "Hi Saamdu, how are you?" It will come and hit me on my forehead and I'm dead. There. Just three grams of explosive right in my brains. This is also the creation of great minds, and these minds come from this land. Can these minds not come back here and create a better world? And I promise you, if all Indians return to India and work here, India will be the greatest nation on this planet very easily. How can you draw them back?

And this is us - parents. You need to blame yourself. You have made your children greedy. You have made your children go for the green money, the dollars. And you don't know...I have seen parents who are sick or have died, children are in America, they have no time to come back. When they come back, the cremation is over. Is that the life you really want? I know of many parents who have flats in Mumbai, in Delhi, in Kolkata; two of them, nobody else here. And one day they are dead. What happens? What are we doing really? Can we not change our mindset a little bit



and come back to our culture that is so very radiant, so very strong, so very grounded? The Indian culture I'm talking about. Can we not come back to this? I am sure we all can come back because *sanskara* [Sanskrit: Values] still live in India.

Dipti Sanzgiri: Indeed. You have dedicated I think a lot of years investigating ideas of Gandhiji. Through your journey of investigating Gandhiji, and how you were inspired by his ideas, what would you say is very relevant in today's world?

Dr. Tridip Suhrud: There are two ways of answering that. One is that let's forget Gandhi. We shot him with a finality; three bullets in his body. That's what we wanted. So let's not beat our chest and say: Oh is he relevant? He was not relevant for independent India; we couldn't keep him. That's one very real response that we need to own up to, and that's a fact. No denying it. And if we put him aside, put the man aside because the man was very troublesome, very problematic, not easy to live with...every time you're having a good time, he will come and pop your party...he induces great amount of guilt. So put the person aside and ask yourself three questions.

Very simply: Are we in a just society? And not only in terms of technical, legal justice that we dispense quite routinely. But does the violence of poverty unnerve us? Does the violence of intolerance unnerve us? That's one question. Two: Do we think that as a civilization, not just as a nation-state, but as a civilization that we have lived up to our potential? And three: Are we happy with our times, not with only ourselves, but with our times?

And if the answer to any of these questions is No, then you need teachers, you need allies. And I think one of them, not the only one, but one of those allies is a man called Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Don't make him the sole guide because that's also very troublesome. Don't wish to necessarily give that kind of hegemonic power to that person. You shouldn't, no society should. But if you

think that your times are interesting times, that you are uneasy with your life, with your society, with the path that civilization is taking...that there is this corrosive violence of poverty and intolerance that we are surrounded by...then you're going to need pointers. And I think one of those pointers would be M.K. Gandhi. There could be many others. So that's two.

Also, let's not forget that I think what was very good about him, was that he was a deeply flawed person. I think we are used to leaders who say: Look at me, I'm perfect! I'm the most good-looking guy - I'm the richest guy - I recognize his clothes - and I do everything right. Here is this person who is deeply flawed. I think we need flawed leaders. I think that's really the reason why he's so attractive, as a person he draws you to him, not because of his gifts which are apparent, but this deep flawed human being that is constantly struggling with himself, constantly struggling with us, constantly struggling with the Empire, but largely with himself. People say he is evolving. Yes, but so are his flaws. And that's what makes him so very fascinating. So if we actually want a better world, and a leader for a better world, let's start looking for flawed people who are ready to admit their flaws...leaders like that.

Dipt Sanzgiri: Dr. Chetri, you have already shared a lot in terms of what today's young generation should take from the GNH experiment, the way of measuring development and prosperity in Bhutan? What would you give as your message, to the young generation? How should we measure in our own lives this index of happiness?

Dr. Saamdu Chetri: Well I think you don't need to do anything much, but BE yourself. That's the first thing. BE yourself. The moment you begin to compare and compete, you are unhappy, you stress out yourself. Compete with yourself; what you did yesterday, do better today. That's competing with yourself. Mahatma Gandhi never competed with anybody. He lived with values; that you can create in your mind. So live with yourself number One.

Number Two: Have right intentions in whatever you do - the way you think, the way you behave, this is the values. So have right intentions. Accept things as they are and let go. Because if we hang onto them, you will never be happy because you will preoccupy your mind with so many things. So learn that practice. Say sorry and thank you every moment you have a chance. Those are beautiful words. And like I said, try to practice the two G's. Gratitude. Write everyday a note on what you are grateful for, or who you are grateful for, why you are grateful, and how does that help you? Write everyday a few sentences on that, and write also one thing that you did good today. Come back to it once in a month to review what you have done. It can be as little as today someone gave you way at the door, you're grateful for it. It can be as little as that. So try to practice these things and be yourself all the time. Don't try to bring any competitions in your life. You will always be happy. This is simple practice. And care for yourself. Please care for yourself. Do not live a life without looking into who you are, what you are, what you want to be. Look in the mirror every day, and convince yourself that you can do better, just be yourself.

Dipti Sanzgiri: Gandhiji spoke about duties and rights. Today's generation is very conscious about rights. But he said that to have rights, first you need to perform your duty. Maybe in that context, would you like to give your message?

Dr. Tridip Suhrud: I'm a deeply skeptical historian and a political theorist. I have no messages. I only scrutinize other people. [Laughter] In all that we've said, and all that Dr. Chetri has said, the question that we need to ask ourselves, and not just as human beings, I mean not just as people, but as citizens at large, what is the source of our rights? Is the source of our rights this document called the Constitution that we can change? Or is it some men sitting in the Supreme Court that can interpret it? Is that the source of our rights? If that's the source of our rights, it's a very flimsy source, and we should be very worried about it. But if the source of our rights is something other than a legal parchment, there is hope, there is possibility, that we could actually claim

rights and continue to claim rights even in absence of such a document. And I think, not just Gandhi, but Dr. Ambedkar, would very very clearly say that without the performance of certain duties, rights do not emanate only from law. And these duties are to nature, are to future, are to fellow beings. Do we own the future? The answer is no. But we do behave as if we own the future. So I think there is something problematic about this rights discourse which looks at rights in absence of, or divorced from, performance of duties.

BE yourself. The moment you begin to compare and compete, you are unhappy, you stress out yourself. But compete with yourself; what you did yesterday, do better today.

This is Bombay and a lot of people would understand Gujarati-Hindi. There is a very beautiful word which is a Gujarati-Hindi-Sanskrit word called *Dharamada*. You walk out in the streets of Cuffe Parade, and you would see a lot of these things which are *Dharamada*, which is *Dharma Adaiyah*, something that you do as an obligation to others, not to a text, not to a religion. I think the idea of rights is based on *Dharamada*; what is it that you do as *Dharma Adaiyah* which makes us I think more capable of enjoying our rights? So that's it.

Dipti Sanzgiri: Thank you so much. Thank you Dr. Chetri. Thank you Dr. Suhrud for your invaluable insights on - if you have to be better world then the change needs to begin with us - to build a better society.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH EDUCATION

Anu Aga & Sonam Wangchuk
Moderated by Zarina Screwvala

EMPOWERING **REAL** CHANGE



You cannot lead others unless you have learnt to lead your own self. You have to earn the right to lead others. Leaders have to work from wisdom, not just from their knowledge and skills.

Zarina Screwvala: Gandhiji, as many of you might know, created a new education system, which he called *Nayi Talim* [Urdu: New Education], where he said education is not textbook-centric but life-centric - purposeful and productive. *Nayi Talim* sees education for life, through life, and throughout life. So we begin with the first question to both of you. What is the purpose of education? Gandhiji said the real difficulty is that people have no idea what education truly is. We assess the value of education in the same manner as we assess the value of land, or of shares in the stock market. In a seminal 1937 article in *Harijan*, Gandhiji said, “By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man - body, mind and spirit.” Literacy, itself he said, is no education. Sonam and Anu, do you resonate with this? What do you believe is the purpose of education?

Anu Aga: I completely resonate with Gandhiji’s ideas and I was very touched by the previous panel, which in a way did our work, by saying what education should be. For example, what we heard, that through education we need to accept our flaws and not pretend to be perfect people. Because I think only a dead man is a perfect man. I very often say that I have a lot of shit in me, which I need to accept, and hope overtime, that the shit doesn’t smell so bad.

To follow Gandhiji’s truth, if we pretend to be perfect, that’s the first educational principle which we are breaking about following truth. Or if we look at the mirror and say, “I am perfect,” what can we learn for ourselves? The second idea is that we use science and technology to create gadgets. We have created the Internet. But through all that, have we understood ourselves better? Have we understood people around us better? Or are we so self-absorbed with the machines, and our children are spending hours and hours on it, and that drone [that Dr. Chetri mentioned] that can destroy humanity!

So what is the purpose of education? I think the purpose of education is to create sensitive human beings, who will make this world a better place. That is my yardstick. People may create wealth,

and I don’t think wealth-creation is wrong. But to follow Gandhiji’s idea of a trusteeship model; you have created wealth, drawing on so many things from society, and so you give back to the community. So that’s another thing.

Never before in human evolution have we learnt sitting in classrooms from chalk and talk! We’ve always learnt out in the fields, in action, in wild nature, as hunter-gatherers, as settled farmers.

Martin Luther King said, “Our children need to be valued not just by their test scores, but by the content of their character.” And as Sonam has done. When we clean rice, we throw away the stones. We don’t throw away children who fail in exams. Education is inclusive of everyone, and is not about differentiating between intelligent and unintelligent. Unfortunately, when we look for a school as parents, we look at the tenth standard results. The higher education schools talk about the perks and pay their students got when they got their first job, and they brag about it. Do they ever brag about how they made an impact on the nation? So education has a huge task to perform.

Zarina Screwvala: Thank you Anu. Sonam, over to you, for the purpose of education.

Sonam Wangchuk: I’ll start by what I think education is not. We were told in childhood that it’s the 3 R’s, which I truly think it is not – reading, writing and arithmetic, which doesn’t even start with an ‘R’ - so you can imagine the people who

propounded these ideas. These are all to do with just the head, whereas education should be an awakening – an awakening of our head with knowledge, information - in algebra and physics and so on. But it shouldn't end there. It should go beyond head alone - to skilled hands, awakening of our physical body with skills of making, repairing, survival skills, and so on. Skilled hands and a bright head are great but not enough. They can do a lot of damage as is happening in the world with these two. It's not complete without the awakening of the kind heart, a compassionate heart, that can feel empathy for all beings; not just for oneself, for the future, not just the present. When all these aspects of us are awakened, I feel the result is a more educated person.

Recently, I was speaking to children in a school and I said that they all celebrate or mourn about how they did in physics, math, and so on. But I think the syllabus of life is more than that. If the syllabus of life was partly learned from the head, and hands and the heart, and suppose each was 33 percent of the whole syllabus. Imagine, your grandmother or grandfather, who may not even be schooled or literate, and in this case they weren't. And I said, let's give marks to them out of 33. How much would you give them in the field of heart? And they all came up with 30 and

so on. And how much would you give yourself with all your great school education? 15, maybe 10. And then I said okay now in the hands sector, how much would you give your grandparents? How skilled are they in doing things? And they give them high marks. And you? Well we don't do much so, 15, or 10. And now, in the field of head. They are not stupid; they may not be schooled but they are...and finally the scores came in: grandparents - 75 and us - 50. Speaking in the language they understand, or as they're taught at school, in terms of ranks and grades. Of course I didn't want to promote this, but to make them see that, only when we are skilled and have the empathy to take care of nature, the environment, and others, are we fully educated.

Zarina Screwvala: Anu, you chose to devote your time, your passion, as well as your money, first to Akanksha, and then to Teach for India (TFI). I think, Teach for India is a deeply inspiring model, especially in the light of our topic today which is Leadership for a Better World. Basically, Teach for India delivers quality education to children from underprivileged backgrounds, while at the same time, serving a dual purpose of creating a leadership of young people. These are the brightest minds, who have chosen to switch



from doing corporate jobs to devote their time to education. So they take two years off and they teach children from underprivileged backgrounds. The switching of tracks is something that TFI does so beautifully. Anu, the question is, why this emphasis on creating a new movement of leaders in education? Why is it so important?

Anu Aga: When we usually talk of a leader, we think of a corporate leader who has helped a company to grow and make better profits. But at TFI, we look upon a leader who has helped to bridge the inequity gap in education. Now why is this so important? Let me tell you about two surveys. Pratham, which is an NGO, does a survey every two years of rural India in education, and they have found that in language, science and maths, we are going backwards. We are not improving, but we are going backwards - which is a scary thing for a nation.

Secondly, there was an international survey called PISA some years ago, where two of our best states took part. And out of 74 countries that took part, India came second last. Kyrgyzstan

was the only country that did worse than us. Now what did India decide after the survey? They said we will not take part in the survey anymore because the questions asked are not relevant to Indians.

Against this scenario, now you can see how important it is to have leaders who will fight for educational inequity. So what do we do? As Zarina said, we recruit young fellows and corporate people, through a very difficult evaluation process. We take only 7% of the people who apply because we want to make teaching an aspirational program, and not something which you take up when you have no other option. These people spend two full years in municipal schools and low-income private schools. And not only do they work in the school, they work with the parents and the community also. They impact the values of the students.

If I have a little more time, I'd like to share two stories. Saurabh, after passing out from IIT Delhi which is a difficult thing to get in, worked for three years in the corporate world. Later, he joined Teach for India, worked for two years



and then worked in a school for another two years. Today, he's the CEO of Akanksha. He was selected through Egon Zehnder as the best person to lead Akanksha. And now he is looking after 21 schools between Mumbai and Pune and impacting the lives of 8,000 students. This is the impact Saurabh has made.

I'll give you all another example. Seema Kamble lived in the slums of Mumbai. She came to an Akanksha centre, before we started the school model, completed her graduation, applied to TFI, and got in. Later, she became a teacher, and today is the principal of one of the Akanksha schools. 75% of our fellows stay back in the social sector, although they get the best of perks and pay in the corporate world, and they impact lives. If that's not a leader then who is? They teach values. Our education is not about only marks, and head. Priyanka, one of our students, who took part in our Musical Maya [Program] decided to take her children to the less privileged, and they were taken to a home for poor destitute women. Priyanka's father had murdered someone and was in jail. The only gift she had from her father was a teddy bear, which she cherished and valued very much. So the second time they went to this old people's home, she took a bar of chocolate for the lady she was visiting. But the lady looked at the teddy bear and wanted that. Priyanka, hesitated for a few seconds, but parted with the teddy bear. This was like my giving away half of my wealth! Can you imagine the sacrifice of the girl? She did it so effortlessly. I'm sure she has learnt a lot of values from others. But I think, TFI fellows have made a huge impact on her.

Zarina Screwvala: Thank you so much for the beautiful story. While Sonam was still a student of engineering in Ladakh, he encountered first-hand how broken the education system was in Ladakh. It actually had an astounding 95% failure rate! This was one of the main reasons, among others, that made him switch from his engineering career to take up an ongoing and deep engagement with education. The solutions he created helped failure rates in Ladakh drop from 95% to 45% while he worked there. And today, it

is 25%. Sonam, please share the solutions that you implemented in Ladakh as a whole and also take us through the reasons and the purpose of why you felt the need for your alternative school SECMOL, and now your alternative university, HIAL.

Suddenly for the last 300 years, we are packed in rooms and taught; people who do well are actually abnormal and unusual, than those who don't do well!

Sonam Wangchuk: The reason why I happened to work with education while I was doing my engineering is because as a child, luckily I did not have a school in my village of five households. And so I was spared actually. I was left to my mother and my village to learn from things around. And I was lucky to learn and develop that third 'H' [Heart] of empathy and values from my mother. I was moved when I saw that children were failing en masse. I started teaching students to support my own engineering; so it was an accident. But that moved me so much, thanks to this. That I learned from my mother. Otherwise I could have made my money and passed on. But I just couldn't do that because I saw that they were so bright. There was nothing wrong with them. And then I saw there was everything wrong with the system.

Imagine: Children at 12,000 feet in the high Himalayan deserts were memorizing, when I visited a classroom, "We grow rice with monsoon rains, we grow rice with monsoon rains, we grow rice with monsoon rains..." And I ask the teacher what they were memorizing. And she says that this is what is in the books. I responded saying: But we don't grow rice! But this is in the books!



We don't have monsoon here! But this is in the books! And I asked: what if a child, at the end of the year writes, "We grow barley with glacial melt-water." She said, "Wrong answer." And the child would get a zero because it's not in the books.

So that's the mockery that education had become. Then I, together with other like-minded young people, who felt the same way but were not able to express it or come forward, we got together, joined forces, to start changing things; starting with changing peoples' mindsets who believed that textbooks come from heaven, like holy books, and that you can't change them. We used to say that these are meant for the good of the people and if it's not doing that, it can change. These are, luckily, not holy books. So we started changing them to, "We grow barley..." So very soon the books started changing to what actually happens in the mountains, people started taking ownership, and we organized people to form village education committees. And so there was somebody taking care of government schools; otherwise government schools were nobody's schools. We then started training, or re-training, teachers to do education in very child-friendly, and humane ways.

We didn't need more. The pass percentage started improving even though, in the early phase, we didn't have enough teachers from Ladakh. Some would come on 'punishment posting' to this 'Siberia of India' and they would come and blame the children, and blame the air. I can understand their state of mind. They would say that there's not enough oxygen in the air and so they can never do maths and physics. But when the pass percentage went from 5% to 55% to 75%, at least there was a scientific discovery made: that it was not about the oxygen in the air. [Laughter]

But then, 25% children failing is also not acceptable. Why should anybody come out feeling like a failure after spending a precious quarter of your life in the name of schooling. We said that these kids are actually not abnormal. They are more normal than the others, because our system of schooling is so abnormal for human beings. Never before in human evolution have we learnt by sitting in classrooms, from chalk and talk. We've always learnt out in the fields, in action, in wild nature, as hunter-gatherers, as settled farmers. And we have always learnt by doing things, applying things. Suddenly for the last 300 years, we are packed in rooms and taught; people who do well are actually the abnormal and

unusual, than those who don't do well!

So we started doing education the way they learn. If they don't learn by the way we teach, they're doing it by doing things, by designing the schools themselves. This school that you talked about is designed by the students, built by, or with the students, and run by them. And through this process itself, they learn the most important half of the syllabus. And that changes things. Some of these who come, qualifying as the failures, do much better than those who didn't fail, in life.

Now we are extending that it to the university level. Why shouldn't young people in their 20s not have things to do...they can be so much more productive, effective, engaging with real life and finding solutions. In their 20s, they are capable of changing the world, and it's a crime to pack them in a room and grade them based on some writing they do on paper. That's what we are now hoping to do with the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh (HIAL) which aims to focus on the mountain focus.

Clean air, clean water, and education. These are the basic necessities and these better be handled by the state because privately they can become very messy.

The second thing we try to say, is that education should be very contextual. You can't have the same system for Cherrapunji with all its rain, and for the Thar Desert, or the Kerala oceans, and Ladakh. You can't have the same medicine. It will be equality of irrelevance. Definitely. But not much more. We wanted it contextualized to the mountains and similarly, every other place needs

to fine-tune it to the problems of the region to engage young people, so that they are effective the day they leave university.

Zarina Screwvala: What are the courses you're offering at HIAL?

Sonam Wangchuk: We are starting with things that matter most to the mountains. For example, Applied Ecology. In the days of climate change, flash floods, droughts, we want to engage young people, and learn together with them, how we mitigate these risks and what we can do to the valleys that are damaged by the rains like never before: water shortage, floods, and so on. Similarly, tourism can be great, but is often mismanaged and does more damage. So how can we manage it as an empowering thing, so that it is distributed to all the people rather than being concentrated. Things like this. Or sustainable habitats in very cold mountains, negative twenty degrees. One way that people respond is to leave the mountains and go to big cities. And then – no, this is too hot! So too cold – to – too hot.

Instead use your science, use your learnings, and apply it to buildings that are made with natural materials like the earth we find under your feet, everyone rich and poor? And then heat them with the sun, over our head, for all rich and poor. So how can you live happily in your own context using your education...applied.

Zarina Screwvala: Sonam, could you touch upon the Ice Stupas that, I believe, your students helped you to create, and are now sustaining it?

Sonam Wangchuk: This is a part of applying learnings to solve real-life problems. One of the problems in the mountains, as I said, is water. It's becoming more and more a challenge with untimely rains, or no rains. This is one thing where we applied our high school geometry and high school science, or even lower grade science, to solve some of these problems. What we observed was that actually there was no shortage of water. The streams on which every Ladakhi village is settled, has water flowing from the glaciers in all

months except in springtime, which is the time when plants need it the most. But the flow is the least, because it's still cold in the glaciers [so the melt has not yet started], and with global warming, they [the glaciers themselves] are smaller. So in spring there is very little water. After summer, you wouldn't believe it. It's a desert, but it has floods. And the flow continues into winter, when nobody does farming, and so it just goes into the Indus River and then into the Arabian Sea.

So we said: how do we optimize and manage this water by freezing the winter water till the summer, in the form of ice. This is easier said than done because the ice melts away in March. And people would laugh if we say this. So we said, how about using some high school science and geometry? If it doesn't stay when it is on the ground, can we put it in shapes like hemispheres or cones, which the sun cannot melt until June, or July? The sun needs surface area to melt the ice, and in geometry, we all learn that certain shapes have low surface areas relative to their volumes like spheres, hemispheres, cones. So why not make it in conical shapes, which will not give the sun the surface area it needs, but will give the farmer the volume it needs? So it's like cheating the Sun a little bit, and tricking it!

Zarina Screwvala: That's wonderful! Thank you so much. Anu, we're speaking of transformation through education. We're speaking of leadership for a better world. You and your Teach for India CEO, Shaheen Mistry, have actually developed three very beautiful commitments which the fellows make to themselves when they join Teach for India. Could you tell us something about those commitments? And why you felt they were important?

Anu Aga: The first commitment is educational equity. I've told you how bad our educational system is, so this is not difficult to understand. The privileged children go to private schools and, at least academically, get a 'good' education. I don't think it's a wholesome good education, but...The belief is that every child has a right to quality education, and that education is the only thing that can pull them out of poverty.

Many of our TFI fellows and alums have become Akanksha principals and teachers. And between TFI and Akanksha, eleven students have been selected by United World College (UWC), studied in Singapore, Armenia, and all over...and four are studying in the US with full scholarship. This is a small number, but even this is possible when given an opportunity. TFI focuses only in the cities and in English medium schools, which is a very very small fraction. But we hope our alums move to the villages, the tribal areas, and make an impact in vernacular.

The second commitment is personal transformation. I believe you cannot lead others unless you have learnt to lead your own self. You have to earn the right to lead others. Leaders have to work from wisdom, not just from their knowledge and skills. So we talk a lot, we expose them, we take them to different places and hope they have a lifetime commitment to personal transformation.

The third is the commitment to collective action. In all our education, you are taught to be competitive and not share your knowledge with others. Whereas at TFI, whatever we do is on an open platform. For example, we had to collect lakhs of rupees, or crore maybe, to create an online teacher-training program called Firki. And since that's an open platform, anyone can get it. So we had to collaborate, not just with our own people, but with the outside world, to make things happen. These are the three commitments.

Zarina Screwvala: Wonderful! In your last one, you call it the commitment to collective action; Be the Change. I believe you also have a very beautiful community outreach program. Could you tell us about that?

Anu Aga: We believe that a student cannot be influenced, unless we influence the entire community. So during school days, on weekends, in the summer, they take up a project that will make a difference to the community. For example, one girl who was sent abroad by UWC, invited 10 of her students from all the world over, to come and work in the community. So community work is very much an important

aspect for the fellows and the students.

Zarina Screwvala: Gandhiji deeply believed that the teaching of ethics was a function of the state. Anu, Sonam do you resonate with this? And if so, how do you suggest we teach ethics in schools? We've touched on bits, but this is very specifically about ethics and values.

Anu Aga: I don't know what kind of a state Gandhiji saw when he suggested that. I would never leave ethics to the state. Never! If by that, you mean municipal schools I don't blame the teachers. The system is so corrupt that most of them have to pay anywhere from 3 to 5 lakhs to enter the system. With this kind of debt, where do you have the energy to teach ethics? You and I wouldn't have it! So I wouldn't leave it to the state at all. I would start with the parents, and schools which are especially able to do this. It is a difficult thing, but...If you just see our Parliament which represents our state of government, it is terrible. You wouldn't be proud of it.

Sonam Wangchuk: I think a little differently. First of all, I would say that ethics should be a major part of education, especially in the third 'H' [Heart]. And education should be for the state to do, for equality of education throughout. It is one of the basic necessities. I no longer think that our basic necessities are *Roti, Kapda aur Makaan* [Food, Clothing and Shelter]. They were once, but today it is clean air, clean water, and education. These are the basic necessities and these better be handled by the state. Because privately, it can become very messy, if people start owning up air, water and education. Everyone has a right to get a good start in life, and an equal start in life. It shouldn't matter where you were born in order to get a good start in life, and the state can handle this!

All of Scandinavia is considered very progressive in education; it's all state-run education. In our own country, *Kendriya Vidyalayas* [System of Central Government Schools in India], I think, are the best system and I was lucky to be a part of it. And if it can be done, why not for all schools? To give everybody that equal chance. And therefore





I think that education can be part of the state.

Actually, the reason why Anu is right in saying that she wouldn't leave it to the state today, is perhaps because we don't have ethics as a part of a sound education system, and because we citizens do not have that ethics; we elect a government for a bottle of rum, whiskey, and some rupees. It is because of not getting the right values early on, that we elect a state that we cannot then trust. It's a circular logic I would say.

Anu Aga: I couldn't agree more. Ideally, education is a state responsibility and we should not have private schools. But that's the ideal situation. Today, with so much corruption and not caring in all schools, including low income private schools - I'm not glorifying them - today I'm saying, I wouldn't leave it to the state.

Zarina Screwvala: Understood. When yours, and my children go to the same schools as everybody else, the schools will be totally transformed. So the last question. Today, as we were speaking, the government educates the majority of children in India. What little practical advice would you give to begin to change the government education system in the country?

Anu Aga: I want to share a story. There was a school where there was a leakage in the toilet, a

bad leakage. So the municipality, which owned the school, was told about it, and they did a little patchwork. A few weeks later, there was a worse leak in another toilet and some patchwork was done. And later, the whole corridor collapsed and some children were hurt. Then they realized that the whole building has to come down and be restructured.

I feel that's what we need to do with our education. Not to make little little changes, like RTE [Right to Education Regulations, India] has made enrolment compulsory, and the inputs are very much emphasized. Education has to be re-done and for that we have to face the unions who are not going to take it easily. We will lose vote banks. We need a government that is really willing to make a huge change. But that is the real way to make a fundamental change. Our 12,000 teacher institutes are mostly owned by politicians in nexus with builders, because they have rules like - you have to have one or two acres to build. In a city, who can afford this? So sorry for being a little negative, but unless we improve the quality of teachers...if a surgeon, or lawyer is not good, people will stop going to him...but in a municipal school, even if a teacher is bad, s/he will continue to teach till s/he has to retire. That should change. Where a teacher has the greatest impact on children's life, we don't demand the best!

Zarina Screwvala: Absolutely! Teachers are the most essential, I agree. Sonam?

Sonam Wangchuk: I think in our country we need to be a little more decided about what we want. For example, we have most of our schools run by the government. They're run in various mother tongues, which is one of the best things to happen. But then, for the better-off or well-off financially, you have private schools which are all run in English. Now these children in English schools, do not get to use the asset that the mother tongue can be; this great arsenal of weapons or tools that they can use to understand their surroundings and so on. They suffer. And the children in the government schools also suffer because they don't get attention. Because those who can speak up are all in the other schools. These are schools with children of the voiceless; and nobody speaks for them, nobody in the government has time for them, and they really perform poorly. So both suffer.

The first thing I would like is that the government needs to decide what language we need to go with. Preferably I would say all state schools and private schools, in all states, should have education in the mother tongue of the state - Marathi in Maharashtra, Tamil in Tamil Nadu, private or government/public. Start in your

mother tongue and you will see that it takes nothing to acquire another language – English, or French, or others. They'll be good in the grasp of the fundamentals, and they'll be good in whatever language. Once you have that great grasp, you'll have the confidence to acquire whatever you like.

But because of this confusion, we mix up, and then we don't get anywhere. That leads to the scores that Anu mentioned in PISA. We are not even decided about which electrical sockets to use. I was so surprised, I was on a flight and the Indian pins [electrical plugs] don't fit anywhere in the world; they don't even fit in the Air India sockets! We have to decide that we are this country, and this is ours. And the world will make for us, and make this kind of pin. We speak these languages as our mother tongues, and we will speak this language as our *lingua franca* and the world will have to adjust. We have to be clear about our education system also in this way.

Zarina Screwvala: Wonderful! Gandhiji also resonated deeply with the teaching of children in the mother tongue and not in a foreign or any other language for that matter, because it builds confidence and conviction and enables the child for a better future. Thank you Sonam, thank you Anu. It was a wonderful panel. Thank you very much.





Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus

EMPOWERING
REAL CHANGE

I'm delighted to be with you today, and with New Acropolis India, for the celebration of the 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi's birth. Although I too was invited to attend, unfortunately my dates didn't work out. And the best thing I could do was to talk to you through this message.

It is a wonderful initiative to explore what can be done and how we can create a better society. Most of the problems of society are created by people like you and me. That's how it has all become messed up. Lots of problems: wealth concentration, poverty, healthcare, discrimination...a long list of such problems.

Many of these problems are causing us to move in the direction of self-destruction. But that is not what human beings came to this planet for. Our task is to build a beautiful world given all our gifts. We are gifted with creativity, the ability to expand the horizons of our knowledge, and the ability to solve problems. But somehow we have not used the full capacity to solve the very problems that we ourselves have created. So that is the important thing that we must do: find the approach we must take so that we can have a better world for ourselves.

Something that we have been practicing, putting into action, is called Social Business. This is just another kind of business which aims at solving people's problems. It is a kind of the reverse of conventional business, which is all about making money. This is a business for not making money. Instead, it is to solve problems. Suddenly this idea opens up a completely new horizon for us. And we bring all of our creative power to make it happen. Once we have designed it, suddenly we see an enormous capacity, all our creative power can be channeled through it. And we find that people solve problem after problem. The more problems we solve, the more ideas keep coming, and more technology keeps coming, to undo the things that we have done in the past, and go beyond.

So it's almost like creating a completely new civilization. Our present civilization follows a greed way of civilization. By approaching it with our creative power, we can undo the greed way, and transform it into a civilization based on human values; with empathy, peace and friendship. And that's the task. I hope that in our discussions and deliberations we come to feel that we can unleash that creative capacity to make things happen. Thank you very much!

RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

Ronnie Screwvala & Chetna Gala Sinha
Moderated by Harianto Mehta

EMPOWERING **REAL** CHANGE



“You are talking about loans and capital.
Our courage is our capital.”

Hariato Mehta: Ronnie this first question is for you. Professor Yunus just spoke about this concept of Social Business, where the business is created not for profitability or for shareholder value, but actually to solve human problems. As a serial entrepreneur yourself what do you see as the real role, the responsibility, perhaps even the obligation of businesses to the society in which they are run?

Ronnie Screwvala: So maybe I'll just start with one thought because I think there's a fair amount of haziness when people define not-for-profit, and then a social business, and then a business for profit. And for me I'm a strong advocate; either a business is for profit, or it's not-for-profit. It can't be for-less-profit - there's no such thing. That's a very strong thought and the reason I say this, especially relevant for a country like India, is that we need to solve every problem at scale for all the obvious reasons. And you're not going to be able to attract the foundation of funding, the resources, and the caliber of people that are needed, to come in and solve those problems unless they're very clear, that this is a non-profit, or a for-profit.

So first, I think when we look at the social space it should not be defined as for-less-profit and my anecdote is that I work very closely with a micro housing finance company. When we took an investment into it, at the first meeting we had this discussion. All of them talked about the factors, that look...here is the situation: We borrow at 7% or 8% and we will not give loans above 9%. And I said that that's fantastic. But what is our role? Do we want to give loans to two lakh auto rickshaw wallas [rikshaw drivers], and people who can't take loans from the official banking system, at 9% interest? Or do we want to impact 10 million people who anyway can't get those loans, but might be quite happy to pay 13%? And I know Chetna might have a different point of view on that. I come from a different world that's trying to bridge and marry those contexts. And I think over a certain period of time, a penny sort of dropped; that actually the goal was

that we need to solve problems at scale. So I think the first responsibility is: are we solving problems at scale?

Either a business is for profit, or it's not-for-profit. It can't be for less profit - there's no such thing.

The second context, as far as that is concerned, is that profitability is not a bad word. It should not be a bad word. I think the context here is the word 'impact'. We use the word 'social' and I try to move people to the thought process of impact. Because you can have a profitable business or a not-for-profit business, but you can also be creating impact. I founded and ran a media company. I think it was inbuilt in our system while we were in the form of media and entertainment. But if you ask me, it's one of the most impactful contexts because you're shaping people's minds. Of course, education shapes people's minds, but media in many ways shapes people's minds; whether it's news, whether it's fake news or right news, whether it's the stories we tell...because actually the most memorable things that shape our minds, whether it's an education or anything else, is stories and evangelism. And if you take those contexts those are impact sectors.

Unfortunately everyone looks at pharmaceutical companies worldwide as an impact sector. And I think that's a gray area because when they've crossed the line and looked at optimization of profits, you found the value system compromised. So value system and ethics I'll keep separate, and I think broadly I'd like to say as the opening thought process that we should be clear of what is the impact that a for-profit organization is making. And therefore, what is the culture of that organization to do it. Maybe later I'll talk about how we went and formed a certain

sense of culture by sort of marrying the fact of 'let's keep impact', but let's not get mixed up between for-profit and not-for-profit.

Hariato Mehta: Chetnaji you come from a completely different background. You come from grassroots rural India, where in fact you decided to actually create a microfinance banking business to address very pertinent social issues at the time. I'd love to hear a little bit about your journey. How you came across this need at all? How did you address it? Because I'm sure there were many challenges to encounter.

Chetna Gala Sinha: So first of all, I never thought that I'll start a bank. I am born and raised in Mumbai. I was active in the Jaiprakash Narayan movement, who was a Gandhian leader who started a student and youth organization. I was part of that, and passionate of that. And Jaiprakash Narayan used to say that we need young people to work in rural India. Being a young undergraduate university student, I was so passionate and I used to go to villages in drought prone areas, in western Maharashtra. I met my husband there, who was not much educated. But he could pull the crowd and I got attracted to him and married him, and

left Mumbai and went to the village and settled there.

It was very different. I had great ideas of revolution and total revolution...I was talking about revolution and that we will change the whole society. But the very next day I realized that where I'm going to stay, there is no toilet, there is no running water, there is no electricity, and if you go to another village, and go and stand at the bus stop, you will have to stand for three hours. A hundred times I used to ask the station master at the bus stop, when the bus is coming. Because we are so used to the local trains of Mumbai; at that time it was much more efficient, it wouldn't be late.

Suddenly, we realized that revolution is a great thing, but that the day-to-day life is equally important. And my whole macro-level ideology got challenged; how do I bring it to each one...I mean to a poor woman...what am I going to talk to her about revolution and total revolution? Anyway, so that actually made me think and rethink what exactly I am going to do when I'm going to be in the community. So it was a very learning journey I would say, or in fact I would say it was more than that. Even now I have been questioned. I have to





unlearn every time, and I have made so many mistakes. So I'll start with that.

One of the women came to me and said that she wanted to do savings – Kantabai. She was a street vendor, staying with her family on the street. So my obvious response was: do you earn enough to save? And she kept saying, “I want to do savings because I want to buy a tarpaulin sheet so that in monsoon and summer I can cover my family.” I felt that she's not asking for any grant, no subsidy, as we always presume that poor people are going to ask for. So why don't I go with her to the bank. And the banks were very clear. She wanted a daily saving account; she wanted to save a small amount. The bank said that she was not an affordable client for them. And that's where I thought that if women like Kantabai cannot open a savings account, why don't we start a bank for that? And we applied for the banking license.

I must have told this story a thousand times. But every time I say it, I feel myself empowered because of these women. And so I like to share it. When we applied for the banking license, the majority of our women used a thumb impression, where it came to the signature. And on those grounds, the Reserve Bank rejected the license, saying that we cannot issue a license to a bank whose promoting

members are non-literate. I was devastated as I came back from Mumbai. And in the bus I was crying. I told our women that we didn't get the license because all the promoting members were non-literate. You know what the women said? “So what? Why are you crying? We do not know to read and write. So we will learn from today!” And our literacy classes started from the very day that the license was rejected.

You know, it makes me so humble that in spite of their situation, whereby they go for wage-earning in summers of 47 degrees Celsius, come home at night, and want to learn and study, and have a passion. And somewhere I was feeling that they are so passionate, but I don't know how, or if, we are going to get the banking license. And then we applied again. But at that time, because I myself was not sure, I didn't go alone. With me, 15 women came to the Central Bank to talk to the bank officers. I wasn't sure what was going to happen. But I was sure that they were quite confident.

And when we went to the RBI. I had no idea what our women were going to say. But you know what they said? They said that you rejected the license because we were non-literate. We cannot read and write, but we can count! That was a learning for me. That even a person that cannot read and write, can count. And they said, “Tell us to calculate the interest

of any principal amount. If we fail, don't issue the license. Tell your officers to do it without a calculator, and see who can calculate faster."

And I would just say that after this, I realized that when you set up anything, you just have to think one thing...that the opposite person, who is poor, is not thinking in a poor way.

See, you too are getting goose bumps, right? Obviously I had no idea what was going to happen. But then we came back. And then one day, after three months, we received by post the license and a call from Reserve Bank of India. It was a trunk call. At that time it used to be 'PP' - you had to be the particular person. This RBI officer said that this was the first license they have ever sent by post, because people come to the office asking when it would be issued. And you guys never came after that. So that is the journey. And when I share this journey, what it actually teaches me is that these women were so committed and persistent about their own savings. They required a safe and secure place to save, and they knew what they wanted. It was a matter of listening to them.

And I would just add to what Ronnie said. There are other lessons. This is now a bank which is managed and operated by women, more than 110000 women having accounts, and they are transacting with the bank, and they are leading the bank. And we had to take some very tough decisions. When you have a bank, it is a for-profit. A bank has to be. Every year we are supposed to give a dividend to our women. But then, how do we create the reserves? That was our challenge. Because

it is a co-operative bank, not an investor driven organization.

And so we asked our women: how do we create our reserves? If we give dividends, there won't be any reserve. You know what? For five years our women sacrificed their dividends to create the reserves for the bank. So here I want to say that they had a broader vision than me, than my books which taught me economics, which said that dividends are must. But these women, they said that we are members, we want this institution to stay longer, and we are ready to sacrifice our dividends and create the reserves. I think these are the lessons that we need to learn as an investor; that impact will happen if you create such reserves for the people.

And I would just say that after this, I realized that when you set up anything, you just have to think one thing...that the opposite person, who is poor, is not thinking in a poor way. Right? They are not! They are thinking of creating wealth! And I always say that what these women taught me in my journey is: never provide poor solutions to poor people.

Ronnie Screwvala: If I can just add, to extrapolate what Chetna has just said here. I think it is quite relevant for all of us, because we also come from the other world. What I think she's not saying is the realization and the concept of financial inclusion that starts coming into the mindsets of these people when they feel so empowered. Since your entire thrust today is one of empowerment, I think that's when the mindset changes. Because first is this entire self-process, and this whole self-help group, and then going forward...that transformation is really the critical element where the woman decides that she can make a difference and understands what money can mean to them, and therefore the power. It's not normal today in many parts of rural India that everyone actually thinks with clarity on financial inclusion, or wealth creation. But by the process of what I think they've done, we've changed mindsets. And I think that that's even a bigger compliment than actually the savings, and the reserves.

Hariato Mehta: Ronnie, you have actually decided on an alternate model. You've run a spate of successful companies, and at some point you decided on the philanthropic initiative of Swades as a standalone operation where it is very clearly a not-for-profit type of direction. How do you see this bridge? Where you have a set of businesses which are profit-based businesses, and then there is a separate non-profit enterprise where, for example there is social upliftment, or a community upliftment type of program? Do you see these at odds? And are you able to find a way to rationalize them together?

Ronnie Screwvala: Personally, no. I don't see it at odds, and I think the origin can come at any age, at any stage. I think everyone has a misnomer that the context of sharing and giving comes only when you have - both resources and time. And I think the younger generation today, they're anyway proving all of us wrong, because they have figured it out; that even if they don't have the resources, they will contribute in some form, and most of them in terms of their time.

And I'm a strong advocate in any case; I think if you look at the GDP of what is philanthropy in India, even though I don't particularly like the word philanthropy, the resources and time that people give to it today is much much higher than most other countries. So we may be at 0.02% of our GDP when we talk about the cheques that we cut towards social causes. And I constantly have this angst where America feels that they do 2% of GDP. That's there, but I keep repeating this...1.8 percent of that endowment goes to universities and others, who I don't think need half the money that they get.

So the sweat equity that happens in India is incredible. The younger generation is already doing that. So anecdotally for us, I think it was at a very early stage. Since at least this session is one about building organizations, and for-profit or not...for me, what is the culture of a company? And I think if you can set the culture of an organization right, then it actually catapults and predefines the betterment.



But profit is not a bad word. What you can do with that, to make it happen whether it's in the micro finance space, or it's in a highly profitable sense, the culture defines it. In our early stage I feel very proud that when we started off our first organization, we decided that 10% of whatever we would have as profits, which was almost zero at that time for almost five years thereafter, we would give in some form. At that stage it was just a vocalization of a thought, but what happened is that we had a 10,000 square foot office, and we allocated a thousand square foot at that stage – to what had turned out to be a creche and an old-age home. But the 30 people that worked in our company, and then grew to 300 people, for them they kind of owned it. So in the culture that we set in our organization and the company - I think that 10% had more to do than anything else that we were doing. So I think when you look at it, and draw lines, we should be very clear that there is no sense of when you do this, how you do this, or what's the concept of timing. And you can marry both the worlds ongoingly and constantly.

Hariato Mehta: So is there sometimes, a challenge to bridge the gap between profit, which might be misconstrued as greed, and this value system that you speak of. Is it easy always to bridge the gap?

Ronnie Screwvala: It could be but I think it's wrong for it to be. Today, in Swades foundation we're working with 1,200 schools, completely not-for-profit. Our entire mindset and thinking is one of how to improve that system, to work with it, and to empower. At the same time I'm running a for-profit online education company in the higher education space and there we're very focused on it being for-profit. We are creating very high impact. Anywhere and everywhere we go today, I think we're changing people's lives, working professionals who started off as being undergraduates, now have an opportunity to not leave their job, because they can't afford to leave their job, because they can't afford to not work. Yet they are getting the opportunity to get into specialization. We are creating impact, but it is for-profit. And between the two, again here my job is to see that we can create 10 million

entrepreneurs, or 1 million data scientists we can create, rather than figuring out what I am going to do with that resource. So I think if you can divide the two, it's much more productive. I personally feel blessed that I've been able to be in a situation where I can straddle both.

Never provide poor solutions to poor people.

Hariato Mehta: This is actually a question for both of you. It comes back to the root of our subject today of Gandhiji. One of the inspirations we draw from him is this unfaltering pursuit of truth. And when it comes to the realm of business, I was trying to define what could it be that we run a business in the pursuit of truth. And I came up with a few ideas like sustainability, like inclusivity, like being holistic. And in fact both Sawdes, as well as Mann Deshi, do a vast array of activities. How do you see sustainability and this pursuit of truth in each of your works, both at Swades, as well as at Mann Deshi?

Chetna Gala Sinha: You are saying 'in pursuit of truth'. I also felt when you were talking that I will focus on sustainability. But in this whole journey, when we work, many times what we think, what we decide, what we theorize, the concepts that we have...when we work with the community, things are totally different. And sometimes we don't realize that. But then the community actually tells us.

I'll just share another example and then also come to the point about sustainability. When we started the bank, the women actually were not coming to the bank for the savings. It was started for that, but they were not coming to the bank. And I went again to the women, at the weekly markets, and said to them that there was so much excitement...what happened? Why are you not coming? And they said that if we come, we will lose our working day, so we cannot come. Which means that if they cannot come, the bank has to go to them...so provide doorstep banking.

I'll be sharing a story that shows you how foolish we are when we work, and then how people are smarter than us. So we circulated boxes for the women to save; since they cannot come every day, they will save coins, as their wages are small, and when the box gets full, then they will actually transfer the amount to their bank account.

Now after eight days, one woman came in with a broken box, and she was so angry. And she was saying: whose stupid idea is this? And it was mine. She said that before your representative comes, my husband broke the box and took away all the money. Now who is responsible? It was a learning. I should have asked this lady first, before myself designing, myself deciding it all. So in pursuit of truth of Mahatma Gandhi, I see that you have to listen to the people. If you have done something wrong, humbly agree, and listen to them. These are the lessons you are going to get from the people. So first is, listen. And then, how do we make it sustainable, right?

So doorstep banking was also not very easy for us because there was an administration cost, which was 3% of the cost of our total spread. These are a little technical terms, but I am just saying...say the cost of funds is 9%, now the costs are 3% more, so it costs 12%. So you need to have profit. And we asked our women: if you are not going to come to the bank, the bank will come to you, but that is an additional cost. And they said yes, we are ready to pay for it. Add that additional amount, get the interest, little bit reduce your profit also, but then keep it going...because you cannot make a loss. I think you have to figure it out and you find ways. And that's how this whole concept of business correspondence, of having doorstep banking came, that mainstream banking took as a model. Why? Because it was sustainable. Otherwise these women would never have been in the mainstream banking.

Hariato Mehta: It's very interesting because one of the things that I'm hearing also is the need to really open our ears and to listen, to hear, to observe, to recognize. And very often we go into these situations already with a preconceived notion and impose our thought

processes, or our expertise onto a situation.

Chetna Gala Sinha: Actually, I re-emphasize that when she brought the box, what was she saying? "Don't forget, I am NOT asking you for access. I'm asking for control." So the lesson was to design a product for the poor in such a way that they have control on their resources. She was not against us...all those issues are secondary; who took her money, and all. But if you create such institutions where the poor have control on their resources, they will make sure that it gets sustainable. They will find ways. They will not wait for some investors to come. They will find ways.

In India we don't evangelize failure. I think we need to talk much much more about failure.

Hariato Mehta: Ronnie, how do you approach this question of sustainability, inclusivity and the holistic upliftment of the communities in which you are involved?

Ronnie Screwvala: So I think sustainability is a very very critical word for anything that you're doing in the social sector because of two things. One is that we need to measure and have a permanent change. And I think when we started looking at scaling up Swades, and Zarina and I met almost 400 NGOs across India, and then got inspired by meeting Professor Yunus and Professor Faisal both icons in Bangladesh, what came to us was the incredible amount of work being done by so many people in the social sector, and they were doing it for 20 years and 30 years. But I think when you come down to measuring that impact, the question is: okay but if you've been doing this for 10 years then at some stage you would have made some sense of permanent change. And to be honest I found a certain lack of that. And I think that was a sort of a penny-dropping-moment for us, as

to how, and if, we wanted to be an execution foundation. And it's not that I'm saying that we have all the solutions for it, but it's there at the back of our mind.

Sustainability, from our perspective therefore at the entry level, is to have the community fully involved; fully and totally identifiably involved. Number two, we get them to contribute. If they've not self-contributed to this thought process...

And you know when we built toilets for example, many people asked us, "Yes, but are they using it?" And I think its total two tick marks for us really. If there isn't water, we shouldn't be building the toilet. And the second is, if they haven't contributed 15% of the cost of the toilet, or done *shramdaan* [Sanskrit: Voluntary Contribution], the probability of them thinking, "It's my toilet," is going to go away, and then they're not going to use it.

So if you take that as the microcosm of all thought process, sustainability is the most critical element and I think it mostly comes, when it comes to livelihood. As Sonam rightly mentioned, I think for India the *Roti-Kapda-Makan* [Food, Clothing, Shelter] era has gone, and therefore learning and education is your true sense of empowerment. Because when you understand financial inclusion and you are in control of your own destiny, that's when you're going to be able to make change. So the only job I think we have in the social sector is to be able to allow people to take control of their destiny. And I think maybe the British Raj left us with much less confidence, and a lot of shambles. But in the 70 years of our independence this is something that needs to come through. Therefore sustainability is a very very critical word. I fully agree with that.

Hariato Mehta: What then perhaps, is the role of government in supporting businesses, to support entrepreneurship, both in the rural and very grassroots farmer level type of micro enterprise, as well as perhaps much with larger enterprises and profit-based organizations which are still very much conscious of the community and social upliftment. How can the government participate do you think?

Ronnie Screwvala: Well, again, I have a very strong view that they need to be a catalyst. I think we expect too much and then we get deeply disillusioned and disappointed. And I think the truth doesn't lie in either of these two extremes. I think in many aspects the government is supposed to be a catalyst, especially when you come to entrepreneurship, for example, in this country. And the problem is that we all think that a *kirana* [General Groceries] store is an entrepreneur and we've grown up on the context of *jugaad* [hack mentality] and therefore we think we're an entrepreneurial country.

I think Israel is a more entrepreneurial country than we are and that's primarily because there's a certain sense of hunger there. We don't have enough first-generation entrepreneurs and even if you have 20,000 entrepreneurs of which the economic times only glorifies seven, we're not going to be able to build an ecosystem on that right? Because we need 10 million entrepreneurs. So, I think that's really the level at which we need to be able to empower people to go forward and I think that's very critical for us to do.

Chetna Gala Sinha: I would have liked if one of our women would have been here, who has set up herself a farmer-producer company. When you go for such things the first response for the government will be: Please don't intervene in my life. Make my life easy, don't make it complicated.

Why was micro credit so successful in India? Two reasons: One, because women paid loans on time, and investors got returns on time. It's as simple as that. Second, because collateral was formed by peers. Five women came together and said that they will take the responsibility of another person. So the community comes together and that gives you a business model. That is second. And when there's so much aspiration and there is so much readiness, then when they graduate, when our women have been through the cycle of 10 loans, 15 loans, now they are ready for micro enterprise. But when they are ready, investors are not yet matured, or the government programs which talk about financial inclusion, are not mature enough, as much as our women are mature. They want to



set up enterprise, they are talking about wanting bigger loans with a low interest? Mann Deshi Bank is doing that. But it's not only that. They are saying, "Re-invent your process!" Because our women do not have collateral. They do not have property. But they want a bigger loan. Here peer pressure is not going to work. Your five women are not going to come together; it is a bigger amount. So how do you do that?

You know what our women said? Who are doing daily savings? They do savings, they do repayment. And all the data is there. So they ask why do you need property?...For 360 days, or 380 days, I am repaying every day some amount. You know my digital history, right? When you have all that data, why are you not re-inventing the process? And so one thing is that when you are working with the poor community, as Professor Yunus said very clearly, you will have to re-invent your whole process. How do you do it? So the public sector banks, in our case government comes like public sector banks and regulator... when you are giving micro-enterprise loans your old methodology was to ask for balance sheet, profit and loss account, all that boring stuff...

But our women would immediately say that we already have this data. Every day my cashflow is this, and so government has to facilitate that. And how would it do it? So say, for example, *Neeti Ayog* [National Institution for Transforming India, India] has set up women entrepreneurship councils. In Hyderabad they declared that we are provisioning Rs10,000 crores for women entrepreneurs to facilitate women entrepreneurs. I say, don't give money to them; they are not even asking for it. But facilitate it! Tell bankers... give guaranteed funds to the bankers. And for these women who do not have collateral, let the government take the first loss guarantee. That is one.

Another, is to have policies. Our women are actually building assets. Why can't they be owners? When one of our women was setting up a farmer-producer company, the officer was asking, "You are a farmer. Do you have land in your name?" She replied, "Okay, my husband's *7/12 Utara* [Property Papers] is here. I will bring my husband, and he will write I'm a co-parcener." Officer responded, "No, no, no. You have to have land in your name. Then only we will give

you a license for a farmer-producer company.” She asked that guy, “Does your wife have land in her name?”

Sometimes you have to shame them. It’s important. What you’re asking for, you yourself do not have! I say that government will have to say that if women are working equally, they are also entitled for co-ownership of property. And government should say that every house is co-owned...why, it’s a family household. I will not even say husband and wife, because, in India we have grandmothers...so it’s a family household. And the family has a share, and that share can be collateralized. So I think these are the processes; Mann Deshi will bring it to the model. But if you have to do it at scale, then government also can take it to scale as far as making those policies. So that is the role I think government has.

Hariato Mehta: Ronnie, in some of the more recent enterprises that you have been working on, especially with U Sports and with UpGrad... these are high impact spaces. How do you see them in terms of the social upliftment. I hear that there’s a lot of work in the U Sports area, especially with Kabaddi and a few other sports, that you’re involved with.

Ronnie Screwvala: Sport, I think is the core of a nation’s pride. Can you imagine Germany getting into de-growth two years back, and then they go win the World Cup. They’ve forgotten about their GDP problems...they’re just celebrating. Look at the national sense of pride that sport can bring to a nation. It just rallies people like nobody else. We’ve had that rare experience, unfortunately with only one sport. We are a one-sporting country, and I think we need to be a five-sporting country. And sports in India, or anywhere in the world, can’t really get popular unless people are playing it. A sport can’t soar if you’re just a spectator. It has to be that people, and the general community, and the young community is playing it. So I think it’s a very high sense of impact and the reason I’m involved with it is because I feel it is fun. It is fun to be innovative and disruptive. I think we need to have four more national sports in this country outside of

just cricket. Nothing wrong with cricket. I’m just saying that the whole world has moved on, but we are now obsessed with only cricket, and the Commonwealth countries, as the British legacy left us, have also moved on, and cricket is fourth and fifth and we’re here. So yeah I think it’s the sense of pride.

Sustainability, from our perspective therefore at the entry level, is to have the community fully involved; fully and totally identifiably involved. Number two, we get them to contribute.

It’s also a sense of discipline at a schooling level. It’s a sense of collaborativeness, competitiveness, and discipline that nothing else can substitute in a classroom. Whether you’re in school or college, it teaches you something very very clear. And then it cuts through demographics and income levels. It’s a very different kind of threshold. And in Kabaddi for example, football now, and maybe others, I think there’s incredible amount of scope for a nation to be bound together, for the youth to rally together, and create a sense of discipline and ownership, and a sense of national pride.

Hariato Mehta: A final question for you both. And I think this is a little even my own personal aspiration. I think young people today are looking to go out and venture. I think the courage is there, and I think the aspiration also is there, to participate and contribute. But perhaps there’s a sense of fear or a lack of recognition of the real opportunity, or the potential to move forward. How would you perhaps help foster this, foster that aspiration, that inspiration to go out and try things out.

Chetna Gala Sinha: How did I get motivated? That would be what I would like to share with the younger people because in your day-to-day life you have so many problems. Sometimes you decide something, so many things go wrong, particularly when you are trying something new. Then how do you motivate yourself?

I will just share another story of our women. We have a community radio and when we were setting up the radio it was in a very small place. We were so ambitious: If we can set up the bank, we can set up a radio. That's how I was talking. But when the license came, you have to have a tower, run the program for nine hours at least, and then there is a condition not to play Bollywood songs, where everybody wants to listen to just that...how do you do that?

And so when we set up the radio, one lady came, and her name is Kera bai. You can see her on YouTube. She came to the radio, and she said that she wanted to feature her program. So our radio manager said, "Kera bai,

you do not know to read and write. How are you going to feature your program regularly?" See again; what I'm trying to say is how many times we have to unlearn the same things. Our women had said that we cannot read and write, but we can count. Kera bai said that I cannot read and write, but I can sing. She was making her own poems, and she started her program, and became really popular. Every week she would do it.

Anand Bakshi's son is writing a book *Let's Talk On Air* and one of the chapters is Kera bai's chapter. And when he was interviewing her, he asked, "How did you learn to sing? How did you start singing?" You know what reply she gave? She said, "When I was first time pregnant, in our house we had hardly any food to eat, and I continuously used to feel hungry. And to forget my hunger, I started singing." I just had no words. I was just listening to her, and I just felt that this lady started singing just because of hunger! These are the stories of this country. If you move around, go into the rural areas, talk to them, how



they have retained themselves, in those negative situations. You will be able to listen to such stories that will actually motivate. When women like Kera bai...now she's a famous radio jockey. On 7th January we are actually launching her CD in a big event in Mumbai at Ravindra Natya Mandir and she has been celebrated and gets awards everywhere, all over Delhi, Mumbai, and she goes to several radio stations.

And younger population, I do see in India, actually listens to these things which 20 years ago a younger person would have been, "Yeah, she can do but we cannot." But now as you mentioned, young people are persistent about their new idea. So I do think that these people keep you motivated, keep you going forward.

When I talk of with our women about what keeps them going, because in business they make losses, they make profits; if there is a drought they again are back to where they were. And I always ask them how they manage these loans? One of our women said, "You are talking about loans and capital. Our courage is our capital."

Ronnie Screwvala: So, I think if you ask me, what's the environment that can really foster... top on my list is that in India we don't evangelize failure. I think we need to talk much much more about failure. I think we should have conferences, not with successful people, but people who have failed. And I think in the beginning, people will not attend...but it's like going to the movie theatre - I want to have a laugh and I'm going to enjoy myself - and I'm saying, what's wrong with a good cry? If the story is good, you'll feel equally emotional about a good cry. And I think therefore, we just do not evangelize failure. We always think it's such a binary product, it's a sense of embarrassment. That can be a changing point in many people's mindsets and I'm a strong advocate of that and I think the penny dropped with me just when my daughter was giving this long introduction of me. And I think I said you know, it was all about X, and I thought maybe I'll reframe my CV and talk about the things that I failed in rather than what I think I may have gone through. It might be more interesting.

The roti-kapda-makan era has gone away, and therefore learning and education is your true sense of empowerment. Because when you understand financial inclusion and you are in control of your own destiny, that's when you're going to be able to make change. So the only job I think we have in the social sector is to be able to allow people to take control of their destiny.

Hariato Mehta: Thank you, really. Thank you very very much. I think what's really beautiful about both of your visions is this incessant need, to pursue...to rise up, every time you fall, every experiment, every error. And I think that's perhaps what we can really identify with; the courage to stand back up and to try again, not perhaps motivated by greed, but by really some conscious awareness and the ability to do good. Thank you very very much for your wonderful inspiration.

Maatibaani feat. Moorlala performs verses of poet-saint Kabir, capturing the yearning for truth that lies at the heart of a seeker.

Lyrics to one of their songs:

BANJARA

*The millstone of life turns onward, Kabir weeps.
Between the banks of Truth and Untruth,
No one is Spared!*

*The millstone of life turns onward, Kabir observes
He who holds the anchor of His name
Will always remain unhurt!*

*Don't leave me now
O Breath, O Wanderer!
Have yet to travel to faraway lands
O Sleeper, Awake!*

*Our Master has made this body like a garden.
How He's played into it the instrument of breath!*

*Our Master has made this body like a garden.
How He's filled it with a bowl of flowers!*

*Says Kabir, he who follows the Truth,
Will attain the Kingdom of Immortality.
O Sleeper, Awake!*

*Don't leave me now
O Breath, O Wanderer!
Have yet to travel to faraway lands
O Sleeper, Awake!*



RECONNECTING WITH NATURE

In Conversation with Dr. Vandana Shiva
Moderated by Harianto Mehta



Organic farming is nothing but an act of gratitude to the earth. It's not a technique. It's not a product. It's not a production system. It's an obligation for being members of the earth family.

Hariato Mehta: Dr. Shiva thank you so very much again for making this trip despite your injury. It really is our pleasure. We were talking during the lunch break about your very inspiring take on going back to our roots. We see in the Indian tradition that ecology is almost elevated to the level of the divine, and perhaps one of the challenges of our times is a deviation from this worldview, from this connection to nature. What would you say is this misplacement? How have we deviated? And how perhaps is it the root of our ecological crisis?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: I'm remembering Gandhi who said as a complaint against India that we are steadfast. Storms come and go and we don't get uprooted. And the problem is that we forgot how to stand and be steadfast. Partly because our philosophy of being an ecological civilization, which to me means many things... you know I did my PhD in the Foundations of Quantum Theory because I was absolutely fed up with a mechanistic worldview, of the world as dead matter, of things disconnected and separate...and therefore the license to violate. And when I did my quantum theory, and later also became an ecological activist, starting with the *Chipko* [Anti-Logging Movement in India], I realized that our entire philosophy is based on

non-separation. So my science and my activism kind of mutually reinforced each other.

And we were dealing with globalization. I used to organize rallies of 5 lakh farmers, 8 lakh farmers, to say: No, you can't reduce food to a commodity and you can't reduce the livelihoods of our small farmers, to have to compete in a highly unfair market. We managed to stop WTO in Seattle, and then we were told that we don't know what we are against, we don't know what we are for. And I remember telling a journalist, that it's because we know what we are for, that we are against this crass commodification of the world...of the liberty and licence to extract and violate. I think we lost our way because we allowed the religion of money-making, which is all that globalization is; deregulation both of society - forget your values - and of governments - don't protect. I mean we're dealing with every environmental law we put in place in the 70s being dismantled and it's counted as progress. And they call it reform. Reform was from ethics; that you become a better person. Now reform is how to be a worse person; just be a greedier person and we will worship you.

And then the tools for money-making become another God and another religion. And because the rest who have no role in all of this must



somehow keep this illusion alive, consumerism becomes a new God. And the lovely teachings we had in my family, from Gandhi, of simplicity as the most elevated way to be...you remember simple living, high thinking...now it is crude living and base thinking.

And *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* [Sanskrit: Earth Family] is what has inspired me as the idea for our times.

Vasundhara is the earth in her sacredness and her divinity. She is of course expressed in diverse species and in diverse cultures. And Kutumbakam means the family So Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam means the Earth Family.

Hariato Mehta: Please explain this because it's a beautiful concept.

Dr. Vandana Shiva: So *Vasundhara* [Mother Goddess] is the earth in her sacredness and her divinity. She is of course expressed in diverse species and in diverse cultures. And *Kutumbakam* means the family. So *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* means the Earth Family. And the original teachings of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* say very clearly that anyone who thinks so-and-so is like me, and so-and-so is not like me, or so-and-so is an outsider and so-and-so is an insider, shows a symptom of a petty mind. Elevated minds realize the whole world is one interconnected family. And so we never allowed anthropocentric thinking to evolve in India. We

were not above the tree, and we were not above the whale. And that anthropocentrism is what has brought the world to a brink; originally by creating scarcity and poverty, then by creating conflicts. We worshiped the tiger and the elephant, and now there's shooting of tigers and elephants because there's new man-elephant conflicts they say. Which is a strange phrase because we are animals too. So at one level, it's conflicts within the earth family.

And then finally its collapse. I want to make a map of India that is desertifying. We planted every tree according to the right place. Rajasthan is the most populated desert of the world, not because they got lots of rain, but because they protected every drop of water. And that love and care for the earth, *Maati Baani*, that's what it means: the voice of the earth.

We wrote a manifesto the other day where we realized that the word 'human' in Latin is derived from the word *humus*, which means soil. We are the earth, we are all *Maati Baani*. We've forgotten that and we'll have to return to it to survive; not just as a civilization, but as cultures, as religions.

And we are the only place which spoke of *Dharma*, the Right Livelihood. We didn't have religions; that's why all these fights over religions are a bit of a make-belief, political theatre.

Hariato Mehta: It's interesting that you mention it like this because one of the things, especially on the Indian subcontinent, we see this rich diversity of languages and cultures, and all sorts of different practices and customs. And yet there is some uniting thread. And this *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* concept unites. And yet you speak about mono-cultures; mono-cultures of the mind, mono-cultures in agriculture. Can you explain a little bit about why you see this as a deviation from the beauty of diversity, into a simplification, or oversimplification, homogeneity?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: Reduction. Because I think simplicity is elegant. I think reduction is a shrinkage. And when life is free, when society is free, when a child is free, you express yourself

in unique ways. It's when you're constrained that uniformity creeps in. So all dictators love uniformity. I first awoke to the mono-culture of the mind seeing our forests of the Himalaya, become mono-cultures of pine, and the oaks, and the rhododendrons...

Hariato Mehta: Can you explain this a little bit more because this mono-cultures concept might still be alien to many of us.

Dr. Vandana Shiva: The world in freedom, both the world of human life and non-human life, is an urge to express diversity. And anywhere we see the diversity, in a forest, on a farm, in the way we dress, in the way we eat, it is an expression of freedom. When a system starts to get exploited, either to reduce it to one supplier, or one commodity, then the oak which has a personality and grows in all directions, and is not linear, is not good enough. You need the pine, you need the eucalyptus; you need linearity. And so natural forests with rich diversity are converted into mono-cultures.

And it was to articulate the call of the *Chipko* sisters that I first talked about this word. And then when I studied the destruction and devastation of Punjab, which led to the 1984 emergence of violence, that's when I realized that it's happening in agriculture too. People used to write before globalization, that in India, the sari will never go. We've seen it go! Because fast fashion has managed to convince brilliant Indian women, who now get clothing out of a slave factory in Bangladesh, using cotton that killed our farmers in Vidharbha. That chain of fast fashion, is like the chain of uniformity of junk food. Around the world, people are drinking the same junk Coke and the same junk Pepsi, and our kids are living on the junk Lay's chips; that's become the staple diet worldwide. And it is an alarm. 75% diseases are coming from this. But everyone's wearing junk clothing. And the economies of this, from what I've looked at, is that only 1% stays with the producer; 99% is those who trade, and those who put their stamp, the logo, the brand.

And so a mono-culture of the mind is a system

that distills exploitation of the earth, exploitation of producers, and leaves you in the current Macaulay syndrome.

Satyagraha is knowing that there are higher laws in this universe. The *Ishu Upanishad* is one. That this world and creation is meant for all beings today, and forever in the future; that this planet has her law. She's called *Gaia*, not for nothing.

I don't know how many of you know of Macaulay. Macaulay was the one who said that India's too rich; she can never be colonized. But we can colonize her by making them believe that everything they have is inferior, and all the junk we bring is superior. And that's how we'll get them to buy our clothing. And now, without a Macaulay saying it, we're doing it all the time.

Hariato Mehta: Related to this, in your books and in your talks, you caution against this incessant drive to make money, and the measure of GDP as a major contributor to the ecological destruction. What has GDP measurement, and the drive for money, or profit-making got to do with ecological destruction?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: I have seen it come in three waves. First was when my sisters of *Chipko* in the 70s were getting arrested for protecting the forests by doing the hug [of trees]. *Chipko* means "to hug", and they defended the forests

of the Himalaya by hugging the trees. And they were arrested for hugging trees, because the crime was that you are interfering with the collection of revenues and growth. It wasn't a big word in those days, but it meant the same thing. Because, cutting a tree generated money. Saving a tree generated life, but not money. It was a clear thing between life and money.

And then with the whole issue of globalization...it really failed because we never accepted it. And I remember a fictitious figure was cooked up: 200 billion dollars of additional trade. Well additional trade doesn't mean better lives. We are importing *ghatiya daal* [low quality lentils] like yellow pea daal, 7% protein. And our farmers, growing *Tur* and *Chana* [local lentil varieties] are being shot to death for protesting, for selling their good daal, which is 35% protein. Of course there's more trade. You cut a tree you have growth. You sell junk, you have growth. You poison people...

And the same companies that contribute to growth by selling roundup and pesticides... One: growth. And then you get cancer, and the same company makes the medicines for cancer; more growth. More cancer, more growth. More

sickness, more growth. And my brother Saamdu, who's here from Bhutan, where the idea of Gross National Happiness evolved, and they become so clear that GDP doesn't measure anything real.

When did it start? It started during The War. Measuring economies through Gross Domestic Product and Gross National Product began in the war, when they needed to mobilize society's wealth, to finance warfare; more drones, more armaments, more naval ships. Society's wealth had to be extracted and therefore the measure created was GDP. And it's based on something called a 'production boundary'. I went into this to understand how they calculated it in this way. In the war they said: if you produce what you consume, you don't produce. Like our wonderful singers from Kutch - they're producing their own music, and participating in it, and they're not part of the big music economy. So if you produce what you consume, if you're self-reliant, if you are in a circular economy, you are not contributing to production. You've got to sell what you produce, and you've got to buy what you need, and that is how GDP grows. But a system of that kind is based on extraction from nature, and extraction from people, and





extraction from society. Therefore nature gets poorer, that's the ecological crisis, people get poorer, that's the hunger crisis, that's the poverty crisis. And when things get too bad, you just change the statistics.

Earlier, poverty used to be measured on the basis of what did you eat? It's measured now on what you consume. And the more you spend on food, the richer you're getting. You might be eating half, but you spend double the amount. If my clean river went, and I have to drink water from this bottle, I'm spending more money to quench my thirst; I'm richer. A dead river, which is poverty, doesn't count. So it's an interlocked system, which I see more and more; as a system of theft from nature and society, and an illusion, in which we are living in a prison.

Hariato Mehta: This naturally reminds me of Gandhi's very famous quote that "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed." And actually you've spoken about this whole industrial revolution as almost inspired by war, as a destructive means. How is industrial agriculture which was invented, or developed, in order to feed the growing population of the planet, how is it actually a war technology? In what manner?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: Well, coming back to Gandhi's quote - it is brilliant. I don't think there is a lesson in ecology, distilled more than that phrase - that the earth has enough for everyone's needs. If we only really learn how much potential the earth has! I save seeds. One seed can give

you a million seeds in one generation. In the next generation: a million into million. You never have scarcity. Whereas if I make a terminator seed, or a hybrid seed, which you can't save, I have growth, but we don't have more seed.

Gandhi distilled this from the ancient *Isha Upanishad* which says that the universe is the creation of the supreme power, meant for the benefit of all creation. Each individual life-form must therefore learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system, in close relationship with other species. Let not any one species encroach on another's rights. When you start encroaching on another's rights, if you're thinking mechanically, there's less space for them, but more for you. But when you realize ecologically non-separation: when you've killed the butterflies and the pollinators, you have 1/3 food less. Because they pollinate for you. That's 1/3 the food. When you kill the soil organisms with industrial farming, your soils become desertified, and the decline of yield starts, which is happening to Punjab. Their soils are desertified, their production is going down.

So my critique of industrial agriculture really, is that it's not an agriculture system. Agriculture means "care of the land".

Hariato Mehta: But we have to feed our growing population...

Dr. Vandana Shiva: Exactly, by taking care of the land. Industrial agriculture was an invention after the wars to sell leftover chemicals. Pesticides

were the chemicals used in the concentration camps to kill people. All pesticides are derivatives of Xylon B, which was used to gas people in the gas chambers. Even chemical fertilizers, which look very harmless, were first made through the technology of fixing atmospheric nitrogen by burning fossil fuels at high temperatures, for making ammunition and explosives for the war. After the war, they were sold as nitrogen fertilizers. And it's not an accident that all over the world, fertilizer bombs are being used in terrorist attacks. In Afghanistan, most of the terrorist attacks are fertilizer bombs. So these were imagination of war. For Humanity to imagine that this person is something else, not like me, and therefore I have a right to exterminate them... I think that thought of extermination, either of other humans or other species, is the highest human rights crime. And it is recognized as a crime, which is why we have a human rights declaration. It frames all our laws.

Hariato Mehta: So then, what is the alternative that at Navdanya, and in your work, you have developed?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: Well, I've learned from nature. I'm not trained in agriculture. I've learned from our farmers. We've farmed for ten thousand years. And we have been feeding 1.3 billion people. And we've been feeding them well, with a lot of diversity. Our amazing *thali* [traditional Indian meal] is the richest biodiversity you can ever eat. I think we eat about 50 crops in every meal minimum. In the US they eat one big steak from a factory farm. I realized in my studies on the violence of the Green Revolution, and all my other work, that it all began with seed. To put chemicals into farming they had to change the seed, and turn it into the dwarf varieties. Later they wanted to patent the seed, genetically modify the seed. That's when I said I'll save the seed. The seed, when it's organically bred is good for organic farming, and produces a lot. When you allow nature to recycle what she produces, and give something back to her in the form of organic farming...Organic farming is nothing but an act of gratitude to the earth. It's not a technique. It's not a product. It's not a production system. It's an obligation for being

members of the earth family.

Hariato Mehta: It almost sounds like Gandhi's *satyagraha*.

When life is free, when society is free, when a child is free, you express yourself in unique ways. It's when you're constrained that uniformity creeps in. So all dictators love uniformity.

Dr. Vandana Shiva: Well, you know my life has been guided by Gandhi's *satyagraha* [Sanskrit: *To stand for Truth, refering also to passive resistance*], because I woke up to environmental destruction with the disappearance of a forest in the Himalaya. I grew up in these forests, and I joined *Chipko*. *Chipko* was a forest *satyagraha*. Last year we celebrated a hundred years of Gandhi's Champaran *satyagraha*, where indigo was being cultivated under forced conditions in Champaran. And one bag of indigo used to be sold for a bag of gold, which is why they wanted to control indigo. So we did a *yatra* [Voyage, Pilgrimage] because for 45 years now, forest *satyagraha*, *bhu* [Sanskrit: Earth] *satyagraha*, the land grab; everywhere people are rising on land grab because this is our mother.

Hariato Mehta: What is *satyagraha*?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: *Satyagraha* is knowing that there are higher laws in this universe. The *Ishu Upanishad* is one; that this world and creation is meant for all beings today, and forever in the future; that this planet has her law. She's called *Gaia*, not for nothing. When James Lovelock realized she is self-organized and alive, he said,

“She’s Gaia.” We have laws of human rights, of respecting all humanity. Just knowing those laws, and understanding when they are violated, and then distilling the courage, both from the understanding of the whole, and by not accepting the violation, is a non-cooperation with brutal laws, laws of injustice, laws of violence; that’s *satyagraha*, the power of truth, the force of truth. And that’s what I’ve done with the seed.

Hariato Mehta: To take this one step further, you spoke about inherent nature’s laws as being above any other legal or administrative system that could be. If the individual, like any common person in the audience today, wanted to take an ecological step in our everyday lives, living in Mumbai, how can we really live it? While there’s always a choice, let’s say for the sake of practicality, we cannot move to the Himalayas. We cannot rent a cottage in navdanya as much as I would like it. How do I do it in Mumbai? How do I do it here, in our everyday lives?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: You eat in Mumbai? I think that’s where the problem begins; where we eclipse nature from our being because we were told that we are separate from nature, we are outside her, we are her masters, we are her exploiters, her owners. We forget the farmer who produced the food. And of course, because of the way chemical farming has been celebrated, we forget the earthworm, and the bee, and the butterfly. And it doesn’t matter if they are getting annihilated. Every scientific study of the recent months has said that. Whether it’s the UN Climate Change Treaty, or it’s the Biodiversity Treaty, they are warning; saying if we don’t shift in the next 10 years, there is an imminent collapse of our life supporting systems on this planet; the climate systems, the biodiversity systems, the land systems, the water systems.

You all eat every day. The beauty of my learnings from the seed, and the soil, and the food, has been that we don’t just have to protect biodiversity out there. We have to protect biodiversity within, because we are one life. We are not made from different elements; it is the same *Pancha Mahabhuta* [Sanskrit: 5 Elements].

And outside us, it shows up as a forest, as a farm, as a soil food web, as insect webs. Inside us, is a hundred trillion companions, what is now being recognized as the gut microbiome. We are only 10% human. We are 90% microbial. They are the ones who take the *chana* we eat and turn it into our brilliant system. They’re making our bones, and our blood. They’re making our neurotransmitters. There are new findings that this is only one little brain. There’s a brain, called the second brain, which is the gut. This work is being done by trillions of organisms. And when they are killed because of the chemicals in our food, they are not able to produce the enzymes that produce the neurotransmitters. So you now have an epidemic of Alzheimer’s, of dementia, of autism; all neurological problems that scientists are realizing come from the food we eat. But the same system that’s killing you (75% of the chronic diseases begin with food), the same problems are killing our farmers (300,000 farmers suicides), and they’re killing the planet. And so every time you eat, it is a time you can make a difference. Of course you make a difference to yourself, but you make a difference to others. Then you’ll say, but how do I get it, right? Well, you’re very lucky because Navdanya, years ago, started a small place in Andheri, and I know my colleagues reachable at navdanyamumbai@gmail.com also do home deliveries. But that’s a very small part of it because one little outlet is not going to address the problems.

In this journey, pilgrimage, we took a pledge that by the year 2047, by the time it’s a hundred years of our independence, we want to work together for an India that’s free of hunger. We are hundredth on the hunger list, every second child is malnourished, every fourth Indian is hungry. We’re going to be an India that’s free of farmer suicides; no farmers should be committing suicide, the *annadata* [Sanskrit: Giver of Grain] shouldn’t be committing suicide. We are going to get rid of the chronic diseases. And I would love to invite New Acropolis to be a partner of Navdanya to do two things very concretely: First, we’ve got to get out of the idea that food is a commodity you buy blindly; food is not a commodity. Food is your very nourishment; it’s the divine. *Annambrahaman* we say in this civilization, meaning that food is

the Creator. *Brahman* is God, and *annam* is food; food as sacred. Every religion has sacred bread. So to recover that, and to re-find our community, our common-ness, I'm working towards food as a commons, and building food communities where farmers of Vidharbha are not separate from you, and you don't feel isolated and incapable of action, while the farmer of Vidharbha on the verge of committing suicide doesn't feel there's no way out. Let's work on a common plan for a five-year transition, so that Vidharbha, instead of growing BT cotton which is pushing farmer suicides, is growing good nourishing food for a food community of solidarity you create here. [Applause]

Food is not a commodity. Food is your very nourishment; it's the divine.

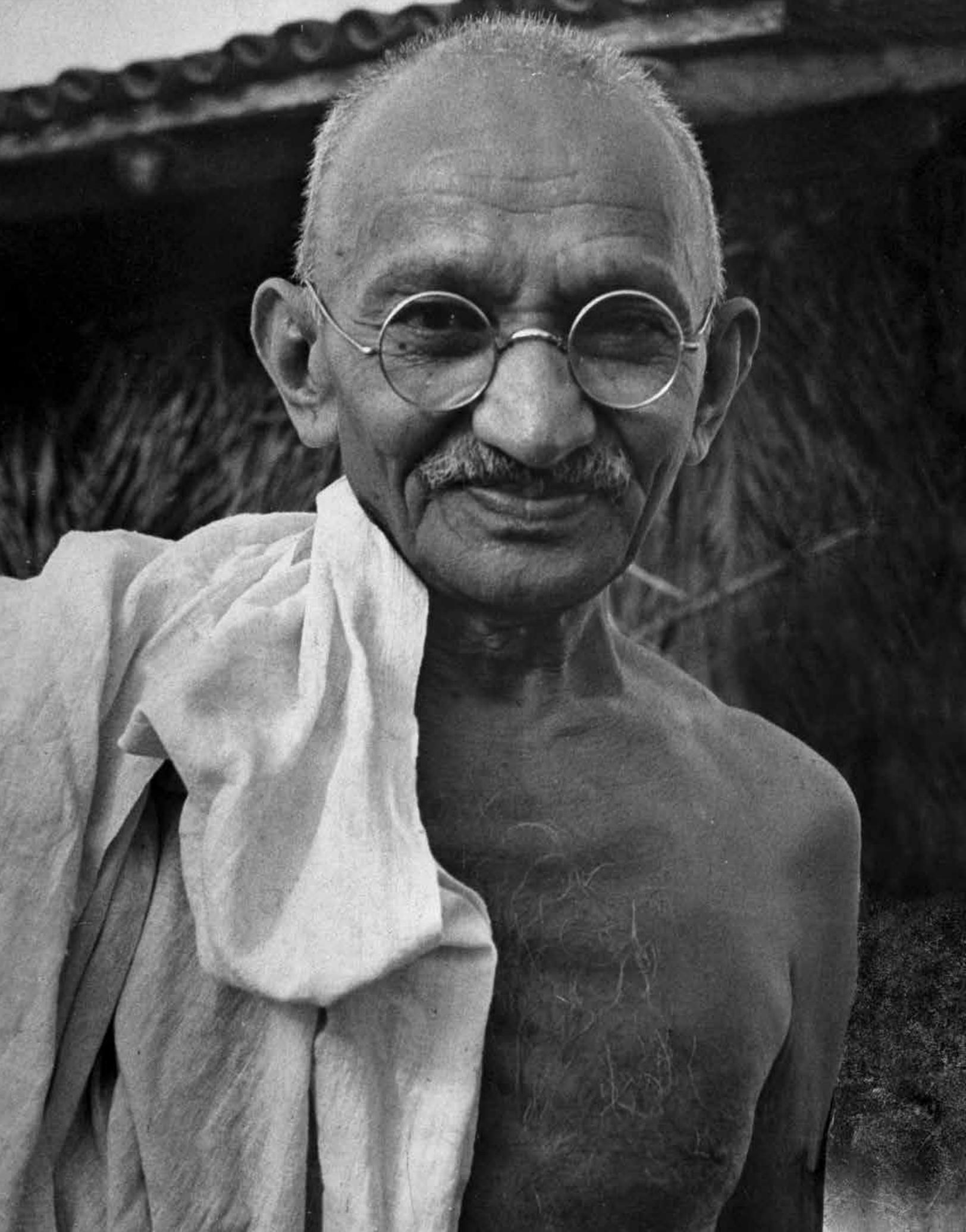
Annambrahaman we say in this civilization, meaning that food is the Creator. *Brahman* is God, and *annam* is food; food as sacred. Every religion has sacred bread.

Hariato Mehta: There are a few places that you have spoken about the seed as the new spinning wheel. This is an interesting concept because it demonstrates the ability to revitalize Gandhi, to adapt a spirit to changing times, changing circumstances. Can you share with us just as a closing remark something about that?

Dr. Vandana Shiva: I wasn't revitalizing Gandhi;

that's too arrogant a situation, no. I was desperate. I was at this meeting where the old chemical industry that had gassed the Jews, and then had killed people, was now saying we're not making enough money. And we have to own the seed. And to own the seed, we'll use genetic engineering to pretend that we are making something new. Then we'll have patents, and with the patents we will take royalties, and the royalties on seed will be our future profits. I was at a small meeting at the UN, and I said, "But, you don't invent the seed!" And they said, "No, by the time we are finished, we will be five companies (there are three: Monsanto-Bayer have become one, DuPont-Dow have become one, and Syngenta-ChemChina have become one) and they said we'll be three, and no farmer will be allowed to save seed, because we will make sure patents make it illegal for them to have their seed. I said that by the time I'm finished, every farmer will have a right to save seed, and your lie that you are the creators of life on Earth will be defeated. We changed the laws of this country, we've done a book called *Origin*, and last-to-last week I was in Nariman's Court because Monsanto is trying to knock out article 3J which says that plants, animals, and seeds, are not human inventions in Indian law. Therefore, they can't be patented. We distilled *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* into our law. So when I was thinking of how do you deal with this idea of Empire-over-Life, I thought of Gandhi dealing with the Cotton Empire; he pulled out the spinning wheel, and I did a little matrix in my head and said - if for the Cotton Empire it was cotton and the spinning wheel, for this empire of life it's the seed. And so it's the spinning wheel that inspired me to start Navdanya and the seed saving movement. And satyagraha which gave the courage and the creativity to find new ways to say that we will not obey bad laws that violate our conscience, that violate our ethics. I want to mention that at this year's climate treaty, she didn't use the word satyagraha since she's Swedish, she calls it a school strike; she said, "I will not go to school till you adults can start behaving with maturity about the planet."

Hariato Mehta: Ladies and gentlemen, in pursuit of truth, **Dr. Vandana Shiva.**



BECOMING THE CHANGE

Pierre Poulain & Fernand Schwarz
Moderated by Yaron Barzilay



The deepest battle is to stop the calculations and open the heart. The expectation for immediate results, as inculcated by this education and our system of life, closes us from the inside and prevents us from proper conduct in the battle.

Yaron Barzilay: As the *shishya* [Sanskrit: Disciple] of my teacher, with the presence of his teacher, *pitaji* [Father] and *dada* [Grandfather], I cannot not be nervous; so I'll probably forget everything. But at least I feel the youngest, the youngest generation. [Laughter] Today, we are going to talk about *Empowering Real Change: Becoming the Change*, which is at the heart of the philosophy that we all learn and practice; especially with the two recent books: one of *Pierre After the Fall...History Continues* and of *Fernando Perseus: The Warrior of Peace* - both books are translated into English.

I'll start with you Pierre, about your recent book *After the Fall...History Continues*. Can you please explain the title? Is Winter coming? What exactly is falling? What will continue? What is it about?

Pierre Poulain: Thank you. Well, first to say, that you may feel nervous because you are the youngest one; I feel nervous because I am just like the ham in the middle of the sandwich...but it's a great moment; it's the first time worldwide that three generations are on the same stage. So it's really very special.

First sorry for my English. I hope my English will be good enough; I try to speak slowly because anyway my understanding of English does not allow me to speak it in any other way...so this is the way.

Well, the title of the book is *After the Fall...History Continues*; which fall? What falls? Well, civilization falls. Like many of those who spoke today before me said, each one in his way, in her way - in fact many of the ideas I will develop have been already said before. And this is also nice, because it means that we've reached a kind of unity. We're not talking here about personal opinions. But each one, in his way, is revealing one universal fact; something which happens today to humanity. Why do civilizations fall? In my philosophical conception, civilization is not only the passing of time. Civilization is a human structure, organization, which is not only about physical, biological, psychological, or even an intellectual structure and organization. It's more than this. Civilization means that people have a unity of destiny. Civilization means that people have a deep understanding of their meaning as humans, as people. What are our responsibilities as human beings? Why are we here?



I remember one of the first lessons, or teachings, I received from the generation before me, nearly 40 years ago, in France, in Paris, when I began this path. He gave a lecture about the Aztec people in ancient Mexico. And he reminds us, that people in the Aztec tradition had a real understanding of what they have to do as human beings; they had to maintain the march of the universe. If somebody was not aware of his responsibilities as human, well, the Sun would stop, and the cosmos, life would crash. In a way, my feeling is that today we have lost our way; we have lost our responsibility because we don't know what it means to be human anymore. And instead of living, we survive - we try to survive. And we teach our people, our children, the next generation, to survive; not to be alive. To be alive is about happiness, like it was said before. To be alive is about union with nature. To be alive is about profits, but I would say also, spiritual profit. To be alive is to know deeply what it means to be human. We are looking for external solutions, not internal solutions; we want a better world so what do we do? We are looking for better products, a better computer, better technicals. But we're not trying to be better human beings. And as long as we think, we believe, that the solution is external, we will not change. We will continue to survive, maybe we will be able to survive better; this is what modern civilization is proposing to us: you will survive better!

Yes, but this does not touch the soul. It's not enough. It can touch the personality; the word 'personality' comes from the Latin word *persona*; *persona* is the mask. So it is better for my mask, but who am I? I'm not my mask. I identify with my mask because nobody teaches me otherwise, but I'm not my mask. I am the one who is using this mask. And the mask should serve me; should help me to manifest my true self in the world. I'm not living to make the mask happy; I am for happiness, I agree with happiness, but happiness of the self; real happiness, true happiness. So this is falling.

But...but...but, history continues. History is not just the passing of time. That history continues, means that time is cyclical; you have the *Pralaya* [Sanskrit: Primordial Unity, Absence of Creation],

you have the *Manvantra* [Sanskrit: Creation, Life in expression]...everything is cycles. You have the four seasons, you have the day and night, you have the little cycle of respiration, inspiration-exhalation. Nothing is going in a linear way. Life and death, and reincarnation. So everything goes around, and once civilization is crashing, obviously a new one will arise. Time will offer the opportunity for the birth of a new generation. But what are we talking about?

Civilization means that people have a unity of destiny. Civilization means that people have a deep understanding of their meaning as humans, as people.

We're not talking about just repeating the same thing. It's not enough to say - okay it falls, but after this death there will be a rebirth; so I don't have anything to do...just wait. No, of course not. We want the new civilization to be not just a new one, but a better one. We want it to be different, and not just different, but better. Because we need to learn from all the problems, the challenges, all the errors we've made. It's okay to make an error; somebody said today that it's okay to make an error. If we don't make errors we don't learn, we cannot learn. We should not be afraid to make errors, but we have to learn from an error; to recognize it, and to go on.

So how shall the new generation, the new cycle, be better? Who makes civilization? Who builds civilization? Us. Human beings. So the only way is to change human beings, to allow human beings to be better. How shall the new generation, the next generation be better human beings? Only if we change ourselves! Because, how do you teach, how do you learn? You teach

by personal example, and you learn by imitating a master, by imitating a personal example, by imitating something; not words. Words are not enough. Words are important, but not enough. You need words, but it's not enough. Too many people are able to use fantastic beautiful words. And after doing so? Is there something behind the words? No, you have to see, you have to look. You have to understand that somebody is being what he says; it's not enough to talk about something, you have to be it, to have to become it. Because it's not about doing. It's about being.

To be a philosopher is in everyday life situations, to act as a philosopher, to react as a philosopher. To put the union before the disunion, to put the ocean before the drop. To become a philosopher. And when you become a philosopher, you begin to be reborn as a human being, and to survive is not enough.

To give a simple example, the Sun gives life to the earth, to humans, to animals, to plants, to seeds, to minerals, anything on earth. Light and heat come from the Sun. But does the Sun have to do something to offer it? Does the Sun take the light and say that we'll give some light here and some there? No. The Sun is. It is nothing more than to be. And he will emanate. He will emanate

because he is. And he emanates because he is more than he needs. He produces benefits for the other by emanation. So if we can be, not just for ourselves, but to be for more, be for the others, we shall emanate. And if we can be good (maybe we shall talk about this afterwards; what does it mean to be good, to be right, to be beautiful - art is about beauty...) if we can be, not just for us, but for more, we shall emanate for more.

And how can I be for more than myself? Well for me it's a question of identity. If I identify with humanity, if I am part of humanity, if my inner and spiritual conviction is that I am not separate from the others, my world does not stop where my body stops. Instead, I am just like one drop of the ocean. And I don't identify with the drop, I identify with the ocean; not because I have a mega-maniacal ego where I think that I am all the ocean. No. I know that in quantity I am only one drop. But in quality, in values, in spirituality, in life, every drop can be the ocean. So this is, more or less, the idea of the book.

Yaron Barzilay: I want to continue with that Pierre, because when speaking about cycles, you mentioned in your book, "The Renaissance, before being reflected in history, must be a Renaissance of mankind." And you add to this. On the other hand, you say there is a "mentality of the Middle Ages." But you're not talking about the past. Can you explain this a little bit?

Pierre Poulain: Yes. From a historical conception, the Middle Ages are a period in history that we identify very precisely with historical dates. There is a beginning, there is an end. And it's a long period; nearly a thousand years. But from a philosophically point of view, the Middle Ages is not only this historical period. The Middle Ages is a mentality; and a mentality which is, in my understanding, quite close to what we call modern mentality.

I mean there is like a link between the times of the Middle Ages, and modern time.

The Middle Ages is the loss of values. It's what I said before; we don't know what it means to be human. We're living in the state of dis-union, of

lack of union. We replace higher sentiments with desires. We run after our desires - psychological desires, biological desires. And like I said, we just survive. This is the human being. But we are so attached to the need of the drop, not the need of the ocean. The lack of Union; maybe the most important for me is the lack of Union. Thus a lack of unity in the destiny of humanity.

And the Renaissance - because after the Middle Ages, you have the Renaissance - is to remember...and not only to remember, but to begin a path to regain and return to the identification with those human values. And in my experience - I don't say that it is the only one, but that in my experience, and I cannot talk about experience that I don't have - in my experience the path to come back from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, from survival to being alive, to awaken the consciousness and to be alive, is called philosophy - love of wisdom.

And philosophy is something very practical. It's not like people say that you go to university, and you learn about all the philosophers from Eastern and Western traditions; to know what they all said...this is great. But it doesn't make you a philosopher. It makes you somebody that knows what philosophers said.

To be a philosopher is in everyday life situations, to act as a philosopher, to react as a philosopher. To put the union before the disunion, to put the ocean before the drop. To become a philosopher. And when you become a philosopher, you begin to be reborn as a human being, and to survive is not enough.

And I really really believe, deeply in my heart, because it is what I'm doing for 40 years already, that everyone can do this. Everyone has this potential. It's not about being academic, it's not about where you were born, it's not about your religion. It's just about being human. Maybe not everybody will find inside this need to do it. And it's okay, because you have to respect the choice of everyone. Not everyone will find the need to do it because it demands effort, to change habits. But everyone can do it. And the philosopher for me, is someone who opens a gate; who gives the opportunity. And you have to let the people be, with the freedom to choose to follow this path, or not. Because this is freedom.

Yaron Barzilay: Thank you, and from this I want to turn to Fernand. In his book Pierre writes that “a fall of civilization is an opportunity because it gives birth to the hero; or an





opportunity of the birth of the hero.” And in your book *Fernand, Perseus: The Warrior of Peace*, a mythological hero, you speak about such a hero. Can you tell us a little bit about this book? Who is the warrior of peace? What kind of transformation can he offer the world?

Fernand Schwarz: Ok. My English is not very good, so I will read this little paper, more or less little paper, it to be understood. So I am sorry, but you will be kind.

It is a great honor for me to participate in this event “Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World”. It finally gives me the opportunity to see personally a country and civilization that has inspired the largest part of my philosophy and practical approach to life, since the age of 15.

The first text of oriental philosophy that I had was the *Bhagavad Gita*, and this partially inspired my book *Perseus: The Warrior of Peace*.

Through the teachings of my master, I understood that we had to find a solution for all mankind and not just for a particular collective or community, because basically we are all the same, and we belong to one humanity. Victory could not

be achieved by violence. It was necessary to find other means - inner victory. To become a peaceful warrior, to promote civilization, not barbarism.

He told me: “The smallest step we make inside of ourselves towards the good is, in a way, a step made by all of mankind. No individual is without historical responsibility, but no one is master and lord of history. [...] If every day you triumph in yourself over a bad tendency; if every year you can rule a vice; if every decade you can improve your self-control, you are making history. And you are not only helping yourself but all other human beings, through your action.”

In 2010, thinking about the difficulties faced by today’s young people in finding themselves, and especially in believing in their future, I reflected on how one might help them build adequate tools to face the challenges of our times.

The teachings that I received a long time ago, and which I now pass forward are, above all, intended for the youth. These teachings can be summed up in what others later called “the quest for the peaceful warrior.”

The ideal of the peaceful warrior is not a new concept; it has existed since time immemorial. Despite the violence and the great difficulties that human beings have gone through, driven by the ease and mechanics of instincts, and prone to dominating others, and to the subjugation or destruction of others, there has always been, since the earliest traditions, philosophers, men and women, sometimes barely known, who decided to act otherwise, choosing the path of the peaceful warrior. For millennia, in all civilizations, men, women, and groups, have chosen to live in accordance with the model of the peaceful warrior. Naturally, human beings are more prone to violence, impulsiveness, anger, and hatred. But it is surprising, and also comforting at the same time, that this very old lineage of people, despite never having met, have grasped and have wanted to live a common model, one in which the real struggle is within oneself.

I understood that it was necessary to start from the beginning; that is to say, to give meaning. Not in an intellectual way, but through daily action, and to appeal to young people who wanted to be in contact with their soul, the higher dimension of their being, and transmit this quest to their peers. To do this, I relied on three disciples with whom I shared several adventures, and this allowed me to put a small group of young people to the test, through their own questioning, and to discover the depth of their soul, in order to build the future.

It has always amazed me that life for the Egyptians in the times of the pyramids was thought of as a journey of sailing between the horizon of birth and death, the waters of the Nile representing life itself. An interesting thing about sailing is that we cannot brake with a single stroke; it is impossible, we will always drift. Performing any manoeuvre while sailing requires us to learn to cruise by following the current, the wind, the counter-currents, and a thousand other jests of the elements. "One learns to control," as the phrase of Lao Tse says, "by following the course of things." To oppose or to resist is impossible and is not even very intelligent. To adapt, while keeping on course, is necessary.

The western education, in wishing to control and subdue everything, tries to classify and fix everything to a specific place, making things immobile. We tend to freeze things, to view them as static entities, having the sad delusional belief that they will never move, and will always be available to us where we left them.

The peaceful person is not the person who wishes to be left alone in peace, who does nothing that may disturb him or cause himself to be noticed. The peaceful person is the person who can live in peace with his conscience, the source of calmness and serenity, which helps us, face the difficulties of life. The peaceful warrior is only an apparent contradiction. He fights to bring peace within himself and around him.

We can define the quest for the peaceful warrior as the art of mastery over oneself by learning to adapt, learning to follow the course of things. It is a conscious process of transformation that leads to profound happiness; an inner state that cannot be reversed.

The deepest battle is to stop the calculations and open the heart. The expectation for immediate results, as inculcated by this education and our system of life, closes us from the inside and prevents us from proper conduct in the battle. I have found that when human beings cannot defend what is noble and just, they always accumulate tension that makes them aggressive and violent. It is then that selfishness takes precedence over altruism. These transference tactics are put in place when the human being can no longer act with the greatness of his soul. The path of the peaceful warrior aims to endow dignity to every human being. It is as old as our species.

The way of the peaceful warrior, present in the ancient wisdom of the East and the West, teaches that each one of us, at the heart of our being, has an immense potential. This enables us to grow and to become better. Only the awakening and the actualization of this potential enable the development of the "knowledge-being". Three stages seem important for this

actualization, which I can synthesize into three complementary directives: to overcome oneself; to liberate oneself and others; and to build and to be built. It is all about a real internal and exterior trip.

We want the new civilization to be not just a new one, but a better one. We want it to be different, and not just different, better. Because we need to learn from all the problems, the challenges, all the errors we've made.

To Overcome Oneself

In this stage, which is related to the art of the inner battle, we must become able to mobilize our own will. This means to implement courage and authenticity to apply the laws of life, teaching us to correct ourselves by extracting our latent potential. It is through the practice of discipline - which should not be rigid - that we will overcome inertia and gradually diminish our comfort zones. If we are motivated to express the true nature of our being, we will practice this new art of living, leading us to become the victorious warriors who defeat their own selves.

The most important idea at this level is to exit from one's comfort zone, and to then overcome one's inertia and mechanicity through the gift of our presence, *Dana*.

The most important rule that one must follow, as Arjuna does in the *Bhagavad Gita*, is to find the right battle; and then to eliminate violence;

accept trials and to follow the rules necessary to remodel one's personality.

To Liberate Oneself And To Liberate Others

At this stage, we must learn to discern between what is useful and what is superfluous, by understanding our real needs. It is said that life is a journey in which one has to move without much weight. We must learn to unleash our energy, which in the Hindu and Buddhist tradition, is called *Virya*.

It is the energy, which arises from our own commitment and engagement and by taking responsibility.

According to this theory, which in my experience has proven to be true, when someone is engaged with a cause, he discovers means he did not even suspect existed. Paradoxically, the practice of commitment lets loose new energies, such as the gift of the self, the gift of presence. One then possesses the real weapons, for which detachment is the key. With it, opening of the heart becomes possible. And the best weapon becomes the ability to think with the heart.

Expressing the good in oneself, and sharing that goodness with others, produces an extraordinarily purifying effect. We become detached from external thoughts, prejudices, critical judgments and useless comparisons. As in Plato's cave, we gradually release ourselves from our chains to face the light of day - reality as it is. At that moment the warrior is born, the liberator of mankind. For it is not possible to help others, if we have not already had the same experiences ourselves.

The Voice of the Silence reminds us: "Thou that fightest for man's liberation, each failure is success, and each sincere attempt wins its reward in time. The holy germs that sprout and grow unseen in the disciple's soul, their stalks wax strong at each new trial, they bend like reeds but never break, nor can they e'er be lost. But when the hour has struck they blossom forth."

To Build, And To Be Built

The pursuit of the True and the Good helps us



take the first steps. The concepts of the Just and the Beautiful can inspire us to build ourselves. Intelligence is the potential that awakens, making us capable of discerning and directing all of our mental abilities. Discernment allows us to see beyond appearances and, with the help of love-will, penetrate the inner nature of things, where true knowledge resides.

At that moment, an awareness emerges within us: we are not alone, we are interdependent with other human beings and with nature. We will now learn that in order to find the right expressions, in order to be and to act at the same time, we must reject tension and any form of rigidity. It is the respect and understanding of certain inner laws of nature that will soften our souls and give us the right expression.

At this point the warrior-constructor of civilizations appears.

In *Citadel*, Saint-Exupery insists that a civilization must first be built in the heart of man. For him, as for all peaceful warriors, civilization is not a set of systems or rules, but a state of consciousness, an inner state that allows us to grasp and to live a superior ideal that transcends individual

selfishness. “If you want to build a boat, do not gather your men and women and give them orders, explain every detail, tell them where to find everything ... If you want to build a boat, instill in the hearts of men and women the desire for the sea.”

Saint-Exupery insists “man discovers himself when he measures himself up with an obstacle.” For trials mobilize our potential. The Warrior’s way of building civilization is eternal. Yves Michaud defines civilization as the process of emerging from barbarism.

This is the most important issue of today; we must re-establish links; links with ourselves, with humanity, with nature and with the universe. The warrior-builder of civilization does not only think of himself and the people in his immediate surroundings. He feels the pain of all men and women of his country, and of humanity.

Yaron Barzilay: Thank you Fernand for making the effort to give a conclusive answer, and in a language you are not familiar with. It’s already an example of a hero, at least for me. And since time is always running, I just want to make a link to Gandhiji. Do you find

such an inspiration of a peaceful warrior in the action of Gandhi?

Fernand Schwarz: Gandhi is one of the sources of inspiration for the warrior of peace. I think that's pretty evident given everything that's been said. He is part of a long chain that must be continued. For me there's also this term *swadeshi* that has been used. I like this term a lot; we translate it as 'sobriety' It is restraining ourselves to using resources only from our immediate environment. And this is very important if we would like to change civilization. It is another paradigm, which is closer to us; people interdependent on each other, to understand better who is behind the other. Because we don't know each other; we have neither learned to know ourselves, nor to know the other. And that is why practical philosophy is so important. Pierre also said that the philosophy that he was trying to explain is not an academic philosophy. It's this love for the truth that gives us energy. It's the same as *satyagraha*, but in the West we call it philosophy. The problem is that the West has forgotten the source of philosophy.

Yaron Barzilay: Pierre, you are also an

artist, who cannot even sit on this stage without your camera. And as a philosopher-photographer, you even developed a new term (it's the first time that I have heard of it) which is *photosophy*. It is also the title of your new book, and is being presented in galleries all over the world. Do you yourself see art, and more than that, culture at large, as an important means of transformation? How do you see this connection? Are they two separate things, or is it one?

Pierre Poulain: Yes. Well I think first, we'll have to remember what really is art? Because my feeling is that for many things in our modern times, we use the same words, but we don't give the same meaning to the words. And it seems to me that the way people understand art, or beauty for example, which is linked to art, today, are very few in comparison to those that once understood beauty and art. I understand beauty as an ultimate archetype. Just like I consider that there is one reality. We can understand it, every one of us, as our own subjectivity. We can understand it differently, but still we share the same reality; we share the same universe, the same cosmos, there's one reality. I understand that there is one



Dharma, one law of evolution, one common destiny for Humanity, for example, even if every one of us may understand it differently. Still, there is one law of evolution. There are some very specific laws of nature; there are those and no others. And if anyone understands them in another way, it doesn't mean that the law has changed; it's only my understanding which fits better or not.

So beauty is also one understanding, one archetype, one archetypal value; like truth, like justice, the just, like the good. Art would be the way to allow this archetypal value, the beautiful, to be manifested here, in the realm of visibility, in time, in what you may call in India, the *maya*, the representation. And beauty, for it to be manifested here, will need to be manifested through elements which belong to the physical realm: colours, sound, it can be through movement - there are many forms, different forms of art. But it is not the movement, it is not the colour, it is not the sound - those elements are tools to embody and to manifest beauty.

To say it in other words - a piece of art is something in this moment, in the visible, in the ephemeral, that will manifest something which belongs to the invisible and to the spiritual, or to the eternal. This will be a piece of art. At a moment, with time, the piece of art may be destroyed. Like a painting; if you don't care for the painting, the body, the manifestation will be destroyed, and its value of beauty will vanish - it will go back to the archetype. But beauty itself continues; it cannot be destroyed. So an artist would be somebody who is able to recognize the art, the beauty, and manifest it.

It means two things for me. First that the artist himself must be aware of the tools he has to manifest, to capture, this beauty. And I see it in what we call imagination. Imagination is not fantasy; fantasy is from me, from the part, to the whole. I like something, I'm thinking about something, I feel something, and I want to project it such that it will be for everybody. It's from the part to the whole. But this is not truth. I make my truth, the truth for all. This is fantasy. But imagination is the opposite. Like the drop of

The peaceful person is not the person who wishes to be left alone in peace, who does nothing that may disturb him or cause himself to be noticed. The peaceful person is the person who can live in peace with his conscience, the source of calmness and serenity, which helps us, face the difficulties of life. The peaceful warrior is only an apparent contradiction. He fights to bring peace within himself and around him.

the ocean, as the part, I can connect myself with the whole. It's something, which is related to what I think you call *budhi*, the light, the spiritual enlightenment. So, I stand up and I contact something which is higher than myself, and I bring it back and manifest it through something. And this thing which I produce, in my case it is photography because I am very lazy; it's very easy to produce...you know, click, click, click,

click; my wife is a painter, it's much more difficult. I don't have the patience to paint something; she does. But I try to click, and to produce something which is linked with this *budhi*.

We must re-establish links; links with ourselves, with humanity, with nature and with the universe. The warrior-builder of civilization does not only think of himself and the people in his immediate surroundings. He feels the pain of all men and women of his country, and of humanity.

In the case of photography, it's very interesting because each time that I see something and recognize something, it's a photograph, but it will not be photosophy; it will not be a piece of art. It's very interesting. I have something like maybe 200,000 photos, but I consider only 21 of them pieces of art. I didn't see what was in front of me when I took the photo. Because if I see something, and I recognize it, my intellect becomes a filter in the process. And it will show only my subjectivity. So I try to be transparent. And this is the philosophical process; not to put your subjectivity, to be transparent, and something occurs - and you don't know why, you don't have the time to think about it, and *click*, you take the photo. It was something very very very subtle inside you that

recognized it, and afterwards you look at it and say, "Wow! It was worth it." But it is not here anymore. It passed.

So sometimes, only sometimes, I take a good photo. My last good photo was about one and a half year ago. But I am with my camera every day, and I take photos every day. So it's very difficult to take an artistic photo. It's not about a conscious effort. My work is to be transparent, transparent, transparent, transparent, transparent - again and again and again - and sometimes it occurs. And if not, it's not a problem. Because the happiness doesn't just come from the result. The happiness comes from the work, everyday work, to be transparent and transparent and transparent. And to be with yourself. So it helps the philosophical process.

And in these photos, I make a combination of image and text whereby the image does not explain the text, and the text is not a description of the image; but it is the link between the two different languages. Because in text, you use time, and we have to understand it in time; you begin it at a certain moment, at the beginning of the text, and you go on, and you read it till the end. So it's a time-process. And you cannot understand everything at a glance; you cannot see the text to understand everything. A photo is the opposite. You look at the photo, you see it but you don't need time; it's global, and it's immediate. And both together, creates between the two languages, just like oil and water, just like visible and invisible, just like permanent and the ephemeral, creates a tension. And this tension is something that when you pass in front of the photo, you don't understand everything, but there is everything. And you cannot say that I don't understand anything because you did understand. There is something; this tension creates something uncomfortable - it is comfortable when you understand everything. There is a tension, there is something uncomfortable, and this does not give an answer. This awakens a question. And I want people to pass through in front of my photography to be with the question. This is good, because now they have to work to find the answer inside themselves. This is what I try to produce, and



this is for me art; something which also is a path to be offered to people, like an opportunity - so that they can work to find the answer.

Yaron Barzilay: Thank you. We really have time for one last question for you both. Try to make it short, and practical; I mean something that we can take with us even if it's a sentence, or two. But I don't want to miss the opportunity. Fernand as an anthropologist who investigates many traditions, East and West, close to us in time, further away in time...What of essence can we take from tradition, without falling into conservation; something that is important to impact change for our future? Is it possible to give us advice? In India and worldwide, how to refer to tradition in such a way that we can take something to impact change for the future?

Fernand Schwarz: Tradition is the art of transmission. Consequently, it is always alive. And it must be re-actualized by each new

generation. If not, she is dead. And you fall to conservatism, and you keep it. Because conservatism is not transmission; it is only to keep something, possess something, have something - and this is very very dangerous. Because you cannot keep it alive with this.

Yaron Barzilay: You want to add Pierre, your message for empowering real change?

Pierre Poulain: Just don't be afraid to dare to be yourself. Don't be afraid to dare to be yourself; who you feel that you really are, but are usually afraid to be. Nothing else.

Yaron Barzilay: Thank you very much Fernando and Pierre for a very inspiring closing session today, and for demonstrating through your own example the practical ability of philosophy to impact an outer change.

Panelists



ANU AGA

CSR & EDUCATION

Anu Aga is Director on the Board of Thermax Limited, an engineering company providing solutions in the areas of energy and environment.

She began her industry career at Thermax in 1985. After her husband Rohinton Aga passed away, the board appointed her as Executive Chairperson of the Thermax Group in February 1996, and two years later she chose to continue as Non-Executive Chairperson. Ms. Aga

anchored the turnaround of Thermax and retired as Chairperson of Thermax in October 2004.

Since her retirement, Ms. Aga has been focusing on social causes through the Thermax Foundation. Her area of interest is primary education for the underprivileged and is involved with NGO Akanksha, which runs 20 schools between Pune and Mumbai. In addition, Ms. Aga is the Chairperson of the Board at 'Teach for India' a movement that attempts to bridge the inequity gap in education and spanning to seven cities in India.

Ms. Aga has been very active in various national and local associations like Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and had served as the Chairperson of CII's Western Region. She has written extensively and given talks on the subjects of corporate governance, corporate social responsibility, the role of women, education and the importance of respecting diversity in India.



CHETNA GALA SINHA

MICROFINANCE

Chetna Gala Sinha is an activist, farmer and banker. She is the Founder-Chairperson of Mann Deshi Bank and Mann Deshi Foundation.

In 1996, she founded the Mann Deshi Foundation in Mhaswad, a drought-stricken area of Maharashtra, with the aim of economically and socially empowering rural women. In 1997, she set up the Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank - India's first bank for and by rural women.

Today, the Mann Deshi Bank has 60,000 account holders, manages a business of over \$20 million and regularly creates new financial products to support the needs of women micro-entrepreneurs.

In 2006, Chetna founded the first Business School for Rural Women and in 2013 she launched the first Chamber of Commerce for women micro-entrepreneurs in the country. The Foundation supports water conservation, has a sports programme and a women-owned community radio station. Mann Deshi has supported over 400,000 women and plans to reach a million women entrepreneurs by 2022.

Chetna Sinha has received many accolades for her work. She has been awarded the 2005 Jankidevi Bajaj Award for Rural Entrepreneurship, the 2005 Ashoka Changemakers Award, the 2009 Godfrey Phillips Bravery Award, 2010 EdelGive Social Innovation Honors and the 2017 Forbes Social

Entrepreneurs of the Year Award. In January 2018, she served as co-chair of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.



FERNAND SCHWARZ

ANTHROPOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY

Anthropologist and author, Fernand Schwarz is the Director of the International Hermes Institute, which is dedicated to studying the heritage of ancient civilizations and analysing contemporary societies from a symbolic perspective. It has delegations in Austria, France, Spain and Portugal and affiliates in Greece, Israel, El Salvador, Chile and Colombia. The Institute focuses on anthropology relating to the symbolic dimension of man which can be linked to what ancient cultures across the world considered sacred. Their studies and findings are disseminated internationally through conferences, lectures, seminars and publications and are also applied to various fields such as management consulting and training.

Schwarz is a recipient of the Silver Cross of Arts, Sciences and Letters of Paris. Among his various accolades, he has served as honorary president of the Institute of Interdisciplinary Sciences of Anthropology at the University of San Jose (Brazil), director of the faculty of Religious Anthropology in the School of Anthropology of Paris, and was the founder of the faculty of Bio-cultural and Business Anthropology at the University of Paris.

His vast array of works have been published in various languages and include “The Camouflaged Sacred”, “Tradition and the Ways of Knowledge”, “Ma’at: Egypt Mirror of the Sky”, “Symbolism of Egypt”, “Cathedrals: Symbols and Light”, “The Way of Happiness: The Living Philosophy of Socrates”, “Initiation of the Egyptian Book of the Dead”, “Egypt, Land of the Gods, Gift of the Nile”, “Egypt, The Mysteries of the Sacred”, “Totalitarianism”, “Sacred Geography of Ancient Egypt”, “Dangers of Racism”, “Bardo Thodol, Tibetan Book of the Dead”, “Concentration and Inner Awakening”, and “Perseus: The Warrior of Peace”.



PIERRE POULAIN

PHILOSOPHY & PHOTOGRAPHY

Philosopher and Photographer Pierre Poulain has taught and practiced philosophy and photography for more than 25 years. He observes, “A photograph is a door, an open passage from the intelligible to the sensible, from the invisible to the visible, and looking at its inner nature is looking into a mirror; it can help us discover ourselves; it can help us get to know ourselves.” Inspired by the classical schools of world philosophy, Pierre connects to the world of archetypes and endeavours to bring it to the temporal world.

Poulain’s photographs have been displayed in galleries across the world, and his list of published books include “Artist, Dreamer, Warrior”, “Wisdom through the Lens”, “Metaphysical Aesthetics of Photography”, and “After the Fall...History Continues”. Poulain believes that philosophy and photography are not separate paths but expressions of the same wisdom, which reveals itself through Beauty and Aesthetics.



RONNIE SCREWVALA

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & PHILANTHROPY

Ronnie Screwvala is a first generation entrepreneur who created a Media & Entertainment conglomerate – UTV – which he divested to The Walt Disney Company in 2012. Demonstrating an innate ability to merge creativity with commerce, Newsweek termed him the Jack Warner of India, Esquire rated him one of the 75 most influential people of the 21st Century and Fortune recognized him as one of Asia’s 25 most powerful.

Driven by his interest in championing entrepreneurship, Ronnie has authored a book titled “Dream With Your Eyes Open”, and is focused on building his next set of businesses in high growth and impact sectors. UpGrad zeroes in on the massive opportunity that exists in creating an Online Education Company of scale, focusing on post graduation and specialization areas. U Sports is committed to building a sports company spanning Kabaddi, Football, Moto Sport + E Sports via league and team ownerships as well as grassroots training programs.

Ronnie is also passionate about social welfare and is active as Founder Trustee of The Swades Foundation, which focusses on empowering one million lives in rural India every 5-6 years through a unique 360 degree model with verticals of Water, Sanitation, Health, Nutrition, Community Mobilization, Education, and most importantly Agriculture & Livelihood, to lift them out of poverty permanently.



DR. SAAMDU CHETRI

GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

Dr. Saamdu Chetri is a visiting faculty member of IIT Kharagpur. He was born in a cowshed in rural Bhutan and has a PhD in commerce. After working for 25 years in private and development sectors, and for five years in the Prime Minister’s Office of the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Bhutan, he founded Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness Centre (GNH) and headed it for six years. He has been teaching, consulting and has been invited to speak at various

universities, as well as international and national forums on mindfulness, ecology, governance and the GNH index, including two world toursto lecture about happiness. Recently he has also begun addressing international conferences over Webinars.

He is a strong advocate of the organic movement, impact of climate change, the environment, a practitioner of mindfulness, and learner of happiness.



SONAM WANGCHUK

EDUCATION & INNOVATION

Though a Mechanical Engineer by education, Sonam Wangchuk has been working in the field of education reform for more than 27 years. In 1988, he founded SECMOL (Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh), to reform the government school system in Ladakh. In 1994 he was instrumental in the launch of Operation New Hope, a triangular collaboration of the government, village communities and the civil society to bring reforms in the government schools system. The program involved formation of Village Education Committees to take ownership of state schools, training of teachers in child friendly ways and re-writing localised text books for Ladakh. As a result the pass percentage at 10th grade rose from 5% to 55% in 7 years and 75% these days.

For students who still failed in their state exams he founded the SECMOL Alternative School Campus near Leh, where the admission criteria is failure in exams and not grades. However, with the supportive and creative environment at the school, the so-called failures have excelled and risen to international acclaim as entrepreneurs, film makers, politicians, and teachers. Sonam has also led pioneering innovations such as low cost solar heated buildings, and artificial glacier Ice Stupas to solve the region's water crisis. Among his many awards, Sonam Wangchuk was the recipient of The Rolex Award for Enterprise 2016, The Terra Award 2016 for World's Best Earth Buildings, and was declared The UNESCO Chair for Earth Architecture for India in 2014.



DR. TRIDIP SUHRUD

GANDHIAN SCHOLAR

Dr. Tridip Suhrud is a scholar, writer and translator who works on the intellectual and cultural history of modern Gujarat and the Gandhian intellectual tradition. As the director and chief editor of the Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust (2012-2017), he was responsible for creating the world's largest digital archive on Gandhi - the Gandhi Heritage Portal. He has authored 28 books, including the critical edition of "Hind Swaraj", Narayan Desai's four-volume biography of Gandhi, "My Life is My Message", and the four-volume epic Gujarati novel called "Sarasvatichandra". His most recent work is a critical edition of Gandhi's autobiography "My Experiments with Truth" in Gujarati and English.

Dr. Suhrud is presently translating the diaries of Manu Gandhi, covering the period between 1942 and 1948. He is also compiling 'Letters to Gandhi', comprising unpublished correspondence to Gandhi, and is working on an eight volume compendium of testimonies of indigo cultivators of Champaran. He is a professor and the Director of Archives at CEPT University (Ahmedabad) and serves as Chairman of the Governing Council of MICA.



DR. VANDANA SHIVA

ECOLOGY & SUSTAINABILITY

Dr. Vandana Shiva is a trained Physicist, with a Ph.D. on the “Hidden Variables and Non-locality in Quantum Theory” from the University of Western Ontario (Canada). She later shifted to inter-disciplinary research in science, technology and environmental policy, at the Indian Institute of Science and the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore.

In 1982, she founded the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in Dehradun dedicated to high quality, independent research to address the most significant ecological and social issues of our times, in close partnership with local communities and social movements. In 1991, she founded Navdanya, a national movement to protect the diversity and integrity of living resources, especially native seed, as well as the promotion of organic farming and fair trade.

In 2004 she started Bija Vidyapeeth, an international college for sustainable living in Doon Valley in collaboration with Schumacher College (U.K.). Time Magazine identified Dr. Shiva as an environmental “hero” in 2003 and Asia Week has called her one of the five most powerful communicators of Asia. Forbes magazine in November 2010 has identified Dr. Vandana Shiva as one of the top Seven most Powerful Women on the Globe. Dr. Shiva was awarded honorary Doctorates from various universities, and is the recipient of many awards including the Alternative Nobel Prize (Right Livelihood Award, 1993), Order of the Golden Ark, Global 500 Award of UN and Earth Day International Award, Calgary Peace Prize and the Thomas Merton Award (2011), the Fukuoka Award and The Prism of Reason Award in 2012, the Grifone d’Argento prize 2016 and The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2016.



YARON BARZILAY

PHILOSOPHY & MANAGEMENT

Yaron Barzilay is a certified specialist of Eastern and Western Philosophy, including History, Symbolism, Moral Philosophy, and Psychology. He has authored several investigative articles related to practical philosophy, exploring timeless and universal concepts as relevant and applicable to daily life in modern times.

He is also Editor-in-Chief of The Acropolitan Magazine, and spearheads a number of initiatives to foster social and ecological responsibility, demonstrating that philosophy, far from being an intellectual faculty, has the ability to bring about profound and sustainable change.

Yaron founded a branch of New Acropolis in Jerusalem, and in 2006 founded New Acropolis Cultural Organization in India. Under his leadership, New Acropolis India has successfully partnered on initiatives with Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to execute volunteer driven civil beautification and cleaning drives, and presented various awareness campaigns and exhibitions at Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, Jehangir Art Gallery, National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA), among others.

Professionally, Yaron is the Managing Director of IDEX Online - International Diamond Exchange - in India, a leading diamond trading platform for professional diamond traders worldwide, and he is an active member of the Bharat Diamond Bourse in Mumbai and the Gem & Jewellery Federation in India.

Understanding Gandhi

Interview with Dr. Tridip Suhrud

By Harianto H Mehta and Manjula Nanavati, The Acropolitan Magazine



As the architect of a non-violent civil disobedience movement that led to the independence of a nation, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has been hailed as a spirited activist, a courageous freedom fighter, and an astute politician. For his own deeply ascetic lifestyle, uncompromising ethical code, and strict adherence to human values, he won the veneration of masses, a devotion usually reserved for saints, indeed even the title of a Mahatma. His profound influence on world leaders like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King can be said to have changed the course of history.

To understand the true measure of the man, however, we need to invite reflection. Perhaps by grasping the spirit of his lofty ideals, we might translate Gandhi's legacy into a practical and enduring tool for transformation and renewal in our times today.

To pay tribute to his relentless pursuit of Truth on the occasion of his 150th Birth Anniversary, The Acropolitan Magazine met with Gandhian Scholar and cultural historian Dr. Tridip Suhrud. As the director of Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust, he was responsible for creating the Gandhi Heritage Portal, the world's largest digital archive on Gandhi. He is uniquely fluent in all three languages in which Gandhi wrote, and has authored numerous books, including *Beloved Bapu: The Mirabehn-Gandhi Correspondence*, as well as a bi-lingual edition of Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*. Presently he is working on translating the Diaries of Manu Gandhi, and a twenty-volume archival project called *Letters to Gandhi*. Dr. Suhrud is renowned as an authority on Gandhi's life, his books and his intellectual tradition. Here are excerpts from our conversation.



THE ACROPOLITAN (TA): Gandhiji's deeply ascetic lifestyle is legendary. He emphasized the need to exercise a rigid self-control on diet, clothing, chastity, medicines; almost to the point of obsession. In your view, what might have been at the root of this degree of self-restraint?

DR. TRIDIP SUHRUD: Simply, it comes from his need to see God face-to-face. The question is if one can see God face-to-face when one is still in the physical body? His answer is that it will always elude you; no human being can actually see God face-to-face. And yet, unless you have a body, unless you are in the body, you cannot have this desire to see God. This is a standard philosophical problem of the relationship between mind and matter. And Gandhi is aware of it.

But, he says, what we are capable of is, hearing the voice of God, the voice of truth. For Gandhi, there are two requirements to make it possible: the first is the acquired capacity to listen to this voice from within, and the second is the ability to communicate to the world that he is actually acting on behest of this voice.

Gandhi speaks of the voice of Ravan, the untrue, the ego, and the voice of Rama, the truth. In order to be able to discern between these two [inner] voices, to be certain that one is hearing the voice of truth, and not of untruth, one needs to be in control of the senses, of the mind, of the desires.

Unless the senses are in harmony, a person does not acquire, what he calls, a fully developed conscience. And for Gandhi, all desires, whether

they emerge from the mind or from the body, are satisfied only through the body. It is really the body which craves, signals satiation or unfulfillment, and feels pain or pleasure. Hence since the body is an impediment, the only way to deal with it is to subjugate the body to the will of the mind, the will of the conscience. If the body acts autonomous of the mind, then you have a problem.

TA: Satyagraha can be translated as Force of Truth, but also connotes civil disobedience, non-cooperation, or passive resistance. But the concept seems to have been used as more than just a political tool. What was the underlying principle that drove satyagraha?

SUHRUD: What is an act of satyagraha? When is it that we do disobedience? Gandhi says I do disobedience when something is repugnant to my conscience and I choose to recognize a higher law.

TA: But could this not be very subjective?

SUHRUD: Of course. Gandhi says that my notion of the truth allows for the fact that I could be wrong. Hence, satyagraha is a process of dialogue.

In any search for truth, you have to make a provision that you could be wrong. Therefore, the question is, can you and I have a relative notion of truth, which then might lead us onto the path of absolute truth? We go back to an old philosophical problem: is truth absolute, or is it relative?

Leading others becomes possible only when you are able to lead yourself, and if you are able to constantly reduce the gap between your words and your deeds.

Gandhi's answer to this is very simple. He says that it is not given to him to understand truth in all its aspects. He is a believer in the Buddhist or Jain notion of truth which says truth has many facets...anekantvada, meaning that there are anek anth, or many possible ends in this search for truth. The truth will always have many different faces, and each person will be able to glimpse only a part of it.

Hence, in the practical terms of satyagraha, there are no non-negotiable stands. A satyagrahi always negotiates. This is not a strategic move. It is a philosophical statement which recognizes that there could be truth in what the other has to say. Even those acting from a large position of injustice, could have truth on their side, or at least a measure of it.

TA: Gandhiji said, "Experience has taught me that civility is the most difficult part of satyagraha." What really is civility in the context of satyagraha?

SUHRUD: Civility of two kinds. Firstly, one must recognize that there could be truth available to you which is not available to me. Therefore, I recognize that you are just as capable as I, of recognizing and acting upon truth. Now if I say that you are neither capable of recognizing truth nor of acting upon its recognition, then what is the point of satyagraha? You will be blind to any truth that I present to you.

Therefore, civility is that I recognize your humanity. Satyagraha is the only form of protest which recognizes the humanity of others. And that is why there is no notion of pure evil in Gandhi's

world view. That Gandhi is always willing to talk to the British Empire comes from the idea that even the Empire is capable of recognizing the truth. And that if it has become dark one can reawaken it with some light.

TA: How does one foster this civility, or reawaken this light, this attitude of looking for, and allowing for, truth?

SUHRUD: By conduct, by example. Therefore, the notion of the exemplar.

TA: Gandhi recognizes such an obligation of an exemplary leader?

SUHRUD: All the time. And this is not only true of Gandhi. For anybody who seeks reform, change must begin with oneself. I mean, if I am asking you to consume less...I must first consume less. If I am asking you to stop being exploitative, I must first consider if my own relationships are exploitative. If I am asking you to go to jail for the sake of freedom, am I also willing to go to jail for the sake of freedom?

He says that leading others becomes possible only when you are able to lead yourself, and if you are able to constantly reduce the gap between your words and your deeds.

TA: Leadership can be a very complex issue. Since life is not black and white, it must involve spiritual and ethical dilemmas. What were some of these moral dilemmas and how did Gandhiji resolve them?

SUHRUD: The notion of non-violence, for

There is an inviolable relationship between means and ends. Means are like seeds which tell us what kind of fruits we are going to have.

example, is very problematic. What is it that we are supposed to do if the police come charging at us? Even though the law recognizes self-defence, Gandhi questions whether a satyagrahi can defend himself or herself. And if the answer is yes, then are any and all means justified? Meaning, can I, in self-defence, attack my assailant? Gandhi says: No - a true satyagrahi does not defend himself or herself.

TA: So, what is the right course of action in such a situation?

SUHRUD: Nothing. You stand and are beaten. And you are beaten to that point till the other person sees the invalidity of his violence.

TA: Is there not a dignity involved in standing for justice? By not doing anything and by being beaten down, one is not really proactively endorsing what is needed or what is just.

SUHRUD: Gandhi takes a completely contrary view. The role of a satyagrahi is to say to the oppressor, "Do your worst. If taking my life is going to satisfy your need for violence then go right ahead...do it." This is a very extreme position on violence and it's not that it was not practiced by him.

One of his greatest acts of defiance was the picketing that happened at the Dharasana Salt Mines in 1930. Satyagrahis walked up to the barbed wire fence that protected the salt pans, and were beaten down, day in and day out, for weeks! We know through medical records, that of all the people who suffered injuries, not one had fractured fingers or arms. They all had

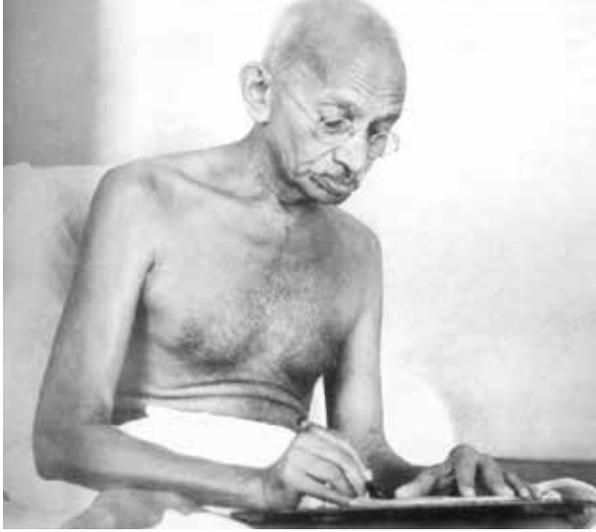
fractured skulls or fractured shoulders. Gandhi had told these workers not to raise a single hand to ward off any blows, not even to protect the skull. He believed that the only answer to that kind of violence could be perfect non-violence.

It was in the ensuing international publicity that the legitimacy of British rule over India was snatched away. The world came to believe that this act of complete non-violence on the part of Indians proved the futility of the use of violence as a legitimate means of subjugating people.

TA: In other words, a civilized world cannot justify the use of uncivilized means?

SUHRUD: Yes. The question really is what is the relationship between means and ends? We have come to believe that if the end is good it does not matter what means we employ. We want freedom and we shall have it at any cost. Gandhi says no. There is an inviolable relationship between means and ends. Means are like seeds which tell us what kind of fruits we are going to have. So, if you create your freedom through an act of violence, then violence becomes a legitimate means for that society, which cannot then aspire to be a non-violent, non-exploitative, just society. When at the root it is believed that all means are justified, what is to prevent the new state from also acting in an unjust way towards its own people?

Every collective believes that its ends are noble. Even those people who go out and lynch people think that their goal is noble because they are protecting the cow and so will employ any means possible. That's the argument, right? Gandhi



says this is exactly what happens if violence and exploitation become a just means.

TA: Gandhiji spoke of “True civilization as that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty.” He does not emphasize inalienable rights, but obligatory duties. What kind of duties was Gandhiji referring to?

SUHRUD: Gandhi would say that we will not be violent. We will not be exploitative. We will create conditions where each human being is able to try to realize her potential. If nothing else, it is our duty to create enabling conditions, or what is called trusteeship; not out of compulsion, but out of moral obligation or duty, which is the basis of all philanthropic work. You cannot have philanthropy or trusteeship, if you do not have a notion of duty.

The fact that there is now a Corporate Social Responsibility Law is a signal to us that the wealthy in our country have forgotten this notion of duty. If everybody performed their duties to fellow human beings, then there would not have been a need for enforced CSR, or enforcement of duty. So, I don't necessarily think that CSR is a great sign of our merit; in fact, for me it is a sign of a lack of merit.

This notion of duty is fundamental to any society. I don't think you can have a society, without any notion of obligations that we have towards each other. Now, your rights are justiciable, your duties are not, and that's a very important distinction.

TA: Is this Gandhi being a little bit naïve? Because usually, the duties we perform are

quite personal.

SUHRUD: No, he is not. What is personal? The notion of the personal keeps expanding for all of us, doesn't it? For example, we all say, “This my City.” The fact that you would be concerned about the environment - is that personal? Of course it is. You are saying that the concern for the environment belongs to me, as well as to those who shall succeed me. And therefore, the idea of what is mine can actually potentially include the generation yet to come.

TA: Is it also Gandhi's understanding that a citizen is obligated to widen the scope of his so-called personal duty?

SUHRUD: Yes. For example, what comprises the personal for a leader?

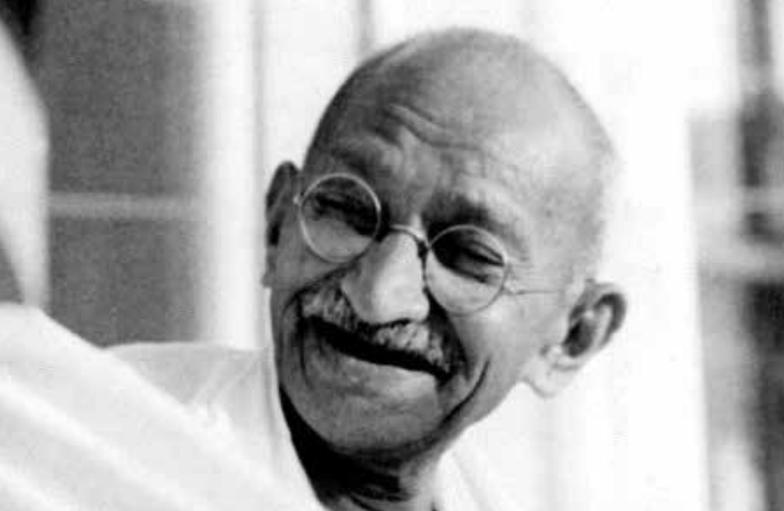
TA: All those that he leads are part of his personal.

SUHRUD: Exactly. So, can the leader therefore promote his family?

TA: Not at the cost of all those that he leads.

SUHRUD: Exactly. We recognize that. And we take inspiration from leaders like Gandhi who constantly widen the notion of what is their ambit of duty, thereby including the dispossessed within it.

TA: Gandhiji was outspoken about his anguish over modern civilization. He advocated an exacting way of life, and made many controversial statements especially in Hind



Swaraj, where he speaks out strongly against lawyers, doctors, hospitals, railways. In his rallying cry to go back to our roots, what was Gandhiji trying to illuminate and revive?

SUHRUD: I don't think people should take Hind Swaraj literally. We forget that it is a philosophical text. It's not a programmatic text.

You have to understand that it was written at a time when what we call modernity was not yet a fact. When Gandhi was writing in 1908, modernity was only one of the possibilities. There was actually a larger life outside of modernity, and today what we call primitive was really the norm.

Gandhi says that modernity shifts the focus of human worth outside the human being, into objects. Philosophically it transfers the notion of human goodness or human virtue into an object, what today we call consumerism. That's One.

Two - we have to recognize that colonialism was tied together with modernity. Industrialization was not possible without the colonial structure which supported it. What were the two forms of knowledge which came to India as part of modern Western education? Law and Medicine. That we will be governed by laws, laws that are not our own, is something that became possible through our participation in the legal framework.

TA: What you're saying then, is that when Gandhi speaks out against hospitals and railways, he's using them as symbols...

SUHRUD: They are metaphors. The railway was seen in India, for a very long time as the first modern

artefact of industrial production. Even today we think that railways are a sign of progress, right? If your town acquires a good metro system you are likely to re-elect that government, because it is seen as a sign of progress.

TA: But is it not progress in our context?

SUHRUD: But is it the only thing? I mean, although it is something which we require, it does not become the measure of progress. One could argue that it is a sign of regression, having resulted in lop-sided growth and created these unmanageable cities. If you actually had more balanced growth, Bombay would have been liveable, and Delhi would have been breathable.

TA: What should be the relationship of modern India's youth to Gandhi today?

SUHRUD: It cannot be an easy relationship; he is not an easy character to relate to. But my thinking is very simple. If you are unhappy with the world in which you live, if you think there is injustice, poverty and hunger that we are unable to explain even to ourselves, then you need to engage with India. And one of the persons who would allow you to engage with India deeply is Gandhi.

In what I call normal times, we don't want to engage with anyone who asks uncomfortable moral questions, and that has been exactly the relationship that India has had with him. It's only in times of crisis that we turn towards Gandhi. And at those times, he can be a great ally in showing us how to make individual and collective lives better.

Daring to Dream of a New and Better World

In Conversation with Yaron Barzilay, New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India), Director

By Manjula Nanavati, The Acropolitan Magazine

Tall, trim and relaxed in any environment, Yaron Barzilay smiles easily, but weighs his words very carefully. Understated and well-read, he punctuates his conversations unexpectedly, with an incisive colloquial humor that betrays his acute sense of the current socio-economic and political climate, and his capacious grasp of India's history and mythology.

Professionally, Yaron Barzilay is the Managing Director of IDEX India – a leading diamond trading platform for professional diamond traders worldwide.

Yet what really lights up his life, is his passion for philosophy, and the unassailable belief that it has the ability to bring about profound and sustainable change.

To this end, in 2006, he founded New Acropolis Cultural Organization in Mumbai, a non-profit organization represented in over fifty countries, established on the foundations of Practical Philosophy and Universal Fraternity. Its goal is threefold; to encourage the love of wisdom through the comparative study of philosophies, religions, sciences, and arts; the development of human potential through ethical principles; and the integration of each individual as an active and conscious part of society.

Few people know that Yaron is a certified specialist of Eastern and Western Philosophy, including History, Symbolism, Moral Philosophy, and Psychology. He has authored several investigative articles and spoken at a variety of forums, exploring timeless and universal philosophical concepts as relevant to modern daily life.

Editor-in-Chief of The Acropolitan Magazine, launched to inspire young adults in Mumbai, he has also spearheaded a number of initiatives to foster social and ecological responsibility, demonstrating that promoting humanitarianism is the most constructive means to tackle societal challenges. Under his leadership, New Acropolis has successfully partnered on initiatives with Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to execute volunteer driven civil beautification and cleaning drives, and presented awareness campaigns and exhibitions at Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, Jehangir Art Gallery, National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA), and National Gallery for Modern Art (NGMA).

What inspires this dynamic and progressive changemaker? How does he stretch time to accomplish so much, in such diverse fields, and how does he bridge East and West, professionally, personally, and most of all, philosophically?

As Yaron warmed to his favorite subject, one could not help being drawn to the quiet strength of his moral convictions, applaud the magnitude of his commitment to serve, and be inspired by the intensity of his empathy for mankind.

The Acropolitan Magazine (TA): The name New Acropolis is intriguing. What does the name and the institution stand for?

YARON BARZILAY: Acropolis literally means "higher city", and the idea represents the place where we look to for inspiration, our higher thoughts, the source of Beauty, Truth and Justice. In Ancient Greece cities were built around the concept of an Acropolis, a citadel



which housed a temple, a sacred theatre, a place of justice, and around this was the Agora where the citizens lived their daily lives. We find something very similar in other ancient traditions too. The symbolic meaning of the legendary Hastinapura, which literally translates to the City of Elephants (a symbol of wisdom), was a reminder to its citizens of what should be their primary aspiration.

Acropolis then refers to both a physical place that embodies the higher aspects of our lives, as well as an inner higher place within each and every one of us.

And to me, this is exactly what we are missing today. We are so consumed with survival in the day-to-day engagements that we forget the central aspect of why we are here at all.

New Acropolis is a School of Philosophy in the classical manner. That is to say our purpose is not to learn about philosophers and their philosophies, but to learn from them. What is crucial is the idea of implementation, rather than the theory per se. We must learn from our past, not just from the traditions of India or Greece or Rome, but the combined heritage of humanity, and then implement that consolidation of ancient wisdom in the present, in order to create a bridge to our future.

It was schools such as these that were able to re-invigorate culture and civilization through past ages.

TA: But in a world replete with technology, where information and knowledge is literally

at our fingertips, what is the relevance of a classroom to young adults on the fast-track of their careers?

YARON: The first point I would like to make is that we must recognize that technological advancement, while allowing us to live and learn better, is a tool that serves a certain purpose. But regrettably there is the danger of it transforming from an instrument meant to serve us, into a master. It is extremely important to learn to discern between tools and their purpose.

Therefore, what I really would like to touch upon is the purpose of education, rather than the methods we might employ. Is education synonymous with the gathering of information? Or should education also allow us to discover ourselves? The etymology of the word comes from the Latin *educare* which means ‘to bring out’, implying that there is already something essential within us that needs to be drawn out and brought to light. This needs to be the guideline for a beneficial education; not just absorbing more knowledge and acquiring more skills. Instead, we must ask, for what purpose is this knowledge and these skills?

Here again we come to the role of philosophy, which pushes us to ask those very basic questions that will define how we live: Where do I come from? Where am I going? What is the purpose of life? To think that these are questions that we can leave to tackle at some hypothetical ‘later’ is completely illogical. To initiate these questions, ones that we all have, is philosophy. To search, to learn, to engage with enquiry, to question, to find answers that will lead you to new questions...

*Should education also allow us to discover ourselves? The etymology of the word comes from the Latin *educare* which means ‘to bring out’, implying that there is already something essential within us that needs to be drawn out and brought to light.*

isn't that what education is, to evolve?

And it's not exclusive to a classroom. The application manifests as an ability to volunteer, to be humane, to care for the world. This cannot happen because someone lectures you. You need to discover it within yourself, which will only happen through an intense, internal investigation. Starting in a classroom leads to a better understanding, which in turn allows you to take it forward in any way you want.

Philosophy contains the idea of wisdom. The classes we offer at New Acropolis are meant to initiate this process. Its purpose is to take the philosophy out of the classroom, and into your life.

TA: One of the essential principles of New Acropolis is the comparative study, where you bridge the seemingly disconnected branches of Arts and Sciences. What is the value that we can draw from this?

YARON: Unfortunately, this is a characteristic of our times, the emphasis on specialization. But to be a specialist one needs to focus on one thing and segregate it from everything else. To aid this, our education system separates everything into different silos – physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, history, geography, art. Yet life is not dependent on any one skill or expertise. Life is everything.

And by seeing life from only one perspective, we are missing out, not just the whole picture, but the wholeness of life itself. So, the method of comparative study seeks to investigate the holistic approach to life, by emphasizing the

connectedness of knowledge. If we only focus on life though the perspective of science and ignore art and philosophy, we will understand in depth the how of life, but very little of the underlying why.

Without searching for deeper meaning, beyond the limitation of forms, we may be losing what Saint-Exupery called ‘the essential that is invisible to the eye’. And how do we engage with this subtle essential? By perceiving the common ground that speaks to us through myths, unifying thousands of years of ancient traditions, through symbols, which speak of common realities, similar shared experiences and universal truths.

This does not mean that everything is the same, but that everything evolved from a common origin.

TA: You have lived, studied and taught in both Israel and India, interacting with people from both western and eastern cultures. Is there a difference in their approach or sensibility to philosophical thought?

YARON: By its very nature, Israel is a mix of people and cultures from all over the world. My mother comes from Poland, and is a holocaust survivor, and my father's family is originally from Yemen, though he was born in Israel. To me, that separation between East and West has never been so clear-cut. Moreover, if you see our planet as a globe, then East and West mean nothing, because wherever you stand, relatively speaking there is East on one side, and West on the other [Laughter].

It is true that there are differences: we look a

Life is not dependent on any one skill or expertise. Life is everything. And by seeing life from only one perspective, we are missing out, not just the whole picture, but the wholeness of life itself.

little different, we talk a little differently, we have different traditions. But if we turn our attention to the common ground instead, then it is also true that we are all human; we live in one world, and what we do in one part affects the whole. That to me is far more essential, and a far more pertinent outlook, rather than the differences. I'm not saying they do not exist, but that they are not of foremost importance.

TA: Today however, we are living in an increasingly divisive world where differences are unfortunately and sometimes quite violently highlighted. What can be done to mitigate this problem?

YARON: Yes. I agree with you in this observation that we live in a world that seems to be moving more and more towards separation, and conflict. It is ironic that we talk of a global world where communication is at its peak, and yet it seems harder and harder to co-exist.

One answer or solution to this is the concept of fraternity. But it cannot remain just an ideology or a Facebook campaign that collects likes. It is not enough to understand something, to agree with something. We need to live it. We need to discover it as a profound truth of life itself. Real fraternity can only come if I bring down the illusionary walls of separation that lie within me. If I don't do that, I will only talk about fraternity, but I will not be able to resonate with someone else's joy or fear or needs. We must develop empathy, an understanding of the other, and go beyond the limitations that make us obsess over ourselves. Without empathy, how can we make the world a better place?

A good exercise that I like to offer is to visit a Mumbai train station at rush hour, where you can literally see thousands of people. Or observe a tall residential tower, where you can see hundreds of living rooms, and imagine that inside each one, there are people and families similar to your own. We don't need to be ingenious in order to understand that their day-to-day concerns are not so very different from our own.

Yes, our lives are pressured, but as Seneca reminds us, "we are not ill-supplied of time but wasteful of it." We have exactly the right amount of time available to us if we utilize it correctly. We have to create the opportunity to go beyond our self-interest. I don't mean we need to ignore who we are, but in fact we need to become who we really are. We are a force of life, we are a part of life. These masks we wear today, of gender, age, and nationality are true...yes...but this is only part of the whole truth. Fundamentally we are all human beings. Perhaps we should actually say we are all living beings... sharing our planet with so many others. When we are able to rise above the temporary definitions that we label ourselves with, we naturally develop empathy; naturally we act with the generosity of a volunteer, naturally we live as philosophers.

That's our impact. That is what I would say a school of philosophy in the classical manner hopes for.

TA: In a world where hunger poverty, pollution are such pressing concerns, can philosophy really provide an answer.

YARON: The answer lies in your question.



Why is the world full of hunger, poverty and pollution? We seem to have the requisite knowledge and technology, yet we are no closer to solving these issues. That is exactly why we need philosophers.

TA: To change our way of thinking?

YARON: To change the way we are. People understand what is the right thing to do in order to solve many of the world's problems. But they don't follow through with that. This dichotomy between what we know to be true, and how we continue to act, is exactly the problem we need to solve.

Philosophy is not, as most people think, an endless intellectual debate, detached from solving practical problems. On the contrary, it is an intelligible perspective of life that expresses itself in everything we think, and feel, and do. It is the ability to honor thought with action. It is the ability to live and put into practice what I believe to be right, not only for me, but for others, and yes, for the rest of the world. It is the ability to view myself not as a separate unit, engaged only with my own survival or my short-term benefit, but as part of a whole symbiotic relationship with all of life. Philosophy without altruism is incomplete, and altruism without philosophy is not possible.

To me philosophy is really an adventure; to live by the truth as I understand it, is always a challenge. To act for the benefit of others by overcoming one's own propensity towards selfish interest is a challenge that philosophy can help one overcome.

TA: But when one is so bogged down by the

individual struggles of everyday life, in what way can philosophy be of practical help?

YARON: It is true that when a person is hungry he is consumed by just the need to survive. But for many of us, it is up to each individual to choose how much time to allocate to all the different priorities and obligations that life throws up. It is time to really dedicate ourselves to things we value. It is time to understand that philosophy must become a way of life.

It cannot be that one aspect of you sits through a philosophy class and then another completely divorced aspect of you deals with the day-to-day predicaments of your life. In fact, it is exactly in how we deal with the difficulties that is the application of our personal philosophy of life. So why do we need time for that? We can practice philosophy at home, when we are at work, when we sit with a friend, and yes when we face obstacles in our life. Life is where philosophy expresses itself. A class for two or three hours a week can orient us, but how we deal with life is eventually based on the way we recognize ourselves, and the meaning we give to life.

Victor Frankl said in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* that we need to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead think of ourselves as those who are being questioned by life – daily and hourly.

That is what I mean by living philosophy.

TA: Establishing a suitable platform, creating a fitting bridge to a better future requires voluntary service and a change of mindset.



What is the answer to a cynical generation wanting to know what's-in-it-for-me? Or on the other hand, many who are idealistic and full of hope, but discouraged by the enormity of the effort required for sustainable change?

YARON: Volunteering and service is the natural expression of a true philosopher. It cannot be forced. Natural empathy cannot be imposed. But I think it is important that we should not blame the new generation. It is not their fault; it is the fault of the world they have been born into, what this world is preparing them for, and consequently what they understand as a way of life.

But I would take inspiration from the life of Gandhiji and Confucius. Though it may sound a little naïve, I do believe that sometimes what we call naivety may be profound truth. Change can only begin with us, from us, and by us. We need to be the change we want to see. This philosophical realization underlines the essential role of philosophy. It is a path of self-discovery, of the realization of the unity, of identification with the whole, of developing empathy towards all.

It is essential to share this magnificent aspiration: we can change world, if we can change ourselves.

TA: As the world slowly embarks on learning how to revitalize itself in a necessary renaissance of sorts, what can India offer or contribute?

YARON: India has its undeniable uniqueness, its colors, its traditions, its art, its philosophy.

Ever since I was a child, I was drawn towards

India. I could not travel until I had finished High School, but I had this aspiration for an inner search fueled by the idea of what India symbolized. India is a complex diversity of languages, traditions, religions and philosophies that are thousands of years old, maybe even more ancient than historians have conventionally acknowledged. Through time it has always been a land of seekers, wise men, disciples, and philosophers – lovers of wisdom, who found truth and inspiration and expressed it in literature, poetry, song, dance, sculpture, art, and architecture. Millennia have been spent sharpening ancient wisdom, burnishing the richness of ideals, and investigating systems of thought that lead to self-knowledge, transmutation and truth. That impact of wisdom still exists today. You have only to open your eyes to Indian art and philosophy, gaze at her ancient monuments and sacred temples to experience it.

By the time I had been here just a few months, I came away with the idea that I would find the true purpose of my life through philosophy. That was the gift that India gave to me. And that is a precious gift that India can share with the world: that life implies constant change and growth, that your own evolution proceeds from the pursuit of the essential reality that is beyond what we see, that man has a purpose, a purpose that lies within him, and to discover and conquer that path is his principal endeavor.

I'm not saying that India is an exclusive place to engage with ancient wisdom. But what I am saying is that this land we call India is soaked with it, and at New Acropolis, as Indians, we can take a step forward and share it with the world.

The Indian EXPRESS

Sunday, December 16, 2018

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS, DECEMBER 16, 2018

Education a basic necessity, must be handled by state: Sonam Wangchuk

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 15

SONAM WANGCHUK, an engineer whose reforms in the education sector has helped bring down the failure percentage of students in Ladakh from 95 per cent to 25 per cent, on Saturday emphasised that education was a basic necessity and that it must be handled by the state.

"Education is a basic necessity and ethics must be a part of it. It must be handled by the state," he said. He was speaking at an event organised by the New Acropolis Cultural Organisation on how to ensure social change through innovative practices and the role of business models in bringing about social reforms. It was organised to observe the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Experts from various fields such as banking, education, social reforms history and philoso-

phy shared their views at the event.

In a panel discussion, Wangchuk emphasised that education needs to be contextual. For him, if children living in Himalayan deserts are taught about agriculture not suitable to local terrain, such education would be out of context. "It will be equality of irrelevance," he said.

Wangchuk along with students has designed a cone-shaped reservoir to keep water frozen during spring for agricultural purposes in Ladakh. It is during spring that we have minimum flow of water, he says, adding that basic physics was used to stock water.

Anu Aga, founder of Teach For India, an organisation that encourages corporates to teach underprivileged students in municipal schools, said these leaders selected to teach students help bridge the inequality gap in education. "Teaching should be an aspirational profession, not

the last resort... our educational institutes are mostly owned by politicians and builders. We need the best teachers because they have the greatest impact on students' lives," Aga said.

The one-day-long conference, titled 'Leadership for a Better World', also saw discussions on Bhutan's gross happiness index and Gandhian philosophy.

Gandhian historian Tridip Suhrud, author and photographer Pierre Poulain, Dr Vandana Shiva from Navdanya, Bhubaneswar-based Dr Saamdu Chetri, author Fernand Schwarz and Yaron Barzilay from the New Acropolis Cultural Organisation also shared their views.

Speaking on having a business model to bring social reforms, Chetna Gala Sinha from Mann Deshi Bank said that the government needs to facilitate licences and permissions to allow women to start their own businesses. Hermito-financing bank has 1.10 lakh account hold-

ers. When she first applied for a licence to open a bank in rural Maharashtra, it was rejected on grounds of having no-literate promoting members. "The promoting members, all women, ensured they got literate and we applied again," she said, adding that for five years they sacrificed their dividends to create reserves in the bank.

Producer and philanthropist Ronnie Screwvala said it is not bad to have profit as a component in business. "We have not-for-profit organisation Swades that works with 1,200 schools and at the same time we are running a for-profit education programme for higher studies," he said.

The event, with over 244 participants, also saw musical performance by folk singer Moorlaka Marwada. The New Acropolis, founded in 1957, is an international philosophical organisation that talks about culture and social nature. Over 40,000 volunteers work with it.

The Indian EXPRESS

Saturday, December 15, 2018

Day-long conference on 'leadership for a better world' today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 14

OVER 10 distinguished speakers will be a part of the 'Leadership for a Better World' conference organised by New Acropolis Cultural Organisation on Saturday. The day-long conference will entail a series of panel discussions drawing from the experiences of its speakers from various fields.

From discussions on the concept of a 'just society' in the light of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy, to opinions on having a business outlook beyond profit, to musical performances, speakers at the event include Padma Shri awardee and Rajya Sabha member Anu Aga, Gandhian historian Dr Tridip Suhrud, author and photographer Pierre Poulain, Chetna Gala Sinha from Mann Deshi Bank, environmental activist Dr Vandana Shiva, Bhubaneswar-based Dr Saamdu Chetri, author Fernand Schwarz, entrepreneur and philanthropist Ronnie Screwvala, engineer and innovator Sonam Wangchuk, and Yaron Barzilay, founder of the New Acropolis Cultural Organization, Mumbai.

The event will bring together change-makers working in the fields of education, philosophy, ecology, anthropology, governance, microfinance and corporate social responsibility. The

conference aims to draw out a resolution on Gandhi's legacy, which will be shared with affiliated organisations in 50 countries.

New Acropolis was founded in 1957 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, by historian and philosopher Jorge Ángel Livraga Rizzi (1930-1991). It is an international organisation of a philosophical, cultural and social nature with over 40,000 volunteers. In October, 30 volunteers cleaned mangroves near Mumbai's Navy Nagar. Volunteers were also part of learning survival skills in a three-day camping experience in Harishchandragad.

The event, to be held at the Taj Vivanta in Cuffe Parade, will see 244 participants. Aga, who co-founded Teach For India, and engineer Wangchuk, will discuss on education for sustainable development. Bhubaneswar-based Chetri and historian Suhrud will discuss Bhutan's gross national happiness (GNH) index and Gandhian philosophy.

Fernand Schwarz and Pierre Poulain, both authors, will discuss on the path of the Warrior of Peace to transform oneself and the world. Dr Shiva will speak at a session titled 'Reconnecting with Nature'.

New Acropolis is part of an international non-profit association called International Organization New Acropolis.

ठाणे जिल्ह्याचे सर्वाधिक रूपाचे परिपूर्ण दैनिक

इष्ट ते छापणार संस्थापक : नरेंद्र बल्लाळ

ठाणेतैभव

चांगले नेतृत्व चांगले जग घडवून आणू शकेल

ख | रा चांगला बदल कोणता? बदलाची नेमका व्याख्या कोणती? बदल ही गोष्टच अटळ असले तर घडणाना बदलास योग्यतेने साध्यासाठी काय करावे? चांगल्या वारंट बदलाचे द्वयच परिणाम वेळोवेळी साध्या जगाला दिवून देत असतो तर त्यासाठी सर्वात बुध्दीमान मानल्या गेलेल्या मानसशास्त्रज्ञ कोणत्या गोष्टी अन्वितकारा? आणि खऱ्या बदलासाठी किता मयल जीवघुटीसाठीही उपयोगी उरतील. या विषयासत असे कोणते साक्षरकरणा स्वीकारावे आणि साध्यत महत्वाचे घड्याले या साध्यासाठी नेतृत्व काय आणि कोणते असते? यथार खे प्रश्न मयल पोषणत राहिले ते 'न्यू अर्थोपेलेस कन्सलर आणिमानवोपेन'च्या ठाणेच्या घड्यालेच्या एका कार्यक्रमात.

जोक्मयन देण्यासाठी उपयोगी उरतील अशा अनेक गोष्टी अनेक जग सातत करतात दिसले आणि त्याचे समाजातील उभयतेलच सकारात्मक परिणाम पाहून वा आश्चर्य झाले.

महात्मा गांधीच्या 150 व्या वर्षे अजिंक्यरी निर्मिताने त्यांच्या एवढ्याच उरतून व्यक्तिमत्वातला नेतृत्वगुणांचा पैलू घेऊन त्यापासून प्रेरणा घेऊन तसे उरतून नेते घडवण्यासाठी वेगवेगळ्या क्षेत्रात निघेते आणि प्राणतिक्रमणे सातत प्रयत्न करणारी अनेक व्यक्तिमत्त्वे त्या विश्वाच्या कार्यक्रमात आपले अनुभव कथन करत होते. रोजीकच क्षेत्रात असल्या अधिनिय कार्यक्षेत्री मुलांचा विकास घडवताना रुढतेल्या पाण्याचेरूनच न जात लडाखसारखा छिटाकी मुलांच्या वीर्यक्षेला

चाताना देणारे विविध प्रकारचे

राबकराचे सोम सांगुचक यरी साक्षा

गळतीचे पूर्वीचे प्रमाण स्वतःच्या



मनाचिये गुंती
शोमा सुभेदार
मो. नं. ९८६९०९९०२३
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प्रयत्नामुळे खूप कमी कसे केले आणि लडाखसारख्या भौगोलिक परिस्थितीमुळे वेगळ्या अडथळांना तोंड देत १९८८ साली त्यांनी मुकू केलेल्या 'स्टुडेंट एज्युकेशनल अँड कल्चरल मुव्हमेंट अँड लडाख' मधून उरतमोसम गुंतीने पुढे वेगळे विद्यार्थी कसे घडवले याचा वास्तुपाठ इतरांनाही देण्यासाठी उरत.

भूतानमधील एका खेड्यात जन्मलेल्या आणि कारिमसमर्थे पीएचडी केलेल्या

डॉ. सायदू पेरो पत्नीसय र्थे खाजगी क्षेत्रा काम करून नंतर 'भूतानस सॉस नेशनल इन्व्हेसटमेंट' मुकू केले आणि खाजगी बाजार या गोष्टीवर व्याख्याने दिली. कारण त्यांचा फक्त निरवास घटल्या की चांगल्या जग्यासाठी लक्ष्मण बदल, संदीप रोती, अकराशालीत बदल सावर द्यावे असे अनेक पण जीवनाचा आनंद मिळवणे हे हो लक्ष असणे अनेककांसाठी आवश्यक आहे.

खातनाची आणि शरारंपरागत चालत आलेल्या व्यनसाय पुढे नेणे हेही विकरीचे काम असलेच पण अशी कुठलीही पारदर्शुमी नसताना सतत, एखाद्या व्यनसाय उपाकरून त्यात उरतून देणे पणून घडवणे असले, ते करणारे संदीप रोती याच कोणते रती खूबाला यानीही स्वतःच्या आध्यात्मील आव्हाने कशी झेलली हे सांगितले. त्यांना त्यांच्या व्यनसायतील स्पर्डी टिकून राहतातच प्राणीय पारतालीत साखी लेकांच्या आध्यात्मात चांगल्या जीवनासाठी प्रयत्न करणे आव्हाने आणि त्यासाठी त्यांच्या अनेक कोकस ते राबकत असताना ही गोष्ट खूप पहावी.

प्राणीय आणि रोतकी आदिवासी गरीब महिलांसाठी मनेदरी रीकरी स्थान करून त्यांना जगण्यासाठी सहाय करणाना आणि आर्थिक सवलतीकरण करून देण्याचा यत्न घेताना याचाही प्रवास असताना उद्दीपक घटल्या. वैकिकनेतर आणि त्याची सातय साखडी राबक्यासाठी प्रयत्न करणाना डॉ. यदन शिवा यांच्या कामाचा प्रसंग आसाका त्यांच्या नेतृत्वाची खात्री देणारा उरत. अशी आणखीही अनेक नेतृत्वाची अनेक देणारा हा कार्यक्रमात उभिताना खूप मोलाचे वैचारिक खास देणारा उरत. आणि अशा नेतृत्वाकडून चांगले जग निर्माण करण्यासाठी आपणांही काही प्रयत्न करूया अशी प्रेरणा देणाराही उरत.

Around the World

With *Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World* New Acropolis Cultural Organization (India) initiates the spotlight on Mahatma Gandhi internationally, with events planned through 2019 by various affiliate organizations worldwide, as a tribute to the continuing relevance of Gandhi's philosophical legacy. Brief notes on events already conducted as on February 2019:

February 2019

Gandhi – Warrior of Peace: A Philosophy
Strasbourg, France



January 2019

Gandhi Conference, Vandana Shiva,
The Peaceful Warriors | Marseille, France

Gandhi - Warrior of Peace | Lyon, France

Vandana Shiva, Satish Kumar: In the Tradition
of Gandhi | Lyon, France

Gandhi, Be a Warrior of Peace Today. In the
Basque Country, and Everywhere in the World
Biarritz, France



November 2018

International Philosophy Day 2018

Tel Aviv, Israel



On the occasion of the International Philosophy Day, associated with the 150th year of Gandhi's birth, New Acropolis in Israel held a conference about philosophy as an incentive for change in man and society, as a guide to self-rule and spiritual freedom.

Through a dialogue dealing with man and society according to the philosophical approach to life and in accordance with Gandhi's ideology concerning spiritual freedom, self-rule and internal and social change – we asked whether there is a connection between the freedom of a people and the freedom of an individual, and whether or not the philosophical approach can create real change.

The discussion was led by Ronen Halabi – Director of New Acropolis in Israel, with the participation of Fernando Schwarz – Founder and Director of New Acropolis in France, and of the Hermes International Institute for the Study of the Non-Material Human Heritage, anthropologist and writer; Pierre Poulain – Founder of New Acropolis in Israel, philosopher and photographer; Noam Sharon – translator of Gandhi's book *Hind Swaraj* from Hindi, educator and founder and manager of the Adam Olam publishing.

At the event we launched two books, one written by Fernando Schwarz *Perseus: The Warrior of Peace* on the power of the youth nowadays to combine between ancient wisdom and the new challenges of man and society. The second was

written by Pierre Poulain *After the Fall ... History Continues* which deals with the process of the decline of Western civilization and the possibility of a renewed cultural renaissance.

During the event, we also held a “small gift” volunteer workshop – preparing postcards for patients in hospitals that we will meet in our coming volunteer activities. This extraordinary day ended with small group philosophical dialogues, live music, etc.

November 2018

Story of a Warrior of Truth: 150 years since the birth of Mahatma Gandhi | Athens, Greece



In the framework of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi and of World Philosophy Day, New Acropolis in Greece held an open event at the Public Cafe on Syntagma Square in Athens. Kostas Frantzakinakis, researcher and director of New Acropolis Greece, spoke about “true philosophy always has been a practice” and, journeying through the great philosophers of various eras, demonstrated that “the philosopher is in constant action. .. he is not wise, but he is looking for wisdom all his life”.

Professor Dimitris Vasiliadis, indologist, President of the Hellenic-Indian Society for Culture and Development, spoke about “a warrior of the truth” and Gandhi's life and actions, highlighting his basic ideas on non-violence, love for one's neighbor, ethics, giving to the poor, etc.

The audience that filled Public Cafe created engaging interactions and joyful atmosphere throughout the event.

Past Events of this Series

The need for social, political, ecological, and spiritual change is evident in our times. In early 2017, New Acropolis Cultural Organization conceived “Empowering Real Change” – an ongoing series of events to examine the journeys of leading changemakers. As examples of everyday heroes, they dare to dream of a better world, and take responsibility to initiate this transformation. Their courage and experience can serve to empower and inspire. A brief look at our past events:

January 2017

Empowering Real Change

Champions of change come together, driven by an inner search, which expresses itself in the courage to act in the face of social, economic and systemic challenges.

Venue: Express Gallery, Express Towers. Nariman Point, Mumbai.

Moderator: Harianto Mehta
(New Acropolis Cultural Organization)

Speakers:

Sonam Wangchuk (SECMOL, HIAL)
Zarina Screwvala (Swades)
Yaron Barzilay (New Acropolis Cultural Organization)

November 2017

Empowering Real Change: Philosophy & Art

Personal journeys that reveal the intrinsic relationship between Philosophy and Art as an instrument of transformation, the source of meaning, and an engine for self-discovery.

Venue: National Gallery of Modern Art. Kala Ghoda, Mumbai.

Speaker/Moderator: Yaron Barzilay
(New Acropolis Cultural Organization)

Speakers:

Music: Shabnam Virmani (Kabir Project)
Dance: Miti Desai (Miti Design Lab)
Photography: Pierre Poulain (International Organization New Acropolis)





Thank You

Empowering Real Change is strengthened by the generous and collaborative participation of so many. We acknowledge with gratitude our Donors, Sponsors and Partners who have joined New Acropolis Cultural Organization to celebrate the legacy of Leadership and the Pursuit of Truth inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary.

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