

OCT - DEC 2019

THE ACROPOLITAN

A Magazine on Philosophy, Culture & Volunteering

Gandhi ji's 150th
Birth Anniversary
Commemorative Issue



FEATURE

Does Free Will Exist?

The Joy of Living Philosophy

The Need to Stand Out

Heritage - Foundation of the Future:
Architect Parul Zaveri's Journey

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PHILOSOPHY

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THE ACROPOLITAN

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



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



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VOLUNTEERING is the natural expression of a spirit of union with life and humanity, which manifests in the practice of values such as unselfishness, commitment and striving for the common good.

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From The Editorial Desk

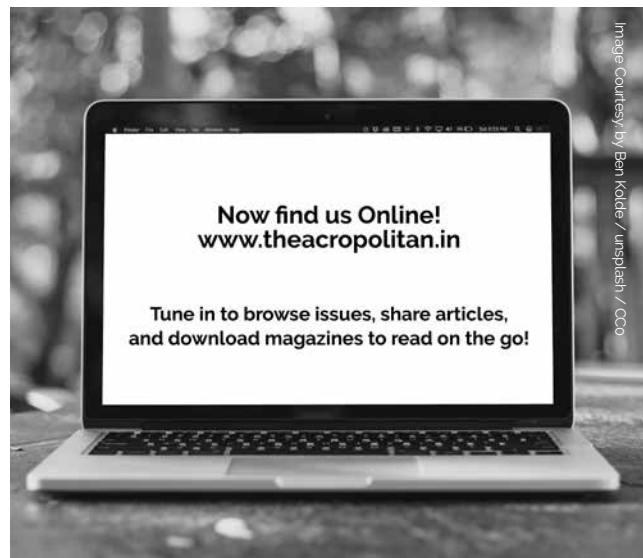
Dear Reader,

Living philosophy is perhaps the most joyful and meaningful way to celebrate life. The heroic philosopher dares to live such a life; he discovers his own inner strength, his own Free Will, and he empowers himself to contribute in the building of a strong and sustainable foundation for a better future.

As we approach the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on 2nd October 2019, let us take inspiration from Gandhi ji's courageous pursuit of truth. Even without necessarily agreeing with all aspects of his ideology, one cannot deny his exemplary leadership, characterized by his personal example, and his audacity to dream of, and bring about, real change.

In this issue of The Acropolitan Magazine, we bring to you a glimpse of a philosophical attitude to daily life, one that is driven by seeking the inner nature of things. Such an approach makes life a wondrous adventure. We must but dare to Discover, Awaken, and Transform.

Harianto H Mehta, *Editor*.



The Joy of Living Philosophy

By Akanksha Sanghi

Know Thyself. This famous axiom from the ancient Greek tradition seems so simple but in reality these words are a key to living life. As I reflect over the last 5 years, since when I began my journey as a philosopher and started to explore the meaning of these words, it is easy for me to see that I am a totally different person. While externally I may seem quite the same to many, there is a deep inner transformation, a sense of joy, inner strength, purpose and wonder; a whole new outlook to life, a spirit of discovery and adventure.

Traditionally, Philosophy is defined as *the love for wisdom*. It is this beautiful journey of humbly beginning to discover the mystery that we call LIFE, by beginning the inward journey of discovering ourselves, daring to identify who we really are. However, this journey is possible only when we start *living* philosophy; practicing it in our daily lives. Upon reflection, we might find that many of us are going through life mechanically, simply surviving, rather than really living.

Just as the sun shines 24/7, fulfilling its potential and serving its purpose, so too it can be observed that everything in this universe has a purpose and lives in accordance with that. But what about human beings?

What then does it mean to really live? Traditions world over suggest that each of us has come to this world with a purpose, *swadharna* as it was known in the ancient Indian context. Just as the sun shines 24/7, fulfilling its potential and serving its purpose, so too it can be observed that everything in this universe has a purpose and lives in accordance with that. But what about human beings?



By Pedro Lastra / Unsplash / CCO



What might be our purpose? Our education system and social upbringing are directed towards building successful careers, acquiring wealth, earning prestige in society and so on. However, it is evident that these are temporary achievements, and while they do satisfy some of our desires, for many they do not necessarily lead to long-term inner happiness, or a sense of fulfilment. Some might experience a strong need for something more transcendent, a more permanent search, an inner voice that we often ignore. Maybe our purpose becomes clearer to us, when we dare to start listening to this inner voice, however soft it maybe.

To strengthen this inner voice, is to dare to listen to it more. It can help us discern the real from unreal, the just from the unjust... It is to strive to express the virtues such as compassion, love and beauty, in our lives, even if in the smallest of ways. It is the practice of raising ourselves towards our true potential as human beings, raising ourselves towards who we can, and who we are meant, to be.

Hence, when we start living philosophy, we engage with an inner battle, symbolically captured in the battle of the *Kuruksheetra* between the *Pandavas* and the *Kaurava*. Perhaps we can understand the *Pandavas* as our virtues, archetypes such as Justice, Beauty, Goodness and Truth. The *Kauravas* are the temptations, the multiplicity of distracting voices, and the countless desires of the material self that are constantly shouting and pulling us in various directions. Living philosophy enables us to engage in this battle on a daily basis, and not run away from

it. We learn to make choices when at a crossroads; to actively choose to align our actions with the archetypes, rather than the desires; right over wrong, good over bad, just over unjust - even when it is not comfortable. It allows us to make difficult choices, to remain loyal to what we see as our own higher potential, more and more towards our purpose. Without this friction there can be no fire, without this inner battle there can be no growth. Through this inner battle, we emerge stronger, we emerge surer. And every time we fall, we learn to transform the failure into an opportunity for us to fight again.

Freedom is really about daring to choose and committing to something with a higher purpose, something which you truly want, to live your life in accordance with that.

With it also comes the understanding that each person has his own battle to fight, his own *Kuruksheetra*, his own journey. And yet, my study of philosophy demonstrates the ancient recognition that everyone and everything in the universe actually comes from the same common source. Why then, is there so much separation because of religion,

skin colour, wealth, etc.? While our expressions may be vastly different, isn't our source one? Don't we all come from the same "God", the same one Life? Aren't we One? Of course, the application of this is easier in theory than in practice, but reminding ourselves of this every time that we see separation can help us change our approach. It can help us bring more love, compassion and generosity.

My journey has helped me develop a strong direction, a focus, and a sense of purpose in my life. In this scattered world, which is filled with innumerable choices, distractions, voices, people and temptations it is easy to get pulled towards various directions. We think that keeping our options open, and avoiding commitments enables us to be free! But is this really freedom? Being a slave to our moods, to our emotions, to the external expectations and obligations – is this really freedom?

I have gradually learned that freedom is really about daring to choose and committing to something with a higher purpose, something which you truly want, to live your life in accordance with that. And slowly life becomes much simpler. Things fall into place. It is exactly like a circle; with a centre as the focal point, everything else falls into place, revolving around it. It is about decluttering life of the things that are not so essential, i.e. things that are temporary, transient, serve the ego, etc. This does not mean that we neglect or abandon these needs. It just means that we give priority to working towards a centre, around something more essential, something more permanent.

Over these last few years, I have learned to push so many boundaries. It has actually helped me to see that boundaries are self imposed; they are illusions that we can push ourselves beyond if we really want to. It has made me begin to wonder about all that is beyond the tangible, all that we cannot see, touch and feel, to develop this need to discover more and more. It also helps me recognise that there is something higher within me – higher than the physical, the emotions and the thoughts that I had identified with so much. We may think that we are our thoughts, but in reality when we learn to hear the inner voice, we realise that even our thoughts are temporary. This realisation and the attempt to practice it daily, helps to change my outlook to life. It helps me moderate my reactions to situations,

allows me to pause, to absorb. It allows me to see that I need not be a slave to my emotions and thoughts; that I have the power and the ability to direct them.

In this way, living philosophy gives hope, in a world of despair. In a world in which everyone thinks that there is no point being different, nothing can change. In a world in which everyone blames external circumstances, situations, politics, government, etc. we can look inwards to find that the real problem today may be within each of us. Perhaps it is in our inability to see that we have a higher purpose. Perhaps it is our inability to see that every human being, and everything else in this universe, is actually from the same source. It is with this realisation, and the decision to take the tiniest steps towards our inner potential to change ourselves from within, that we might begin to change our world today. Because, if I can change, others can, and will, as well. It develops the strong need to take a step towards the better - for you and for humanity.

I invite you to take a step towards Living Philosophy – embark on this beautiful journey of Life, with joy.

★★★



The Need to

Stand Out

By Delia Steinberg Guzman

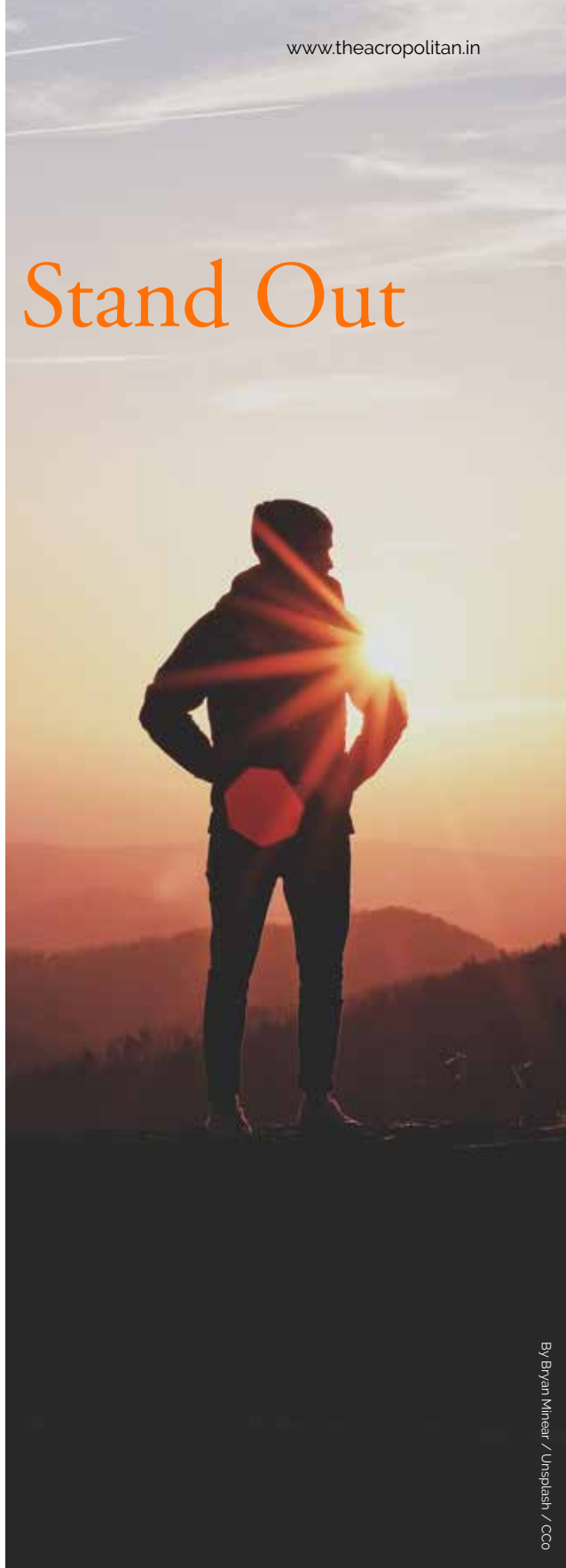
Delia Steinberg Guzman is the President of International Organization New Acropolis.

Let us ask ourselves about one of the aspects that is most important for the human beings of our times: what are the different ways of achieving success, of standing out? There is one thing that is indisputable: all human beings, in one way or another, try to stand out, to succeed; it is like a vital necessity. It is the need to do something, but above all, something important; it is the need to act, but to act in a way that does not pass by unnoticed. It is about "being someone", not disappearing into anonymity, ensuring that our name will be on the lips of the greatest possible number of people.

The natural law of life leads us to act. The whole universe acts, moves, is going somewhere, even if we cannot say exactly where. So the need for action should not surprise us, since the human being responds harmoniously to the universal laws. It is also natural that every action should have results, a response that is in accordance with the action. But today, action and its results are seen under the lens of easy success: the important thing is to excel, to stand out from others, rather than ensuring that the things that we do are done well, as long as they look as if they have been done well, that is enough.

In this unstoppable race to stand out, we can find different forms of action.

- There are those who make a personal effort and, within their possibilities, seek some appropriate means of standing out.
- Others also rely on their own effort and work, but do not focus on the means that will lead them to obtain those desired outward signs of success.



- And there are plenty of people who simply set about crushing others in order to seem taller themselves.

In one way or another, the results that are obtained, with some exceptions, are rather sad. The required condition of outer success produces dissatisfied human beings in the best of cases, or traumatized and neurotic ones; there are many others who are depressed, envious, brutal and aggressive, or vain, cruel and ruthless, without excluding the social climbers and opportunists and hundreds of other examples that would expand the above-mentioned fauna.

Let us ask ourselves, then: where is this race leading and what is its purpose? History, as the experience of humanity, and our own personal experience both indicate that all this glitter comes and goes with the wind. What is valid today is stigmatized tomorrow and what would have been subject to the death penalty yesterday is admired today.

Who do we want to stand out among and for what purpose?

This question that I am asking leads me to think that

The whole universe acts, moves, is going somewhere, even if we cannot say exactly where. So the need for action should not surprise us, since the human being responds harmoniously to the universal laws.



the desire to stand out is a natural impulse of the soul: it is natural for the human being to aspire to ever more and better things. But I also understand that to excel is essentially to grow, to truly grow, not to wear stilts; it is to stretch oneself inwardly to the highest and best point within ourselves. And it is to earn our own self-respect, our self-esteem, it is to be at ease with our own conscience.

There are ways of standing out that seem to be almost forgotten now, such as, for example...

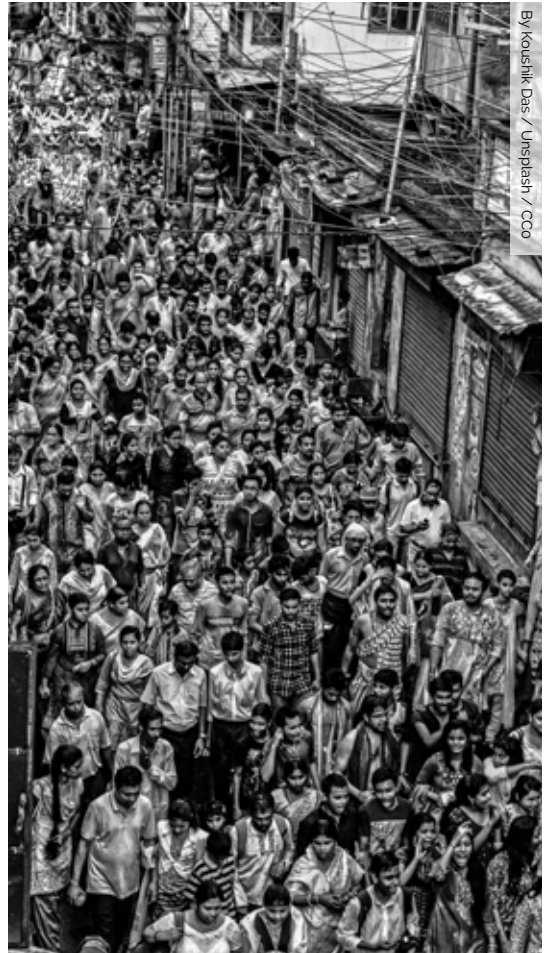
- knowing ourselves so as to better control our negative aspects and strengthen the positive;
- taking as models, without any false modesty, those who have been able to succeed in the name of the good, the beautiful and the just;
- forgetting about the demands of fashion or the psychological and pseudo-rational madness of a particular moment;
- making life an exercise of daily self-improvement...

It is appropriate to remember that it is not good to stand out just for a moment, because this would lead to the same states of despair as are experienced by those who have not achieved the necessary symbols of prestige. On the other hand, it is worth making a serious and sustained attempt that will lead us to a solid, stable, uninterrupted inner growth, always in search of the greatest and the best.

That is why we asked ourselves about the need to stand out and the purpose of doing so; and about the means that exist to achieve it.

The need is clear. The purpose and the means depend on the choice which each person is able to make. In this case, there will never be too many questions to ask ourselves if we ask them as sincerely as possible. ★★★

It is natural for the human being to aspire to ever more and better things. But I also understand that to excel is essentially to grow, to truly grow, not to wear stilts; it is to stretch oneself inwardly to the highest and best point within ourselves.



By Koushik Das / Unsplash / CCO

COVER FEATURE

Does Free Will Exist?

By Julian Scott





The question of free will is one of the oldest and most enduring questions facing humanity. The ancient Greeks considered it in their tragedies, such as Oedipus Rex, where it seemed as though the hero's fate was predetermined in spite of any actions he might take to prevent or alter it. The Greeks and their cultural successors, the Romans, had an image of three Fates, who wove and spun the destinies of men, and cut the thread of their lives at a pre-ordained moment.

In the East, the doctrines of Dharma, Karma and Reincarnation helped to explain the question more clearly. Dharma is the law by which every being has a destiny arising from its own nature. The oak seed will become an oak tree and the human being will develop into its fullest expression, with time... a lot of time (hence the doctrine of reincarnation). Karma is the law of action and reaction whereby every action we take, on any plane (including invisible planes such as the mind or emotions), will have a reaction, depending on whether our action is in harmony with the natural laws of life, or not. In this way, we build up a 'karma' - 'good' or 'bad' - which will bring us the bitter or sweet fruits of our past actions. The purpose of this process is (a) to help us learn about the laws of life, (b) to provide justice and (c) to ensure the safety of the whole system, since unlimited freedom of action without consequences would lead to a breakdown of the universal order.

Karma is the law of action and reaction whereby every action we take, on any plane, will have a reaction, depending on whether our action is in harmony with the natural laws of life, or not.

This approach implicitly contains both the notion of a guiding intelligence and an element of free will in the actors on the stage of the theatre of life. The Eastern philosophers would say that Oedipus arrived at his tragedy through the accumulation of past karma, or perhaps the karma of his family or culture, of which he was a part. But what lies within the scope of his free will would be how he reacted to the tragedy of his fate: whether with dignity and nobility, or with resentment, anger, bitterness and hatred.

The Stoic philosophers of ancient Rome, such as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, took a very similar approach. They held that many of life's outer circumstances lie beyond our control, for example the family or country into which we are born, our health, reputation, wealth and so on. Some of these factors can be modified by our own action to some extent, but others can't – for example if you were born a serf on a feudal estate in the Middle Ages, your chances of escaping that life would be minimal. Or if you were unjustly imprisoned in a police state, there is little you could do about it. So, our free will is limited in these outer aspects, but, according to the Stoics, it is unlimited in terms of our inner life and our own actions. No one can force us to think in a certain way, or even to act in a certain way; we always have the freedom to say 'yes' or 'no' (or even 'maybe') to the choices life offers us (accepting the consequences of our decisions), and therein lies our free will.

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For some thinkers, however, our free will is not only limited, but non-existent. In medieval Christian and Islamic philosophy there was a big discussion about whether or not man has free will, and there were even some daring thinkers who questioned whether God, the source of all things, can be said to have free will.

On the one hand, there were those who argued that we are totally dependent on God, the omnipotent creator, upon whom everything that happens depends. On the other hand, there were those who held that God had given the freedom to man to choose whether to follow the path of good or evil and that, if he did not have that choice, life would be meaningless.

In the Renaissance the idea of free will definitely had the upper hand. A feeling of self-confidence and optimism pervaded the human spirit and it was believed



that man was master of his own destiny and could achieve anything – all of which is reflected in the wonderful art and culture of that period.

A few centuries later, a more pessimistic philosophy took hold. David Hume (1711-1776) believed that human beings, despite their reasoning faculty, are completely subject to their passions and not as free as they would like to think. We find the same idea in Freud's view of the human being – dominated by instinctive drives which can be controlled by social restrictions but are always on the point of erupting to the surface if they are not kept in check. This view seemed to have been proved correct by the carnage of the First World War and reconfirmed by the horrors of the Second. What cruelties was supposedly civilised man not capable of, once the superficial veneer of civilisation had been removed?

The fact is that both positions (determinism and free will) are partly valid, as the teaching of dharma and karma indicates.

So what is the reality of our free will? Today there are scientific experiments that claim to prove that free will does not exist. But we have to bear in mind that science has made many claims in the past which were later proved to be incorrect. So I think we are on safer ground if we look at the matter from a philosophical point of view. Is it possible to answer the question definitively? The scientific argument could be seen as just a new manifestation of the old position of determinism. The fact is that both positions (determinism and free will) are partly valid, as the teaching of dharma and karma indicates. There is the determinism of karma, or chance (whichever term we prefer), but there is also the free will to decide and to act within the present circumstances.

The Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus (204-270 AD) said that the reason why we are preoccupied by the question of free will is that "we are beset by compulsions, violent assaults of passion crushing the soul, feeling ourselves mastered by these experiences, going where they lead, being like slaves to them [similar to Hume's view]... So we doubt whether we are anything at all and have power over anything." "Aye, there's the rub," as Hamlet said. Are we anything at all? Are we real, or are we, as in The Matrix, products of some fiendish computer simulation engineered by a heartless intelligence? Plotinus says that, in order to answer this question, we must go back to the very source of all things, which he says must logically be some single first principle, a causeless cause. Did this principle, which the philosophers of India called simply 'That', neither being nor non-being, have free will, or was the entire universe generated automatically, either by chance, or by the first principle being 'forced' by necessity to produce the whole universe because it could not help but act in accordance with its own nature?

In the first case, Plotinus shows that 'chance' cannot precede the first principle, but must necessarily proceed from it, like everything else. And in the second case, a first principle cannot be subject to necessity, because all laws, including necessity, must also proceed from it and it would be absurd to think that something which is the supreme good to which everything aspires could be subject to anything at all. In a short article such as this I cannot attempt to

describe Plotinus' arguments in any detail, but for those who are interested I refer you to the chapter in his magnum opus *The Enneads* entitled 'On Free Will and the One':

In Plotinus' philosophy the world is produced by emanation: from the One is produced, "by sheer wealth", a second principle or being, called 'Intellectual-Principle', and this in turn produces 'Soul'. Soul shares the characteristics of the Intellectual-Principle and ultimately of the First Principle. Therefore we, as participants in Soul, must also share in real being, in other words, in answer to Plotinus' earlier question, we are real, or at least there is a part of us which is real.

If this is the case, then we do have free will, because by virtue of what is real in us we can act independently of all circumstances. In practical terms, this means that if we wake up in the morning in a bad mood, due to a bad dream, bad digestion, a row with our partner or a business disaster, we can exercise our will, the highest manifestation of our being, and decide not to succumb to that bad mood; and in general not to succumb to tiredness or to anything that would cause us to lose our dignity as human beings.

The belief in free will does not negate the existence of chance or determinism in certain areas of life; the two factors can coexist if we know how to act with wisdom. ★★★



Celebrating the Meaning of Life in Warli Art

By Shraddha Shetty



By Jean-Pierre Daltora / Wikimedia Commons / PD

"They still look upon life as a gift to be celebrated; and this ancient Earth as one to be praised, worshipped and also celebrated. They are the one to whom the earth is not something to be used, not a possession or an object for exploitation but a living entity, an object of reverence, and the relationship is one of sacred trust and loving intimacy. For, they believe as much in celebrating one's life in this world as in remembering, adoring and celebrating the world in one's life. The sacred soil of ancestors into which one is born is thus a part of one's fundamental psychic experience of life and is a part of its spiritual dimension. The earth, the land, the village enter into and are secure in racial memory and it is only an ethical imperative to worship the Earth goddess, the Mother Earth." – Sitakant Mahapatra

In this article, I seek not to publish a scholastic investigation of Warli Art. Instead, as a philosopher studying symbolism, I humbly share my observations of a few elements from its unique tradition in which the artists seem to have been preoccupied, not with mythology, but with the strong drive to align to Nature's order, by celebrating life and revering Mother Earth, through a unique sense of aesthetics.

Today, people throughout the world are perturbed by the degradation of the environment and the disastrous consequences of the loss of resources in the hands of an ever growing population. In such times, traditional ethics, which contained nature conservation, can be looked upon as a source of inspiration and guidance for the future. By this I mean not 'fixing' nature, but reviving our natural identity as an integral part of nature. Therefore, perhaps we might begin by fixing our own perspective; our attitude towards life at large. There is a profound variety of cultural practices that cultivate such an ecologically sound relationship with nature, which is embedded deep in the Indian tradition, as seen in Warli Art.

Although native to the northern Sahyadri region, there is not much clarity as to the origin of this

rudimentary art form. Some date its development to as early as the 10th Century AD, while some historians claim that the Warli tradition stretches back to 2500 to 3000 BCE. It was made famous in our times by Mr. Jivya Soma Mashe, who is known as the modern father of Warli painting.

Traditional ethics, which contained nature conservation, can be looked upon as a source of inspiration and guidance for the future. By this I mean not 'fixing' nature, but reviving our natural identity as an integral part of nature.

One feature of Warli art, unique among the traditional art forms in India, is the absence of bright colors. It employs pigments, usually red ochre for the background, made from a mixture of branches, earth and red brick. The painting of the subject was usually done with just a white pigment made from a mixture of rice paste, water, and a binding gum. It is said that a chewed bamboo stick was used as a paintbrush.

The subject matter primarily comprised scenes from simple daily village life, in all its movement. It doesn't appear chaotic, but usually has a specific direction, capturing simplicity, harmony, and unity, as if imitating nature. The scenes seem to demonstrate the deep understanding that Man is a humble part of Nature, playing his role, contributing to its harmony. The Warli people seem to animate everything in life; stone, plants, animals, the weather, mountains, rivers - everything is alive, bearing spiritual essence. And the whole of life is observed to be coordinated in such a way, that it always perpetuates and celebrates collective wellbeing.

Interestingly, the ritual painting was usually composed around a central square, a *chauk*, home of the mother goddess Palaghata, the sacred fount of life. In this way, Mother Earth was placed at the



By Nishalpa / Wikimedia Commons / PD

very centre, surrounded by the day-to-day activities in all its hustle and bustle. To me, Mother Earth symbolizes fertility, beauty, justice and altruism. These eternal principles, when placed in the centre, harmonize and unite all aspects of human activity. This central priority given to the sacred perhaps captures the un-anthropocentric understanding of Warli life.

The whole of life is observed to be coordinated in such a way, that it always perpetuates and celebrates collective wellbeing.

Another expression of unity commonly depicted in Warli art is the sun, illustrated geometrically as a circle. Note that by definition, all the points on the circumference of a circle are united because they emerge from a single source, one dimensionless centre. Similarly, without the central sun, life would not exist on planet Earth, which is just one planet in our solar system. It is unsurprising therefore that the sun is considered a spiritual symbol in many traditions. If this principle of unity is indeed a law of nature, what then stops us from expressing it in our lives?

Maybe what is needed is the individual effort to join hands, and focus on what unites us rather than what separates; to move consciously towards the eternal principles we see in nature. This is symbolically illustrated in the depiction of the ceremonial *tarpa* dance; women and men dancing, hand in hand, forming the iconic spiral, led by the one in the centre. Each one is dancing individually, but all are also dancing together, as if to a single tune of life, in one direction, which is inwards. If we look at nature, every phenomenon seems to occur in such a cyclical spiral manner, from the seasons to our very breath.

If the principle of cycles is indeed a law of nature, wouldn't the next natural question be: Why? What is the purpose of such a spiral-cyclic movement? The spiral is a geometric symbol, which may hold some meaning to understand the direction of life. It demonstrates that the movement of life is not just repetitive. Instead, with each iteration of the cycle, experience and consciousness can deepen, demonstrated graphically by the inward movement,

towards the centre. Probably the opportunity lies in our routine lives, when we repeat actions on a daily basis. Can we use our mundane repetitive acts as opportunities to learn and improve, to do the same actions more meaningfully, to extract a more enriching experience, and take a humble step closer to perfection each time?

Another geometric symbol used is the triangle. Human figures are represented as a pair of triangles; one facing upwards, another facing downwards. Such is the potential of a human being, one triangle pointing towards the celestial, its base on earth, while another triangle pointing towards the earth, with its base in the sky. Both triangles meet. Perhaps this suggests the meaning and purpose of the complex entity we call a human being, which according to tradition has always been regarded as a union of a celestial and a terrestrial part. This seems to depict the potential of man, to become a bridge between the two realms; he must educate and tame his animalistic terrestrial base, to move upwards. And at the same time, he must grasp the higher archetypes or noble ideas, giving them expression in worldly daily life, thereby bringing meaning to a mundane existence.

For me, the simple language of Warli art therefore, is a world of meaning. Fundamental ecological principles, such as the interrelationship and interdependence of all life, are conceptualized and reflected in this beautiful tribal art form. It reminds me that we are all a part of a whole, and not the centre of life. We have an important role to play. Let us take responsibility over our actions and take our humble place. Many of us look forward to a blooming, growing India in all aspects; economy, technology, medicine, the arts. However, how big can a tree really grow if its root starts decaying? It is imperative for us to cherish and nurture the philosophical treasure that has nurtured our roots. And perhaps we can use the wisdom of our ancestors, to enrich our present and dream of a brighter future. ★★★

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Heritage—Foundation of the Future

Architect Parul Zaveri's Journey

Event Synopsis by Manjula Nanavati



Parul Zaveri

Architect Parul Zaveri established Abhikram (Sanskrit: initiation) to explore design directions and processes that make built environments functionally, psychologically, environmentally and spiritually more contextual, more comfortable and more healthfully livable for all.

At a time when energy guzzling steel, cement and glass towers are making towering bar-graphs of our city skylines, Parul and her late partner Nimish Patel have been successfully re-establishing the use of traditional material, technologies and craftsmen, adapted to a contemporary context. The path has not been easy, but armed with a clear intention and an unwavering conviction that has seen them refuse projects when clients' belief systems are not in consonance with their own, and courageously stipulating environmentally friendly materials and processes as a precondition, they have embarked on building a better world.

This belief in sustainable architecture and interiors has led them to diverse projects, from rural schools to the multi- award winning luxury hotel Oberoi Udaivilas (Udaipur), which in employing 300 local craft persons over 3 years, magnificently showcases the timeless richness of local aesthetics and artistic traditions.

The prestigious awards they have garnered over the years, for excellence in Public Architecture, Social Responsibility and Heritage Conservation, including from UNESCO, are a tribute to both the quality of their work and the strength of their conviction.

In July 2019, Parul flew down from Ahmedabad to address *The Culture Circle*, presented by New Acropolis (Mumbai) and left us all with much to ponder.

The concept of Sustainable Living seems to have gained traction recently, in an approach that seeks to increase efficient utilization of energy, water and all our natural resources, to boost community wellness. Sustainable architecture

The Culture Circle, presented by New Acropolis, explores the diverse expressions of culture through a series of intimate and interactive monthly events, in an attempt to revive the spiritual essence that forms the basis of all classical arts. (Inquiries: 9820093355 / mumbai@acropolis.org)

comprises the design and construction of spaces to minimize their negative environmental effect and maximize their socio-cultural impact. Says Parul, "The construction industry alone is responsible for 50% of the global water usage, and 65% of the global energy usage, and contributes to 50% of landfills. Materials and processes used in building and interiors are causing rising rates of allergies, cancers and other life-threatening diseases."

It is clear that sustainability is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. And the rampant disastrous practice of fulfilling present needs at the expense of future generations must be halted.

Our mindsets have been colonized into believing that new, modern, and 'scientific' technology is superior, sophisticated and preferable. Instead she insists that ancient knowledge has sharpened over centuries of experience and experimentation with local materials across diverse trades.

How has this happened?

"Colonization and Industrialization brought into being a linear economy instead of the circular economy that traditional societies followed. This narrow funnel vision skewed all productivity towards its own needs, at the cost of the destruction of local resources and economy. A tree must grow from its own healthy roots," says Parul, referring to the need to extract the value of local age-old materials and practices.

She elucidated by saying that incongruent modernization and the global standardization of lifestyles ignores tradition, resulting in a wealth of traditional knowledge dying out, as our mindsets have been colonized into believing that new, modern, and 'scientific' technology is superior, sophisticated and preferable. Instead she insists that ancient knowledge has sharpened over centuries of experience and experimentation with local materials across diverse trades. "Is that not a science?" she asks.



Her question immediately brought to my mind the monumental, mystical pyramids of Giza, the magnificent Roman Colosseum, the enigmatic ruins of Machu Pichu! What skillful technology and artistry might have been employed to build them? Knowledge that still eludes us today! These supreme examples of sustainable architecture, that have withstood the test of time, contrast sharply with our modern construction practices that are evident all over Mumbai in decaying and decrepit urban sprawls.

More examples of sustainable living leapt to my mind. Palaces in the desert climate of Rajasthan were cooled by step-well systems and intricately carved *jali* panel walls that diffused the sun's heat while enhancing light and ventilation. Sustainable architecture is not a modern buzzword, but had been around from time immemorial. The wisdom of

ancient traditions in far flung continents, isolated from each other by time and distance, lived by the simple principle that the balance and harmony between Man and the Earth he called his home, must be respected.

Sustainability then is an attitude, a process of responsible consumption. We need to make the transition from degrading the environment, to protecting it.

I was brought back to the present as Parul continued: "The conservation of our natural heritage is vitally important since our manmade heritage stems from there." Sustainability then is an attitude, a process of responsible consumption. We need to make the transition from degrading the environment, to protecting it. But to have the desired impact Parul clarified, "No individual, NGO or government has the wealth and ability to conserve all that we have. It needs to be both a grassroots, as well as a top-down movement, both wholistic and universal, that involves all people, each and every one of us." This does not necessarily mean a reduction of material comfort; just more humane and less wasteful processes to achieve human comfort and health.

What is the path forward to attain this goal?

"A major shift in outlook is imperative. We have to re-center our focus on locally-based knowledge, technology and skills which are environmentally friendly, have longer lifespans and are less embodied energy. We must have a cross sectoral approach towards decolonization and de-standardization, which includes culturally relevant education, teaching methods and textbooks. Solutions to our problems must be found from our own resources, and by developing stronger partnerships with the scientific community, to validate traditional knowledge and cultural heritage." She concluded with a practical message: "And finally, take responsibility. Design responsibly. Make responsibly. Sell responsibly. Use responsibly. Re-use, re-cycle, and replenish the Earth."

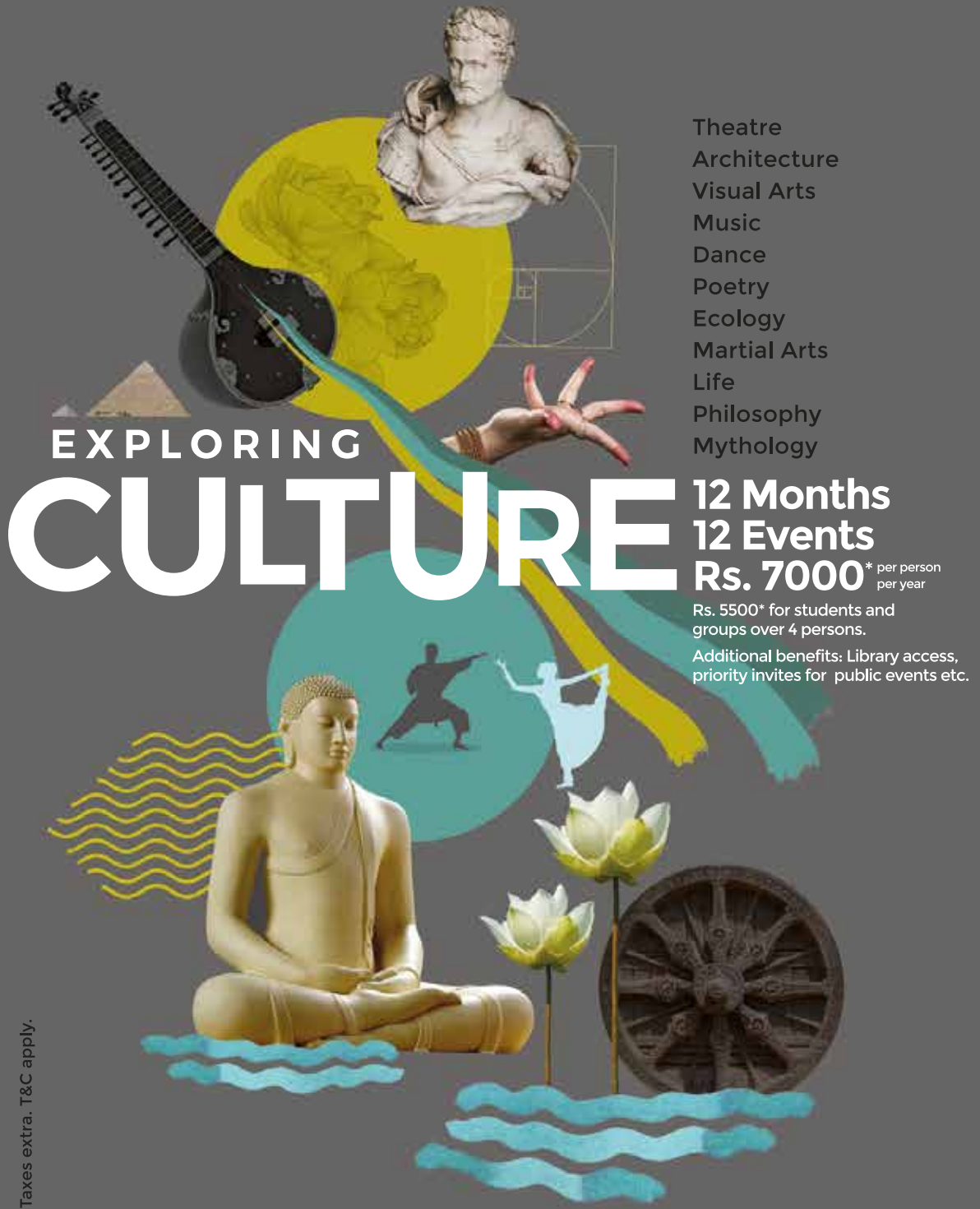
From a philosophical perspective, to me, sustainable living is an attitude that recognizes that our living spaces are a vital and integral part of the larger environment, which is the living biosphere we call Earth. It is to accept stewardship of our planet, and to acknowledge and commit to humanity's role as temporary trustees of the Earth. To regard our natural resources as sacred, might inspire us to respect, and cherish them as precious gifts, to be treasured as a blessing - not just for our own, but for countless generations to follow. ★★★



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New Acropolis India Spearheads Global Celebration of Gandhi's 150th Birth Anniversary



In December 2018, New Acropolis India curated a conference titled ***Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World in Mumbai***. The event called upon our affiliate associations comprising over 500 centres across 60 countries, to celebrate Gandhi's philosophical legacy through cultural activities, conferences, and exhibitions.

More than 50 international events have already been organized in response to this call, with many more activities being planned worldwide.



15th Dec 2018, Mumbai (India)

Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World

Taking inspiration from Gandhi's relentless pursuit for Truth, *Empowering Real Change: Leadership for a Better World* brought together distinguished leaders who have been striving to make a better world through tireless work in their various fields. The event culminated in a **Resolution** to spearhead a series of events, conferences and exhibitions across the world, exploring Gandhi's contributions as practical solutions to address the challenges of our times.





Worldwide Events Spotlight

**Gandhi ji's 150th
Birth Anniversary
Commemorative Issue**



16 Jun 2019, Lyon (France)
Gandhi's Philosophy and The Bhagavad Gita

It is from the Bhagavad Gita, a sacred text of ancient India, that Gandhi drew his spiritual insights and power of action, and the text can provide each of us with confidence to awaken the peaceful warrior that lives within us to undertake the path of self-conquest. The event opened with a dramatised reading of Gandhi's message, and included a photography exhibition titled *Into the Eyes of India*.



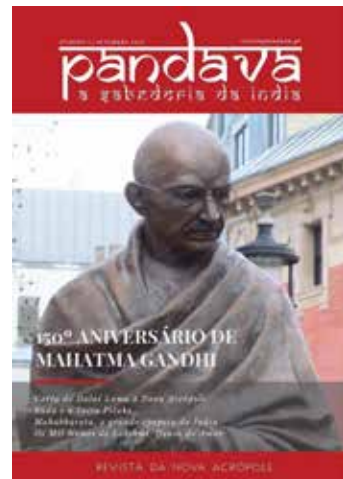
16 Aug 2019, Comayagua (Honduras)
Gandhi: The Greatest Peaceful Revolution

In a time when the world was shaken by two world wars, atomic bombs and the Holocaust, one man managed to lead more than 450 million people in what is known as the greatest pacifist revolution in history. Through non-violent means, Gandhi proposed an ethical model in which the ends do not justify the means; teachings that would later inspire leaders such as Martin Luther King and

Nelson Mandela. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, Acropolis Comayagua organized a Conference and film screening to offer homage to his life and work.

24 Aug 2019, Czech Republic
New Acropolis Celebrates Gandhi's Birth Anniversary Across 9 Cities

Celebrating Gandhi's philosophy and life dedicated to the pursuit of Truth, through a series of lectures across the country: Prague, Brno, Hradec Králové, Liberec, Olomouc, Ostrava, Pardubice, Plzeň and Zlín.



14th September 2019, Portugal
Launch of Magazine Honouring 150 Years of Gandhi along with a series of 15 events celebrating Gandhi's ideals

New Acropolis Portugal honours Gandhi's 150th Birth Anniversary by launching the first edition of their Magazine *Pandava*, as a dedication to this special occasion. The first volume, titled *Pandava: The Wisdom of India* features articles highlighting India's heritage as a contribution towards universal wisdom, and includes the vision behind the *Empowering Real Change* event held in Mumbai. The magazine also announces a series of 15 upcoming events across 8 cities in Portugal, celebrating the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and his pursuit of Truth.



Other Worldwide Events

**Gandhi ji's 150th
Birth Anniversary
Commemorative Issue**

16 Nov 2018, Rouen (France)
*Celebrating World Philosophy Day 2018 with
Gandhi: The Warrior of Peace*



21 Nov 2018, Athens (Greece)
*The Story of a Warrior of Truth: 150 Years Since the
Birth of Mahatma Gandhi*

22 Nov 2018, Tel Aviv (Israel)
International Philosophy Day 2018

18 Jan 2019, Marseille (France)
*Conference: Gandhi and Vandana Shiva, The
Peaceful Warriors*

21 Jan 2019, Lyon (France)
Gandhi, Warrior of Peace

30 Jan 2019, Lyon (France)
*Vandana Shiva, Satish Kumar: In the Tradition
of Gandhi*

9 Feb 2019, Biarritz (France)
Gandhi, Be a Warrior of Peace Today

13 Feb 2019, Strasbourg (France)
Gandhi – Warrior of Peace: A Philosophy

28 Feb 2019, Paris (France)
Gandhi: Warrior of Peace

8 Mar 2019, Bordeaux (France)
Gandhi: Warrior of Peace

14 May 2019
*New Acropolis International Assembly Resolution
includes 'Empowering Real Change'*



19 Jun 2019, Bratislava (Slovakia)
Conference on Mahatma Gandhi

31 Jul 2019, Viseu (Portugal)
*Course in Sanskrit Language and Literature of
India at the Grão Vasco National Museum*

1 Sep 2019, Tegucigalpa (Honduras)
*Commemoration of 150th Anniversary of Mahatma
Gandhi*

2 Oct 2019, Brasilia (Brazil)
Gandhi and the Philosophy for Peace
In partnership with the Embassy of India

3 Oct 2019, PyeongChang (South Korea)
Better Together Challenge
Yaron Barzilay, Director of New Acropolis in India
and Curator of Empowering Real Change has been
invited to share his work and message of peace.



3 Oct 2019, Toulouse (France)
Gandhi's Philosophy: The Bhagavad Gita
With patronage of the Embassy of India

5 Oct 2019, Lyon (France)
*National Festival: Tribute to Gandhi on his 150th
Birth Anniversary*
With patronage of the Embassy of India

For Updated Listing of International Events [click here](#).

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

COLABA

Talk

2 OCT
WEDNESDAY

7:30 - 9:30 pm
Free Admission



By Vignesh dts / Wikimedia Commons Images / CC SA 4.0

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF THE BIRTH OF MAHATMA GANDHI

Gandhiji's Lessons for "Real" Change

Great leaders have the unique quality of pulling off transformations that seem impossible. They thrive in the face of a challenge. What is "Real" change and how can we be the agents for change?

KHAR

Talk

5 OCT
SATURDAY

6-8 pm
Free Admission



By dimitrivskisrskisrsgg / pixabay / CC0

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF THE BIRTH OF MAHATMA GANDHI

The Pursuit of Truth – Gandhiji's Inspiration

We seek inspiration from Gandhiji, on the occasion of his 150th Birth Anniversary, by investigating his recognition of human dignity. His courageous pursuit of truth is arguably his greatest legacy, and very relevant to our times today. How might we use Truth as a guiding principle to improve our lives?

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

COLABA

Annual Fair
5 OCT
SATURDAY
 10 am-8 pm
 Free Admission



Philo-Fair

New Acropolis presents the 4th edition of its annual fair. There will be 15 colourful stalls ranging from hand-made artefacts, home décor products, fashion and gifting items along with delicious home-made food! In addition there will be an activity corner for tarot card reading and "Know Thyself" through sketching.

During the day, there are also short 60 minute workshops scheduled as follows:

- 11 am – Flower Arrangement
- 12:30 pm – Desserts
- 3 pm – Making Paper Flowers
- 4:30 pm – Self-watering Planters

KHAR

Talk
12 OCT
SATURDAY
 6-8 pm
 Free Admission



Searching for Wisdom in a Busy Life

Ancient wisdom suggests the need for a clear direction, a real goal, to make our actions meaningful. It has perhaps become fashionable to be busy, as if to race against time to get things done. How might we find meaning in our fast paced lives?

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

COLABA

WEDNESDAY

Open House

16 OCT

Course Starts

23 OCT

7:30-9:30 pm

Pre-Registration
Required

Living Philosophy – Discover Awaken Transform

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

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

Testimonials:

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

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

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

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

COLABA

Talk

19 OCT
SATURDAY

6-8 pm
Free Admission



By Jastrow / Wikimedia Commons Images / CC SA 4.0

The Adventures of Theseus

This hero of Greek Mythology entered a labyrinth to battle a terrible monster (Minotaur) in a valiant selfless adventure. Theseus in this journey exemplifies the human challenge and allows us to see victory through his example.

We too will try to learn from the hero's journey, to dare to enter the labyrinth of our own challenges, vanquish the Minotaur and be more free.

COLABA

Talk

9 NOV
SATURDAY

6-8 pm
Free Admission



By Unknown / Wikimedia Commons Images / CC SA 4.0

Pythagoras: Wizard of Numbers

Pythagoreans viewed music and mathematics as ways to bring order into chaos.

In this talk we come close to Pythagoras the philosopher, in order to see if we can learn from him not just arithmetic, but a way of life.

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

KHAR

Talk
9 NOV
SATURDAY
 6-8 pm
 Free Admission



By Michael Shannon / Unsplash / CCo

CELEBRATING WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY 2019

Living The Philosophical Adventure

As human beings we may be drawn to the adrenaline rush from facing danger in adventure. But we don't always dare to bring this adventurous approach in our daily lives. How might we fight the tendency towards comfort, to unleash our true potential?

COLABA

Book Launch & Talk
21 NOV
THURSDAY
 7-9 pm
 Free Admission

*Above All,
 Be Good.*

CELEBRATING WORLD
 PHILOSOPHY DAY 2019

By Diego PH / Unsplash / CCo

CELEBRATING WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY 2019

Above All, Be Good

"The pragmatic teachings of the Stoics find a listening ear among contemporary seekers, as they come from a time very similar to our own"
 Gilad Sommer

New Acropolis invites you to celebrate World Philosophy Day at our Colaba Center. National Director of New Acropolis India, Yaron Barzilay will launch a book entitled 'Above all be Good: A Stoic Guide to Happiness' by Gilad Sommer combined with a talk on Stoicism. Stoic Philosophers such as Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Seneca are proponents of this philosophical stream which lasted nearly 600 years.

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

COLABA

Talk

**30 NOV
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm
Free Admission



By Daniel Schwen / Wikimedia Commons Images / CC SA 4.0

Mystery of the Mayans

What do we know about the mysterious Mayan civilization? What lies under the relics of this civilization who had a highly developed architectural, mathematical, and astronomical understanding? Their advanced understanding of the universe continues to amaze us even today! What did they know which we might have forgotten? Join us to explore this fascinating civilization, their perception of the world, of time and of the role of man.

KHAR

Talk

**30 NOV
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm
Free Admission



By Juken Taleisi / Unsplash / CC0

Challenges: Problems or Opportunities?

We cannot always choose the circumstances of our lives. But we always bear the responsibility of how we choose to respond - as a victim, or as masters of our destiny. Together, we shall investigate how to develop the right attitude and identity for transforming challenges into opportunities.

COLABA

Talk

**14 DEC
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm
Free Admission



By Junior Moran / Unsplash / CC0

The Freedom to Be

What makes some people realize and fulfill their potential while others are left with a sense of missing out? Many of us feel that we are not able to fulfill our true and full potential. Science provides us with conclusive evidence that the human potential is far greater than what we know today, but only few manage to get close to it. An open discussion on the possibilities of self-actualization and living with a sense of fulfillment.

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **MUMBAI**

KHAR

Talk

**14 DEC
SATURDAY**6-8 pm
Free Admission

By Alex Ibr / Unsplash / CC0

Forget Yourself To Know Yourself

Despite all the evidence that suggests otherwise, what if our true human nature was characterized by the spirit of Altruism? How might we express this most noble nature?

KHAR

Talk

**28 DEC
SATURDAY**6-8 pm
Free Admission

By Kahlil Gibran / Wikimedia Commons Images / CC-SA 4.0

The Meaningful Life - Musings of Kahlil Gibran

In his writings, we glimpse the thoughts of a seeker, as Gibran investigates the meaning of life and relationships for a philosophical way of life.

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **PUNE**

PUNE

Talk

5 OCT
SATURDAY

6-8 pm
Free Admission



By ParentRap / pixabay / CCo

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF THE BIRTH OF MAHATMA GANDHI

Let's Light the Spark of Adventure!

Do we dare to break inner boundaries and venture into the unknown? It takes courage to take risks, make mistakes sometimes and learn from them. Let's explore how to approach life and live it with a spirit of adventure, every moment.

PUNE

Musical Recital

20 OCT
SATURDAY

6-8 pm
Free Admission



By Carlo Altomir / pixabay

Music and Life...The Inward Journey!

"Music is an art form which, being creative and technical has a big power of imagination and other major power of achieving harmony and happiness. Isn't this what we strive for ultimately in life..." Recital by Kasmira Sarnobat (Disc. of Guru Padmatai Talwalkar).

PUNE

Talk

9 NOV
SATURDAY

6-8 pm
Free Admission



By Ben Sweet / Unsplash / CCo

The Mind – Our Best Friend or Worst Enemy?

Many of our thoughts may not be helpful to us – some, in fact, could become the very roadblocks that we struggle to overcome. Especially if they are deeply entrenched in negative territories like anger, pride or ego. And yet, when used in a more productive way, the mind can be a potent force. How do we turn this powerful tool into an ally? Let's explore at this free talk.

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **PUNE**

PUNE**THURSDAY**

Open House

14 NOV

Course Starts

21 NOV

7:30-9:30 pm

Pre-Registration
Required

Living Philosophy – Discover Awaken Transform

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

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

PUNE

Talk

23 NOV**SATURDAY**

6-8 pm

Free Admission



By: Cherishsanjosh / Wikipedia commons / CC BY-SA 4.0

CELEBRATING WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY 2019

Tagore – The Poet Philosopher

"Our passions and desires are unruly, but our character subdues these elements into a harmonious whole," said Rabindranath Tagore. What can we learn from this noble laureate in literature who was a polymath, poet, philosopher and artist, that could shape our lives more beautifully? Join us as we take a glimpse into his literary works and his exemplary life. It can inspire us in our own battles of daily life.

OCT//NOV//DEC 2019

Schedule of Public Events **PUNE**

PUNE

Talk

**14 DEC
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm

Free Admission



By FUTURE / Unsplash / CCO

At the feet of Dharma – Lessons From the Dhammapada

It is said that the Buddha's journey took him from a princely life into a dedicated search for a solution to the suffering of all mankind. Lets explore how we could walk a few steps on the path he paved, to sow some seeds of wisdom in our lives.

PUNE

Talk

**21 DEC
SATURDAY**

6-8 pm

Free Admission



By Lennou / pixabay / CCO

Take a Voyage With The Little Prince

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."
-Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's 'The Little Prince'.
What could help us to begin to see with the heart? Join us as we explore the insights shared by one of Literature's endearing characters – The Little Prince, through a story of courage and adventure.

Our Centers

Mumbai | COLABA CENTER

(Centre of New Acropolis Cultural Organization, India)
A-0 Ground Floor, Connaught Mansion,
Opp. Colaba Post Office, Colaba,
Mumbai, Maharashtra
Tel: +91 22 2216 3712

Mumbai | KHAR BRANCH

Parvati Nivas, 1st Floor Anand Vihar Society,
19A Road, Khar-Danda Road, Khar (W)
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Pune | KOREGAON PARK BRANCH

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