

Value Insight

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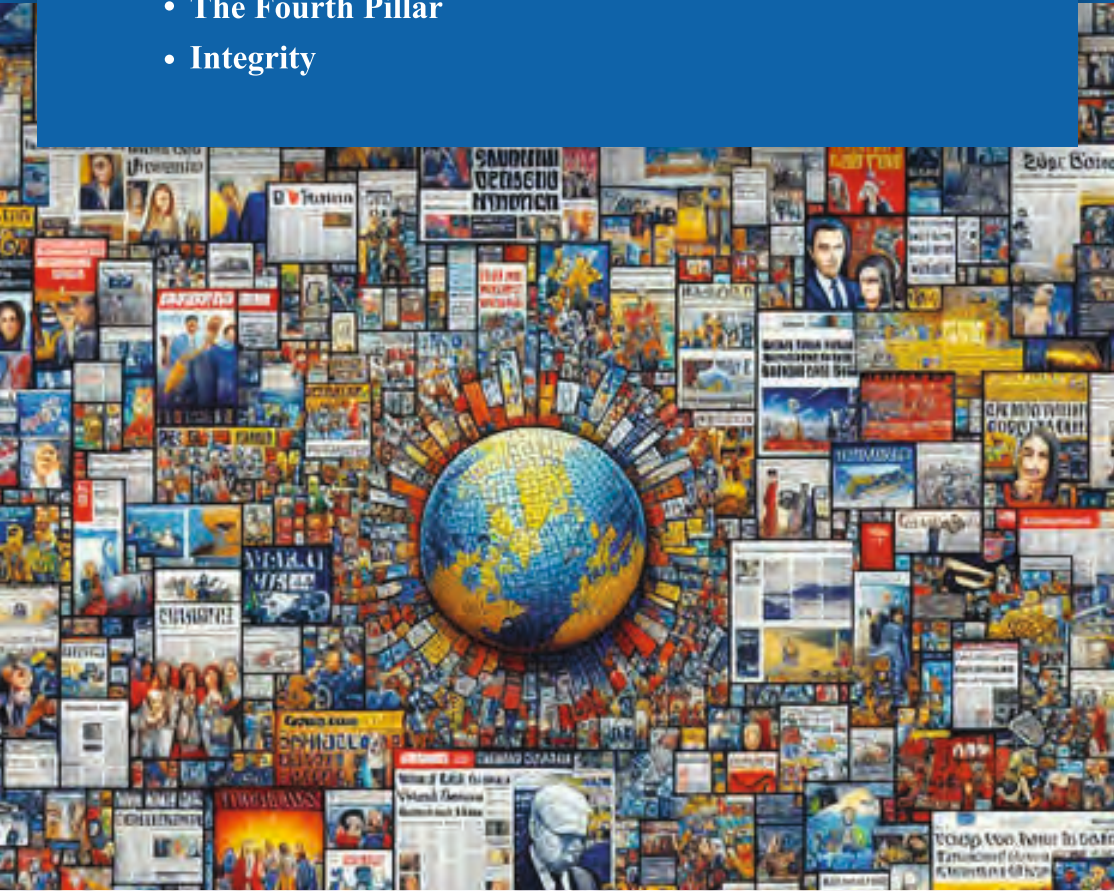
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Bi-Monthly

Kaleidoscope of Perspectives

- The Truth about Truth
- The Fourth Pillar
- Integrity



A bi-monthly magazine of
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Website www.valuefoundation.in

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Value Insight

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THEMES FOR THE NEXT ISSUES OF THE JOURNAL

Month	Theme	Deadline for articles
June 2024	Service	April 1, 2024
August 2024	Equanimity	June 1, 2024
October 2024	Bhakti	August 1, 2024
December 2024	Love	October 1, 2024

BRIEF GUIDELINES FOR THE ARTICLES

1. Write up may include original articles / short stories. In case of extracts / excerpts / photographs, due credit by way of acknowledgement is to be given.
2. About 900-1400 words.
3. Not political and / or religious.
4. Student(s) are encouraged to send through their school(s).
5. Brief profile of about 70 words and a photograph along with the write up may be sent to frnv@valuefoundation.in and / or frnvindia@gmail.com
6. Honorarium, if any, may be considered by FRNV Editorial Board for articles published.
7. The decision of the FRNV Editorial Board shall be final and binding.



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Pilar Copete Came to India in 1976 and lived in an ashram in Munger, Bihar for several years as a sannyasin. She is a painter by training and yoga instructor. She now lives in Bogota, Colombia.



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Prema Raghavan is a writer, teacher, counsellor. She did her B.Ed at SNDT, MSW at Nirmala Niketan and studied Methodology at TISS and Nature Cure under Lakshman Sarma which she has been practicing for the last 4 decades using herbal remedies. She also learnt yoga at the Bihar School of Yoga and has authored 2 books, 'Living in Rhythm with Nature' and 'A journey with a Special Traveler'.



Ma Gurupriya is a Sannyasin (renunciate) disciple of Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha. Ma Gurupriya's deep feeling of dispassion led her to the path of seeking the Ultimate Truth. Ma received initiation from Baba Gangadhara Paramahansa of Dakshinkhanda, West Bengal. Ma's teachings are focused on the practice of Vedanta in day to day life.



R. Dasarathy is former banker who worked in the areas of Banking Operations, Information Technology, Risk and Project Management.

Readers Write

“ With its scholarly and enlightening contents, the focused articles on Ahimsa (Non-violence), Value Insight February, 2024 issue makes the ardent reader introspective about the perennial values of Ahimsa. Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha has delved deep into explaining to the readers the invaluable manifestations of 'Qualities of a Seeker' with focus on the Vedantic aspects of the Seeking. Satyagraha too is a thought-provoking piece highlighting the Gandhian philosophy which inspired iconic global statesmen like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr in their fights against oppressive rulers for restoring and ensuring freedom for their communities and countrymen. Other articles too in this issue are quite enlightening for the readers. Lastly, I pay my deepest homage to Late Sri Satish Kumar, the illustrious Late Vice- President of FRNV who passed away on 15.1.2024. ”

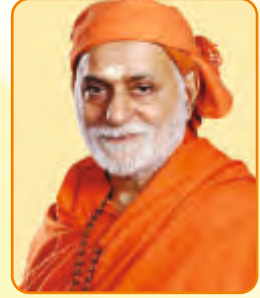
Samarendra Dash,
Secretary, FRNV, Odisha Chapter, Bhubaneswar.

“ The meticulously organized February 2024 edition of Value Insight deserves immense appreciation for its thoughtful arrangement. Within this edition, I present a profound insight into timeless values, drawing inspiration from Maharishi Patanjali's eloquent depiction of Astanga Yoga. Patanjali beautifully outlines the eight limbs of Yoga, namely Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dhyana, Dharana, and Samadhi. In the context of Yama, one of the five outer observances, Patanjali emphasizes the principle of Ahimsa, which translates to Non-violence. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar ji in his commentary of Yoga Sutras of Patanjali had said, during the time of Mahavira, the thorns did not prick to a significant distance where he was living. Ahimsa as a virtue is very powerful and people get affected positively coming in close to the practitioner. This essential virtue is succinctly encapsulated in the timeless wisdom: "Ahimsa Paramo Dharma," which was practiced and popularised by Mahatma Gandhi as a supreme ethical principle. Such profound insights from Indian Knowledge Systems illuminate the path toward virtuous living and holistic well-being. Let's practice Ahimsa, by not hurting anyone through our speech, action and thought. ”

Dr. Vijaya Lakshmi Mohanty
Life Member, FRNV, Associate Professor- FMS
Sri Sri University, Sri Sri Vihar

Importance of Being Truthful

Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha, a well-known exponent of spiritual treasures like the Bhagavad Gita, is the head of Narayanashrama Tapovanam, Trichur, Kerala. He has provided inspiration to people across the globe including corporate leaders on ethical practices.



Poojya Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

Discovering the true colour of the mind...

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru!

Today I thought I would speak about the implication of truthfulness, a very important virtue, a discipline, a watchword for every seeker, be he a Brahmachārin, a Sannyāsin or a householder. At the same time, I wonder: Will my message be properly understood and correctly absorbed?

Living in the Ashram, interacting with people here, especially Brahmachārin and seekers, I am often amused! Is truthfulness such a rare commodity? In our discussions with the Brahmachārin, I ask: “See, did you do this because of a certain dislike or a certain ambition? Or, you did it because it was natural for you? Was there any other need or motivation? What was in your mind?”

When I ask this question, it is a hunt, a probe for finding the truth – truth about the inner workings of your mind. I am making you reflect upon your actions so as to know very clearly whether there was a personal dislike, ambition or fear, which motivated the action or reaction.

By doing the action, did you subject yourself to rāga-dveṣa (likes or

dislikes)? Or, is it that the rāga-dveṣa had no part in it? Was the way you reacted the other day, occasioned by any particular note in you or was the cause something else? What was the particular need that led you to act the way you did? Was there a personal satisfaction working behind? This is a question one must always take up. Such an analysis is actually a fillip for discovering the true colour of your mind.

Generally, a seeker is not able to do introspection in right lines on his own. When he is not able to make the enquiry and we try to prompt it, there should be a harmonious response. Instead, when a particular point is discussed, immediately he comes up with a reaction: “Why are you discussing that subject and pinpointing me?” Whether we discuss this subject or that, ultimately it is your purity and fulfillment that matter. And that will have to come only through truthfulness, austerity, refinement, etc.

In interactional evaluations, it is your traits and tendencies that we examine. We have to see that the wrong notes are eliminated, good ones strengthened, and

the missing notes inculcated. But just see how the mind often does a somersault!

So, I believe the word 'truthfulness' does mean a great deal! It is not merely a question of not speaking a lie or not covering up a fact. It is much more.

Often I ask this question: Why are you living? Are you living because of any desire? Are you living merely to get married or to become a parent? Are you living for the sake of moksha? And then, why have you come to the Ashram? Do you have a proper evaluation of your life here? That is also a hunt for truthfulness. You must ask yourself and get at the answer: What is the purpose of coming to the Ashram? Is it not for self-improvement, self-refinement? When you have so decided and are geared for self improvement, how is it that you get focussed on other things? Where is the need to hide, to cover up or suppress? Why not open up? Is this not a question of being true and truthful? So I think the word 'satya', actually means quite a deal. And you have not thought enough about it!

Being 'truthful' does not mean merely uttering the truth. It is about going into the very question of creation. The *pancha-bhutas* around us – what are they in reality? Tell me very clearly: In your perception, are they a Godly outcome or are they merely worldly products? That the world itself is Godly is the truth I understand and perceive. It is divinity that has become materiality. It is not that the materiality around is different from reality or divinity.

So, I think, my dear children, all of you will have to take the meaning of Truth and Truthfulness very deeply. Whenever we are having a discussion, you should

help the effort by being truthful. Don't get distracted, deluded.

When questions are asked – straight questions – straight answers must come forth. If you don't know, you can say: "Swamiji, I am not able to answer now. I need time." That is OK. When no such time is required, when I ask about you, and evidently you know about the matter very well, you have to answer straightforwardly.

There are some people who would say: "I don't know, it is for others to say". The other day, Ramesh (Br. Prasanna Svaroopaa) said in the course of a conversation with S: "This is what we feel about you. This is the impression we get or you give to us. We don't know what you really are, but this is what we feel. You look like this. You appear like this. What are you, I cannot say. But I can only say that when we look at you, this is what we feel. So this is a picture you are giving and we are getting. What is behind this picture is invisible. And we cannot say about that." I think it is a very great statement, an honest one.

So, all of you should spend enough time to understand the implication of the words 'truthful' and 'truthfulness'.

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

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SUBHASHITAM

ये वदन्तीह सत्यानि प्राणत्यागेऽप्युपस्थिते ।
प्रमाणभूता भूतानां दुर्गाण्यतितरन्ति ते ॥

प्राणत्याग की परिस्थिति में भी जो सत्य बोलता है,
वह प्राणियों में प्रमाणभूत है । वह संकट पार कर जाता है ।

The one who adheres to truth when his life is
being challenged is the one who becomes
the ideal in society. He transcends the challenge

From the President's Desk



When I met Sri Bhoomananda Tirtha Swamiji during his last visit to Delhi, he observed that elected representatives should not be exempted from legal action if they indulge in any unlawful activities in the Parliament or Legislative Assembly. Whatever law is applicable to the common man should be applicable to them also.

Perhaps sensing his angst the Supreme Court has recently given a verdict along just those lines, “The Houses of Parliament or Legislatures, and the committees are not islands which act as enclaves shielding those inside from the applications of ordinary laws. The law makers are subject to the same law that law making body enacts for the people it governs and claims to represent. . . when an issue involving privileges arises, the test applied is whether the privilege claimed is essential and necessary to the orderly functioning of the House or its committee.”

Hopefully it will arrest the corrupt practices they indulge in, be it outside the House, damaging public property or indulging in unlawful activities inside the House.

Another judgement, which was given by the Supreme Court some time ago, was that a Special Court should be constituted to try the cases expeditiously relating to criminal charges against the elected representatives. This might curb criminals contesting in the elections. Though they may put up their henchmen and benami candidates, at least a beginning has been made to arrest criminals from getting elected to various legislative forums. The ensuing elections would indicate how far our expectations are fulfilled.

While the courts have done their bit, the onus is now on us to be alert and contribute our might to ensuring the above actions are followed. The oft heard plaintive is, “what can a single person do?” I found an inspiring answer to that. A constable who could not pursue his ambition to become an athlete at the National level or pursue higher studies due to family circumstances, resolved not to let the next generation face what he had. He is providing education to 350 children who are similarly placed. Of them, 180 have got into government service because of the extra coaching provided by him and his wife.

S. Regunathan
President (FRNV)

The Truth about Truth

Radhika Srinivasan



There are layers of meaning hidden in the word satya or truth.

What indeed is truth?

Sat or Satya is one of the fundamental principles of Indic thought, extending throughout the Vedas, Yoga Shastra and the Dhammapada. Usually rendered as truth, Satya has many dimensions to the term, especially in Eastern philosophy. What indeed is Truth? Let us unravel the layers of meaning hidden in the word Sat or Satya. Normally speaking, when the mind and speech are well integrated, we define it as being truthful.

“*Vangmanasyoh aikyarupyam satyam*”, say the scriptures. When the thought, speech and deed are not in alignment, the outcome is obvious falsity. Yet, from

whose perspective is it truth - from the victor's or the victim's perspective? Surely, both can't be truth, we argue, clearly confusing between opinions and truth. We often get mired in words like fact, truth, perception and reality because of its elusive nature. For thousands of years philosophers have mused over the definition of truth, contested and contextualized its relevance.

While a fact may be an event as it happened, its interpretation may veer into opinions, view-points, biases and prejudices. Objective truth is determined

when we can prove that a phenomenon exists, using evidence and logical reasoning. It does not take into account our belief, faith, mental conditioning or emotions. Yet, there are multiple schools of thought regarding the existence of objective truth. The philosopher Protagoras famously said, “Man is the measure of all things and hence truth is relative and influenced by human perception”, reminding us of how perception passes off as truth; *Yatha Drishti thatha Srishti*.

The Indian mind viewed truth from two perspectives; relative and absolute. In the transactional world, speaking the truth is a moral value; without a clean conscience and a modicum of discipline, this ethical virtue often gets compromised, especially in today's day and age when expediency, political correctness and smartness in evasion are valued more! There may be exceptions to truth under extraordinary circumstances, especially when one gives expression to thoughts that are counter-productive or hurts the sentiments of the listener. Dharma Shastra says,

*“Satyam Bruyatpriyam bruyat,
na bruyatsatyamapriyam
Priyamcha nanrutam bruyat,
esha dharmah sanatanah.”*

“May we speak the truth; may our speech be pleasing. May we not speak the truth that is not pleasing. And may we not speak untruth even if pleasing. This is the eternal Dharma of the wise.” A

mind that is subject to anger or avarice will not give rise to words that cause well-being. Words must spring from the heart that is sweet and mind that is serene. In fact, it is said that for a man rooted in truth, whatever he says will become the truth! The blessings and even curses of truthful men can thus come true because of the innate power of truth! This is called *Avantara prayojana* or the incidental benefit of truth. But this power should not be used with deliberate intention to harm someone, cautions our shastras! While this is regarding relative truth, Truth as the Absolute *Sat* takes on an all-new dimension, which we shall see.

The Buddha summarized his teachings into Four Noble Truths in order to teach Dhamma and offered a solution to life's sufferings. Significantly, the noble truths reveal the awakening of the Buddha and first appears in the Pali Tripitaka scripture. These Truths are 1. Samsara is suffering. 2. Desire is the root cause of that suffering. 3. There is a solution to end the suffering. 4. And the method is to follow the 8-fold path of right view, right speech, right action, right living, etc. This indeed is the Truth to end the suffering and attain Nibbana.

Soon after the Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana* or the mortal exit, the Buddhist tradition in the Madhyamaka School of Nagarjuna evolved two levels of Truth; the provisional truth or *Samutti Sacca* (*Samvritti Satya* in Sanskrit) and the ultimate Truth or *Paramartha Sacca* (*Satya dvaya vibhaga*). The former is the

relative truth operating in the ever-changing world and the latter is the conceptual or higher Truth beyond word.

He referred to the phenomenal world as neither real nor unreal, but logically indeterminable and hence relative truth. But ultimately, all phenomena are empty; this conclusion however leads neither to Nihilism nor to Eternalism, and strikes a middle course between excessive belief and excessive skepticism; *Madhyamaka* is in other words beyond the realm of words! *Paramartha Sacca* is the ultimate Reality that can only be pointed to. It cannot be spoken of since all phenomena are empty. “The existence of this depends on the existence of that; if this ceases to exist, that too ceases to exist”, other than this, there is no other truth. This is known as the Law of dependent origination or *Pratityasamutpada*. It is compared to two sheaves of hay, one depending on the other for standing erect; if one falls, the other falls as well. Interestingly, Vedanta talks of three different kinds of truth or reality. *Vyavaharika Satyam*, *Pratibhasika Satyam* and *Paramarthika Satyam*. *Vyavaharika* is the relative truth in the world we live in. Everything in the universe is ever changing, transient and therefore only an apparent reality. The child we saw yesterday is an adult today, an old man tomorrow and dead the day after.

The classic analogy is the pot that has a form, name and function as long as it remains a pot and is useful to store water. This apparent reality is superimposed on

the material cause, the clay and so, the pot does not have an independent existence apart from the clay.

Pratibhasika is wholly a psychological phenomenon where the mind brings certain things to bear on the person “as if” real. Illusions, hallucinations, dreams, imagined fears are all creations of the mind and hence *Pratibhasika* or a mere mirage. It has no intrinsic reality other than one's own mental construct. The perceptions of the dream may be valid but only to the dreamer. One can bring any event or object to “as if” reality, based on memories, worries, experiences and prejudices of the mind and therefore, really speaking *Pratibhasika* is unreal! And then there is the ultimate Reality or the *Paramarthika Satyam* that the Bhagavad Gita talks



about. This Truth does not depend on any mental activity or any other transient factor in the universe for its existence, for it is Existence itself. This is the substratum of Reality, variously referred to

as *Sat, Chit, Ananda*. It is *Avyakta*, unmanifest, *Arupa*, formless, *Ananta*, limitless, *Brman*, the Big.

Paradoxically, the un-nameable has so many terms to serve as pointers! The analogy that is given to elucidate this phenomenon is the ever-changing wave and the ocean.

The wave is like the individual *Jiva*, now here, now gone; the ocean is like the *Jagat* or the world of forms, names and function; and the intrinsic nature of both the wave and the ocean is water which is the Reality or *Satyam*. And this Reality, *Sat* or *Satyam* is none other than the observer or the *Sakshi Chaitanya*, the Awareness of the Self. The Guru pries open the inner eye of the disciple by knocking down the ephemeral body, mind, intellect and ego only to make him realize the Oneness of Reality.

As to what is the point of this exercise, it helps us drop the difference between me and the other, between human and other life forms, leading to *Jivatma-Paramatma Aikyavam*; Oneness of the Divine Spirit pervading in and through all life. It brings out extreme compassion towards one and all. Interestingly, this system of philosophy and religion has no name to identify itself with! "Hinduism" is what others call our thought system to lend it an identity. It is simply called *Sanatana* or the Eternal. It is argued that the Buddha was against the Vedic rituals and hence how could his teachings have anything to do with Vedanta, the final chapters of the Vedas? Not just the

Buddha; Vedanta itself that enumerates the path of knowledge belittles the value of rituals of the previous chapters called *Karma kanda* and often ridicules those obsessed with sacrifices and Vedic rituals. "Full of desires for material prosperity here and in the hereafter, they are born again and again in the karmic cycle", says Krishna to Arjuna.

*Kamatmanah svarga-para janma karma phalapradam
Kriyavishesha bahulam bhogeshvairya gatim prati*".

Such seeming contradictions may often confuse even a serious student of spirituality. On the one hand, the Gita says, Karma drops when knowledge dawns, while on the other, it says, even the wise never give up doing good to society. A closer scrutiny helps us understand the importance of chronology.

The Vedas prepare us with the required disciplines of austerity, prayerful attitude, values of honesty, charity, humility, etc. even as we enjoy life's material prosperity and sense gratification early in life. As we reach a point of satiety, we look inwards and take up the study of Vedanta, where Self-realization alone becomes our chosen path and destination. It is emphasized time and again that unless one has completely renounced worldly life, action must continue even though it is done without the desire for gains.

After renunciation, since Karma is no

longer a means to attain anything, one takes on activities for the joy of it, as one's very own nature.

Karma and *Jnana* are in fact, opposed to one another at one level, *Tamah Prakashavat viruddhah*, says the shastra. It is only when all notions of karma are given up that enlightenment comes knocking at our doors. It is called *Sarva Karma Sanyasapurvakam Atmajnanam*.

Yet, Karma and Jnana merge into one Truth when the individual loses his identity and becomes aware of the Eternity.

Thus, the Buddha's path is akin to the Vedantic path. He was a *Jnani* (the Awakened) monk and his address was largely to the monks in the Order. In fact, since it became hard for the common man to graduate directly to the path of *Nibbana*, the path of the elders, (*Theras*) Theravada made way for the growth of the Mahayana school and the Vajrayana tradition, full of Bhakti, rituals and prayer with the promise of *Tavatimsa* heaven and *Vimokkha*, thus completing the cycle. According to Swami *Sarvapriyananda*, “If you say, “You are That” to the fresh seeker, he is confused. Then, you

need to simplify it, break it down and lead him up the ladder step by step, until he has no more use for the ladder”.

It is ignorance that covers us from ourselves. Once the veil is lifted, the light is self-revealing or *Svatah Siddhah*. This Truth is mystified as being hidden in the cave-space of the mind. In reality, it was always shining, as luminous as the Sun. If we purify our thoughts, speech and action, develop detachment, a discerning mind and equanimity, our inner eye of knowledge is ready for the right Guru and the Grace of God to ensure total transformation. Then when the Guru says, “*Tat Tvam Asi*” (That Thou Art), the *Upanishadic Mahavakya*, the disciple replies, “I Am That”, another *Mahavakya*. Both reveal the One Truth through The Dhamma and the Gita.

Excerpts from 'Dhamma Gita', a book to be released.



The Fourth Pillar It's All About Being Responsible

Manish Pant



*At a time when democracy's
fourth pillar
seems to be tottering, there is
hope yet for the
time-tested agent of change.*



A couple of years ago, a wire agency broke the story that several flights of one of India's leading air carriers were getting delayed or cancelled owing to a large number of its staff going on leave to ostensibly appear for interviews with another airline that had recently been privatised.

Being highly sensational and hilarious at the same time, the story was immediately lapped up by all leading media outlets in the country. Not to be left behind, yours truly also filed a copy based on the information available. However, some things just weren't

adding up. Like, which department in an airline company would tolerate its personnel taking leave at such short notice? Or, was the market leader planning to penalise staff who had ostensibly appeared for those interviews?

Further inquiries on my part revealed that the flights were impacted due to industrial action. Despite the recovery in air traffic the carrier had failed to revoke the salary cuts announced at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The reason behind citing the incident is that amid the advances in technology as well as news getting reported in real-time, we in the media often fail to look beyond the visible. And it is this tendency that ends up harming our credibility.

And it's not that this is symptomatic of the media in what is now the world's most populous nation. Even the Western media, which for long used to pride itself on its fairness and objectivity in reporting stories, is afflicted with this malaise.

As a result, fake news often ends up being reported as facts.

So, why does democracy's fourth pillar seem to be tottering? Or, why is it that the mirror into society has become cloudy?

And it is not that this change has come about suddenly. Here I would like to cite two incidents separated by a few years gap.

In 2005, when I would go out for field reporting as a television reporter in Mumbai, passersby would often stop to chat about the day's main stories. The awe for the profession would be visible in their eyes. Three years later, while I was at the slums near the city's international airport to get some visuals of aircraft taking off and landing on the strip, a passerby casually remarked, "You media folks are capable of making even lies appear credible!"

The remark hit me like a ton of bricks for it was nothing short of a reality check for a job that I have always held sacrosanct.

Like all sentient beings, we journalists have our own biases. That's not unnatural as each person is a product of their unique circumstance. However, in this age of wokeism and gender fluidity, the race to be more politically correct than one's peers makes us move to the extremity of driving agendas to become less honest. That has, in turn, compromised truth.

Crisis of Credibility

We conveniently forget that with the expansion of the internet and the rise of social media towards the end of the 2000s, we journalists no longer enjoy the luxury of delivering a monologue from a pedestal. With the reader or viewer becoming as much a stakeholder in the developing story as the reporter, the latter can be immediately taken to the cleaners by the former across their social media platforms for misreporting facts.

In 2023, India's over 510 billion internet users spent a good 2,215 billion minutes surfing the cyberspace, according to the US-based media measurement and analytics firm Comscore. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has said the country has 600 million smartphone users. This ever-growing demography also has an insatiable hunger for news and information.

It is no surprise then that media stalwarts based in major metro cities have seen

their reach and influence diminish considerably. You now find them scattered like abandoned four-wheel drives even as waves of new 'influencers' based in the country's smaller towns and cities have been quietly yet surely replacing them.



Yet the development has again given rise to a new set of challenges.

Rise of Social Media

If the increased corporatisation of print gave rise to paid news and unhealthy obsession with celebrity culture and TV to trivialisation and sensationalism, social media has emerged as a purveyor of unhinged content and fake news.

As the events following the now-discredited Arab Spring that swept through much of the Middle East in the early 2010s have proved, they can be successfully used to effect social disharmony and regime change by powers inimical to a nation-state. That

event purportedly started on the social networking site Facebook.

In India's case too, social media narratives emanating from overseas have incited dissonance against the nation and its duly elected government.

Add to this social media's ability to allow the individual to broadcast what's on their mind. This illusion of control can often have dangerous consequences for them. In January this year, a Spanish court cleared a Briton of Indian origin of a terror attack plot. The teen was taken into custody by the country's security after they were alerted by British intelligence of a chat, where the person had jokingly shared plans to blow up planes while on his way to a flight. But that wasn't before the Spanish Defence Ministry handed the person a bill of €95,000 for scrambling three fighter jets



to escort the flight to land to preempt a terror attack!

Rights with Responsibilities

Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees citizens the right to freely express their thoughts, opinions and ideas, which is only limited by “reasonable restrictions” listed under Article 19(2). Except during the 21 months of Emergency imposed from 1975-77, the country's media has largely enjoyed unrestricted freedom.

This notwithstanding the charges of restraints on media freedom is often alleged by Western think tanks.

It is another matter that those very think tanks are often silent on the targeting of conversations that run contrary to Western narratives on Big Tech social media platforms by either restricting access or outrightly shadow-banning them.

Thus, as several experts have pointed

out, India needs to develop its social media platforms just like China has done to avoid becoming a digital colony whose public opinion is moulded by powers based overseas. Some kind of representative body is also required to ensure that best practices are adhered to at all times as the media continues to have the power to be the architect of change.

It's time to conclude the story narrated at the very beginning of this piece.

Within hours of the reports of its flights getting delayed due to staff going for interviews at another airline getting dismissed, the management at the airline in question convened a high-level meeting to announce the retraction of pay cuts.

Even in this age of cynicism, being honest to one's *dharma* often results in positive outcomes.

With Rights Comes Responsibilities





ANEKANTA My Experience with Truthfulness

Geeta Chandran

For the first fifty years of my life, it was all black and white. That is the way I was brought up! My mother instilled in me this strict lens of propriety and truthfulness. Everything was right or wrong; hot or cold; bright or dark; good or bad; white or black. This worldview continued with me into my husband's home where his grandmother only reiterated my mother's values. People were slotted as saints or devils; good or wicked! This lens percolated in my assessment of artists too! I was truly irrevocable in the passionate opinions I held.

Then came a turning point. Author and Jaina scholar Sudhamahi Regunathan invited me to perform at the launch of her book entitled "The Colours of Desire on the Canvas of Restraint." Little did I realize then that my entire thought frame towards classical dance – and life -- would soon undergo a seismic shift. The

ideas I encountered in that book launch performance – especially the remarks made by Dr. Karan Singh's speech disturbed my comfort zone. Something inside told me that I should seek further in that direction.

And so it was that I tried to understand the Jaina philosophy of Anekanta. And what a journey it turned out for me! For, while that infusion of scholarship gave me added heft in creating a different choreographic scape for Bharatanatyam, little did I realize that my entire philosophical approach to life too would be re-choreographed. And how!

At its crux, Anekanta says no one thing is true...it could be true and other ideas too could be true. This statement admits of many dimensions and some of these are outlined below:

Anekanta is impermanence and



Photos by Robyn Beeche



permanence together...the immortal and the mortal. Anekanta accepts co-existence of opposites, the innumerable and the finite. While divine is permanent, its name and form can change with context and time. That which we express (vyakt) and that which is left unsaid (Avyakt) are both part of Anekanta.

Anekanta thus celebrates non-absolutism. Truth is relative to time,

space, context and so many other factors. What may be true for you at this moment, need not be true for me. Truth is relative.

Mahavira took this idea even further by stating that every living being had something good in him or her. Similarly, he stated that every faith has some truth in it. Absolute truth or the whole truth is inexpressible in its entirety because of our limited capacity of words. Those who say "my faith alone is true" and put down other faiths are only increasing their own bondages and will remain stuck in this cycle of life and death.

I also learnt that this idea by itself was not the singular discovery of the Jainas. For example, the Rig vedic verse says *Ekam sat bahuda vadanti vipraha...* one truth, different people express it in different ways.

I also learned that the Jainas examined the idea closely and in detail. They say that permanence and impermanence co-exist, and the example they give of impermanence is the body and that of permanence is the soul.

They also say that creation and



destruction are taking place constantly in this world, in this human body. But permanence and impermanence, creation and destruction are opposites. Can opposites co-exist? I had already sensed this coexistence of opposites in the spectacular South Indian iconography of the dancing Shiva as Nataraja. There too, seemingly opposing concepts like creation and destruction dialogue with each other to create new levels of meaning.

The idea that opposites can co-exist opened many doors for me. While at the social level it lights the way to peaceful co-existence, more importantly, I realized that even those who hold diametrically opposite views can still be true and do not really challenge your own truth. In the keenest sense, this means live and let live.

While all these ideas evolved into dance choreographies for an Anekanta festival I hosted for two-days, the key take aways altered my – my students and my audiences – perceptions.

While at Natya Vriksha, my efforts have always been to create new conversations around classical dance in India through its multiple outreach activities targeting performing arts connoisseurs, the youth and the broader community across India, no other work led to this deeper satisfaction than Anekanta.

What did this mean to me personally? Quite frankly, a lot. My erstwhile dogmatic view where I evaluated everything in binaries that slotted realities in silos, was altered forever. In seeing Truth and Truthfulness as a complex web of contexts and circumstances, made me feel cleansed.

And this in turn improved my relationships with a wide swathe of people – relatives, friends, students, audiences, and critics.

Telling Tales

Kaleidoscope of Perspectives

Sudhamahi Regunathan

Illusions: There was once a golden bee and a turquoise bee. They were deeply in love with each other. One could not live without the other. They would fly to a garden daily and feast on the flowers. However sweet the nectar was, they followed a golden rule: to return before sunset for that is when the flowers closed for the night. If they lost themselves sucking nectar, they would be trapped inside the flower.



One day as the turquoise had just landed on a flower and was sucking sweet nectar, a cloud came over the flower in the skies. The flower thought it was sunset and closed. The turquoise bee was trapped within. As the golden been came in search of his mate, he found her crying from within the flower. Their hearts froze. They would now be parted from each other. An illusion had caused the flower to close, trapping the bee within. *“Alas illusions trap us and Truth eludes us,” cried the golden bee.*

Light and Darkness: A seeker and her Master were driving out of Itanagar. About half an hour out of the city, the streets were dark, without any lights



for miles on end. Silhouettes of the mountains far and near now merged into the darkness. Suddenly, the driver stopped, opened the car door and said he would be back in a minute. The seeker and her Master were in no hurry. They got out of the car and, as they stood in that dense darkness, they could hear screeches of wild animals. They seemed all too close. Sometimes it was a bird that was calling, sometimes it was a jackal howling, there were monkeys making a cacophony for sure and then there were so many other indistinguishable sounds. “Let us get into the car,” said the seeker, “I am terrified. We cannot even see how close they are.” A cool wind blew and the seeker shivered both in cold and fright. Just then the driver returned and the two of them got into the car. “Where did you stop? Is this in the middle of a forest?” asked the seeker of the driver.

“No, ma'm, we are miles away from any forest,” said the driver and, as he turned the headlights on, he showed them the location. Deep down on one side was a valley. On the other side was the wall of a mountain. “The sounds of the forest echoes from the valley,” the driver added.

“With light we were able to get the true picture,” said the Master. *“Ignorance is thus equated to darkness and knowledge to light.”*

Truth Alone Exists: A serious young man went to a monk with a request. “Sire, “said the young man, “I have heard that light shows us the truth. But what about the mirage? It is a play of light which creates illusions. Is Truth a mirage or is mirage the truth?” The Master laughed. “Truth alone exists,” he said and then became silent.

The young man waited for many days for the master to enlighten him. What the master had said he had heard several times before but it was because he was not convinced that he had come seeking him out.

The only thing the master did was to borrow an Aesops fables book from a child in the neighbourhood and give to him. The young man was a little disappointed. As he opened the book, the first story was the famous story of how the rabbit tricked the lion by making him peep inside a well? The lion roared and found his reflection roaring too. He did not know that it was his reflection and so jumped into the well drowning himself.

Finally, when the young man was getting too restless the master said, “Answers lie before you. If you keep thinking of your question, the answer will appear to you. You do not need a master to answer them for you. Mirage is a play of light.

If you do not know the principle behind a phenomenon, you either interpret it as a miracle or misunderstand it.

Don't Judge Others: A story is told of wise Nasruddin who went to a rich businessman. He wanted to ask him for a

donation for the needy. He knocked at the door, and he knocked again. After some time, a young boy came and opened the door. “I am Nasruddin and have come to ask for some donation to help the needy,” said Nasruddin. The boy went inside and came back and said,” My master is not at home.” “Oh?” said Nasruddin with a serious face. “Please wish your master great success in whatever he has gone to do. And also give to him my suggestion that next time he goes out, he should not leave his face stuck to the window or else people will think he is lying.”

Don't think others are fools.

Ignorance and Knowledge:A young man from a village got a very well-paying job in the city of Mumbai. He arrived a day before he was to report on duty and went to his hotel room. Once in his room, he got ready for bed, laid out his new clothes for the following day and turned to blow off the light. He blew and blew all night trying to extinguish the electric bulb...Finally he slept off in fatigue, but alas woke up too late and reached office even later. He did not keep his job for long.

Right knowledge destroys ignorance which is the thickest veil on Truth.





Truth : Beyond the Blindness of the Ego...

Pilar Copete writes about truth as that which gets hidden by the ego. To lose the ego is to behold truth...See into the heart of truth, she says.

Pilar Copete came to India in the April of 1976. She had strong spiritual leanings. A painter by training she dealt with subjects that stood at the threshold of spirituality and aesthetics. Adding more mystery to her artistic expression was her passion for yoga. She went to the Munger ashram in Bihar and soon became a sanyasin wearing ochre robes. She lived for several years as a sanyasin performing great service to the rural population of Bihar. One day, her father came to India and took her back to Colombia. In Bogota she then got married and now lives happily with her husband Ernesto. Her inner being still resonates with her experience in India.

Pilar Copete: For me it was a very interesting experience to arrive in India and observe how a change slowly occurred in the way of seeing, feeling and assimilating a new culture. Somehow something interesting was happening that was how slowly my culture was erased and another one appeared with rituals, ways of dressing, eating at very different times. Slowly a culture and ego disappeared and it changed, becoming richer. Customs,



prayers and another way of eating appeared, providing new movements, flavors and songs. As time passed, customs and sounds were lost in memory that gave way to new ways of facing the day. How? dressing, brushing teeth ...creating a new routine for example knowing the *chakras* and *mantrams* . At the same time... the ego was enriched by the new customs. Not in all cases is the ego the objective of arrogance or humility. For me the ego through the Saints and the stories enrich the way of manifesting and relating to others depending on the day-to-day experience. The ego transforms as one discovers oneself in the other and in a new way of living. When I had the opportunity to share Yoga, for example, in different communities and cities, I learned to accept new customs without comparing

them, simply accepting them, getting rid of my own, which slowly disappeared while I learned to live and look differently. I understood that the best thing was not to speak mentally or compare... not to look at myself but rather, it was to strip myself away... and be open to understanding what was coming... An open heart considers all perspectives, discerning without bias. For me the best thing was to be present moment by moment, the here and now and not to dialogue mentally, living day by day what was in front of me. In this way I was able to share and learn new concepts. I learned from traveling

through the different paths and examples of the people with whom I was accompanied, is seeing yourself reflected in the other and understanding it without dialogue, neither past nor present, being here and now makes daily life easier and I was able to face the ghosts of memory without talking to me, without comparing. For me, the ego is a brake that prevents the sweet manifestation of the being that witnesses a new dawn every day and allows a journey with the sounds of the hours and the weaving of light in the different seasons.

Every journey is a canvas all its own – Helen Frankthaler

Paintings by Pilar Copete





Beyond Philanthropy

Vikram Bhalla

Businesses can build a reputation of trustworthiness and integrity in the marketplace through corporate social responsibility – CSR- marketing integration.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not just a trendy buzzword, but a strategic imperative for companies that want to enhance their credibility with buyers. CSR refers to the business model that a company follows to be socially accountable to its stakeholders and the public. It involves

The successful merger of corporate social responsibility and marketing goes beyond philanthropy, becoming a narrative that resonates with consumers, building trust and fostering loyalty.

making ethical, moral, and sustainable choices that have a positive impact on the environment, society, and economy.

But CSR is not only about doing good deeds; it is also about communicating them effectively to the target audience. CSR marketing integration is the process of aligning the CSR efforts of a company with its marketing strategy, so that the company can showcase its values, purpose, and social impact to the buyers. By doing so, the company can attract and retain customers who share its vision and values, and who want to support a cause or make a positive change with their purchasing decisions.

There are many benefits of CSR marketing integration for a company's credibility, such as:

Building trust and loyalty

Consumers today are more aware and informed than ever before. They want to know the story behind the products and services they buy, and they want to see proof of the company's claims. By integrating CSR with marketing, a company can demonstrate its authenticity, transparency, and accountability to the buyers, and show them how it is making a difference in the world. This can help the company to build trust and loyalty among the customers, and increase their satisfaction and retention rates.

Enhancing reputation and differentiation

In a competitive and crowded market, a company needs to stand out from the crowd and create a unique identity for itself. By integrating CSR with marketing, a company can showcase its distinctive values, culture, and personality

When buyers perceive a genuine commitment to social responsibility, they are more likely to trust the brand, which, in turn, translates into increased loyalty and repeat business.

to the buyers, and create a positive image and reputation for itself. This can help the company to differentiate itself from the competitors, and gain a competitive edge and a loyal customer base.

Increasing engagement and advocacy

Consumers today are not passive recipients of marketing messages, but active participants and co-creators of value. They want to be involved and engaged with the brands they love, and they want to share their opinions and experiences with others. By integrating CSR with marketing, a company can create meaningful and memorable interactions with the buyers, and invite them to join its mission and vision. This can help the company to increase the engagement and advocacy of the customers, and leverage the power of word-of-mouth and social media to spread its message and reach new audiences.

CSR marketing integration is not a one-time activity, but a continuous and consistent process that requires a clear vision, a strong commitment, and a strategic approach. A company that wants to successfully integrate CSR with marketing should:

Identify its core values and purpose

A company should start by defining its core values and purpose, and aligning them with its business goals and objectives. The company should identify the social and environmental issues that are relevant and important to its industry,

its stakeholders, and its customers, and choose the ones that it can address effectively and authentically.

Develop its CSR initiatives and programs

A company should then develop its CSR initiatives and programs, and implement them in a systematic and measurable way. The company should ensure that its CSR efforts are aligned with its values and purpose, and that they create value for both the company and the society. The company should also monitor and evaluate its CSR performance, and report its results and impacts to the stakeholders and the public.

Communicate its CSR story and message: A company should finally communicate its CSR story and message

to the target audience, and integrate it with its marketing strategy. The company should use various channels and platforms, such as websites, social media, blogs, newsletters, press releases, events, etc., to convey its CSR message and showcase its CSR initiatives and programs. The company should also use storytelling techniques, such as narratives, visuals, testimonials, etc., to make its CSR message more compelling and engaging.

CSR marketing integration is a powerful way for a company to enhance its credibility with buyers, and to create a lasting and positive impression on them. By integrating CSR with marketing, a company can not only do good for the world, but also do well for its business.





Spiritual Intelligence True to Oneself

Prof.C.S. Krishna Das

*Spiritual intelligence is a higher dimension
of intelligence that delves into the essence of existence and the
eternal nature of the true self.*

Science has categorised intelligence into Intellectual intelligence, Emotional intelligence and Spiritual intelligence. The level of intelligence is calculated from the results of a special test done and mathematically expressed as Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Spiritual Quotient (SQ) Under spirituality, people can be classified as believers and non-believers; belief in God or religious faith alone does not make a man spiritual. A non-believer is also spiritual in terms of his ability to lead a life of meaning, purpose and values. They are complementary to each other. Spiritual intelligence comprises self-awareness, perceptions, intuitions, instincts, cognitions and judgements. It integrates intellectual and emotional intelligence and allows us to explore our core identity, to seek “who am I?” “where have I come from?”, “what is the

purpose and goal of life?” This kind of self-examination helps us understand that we are more than just physical bodies, minds or intellects. That these are but tools to play out in the world outside. The past self, the present self and the future self are simultaneously at play in our lives. The mind has the tendency to swing to past and future; mental energy is drained in regretting over the past and worrying about the future. One cannot undo the past, nor can one predict and direct the future course to his liking. The best way is to concentrate on the present by spiritualising every action of the present. To move forward with faith and dynamism is a quality of the spiritually intelligent person.

Man is composed of various emotions like love, compassion, pity, charity and negatives like anger, hatred, etc. Spiritual intelligence does not allow

emotions to possess or overpower a person; by his discriminating intellect, emotions are kept under control. However, while emotions are part of the human experience, spiritual wisdom allows us to maintain balance and poise. Negative emotions, if left unchecked, weaken our spiritual well-being. In the Mahabharata war, the mighty warrior Arjuna became a slave to his emotions. He faced an emotional crisis on the battlefield. His inner turmoil led him to question his duty and abandon his role as a warrior. Lord Krishna, in his role as Arjuna's charioteer and guide, awakened Arjuna's intellect. He reminded him of his duty (dharma) and guided him make the right decision and take the right course of action on the battlefield.

Spiritual intelligence is also nurtured by scriptural wisdom. The Bhagavad Gita emphasises self-realization and the

eternal nature of the *atman* (the true self). It transcends the physical body, mind and intellect. Ignorance or *avidya*, keeps us in spiritual darkness and materialistic pursuits often distract us from the light of true knowledge.

The path to knowledge involves personal effort; no external entity can guarantee our salvation. The Bhagavad Gita encourages self-elevation: "Let man raise himself by his own self alone and let him not lower himself." The true self is our greatest friend. Temples, gurus, and pilgrimages play a role but ultimately, the responsibility lies with each individual to discover their divine essence.

Spiritual intelligence empowers us to navigate life's complexities with discernment, compassion and a connection to our higher self.

Spiritual intelligence





Pathways to Fitness

Prema Raghavan

Surya Namaskar

Surya Namaskar or sun salutation offers the sun gratitude and love for the life-giving energy and vitality that it provides. It is a complete body workout that boosts flexibility, strength, stamina and overall fitness.

Surya namaskar is a yoga sequence involving 12 postures for each side: right and left. It is best done early in the morning on an empty stomach. Chanting of the Surya Namaskar mantras enhances mindfulness and brings total awareness within the practitioner.

As the Surya Naadi or sun channel runs along the right side of the body, you begin the Surya Namaskar with your

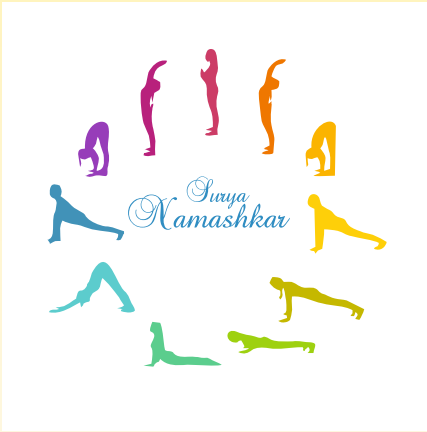
right leg first.

Surya Namaskar Steps and Associated Mantras

Step 1: Pranaamaasana (Prayer pose).
Mantra: “*Om mitraaya namah*” –
Salutations to the friend of all!

Stand at the edge of your mat, keep your feet together and balance your weight equally on both feet. Expand your chest and relax your shoulders. As you breathe in, lift both arms up from the sides. As you exhale, bring your palms together in front of the chest in a prayer position.

Step 2: Hasta-uttanaasana (Raised arms pose).
Mantra: “*Om rayaye namah*” –



Salutations to the radiant one!

Breathing in, lift the arms up and back, keeping the biceps close to the ears. In this pose, the effort is to stretch the whole body up from the heels to the tips of the fingers. Tip: You may push the pelvis forward a little bit. Ensure you are reaching up with the fingers rather than trying to bend backward.

Step 3: Hastapaadaasana (Standing forward bend).

Mantra: “*Om Sooryaaya namah*” – Salutations to the inducer of activity!

Breathing out, bend forward from the waist keeping the spine erect. As you exhale completely, bring the hands down to the floor beside the feet. Tip:

You may bend the knees if necessary to bring the palms down to the floor. Now make a gentle effort to straighten the knees. It is a good idea to keep the hands fixed in this position and not move them henceforth until we finish the sequence.

Step 4: Ashwa-sanchaalanaasana (Equestrian pose).

Mantra: “*Om bhaanave namah*” – Salutations to the illuminator!

Breathing in, push your right leg back, as far back as possible. Bring the right knee to the floor and look up. Tip: Ensure that the left foot is exactly in between the palms.

Step 5. Dandaasana (Stick pose)

Mantra: “*Om khagaaya namah*” – Salutations to the sun who moves in the sky!

As you breathe in, take the left leg back and bring the whole body in a straight line. Tip: Keep your arms perpendicular to the floor.

Step 6: Ashtaanga Namaskaara (Salute with eight parts or points).

Mantra: “*Om pooshne namah*” – Salutations to the giver of strength and nourishment!

Gently bring your knees down to the floor and exhale. Take the hips back slightly, slide forward, rest your chest and chin on the floor. Raise your posterior a little bit. The two hands, two feet, two knees, chest and chin (eight parts of the body) should touch the floor.

Step 7: Bhujangaasana (Cobra pose).

Mantra: “*Om hiranyagarbhaaya namah*” – Salutations to the golden womb, the source of creation!

Slide forward and raise the chest up into

the Cobra pose. You may keep your elbows bent in this pose with the shoulders away from the ears. Look up at the ceiling. from the ears. Look up at the ceiling.

Step 8: Adhomukha-shvaanaasana (Downward facing dog pose).

Mantra: “*Om marichaye namah*” – Salutations to the ray-endowed Lord of Dawn!

Breathing out, lift the hips and the tailbone up to bring the body into an inverted 'V' pose.

Tip: If possible, try and keep the heels on the ground and make a gentle effort to lift the tailbone up, going deeper into the stretch.

Step 9: Ashwa-sanchaalanaasana (Equestrian pose).

Mantra: “*Om Aadityaaya Namah*” – Salutations to the son of Aditi, the celestial mother!

Breathing in, bring the right foot forward in between the two hands. The left knee goes down on the floor. Press the hips down and look up.

Tip: Place the right foot exactly between the two hands and the right calf perpendicular to the floor. In this position, make a gentle effort to push the hips down towards the floor, to deepen the stretch.

Step 10: Hastapadaasana (Standing forward bend).

Mantra: “*Om Savitre namah*” - Salutations to the Lord of creation who enlightens the world!

Breathing in, bring the right foot forward in between the two hands. The left knee goes down on the floor. Press the hips down and look up.

Tip: Place the right foot exactly between the two hands and the right calf perpendicular to the floor. In this position, make a gentle effort to push the hips down towards the floor, to deepen the stretch

Step 11: Hasta-uttanaasana (Raised arms pose).

Mantra: “*Om arkaaya namah*” – Salutations to the praiseworthy one who gives heat!

Breathing in, roll the spine up. Raise the hands up and bend backward a little bit, pushing the hips slightly outward.

Tip: Ensure that your biceps are beside your ears. The idea is to stretch up more rather than stretching backward.

Step 12: Taadaasana (Mountain Pose).

Mantra: “*Om BhaaskaraayaNamah*” - Salutations to the maker of light!

As you exhale, first straighten the body, then bring the arms down. Relax in this position and observe the sensations in your body.

This completes one set of surya namaskar. Complete the round by

repeating the steps. Only this time, start with taking the left foot behind in step number 4 and bringing the left foot forward in step number 9.

Once done, you would've completed one round of surya namaskar. As you exhale, first straighten the body, then bring the arms down. Relax in this position and observe the sensations in your body.

At the end of surya namaskar, it is important to spend a few minutes in *shavaasana* (corpse pose) before winding up. Shavaasana is a relaxing position in which the body is kept still in a supine position (lying on the back facing upwards) while being conscious and alert.

Through body and mind control, Yoga aims to unite us with the Universal Spirit, where there is infinite and eternal

bliss, peace, perfection and liberation. The timeless practice of Yoga provides a path to physical, mental and spiritual

The Paradox of Modern Life

Smart home appliances make household work quicker and more energy-efficient. I attended Yoga workshop where all physical movements were akin to those involved in cleaning the floor, washing clothes and grinding with a traditional grinding stone! Washing clothes on a stone is akin to punch therapy which is a great way to release stress and tension. It also helps increase energy levels, improve coordination and balance, boost confidence, and strengthen the muscles in the arms, shoulders and chest. In my personal experience, grinding with the traditional stone and making rotis are excellent remedies for frozen shoulders. In addition, these are ecologically friendly, energy-saving methods.

Images by Freepik





Wisdom Waves... Navigating Spiritual Realms

Ma Gurupriya

Our Ashram is in a small village located 7 km from Thrissur city in Kerala. Long back, in the 1980s to 1990s, there used to be 'Summer Gurukula' in the ashram.

A few children of Poojya Swamiji's disciples used to come to the Ashram during summer vacation from Jamshedpur, Thrissur and other parts of Kerala. They would live in the ashram for a period of 4-6 weeks. The aim was to expose the children to the great epics and spiritual literature and to help them cultivate noble values and virtues.

Poojya Swamiji narrated stories from our epics and great texts picturizing characters who manifested wonderful values and virtues. He would ask the children what they understood and whether they aspired to imbibe those values. They were encouraged to introspect and discuss in order to find out how they should improve.

Once B, a 13-year-old boy wrote to me, "...It has been weeks since I spoke a lie. Each time I speak a 'dangerous truth' in spite of a possibility of getting punished, I feel I have conquered the world. It comes to me as an unexpected pleasure!"

The letter came at the time of the Onam festival in Kerala. Onam is associated with the king Mahabali. I remembered the story of Mahabali's Truthfulness under all odds and sufferings. And so I thought of writing to B.....

14th September, 1994

Dear and blessed B,

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

Yesterday I was reading from Bhagavata the story of Bali the king of Asuras. When the Devas stole the 'Amrita' churned out of 'Samudra Manthana', the enraged Bali attacked the Devas with his army. Bali was defeated and deprived of his kingdom. Guided by his teachers, Bali

performed a great yajna and acquired divine armaments. Becoming very powerful again, Bali set out to conqueror Indra's heavenly empire.

Aware of Bali's prowess, Indra along with all devas, approached their Guru Brihaspati for advice. Brihaspati advised the Devas to hide until Bali's downfall. Emphasizing that only Shri Hari, (Vishnu) could match Bali's strength. Bali took possession of the entire heaven and ruled all the three worlds. Meanwhile Sri Hari incarnated as Vamana (dwarf) born to Aditi and Kashyapa Prajapati. His brilliance surpassed that of Devas and Brahmars his.

Learning of Bali's Ashvamedha Yajna, Vamana entered the sacrificial hall radiating like the rising sun. King Mahabali welcomed him, offering a seat, washing his feet and worshipping him. He then humbly said, "Your arrival, O Honourable sir, purifies our dynasty. Please task for anything - cow, horse, elephant, gold, chariot..."

Vamana complimented Bali, saying "... O great King, only that which is

absolutely necessary should be received as a gift. So, I seek from you a small stretch of land covered by my three footsteps."

Hearing this Bali laughed and prepared to fulfill Vamana's wish. His Guru Shukracharya warned him saying that Vamana was none other than Shri Vishnu in disguise. That with his three footsteps



he would cover all three realm and deprive Bali of everything. A sacrifice endangering the sacrificer is never commendable.

Mahabali, hearing his preceptor's words responded thoughtfully. He acknowledged that a householder's actions should not harm their own interests but he could not break his promise. The path of truth mattered more than wealth or possessions. **There is no greater adharma than non-truthfulness.** Bali decided to honor his commitment.

Shukracharya cursed Bali for his defiance yet, Bali remained steadfast in his unwavering resolve to uphold truth.

Now Vamana revealed his own divine form and with two steps took.

Possession of the three realms. There was nothing left in Bali's possession to offer with the third footstep.

Vamana said, "O King, you promised to give me land measured by my three footsteps. With two footsteps, I have occupied all the worlds. You have nothing more in your possession now which I can occupy with my third footstep.

Bali remained unmoved in his resolution to be truthful. Without hesitation he replied, "O Supreme Holiness, if your idea is to make my promised words be false, I am resolved to make them truthful. I still have in my possession my body. Kindly place your third step on my head..."

Bereft of all possessions, defeated and put in fetters, deserted by all, and cursed by his guru, Mahabali remained firm in his vow and did not give up his truthfulness. Pleased with Mahabali, Lord Vishnu bestowed on him boon him saying, "Be prosperous ! Along with all your followers go to Sutala, a place which is free from every kind of difficulty and suffering. I shall be ever protecting

you and you will ever feel my presence."

Dear B, what purity and sublimity I experienced reading these great episodes! The mind is filled with the virtues of truthfulness, firm resolution, straightforwardness, devotion and complete resignation at the Lord's feet. All that has been depicted in this story. What other method is there to purify oneself except to dwell constantly on virtues?

Dear son, regarding not telling lies and sticking to the truth in spite of the fear of punishment you have written, "I feel I have conquered the world, it comes to me as an unexpected pleasure!" Well, it



*is bound to be so. **When, in spite of all temptations, you are able to preserve the virtues, you will be more and more strengthened, and will enjoy supreme bliss.***

With love and blessings,



Destination Sanctuary of Truth

Editorial Team

The Sanctuary of Truth.

Yes, that is what it is called!

*Did truth swim down or fly down
to this corner of the world?*

What makes the place we were headed to a sanctuary? Questions galore excited our imagination as we saw a Thai structure of wood in the tourist pamphlets. For directions, it said this sanctuary lay off Sukhumvit road.

It was surprising, but even shop owners on Sukhumvit road could not guide us to the place. Finally, when we showed them the picture on the tourist map, they exclaimed, “Oh! Naklua!” and so we got there. The address is more helpful (Naklua soi 12) in getting you there. It is not a straight route anyway, so it is best to take a cab.

A huge compound welcomes you and at the reception, they tell us we have to walk 500 metres and go down 64 steps to get to the Sanctuary. You could take a

buggy ride or ride an elephant. We opted to walk. Through a green patch which had a carefree abandon about it, we came to the steps before which we saw a cafe and some souvenir shops. Here we showed our ticket of 500 bahts each.

Moving closer to the steps, we beheld a sight that caught us by surprise. Way down below, as though a lotus on a pond, there stood a magnificent structure. Its splendour is nothing that one can imagine. Exquisitely carved wooden spires standing atop the structure, unleashed the spirit heavenwards.

The wooden steps go down to another small reception where beautiful Thai girls greet you and give you a helmet to wear while going in to the sanctuary. By now the vision has grown and you hold

your breath. What makes it all the more intriguing is that in Thai architectural style, you see every mythological figure from Ganesha to the Buddha.

Our guide was a girl from Burma called Ta. She told us the purpose of creating a structure so beautiful and breathtaking, bringing together the best in all Eastern thought and religion was to gently suggest to the visitor to aspire for an ideal life. “Men have drifted away from their old values in such a way that morality and spiritual contentment have become irrelevant to many people...we have egoistic people out to destroy one another through wars and economic plundering. This sanctuary was created not from hubris but from the goodness drawn from religion, philosophy and art...The Sanctuary is a place where your belief in this life, after life and goodness is reborn,” she said as she told us that mythology from India, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam had been brought into this one structure symbolizing that all religions show the same path: the path of oneness. “So there are four spires atop the building, each showing us how to get to the ideal world.” The tallest spire in



the centre, interestingly, represents Kalki, the tenth incarnation of Vishnu that is yet to take place, according to Hindu mythology.

“The Sanctuary celebrates seven creators,” said Ta, “Heaven, Earth, Father, Mother, Sun, Moon and the Stars,” and she leads us into the first chamber which shows the four natural elements with intricate sculptures on its four walls. It also shows scenes from different mythological stories including the Mahabharata for the sanctuary emphasises the need for a constant battle between evil and good, with the good always victorious. In one of the five halls in the Sanctuary there is a magnificent statute of Sun and all the seven planets that orbit around it. For the tourist there is also a chart which, the basis of your date of birth, tells you which day of the week you were born on.

There are five halls in the Sanctuary, each of which has many stories to tell. You see resplendent sculptures of Ganesha, Krishna, Siva and even Mahishasuramardini. The story of Mahishasuramardini stands atop one of the spires. There are detailed scenes from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana carved on the walls. And then there is the Buddha. In the centre is the sanctum sanctorum where five steps lead to its inner chambers. These five steps are indicative of the five moral values for humankind to follow: not to steal, not to commit adultery, nonviolence, to be truthful and to avoid intoxicants. “There is nothing inside.

The chamber it is empty,” said Ta, evocative of the concept of *shunyata* in Buddhism.

“The main message of this temple is that everything returns to dust. Only truth triumphs and so we should seek spiritual growth and progress,” said Ta as she showed us the last chamber which has a huge sculpture of Siva and Parvati with many children around them. “The first step towards spiritual progress is to respect and honour one's parents.”

Taken over 31 years already to get so far, the Sanctuary is still under construction and that is why they give you the helmet to wear at the entrance. Men and women are working constantly using traditional

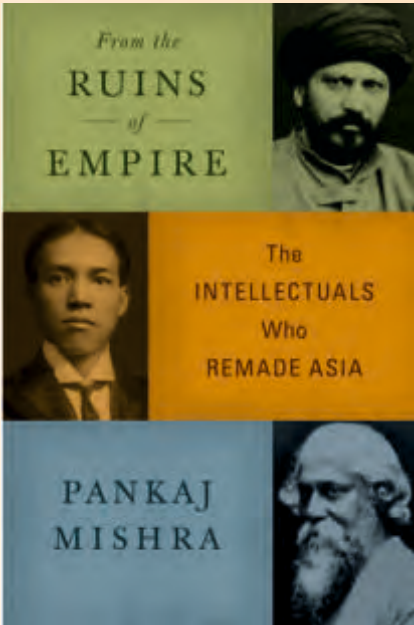
techniques. It is true that while the sanctuary celebrates ancient art, it also showcases the power of contemporary creation. The all wood structure does not have a single nail. Traditional techniques have been used to hold joints together. There is a butterfly joint a male-female joint and many more such.

In the lawns outside the Sanctuary, a cultural show is presented every day, one before noon and one after noon. It is an interesting medley of Thai dance and drama which not just make interesting and aesthetic viewing but also gives some time to contemplate on this magnificent structure and drink a cool fresh juice while doing so.



Book Review

R. Dasarathy



“From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia”

by Pankaj Mishra

Publisher:

Farrar, Straus and Girou

Pages: 368

Price (Paperback): Rs. 1,354/-

The recent writings in modern history, especially by non-professional historians, have opened new vistas and dimensions. This history is based on 'uncovering' of certain 'lesser-known' facts, deliberately suppressed by vested interests (e.g. the imperialists). It also uncovers the promotion of certain ulterior theories like 'martial' races, 'white man's burden' etc.

The author, Pankaj Mishra was educated in India, but is a global intellectual. The book has an ambitious canvas with the

narrative flowing across continents. It is rich in facts but not always flowing freely – not quite making it an easy read. But the book (published in 2012) covers a big gap in our awareness, of the two “overtaken civilizations” – China and India and our misconceptions of the Muslim world. The book includes several Asian nations (Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Arab nations, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, ...) and their interactions with European powers. The author travels with the 3 main protagonists (Jamal al-Din al-Afghani,

Liang Qichao and Rabindranath Tagore) in the context of imperialism/ colonialism and discovers nationalism and then in stages across pan-Islam, pan-Asia, Communists narratives...

The book begins rather dramatically with the Russia-Japan war 1905. For the first time in history, an Asian country had defeated a European imperial power. This created excitement across Asia and each country took its lessons from that.

Since the second half of the 19th century, across Asia from Turkey to Japan, the Asian citizens faced the humiliating experience of subjugation. The superior technology and organization of the imperial powers were self-evident. The disproportionate response by the British to the Mutiny in India in 1857 and consequent discrimination against certain sections of the population, was followed as a policy.

In China, in 1860, during the Second Opium War, the Old Summer Palace in Beijing was ransacked and torched by French and British soldiers. The destruction of the Old Summer Palace still excites shame and anger in China, where it is seen as a symbol of Western imperial brutality and a reminder of the consequences of national military weakness.

The Asian intellectual wonders how to respond. Could new innovations and modes of production be grafted onto existing social structures, or did cherished ways of life and thought have

to be abandoned? The question of what to accept, what to adapt and what to reject from “the West” remains central in contemporary Asian politics.

Mishra tells this story through the biographies of three public intellectuals: the itinerant Persian-born agitator Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the Chinese reformer Liang Qicha, and Rabindranath Tagore, poet and Nobel laureate, vaunted as the embodiment of traditional Eastern wisdom. Al-Afghani (1838-97) was a Persian Shiite. He traveled to India and by the age of 28 was in Kabul, trying to play off the British against the Russians in the “Great Game.” A man of flexible political allegiances and fond of the Koranic maxim: “God does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition,” he became an early apostle of pan-Islamism. He hoped to restore authenticity to a religion he saw as fundamentally rational, open to change and innovation, but which had become corrupt. After his expulsion from Kabul he traversed the Muslim world, from the mosques of Cairo to the drawing rooms of Istanbul, where he impressed upon the sultan to launch Muslim resistance to the West.

Liang Qichao (1873-1929) sought a middle way for China between the intellectual hardening of the Qing imperial court and the destructive transformation sought by the Communists. In 1898, having caught the ear of the 26-year-old emperor Guangxu, he and his friend and mentor Kang Youwei tried to initiate a rapid process of reform. It lasted only about 100 days before the dowager empress

“took it upon herself to squash her little nephew.”

Kang and Liang were instrumental in the formulation of a decisive new category in Chinese political discourse: “the people.” Traditionally, popular opinion was considered irrelevant. Now they proposed that the state needed the consent of an educated citizenry to govern. Kang even believed that such reforms as mass education and free elections could realize the Confucian notion of *ren* (benevolence), a “utopian vision of an inevitable universal moral community, where egoism and the habit of making hierarchies would vanish.”

After the failed 1898 reforms, Liang went into exile in Japan, which was a hotbed of international revolutionary plotting. It was a cosmopolitan milieu in which radicals from across Asia met, studied and argued in an atmosphere whose prevailing sentiments were “cultural pride, political resentment and self-pity.” Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith and T. H. Huxley had been newly translated into Chinese, and social Darwinism became especially influential.

Under this influence, Liang moved away from Confucianism. The motivating force of modern international competition stems, “from the citizenry's struggle for survival which is irrepressible according to the laws of natural selection and survival of the fittest. Therefore, the current international competitions are not something which only concerns the state, they concern the entire

population.” The influence of Liang's realist theory of power is abundantly evident in contemporary Chinese politics.

It was Liang who invited the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) to Shanghai to lecture in 1924. By the end of the 19th century, Hindu intellectuals had adopted a posture of spiritual superiority, disparaging modern civilization as a 'machine'. Tagore hoped that the East might temper the machinelike nature of modern civilization, “substituting the human heart for cold expediency,” but despite such lofty posturing, India had become a sort of cautionary tale for China, a country of humiliated British slaves. When Tagore spoke at a meeting in Hankou, he met with heckles and slogans saying: “Go back, slave from a lost country! We don't want philosophy, we want materialism!”

Tagore, the apparently unworldly romantic, transformed the consciousness of his region through essays, poems and songs, two of which are now the national anthems of India and Bangladesh. Likewise, Al-Afghani's mission to redeem the fallen Muslim world and Liang's desire to mobilize the popular will for national transformation have both shaped a century of Asian political aspirations. Mishra's astute and entertaining synthesis of these neglected histories goes a long way to substantiating his claim that “the central event of the last century for the majority of the world's population was the intellectual and political awakening of Asia.”

Swami Vivekananda

The Universal man

Narendra's Inheritance

S. Regunathan

Narendra and his guru bhaiyas dedicated themselves to looking after their guru Sri Ramakrishna along with Ma Sarada Devi. Being a natural leader, Narendra guided his guru bhaiyas in both nursing their guru as well as in pursuing their spiritual quest through their meditational practices.

Even before this Sri Ramakrishna handed over the guru bhaiyas in the care of Narendra. The relationship between Narendra and his guru bhaiyas was growing stronger day by day, so much so that the guru bhaiyas felt uneasy without Narendra. Even as their love for Narendra started growing, their guru's health started deteriorating.

In the meantime the desire in Vivekananda to realize *samadhi* and



ultimate truth was also growing stronger. One day, along with two guru bhaiyas, he left for Bodh Gaya to understand the Buddha and his experiences.

Sure enough when he meditated under the Bodhi tree at Buddha Gaya he realized what Buddha had experienced.

He too experienced Buddha's strong sense of renunciation and compassion. He understood that Buddha had crossed the stage between existence and non-existence and though he did not describe God and atman, he was not an atheist. On his return when he narrated his experience at Bodh Gaya to his master, he enlightened him further by saying that this existence and non-existence are attributes of *Prakriti* and reality is beyond both.

During this time Narendra also experienced *nirvikalpa samadhi* and came out of it with immense peace in his mind and also in an exalted state.

The guru called him and said, "Now that you have experienced it, I am going to lock up your realization in a box."

Knowing that Narendra was a great sage reborn, and that he was the right person to carry the message to entire humanity, Sri Ramakrishna told him that there was more, beyond the samadhi stage and that one day he would show it to him, only after he has completed his work on earth.

Ramakrishna told his other disciples that

one day Narendra would conquer the world with his spiritual power and the world would realize his greatness.

It was also believed that Sri Ramakrishna instructed the disciples that Narendra had a lot of work to do and that they should not leave him even for a moment.

They should also look after his health. "He has the capacity to decide his time of departure from this world and he will tell you all. Till that time you all should take care of Narendra."

Just before his departure from this world the master called Narendra and wrote on a piece of paper that "Narendra will teach others." On reading it, Narendra hesitated and said, "I will not do that. But the master replied, "You shall have to do it and my *siddhis* will manifest through you in time."

After a few days, his guru's health deteriorated further. He called Narendra and looking at him entered into deep meditation. Narendra felt as though some force like an electric current was entering his body.

He lost complete outer consciousness and when he came back to consciousness, his master told him, "I have given you my all and have become a fakir. By the force of the power you have now inherited, you will do great things only after that you will return to where you have come from."

Children's Corner

Holi Hai!

Story: Gayatri Kumari Diggi

“Truthfulness is a cornerstone in character and if it be not firmly laid in youth there will ever after be a weak spot in the foundation.”

— Margot Asquith

Two young sisters, Sidhi and Vidhi, in their early teens lived in an apartment in Mumbai. Their mother was strict and always lectured them on honesty and integrity. Now these girls were teenagers and they sometimes crossed the line. Once, on the day of Holi, the festival of colors, they went to the prayer room, prayed and played Holi with the Gods and Goddesses. The sisters were told to play Holi in the balcony and not to mess up the rooms with colors so they went to the balcony and their maid Radha also joined in to play. They had fun giggling and throwing colors and then Radha went and got colored water in a bucket and splashed them with a mug and so the water game started -- throwing buckets of water at each other. They grew tired and sat down on the floor laughing when Sidhi said, “Look! There are people walking on the road let's throw water on them.” The other two agreed and buckets of colored water was prepared and they aimed at the passersby and then quickly ducked down on the floor, laughing. More buckets were brought by the maid and then, in their excitement the girls banged into each other and one bucket went flying into the air. Just then, a man who was looking around and wondering how come there was so much

water on the ground, looked up. Just then, splash came the water and bucket directly on him. Angrily, he picked up the bucket and marched up to the



building lift and straight to the floor and rang the bell loudly. Meanwhile, the girls were wondering where the bucket had gone.

The apartment door was opened by their old servant Ramu Kaka. He was stunned to see a man in soaked clothes waving a bucket at him and shouting. He quietly took the bucket from him and asked him to come in saying politely, “Secretary saab do come in” and led him to the drawing room. He then quickly told the cook to make warm masala milk tea then

he took a fresh towel and went to the drawing room. He listened quietly to the man's story and then went to the mother, Ma saab's room with the news. Ma saab said "I am not meeting the building secretary. You tell the girls to go and sort it out after all they are the ones who should face the man



they threw the water at and they must learn to face the consequences too and correct it peacefully." So Ramu Kaka went to the girls. He saw buckets on the balcony and heard Sidhi telling the maid to quickly fill the buckets with pink colored water as someone was passing under their balcony. Then Vidhi said, "Ramu kaka we can't find one bucket will you fetch it?" Ramu Kaka said "Is it this one?" They happily said, "Yes thank you" snatching the bucket from him and the maid took it to fill it with water. Sternly, he looked at the maid, Radha, and said clean up the place. Ma saab is

coming." And then to Sidhi and Vidhi he said, "Kindly change from these wet clothes and tidy up, there is a guest Ma saab wants you to meet." Shortly after a while the girls came dressed in clean clothes and hair tidied up looking neat and clean. When they entered the drawing room they saw the secretary saab sitting and drinking tea and wiping his wet hair. The girls looked enquiringly at Ramu kaka who spoke calmly, "Someone threw water from the balcony and so saab got wet." Sidhi was the first one to react "Oh! How terrible." Vidhi said, "Please drink the tea it will warm you up."

Secretary saab looked at the girls drinking his tea seriously saying, "If you know who threw the water on me will you tell them not to do so as I can't keep getting wet and coming up to drink warm tea again". The girls nodded silently and confessed, apologising for their mischievous misbehavior saying, "*Bura na mano holi hai.*" In short: "Please don't mind, it's holi!" The secretary saab smiled and the girls broke into giggles.

Their mother was strict enough to make them confront and face the consequences of their behavior and the girls honestly admitted their guilt. So, "All's well that ends well".

To make our children capable of honesty is the beginning of education

– John Ruskin

Children's Corner

The Honest Woodcutter

In a small village by the forest, there lived a woodcutter named Dev. He was poor but very honest. Every day, he went to the forest to cut wood. One day, while cutting a tree near a river, his axe slipped from his hands and fell into the river.

Dev was very upset as the axe was his only means to earn a living. He sat by the riverbank and prayed to the river goddess. Moved by his honesty, the goddess appeared and asked, "Why are you crying, Dev?"

Dev replied, "I have lost my axe in the river. It was all I had to support my family."

The goddess dived into the river and brought out a golden axe, asking, "Is this

your axe?" Dev shook his head. She then brought out a silver axe and again asked, "Is this your axe?" Dev denied again. Finally, she brought out an iron axe, and Dev's eyes lit up with joy. "Yes, that is



my axe!" he exclaimed.

The goddess was pleased with his honesty and gave him all three axes as a reward. Dev's life changed after that day,

but he remained as honest as ever. The villagers learned about his integrity and treated him with great respect.

The moral of the story is that honesty may not always give you quick riches,

but it will earn you trust and respect, which are worth far more.

Truthfulness is composed of justice and courage—Ibn Hazim



FRNV NEWS AND EVENTS

Values Based Education Workshop

Foundation for Restoration of National Values (FRNV) jointly with Balvantray Mehta Vidya Bhawan, Greater Kailash-3, New Delhi organized a workshop for Teachers on Monday, the 5th February 2024 at the school auditorium. About 50 teachers participated. Dr. Sharda Kumari, Head, Values Based Education Task Force, FRNV conducted the workshop. Dr. Renu Bhatia, Deputy Director (Education), Retired, Dr. Anushree Ghai, Psychotherapist and Ms. Neena Ahuja, Architect addressed the participants.



Guest Speakers at the School Workshop

Launch of FRNV Delhi Chapter

On 8th February 2024, FRNV Delhi Chapter was inaugurated by the President/FRNV. Dr. Manoj Singh, former Professor, Pathology, AIIMS, New Delhi took over as Chairman of Delhi Chapter. About 25 eminent people from all walks of life took part in the discussions. After detailed discussions, Chairman/Delhi Chapter submitted that Delhi Chapter will finalize very soon its activities to be taken up in the coming financial year.



Delhi Chapter inauguration

Corporate Workshop for Apollo Hospital, New Delhi

On 13th February 2024, a corporate workshop for Apollo Hospital, Sarita Vihar, New Delhi was organized on Medical Values & Ethics. About 40 senior consultants participated in the workshop. The workshop was addressed by Shri S Regunathan, President/FRNV, Dr. Subramanian, Urologist, Apollo Hospital, Dr. Manoj Singh, Chairman/Delhi Chapter/FRNV and Dr Lt. Gen. Bipin Puri, Director, Medical Services, Apollo Hospital.



Corporate Workshop for Apollo Hospital, New Delhi



FRNV JOURNAL – VALUE INSIGHT – EDITOR

Smt. Sudhamahi Regunathan took over as Editor, FRNV bi-monthly journal “Value Insight” from 1st February 2024.

Life Members joined since 1st January 2024

Name	Membership No.	From
Dr. Dindayal Swain Odisha Chapter	FRNVFRNV/LM/075	19.01.2024
Ms. Namrata Sahoo Odisha Chapter	FRNVFRNV/LM/076	22.01.2024
Shri Debabrata Panigrah Odisha Chapter	FRNVFRNV/LM/077	29.01.2024
Dr. Manoj Singh Delhi Chapter	FRNVFRNV/LM/078	16.02.2024
Ms. Sarita Nagpal Delhi Chapter	FRNVFRNV/LM/079	02.03.2024
Dr. Renu Bhatia Delhi Chapter	FRNVFRNV/LM/080	19.01.2024
Dr. T S Sridhar, IAS (Retd.) Chennai Chapter	FRNVFRNV/LM/081	06.03.2024
Dr. N SUBRAMANIAN	FRNVFRNV/LM/082	12.03.2024
Dr. CHITTA RANJAN MISHRA Odisha Chapter	FRNV FRNV/LM/083	12.03.2024
SHRI BIPIN KUMAR SAHOO Odisha Chapter	FRNVFRNV/LM/084	12.03.2024



Dr. N. Subramanian

MBBS, MS, FRCS (G) FRCS (Ed), FIMSA

Dr. N Subramanian, a Senior Consultant Urological Surgeon and Clinical Advisor Urology at the Apollo Hospitals, Delhi joined FRNV as Member on the Governing Body on 13th March 2024.

He also served the hospital as Director Medical Services and medical Advisor. A passionate Rotarian from the Rotary club of Delhi Central, RI district 3011. A fellow of the Royal colleges of Surgeons of Edinburgh and Glasgow and the international medical sciences academy. Chairman Health Committee PHD chamber of Commerce, Advisor innovative physician Forum, Trustee Neuro AID and research foundation, Governing board member of AADI, Chairman Emeritus of the Rotary central charitable trust and President of the Rotary 3010 education foundation.

His rich experience shall add to the cherished goals of FRNV.

SUBSCRIPTION

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