

“WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT AS WE ‘PRESS FOR PROGRESS’ WE ARTICULATE NOT ONLY WHAT THE PROGRESS LOOKS LIKE BUT ALSO **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE JOURNEY** TO GET TO THAT DESTINATION.”

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Published by: Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (UK),
Registered Charity No. 267309

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Namaste

You'll have immediately noticed this edition of Sangh Sandesh as being different by way of design, substance and style.

The size, the spaces, the simplicity, reflects a need to be more focused whilst appreciating the openness around us. It echoes Sangh's philosophy of being accommodating, yet at the same time understanding the power of simplicity and focused work.

We wanted the Sangh Sandesh to reflect our true nature - to be humble and honest, but at the same time one of high ideals, expansive thoughts and focused vision.

The change in substance - the depth, precision and rigor of the pieces reflect a need to engage in more thoughtful, emotive and intellectual discussion whilst being rigorous in the application of all our efforts. The balance of articles and viewpoints in this and future editions of Sangh Sandesh allow the reader to observe a more rounded perspective on a wider range of topics from philosophy to art, history to emergent lifestyle choices, politics to Sewa.

The change in style – critical, expository and narrative – reflect the need to inform as well as entertain the reader. Critical pieces attempt to challenge assumptions by offering rational argumentation and proposing opinions on issues. They encourage rational thinking. Narrative pieces on the other hand bridge

the literary techniques of storytelling with the fact-reporting style of journalism. These could take the form of reporting on events, profiles, or memoirs. They are sometimes referred to as creative non-fiction.

Expository pieces seek to 'expose' or 'expound' on tough topics. They offer a shift in paradigm, a new way of seeing something. They enable us to become 'unstuck' when dealing with complex subjects.

Through conversations with readers and writers, we've learned that all three - design, substance and style - required a change. This edition presents that change.

The etymology of the word 'Sandesh' comes from 'saṃ-deśā'. 'Saṃ' means with, together, complete, wholesome - as in saṃjaya, saṃskṛta, saṃskāra etc. And 'deśā' means a space. Sangh Sandesh then becomes a 'wholesome space', a space for sharing thoughts that seek to move us in some way.

This edition seeks to expound on this theme of 'movement'.

Like the appearance and disappearance of the seasons, this constant change of everything is not only inevitable, but essential. Without change, the newness of life would be stifled and creative potential of our work would be stunted. The physical manifestation of this change comes in the form of movement.

To live is to move.

The beating of the heart, the dilatation of the pupils, the flushing of the skin, the peristalsis of the gut and the transmission of current through our nerves, all require movement.

There is no life to our body, nor substance to our work, if we remain static. Indeed, in our stubbornness to remain static, we are eventually forced against our will into movement. Let us be clear in our distinction between being static and being stable. Stability is a function of strong foundations that propel a given work forward. Being static on the other hand, means being self-absorbed and numb to the demands and needs of our constantly changing environment.

We may be the movers or be the moved; we can start movements or join them; we move jobs and cities for better lives; we may move the snow blocking the road or move a country's energy policies for a better climate; we write to move ours' or others' understanding; we move by playing, dancing, composing or drawing; we move people through our lyrical melodies; our own physical movement enables others to move with us; we move people by a stern email or a caring touch; we may move in convergence of our unity, or through the divergence of our diversity; we may move in keeping with the mainstream current like the unobstructed flow of a river, or move against the norm and

resist what we deem to be wrong; we move closer to each-other to cognise each-others' viewpoints, or happily move away to develop our own viewpoints; we move ourselves to enable an elderly citizen to sit in our seat or be moved by the words of a wise elder.

Whether movement brings pleasure or pain, we can be assured of its universal quality of making us a better person.

All the feature pieces in this edition relate to this reality of 'movement' in some way or another. We hope you are moved by the works and urge you to read, reflect, share and discuss the pieces in your local areas. The aim of Sangh Sandesh is to move people - physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

From the Sangh Sandesh Team:
Rajen Shah
Deepti Mistry
Ajay Mistry
Yajur Shah
Rajiv Chandegra

AHAM
BRAHMĀSMI

WHY THE
WORLD
NEEDS
WOMEN TO
REALISE
THEIR
DIVINITY

As a slightly late midnight child, I was born in Independent India in 1947 and was one of four sisters who were brought up believing that the only limits we had were those we set for ourselves.

Dr Vidhula Ambekar

In India and globally it was a time of great upheaval but also of hope; hope and admiration for all those who had been fighting for independence. After years of hardship, inequality and bloodshed that had come from the wars, it was a chance for India, and the world to aim for a fairer, more egalitarian and peaceful place to live.

After more than seven decades of seeing the world 'evolve', I find myself pondering why it is that International Womens' Day, still has to focus on #PressforProgress. Further contemplation reveals a simple answer. The people in power and the rhetoric may have changed, but mind-sets have not. Whilst innovation and materialism have given us more tools that we can dream of, accompanied by the perception of greater sophistication, it has also led to an unhealthy pursuit of pleasure and a skewed acuity of what improvement looks like. Recent events have shown that those held in esteem as leaders and even celebrated institutions have betrayed the trust we've put in them. This is happening in the corporate, media, religious, political and philanthropic spheres and is fast becoming a social endemic.

This year therefore, it has become even more important that those who understand the philosophy of Samiti add their voice to the debate and act on their convictions. We need to ensure that as we 'press for progress'

we articulate not only what progress looks like but also the importance of the journey to get to that destination. The concept of Aham Brahmāsmi is so fundamental to this journey and destination.

Aham Brahmāsmi means 'I am the ultimate reality' and it is a central concept for both Hindu Dharma and for Hindu Sevika Samiti.

For every girl and woman, we have to encourage them to comprehend how important this is – it means that there is a divinity within and to realise it, we must forgo ego and realise this divinity through true enquiry. At a time when media and PR are able to raise money for fame and prestige, it seems to earn more respect than the selfless acts which many endeavour for the benefit of society or the difficult work which improves or even saves lives but attracts little economic remuneration. It is indeed such a time where women and girls should not simply strive for 'parity' – rather we should bring greater value to the divinity within all females. 'Empowerment' too, is within us as women, so I hope that this year, girls, women and men too, learn a new language for this debate. Let's start with 'Aham Brahmāsmi' because the world needs women to change the prevailing rhetoric and more importantly, the mind-sets.



Dancing, Decolonising

Photo credit to: Steven Lippitt

About two seconds on the train, five seconds when I wake up, and twelve seconds when I'm reading a book.

Shivaangee Agrawal

This is the amount of time my mind rests on a thought before the impulse arises to check something or contact somebody on my phone. I'm usually grateful for the distraction from my claustrophobic commute and for the stimulus to wake up and get out of bed. But my phone has colonised my mind to a degree that I feel I'm basically a face, with thumbs that do all the work. A bit like an emoji, I suppose. I wonder how I still have a body and what purpose it serves anymore, for any of us. We earn by thinking and tapping, procure food often by tapping and expend most of our earnings by tapping. I'm more grateful then, that my profession requires me to reclaim my body.

Contemporary dance demands that I begin carving movement from the impulses and sensations that arise in my limbs, joints, skin, bones, fascia, muscles, cells. In order to do this, I have to tune in, listen and most importantly, maintain contact.

Movement (or 'dance') arises as I accept these small intuitions; when I let my thinking mind work in sync with my feeling body to develop patterns, shapes, designs, meaning. It is a struggle and one I think highlights a severe deprivation in our lives today.

I'm in the studio, alone. There is no music, my eyes are closed and I can sense large amounts of sweeping empty space around me. The instant possession of knowledge that I have not only become accustomed to,

but have come to depend on makes listening to my body extremely difficult. The physical sensations are small, quiet, fleeting and not immediately inspiring. I feel my attention move to a twitch in my elbow and I resolve to stick with it. I let my elbow move and images of triangles flood into my mind's eye. I accept them, letting the imagery stimulate increasingly expansive movement. Behind my eyelids, I'm imagining building pyramids, watching light refract through prisms, letting the seven colours of a rainbow guide my feet and - and - and - and suddenly the desire to let it all go is overwhelmingly powerful because something much better is offered up: take a break and check your phone. Check if she's read the message, check the time, check the train, check if that email sent. All of these options feel more gratifying than this delicate and difficult task of listening to and staying with my body. Which certainly feels better than feeling stuck, like I'm not getting anywhere, like I can't. I record my movement improvisation for Instagram and realise it doesn't look great. I look kind of clumsy and my tricep fat is forefronted. Clicking through to other videos, photos, stories, feels better. My previous post has been racking up likes and now I feel great. Everything is fine.

By now I've opted more than a hundred times to consume a distraction or to view my body from the gaze of somebody watching me on a screen, than encounter my body in all its reality. These alternatives are more appealing than encountering the plain, unspectacular, unglamorous, lumpy, uncertain, long, unproductive, confusing, complicated and unsettling moments of reality. I can't help but feel that these four mins in the studio are a microcosm

of the battle that we should all actually be fighting. Encountering reality in all its ungratifying glory is the cornerstone to staying sane; for being able to process 'negative' emotions and attend to trails of thought long enough to untangle complexity. But most importantly, a resistance to instant gratification and crowd validation is what will allow us to question the societal and cultural structures that are constantly being built by those in power; that is those with the most money, and those looking to make the most money.

Some of these technological structures have convinced us that there is no reason to bear inconvenience, but I question that.

Feeling hurt is inconvenient, grief is inconvenient. Concentration is inconvenient. Having to think through complex problems is inconvenient. Reconciling arguments is inconvenient. Having to be my own source of self-esteem is inconvenient. Boredom is inconvenient. Questioning the dominant ideals of feminine beauty is inconvenient. Checking facts from four different sources is inconvenient. Stepping off the rollercoaster of notification-induced gratification, to sleep, is inconvenient. Listening to my body is often inconvenient, uncomfortable, and takes a long time to become pleasurable. But I'm reclaiming my body from the forces above (read: in my phone) whose very existence depends on their ability to disconnect me from myself.

MIRROR

NOT GLASS
ИОТ ЕТ АСС

WIBBOB

Vidhu Sharma

*Have you ever looked
At your other half and thought
“I hate you when you do that!”*

At someone you hold dear and thought their opinions
are, at best, unhelpful, and at worst, futile breath?

At your brother, or friend, and felt an overwhelming
sense of frustration at something they do? Something
they say? A way they've acted? Maybe it's the way they
chew their food, the way they shake their leg, the way
they browse endlessly through the television guide?

.....

And then they leave the room, and you're left there by yourself.

You breathe a sigh as you're relieved of their burdening
behaviour. You restore your composure and tuck into your
plate of food, with your knee propped up, in front of the
television.

You then find yourself chewing, just like them; you find yourself
shaking your leg, eerily, just like them; and you find yourself
flicking through TV channels, just like them

How is this possible? You look at yourself with the same
frustration and think

“No, this isn't me!”

I want you to consider, as a possibility, that there's nothing more humbling, no lesson as quickly delivered, no opportunity for revaluation as compelling, as the one in this given moment.

As you begin to view that which you find distasteful from a birds-eye perspective, you realise your resentful acknowledgement merely reflects actions of your own.

Those little things that you detest in others are simply echoes of your habits. All the annoying nit-bits in others which itch at your brain are behaviours you yourself possess.



Upon this realisation, you are faced with a choice:

Do you see how all the stories you notice in others with a scornful eye are actually stories you're telling yourself about yourself?

Do you extrapolate the situation, look at those you perpetually judge, and see the correlation with your own lifestyle?

Do you get annoyed and ignore your actions, or do you view these nuances as traits in your personality to be addressed?

Do you pass these lessons off as just coincidence?

Do you dissociate yourself from the lessons blatantly slapping you in the face?

Let's look at this in a wider context.

Have you ever watched someone mourn and think they're overdoing it? Have you seen someone at a temple getting 'shakti' and thought they're faking it? Have you ever hesitated in giving to someone in a time of need because you'd already given into your cynicism about their sincerity? Have you ever judged another and thought in a crevice of your mind

“Well I have my affairs in order, there's no reason why they shouldn't.”

.....

And then, almost instantly, you find yourself in a place of need. Maybe you've run out of change at the parking machine, or news about a colleague's death moves you more than you had premeditated.

When you find yourself acting out of character, do you judge yourself as dramatic or attention seeking? **Or does the situation humble you, make you think about how our experiences are all connected?**

When your character comes into question, do you begin to ask yourself why you don't have your affairs in order and why you can't remain composed?

It becomes apparent in these moments of need that you only judge in others what you yourself possess. With this introspection into the things you judge, you begin to realise that you only see negatively in others what you do not like about yourself.

You're looking at
a mirror, not glass

Treating yourself with gentleness and acting with humility becomes compelling in these moments. They allow you to think ahead and rectify, that which you do not desire for your future. You are granted the opportunity to see why certain aspects of your life refrain from moving forwards.

There may be people who treat you badly and neglect you when you're in need. Think back to moments when you may have been harsh with another. Maybe in the moment it was difficult to see, but in hindsight it comes clear. You may have been served a bad meal at a restaurant. Can you think back to when you cooked in anger for your family last night? The lack of love in the meal you prepared is translated in a meal prepared for you. 'For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you'.



But looking at it as karmic retribution is far from my intention.

It would be too ironic to suggest that karma is itself judgemental.

No. There are no such judgements in the world, or indeed in karma, apart from the ones that we create in our own minds.

What I am suggesting to you instead, is the huge opportunity available here. Understanding the concept of 'Mirror, not Glass' allows us access to something quite special. When we fully experience that our judgements of others and the world are a direct reflection of us (a mirror), we realise that it is we who have created them. In other words, they have no existence apart from inside our own minds.

Instead of getting angry, frustrated, let down or demoralized because we believe the world is like that, we come to realise that it is in actual fact like so, as a reflection of us.

Such lessons provide the clarity needed to analyse how you can better your everyday experience. Every day is judgement day, where your actions are weighed and karma is accumulated. Sometimes the return is instant. Sometimes it is prolonged. Either way, if not for the sake of others, for yourself, be wary of how you react. For your reactions are stories you make up about your circumstance and provide the necessary insight into your true character.

You have a choice:

you either judge the world and its problems as independent to who you are (like looking through a glass), and thereby lose control of the situation and complain,

OR

You embrace the humble possibility that the world is (at least in part) a reflection of you (like looking at a mirror), thereby gaining more control of the situation.

Mirror

- More control
- Less judgemental
- Greater ability to deal with reality
- More responsible

Glass

- Less control
- More judgemental
- Lose ability to deal with reality
- Forgo responsibility thereby becoming a victim and serial complainer

.....

The ability to observe without
evaluation is the highest form of
intelligence'

J.Krishnamurti

.....

Free
will to
Move

Analysing the Neeti Shatakam of Bharthruhari
by Madhurima Venkat

प्रारभ्यते न खलु विघ्नभयेन नीचैः
प्रारभ्य विघ्नविहता विरमन्ति मध्याः ।
विघ्नैः पुनः पुनरपि प्रतिहन्यमानाः
प्रारब्धमुत्तमगुणा न परित्यजन्ति ॥

Prārabhyate na khalu vighnabhayena nīchaih
Prārabhya vighnavihatā viramanti madhyāḥ
Vighnaih punah punarapi pratihanyamānāḥ
Prārabdhamuttama janāḥ na parityajanti
I.26

prārabhyate na = do not undertake actions;
khalu = indeed;
vighnabhayena = due to fear of obstacles;
nīcai: = people with no will power;
prārabhya = undertake actions;
vighnavihitā: = face obstacles;
viramanti = give up;
madhyA: = people with weak will power
vighnai: = by obstacles;
punah-punarapi = time and again;
prati-hanyamānā: = attacked;
prārabdham = all undertakings;
uttama-janā: = people with strong will;
na parityajanti = do not give up.

'Neeti Shatakam' is a compilation of more than a 100 verses expressing high moral and ethical thoughts penned by Bharthruhari (450 – 510 CE). He is considered one of the original philosophers of language and religion in ancient India. He is known primarily as a grammarian, but his works have great philosophical significance.

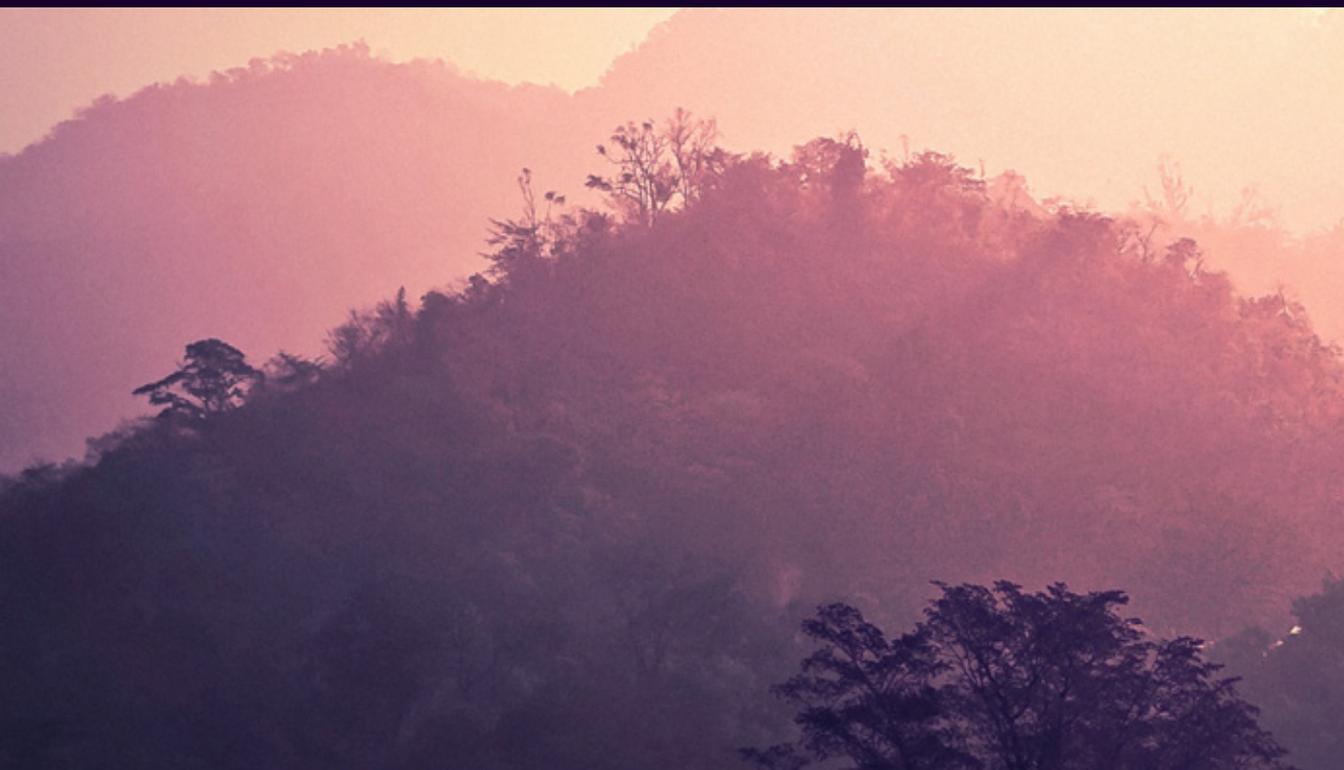
This particular subhāshit (literally 'eloquent saying', or aphorism) explores an important in-built human tool called 'free will'. It proposes that our actions are governed by free will and it categorises individuals based on their strength of will. Here, I offer my humble interpretation of this profound and timeless verse.

For all practical purposes, we must live as if the future is in our hands. Regardless of one's philosophical, theological, or spiritual inclinations, we must act in accordance to our will. The reliance on destiny whilst deciding a course of action is highly disempowering. As far as destiny is concerned, it is unseen. There is no use worrying about something which

is unseen. What is seen is in our hands – to undertake every action with a strong will to its completion.

Those who are totally dependent on destiny, or abdicate their responsibility in the guise 'a higher power' are considered to be at the lowest rung, adopting a mode of action that is ideal for the idle person. It is a convenient way out because the biggest trouble for anyone in life is taking responsibility. Therefore, they do not start anything because their philosophy is **"What can I do? What is going to happen will happen"**. They also claim they have never failed in life; whereas the fact is, they have never undertaken anything in life to face failure. Thus, they do not start anything in life out of fear of obstacle or an 'unfavourable destiny'. This category of people is considered to be at the lowest level of maturity.

Then there is a second category of people who do believe in free-will but have very weak will power. Initially when we start something, we may not have much experience. So, the first attempt may in general, be a failure. This



person who believes in free will takes the first step but fails. Now, a minor failure is enough to shake his/her confidence. Then, again one goes back to fatalism and takes the failure as a confirmation for a destiny-based view. They think, "I did my best and I did not succeed. From this it is very clear that nothing is in my hands". Sometimes even after just one attempt they fall back on fatalism. They have a fragile or wavering will power and the moment even a small obstacle comes their way, they become withdrawn. It need not be an actual obstacle, even an imaginary obstacle is enough!

Now to those with a strong will power. These are the most noble and exalted people who, in spite of being obstructed by obstacles, again and again, never give up until the end is achieved. The difference is in their attitude towards failure. They attribute the failure to insufficient effort. They think - ***"I will work harder and more efficient and if my effort is still not enough, I will take the help of the Lord's grace. I will increase my prayer and I will increase my efforts"***. They will never change their basic, and most pragmatic philosophy that ***"my***

actions are alone responsible for a future worth living into".

A successful executive was once asked, ***"What is the secret of your success?"*** to which he replied, ***"it is making the right decision"***. He was then asked, ***"What is the secret of right decision?"*** to which he said, ***"it is purely due to experience"***. So, the question was asked ***"What is the secret behind your experience?"*** and his response was, ***"making the wrong decision"***. Therefore, it may be through wrong decisions we get experience, and through experience we make the right decisions, and through right decisions we get to success. So, until that experience comes, we should have patience and never give up.

Bhartruhari exposes our default need to be secure and avoid responsibility. To this, he presents a critique of 'destiny' and instills within us the power to enable change through assertive decision making. In order to move the world, we must first move ourselves into action.



Walking Amongst Giants

Yajur Shah in conversation with Bhupendraji Amrutlal Dave

I was sitting and chatting to Harshaben Jani, Bhupendraji's daughter, in their modest but neat living room in Finchley, when one of the great veterans of HSS (UK) walked into the room. Bhupendraji exuded a presence that few could pull off. From his handshake alone, I could tell that he was strong regardless of his age, and his bellowing laugh filled the room with a lightness that wasn't there before. Something special was about to happen and I could feel it. As I interviewed him with Harshaben listening in, I couldn't help but admire his dedication to serve not just the Hindu community, but every community with such humility over so many years. Throughout the interview, no recollection was complete without a mention of all those who had supported him and several times he broke off mid-sentence to say how lucky he was to be in their presence. I left feeling inspired and energised. All I can say is, hats off to you Bhupendraji! It was an absolute pleasure listening to you.

**Bhupendraji Amrutlal
Dave, 91**



Where were you before you came to the UK?

Before I came here [the UK in 1965] Yajurji, I was in Kenya for about 15 years and before Kenya, I was in Bharat.

How did you come to be a part of Sangh?

In Limbdi, from a very young age, 5, I used to go to the gym. In around 1939, when I was 13, Annaji Chitle, a Pracharak from Nagpur came to start Shakha in Limbdi and the gym got converted into a Shakha. So I started to go to Shakha because of this reason. From there, I went to Bhavnagar. In Bhavnagar College, I was very lucky to come into contact with two very, very important Swayamsevaks: Ramanbhai Shah and Harshadbhai Parekh. Very, very dedicated were these two Swayamsevaks. We were living in the same hostel in college and they were my mentors. I was already a Swayamsevak but these two Swayamsevaks were responsible for moulding me into a true Swayamsevak. Harsha, you wouldn't believe it; they were completely dedicated, you know. Completely. It was unbelievable.

I understand that you also spent some time in jail during the Declaration of Emergency in 1948/9.

What was that like?

I was kept in Worli Prison until March 1949. It was dreadful because our food was very, very bad. Instead of ghee, we were sometimes given coconut oil and just some ordinary roti. Everything was very, very rough but whilst in prison, because we were all Sangh

Swayamsevaks, we became friendly with the Jail Superintendent and he was so good to us. He allowed us to take a few liberties. A liberty he gave us was to go out into the courtyard where there was some open space, and behind the open space there were some big buildings. The people in the buildings knew that there were some Swayamsevaks imprisoned here, so they used to turn their radios up when the West Indies and India match was on. I still remember the three W's - Worrell, Weekes and Walcott; very powerful batsmen. We would go near the buildings and listen to the commentary and we would be so happy. That was the liberty given to us. One day, we also kept a drama where some Swayamsevaks played various parts such as Shivaji etc. Finally, in March 1949, we were given remission and were discharged from the prison.

There are refugee crises all over the world at this very moment and it can be quite difficult to imagine what it's like but you actually spent some time at refugee camps.

Do you have any insights you can share with us?

During the partition between India and Pakistan, there was an exodus of people coming from Pakistan. Thousands and thousands of people came from Pakistan to settle down in Mumbai; mostly Sindhi people. They were living in shanti towns and small huts. There was no sanitation and so Cholera and Typhoid had started to spread amongst the refugees that had come. We were asked to look after them. They were often vomiting because that's what happens when you have Cholera and we used to go and either carry them to the hospital or if there was no

space at the hospital, we would administer the medicine ourselves. The conditions of these places was really quite bad.

Wow, sounds pretty intense. Did you have anyone to inspire you over the years?

While I was in Nairobi, in 1963 or 1964, Deendayalji Upadhyay came to Nairobi and he was so wonderful. I think he was in Jan Sangh at the time. He came to our Shakha and his speech on Integral Humanism was so powerful that all the dignitaries that had come to listen to him were all so very impressed. While someone was taking a photograph, I remember Deendayalji commented “Don’t just take my photograph, but listen to what I am saying also.”

Why did you come to settle in the UK?

In 1965, I decided to start studying Law because the Africanisation Scheme was coming into force. Kenya had become independent and our government jobs were becoming Africanised so we were asked to think about leaving Kenya and settle down somewhere else. I sent my family away to India and in December 1965, at the age of 39 years or so, decided to come to the UK as a student of Law at Lincoln’s Inn.

You were here during the formative years of Sangh in the UK. From your perspective, how did it all come about?

Shortly after I first arrived, I felt so lonely and strange in this country and so Vedji Khanna kindly invited me to stay with him and his family in Finchley. After a couple of months, Nareshji Arora also came and wanted to stay. So in one room, I was living and in another room, Nareshji was living. Nareshji had been in the UK for some time before and he had already started an activity called Bharatiya Yuvak Sangh and a magazine called Chetak. So when he started living with us, we all decided that we should look for other Swayamsevaks living in London.

We found that there were quite a few Swayamsevaks who had come from India, one of whom was Satyanarayanji. Finally, in 1966, I heard the news that Atal Biharee Vajpayeeji was coming to visit. On 13th August 1966, Vajpayeeji came and on that day, at a big meeting at Kulwantji Chaggar’s house in Greenford, Vajpayeeji, in his very fluent language, told us not to sit back but to start Sangh work. When Vajpayeeji’s meeting was finished, he told us to appoint Satyanarayanji as our leading figure so we accepted Satyanarayanji as such and started Sangh activities fairly soon after that.

Recently, you’ve become very active with your local council and have been trying to make it a better place for everyone. How have you gone about that?

Yajur, I always believe to mix with local people. I joined a local activity called Friends of Etchingham Park. This was about 7 or 8 years ago. Our aim was, or is rather, that our park is well maintained, safe and that we have as many good facilities in the park as possible. In 2013, we decided to plant 17 oak trees and also collected £7,000-£8,000 for the park. To recognise our efforts, Mike Freer MP came to congratulate us. Since then, not only have we planted trees, but with the help of the local council, we now have some very nice tennis courts here. Before they were in a very bad condition. We even started croquet club and bowling club where I go from time to time. We’re now joining hands with the council to see what else we can do, including getting a cafe or children’s facilities.

If you were going to give a message to our readers, what would it be?

If you have got extra abilities, then you should demonstrate those extra abilities by joining these activities in your local area. To the elderly, my message is that they shouldn’t just sit at home when they become older, but they should try to do some other communal activities as well, so that they can inspire younger generations to take part.



“We’re now joining hands with the council to see what else we can do, including getting a cafe or children’s facilities.”

When the Acharya was moved

"How does one interpret that aphorism?" asked Totaka excitedly. "And how does one interpret the aphorism beginning amso nanavyapadeshadanyathacapi of the Brahma Sutra?" asked Sureshvara with smiling curiosity.

Amrish Chandegra

"Acharya, where is the locus of Avidya; Brahman or the Jiva?" fired Totaka with great determination, whilst Padmapada and Hastamalaka were looking on observing the discourse on Brahma Vidya, themselves lost in deep contemplation on Brahman, The Absolute.

The four disciples accompanied and led by their great Acharya, their shelter and Guru, each carrying a stick and garbed in simple saffron coloured robes were making their way through Kashi; the great city of light and the seat of

knowledge in Bharat. At last the great Acharya said, "Dear shishya's your questions will most certainly all be answered."

Making their way through the narrow alleys and streets of Kashi, people looked on with awe and reverence.

"It's him!" shouted a young brahmachari. *"He is really here!"* exclaimed a bystander with folded hands.

The citizens and pandits of Kashi were offering their dandavat pranaam (lying fully prostrate like a stick) to the young Acharya. A deep serenity enveloped Kashi. The current of the Ganga river could be heard flowing in the backdrop of pandits teaching Sanskrit. Mantras from the Vedas were sung by young brahmacharis, carried through the air by gentle winds.



The Acharya turned his gaze towards his disciples and instructed “let us bathe in the Ganga.”

The Acharya, who’s face was filled with reverence, broke into poetry as a tribute to this purifying river.

“*Devi Sureshvari Bhagavati Gangge Tribhuvana-Taarinni Tarala-Tarange,*” sang the Acharya in a soothing melody.

After some time, the Acharya wished to gain the blessing of the Kashi Vishvanath temple. Along the path to the temple the Acharya suddenly halted. On his path was a man deemed by society to be an outcast, a man of low birth, a Chandala with four dogs roaming besides him. The Acharya looked sternly at the man who seemed to be obstructing his path, and suddenly shouted “*move away, move away!*” He repeated again “*move away, move away!*”. This time with more vigour and a wave of his hand as if to gesture that outcast should not be associated with the Acharya. The man of low birth with a smile calmly approached the Acharya. The Acharya was perplexed at such behaviour. Suddenly, there was a tumultuous uproar. Insults were being hurled at this unknown outcast by bystanders; some of whom were considered learned.

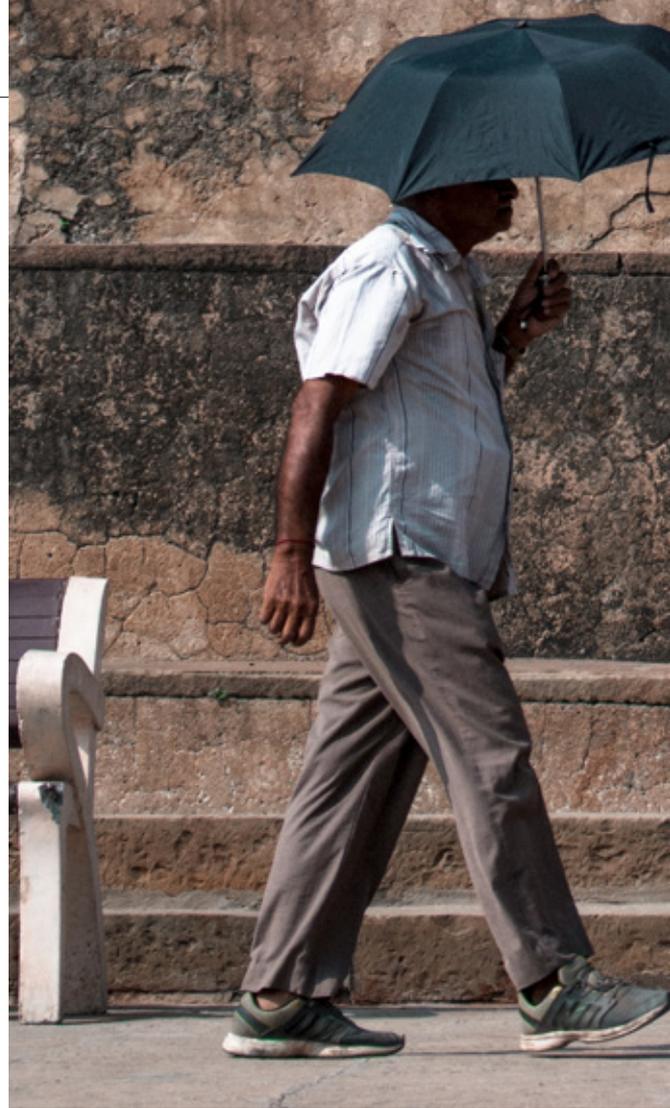
The four disciples shouting collectively “*do you not know whom it is you approach. This is Shankaracharya, shishya of Govinda Bhagavadpada, in the lineage of Gaudapadacharya and propounder of the -*”

“*Advaita Vedanta!*” interjected the outcast.

All in the midst of this setting were stunned. The simple man of apparent low birth continued with determination and pristine clarity. He continued:

“*You are the expounder of the Advaita school of Vedanta so therefore tell me oh Acharya who are you asking to move, is it the body you see before you? If this is the case, you are false as this body and your body are simply dull matter, composed of the five essential elements and thus impure. If on the other hand it is the atman / jiva / self which you are asking to move then still it is you who are false. For in accordance with the Advaita Vedanta, the self-pervading in you and I is the same, eternal, partless, infinite and inert (vibhuti and nirvayava) Brahman. How then can you ask that which is infinite and immovable to move?*”

Silence befell all who witnessed this. They were unable to believe what had just happened. Fascinated and in awe of this man’s



knowledge, Shankaracharya experienced a profound realisation. As this realisation dawned upon him, he approached the Chandala with folded hands and knelt to touch his feet. The Chandala, with his four dogs, not saying another word, walked away. Shankaracharya moved by this incident began to sing aloud the essence of his Advaita Vedanta, the Maneesha Panchakam in which he pays obeisance to this Chandala who has, through self-knowledge understood the goal of the non-dual philosophy. Declaring such a person to be beyond Varna (social classification), he at last lifts the dust from the ground where the man had just moments ago stood and adorns himself with it.

This is of course my take on this very prominent incident in the life of Adi Shankaracharya, the great socio-spiritual reformer and founder of a very popular and large branch of Hindu Dharma. There may well be historical inaccuracies but I take recourse and comfort in envisioning the incident in such a way. There is an addition to this incident often quoted, revealing the



chandala's identity as Lord Shiva surrounded by the four Vedas. In all honesty I prefer not mentioning this. For me, it takes away the all too familiar human error which we are all so prone to and it gives less meaning to the moral of this story.

If we simply gloss over this story we can take away the basic level understanding. To use the cliché this would amount to 'not judging a book by its cover' and learning about some concepts of Hindu Dharma. If we, however, string together the themes from this incident; knowledge of identity, social factors and human traits to name a few, we can begin to appreciate their interaction revealing the subtler pearls of wisdom this life event has to offer. In my opinion, the more compelling themes that arise are fearlessness, humility, purity of character free from hypocrisy and the rise of knowledge. It is in these themes that the truth of this story is to be found.

The Acharya, in his error attempted to move another

by force of his authority and knowledge. Can we think of a time when we attempted the same? Bewildered by the illusion of position, and being surrounded by his followers, he was then stunned by the words of the Chandala. Can we think of a time when someone with a contrarian view, humbles us with their profound knowledge in front of our own loyal followers? These are very human traits and its comforting to know that even the greatest of people can fall. But what then Acharya does is remarkable and worthy of his fame. Deeply moved by the Chandala's words, he bows down to him in reverence; in humility.

As swayemsevaks and sevikas, as leaders of great change, this story reveals the enormous possibility that is available to us. If we are open to being humbled; open to being moved, by the words and deeds of not only the great, world-renowned individuals, but even the common man, we too can gain the same realisations as this great Acharya.

EN

SLAVE

D

*"The worldly pleasures have not been
enjoyed by us, but we ourselves have
been devoured (enjoyed) by them"*

Verse 7 from "Vairāgya Śatakam" of Bhartrhari
"Hundred Verses of Renunciation"

Zima Bhatt



Imagine if you will, the famous 20th-century psychologist Abraham Maslow, sitting and conversing with a modern-day man (let's call him Harry) about his 'Hierarchy of Need'.

How would such a conversation progress?

Maslow: Hello Harry, may I ask you a question?

Harry: Of course, Mr. Maslow.

Maslow: Tell me young Harry, what are your basic needs?

Harry: What do you mean?

Maslow: I mean, what things can't you live without?

Harry: Oh, I see, you mean like when my phone battery dies just as I'm about to upload a new snapchat story?

Maslow: Well if you say so...

Harry: So obviously, I need to carry a power bank with me - that's literally a life saver. And, who can live without Wi-Fi?! I was in Europe recently and I'd been without WhatsApp for a whole 8 hours; it drove me crazy that I couldn't speak to my wife

Maslow: I see...that's interesting. Anything else?

Harry: An early morning espresso with crunchy nut cornflakes. Mainly the espresso though; I'd go crazy by midday without one.

Maslow: Harry, this is really insightful, but, if I'm not mistaken, are these not 'Wants' rather than 'Needs'? I mean, you choose them to make your life more comfortable, right?

Harry: No not really. I genuinely need these things in my life. Without them, I'd struggle.

Who knows if Maslow and Harry ever met. Maybe they did, maybe they didn't. But, if we consider the possibility of it, I think Maslow would've come to a peculiar yet riveting realisation – 'are we confusing wants with needs?'

Now, I do take the above conversation to be rather superficial (as far as Maslow is concerned anyway), but what happens when we extrapolate it to other parts of our lives?



Let us enquire further.

'Needs' (as per Maslow's hierarchy) are 'essential' for life.

In his diagram, the primary needs of all humans are physiological. Without food, water, warmth and rest, we could not survive - that's not a matter of opinion, it's a scientific fact. As we go up the triangle however, we discover higher needs corresponding to the higher centres of cognition as per our relatively recent evolutionary development of the neocortex.

But is this idea of 'Need' embedded within the actual object of desire (intrinsic to the object) or is the 'Need' embedded within our own minds (intrinsic to us)?

In other words, where is the 'Need' located? For example, is 'Need' located within the food

' W A N T S '
A R E
N O N -
E S S E N T I A L
T O L I F E ,
Y E T
D E S I R E A B L E

itself that we consume or within our minds? For example, the cool feeling and sweetness of ice cream in hot weather provides us with pleasure, and so we may want it; but we'd hardly call it essential to life. We wouldn't equate this physiological satisfaction with our physiological needs.

But is this 'Want' embedded within the actual object of desire (is it intrinsic to the object) or is the 'Want' embedded within our own minds (intrinsic to us)?

In other words, where is the 'Want' located?

Where are 'Needs' and 'Wants' located? Show me. Point to them. Where are they in the physical world?

To answer this, I'd like to share an example of a conversation I had with my mother a few years ago surrounding my relationship to 'Chai' (Indian tea):



1st year – 'I want Chai in the morning because I want to try it with toast'

2nd year – 'I want Chai in the morning because it tastes nice with my toast.'

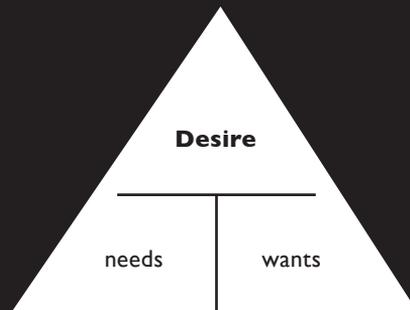
3rd year – 'I need Chai in the morning otherwise it feels odd'

4th year – 'I need Chai in the morning or I'll have a headache, won't function and my day will be wasted'

In a subtle way, unbeknownst to me, my 'Want' for Chai transformed into my 'Need' for Chai. In other words, the non-essential became an essential. Over the years, the language I used to describe my relationship with chai changed.

But the Chai itself never changed. So, what did? Where did this transformation occur?

To understand what changed and where the transformation 'occurred', I'd like you to consider the possibility that 'Needs' and 'Wants' (according to my linguistic criteria) are two subsets of something bigger - 'Desire'.



Many philosophers, sages, scientists and even politicians have universally accepted that 'desire' is core to human nature and cannot be denied. Buddha, for example, confirmed the existence of 'desire' as a universal human trait and sought to neutralise it through deep introspection. Thomas Hobbes, the English political philosopher, intuitively described in his book, Leviathan, how human nature is all motion - the continual move towards the objects of our desire.

Consider that 'desires' are embedded, not in the objects of desire, but rather in our own minds.

Over time, we are bombarded by billions of sensory experiences, each leaving a subtle mental footprint on our subconscious. Over time, these deeply held imprints coagulate to form strong and often unshakeable beliefs about the world. Through them, we create opinions, judgements, and ideas - all acting like a filter to the world.

We develop a craving to what is (arbitrarily) desirable and aversion to the undesirable.

Desire is arguably the most powerful force in the universe. But we tend to give it a bad name. We daren't let ourselves express what we desire for fear of what others may think. As we shall see, desire in itself can be very powerful and rewarding to yourself, as long as you know how

to harness this force.

So back to our original conundrum - where and how did this transformation occur?

Where are 'Needs' and 'Wants' located?

'Wants' are those desires that we still have control over - we retain the capacity to choose.

'Needs' are those desires where we've lost control - we are instead controlled by them.

Over the years, Chai started as a want, but through daily habit it became a need. Every time I drunk Chai, it left a subtle impression within my subconscious mind, which perpetuated into a craving. What was once a conscious (in my control) choice to consume it, became an unconscious (out of my control) compulsion. I've reached a stage where Chai is no longer a luxury that I consume when I want, but a need that is dictated by my mind on behalf of me.

'Needs' and 'Wants' aren't in the outside world - they're in our minds in the form of

desires.

I've re-drawn Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs; only this time it's Zima's Hierarchy of Needs.

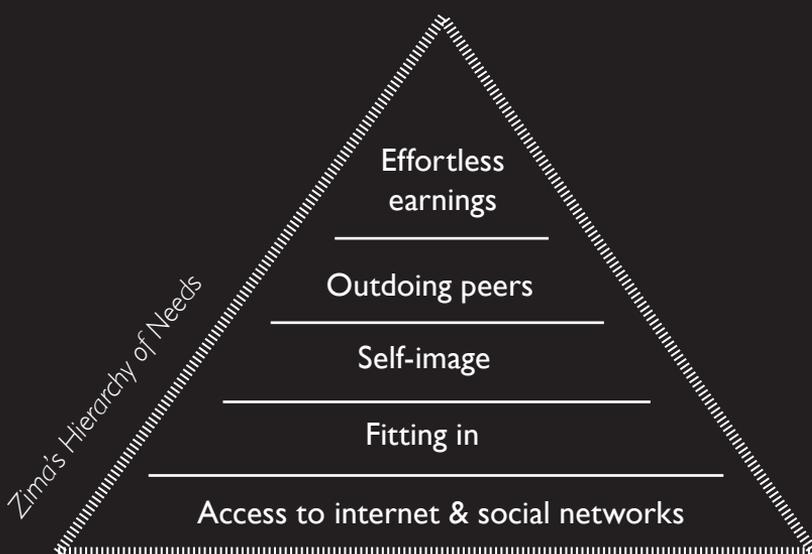
My hierarchy was formed from the constant striving for 'Wants' which transformed into 'Needs'. These could've been something as small as a cup of Chai to something as big as a mansion. In our unrelenting pursuit to gratify our desires, we start blurring the lines between 'Needs' and 'Wants' and become confined to a lifestyle that we no longer rationally control and thus have less freedom in decisions we take. The more we gratify, the more our 'Wants' become 'Needs' and this is reflected in our language.

Let's take 'self-image' from my hierarchy.

We all want a good self-image. It could mean different things to different people, but for me, it's the way my hair looks, the way I dress and the way I carry myself.

Will there be a point in time where my self-image will control me?

When it does - that's the point it becomes a 'Need'. When it effects and controls my attitude, confidence, and life progress - I've lost all control. It's become a psychological need. This need will imprison me.



What has become a need, has become a compulsion. It has consumed me. Despite the strongest of will-power, I will be compelled to do what I may not want to do. I have lost all freedom. The 5th century Indian Philosopher, Bhartrhari known for his influential text *Vairāgya Śatakam*, beautifully reminds us that 'Worldly pleasures have not been enjoyed by us, but we ourselves have been devoured'.

But all is not lost. The ability to create a distinction between what are our 'wants' and what have become our 'needs' directly correlates to the level of freedom we experience in life. When we see needs as they are, we become aware that they were psychologically formed and learned - this opens up the possibility for them to be unlearned.

To recap:

We all have physiological and psychological needs. Needs are what we deem essential, and Wants are what we deem desirable but non-essential. Needs and Wants constitute Desires. Desires are located deep within our minds and not in the objects themselves. Needs create dependency and control us. Wants are healthy desires and we retain control over them. Normally the lines are blurred, but creating this distinction between our Needs and Wants opens the door to freedom. Needs and wants are interchangeable. Transforming our needs back into wants is a process of unlearning and leads toward greater happiness in life.

I'd invite you to write down all the things you desire on a blank canvas. One by one, start highlighting which are your needs and which are your wants. It won't be an easy task; your mind will continually tell you that you 'need it', but in those moments, listen to the voice of reason and understand that the 'need' was created by you.

Desires will continually play a central role in our lives; but you now have the ability to start distinguishing and making conscious decisions about your purchases, lifestyle, relationships, habits and in turn, the footprints you leave on this planet.



'For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his very mind will be the greatest enemy'

Bhagavad Gītā 6.6

It's time for a big idea

Devika Jina

It's about six in the evening, it's October, and I've just turned eight. Mum's running around her bedroom trying to find a couple of rogue safety pins, so she can help me get into my chania-chori. I stand awkwardly, waiting for her to unearth the last one. She's got it and proceeds to position my arms abruptly while she pins the folds of fabric around me. Finally, she's ready and admires her work. I look in the mirror. Great, I look like a Christmas tree.

This was what nine nights every autumn looked like as we celebrated the festival of Navratri. I was an awkward child, so the thought of socialising and dancing with other people filled me with dread. Still, we bundled into the car, chiffon and sequins digging into my rib cage.

Despite my inability to play garba, for me, Navratri has always been special because of the madh in the middle of the room. Every night during the festival, before the floor crowded with whooping and jumping, I would walk quietly around the madh, looking intently at each and every picture on it. Durga with her lion steed, chakra spinning around her right index finger, Kali with tongue defiantly stuck out, a garland of skulls laced around her neck, and my personal favourite, Saraswati sat on a swan, book in hand, eyes smiling.

This small but significant ceremony of mine was an annual tradition. I looked at each and every one of them with awe and respect. The more I learned and the more I asked questions, I discovered that these weren't just pretty pictures. For a young girl, this was hugely important, as I realised that I was growing up in a culture that celebrates seeing exactly

how valiant, determined and courageous women ~~can be~~ are. Aham Brahmasmi was a very real thing that pushed us to recognise the divinity and strength in all women, and now is the time to live it out.

At 28 years old, I've observed and experienced just how much we women have to endure. From sexual violence to the glass ceiling, to outspoken women being called "bossy" or "bulldozers", all of these things take the strength and divinity of a woman and revile her for it. Every time I've come face to face with these in my 28 years, those images of Kali, Durga and Saraswati reminded me of my strength, and that of every woman.

The simple fact is, we shouldn't have to endure these things. In an age of Me Too and Time's Up, the world is waking up and it looks like changes are happening, changes that will mean something. The theme for this year's International Women's Day is Press for Progress, and it calls on all of us to work together to accelerate gender equality. It's a call to action for the whole world, but this is our chance to make sure young girls know they truly can learn from Kali, Durga and Saraswati.

So, let's take a leaf from them and really recognise the strength and divinity of all women. Perhaps then, we can play a part in creating a world where that ceiling can shatter, and young girls won't be labelled bossy when boys are praised for being assertive. I join Hindu Sevika Samiti to press for progress by empowering every woman to recognise her own divinity.



**‘I was often
punished without
understanding
why.’**

Suraj Tailor

Suraj visited the Samatol Foundation in Mumbai in the first expedition of Youth for Sewa in 2016. Samatol works to provide run-away children with a safe environment to live, school and receive counselling with the aim of re-uniting them with their families.

Hariharan looked successful. Now in his mid-fifties, he presented himself with the aura of a man of significant business acumen, intelligence and charisma. Speaking fluently in English, his confidence in greeting me at Samatol was overwhelming and we were now sat in a relatively small room that the foundation had adopted as its main office, doing something I hadn't expected. Soon after walking into the office, he had begun to play the stock markets on his laptop and I was left to simply watch him. Underneath all that charm, there was a certain restlessness and a few things had begun to irk me. It was evident that he was wealthy but this had sparked my natural curiosity. Why was he playing the stock markets whilst I was there? Why was he was a committee member for Samatol Foundation? What were his motivations for being here? Seeing the confusion on my face, he interjected my train of thought.

'I ran away from home three times.'

My pre-misconceptions dissipated almost immediately by the calm demeanour with which he had just read my mind; suddenly replaced with a sense of shame that I had questioned his integrity. However, questions still remained. Why did he run away? And why three times?

'I was often punished without understanding why. If my parents had simply communicated with me, I would not have run away.'

I was told earlier in the week that neglect was the root cause for kids running away from home. The common misconception is that the attractiveness of Mumbai as the destination of success and movie stars is the underlying reason for the existence of run-away children in the city. No doubt it has a role to play but the root cause runs deeper than the glitz and glam of the Bollywood industry.

In my mind, neglect was not supplying a child with their basic needs such as food, shelter or clothing. However, in Hariharanji's circumstances it was evident that there was an emotional disconnect between the parent and child. Humiliation and mistreatment were undoubtedly rife in their relationship but far more subtle issues existed as well. A lack of compassion and even a lack of conversation played a significant role in the damage of the child's emotional wellbeing. This was much more difficult to resolve. Telling parents to stop abusing their child is tangible, therefore easy to grasp but how do you tell them to build an emotional bond with them?

Hariharanji handed me a short autobiography of the key moments in his formative years. His business acumen came out of necessity in surviving on the streets of Mumbai and making money had to become an instinct, explaining his instant urge to monitor the stock markets. The book also detailed that the second time he ran away was after his parents were furious with him for coming into the house after smoking and drinking. The only thing missing from the screaming and interrogation, according to Hariharanji, was an explanation why.

'Hey Hariharan, I am shouting at you because smoking causes lung cancer and could reduce your life expectancy.'

'Hey Mum and Dad, thank you for that explanation. My tumultuous mind is now put at ease with an understanding that my punishment was motivated by your desire to protect me. I won't run away now. I understand.'

Perhaps the dialogue would be a more drawn out than that, but its fascinating to think something so simple more than thirty years ago could have had such a drastic impact on this man's life.



MOVING THE

"My countrymen should have nerves of steel, muscles of iron, and minds like thunderbolt."

Swami Vivekananda

Mitesh Sevani | Jiten Davdra | Sharad Shah

This familiar utterance comes as no surprise from a person whose physique was as daring as his intellect. Perhaps his mission, daily schedule and environment demanded that of him. But what of us?

In an age, country and lifestyle of relative comfort, where we seldom grow our own food, spin our own cloth, till our own fields, or fight our own battles, why then must we focus on strengthening our bodies.

They say, “knowledge is power”, “education is essential” and that “we must study hard in order to become well-earning professionals”. In formal institutions of learning, it is the mind that is rewarded. Professorships, doctorates, and Nobel prizes are delivered to the greatest thinkers. Even from a limited understanding of the Hindu tradition that expounds on the deepest, most fundamental questions of life, society, metaphysics and spirituality, one may feel, even it seems to suppress the significance of this cloak that wraps us warm and keeps us moving.

Why then has Vivekananda laid emphasis on strengthening our physiques? Of what purpose is this temporary garment? Beyond vanity, what value does it add?

Why is it that most of a shakha’s programme is dedicated to games and other physical activities? Isn’t this what kids do? The classic picture of a raider in a game of Kabaddi, who in one breath tries to tag the opposing team, only to realise he has been caught and frighteningly taken down by a team of defenders.

Do these bruises in a game have anything to do with our mission? Or the martial art of Ni-Yudh where practicing self-defence for hours leaves us sweating and with muscle fatigue. Or the swift movements of Vyāmyogs and generous stretching of Yogāsana – do they relate in

part of our life in this country and so imminent danger is never really experienced. Beyond the vanity of modern day body building, there is no pressing need to have ‘muscles of iron’. And so, in our complacency, we simply decay. We become depressed and ill. Public health England advises we must undertake at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise every day. It even advises patients with cancer and crippling arthritis to move. So, for individual wellbeing, a focus of Sangh activity has been dedicated to physical activity.

Secondly, it is only a physically healthy individual that can develop a strong mind, a mind like a ‘thunderbolt’. The body and mind are intimately connected. A sluggish, tired and weak body cannot succeed in spiritual endeavour. In the system of Yog, right after the first two rungs of developing moral strength (Yama and Niyama) comes the rung of Āsana, that of physical capability. You’ll even notice in your daily lives. Take up a challenge. Take up Yog, martial arts, athletics, a sport or exercise of your choosing and immerse yourself in it. After a month of continuity, you will want to carry on, and if you do, the resulting mental wellbeing will become extraordinarily apparent.

Thirdly, a strong body is capable of serving society. The question must be asked that, although we may have the best of intentions, do we have the capabilities of such work? When Vivekandand arrived to America, he writes to his friend Alasingha in India of his hardships, “All those rosy ideas we had before I started have melted... Starvation, cold, hooting in the streets because of my dress, these are all the things I have to fight against.” We may have high ideals, but the harsh stresses of our environment soon catchup. If adequately trained, our bodies can be the only saving grace.

And finally, it brings people together. Doctorji’s simple methodology of coming together daily on a playfield was centred on the principle that regular physical proximity fosters a kind of intimate connection that cannot happen from dry seminars. The simple khel of ‘Ung-Bhung’ (a game where a player tries to make it out of an interlocking group that actively tries to keep him or her inside), espouses such a connection where players begin to lose their precious ‘personal space’ and unify with the whole. It is this unity of the whole where shakha has its strength. A simple game can bring diverse groups of people together.

So, as the winter settles and spring is near, let’s make a resolution to plan shakha activities in order for us to reach peak physical performance and health.

BODY

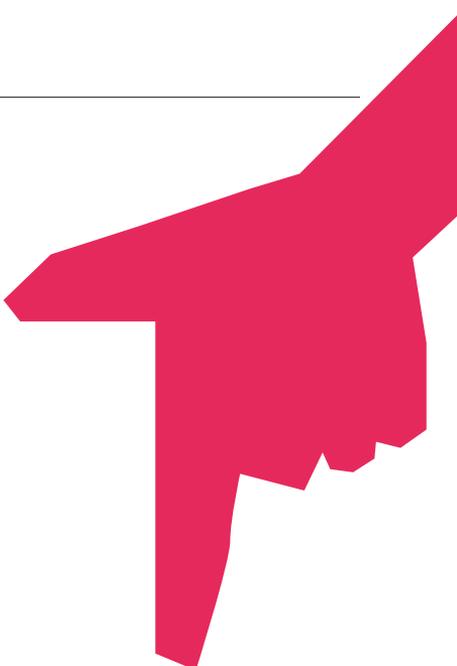
any way to our vision of “Vishwa Dharma Prakashena, Vishwa Shanti Pravarteka” (Universal righteousness and peace).

Unequivocally, yes.

Here are just a few reasons why Shareerik, or the physical activities of Sangh are of paramount importance.

Firstly, as our lifestyles are increasingly sedentary and our dietary needs dictated by convenience, we are primed by default to be physically inactive. Our kids will grow up aspiring for jobs behind a desk. Physically laborious jobs are not aspirational. Military training is not a compulsory

A Third Way

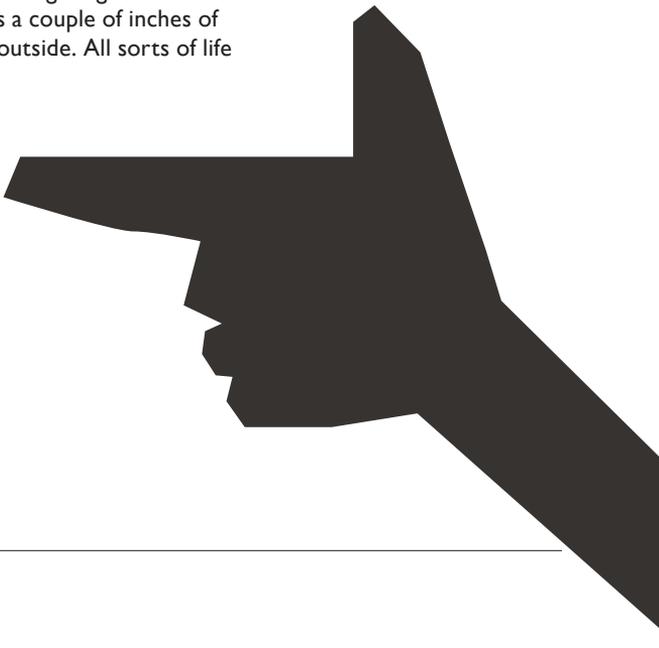
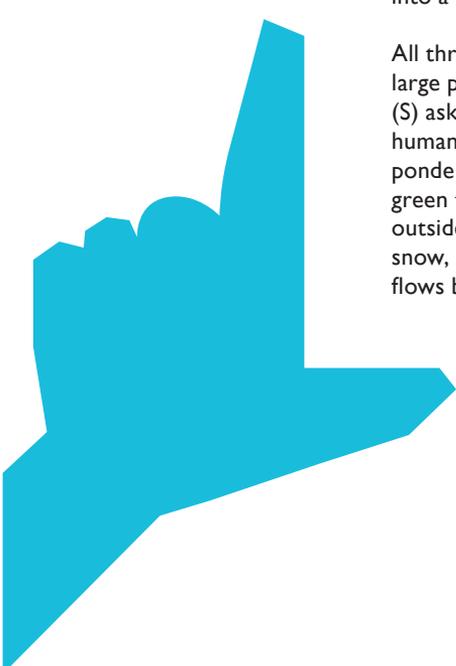


Sachin Nandha

Integral Humanism is a philosophical and scientific thought developed by Deendayal Upadhyay who was an eminent Indian thinker, social worker and politician. All the quotes in this article are from his Bombay lectures, April 22-25, 1965. Deendayal considers the progression of society as paralleled to the progression of humans.

A capitalist, a socialist and an integral humanist all walk into a coffee shop...

All three order their drinks. The capitalist (C) asks for large peppermint mocha with extra froth. The socialist (S) asks for a shot of espresso. And the integral humanist (H) looks at the menu, finds it perplexing, ponders a little, and then simply asks for an organic green tea. All three choose to sit gazing at the scene outside. It's snowing. There is a couple of inches of snow, and a busy high street outside. All sorts of life flows by...



C: Isn't it amazing the progress we've made in 150 years?

S: I don't think that homeless person outside asking people for money would agree with you.

Guarantee of Work

"It is clear that the resources must be produced by our own efforts. Therefore where a right to a guaranteed minimum is recognized, any individual who does not share in the efforts to produce is a burden to the society. Similarly any system which obstructs the production activity of the people is self-destructive."

C: But the majority would. Humanity, at least in the capitalist West has never had it so good.

S: Good? Are you for real? There are more people on anti-depressants than ever before, the bottom 80% of earners in society haven't had a pay rise in real terms for over a decade, we've trashed the environment, and vested interest groups have weakened our democracy...exactly what is so good? It may be good for the likes of you – the capitalist class. You guys have been running a racket for over a century trading other people's resources and labour!

C: That's the problem with you 'S', complaints, moans, and sob stories. You've got nothing better to offer. I accept all these problems are quite correct, but the present system of private capitalism coupled with individual liberty, can, and is solving all these issues. Profit is the best incentive for change.

S: Profit leads to exploitation. It's uneven individual liberty that allows people to exploit one another. Only State intervention and the right regulation can make society fairer, more equal.

C: Just like the Soviet Union, or Cuba? Great places to live they were!

S: How about we talk about Scandinavia – prosperous and more equal than our

society.

C: Hahaha, yes and with more suicides than any other region. Not forgetting that they are endowed with lots of natural resources which they have been exploiting ruthlessly, while having a tiny population.

S: Its unchecked liberty that leads to inequality and moral relativism. A real postmodern mess!

C: State control leads to oppression, and utopians like you do more harm than moral relativists ever could.

History tell us as much!

H: I wonder if there is another way to rethink our society? A way that is beyond the argument of liberty vs equality; or state vs the individual?

...S & C both look at each other, a little surprised, with a tinge of annoyance at the untimely interruption just as things were getting interesting.

S: Well, what do you mean?

C: Are you going to come up with some utopian daydream again, based on some ancient morality that failed centuries ago?

H: Shall we just think about this for a moment. Can we assume that humanity, on the whole, wants to be happy?

C: Sure thing.

H: And can we assume that a good base for happiness is when people on the whole are cooperative, have a sense of belonging, are optimistic about the future, and can exercise a good amount of liberty, and pursue their desires within the boundaries of that which is good for everyone?

Mutual Cooperation

"Vegetation and animal life keep each other alive. We get our oxygen supply with the help of vegetation whereas we provide carbon dioxide so essential for the growth of vegetable life. This mutual co-operation sustains life on this earth."

C: Well, yes – all that sounds reasonable enough, but...

H: Now just hold on C, give a girl a chance. Enjoy your extra frothy mocha for a minute will you.

...C holds his hands high and makes the motion of a retreat. Smiles and picks up his large cup of coffee.

H: Can we also agree that to achieve all that, we need to create wealth? We need people who have sufficient liberty and rights to pursue their ambitions, and look to advance themselves in one way or another?

Capital Formation

“For capital formation it is essential that a part of production be saved from immediate consumption and be used for further production, in future. Thus capital can be formed only by restraint on consumption. This is the basis of capital formation to which Karl Marx refers to as ‘surplus value’ in his treatise. In the capitalist system the industrialist creates capital with the help of this surplus value. In a socialist system, the state undertakes this task.”

S: Well, yes that’s quite obvious really! But the question is ...

H: See now you’ve interrupted, can you men just not listen for a few minutes while we bring some common grounding between us?

S: Okay, H, take it easy, carry on. I’m just going to order another shot of espresso.

H: Now... we accept that wealth-creation is indeed paramount to a secure, happy society, and we accept that liberty is important to that end... then the question arises how do we temper society? A society that does not over indulge in either wealth or liberty. To not exploit the weak or the environment? To not pursue short-term ends at the direct cost of longer term harm?

C: Well, that’s the \$64,000 question, isn’t it?

Society

“In our view society is self-born. Like an individual, society comes into existence in an organic way. People do not produce society. It is not a sort of club, or some joint stock company, or a registered co-operative society. In reality, society is an entity with its own ‘Self’, its own life; it is a sovereign being like an individual; it is an organic entity. We have not accepted the view that society is some arbitrary association. It has its own life. Society too has its body, mind, intellect and soul.”

H: Right. So, my contention is that rather than fighting inequality, why don’t we ask why liberty causes inequality?

S: Because it’s so blindingly obvious H, liberty causes inequality simply due to the fact of human nature. We have infinite desires, we have a will to power, and the strong, able, and privileged, like C over here, will always look to protect what they have. And so, the rest continue to fall further behind. And because that is the way it is, we need the State to intervene – tax the rich, curb the exploitation of labour, bring in the minimum wage, regulate the markets and so on.

H: I agree with everything you said about why we need State intervention? I disagree with your premise that people are inherently greedy, exploitative or have a will to power. People are malleable. Children can be made to be as cooperative, or as competitive depending on the values that society promotes.

Education

“To educate a child is in the interest of the Society itself. He or she becomes a responsible member of the society only by education and culture... and will indeed serve the society. On the other hand it will not be surprising if people grow indifferent to the society which leave them to fend for themselves.”

Could it not be that we have simply built a society where we turned people into competitive, power hungry and exploitative individuals? Equally, could we nurture people in a new style of society that are both ambitious and cooperative; wealth generating and equally generous?

What if production, capital, labour, regulation and governance were a means to create an integrated society, where every individual is encouraged to think about their responsibility to the whole society?

Human Knowledge Is Common Property

“While absorbing the wisdom of other societies it is only proper that we avoid their mistakes or perversities. Even their wisdom should be adapted to our particular circumstances. In brief, we must absorb the knowledge and gains of the entire humanity so far as eternal principles and truths are concerned.”

We could create a society where material externalities are not accepted as the ultimate success, or at least minimised at the worst; individuals collectively learn to restrain their appetites thinking first of the wider impact on society? Success could be redefined in terms of the positive change toward the betterment of the whole.

C: Well yes, I suppose all these things are possible but...

S: You seem to be alluding to some sort of integrated “whole” – and not relying on the individual or the State, but on cultural values of some sort.

Political Aspirations

“We have placed before ourselves the ideal of the four fold responsibilities, of catering for the needs of body, mind, intellect and soul with a view of achieve the integrated progress of man (and society). [Both should be governed by] Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha [which] are the four kinds of human effort.”

H: Right. Exactly that. A self-governing system with minimum government, where possible, and plenty of government intervention if required – it depends on the collective. If we can create an “integral humanism” where people are self-restrained, and yet ambitious not just for themselves but for all of us; then a society built on this integral humanism could be possible right?

...a silence creeps over the three of them. S & C contemplate. Then suddenly C realises he’s about to miss his train. He jumps out of his mild stupor, grabs his bag, hugs H, slaps S on the back and runs out of the warmth and into the cold air. S & H take a look at C running down the street before his stubby little legs move out of sight.

S: I wonder, if we really could curb wealth creation within the boundaries each individual’s ambitions... provided it’s in the best interest for the whole of society that is... it would need a change in mind set from everybody... well, there’s certainly something to think about!

H: All done with your espresso? Shall we make a move?





Tarun Shibir



Pranamy Matru Devata inspired bauddhik by Sale Balagokulam



Youth for Sewa workshop



Northern Island visit in celebration of Sister Nivedita's birth Anniversary



Bromley Sanskaar
Shakha Holi Milan



Samiti khel pratiyogita



