

# The Crossroads

Issue 13

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# THE DANCE OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY: SACRED SPACES AND THE FUTURE OF THE NATIVE

- The Editorial



Sacred groves are small areas of ancient forests or groups of trees set aside exclusively for religious purposes, which form a crucial tradition in environmentalism. They hold a special religious and spiritual importance for the people and communities living nearby. Bharat is one of the few places where these sites still exist. Often, local communities revere and protect these areas as homes for their deities, ancestral spirits, or even as the deities themselves.



This concept of having dedicated sacred spaces to commune with one's inner self can be found in various indigenous traditions in the world. Many such places around the world are centered around local nature deities like nymphs, spirits etc. In Bharatiya religious systems, we recognize a conscious presence (a Devata) in every aspect of the universe. The sacred groves are just a natural extension of the Devata's will. Here, the Devata's energy strongly manifests itself. These places are usually used by communities to worship, meditate and commune with the Divine.

According to Professor Madhav Gadgil, sacred groves represent a valuable legacy of ancient Bharat's environmental conservation. The religious significance attached to these sites results in strict rules governing all human interaction with them. Cutting trees and hunting animals in or around the groves are generally prohibited, with exceptions for gathering medicinal plants, firewood, or in emergencies, logging for local use. These rules have helped sacred groves become reservoirs of biodiversity, preserving plant and animal species that are disappearing elsewhere.

For instance, the sacred groves in Kodagu District, Karnataka, have preserved ancient trees of threatened species. However, these groves face threats from nearby coffee plantations and the felling of native trees for exotic species. Traditional practices, such as shifting cultivation, play a role in preserving these groves. It is crucial to promote and preserve these practices rather than replacing them with potentially harmful modern alternatives.

Sacred groves, numbering over a thousand, are spread across Bharat. They are notably present in the Western Ghats, Southwestern Bengal, the Northeast, Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. The decline in their numbers can be traced back to British rule, when the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources accompanied industrialization. British policies, branding traditional environmental practices as 'backward,' led to the destruction of forests previously protected by local communities.



Despite recognizing the decline in natural resources and nature-centric lifestyle, British actions, such as the Indian Forest Act of 1865, favored state control over forests. This trend continued, and by the time Bharat gained independence, community rights were almost nonexistent, and forest land remained under state ownership. Post-independence policies also focused on commercial forest use, sacrificing sacred groves for developmental projects. In response to community concerns, the Biodiversity Act of 2002 and the Forest Rights Act of 2006 were enacted. These laws aimed to involve communities in the conservation and management of their traditional lands. However, their implementation has faced challenges.



Loopholes in the Forest Rights Act deprive communities of their rights. The Gram Sabha, tasked with determining community rights, often faces political considerations.

Presently, sacred groves in Bharat, concentrated in the Western Ghats, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, survive due to traditional cultivation methods and religious beliefs. However, without swift action, these groves may too succumb to industrial and developmental pressures.



Measures such as granting exclusive rights to local communities, enacting specialized legislation and creating a comprehensive inventory of sacred groves are essential for their preservation.

At our current juncture, it is imperative to ponder upon the true essence of development. Does development solely manifest in towering skyscrapers and motorized roadways, even if it means a populace detached from the natural world, languishing in compromised health? How do we reconcile the destruction of time-honoured Earth-revering traditions with our concept of development? Should we rightfully label it as progress? The ancients seem to have embodied a more profound understanding of development than contemporary society. Their conception of progress encompassed the intrinsic importance of nature.

As we critique our past, often deeming it backward, the environmental repercussions of our modern idea of development force us to question whether the term 'backward' is more aptly applied to our current trajectory.

These groves play a significant role in forest and biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture and indication of the natural productivity of a region. Therefore, efforts should focus on surveying, restoring, and conserving these culturally and ecologically significant sites.

**"Hinduism comes closest to being a nature religion. Rivers, rocks, trees, plants, animals, and birds all play their part, both in mythology and everyday worship. This harmony is most evident in remote places like this, and I hope it does not lose its unique character in the ruthless urban advance." - Ruskin Bond**



*Trailblazing with TDK*

CONFIRMATION BIAS

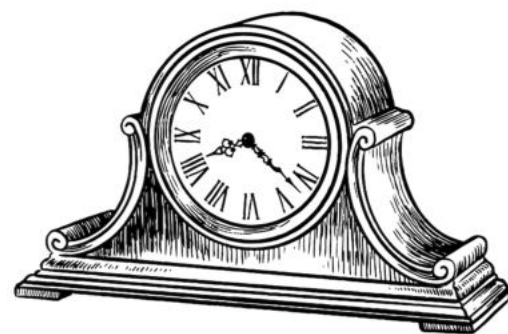


Confirmation bias is a cognitive bias coined by psychologist Peter Wason; it refers to the need for individuals to seek, interpret, and recall information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs and/or preconceived notions. It leads to effects such as attitude polarization, belief perseverance, irrational primacy effect, and illusory correlation. Confirmation bias often robs one of their ability to objectively analyse and understand any situation. While some psychologists define confirmation bias as selectively collecting evidence that supports existing beliefs, others extend it to preserving one's beliefs throughout the entire process of recalling events and interpreting evidence. The bias is mostly a result of automatic, unintentional strategies rather than deliberate deception and is indeed a challenge to eliminate. However, it can be managed through good education and an improvement in critical thinking skills. Notably, confirmation bias has been identified in various contexts, in politics, organizations, finance, and even in scientific circles, contributing to overconfidence in one's findings and a clear resistance to contrary evidence. This bias is exacerbated in the digital age through filter bubbles and echo chambers in social media, reinforcing individuals' exposure to information that only aligns with their views while excluding opposing perspectives. This gives rise to intellectually malnourished individuals who contribute to the decadence of society as a whole.



# 01 TIME

- Yash Baisya



Time. The most powerful gift of life. The supreme force that guides and develops personalities. A force which cannot be turned around, and a gift which cannot be retrieved.



I want you to invest. Invest in this power of time. What you should understand is that when you invest in financial assets, your investment is not the face value of the asset. You essentially invest in the force of time, hoping that it will turn favourable and yield a positive return. This is exactly why not planning your investments and actively investing right now, at this very moment, is a major loss for your future.

Firstly, know what happens when you do not invest today. Assuming you wish to invest later in life, when you have a stable source of income and a better grasp of markets, what could possibly go wrong with such a mentality? Well, you reduced the value of all your investments. You eliminated years, if not decades, from the time period for your investments to grow in value. I cannot help but lament at the loss you have already added to all your future decisions. You essentially forego the benefits of investing early and letting your investments compound.

Then why does there exist a stigma around letting adolescents invest in financial assets? The bottom line is that before we developed economically, the idea of investments was closely related with high-risk speculations. Thus, they are associated with levels of caution and expertise. The very thought of you investing might sound jarring at first. Stocks are equated with aspects of gambling in many households. However, there exists a massive opportunity cost of not investing today.

It should be made clear that investment is not gambling. It is determined by quantitative factors, such as interest rates, risk spread, demand and supply, just to name a few. With adequate training, one can easily grasp the basics and use these factors to leverage a profit in markets. Unlike gambling, trading and investment in stocks, equity, ETFs and cryptocurrency is not based on luck, rather, it is based on the infinitely many forces of the market. Reading the right forces ensures that you will not make a significant loss if forces are unfavourable. Contrary to gambling, investments can be controlled and calculated. In fact, the longer one gambles, the more money they stand to lose. However, the longer one invests, the higher the chance of getting a greater positive return.





It should also be noted that an investor who makes a profit on 5 in every 10 investments he makes is considered an outstanding, exceptional genius in his field. Therefore, it is clear that we are not looking at making an ambitious profit at every investment we make, rather, I urge you to make multiple high-risk investments. Despite most of them failing, those that will stay around will be compounded heavily by the time you grow older, and offer a high return, one that exceeds all your expectations.



The compounding effect of time is just one of the many reasons why you should invest today. Investing today will allow you to invest in assets that offer significant upside, but are high risk. These investments are fairly long-term, as they emerge in sunrise industries, which take many years to develop. Taking on such calculated high risks is not as feasible in the future, where there is practically no time for you to take on multiple investments of such sorts. Thus, investing today will also build the required expertise for better personal financial management and investment in the future, and you would be able to spot promising high-risk investments that would otherwise be foregone due to inexperience.

I will not tell you where to invest or strategies for investments, as it would be utterly useless and shallow when compared to what you can learn from the internet. What I do wish to tell you is that it will be shuddery to talk to your parents regarding these matters.

There will be disagreements. Therefore, I advise you to learn and research. Use a simulator for trading after you inform your family about your need to invest, in order to assure them of your skill at investing and gain experience. Use the internet to your advantage to learn strategies and different types of investments you can make. This will by far be the most important part of all your investments. All I wish to warn you of, is the allure of quick money and the mental pressure of your investments performing badly in the short term. Set goals and work in the long term, and you will not be deceived by the lustre of earning a quick buck or be unsettled by the momentary ups and downs of the markets.

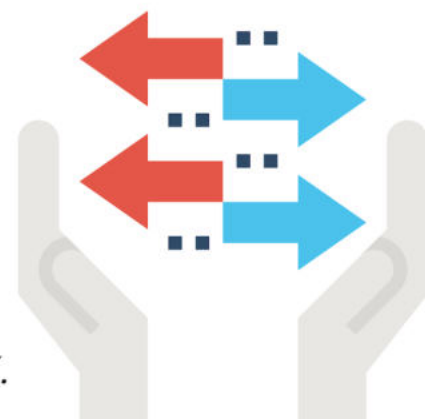
Investments and financial planning are two of the most important 21st-century skills. I hope you now understand the importance of investing as early as possible and will develop the necessary skills to add another stream of revenue to sustain your family in the long term, especially in this unpredictable and uncertain future we see for ourselves.

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# 02 THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

- Prisha K.



They say give respect, get respect. This phrase has been repeated so many times that it has lost all meaning, but now, it's up to us to make sure it doesn't lose its true essence.

In this world the most important thing for a man to live peacefully in this chaotic world is respect. Take a very big superstar for example; he's got a bad name. People do not respect him or value him. Whatever he says creates controversies and the public keeps getting mad at him and lose their faith in him. Now, take a look at the secretary of a small society. Everyone in the society values his opinions and ideas and do whatever he says. Getting respect is the hard part, giving is the easier one. However, to get respect you have to give respect first.



So, you get to do the easier thing first. Respect everyone no matter what. Let them be your junior or senior, let them be skinnier or bulkier, everyone should get the same respect. If you give respect it is bound to come back to you. Now with that respect, you have to learn to uphold your morals and live by the values you look up to. You should know to distinguish between right and wrong. You must learn to stand up for the truth albeit to your own friends.

To get respect you needn't have a post or an official rank. It comes from the way you carry yourself. You should give yourself the value and respect you want others to give you. Follow the rules and morals you want others to follow. Create an ideal for them and live as that ideal.

All of this respect and value sounds so baseless and pointless, right? But it is not. This is what dignifies a person. It gives a person faith in one's own capability and the confidence to do the job in the right way.

It is imperative to understand the social contract of society: **"Give respect and get respect"**

# 03 REALITY AND FANTASY

- Abhinav Singh & Shubham Velani



Fantasy is something you can only interpret. It is not the ultimate reality. It only contains characters who don't exist till date. We have several examples - Iron Man, Thor, Captain America and much more. They do hard work, but not as much work as real heroes do. Fictional movies are made just for entertainment, but real-life heroes are not just for entertainment. They work for the citizens.

Many of us think that there are no real-life heroes, but that's completely wrong. Some major examples were seen in the COVID-19 pandemic. Doctors and police officials suffered for our safety in the COVID-19 pandemic. They stayed in hospitals and on dark roads, curing patients and ensuring our safety 24/7. Other examples are the army generals. They were at the borders for our safety, leaving their families and protecting the boundaries of our country without thinking about themselves.

On the other hand, fantasy gives us the courage to become real-life heroes. Just look at 'Avengers: Endgame', where Iron Man sacrificed his own life without thinking about his family, just to save his partners. There are also some movies based on real-life incidents - 'Shershaah', 'Uri: The Surgical Strike' and 'Khaki' (series). These movies help us build our mental strength, and inspire us to become real heroes.







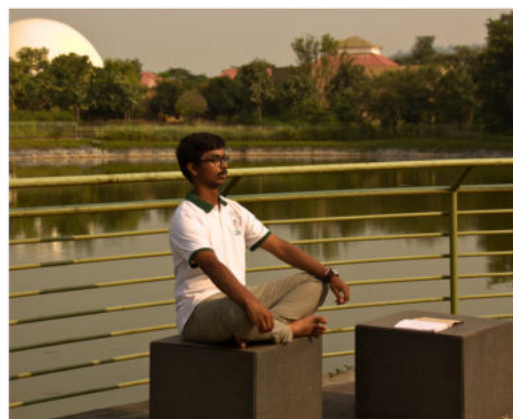
# *Meditation*

- Eranki Viswanath Chaitanya

Meditation and I have quite a history. For years, I have been told that meditation makes us look within, “inside.” I never truly understood what that meant, until I had 3 sessions of meditation at Sidhabari.

The Chinmaya Ashram in Sidhabari was, without a doubt, the highlight of our weeklong educational tour. As the sun set on the very first night, we ventured into Gurudev’s Samadhi Sthal. An unfamiliar feeling of comfort and positivity washed over me; I’d never been to a place that was brimming with such potent spiritual energy.

At this juncture, it would be fitting to give you all a fair understanding of my aversion towards meditation. From the days of my youth, the list of my interests was long and varied. Meditation, however, was not a part of it. To me, closing my eyes for more than 10 minutes seemed as gargantuan a task as scaling a mountain.



The foremost advocate for meditation in my life was my grandmother. I cannot recollect the sheer magnitude of her efforts to inculcate it into my life, but I know for sure that those efforts were in vain. Not once, in the last 14 years of my life, had I meditated. But, as fate would have it, this educational tour would change that.



Gazing at the heart of the Chinmaya Tapovan Ashram, at the very pinnacle of spiritual upliftment and innate focus, I awakened to a novel possibility: discovery of the self through meditation. While all this was going through my mind, my body had almost given up. So I slept, but I slept with a solemn resolve - I would come back the next day.

True to my promise, I was back in the Samadhi Sthal. This was my moment, my venture into the unseen, or rather, the unknown.

Despite my misconceptions about meditation, I sat down and closed my eyes. In the chilly morning air of Sidhabari, silence found its way into my mind, and soon, I was engrossed in meditation. Silence brought peace to my psyche, and I could feel it. The never-ending rush of thoughts that would normally flood my mind ceased, and the brief respite I got was beyond refreshing.

The silence was beautiful, and for the first time in my life, I enjoyed it. When I opened my eyes, I found that 40 minutes had passed. How? That remains a mystery. But one thing is for certain: something in that Sthal stretched the boundaries of my focus by a giant margin. As I walked out and gazed at the snow-capped Himalayas, I could feel the energy and positivity coursing through my body.

In my second stint at the Sthal, I decided to opt for something much more familiar - chanting. It was an experiment that sought to answer a simple question: can chanting replace silence as a tool for self-unfoldment? The answer came a short while later. As the words started flowing out of my mouth, I shifted my mental lens, so that it focused on one thing alone: Bhagwan’s name. At the tiniest of intervals, my mind fluttered away, but I reined it in and kept chanting. At the close of the second session, I had found my answer. Chanting was another astounding medium to achieve focus, but only when it was performed with absolute precision and unwavering dedication.



The first time had been about silence, the second time about the chanting. The third session brought with it an entirely new mode of meditation for me. In my quest to explore the nooks and crannies of meditation, I decided to simply embrace all the thoughts that rushed into my mind. I would neither quell them nor indulge in them. As the familiar cascade of thoughts began their endless surge through my mind, I recollected every memory, every idea, every passing thought. I had to rein myself in and force myself not to relive my memories or rethink my ideas. But when I turned my back on the Sthal for the last time, my mind was bereft of its once-usual agitation. Thoughts would come and thoughts would go, but my mind stayed calm throughout. The feeling was indescribable.

After this experience, I decided that I would practise meditation and cherish every moment of it, be it recollecting my thoughts or just sitting in silence. Meditation is a wonderful practice, and I look forward to inculcating it into my daily life.



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# CIRS REPORTS

**BREAKING  
NEWS**



CIRS was honored to host Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran, the distinguished Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India. Our students found immense inspiration in his insightful speech, where he elucidated India's economic growth story. Dr. Nageswaran graciously addressed a spectrum of questions, showcasing his profound understanding and clarity of economics and Indian economic foreign policy. Noteworthy was his down-to-earth nature and his ability to seamlessly weave complex ideas into relatable bits of information for our students. The event left a lasting impact on both our staff and students.



CIRS students were delighted to attend a six-day session with Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda Ji at the Chinmaya Gardens Ashram. His profound insights into the nine forms of devotion were a delight to our student's ears. The talks served as a source of motivation to our students, inspiring many to come up with deep philosophical questions and empowering them to discuss various topics surrounding religion and spirituality, which are otherwise neglected by the student populace.





# Battling Perceptions

## HOW DO YOU WIN OR LOSE PEOPLE?

- Raghav Agrawal

It's natural to care about what others think of us. After all, we live in a social world, where our relationships with others are essential for our well-being. So, why do others' perceptions about us matter? It is always someone else's perception of us that helps us grow in all aspects. If people perceive us as competent, confident and trustworthy, they are more likely to respect us and give us opportunities. On the other hand, if they perceive us as incompetent, insecure or untrustworthy, they are less likely to have healthy interactions with us. In other words, others' perceptions of us can have a significant impact on our lives. They can affect our relationships, our careers, our student lives and our overall sense of well-being.



**निंदक नियरे राखिए आँगन कुटी छवाय,  
बिन पानी, साबुन बिना, निर्मल करे सुभाय।**

This very beautiful and meaningful doha was composed by the great Sant Kabir. Through this, he suggests that the best way to grow as an individual is by always having someone near us who criticises us. Eventually, we will find out that the same person helped us the most and that he is our best friend.

You might think that we ourselves hardly play a role in influencing what someone else thinks about us. However, in reality, it is the exact opposite. Others' perceptions of us are nothing but a reaction to, and a reflection of, our own behaviour and personality. What we do is what people get to know about us. This is exactly what forms their first impression of us. This then spreads to other people through conversations. So, make sure that there is more of you to appreciate than to disparage. You should reach out to people with a positive mindset about yourself. This need not be conveyed directly, instead, it should reflect in every action you take up.

Another major factor that influences others' opinions of us is the quality of our interactions with people and how we deal with them. When communicating with others, be mindful of your tone of voice, your body language, and the choice of your words. Be respectful and professional, even in a disagreement. People are more likely to trust and respect someone consistent in their behaviour. Be someone who is reliable, honest, and trustworthy. Genuineness and authenticity in your behaviour with others is what prevails and creates an impact. You cannot "fake it till you make it". You will only end up breaking everything. The true nature of man is to acknowledge and accept the truth as it is. You are special. You are as equally blessed as everyone else. You are unique in your own way. You are worthy and efficient when you are yourself.

Let me give you my own example. There was a time in my life when I was a disrespectful and disobedient kid. It took me while to realise that being talented is overrated, in the end it is attitude which matters, my attitude shut the door for many opportunities that I later realised I had missed. It was not until I noticed my peers' behaviour towards me that I realised I had to change. I picked myself up out of the dirt and started working and reflecting upon my personality. Now, I am in the process of growing into a responsible individual who is recognised and appreciated for his talents and personality. All I had to do was reflect on the reason my peers had started thinking otherwise of me and change my attitude accordingly. That is exactly what you have to do if you are fighting a similar battle.

Let me caution you - it is not going to be easy. Criticism will be shot at you from every direction, but you ought to have a strong will. Be true to yourself and stand by your ideals. Only then will society perceive you as a strong and confident individual. You also have to keep in mind that you cannot please everyone. There are shadows even when there is light, aren't there? But that's okay. The important thing is to focus on the people who matter to you and to manage their perceptions in a way that is healthy and productive.



# MATHEMATICS HAS A FUNDAMENTAL FLAW

- Aryan India Gavaskar



There is a 'hole' at the heart of mathematics, because of which we will never know everything with absolute certainty. Here's the story behind it. 150 years ago, Georg Cantor had come up with an interesting proof: diagonalization. He wondered if there are more natural numbers or real numbers. The answer might seem obvious - there is an infinite number of both. However, Cantor wanted to challenge this logic.

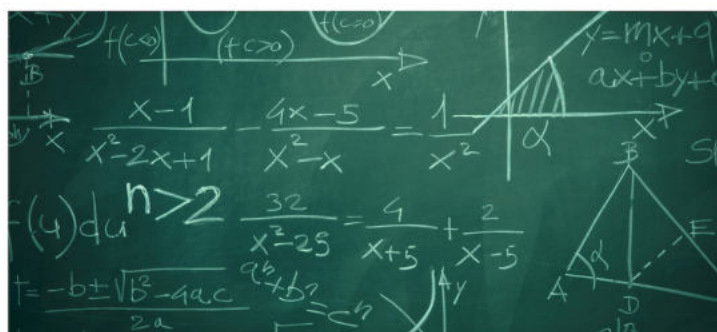
Cantor imagined an infinite list, maintaining every natural number on one side, and on the other, a list of all the real numbers between 0 and 1. So, every real number between 0 and 1 will correspond to a natural number, and they balance each other out perfectly. However now, Cantor proved that there can be a new real number formed from this list.

You start by taking the first digit of the first number, and adding 1 to it. Then take the 2nd digit of the 2nd number, and add one again. Then take the 3rd digit of the 3rd number, the 4th digit of the 4th number, and add one again. Do this process up to infinity. You obtain a completely new number which differs from each of the previous real numbers by at least one digit. This new number cannot be matched with any natural number, because we have already run out of natural numbers.

While this was happening in the world of number theory, Gauss and Lobachevsky discovered non-Euclidean geometry. The heart of Newtonian calculus was poorly defined, and now, Georg Cantor was proving that infinity itself was much more complex than anyone had ever imagined. In all this upheaval, mathematics fractured and a huge debate broke out at the end of the 19th century. On one side there were the intuitionists, who thought that Cantor's work was pure foolishness. They thought that mathematics was a pure and sacred creation; there could be nothing flawed or incomplete about it.

On the other side were the formalists, who proved the theory correct, and believed in the rigor and formality of mathematics. They were led by a man named David Hilbert, who wanted to secure the foundation of mathematics by developing a new system of proof. He had created a language of symbols, with a rigid set of manipulation rules for those symbols. He published a book called the Principia Mathematica which contains 2000 pages, of which 762 pages were dedicated to a complete proof of  $1+1=2$ . They wrote three volumes, and when they tried to write their 4th volume, mathematicians had already demonstrated its inaccuracies. Hilbert had three big questions he wanted answers to:

- **Is mathematics complete?**
- **It is free of contradictions?**
- **Is math 'decidable'? Meaning, is there some way to determine that math always works?**

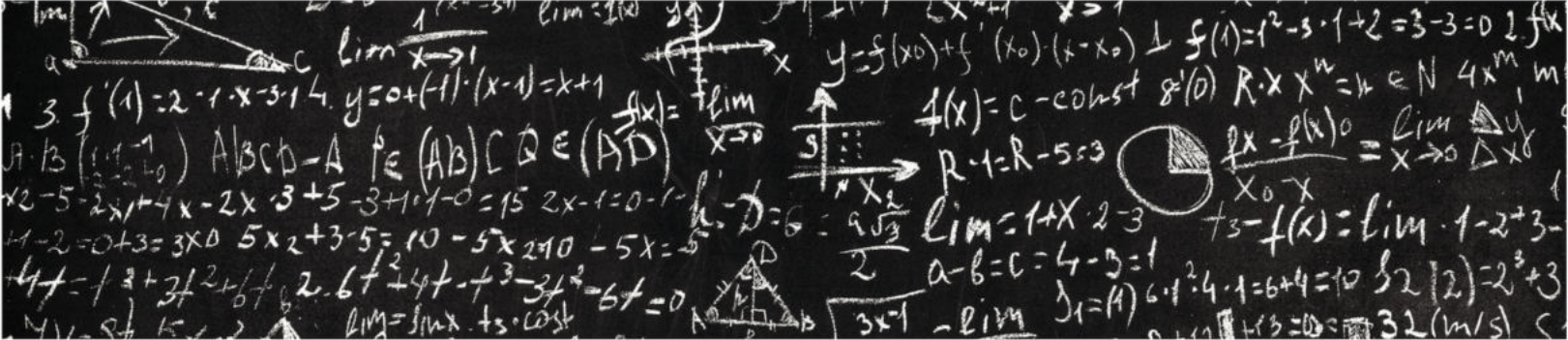


The answer to all three of these questions was yes. Or, at least, David Hilbert said so. But in a major conference, 24-year-old Kurt Gödel found that the answer to Hilbert's questions was a big **NO!** Gödel's proof worked using symbols, just the way Hilbert wanted it. He fabricated a system of symbols that corresponded to words. For example,  $A(\text{Book}) \supset (\text{will be}) B(\text{falling})$  translates to 'Book will be falling', and 'No human is immortal' will be  $\sim \exists (x)(\text{HCx}) \wedge I(x)$ . Gödel created all this to make a statement. He created his own number, called the Gödel Number 'G'. The statement he made was simple, but it perplexes mathematicians to this day.





He stated that there is no proof for the Gödel Number. Now, what does this mean? Think about it, if it is false, there is a proof for it. However, what you have just proven is incorrect. And if it is true then the methodical process is incomplete because math follows statements that are true without any proof. This goes to say that there will always be statements in mathematics which cannot be proven. This also means that math cannot be consistent since it is incomplete. Hilbert is left with only the third and final question: The question of decidability.



Alan Turing invented the Turing Machine, which functions like a normal computer but halts if an answer is found and doesn't halt if the answer is never-ending. Seeing this, mathematicians imagined a machine H+, which will predict if the Turing Machine will halt or not and will make it do the opposite. H+ was thus called 'The Decidability Machine'. If you give the code of H+ to a machine just like H+ (call it H) without making it do the opposite, a problem arises. If H concludes H+ never halts and this will make H+ immediately stop and if it thinks it will halt, then it is made to loop. Whatever output 'The Decidability Machine' gives, there is a contradiction. Thus, a machine such as H cannot exist, proving that math is not decidable.

Now, one might think this would have driven mathematicians crazy but instead, thinking about this problem led to discoveries that changed the world. The invention of the Turing Machine cracked the Nazi Enigma code, which changed the course of a war. It further led to the invention of phones and tablets, but that's a story for another day!

07

The Colors of the Cosmos

- Avika Rahul Mundra

A volatile world with a hundred different hues,  
Up in the serene sky a brilliant blue.  
Woven by the harmonious heavens above,  
Are careless clouds showering limitless love.

Governing the gargantuan gown of graceful green,  
Which adorns the Earth wearing a smile so serene.  
Surrounded by the shattering song of the sea,  
Flooded with a million mesmerizing melodies.

Atop the pigmented peaks of the treacherous trails,  
Under the vibrant voice of the nightingale.  
A dialect of the divine filling everything around,  
Colors caress a cosmos oh so profound.

CIRS Monthly Newsletter

The Crossroads



# THEATRE AND LEADERSHIP



**THEATRE INSTILS AN INNATE QUALITY TO HANDLE TOUGH SITUATIONS. WHEN IT'S THE NEED OF THE HOUR, THAT IS WHAT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.**

- Rishi Suresh Iyer

A true definition of the creativity possessed by humans can be seen through theatre. Spinning stories with utmost poise, the playwright creates an ambience for the fruition of the play. The twists and turns, the crafting of characters, the tireless theatrics, all add into the final performance. It's a slog. Day in and day out, all you think about is every detail, every small wrinkle in the story. And one day, poof! It's right in front of you. The product of all the hard work that you and countless others put in.

But, something's different now. You don't see the mistakes. You don't see the forgotten lines. You don't see anything other than the manifestation of your vision. A figment of your imagination brought to life. Every intricacy revealed to the outside world.

What changed? You. You became a leader. In the process of making a play, when the weight of the whole world weighs you down, you stood up. You didn't let it pin you down. That changed you. In the process of making a play, you made the hardest decisions humans face in their whole lives. The collective or the self.

You begin to see the bigger picture. Every moment, your thoughts and actions align to bring out a better final product. The experience you gain in creating a play propels you forward in every walk of life. The obstacles you face while making a play are innumerable, but somehow, something inside stops you from giving up. You work for a higher goal. The daunting task of making a theatrical masterpiece pushes you.



Inevitably, you become a team player. Working to bring out your vision on the stage is impossible alone. The oneness of your team makes all the difference. You learn to handle people and situations unlike ever before. One small slip and the confidence of many is shaken. It is you who stand like an unshakable wall. The everlasting pillar of support. Once you become that pillar of support, they look up to you everywhere. Now, what changed? The way people see you. You became the personification of an ideal.



Bringing out what you have envisioned isn't easy. Obstacles will arise, sometimes at the worst times. Yet, you stayed composed and found a solution. How? Your actions kept the greater goal as the ideal. You worked not for yourself. You worked for the vision you shared with all those around you. That made all the difference. Just about a year back, I faced the exact same problem. I did falter at the start but soon, the goal became clear. With it, the path cleared out as well. At the end, none of the struggles mattered. We reached the goal and that was it.

Through theatre, you become a leader. You learn new skills; you learn about people and most importantly you learn about yourself. You meet yourself as you express the infinite creativity within. Along the way, you would have thought it was not possible. As you stand at the culmination of your efforts, transformed and endowed with a higher vision, you turn back and realise that it was perfectly possible all along. It was right within you. Theatre was a mere mirror to see that creativity housed within. This theatre season, look within, not without. Make the most of every situation you're put in and keep the greater goal first. The rest will simply fall into place.



# Rise in Love

*An Exploration into Devotion*

- Malhar Alap Modi

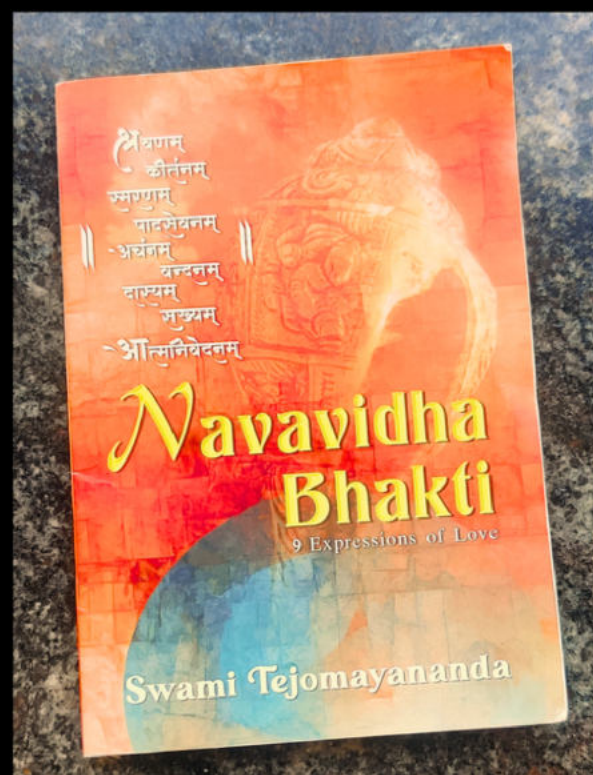


In the past week, a few of us from Grade 11 and 12 attended the talks by Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda Ji - Senior Spiritual Mentor (Chinmaya Mission). Swami ji had chosen the topic of Bhakti, more specifically 'Navavidha Bhakti' - The nine ways of devotional expression.

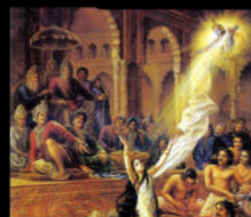
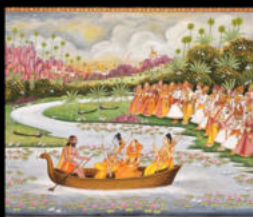
The discussions delved into Shravanam (Listening), Kirtanam (Singing His glories), Smaranam (Remembering Him), Pada Sevanam (Serving His feet), Arcanam (Worshipping His Idol), Vandanam (Prostrating to Him), Dasyam (Being his servant), Sakhyam (Being His friend), and Atma Nivedanam (Self-surrender to Him). These nine expressions of bhakti, elucidated in our scriptures, were codified in the form of a shloka by Bhakta Prahlad ji. The talks were an absolute delight, each minute brought out the magnanimity of the teacher in trying to bring himself right down to our level with simple relatable examples, humourous jokes and soulful kirtan sessions. While attending, these talks became an increasingly profound experience. While it is often said that spiritual leaders emanate a divine presence, I initially didn't sense it on the first day. However, by the second day, there was a perceptible change in the atmosphere, and by the third day, my undivided attention was completely on Guruji and his words. One only has to wonder about the immense sadhana required to emanate such a strong spiritual aura.

The focus of the talks was the nine expressions of Bhakti. Which among them is the most crucial? Atma Nivedanam may seem obvious, and it is indeed one of the most significant. Regardless, the specific expression chosen is inconsequential; dedicating oneself to any one practice opens myriad paths. What intrigued me most was the Kirtanam aspect – not just vocalizing Bhagwan's glories, but as one's spiritual practice deepens, even the act of observing and appreciating the world becomes a form of worship.

Throughout the nine days, Guruji adeptly elucidated the intricacies of Navavidha bhakti. Personally, I found Smaranam (remembrance) and Atma-Nivedanam (self-surrender) particularly compelling. Guruji transitioned from simple methods of devotion to the characteristics of an ideal devotee. Emphasis was also placed on Brahman and the Vedic idea of yoga (union with God), aligning with my current spiritual classes conducted by Swamiji Anukoolananda ji. In conclusion, these talks were profoundly enriching, leaving me with a plethora of questions to explore. Each day was an exploration with hours spent in pondering over questions, only for them to be answered in the next session. This way, every session felt like a personal experience curated especially for me. Overall, it was a truly unique experience.



*Love is the one thing that always remains with us.*  
- Swami Tejomayananda





# 10 SWANUBHOOTI VATIKA - A REFLECTION



Housed within the sprawling campus of Chinmaya Vibhooti is a hidden gem. An experience unlike any other; Swanubhooti Vatika. A walk of self-reflection for spiritual discovery and unfoldment. The students of Grade 11 had the chance to visit it during their educational tour of Pune. Here are a few reflections on the experience:



Over there I learned a lot about myself. I discovered who I am and how I can approach the challenges of life. The stories outlined there were simple yet profound, as they conveyed the message of spirituality in the simplest of ways. The ambience of the entire place made it all the more unforgettable as I will never find the same environment anywhere else.

**- Ishaan Srivastava XI Sci.**

Staying there, time passed by so quickly I didn't even notice it. The positive vibrations there encouraged me to introspect and find answers. I'm definitely not a morning person but our first experience there uplifted my spirits throughout the trip. The story of the two swans really struck me and made a lasting impact. I learned that dwelling on the past just holds you back and stops future growth. Live in the present! That was my biggest takeaway.

**- Nitya Goenka IB-I**

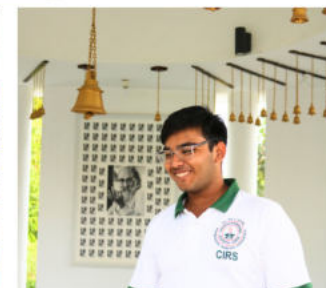


This was the first time I had felt such solitude in my life. My inner self called out to explore the Vatika further. The intuitive nature of the quotes and the various ways in which the Vatika made us introspect struck me. The experience of the Vatika had a sense of completeness around it which was irreplaceable. I would definitely urge everyone to go have a visit themselves!

**- Archit Sarawgi XI Mgt.**

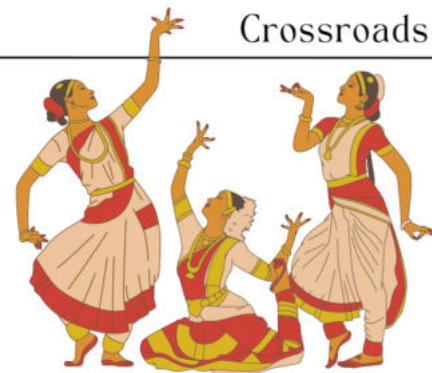
It was almost like heaven. It was a garden of unfoldment and taught me a great deal. It taught me to be alone by myself. As I walked through the Vatika, I quite literally felt like I was having a conversation with nature. I reflected upon my past experiences and realized the changes I could have made. I met my true self and recognized my infinite nature. I learned that happiness of life comes from within and not externally. One quote stayed with me: "You are your sky; you are your limits."

**- Prakhar Agrawal XI Mgt.**





# 11 ANY BODY CAN DANCE



- HRITIK VIKAS BHAGERIA

Dance. What comes to your mind when you listen to this word? A set of moves that matches with a rhythm or a beat. For me, it's just happiness. Dance is your emotions taking the form of a set of moves. It's an expression of emotions, like art. Bharat has been a homeland to this beautiful form of art, dating back to the era of Bhagwan Shri Krishna and even earlier. Dance and music are an integral part of our culture. Dancers were idolized in olden days by having statues created of them. But that's not the point. How many of us know, or will even look at the styles of Bharatiya Nritya?

Bharatiya Nritya was a means of entertainment. In the olden days, dancers used to entertain kings in their courts. These days, the hype around western dance is slowly eroding the beauty of our traditional dance forms. Bharatiya dance styles have such vast theories behind them, and various ways of performing them on stage. The form of dance differs from region to region. Bharatanatyam, Dandiya, Bihu, Odissi, Kathak, Kathakali, dance flows through the culture of the entire country.

The Late Birju Maharaj was a pillar of Bharatiya Nritya in the modern days. His dance was so graceful that his praises were sung beyond the borders of Bharat. Looking a little further back, our beloved Manmohana, Bhagwan Shri Krishna gave life to the streets of Gokul with his mesmerizing dances. Bhagwan Natraja, an avatar of Bhagwan Shiva is the deity of worship for all dancers. Legends say, his dance was to release the souls of all men and dispel the illusion of this world. His dance was the cradle of creation. His moves gave birth to this entire universe. The rage of his steps can bring an end to the universe for which Bhagwan Brahma has to be prepared. So, this further proves that dance was not just entertainment. It was the source of many other things that are synonymous with us, even today.



Not only that, dance is a healing tool that cures many problems. It is proven that dance helps us to improve our heart and lung condition. It helps you overcome depression which is a common problem for today's youth. It also leads to increasing energy levels in your body and makes you fresh and active. But why Bharatiya Nritya?

Bharatiya Nritya narrates stories of our forgotten Itihasa that are not known by most Bharatiyas these days. The dancer narrates a story almost exclusively through gestures. Most of the classical dances of Bharat enact stories from Bharatiya mythology. Each form represents the culture and ethos of a particular region or a group of people. It is a symbol of their identity which is unique to them and their collective.

For me, dance has always been a way of expressing my emotions. I still remember watching television and seeing everyone dance even though I never learned how to dance. Slowly and steadily my interest in dance increased, but I never went to any classes because I didn't want to become a professional dancer. I always wanted to dance for myself and for my loved ones. So, I always found ways on how a step could express my emotions and make the audience understand them. That was given to me through the magic of Bharatiya Nritya. The connection I developed with my culture and Itihasa was all because of my intrigue in dance.

This is how I learned to dance and found a way to be more expressive. I found a way to make others understand my feelings through simple moves. When the message of my dance resounds within the hearts of every person who sees it, I feel like I have achieved my purpose. It's never too late to learn dance because as cliché as it is, **Any Body Can Dance**. So, start thinking on different levels. Who knows? You might be next in line to find your passion, which could redefine your life in the years to come!



# 12 Celebrations AND CHANGE

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-Yash Himanshu Bavishi

Be it the bright diyas, spirited colours, delicious delicacies or exquisite decorations, our festivals boast a variety of aspects that celebrate the unique spirit of Bharat. Carefully curated rituals, painstakingly deciphered from the Vedic scripts form the core of our festivals; they make our festivals the guiding light towards connecting with the Divine. Millions around the globe carry out these ceremonies with genuineness which bring about economic, agricultural and cultural harmony in society. Augmentation of trade, strengthened relationships and magnanimous charitable events take place. However, a tidal wave is perpetually poised to stain the pure muslin of our rituals. A wave of unscrupulous condemnation of our 'utsavs' while disregarding logic and embracing fallacies.

Fallacies that accuse our festivals of being 'backward' and flawed. The 'vyavahar' towards our festivals is changing. The vibrant crackers are shadowed by calls of emission and the spirited colours are dulled by cries of contamination. Religious riots and communal violence take place on the most awaited days of the year. On a grander scale, these protests are present not just on a physical level, but also on an intellectual one.

International organisations take a stand on the undoubted king of free expression - social media. Giving flight to their ideologies by glazing it with a sugary coat of 'well-wishing', designating our unique festivals as 'global celebrations', they further go on to preach and pontificate to us about how we should celebrate the very festivals which we have been celebrating for decades. All while turning a blind eye towards our right to live our indigenous way of life. Our festivals are primarily a celebration of nature weaving around its cycle of seasons and agriculture. Pongal, Baisakhi, Makar Sankranti and Onam are prime examples. Our festivals underpin economic stability. The C.A.I.T. (Confederation of All India Traders) has documented record sales of ₹3.75 lakh crore, just this DIWALI. From a small-time diya hawker to an opulent industrialist, this growth of trade aids all. Relationships are reinforced and cut-off ties are patched again. However, propagandists have corrupted the entire idea of performing these festivals. Highlighting the spikes in carbon emissions, the surge in food wastage and the peaking of unsafe environments, they needlessly connect every negative outcome to our celebrations and dumb down the lofty philosophical depth of each festival. Should we change our millennia-old prescribed rituals, or should we instead notice our drifting lifestyle choices which are causing the degradation of society and the environment?

Our celebrations are iced with innocence and purity that the revolting hordes misunderstand. We live in tune with our surroundings throughout the year and earn the right to boisterously revel and jol during our festivities. Our artists, artistes and artisans draw out their sacred tools and skills, to carve out joy for the public, chiselling the revelries of children and polishing the spirit of elders. Beware the dark clouds of false propaganda and the gloom of theirs, as we are the children of 'BHARAT', the ones who revel in light. If at all anything needs to change, it's our 'vyavahar', our day-to-day actions which do not reflect the great ideals of our ancestors; not the 'tyohaar' which are a testament to our immortal civilization. Dear friends, beware the dark clouds that loom ahead and fight them with your 'diyas' of brightness.



व्यवहार बदलो, त्योहार नहीं।



# 13 Mudras Unveiled: The Power Within

- Br. Sanatan Ji



Mudra, a term rooted in Sanskrit that translates to "posture" or "pose." It comprises two components: 'Muda,' meaning 'joy', and 'Ra,' signifying 'to create/produce'. In essence, a mudra is a gesture designed to invoke joy and cheerfulness within oneself. Originating from the eternal tenets of Sanatan Dharma - Hinduism, the knowledge of Mudras are usually sourced from sacred texts such as the "Mantra Shastra" (chants), "Upasana Shastra" (worship and prayers), and the "Nritya Shastra" (classical dances). Various Mudras have been documented since the Vedic times like: The Chin Mudra or Jñāna Mudra; The Prana Mudra; The Vayu Mudra and the Dharmachakra Mudra to name a few.

References in the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita indicate that Bhagwan Shri Krishna assumed the Jñāna Mudra while imparting wisdom to Arjuna in the Kurukshetra. In Sikhism, Swami Mahavir Jain and Guru Nanak Devji are depicted in Jñāna or Dhyana Mudra. Popular imagery depicts the great poet-philosopher Adi Shankaracharya seated with his right hand holding the Chin mudra in the form of a blessing towards his disciples. Hand gestures were also integral to the religious rituals of ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Mayans, Aztecs and various other indigenous cultures around the globe.

Bharatanatyam incorporates 200 mudras, Mohiniattam boasts 250, and Tantric rituals employ 108 prominent ones. Most Hindu pujas are incomplete without the usage of a few mudras like Shanka Mudra, Surabhi Mudra and Meena Mudra. This inclusion of Mudras in the Vedic Puja rituals is often attributed to the influence of the tantra system.

Mudras, essentially a silent language of self-expression, involve hand gestures and finger postures. Envisioned as closed electrical circuits, mudras facilitate the flow of energy throughout the body. The term "mudra" itself conveys the idea of a seal, a specific hand position that constitutes a subtle science of arranging the body to enhance the flow of prana. The positions of the palm can influence bodily functions, with each finger representing a specific element:

- **Thumb: Fire**
- **Index finger: Air/Wind**
- **Middle finger: Sky/Space**
- **Ring finger: Earth**
- **Little finger: Water**



Imbalances in these elements can disrupt the immune system, leading to diseases. Bringing a finger representing an element into contact with the thumb restores balance and aids in curing related ailments. The joining of fingers creates an electromagnetic force within the body, contributing to overall health restoration.

Mudras are also intertwined with Ayurveda, the Bharatiya Medical Science, which focusses on the balance of three factors - Vata (wind), Pitta (bile), and Kapha (phlegm). To practice mudras effectively, it is recommended to use both hands, creating a loop and an entity. Daily practice, ranging from 5 to 45 minutes, with appropriate mudras, pressure, touch, sitting position, and breathing, is essential.

However, the efficacy of mudras isn't solely contingent on practice; it also hinges on a person's eating habits, diet, and lifestyle. Mudras have the potential to bring about profound changes in mental, spiritual, and physical well-being, expediting the balance of elements in the body.

Whether in a meditation pose or sitting on a chair with a straight back, mudras can be practiced for spiritual healing. Notably, practitioners should avoid practicing mudras on a full stomach, discontinue in case of discomfort or pain, and be aware of the benefits and adverse effects.



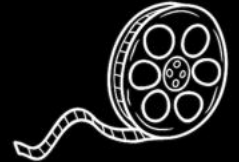


The right points in the hands should be pressed for optimal results, and consistency is key for desirable and lasting outcomes. This is true in the case of any spiritual sadhana, consistency is always the key to fulfillment in the spiritual path.

In summary, the practice of mudras is a transformative journey, an invaluable medicine for the holistic development of one's personality that, when applied daily, can lead to a healthier and more balanced life.

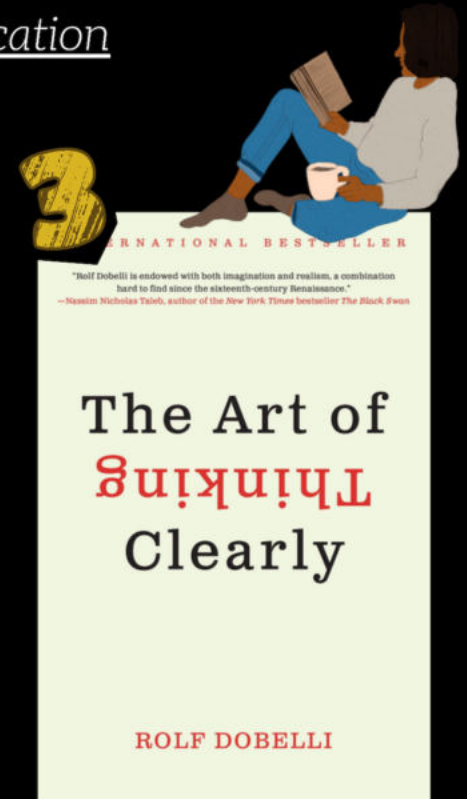
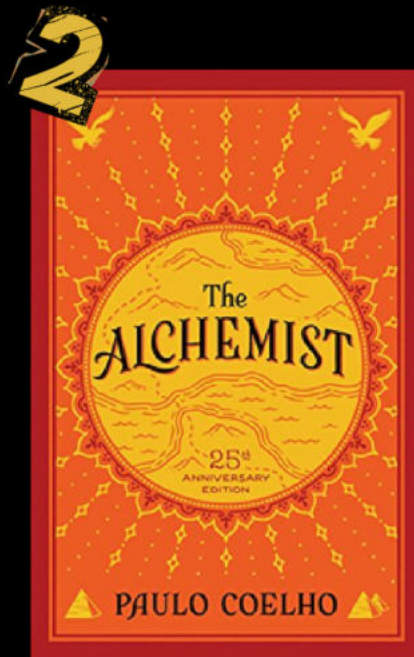
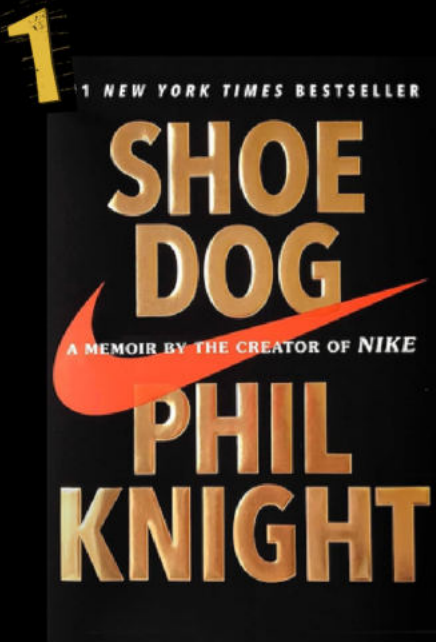


# CROSSBUSTERS

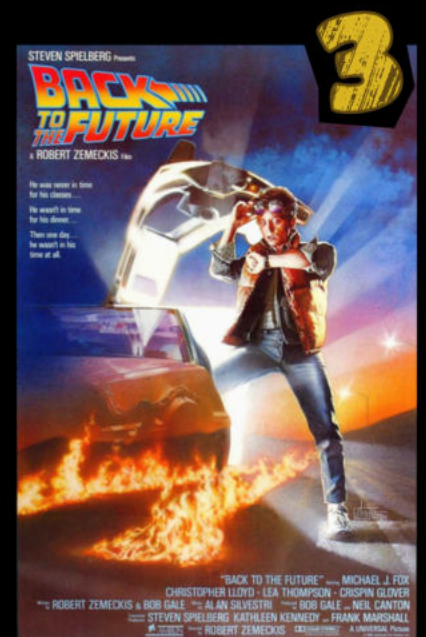
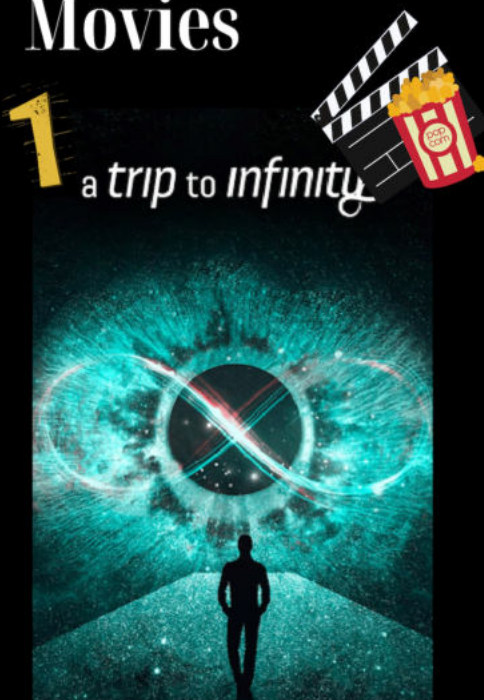


A few suggestions for a fruitful vacation

## Books



## Movies



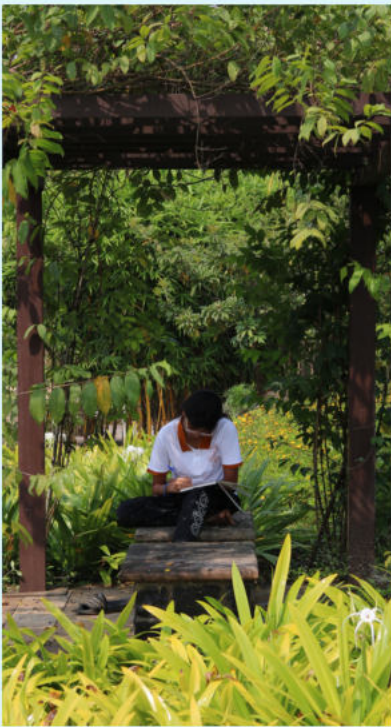


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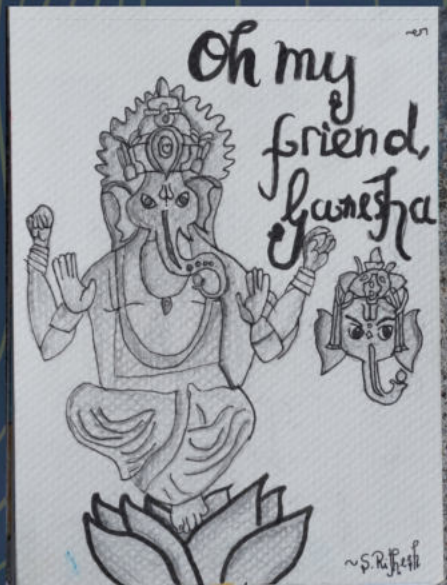




Guru Bhakti | Concept Photography - Raahi Shah - I IB



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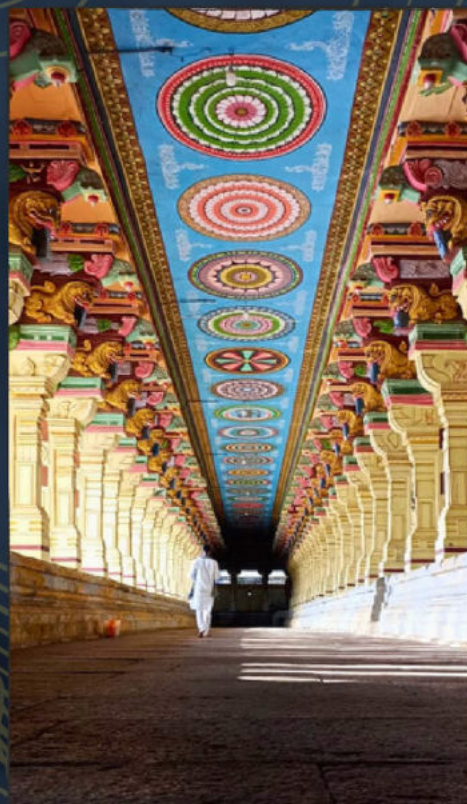
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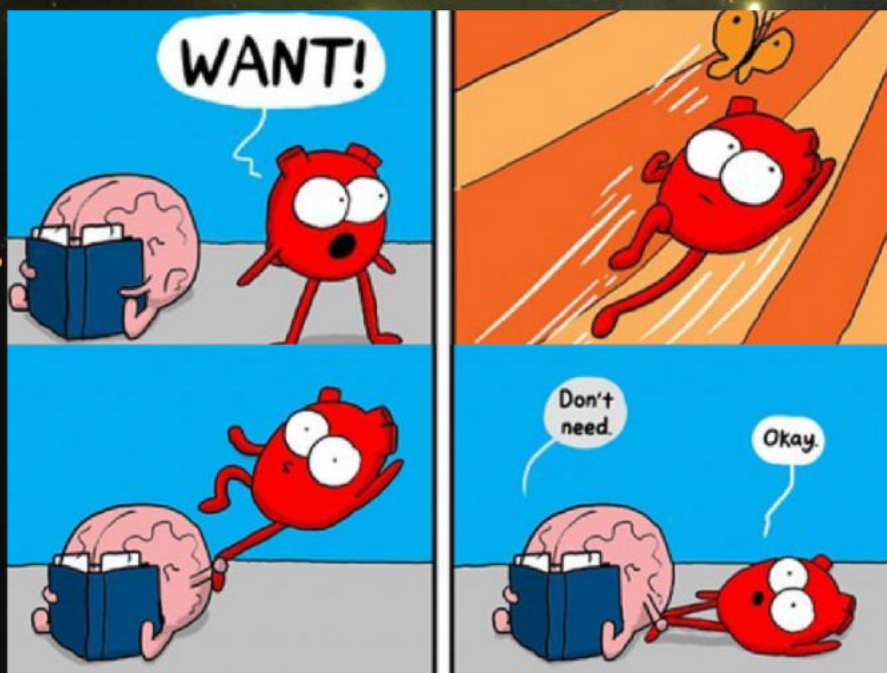


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*True freedom is not in doing what we want to do, but in doing what we ought to do.*

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Sadhvika Ramji - Alumnus

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