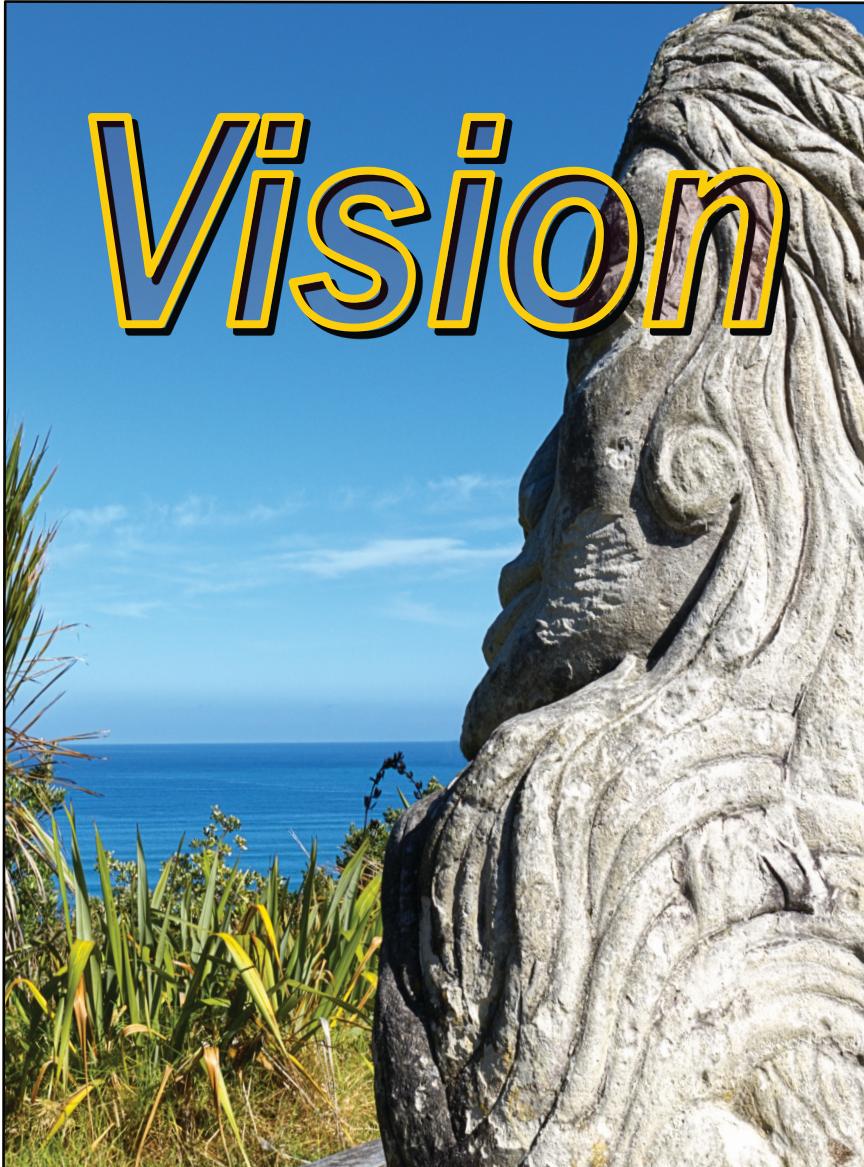


Vision



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The School 'Vision' publication began in November 2000 offering students the opportunity in their writings and contributions to convey a sense of looking beyond the boundaries of the physical world and into the subtle and spiritual realms.

Contributions for the next issue are always welcome.

Cover picture: One of the four Maori Compass Direction Sculptures, Michael Hope Lookout, Raglan.

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Bhāvana

Bhāvana causing to be, effecting, producing, displaying, manifesting, feeling of devotion. (MW 755/1)

Bhāva being. True condition or state. (MW 754/1) The emotional level. (76.2.3)

One should maintain the mind in one of four dispositions (bhāvanā):- friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

With your friends hold the attitude of **friendliness**; with those younger or smaller than you or with those who are suffering, hold the attitude of **compassion**; with those who are more contented or who are wiser than you, or those who are better than you in some respect, look on them with the attitude of **joy** in their good fortune; and with those who oppose or hate you, maintain a feeling of **equanimity**; you should never generate the attitude of enmity or hatred in your mind.

The Sweet Teachings of the Blessed Śaṅkarācārya Svami Brahmananda Sarasvatī

The moment one's bhāva changes then everything about the object and the action involved in the appreciation of the object is changed. (76.2.3)

Thoughts on a Monday Afternoon

After a good start to this first term, where the very first zoom meeting so inspired me to get into a fixed meditation programme, I had some wonderful inspirations in week one.

I was wandering along the beach, it was sunny with a good easterly breeze pushing up great foamy waves and lots of energy. I thought of the Rumi quote, 'you are not a drop in the ocean, you are the entire ocean in one drop'. I can honestly say, for some reason, I know this, or feel this to be true (an unchanging Truth for me). I am the entirety, but I am experiencing it through the limitations of my five senses. I can look out and see and feel the beautiful scene and seem small, but within me, something knows that I am in truth, Awareness itself, and all of 'this' is unfolding within me.

This thought developed on this day to -

I am not a human, one of billions,

I am all of humanity in one human.

That really was a bolt out of somewhere! What does this mean? Here I am worrying about the huge crises around the globe and feeling helpless, inconsequential, but am I in fact a powerful force and the answer is to look inward, to heal and love the fear driven ego traits within myself? If the answer is yes, then I not only have work to do, but I can actually make a difference to the world. I have agency.

As my tutor reminded us on Wednesday, we are not meditating for just ourselves, but for all. He quoted from the material we are studying, 'only some are called to seek the Truth, on those people, the health of mankind depends.'

And what if I am in a dream and cannot change anything on a grand scale, surely changing something on a small scale is still a triumph for Love, and those around me will benefit.

There are worlds within worlds after all.

February 2025

Mary Poole



Meet the Need

'And how do you like your tea?'....

In 2017 I became a FED, or Friend of the Emergency Department. Run by the St John organisation, this simply means volunteering once a week for a four-hour shift at Auckland Hospital. The aim is to fill the gap between the excellent care given by all the medical professionals and the simple human needs of the patients, including their supporters. That's not to say, of course, that people are neglected in any way. No,

simply that a friendly face and the offer of a hot drink, warm blanket, extra pillow, etc. etc., can help to alleviate a sometimes frightening situation.



St John operates FEDs throughout New Zealand. At Auckland Hospital, before Covid, two people were rostered on to three four-hour shifts each day. But once we were allowed to return after the pandemic, many people did not come back. So, there is a need to encourage more people to come on board, and I presume it is the same situation for hospitals throughout NZ. I have to say that it is a privilege to work in an environment where everyone is intent on doing good, putting into practice the ancient instruction

'May all be happy, may all be without disease, may all have well-being, and none be in misery of any kind'.

So, at 4pm each Friday I arrive at ED. I am lucky to share my shift with Andrea, who has been a FED far longer than I, and she has been an incredible role model to me. Each shift is different, of course, depending on the number of people needing help. On busy nights, triage can be full of people waiting their turn, and the ambulance crews queuing up with their patients to be admitted. Despite what you hear and read the system **does** work, and each person gets the appropriate care, despite often having to wait their turn for procedures or for the doctor to visit. As soon as a bed becomes empty and the patient is either discharged or sent up to a ward, it is filled again straight away.



Meet the Need



Our role is to visit each patient. One can assess immediately if the person just wants to be left alone, or perhaps they are in pain. But often people have landed there unexpectedly and they simply need a happy face and someone with whom they can chat and even giggle.

Andrea is expert at 'chatting' and I do my best! Between us we cover the ED wards, Short Stay wards and two Clinical Decision Units, all on level 2 of the vast ocean that is Auckland Hospital. We offer tea and coffee, especially to people who are in support of the patient, and we check with the nurses before offering drinks to the patients as they may be nil by mouth. A huge box of packed sandwiches is dropped off from the hospital's kitchens and these we take around to those patients who are allowed to eat, with yoghurt and juices. Andrea and I have a break halfway through the shift with a coffee and a chat in the staff area.

Obviously, there can be trauma going on and people undergoing the effects of drugs, etc. But there are always security officers on duty and police accompany anyone coming in from the prisons. No matter what, there is such freedom in being able to give love and care without judgement of any kind.

None of us knows when disaster might strike, either to one's health or due to an accident. There is a special cupboard where blankets are heated. When people arrive from some trauma or are chilled, carefully laying a warm blanket over them connects one to the universal love and care that is ever present. A real privilege.

Our duties include keeping the tea/coffee bays stocked and tidy, and really anything else that crops up and that we can handle. One night, a patient's visitor had come in with an elderly relative, whose memory was not the best, and who then went missing! We searched everywhere. Finally, I went up



in the lift to level 5 where the main hospital entry point is and found her surrounded by concerned well-wishers as she was so confused! Another time, a lovely gentleman in his nineties had been told by his doctor to come to the hospital. So, he drove himself down from a long way up north and then parked 'down an alley by some other cars'...! Also, he had locked his phone in the car so couldn't contact his son. I checked the temporary car park by ED, but the car wasn't there, and security said they hadn't towed it away so that was a relief. We finally managed to contact his son on my phone, and I asked the son to contact the hospital and sort it out.

I recommend being a FED – after all, only four hours of your life each week!

If you are interested, contact <https://stjohn.org.nz>. Men and women are welcome, any age from university student to pensioner! Training is given and you cover the first few shifts with someone who can show you the ropes.

For those of you who attend Philosophy classes online from outside Auckland and cannot help with second line duties, being a FED could be just what you need! It really is a great way to put into practice what we hear on our group evenings.

Sue Andreassen



'...the need has to be seen, that is to say it has to be lit by consciousness. Now what responds to that need is the heart, the citta. if the citta is open and clear it responds just like that! But of course the need has to be seen. (MacLaren Lectures Vol 4. p180)

Service is only a means [towards transformation], but the feeling of love in being of service is very important. (89.2.5)

A sense of service is the best way for all actions. (76.5.5)

Work is love made visible. (The Prophet. Kahlil Gibran)

Poems

The True Nature

When I really stop and observe I can appreciate beauty all around me
In the streams, on the earth, in the trees right to the leaves
Yet I forget that that beauty is a self reflection
And to grow this further I require more introspection
So if I am to experience my true nature more
I must embrace those parts of me that made me sore
So I myself can soar above and look down below
To let go of my resistance and act from flow
The time is right, I am almost ready
I just need some support to keep me steady
When I go deep I can find that place
It may get dark but it's what I must face
So as I listen to the water and the birds all around
It's really my own voice that can be found
So I express my true nature

Self Belief

If I don't believe in myself
How can I expect anyone else to?
If I can so strongly believe this
Just imagine a life where I didn't
Daring to believe in the impossible
Thereby making it possible
Is it possible?
It is when I believe it is.
And impossible when I do not.
So rather than trying to believe in the impossible
I could possibly just believe in myself
And create endless possibilities
As unbelievable as it sounds
This is my reality
So I'm going to listen to that inner voice
You best believe it

Mate Glamuzina



The Ritual

'When tea becomes ritual, it takes its place at the heart of our ability to see greatness in small things. Where is beauty to be found? In great things that, like everything else, are doomed to die, or in small things that aspire to nothing, yet know how to set a jewel of infinity in a single moment?'

Muriel Barbery, *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*



An array of red, blue, green, orange, pink and yellow bits of silk are strewn on our drawing room floor. They eagerly await strips of golden brocade or 'zari' to be painstakingly sewn around their borders and transform them into little garments for the gods at festival time. The gods have a personal dress code too – white on Mondays, red or yellow on Tuesdays, green on Wednesdays...and so on. Nine little mounds of rice representing the nine planets are to be meticulously arranged around a brass plate, each topped with a slice of banana and a bit of pearly white sugar candy. Precisely eighteen trident shaped blades of grass (durva), eighteen holy basil leaves and eighteen grains of unhulled rice are to be wrapped immaculately in young betel leaves. A decorative 'toran' of bright orange marigolds interspersed with bright green mango leaves, has to be hung from the doorway. A rangoli or colourful motif with rice paste, vermillion and turmeric must be drawn in the courtyard and on the threshold of each room. The idol or 'lingam' of Shiva the destroyer must be bathed through the four quarters (prahars) of the night alternately with milk, yoghurt, ghee (clarified butter), honey and water – precisely in that order. A mixture of these and sugar has to be served to devotees as 'pañcamṛta' or the 'five nectars' after the 'pūjā' or religious ceremony. Welcome to the fascinating and kaleidoscopic world of Hindu rituals.



Rituals such as these were an inextricable part of my life since age five. I would watch my highly erudite and accomplished mother performing these rituals time and again - with awe as a child, exasperation as an impatient teenager, incredulity as a university student and exasperation

The Ritual

as a busy professional. Then came the big move to New Zealand and they disappeared from my daily life altogether. Good riddance – one would think! Not quite – I realised soon enough.

Be they around nativity, harvest, weddings or death, rituals have existed across the ages in every culture for a reason. They provide order in our otherwise chaotic and busy lives. They enforce discipline. They bring focus and help us live in the moment. Try picking eighteen perfectly shaped blades of grass from a tangled tuft of green hastily plucked from the garden. It's a sheer test of concentration I assure you!

Another good example is the repetitive chanting of a mantra. It compels us to focus on our breath and brings a sense of calm. And it doesn't matter if we don't understand the words. No wonder research has proved that performing rituals actually lowers anxiety and stress. Rituals can be comforting and help us get over grief and worries. To echo Elizabeth Gilbert in 'Eat, Pray, Love,' rituals 'create a safe resting place for our most complicated feelings of joy or trauma, so that we don't have to haul those feelings around with us forever, weighing us down. We all need such places of ritual safekeeping.'



There is a beautiful Buddhist ritual performed at the monastery at the end of a retreat in which all the participants are connected with a piece of string as everyone chants together and the monk pours water into an urn. Very few understand the language – Pali. But as the hall reverberates with the chanting, the feeling of positivity and peace has to be experienced to be understood. There is great power in communal chanting.

Rituals can often be motivational and inspirational by giving us a sense of significance and achievement. Working with one's hands and creating something real gives us a sense of pride in a small task. Because they have a definite beginning and end – there is also the perception of completion or 'doneness' I guess. Rituals imbue a seemingly laborious, illogical, monotonous or time consuming activity with value simply because we've made a commitment to continue to do it.

And they're not entirely meaningless either I discover. In India, almost every auspicious ceremony starts with the lighting of the lamp. Most Indians light a lamp at dawn and dusk in their homes at the altar of their deities. Light symbolises knowledge, and darkness, ignorance. Knowledge removes ignorance

just as light removes darkness. The oil or ghee in the lamp also symbolises our desires and negative attributes or 'vāsanās' and the wick, the ego. The flame of spiritual knowledge, extinguishes the ego. As the flame of a lamp always burns upwards, so does knowledge uplift us to attain higher ideals. Yet I find that I no longer have the need to seek logic or meaning in rituals. Some things in life are better left unquestioned.

Rituals give us identity and are an enactment of our values. They connect and bind – families, groups, communities and nations. Yet they're universal too. In fact, it is interesting to note that the word 'ritual' can be traced back to the Latin 'ritus', meaning 'correct performance or custom' as well as to the Sanskrit 'ṛtā' meaning 'visible order'. As I delve into essays on anthropology, observing the similarities between rituals in different religions and cultures across the world fills me with wonder. The sprinkling of water, symbolising life and sanctity for example, common in most cultures in birth and death rituals. 'Tying the knot' in some form or the other is a symbolic ritual at weddings. Exchanging rings or garlands is common too. As is the bride throwing a bouquet or a fistful of rice over her shoulder before leaving for her husband's home.

Commemorating the dead on a particular day around October-November each year seems to be common across cultures – Hallowmas, All Souls Day, the Day of the Dead, Diwali eve. Lighting a lamp at the head of a dead person is a common rite of passage across the world. And so is having a feast after a funeral. The harvesting season is celebrated in most cultures with feasting, drinking and dancing.

Although rituals largely stem from religion, secular rituals abound. The gun or canon salute to pay tribute to a national dignitary for instance, removing one's headdress to honour the dead, or releasing pigeons to celebrate peace and freedom. Tea drinking is a ritual in China and Japan. Come to think of it all of us engage in some ritual or the other everyday – be it our morning takeaway coffee, reading the newspaper, taking the dog for a walk, or watching a soap on television. You don't have to belong to a particular culture, religion or ethnicity to build ritual into your life. To quote



The Ritual

Elizabeth Gilbert once again, 'you are absolutely permitted to make up a ceremony of your own devising, fixing your own broken-down emotional systems with all the do-it-yourself resourcefulness of a generous plumber/poet.'



Home alone this Diwali, I lit lamps inside my ninth floor apartment in central Wellington, put up fairy lights, decorated the altar with an artificial Hawaiian garland from the two dollar shop, hung a 'toran' on my doorway and drew motifs on my carpeted floor with tinsel so that I could remove it with a vacuum cleaner. I gave myself the gift of the ritual.

Kaushiki Roy



'A ceremony simply depends upon the needs of the participants. Organised in due measure, it creates happiness and simple happiness always leads to spiritual search. Where there is happiness there is bound to be a move towards spirituality.'

'Ceremonies as part of human life cannot and need not be denied, but to find the way back to the Ātman cannot be ignored either.'

'There is great pleasure even in waiting for the ceremony.' (82.3.2)

Rosslyn Chapel

We visited Edinburgh during November of 2024 and having heard of Rosslyn Chapel from another School member, we were keen to visit it. We discovered that the Chapel was just 11 kilometres south of Edinburgh, an easy bus journey leaving from the city centre.

The day we visited Rosslyn it was a cool -3°C cloudy day in autumn. The 60 minute bus journey gave us a glimpse into the beautiful Midlothian countryside with its rolling green hills and woodlands. It felt quite natural to be at rest and take in the countryside as it appeared to come towards us. We joined a small tour group when we entered the Chapel and learnt about the historic and mystery filled chapel.

Rosslyn Chapel was built in the Gothic style of architecture, took forty years to build, and has enjoyed a rich and sometimes turbulent history. Founded in



1446 as a family chapel, the building was incomplete when the founder, Sir William St Clair, died in 1484. His son, Sir Oliver St Clair, replaced the choir roof with its stone vault but did not complete his father's original design.



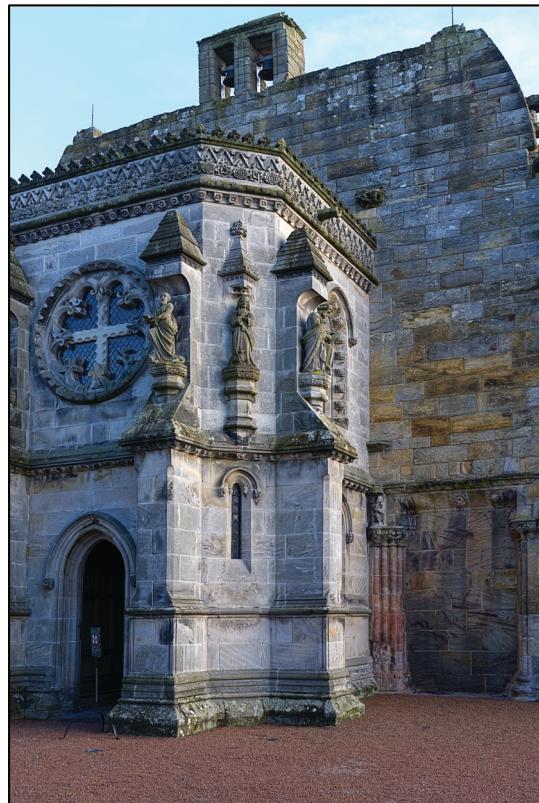
Rosslyn Chapel

Following the Presbyterian Reformation which began in 1517, the Chapel fell into disrepair and, in 1650, Cromwell's troops attacked Rosslyn Castle and stabled their horses inside the Chapel. Following a period of Victorian repair and restoration, the Chapel was re-dedicated in 1862 and weekly services began again.

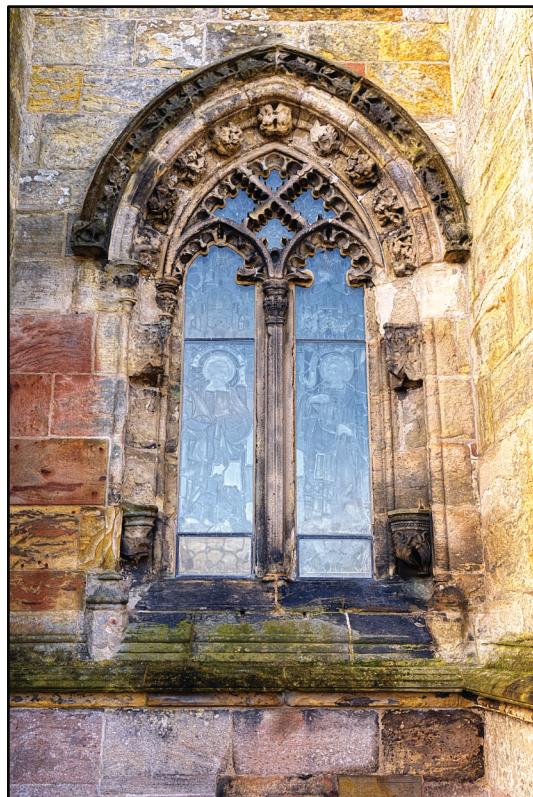
A report in 1954 highlighted the poor condition of the stonework and the thinking of the time was to cover the historic stonework with a cement slurry, but no action was taken. A further report, in 1995, confirmed that damage was occurring due to the very high humidity in the Chapel. This led to a reassessment of the plan and instead of applying a cement slurry, which would have covered the sandstone which had been carefully selected by the stonemasons, a major conservation project was undertaken by Rosslyn Chapel Trust to conserve the building for future generations to appreciate.

Today, the Chapel is managed by a charity which depends on income from visitors. The Rosslyn Chapel guides give introductory talks throughout the day which shed light on the many carvings by explaining the history and stories behind them. I shall describe some of the carvings and their significance which collectively contribute to the Chapel being a highlight of our travels for me. Photography was not permitted inside the Chapel.

Rosslyn is renowned for its many carvings of the Green Man. Vines sprout from the figure's mouth representing nature's growth. During the conservation work at the Chapel, modern day stonemasons found that two high level stone pinnacles had become unstable. Each



pinnacle had to be taken apart for repair. Imagine their surprise when they found inside one of the pinnacles, perfectly preserved fossilised honeycomb! The medieval stonemasons had created an opening in an intricately carved flower and lined the pinnacle to create a unique stone beehive. The construction shows that the hives were never intended to be a source of honey, but as a protective haven for bees during times of inclement weather. It is believed that the hives were built out of kindness and respect for these sacred creatures, known in medieval times as 'small messengers of God'.



There is a carving of an angel playing the bagpipes. The angel was celebrating Christ's birth. Bagpipes first appeared in Scotland from the 1400s and this is thought to be one of the earliest depictions of the instrument.

There are two lintels (horizontal) carvings which depict morals to live by. The first, 'Seven Acts of Mercy', demonstrates the seven virtues by which people should live. One of the virtues has been transposed with one of the sins –

Rosslyn Chapel

Greed appears within the Virtues and Charity within the Sins. Was this a mistake or is the message that each of us has the capacity for both good and evil? The second part of the two carvings, 'Seven Deadly Sins' depicts the sins that people should not commit, including greed and anger.

The carving of the 'Dance of Death' shows skeletons pushing and pulling the reluctant people to meet their fate. This carving symbolises death's inevitable triumph over the life of the body.

Two carvings are most memorable due to the story they tell. One is of the master mason's pillar which is comparatively much simpler than the elaborately carved apprentice's pillar. However, the apprentice did not seek permission from the master carver to produce the pillar and carved it in the master's absence. On his return, the master saw the apprentice's magnificent pillar and flew into a rage, killing the apprentice. The master was put to death for the crime and his face was carved and placed in a position in the Chapel where it would gaze on the apprentice's carving for eternity. Unfortunately photography was not permitted inside the chapel.

I found it very restful walking around the interior of the Chapel, recognising carvings explained by the tour guide and being aware of the fine care and stillness that must have been given by the stonemasons to the carving as I could feel those qualities as I moved quietly through the Chapel. I sat to meditate and that stillness deepened. I had been aware of all that had been viewed and the noise of visiting school children. All that faded to a deep sense of oneness and peace.

I noticed on the displays at the Visitor Centre that the Chapel is appreciated and enjoyed by the local community, school groups and international visitors. Rosslyn Chapel is one of the most famous religious sites in Scotland, made even more famous due to The DaVinci Code novel and subsequent movie where the finale of the story was filmed in the Rosslyn Chapel.

Lastly, we accepted the welcoming aroma of coffee and freshly baked scones with jam and whipped cream as we discussed aspects of the magic and history of the Rosslyn Chapel that we had each enjoyed.



Katrina Ames

You're on Mute

A new phrase entered common usage in 2020 as we moved into an online meeting environment for our weekly philosophy group meetings.

'Click the microphone button in the bottom corner of the screen, the one that sort of looks like a microphone. No not that one, now we can't see you; the button to the left...that's it!'

How life changed for us, tutors and students in those first few months.

So, where are we now? For many of us Zoom has become the main way to join our weekly meeting and to keep in touch with our group. We even attend what we still call 'residential' events via the online world of Zoom!

What has been the impact on me as a student and as a tutor? The student enjoyed the novelty of continuing to meet during the 'lock down' days. But what is clear now is that for me meeting online has moved far past novelty. The ability to access the teaching and join with the finest company, when I cannot get to the in-person meetings, has been vital in keeping the life on track during some challenging times. There was the thought that one could not find that stillness I love so much, when attending on Zoom. But that concern is now well in the past.

The Wise were correct! That fine and deep stillness and connection with the greater is available anywhere, anytime, even in an online meeting.

What about as a tutor? I've been privileged to have been asked to tutor groups from time to time, both in person and using Zoom. What impact did meeting



"You're on Mute"

2020 Quote of the Year

You're on Mute

online have on the role of tutor? I was immediately forced to confront any ideas I may have had about the tutoring process.

All those new skills to learn! Open PowerPoint, click there to share the screen, look at the camera not at the images on the monitor. I suspect I'm not alone in finding all this overwhelming at first. The whole set up certainly provided opportunities to practice what I as a tutor was sharing with the very patient group of people sharing their time with me; attend, attend, attend!

But what about the personal connection? From this tutor's experience it seems possible to connect with students every bit as well as in person. Or perhaps I'm imagining this?

To those of you who have attended group meetings online, what do you think?

Another of the benefits of online meetings is of course the ability for those of us who are unwell or simply not able to travel to still join with others for study and practice. How welcome is that! I know many of us have experienced the depth and stillness which can arise in a philosophy group meeting. The experience now is that this is equally available even online.

It's not the system which needs to change. It's me!

So, was the addition of online meetings worth it? Yes! There are still times when the sound or video set up is not ideal but that is now rare as our familiarity with the equipment and the technology has improved. And the online world continues to provide reminders of the need for the constant vigilance spoken of by the wise... 'You're on mute'!

Mark Rassie



Wisdom is one of those things which cannot be shown except through speech. Unless one speaks and speaks coherently, one's wisdom will remain unknown. (87:7.4)

In human affairs the light within manifests in sound, words and one's use of language. (91:1.1)

Sanskrit Week

The Australasian Sanskrit Week, Perth 2025.

For one who loves to travel, a chance to visit Western Australia in the summer break was not to be missed; and the draw-card – the 2025 Australasian Sanskrit Retreat held at the beautiful ‘Sisters of St John of God Retreat Centre’ on a peninsular an hour south of Perth. I knew the temperature would be very hot – and it was – over 40 degrees when we arrived in Perth, but the Centre promised air-conditioning, beautiful grounds, two minutes’ walk to the beach on the warm Indian Ocean, catered meals and en-suite accommodation, what more could we want?

Well, such a lot more was discovered. Six days of inspiring company, uplifting conversations and study that just continued to delight, amaze and challenge. I found that with following the suggestions of how to proceed, how to apply and refine one’s attention, a taste of the mysteries, elegance and sheer intelligence of this language began to be revealed.

From New Zealand, Emilie Preston, Karen Crompton and I attended. Barrie Preston came as a guest and joined in many of the activities. We all had reasons to visit other parts of Australia before and after the Conference and so the application of the mind and heart to such investigation was a restful and nourishing interlude within a holiday of visiting family, friends and exploring the tourist sights in the busy holiday season. The other 46 Conference attendees came from Philosophy Schools all over Australia, some of whom had visited Auckland in January 2024 when the Australasian Sanskrit Retreat was held here. It was lovely to deepen the connection with others who find Sanskrit study so rewarding.



The week was led by Dianne Kruger from Perth and the tutoring team included her husband Phillip and Gai Kroczek from Perth, and Naomi Smith from Sydney, all who had been in Auckland in 2024. Other assistant tutors or leaders of the elective study groups were Jayanthi Balasubramaniam, Jean Wyder and Moya Garde, all who had also been in Auckland, plus Cindy Toghill and Matthew Dunston.

Sanskrit Week

The Rev. Dr Stephen Thompson, an eminent Sanskrit scholar from the UK was again the guest tutor and his incredible understanding and immersion in the spiritual aspects of this language, complemented by his deep penetration of the Christian faith, lifted our study far from an academic exercise.

One felt one was engaged in an extremely noble and essential human pursuit. And it was fun and marvellously stimulating.



The verses for study were from the Mundaka Upaniṣad, II.ii.7-8.

ॐ

यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद्यस्यैष महिमा भुवि ।
 दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे ह्येष व्योम्न्यात्मा प्रतिष्ठितः ।
 मनोमयः प्राणशरीरनेता प्रतिष्ठितोऽन्ने हृदयं सन्निधाय ।
 तद्विज्ञानेन परिपश्यन्ति धीरा आनन्दरूपममृतं यद्विभाति ॥७॥

मिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
 द्वीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन्दृष्टे परावरे ॥८॥

Translated by Swāmī Gambhīrānanda as:

Om

That Self which is omniscient in general and all-knowing in detail, and which has such glory in this world – that Self, which is of this kind – is seated in the space within the luminous city of Brahman.

It is conditioned by the mind, It is the carrier of the vital forces and the body, It is seated in food by placing the intellect (in the cavity of the heart). Through their knowledge the discriminating people realise that Self as existing in its fullness everywhere – the Self that shines surpassingly in blissfulness and immortality. (v7)

When that Self, which is both the high and the low, is realised, the knot of the heart gets untied, all doubts become solved, and all one's actions become dissipated. (v8)

To assist with our study, we were provided with extensive notes, grammatical analysis of the verses with the Sanskrit dictionary and Dahātupāṭha page references, the break-down of words, different translations, and commentary on these two verses by Ādi Śaṅkara. There was assistance for every level of Sanskrit experience. The only requirement for attendees was that they were meditating. And this we could do anywhere, many of us choosing to meditate in the beautiful grounds, enjoying the cool of the early morning and evening.

The day's programme was well balanced, a mix of sounding Sanskrit; learning the verses in Sanskrit and in English; small group study looking up meanings of words, reflection and discussion of the verses, elective sessions; meetings altogether to share our discoveries and inspirations; meditation and interesting and wonderful evening presentations.

The Electives included Yoga; three different chapters of grammar study from the Laghu; and a journey into how to use the original Dahātupāṭha. There was something for all levels of interest and experience.



The daily programme was interspersed with three excellent meals, plus morning and afternoon tea and snacks. The food was delicious so thank goodness the grounds were extensive and shady for gentle walking, the suburb flat for more energetic walks, the

Sanskrit Week



beach right there for afternoon or early morning swims, and yoga as an elective for those who enjoyed the disciplined movement, breathing and stretching as part of their formal study day.



The evening presentations included an on-line address with Mr Lambie, a Q and A session with the Rev. Dr Thompson, an address by Mr Preston on the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad and two musical performances from adult children of the Krugers, Brian Kruger, solo violin and daughter Helen in the Australian Baroque Group. What a treat.

There is always more to explore and discover in Sanskrit. You'll never know it all, but there is always someone ahead of you to help. However, the journey is wonderful. Through the focus and investigation of the structure and usage of Sanskrit, insightful questions arise and the discovery of what the scriptures and the sages are saying becomes more accessible. Thus in studying such a text from an Upaniṣad, many opportunities to experience the truth contained in the words arise naturally. This truth becomes known in experience. I recommend it.



Margaret Brickland

Travelling with Vaśiṣṭha

During the summer holiday season I embarked on a quite extensive overseas sojourn, a complete change of environment and routine from the life in Auckland. It was a very refreshing holiday and provided for a refreshed view and experience of life on return to Auckland.

Despite the change of routine during the holidays the regular daily meditation and study of some scripture continued throughout. The scripture of choice that accompanied me on my travels was 'The Supreme Yoga', a translation of the teachings of Vaśiṣṭha. Reading this text each day was both enriching and upsetting. The heart and mind were enriched with such purity of true knowledge on every page, but the ahaṅkāra (ego) was upset by the apparent conflict between enjoying the attraction to the immense variety of different cultures, sights and environments, and conversely, Vaśiṣṭha telling me that there is no diversity, it is all One, the creation is simply an appearance, like a mirage. *'The Creator's thought being the cause of this manifold creation and the Creator himself having no physical body, the creation too is truly of the nature of thought, without materiality.'* (p45)

Part of the purpose of holiday travels is to experience variety, different people, places and cultures, very evident as the journey moved from England to Spain, Italy, Malta, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco..... Yet, each day I would read Vaśiṣṭha telling me in so many different ways that there is only one, there is no diversity. Every page of the book is full of potent guidance and quotable nuggets of true knowledge. *'In order to cross this formidable ocean of samsāra (repetitive history), one should resort to that which is eternal and unchanging.'* (p34)



Travelling with Vaśiṣṭha

Reading this from Vaśiṣṭha while cruising the Mediterranean, in a ship and on a sea that both seemed formidably large and real, was definitely a wake-up call. Every new place visited has its own story, history, legend, habits and idiosyncrasies. Hearing and discovering all these stories and histories I asked myself how true are they? How much embellished in the retelling over the centuries have they become, how far have the stories strayed from recounting actual events. Perhaps more so now than ever before, history is subject to being re-written. And does it really matter? The various stories about the Creation itself given in the Teaching are subject to variation. Education at all levels needs stories, pictures and concepts to indicate its message, the knowledge to be conveyed. As long as we finally 'get the message' the story really does not matter. Only the truth matters. Vaśiṣṭha reminds us that all creation is a constantly changing fictional concept, to be enjoyed, but it's not the whole 'story'.

As the holiday progressed the resolution to the apparent conflicting experience in the inner being, of both enrichment and upset, was evident on every page of the Supreme Yoga, and I only read through half of volume one. *'Taste the pure consciousness which is, in truth, the very essence of all that exists, by resolutely renouncing objectivity of consciousness (all the concepts and precepts) and contemplating the changeless consciousness which is infinite. You will surely cross this river of world-appearance and rebirth.'* (p272)

The unifying resolution was simply to 'taste the pure consciousness'. In fact, a quotation from another text, 'World Within the Mind', also recounting the teachings of Vaśiṣṭha came to mind. *'In whatever company he finds himself while performing the duties of life, the wise man yet watches the movements of his mind.'* (p11) The enrichment of heart and mind with true knowledge remains and the ignorance that was the temporary upset of ahaṅkāra disappears.

But creation is exciting, addictive, and as with overcoming any addiction, ongoing perseverance with the corrective medicine is needed. *'... there are four gatekeepers at the entrance to the Realm of Freedom (mokṣa). They are self-control, spirit of enquiry, contentment and good company.'* (p32)

Vaśiṣṭha is very good company, enriching the joy of travel without the need to leave one's true home.



Lawrence Ames

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Reflecting upon and writing about your philosophic insights or experiences can be therapeutic. This simple peaceful exercise may help clear false views and ideas from the heart and mind.

Contributions for further issues of Vision are most welcome.
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