



Mita Mistry

The art of ancient healing



How to be your best self

ANYONE who has been on a business or management course will undoubtedly have left with Maslow's *Hierarchy Of Needs* stamped on their forehead. But what did he really mean by "self-actualisation" and how do we apply it to our personal growth?

Abraham Maslow, a pioneer of human psychology, said that to understand the world, one must get familiar with their inner nature, letting go of judgments and the conditioned mindset. The idea is that once our basic needs for food, safety, health, employment, belonging or self-esteem are met, we have the capacity to acknowledge all aspects of ourselves.

People at the self-actualisation phase of the hierarchy can see the big picture is made up of opposites or polarities like male-female, selfish-unselfish, kind-cruel, good-bad. They understand that these are not separate with mutually exclusive boundaries, but are interconnected, which means any person simultaneously can be good and bad, male and female, adult and child.

Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu said the same thing, stating, "where there is birth there must be death, where there is acceptability there must be unacceptability, where there is right there must be wrong".

The journey into self-actualisation as most of us know it, or self-awareness, begins to flourish when we change our perception. We begin to accept polarities by harmonising opposites in our inner and outer worlds, seeing that they are complementary not disparate. Our awareness becomes less judgmental, allowing more of reality to be embraced and in doing so, greater aspects of the inner self can unfold. This experience of "waking up" is like coming out of a trance.

Accepting or tolerating contradictions, inconsistencies and oppositions leads to re-connecting with the authentic self by becoming whole. This is growth, which shines through creativity and joy in everyday life. This is freedom.

We are often afraid of freedom or being our whole self, so we cling to a familiar image we have acquired to feel safe, but this is settling for less because this image is a shadow of our authentic self. This is the source of frustration, anger and eventually sickness.

Sickness and emotional problems can be your soul's way to push you towards growth. But how can we let ourselves be all that we truly are? Each one of us has the power to listen to the wisdom of our body. By listening to aches, tension and pain, we can get in touch with our unconscious thoughts and feelings. By paying attention to these messages we can discover the beauty of the core self and learn to let ourselves find the joy of being whole, knowing that all is one.

Mita Mistry is a qualified five-element acupuncturist and an expert in other ancient healing techniques. Visit www.twitter.com/MitaMistry and www.mitamistry.co.uk/go/thepowerofmindfulness for more.

Soraya: Listening

SIKANDER EX

Photograph courtesy Sohail Anjum



Continued from page 23

What first connected you to art?

From a young age, I saw the works of old masters at international museums and knew this was my calling. I trained in fine arts from the age of 16 and took up art professionally at GCE, foundation, college, and university. I went to famous art universities, sketched laboriously, worked at Unicorn Gallery, met established painters and spoke to scholars and curators. I read books on art history and drew until I reached a high level of skill. To this day, I continue to perfect my craft. It was an inner calling, something I had to do, a compulsion. It was something I was drawn to. It came naturally to me.

What made you decide to become a professional artist?

I believe I was destined to be this. Painting always drew me to it. Art brought certain clarity – it was my voice. I knew how to compose pictures. I could sketch and had my own ideas. I responded to the visuals around me, making new images of known places, as seen through the mind's eye. I would sketch and my work started getting attention. After university, in 2009, I was offered my first exhibition in a group show, which received a lot of acclaim from critics. The next year was my debut solo show, which sold out within a few hours of its opening.

That must have been a turning point for you?

Yes. I decided I wanted to turn this into a full-time profession, and there has been no looking back. Art for me is a way to understand our fascinating world and everything in it – large masses of land, areas, streets, known locations, unknown horizons, the sea, flowers in a bush, flowers in a vase, everyday scenes that make our world. The visuals and the memories we associate with them. How we understand things. Art gives meaning to the everyday.

How would you describe your artwork?

I am known for something I invented, called 'calligraphic landscapes'. This is an entirely new concept, theme and approach. They are contemporary landscapes that are simplified.

When I paint a picture, I see it first as simply light and shade, and then form takes over. There



are shapes with a design quality to it and my work is mostly tonal. In terms of art movements, I do not adhere to any particular one. Traditionally, landscape paintings are almost always classified as either semi-abstract, impressionistic or semi-realist. As far as my work is concerned, it is perhaps best described as unclassifiable – and that is the beauty of contemporary art. It is new, with no existing actual references in art history.

What about past work?

I have experimented a lot. In 2010, I looked at the woodblock prints of Japanese Manga masters like Hokusai, Hiroshige, and inspired by the style, I painted my own unique indoor pictures of flowers in ink. Between 2011-2012, the brushstrokes were much thicker, and the landscapes I made of old Clifton, Karachi, were heavily textured. After 2012, I went to the Slade Summer School (UCL) and the work became louder and bolder. Now, after being at an atelier (old masters studio school) where they train you in classical tradition, my work is more tonal. This is what my new series is about – light and shade, contrast, half tones, highlights and dramatic sceneries.

What is your creative process like?

For each show, I produce fresh work at new locations. I work in oil on canvas. I trained in old

master's style, so I build pictures, layer by layer, and use the highest-quality pigments, oil paints mixed with turpentine and linseed. With time I have started to go very, very fine. The work is becoming much clearer, the content is simpler, the treatment and style more definite. My landscapes are always painted *plein-air* [in the open air]. I never work from photographs.

Really?

I hardly even make any preliminary sketches when I am outdoors. It is the very urgency to capture a fleeting moment and the light before it changes. Landscape painting is one of the most challenging forms of art. There is nothing tame or settled about a landscape or the sea. It is far simpler to paint people.

Has it been a challenge pursuing art in a country like Pakistan?

Contrary to popular belief, Pakistan has a thriving art industry and a rich art legacy. Being a woman painter here in no way limits me. The only challenge the country's art world faces is the lack of institutional/government support, which will lead to major gaps in our art history heritage.

What are the biggest challenges you have faced?

The subjects I choose bring with them everyday