A Path to Fulfilment

Vedanta brought Surya Tahora and Neema Majmudar together in 1995. Since then, this teaching duo has travelled the world bringing this philosophy to others. By Mrigaa Sethi

Why do you recommend the practices of Vedanta? Who is it good for?
Vedanta is good for anyone who wants to be objective and alive to realities. It enables a person to take off unwanted loads, such as feelings of failure, being a victim, and feelings of "why me?". When these burdens are taken off through understanding a larger perspective, we can live much more proactively, dynamically, with enthusiasm, and show compassion towards others.

I heard you both worked jobs in the private sector before you turned to teaching Vedanta full-time. Can you tell us about that journey?
In spite of having high positions, very lucrative jobs, and a comfortable life with lots of travel abroad, something seemed to be lacking. We felt something was missing in life, which led us to search for something more fundamental that would give lasting fulfillment. We came across our teacher Swami Dayanananda Saraswati who taught us Vedanta. We studied Vedanta full-time for three and a half years. After in-depth study from 1995-1998, (Neema) went back to work with the United Nations. The knowledge gained during the Vedanta studies enabled her to make decisions in different aspects of life with a lot of clarity. We started sharing the vision of Vedanta and got very positive feedback from the participants about how it helped them to become better human beings. In 2012, we decided to leave our professions and become full-time teachers of Vedanta.

What’s it like working as a husband-wife team? Why did you decide to work together?
We were not working together in our professional life, but for Vedanta, we work together as a team. It is very productive as we have complementary skills. Neema teaches in English and (Surya) teaches in French. She is also creating course content and (Surya) is making videos. They are working with new programmes. They launched an interactive workshop on self-growth in Matheran (near Mumbai) in January 2012, which was attended by many corporate leaders. This workshop imparts the teaching of Vedanta in an interactive format. The workshop was held at a resort along the same lines. They have also authored a book called "Living the Vision of Eternity" and produced a DVD, "Insights into the Timeless Teaching of the Gita". Working together as a team, we have been able to accomplish a lot more than what we could have done alone. Our ultimate goal is to make this wisdom available to professionals, corporate leaders, and intellectuals.

What kinds of things can corporate leaders take away from a Vedanta workshop?
Practical ways to incorporate ethical considerations in business, knowing the benefits of having a broader perspective in business decision-making, the ability to better deal with uncertain situations in a complex world, enhancing objectivity of staff and senior executives in decision-making, and improving interpersonal relationships among bosses and colleagues.

What specifically does Vedanta say about these things?
There are no black and white answers. It is all about understanding and applying this profound teaching in our daily lives.

The workshops you teach are open to all religions, but Vedanta, as far as I’ve heard, is a Hindu tradition. What makes it so inclusive?
The framework for human growth expounded by Vedanta is universal as it includes analysing criteria that we need to consider to make decisions. It shows some facts that enable us to respond to different situations with objectivity and prudence. It reveals how to manage desires effectively, conduct interpersonal relationships with compassion, and take care of our subjectivities. In addition, it shows some practices, such as meditation, as necessary to be well-grounded and a centred person. All the above topics are highly relevant for any human being who wants to grow and be a better person.

How do the techniques of your workshop differ from other forms of meditation, such as mindfulness or vipassana?
Our workshop is multidimensional. The workshops are designed to help people think through different areas of their personal growth by engaging them in group discussions, examining core studies, doing personal reflections, and role-plays.

Upcoming Workshops

January 11-12: two-day workshop at Sri Vidya Bhavan, Altamount Road, Mumbai
January 17-21: residential retreat at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Coimbatore
February 15-16: two-day workshop in Vasant Kunj, New Delhi
For information, write to discovervedanta@gmail.com

Neema Majmudar had been working for the United Nations and Surya Tahora with French multinational companies, when they decided to travel the world, working on retreats whenever possible. In 1995, Neema made a commitment to Vedanta by signing up for a three-year course near Coimbatore. It was here that Neema and Surya’s paths finally crossed. In 2001, they got married and since 2012 have left their jobs to devote themselves full-time to teaching Vedanta around the world. They were in Bangkok in late November, conducting a two-day workshop at Iris restaurant. Here, we speak to them about working as a husband-wife team, who can benefit from Vedanta, and why it’s for people of all religions.

What does Vedanta mean to you?
Vedanta is a body of knowledge which throws light on certain realities of existence. It not only answers questions such as what is our true nature, the nature of the universe, and the cause of the universe, but also helps us think through transformation in our daily life. The realities unfolded by Vedanta are highly relevant for people to live their life meaningfully and with greater purpose.