

## Introduction

Dear Asha, Ajay, Ravi, Ariana, Roma, and Sai,

I am writing this book summarizing my thoughts on my most favorite topics for meditation as if I am writing just for you, my grandchildren, as a personal note. But this is meant for all the grandchildren of the world. I know that these topics are deeply philosophical, and you may not get to them until later in life. That is fine. But I hope you will get to at least some of these essays.

During a group discussion I had with all of you recently, I realized that children of the future are increasingly likely to be global citizens, migrant and mixed, not tribal, or tradition-bound, who value both science and indigenous knowledge and who value both religion and spirituality. I also know you will be living in a world in which you will be working in an increasingly technological world with robots run by AI. Therefore, you will have to learn to use technology wisely for your survival.

Your world is also likely to be removed farther from Mother Nature. Religions will probably play a lesser part than spirituality in your lives. I remember one of you asking what spirituality means. I remember being asked questions such as: “Why should everyone marry?” and “Why should we bring in more children to this chaotic world?”

I do not have good answers to your questions. I am glad you are asking them. But you have to think deeply on your own about these questions with an open mind and humility. I hope we have given you an adequate knowledge about your “roots” and given adequate freedom to sprout your own “wings” so you can reflect on such important questions.

This is a book based on personal philosophy based on my reading of Eastern and Western philosophies, experiences in my professional life as a pediatrician and personal reflections. Obviously, not all of them are original insights. In my work as a physician, philosophical thinking opened my mind to understand events in people’s lives. It helped me develop my own values to guide my personal and professional lives.

My roots in India and my professional training and career in the USA gave me a perspective on the strengths and weakness of the values and philosophy which underpin the structure and function of these two cultures. The values in eastern philosophies come out of thinking of individuals as part of the whole, time as cyclic and logic as dialectic. The values in Western philosophies come out of thinking of individuals as the centers of focus, emphasis on the context, time as linear Aristotelian logic.

In addition, the word “knowledge” is considered as knowledge about the observable universe, and this world – worldly knowledge. Knowledge is not just scientific knowledge based on objective evidence. It is also knowledge of lived experience, subjective knowledge and indigenous knowledge. The word for knowledge in Sanskrit is *gnana* (see the similarity to the Latin *gnosis*) which includes knowledge of this knowable universe and of the unknown and the unknowable, which may be considered as spiritual knowledge.

Scientific advances made possible by the western philosophies and methods with their roots in ancient Greece have benefitted the entire world. Scientific method requires breaking down the whole into parts and studying the particular in detail. This makes it difficult to reconstruct the whole

from an understanding of the parts. Scientific method tends to ignore useful knowledge acquired from experience. Technological advances made by possible by scientific methods, have come with their own weakness resulting in the current crises in the climate, species disappearance and self-destructive human behavior.

This may be a suitable time to borrow ideas from eastern philosophies which are more tolerant of various points of view, more inclusive, more adaptive to local contexts and conditions. Just as Science and Spirituality are needed to live harmoniously in the new world, strengths of eastern and western philosophies can be combined to create a more harmonious world for our future generations. This is the main purpose for my writing this book.

Let us use Science and Spirituality like we use the close-up lens and the wide-angle lens of a camera. We need both to get a fuller picture of the world and of the universe. As pointed out by Frank Wilczak, in his book on *Fundamentals-Ten Keys to Reality*, complementarity principles coming out of quantum physics have utility in thinking about life on this planet. We are wrapped in dualities both inside and outside. Depending on the perspective, what we observe seems to have different and often contradictory properties – like music as melody or harmony. Looking at the world from different points of view is likely to offer us a better understanding of Nature and greater enjoyments in life.

Philosophers from different civilizations have dealt with mighty questions over the history of civilization. Their fundamental questions led to the development of theology initially and later to science. It started with basic questions with consequences in everyday life. It was practical. As more questions about the universe, we live in and nature were answered through empirical evidence and scientific methods, what used to be called philosophy became an academic discipline in the west. Fundamental questions on the structure and nature of reality became part of what is called metaphysics, which together with logic, epistemology and ethics is now part of the modern-day philosophy.

However, philosophy is not just an academic discipline. It has practical value to give us ethical directions and noble values to lead a compassionate, useful, and fulfilling life. Some of the questions asked by sages and philosophers from the East and the West for the practical aspects of living are Universal Perennial Questions.

Who am I?

What is the Universe?

How did it come about?

Can something come out of nothing?

Now that “I” am here, what am I supposed to do?

What is Life? Why?

What is the meaning of life?

Can one live after one is dead? How can that be?

What is a soul? Is it real or a concept we created?

Did a God create the Universe? Or did we create a concept of God to explain the unexplainable?

Whether the first causeless cause is a God or Abstract “That” or “It” or a Big Bang, what was there before?

If the Big Bang caused the universe to expand, where did it expand into?

When I think I know, how am I to be sure?

What is Awareness? What is Consciousness?

And several more questions of practical importance. For example: What if I do not want to think about any of these questions? How can I lead a useful, ethical, and compassionate life?

These are fundamental questions. Difficult to answer.

There may be, and indeed there are, several answers to these questions. A lifetime is not adequate to read and think about them.

Reflections on these questions led me to some insights which I wish to share. These essays do not address all the questions listed above. But they include essays expressing my ideas from a non-traditional point of view, essays which synthesize different points of view and essays with ideas, some of them controversial, which I believe will be beneficial to future generations.

These essays reflect my interest in giving equal access to science and spirituality in my thinking. They come out of my desire to synthesize what I have learnt using both western style formal logic and the dialectic reasoning of the east.

Some of the essays in this book have been published already in my blogs or self-published books. However, I have included them in this book since these are the thoughts I wish passionately to share with the younger generation. I have also added a few new ones.

The book is organized into three sections, namely Science, Spirituality and Society. However, there will be significant overlap since my intention is to use science and spirituality as a good photographer will use two different lenses for two different purposes.

Since the essays were written at different periods of time, there was a lack of flow and coherence. Therefore, I decided to write about my personal experiences which influenced me in the thoughts expressed in the essays and weave them into the three sections to give some context and flow. Based on suggestions made by Mr. Ed Levy, an experienced book editor, the subject matter of each essay is given in the form of an aphorism at the beginning. This is a well-known format in the ancient writings of India such as *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali and *Brahma Sutra* of Vyasa.

My experiences of growing up in India in my formative years including childhood in a village and college years in a big city gave me the “roots”. My years spent in the United States, training in pediatrics first and then working for over 50 years in academic medicine (which means taking care of patients, teaching, and research) gave me the “wings”. In addition, several remarkable individuals in my life including family members, teachers, mentors, patients, and their families

influenced my thinking. There were, of course, several books and articles, listed at the end of the book, which gave me “wings” to take off.

Your generation is facing major decision points that will determine the direction of the future civilization. Earth’s resources are being depleted at unsustainable rates and human wastes are drowning the oceans. Several socio-economic factors, fueled by social media, are making the collective behavior of people irrational and self-destructive. You will be living in a world in which humans will have to interact with AI-driven robots capable of making not only major decisions but also executing them on their own. Human involvement in such decisions are imperative since AI cannot make judgements and has no emotions or values. Therefore, you and your cohorts will have to take control and work collectively to define human values that would direct machine-human interactions and the future of civilization.

I hope you will have an open mind and reflect on questions and values that can guide the future of humanity. I hope all of you will use science and spirituality, Eastern and Western philosophies, the mind and the heart, in your personal and professional lives and develop values to live by in the future world of “man and machines.”

I hope some of my thoughts in the following pages will be of help in your efforts to improve the quality of life of all the people and all forms of life on this planet. Although I organized these essays under different sections, they can be read at any sequence. They are meant to give you both the “roots” (traditional knowledge, scientific knowledge, and values) and the “wings” (imagination, curiosity, and creativity). –