

Mahabharata Immersion

Purānā. Theatre. Immersion

This immersion into Purānā, Yoga and Theatre will enable the participant to discover and foster one's latent heroic potential

Ritambhara Ashram
Jul 22 - 28, 2018



The Mahabharata Immersion (MI) is intended to enable the participant to engage with inner work. The design of the programme will enable the participant to engage with the *itihāsa-purānā* (epic) from an “inside-out” location, enliven the archetypes and enact the primal drama that occurs at the various turning points in the saga. One wears the mask of the Heroes, and in playing out the archetypal drama, views oneself in the mirror of the emerging “here and now re-play” of the eternal motifs of life and of relationships with significant others.

The MI is a learning laboratory

- ☯ It deploys the Learning Theatre methodology
- ☯ It is an opportunity to use the *purānā* as a *darshanā*, a mirror unto oneself
- ☯ It is an invitation to experiment with oneself, delve into the depths of the invisible, the unarticulated and the disowned parts of oneself by donning the traditional masks from the *koothu* tradition

The MI is not

- ☯ An opportunity to learn the Mahabharata
- ☯ An attempt for the faculty to offer their particular interpretation through discussions or discourses
- ☯ An opportunity to learn theatre or to appreciate tradition

For Whom

The MI is designed to enable:

- ☯ Leaders, Change Agents and Professionals in the field of Social Services, Management, and the Arts wishing to delve inwardly and regenerate themselves.
- ☯ People in the healing/ enabling professions who wish to discover and develop creative processes of their own unfolding and therefore facilitate self-discovery in others.



There will be a maximum of 24 participants in the group. The participants are invited to see themselves as **co-creators** of the learning laboratory. No prior theatre experience or exceptional interest in fine arts is required for this adventure. Participants will be required to read the Mahabharata. Discussions over the Internet and specific suggestions will be given to initiate the exploration. This preparation is essential for a vibrant and meaningful engagement in the Lab.

Perspective

Our Personal Energy is immense and can act in heroic ways, however, it is often locked up in our unconscious. The stories of heroes from our *purānā*-s evoke the potential in ourselves. We have a great treasure house of *purānā*-s and hero archetypes to tap into and unleash this potential. In the pursuit of the modern and the technological, we are losing our ability to discover and nurture ourselves through this wellspring of energy. Working with *purānā*-s through theatre and self-reflection is one of the most powerful and effective ways to gain mastery over one's hidden potentials.

The Intent

This programme will therefore provide an opportunity for participants to:

- ☯ Discover and foster one's hidden heroic potential.
- ☯ Introspect upon the relationship between outer expression and inner processes.
- ☯ Develop a personal foundation of Role effectiveness, interpersonal ethics and intra-personal discipline.
- ☯ Introspect upon the way one holds and gives meaning to one's mission in life.

Yoga & Mahabharata

The Arthashāstra recommends that all leaders must be yogis, the Nātyashāstra, the Vāstu Shāstras and a host of other texts specify that the professional must be a yogi. The reason is very simple. Yoga practiced in a holistic fashion ensures that a person becomes capable of being the best he or she can be. Leaders and professionals need to strive continuously to perform at their peak capabilities. This means that one has to make a continuous investment in one's competencies, one's inner wellbeing and health. However, the meaning of Yoga is limited to āsana and prānāyāma in most people's minds.





Our *purānā*-s were written to bring out the meaning of Yoga through stories that illustrate how different types of minds perceive a situation and how they respond. The Mahabharata portrays the five Pāndavā heroes as the central archetypes of a human psyche, the Kauravā as the anti-hero/shadow archetype and Krishnā as the meditative mind.

Through the drama played out by Pāndavās and the Kauravās the text discusses Yoga in the context of familial strife. The Mahabharata is a dialogue on the Yoga of leadership, a dialogue about dhārmic conduct. The Mahabharata is a complete text of Yoga, it not only captures its philosophical profundity, it evokes the person deeply by portraying different types of archetypal heroes, placing them in difficult and trying situations and describing their struggles as they delve into themselves and overcome these obstacles.

The MI is an invitation to explore Yoga through the Purānā.

Design of the Programme

The two main components of the programme are:

One: The Learning Theatre

An Individual is simultaneously a member of multiple systems - organisation, society, family and others. Each of these systems is a complex network of interdependent roles and processes with distinct values and norms. The diverse pulls and pressures of the systems and lack of integration and synergy in oneself result in diffused inner energies and consequently affects the expressions.

The *Learning Theatre* is designed to focus on inner energies and enable coherent expressions. An exploration into one's inner process is enabled by bringing alive one's inner drama and the personas that play out these psychodramas. (This method has been developed by Raghu Ananthanarayanan.)

Two: Koothu enactment

The participants will also work with actors from the *Koothu* tradition. Having explored the dynamics of heroism within, the participants will be introduced to the nuances of the *purānā*. By working with the traditional masks, music, rhythm and dance the rasa of each hero is evoked and explored.

For example, through an exploration of 'Draupadi Vastrāharanam' (the disrobing of Draupadi) a powerful field is created where the helpless rage of the victimized is contrasted with the blind greed of the oppressor and the lack of conviction in the legitimate protector. The individual who explores this archetypal drama with authenticity enters the universal motifs of human suffering. Such engagement with one's dhukkā is deeply insightful and healing. The stage is thus set for an honest introspection of one's inner patterns of feeling and thought as well as one's outer patterns of action.





This programme will bring together experienced facilitators in human processes and renowned traditional *Koothu* artists to work with the participants.

Programme Director: Raghu Ananthanarayanan. Raghu has worked extensively in the field of Yoga and Behavioural sciences. He has successfully developed an approach to individual and group processes based on a creative convergence of the traditional and the modern.

The co-facilitators would be drawn from the pool of Sashikala Ananth, Raja Ravivarma, Shanta Kumar, Parthasarathy Ramanujam and Bhavana Issar.

Koothu Partners: The *Koothu* facilitation at the lab would be anchored by artistes from a traditional Koothu group from Tamil Nadu.

Venue

The Ritambhara Ashram is a small meditation center situated near Kotagiri in the Nilgiris, nestled in a valley surrounded by shola forests and graced by many beings of the wild. The main purposes of the Ashram is to help foster contemplative conversations, inspire authentic inner work and a reverence for the Earth. It provides a much needed retreat from the hustle-bustle of modern life, and a nurturant context for rest and regeneration.

Accommodation is simple and comfortable. Food is vegetarian.

For more details please visit our website: <http://ritambhara.org.in>





The programme fee is Rs. 35,400/-
This covers the faculty fee and related expenses.

Accommodation options at the Ritambhara Ashram are the following:

- ☯ Twin Sharing rooms (Non A/C) - Rs. 14,160/- (16 pax)
- ☯ Tented Accommodation - Rs. 8,850/- (8 pax)

This covers food and accommodation for 6 days. All prices include GST already.

There are a few scholarships on offer for those who would like to avail of them.

Dates & Contact

The immersion starts on **July 22nd** (5pm) and ends on **July 28th** (2pm).
Last date for registrations: **May 15th**. (Preparatory work starts soon after.)

There may be some emotional stress involved during the Lab. Participants must take responsibility for self- screening if stressful situations are a concern. The MI Lab is not a substitute for therapy or psychiatric treatment. If you are currently in therapy or under psychiatric treatment, you are required to obtain a clearance from your therapist/ psychiatrist before attending. Please also consult your physician, in case you have a current condition of heart ailment or any chronic illness.

Should you wish to explore the nature of the program further you are invited to get in touch with us about it.

Email: [**ashram@ritambhara.org.in**](mailto:ashram@ritambhara.org.in)

Thank you!

