

AUTHOR SPEAKS

EPIC REMEDIES

Open-Eyed Meditations, the latest book by best-selling author & motivational speaker of Goan origin SHUBHA VILAS, converts the practical knowledge of the Ramayana and Mahabharata into solutions for today's problems

By ASHLESHA DE NORONHA

Traveling across the globe and meeting people from all walks of life, Shubha Vilas teaches the importance of being governed by *dharmic* principles, meting out spiritual lifestyle tips and contemporary wisdom to deal with modern life situations.

His leadership seminars, where he addresses the crucial needs of top-level management through inspiring seminars, are popular in corporate houses.

But in essence, he is an author, a motivational speaker, lifestyle coach, and a storyteller par excellence.

Open-eyed Meditations is a distillation of ancient wisdom tips for modern lives; a unique self-help book wherein each meditation takes you on a journey to the past, bringing a secret herb to heal a problem of the present.

It introduces the concepts of emotions, thought orientations and personality upliftment. It also focuses on time management, importance of responsibility

and the power of letting go. Each meditation in the book deals with a modern problem that one encounters in life and is accompanied by profound insights to those situations through a story or a character from the ancient epics.

Whether you are dealing with complex dynamics of relationships, solving an impossible crisis in your life, coming to terms with embarrassing failures, struggling with important decisions or dealing with any kind of addiction, this book offers valuable nuggets of wisdom and action point resources to deal with it all.

It is easy to understand and follow especially when Shubha Vilas is talking about things so deep and moving. It is through that simplicity that he leads us into the complexity of thoughts. He retains our interest to the end with witty descriptions and examples which leave us smiling in agreement for having either done something similar or witnessed someone else do that.

Shubha Vilas opens up to VIVA GOA about his life and new book.

Can you tell us a little more about your latest book?

Open-eyed Meditations is a beautiful compilation of thoughts where each meditation takes on a journey to the past to heal a problem in the present. It offers valuable nuggets of wisdom and action point resources to deal with every modern dilemma with eyes open. It's a unique self-help book with ancient wisdom tips for modern lives.

It's a book of 64 theme-based articles that see modern dilemmas through the eyes of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. In the introduction, I wrote that 'when you are open to life, life opens up to you. Water is present

in air but only when air is subjected to condensation do we get that water. Similarly, thoughts are all around but only when subjected to contemplation do they become meaningful.'



Shubha Vilas

What message are you trying to convey from this book?

To relate what my message through this book is, I will narrate a simple story. Once there was a man whose father left a very precious treasure for him, but he died without informing him where it was hidden. This man spent his whole life searching for it. At the far end of his

life, when he gave up his search, he discovered the treasure hidden in his backyard.

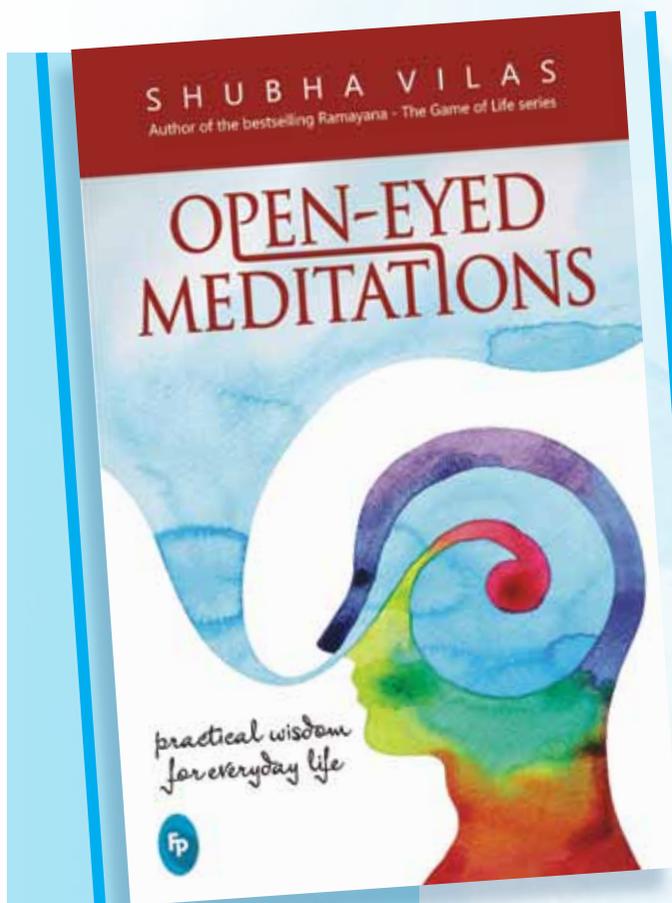
We are exactly like this man searching for the treasure of wisdom through millions of self-help books and inspirational talks. Through this book, I want to show every Indian that there is a precious treasure hidden within our own epics that we haven't discovered yet.

What made you think of using the Ramayana and Mahabharata as a solution to everyday problems?

From childhood, I had heard that these epics have solutions to all our problems. But though I searched a lot, I couldn't find any book that shows how. I realised that if people need to have faith in this fact, then someone had to venture into this project. That's when I decided to write this book.

And as I began writing, I realised that these ancient epics do hold deep secrets which help us deal with every modern dilemma with dignity and maturity. My faith in the wisdom of these epics increased manifold after I wrote the book and saw hundreds of its readers appreciating its practical wisdom.

You said, “The book should be read in such a way that you absorb the wisdom from it.” Please elaborate



This book is not a fast read. It has to be read peacefully like a meditation. Every word is carefully chosen and is embedded with deep meaning that can transform some aspect of your life. Here is a paragraph from the book that will help you appreciate what I just said.

“Talent alone tends to make one arrogant. Talent and good attitude make one malleable. Talent, good attitude, and character make one trustable. Talent, good attitude, character, and blessings make one capable.

Talent, good attitude, character, blessings, and grace make one successful. And if you top that with guidance of the wise, then that makes one eternally grateful!”

“If you feel helpless in the face of a problem, remember, Lord Rama waited for four months of monsoon before rescuing Sita. An intelligent problem solver is not one who solves every problem, but one who knows which problems to solve and which to tolerate.”

“This book is an attempt to uncover the hidden layer of wealth that is cleverly packaged within commonly known storylines.” Please elaborate

We have always heard about the story of the Mahabharata. Here is a new way to look at the connection between three characters in the Mahabharata. This will tell you exactly what I meant by my statement: “In the board game of life, amateur players look upon envious people as snakes who pull us down.

But the expert players look upon them as hidden ladders that actually can potentially push us up.

Karna became a disguised ladder for Arjuna. From the day he appeared in Arjuna’s life, Arjuna was on his toes and constantly upgrading and trying to improve his skill-sets and resources. On the other hand, Duryodhana was a disguised snake for Karna. From the day he appeared in Karna’s life, he eulogised Karna as an expert who needs no improvement but whom the world needs to recognise.

From then on, Karna lived to prove while Arjuna preferred to improve.”

During your discussion with Renuka Narayanan at the book launch in Delhi you said, “I believe that in any relationship, crossing the Line of Respect is a warning bell for disaster”. Can you elaborate on your concept of “Line of Respect” and what you mean by that?

As soon as respect is taken away from a relationship, life is taken away from that relationship.

When two countries fight, an LOC (Line of Control) is created to ensure peace. When two people fight, is there an LOC? Yes! It is called LOR, Line of Respect. When the LOR is crossed, the fight begins. Important relationships should be preserved judiciously like a priceless jewel. When one mistakes priceless relationships to be artificial jewels and treats them like artificial jewels, one crosses the LOR. Crossing the LOR harbingers the disc of time to sever the relationship forever.

Love needs respect right in the beginning and in the middle of a relationship but not at the end of it. When respect ends, love ends. Disrespectful verbal violence is like a relationship suicide bomber.

When we respect boundaries, we value the relationship. When we step into boundaries without being welcome, we only value ourselves.

In the Ramayana, the moment Ravana crossed the LOR drawn by Lakshmana, Sita lost her respect for him as a *sadhu* and knew that he had sinister intentions.

Love without respect for boundaries is, at best, temporary and, at worst, selfishness. Before you begin to love, learn to identify the invisible LOR’s

OPEN-EYED MEDITATION

Author

Shubha Vilas

Publisher

Fingerprint! Belief Publishing

No of pages

280

Price

₹250/-

Can people who have never read the Mahabharata or Ramayana before understand this book?

This book is written in a way that both a layperson and a scholar will be able to appreciate it. Someone who has no background of the Ramayana or Mahabharata will appreciate this book for its practicality. And those who have sufficient understanding of these epics will appreciate this book for its depth in excavating gold that is cleverly hidden within the storyline of these scriptures.

AUTHOR SPEAKS

in people's lives. Love that is fortified with respect, can defy time and circumstances.

What made you switch from engineering and law to writing? How did these subjects help you as an author?

I consider my training in engineering and law to be my greatest assets, which help me as an author. The logical thinking of an engineer and the analytical thinking of a lawyer combined together help me present my writings in a way that is both logical and deeply analytical. I guess anyone who reads even a few pages of any of my books will agree with this.

Writing a book takes a lot of patience. What was your motivation?

My inspiration has always been the hundreds of readers who communicate

to me how my writing has positively affected their lives. I derive more pleasure in giving than in taking.

Writing, I realised, is the best way of giving to a greater number of people. My inspiration to write comes from this one thought. If, by investing my time, energy and abilities, I can bring about a transformation in the life of even one individual, it's more than worth the effort.

What makes your book differ from the other meditation books?

As the title itself suggests, Open-Eyed Meditations is different from all forms of meditative experiences. This is not really a book on meditation in the real sense. It's about observing the world with open eyes using the lens of epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Actually this title is derived from a Sanskrit term called *Sastrachakshu*. It means the art of seeing the world through the vision of the scriptures.

Your earlier book 'Ramayana – The Game of Life' was a

bestseller. Do you see this book as the next?

When I write, I put my full heart into it without thinking about the result. I guess when you offer the best you have, the world offers you the best it can.

Who is your role model?

Rather than learn everything from one person, I prefer to learn something from every person. I have thousands of role models who inspire me in thousands of aspects of life. Of course one person who has influenced me the most of these thousands of role models is my spiritual teacher, His Holiness Radhanath Swami, who is a spiritual teacher and a New York Times best-selling author. His teachings have touched me like no other.

Do you have any advice for aspiring writers?

The best writers are the most voracious readers. Rather than focusing on trying to become a good writer, one should focus on becoming a good reader.

Writing is simply a by-product of reading. So the best advice for writing well is to read well. ■



Moments
in Time
are Precious.
And Watches
Timeless.

Gift a Watch



Time Collection
— The Power of Time —

Panjim: ◆ 8/9, Municipal Building, Opp. BSNL Commercial Office,
18th June Road, Panjim Ph.: 2420645

◆ CACULO MALL, St. Inez, Panjim, Ph.: 2233350 ◆ MALL DE GOA, Porvorim, Ph.: 2412961

RADO

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CITIZEN

HAMILTON
THE AMERICAN BRAND SINCE 1851



CASIO

TOMMY HILFINGER

swatch

DIESEL

GUESS
BY MARCIANO

fastrack

TIMEX

TITAN