Our shifting sands

Knowledge is power, so understanding the influences from the year of the Black Water Snake will separate players from stayers, says TAMMY HAMAWI

I was born in Kuwait and spent most of my childhood summer holidays playing in the desert. This gave me insight into the true meaning of "shifting sands".

The amazing skills displayed by Bedouin tribes as they tracked faded footprints, spread over more than 10,000 square kilometers of changing desert dunes, left me wondering - how do they do it?

Harry St. John Bridger Philby (1885-1960) noted: "The higher flights of desert-craft are as uncanny as the soarings of an Einsteinian brain. In both cases the responsible factor would seem to be not instinct, but education. The habit, derived from generations of instruction, of observing the material facts and applying a certain train of reasoning, can alone account for the miracle of the expert. And so in the Arabian Desert the good guide is he who observes carefully, deduces accurately and remembers faithfully".

While I am passionate about the power of instinct to drive our goals and dreams, this year my advice will be in-line with the ways of the Bedouin, as we navigate in the year of the Black Water Snake. The continual shifting, changing and sometimes even tumultuous landscape in business and politics will bring opportunity to be capitalised upon by prudent investors.

This cornerstone year symbolised by the snake, features shedding of old skin and opening up to new ideas and developments; an invitation to replace redundancy with improved actions. As a snake coils up, contemplates, then strikes, so too are we encouraged to do the same with many of our decisions, while remaining very flexible and aware of making steady progress, paying attention to detail

and having good timing. Once you have set your plans for this year, it is best to be pragmatic about the outcomes.

As we enter the Asian Century, with minds open and ready to see all opportunities that come from merging the best of what the East & West has to offer, long term success will be for the few visionaries amongst us who resist being stuck in old ways of thinking and (like the snake who sheds its skin) use this year to really focus on encompassing global needs in all business decisions. This will include how we invest and, more importantly, how we educate ourselves, our families and even our workforce.

As the balance of power begins to tilt, statistics show that, in 2012, world ranking universities, historically dominated by the USA and the UK, have now started to emerge in Asia and Australia. For example, the Aanyang Technological University in Singapore, has leapt 83 places to rank 86th. These are our golden opportunities.

Among the famous who were born under the influence of the "year of the snake" were Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi; two individuals who were so different in so many ways, yet bonded by the fight to end slavery and gain freedom for others.

Is this an insight into what we should work on this year? We have the power to do great things. As the shifting sands of our world continue to move so fast, some of us may be suffering from whiplash. Our greatest opportunities await, once we have ended the enslaving of our own inner self through doubt, fear and self-judgment. It's time for us to be our own heroes and grow inner freedom. Accept who you are. Understand what drives you!

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