

Theosophy

Forward

Moving
ahead in

the 21st
century

Special Edition

New Year Gift 2014

Editorial

Thank you for collecting this year's New Year Gift.

In this compilation you'll find selected articles that appeared on Theosophy Forward over the past twelve months and some other special holiday treats. I thought it would be a good idea to introduce Theosophy Forward's co-workers in this issue. All of them are volunteers who dedicate much, and in some cases all of their free time to Theosophy Forward, thus spreading the message of Theosophy. You'll see them all listed on pages 60-61.

By choosing another software and specially to accommodate MAC users, it became possible that the electronic editions, so very well crafted by Anton Rozman in Slovenia, now open directly in your preferred browser, while in 2014 we hope to present the Website version of Theosophy Forward on a new template to make it even better accessible for its readers.

The past year was an important one, announcing many transitions. Change is natural, necessary, and therefore unavoidable. All that is, is subject to change. Not one split second is identical to any other one. The universe is endlessly dynamic, and there is but one Truth. By being open to those from other Theosophical traditions, without fear or prejudice, we will feel stronger even in what is important to us personally. On the other hand, what can be altered, within the

context of dynamic change, is the way we all look at each other, keeping in mind that there are many fine and genuine people in all Theosophical groups.

The Theosophical world in 2014 is not divided into those who know and those who mislead or are misled. We might follow different paths, yes, but ultimately there is but one Life and one Truth, so, only one objective: to help our troubled world and make known that such a thing as Theosophy exists. Theosophy is not mine or yours; none of us owns it. We owe it to the world to make the teachings accessible to all because the only reason why we are here is to help those who come after us and those who are less fortunate.

In 2014, Theosophy Forward will once more support the initiatives of International Theosophy Conferences Inc. The 2014 meeting of ITC will be held from August 15 to 18 at the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, The Netherlands, a wonderfully located spiritual retreat centre fostering Universal Brotherhood and Peace.

On behalf of the Theosophy Forward team I wish you light, inspiration, and above all peace in the year to come.

Enjoy this New Year Gift.

Jan Nicolaas Kind



Maria Callas

The music accompanying the New Year Gift 2014 is Franz Schubert's "Ave Maria", a composition he wrote in 1825 as part of his Opus 52, a setting of seven songs from Walter Scott's epic poem "The Lady of the Lake", arranged for piano by Franz Liszt.

You'll hear the breathtaking voice of the American-born Greek soprano Maria Callas (1923—1977) at the height of her career. Although this track was recorded many decades ago, it is still considered by many as one of the best interpretations of "Ave Maria" ever.

To download music to your computer click here: [...](#)

This poem is a German translation by Adam Storck of an excerpt from Sir Walter Scott's "The Lady of the Lake," part of the Arthurian legend. Schubert called it "Ellens dritter Gesang" ("Ellen's Third Song"). Here is the text of the original English by Sir Walter Scott from which the German translation was made:

Ave Maria!

Now your ageless bell
so sweetly sounds for listening ears,
from heights of Heaven to brink of Hell
in tender notes have echoed through the years.
Aloft from earth's far boundaries
Each poor petition, every prayer,
the hopes of foolish ones and wise
must mount in thanks or grim despair.

Ave Maria!

Ave Maria!

You were not spared one pang of flesh, or mortal tear;
So rough the paths your feet have shared,
So great the bitter burden of your fear.
Your heart has bled with every beat.
In dust you laid your weary head,
the hopeless vigil of defeat was yours
and flinty stone for bread

Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! Heaven's Bride.

The bells ring out in solemn praise,
for you, the anguish and the pride.
The living glory of our nights,
of our nights and days.

The Prince of Peace your arms embrace,
while hosts of darkness fade and cower.

Oh save us, mother full of grace,
In life and in our dying hour,

Ave Maria!

Theosophy Forward

This independent electronic magazine offers a portal to Theosophy for all those who believe that its teachings are timeless. It shuns passing fads, negativity, and the petty squabbles of sectarianism that mar even some efforts to propagate the eternal Truth. *Theosophy Forward* offers a positive and constructive outlook on current affairs.

Theosophy Forward encourages all Theosophists, of whatever organizations, as well as those who are unaligned but carry Theosophy in their hearts, to come together. Theosophists of any allegiance can meet and respectfully exchange views, because each of us is a centre for Theosophical work.

It needs to be underscored that strong ties are maintained with all the existing Theosophical Societies, but the magazine's commitment lies with Theosophy only and not with individuals or groups representing these various vehicles.

Theosophy Forward - New Year Gift 2014
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Christmas Menu

Thanks to Margaret Johns, the President of the Vegetarian Society in New Zealand. She is also a committed Theosophist of many years' standing.

Broccoli Soup
Hazelnut Loaf or Layered
Cashew Loaf
Roast Potatoes
Mushroom Salad
Couscous Salad
Christmas Pudding with Custard
& Cream

BROCCOLI SOUP

2 Tbsp cold pressed oil

1 onion, chopped

1 stalk celery, chopped

1 clove garlic, crushed

500 g broccoli, chopped small

2 medium grated carrots

½ cup hot tap water

seasoning

½ tsp nutmeg

2 cups stock or water

Optional - 150 ml soy cream

Heat oil in saucepan over medium heat, add onion, celery, garlic, broccoli, carrots and the hot water. Stir and cook 3-4 minutes.

Stir in seasoning & nutmeg, then add stock or water. Simmer until vegetables are tender stirring from time to time.

Put through blender. Optional - stir in 150 ml cream and reheat gently, serve with a parsley garnish if desired.



MUSHROOM SALAD

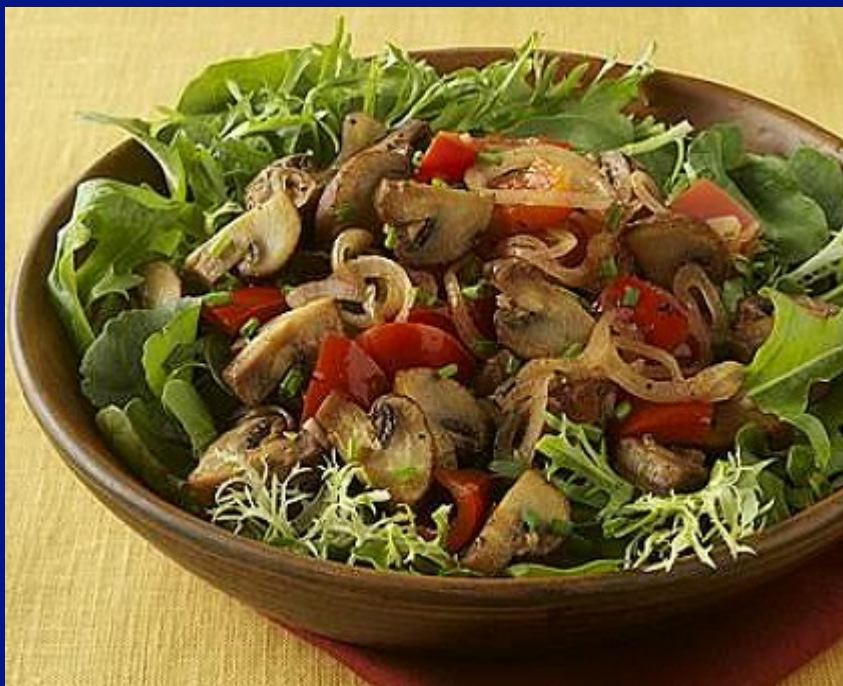
500 g button mushrooms
½ cup finely chopped onion
1 Tbsp finely chopped mint
1 Tbsp finely chopped parsley

Dressing:
1 Tbsp cider vinegar
1 Tbsp oil
1 Tbsp lemon juice
ground black pepper
Garnish with tomato slices and parsley

Wash mushrooms and slice lengthways. Put into serving dish with onion and mint.

Mix together the dressing and pour over the mushrooms. Chill in fridge for at least 1 hour and stir from time to time.

When about to serve, sprinkle with parsley. Decorate with slices of tomato.



COUSCOUS SALAD

1 cup couscous

1 cup boiling water

3 spring onions

canned beetroot, diced into small pieces

1-2 avocados

fresh mint leaves, chopped finely

1-2 Tbsp parsley, chopped finely

Dressing:

Fresh lemon juice (preferably tree ripened!)

Mayonnaise

Place couscous in a bowl, pour over the boiling water and leave for five minutes or until water is absorbed. Fluff with a fork. (May substitute couscous with cooked brown rice.)

Prepare other ingredients and mix them into the couscous with a fork.

Cut avocado in half, remove stone, and scoop the flesh out in small amounts using a teaspoon. Vary quantities according to desired size of salad.

Combine lemon juice with mayonnaise. Work into salad. Vary quantities of salad ingredients and the dressing according to your requirements.



HAZELNUT LOAF

3-4 Tbsp cold pressed oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
100g hazelnuts, chopped
2-3 medium courgettes, diced small
1 Tbsp sesame seeds
1 tsp cumin powder
½ tsp turmeric

1 tsp grated fresh ginger root
75g rolled oats
75g ground nuts e.g.
peanuts/almonds
50g coconut
pinch cayenne pepper
290g can tomato puree

Heat 1-2 Tbsp of oil in frying pan and sauté onions.

Add the hazelnuts and courgettes and cook 8-10 minutes further until courgettes are soft then remove from heat. Transfer to a bowl.

Heat 2 Tbsp oil in frying pan and mix in sesame seeds, cumin and tumeric. Cook 5 minutes while stirring. Watch carefully so seeds do not burn.

Add sesame seed mixture to hazelnuts in the bowl, and combine all ingredients.

Press mixture firmly into a greased loaf tin and bake 35- 40 minutes at 180oC. The top should be well browned and firm to the touch.

Stand five minutes, turn out and slice to serve with a sauce or gravy.

Accompany with jacket potatoes, roasted pumpkin and 2 green vegetables in season.



LAYERED CASHEW LOAF

1 Tbsp margarine
1 large onion, sliced
225g cashew nut pieces
100g bread (with crusts removed)
garlic

200ml water or vegetable stock
½ tsp salt
1 tsp basil
½ tsp ground nutmeg
1 Tbsp lemon juice

Line a loaf tin with greaseproof paper, grease it and put aside.

Melt margarine in saucepan, add the onion and sauté for five minutes until tender but not browned. Remove from heat.

Put the cashew nuts, bread and garlic into a food processor and process until medium- fine, then transfer to a bowl so it does not over process.

Add to the bowl the onion mixture, and the remaining ingredients of water, salt, basil, nutmeg and lemon juice. Stir well using a spoon and put aside.



STUFFING

100g white breadcrumbs	½ tsp marjoram
1 Tbsp margarine	5 Tbsp parsley, chopped
1 small onion, very finely chopped	½ Tbsp water
½ tsp thyme	

Mix all the stuffing ingredients together in a separate bowl.

Put half the cashew nut mixture into the prepared tin, top with all of the stuffing, then spoon the rest of the cashew nut mixture on top.

Bake at 200 C for about 30 minutes or until firm and lightly browned. Should it become too brown before time, cover with foil.

CHRISTMAS PUDDING

1 cup wholemeal flour	In a bowl mix the above ingredients, rubbing in the butter with your fingers. Then add to it the next group of ingredients listed below.
1 cup carrot, finely grated	
1 cup wholemeal breadcrumbs	
½ cup raw sugar	
125g margarine, melted	

2 cups mixed dried fruit	1 tsp allspice or mixed spice
1 grated lemon/orange rind	pinch of salt
1 tsp baking soda dissolved in a little hot water	soy or almond milk to mix

Use sufficient milk to make a fairly moist mixture. If a fine texture is desired, the preparations may be done in a food processor. If a more coarse texture is preferred, mix by hand.

Transfer to a greased 2 litre pyrex or stainless steel mixing bowl. Cover bowl with greaseproof paper, which is secured by a string. Stand basin in saucepan or pressure cooker with sufficient boiling water to come half-way up the side of the basin.

Steam in a saucepan for 2½ - 3 hours, OR cook in a pressure cooker for ¾ hour, cool & store in freezer until required. Reheat for 20 minutes in pressure cooker and serve.

It may also be microwaved although it is not as flavoursome. Divide the mixture into equal halves, and put into two, small-sized ungreased ring moulds. Cover with a paper towel, elevate and cook each half separately, medium power for 7½ minutes. Stand 4 minutes and turn out.

Serve with custard and whipped cream if desired.



Selected articles



The Dream That Never Dies

by Boris de Zirkoff

[This article appeared in *Theosophia*, Volume XIII, No 3 (69) Winter 1956-57]

We had dreamt of a better world ... We had been told by figures prominent on the stage of current history that the chances for peace and good-will among men were greater than ever ... With eager thought and hopeful heart, we had pictured ourselves a global family of nations bent upon a common task - the building of a new commonwealth of the people, dedicated to the arts of peace and progress. The harnessing of the atom for the good of all men, the development of science and research across all boundary lines and racial discrimination, the recognition of the simple right of all men to unfold their own particular lines of growth and culture ... all these, and many other noble ideals were floating in the ambient air, seeking for embodiment.

Then suddenly, torn violently from these ideas which reflected but our over-optimism, we saw coming upon us from the surrounding darkness of unregenerate human nature a black cloud of cruelty, oppression, greed and inhumanity. Brothers were killing brothers; men were trampling the inherent dignity of other men like themselves; innocent men, women and children were mowed down with the latest implements of destruction; deeds of unspeakable cruelty, selfishness, and brutality gave the lie to streams of high-talking and lofty word-weaving, and people who but a short while before had declared themselves to be the protagonists of liberty, freedom and equality, engaged in sordid chicanery, dishonest double-dealing, or outright rapine and devastation ...

We had dreamt of a better, nobler world ... Suddenly, we woke up from the enchanting, lovely dream, and looking around, after a few brief moments of dismay, found ourselves, of all places, back home in the jungle ... But our dream is not dead! It is still a living thing, pulsating, beating with its own heart-beat, flooding with its un-earthly radiance the higher levels of human consciousness, brooding over the imperfections of men and the temporary triumph of the powers of darkness ... That dream can never die! Out of it were born all the noble reforms throughout untold centuries of human progress; all

the selfless deeds of valor which have helped the race to mount the thorny road of spiritual unfoldment and material growth; all the visions of the future which, from time to time, became the present, and gradually receded into the past, while greater visions rose upon the distant horizons of our hopes, beckoning us to come up higher ... Out of that ageless dream of human perfectibility and global consciousness came the mighty thoughts which have shaped the new forms of civilization, and gave impetus to men and women to attempt the seeming impossible, and to scale new heights of achievement ... Out of it will come other thoughts, yet mightier and nobler, which will sustain the coming generations in their struggle for a world of enduring peace and good-will among men ...

We enter through the mystic Portals of Januarius with hope undimmed. We see the old and venerable god Janus, with his two faces, one turned towards the past, and the other towards the future, to which he holds the key. Many doors did he open in the past, now lost in the night of time; many other doors will he open into the un-dreamt possibilities of the future, and the ever-widening vistas of coming centuries.

It is precisely when the heavy clouds of human passions rise again from the depths of our as yet largely imperfect nature, that the time is auspicious to re-assert our noblest ideals, to take firm resolutions to work for the upliftment of the race, to impress upon our plastic minds thoughts of perpetual growth, endless improvement, unending change along the spiral course of evolution; it is just when ideals are trampled, and heroic deeds are denied or laughed at, that it is of paramount need for true men and women to proclaim the enduring strength of these ideals and the lasting value of noble action, backed by strong and lofty thoughts.

Herein lies the essential purpose and value of the modern Theosophical Movement. It is a granary of ideas intended to impregnate the fertile soil of a new cycle of thought, and its votaries are pioneers of the spirit, whose life is dedicated to the liberation of the human race from the shackles of the senses and the dominion of material interests. Others have done it in ages past, and still others will follow the present workers when these have gone to their temporary rest. It is a work of ages. It requires men and women of vision, to whom personal concerns of praise, well-being, recognition and reward are of very small value if any, and whose heart and mind are astir with the echo of a

distant symphony whose chords are vibrant with the music of the spheres, whose strings respond to the Wind of the Spirit ...

The call is for men and women of magnanimous heart, of all-encompassing sympathy, of greatness of soul, whose quiet serenity of the spirit creates peace among discord, light in the midst of darkness, wholeness in separateness and good-will among contention. With good old Horace we may say: "Every man whom perverse folly, whom ignorance of the truth drives on in blindness, the Porch of Chrysippus and his flock pronounce insane. This definition takes in whole nations, this takes in mighty kings, all save only the sage" (Satires, II, iii, 43-46.). The future will establish upon a sound scientific basis the fact that all inhumanity of man to man is a state of temporary insanity, a "descent" or "stepping down" from the natural level of genuine humanhood, and therefore must be treated as a disease of the mind and an affliction of the soul.

The road to spiritual growth lies through the jungle of our personal selfhood, and the barbed wire entanglements of our passions; through the bleak and dreary lands of despair and doubt, and on to the sunlit slopes of intuitive knowledge, towards the pure snow-covered peaks of our Spiritual Himalaya, where the unfading glory of our own Divine Self shines in the silent stratosphere of our own inner being.



Conflict Prevention

by Juan Carlos Murillo Gonzales*

Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation among Displaced Population: Some Field Experiences

[This talk was given during the meeting of International Theosophy Conferences: "KARMIC CYCLES: WHEELS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH", in Wheaton, Illinois, August 9-12, 2012.]

I. INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to be here today and to present some ideas related to the international protection of refugees, particularly as regards to some field examples on how to promote conflict prevention, conflict resolution and reconciliation among forcibly displaced populations.

Over the past years, I have been in contact and benefited from the close friendship and exchange of ideas with theosophists living in Costa Rica and The Netherlands. I believe that those discussions have helped me to have a quite different and broader perspective of life, the world and the way I do my work for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), particularly in the field of promotion of international refugee law.

In a context whereby the humanitarian space is shrinking worldwide, the dissemination of the principles of unity, international cooperation and solidarity are essential to protect those in need. The institution of asylum and refugee protection is rooted in the noblest principles of mankind: the respect of the dignity and the human rights for all individuals without any discrimination.

The notion of "cycles" is also a familiar feature in refugee protection. In fact, we might find this notion in three different manifestations:

1) We refer to the **"cycle of displacement"** to summarize all the dynamic phases or the whole experience that a forcibly displaced person has to go through from fleeing his/her country of origin, having access to safety in a foreign territory, to the actual exercise and enjoyment of rights and duties abroad, and the finding of a durable solution. For example, let's think about the

case of a Colombian teacher affected by internal armed conflict in his/her community, who in order to save his life and security due to the frequent clashes between the army and guerrilla members crosses an international boundary into a neighboring country (i.e. Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil or Panama). Later on, the person is granted refugee recognition and then, opts for permanent residence and naturalization to end or disrupt the cycle of displacement in the hosting country.

2) In many parts of the world refugee crisis tend to be **cyclic**. In the Americas, in the 50 and 60's, refugee movements came mainly from the Caribbean. In the 60 and 70's refugees came from the southern part of South America (i.e. Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile). Then you had the humanitarian crisis in Central America and in recent years, the majority of the Latin American refugees come from the Andean region (mainly from Colombia). In many countries, a person or a whole community might suffer forced displacement and become refugees more than once. Think about Haiti, Afghanistan, and Somalia, and how their nationals have been affected by forced displacement many times over the past decades. At the same time, when root causes of forced displacement are not properly addressed or new forms of violence emerge, this might lead to new refugee situations. Hundreds of persons are currently fleeing violence at the hands of drug cartels in Mexico and criminal gang organizations in the northern triangle of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador). Violence, armed conflict and refugee situations tend to be cyclic all over the world (Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Western Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, etc.)

3) Political will, international cooperation and support are needed to find **durable solutions** for refugee situations. However, the humanitarian commitment of the international community, States and populations varies according to different political, cultural and socioeconomic circumstances. This explains why some cycles of human history are characterized as more **humanitarian** than others or we might say that some **cycles of human history** are more conducive for the adoption and the provision of protection responses for those in need. The end of the cold world did not put an end to forced displacement; new conflicts erupted due to ethnic and religious differences. Refugees are no longer welcome in many parts of the world where a new emphasis on security and migration control measures is on the rise.

II. FORCED DISPLACEMENT AS A CONTEMPORARY FEATURE OF HUMAN HISTORY.

Social tensions and disharmony in the forms of persecution, human rights violations and conflict are at the origin of forced displacement, affecting refugees and other uprooted populations (i.e. internally displaced populations and returnees).

While everybody is entitled to basic human rights under international law, people are still being targeted, harassed and severely discriminated against because of having a different political opinion, religion, race, and nationality or because of belonging to a particular social group. In some cases, the various forms of persecution affecting the life, freedom or security of a person might even emanate from the perception, belief or imputation by a State, a non-state actor or sectors of the population that the individual has a certain political opinion or a given religion (or lack of it).

Refugees are like you and I, human beings, with aspirations, goals and wishes, strengths and weaknesses but unlike us, they do not have the national protection of their own States, either because they cannot provide this protection or because they are unwilling to do it (i.e. failure or lack of national protection).

Persecution might be also linked to age (i.e. forced recruitment of children), gender (sexual and gender-based violence, including trafficking in persons) and diversity (i.e. Afro-descendants, indigenous populations, sexual orientation and gender identity).

While the actual exercise and enjoyment of basic human rights allow all of us to grow and develop in a society, in a given country, in many parts of the world intolerance, discrimination, and xenophobia still lead to persecution, conflict and human rights violations rendering life unbearable for many. As you can imagine, in the XXI century, persecution remains unfortunately a contemporary feature and in many places around the world, those who dare to think and act differently might become displaced persons and might need to flee to save their life, freedom and security and those of their loved ones.

According to UNHCR statistics, 800,000 persons became new refugees at the end of 2011 bringing the total figure of refugees to more than 14 million around the world (including some 4 million Palestinian refugees under the UN Work

and Relief Agency for Palestine Refugees in Near East, UNWRA), 10% of who live in the Americas. While this figure might be considered too high in terms of human suffering, it is important to mention that there are also 26 million of persons internally displaced (more than 3.6 million in Colombia alone) and 12 million stateless persons around the world.

Forced displacement often involves leaving everything behind, including, quite often, family members and to start over in a different community or country. Survivors of persecution, conflict and massive violations of human rights will adopt with resilience various coping mechanism based on the circumstances of fleeing and ensuring access to safety.

As far as putting an end to the cycle of displacement and finding solutions for refugee situations, we might see also some interesting trends at the end of 2011:

1. Voluntary repatriation (going back to the country of origin) became the best solution for only 532,000 refugees. This means that only 5% of the total number of refugees benefitted from this durable solution and that the prevailing conditions in countries of origin were not conducive for many refugees to consider the possibility of going back home. This is a significant change compared to the 90's where hundreds of thousands of refugees were able to voluntarily return to their countries of origin.
2. During the same year 2011, almost 80,000 refugees (1% of the total refugee figures) were able to travel to and establish themselves in a third country under resettlement arrangements with the participation of 25 receiving countries. 80% of those resettled refugees came to United States of America and Canada.
3. During 2011, 4/5 of the refugees fled to neighboring countries and 7.1 million refugees (out of 10.4 million under UNHCR) have been in exile at least 5 years. This means that under the present circumstances, remaining and starting a new life in the asylum country through local integration with the support of hosting communities should be further promoted and explored for the majority of the refugees in cooperation with hosting States, the international community and organizations of civil society.

4. By the end of 2011, some 2,596,000 refugees were living in camps in rural areas, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa (60%) and Asia (35%). In many countries around the world, refugees are supposed to reside in camps where humanitarian assistance is provided. This limits not only the freedom of movement of refugees but their opportunities for self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Refugees should not be seen as beneficiaries or recipients of humanitarian assistance, but as agents of change and factors of development. It is important to note that refugee camps were abolished in the Americas by mid-90.

III. CONFLICT PREVENTION, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND RECONCILIATION AMONG DISPLACED POPULATIONS.

Going back to the issue of cycles in human history, we need to consider how to put an end to the “forced displacement cycle”. However, the question remains how to overcome the psychological trauma of losing one’s home and going into exile, which often means losing contact with loved ones and supporting communities. How to empower refugees to start over in a new society? New generations might be born in exile and listen to the parents’ recollection of a society and a country unknown to them and parents might tend to highlight only the positive aspects that they remember and miss of their countries of origin (i.e. Ulysses syndrome).

When going back home is feasible, how to restore the social tissue to overcome possible resentments among refugees and those who actually generated the forced displacement? How to foster healing and reconciliation efforts among those who left and those who remain in the country? What coping mechanisms are needed to deal with psychological trauma as part of healing and confidence building efforts?

Yet, peace efforts, the restoration of the rule of law and the improvement of human rights conditions might enable the possibility of going back to countries of origin. In the case of Central America (i.e. Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala), peace building, democratization and reconciliation efforts were directly linked to the voluntarily repatriation of refugees and other displaced persons. In fact, the 1987 peace agreements explicitly refer to the situation of Central American refugees and their voluntary repatriation.

However, when able to going back to their communities or countries of origin, displaced populations might be faced with the fact they are returning to places that they no longer recognize as their own or to places where they might have to live along with those who forced them into fleeing, in the first place. This was the case of refugees returning to Argentina and Chile, but also to Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Displaced populations might be coming back to communities where they will have to live with people who never left and/or people who were brought and settled in by the very same persecutors and who took possession of their houses and properties. This was the case of Mayan descendent refugees in Guatemala where access to land plots play an important role as part of their Cosmo vision. In these complicated circumstances, how do you foster reconciliation efforts? What prevention and conflict resolution mechanisms are needed to ensure the sustainability and durability of any solution?

Maybe some lessons might be drawn from the experience of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico. During the 70's and 80's thousands of Guatemalan peasants and Mayan descendants were sent into exile in Mexico and other countries as part of a strategy to combat people perceived as being the social base of guerilla movements or because of living in areas considered as their strongholds. Many of those who flee did not have access to education and health posts in Guatemala, and did not even speak Spanish. In Mexico, over 20 years they started over a new life with access to basic facilities, they learned Spanish and participated in awareness raising activities regarding their human rights and duties, community empowerment and organization, women's rights, vocational training, and they also actively participated in water and sanitation projects and the training of education and health promoters. For many growing children and the newborns, Mexico became their homeland and only point of reference.

During their tenure in Mexico, Guatemalan refugees were able to highly contribute in the agricultural field and other income generation activities, mainly in the southern states of Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo, which economies grew with the support of the "hombres de maiz" ("corn men", as Guatemalan Mayan-descendant populations identify themselves). However, the elderly and the grown ups always dreamt about going back to Guatemala and that possibility became a reality during the 90's before, during and after

the peace accords of 1996. Referring once again to cycles, some people refer to those years as the “renaissance of the Mayan culture in Guatemala.”

Healing efforts as part of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and reconciliation measures might be summarized as follows:

1. Knowing your rights and duties as an individual as a means to community empowerment.

When individuals are aware of their rights and duties, they are better prepared to understand that they do not live in isolation, that they are part of a community, a society, a nation, a country. We are interconnected and our rights and duties presuppose the understanding of the rights and duties of others. My well-being is dependent on the well-being of others. So in order to have stronger communities, we need to start with the individuals and make them aware of their rights and duties. Building on the knowledge of basic human rights, community-based approaches help us to support displaced populations in overcoming individualism and on looking for ways to attend and respond to the needs of the collectivity.

Human rights awareness training for Guatemalan refugees started in Mexico, well before any voluntary repatriation took place. They needed to recognize themselves as holders of human rights and duties, in equal footing like any other human being, without any discrimination between men and women. Guatemala refugees learnt about their basic human rights in Mexico, at the same time that they had access to education and health facilities in their normal daily life as part of a family and a community. This became such a factor of change that they were able to negotiate directly with the Guatemalan government the terms of their voluntary repatriation (06 October 1992 agreements), being the first time in this continent that refugees themselves negotiate the conditions for their voluntary repatriation. Upon return to Guatemala, they also realized that human rights were not only part of their exile experience in Mexico, but that they also apply anywhere in the world. Women did not renounce to their rights and community organizations once back in Guatemala and for the first time in their lives, they became property owners and members of cooperatives on their own right on equal footing as men.

2. Looking for commonalities rather than differences.

In order to promote coexistence, tolerance and respect, displaced populations need to recognize, acknowledge and value commonalities with local populations (i.e. those who never left and those who were brought into their communities of origin). For instance, in many cases they will belong to the same minorities (i.e. indigenous populations, Afro-descendants), they might have the same professional or occupational background (i.e. peasants), the same language, culture, nationality or religious beliefs. In a way, all of them have been affected by forced displacement as a country, nationality or community.

In Guatemala, many of the land plots previously owned by refugees were given to new owners or were occupied by other destitute peasants, with or without the support of different actors. Land restitution became problematic, as later witnessed also in former Yugoslavia. So the question was, how to promote co-existence and reconciliation, taking into account that we are talking about the same destitute peasants of Mayan origin, for whom land ownership constitute an element of survival?

Long dialogues were promoted among those populations to identify common interest and similar characteristics and to get to know each other much better. Third parties were present in the dialogues, acting more as witnesses and facilitators, than as external negotiators. This is a key element, because third parties usually are only temporarily in the country and any lasting solution should not be dependent on their continued support or coaching.

Once those commonalities have been identified and underlined, efforts should also be undertaken within the community to recognize and value differences and their contribution to a multicultural society. As human beings, as part of our traditional way of thinking, we might be afraid of the “other”, usually perceived as different, as a foreigner or as an alien. In fact, differences should be seen as complementary assets to benefit the community.

As previously mentioned, many refugees have learnt a new language, new vocational and professionals skills, and have benefited from living in multicultural societies. The experience of living abroad, even during exile, has expanded their way of thinking and the way they react to what is perceived as “different”.

Refugees are survivors of persecution, human rights violations and violence,

but as human beings they are also agents of change and factors of development.

3. Bottom up approaches to prevention and resolution of conflict.

No solution is sustainable when a third party imposes or instigates it. Change comes from “within” and not from outside. Healing efforts should come and be identified by the community itself with the support and coaching of third parties.

In our experience, displaced populations tend to live in isolated and impoverished areas in rural or urban settings with scarce access to public facilities and lack of presence of state and development institutions. Rather than waiting for the State and other external actors to be present and provide responses, the community needs to organize itself and look for solutions. This organization will attract the attention of other actors, including state institutions.

We need to start with a **bottom up approach**, rather than waiting for responses or solutions to come from outside or from a third party. By doing so, communities realize that they cannot expect change to come from abroad as an external factor. It can neither be an imposition nor a gift done by others. For real change to take place, it has to be done by them and for them, provided that they fully recognize that change is within them. They should understand that they are the agents of change. Healing efforts should be built upon this premise for reconciliation to be sustainable and durable.

In the case of Guatemalan refugees, this community based approach started in Mexico well before any voluntary repatriation movement became feasible. Individuals and communities learnt to depend on their own, through empowerment and community organization. Many of the infrastructure work needed for the returnee settlement was built directly by the community. Many health and education promoters, trained in Mexico, started to provide services to their communities, before any facilities were built or the Guatemalan government formally hired them. Following the establishment of new returnee settlement in different parts of the country, national and international institutions started to be present in those areas and to offer new programs.

IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Refugee protection involves nowadays many challenges. Situations of tension leading to forced displacement are present worldwide, fuelled by the emergence of new actors and forms of persecution.

Refugee crisis tend to be cyclic in an environment whereby the humanitarian space is shrinking with increasing emphasis on security issues and migration control measures by States. Refugees are perceived as threats rather than persons in need of protection in various countries around the world.

Awareness raising activities should be promoted with hosting communities to realize that refugees are agents of change and factors of development. Commonalities of individuals and communities rather than differences should be underlined and differences should be seen as complementary assets. Mixed societies will be in a better position to benefit from and understand this dynamic reality where all of us are united and interconnected. This represents a higher responsibility for some individuals, societies and countries.

Every one of us can contribute to put an end to the cycle of forced displacement, affecting so many people around the world. Refugee protection is about knowledge, skills and particularly about attitudes. So, refugees and displaced persons count on your sustained support.

V. Bibliographic references

1. UNHCR, *The State of the World Refugees: In search of Solidarity*, Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2012.
2. UNHCR, *Global Trends 2011: A year of crises*, Geneva, June, 2012.

Footnote:

* The ideas expressed by the author in this article are his own and does not represent by any means the ideas or positions of UNHCR or the UN, in general.



Our Closeness is This

by Tim Boyd

[This article was the "Viewpoint" for the Quest magazine in Fall 2012.]

There is a principle that functions as a sort of touchstone for many of us. It is an understanding that we are intimately connected in some way to a greater life – an abiding presence that, when allowed, informs our awareness in profound ways, heightening our understanding and quieting our obsessive thinking process. A great deal of what constitutes our “spiritual life” is involved in creating conditions for a fuller experience of this inner richness. To call this experience addictive would be inaccurate, but, once experienced, everything else seems to pale in comparison.

Ask yourself a question: when have I felt safe, calm, peaceful, overflowing with love, warm, kind, expansive? Certainly there have been times when we have had each of these feelings. A variety of circumstances may call them out in us, but there is a common experience that draws them all out. All are things we experience in the presence of a true friend. A friend calls these things out in us. In Buddhism there is a special category of friendship reserved for those people who help us to experience the deepest qualities of our inner nature – peace, joy, equanimity, compassion. These special people are called “spiritual friends”. Sometimes they are teachers. Sometimes they are just people who are simply more aware of and connected to an inner source. We love being around them because they seem to bring out the best in us. What is the source of the energy we feel flowing out from them? If you ask them, they would express it in a variety of ways, but the essence of it would be the same. They would say that they have cultivated a friendship of their own. In the terminology of the world's various spiritual traditions that friend might be called Buddhamind, Jesus, God, Krishna, Higher Self, higher power, or a host of other tradition specific names.

Some would say, as Shakespeare did, that the particular name is not important - “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”. I disagree. In the realm of the inner life all names are not equal. The particular name one uses when speaking to, or even thinking about this most intimate of friends is extremely

important. So, the standard is this, whatever name it is that feels comfortable, that heightens your sense of connection is the name for you. It may not work for anyone else, certainly not for everyone else, but it is your link. One of the many mistakes of conventional religion is the narrow insistence on a group think, lock step approach to this type of spiritual relationship. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna, as an incarnation of God, makes the statement, “By whatever path men approach me, by that same path do I meet them”.

Jallaludin Rumi, the 15th century Persian mystic penned a beautiful expression of the closeness of the Friend. It begins with the inner Friend speaking to Rumi:

Friend, our closeness is this
Anywhere you place your foot
Feel me in the firmness beneath you

Then Rumi's response

How is it with this love?
I see your world, but not you.

Much of Rumi's poetry refers to his spiritual mentor, Shams el-Tabriz, as the Friend. Reading it can sometimes be confusing because in his work the distinction between the Friend and the deepest experience of the real is quite fluid. In the realm of mystical experience, the one is the gateway to the other.

Sometimes people balk at the idea of cultivating this inner friendship. It seems like a difficult, complex, or mysterious process. As much as we speak of the need to simplify, I often feel that we are suspicious of simplicity. Particularly within Theosophical circles, we have been reared on a complex system of thought describing the nature of the universe and the individual. Rounds, races, manvantara, planes of consciousness, dhyana chohans, hierarchies of nature, etc. are just some of the features of that description. The breadth and richness of this conceptual framework is inexhaustible, but genuine understanding requires something more than the facts. The missing ingredient can be something quite simple – this quality of relationship that we are calling friendship.

Just to be clear, we are not only talking about our relationships with other people. However, because for most of us that particular type of relationship is

familiar, it is a good place to start as an example of something potentially far reaching and profound. As it is below, so it is above.

The process of making a friend is something quite familiar to all of us. We know very well how to do it. We have been doing it since we were children. It begins with appreciation - when we see some quality in someone that we appreciate. In the life of Rumi, his first meeting with Shams is said to have occurred while Rumi, at that time a scholar, was studying some texts. Shams asked him what he was doing, and Rumi's high handed response was, "I am doing something you would not understand." Shams then took Rumi's books and threw them in the water. When Rumi recovered his precious reading from the water, miraculously all of the books were dry. He asked, "How did you do that?" To which Shams replied, "Because I am doing something you cannot understand." At that point Rumi's appreciation for Shams was immediate and lasting.

Having recognized some quality of value, next we find a way to be around that person, to spend time to get to know them better. As the process goes on we find that we come to know that person better and better. Gradually a closeness develops a friendship. We become aware of deeper, hidden levels within our friend, things we never knew before. With time we discover that without a word we can sense our friend's mood and thoughts. If we are fortunate enough to have cultivated a friend who genuinely possesses deep qualities of mind and heart, our friendship becomes infused with love. Love magnifies the experience beyond all bounds. It is a familiar experience for anyone who has loved or been in love that the sense of personal boundaries dissolves. When our beloved is sad, we feel sadness. When they are joyous, we too feel joy. This is the process and the result, whether with a childhood friend, or with our truest, most inner and patient of friends. It is simple, natural, and unailing.

In the book *The First and Last Freedom*, Krishnamurti says, "love is one of the most difficult things to comprehend. It cannot come through an intellectual urgency, it cannot be manufactured by various methods and means and disciplines. It is a state of being when the activities of the self have ceased...There can be true relationship only when there is love, but love is not the search for gratification. Love exists only when there is self-forgetfulness, where there is complete communion, not between one or two, but communion with the highest; and that can only take place when the self is forgotten."

One of the beauties of the imagination is that it takes place out of sight, internally. This is especially useful in our initial efforts because we need not be concerned about what others think. Unless you tell them no one knows what's going on inside of you.

So, here is an exercise in imagination.

Sometimes when we go to visit with friends we bring a gift. As we become acquainted with our inner friend we will make a point to offer something. What to give? Think of it this way: if some important dignitary was coming to visit you and you had to give them a present, you would make sure that the gift was something of quality, beauty, and value. You wouldn't just pull something down off of the shelf and throw it to them, or regift something that you did not want. This is even more true for our most precious of friends.

People always say of gifts that "it is the thought that counts". In this offering exercise that is a profound truth because what we will be giving are thoughts. So, what to give? It could be anything. For example, I made some banana bread this morning. The act of making it was my gift. With each ingredient, I measured mindfully. I didn't rush. I listened to the music that was playing from my iPod. I smelled the fragrance of the overripe bananas as I mashed them with the fork. I felt the tension in my forearm in the mashing process. In other words my conscious offering was this fully lived and experienced moment. My gift was as perfect as I could make it. Really, the gift had little to do with the bread. It was more like a garland of thoughts and awareness strung together and presented in the act of making bread. However, it was only the intention to offer this specific moment that made any of this possible.

I, too, received a gift in return. The gift to me was a certain stillness and sense of an enfolding grace during the time that I was making the bread. Presence would be the word I would use to describe the feeling. It lingered and colored my day long after the bread was baked and eaten. A side benefit was that everyone enjoyed the bread.

So now, what do I give? This block, mindfully walked, I give to you. This phone call, this meal, this drive, this meditation, this cup of coffee. It all becomes sacred when offered to the friend.





Unity among Theosophists

by Betty Bland

One of my favorite but decadent recipes comes from my mother's family; it is the traditional Southern pound cake. The recipe probably began when recipes were not as sophisticated as today, so its ingredients were simple: a pound of eggs and a pound each of butter, sugar, and flour. Refining adjustments have been made over the years, but the proportions are still similar. Now this is an instance in which the whole is definitely better than its parts. Each ingredient is dependent on its proper blending with the others and if any ingredient is missing, the operation is a disaster.

As Theosophists who are committed to a chief aim of brotherhood, we are similar to that pound cake. Through our unfortunate splits and disagreements we have evolved into different but essential ingredients for the whole Theosophical cake. If any one of our groups which is committed to the Theosophical worldview as espoused by Madame Blavatsky shuns the rest, it denigrates the outcome of our final product — the upliftment of humanity, humanity being freed from religious superstition and scientific materialism so that we might grow in harmony and peace.

Considering our world situation today, we can see more clearly than ever why the Masters were so adamant that our task is extremely urgent. Madame Blavatsky made this clear in her writings. I quote from her *Collected Works*:

But in order that we may be able to effect this working on behalf of our common cause, we have to sink all private differences. Many are the energetic members of the Theosophical Society who wish to work and work hard. But the price of their assistance is that all the work must be done in their way and not in any one else's way. And if this is not carried out they sink back into apathy or leave the Society entirely, loudly declaring that they are the only true Theosophists. ... But to work properly in our Great Cause it is necessary to forget all personal differences of opinion as to how the work is to be carried on. Let each of us work in his own way and not endeavour to force our ideas of work upon your neighbours. ... Theosophy is essentially unsectarian, and work

for it forms the entrance to the Inner life. ... Thus, then, "UNION IS STRENGTH"; and for every reason private differences must be sunk in united work for our Great Cause. (Vol.XI; pp. 165-166)

The use of the term union, or unity, implies more than one thing or being united in a common work. Although the Theosophical Society began as one, we have become multiple. Over the past more than 130 years, we Theosophists have divided and split over a number of issues, generally personal in nature. In a number of ways, that is most unfortunate, but if our differences can be seen as complimentary and enriching, then perhaps we find ourselves at an auspicious juncture. If we can work together with mutual respect and cooperation, we just might be able to achieve our original goals in time to save this fragile world. Instead of having our "goose cooked" we might make a great deal of progress toward our objective. In other words, we might "make the cake."

I end with another citation from the *Collected Works of HPB*:

"Theosophy teaches self-culture and not control," we are told. Theosophy teaches mutual-culture before self-culture to begin with. Union is strength. It is by gathering many theosophists of the same way of thinking into one or more groups, and making them closely united by the same magnetic bond of fraternal unity and sympathy that the objects of mutual development and progress in Theosophical thought may be best achieved. (Vol.VII; p.160)



On Theosophical Unity

by Vicente Hao Chin Jr.

The issue of Theosophical unity is a complex one. We must first be clear as to what kind of unity we are talking about.

If it is about organizational unity – that is, merging all Theosophical organizations into one – then this looks improbable, at least in the foreseeable future. The ground is not yet well set.

If it is about cooperative unity among the different Theosophical organizations to further the mission of the Theosophical movement, then it is definitely possible as well as desirable.

Below are some thoughts on such an effort:

1. First, we need to state the obvious: the underlying principles of such cooperation should be the objectives of the Theosophical movement as laid down by the founders, including the Mahatmas in their letters. The essentials of these objectives would not be too difficult to define, even if there may be some grey areas. The three objectives of the TS, the spiritual life, character building, Theosophical philanthropy, and popularization of theosophy (this is an example of a grey area) are examples of bases for such unified vision and work.
2. Because of the existence of grey areas, such cooperative unity must accentuate the positive or the unitive facets when it comes to efforts to popularize Theosophy, rather than rub on the areas of disagreement. The International Theosophical Conferences are examples of such efforts where we strengthen the areas of unity rather than wrangle about the differences.
3. But the basic areas of disagreement cannot be avoided, and we cannot be blind to them as if they don't exist because they will keep on popping up in the effort to popularize Theosophy. How can we handle this?
 - a. The Theosophical world is firmly founded on genuine freedom of thought, inquiry and belief. But at the same time, it is best that we come nearer to a consensus on what is this thing called Theosophy that we want to popularize. (I am speaking here on theosophy for the general public.)

b. To achieve this it will be helpful to have a *friendly* inter-theosophical forum among knowledgeable theosophists who will study and discuss perceived incongruities in basic or popular theosophy and see in what way we can develop an integrated body of teachings. I need to emphasize the word “friendly” or brotherly because any unfriendly or aggressive attitude will just derail such efforts to bring about a general consensus as to what is the theosophy that we wish to popularize. This need not be an official inter-organizational forum. A group of well-known and respected theosophists from various societies would be enough to lead other theosophists to a reasonable consensus. This can be initiated by, for example, Theosophy Forward or the International Theosophical Conference. The effort may fail, but it is worth pursuing.

c. Such a group will inevitably arrive at certain principles that will guide such a joint inquiry and research that will serve as the basis for arriving at a broad consensus. For example, they will most probably acknowledge that scientific findings that are reasonably conclusive should be given due consideration in case it conflicts with any Theosophical teachings, such as that there are no canals or forests on the physical surface of Mars.

d. For certain controversial areas, more joint research and exploration would be necessary. For example, *is the astral body the kama rupa or the linga sarira?* There is room for actual quasi-scientific research on this issue because of the vast information now available on out-of-body experiences, near-death experience, etc.

e. There will probably remain certain areas that are difficult to tackle, such as the definition of the monad (*is it the atma-buddhi or the anupadaka monad?*) primarily because they rely on the assertions of individuals rather than based on experience. Part of the problem is the use of the same terms for different things (monad, astral body, logos, etc.). It would have been helpful if a different term had been used when a later writer introduced a new idea or concept. Although this is water under the bridge, it is still possible to review the confusing nomenclature and create qualifying adjectives to distinguish one term from another (especially if theosophists cannot agree on the actual teachings), and present a less confusing body of teachings to the public.

4. An area of bitter dissension is about historical personalities, primarily C. W. Leadbeater and W. Q. Judge:

a. As much as possible, we must look forward and not backward. Many issues about the past probably can no longer be resolved at this time when the protagonists and witnesses are long dead. The effort of some ULT members to reopen the Judge case as if a new trial ought to be undertaken is most probably doomed to fail, and the one that will perhaps be harmed most by such an attempt to reopen will be the memory of Judge himself. At present, the whole theosophical world has maintained respect for Judge and to re-ventilate the whole controversy will just harm him more than it will help. Even a staunch pro-Judge writer such as Ernest Pelletier has concluded that the charges “could not be proved or disproved” (*The Judge Case*, p. xiv).

b. We must focus on the validity of the Theosophical teachings of these historical people rather than the moral issues about them. It is not that we are to become blind to such moral issues – for the latter have importance – but a hundred years of seemingly unending disputations should be enough to convince us that we are unable to arrive at a consensus on these issues. Much talent, time and resources have been wasted on the fruitless recycling of such issues that just divide us more. The farther we are from the eras of these historical personalities, the less are we in a position to judge personal moral matters. So let us move forward. Theosophy is immensely larger than any personality, including those of Blavatsky and the Mahatmas. We must not be bogged down by the issues about the personalities who tried to be vehicles of the reintroduction of the ageless wisdom. The imperfections of its advocates are secondary. Our primary agenda is about the Wisdom and its potential for human and social transformation. Let these be the foundations of Theosophical unity.

Unity in Theosophical work and mission is possible and desirable. Together, we will become far more effective in the effort to popularize theosophy and make it a practical living philosophy for everyone.



Theosophical Leadership

Introduction:

by Jan Nicolaas Kind

“For time and the world do not stand still. Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.”

— John F. Kennedy

In 2008 members of the Theosophical Society Adyar democratically elected their International President. It turned out to be a highly controversial election. Until today the aftermath of that unfortunate epoch is still felt. It is not the intention now to open old wounds or to launch another series of useless bickering, on the contrary. But every self-respecting organization, so also the TS Adyar, should have the courage to look at certain events retrospectively and learn from them, so that any mistakes made may be avoided in the future.

Before long, at the latest in 2015, once more an International President will have to be chosen and it is quite possible that this time more than one candidate will be on the ballot. But having learned from the 2008 debacle, and looking forward to the future, even if there should be only one candidate, it is a good exercise to ponder on the subject of Theosophical leadership. What are the requirements and challenges for a modern leadership that will enable the largest Theosophical organization to find its rightful place in the world, serving humanity? Who could be suitable candidates? And how should members prepare themselves for that inevitable election looming on the horizon?

Theosophy Forward invites its readers to reflect on this subject and express their reflections, because the 2008 election proceedings were an example of how not to elect a leader. A repetition must be avoided. Constructive contributions are welcomed by the editor and will be carefully considered for publication in the magazine. Thoughts in general, names, wishes, questions, suggestions, or demands, would be appropriate as long the tone remains positive.

The magazine Vidya, <http://www.theosophysb.org/site/publications.html>, edited by associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists in Santa Barbara, USA, published in its winter 2013 issue the following article. It deals aptly with the subject of leadership and is germane to all Theosophical traditions. Hopefully this fine piece is a first start leading to a worthy dialogue.

Send your reaction to: siteowner@theosophyforward.com

THEOSOPHICAL LEADERSHIP

Challenges to and changes in leadership are a very pronounced part of current news. Whether by secret conclaves, elaborate protocols, election upsets or violent coups, new leaders are presented to the world community in a dizzying and dramatic proof that we live in turbulent times when no leader can assume that his or her position is secure. Although ambition for power and wealth may motivate those who seek leadership positions, one cannot but sense that deeper currents of karmic justice are at work in magnifying the failures of contemporary leadership and stirring the enormous protests glimpsed on the nightly news. Not even the most venerated authority of religious institutions or popular monarchies are escaping the turmoil of dissent. As the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats observed, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." What is the problem? Why is respect for leaders and their power dissolving? Why are even the best and well-intentioned leaders failing to gain support and cooperation? Why won't the center hold?

What are the qualities of effective leadership? Some ideas easily come to mind.

A leader is one who initiates actions and shows a way for others to follow. A leader can articulate and connect some sort of vision or sense of a purpose to practical needs in a particular situation. A leader has courage and a willingness to take risks. A leader perseveres and finds a way to overcome hindrances to a chosen path of action. A leader shows a compassion that inspires others to rise above the fears and divisions that inhibit cooperation and to do their best.

We can recognize and be inspired by historical leaders as well as those in more visible, contemporary affairs, but the question is: What is the difference

in leadership referred to by the term, 'Theosophical leadership?' The answer in one fundamental way is found in the word "*theos*." Among its many rich meanings *theos* could be understood as that which is divine in wisdom and illumination, that which expresses the sacred and the spiritual, that which gives forth the most rich and comprehensive truth. Although the word "*theos*" may be attached to a being or to an entity, according to Theosophical teaching it conveys a central, abstract idea about what exists. That is a reference to the divine spark — that divine, sacred light that is at the core of everything that exists. It is the *Christos* in every atom. This divine spark or *atman* is the essential identity and higher self of every human soul. That spark is what enables us to perceive and to learn. The *atman* most directly activates and illuminates two very important principles in the human soul — the ability to discern what is true and right and good and the ability to reason at a level of understanding universal principles. When activated, those core capacities of the human soul called in Sanskrit the *buddhi*, and the *manas*, can in turn enlighten and guide the lower principles of the human being. Thus, we can integrate our highest powers with the more worldly of our principles, the lower quaternary of the physical body, the astral body and the forces that course through them.

Therefore, Theosophical leadership is leadership that is illuminated and guided by the *theos* within each human soul. That source brings a special kind of illumination and a special kind of understanding into the human consciousness and into communication and interaction with other human beings. One current ideal of Theosophical leadership is the Dalai Lama. We read about his discipline, his thorough commitment to a life of seeking sacred illumination, and we witness his tremendous energy, his sense of humor, his boundless compassion in the way he reaches out to each and all. Thus the Dalai Lama is a good example of leadership that is enlightened by the highest spiritual powers and energies available to a human soul. What is remarkable about him is that, having come as a refugee at a fairly young age, plunged into a foreign land, he had to develop a concept of spiritual leadership in a secular society. When one reads about the hordes of people who make their way to the city in which he resides, it sounds like a circus. Yet he is there preserving something very sacred. As an exemplar of Theosophical leadership, he is seeking to awaken the best in each and every human soul. That does seem to be a

particularly important motive for leadership that is empowered by the theos.

A spiritual leader wants to awaken a human soul and inspire it to do better. A leader encourages a pilgrim to tread the path that leads towards realization of a better, truer self, and ultimately to become an exemplar of spiritual evolution. Thus, a Theosophical leader would want to liberate a human being from all the kinds of karmic limitations of conditioned existence and promote the spiritual freedom of each and all. This aim would be pursued by a combination of wisdom and adaptive understanding of the needs of particular individuals in particular situations at particular times. Leadership is truly an art.

Theosophical leadership is also to be understood as that kind of leadership that is in line with the wisdom, purpose and mission of Theosophical adepts and all the great teachers who come to teach, to arouse, to awaken and to promulgate the great message of *Theosophia*. This might seem like a kind of leadership that is simply beyond most of us. One might hope to glimpse and be inspired by such a leader who brings light and knowledge into the darkness of an iron age. Yet this is a rare experience. Cannot more immediate examples of Theosophical leadership be found and understood at the level of ordinary people in ordinary life seeking to do the right thing? How could an ordinary person of average competence become a leader somehow reflecting the ideals and the capacities of the highest exemplars of Theosophical leadership? Thinking about that question several qualities of leadership in action in everyday life and for more immediate purposes come to mind. We have all had the experience of being in some kind of group trying to do something, build a house, print a magazine, organize a youth group, or whatever. Is not a faith in human brotherhood and the ethics of cooperation required for the success of any such project? How can we lead while just being one worker among many?

One of the first requirements of Theosophical leadership in daily life is to approach each and all with kindness — a virtue that the Dalai Lama speaks of often — to approach every human being, every situation with a heart filled with kindness. That is easier if one recognizes the fundamental identity of every human soul with every other and assumes that spark of the divine is in everything that lives. A strong sense of human solidarity implicit in this fundamental source of shared identity could be an unspoken but effective basis of communication and activity. That mental attitude right away brings those who perhaps not by choice, but by necessity, would lead, into a

rapprochement with others. A leader must listen and engage in discussion and recognize the perspectives and the statements of the needs of others. Listening leads to a sense of mutual purposes and opens a mind to fresh opportunities for creative action. Thus emerges a synthesis of ideas that unites and inspires a community.

H. P. Blavatsky explained that all she did was to bring together several Theosophical ideas descended from ancient sources. She simply provided the ribbon that tied them together. We think that is a good metaphor for Theosophical leadership. In other words, it is not a leadership of imposing a particular idea, a particular plan of action, a dominant will, but a leadership that is open to suggestions and ideas and then has a way of synthesizing those ideas into an expression of a principle and then into a plan of action with a sense of future as well as of present needs. This is what distinguishes a leader from a follower who is yet to become a leader because, Theosophically, every human being could become a leader in some situation, somehow, somewhere. A leader may have only a little more knowledge or insight into the objective needs that are part of the cycle of the time. These needs according to Theosophy would have to do, again, with the inspiration, the liberation, the evolution of the human soul. This is leadership that enables others to see the benefits of becoming more like the sage, more able to be detached from the elements of the personality, more able to engage in a commitment with less baggage and fewer karmic anxieties.

A Theosophical leader would be able to adapt the teaching to a particular situation, finding ways to express it and yet never compromise on what is essential to the teaching and essential to the goals that promote human evolution. A Theosophical leader would have a very definite sense of the sacred and thus, could bring into a situation opportunities for others to experience that very sense of the sacred. Ideally, Theosophical leadership will bring people together so that everyone can experience the brotherhood realized in a community of purpose that strengthens each and all as well as improves the likelihood that the goal of whatever task it is can be achieved.

Theosophical leadership would educate both in terms of the Teachings as well as in terms of the possibilities of effective practice. That is no easy purpose if you think of how many ways our lower natures pop up with opinions and negative reactions and various ways of increasing separation. Theosophical

leadership would encourage everyone to engage in a kind of individual leadership by developing a discipline and ultimately a transformation in both consciousness and magnetic energy. That effort would then make them a better participant in a team or community, more willing to look for leadership in others than to demand a position of leadership.

This leadership would also recognize the need for ceaseless evaluation and correction. That is sometimes the tough thing to do because, when you are leading, there is a tendency to want to respond positively to everybody's ideas because that is in one way, part of the process. On the other hand, leadership will fail if it does not have an element of an objective evaluation of whatever the task is. Leadership may include some sort of admonishment of somebody in a group or a situation who is disturbingly off track. In serious, hostile situations one would at first try to learn from one's enemy or from any personality that has gone haywire in some way, and approach it with compassion. One would always draw the larger circle, holding out the possibility of transformation. Any particular person who is expressing negative emotions, perhaps caught in some bad karma, could, in the end, be made to feel that he or she has opportunity to do better. There is a major lesson to be learned from the story of the Buddha sitting outside the cave where a very dangerous evildoer was caught in his own pride of accomplishment, but was nonetheless attracted to the Buddha. The Buddha was displaying the calm of being in the still centre of the situation. Eventually that evildoer became one of his disciples, accepted responsibility for his evil actions and engaged in a full transformation.

The regeneration of human beings as well as the guidance of human beings is firmly the responsibility of the Theosophical leader. In the end he or she seeks to help people experience the highest potential in their very being and thus increase their loyalty and their dedication to the common enterprise helping them become Theosophical leaders in turn. Must not leaders in secular positions also learn and practice some higher principles of human growth, brotherhood and environmental care? While contemporary monarchies delink their authority from claims of divine rights and sacred authority, could they not recognize the sacred aspects of their responsibilities? Must not all who would be leaders recognize the heartfelt aspirations of humanity for peace and opportunity for true fulfillment within the great harmony of cosmic evolution?





Reflections on the meaning of life

with Professor P. Krishna

Questions

Generally the big questions about life arise out of grief, illness, death and seldom during happy moments – which we all chase. What is happiness for you?

Happiness is a by-product of right living, which in turn requires wisdom. Theosophy literally means the quest for wisdom, which is the same as the quest for truth since the perception of truth ends illusion. The perception of what is true and what is false is self-knowledge which is the key to wisdom and therefore to happiness. Only then is happiness not dependant on circumstances.

What is love for you?

Love is a state of being in which there is compassion for all living beings without any self-interest or judgement.

How do you explain suffering in any form?

Ignorance as illusion is the cause of suffering. One must distinguish between personal suffering and the suffering due to compassion. Personal suffering ends when the mind is freed of all illusion. The ego is the greatest source of illusion and therefore freedom from the ego is the beginning of wisdom and the end of psychological suffering.

What is death for you?

Death of the body is a natural fact of all life and therefore a part of living. There is real creative and joyous living only when one dies to the ego, which is attachment to the personality. That is also freedom from conditioning due to the past or the known.

We know we are born, we know we will die and within this temporal space we live and build up a route; for some this is lived consciously, for others unconsciously. What are your objectives in life and what do you do to realize them?

To me the whole of life is a ground for learning, not only learning about the external world but also learning to distinguish what is true from what is false. Life is a great mystery and understanding that mystery is the objective of my life. The rest is a by-product of the wisdom so generated.

Do we have an existential project to perform?

Being true to oneself and therefore to others is a major responsibility in addition to whatever other responsibility one takes up in life. This again is a by-product of self-knowledge or wisdom.

We are social animals; our life would have no meaning without the others, notwithstanding that we live in an era where individualism is more exalted than ever. This brings about a social involution: what do you think of that?

Individualism is an illusion. We are inextricably linked to each other and to the entire universe around us. To separate oneself from the world and treat it as something meant for one's use is narrow-minded egoism. It is the greatest source of all suffering, both personal and global.

How can we recognize good and evil?

To the extent we are capable of being egoistic we have the capacity for evil. Any action born of the ego state is evil irrespective of what results it achieves outwardly and any action born of love and compassion is right action irrespective of what it achieves externally.

Man has always been distressed by the unknown. Religions, and afterwards philosophies with the aid of reason, gave him some help. What help did you have?

Theosophy and Krishnamurti taught me that religion is not belief but the quest for truth. That we can grow in wisdom if we have a learning mind and look upon life as a mystery to be lived and learnt from. The known is very limited and the awareness of the existence of the vast unknown brings humility. Our knowledge leads to arrogance when it is not coupled with wisdom and blocks learning.

What is for you the meaning of life?

Life is not a problem to be solved; it is a mystery to be lived.





The Christmas Lesson

Who knows what is the longest day in the year? Who knows what is the shortest? The ancients said that on these two days, the Sun stands still and trembles in the balance, before it turns on its journey, whether to the north or south again. So, we have the word from them in the Latin language, solstice. (sol — sun; sistere — to stand) Of course, the Sun doesn't ever really stand still, but seems to, as we watch it from the earth. So, also, the sun does not move at the rate it seems to us each day across the sky. It is the earth's turning on its axis every twenty- four hours that gives the appearance of the sun's moving.

During the year, the sun's path changes in the sky. Now — north of the equator, of course — the sun is rising on the eastern horizon way down in the south, and shines in our south windows almost all day, because it sets far down south on the western horizon. Comes the winter solstice, December 21st, and first thing we know, the sun begins to climb up the sky. In the spring-time, it makes its circuit from east to west at the very top of the sky. For three months, it moves by degrees up to the north. On what day, then, would you be expecting to see it rise farthest north, bringing light even into some of our north windows all the day? Here, comes the summer solstice; the sun "stands still," and then moves on toward the south, in its risings and settings. 'When the sun rises midway of the horizon, and high in the sky, comes autumn, with its equinoctial storms. Farther down to the south, moves the sun, till it can go no farther; again we have come to December 21st, to begin the real New Year, according to Nature's clock! Then it is, the seeds beneath the earth get a message from the sun to germinate, although it will be months yet before the plants will venture forth above the soil.

Most people celebrate the New Year according to men's "clocks," or calendars, on the first day of January, but the real New Year is on December 21st, as we have seen. Two weeks after that — fourteen days — is another kind of New Year, said the great Teacher of Theosophy, H. P. B. This was the Day when the great host of Shining Monads incarnated on earth, in the beginning, she said.

Now, the very ancient peoples — Indians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Americans, — thought of the sun as the Life-Giver to all growing things, but they knew it to be only a symbol of the True Sun — the One Light — the Self. They knew that the Self acts only through beings and that this great sun of our world was just an instrument, or lens for the True unseen Sun. And when they sang their hymns to the Sun in this cycle, it was with the thought of acting for the Self in every heart:

That which giveth sustenance to the Universe and to ourselves, from which all doth proceed and unto which all must return — That Thou Art. In the golden vase of thine earthly body may the pure Light of the Spiritual Sun shine forth, that thou may'st know the Truth, and do thy whole duty, on the journey back to the Sacred Seat!

At a later time, people came to think of all the forces and beings in the sun as making up one Being, which they worshipped as the Sun God — much as some of your friends, perhaps, think of “God” as a great good man outside themselves — rather than as the Real Self ‘within each and every being.

It was on the 21st of December that the Sun-Gods went down under the earth, the ancients thought, to help the Souls — the seeds — imprisoned there. Remaining for three days, they came forth triumphant in all their glory, on December 25th. And this was the new birth of their Sun-Gods. The Egyptians celebrated the Sun cycle by the singing of hymns to the image of an infant, symbolizing their Sun God, then born again.

Now it seems very fitting, doesn't it, that an Elder Brother, who was born into the world to be a teacher of the Three Truths, should have his birthday at the birth-time of the new sun-cycle? That, anyway, is what the Catholic church fathers thought, when it was given to them to decide on a day to celebrate, nearly four hundred years after the birth of Jesus. No one really knew by then when He did come — neither the day nor the year. Only very Wise Men know that, because they know the cycles.

Yet, we know something about cycles — so let us see what we shall discover by recalling that it takes the sun about 25,868 years to travel through the signs of the Zodiac. There are twelve signs; so, dividing 25,868 by 12, we find that it must take about 2,155 years for the sun to move from one sign to the other.

It seems as if the old world learns and for gets in that time, so that a wise Elder

Brother has to come to remind it again of what it has forgotten; 2,155 years is the cycle which marks the time when a messenger is needed. Well, the Sun turned into the constellation of Pisces 255 B. C. (B. C. as we know, stands for Before Christ), and that means that a Wise One came somewhere around that time, before the year 1 — which is usually reckoned as the birth year of Jesus. Again, very close to 1900, the sun passed into the sign of Aquarius. So, it looks very much as if Jesus was born at least 150 years before they reckon his birth.

Do you think it very strange we don't know just when Jesus was born? You see, such a Messenger is recognized only by a few at first; Jesus never wrote anything, and those who knew him did not write of him till long after he had died; so all we have is a few legends about him; and we can only know he was a great Teacher by his wise sayings — which are according to the Three Truths.

Perhaps we think that we should recognize such an One! Well, was there any Messenger teaching the Three Truths at the time the sun passed into Aquarius? Yes; in 1875 Madame Blavatsky began to teach Theosophy, just as we are learning it now. She left her body in 1891 and she said that in the last quarter of this, our twentieth century, another Messenger would come to carry the work still further on, if those living up to that time are faithful in learning the truths of Theosophy and in spreading it over the world. Perhaps you very boys and girls will live to see that Messenger and know him! Anyway, you can learn and teach the boys and girls who will be men and women then how to know him. Both 1875 and 1975 come within the cycle of the Messenger.

Now let us go back to the birth-time of Jesus, who was called. the Christ, the Illuminated One, because he had learned so perfectly that he knew only how to think every thought, and do every deed for and as the Self, before he entered that baby form in Bethlehem of Judea on the day now called Christmas — Christ's day. (Mass — the service.)

Wise men knew the cycle then and were expecting this little one. So they came there from far eastern countries to greet the babe with gifts and thanksgiving. They gave him gold — as symbol of the sun; they gave him frankincense and myrrh, because these had mysterious healing qualities to protect him — symbols of love and thoughtfulness, as all gifts should be. Little

did it mean to Wise Men that Jesus was born in a lowly manger, with patient oxen munching the sweet hay nearby; they knew that the glory of Jesus would never come from riches and lands, but from knowing and showing the treasures of the soul. And as they looked for the birth-place, they followed a star, which led them to where he lay — that star called The Star of Bethlehem.

It is recorded that Jupiter and Saturn were in conjunction in this cycle — as you may remember Venus and Mercury were, not so very long ago, so that they looked like one bright star. This might happen again when the new Messenger's birth is near.

All nature seemed to know that the cycle for the Messenger had arrived! As Joseph, the father of the little Jesus, looked up into the air, the legend tells, he saw the clouds astonished, and the fowls of the air stopping in the midst of their flight. The sheep, while scattering, yet suddenly stood still, and as he looked into the river, he saw the kids with their mouths close to the water and touching it, yet not drinking. He saw a bright cloud over shadow the cave and suddenly it was in the cave, such a blinding light, that their eyes could not bear it. The stable was built into a rocky wall, you see.

The oxen fell to their knees, and the shepherds sang hymns of rejoicing and, to this day, the custom lasts of singing about the birth of Jesus — and they say that on Christmas, alone of all days, always the oxen kneel. In ancient England the hawthorn was said to bud on the 24th and blossom the 25th of December, in memory of that birth.

Why do we use evergreens at Christmas time? This is another recognition of the cycle, because long, long ago 'twas thought the spirits of the woods and dells flocked to the ever greens and there were protected from frost till milder season.

So, while at Christmas time, we remember the birth-time of Jesus, and give gifts as the Wise Men did of old, but now in memory of the Great Messenger — the Christ — we do not forget December 25th is the hidden birth-time of all nature. Without the turning of the sun on its cycle then, would be no glorious bursting forth at Easter-time of all the living things in earth, of trees and plants and little creatures.

Above all, let us not forget that we too are suns, reflecting the true Sun — the Self — and as we turn on our course, ever acting for The Self, we are day by

day coming to the Light — “of all our Light the Source.” Can it be that, like Jesus and other Elder Brothers, we too may become Illuminated Ones — Christs — to younger brothers in ages far away?

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