

The Preservation of the Future

“When you realize the value of all life, you dwell less on what is past and concentrate on the preservation of the future.” Dian Fossey, Naturalist and Environmental Campaigner

These words seem just as relevant to the theme of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as they do to their original natural-world context. Many would argue that it is our heritage that needs to be preserved – that a knowledge of history is crucial if we are not to repeat the mistakes of the past. It is not equally evident perhaps that some considerable effort is needed to preserve our future.

This is not meant to suggest that history should be ignored or devalued but it is rather an acknowledgement that meaning and significance can be obscured through absorption in the fine details of past events – where the past becomes something complete in itself, rather than as a resource from which the future can be built. On the other hand, study that examines and seeks to understand the prevailing mind set and the underlying causes of historical events can be a powerful instrument developing insight, transforming attitudes and providing a new and more reliable foundation for the better future we so deeply desire.

This intriguing idea of preserving the future hints of a yet unrealised potential... one not easy to bring to light but that is just at the edge of possible attainment if we are prepared to invest our combined efforts, our very different perspectives and approaches. Constructive change is possible if we acknowledge the lessons of the past and have the courage to continue to move towards the future. Change involves learning from past mistakes and failures by seeking to understand the inner causes that lie behind the outer effects of conflict. If we have the courage to continue learning then success can emerge out of failure. This involves the risk and uncertainty of moving from familiar ground but, if successful, the differences that have separated us and terrified us in the past can be celebrated as the diversity that leads to a more unified future for all our children.

This is something that people in areas of conflict such as the Middle East are starting to awaken to. A significant number of Israelis and Palestinians are realising that the different beliefs and cultures of their neighbours doesn't have to threaten and undermine their own established sense of racial identity. Rather, they can serve to produce something greater through creative cooperation and a shared vision. This approach understands change as a necessary and vital part of life – not change as a negation of the past, but change as an affirmation of the new possibilities that life has yet to achieve.

If change can be used as an affirmation of life's potential, then it is thinking that is a vital key to realising that potential. Our thoughts energise the objects of their focus and this directive power can give substance to what would otherwise be no more than a fine dream of yet unrealised possibilities. The moving from dream potential to concrete reality therefore requires not only the participation of those involved in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict but also all of us who have awakened to the power of penetrative thought and individual insights. By recognising our own attitudes for what they are and transmuting them in our consciousness, we are making a powerful contribution to the solution of the greater conflict on the world stage. This process examines the foundation of the problem, its essence and what perpetuates it. In the depths of our inner questioning, we too may find the negative attitudes and prejudices that we ourselves have unintentionally absorbed and from which we still have been unable to free ourselves. These enemies within each of us substantiate the universality of human fallibility and are at the source of the harm we ourselves have done to others. The insights gained through their discovery may provide the seeds of forgiveness for those who have harmed us.

As Anwar Sadat so clearly perceived, “The Israeli-Arab conflict is 10% real problems and 90% psychology.” Addressing this psychology can help us to find ways to move forward together rather than remaining together in the mutual destruction so prominently featured in the media. As the internal

barriers of separation begin to be removed, we may see beyond the usual labels and know how little really separates us, one human from any other. This small measure of genuine forgiveness signifies a spark of pure freedom. The 'past-that-cannot-be-changed' no longer shackles the psyche so completely – our knowledge of the past can no longer blot out all vision of the future. In this way we create a space in our thinking for the positive future that we want above all else to preserve.

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