

Goodwill in World Affairs

*World Goodwill
Newsletter*

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The Spiritual Dynamics of Crisis on the Path to Global Cooperation

On November 14 2020, World Goodwill convened our annual seminar, which this year, because of the pandemic, took place online. The theme, given in the title above, resonated strongly with this unprecedented situation, as the need for global cooperation has never been more evident. Yet humanity still has some way to go before global cooperation is a fully established norm. The twentieth century saw major steps forward, not least the birth of the UN, which celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2020. We must hope that, with the growth of Aquarian group consciousness in the twenty-first century, the promise of the UN can be fulfilled. To get there, there is much work to be done, and our presenters set forth a number of ideas for how servers around the world can do so, or are already doing so.

We encourage you to view the recorded videos of the meetings at worldgoodwill.org/seminar2020, as these summary remarks give only a taste of the energies and qualities of the gifted servers who participated.

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Geneva

The day's events began in Geneva. Three key points from opening remarks: the spiritual nature of crisis is a conflict between soul and personality, and this thought can be extended to the national and international level; inequality is at the root of a number of outer crises, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals provides a clear path to their solution; and the growth of civil society is evidence of the emergence of the New Group of World Servers.

The first speaker was Thubten Wangchen, Member of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile and director of the *Fundación Casa del Tibet*, Barcelona, Spain. Thubten gave a profound talk, using simple terms speaking from his heart from a Tibetan Buddhist perspective.

In his address, Thubten noted that crises do have causes, which are often found in the realm of ignorance. In their ignorance, human beings are lacking compassion and are very selfish, focussed on outer wealth rather than inner wisdom, thus causing crises or conflicts. The responsibility humanity has with respect to the other kingdoms of nature, especially the animal kingdom, was mentioned too. A basic energy to overcome crisis – now and in the future – is hope: despite the outer conditions we should stay strong and confident.

This feeling of selfishness, only thinking for oneself, is creating more problems and conflict...Real conflict comes from our ignorance: not



knowing, not understanding the nature of phenomena.

Thubten Wangchen

Alexandra Masako Goossens-Ishii from Soka Gakkai International (SGI) gave an inspiring talk on Climate Justice: Constructing an Era of Human Solidarity. SGI collaborates with other NGOs, faith-based organisations and UN agencies to address global issues through activities such as raising awareness and engaging in dialogue grounded in the Buddhist teaching of respect for the dignity of life.

Alexandra focussed on three topics: first, the field of international advocacy, citing the appeal to the United Nations Human Rights Council to recognise the fundamental right of all to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Recognition by the Human Rights Council of this right can also play a crucial role in achieving environmental justice for communities exposed to degraded, threatening or dangerous environments.

Second, inter-religious and spiritual movements for action and climate justice. The climate and environmental crisis has truly awakened the consciousness, the sense of responsibility and solidarity, and the sense of urgency of many religious and spiritual movements to work together to transform this situation and to engage with the most vulnerable.

Third, the solidarity and actions of young people for the climate and the environment. Of course, Greta Thunberg was mentioned, but there are many more inspired young people playing an important role. This led Alexandra to conclude: “when the will of

young people to transform reality goes hand in hand with dauntless optimism, the possibilities are endless. There is no single simple answer to solve the climate crisis, but as long as there is solidarity among young people, there is no impasse that we cannot overcome”.

Although the world is in a critical situation, the theme of today's seminar echoes the vision at the heart of many religions and spiritual movements that even the darkest and most desperate circumstances carry within them the seeds of new teachings and opportunities.
Alexandra Masako Goossens-Ishii



In the subsequent plenary discussion, deep questions like “what is the Soul of a Nation?” and “how do we tackle the problem of sustainability on our Planet?” were addressed in a very clear manner, bringing the focus back to the individual level, yet still having its impact on a global scale: conflicts which arise on a world scale often are very similar to problems we experience as individuals in our own heart.

One of the topics emphasised by both speakers was education and the role of ethics or values therein. Rather than just being a method of learning facts, education should include other qualities like ethics, responsibility and values.

Thubten concluded that despite the fact that many people – through the recent digital and technical revolutions – nowadays are stressed and impatient, a very constructive quality in conflict resolution is patience. And he summarised goodwill as: thinking positively and acting positively.

London

In London, the seminar began with some reflections from World Goodwill on the nature and importance of education, a theme that was picked up when Dr Thomas Burr joined the conversation.

In a wide-ranging discussion, which nevertheless retained a connecting thread on the importance of education, here are some of the key points: if conflict is inherent in human nature, the challenge is to work creatively with this. Thus, to create harmony through conflict, there needs to be openness to ‘the other’, so that hearing other points of view can help break through our own erroneous beliefs. So how do we scale up empathy between differing groups?

The opportunity to demonstrate such group empathy and reconciliation on a global scale might have been missed with the fall of the Berlin Wall. And there are longer term trends to consider, such as the rise of East and South Asia. What can different regions contribute to humanity's spiritual progress? How do we cope with accelerating technological and social change, leading to inequality, which may fuel populism, thwarting the cooperation needed between nations? Can a focus on sharing help decrease inequality?

The rise of civil society may be seen as a manifestation of this. Two other important trends are the deep significance of global literacy (education again), and a shift towards the balancing of gender polarities and how this may affect power politics as women come to the fore. Can we transform education to show people how to fulfil ►

themselves creatively (the UNESCO Learning to Become programme is a useful first step)? And demonstrate that, beyond a certain point of material comfort, it's much more sensible to invest energy into improving relationships? In this way, we can ground the mystical vision of unity in pragmatic solutions through the power of directed thought. The challenge is how to convey some of these ideas through popular culture, and positive manifestations of celebrity culture via social media. Another positive trend is the growth of interparliamentary assemblies, including the possibility of a World Parliamentary Assembly at the UN, which can critically examine global problems; and a talk and visualisation to strengthen this work ended the first part.

If we want to manage and solve conflict, create harmony through a conflict, we need to be open to the other's point of view, to listen, to... get out of our own heads.

Dr Thomas Burr



In the second part, World Goodwill was honoured to host an interview with the founder of the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement of Sri Lanka, Dr A T Ariyaratne. The movement applies a Gandhian model of development from the village upwards, inspired by Buddhist principles, and is the largest civil society initiative in the country. Dr Ariyaratne gave a comprehensive picture of this work, beginning with the Buddha's original teachings which stress the importance of putting into practice loving-kindness (goodwill), self-forgetfulness, compassionate action, dispassionate joy in service to others, and equanimity. These

qualities can be awakened in those we serve through working together with them on their problems, and can be expressed in groups, from the family upwards, through sharing our gifts and energies, through right speech, through temperance, and through respect for all beings. Applying these principles allows Sarvodaya to tackle concrete social problems such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education, or poor sanitation through people's own initiative - "we build the road, and the road builds us." This allows true, 'bottom-up' community development.

Sarvodaya also seeks to associate with international movements like World Goodwill to promote the ideal of world awakening as the natural culmination of various stages of awakening, from the individual through the family, the community, the nation, to the global level. Expanding further, the Buddha's teachings describe five cosmic laws which supersede all human laws: do not disturb the genetic balance of nature; do not disturb the climate; ensure that one's livelihood and actions respect nature; control the mind so that actions are always intended to benefit all beings and thus help build a critical mass of spiritual consciousness; and finally, live so as not to violate the dharma of other beings, building harmonious relationships among all the kingdoms of nature. There is an increasing need for groups such as Sarvodaya and World Goodwill who seek to blend ageless spiritual principles with modern scientific insights, to cooperate in meeting the problems of the future. As an example, even during the pandemic, Sarvodaya's economic activities have continued to make a profit, even without the profit motive.

We insisted, those individuals who came and participated in our camps, [and] all kinds of programmes we did, for them to get their family members involved, and within the family also to develop these characteristics...Within a group, say a family, you should practise sharing. So dana is sharing, shramadana is sharing your energy, your knowledge, your expertise.

Dr A T Ariyaratne



Finally, Dr Charika Marasinghe, daughter of Dr Ariyaratne, and a distinguished server in her own right, shared her perspective on ‘social architecture’. This is “the science, art and the study of designing ‘human lives’ embodied with flesh, blood and veins. When designing buildings, the architects play with a wide array of contrasting material substances that are rough and soft, elegant and messy, colourful and dull, heavy and light etc.. Similarly in social architecture we have to deal with varying levels of mental, emotional and physical dynamics of the human personality.”

If we are to find viable social architectural models to change the destiny of our individual and collective life for the better, we should possess a clear and succinct understanding of the causes and conditions that have resulted in the crisis we are facing at this hour.

Dr Charika Marasinghe



She reflected on the work which the Vishva Niketan Peace Centre, the spiritual arm of Sarvodaya, is doing in this field. Working with the Buddhist

doctrine of co-dependent origination, it seeks to understand the fundamental roots of human problems, and thus to create positive solutions in the present moment. Using the most up-to-date tools available, Vishva Niketan seeks to promote objectives as diverse as mindful parenting, and the psycho-spiritual healing of both prison officers and prisoners through meditation. Her presentation concluded with a beautiful video illustrating these programmes of work. In closing remarks from World Goodwill, the key need to restore trust at all levels, from the local to the global, was highlighted.

New York

The New York seminar began with three reflections on the theme of ‘Conflict, Crisis and Transformation on the Path to Global Cooperation’ from the perspective of the Ageless Wisdom.

Many branches of the Wisdom teachings suggest that part of humanity’s spiritual destiny is to transit from competition to cooperation, and the seminar’s focus on tracing this path in the field of international cooperation was approached as an objective way of assessing progress in our entrance into the widely prophesied Age of Aquarius.

The writings of Alice Bailey describe the pioneers responsible for bridging into this coming Era as the New Group of World Servers: the group of all who love humanity and the Earth and ▶

who express that love through lives of active service. Significant astrological alignments and energies conditioning this Group were discussed with a particular focus on the group's work of bridging and mediating between past, present and future.

Esoteric literature proposes that the spiritual is concerned with all levels of relationship, particularly relations between personality and soul ('God immanent within the heart of all forms'). Crisis plays a significant role in the spiritual life as the soul propels us forward on the evolutionary path. The crisis facing humanity today is initiating a reorientation of consciousness towards soul values.

A surprising depth of insight around the theme of crisis and global cooperation flowed from the four panelists on the New York broadcast. Each had a wealth of experience in the field of international relations and United Nations negotiations to draw on in addition to an active spiritual life – and each was able to bring these two dimensions together in their reflections and interactions.

One of the clearest results of the world crisis is that a growing recognition is emerging amongst individuals in the international community of the need for what Daniel Perrell, a representative of the Bahá'í faith community at the UN, referred to as "a shift in thinking beyond the accumulation mentality". Reflecting his lead role in coordinating NGO discussions at the UN, he noted a new willingness to discuss the mind-sets producing the non-stop vulnerabilities and hazards we face as a global community. Rather than only making decisions on policy and action

more NGO's are beginning to speak about the shared principles underlying cooperation and our "sacred duty and privilege to serve each other".

...we are confronted with a question to which we do not have a clear answer - how are we to behave, personally, as communities, and as institutions, in an interconnected world that is so different from anything we've experienced before? And this has the potential, the great potential, to expand our consciousness, to help us rethink our priorities, to gain an appreciation for our shared identity, and ultimately to reorder our societies based on that understanding.

Daniel Perrell



A former member of the Guatemalan government mission to the UN and writer on the art of international negotiation, Jimena Leiva-Roesch, reminded us that while those in the South have always suffered under constant reminders of their mortality and vulnerability, the COVID pandemic has created personal crises for people in the North as well. The epicenter of the virus has impacted cities of power throughout North America and Europe. People of influence with access to resources that can change the world are now realizing that their future is fragile as well, and nothing is certain. As a result, many are considering how they can more effectively support principles of oneness and sharing. This has immense significance for the future of international cooperation.

We have the choice of really building a renaissance where the principles of cooperation, solidarity and universality will be the guiding values for this new era.

Jimena Leiva Roesch



For Emad Kiyaei, the intensity of the crisis of this time requires people of sufficient will, insight, wisdom, and connection to the divine in order to envision a different future. And that is the opportunity of the crisis. Institutions and governments desperately need fresh ideas. He spoke of his work as a cofounder of the civil society Middle East Treaty Organization (METO) working to eliminate weapons of mass destruction from the region. While Middle East officials privately accepted the need for a treaty, no-one was willing to start the process. METO offered to step in, consult experts and draw up a draft that could then be a basis for negotiation.

It is time for people who just have enough will in them, who have enough insight in them, who have enough wisdom in them, who have enough connection to whatever you call divine or other, that see that [the state of the Middle East] can be different.

Emad Kiyaei



Drawing on over 20 years of service as an international civil servant at the UN and elsewhere, Marco agreed that the current time is significant because motivations are being transformed. This is essentially a moment of assessment, discernment, choices,

and decisions. Transformative action can be expected to follow, but without sufficient reflection any actions taken will only perpetuate the vicious cycles of hazards.

I think that the next few years are really of critical importance as we build the building blocks of what we are set to achieve in the next 50 or 60 years. It is a time when the space of our hearts, the lights of our minds, the energy of our bodies may be consciously and intentionally, purposefully, used in service of humanity, the planet and its kingdoms, in a spirit of synthesis.

Marco international civil servant

Jimena noted, however, that the moment of recognizing the need for “complete and utter transformation” in global cooperation for a world where no one is left behind has not yet arrived at the UN. This is not a “1945 moment”. But the crisis is helping prepare for such a moment. Marco added that the signing of the UN Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights in 1945 signified “a milestone in the growth of human conscience.” But the UN is only “75 years young ... We are in the very early days of an experiment of forging and using collective will for the common good.” It takes time to come to terms with the fact and the practical consequences of being one humanity. The task for all of us now is to “give the experiment our focused attention; our determination.”

The Great Invocation

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
May Christ* return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power
restore the Plan on Earth.

Adapted version

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into human minds.
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into human hearts.
May the Coming One* return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide all little human wills –
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the human race
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power
restore the Plan on Earth.

* Many religions believe in a World Teacher Who is to come in the future (hence 'Coming One'), knowing Him under such names as the Lord Maitreya, the Imam Mahdi, the Kalki avatar etc.. These terms are sometimes used in versions of the Great Invocation for people of specific faiths.

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Helping to build right human relations

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The Lucis Trust is on the Roster of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The World Goodwill Newsletter is published three times a year. Unless otherwise indicated, all articles are prepared by World Goodwill staff members. Multiple copies for distribution are available on request. The newsletter is also available in: Dutch, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese (online), Russian, Slovenian and Spanish.

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