

THE HIGH COUNTRY

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Death, Impermanence and the future of the HCT

Death is the necessary dissolution of imperfect combinations. ... All who have lived upon earth, live there still in new exemplars of their types, but the souls which have surpassed their type receive elsewhere a new form based upon a more perfect type, as they mount ever on the ladder of worlds.”

The Mahatma Letters. The chronological sequence. Appendix I. page 501

Death, is a subject that most people dread to speak about but nonetheless it will come to us all as well as dissolution will come to the material things we possess and the activities we perform. How do we approach it? When do we approach it? These are the questions that editors Dick Slusser and Marty Lyman have had to ponder these last few months. These were questions we had to address when filling out a Medical Directive. These were questions we had to address as we saw the much dreaded disease Parkinson winning over Dick’s body. Impermanence becomes most evident when the simplest task like dressing oneself and tying one’s shoes become a major hurdle and it is further complicated in our ever expanding information age that requires new and better equipment. A question that always remains is at what point do we abandon ship.

When is it appropriate and what is the best approach?

“Our souls are as it were a music, of which our bodies are the instruments. The music exists without the instruments, but it cannot make itself heard without a material intermediary; the material can neither be conceived nor grasped.”

The Mahatma Letters. The chronological sequence. Appendix I. pages 502

It is this latter passage which we need to consider. What does it mean? It means that only in this life can we work out our karma, interact with others to their weal or woe, and fulfil one’s dharma. When impermanence touches us personally, we are forced to the realization that there is no escape for us, it is a time to reflect and simplify.

This is how we felt about the continuation of *The High Country Theosophist*. It was too overwhelming, the cost of printing too high, the software too archaic, the human body was refusing to move. It was too much so we told our readers that it was time to close shop and search for a new owner, a new magazine to send our articles to, but then our readers wrote:

Dear Dick and Marty,

Thank you very much for the *HCT*. It is an excellent Theosophical publication. I certainly hope that it is not phased out; it would be a great loss to the Theosophical community and to its readers everywhere. I think you will find it difficult to locate a Theosophical magazine to take the place of the *HCT*. It is one of a kind, there will never be a replacement that is even comparable. The other magazines are OK as a basis and inquiry to pique an individual's interest, but if a person wishes to transcend and go deeper on the spiritual path then they must go beyond the barriers of the mind that impede Consciousness Itself.

“New ideas have to be planted on clean places, for these ideas touch upon the most momentous subjects.”

ML (Chronological Edition). Page 401

May the Goddess Shakti intervene and you find a way to keep the publication alive.

Swami Pilupakananda, CO

Dear Dick and Marty,

Thank you for the *HCT* and as for someone else publishing it, well, it would not be the same. The *HCT* belongs to you. To me, you and this publication have been my friend, my outlet on my thoughts, and a doorway to the whole Theosophical World. I know everything has its time for rest. I hope it brought you two as much enlightenment as it has to me. I love you two even today as in my mind I see you both poring over letters, thoughts, and little pieces of knowledge. Continue to look for the Truth in each person and live your life as you have touched mine.

Love and light,

Big Brother (your brother always and fellow Theosophist) IL

Dear Dick and Marty,

Here is my belated subscription renewal to the *HCT*. Keep up the good, oh so very good, work. I try to be a good theosophist, but I don't seem to find any worthy causes. So, I just try to do the little things which are no big deals. I admire what you are doing. I have been reading a letter from the “View of the Chohan on the T.S.”

For our doctrines to practically react on the so called moral code or the ideas of truthfulness, purity, self-denial, charity, etc. we have to preach and popularize a knowledge of Theosophy. It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining oneself Nirvana (the culmination of all knowledge and absolute wisdom) which is, after all only an exalted and glorious **selfishness**, but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbor, to cause as many of our fellow creatures as we possible can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true Theosophist.).

And I think you two are doing it. Bless you,

Virginia and David (CA)

These letters came after a time of intense change with Dick's Parkinson Disease. We remember a specific comment that came from Dick's neurologist, “You have entered a new era of Parkinson's

disease. You two are now on the new cutting edge; you are creative, innovative and work well together. We doctors, don't have all the answers or solutions. YOU, together, can pave the way for others."

Dick has always been on the cutting edge. He was in rock climbing, backpacking, bicycling (ten speeds and mountain bikes), bike touring, *HCT* (Theosophy) and now Parkinson's. Perhaps, our lessons lie not in death but in impermanence itself. How do we look at impermanence? Why must it exist? How can we flow with the dharma and impermanence? Is impermanence a bad or a good thing? These are the questions that we will look at in this issue and in issues to come.

Impermanence:

... Consciousness is inconceivable to us apart from change, and motion best symbolizes change, its essential characteristic. ... Apart from Cosmic Substance, Cosmic Ideation could not manifest as individual consciousness, since it is only through a vehicle of matter that consciousness wells up. ... The "Manifested Universe," therefore is pervaded by duality, which is, as it were, the very essence of its EX-istence as "manifestation."

H.P. Blavatsky. *The Secret Doctrine*. Vol. I. proem. pages 14, 15.

Only a portion of this text has been used. It is to illustrate the point that change is inherent in the world of duality. Change is the "Divine" playing "Its" Divine role through us. The "Divine" lies within and throughout us and is the "music" that the masters talk about, while our body is the instrument. The harmonies, the notes lie in impermanence itself. Impermanence must exist for the Divine notes to play. It is our mind that judges whether it is good or bad. To the Divine it simply does not matter; it is only "Its" play.

We have decided to try an experiment and this new format is that experiment. We need to test and see if it is indeed easier, simpler, and cheaper. We may choose on special occasions to return to the old booklet format, but if this new format is satisfactory to you, dear reader, then we may be able to continue. The discussions will be limited. Scanning and typing large amounts of text is difficult. We will continue to work in Page Maker as then we can easily go back and forth between the old booklet format and this new text style.

Where we see the cutting edge is that we would like to introduce Theosophists to yoga and how it can apply to the teachings. This is difficult because Blavatsky does not give practices in yoga. We believe that she chose to do so only to her inner circle of students.

In order to really understand the teachings, one must do the practices. One of the questions that had always perplexed us is why should we even bother to study *The Secret Doctrine*? The answer to that did not come until we started to practice contemplations. This is what we would like to share in future issues.

Swami Pilupakananda writes:

Remember that the simplification is, in its own way, a preparation for death. Think about it; life becomes increasingly complex, with its accumulating more stuff and the involvements therewith, in both the objective and subjective realms.

Death is the cessation of all objective stuff, as well as the cessation of the additional subjective stuff (samskaras and skandas). The process of elimination through simplification is a form of preparation for death because simplification is the cessation of complexity. Indeed, death is the ultimate simplification, (the reduction of the complex to its simplest form). Life is the compounded and complex form, whereas, death is the simplest form. Yet, even the simplest form of death must come from something; for *some* thing can not come from *no* thing, but the question is what is it?

Remember that it is only the mind with its conditioning samskaras that fights, resists, or comes in harmony with another. ... All wars are based on the conflicts which arise from different mindsets and the failure to realize that the disagreement is due to “artificial” thought forms imprinted on their psyches. If we remove the conditioning samskaras, then the Pure Conscious state of Universal Mind is all that remains. Once all the samskaras are removed then all conflicts will vanish. Ultimately, it is just another evolutionary phase of the mind that Consciousness and its Principles of mind are passing through. This too shall pass. Only when the dynamics of the relationship of mind to mind is grasped and you don’t fall into the illusion based on conflict traps can this happen. Don’t think in the old ways anyway more; allow the intuition from the heart mind to flow. It is only your mind with its conditioning samskaras that fights and argues.

Swami Pilupakananda. CO

In conclusion: It is the removal of our samskaras and opening to the state of Pure Consciousness of the Universal Mind that is the means by which we are led on the right path to help our neighbor and to cause as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it.

The following excerpt comes with permission from *The Canadian Theosophist*. It is our mission statement. We recognize that it is broad. We wish to present it and let each individual reader decide how they wish to implement it in their own way. The co-editor for example is working with “justice” with the correctional facilities and we support various organizations that work with the other aspects of the mission statement.

Editor, Dick Slusser has supported the work of Bo Lozoff’s *Prison Ashram/Human Kindness Foundation* and the Farm’s *Plenty International* since the 1970s, connections we value and intend to keep as long as there is the HCT on the scene. See Peter Schweitzer’s report on page 8.

THE EARTH CHARTER

The latest version of the Earth Charter, released in 2000 originated out of a 1987 call by the United Nations World commission on Environment and Development for the creation of a new charter that would set forth essential principles for sustainable development. The Earth Charter establishes the fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society. It has been translated into twenty-eight languages, is widely distributed throughout the world, and has been endorsed by over 8000 organizations worldwide. This latest version is hailed as the most important development in international, environmental and sustainable development law since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. It recently exercised an important influence at the 2002 world summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg South Africa, where the world’s nations addressed principal concerns facing Earth’s population: eradication of poverty, overcoming the gulf between rich and poor, and reversing the trend of global environmental degradation. The Earth Charter principles and goals are reflected in the “Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development” - a most important statement that resulted from this vital world summit. In this spirit we share the Earth Charter with our readers.

PREAMBLE

We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

Earth, Our Home

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life's evolution. The resilience of the community of life and the well-being of humanity depend upon preserving a healthy biosphere with all its ecological systems, a rich variety of plants and animals, fertile soils, pure waters, and clean air. The global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

The Global Situation

The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined. The benefits of development are not shared equitably and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. An unprecedented rise in human population has overburdened ecological and social systems. The foundations of global security are threatened. These trends are perilous-but not inevitable.

The Challenges Ahead

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.

Universal Responsibility

To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.

We urgently need a shared vision of basic values to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community. Therefore, together in hope we affirm the following interdependent principles for a sustainable way of life as a common standard by which the conduct of all individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed.

THE WAY FORWARD

As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Such renewal is the promise of these Earth Charter principles. To fulfill this promise, we must commit ourselves to adopt and promote the values and objectives of the Charter. This requires a change of mind and heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. We must imaginatively develop and apply the vision of a sustainable way of life locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. Our cultural diversity is a precious heritage and different cultures will find their own distinctive ways to realize the vision. We must deepen and expand the global dialogue that generated the Earth Charter, for we have much to learn from the ongoing collaborative search for truth and wisdom. Life often involves conflicts between important values. This

can mean difficult choices. However, we must find ways to harmonize diversity with unity, the exercise of freedom with the common good, short-term objectives with long-term goals. Every individual, family, organization, and community has a vital role to play. The arts, sciences, religions, educational institutions, media, businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and governments are all called to offer creative leadership. The partnership of government, civil society, and business is essential for effective governance.

In order to build a sustainable global community, the nations of the world must renew their commitment to the United Nations, fulfill their obligations under existing international agreements, and support the implementation of Earth Charter principles, with an international legally binding instrument on environment and development.

Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

PRINCIPLES

I. RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.
2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.
3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.
4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

II. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.
7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being
8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.
10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.

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12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

IV DEMOCRACY, NONVIOLENCE, AND PEACE

13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.

14. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.

15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.

16. Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.

Reprinted from The Canadian Theosophist with permission of the Earth Charter International Secretariat

Dear Friends of Plenty,

Belize is a paradise of visual delights and biological riches, clean sea breezes, and expansive horizons. The people are poor, but they work hard, especially the people in the rural villages, the farming families, who live simply and survive by their tenacity, their wits and the fruits of their labors. Some of their difficulties are the result of the contemporary circumstances of the society they inhabit. For instance, traditionally these villages had access to the “granny midwives” who had helped bring new lives into the world since the beginning of time. Now the granny midwives are disappearing and are not being replaced. ...

For the past three years Plenty midwives, with the collaboration of the local Ministry of Health, have been training women and several male community health workers from the villages in the time-honored art of delivering babies. Several have saved the lives of babies and mothers. All are thrilled and gratified to be able to do what they’re doing, and every one of them is incredibly inspiring to talk to. One of them, when I asked her why she wanted to be a midwife, told me she wanted to be a midwife when she was a little girl, that she dreamed about delivering babies, that she loved babies and loved to hold them and, also, that she just liked helping people. In my book, midwives already qualify for sainthood.

Next year Plenty turns 30, and the current thinking in Plenty is that we need to be a lot stronger. We need to be able to better support our partners, expand our projects and programs and extend our reach. We look around and we see endless opportunities where we could make real differences for people in very basic education, more healthful farming methods, improved quality of life through appropriate technologies like midwifery and solar energy. For thirty years we’ve tried to be faithful to our original commitment to help save the world. Saving the world - it’s a grand equal opportunity occupation. Everybody’s got their heart in it. Everybody’s got a prayer. When we pull together, we make waves.

With Love, Peter Schweitzer Executive Director Website: www.plenty.org E-mail: plenty@plenty.org

EDITORIAL

OBJECTIVES

THE HIGH COUNTRY THEOSOPHIST is an *independent* Journal and has the following editorial objectives:

(1) To serve the greater Theosophical Movement as a forum for the free interchange of ideas and commentary in the pursuit of Truth and to facilitate various projects in furtherance of Theosophical principles.

(2) To present articles and essays consistent with source theosophy, otherwise known as the Ancient Wisdom as given by The Masters and H.P. Blavatsky, and other theosophical writers consistent with this tradition.

(3) To examine contemporary ethical, religious, metaphysical, scientific and philosophical issues from the viewpoint of the source theosophical teachings.

(4) To impartially examine emerging events and issues on the contemporary scene that challenge traditional assumptions within the Theosophical movement.

(5) To compare basic Theosophical teachings with other ancient wisdoms or even contemporary philosophies.

(6) To explore our knowledge of the basic teachings of Theosophy through the jnana yoga practice of contemplation and direct experience and then to share it with others.

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