

WORLD HEALING PROJECT

THE CAUSES OF WORLD PROBLEMS

What are the problems in the world?

It is easy to identify the problems in the world: fear, war, greed, crime, illness, poverty, pollution, violence, addictions, intolerance, apathy, prejudice...etc. These things are manifest at a global level, but also in our own communities (and in our lives) we see things that are obviously undesirable, and are manifestations of a state of dis-harmony. Intrinsically, all humans have a sense of “what is right” – and despite different religious and cultural conditioning most would agree that a society that lives in peace, kindness, health, abundance, respect, understanding and freedom is desirable. What has caused our local and global society to move away from these qualities?

What is human nature?

Some people argue that it is human nature to have conflict, anger, fear, control dramas and to inflict these qualities outwardly onto our families, friends and work colleagues (or in the case of world leaders, on to other countries). Whilst such negative qualities are seen in many people, is this the essence of what it means to be human?

The role of religion

The dogmatic and divisive following of religion has caused much suffering in the world, and this coupled with the unscientific nature of much literal religious teaching leads many to denounce religion as dangerous and deluded. Such thought is understandable, but akin to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. One can differentiate religion, being an organised and often politically motivated force, from spirituality, which is an individual’s quest for inner peace and harmony. The essence of spirituality can be found in all major religions, when we focus on the esoteric or inner teachings, and go beyond the exoteric, the outer rituals and dogma. The mystic heart of such teachings reveals very practical guidelines for harmonious living. For example, in every religion is the parallel teaching: **“Treat others as you would like to be treated”**. If we identify qualities we find desirable – peace, harmony, kindness, joy – then a simple step in the right direction is to act towards others with these qualities.

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Wisdom is eternal

The Upanishads are ancient stories which contain the essence of the wisdom teachings of India going back many thousands of years. They contain insights into the human condition and guidelines to harmonious living. One verse states: **“Thousands strike at the tree of disease, but one who is wise strikes at the root”**. We can identify the problems of the world to be like branches and leaves growing from a root cause. Identifying and healing the root, will transform the entire tree.

The microcosm and the macrocosm

We have seen some of the qualities we find undesirable in society. The next important step is to realise the transference and connection between problems at individual and collective levels. The world is made of nations, which in turn is made of communities, which is made up of families, which is made up of individuals - the microcosm affects the macrocosm and vis-versa. A peaceful world is made up of peaceful people. This concept may seem simplistic, but as we will explore in more detail in later chapters, it is at the heart of world healing.

The way out of suffering

The esoteric teachings of the world agree; the root cause of the world’s problems is our separation with the soul, our true Self whose nature is peace, harmony, unity and joy. The solution is to return to soul consciousness from the temporary state where our “kingdom” has become overrun by the dictates of the ego, which in identifying with body consciousness and the senses manifests material desires, attachment, fear, anger, and separation. One scripture that beautifully describes this process is the Bhagavad Gita. These teachings contained within this Upanishad are not the property of any religion, but based on the eternal principles of truth.

In the Gita the journey of life is depicted as a battle between the good and evil tendencies of ones nature. The soul is defined as being eternal and beyond the pain and suffering of the world. Its nature is Satchitananda, eternal existence, consciousness, bliss. As a being with free will, we can choose to focus on our unlimited soul nature, or become ensnared in identification with our limited personality (from the Greek *persona* meaning “mask”), manifesting as our ego.

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Problems with the ego

The first problem with ego consciousness is that when we identify with the body and the senses, we severely limit our perception of reality. For example, our eyes can only see a limited spectrum, we only see about 1% of the matter in the universe. Our ears can only hear between 20-20,000 hertz. Body consciousness gives us a tiny view of reality, and if the senses are our sole means of perception, and our senses are deluded or the sensory input is manipulated, our world view is therefore incomplete at best.

Material desires

The second problem with living from the ego is that it leads us into trouble and misery. This is how it works: The ego, as an incomplete aspect of our self feels separate and seeks to find wholeness. It looks out to the world (as the ego is fed by the sensory mind) and sees what it thinks will make it happy. Thus it manifests desire. As a child this might be for sweets, a bicycle or new mobile phone. An adult might want a new car, or a bigger house or a diamond ring. What happens when the desire is fulfilled? Does it bring lasting happiness? It may bring some temporary pleasure, but this is often followed by pain, and the ego says "what you need is a better bicycle, mobile phone, newer car etc". The egos desires are endless, and as Buddha said "**life's suffering is caused by material desire**". For people who are able to fulfil their constant material desires, they will have a journey of pleasure followed by emptiness, until they have the wisdom to realise, as Yogananda explained that "**happiness is not a thing, trying to capture happiness is like trying to lasso a cloud, happiness must be lived**". Does money bring happiness? Why do the most affluent societies like USA and Sweden have the highest suicide rates? Why do so many people who win the National Lottery end up miserable? Material and physical prosperity is an important part of life and money should not be seen as an evil force but we must understand the futility of seeking true happiness through material possessions.

When desires cannot be fulfilled

For most people in industrialised countries who are subject to a bombardment of advertising, the fulfilment of their material desires is simply not possible, they do not have the material wealth for endless desires. When a material desire is unfulfilled it can lead to frustration and anger. For example, children are now

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under great pressure to have the latest mobile phone. For the children who cannot afford this (and phones are cleverly updated every few months to keep people under constant pressure to “keep up with the joneses”) they are either ridiculed for not having a new phone, get depressed or upset because they haven’t got a new phone, or decide to “take matters into their own hands” and may steal a phone from someone else, or get involved in other criminal activities to enable them to buy the latest phone. Much crime is due to the frustration people feel because they want things that other people have because they wrongly assume it’ll make them happy. Criminals just want to be happy like everyone does.

Attachment and possessions

When we live through the ego and a desire is fulfilled we associate with it “this is my mobile phone, that car is mine, I own this building, stop looking at my wife” etc. Again, it is fine that we have possessions, but problems occur when we are possessed by our possessions for this leads to another aspect of ego misery – attachment. Our thoughts can become trapped in worry, anxiety and fear about loss, theft or damage to our possessions. In focusing on these negative emotions we forget to experience the simple joys in our lives – a lovely walk, the smile of a loved one, a beautiful sunset, the fell of rain on our faces etc. Insurance policies, guard dogs, safes, security systems, nuclear weapons etc all exist because of attachment and fear. I am not saying we should not look after and protect our possessions, family or country, but be aware if attachment and possession is reducing the joy in your life. The Native American’s laughed when the white settlers said “this is our land”. “How can you own the land?” they replied. They understood that they were the caretakers of the land, and that the earth did not belong to them, *they* belonged to the earth. If possessions start to possess you then you may consider whether you are better off without them. Giving things away can be very liberating.

How ego traits affect nations – The story of “Country A”

When we take individuals living in ego consciousness and realise that nations are collectively manifesting these traits, we can see how easy it is that global conflicts are generated. For example, let’s see how these ego traits can play out. The following story is based in true events:

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The people that control Country A seek greater control in world affairs. Through selling a materialistic dream to some its people, Country A desires more possessions, bigger cars, and more TVs, due to being told through the media that these things will make them happy. To be a “success” in Country A means to make lots of money and have power. Country A has limited resources for oil, and needs more oil to supply the energy for their growing need for cars and to power their electricity generators. It knows that Country I has got a lot of oil. Country A decides to start a war with Country I knowing that its superior arms will destroy Country I. They can then take the oil and temporarily fulfil their desires for more possessions. (They don’t like to tell their people but Country A is seriously in debt to banks, and they could do with some easy money).

Country A can’t just start bombing Country I though. The people of Country A would find that intolerable and rebel against their government. Another ego trait is played out first – fear. Country A is “attacked” by a group of people supposedly from Country I. Two big buildings fall down. Many innocent people die. The “attack” is captured on TV and is repeatedly played back to the people, causing great upset and reinforcing the fear. Country A’s intelligence people tells the media which tells the people that the “attack” was orchestrated by a man who is a “dangerous terrorist”, and that unless something is done, the entire nation of Country A could be under threat. The people of Country A are seriously worried. Any time, in any city they could be blown up. (At this time many other “attacks” are going on around the world – all apparently done by people with connections to Country I, so the media tells us.) Some of the people in Country A think something fishy is going on - the “dangerous terrorist who attacked them” was formally trained by the central intelligence organisation of Country A, and the weapons that Country I were apparently going to use any minute were sold to them a few years back by Country A. Hmm. Many of the people of Country A who smell a rat are kept quiet and are afraid to speak out for fear of being branded “un-patriotic”, and in some cases stopped from doing so by laws preventing protests. Many people in Country A believe what they read in the papers and on TV. These people think that their leader is an honest man who would never lie to them about important things like this. (Incidentally, the Daddie of this leader used to be the leader of the country himself, and his family has strong connections with “the dangerous terrorist” who are meant to have “attacked” Country A. Strangely, this fact is not mentioned much by the media of Country A)

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With the backing of some of its people Country A starts to bomb Country I, on the basis that “better kill them before they kill us”. As the bombs drop some people from Country A cheer, many cry as they watch innocent people being brutally killed.

The story has a happy ending, though. These events awaken a growing number of people around the world to act, not through their egos with hatred, but with love. Not with anger, but with peace. Not with fear, but with bravery. Not with lies but with truth. This awakening acts like a snowball, becoming stronger with each moment. More people start to remember that beyond the limited self they are the eternal soul. The light from their hearts starts to fill the world, bringing healing. Even the governments and controllers of the Countries of the world awaken to the higher purpose of life, living in attunement with the peace, love and joy of our soul.

Shadows and light are needed for the play of life

As night and day, shadows and light, positive and negative are both necessary for the drama of life to continue so the eternal battle of soul and ego plays out. Victory, it says in the Gita, is found in acting in a way that leads to soul awareness. On an individual and global level this is necessary to heal ourselves and the world. Meditation is the key to victory, as meditation is soul awareness.