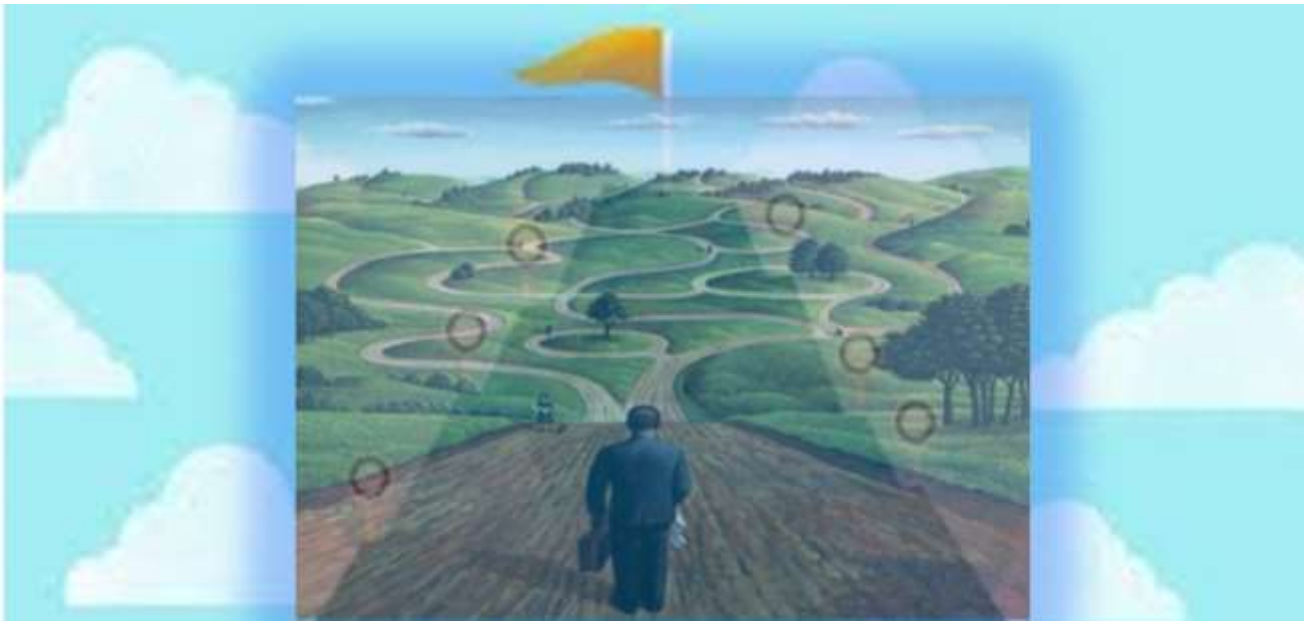
Spiritual Growth demands more than speaking Prayers and Words of inspiration.



To say that the COVID-19 phenomenon has elicited a deluge of comments and reactions world-wide would be a great understatement. These responses or reactions fall into three broad categories:

The analytical, in which the focus is on trying to explore, in extreme detail, the plausible causes of the virus, governments' responses, social responses, attitudes to the progression of the virus, as well as prognosis for the future under, or post-COVID-19.

The esoteric, focusing on prayers, words of inspiration, or encouraging messages for awakening the "good" in humanity.

The mischievous, whose focus is developing and sharing all manner of conspiracy theories and fake news.

Because the focus of this write-up is Spiritual, we shall focus our discussion on the esoteric.

There is no doubting the sincerity of many of the prayers, the inspiring stories and words being shared. They are generally upbeat messages to refocus our attention

and energies on hope, having a positive outlook, the good, or noble elements within us. They have led many to deeper introspection, and helped many to cope.

Without discounting the value of these well-meant prayers and words of inspiration, one cannot help but consider that COVID-19 is not the first occurrence of human tragedy on a global scale. And, each of such previous occurrences have been accompanied by the same heart felt prayers and appeals to the nobler self. So, why is it that the feelings of piety, or the reconnection to the higher-self vanishes, for most people, after the crisis has abated?

For example, the general and global condemnation of wars led after the end of the First World War in 1918 to the establishment of The League of Nations, ostensibly to promote the brotherhood of man, the absence of which was lamented while the First World War raged. Yet, within 21 years of the end of the First World War, a bitter and even more ferocious Second World War started, that was to last longer and claim more lives than the First World War. The end of the Second World War saw the creation of the United Nations, a new body that is to address the weaknesses that made The League of Nations unable to do its job. But within a year of the establishment of this second body, war broke out in Korea, followed by the numerous local and regional wars that the world has witnessed between 1945 and now. All of these events were accompanied by fervent prayers, inspiring stories and sweet words of appeal to the higher self. Also quite remarkable is that many of the same people who idealistically proclaimed, repeated or solemnly embraced these prayers or words of appeal to the higher self, became, in the aftermath of the crisis, key players or silent beneficiaries of the next crisis.

The repetition of wars has been used as an illustration because it will be more easily understood by most people. Nonetheless, the same repetition can be found in any social crisis. As is in the crises caused by the swings from one political or social system to the next, accompanied by lots of social commentary and prayers during the crises. Same too with other global pandemics.

This behavior pattern is repeated as far back as there are historical records. The Old Testament of the Judeo-Christian bible is practically a cycle of “punishments by the LORD”, prayers, lamentations, promises of improvement, to be followed by yet another cycle, within or between generations! This should be enough to induce the serious thinker to wonder, WHY?

The answer lies, among other things, in a combination of the naivety, and the deep seated unconscious self-interest (self-ish-ness) that is almost often woven into all of the desires of the average person, including those who pray and espouse noble sentiments.

There is an element of naivety evident in the attitude of many who pray or expect that simply repeating, or acclaiming a noble idea would automatically cause the believers or acclaimers to change. This thinking shows a lack of awareness, or perhaps the inability to understand that what may sound easy can be very difficult to implement. Thus it is easy to talk about being good, loving one another, etc. BUT very difficult to put into practice. Yet, when a knowing one attempts to give pointers or explanations of the steps that can lead out of the maze, like the prophet of old, he or she is generally met by even the few who appear ready to listen with comments like, “the explanations are too complicated”. Or, “Why can’t you make it simple for the common person to understand?” This usually comes from people who do not dispute that they have the capacity to understand the explanation. The majority show no interest in even listening.

This common response of the few who even show interest could at first be mistaken as concern for one’s less endowed brethren. But closer examination will show that this response is more out of the desire not to be disturbed from our comfortable way of life, and less out of concern for our fellow man. For otherwise, a serious person would, at least, take the time to examine the new pointers that are being given. And if they benefit from them, then try to help their our fellow men, from their own understanding. After all, the teacher never stipulates that one who has learned cannot assist another after acquiring knowledge.

Practice makes perfect. We recognize this maxim in our everyday material lives. But, we seldom take it into account when it comes to striving towards developing those traits that we associate with our higher selves, to which there is a general appeal during times of crisis. Practice, usually entails a detailed regimen. This fact tells us right away that it will not necessarily be that simple and easy. Anyone who has taken up any form of exercise knows how difficult it is at the beginning. It is only with continual effort that the routine becomes easier with time. Again, routines involved with even the simplest of exercises may, at first, appear complicated to grasp and understand. Take for example what it takes to hit a golf

ball for maximum effect; the right stance, approach and swing at a golf ball. Simple, yet involved (complex or complicated), until the golfer gets a handle on it, over a time period of dedicated practice. And then it becomes very easy for him or her.

The same recognition that applies in sports holds true in man's Spiritual development. This means that one can only benefit fully from prayers or inspiring words when one has absorbed, understood and practiced them with sincerity. For some this sincerity comes naturally, out of a childlike approach to acceptance of life, in complete trust in the wisdom embedded in Nature (i.e. in The WILL of GOD). There are very few today who can honestly be described as having such childlikeness. Not even in today's less-sophisticated societies. For the majority of mankind of today, our rational thinking, regardless of whether it is rudimentary, or highly sophisticated, wants to have an understanding of the forces at work, and how to use them, before we can accept them. This desire for understanding manifests in the most basic of superstitions, in religious faith, or in highly intellectual philosophizing. When closely considered, Superstition, Religious Faith and Philosophizing are simply attempts at providing explanations for the enigmas of Life. Childlikeness, by contrast, simply accepts without the desire to know the why or the how. Just as a child experiences the moment without wishing to understand or know how or why.

The fact that history is continually repeated implies that neither superstition nor religious faith nor intellectual philosophizing have succeeded in leading the majority of mankind to the point of understanding, and using the forces behind prayer or inspiration to avoid new crisis, and thus fully benefit mankind.

There are those who seriously embark on a path of reform, recognizing that even the smallest of actions, though appearing easy, can be very complicated. These are the people who, in all sincerity, try to create organizations for world peace or a utopian society that they hope will reflect the higher self. They take the time to identify and, if able, to put in place measures that address all of the intricate steps required. But in the end, the well-articulated plans almost invariably collapse. For example, we are today witnessing the demise of the United Nations, and the not so admirable fruits of the technological, industrial developments and social experiments that once espoused utopian promises. The disintegration of these erstwhile glorious promises is because of yet another simple but difficult to

overcome human flaw – conscious, and oftentimes, unconscious self-interest. In other words, Self-ish-ness.

As the foregoing has hopefully conclusively established, naivety and self-ish-ness of the majority account for mankind's inability convert the ground swell of prayers and inspiring words that occur during a crisis into lasting solutions.

So, is there a way forward? The simple answer would have to be: "it depends".

Most societies have a form of organization, with a few people, either selected or endowed, with the authority to manage the affairs, on behalf of the majority. Therefore with respect to events that affect a society at large, the driving impetus for change may well rest with this critical group. It is they who, first and foremost should be willing to investigate and understand what it takes, and how to awaken our nobler self, in a way that also addresses the pitfalls of human naivety and self-ish-ness. Otherwise, we will continue to go from one crisis to another, despite the sincere prayers, and inspiring words that are said and shared during crises.

Many may see this suggestion as very simplistic. To which the respond would be that there is nothing wrong with simplicity. Einstein's very famous equation $E=MC^2$ is very simple, perhaps simplistic, but it represents a complexity that only the most brilliant of minds can grasp, let alone to make use of it. In the same way, the suggestion made here sounds very simple, but is definitely not be easy to implement. Thinking otherwise would be shear naivety and delusion. The foundation for this suggestion has to be true Spiritual knowledge.

As has been stated in many other articles on this site, the only path to overcoming the challenges that mankind continues to face is Spiritual knowledge that leads to Spiritual growth. And, this can only be attained by becoming intimately familiar with the Laws that govern Creation. And, equally important inculcating them into every aspect of our lives and living.

When, at least, the managers of society have attained to this recognition, crises will gradually end, as prayers will then be taken to heart, and the words of inspiration will be allowed to take effect, first within these individuals, and then to manifest outwardly in society at large. With this kind of leadership at work, the message will spread, and become common practice among the majority in the society.

It is a pity that many secular Leaders do not appreciate the extent to which they especially influence or direct the social and spiritual progress of their societies. As has been stated many times in various articles on this web, Spiritual development has nothing to do with religion or dogma. It involves learning to look, in the proper way, to the higher realms for support and guidance in gaining recognition and adherence to the Laws governing Creation. These laws also govern all aspects of human existence, and constitute the only true path to developing our higher self – our Spirit, the noble man - the objective of desire over the ages. Therefore, there is great Spiritual responsibility attached to being, or wanting to be, in a position of managing the affairs of society. Failure, or carelessness in this position affects and even influences the lives and thinking many, and can draw upon the person very heavy Karmic burden.

It may be helpful to conclude this write up with a practical hint of how familiarity with the Laws of Creation can lead to Spiritual growth. For this, we shall examine four governing principles of Life (Laws of Creation):
The principle of constant activity (The Law of Motion) – Everything in nature is always active. For everyman, this activity occurs with our thoughts, our words or our deeds.
The principle of cause and effect (The Law of Sowing and Reaping) – Every act, including our thoughts, words and deeds, produces a reaction
The principle of propagation (The Law of Love) – Every act can either propagate goodwill i.e. benefits all, or ill-will i.e. creates disharmony
The principle of balance (The Law of Forgiveness) – Every act that creates disharmony must be offset to restore balance.

Now to see how these laws come into play in individual as well as social interactions.

Man exists in nature, and in a social environment. Therefore, every act of man (consisting of his thoughts, words and deeds) must affect things in his environment, i.e. nature or his fellow man. Man can use his free will to decide whether his or her act is directed towards the greater good, the selfish, or even the oppressive and destructive. The direction given to these acts will determine whether they generate goodwill and thus greater harmony, or ill will and thus resentment or disharmony which manifest as chaos, crises. Nature works automatically to gradually restore

balance. Or, the victim of ill will can assist in restoring balance by choosing not to aggravate and continue disharmony through voluntarily deciding to forgive the perpetrator. And, through sincere forgiveness, leave open the door for future opportunities for interacting in harmony and goodwill – with LOVE.

Perhaps with this simple explanation, the keen reader can now see how a grasp and conscious application of these principles of life (laws of Creation) can help the individual and society at large avoid situations that invariably lead to individual or group disharmony (i.e. crises). Every natural disaster, including pandemics, that man suffers, can eventually be traced to some conscious or unconscious act or omission by man. But, do we need to suffer the consequences of our actions in order to learn? Everyone, if we want to be honest, can sense deep within whether an act will generate goodwill or disharmony in the individual, in society, or in nature, even before it is put into words or deeds.