

LETTER TO WORLD CITIZENS 6/8, Oct 92

The phrase "jagat guru" means "world teacher." Religions through the ages have prophesized the coming of a future "Teacher." Christians spoke of the return of Christ while Muslims hope for the Imam Mahdi, the Jews for the messiah and the Buddhists for the coming of Maitreya. Why this dependence on a future master? It bespeaks of the relativity of religion itself. And the evolutionary climb of humankind to increasing fulfilment, as Teilhard de Chardin predicted.

But what would a "world teacher" teach? First, by definition, he/she would accept the world as such. Teachers such as Socrates, Hypatia, Erasmus, Bergson, Emerson, and Shri Nayarana Guru prefaced their teachings with an acceptance of the world as a given. Second, a "world teacher" would relate everything, that is, all relative facts, whether religious, social, political, economic or natural, to the *a priori* world as Total Fact. Third, a "world teacher" would refer backwards to former "world teachers" as corroborative therefore lending incontrovertibility. Fourth, since "world" is a holistic, unitive or inclusive word, it represents a microcosm of the macrocosm. Jesus is quoted as saying "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." A perfect example of the microcosm, Earth, in direct relationship with the macrocosm, Heaven. So a Jagat Guru would also be a conveyor of spiritual or conceptual truth.

So the "what" becomes self-evident. Simply put, a "jagat guru" teaches wisdom, but wisdom raised to a global level. That implies a new language to address the particular problems and needs of our troubled times.

The word "humanity" is not to be found in the Bible. Nor in the Koran, the Talmud, the Bagavad Gita, or the Buddhist writings. Why the omission? Because humanity did not exist until it was "born" in the 20th century! Baha'ullah, in the 19th century, added the third revolutionary injunction to Love God and thy neighbor: "Love thy kind as thyself." He was a true prophet. Later Marshall McLuhan added the caveat: "You can only organize society to the extent you can communicate." Like the body, until humanity had a "nervous system," which permitted instant feedback to its potential "brain," it consisted only of disjointed "cells," mainly in the form of artificial nations and religions. It was only until the breakthrough in the early 20th century in electronics virtually eliminating time and distance between humans that a "nervous system" permitted global, instantaneous feedback. The birth was slow and painful, but humanity is now here demanding our recognition, care and love, for without the last, we will have neither the will, motivation or courage to overcome the vast, institutionalized inertia of divisions currently bestride our common world.

I was invited some time ago to address the congregation of a synagogue near Washington, D.C. After talking about world citizenship, I said that the Jews awaited the Messiah to clean up the mess we humans made on earth. But the "messiah" was already here, I added. The audience turned ice-cold. I could feel the tension. Who did I think I was to make such an outrageous claim?

"If you think of Moses returning from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments," I persisted, "he claimed to have received them from God. The first commandment, as you know, was 'Thou shalt not kill.' But if God Almighty, the Creator of the Universe itself, told us here on Earth not to kill, who was He addressing? Obviously, everyone on Earth, not just Jews. This was the first hint of a universal morality"

Both Moses and Jesus as well as Mohammed, I continued, addressed humans as humans therefore members of one humanity. But the times were not ripe to announce the momentous news that Humanity Itself was a being, a "creature" with the birthright to live.

In short, the "Messiah" was humanity, a "newborn," claiming our recognition, our help and our love. A great sigh of relief prevailed the congregation. This unfamiliar yet intriguing idea, while maybe not orthodox, at least could not be called a heresy! Moreover, it seemed to acknowledge implicitly the idea that each one of us could, if we accepted the fact of humanity, become **part** of the "Messiah" without sacrificing our individuality. Not a bad idea.
