

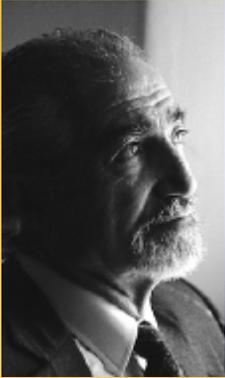


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OUTREACH

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR ETHICAL LIVING

JAN / FEB 2010



Torkom Saraydarian
1917-1997

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New Year's Resolutions:

The Art of Self-Questioning... and the King of Bhutan

The tradition of making New Year's resolutions is, of course, one of annual self-improvement. But has tradition simply become a mechanical process? After all, research has shown that 25% of our resolutions are dropped after the first week, 36% are dropped after one month, and over 50% are dropped after six months.* Yet, the same research shows that making resolutions is useful: people who explicitly make resolutions are 10 times more likely to attain their goals than people who don't explicitly make resolutions.

Whether the goal is an area of improved physical, financial or spiritual health, asking three key questions can help focus one's efforts: Why make a resolution? How can I keep this resolution? What if the resolution is broken? Remembering reasons, developing well-designed plans and back-up approaches in case of setbacks will increase the likelihood of making successful, long-term resolutions.

This example of self-questioning illustrates the value of questioning as the primary means of achievement. The real battleground of life is the questioning of our own nature: we expand, we grow, we achieve as questioning travelers who are always asking questions about our own needs and the needs of others.

Which brings us to the King of Bhutan.

In 1972, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, then the ruler of Bhutan, decided that his country needed something more than the results of an expanding gross domestic product (GDP) index. He asked himself how he could build an economy for the people of his tiny Himalayan country that would increase their material well-being and preserve the traditional values that made Bhutan a special place. To measure that process, he introduced the concept of "Gross National Happiness" (GNH).

Bhutan has gotten increasingly serious about its system of GNH over the years. From a fuzzy feel-good collection of values, it is evolving into a serious index with real measurements of happiness. And, by now, the system of GNH has spread to other countries.

In this *Outreach* issue, we explore the value and mechanics of questioning for self-improvement and progress. We examine Torkom's expansive and provocative writings on the consciousness

**TSG
Mission
Statement**

*Publish
Distribute
Teach
Preserve
Torkom
Saraydarian's
Creative Works.*

*TSG
provides
tools to live
Successful,
Healthy,
Happy,
Joyful
lives.*



Gita Saraydarian

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of questioning, and we'll read more about "Gross National Happiness" and the application of collective self questioning. In addition, Gita has written a deeply moving message about questioning drawn from her working relationship with Torkom.

Torkom has written that the mysteries within the individual are revealed from a simple beginning: questioning. Effective questioning continually prepares us for the next steps on our journey. As we begin a new year, let us "corner ourselves" to gain illumination about our real issues and conditions, and break long-held and outworn patterns and habits.

From the *Outreach* staff and our families, we wish you and yours a Happy New Year.

— Lou Schwartz

*University of Scranton, "*Journal of Clinical Psychology*", 2002.

Kinds of Questions

By Torkom Saraydarian

The Process of Questioning

A questioning traveler is a person who asks questions from childhood until he dies. He asks about his needs —mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual — and he asks about the needs of his group and society. Wherever he goes in life, he asks questions. Through his questions he grows and his consciousness expands.

It is very important to observe how people ask questions because their questions reveal what they actually are. By their questions you can find where their consciousness is located. If their consciousness is located in their stomach, most of their questions will be about food. If their consciousness is located in their sex center, most — or maybe all — of their questions will be about sex. If their consciousness is located in their emotional nature, they will ask questions mostly related to the emotions. If their consciousness is in the mind, they will ask mostly mental questions. If they are spiritual, they will ask mostly spiritual questions.

If a person asks you a question, try to find the level of the question and where his consciousness is located.

Once you know the location of the consciousness and its level, you will be able to answer the question exactly on that level. It is very important to answer people's questions on their level because that is where their need is. People cannot take more than what they are, and they cannot ask more than what they are.

Your questions are equal to what you are. In the future, a great science will be developed which will teach how to observe other people through their questions and answers. You will learn that if you ask someone a spiritual question and he gives you a physical-level answer, then that person is unable to meet you on your level and thus aid your growth. You will learn to find the answers that are on the same level as your questions.

Questioning means that you have a need. Questioning also means that somewhere in your heart, you intuitively know there is an answer. Actually, it is the answer within you that stimulates you to organize and formulate your question. If you formulate and ask your question in the right way, it is impossible not to find the answer. As Christ said, "Ask and it shall be given."

All human progress is like step-by-step walking. The questions we ask and the answers we find are like the steps, helping us to progress toward higher achievements. A question is one step. Its answer is another step. Every time we understand an answer, that answer turns into a new question within us. And if an answer does not create new questions, we fall into a rut.

Human progress can also be compared to the process of breathing. Asking questions is like inhalation; it is the inspiration. You receive a question from within the depth of your being which evokes the answer, or the exhalation. Questioning is a process of revitalization.



“Questioning
is a process of
revitalization.”

continued on page 3

Understanding Answers

There are many kinds of questions. There are questions about the past. There are questions about the future. There are questions that are only related to the present. Old-age people are always busy with questions that are related to the past; their focus of consciousness is anchored in the past. Present-age people ask questions relating only to the present. They are interested only in the satisfaction of their pleasures and their immediate needs. Questions related to the future are more inclusive, more synthesizing, and more beautiful. Ask yourself, what is the level of your questions, and what is the focus of your interest?

It is very important in the process of questioning to understand the answer you receive. There is a very complicated process involved in understanding the answer to your question. Sometimes you ask a question and listen for the answer only with your physical ears. Sometimes you ask a question and listen with your pleasures, glamors, desires, or aspirations. Then when you receive the answer, it is totally mixed with what you have created within your own psychology.

Suppose you are listening to the answer to your question through the mental shadows of your prejudices, your dogmas, and the pride that you know everything. You distort the true answer with these shadows, and you do not see the true light contained in the answer. These shadows interfere with your translation of the answer.

You also have emotional shadows. Both your emotional and mental natures are distorted primarily by the pain and suffering of your past experiences. Tradition is another source of distortion. When all these things are mixed together with the reception of the answer, you lack a clear understanding of the answer you receive.

Another dark shadow which blocks your path is the stagnation of your consciousness. Your body, emotions, and mind are in a groove or rut of crystallized and inflexible habits. You may intellectually understand the answer to your questions but be so conditioned or crystallized that you are unable to see it. When your answer comes when you are in this condition, it is like a seed dropped on a rock instead of in rich soil it does not give fruit because you did not accept it or respond to it.

You must learn to listen. First, clear your mind. Second, when you see that the answer is really right for you, then respond to it.

Sometimes our answers come from other people. Once an elderly man came to visit me. He said, "The doctor told me that my heart is no good and that I must not smoke."

"Well," I asked him, "did you understand?"

"Yes, but I still smoke anyway."

This man did not accept the answer. The doctor gave him the correct answer for his health needs, but he could not respond because he was not at the level to understand properly. The answer was not within him.

You can understand something if that something is already within you or active within you. If it is not within you, it does you no good. My Father used to say, "Take the tail of a dog and iron it two hundred times and it will again return to its usual curl."

"There is no answer for one who will not accept the answer."



Can We Respond to the Answer?

Whenever you ask a question, something within you must be able to respond. Before you ask the question, you must already feel you know the answer. If the answer is not already within you, prepared and ready to be used, you will be unable to ask the question. And if you should receive an answer by chance, you would not be able to understand it.

It is interesting to know that there is no answer when the question has no logic behind it. There is no answer when the one who questions is not ready for the answer. There is no answer if the one who asks the question is not interested in the answer. There is no answer for one who will not accept the answer.

A truly progressive person must welcome the answers that come to his questions as a fertile ground accepts seeds to sprout, grow, and give fruit. You must have a physical, emotional, and mental nature that welcomes the seeds or the answers of light and accepts them. In this way, the answers can create a transformation in your life.

Kinds of Questions - continued from page 3

The vehicles or mechanisms of the personality do create obstacles and distortion, but when you ask a question, you can still hear in that distorted radio the message that is being broadcast. One day I was listening to a presidential address on the radio. Even though there was so much static on the radio, I could still hear what the President was saying. In your mind there is also a president, and no matter what noise is in you — rejection, glamors, illusions, complexes — his message is still there.

St. John said that there is a light that enlightens every person who comes into the world. The light is within us. There is no reason for us not to hear the answers to our questions. To say “I don’t hear any answer” is an escape. You hear it and you know exactly what is needed, but you do not do it. Heed the light within you because that light is the presence of God. That light is both the question and the answer that enables you to progress toward greater achievements of health, success, and enlightenment.

The most important questions you can ask apply to the foundations of life and how life can be transformed. What is the foundation of life and of the future? Our children are both the foundation and the future.

Then your next question will be: How can we raise our children so that they are healthy? If you ask this question, millions of answers will come to your mind. You will realize that their health is intertwined with practically everything — with social and political conditions, traditions, the way they eat, the way they live, pollution, and so on.

Next you might ask: How can we bring up our children so that not only are they healthy, but they also become successful and enlightened? Our children must be healthy, but when they grow up they must also be successful. When they are successful, they will need to be enlightened. Enlightenment means that our children must feel the purpose of life, why they are living on this planet. To be enlightened means that instead of working for your own individual ego, you work for three things: you work to make all the world’s children healthy, successful, and enlightened.

Excerpts taken from *Education As Transformation, Vol. 1*, by Torkom Saraydarian, pp. 425-430.

TSG Monday Evening Class Schedule: January – April 2010

Monday evening classes will focus on Esoteric Leadership alternating with *Wisdom of the Zodiac* discussions. Everyone is welcome. Email or call us for information on class materials. Fees by donation. Classes are led by Gita & Senior Class Teachers.

January

- 4th: Themes in Esoteric Leadership:
Text Leadership Vol. 1, Chapter 1
- 11th: Themes in Esoteric Leadership:
Text Leadership Vol. 1, Continuing
- 18th: WOZ Class: Aquarius Chapter (MLK Day)
- 25th: WOZ Class: Aquarius Chapter

February

- 1st: Themes in Esoteric Leadership:
Text Leadership Vol. 1, Continuing
- 8th: Themes in Esoteric Leadership:
Text Leadership Vol. 1, Continuing
- 15th: President’s Day; no class
- 22nd: WOZ Class: Pisces Chapter

March

- 1st: WOZ Class: Pisces Chapter
- 8th: Themes in Esoteric Leadership:
Text Leadership Vol. 1, Continuing
- 15th: Themes in Esoteric Leadership:
Text Leadership Vol. 1, Continuing
- 22nd: WOZ Aries Chapter
- 29th: WOZ Aries Chapter

April

- 5th: Themes in Esoteric Leadership:
Text Leadership Vol. 1, Continuing
- 12th: Themes in Esoteric Leadership:
Text Leadership Vol. 1, Continuing
- 19th: WOZ Taurus Chapter
- 26th: Wesak Conference week.

See Wesak Conference Information

For other events at TSG please visit our
Event Calendar Online



Collective Self Questioning

By Lou Schwartz

“Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers.”
- Voltaire

Questioning is an invaluable tool for self transformation. “Spiritual people go deep into the closed corridors of their lives and they ask questions.” (*Education As Transformation, Vol. 1*, p. 411.)

The act of effective questioning starts to break habits, patterns of thinking and our entrenched routines of life. The effective questioner progresses towards increased health and creativity.

This process and outcome holds true for collectives or groups... and introduces us to the King of Bhutan.

There is an assumption deeply embedded in classical economics that increasing the Gross Domestic Production or GDP equals increasing the quality of life. That notion has become challenged – with much of the leadership originating from the king of this tiny Himalayan country.

Years go, King Jigme Singe Wangchuck of Bhutan asked the question of how he could increase both the material and non-material well being of his people. The king recognized that success for the country was tied to values that included, but did not solely involve, material success. He was looking for goals that would guarantee long range happiness. He came up with what he called, ‘Gross National Happiness.’ For example, he determined that over fifty percent of the country would remain forested.

Over the years, Bhutan has developed a Gross National Happiness Index based on surveys from the population taken by The Center for Bhutan Studies. As one Western pundit described: “To those of us reared on GDP and the myth that Western methods tap into a superior objectivity....their (Bhutan’s) efforts may seem naïve.” *

However, there is now a significant body of research that agrees with Bhutan’s approach. A psychologist at the University of Leicester has produced the first ever

‘world map of happiness.’ Adrian White, an analytic social psychologist at the University’s School of Psychology, analyzed data published by UNESCO, the CIA, the New Economics Foundation, the WHO, the Veenhoven Database, the Latinbarometer, the Afrobarometer, and the UNHDR, to create a global projection of subjective well-being: the first world map of happiness. According to Adrian White, “The concept of happiness, or satisfaction with life, is currently a major area of research in economics and psychology, most closely associated with new developments in positive psychology.”*

It seems that our current economic crisis has given the idea of a GNH more traction. The French President Sarkozy has proposed creating one, and England created an unofficial Department of Happiness.



As Adrian White says, “The concept of happiness, or satisfaction with life, is currently a major area of research in economics and psychology, most closely associated with new developments in positive psychology.”*

All of these new dynamics have resulted from one leader deciding to question how to break with conventional thinking and examine, wrestle with the happiness of the people as a means of directing national priorities.

**Juba Picks*. October 16, 2009. <<http://jubapicks.com>>.

More resources for self questioning can be found in the following by Torkom Saraydarian:

Buddha Sutra, A Dialogue with Christ,
Education as Transformation, Vol. 1

3-part audio lecture series by Torkom Saraydarian on:

The Questioning Traveler:

1. How To Answer Your Own Questions
2. Breaking Our Habits
3. Increasing Our Enlightenment

Please visit our website at www.tsgfoundation.org for more information.

TSG Cave Creek Center Upcoming Community Lectures



Sunday, January 31, 2010

10:00 am - 11:00 am

*The Science of Becoming
Your True Self #6 of 12*
with Gita Saraydarian.



Sunday, February 28, 2010

10:00 am - 11:00 am

*The Science of Becoming
Your True Self #7 of 12*
with Gita Saraydarian.



The *Wisdom of the Zodiac* book Chapters are available through subscription, emailed to you two weeks before each full moon!

Each chapter begins with a discussion of the particular full moon and ends with a meditation.

The cost to you is only \$48.00 for the entire 12 part set of Chapters, plus you'll receive a free Introductory Chapter as soon as you sign up. Visit our website for more info:

www.tsgfoundation.org

Wisdom of the Zodiac in Spanish
Wisdom of the Zodiac in German

What Questions Do I Ask?

By Gita Saraydarian

The Teaching says that it is not the fact of asking questions that is important, but the content, the intent, the way we frame it subtly that is the key. The underlying reason should be to establish a dialogue with our Inner Essence. It is not one question and one answer, but an ongoing relationship. We ask and we listen to an answer. Then we ask a follow-up, and then clarify what we thought we heard. We continue back and forth until we are able to understand the answers and the follow-up questions that we need to be asking.

I did not fully understand this process until one day, just about a month before Dad passed away, I visited him at his bedside. I was holding back my grief and sense of impending loss. I kept saying to myself that he is not gone yet, so it was not appropriate to start grieving; better wait and get some things cleared up first while there is still some time left. I wanted to be sure I asked all the right questions, had all the answers given to me, and I was "ready." I wanted a set of answers that I could count on. I thought that my main issues revolved around finding the right ways to continue editing and preparing manuscripts for publishing.

I had been working closely with him in editing and proofing his writings for ten years. Hours would fly by and they were the most memorable and intense communication times that we had with each other. We would sit on a couch and I would have all the pages marked by little pieces of paper, with questions marked on the margins. Then, one by one, I would turn the pages and ask the question, offer a suggestion, wonder what he meant — is it better to say this way or that way? He would tune in immediately to what I was asking without even looking at the pages, and would respond quickly and with certainty as to the right way to say what he wanted to say. Often, we would be at a loss for the right words and we would sit in silence. Or, he would complete my thoughts or I would complete his thoughts and come up with just the right content. Sometimes, he would say, 'leave it with me and I will have it done by tomorrow.' Indeed, he would have every question answered by the very next day. Sometimes he would sit up all night and would have

an entire book's questions clarified. Opening the pages, I would see little comments, re-writes of paragraphs, even little cartoons on the margins! I wondered how he did this. Soon these moments would be lost forever.



“Gita this ✓ sign means o.k.”

So, I sat on the side of his bed and, I remember feeling a deep sense of sadness and emptiness, I said, “Dad, when you are gone, whom do I ask when I have a question?” Perhaps I had a deeper question to ask him rather than the obvious ‘how do I edit your books’ question! He looked seriously impatient with me and said in a strong affirming voice, “Ask yourself.” “Myself?” I thought and simply stared at him. I felt totally empty. Who is that ‘self’ that I could ask? What would I ask? How would I ask? How would I know the right answer? How do I choose the answer?

Years went by, and I began to see how this process works. Every time I came across a passage that I needed to clarify, I would sit and ask ‘assuming this text is correct, what is he really trying to say?’ I would read and re-read the passages all around the text in question and immerse myself in his thought process. And the answer would emerge, sometimes immediately and sometimes a few days later. I learned to use the same process when I study a difficult passage in the Teaching. If I do not find the answer immediately, I mark the area in question and go back to it day after day until finally it becomes clear to me. I now use the same process to clarify questions in different areas of my life.

How do I approach questioning? I assume that whatever is happening right now is the right result of something that preceded it. I assume that there is a

complete picture or text of what I need to know. I have to fill the gaps that prevent me from seeing the whole, the truth.

I understand that nothing happens in isolation. I try to be patient and persevere. I assume an inner tension and an awakened poise and try to ask the right question by posing the question and ‘trying it on’. I observe and try to understand what I am really asking before I look for the answer. If it is a passage in a text, I try to find out why that passage is written and what it is referring to. I don’t strain, I don’t judge, I don’t assume immediately that there is a mistake, but remain calm and focused. Eventually, as I remove my personal self and stay focused, the right answer always emerges. From this and many other experiences, I have come to the conclusion that the only question I could really ask is this: ‘Let the truth of this situation reveal itself to me and let me have the wisdom to understand it.’ I am never disappointed although, I have to admit, not always ‘pleased’ with what I find.

So, go ahead and ask questions, as many as you like. Write them down and try them on. Then go over them again and again and find out if they really are what you need to be asking. We cannot find the right answers until we learn to ask the right questions. Are you being truthful or posturing? Are you really seeking or are you expressing frustration and anger? What are you really saying by asking? Do you really want an answer? Do you want to establish a dialogue? Find out and you will be amazed at how simple the questions become and how fruitful the dialogue that follows, a dialogue that opens ever new questions and new answers in your life.

I wish for you a most fruitful questioning this year.

With love and gratitude,

Gita

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