

# *Spirituality & Community*

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## **New Serial: *Jarvis the Duck***

**Deciding Peace**  
Robert Kezer

**Higher Knowledge**  
Stewart Bitkoff



## **The Bhagavad Gita** **A Key Hindu Text**

**Poetry**

**Stewart Bitkoff**

**Kurt Venables**

# Contents

<b>Who We Are</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Bhagavad Gita</b> A Key Hindu Text	<b>5</b>
<b>Jarvis the Duck</b> The Black Death Kurt Venables	<b>10</b>
<b>Jarvis the Duck</b> A Trip Kurt Venables	<b>12</b>
<b>Higher Knowledge:</b> <b>The Enriching &amp; Enabling Factor</b> Dr. Stewart Bitkoff	<b>14</b>
<b>Deciding Peace</b> Robert A. Kezer	<b>16</b>
<b>Poems</b> Stewart Bitkoff	<b>18</b>
<b><i>The Rose</i></b> Kurt Venables (poetry)	<b>20</b>

# Who We Are

[www.spiritualityandcommunity.com](http://www.spiritualityandcommunity.com)

***Welcome!*** Seeking spiritual fulfillment? True happiness and mental wellness? Well, that's what we're all about. Spirituality & Community is a magazine, web site, and online community for those seeking answers to life's deepest questions. ***We are dedicated to promoting spirituality, true happiness, mental wellness, and appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.***

## A New Age of Light

***Our focus is spirituality, which we view as an inner search for happiness and fulfillment.*** We are concerned with what lies within the heart. ***We believe that within everyone lies a pure love that we call the Light or the Lord within. We believe that one must open one's heart to the Light to attain spiritual fulfillment and that only this brings true happiness and mental wellness.*** The Light is the essence of humanity. ***Ultimately, we find our way by casting our gaze inward.*** We will search this inner world over until we find our home:

***We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding***

***We believe that mankind is entering a new age, an Age of Light.*** We see a growing spiritual crisis in the world today. Our culture has brought us unprecedented material well being, but we seem further away than ever from true spiritual wholeness. We also perceive an increase in mental health issues in our society and believe this to be linked to spiritual detachment. Many wander endlessly in search of the material gratification that will bring them happiness. Many have lost faith in religions and traditions. Others sincerely believe in traditional religions but remain unfulfilled spiritually and unhappy. Unfortunately, too many are so close-minded they refuse to ask what is missing from their lives. Yet, many hunger for spiritual wholeness and are searching for answers. ***We believe that we are entering a new age of enlightenment in which genuine spiritual progress will be made and that spiritual development depends upon a genuine appreciation for a diversity of spiritual beliefs.*** An appreciation for diversity of belief provides us with a fresh view of the beliefs of others, allows us to take from each set of beliefs that which rings true, and enables us to synthesize a personal spirituality that makes sense for each of us. When we view the beliefs of others with our hearts, we see truth shine through. We look with the highest regard to traditional beliefs and religions for guidance, and we also look forward. ***We believe that the past is not the end but the beginning.***



## What We Do

*Spirituality & Community produces a magazine and encompasses an online community. Both aspects serve as the basis for bringing together those who share our aspirations and beliefs, to meet each other and exchange ideas.* We provide many opportunities for exploring spirituality and communicating with others:

- Spirituality & Community magazine*
- Features on the site*
- Online chats* (as interest arises)

The magazine is based on a Reader's Digest® type model. It is comprised primarily of reader submitted material. It is the primary mechanism for a member to both explore spirituality and communicate his or her ideas to others. Features are also posted on the site. When interest is sufficiently high, we will hold chats online. *We sincerely hope that you will find truth within, and we wish you only the best on your own personal journey!*

# The Bhagavad Gita

(excerpts)

Translated by Kâshinâth Trimbak Telang (1882)

The Bhagavad Gita, probably composed circa 300 BC or earlier, is one of the central texts of Hinduism. The text tells that Krishna is the supreme god of the universe and relates a conversation between Krishna and the warrior Arguna (Arjuna). The work details many of the central themes of Hinduism. It explains the importance of selflessness and meditation, proclaiming that the development of devotion (the love of God) is necessary for true happiness. For more, see:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/index.htm>.



## Chapter I

Dhritarâshtra said:

What did my (people) and the Pândavas do, O Sañgaya! when they assembled together on the holy field of Kurukshetra, desirous to do battle?

Sañgaya said:

Seeing the army of the Pândavas drawn up in battle-array, the prince Duryodhana approached the preceptor, and spoke (these) words: 'O preceptor! observe this grand army of the sons of Pându, drawn up in battle-array by your talented pupil, the son of Drupada. In it are heroes (bearing) large bows, the equals of Bhîma and Arguna in battle--(namely), Yuyudhâna, Virâta, and Drupada, the master of a great car, and Dhrishtaketu, Kekitâna, and the valiant king of Kâsî, Purugit and Kuntibhoga, and that eminent man Saibya; the heroic Yudhâmanyu, the valiant Uttamaugas, the son of Subhadrâ, and the sons of Draupadî--all masters of great cars. And now, O best of Brâhmanas! learn who are most distinguished among us, and are leaders of my army. I will name them to you, in order that you may know them well.

...

Arguna said:

Seeing these kinsmen, O Krishna! standing (here) desirous to engage in battle, my limbs droop down; my mouth is quite dried up; a tremor comes on my body; and my hairs stand on end; the Gândîva (bow) slips from my hand; my skin burns intensely. I am unable, too, to stand up; my mind whirls round, as it were; O Kesava! I see adverse omens; and I do not perceive any good (to accrue) after killing (my) kinsmen in the battle. I do not wish for victory, O Krishna! nor sovereignty, nor pleasures: what is sovereignty to us, O Govinda! what enjoyments, and even life? Even those, for whose sake we desire sovereignty, enjoyments, and pleasures, are standing here for battle, abandoning life and wealth--preceptors, fathers, sons as well as grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, as also (other) relatives. These I do not wish to kill, though they kill (me), O destroyer of Madhu! even for the sake of sovereignty over the three worlds, how much less then for this earth(alone)? What joy shall be ours, O Ganârdana! after killing Dhritarâshtra's sons? Killing these felons we shall only incur sin. Therefore it is not proper for us to kill our own kinsmen, the sons of Dhritarâshtra. For how, O

Mâdhava! shall we be happy after killing our own relatives? Although having their consciences corrupted by avarice, they do not see the evils flowing from the extinction of a family, and the sin in treachery to friends, still, O Ganârdana! should not we, who do see the evils flowing from the extinction of a family, learn to refrain from that sin?

## Chapter II

Saṅgaya said:

To him, who was thus overcome with pity, and dejected, and whose eyes were full of tears and turbid, the destroyer of Madhu spoke these words.

The Deity said:

How (comes it that) this delusion, O Arguna! which is discarded by the good, which excludes from heaven, and occasions infamy, has overtaken you in this (place of) peril? Be not effeminate, O son of Prithâ! it is not worthy of you. Cast off this base weakness of heart, and arise, O terror of (your) foes!

Arguna said:

How, O destroyer of Madhu! shall I encounter with arrows in the battle Bhîshma and Drona--both, O destroyer of enemies! entitled to reverence? Not killing (my) preceptors--(men) of great glory--it is better to live even on alms in this world. But killing them, though they are avaricious of worldly goods, I should only enjoy blood-tainted enjoyments. Nor do we know which of the two is better for us--whether that we should vanquish them, or that they should vanquish us. Even those, whom having killed, we do not wish to live--even those sons of Dhritarâshtra stand (arrayed) against us. With a heart contaminated by the taint of helplessness, with a mind confounded about my duty, I ask you. Tell me what is assuredly good for me. I am your disciple; instruct me, who have thrown myself on your (indulgence). For I do not perceive what is to dispel that grief which will dry up my organs after I shall have obtained a prosperous kingdom on earth without a foe, or even the sovereignty of the gods.

Saṅgaya said:

Having spoken thus to Hrishîkesa, O terror of (your) foes! Gudâkesa said to Govinda, 'I shall not engage in battle;' and verily remained silent. To him thus desponding between the two armies, O descendant of Bharata! Hrishîkesa spoke these words with a slight smile.

The Deity said:

You have grieved for those who deserve no grief, and you talk words of wisdom. Learned men grieve not for the living nor the dead. Never did I not exist, nor you, nor these rulers of men; nor will any one of us ever hereafter cease to be. As, in this body, infancy and youth and old age (come) to the embodied (self), so does the acquisition of another body; a sensible man is not deceived about that. The contacts of the senses, O son of Kuntî! which produce cold and heat, pleasure and pain, are not permanent, they are ever coming and going. Bear them, O descendant of Bharata!

...

Your business is with action alone; not by any means with fruit. Let not the fruit of action be your motive (to action). Let not your attachment be (fixed) on inaction. Having recourse to devotion, O Dhanaṅgaya! perform actions, casting off (all) attachment, and being equable in success or ill-success; (such) equability is called devotion. Action, O Dhanaṅgaya! is far inferior to the devotion of the mind. In that devotion seek shelter. Wretched are those whose motive (to

action) is the fruit (of action). He who has obtained devotion in this world casts off both merit and sin. Therefore apply yourself to devotion; devotion in (all) actions is wisdom. The wise who have obtained devotion cast off the fruit of action; and released from the shackles of (repeated)births, repair to that seat where there is no unhappiness. When your mind shall have crossed beyond the taint of delusion, then will you become indifferent to all that you have heard or will hear. When your mind, confounded by what you have heard, will stand firm and steady in contemplation, then will you acquire devotion.

Arguna said:

What are the characteristics, O Kesava! of one whose mind is steady, and who is intent on contemplation? How should one of steady mind speak, how sit, how move?

The Deity said:

When a man, O son of Prithâ! abandons all the desires of his heart, and is pleased in his self only and by his self, he is then called one of steady mind. He whose heart is not agitated in the midst of calamities, who has no longing for pleasures, and from whom (the feelings of) affection, fear, and wrath have departed, is called a sage of steady mind. His mind is steady, who, being without attachments anywhere, feels no exultation and no aversion on encountering the various agreeable and disagreeable (things of this world). A man's mind is steady, when he withdraws his senses from (all) objects of sense, as the tortoise (withdraws) its limbs from all sides. Objects of sense draw back from a person who is abstinent; not so the taste (for those objects). But even the taste departs from him, when he has seen the Supreme. The boisterous senses, O son of Kuntî! carry away by force the mind even of a wise man, who exerts himself (for final emancipation).

Restraining them all, a man should remain engaged in devotion, making me his only resort. For his mind is steady whose senses are under his control. The man who ponders over objects of sense forms an attachment to them; from (that) attachment is produced desire; and from desire anger is produced; from anger results want of discrimination; from want of discrimination, confusion of the memory; from confusion of the memory, loss of reason; and in consequence of loss of reason. he is utterly ruined. But the self-restrained man who moves among objects with senses under the control of his own self, and free from affection and aversion, obtains tranquillity. When there is tranquillity, all his miseries are destroyed, for the mind of him whose heart is tranquil soon becomes steady. He who is not self-restrained has no steadiness of mind; nor has he who is not self-restrained perseverance in the pursuit of self-knowledge; there is no tranquillity for him who does not persevere in the pursuit of self-knowledge; and whence can there be happiness for one who is not tranquil? For the heart which follows the rambling senses leads away his judgment, as the wind leads a boat astray upon the waters. Therefore, O you of mighty arms! his mind is steady whose senses are restrained on all sides from objects of sense. The self-restrained man is awake, when it is night for all beings; and when all beings are awake, that is the night of the right-seeing sage. He into whom all objects of desire enter, as waters enter the ocean, which, (though) replenished, (still) keeps its position unmoved,-he only obtains tranquillity; not he who desires (those) objects of desire. The man who, casting off all desires, lives free from attachments, who is free from egoism, and from (the feeling that this or that is) mine, obtains tranquillity. This, O son of Prithâ! is the Brahmic state; attaining to this, one is never deluded; and remaining in it in (one's) last moments, one attains (brahma-nirvâna) the Brahmic bliss.

## Chapter VII

The Deity said:

O son of *Prithâ*! now hear how you can without doubt know me fully, fixing your mind on me, and resting in me, and practising devotion. I will now tell you exhaustively about knowledge together with experience; that being known, there is nothing further left in this world to know. Among thousands of men, only some work for perfection; and even of those who have reached perfection, and who are assiduous, only some know me truly. Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, understanding, and egoism, thus is my nature divided eightfold. But this is a lower (form of my) nature. Know (that there is) another (form of my) nature, and higher than this, which is animate, O you of mighty arms! and by which this universe is upheld. Know that all things have these (for their) source. I am the producer and the destroyer of the whole universe. There is nothing else, O *Dhanañgaya*! higher than myself; all this is woven upon me, like numbers of pearls upon a thread. I am the taste in water, O son of *Kuntî*! I am the light of the sun and moon. I am 'Om' in all the Vedas, sound in space, and manliness in human beings; I am the fragrant smell in the earth, refulgence in the fire; I am life in all beings, and penance in those who perform penance. Know me, O son of *Prithâ*! to be the eternal seed of all beings; I am the discernment of the discerning ones, and I the glory of the glorious. I am also the strength, unaccompanied by fondness or desire, of the strong. And, O chief of the descendants of *Bharata*! I am love unopposed to piety among all beings. And all entities which are of the quality of goodness, and those which are of the quality of passion and of darkness, know that they are, indeed, all from me; I am not in them, but they are in me.

## Chapter X

Yet again, O you of mighty arms! listen to my excellent words, which, out of a wish for your welfare, I speak to you who are delighted (with them). Not the multitudes of gods, nor the great sages know my source; for I am in every way the origin of the gods and great sages. Of (all) mortals, he who knows me to be unborn, without beginning, the great lord of the world, being free from delusion, is released from all sins. Intelligence, knowledge, freedom from delusion, forgiveness, truth, restraint of the senses, tranquillity, pleasure, pain, birth, death, fear, and also security, harmlessness, equability, contentment, penance, (making) gifts, glory, disgrace, all these different tempers of living beings are from me alone. The seven great sages, and likewise the four ancient *Manus*, whose descendants are (all) these people in the world, were all born from my mind, (partaking) of my powers. Whoever correctly knows these powers and emanations of mine, becomes possessed of devotion free from indecision; of this (there is) no doubt. The wise, full of love, worship me, believing that I am the origin of all, and that all moves on through me. (Placing their) minds on me, offering (their) lives to me, instructing each other, and speaking about me, they are always contented and happy. To these, who are constantly devoted, and who worship with love, I give that knowledge by which they attain to me. And remaining in their hearts, I destroy, with the brilliant lamp of knowledge, the darkness born of ignorance in such (men) only, out of compassion for them.

Arguna said:

You are the supreme Brahman, the supreme goal, the holiest of the holy. All sages, as well as the divine sage Nârada, Asita, Devala, and Vyâsa, call you the eternal being, divine, the first god, the unborn, the all-pervading. And so, too, you tell me yourself, O Kesava! I believe all this that you tell me (to be) true; for, O lord! neither the gods nor demons understand your manifestation. You only know your self by your self. O best of beings! creator of all things! lord of all things! god of gods! lord of the universe! be pleased to declare without, exception your divine emanations, by which emanations you stand pervading all these worlds. How shall I know you, O you of mystic power! always meditating on you? And in what various entities, O lord! should I meditate on you? Again, O Ganârdana! do you yourself declare your powers and emanations; because hearing this nectar, I (still) feel no satiety.

The Deity said:

Well then, O best of Kauravas! I will state to you my own divine emanations; but (only) the chief (ones), for there is no end to the extent of my (emanations). I am the self, O Gudâkesa! seated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning and the middle and the end also of all beings. I am Vishnu among the Âdityas, the beaming sun among the shining (bodies); I am Marîki among the Maruts, and the moon among the lunar mansions. Among the Vedas, I am the Sâma-veda. I am Indra among the gods. And I am mind among the senses. I am consciousness in (living) beings.

## Chapter XII

That devotee of mine, who hates no being, who is friendly and compassionate, who is free from egoism, and from (the idea that this or that is) mine, to whom happiness and misery are alike, who is forgiving, contented, constantly devoted, self-restrained, and firm in his determinations, and whose mind and understanding are devoted to me, he is dear to me. He through whom the world is not agitated, and who is not agitated by the world, who is free from joy and anger and fear and agitation, he too is dear to me. That devotee of mine, who is unconcerned, pure, assiduous, impartial, free from distress, who abandons all actions (for fruit), he is dear to me. He who is full of devotion to me, who feels no joy and no aversion, who does not grieve and does not desire, who abandons (both what is) agreeable and (what is) disagreeable, he is dear to me. He who is alike to friend and foe, as also in honour and dishonour, who is alike in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, who is free from attachments, to whom praise and blame are alike, who is taciturn, and contented with anything whatever (that comes), who is homeless, and of a steady mind, and full of devotion, that man is dear to me. But those devotees who, imbued with faith, and (regarding) me as their highest (goal), resort to this holy (means for attaining) immortality, as stated, they are extremely dear to me.

# Jarvis the Duck

Kurt Venables

## The Black Death

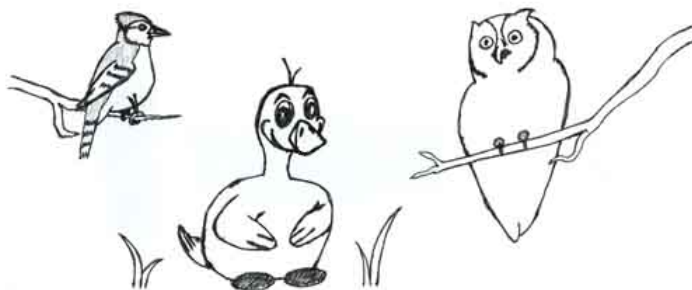
*Jarvis is a young duck that lives on a small pond in The Great Poplar Forest. These are the chronicles of his adventures.*

The Black Death was remarkable both for its ubiquity and the speed with which it swept over The Pond. The disease would begin with the afflicted becoming tired and melancholy. The disease could progress to result in deep depression and delusional hysteria, completely sapping the energy of its victims. Black lesions could form all over the face and body. The disease struck different individuals with differing severity, though nearly all the ducks at The Pond had been afflicted within weeks of its first appearance. No deaths had occurred at this early date at The Pond, but rumors spread that many were dying at The Great Lake.

Jarvis had been spending increasingly more time with Jay and Sage in the forest, both because of the misery at The Pond and because he simply felt he had more in common with them. Jarvis was one of the lucky few who had not been struck by the plague; neither had Jay or Sage. It was a beautiful, cool morning in early October:

“Trixie and Malcolm were the first to come down with it at The Pond,” said Jarvis. “A few weeks ago. They’re in really bad shape now; can’t get out of their nests and covered in black splotches.”

“The two that you told me were making fun of the little duck this summer?” asked Jay.



“Yes,” said Jarvis and after a pause, “Most of the ducks at the Pond have it now to one extent or another. Things are pretty bad there.”

“Yeah, man. A lot of owls have gotten it as well, all over the forest. It really brings me down to see them in such bad shape,” said Sage.

“It hasn’t been so hard on us smaller birds,” said Jay. “Only a few I know have been affected.” After a pause, he said, “Strange, it seems like it’s the one’s I never really liked.” Then he added quickly, “But I still do feel sorry for them, of course.”

“Bizarre,” said Sage, and after a pause, he said with a sly smile, “I hope you like me.”

The three felt uncomfortable talking about the plague. These were strange times, and you never knew who was going to be next. After a few moments of silence, Sage said, “The owls at The Great Lake say this is the Black Death; it’s mentioned in the Book of the Dead.”

Jarvis perked up, “Do you know about the Book of the Dead?”

“Sure, man. I remember from back in the day, ya know.”

“Angeldown’s grandma was telling me about the Book of Ra. Angeldown and I both like riddles and mysteries; we were trading riddles, and her grandma asked me one from the Book of Ra. Then she told me about the creation, and Osiris, and lots of other stuff.”

“It’s no mystery why you’ve been spending time with Angeldown,” said Jay with a sly smile.

“She’s really nice, and we get along really well,” replied Jarvis, smiling.

“And the fact that she’s a cute girl has nothing to do with it,” said Jay smiling, baiting Jarvis.

“Now I didn’t say *that*,” said Jarvis, now almost laughing.

“No worries, man, I remember what it was like to be young,” said Sage. “There are some pieces missing, but I remember.” After a brief pause, he said, “The famous owl playwright, Shakespeare, once wrote, ‘Tis better to have loved and lost than never loved at all’.”

“*Loved and lost*,” said Jarvis, “I’ve only known her a few months.”

“Methinks he doth protest too much,” recited Sage wisely.

“*What?*” replied Jarvis and Jay in unison, and they all broke out laughing.

“Exactly how old *are* you, Sage?” said Jarvis through his laughter, ribbing Sage.

After a few minutes of hearty laughter, Jarvis looked serious as he asked, “Sage, can you tell me about the Book of the Dead? This plague is a real mystery, and I can’t figure it out.”

“Sure, man. The Book of the Dead tells about the afterlife. When you die, your spirit enters the underworld, and you go before Osiris. To judge whether you’re a good person, Osiris asks you a riddle. If you answer correctly, you may pass on to join Ra in the heavens. You become a star and experience everlasting life and joy. Every star you see at night is a creature that has passed on and joined Ra in the heavens. If you respond to the riddle incorrectly, you must stay in the underworld until you become a good person and have learned the answer. The book also mentions the Black Death. It says the plague is a form of living death, and the only cure is to find the answer to the riddle of Osiris while on earth.”

“But if you don’t hear the riddle until you die, how can anyone ever find the cure?” asked Jarvis.

“That would be a problem,” replied Sage. “One last thing, guys, I hear that the owls and ducks at The Great Lake are planning to hold a council very soon to try to find some kind of an answer to help deal with this problem.”

# Jarvis the Duck

Kurt Venables

## A Trip

*Jarvis is a young duck that lives on a small pond in The Great Poplar Forest. These are the chronicles of his adventures.*

Jarvis was rushing at a breakneck pace through The Great Poplar Forest towards Jay's nest near the blackberry bush. Jarvis had been visited in *his* nest by The Pond earlier that morning by two of the elder ducks. These two had some small black splotches on their faces and bodies. The splotches were a discoloration of the feathers that went right down to, and included, the skin, which was inflamed and puffy. But they were much better off than most of the other ducks. They had told him about the council at The Great Lake and had asked him if he would please attend.

Jarvis wanted to tell Jay and Sage about the trip to The Great Lake and some other goings on that they had related. Jarvis found Jay pecking the ground for seeds near the blackberry bush.

"Hey," said Jarvis excitedly.

"What's up," said Jay, sensing that something had happened.

"Let's find Sage; I've got something to tell you guys."

It was a short trip to the tall poplar in which Sage's nest perched between two gnarly old branches sprouting off the main trunk near the top. Sage was out on a branch sitting serenely, enjoying the morning sun.

"Sage, I've got something to tell you and Jay," said Jarvis.

Sage flew down to a branch near the ground where Jarvis and Jay were. "S'up guys," he said with a broad smile.

"Sage, ... Jay," said Jarvis, so excited he couldn't decide where to begin.

"Yeah," said Sage, raising his eyebrows.

"Tell us," pleaded Jay.

"I, ... I was visited this morning by two of the elder ducks at The Pond. They, ... they asked me to attend a council at The Great Lake. They told me that the owls and ducks are looking for a party to make a journey to see the great Snowy Owl, Gnosis, the spiritual leader of the Snowy Owls in The Black Forest."

"The Black Forest is far to the north, Jarvis, and Gnosis is one of the oldest and wisest creatures on earth," said Sage.

"They said that the ducks and owls are looking for a few strong individuals that are both healthy and clever. They said the members of the party need to be very clever because the purpose of the journey is ... the purpose is to find the answer to the Riddle of Osiris," Jarvis nearly burst. He added excitedly, "They said that Gnosis stood the best chance of being able to help and that all possible candidates for the party were to attend the council."

"Wow!" said Jay, then after a short pause, "Individuals that are healthy and clever. Well, you are *healthy*."

"Very funny."

“You sure they didn’t say ‘lovely and talented,’ ‘cause you *are* that.”

“Thank you for the compliment, Jay, and might I say that you’re looking particularly radiant this morning as well,” said Jarvis smiling.

“Man, it *is* an honor that you were asked Jarvis,” said Sage seriously. “Whoever is selected will bear a great responsibility.”

“They told me that of the ducks at The Pond, me and one other are being asked to go, ... the other being Angeldown.” Angeldown was also one of the fortunate few at The Pond that showed no signs of the plague. “I don’t know exactly where The Great Lake *is*,” said Jarvis, “To be honest, I’ve never been that far away from The Pond.”

“No worries, man. I’ll take you there, and Angeldown. You’re a cool cat, Jarvis. Any time you need help, I’m there,” said Sage.

“If you guys are going, I’m going too,” said Jay. “You slowpokes ‘ll need someone to run advance scout. There’s all kinds of dangers in the forest.”

“Like black feathered doppelgangers?” replied Jarvis smiling.

“Hey, those are real,” said Jay, crinkling up his eyebrows and drawing them together.

“Then we’ll be happy to have a scout,” replied Jarvis seriously. “I’ll go and see if Angeldown wants to go with us.”

# ***Higher Knowledge: The Enriching & Enabling Factor***

**By Dr. Stewart Bitkoff**

Most people would agree, we all want to live in a kinder, more humane world. A world where there is respect for human life, economic resources are shared, and the old and infirm are treated with dignity. In each of these areas there is room for improvement. Economically, many are still without the basic necessities of life and go hungry. Even in the richest country on earth, often the sick go untreated.

Further most would agree, somehow, as a planet we need to work together to share our natural resources and improve our collective circumstance. It is at this point, when we try to identify and prioritize what areas need improving and how we are to accomplish this all, we start to disagree and things break down.

Rational or linear thought is able to tackle some of these problems, offering possible solutions; however, this form of thought is not able to solve all problems. It has limitations and, in some areas, is like the cart and horse that is without a driver and going around in circles. Generally, for problems which involve the needs of many, there is no balancing factor and the needs of one group bounce unsuccessfully against the needs of others. In situations like this, self-interest repeatedly rears its head and there appears to be no corrective. Many are slow to accept that the needs of the individual are bound to the needs of the many.

What is the corrective to this harmful self-interest? What factor reconciles the needs of different nations while sharing the earth's resources in an ecologically sound manner? The balancing factor is higher knowledge or knowledge that is spiritual in nature and tied to our collective higher destiny. It must be added to the mix and used with our other capacities to find solutions. Higher knowledge will not replace common sense, experience, hard work, or economic imperative. That is not its function. It is an added capacity which integrates and works alongside others.

The mystic maintains humanity is evolving to a higher condition. This evolutionary process is according to Design, and is purposeful and directed. The outcome of this process is better individuals who are more complete and better able to serve others. This higher state of being can only be reached when the integrating factor is added. This is holistic thought or increased spiritual capacity. It is attained one person at a time and only by entering upon a path to spiritual completion. Better people make a better world. More complete people make sounder decisions and are equally concerned about their neighbor and themselves.

All paths are sacred and all people have the potential to reach higher. The higher consciousness teaches we are connected and have within a Divine spark of energy. As we come to understand this and be one with this energy, we experience our connectedness to others and are better able to serve. Spiritually, this oneness links us, and we take positive, holistic, action. Better people select honest, hardworking representatives. These representatives combine to form a useful government that participates in a richer, more complete world.

If we are truly committed to making a better world, we start with ourselves. We seek to make ourselves whole and use all our talents. This includes added spiritual capacity and higher knowledge.

Yes, this planet can be a wonderful place to live. Yet, we must work together and solve our mutual problems. This willingness to work together comes naturally to some and for others only after a personal catastrophe or natural disaster of some kind. For many problems facing us, this coming together of people is essential. We are one family and must remember our common heritage, or in time our planet may be lost.

Added, individual spiritual capacity and higher knowledge is the missing ingredient and enabling factor. Each of us must take personal steps to add this element to our lives and fully embrace the higher potential taught in all the great religions. Then, the needs of the many will more easily reconcile with the needs of the few.

\* \* \*

Once there was a man who traveled the highway in search of Truth. He stopped at every town and inquired. Sometimes, the answers he received appeared to be useful and at other times, they did not. Always the advice he received was targeted at his worldly life: get a job, marry and have children. Or don't work, live in a monastery and become a recluse.

Somehow, these pieces of advice did not satisfy him, so, he kept searching. One day as luck would have it, he encountered a wise man who said, "The answer lies within." So for many years, this traveler with the help of the wise one examined the inner world and came to see these experiences as part of the answer.

Slowly, he realized, what good is spiritual knowledge if it is not incorporated into the world? So he settled down, found a job, married and raised a family. As he worked, celebrated and worried, he came to see a truly spiritual life is a life that serves others and is guided by the unseen forces. And according to Design, he found real knowledge, used this knowledge in the way it was intended and the world about him benefited.

For more, see: [www.thedeeganproject.com](http://www.thedeeganproject.com)

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# Deciding Peace

Robert A. Kezer

Peace, whether in our homes or on our planet, is a product of choice - an environment conditioned by those present. It cannot be forced, imposed, or expected to flourish before its time: thinking so confuses the law of cause and effect. Whatever is used to bring about a new social order remains a part of us.

The idea of global peace is so big that many people are unsure how to approach the subject. As only one out of almost 6.5 billion, few think they can participate or that their leaders can effect change. But while difficult to discern in the chaos of today's world, the responsibility for our planet does reside with the individual.

Reducing scale helps: we know the energy in a home reflects the people living there. If everyone has matured to where their lives are dominated by the divine traits of love, such as empathy, patience, compassion, forgiveness, and good will, then peace will prevail. How could it not? Violence is no longer an option.

These people base their decisions in love, not fear. Rather than an endpoint, this maturity becomes our baseline – the minimum level of conduct needed to support our next evolutionary state. Peace flourishing in this environment does not happen from duty, rules, or treaties, but is rather the natural result of a higher order of being.

Should people still grounded in the human constructs of fear, such as hate, anger, revenge, selfishness, and intolerance enter into this family, the energy in the home becomes tainted: no longer is it all love. Violence now becomes possible: as the ratio of fear to love increases, it becomes more probable.

Spiritual or ethical progress requires a willingness to grow: it cannot be forced. Attempting to do so fuels anger, violates free choice of will, and negates the attractiveness of love: the cycle is maintained. Feeding upon itself, fear will eventually consume all who allow it to remain in their minds.

While only love generates more than it takes, it must be extended first. People must experience love - both the giving and the receiving - before they will choose it over fear. This is a dynamic process: one of intention. Those who decide to embrace it will bond together in strength; those who do not will fall apart divided.

Moving forward in crisis, the middle ground will shrink. People based in love will strengthen: their growth, now and later, is endless - they are universal reality. Those remaining embroiled in fear will harden even further, becoming ever more desperate in their attempts to survive: for them, there is no future - they are unreal to the universe.

As each side becomes more defined, those coming of age will better see their options. For them the choice will be to continue the legacy of fear, or to embrace the healing

effects of love. While many are engulfed by war, few in truth want it: eventually love will prevail, tipping the scale in our favor and giving peace its first true chance.

But while this is possible, it is not ordained. To abolish war, we must evolve - person by person until our race finds footing at its next level of consciousness. Procrastination retards progress: action must replace intent. This is our world, we each have responsibility, and every decision counts: how do you choose?

Bob is the author of *God Refined: A Proposal for Peace* (ISBN: 978-0-6151-3810-7) available at <http://stores.lulu.com/bobkezer>.  
Robert A. Kezer

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# Poems

**Dr. Stewart Bitkoff**

And he went into the desert to find the answers.  
He looked into the sky and began to ask,  
And the days passed.

When no answers came  
He looked across the land and asked again,  
And the days passed.

When he realized the desert could not answer,  
Tears from the heart began to fill his eyes.  
And the tears fell like spring rain  
Forming a small pool at his feet.  
And he looked into the water  
And watched the sands drink of his suffering.

Then, the answers came.

\* \* \*

## *The Child*

And so they came  
To see the child.  
The miracle had occurred  
And they were drawn  
To share in the beginning.  
Bearing gifts they came,  
Singing praise to their King.

This child was born  
To dance among humanity  
And turn heads upward in remembrance.  
And with His breath  
This life began  
And in each heart  
A candle is waiting.

This child was born  
To carry the flame.

\* \* \*

And he shall walk among us again.  
His presence  
Shall sing of breezes from mountain streams  
Touching hearts with a loving caress.

All men shall bow before his majesty  
And ask forgiveness for their fears.  
He shall awaken a realization, never known,  
Of the Father's Mercy.

Men shall weep in their fellows.  
Nations that were parted shall be joined.  
And all men shall be One  
With the Father.

\* \* \*

Religion may be compared  
To a great river that feeds the land.  
The river winds its way as a mighty force  
And smaller tributaries are formed  
To serve the distant regions.  
Some are satisfied  
To drink of the small stream  
And forget they must travel  
The river to its Source.

Beyond the river's gate,  
The Ocean is waiting.

# *The Rose*

**Kurt Venables**

A thousand beams of celestial light  
Rain through sparse clouds of pearly white  
A thousand dreams the rays delight  
Upon a bud, each will alight

A budding grain of gnosis glows  
And though it struggles through its throes  
Left in the rain, it sprouts and grows  
Until the heart becomes a rose