

The magazine Vidya, <http://www.theosophysb.org/site/publications.html>, edited by associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists in Santa Barbara, USA, published in its winter 2013 issue the following article. It deals aptly with the subject of leadership and is germane to all Theosophical traditions. Hopefully this fine piece is a first start leading to a worthy dialogue.

Send your reaction to: siteowner@theosophyforward.com

THEOSOPHICAL LEADERSHIP

Challenges to and changes in leadership are a very pronounced part of current news. Whether by secret conclaves, elaborate protocols, election upsets or violent coups, new leaders are presented to the world community in a dizzying and dramatic proof that we live in turbulent times when no leader can assume that his or her position is secure. Although ambition for power and wealth may motivate those who seek leadership positions, one cannot but sense that deeper currents of karmic justice are at work in magnifying the failures of contemporary leadership and stirring the enormous protests glimpsed on the nightly news. Not even the most venerated authority of religious institutions or popular monarchies are escaping the turmoil of dissent. As the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats observed, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." What is the problem? Why is respect for leaders and their power dissolving? Why are even the best and well-intentioned leaders failing to gain support and cooperation? Why won't the center hold?

What are the qualities of effective leadership? Some ideas easily come to mind.

A leader is one who initiates actions and shows a way for others to follow. A leader can articulate and connect some sort of vision or sense of a purpose to practical needs in a particular situation. A leader has courage and a willingness to take risks. A leader perseveres and finds a way to overcome hindrances to a chosen path of action. A leader shows a compassion that inspires others to rise above the fears and divisions that inhibit cooperation and to do their best.

We can recognize and be inspired by historical leaders as well as those in more visible, contemporary affairs, but the question is: What is the difference