

# Our True Home

*Linda Bahan:* Recently Bill and I watched one of our favorite movies, *Lost Horizon*. Perhaps you have seen it, maybe many years ago. To set the stage for our consideration, I am going to read a synopsis of the movie based on the original 1937 version directed by Frank Capra.

The main character in the movie is Robert Conway, a British diplomat, author and celebrated soldier who is soon to become England's next Foreign Secretary. The movie begins in 1935 with Conway helping to evacuate people by planes from Baskul, China where a revolution has broken out. Conway, his brother George and three others barely escape on the last flight out. However, without knowing it, their plane is hijacked when the pilot is swapped out before takeoff, and after a long journey, makes a crash landing on a mountain in Tibet. With the pilot dead, the group is worried about their chances of surviving, but soon thereafter, a Tibetan monk, or lama, named Chang arrives with porters and takes them to Shangri-La; a mysterious valley paradise that is sheltered from the harsh elements of the Himalayas by mountains on all sides.

That evening, Chang tells the group that Shangri-La was founded in 1713 by a Belgian priest named Father Perrault. He also explains that the community has no communication with the outside world except for a group of porters, five hundred miles away, who visit infrequently. Conway feels right at home but the others are anxious and demand to know when they can go home. Chang takes Conway to see the High Lama to inquire about the group's concerns of getting home. Conway soon realizes that the High Lama is Father Perrault, now over two hundred years old. He is deeply inspired by the High Lama's description of Shangri-La's mission of spreading peace and brotherly love.

The next day, while walking in the valley, Conway meets Sondra, a beautiful young woman who lives in Shangri-La. She tells Conway that it was her idea to have him brought there, with the High Lama's consent, because she felt he belonged there, after reading his books filled with the same idealistic principles on which Shangri-La is based.

As the weeks pass, the group happily fits into the community except for George who wants to leave, along with a lovely young woman named Maria with whom he has become friends. Conway learns from Chang that Maria is actually a very elderly woman and that she will lose her youthful vigor and appearance if she ever leaves Shangri-La. Conway doesn't know what to do about his brother's insistence on leaving and visits the High Lama once again for guidance. During the visit the High Lama tells Conway that George is now his

responsibility and just before he dies, he places the future and destiny of Shangri-La in Conway's hands. Although Conway wants to stay in Shangri-La, George tells him that Maria has bribed the porters to escort them down the mountain and they want him to come with them to ensure their safety. Conway is very reluctant but finally relents and leaves Shangri-La with them. Sondra can only watch in despair as the three of them venture out into the bitterly cold and treacherous conditions of the Himalayas.

As their arduous journey through the snow progresses, the porters leave Conway, George and Maria further and further behind, and even fire gun shots in their general direction. The porters' cruelty backfires, however, when their gunfire starts an avalanche that buries them. The trio pushes on until, far outside Shangri-La, Maria reverts to her actual age and dies. George, on the verge of madness after seeing Maria's shocking transformation, plunges off a cliff to his death, but Conway labors on by himself down the mountain, eventually reaching a village where he receives medical attention.

Prime Minister of England sends Lord Gainsford to China to escort Conway, who is suffering from amnesia, back to England. While on the ship Conway regains his memory and escapes by jumping overboard to begin making the dangerous journey back to Shangri-La. After ten months of searching for Conway, Gainsford gives up the chase and returns to London. He tells his friends about Conway's amazing adventures as he attempted to find his lost horizon. Meanwhile, Conway climbs the mountains and after making several attempts he finds the pass to Shangri-La, where he will rejoin Sondra and carry out the mission he received from the High Lama.

**Bill Bahan:** This is a remarkable story with a depth of meaning. Shangri-La is a beautiful depiction of the true state of man on earth where the sweet essences of heaven are present by reason of those who dwell there. This paradise in the Himalayas may remind us of the fact that when man was first created, he was placed in a garden to dress it and to keep it. There is indication that man, men and women, lived in this garden state for a long period of time but when he chose to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the fall of man ensued and he was driven out of the garden through his own actions. Man's consciousness fell from heaven into the earth and the garden state disappeared from his awareness. The title of the movie, *Lost Horizon*, suggests the loss of something that is still available to be experienced.

It's very interesting to see how the five people who were brought to Shangri-La responded to that new setting. Conway felt right at home. He immediately sensed the heavenly essences of Shangri-La. The others, with the exception of George, found ways in which they

could offer their talents to the community and began to feel a sense of belonging. George didn't relax for a moment and was never able to appreciate the peaceful setting of Shangri-La. It completely escaped his awareness. His only concern was to get back home to his familiar life in England. We see how the things of heaven can only be perceived when there is a still mind and an open heart.

By worldly standards Conway was a very successful man and greatly revered by his country but Sondra told him that when she read his books, she saw a man whose life was empty. He acknowledged that there had been a great void in his life. However, in the serene atmosphere of Shangri-La he remembered what really matters in life and felt the void within himself being filled.

Conway told Sondra that he had the feeling he'd been to Shangri-La before and that he belonged there. Everything seemed so familiar. Sondra told him that perhaps he'd always been part of Shangri-La without knowing it. She felt there was a longing for Shangri-La in everyone's heart and wished the whole world could come there, but Conway told her that it wouldn't be Shangri-La for very long. There is a great longing in many people for the true experience of home and we see the need for those who can provide the essential atmosphere of home for others.

There's a common misconception in the world that Shangri-La would be a place where everything is exactly the way a person would like them to be. However, we know that Shangri-La is not a geographical location but a place in consciousness that one may carry with them wherever they go. Those who have the Shangri-La consciousness are always living in Shangri-La no matter where they are or what the circumstances may be. This community was in the mountains, which, as we know, represents a higher state of consciousness where there is a perception of spiritual things.

After being lured away from the community, Conway developed amnesia and completely lost his awareness of Shangri-La. Fortunately he regained his memory and eventually found his way back. Nothing was going to stop him from returning to the place where he knew he belonged. Many of us at one time or another may have been lured away from our place of centering, our Shangri-La, which produced a temporary state of amnesia. In other words, we may have forgotten who we are and why we're here. There is a great need for those who cannot be lured away for any reason so that there is always a stable core of individuals who are awake in heaven. We've been given the mission of conveying the essences of heaven into the world.

Here are some words the High Lama spoke to Conway: "Look at the world today! Is there anything more pitiful? What madness there is, what blindness, what unintelligent

leadership! A scurrying mass of bewildered humanity crashing headlong against each other, propelled by an orgy of greed and brutality. The time must come, my friend, when this orgy will spend itself, when brutality and the lust for power must perish by its own sword. Against that time is why I avoided death and am here, and why you were brought here. For when that day comes, the world must begin to look for a new life. And it is our hope that they may find it here. For here we shall be with a way of life based on one simple rule: BE KIND. When that day comes, it is our hope that the brotherly love of Shangri-La will spread throughout the world.”

As the High Lama described, we observe the world of self-active man coming apart at the seams. However, concurrently, we are also aware that there is an awakening occurring in many people. We each have a part to play in welcoming people home and providing a living example of a new state on earth. This was the purpose of Shangri-La and this is our purpose now.

*Larry Krantz: Lost Horizon* is a story—a book and a movie. Stories are useful; we can live other lives through them; we can learn from them. The Master told simple stories to convey a sense of what living in Heaven on earth is like. Our days are filled with stories. Each moment, we write something in the Book of Life. Many stories are not pleasing to the ear of God, for they do not reveal his spirit, his nobility of character, but are often tragedies, tales of human suffering and ignorance.

Not all stories are epic tales. Let me share some small personal examples. I feel wonder at how tomatoes grow in my little garden, the round redness of them and their juicy taste. I marvel at the way light plays on the leaves of a towering ash tree behind our house. These are vignettes that seem insignificant, but to me they convey a sense of connection to the creation, and of the magic of simple things. Recently, I went to our local bagel shop; behind the counter was a very large young man, at least six-foot-seven. I felt a connection with him and wondered what it was like living in such a large physical form, how he must duck his head every time he goes through a doorway and the challenge of fitting into a car designed for smaller people. It was not just idle curiosity, but a sense of oneness, a vibrational reaching out. Next, I went to Starbucks, where a young woman served my drink. She was shy and hunched over, never looking up. I felt empathy for her, for she is part of me. I told her how tasty the cappuccino was and thanked her for doing such an excellent job. People in retail often deal with complaints, so a compliment and bit of kindness stands out. Her face lit up and she smiled and thanked me. These are small stories. Our lives are filled with them. Each moment, each

interaction is important and filled with treasures, if we have eyes to see them, and extend a bit of Shangri-La.

We engage with our worlds all the time. Are we aware of spirit moving through us, and the effect it has beyond ourselves? In true identity, we are islands of peace, of Shangri-La, and bless all that we see and touch. At the beginning of the *Lost Horizon* movie, a notice proclaimed, “In these days of wars and rumors of wars, haven’t you ever dreamed of a place where there was peace and security, where living was not a struggle but a lasting delight. Of course you have. So has every man since time began. Always the same dream. Sometimes he calls it utopia, sometimes the fountain of youth.”

We could add names like Paradise or Nirvana, as well as Heaven. This film is poignant because it touches on the longing in people’s hearts for true home, a place of peace and eternal ease, where everything fits and makes sense. It calls to our remembrance that heaven may be known while on earth. It is, as Bill said, a place in consciousness, but may also be reflected as a physical place on earth—heaven revealed in form—for the earth is molded from what is in consciousness, heaven or hell.

The true state, available now, is where oneness is known. We are connected to all things. With people, I am reminded of the quantum-physics term: *entanglement*. This is when two particles are connected in such a way that a change in one produces a change in the other, regardless of the distance between them. Einstein called it, “Spooky action at a distance.” This kind of magic binds people. We seem to be separate, yet we are one body of humankind. Any change in one person effects everyone else. We are entangled, so what we do, how we live, matters, and influences everyone else. Even if a person were to live in a cave, he would still be connected with everyone else invisibly. Cords of connection may be stronger between certain people, perhaps based on a similar vibration, or weaker, as the case might be, but there is always a connection with others.

What kind of influence do we have? Is it uplifting and inspiring, or do we send over the invisible wires petty complaints and disgruntlement over our apparent misfortunes? The Master lived in a consciousness of Shangri-La, and called it the Kingdom of Heaven. He extended an invitation for everyone to join him there, to know oneness with each other and with God. He never said it was a difficult place to access or could only be known after death. No, he emphasized that the heavenly state was at hand—and that’s pretty close. When we choose to live in that place of kindness and peace, there is synchronicity, the right frequency, a vibrational alignment with the inner realm. Transcendent awareness comes into view—a heavenly experience. The state of Shangri-La is always available. It does not need to be invented or manufactured; it already is. We need only to connect with it.

As we live in a place set apart from the chaos and ignorance of the world, we are living reminders of true home. It matters not that beyond us is turmoil and stupidity, for we know we have a divine purpose and are part of a grand design. Some people get involved in judgment of the nefarious deeds in the world, blaming the other political party or the pharmaceutical or banking community, finding some entity to rail against. It is tempting to delve into the details of the perfidy in the world, of which there is plenty, and then feel smug about what we think we know, but it is all a distraction, an energy drain, for none of it really matters. The human condition is a mirage and nit-picking any part of the mirage only strengthens the delusion. It accomplishes nothing.

I find the more I know, the less I need to know. Life is not all that complicated. What we need will be available when we need it, as long as we are open and trust spirit. We may be—in a sense—as little children, innocent of preconceptions about what we think we need to know. With ease and inner stillness, we find the world is a wondrous place, full of miracles. In that state of mature innocence, we see more clearly what is going on in the world, for we are not blinded by smoke and mirrors.

Shangri-La is at hand, available now, our true home, a place of peace and ease. The table is set; we need only take our place. Those, like Conway, who sense a larger purpose in their lives, recognize true home, the answer to their longing. Others, like his brother George, are so caught up in the machinations of the world, they miss the beauty and wonder right in front of them—and that leads to disaster. Let us stand in the place of sacred stillness that we may be lights shining into the darkness of the humanly-devised world.

In the movie, there was a stark contrast from the chaos and murderous intent of the revolution they escaped by airplane and the serene setting of Shangri-La. It presented a choice between madness and danger, between sanity and beauty. What do we choose? Do our lives inspire others to come home, to know this place of sacred dwelling? Let us be examples of living in heaven, in Shangri-La, while on earth.

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**Pre-Service Music***1. Iskim*

Tanya Ekanayaka

*2. Psychogeography*

Max Richter, Mari Samuelsen, Ian Burdge & Robert Ziegler

*3. Asha*

AO Music

**Concluding Music***Don't Worry, Be Happy*

Bobby McFerrin