

Biographical Notes on the life of Leo Tolstoy (by Firouzeh Mostashari)

Count Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, was born on August 28, 1828, to an old Russian aristocratic family dating itself to the times of the legendary Prince Rurik. His family lived on his mother's ancestral estate, Yasnaya Polyana, situated some 130 miles south of the ancient capital Moscow. Related to the Volkonsky's from his mother Princess Maria's side and to the Tolstoy's and Gorchakov's on his father's Nikolai's side, Tolstoy belonged to the inner most circles of privilege and status within the Russian empire. It was this aristocratic milieu that was the subject of his literary writings until his mid-life transformation

The loss of his mother before the age of two, remained one of the most troubling sensations of his adult life, and when Tolstoy at the age of twenty three wrote his first novel, *Childhood*, the theme of Mother provided the unifying thread of the work.ⁱ The idealized image of a mother he never knew and had not even seen in a photograph (nothing but a vague etching had survived, providing only a shadow of a profile) remained with Tolstoy throughout his life, and even as an old man, he periodically ached for the gentle comforting hand of a mother to assuage his pain. The self-sacrificing, morally developed and kind mother, provided the prototype of female perfection in Tolstoy's subsequent novels (Princess Mary Bolkonsky, in *War and Peace*, was certainly patterned on Tolstoy's mother). Before his crisis, Tolstoy had considered the highest attainment of life to have been summarized in family happiness, a theme demonstrated by the Kitty-Levin marriage in *Anna Karenina* and the Peter-Natasha marriage in *War and Peace*. And yet, the buddings of a wider social consciousness had always been present in Leo Tolstoy, ever since he had been a child.

Tolstoy, his three older brothers and his younger sister were raised by their father, grandmother and two aunts, along with a host of tutors and house servants and serfs. These early years at the family estate, Yasnaya Polyana, formed some of the most lasting memories of Tolstoy's life. Tolstoy relates his imaginary games which he had played with his brothers in the woods:

“So it happened that when I was five, Dimitri six and Serezha seven, he announced that he had a secret by means of which, when he would reveal it, all people on earth would be made happy; there would be no sickness, no unpleasantness, no one would be angry at anyone else, and everybody would love one another-they would all become *Muravian* Brethren (I imagine they were supposed to be Moravian Brethren about whom we had read or heard tell, but we called them Muravian Brethren)...¹ We knew of the Muravian Brethren but their principle secret of what to do so that nobody would have any more unhappiness, nor even quarrel, and always be happy- that was inscribed on a stick, and this stick was buried near the rim of the ravine in the old Zakaz Forest, in the very place where, since my body must be buried somewhere, I have asked in memory of Nikolenka that I be laid to rest.”ⁱⁱ

Indeed the ideal of the Muravian Brethren, “bound to each other by love” always remained with Tolstoy, whose desire to be buried where the secret green stick of his childhood was placed, was eventually honored by his family. The ideals of a Christian brotherly love, a society devoid of violence and suffering, and a rural setting for this blissful community, were part of Tolstoy's childhood daydreams, dreams which he would carry into adulthood.

¹ This suggests the Russian *muravi* or ants.

By the age of nine, with the death of his father, Tolstoy had become orphaned, and although raised by his aunts, was left without a true mentor. He searched in the world of letters and philosophy for a guide and in his readings was captured by the bold and free style of Jean- Jacques Rousseau. In Rousseau he found an echo of his old childhood desires. Writing to the Rousseau society, when he was over 77 years old, Tolstoy admitted: “Rousseau was my teacher from the time I was fifteen. There were two great and beneficent influences in my life: Rousseau and the Gospels. Rousseau does not age.”ⁱⁱⁱ

It was under Rousseau’s influence that he yearned to live the simple and “primitive” life of the peasant, an idea which he was not to abandon until the very end of his days. It was also under Rousseau’s influence that he renounced high society and found comfort in the solitude of the countryside. Similar to Rousseau, Tolstoy idealized the peasants and pastoral life. He found the peasants, more than any other social group, capable of attaining moral perfection, since they lived a natural life, unlike the artist, who in Tolstoy’s opinion was unknown to the people and contributed nothing to their lives.^{iv} The desire for living a more natural life, eventually led him to abandon his university studies in Law at Kazan University and to settle in his inherited estate, Yasnaya Polyana.

Tolstoy’s diaries in these years show an individual engaged in a fierce battle with himself, and often vanquished by his weaknesses. The diaries, which he began meticulously recording since the age of 19, are a valuable source for discerning Tolstoy’s thought process and formative influences. He tells us what he has been reading, thinking, eating, saying...From early on, we detect a truly creative and non-conformist mind in

action. For example, when he read Catherine the Great's *Instructions*, one of the most celebrated documents of the Enlightenment, understanding its internal contradictions, he saw the document in its naked reality; an attempt to transplant Montesquieu's republican ideas to Russia in order to justify despotism.^v Quite a feat for a young man of 19!

In the diaries we also see Tolstoy's attempt to attain moral and physical perfection. Throughout his life, Tolstoy was a believer in the mind-body connection and rigorously pursued sports, especially riding and gymnastics (he even learned to ride a bike in old age!). In addition, he regularly set up rules of conduct for himself (which he incidentally broke and repentant, castigated himself in the diaries). The rules were inadvertently simplistic: "All feelings originating from love towards others, are good. All feelings originating in love of self are idiotic."^{vi} The young Tolstoy even proceeded to categorize the types of feeling that would fall under the heading of self-love (careerism, love of fame, passionate love). He then proceeded to draw up rules that would help him "defeat" narcissism. "Always seek in others their good traits. Always speak the truth..."^{vii}

Interspersed with the high-minded notes were also self-flagellating notes to himself, when he had given in to gamble, drink, women, and an altogether pleasure-seeking life style. In Tolstoy a vibrant life-force and a penchant for stoicism were waging a battle which remained indecisive to his old age. Writing to his aunt, he described his state of mind: "I went among the common people in the gypsies' tents.² You can easily imagine the struggle that I waged there with myself, for and against; but I emerged victorious- that is, having given nothing more than my blessing to the joyous

² Tolstoy had a love for gypsy songs, drinking, and merry making with the gypsies. Often this resulted in drunken orgies with the gypsy beauties.

descendants of the pharaohs.”^{viii} In fact his diaries are replete with alternating good days, when he had resisted the urge to visit the gypsies and “bad days” where he admitted to “living like a beast.”^{ix}

Aside from his metaphoric internal battles, young Tolstoy also had the opportunity to observe war first hand and to participate in the adventures which he would later question as a mature adult. His first opportunity to partake in war dates to May of 1851, when as a young man of twenty three, he accompanied his older brother Nicholas, an army officer, to the Caucasus, where the Russians were waging a battle against the native mountain tribes of Chechnia and Daghestan. Tolstoy had obtained permission to accompany the regiment as a volunteer, in their raiding operation against the mountaineers. His observations are recorded in his story “the raid” as well as in his memoirs. By and large, Tolstoy, took the patriotic position in his early years, as a participant in Russia’s empire-building efforts. In his story “A Prisoner of the Caucasus,” written in 1870, and drawing from his experiences in the region, Tolstoy draws a characteristic portrait of the Russian captive soldier as a brave, feeling, hero, and the reader is made to cheer on the protagonist in his attempts to escape incarceration. The Caucasians are portrayed as incompetent, brute savages, all except the little sweet girl, Dina, who had helped the hero make his exit to the warm embrace of the Russian side.

Beginning from the great Russian lyrical poet Alexander Pushkin and the novelist Mikhail Lermontov, Russian literary world and the public alike had been fascinated with the Caucasus, its nature and its “warlike” peoples. Tolstoy had entered the Caucasus with

great expectations of being dazzled with its majestic nature and the excitement of a real battle. His stay in the Caucasus, however, was marked by boredom and disappointment. In his diaries he laments that he has “not one remembrance, not one strong impression,” and that his days were passing by idly and insignificantly.^x

And yet it was in the Caucasus, where Tolstoy spent over two years among nature, the Cossacks and the native Chechens, that Tolstoy first seriously tried his hand at writing. The resulting novel, *Childhood*, would subsequently be published by the serious literary journal *Sovremenik* (contemporary) and almost overnight Tolstoy would be hurled into the ranks of the Russian writers, and declaimed as one of the most talented of authors. Writing to his aunt, Tolstoy acknowledged the transformation: “Do you remember, dear Auntie, the advice you once gave me, to write novels? Well, I am following it and the occupation I write you about is literary. I do not know whether what I write will ever be printed but it is a piece of work which absorbs me and in which I have progressed too far now to stop.”^{xi}

However Tolstoy was to experience more of military life, before he could exclusively devote himself to writing. On October 20, 1853, Tsar Nicholas I declared war on Ottoman Turkey, and several months later, in March, responding to a patriotic fervor, Tolstoy enlisted in the army once more. Partaking in the Crimean War and the defense of Sevastopol was critical in Tolstoy’s moral and religious development. Tolstoy experienced war first hand. He even conveyed this taste vicariously to the readers of *Sevastopol Tales*, and it is said that the Tsarina Alexandra Fyodorovna wept as she read about the plight of the dying soldiers.^{xii} In Tolstoy’s early war stories, the common Russian people were the true heroes and the stories were written in a clearly patriotic mood. Tolstoy, therefore, did not condemn war in general; he condemned

the inept handling of the war effort by incompetent Russian generals. In fact he has been credited with authoring mocking soldiers' songs poking fun at the commanders. However, in his more somber writings and especially in his diary, Tolstoy decried the fate of the under-prepared Russian peasant serf soldier and the entire imperial system that had brought about their tragic end. Here we have a foretaste of his activist writings later in life: "My conscience and sense of justice forbid me to keep silent in the face of evil being openly perpetuated before me, causing the deaths of millions and sapping our strength and undermining our country's honor... We have no army, we have a horde of slaves cowed by discipline, ordered about by thieves and slave traders."^{xiii} As Simmons, Tolstoy's biographer has commented, "his experiences at Sevastopol dated the end of his career as a militarist and the beginning of that of a pacifist."^{xiv}

Under fire and grateful for being alive, Tolstoy pondered his relationship to God and man. It was in Sevastopol that he came upon the idea that was going to eventually change his life, when it had germinated into a mature system of thought. He wrote in his diary that he had a "grandiose, stupendous" idea. "I feel capable of devoting my life to it. It is the founding of a new religion, suited to the present state of mankind: the religion of Christ, but divested of faith and mysteries, a practical religion, not promising eternal bliss but providing bliss here on earth."^{xv} Decades later he would author *The Kingdom of Heaven is Within You*, a work that was to have a seminal influence on the non-violence movement and on the thoughts of the young Gandhi in particular.^{xvi}

Tolstoy's pacifist ideas, which came to maturation later in his life, were in part a reaction to the experiences of his youth. Having experienced war first-hand, he found it difficult to romanticize violence. Furthermore, in his first European visit in 1857, he had

witnessed a guillotining in Paris, and the impact was so dramatic that it turned him against all government, which he viewed as a source of organized evil and brought him close to anarchist position. Of the guillotining he wrote: “ A strong impression that will leave its mark. I am not a political man....Human law is nonsense! The truth is that government is a conspiracy not only to exploit, but mainly to corrupt citizens....I will never serve *any* government anywhere.”³

The years following Russia’s defeat in the Crimean War were filled with soul-searching and humiliation for Russia’s intellectual and political elite. As Tolstoy had also reasoned, linking the “slave” status of the serf soldiers to the ineptitude of the Russian army, serfdom had outlived its usefulness in Imperial Russia and was widely recognized as a moribund social and economic system. With the death of Nicholas I in the midst of the War and the assumption of the throne by his liberal son Alexander II, all hopes rested on the new tsar to modernize and salvage Russia. And abolishing serfdom was an utmost priority.

Tolstoy wholeheartedly supported Alexander’s plan to abolish serfdom from above and returning to Yasnaya Polyana, gathered his peasant serfs, offering them their liberation, only to be met with skepticism and mistrust. Realizing that his gambling debts precluded granting the peasants the land outright, Tolstoy instead made them the generous offer of giving each adult one acre for free and an additional ten acres at minimal cost, to be paid over thirty years. This offer was substantially better than that which the government was to work out after the emancipation proclamation of 1861. The peasants refused Tolstoy’s offer suspecting trickery, believing that they were to eventually be granted the land *gratis*.^{xvii}

³ Donna Orwin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Tolstoy*, (Cambridge: 2002), p. 6.

Tolstoy did not lose heart and continued with his efforts to improve peasant life, a goal that remained dear to him to his last days. Tolstoy became a pioneer of peasant education and in the fall of 1859 set up a school on his estate for the serf children. The school was experimental and based on principles of free education. Eschewing traditional teaching techniques, Tolstoy wrote his own text book of ABCs (*Azbuka*) and children stories. The students could arrive and leave as they pleased and were not disciplined or given homework. Tolstoy's informal method was extremely popular and within three years, he had established twelve additional schools in the surrounding villages. In July of 1860, Tolstoy set off for Europe for the second and last time, in order to study the latest pedagogical methods in fashion. His experiments with school teaching were to be continued in the 1870s and the 1890s.^{xviii}

In the early 1860's, Tolstoy who considered teaching to be a form of art, gave his attention to educational matters, culminating in the publication of his magazine *Yasnaya Polyana*. The Ministry of Interior soon thereafter saw the subversive potentials of Tolstoy's educational theories. Commenting on the articles in *Yasnaya Polyana*, the tsarist secret police reported that Tolstoy, "very often attacks the fundamental rules of religion and morality."^{xix} Tolstoy's writings were the precursor to the beliefs of the Russian populists, that the intellectuals must learn from the peasants. To this Tolstoy would add that we must learn from children in particular, because they are inherently free in their thoughts.

In his article "Are the peasant Children to Learn to Write from Us, or Are We to Learn from the Peasant Children?," Tolstoy idealizes the creative potentials of the peasant children and resolutely decides that they have little to learn from him. "It seemed

strange to me,” he wrote “ that a half-literate peasant boy should suddenly arrive at such conscious artistic powers-powers that Goethe, for all his immeasurable achievements, was unable to equal.”^{xx} Not only Goethe, but he also saw himself as falling short of the creative powers of eleven year old Fedka or Semka, his favorite peasant students.

Even though the school kept Tolstoy fairly busy, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Tolstoy to live alone. It was not until the fall of 1858, that Tolstoy experienced the full impact of a serious romance, this time with a married serf woman on his estate, Aksinia Bazikina. Their relationship lasted four years and resulted in the birth of Tolstoy’s first son, Timothy (Timofei). Tolstoy never publicly admitted paternity of Timothy but the likeness of the father and the son, left little doubt as to the connection which was a well known fact within the family.

What we do know about Aksinya, we have mostly learned from Tolstoy and his family members, as Aksinya was most likely illiterate. The stories “An Idyll,” “Tikhon and Malanya,” and “The Devil,” all provide literary portraits of this intriguing woman who Tolstoy could not forget until old age. In addition to Tolstoy’s fiction, his diary also gives us clues as to the nature of their relationship, which was far from casual. We know that Aksinya was from another village and had against her will been married off into a relatively well-to-do peasant family on the Tolstoy estates; that her husband was often away working in a far off town, leaving her alone for months on end; that she had only one child, her son with Tolstoy. We know that she was religious and that she lived on the estate until old age. But above all, we know that she had a deliriously life-affirming character that was very alluring to Tolstoy, who had once admitted feeling husbandly in

relations to her.

Before meeting Aksinya, Tolstoy had almost been engaged to a neighboring landlord's daughter, and by the summer of 1862, as his passion for Aksinya cooled, he felt ready to be married and saw a happy marriage as the highest of ideals to be realized in one's lifetime. This theme of happiness in marriage was repeatedly visited in Tolstoy's earlier writings, particularly the story "Family Happiness" as well as in his later novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* (the example of the Levin and Kitty couple). Sadly, in later life, the theme of anti-marriage replaced marital happiness in Tolstoy's writings and reached a high-point in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, when Tolstoy's own marriage had gone sour.

In the preceding year, Tolstoy had been a constant visitor to the house of Andrei Behrs, a Moscow court doctor, whose wife Lyobov, had been a childhood friend of Tolstoy. The Behrs' had three attractive teenage daughters, and Tolstoy, although he flirted with the idea of marrying the oldest and most intellectual of the three, Lisa, eventually married Sonya, the middle sister, who was the most attractive and sentimental of the sisters. The Behrs household was represented in *War and Peace* as the Rostov household and was a place of much gaiety and affection. Known as *le comte* in the Behrs family, Tolstoy, who had already made a name as a writer, was seen as a very desirable match for the girls and Lisa in particular. When Tolstoy made his intentions known to Sonya, in a dramatic scene also portrayed in *Anna Karenina*, where the lovers trace the first letters of words on a card table, declaring their intentions in coded language, the Behrs family was shaken.^{xxi}

The marriage of Leo and Sonya took place shortly thereafter and herein began one

of the most publicly recorded marriages of all times. From the heights of passion to the depths of loathing and despair, their every emotion was recorded in diaries, that were to be published posthumously. Their diary wars were legendary- each was allowed to read the other's diary and retaliate in their own. Posterity itself was the judge. Historians and critics alike felt obliged to comment on and even take sides in this most famous of marital rivalries. However the first half of this nearly fifty-year union, was relatively peaceful and extremely fruitful. Tolstoy's family grew larger with every passing year and his epic novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, were a product of these stable years, the pre-crisis years

Although Tolstoy was to later proclaim his most well-known works as frivolous and undemonstrative of the deal of "good Christian art," as espoused in *What is Art?*, critics and public have long lauded the depth and worthiness of these masterful works. Isaiah Berlin, goes so far as endowing Tolstoy with a philosophy of history, one that contrasts the everyday life of individuals with the artificial constructs of historians.^{xxii} In the final analysis, Tolstoy seems to say that the unconscious individual has the power to change events, that history is made by the sum of the multitudes, and that even the Napoleons were deluded into believing that they had history under their control. This was nothing less than a "disposing of the heroic theory of history."^{xxiii}

War and Peace was in fact much more than pure fiction. Tolstoy himself believed that it was an epic tale, one based on the meeting of the individual and history. It is in the pages of this monumental work that Tolstoy presents his precocious philosophy of history, one that we can today recognize as the precursor of social history and *Alltagsgeschichte*, or

“everyday history.” Inspired by the historicist trends of the late nineteenth century, Tolstoy focused on the investigating of human nature in the world of the past. No individual, real or fictitious was too insignificant in their historical impact.⁴

War and Peace came to represent Russia’s national literature and is today part of the cannon of world literature. The depictions of the lives of the Russian nobility were far from voyeuristic in Tolstoy, they were part of an integral whole. And yet, Tolstoy, with dramatic flourish, renounced his own art, including *War and Peace*. as his spiritual and religious crisis unfolded. The year 1880 was a critical year in Tolstoy’s personal development. It is at this time that Tolstoy’s hesitations about the righteousness of his previous life crystallized into a firm negation, one that in the words of his biographer, translator and friend Aylmer Maude brought him to the conclusion that “much that he had formerly considered good was bad, and much that he had thought bad was good.”^{xxiv}

Was post-conversion Tolstoy really that different from the younger Tolstoy? Had the roots of his new thinking not always been present in Tolstoy, if one had carefully read his writings (albeit as Turgenev had once commented, Tolstoy’s philosophical tangents were seen as a regrettable addition to his writings). Tolstoy was the quintessential man of contradictions. As Berlin has noted, if one were to apply the Greek poet Archilocus’s observation that individuals either think creatively and are multifaceted like a fox, or are directed and systematic like a hedgehog; then Tolstoy confounds his readers by being a fox masquerading as a hedgehog.^{xxv} He believed in seeking the abstract Truth, and yet he was observant of all the minute details of everyday life. He dressed like peasant, and only ate Kasha with vegetables and emptied his own chamber-pot, but was still secretly

⁴ For a brief discussion of historicism see Norman Wilson’s *History in Crisis: Recent Directions in Historiography*, (Pearson: 2005).

interested in the society fashions of St. Petersburg.^{xxvi} He taught about brotherly love, peace, and chastity, and yet was annoyed by Tolstoyans, who had turned his teachings into inflexible doctrine (and who periodically reminded him that he was diverging from his own teachings). Until his last days, Tolstoy was aware of the chasm between his beliefs and his life, and perhaps his dramatic flight from home, at the age of 82, can be explained by a desire to finally reconcile the two and lead the life of a simple pilgrim. Writing a farewell letter to his wife of 48 years, he noted: “I have long been tormented by the incongruence between my life and my beliefs...”^{xxvii}

Tolstoy was inconsistent, but he drew his inspiration from life itself and was weary of artificial divisions in disciplines and in professions. Ultimately he defies narrow identification and poses a challenge to future biographers. Was he a prophetic sage, literary writer, polemicist, philosopher, nobleman, social activist? He was all of these perhaps, but above all he was a free spirit, pursuing independent thought in a multiplicity of forms.

After the publication of *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy was universally regarded as the greatest living Russian writer. He had accumulated considerable wealth from his book royalties, and was ostensibly living the happy life of the country gentry, with a large family and an extensive staff of chambermaids, footmen, tutors, governesses and the like. And precisely when he had reached the pinnacle of fame and fortune, was he haunted by angst and an excruciating fear of death and meaninglessness. It was as if he knew that all of his worldly success could not shield him from the certainty of death.

He asked himself, “Very well, you will have 6,000 desyatins* in the Samara province, as well as 300 horses; what then?.....Very well, you will be more famous than

* A desyatin equals 2.7 acres.

Gogol, Pushkin, Shakespeare, Molière. More famous than all the writers in the world- so what? “^{xxviii} And he could not find any reply. Tolstoy’s regular life was disrupted and he was overcome by nihilism and a belief in the meaninglessness of life. If life was a delusion, then suicide was his only escape, and Tolstoy feared that he may in a moment of impulsivity carry out this hidden desire. “And there I was, a fortunate man, carrying a rope from my room, where I was alone every night as I undressed, so that I would not hang myself from the beam between the closets. And I quit going hunting with a gun, so that I would not be too easily tempted to rid myself of life.”^{xxix}

In the midst of his crisis, Tolstoy reevaluated his own life and his art, and his critical eye did not even spare his works which were adored by the public. If life had become meaningless, then a reflection of life through literature was equally in vain. Tolstoy was obsessed with the question of “Why do I live?”

Tolstoy searched the words of philosophers for meaning, and found that abstractions and general truths, did little to placate his fears. He began to look elsewhere for meaning and focused his attention on the lives of the common peasants. Their lives were difficult and full of strife, and yet they did not kill themselves, and on the contrary even appeared cheerful. Observing the working people, Tolstoy saw that they were at peace with life because they had “true faith.” And so began Tolstoy’s major transformation, the roots of which had been present in him since childhood.

“I renounced the life of our class and recognized that this is not life but only the semblance of life, that the conditions of luxury under which we live make it impossible for us to understand life, and that in order to understand life I must understand not the life

of those who are parasites but the life of the simple working people, those who create life and give it meaning,” wrote Tolstoy in confessions.⁵ And in fact to the great dismay of his immediate family, Tolstoy began an attempt to live a simple life, one that was eventually canonized as that of the Tolstoyan faith.

After *Confession*, Tolstoy worked on scripting the story of his life and his art followed in stead of his ideas, which had crystallized into a philosophy of existence. To serve others, rather than himself, to live a simple life like the peasants, to embrace humility, to renounce possessions, would bring about a cure, he concluded. As Tolstoy searched the writings of other seekers for instruction (he delighted in gathering maxims from the philosophers of old) he came upon the writings of the nineteenth century American philosophers and transcendentalists, Emerson, Thoreau, and the abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and the lesser known minister Adin Ballou. He was also greatly receptive to the ideas of the American Quakers, with whom he held correspondence, and whose ideas on non-violence and refusal to bear arms were very similar to those of the Russian Old Believers, considered heretics by the Orthodox Church. Eventually, Tolstoy was to craft his own theories of non-resistance, while acknowledging the intellectual debt to the American thinkers.

By the 1880s, Tolstoy had reached a major crisis point and had emerged victorious. To align one’s beliefs with one’s actions? To live the life of this world or the life of the spirit? Having attained worldly perfection, Tolstoy also wanted to perfect his “soul.” His writings, to the chagrin of many of his contemporaries came to resemble evangelical preaching and even ranting. They could not relate to his metaphysical yearnings, when he had made such a name as a writer and a realist writer at that! And

⁵ Tolstoy, Leo, *Confession*, pp. 76-77.

yet, for Tolstoy, having glimpsed the abyss, acceptance from educated society was irrelevant. He basked in his infamy and even exaggerated his contempt for polite society, in order to elicit a response.

Calling his fellow noblemen parasites, he pledged himself to the spiritual life. “Man’s task in life is to save his soul. In order to save our souls, we must live according to the ways of God, we must renounce the sensual pleasures of life; we must labor, suffer, and be kind and humble,” he wrote.^{xxx} And so began a new chapter in Tolstoy’s life, one that has been likened to the emergence of a prophet. Thereafter, Tolstoy’s main occupation was the propagation of his message to the world, nothing short of the profession of a new faith.

Leo Tolstoy died on November 20, 1910 at the Astapova train station from complications of Bronchitis. He was fleeing his family and ancestral home of Yasnaya Polyana to live a life of solitude, much as the saints of old had done before.

- ⁱ L. N. Tolstoi, *Detstvo* (Childhood), (Chicago: Russian Language Specialists, 1961), p. 3.
- ⁱⁱ Alexandra Tolstoy, *Tolstoy: A Life of My Father*, (Belmont, Mass: Nordland Publishing, 1953), pp. 17-18.
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, [Tolstoy a life of my father] p. 35.
- ^{iv} *Ibid* (jean-jacques), p. 282.
- ^v L.N. Tolstoy, *Sobrannii Sochenenii*, volume 19 (diaries 1847-1894), Moscow, 1965, p. 37.
- ^{vi} *Ibid* (Sobrannie), p. 42.
- ^{vii} *Ibid* (sobrannie) p. 42
- ^{viii} Henri Troyat, *Tolstoy*, p. 71.
- ^{ix} *Ibid* (troyat), p. 66.
- ^x Lev Tolstoy, *Sobranie Sochenenii*, vol. 19, p. 68.
- ^{xi} Alexandra Tolstoy, *Tolstoy*, p. 52.
- ^{xii} *Ibid* (Tolstoy a life), p. 70.
- ^{xiii} Troyat, *Tolstoy*, p. 118.
- ^{xiv} Ernest Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy*, (Boston, 1946), p. 121.
- ^{xv} Troyat, *Tolstoy*, p. 119.
- ^{xvi} Peter Brock, *Freedom From War: Nonsectarian Pacifism 1814-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 268.
- ^{xvii} Alexander Fodor, *Tolstoy and the Russians: Reflections on a Relationship* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), pp. 26-27.
- ^{xviii} Alexander Fodor, *Tolstoy and the Russians*, pp. 27-32.
- ^{xix} Bob Blaisdell, *Tolstoy as Teacher: Leo Tolstoy's Writings on Education*, (New York, 2000), p. 3.
- ^{xx} Leo Tolstoy, "Are the Peasant Children to Learn from Us, or Are We to Learn from the Peasant Children," in *Tolstoy as Teacher*, ed. Bob Blaisdell, p. 32.
- ^{xxi} Alexandra Tolstoy, *Tolstoy*, pp. 149-154.
- ^{xxii} Isiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, (Chicago, 1953), pp. 20-21.
- ^{xxiii} Berlin, p. 27.
- ^{xxiv} Aylmer Maude, *Tolstoy and his Problems*, (London, 1901), p. 25.
- ^{xxv} Berlin, pp. 3-5.
- ^{xxvi} John Bayley, *Leo Tolstoy*, (Newcastle-under-Lyme, 1997). P. 9.
- ^{xxvii} I.I. Zamotin, *L. N. Tolstoi v ego pis'makh*, (Warsaw, 1912), p. 27.
- ^{xxviii} Tolstoy, *Confessions*, p. 27.
- ^{xxix} *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ^{xxx} *Ibid.*, p. 77.