

Spiritual Life and Its Relevance

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Definition of Terms

Before delving into the aspects of "spiritual life," let us first take a look at what is meant by "relevance" for the purpose of this discourse. The relevance of an idea, circumstance, event, phenomenon and so forth has to do with its *significance, value, bearing, importance, applicability, consequence*. At the same time, we are to ask "relevant for what?" In the context of this discussion, I am choosing to highlight the relevance of spiritual life for the individual, for society and for the planet. When we combine these points, we can word this inquiry as: "What is the value or significance of spiritual life for an individual, for society, for the planet?"

A "spiritual life" is a life devoted to and focused upon 'Spirit,' Paramatman, Brahman, Buddha, Allah, Christ, Source, Creation within us, a life in which we discover the Truth of who we are, our true Self, and we live this Truth in the body in the world as a Spiritual Being. A "spiritual life" includes self-mastery, mastering the body, mind and senses, purifying ourselves so that we manifest the "Divine Alchemy" by being spirit in humanness, Divinity in matter.

As Her Holiness Sai Maa Lakshmi Devi Sarvanandamayi Maa 1008 Mahamandleshwar writes, "*You were divine consciousness before being a human being. Now create your existence on earth with the collaboration of the Creator.*" (Petals of Grace," p. 131)

When we combine this view of "relevance" and "spiritual life," we can use as a reference point for this inquiry the question: "What is the value or significance of living life as Spirit, as Creator, for the individual, society and the planet?"

We will begin with the individual. One reason for beginning with the individual is that this initial focus enables each of us to understand within ourself the value of living as Spirit, the applicability to our life, the decisions we may wish to take to transform ourself, and thereby influence our family, communities, and so on.

Another reason for beginning with the individual is that fundamental change begins with the individual being, spreading out into society and the planet. This is not to say that efforts by groups, cultures, societies do not have consequence and impact the world. However, the transformation of the individual and the living of each individual as Spirit, has a dramatic "domino effect" which increases in momentum as others around us live as Spirit. This reflects the power of the individual to transform the planet. We each transform ourself and move this into action in the world, a

"movement" from individual to group to planet. Our individual transformation impacts our family, those with whom we go to school or work, and this impact extends out into society and across the planet.

The following quote from H.H. Sai Maaji enriches this viewpoint:

"All of the great teaching asks you to embody the Self that you are, to embody the consciousness that you are. Listen to the words of the great masters and practice them. This is life. This is puja. This is worship. You are here to restore the original design of heaven on earth. In other words, you were created to divinize humanity, starting with yourself, a humanity full of heart." (Petals of Grace, pp. 143-144)

Relevance of Spiritual Life for the Individual

What does "living life as Spirit, as Creator" look like for an individual? What is its value for the individual?

In traditional approaches to Psychology, we study the "psyche," the mind, the personality, to identify what is creating conflict, what is no longer working in the life of the individual, and we guide the individual to move through and change these patterns of thoughts, emotions and behaviors. In many cases, in the West especially, this can take time to analyze and process (e.g., in therapy), so that the individual understands and makes new choices and decisions from a different perspective on himself/herself and the world.

In focusing upon "spiritual life," we expand this to a new view of the Self that is unchanging in a body that is changing (no longer the "self" with a small "s" as ego or personality). We place greatest significance upon the aspect of Self that does not change and is Absolute:

"... the seer of Truth perceives clearly the difference between the never-changing absolute state of life and its ever-changing states of diversified phenomenal existence. It is this which gives him that stability and heightened state of consciousness by which he rises above the binding influence of activity in the phenomenal world." (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita, p. 96)

Living life as Spirit is not being attached to the body; it is transcending the body to realize the Divine Consciousness that we are. We then use the body as a vehicle for experiencing life and manifesting this consciousness through action in the world, for example, being Divine Love in Action.

H.H Sai Maaji highlights the value for the individual in taking this broader perspective:

"The work, then is to move from the limited concept of identity caused by fear to identification with the Divine within.... Humans are always in fear, fear of losing. This is because of identification with the body-consciousness and with the physical body, instead of identifying with the Eternal Self, with the One who is breathing within. In this way, you are to use this birth to know yourself, to experience your own inner consciousness, and to find out who you truly are (Petals of Grace, p. 142)

Therefore, the value for each of us in living as Spirit is that we see ourselves as more than the body, and we move from the fear based on a limited viewpoint of who we are to the freedom of realizing all of the aspects, the multiple dimensions that we truly are as consciousness, as energy, as Divinity. We can then identify with the Divine attributes that we are and, in that identification, we serve each other by applying them as Spiritual Values that we manifest in our communities (discussed later in "societal relevance").

The key to this identification with our Divinity is Love:

"Through Love — only through Love — the Self reveals itself, the Beloved reveals itself. Only Love will attract God or the Self so that this revelation is made manifest. And you are That, you are that Grace." (Petals of Grace, p. 141)

Living as Spirit comes about through the work of purification that we do to divinize our thoughts and feelings, our ego and personality, by connecting with Spirit, with Source, with the Supreme Self that we are. We bring this Light, this vibration, into the physical form and subtle bodies and, through this practice, we dissolve and transform the old patterns of thoughts, emotions and actions that are stored there. In embracing the higher aspects of ourselves and enlightening our patterns and old ways of being, we realize ourself as Spirit. We move from fear to Love, as we dissolve with Love and Light the impurities, karma and samskara from the past. We then "re-fill" ourselves as we create divinely in the world, re-focusing in the present and changing our thoughts, feelings, and actions from non-Divine to Divine. We "plant new seeds" of karma, spread waves of Divine Consciousness across the planet, as we bring Spirit into our total life.

H.H. Sai Maaji speaks about this moment-to-moment practice (sadhana) as "Awareness-Choice-Decision-Focus-Realization." Through a new awareness of ourselves and the world, we make new choices that lead through commitment to decisions and action. We then continue to focus in action on what we have decided in order to realize what we have set out to accomplish. This practice improves our communication, our relationships, our leadership in the world, as we live life anew as Spirit.

In summary, by committing to live life as Spirit, the individual purifies, transforms and enlightens himself/herself, becoming a realized Being who impacts the world through Divine thoughts, feelings and actions, while also collaborating with the Creator.

Relevance of Spiritual Life for Society

Living life as Spirit takes on even greater value and significance as individuals join together in groups and communities, realizing their interconnectedness and sharing common practices for realizing themselves more and more as Spirit, in other words, consciously evolving together. When there is agreement among individuals, there is manifestation as they take action together and co-create. Two verses from the Bible highlight the power of the group: *"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on Earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven."* (Matthew 18: 19) *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."* (Matthew 18: 20)

The power of the group, uniting in the name of Self, Spirit, Source, is demonstrated in their creativity, in the "Divine flow" of co-creation as the individuals tap into Universal Consciousness and reveal ideas, solutions, creations that were not previously possible by any one individual, or by others not aligned with Spirit. In addition, the power is enhanced by the grid of Group Consciousness, the waves of vibration and energy that radiate from the group. Not only does this vortex empower the group for creation and manifestation, it also spreads among other individuals in communities that are aligned with the same "Work" (e.g., religious or spiritual communities, Ashrams), within cities and countries, within and among cultures and societies. This Group Consciousness also attracts other individuals who wish to create in Spirit, according to the Laws of Resonance and Attraction.

This Divine radiance of Spirit among groups and communities points to the importance (the "relevance") of finding ways for communities to come together to create and to manifest divinely. This Unity of Spirit is not only important for "like-minded" communities, but also for those communities who are disagreeing, living in conflict, fighting with one another. The occasion of this International Interfaith Congress is one example of bringing together different religious traditions, teachings and practices and finding "common messages" upon which different groups can build ways to co-create and manifest that which is Divine. In this way, we can uncover creative educational, humanitarian, and energetic bridges between East and West, Hindu and Muslim, Jewish and Arab. This union is facilitated when we can move beyond religion and focus upon Spirit which resides across religions, when we can bring what is best of common Spiritual Values, such as Love.

Living as Spirit means learning from others how they live Spirit in their community, in their society, in their world. It means sharing and teaching what expands rather than contracts, what comes from Love and not fear, what results in union rather than separation. Living as Spirit means being a Divine Presence for others, modeling the expression and manifestation of Spiritual Values through words and deeds, setting an example for how to be open and learn from others and transform. Living as Spirit means more than talking about Peace and Unity; it means being Peace and Unity from the inside out.

In addition to interfaith gatherings, how can we impact society by living as Spirit? We can start with our families by being loving parents to our children, loving children to our parents, true brothers and sisters, serving our family members to realize their Truth and to be Masters in their lives as Spirit. We can express ourselves as Spirit at work and transform our workplace and organizations through new forms of communication, more Divine relationships and powerful leadership based on Spiritual Values. We can transform educational systems by incorporating Spirit into their design and implementation. We can manifest Spirit in political systems by standing in our Truth and by supporting political leaders, and being leaders ourselves, who behave with honesty and integrity.

We cannot speak about the societal impact of living as Spirit without mentioning a major community that will significantly transform society and the planet: Youth. Young people are being born with different ways of seeing the world and their place in it, with different brains and cellular structure. Young people are more and more open to realizing the Truth and multiple dimensions of who they are, to finding ways to deal with the turmoil and chaos prevalent in the world today. Young people are coming together more often to express themselves and to co-create.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has created an educational system based on Spiritual Values in Puttaparthi, including the Institute for Higher Learning, where students learn about the values and how to live them in the world (Prema — Love, Sathya — Truth, Shanti — Peace, Dharma — Right Action, Ahimsa — Non-Violence). H.H. Sai Maaji, and the non-profit organization Sai Maaji founded, Humanity in Unity (HIU) have formed a major humanitarian and educational program that supports youth (SYMPLE: Spiritual Youth Mentoring Program for Leadership and Enlightenment). Four youth were sent to Thailand earlier this year to represent Sai Maaji and HIU in a Global Youth Conference, and three young adults are attending this Congress as speakers. (More information about the HIU youth program can be found under "SYMPLE" on the HIU website: www.HumanityInUnity.org.)

In summary, society is transformed through living as Spirit when: groups co-create and serve as Group Consciousness; when different religions and groups that are in conflict find and share commonalities of teachings and practices; when we transform our families, schools, workplaces, organizations and political systems; when we support the transformation, leadership, enlightenment and service of youth around the world.

Relevance of Spiritual Life for the Planet

The planet is now expressing the conflict, non-peace, suffering, "dis-ease" that its inhabitants have been experiencing and spreading across and into Mother Earth over centuries and eons. The weather, the wars, the terrorism represent the fear that we have held within ourselves and manifested in the world. We are now at a critical stage of the evolution of the planet when we must behave differently, develop creative ideas and take new action for the planet to heal, for all of humanity to rejuvenate and move into a state of being truly Divine.

We have covered here how individuals and societies can transform by living as Spirit. Of course, as this happens the planet transforms. What else can be said about planetary transformation and the relevance of spiritual life? Let us hear what H.H. Sai Maaji says about this shift:

"The energy grids around this planet are also undergoing major shifts, pulling the planetary energies into a new alignment. Through this process a new sphere of energy will be available, which will make the work for all much easier when they attune themselves to this new vibration. Thus they will accelerate this evolutionary process. ... Start to align your energy, your frequency, with beings of Light. With the sixth sense, attuning yourself to different kinds of energies, different levels of vibrations will be experienced naturally. ... Human beings are capable of consciously cooperating with the power of evolution. Evolution no longer needs to be blind or instinctive. Only you can speed up and perfect what the 'future' is to be." (Petals of Grace, p. 136)

In consciously contributing to the evolution of humanity and the planet, individuals can raise their vibration and radiate and spread their Divine Love and Light. They can connect with and penetrate the energy grid of the Mother Earth with this Light. Groups and communities, as they transform themselves, can create powerful vortices of healing energy that serve the planet. Individuals, groups, communities, societies can all align themselves with the frequencies and energies of Ascended Masters, Angels and Light Beings to co-create in serving the planet. This co-creation, with our

dedication and commitment to being Divine Love in Action, will lead to the enlightenment of all of humanity and the planet, as H.H. Sai Maaji describes:

"The next evolutionary step is to realize that you are divine. That Divinity is beginning to dawn, and the destiny of humanity is to culminate in divine consciousness. At this time, you are to be divine, to be Godly, to be Supra-conscious Beings. Free will is the key to your evolution, because free will or the freedom to evolve is inherent in each of you. The human race will eventually experience enlightenment, but when will it happen? When depends on each individual. The more you are aligned with your true Self, the more Unity and Love will exist on Earth." (Petals of Grace, p. 135)

Individually and collectively, our decision to live as Spirit determines the evolution of humanity and of the planet. Our actions to transform within ourselves, and to transform together, impact how soon we will achieve Global Enlightenment and the healing of Mother Earth. This view of ourselves and the world, of our power through action and creation to affect and alter how we evolve as a planet, can be called "conscious evolution."

As Barbara Marx Hubbard states in her book, Conscious Evolution: Awakening the Power of our Social Potential:

"Deep in the hidden process of our metamorphosis we can see a natural design — an evolutionary pattern to guide us toward the next stage of transformation. We intuit the presence of the still-invisible social butterfly, yet how do we become it? What we are seeking is a worldview that will call forth our creation action and direct our immense powers toward life-oriented and evolutionary purposes. That guiding worldview is, I believe, conscious evolution. It holds that through our unprecedented scientific, social, and spiritual capacities we can evolve consciously and cocreatively with nature and the deeper patterns of creation (traditionally called God), thus enabling us to manifest a future commensurate with our unlimited species and planetary potential." (p. 57)

The more we focus upon Spirit, the more we practice in our daily lives living as Spirit, the more we raise our vibration and expand our consciousness so that we actually co-create with Spirit, with Creation itself. What a blessing it is to be alive at this critical transition period of our planet, to come to this realization of our power to transform what no longer serves, to manifest Spirit in the world through our own thoughts, words and deeds. Barbara Marx Hubbard describes the current state of our species:

"The capacity for conscious evolution means that our species has become capable of understanding and resonating with the processes of creation itself. ... Spiritually we are attuning to the patterns of evolution within us as we begin to transcend the illusion of separation born out of the phase of self-conscious humanity. Whether or not there is other life in the universe, our role, if we learn conscious evolution, is to become partners in the process of creation, enhancing life on Earth and bringing Earth's life into the universe." (p. 59)

We are all important, interrelated "team members," playing our part in this movement toward Perfection, returning to our original Divine Source. We are each to take responsibility for progressing in our path to Source, for directing our own transformation, and thereby the transformation of our families, communities, societies and Mother Earth herself. We are to use our

creativity, our inherent powers, our focus and discipline, to become Masters of how we live our life on this planet during this incarnation, and how we contribute to the evolution of humanity. Let us remember our original question of "What is the value or significance of living life as Spirit, as Creator, for the individual, society and planet?" Does this question resonate differently with you now? How do you respond to it? What actions are you committed to take right now to live a spiritual life?

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