

CONVEYED INTO THE DIVINE DOMAIN

Five spiritual questions answered by Richard Harvey

SPIRITUAL QUESTION No.1

What is the purpose of life? What can I do with feelings of wanting to give up?

The purpose of life is a chimera, an hallucination. If you go in pursuit of purpose in your life eventually you reach a wall and that wall is marked despair. If everything you do in life is directed toward something else you reach an obstacle sooner or later and this obstacle can be the greatest disenchantment and disillusionment. This obstacle is also a great blessing. It turns you inward. When all your purposes have become disappointments, you turn inward because there is nowhere else left. And the inward turning brings you to a fork in the road, a choice, a decision: whether to surrender to life in its true purposelessness and splendour or to carry on down the road to despair.

There is no purpose to life. Or life is its own purpose. When you live life with purpose you miss it. You don't really live. You must be innocent, purposeless, and open. When purpose comes to the end of its life and its spell is broken, you feel like you want to give up. But who is it that wants to give up? It turns out it is the ego, the small part of you, and it was this part that created the purpose all along. So naturally when the purpose dries up the ego becomes petulant and has a tantrum. If you watch it carefully you will see that this tantrum could be the death throes of the ego if you would only allow it. Let the ego have a tantrum, stand alongside it, and allow the feeling to play out in you and when it is all over what remains will be yourself, your actual self, your authentic self.

Purpose and giving up are the same. One is positive, the other negative, but they are really both the same, just two ends of a continuum, or flip sides of the same coin—like doing and not doing, action and inaction. Spiritually you don't need to get attached to either. You want to aim straight down the middle. That path is called non-doing which is different to not doing. It involves surrender, spontaneity, and naturalness.

There is no purpose *or* purposelessness; there is only presence and compassion, devotion and awareness. There is only peace and life, love and understanding; there is only reality or God.

SPIRITUAL QUESTION No.2

Please speak about sentimentality with regard to spiritual life, path, and practice?

To understand sentimentality you must understand the source of emotions and the authenticity of emotions. Humanity has learned how not to feel. We have become numb to real emotion. Emotion is incredibly powerful and we have been warned off. The first shot across the bows that warned us off was in childhood when we were persuaded not to cry, or we were not given attention for feeling and expressing emotions, for being angry or hurt or scared or terrified. Whatever it was it was the adverse reaction to the source of our developing emotional life that resulted in our renouncing the real emotional level of response, of experience, of being touched by the world.

You have been divorced from the world of feeling and authentic emotion and something had to replace it. The persuasion to renounce feeling was easy since all children need a sense of belonging, a sense of safety and acceptance. You were not acceptable in your wild state of raw emotion, of authentic response and feeling, and openness and innocent experiencing, so you learned to suppress your genuine emotions. In time, feigned emotion, inauthentic feeling, and ultimately superficial displays of affection and sentimentality substituted for real emotionality.

Real emotions are profound and intense. We have not learned how to feel real emotions; we have only learned to fear them. In a natural state, when feeling is full inside you and you have developed a capacity for containing emotional flow, feelings don't necessarily require expression. The only necessity is that they are *felt* inside you. Your inner world has expanded to such a degree that tidal waves of emotion may be experienced and contained within you without dissipation, rejection, or even demonstration or expression.

This is one of the functions of the spiritual teacher: to lovingly tolerate the great flowing rapids of emotion when emotion itself has been so denied and rejected, ignored, blamed, and dominated by thought in the modern psyche, in the soul.

Try to not be seduced and manipulated by sentimentality. It is prevalent and powerful in the modern world. It is offered as a substitute for reality. Learn to discriminate and distinguish between what is real and what is not. This has become harder than ever. Fast food is not real food, sex is not a visual image, spectacle and drama does not necessarily mean depth or meaning, hysteria does not necessarily entail authentic emotions, machines do not create real music, and spirituality is not represented in sentimental imagery. Our world is a strange place of unnaturalness and fear, foolishness and insensitivity. Start now by becoming familiar with your emotional life and learn to deal with emotions intelligently and wisely. When you have achieved this, the path of the spirit will be before you and you can follow it with an inner gauge; the inner gauge that intuitively knows what is real, what is true, and identifies the deceitful and the false without question.

SPIRITUAL QUESTION No.3

What should I do with aspirations? I would like to love more, feel more, be more, and contribute more, but all these aspirations simply seem to be more ballast in the bag of desire.

Aspire to truth, aspire to God, and aspire to contentment. Aspire to being grateful for what you have in your life, as opposed to being ungrateful for what you do not have in your life. So long as aspirations do not cause dissatisfaction and frustration in you, it's all good. Aspire to love, aspire to wisdom, but don't let aspirations distance you from what you aspire to. The human being is on a very strange journey when you think about it. We are travelling to ourselves. Really there is no distance between you and yourself and even less distance between you and the Divine. But sometimes this journey of imaginary distance seems interminable, endless, hopelessly distant. So remember that aspirations, like hope and longing, can reinforce your inner sense of lack, reduce your self-image, and make you feel less than you are. In truth you lack nothing at all! But this feeling of lack exists to keep you dissatisfied, discontented, and restless. So long as you feel these things you will feel that it is necessary to be protected by the ego, protected

by the mind, protected by fear and hate. There isn't really anything to fear or hate, other than what fear and hate have created.

SPIRITUAL QUESTION No.4

What is the crisis of doubt?

The proving ordeal, the testing time, the valley of the shadow of death, the great dejection, the letting go into pointlessness, purposelessness, and despair. The crisis of doubt is the time when the light is extinguished and only your true belief, your real conviction, your faith, and your commitment can survive it. Only these can bring you through the devastation of this narrowing, this chicane, where you pass between the clashing rocks, with two hounds biting at your heels, where you can decide to deny your spiritual self, your inner being, your awareness and integrity altogether, or fall into a deeper despair. The clashing rocks, like the valley of the shadow of death, direct you to a third option, the unseen option. You will have to reach higher. There is no other way and no other choice. You will have to reach higher, so that you must suffer this test of faith. The crisis of doubt is reserved for great spiritual leaps forward.

SPIRITUAL QUESTION No.5

Are you a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Sufi, a Christian? What is the role of the ancient traditions in your spiritual worldview?

I am myself. And you are yourself. If you want to align yourself to a tradition of spirituality or if you feel a calling to a way, you must follow the dictates of your heart. But remember that the traditions have all in a sense failed. They are old, ancient, profound, and worthy of reverence, but they have each of them failed in several senses. First, they have not merged together in mutual tolerance and cooperation and respect of each other's differences and that has been a great failure for religion and for human society.

Second, they have failed doctrinally because they have tended toward dogma, fixedness, and dominance, prescribing the way and proclaiming an exclusive right or claim to the way. The trouble always comes when you systematize spirituality and create an institution, because spirituality which is the essence of all religion is essentially untameable. You cannot tame it, systematize it, and transform it into scriptures, edicts, and commands. It is alive and breathing inside you. You are both human and divine. In ancient Arabic *hu* means God. Hence a human being is a God-man or a God-woman, or drawing on ancient Sanskrit, man carries the meaning "mind" or "hand," so you are the mind of God or the hand of the Divine. So a human being has unlimited access to the Divine, because the human being *is* divine. How do you express that in a structure, in commands? It is a sort of madness, like talking to yourself or telling yourself out loud what to do!

Third, not one of the world religions has triumphed by setting a course for humanity toward harmony, collective loyalty and compassion; not even world peace has been achieved, in fact it seems we are further from that than ever. Not only has not one religion achieved that, but also most wars have been fought in the name of religion for religious beliefs and intolerance.

Do religions, like other belief systems, produce prejudice, bigotry, and injustice in human beings or do human beings instil these states in religion? It is a chicken and egg dilemma.

One of the incredibly positive aspects of today from a spiritual point of view is the vast choice we have. Now that we have access to the secrets from past millennia, we are free to choose. We may gravitate toward any number of different paths and ways and find one that suits us.

Another positive aspect of spirituality today is that many prefer not to choose a prescribed way or path. This entails a high level of self-responsibility, but it is a spark of newness, a fresh growth. A mere few hundred years ago people were murdered in the most horrible ways for holding beliefs that didn't conform to the established view. Today it is virtually the norm to hold individualistic beliefs about God and religion. We have covered a vast distance or perhaps executed an extreme flip.

The self-directed path does not really differ from the traditional path in the fundamentals. Whether traditional or contemporary in form or description, certain fundamental necessities of spiritual practice still apply. First, you cannot do it on your own. Therefore you need a guide or mentor. Second, if you are not part of an organized collective of adherents who support you in your practice spiritual, you have to cultivate self-discipline. Third, you must be aware of the inner voice of guidance, the still small voice within, and know it and trust it

Traditional ways are a means, as are contemporary ones. The distinction is not in the maturity or modernity of spiritual approaches, more in their shallowness or depth. Today superficial spiritual teachers are plentiful. But what is new under the sun! It has been like this for millennia. There are always lesser teachers and teachings, always cheaper goods, always dishonesty and ignorance.

To be a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Sufi, or a Christian demands adherence to a system, to an organized set of principles, beliefs, behaviors, and moral code, a certain labelling, a certain definition. Spirituality itself is beyond definition, beyond labels. It is about the unknown, about the source of all things, about being-ness, awareness and consciousness, not as a belief but as a spiritual "experience," not as a conviction but as a communion with divinity beyond space and time. The spiritual reality is not the relative reality; it is absolute. This is why ultimately the reality of the Divine is inexpressible, indefinable, indescribable. You must be present and absolutely conscious to apperceive the Truth.

You ask about my spiritual worldview. Humanity is in need of a new culture, a wise culture, a spiritual culture, a truly intelligent culture: a world culture that is characterized by tolerance and cooperation, insight and understanding. Interpersonal, international, global, and in time perhaps interplanetary relations, distinguished by compassion and peace, a feeling of connection with all things that stems from the expanded awareness of truth, an enlightened culture that fosters harmony, creativity, and love. A spiritual culture in which the sacred, timeless truths are not merely preserved in a place of worship that is set aside and marginalized by "holy" distance, but one in which the reality and practice of sacredness and the fruits of awareness are a

part of everyday life, witnessed and practiced, seen, heard, felt, tasted, smelt, and experienced by everyone everyday in all aspects of their lives.

To ground this vision in the world we should begin to look less to the past and the ancient traditions and more to the future, to innovations, to radical spiritual questioning, and constructive criticism and direct intuition. We should work with our brightest minds and hearts to birth a new mythology for humanity to move into the coming millennia with a balance of heart, mind, and action, enlightened souls leading and involved in decision-making about political, planetary, ecological, economic, artistic, and sacred issues that must affect us all. In a new sacred world also there must be a place for esoteric spirituality, for the practices of divine prayer, devotion, and ascending consciousness that appear to have no practical implications at all, no material outcome, or apparent results or benefits, but which are absolutely necessary for the evolution of humanity and the world in present time and the eras that are to come. Indeed this esoteric faction of human existence is and should be regarded as the most elevated and necessary development in humanity's present "progression" in planetary evolution.

Human beings are not apart from the planet, from nature, from the mineral, plant, and animal domains. We are all connected, but this does not mean that we, humanity are interconnected and somehow in a separate and separative relationship to everything else. All is consciousness; all is divine. We may learn from a child, from nature, from a flower, from the wind, from an essence or a fragrance, from an insight freely flown from whatever era or place through the etheric body of life itself. The mysteries are vast and humanity's progress and spiritual being-ness are still in their infancy. We cannot begin to guess at the height to which humanity's spiritual destiny will rise. In the meantime let us loosen our hold on the past and become more present to meet the demands of the times and the challenges of this precious present era. This era is the age of the individual and, rather than being a curse, it is a blessing. Free from dogma, uniformity, and opposition, as individuals we may seek the path to the spirit in our own souls. We may follow the path through enlightened states intelligently and, with all the wisdom of the ages behind us, allow ourselves to be conveyed into the divine domain. We may be identified as divine humans, both transcendent and grounded with roots and wings, love and transcendent at the same time, existing, living, celebrating life and form and formlessness in time and eternity.