

The Joy of Service ~ by Andrew Harvey & Karuna Erickson

“Fuse the powers of the sacred heart with the energies of the body, and you can transform everything”.—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

In the stress and busyness of our daily lives, we often find it challenging to remain connected to a source of inspiration that can fuel and sustain us and help us remember the essential joy of life. A daily spiritual practice which unites body, mind, and heart can keep us connected to the joy that is the essence of our being, and so be able to serve others joyfully. As it is written in an ancient yogic text:

“From joy all beings have come, by joy they all live, and unto joy they all return.”

All authentic mystical traditions proclaim with one strong voice: the aim of spiritual awakening is not merely to realize one’s own divine identity, but to serve all beings with compassion and a commitment to justice. The enlightened life is one that balances ecstatic inwardness with dedicated action; profound inner surrender with unceasing service to others.

A great Indian saint, Anandamayi Ma, once said, “Just as God is both utterly peaceful and utterly dynamic, so the being who realizes God is at once sunk in a calm that nothing can disturb and active with a love that nothing can defeat. It is so simple;” she added, “through sacred practice you breathe in divine inspiration, divine strength, divine peace, and divine passion. Then you breathe them out in acts of wise compassion. This is the real life all of us are called to.”

In these chaotic and difficult times, the union of grounded passion and peaceful joy in the body and heart that everyone needs to keep strong, creative, and inspired by love can be awakened by a spiritual practice such as yoga. A heart-centered approach to yoga, like Heart Yoga, unites an awakening into the luminous body with and settling into a meditative peace of mind. From this sacred marriage of body and mind, your heart will burn with the holy desire to see all beings safe, protected, and happy.

To stay connected to this natural desire of your heart, begin your practice by sitting quietly and noticing how you are feeling. By listening to your body and mind, you can choose whether you need a heating, awakening practice or a cooling, restorative practice.

When you sense that you need grounding or extra vitality, or if you’re feeling distracted, unfocused, or not present, an active, heating practice can help you return to the strength of your body and restore your energy, intention, and clarity. Strengthening yoga postures develop courage and stamina for the practical healing, creative, and transformative service you do in the world.

When you’re busy and not attending to the messages of your body, heart and mind, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed, ineffectual, stressed, or burned out. Reconnect directly with your own source of inspiration with a relaxing, restorative yoga practice, bringing you to the place where the desire to serve others naturally arises.

Those who come to know and trust in the sacred heart, and act from its passion of compassion are Sacred Activists. Sacred Activists unite peace, strength, and courage with the holy desire of the heart to see justice established everywhere. They work passionately to see the poor housed and fed, the environment cherished and protected, and all sentient beings revered as divine,

and so in turn experience the joy of service.

With bodies infused with the inspiration of the transcendent, and with mystical awareness grounded in the present moment, those of us who are responding to the call to serve the creation of a new humanity will be able to devote ourselves to service whole-heartedly without growing exhausted. Through our ever-deepening experience of the power of spiritual practice, we will find the strength and wisdom to serve all beings, and to live in deep peace and joy.

Through living and serving in this way, we become the new humanity we are longing for. We both embody the light and serve the light's compassionate desire to illuminate and awaken all beings.

The practice of yoga, when united with a precise and luminous mystical consciousness, offers an unshakeable foundation for the great work ahead. This is the great work we have been destined for since the beginning: the birthing of a humble, generous, tenderhearted, illumined divine humanity on Earth. Through our own direct experience, we realize the ultimate purpose of embodying the light, which is to be a light for ourselves and others, and to serve all beings with a full and glowing heart.

Andrew Harvey and Karuna Erickson have recently co-authored *Heart Yoga: the Sacred Marriage of Yoga and Mysticism*, which has been endorsed by Deepak Chopra, Marianne Williamson, and Caroline Myss, and is available through Amazon.com, Random House, and local bookstores. Andrew Harvey is an internationally acclaimed author of more than 30 books including *The Hope: a Guide to Sacred Activism*, is the director of the Institute for Sacred Activism, and can be reached through www.andrewharvey.net. Karuna Erickson has been a psychotherapist and devoted yoga teacher for more than 40 years and is the director of Heart Yoga Center, and can be contacted at www.yogakaruna.com.