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The Sacred Activism of Heart Yoga: An Interview with Andrew Harvey

by Michael Bertrand

MB *Andrew it's great to talk with you once again. You've been working with two books: a new one coming out called Heart Yoga, and of course the one on sacred activism—The Hope. So, you've been very busy and trying, I guess, to find some tools for us all to help ourselves face up to what's going on in the world as it is.*

AH Well, the two books are deeply interconnected. With sacred activism I really try to lay out in as clear a way as I can what I believe to be the great birth happening through the great death that we're enduring. I believe we are living through periods of the dark night of the species and just as the mystics know the dark night prepares a whole new level of divine consciousness, so as we progress through this shattering, this searing and terrible process of disintegration that we're living through, what I deeply believe is that a new human race will be born from it, and that this new human race will be one that embodies divine peace, divine passion, divine love in sacred action on every level of the world.

This is the meaning of the words "sacred activism", and that is profoundly the marriage of the two most noble fires in the human heart and soul—the fire of the mystic's passion for God and the fire of the activist's passion for justice. When these two fires come together they birth a third fire, which is the sacred evolutionary fire of the Sacred Marriage, the fire of love and wisdom in action.

It is this third fire that is the heart fire of sacred activism and also of the new ancient yoga that Karuna and I have created. **Heart Yoga** is the marriage of traditional yoga with sacred mystical practices that enable the light energy of the divine to be born in the body. In my book *The Hope* I say **it's really essen-**

tial now for everyone who wants to be a midwife of the birth to have four essential kinds of practice in the core of their life: cool practices that calm and unite you with the peace of divine being; **hot practices** that ignite you with the passion of divine becoming; a **prayer practice** that can always align you with the Beloved; and—most importantly of all I think for our time—**body practices** that enable the divine light to descend into the body to empower, illumine and wake up its essential light energies to birth the divine in matter.

This fourth practice is I think the clue for us, because what's trying to be born is a divine humanity that embodies radical compassion in action. Because of my profound belief that this embodied divine consciousness is trying to be born in us I've been working over five years in secret with a great yogini—Karuna Erickson—to **marry traditional yoga with the light practices of the mystical traditions** that can help all yoga practitioners everywhere take their practice to the next level so they can use a renewed, restored, renovated and reinvigorated yoga as the crucible for the birth of the divine in matter at this moment when everything is telling us that unless we birth the divine in matter in our hearts, minds and bodies, we will simply not be strong or illumined enough to do the great work of birth.

If we do, then we can become a conscious instrument of the birthing energies of the Mother/Father and participate in the most glorious and massive transformation that the human race has ever gone through, to take an evolutionary leap into our future destiny which I believe is nothing less than to be cocreators with the divine of a new world.

MB *Well, that's quite a prescription for what we need.*

AH It's very clear now that we cannot

solve the problems with our shadow exploding everywhere from the patriarchal consciousness addicted to power and transcendence.

We now need interconnection with the deepest vision of the mystical traditions, which is the one of the sacred marriage of heaven and earth, heart and mind, soul and body, prayer and action and to let this tremendous vision that's at the heart of all the serious and noble mystical traditions infuse us with its sacred passion, peace and power.

If we can do this, and *we can* because there are hundreds of thousands of people who realize it and are practicing this at this moment, then we can birth a new humanity. The yoga that Karuna and I have created—one which has behind it all the major spiritual teachers—Deepak Chopra, Marianne Williamson, Caroline Myss and all of the major yoga teachers—Shiva Ray, Seane Corn, Rodney Yee, Judith Lassiter—is I believe one of the most important tools of this birth. There are 50 million people now practicing yoga and if they can come to the vision that we have presented in this book of this marriage through using yoga in this renewed way—presented as a crucible of the divine birth in matter—then the possibilities are limitless.

I am also working on a book with Gabrielle Roth to fuse her extraordinary vision of the Five Rhythms that govern the cosmos and the coming of the divine with the five stages of Rumi's ascent to divine love. This is going to be my way of opening up the sacred dance community with Gabrielle to **helping make sacred dance as well as yoga a crucible for the divine birth**. This will be the next book—it will make a trilogy that I hope helps people in both the most exalted and most practical ways to start becoming midwives of this birth in the core of our burning reality.

MB *In order for humanity to not go down the drain and take the rest of creation with it, we need to have some sense of the purpose of being here with all the other sentient beings on this planet. We have to transcend this ego-based world that seems to want to force us back into being nothing but consumers and people that don't have their hearts opened enough, and regain the strength to work with and from the heart.*

AH Well, unless we do take the enormous menace of our potential extinction as a challenge to go through a radical divine transformation that embodies us as servants of divine love in the world, we will die out. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that none of the problems we are facing can be solved in any way from our existing ego consciousness and our existing addiction to power and holy



Andrew Harvey & Karuna Erickson

crazed celebration of materialism, consumerism and a debased vision of science.

If we persist in this addiction to control that governs our actions we will die out and take out a large part of nature with us, leaving nothing but a devastated, smoking, burning world as a memory of our presence on the earth. This would be an appalling tragedy, but most of all would be an appalling waste of an extreme crisis. When extreme crisis hits anyone on the authentic mystical path they know that it's sent to them by the Beloved as an immense challenge to go deeper and deeper into the core of divine love and divine consciousness.

This extreme crisis that we've manifested through our lust for power and domination of nature I believe is an evolutionary crisis that we were destined to pass through and that is, when understood from the deepest mystical levels, not something to be afraid of or disturbed by, nor something to be embittered or driven into paralysis, despair and cynicism by, but something to embrace so to surrender more deeply to the divine and take up the challenge of the great traditions of the sacred marriage to start embodying that on earth.

If we can see the crisis in that way an enormous hope is born in us. This is why I called the book on sacred activism *The Hope*. **This hope is nothing less than knowing this crisis is a dark night of the species destined to compel us to take a great evolutionary leap forward.** When you've seen and known that, when you've understood and innerstood it, when you've connected the enormous global crisis with the truths of the great mystical traditions that are compelling us to die to the agenda of the ego into the radiance of divine love, then you know **this crisis is not the prelude to the end of humanity but actually the birth canal of a new humanity.**

So I am urging all mystics and spiritual people and activists who are pursuing justice everywhere to realize what this spiritual crisis really is and to start doing the serious, beautiful, frightening, grueling but marvelous work of calling upon the divine to awaken their minds to illumination, their hearts to sacred rapture and their bodies to divine strength, so that in this unified force field of the sacred marriage we can be born into our divine identity and start working with divine help and divine wisdom to transform our apocalyptic nightmare into a new

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HEART YOGA

The Sacred Marriage of Yoga and Mysticism
by Andrew Harvey & Karuna Erickson
\$21.50, paper. North Atlantic.
288 pages, 7x9, 50 b/w photos

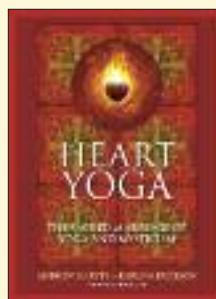
Andrew Harvey, renowned spiritual writer, and Karuna Erickson, longtime yoga teacher and psychotherapist, have been working together for many years to birth a revolutionary approach to yoga. *Heart Yoga* marries at the most passionate depth the ancient traditions of yoga with the wisdom of the mystical traditions concerning the sacred heart and the divine light. Their intention is to inspire the yoga community to become the crucible for the divinization of the body and the birth of the divine human.

Their book *Heart Yoga* grounds the splendor of the vision of the sacred marriage in an unfolding of the "Five Great Joys" that radiate from it: the joys of transcendence, creation, love for all beings, Tantra, and service. For each of these joys, Andrew and Karuna offer precise and beautiful combinations of classical asanas with sacred poetry, meditations, and visualizations drawn from the classical mystical traditions. These enable each joy to be experienced simultaneously in the illumined mind, ecstatic heart, and increasingly conscious and spiritualized body.

With detailed descriptions and photographs of fifty yoga poses and their alchemical effects on the body and consciousness, *Heart Yoga* presents yoga as a simple meditative practice that enables the practitioner to dwell in the heart and experience the bliss of union with the sacred power underlying all of life. The book explains how to prepare for *Heart Yoga* and includes the authors' own compelling stories of their individual journeys along the path of yoga: stories of suffering, transcendence, and joy.

Andrew Harvey and Karuna Erickson are both longtime devoted Sacred Activists who see *Heart Yoga* as a yoga that can tremendously help the creation in a human being of a unified force-field of embodied divine energy and love.

Among Andrew Harvey's other books are *The Hope* and *Light Upon Light*.



BANYEN EVENT

Andrew Harvey
and Karuna Erickson

Sept. 13, VPL
See p. 9 for details.

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kind of grace.

MB *What is your meaning when you say the word "divine"?*

AH Well, I have to speak as a mystic and what I mean by it is that everyone is born with an original blessing of divine consciousness. All the mystical traditions proclaim this with one voice, and when you wake up you realize your innate consciousness is radically non-dual with the light consciousness that is creating and engendering all the world. The entire universe is created out of a pulsing dynamic light, love, bliss, knowledge

consciousness—*Sat-chit-ananda*—and everything that exists is a crystallization of this light consciousness in matter. **The 'father' has been described in the great Hindu traditions as a transcendent light and the 'mother' as the shining of that light that is embodied in every single sentient creature, every rock and tree and leaf. The entire universe is a divine manifestation and human beings are the peculiarly privileged locus of that** because they have been given, as a primordial blessing from the divine, a divine consciousness which is everyone's duty on this earth to realize and embody.

I was fortunate enough to interview the Dalai Lama on the day he won the Nobel Prize in Oslo. At the end of the interview I

found the guts to ask him, eyeball to eyeball, what is the meaning of life. He roared with laughter, flung his head back and then became extremely focused and serious and said, "The meaning of life is to embody the transcendent."

The divine is everywhere, it is in everything, and it can be uncovered through a long and arduous journey at the core of every human being.

You can read the much longer full interview in the *In Focus* section of our website, www.banyen.com, or follow this link: http://www.banyen.com/infocus/harvey_heartyoga_0410.htm

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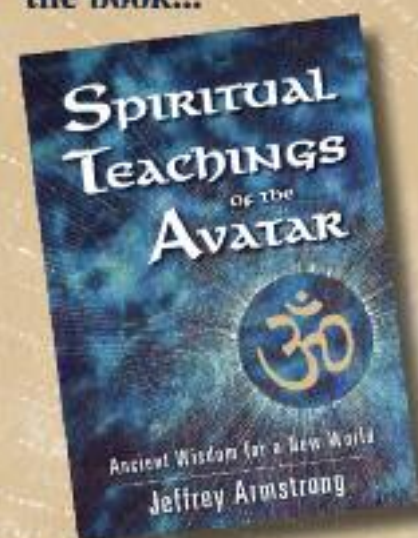
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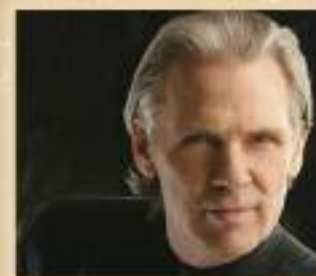
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