

A Paradigm of Spiritual Engagement

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Introduction

Unity and love already exist between any two beings. Spiritual practice helps to realize it. The natural, social, and political world responds when we cooperate. Way and goal are not different. Peace contains love, and love is the fulfillment of peace. This is not an end-state, but a dynamic process—surrendering to the grace of the moment.

Seven Elements of Spirituality

1. Love
 - a. Surrender to the grace of the moment
 - b. “Yes!” = No resistance to what is. This does not mean not responding
 - c. Detachment—from desire that things be different
 - d. The Love Triangle = Loving thoughts, words, deeds = Both results and causes of underlying love
 - i. Compassion = Conscious tendency to eliminate suffering and delusion
 - ii. Loving-kindness = Conscious tendency to increase happiness or love
 - iii. Wisdom is compassion at rest, Compassion is wisdom in action
 - e. Circulate(whatever good energy we have), if only by radiating it quietly
2. Remembrance of the Divine
 - a. We remember what we love, and we love what we remember
 - b. We become like what we remember, and we dissolve in what we love
3. Oneness
 - a. Unity is the realization of love
 - b. Interdependence, interrelationship, inter-being, connectedness
 - c. Basic equality—We’re all learners, growing, with infinite limitations, the same Divine essence
 - d. Cooperation
 - e. Spirituality includes social and political action
 - i. Inner transformation is inseparable from outer transformation—but comes first
4. Peace
 - a. Spirituality is the inner knowledge of peace
 - b. Peace is a process, not a destination or static state
 - i. Joy = Vibrant peace
 - c. Spiritual action = Any action performed with a quiet mind and open heart
5. Heightened awareness includes: “Look and see” into the more real conscious reality beneath the transitory and shallow level of thoughts
 - a. Various levels of knowing—of conscious reality—are uncovered

- b. Spiritual science—Look and see—Investigate the deeper conscious realities by seeing—and thus dissolving—progressively subtler levels of mental formations
 - i. Four levels of knowing—analysis, discrimination, inspiration, transformation
 - 1. Mohiyuddin ibn al-Arabi: Perceiving and being that which is—transformation
 - 2. Fanaa = Samadhi, satori, jhana, nirvana
- 6. Tightrope balance of ideal and experience—ideals are not realization
 - a. Balance comes through “self observation” in all situations
- 7. Freedom is an end in itself
 - a. Inner freedom comes before political, economic, and social freedom
 - b. Outer freedoms follow if enough people realize inner freedom

Short Form of the Seven Elements

1. Love
2. Remembrance of the Divine
3. Oneness
4. Peace
5. Mindfulness
6. The Tightrope of ideal and experience
7. Freedom

The Seven Elements as One-Liners

1. Love everybody
2. Remember God
3. It's all One
4. Peace is a process
5. Watch our limitations to death
6. Practice is a tightrope from bondage to freedom
7. Freedom is an end-in-itself

Appendix 1

In this Paradigm of Spirituality...

Freedom is treasured.

Human rights are treasured.

Politics is hopeful.

I don't abandon my life for the monastery.

I don't abandon my monastery for toil, even in a righteous cause.

I enjoy religious celebrations of all kinds.

I don't convert; I listen.

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Science is only one window on an extraordinary universe, and therefore limited. But it provides a wonderful example for other ways of thinking, including spirituality. Scientists can change their theories, yet still be scientists. They meet, debate, and seek truth together. One generation can overturn another's thinking without violence. Scientists publish retractions of their work when they are wrong, and even wrong ideas are respected if they help smooth the way to the right idea. Religion is sadly behind human development in this regard. Spirituality can adapt to changing understanding.

Spirituality seeks direct revelation as the source of certainty, the sure and profound sense of the presence of God. This activity is not confined to special times or activities or places, but becomes continuous. In this sense mysticism has come out into the light, and the practice of the presence of God is no longer reserved for monks and sadhus.

Appendix 2

Questions for Consideration

- 1) Can there be spirituality without form?
- 2) Can there be spiritual practice without beautiful, self-evident theory?
- 3) If there is the possibility of knowledge, what is the necessity for belief?
- 4) Are we the subject, the object or the vehicle of contemplation?