

A
Ceremony
Called
Life

WHEN YOUR MORNING COFFEE
IS AS SACRED AS HOLY WATER

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sounds true
BOULDER, COLORADO

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INTRODUCTION

We weave in and out of ceremony throughout our entire lives. Between our very own births and deaths, we celebrate rites of passage, we lose loved ones, and perhaps we get married, birth our children, engage in personal rituals, attend support circles, or sit in spiritual ceremonies.

No matter what sort of ceremony we find ourselves in, once we are there, we sense we're in the midst of some sort of tangible meaningfulness and at the feet of a mysterious invitation, and for that, our presence heightens, our hearts begin to open, and we're more likely to recognize our role in creating our lives. Indeed, we weave into these sacred moments when we allow ourselves to drop into this deep space of ceremony, once again engaging with the magic of life and soaking up the profundity we crave so much.

But then we weave *out* of these sacred moments when we mistakenly believe that all of life could ever be anything other than a procession of sacred moments, an inherently divine ceremony. We compartmentalize the spiritual nature of our lives, squashing it into one specific corner, rather than allowing it to course the waters of our whole lives, as it naturally does. We build spirit dams, and because of that, we become dry, tame, disjointed, and we do not feel whole. It is so easy to read self-help books, go to yoga class and workshops, and sing *Om Shanti Om*, but at the end of the day, until we realize all of life as the spiritual practice—until we realize the water we drink is the wine of

God—we don't feel the completion we crave. When we begin to see the altar is all around us—in the rocks, the magic of numbers, the miracle of other people, the sound of crunching leaves beneath our feet, our morning showers—all of life is again meaningful, and each moment carries within it the invitation home.

I was first confronted by the seeming deficiency of the sacred nature of my own life when I was working as an artist manager in the music industry. Since I was a little girl it had been a fantasy of mine to work directly with musicians, and living it out was a dream come true, until it wasn't. At twenty-six, I realized the path I was going down was no longer right for me, and that the longer I remained on it, the more disconnected I felt from my soul and the generous, good nature of life.

I tried to talk myself out of leaving for as long as I could, fearing the end of the secure life I knew so well, but eventually, the call of life was screaming through my soul and was impossible to ignore. *It is time to follow your heart. It is time to resolve the pain, meet your true Self, and learn and live your truth.* So I followed the wild call of my being to a commune in Central America to see what would happen if I let go of who I *thought* I was in favor of finding out who I *truly* was. As crazy as it seemed to leave such a promising career and head to the jungle with no plans and very little money, it was undeniably time to let go and dive into the unknown.

Allowing myself to trust that mysterious guidance and the magical call of life, no matter how unreasonable or insane it sounded, proved to be the beginning of my return to the true nature we all share: that of a wise, intuitive, joyful, free being; part God, part human, home to the true master that lives within; destined to create many good things. Indeed, since walking off the cliff of that secure life and into the free fall of following my

energy wherever it takes me, of allowing life to be a meditation, I have remembered to appreciate each step of the journey as just as sacred as the next. I have remembered that every tear and challenge is just as meaningful, benevolent, and welcome as every gust of bliss and surge of joy. I have remembered that our presence and our accountability are the weavers of our best destiny.

I have also remembered that when we keep our attention inward with the stillness, remembering the life we experience to be a reflection of what we hold inside, and work with what we see in that mirror for our freedom, we are empowered, we open more, we move away from fear and into love, and we are able to do our best. And, finally, I've been reminded again and again that our willingness to show up for it all without judgment—our willingness to keep our eyes and hearts open and our awareness sharp—is the current that keeps us harmonized and going wherever we are best off going, continuously delivering us to the sweetest, most fulfilling visions of our lives.

This book is about all of that. It's dedicated to helping you remember how to experience all of life as the precious ceremony it is. It's an invitation to remember how to wake up each morning—whether you're happy or sad, whether you're alone or in the arms of your lover—knowing that you are in a unique ritual and gift of life, and how *that*, in and of itself, is profoundly and inherently *miraculous*. It's about the opportunity you have to stand there while your oil gets changed and be absolutely mystified and amazed or even simply curious about that simple miracle: that you can stand there, that there's a car, that you happen to be doing this, that you are breathing, that you also happen to be passing through an intense breakup or just had another beautiful day. This book is about the opportunity we have to wake up not only through the profound and dazzlingly spectacular moments, but also through the mundane, the challenging, the seemingly

meaningless or *please-can't-you-just-end-already* moments that make up the expanse of our lives. Indeed, it's about discovering the miraculous *through* the mundane, the Godself *through* the human self, and the beauty that abounds when we stop denying our humanity and instead integrate the two.

Today, through my work as a metaphysical guide, channel, and writer, I share this way of living and being with others. Whether in personal relationships, work with clients, or work with myself, I rest my focus upon the simplicity and perfection of this moment; the storyless experience and honoring of the feelings within it; what there is to learn, “heal,” or align, when needed; and the journey into that which limits us, disempowers us, and keeps us playing small—all of which are insights we explore in this book.

What I share here is a reminder of what we all already know. We just need to be reminded of the essential teachings of life now and then. Why? Because we are on a profound journey of remembering our divinity in a world that still fights against it. Because we are still learning how to be human. Because we have absorbed at least a few layers of conditioning, and for that, it is inevitable that our perspective clouds and clouds again. So many of us are doing our best to remember and align with the power of love, presence, and grace, and it's always helpful to have some outstretched hands to hold along the way. This book is offered to you in this way.

To help us drop into a new understanding and embodiment of our divine nature, we will begin by taking a closer look at what it means to be “spiritual” and what it means to tap into our unconditional spiritual nature. In that discussion, we'll take spirituality off its pedestal and put it onto the seat beside us, where it can giggle with us at the madness and the glory of this life. From there, we'll dive a bit deeper into demystifying the old ideas,

concepts, and obstacles that tend to keep us feeling separate from our true nature and the Divine. After that, we'll explore what it means to embody our sacred nature of Creator and Created, and in doing so, we'll talk about how we can truly live life as the spiritual practice that it inherently is. It is my prayer that upon having diffused the confusion about what it means to be human and infused that perspective with the glory it deserves, we will begin to remember our true nature and the gift of our Earthwalk, and we will re-emerge at the end of this book as more awakened, empowered, and ceremonious individuals.

Through this writing, may you come to see that all of life is a ceremony for your awakening, your expansion, your joy, and your love, *when you are present to it*. Something happens in your day—an emotional trigger, an argument, a boring lunch break, amazing sex, unexplainable tears, weirdness, a profound joy, laughter, a breath in, a breath out—and there begins a new moment in the ceremony. You are learning, you are expanding, you are appreciating, you are opening and contracting, only to open again more into love. You are infinitely wiser from your connection to the teachings of the Guru of Life. And what is more worthy of awe, what is more worthwhile, what is more ridiculously and absurdly miraculous than that?

Part One

I AM

Recalibrating Our Vision
of Spirituality

Chapter 1

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Are you looking for me? I am in the next seat.
My shoulder is against yours.
You will not find me in stupas, not in Indian shrine
rooms, nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals:
not in masses, nor kirtans, not in legs winding
around your own neck, nor in eating nothing but vegetables.
When you really look for me, you will see me instantly—
you will find me in the tiniest house of time.
Kabir says: Student, tell me, what is God?
He is the breath inside the breath.

KABIR,

Kabir: Ecstatic Poems, versions by Robert Bly

I have to say this now, for if I don't I will burst: *spirituality includes your humanness*. It includes your weariness and stumbles as much as your reverence and joy, and it includes *Seinfeld* as much as *satsang*. It is perhaps confounding for us all that somewhere along the line, spirituality seemed to begin to exclude the ruffled feathers of our humanity. Maybe it's all the conditioning of control and the patriarchal structures, or maybe it's the Eastern focus on enlightenment and nonduality that did it. But whatever is

responsible for the misunderstanding that spirituality only breeds on shiny white marble floors—that spirituality is a compartmentalized area of our lives rather than *all of life itself*—I am sure it did not intend for such an epic mix-up.

Spirituality or anything that is meant to explore the nature of being could never reject or exclude anything that exists—period. In other words, spiritual practice includes and welcomes not just your *ommmms*, but also your “*ommm*-my God, I’m about to flip out.” For, after all, although the former may be peace, the latter is just the perception of an absence of peace and therefore an invitation into the opening and expansion process that life is all about. Our places of discovery, illumination, and breakthrough are not limited to our temples and our mosques but extend into traffic jams, dirty dishes, and even our trips to the mechanic.

What’s happened, though, is we have moved so far away from appreciating the sacred, pervasive nature of our vulnerability—which is truly one of our most essential gifts—and as a result of this rejection have struggled, compartmentalized our lives away, and become deeply dissatisfied. For that, it is time to reclaim *what we know in our bones to be true*. It is time to reclaim the spark in our souls and the expansive holiness of our lives.

It is often our ignorance and our ideas around spirituality that keep us from knowing our wholeness. For example, many of us believe ourselves to be “unspiritual” or not into “that stuff,” which in and of itself is a debilitating idea. On the other hand, many of us on a spiritual path quietly hope that spirituality is an end to vulnerability and the ups and downs of life. We believe we are out of the grace of God or not doing good enough or regressing or need to grow faster or whatever our particular strand of rejection is—just because we’re human.

To that, I say, it is time for an inner revolution—one that burns away that old paradigm, the idea that who we are *as we are* is not enough and that life “gives us problems,” and radically welcomes a new paradigm, that honors the full spectrum of our human vulnerability and the teachings of the Guru of Life. This, I am sure, is the only way to remember the wholeness we once knew so well.

If that wholeness is what spirituality points toward, then I say spiritual practice is the practice of becoming more aware, via the human experience, of the divinity and unity consciousness that is everyone and everything. I also say that wherever there is transcendence, there must also be inclusion. In other words, spirituality is working *with* and *through* the human experience for the expansion of our awareness. Furthermore, I’d say it’s the practice of anchoring that awareness in the body, which can also be described as merging and integrating the Godself/spiritual with the human self/material. I refer to that merged wholeness as the *Self*. It’s a case of “and”: We are both human *and* God. We’re feeling both frustrated (or sad or angry) *and* at peace. We are both the spiritual (eternal) *and* the material (ephemeral). We created the material *through* the spiritual, which means the material must be inherently spiritual, and now have the unique and wildly magical opportunity of experiencing our Selves, which is what it’s all about. By the power of reflection, life is an experience of our Selves (and ourselves, as the case may be). The two simple things this practice of awareness and integration necessitates are presence and accountability.

This understanding of spirituality implies that all of life is a ceremony simply because it is a procession of sacred moments, and all of those moments inherently contain within them the invitation for you to either become more aware or rest in your beingness as awareness itself, as the one who witnesses all. Every single thing from washing the dishes to mowing the lawn is

a spiritual activity simply because it involves *you*—a being of inexplicable cosmic presence—and simply because it is happening. It is a moment available for your totality. It is a moment for you to experience the fullness of life through the incredible spectrum of duality. It is a moment for you to appreciate—really *appreciate*—that life is not about making you happy or meeting your expectations. It is a moment for you to appreciate that *all* moments—the “good” moments, the “bad” moments, every kind of moment—are part of the ceremony. It is a moment for the awareness that you are to juice the experience of this divine unfolding—via your presence, accountability, and vulnerability—for all that it’s worth.

Essentially, we’re always either in a state of presence and peace or we’re in a moment that is experienced as an upset: an interruption from that state of simplicity to reveal that which is unresolved within (that which, therefore, welcomes the feeling of upset). This can only mean that even when it’s not “good,” it’s all, actually, truly good, simply because it’s all “grist for the mill of awakening,” as Ram Dass says. We’re either able to stay present and in peace or enjoyment—or we’re not, in all of the various ways we masterfully tend to check out. The point is, when we *do* check out and react, it’s always an opportunity to discover and disintegrate the little trapdoors that had been locking out peace and wholeness and had been allowing the unconscious to take over. We will be discussing how to work with these opportunities in-depth throughout the book.

We have heard the echoes of the human-spiritual separation misunderstanding through all areas of our lives—in misguided “good advice” like “control your emotions” and “be cool” and in common collective patterns, like leaving relationships when shit hits the fan and rationalizing or soothing yourself out of what you’re feeling. Because so many spiritual conversations are often