

All Are Sacred – Everyone?

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I. As I was preparing this talk, I felt almost overwhelmed by the conflict in our culture at this time, politically, and especially with the shootings of unarmed black men by police and the horrific pain felt by communities protesting the same, and the unrest in the communities where these occurrences took place. Scriptures from all the great religions proclaim that all are sacred. All! Without exception. How can this be true, we sometimes feel?

A. In Chapter 2, verse 53 of the Bhagavad-Gita, one of India's oldest scriptures, it is written, "They live in wisdom who see themselves in all and all in them."

B. And the master teacher Jesus is reported in the book of Matthew, Chapter 5, verses 43-48, to have said, "Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." He went on to say that if we just love those who love us, and do good to those who do good to us, and bless those that bless us, that is no big deal spiritually speaking – anyone can do that. He was issuing a challenge for us to see past appearances to the internal Truth.

1. What about people who behave in destructive ways, people who roam the streets with addictions, mental illnesses, people who attack others, people who are habitually unkind, who are greedy, lawbreaking, lust-driven? Yes, even these are sacred – but they don't know it, and so are acting out who they believe themselves to be.

2. A great spiritual teacher once stated, "There is no sin but a mistake, and no punishment but an inevitable consequence." He went on to explain that the so-called "mistake" was the ignorance of one's own sacredness and the sacredness of all others. Only in this ignorance could

self-destructive acts and destructive acts toward others be committed. Therefore it is up to the spiritually awakened to recognize and practice seeing beyond appearances to the sacred core of all.

3. I am certain everyone here has heard and perhaps even used the greeting, “Namaste.” What does it mean? The sacred in me bows to the sacred in you. I wrote a song entitled, “I Recognize You,” the words to which are, “I recognize you. You are a sacred being. I honor you. You are a child of Divine Love. I bow to you and to myself for we are one. Man, woman or child, I include you in my circle of love. Rich, poor or becoming, I include you in my circle of love. Every color, race or religion, I include you in my circle of love.”

I wrote it because it is not always easy to see the sacred in all beings, regardless of who they are, regardless of their behavior or their current state of consciousness. But I wanted to be able to do it because that *is* the spiritual calling. That *is* the spiritual practice that we must embrace. Every war that has ever been fought requires the fighters to dehumanize the so-called enemy. Derogatory names have been invented and fictional information is created to justify killing them. In my immediate family, we have Japanese, Vietnamese, African Americans, Apache Native American, Italian, Welsh, Irish, and French Canadian. We have Buddhists, Fundamentalist Christians, Mormons, atheists, Episcopalians, Catholics. Somehow, we have evolved into the United Nations. And every group brings its wealth of beauty and cultural uniqueness to the table where we peacefully assemble; also, their histories and experiences of suffering, persecution and prejudice.

4. I recall Mother Teresa once having been asked how she could bring a poor, filthy, diseased person into her home to nurse them and she replied, “He’s just Christ in one of his many distressing disguises.” As we face our nation during this very trying time of political turmoil, the forthcoming presidential race that has been ugly and contentious, the disturbance in our cities between police and the communities they are supposed to be policing, it is important for us as spiritually awakened beings to embrace a practice of blessing, of recognizing, of praying for those who we may be tempted to judge, criticize, even hate because of their “distressing disguises.” Recently, Dr. Kenn Gordon, speaking at a Peace

Conference, stated, "It is not what we hate that is the problem; it is that we hate al all."

5. The class on World Religions that is currently being offered by the UU Fellowship of Visalia at Brandman University, examines the core beliefs and practices of a variety of religions. This past week, Buddhism was the subject. One of the quotes by Christian Humphrey, authoritative author on the subject pointed out a key belief, called *tahna*. He describes it as "the cause of life's dislocation, all those inclinations which tend to continue or increase separateness. He further quotes Buddha: "Life, being one, all that tends to separate one aspect from another must cause suffering. Our duty to our fellows is to understand them as extensions, other aspects of ourselves, fellow facets of the same Reality."

C. I offer to you this evening a challenge, and to myself: Are we willing to love, bless, do good to, forgive and pray for those who we find unlovable? Are we willing to embrace all as a sacred expression of the One Life? I have taught myself a way of invoking or calling forth a blessing upon those whom I find challenging: "May we experience complete enlightenment in this lifetime!" I include myself in that blessing because any time I judge or condemn anyone else, I am poisoning the atmosphere of life. Therefore, I must bless, I must love, I must forgive.

D. In closing, I offer these words by Emmet Fox:

"There is no difficulty that enough Love will not conquer; no disease that enough Love will not heal; no door that enough Love will not open; no gulf that enough Love will not bridge; no wall that enough Love will not throw down; no mistake that enough love will not redeem. It makes no difference how deeply seated may be the trouble, how hopeless the outlook, how muddled the tangle. A sufficient realization of love will dissolve it all. If only you can learn to love enough, you will be the happiest beings in the world."