



## Week 5 Lesson:

### Bring Forth What is Within You

*If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.*

- Gospel of Thomas, 70

Those strong words from the teachings of Jesus shine a light on the significance and power of our choices. Exploring svadharma—what it is to actively live a life with higher purpose and meaning—lands us face to face with the timeless challenge of bringing forth what is within us. It also points to its great promise. What does that mean? First, it means we have the power to *choose* to live the soul life—to live our lives authentically from within by attuning to, and cooperating with, Spirit. When we make the choice to live the authentic soul life, we align body, mind, and spirit. This gives us access to the soul’s bliss, creative energy, and wisdom. It then takes discipline, discernment, and surrender to follow through with the inner guidance we are given, to do what we are called to do.

To not bring forth what is within us is to remain driven by outer circumstances, either oblivious to our inner callings or dismissive of them. There is little vitality in such a life disconnected from the soul’s direction. We may be outwardly successful, but without the inner connection, our experience of the soul life is destroyed. Bringing forth what is within us—living by soul guidance—saves us from unconscious, mundane, soulless living. It makes thriving possible.

Discerning our svadharma is not as simple as deciding what our vocation will be. As Yogarupa Rod Stryker noted in a recent conversation with me on the Yoga Hour podcast, “our purpose is



not our profession.” Our purpose in life is not *what* we do, it is *how* we do it. It is what we bring forth, what we *express* as we do what is ours to do. As emanations of God, all the qualities of God are within us. Yet, these qualities exist as only as potential. The way we live with higher purpose and bring forth what is within us is how these divine potentials become actualized.

There are several ways we can explore our svadharma—what it is and how to actualize it. What follows are ten points for discerning svadharma. But first, a story.

In the last lesson, I mentioned that one of the ways my svadharma is expressed is through writing. For decades, I have been writing poetry and inspirational instruction in my role as a spiritual teacher. It is something I enjoy and recognize as both a gift and responsibility. Yet, it is frequently difficult for me to set aside the time that writing requires. When I am fully immersed in a writing project, many other important things must be set aside.

Once when I was working on writing a book, I got tired and began to think about the other things I was not able to do. About that time, I saw a television program where a writer was being interviewed about his work. My attention floated away from what was being said in the interview as I noticed all of the books on the shelf behind him. The thought rose in my mind, “soon this man will be gone from this planet, and all of those books behind him will just be sitting on the shelf. No one will look at them. Ultimately, they too will fade away.” You can probably tell I was having a low mood! It was one of those challenging times when you ask yourself “what’s the use?” I started wondering; here I am putting all this time and energy into this work—will it make any difference? Does the cost of doing it measure up against what it accomplishes? Does it matter? As far as svadharma goes, those are not the right questions to ask. However, they led me to further insight and clarification about my svadharma.

Continuing my line of questioning, I said to my husband, “what if I just didn’t write? What if I didn’t spend all this time writing? Just think of all the things we might do.” Fortunately, I am married to a wise man. He thought about what I said (and likely took into account my mood) and



replied, “Yes you could stop writing. But then, you would not be you.” His comment was just what I needed to remind me of the purpose of svadharma. In truth, the writing is not for anyone else, even though my goal is to serve others. What we do as we express our svadharma is not for a result, no matter how noble. It is the process itself that is our proper concern. We do what we do to very best of our ability, and then we let it go. This is the key to loving what we do and discovering joy in doing it. What we do is our offering, *one that only we can make*.

## Discerning Svadharma: Ten Points of Living our Purpose

**One:** Our svadharma is uniquely ours to do. It aligns with our responsibilities, our calling, capacities, and potential.

**Two:** It arises from an intrinsic, fundamental urge. We all yearn to be happy, love and be loved, and to be of service.

**Three:** It may not be easy. It usually isn't. It stretches us and takes us beyond the confines of ego identity.

**Four:** It requires self-discipline.

**Five:** Arising as it does from within us, it is natural for us and ultimately, familiar to us.

**Six:** It is required. Bringing forth what is within us is our pathway to fulfillment. Because we were born for it, it has a relentless quality to it.

**Seven:** It is our path of perfection. By engaging in our svadharma, we discover and unfold the soul's inherent potentials.

**Eight:** It requires surrender to our higher Self in order to be fulfilled.

**Nine:** There is help. Divine grace naturally supports our efforts in harmony with higher purpose.

**Ten:** It brings joy.

# Dharma 365!

A Year of Living Purposefully



Discerning and expressing our svadharma is simply being authentically who we are in alignment and attunement with the universe. As author E. Stanley Jones wrote, “The Gulf Stream will flow through a straw provided the straw is aligned with the Gulf Stream, and not at cross purposes to it.”<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> E. Stanley Jones, *How to Pray*, (Ravenio Books, 2015) p.5



## Lesson Journal:

Am I bringing forth what is within me?

What do I do that continually calls me to express my divine potential? Can I name my svadharma, my unique contribution, as I consider that?

Write down one or two discrete goals that you have already set or will set now that relate to your svadharma. Track your progress in your journal, keeping in mind the higher goal of soul unfoldment—what you are learning and becoming in the process.