

# Leading with Spirit

## Training in Spiritual Activism



*Leading with Spirit* is a unique training program for professionals and organizations seeking to infuse their work with inspiration and transformative practices from the world's spiritual and wisdom traditions. The premise of Satyana's *Leading with Spirit* program is that new forms of leadership in social, business, and political arenas are urgently needed for the 21st century. Spiritual life is no longer limited to the quiet seclusion of mystics or seekers living in isolation from society. Now more than ever, we need leaders who truly combine the deep inner work of the heart with active outer service in the world.

Spiritual practices drawn from the world's wisdom traditions are vital to fostering the sea change in human consciousness that is our only hope for bringing peace into the world. Practices that inspire the soul and transform the heart—whether characterized as “contemplative” or “spiritual” or “mystical”—are as fundamental to today's leaders as traditional practical and organizational skills. Otherwise—as Thomas Merton cautioned—“If we attempt to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening our own self-understanding, our own freedom, integrity and capacity to love, we will not have anything to give to others. We will communicate nothing but the contagion of our own obsessions, our aggressiveness, our ego-centered ambitions.”

The choice between an outer life of activism and an inner life of contemplation has become a false dichotomy. Activism without spirituality is blind, and spirituality without activism is lame. What we need now is a new form of “spiritual activism” that combines both spiritual and social transformation. Nothing less can marry the heart's longing to the world's need, and give birth to a truly compassionate society.

*What is the purpose?* Every human being has a unique calling which, when followed, serves the larger human community and the natural world. Lasting change and innovation ultimately come from those who, poised on the brink of their own genius, courageously choose to follow their hearts. *Leading with Spirit* supports participants to find and fulfill their true calling, and to galvanize the necessary resources to manifest it.

*Who are these programs for?* *Leading with Spirit* programs are designed for activists, professionals, and organizations who genuinely seek to tap inner wellsprings of spirit in their work. The program is ideal for those seeking to lead from their hearts in daily professional service, and find supportive camaraderie among peers who share a commitment to integrating spiritual wisdom into their professional lives.



*In darkness live those who devote themselves to a life of action alone. In deeper darkness live those who devote themselves to a life of meditation alone . . . But those who combine action with meditation cross the sea of death through action, and enter into immortality through the practice of meditation.*

—Isha Upanishad

*What are the benefits?* The program is designed to augment traditional leadership and organizational skills with increased capacities of awareness, compassion, courage, vision, and presence. Benefits include:

- Principles of spiritual activism, and how to apply them in professional life;
- New paradigms in science and cosmology, and implications for social change;
- Balancing action and surrender: spiritual dimensions of leadership and service;
- Inspiring teachings from the world's spiritual traditions, and stirring lessons from historical pioneers;
- Clarification of personal vision, passion, and purpose. How to bring vision into reality;
- Building creative community with colleagues who share the yearnings of the heart;
- Enhanced skills of communication, conflict resolution, and group facilitation;
- Contemplative practices, and how to integrate them into daily professional life;
- How to maintain the heart connection in challenging situations and environments.

*Action follows being.* The real pioneers of social and cultural innovation are those who infuse spiritual wisdom into practical activism. Leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Aung Sang Suu Kyi, Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa always emphasize this integration of spirit and action—and their unprecedented social contributions are the direct result of a deep commitment to spiritual life. Whether rooted in Eastern or Western traditions, these pioneers all share a profound commitment to spiritual discipline at the very core of their worldly service. It is no small irony that social change activists universally revere these pioneers, yet relatively few follow their example of cultivating a spiritual discipline, and *leading with spirit* in every action and project. Nothing less is required if we are to become the instruments for the work of a larger wisdom and grace.

*The way of spirit.* Drawing on an eclectic range of traditions—ancient and modern, East and West—*Leading with Spirit* emphasizes practical skills and hands-on learning, rather than theory or philosophies. In practice, *leading with spirit* means awakening and following the silent wisdom of our own hearts. We are led by spirit. Participants learn how to draw on their inner resources and the collective power of the group for support in manifesting the changes they wish to make in their professional and personal lives.

*Variety of formats available.* Satyana Institute has conducted *Leading with Spirit* programs in a range of different venues and formats. Past events have included day-long or weekend introductory events, week-long seminars and retreats, and special long-term programs that met for multiple weekends spread over a year's time. Training programs are tailored to suit the particular needs of specific organizations or individuals.

*The outer work can never be small  
if the inner work is great.*

*And the outer work can never be great  
if the inner work is small.*

—Meister Eckhart

## Comments from participants in previous Satyana programs

I came away with the clear awareness that we are guided in all this by a greater intelligence and presence, and that our real learning is how to invoke, invite and surrender to that.

—Betsy McGregor, MD  
Beth Israel Hospital, New York, NY

Forty-four participants from our foundation experienced the all-encompassing work offered by the Satyana Institute. Creative new ideas and experiential practices were introduced, and throughout there was integrity and congruency of the facilitators and the program. The experience continues to inspire and motivate all of us.

—Karen Harwell, Foundation for Global Community  
Palo Alto, California

I love your commitment to this work of leading or stewarding spirit in the service of social evolution. The openness to flexibility in the process allowed for spontaneity and different possibilities to emerge.

—David Isaacs, Senior Strategic Planner  
Whole Systems Associates, Mill Valley, CA

I respect, honor, and appreciate your approach to this exciting work, your abilities to design processes that have transformational capabilities, your facilitation skills under very difficult and challenging conditions (this I can really appreciate), and the awesome integrity of your presences at all times.

—Linda Cunningham, co-founder, Howard-Cunningham, Boston, MA  
international organizational development firm

No other gathering of my colleagues has produced such deep reflection and connection. Rarely do we ever take the opportunity to share the raw vision we have, void of our egos and baggage. We come out of these retreats with a glow that truly endures. We are blessed to have this opportunity, and our work gets the payoff as well.

—Rob Edward, Executive Director,  
Carnivore Restoration Program, Colorado



*It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community—a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the Earth.*

—Thich Nhat Hanh

# Satyana's Principles of Spiritual Activism

**1. Transformation of motivation from anger / fear / despair to compassion / love / purpose.** This is a vital challenge for today's social change movement. This is not to deny the noble emotion of appropriate anger or outrage in the face of social injustice. Rather, this entails a crucial shift from fighting against evil to working for love, and the long-term results are very different, even if the outer activities appear virtually identical. Action follows Being, as the Sufi saying goes. Thus "a positive future cannot emerge from the mind of anger and despair." (Dalai Lama)

**2. Non-attachment to outcome.** This is difficult to put into practice, yet to the extent that we are attached to the results of our work, we rise and fall with our successes and failures—a sure path to burnout. Hold a clear intention, and let go of the outcome—recognizing that a larger wisdom is always operating. As Gandhi said, "the victory is in the doing," not the results. Also, remain flexible in the face of changing circumstances: "Planning is invaluable, but plans are useless." (Churchill)

**3. Integrity is your protection.** If your work has integrity, this will tend to protect you from negative energy and circumstances. You can often sidestep negative energy from others by becoming "transparent" to it, allowing it to pass through you with no adverse effect upon you. This is a consciousness practice that might be called "psychic aikido."

**4. Integrity in means and ends.** Integrity in means cultivates integrity in the fruit of one's work. A noble goal cannot be achieved utilizing ignoble means.

**5. Don't demonize your adversaries.** It makes them more defensive and less receptive to your views. People respond to arrogance with their own arrogance, creating rigid polarization. Be a perpetual learner, and constantly challenge your own views.

**6. You are unique.** Find and fulfill your true calling. "It is better to tread your own path, however humbly, than that of another, however successfully." (Bhagavad Gita)

**7. Love thy enemy.** Or at least, have compassion for them. This is a vital challenge for our times. This does not mean indulging falsehood or corruption. It means moving from "us/them" thinking to "we" consciousness, from separation to cooperation, recognizing that we human beings are ultimately far more alike than we are different. This is challenging in situations with people whose views are radically opposed to yours. Be hard on the issues, soft on the people.

**8. Your work is for the world, not for you.** In doing service work, you are working for others. The full harvest of your work may not take place in your lifetime, yet your efforts now are making possible a better life for future generations. Let your fulfillment come in gratitude for being called to do this work, and from doing it with as much compassion, authenticity, fortitude, and forgiveness as you can muster.

**9. Selfless service is a myth.** In serving others, we serve our true selves. "It is in giving that we receive." We are sustained by those we serve, just as we are blessed when we forgive others. As Gandhi says, the practice of satyagraha ("clinging to truth") confers a "matchless and universal power" upon those who practice it. Service work is enlightened self-interest, because it cultivates an expanded sense of self that includes all others.

**10. Do not insulate yourself from the pain of the world.** Shielding yourself from heartbreak prevents transformation. Let your heart break open, and learn to move in the world with a broken heart. As Gibran says, "Your pain is the medicine by which the physician within heals thyself." When we open ourselves to the pain of the world, we become the medicine that heals the world. This is what Gandhi understood so deeply in his principles of ahimsa and satyagraha. A broken heart becomes an open heart, and genuine transformation begins.

**11. What you attend to, you become.** Your essence is pliable, and ultimately you become that which you most deeply focus your attention upon. You reap what you sow, so choose your actions carefully. If you constantly engage in battles, you become embattled yourself. If you constantly give love, you become love itself.

**12. Rely on faith, and let go of having to figure it all out.** There are larger 'divine' forces at work that we can trust completely without knowing their precise workings or agendas. Faith means trusting the unknown, and offering yourself as a vehicle for the intrinsic benevolence of the cosmos. "The first step to wisdom is silence. The second is listening." If you genuinely ask inwardly and listen for guidance, and then follow it carefully—you are working in accord with these larger forces, and you become the instrument for their music.

**13. Love creates the form. Not the other way around.** The heart crosses the abyss that the mind creates, and operates at depths unknown to the mind. Don't get trapped by "pessimism concerning human nature that is not balanced by an optimism concerning divine nature, or you will overlook the cure of grace." (Martin Luther King) Let your heart's love infuse your work and you cannot fail, though your dreams may manifest in ways different from what you imagine.