

“Do not settle for less than everything – the transformation of the human heart and the courage to demand and bear the responsibility of leading a spiritual life in the world.”

THE ARHAT PROJECT

· a Residential Spiritual Community and an Experiment in Sacred Living ·

An outline proposal by Richard Harvey

The Arhat Project

The Arhat Project – a residential spiritual community for people seeking personal authenticity and Self-realization where the processes of personal inner enquiry and transformation are accelerated through a sacred engaged schedule and life-style of spiritual discipline and focus and psychological exploration and awakening. Based on the psycho-spiritual approach described in Richard Harvey’s book Human Awakening, particularly The Three Stages of Awakening, Arhat is a spiritual living project where personal and spiritual development are intensified and potentized through communal life, group work, lectures and study, meditation, spiritual and sacred practices, and spiritual direction.

If you are seriously interested in being a part of a residential community based on The Three Stages of Human Awakening (see <http://www.therapyandspirituality.com/interview-stages-awakening.html> and <http://www.therapyandspirituality.com/human-awakening.html>), please familiarize yourself with this new paradigm of psychological and spiritual growth before you read on. If you find yourself in the first, or possibly the second, stage of this model and you would be inspired and enthusiastic about establishing a core group for a spiritual community where personal and spiritual development is accelerated, intensified and potentized in a semi-monastic, secular structure of scheduled tasks and spiritual discipline, then write via the contact form at <http://www.therapyandspirituality.com/contact-us.php>.

Meanings of the Word “Arhat”

Arhat is a Sanskrit word meaning one who is worthy, one who has gained insight into the true nature of existence and achieved spiritual enlightenment. The arhat, having become free from the bonds of desire, is not reborn. It is the fourth and final state of spiritual attainment in the Theravada tradition (the Mahayana Buddhist equivalent of bodhisattva). Except under extraordinary circumstances, a human being can become an arhat only while a monk or a nun.

In China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet, arhats are depicted on the walls of temples in groups of 16 or more, representing disciples of the Buddha who remain in the world rather than enter Nirvana to provide people with a focus for spiritual attainment.

The Three Foundations of Spiritual Life

Three essentials exist to complete the integrated, effective, authentic spiritual practice. They have been known and practiced for a long time. The following is merely a summary of the seemingly endless expressions of the three foundations of spiritual life. Once you have begun your psycho-spiritual practice in earnest they will appear in people,

circumstances, objects, animals, nature, events, emotions, thoughts, until everything demonstrates, supports and furthers your sacred life and spiritual practice.

First, the recognition of the Divine in the world. Nothing can happen without this knowledge or, at the very least, the intuition of the Divine. Without it, one is condemned to the worldly, materialistic shadow life of superficial thinking and acting, of inauthentic feeling, of displacement from the eternal moment in the past and the future. One is lost, truly lost. So, this is the first point, the sighting of the Zen bull, the beginning of the life quest, the excitement of the venture must be there. This makes you a spiritual person and a wise fool. You cannot explain it; you don't know if it exists or even if it is real, but you have no choice, it is decided for you; your life is dedicated to the impossible quest of spiritual enlightenment.

Second, the sharing of enlightenment, the teaching, the dharma, the ever-present insights of deep wisdom which characterize and typify the life spent in sacred pursuits. Everything is significant. Everything is powerful. Nothing is superficial, without spiritual meaning; experience is a full passionate intensity at the center of your life. You are never superficial, so neither is the world. From the most mundane to the most exalted, from the ordinary to the extraordinary, the circumstances, relationships, dynamics and story of your life unfolds in profundity. All is teaching as long as you are listening, seeing, touching and feeling life in its multi-dimensionality, in its endlessness, in its expressions of truth. Life lessons fill you with excitement and inner knowledge. You learn from everything and everything learns from you. The sharing of enlightenment is endless.

Third, the help and support of sacred community. You yield to the help and support of the community. No human being stands alone; we are all interconnected and never more so than in our true spiritual nature. This nature, the very source and core of spiritual enlightenment, is one, a unity common to all. Our resistance to our divinity is expressed in our intolerance and prejudice of each other and in our unwillingness to combine together to attain the highest states of enlightenment that humanity is capable of. Think for a moment: were the whole of humanity to cease doing for only a short time and bring their collective powers to the spiritual endeavor, what could possibly prevent humanity from becoming spiritually enlightened, transcendent and divine? Nothing could withstand this combining of efforts. Each person may be considered an expression of God, so with this combination of the divine what couldn't we do? The power of the sangha, the community of like-minded souls, gathers in strength and power for the common good, to increase the great virtue of the impulse toward Divinity. Simply the act of surrender to the impulse to join together can be enough to accelerate your personal development through the layers of personality, character and defense that comprise the ego processes. Celebration, ritual, ceremony and the sacred life typify the community intent on spiritual practice and on manifesting the sacred.

A New Model of Spiritual Community

For many years now individual psychotherapy, group work, spiritual retreats and similar approaches have been the staple activities of psychological and spiritual seekers. The way of the future will be the way of community: local, provincial, decentralized, national, international, global and cosmic, and spiritual, transcendental and divine. The beginning of this tremendous undertaking will take place in small communities reminiscent of the traditional monastic and ashram establishments and the psycho-spiritual experiments of the later twentieth century. But if they are to succeed, the new spiritual communities must be

bound by a single focus and learn from the experiences of the earlier pioneers of communal spiritual living, as well as going beyond them and the paradigm they set.

The Present State of the World

In the modern era human beings face the challenge of rising into the heart chakra. For too long humanity has been dominated by the power and relational dynamics of the lower, essentially animalistic, survival-orientated energy centers. The result is the kind of world we live in and we know intuitively in our deepest wisdom that it is over. The power plays, the violence – both base and sophisticated types – the disregard for human life, the lack of empathic response, the inhumanity in relationships, the intolerance, prejudice, bigotry and victimization, marginalization, dissatisfaction and underlying discontent with the world lies in our prolonged experience of this limitation.

The limits of experience within the realms of the lower chakra concerns reduce humankind to a life-experience of action and reaction, of mechanical life, of unnaturalness, of predictability, of supposed safety and security bought at a dear price, of intolerance and lack of caring for fellow humans which rebound back on ourselves with inhuman regard and the inability to love ourselves. Out of touch with inner wisdom, spiritual and soulful qualities human beings have become angry, manipulative and wholly selfish, arrogant, complacent and unhappy. With the accompanying erosion of basic wisdom in the paradigms of communication and education most people can see no way out. Even those who should know better, and those who profess to know, seem to have little inkling that they are presenting truth in such a way that it is corrupted and polluted. This is because they deem it appropriate and right to dilute it for the consumption of the common person, or lowest possible denominator, without seeing that this reduces the aspirations of the truly spiritual to the lower ambitions and vision of spiritual materialism, power and everything that authentic spirituality is not about.

The Aims of the Arhat Project

The Arhat Project is a vision of courageous individuals bringing their lives to a tremendous experiment. What if a small group of dedicated people potentially bring their every waking moment to the spiritual endeavor; how long can it take for awakening to occur? Imagine you are pushing a boulder that won't budge and someone joins you to help and it still won't budge and then another and another person joins you. Eventually the boulder begins to move and you can roll it along the ground. If everyone joins in and lends their full weight to the endeavor, then the time comes when your original initiating impulse to move the boulder succeeds. What if spiritual awakening has never really been an individual endeavor? What if a collective, a community of like-minded souls is required? In Arhat then, with everyone pushing, pulling and aiming in the same direction we can accomplish far more than we ever could individually.

The Aims of the Arhat Project: to accelerate the growth of individual members and the community collectively, to transcend the processes of the ego and live the life of transformation and authenticity, with the practices of The Three Stages of Human Awakening as the chosen way method and background philosophy for the individual members and community collectively.

Numbers

We are not in the numbers game or the “attracting followers” game. We are interested in individuals who are sincere and passionate about spirituality and transcending the limitations of their personality. Quality of intention, motivation and application take precedent over the quantity of participants in the project. Even as the community tends toward the highest individual or most realized, more experienced, or wisest of its members to project adulation, admiration, scapegoating and sacrifice onto, it will just as much err toward the slightest, the weakest, least experienced, or least realized of its members to project disparagement, condescension, disapproval and rejection onto. The aim of this community is scrupulous self-honesty, but not the kind of “acting out” that implies license to take out your feelings on others. Any lack of caring for fellow members or taking responsibility for yourself is expected to be handled openly and honestly.

Religious and Spiritual Convictions

The Arhat Project is a milieu in which your own innate wisdom is encouraged to flourish through stimulation, silence, awareness practices and self-reflection. Nothing should be accepted without being considered deeply in your own heart. Inherent in The Three Stage model is the individual development of your own unique psycho-spiritual unfolding. Human Awakening is not a model that has been created for you to fit into; it is an innovative, informed paradigm that spans the ego processes, inhibitions and resistances inherent in 21st century life to the true opening, unfolding development of the spiritual, transcendent and divine states that are naturally and deeply desired by human beings both today and in the past.

You are not required to renounce your previous spiritual experiences, practices or beliefs or to give up your present ones. All religious and spiritual convictions have a place in the community, since all religious and spiritual traditions have in common the seeking after truth and the realization of the divine. This is common to all and therefore poses no threat or resistance whatsoever to the aims of the project.

What *is* asked is that the members of the community fully embrace, practice and commit to practicing the methods of Human Awakening as their central psycho-spiritual discipline, since the practice of a common ethos is the optimum way for the project to succeed in accelerating and intensifying the psychological and spiritual growth of its members. The principle is really combining the forces of several individuals to assist each one in strength, courage and application toward their shared spiritual goal.

The Core Group

To begin a community Arhat requires between four and eight spiritual seekers. They may be therapists, counselors, guides, spiritual teachers, healing practitioners, or serious spiritual students. They should have sincere interest in a radical, new and innovative psycho-spiritual approach to their own development and have acquainted themselves with The Three Stages of Human Awakening (see <http://www.therapyandspirituality.com/interview-stages-awakening.html> and <http://www.therapyandspirituality.com/human-awakening.html>) to establish a founding core group.

Time Scale

Initially we need a core group of individuals who are each able to make a long-term commitment to the project. Without this core group the project cannot begin. So, this is the first step: to assemble and gather the guiding heart, the nucleus of the community in a group of between four and eight members who are dedicated to furthering the work of Arhat.

As the community grows in strength and effectiveness, particularly in terms of the second stage of human awakening, which is the level of transformation and authenticity experienced as heart-centeredness and expressed through compassionate action, the number of community members may grow correspondingly.

Spiritual Focus

Although the functionality in practice of Arhat will include outreach and invitations to events, for example, psycho-spiritual workshops and neo-meditation events, the primary focus is on the reality of internal and deep processes of spiritual evolution in the individuals who comprise the community collective. This means that everything that takes place in the Arhat community should be witnessed, contemplated and understood on several levels, for example, outwardly, interpersonally, as a collective dynamic of the community, as an influence and/or a demonstration of inward processes.

Present Requirements

To build an Arhat community, the requirements are: property and land, including a sufficiently large building providing communal areas and personal living accommodation; having the potential for a library and study area, and a meditation/lecture/music/dancing room or hall. Beauty, aesthetics, sacred space potential, plus areas for storing supplies and growing food.

In time, a community member or participant will be required with legal skills and knowledge who can take charge of donations, funding and the establishment of non-profit organization or charitable status.

Primary Roles

Primary roles within the community should be assumed by the core group. Depending on the size of the core group initially two primary roles may have to be assumed by some members. I have identified the job tasks as:

Chief Cook

responsible for meals, snacks, catering, ordering food, food preparation, cooking, food stocks and storage, kitchen management, nutrition, serving, disposal of waste.

Head Gardener

responsible for land, gardens, growing vegetables, fruit, herbs, flowers, agriculture and horticulture, animal husbandry, composting, maintenance of external property, entrance.

Administrator

responsible for accounts, payments in and outgoings, official matters, legality, insurance, banking, planning permissions and establishment of the not-for-profit and/or charitable organization status.

Guest Master

administers and coordinates visitors, guests and volunteers; responsible for accommodation, provision of domestic catering facilities, bookings and deposits, and relationship with outside world, for example, inevitable enquiries from “the curious.”

Archivist

responsible for keeping records of the growth and development of the community and its various activities over time through photos, video and writing; collating and documenting.

Process Facilitator

responsible for facilitating and organizing group meetings to process the experiences and feelings of the community. Ideally a therapist or practitioner with some expertise and skill in therapeutic (psycho-therapeutic) approaches.

Spiritual Mentor

responsible for psycho-spiritual well-being of the community, witnessing and commenting openly on group community dynamics, in regard to individual well-being, the development of the community collective, spiritual advancement and, in time, relationship to wider community (local, national, international etc). This is the role Richard would assume in relationship to the community. Richard: “Please note I would not be a psychotherapist in the community or be involved directly in any practical tasks. My role is purely spiritual, mentoring, teaching and inspiring the community in its central endeavour – psycho-spiritual development through the Three Stages of Awakening, and initially to transcend the attachment to personality limitations, evolving, as the community progresses, through higher states of awakening and liberation.

Locations

Arhat may be located anywhere where there are self-motivated individuals with sincere spiritual aspirations. The communities may be set up by several core groups and in time a network for connecting and sharing knowledge and wisdom of the unfolding of each community’s experience may further each in their further growth and development.

Support link

See <http://www.therapyandspirituality.com/offer-support.html#qs5>



Thank you for your patience and interest in reading this material. I urge you and others to consider that now is not the time for our petty differences or preferences to prevail and dominate in the human world. Now is the time for us to do and be inspired to be more than we could ever have imagined. The intention of Arhat is to convey you further toward that exalted possibility that is your real life, your spiritual reality and the transcendent heart-motivated intention of your soul.

In summary the intention of Arhat is this: to be together as One. Here is a story:

A man came and knocked at a friend's door: his friend asked him, "Who art thou?" He answered, "I."

The friend said, "Be gone, there's no room here." The man went away and spent a year in travel and in separation from his friend until he realised his error and returned to the door and knocked again.

His friend called to him, "Who is at the door." "Thou," answered the man. "Now," said the friend, "since thou art I" come in. There is not room in the house for two "I's."

Every moment brings an opportunity for seeing "I" in "Thou," "Thou" in "I" and for seeing ourselves *as we really are*.

[excerpt from *The Flight of Consciousness*, Richard Harvey, Ashgrove Publishing 2002, p.25. Order at <http://www.amazon.com/-/e/B004WC4YQI>]

Thank you for your divine attention.

With love

Richard

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