

THE
EVOLUTION
OF THE SOUL
THROUGH SERVICE

Born to Serve

by Susan S. Trout, Ph.D.

WITH A FOREWORD BY HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

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Poem by Uvanuk from *The Enlightened Heart* by Stephen Mitchell.
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Personal stories in this book have been changed
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FOREWORD

Be wisely selfish and know that your happiness depends on the happiness of those around you and the world in general. If society suffers you will suffer, so love yourself enough to work for the social good.

—THE DALAI LAMA

*A*s human beings we all want to be happy. One of the most important foundations for happiness is mental peace. From my own limited experience I have found that the greatest inner tranquility comes from the development of love and compassion.

The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater is our own sense of well-being. Cultivating a close, warmhearted feeling for others automatically puts the mind at ease. It helps remove whatever fears or insecurities we may have and gives us the strength to cope with any obstacles we encounter. It is the ultimate source of happiness in life. If we remember that it is not just ourselves, but everyone who has to undergo suffering, this realistic perspective will increase our determination and capacity to overcome difficulties. Indeed, with this attitude, each new obstacle can be seen as another valuable opportunity to improve our minds.

Whether people are beautiful and friendly or unattractive and disruptive, ultimately they are human beings, just like ourselves. Like us, they want happiness and do not want suffering. Moreover, their right to overcome suffering and be happy is equal to our own. When we recognize that all beings are equal in both their desire for happiness and their right to obtain it, we automatically feel an empathy and closeness towards them. Through acquainting our minds with this sense of universal altruism, we develop a feeling of responsibility for others: the wish to help them actively overcome their problems. This wish is not selective; it applies equally to all. As long as there are human beings experiencing pleasure and pain, just as we do, there is no reason for discriminating between them by altering our concern for them if they behave negatively.

Recent advances in science and technology have led all over

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the world to an undue emphasis solely on material development. We have become so engrossed in its pursuit that, almost without knowing it, we have neglected to foster the most basic human needs for love, kindness, cooperation, and caring. But the development of human society is based entirely on people helping each other. If we lose this essential humanity, what is the point of pursuing only material improvement?

In this book Dr. Susan Trout draws on her long experience to discuss serving others as a means to greater happiness and spiritual development. We find that this is one of the common elements of almost all spiritual traditions. Indeed, I believe it reflects a fundamental aspect of human nature. Because we all share a wish for happiness and an identical need for love, it is possible to feel that anybody we meet, in whatever circumstances, is a brother or sister. We do not need to become religious; nor do we need to believe in an ideology. However, at every level of society the key to a happier and more successful world is the growth of compassion and the active wish to help each other.

The Dalai Lama
Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India
March 31, 1997

*P*REFACE

In the process of my journey I have learned a very important lesson: being of service means doing whatever needs to be done with no attachment to the form of the task and with no investment in its outcome. I have also learned there is an integral relationship between service and my own personal healing process.

–SUSAN S. TROUT

*D*uring the thirty years of my friendship with Susan Trout, I have watched the journey of her life as directed by her driving desire to understand service. Underneath this drive, I think, runs an even deeper river: a calling to experience joy—that deep, in-the-bones, peace-of-mind experience of God in each moment. From my vantage point, service is her medium, joy her goal. To these two things she has applied a singleness of purpose I have rarely encountered in anyone else whose focus has been inner rather than outer.

In *Born to Serve*, Susan extends the enormous gift of her life's journey to individuals and organizations. This gift has the potential to transform the way our society views service during the next century. The proof of her contribution is manifested by those whom she has already taught through her work as Executive Director of the Insititute for Attitudinal Studies in Alexandria, Virginia, and through her very being. Those of her students who have integrated what is presented in this book have each become a pebble of service dropped in the water of life. In this way the ripples of Susan's work are already reaching around the world.

Through her background in psychoneurology and communication disorders Susan possesses an understanding of scientific inquiry and research. She applies this analytical approach to everything—her own life and work and the study of psychospiritual development and organizational systems. She then synthesizes her observations and study of the empirical with her deep inner spiritual experience. Finally and almost immediately, she is able to envision the practical application of this synthesis. This ability to swiftly move from study to theory to

This ability to swiftly move from study to theory to revelation to practice is the gift of Susan's cognitive and spiritual process.

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revelation to practice is the gift of Susan's cognitive and spiritual process. *Born to Serve* is the result of just such an integration of sound psychological research, inner revelation, and years of observation and application.

Born to Serve turns Western culture's current view of service upside down. It challenges individuals and organizations to view everything, all of life, as service. In this new definition, service is not limited to some—the poor, the disabled, the sick, the dying; it pervades every encounter and every action. Service is the mirror of our relationship with God, for we cannot love God any more than we love others; and we cannot love others any more than we love ourselves. This concept of service challenges the individual to accept responsibility for the sculpting of his or her own soul; it challenges religions to focus on the deepest and most mystical truths of their teachings; and it challenges the culture as a whole to shift from an outer directed search for happiness to an inner directed experience of peace.

In *Born to Serve*, Susan presents service (by which she means the giving and receiving involved in every encounter) as the context for the deep personal inner work necessary to unveil the perfection of the individual soul. Inner work is work with the shadow side of ourselves, that part of ourselves, positive and negative, that we disown and deny. In the context of service, the shadow consists of our hidden motivations for serving. Becoming aware of “why” we serve raises our consciousness and brings us closer to God. The process of self-discovery is developmental in nature. We can choose to participate in our own development by increasing our willingness to meet the shadow, to use the “blows” of our life experiences as the tools for removing the obstacles to the discovery of our innermost selves.

I believe this book is a classic. In the sixteenth century, St. Teresa of Avila wrote *The Interior Castle* in which she described stages of development of the soul. She wrote the book for the sisters of the order she founded, the Carmelites. She wrote in Christian terms for those leading a monastic life. The only purpose for seeking the inner room of the castle where God dwells, St. Teresa wrote, is to take what one experienced there out into the world to help others. St. Teresa saw service as the result of the search for the inner room.

I feel that *Born to Serve* is *The Interior Castle* for the twenty-first century. Susan wrote it for lay people who seek to make the spiritual practical in their daily lives. She wrote it from an inclusive point of view, transcending dogma and doctrine. Susan sees service as both the castle through which we engage in the search and the result of the search. As our search is refined, so is our service. *Born to Serve* provides a roadmap through the castle to the inner room in which we are reborn as mystics, as selfless servers, as One with the Unknowable Absolute. Nothing is required but our willingness to let go, to fall unencumbered. For most of us arriving at the jump site is the result of an arduous journey and the decision to jump the result of great inner conflict and struggle.

Only when we feel driven, usually by despair, to fill our yearning for wholeness, do we surrender to the understanding that who we are is not determined by what we do in the world, but rather by our state of being. We then see that there is a reciprocal, dynamic, and ever-deepening relationship between our process of healing ourselves and the depth and breadth of our service to others.

In *Born to Serve*, the reader is invited to plunge into the intensity of exploring service as a way to become free from the entanglements and attachments of personality and to live in har-

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mony with the soul's true nature. Susan Trout leads the way on a path of service for all of us who know we were born to learn, to grow, and to serve.

Peggy Tabor Millin, M.A.
Asheville, NC
February 1997

PART ONE

*Service and the
Unfoldment of
the Soul*

A woman lay in a daisy field watching the clouds and contemplating her life. She remembered with deep regret all the times she had harmed herself and others. With all her heart, she looked to the heavens and asked for forgiveness.

Suddenly one of the clouds descended. Standing on it was an angel child who beckoned the woman to board the cloud. She did as bidden. The two rode the cloud to a great building in which there were many men, women, and children of all races, colors, creeds, and religions. The angel child led the woman inside where she was presented with a white book beautifully decorated with a gold rose. Then he led her back to the cloud and guided it back to the daisy field.

The woman had barely been able to contain her excitement over her gift. Alone in the field, she examined the book. When she opened it, she saw there was only one page. And on that page was written:

*There is nothing to forgive.
Use what you have learned from your life to help others.*

*I*NTRODUCTION

*L*ife, with its achievements and challenges, its joys and sorrows, gifts us with many opportunities to grow and serve. We serve when we willingly share the wisdom we have gleaned from our life experiences. The spirit of our life is made visible in the spirit of our giving and receiving.

Service pervades all of life. It is present in our communications with family, colleagues, and friends. The spirit of service exists in all activities of life, whether we cook meals, teach school, paint pictures, tend gardens, sweep streets, build buildings, or visit someone who is ill.

As we evolve spiritually, service is less about doing and more about being. We move from being outer directed to inner directed. More and more, we focus on the quality of our mind while living and working in the outer world.

Service is a dynamic partnership between the server and the served. We are all servers and we are all being served. The quality of our motivations, not the form of our service, determines the quality of our service.

STRUCTURE OF *BORN TO SERVE*

Following this introduction, the prologue entitled “Service as the Masterpiece of the Soul” captures the essence of *Born to Serve*. The book’s intent is to bring clarity and inspiration to service as a medium we can use to consciously sculpt our souls and our lives as masterpieces.

The book is divided into three parts. Part One: Service and the Unfoldment of the Soul explores the nature of the soul and its relationship to service. It defines the role of service in spiritual traditions and addresses how our hidden motivations can impact the quality of our service. Part One serves as the psychological and spiritual framework for the seven evolutionary stages of service discussed in Part Two: The Stages of Service. Part Three: Unveiling the Soul contains suggestions for indepth study of the book and methods and exercises for identifying and working with the shadow of service.

STRUCTURE OF PART ONE

THE NATURE OF SERVICE

This chapter explores our soul’s innate urge to serve and the role of personal choice in manifesting service in the world. A system of natural laws supports the soul’s urge to service. Ten laws of service are identified and described—the laws of synchronicity, *dharma*, omnipresence, evolution, receiving, uniformity, extension, agreement, transmutation, and transcendence.

Exploration of the relationship of personal growth to service is essential to understanding the nature of service. The Universal Tributes are introduced in this chapter as guidelines for unifying the self and service and for actualizing the principle that giving

and receiving are the same. The Tributes are discussed in detail in Part Two, Stage Five: Healing the Healer.

SERVICE AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOUL

Service is an expression of our soul's evolution. This chapter discusses the aspects of this evolution, including parameters of the soul's evolution, aspects of the soul's unfoldment, cycles of life, styles of service, and evolutionary shifts currently taking place in our consciousness of service. This chapter introduces the soul's seven evolutionary stages of service: Awakening to Serve, Work Ethic, Missionary Attitude, Wounded Healer, Healing the Healer, Selfless Action, and Beyond the Physical. These stages are discussed in depth in Part Two.

THE DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE

Service is an integral part of the world's five major religions. There are four spiritual dimensions to service: duty, charity, purification, and devotion. Duty is explored as giving, good works, a container for life, and spiritual practice. Service as charity is defined as the ability to give the right thing in the right amount at the right time and for the right reason. Service as purification allows service to be used as a means to clarify and purify hidden motivations. Viewing service as the altar of devotion is the purest form of service.

THE SHADOW OF SERVICE

Our motivations impact the quality of our service. Hidden motives reside in our shadow, an unconscious aspect of our psyche. Projection, denial, and neglect are shadow qualities that impact

our service. Projections of the shadow become visible in power and fame, pride, sentiment, and attachment. The denied shadow appears as evasion of service and incompetence and the neglected shadow as avoidance of caring for our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.