



Book Recommendation

The Great Work of Your Life: A Guide for the Journey to Your True Calling by Stephen Cope

Stephen Cope is a psychotherapist, Kripalu Yoga teacher, and an author of several books on yoga and meditation. He is the founder of the Kripalu Institute for Extraordinary Living. In this book he asserts that in order to have a fulfilling life you must discover the deep purpose hidden at the very core of yourself. The secret to unlocking this mystery, he asserts, can be found in the pages of a two-thousand-year-old spiritual classic called the Bhagavad Gita. Cope takes readers on a step-by-step tour of this revered tale and highlights well-known Western lives that embody its central principles – including such luminaries as Jane Goodall, Walt Whitman, Susan B. Anthony, John Keats, along with stories of ordinary people as well.

Allow me to briefly focus on one example that Cope gives us and comment upon how I was compelled to take note, to stop and to ponder and apply my understanding of it to my own way of being.

Cope shares with us the fourth teaching from Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita:

Know your dharma
Do it with all your passion
Let go of the fruits
And turn it over to me.

Know your dharma: Cope defines ‘dharma’ as the way, your calling, your vocation. To me, ‘knowing your dharma’, is akin to doing your personal manifesto work. Revealing, uncovering your purpose in your life by examining yourself at a deep level is the beginning of the process of examining your life and knowing your dharma. By starting with your self, you ensure that the insights that emerge regarding the life you wish to pursue, belong to you.

Do it with all your passion: once you have revealed your dharma – your best life – invest all that you have in the pursuit of it. This is the commitment that needs to be made to yourself. There is no denying that living your life, in the way that you have identified, to fulfill your purpose, takes courage. There are times when you will find yourself running up against others and need to stop and consider the best way forward that respects yours and their positions. Boldness, resolution, and courage however, especially in times of contention, combined with passion are vital in order to stay your chosen course, the one you’ve identified.

Let go of the fruits: know why you are choosing what you choose. Ensure your choices are anchored within your values aligned life, and are congruent with the passionate living of that life –



the process itself. If you allow yourself to project beyond the process, to the outcomes, and rely upon them as proof of your 'success', you are bound to be frustrated and even in danger of abandoning your chosen life. If you can adopt the attitude of 'let go the fruits', you have acceptance of whatever the outcomes may be without a reliance upon any one way. It is vital to find your reward in the living of your dharma – your way – intrinsically.

And turn it over to me: this teaching originates from Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. The 'me' referred to is the divinity. My reading is that the divinity is the divinity within me, within you, and within all humans. I read this teaching as an understanding that we live our lives for ourselves, but not just to serve self, but to serve something/someone greater than self. I believe we must all reach an answer – unique to ourselves – of what that 'greater than self' is. Our personal answer becomes the driving force beyond one small self.

I believe that at the heart of all spiritual truths there are commonalities that all of us can stand for, such as kindness, respect, and service. Discovering illuminating insights from a number of texts sacred to many, interpreting them in a way true to yourself, and living a life fully as a result, is beneficial to you and to all of us.

Please explore this book for yourself, with an open mind and an open heart. It deserves that attention.

Warm wishes,
Sue