

PROGRESS IN SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

People who come across spiritual movements and join to become part of the process of spiritualisation, generally belong to three groups: those who matured to embrace spiritual reality for the first time in their soul life, those who have done this kind of work in their previous lives and now need to continue their soul development, and those who voluntarily come back to Earth to facilitate some major developments, spiritual understanding or to aid in tipping the balance of development in a certain direction. These three kinds of people meet in spiritual groups.

It is not difficult to accept the fact that the soul development levels these people have are different, and that the speed of comprehension of spiritual truths and integration of these truths in a person's life will be different. At the end, what really matters in spiritual development of a person, is the *integration* of spiritual truths in this person's life. Likewise, it is not difficult to understand that people, who are highly spiritually developed, will be in a position to see who in their spiritual group is paying only a 'lip service' to the spiritual principles of life and who is not really progressing in their personal development. And it takes a certain level of humility for a person to admit that they need some additional guidance in their spiritual progress. Without humility this person cannot progress any further, because humility is one of the virtues we must acquire and comprehend the need for before we can move into a more challenging territory in spiritual development.

The most significant of spiritual truths, which we should try to comprehend, is that the spiritual reality is in a constant progression, and that we are going backwards if we, personally, do not improve our own spiritual development level. We can be useful to higher spiritual hierarchies and we can fulfil the Cosmic plan for ourselves and the human family if we are spiritually developed and progressing in that development, rather than just stagnating with a mere spiritual awareness. To be on par with the dynamics of spiritual life in the Universe, our task is to continually improve our level of being.

Spiritual development of a person is most successful and effective when all aspects of one's being are involved in that development. This concept is not new and already a number of highly spiritually developed people have embraced it and created or followed practices leading to a balanced but certain progression in spiritual life. Sri Aurobindo, for example, called his teachings Yoga of Synthesis,

where all aspects of a person's life need to be devoted to the spiritual progression.

With the attainment of a certain level of spiritual development, there comes an understanding that there is nothing more important in one's life than a progression in spiritual awareness and the improvement of one's spiritual level of being, that this is the purpose of an individual life and that of the Life of Cosmos. We all may not be in a position to live in ashrams lead by highly developed spiritual practitioners, but we all (even while living a busy existence in the centre of our materialistic world) can improve the efforts in our personal spiritual journey by, first of all, adhering to our spiritual development plan and by continually paying attention to different aspects of our personality, our needs, and our emotional attachments.

A friend of mine once said that the contemporary spirituality is mostly a 'salt and pepper' spirituality: people like this and that, go for holidays, go to a church or a sailing club, and on top of that go to a meditation group to gain some other experience—in the same way as adding salt and pepper to our meal makes it more interesting. This kind of attitude is very much immature—perhaps a nascent spirituality entering someone's life—just the beginnings. We need to realise that it is not our privilege to make spirituality a 'salt and pepper' of our lives. The spiritual understanding is given to us in order to facilitate the progress in the life of the Cosmos, to allow us to shake off the shackles of ignorance, fear and gross existence. Is this not important enough to be taken seriously?

Why is it essential to have a master or a mentor in this area of our development? It is important for us to know that we are indeed doing everything we can to further the progression of our spiritual development. We can spend the rest of our lives thinking that we have progressed sufficiently, or that there nothing else to discover (within ourselves for example), or we can forget completely about our spiritual quest and, say, waste ten years of our lives chasing up some dreams of grandeur and glory, not knowing that this was a wrong pursuit, and worst of all that our spiritual quest has been abandoned. We need to understand that our personal egos are in charge of our volition during a large part of the spiritual development process. Where we think our soul needs to go, turns out, after much lost time, that it was our ego's desire to pursue. People who practise spiritual development without using a spiritual instruction devised by someone much more advanced, or people who have a problem with accepting someone else's seniority in spiritual matters, have really only scratched the surface of spiritual transformation. And until such time that they experience the pangs of true humility and find in their hearts a true desire to serve the human family rather than the requirements of their ego, they can consider themselves to be the students and not the developed practitioners.

Let us remember that our human race takes only a specified spectrum of the mind energies of the Creator. The human level of development always has and always will be taking the same specified spectrum place in the mind economy of the Cosmos. From the point of view of the divine intention for our development, our task, given the appropriate tools, is to move out of this spectrum toward higher frequencies of existence in the Universe. We can pursue this only individually, but if we were born in a spiritually less degraded environment, our task of progression would be much easier. This is why we all need to struggle very hard to make the way simpler for those who will follow. Let us think of this as the building of a highway for our children to use, instead of leaving them with the unsealed roads we have to tread today.

It is a Cosmic function of ours to progress spiritually. If we are not choosing this as our highest priority here on Earth, it is because we became laggards through a very deep immersion in the physical reality. When we realise our Cosmic destiny and when we are given tools to work towards that destiny, we will find our egoistic feelings of superiority over another person, who happens to be more advanced spiritually as grossly misplaced. Whether it is a man or a woman, whether old or not that old—this more advanced spiritually person can help us in our assignment. We need to admit to ourselves that there have always been people in the world who were spiritually more advanced than us; such people have always lived on Earth and always will be present here. We have not been placed in a competition with those people, but rather in a situation, in which we need to find synergies and try to work together towards the achievement of something, we alone (as one person) can never achieve without help.

Who then, can be a judge of other person's spiritual progress? Obviously if the spiritual group's founder is present then he or she can be of assistance. Many groups, however, continue the existence after their founder's passing. In such cases more often than not the original teaching becomes corrupted and with time loses its potency and even its relevance. It is rare and very heart warming to see some groups operating without their founder for many years into the future. Of the three categories of people who find themselves present in such spiritual groups, the middle category, that is the people whose souls are continuing their spiritual growth, are those who most often are taking up the spiritual instructions left by the founder and themselves become teachers or instructors; these people are placed in best positions to help the beginning students in their spiritual journey.

People in the middle category of spiritual advancement can identify quite readily with the reactions, questions and problems of those who have just begun their spiritual journey. They can indeed become their best teachers. They cannot, however, easily recognise a higher spiritual incarnations amongst their milieu. And even if they have a personal intuition or some other sources of knowledge characterising the appearance and behaviour of such a highly developed spiritual

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person, they cannot guess the exact reason or their intentions for being present where they are. People on a lower level of spiritual development cannot read the minds of people on a higher level; this is the law of the Cosmos. People on the lower level of spiritual development, however, can try to assist those who are on a higher mission. Inevitably, the presence of a higher spiritual personage is a blessing for the group as well as the entire community.