

The Progression to Enlightenment – A Series of Steps

Sunrise and sunset

When the sun rises, darkness disappears. When light is present, darkness is absent.

Similarly, when the thinking mind is predominant, the feeling heart subsides. There is no fine line that separates the mind and the heart. The point of balance between these two poles is a place of mystical meditation or is an experience of mysticism, like the experience of twilight. When one's presence is felt deeply in the heart, it is a spiritual experience. When one is fully present in the mind, one is not in the heart, and vice versa. However, darkness and light are both essential for the beauty of life. When we go to extremes, either into the core of darkness or into the very centre of dazzling light, we are blinded. But if we have a choice, we choose light. At least we may be aware of what is occurring around us in blinding light, whereas in darkness, fear of the unknown frightens us and takes our breath away.

Each time we see the sun rising over the eastern horizon, it is as if a new door has opened in our lives, increasing our sense of elation. We love to watch the sunrise. It has a profoundly positive, awakening effect. Conversely, as the sun gradually lowers over the western horizon, we feel serene and settled. We enter into a state of bliss. One state of mind is the effect of sunrise, while the other is the effect of sunset.

The amalgamation of light and darkness is in equal proportions at both sunrise and sunset. But the effects are different. The morning sun invites us to dwell more in the mind, and to experience the sounds of the day and the world. The evening sun creates an atmosphere of serenity and inspires us to experience the beauty of nature in our hearts. We are strongly influenced by the outside environment. Thus, we raise the sun of our consciousness to our minds with the rising of the sun outside and we become inspired to bring our consciousness down to our hearts with the setting of the sun.

With the rays of the sun we raise our consciousness to our egotistic minds and with the setting of the sun we descend with our consciousness to our humble hearts.

Before taking on our present state, we existed in some form somewhere in the universe. Whether we consider ourselves as mere matter or energy, or consciousness, or something else, only the *forms* of our existence change.

Just as we exist in the present, we manifested ourselves in infinite variety in the past. There are traces of us in nature and in the universe of our past. Only a few discover and access these traces and such people can feel lonelier than others, because there is no one with whom they can share their experiences. If they do attempt to express themselves, their experiences are viewed as frenetic or bizarre. Those who are able to access other manifestations of themselves are often dismissed as being mentally out of balance.

Sometimes it is better to be ordinary than special. If we become too special, we are excluded from the world unless we use our special qualities with humility. For example, being wealthy

need not be just a matter of earning money. We need to know how to save, protect and maintain our wealth while keeping our egos in check and working at running our businesses. We should work with the rest of our staff as one among them, acknowledging the qualities in others, instead of feeling superior ourselves. If we remain humble, we achieve greatness. Then we evince a humility and simplicity that is complemented by pride and dynamism.

Similarly, it is not enough to gain an insight into our previous forms of existence, to learn about them and experience them. What is important is the extent to which we can absorb and assimilate those impressions into our *present* state of existence. How much we listen to the discoveries, insights and experiences of others and help them to relate to us is also very important. If we learn to incorporate the experiences of others along with our own, we will have entered the nearly impenetrable, sacred realms of nature.

Sound and silence

To access the data of pre-existence, we have to silence the mind, that is, the surface mind. Then the deeper mind awakens and takes us to the intuitive heart. Silence becomes more and more profound as we descend into the depths of consciousness. Of course, outer silence must be synchronized with inner silence. We have the tendency to be silent if we are upset, disturbed or exhausted. Silence allows us to revive and recharge our spirits before returning to the chaotic world. We cannot make good decisions while being bombarded by sound. A noisy atmosphere impels us to action, but major decisions are best made in an atmosphere of silence. This does not mean that such decisions will always be perfect, but with silence we can minimize untoward results.

We were silent before we entered this plane of existence; and we will again go into periods of silence, only to emerge into the same or another form of existence, here or elsewhere, in the infinite ocean of cosmic consciousness.

There is no action without sound and there is no sound without action. When a particle collides with another particle, there is an emanation of subtle vibrations. When a planet or star collides with another celestial object, it produces an enormous explosion. We do not hear this partly because it is too far away and partly because of the vacuum that separates us from it.

The universe manifests itself in the emanation of sounds from the silence of cosmic consciousness. Sound and action will coexist as long as the universe exists. Every action is followed by a sound of contact, an explosion or collision. Our auditory nerves and our minds are provided with intense stimulation by a plethora of sounds. We are bombarded, especially in these modern times, by sound pollution adding to the sensitivity of our health and of the environment.

Silence is not much appreciated by the mind. The mind requires constant stimulation, otherwise it ceases to function properly. When we close our eyes without spiritual inspiration or interest, we feel lethargic, because we have greatly reduced the stimuli busying our minds.

The mind is an extended entity of the inner consciousness. It exists on the surface. It is a connecting agent between the senses, the body and the memory centre. Inner consciousness blossoms and spreads itself all around the being when there is a serene uplifting atmosphere.

Suppose we attempt the following experiment. We travel to a village or into the mountains, or anywhere nature prevails without urban interruption. We feel something special, something fulfilling, though there is nothing present to entertain us. We do not know what it is. In actuality it is nature's silence and serenity that is inspiring us. The inner consciousness of the self blossoms in the sunlight of beauty and silence. If we simply close our eyes in that situation, we will be bathed in the bliss of silence, joy and serenity, which change our inner spirits.

The true nature of inner consciousness is silence. The true nature of the mind is sound. The mind is like an extension of the deeper consciousness. We may refer to the mind as a bubble of consciousness. Or we may call it the face of consciousness. But the mind does not represent the whole of consciousness.

The head, where the face and most of the senses are seated, is often the first part of the body to be noticed; thus the mind is volatile and very sensitive, excited by thousands of stimuli every second. It is difficult to quieten the mind. Silence, on the other hand, can be felt in one's heart since it is an organ that is placed almost at the centre of the body and is well protected by the ribs and muscles. Future science will evolve faster and become revolutionized because of its openness and an increased capacity to accommodate many possible ways of approaching physical facts and the sensitive truths of metaphysics. Future scientists will not hesitate to incorporate their personal experiences into their impersonal methods of studying and researching. They will acknowledge that the heart is the mother of mind. Then further research will seek the location of the heart in our body and our consciousness. The threshold of that research will be the cardiovascular heart.

It is from the heart that all noble qualities emerge.

The mind is like an office and the heart is like a home. There can be discipline in the mind but the heart feels love. We do not love from the mind. We love from the heart. Love should be distinguished from lust, which is experienced through the senses, and directed by the nervous system. Experience that is only lustful is not deep. We forget it after a time, whereas the experience of love leaves a lasting impression and is not easily forgotten. Whether the expression of love is a word, a look, a touch, a smile or just the presence of a person, it is remembered forever, because this memory is both subtle and deep, an experience that is not yet understood by the medical world.

Enlightenment and human will

Some people believe that everything in life is predetermined. If this were true, life would be meaningless. We would not be responsible for our actions and their consequences. The superbly creative intelligent forces that are responsible for the universe also made us feel responsible by bestowing upon us individual will and freedom of choice, so that we can attain fulfilment in life. The will is like the steering system of a car. When we make choices, we are manifesting our will. The will is an operational device that is invisible, internal and highly mystical. Others can only give us instructions or suggestions, but we are the operators. We can project our consciousness in any direction, into any dimension. We can descend within ourselves or heighten our being. We are steering ourselves by applying our will. If we do this within the disciplines of the universe and creation, we can progress and evolve materialistically and spiritually. We can use meditation to enhance our willpower.

As we journey deeper, we begin to evolve in many aspects. Consciousness expands, encircling us like an energy field, and our vision becomes clearer. The distance from the head to the heart is only a few centimetres. But the mystical journey to expansion of consciousness is a life-long blossoming process in its beauty and spirituality.

The moment that one's cursor-like awareness (surface consciousness – in the head) reaches the core conscious Self, as steered by one's will, there is a brilliant opening and awakening in the whole being. This is the mystical experience of the illumination of the true Self. Enlightenment takes us a step closer to reaching the outer Self, which is infinitely sensitive, subtle and macrocosmic. Enlightenment penetrates everything. When consciousness is intensified through personal endeavour and sincere internal persuasion, it is possible to reach the heart of the cosmos or the very core of cosmic conscious laws. *Expanded consciousness leads one to higher understanding of the universe and its relationship with one's inner self.* This is the state of enlightenment. Enlightened people understand the secrets of universal communication and the art of managing and varying their energy levels and of absorbing energy from various sources in the universe. They can connect with elements in nature, accessing higher information that pertains to the well-being of humankind.

We all wish to be perfect. Many of us wish to achieve enlightenment, but something prevents us from attaining this goal; negative forces cause us to deviate from our own humanity. In addition, we are distracted from the path of enlightenment by problems such as ageing, pain, disease and death, as well as by weaknesses of the mind.

We can change the way these distractions affect us only if change is within the scope of our will. Even then, change is not always possible. The mind rarely accepts this, since denial is the overpowering nature of the mind. But the heart accepts, forgives, shows compassion and endures. When we accept things that cannot be changed, then we open up a new dimension of unimagined possibilities. We become unified with the forces of nature. We are then able to effect some remarkable changes in our thinking, our feelings, our whole personality and the magnitude of our understanding and experience of life.

Some of us may already have been enlightened, but we just need to recognize this. Some may be far away from being enlightened but they have their own time in which to attain enlightenment. Some have embarked on the path of enlightenment. Some are truly enlightened.