

Psycho-Spiritual Development

We come into this world with nothing and we leave it with nothing, so it is pointless trying to acquire lots of material possessions while we are here – because there is no net gain. Our material balance sheet is always zero at the start of our life and it is always zero at the end of our life, and no one is ever going to change that! But it is a different story with our spiritual balance sheet. If we end our life with a higher level of consciousness than we began with, we can claim success. Adding to our spiritual balance sheet by developing our consciousness is the one purpose that remains the same in each and every life, no matter who we are.

All living beings possess an inherent drive to evolve, to become the highest possible expression of life and to fully realise themselves. Personal development is the wilful co-operation with this natural evolutionary process, but an understanding of the processes involved is required if it is to be truly effective. We only learn lessons and develop new faculties through direct experience; theoretical learning does not develop consciousness. For example, seeing the word “fear” in print is not the same as experiencing it first hand – that is why we incarnate.

During the lower stages of human development, material ambitions and an egotistical nature are justified because they drive us onwards and upwards. But once we have progressed beyond the lower stages we no longer have any use for those motives and they are gradually eliminated from our being. Eventually we come to realise that nothing outside of us can bring lasting peace or satisfaction, and that the only way we can achieve these is to develop our consciousness.

Methods of Development

There are two main methods of self-development:

1. Active: The “way of the student” involves actively working at your own development. Your level of consciousness is directly related to what you choose to focus your attention on. For example, a person who is nearing the end of the developed stage naturally focuses much of their attention on mental and intellectual interests, but if they are content to limit their thinking to intellectual issues they will not progress any further. They must actively decide to study abstract and conceptual material (such as esoterics) in order to attract the higher vibrations of causal matter and begin to develop subjective causal consciousness. Examples of active development are constant conscious awareness, living in the now, meditation and visualisation exercises.
2. Passive: The “way of the saint” involves forgetting about yourself entirely and dedicating your life to serving others. Serving others means helping and protecting those who are less developed, less experienced, less knowledgeable or less capable than you are. All developing monads are dependent on energies and assistance from the next higher kingdom, but the condition of receiving this help is service to others. Life is give and take – we give to those who are less developed than we are and receive from those who are more developed than we are.

More often than not people use a combination of the two methods or alternate between them in different incarnations. Personality types (rays) 1, 3, 5 and 7 are generally more inclined to the active method and types 2, 4 and 6 are usually attracted to the passive method. There are many different paths but they all lead to the same destination; some are more winding than others but all eventually get there.

Controlling Consciousness

To become whole we must integrate the subtle bodies of our persona by learning to control their energies and consciousness. Emotional conscious can only be controlled by mental consciousness,

and mental consciousness can only be controlled by causal consciousness, etc. The main challenge facing most people is for the mind to gain control over the emotions and desires of the emotional body. This does not mean ignoring our emotions or killing them off altogether; it simply means us controlling them, rather than them controlling us. An integrated and balanced persona is the natural result of breaking down the automated behavioural patterns and reactions in our subtle bodies.

The automated responses of our emotional body give rise to all sorts of feelings about our self and others. Learning to disregard these emotional reactions is a very difficult but incredibly important aspect of human development, because if we don't disregard them and end up giving them attention we inadvertently reinforce them. Ridding ourselves of old patterns of behaviour is a prerequisite for acquiring higher levels of consciousness. We are not free unless we determine the content of our own minds, so we must learn how to control our attention so that it doesn't wander aimlessly and reinforce every thought or feeling that passes through our subtle bodies.

Our sub-conscious continually feeds our waking conscious with thoughts, feelings and impulses that our waking consciousness assumes are its own. Our waking consciousness continually feeds our sub-conscious with bad habits, illusions and fictions. So negative thoughts and fictitious concepts are continually recycled between our conscious and sub-conscious minds, which reinforces our weaknesses. This vicious cycle can be only broken through persistent awareness of our thoughts and feelings to ensure that we only give attention to (and reinforce) positive influences and quickly discard the negative ones. Eventually the negative stimuli will grow so weak that they are unable to send impulses up into the waking consciousness.

Developing Consciousness

Consciousness develops by moving our attention away from the activity within our subtle bodies (senses, emotions and thoughts) and towards our soul (higher self or second triad). Freeing ourselves from identification with our bodies is a particularly difficult and time consuming aspect of our evolution. It can only be achieved by refusing to pay attention to the lowest impulses of our subtle bodies, i.e. negative feelings, emotions and thoughts. This causes the lowest molecular types within our subtle bodies to gradually lose their vitality and become redundant; only then can they be replaced by higher molecular types.

In order to progress, we must free ourselves from the automated patterns of our sub-conscious (by continually "watching" our consciousness) and identify more with our super-conscious (by meditation and "living in the now"). We must also dedicate our development towards the service of humanity, and not do it for personal gain. Caring not for our own development and putting the needs of humanity ahead of our own is the only way we can overcome our inherent egotistical nature and attain enlightenment. We shouldn't ponder over how far we have come or how many incarnations remain, because these things don't matter. What is important is to make the best of the incarnation we are in now. If we rush to achieve enlightenment we will never get there, because we won't have learnt the most important lesson of all: You need to forget about yourself in order to free yourself. By helping yourself you help no one, but by helping others you also help yourself.

As we progress we must be careful not to develop a "spiritual ego" or think we are special because we are more advanced than others. A spiritual ego is no better than a regular ego but is a trap that we all fall into many times during our human development. It's not possible to overcome the ego by fighting it head on because whilst our monad is centred in the first triad we are the ego, so it would be like punching our self in the face. The only way to overcome the ego is to transcend it; to

move up to the second triad and become our soul. In order to achieve this (enlightenment) we must:

1. Disassociate our self from our ego (first triad or lower self) by actively putting the needs of others ahead of our own.
2. Identify our self with our soul (second triad or higher self) by mediation, contemplation, visualisation, aspiration to unity and the development of virtuous qualities.

This dual-pronged approach gradually tips the balance of power in favour of our higher self and helps it gain control over the egotistical lower self.

Rapid Development

Rapid development is the reward of unselfishness – we develop the fastest by helping others to realise the meaning of life and live in accordance with the laws of life. In order to help others understand we must first have an understanding of life and the stages of human development. We must understand the difficulties they face at each stage, their motivations and what they are capable of grasping. Trying to force people into accepting a particular belief system is a violation of their freedom, so those who are content with their current beliefs and world view must be met with loving understanding, even if they are wrong. They will have plenty of opportunities in future incarnations to correct their views. In the meantime we must respect the fact that their current beliefs are appropriate for their current level of development. Everyone who reflects on the meaning of life gradually develops their own belief system. Initially it will be flawed but over time, perhaps many incarnations, it will gradually build into a system of knowledge and description of reality that matches that of those in the fifth kingdom – the ones who gave us esoterics.

Two additional factors contribute to rapid development – awareness and will power. Maintaining constant awareness of our desires, emotions and thoughts is of prime importance because we can't address our weaknesses unless we are aware of them. Once we become aware of a particular issue we will obviously need will-power to overcome it. Will-power is also necessary to sustain our efforts over an entire lifetime or series of lifetimes.

Every new effort gives rise to a corresponding resistance from the persona. It may seem that when you first start out on the path that things are conspiring to make it difficult for you. Don't be discouraged by this – it is just a test to see if you are up to the task ahead. The path of the spiritual aspirant is the one straight up the mountain whereas the path of the normal person is the one that meanders around the mountain. The first is much more difficult but the rewards are far greater. Many set out on the steep path but lack the commitment to follow it through to the end. They put in a concerted effort at the start but give up quickly and slip back down again. It is better to proceed at a steady and sustainable pace because a lifetime of commitment is required if you truly want to succeed. Don't necessarily expect immediate results or you may become demoralised and slip back down again. So the tests that confront us as we begin our journey are for our own protection; they stop us from proceeding unless we are truly ready.