

Sat Chit Anand

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Stages of Spiritual Evolution

During this Easter month, we are looking at the journey of spiritual evolution, culminating in the experience of oneness with the Divine. There are 4 levels of spiritual growth: from individual > to collective > to universal > to Divine. The Garden of Eden only tells the story of leaving – it is completed by the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The prodigal son was one with his father in the beginning. Then he journeys through the different levels. He rebels against the authority of his father, becomes a rebellious individual mind, grows into a collective social mind, surrenders, and comes back to his father. He shows the journey of spiritual evolution of every human being.

INDIVIDUAL: individual mind

Adam and Eve gave birth to the original sin of separation from God, wanting to do our own thing apart from God. We became self-centered instead of God-centered. When we act from ego-consciousness, our actions are not grounded in God, but come from ourselves as a separate entity. Instead of being a servant and instrument of God acting through us, we become the one acting. In this way, we perpetuate the original sin of Adam and Eve. "Sin" defined as separation from God.

Actions are done for me. I am the centre of the Universe, and I do my best to fulfill my needs and desires. My will be done, rather than Thy will be done. I will decide what is right and wrong for me, based on my preferences, likes and dislikes. Humanity fell from acting in accordance with the dictates and purity of the Spirit which is one with God, to acting based on our lower natures which are governed by our bodies and minds and their involvement with and attachment to sense pleasures. Our actions thus became impure and this is where "sin" enters the picture.

However, rebellion is necessary and part of the journey of spiritual evolution – to move beyond the God of authority; to become an individual; and then to surrender one's individuality. It is a phase we go through. Some people become atheistic or secular, which is part of their rebellion to deny the existence of God, or to live in a secular way, where God is ignored, forgotten, and not regarded as being a necessary part of life. The fall of man was necessary in order that our relationship with the Divine be transformed. The God of authority, with whom people had a relationship based on fear > had to become a God of love, with whom a relationship is a joyful celebration. It is based not on authority but on love, as in the New Testament when the law is written in the heart.

COLLECTIVE: social mind

After becoming an individual, we have to make the transition from individual to collective. During this stage, you realize that you actually cannot be an individual, because nothing happens in isolation. Your actions affect others, and their actions affects you. You can only act because of the actions of others, everything we know we learnt from others. Everything is interconnected to all. By realizing the interconnectedness of all, one goes beyond the idea of a separate self. You also realize what Br Martin called the “burden” of interconnectedness, because somehow you feel responsible, there is a sense of universal responsibility. You have moved from individual > collective.

Based on teachings by Br Martin at Saccidananda Ashram, South India, Dec 2010 / Jan 2011

To be continued next week: from universal > to Divine.

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With Br Martin at Saccidananda Ashram

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