

Seeking, The Fallacy Of Spiritual Practice

By Richard Harvey

The “wayless” way

In reality, the world of spirituality, personal growth, and self-help are all based on thought, accumulation, and progression. In other words, there is the fundamental and almost universal fallacy of spiritual practice: that when we seek we will find. There is this generally held and understood idea that like worldly pursuits, spiritual practice will somehow make perfect when you persist.

As “pop” God has been made in man’s image, so the conventional spiritual person conforms to his idea of an image in himself. The way to God is through the achievement of spiritual states that progressively bear you forward, onward or deeper or higher through maneuvering and influencing the bodymind. Or so we have been taught to believe.

But this is not true. The idea that we should create an identifiable bodymind-self and then use spiritual techniques to transcend or in some ways get the better of it when it is our imagination’s fantasy, is preposterous and farcical. Yet in most by far so-called spiritual disciplines and practices this is exactly what seekers are encouraged to do.

There is no ego; there is no small, petty self; there is no possession. Identity with doing, having, or achieving is all entirely false. Any apparently “spiritual” process that is used to defeat the ego or go against it in any way only serves as reinforcement for delusion.

The outer worldly logic and approach of accumulation and results through effort have no relevance to the genuine spiritual endeavor. The spiritual teachers know this – from the father of yoga to the modern day guru. There is no way. Or perhaps they might call it a “wayless” way or some such paradoxical soubriquet, because the “wayless” way soon gets turned into a way by its adherents. Let me give you some examples.

The celebrated Tibetan spiritual master Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, newly arrived in the USA in the 1970s, propounded the doctrine of “Ati,” (a Sanskrit word meaning “very,” “much,” or “too much”) which briefly amounts to this: since there is only enlightenment and no ego exists, we must practice no-practice, because anything else will only lead us further away from the enlightened reality of this present moment. As you might imagine (although curiously no one appears to have advised Trungpa about this), absolutely no one understood this, so he abandoned “Ati” and taught instead the Nine Yanas, a progressive practice designed to reach progressively and over time the always present divine “Ati.”

The divine avatar, Adi Da Samraj originally taught that wanting to be enlightened was the egoic form trying to fulfill its desires and excluding the present reality through seeking something else, when all along the perfect practice was simply to be the enlightened spirit that you are. But the simplicity and directness of this practice was too much for Adi Da’s followers, so instead he developed and taught them a seven-stage model of spiritual practice.

Here now is the Truth and not just the relative but the absolute truth and really you should pay me several hundred dollars for this... at least!, because if you can hear what this means, it will save you thousands of dollars on books, discourses, workshops, meditation groups, retreats and so on. Ready?

There is only Consciousness

You are Consciousness

I am Consciousness

There is no you and I

We are only Consciousness

If you are so inclined you may replace the term Consciousness with the more traditional (at least in the west) term God.

The original teaching of the Buddha, prior to sutras or spiritual instruction of any kind, contrasts with Buddhism. When the Buddha raised a single flower not one of the thousands of monks who were assembled understood, with the exception of Mahakashyo who smiled, the only one who understood. Mahakashyo became his successor, receiving the transmission of the dharma of the wisdom of Buddha's enlightenment. Buddha's original teaching was wordless but he compromised and taught through method and form instead.

Buddha's presumption – the presumption that his followers would understand truth when it was starkly presented to them in an uncompromised way – is reminiscent of another spiritual teacher's approach, some two and a half thousand years later. The spiritual teacher Rudolf Steiner, when he was opening the very first Waldorf School, advised the teachers to look deeply inside themselves for guidance and deep inner wisdom to direct them in their teaching. This was his sole guidance to them. After two weeks the teachers were at a complete loss, so they approached Steiner for instruction, resulting in the scores of books on the subject that we have today.

Patanjali is known as the father of yoga. Among other complex works he wrote the Yoga Sutras, 196 sutras in all, nearly 2000 years ago. When he was asked, "What is the essence of your teachings?" he replied simply, "Be loose and natural."

The essence of spiritual teaching is the truth which is ever present, here and now. The method of spiritual practice doesn't strictly speaking take us further away, it pitches us at a distance before we even start! By seeking for what we already have, we prevent ourselves from ever finding it.

As we "progress" through the stages of psycho-spiritual development, the work becomes increasingly simple, clear, and direct. As we cling, and care less about, to the human form for its own sake in all its attachments, fears, and desires and forsake it for truth, we experience the already complete liberation we have been seeking. As we leave behind seeking itself, we realize the Self and are free to be as we are.

Now some people argue that progressive forms of spiritual practice should be respected. Either because they enable people to be initiated into self-help and then progress to deeper teachings or because they suit some people's potential. Some folk, they argue, want a better life, want to be happier, or to have better relationships and more personal fulfillment, but they are not necessarily interested in spiritual

transformation or the deeper teaching of the spiritual way. But this argument doesn't serve humanity at all, since equating these methods with spiritual practice leads only to confusion and misunderstanding. Since most people by far are uninterested in spirituality per se, let us be clear, so people do not get confused about what they're doing. It's alright to be secular, straightforward, and real. But let's call it what it is: relaxation not meditation, feeling better not intentional suffering, trying to be human not trying to live your spiritual nature, living in the world not training to transcend it, chasing pleasure, not looking for liberation.

This article is an excerpt from Richard Harvey's book [Your Divine Opportunity](#).