

From Exclusivity to Inclusivity

One of the essential ingredients of an authentic spiritual life is an understanding of the process itself; otherwise the truth may present itself to us but we are not equipped to recognize it. As the scriptures declare that our fundamental error is wrong identification, the spiritual process logically would be about correcting that wrong identification.

Gurudev and Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī often tell us that the human being has a triune nature—animal, human, and divine. We must use our human understanding to stamp out the animal propensities in ourselves and then allow the human part of ourselves to be sublimated into the divine. Another way of describing the process is to say that we move from an ego-centered life to a God-centered life, from a life centered in the body and mind to a much broader understanding and vision.

There is a further way of expressing it that answers still other questions, and that is that we move from exclusivity to inclusivity. We move from a consciousness that fundamentally excludes everyone and everything else to one that includes everything and everyone else. Basically when our consciousness is identifying with the animal within us, the body, we exclude everyone and everything else. We are only interested in ourselves and our own satisfaction. If we so-call love someone else or something else, it is because of the satisfaction it gives to us.

As we move out of self-centered exclusivity and become slightly more inclusive, we may begin to include some others in our consideration—perhaps our family, relatives or tribe. As we become more human, more evolved, our consciousness may include the district or to our language group. Ultimately we may even include the whole country, be as concerned about the welfare of people on the other side of the country as we are of the people in our own native place.

Our consciousness may then become still more inclusive. We will identify with all human beings the world over. We will be as concerned about people starving in Africa as we are in our own nation. Gradually we understand that the planet earth is part of the solar system, part of creation and so our consciousness expands to include all of creation.

By this time, indeed long before this time, we have moved from an ego-centered life towards a life of God-consciousness, a God-centered life. The world still very much exists, but our perspective on it has utterly changed. When we have come to this stage of inclusivity, including everything conceivable, there is just one more step. That inclusivity and ourselves are one. Any separation disappears. The world still exists. It is our angle of vision that has changed. We have reached the goal that Gurudev is calling us to when he tells us to change our angle of vision. And one way of expressing it is from exclusivity to inclusivity.