

[Evolution of Faith](#)

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Evolution of Faith

As the soul matures, it slowly develops an unshakable spiritual knowledge

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Faith is the intellect of the soul at its various stages of unfoldment. The soul comes forth from Lord Siva as an embryo and progresses through three stages (avastha) of existence: kevala avastha, sakala avastha and shuddha avastha. During kevala avastha, the soul is likened to a seed hidden in the ground or a spark of the Divine hidden in a cloud of unknowing called anava, the primal fetter of individuality, the first aspect of Lord Siva's concealing grace, tirodhana shakti. Sakala avastha, the next stage in the soul's journey, is the period of bodily existence, the cyclic evolution through transmigration from body to body, under the additional powers of maya and karma, the second and third aspects of the Lord's concealing grace.

The journey through sakala avastha also happens in three stages. The first is called irul pada, "stage of darkness, " where the soul's impetus is toward pasha-jnanam, knowledge and experience of the world. The next period is marul pada, "stage of confusion, " where the soul begins to take account of its situation and finds itself caught between the world and God, not knowing which way to turn. This is called pashu-jnanam, the soul seeking to know its true nature. The last period is arul pada, "stage of grace, " when the soul yearns for the grace of God. Now it has begun its true religious evolution with the constant aid of the Lord.

The intellect in its capacity to contain truth is a very limited tool, while faith is a very broad, accommodating and embracing faculty. The mystery of life and beyond life, of Siva, is really better understood through faith than through intellectual

reasoning. The intellect is a memory/reason conglomerate from the lower nadi/chakra complex. Its refined ability to juggle information around is uncanny in some instances. Nevertheless, the intellect is built upon what we hear and remember, what we experience and remember, what we explain to others who are refined or gross in reasoning faculties. What we remember of it all and the portions that have been forgotten may either be greatly beneficial to those listening or may be confusing, but will certainly not be Truth with a capital "T."

There are two kinds of faith. The first kind is faith in those masters, adepts, yogis and rishis who have had similar experiences and have spoken about them in similar ways, unedited by the ignorant. We, therefore, can have faith that some Truth was revealed from within themselves, from some deep, inner or higher source. The second aspect of faith is in one's own spiritual, unsought-for, unbidden flashes of intuition, revelations or visions, which one remembers even stronger as the months go by, more vividly than something read from a book, seen on television or heard from a friend or a philosopher. These personal revelations create a new, superconscious intellect when verified by what yogis and rishis and the sadhus have seen and heard and whose explanations centuries have preserved. These are the old souls of the shuddha avastha, being educated from within out, building a new intellect from superconscious insights. Their faith is unshakable, undaunted, for it is themselves. It is just who they are at this stage of the evolution, the maturation, of their soul in the shuddha avastha.

One of the aspects of faith is the acceptance of tradition rather than the questioning or doubting of traditions. Another is trust in the process of spiritual unfoldment, so that when one is going through an experience, one always believes that the process is happening, instead of thinking that today's negative experience is outside the process. However, it is not possible for souls in the irul pada, stage of darkness, to trust in the process of anything except their need for food, a few bodily comforts and their gaining the abilities to adjust transparently into a community without committing too many crimes for which they would be severely punished. They gain their lessons through the action-and-painful-reaction ways.

It is difficult and nearly impossible for those in the marul pada, stage of confusion, to have faith in the process of spiritual unfoldment and trust in tradition, because they are developing their personal ego, manufacturing karmas, good, bad and mixed, to sustain their physical existence for hundreds of lives. They will listen to sermons with a deaf ear and, after they are over, enjoy the food and the idle chatter the most. They will read books on philosophy and rationalize their teachings as relevant only to the past. The great knowledge of the past tradition, even the

wisdom their grandparents might hold, is an encroachment on their proud sovereignty.

It is only when the soul reaches the maturity to enter the arul pada, the stage of grace, that the ability will come from within to lean on the past and on tradition, perform the present sadhanas, live within dharma and carve a future for themselves and others by bringing the best of the past, which is tradition, forward into the future. This transition is a happy one. Truth now has a capital "T " and is always told. The restraints, the yamas, truly have been perfected and are a vital part of the DNA system of individual living beings. Now, as he enters the arul pada, the niyamas, spiritual practices, stand out strongly in his mind.

The Sanskrit word astikya means "that which is, " or "that which exists." Thus, for Hindus faith means believing in what is. Astikya refers to one who believes in what is, one who is pious and faithful. There is an old saying favored by practical, experiential intellectuals, "Seeing is believing." A more profound adage is "Believing is seeing." The scientists and the educators of today live in the marul pada. They see with their two eyes and pass judgments based on what they currently believe. The rishis of the past and the rishis of the now and those yet to come in the future also are seers. There is a thin thread through the history of China, Japan, India, England and all of Europe, Africa, the Americas, Polynesia and all the countries of the world connecting seers and what they have seen. This seeing is not with the two eyes. It is with the third eye, the eye of the soul. One cannot erase through argument or coercion that which has been seen. The seer relates his seeing to the soul of the one who hears. This is sampradaya. This is guru-shishya transference. This is Truth. This is shuddha.

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001) is the founder of Hinduism Today and 162nd satguru of the Kailasa Parampara. Web:
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