

Modern Ascension: Stories from the Spiritual Paths of High Initiates

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Modern Ascension is an encouraging text that suggests a new paradigm for addressing karmic debt.

Carol Anne Halstead's *Modern Ascension* collects the personal stories of thirteen initiates on a quest for higher consciousness.

Herein, ascension is the process of evolving into higher consciousness and an expanded state of awareness. It involves clearing karma and leaving the cycle of reincarnation. Though it was once the province of ascetics and thought to take many lifetimes to achieve, the book argues that ascension is now accessible to all. The reason for this new availability is not made explicit, though contact with ascended masters and other higher beings is an implied cause.

With the hope that the transformation resulting from ascension would pave the way for profound planetary change, the book says that it is no longer necessary to follow gurus or other religious leaders, live in isolation, or engage in harsh physical disciplines. Its approach is a process, not an event, and with steps that cannot be skipped. It suggests that there is a quantitative way to measure spiritual growth.

To demonstrate the process and its benefits in the lives of real people, each of the book's contributors are ordinary people from various backgrounds and life stages. They are vulnerable, sharing their stories of personal ascension, shown to unfold in the course of daily life. Their intimate narratives address issues that speak to the needs of a wide demographic. Each is unique, but all have much in common: many had traumatic experiences in their childhoods, felt that they did not fit in, and became disillusioned with mainstream Western religions. Most were drawn to Eastern and esoteric teachings, became involved in the healing arts, and were spiritually sensitive or gifted in some way.

All, through various coincidences and synchronicities, found themselves guided to two women, Verna Maruata and Waireti, who are credited with working with a group of ascended masters to open a portal in New Zealand through which communication between higher beings and humanity became possible. Contributors share their struggles in open, honest terms; all agree that the process is worthwhile, even humanity's highest purpose.

A glossary at the beginning prefamiliarizes the audience with the book's specific terms and concepts, while a table of contents makes each entry easy to locate. The informative preface includes background information on the book's concepts and is assertive as it argues for the importance of the ascension process. No bibliography is provided, but several contributors cite helpful reading material, websites, and other resources. Misused words, mistakes in verb tense, missing spaces at the ends of sentences, and agreement issues are an impediment.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (January 22, 2020)

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