

AWAKENING NEWSLETTER

#7

The Role of Grace

*Sitting quietly doing nothing
Spring comes and the grass grows by itself
-Zen Proverb*

I have been revisiting what has been the central question of my life, the one I have asked every Guru and Master I have studied with. When we have a central question, it becomes the pivot point, the ground which we touch back upon for clarification. It essentially guides the deepest aspects of our lives. Central questions may never be fully answered, but the question itself serves as a push for us to investigate truth ever more deeply. My central question is, “What is mine to do, and what is existence’s?”

To say it another way, am I the creator of my experience? Is all that happens to me a direct result of my actions, decisions, choices? Do I create by intention and thought? Is it all up to me? Am I the doer?
Or, am I the created? Is what arises in me given by forces beyond my conscious control, linked to karma, destiny, fate? Is my role to accept whatever arises and not react from my likes and dislikes, fears and desires? Is the answer surrender to what is?

This is a fundamental fork-in-the-road, and the answer you choose will determine how you will view life’s experiences and what actions will proceed. Many of you at this point may be providing your own answer of “It’s both, we are co-creators.” And while there is truth in this, a fundamental question needs an answer with more definitive meat on it. We will have an approach to our experience. We will conceive ourselves as basically the “doer” or the “non-doer”. We will believe we are either the Master of our creation (Sorcery, the Abraham work, Tony Robbins), or be surrendered to what is appearing (Taoism, Tantra, Zen). When challenged by life we will either respond from, “How can I change it?” or “How can I move through my resistance to the way it is?” Certainly, we can be active in our surrender, and also surrender in our actions, but there is a bottom line

choice of direction to be made here. Masculine-manifesting or feminine-receptive? Creator or created? Doer or experiencer?

Lord Shiva is making thunderous love to his consort, Shakti, when suddenly he jumps up and hastily throws on his clothes. “What is it, my Lord?” asks Shakti. He replies, “One of my disciples is in trouble. He is being taunted by a crowd, they are throwing rocks at him. I must go to his aid.” He runs to the door, then stops. After a moment he returns to Shakti, his fervor calmed. “He has picked up a rock to defend himself. He no longer needs me.” – The Vedas

How do you interpret this story? Has the disciple correctly taken it upon himself to respond, or has he blocked the potential aid of the Divine by become the doer? We have discussed the role of the Manifestor previously, let us here turn our attention to the idea of Grace. What is Grace, and how does it call us to lead our lives?

Grace is the unseen, unfathomable, unknowable aspect of Creation over which we have no control. Why those of us reading this are given a life of relative ease, prosperity, and comfort when most of the world lives in poverty, war, and disease is a great mystery. Why some people have the great good fortune to have the desire to Awaken flower in them and others could care less cannot be known. Some seekers will sit in caves and meditate for years for Enlightenment, others have it thrust upon them spontaneously and unbidden. Grace is very mysterious and cannot be conceptualized, understood, or controlled. Thus, the Western mind has little use for it.

And yet have we not all experienced the movements of Grace – that perfect sunset that moves us unexpectedly into deep silence and awe? The chance meeting that turns into our perfect lover? The curious circumstance that opens up our career in an unplanned way? How can we explain this? Did we “create” it? And if we attempt to usurp this by believing we are the doer, are we preventing Shiva, preventing the unknowable, from guiding our lives far better than we could alone?

Action Steps

1. Notice what your predominant mode of response is. In what areas of your life are you “creative” in which “receptive”?
2. Take an area in your life that is challenging for you at present. Try viewing it from the perspective of “it’s all up to me to change things.” Now

view it from, “it’s up to me to stop resisting what is”. Notice what arises in each these cases.

3. Find an areas of your life that is less challenging and consciously practice non-resistance to what is.

***“When you fight with reality, you lose. But only 100% of the time.”
– Byron Katie***