

AWAKENING NEWSLETTER

#12

WHAT WILL YOU GET FROM ENLIGHTENMENT ?

“The problem is that ego can convert anything to its own use, even spirituality.

Ego is constantly attempting to acquire and apply the teachings of spirituality for its own benefit. It is important to see that the main point of any spiritual practice is to step out of the bureaucracy of ego.”– Chogyam Trungpa

We are initially drawn to spiritual experience, to the inner journey, with the expectation that we will get something from it. Maybe the desire to be out of pain, to be always happy, to have all problems disappear. Or to be admired and respected. Money and lovers will flow into our lives without effort. Perfect health will ensue. We'll be on a permanent high without drugs. Yippee! The inner journey then becomes the long sought after means of attainment of something. At last we will be in control.

The first problem with this is that we begin then from a position of something missing that must be sought after, a subtle form of Original Sin. We may spend years in pursuit of that elusive carrot, always dangling just outside our reach. We believe it is out there, to be somehow attained with proper practice.

The second problem is that the inner path is really a path of death and loss, rather than gain. Like a sculptor chipping away the pieces that are not the statue until the form is revealed, Enlightenment calls us to encounter and let go of the perception of separation, which leads to fear and desire. We are faced with our attachments to preferences, likes and dislikes, judgments of right and wrong, with our depressive withdrawal or narcissistic expansion. All of these are seen as barriers to the experience of wholeness and presence that are always here. Trungpa continues,

“The heart of the confusion is that man has a sense of self which seems to him to be continuous and solid. When a thought or emotion or event occurs, there is a sense of someone being conscious of what is happening. You sense that you are reading these words. This sense of self is actually a transitory, discontinuous event, which in our confusion seems to be quite solid and continuous. Since we take our confused view as being real, we struggle to maintain and enhance this solid self. We try to feed it pleasures and shield it from pain. This struggle to maintain the sense of a solid, continuous self is the action of ego.”

Let us back up a moment and define more precisely what we are meaning when we say “enlightenment”. In the words of Steven Norquist,

*“Stuff is happening but no one is doing it. The unawake person believes that they are acting, that the human them exists. The reality is, the body exists, the thoughts exist, the memories exist and that is consciousness and that is all.
There is no experiencer, there is no observer.”*

The “me” who initially desired to attain something is seen to be the central distortion. This egoic self believes that “it “ will be Enlightened (finally able to control everything), when in fact it will be seen as the experience that is out of reality. Steven continues,

“All that is really required is the realization that you are not that ego. That the ego really doesn’t exist, is an illusion that can be left to its own designs. Enlightenment is not about morality or vows, it is simply existence in the truth, that is all. The body can be quite active and manifest all manner of good and bad behavior, the mind can be racing with thoughts and feelings, but consciousness, now enlightened, knows no one is acting. It is only the universe blossoming forth spontaneously and perfectly.”

As we know, this ego can be very stubborn, tenacious, and seductive. It is the identification with this thought of “me” that leads to fear and desire. Waking up is not about good actions, being loving, practicing kindness or virtue – although when we live from the truth of who we tend to express ourselves naturally in these ways - it is simply knowing that the “story” in your mind is not who you are.

From this we can now turn back to our original question – what will Enlightenment give you? Whatever the answer, be it your self worth, feeling of belongingness, safety, security, recognition, purpose, love, peace – you will find they already exist in fullness in you. When the “you” you think you are is no longer identified with.

“We are so busy wanting to escape that we have not taken the time to understand the nature of our imprisonment. What sense does it make to trade one jail cell for another, when the prison walls are in reality our own forgotten creation?” - Kobutsu Malone

ANNOUNCEMENTS

“I have been standing outside and not getting it, and it’s been right here all the time. Now I remember what it’s like to experience love. I know how to just be. What a blessing to find myself!”

“I walked through the valley of darkness and found light. For the first time in my life I really love myself. I’m ready to fly and am dancing in the light. I’m present and completely in love. What an amazing feeling!”

“I told my demons to leave and they did. A huge cloud of darkness has left me. It’s amazing! I’m wide open and new. I am worthy of love and filled with light.”

“I have been really sad for a long time. Now I am powerful and free and ready to spread my wings. I found a long lost love. I’m ready to move on and start a new life.”

“I’m done with the lies. For the first time in my life I see a possibility I didn’t see before.”

“I can see that what I thought was me isn’t me. I’ve been carrying it around and it squashed me for so long. I am no longer a terrified little girl needing to be saved by somebody.”