

Ceasing to Become

By Munir Peter Reynolds

Many people have high aspirations for their lives...to earn, to own, to attain, to become. Of course this is part of life, especially in our younger years as we learn about navigating the world and who we are. Success, or our highest purpose is sometimes framed in these terms. But, I'd like to bring a different perspective here.

What if the highest purpose we could live is "Ceasing to Become." That may sound very strange. "Ceasing to Become" implies a revolution in the mind and heart wherein consciousness recognizes *itself* and begins to have its way with us. Let's start at the beginning and see if we can make sense of this.

First, a joke. Gladys had a near death experience on the operating table. She died and went up to heaven and met God. But God said, "You're here too early. You've got 40 years, 6 months and 3 days to live. Better get back down there." Gladys was stunned.

After she woke up and left the hospital, she thought, "Wow. 40 more years to live! That's fantastic. I'm going to get ready for this." So she goes out and gets a tummy tuck and a face-lift, buys a whole new, colorful wardrobe including several bathing suits, got a pair of new designer sunglasses, and had her hair done in the latest fashion hair style. Then, as she was leaving the beautician, she stepped off the curb and was run over by a bus.

Back in heaven, she met God in a huff and said, "You said I had 40 more years to live. How could you let that bus hit me?"

And God said, "I didn't recognize you."

This illustrates that God only recognizes God, not "someone" masquerading as God. But, many of us are like this.

Eckhart Tolle teaches that most people expect life to make them happy. We see this everywhere in our society, especially on social media. Then when life doesn't actually make them happy, they feel cheated! Eckhart goes on to say that that life doesn't exist not to make you happy but to make you *conscious*.

Hazrat Inayat Khan says the same thing essentially. "If the soul does not hear the call and sleeps, it is not the fault of nature, which is continually calling. Therefore, if I were to say in a few words, how to find one's purpose, I would say: by *waking from sleep*."

How are we asleep? Most people are indeed sleepwalking through their lives, believing themselves, everything and everyone to have a separate existence. In the eastern traditions, this is called "ignorance", being focused on the material. People make various demands on life to make them happy through things like experiences, substances, relationships, and activities. It is the personal self chasing an endless mirage of desires and attachments, all while trying to avoid as much pain as possible.

It is the greatest irony that we are all *already* looking out from timeless, placeless, eternal being. But, so few people have the curiosity, commitment and take the time to discover this.

We've reviewed this in earlier talks I have given. Consciousness is one. The real self is pure awareness. As I said last time, realizing the primacy of this requires taking the inward facing path: falling back into what we essentially are, absent thoughts, feelings, perceptions and images.

In fact, a separate self doesn't really exist. It is simply the activity of moving away from, of resisting, the present moment. The activity of mind obscures the timeless context of our true nature with a constant firehose of thinking, memories and attachments. The separate self rides all this activity like a horse into a future, which is entirely a figment of its imagination. When things don't go its way, it feels cheated, as Eckhart says.

Rumi poked fun at all this when he wrote:

“Who makes these changes?

I shoot an arrow right.

It lands left.

I ride after a deer and find myself

Chased by a hog.

I plot to get what I want

And end up in prison.

I dig pits to trap others

And fall in.

I should be suspicious

Of what I want.”

He’s saying that we’re being lived by something tremendous - infinite intelligence. A petty little life, just getting by, does not satisfy. That intelligence actually throws up situations, roadblocks, setbacks and disasters when the separate self believes it is in charge. This is what Rumi is talking about.

The separate self defines itself most acutely by struggling, including “What is my purpose?” “What does it mean to be true to or please God?” Underneath it all is, “I am the one who struggled” or the “one who is struggling now”. We miss the fact that struggle itself will never reveal what we are.

Let’s look for a moment at the mechanism of time and how belief in time sustains all this conflict. “I will become, attain, have, possess.” Has any one of us every visited the future outside of thought about it. No, or could we ever. When we succumb to that model of reality we have accepted the movement of the self, the attainment of a better self in the future. This movement literally takes us away from the Truth. Can “Living to A Higher Purpose” have any room for the belief in time?

Eckhart Tolle observes, life exists to make you *conscious*. Life itself is neutral, but it does present challenging situations. Challenge is good. It strengthens us, builds character, and calls out divine attributes.

We find this in the poetry of Hazrat Inayat Khan:

I asked for strength,

and God gave me difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for wisdom,

and God gave me problems to learn to solve.

I asked for prosperity,

and God gave me a brain and brawn to work.

I asked for courage,

and God gave me dangers to overcome.

I asked for love,

and God gave me people to help.

I asked for favors,

and God gave me opportunities.

I received nothing I wanted.

I received everything I needed.

Now, we're beginning to put some light on how things are actually set up.

What would it mean to stop making demands on life...to become suspicious of what we want... and start living life from the inside out?

As the modern sage Adyashanti has written, "To rest in the unknown means that your mind knows absolutely nothing about how to get you to your goal. It means you have stopped looking toward the mind to tell you

how, when and where. By absolutely *ceasing to become*, you stop. This stopping is effortless. It comes out of wisdom.”

Let’s just notice how unappealing a statement like that is to the ego. The separate self is encased in mind, and it needs time and struggle in order to survive. To the separate self, ceasing to become looks like death. “My god, are we supposed to just become lifeless blobs on the couch?” That’s the discomfort we may feel as the momentum of the separate self just wants to keep spinning.

Resting in the unknown, in the infinite, sounds bizarre and perhaps scary to the mind. But the heart says, “Ah, a hot tub!” Notice that Adyashanti says “This stopping is effortless. It comes out of wisdom.”

In these days of apparent chaos, turmoil and rapid change on the world stage, resting heartfully in the unknown actually is the only sane stance with the seeming madness. The remedy we are all actually seeking is to find our home rooted in that which does not change - silence, stillness, heartfulness, in the “I Am.”

Some traditions have called this “sinking the mind into the heart” wherein we return to pure awareness and recognize what is aware of our experience and what it is made of. In meditation when we recognize that everything is appearing in and as awareness. *What is it that recognizes that? Awareness! What else could it be?*

Feel into that for a moment. Is there something that rings true, that is familiar about that? That is the beginning of waking up from the sleep of the separate self. Awakeness knows awakeness. Being aware of being aware. We have to go slowly at first and really soak in the implications of it.

Consciousness doesn’t evolve. You’re exactly the same “knowing” of your experience as when you were 5 years old. *Mind* evolves. And a mind that evolves toward a recognition of its source and an understanding of our

shared being is evolving. It is a mind evolving toward the highest truth we can live from.

Beginning to live from Awakeness, or from Aware Presence, or Heartful attention is symbolized by the Sufi Heart with Wings. The heart symbolizes the recognition of no separation. That is love. The two wings are indifference and independence. Does that sound surprising? Actually, it means that we are no longer making demands on life or on anyone in order to be who we are. It's perfect freedom.

What does this look like?

Jesus in John 3:8 said this: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

Adyashanti says it this way: "There's nothing to do, nothing to be, and nothing to become. There's nowhere to go and no experience to have".

But to give a little more direction than that, I'll paraphrase some sayings of the English sage Rupert Spira, who is a genius at finding words to invite *everyone* to return home to themselves:

Let all resistance come to rest in peace. Resistance to "what is" is all there is to the separate self. There is no one who resists, only resisting. See your resistance, come out of it and be at peace. This is the peace that passes all understanding. Peace is here already, if you notice, within and around the edges of your awareness. Hang out more of the time with those quiet places within.

Let all sense of lack come to rest in happiness. True happiness is uncaused. It is feeling complete and whole within yourself without anything needing to be added. It happens when the "clear blue sky of you" breaks through the clouds of gloom, when you see that there is nothing lacking in

the eternal now. In being we are present to everything, as everything, and we feel held and nurtured by that.

Let all longing come to rest in love. If we longing for a relationship, longing for harmony in the world, longing or grieving for something that is lost, just come to rest in Love. Longing is simply the echo or memory of our true self, that which knows love without an object.

Finally, **Let all becoming come to rest in being**

Let Truth carry your life forward. Let go of being the doer. Everything just happens anyway. Truth exists before any thought about it, always reveals what's next and it doesn't care if people like you or not. If we're doing what we believe others will like or accept we're not in the domain of truth. Adya says, "Don't stuff more truth into your life; Throw your life into the Truth." In other words, let the Truth *live you*.

As St. Augustine said, Love everybody, and then do whatever you like. We can have different opinions, even strongly divergent views. But we keep loving everybody and everything because it is our own being, our very own self.

Perhaps the sum total of Living to a Higher Truth can be found in this saying of the great Indian nondual sage Nisargadatta Maharaj:

"Wisdom tells me I am nothing. Love tells me I am everything. And between the two my life flows."

Let's come out of what we are not, which is any object, thought or perception we can find. Wisdom tells us this. When separation is dropped our hearts truly reveal the highest purpose we can live, right there amidst the beauty, struggles and detritus of daily life.

May we all keep letting go and evolving toward what we know in our hearts is our Real Self, which is the highest purpose we can ever live.