and fleeting. In a wisdom circle — of men, women, people in recovery, or simply budding translucents — every small moment of awakening in each person contributes to the translucence of the circle. As a participant, you may find yourself speaking in spite of yourself. When you are done, you may wonder where the clarity came from. It was not the “you” you are familiar with, it was Maitreya using your lips and tongue to turn the wheel of dharma again.

And finally as you expand beyond the confines of religious tradition, the whole of your life becomes the teacher, everywhere you go is the temple, and every moment is a sacred event. ShantiMayi asks: “Who can say anything about anything? Terence McKenna was a shaman, plants were his teacher. Ramana Maharshi’s guru was a mountain. Some people are taught by the core of their own heart. Some people’s gurus are their children. And some people are dedicated to a living master, or one who has passed away, for a lifetime.”

THE PARADOX OF TRANSLUCENT PRACTICE

Whatever the catalyst, after any radical awakening the translucent finds herself sitting in the middle of a paradox. A moment of awakening is a moment outside the mind, a moment outside time. Surya Das says of such a glimpse: “Things are already perfectly at rest and in place, they are not expanding, evolving, improving, or anything. That is the ultimate absolute reality, the unconditioned, the true nature of things. We all come home to it, and it feels like home. Houses come and go, but home is a state of mind.” Whenever we rest in our original state, there is clearly no need to do anything, to improve anything, or to go anywhere.

The other side of the paradox is the actuality of our human day-to-day life. We see where we are being unconscious, insensitive to other people’s needs, or just getting lost in stories and trivial details. We intuitively know our human potential is greater than this. Surya Das continues:
We need to integrate awakening into our jobs and our families and our health and our community action, and social action and connect with the environment. That is why I find teachers like the Dalai Lama very inspiring today. They are willing to entertain new applications of the timeless truth. It is true that our own innate divinity is always and already perfect. But it is not true that our human nature is perfect, and therefore there is nothing we can do about improving ourselves, or this world. There definitely is plenty that we can do.

It is easy to become dogmatic on either side of this razor’s edge. On one side, we can become fundamentalist about there being nothing to do. Everything is already perfect as it is, not only because we have intuited it in a glimpse but because we have also heard so from various teachers and books. So it becomes “unenlightened” to initiate any action at all. No need to practice; who you really are is divine already, and the rest is illusion. No need for prayer; there is nobody to pray to, it is all you anyway. Although this position is based on authentic realization, our own or someone else’s, its interpretation through the mind cripples us from acting with common sense, and in fact buffers us from the divinity of this present moment.

The other side of the paradox is to become fanatical about fixing ourselves. Looking at our day-to-day life, we tend to compare ourselves to spiritual heavyweights like the Dalai Lama or St. Francis and feel that we are far from living wakefully. Then there is no time to waste; we need to work hard if we are ever going to make it. When we can embrace both ends of this spectrum, we enter translucent spiritual practice in devotion to the present moment, not to get somewhere later.

Says Michael Barnett: “One doesn’t sit to get somewhere; one sits because sitting is it.” Rather than using practice as a means to get there, it is a means to come home to here, again and again and again. However deep our glimpse may have been into our real nature and the real nature of things, we are still living in
a Iago-dominated culture. Through television, advertising, the whole nature of our economy, our culture is continuously attempting to generate more desire, more of a feeling of lack. That is how the commerce machine keeps going.

We need practice not because there’s anything wrong with our realization, but as an antidote to our contact with the collective Iago mind. It’s like cleaning the kitchen. You can deep-clean the kitchen, scrub under every cabinet door, but it doesn’t mean you never have to clean the kitchen again. You clean it, and then it gets dirty. So you clean it again. We are used to the fact that we have to clean the kitchen regularly to bring it back to its pristine condition. In the same way, we enjoy practice regularly, not to get to a place where we no longer need to practice anymore, but because we recognize the outgoing pull of the world around us. Here’s how Richard Moss speaks of his practice:

After the radical awakening I had a reference in my reflection, which was emptiness, infinite. Now, there is a basic practice of self-reflective awareness. So my practice has been to look at myself when I’m in a contraction or reactivity and find out where that started in myself. I have a natural love of meditation, but I don’t like sitting per se. I like to sit up when I wake up in the middle of the night. I always keep some big pillows at the side of the bed, and I just put them up against the back of the bed and sit myself up into a semireclining position. I open my eyes and rest into the night and listen, watch, and let movement happen. You can call that my practice. It is a calling. I create an environment for being. Every moment of my life is a practice.

Translucents love to practice. Lama Surya Das loves to sit, to meditate every day. He loves to chant and to do the many things he has learned in his years as a Tibetan Buddhist: to pray, to study texts, to do inflections,
to do self-inquiry, to practice yoga. He conducts many retreats a year, and in this way he spends long periods with his students enjoying practices. He is awake. He knows his true nature to be limitless, always at peace, outside of time.

“So why do you practice?” I asked him. “Is it to deepen the realization, is it to reach some further state?”

“I don’t know,” he answered. “I have no other choice. That is who I am, that is my karma. I love it. I am moved to do that, for no good reason. And for every reason I can think of. I don’t find anything else I would rather do. I have looked... I have traveled around the globe six or seven times.”

Jack Canfield is another veteran of spiritual exploration. He has collaborated with some of the more mature teachers and writers of our time for his *Chicken Soup* series of books:

> What I’m seeing is a lot of my friends don’t go to church or belong to spiritual movements. They don’t go to satsangs. A lot of us have reached places where we have spiritual practices, maybe not just one but a smorgasbord of practices to draw upon. We have dipped into many traditions. I’ve done Sufi retreats, Christian retreats, Vipassana sessions, and sat in Hindu temples. But now it’s just me and the practices that bring me back into a state of fullness — sometimes in community and sometimes alone.

Translucent practice is generally tailor-made in this way. The Iago mind loves to find the “right way.” It loves dogma, uniformity. Thirty years ago, we were offered a variety of universal panaceas. Feeling depressed? Repeat this mantra twenty minutes twice a day and everything will be okay. Low sex drive? Repeat the mantra. Want world peace? Same mantra. Want to lose weight, make more money? Got gangrene in your leg, ants in the basement? Repeat the mantra. Some were peddling mantras, some advising we chant in the streets, some had a two-weekend deal to “get it” and leave all your troubles behind forever. That was the time of one-size-fits-all, off-the-rack, Kmart spirituality. What’s good for the goose...
Translucent practice is subtler. You order made-to-measure clothes according to your size and need, instead of one teaching, one-practice-suits-all. Lama Surya Das loves to sew fine clothes for his translucent students:

> Everybody has to find the way themselves. It doesn’t mean that they have to invent the wheel from scratch, but one has to find what works for oneself. People often ask me, “If I were going to have one spiritual practice, what would it be?” And I say, “How about taking a walk in nature every day? Or connecting with animals or pets, something simple. Or lighting candles, putting flowers on an altar.” You know, simple. Of course, if you want to do yoga, if you want to do meditation, if you want to do tai chi, of course those are great. But then you have to talk about learning them and further practicing them. Anybody can walk outside and connect with nature. That is one of the most available, always accessible spiritual experiences. On the other hand, it might not be for everybody. So you have to be open to that, for others it might be reading scriptures, or any number of other things, which may or may not be my bag.

Prayer

Translucents pass through many relationships to prayer, a special flavor of practice. In the Iago trance, everything is external. God is far away; he’s got a naughty twinkle in his eye and a joystick on his knee controlling what happens next in our adventure. So we beg: Please, give it to me, give me a new truck, make me richer and smarter and safer, please God, give me more pleasure and less pain. After a radical awakening, the whole exercise seems futile. You discover yourself to be limitless, the source of everything; you extend everywhere, you are one with God. There is no one out there to beg, and besides, you are totally full, missing nothing at all. Translucents pass through a period, usually soon after an initial awakening, when prayer is dismissed as the infantile projections of a mind calling out to Daddy for help. As the awakening matures, however, prayer returns in a new way.

> I just can’t see how people can grow unless they start inside. A teacher creates the possibilities and sets up the situation, but the teacher can’t do it for them. New esoteric Christianity is to do practices; they say don’t worship Christ, they become him.

— Gay Luce
Translucents can embrace the full spectrum of who they are from the vast, eternal spaciousness to the personal, immediate, and temporary. When we look back all the way into ourselves, behind our own eyes, we find an endless ocean of consciousness. When we look out through these same eyes, we see the world, and we are willing to be a human wave in that ocean. We are both. The dialogue between the wave and the ocean is called prayer. Being consciously connected with the ocean of which they are made, translucents tend to speak and take action more in alignment with that oceanic source. They want things that the ocean wants them to want. They think things that the ocean is thinking. As a result, they experience a much higher degree of synchronicity than they do before an awakening. Things happen easily, with less effort. The right thing happens at the right time. There's a feeling of benevolence, as though something or someone very loving is taking care of you.

The old way of praying: Please, Lord, Father, Daddy, Pop, give me what I want is replaced by Thank you, whoever you are, for giving me more than I need. Prayer becomes a song of thanks, a song of surrender, a song of devotion to a source that is both the depths of who you are and at the same time just separate enough for there to be a flow of gratitude, worship, and surrender. The Iago prayer sees half a glass of water and thinks about the future: I have only half a glass, I may die of thirst. Please Lord, give me the rest of the glass, please, do not let me die. The translucent prayer sees the same glass and, in a voice that calls within to the infinite cavern of the heart, says: Thank you, God, Goddess, my own true heart, thank you for the half glass I have, and thank you in advance for the rest of the glass, too.

Service: Prayer in Action

The teachings of Jesus and others remain relevant today because of the emphasis on service, a form of prayer in action. Twelve-Step programs see service as essential to ongoing recovery, and most spiritual teachings include the vision of generosity of spirit. When our spiritual life is about getting something or arriving at some destination, it reinforces a trance of lack, of not being “there” yet.
Wanting anything, including enlightenment, solidifies a universe in which you are missing that which you want. The cures for endless aspiration are service and gratitude. When you are giving away, helping someone, inspiring someone, you are giving from what you have, and you enter a universe where you are overflowing. Service is the antidote to the beggar mentality.

Morrissey shared with me stories of many people who came into her church looking for something. As they felt more connected with themselves, they connected with “the place where the love of God moves from.” And so, she says, after some time you naturally put yourself in the service of that which is within you. Which is the same as putting yourself in the service of that gift in every single person. Which is the same as putting yourself in the service of God.

Compassionate service is the inevitable and natural perfume of a translucent life. It does not take morality or effort. When you put you finger into the flame of a candle, it takes no effort or willpower to pull it out. You feel the pain, and the action is spontaneous. When you feel out a little more, expand your circle of life, you feel those close to you as yourself. When a mother sees her child in danger, standing in the path of an oncoming car, she does not need religious dogma to know what to do. The intimacy she feels with her child makes her action spontaneous. As our translucence deepens, so the sense of a separate identity becomes thinner, and the recognition of one spirit everywhere becomes stronger. Every sentient being becomes part of us, and we know ourselves to be part of one humanity. Then we live in Jesus’ teaching, and Buddha’s and Krishna’s too, and the teaching lives in us.

When people fall into that awakened love disposition, and are no longer struggling to get out, then there’s a discovery, a landing in what I refer to as “an inherent bodhisattva impulse that needs no vow.” This to me is a natural human being. We were built to participate in the furtherance of life, for everyone, and unless everyone is included, it ain’t complete.

— Saniel Bonder

THE RETURN OF THE GODDESS

The translucent transformation of religion is not only the product of more people experiencing radical awakening. After all, religion has always and