

Exceptional Human Experience of Awakening

An awakening experience is an exceptional human experience which has been defined as “as a means of moving the experiencer away from a more or less exclusive identification with a self bounded by the skin and thought of as separate from others and everything else.” (White 1999)

Taylor (2010) explains that “awakening experience” and “higher state of consciousness” have the same meaning and goes on to define them as a state of consciousness or being in which “our vision of the world and our relationship to it are transformed, an experience of clarity, revelation and joy in which we become aware of a deeper(or higher) level of reality, perceive a sense of harmony and meaning, and transcend our normal sense of separateness from the world.”

The importance and collective benefits for the entire human species has been substantiated by Taylor (2017, p.9) stating that “Our own conscious efforts to awaken are important to intensify the shift that is already under way. Our own personal evolution will contribute to the evolution of our whole species.”

The benefits of awakening experiences are easily recognised in the definitions and explanation presented above. The ultimate benefit is that “our consciousness has become wider and clearer and that we have gained access to a deeper and truer level of reality which is normally hidden from us”. (Taylor 2010, p.xiv)

The growth and transcendence that follows the transformational experience initiated by an awakening experience can result in a moderate change in the experiencer or a major change. The change is reflected in personal growth and transformation and the effect of which is inextricably linked to its sustainability which itself is determined by it being of a temporary or permanent nature.

Taylor (2013) distinguishes between temporary awakening where the ‘self-system’ is temporarily disabled and permanent awakening where it is replaced altogether.

The main benefit of a permanent awakening is that it is more embedded in the psyche replacing the ‘self-system’ altogether and in so doing ensures lasting transformation.

The challenges are that most cases of permanent awakening come about as a result of turmoil and trauma and so in the absence of support can present difficulties. Frawley (2000, p.64) explains suffering of this type as “an energy to awaken us to truth, to get us to question who we really are.”

This may be exacerbated when there is a new sense of identity which is at odds with the old 'self system' and which renders the person less recognisable to those close to them, who are the very ones who would be expected to provide the necessary support.

Temporary awakenings provide a glimpse of the benefits described and continue to have long term effects but not as intensely experienced as permanent awakenings. Many develop a desire to re-create the experience and spend much of their lives chasing the re-enactment of the experience. In addition, as a result of the impermanent nature of the experience the essence of the experience itself is impermanent and its effects diminishing in nature.

References:

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