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Moving From Spiritual Awareness to Spiritual Enlightenment to Spiritual Awakening

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We come across these terms all the time in spiritual study: spiritual awareness, spiritual enlightenment and spiritual awakening. Is there any difference to their meanings or are they simply variations of a theme? They are often used interchangeably so any difference in meaning would have to be negligible – right?

As with the concept of “the trinity” where an understanding of the one God tries to be explained in terms of three distinct overall expressions of God, these three concepts of spiritual study (spiritual awareness, spiritual enlightenment and spiritual awakening) might more understandingly be thought of as three distinct phases of a single process known as spiritual evolution. Every phase within the spiritual evolution process so seamlessly flows into and feeds the next phase that there really is no genuine distinction between them. It’s all one process which continually repeats itself. After moving through each of the three phases you find that the process turns in on itself and that the end of one cycle is simply the beginning of another cycle, with the same phases, but at just a slightly higher degree of nearer to Source-ness than you were before. One journey ends, and a new one instantly begins. And along each rite of passage you move through the stages of spiritual awareness, spiritual enlightenment and spiritual awakening, then back again.

Let’s examine the definitions of the words awareness, enlightenment and awakening in their specific contexts.

To be aware simply means to be cognizant of; to recognize. In this, spiritual awareness is simply about being mindful of spiritual Truths.

To enlighten means to inform; to give the light of truth to. So having spiritual enlightenment implies that your awareness of spiritual Truths actually informs both your thinking and life outlook. Spiritual enlightenment happens when you actually become *accepting* of spiritual Truths. For it is possible for you to be aware of something but still not allow that awareness to illuminate or factor into your way of thinking or in the way you perceive life. For example, it’s common knowledge to nearly everyone above age six who lives in an industrialized society that if you step out into traffic without waiting for it to be safe first, you could very well be hit by a car. Now I don’t know how prevalent this behavior is in other cities, but where I live (in Boston) it’s not an uncommon occurrence for grown people to knowingly step out into the path of an oncoming car. I’ve never understood what the thinking is here. Perhaps these folks have a running internal dialogue that says, *that car is just going to have to stop because I’m*

out here now. Or I'm superman. My body's invulnerable to high speed impacts. I don't know. It baffles me – but that's moving away from the heart of the conversation. To bring it back the point is, your awareness does not have to inform your thought process. You can choose to disregard, distort or minimize any awareness, any understanding of an idea, you may have.

To awaken means to arouse, to become active. Therefore spiritual awakening involves allowing Spirit to actually *act* through you with lesser and lesser degrees of obstruction from you. Spiritual awakening denotes a growth in your *active* awareness of spiritual Truths. For you can be aware of something, accepting of that something, but still choose not to act upon it. Simple spiritual awareness can be passive; it may simply bear witness. Spiritual awakening, however, requires that you actually put your spiritual understandings into life action. So if you *know* that love has power over hate, and you accept this understanding and allow it to illuminate your life outlook, you will have moved through the spiritual evolution phases of both awareness and enlightenment. But in order to progress to spiritual awakening you will have to actually express this understanding in how you react to the situations you are faced with in life. Spiritual awakening is the application part of the spiritual evolution process. It's the leg of the journey which actually promotes the expansion of consciousness so that your awareness grows to know greater and greater depths of understanding. So here the cycle begins again you see?

For every spiritual lesson there is to learn, for every spiritual Truth we must perfect our understanding of, there is a cycle. We each have multitudes of these cycles going on in our lives simultaneously. With this situation in our life we may be working on truly understanding compassion, with that situation it may be patience, and with that situation it may be self-assurance. And for each of these sub-cycles going on within the one grand cycle of spiritual evolution, we move through the stages of being aware of a more pure understanding of a particular Truth; to allowing this deeper understanding to illuminate our life outlook; to actively applying this understanding to the situations which arise in our experience. Spiritual awareness, spiritual enlightenment, spiritual awakening.

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