

# The Crossroads of Awakening

by Nicki Musick

*Awakening. Imagine the softly emerging glow of dawn breaking into sunlight that splits wide open the deep darkness of night's final hour. A celebration of joyous song begins as life awakens and the world emerges brilliantly into sight.*

The awakening of consciousness is much like the dawn of each new day. It may occur slowly, in a series of life changes, or it may burst forth suddenly through circumstances that act as catalysts to startle or shock us awake. By shaking your foundations and touching your very core, these changes can facilitate what is aptly referred to as a "wake up call." On the other hand, awakening can come from seeing one's child for the first time, from truly experiencing a beautiful sunrise, or from some other natural event that moves you to a depth of feeling unknown before.

Many people practice meditation and other sacred and spiritual arts that can bring about awakening in a more deliberate way. These practices bring inspiration on a human level, as each practitioner acknowledges his or her own life journey and challenges the constraints of the usual boundaries of reality. The subsequent awakenings bring us into contact with something greater than ourselves, something with a Universal or Divine nature, and perhaps closer to a deeper sense of peace and grace.

We have been on a journey in search of awakening since we emerged as human beings, both as individuals and as a species. Ten thousand years from now, humanity will study us as naive and innocent, and think about us as we do about our own ancient ances-

tors. We have gone from food gatherers to fact gatherers, and are rapidly developing a mind that detects forces and energies as it records a growing knowledge of both nature and technology. Awakening consciousness is happening right now, in a significant way, because as a civilization we are at a crossroads. We understand that our survival as a species is at stake, while we are also beginning to realize the far reach of our intuitive senses as they emerge and grow, becoming ever more receptive. These perceptions have begun to replace the more ancient instinctual patterns of fear-based consciousness, giving us the capacity to connect to one another and the world in a new way.

As we evolve, humans are more able to connect heart to heart to other creatures, to have the knowledge of what it is to "walk a mile in another's shoes," to understand with compassion instead of misunderstanding through judgment. The awakening coincides with the advent of sophisticated communications, which allow us to connect to others anywhere in the world and to obtain all kinds of information instantaneously. This ability can cause information overload, and encourages us to use our minds more completely, to delve into its deeper faculties. This means we know and understand more, thus are less hungry for knowledge, and that we are more starved for experiences. Too many of us are not awake to our own

human potential, to the deeper realities of life or our capacity to find joy and constructive creativity on the planet. The drive for positions of power, the propensities of cunning, envy, jealousy, lust, anger, greed, judgment, or the many other states of unconsciousness bring only burden and sorrow to the heart. Eventually these states, and the snowballing kinds of experiences and circumstances they create, become so unbearable that we surrender incrementally, just like the break of dawn, and eventually awaken to our own better nature.

The hammering call of becoming more conscious is unrelenting, and requires that we continue to awaken, be it quickly or slowly. Awakening consciousness begins with an awareness that you must overcome your own worst enemy: you. The further the awakening progresses, the less personal the focus becomes. You will switch from "What's going to happen to me?" to "How can I serve this life and the people around me?" The questions, and the thoughts and actions that follow, become the measure of awakening in consciousness.

*Nicki Musick, "Anahata," is director of the Yoga and Wellness Center of Columbia, a certified yoga instructor and is trained in stress management for medical symptom reduction. For more info, call Nicki at (803) 765-2159. See ad page 10.*