



## Suffering Leads to Grace, by Ram Dass

For most people, when you say that suffering is Grace it seems off the wall to them. And weâ€™ve got to deal now with our own suffering and other peopleâ€™s suffering. That is a distinction that is very real, because we may see our suffering as Grace but itâ€™s quite a different thing to look at somebody elseâ€™s suffering and say itâ€™s Grace.

Grace is something that an individual can see about their own suffering and then use it to their advantage. It is not something that can be a rationalization for allowing another human being to suffer. You have to listen to the level at which another person is suffering. When somebody is hungry, you give them food. As my guru used to say, God comes to the hungry person in the form of food. You give them food and then when theyâ€™ve had their belly filled then they may be interested in questions about God. To give somebody a dharma lecture when they are hungry is just inappropriate methodology in terms of ending suffering.

So, the hard answer for seeing suffering as Grace, and this is a stinker really, is that you have to have consumed suffering into yourself. There is a tendency in us to find suffering aversive, and so we want to distance ourselves from it. Like if you have a toothache, it becomes that toothache. Itâ€™s not us any more. Itâ€™s that tooth. And so if there are suffering people, you want to look at them on television or meet them but then keep a distance from them. Because you are afraid you will drown in it. You are afraid you will drown in a pain that will be unbearable. And the fact of the matter is you have to. You finally have to. Because if you close your heart down to anything in the universe, itâ€™s got you. You are then at the mercy of suffering.

To have finally dealt with suffering is to consume it into yourself. Which means you have to, with eyes open, be able to keep your heart open in hell. You have to look at what is, and say Yea, Right. And what it involves is bearing the unbearable. And in a way, who you \*think\* you are canâ€™t do it. Who you \*really\* are, can do it. So that who you think you are has to die in the process.

Like, right now, I am counseling a couple who went to a movie and when they came home their house had burned down and their three children had burned to death. Three, five and seven. And she is Mexican Catholic and he is a Caucasian Protestant. And they are responding entirely different to it. She is going in to deep spiritual experiences and talking with the children and he is full of denial and anger and feelings of inadequacy. In a way, that situation is so unbearable and you wouldnâ€™t ever lay that on another human being

but

there it is. What may happen is she may come out of this a much deeper, spiritual and a more profound, more evolved person. And he, because the way he dealt with it was through denial, may end up contracted and tight because he couldn't embrace the suffering. He couldn't go towards it. He pushed it away in order to preserve his sanity.

There is a process of suffering that requires you to die into it or to give up your image of yourself. When you say, "I can't bear it", who is that? In India, they talk about their saints as being the living dead, because they have died to who they thought they were. And they talk about the saints for whom all people are their children, so that everybody that is dying is their child dying. In that way, suffering leads to Grace.

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