

Chaos and Order

By

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Our life is punctuated by losses, crisis, trauma, illness, disease and chaos. As a psychiatrist and a psychoanalyst, it is my burden and privilege to be a witness and guide to individuals as they negotiate and master this murky terrain in their life journey. Every developmental threshold and initiatory transition is punctuated by chaos in the life of the individual. This may involve transition from parental home to kindergarten, from adolescence to young adulthood, from student hood to the householder stage, from parenting to the empty nest with its challenges of renegotiating marital intimacy and personal priorities, from midlife to old age and infirmity, from focus on this life to existence beyond this life and one's place in the flow of the Universe.

Each of these transitions destroys the existing infrastructure of our life and relationships and we get caught in the turbulence of change and chaos. This is the stage of destruction of our existing life order. With change of context, old system and priorities become redundant and the new framework is not yet in place for the next stage of our life. This transitional phase is extremely chaotic for even the most psychologically minded and proactive individuals, let alone the naïve and the uninitiated. At this point, it is very tempting for us to quickly reestablish a new framework and restore a semblance of order. This is premature order and an attempt to bypass the chaos is a missed opportunity. It leads to a band aid approach to life rather than a life renewing transformation.

Holding the tension between the pain of chaos and craving for order is a necessary condition for establishment of new and enduring order which is aligned with our life's spiritual purpose rather than palliating ego's demand for procrustean order at any cost to our authenticity and uniqueness. If we can hold this tension of the opposites for long enough, and incubate the void with the guidance of Aditi, the goddess of void and new creation, than our soul activates a new archetype consistent with

our soul's code. For a student, this may involve the activation of the warrior archetype, for one seeking a relationship, it may be the lover archetype, for an individual in midlife transition, it may involve the activation of the archetype of the trickster to help one find one's own voice; for an established professional, it may be the activation of the mentor archetype to pass on the wisdom of one's life experiences to younger generation.

This process of chaos and dissolution of the existing order and invocation of the new archetype, or context of our life journey is well captured in my favorite quote from Bhagavad Gita:

Whenever sacred duty decays

And chaos prevails

Then I create

Myself Arjuna,

To protect men of virtue

And destroy men who do evil

To set the standard of sacred duty

I appear in age after age.

Ref: Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 4, para7-8

If we do not over manage the chaos with ruthless personal determination, but rather surf the wave of change and transition, our soul gently guides us by whispering to us via our dreams, images, day dreams, synchronistic events, emergent relationships, even our accidents, medical and psychiatric symptoms, our activated complexes or hang ups, or our creative or artistic output which may have our emerging personal myth embedded in them.

While is the hustle and bustle of our materialistic life, we may not always make room for our soul's whispers, but if we make room for these whispers by creating a sacred vessel of silence, solitude, studio time, journaling, prayer, reflection, contemplation, meditation, mindfulness and a beginner's mind, we are handsomely rewarded by a middle way between the pain of chaos and need for order. We find our Proper place in the flow of life.

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Dr. Bedi specializes in treatment of adults with emotional, relational, addiction and psychiatric problems. He uses a Jungian analytical psychotherapy and psychoanalytical treatment models, not only treating the symptoms, but the underlying psychological and spiritual issues that feed these problems. Medications are used when appropriate but I believe one must also attend to the underlying issues in psychotherapy or psychoanalysis.

