

The Sage

Speaking out
 the tree was talking
 in the voice of a hundred starlings
 the tree was chanting
 in hush de-ter-mine-rince of the wind

so much discussed in overtones beyond this tongue
 speaking with nature as nature arises in itself
 as scents burgeon to pollen
 roots pulling earth to sky
 breaking winter to spring
 in awakening converse

as such

words will never record
 sunlight green overtones of a conversation
 of my silence and talkative, chittering, rustling leaves

===== Thoughts =====

One tradition of Chinese Taoism upon getting older, is to walk away from mainstream society: to go back into the woods, into nature, to discover the Tao. In Hindu culture a person can become "sanyasis", handing off previous responsibilities, cast off their caste, return into nature to discover spiritual connections with an inner self and the larger universe. This casting off process is a common pattern across many cultures. The western world often labels this time of life as a "*mid-life crisis*"¹. Instead of being a "*crisis*", it should be understood as a transformative time when a person is seeking personal growth and enlightenment into something new. This is the path to becoming a sage. The process is like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, complete with changes on all levels of a person's makeup.

Human conversation is an over-powering activity. Humans spend an extraordinary amount of energy making and listening to our expressions of life. They live amidst a cacophony of humanity. One aspect within the transformation into the sage typically includes walking away from that cacophony. This permits a person to hear the more subtle conversations between the inner self and the natural world.

- 1) I find it interesting that western culture subverts this time of change into a consumer event. Instead of being a time of self discovery, mass culture labels it as the time to buy a red sports car or to have a fling. However, by the time the car gets paid off or the fling ends the chance to discover real change within oneself has often passed on by.

Mid-Life Revelations

Risking everything that I am
to become myself.

Juggling balls of fire
fire of my own spirit.

Transformation is never easy
Watching who you are crumble
While growing into the wonder of something new.

===== Paths =====

Twenty years ago I worked with Boris the engineer. Boris was in his early forties and one day he stopped working. Instead, Boris spent the entire day at his desk drawing abstract art. He would shuffle colors around for hours until at the end of the day he proclaimed it a masterpiece. It was nice art, but I didn't understand then why he stopped all work in order to make the drawing. It was clear that Boris was connecting to somewhere that I didn't have the same perspective to view.

Two years ago, at age 39, I found myself drawing. I talked to other people going thru similar bursts of expression upon reaching mid life. The common thread: the art is a probing into deeper levels of oneself. At age twenty my exploration was about reality and how it related to my direct experiences. At age forty this flipped around to the aspects of my life which are indirectly assessable. The drawings now made sense, as tools of expression at an emotional level. The whole goal is to stir into feelings the things that the 5 primary senses cannot directly discern. This emotional response acts as a lens to get a closer view of our hidden nature. For myself, this artistic process was the starting point of a mid-life transformation.

Having gone thru a mid-life transformation, I am surprised by how little our culture understands the process or supports this *inner revolution*. Western culture is more concerned with maintaining status quo. A mid-life transformation is a time of breaking one's personal status quo. This process of transformation takes time and is about a person changing & growing into themselves.

My other observation is it's very painful to be within the state of dramatic change too long. Typically it seems if the change isn't completed within several years' time social pressures and / or personal pain force people to revert to old patterns. Most people I have met never complete the transformation process for this reason.

I recommend growing into new aspects of life. To anyone going thru this process I encourage you to stay true to change. It's hard, risky and unpredictable. However, once completed the change opens up whole new aspects of living and whole new worlds to explore.

