

The Kata as Creative Act

by Tim Cleary

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At the 20th anniversary celebration of the birth of Integral Transformative Practice® (ITP), keynote speaker Jeff Kripal spoke to us of “authoring our own lives.” He reminded us that by consciously taking control of the direction of our lives - lives that were previously guided by the shaping forces of society - we are given a chance to write our own script, one that serves our deeper, more authentic selves.



In ITP, we have the opportunity to author our own lives through the process of creating affirmations. Affirmations allow us to imagine moving toward a more desirable state of being, in effect, creating a template to aid us in the act of transformation. An ideal time to internalize our affirmations is during the practice of the Kata.

Most creative ventures contain an arc that often peaks during the last quarter of the way through. During the Kata this climactic point occurs when, after deeply relaxing body and mind, we focus on affirmations while infusing them with the practice of Transformative Imagery and before we release them into meditation, a combined act referred to as Focused Surrender. This is a potent time to engage our affirmations, because in this relaxed state, the brain starts to emit slower, deeper waveforms that have been shown to be ideal for learning, creativity and healing. In this highly fertile state, affirmations and transformative imagery make strong, lasting impressions on our inner body and mind, possibly even at a cellular level.

At the risk of mixing metaphors, this process can be likened to tending a garden. The gardener prepares the soil, plants the seeds, provides fertilizer and water, and then turns it over to nature to continue the process. In time, through careful cultivation, the crop yields fine, ripe fruit. Likewise, during the Kata, we prepare the body and mind through gentle activity and deep relaxation. We then implant the affirmations by thoughtfully bringing them to mind, enliven them with transformative imagery, and finally release them into the ether as we move into meditation. In time, through practice, we are able to manifest our affirmed intentions.

This act of focused surrender is what the Kata has been leading us toward throughout the series of meditative movements. After invoking each affirmation, we have the opportunity to infuse our carefully crafted words with imagery that breathes life into them. It is important to realize that everyone has preferred methods of processing information, so while some of us prefer visual imagery, others more easily feel or hear the imagined state. All are acceptable; there is no right or wrong way. In fact, with practice, **all** of our senses can be evoked to strengthen the imagined outcome.

Next comes the opportunity to become the writer/director/actor in our own scenario! We imagine seeing and hearing ourselves in a 3-D movie, watching ourselves act out a scene that best illustrates our transformed state. Using oversized images, vivid colors, loud sounds, we make it bigger than life, a cinematic masterpiece writ large! To deepen this powerful act of imagination, we immerse ourselves into the scene, becoming the star of our own production, feeling into it with our whole selves, engaging every sense - smell, taste, touch - in a deep virtual reality experience.

Finally, after bringing the scene to a satisfying conclusion, we allow a moment to bask in the feeling we've conjured and offer thanks to whatever gods that be, surrendering the process to a power greater than our own.

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