

## **A few fundamental ideas concerning spirituality and being a teacher**

### **A homage to Mrs. Irina Tweedie by Annette Kaiser**

I have been frequently asked if I would like to add something to the SIS discussion paper. I have read all the information and the different responses to that paper. Looking back on all that I came to the conclusion that Mrs. Tweedie passed on so much to me within the Sufi tradition and that this could be of interest now. So I will start with what was passed on to me and I will continue with my own further development.

### **Spirituality as a way of life and conscious humanity**

In this context spirituality is understood as a way of life concerning any conscious human being. It is not only a practice to be performed but spirituality is understood as a unity of being and becoming which brings together thoughts, words, and actions. To be present in every moment and lead a life which is guided is the goal of any spiritual practice. A guided life means that you follow your own light, bring to life the great I AM that is all-one and nothing at the same time, and let this I AM energy find its expression in our times, e.g. worldcentric modes of expression. The way I see this today is that such a life is able to connect the non-dual dimensions of consciousness with the integral level of consciousness. What sounds complicated is in essence really quite simple: live in the now – simply so from moment to moment – the one reality – where all and everything is one, inseparably one.

### **Spirituality evolves**

In this context spirituality is not to be seen as something fixed or finalized. Mrs. Tweedie taught us that the essence of the teaching is eternal but must always fit into the given time or culture. In my opinion spirituality itself is in the process of evolving. It is exciting for me at this time to explore the dimensions of consciousness with respect to reality. While mystics in former times stammered about that which was beyond words, I believe that many others, including myself, can now discover qualities in the exploration of the awareness that are very important in the evolutionary context of our times.

### **The spiritual teacher as a mirror and catalyst**

We say there are as many spiritual paths as there are breaths to take. We traditionally consider a spiritual teacher to be important and helpful. A spiritual teacher is a catalyst and a mirror. Depth and span of consciousness (meaning dimensions and stages of consciousness) can be connected to frequencies. The deeper and more comprehensive the consciousness, the higher its frequency. This frequency of consciousness has an effect on others. In this way the presence of the teacher is effective, it can catalyze and help in transforming the heart. The function of the mirror means that people can see themselves as they really are. It also means to be mirrored directly and incorruptibly which leads to an essential self awareness. It is part of the shadow work.

### **Test and see what the presence of the teacher does**

In this context the teacher is described as someone without a name and without a face. I think this is an important aspect. It basically means that the spiritual teacher has no claim to fame concerning his experience or his knowledge of self in an integral sense. So that means: no cult, no admiration - but respect of course. We believe that a teacher should be viewed carefully. On the one hand one needs to examine what it means to be with the teacher: am I more clear, calm, peaceful in his presence? On the other hand there are four substantial material aspects that need to be examined. They can be a great challenge for anyone and are money, property, sex, and power over others – individually or collectively. With respect to these four aspects the teacher needs to be very clear and wise and act accordingly. On a more subtle level it is also important to check if the teaching system itself is free, evolving, and able to introspect. At this point I have to remark that that which seems most obvious does not always reflect the reality. The examination

itself must go into great depth. Also the resonance of the heart is essential. The result of a true meeting with a spiritual path and/or teacher often results in an inner sense of bliss or even jumping for joy.

### **To get involved with the path**

Once we have made a decision for a specific path and perhaps even a spiritual teacher who will guide us, it is important to be fully committed. We are very serious about the recommended exercises and instructions and apply them in greatest details and put them into daily practice. An inner fire, perseverance, courage, and fearlessness are all required. This allows an intensive relationship with the spiritual teacher. A true spiritual teacher has only one goal - to help individuals awaken to their true selves and express this in their way of life in the inherent service of all sentient beings. Most of the time the spiritual teacher works with methods that can be used in everyday life. There are methods of focusing awareness such as a mantra practice, breathing exercises or practicing mindfulness – and mind-emptying methods such as falling into love or the moment that can lead to a complete letting go of thoughts, expectations and so on in meditation. The third element is dedicated to expanding awareness; this includes personal light- and shadow work by which self- and world awareness steadily expands and transcends. For me today this also includes a training of integral consciousness which I see in an evolutionary spiritual context. As we understand it, it is important for the students to be with their teachers as often as possible. There are also recommendations when it comes to dealing with the teacher's expectations. First it is important to listen to his words carefully. Most of the time people do not really listen, or they hear only what they want to hear. Then it is important to weigh this within your own heart so that an unhealthy dependence cannot develop and self-responsibility is promoted. In the end every student must walk in his own light, whatever that means for him. But of course this inner light must be fully conscious and clear. And then the student does what has to be done.

### **From the exterior teacher to the inner teacher**

The role of the exterior spiritual teacher is to help the student become aware of his inner teacher. We know that a temporary projection on the teacher can sometimes be helpful. But this projection must be withdrawn. The student has to awaken, that means he becomes integrally aware.

Sometimes the student is sent to another teacher. Every spiritual path has its own flavor. We all know the three gates that Ken Wilber calls the three faces of God. Inside every gate there are compartments where for example the aspect of love and devotion is taught, in another department the training of will or the transformation to manifestation is added. As each person is unique, so is his spiritual path. Sometimes it can be very meaningful to offer a student a different method, practice, or insight. But at the same time it is important to emphasize that spiritual window-shopping is not the way. The same applies to half-hearted practicing. The results will be lukewarm.

From time to time each practitioner should examine his own way to determine if he is truly evolving, if his heart is being transformed. This is quite easy to do: Is there more peace, love, and wisdom in my everyday life, in the relationship to my partner, the family, the office, or with my neighbors? Am I more tolerant, more respectful, or can I do better in dealing with other people? Has my heart become more open so that the entire world, all humans, all animals, all beings find a place in it? And what am I doing specifically as a world citizen? What is my contribution to that which is inseparably one and transparent at the same time? These questions can be of help to determine if I have found the right spiritual path.

### **Beware of the shadow**

It is very important for me to say that each spiritual path and each spiritual teacher will have its own shadow. A shadow is inherent even in the three faces of God leading to oneness. So even the first gate with its question "Who am I?" may contain the shadow of narcissism with untransformed roots. In the second gate it is possible that a spiritual seeker cannot completely surrender to the commitment involving the YOU. And in the third gate – the perfection of manifestation – the

transparency of matter often is difficult to recognize in its entirety. Even individual spiritual paths can reveal a recognizable shadow. We could say that every spiritual path has its strengths and its weakness. A shadow is always created whenever a weakness or a blind spot cannot or is not allowed to be seen. It is a sign of maturity if a student recognizes a shadow in his spiritual teacher and without suppressing it or pushing it aside can accept it and maintain his respect for that teacher. In my opinion a spiritual teacher must be open for exchange and introspection with others who find themselves in a similar field of consciousness. That can be used to mirror their own development. I believe that a spiritual, integral consciousness is a dynamic process of being and becoming. This means that as the individual continues to grow and develop in a deeper and wider understanding of oneness, this will always find its way into the manifest world.

### **Relationship between teacher and student is evolving**

The relationship between the teacher and student has gone through extreme changes in the tradition that I come from. Today I call it guidance. Getting "educated" in a traditional sense is a heart's desire for some people. For others this is not the right approach for today. That is why I created an integral path called DO in the year 2000 based on my own development. Guidance is an important part of this training but takes place in a kind of "WE" space. Then there are people who just come to retreats and seminars to get what they need as the need arises. In a traditional sense the relationship between the teacher and student is the most difficult relationship of all. It requires great care as it goes into such depth. The basis can only be an awakened existence that provides unconditional love knowing that really nothing can be given or taken. This love has only one wish – to help all mankind awaken. Sometimes more radical methods are used but they must be seen as a temporary option to enable transformation. But I feel that this kind of teaching is changing in our times. The entire awareness of mankind is changing. Nonetheless, deep inside I know for sure that a lived spirituality is something natural that someday will not have to be specially promoted any more. In the widest sense each kind of spiritual teaching can be seen as something that is artificial. In the end spirituality can be found where human beings can express themselves spontaneously and naturally in community. But for now and until then we will not automatically become full of wisdom – and that's why we will just continue practicing.

### **For a school of integral spirituality and a meta-sangha**

Finally, I would like to mention that I have a deep desire for spiritual teachers to become more and more involved with one another. I think we have to step forward and set an example. How can we expect real cooperation from other social groups if we cannot cooperate among ourselves? A meta-sangha (Terry Patten) could generate a new spiritual force to reach and inspire many people. First and foremost there is cooperation, tolerance, and respect that can be found and comes from a worldcentric and integral space. That which unites being and becoming, acting from natural enthusiasm, unintentional/intentionally, in understanding a doing-while-not-doing mode, could help create a togetherness that would form a new basis for a new civilization in the service of all.

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