

AN OPEN DOOR

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I am an open door, ready to receive the spiritual Light, the Light that illuminates all darkness. (Apelo as Potencias Divinas, Isabelle Barse)

Most transformative paths recognize the need for tradition, ritual, rites of passage and initiations to assist the individual through the hazardous territory of self transformation. Elders, teachers and guides are necessary as role models, and to share collective wisdom with the apprentice. The student on the path will learn that some of the teachers or guides required to advance their study are fully human, each with his or her inherent strengths and limitations. Other guides will be spiritual guides and these can manifest in many different forms. It appears that to truly learn how to walk on the spiritual path one needs both human and spirit guides or teachers. It would seem that the form that a guide takes is exactly what is required for the student on the path, bringing the correct teachings, insights and strengths for the challenges of the moment, or the near future.

It is thought that both human and spirit guides come to us in different ways: through pre-incarnation agreements, in response to our conscious requests, or by their own choosing. Spirit beings or guides will be experienced in different ways. Individuals may see, sense, smell, feel, or otherwise energetically experience the presence of these guardian or helper spirits. Frequently, in initial contact with these beings, fear will be the reaction. It is not uncommon to fear, deny or repress contact with the Light and its guardians, while simultaneously longing for restored union with the Source. There can be many reasons why one feels separate from the source of Light; one may for example, have had painful life events, experienced a loss of faith, or developed distorted beliefs. It is helpful in these instances to remember that the Light and the Beings of Light are coming to assist in the illumination of the soul and that this process generally requires some purification of the mind, the heart and the chakras, or power centers of the energetic body.

For those on the path of the Santo Daime, the Daime itself is considered to be the essential Teacher and the vehicle to the direct experience with the Divine and the Celestial Kingdom. In the encounter with the Daime and the Divine Light it would appear that there are stages involved in the process of transformation and purification

that are required in order to become mediums or channels for the Light and for the Beings or Guardians of the Light.

Personal evolution involves the responsibility to transform ourselves by examining our incarnations in the Light of the Daime, to understand our Karma and to remove any obstacles in the way of the development of our soul. Any lack of self-care and/or self-love, which manifests as a lack of self-responsibility, will become an obstacle, for the absence of these essential factors will cause suffering in the body or soul. These obstacles can include unresolved aspects of our biography – our life story, our birth trauma, and our karmic patterns, or past lives.

If we carry wounds in our unconscious, these wounds can function like an open door, energetically attracting or vibrating to similar material in the other realms or in the collective unconscious. For example, an unresolved victim experience in this lifetime can merge in the unconscious into the victim aspect of our birth and/or victim experiences in past lives. These condensed experiences can then resonate with the archetype of victim; this archetypal energy will then add a very strong charge to the experience. These energetic open doors in the unconscious can also attract discarnate beings, trickster entities or dark beings. Generally, some part of us is in collusion or co-operation with these entities or beings, and in this way we open the door for them. An essential part of the transformational learning is that the doorknob is on the inside, and only we have the power to open or close the door. It is also imperative to ask ourselves "is this mine, or not mine?" when we experience difficulties or darkness within our energetic space. What is ours, for example; our biography, our birth and our past life experiences, we must deal with. What is not ours we can detach from and assist into the Light for transformation. Ultimately, we are, or we are in the state of becoming, the master of ourselves, only permitting that which we want to enter into our psychic space. The more we are in the Light, and have the Light within us the more able we are to see what is in our energetic "space."

During this time of self-exploration one needs to be mindful of the possibility of fantasy or magical thinking as part of the developmental process in mediumship. In the beginning of a spiritual practice or in the event of spiritual emergency there can be some inner confusion as many different forces rise to the surface from the unconscious. The wounded or immature ego that is still struggling with unresolved longings or needs may be unable to make the distinction between those longings and spiritual development. What is referred to as "beginners mind" can often include fantasy or magical thinking. True spiritual and visionary experiences will be personally transformative and manifest as healthy choices and actions in everyday life. True sacred

practice is a way of perceiving and experiencing inner and outer reality with humility, simplicity and balance. Often the wisdom and guidance of elders or teachers are required to help in the navigation of this difficult psychological territory.

INCORPORATION

Mediumship and channelling are processes in spiritualism of giving form or expression in physical reality to discarnate intelligence, beings, entities or energies. Discarnate intelligence can manifest through individuals in all creative forms, such as art, music or dance, as well as in all the sciences. Both mediumship and channelling can manifest differently from person to person. This range can include artistic expression in everyday life to the incorporation of a spirit guide in a sacred ritual. In Eastern philosophies, the highest form of incorporation and manifestation is in compassionate service, where the Love & Light of the Divine Heart is revealed through an individual's daily life. In the Santo Daime doctrine the practice of mediumship follows the Umbanda tradition and is considered to be the incorporation of specific beings and entities for teaching and healing.

In the study of incorporation, possibly the most important teaching is that as individuals we need our own life force to be fully incarnate; fully present, aware and grounded. As we open ourselves to the Divine Light, through the Daime, this Light will be trying to awaken our life force. One of the ways that it will do this is by opening and illuminating our charkas or energetic centers. This can feel confusing in the beginning as it can be experienced as two opposing forces, the Light and the ego-self. In the beginning as the Light is trying to open and illuminate the 7th charka, one may experience energetic pressure and psychic openings. Without a framework or "map" of these psychic phenomena the experience may not be understood. Without the physical and emotional resilience to hold the experience this can feel like a form of madness. If one is grounded and firm in their "Self", then this true Self will rise up from the 1st chakra to meet and welcome the Light. If one is ungrounded or dissociated from aspects of the self then one might feel overwhelmed, crazy, or a need to escape what is happening. A key element in this process is the surrender of the personal will (in the 3rd chakra) to Divine will. In Eastern traditions, this is referred to as a Kundalini awakening, the awakening of the true Self to Self-awareness and God-consciousness.

So we can see that of primary importance in spiritual development is *the incarnation of the Self*. This Self is our personal life force in its most whole form. Through this conscious incorporating of the Self in harmony with Divine Light and Divine Love, it is possible to manifest wisdom, higher teachings and creativity in its myriad of expressions. It is the belief of the Santo Daime that Christ dwells within and can be

experienced by each of us who invite the embodiment and manifestation of Christ consciousness. Preceding this embodiment are often powerful experiences of inner cleansing and preparation that include, in the Daime, the re-occurring themes of the incorporation of the Star, or the Cross. This can occur as a visionary and energetic experience in which one "sees" or "feels" the star or the cross within the energetic body.

In the Santo Daime, of particular significance is the channelling of the hymns of the Doctrine. It is believed that the hymns received by the Elders, Masters and experienced members of the religious faith are sacred and contain spiritual teachings of perpetual and universal value. Mestre Irineu received hymns, the Doctrine and all the details of the ritual and tradition through an apparition of the Divine Mother in the form of the Queen of the Forest.

Mediumship is a study, an ongoing learning encounter with oneself and with one's guides. This process is often depicted with the image of the spiral, a symbol of growth and evolution. For instance, in the spiral's circular aspect, the process returns to the same place over and over, but in its linear aspect it achieves a different level each time, such that everything is seen in a new light. Therefore of primary importance is becoming the medium or channel for the Self, for Divine Light, Divine Love and Christ (cosmic) Consciousness. As part of this spiritual service, some individuals will be called to connect with, channel or incorporate Beings of Light, Spirit Entities or Spirit Guides.

Beings of Light, Spirit Entities and Guides:

1. Divine Beings. Known cross-culturally by many different names yet all containing the same attributes, Creator, Divine Mother, Divine Father, Gods, and Goddesses.
2. Orixas. The Orixas are considered energy formations in alignment with the fundamental structure of the Universe who act as intermediaries between the Creator and all beings. The Creator is seen as having many attributes that manifest as the various aspects of nature. Orixas are deities of nature with two aspects, cosmic and planetary.(Umbanda, Yoruba & Candomble beliefs)
3. Archangels, angels, and guardian angels.
4. Spirit beings of the astral, air, forest, sea and waters, manifesting in many different forms, and culturally known by many different names.
5. Caboclos & Caboclas are beings that assist through teaching and healing. (Umbanda tradition)
6. Illuminated Saints, Ascended Masters.

7. Pretos velhos and ancestral spirits. Preto Velhos means in Portuguese “old blacks” and refers to the spirits of slaves who visit or incorporate during spiritual rituals. (Umbanda beliefs)
8. Discarnate Souls. In spiritualism it is believed that souls who have passed from human life, but have not reached the Light can be assisted in this journey through the incorporation of mediums during sacred ritual.

Of particular challenge are dark beings and trickster entities. Known by many different names on the various spiritual paths, they are teachers with difficult but significant lessons. It is important to remember that in the cosmic game they are simply doing their job, which is to contribute to our self-mastery.

“If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you”
(Gospel of St. Thomas)

GUIDELINES FOR THE STUDY OF MEDIUMSHIP OR CHANNELING DURING SPIRITUAL WORKS

PREPARATION:

Before a spiritual work it is important to pay attention to the care of the body and of the mind. Healthy habits with food, rest, sleep and exercise will all contribute to a well body and a well mind. The practice of meditation and/or prayer will help to focus and train the mind. Learning to breathe in an open, flowing way will also help to relax the body and bring the focus into the present moment.

Simple exercises that teach one how to ground and center oneself i.e., connecting with the higher self and with the energy of the Earth, will help to develop a deeper sense of being present in the body, in the now. Being grounded enables one to better manage one’s stamina and energy during the demands of the spiritual work. Mestre Irineu instructs us to come to the works with a healthy mind full of hope. A wise teacher once said - do not wait until you have fallen into the water to learn how to swim.

COMMENCING THE SPIRITUAL WORK:

SET YOUR INTENTION: Be very clear within yourself what the intention is in your heart regarding your personal transformation, healing or development that you are bringing to the spiritual work.

CONNECT: Take the time to connect with yourself, with your higher self, and with the Divine, however you experience that. Place your intention in the care of the Divine. If there are specific Beings of Light or Guides that you feel aligned with or work with, focus your heart and mind on opening the connection to her/him or them.

SURRENDER: Breathe, relax, and let go of thinking. Quiet the mind while retaining a relaxed attention. Trust the spiritual guidance and protection that is present in the Doctrine and the ritual.

PRAY: Stay connected to the Light and to your Guides through prayer. Ask for help, for guidance or for clarification from them at any time. Be willing to be shown personal attachments, and be willing to release them. Remember in difficulty to check what is yours and what is not. Be open to receive what the Light will reveal or offer as an answer to your prayers.

DURING THE WORK:

For those who have consciously entered into the study of working with their guides or those who are aware that they incorporate Beings of Light, guardian spirits or helper spirits the following guidelines may be helpful. The process of education is for the medium and also for the beings arriving. As there are different rules in the other realms from those in the Salão (ritual space) it is necessary for the mediums and the incorporating beings to be under the command of the Doctrine and the leadership of the work during the ritual. (Marked *are my understanding of instructions from Mad. Baixinha.)

1. In the study of mediumship, 90% of the study is an internal learning experience of self evolution for the channel, the individual incorporating. The other 10% is for the service of others.*
2. Breathe, relax, stay centered and stay grounded.
3. Remove glasses, watches, and preferably, shoes. Put down hymn books and musical instruments. Move to the area designated for incorporation.* (Usually in front of the altar or cross)
4. For those who do incorporate spirits or guides it is necessary to have the blessings and permission of the person leading the work before approaching or working with any individual.*
5. Develop a relationship of respect with your guide(s), honouring her/him/them in the way that either they or tradition indicates.
6. Know how to open the "door" within yourself to your guides, and how to close this door within you. Breathe, relax, re-center, re-ground.

For those who are supporting the ritual by holding the sacred space and the Light:

1. Please stay in your place, continuing to sing and/or pray with tranquility and firmness.
2. Do not approach any individual who is incorporating, unless you are designated to do so or it is for their safety or well-being.
3. Do not get in between the person incorporating and the altar or cross.

CLOSING

1. Breathe, relax and ground.
2. Thank and acknowledge the spirit guides and guardians who have worked with you during the ritual.
3. Connect with the Light and surround yourself with the Light.
4. Use your intuition and/or senses to "sweep" your energetic space to ensure that your space is clear.

IN DAILY LIFE:

GROUNDING:

To be grounded means that one feels stability within oneself, a stable identity. A grounded person can withstand challenges and return to that stable sense of self. An important aspect of being grounded is recognizing when one is not grounded, and taking the steps to re-align, re-center and ground.

1. Take care of the body: good nutrition; regular exercise, sufficient rest and sleep are essential.
2. Take time to be in nature, and to bring nature into your immediate surroundings, or to commune with the nature that is already in your immediate surroundings.
3. Take care of the mind: meditation and prayer are a good daily practice and maintain a healthy mind, full of hope.
4. Take care of the everyday life: keeping one's work, studies, career and finances in order are necessary for well-being.
5. Take care of the home: create an environment that is healthy and conducive to well-being and reflects your spiritual life.
6. Good relationships require healthy boundaries. Bring the Doctrine of Love, Harmony, Truth and Justice into all your relationships.
7. None of us can make it through difficult times alone. Recognize when help is needed.

BEING HERE NOW:

1. Connect with your higher self with prayer requesting to be fully present and aware.
2. Breathe, relax the body and mind, let go, if possible, wherever there is tension or a feeling of attachment. If there is something "in process" within you, if now is not the right time to explore it, find a way of honouring it and ask it to be patient until you are able to take the first opportunity to be with it fully.
3. Align the body, paying attention to the feet first, really feeling the feet in contact with the ground, with the good energy of Mother Earth.
4. Breathe slowly into the center of your body (3rd chakra) where your will, self-confidence and self image is held.
5. Activate your will through intention with kindness, such as "I want to be here, present, aware" rather than "I have to or am supposed to be..."
6. Use the image of the tree as a meditation tool. The power in this image is that the tree has its roots in the ground and its branches in the sky. It provides a model for being grounded in the earth and yet connected to the upper realms. The entire tree is contained within the seed; the meaning that we can take is that everything that we need to be whole and to develop exists within us.

The following prayers used consciously can assist in this process.

The Light of God surrounds me
The Love of God enfolds me
The Power of God protects me
The presence of God watches over me
Wherever I am, God is. (Unity Church)

May I be filled with loving-kindness.
May I be well.
May I be peaceful and at ease.
May I be happy. (Traditional Buddhist)

Suggested Reading:

Ayahuasca Awakening, A Guide to Self-Discovery, Self-Mastery and Self-Care
Volume One and Two Jessica Rochester
The Stormy Search for the Self Stan & Christina Grof
Spiritual Emergency edited by Stan Grof

Remarkable Healings	Shakuntala Modi
A Path With Heart	Jack Kornfield
After the Ecstasy, the Laundry	Jack Kornfield
The Ethics of Caring	Kylea Taylor

GLOSSARY

Archetypes:

Archetypes are universal energies that exist in the collective unconsciousness. All individuals are connected with these forces and one may access the archetypes through dreams, myth or altered states of consciousness.

C.J. Jung	The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious
Joseph Campbell	The Hero With a Thousand Faces
Carol Pearson	Awakening the Heroes Within

Chakras:

According to Eastern Tantric philosophies, the charkas are centers of psychic energy in the subtle or astral (spiritual) body. Chakra literally means "wheels" or "circles" to describe the psychic centres of energy situated along the spinal column of the human body and generally symbolized by lotuses.

Ajit Mookerjee	Kundalini, The Arousal of the Inner Energy
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Discarnate:

When referring to souls, discarnate means without a physical body. It can also be used to refer to creative intelligence as it exists in the collective unconsciousness.

Karma:

In the Eastern philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism, karma is the belief that the quality of people's current and future lives is determined by their choices and behaviour in this and in previous lives.

Santo Daime:

The Santo Daime is a syncretic Christian religion that was founded in the Brazilian Amazon by Mestre Raimundo Irineu Serra. The Santo Daime incorporates Native (South) American, Brazilian and Espiritismo elements.

Umbanda:

Umbanda is a Brazilian religion that incorporates the beliefs of the European settlers (Catholic) with Espiritismo elements, African traditions and Amazonic traditions.