

The Seed, the Tree and the Branches

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In the history of human development, all great traditions begin with a seed: the life and teachings of a great Master. After the growth of the movement and the passing of the Master (and sometimes even during her or his lifetime) it is only natural that the trunk of the tree begins to branch out. For example 2500 years ago the seed planted by the life of the Buddha became a great tree; Buddhism, with many branches. 2000 years ago the seed planted by the life of Jesus of Nazarus became a great tree; Christianity, with many branches. In the last century the seed planted by the life of Mestre Irineu, the founder of the Santo Daime, has become a tree with many branches.

In Brazil there are many Daimista churches, different branches of the Santo Daime and Ayahuasca Church lines, such as the União de Vegetal and the Barquinha. The structure of the GMT/CONAD committee, a committee connected to the Brazilian government to advise on the heritage and religious lines that use Ayahuasca traditionally and/or religiously, reflects that by its members.

There are different studies or different charities of the branches and individual churches, each one has its merit and each church has its own "flavour" and/or charitable mission.

There is a natural evolutionary process of all aspects of life, including people, cultures and beliefs. Many factors contribute to the developmental aspect of a religious movement; cultural, social and legal influences, personal interpretations, scientific advances and visionary revelations. It is possible to stay in alignment with the "perennial philosophy" encoded within the teachings while noting that with the passage of time, aspects of the great teacher's life or teachings that were culturally and or politically relevant for the era and location of the Master's life, may not be pertinent in today's world. This requires considerable discernment and integrity as well as a direct inner experience of spiritual truths.

One can see throughout the history of religious traditions and movements, and to this day, that it is possible for the branches of a religion or organization to live in harmony with each other by acknowledging that they are from the same roots and part of the same tree. Respect and harmony can be maintained when individuals, groups and organizations choose to consciously live the spirit and truth of consciousness teachings – "the content" while recognizing the need for

"the form" - the ritual or practice - to adapt to an ever expanding and transforming global human experience.

Part of the human dilemma is the tendency to become attached to the "form" over the "content". There is a Buddhist story that explains this. It likens the tools of meditation to a boat that enables one to cross over the river. Once on the other side, one can see that the boat is merely a means to assist the journey.

Problems begin when people lose direct connection with the transcendent power of the teachings and become attached to the boat, or even worship the boat. To further complicate matters, the lower characteristics of the human race can act out personal/group needs for power, money or territory by claiming to own the truth, be the only "pure" or true branch or even claim to be the whole tree. At its worst this develops into religious crusades, persecutions and/or warfare.

Another challenging aspect is the tendency for people to project their inner longings and their higher self onto leaders, senior members or the path itself. By handing away their own power to others, they contribute to the ethical problems that can occur.

A true spiritual path is one that embodies compassion, respect, truth-telling, dignity, fairness and healthy boundaries.