



Natural Unfolding, by Gil Fronsdal

I believe that spiritual practice unfolds most smoothly when we find how to accord ourselves with nature. A useful metaphor for this is river. The river metaphor is expressive of a practice of according with nature, with truth. A fast river may require our attention and navigation to stay in the current, off the rocks, and out of the eddies. Practice requires mindfulness and investigation, supported by calmness and inner stability, to discover nature and how to accord ourselves with it. Often this entails learning how to leave ourselves alone, how not to interfere with the natural unfolding and healing that will occur if we give them a chance. Our conscious mind may not know what is supposed to unfold. Like a flower that needs water and fertilizer, our inner life opens in its varied ways when it is ready, if we nourish it with attentiveness, compassion and acceptance. [.] To work with nature, we also need to study it thoroughly. One way to do this is to investigate all the ways we work against nature by being judgmental, hostile, demanding, hurried, unkind or ungenerous. In contrast to natural unfolding, there is change imposed by the ego, out of our insecurity, fear, hostility, greed, or ambition. One concept we often impose on our experience is an assumption of permanence, which can put us at odds with the impermanence of all natural processes. Another concept that can inhibit the expression of our nature is a fixed image of ourselves, which can easily propel us to conform to "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts." Because of our phenomenal ability for abstract thinking, we easily impose our world of ideas on top of nature rather than patiently allowing nature to show us what is needed and how we can come into accord with it. --Gil Fronsdal

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