

### **Gratitude as an inner orientation**

I remember a number of years back when I was experiencing profound sorrow in response to certain challenging life circumstances. Such circumstances had given rise to the experience of disorientation within my inner being. It was as if my Selfhood was being broken



open. Then one day as I walked into the front garden I was drawn by the beauty of a flower. The beauty stopped me in my tracks. And as I looked into the flower a profound sense of joy radiated throughout my being. However, the experience of joy did not dissolve the experience of sorrow. Rather it seemed as if the joy and the sorrow lay side by side within my inner being. And I remember being awe struck. For it was the first time I was aware of experiencing both joy and sorrow at the same time in a way that I was neither seeking to hold fast to the joy nor completely overwhelmed by the sorrow.

As I now reflect upon that particular moment, I recognize it as one of living with gratitude as an inner orientation. From such an orientation I was able to notice both affective experiences without the judgment of good for me/bad for me. And from such an orientation the internal wrestle against what was happening within me dissolved and I was able to remain open to inner wisdom's invitation towards inner healing.

### **How may we cultivate gratitude as an inner orientation?**

We cultivate gratitude as an inner orientation by shifting our focus from the good/bad judgments we usually place on our circumstances; to gently engaging with whatever affective experience arises within us in response to present circumstance. Such a shift in focus is in stark contrast to our usual reactions of either seeking to grasp onto our joys, or denying and/or being overwhelmed by our sorrows, anger or fears. However, such a shift in focus allows us to continue our inner journey of responding to inner wisdom's invitation to continue to grow in self knowledge, inner freedom, wisdom and compassion through all life circumstances. In so doing, we cultivate gratitude as an inner orientation.

Finally, let me give thanks for the person I meet with in the ongoing practice of spiritual companionship. Let me give thanks for their ability to courageously walk alongside me in my inner journey and in so doing cultivate gratitude as my inner orientation. For I cannot imagine being able to continue in such a life affirming journey without their companionship to guide and sustain me along the way.

In gratitude, Kaye

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