

THE INSPIRING TEACHER

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“Sunnie is truly inspiring
and an extraordinary human being.”
Ramakrishna Puligandla

To be a teacher is to be an inspiration. Three months before my teacher Sunnie D. Kidd passed on she told me “you have come into your own as a teacher.” I had already been teaching for more than twenty-five years! But to have my teacher say that to me was the highest honor I could and will ever achieve. That is the power of a teacher to recognize the capabilities of another person and help them on their path. Great teachers read character. The beauty of having a great teacher is to know it at that time. To be aware of what is happening while it is happening.

Not only did my teacher inspire me, person to person, but also she taught me the dynamic aspects of inspiration. Person to person inspiration brings with it a time of personal change. Basic to the inspiring experience is an inspiration/aspiration dialectic that arises in the dynamic field of *Inbetweenness* shared by the inspiring person and the teacher. It is a shift in existential meaning. There are three aspects of the shift in existential meaning: aspiring; authentic moments; and breaking through boundaries.

A shift in existential meaning provides the overarching themes for this experience. This shift in personal understanding emerges as an expression of the experience. It arises from the inspired person’s experience of being-with the teacher who is inspiring.

The aspiring person comes to the shared situation in a way that reveals a readiness to be present and an openness to discover new meanings.

Authentic moments are when the inspired person is in search of and moves toward meaning. Authentic moments are turning points in experience. These are experiences that arise in relationship with the teacher. Authentic moments dis-close personal meaning in new way as the inspired person comes to turning points in self-understanding. This is an experience of “I am able to.” Authentic moments stand out in one’s experience to offer new possibilities.

In the experience of being inspired the inspired person discovers options. As the inspired person affirms one of these existential options, it is enacted. Enacted options precipitate the shift in existential meaning and are given expression as experiences of personal change. An experience of breaking through boundaries of self arises. This act of self-transcendence

shows how a teacher frees another for one's own most possibilities. The shift in existential meaning comes about as the person takes up meaning found in the experience of being inspired.

Qualities that the inspiring teacher lives are: authenticity; humility; confidence; openness; availability; compassion; and sense of humor. Great teachers live these qualities. Being in relation with a teacher who lives these qualities the inspired person comes to know the meaning of inclusiveness.

My teacher lived these qualities and inspired me. But not only that she taught me the dynamics of inspiration. I not only have the lived meaning but the theoretical understanding too!