

The Unique Self of Marc Gafni

By Sally Kempton and Ken Wilber

When we first met Marc Gafni, I was struck, like most people, by his brilliance and his openhearted friendliness. It was clear that he was a 'big' person and a gifted teacher. It wasn't until we got to know him better that we became aware of his deeper qualities—his basic goodness, his insight into the human heart, and his profound commitment to living a life of love and service.

Gafni has a strong and charismatic presence and a sharp and elegant mind. Yet what makes him remarkable as a spiritual teacher, scholar and friend, is his fine balance of mind and heart. We have rarely met anyone with such a capacity for seeing and bringing out the best in other people. We have watched him spend hours listening to someone in pain and confusion, teasing a friend out of a bad moment, offering love and support to people he barely knows, and to old friends he hasn't seen in years. He does these things as a matter of course, as part of his natural sense of service. He consistently offers his ideas, his insights, and his time for other people's use—willingly helping a friend prepare a presentation, or helping two people resolve a knotty interpersonal problem.

Marc, more than almost anyone we know, lives from a profound sense of being responsible to love. In practice, that means that when he loves someone—and he has the gift for genuinely loving many people-- he is willing to offer whatever he has. This willingness to love and give himself—sometimes against his own best interests—is one of Marc's remarkable qualities. One aspect of this gift for loving is that people who spend time with him will often experience a natural opening of the heart, which gets played out in their own relationships and work life.

Marc's open heartedness is unusual, and has often been misunderstood, just as his spontaneous, playful and experimental nature has been misunderstood.

Yet, in the years we have known him, we've seen that his open-heartedness is much deeper than superficial friendliness and an ability to connect to people. Marc's refusal to close his heart, his ability to stay open with whatever life presents, springs from his realization and from his connection to God, and to a lineage of holy beings. It is based on a profound commitment to love and service, to helping others in whatever way he can-- personally, spiritually, and materially. He lives from a sense of obligation to give love, to give love to a wide circle, and to make love actual in all his encounters.

Several years ago Marc suffered a profound injustice, which continues to be perpetrated on some malicious websites, and to be spread by people who do not understand the truth of the situation. That there was significant injustice done to Marc through false complaints, is something that I and others have concluded after much examination. Among those are Zen teacher Diane Hamilton, Integral CEO, Robb Smith, author and spiritual leader Dr. Gabriel Cousens, lawyer and philosopher John Kesler, Rabbi Gershon Winkler, Rabbi Avram Davis, journalist Jeff Bell. fFormer Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Andersen, spiritual teacher Paul Goodberg, author Mariana Caplan, psychologist Dr. Cindy Lou Golin, psychiatrist and author Dr. Joseph Berke, author and transformational teacher Katherine Woodward Thomas, psychological evaluators, Thomas Meeham and Dr. Keven Udis, lawyer Charlotte Miller, Esq, former Utah Chief Justice Michael Zimmerman, as well as a group of credible professional third person evaluators including the leading polygraph expert in sexual issues in the United States. All of the people cited above are serious professionals and leaders, who know Marc well, and are highly sensitive to the honor and protection of the feminine.

The evidence makes it abundantly clear that the horrendous claims made about Marc on what can only be described as Internet vendetta or hate sites hidden beneath the fig leaf of victim advocacy, are without a shred of truth. To even need say this is in some sense offensive. It is somewhat like a Jewish person needing to deny anti - Semitic claims on a neo -Nazi site.

To reach this understanding, we reviewed hundreds of pages of material, which had been gathered and recovered over a period of two years. This material included direct transcriptions of

correspondence bearing on the issues at stake, gathered from virtually all of the key players in the story both before, during, and after its unfolding. We also read an enormous amount of supplementary supportive material as well. Between us, all sides were spoken to directly or indirectly.

After looking at all this, and weighing the perspectives of all sides, we *came to the clear conclusion that the complaints made in the public realm, and which continue to be disseminated on certain Internet sites, were categorically false*. This is not to deny—as he himself has recognized-- that Marc's rather bohemian lifestyle and other factors related to Marc, at the time and in earlier periods in his life, were contributing factor in the situation. This is always the case in any situation. Marc has both recognized and apologized in public and in writing, for his part in the contribution system that fostered conditions, which allowed this injustice to occur. Marc has said both in private and in public time again that “even if one has five percent responsibility in an event one must take one hundred percent responsibility for their five percent. This is what differentiates a victim from responsible player in the game of life”. We are convinced that despite the injustice Marc has not only kept his heart open and not become bitter or a victim but he has also taken one hundred percent responsibility for his part in the contribution system and learned what needed to be learned.

Sadly some of the people who acted out some mixture of fear, cowardice malice, hurt or other motives have not recognized their substantive part in the contribution system and not found the courage to step down or apologize.

We also came to a deep understanding of some of the ways that politics and malice played out in these events. For example, it is difficult to understand what happened without recognizing the pivotal role played by male, politically motivated malice, which in one case was directed against Marc for several decades. In the same way, one also has to recognize the workings of feminine shadow as it plays out in the collective as well as in individuals, and also the way in which the masculine uses **and hides behind sexual politics to serve agenda of power and malice**.

If you care to know more about this, Marc's website contains a section entitled Controversy where you will find some, though not all, of the documentation on these issues. Marc decided for the time being to go on with his life and not expose on this website some of the key players and motivating factors that contributed to this great injustice.

The tragedy and injustice, which Marc suffered, has paradoxically given him great gifts. Life invited him to examine himself, to purify his motivations and his ego, and to strengthen his realization, humility and practice. All this only deepened his commitment to love. His compassion seems to widen every day. Marc is simply one of the best human beings I have met in my long life of knowing great human beings. It is an honor and a privilege to call him my spiritual friend and colleague. Moreover we believe that Marc's experience has deepened him into the kind of Integral Spiritual leader and teacher that we need to help lead the movement in the future decades.

Sally Kempton and Ken Wilber

Kempton is an internationally known spiritual teacher, who spent 20 years as a swami in an Indian tradition. She writes a monthly column, Wisdom, for Yoga Journal, and is the author of The Heart of Meditation: Pathways to a Deeper Experience. In the 70s, she was an early spokesperson for the second-wave feminist movement.

Wilber is the leading philosopher and pandit of the worldwide Integral Evolutionary movement. He is the author of over a dozen major works including Sex Ecology and Spirituality, Up From Eden, Atman project and Integral Spirituality. He is the most widely read living philosopher in the world today with enormous moral and spiritual influence in many spheres of public life.