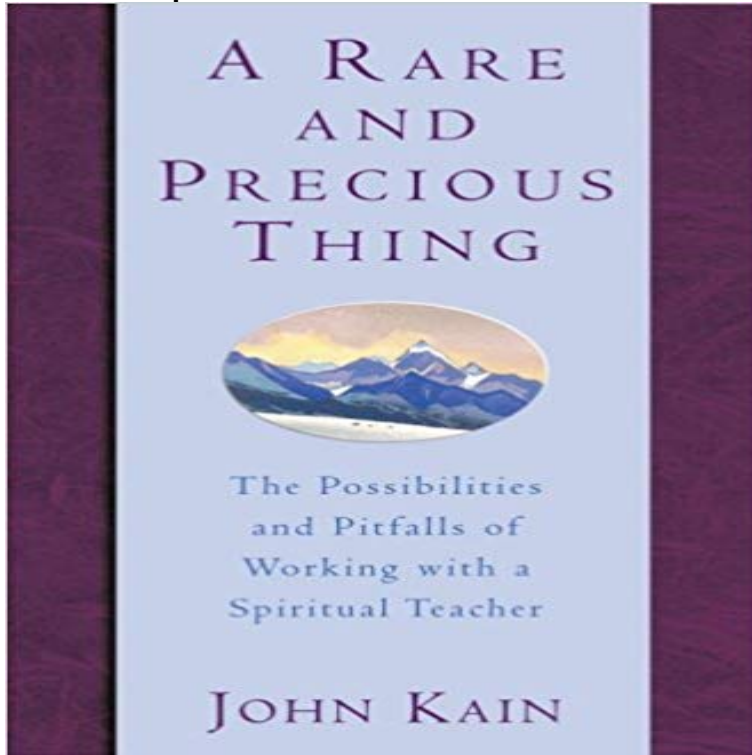


## A Rare and Precious Thing: The Possibilities and Pitfalls of Working with a Spiritual Teacher



Never have there been so many spiritual seekers and so much readily available information about paths to self-fulfillment. Yet this book is the first in-depth exploration of how to evaluate spiritual teachers, what to expect from them, and what to be wary of, as well as whether it is necessary to study and practice with a guru or possible to achieve the same thing on your own. John Kain introduces us to teachers (and their students) from a wide range of traditions: Murat Yagan, a ninety-year-old Circassian teacher of Sufism and Kebzeh in a rural community in British Columbia; Chief Arvol Looking Horse, the nineteenth-generation keeper of the sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe of the Lakota, Dakota, Nakota Nation; Joan Chittister, OSB, a sister at a Benedictine monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania, an ardent advocate for peace and justice, a feminist, and a questioner of institutional thinking; Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, founder of the Jewish Renewal movement, enthusiastic teacher of Hasidism, and past holder of the World Wisdom chair at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado; Gehlek Rimpoche, a renegade but beloved Tibetan Buddhist teacher whose aim is to dispense with superficial traditions and integrate the essence of Buddhist teaching into Western culture; Sudha Puri, the American-born head of Ananda Ashram north of Los Angeles and the Vedanta Centre in Massachusetts, in the lineage of the Indian sage Ramakrishna; John Daido Looi, the abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery in New York's Catskill Mountains, who is known for using photography and the arts as bridges to awareness; and Adyashanti, a charismatic American teacher in Los Gatos, California, who has broken away from all established traditions. Woven throughout Kain's detailed profiles of the teachers themselves is information on finding a teacher, life in a spiritual community, dealing with

problems like disillusionment and abuse of power, and the meeting (or lack thereof) between Western psychology and religion. A teachers job is not actually to give us anything but to take away the unnecessary baggage we accumulate in our minds that obscures the truth. It is a rare and precious thing to work with someone whose purpose is to cajole us into opening our eyes and experiencing a saner reality. Kain offers would-be pilgrims an inside look at this relationship and what extraordinary things can result from it.

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