

"Seeking the Master" by Dion Fortune

How shall he who has glimpsed the possibility of the Great Work find a Master who shall train him for its performance? This is the supreme question for the earnest seeker. But remember this, treading the Path is very different from studying the map.

The map may be studied by lamplight at the fireside; the Path is trodden out in the wind and darkness of the barren places of the soul, for the Path is within, and leads from brain consciousness, through subconsciousness, to superconsciousness. It is nevertheless by no manner of means subjective, and it is concerning the objective aspect of the quest that the student will no doubt be curious.

Let us consider the spiritual history of one who sets out on the quest and note the stages through which he will pass.

First there comes the formulation of the concept. He conceives the idea of initiation and the ideal of the Master's service, and desires to make his dedication. But is desire enough? Yes, it is enough if it is strong enough and long enough; if it continues unwavering and unshaken through all the testing of the soul that shall try its fibre, through the purgation that shall purify it for the Master's contacting, and through the toil of the training that shall fit it for the Master's service; if the desire for initiation continue unwavering through all this, it shall bring the pupil to the feet of the Master.

But how few achieve or even realise the strength of the desire that is needed to bring about initiation! The beautiful Eastern tradition tells of the Master who held his chela under water till he was half drowned, and then told him that when he desired light as fervently as he desired air, he would receive it. There is also a Western story that tells of the man who sold all he had in order to buy the pearl of great price. He who sets foot upon the Path may take nothing with him; naked are we born into the world, and naked we pass out of it into the higher consciousness. The heavenly homesick are many, but those who will endure the divine journey are few. It is impossible to make the best of both worlds, for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also.

It is only those for whom the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life have ceased to have any significance who will essay the journey that leads to the heights, and for them the journey will not be hard, because they travel light. He who goes empty-handed treads lightly; it is the great burden of egoistical necessities that renders the way toilsome.

There comes to the soul a period of bitter conflict. It has glimpsed the divine ideal, it has drunk of the living waters of the spirit, and these have begotten in it a thirst which cannot be slaked upon earth; having known reality, it cannot find rest in appearances; and yet it has not exhausted the delights of matter. It is best that such a one should seriously count the cost before embarking upon the Great Quest and calling upon the Masters for aid in his search. For the Masters will take him at his word if he invokes them, and cause him to pass through the flame of circumstance so that all dross may be purged from the character; but if the ore of his nature be poor in spiritual metal, the conflagration thus caused will

generate such heat that the gold will fuse and run, and the form of that man be lost.

It is the desireless man alone who passes into the Great Freedom, and when one who is ruled by desires essays the passage, these desires, being torn up by the roots, cause the soul to bleed. It is better that a ripening of the spirit should be achieved so that it parts with its fleshly desires naturally by outgrowing them, rather than do violence to the instincts of the nature. It is not the suppression but the outgrowing of desires that we should seek; ripe fruit parts readily from the stem, and the man who has learned the lessons that life has to teach will pass on without regrets. An incomplete, abortive experience of life is not a good foundation for illumination.

Initiation cannot be obtained in less than three incarnations of steadily directed effort. In the first incarnation the soul conceives the ideal and nurses it in secret, fulfilling all the duties of humanity in humility and patience, thus building character; in the second incarnation the soul undergoes testing and purgation and has to meet its karma; this is sometimes spoken of as the seed incarnation; and in the third incarnation it rapidly recapitulates the development attained in the other two and is ready for the Path.

Each individual who conceives the ideal of initiation has to ascertain whether consciousness is being awakened for the first time, or whether memory is returning from the depths of the subconsciousness after the inter-natal sleep; it is here that the advice of a teacher who can read the Records is very necessary, for an imagination fired by the lust of adventure or the spirit of emulation may lead the aspirant grievously astray, causing him to venture out of his depth. It may also happen that the previous preparatory life may not have fulfilled its purpose and the preparation thus be incomplete; the work has then to be done over again before further advance can be made.

Finally, there are many souls who, after being initiated in the past, went astray into black-magic or failed in a test, and have laboriously to climb back up the ground they have lost. Such souls are often psychic, but have no knowledge of occultism, the senses remaining, but the contacts being broken and the memories obliterated by the Master who has been betrayed. For these the Path is forbidden until expiation has been completed and the wrong redressed. Their own instinct is the best guide in this matter, for they will know with an unerring certainty when the invisible barrier is down and they are free to go forward.

The aspiration of the soul for initiation should be formulated and held with an unswerving determination; it should be meditated and brooded over in the night watches and every action of the waking hours should be dedicated to the perfecting of character and the service of humanity and through it of the Masters; but the soul should wait in humility for psychic experiences, not seeking to project itself out into the astral spaces where it has neither guide, chart nor compass. In due season, when the time is ripe, it shall indeed travel the astral ways, but under the care of a guide and not alone.