

FINDING YOUR WAY ON THE PATH

INTRODUCTION

The Path of Discipleship is embedded in the larger Path of Evolution. Both paths are part of the long journey of the soul and they consist of different stages that partly overlap each other. In the books of Alice Bailey it is not always immediately clear how the different stages can be distinguished and how they relate to one another. At least for me it isn't. In this paper I will endeavor to give an overview of the different stages of the journey of the soul, and in doing so I will try to put them in a logical order.

Students of the books of Alice Bailey are on the larger Path of Discipleship, which includes the phase of preparation which is called the Probationary Path. Of this last path I wrote my earlier paper '*Stairway to Heaven*'. The main topic of this paper is the Path of Discipleship. It is not easy to find out where one exactly is on this path. Another topic of this paper will be therefore to find my own place on this path as an example for the reader to find his or her place.

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

The journey of the soul is a long and enduring one. No question about that. According to the Ageless Wisdom teachings the soul walks through different paths on its long journey. The following paths or stages can be identified:

1. The Path of Evolution
2. The Probationary Path
3. The Path of Discipleship
4. The Path of Initiation

The first one, the Path of Evolution, encompasses the other three, which are the specific stages in which the soul gradually takes over the personality and in which the aspirant is becoming a disciple and passes different initiations.

In this paper I will keep it at these four paths. Although they are just four, they're more than a handful. After these stages there are the ways of Higher and Cosmic Evolution, but we won't bother with those ones. Those are the ways we don't enter before we transcended being human altogether. And that seems for most of us a long way ahead. So let's focus on the mentioned four stages.

1. THE PATH OF EVOLUTION

This stage begins with the individualization, the transference of the animal group soul into the individual human soul, when we actually become a human being and make a first entrance into the human kingdom coming from the animal kingdom. This is the start of the long evolutionary journey of the human soul. The longest part of it we travel in a state of relative oblivion and ignorance. In the early phases life after life is

spent in blindness. The questions of who we are, where we come from, why we are here, where we're heading to and what the meaning of life is are not asked. They do not arise in the awareness. The individualized incarnating souls, just live (or better: survive) and die, life after life, one short one longer, one as the victim one as the perpetrator, one with more good than bad luck one the other way around. Many experiences we have to undergo on this Path of Evolution, wherein the different bodies of our personality – the physical, astral/emotional and mental – develop their qualities independently. The evolving human soul acquires experience after experience and endeavors to earn virtues from each incarnation, without any awareness in the incarnated consciousness of connection with the soul. It seems that this stage still covers a large group within humanity who are not on any spiritual path at all yet. This group is submerged into the little ego, or the lower personality, and is largely selfish.

Eventually however the Path of Evolution will evolve into a quest towards self-development. Then a slow awakening is dawning in which the aspirant is emerging and starts to respond to something higher. Now the Soul is seeking to contact with and control the personality, and the Solar Angel starts to give its first conscious attention to the struggling personality. But before one really enters the Path of the so-called Chelaship or Discipleship (the word 'chela' is Hindu for 'disciple') one has to go through a preparatory period of probation, which is called the Probationary Path.

2. THE PROBATIONARY PATH

With this stage the larger path towards Discipleship begins. It covers the period of personal growth. In *'Initiation, Human and Solar'* (IHS) from Alice Bailey is written (on page 63) that this path

"...marks that period in the life of a man when he definitely sets himself on the side of the forces of evolution, and works at the building of his own character. He takes himself in hand, cultivates the qualities that are lacking in his disposition, and seeks with diligence to bring his personality under control. He is building the causal body with deliberate intent, filling any gaps that may exist, and seeking to make it a fit receptacle for the Christ principle."

This means that the lower self becomes interested in developing qualities for the first time, and conversely the soul is beginning to take interest in the personality. The person starts working on his character development and purification, and on the union of his three bodies (physical-etheric, astral/emotional and mental) into an integrated personality. He is also building the causal body, which is the body of the soul, also called the egoic lotus. He does this by filling any gaps in a conscious way with the intention to make this body a useful container or vessel for the transference of the light and loving kindness of the Christ consciousness. The goal of this path is the first initiation wherein the child of Christ is born in the heart and where *"this babe starts on the pilgrimage of the Path"* (IHS, p.63).

I wrote more of this path in my earlier paper *'Stairway to Heaven'*. There I explained the difference between the *Mystical Aspirants* and the *Probationary Disciples* who are both on this path, whereby the last ones are setting the first steps on the Path of

Discipleship. I also described the hindrances on the Probationary Path (ignorance, egoism, attachment or desire, hate and clinging to life) and the ways to overcome them.

Let's focus now on the next stage, the Path of Discipleship, which is the main topic of this paper.

3. THE PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP

On this Path the primary focus of the incarnated soul transmutes from personal growth into group development, service and goodwill. The personality has lost his earlier dominance and is brought under the much wiser influence of the soul. Integration and fusion of the personality with the soul takes place. This doesn't mean that the pain and suffering of the disciple is overtaken by only fun, joy and harmony. The personality will not give up without a fierce battle and there will be some crises and a lot of 'growing pains' and tension of expended effort.

Alice Bailey mentions in her book *Discipleship in the New Age I (DINA I, p. 673-674)* six different Stages of Discipleship. And here is where it starts to become a little complicated. A certain overlap between the different stages seems to be the case, also with the former Probationary Path. The following six Stages of Discipleship are mentioned:

1. "Little Chelaship"

Herein a disciple is contacted by the Master through another chela on the physical plane.

I think it can be said that this stage actually overlaps with the abovementioned *Probationary Path*. This is, as I said, the stage where the larger Path towards Discipleship begins. In the earlier phases of this path the seeker is called a *Mystical Aspirant* who is emotionally oriented and interested in spirituality, but still centred in the limited good of his little self. This however is a very important and necessary phase to engage and open his heart for compassion and loving-kindness. Without this the development of his mental faculties would bring the danger of black occultism. To become a *white* occultist the work of preparation, purification and one-pointed concentration is necessary and this is carried out in this phase. In doing so the seeker has made enough progress on his individual path to cause his inner light to flash out, attracting the Master's attention for the first time. The Master contacts the chela, or disciple, (without him being aware of it) through another chela on the physical plane.

2. The "Chela in the Light":

This is the stage wherein a higher disciple directs the chela from the egoic or soul level. This stage encompasses *three sub stages of Discipleship*:

- a. The *Probationary Disciple* who is beginning to make the transition from the Probationary Path to the real Path of Discipleship by his focussing on the mental plane via one-pointed meditation, study and service.
- b. The *Accepting Disciple* who is evolved into the more mentally oriented occultist who is growing and working in the Light on overcoming character faults, glamour, and personal and planetary karma. It goes without saying that the latter adds on his experience of suffering and pain. But this seems to be a necessary part of his awakening process in which he learns to demonstrate love in action.
- c. The *Pledged Disciple* who is evolved from the knowledgeable student into the committed and loving server. He has pledged or taken three vows: to serve humanity; to cooperate with the Plan of the Hierarchy; and to develop the Higher Self and follow its guidance. Where the Accepting Disciple works with his mind (Light), the Pledged Disciple works with his mind and his heart (Light and Love).

The disciple is now directed by a more evolved disciple from a soul level. He is probably not aware of these contacts until he becomes more aligned with his soul and its energies.

The Chela in the Light has fulfilled three more requirements (*DINA I, p, 722*):

- a. He makes a transition in consciousness from the astral plane to the mental plane.
- b. He learns to distinguish between the pairs of opposites (e.g. good-bad, light-dark, fear-love, etc.).
- c. He becomes aware of glamour (spells or illusions from the astral plane) as something from which he must eventually free himself and aid in freeing the world.

When the Accepting Disciple becomes a Pledged Disciple a fair amount of **loneliness** can be his part. This he is causing all by himself and he has to deal with it by himself too. See the next quote for this in which DK speaks quite strictly about this.

“There is much loneliness in a disciple’s life which is entirely his own fault and which is subject to cure if he employs the right measure of self-discipline. With these he must deal himself, for they concern the personality, and with your personalities I have no affair. I refer to the loneliness which comes when the accepting disciple becomes the pledged disciple and steps out of a life of physical plane concentration, and of identification with the forms of existence in the three worlds, and finds himself in the midway place, between the world of outer affairs and the inner world of meaning. His first reaction then is that he is alone; he has broken with the past; he is hopeful but not sure of the future; the tangible world to which he is accustomed must, he knows, be superseded by the intangible world of values, involving a new sense of proportion, a new range of values and new responsibilities. This world he believes exists, and he steps forward bravely and theoretically, but it remains for a while wholly intangible; he finds few who think and feel as he does and the mechanism of sure contact only exists within him in embryo. He is breaking loose from the mass consciousness

with which he has been merged hitherto, but has not yet found his group, into which he will eventually be consciously absorbed. Therefore, he is lonely and feels deserted and bereft.” [DINA II 45-46]

In this quote I find a lot of recognition as I look at my own process during the last fifteen years. DK mentions here the loneliness one will experience in his transference from a focus on the physical material world, wherein the majority of mankind is dwelling, to a more dedicated interest in the spiritual world. At first he experiences a kind of a vacuum, an empty and unsure space between two worlds, a familiar but no longer interesting one and an unknown and intangible but rather hopeful and interesting new one. The intangibility of this new world will last for a while and the disciple wanders through it at first in a blind state trying to get some sense and grip on it. This path he must walk alone, it is his personal ‘*Stairway to Heaven*’, as I called it in a former paper. The mass consciousness has no awareness of this path yet, so there is not much recognition or support in the outer world. Contrarily there is much ignorance, scepticism, disinterest and incomprehension. The lower personality of the disciple doesn’t like this. He wants to be understood, and to be recognized. When this is not the case he can experience pain and feelings of loneliness. DK states strictly in this quote that he has no affairs with these problems of the personality and that the disciple has to overcome them by himself. In this way he has to ‘earn’, so to speak, his rightful place as a disciple on his own efforts. As long as the aspirant is submerged in self-pity, suffering and complaint about his personal state of ‘misery’ he cannot be called a disciple. At best he is on the Probationary Path. He has to overcome his attention on his own affairs and replace it by service, care and interest in the good of humanity.

From my own experience I can say that relief, balance and harmony can be found in the development of such an outward group focus and the belonging attitude of service. When the lower personality finds itself poor or pitiful and unrecognised I find relief by shifting the attention away from the self to a search where and in what way I can be of service.

3. Accepted Discipleship

This is the stage wherein, according to necessity, the Master contacts the chela through:

- a. A vivid dream experience.
- b. A symbolic teaching.
- c. A using of a thoughtform of the Master.
- d. A contact in meditation.
- e. A definite remembered interview in the Master's Ashram.

The Accepted Disciple adds to his mind and heart his will, meaning he works with the soul trinity of Light (mind), Love (heart), and Power (will). Now he not only has accepted important esoteric facts but he also has successfully integrated them into his life. He has been successfully following the pledges from the previous period, and is focused more on human need than on his own individual progression. It is important to note that the term “*accepted*” means that he has accepted truths and responsibilities, and not that he has personally been accepted by a Master for

training. However, at this stage he is a member of an occult Ashram (even if only on the periphery of it) and is beginning to experience these connections.

Reading the part of Accepted Discipleship in *DINA I* (p. 673) a remembrance of a **vivid dream experience** from about ten years ago came to my mind. It is quite peculiar that I remember this 'dream' at all because I hardly remember any dreams. I dream a lot but I almost always forget them right after awakening. But this one was different. I remembered it very vividly after awakening and, even more special, I still remember the large contours of it after ten years. Also different was that I noticed inside the dream that I had to be dreaming. That never happened before as far as I can remember. Probably this was what is called a lucid dream experience of which I heard but never knew what that really meant. Here it is.

I fly just above the ground, not more than a meter or so, maybe even lower. Yes, I really am flying, and I am wondering how this is possible but I enjoy it. It feels like an effortless sailing or floating in a state of deep stillness. The speed is considerable however. I see the surrounding landscape in black and white and I feel the air gliding pleasantly around my head and body, which finds itself in a perfect horizontal and balanced fashion. I look around curiously to the quickly passing landscape. I notice that I am wondering about the fact that everything is in black and white. Where are the colours? I also notice that I think inside the dream that this must be a dream. I am amazed by this. How can this be, that I am aware of the fact that I must be dreaming, but at the same time the dream experience just goes on? And it feels very alive, like a real live experience! Then I see dawning in the distance the contours of a city, also in black and white. It is approaching fast and I see the outlines of buildings becoming clearer quickly. The buildings are not very high and suddenly I fly right in the middle of them. That's when I see they are in a bad and tacky state. The next moment people appear on the scene. They are suddenly everywhere. They are in a similarly tacky and poor state as the buildings and stare at me, flying in the middle of them, just above the ground. The looks on their faces are of surprise and excitement. They point at me with stretched arms and forefingers, talking and shouting to each other in an excited way. My flight stops and I find myself standing on the ground in the middle of the people who have grown into a crowd. They are closing in on me. I feel perfectly relaxed. No anxiety or fear whatsoever. I even feel at home, or better: I feel exactly in the right place. I am here with a mission. In my hand I see a golden coin, in colour, the only thing which is coloured in a, for the rest, totally black and white surrounding. And brightly coloured it is, with a fierce golden shine. The people reach out to me and I give the coin to one of them. The rest excitedly encircles this person. They all look at the coin, in admiration to its brightly golden colour and shine. The person shares the coin with the rest. They all get an opportunity to hold the coin for a moment before it is given to the next one. The sphere is joyful, harmonious and peaceful. There is a complete absence of greed, anxiety or animosity. They are excited as a group and seem very pleased with the coin. It shines very brightly in their dingy hands. The look on their likewise dingy faces is soft and joyful. They suddenly are further closing in on me, and start thanking me with an endearing gratitude and a very pleasant form of quiet enthusiasm. This moves me. I feel grateful for being able to spread such gratitude under these seemingly very poor but satisfied people. I also feel very amazed. What is this? Where am I? What role am I playing here, sharing this golden coin, which shines so brightly in this grim black and white environment, with these lovely people? Who are they? They feel so soft and

harmonious and content, while living in such a grim environment with dingy houses and poorly kept and muddy streets. They cheer at me and wave me goodbye when I proceed on my way, flying again just above the ground, leaving the town and merging into the surrounding landscape, still very black and white.

I remember that I was amazed about this vivid dream experience and the fact that I could remember it so well. What did this have to say to me? I was, ten years ago, in the fifth year after my burn out and the following sudden interest for spirituality and for personal and spiritual growth, which felt like an awakening. I had started my own coaching practice a few years before, and after a difficult start, it had found its place and a steady amount of clients. I already read a lot of spiritual books and my interest in deeper esoteric stuff was beginning to dawn. But the latter didn't come much further than buying both volumes of *'The Secret Doctrine'*, and the Dutch version of *'A treatise on White Magic'*. I stopped reading the first after maybe ten pages and the second half way. These faltering reading experiences left me in puzzlement about the content of these books, which I put quickly in my bookshelf and left them there unopened for almost a decade.

In the same time period I sometimes visited a person who felt like a master to me and who gave me wise insights and healing. Some time after the dream, I don't remember exactly how long but not very long, I visited him again and I told him my dream, asking him about the meaning of it. His explanation came as a surprise. He told me without any hesitation it was not a dream but an out of body experience which symbolized me being a coach, teacher and healer who could bring new insights to other people. The black and white colour and poor state of the environment and the people stood for the fact that they are in an earlier phase on the path towards awakening. The golden colour of the coin stood for the relatively higher vibrations my soul and aura is radiating, and, as a result, for the gifts I have to give and the support I can offer in raising the consciousness of other people. And it would and will be received in great gratitude. I could unshackle myself, he said, and spread all the knowledge and qualities I had without reluctance or fear. It was time to really start flying.

And that was what I did, or at least tried to do, sometimes with a lot of energy and self-confidence, and on other times with a recurring reluctance and self-doubt because I had a hard time of finding the right words without losing the person I tried to teach or help. The latter brought the necessary suffering which buttresses the next quote from DINA II, p. 643-644:

"The accepted disciple, however, is suffering also mentally and to this must be added his capacity to identify himself with the whole; his trained imagination also presents special difficulty for he can include possibilities which others may not envisage, and his sweep or grasp of the plan is presumably greater; he is also endeavouring to apply his knowledge of this plan to the immediate enviroing situation and is strenuously attempting to understand and at the same time to interpret to others, no matter what he may be undergoing in his own personal life."

So, in this stage of Accepted Discipleship the suffering is not over yet. The transition and the tasks accompanying this stage bring mental suffering. DK addresses here

the difficulty one meets when one discovers a larger picture of reality but cannot share this with his fellow men, or is not able to translate it in words that matches with others interest or understanding. Another example of this is the difficulties I experience in writing books and articles about esoteric knowledge. Here I also have a hard time to find the right words and explanations, and to step down this knowledge to a bigger public, which is my aspiration. This difficulty is even greater in the writing of papers like this one. I struggle with the right balance between the rather complex language in the quotes and the translation in more digestible language for a bigger public of interested readers without much knowledge of the Ageless Wisdom teachings. And the lower personality sometimes experiences frustration when the amount of readers is not as large as he wants it to be...

Returning to the above described vivid dream experience the question is what it says about my place on the path. Would this mean that I am already on the Path of Discipleship? DK gives his hints in the books of Alice Bailey on many different places and in with varying angles, which makes it not easy to interpret them. On page 673 of *DINA I* he mentions the vivid dream experience as one of the five possible contacts with a Master that would hint at the Stage of Discipleship. But on page 733 he repeats these five contact and adds the remark that *'the first three are more usually the experience of the probationary disciple'* and that *'the last two are undergone by the accepted disciple.'*

So, as a tentative conclusion I would say that my place on the path probably is that of a Probationary Disciple, or a "Chela in the Light". But in the same time I also recognize some aspects of the Mystical Aspirant (in my visits to the Oneness University in India between 2007 and 2011 and in my sharing of the Oneness Deeksha, which I still do). We move very slowly at the early stages of the path and it can take sometimes a few lives to move from one stage to the other, in which we have to repeat and re-member earlier accomplished lessons and faculties. It seems that in this life I am walking through the mentioned different paths again in a sort of a high-speed velocity.

4. The "Chela on the Thread"

The "Chela on the Thread" is found on the middle point between the second and third initiation. This is the stage wherein, having shown his wisdom in work, and his appreciation of the Master's problem, the chela is taught how (in emergencies) to attract the Master's attention and thus draw on His strength, knowledge and advice. This is an instantaneous happening, and practically takes none of the Master's time.

I cannot say that I recognize the description of this stage in my personal awareness, so probably I am not here yet. That is not to say that I never try to attract the attention of higher realms but I have no conscious recollection in succeeding in this. Probably any efforts to attract their attention is contra-productive anyhow, since it has to be an instantaneous, and probably spontaneous, happening, as a consequence for disciplined and enduring work of meditation, study and service.

5. The "Chela within the aura"

This is an advanced stage wherein the chela exits within the aura of the Master, having navigated from the Ashram's periphery towards its centre. Now the chela is permitted to know the method whereby he may set up a vibration and call which will entitle him to an interview with the Master. This is only permitted to those trusted chelas who can be depended upon not to use the knowledge for anything except the need of the work; no personality reason or distress would prompt them to use it. The chela, or disciple, lives in a state of serenity, with the mind ever held steady in the Light.

6. The "Chela within his Master's heart"

This is the final stage wherein the chela can get his Master's ear at any time. He is in close touch always. Now the chela is being definitely prepared for an immediate initiation or, having taken initiation, is being given specialised work to do in collaboration with his Master. Now he works so closely together with his Master he is very near to being a Master himself.

These last two stages of discipleship, 5 and 6, overlap with the next stage in the larger Path of Evolution, the Path of Initiation

4. THE PATH OF INITIATION

In *'Initiation, Human and Solar'* (IHS, p. 82-94) this path is divided into six stages of initiation. A larger part of humanity than would be expected has covered or is covering the first initiation, and many disciples are in between the first and second initiation. The next four initiations however seem to be quite far away for the large majority of humanity, and maybe even for the disciples. These stages begin after the disciple has completed the process of soul fusion, and they progress as one perfects and eventually transcends the soul itself. The seeker has become a conscious cooperator with the Masters, their Ashram, the Plan, and the Hierarchy itself.

It falls out of the context of this paper to offer a broader description of these stages and I probably will treat them more in an upcoming paper.

CONCLUSION

The journey of the soul is a long and enduring one. This journey can be divided in different stages of which the first four are described in this paper: the Path of Evolution, the Probationary Path, the Path of Discipleship and the Path of Initiation. Most attention is been given in this paper to the Path of Discipleship. I described its six different stages, which are partly overlapping each other. This makes it not always clear how they can be distinguished. Another thing is that it is not easy to discern where one is on the Path of Discipleship. Looking at my own process I recognize myself in the different paths of the Mystical Aspirant and the Probationary Disciple or "Chela in the Light". One of the signs for being in the latter is a vivid dream experience. I described one I had myself about ten years ago. I hope the reader can find some hints in the overview of the different stages and the description of my own experience to find his own place on the path.

Eric Huysmans,
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