

## Initiation

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From "The Theosophist"  
Reprinted from "Theosophical Siftings" Volume 4

The Theosophical Publishing Society, England

IN works, by classical and modern authors, treating of the Mysteries in various lands, we find very grand and thrilling pictures of the series of initiation trials the candidate has to go through. In these every resource that the human mind can imagine is employed to heighten the mystery and to give importance to the ceremony. In the older Sanskrit literature, however, we find nothing about these initiation ceremonies, just as we find nothing said about temples, though dwelling-houses are now and then described.

In India, at least, the erection of magnificent temples seems to have been a custom of later date. The great sacrifices that we read of took place on spots specially chosen for the purpose which were not used a second time. And the initiations, for there were initiations in those old days, and the adepts then produced seem to remain as giants even among their own fraternity, took place under some tree, on the top of a mountain or in some hut.

The reason why we hear so little in the books of the trials undergone by the candidates for initiation is that they were not used in the same way as in later times. The Guru knew when his disciple was fit to be entrusted with the sacred knowledge by looking into his soul, and did not need other demonstration. It was only after the initiators had partly lost the power of themselves determining whether the candidate was fit for initiation or not, that the ceremonies and great trials were introduced.

In the old times a disciple remained many years with his Guru, when the latter tried him, he did not know he was about to be tried at all. He was not, at the close of other trials which he had gone to in some sort prepared to meet and conquer, suddenly ushered into the presence of a bevy of fair houris, well knowing all the time that every action of his was watched from unseen points of vantage, and well knowing that the whole proceeding was part of a set trial of strength and endurance; but, one day when sent into the jungle as usual to get wood for fuel, the Guru would send some elemental to take the form of a lovely female and meet the unsuspecting disciple in a lonely part of the wood, and thus tempt him. If he got through a series of unexpected trials of this kind, it was pretty certain that his strength was steady and his courage firm.

Some people are always looking forward to the initiation chamber and its trials, and longing for the time when they shall enter it. The truth is, however, that the wise man makes the world his own initiation chamber, [Page 20] and life the threshold of the mysteries. If a man can really command himself perfectly, he can command all else. He has the strength, the exact modes of using it are but matters of detail. We ought to make use of every opportunity that occurs, and when none seems to occur, we ought to try and

make opportunities for ourselves.

Those who would make true progress should look on everything that happens to them in life as an initiation trial, and so become, as it were, their own initiators.

Some seem to imagine that they can do nothing at all without some special Guru — whom they can see. Moreover they expect that Guru to do nothing but attend to their every action, and be in fact a sort of superior nurse. This is especially the idea of some Hindus. But the whole object of initiations is to make a man and not a slave, to strengthen the individual will, and to give self-reliance and the sense of strength. A constant feeling of dependence on a Guru, however great that Guru may be, is liable to end in that state of mental and moral subjection that we see so often among devout Roman Catholics, who have come to believe that they cannot possibly do anything without having some spiritual director to support their every step. "When the disciple is ready, the Master is ready", says "Light on the Path", and therefore the main thing for each of us to do is to use every effort to make the disciple ready — the rest is not our affair at all, it is already provided for. But it is very certain that neither Master nor disciple will be made ready by a constant desire for changed outward conditions, instead of earnest endeavour to make the very best we can out of our present circumstances.

Except in proportion as we ourselves make effort, no more light will be vouchsafed to us.