

November 2011

SOME THINGS CAN CHANGE

It takes years of post-graduate study to become an attorney; it takes years of grueling physical workouts to become a professional athlete; it takes years of intense practice and training to become a concert pianist—assuming one has the requisite raw talent and mental or physical aptitude to begin with.

I grant you that none of this is exactly a news flash. Yet for some inexplicable reason, people hearing about self-transformation for the first time often think they can achieve it by going to a few workshops or by listening to motivational CDs in their spare time.

The spiritual neophyte would be well advised to study history and face this one enduring fact: human nature is full of flaws, frailties, and shortcomings. To delude one's self into thinking otherwise is to court failure and even abandonment of the quest. Christians have long recognized this. As a young man-about-town, St. Augustine struggled with the passions of his lower nature because he "knew not how to conceive of anything beyond corporeal splendors." When he decided to follow Christ, he still had to do battle with his ingrained habits of sensuality and physical gratification.

In one of his letters, the Master KH said, "As for human nature in general, it is the same now as it was a million of years ago." Are we really surprised by that statement? We shouldn't be. If transformation were that easy, there would be more Adepts with glowing auras than there are shoppers at Walmart the day after Thanksgiving.

The message that we can take from studying the lives of deeply spiritual people is that self-transformation is possible, but it is not the work of a few short months or years. From the Theosophical point of view, it may require not only years, but lifetimes. Speaking from experience, the Master KH described it this way: "The adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers."

Translation: there are no easy shortcuts on the spiritual path.

All this is said not to discourage anybody, but rather to provide a realistic expectation as to the difficulties and hardships involved. To embark on this greatest of all adventures—the treading of the path to Self-realization—brings not only tears, but sublime joy beyond our imagining. To reach those lofty heights, however, the aspiring pilgrim needs the mental discipline of an attorney, the stamina of an athlete, and the sensitivity of a concert pianist.

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