

I was often influenced by great books from the past such as “**Ancient Wisdom**” by Annie Besant published in 1897. Annie Besant was a student of Madame H. P. Blavatsky of the Theosophical Society. Her book covered much about karma and man’s form and destiny as he moved through the cycles of birth and death in the three worlds. The part I was influenced by and often referred to was about the progression of the person from the preparatory stage of the spiritual path to the path of discipleship over perhaps a number of lives. I am most grateful that my review is awakening further “ah hahs” and deepening my understanding. Italicized quotations are copied from “**Ancient Wisdom**” by **Annie Besant**.

PROGRESSION OF SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

According to Annie Besant man has evolved from the lowest savage to the triumphant perfected spiritual soul through a long journey. The savage is at the beginning of his journey of evolution and the perfected soul at the end of man’s ascent.

“As a man’s intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature develops, he becomes more and more conscious of the purpose of human life, and more and more eager to accomplish that purpose in his own person. Repeated longings for earthly joys, followed by full possession and by subsequent weariness, have gradually taught him the transient and unsatisfactory nature of earth’s best gifts.”

I recognized so completely the above words. I had often striven for a goal, gained it, and enjoyed my achievement, only to feel disappointment that it did not provide the fulfillment I was pursuing or the happiness that I thought it would bring. In fact any joy was soon gone leaving behind a state of weariness with a still gnawing hunger for some unknown what. In 1961 long before I became a spiritual seeker I realized there must be something more to life when my husband and I moved into our first home. I remember so clearly standing looking out of the living room picture windows at the streetscape. As I looked down the length of the street I thought that this was nice but there must be more than this. It was another ten or more years before I even began the process of regaining my self esteem that led to my spiritual yearnings and yet that memory of standing at the window stayed with me in an indefinable way.

Later I began exploring metaphysical practices, becoming aware of the power of my mind and emotions. Another book by Jack Addington of Abundant Living Foundation called the “The Perfect Power Within You” spoke to the thirst of my soul. It opened my awareness beyond just my physical experience. I began exploring with excitement other metaphysical dimensions of life of whose existence I had had no awareness. This ultimately led me on to become a spiritual seeker and probationary disciple. First I sought information from books and later through wisdom and spiritual teachers.

By the time Annie Besant’s book arrived in my life I had begun to understand that there was a progression, some may call a path that leads to higher states of consciousness. The seed planted at the living room window began to take root. I began to seek the promised freedom of spiritual enlightenment.

Annie Besant described the probationary path, the path of discipleship and the relationship of help provided by Masters, the guardians of humanity, which help on human evolution. They provide spiritual assistance to those persons ready to cross the bridge between the two states of existence, ready to take the same steps that masters have already completed. Masters watch for those that practice virtue, that labor unselfishly for human good, that make intellectual effort to serve their fellow man, that demonstrate sincere devotion and purity and render themselves capable of receiving spiritual assistance.

However, man is not ready to progress to the probationary path until he recognizes that things of earth and even the promises of heaven no longer are competent to satisfy his needs. He has to become disillusioned with earthly pleasures and hungry for that indefinable something that he perceives is missing from his life. The student is still not ready to be overseen by a Master teacher until he has demonstrated a loving, selfless and helpful nature. Once the student has developed these qualities a Master will begin guiding his steps if he continues to show promise. Once the student is ready a Master appears to direct his life even though at first his Master’s assistance may be unknown to the student. This assistance perhaps takes place at night through dreams or in other indiscernible ways until the first outward meeting takes place. Then the student will receive much teaching from his Master, while being embraced in and receiving from his Master’s field of energy.

The student’s preparatory work to be undertaken on the probationary path is mental and moral. There are four definite “Qualifications” that the probationary student must set himself to acquire that must be at least partially possessed before

the student is granted Initiation into full disciple hood. First he must discriminate between what is real and unreal becoming indifferent to external things and seeing their worthlessness. He must recognize that his weariness with worldly things was *“due to the disappointments constantly arising from his search for satisfaction in the unreal, when only the real can content the soul.”* The second qualification is the development of indifference to external things. He must recognize that all forms are unreal and transitory, *“changing ever under the impulses of life”* and *“that nothing is real but the one Life that we seek for and love unconsciously under its many veils.”*

At this time the student’s life will rapidly alternate between joy and sorrow, peace and storm, rest and toil in order that the first two qualities are recognized and internalized.

The third qualification requires that he at least partially develop six mental capacities.

1. He must gain control of his thoughts recognizing that his increase in thought power can pose a problem to others and must be used with great care. This creative power is not to be placed in the hands of the selfish or ambitious. My awareness of this came when I unknowingly injured my business partner’s emotional body by speaking with vehemence on a topic while we were at a restaurant for lunch. She suddenly jumped up from the table in response to my words and left. For almost a week she continued to suffer her emotional pain. Till then I had not realized the power to harm that had grown within my spoken words.
2. The student must add outward self control to inner, rigidly ruling his speech and actions in the same manner as he rules his thoughts.
3. The candidate for discipleship must develop the virtue of tolerance. He must accept each man and each form of existence as it is without demand that it be different. In his quiet acceptance of what is *“he learns to revere the wisdom which planned this world and which guides it.”*
4. The probationary student must develop cheerful endurance that bears all and resents nothing. He realizes that he is paying back all his karmic obligations accumulated in the past.

5. The fifth requirement is the development of faith – *“faith in his Master and in himself, a serene strong confidence that is unshakable. He learns to trust in the wisdom, the love, the power of his Master and he is beginning to realize the divinity within his own heart.”*
6. The last of the six mental requisites is the development of balance and equilibrium which grows during the striving for the other five.
7. The very setting of the will to accomplish these tasks indicates that the spiritual nature is opening up.

The last of the four qualifications is the development of *“the deep intense longing for liberation, that yearning of the soul towards union with Deity that is the promise of its own fulfillment.”* Once that longing has been established it can never be eradicated or quenched again with earthly interests. These steps having been mastered at least in part prepares the student ready for Initiation into the path of discipleship.

These understandings have been guideposts of my development for over fifteen years. Unfortunately the guidelines were often forgotten while I continued my pursuit of worldly pleasures and acquisitions. The ability to meet the requirements has none the less been quietly gaining strength as my consciousness changes and develops under the direction of my Master, John de Ruiter. The realization that my surface day to day existence is but a false reality, an empty creation of my mind did not fully dawn on me until years after having read Annie Besant’s book. The external world still holds me in its thrall in some ways even now as I acknowledge the truth just expressed. While I focused on being good and kind, and serving others in my work roles, I still have not fully surrendered the things and activities of my surface life that hold me to an outer existence. My fears have still not been fully overcome. Fear of losing control of my existence, fear of having to relinquish my comfort, fear of lack of financial security or of becoming a bag lady, and fear of not being worthy enough to make the transition all hold me back from fully embracing discipleship. However as I have reviewed the book I realize that I have also quietly, albeit slowly, been making progress and positive change toward discipleship.

“The Ancient Wisdom” by Annie Besant published in 1897

August 2008
Nana