

THREE GATES OF WISDOM

A king had a courageous, skilful and intelligent only son. He sent him to see a wise Old Man so that he would open his mind to Awareness.

Enlighten me as to the path I should take, asked the Prince.

My words will only vanish like footsteps in the sand, answered the wise man. *However, I give you a piece of advice. On your path, you will come across three gates. Read the sayings on each one of them. You will be overwhelmed with the need to follow them. Do not seek to turn away; you would be condemned to live again and again that which you had run away from. I cannot say any more. You must feel all this in your heart and flesh. You may go. Follow the road right ahead.*

The wise old man disappeared and the Prince started walking on the Life Path. He soon came across a large gate on which one could read:

CHANGE THE WORLD

This is precisely what I intended to do, thought the Prince, *there are things that I like in this world, others don't suit me.*

And he started his first struggle. His ideal, his enthusiasm and his power pushed him to be confronted with the world, to conquer, to shape reality according to his way of thinking. He experienced the pleasure and the exhilaration of the conqueror, but his heart was not at peace. He managed to change certain things but others would not give way.

Lots of years went by. One day, he met the wise Old Man who asked him:

What did you learn on the path?

I learned, replied the Prince, *to see what is in my power and what is beyond it, what depends on me and what doesn't.*

Well done, said the Old Man. *Use your strengths to act upon what you can influence. Forget about what you have no hold on.* And he disappeared.

Later on, the Prince came across a second gate. One could read on it:

CHANGE OTHERS

This is precisely what I intend to do, he thought. *Others give joy, pleasure and satisfaction, but also cause pain, bitterness and frustration.*

And he rebelled against all that could disturb or displease him in his fellow beings. He struggled to alter their minds and extirpate their weaknesses. This was to be his second battle.

Many more years went by. One day, as he was meditating on the uselessness of his attempts to change others, he came across the wise man who asked him:

What did you learn on your path?

I have learned, said the Prince, that the others are neither the cause nor the source of my joys and my sorrows, my desires or setbacks. They merely reveal or trigger them. It is within me that everything takes place.

You are right, said the Old Man. The others are a mirror of yourself. Through what they awaken in you, they made you aware of yourself.

Be grateful towards those who fill your soul with joy and pleasure. However, be also grateful towards the ones that hurt and frustrate you, for through them life teaches you what you have yet to learn and the long way ahead of you.

And the Old Man disappeared. Soon after, the Prince arrived in front of a door where these words appeared:

CHANGE YOURSELF

If I am myself the cause of my problems, this is what I have to do, he thought. And he started his third struggle.

He tried to change his character, to fight his shortcomings, to remove his drawbacks, to alter everything he did not like about himself, anything that did not fit with his ideal.

After many years of struggle during which he met with some success but also setbacks and opposition, he met with the Old Man again who asked him:

What have you learned on the path?

I have learned, said the Prince, that there are things within ourselves that we can improve, others that resist us and that we can't shake.

That's good said the Wise Man.

Yes, continued the Prince, but I am getting weary of fighting against everything, against others and against myself. Won't this ever end? When will I be at rest? I wish to stop fighting, to give up, to let go.

This happens to be your next lesson, the Wise Old Man said. But before going any further, turn around and look back at your journey. And off, he went.

Looking back, the Prince saw in the distance the third gate and realised that one could read a different message on the back of it:

ACCEPT YOURSELF

The Prince wondered why he had not noticed this inscription when he went through the gate the first time in the opposite direction.

When one is fighting, one becomes blind, he said to himself.

He also saw, spread on the ground around him, everything he had rejected and fought within himself: his faults, his dark side, his fears, his limits and his old demons. He then learned how to recognise them, accept and love them. He learned how to love himself, without comparing himself, judging himself, blaming himself.

He met again with the Old Man who asked him:

What have you learned along the path?

I learned, replied the Prince, that to hate or refuse part of myself was to condemn me never to be at peace with myself. I learned how to accept myself completely, unconditionally.

Well done, said the Old Man, it is the first stage of Wisdom. Now go through the third gate again.

Just as he had reached the other side of the gate, the Prince saw the back of the second gate and it said:

ACCEPT OTHERS

All around him, he recognised the people he had met in his life, those he had loved, and those he had hated. Those he had helped, those he had fought. But much to his surprise, he was now unable to see their faults, which had disturbed him so much, against which he had fought before.

He met the Wise Old Man again:

What have you learned on your path?

I have learned, replied the Prince, that by being at peace with myself, I have nothing to blame others for, nothing to fear from them. I have learned to accept and to love others totally and unconditionally.

Well done, said the Wise Old Man. It is the second stage of Wisdom. You can go through the second gate again.

When he arrived on the other side, the Prince read on the back of the first gate:

ACCEPT THE WORLD

That is strange, he thought, why didn't I see this inscription the first time?

He looked around him and recognised the world he had tried to conquer, to transform and to change.

He was hit by the brightness and the beauty of all things. By their perfection. And yet, it was the same world as it used to be. Had the world changed or had his perception of it changed?

He came across the Wise Old Man who asked him:

What did you learn on your journey?

I have learned, the Prince said, that the world is the mirror of my soul. That my soul does not see the world but sees itself in the world. When it is cheerful, the world seems merry. When it is gloomy, the world seems sad. The world is neither merry nor sad. It just is, that is all. It was not the world that was troubling me, but the idea I had of it. I learned to accept it without judging it, totally, unconditionally.

This is the third stage of Wisdom, said the Old man. You are now at peace with yourself, with others, and with the world.

A deep feeling of peace, serenity and fulfilment overwhelmed the Prince. Silence was within him.

You are now ready to cross the last Threshold, said the Wise Old Man, the Threshold from the Silence of Fulfilment to the Fulfilment of Silence.

And the Old Man disappeared.

Charles Brulhart, December 1995

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