

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL



Many years ago, a man was seen walking down a road. He had a limp and rested heavily on a stick. Many people came up to him. Some jeered because he was quite ugly to behold. Others stared and turned away. Yet others passed without a glance.

This man was on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He had heard wondrous stories of the delights to be found there. He had heard that he could find healing from holy men who lived there, and so he trudged on. Yet this man with the ugly mien felt no resentment, no fear. He looked with charity on all and, in no small measure, left the inns and their inhabitants richer for the encounter.

Thieves and robbers often accosted him on the road. They were fierce fighters bent on relieving all unwary travellers of their goods and even their life. But somehow, this traveller was different. He wasn't afraid of them, he didn't hate or resent them, but spoke to them kindly and with a look of love and compassion in his eyes. And these desperate robbers found themselves powerless to inflict injury upon him and often furnished him with his needs and sent him forth better off than before.

Now, as this man progressed along his journey, he found that those who accosted him and reviled him were, within themselves, deeply unhappy, often lost in a world of hopelessness and misery, and so, as he went his way, he would stop and talk to them and listen to the silent messages behind their harsh words. And

those sad ones began to sense that behind the ugly exterior there beat a heart full of love for them. They stopped reviling him and began asking him about his travels and the experiences he had gained along the way. And, as he talked, as he shared the wisdom that his travels had taught him, they realised that this man could teach them much, could relieve their burdens and help them overcome their many difficulties.

And so, he tarried with them for many months before moving on. News of his coming spread before him and now instead of torment and reviling, he was greeted with love and reverence, and people came from afar to hear his great wisdom. Some followed him from town to town, and so, as time went on it was noticed by his followers that this man whom they once thought ugly was indeed, in some inexplicable way, changing. His limp was no more – the tiredness around his eyes had disappeared and his eyes sparkled with youth and vitality. His body was no longer bent and he had no more use for the stick that he once had relied on so heavily. His whole mien was one of youthful joy, exuberant strength and power, and people marvelled amongst themselves and wondered until one plucked up the courage to ask of this miraculous transformation.

‘My friend,’ said he, ‘Many years now I have been with you, travelling on the road you travel, eating the food you eat, sharing the bed on which you sleep. Many years have passed since the time we first met. In all that time I have been heading for the Holy Land, the land of bliss and healing, and yet I have found not that Holy Land. The road I travel has not yet reached its hallowed gate, yet I have found peace and health and joy and bliss, and I have found it here, with you. I have found within myself a wellspring of healing and joy which increases daily as I impart it onto others.

‘I have found that this state of bliss is not outside myself at all – that I have to go nowhere to find it. That it is not necessary to seek it, to search for it or hunt for it. It is only necessary to be still and experience the wonder and awe within my own being and to share these gifts with those around me. Joy and peace and love are within us all, and to increase this most blessed state it is only necessary to share it.’

And so, this man went his way, strong and sure in himself and those that followed him and his teachings also gained in strength and beauty and spread his joy and happiness abroad. And the time came when all along that once stony road people greeted each day with joyful faces – they tilled their fields with love and helped lonely travellers along their way with food and blessings, and gradually this joy spread throughout the land and it was recognised far and wide, and pilgrims travelled great distances to bask in its sunshine and love. And all this started with one ugly man who limped heavily and relied on a stick.

Joy and peace and love are not outside of ourselves. All is within and within is all. Love knows no boundaries. Love spreads on wings of energy and encompasses all. Love changes the world and love starts with you.