

The Quest 17

Chapter 17: Techniques

Yan Jiaoxi spoke, "The Sect previously taught a breathing technique similar to this cultivation technique, which can also cultivate spiritual power but is quite basic, only suitable for cultivators below the third level of Qi Cultivation. After reaching the third level of Qi Cultivation, one should choose a genuine cultivation technique to learn. Of course, continuing with the breathing technique is also possible, but the cultivation will progress much slower..."

"This is a catalog of cultivation techniques provided by the Sect for the outer sect disciples, listing the names of the techniques, suitable spiritual roots, required spirit stones, spiritual items needed for breakthroughs, and the effects of each technique. Take a look for yourselves first."

Yan Jiaoxi handed out the catalogs, and each disciple received one, Mo Hua included.

The catalog was thin, only about a dozen pages, but it densely listed roughly dozens of cultivation techniques and related matters.

"If you have any questions, feel free to ask me," Yan Jiaoxi said.

After a moment of silence, a disciple raised his hand and asked, "Sir, are cultivation techniques also categorized by attribute and rank like spiritual roots?"

Yan Jiaoxi glanced at the disciple and responded, "At the third level of Qi Cultivation, and you still ask such a basic question. It seems you haven't been paying attention in Zhou Jiaoxi's classes. Go back and copy 'Introduction to Cultivation' once, and hand it to me in three days."

The disciple, as if struck by lightning, stood dumbfounded for a moment before sadly lowering his head and saying, "Yes," filled with regret.

It was careless to forget that it wasn't Zhou Jiaoxi speaking now and to blurt out whatever came to mind...

Yan Jiaoxi surveyed the room and spoke earnestly, "Zhou Jiaoxi is older and more lenient, not strict with you all, and you may not always pay attention in class. But selecting a cultivation technique is a serious matter. I will explain it again, listen carefully and don't find it tedious."

The disciples then sat up straight.

"A cultivator's spiritual root is categorized by attributes and ranks, just like cultivation techniques."

"The attributes of spiritual roots primarily consist of the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. Some are single-element, some are mixed, and there are small and grand Five Elements. Beyond these, there are also special spiritual roots born from variations of the five elements, such as ice, thunder, wind, and the yin-yang spiritual roots, which are quite rare and seldom encountered."

"Furthermore, based on the quality of talent, spiritual roots are also divided into nine ranks, from the lowest to the highest, and each rank significantly differs. The higher the rank of a spiritual root, the better the innate talent for cultivation, and the greater the capacity of the spirit sea to hold spiritual power."

"The classification of cultivation techniques is similar, divided by attribute and the same nine ranks. When choosing a cultivation technique, it should match your spiritual root; the technique should match the attribute and rank of your spiritual root."

"The attribute of a spiritual root determines the unique nature of a cultivator's spiritual power; the rarer the attribute, the more special the spiritual power. The rank of the spiritual root determines the cultivator's talent for cultivation; the higher the rank, the greater the cultivation talent."

...

"Is a rarer spiritual root better?" timidly asked a disciple.

"Not necessarily. For disciples with large family clans and sect heritage, it's a good thing. But for average cultivators, the rarer the spiritual root, the fewer the cultivation techniques available, and some may even find no suitable techniques to learn, which isn't a good thing," explained Yan Jiaoxi.

"What if the attribute of the cultivation technique differs from that of the spiritual root?" asked another disciple.

"Nothing happens," Yan Jiaoxi said, "because you can't cultivate it. A cultivator with a gold and water spiritual root simply cannot learn a technique of the earth and wood category."

"Are there no exceptions?"

Yan Jiaoxi raised an eyebrow and said, "At least, in the annals of the Dao Court over the past twenty thousand years, none have been recorded. If you encounter one, let me know; it would be an eye-opener for me."

That disciple shrank back, silent.

"Teacher, does the rank of the cultivation technique also have to match the rank of the spiritual root?" another disciple asked.

"Those with higher-ranked spiritual roots can cultivate lower-ranked techniques, but those with lower-ranked roots cannot cultivate higher-ranked techniques," Yan Jiaoxi replied.

A disciple puzzled, "Why would someone with a high-ranked spiritual root choose a lower-ranked technique? Wouldn't that mean cultivating less spiritual power?"

"The higher the rank of the technique, the more spirit stones are required for cultivation, and the more precious the celestial materials needed for breakthroughs. Some celestial materials are not something an ordinary cultivator can afford. It's not wise to choose a high-ranked technique and find halfway through that you can't afford to continue; regret would come too late then."

"What if someone with a low-ranked spiritual root learns a high-ranked technique?" the disciple asked again.

Yan Jiaoxi said, "According to the 'Manual of Cultivation Techniques,' if the rank of the technique exceeds that of the spiritual root, the cultivator, after absorbing too much spiritual power, often suffers damage to the spirit sea, which can lead to a complete collapse of cultivation ability, and in severe cases, deviation and death."

"Some go into deviation; does that mean some don't?" asked a disciple, eyes lighting up.

Yan Jiaoxi looked at him meaningfully, "Don't always think you're the special one who won't have problems while others will. Some people might have the luck in cultivation, but don't stake your life on such fleeting fortune, seeking your own death."

Many of the disciples present had harbored such thoughts; hearing this, they felt a chill in their hearts and dared not entertain other thoughts.

Yan Jiaoxi continued, "These are not isolated cases but the bitter lessons from twenty thousand years of cultivation history. Not learning from the experiences of predecessors makes it easy to stray from the path. Once a cultivator deviates, it's often beyond their control. Some may turn back, but others never can."

Yan Jiaoxi sighed, looking somewhat forlorn. Mo Hua felt that Yan Jiaoxi seemed a bit troubled.

But Yan Jiaoxi said no more, instead pointing to the 'Tongxian Sect Qi Cultivation Outer Sect Techniques Catalog' and instructed:

"Based on what I just explained, find a suitable technique for yourselves. Remember, in cultivation, appropriateness is best."

The disciples then lowered their heads and began flipping through the catalog.

Mo Hua understood the basics and started looking for a technique.

His was a lower-middle rank spiritual root, so he could only practice techniques of the same rank, but he was still curious about what the higher-ranked techniques were like.

Mo Hua first flipped to the last pages of the catalog, looking at several higher-ranked techniques:

'Yellow Earth Profound Technique': Suitable for earth-element spiritual roots, allows for cultivating spiritual power for one hundred and twenty cycles, at least five thousand spirit stones required for complete Qi Cultivation phase, celestial materials needed: Xuan Huang Grass, Bitter Water Root, Celestial Black Stone...

'Gentle Water Technique': Suitable for water-element spiritual roots, allows for cultivating spiritual power for one hundred and thirty cycles, at least five thousand two hundred spirit stones required

for complete Qi Cultivation phase, celestial materials needed: Hundred-Year Rootless Water, Silver Serpent Blood...

'Five Elements Qi Absorption Technique': Suitable for spiritual roots of the metal, wood, water, fire, and earth elements, allows for cultivating spiritual power for one hundred and fifty cycles, at least six thousand spirit stones required for complete Qi Cultivation phase, celestial materials needed: Gold Essence Stone, Molten Fire Stone, Century-Old Soil...

...

Mo Hua was astounded.

"At least five to six thousand spirit stones required for complete Qi Cultivation phase, and that's just for the spirit stones needed for cultivation, not including the celestial materials for assisting cultivation and breaking through bottlenecks. Some rare celestial materials might cost even more than five to six thousand spirit stones..."

Mo Hua had toiled for a month to earn just fifty spirit stones; the staggering cost of five thousand stones left him reeling.

Mo Hua had also heard from others that ordinary loose cultivators, even with high-ranked spiritual roots, simply couldn't afford high-ranked cultivation techniques.

If one insisted on practicing them, there were generally only two options.

One was to find a major sect, take a senior as a master, enter the inner sect, and bind oneself to the sect for life.

The other was to marry into a family, allowing the family to support your cultivation, but the family would require you to change your surname, forsake your parents, your origins, and all your past, although you would have a future, you would no longer be yourself...

Either way, you were more or less bound by others, though you had hopes for advancement in cultivation, you weren't free anymore.

No wonder cultivators often say, "Fate first, then luck and geomancy."

A cultivator's fate is set by their spiritual root and then by their birth.

Changing one's fate against the heavens is easier said than done...

Mo Hua sighed deeply.