

## SEEK OUT THE WAY

By Joy Mills

LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Yes, we've heard that before, and yet the metaphor is still a good one. A journey from here to there, from birth to death, from this room to that. Sometimes we have traveled as tourists, excited over the sights and sounds to be seen and heard, or bored by the long stretches of apparent wastelands.

Many years ago I made a trip, driving from Seattle to Wheaton for the summer sessions at Olcott. Two friends accompanied me on the journey. One sat in front with me as I drove, studying the map but never tiring of pointing out the beauty of the varied landscapes through which we were traveling. The other friend was content to sit in the back seat reading a book, lost in a fantasy world, and glancing up only occasionally when the first friend would excitedly demand that she look out at some unusual scene. My backseat friend reread the same book on the journey back to Seattle.

As tourists we often collect souvenirs of our travels, trinkets and oddments along with descriptive brochures and photographs. We burden ourselves and our suitcases with all kinds of mementos, so that we can regale each other with stories of our adventures. Tourists really love the excitement of going, and they often take pride in the number of places they have visited: twenty countries in ten days.

Then, of course, there have been times when we have traveled our journey as pilgrims. As pilgrims, we have experienced sacred times and sacred places or perhaps not



H. P. Blavatsky

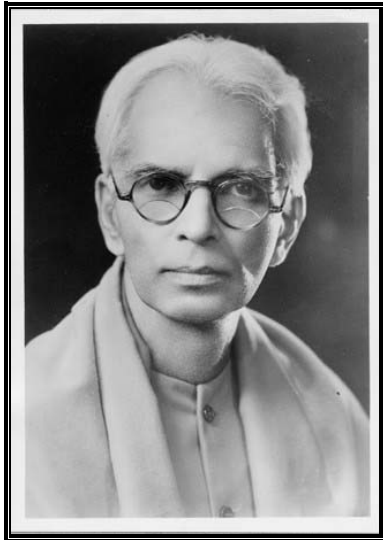
so much places as spaces—sacred spaces in our lives. As pilgrims, we have been content with little, perhaps as small an icon as a stone picked up from the path or a flower to be pressed between the pages of our diary. Helena P. Blavatsky spoke of our entire existence as a pilgrimage, the pilgrimage of the monad, the essential Self. Pilgrims are not so much quantifiers as qualifiers. The importance of a pilgrimage is not the number of places visited, but the quality of the experience, its deeper meaning, its significance, a new way of looking at everything, a new way of being in the world.

Pilgrims are also questers. Poet Diane Ackerman said, “We are a life form that quests.” We are a restless species. Our innate restlessness has led us to the outermost reaches of space, to the depths of the oceans, to the peaks of the highest mountains, to subterranean caves, and into the core of the earth. From the Arctic to Antarctica, we have explored our planet, and its few remaining unexplored regions call temptingly to the adventurer who is determined to go where no one has gone before. We are fascinated with the probes of Mars and Jupiter, and the question of whether the universe is infinite or finite continues to engage the finest minds of science and intrigues us all.

To be a quester means to have questions, though the questions may be different for each of us, and different at different times too. The questions I asked when I was 20 were not the questions I asked at 40 nor those asked at 60 and 70; they are not even the questions I ask today. But somehow each question seems to unfold into another question, and perhaps, if we are really pilgrims, we learn to live with the questions, realizing that the pilgrimage itself is the answer. Questions just set us on the way.

And so we come to the title of these remarks: “Seek Out the Way.” That phrase comes from the book *Light on the Path*, the first of the three main theosophical texts that offer guidance for the pilgrimage. The other two, in order of publication, are *The Voice of the Silence* and *At the Feet of the Master*. Countless members of the Theosophical Society,

as well as numerous other seekers, have read those three little classics of the spiritual life and derived inspiration from them.



N. Sri Ram

The phrase “Seek Out the Way,” from the first of these spiritual classics to be published raises the question of what it means to be questers or pilgrims on this journey we are all taking. N. Sri Ram, in his book *The Nature of Our Seeking*, has pointed out that “the nature of our seeking would depend on what it is that prompts it.” And he states further, “We often use the words *seeking* and *search*, but without enquiring deeply into their implications, the psychological process in relation to a Truth which is not of the same nature as the facts of the external world, but is a truth to be realized within oneself.” He cites Annie Besant and Prince Siddhartha as genuine seekers. We might well add Arjuna, as well as Socrates, to the list, and of course there are many others who are authentic questers.

The first “rule” on the Path is to seek out the way, to discover the path that is one’s own. The title for these remarks might well have been “Finding Shoes That Fit,” for no one can walk properly in another’s shoes. The first “rule” is found in that one word “seek.” Unless we seek, unless we realize we are questers on this journey of existence, pilgrims not tourists, there is no way, no path, no road.

Three statements come to the heart of my thesis. The first is the most direct and simplest. It comes from the Inaugural Address of the President-Founder, Henry Steel Olcott, and sets forth beautifully in the most succinct manner possible the work of the Society:

We seek, inquire, reject nothing without cause, accept nothing without proof; we are students, not teachers.

We state in our literature that we are a Society of seekers, a group of inquirers. Yet often it seems that once we have joined the Society, we cease to inquire or to question any of the ideas we have so enthusiastically embraced.

The second statement is from the second mahatmic letter addressed to A. P. Sinnett:

The adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers; and to become one, he must obey the inward impulse of his soul irrespective of the prudential considerations of worldly science or sagacity.

Two ideas confront us in that statement: first, to become an adept requires inquiry; second, we must follow our own “inward impulse” without regard to worldly concerns or the demands imposed by others.

The third statement is from Joseph Campbell’s fourth volume of his series *The Masks of God*, devoted to *Creative Mythology*:

Just as in the past each civilization was the vehicle of its own mythology, developing in character as its myth became progressively interpreted, analyzed, and elucidated by its leading minds, so in this modern world—where the application of science to the fields of practical life has now dissolved all cultural horizons, so that no separate civilization can ever develop again—each individual is the center of a mythology of his own, of which his own intelligible character is the Incarnate God, so to say, whom his empirically questing consciousness is to find.

Campbell adds, “The pathless way is the only way now before us.” Implicit in Campbell’s words are the two ideas found in the mahatmic communication to Sinnett: inquiry or questing, which Olcott emphasized at the founding of our Society, and the need to find our own way. It is truly a “pathless way,” as J. Krishnamurti so often emphasized. There is no way until our feet have trod it. What is all important to the finding of that way is the seeking. Krishnamurti often said to his audiences as well as in his dialogues with small groups, “Inquire, sirs; you do not inquire.”

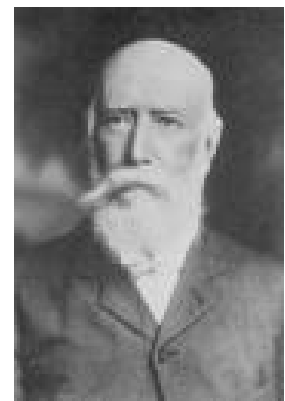
Just what is it then to inquire, to have what Campbell called a “questing consciousness”? How do we seek? And what is it that we seek? To inquire—genuinely

inquire—means that we are in earnest about understanding ourselves and the world in which we are living. It means that we are willing to clear away any and all excess mental and emotional baggage so that the mind is clear, transparent as it were. Only in such a mind, a mind that is without prejudice and preconception, a mind that is not entangled in its own net of favorite and passionately held convictions, a mind that is not shadowed by personal likes and dislikes, only in such a mind can the truth of a way, one's own unique way, arise.



A. O. Hume

The profound teachings communicated by the inner founders of the Society in their letters to A. P. Sinnett and A. O. Hume were the result of inquiries by those two men, their questions, and their earnest seeking for information and understanding concerning inner truths. On many occasions those adept teachers nearly despaired of their efforts



A. P. Sinnett

because, as they pointed out, the minds of the two Englishmen were so cluttered with preconceived ideas, with their own sense of pride in possessing superior knowledge, with their conviction of rightness, that— to paraphrase the adept teacher— there was scarcely a niche into which a new idea might be inserted. Again and again, Sinnett and Hume were advised that it was only upon “the serene and placid surface of the unruffled mind,” a mind open and free from the contamination of selfish interests and preoccupations, that the light of truth might shine. The inquiry, in other words, must be from an authentic openness, not the kind of seeking that is already convinced of the answer.

We may think that Sinnett and Hume were extremely obstinate men and wonder how they could have been so stubborn in their convictions that at times they seemed to

argue with their mahatmic teachers! Yet are we not sometimes just as proud of our convictions, as stubborn in maintaining the correctness of our views? This is the way reincarnation works, we may say, or this is simply your karma, or this is how it is after death! Do we feel that the last word has been given to us on any of these subjects? On Theosophy itself?

We should be grateful to Sinnett and Hume for the questions they asked and remember that Sinnett produced out of the mass of material found in the letters those teachers wrote to him the first textbook of theosophical ideas: *Esoteric Buddhism*. Hume also performed services for India, including the founding of the Indian National Congress, which elicited the gratitude of the mahatmic adepts. So, whatever one thinks of the faults of these two Englishmen, their persistent questioning, their endless inquiries, called forth that most magnificent work of our literary heritage, *The Mahatma Letters*.

But to return to the question posed by the word “seek.” Jacob Needleman in his book, *The Heart of Philosophy*, says, “Philosophy is no answer to anything.” And he continues, “The function of philosophy in human life is to help man remember. *It has no other task.*” We might substitute “Theosophy” for “philosophy” in those statements. It is often said that Theosophy answers all the questions of life, but really it does not answer any questions or solve any problems. We ourselves answer the questions; Theosophy just helps us to remember—it awakens us to right memory. But to be awakened we must ask the right questions, we must seek, probing deeply into matters. We have indeed forgotten something. And life calls on us to remember—to remember who we are, because when we remember who we are, we have found the way.

“The magic of real philosophy,” Needleman wrote, “is the magic of the specifically human act of self-questioning— of being in front of the question of oneself.” This is really to seek. It is what Socrates, the greatest questioner in western philosophy,

demanded. It is the demand of the Upanishadic teachers of ancient India, and the demand of Krishna in awakening Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. To stand in front of the question of oneself—that is to remember our authentic Self.

William James wrote, “The deepest question that is ever asked admits of no reply,” but demands instead what he termed a resolute “turning of the will.” That “turning of the will” may be equated with what the Mahatma KH called “the inward impulse of the soul,” which then must be obeyed. Out of the seeking, out of the questioning, the inquiring, comes the way—a way that is both a path and pathless. It is a road “steep and thorny,” as Blavatsky told us. It is “narrow” and “few there are who find it,” as the Master Jesus declared. It is “narrow as a razor’s edge,” as one of the Upanishads states. But for those who truly seek, as *Light on the Path* reminds us, there opens out before us “the mystery of the new way,” when “the star of your soul will show its light.”

Genuine seeking, then, involves a question that lies at the core of our being, which is never satisfied with easy answers, but that carries us both outward and inward toward true knowing. Its answer demands that “turning of the will” of which William James wrote and which Plato called “eros,” love in its essence. Because of the nature of love, one does not approach the question with the scientific-scholarly mind alone. One stands before the question, as Socrates demanded of his listeners, one gives attention to the question, stripped—as Plato might put it—of all but love itself. In such a condition, one remembers, which is to reassemble a primal knowing. There is no other way, no other path; and because there is no other path, it is essentially and always a pathless way, for until each one of us has done it, no path exists.

In the truest sense, this is what it means to be a Theosophist, not simply a member of the Society, but an authentic Theosophist, a knower and a lover of wisdom, of truth, of beauty. It is to seek, to ask the really big questions, the central questions of human

existence, and never be satisfied with answers until we have probed, inquired, ever more deeply.

One of the Upanishads says:

As a pot with cracks shows light within, so the hidden light of Atman shines out through cracks in the mind-body complex.

Questioning, seeking, inquiring produces cracks. And if the seeking makes us “crackpots,” so much the better for us. We need ever-widening cracks in our psychological nature, cracks in the “mind-body complex,” if ever the light of Atman is to blaze forth in all its splendor. Perhaps the world needs more “crackpots” like us. Certainly we need to shatter the molds of our mental-emotional encasements and let shine forth the light of Atman, the One Self. That is to “seek out the way.”

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