



THE HOLY LIGHT ACADEMY



STEPPING STONES ALONG THE PATH



Goals on the Path

Understanding the true goal of any spiritual process must be put into proper perspective. The aim of the aspirant should not be the accumulation of intellectual knowledge, psychic phenomena, or even self-gratification, for these tend to be hallmarks of status and achievement, which are elements of the mundane world, not of the spiritual realm. Goals such as these are only ego hooks that act as anchors that will hold back the aspirant from any real goal or direction. Therefore, one must become humble on this path, so that he may learn to surrender over to the Divine Consciousness of God.

Certain esoteric teachings will say that you are on a “pathless path” by which you must “seek without seeking.” This line of reasoning is usually baffling to many people and doesn’t sound logical. Such archetypes are merely allegorical as they imply something deeper. Let us explain that this kind of philosophy is essentially saying that this process is a nonlinear avenue but operates on many levels. Clearly you understand this is not a literal path that winds through the land and leads somewhere. This kind of path refers to your interior being and how you grow spiritually.

The Mystical Path is not concerned with some distant destination, but it focuses on the ongoing journey while you focus on the present moment. Hence the idea is to live life as fully as possible in the moment, without endeavoring to reach some far-off goal. When you hold out for an ultimate destination, you will miss the journey and any significant keys to development along the way. You can’t force your inner growth, but you must remain receptive to the flow of Spirit within you, so it can guide you where you need to be. The journey is a natural process that you can’t rush or manipulate. This path involves living in the present moment, being here now.

“Growth is natural to man. No one thinks of a flower trying to bloom, or of a tree trying to grow. The blossoming of the flower is the manifestation of universal law flowing through the plant; it is the will of the Infinite made manifest in the finite. Illumination is the blossoming of the soul in man; it is just as natural, simple, and inevitable as the flowering of the rose.”¹

Another example of this is demonstrated by the question, “At what point did the tree arrive?” At which moment did it achieve full maturity?” It’s a ridiculous question. The point is that inner unfoldment is gradual, natural, and continuous. It is easier to perceive this process as the aspirant advancing through countless stages, as in a stair-step progression along the whole journey, while he does not hold out for one final goal. The aspirant may perceive a particular ideal

as the main goal he seeks, such as Illumination for instance, although it is not a final goal, but yet another stepping stone along the whole path.

The distant steps ahead of you may seem vague and abstract at first, but farther along the journey you walk, these become much clearer and attainable, as the unseen becomes the seen, so that you may more fully experience these deeper realities of Life. But this

Nevertheless, if you have been proceeding on the spiritual path for quite a while, perhaps several years, having applied the proper tools, upon reflection you will notice that you have changed quite a bit. For example, if you have overcome certain negative temptations, then you have moved on from there. Your passion for this path and your yearning for intimacy with God will be stronger than before. It may become a choice between pursuing these old temptations or taking the spiritual path seriously, which often becomes a tug-of-war between the lower nature and your divine nature.

What about seeking without seeking?

While you are seeking on this path, you don't want to get in your own way, because the ego will try to block your way and hinder your desire to seek further. The key is to relax and allow the Spirit to flow through you and guide you, not trying to force something to happen on your own, or by way of your lower nature, which will prove fruitless.

When you seek the Illumination, or any Initiation, you should not seek it for its own sake, that is, for sensationalism or ego-gratification. The phenomenalism of it is a side benefit at most. The vivid experiences of a mystical nature are important, but not to be seen as the goal, hence, you do not seek them in an egocentric manner, which will not bear fruit. Here you must apply the virtue of humility. Your spiritual experiences are a clear sign or indicator that you are definitely advancing on the path and reaching the deeper Reality in all of its Infinite and Eternal nature. The experiences you receive are not the aim itself, but these are indications that your consciousness is awakening and growing into more expansive levels of God's Consciousness, thus these mystical experiences are transformative through deeper realizations of Universal Beingness, which is God.

At the beginning of your walk on the Mystical Path, you may have an initial experience, but you will have many more along this whole journey. This explains more clearly the idea of stages of progression, which are initiatory stages that take place during your continual deepening awareness and realizations into the higher unseen realms of Divine Consciousness, or what has also been called Cosmic Consciousness.

You aren't here on this path merely to see and experience the Light inside and then go out and boast about it to your friends and family. Illumination is not a badge of honor for attainment. These sublime experiences and realizations of God within are personal, not something to broadcast to just anyone. However, they should be discussed between you and your class instructor, as he guides you in further understanding and unfoldment in these sensitive and profound interior areas. The ego does not need to be gratified through spiritual unfoldment, nor will it ever find real fulfillment in self-gratification. Unfortunately, the ego often takes advantage of these stages of progression, so the aspirant must learn to be more humble in this process. Otherwise, he gets caught up in the phenomena of spirituality.

“It is most important that any student of metaphysics who expects to make any true progress in the development of his inner life should refrain from all forms of psychism, and avoid psychic phenomena. The best schools in both East and West warn their disciples against psychism and mediumship.”²

Indeed, there are those who may have natural spiritual gifts, even from childhood, or those who may develop them later, and these are for the benefit of serving the people. In fact, it is more important to seek to help others, not necessarily oneself.

Seeking spiritual or psychic phenomena and satisfaction therein is a waste of valuable energy. Likewise, the aspirant must not view attainment or the Initiations as trophies for spiritual achievement, which is all too tempting. However, as he learns to live the inner life of living and working in the Light of Christ, and sincerely continues his spiritual disciplines and service to mankind, he will continue on this spiritual journey in a more balanced way.

To be clear, we are not here to evangelize or convert people to a particular belief system as if it is the only way or the best way to pursue the Truth. Each person must find his own path that is right for him or her.

"One gem from many facets blazes fire,
One Light paints sacred scenes of stained-glass hue;
To just One Truth do many faiths aspire –
There is One Way, but many paths thereto."³

The Illumined Mystic often holds to the idea that there are many paths to choose from, yet one way. There are many branches of the tree, but one central trunk from which they spring. The main trunk represents the Truth, and the branches represent the many avenues by which to reach this. Such analogies demonstrate the difference between religion and spirituality. Religion represents people's quest for the Truth of God, whereas spirituality is the flow of the Spirit that will more clearly lead you to that Truth.

Many religions do have their mystical aspects, although not always well understood or even practiced correctly, which is why devotees must go deeper to find the true Mystical Path, and finally the Divine Source it leads to.

As always, everyone is different in their life experiences, and there are countless religious groups and traditions through which the seeker seeks the one Truth. Often these avenues are colored or flavored differently and so the way to the Truth may not always be exact. For this reason such paths are like winding roads going through valleys and hills and are strewn with obstacles and distractions along the way. The aspirant may seek through many different exterior paths, perhaps trying different ones out from time to time, and then he will eventually turn within, to the interior Way instead. The Mystical Path may at first be erroneously perceived as merely one of these branches of the tree, but at its deeper levels it becomes the Mystical Way, because the essence of the Way can only be mystical in nature. This is because true mysticism is "experiential spirituality," or learning to know and experience God and becoming one with this Reality.

*Indeed, your spiritual eyes and ears will be opened and you will begin to perceive these mystical levels, especially through various initiatory stages and spiritual experiences along the way, as long as you don't get caught up in the glamorous phenomenalism of it all, which only satisfies the ego and not your soul.

Many traditions from the East are not fully understood by the typical Westerner, who tends to retain a superficial view of Eastern philosophies and practices, unless he is trained properly. However, no matter if a person was born and raised in one of the Eastern paths or one of the Western paths, or somewhere in between, ultimately it doesn't matter since all growing souls come from the one Divine Source. Each person must find the path that is appropriate for him. It doesn't really matter as long as you discover what will work right for you. But it always requires patience,

perseverance, and sincerity through the appropriate disciplines. When you find the right path and the right teacher for you, you will know, because if you apply the tools of this path correctly and sincerely, you will truly unfold spiritually as a result. “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” – Matthew 7-16. The teacher and the path he represents will reveal itself as one that is truly genuine if it bears righteous fruit. This is true because Truth demonstrates itself.

In spiritual unfoldment, each aspirant unfolds at a different pace, some much slower and painstakingly, and others more swiftly and steadily. We cannot train all students according to one rigid system. Each person requires a somewhat different treatment to match his individual process. This is where your class instructor can help you with your individual and personal needs.

“Many modern schools place their disciplines on a time basis, but time has little place in the matter of growth. One may practice certain disciplines for ten years and still not be ready for any further enlightenment; or one may practice only a few weeks and be prepared for further instruction. The time that it requires to release the inner faculties depends upon the amount of spiritual enlightenment that has been brought forward from the previous life. It may be necessary to practice the disciplines for a number of years before the maximum results are achieved. If you are discouraged easily, or inconstant in your development to the subject, the benefits will be proportionately diminished.”⁴

While the aspirant commits to his spiritual work, essentially he is opening doors to deeper realization, because the process does not have to be arduous or toilsome. He learns to realize his inner unfoldment is not a strenuous effort, but a natural process after all.

Spiritual growth is very natural, although it doesn't appear this way, for people have complicated the process with their limited conceptions and lack of true understanding and insight. It is very much like building dams in a river, preventing its natural flow. Hence, these people have blocked the Way, so their journey seems very difficult. So they must remove the dams to allow this natural flow.

If there are certain negative traits, bad habits, temptations, vices, etc., that have been afflicting you and hindering you on your path forward, then you must focus on them and learn to overcome them, plain and simple. Although many people face this when they are trying to overcome certain mundane addictions or habits, whether it is alcohol or drug-use, smoking, weight-gain, etc., there are deeper aspects on a soul-level that you also must overcome, which typically stem from the desires and appetites of the lower nature, different aspects of ego-gratification that often stem from emotional, psychological, mental, or physical levels. For some instances, sometimes a person will get caught up in various vices or negative patterns, whether it is criticizing and judging others, selfish indulgences, anger issues, arrogance, ignoring others' needs, procrastination, etc.; the list is long. This is where practicing spiritual virtues is very beneficial. One of our courses will help with this practice, namely, **Soul Unfoldment on the Virtuous Path**.

The journeyer on the path will learn to let go and surrender completely to the process, and then the natural flow will carry him through, and the rest of the inward journey will be a truly wondrous adventure. You must come to realize and experience the natural flow of this process for you to grow more smoothly, not just spiritually, but all levels, even psychologically, mentally, emotionally, and so forth; everything is connected. In fact, if you have a physical addiction, it might stem from a psychological problem that is preventing you from overcoming it. This is where retrospection comes in handy, to review your thoughts, actions, and words throughout the day.

This is just a part of allowing that spiritual flow to continue.

“When through realization we come to understand the divine energy that causes us to exist and grow, we cease to impede its natural flow in and through ourselves. When through realization we become aware of this divine virtue within ourselves, our inner nature is enlightened, with the result that our outer nature inevitably is transmuted.”⁵

When you receive genuine Awakening and Illumination, it resonates on all levels; body, mind, and soul, and the natural flow will be initiated; spiritual unfoldment will be a steady pace toward what the mystics call Divine Union with God. You may ask, is this the final goal then? No; but you can say it is the end of one phase of the process and the beginning of another. Here is where the real adventure in God's whole Beingness truly begins for the unfolding mystic!

All of us are cosmic travelers who have embarked on an Eternal Adventure where Infinity is our range!

1 Manly P. Hall, *Self-Unfoldment by Disciplines of Realization* (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society), 8

2 Ibid., 23

3 Holy Order of MANS, *Jewels of the Wise*, Epiphany Press, 1

4 Manly P. Hall *Self-Unfoldment by Disciplines of Realization*, (Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society), 30

5 Ibid., 8

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