



# *Peace Pilgrim*

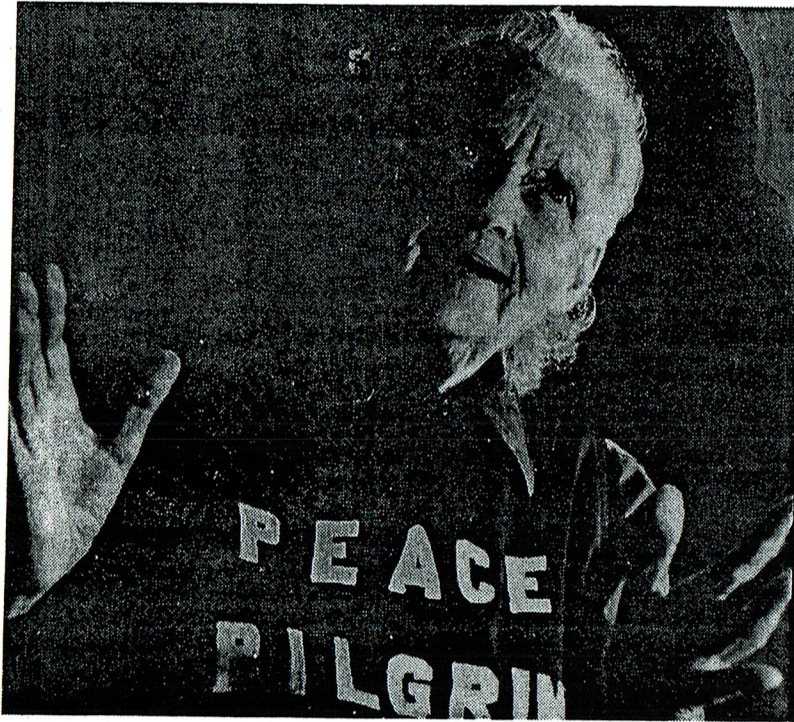
HER LIFE AND WORK  
IN HER OWN WORDS

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*Compiled by some of her friends.*

FRIENDS OF PEACE PILGRIM

*A Non-Profit All Volunteer Organization*



photograph by Carla Anette

## Introducing Peace Pilgrim

*YOU MAY SEE HER walking through your town or along the highway—a silver-haired woman dressed in navy blue slacks and shirt, and a short tunic with pockets all around the bottom in which she carries her only worldly possessions. It says "PEACE PILGRIM" in white letters on the front of the tunic and "25,000 Miles On Foot for Peace" on the back. She has walked the 25,000 miles. However, she continues to walk, for her vow is, "I shall remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace, walking until I am given shelter and fasting until I am given food." She walks without a penny in her pockets and she is not affiliated with any organization. She walks as a prayer and as a chance to inspire others to pray and work with her for peace. She speaks to individuals along the way, to gatherings such as church groups or college groups, through newspapers, magazines, radio, television—relating interesting and meaningful experiences, discussing peace within and without. She feels we have learned that war is not the way to peace—that security does not lie in stockpiles of bombs. She points out that this is a crisis period in human history, and that we who live in the world today must choose between a nuclear war of annihilation and a golden age of peace. Although she does not ask to see results, thousands of letters testify that her journey has not been in vain—saying, in effect, "Since talking with you I've decided that I should be doing something for peace also."*

(This message was printed on a brief leaflet, a few copies of which Peace Pilgrim carried in her tunic in order to introduce herself.)



PEACE PILGRIM had an impact on people as she walked joyfully across the country that will never be adequately expressed. She awakened and inspired many thousands during her twenty-eight year pilgrimage for peace. Those she touched in a personal way carry very special memories—talking, laughing, walking together; listening to pilgrimage stories over the dinner table or while driving her to a speaking engagement; waving goodbyes as she quickly departed for her next destination.

From 1953 until 1981 this silver-haired woman, with cheerful obedience to her calling, was a server in the world. As she approached each country hamlet or sprawling city she carried to all she met a message of peace expressed so simply: When enough of us find *inner peace*, our institutions will become more peaceful and there will be no more occasion for war.



The simple yet profound message of Peace Pilgrim's life and words is urgently needed in humankind's search for peace. She has given us renewed hope in the future of this world—hope that enough might gain inner peace to make world peace possible. She has given us an example of a person who *lived* in inner peace and was filled with a boundless energy that grew rather than diminished with age.

Robert Steele wrote in the Indian journal *Gandhi Marg*: "Peace Pilgrim speaks with astonishing authority and confidence; she reminds one of the spokesmen of God of biblical times. However, her utterances do not sound like a fanatic or dogmatist. Instead, they sound like a deeply sincere and devoted human being who has been linked to a wise and ineffable vision..."

Known from coast to coast simply as Peace Pilgrim, it was her wish to stress "the message and not the messenger." She never told details of her life that she considered unimportant, such as her original name, age, and birthplace. Since this book is about her

No one walks so safely as one who walks humbly and harmlessly with great love and great faith. For such a person gets through to the good in others (and there is good in everyone), and therefore cannot be harmed. This works between individuals, it works between groups and it would work between nations if nations had the courage to try it.



Once I was hit by a disturbed teenage boy whom I had taken for a walk. He wanted to go hiking but was afraid he might break a leg and be left lying there. Everyone was afraid to go with him. He was a great big fellow and looked like a football player, and he was known to be violent at times. He had once beaten his mother so badly that she had to spend several weeks in the hospital. Everybody was afraid of him, so I offered to go with him.

As we got up to the first hilltop everything was going fine. Then a thunderstorm came along. He was very terrified because the thundershower was very close. Suddenly he went off the beam and came for me, hitting at me. I didn't run away although I guess I could have—he had a heavy pack on his back. But even while he

was hitting me I could only feel the deepest compassion toward him. How terrible to be so psychologically sick that you would be able to hit a defenseless old woman! I bathed his hatred with love even while he hit me. As a result the hitting stopped.

He said, "You didn't hit back! Mother always hits back." The delayed reaction, because of his disturbance, had reached the good in him. Oh, it's there—no matter how deeply it is buried—and he experienced remorse and complete self-condemnation.

What are a few bruises on my body in comparison with the transformation of a human life? To make a long story short he was never violent again. He is a useful person in this world today.



On another occasion I was called upon to defend a frail eight year old girl against a large man who was about to beat her. The girl was terrified. It was my most difficult test. I was staying at a ranch and the family went into town. The little girl did not want to go with them, and they asked, since I was there, would I take care of the child? I was writing a letter by the window when I saw a car arrive. A man got out of the car. The girl saw him and ran and he followed, chasing her into a barn. I went immediately into the barn. The girl was cowering in terror in the corner. He was coming at her slowly and deliberately.

You know the power of thought. You're constantly creating through thought. And you attract to you whatever you fear. So I knew her danger because of her fear. (I fear nothing and expect good — so good comes!)

I put my body immediately between the man and the girl. I just stood and looked at this poor, psychologically sick man with loving compassion. He came close. He stopped! He looked at me for quite a while. He then turned and walked away and the girl was safe. There was not a word spoken.

Now, what was the alternative? Suppose I had been so foolish as to forget the law of love by hitting back and relying upon the jungle law of tooth and claw? Undoubtedly I would have been beaten — perhaps even to death and possibly the little girl as well! Never underestimate the power of God's love — it transforms! It reaches the spark of good in the other person and the person is disarmed.

#### The Pilgrimage / 33

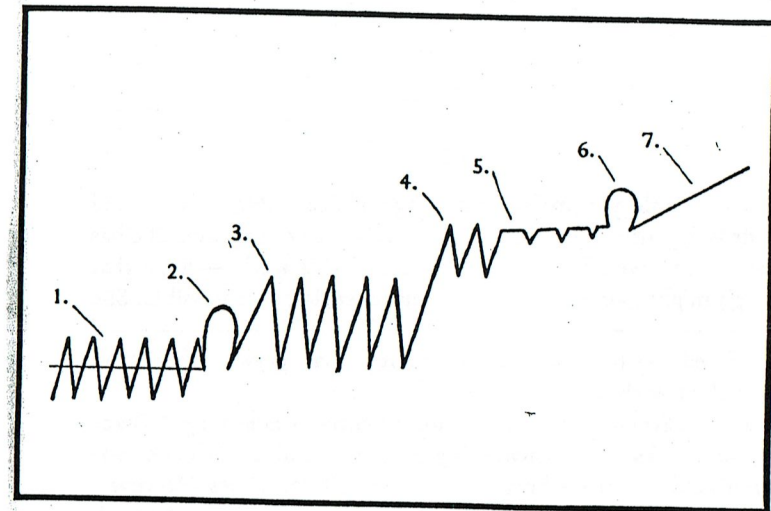
When I started out on my pilgrimage, I was using walking for two purposes at that time. One was to contact people, and I still use it for that purpose today. But the other was as a prayer discipline. To keep me concentrated on my prayer for peace. And after a few years I discovered something. I discovered that I no longer needed the prayer discipline. I pray without ceasing now. My personal prayer is: *Make me an instrument through which only truth can speak.*

THIS IS THE WAY OF PEACE: *Overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth, and hatred with love.*

It is hard for people to understand that all war is bad and self-defeating. People in their immaturity attempt to overcome evil with more evil, and that multiplies the evil. Only good can overcome evil.

My simple peace message is adequate — really just the message that the way of peace is the way of love. Love is the greatest power on earth. It conquers all things. One in harmony with God's law of love has more strength than an army, for one need not subdue an adversary; an adversary can be transformed.

#### Peace Pilgrim's Chart of Spiritual Growth



1. The ups and downs of emotion within the self-centered nature.
2. The first hump of no return: Complete willingness, without reservation, to give life to serve the higher will.
3. Battle between the God-centered nature and the self-centered nature.
4. First peak experience: A glimpse of inner peace.
5. Longer and longer plateaus of inner peace.
6. Complete inner peace.
7. Continuation of growth on a steadily upward path.



## Rumi's Meditation on War

Some people have asked us for spiritual advice in this time of war. At the beginning of Book Six of his *Mathnawi*, Mevlana Rumi tells us that his book is "a lamp in the darkness of imagination, bewilderment, fantasies, doubt, and suspicion." In the following lines Mevlana refers to all of worldly existence as a state of war. The world is maintained by heedlessness; oppositions are the pillars of existence. Even the four elements are continually at war with each other:

The snakes are scattering venom  
and though the sour-faced folks distress us,  
yet up in the mountains in hives among the trees  
communities of bees still create their stores of honey.  
As much as the poisoners spread their poisons,  
these antidotes will neutralize them.  
When you reflect, this world is all in conflict, particle with  
particle,  
just as spirituality is in conflict with denial.

One particle flies to the left, and another to the right.  
One particle flies up and another down:  
Witness the conflict in every movement.  
All of this visible strife is the result of hidden strife:  
This outer discord springs from that inner discord. . .  
By means of *truly unto him we are returning*.  
We have come back from ourselves to Your Ocean,  
and we have begun to nurse at the source that suckled us.

Phantoms have distracted you from the path,  
so don't boast of principles,  
if you have lost the Principle.  
Our war and our peace are in the light of essence:  
It does not depend on us alone, everything is  
between the two fingers of God.  
The wars of nature, action, language—these terrible conflicts  
exist in all the parts of this universe.  
This world is maintained by means of these wars:  
consider the elements in order to solve these difficulties.  
The four elements are four strong pillars  
by which the roof of this present world is supported.  
One pillar is a destroyer of another:  
the pillar of water is a destroyer of the pillar of fire.  
And so this whole edifice of creation  
is founded upon conflicts;  
and for better or worse we are at war.  
My own states oppose each other:  
each is in conflict with the other.  
If I am constantly warring against myself,  
how can I be in harmony with another?  
Behold the surging armies of my states,  
each at war and in conflict with another.  
Contemplate this same poignant war in yourself:  
why then be so busy warring with others?  
Unless God spares you from this war  
and brings you into the single-colored world of peace?

*Mathnawi, Book VI: 33-39, 41-55, Translated by Kabir Helminski  
From Sufism.org*