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Foreword Review SELF-HELP

Life: A User's Manual

Eliza Finkelstein
John Miller
New World Library (Jul 21, 1998)
$15.00 (144pp)
978-1-57731-067-9

The idea of describing life as a journey has spawned a multitude of books in the spiritual enlightenment genre. Life: A User's Manual is a refreshing offering with its unique premise. Rather than presenting itself as a guide to a certain end, Life offers a variety of people's reflections on one of five aspects (search, love, faith, meditation, and death). The book is reassuring that we are all searchers and there may be many satisfying paths to follow. The opening quote by Saul Bellow speaks well to the book's premise: "The quest is one and the same…We are all drawn toward the same craters of the spirit—to know what we are, and what we are for, to know our purpose." This book is true to the quote in defining the craters of the spirit not as certain answers to these questions, but as the questions themselves.

Each selection adds more dimension to a category, allowing the searcher to integrate the selections differently into his or her understanding.

The choice of writers contains few surprises to those who are steady readers of such materials. Most of the selections, however, are not widely published elsewhere, and some authors provide delightfully different insights. The layout of the book includes enough white space for an uncrowded read, as though there are visual meditative pauses between selections. The result is graceful.

EMMY LOU BELCHER (September / October 1998)

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