

Editorial

One myth or metaphor which enchants our age is the paradigm of Spiritual Journey. Even the Second Vatican Council chose to explain the Church as a pilgrim Church in journey or in transit. This has proven useful for a Church constantly seeking to discover its hidden depths. Moreover, a variety of religious traditions also bear witness to a host of different spiritual voyages undertaken by many different peoples in a variety of cultures and time perceptions. With the hope of expanding our understanding of Spiritual Journey, *Journal of Dharma* has invited a number of scholars to reflect on a variety of spiritual journeys while paying special attention to the role of the spiritual guide or director.

Professor Kurt Leidecker, one of the founding pioneers in the field of Comparative Religion and currently Professor Emeritus at Mary Washington University in Virginia, sets our tone by a penetrating analysis of the "Origin and Function of the Guru". By reminding us that Nature Itself is a "guru", he draws attention to a primordial but perduring archetype. He then proceeds to trace some of the difficulties which individualism, dualism, and especially Egoism introduce. Professor Leidecker thus challenges us to recall the roots of the ancient Guru Tradition.

Professor Mervyn D'Souza of Kean College of New Jersey focuses on the classic and well-known dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. He argues that a totally "open and generous human spirit" marks the beginning of holiness; an honest and realistic spiritual voyage begins by embracing the human dilemma in all of its ambiguities and promises.

Professor James McMichael of Alfred University draws on much of his own personal experience in "Beginning *Jñāna* Yoga in Contemporary India". His thesis is that "*Jñāna* Yoga" still holds the key to understanding the guru and the aim of the spiritual journey in India today. His explanation is an eloquent defense and clarification of several misconceptions concerning the guru tradition.

Professor Frank Podgorski of Seton Hall University switches to the Theravada Buddhist tradition and locates the Buddhist "*kalyana metta*" or "beautiful friend" within the overall context of the guru tradition. He presents an idealized picture of the spiritual experience

which Buddhist guides and monks seek. This Buddhist spiritual goal continues to motivate much of Asia to this very day.

Professor S. Arulsamy of St. Peter's Seminary, Bangalore develops the human dimension by concentrating on an understanding of spiritual journey within Saivism. His article is a marvellous testimony to Hindu spirituality as it is actually lived and practiced within India.

Approaching spiritual journey from an entirely other perspective, Professor David Abalos of Seton Hall University points to the spiritual roots which underlie education and the vocation of teaching itself. According to Professor Abalos, a true education is one which is always in the process of transformation and the uncovering of deeper levels of understanding. Accordingly, every teacher is a critical spiritual guide who must always be in a process of self-purification so that the educator may serve as a "mid-wife" drawing forth the "sacredness" already latent within the student.

George J. Seidel tries to establish in his article that the spiritual route taken by the wandering ascetics of India is a path of spiritual freedom. They gradually come out of the limitations of the caste, *ashrama* add reincarnations.

Prof. Purushotama Bilimoria speaks about radical alternative ways for spiritual journey. This would mean changes in the existing living pattern and the form of life, the educational system, the social economic policies and the political structure.

Spiritual Journey thus means many things to many different peoples: awe-filled cosmic transformation, realistic assessment and transformation of our milieu, mutual and interrelated compassion for oneself, others, and the divine, a non Egoistic acceptance and celebration of what is and even of what is not, a realization and awareness of the "sacredness" of all that we are learning and stammering to explain. Vast, profound, mammoth, and beautiful are the ideals which so many different peoples in so many different times and places have struggled to describe. May the spiritual journeys of our day be enhanced by our reflection on our many different pilgrim roots!

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