

INTRODUCTION

I put off writing a narrative account of my spiritual journey because I thought it would not be helpful to dwell on the past. For I was seeking freedom from thoughts, regrets, and musings on perceived mistakes. But friends, acquaintances, and family members who had witnessed my ongoing journey from their perspectives often remarked that I should put it down in writing and that my experiences would be of interest, and maybe even beneficial, for others to read. Thus, as I approach my 70th birthday and am in an environment conducive for devoting many hours to this task, I thought I would finally write it.

This is not a full account of my life. I am narrating the story of my spiritual journey towards attaining a vaguely defined goal—a goal that over time I would understand to be reaching a level of awakened awareness by which I perceive all external and internal phenomena, and especially the convention of “I” and “me,” as they truly are. I have left out most of the personal and intimate encounters I had over the years, particularly in the early decades, as narrating them would have taken me away from the main subject of the narrative. Also, my spiritual journey has been travelled by me alone, as any spiritual journey must. Even if one treads a path together with a partner or any other individual, the essence of the journey is experienced and travelled internally by each person individually.

As will become evident, my path has not been linear and my goal, fuzzy in the beginning, has been a work in progress. During the course of nearly fifty years, my awareness of what it was exactly that I was seeking began gradually to become more focused as I let notions and ideals that I had outgrown—or no longer found relevant—slip away, though each has left a mark on my consciousness.

Many spiritual journeys can be likened to traveling along an interstate. It may at some point go through a tunnel, maybe even a very long one, but it then comes out into daylight and one is aware that it is the same road as it was before the darkness descended. My journey, however, has been like a country road, for example Rt. 29 East. Periodically it goes through a small town and the road turns right, then left, and right again, maybe joining with other routes, and then continues again in the open countryside, having left behind the other routes. But then sometimes there is road construction. One sees the sign, Rt. 29 East Detour. As the driver follows along the detour route, Rt. 29 East may hook up with one or more routes, each perhaps having a different direction marker, yet the road upon which one is driving is going in only one direction and the sign indicating Rt. 29 East appears now and then, as if to remind the driver that this is still the same route. Eventually the detour ends and Rt. 29 East continues without any further obstacle.

There have been detours and diversions on my journey that may at first seem to be mistakes or misguided movements. All of them were voluntary, yet I felt compelled to make each one—a major change in direction when I felt I had encountered an obstruction to progress. My entry into Tibetan Buddhism was my first major detour and after a temporary return to the Early Buddhist road I had been following previously, I made an even greater, prolonged detour into Christianity. But I hope it will become clear to readers that these changes in direction or emphasis are actually part of the journey. For a detour is not a dead-end. It merely takes drivers on a different route but then leads them back to the road they had been travelling on. The landscape might have changed but the road is the same one. And so it has been with my spiritual journey. I was led for different reasons in a direction I had not anticipated but I never felt I made a wrong turn, and thus on no occasion was I inclined to turn back and return to the point from

which I seemingly diverted from the main path. While my departure from Buddhism to continue in a Christian tradition shocked many people, it was not a tangential aberration, not an unfortunate waste of time, but a necessary segment of the journey. Admittedly, I did not and could not have this complete picture at the time the event occurred. From the perspective of hindsight, everything seems clearer. But after each detour in my journey, I gained greater clarity of what my goal was by determining clearly what it was not. Thus, the change in direction was not extraneous to my ongoing path.

I do not attempt to explain or give teachings about any of the religious traditions I have experienced. I am not qualified to do so and there are many resources available for those wishing to learn about a particular religious or spiritual tradition. This is first and foremost a personal narrative of my journey—a journey motivated by a search for meaning in life. Once I had caught a glimpse of seeing the world, and my life, otherwise, I was prompted to begin the search to live in that transcendent state of awareness. I was propelled by an inner force that I could not articulate even to myself, and certainly not to my friends or family. But I listened to that voice and became more astute in discerning it.

It is my heartfelt wish that readers will find inspiration in this autobiographical account of an indefatigable quest for enlightened awareness and clarity of vision regarding the subtle layers of self-identification.

In order to keep the narrative focused mainly on my spiritual journey, I have left out scores of people who in some way played a part as I traveled my path. I thank them in silence.