FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Body, Mind & Spirit

A Commuter's Guide to Enlightenment
Stewart Bitkoff
Llewellyn Publications
978-0-7387-1263-5
(February 29, 2008)

Commuting as spiritual practice may not be the easiest path to enlightenment as it presents so many opportunities for frustration, irritation, and even rage to erupt. Marking off his own daily commute on the Major Deegan Expressway in New York City with teachings on how the drive to work can lead to progress on the spiritual path, Stewart Bitkoff offers a way to turn an otherwise irritating and unavoidable part of one's day into an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Bitkoff holds a doctorate in education and has taught at New York University, and several other colleges and universities. Now specializing in therapeutic recreation and psychiatric rehabilitation and treatments, he is realistic about life's difficulties, yet asserts that "within each soul, there is also a place that is quiet and special. When we retreat to this center on a daily basis, we come forward more complete and able to serve. This is our seat of power; our oasis amidst the routine of daily life."

That this "seat of power" could be the driver's seat of a car requires an understanding of being in the moment. A student of modern mysticism, Dr. Bitkoff knows that inner battles can be the greatest challenge, and teaches that the time spent alone in the car can be used to make contact with the self as it responds to all that that occurs while driving. In this way, the commute then becomes the teacher, the car and driver trapped in traffic become metaphors for the body and soul longing for freedom.

Familiar landmarks on the drive can be signposts pointing to possibilities for the memory and visioning to take place. Bitkoff demonstrates how he uses music, meditation, and the magic of mindful awareness to make each commute an opportunity to use the mind in a different way, taking otherwise "wasted" time and a potentially disagreeable situation and creating from these the very steps needed for spiritual growth.

Kristine Morris