ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

BODY, MIND & SPIRIT

A Journey to the Truth
Sohrab ChamanAra
978-1-4208-7727-4
Two Stars (out of Five)

The Hindu Rig Veda teaches, "Truth is One, though the sages know it as many." This teaching is one that Sam, the primary character in *A Journey to the Truth* learns as he explores the many religions and philosophies of the world. Less a novel than a parable, this story shares author Sohrab ChamanAra's apparent yearning for cultures to meld and for people to understand that many religions share spiritual roots or values.

Sam is born in a Chicago ghetto in 1947 and is orphaned in his teens. With the help of family and friends, he overcomes his background and begins his spiritual journey in Christianity. As he meets people of varying backgrounds, he converts to Islam, then Judaism, followed by Buddhism, Hinduism, and finally Sufi, a mystical form of Islam.

Sam's career path also takes many twists and turns. He repairs radios and TVs, earns a degree in engineering, obtains extreme wealth through the stock market, falls into poverty after the crash of 1987, runs for political office, then hosts a radio talk show. Sam struggles with balancing his wealth with his need to help his friends and strangers. Ultimately, he realizes that, "a caring heart, a kind deed, a loving touch, a good Word, however small, however quiet, is the Whole."

The book purports to resemble a similar spiritual journey found in *The Conference of the Birds*, a twelfth-century Persian book of poems. The literary connection, however, is not easy to discern for average readers who are probably unfamiliar with the work.

A Journey to the Truth suffers from distracting editing flaws in punctuation, tense, capitalization, and word usage ("forward" instead of "foreword," for example). The characters are one-dimensional and often mysteriously arrive and disappear. Sam's wife, Serena, who is apparently happy, leaves him, and a young teen, Jackson, later appears in his life. Both of these occurrences happen without explanation. Most unusual, the author himself, along with his wife and child, enter the story as friends of Sam. Their presence seems to have the primary purpose of introducing more of the author's Sufi views to Sam and ultimately the reader.

Sam's ghetto background surfaces when Sam recalls conversations that he had with his

parents. The dialect used in these exchanges is awkward and inconsistent with spellings (debil, debbils). Oddly, Sam speaks that way as a kid, but not as an adult.

Editing problems aside, the book has its sweet moments. After lengthy discussions about heaven and hell, Sam and his friend Sohrab take a walk in the night. Sam looks at the sky, “marveling once more at the majesty of creation.” They come to a streetlight, and a moth, “dancing crazily in and out of the shadows, collided with him and fell to the ground.” Sam, still looking for answers, rescues the moth and wishes it a good life.

Sam’s quest for spirituality and a good life on earth mirror the longings of many. His spiritual journey could be thought-provoking for seekers of the truth.