



Book of Wisdom

Mohmood Valimohamed

Moonlight Books (March 2006)

Softcover \$14.95 (182pp)

978-1-894806-10-7

When the World Is Too Much with Us

Sooner or later it may occur to us to ask what the point of our life is. When we do it is often in a period where we are overwhelmed by sorrow disappointment or frustration. The array of possible answers only increases our disorientation.

With that in mind Mohmood Valimohamed has prepared a Dick-and-Jane reader for the spiritual first grader. In it he addresses the fundamentals of spirituality but avoids any obvious affiliation to a particular faith. He includes with equal emphasis teachings by Buddha Jesus and Lao Tsu and from the Holy Gita Hindu Vedas and the Bible.

The material lives up to its claim of simplicity and this is both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. Sometimes Valimohamed's claims and statements made without appropriate support approach the naive. For instance he states that good intentions are an indication one is "heading in the right direction" but he does not define how one determines the value of an intention. Experience shows that thinking it is so does not automatically make it so.

In another instance he praises the beauty of motherhood and describes mothers as merciful compassionate tolerant patient loving and warm. He says we are "bathed in our mother's limitless love from the moment of birth." This sadly is not supported by the statistics of our welfare and juvenile court systems nor is it the experience of anyone who works with children. He states a father's ego is dissolved as soon as he catches sight of his infant but too many fathers have no involvement with their children whatsoever regardless of economic or social status. He provides no caveat that this view of parenthood is not representative of reality but is instead useful as an ideal.

These kinds of statements however do not define the entire book. Valimohamed's simple style also reveals gems of real spiritual and digestible brilliance: The person who forgives benefits more than the person forgiven. The more we learn to witness ourselves the more we can identify when we are acting out a role instead of living with authenticity. We must be cautious about tying ourselves to the world through our insecurities. Expressing love expands our capacity to both give it and receive it. Our defeats often take on quite different meaning when looked at from a growth perspective. "Spiritual logic" he says "is a totally different dimension than everyday logic."

This is indeed a simple book published in large type without much thought given to design or presentation. It lacks slick production values and the prose is not always polished to fine precision. But it does resonate with a remarkable purity that anyone can access. It's simplicity comes from the heart and becomes the very antidote needed for a harried and hungry soul too well immersed in a complex world.

ROBIN IRELAND (April 30, 2006)

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