

*Outpost Exchange*

*Spirituality and Wellness Sidebar I*

*By Maggie Jacobus*

*January 15, 2001*

*450 words*

Are you feeling that you've lost some of the proverbial fire in the belly when it comes to your job, your relationships or just life in general? This feeling of blasé may be more than just burn out; you may be in a transition from your Maya Life—or first life, which is spent in the pursuit of wealth and pleasure—to your Dharma Life—your soul calling. “The first half of our lives is Maya. Then we realize something is missing, which is preparation for our soul’s calling, to move from material consciousness to spiritual,” said Dr. Ashtok Bedi, M.D. a psychiatrist based in Milwaukee and author of a new book, Path to the Soul: The Union of Eastern and Western Wisdom to Heal Your Body, Mind and Soul (Samuel Weiser 2000). “This happens not only in individuals, but also cultures,” he added.

Bedi contends that the West is in just such a transition, moving from a very material existence to a spiritual one. In fact, Bedi believes that “the torch of spirituality is being passed from the East to the West. The East has lived in the seventh chakra, preoccupied with consciousness,” he said. “The West, through Christianity, has been a tradition of the fourth, or heart, chakra. The East, out of necessity, is moving back to the root chakra, so the task of illuminating the dharmic path is up to the West.” He cites the urgency of Eastern cultures such as India to tend to its citizens’ basic needs as the reason it must return to the root chakra.

Bedi believes part of his work in the US is to act as an “ambassador of a lost civilization, to bring Eastern teachings to the West.” Educated in India by Jesuit priests and then trained as a psychiatrist and Jungian analyst in India, Great Britain and the US, Bedi perhaps represents the intersection of the Maya and Dharma lives, as well as of the two sides of the world. He views himself merely as a messenger. “It’s critical that the West become the world’s spiritual leaders and take this role seriously,” he said and that each of us realizes our individual part in it. “The spirit is like an ocean and each of us takes a little bucket out of it that is our soul. We can contaminate it and return it to the ocean and make it dirty, or we can live a dharmic life and purify our drop of water and return it to the ocean clean and more pristine,” he said. “When we purify ourselves, we purify our community and the world.”

###