

amazon
#1 New Release

...in seven
categories

Far Sweeter Than Honey

Searching for Meaning on a Bicycle

The book title is taken from
a medieval Persian poem

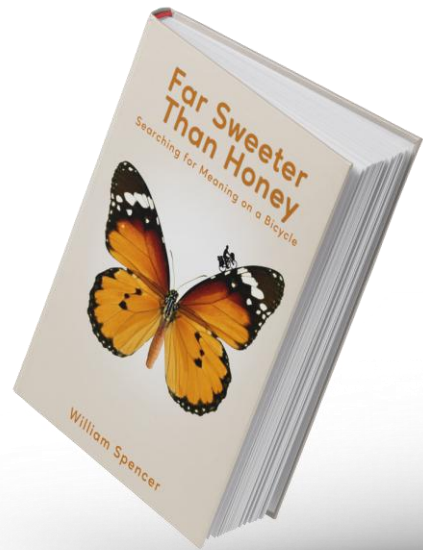
In many lands I have wandered, and
wondered, and listened, and seen;
And many my friends and companions,
and teachers and lovers have been.

And I said to my soul in secret, "Oh
thou, who from journeys art come!
It is meet we should bear some token of
love to the stayers at home."

But, if my hands were empty of honey,
and pearls and gold,
There were treasures far sweeter than
honey, and marvelous things to be told.

Whiter than pearls and brighter than
the cups at a Sultan's feast,
And these I have brought for love-tokens,
from the Lords of Truth, in my East.

Sheikh Muslih-Uddin Sa'di Shirazi, *The Gulistan*



Book summary

This is the true story of a young man's epic bicycle journey from England to India. Traveling more than eight thousand miles, he encounters all manner of adventure, from the curious company of a butterfly in the wilds of Iran to the aftermath of a coup in Kandahar, Afghanistan—from navigating the foreign yet welcoming Muslim world, where he learns the basics of Islam, to the journey's end in mystical India, where he arrives at an understanding of what it means to be free.



William Spencer explains why he wrote this book

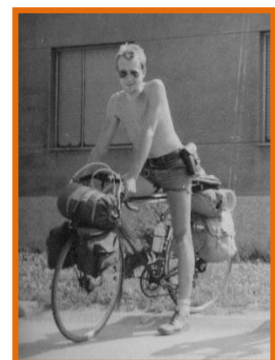
This book contains a story that wanted to be told. A young boy in England completes a school project about India and forms a deep yearning to explore that subcontinent. As a young man, he embarks on the journey using, of course, a bicycle. For him, two wheels are the ideal means of escape—he'd learned to cycle off and find respite from warring, alcoholic parents.



He sets out in search of meaning, in search of something beyond an everyday existence. And, as with any odyssey, the search reveals the values and aspirations that will guide his adult life.

How do we shape an understanding of places we have never visited? In school, I was taught about Muslim lands: warrior Arabs who invaded and held Spain for several centuries, the Crusades against barbaric hordes who lacked Christianity, the British Raj that brought order to Hindu and Muslim masses in India. Years later, the constant onslaught of contemporary news media provided me with searing accounts of inhumane acts committed by Islamic fundamentalists. As a result, I held a dim view of Islam and Muslim peoples.

My travels through Muslim lands stood in stark contrast to this narrative. I experienced a consistently warm welcome. I came to know the everyday face of Islam as predictable human kindness.



So, the second reason I wrote this book was as a testament to this other side of the story. I hope that you will read this book and come to recognize a truer view of the peaceful followers of Islam: the poor farmer, the struggling student, and the humble railway stationmaster.



Reviews from early readers

I loved (this book) because of the vivid storytelling across the many months of the epic journey. Many of the images will stay with me. So much serendipity that cannot be explained away or attributed merely to “coincidence” or “chance”.

Laura Ricard, US

I really enjoyed the book. In my opinion, the narrative is exactly as a book of this genre should be: involving, personal and real. The reader experiences highs and lows with the author and is also enriched.

Peter Jordan, UK



About the author

Originally from the UK, William Spencer is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He has traveled, lived and worked on several continents. After spending seventeen years going back and forth to India (subsequently by airplane), he settled with his wife and two young children in New Jersey, USA.

His work with Fortune 1000 companies focuses on making the workplace more human through participative learning and employee-centric change. His curiosity about other cultures persists. His quest for meaning continues.





From the author's sketchbook

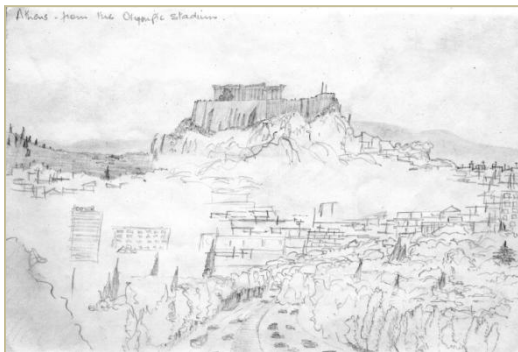
The author carried no camera, but made a few sketches en route instead.



Yugoslavia, a country scene



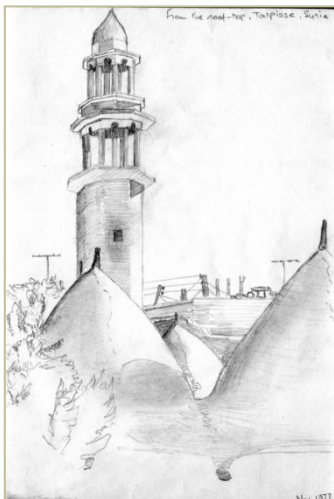
Greece, an abandoned village



Athens, from the Panathenaic stadium



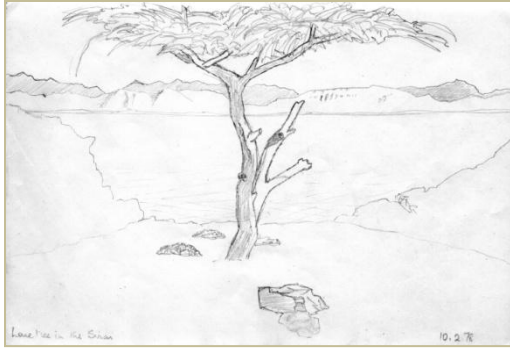
Greece, Samos island



Syria, Talbiseh from the rooftops



Israel, palm tree by the River Jordan



Israel, lone tree in the Sinai



Syria, Sultan Salim's Mosque in Damascus

Reader feedback

What does an author stand to gain by asking for reader feedback? A lot. In fact, what we can gain is so important in the publishing world, that they've coined a catchy name for it. It's called "social proof." And in this age of social media sharing, without social proof, an author may as well be invisible.

So if you've enjoyed *Far Sweeter Than Honey: Searching for Meaning on a Bicycle*, please consider reviewing it on Amazon or Goodreads. A review doesn't have to be a long critical essay. Just a few words expressing your thoughts, which could help potential readers decide whether they would enjoy it, too.