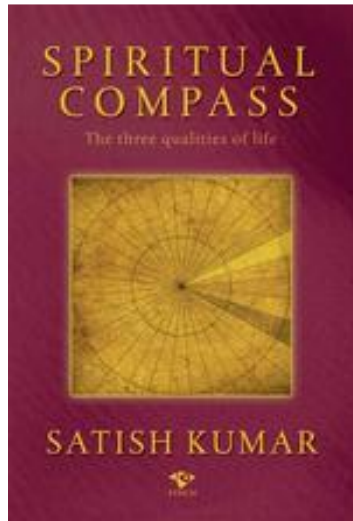


## BOOK REVIEW

**Kumar, Satish.** *Spiritual Compass: The Three Qualities of Life.* Sydney: Finch Publishing, 2008.



Satish Kumar approaches the malaises of modern society from the perspective of first causes. He asks not "how can this problem be treated", but "what has caused this problem"? If the first cause can be identified and addressed, then short-term and often short-sighted attention to symptoms becomes unnecessary and irrelevant.

In a society characterised by growing personal, spiritual, societal and environmental crises, this approach is like a beacon shining a light of hope into the darkness of modernity.

Kumar writes of the three qualities that can provide a "spiritual compass" for navigating through the morass of consumerism and disempowerment that besets life in the twenty-first century. These qualities, drawn from the ancient Indian tradition of Ayurveda, are *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*.

*Sattvic* includes all that is natural, wholesome, truthful and spiritual. *Rajasic* is powerful, prestigious, glamorous and exciting. *Tamasic* means dark, heavy, depressing and damaging. All actions, thoughts and interactions have one, or a combination, of these qualities but one of them always dominates. Traditional Indian wisdom suggests that *sattvic* qualities can help orient and guide us as we seek an authentic and holistic path through life. This, in turn, can alleviate many of the problems that scientists, politicians, environmentalists and therapists are seeking to redress today.

Every aspect of life – and life choices – can be shaped by a commitment to *sattvic* qualities: the food we eat, the fabrics we use in clothing, means of transport, house design and construction, business and finance, relationships, attitudes to the natural world, conflict ..... and the list goes on.

Satish Kumar is the Director of Programs at Schumacher College, an internationally recognised institution in Devon UK, which offers courses related to environmental and social sustainability. Written in a simple, eloquent style, without footnotes or bibliography, this is a warm, optimistic and inspiring little book which clearly reflects the philosophy and wisdom of the author.