



AUTHOR: [BIO](#) | [CONTACT & SOCIALS](#) | [SAMPLE Q&A](#)

BOOK: [PRESS RELEASE](#) | [SYNOPSIS](#) | [REVIEW](#) | [PHOTOS](#) | [EXCERPT](#)

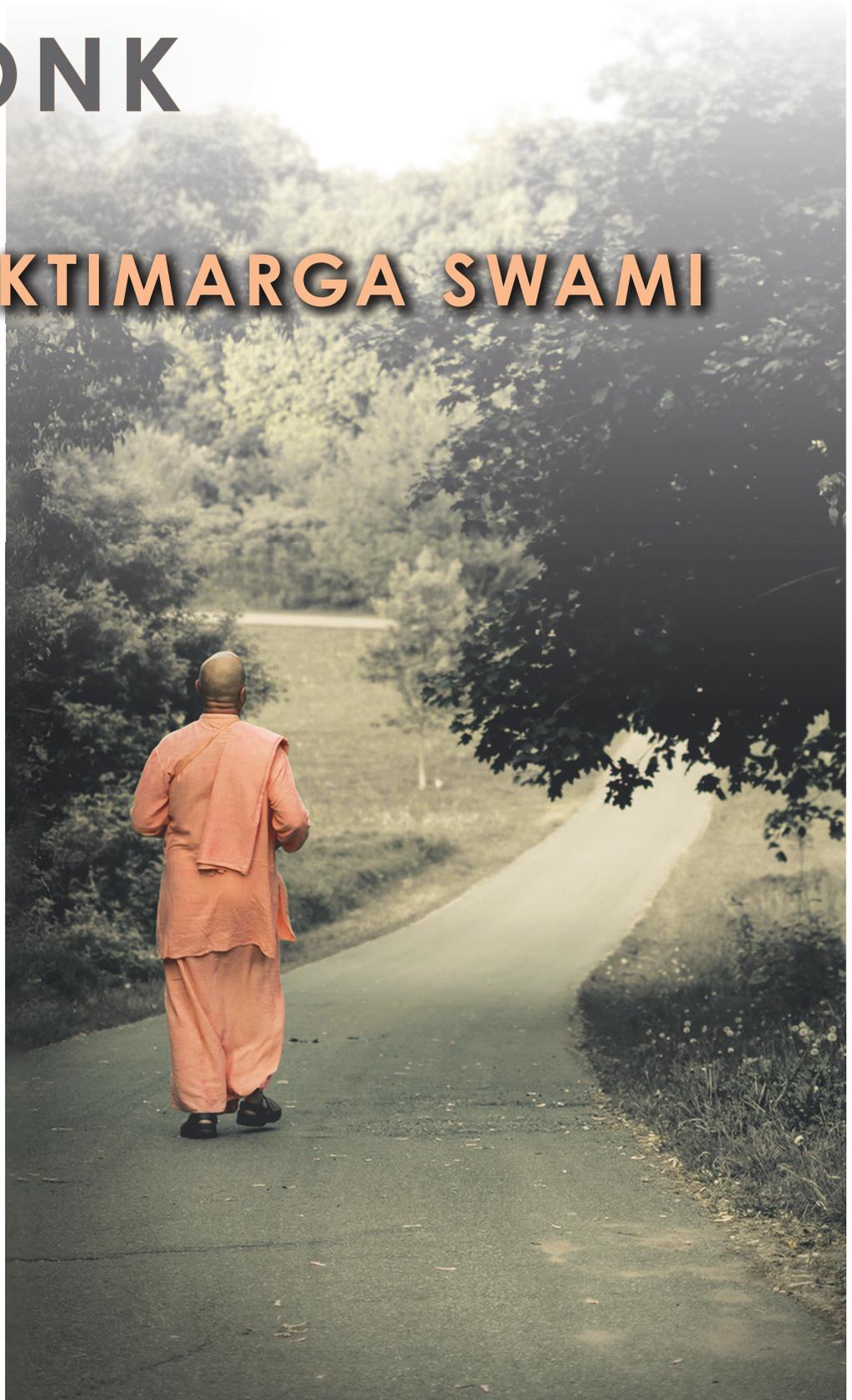
Marathon Walker

THE WALKING MONK

BHAKTIMARGA SWAMI

MARATHON WALKER | AUTHOR | PLAYWRIGHT | POET

FILMMAKER | BHAKTI YOGA INSTRUCTOR



BIO

Bhaktimarga Swamil, born in Chatham, Ontario, Canada, is also known as The Walking Monk for having **trekked four times across Canada**. Keeping with the spirit of pilgrimage, he also crossed the USA, Israel, Ireland, Guyana, Trinidad, Mauritius, and the Fiji Islands. Documentation of his Canadian walks is found in two films: ***The Longest Road, by the National Film Board of Canada***, and *Walking: The Lessons of the Road*, by Michael Oesch. The Walking Monk's pilgrimages have also been covered by numerous international newspaper, radio, and television outlets.



putting
heart and feet
together toward
a more care-free /
car-free lifestyle



As a youth, Swami was a student of fine arts, but took to the life of a monk at age 20 in 1973. Although pursuing monastic ways, he maintains artistic expression through morality theatre which takes him around the globe as **a playwright and director** - an opportunity to work with talented youth in various communities. He has also recently **published his first book, *The Saffron Path: Trekking the Globe with the Walking Monk***, detailing his marathon walking adventures.

Bhaktimarga Swami is also an instructor of bhakti yoga, a leader of musical mantra meditation called kirtan, and a speaker on the science of the self based on the ancient teachings of the Gita.

CONTACT / SOCIALS



thewalkingmonk.net



@thewalkingmonk



BHAKTIMARGA SWAMI



647 530 4273 (EASTERN)



bhaktimargaswami@gmail.com

REP: JENNIFER LAYNE BORTNAK



416 944 9505 (PACIFIC)



neateyedesign@gmail.com

10.3K
FOLLOWERS ON INSTAGRAM

554.5K
VIEWS ON TOP POST

Q&A

WHAT DRIVES YOU TO BE SO PASSIONATE ABOUT WALKING?

Being that I'm a monk, this is the type of thing we do—accept some inconvenience to build character. I want to encourage the public to take care of themselves more and live a less sedentary lifestyle out in the real world. I hope to inspire people to give the car a break, and in doing so, make a green statement. Our planet is under siege on so many fronts, and this is a humble way to combat this kind of onslaught.

I've had hundreds of beautiful and bittersweet experiences with wildlife, from the grim prevalence of roadkill to magical moments with the mystic loon and the northern lights.

WHAT KIND OF ENCOUNTERS HAVE YOU HAD WITH WILDLIFE?

However, being stalked by a grizzly bear was probably my most memorable experience. On one of my walks across Canada, I hadn't yet seen a bear, so I made a wish to see the greatest form of the bear in all its glory. A grizzly suddenly appeared and proceeded to stalk me and my walking companion for quite some time along the Crowsnest Pass in BC. We knew our lives were in danger. The bear was becoming aggressive and almost within arm's reach. Just in the nick of time, a large transport truck rumbled and honked at the bear as he passed by us, and the grizzly finally ran off and left us alone. Be careful what you wish for!

A MONK WALKING ON LONG STRETCHES OF HIGHWAY IS AN UNUSUAL SIGHT. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN RECEIVED BY THE PUBLIC?

Generally positively. Some indifference. You take people by surprise. I've been known to be a head turner. Drivers see what from a distance looks like a moving traffic cone. They realize it's a human being and offer a ride, a meal, some water, or seek advice. With good intentions they occasionally offer a beer or invite me to a round of golf, but those aren't really monk activities. There's something about long stretches of highway that make people want to connect. They want to know what's going on, and when you tell them they get rather surprised and often wish they could take to the walking lifestyle as well.

It's called The Saffron Path: Trekking the Globe with The Walking Monk. I've done so many marathon walks—across Canada

YOU'VE WRITTEN A BOOK; CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT?

four times, the USA, Ireland, Israel, Guyana, Trinidad, Mauritius, Fiji. I had an idea that it would be better to write about my adventures thematically instead of chronologically, so there are chapters on my experiences with law enforcement, Canada's Indigenous Peoples, kind-hearted souls, aggressors, wildlife, and even miracles. There are over 100 colour photos throughout, so it really helps put you right on the road with me.



PRESS RELEASE

THE SAFFRON PATH

BHAKTIMARGA SWAMI

trekking the
globe with

THE WALKING MONK

THE SAFFRON PATH: TREKKING THE GLOBE WITH THE WALKING MONK

BY BHAKTIMARGA SWAMI

From being stalked by a grizzly bear to being mistaken for an escaped prison inmate, marathon pilgrim, The Walking Monk, braves the elements and adventure across the globe to bring us the tales only trails can tell!

SYNOPSIS

The Saffron Path is the inside story of a courageous and humble down-to-earth modern monk as he embarks on marathon walks across several countries.

Bhaktimarga Swami, known as “The Walking Monk”, details his intriguing experiences and shares inspirational insights over 50 themed chapters, including exciting encounters with wildlife, law enforcement, aggressors, kind-hearted Indigenous Peoples, and genuine miracles. *The Saffron Path* includes over 100 colour photos inserted throughout the book, immersing the reader visually in the fun, challenging, and meaningful experience of pilgrimage.

We follow The Walking Monk as he treks across Canada (four times), the USA, Ireland, Trinidad, Mauritius, Guyana, Fiji, and Israel. Throughout, the reader is encouraged and uplifted toward a greener, more care-free and car-free lifestyle.

“*The Saffron Path* is a book of adventure, soul searching, and profound life experiences. Everyday, Bhaktimarga Swami humbly puts his life on the line in direct contact with the people, the wildlife, and the elements in the simplest way—walking. He has walked throughout the world to share the spiritual treasures of his heart with all. In this extraordinary book, we go with The Walking Monk and experience incredible and transformative events alongside him. I am sincerely grateful to Bhaktimarga Swami for sharing his amazing and heart-moving story.

RADHANATHA SWAMI - *New York Times* best selling author of *The Journey Home*

“Here at last is the inside story of how The Walking Monk’s incredible trans-Canadian walks began and unfolded to become an international phenomenon. In his unassuming and affable style, Bhaktimarga Swami details the genesis and nitty gritty of how he repeatedly set and met remarkable goals few of us would even contemplate. A page-turner.

CARL WOODHAM (KALAKANTHA DAS) - Author of *A God Who Dances* and *The Saint Within*

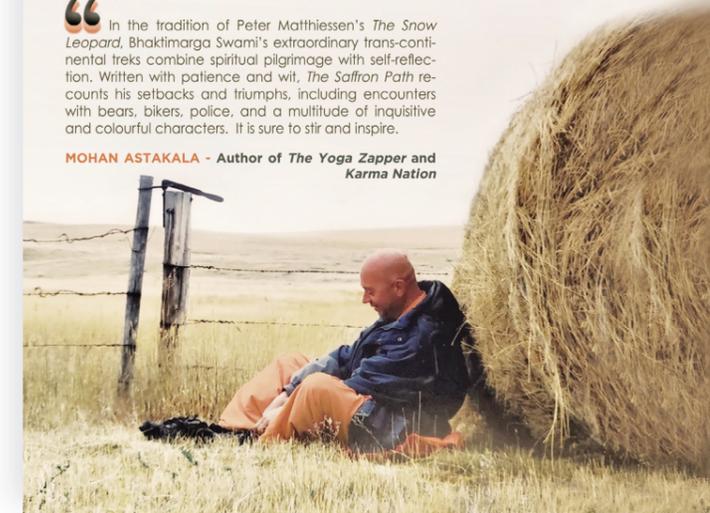
“In the tradition of Peter Matthiessen’s *The Snow Leopard*, Bhaktimarga Swami’s extraordinary trans-continental treks combine spiritual pilgrimage with self-reflection. Written with patience and wit, *The Saffron Path* recounts his setbacks and triumphs, including encounters with bears, bikers, police, and a multitude of inquisitive and colourful characters. It is sure to stir and inspire.

MOHAN ASTAKALA - Author of *The Yoga Zapper* and *Karma Nation*

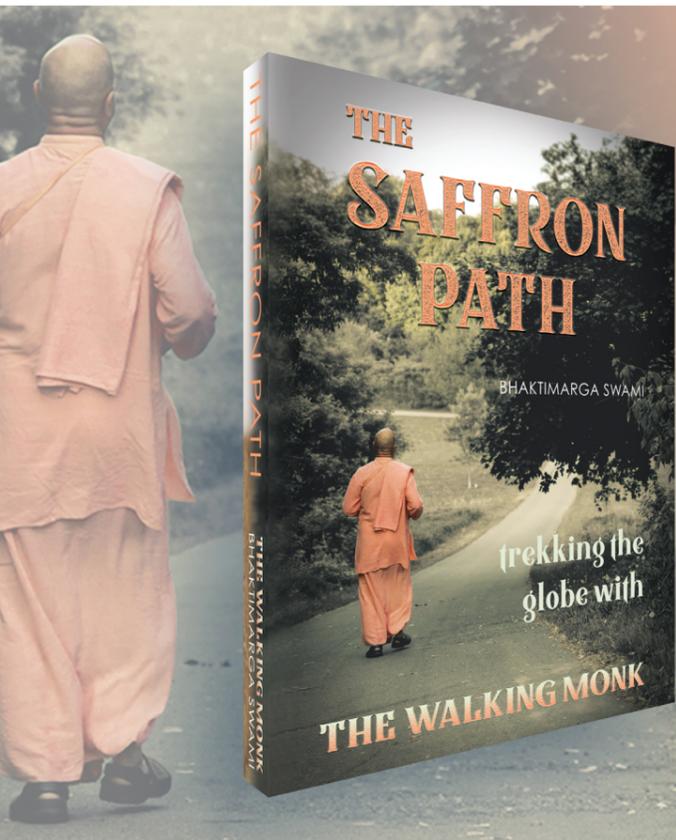
THE SAFFRON PATH

BHAKTIMARGA SWAMI

From being stalked by a grizzly bear to being mistaken for an escaped prison inmate, *The Walking Monk* braves the elements and adventure across the globe to bring the tales only trails can tell!



PUBLICATION DATE: APRIL 2022
PUBLISHER: THE WALKING MONK
AVAILABLE ON: AMAZON
FORMAT: PAPERBACK / KINDLE



THE SAFFRON PATH

BY BHAKTIMARGA SWAMI

NEW BOOK

NOW ON AMAZON

AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK
COMING SOON TO KINDLE

REVIEW

NEW YORK TIMES BEST SELLING AUTHOR
of *The Journey Home* – Radhanatha Swami

"*THE SAFFRON PATH* is a book of adventure, soul searching, and profound life experiences. Everyday, Bhaktimarga Swami humbly puts his life on the line in direct contact with the people, the wildlife, and the elements in the simplest way—walking. He has walked throughout the world to share the treasures of his heart with all. In this extraordinary book, we go with The Walking Monk and experience incredible and transformative events alongside him. I am sincerely grateful to Bhaktimarga Swami for sharing his amazing and heart-moving story."





EXCERPT

FROM CHAPTER 8

A PRAYER AND A BEAR

I offered a special prayer as I was trekking through splendid mountain country in British Columbia, Canada's westernmost province. There were not any buildings, shelters, or homes on today's forty-kilometre stretch. It was pure, raw countryside, protected land, something we call conservation wilderness.

My prayer kind of went like this, "This is my third walk across Canada. The whole world knows this land for its wilderness and beauty. I'm in bear country and I haven't seen a single one since I started doing this extreme walking. Please show me the form of some bear avatar...It's just a wish."

I was curious, and knowing bears are sometimes big and dangerous, I still thought it would be great to see one...from a distance, in its natural habitat.

My support person on this trip was Garuda (not the bird), and we were doing our regular morning walking routine. He would drop me off at the exact spot where the walk had ended the previous day. Then he would drive ahead, pull over right around the five-kilometre mark, the vehicle, and walk back to me. When we would meet, he'd do an about-face, and we'd proceed to walk to the vehicle once again. When we reached it, we would repeat the whole process again.

We were making our way along the famous Crowsnest Pass, headed toward the town of Castlegar on a quiet, lonely-looking road. Nature's gorgeousness was in full display in that early morning setting, and we were taking it all in, one fresh breath after another.

I am used to walking alone and experiencing the sounds, sights, and smells of the trail. Garuda has a tendency to chat quite a bit. He's a good walker, though perhaps an even better talker. In his usual loveable and loquacious way, he was going on about something or other when I noticed this ape-like creature roaming around a curve on this serene mountain road.

"Garuda, look ahead, do you see him?" I asked.

Speechless for once, Garuda nodded his head as his jaw dropped open.

There he was, a chunky and stocky specimen walking toward us. In the middle of the two-lane road this furry creature with sandy dark brown coloured hair had a huge hump on his back. Surely, this was no gorilla because we don't have them in Canada. He was prowling west while we were walking east, and we were bound to meet at some point. As we got closer it became clearly apparent that this creature was a giant grizzly bear.

Right around 1805, the explorers, Lewis and Clark, came across this animal's ancestor during their famous Expedition and labeled him, 'grizzly'. A decade later, the beast was formally classified by naturalist George Ord as *Ursus horribilis*, which means 'terrifying bear'.

Okay, so we weren't quite terrified, but we were a bit concerned—not overly, not at first sight, at least. We felt confident because we were on a road that was made by man, and for some reason that made us feel somewhat safe. We also felt almost adventurous out here, alone, and nearly eye to eye with this solitary and majestic symbol of the wild.

Garuda and I became a bit confused, because instead of darting off the road and into the safety of his forest, this bear kept trekking along, coming right down the middle of the road. It was so quiet we could hear ourselves breathing. Just fifty metres away now and we realized that he hadn't yet seen us and was totally unaware of our existence in his habitat. All of a sudden, he paused, stuck his nose straight up into the air and sniffed loudly, perhaps detecting our presence. Bears compensate for their poor eyesight with a sharp sense of smell. With his snout flung into the air and twitching his head this way and that, it became obvious he had finally picked up our scent. Instead of backing off, or fleeing into the woods, he forged on toward us.

Now what?

We had no place to run; no place to hide. With thick forest on either side, the road seemed to be the safest place for us to be. But there he was, his nose distorted trying to determine whether we were food or foe. Suddenly, almost heaven-sent, a motorist came up behind our grizzly. At the sound of a blaring horn, the killer bear fled full throttle straight into the woods.

Wow, what a relief!

We had been more than a little anxious with this close encounter, but now, Garuda and I heaved sighs of relief.

We ambled along, too stunned to say much. About fifteen minutes later, our reprieve was short-lived, when we heard a sudden snort behind us. We turned in unison and there he was—one of the biggest predators on Earth! He had circled around behind us and was hot on our trail, only twenty metres away and closing in fast.

Garuda and I were shocked by this turn of events but in awe of his mighty frame, roundish head, and protruding dark snout. He was extremely bulky. Not knowing what to do next, Garuda and I started loudly chanting mantras for protection.

What were we going to do? Our vehicle was at least two kilometres away. There was no use running for our lives because this fellow can cover fifty metres in less than five seconds and reach a top speed of seventy kilometres an hour! Again, what were we going to do? No people. No bear

spray. Our mantras continued, and we even tried communicating with him, telling him he was so big and strong. Garuda and I figured we were ‘bear smart’, but now we were put to the test.

“Raise your arms. Stand tall. His eyesight is poor. Height can intimidate him!” I blurted out. This was the advice I recall reading in a “Protect Yourself from Grizzlies” brochure.

Suddenly, down toward the valley and coming up the road, we heard the echo of grinding gears. What a racket! A transport truck, the source of this joyful sound, was slowly coming up behind the bear. The eighteen-wheeler seemed small in the distance, but he was growing in size and volume as he approached our Mister Bear. As the driver urged on his diesel-belching machine, the sound of the hard-working engine reverberated throughout the cavernous mountain valley. The burly bear was just four metres from us and still coming our way. We could hear him breathing as he uttered a ghastly growl. He then perked up his ears, and his head swayed from side-to-side as he seemed unsure of the source of the noisy commotion. By now the truck was closing in on the bear’s heels. The grizzly finally turned his large head and looked back, only to come face to face with that giant metal monster. With the transport truck almost on top of him and quickly realizing his plans were dashed, he ran off once again, into the safety of his lovely wilderness, never more to be seen.

At least, not by us.

Normally, I am somewhat appalled by the sound of an eighteen-wheeler shattering the quiet, peaceful sound of the trail. But this was one time when I was happy to see and hear a truck, and I waved in gratitude to the driver as he slowly overtook us, working his way up the mountain.

The moral of the story is, ‘Be careful what you wish for!’

But there is a little more to the story. Not but an hour later when Garuda drove off to seek out a lodge—if there were any—for our overnight stay, I forged on alone to cover my day’s distance. A smaller black bear came into my view. It was a mama bear, and lo and behold, she had her cub with her—a young energetic cub who was climbing up a nearby coniferous tree.

The road I tread was actually a form of embankment, and I was at a higher elevation in position to the bear and her cub. She spotted me suddenly. I must have looked intimidating to her. With a sound much like that of a cow, she cried out an alarm to her cub, who quickly made his way to the base of the tree and fled along with his mother.

In this case, I was the fearsome grizzly.

On the day’s topic of ‘bear’, I surely had my share.