

“The invisible excludes nothing, the invisible that excludes nothing is the infinite – the soul of India is the infinite.”

“Philosophers tell us that the Indians were the first ones to conceive of a true infinite from which nothing is excluded. The West shied away from this notion. The West likes form, boundaries that distinguish and demarcate. The trouble is that boundaries also imprison – they restrict and confine.”

He has astutely noted:

“India saw this clearly and turned her face to that which has no boundary or whatever.” “India anchored her soul in the infinite seeing the things of the world as masks of the infinite assumes – there can be no end to these masks, of course. If they (masks) express a true infinity.” And it is here that India’s mind boggling variety links up to her infinite soul.”

“India includes so much because her soul being infinite excludes nothing. It goes without saying that the universe that India saw emerging from the infinite was stupendous.”

With great perception, Smith points out that:

“While the West was still thinking, perhaps, of 6,000 years old universe – India was already envisioning ages and eons and galaxies as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. The Universe so vast that modern astronomy slips into its folds without a ripple.” ¹⁵⁵

Roger-Pol Droit (1949 -) is a French philosopher, and *Le Monde* journalist, recently wrote in his book *The Forgetfulness of India*, that:

“The Greeks loved so much Indian philosophy that Demetrios Galianos had even translated the Bhagavad-Gita”. There is absolutely not a shadow of a doubt that the Greeks knew all about Indian philosophy.” ¹⁵⁶

He has remarked that the philosophy of the Vedas and spirituality seems to disappear from the consciousness of Europeans and the references to the Indian culture after the collapse of Nietzsche. Since then, Europe has practiced what he calls “helleno-centrism”

(Greece-centered) education, which means that the West believes that all philosophical systems started with Greece and that there was nothing worth the name before them.

In his remarkable book, *L'oubli de l'Inde: une amnésie philosophique* (*The forgetting of India*) 1989 Droit explains the reasons of this “intellectual amnesia”. One reason was due to the German philosopher Hegel, who did not discover the Greeks, but created them and made up for them a destiny and thoughts which they did not always have.”

In India, things add up, they don't complete to replace each other. It is this gift for coexistence that we have to learn from this exuberant yet impassive civilization.^{157 158}

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Chapter 2

Writers

“The sparkling energy of India lies in Hinduism. Without the framework of Hindu belief India would fall apart. Without Hinduism India is not herself.”

- *Peggy Holroyde*



Mahalakshmi Mata Jagdamba Koradi, Nagpur, India.

In Hinduism the female aspect of the Creator has been venerated as the feminine under different manifestations. Mahalaxshmi, Mahakali, Mahasaraswati, Maheshwari. India of the Vedas entertained a respect for women amounting to worship. It is a culture whose only words for strength and power are feminine — "shakti" means "power" and "strength." All male power comes from the feminine.

Author's collection of photos.

Writers

Literature is the writings in which expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest, are characteristic or essential features, as poetry, novels, history, biography, and essays. Literature is said to be a reflection of the mindset of a people. Hindu epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharat, both written in Sanskrit, have long been an inspiration and motivation and have transformed the landscape of Southeast Asia. For centuries now, writers and novelists have drawn heavily from these two along with the rest of India's vast and varied spiritual literature. Somerset Maugham, Mark Twain, Aldous Huxley, Leo Tolstoy, Christopher Isherwood, and Yann Martel all found inspiration for writing novels by incorporating Hindu philosophy. The pearls of Indian literature have had a profound impact on the imagination of the West.



Philostratus (AD 220) was an ancient Greek writer, son-in-law of Flavius Philostratus. Philostratus puts in the mouth of Apollonius of Tyana these following words:

“All wish to live in the nearness of God, but only the Hindus bring it to pass.” ¹⁵⁹

Denis Diderot (1713 - 84) was a prominent French figure in what became known as The Enlightenment, and was the editor-in-chief

of the famous *Encyclopédie*. He was also a novelist, satirist, and dramatist. Diderot was enormously influential in shaping the rationalistic spirit of the 18th century.

He suggested in his article on India that the “sciences may be more ancient in India than in Egypt.” ¹⁶⁰

Pierre Sonnerat (1748-1814) was a French naturalist, and author of *Voyage aux Indes Orientales et a la Chine*, (1782) concurred:

“We find among the Indians the vestiges of the most remote antiquity...We know that all peoples came there to draw the elements of their knowledge ... India, in her splendor, gave religions and laws to all the other peoples; Egypt and Greece owed to her both their fables and their wisdom.” ¹⁶¹

“Ancient India gave to the world its religions and philosophies: Egypt and Greece owe India their wisdom and it is known that Pythagoras went to India to study under Brahmins, who were the most enlightened of human beings.” ¹⁶²

Count Magnus Fredrik Ferdinand Bjornstjerna (1779-1847) was the author of *The Theogony of the Hindoos with their systems of Philosophy and Cosmogony* after quoting from the Vedas says:

“These truly sublime ideas cannot fail to convince us that the Vedas recognize only one God, who is Almighty, Infinite, Eternal, Self-existent, the Light and the Lord of the Universe.”

He has pointed out:

“No nation on earth can vie with the Hindus in respect of the antiquity of their civilization and the antiquity of their religion.”

“In a metaphysical point of view we find among the Hindus all the fundamental ideas of those vast systems which, regarded merely as the offspring of fantasy, nevertheless inspire admiration on account of the boldness of flight and of the faculty of human mind to elevate itself to such remote ethereal regions. We find among them all the principles of Pantheism, Spinozism and Hegelianism, of God as being one with the universe; spiritual life

of mankind; and of the return of the emanative sparks after death to their divine origin; of the uninterrupted alternation between life and death, which is nothing else but a transition between different modes of existence. All this we find among the philosophies of the Hindus exhibited as clearly as by our modern philosophers more than three thousand years since."

Referring to the practical character of Hindu philosophy, he has said, "In this respect the Hindus were far in advance of the philosophers of Greece and Rome, who considered the immortality of the soul as problematical."

"The literature of India makes us acquainted with a great nation of past ages, which grasped every branch of knowledge, and which will always occupy a distinguished place in the history of the civilization of mankind." ¹⁶³

Colonel James Tod (1782-1835) British officer and Oriental scholar who went to India as a cadet in the Bengal army in 1799. He was the author of *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan: or the Central and Western Rajput States of India*.

He has observed:

"Where can we look for sages like those whose systems of philosophy were prototypes of those of Greece: to whose works Plato, Thales & Pythagoras were disciples? Where do I find astronomers whose knowledge of planetary systems yet excites wonder in Europe as well as the architects and sculptors whose works claim our admiration, and the musicians who could make the mind oscillate from joy to sorrow, from tears to smile with the change of modes and varied intonation?" ¹⁶⁴

William Cooke Taylor (1800 -1849) was the author of several books including *A popular history of British India*, commercial intercourse with China, and the insular possessions of England in the eastern seas.

He spoke glowingly of Sanskrit literature:

"It was an astounding discovery that Hindustan possessed, in spite of the changes of realms and chances of time, a language of

unrivalled richness and variety; a language, the parent of all those dialects that Europe has fondly called classical - the source alike of Greek flexibility and Roman strength. A philosophy, compared with which, in point of age, the lessons of Pythagoras are but of yesterday, and in point of daring speculation Plato's boldest efforts are tame and commonplace. Poetry more purely intellectual than any of those, which we had before any conception; and systems of science whose antiquity baffled all power of astronomical calculation. This literature, with all its colossal proportions, which can scarcely be described without the semblance of bombast and exaggeration claimed of course a place for itself - it stood alone, and it was able to stand alone."

"To acquire the mastery of this language is almost the labor of life; its literature seems exhaustless. The utmost stretch of imagination can scarcely comprehend its boundless mythology. Its philosophy has touched upon every metaphysical difficulty; its legislation is as varied as the castes for which it was designed."¹⁶⁵

Herman Melville (1819-1891) was the great American novelist, and author of *Moby Dick* or *The Whale*. Melville's references to Hindu myth and thought, however, peripheral to his works some have thought them to be, are so numerous that there can be no doubt about his extensive knowledge of Hinduism.

That Melville should give a fairly detailed description of the story of Lord Vishnu in two places is itself an indication that he did not intend it to be read and forgotten. While trying to present the "true form of this whale," he adverts to those "curious imaginary portraits of him" and describes the Hindu whale as the most ancient portrait available in the world:

"Now, by all odds, the most ancient extant portrait anyways purporting to the whale's is to be found in the famous cavern pagoda of Elephanta, in India. ... The Hindoo whale referred to, occurs in a separate department of the wall, depicting the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of leviathan, learnedly known as the Matse-Avatar."

In addition to this reference to the portrait of the Hindu leviathan at Elephanta, Melville mentions the context in which Vishnu incarnates himself as a fish and relates him to the whaleman's fraternity:

"That wondrous oriental story is now to be rehearsed from the Sashras which gives us the dread Vishnool, one of the three persons in the godhead of the Hindoos; gives us this divine Vishnool himself for our Lord: - Vishnool, who, by the first of his ten earthly incarnations, has forever set apart and sanctified the whale. When Brahma, or the God of Gods, saith the Shaster, resolved to recreate the world after one of its periodical dissolutions, he gave birth to Vishnool, to preside over the work; but the Vedas, or mystical books, whose perusal would seem to have been indispensable to Vishnool before beginning the creation, and which therefore must have contained something in the shape of practical hints to young architects, these Vedas were lying at the bottom of the waters; so Vishnu became incarnate in a whale, and sounding down in him to the utter-most depths, rescued the sacred volumes. Was not this Vishnool a whaleman, then? Even as a man who rides a horse called a horseman?" ¹⁶⁶

Albrecht Weber (1825 - 1901) was a German historian and author of *The History of Indian Literature*, London 1878, and he wrote:

"When we compare the doctrines, aims, organization of this (Pythagorean) brotherhood with Buddhistic monarchism, we are almost tempted to regard Pythagoras as the pupil of the Brahmins...Dualism, Pessimism, metempsychosis, celibacy, a common life according to the rigorous rules, frequent self-examination, meditation, devotion, prohibitions against bloody sacrifices, kindness towards all men, truthfulness, fidelity, justice, and all these elements are common to both." ¹⁶⁷

He is laudatory in his appraisal of the achievement of Panini. He remarked:

"We pass at once into the magnificent edifice which bears the name of Panini as its architect and which justly commands the wonder and admiration of everyone who enters, and which, by the very fact of its sufficing for all the phenomenon which language presents, bespeaks at once the marvelous ingenuity of

its inventor and his profound penetration of the entire material of the language.”¹⁶⁸

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) was a champion of nonviolent protest; he was “an influential factor in the social restlessness that swept Russia before the revolution.” He was a mystic who started Russia’s first vegetarian society. After the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, his followers were persecuted and all vegetarian communities were closed.

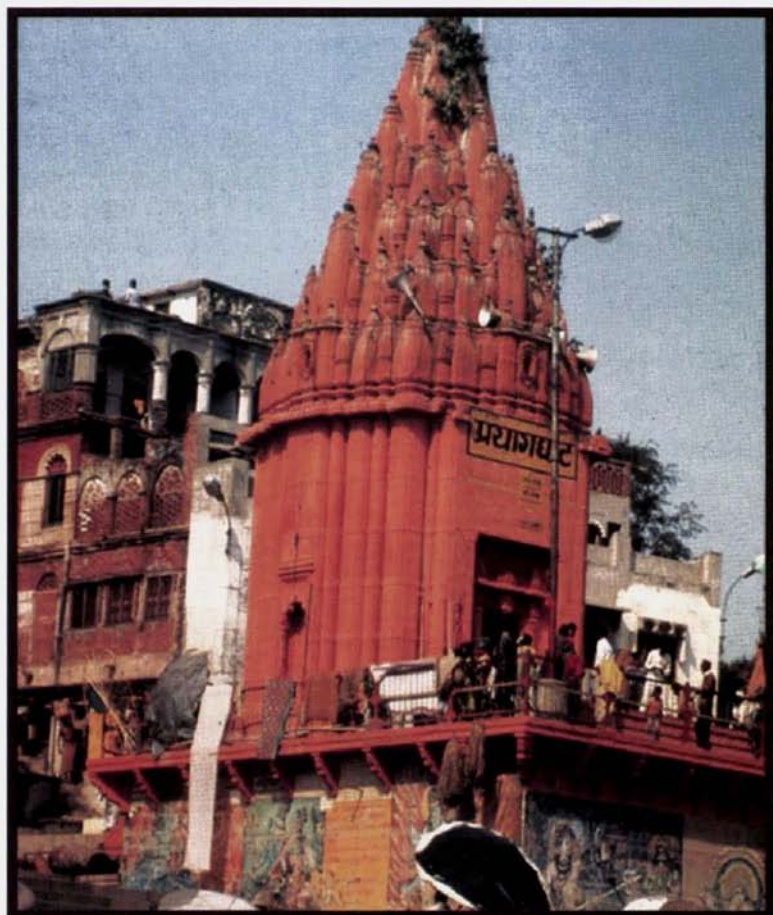
Tolstoy, a latecomer, was also deeply influenced by Indian religious thought. Like Wagner, his introduction to it was through Burnoff and Schopenhauer. Beginning with his *Confessions*, there is no work of his “which is not inspired, in part by Hindu thought”, to put it in the words of Markovitch quoted by Raymond Schwab in *The Oriental Renaissance*. He further adds that Tolstoy also “remains the most striking example, among a great many, of these who sought a cure for the western spirit in India.”¹⁶⁹

Tolstoy, the famous Russian author of *War and Peace* responded to India with sensitivity. Ancient Indian literature and the writings of Swami Vivekananda made a deep impression on him. In a letter to Gandhi in 1909, he quoted from the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Tamil Kural, and Vivekananda. His philosophy contradicted official church doctrine and was deemed heretical. Tolstoy is only one of the many Western writers and thinkers to find much of illumination within Hinduism’s pages.

He urged Indians to adopt what he called:

“The Law of Love,” and not to give up their ancient religious culture for the materialism of the West.”¹⁷⁰

Mr. Alexander Shifman, a research scholar at Tolstoy Museum in Moscow, wrote in his article entitled *Leo Tolstoy and the Indian Epics* published in several papers during Tolstoy centenary celebrations in 1963.



Hindu Temple in Prayag Ghat Varanasi.

Mark Twain wrote that Varanasi or Banaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together.

Photo courtesy: Dr Deepak Shimkhada © copyright 1980.

“Leo Tolstoy was deeply interested in ancient Indian literature and its great epics. The themes of the Vedas were the first to attract his attention. Appreciating the profundity of the Vedas, Tolstoy gave a particular attention to those cantos which deal with the problem of ethics, a subject in which interested him deeply.”

Tolstoy not only read the Vedas, but also spread their teachings in Russia. He included many of the sayings of the Vedas and Upanishads (Vedic expositions) in his collections “Range of Reading”, “Thoughts of wise men” and others. It would have been an ideal time to introduce this great learning with the birth of Marxism where all dogmas were outlawed. The intellects were freer of perversion and could have been easily found acceptance by a great many young Russians.¹⁷¹

Mark Twain (1835-1910) also known as Samuel Clemens, one of the most widely loved and celebrated American writers since his first books were released in the late 1860s. Many of his writings have reached the pinnacles of American and world literature, including the timeless *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and *Following the Equator*. Besides these easily recognizable classics, Mark Twain wrote fascinating Travelogue detailing his experiences in Asia.

“So far as I am able to judge, nothing has been left undone, either by man or nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the sun visits on his rounds. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked.”

“Land of religions, cradle of human race, birthplace of human speech, grandmother of legend, great grandmother of tradition. The land that all men desire to see and having seen once even by a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of the rest of the globe combined.”

“India had the start of the whole world in the beginning of things. She had the first civilization; she had the first accumulation of material wealth; she was populous with deep thinkers and subtle

intellects; she had mines, and woods, and a fruitful soul.”

“Varanasi or Banaras has been continuously populated for more than 3,000 years, and has often been called the oldest city in the world. It was the contemporary of Thebes and Babylon. Early visitors were struck by the “spectacle” the “panorama” of the Banaras riverfront.”

In his around-the-world adventures, *Following the Equator*, Mark Twain noted:

“The Ganges front is the supreme showplace of Benares. Its tall bluffs are solidly caked from water to summit, along a stretch of three miles, with a splendid jumble of massive and picturesque masonry, a bewildering and beautiful confusion of stone platforms, temples, stair flights, rich and stately palaces.... soaring stairways, sculptured temples, majestic palaces, softening away into the distances; and there is movement, motion, human life everywhere, and brilliantly costumed - streaming in rainbows up and down the lofty stairways, and massed in metaphorical gardens on the mile of great platforms at the river’s edge.”¹⁷²

He had said in his inimitable style: “Varanasi” or Banaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together.”¹⁷³

Mark Twain remarked: “India has two million gods, and worships them all. In religion all other countries are paupers; India is the only millionaire.” When traveling through India, he had exclaimed that though a week had only seven days, Indians seemed to celebrate eight festivals every week.

He observed that having had only the briefest glimpse of India, you would not trade the experience for all the riches in the world. This is what he wrote about India in 1896:

“India had the start of the whole world in the beginning of things. She had the first civilization; she had the first accumulation of material wealth; she was populous with deep thinkers and subtle intellect; she had mines, and woods, and a fruitful soul.”¹⁷⁴

“Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history

of man are treasured up in India." Twain was awed by Hindu tradition. He said, "the one land that all men desire to see, and having once seen, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for all the shows of all the rest of the globe combined."¹⁷⁵

"India is a country "whose yesterdays bear date with the mouldering antiquities of the rest of nations."

H. T. Goldich has written in Imperial Gazetteer of India The Clarendon Press, Oxford about the Ganga River thus:

"No river on the surface of the Globe can compare with the Ganges in sanctity. From her source to her outflow in the Bay of Bengal, every yard of the river is sacred. To bathe in the Ganges at stated festivals is to wash away sin; to die and cremated on the riverbank is to attain eternal peace. Tracing magnificent curves through the flat lowlands, the four rivers – Ganga, Jumna, Gogra and Gandaki – have for centuries combined to form an over-ruling factor in the development of Indian races."

"Below the Rajmahal hills, the flood-discharge amounts to a million and a half cubic feet per second. Nearly every vegetable product, which feeds and clothes, a people, or enables them to trade with foreign countries, is to be found in its basin. Upon its banks, in the present day, are such centers of wealth as Calcutta, Patna, Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore – with Agra and Delhi on its affluent Jumna. "There is not a river in the world which has influenced humanity or contributed to the growth of material civilization or of social ethics, to such an extent as the Ganges. The wealth of India has been concentrated in her valley; and beneath the shade of trees, whose roots have been nourished on her waters, the profoundest doctrines of moral philosophy have been conceived to be promulgated afar for the guidance of the world."^{176 177}

John Davies (?-1890) author of *Hindu philosophy* has commented that:

"The latest German philosophy, the system of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann, is mainly a reproduction of the philosophic system of Kapila in its materialistic part, presented in a more elaborate form but on the same fundamental lines. In this respect

the human intellect has gone over the same ground, that it occupied more than two thousand years ago; but on a more important question it has taken a step in retreat. Kaipila recognized fully the existence of a soul in man, forring indeed his proper nature - the absolute ego of Fichte - distinct from matter and immortal; our latest philosophy, both here and in Germany, can see in man only a highly developed physical organization. 'All external things' says Kapila 'were formed that the soul might know itself and be free.' "The study of psychology is vain says, Schopenhauer, "For there is no Psyche." ¹⁷⁸

"Scythianus was a contemporary of the Apostles, and was engaged as a merchant in the Indian trade. In the course of his traffic he often visited India and made himself acquainted with Hindu philosophy. According to Epiphanius and Cyril, he wrote a book in four parts, which they affirm to be the source from which the Manichaeon doctrines were derived." ¹⁷⁹

Pierre Loti (1850-1923) pseudonym of Louis-marie-julien Viaud, a novelist whose exoticism made him popular in his time and whose themes anticipated some of the central preoccupations of French literature between World Wars. Loti's career as a naval officer took him to the Middle and Far East, thus providing him with the exotic settings of his novels and reminiscences. Some of his books include *Voyages 1872-1913* and *L'Inde sans les Anglais*.

He expressed his esteem for India in the following pregnant words:

"And now I salute thee with awe, with veneration, and wonder, ancient India, of whom I am the adept, the India of the highest splendor of art and philosophy. May thy awakening astonish the Occident, decadent, mean, daily dwindling, slayer of nations, slayer of Gods, slayer of souls, which yet bows down still, ancient India, before the prodigies of thy primordial conceptions!" ¹⁸⁰

William Crooke was the author of the book *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* Oxford University Press, 1896.

He wrote:

“Among all the great religions of the world there is none more catholic, more assimilative, than the mass of beliefs which go to make up what is popularly known as Hinduism.” ¹⁸¹

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was a vegetarian and Nobel Laureate in Literature. He was an active socialist on the executive committee of the Fabian Society along with Annie Besant. Shaw was a famous British Author and Playwright, of books such as *Pygmalion*.

Shaw has remarked:

“The Indian way of life provides the vision of the natural, real way of life. We veil ourselves with unnatural masks. On the face of India are the tender expressions, which carry the mark of the Creators hand.”

“In the face of an Indian, you can see the natural glory of life, while we have covered ourselves with an artificial clock.”

“The apparent multiplication of gods is bewildering at the first glance, but you soon discover that they are the same GOD. There is always one uttermost God who defies personification. This makes Hinduism the most tolerant religion in the world, because its one transcendent God includes all possible gods. In fact Hinduism is so elastic and so subtle that the most profound Methodist, and crudest idolater, are equally at home with it.” ¹⁸²

Hugh E M. (Edward Millington) Stutfield (1858 -1929) was the author of *Mysticism and Catholicism* (1925) states:

“Especially does there seem to be a growing probability that, from the historical standpoint at any rate, India was the birthplace of our fundamental imaginings, the cradle of contemplative religion and the nobler philosophy.” ¹⁸³

Helen Churchill Hungerford Candee (1859 -1949) who was a noted author and lecturer on the arts and travel and survivor of the Titanic and author of *Angkor the Magnificent* (1924) must have been standing on this terrace of Angkor Wat, the largest Hindu temple, almost 70 years ago when she described it:

“Away from the plateau of entry the causeway stretched over the moat, a veritable avenue to the temple walls. It is balustraded with Nagas on either side, it is 36 feet wide, and its length is the unbelievable width of the moat, over two hundred meters, nearly 700 feet. A moat for us means a grassy cincture sunk around a castle. The moat of Angkor vat has no such niggard measure. It is a lake in width, it is enclosed in masonry, and it measures about three miles around! Superb! Few architects think in measurements as big as that.”

“Any architect would thrill at the harmony of the facade, an unbroken stretch of repeated pillars leading from the far angles of the structure to the central opening, which is dominated, by three imposing towers with broken summits.”

Candee brilliantly draws our attention to Angkor Vat’s beauty by saying:

“The Vat rises in fair majesty against the heavens. All the ancient power of the temple and its gods is puissant still. It surrounds those who look upon the wonder. The eyes sweep upwards over the rising storeys, up, up, to the mounting towers, to the pure firmament, and pause subdued. It is ever thus. Some power overcomes, some mysterious spell is caste, one never look upon the ensemble of the Vat without a thrill, a pause, a feeling of being caught up into the heavens. Perhaps it is the most impressive sight in the world of edifices. The whole place is covered, once you open your eyes to it, columns, lintels, surbases, panels, pediments, jambs of doors and windows. One says that this holy sanctuary contained a wondrous statue of God Vishnu carved from precious stone.”

“The portico is magnificent in a way not unfamiliar. One is at once in harmony with the plan. Nothing exotic about it, nothing that shocks Western traditions, simply grandeur and dignified beauty as we know it in our own architecture.” ¹⁸⁴

Emmeline M. Plunkett an author writes in his book *Ancient Calendars and Constellations* (1903):

“The opinion of the Greek writers at the beginning of the Christian era may be quoted as showing the high estimation in which Indian astronomy was held. In the Life of

Appollonius of Tyana, the Greek philosopher and astrologer, written by Philostratus about 210 CE, the wisdom and learning of Appollonius are set high above his contemporaries because he had studied astronomy and astrology with the sages of India.”¹⁸⁵

Sir Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a poet, author, philosopher, and a Nobel Prize laureate. He was the author of several books including *Chaturanga*, *Shesher Kobita*, *Char Odhay*, and *Noukadubi* and *Gitanjali*.

He had described the Vedic hymns of Ancient India as:

“A poetic testament of a people’s collective reaction to the wonder and awe of existence.”

“India harmonized rural life and urban life. She was no blind worshipper of urbanization like the west of today.”

Tagore says well in his book, *Sadhana*:

“The civilization of ancient Greece was nurtured in the city walls. In fact, all the modern civilization have their cradles of brick and mortar, The walls leave their mark deep in the minds of men...Thus in India it was in the forests that our civilization had its birth, and it took a distinct character from this origin and environment. It was surrounded by the vast life of nature and had the closest and most constant intercourse with her varying aspects...His aim was not to acquire but to realize, to enlarge his consciousness by growing into his surroundings. The west seems to take pride in thinking that it is subduing Nature as if we are living in a hostile world where we have to wrest everything we want from an unwilling and alien arrangement of things. This sentiment is the product of the city wall habit and training of mind. But in India the point of view was different; it included the world with the man as one great truth. India put all her emphasis on the harmony that exists between the individual and the universal....The fundamental unity of creation was not simply a philosophical speculation for India; it was her life object to realize this great harmony in feeling and in action.”

“India chose her places of pilgrimages on the top of hills and mountains, by the side of the holy rivers, in the heart of forests

and by the shores of the ocean, which along with the sky, is our nearest visible symbol of the vast, the boundless, the infinite and the sublime.”¹⁸⁶

“India has all along been trying experiments in evolving a social unity within which all the different peoples could be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their differences. The tie has been as loose as possible, yet as close as circumstances permitted. This has produced something like a United States of a social federation, whose common name is Hinduism.”¹⁸⁷

In a letter to William Rothenstein (1872 – 1945) of April 2, 1927, Rabindranath Tagore wrote:

“In Hinduism, in our everyday meditation, we try to realize God’s cosmic manifestation and thus free our soul from the bondage of the limitedness of the immediate; but for us he is also an individual for the individual, working out through our evolution in time, our ultimate destiny.”¹⁸⁸

In later years Artist Rothenstein met up with Sir Rabindranath Tagore, was influential in getting his *Gitanjali* printed.

In religion his inspiration was derived from the Vedas and the Upanishads. Tagore pointed out that Indian civilization was a “forest civilization”. The essential continuity of the culture was developed and preserved by families living in small communities close to nature. “The ancient Indians distrusted the pace and pomp of urbanity; they distrusted it strongly enough to resist central authority and conformism. He further predicted that: “India is destined to be the teacher of all lands.”

Tagore said of the quintessence of India’s spiritual philosophy:

“Santam, Sivam and Advaitam (peace, goodness and Unity of all beings).” Rabindranath Tagore said that we Indians could buy our true place in the world only with our inheritance, not with the inheritance of others.

Regarding the vitality of ancient India, Rabindranath Tagore has

said: "To know my country one has to travel to that age, when she realized her soul and thus transcended her physical boundaries when she revealed her being in a radiant magnanimity which illumined the eastern horizon, making her recognized as their own by those in alien shores who were awakened into a surprise of life."

He also said about the culture of Indonesia: "I see India all around me.' And in Indonesia, such words as 'sea' and 'ship' are recognizable for their Tamil roots."

"The fundamental Unity of Creation was not simply a philosophical speculation for India: it was her life object to realize this great harmony in feeling and in action." ¹⁸⁹

James Henry Tuckwell in his book, *Religion and Reality: A Study in the philosophy of Mysticism* (1915) rightly says:

"In our main conclusion we have long ago been anticipated by the religious philosophy of India. In the West our philosophy has been surely but slowly moving to the same inevitable monistic goal. In Professor Ladd of Harvard we have a notable Western thinker who by a process of careful and consistent reasoning, concrete in character, has also arrived at the conclusion that the ultimate reality must be conceived of as an Absolute Self of which we are finite forms or appearances. But it is the crowning glory of Vedanta that it so long ago announced, re-iterated and emphasized this deep truth in a manner that does not permit us for a moment to forget it or explain it away. This great stroke of identity, this discernment of the ultimate unity of all things in Brahman or the One Absolute Self seems to us to constitute the masterpiece and highest achievement of India's wonderful metaphysical and religious genius to which the West has yet to pay the full tribute which is its due." ¹⁹⁰

John Adam Cramb (1862-1913) author of *The Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain* says:

"India is not only the Italy of Asia, it is not only the land of romance of art and beauty, and it is in religion, earth's central shrine. India is religion." ¹⁹¹

L. Adams Beck (? -1931) was author of '*The splendour of Asia: the story and teaching of the Buddha*' and '*The Story of Oriental Philosophy*' and he writes:

"India has had a spiritual freedom never known until lately to the West. Christianity when it came offering its spiritual philosophy of life imposed an iron dogma upon the European peoples. Those who could not accept this dogma, whatever it happened to be at the moment, paid so heavy a penalty that the legend of the Car of Juggernaut (Jagannath) is far truer of Europe than Asia."

He has pointed out that:

"Whereas in India the soul was free from the beginning to choose what it would, ranging from the dry bread of atheism to the banquets offered by many-colored passionate gods and goddesses, each shadowing forth some different aspect of the One whom in the inmost chambers of her heart India has always adored. Therefore the spiritual outlook was universal. Each took un rebuked what he needed. The children were at home in the house of their father, while Europe crouched under the lash of a capricious Deity whose ways were beyond all understanding."

"But while India fixed her eyes on the Ultimate she did not forget that objective science in the beginning of wisdom. In India, in relation to this consciousness, all roads lead home. A prayer daily repeated by millions says: "As different streams, having different sources and with wanderings crooked or straight, all reach the sea, so Lord, the different paths which men take, guided by their different tendencies, all lead to Thee."

"There the foundations of mathematical and mechanical knowledge were well and truly laid by the Noble Race. Here, written two thousand years before the birth of Copernicus, is an interesting passage from the *Aitareya Brhamana*:

"The sun never sets or rises. When people think the sun is setting he only changes about after reaching the end of the day and makes night below and day to what is on the other side. Then, when people think he rises in the morning, he only shifts himself about after reaching the end of the night, and makes day below and night to what is on the other side. In truth, he does not set at all."

“It is interesting to wonder along what lines the philosophies of this great race might have developed later if its ancestral heritage had been less diffused and intermingled with other such different stocks as it found in India on arrival, or were forced by many invasions and conquests to accept later.”

Regarding the *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavad Gita*, he comments:

“I read almost daily in both, marveling at the vast fertility, the tropic splendor of romance unfolded in either, but still more at the nobility of ideals set forth, the great passion for the Unseen, the Beautiful, and Entirely Desirable, both in man and woman, which has always been the soul of India.”

“The Bhagavad Gita is known as the Lord’s Song - or the Song Celestial - and it represents one of the highest flights of the conditioned spirit to its unconditioned Source ever achieved.”¹⁹²

L S S O’Malley was the author of *Popular Hinduism* (1935) writes about Hindu Literature as giving help to a sense of moral value and to maintain a healthy ethical standard. The two great epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana, are a means of moral education for millions, teaching moral lessons in concrete terms and illustrating in the lives of heroes and heroines such virtues as truth, love, fidelity, courage and calm resignation.

He has said:

“Besides giving examples of noble lives, the literature of the Hindus is full of lines announcing moral truths and inculcating virtue. In the Ramayana Rama, who is himself a pattern of loyal truthfulness, declares: “Truth is lord in the world; virtue always rests on truth.”

“The Mahabharata has been described as an encyclopedia of moral teaching, the nature of which may perhaps be judged from a few extracts. “The sum of true righteousness is to treat others as you yourself would be treated. Do nothing to your neighbor that you would not have your neighbor do to you hereafter.” “It is the constant duty of the good to injure no one by thought, word or deed, to give to others and to be kind to all.” “High minded men delight in doing good without thought of their own

interest when they confer a benefit on others, they do not count on favors in return.” “Fasts, ablutions and austerities are all in vain unless the soul is pure.” “Overcome the wicked by goodness.”

“The complexity of Hinduism is so great, the forms which it assumes so protean, that it defies precise definition. It is a composite religion made up of many conflicting elements.... It allows the greatest possible freedom of thought as apart from practice, as is admitted by Hindu scholars.”

“Hinduism has a highly spiritual side and contains many sublime conceptions.” ¹⁹³

Ernest E. Kellett (1864-1950) is the author of *A Short History of Religions*. He thought:

“On the other hand there seems to be an increasing number of persons who have been led by natural and acquired sympathy to adopt in some form one of the Eastern religions.” The new German faith is said to have for its main source of interpretation Eckhart and the Bhagavad-Gita.” ¹⁹⁴

Count Louis Hamon aka Cheiro (1866-1936) was the author of several books, *Language of the Hand and World Predictions* published in 1926. Born in Ireland as William John Warner, Cheiro also went by the name Count Louis Hamon. He had a wide following of famous European and American clients like Mark Twain, Sarah Bernhardt, Mata Hari, Oscar Wilde, Grover Cleveland, Thomas Edison, the Prince of Wales, General Kitchener, William Gladstone, Bernard Shaw and Joseph Chamberlain.

He spoke of the Hindu race and the remarkable sciences for foretelling future, (*The Bhavishya Purana*), which the Hindus, have, as prophetic sciences:

“To consider the origin of this science, we must take our thoughts back to the earliest days of the world’s history, and further more to the consideration of a people the oldest of all, yet one that has survived, and who are today as characteristic and as full of individuality as they were when thousands of years ago the first

records of history were written.”

“I allude to those children of the East, the Hindus, a people whose philosophy and wisdom are every day being more and more revived.”

“Looking back to the earliest days of the history of the known world, we find that the first linguistic records belong to the people under consideration, and date back to that far distant cycle of time known as the Aryan civilization. Beyond history we cannot go; but the monuments and cave temples of India, according to the testimony of archaeologists, all point to a time so far beyond the scant history at our disposal, that in the examination of such matters our greatest knowledge is dwarfed into infantile nothingness – our age and era are but the swaddling clothes of the child; our manhood that of the infant in the arms of the eternity of time.”

He has noted that:

“Long before Rome or Greece or Israel was even heard of, the mountains of India point back to an age, of learning beyond, and still beyond. From the astronomical calculations that the figures in their temples represent, it has been estimated that the Hindu understood the Precession of the Equinoxes centuries before the Christian era.” ¹⁹⁵

In a book called *You and Your Hand* by the late Count Louis Hamon, known better as Cheiro, this statement is found: “people who in their ignorance disdain the wisdom of ancient races forget that the great past of India contained secrets of life and philosophy that following civilizations could not controvert, but were forced to accept. For instance, it has been demonstrated that the ancient Hindus understood the precession of the equinoxes and made the calculation that it [a complete cycle] took place once in every 25,870 years. The observation and mathematical precision necessary to establish such a theory has been the wonder and admiration of modern astronomers. They, with their modern knowledge and up-to-date instruments, are still quarrelling among themselves as to whether the precession, the most important feature in astronomy,

takes place every 25,870 years or every 24,500 years. The majority believes that the Hindus made no mistakes, but how they arrived at such a calculation is as great a mystery as the origin of life itself.”¹⁹⁶

Sister Nivedita - Margaret Noble (1867-1911) was an author, teacher, social worker and disciple of Swami Vivekanada. Her first literary achievement was *Kali the Mother*, in which she expounds the conception of Kali. There are many ‘educated Indians and Christian missionaries’ we need not speak - who think that Kali is some blood-thirsty deity worshipped by barbarous people, to such people this book ought to be a revelation. *The Web of Indian Life* may be at once said that it is the greatest book in the English language upon India. It is not a travel book, but a revelation of the soul of a people.

Sister Nivedita probed into the heart of Indian womanhood and reflected in her rhythmic and eloquent prose the natural simplicity and spiritual fervor of the women of India. Women, she contended, are the embodiment and repository of the ancient wisdom of the East. They are the inheritors of a radiant orthodoxy, unspoiled by age and undimmed by the passing fashions of the day to which men so easily succumb.

In the chapter on the Bhagavad Gita, she expressed her opinion:

“The book is nowhere a call to leave the world, but everywhere an interpretation of common life as the path to that which lies beyond. “Better for a man is his own duty, however, badly done than the duty of another, though that be easy. “Holding gain and loss as one, prepare for battle.” That the man who throws away his weapons, and permits himself to be slain, unresisting in the battle, is not the hero of religion, but a sluggard and a coward; that the true seer is he who carries his vision into action, regardless of the consequences to himself; this is the doctrine of the “Gita” repeated again and again....Not the withdrawn, but the transfigured life, radiant, with power and energy, triumphant in its selflessness, is religion. “Arise!” thunders the voice of Sri Krishna, “and be thou an apparent cause!”

Sister Nivedita talked about the task before India.

“We must create a history of India in living terms. Up to the present that history, as written by the English, practically begins with Warren Hastings, and crams in certain unavoidable preliminaries, which cover a few thousands of years...The history of India has yet to be written for the first time. It has to be humanized, emotionalized, made the trumpet-voice and evangel of the race that inhabit India.” ¹⁹⁷

“Beauty of place,” writes Sister Nivedita, “translates itself to the Indian consciousness as God’s cry to the soul. Had Niagara been situated on the Ganges, it is odd to think how different would have been its valuation by humanity. Instead of fashionable picnics and railway pleasure-trips, the yearly or monthly incursion of worshipping crowds; instead of hotels, temples; instead of ostentatious excess, austerity; instead of the desire to harness its mighty forces to the chariot of human utility, the unrestrained longing to throw away the body, and realize at once the ecstatic madness of Supreme Union. Could contrast be greater?” ¹⁹⁸

Sister Nivedita realised that India’s unrivalled, integrating culture that had spread from the Himalayas in the North to Kanyakumari in the South was due to this closeness with the ancient epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, a closeness that had been attacked and almost severed by Colonial style of education: “These two great works form together the outstanding educational agencies of Indian life. All over the country, in every province, especially during the winter session, audiences of Hindus and Mohammedans gather round the Brahmin storyteller at nightfall, and listen to his rendering of the ancient tales. The Mohammedans of Bengal have their own version of the Mahabharata.”

This is why she would never call Indian women as ever having been illiterate. They had imbibed the best in the Indian tradition and strove to bring up their children as a Rama or Krishna, Arjuna or Karna, Sita or Savitri. ¹⁹⁹

W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) was born in the British Embassy in Paris and was educated in England and Germany. After medical school, a successful attempt at writing led him to widespread

fame for his plays and novels. He was the author of several books including *Of Human Bondage* and “*The Moon and Sixpence*”.

When Maugham arrived in India in 1938, he was hoping to find some inspiration for a novel he planned to write incorporating Hindu philosophy. Arriving in Chennai, he met Ramana Maharshi. This meeting inspired him to write his classic “*The Razor’s Edge*”. He derived this title from a passage in the *Katha-Upanishad* - (Kshurasya Dhara):

“Like the sharp edge of a razor, the sages say, is the path, Narrow it is, and difficult to tread.”

His book *Razor’s Edge* reveals his clear grasp of Hindu philosophy. The main character of the book seeks in the end relief in India from the horrors of war and gains a sense of being at one with the Absolute, through the Indian philosophical system known as Vedanta.²⁰⁰

The greatest English novelist Maugham, advises prospective writers to come to India for knowledge of the higher values of life.²⁰¹

James Bissett Pratt (1875 -1944) was an American author of *Why Religions Die* and *India and its Faiths*, makes these observations about Hinduism, which according to him, is the only religion, which tends to survive the present crisis in the life of all religions.

Hinduism, which he calls the “Vedic Way”, is a “self-perpetuating” religion. “The Vedic way...the way of constant spiritual re-interpretation leads to life - life which is self-perpetuating, self-renewing and which for the individual and for the world may be eternal.”

Unlike other religions “not death, but development” has been the fate of Hinduism. “That which in it was vital and true cast off the old shell and clothed itself in more suitable expression, with no break in the continuity of life and no loss in the sanctity and weight of its authority.”

Generalizing on the secret of longevity of the Vedic religion, Professor Pratt says:

“If a religion is to live it must adapt itself to new and changing conditions; if it is to feed the spiritual life of its children, it must have the sensitivity and inventiveness that shall enable it to modify their as their needs demand.”

Another secret of the vitality of Hindu religion is its catholicity.

He has wisely noted:

“Mutually contradictory creeds can and do keep house together without quarrel within the wide and hospitable Hindu family.”
 “Hindu thought....because of its ingrained conclusiveness, its tolerance, and its indifference to doctrinal divergences, stressed the essential unity of all Indian Dharmas, whether Hindu or Buddhist, and minimized differences.” ²⁰²

Herman Hesse (1877-1962) was a German poet and novelist, awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1946, found in Indian thought an answer to his yearning for deliverance from “ego” and from the tyrannical dictates of temporality. Indian thought offered the most radical possibility of undoing the curse of individuation, of annihilating the “idiotic one-after-the-other” by the postulation of the eternal simultaneity of nirvana.

The positive attitude of the Bhagavad Gita also appealed to Hesse. He wrote:

“The marvel of the Bhagavad Gita is its truly beautiful revelation of life’s wisdom which enables philosophy to blossom into religion.”

Hesse claimed that Yoga had an invaluable effect upon him as a means of improving his powers of concentration. Yoga and Maya are the background to the events portrayed in *The Glass Beads Game*.

He visited India in 1911 and the study of ancient Hindu texts affected Hesse deeply and had great influence on his works. The threefold sequence of sensual love, wisdom, and self-denial

experienced by the poet Bhartrihari is interpreted by Hesse as the result of humble and wise humanity.

In the *Journey to the Orient*, Hesse says about India:

“It is not only a country and something geographical, but the home and the youth of the soul, the everywhere and nowhere, the oneness of all times.”

It is significant that Hesse, although a Christian, repeatedly substituted the Upanishadic *tat tvamasi*, literally “love your neighbor for he is yourself. In *Siddhartha* which is subtitled “Indic Poetic Work (1922) he tried to reconcile Christian and Indian piety. There are many parallels in *Siddhartha* and *Bhagavad Gita*.²⁰³

Madame Alice Louis-Barthou was the author of *Au Moghreb parmi les fleurs* published in 1925, and writes:

“I look upon the Occident (Europe) with abomination. It represents for me fog, grayness, chill, machinery, murderous science, factories with all the vices, the triumph of noise, of hustling, of ugliness...The Orient is calm, peace, beauty, color, mystery, charm, sunlight, joy, ease of life, and reverly: I find the exact opposite of our hateful and grotesque civilization. If I had my way, I should have a wall built between the Orient and the Occident to keep the latter from poisoning the former; I should go and live where you can see clearly and where there are no Europeans.”²⁰⁴

Kenneth Saunders (1883-1937) was the author of *The Heritage of Asia* and has written vividly about India:

“India is not only a mother of civilization; she is pre-eminently a spiritual mother of Asia. Her arts - noble architecture, fresco painting, sculpture, chamber music and poetry - these have in India been handmaiden of religion. And this is no less true of her poetry from the rich anthology of the Rig Veda and the Great Epics to the lyrics of Rabindranath Tagore, the best of which are hymns. The tradition, too, of her education, from the University of Nalanda, where ten thousand students sat at the feet of religious teachers, to the guru seated under a tree with his handful of

disciples, has been pre-eminently religious. India, in a word, is a God-intoxicated country; and her philosophy, which has in many ways and by many centuries anticipated the systems of European thought, is for the most part a religious philosophy; it deals with the One behind the many, the Real behind the illusory, and is perhaps man's most courageous attempt to reach an ultimate unity."

He has remarked that:

"The essential unity of ancient India may be sufficiently demonstrated for our purpose by two facts. Firstly, her sacred places are known and visited by all; they are a common heritage, and a network of pilgrim-roads links them one with another. "The institution of pilgrimage," says a Hindu writer "is entirely an expression of love for the motherland, one of the modes of worship of the country which strengthens the religious sentiment and expands the geographical consciousness." Whether amidst the snowy peaks of the Himalayas or the palm-fringed shores of Bengal or Madras, these shrines are all set in scenes of great natural beauty. Indian religion and Indian patriotism are, the, inseparably intertwined; the motherland is a holy land, one for every Indian from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin."

Saunders has observed about India's unique gift to humanity thus:

"India's noblest gift to humanity - a belief that the unseen and intangible values are stronger and more real than the things of sense, and to this, her philosophy, with its unshaken conviction that there is One behind the many. One alone supremely real, bears witness."

Her most ancient prayer is a summary of her immemorial quest:

From the unreal to Reality

From death to Immortality. ²⁰⁵

"We may say schematically that India has been more concerned with the mystical than the ethical, with the beauty of the unseen mind at play in the universe."

"In the golden age of Korea, too, something of Indian mysticism and of Chinese humanism was blend in a fine synthesis which inspired the Japanese...." ²⁰⁶

Dr. Matheson wrote about the religious speculations of India:

“It is not too much to say that the mind of the West with all its undoubted impulses towards the progress of humanity has never exhibited such an intense amount of intellectual force as is to be found in the religious speculations of India.....These have been the cradle of all Western speculations, and wherever the European mind has risen into heights of philosophy, it has done so because the Brahmin was the pioneer. There is no intellectual problem in the West which had not its earlier discussion in the East, and there is no modern solution of that problem which will not be found anticipated in the East.” ²⁰⁷

Mr. Sam Thorton was an author and in his book *History of British India*, observed:

“The Hindus are indisputably entitled to rank among the most ancient of existing nations, as well as among those most early and most rapidly civilized ...ere yet the Pyramids looked down upon the Valley of the Nile.. When Greece and Italy, those cradles of modern civilization, housed only the tenants of the wilderness, India was the seat of wealth and grandeur.” ²⁰⁸

Juan Mascaro (1897-1987) author of *The Bhagavad Gita* translated by Juan Mascaro Penguin Classics, 1962 pays tribute to the glory of the Sanskrit literature by saying:

“Sanskrit literature is a great literature. We have the great songs of the Vedas, the splendor of the Upanishads, the glory of the Upanishads, the glory of the Bhagavad Gita, the vastness (100,000 verses) of the Mahabharata, the tenderness and the heroism found in the Ramayana, the wisdom of the fables and stories of India, the scientific philosophy of Sankhya, the psychological philosophy of yoga, the poetical philosophy of Vedanta, the Laws of Manu, the grammar of Panini and other scientific writings, the lyrical poetry, and dramas of Kalidasa. Sanskrit literature, on the whole, is a romantic literature interwoven with idealism and practical wisdom, and with a passionate longing for spiritual vision.”

“Amongst the sacred books of the past, the Upanishads can be called the true Himalayas of the soul. Their passionate wanderings

of discovery to find that sun of the spirit in us, from whom we have the light of our consciousness and the fire of our life; the greatness of their questions, and the sublime simplicity of their answers; their radiance of joy..."

"In the Bhagavad Gita Arjuna becomes the soul of man and Krishna the charioteer of the soul."

"The greatness of the Bhagavad Gita is the greatness of the universe, but even as the wonder of the stars in heaven only reveals itself in the silence of the night, the wonder of this poem only reveals itself in the silence of the soul." ²⁰⁹

"The essence of the Bhagavad Gita is the vision of God in all things and of all things in God."

"The Gita is like a little shrine in a vast temple, a temple that is both a theatre and a fair of this world."

"Self harmony, or self-control, is again and again praised in the Bhagavad Gita - All perfection in action is a form of self-control, and this sense of perfection is the essence of the Karma yoga of the Gita. The artist must have self-control in the moment of creation, and all work well done requires self-control. But the Bhagavad Gita wants us to transform our whole life into an act of creation." ²¹⁰

Mascaró, a Spanish scholar and admirer of the Upanishads, said:

"If Beethoven could give us in music the spirit of the Bhagavad Gita, what a wonderful symphony we should hear." ²¹¹

Dhan Gopal Mukerji (1890 -1936) was the first South Asian immigrant to the United States to carve out a successful literary career, publishing more than twenty books. *Caste and Outcast* was the first book on India written by an Indian that was widely read in America. As an interpreter of Indian thought and spirituality, Mukerji's influence on American literary circles was considerable. Among his long-time literary associates were the eminent critic Van Wyck Brooks and the historians Will and Ariel Durant. Mukerji's opus was an integral part of a far-flung intellectual effort in the early twentieth century that seriously studied Indian civilization and drew upon it for inspiration and direction. Those involved included

such figures as T. S. Eliot, Theodore Dreiser, Eugene O'Neill, Lewis Mumford, Luther Burbank and A. J. Liebling.

The book won high critical acclaim: *Saturday Evening Post* reviewed it as "the most important and inspiring book that has appeared in America since the war." Its theme is the contrast between Hinduism's pervasive spirituality and tolerance and the Western world's materialism and religious dogmas. Mukerji proposes that the West should learn "repose and meditation" from India, and India should learn the value of "activity and science" from the West. In *Caste and Outcast*, Mukerji depicts India as a tolerant Hindu civilization.

He illustrates Hinduism's tolerance with numerous narratives. An example: As a child, Mukerji brings home a picture of Christ given to him by his Christian teacher in the missionary school with the admonition to get rid of false Hindu gods and instead worship the only true god, Christ. Mukerji's mother places the picture of Christ next to Vishnu's and says, "God is one. We have given him many names. Why should we quarrel about names?" She burns incense and meditates before the images of Christ and Vishnu."

He talks about the role of Art in Hinduism.

"According to the *Shilpa Sastras*, in which the symbolic art of India has been thoroughly explained, certain rules have been laid down for the guidance of artists. One of these is that the novice should not be taught the technique for the asking. He must meditate, and find within himself a vision that clamors for expression, and only then may his masters instruct him in technique."

"In India, all our art is ritualistic, especially the art of the temples and the caves. When I went to the cave temples, to Elephanta or Ellora, I found mountains hollowed out, and temples built underneath them. The columns supporting the roof resembled elephant legs, and the ceilings and the walls were gorgeously decorated with the sculptured forms of human beings and of gods. About 200 B.C, or earlier, a group of monks went to meditate under the rocks of Ajanta. In meditation they experienced ecstasy,

and having experienced it, they carved it on the wall. The story of all the gods of India is carved on these walls, and the youngest of them all is Buddha. Seven hundred years of Indian history is written out in these caves covering vastness with terrific forms.”

“I shall never forget my first visit to Ellora, reached after two days tramp from the nearest town. When the sages of southern India wanted to create an image of the universe, they went to Ellora. They worked for one hundred and fifty years and used up generations of artists. They carved a mountain into galleries, and as these rose higher and higher, they gradually attained the summit, and the whole mountain was covered as the Himalayas are covered with strange life.”

The “Outcast” in the title refers primarily to Mukerji’s experience in America as a newly arrived, penniless Indian student at the University of California, Berkeley, where he suffered from racial discrimination - the Indian students were routinely refused service in the campus restaurants.²⁷⁹

F. C. (Frederick Crossfield) Happold (1893 -) was the author of several books including *Mysticism: a study and an anthology and Religious faith and twentieth-century* (1970) and has said this about the Upanishads:

“The most profound and revolutionary statement on the nature of reality, which mankind has as yet made”²¹²

Aldous Huxley (1894 -1963) was the English novelist and essayist, born into a family that included some of the most distinguished members of the English ruling class, says that the Bhagavad Gita is for the whole world. He is one of those who enriched the West greatly with the wisdom of the East.

Author of several books including *Brave New World* and *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* and *The Perennial Philosophy*, he observed:

“The Bhagavad-Gita is the most systematic statement of spiritual evolution of endowing value to mankind. The Gita is one of the

clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the spiritual thoughts ever to have been made.”

Hence Huxley thought its enduring value, not only for Indians, but for all mankind. ²¹³

In his latest books, *Eyeless in Gaza* and *Ends and Means*, Aldous Huxley invites our attention to the discipline essential for spiritual insight and argues for the acceptance of the Yoga method. The influence of Indian thought is not so much a model to be copied as a dye, which permeates. ²¹⁴

He observed that while historical religions have been violent, eternity-philosophies like “Hinduism and Buddhism have never been persecuting faiths, have preached almost no holy wars and have refrained from that proselytizing religious imperialism, which have gone hand in hand with the political and economic oppression of the colored people.” ²¹⁵

“The Gita occupies an intermediate position between scripture and theology, for it contains the poetical qualities of the first with the clear-cut methodicalness of the second.” ²¹⁶

Huxley wrote in his book - *The Perennial Philosophy*,

“The religions whose theology are least preoccupied with events in time and most concerned with eternity, have been consistently less violent and more humane in political practice. Unlike early Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism (all obsessed with time) Hinduism and Buddhism have never been persecuting faiths, have preached almost no holy wars and have refrained from that proselytizing religious imperialism which has gone hand in hand with political and economic oppression of colored people.” ²¹⁷

In his book, *The Perennial Philosophy*, Huxley indeed gives due respect to Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism stating clearly that History centric religions indeed are driven by conquest mentality and hence potential for violence exists all the time because of “Market share “ and conversion mentality.

In his book, *The Perennial Philosophy*, (an alternate translation of the Hindu name for their tradition, Sanatana Dharma) Huxley indeed gives due respect to Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism stating clearly that History centric religions indeed are driven by conquest mentality and hence potential for violence exists all the time because of “Market share “ and conversion mentality.

“The Perennial Philosophy is expressed most succinctly in the Sanskrit formula, *tat tvam asi* (‘That art thou’); the Atman, or immanent eternal Self, is one with Brahman, the Absolute Principle of all existence; and the last end of every human being, is to discover the fact for himself, to find out who he really is.”²¹⁸

Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897-1999) in his first book, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, was published in 1951 and was followed by many others, including *The Continent of Circe*, for which he won the Duff Cooper Memorial Prize, and *Thy Hand Great Anarch!*, a second volume of memoirs. He was a Booker Prize winner. Chaudhuri moved to England in 1970. Sir Naipaul has referred to him a foolish man who wrote one good book, then went into kind of absurd fantasy, he built a whole book around somebody who came with the invaders. His views on British rule were not popular in India. Once an admirer of the British, he now finds them a decadent lot and their country in steep decline. This is the final disillusionment for the man who dedicated *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* to the British Empire!

He writes about the vitality of Hinduism and the lack of organization.

“The faith, which the Hindus had in their religion never wavered even in its worst days. It has had waxings and wanings which has kept the balance even.” “In judging the vitality of Hinduism the point should be emphasized that it has maintained itself through the ages and enforced obedience to itself without support from any kind of organization, secular or spiritual.”²¹⁹

Michael Pym (1889 -) was the author of *The Power of India* and has written:

“Hindu philosophy has had more effect upon the world than is perhaps generally realized, though it has often come through at second and third hand. Hinduism as a practical working institution is intended for and has grown out of Indian condition.”

“India challenged, one realized, the whole of the West. Not Western inventions, Western science, Western conveniences, which India was perfectly ready to adopt insofar as they suited India’s convenience. Not that. The challenge was a much deeper thing. A challenge of values, of ethics, of attitude to life.”

“India, like the rest of the East, had bowed to the illusion of Western superiority, taken it all quite literally - Christianity as the religion of peace and love, of the brotherhood of man. Western education and Western progress as the panacea for the evils of existence.”

“The West spoke fairly enough, talking of honor, the sanctity of the given word, and of promises; of freedom and enlightenment. It vaunted its poets, its philosophers, its scientists, its classical inheritance from that beautiful, far off Greece, whose greatest philosophers, it forgot to mention, had been inspired through Egypt and Persia, by India.”

He has reflected that:

“For years India and the entire east really believed all this. Complete subscribers to Nordicism and the theory of the Great Race. Indians did their best to westernize themselves. It was a dis-illusionizing period. This great Western civilization, what was it? The West brought certain material benefits; certain aspects of learning which nobody could deny....But also it seemed to bring a deadly poison. Beneath its hand, the East withered – its morality destroyed, its physical body destroyed, its ancient learning destroyed. Only its vices added to by the new vices of the West, remained and flourished.”

“So this wonderful Western civilization made its own people no happier, no better off ultimately, than the ancient systems of the East. India understood greed; she understood treachery and lies, violence and vice. All that exists wherever humanity exists is a part of life. But it could not understand a claim to superiority, which as far as it could see, was based upon just these things. It

saw that in the West vice hardly troubled any longer even to pay tribute to virtue. The West, India observed, did not revere its holy men. It seemed always to prefer killing them. It saw the West take possession of other lands, because the people to whom they first belonged were, said the West, ignorant and miserable and it was the sacred duty of the Christian West – “the White Man’s Burden” – to bring them enlightenment, education, and freedom.”

“It saw these people, in their turn, strive towards Western education, imitating the White Man, and saw the White man, when this or that individual had successfully obtained the prize, gone through Western universities, Western schools, scornfully deny them equality, and openly declare that Western education spoilt a good Orient. Finally, India, the East, saw the West in its frenzy of destruction turn upon itself, and, in the most horrible of all wars – a conflict disgraced by its barbarism, its inhumanity, its slimy filth of propaganda, tear itself to pieces. The forces of Western civilization revealed themselves to the East as forces of sheer, mad, destruction.”

“Then India shuddered. It did not condemn the peoples of the West. But it realized that somewhere in the Western scheme existed a dreadful flaw. India does not believe in the validity of Western civilization. It does not believe in Western ethics or in Western standards – taken as a whole. It challenges dynamic action with dynamic thought. It challenges the intolerance which conceives of a personal Deity creating, at his pleasure, a Chosen Race to inherit and rifle the earth, with the tolerance which sees all the world as changing forms expressing the same essential divinity. It challenges the intellectual conceit, which sees no divinity anywhere, man as the supreme formation of matter, with the spiritual wisdom, which realizes the limitations of the senses and of the intellect. It lifts above the five-pointed star, the seven pointed!”

“That is India’s challenge to the West – a question of values, of attitude to existence. India as Vishnu, preserving the sacred flame; as Shiva dancing the dance of creation over the Darkness he has destroyed; even as Kali, garlanded with skulls, smeared with blood, destroying destruction. India will win. Matter is always molded by spirit. But what is this spiritual power of India? As a

sensitive Russian woman asked me: "Why does God seem so much nearer in India?"

He has noted that:

"India is God-intoxicated. Not, as the limited view has it, religion mad, but infected by what Plato called the divine madness of the philosopher, the seeker after wisdom. Nothing of that explains India's spiritual power.

"It may be that India has realized God. Is that the secret of her power?"

"India regards the attempt to understand the ultimate reality as the highest and finest aim of existence... This freedom is more priceless than any political institution. Because of this, India has been able to arrive at spiritual knowledge and strength unequalled anywhere in the world."

"Were India ever to be influenced by superficial Western ideas as to institute foolish vagrancy laws and organized charity distribution societies, it would lose living torches of spiritual wisdom and knowledge, and perhaps even sink to levels of materialistic barbarism. The spiritual adventurers of India are the yogis, sadhus, holy men and women of all creeds and descriptions... They have existed in India since the earliest days of history, and through all its magnificent and wealthy civilization they have kept alive in India the thought of another beauty, a more wonderful existence, of which is all this is but a lovely veil."

"To reach the reality which is concealed by the unrealities of the visible world. That is yoga – literally union with God. With ruthless logic, India dismisses the unthinking Western deification of science as a means of discovering ultimate truth. Science, especially as the popular mind understands it, with its test tubes, its microscopes, its laboratories, all its most delicate instruments, while it is helpful, has an inherent limitation. It is still confined to the bounds of this form world. India, through centuries upon centuries, has taught another method of attaining reality. This is the system of yoga. It is based upon two things: intuitive knowledge; and the development of other faculties, other states of consciousness." ²²⁰

Dorothea Chaplin an author who mentions in her book, *Matter, Myth and Spirit or Keltic and Hindu Links* (1935) on page 168 - 9.

“Long before the year 460 B.C. in which Hippocrates, the father of European medicine was born, the Hindus had built an extensive pharmacopoeia and had elaborate treatises on a variety of medical and surgical subjects...The Hindus’ wonderful knowledge of medicine has for some considerable time led them away from surgical methods as working destruction on the nervous system, which their scientific medical system is able to oblivate, producing a cure even without a preliminary crisis.” ²²¹

Kewal Motwani (1899 -) was a man of great intellect and a brilliant Professor of Sociology. He was an author of several books including *Manu Dharma S'satra: A sociological and historical study* (1958).

Motwani has mentioned that:

“Environmental, biological, ethnological, psychological and spiritual forces have gone into the making of an Indian culture of amazing virility and continuity.”

“One idea runs through all the modes of thought and segments of social reality, and that is the Vision of the One, while India’s history is a continuous attempt to make this Vision a living reality in the life of every man, woman and child. This enduring quest and its realization have imparted to Indian culture continuity, universality, humanity, and spirituality that have placed it beyond the challenge of time. This Vision emphasized integration, synthesis, dharma, gathering up of the many into the one, in every phase of life of the individual, the group and the nation.”

He remarks that:

“Science was woven into philosophical thought - The study and cultivation of exact sciences in India was a part of search for truth and reality. From Vedic times onwards, investigations into the realm of the spiritual included those of the physical. The whole of the philosophical literature is replete with and based on some of the tenets of science, as we understand it today. It has

been an unmitigated calamity for India that it was the philologists, both eastern and western, who became the first interpreters to her ancient Sanskrit literature. India's Sanskrit literature came to be interpreted in an apologetic tone and from the standpoint of the western achievements. Some of the sublimities of the Hindu thought, far ahead of the prevailing times, were considered as oddities belonging to primitive past. The great Orientalists were philologists, not philosophers."

"India was called the Bharat Varsha, the "country that embraces all in one bond," and she was selected to become the embodiment of that immutable, eternal, law of the universe, Santana Dharma - dharma is that which "holds together" - which makes the universes run in their orbits. It was this principle of dharma, synthesis, balance, harmonious relationship between various forces and factors, between various individuals and groups that came to be the corner-stone of her civilization." "India has been known as the moksha-bhumi and karma-bhoomi, the Land of Liberty, spiritual and temporal, gained through service of fellowmen. India was not thought of as a bhoga-bhumi, a pleasure-resort for a single lifetime allowed to the mortals. India is the only country in the world where civilization has revolved round this fundamental spiritual nucleus, where the greatest concentration of intellect has centered round the basic human problem of existence..."

"From the ancient past to the present day, this spiritual quest of the One has received India's continued homage. There have been alternating periods of quiet and intense philosophical activity, but the search has continued. The lights have flickered, but never faded, so that even today, attempts are made to penetrate the esoteric sublimity of India's sacred teachings."

"In India, religion became scientific and philosophical; science received religious sanction and philosophic support, and philosophy became religious, with a practical bearing on the problems of daily life. Here lies the secret of India's uniqueness and greatness. India saw Reality as a whole; there were no partition walls in the world of the One. With this universality, humanity and sublime idealism India offered a challenge to time." ²²²

Andre Malraux (1901-1976) was the author of *Anti-memoir*, profound thinker and French prolific writer, an essayist, novelist,

art-historian, and political speechwriter, Malraux did give his readers a philosophy. He was the author of several books including *The Temptation of the West*, *The Conquerors*, *The Royal Way* and *Man's Fate*.

He has wisely noted:

“The problem of this century is the religious problem and the discovery of Hindu thought will have a great deal to do with the solving of that particular problem”.

“Europe is destructive, suicidal,” said André Malraux to Nehru in 1936, whom he would meet several times until the 1960s, trying in vain to persuade him of the relevance of India’s spirituality in today’s world.”

Malraux also reflected:

“...The West regards as truth what the Hindu regards as appearance (for if human life, in the age of Christendom, was doubtless an ordeal it was certainly truth and not illusion), and the Westerner can regard knowledge of the the universe as the supreme value, while for the Hindu the supreme value is accession to the divine Absolute. But the most profound difference is based on the fact that the fundamental reality for the West, Christian or athiest, is death, in whatever sense it may be interpreted — while the fundamental reality for India is the endlessness of life in the endlessness of time: Who can kill immortality?” ^{223 224}

William Macintosh wrote: “All history points to India as the mother of science and art.”

“This country was anciently so renowned for knowledge and wisdom that the philosophers of Greece did not disdain to travel thither for their improvement.” ²²⁵

Barend Van Nooten is the author of Rig Veda, a metrically restored text with an introduction and notes, and *The Mahabharata; Attributed to Krsna Dvaipayana Vyasa*, writes:

“Borrowings by western scholars in the sphere of literature and philosophy are obvious and well-known. There are near virtual;

copies of plots, characters, episodes, situations and time duration from the Mahabharata in Homer and Virgil.” ²²⁶

Louis Revel was a French author who wrote several books including *The Fragrance of India: landmarks for the world of tomorrow* (1946) and *Les Routes Ardentes de L’Inde* (1948). He took on the duties of editing the monthly called *Theosophie* while he was in India.

He remarked that if Greek culture had influenced Western civilization, the ancient Greeks themselves were the “sons of Hindu thought.”

He pointed out:

“If Greek culture has influenced Western civilization, we must not forget that, in spite of the inestimable benefits of Greece to India, the ancient Greeks themselves were also sons of Hindu thought. As has already been mentioned, Pythagoras went to India in order to draw from the very source the principles, which constituted the foundation of his doctrine and which in its turn influenced Plato, Socrates and even Aristotle to a certain degree. Apollonius of Tyanae, Plotin, did they not follow in the footprints of their predecessors, in directing themselves towards far-off India? China, Persia, Islam – the three-fourths of Asia – these civilizations which had already been influenced by the missions of Asoka, were they not attracted by India’s wisdom? That is the reason why ancient India is our Mother. In the measure that we Westerners make our intellectual and spiritual genealogy reach back to India shall we learn to love her and to consider in its true light her wisdom, the patrimony of every man.” ^{227 228}

He has dedicated his book ‘The Fragrance of India: landmarks for the world of tomorrow to the Great rishis of India’²²⁹:

*“These pages are a humble offering,
To the Great rishis of India,
Those wise men who loved the people,
lived for the people,
and who taught the brotherhood of peoples.”*

“The soul of the world is in danger. It is a banal truth to write but,

nevertheless, it ought to be ceaselessly repeated. When we seek in the buried centuries for vestiges of these columns of glory, a name, among others, emerges: INDIA."

"It is a fact, whether we wish to accept it or not, that India is the Mother of all of us. She has given us everything: religion, philosophy, science, art. All that has been truly great, noble, and generous, throughout the ages has come from India. At this moment when a hurricane of violence and hate is raging across the world, and will rage still more through the world of the future, making the very frame-work of our civilization crack, at this moment when intellectual and moral values are being trampled upon by the hordes of egotism, brutality, and lying, let us go together, towards India from whom we can learn so much."

He wrote glowingly about the Ramayana:

"Ramayana is one of the greatest epic poems of the world and that, correctly understood, it leads us, scholars tell us to an understanding of the evolution of humanity:"

"The Ramayana shows us also, in the story of Rama and Sita, the ideal of human love, love which is inspired by the noblest of ideas. The Illiad and Odyssey have touched many Western hearts; nevertheless, those epic poems which contain so much truths, when translated into our modern languages, fail unfortunately, to influence intimately the lives of people. In India, on the other hand, there is scarcely a Hindu family or dwelling where the divinity of Rama and of Krishna are not adored; where the chastity of Sita or of Draupadi is not extolled; or where the courage of Hanuman – the monkey god who aided Rama to vanquish his enemies – is not a subject of conversation. These heroes for Hindus, are living personages, as are those of the Gospel for Christians, modeling, kneading India's thought, even in our modern times of upheavals and violence, and it is they, these heroes, who preserve perhaps, or who help to preserve the glory of ancient Aryavarta in the India of today."

"Every civilization, which is not based on the culture of the Spirit, is doomed to perish in brutality and blood. Oh! Rama and Sita, noble human heroes, you who give the example of a sublime

spiritual ideal, in your atmosphere of peace and infinite tenderness there reigns a hope, the hope of the regeneration of humanity through the understanding of these ancient symbols and by their realization in the inner lives of men.”²²⁹

“The Bhagavad Gita is par excellence the Book of Democracy; that is what gives it its peculiar radiance. It is not necessary to be a great scholar on the subject to perceive this. It unites all men in the same Principle which “resides in all hearts.” If Krishna makes no distinction between races, castes, sects, he also shows us how men, nations, can sink in the typhoon of unchained passions. The message of the Gita is a universal call to Democracy, liberty for the peoples, liberty for each individual. The great affirmation of the Bhagavad Gita is that every individual, whatever he may be, rich or poor, can and must raise himself on life’s path and that he has a right to his emancipation, social, intellectual, and spiritual.”

“Even if thou were the greatest of all sinners, thou shalt be able to cross over all sins in the bark of spiritual knowledge.” (BG iv).

“In the temple of Somanthpur, the stone figure looms out from the shadows. A ray of light rests on the face of Krishna. Above the wind of the plains swirling under the vaults, it seems to me that the flute of Shri Krishna sings melodies on this day of fete, the glory of life, the dawn of a new world, in the eternal verses:

“Know, son of Pritha, that I am the pure fragrance of the earth, sound in the air; in the fire, its splendor; life in all beings; continence in ascetics.

*Oh! Govinda. The Friend! May we find, we also, the resting-place, the refuge, the friend who guides and inspires our life!”*²³⁰

F. W. Thomas wrote in *The Legacy of India* (1937):

“What gives to the Upanishads their unique quality and unfailing human appeal is an earnest sincerity of tone, as of friends conferring upon matters of deep concern.”

He wrote in his book *The Mutual Influence of Mohammedans and Hindus*,

“Hinduism is one of the greatest assimilants that the world has known.” “It is infinitely absorbent like the ocean.” ^{231 232}

Gordon R Milburn was the author of *Logic of Religious Thought: An Answer to Professor Eddington* (1929) claims that:

“Christianity in India needs the Vedanta...as constituting what might be called an Ethnic Old Testament” in an article on Christian Vedantism - Indian Interpreter 1913.

George Hendrick wrote the *Introduction to reprint edition of Charles Wilkins Bhagavad Gita*.

He noted about the Bhagwad Gita and its: “Antiquarian charm and historical importance.” ²³³

Christopher W. B. Isherwood (1904 -1986) was a Translator, biographer, novelist, and play wright he was the author of over twenty books, including *Vedanta for the Western World* and *My Guru and His Disciple* a book about Swami Prabhavananda, who guided Isherwood for some thirty years. During the 1940s his interests turned from Christianity to Hinduism. With his guru Swami Prabhavananda Isherwood translated from the Sanskrit The Bhagavad-Gita and The Yoga Aphorism of Patanjali. Isherwood broke from the strictly chronological format to create a spiritual autobiography wherein the values of Vedanta Hinduism counter his life as a Hollywood scriptwriter.

He wrote:

“I believe the Gita to be one of the major religious documents of the world. If its teachings did not seem to me to agree with those of the other gospels and scriptures, then my own system of values would be thrown into confusion, and I should feel completely bewildered. The Gita is not simply a sermon, but a philosophical treatise.” ²³⁴

Turning from Christianity to Hinduism in 1943 he became follower of Swami Prabhavananda, producing several works on Indian Vedānta in the following decades. ²³⁵

K. P. Mukherji an author who has observed:

“The essential point which Westerners and Westernized Indians have to bear in mind, is that the Hindu Culture is through through synthetic, it aims at the synthesis of the here and hereafter, the world and the other world, the appearance that is many and the reality that is one, the temporal and the eternal, the positive and the transcendental.” ²³⁶

Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) was one of the foremost interpreters of myth in our time. Campbell was a prolific writer, dedicated editor, beloved teacher, inspiring lecturer, and an avid scholar of spiritual and cultural development. He was the author of several books including *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and *The Power of Myth* and *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*.

He has observed that:

“It is ironic that our great western civilization, which has opened to the minds of all mankind the infinite wonders of a universe of untold billions of galaxies should be saddled with the tightest little cosmological image known to mankind? The Hindus with their grandiose Kalpas and their ideas of the divine power, which is beyond all human categories (male or female). Not so alien to the imagery of modern science that it could not have been put to acceptable use.” ²³⁷

“The first principle of Indian thought, therefore, is that the ultimate reality is beyond description. It is something that can be experienced only by bringing the mind to a stop; and once experienced; it cannot be described to anyone in terms of the forms of this world. The truth, the ultimate truth, that is to say, is transcendent. It goes past, transcends, all speech all images, anything that can possibly be said. But, as we have just seen, it is not only transcendent, it is also immanent, within all things, everything in the world, therefore, is to be regarded as its manifestation. There is an important difference here between the Indian and the Western ideas.”

“There is an important difference between the Hindu and the Western ideas. In the Biblical tradition, God creates man, but man

cannot say that he is divine in the same sense that the Creator is, where as in Hinduism, all things are incarnations of that power. We are the sparks from a single fire. And we are all fire. Hinduism believes in the omnipresence of the Supreme God in every individual. There is no "fall". Man is not cut off from the divine. He requires only to bring the spontaneous activity of his mind stuff to a state of stillness and he will experience that divine principle with him." ²³⁸

"There is an illuminating story told of the deity Krishna, who, in the form of a human child, was raised among a little company or tribe of herdsmen. One day he said to them, when he saw them preparing to worship one of the great Gods of the Brahminical pantheon: "But why do you worship a deity in the sky? The support of your life is here, in your cattle. Worship these! "Whereupon, they hung garlands around the necks of their cattle and paid them worship. This wonderful art of recognizing the divine presence in all things, as a ubiquitous presence, is one of the most striking features of Oriental life, and is particularly prominent in Hinduism."

"I have seen very simple people out in the country, climbing a hill, who, when they became tired and paused to rest and eat, set up a stone, poured red paint around it, and then reverently placed flowers before it. The pouring of the red paint set that stone apart. The idea was simply that those people were now going to regard it, not as a stone, but as a manifestation of the divine principle that it is immanent in all things. The pouring of the red paint and placing of the flowers were typical acts of Bhakti, Devotional Yoga: simple devices, readily available to anyone, to shift the focus of the mind from the phenomenal aspect of the object as a mere stone to its mystery of a miracle of being. And this popular form of yoga, no less than the very much sterner and more difficult discipline of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, to which I first alluded, is a technique to link consciousness to the ultimate truth: the mystery of being. The sense of the whole universe as a manifestation of the radiance of God and of yourself as likewise of that radiance, and the assurance that this is so, no matter what things may look like, round about, is the key to the wisdom of India..." ²³⁹

Joseph Campbell, traveled widely in India and was a good friend of Hindu teacher J. Krishnamurti. He also assisted in the translation of one of the greatest classics of modern times, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. At one point, he admitted that discovering the *Mandukya Upanishad* affected him more profoundly than the beginning of the World War II.²⁴⁰

Beatrice Pitney Lamb (1904 - 1997) was the author of several books including *India: A World in Transition*. She was Editor of the United Nations News for several years and has written and lectured extensively on Indian affairs. Beatrice Lamb first visited India in 1949 on an assignment for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Mrs. Lamb saw the many-hued soul of India revealed through its people, living, working and worshipping.

She has noted:

“In addition to the still visible past glories of art and architecture, the wonderful ancient literature, and other cultural achievements of which educated Indians are justly proud, the Indian past includes another type of glory most tantalizing to the Indians of today - prolonged material prosperity. For well over a millennium and a half, the Indian subcontinent may have been the richest area in the world. As early as the first century A.D. a statesman in ancient Rome wrote in worried vein about the squandering of Roman wealth on Indian luxuries.....Although direct relations between Europe and India were cut off by the Arabs in the Middle Ages, the legend of the wealth of the “Indies” continued to grip Western minds. The power of this legend caused Columbus in 1492 to take his dangerous journey westward across the Atlantic, seeking to re-establish direct contact with India. As late as the 18th century, British observers were repeatedly struck by the material prosperity of the land they were beginning to conquer.”²⁴¹

“In India I have found great beauty of a kind far too rare in the United States. Instead of the hard, taut, anxious faces, so common in America, I have seen many there that were calm, open, untroubled, and serene. I have seen dignity and grace of movement derived not from training but from inner peace and wholeness.”²⁴²

“Recently, increasing numbers of Westerners in revolt against what they have found to be the shallow, gadget-dominated, spiritually empty civilizations of the West have turned to “Hinduism” in search of greater meaning or purpose in life. There is no doubt that the great Hindu tradition offers profound spiritual insights, as well as techniques for attaining self-realization, detachment, and even ecstasy.” ²⁴³

William Harten Gilbert (1904 -) author of *Peoples of India* has said:

“In the history of human culture the contribution of the Indian peoples in all fields has been of the greatest importance. From India we are said to have derived domestic poultry, shellac, lemons, cotton, jute, rice, sugar, indigo, the buffalo, cinnamon, ginger, pepper, sugar-cane, the games of chess, Pachisi, Polo, the Zero concept, the decimal system, the basis of certain philological concepts, a wealth of fables with moral import, an astonishing variety of artistic products, and innumerable ideas in philosophy and religion such as asceticism and monasticism.” ²⁴⁴

Edmond Taylor (1905 – 2000) was the author of *Richer By Asia* (1947) and he has said:

“The sophisticated philosophies of the East (India) are even more abstract, subtle, and given to the splitting of unsubstantial hairs than those of the West, but the emotional basis of the oldest and richest Oriental religion - Hinduism - is perfectly accessible, it sometimes seemed to me, than certain Christian moods.”

He had reflected that:

“The underlying mood of Hinduism is one of joyous acceptance of the universe.” It is more richly endowed with gods and goddesses and all the trappings of mythology than even the religion of ancient Greece, and this imaginative exuberance is certainly connected with the pantheist emotional mood.” “More than any other religion, Hinduism hangs upon the concept of wholeness, and the perception of wholeness to the Hindu mind is the most joyous of all human experiences.”

“The convictions of the unity and orderliness of the universe is so strong in the devout Hindu that nothing can shake it.”

“Popular Hinduism, it is true, is more richly endowed with gods and goddesses and all the trappings of mythology than even the religion of ancient Greece, and this imaginative exuberance is certainly connected with the pantheist emotional mood, but it seems to be more a by-product than an integral feature of it.”

“The Higher Hindu sages have always dispensed with all this objective paraphernalia while retaining their pantheist hearts.”

“The emotional root of animism in Hindu village worship seemed to me to lie in a heightened sense of reality rather than in unreality, in the use of marvel to express the marvelous ness of simple reality in creating magical beings to explain the magic feel of normal experience.”²⁴⁵

Arthur Koestler (1905-1983) was a Hungarian-born British novelist, journalist, and critic. He is best known for his novel *Darkness at Noon* and *The Lotus and the Robot* in which he examines Eastern mysticism and wrote:

“Rome was saved in A.D. 408 by the ransom the Senate paid to Alaric the Goth; ever since, when Europe found itself in an impasse or in a questing mood, it has turned yearningly to the land of culinary and spiritual spices. The greatest influence during the dark ages was Augustine, who was influenced by Plotinus, who was influenced by Indian mysticism. Long before Aldous Huxley found Yoga a remedy for our Brave New World, Schopenhauer called the Upanishads the consolation of his life.”²⁴⁶

Alain Danielou a.k.a Shiv Sharan (1907-1994) was the son of French aristocracy, author of numerous books on philosophy, religion, history and arts of India, including *Virtue, Success, Pleasure, & Liberation: The Four Aims of Life in the Tradition of Ancient India*. He was perhaps the first European to boldly proclaim his Hinduness. He settled in India for fifteen years in the study of Sanskrit. He had a wide effect upon Europe’s understanding of Hinduism. Danielou had been sharply critical of the Western-

educated Congress leadership, which led the country to Independence from British rule in 1947.

Daniélou has wisely said:

“The Hindu lives in eternity. He is profoundly aware of the relativity of space and time and of the illusory nature of the apparent world.”

“Hinduism is a religion without dogmas. Since its origin, sages who sought to comprehend man’s nature and role in creation as a whole have built Hindu society on rational bases.” ²⁴⁷

“Hinduism especially in its oldest, Shivaite form never destroyed its past. It is the sum of human experience from the earliest times. Non-dogmatic, it allows every one to find his own way.”

He also noted as early as 1947 that “the Egyptian myth of Osiris seemed directly inspired from a Shivaite story of the Puranas and that at any rate, Egyptians of those times considered that Osiris had originally come from India mounted on a bull (Nandi), the traditional transport of Shiva.”

“Ultimate reality being beyond man’s understanding, the most contradictory theories or beliefs may be equally inadequate approaches to reality. Ecological (as we would say today), it sees man as part of a whole, where trees, animals, men and spirits should live in harmony and mutual respect, and it asks everyone to cooperate and not endanger the artwork of the creator.

It therefore opposes the destruction of nature, of species, the bastardization of races, the tendency of each one to do what he was not born for. It leaves every one free to find his own way of realization human and spiritual be it ascetic or erotic or both. It does not separate intellect and body, mind and matter, but sees the Universe as a living continuum. “I believe any sensible man is unknowingly a Hindu and that the only hope for man lies in the abolition of the erratic, dogmatic, unphilosophical creeds people today call religions.” ²⁴⁸

Overwhelmingly convinced of the importance of culture and religion as presented by Hinduism, Alain Daniélou always considered himself a Hindu and, in his last interview, declared “India is my true home”.

In the recent supplement to his memoirs, he wrote “The only value I never question is that of the teachings I received from Shaivite Hinduism which rejects any kind of dogmatism, since I have found no other form of thought which goes so far, so clearly, which such depth and intelligence, in comprehending the divine and the world’s structures”.²⁴⁹

John Elington was author of *A Memoir of A E Russell*, (1961) and he wrote:

“The Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads contain such godlike fullness of wisdom on all things that I feel the authors ‘Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson and Thoreau among moderns have something of this vitality and wisdom, but we can find all they have said and much more in the grand sacred books of the East. The Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads contain such godlike fullness of wisdom on all things that I feel the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back through a thousand passionate lives, full of feverish strife for and with shadows, ere they could have written with such certainly of things which the soul feels to be sure.”²⁵⁰

Satprem (1923 -1989) aka Bernard Enginger, was a sailor and a Breton born in Paris. He was a member of the French Resistance. The Gestapo arrested Satprem when he was twenty and spent a year and half in concentration camps. Devastated he journey first to Upper Egypt, then to India, where he served in the French colonial government of Pondicherry. There he discovered Sri Aurobindo and Mother. Their Message - “Man is a transitional being” - struck a deep chord.

His first essay was dedicated to Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness a book that has led so many to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. His book, *Evolution II* translated from the French by Michel Danino is dedicated to the Souls of India:

*“the millions souls of India
unknown to themselves
unknowing of their own Treasure
with my love infinite”*

In his book, *Evolution II*, he wondered after Man, who? But the question is: After Man, how? ²⁵¹

Satprem believed in the Hindu concept of reincarnation and asks:

“Which sadist God has decreed that we would have only one life to realize ourselves and through which colossal ignorance Islam and Christianity have decided that we shall go to Heaven or Hell, according to the deeds, bad or good, which we have committed in a single life?” ²⁵²

Peggy Holroyde (1924 -) was the British author of several books on India including *Indian Music: a vast ocean of promise* and *East comes West: a background to some Asian Faiths*, and *An ABC of Indian Culture* (2007).

She thinks that:

“The sparkling energy of India lies in Hinduism. Without the framework of Hindu belief India would fall apart. Without Hinduism India is not herself.”

“Because Indian society has, like the Chinese, been a unitary one where science and religion have never been in conflict, there has been no basic split as has happened with our own Christian background. Our own antagonism between the two disciplines of theology and science has created chaos in our thinking and a curious dichotomy during the past two centuries. In India I found a thankful release from our restricted vision of the creation of God.”

She has further reflected on:

“Hinduism has remained in constant, replenished usage throughout this tremendous stretch of time, impervious to outside influence, as onward flowing as the imperturbable Ganges itself. Not even Moghul invasion and Muslim supremacy for 700 years, nor the arrival of the British, Dutch, French and Portuguese with their own civilization and standards, penetrated into the imperious core of this steadfast faith. Hindu thought took and absorbed according to its own will, folding itself inwards at the sense of approaching danger like some gigantic sea-anemone drawing up all its tentacles, only to stretch outwards and flourish when the

danger was past. One continues to hope that this will remain so, that modern Indians will realize that this is their enviable strength despite all their understandable yearnings for the material advantages of technology which they have seen give power and monopoly of advantage to the Western world. But their quality of synthesis, of intelligent absorption, may still save them from the sterility of urban life and the monotonous obsession with quantity and things, rather than with quality and life-perspective.”²⁵³

Girilal Jain (1924 -1993) was the doyen of Indian journalists and editor of *The Times of India* from 1978-1988, was a passionate crusader of the Hindu cause. Author of *The Hindu Phenomenon*, he has noted:

“Many Hindu intellectuals are just not able to comprehend the fact that there is no human aspiration or experience which lies outside the range of Hinduism; it provides for even demon-Gods. In contrast, all religions are in the nature of sects, though they cannot be so defined because of their insistence on their separateness and, indeed, hostility to Hinduism.”

“Hindus fought and lost, they did not throw up prophets of woe and doom; they did not bemoan that their Gods had let them down because they had been disloyal to them. Hindus are perhaps unique in this respect.”

He has pointed out:

“Hindus accept no divisions between the believer and unbeliever. Every path leads to Him (God or Reality); there can be as many paths to Him as the number of human. Indeed, the prophetic tradition is alien to Hinduism. Narrowness of the spirit, peculiar to Semitic faiths, has been alien to India.”

“The concept of nation itself is, in fact, alien to the Hindu temperament and genius. Such a concept is essentially Semitic in character even if it arose in Western Europe in the eighteenth century. The nation concept too emphasizes the exclusion of those who do not belong to the charmed circle (territorial or linguistic or ethnic) as much as it emphasizes the inclusion of those who fall within the circle. By contrast, the essential spirit of

Hinduism is 'inclusivist' and not 'exclusivist' by definition. In that sense the Hindu fight is anxious to renew themselves in the spirit of their civilization and the state and the political and intellectual class trapped in the debris in which the British managed to bury our people before they left." ²⁵⁴

He noted that:

"The Semitic spirit is intolerant and insistent on the pursuit of a particular course, whereas the Indian spirit is a broadminded and tolerant one. To say therefore that Ram and Rahim are the same is, in my opinion, a form of escapism or make-believe."

"There is no concept, for example, in Hinduism of kafir. You cannot be a kafir in Hinduism. You do not cease to be a Hindu whatever you do, unless you choose to get converted to another religion. You can be a Buddhist and a Hindu at the same time, not only in a social sense but also in religious terms." ²⁵⁵

Carl Suneson was the author of *Richard Wagner och den indiska tankevärlden* (1985) has said: "Parsifal" is in my opinion, of Wagner's completed music dramas, that in which the Indian influence is most demonstrable. ²⁵⁶

J A B Van Buitenen (1928 -1979) author and translator of *The Mahabharata into English*, says that the Bhagavad Gita is:

"The most important text for Hindu religion and a recent survey of that religion says that during the last thousand years the Gita's "popularity and authority" have been "unrivalled." ²⁵⁷

Geoffrey Moorhouse (1931-) is the author of *Om: an Indian Pilgrimage* (1994) and he writes:

"No other country has lived with so complicated a past so equably, assimilating everything that has happened to it, obliterating naught, so that not even the intricate histories of European states have produced such a rich pattern as that bequeathed by the Mauryas, the Ashokas, the Pahlavas, the Guptas, the Chalykyas, the Hoysalas, the Pandyas, the Cholas, the Mughals, and the British - to identify a few of the people that have shaped India's inheritance."

“Religion, flourishes here as it does nowhere else. Other lands may surrender themselves totally to a particular faith, but in India most creeds are deeply rooted and acknowledged fervently. Virtually the whole population practices some form of devotion: the Indian without the slightest feeling for the divine, without a spiritual dimension to his life, is exceedingly rare. Incomparable and inimitable she is, India is also our great paradigm.”²⁵⁸

Bhagwan S. Gidwani is the author of *The Return of the Aryans* (1994) has correctly shows that Hinduism is based on supremacy of conduct, and not creed. His view also is simple and forthright - that Hinduism is the one religion that honors and respects human rights. Most other religions consign non-believers to hell, everlasting. Hinduism has room for non-believers, agnostics and atheists. What Hinduism seeks is purity of conduct, and not creed.

In *The Return of the Aryans* he clarifies that Bharat who composed the Song of the Hindu, was the 19th Karkarta (Elected Supreme Chief) of the Hindu clan from 5,106 BC. He retired as a hermit at the age of sixty. Long after he retired, the name Bharat Varsha was given to the country to honor his memory.

The book unfolds the drama of the birth and beginnings of Hinduism prior to 8,000 BC, and its early roots of Sanatana Dharma and Sanatanah. It also tells the story of how in 5,000 BC, the Aryans originated from India, and why they moved out of their homeland; their trials and triumphs, battles and bloodshed, adventures and exploits in Europe and elsewhere, including Russian Lands, Finland, Lithuania, Scandinavia, Italy, Greece and Germany; and finally their return to the home-town and heritage of Bharat Varsha. In the Song of the Hindus, Gidwani clearly defines Hinduism.

The Song of the Hindu:

“Our desires have grown immeasurable. But they should be desires to give, not merely to receive, to accept and not to reject; to honour and respect, not to deny or belittle...”

“God’s gracious purpose includes all human beings and all creation.”

“For God is the Creator; and God is the Creation.”

“Each man has his own stepping stones to reach the One-Supreme...”

God’s grace is withdrawn from no one; not even from those who have chosen to withdraw from God’s grace...”How does it matter what idols they worship, or what images they bow to, so long as the conduct remains pure...”It is conduct then - theirs and ours - that needs to be purified.

“There can be no compulsion; each man must be free to worship his gods as he chooses...”

“Does every Hindu worship all the gods of all the Hindus? No, he has a free will; a free choice” A Hindu may worship Agni (fire), and ignore other deities. Do we deny that he is a Hindu?... Another may worship God, through an idol of his choosing. Do we deny that he is a Hindu?” Yet another will find God everywhere and not in any image or idol. Is he not a Hindu?...”He who was Karkarta before me was a Sun-worshiper. Did the worshipers of Siva ever say that he was not a good Hindu? ...”Do the worshipers of Vishnu feel that he who worships before the image of Brahma is not a Hindu?”

“How can a scheme of salvation be limited to a single view of God’s nature and worship? “Is then God, not an all-loving Universal God?...”Clearly then, he who seeks to deny protection to another on the basis of his faith, offends against the Hindu way of life, and denies an all-loving God... “Those who love their own sects, idols and images more than Truth, will end up by loving themselves more than their gods...” He who seeks to convert another to his own faith, offends against his own soul and the will of God and the law of humanity...”In the Kingdom of God, there is no higher nor lower. The passion for perfection burns equally in all, for there is only one class even as there is only one God...”The Hindu way of life?... Always it has been and always it shall be...that God wills a rich harmony - not a colorless uniformity...”A Hindu must enlarge the heritage of mankind “For a Hindu is not a mere preserver of custom. “For a Hindu is not a mere protector of present knowledge...”

“Hinduism is a movement, not a position; a growing tradition and not a fixed revelation...” A Hindu must grow and evolve, with all that was good in the past, with all that is good in the present, and with all goodness that future ages shall bring. “Yet he remains a Hindu. “Hinduism is the law of life, not a dogma; its aim is not to create a creed but character, and its goal is to achieve perfection through most varied spiritual knowledge which rejects nothing, and yet refines everything, through continuous testing and experiencing...” “Yet he must remain strong and united, for a Hindu must know that not an external, outside force can ever crush him, except when he is divided and betrays his own...” What then is the final goal of the Hindu? Through strength, unity, discipline, selfless work, to reach the ultimate in being, ultimate in awareness and ultimate in bliss, not for himself alone, but for all...” This was the silent pledge that our ancient ancestors had taken, when they called themselves the Hindu... “If I cannot abide by that pledge, how can I retain the right to call myself a Hindu?”

Gidwani meets another issue headlong, and demonstrates clearly that caste system was never a tenet of the Hindu faith. Tracing the development of caste system, he shows that it is in fact antagonistic to the Hindu religion, and its ideals.²⁵⁹

Gustave Le Bon was an author of the book *The World of Indian Civilization* (1974) and he had commented on Hindu philosophers:

“Their philosophical daring remains unequalled to this day; indeed, one has to admit that, 2,000 years ago, India had begun pondering on the great issues which have been raised in the West only in within the last century, and that, in doing so, it did not shrink from the most drastic solution.”²⁶⁰

Sir Mark Tully (1935 -) was a former BBC correspondent in India, author of several books, including *No Full Stops in India* and *The Heart of India*, and he has observed:

“The genius of Hinduism and the very reason of its survival for so long, was that it does not stand up and fight.”

“It changes and adapts and modernizes and it absorbs and that is the scientific and proper way of going about it as well.”

“Why is Christianity in so much trouble at the moment? Because it is so difficult for it to adapt,” says the celebrated television journalist. He has said that Hinduism would prove to be the religion of the next Millennium.”

He has also reflected that:

“The Kumbh Mela could only take place in India. In no other country would millions and millions of pilgrims, driven just by faith that the sins of this life and previous lives would be washed away by bathing in the confluence of two rivers at an auspicious time, brave severe hardships, some walking barefooted, to get to bathe. Where else would you find hundreds of holy men willing to march naked in processions through the crowds of pilgrims, or one thousand Brahmins sitting around a hundred sacred fires offering a sacrifice for world peace?” At what gathering of one religion would you find such a variety of teaching, such an acceptance that there are many ways to God?” ²⁶¹

Addressing the National Hindu Students Forum in Britain in August 1997, he expressed the view that Indian civilization has a Hindu base to it and that Hindus should proclaim their identity with pride. ²⁶²

“It was the promotion of the ancient Indian tradition of religious tolerance, a tolerance which owes so much to Hinduism’s own pluralism...This tradition provides a basis for Hindus and for Indians who believe in many of the many other religions of this country to live with self-respect, in peace, and proud of their national identity. This is very much an Indian tradition, a tradition, which is very different too from the tradition of countries where Semitic religions like Christianity and Islam have dominated. It is the tradition which could meet the needs of so many other countries in the world.” ²⁶³

Gary Zukav is the author of *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (1979) and *The Seat of The Soul* (1990) and he says:

“Hindu mythology is virtually a large scale projection into the psychological realm of microscopic scientific discoveries.” “The Wu Li Masters know that physicists are doing more than

‘discovering the endless diversity of nature.’ They are dancing with Kali, the Divine Mother of Hindu mythology.”²⁶⁴

Sandhya Jain is the author of *Adi Deo Arya Devata. A Panoramic View of Tribal-Hindu Cultural Interface* (2004) and eminent columnist in the mainstream English Media of India, she has written eloquently about Hinduism:

“India has existed for several millennia; it is rooted in history and enshrined and encompassed by a civilisational ethos based on the attainment of Consciousness (self-realisation). India’s ancient religion, Hinduism, is not a codified creed in the manner of other world religions. Properly known as the Sanatan Dharma or the Eternal Tradition, it is simultaneously a religion and a living civilisation or way of life, and is inspired by the ideal of universal welfare of all beings, both human and other creatures. Dharma is natural (cosmic) law. As Hinduism, it takes on a formal structure, creed and ritual; yet it is never the captive of absolutism.”

“The Sanatan Dharma recognises even the atheist as morally valid, and does not deny him space in the religious-spiritual spectrum. This is because Sanatan Dharma is all-embracing: it is righteousness, duty, and the eternal law that is not fixed (in time or space) but eternally renews itself in response to changing times and provides for as many paths to salvation as there are individual souls who seek it.”

“Dharma demands that all faiths be treated with respect and courtesy, as they are all attempts to attain Godhead. Its quintessential argument is that each soul must chart its own evolutionary course, and that it is not given to any human agency to arbitrate a final truth for all mankind. Hindus do believe that the Vedas are the revealed truth that was heard by the Vedic rishis (Sruti). But that is no reason that they should be imposed upon the world by human regents who claim to be sole prophets of the only true revelation. This is the reason why, despite the belief in One Supreme Being, non-monotheism has been the hallmark of all Indic religions. Our polity and innate secularism has flowed naturally from these values; it is not for nothing that Aristotle observed that the Hindus were the only people to have successfully made dharma the basis of their public life (Politics).”

“Being a living civilization, Hinduism is by definition multi-dimensional, multi-layered. It is inherently distrustful of the one-dimensional approach towards religion, and does not perceive other faiths as alien, threatening or unacceptable.”

“Hinduism is a subtle, complex, multi-dimensional spiritual cosmos. Although it spawned a great and powerful religion with profound philosophies and daring intellectual constructs, it never ceased to be a ‘way of life.’ It never wholly identified with the religious forms it gave birth to (Shaivism, Vaishnavism, et al), nor did they subsume it. This is how it remains a living civilization: the individual seeker is accommodated theoretically and actually. Even today a seeker may reject the world of man and the world of formal religion, and pursue a solitary salvation on the banks of the Ganges or in the Himalayan mists. None may chastise him for deviance (for there is none), nor catechize him about the path to take (for there are as many paths as there are seekers).” ²⁶⁵

Solange Lemaitre author of several books, including *Le Mystère de la mort dans les religions d’Asie* and *Râmakrishna et la vitalité de l’Hindouism* (1986) has observed:

“The civilization of India, at root purely religious, is only now becoming known in Europe; and as the mystery surrounding it is unveiled it emerges as one of the highest achievement in the history of mankind. By the very breadth of the outlook it affords on to the destiny of man the Vedic religion offers in abundance the spiritual experience that has inspired the Indian people since the dawn of their history. The vocation of India is to proclaim to the world the efficacy of religious experience.”

“There is more than a purely literal meaning to be found in the Vedas. This can be felt behind the poetic imagery of many hymns about the Creation and the Divine, in which certain lines sparkle like specks of gold in the opacity of their vein.” ²⁶⁶

Rajeev Srinivasan works in software sales and is marketing professional, and writes commentary for Rediff.com. He graduated from IIT Madras and the Stanford Business School.

He writes in his column:

“Hinduism is the most apolitical of religions, with an extremely clear separation of church and state. This has always been the case historically.” ²⁶⁷

Talking about the sacredness of rivers to ancient Hindus, he notes:

“Ancient Indians did recognize the importance of their rivers as literally the lifeblood of the nation. Hence the great honour and respect given to them in Hindu scriptures. See, for example, the sloka:

*“Gange cha! Yamune chiava! Godavari! Sarasvati!
Narmade! Sindhu! Kaveri! Jale asmin sannidhim kuru!”*

In this water, I invoke the presence of holy waters from The Rivers Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Sindhu and Cauvery! ”

“The divinity attributed to the sacred rivers such as the Sarasvati, the Ganga, the Cauveri, and the Narmada has perhaps helped us manage and preserve them. The Rg Veda speaks often about the mighty river Sarasvati, as broad as the ocean. In the story of Indra’s slaying of the water-demon Vrtra, we see the damming of the river and its subsequent release. Pilgrims even today undertake the arduous trek to Gaumukh, the origin of the Ganga/Bhagirathi, even though the glacier that gives rise to the river has receded eighteen kilometers away from the original temple to Ganga built millennia ago at the then source, Gangotri.”

“The Sarasvati, along whose banks the bulk of the settlements of the Indus-Sarasvati (Harappan) civilisation can be found, dried up circa 2000 BCE, after an earthquake caused its tributaries to be captured by other rivers, the Sutlej by the Indus, and the Yamuna by the Ganga. The Indus-Sarasvati civilisation declined precipitously thereafter, and its next flowering was hundreds of years later, in the Gangetic Plain to the east. The river died, and so almost did the civilisation; this is a cautionary tale for us. There are those who still remember the long-lost river. The Gauda Saraswat Brahmins of the Konkan coast, Sarasvati’s children, still recall that immense river, whose course was eight kilometers wide in parts.” ²⁶⁸

He proudly points out about ancient India's greatest achievement was:

"Panini's grammar, dating back 2500 years, and encapsulating the complete structure of Sanskrit in four thousand context-free rules, is arguably the greatest achievement of a single human mind in all of history."

"The sheer audacity to imagine capturing the infinity of language in the finitude of a set of rules is simply breathtaking: it could only have come from ancient India which invented the ideas of the infinite and the infinitesimal, and the correspondence between the two. The concept of context-free languages was re-invented only in the 1950s by computer scientists, since ambiguity is unacceptable to computers."

"To take mathematics and astronomy, Madhava, Nilakantha and Parameswara of the Kerala School invented the ideas of the calculus and infinite series (including the so-called Taylor series) circa 1500 CE, and Jesuit missionaries most probably transmitted these to Europe. Baudhayana discussed the so-called Pythagoras theorem about 500 years before Pythagoras. Aryabhata calculated pi to six decimal places in 499 CE. Saayana appears to have accurately calculated the speed of light around 1370 CE." ²⁶⁹

Alistair Shearer has done postgraduate work in Sanskrit at the University of Lancaster, after studying literature at Cambridge. He has translated *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (2002). He has practiced and taught meditation for many years.

He affirms:

"The Hindu understanding of the universe has often been misunderstood as bizarre and primitive. The Hindu imagery is in fact a sophisticated iconography conveying universal religious truths only now beginning to be understood in the West."

Richard Waterstone has studied Sanskrit at the University of Edinburgh, journalist, creator of BBC documentary, author, and comments in his book on *India: Living Wisdom* (1995):

“Shiva’s dance is a symbol of the unity and rhythm of existence. The unending dynamic process of creation and destruction is expressed in the energetic posture of the god. Shiva dances in a ring of fire that refers to the life-death process of the universe.”

He has astutely observed that:

“There is a striking resemblance between the equivalence of mass and energy symbolized by Shiva’s cosmic dance and the Western theory, first expounded by Einstein, which calculates the amount of energy contained in a subatomic particle by multiplying its mass by the square of the speed of light: $E=mc^2$.”

“Well before 700 BC. Hindu sages were chanting *neti neti* (not that, not that), denying the ultimate reality of an external world in which they saw little more than illusion, and searching instead for the eternal spark of Brahman in the soul within all beings.”²⁷⁰

Roger Housden is the author of *Travels Through Sacred India* (1996) and a student of the spiritual traditions of India for over 20 years, concurs in his book:

“Time, for example, is intimately connected with the goddess Kali, which partly accounts for her destructive nature. Energy - in Einstein’s equation, $E=MC^2$ - is personified in India as Shakti in her various guises.”

“...The magnificent portrayal of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, when he appears to Arjuna and gives him the most profound of spiritual teaching.”

“India is a vast network of sacred places. The entire country is a sacred land. The sacrality of the land of India, is what, still today, gives a sense of unity to this country of so many religions, cultures, races and factions.”

“The Ganges is a living presence, a protector, a healer of ills. The Ganges is as alive as it ever was with the hopes and dreams of an entire culture. Countless flowers are strewn across her body daily; millions of lights set sail every evening upon her waters. While stories of gods and goddesses come and go with the ages, while one myth replaces or rivals another, the organic presence of Ganga continues as ever, absorbing her devotees’ offerings and ashes

in the same way she has done since time immemorial.”

“Christian missionaries, and Muslim invaders even more so, were naturally shocked at the profusion of ‘idols’ they found in every town and village in the country. Their distaste, however, was caused more by their own literalist manner of thinking than by any intrinsic inadequacy in the Hindu religion. The three religions of the Near East are all religions of the book. The word, which they all depend on, tends inevitably towards concretization: this is the truth, so that must be false. Once cast in stone, the truth has no freedom of movement. It becomes linear, set down for all time, and casts a shadow as dark as its words are bright. Hinduism had no founder, and no single book, foundation or organization to set uniform standards and rules. As in life, all the subtle variations of light and dark thrive there, and are indeed encouraged to do so.” ²⁷¹

Kanchan Gupta is a political commentator for the English language media.

He has observed that:

“One of the great strengths of Hinduism is that it is not an organized religion rigidly structured on verse and chapter of a single holy book. Hinduism accommodates in its fold believers and non-believers, iconoclasts and idol-worshippers, liberals and conservatives. It is at once amorphous and intense, reverent and irreverent, ancient and modern.”

“It is this strength that makes Hinduism a living religion, a life-sustaining experience.” ²⁷²

Richard Bernstein a former New York Times correspondent in China, book critic, is the author of the book, *Ultimate Journey* (2002).

On a visit to India, he was struck by how Hinduism is so detached from materialistic values. A meeting with the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram, a leading figure of Hinduism, was particularly enlightening. “With his entourage, the kind of conspicuous anti-materialism of it, really kind of brought home to me that Hinduism really is an ascetic religion,” he said.

“It is a religion which encourages people to look into themselves for truth as the goal of life rather than to get rich or to acquire power.” As evidence of this, Bernstein compared the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram to the Pope, who, he said, holds a comparable spiritual position in Roman Catholicism. Yet, “their appearance to the world is utterly, utterly different”, he said. “One is surrounded by the trappings of splendor — vast cathedrals and palaces and fabulous museums full of zillion-dollar paintings and sculptures... and all the trappings of power. I couldn’t show up in Rome and say ‘Gee, could I come and see the Pope?’ and be welcomed, but there I was in India, asking if I could meet the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram and I was welcomed.”

“One of the elements of India that is most difficult for the Western mind to grapple with is the depth and power of Hindu spirituality,” Bernstein noted. “It’s both troubling and inspiring that so many people who are so poor have time and energy for very, very thorough-going, intense and profound spiritual searches.” ²⁷³

Rizwan Salim is a reviewer for New York Tribune, Capitol Hill reporter, Engineering Times, assistant editor, American Sentinel, published in Hindustan Times.

He has wisely reflected that:

“Given the reality that Hindustan is the longest surviving ancient civilization and Hindus have to their credit so many unaccountable and such astonishing achievements of architecture and painting, music and dance, poetry and drama, epics and narratives, intellectual systems and philosophical doctrines, healing systems and mind-body disciplines, Hindus of every caste and class today should have possessed a well-informed and well-developed, intense and, fully conscious cultural pride.”

“But one of the principal tragedies of contemporary India is that the majority of even the educated and otherwise affluent Hindus do not possess a deep and extensive knowledge of their culture—and do not give evidence of an intensely felt cultural pride.’ Lacking profound cultural knowledge and intense cultural pride, India’s intellectuals regard the fashionable ideas and ideologies from Europe and America as unquestionably superior to Bharat’s

thousands of years old Hindu culture and wisdom.”

“There are not very many scholars of high ability and international reputation in India today who illuminate Hindu culture and Hindus’ past great accomplishments. It is an embarrassing truth that the best Indologists are found in the Netherlands and Sweden, Germany and France, Japan and Italy-not in Delhi and Ujjain, Varanasi and Puri, Madurai and Mysore.”

“It is clear that India at the time when Muslim invaders turned towards it (8 to 11th century) was the earth’s richest region for its wealth in precious and semi-precious stones, gold and silver; religion and culture; and its fine arts and letters. Tenth century Hindustan was also too far advanced than its contemporaries in the East and the West for its achievements in the realms of speculative philosophy and scientific theorizing, mathematics and knowledge of nature’s workings. Hindus of the early medieval period were unquestionably superior in more things than the Chinese, the Persians (including the Sassanians), the Romans and the Byzantines of the immediate preceding centuries. The followers of Siva and Vishnu on this subcontinent had created for themselves a society more mentally evolved - joyous and prosperous too - than had been realized by the Jews, Christians, and Muslim monotheists of the time. Medieval India, until the Islamic invaders destroyed it, was history’s most richly imaginative culture and one of the five most advanced civilizations of all times.”

“The descendents of those who built the magnificent temples of Bhojpur and Thanjavur, Konark and Kailas, invented mathematics and urban surgery, created mind-body disciplines (yoga) of astonishing power, and built mighty empires would almost certainly have attained technological superiority over Europe.”²⁷⁴

Dr. Aidan Rankin is the author of *Lifting the shadow and why Conservatives must reclaim human rights* and was a Research Fellow in Government at the London School of Economics and editor of the Britain’s leading environmental magazine, the Ecologist has written:

“Hinduism, whose rishis or seers the Greeks admired from afar, provides the strongest, most consistent critique of materialism.

It is the philosophical tradition best adapted to our post-modern age.”

He has pointed out that:

“Hinduism offers true universalism, that is to say unity-in-diversity. In the Hindu dharma, the individual can approach the divine in his or her own way. The eternal truth is the same truth, but can be pursued by different means, according to personal or cultural preference. Hindu economics is based on local production for local need, a principle to which the green movement now looks. Rooted in Hindu philosophy it offers a humane alternative to the failed socialist planning of Nehru - and the ascendant Coco Cola capitalism, the iniquities of which become more apparent every day. Similarly, the ethical teachings of the Vedas provide for a healthy balance between masculine and feminine principles, to the advantage of both and the detriment of neither. Above superficial ‘rights’ for individuals or groups, Vedic teaching exalts our responsibilities - for each other, as human beings, and to our fellow creatures that have souls as we do. Hinduism gives spiritual underpinnings to the new wisdom of Deep Ecology and the revelations of modern science.”

“Hinduism has survived its historical tribulations and is finding a new voice in world affairs.” ²⁷⁵

R S Nathan is the author of *Hinduism That is Sanatana Dharma*, and he has noted:

“The result is the profound Philosophy of Vedanta to which more and more men and women from all parts of the world are flocking today for light, solace and fulfillment. So in India, Philosophy is not a hobby or an escape, but an intense search for Truth after having found from experience that mundane achievements only complicate our lives and takes us farther from our real goal. In fact Rishis of yore did not make a distinction between Science on the one side, and Religion and Philosophy on the other. The Science of the Upa-Vedas and the Vedanagas, and the Philosophies are the Vedas-Vedangas, all culminating in the Vedanata – the end of the Vedas.”

“Sanatana Dharma” the most ancient of all the living religions of today, a non-prophetic religion popularly known as “Hinduism” since the last few centuries, based on all-embracing universal love, the eternal values of life and human endeavor, time-tested knowledge and wisdom, and all-comprehensive in its vision, has a permanent message enshrined in it, for the entire humanity irrespective of time, place and circumstances.” ²⁷⁶

M. J. Akbar (1951 -) is an Indian journalist and editor of *Asian Age* and author of *The Shade of Swords: Jihad and the Conflict Between Islam and Christianity* (2002), writes:

“Hinduism has a supernatural aspect, which involves faith in an afterlife; and a natural one, which guides the worldly behavior.”

“If Hinduism has a defining message, then it is humanism. There is space in its philosophy for everyone, which is one reason why India is a home to every single religion in the world. Anyone who has been persecuted anywhere else has found an undisturbed haven in India. This remained true even when men distorted the philosophy of Hinduism and introduced the inequities of caste: The attitude of Hinduism to other faiths continued to be liberal. Hinduism is synonymous with humanism. That is its essence and its great liberating quality.” ²⁷⁷

Andrew Harvey (1952 -) has devoted his life to studying the world’s mystical traditions. He is the author of several books including *The Direct Path creating a journey to the divine through the world’s mystical traditions* (2000).

He has noted:

“The Sanatana Dharma is a gallimaufry of the most extravagantly varied faiths, rituals, customs, beliefs; Hinduism has no single dogmatic authority and, until very recently in its history, no “missionary zeal” to convert others, sine it has never seen itself as the one true religion or the only hope of salvation.”

“While there is no one ‘exclusive’ dogmatic Hindu tradition, then, there is a very definitely, a spirit of inquiry and of revelation that is so consistent with the greatest of modern Hindu mystics, Ramana Maharshi...down the Upanishads more than two

thousand years before him. It is this consistency that gives the Hindu mystical tradition its timeless purity, weight, and grandeur.”

“What, then, is the core truth of the Hindu tradition? It is the truth of the mystery of a Spirit that pervades, creates, and transcends all things and of each soul’s conscious identity with it beyond space and time. In the Upanishads, this all-pervading, all-creating, all-transcending Spirit is named Brahman. For the Upanishads and all the later teachings rooted in them, every human being is naturally one with Brahman in his or her Atman, his or her “soul” or “indwelling core of divine consciousness.” The aim of human life and the source of liberation from all the chains of life and death is to know, from inmost experience, the Atman’s identity with Brahman and to live the calm, fearless, selflessly loving life that radiates from this knowledge.”

He has further stated that:

“It is its sublime ancient tolerance that was the true proof of the wisdom and mature dignity of the Hindu tradition. While there is no one “exclusive” dogmatic Hindu tradition, then, there is very definitely, a spirit of inquiry and of revelation that is so consistent that we find one of the greatest of modern Hindu mystics, Raman Maharishi, speaking in ways and with images that echo exactly the terminology of the anonymous seers who wrote down the Upanishads more than two thousand years before him. It is this consistency that gives the Hindu mystical tradition its timeless purity, weight, and grandeur. It is as if one eternal voice is speaking in and through a myriad different voice tirelessly exploring different registers of its own majestic range, as if all the tradition’s poems and meditations and philosophical texts are, in Zaehner words, “different-shaped peaks in one vast, grand, interconnected mountain chain, like the Himalayas.”

“The Hindu tradition provides exquisite, firm guidance toward this attunement because it has always recognized that different temperaments take different paths into the Sacred Marriage. It has not only recognized the validity of other religions, but has also acknowledged within itself a variety of paths.” No other mystical tradition has had so broad and wise and all-embracing a vision of the different aspects and faces of the path. As Robin

Zaehner used to say, “If anyone feels excluded from the Hindu embrace it is by his or her own perverse choice.”

“Perhaps the supreme gift of Hinduism to the world is that its Tantric traditions have kept the truth of the splendor, majesty and power of the Bride vibrant and alive in all her unbridled fullness. Worshipping Her as Devi, Ambika, Durga, Lakshmi or Kali, the Hindu Tantric mystics have known how to adore Her both as Queen of Transcendence and Earth Mother, and love Her both in Her terrifying, life-devouring aspects and as infinitely benign and tender.” ²⁷⁸

Tom McArthur is the author of *Yoga and the Bhagavad Gita* (1986) has observed:

“If all the forms of Christianity from voodoo in Haiti to Christian Science in Boston were penned up – and had for centuries been penned up – in one peninsula, however large, then the results would be much the same as the Hinduism we see today. Vishnu and Shiva are no more at odds than Calvin and the Papacy; the Hare Krishna movement and the Ramakrishna Mission are no further apart than the Pentecostals and the Jesuits.”

“Hinduism is India’s response to what the German philosopher of religion Rudolf Otto has called ‘the numinous’, that mystery all around us that fascinates and inspires awe. The universe into which we are born – thrust, thrown, whatever, weak and dependent as kittens – is only ever partly explicable, often hostile, and always awesome, whether we want to feel the awe or not.”

“Hinduism demonstrates the interplay of seven factors over at least 3,000 years. Natural disasters are a constant in the collective Indian experience, part of the Wheel of Rebirth. Mountains, rivers, cities, and shrines have all been turned into focuses of supernatural powers; they are the bindus or ‘points’ where the gods meet us or this world touches the other.”

He continues:

“Hinduism combines in its gigantic tapestry the threads of both fantasy and logic, where some centuries ago the Western world severed the two fairly thoroughly. In the West, rationality and

fantasy live uneasily together in divided minds; in India at large, the division was never even attempted, at least not until the coming of European education.”

“There are no Egyptian pharaohs now, but when Cleopatra lived there were yogis, and there are yogis still. The Greek philosophers and the Roman legions are no more, the Arab-Muslim expansion has come and gone, and the European maritime empires on which the sun wasn’t supposed to set have all been dismantled. Some kind of yoga was there when all that was happening, and many kinds of yoga are here now - some even being considered for use abroad starships. That is continuity and it is worth a little thought. Yoga is embedded in the literature of the Hindus as well as in their age old practices, and that literature is in turn one of the richest seams of recorded language anywhere on the planet. The sheer volume of stories, treatises, and commentaries challenges the imagination.” ²⁸⁰

T C Galav is the author of the book *Philosophy of Hinduism* (1992) and he expressed that:

“Hindus have given the world a Krishna, a Buddha, a Gandhi, and hundreds of equally great saints, seers and scholars from Valmiki and Ved Vyasa to Samkra, Tulsidasa and Vivekananda, and with them a most logical, scientific and secular philosophy of religion and free worship of God or free contemplation of the supernatural - something different from dogmas and creeds based on miracles, mysteries, and irrational stories.”

He states thus:

“Hinduism is freedom, especially the freedom in thinking about God.”

“Unlike other religions, Hinduism has no founder. It does not depend for its authority on the personality of any man - a messiah, a savior, a prophet, or a guru. Its authority is eternal Truth, which has revealed itself through the minds of great rishis who perfected themselves by long penances and are said to have heard in their hearts eternal truths as Sruti. Thus, it has become a cumulative record of metaphysical experimentation.”

“Rig Veda is the Veda par excellence, the real Veda that traces the earliest growth of religious ideas in India. It is the earliest book of the Hindus and, indeed of the whole world. It is in poetical form, has one thousand twenty eight poems or hymns called Samhita. It is so much full of thought that at this early period in history no poet in any other nation could have conceived them.”²⁸¹

Linda Johnsen holds a Master’s degree in Eastern studies. She is author of *Daughter of the Goddess: The Women Saints of India*, and *The Living Goddess: Reclaiming the Tradition of the Mother of the Universe*. She has published nearly 100 articles in magazines such as *Hinduism Today*, *Yoga Journal*, and *Yoga International* and has lectured throughout the United States on Hindu spirituality.

In her book on *Hinduism* (2001) she has observed that:

“Hinduism is the one world religion that reaches out to embrace other faiths with respect, a welcome change from groups who expend enormous amounts of energy condemning the sincere beliefs of others. There is no eternal damnation in Hinduism because Hindus believe absolutely no one is excluded from divine grace.”

“The Hindu tradition has held the culture of greater India together for thousands of years, through fair times and foul. Increasingly, we in the West are looking to Hinduism with the respect and appreciation it deserves, realizing we modern people have a great deal to learn from the oldest religion on Earth. Today, there’s a resurgence of interest in “the wisdom of the East.”

She has further pointed out that:

“Many of us in the West flounder spiritually, confused by the inability of our religions to square with scientific reality and craving actual spiritual experience of which our lives seem so devoid. We’re impressed by the ability of Eastern religions like Hinduism to meet science head on, agreeing in many respects about important topics, such as the age and size of the universe. Today, Hindu culture is one of the last remaining enclaves of a universal minded religion.”²⁸²

S Gurumurthy, a chartered accountant, columnist and founder of *Swadeshi Jagaran Manch* has written eloquently about Indic Civilization:

“In the East, more specifically in India, there prevailed a society and a social mind which thrived and happily grew within a multiplicity of thoughts. “Ano bhadrah kratavo yantu visatah” (“let noble thoughts come in from all directions of the universe”) went the Rigvedic invocation. We, therefore, welcomed all, whether it was the Parsis who came fleeing from the slaughter of Islamic theocratic marauders and received protection here for their race and their religion, or the Jews who were slaughtered and maimed everywhere else in the world. They all found a secure refuge here along with their culture, civilization, religion and the book.”

“There is continuity in Indian civilization today. It is not a frozen continuity. It is change and continuity. It is changeless India and yet changing India. It can interface with modern world, holding tradition in one hand. This is the civilizational assert that India has been able to preserve in spite of thousands of years of onslaught, with a stateless situation, with hostile ruling situation, which tried to destroy the society of India, the ethos of India, the lifestyle of India, the traditions and faith of India. This capacity to survive seems unique to Indian civilization. In Europe, the erosion of culture, family values and trivializing of marriage as mere biological relationship, all resulted in the decline of Europe so much, that they say, that in the next fifty years, there may be no Scandinavian nations.” ²⁸³ ²⁸⁴

Rudolph Wurlitzer is a screenwriter, novelist and author of *Hard Travel to Sacred Places* (1995). While visitng Angkor Wat, the largest Hindu temple in the world, he has written:

“We stumble around the massive solemnity of this temple mountain, which offers not so much solace or refuge as it does awe and even a shiver of atavistic fear at the omniscience of its precision. It is a place of power, once ruled by Hindu devarajas, under whose totality religious art and sculpture reflect Shiva and Vishnu...”

“One huge bas relief in particular stuns us with its fluid elegance in depicting the Hindu creation myth, “churning the sea of milk” In a union between gods and demons, the giant serpent Vasuki is pulled back and forth between the monkey god, Hanuman, and a line of demons. Vasuki who has wrapped himself around Mount Mandara, is supported by a giant turtle in the Sea of Milk, the ocean of immortality. As Vishnu overseas this divine rhythm of

opposites, the gods and demons rotate the mountain and churn the sea into foam, releasing a seminal fluid which creates a divine ambrosia, or amrita, the essence of elixir of life. Much of the bas-relief has faded from centuries of worshippers rubbing their hands over the figures, but overall it is still exquisitely defined.”

“Angkor wat has overpowered as much as inspired me. It is as if I’ve trapped myself my wishing for relief, for a transcendent moment, or even, on a more banal level, a catalyst that would revive our sagging energies. The magnificence of the sheer mass of Angkor Wat, the weight and abundance of imagery has become oppressive. I am disoriented by so much visual grandeur.” ²⁸⁵

Richard Schiffman is nationally known as an on-air journalist whose features regularly appear on the National Public Radio shows: *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, and *Living of Earth*. He has studied in India for over four years and is the author of *Sri Ramakrishna - Prophet for the New Age* (1989).

He has observed about the Upanishads thus:

“These sparse treatises of great beauty, intensity, and revelatory power are set for the most part in the form of dialogues of spiritual guidance between youthful seekers and their enlightened masters, the immortal rishis. The approaches pioneered by the rishis remain to this day the mainstays of Hindu mystical practices.”

“Living far from the concerns of the larger society, these sages nonetheless initiated a revolution in thought and spiritual practice which would spread throughout Asia and beyond, setting the basic agenda for the development of over two millennia of Eastern civilization – and just now sparking some interesting fireworks along the cutting edge of our own exploration which has continued until the present day. And they charted in breathless and enigmatic words – the only words possible for describing such a mystery! – the rough outlines of a realm as wide as the cosmos and equally as wondrous. For had not the sage of the *Chandogya Upanishad* declared: “The little space within the heart is as great as this vast universe. The heavens and the earth are there, and the sun and the moon, and the stars; fire and lightning and winds are there; and all that now is and all that is

not: for the whole universe is in Him and He dwells within our hearts." "With words such as these, the rishis were the first to proclaim the virtually unlimited potential of consciousness, not as an abstract theoretical possibility, but as an experiential reality."

"The Upanishads are the living expression of that understanding."

Reflecting on post-Newtonian physics, he has noted that:

"This primal insight into the dreamlike nature of the world of appearances has an oddly contemporary resonance given the direction of modern scientific thought. Long before post-Newtonian physics "discovered" that matter is essentially energy in drag – $E = MC^2$ – the sages had already intuited that the physical universe is an emanation of the omnipotent Force, which they call Shakti. "By Primal Energy, all that exist is born; by Primal Energy all that exists is sustained; and into Primal Energy all that exists returns in the end." Creation, according to this view, is neither static, nor at base even material, but a dynamism of ceaseless transformation, the ecstatic dance of the Divine Mother Kali. The astrophysicist, the molecular biologist, the subatomic physicist could only agree."²⁸⁶

Ed Viswanathan is the author of the bestseller book, "*Am I a Hindu?: The Hinduism Primer*" (1992) is a form of dialog between a Hindu father and his American-born son. It presents a great overview of Hinduism.

He has written very astutely about the open mindedness of Hinduism and one of its greatest traits, thus:

"Hinduism has no problem facing any type of question. It does not have to hide behind unpronounceable Sanskrit words or spiritual dogma. Instead, it absorbs new ideas like a sponge. Believe it or not, Hinduism recharges itself with modern thoughts. Technology, psychology, parapsychology, modern astronomy, the new physics and genetics all enrich Hinduism." "Within Hinduism, you can think and argue on any subject. It has no hierarchy, it has no establishment and it has no governing body."

Viswanathan has rightly pointed out that Hinduism readily and easily encompasses a whole gamut of ideas and thoughts known to mankind:

"It has highly spiritualistic Advaita and Raja Yoga on one side and highly materialistic atheistic, hedonistic Charvaka philosophy, which does not believe in God or the Vedas, on the other side. On one side, idolatry is a part of Hinduism. The Jahala Upanishad says, "Images are meant only as aids to meditation for the ignorant."

"Hinduism is not a religion that seeks to convert. In fact Hindus consider it to be absurd to state that only one religion is the true religion of the world. Writing about this, he states: "The Hindu yogi will never try to convert a person from another religion to Hinduism. Instead he will try to make a person's faith steadfast in his/her own religion. The Bhagavad Gita says, "In whatever form a devotee seeks to worship Me with faith, I make his faith steadfast in that form alone." He further explains about sin in Hinduism: "Hinduism very scientifically deals with sin, explaining the law of karma, or cause and effect. All the parables in mythology explain how to deal with sins in a very positive manner. When a child puts his hand in fire, he gets burned. His action here is due to his ignorance of the power of fire. The child did not commit a sin, but due to his ignorance of the truth that fire burns, he did a bad Karma and he had the result of getting burned. That is the way the idea of sin is explained in Hinduism. Christianity has stressed sin and fear of God and hell. Hinduism stands against the doctrine of sin."²⁸⁷

Yann Martel (1963 -) is a Canadian who won this year's Booker Prize for *Life of Pi* thinks:

"Hinduism — is a very open religion. It can lend itself to so much,"

Martel claims he has always loved India. "India is all lives in one place; India is all emotions in one place. It's an extra - ordinary, dazzling place, it's all the wonder and horror of life."

According to him, India stokes the fires of creativity.

"There are stories that can be told only in India. There are things that are possible in India that are not possible anywhere else."

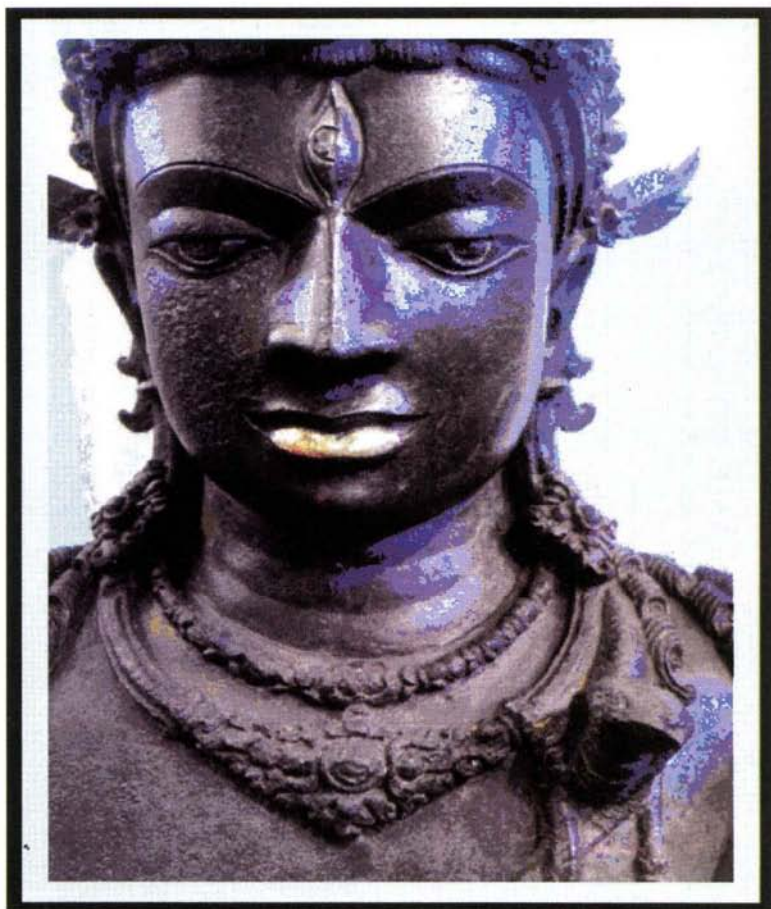
"It's a country that dazzles me because it is all of life. I truly think that in some ways, India is the richest place on earth."²⁸⁸

Chapter 3

Historians

“It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation is the ancient Hindu way. Here we have the attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together in to a single family.” “India is not only the heir of her own religious traditions; she is also the residuary legatee of the Ancient Mediterranean World’s religious traditions.”

- Dr. Arnold Joseph Toynbee



Lips glittering Lord Shiva in the form of Avalokiteshvara from Indonesia. This statue was covered with a form of black soya sediment coat to camouflage from being stolen. When it was found archaeologist scrapped lower part of the lips to reveal that it was golden statue.

Photo courtesy: Vikneswaran Shunmugam, Malaysia.

Historians

History is the branch of knowledge dealing with and recording past events. India's hoary antiquity is immense and enormous and has impressed most historians across the globe. Her history for many centuries was relatively peaceful, which helped build a nation of meditative philosophers. India's historic past has seen several lengthy incursions and intrusions. Hindu India has faced endless persecutions and has yet lived in peaceful coexistence with other faiths. Arthur Toynbee and others who on many occasions contrasted the exclusivity of the Semitic religion recognized this spirit of tolerance of Hinduism.



Flavius Arrian (2nd century) was a Greek historian of the campaigns of Alexander, thought of the Hindus:

“They are remarkably brave, and superior in war to all Asiatics; they are remarkable for integrity; they are so reasonable as seldom to have recourse to law suits, and so honest as to require neither locks to their doors nor writings to bind their agreements. They are in the highest degree truthful.” ²⁸⁹

Al-Jahiz was the 9th century Muslim historian.

He observed that:

“The Hindus excel in astrology, mathematics, medicine and in various other sciences. They have developed to perfection arts

like sculpture, painting, and architecture. They have collections of poetry, philosophy, literature and science of morals. From India we received the book called *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. These people have judgment and are brave. They possess the virtues of cleanliness and purity. Contemplation has originated with them.”²⁹⁰

Yaqubi was the 9th century Muslim historian has stated:

“The Hindus are superior to all other nations in intelligence and thoughtfulness. They are more exact in astronomy and astrology than any other people.”

“*The Siddhanta* is a good proof of their intellectual powers; by this book the Greeks and Persians have also profited. In medicine their opinion ranks first.”²⁹¹

Abdullah Wassaf writing in the 14th century A.D. says of India in his history book, *Tazjiyatul Amsar*:

“India, according to the concurrent opinion of all writers, is the most agreeable abode on earth and the most pleasant quarter of the world. Its dust is purer than air and its air is purer than purity itself: Its delightful plains resemble the garden of paradise.”

Sir William Wilson Hunter (1840-1900) was educated at Glasgow University (B.A. 1860), Paris and Bonn, acquiring knowledge of Sanscrit, and passing first in the final examination for the Indian Civil Service in 1862. He was the author of *A Brief History of the Indian Peoples* and editor of *Imperial Gazetteer of India*.

He remarked that:

“The Astronomy of the Hindus has formed the subject of excessive admiration.”²⁹²

“The various theories of creation, arrangement and development were each elaborated, and the views of the modern physiologists at the present day are a return with new light to the evolution theory of Kapila, whose Sankhya system is the oldest of the Darsanas.”²⁹³

“The Hindus attained a very high proficiency in arithmetic and algebra independently of any foreign influence.” The romance of

the composition of *Lilavati* - the standard Hindu textbook on Arithmetic by Bhaskaracharya - is very interesting and charming. It deals not only with the basic elements of the science of arithmetic but also with questions of interest, of barter, of permutations and combinations, and of mensuration. Bhaskaracharya knew the law of gravitation. *The Surya Siddhanta* is based on a system of trigonometry. Professor Wallace says: "In fact it is founded on a geometrical theorem, which was not known to the geometricians of Europe before the time of Vieta, about two hundred years ago. And it employs the sine of arcs, a thing unknown to the Greeks." The 47th proposition of Book I of Euclid, which is ascribed to Pythagoras was known long ago to the Hindus and must have been learnt from them by Pythagoras." ²⁹⁴

He observed:

"The grammar of Panini stands supreme among the grammars of the world, alike for its precision of statement, and for its thorough analysis of the roots of the language and of the formative principles of words. By employing an algebraic terminology it attains a sharp succinctness unrivalled in brevity, but at times enigmatical. It arranges, in logical harmony, the whole phenomena, which the Sanskrit language presents, and stands forth as one of the most splendid achievements of human invention and industry. So elaborate is the structure that doubts have arisen whether its complex rules of formation and phonetic change, its polysyllabic derivatives, its ten conjugations with their multiform aorists and long array of tenses, could ever have been the spoken language of a people." ²⁹⁵

Edward Gibbon (1734 -1794) was an English historian and scholar, the supreme historian of the Enlightenment, who is best known as the author of the monumental work of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776).

He admirably describes the religious freedom in Hinduism:

"Thus the Hindus have an extraordinary wide selection of beliefs and practices to choose from: they can be monotheists, pantheists, polytheists, agnostics or even atheists. They may follow a strict or a loose standard of moral conduct, or they may

choose instead an amoral emotionalism or mysticism. They may worship regularly at a temple or may not go there at all.”

“The ancient Romans also had a similar form of worship like the Hindus.” “The policy of the emperors and the senate, as far as it concerned religion, was happily seconded by the enlightened, and by the habits of the superstitious, part of their subjects. The various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people, as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.” ²⁹⁶

Thomas Carlyle (1795 - 1881) was a Scottish-born English historian and essayist who was a leading figure in the Victorian era.

He was a novelist who exerted a huge influence over the Victorian age. His major works are the satirical novel *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4) *The French Revolution* (1837) and the lecture-series *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841).

The Vedantic note in Carlyle’s writings is too well known to require mention. And the Gita was the only book he chose to present to Ralph Waldo Emerson when the latter met him for the first time. ²⁹⁷

Thomas Carlyle, in *Sartor Resartus* exclaims:

“Detached, separated! I say that there is no such separation, nothing hitherto was ever stranded, cast aside;The withered leaf is not dead and lost, there are Forces in it and around it, though working in inverse order, else how could it rot? Rightly viewed no meanest object is insignificant: all objects are as windows, through which the philosophies eye look into infinitude itself.”

In the last lines he rises to passionate heights in his assertion of the same theory, which fascinated the first Hindu thinkers. ²⁹⁸

Alexander Dow was the author of *History of Hindustan* (1903) and had published an essay on Hinduism, entitled *A Dissertation Concerning the Customs, Manners, Language, Religion, and*

Philosophy of the Hindus (1768). The first European scholar to produce a real dissertation on Sanskrit learning, he pointed out the vast quantities of Sanskrit literature in existence, plus the fact that the history of the Hindus was older than that of any other people.²⁹⁹

Jules Michelet (1798 -1874) was a French writer and the greatest historian of the Romantic school. He was the author of several books including *Bible de l'humanité* and *Histoire de France*.

He noted:

“At its starting point in India, the birthplace of races and religions, the womb of the world.”

While seeking for the wisdom of ages, he cried at the commencement of his work, “The Bible of Humanity”: “The year 1863 will remain dear and blessed to me.” Why? It was because he had read India’s sacred poem, the *Ramayana*.

“Divine poem, ocean of milk!” cried Michelet on discovering this ancient Scripture.

In what moving terms he then wrote about India. We can but transcribe his burning words:

“Each year, it is necessary to respire, to take breath again, to revive ourselves at the great living sources that forever keep their eternal freshness. Where can we find them if not at the cradle of our race, on the sacred summits from where descend the Indus and the Ganges?”³⁰⁰

Having read Fauche’s translation of the *Ramayana* in 1863, Michelet said:

“That year will always remain a dear and cherished memory; it was the first time I had the opportunity to read the great sacred poem of India, the divine *Ramayana*. If anyone has lost the freshness of emotion, let him drink a long draught of life, and youth from that deep chalice.”³⁰¹

This is what Michelet movingly said of the Epic of The *Ramayana*:

“Whoever has done or willed too much let him drink from this deep cup a long draught of life and youth.....Everything is narrow in the West - Greece is small and I stifle; Judea is dry and I pant. Let me look toward lofty Asia, and the profound East for a little while. There lies my great poem, as vast as the Indian Ocean, blessed, gilded with the sun, the book of divine harmony wherein is no dissonance. A serene peace reigns there, and in the midst of conflict an infinite sweetness, a boundless fraternity, which spreads over all living things, an ocean (without bottom or bound) of love, of pity, of clemency.”

Such was the first and enduring impression made on Michelet by the Ramayana.^{302 303}

He expressed further that:

“From India comes to us a torrent of light, a river of Right and Reason”³⁰⁴

“Whereas, in our Occident, the most dry and sterile minds brag in front of Nature, the Indian genius, the most rich and fecund of all, knows neither small nor big and has generously embraced universal fraternity, even the identity of all souls.”³⁰⁵

Edgar Quinet (1803 - 1875) was a French Historian. His first publication, the *Tablettes du juif errant* (*Tablets of the Wandering Jew*) appeared in 1823. Being struck with Johann Gottfried Herder's *Philosophie der Geschichte* (Philosophy of History), he undertook to translate it, learnt German for the purpose, published his work in 1827, and obtained by it considerable credit. At this time he was introduced to Victor Cousin, and made the acquaintance of Jules Michelet. In 1839 he was appointed professor of foreign literature at Lyon, where he began the brilliant course of lectures afterwards embodied in the *Génie des religions*. Two years later he was transferred to the Collège de France, and the *Génie des religions*, which appeared in 1842.

In his *Génie des religions*, Quinet introduced the title ‘The Oriental Renaissance’ to his chapter describing the event:

“In the first ardor of their discoveries, the orientalist proclaimed that, in its entirety, an antiquity more profound, more philosophical, and more poetical than that of Greece and Rome was emerging from the depths of Asia. [One that promised] a new Reformation of the religious and secular world. This is the great subject in philosophy today.”

Quinet believed that:

“When human revolutions first began, India stood more expressly than any other country for what may be called a Declaration of the Rights of the Being. That divine Individuality, and its community with infinity, is obviously the foundation and the source of all life and all history.” ³⁰⁶

Sir Henry M. Elliot (1808 – 1853) was the author of *History of India*, volume III and he has written:

“It is asserted that Paradise is in India,

Be not surprised, because Paradise itself is not comparable to it.” ³⁰⁷

William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838 -1903) was an Irish historian, essayist and author of *The Substance of History of European Morals (From Augustus to Charlemagne)*.

He quotes an old tradition in Greece that Pythagoras himself had come to India and learnt philosophy from the gymnosophists. It seems he believed in an “all-pervading soul” which is at least one important attribute to Hindu atman. Pythagoras believed in rebirth or transmigration; he taught and practiced harmlessness or no-injury, he taught silence; he taught that the end of man is to “become like God”. Orphic mysteries taught release (lysis) from all material entanglements, which is close to moksha of the Hindus. ³⁰⁸

Vincent Arthur Smith (1848 – 1920) served in the Indian Civil Service for almost thirty years before retiring to become a historian. He is best known for *The Oxford History of India* (1918), but was also recognized as an authority on India’s early history, fine art, and the great emperors Ashoka and Akbar. He wrote *The Oxford*

Student's History of India in 1908, and “constantly revised” it until his death twelve years later.

He says:

“India ...beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, color, language, dress, manners and sect.”

He prudently observed that:

“Hinduism has never produced an exclusive, dominant, orthodox sect, with a formula of faith to be professed or rejected under pain of damnation.” ³⁰⁹

Regarding astronomy, he wrote:

“The most systematic record of Indian Historical tradition is that preserved in the dynastic lists of the Puranas, five out of the eighteen works of this class, namely the Vayu, Matsya, Vishnu, Bramhanda and Bhagvata contain such lists. The Brahmanda and the Vayu as well as the Matsya, which has large later additions, appear to be the earliest and most authoritative.” ³¹⁰

Herbert George H. G. Wells (1866 -1946) was a historian, a bitter critic of the Roman Catholic Church and author of several books including *A Short History of the World* and *Crux Ansata: An Indictment of the Roman Catholic Church* and *The Time Machine*.

He rightly noted that:

“In Hinduism, tolerance is not simply a matter of policy but an article of faith. He said that Hindu kings actually welcomed with open arms Christian Missionaries and Muslim fakirs and Buddhist monks for a free exchange of ideas. One great Hindu king, Ashoka, in fact changed his religion to Buddhism and propagated Buddhism throughout India.” ³¹¹

Mr. Wells has remarked:

"The history of India for many centuries had been happier, less fierce, and more dreamlike than any other history. In these favorable conditions, they built a character - meditative and peaceful and a "nation of philosophers such as could nowhere have existed except in India."³¹²

Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji (1884 -1964) was a distinguished historian and author of several books including Hindu civilization (from the earliest times up to the establishment of Maurya empire), *Ancient Indian Education: Brahmanical and Buddhist* (1951) and *Indian Shipping: a history of the seaborne trade and maritime activity of the Indians from the earliest times* (1957).

He judiciously noted that:

"The first point of distinction is that the Vedas and especially the primordial work known as the Rig Veda, represents not merely the dawn of culture, but also its zenith. Indian thought is seen at its highest in the Rig Veda. ...On the one hand it is the first book of India and also of mankind. At the same time it shows the highest point of human wisdom. We see in it the whole process of evolution from its beginning to the completion."³¹³

He remarks on ancient Indian history:

"For full thirty centuries India stood out as the very heart of the old world and maintained her position as one of the foremost maritime countries. She had colonies in Pegu, in Cambodia, in Java in Sumatra, in Borneo and even in the countries of the Farther East as far as Japan. She had trading settlements in Southern China, in the Malayan Peninsula, in Arabia and in all the chief cities of Persia and all over the East Coast of Africa. She cultivated trade relations not only with the countries of Asia, but with the whole of the then known world, including the countries under the dominion of the Roman Empire, and both the East and West became the theatre of Indian commercial activity and gave scope of her naval energy and throbbing international life."

"We now know that many ports on both Eastern and Western Coast had navigational and trade links with almost all Continents of the world. There are many natural and technological reasons

for this. Apart from Mathematics and Astronomy, India had excellent manufacturing skills in textile, metal works and paints. India had abundant supply of Timber. Indian - built ships were superior as they were built of Teak which resists the effect of salt water and weather for a very long time.”³¹⁴

Will Durant (1885 -1981) was a Pulitzer Prize winner whose books included *The Story of Philosophy* and *The Story of Civilization* series. He was an American historian, who would like the West to learn from India, tolerance and gentleness and love for all living things:

He wisely observed that:

“It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier India has sent to us such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit; they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future.”

He hoped that:

“Perhaps in return for conquest, arrogance and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, a pacifying love for all living things.”³¹⁵

Durant pointed out that:

“India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages: she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all.” Nothing should more deeply shame the modern student than the recency and inadequacy of his acquaintance with India. This is the India that patient scholarship is now opening up like a new intellectual continent to that Western mind which only yesterday thought civilization an exclusive Western thing.”

“As flowing rivers disappear in the sea, losing their name and form, thus a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the divine person who is beyond all.” Such a theory of life and death will not please Western man, whose religion is as permeated with individualism as are his political and economic institutions. But it has satisfied the philosophical Hindu mind with astonishing continuity.”

He has noted in his book, *The Case for India*:

“India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages: she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all.” Nothing should more deeply shame the modern student than the recency and inadequacy of his acquaintance with India.... This is the India that patient scholarship is now opening up like a new intellectual continent to that Western mind which only yesterday thought civilization an exclusive Western thing.”

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Durant felt that:

“Even in Europe and America, this wistful theosophy has won millions upon millions of followers, from lonely women and tired men to Schopenhauer and Emerson. Who would have thought that the great American philosopher of individualism would give perfect expression to the Hindu conviction in his poem *Brahma*, that individuality is a delusion?”

He wrote this about the *Upanishads*, and how they had begun to stir Western thought:

“They are the oldest extant philosophy and psychology of our race; the surprisingly subtle and patient effort of man to understand the mind and the world, and their relation. The Upanishads are as old as Homer, and as modern as Kant.”

“But hardly had the British established themselves in India before editions and translations of the Upanishads began to stir Western thought. Fichte conceived an idealism strangely like Shankara’s; Schopenhauer almost incorporated Buddhism, the Upanishads and the Vedanta into his philosophy; and Schelling, in his old age, thought the Upanishads the maturest wisdom of mankind. Nietzsche had dwelt too long with Bismark and the Greeks to care for India, but in the end he valued above all other ideas his haunting notion of eternal recurrence – a variant of reincarnation.”³¹⁶

Durant truly one of the most recognized historians in the world, has remarked on the universal applicability of the Vedanta paradigm.

Sardar Kavalam Madhava Panikkar (1896-1963) was an Indian scholar, journalist, historian from Kerala, administrator, diplomat, Minister in Patiala Bikaner and Ambassador to China, Egypt and France. He was the author of several books, including *Asia and Western Dominance* (1955) and *India Through the ages and India and the Indian Ocean* (1945).

He has succinctly summed up the basic tenets of Hinduism, which show that the Divine for the Hindu is a family phenomenon and not a distant Truth.

He emphasized clearly that:

“The Hindu belief in one God, conceived as the universal soul or Paramatma, the absolute and eternal, beyond the categories of thought and expression, and embracing the entire universe. The text - there is only One, the learned speak of it in many ways. Though the Paramatma is impersonal or without qualities in itself in relation to the world expressed in terms of the relative, it is personal and man’s mind conceives it as having qualities and form. This leads to the doctrine of Ishta Devata, or God, as conceived according to one’s preference, as father, mother, guru,

lover or even friend. The One Supreme thus assumes for the devotee the qualities and form in which he likes to worship. Many who worship the Supreme as Krishna think of him as a playful child, others as the great guru. In the same way, others conceive God as the Divine Mother. It is this doctrine of Ishta Devata, the freedom given to every one to worship God with the attributes of his own choice, never however forgetting that the Supreme has no qualities, that has led to the misconception that Hinduism is polytheistic. In a sense, it is true that there can be as many forms of Godhead in Hinduism as there are believers, for each one can conceive God only as the limitations of his own mind permit him.”³¹⁷

Panikkar reflected about the unique and major aspect of Indian culture:

“Another major aspect of Indian culture is its open attitude to science. India’s religious ideas deal only with the relations of god and man, and, consequently, there are no dogmatic views regarding material aspects of the universe. You are no doubt aware of the tremendous shock to the European world of belief when the discovery of Copernicus, that it is the earth which rotates round the sun, was announced. It took many decades before the discovery could be publicly stated. And yet Aryabhata had made the same discovery more than a thousand years before the time of Copernicus, without causing any flutter in India. This shows the open attitude of Indian Culture to science was not shared generally even by Europe.”³¹⁸

Dr. Arnold Joseph Toynbee (1889-1975) was the great British historian. His massive research was published in 12 volumes between 1934 and 1961 as *A Study of History*. He was the author of several books, including *Christianity: Among the Religions of the World* and *One World and India*.

Toynbee was a major interpreter of human civilization in the 20th century.

He has astutely remarked that:

“It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western

beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation is the ancient Hindu way. Here we have the attitude and spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together in to a single family.”

The tolerance of Hinduism was recognized by Toynbee, who on many occasions contrasted the exclusivity of the Jewish religion, based on the Jewish belief that the Jews are the chosen people with the large tolerance of the Hindus and Buddhist. This plague of exclusiveness, he claims, was inherited by both the Christians and Muslims: hence their lamentable record. ³¹⁹

“There may or may not be only one single absolute truth and only one single ultimate way of salvation. We do not know. But we do know that there are more approaches to truth than one, and more means of salvation than one.” “This is a hard saying for adherents of the higher religions of the Judaic family (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), but it is a truism for Hindus. The spirit of mutual good will, esteem, and veritable love ... is the traditional spirit of the religions of the Indian family. This is one of India’s gifts to the world.” ³²⁰

Toynbee predicted:

“At the close of this century, the world would be dominated by the West, but that in the 21st century “India will conquer her conquerors.” ³²¹

“India is a whole world in herself; she is a society of the same magnitude as our Western society.” ³²²

In 1952, Toynbee had shrewdly observed:

“In fifty years, the world would be under the hegemony of the USA, but in the 21st century, as religion captures the place of technology, it is possible that India, the conquered, will conquer its conquerors.” ³²³

“India is not only the heir of her own religious traditions; she is also the residuary legatee of the Ancient Mediterranean World’s religious traditions.” “Religion cuts far deeper, and, at the religious

level, India has not been a recipient; she has been a giver. About half the total number of the living higher religions is of Indian origin.”³²⁴

Toynbee explains his position in clear terms: In our spiritual struggle, he says:

“I guess that both the West and the world are getting to turn away from man - worshipping ideologies - Communism and secular individualism alike - and become converted to an Oriental religion coming neither from Russia nor from the West. I guess that this will be the Christian religion that came to the Greeks and the Romans from Palestine, with one or two elements in traditional Christianity discarded and replaced by a new element from India, I expect and hope that this avatar of Christianity will include the vision of God as being Love. But I also expect and hope that it will discard the other traditional Christian vision of God as being a jealous god, and that it will reject the self-glorification of this jealous god’s “chosen people” as being unique. This is where India comes in, with her belief that there may be more than one illuminating and saving approach to the mystery of the universe.”³²⁵

Joseph Needham (1900-1995) was a historian and was famous mainly for the formidable magnitude and scholarship of his work on science in China. He was the author of *Science and Civilisation in China*.

He was impressed by the achievements of India in the field of knowledge and learning.

He comments on the Indian fascination with perpetual motion, ‘to seek the ultimate origin or predisposition of the Indian conviction in the profoundly Hindu world view of endless cyclical change, kalpa and mahakalpas succeeding one another in self-sufficient and unwearying round. For Hindus as well as Taoists, the universe itself was a perpetual motion machine.’”³²⁶

In his lecture to the students of Cambridge University in 1963 he gave full compliments to India’s intellectual heritage.

He said, “it is good to remember, therefore, that our own pious founders were not the only men, and that Christendom was not the only culture, to set on foot great and noble institutions of learning where successive generations of students assembled to get the benefits of education and research. When the men of Alexander the Great came to Taxila in India in the fourth century BC they found a university the like of which had not then been seen in Greece... and was still existing when the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien went there about AD 400.” ³²⁷

“Indian culture in all probability excelled in systematic thought about Nature (as for example in the Samkhya atomic theories of Kshana, bhutadim paramanu, etc.), including also biological speculations... When the balance comes to be made up, it will be found I believe, that Indian scientific history holds as many brilliant surprises...” ³²⁸

Robert R. C. Zaehner (1913 -1974) was a British historian of religion who investigated the evolution of ethical systems and forms of mysticism, particularly in Eastern religions. The son of Swiss parents who had immigrated to England, Zaehner studied Oriental languages at the University of Oxford. He is the author of several books including *Hindu Scriptures*, and *Hinduism*.

It was the sublime ancient tolerance of Hinduism that he often stressed that was the true proof of the wisdom and mature dignity of the Hindu tradition.

He prudently pointed out that the wisdom of Hinduism:

“In the family of religions, Hinduism is the wise old all-knowing mother. Its sacred books, the Vedas, claim, ‘Truth is one, but sages call it by different names.’ If only Islam, and all the rest of the monotheistic ‘book’ religions, had learned that lesson, all the horror of history’s religious wars could have been avoided. Which other religion has its God say, as Krishna does in the Bhagavad Gita, ‘All paths lead to me.’”

He bemoaned that:

"If only the Church had the sense to allow so many different and seemingly contradictory approaches to God, how much saner its history would have been!"

He also observed that all traditional poems and meditations and philosophical texts of Hinduism are "different-shaped peaks in one vast, grand, interconnected mountain chain, like the Himalayas."³²⁹

Gertrude Emerson Sen (? -1982) was a historian and journalist and Asia specialist. She was the author of several books including *The Story of Early Indian Civilization*. She married a Bengali - Basiswar Sen and in her *Voiceless India*, she learned to love the deep-rooted Indian view of life, Indian ways of thought and Indian ideals.

She considered Hinduism a priceless heritage of India.

The vast archaic literature been handed down, and which faithfully preserves the ideas and ideals of those far-off times. It establishes the wonderful continuity and depth of Indian civilization.

She wrote with feeling:

"As the Indian sages pondered on the problem of good and evil, they were confronted with the apparent injustices and cruelties of the world around them, and this state of affairs was finally reconciled with their idea of Brahman by the conception of a universal ethical law applying to all life. This law as proclaimed as the law of karma. In the words of the Upanishads, "As is a man's desire so is his will, and as is his will so is his deed, and whatever deed he does that he will reap."

"India held a strange and irresistible attraction for the whole of Asia in the first millennium. People in the most primitive stage of development as well as the Chinese with a civilization as ancient and illustrious as India's own, acknowledged India as first in the supreme realm of spiritual perception. Yet the civilization of India, transplanted abroad, did not have a deadening effect of suppressing or stifling native genius, as the imposition of a foreign culture often does. On the contrary, it called out the best that others had to give. As a result of India's fertilizing influence,

new and distinctive types of culture everywhere arose, and each new colony was able to create and contribute fresh treasure, to be added to the great Asiatic heritage. How Indian religions and Indian culture blossomed anew in foreign environments and endured for many centuries is a fascinating and little appreciated chapter of Indian history.”

She remarked on the growth of India and Indic ideas:

“The Indian colonies which began to grow up all along the periphery of the motherland were essentially cultural and religious, rather than political or racial. Yet they were subject to strong Indian influences. These swept outward like tidal waves. They passed south to Sri Lanka and beyond to the remote islands of the Pacific. They inundated Burma, Malaya, Siam and Indo-China. They overwhelmed Nepal and Tibet. From Afghanistan, they passed along to central Asia and China. They lapped at the far shores of Korea and Japan. Indian religious ideas and literature, Indian conventions of art and architecture, Indian legal codes and social practices...all took root in these outer territories.” “For a long time Indians seem to have held the monopoly of maritime commerce in both the southern and eastern seas of Asia. They possessed large ocean-going vessels, in which they first ventured to Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaya and gradually they extended their journeys to Java and Sumatra and then to southern China.” ³³⁰

Paul Johnson (1928 -) is the eminent British historian and author of several books including *A History of the American People* has observed that to prosper a nation needs tolerance. He pointed out the economic value of being tolerant. All societies flourish mightily when tolerance is the norm. And India is a good example of this. India’s tradition, particularly the Hindu tradition of tolerance, has been exalted by Johnson to make his point that whenever a society develops tolerance, there is prosperity in the society.

He astutely points about India:

“It is the nature of the Hindu religion to be tolerant and, in its own curious way, permissive. Under the socialist regime of Jawaharlal Nehru and his family successors the state was intolerant, restrictive and grotesquely bureaucratic. That has

largely changed (though much bureaucracy remains), and the natural tolerance of the Hindu mind-set has replaced quasi-Marxist rigidity.”³³¹

In what appeared to be a thumbs-up to Hindu nationalism espoused by the BJP government, Johnson also took a swipe at the country’s Congress legacy, arguing, “Under the socialist regime of Jawaharlal Nehru and his family successors the state was intolerant, restrictive and grotesquely bureaucratic. “That has largely changed (though much bureaucracy remains), he wrote, and the “natural tolerance of the Hindu mind-set has replaced quasi-Marxist rigidity.”³³²

Michael Wood (1948 -) is a British historian/host/writer of *The Barbarian West* and *India: The Empire of the Spirit* public TV documentaries.

At the heart of the Western Civilization, says Wood, lies a deep streak of violence, which drives them to exploit nature and mankind.

“Usually it is said that the East is hopelessly backward and needs to catch up with the West. But, a consideration of the legacy of these great civilizations suggests, says Wood that the West has some catching up to do. It needs to learn from the East a way of cultivating its inner space, of accepting limits and desires in an increasingly finite world.”

“In the past 200 years one form of civilization, that of the West, has changed the balance of nature for ever. And now it is civilization itself which has become a central problem of our world.”

Taking the Eastern perspective of life, Wood leads us through Western history from its Greco/Roman beginnings to Sir Francis Bacon’s and momentous treatise declaring science’s supremacy over God. Wood says this is where the West really got off-track, into matter, away from spirit. Final frames of this uncomplimentary portrait of Western societies-and their claims of superiority over Eastern cultures-are cuts from NASA spaceships to a worship scene in Meenaskhi temple, South India, where Wood suggests real civilization has been flourishing for millennia.

He forcefully appreciates India's spirituality and culture and narrates:

"History is full of empires of the sword, but India alone created an empire of the spirit."

"India was one of the earliest of the great civilizations and it defined the goals of civilized life very differently from the West. The West raised individualism, materialism, rationality, [and] masculinity as its ideals. India's great tradition insisted on non-violence, renunciation, the inner life, [and] the female as pillars of civilization. And through all the triumphs and disasters of her history she hung on to that ideal, an eternal quest to identify humanity with the whole of creation, a unity in diversity ..."

He has rightly pointed out that:

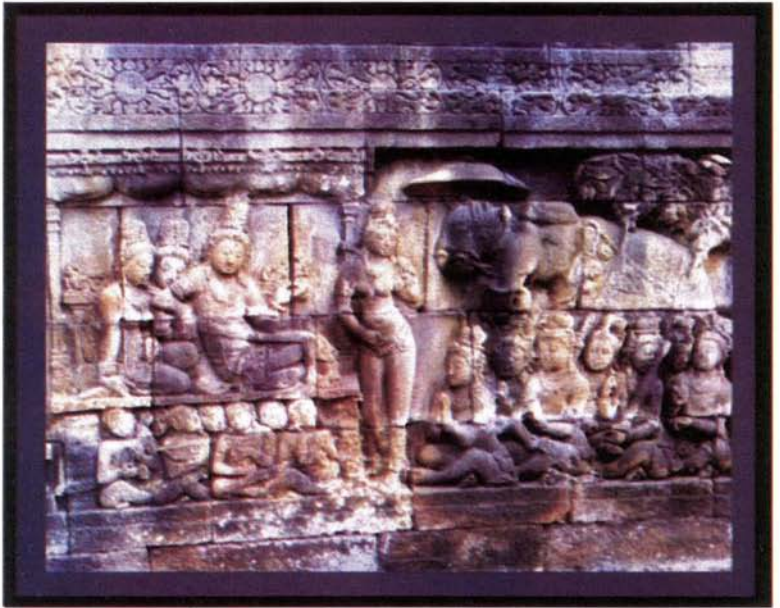
"Ancient India is with us today in the living tradition of the Hindu religion, the basis of Indian culture. The traditions that are honored by millions of Hindus in the present were born in the Indus Valley 5,000 years ago." ³³³

Chapter 4

Political Thinkers

“The Hindu revelation, which proclaims the slow and gradual formation of worlds, is of all revelations the only one whose ideas are in complete harmony with modern science.” “Besides the discoverers of geometry and algebra, the constructors of human speech, the parents of philosophy, the primal expounders of religion, the adepts in psychological and physical science, how even the greatest of our biological and theologians seem dwarfed! Name of us any modern discovery, and we venture to say that Indian history need not long be searched before the prototype will be found on record And here, to mock our conceit, our apprehension, and our despair, we may read what Manu said, perhaps 10,000 years before the birth of Christ: “The first germ of life was developed by water and heat.” (Book I, sloka 8, 9). “Water ascends towards the sky in vapors; from the sun it descends in rain, from the rains are born the plants, and from the plants, animals.” (Book III, sloka 76).”

- *Louis Francois Jacolliot*



A carved relief from Java, Indonesia.

"From Persia to the Chinese Sea, 'from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization." "She has left indelible imprints on one fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time and to hold her place amongst the great nations summarizing and symbolizing the spirit of humanity."

Photo courtesy: Vikneswaran Shunmugam, Malaysia.

Political Thinkers

Politics is the science or art of political government. Outstanding personalities related to government and politics have drawn inspiration from Hinduism's eternal message of tolerance and hope. India's freedom fighters like Lokmanya Tilak, Annie Besant, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru all have been champions of Hinduism and India.



Sa'Id Al-Andalusi (1029 -1070) was a prolific author and in the powerful position of a judge for the king in Muslim Spain. He focused on India as a major center for science, mathematics and culture. He wrote *Kitab Tabaqat al-Uman* or "*Book of the Categories of Nations*," which recorded the contributions to science of all known nations.

He has written eloquently of ancient Indians:

"The Indians among all nations, through many centuries and since antiquity, have been the source of wisdom, fairness and moderation. They are creators of sublime thoughts, universal apologies, rare inventions and remarkable concepts."

"... They referred to the king of India as the "king of wisdom" because of the Indians' careful treatment of 'ulum [sciences] and all the branches of knowledge."

“The Indians, known to all nations for many centuries, are the metal [essence] of wisdom, the source of fairness and objectivity. They are people of sublime pensiveness, universal apologues, and useful and rare inventions.”

“Their kings are known for their good moral principles, their wise decisions, and their perfect methods of exercising authority.”

“To their credit, the Indians have made great strides in the study of numbers and of geometry. They have acquired immense information and reached the zenith in their knowledge of the movements of the stars (astronomy) and the secrets of the skies (astrology) as well as other mathematical studies. After all that, they have surpassed all the other peoples in their knowledge of medical science and the strengths of various drugs, the characteristics of compounds and the peculiarities of substances [chemistry].”

“What has reached us from the work of the Indians in music is the book... [that] contains the fundamentals of modes and the basics in the construction of melodies.”

“That which has reached us from the discoveries of their clear thinking and the marvels of their inventions is the (game) of chess. The Indians have, in the construction of its cells, its double numbers, its symbols and secrets, reached the forefront of knowledge. They have extracted its mysteries from supernatural forces. While the game is being played and its pieces are being maneuvered, there appear the beauty of structure and the greatness of harmony. It demonstrates the manifestation of high intentions and noble deeds, as it provides various forms of warnings from enemies and points out ruses as well as ways to avoid dangers. And in this, there is considerable gain and useful profit.” ^{334 335 336}

Prince Muhammad Dara Shikoh (1627-1658 AD) was the favorite Sufi son of Moghul emperor, Shah Jehan. He was known the world over for his unorthodox and liberal views. He was a mystic and a free thinker. Dara Shikoh's most important legacy is the translation of fifty *Upanishads*, known under the title of *Sirr-i-Akbar* (“*The Great Secret*”). It was completed in 1657, together with paraphrases and excerpts from commentaries, which in various

cases, though by no means throughout, can be traced back to Sankara.

He had learned Sanskrit and studied the Hindu scriptures in the original. He studied the Torah, the Gospels and the Psalms, but it is the “Great Secret” (Sirri-i-Akbar) of the Upanishads, which, in his view, represents the most original testimony of the oneness of God or the Absolute.

His personal fate is well-known: in 1659, two years after the completion of the Sirri-i-Akbar, he was executed by order of his brother, Aurangzeb, and with the consent of the Islamic orthodoxy community (Ulama), who claimed that he was a heretic and a danger to the state, the faith and the public order.³³⁷

He translated the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Yoga - Vashishta into Persian directly from Sanskrit and called it *Sirr-e-Akbar* (The Great Mystery). Titled “*The Upanishads: God’s Most Perfect Revelation*” and then into Latin by Anquetil Duperron (1801 and 1802) under the title *Oupnekhat*, contained about fifty. This translation introduced Western readers to the Upanishads. Schopenhauer’s reaction to it is well known.

The Quran itself, he said, made veiled references to the Upanishads as the “first heavenly book and the fountainhead of the ocean of monotheism.”

Dara Shikoh wrote in his Persian translation of the Upanishads.

“After gradual research; I have come to the conclusion that long before all heavenly books, God had revealed to the Hindus, through the Rishis of yore, of whom Brahma was the Chief, His four books of knowledge, the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda.”

In his *Majma al-Bahrain*, he sought to reconcile the Sufi theory with the Vedanta.

He was able to affirm that Sufism and Advaita Vedantism (Hinduism) are essentially the same, with a surface difference of terminology.

And in introduction to this work he says that one finds in Upanishads the concept of tawhid (the doctrine of Unity of God, the most fundamental doctrine of Islam) after the Qur'an and perhaps the Qur'an refers to Upanishad when it refers to Kitab al-Maknun (The Hidden Book). His work Majma'ul Bahrayn (Mingling of the Two Oceans i.e. Hinduism and Islam) is very seminal work in the history of composite culture of India.

Two years after the completion of the Surr-i-Akbar, Dara was executed on the orders of his brother -Aurangzeb.³³⁸

Sir William Temple (1628-1699) was an English statesman and diplomat and in his Essay upon the *Ancient and Modern Learning* (1690) he believed that:

"From these famous Indians, it seems most probable that Pythagoras learned, and transported into Greece and Italy, the greatest part of his natural and moral philosophy, rather than from the Aegyptians...Nor does it seem unlikely that the Aegyptians themselves might have drawn much of their learning from the Indians..long before..Lycurgus, who likewise traveled to India, brought from thence also the chief principles of his laws."

"Temple's ideas remained in isolation in his period until they were revived in the middle of the 18th century when a battle raged between the 'believers' and the 'infidels' on the question of the value of Mosaic interpretation of history."³³⁹

Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was the British statesman, parliamentary orator and political thinker, played a prominent part in all major political issues for about 30 years after 1765, and remained an important figure in the history of political theory.

In all his speeches in Parliament on India - those made in connection with his Impeachment of Warren Hastings and others - Edmund Burke invariably represented the civilization of India as high.

In his speech on the East India Bill, he commented that:

“This multitude of men (the Indian nation) does not consist of an abject and barbarous populace, much less of gangs of savages; but of a people for ages civilized and cultivated; cultured by all the arts of polished life while we (Englishmen) were yet dwelling in the woods. There have been in (India) princes of great dignity, authority and opulence. There (in India) is to be found an ancient and venerable priesthood, the depositary of laws, learning and history, the guides of the people while living and their consolation in death. There is a nobility of great antiquity and renown; a multitude of cities not exceeded in population and trade by those of the first class in Europe; merchants and bankers who vie in capital with the banks of England; millions of ingenious manufacturers and mechanics; and millions of the most diligent tillers of the earth.” ³⁴⁰

Lord Warren Hastings (1732-1818) was the first governor general of British India (1773-1786). Hastings was very much impressed and overwhelmed with Hindu philosophy:

He wrote with a prophetic and resounding pronouncement on the whole body of Indian writings:

“The writers of the Indian philosophies will survive, when the British dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist, and when the sources which it yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrances.” ³⁴¹

“I hesitate not to pronounce the Gita a performance of great originality, of sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction almost unequalled; and a single exception, amongst all the known religions of mankind.” ³⁴²

Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804) was an aide-de-camp to George Washington and first secretary of the Treasury, epitomized this attitude in these words:

“When we read in the valuable production of those great Oriental scholars...those of a Jones, a Wilkings, a Colebrooke, or a Halhed, - we uniformly discover in the *Hindus* a nation, whose polished manners are the result of a mild disposition and an extensive benevolence.” ³⁴³

Colonel Charles ‘Hindoo’ Stuart (1757- 1828) was an Irish man and a member of the Asiatic Society, who came out to India in his teens.

He seems to have been almost immediately attracted to Hinduism and within a year of his arrival in Calcutta had adopted the practice-which he continued to his death-of walking every morning from his house to bathe in and worship the Ganges according to Hindu custom.

The inventory of goods that Stuart left behind him when he died indicates the degree to which he wore Indian clothes and had taken on Indian customs such as chewing paan; it also details the huge number of statues of Hindu deities, which Stuart appears to have worshiped. Certainly he built a Hindu temple at Saugor, and when he visited Europe in 1804 he took a collection of his Hindu household gods with him.

He learnt Indian languages and in his writings championed all things Indian and Hindu.

He opposed Christian missionary activity and the notion that the West was morally superior. He denounced James Mill’s bigoted ideas of Hinduism and published a pamphlet entitled *Vindications of the Hindoos by a Bengal Officer*, which suggested that Hinduism little needs the meliorating hand of Christianity to render its votaries a sufficiently correct and moral people for all the useful purposes of a civilized society, and remarked that:

“Whenever I look around me, in the vast region of Hindoo Mythology, I discover piety in the garb of allegory: and I see Morality, at every turn, blended with every tale; and, as far as I can rely on my own judgment, it appears the most complete and ample system of Moral Allegory that the world has ever produced.”

When he died, Hindoo Stuart’s collection of Hindu sculpture-the largest and most important ever amassed by a European-ended up in the British Museum where it still forms the core of the Oriental

collection. Stuart himself was buried in the Christian cemetery in South Park Street but with his idols in his coffin and under a tomb which takes the form of a Hindu temple, with a carved stone gateway, the recesses on each side of which were occupied by figures of the Goddess Ganga, Prithvi Devi.³⁴⁴

Sir Thomas Munro (1761-1827) held various posts in the colonial administration of India, served as brigadier-general during the third Maratha War (1817-18) and was appointed Governor of Madras in 1819. A distinguished Governor of Madras, in a statement made by him before a Committee of the House of Commons, in 1813, ("Hansard's Debates, April 12), he noted:

"If a good system of agriculture, unrivalled manufacturing skill, a capacity to produce whatever can contribute to convenience or luxury, schools established in every village for teaching, reading, writing and arithmetic; the general practice of hospitality and charity among each other; and above all, a treatment of the female sex full of confidence, respect, and delicacy, (if all these) are among the signs which denote a civilized people, then the Hindus, are not inferior to the nations of Europe; and if civilization is to become an article of trade between England and India, I am convinced that England will gain by the import cargo."^{345 346}

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767- 1835) was a Prussian minister of education, a brilliant linguist and the founder of the science of general linguistics. Humboldt began to learn Sanskrit in 1821 and was greatly moved by Schlegel's edition of the Bhagavad Gita, on which he published an extensive study.

The Bhagavad Gita made a great impression on Humboldt, who admiringly wrote that, this episode of the Mahabharata was:

"The most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongueperhaps the deepest and loftiest thing the world has to show."³⁴⁷

He devoted to it a long treatise in the *Proceedings of the Academy of Berlin* (1825 -1826).

After looking into the Bhagavad Gita, he wrote to his friend, statesman Frederick von Gentz in 1827:

“I read the Indian poem for the first time when I was in my country estate in Silesia and, while doing so, I felt a sense of overwhelming gratitude to God for having let me live to be acquainted with this work. It must be the most profound and sublime thing to be found in the world.” ³⁴⁸

He thanked God for having permitted him to live long enough to become acquainted with the Bhagavad Gita. ³⁴⁹

On June 30 1825, Humboldt lectured to the Berlin Academy of Sciences on the Gita, placing it firmly in the mainstream of the scholarship of the period. He found in the Bhagavad Gita his own “spiritual ancestors”.

What appealed to him were its originality and its simplicity. Lord Krishna’s doctrine, he remarked:

“...Develops in such a peculiarly individual way, (and) it is, so far as I can judge, so much less burdened with sophistry and mysticism, that it deserves our special attention, standing as it does as an independent work of art...” ³⁵⁰

Humboldt studied Sanskrit with Franz Bopp in London. For Humboldt, Sanskrit with its wealth of grammatical forms is the climax of inflecting languages. ³⁵¹

Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779 -1859) was one of the first dissenters of the now debunked controversial Aryan Invasion theory. He was aware of the kinship in language between Sanskrit and European tongues, but found the theory of their “spread from a central point...a gratuitous assumption.”

In his *History of India* in 1841 he observed:

“Neither in the Vedas, nor in any book...is there any allusion to a prior residence ... out of India...There is no reason whatever for thinking that the Hindus ever inhabited any country but their present one.”

He expressed his views on the antiquity of mathematical knowledge in ancient India:

“In the *Surya Siddhanta* is contained a system of trigonometry which not only goes beyond anything known to the Greeks, but involves theorem which were not discovered in Europe till two centuries ago.”³⁵²

Comparing the Hindus and the Greeks as regards their knowledge of Algebra, Elphinstone emphatically says that:

“There is no question of the superiority of the Hindus over their rivals in the perfection to which they brought the science. Not only is Aryabhatta superior to Diaphantus (as is shown by his knowledge of the resolution of equations involving several unknown quantities, and in general method of resolving all indeterminate problems of at least the first degree), but he and his successors press hard upon the discoveries of algebraists who lived almost in our own time!”³⁵³

James Young (1782-1848) was an officer, Bengal Horse Artillery, and twice sheriff of Calcutta Secretary, Savon Mechanics Institutes. He remarked:

“Those races (the Indian viewed from a moral aspect) are perhaps the most remarkable people in the world. They breathe an atmosphere of moral purity, which cannot but excite admiration, and this is especially the case with the pioneer classes, who, notwithstanding the privations of their humble, lot, appear to be happy and contented. Domestic felicity appears to be the rule among the Natives, and this is the stranger when the customs of marriage are taken into account, parents arranging all such matters. Many Indian households afford examples of the married state in its highest degree of perfection. This may be due to the teachings of the Shastras....”³⁵⁴

James Prinsep (1799 -1840) was an employee of the East India Company, deciphered the Brahmi script in 1838 and author of *Essays on Indian antiquities, historic, numismatic, and palaeographic of the late James Prinsep*, and had recorded to have observed that:

“Greek was nothing more than Sanskrit turned topsy-turvy.”

“The fact, however, that he (Pythagoras) derived his doctrines from an Indian source is very generally admitted. Under the name of Mythraic, the faith of Buddha had also a wide extension.” ³⁵⁵

General Joseph Davey Cunningham (1812-1851) was the author of *A History of the Sikhs*, from the origin of the nation to the battles of the Sutlej has perceptively said that:

“Mathematical science was so perfect and astronomical observations so complete that the paths of the sun and the moon were accurately measured. The philosophy of the learned few was perhaps for the first time, firmly allied with the theology of the believing many, and Brahmanism laid down as articles of faith the unity of God, the creation of the world, the immortality of the soul, and the responsibility of man. The remote dwellers upon the Ganges distinctly made known that future life about which Moses is silent or obscure, and that unity and Omnipotence of the Creator which were unknown to the polytheism of the Greek and Roman multitude, and to the dualism of Mithraic legislators, while Vyasa perhaps surpassed Plato in keeping the people tremblingly alive to the punishment which awaited evil deeds.” ³⁵⁶

Sir Henry James Summer Maine (1822 -1888) His first work *Ancient Law* was his most famous. He was (1862-69) legal member of the viceroy’s council in India, where he planned the codification of Indian law.

This eminent Jurist has shown that the old Brehon laws of Ireland are derived from Vedic laws of India. ³⁵⁷

Sir Henry Maine, a former Vice Chancellor of Calcutta university and an advisor to the Viceroy echoed the sentiment of many Englishmen when he said that:

“A nation has been born out of Sanskrit.” ³⁵⁸

Sir John Malcolm (1829-1896) was the Governor of Bombay and author of *A Memoir of Central India including Malwa and Adjoining Provinces* and also worked for the East India Company and he remarked:

“The Hindoo...are distinguished for some of the finest qualities of the mind; they are brave, generous, and humane, and their truth is as remarkable as their courage.” ³⁵⁹

Louis Francois Jacolliot (1837-1890) who worked in French India as a government official and was at one time President of the Court in Chandranagar, translated numerous Vedic hymns, the Manusmriti, and the Tamil work, Kural. His masterpiece, *La bible dans l'Inde*, (1869) stirred a storm of controversy.

He was author of *Krishna and Christ* (1874). He praised the Vedas in his *Sons of God* (1873) and noted:

“The Hindu revelation, which proclaims the slow and gradual formation of worlds, is of all revelations the only one whose ideas are in complete harmony with modern science.”

Jacolliot feels India has given to the West much more than she is credited with and he remarks:

“Besides the discoverers of geometry and algebra, the constructors of human speech, the parents of philosophy, the primal expounders of religion, the adepts in psychological and physical science, how even the greatest of our biological and theologians seem dwarfed! Name of us any modern discovery, and we venture to say that Indian history need not long be searched before the prototype will be found on record. Here we are with the transit of science half accomplished, and all our Vedic ideas in process of readjustment to the theories of force correlation, natural selection, atomic polarity and evolution. And here, to mock our conceit, our apprehension, and our despair, we may read what Manu said, perhaps 10,000 years before the birth of Christ:

“The first germ of life was developed by water and heat.” (Book I, sloka 8, 9).

“Water ascends towards the sky in vapors; from the sun it descends in rain, from the rains are born the plants, and from the plants, animals.” (Book III, sloka 76). ³⁶⁰

He has further written:

“Aware of the resentment I am provoking, I yet shrink not from the encounter. We are no longer burnt at the stake, as in the times of Michael Servetus, Savanarola, and of Philip II, of Spain, and free thought may be freely proclaimed in an atmosphere of freedom.”

“Soil of Ancient India, cradle of humanity, hail! Hail, venerable and efficient nurse whom centuries of brutal invasions have not yet burned under the dust of oblivion! Hail, farther land of faith, of love, of poetry and of science! May we hail a revival of thy past in our West in future!”

“I have dwelt midst the depths of your mysterious forests, seeking to comprehend the language of your lofty nature, and the evening airs that murmured midst the foliage of banyans and tamarinds whispered to my spirit these three magic words: Zeus, Jehova, Brahma.”

“How glorious the epoch that then presented itself to my study and comprehension! I made tradition speak from the temple’s recess. I enquired of monuments and ruins, I questioned the Vedas whose pages count their existence by thousands of years and whence enquiring youth imbibed the science of life long before Thebes of the hundred gates or Babylon the great had traced our their foundations.”

“And then India appears to me in all the living power of her originality – I traced her progress in the expansion of her enlightenment over the world – I saw her giving her laws, her customs, her morale, her religion to Egypt, to Persia, to Greece and Rome – I saw Jaiminy and Veda Vyasa precede Socrates and Plato, and Krishna, the son of the Virgin Devajani (in Sanskrit, created by God) precede the son of the Virgin of Bethlehem.”

“Very few travelers have sought to understand India, very few have submitted to the labor necessary to knowledge of her past splendor, looking only at the surface they have ever denied them and with an unreasoning confidence of criticism that made them the easy victims of ignorance.” ³⁶¹

He wrote admiringly in his book, *Bible in India: Hindoo origin of Hebrew and Christian revelation* (1870):

“India of the Vedas entertained a respect for women amounting to worship; a fact which we seem little to suspect in Europe when we accuse the extreme East of having denied the dignity of woman, and of having only made her an instrument of pleasure and of passive obedience.” He also said: “What! Here is a civilization, which you cannot deny to be older than your own, which places the woman on a level with the man and gives her an equal place in the family and in society.” ³⁶²

Regarding the branching out of the primeval human family, he confirmed his views in his book *Bible in India*:

“In returning to the fountainhead do we find in India all the poetic and religious traditions of ancient and modern people? India is the world’s cradle. Thence it is that the Common Mother in sending forth her children even to the remotest West has in an unfading testimony of our original, bequeathed us the legacy of her language, her laws, her morals, her literature, her religion.” ³⁶³

“In point of authenticity, the Vedas have incontestable precedence over the most ancient records. These holy books, which, according to the Brahmins, contains the revealed word of God were honored in India long before Persia, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Europe, were colonized or inhabited.”

“Of the Sastras and the Mahabharata, which profess the same doctrines, the dates are lost in the night of time. If we accept the chronology of the Brahmins, as calculated by the learned Orientalist, Halhed, they must possess, the first an antiquity of Seven and the second of four million years – a chronology which strikes point blank at all our European ideas or matter. Such things easily excite laughter, especially in France, the country of superficial spirits and of inconsiderate affirmation. We have made a little world for ourselves, dating from scarce 6,000 years, and created in 6 days, that satisfies all, and needs no thought.” ³⁶⁴

Sir William Wedderburn Bart (1838 - 1918) He left for India in 1860 and began official duty at Dharwar as an Assistant Collector. He was appointed Acting Judicial Commissioner in Sind and Judge of the Sadar Court in 1874. In 1882 he became the District and Sessions Judge of Poona. At the time of his retirement in 1887, he was the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay.

As a Liberal, William Wedderburn believed in the principle of self-government. He has said:

“The Indian village has thus for centuries remained a bulwark against political disorder, and the home of the simple domestic and social virtues. No wonder, therefore, that philosophers and historians have always dwelt lovingly on this ancient institution which is the natural social unit and the best type of rural life: self-contained, industrious, peace-loving, conservative in the best sense of the word...I think you will agree with me that there is much that is both picturesque and attractive in this glimpse of social and domestic life in an Indian village. It is a harmless and happy form of human existence. Moreover, it is not without good practical outcome.” ³⁶⁵

Sir Lepel Henry Griffin (1840-1908) was a Knight Indian Civil Servant. He was the President, East India Association and the diplomatic representative at Kabul of the Indian government. He was the author of several books including *The Rajas of the Punjab*; being the history of the principal states in the Punjab and their political relations with the British government and *The Great Republic*.

At a meeting of the East India Association held at the Westminster Palace Hotel, London in December, 1901, he reported as paying the following tribute to Indian morality:

“The Hindu creed is monotheistic and of very high ethical value; and when I look back on my life in India and the thousands of good friends I have left there among all classes of the native community, when I remember those honorable, industrious, orderly, law-abiding, sober, manly men, I look over England and wonder whether there is anything in Christianity which can give a higher ethical creed than that which is now professed by the large majority of the people of India. I do not see it in London society, I do not see it in the slums of the East End, I do not see it on the London Stock Exchange. I think that the morality of India will compare very favorably with the morality of any country in Western Europe.” ³⁶⁶

Annie Wood Besant (1847-1933) was an active socialist on the executive committee of the Fabian Society along with George

Bernard Shaw. George Bernard Shaw regarded her as the “greatest woman public speaker of her time.” She was a prominent leader of India’s freedom movement, member of the Indian National Congress, and of the Theosophical Society. Dr. Annie Besant was a housewife, a propagator of atheism, a trade unionist, a feminist leader and a Fabian Socialist. She was also fundamentally instrumental in freeing the country she lost her heart and sublimed her soul to: India.

Besant is an indivisible part of the composite struggle for independent India because she declared most passionately,

“I love the Indian people as I love none other. My heart and my mind... have long been laid on the altar of the Motherland.” ³⁶⁷

Annie Besant, proponent of the philosophy of Theosophy, gave many a lecture in which she aired her views that India was a victim of the mischief wrought by Christian missionaries.

A friend of Swami Vivekananda, Mrs. Besant was trying to lead Indians back to their own gods and arouse their sense of self-respect and pride in the greatness of their religions.

This is what she cleverly remarked on India and Hinduism:

“After a study of some forty years and more of the great religions of the world, I find none so perfect, none so scientific, none so philosophical and no so spiritual that the great religion known by the name of Hinduism. Make no mistake, without Hinduism India has no future. Hinduism is the soil in to which India’s roots are stuck and torn out of that she will inevitably wither as a tree torn out from its place. And if Hindus do not maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India’s own children do not cling to her faith who shall guard it. India alone can save India and India and Hinduism are one.”

Annie Besant thought that “among the priceless teachings that may be found in the great Indian epic Mahabharata, there is none so rare and priceless as the Bhagavad Gita.”

“This is the India of which I speak - the India which, as I said, is to me the Holy Land. For those who, though born for this life in a Western land and clad in a Western body, can yet look back to earlier incarnations in which they drank the milk of spiritual wisdom from the breast of their true mother - they must feel ever the magic of her immemorial past, must dwell ever under the spell of her deathless fascination; for they are bound to India by all the sacred memories of their past; and with her, too, are bound up all the radiant hopes of their future, a future which they know they will share with her who is their true mother in the soul-life.”³⁶⁸

Mrs. Besant pointed out at Calcutta:

“India is the mother of religion. In her are combined science and religion in perfect harmony, and that is the Hindu religion, and it is India that shall be again the spiritual mother of the world.”³⁶⁹

“During the early life of a Nation, religion is an essential for the binding together of the individuals who make the nation. India was born, as it were, in the womb of Hinduism, and her body was for long shaped by that religion. Religion is a binding force, and India has had a longer binding together by religion than any other Nation in the world, as she is the oldest of the living Nations.”³⁷⁰

Besant held Hinduism in high esteem and very well advised in her book, *In Defense of Hinduism*:

“Based on knowledge it need not fear any advance in knowledge; profound in spirituality, the depths of the spirit find in it deeps answering into deep, it has nothing to dread, everything to hope, from growth in intellect, from increasing sway of reason.”³⁷¹

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) was a freedom fighter, great Sanskrit scholar and astronomer. He was an ardent patriot and a born fighter. He has been called the Father of Indian Nationalism. He is the author of *The Orion and The Arctic Home in the Vedas* in English and of *Gita Rahasya* in Marathi. He was the fearless editor of the two leading newspapers of the Deccan - the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta*. He suffered imprisonment thrice - one of them a rigorous one for twelve months in 1897 and deportation to Manadalay.

His contribution to modern India stands on par with that of Mahatma Gandhi's.

He proclaimed to the nation, "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it!"

He wrote his famous commentary on Bhagavad-Gita, the sacred book of Hindus.

He stressed that The Bhagavad Gita taught Karma (action), nothing but action. Religion or spiritual messages were secondary and the need of the hour was to arise and fight. This was Lord Krishna's message to Arjuna.

He explained: "The most practical teaching of the Gita, and one for which it is of abiding interest and value to the men of the world with whom life is a series of struggles, is not to give way to any morbid sentimentality when duty demands sternness and the boldness to face terrible things." ³⁷²

He reflected in earnest that:

"The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is one of the most brilliant and pure gems of our ancient sacred books. It would be difficult to find a simpler work in Sanskrit literature or even in all the literature of the world than the Gita, which explains to us in an unambiguous and succinct manner the deep, and sacred principles of the sacred science of the SELF (Atman), after imparting to us the knowledge of the human body and the cosmos, and on the authority of those principles acquaints every human being with the most perfect and complete condition of the Self...." ³⁷³

Lord Curzon (1859-1925) was the Marquis of Kedleston, a British statesman, was a Conservative Party politician. He was viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, and later became chancellor of Oxford University. He re-entered politics during the 1st World War. He became a member of Lloyd George's war cabinet in 1916.

In an address delivered at the great Delhi Durbar in 1901 he said:

“Powerful Empires existed and flourished here [in India] while Englishmen were still wandering painted in the woods, and while the British Colonies were a wilderness and a jungle.”

“India has left a deeper mark upon the history, the philosophy, and the religion of mankind, than any other terrestrial unit in the universe.”

“It is such a land that England has conquered and is holding as a dependency. It is such a people that she is ruling without giving them any voice whatever in the shaping of their own destiny.”³⁷⁴

Sir Charles Eliot (1862 - 1931) was a British diplomat and colonial administrator, a famous scholar and linguist of Oxford, observed on his book *Hinduism and Buddhism – An Historical Sketch*:

“Let me confess that I cannot share the confidence in the superiority of Europeans and their ways which is prevalent in the West.”

“European civilization is not satisfying and Asia can still offer something more attractive to many who are far from Asiatic in spirit.”

Sir Eliot sagaciously commented that:

“Indian religions have more spirituality and a greater sense of the Infinite than our western creeds and more liberality. They are not merely tolerant but often hold that different classes of mankind have their own rules of life and suitable beliefs and that he who follows such partial truths does no wrong to the greater and all-inclusive truths on which his circumstances do not permit him to fix his attention...and are more penetrated with the idea that civilization means a gentle and enlightened temper - an idea sadly forgotten in these days of war.”

He predicted wisely that:

“I do not think that Christianity will ever make much progress in Asia, for what is commonly known by that name is not the teaching of Christ but a rearrangement of it made in Europe and like most European institutions practical rather than thoughtful. And as for the teaching of Christ himself, the Indian finds it excellent but not



Lord Brahma known as Phra Phrom in Thailand.

For full thirty centuries India stood out as the very heart of the old world and maintained her position as one of the foremost maritime countries. She had colonies in Pegu, in Cambodia, in Java in Sumatra, in Borneo and even in the countries of the Farther East as far as Japan.

Author's collection of photos.

ample or satisfying. There is little in it which cannot be found in some of the many scriptures of Hinduism..."

"The claim of India to the attention of the world is that she, more than any other nation since history began, has devoted herself to contemplating the ultimate mysteries of existence and, in my eyes, the fact that Indian thought diverges widely from our own popular thought is a positive merit." ³⁷⁵

Eliot also remarked admiringly that:

"Hinduism has not been made, but has grown. It is a jungle, not a building. It is a living example of a great national paganism such as might have existed in Europe if Christianity had not become the state religion of the Roman Empire, if there had remained an incongruous jumble of old local superstitions, Greek philosophy, and oriental cults such as the worship of Sarapis or Mitras." ³⁷⁶

"Compared to Islam and Christianity, Hinduism's doctrines are extraordinarily fluid, and multiform. India deals in images and metaphors. Restless, subtle and argumentative as Hindu thought is, it is less prone than European theology to the vice of distorting transcendental ideas by too stringent definition. It adumbrates the indescribable by metaphors and figures. It is not afraid of inconsistencies, which may illustrate different aspects of the infinite, but it rarely tries to cramp the divine within the limits of a logical phrase."

"The Hindu has an extraordinary power of combining dogma and free thought, uniformity, and variety. Utmost latitude of interpretation is allowed. In all ages Hindus have been passionately devoted to speculation. It is also to point out that from the Upanishads down to the writings of Tagore in the present day literature from time to time enunciates the idea that the whole universe is the manifestation of some exuberant force giving expression to itself in joyous movement. Thus the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (III. 6) says:

"Bliss is Brahman, for from bliss all these being are born, by bliss when born they live, into bliss they enter at their death." ³⁷⁷

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) was among India's most fervent nationalists, fighting for Indian independence from British

rule. Gandhi rose to the eminence of being called “amoral genius” by no less a person than the celebrated British philosopher C. E. M Joad.

He was disillusioned by the hypocrisy of the Western civilization. He denounced England’s devilish acts in India, and proclaimed it as a “Satanic Power”. Then, gave the cry for the ‘Quit India’ movement.

While in London, (cited in *Indian Opinion: Mahatma Gandhi* quoted by Judith M. Brown. 1994. *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian democracy*.) Gandhi wrote:

“Looking at this land, I at any rate have grown disillusioned with Western civilization. They spend, their days in luxury or in making a bare living and retire at night thoroughly exhausted. In this state of affairs, I cannot understand when they can devote themselves to prayers.”

It is said that Gandhi was once asked what he thought of Western civilization, and answered that he felt it might be a good idea.³⁷⁸

As is clear from the Mahatma’s polemic against the Christian missionaries, he was first and foremost a Hindu, who opposed all designs to destroy Hindu culture.

He claimed that:

“I am a proud staunch Sanatani Hindu.” He took considerable pride in this self-identification. Far from being a dirty word, as it would soon become even for some so-called Hindu leaders, the word “Hindu” conveyed to him all that was noble and elevating. He did not feel that he was being “communal” when he called himself a Hindu. For him Hinduism was a vast, spiritual vision beckoning man to rise to the highest heights.

He has further stated:

“Hinduism has made marvelous discoveries in things of religion, of the spirit, of the soul. We have no eye for these great and fine discoveries. We are dazzled by the material progress that Western science has made. Ancient India has survived because Hinduism was not developed along material but spiritual lines.”

“Hinduism is a relentless pursuit of Truth.”

“Truth is God” and if today it has become moribund, inactive, irresponsive to growth, it is because we are fatigued; and as soon as the fatigue is over, Hinduism will burst upon the world with a brilliance perhaps unknown before.” ^{379 380}

“The tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God.” ³⁸¹

“I believe that the civilization India has evolved is not to be beaten in the world. Nothing can equal the seeds sown by our ancestry. Rome went; Greece shared the same fate; the might of the Pharaohs was broken; Japan has become westernized; of China nothing can be said; but India is still, somehow or other, sound at the foundation.” ³⁸²

Gandhi wrote with great feeling about the Bhagavad Gita:

“The Geeta is the universal mother. I find a solace in the Bhagavadgeeta that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Bhagavad Gita. I find a verse here and a verse there, and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies - and my life has been full of external tragedies - and if they have left no visible or indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teaching of Bhagavadgeeta.”

Writing further on the Bhagawad-Gita, Gandhi remarked that:

“Today the Gita is not only my Bible or my Koran, it is more than that—it is my mother. When I am in difficulty or distress I seek refuge in her bosom.” ³⁸³

Gandhi, the author of the Quit India movement was inspired by the teachings of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. ³⁸⁴

He pointed out that:

“Hinduism is a living organism liable to growth and decay subject to the laws of Nature. One and indivisible at the root, it has grown into a vast tree with innumerable branches. The changes in the season affect it. It has its autumn and its summer, its winter

and its spring. It is, and is not, based on scriptures. It does not derive its authority from one book. "Non violence has found the highest expression and application in Hinduism."³⁸⁵

"I think I have understood Hinduism correctly when I say that it is eternal, all-embracing and flexible enough to suit all situations (cited in *Navjeevan* 27-9-1924). "Hinduism contains the essence of all religions. What it does not contain is not worth knowing." (cited in *Navjeevan* 17-9-1925).

"Since Hinduism is based on truth and nonviolence, it can never oppose any other religion. Hinduism strives for the betterment of all religions, and through them of the entire world." (from a speech made on 25-3-1929 while inaugurating Shri Laxminarayan Temple).

He proudly proclaimed in *Young India* 1-120-1926, that:

"I am a Hindu because it is Hinduism, which makes the world worth living."

"I am a Hindu hence I Love not only human beings, but also all living beings."

He considered the Bhagavad Gita as a book 'par excellence' for the knowledge of Truth (God).

Gandhi called the Gita the 'Gospel of Selfless Action'.

"India is to me the dearest country in the world, because I have discovered goodness in it. It has been subject to foreign rule, it is true. But the status of a slave is preferable to that of a slave holder."

"Hinduism is a living organism. One and indivisible at the root, it has grown into a vast tree with innumerable branches. Knowledge is limitless and so also the application of truth. Everyday we add to our knowledge of the power of Atman (soul) and we shall keep on doing so."

He was a Hindu to the core. Defining his attitude to a prominent Indian Christian, Kali Charan Banerjee (1847-1902) he expressed his opinion:

"I am unable to identify with orthodox Christianity. I must tell you in all humility that Hinduism, as I know it, entirely satisfies my soul, fills my whole being, and I find solace in the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount....I must confess to you that when doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon I turn to the Bhagavad Gita, and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been full of external tragedies and if they have not left any visible and indelible effect on me, I owe it to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita." ^{386 387}

Gandhi wrote in his book *Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*:

As "philosophically there was nothing extraordinary in Christian principles" no one, much less a Hindu, would ever give it a second look. ³⁸⁸

Mahatma Gandhi told Romain Rolland in Switzerland on his way back to India from the Round Table Conference (1911) that Christianity is an echo of the Indian religion and Islam is the re-echo of that echo." ³⁸⁹

"I have no other wish in this world but to find light and joy and peace through Hinduism." ³⁹⁰

Gandhi declared that:

"If all The Upanishads and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse in the *Ishopanishad* were left in the memory of the Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever." ³⁹¹

Gandhi has written: "The Gita "struck me as one of priceless worth." ³⁹²

Koenraad Elst in his book *Negationism in India: Concealing the Record of Islam*. page 84 has said that Gandhi was a proud and combative Hindu, his first and foremost loyalty was towards Hindu society and Hinduism.

Gandhi says.

“The Bhagavad Gita is my mother,” he once said; and the name of Sri Rama was his shield.” ³⁹³

He accords the highest honor to Hindu scriptures - the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Gita, the Mahabharata, the Ramayan, The Bhagavata. He defends the “much-maligned Brahman” and entertains “not a shadow of doubt” that “if Brahmanism does not revive, Hinduism will perish”.

Gandhiji upholds the “spirit behind idol-worship” and is prepared “to defend with my life the thousands of holy temples which sanctify this land.” For him cow protection “is the dearest possession of the Hindu heart” and “no one who does not believe in cow-protection can possibly be a Hindu.” The sacred threat has “deep meaning for him” as it is “the sign of the second birth that is spiritual.” He said that varnashrama is “inherent in human nature, and Hinduism has simply made a science of it.” ³⁹⁴

“What the divine author of the Mahabharata said of his great creation is equally true of Hinduism. Whatever of substance is contained in any other religion is always to be found in Hinduism, and what is not contained in it is insubstantial or unnecessary.”

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“Hinduism insists on the brotherhood of not only all mankind but of all that lives.” ³⁹⁶

“Hinduism is like the River Ganga, pure and unsullied at its source but taking in its course the impurities in the way. Even like the Ganga it is beneficent in its total effect. It takes a provincial form in every province, but the inner substance is retained everywhere.” ³⁹⁷

“On examination, I have found it to be the most tolerant of all religions known to me. Its freedom from dogma makes a forcible appeal to me inasmuch as it gives the votary the largest scope for self-expression.” He saw no reason to for changing his belief or his religion. He found it impossible “to believe that I could go to heaven or attain salvation only by becoming a Christian.” “Philosophically there was nothing extraordinary in Christian

principles. From the point of view of sacrifice, it seemed that the Hindus greatly surpassed Christians. It was impossible for me to regard Christianity as a perfect religion or the greatest of all religions.”³⁹⁸

London Times editorial said on the day after his death: “No country but India and no religion but Hinduism could have given birth to a Gandhi.”³⁹⁹

“Hindu Dharma is like a boundless ocean teeming with priceless gems. The deeper you dive the more treasures you find.”⁴⁰⁰

He affirmed, again, and again not only the fundamentals of Hindu spirituality but also the framework of Hindu culture and social life. He valued “the spirit behind idol-worship” and declared his determination “to defend with my life the thousands of holy temples which sanctify this land of ours.”

“Cow-protection is an article of faith in Hinduism. Apart from its religious sanctity, it is an ennobling creed. Cow protection is the dearest possession of the Hindu heart. It is the one concrete belief common to all Hindus. No one who does not believe in cow-protection can possibly be called a Hindu. It is a noble belief. I endorse every word of what Prof. Vaswani has said in praise of the cow. For me the cow is the personification of innocence. Cow protection means that protection of the weak and helpless.”⁴⁰¹

Gandhi was proud of his ancestors’ respect of Nature and wisely wrote:

“I bow my head in reverence to our ancestors for their sense of the beautiful in nature and for their foresight in investing beautiful manifestations of Nature with a religious significance.”⁴⁰²

Thoreau and Gandhi both believed in non-violence, had religious temperament, were vegetarians, and admired the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. They appreciated poverty and lived the simple life. Webb Miller in his book, *I Found No Peace* page 240 wrote: “Gandhi received back from America what was fundamentally the philosophy of India after it had been distilled and crystallized in the mind of

Thoreau.” The nationalist movement of Congress, and its political vision of a free India, was as thoroughly suffused with the spirit of Hinduism. Nationalism and religion were thus allied in Gandhi’s teachings. Gandhi found the substance of India’s life in Hinduism. His political vocabulary of Ram rajya, ahimsa, satyagraha, swaraj, bharat mata, swadeshi etc. He passionately rejected the British project of Westernizing India. ^{403 404}

C. Rajagopalachari (1878-1972) was popularly known as “Rajaji” was a great patriot. He was a scholar, a statesman, and a linguist. A contemporary of Mohandas Gandhi, he was also free India’s first Governor General. Perhaps his most signal accomplishment was his thoughtful rendition of the Mahabharata and Ramayana in English, making the stories and wisdom contained in those classics available to a new generation of English educated Indians. In his book *Ramayana*, Rajaji captures for us the pathos and beauty of Valmiki’s magic in an inimitable manner.

He spoke eloquently of the Upanishads.

“The spacious imagination, the majestic sweep of thought, and the almost reckless spirit of exploration with which, urged by the compelling thirst for truth, the Upanishad teachers and pupils dig into the “open secret” of the universe, make this most ancient of the world’s holy books still the most modern and most satisfying.” ⁴⁰⁵

Rajagopalachari has observed on indestructible culture of India:

“If there is any honesty in India today, any hospitality, any chastity, any philanthropy, any tenderness to the dumb creatures, any aversion to evil, any love to do good, it is due to whatever remains of the old faith and the old culture.” ⁴⁰⁶

“The Hindu doctrine of all ways treading to God with the resulting attitude of the Hindu creed towards all other religions is unique. No other creed has arrived at this all embracing fraternity of faiths, which Hinduism stand for.

Akasat Sarvadeva Namaskarah Kesavam Prati Gachati. The quotation is from Mahabharata.” ⁴⁰⁷

“The Mahabharata has molded the character and civilization of one of the most numerous of the world’s people. How? By its gospel of Dharma, which like a golden thread runs through all the complex movements in the epic; by its lesson that hatred breed hatred, that covetousness and violence leads inevitably to ruin, that the only real conquest is in the battle against one’s lower nature.” ⁴⁰⁸

Sir Chetpat Pattabhirama Ramaswami Aiyar (1879-1966) was the former Dewan of Travancore, and eminent scholar-statesman and former Vice-Chancellor, who was the first to ban hunting in India.

He has observed that:

“Indian Culture in the past is analogous to a subterranean river that has been fertilizing many countries which have not only on the landscape but also on all the countries of the mind.”

He has also shown how we see manifestations of the pervasive influence of Hindu Culture in Greece and Egypt and in Peru and Mexico as also in Sumatra and Java and Bali and in Burma and Siam and Cambodia and Indo-China and even in China and Japan. He has shown how Vedanta has inspired the Sufi doctrine.

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, who had reached New York en route to San Francisco, met on the 30th September a group of American intellectuals and journalists. British historian had observed that India was conquered in a spirit of British absent-mindedness. Free India wanted to make sure that there was not going to be such absent-mindedness on anybody’s part again. Asked if India would accept Communist doctrine, he replied it could not, because the Indian was a rugged individualist. ⁴⁰⁹

J. Seymour Keay was a British M. P. Banker in India and Indian Agent and writing in 1883 he noted:

“It cannot be too well understood that our position in India has never been in any degree that of civilians bringing civilization to savage races. When we landed in India we found there a hoary

civilization, which, during the progress of thousands of years, had fitted itself into the character and adjusted itself to the wants of highly intellectual races. The civilization was not perfunctory, but universal and all pervading - furnishing the country not only with political systems, but with social and domestic institutions of the most ramified description. The beneficent nature of these institutions as a whole may be judged from their effects on the character of the Hindu race. Perhaps there are no other people in the world who show so much in their character the advantageous effect of their own civilization. They are shrewd in business, acute in reasoning, thrifty, religious, sober, charitable, obedient to parents, reverential to old age, amiable, law-abiding, compassionate towards the helpless and patient under suffering.”⁴¹⁰

General George S. Patton (1885-1945) came from a long line of soldiers who fought and often died in many conflicts, including the American Revolution and, in particular, the Confederate side in the American Civil War.

Remembered for his fierce determination and ability to lead soldiers, General S. Patton, Jr. is considered one of the greatest military figures in history.

He was a staunch believer in reincarnation. One of his favorite topics, he would offer up as evidence pertinent bits of *The Bhagavad Gita*:

“For sure is the death of him that is born, and sure the birth of him that is dead”

He used to point out that the poet William Wordsworth also shared his belief in reincarnation. It is impossible for a person familiar with Indian thought not to see the reflection of Vedanta in Wordsworth poem - *Tintern Abbey* written in 1798.⁴¹¹

Dr. K M Munshi (1887 - 1971) was a freedom fighter, Committee of the Indian National Congress. He founded Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in 1938 with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi. He ceaselessly strove for cultural and spiritual regeneration.

Dr. Munshi looked upon the Bhavan as an Adventure in Faith- a faith in India's past, present and future. It is also a faith in India's people who have a rich and unbroken cultural heritage. He was the author of *Foundations of Indian Culture*.

He has written in *The Essays and Reflections*:

"The Mahabharata is not a mere epic. It is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but above all, it has for its core the Gita, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of stages in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh canto." ⁴¹²

Acharya Jiwatram Bhagwandas Kriplani (1888-1982) was the noted Gandhian, and Eminent National Leader.

When speaking as the President of the Congress in India, he said:

"I am a Hindu and am proud of the fact. But this is because Hinduism for me has stood for tolerance, for truth and for non-violence...." ⁴¹³

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was the first prime minister of free India was more than a deeply moral human being. He yearned for spiritual light. He was particularly drawn to Swami Vivekananda and the Sri Ramakrishna Ashram. He was the author of *A Discovery of India* and *Glimpses of World History*.

The Upanishads fascinated him.

Nehru called the Vedas as:

"The unfolding of the human mind in the earliest stages of thought. And what a wonderful mind it was!"

"It is the first outpourings of the human mind, the glow of poetry, the rapture at nature's loveliness and mystery."

A brooding spirit crept in gradually till the author of the Vedas cried out: 'O Faith, endow us with belief'."

It raised deeper question in a hymn called the 'The Song of Creation'.

"The Bhagavad-Gita deals essentially with the spiritual foundation of human existence. It is a call of action to meet the obligations and duties of life; yet keeping in view the spiritual nature and grander purpose of the universe."

Panditji stated proudly that:

"I am proud of this noble heritage which was and still is ours, and I am aware that I too, like all of us, am a link in that uninterrupted chain which finds its origin in the dawn of history, in India's immemorial past. It is in testimony of this and as a last homage to the cultural heritage of India that I request that a handful of my ashes be thrown in the Ganges at Allahabad (formerly known as Prayag) so that they may be borne to the vast ocean that bears on the shores of India." ⁴¹⁴

Jawaharlal Nehru in his book - *A Discovery of India* has observed:

"The statue of Nataraja (dance pose of Lord Shiva) is a well known example for the artistic, scientific and philosophical significance of Hinduism." ⁴¹⁵

Vinoba Bhave (1894 -1982) was the great spiritual leaders and social reformers of modern India, was a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. Founder of the Bhoodan, or land-gift, movement, seeking donations of land for redistribution to the landless, he said:

"The Supreme Lord of the Gita confirms the faith of each and grants the rewards each seeks....No matter what we revere, so long as our reverence is serious, it helps progress."

He intelligently expressed that:

"Hinduism gives its followers complete freedom. It does not insist on any particular discipline or prayer. Religion has to release us from bondage. The only imperative commandment it can have is to ask us to purify ourselves. Hinduism has emphasized the need

for inner purity. Indian civilization and culture has shown a tremendous capacity for assimilation and absorption. If Hinduism becomes narrow, we shall be destroying our precious heritage.”

Colonel Frank Smythe aka Francis Sydney Smythe (1900-1949) was a military leader, explorer, mountaineer, writer, photographer. He describes experiencing the same feeling of loneliness and revelation in the Bhyunder Ganga Valley. Chronicle of the author’s four months in the remote, difficult to reach Bhyundar Valley in the Himalayas, the spectacular Valley of Flowers. The credit for the popularising the Valley of Flowers generally goes to Frank S. Smythe and R.L. Holdsworth who incidentally reached this valley after a successful expedition of Mount Kamet in 1931.

“In my mountaineering wandering I have not seen a more beautiful valley than this ... this valley of peace and perfect beauty where the human spirit may find repose.” Originally called the Bhiundhar Valley (after a village located in south-east Badrinath) it was renamed “The Valley of Flowers” by Frank Smythe.

He writes in his book *Valley of Flowers*

“For the first time in my life I was able to think. I do not mean to think objectively or analytically, but rather to surrender thought to my surroundings. This is a power of which we know little in the West but which is a basic of abstract thought in the East. It is allowing the mind to receive rather than to seek impressions, and it is gained by expurgating extraneous thought. It is then that the Eternal speaks; that the mutations of the universe are apparent; the very atmosphere is filled with life and song; the hills are resolved from mere masses of snow, ice and rock into something living. When this happens the human mind escapes from the bondage of its own feeble imaginings and becomes as one with its Creator.” ⁴¹⁶

Octovio Paz (1914 -1998) was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1990. He served as Mexico’s ambassador to India from 1962 until 1968.

This is what he says about Hindu art in his book *In Light of India* (1997):

“The Hindu genius is a love for abstraction and, at the same time, a passion for the concrete image. At times it is rich, at others prolix. It has created the most lucid and the most instinctive art. It is abstract and realistic, sexual and intellectual, pedantic and sublime. It lives between extremes, it embraces the extremes, rooted in the earth and drawn to an invisible beyond.” ⁴¹⁷

King Norodom Suramarit of Cambodia (1920 -1960) in a banquet in honor of Dr. S Radhakrishnan in Cambodia in 1957 he proudly proclaimed that:

“We are your spiritual descendants. A man called Kaundinya (a Brahmin) came from South India years ago, defeated the Cambodian princess, married her, settled down, established his dynasty, and, we are the spiritual descendants of that dynasty. The name Khmer civilization which you give to that comes from the word Kh-Meru of which Kaundinya was a citizen here.” ⁴¹⁸

Austin Coates (1922 - 1997) was the son of composer Eric Coates, Assistant Colonial Secretary and a magistrate in Hong Kong during the World War II and First Secretary to the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur and Penang in 1959-62.

He was the author of *China, India and the Ruins of Washington* (1972).

He expressed his views that:

“What we generally fail to realize is that in talking today to the Indians we are face to face with the direct descendants, as often as not, of people who were contemporaries of Ancient Egypt, and whose present culture, in most of its main essentials, is nearly the same as it was then, and is in any event directly descended from that age, and even possibly before it.” ⁴¹⁹

Bulent Ecevit (1925 - 2006) was the then Turkish prime minister, was asked what had given him the courage to send Turkish troops to Cyprus (where they still remain). His answer: he was fortified by the Bhagavad Gita which taught that if one were morally right, one need not hesitate to fight injustice. Besides the Gita, he was also influenced by Nehru's book - Glimpses of World History.

Ecevit first learnt Sanskrit at the Ankara University. Later his love for poetry and philosophy led him to Rabindranath Tagore. He studied Bengali to appreciate and later translate Tagore's writings, including some poems from Geetanjali. During his visit to India in early 2000, Ecevit fulfilled his dream of visiting Shantiniketan. After the 1971 military crackdown by the left, the Upanishads, Gita, and Geetanjali were banned in Turkey.

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's passage to India has far greater significance than that of an Indophile scholar-statesman realising his long cherished dream. Mr Ecevit, had translated Tagore's *Gitanjali* and the *Bhagavad Gita* into Turkish. Together with Delhi and Agra, he has included a visit to Shantniketan in his itinerary.⁴²⁰

Queen Fredricka of Greece (1931- 1981) was the wife of King Paul of Greece.

Queen Frederika had come to pay homage to her guru, one of the Shankaracharyas, following his book on non-dualism -i.e., absolute monism, also called Advaita (or Advaita Vendanta). This book was an exposition of the teachings of the ancient Hindu scriptures called the Upanishads, or Vedanta.

While the Paramacharya was in Kalahasthi, Queen Frederica of Greece, who had visited India at that time, came to kalahasthi to have the blessings of the Paramacharya on December 3rd. Queen Frederika said that it was her advanced research in physics that had started her on a spiritual quest. It culminated in her accepting the non-dualism or absolute monism of Shankara as her philosophy of life and science.

Long before physics discovered it, Shankara had argued that the world of sense experience, that is the world of matter, was a world of appearance (maya), because at the root of each individual existence is the same energy which forms the cosmos. The human self (atman) is ultimately not distinct from the universal self (brahma). Duality is illusion. Reality is not dual, but one. Science, said Frederika, has yet to catch up with what the seers in India had already

understood over 2500 years ago. Therefore, she said to the Rajmata, 'you are fortunate to inherit such knowledge. I envy you. While Greece is the country of my birth, India is the country of my soul.'

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Shri V. Shankar is an ICS (Retd.) and former Defense Secretary and earlier Private Secretary to the late Sardar Patel.

He has reflected that:

"It is nothing short of a miracle that the Hindu society and Hindu Dharma have survived so long in spite of repeated aggressions. The secret of our continued existence lies in the fact that our culture has the requisite vitality to influence and absorb outside elements." "India will be saved by Dharma, not by Political maneuvers." Regarding marriage within caste, he says: "It is human nature to marry some one who is from a similar background. Everyone does it. A Sunni Muslim wants to marry only a Sunni Muslim. How about Jews, Catholics, Whites, Chinese? They all advertise and seek only their own kind. It is universal. A honest narrow minded person creates less harm to the society than a pseudo broad minded person. Are you saying an fifty year old white American who marries a twenty year old mail order bride from Phillipines is better than the typical Indian who marries within his sub caste?"

Justice Manadagadde Rama Jois (1931 -) was the Former Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court. A distinguished writer and historian, Justice M. Rama Jois has produced several authoritative books on *Service Law*, *Habeas Corpus Law*, *Constitutional Law*, etc., which are popular among the Law fraternity of India including students of Law. His most appreciated two-volume book *Legal and Constitutional History of India* is a textbook for Law Degree course. His other book *Seeds of Modem Public Law in Ancient Indian Jurisprudence* is also a much-valued contribution. Former Chief Justice of India A.S. Anand released a book authored by him *Eternal Values in Manu Smriti*. In this book valuable verses from "*Manu Smriti*" has been selected, which are still relevant to the society.

Justice Jois has held the view that:

“In India, religious leaders have never exercised any control over the political authority. The ancient Indian constitutional law, the Rajadharma, did not recognise the authority of religious leaders to interfere with the political power of the king. Religious leaders had a purely advisory role, tendering opinion when it was sought or suo motu on matters of public interest. There used to be a process of consultation, not of confrontation.”

“This is why no Hindu king has ever persecuted anyone on the ground of religion. Thus, it is Clear that in the Indian context, secularism meant respect for all religions as distinct from mere tolerance of other religions. This respect is part and parcel of Hinduism, to which theocracy is unknown. In fact, they cannot co-exist any more than light and darkness.”⁴²²

Vecente Avelino was the Consul General for Brazil in India in 1930 belonged to the inner circle called Tattva Shri Chaitanya. He was a devout Vaishanava and an ardent admirer of Shri Ramakrishna.

In an address at Panihati, near Calcutta, on the occasion of a religious festival organized by the Shri Gauranga Grantha Mandir to commemorate Shri Chaitanya’s visit to that place, he said:

“India is the only country which has known God and if anyone wants to know God he must know India.”⁴²³

Robert Blackwill (1939 -) is a lecturer on international security at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, former ambassador to India (2001 – 2003). Blackwill is the author and co-editor of numerous books and articles on U.S. foreign policy, including: *America’s Asian Alliances*. Although he returned this summer, part of Blackwill’s heart is clearly still in India. A huge map of “Mother India” adorns the cream-colored walls of his fastidious office in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The only item on his vast desktop — besides precisely arranged wooden “in” and “out” boxes — is a tiny figurine of Ganesh, the Hindu elephant-headed god of wisdom and success.

In *What India means to me*, he has noted that:

“India’s innumerable and distinctive dances, beginning with the classical. The Vedas and the Upanishads.”

“They mean so much more when I read them here: “It is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of speech, the breath of breath, and the eye of the eye. When freed (from the senses) the wise, on departing from this world, become immortal.”

“And, despite my continuing contemplations, I am not always able to follow Krishna’s wise words, “Be thou of even mind.”

“But, my friends, these terrorist outrages against my country and against yours will not continue indefinitely. We know this from the Ramayana, and many other holy books. Good does triumph over evil, although it sometimes takes more time than we would like. Someone once said, “The most sublime purpose of religion is to teach how to know God.” India has been working on that challenge from a variety of perspectives for several millennia. It has been my immense privilege during these two years to experience, and to profit from, these profound wellsprings of Indian spirituality.”

“I will return to India. How could it be otherwise? Mother India has changed my life — forever.” ⁴²⁴

Alexander M. Kadakin (1949 -) was the former Russian Ambassador in India (1999 – 2004).

In his column *Passage to India: The Coexistence of Multiple Realities*, he has thoughtfully written:

“How more profound is India’s traditional world, where each stone is a hierophant, a sign of the presence of the sacred in our world. Every sunrise here becomes a cosmogenic drama, every woman an embodiment of the tantric principle of Shakti. Behind the exterior forms specific only of India hides the sublime universal paradigm of the traditional conscience totally opposite to the modernistic one, also far more vibrant and wholesome. The craving of human soul for sacral archetypes is unquenchable, and archetypes are easily juxtaposed with new age constructs. The sacral and the profane coexist.”

“It took me time to realize that my India is similar to the human body with its seats of power and intellect and various indriyas. At times the body is guided by reason, and at other times by mere emotion. It might feel rigid in the morning, elastic by daytime, overexcited by evening, and frustrated by night. It fights its ups and downs, tides and ebbs, low and high spirits. It looks different if observed from various angles: familiar yet mysterious, gorgeous yet shabby, pure yet impure. I have visited many other countries, but I reserve this complex metaphor of the body for India.”

“India seems to be specially designed by the Vidhata to defy all prognoses and theories. My heart remains here but all my Indias will travel back along with me, needing no extra space in the plane. And new ones will appear when I return.”

*“Once I heard you weeping... Timidly.
The scent of salty sands.
Was strumming the sitar.
Your laments made me love and treasure you, I India.
And when you were leaving,
A soft sirocco burned my lips.
It was your kiss, I India!”* ⁴²⁵

Balbir Punj (1949 -) was a Member of Parliament and a Rajya Sabha member and convener of the BJP’s think-tank.

He has sagaciously expressed that:

“Hinduism doesn’t breed exclusivism, intolerance of other religions and disavowal of the pre-Hindu past. Unfortunately, the same is not true about proselytising religions.”

“Exclusivism and intolerance in matters of faith are features of Semitic religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam. Islam, in fact, had an empire-building agenda from day one. Contrary to these desert-born religions, intolerance and persecution was alien to Hinduism.”

“It’s also not correct to say that pre-Muslim India was not predominantly Hindu, that Buddhism was the dominant religion for many centuries, and that Jainism has an equally long history. By Hinduism one perhaps implies the Vedic faith. Otherwise, Buddhism and Jainism, like Sikhism, Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj,

are equally Hindu. Their respective founders as well as their patrons and subscribers were Hindus. The Hindu is inclined to revere the divine in every manifestation, whatever it may be, and is doctrinally tolerant.... A Hindu may embrace a non-Hindu religion without ceasing to be a Hindu...he tends to believe that the highest divine powers complement each other for the well being of the world and the mankind."

"The clear-cut and exclusive religious identities of Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism and perceiving them as separate religions are recent phenomena. Otherwise, they were overlapping and mutually inclusive throughout. Most of the Jains and several Sikhs even today consider themselves Hindus. Many Hindus worship Buddha as a reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, visit Jain and Buddhist temples with devotion and pay obeisance at gurdwaras. Small wonder then that the all-India convenor of Bajrang Dal, bugbear of secularists, is Surendra Jain." ⁴²⁶

Shashi Tharoor (1956 -) was the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information at the UN, author of six novels and two non-fiction books. Educated in India and London, describes himself as a 'believing Hindu'. He is author of several books including *The Great Indian Novel* and *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (1998).

He has written perceptively that:

"Every other religion lays down certain fixed dogmas and tries to force society to adopt them. It places before society only one coat, which must fit Jack and John and Henry, all alike. If it does not fit John or Henry, he must go without a coat to cover his body."

"The Hindus have discovered that the absolute can only be realized, or thought of, or stated through the relative, and the images, crosses, and crescents are simply so many symbols — so many pegs to hang spiritual ideas on. It is not that this help is necessary for everyone, but those that do not need it have no right to say that it is wrong. Nor is it compulsory in Hinduism..." The Hindus have their faults, but mark this; they are always for punishing their own bodies, and never for cutting the throats of

their neighbors. If the Hindu fanatic burns himself on the pyre, he never lights the fire of Inquisition."

"The wonderful doctrine preached in the Bhagavad Gita says:

*"Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me."*⁴²⁷

"The Rig Veda asserted that gravitation held the universe together 24 centuries before the apple fell on Newton's head. The Vedic civilization subscribed to the idea of a spherical earth at a time when everyone else, even the Greeks, assumed the earth was flat. By the Fifth Century A.D. Indians had calculated that the age of the earth was 4.3 billion years; as late as the 19th Century, English scientists believed the earth was a hundred million years old, and it is only in the late 20th Century that Western scientists have come to estimate the earth to be about 4.6 billion years old. It was an Indian who first conceived of the zero, shunya; the concept of nothingness, shunyata, integral to Hindu and Buddhist thinking, simply did not exist in the West. *The Vedanga Jyotisha*, written around 500 B.C., declares: *"Like the crest of a peacock, like the gem on the head of a snake, so is mathematics at the head of all knowledge."* Our mathematicians were poets too!"⁴²⁸

He has proudly stated that:

"I am proud to claim adherence to a religion without an established church or priestly papacy, a religion whose rituals and customs I am free to reject, a religion that does not oblige me to demonstrate my faith by any visible sign, by subsuming my identity in any collectivity, not even by a specific day or time or frequency of worship. (There is no Hindu Pope, no Hindu Vatican, no Hindu catechism, not even a Hindu Sunday.) As a Hindu I am proud to subscribe to a creed that is free of the restrictive dogmas of holy writ that refuses to be shackled to the limitations of a single holy book."⁴²⁹

Shri Jagmohan was a former Union Minister of Tourism and Culture of India has recently observed eloquently that:

“The hallmark of India has been the power of its mind. It was this power of mind which found expression in its pre-eminent philosophy, religion, culture and way of life.”

“One of the finest pieces of evidence which shows how powerful and insightful was once the Indian mind was its clear and correct understanding of the pattern of human existence on this planet and beyond. It perceived the “non-dual reality” that lies behind the smoke screen of “surface duality” and realized that the universe was an organic web in which every item of life and nature was inextricably enmeshed with every other item. It also understood that this web was permeated with a cosmic force of which man and nature are the constituents as well as the contributors.”

“This deep perception, this great realization and this subtle understanding of the Indian mind so impressed the renowned American poet and philosopher, Emerson, that he wrote a beautiful poem, titled “Brahma”, in which he gave expression to the concept of non-duality. Clearly, what the Indian mind discovered, centuries earlier, by virtue of its perceptive power and its higher level of consciousness, was discovered by the modern science only recently. The profundity of the concepts of the universe being an organic web, as evolved by the Indian mind, in the heydays of its power, can best be brought?”

He has further declared that:

“The Indian mind was the earliest to grasp the significance of maintaining the ecological balance. From time immemorial, our sages and saints have been propagating: “The Earth is our Mother and we are its Children.” One of the earliest Vedic hymns, composed over 4,000 years ago, gave the message of what is now termed as sustainable development: “*Whatever I dig of you, O Earth\ May you of that have quick replenishment! O Purifying One, may my thrust never\ Reach right unto your vital points, your heart!*”⁴³⁰

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Chapter 5

Indologists

“The Hindus, were Spinozists more than 2,000 years before the advent of Spinoza, and Darwinians many centuries before Darwin and Evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of Evolution was accepted by scientists of the present age.” “The strength of Hinduism lies in its infinite adaptability to the infinite diversity of human character and human tendencies. It has its highly spiritual and abstract side suited to the philosopher; it’s practical to the man of the world, its aesthetic and ceremonial side attuned to the man of the poetic feeling and imagination; and its quiescent contemplative aspect that has its appeal for the man of peace and the lover of seclusion.”

- *Sir Monier Monier-Williams*



The Ramayana in Thailand.

The Thai Ramakien literally means "ram akhyan" In Southeast Asia, the story of Rama has become a traditional part of culture in Buddhist Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia.

(From author's collection of photos.)

Indologists

Indology is the intellectual pursuit of all things Indic, with a focus on the interpretation of the past. Indology is the study of classical Indian languages, history, and culture. Classical India was a prosperous civilization and had flourishing trading contacts with many parts of the world, including Southeast Asia. Though early Indologists, partly due to their evangelical mindset, reviled Indian studies, to many Indologists, spiritual India is a wonder and still lives on. Hinduism's lofty ideals stirred their imagination. India is indebted to their painstaking labor and contributions in translating and publishing ancient Hindu texts in English.



Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805) was a French Orientalist. He gave up studying for the priesthood to pursue his deep interest in Eastern languages. In India he learned Persian, Sanskrit, Zend, Avestan, and Pahlavi. He also translated *The Upanishads* into Latin (1804) and wrote several works on India.

He spent seven year in India, had recorded in his moving testimony in 1778:

“Peaceful Indians, did the rumor of your riches have to penetrate a clime in which artificial needs know no bounds? Soon, new foreigners reached your shores; inconvenient guests, everything they touched belonged to them...”

“If the British ...neglect any longer to enrich Europe’s scholars with the Sanskrit scriptures...they will bear the shame of having sacrificed honor, probity, and humanity to the vile love for gold and money, without human knowledge having derived the least lustre, the least growth from their conquests.” ⁴³¹

Sir William Jones (1746 -1794) came to India as a judge of the Supreme Court at Calcutta. He pioneered Sanskrit studies. His admiration for Indian thought and culture was almost limitless. Even at a time when Hinduism was at low ebb and it was quite fashionable to run it down, he held it in great esteem. While he believed in Christianity, he was attracted to the Hindu concepts of the non-duality of God, as interpreted by Shankara, and the transmigration of the human soul. The later theory he found more rational than the Christian doctrine of punishment and eternity of pain.

Writing to his close friend, Earl Spencer, in 1787, he articulated his ideas thus:

“I am no Hindu, but I hold the doctrine of the Hindus concerning a future state to be incomparably more rational, more pious, and more likely to deter men from vice, than the horrid opinions, inculcated on punishments without end.”

He writes of the Hindus that they are “a people with a fertile and inventive genius” who in some early age...were splendid in arts and arms, happy in government; wise in legislation, and eminent in various knowledge...”

“I am in love with the gopis, he wrote to Wilkins in 1784, ‘charmed with Krishna, an enthusiastic admirer of Rama and a devout adorer of Brahma. Yudhisthir, Arjuna, Bhima and other warriors of the Mahabharata appear greater in my eyes than Agamemnon, Ajax, and Achilles appeared when I first read the Iliad.” ⁴³²

He declared glowingly about Sanskrit in his book *The Sanscrit Language* (1786). Quoted in *Discovery of India* by Jawaharlal Nehru page 165:

“The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a

wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either: yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologist could examine them all without believing them to have sprung from some common source which perhaps no longer exists..."

In 1794, he published a translation of the *Ordinances of Manu*. He noted about Manu:

"A spirit of sublime devotion, of benevolence to mankind, and of amiable tenderness to all sentient creatures pervades the whole work: the style of it has a certain austere majesty, that sounds like the language of legislation and extorts a respectful awe; the sentiments of independence on all beings but God, and the harsh admonition even to kings are truly noble: and the many panegyrics on the Gayatri, the mother, as it is called, of the Veda, prove the author to have adored not the visible material sun, but the divine and incomparably greater light, to use the words of the most venerable text in the Indian Scripture, which illumines all, delights all, from which all proceed, to which all must return, and which alone can irradiate not our visual organs merely but our souls and our intellects." ⁴³³

"To read the Vedanta, or the many fine compositions in illustration of it, without believing that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the sages of India." He also gave arguments to show that a group of Egyptian priests had settled down in India and borrowed much from it." ⁴³⁴

Equally interesting are his poems. *A Hymn to Narayana*, in which he describes the Hindu theory of creation. *A Hymn to Lakshmi* and *A Hymn to Ganga* are equally fine.

A Hymn to Ganga

"How sweetly Ganga smiles, and glides,
Luxuriant o'er her broad autumnal bed!
Her waves perpetual verdure spread,
Whilst health and plenty deck her golden sides." ⁴³⁵

“The analogies between Greek and Pythagorean philosophy and the Sankhya school are very obvious.”

Jones firm belief in the Vedas is challenging and at the same time illuminating:

“I can venture to affirm, without meaning to pluck a leaf from the never-fading laurels of our immortal Newton that the whole of his theology, and part of his philosophy, may be found in the Vedas”.

“The six philosophical schools, whose principles are explained in the Darsana Sastra, comprise all the metaphysics of the old Academy, the Stoa, the Lyceum; nor is it possible to read the Vedanta, or the many fine compositions in illustration of it, without believing that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the Sages of India.”

“We are told by the Greek writers that the Indians were the wisest of nations, and in moral wisdom, they were certainly eminent.”⁴³⁶

Of Sankara's commentary upon the Vedanta, Sir Jones has observed, “it is not possible to speak with too much applause of so excellent a work.”

Sir Jones uttered this of the Vedanta:

“The fundamental tenet of the Vedantic school consisted not in denying the existence of matter, that is, of solidity, impenetrability and extended figure (to deny would be lunacy), but in correcting the popular notion of it, and in contending that it has no essence independent of mental perception, that existence and perceptibility are convertible terms, that external appearances and sensations are illusory and would vanish into nothing if the divine energy, which alone sustains them were suspended but for a moment: an opinion which Epicharmus and Plato seem to have adopted, and which has been maintained in the present century with great elegance, but with little applause, partly because it has been misunderstood, and partly because it has been misapplied by the false reasoning of some popular writers, who are said to have disbelieved in the moral attributes of God, whose omnipresence, wisdom, and goodness are the basis of the Indian philosophy.”

He adds: "The system is built on the purest devotion."

"Human life would not be sufficient to make oneself acquainted with any considerable part of Hindu literature." ⁴³⁷

Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren (1760-1842) was an Egyptologist and author of Historical researches into the politics, intercourse, and trade of the Carthaginians, Ethiopians, and Egyptians.

Speaking of Sanskrit, he wrote admiringly:

"The literature of the Sanskrit literature incontestably belongs to a highly cultivated people, whom we may with great reason consider to have been the most informed of all the East. It is, at the same time, a scientific and poetic literature." ⁴³⁸

He has rightly observed:

"India is the source from which not only the rest of Asia but the whole western world derived their knowledge and religion." ⁴³⁹

He goes on to assert that:

"The literature of the Hindus is rich in epic poetry."

"It will scarcely be possible to deny the Mahabharata to be one of the richest compositions in Epic poetry that was ever produced." "The Hindu lyric surpassed that of the Greeks in admitting both the rhyme and blank verse." ⁴⁴⁰

"If we compare the mythology of the Hindus with that of the Greeks, it will have nothing to apprehend on the score of intrinsic copiousness. In point of aesthetic value, it is sometimes superior, at others, inferior to Greek: while in luxuriance and splendor it has the decided advantage. Olympus, with all its family of gods and goddesses, must yield in pomp and majesty to the palaces of Vishnu and Indra."

"The Hindu Mythology like the sublime compositions of Milton and Klopstock extends its poetic flight far into the regions of unlimited space." ⁴⁴¹

Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858) was a German philologist and archaeologist, was born at Marburg, the son of a bookbinder. In 1802 he was appointed professor at Marburg, and two years later professor of philology and ancient history at Heidelberg. Creuzer's first and most famous work was his *Symbolik und Mythologie der allen Volker*.

He emphasized that:

"If there is a country on earth which can justly claim the honor of having been the cradle of the human race or at least the scene of primitive claim the honor of having been the cradle of the human race or at least the scene of primitive civilization, the successive developments of which carried into all parts of the ancient world and even beyond, the blessings of knowledge which is the second life of man, that country assuredly is India." ⁴⁴²

Friedrich Majer (1771-1818) was a disciple of Johann Gottfried Herder and an Orientalist who introduced to the great German philosopher Schopenhauer to Hindu thought and philosophy.

He found that:

"It will no longer remain to be doubted that the priests of Egypt and the sages of Greece have drawn directly from the original well of India," that it is to 'the banks of the Ganges and the Indus that our hearts feel drawn as by some hidden urge.'

And again he has remarked:

"Towards the Orient, to the banks of the Ganges and the Indus, it is there our hearts feel drawn by some hidden urge - it is there that all the dark presentiments point which lie in the depths of our heart...In the Orient, the heavens poured forth into the earth." ⁴⁴³

Friedrich Ruckert (1788-1866) was a Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Erlangen from 1827 to 1841, produced, under the inspiration of August Wilhelm von Schlegel, numerous skilful translations from Sanskrit.

His published translations from Indian classical poetry made Indian lyrics and poems widely popular in Germany.

Amongst Ruckert's translations are *Nalopakhyaṇa*, *the Amarusataka*, *the Raghuvamśa*, and *the Gita Govinda*, which lost nothing of its beauty, color and atmosphere in Ruckert's German version. The Indian poem is such a complex work from the viewpoint of rhyme, alliteration, and allusion that Ruckert's version represents a brilliant accomplishment. Of all the German poets, it was he who best understood the character of Indian poetry.

Ruckert's translation of the *Gitagovinda*, Bonn 1836, is a work of art. Written in beautiful language, it comes very close to the original in spirit and form. In his *Brahmanische Erzählungen* ('Brahmin stories'), Leipzig 1836, he brought out free renderings of Hindu legends from the epics. His translation of the Savitri episode is particularly noteworthy.⁴⁴⁴

Professor Eugene Burnouf (1801-1852) was the French orientalist in his *Discourse on Sanskrit and Its Literature*, given at the College of France, and he affirms that:

"We will study India with its philosophy and its myths, its literature, its laws and its language. Nay it is more than India it is a page of the origin of the world that we will attempt to decipher."⁴⁴⁵

Friedrich Maximilian Müller (1823-1900) was a German philologist and Orientalist. He repeatedly drew attention to the uniqueness of the Vedas and awakened interest in Indology among educated people. He did more than any other scholar to popularize philology and mythology, e.g., his lectures *Science of Language*.

Max Mueller is best known for his series *Sacred Books of the East*.

He expressed his views most brilliantly when he wrote:

"If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered

over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India." And if I were to ask myself from what literature we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of the Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human a life...again I should point to India." ⁴⁴⁶

"I maintain that for everybody who cares for himself, for his ancestors, for his history, for his intellectual development, a study of Vedic literature is indispensable."

"The Upanishads are the...sources of...The Vedanta philosophy, a system in which human speculation seems to me to have reached its very acme." "I spend my happiest hours in reading Vedantic books. They are to me like the light of the morning, like the pure air of the mountains - so simple, so true, if once understood." ⁴⁴⁷

"The conception of the world as deduced from the Veda, and chiefly from the Upanishads, is indeed astounding." ⁴⁴⁸

"The transcendent temperament acquired, no doubt, a more complete supremacy in the Indian character than anywhere else."

In *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (p 557) Max Muller observed,

"In the Rig Veda we shall have before us more real antiquity than in all the inscriptions of Egypt or Ninevah...the Veda is the oldest book in existence."

"Historical records (of the Hindus) extend in some respects so far beyond all records and have been preserved to us in such perfect and legible documents, that we can learn from them lessons which we can learn nowhere else and supply missing links." ⁴⁴⁹

"The Vedic literature opens to us a chamber in the education of human race to which we can find no parallel anywhere else. Whoever cares for the historical growth of our language and thought, whoever cares for the first intelligent development of religion and mythology, whoever cares for the first foundation of Science, Astronomy, Metronomy, Grammar and Etymology,

whoever cares for the first intimation of the first philosophical thoughts, for the first attempt at regulating family life, village life and state life as founded on religion, ceremonials, traditions and contact must in future pay full attention to the study of Vedic literature.”⁴⁵⁰

“The whole of their (Hindu) literature, from one end to the other, is pervaded by expression of love and reverence for truth.”⁴⁵¹

Max Mueller declared that:

“None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel, has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightnings. Stone follows on stone, in regular succession after once the first step has been made, after once it has been clearly seen that in the beginning there can have been but One, as there will be but One in the end, whether we call it Atman or Brahman.”⁴⁵²

He says that from Indian literature the Christian world “may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly humane, a life not for this only, but a transfigured and eternal life.”⁴⁵³

In *Three Lectures on Vedanta Philosophy* (p 11-12) published in 1896, Muller expressed his opinion thus:

“What distinguishes the Vedanta philosophy from all other philosophies is that it is at the same time a religion and a philosophy.”

About the love of truth experienced by the sages of the Upanishads, Prof. Max Muller stated,

“If it seems strange to you that the old Indian Philosophers should have known more about the soul than Greek or medieval or modern philosophers, let us remember that however much the telescopes for observing the stars of heaven have been improved, the observatories of the soul have remained much the same.”

He went on to say:

"It is surely astounding that such a system as the Vedanta should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy, as in mounting last steps of the swaying spire of a Gothic cathedral. None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant or Hegel, has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightning. Stone follows on stone after regular succession after once the first step has been made, after once it has been clearly seen that in the beginning there can have been One, as there will be but One in the end, whether we call it Atman or Brahman." ⁴⁵⁴

Prof Max Mueller, an authority on ancient India, noted:

"I do not deny that the manly vigor, the public spirit and the private virtues of the citizens of European states represent one side of the human destiny." But, surely, he asserts, "there is another side to our nature and possibly another destiny open to man." And he points to India, "Where the climate was mild and the soil fertile." He asks: "Was it not, I say, natural then, that another side of human nature should be developed — not the active, the combative and acquisitive, but the passive, the meditative and reflective?"

"If philosophy is meant to be a preparation for a happy death, or Euthanasia, I know of no better preparation for it than the Vedanata philosophy." ⁴⁵⁵

"Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whether it be language, or religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be law or customs, primitive art or primitive science, everywhere you have to go to India, whether you like it or not, because some of the most valuable and instructive materials of the history of man are treasured up in India and India only." ⁴⁵⁶

"The Hindus," says Max Muller, "were a people remarkably gifted for philosophical abstraction." ⁴⁵⁷

"The earliest of these Upanishads will always maintain a place in the philosophic literature of the world among the most astounding products of the human mind." ⁴⁵⁸

Professor Edward Washburn Hopkins (1857-1932) was an Indologist, Chair of Sanskrit Studies of Yale, and has said:

“Plato is full of Sankhyan thought, worked out by him, but taken from Pythagoras. Before the sixth century B.C. all the religious-philosophical idea of Pythagoras are current in India (L. Schroeder, Pythagoras). If there were but one or two of these cases, they might be set aside as accidental coincidences, but such coincidences are too numerous to be the result of change.”

And again he observes:

“Neo-Platonism and Christian Gnosticism owe much to India. The Gnostic ideas in regard to a plurality of heavens and spiritual worlds go back directly to Hindu sources. Soul and light are one in the Sankhyan system, before they became so in Greece, and when they appear united in Greece it is by means of the thought which is borrowed from India. The famous three qualities of the Sankhyan reappear as the Gnostic ‘three classes’.”⁴⁵⁹

Sir Monier Monier-Williams (1819-1899) was an Indologist and head of the Oxford’s Boden Chair. His works include *Indian Wisdom* (1875), an anthology from Sanskrit literature; and his translation of *Sakuntala* (1853).

He wrote eloquently:

“The strength of Hinduism lies in its infinite adaptability to the infinite diversity of human character and human tendencies. It has its highly spiritual and abstract side suited to the philosopher, its practical to the man of the world, its aesthetic and ceremonial side attuned to the man of the poetic feeling and imagination, and its quiescent contemplative aspect that has its appeal for the man of peace and the lover of seclusion.”

He wisely noted that:

“The Hindus, according to him, were Spinozists more than 2,000 years before the advent of Spinoza, and Darwintians many centuries before Darwin and Evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of Evolution was accepted by scientists of the present age.”

“I have found no people in Europe more religious, none more patiently persevering in common duties.” ⁴⁶⁰

“Starting from the Vedas, Hinduism has ended in embracing something from all religions, and in presenting phases suited to all minds. It is all tolerant, all-compliant, all-comprehensive, all-absorbing.”

“The following passages about the Hindu Epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata) are noteworthy for their beauty and for their insight:”

“It must be admitted, however, that, in exhibiting pictures of domestic life and manners, the Sanskrit epics are even more true and real than the Greek and Roman. In the delineation of women the Hindu poet thrown aside all exaggerated coloring and drawn from nature - Kaikeyi, Kausalya, Mandodari (favorite wife of Ravana), and even the humble-backed Manthara are all drawn to the very life. Sita, Draupadi, and Damayanti engage our affections and our interest for more than Helen or even Penelope. Indeed Hindu wives are generally perfect patterns of conjugal fidelity; can it be doubted that, in these delightful portraits of the Pativrata or purity and simplicity of Hindu domestic manners in early times.”

“Indeed, in depicting scenes of domestic affection, and expressing those universal feelings and emotions which belong to human nature in all time and in all places, Sanskrit epic poetry is unrivalled even by Greek Epics. In the Indian epics, such passages abound, and besides giving a very high idea of the purity and happiness of domestic life in ancient India, indicate a capacity in Hindu woman for the discharge of the most sacred and important social duties.”

“Yet there are not wanting indications in the Indian Epics of a higher degree of civilization than that represented in the Homeric poems. The battlefields of the Ramayana and Mahabharata...are not made barbarously wanton cruelties; and the description of Ayodhya and Lanka imply far greater luxury and refinement than those of Sparta and Troy.”

“He (Rama) is the type of a perfect husband, son, and brother. Sita also rises in character far above Helen and even above Penelope, both in her sublime devotion and loyalty to her

husband, and her indomitable patience and endurance under suffering and temptation.....it may be affirmed generally that the whole tone of the Ramayana is certainly above that of the Iliad.” ⁴⁶¹

In the words of Monier Williams, India is ‘in all respects a complete world in itself’. ⁴⁶²

“It may be with truth asserted that no description of Hinduism can be exhaustive which does not touch on almost every religious and philosophical idea that the world has ever known. It is all tolerant, all comprehensive, all compliant, all absorbing. It has its spiritual and its material aspect; it’s esoteric and exoteric; it’s subjective and objective; it’s rational and irrational. It has one side for the practical; another for the severely moral; another for the devotional and the imaginative; another for the philosophical and speculative.” ⁴⁶³

Sir Monier Monier-Williams, in his book *Brahmanism and Hinduism: or, Religious thought and life in India*, as based on the Veda and other sacred books of the Hindus, declared:

“Indeed, if I may be allowed the anachronism, the Hindus were Spinozites more than two thousand years before the existence of Spinoza; and Darwinians many centuries before Darwin; and evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time, and before any word like ‘evolution’ existed in any language of the world.” ⁴⁶⁴

He said that Pythagoras and Plato both believed in this doctrine, and that they were indebted for it to Hindu writers. ⁴⁶⁵

About the *Niti Shastras* he says: “Anyone who studies the best Hindu writings cannot but be struck by the moral tone which everywhere pervades them...constantly represent the present condition of human life as the result of actions in the previous existence. Hence a right course of present conduct becomes an all-important consideration as bearing on future happiness....”

Sir Monier Williams says that whatever conclusions we form as to the source of the first astronomical ideas in the world it is probable that we owe to the Hindus the invention of algebra and its application

to astronomy and geometry. And that from them the Arabs received the numerical symbols and decimal notation, which now used everywhere in Europe have rendered untold services to the cause of science.

And again he comments that:

“The motions of the sun and moon were carefully observed by the Hindus and with such success that their determination of the moon’s synodical revolution is a much more correct one than the Greeks ever achieved. They introduced the period of Jupiter with those of the sun and moon into the regulation of their calendar in the form of sixty years common to them and the Chaldeans. They were keenly interested in logic and grammar, and in medicine and surgery they once kept pace with the most enlightened people of the world.” ⁴⁶⁶

Emile-Louis Burnouf (1821-1907) was the leading Orientalist and author of *La science des religions* and *Dictionnaire classique sanscrit-français* and *Essai sur le Veda, ou Introduction a la connaissance de l’Inde* and he uttered that:

“The Bhagavad Gita was “probably the most beautiful book which has ever come from the hand of man.” ⁴⁶⁷

Sylvain Levi (1863-1935) was a French scholar, Orientalist who wrote on Eastern religion, literature, and history. Levi was appointed a lecturer at the school of higher studies in Paris (1886), he taught Sanskrit at the Sorbonne (1889-94) and wrote his doctoral dissertation, *Le Théâtre indien* (“*The Indian Theatre*”).

In *L’Inde et le monde* (“*India and the World*” 1928) he discussed India’s role among nations.

He pointed out that:

“From Persia to the Chinese Sea, ‘from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization.”

“She has left indelible imprints on one fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right

to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time and to hold her place amongst the great nations summarizing and symbolizing the spirit of humanity.”⁴⁶⁸

He astutely remarked that:

“The multiplicity of the manifestations of the Indian genius as well as their fundamental unity gives India the right to figure on the first rank in the history of civilized nations. Her civilization, spontaneous and original, unrolls itself in a continuous time across at least thirty centuries, without interruption, without deviation. Ceaselessly in contact with foreign elements, which threatened to strangle her, she persevered victoriously in absorbing them, assimilating them and enriching herself with them. Thus she has seen the Greeks, the Scythians, the Afghans, the Mongols to pass before her eyes in succession and is regarding with indifference the Englishmen - confident to pursue under the accident of the surface the normal course of her high destiny.”⁴⁶⁹

Levi thought that:

“The Mahabharata is not only the largest, but also the grandest of all epics, as it contains throughout a lively teaching of morals under a glorious garment of poetry.”⁴⁷⁰

Maurice Winternitz (1863-1937) was the famed Indologist, author of *History of Indian Literature* and he states:

“From the mystical doctrines of the Upanishads, one current of thought may be traced to the mysticism of Persian Sufism, to the mystic, theosophic logos doctrine of the Neo-Platonics and the Alexandrian Christian Mystics, Eckhart and Tauler, and finally to the philosophy of the great German mystic of the nineteenth century, Schopenhauer.”⁴⁷¹

Alexandra David-Neel (1868-1969) was a French explorer, writer, Orientalist and mystic. She had studied Sanskrit and Buddhism at the Sorbonne University and made her first journey alone to India. Though educated in a convent, she became interested in spiritualism and theosophy and joined a group with similar interest; one of these

groups was Mirra Richard, the future “Mother” of Pondicherry. She had remarked that the role Gods play in India is remarkable.

She has asserts that:

“Because the images of statues are like a battery which is charged over the ages by the adoration of the devotees, who in turn can draw energy, inspiration, or grace from these statues.”

She goes on further:

“As a battery, the energy in the statue will not get discharged, as long as the faithful continue to worship it by their adoration.” And she concludes: “Gods are thus created by the energy given out by the faith in their existence.” ⁴⁷²

Robert Earnest Hume (1877-1948) was the only American Sanskritist native to India (he was born in Mumbai) and taught in India as well as at Oxford. His correct appreciation of the Upanishads as the first written evidence of a philosophical system in India resulted in the publication of his *Thirteen Principal Upanishads* in 1921. It has been reprinted many times since then.

With skillful imperative he included his estimation of the Upanishads in a lengthy introduction:

“In the long history of man’s endeavor to grasp the fundamental truths of being, the metaphysical treatises known as the Upanishads hold an honored place...they are replete with sublime conceptions and with intuitions of universal Truth...The Upanishads undoubtedly have great historical and comparative value, but they are also of great present-day importance. It is evident that the monism of the Upanishads has exerted and will continue to exert an influence on the monism of the West; for it contains certain elements, which penetrate deeply into the truths which every philosopher must reach in a thoroughly grounded explanation of experience.” ⁴⁷³

“The earnestness of the search for the Truth is one of the more delightful and commendable features of the Upanishads.” Hume wrote in a footnote to that work.

Hume's second revised edition of *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* was published in 1931. A favorable, authoritative review by R. D. Ranade gave prominence to Hume's work. This edition included an appendix with a list of recurrent and parallel passages in the major Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. The list, prepared by Hume's co-author George C. O. Haas, was printed earlier in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.⁴⁷⁴

Dr. Heinrich Zimmer (1890 -1943) was the great German Indologist, a man of penetrating intellect, the keenest esthetic sensibility. Zimmer came to the United States in 1940, at the height of his career, and was lecturing at Columbia University when he died in 1943.

His other works in the Bollingen series include *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* and *Philosophies of India*.

He has declared that:

"We of the Occident are about to arrive at a crossroads that was reached by the thinkers of India some seven hundred years before Christ. This is the real reason, why we become both vexed and stimulated, uneasy and yet interested, when confronted with the concepts and images of Oriental wisdom."⁴⁷⁵

"It is well known that our Christian Western tradition has long refused to accept the wisdom of the pagans on an equal footing with the body of revelation that it cherishes and worships as its own."

Zimmer pointed out:

"The fact is that there are virtue, wisdom, and inspiration to be found even among the historical enemies of Christianity."⁴⁷⁶

"The whole edifice of Indian civilization is imbued with spiritual meaning. The close interdependence and perfect harmonization of the two serve to counteract the natural tendency of Indian philosophy to become recondite and esoteric, removed from life and the task of the education of society. In the Hindu world, the

folklore and popular mythology carry the truths and teachings of the philosophers to the masses. In this symbolic form the ideas do not have to be watered down, to be popularized. The vivid, perfectly appropriate pictorial script preserves the doctrines without the slightest damage to their sense.”⁴⁷⁷

Regarding the Cosmic Dance of Shiva, he has astutely remarked that:

“His gesture wild and full of grace, precipitate the cosmic illusion; his flying arms, and legs and the swaying of his torso produce – indeed, they are – the continuous creation-destruction of the universe, death exactly balancing birth, annihilation the end of every coming-forth.”⁴⁷⁸

Jean Herbert (1897 - 1980) was a famous Indianist, author of several books including *Ganesha, précédé d'une étude sur Dieu chez les Hindous*, *Spiritualité hindoue* (1947), *An Introduction To Asia* and *Vedantisme et vie pratique et autre études* (1942), and he reminds us that:

“Many many centuries before us, India had devised most of the philosophical systems which Europe experienced with later. They contained, at least in its essence, the philosophy of the Greeks, the Alexandrine mystique, the religious speculation of the Middle Ages, the rationalism, of the XIXth century and even the most recent incarnations of modern pantheism.”⁴⁷⁹

Paul Thieme (1905 - 2001) was a scholar of Vedic Sanskrit and German Indologist University of Tuebingen. Thieme is considered one of the “last great Indologists”, advancing all aspects of the philology of Sanskrit, with expertise reaching from the Vedas to the Epics and the Upanishads, Sanskrit poetry and traditional Hindu science (shastra), and Indian grammarians (Panini and his commentators).

He has observed:

“Vedas are noble documents not only of value and pride to India, but to the entire humanity because in them we see man attempting to lift himself above the earthly writing of epics.”⁴⁸⁰

B B (Braji Basi) Lal (1921 -) He joined the Archaeological Survey in January 1946, and held charge of the Excavations Branch and participated with Sir Mortimer Wheeler in the excavations at Harappa, now in Pakistan. In 1951 he was deputed for advanced studies at the Institute of Archaeology, London. In 1961, under a UNESCO project, he conducted excavations in Nubia, Egypt, and brought to light valuable evidence relating to prehistoric and protohistoric periods of that country.

He was the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1968 to 1972. He is the author of *The Saraswati Flows on: The Continuity of Indian Culture*.

He pronounced that:

“The great civilization of the Indian Sub-continent has had its roots deep in antiquity, some seven to eight thousand years ago, and its flowering in the third millennium B.C. still lives on. In contrast, when we look round the world we are surprised by the fact that the Egyptian and Mesopotamia civilizations that flourished alongside this Indic Civilization have all disappeared, leaving hardly any trace behind. Why? The Indian psyche has indeed been pondering over this great cultural phenomenon of ‘livingness’, and this quest.”

“What is that ‘something’, some inherent strength? Doubtless it lies in the liberal character of the Indian civilization, which allows for cross-fertilization with other cultures, without losing its own identity. Even time (kala), the great devourer, has stood testimony to the fact that the deep foundations of Indian culture could not be shaken either by internal upheavals, however great may have been their magnitude....”

He affirms that:

“The soul of India lives on!”

Speaking about the River Saraswati, he writes:

“Western linguists and historians and their, more vociferous, Indian counterparts claim that the Rigvedic Sarasvati was the Helmand of Afghanistan. The Rigvedic Sarasvati, according to

what is stated in the Rig Veda (RV. 10. 75. 5) itself lay between the Yamuna on the one hand and the Sutlej on the other. These two rivers do not exist in Afghanistan.”⁴⁸¹

Lal is correctly critical of “Western scholars and their Indian followers” for not accepting the unity between the Indus Valley and Vedic Civilizations.

“Most likely, the authors of the Indus valley civilization were the Sanskrit-speaking Vedic Aryans,” Lal asserted. Lal invoked the Rig Veda to prove his thesis. “To say the Vedic people were nomads is either ignorance or due to a willful twisting of facts,” he alleged.⁴⁸²

He has dubbed the hypothesis of “Aryan invasion of India” a myth. He alleged that it was still accepted for reasons other than historical.

“The theory that there was an Aryan invasion of India is completely wrong,”

Lal stressed in a seminar in New Delhi and contended that political reasons were behind its being in the textbooks. “Do the proponents of this theory expect us to believe that urban Harappans, on being sent away to south India, shed overnight their urban characteristics and took to a Stone Age way of living?” asks Lal.⁴⁸³

Pandit Jagdish Chandra Chatterji was the Director of the Archaeological and Research Department of Kashmir State and author of *Kashmir Shaivism and Hindu Realism*.

In his book, *The Wisdom of the Vedas* (1980) he articulated thus:

“The name Veda literally means Wisdom or Science, but is given, technically, to the oldest literature of the Indian people.”

“The universe produced from the one undivided Atman by the on-rolling process of manifestation (vivarta) is thus a unified system, a mighty organism in which the inmost nucleus, the pervading Spirit and Self, is the one abiding Being, the one Supreme Person (Purusha) in the aspect of Brahman, the Word,

as Isha, the Lord.” “In this mighty living organism that is the Universe there is nothing really dead or absolutely unconscious. On the contrary, like every cell in a living, healthy body, every part and every thing in the universe is alive, though many parts are, as it were, in a comatose state; every part, every particle in it is ensouled, inspirited, by the All-aware. All-feeling Being that is Atman.”

“This is beautifully illustrated in the story of Prahlada, even though that is found outside the Vedas. We are told how, in order to rescue Prahlada from the heartless tortures inflicted by his wicked father, the Being Divine, in response to Prahlada’s burning love for the Divine, appears in all the glory of That One from a crystal pillar in which, in all fullness, Divinity had remained hidden, deeply buried, as the inmost core of every particle in that cold, dead structure.” ⁴⁸⁴

Claude Arpi (1949 -) is a French dentist-turned-Tibetologist, author of *Fate of Tibet: When Big Insects Eat Small Insects* (1999) and he has written:

“Though I am still a French man, I adopted this country as my own long ago however today, I am sad. When I left France for India, I came with a dream: I was going to the land of the Vedas, of the Buddha, a continent with an eternal religion. I thought everyone in this country was turned “inwards”, seeking a higher light; I believed India would soon be able to guide the world towards a more meaningful tomorrow. Why I am sad now? I can’t help feeling a terrible divide between this dream and today’s reality (at least the one depicted in the English media).”

He cannot help wondering that though:

“I still believe in “India of the ages”, but I cannot grasp **why** Indians themselves still refuse to acknowledge the greatness of their culture.”

“Is it not disheartening that historians base their judgment on press reports and not on their own scholarship? Then why do they spend three days discussing textbooks when there are so many more important subjects related to history to be discussed? What about the neglected discoveries of Poompuhar or the new sites in the Gulf of Cambay?”

"It is estimated that 12 million Americans are today practicing yoga and that 450 yoga centers are blossoming in the US. The same tidal wave is submerging Europe. In France alone, more than one million people are practicing Buddhist meditation. What is sad and shocking is that these historians like many intellectuals in India are not at all concerned by what has always made India great, they prefer to denigrate India."⁴⁸⁵

Jean Michel Varenne is the distinguished French Orientalist and author of *Yoga and the Hindu Tradition*, and he wrote in 1976:

"The only remaining testimony to the prestigious civilization of ancient Egypt lies buried in archaeological remains; which meant that the inhabitants of the Nile valley, converted to Islam thirteen centuries ago, had to wait for Champollion to decipher the hieroglyphics before they could know anything of the beliefs of their distant ancestors. Yet during all this time Hindu families continued, and still continue today, to venerate the selfsame Vishnu who is celebrated in the archaic hymns of the Rig Veda..."

Varenne has reflected that:

"It would be impossible to overemphasize this exceptional durability of a civilization that is extremely difficult to conceive of as mortal. And certainly the Hindus themselves would be the last to subscribe to the notion that all cultures have a limited lifespan. That is the product of Western minds trained at an early age to write essays on "The Causes of the fall of the Roman Empire," of a Christian or a Moslem faith proud of the fact that its first believers once repudiated pagan polytheism, and therefore prone to assume that all civilizations are perishable the same way as human beings themselves. To the traditional minded Hindu, on the other hand, such revolutions are inconceivable, for him, the religion he professes has no beginning and no end; it had no founder, and it lies in no one's power to attack or breach it. It is the eternal norm (in Sanskrit, sanatana dharma), the universal law, the supreme religion. Being absolute, it cannot be modified in any way and remains identical to itself down through the ages."

"Traditional India knows that nothing in the universe is chance, that everything is necessity. In the infinite multiplicity of the real it reads a reference to unity, and perceives the rule of a sovereign

order even where complexity seems in danger of lapsing chaos and incoherence. The All, in itself and in each of its parts, is governed by an immutable, unbreakable law that supports the world while at the same time transcending it absolutely.”⁴⁸⁶

Graham Hancock (1950 -) is the author of a number of bestselling investigations of historical mysteries, including *The Sign and the Seal* (1993) and *Fingerprints of the Gods* (1995).

He has remarked that:

“The Vedas (a superb religious literature with no known parent) might in fact have been the work of the undeniably maritime Indus Saraswati civilization which was long known to have possessed a script but apparently had no religious literature.”

“What is the most amazing about these hymnodies is not so much their overall length, which is awesome, but that for most of their history it is probable that no written versions of them ever existed – and not because they could not be written down but because the priests of the Vedic religion that evolved into Hinduism believed that they should not be written down but should be kept alive instead in human memory.”

Hancock admiringly writes about Hindu scriptures:

“Almost supernatural feats of memory - Unlike in other big modern industrial nations that have long ago lost all sense of the sacred and all respect for ‘what the ancients said’, the sacred life still permeates India through and through to such an extent that an appeal to the authority of scripture can still settle all disputes. And unlike the cultures of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, China and the Americas, where only spectacular fossils of architecture and language remain, the culture of ancient India is still vibrantly alive today in the subcontinent and offers as its gift to the present a vast library of archaic rituals, dances, games, ceremonies, festivals and customs as well as an immense oral literature that has not only been preserved and continuously passed on in the memory of sadhus and rishis (sages, wise men) for thousands of years but that is also celebrated, rehearsed, admired and relished in hundreds of thousands of Hindu villages from the Himalayas to the sea.”

“In India, with its vibrant spiritual culture, its armies of ragged pilgrims and its remarkable Vedas raises the possibility that the real origins of civilization could be very different – not driven by economics but by the spiritual quest that all true ascetics of India still pursue with the utmost dedication. Such a quest does not deny that the basic material requirements of the human creature must be met but seeks to limit our attachment to material things and in general to subordinate material needs to mental and spiritual self-discipline.”

He has pointed out:

“Indian thought has traditionally regarded history and prehistory in cyclical rather than linear terms. In the West time is an arrow – we are born, we live, we die. But in India we die only to be reborn. Indeed, it is a deeply rooted idea in Indian spiritual traditions that the earth itself and all living creatures upon it are locked into an immense cosmic cycle of birth, growth, fruition, death, rebirth and renewal. Even temples are reborn after they grow too old to be used safely – through the simple expedient of reconstruction on the same site.”⁴⁸⁷

Chapter 6

Teachers

“To the philosophers of India, however, Relativity is no new discovery, just as the concept of light years is no matter for astonishment to people used to thinking of time in millions of kalpas (A kalpa is about 4,320,000 years). The fact that the wise men of India have not been concerned with technological applications of this knowledge arises from the circumstance that technology is but one of innumerable ways of applying it.”

- Dr. Alan Watts



Tekadi Ganpati Svayambhu, Nagpur, India.

Lord Ganesha with the head of an elephant is the Lord of beginnings and Wisdom. That the Supreme can be worshipped in any form is a concept unique to Hinduism.

(From author's collection of photos.)

Teachers

Academia is the milieu or interests of a university, college, or academy, academe. For last few decades there has been a dedicated effort by some teachers and professors around the world to better understand Hinduism's multi-faceted identity. Their efforts have been noteworthy by the fact that they have tried to enlighten the religious teachings of Hinduism that continue to nourish India today. Hinduism's complex rituals, her symbols and icons, are continually misunderstood, and have been clarified by such great professors and teachers like Louis Renou, Romain Rolland, Hans Torwesten and others.



Theodore Goldstucker (1821-1872) was born in Germany and was a professor of Sanskrit at London's University College wrote the *Dictionary of Indian Biography*.

He finds in the Upanishads: "the germs of all the philosophies."⁴⁸⁸

Gustav Oppert (1836-1908) was born in Hamburg, Germany, he taught Sanskrit and comparative linguistics at the Presidency College, Madras for 21 years. He was the Telugu translator to the Government and Curator, Government Oriental Manuscript Library.

He writes of his high esteem for the Bharatas, the original inhabitants of India:

"I venture to suggest that the inhabitants of this country would do well if they were to assume the ancient, honorable, and national name of Bharata, remembering that India has become famous as Bharatvarsa, the land of the Bharats." ⁴⁸⁹

Richard Garbe (1857–1927) was a professor at the University of Tübingen, had earned his reputation through his scholarship on Indian philosophy, particularly his work on reconstructing the Bhagavad Gita in its original form.

The Prussian government through its Ministry of Culture and the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin financed his yearlong trip to India in 1885. Garbe kept a detailed record of his experiences in India, which he published in 1889 under the title *Indian Travel Sketches*. Garbe's travels and reactions to the East are especially interesting because he was one of a handful of nineteenth-century German Indologists (scholars of Indian culture and antiquity) who actually visited India.

He had devoted a large part of his life to the study of the Sankhya, consoled himself with the thought that "in Kapila's doctrine, for the first time in the history of the world, the complete independence and freedom of the human mind, its full confidence in its own powers, were exhibited." ⁴⁹⁰

Professor John Stuart Mackenzie (1860 – 1935) has commented on Indian religion and metaphysics. He writes in his book *Elements of Constructive Philosophy* published in 1918 p. 475:

"The Religion that is most nearly akin to a philosophical reconstruction would seem to be that of Brahmanism." ⁴⁹¹

Sir Michael Sadler (1861-1943) was an authority on education, and he wrote in 1919:

"One cannot walk through the streets of any center of population in India without meeting face after face which is eloquent of thought, of fine feeling, and of insight into the profound things of life. In a very true sense the people of India are nearer to the

spiritual hearts of things than we in England are. As for brain power, there is that in India which is comparable with the best in our country.”⁴⁹²

Sir Brajendranath Seal (1864-1938) was the Knight Vice Chancellor Mysore University. Seal's major published work is *The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*, which, besides being a work on the history of science, shows interrelations among the ancient Hindu philosophical concepts and their scientific theories.

Seal has reflected that:

“The Hindus no less than the Greeks have shared in the work of constructing scientific concepts and methods in the investigating of physical phenomena, as well as of building up a body of positive knowledge which has been applied to industrial technique; and Hindus scientific ideas and methodology (eg. the inductive method or methods of algebraic analysis) have deeply influenced the course of natural philosophy in Asia - in the East as well as the West - in China and Japan, as well as in the Saracen Empire. “In “*The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*.”

Brajendranath Seal explains that the Sankya-Patanjali system of cosmology expresses the fundamental idea of conservation, transformation, and dissipation of energy. Every phenomena in the universe is based on the interaction of intelligence, energy and mass. This is modern physics in a nutshell — a world view that was born out of the ashes of the materialistic and mechanistic views of classical physics of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.⁴⁹³

James Ramsey MacDonald (1866-1937) was the first Labor Party prime minister of Great Britain could grasp the truth when he said in his Introduction to the “*The Fundamental Unity of India*:

“The Hindu from his traditions and religion regards India not only as a political unit naturally the subject of one sovereignty, but as the outward embodiment, as the temple - nay even as the Goddess Mother of his spiritual culture.”

MacDonald declared that:

“India and Hinduism are organically related as body and soul.”⁴⁹⁴

Romain Rolland (1866-1944) was a French Nobel laureate, professor of the history of music at the Sorbonne and thinker. Because of his insistence upon justice and his humanist ideal, he looked for peace during and after the First World War in the works of the philosophers of India.

Rolland was strongly influenced by the Vedanta philosophy of Hinduism. He authored a book on the *Life of Ramakrishna* (1929) and *Life of Vivekananda* (1930).

Talking about India he has appreciatively noted:

“If there is one place on the face of the earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India....For more than 30 centuries, the tree of vision, with all its thousand branches and their millions of twigs, has sprung from this torrid land, the burning womb of the Gods. It renews itself tirelessly showing no signs of decay.”

He urges:

“Let us return to our eagle’s nest in the Himalayas. It is waiting for us, for it is ours, eaglets of Europe, we need not renounce any part of our real nature...whence we formerly took our flight.”⁴⁹⁵

He has wisely drawn attention that to the fact that:

“Religious faith in the case of the Hindus has never been allowed to run counter to scientific laws, moreover the former is never made a condition for the knowledge they teach, but there are always scrupulously careful to take into consideration the possibility that by reason both the agnostic and atheist may attain truth in their own way. Such tolerance may be surprising to religious believers in the West, but it is an integral part of Vedantic belief.”

Mr. Rolland thought:

“The true Vedantic spirit does not start out with a system of preconceived ideas. It possesses absolute liberty and unrivalled

courage among religions with regard to the facts to be observed and the diverse hypotheses it has laid down for their coordination. Never having been hampered by a priestly order, each man has been entirely free to search wherever he pleased for the spiritual explanation of the spectacle of the universe.”

He indicated that “a hundred facts testify to how great an extent the East (India) was mingled with Hellenic thought during the second century of our era.” ⁴⁹⁶

He identified the fact that:

“The greatest human ideal is the great cause of bringing together the thoughts of Europe and Asia; the great soul of India will topple our world.” ⁴⁹⁷

Professor Rudolph Otto (1869-1937) was an associate professor at Göttingen. Eventually he became a professor of systematic theology, first at Breslau in 1915, then at Marburg in 1917. He is emphatic that the idea of a Son of God is certainly not from Israel. The figure of a being that had to do with the world is of high antiquity among the Aryans...and points back in some way to influences of the Aryan East.

“These materials are found in India, in more primitive forms not merely as a late period but in the remotest pre-Christian *Kausitaki Upanishad*.” ⁴⁹⁸

Arthur William Ryder (1877-1938) was a Professor at Berkeley. J Robert Oppenheimer the nuclear physicist had studied Sanskrit with him at Berkeley in 1933. He has translated several books including, *Dandin's Dasha-kumara-charita: The ten princes* (1927).

He affirmed in his introduction to the Bhagavad Gita that:

“Uncounted millions have drawn from it comfort and joy. In it they have found an end to perplexity, a clear, if difficult, road to salvation.” ⁴⁹⁹

One of Kalidasa's long poems is the *Meghduta, or the Cloud Messenger*. A lover, made captive and separated from his beloved,

asks a cloud, during the rainy season, to carry his message of desperate longing to her. To this poem and to Kalidasa, the American scholar, Ryder, has paid a splendid tribute.

He refers to the two parts of the poem and notes:

“The former half is a description of external nature, yet interwoven with human feelings; the latter half is a picture of human heart, yet the picture is framed in natural beauty. So exquisitely is the thing done that none can say which half is superior? Of those who read this perfect poem in the original text, some are moved by the one, some by the other.” ⁵⁰⁰

Walter Eugene Clark, was the Wales Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard University from 1928-1950; author of *Indian conceptions of immortality* and *The Aryabhatiya of Aryabhata; an ancient Indian work on mathematics and astronomy*.

He wrote glowingly about Sanskrit:

“Panini’s grammar is the earliest scientific grammar in the world, the earliest extant grammar of any language, and one of the greatest ever written. It was the discovery of Sanskrit by the West, at the end of the 18th century, and the study of Indian methods of analyzing language that revolutionized our study of language and grammar, and gave rise to our science of comparative philology. The most striking feature of Sanskrit grammar is its objective resolution of speech and language into their component elements, and definition of the functions of these elements. Long before Panini (who names over sixty predecessors) the sounds represented by the letters of the alphabet had been arranged in an overly systematic form, vowels and diphthongs separated from mutes, semi-vowels, and sibilants, and the sounds in each group arranged according to places in the mouth where produced (gutturals, palatals, cerebrals, dentals, and labials). Words were analyzed into roots of which complex words grew by the addition of prefixes and suffixes. General rules were worked out, defining the conditions according to which consonants and vowels influence each other, undergo change, or drop out. The study of language in India was much more objective and scientific than in Greece or Rome. The interest was in empirical investigation of

language, rather than philosophical and syntactical. Indian study of language was as objective as the dissection of a body by an anatomist.”

“Indians were a people who were capable of making the Iron Pillar of Delhi and the Sultanganj copper colossus of Buddha, and of hewing out blocks of sandstone 50 feet long and 4 feet square, carving them into a perfect roundness, giving them a wonderful polish which cannot be duplicated even today, and transporting them over distances of several hundred miles, must have attained considerable proficiency in metallurgy and engineering.”

“The Iron Pillar of Delhi measures 23 feet 8 inches from the top of the bell capital to the bottom of the base; and the diameter diminished from 16.4 inches below to 12.05 inches above. The material is pure, rustless, malleable iron. It was made by some sort of welding process, and the weight is estimated to exceed six tons.” ⁵⁰¹

Professor Hugh George H. G. Rawlinson (1880 - 1957) was the author of several books including *India, a short cultural history* (1952) remarks that,

“Almost all the theories, religious, philosophical, and mathematical, taught by the Pythagoreans were known in India in the sixth century B.C.”

Rene Guenon (1886-1951) was better known in Egypt as Sheikh ‘Abd Al Wahid Yahya. But at the age of 21 he was already in Paris, when he came in contact with the Advaita Vedanta School. By the time he was nearly 30, his phenomenal intelligence had enabled him to see exactly what was wrong with the modern West.

He was one of the best-known European traditionalist authors on various civilizations, writes in his book *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines* (1945) articulates that:

“In India, we are in the presence of a tradition which is purely metaphysical in its essence... A fact which stands out much more clearly here than in the Semitic tradition, chiefly owing to the absence of the religious point of view,.....is the complete

subordination of the various particular orders relatively to metaphysics, that is to say relatively to the realm of universal principles.”⁵⁰²

Leonard Bloomfield (1887-1949) was an American linguist and author of *Language* published in 1933 characterization of *Panini's Astadhyayi* (*The Eight Books*).

He admiringly writes of ancient India's accomplishments in grammar:

“As one of the greatest monuments of human intelligence is by no means an exaggeration; no one who has had even a small acquaintance with that most remarkable book could fail to agree. In some four thousand sutras or aphorisms - some of them no more than a single syllable in length - Panini sums up the grammar not only of his own spoken language, but of that of the Vedic period as well. The work is the more remarkable when we consider that the author did not write it down but rather worked it all out of his head, as it were. Panini's disciples committed the work to memory and in turn passed it on in the same manner to their disciples; and though the *Astadhyayi* has long since been committed to writing, rote memorization of the work, with several of the more important commentaries, is still the approved method of studying grammar in India today, as indeed is true of most learning of the traditional culture.”

“While in the classical world scholars were dealing with language in a somewhat metaphysical way, the Indians were telling us what their language actually was, how it worked, and how it was put together. The methods and techniques for describing the structure of Sanskrit, which we find in Panini have not been substantially bettered to this day in modern linguistic theory and practice. We today employ many devices in describing languages that were already known to Panini's first two commentators. The concept of “zero” which in mathematics is attributed to India, finds its place also in linguistics.”

“It was in India, however, that there rose a body of knowledge which was destined to revolutionize European ideas about language. The Hindu grammar taught Europeans to analyze speech forms; when one compared the constituent parts, the

resemblances, which hitherto had been vaguely recognized, could be set forth with certainty and precision.”⁵⁰³

Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar (1887 -1949) was author of several books including *'The positive background of Hindu sociology'* and *Hindu achievements in exact science: a study in the history of scientific development* (1918) *The influence of India on Western civilization in modern times* (1918) *'Creative India'* and *'Hindu theory of international relations'*.

He writes about education in Ancient India:

“The ideal of realizing the infinite in the finite, the transcendental in the positive, manifested itself also in the educational system of Hindu India. The graduates trained under the ‘domestic system’ of the Gurukulas or preceptors’ homes were competent enough to found and administer states, undertake industrial and commercial enterprises; they were builders of empires and organizers of business concerns. It was because of this all-round and manly culture that the people of India could organize vast schemes of colonization and conquest, and not content with being simply confined within the limits of mother India, could build up a Greater India beyond the seas, and spread culture, religion and humanity among the subject and hospitable races. It is not for education, how else can we account for the remarkable progress of the nation in architecture, sculpture, medicine, dyeing, weaving, mathematics, ship building, chess, navigation, military tactics, and implements and all such aspects of socio-economic and economico-political life as have to depend on the help of physical and natural sciences?”

“Hindu literature on anatomy and physiology as well as eugenics and embryology has been voluminous. The Hindus knew the exact osteology of the human body 2,000 years before Vesalius (c. 1545) and had some rough ideas of the circulation of blood long before Harvey (1628) the internal administration of mercury, iron and other powerful metallic drugs were practiced by the Hindu physicians at least 1,000 years before Paracelsus (1540). And they have written extensive treatises on these subjects.”⁵⁰⁴

Betty Heimann (1888-1961) was the late professor of Sanskrit and Indian philosophy at Ceylon University, and she had said:

“It is an undeniable fact that no philosophy outside India makes such a varied and manifold use of [spiritual] instruction in order to visualize the supreme Truth. It is the very metaphysical bent of Hindu thought which makes room for practical educational training.”

W. Norman Brown (1892-1975) was a professor of Sanskrit at University of Pennsylvania, editor of *Mahimnastava or Praise of Shiva's Greatness*, (1965).

He has stated:

“As a religion, Hinduism has set side by side in peaceful coexistence every shade of belief ranging from the most primitive sort of animism to a highly sophisticated philosophical monism, and with this has gone a corresponding range of worship of practice extending from the simplest disease spirits to the most concentrated meditation designed to produce knowledge of abstract impersonal reality.” ⁵⁰⁵

Professor Vere Gordon Childe (1892 - 1957) was an Australian and author of *The Dawn of European Civilization* (1958) was one of archeology's few very great synthesizers and he wrote:

“It would be absurd to suggest that any two tribes living, say, in Greece and India, and speaking quite unconnected dialects, on reaching the same level of development should have hit upon such similar words for “father,” “fall,” and “five” and inflected them in such similar ways as the Vedic Indians and the Homeric Greeks did in fact do. The primitive culture must be the stage of development reached by several peoples while living sufficiently close together to communicate.” ⁵⁰⁶

Friedrich Heiler (1892 – 1967) was born in Muenchen. He was a professor of history of religions. He was the author of *Mysticism of the Upanishads*, *Christian faith and Indian thought* and *Das Gebet and Die Religionen der Menschheit* and he pointed out that Greek mysticism was borrowed from India.

He declared that:

“India is our motherland of speculative theology.”

Heiler expressed the idea that:

“There runs in unbroken chain from the Atman-Brahman mysticism of the Vedic Upanishads to the Vedanata of Sankara on the one side and on the other through the mystical technique of the Yoga system to the Buddhist doctrine of salvation. Another line of development equally continuous leads from the Orphic-Dionysiac mysticism to Plato, Philo and the later Hellenistic mystery cults to the Neoplatonic mysticism of the Infinite of Plotinus which is in turn is the source of the “mystical theology” of the pseudo-Dionysius the Areioagute.....Perhaps this second chain is only an offshoot from the first, since the Elatic speculations and the cryptic doctrine of redemption have possibly borrowed essential elements from early Indian mysticism.”^{507 508}

Dr. Abinash Chandra Bose (1896 - ?) was the Head of the Dept of English in Rajaram College, Kolhapur, and post-graduate Teacher, Bombay University for 25 years. He was a keen student of Sanskrit and had taken a life-long interest in the Vedas. He is the author of *The Call of the Vedas* (1960) and *Three mystic poets a study of W.B. Yeats, A.E., and Rabindranath Tagore* (1970).

He carried out researches in Mysticism in Poetry at the Trinity College, Dublin. His approach of the Vedas has been that of a lover of poetry and a student of India's spiritual history and comparative religion.

He has expressed his thoughts thus:

“It is usual to describe Vedic poetry as primitive. If, by ‘primitive poetry’ is meant tribal song or folk ballad, then nothing could be farther from the fact. No primitive poet ever sang: Thought was the pillow of her couch, Sight was the unguent of her eyes. If we should call Vedic poetry primitive, we should do so with reference to its pristine purity and its freedom from the malaise of the later civilization. Our people have got a better name for the Vedic age - Satya Yuga, the Age of Truth. Because the Vedic sages loved

life as well as God, every wish of theirs for the good things of the earth took the form of an ardent prayer. The Rishis (sages), including women among them, placed themselves under the discipline of Satya (Truth) and Rta (Eternal Order), as well as Tapas (spiritual ardor, superceding animal life). They were pure in their mental make-up, dedicated to a pure way of life and were transported by spiritual exaltation and what they accepted as divine inspiration. Their word (Vak) was, for them, a revelation in their souls of inner truth of reality, which they creatively received.”

“In their purity, austerity and power, the Vedic hymns have appeared to me like fresh, clear streams gushing out of a rocky mountain. The beautiful pictures of life and nature seem to carry some deep, hidden meaning. The very sound often makes a deep, symbolic impression. The wise men of India, from the immediate successors of the Vedic sages right down to our times, have searched for and discovered the revelation of the deepest spiritual truth in the Vedas. The visions of the beauty of life and nature in the Vedas are extremely rich in poetic value. Perhaps nowhere else in the world has the glory of dawn and sunrise and the silence and sweetness of nature, received such rich and at the same time such pure expression. The beauty of woman has been most tenderly delineated. The Vedas speak of ‘gracious, smiling women’ and in Usha (Dawn) with the beauty of a youthful woman in her, they find the perfect smile. Life’s little things are invested with holiness and living appears to be a grand ritual.” ⁵⁰⁹

Professor Louis Renou (1896-1966) was a French Indologists, author of several books including *Hinduism, Civilization in Ancient India* and *L’Inde fondamentale*.

Renou writing in 1962 remarked that:

“Truth is for Hinduism an indivisible treasure; spiritual immediacy is widely distributed, the mystic path is open to everyone. In its purest forms, this religion becomes a type of wisdom, that wisdom which impressed the ancient Greeks when they visited India and which could be of some fruitfulness again for our blase cultures. It is as wisdom that we should like to define Hinduism rather than by the equivocal term spirituality.” ⁵¹⁰

“The fact remains that Hinduism provides an incomparable field of study for the historian of religion: its aberrations are many, but there is in it a great stream of mystical power: it manifests all the conceptions of religion, and its speculation is continually revealing them in a new light. It combines powers of constant renewal with a firm conservancy of fundamental tradition. In Bhakti and still more in Yoga, it has perfected unrivalled technique of mystical initiation that contrast strongly with the frequently haphazard methods of spiritual training in the West. Above all, in the interpenetration of religion and dharma in general and the reciprocal stimulus of abstract thought and religious experiment, there is an underlying principle, that, given favorable conditions, may well lead to a new integration of the human personality.” ⁵¹¹

He observed that: “For almost everyone the Bhagavad-Gita is the book par excellence.” ⁵¹²

The well known Indologist and Sanskrit scholar at the University of Paris, in the course of a talk at Santiniketan in January 1949, said that the best writers and thinkers of France had been influenced by Indian thought and culture, and the intuitive sense of affinity between France and Indian culture had developed into devotion.

In another talk he emphasized that:

“India has the good fortune of being the repository of the noblest spiritual tradition, the only one in the whole world which has been alive throughout the centuries. And Sanskrit has been the privileged instrument of this tradition.” ⁵¹³

Professor Renou spoke admiringly about the Vedas:

“The importance of the Veda to India is well known. Its imprint on Hinduism is permanent and unmistakable; and on Buddhism and Jainism, too, it has left a deep impression, if only in the reaction it produced in them. It seems likely that many Indian literary disciplines would have developed quite differently if there had not originally been that striking sequence of hymns, commentaries, descriptive aphorisms and philosophoumena, which were drawn upon and imitated over a long a period. Vedism is a religion, but it is even more a technique; a technique of learned poets and erudite theologians, who has given rise to the

most atheistic of the philosophical systems of India. Vedism even developed the secular disciplines, phonetics and grammar, astronomy, the rudiments of law, even geometry, because its teaching made use of them.”

“To the Indian mind, God is ‘l’hypostase deficiente de l’Absolut’, as M. Olivier Lacombe (L’Absolu selon le Vedanta - The Absolute according to Vedanta) has said. The world is usually envisaged as an attribute of the divine. In short, the divine is both transcendent and immanent...from early times it was said that the Supreme Being is silence.”

“India in her exhaustion has often taken refuge in ahimsa and the Vedantic scale of values; but a new and more self-assertive generation may be at hand, a generation imbued with the spirit of Yajnavalkya.” The Veda may once again become a great source of inspiration, as it was to the fiery Dayananda Saraswati in the nineteenth century, who set out to establish a mystique of national and social import based on the Vedas.” ⁵¹⁴

Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) was born in Bucharest, Romania and was educated as a philosopher lectured in the Ecole des Hautes-Etudes of the Sorbonne. He was the author of *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (1970).

He has said:

“Yoga, as a ‘science’ of achieving this transformation of finite man into the infinite One, has to be recognized as something intrinsically Indian or, as ‘a specific dimension of the Indian mind.’”

“Yoga constitutes a characteristic dimension of the Indian mind, to such a point that whatever Indian religion and culture have made their way, we also find a more or less pure form of Yoga. In India, Yoga was adopted and valorized by all religious movements, whether Hinduist or ‘heretical.’ The various Christian or syncretistic Yogas of modern India constitutes another proof that Indian religious experience finds the yogic methods of “meditation” and “concentration” a necessity.”

Eliade goes on to confirm about Indian soul’s deepest needs:

“Yoga had to meet all the deepest needs of the Indian soul. In the universal history of mysticism, Yoga occupies a place of its own, and one that is difficult to define. It represents a living fossil, a modality of archaic spirituality that has survived nowhere else. Yoga takes over and continues the immemorial symbolism of initiation; in other words, it finds its place in a universal tradition of the religious history of mankind.” “From the Upanishads onward, India has been seriously preoccupied with but one great problem - the structure of the human condition. With a rigor unknown elsewhere, India has applied itself to analyzing the various conditionings of the human being.”

“The conquest of this absolute freedom, or perfect spontaneity, is the goal of all Indian philosophies and mystical techniques; but it is above all through Yoga, through one of the many forms of Yoga, that India has held that it can be assured.”

“Yoga is present everywhere - no less in the oral tradition of India than in the Sanskrit and vernacular literature....To such a degree is this true that Yoga has ended by becoming a characteristic dimension of Indian spirituality.” ⁵¹⁵

Commenting on history, which has no metaphysical significance for either Hinduism or Buddhism, he states that:

“Profane time must be abolished, at least symbolically, so that man forgets his “historical situation”. The highest human ideal is the jivamukta - one who is liberated from Time. Man, according to the Indian view, ‘must, at all costs, find in his world a road that issues upon a tran-historical and atemporal plane.’” ⁵¹⁶

Dr. A. L. Basham (1914 – 1986) was one of the leading authority of ancient Indian culture and author of *The Wonder That Was India*. (1967).

Basham writes positively about Ancient India and her tolerance:

“Our over-all impression is that no other part of the ancient world was the relations of man and man, and of man and the state, so fair and humane. In no other early civilization were slaves so few in number, and in no other ancient law book are their rights so well protected as in the Arthashastra... In all her history of warfare,

Hindu India has few tales to tell of cities put to the sword or of the massacre of noncombatants...To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilization is its humanity....Our second general impression of ancient India is that her people enjoyed life, passionately delighting both in the things of the senses and the things of the spirit..."⁵¹⁷

"India was cheerful land, whose people, each finding a niche in a complex and slowly evolving social system, reached a higher level of kindness and gentleness in their mutual relationships than any other nation of antiquity. For this, as well as for her great achievements in religion, literature, art, science and mathematics, one European student at least would record his admiration of her ancient culture."⁵¹⁸

Alan Watts (1915 - 1973) was a professor, graduate school dean and research fellow of Harvard University, drew heavily on the insights of Vedanta. Watts became well known in the 1960s as a pioneer in bringing Eastern philosophy to the West. He was the author of *The Legacy of Asia and Western Man* (1937).

He has expressed that:

"There is an unrecognized but mighty taboo—our tacit conspiracy to ignore who, or what, we really are. Briefly, the thesis is that the prevalent sensation of oneself as a separate ego enclosed in a bag of skin is a hallucination which accords neither with Western science nor with the experimental philosophy religions of the East—in particular the central and germinal Vedanta philosophy of Hinduism. This hallucination underlies the misuse of technology for the violent subjugation of man's natural environment and, consequently, its eventual destruction. It is rather a cross-fertilization of Western science with an Eastern intuition".

He has sagaciously indicated that:

"To the philosophers of India, however, Relativity is no new discovery, just as the concept of light years is no matter for astonishment to people used to thinking of time in millions of kalpas, (A kalpa is about 4,320,000 years). The fact that the wise

Vedic god Indra



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Lord Indra – Bronze image from Nepal, 20th century.

French author Victor Hugo made several references to Hindu philosophy in his composition. He gathered his information from G. Pautheir's Les Livres Sacres de l'Orient. Vayou - is Vayu (God of Wind), Agni (God of Fire) and Indra (God of space).

Photo courtesy: Dr. Deepak Shimkhada.

men of India have not been concerned with technological applications of this knowledge arises from the circumstance that technology is but one of innumerable ways of applying it."

"It is, indeed, a remarkable circumstance that when Western civilization discovers Relativity it applies it to the manufacture of atom-bombs, whereas Oriental civilization applies it to the development of new states of consciousness." ⁵¹⁹

Watts asserts that:

"It was once customary to refer to these people of India and China as heathens... apart from Sufism, the Near East produced nothing to approach the high level of mystical and psychological philosophy attained in India and China."

He also judiciously testifies that:

"Hinduism, therefore, is perhaps the most catholic of all religions, for it has not become so in the course of its evolution but was based on the principle of catholicity from the beginnings. Those who laid down the code of Manu made provision both for different mentalities and different vocations in the most thorough going manner; they showed an understanding of the social organism which in subsequent times has seldom been equaled..."

"It is almost certain, however, that Taoist Yoga was derived in great measure from India, and it is here that we must look for the greater wealth of information." ⁵²⁰

Abraham Kaplan (1918 - 1993) was an American professor of philosophy, and he has commented that the Upanishads are:

"Remarkable in literary quality as well as in content." ⁵²¹

Prof. Raimundo Panikkar (1918 -) was born in two major religious traditions he has been striving towards the harmony of religion in a pluralistic world. He is the author of *The Vedic Experience: Mantramajñari: An Anthology Of The Vedas For Modern Man* (1977).

Speaking of the *The Cosmology Hymn/ Hymn of Creation in The Rigveda*, and he has observed:

“The vision of this hymn comes out of a profound insight into the mystery of reality. It is the product of a mystical experience that far transcends the limits of logical thinking; it is a religious chant - for only in music or poetry can such a message be conveyed - invoking in splendid verses the Primal Mystery that transcends all categories, both human and divine.....” ⁵²²

“The Vedic experience may perhaps disclose, not an alternative to the modern view of life and the world....but an already existing, although often hidden, dimension of Man himself.” ⁵²³

“*The Bhagavad Gita* uses the same expression, gati, to express both the way toward the goal and the goal itself, often called the parama gati, the supreme goal. As the word itself suggests, gati (from the root gam-, to go, to move) means a going, a movement, motion in general. In the *Bhagavad Gita* it has the connotation of the pilgrimage that constitutes human life, a connotation that allows the text to say that he who is on the path has, in a certain sense, already reached the end of it, because the end is not another place outside or after the way itself, but is already contained in it. Like other parts of the Vedic Revelation, this truth can be grasped only by personal experience. The pilgrimage that is life may lead us to its goal, which in the *Bhagavad Gita* is described as union with the Lord. The Lord comes down to earth and manifests himself to Man in order to proclaim his message of love and salvation. The Lord is not only the powerful ruler, the mighty God, the just judge, but also the Savior.” ⁵²⁴

Dale Maurice Riepe (1918 -) author and professor says in his book *The Philosophy of India and its impact on American Thought* (1970) has prophetically indicated that:

“If the American empire meets with the fate of the British, if Americans cannot resolve their life-and-death struggle with the intelligent use of technology, if the alienation in American society cannot be alleviated, then a new attitude may gradually replace the 300 years reign of optimism. Such eventualities may lead to more philosophers turning to contemplation, meditation and increased poring over the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures.”

“Western thinkers, through their study of Indian philosophies and religions have “discovered a new technical philosophy of

undreamed-of complexity and ingenuity” and this contact has expanded the imagination, increased the number of categories, made possible new studies in the history of logic, revealed new sensations and has driven the mind back to its origin and out of its possibilities.” ⁵²⁵

J. Donald Walters (Swami Kriyananda) (1926 -) is a world-renowned as a singer composer and lecturer and founder of the Ananda Village is perhaps the most successful intentional community in the world.

In his book *The Hindu Way of Awakening: Its Revelation, Its Symbols* (1999) he has touchingly written:

“Hinduism, in its plethora of symbols and images, is endlessly complex and therefore endlessly misunderstood, but its true mission is both simple and universal: soul enlightenment. The way to understand this mission is to realize that it is goal-oriented, not way oriented. In other words, its focus is the ultimate attainment, Self-realization.”

For even today, thousands of years since they were first expounded by the ancient rishis (spiritual sages), the religious teachings of India nourish what continues to be the most spiritually grounded civilization in the world.”

“Ancient rishis made claims so cosmic that even modern physics seems only to be catching up with them and realizing after every scientific breakthrough, that the ancients were there long before them! Even as recently as a century ago, the West was still reeling under the impact of the discovery of geologists that the earth was formed eons ago, and not in 4004 BC as theologians had determined.”

Walters has pointed out:

“India, has accomplished in the field of spirituality what, in the world of finance, the free market (as opposed to a controlled economy) has succeeded in doing: The individual seeker has been left free to explore and develop his own spiritual potentials. Other scriptures have hinted at the deeper truths of inward religion. But the priests in every religion seldom quote those

passages, which they rightly see as threatening to their institutional preeminence.”

“Hinduism is the most ancient expression of Sanatan Dharma, the eternal and universal religion.”

“The insights of which the Hindu teachings are based were revelation in the highest sense of the word.”

“A special charm of studying Indian philosophy today is that it is more truly Western, in the modern, scientific sense, than any system of philosophy that the West has produced. Whereas Western rationalism has broken down under the impact of scientific discoveries, Indian thought cheerfully rides the crest of the wave, and is only pushed higher by every new scientific finding.” ^{526 527}

Ninian Smart (1927 -2001) was a Professor of Sociology. Born in Scotland, he taught at the Universities of London, Birmingham, and Wales for many years before moving to the University of California, Santa Barbara, and he has said:

“The genius of Hinduism is to combine divergent practices and beliefs into one overall system.”

Ananta Sadashiv Altekar is author of several books including *Education in Ancient India* and *Sources of Hindu Dharma* and *State and government in Ancient India* (1958) in its socio-religious aspects, and he wrote:

“Hindu religion, philosophy and social structure are nothing but the records of a glorious and instructive struggle of the human mind to free itself from limitations that become meaning less in the course of time, and to attain to more and more glorious heights that are revealed by man’s ever expanding vision. There is no doubt that Hinduism will become once more a great world force, the moment this consciousness becomes a part and parcel of the modern Hindu mind and begins to mold and influence its activities in the different spheres of life.” ⁵²⁸

Madeleine Biardeau was a professor of Indian Religion at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, author of several books,

including *Hinduism: The Anthropology of a Civilization* and *L'hindouisme* (1981).

She wrote about the interchange that is continually occurs in Indian philosophy and which can even be experienced by the more prosaic foreigner if he is willing to attune himself to the Indian atmosphere. She writes that, as well as being 'a personal loving God in the form of Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, divinity is at the same time referred to in the Bhagavad Purana divinity and in many other texts as supremely impassive - none other than the cosmos itself.

"The God of Indian devotion - bhakti who responds to the same eternal needs of the human heart as exists anywhere else, never detaches himself wholly from the immanence of the world. He is personal and endowed with feelings only in the eyes of popular piety; to thought he reveals himself both far beyond and within at the same time; he reveals it as much as he hides it; and each man is in himself in some sort a manifestation of God." ⁵²⁹

Ekkirala Krishnamacharya (1926-1984) was the author of *Cradle of Indian History*, physician, educationist and Kulapati (rector) of the Theosophy-related World Teacher Trust in Visakhapatnam. Fondly called by his disciples as 'Master E.K' he has remarked:

"There was no religion in this land, nor was any religion necessary for the Indians. The ancient Indians had a code of law for man to follow. This was framed in accordance with various truths working in nature. The law of the existence of nature and its creation was observed in all its detail and the law for man to follow as copied in accordance with it. This was called Dharma. The term means that which bears and protects. It is that which bears and protects when we follow (it). Man is honored when he honors it. He receives protection when he protects it. It was made into a constitution called Bharata Dharma. It was the path of life commonly accepted throughout the land. Any attempt for religion is naturally limited and narrow when compared with this."

Krishnamacharya defines Dharma:

“Dharma is nothing but living in accordance with the laws of nature.”

He used to say that the only qualification required learning the ‘Gayatri Mantram’ was the urge to learn it, and today lakhs of people all over the world, irrespective of caste, creed or religion have mastered it.

He said: “Secularism only means ‘not guided by religion’ but not discarding religion altogether. While some countries do not feel ashamed to call themselves Christian or Islamic nations, it is only India which is giving freedom to all people to practice their own religion,”

In 1974, he toured Europe and America five times between 1972 and 1983 and propagated the message of Sanatana Dharma, spiritual astrology, *Patanjali’s Yoga*, *Bhagavadgita* and spiritual psychology.⁵³⁰

Harvey Cox (1929 -) is a Professor at the Harvard Divinity School has observed:

“I agree that the quest for Truth is the quest for God. This is the core teaching of all religions. The Scientist’s motivation is to seek the very kind of truth that Krishna speaks about in the Bhagavad Gita. I also agree that the word Religion is an invention of modern western thought.”⁵³¹

Troy Wilson Organ was a professor at Ohio University and author of *The Hindu Quest for the perfection of Man* (1970) and *Hinduism: its historical development and Hinduism; its historical development*

He indicated that:

“Hindu thought is not a philosophy. It is a philosophical religion... “Hinduism is a sadhana which seeks to guide man to integration, to spiritualization, and to liberation.....The concept of reincarnation is the Hindu way of asserting that there are no temporal nor

developmental limits to the perfecting. “Hindu thought is natural, reasonable, and scientific. It is a process, not a result - a process of perfecting man”. In the Hindu Monism (Advaita) God is not anthropomorphic being. He is All; He is not a despot or autocratic God.” ⁵³²

Organ remarked:

“In the Hindu world, the folklore and popular mythology carry the truths and teachings of the philosophers to the masses. In India, the mythology never ceased to support and facilitates the expression of philosophic thought. The rich pictorial script of the epic tradition, the features of the divinities whose incarnations and exploits constituted the myth, became the vehicles of communication for the priests. In this way a wonderful friendship of mythology and philosophy was effected; and this has been sustained with such result that the whole edifice of Indian civilization is imbued with spiritual meaning. The close interdependence of the two has served to counteract the natural tendency of the philosophy to become esoteric, removed from solving life's problems. In this symbolic form, the ideas have not been watered down to become popular. The vivid, perfectly appropriate pictorial script preserves the doctrines without the slightest damage to their senses.”

Prof. Klaus Klostermaier (1933 -) is the Distinguished Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Manitoba in Canada. He is author of several books including *Hinduism: A Short Introduction* and *A Survey of Hinduism* (1994).

He has astutely declared that:

“Hinduism has proven much more open than any other religion to new ideas, scientific thought, and social experimentation. Many concepts like reincarnation, meditation, yoga and others have found worldwide acceptance. It would not be surprising to find Hinduism the dominant religion of the twenty-first century. It would be a religion that doctrinally is less clear-cut than mainstream Christianity, politically less determined than Islam, ethically less heroic than Buddhism, but it would offer something to everybody.”

“It will appear idealistic to those who look for idealism, pragmatic to the pragmatists, spiritual to the seekers, sensual to the here-and-now generation. Hinduism, by virtue of its lack of an ideology and its reliance on intuition, will appear to be more plausible than those religions whose doctrinal positions petrified a thousand years ago...”

Klostermaier has predicted that:

“Hinduism will spread not so much through the gurus and swamis, who attract a certain number of people looking for a new commitment and a quasi-monastic life-style, but it will spread mainly through the work of intellectuals and writers, who have found certain Hindu ideas convincing and who identify them with their personal beliefs. A fair number of leading physicists and biologists have found parallels between modern science and Hindu ideas. An increasing number of creative scientists will come from a Hindu background, will consciously, and unconsciously blend their scientific and their religious ideas. All of us may be already much more Hindu than we think.”⁵³³

Gerald James Larson is the author of *Saṁskṛta: a dualist tradition in Indian philosophy* (1987) and an American scholar and Rabindranath Tagore Professor of Indian Cultures and Civilization and Director of the India Studies Program at Indiana University Bloomington, who points out that there are in a manner of speaking almost as many Bhagavad Gitas as there are readers of it and that:

“What the Gita is finally is inseparable from its many contextual environments, ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, scholarly and popular, corporate and personal, secular and sacred - contextual environments that have emerged in an on-going historical process and will continue to emerge as that historical process unfolds.” and he adds:

“An interesting monograph could be written on the Bhagavad Gita as symptomatic of trends in nineteenth-and twentieth-century European and American scholarly thought.”⁵³⁴

Robert Arnett (1942 -) is a professor, has lectured widely throughout America including the Smithsonian Institute and Harvard and Yale Universities. He has been interviewed on National Public Radio, Voice of America and various television programs.

Arnett in his new book *India Unveiled* (1999) maintains that:

“Hinduism is greatly misunderstood in the West. Most occidentals do not realize that Hinduism is a monotheistic belief in only one God, who as Creator is beyond time, space and physical form. The entire pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses are merely representations of different attributes of the One, Unmanifested Spirit. Hinduism created a different deity for each of God’s numerous qualities to make God seem more real and approachable.”

He perceptively pointed out that:

“Hinduism is a very tolerant religion. It does not have claim exclusivity of the true God for only itself.”

The Rig Veda, clearly states: “Though men call it by many names, it is really One.”⁵³⁵

Hans Torwesten (1944 -) is a native of Germany, studied art in Vienna and Indian philosophy, meditation, and yoga in England. A writer, lecturer, yoga teacher, and painter, he now lives in Austria.

In his book *Vedanta: Heart of Hinduism* (1994) he affirms his high regard for Vedanta by saying:

“A fair number of leading physicists and biologists have found parallels between modern science and Hindu ideas. In America, many writers such as J. D. Salinger (*An Adventure in Vedanta: J.D. Salinger’s the Glass Family*), Henry Miller, Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, and Christopher Isherwood, were in contact with the Vedanta. Most of them came from elevated intellectual circles, which rejected the dogmatism of the Christian Churches yet longed for spirituality and satisfactory answers to the fundamental questions of existence. In Vedanta, they found a wide-open, universal, and philosophically oriented religion where even the penetrating scientific mind could find something to its taste”.

“To the Hindu, shruti is what cannot be thought up by the limited human intellect, but is of God. It is what is forever valid, never changes, and is not dependent on the limited capacity for understanding of any one historical person. The Hindu for this reason is proud not to need a historical founder. The founder and foundation of the Vedas and the Upanishads is the Brahman itself, is what is indestructible and timeless.”

“*The Upanishads* are indeed thoroughly suffused with the spirit of transcendence.” ⁵³⁶

Haven O'More was a scholar at the University of Chicago and author of several books, including *Butoh: Dance of the Dark Soul and Sacrificial Bone Inscriptions* (1987) and he has written:

“Greater than any mountain, the *Mahabharata* sits supreme....”⁵³⁷

Paul William Roberts has taught at Oxford for a year before setting off around the world, stopping in India before settling in Canada, where he has been an award-winning television writer and producer, university lecturer, journalist, film and book critic and novelist. He journeyed through India for twenty years, and his book *Empire of the Soul: Some Journeys in India* (1996) creates a dazzling mosaic, by turns tragic and comic, of the subcontinent and its people.

He writes positively that:

“India is the only country that feels like home to me, the only country whose airport tarmac I have ever kissed upon landing.”

Full of high regard for the *Vedas*, he reflects that:

“The Vedas still represent eternal truth in the purest form ever written. And they are what drew me to India in the first place, what kept me there, and what draws me back still.” “There is no stable principle of evil in Vedic philosophy. There is no infernal realm for sinners. Its non-dualism is really beyond monotheism - which creates a fundamental duality of God and man. Evil is not envisaged as a quality opposed to good. It is the absence of good, just as darkness is the absence of light, not its opposite quality.”

*"In the beginning the Divine Will arose,
This was the first seed from the Creator's mind.
Those who can see deeper by putting their mind and heart
together as one
Found the underlying essence of all existence was deep
beyond all that exists,
Fount the non-existent existing in the existent.*

Roberts writes appreciatively that:

"Here you have the quintessence of classical Indian philosophy. Thinking with your heart; loving with your mind. All yoga and meditation aim to attain this one goal. Anything else is delusion, or worse. And when the heart sees, it sees the unknowable, nameless, formless, limitless, supreme God. He is called nonexistent because he is eternal, beyond existence."

"The Vedas hold enough information to rebuild human civilization from scratch, if necessary. I think someone did believe that might be necessary one day."

"The Vedas see the ultimate Truth behind all ephemereal truths. The Creation leads us to the Creator, to the highest knowledge, which is integrated into one."

"Some Vedic hymns paint the exquisite glories of the natural world; the preternatural beauty of predawn light, its rosy fingers holding the iridescent steel-blue sky; some celebrate the welcome cool of evening, the scented breeze of a calm and refreshing night, its basalt dome studded with shimmering pearls and diamonds. Beauty permeates them, a reflection of Truth."⁵³⁸

He declares that:

"Vedas are the most sophisticated, most profoundly beautiful, and most complete presentations of what Aldous Huxley termed the "perennial philosophy" that is at the core of all religions. In modern academia, of course, there is not supposed to be any "ancient wisdom". In this hymn, which contains the essence of monism, can be seen a representation of the most advanced theory of creation. The germ of free speculation and skepticism were already present in the Rig Veda."⁵³⁹

Diana L. Eck (1946 -) is the Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and Member of the Faculty of Divinity, Harvard University. Her work on India includes the books *Banaras, City of Light* (1982) and *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (1981).

She has written with great feelings about Hinduism:

“Hinduism is an imaginative, an “image-making, religious tradition in which the sacred is seen as present in the visible world – the world we see in multiple images and deities, in sacred places, and in people. The notion of darsan call attention as students of Hinduism, to the fact that India is a visual and visionary culture, one in which the eyes have a prominent role in the apprehension of the sacred. For most ordinary Hindus, the notion of the divine as “invisible” would be foreign indeed. God is eminently visible, although human beings have not always had the refinement of sight to see. Furthermore, the divine is visible not only in temple and shrine, but also in the whole continuum of life – in nature, in people, in birth and growth and death. Although some Hindus, both philosophers and radical reformers, have always used the terms “nirguna” (quality less) and nirakara (formless) to speak of the One Brahman. Yet the same tradition has simultaneously affirmed that Brahman is also saguna (with qualities) and that the multitude of “names and forms” of this world are the exuberant transformations of the One Brahman.”

Professor Eck continues:

“India presents to the visitor an overwhelmingly visual impression. It is beautiful, colorful, and sensuous. It is captivating and intriguing, repugnant and puzzling. It combines the intimacy and familiarity of English four o’clock tea with the dazzling foreignness of carpsioned elephants or vast crowds bathing in the Ganga during an eclipse. India’s displays of multi-armed images, its processions and its pilgrimages, its beggars and its kings, its street life and markets, its diversity of people – all appear to the eye in a kaleidoscope of images. Whatever Hindus affirm of the meaning of life, death, and suffering, they affirm with their eyes wide open. Many westerners, for example, upon seeing Hindu rituals observances for the first time, are impressed with

how sensuous Hindu worship is. It is sensuous in that it makes full use of the senses – seeing, touching, smelling, tasting and hearing. One “sees” the image of the deity (darsan). One “touches” it with one’s hands (sparsa), and one also “touches” the limbs of one’s own body to establish the presence of various deities (nyasa). One “hears” the sacred sound of the mantras (sravana). The ringing of bells, the offering of oil lamps, the presentation of flowers, the pouring of water and milk, the sipping of sanctified liquid offerings, the eating of consecrated foods-prasad – these are the basic constituents of Hindu worship, Puja.” For all its famous otherworldliness, India is a culture that has also celebrated the life of this world and the realms of the senses.”⁵⁴⁰

She has thus written about the city of Banaras:

“It was an awesome city - captivating, challenging, and endlessly fascinating - Banaras raised some of the questions about the Hindu tradition which have interested me ever since - its complex mythological imagination, its prodigious display of divine images, its elaborate ritual traditions, and its understanding of the relation of life and death. It was Banaras that turned me to the study of India and the Hindu religious tradition.”

“For over 2,500 years this city, also called Varanasi, has attracted pilgrims and seekers from all over India. Sages, such as the Buddha, Mahavira, and Shankara, have come here to teach. Young men have come to study the Vedas with the city’s great pandits. Banaras is one of the oldest living cities of the world...It occupied its high bank overlooking the Ganges in the cradle days of Western civilization. Its antiquity has caught the imagination of many, including Mark Twain. There are few great cities in the world which have converted the energy of an entire civilization into culture and have come to symbolize and embody that whole civilization in microcosm.” “It sits above the earth as a “crossing place” (tirtha) between this world and the “far shore” of the transcendent Brahman.”⁵⁴¹

Jeffrey Armstrong has worked as a sales manager with Apple Computer for six years, is married to Sandy Gramah, who shares his passion for all things Indian. The couple, which has founded an

educational institute called the Vedic Academy of Science and Arts (VASA) is now working on creating a permanent library of Hindu and Vedic culture in Vancouver. Their clients include successful businessmen, lawyers, corporate executives and leaders of society.

“Bring as much knowledge from India as you can,” concludes Mr Armstrong. “People in North America are eager for it.”

He has verbalized that:

“*The Mahabharata*, the great Sanskrit epic of ancient India, records the history of Bharat. Within it is the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which describes the events of five thousand years ago when Lord Krishna appeared and spoke to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, which saw the triumph of the Pandavas over the Kauravas, the triumph of good over evil. That event marked the beginning of Kali Yuga. So the Sanskrit of the Vedas refers to an era before that time and to the existence of a pool of knowledge that has survived for thousands of years. That is why India and Indian culture is the mother of all modern civilisations.”

Armstrong further elaborates that:

“Sanskrit is such a perfect language that NASA, the American space agency, contemplated using it as a programming language. I’ll give you a comparison so that you will understand just how perfect Sanskrit is! Imagine that Bill Gates came out with a version of Windows that was so good that it did not need to be upgraded for 2,500 years! He would have created a monopoly. Well Sanskrit has the monopoly on languages, because Sanskrit is a perfect language. It cannot be improved upon.”

He is a charismatic international speaker, author and expert guest on TV and talk radio. He is a scholar of the Eastern teachings including *Vedanta*, *Raja Yoga*, *Tantra*, *Mantra*, and Martial arts. He has practiced Ayurvedic Astrology for 25 years. He predicted over 20 years ago that Indian innovators and engineers would overrun Silicon Valley, no one believed him. Today, his prophecy has come true manifold.

“I based my forecast on the fact that Indians have a very strong Sanskrit background,” he says. Sanskrit being the perfect language for computer programming, I was confident even then that Indians would outshine others in computer innovations.”

His next prediction is equally interesting: India will become a superpower in another 20 years, even earlier if Indians propagate their culture and legacy effectively in the West. The motivational speaker, who left his corporate job seven years ago to foster the spread of Hindu and Vedic culture in the West, looks like a typical American till he opens his mouth. ⁵⁴²

Professor Robert P Goldman (1946 -) is Professor of Sanskrit at Berkeley. His areas of scholarly interest include Sanskrit literature and literary theory, Indian Epic Studies. He is perhaps best known for his work as the Director, General Editor, and a principal translator of a massive and fully annotated translation of the critical edition of the Valmiki Ramayana.

Goldman said he fell in love with Indian culture and history when he was a 20-year-old student at Columbia University, New York. “I was studying chemistry and took up a course on Indian history,” he said. “I became fascinated. Indian history and culture was so rich,” said Goldman, now 60. He took to studying Sanskrit, which he found “very tough and complicated”. But he mastered it.

Delivering a lecture on ‘*Ramayana: Medieval Indian Interpretations*’, organised by the University of Hyderabad as part of its distinguished lecture series, Goldman rejected the Western view that Ramayana was a mixture of the real and the mythological.

Goldman declares that:

“There’s clear-cut evidence to show that the incidents described in Ramayana took place,” he said here on Friday. Goldman said the experts had calculated the exact period in which the war between Lord Rama and Ravana took place and the time taken by Lord Hanuman to bring the Sanjeevani herb and how long the demon Kumbhakarna used to sleep.”

Goldman said he believed that Hanuman flew to Sri Lanka and spoke a human language. "It is something supernatural and something natural," he said. "It is not myth as is generally claimed by some Westerners. Ramayana is a reality."

"Valmiki's Ramayan is the central document of Indian culture. The book and its message express in an aesthetically pleasing and emotionally moving form what must be seen as the most powerfully hegemonic discourse of the brahmanical and kshatriya elites of India's epic age. It continues to be the basic and the founding statement of social and political order in India even today. Greek epics like Homer's Iliad are the books of a lost civilization for today's Westerners. The Ramayan is unique in continuing unbroken over almost 3000 years as the living document of Indian civilisation. The Doordarshan serial's massive popularity only served to remind people how important it continues to be in shaping basic perceptions and social attitudes in India today."

"Ram's central act is not the destruction of the demon king Ravan, but his cheerful acceptance of his wrongful disinheritance and cruel exile to preserve the honour of his foolish father." "It is no exaggeration to say that in India everyone knows the Ram story. In one sense, one has to know it to be part of Indian culture." ⁵⁴³

Ashby Philips is a professor at Princeton University and he predicts that:

"The Hindu argument that all religions are equally valid may well sweep the world in the next 25 years. It may well be that within the foreseeable future; it will be Hinduism, which will be challenging Christianity not only in India but in the west as well. Hinduism indeed has a new vitality not only suitable for defense but also adaptable for offense against Western religions."

Robert C. Priddy formerly lectured in philosophy & social science at the University of Oslo (1968-1984).

He has written eloquently that:

"All agree that the ancient Indians already operated with a time span of truly astronomical proportions long before the earliest

signs of natural science in ancient Greece. It is undeniable that ancient Indian texts present some astonishingly exact scientific calculations even by today's latest scientific standards, such as the speed of light, exact size of the smallest particles and the age of the universe."

"The likelihood is that Indian civilization existed in times far more ancient than historians can witness by scientifically-based methods. Yet this is ignored due to the limitations of the current assumptions (or pre-judgmental beliefs) that direct the minds of historians who themselves belong to a civilization which in many vital respects may still be inferior in many important respects."

Priddy has observed that:

"The age of the *Vedas* of ancient India, the first scriptures known to mankind, may be much greater than supposed by 'scientific historians'. In the West, it is hardly questioned at all that the Bible's Old Testament by and large refers to events that - though probably inaccurately described - actually must have taken place, at least from the time of Abraham and Ur onwards... more than 5,000 years ago. Hebrew scribes are reckoned to have put sacred oral traditions into writing centuries after the events. The same liberality of belief is not accorded to the doubtless yet more ancient *Vedas*, which the evidence shows were much more firmly based in oral traditions and preserved by a complex cross-checking system of memorizing. Yet some historians even date certain Vedic scriptures only from the earliest extant manuscripts, sometimes even as late as 1400 A.D."

"It has been held by some shastris and pundits that Western historians have vastly underrated the age and authenticity of ancient Indian scriptures and handed-down accounts of the past. In the West, it is hardly questioned at all that the Bible's Old Testament... The same liberality of belief is not accorded to the doubtless yet more ancient *Vedas*, which the evidence shows were much more firmly based in oral traditions and preserved by a complex cross-checking system of memorizing. Yet some historians even date certain Vedic scriptures only from the earliest extant manuscripts, sometimes even as late as 1400 A.D."

“It is frequently said, especially by Western academics, that the Greeks were the first to introduce natural philosophy, to speculate on the four (or five) elements, to think of the atom, to conceive of the heliocentric system, and so on. The evidence about India’s distant past shows that this is most certainly not the case. That it has been available for a long time, too, reflects very badly on the scope or the historical competence of academic Western philosophers, who continue to stare too much at their European navels.”

Referring to the Ancient Epics of India, he notes:

“Great epics of good and evil, of individual conscience and will versus fate had been developed in India long before Homer or the classical European period of the dramatists Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes by well over a millennium. One only has to consider the *Mahabharata*, which describes the catastrophic armed conflict that took place according to widespread tradition about 3000 years BC. The date calculated by various Indian shastris and Brahmins from Sanskrit sources is equivalent to 3138 BC.”⁵⁴⁴

Dr. Arthur Versluis (1959 -) is an Associate Professor of American Thought and Language at Michigan State University, a scholar and researcher of several currents of the hermetic, gnostic, theosophic and mystic traditions and author of *The Egyptian Mystery* (1988) and he has remarked:

“It is necessary that we turn to the Vedanta....because the Upanishads provide the purest metaphysics available to us from the primordial past.”⁵⁴⁵

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Chapter 7

Scientists

“The Hindu religion is the only one of the world’s great faiths dedicated to the idea that the Cosmos itself undergoes an immense, indeed an infinite, number of deaths and rebirths. It is the only religion in which the time scales correspond, to those of modern scientific cosmology. Its cycles run from our ordinary day and night to a day and night of Brahma, 8.64 billion years long. Longer than the age of the Earth or the Sun and about half the time since the Big Bang. And there are much longer time scales still.”

- Dr. Carl Sagan



Nataraja – The Lord of the Dance.

The clearest image of cosmic activity of God which any art or religion can boast of. This conception itself is a synthesis of science, religion and art. It is the most elegant and sublime representation of the creation of the universe at the beginning of each cosmic cycle.

Author's Personal Art work.

Scientists

Science is the systematic knowledge of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation. In India, science and religion are not opposed to each other as they are in the West. Science is seen as part of the same search for truth as envisioned by Vedic rishis to understand external reality and the universe. Ancient India's spiritual wisdom has made inroads into today's faith of modern science. It has created hope for many that life is more than just a mass of randomly bouncing atoms. Hindu teachings are based on divine revelations that are so immense that they appear to belong in the realm of modern science. Time and again scientists and Nobel Prize laureates like Oppenheimer, Sagan, Schrodginer, Capra, Carl Jung and others have turned to India's Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. Many books have been written showing the close connection between Eastern mysticism and modern science. Hindu rishis made claims of the universe that were so cosmic and grand that only recently has modern physics caught up with them. The rishis had a profound understanding of the age of the universe; Western scientists were still coming to terms that the Earth had been formed eons ago, and was not 4,000 years old as the theologians had suggested. Indian thought has caused western scientists to change or revise their own intellectual inheritance. Ancient cosmology that was written down centuries ago even applies today.



Jean-Sylvain Bailly (1736 - 1793) was the 18th century French astronomer and politician. His works on astronomy and on the history of science (notably the *Essai sur la théorie des satellites de Jupiter*) were distinguished both for scientific interest and literary elegance and earned him membership in the French Academy, the Academy of Sciences, and the Academy of Inscriptions.

Jean-Sylvain Bailly stated:

“The motion of the stars calculated by the Hindus before some 4500 years vary not even a single minute from the tables of Cassini and Meyer (used in the 19-th century). The Indian tables give the same annual variation of the moon as the discovered by Tycho Brahe - a variation unknown to the school of Alexandria and also to the Arabs who followed the calculations of the school... “The Hindu systems of astronomy are by far the oldest and that from which the Egyptians, Greek, Romans and - even the Jews derived from the Hindus their knowledge.” ⁵⁴⁶

Pierre Simon de Laplace (1749-1827) was a French mathematician, philosopher, and astronomer, a contemporary of Napoleon. Laplace is best known for his nebular hypothesis of the origin of the solar system.

Laplace mentioned that:

“It is India that gave us the ingenious method of expressing all numbers by ten symbols, each receiving a value of position as well as an absolute value, a profound and important idea which appears so simple to us now that we ignore its true merit. But its very simplicity, the great ease which it has lent to all computations, puts our arithmetic in the first rank of useful inventions, and we shall appreciate the grandeur of this achievement the more when we remember that it escaped the genius of Archimedes and Apollonius, two of the greatest men produced by antiquity.” ⁵⁴⁷

Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar (1833 – 1904) was not only the greatest homoeopath of his time in India, but also a great scientist. In the field of physical science, Dr. Sircar has made great contributions and was a pioneer of scientific research in India. Dr. J. C. Bose and Dr. P. C. Ray were also inspired by him.

He has stated that:

“Some of their (Hindu) investigations were solid achievements in positive knowledge as in Material Medica, Therapeutics, Anatomy, Embryology, Metallurgy, Chemistry, Physics and descriptive Zoology. And in these also, generally speaking, Hindu enquiries were not less, if not more, definite, exact and fruitful than the Greeks and Medieval Europeans.”

“The Hindu intellect has thus, independently appreciated the dignity of objective facts, devised the methods of observation and experiment, elaborated the machinery of logical analysis and true investigation, attacked the external universe as a system of secrets to be unraveled, and has wrung out of nature the knowledge which constitutes the foundations of Science.” ⁵⁴⁸

Valentine Ball (1843-1895) was interested in Indian ornithology, geology, botany in British India. He was author of *A Manual of the Geology of India, Part III, Economic Geology*, Geological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1881. p. 331 1st ed.

He remarked:

“It is not many years since the production of such a pillar would have been impossibility in the largest foundries of the world, and even now there are comparatively few where a similar mass of metal could be turned out.”⁵⁴⁹

Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855 -1927) was a British born writer and author of popular scientific books. He was an admirer of music composer Richard Wagner. In his major work, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, he extolled the profundity of Indian philosophy and praise of Hindu mysticism.

“Indian thought is unsurpassed in depth and comprehensive many-sidedness.” ⁵⁵⁰

Nicola Tesla (1856-1943) was the Serbian-American inventor, electrical engineer, and scientist.

One of the most incredible inventors of all time developed this Scaler technology in the early 1900's. Every major technology

currently being used today was invented by Tesla including alternating current, television, radio, robotics etc. etc.

He used ancient Sanskrit terminology in his descriptions of natural phenomena.

As early as 1891 Tesla described the universe as a kinetic system filled with energy, which could be harnessed at any location. His concepts during the following years were greatly influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda was the first of a succession of eastern yogi's who brought Vedic philosophy and religion to the west. After meeting the Swami and after continued study of the Eastern view of the mechanisms driving the material world, Tesla began using the Sanskrit words Akasha, Prana, and the concept of aluminiferous ether to describe the source, existence and construction of matter. ⁵⁵¹

Jagdish Chandra Bose (1858-1937) was a pioneer of modern Indian science, combined ancient Indian introspective methods with modern experimental methods to demonstrate "the universal livingness of matter" or the "omnipresence of Life in Matter."

He thought:

"Modern science thus endorsed the ancient Upanishadic truth that the entire universe is born of a life-force and is quivering with a touch of animation. His work represents the triumph of spirituality over extreme materialism. ⁵⁵²

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) studied Indic traditions, taught summer institutes on yoga philosophy and kundalini in Zurich for a few years. A student of Sigmund Freud, psychiatrist, interpreted Hinduism in terms of his psychological system, and pointed out the great significance of Indian thought for the modern West:

He observed:

"We do not yet realize that while we are turning upside down the material world of the East with our technical proficiency, the East with its psychic proficiency is throwing our spiritual world into

confusion. We have never yet hit upon the thought that while we are overpowering the Orient from without, it may be fastening its hold upon us from within.”

Jung found out in 1909 that myth and dream were linked, but it had been well known in India forever. It is implicit in the syllable OM, or A-U-M according to *Mandukya Upanishad*.⁵⁵³

“No system of thought or body control is more widely known today than Yoga. “When a religious method recommends itself as ‘scientific’, it can be certain of its public in the West. Yoga fulfills this expectation. “Quite apart from the charm of the new and the fascination of the half-understood, there is good cause for Yoga to have many adherents. It offers the possibility of controllable experience and thus satisfies the scientific need for ‘facts’; and, besides this, by reason of its breadth and depth, its venerable age, its doctrine and method which include every phase of life, it promises undreamed of possibilities.”⁵⁵⁴

Jung pointed out:

“The Christian West considers man to be wholly dependent upon the grace of God, or at least upon the Church as the exclusive and divinely sanctioned earthly instrument of man’s redemption. The East (India), however, insists that man is the sole cause of his higher development, for it believes in “self- liberation.”

“While we are overpowering the Orient from without, it may be fastening its hold upon us from within.”⁵⁵⁵

“The idea that man is like unto an inverted tree seems to have been current in by gone ages. The link with Vedic conceptions is provided by Plato in his *Timaeus* in which it states...” behold we are not an earthly but a heavenly plant.”

What is of special interest to us is the surprising affinity between Jung’s conclusions and Hindu thought. He himself was aware of it. He thought that it was no mere accident that soon after the French Revolution the Frenchman Anquetil du Perron brought to Europe a translation of the Upanishads which gave the Western world its first deep insight into the baffling mind of the East.

He reflected that:

“To the historian this is mere chance without any factors of cause and effect. But in view of my medical experience I cannot take it as an accident...in the crowds that poured into the Notre Dame, bent on destruction, dark and nameless forces were at work that swept the individual off his feet; these forces worked also upon Anquetil du Perron and provoked an answer, which has come down in history. For he brought the Eastern mind to the West, and its influence upon us we cannot measure. Let us beware of under-estimating it!” He had a great respect for the Eastern civilizations, which had discovered and learnt to use the resources of the subliminal mind. In his own words, “Great and enduring civilizations like those of the Hindus and the Chinese were built upon this foundation and developed from it a discipline of self-knowledge which they brought to a high pitch of refinement both in philosophy and practice.”

“As the *Upanishad* describes it, the Self is that which being known all else becomes known.” ⁵⁵⁶

He admired Hinduism. He said if Rama could cry in the forest when he lost Sita and if still Rama could be an altar of worship that is why Hindu society is a sane society. He said the Hindu society legitimised sorrow, while other religions do not do that. ⁵⁵⁷

Jung declared that:

“We have not yet clearly grasped the fact that Western Theosophy is an amateurish imitation of the East.” Our studies of sexual life, originating in Vienna and England, are matched or surpassed by Hindu teachings on the subject. Oriental texts ten centuries introduce us to philosophical relativism.” ⁵⁵⁸

Jung in *Psychological Types* examines Indian Philosophy from a psychological perspective in glowing terms. His theories have some intuitively and aesthetically resonant qualities. Simple but precise and partially derived from Indian Thought:

“If the attainment of the middle path consisted in a mere surrender to instinct, as the bewailers of “naturalism” suppose, the profoundest philosophical speculation that the human mind has

ever known would have no *raison d'être*. But, as we study the philosophy of the Upanishads, the impression grows on us that the attainment of this path is not exactly the simplest of tasks. Our Western superciliousness in the face of these Indian insights is a mark of our barbarian nature, which has not the remotest inkling of their extraordinary depth and astonishing psychological accuracy. We are still so uneducated that we actually need laws from without, and a task-master or Father above, to show us what is good and the right thing to do. And because we are still such barbarians, any trust in human nature seems to us a dangerous and unethical naturalism. Why is this? Because under the barbarian's thin veneer of culture the wild beast lurks in readiness, amply justifying his fear. But the beast is not tamed by locking it up in cage. There is no morality without freedom. When the barbarian lets loose the beast within him, that is not freedom but bondage. Barbarism must first be vanquished before freedom can be won. This happens, in principle, when the basic root and driving force of morality are felt by the individual as constituents of his own nature and not as external restrictions. How else is man to attain this realization but through the conflicts of opposites?" 559

Frederick Soddy (1877 - 1956) was an English born scientist who has studied in the University of Oxford.

From 1900 to 1902 and was Chemistry assistant in the University of McGill, Montreal, where he co-worked with Rutherford. He received in 1921 a Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry. He awarded the Nobel Prize in 1921 "for his contributions to our knowledge of the chemistry of radioactive substances, and his investigations into the origin and nature of isotopes"

In 1903, with Sir William Ramsay, Soddy verified that the decay of radium produced helium.

He had a great regard for the Indian epics of *Ramayana* and *The Mahabharat*. In 1909 when academics were first beginning to grasp the awesome power of the atom, he did not take these ancient records as fable.

In the *Interpretation of Radium* (1909) he wrote these lines:

“Can we not read into them some justification for the belief that some former forgotten race of men attained not only to the knowledge we have so recently won, but also to the power that is not yet ours?”

When Dr Soddy wrote the book, the atom-bomb box of Pandora had not yet been opened.

In 1909 when academics were first beginning to grasp the awesome power of the atom, physicist Frederick Soddy wrote in his *Interpretation of Radium*:

“I believe that there have been civilisations in the past that were familiar with atomic energy, and that by misusing it they were totally destroyed.”⁵⁶⁰

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) was a physicist. Einstein’s researches are, of course, well chronicled and his more important works include *Special Theory of Relativity* (1905), *Relativity* (English translations, 1920 and 1950), *General Theory of Relativity* (1916), *Investigations on Theory of Brownian Movement* (1926), and *The Evolution of Physics* (1938).

Einstein explained that:

“When I read the *Bhagavad-Gita* and reflect about how God created this universe everything else seems so superfluous.”

“We owe a lot to Indians who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made.”⁵⁶¹

Kenneth Walker (1882–1966) was the famous British surgeon, who had devoted a good deal of time and writing to the study of Indian thought and literature in search of an answer:

The eminent English thinker, presiding over the Sri Ramakrishna birthday anniversary meeting in London in March, 1949, said:

“If the two great nations, India and England, cannot be united by political chords, the ties of spiritual and intellectual co-operation

will certainly prove a stronger bond of union. India, the greatest spiritual force of the world, even maintains today those fountain sources of eternal life, which are the only hope of the spiritual resurrection of humanity.”⁵⁶²

“From the point of view of science, we see man as an elaborate piece of mechanism, his actions determined by his central nervous system and his environment. From philosophy we learn that his capacity for knowledge is strictly limited, so that by means of his sense organs alone he can never know reality. This is confirmed by Hindu philosophy, but a new idea is added. Man, as he is can see no more and do no more, but by right effort and right method, he can gain powers, understand more and achieve more.”

Niels Henrik David Bohr (1885-1962) was a Danish nuclear physicist who developed the Bohr model of the atom. He received the Nobel Prize in physics in 1922, for his theory of atomic structure (Quantum Theory).

He is on record as saying that he goes into the *Upanishads* to ask questions.⁵⁶³

Srinivas Ramanujan (1887-1920) is one of India's legendary intellectual heroes, hailed as one of the greatest Mathematician of India and compared to all time greats, Euler, Gauss and Jacobi, for natural genius, is an eternal source of inspiration, especially for the student of mathematics. Today's mathematicians - armed with supercomputers - are still star-struck, and unable to solve many theorems the slate-scribbling mathematician, too poor for paper, erasing his errors with one elbow young man from India. Ramanujan spawned a zoo of mathematical creatures that delight, confound and humble his peers. They call them “beautiful,” “humble,” “transcendent,” and marvel how he reduced very complex terrain to simple shapes. G H Hardy, brightest mathematician in England, later wrote: “A single look at them is enough to show that they could only be written down by a mathematician of the highest class. They must be true, for if they were not true, no one would have the imagination to invent them.”

Ramanujan was a mathematician so great his name transcends jealousies, the one superlatively great mathematician whom India has produced in the last hundred years. "His leaps of intuition confound mathematicians even today, seven decades after his death. ..the brilliant, self-taught Indian mathematician whose work contains some of the most beautiful ideas in the history of science. His legacy has endured. His twenty-one major mathematical papers are still being plumbed for their secrets, and many of his ideas are used today in cosmology and computer science. His theorems are being applied in areas - polymer chemistry, computers, and cancer research - scarcely imaginable during his lifetime. His mathematical insights yet leave mathematicians baffled that anyone could divine them in the first place.'

He was a mathematical genius that ascribed his brilliance to a personal relationship with a Hindu Goddess. He saw the divine in the dance of numbers.

The inexhaustible Ramanujan was an observant Hindu, adept at dream interpretation and astrology. His work was marked by bold leaps and gut feelings. Growing up he had learned to worship Namagiri, the consort of the lion god Narasimha. Ramanujan believed that he existed to serve as Namagiri's champion - Hindu Goddess of creativity. In real life Ramanujan told people that Namagiri visited him in his dreams and wrote equations on his tongue.

Ramanujan could never explain to G H Hardy how he arrived at his deep insights in mathematical terms; but he did say many of his discoveries came to him in dreams, from the goddess Namakkal, and that he had a morning ritual of awakening and writing them down.

He was intensely religious. He often united mathematics and spirituality together. He felt, for example, that zero represented Absolute Reality, and that infinity represented the many manifestations of that Reality. Ramanujan felt that each mathematical discovery was a step closer to understanding the

spiritual universe. He once told a friend, “An equation for me has no meaning unless it expresses a thought of God.”

While growing up, he lived the life of a traditional Brahmin with his forehead shaved and wearing a topknot. He often prayed to his family Deity, the *Goddess Namagiri of Namakkal*, and followed her advice. Namakkal is also called as “Namagiri”. He pilgrimaged all over Tamil Nadu. He quoted the Vedas, interpreted dreams and was regarded by his friends to be a mystic. Throughout his life, Ramanujan worshiped at the Sarangapani Vishnu temple in Kumbakonam. ⁵⁶⁴

Mathematicians have mined his theorems ever since. They’ve figured out how to prove them. They’ve put them to use. Only recently, a lost bundle of his notebooks turned up in a Cambridge library. That set mathematics off on a whole new voyage of discovery. And where did all this unproven truth come from? Ramanujan was quick to tell us. He simply prayed to Sarasvathi, the Goddess of Learning, and she informed him. The unsettling thing is none of us can find any better way to explain the magnitude of his eerie brilliance. ⁵⁶⁵

He wasn’t spiritually preoccupied, but he was steeped in the reality and beneficence of the Deities, especially the *Goddess Namagiri*. Math, of course, was his intellectual and spiritual touchstone. No one really knows how early in life Ramanujan awakened to the psychic visitations of Namagiri, much less how the interpenetration of his mind and the Goddess’ worked. ⁵⁶⁶ (Unlike most other major religions, Hindu myth and theology contain ancient and deep mathematical threads, with particular accomplishments in Number Theory and a joyous spontaneity about huge numbers. An Indian stamp issued in 1962 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Ramanujan’s birth).

Erwin Schroedinger (1887 -1961) was an Austrian theoretical physicist, was a professor at several universities in Europe. He was awarded the Nobel Prize Quantum Mechanics in 1933. During

the Hitler era he was dismissed from his position for his opposition to the Nazi ideas and he fled to England. He was the author of *Meine Weltansicht*

Schrodinger wrote in his book *Meine Weltansicht*

“This life of yours which you are living is not merely a piece of this entire existence, but in a certain sense the whole; only this whole is not so constituted that it can be surveyed in one single glance. This, as we know, is what the Brahmins express in that sacred, mystic formula which is yet really so simple and so clear; tat tvam asi, this is you. Or, again, in such words as “I am in the east and the west, I am above and below, I am this entire world.”

Schrödinger’s influential book, *What is Life?* The physical aspect of the living cell and *Mind and matter* (1944) also used Vedic ideas. The book became instantly famous although it was criticized by some of its emphasis on Indian ideas. Francis Clark, the co-discoverer of the DNA code, credited this book for key insights that led him to his revolutionary discovery.

According to his biographer Walter Moore, there is a clear continuity between Schrodinger’s understanding of Vedanta and his research:

“The unity and continuity of Vedanta are reflected in the unity and continuity of wave mechanics. In 1925, the world-view of physics was a model of a great machine composed of separable interacting material particles. During the next few years, Schrodinger and Heisenberg and their followers created a universe based on super imposed inseparable waves of probability amplitudes. This new view would be entirely consistent with the Vedantic concept of All in One.”

He became a Vedantist, a Hindu, as a result of his studies in search for truth. Schrodinger kept a copy of the Hindu script at his bedside. He read books on Vedas, yoga and Sankhya philosophy and he reworked them into his own words, and ultimately came to believe them. The Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, were his favorite scriptures.

According to his biographer Moore: “His system – or that of the Upanishads – is delightful and consistent: the self and the world are one and they are all. He rejected traditional western religious beliefs (Jewish, Christian, and Islamic) not on the basis of any reasoned argument, or even with an expression of emotional antipathy, for he loved to use religious expressions and metaphors, but simply by saying that they are naïve.”⁵⁶⁷

In a famous essay on determinism and free will, he expressed very clearly the sense that consciousness is a unity, arguing that this “insight is not new...From the early great Upanishads the recognition Atman = Brahman (the personal self equals the omnipresent, all-comprehending eternal self) was in Indian thought considered, far from being blasphemous, to represent, the quintessence of deepest insight into the happenings of the world. The striving of all the scholars of Vedanta was, after having learnt to pronounce with their lips, really to assimilate in their minds this grandest of all thoughts.”

Schrodinger wrote:

“Vedanta teaches that consciousness is singular, all happenings are played out in one universal consciousness and there is no multiplicity of selves.”

“The stages of human development are to strive for Possession (Artha), Knowledge (Dharma), Ability (Kama), Being (Moksha)”

“Nirvana is a state of pure blissful knowledge.. It has nothing to do with individual. The ego or its separation is an illusion. The goal of man is to preserve his Karma and to develop it further – when man dies his karma lives and creates for itself another carrier.”⁵⁶⁸

He wished to see:

“Some blood transfusion from the ‘East to the West’ to save Western science from spiritual anemia.”

Schrodinger explicitly affirmed his conviction that Vedantic jnana

represented the only true view of reality- a view for which he was prepared even to offer Empirical proof. ⁵⁶⁹

“In all world,” writes Schroedinger in his book *My View of the World* (chapter iv), “there is no kind of framework within which we can find consciousness in the plural; this is simply something we construct because of the temporal plurality of individuals, but it is a false construction...The only solution to this conflict insofar as any is available to us at all lies in the ancient wisdom of the Upanishad.” ⁵⁷⁰

Regarding mystical insights, Schrodinger tells us:

“The multiplicity is only apparent. This is the doctrine of the *Upanishads*. And not of the *Upanishads* only. The mystical experience of the union with God regularly leads to this view, unless strong prejudices stand in the West.” ⁵⁷¹

John Burdon Sanderson Haldane (1892 - 1964) was a world-renowned geneticist. In 1922, he joined Cambridge University to take up research in biochemistry and in 1925, J.B.S. became interested in genetics-the study of genetics and variations and this subsequently led him to his being elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1932. A year later he joined the University College, London, as Professor of Genetics, a position he held as long as he stayed in Britain. Haldane was the first to use mathematics in genetics. Among his significant contributions is an estimate of the rate of mutation of a human gene. He wrote articles on popular science and gave lectures. Some of his famous books are *The Causes of Evolution*, *New Paths in Genetics and Biochemistry of Genetics*.

Haldane was friends with the author Aldous Huxley and was the basis for the biologist Shearwater in Huxley's novel *Antic Hay*. Ideas from Haldane's *Daedalus*, such as ectogenesis (the development of fetuses in artificial wombs), also influenced Huxley's *Brave New World*. He had many students; the most famous of whom, John Maynard Smith was perhaps also the one most like him.



Sleeping Narayana from Budha Nilakantha, Nepal, circa 8th century, stone more than life size.

Lord Vishnu reclining on the coils of a cosmic serpent on the infinite ocean from which the world emerges. The Lord is shown lying down on a thousand-headed snake named Shesha or Ananta Nag - Timeless or Ageless snake.

Photo courtesy: Dr. Deepak Shimkhada.

He left Britain in 1907 and come to live in India, a country he came to love during his several visits here. He was inspired by Hindu philosophy, the Hindu way of life and the principle of non-violence. The Gita impressed him. He even liked the dhoti and kurta attire and used to wear them.

Disillusioned with Marxism in the 1940s and 50s, he eventually moved to India to conduct scientific research.

He came to India with a purpose. He became an Indian citizen, and went native. He knew the country had a variety of animals and plants in large numbers. He wanted to develop research in biology. He was at first appointed professor at the India Statistical Institute, Calcutta and later he became Director, Genetics and Biometry Laboratory in Bhubaneswar, Orissa where he died in 1964.⁵⁷²

Professor Arthur Holmes (1895 -1965) was a geologist, professor at the University of Durham. He writes about the astonishing time scales of the Hindus in his great book, *The Age of Earth* (1913) as follows:

“Long before it became a scientific aspiration to estimate the age of the earth, many elaborate systems of the world chronology had been devised by the sages of antiquity. The most remarkable of these occult time-scales is that of the ancient Hindus, whose astonishing concept of the Earth’s duration has been traced back to Manusmriti, a sacred book.”⁵⁷³

Werner Karl Heisenberg (1901-1976) was a German theoretical physicist was one of the leading scientists of the 20th century. Heisenberg is best known for his Uncertainty Principle and was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics.

He remarked that:

“The startling parallelism between today’s physics and the world-vision of eastern mysticism remarks, the increasing contribution of eastern scientists from India, China and Japan, among others, reinforces this conjunction. Physical science has now become

planetary and draws into its fold an increasing number of non-westerners who find in its new vision of the universe many elements that are quick to note, one cannot always distinguish between statements made by eastern metaphysics based on mystical insight, and the pronouncements of modern physics based on observations, experiments and mathematical calculations.” ⁵⁷⁴

“The scientific world view has ceased to be a scientific view in the true sense of the word.”

Werner Heisenberg went later in life to Rabindhranath Tagore’s University in India called Shantiniketan (Abode of Peace) in a rural and natural setting evidently in search of what he missed in science, namely the certain principle which is Reality or Truth but which never known outside and therefore never spoken of but which is felt in the pure heart. It is the reflection of this which Heisenberg might have discerned in the spiritual writings of the poet.” ⁵⁷⁵

Julius Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967) was a scientist, philosopher, bohemian, and radical. A theoretical physicist and the supervising scientist for the Manhattan Project, he helped develop the atomic bomb. Graduating from Harvard University, he traveled to Cambridge University to study at the Cavendish Laboratory.

Oppenheimer acquired a deeper knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita in 1933 when, as a young professor of physics, he studied Sanskrit with Professor Arthur W Ryder (1877-1938) at Berkeley.

The Bhagavad Gita, Oppenheimer excitedly wrote to his brother Frank Oppenheimer, was “very easy and quite marvelous”. ⁵⁷⁶

Later he called the Bhagavad Gita “the most beautiful philosophical song existing in any known tongue.” He kept a well-worn copy of it conveniently on hand on the bookshelf closest to his desk and often gave the book to friends as a present. ⁵⁷⁷

He continued to browse in it while directing the bomb laboratory. After President Franklin Roosevelt’s death in 1945, Oppenheimer spoke at a memorial service at Los Alamos and he quoted a passage

from the Gita. In later years, too, he would look back on the Bhagavad Gita as one of the most important influences in his life.

In 1963, Christian Century magazine (May 15, 1963 p. 647) asked Oppenheimer to list the ten books that “did most to shape your vocational attitude and your philosophy of life” It is significant that two of the ten works that Oppenheimer claimed as most influential were Indian (*The Bhagavad Gita* and *Bhartrihari’s Sataktrayam*) and a third, *The Waste Land* by T S Eliot, alluded to the Hindu Scriptures, *The Upanishads* and *The Bhagavad Gita* and concluded with a Sanskrit incantation: *Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.*”

He noted:

“Access to the *Vedas* is the greatest privilege this century may claim over all previous centuries.”

He observed:

“The general notions about human understanding... which are illustrated by discoveries in atomic physics are not in the nature of things wholly unfamiliar, wholly unheard of or new. Even in our own culture they have a history, and in Buddhist and Hindu thought a more considerable and central place. What we shall find [in modern physics] is an exemplification, an encouragement, and a refinement of old wisdom.”

In this context it is worth emphasizing that India’s contribution of Buddhism to China (and other countries of the region) is by no means insubstantial. These civilizations would hardly exist without the Indian contribution in all aspects of culture—from science and technology, the arts, philosophy and spirituality.⁵⁷⁸

Oppenheimer described the thoughts that passed through his mind when he witnessed the first atomic test explosion.

*“If the radiance of a thousand suns
Were to burst at once into the sky,
That would be like the splendor of the Mighty One...”*

*I am become Death,
The shatterer of Worlds. "*

As the gigantic nuclear cloud mushroomed up to the stratosphere followed by a doomsday roar, Oppenheimer continued with the verses in which the Mighty One reveals Himself:

"Death am I, cause of destruction of the worlds, matured and set out to gather in the worlds there" - (Bhagavad Gita XI 12-32).^{579 580}

Doctor Atomic is an opera by the contemporary minimalist American composer John Adams, with libretto by Peter Sellars. It premiered at the San Francisco Opera on October 1, 2005. The work focuses on the great stress and anxiety experienced by those at Los Alamos while the test of the first atomic bomb (the "Trinity" test) was being prepared.

Oppenheimer read the *Bhagavad Gita* in the original Sanskrit, and in the aftermath of the blast reflected on the passage in which Krishna reveals himself as the Creator and Destroyer.

The Act II, scene iii chorus, borrowed from the *Bhagavad Gita*:

*"At the sight of this, your Shape stupendous,
Full of mouths and eyes, feet, thighs and bellies,
Terrible with fangs, O master,
All the worlds are fear-struck, even just as I am.
When I see you, Vishnu, omnipresent,
Shouldering the sky, in hues of rainbow,
With your mouths agape and flame-eyes staring
All my peace is gone; my heart is troubled. "*⁵⁸¹

Then and there, Oppenheimer symbolized a most extraordinary conjunction - the juxtaposition of Western civilization's most terrifying scientific achievement with the most dazzling description of the mystical experience given to us by the *Bhagavad Gita*, India's greatest literary monument.

Oppenheimer's spontaneous conjunction of a Hindu mystical poem with a nuclear explosion was of great symbolic significance.

Nowhere in Western literature could he have found an almost clinical description of mystical rapture that also fits the description of a nuclear explosion in the outer world. ⁵⁸²

“The general notions about human understanding...which are illustrated by discoveries in atomic physics are not in the nature of things wholly unfamiliar, wholly unheard of, or new. Even in our own culture, they have a history, and in Buddhist and Hindu thought a more considerable and central place. What we shall find is an exemplification, an encouragement, and a refinement of old wisdom.” ⁵⁸³

Andrew Tomas (1906- 2001) was an Australian UFO pioneer, author of several books including *Mirage of the Ages: A Critique of Christianity* and *We Are Not The First* and *On the shores of endless worlds: The search for cosmic life and Beyond the Time Barrier*.

He has written:

“A thousand years before the childish image of the earth drawn by Cosmas Indicopleustes a scholar-explorer of the 6th century, in his Christian Topography, philosophers had a different and much more accurate idea of the shape of the earth.”

Tomas points out that:

“Until the second part of the 19th century scholars and clerics of the West thought that the earth was but a few thousand years old. Yet ancient Brahmin books, estimated the Day of Brahma, the life-span of our universe, to be 4.32 billion years. This figure is close to that of our astronomers, who calculate it to be about 4.6 billion years.”

He talks about the amazing ancient India’s knowledge of the atomic structure and their weapons:

“The atomic structure of matter is mentioned in the Hindu treatises *Vaisesika* and *Nyaya*. *The Yoga Vasishta* says: “There are vast worlds within the hollows of each atom, multifarious as the specks in a sunbeam.”

“The Indian sage Uluku proposed a hypothesis over 2,500 years ago that all material objects were made of paramanu, or seeds of matter. He was then nicknamed Kanada, or the swallower of grains.”

“The sacred writings of ancient India contain descriptions of weapons which resembled atomic bombs. *The Mausola Parva* speaks of a thunderbolt – “a gigantic messenger of deaths” – which reduced to ashes whole armies and caused the hair and nails of the survivors to fall out. Pottery broke without any cause and the birds turned white. After a few hours all foodstuffs were poisoned. The ghastly picture of Hiroshima comes to mind when one reads this ancient text from India.”

“A blazing missile possessed of the radiance of smokeless fire was discharged. A thick gloom suddenly encompassed the heavens. Clouds roared into the higher air, showering blood. The world, scorched by the heat of that weapon, seemed to be in fever,” thus describes the *Drona Parva* – in *The Mahabharat*. One can almost visualize the mushroom cloud of an atomic bomb explosion and atomic radiation.”

“Another passage compares the detonation with a flare-up of ten thousand suns. In ancient times the day was divided into 60 kala, each equal to 24 minutes, subdivided into 60 vikala, each equal to 24 seconds. Then followed a further sixty-fold subdivision of time into para, tatpara, vitatpara, ima, and finally, kashta or $1/300,000,000$ of a second. Is this reckoning of time a folk memory from a highly technological civilization? Without sensitive instruments the kashta would be absolutely meaningless. It is significant that the kashta, or 3×10^{-8} second, is very close to the lifespans of certain mesons and hypersons. This fact supports the bold hypothesis that the science of nuclear physics is not new.” ⁵⁸⁴

John Archibald Wheeler (1911 -) is a physicist, the first American involved in the theoretical development of the atomic bomb. He also originated a novel approach to the unified field theory.

He has worked with such famous physicists as: Einstein, Thorne, Oppenheimer Bohr etc.

He was Professor Emeritus at Princeton and Texas universities, studied with Niels Bohr, was named winner of the 1997 Wolf Prize in Physics, for developing the modern “black hole” theory. He has taught students who include scientists like Richard Feynman, now occupies the chair that was held by Einstein.

Wheeler wrote: “I like to think that someone will trace how the deepest thinking of India made its way to Greece and from there to the philosophy of our times.”

It is curious that people like Schroedinger Niels Bohr, Oppenheimer and John Wheeler are Upanishad scholars.⁵⁸⁵

John Dobson (1915 -) is a scientist and a teacher. His theories in physics and cosmology boldly break new ground and significantly challenge the scientific orthodoxy. He was featured in the PBS television series “The Astronomers”. John Dobson is perhaps best known for his work in the design and construction of telescopes, however, as most telescopes made today use what is known as a “Dobsonian” mount.

He discusses the apparitional nature of the universe and why we are fooled into viewing it in a Newtonian-mechanistic way.

“Can we, by now, square science with religion? In particular, can we square relativity and quantum mechanics with Swami Vivekananda’s Advaita Vedanta? Since there cannot be two worlds — one for the scientists and one for the mystics — it must be that their descriptions are of the same world but from different points of view. Can we, from the vantage point of the Swami’s Advaita (non-dualism), see both points of view? Swami Vivekananda said that science and religion would meet and shake hands. Can we see things from his vantage point? Since the notion of maya or apparition as the first cause of our physics is central to the swami’s Advaita, I have chosen as “The Equations of Maya”. Can we find them in our physics? According to the philosophy of the Advaita Vedantins, as the swami himself has said, there cannot be two existences, only one. And maya is, as it were, a veil or screen through which that oneness (the Absolute) is seen as this Universe of plurality and change.”⁵⁸⁶

Abraham Seidenberg (1916 – 1988) was an American historian of mathematics and author of *Studies in Algebraic Geometry* (1980) he has said:

“Ancient Egyptian, Babylonian and Greek geometries derive from the mathematics recorded in the *Sulbasutras*.” ⁵⁸⁷

David Bohm (1917-1992) was a former associate of Einstein, was one of the world’s greatest quantum mechanical physicists and philosophers. David Bohm explains his theory that there is something like life and mind enfolded in everything.

Bohm was profoundly affected by his close contact with J. Krishnamurti.

He states:

“Yes, and Atman is from the side of meaning. You would say Atman is more like the meaning. But then what is meant would be Brahman, I suppose; the identity of consciousness and cosmos...This claims that the meaning and what is meant are ultimately one, which is the phrase ‘Atman equals Brahman’ of classical Hindu philosophy.” ⁵⁸⁸

Aleksandr Georgievich Spirkin (1918 - 2004) was a well-known Soviet psychologist, who was a corresponding member of the erstwhile USSR Academy of Science and the head of the section of methodological problems of Cybernetics in Scientific Council of Cybernetics of the USSR Academy of Sciences, presents some illuminating views in his book *Dialectical Materialism* (Progress Publishers Moscow-1983, published during the Soviet days) about Indian’s ancient explorers.

Professor Spirkin declared that:

“The sages of India discovered astonishingly subtle and profound psycho-biophysical connections between human organism and cosmic subterranean processes. They knew much that even today is beyond the ken European scientific thought, or that it ignores, often trying to conceal its helplessness by asserting that oriental

wisdom is mere mysticism and thus showing its inability to distinguish the rational but not yet fully understandable essence from various figments of imagination...”

“It is sometimes difficult for us to penetrate the profound language of symbolic forms in which this wisdom is couched, to get at the essence of that wisdom. A full understanding of these complex problems can be achieved only in the broad context of history and culture. Historical experience offers us some instructive lessons for the present day. If we look around thoughtfully at the path humanity has passed, it is not difficult to see that the minds of the makers of culture have been guided by the desire to achieve an understanding and a rational transformation of the human being himself, his bodily and spiritual organization, the preservation and strengthening of his health. Socio-political, philosophical, religious, moral, aesthetic and all cultural efforts in general have tended towards this goal.”

He has further remarked:

“The culture of the ancient Orient affirmed not only ideas of man’s dependence on the supernatural forces that were external to him; there was also a tendency to cultivate certain rules of behaviour in relation to these forces, including techniques of training the body in relation to these forces to regulate and perfect bodily and spiritual processes. Various systems of exercises linked with religious beliefs were evolved to change the state of the mind, the consciousness, to achieve complete unity with the universe, to become one with the energy of nature. These techniques for influencing one’s own organism through the mechanisms of psycho-physiological self-regulation and control - techniques that are much in fashion today - could not have survived for centuries and have penetrated other cultures with a different ethnos, if they had not contained some real knowledge of the most subtle and hidden structural. Energo-informational neuro-psychical and humoral potentials, which even now sometimes seem fantastic to the analytical European mind, particularly when it is fettered by stereotypes.”

“Oriental culture is full of beliefs about the role of the way of life and its various components - breathing techniques, the ability to commune very subtly with nature, acupuncture, cauterizing,

and other ways of influencing the biologically active centers of the organism, herbo-medicine, diagnostics by means of the iris of the eye, pulse and olfactory diagnostics, consideration of the position of the earth in relation to the celestial bodies in medicine, the time of year and day and of the properties of water in relation to the state of the earth strata and the character of its flow in connection with the geo magnetic phenomena – all this and much else has contributed to the great wisdom of the Eastern peoples, the wealth of their culture and man's place therein, their understanding of the mechanisms of regulation of his life activity and vital potentials. Thus already in the distant past, in the mists of mythological world views the precious crystals of knowledge, tested by the experience of centuries, of skills in beneficially influencing man's body gradually accumulated. How could people of those far off times know so much without any experiments or apparatus about the conditions and factors that regulate the course of the vital processes and the character of the interaction between man and nature, particularly the influence of the celestial bodies, the sun and the moon and various radiations proceeding from outer space and the bowels of the earth!? And all this was taken into consideration both in diagnosing and in treatment! Does this not go to show an astonishingly high level of culture that should arouse our admiration, gratitude and desire to study! This knowledge could not have retained its vitality if it had not again and again been confirmed by practice.”⁵⁸⁹

Alexander Zinoviev (1922 -) a Russian sociologist and works in Russian Academy of Sciences. He has been many times in India and is interested in Indian culture.

He has marveled at the great value of Hinduism to the world:

“But I would like to believe Hinduism is too valuable for humanity, and sacred Indian books contain too much precious and unique knowledge that it will not sink in oblivion. I'd like to believe that the principles of Indian philosophy and religion are much more in agreement with the needs for the future than any other religion in the world, in agreement with the tendency, known in Western countries as New Age. It's my deep belief that without India the world will sink in spiritual darkness and ignorance.”

“So, what must be done in order to save Hinduism and stop the Islamic flood? There is only one way and it is called mass conversion of Muslims into Hinduism. If Hindus want to survive, they must convert. They must adopt the strategy of Catholic missionaries and Muslim mullahs. I don’t mean only conversion of one-time Hindus that only recently adopted other religions. Hinduism must convert also people of non-Hindu origin. The fact that they live in India is enough because all Indians, notwithstanding their religious affiliation, had once had Hindu ancestors.” ⁵⁹⁰

Dr. Carl Sagan (1934 -1996) was an American astronomer, astrobiologist, and highly successful science popularizer. He pioneered exobiology and promoted the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI). He was author of several books including *Cosmos* and *Broca’s Brain: Reflections on the Romance of Science* (1979).

In his book, *Cosmos* (1980) he remarks:

“The Hindu religion is the only one of the world’s great faiths dedicated to the idea that the Cosmos itself undergoes an immense, indeed an infinite, number of deaths and rebirths. It is the only religion in which the time scales correspond, to those of modern scientific cosmology. Its cycles run from our ordinary day and night to a day and night of Brahma, 8.64 billion years long. Longer than the age of the Earth or the Sun and about half the time since the Big Bang. And there are much longer time scales still.”

“There is the deep and appealing notion that the universe is but the dream of the god who, after a Brahma years, dissolves himself into a dreamless sleep. The universe dissolves with him - until, after another Brahma century, he stirs, recomposes himself and begins again to dream the great cosmic dream.”

Carl Sagan has further observed: “The most elegant and sublime of these is a representation of the creation of the universe at the beginning of each cosmic cycle, a motif known as the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva. The God called in this manifestation Nataraja, the Dance King. In the upper right hand is a drum whose sound is the

sound of creation. In the upper left hand is a tongue of flame, a reminder that the universe, now newly created, with billions of years from now will be utterly destroyed.”

“These profound and lovely images are, I like to imagine, a kind of premonition of modern astronomical ideas.”

Sagan continues, “A millennium before Europeans were willing to divest themselves of the Biblical idea that the world was a few thousand years old, the Mayans were thinking of millions and the Hindus billions”⁵⁹¹

In the episode entitled “*The Edge of Forever*” in the “*Cosmos*” television series, Carl Sagan visits India, and by way of introducing some of the bizarre ideas of modern physics, he acknowledges that of all the world’s philosophies and religions those originating in India are remarkably consistent with contemporary scenarios of space, time and existence.

In his book *Broca’s Brain: Reflections on the Romance of Science*, he remarks:

“Immanuel Velikovsky (the author of *Earth in Upheaval*) in his book *Worlds in Collision*, notes that the idea of four ancient ages terminated by catastrophe is common to Indian as well as to Western sacred writing. However, in the *Bhagavad Gita* and in the *Vedas*, widely divergent numbers of such ages, including infinity of them, are given; but, more interesting, the duration of the ages between major catastrophes is specified as billions of years. ”

“The idea that scientists or theologians, with our present still puny understanding of this vast and awesome cosmos, can comprehend the origins of the universe is only a little less silly than the idea that Mesopotamian astronomers of 3,000 years ago – from whom the ancient Hebrews borrowed, during the Babylonian captivity, the cosmological accounts in the first chapter of Genesis – could have understood the origins of the universe. We simply do not know.”

“The Hindu holy book, the *Rig Veda* (X: 129), has a much more

realistic view of the matter:

*"Who knows for certain? Who shall here declare it?
Whence was it born, whence came creation?
The gods are later than this world's formation;
Who then can know the origins of the world?
None knows whence creation arose;
And whether he has or has not made it;
He who surveys it from the lofty skies,
Only he knows- or perhaps he knows not."* ⁵⁹²

Dr R. Chidambaram (1936 -) Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India has remarked that:

"The Bhagwat Gita" continues to be the source of inspiration for both Indian and western scientists and "one sees a thread of similarity in the spiritual thinking of great scientists like Srinivasa Ramanujan, C V Raman, Chandrasekhar."

He believes that the *Bhagwad Gita* has influenced the thinking of even many foreign scientists like Erwin Schrodinger and Robert Oppenheimer.

"I myself have been influenced by the Saivite religious environment in my family and the great intellectual force of Advaita Vedanta," he indicated. ⁵⁹³

Fritjof Capra (1939 -) is Austrian-born famous theoretical high-energy physicist and ecologist and the author of *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*. (1975). He is co-director of the Center for Eco-Literacy in Berkeley.

Capra who studied with Werner Heisenberg observes that:

"Hinduism cannot be called a philosophy, nor is it a well defined religion. It is, rather, a large and complex socio-religious organism consisting of innumerable sects, cults, and philosophical systems and involving various rituals, ceremonies and spiritual disciplines, as well as the worship of countless gods, and goddesses. The many facets of this complex, and yet persistent and powerful spiritual tradition mirror the geographical, racial, linguistic and

cultural complexities of India's vast subcontinent. The manifestations of Hinduism range from highly intellectual depth to the naïve ritual practices of the masses. If the majority of the Hindus are simple villagers who keep the popular religion alive in their daily worship, Hinduism has, on the other hand, brought forth a large number of outstanding spiritual teachers to transmit its profound insights "

Capra has pointed out that:

"The Upanishads contain the essence of Hinduism's spiritual message. They have guided and inspired India's greatest minds for the last twenty-five centuries, in accordance with the advice given by their verses:

*"Taking as a bow the great weapon of the Upanishad,
One should put upon it an arrow sharpened by Meditation.
Stretching it with a thought directed to the essence of That,
Penetrate that Imperishable as the mark, my friend."*

"Modern physics has shown that the rhythm of creation and destruction is not only manifest in the turn of the seasons and in the birth and death of all living creatures, but is also the very essence of inorganic matter. Modern physics has thus revealed that every subatomic particle not only performs an energy dance, but also is an energy dance; a pulsating process of creation and destruction."

He wrote eloquently of the dance of Lord Shiva:

"I saw cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were destroyed and created in rhythmic pulses; I saw the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I heard its sound, and at that moment I knew that this was the Dance of Shiv, the Lord of Dancers."

"The metaphor of the cosmic dancer has found its most profound and beautiful expression in Hinduism in the image of the dancing Shiva."

“The dance of Shiva is the dancing universe, the ceaseless flow of energy going through an infinite variety of patterns that melt into one another”.

“For the modern physicists, then Shiva’s dance is the dance of subatomic matter. As in Hindu mythology, it is a continual dance of creation and destruction involving the whole cosmos; the basis of all existence and of all natural phenomenon. Hundreds of years ago, Indian artists created visual images of dancing Shivas in a beautiful series of bronzes. In our times, physicists have used the most advanced technology to portray the patterns of the cosmic dance. The bubble-chamber photographs of interacting particles, which bear testimony to the continual rhythm of creation and destruction in the universe, are visual images of the dance of Shiva equaling those of the Indian artists in beauty and profound significance. The metaphor of the cosmic dance thus unifies ancient mythology, religious art, and modern physics. It is indeed, as Coomaraswamy has said, ‘poetry, but none the less science.’”

“The idea of a periodically expanding and contracting universe, which involves a scale of time and space of vast proportions; has arisen not only in modern cosmology, but also in ancient Indian mythology. Experiencing the universe as an organic and rhythmically moving cosmos, the Hindus were able to develop evolutionary cosmologies, which come very close to our modern scientific models. The Hindu sages were not afraid to identify this rhythmic divine play with the evolution of the cosmos as a whole. They pictured the universe as periodically expanding and contracting and gave the name kalpa to the unimaginable time span between the beginning and the end of one creation. The scale of this ancient myth is indeed staggering; it has taken the human mind more than two thousand years to come up again with a similar concept.”

“The two foundations of twentieth-century physics - quantum theory and relativity theory - both force us to see the world very much in the way a Hindu, Buddhist...sees it.” ⁵⁹⁴

Alexander Gorbovsky is the head of the Department of the Russian Munitions Agency and has written that:

“*The Mahabharata* - an ancient Indian epic compiled 3000 years ago - contains a reference to a terrible weapon. Regrettably, in our age of the atomic bomb, the description of this weapon exploding will not appear to be an exaggeration: ‘...a blazing shaft possessed of the effulgence of a smokeless fire (was) let off...’ That was how this weapon was perceived. The consequences of its use also evoke involuntary associations.’ This makes the bodies of the dead unidentifiable... The survivors lose their nails and hair, and their food becomes unfit for eating. For several subsequent years the Sun, the stars and the sky remain shrouded with clouds and bad weather.”

“This weapon was known as the Weapon of Brahma or the Flame of Indra...”⁵⁹⁵

Jack Sarfatti (1939 -) is a Physicist of the Physics Consciousness Research Group writes:

“I suspect that general relativity and quantum theory are two complimentary aspects of a deeper theory that will involve a kind of cosmic consciousness. The cosmic consciousness or the Mahat of India’s Samkhya Philosophy is the basis of entire creation”.⁵⁹⁶

Prof. Brian David Josephson (1940 -) is a Welsh physicist, the youngest Nobel Laureate noted about the evolution of the universe in the Vedanta:

“The Vedanta and the Sankhya hold the key to the laws of mind and thought process which are co-related to the Quantum Field, i.e. the operation and distribution of particles at atomic and molecular levels.”

“He has turned to meditation and Indian Philosophy especially the Vedanta and Smakhya philosophy to find” scientific explanations” for the laws of mind and thought processes and their correlation to the quantum field in physics, which deals with creation and destruction of particles at atomic and molecular levels. ‘Indian philosophy shows the relationship between mind and matter. Mind as seen in Indian philosophy enables one to describe subjective reality or the process of decision making as a wave function in terms of quantum physics”.

“Samkhya and Vedanta propound the evolution of universe in it inanimate and animate aspects, more comprehensively than modern science does. Vedananta derives it from primal Divine Energy or Sakti and Samkhya from proto-Nature or Prakriti.” ^{597 598}

Rupert Sheldrake (1942 -) is a biologist and author of more than 75 scientific papers and ten books. A former Research Fellow of the Royal Society, he studied natural sciences at Cambridge University, where he was a Scholar of Clare College, took a double first class honours degree and was awarded the University Botany Prize. He then studied philosophy at Harvard University, where he was a Frank Knox Fellow, before returning to Cambridge, where he took a Ph.D. in biochemistry. When he was 44, he first went to Hyderabad, India, in 1968 as a plant biologist, more than just pollen and dirt rubbed off on him.

He began digging into the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, examining Buddhist doctrine and Sufi mysticism. He learned meditation. In 1974, India became this Briton's home, and his views of biology were becoming radically altered by his Eastern musings. Eventually, he would create a science theory so wide that it carried an ethical message of being psychically responsible for our thoughts and actions. It was so deep it receded back through transcendent creation gods to a God state that reads like many Upanishadic passages.

He would say in 1987: “My ideas find readier acceptance in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions of the East than in Western culture.”

Sheldrake saw how a subtle, trans-physical field was responsible for defining, regulating and advancing biological form and intelligence - like the akashic formbuilding of the Vedas. In 1978, Sheldrake entered an ashram by the sacred Cauvery River in South India. Here he extended his biological insights to include inorganic matter, formulated a scientifically testable theory and wrote a brilliant book, *A New Science of Life*. He called his theory “formative causation.” It simply stated that the combined form and the learned intelligence/behavior of anything appearing in the universe - from an atom to

man-is guided by a single morphogenetic (form-evolving) field: M-field for short. One field per new form, no matter how numerous it appears in our universe. According to Hindu metaphysics, this is precisely how the interior astral universe works.⁵⁹⁹

He spent seven years in India where he wrote his first book, *A New Science of Life* (1981), while living at an ashram there. That book soon became the target of criticism among Sheldrake's peers, who view many of his theories, at best, as "unconventional." In 1968, Sheldrake went to India for three months while on his way to Malaysia to study tropical botany. Even after a year in Malaysia, he couldn't forget what he'd seen in India. "That had a huge impact on me,"

He has remarked that:

"I suddenly saw this astonishing culture which I found completely fascinating, which had riches and depths beyond anything I had ever been taught about in England." "One of the effects of this exposure to India was to put the scientific perspective on the world that I had learned in Cambridge into a much wider context."

"I saw that this was one rather limited way of looking at things. I was also much influenced by Indian meditation practices, starting with Transcendental Meditation around 1970, and various other forms of meditation and Yoga over the years. This gave me a different perspective on the workings of the mind and on realms of experience I had not known about before."

For the first time, Sheldrake was exposed to the teachings of Hinduism. "I was impressed by the way that Hindus relate to the land of India and the holy places, and was moved by the great variety of pilgrimages and holy animals and plants and festivals. There are so many aspects of Hinduism that link it to the land and to the natural world in India. It is also closely linked to the culture and languages of India. I realized that as an English person I could never fully enter into those aspects of Hinduism."⁶⁰⁰

Paul Utukuru has a Master's degree in Physics and a Doctor of Science degree in Radiological Science. During his professional

career as a medical physicist, he published widely in the field of the physics of medical imaging and radiation oncology. Since his retirement from the Johns Hopkins University in 1995, Utukuru has been active in matters related to bridging the gap between Science and Religion. His writings and lectures reflect his interests from the point of view of Neurotheology, Spiritual Transformation, Christian ethics, Epistemology and Hindu Cosmology. He is a retired medical physicist in the *Science and Theology News*, a French monthly newspaper.

He has recently written:

“Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are said to be the creator, sustainer and the destroyer respectively of the universe in Hinduism. Setting aside the personified symbolism here, the idea can be seen as an extrapolation of what is observed on earth to the universe at large: birth, growth, decay and recycling are central to everything we observe in the world within us and around us. Extrapolation from the particular to the general is commonly done in science, especially physics.”

“Based on similar considerations, some ancient astronomers seemed to have arrived at the conclusion that the creation of the universe, its growth, its eventual decay and regeneration are eternal processes without a beginning and without an end, repeating in endless cycles. The Hindus named each half cycle a night or day of Brahma in symbolic terms. There is also the mention of a transition or a twilight zone referred to as *Yugasandhi* between these half cycles.”

Utukuru admiringly observes that:

“The metaphor extends to some amazing mathematical details. According to the Hindu scriptures, each half cycle is said to last for 4.32 billion years. The Sun, too, revolves around the center of our galaxy once in 325.5 million years. Modern science pegs this in the range of 225 to 270 million years. The point of departure between ancient Hindu cosmology and modern cosmology is that unlike modern cosmology, ancient Hindu cosmology relates the rotational speed of our own galaxy to the period of oscillation of the endless cycles of creation, growth and eventual decay.

Our known galaxy is known as Parameshti Mandala, and it is said to rotate around Svayambhu Mandala, the center of all galaxies with a time period of 4.32 billion years. Pursuing this chronology further in detail, it can be shown that the present day of Brahma began exactly 5 Brahma hours, 28 minutes and 40 seconds ago as of April 1, 1986. Going a step further, they calculate the age of our present universe is 19.252 billion years, amazingly close to the modern-day estimate. Modern historians have also documented that according to some ancient Hindu scriptures, the Sun is 108 Sun-diameters from the earth and the moon 108 Moon-diameters away. The modern values for these figures are 107.6 and 110.6 respectively. Parenthetically, the number 108 has special significance in astrology and in most Hindu rituals even today. The rosaries used in many Hindu and Buddhist chanting routines contain exactly 108 beads.”⁶⁰¹

Navaratna S Rajaram (1943 -) is a mathematician, computer scientist and linguist and historian of science. He has taught in several universities in the United States. Since 1984 he has been an advisor to the National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA). He has written several books including *Politics of History and Aryan Invasion Theory and the Subversion of Scholarship*.

He has observed that:

“Hindu God is not an external God who reveals himself only to a chosen prophet to be then imposed as the ultimate authority on others. God is something that anyone can know through one’s own effort and seeking. Remember Krishna’s words: “*All creatures great and small - I am equal to all; I hate none, nor have I any favorites* ” The different yogas are pathways that can lead one to knowledge of God. This is similar to ancient Greek mysticism as practiced by sages like Pythagoras. There is no dogma that an external agent enforces upon everyone in the name of One God. Thus, the Hindu God like the Greek God is a personal God - as diverse as the individual. The multiplicity of Gods one sees in Hindu and Greek Pantheons is a reflection of the multiplicity of pathways explored by sages. It is a natural consequence of the spiritual freedom that is the right of every Hindu.” ⁶⁰²

Georges Ifrah (1947 -) is a French historian of Mathematics and author of the book, *The Universal History of Numbers* (2000).

He has stated:

“The Indian mind has always had for calculations and the handling of numbers an extraordinary inclination, ease and power, such as no other civilization in history ever possessed to the same degree. So much so that Indian culture regarded the science of numbers as the noblest of its arts...A thousand years ahead of Europeans, Indian savants knew that the zero and infinity were mutually inverse notions.”⁶⁰³

Claiming India to be the true birthplace of our numerals, Ifrah salutes the Indian researchers saying that the:

“The real inventors of this fundamental discovery, which is no less important than such feats as the mastery of fire, the development of agriculture, or the invention of the wheel, writing or the steam engine, were the mathematicians and astronomers of the Indian civilization: scholars who, unlike the Greeks, were concerned with practical applications and who were motivated by a kind of passion for both numbers and numerical calculations.”

He refers to 24 evidences from scriptures from India, whose dates range from 1150 BC until 458 BC. Of particular interest is the work done by Indian mathematician Bhaskaracharya known as Bhaskara (1150 BC). He makes a reference to zero and the god Brahma invented the place-value system. In other words, these notions were so well established in Indian thought and tradition that at this time they were considered to have always been used by humans, and thus to have constituted a “revelation” of the divinities.

“It was only after the eighth century BC, and doubtless due to the influence of the Indian Buddhist missionaries, that Chinese mathematicians introduced the use of zero in the form of a little circle or dot (signs that originated in India)...”

He also mentions that:

“The early passion which Indian civilization had for high numbers was a significant factor contributing to the discovery of the place-

value system, and not only offered the Indians the incentive to go beyond the “calculable” physical world, but also led to an understanding (much earlier than in our civilization) of the notion of mathematical infinity itself.”

“The real inventors of [the numeral system], which is no less important than such feats as the mastery of fire, the development of agriculture, or the invention of the wheel, writing or the steam engine, were the mathematicians and astronomers of Indian civilization: scholars who, unlike the Greeks, were concerned with practical applications and who were motivated by a kind of passion for both numbers and numerical calculations.”

“Sanskrit notation had an excellent conceptual quality. It was easy to use and moreover it facilitated the conception of the highest imaginable numbers. This is why it was so well suited to the most exuberant numerical or arithmetical-cosmogonic speculations of Indian culture.”

Marveling at the genius of ancient Hindus, he wrote admiringly:

“The Indian people were the only civilization to take the decisive step towards the perfection of numerical notation. We owe the discovery of modern numeration and the elaboration of the very foundations of written calculations to India alone.”

“It is clear how much we owe to this brilliant civilization, and not only in the field of arithmetic; by opening the way to the generalization of the concept of the number, the Indian scholars enabled the rapid development of mathematics and exact sciences. The discoveries of these men doubtless required much time and imagination, and above all a great ability for abstract thinking. These major discoveries took place within an environment which was at once mystical, philosophical, religious, cosmological, mythological and metaphysical.”

“In India, an aptitude for the study of numbers and arithmetical research was often combined with a surprising tendency towards metaphysical abstractions; in fact, the latter is so deeply ingrained in Indian thought and tradition that one meets it in all fields of study, from the most advanced mathematical ideas to disciplines completely unrelated to ‘exact sciences.’”

“In short, Indian science was born out of a mystical and religious culture and the etymology of the Sanskrit words used to describe numbers and the science of numbers bears witness to this fact.”

“Sanskrit means “complete”, “perfect” and “definitive”. In fact, this language is extremely elaborate, almost artificial, and is capable of describing multiple levels of meditation, states of consciousness and psychic, spiritual and even intellectual processes. As for vocabulary, its richness is considerable and highly diversified. Sanskrit has for centuries lent itself admirably to the diverse rules of prosody and versification. Thus we can see why poetry has played such a preponderant role in all of Indian culture and Sanskrit literature.”⁶⁰⁴

Dr. Subhash Kak (1949 -) is a widely known scientist and an Indic scholar. Currently a Professor at Louisiana State University, he has authored ten books and more than 200 research papers in the fields of information theory, quantum mechanics, and Indic studies.

Dr Kak has recently resolved Einstein’s twin paradox. He is a Sanskrit scholar and author of several books including *Patanjali and cognitive science* (1987), *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization: New Light on Ancient India* (1999), *India at Century’s End: Essays on History and Politics* (1994), *Astronomical Code of the Rig Veda* (2000) and *The Wishing Tree: The Presence and Promise of India* (2001).

He has noted:

“India has had cultural continuity for at least 10,000 years. Before that we had a rock-art tradition which, according to some estimates, goes back to 40,000 BCE. Not only are we one of the most ancient civilizations, we have found in India the record of the earliest astronomy, geometry, mathematics, and medicine. Artistic, philosophical and religious impulses, central to the history of mankind, arose first in India.”

Dr Kak has affirmed that the:

“Vedic Indians were scientific. They believed in laws of nature. They represented their astronomy in terms of the altar

constructions. One problem they considered was that of the synchronization of the lunar and the solar years: the lunar year is about 11 days shorter than the solar year and if we add a round number of days every few years to make up for the discrepancy, we find we cannot do it elegantly unless we have a correction cycle of 95 years or its multiples. This 95-year cycle is described in the earliest Vedic prose books.”

“The altars were to be built to slightly larger dimensions each year of the cycle to represent the corrections. There were other symbolic constructions. Like building a square altar (representing the sky) with the same area as a circular altar (representing the earth), which is the problem of squaring the circle. This led to the discovery of the earliest geometry. They were aware that the sun and the moon were at 108 times their own diameters from the earth.”

He has very wisely pointed out that:

“Our school books talk about Socrates, Plato and Aristotle — and rightly so — but they don’t mention Yajñavalkya, Panini and Patañjali, which is a grave omission. Our grand boulevards in Delhi and other cities are named after Copernicus, Kepler and Newton, but there are no memorials to Aryabhata, Bhaskara, Madhava and Nilakantha!”

“For at least 50 years, Indian intellectual life was stifled by a Stalinist attitude. And before that, for two centuries, colonialist historians appropriated Indian past for their own purposes. What they left for us was a mutilated version of our past. We are barely emerging from that hell.”⁶⁰⁵

“The Vedic devas went to China and Japan through Kashmir. The fourth great council was held there under the patronage of the Kushana emperor Kanishka (r. 78-120) in around 100 CE, where monks of the Sarvastivâdin School compiled a new canon. This became the basis of Mahâyâna. The Vedic devas were a part of this understanding, as was dhyâna of the Vedic tradition (Ch’an in China and Zen in Japan) with devotion to Īśvara (Īiva) as its ultimate objective (Yogasûtra 1.23). The Parihâsapura monuments (near Ūrînagar) of the Cankuna stûpa (Kârkota dynasty, 8th

century) “served as a model all across Asia from the Pamir Mountains to Japan”.

“Vedic ideas were also taken to Japan by the sea route from South India and Southeast Asia. That serves to explain the specific transformations of some Sanskrit terms into Japanese through Tamil phonology. For example, consider the transformation of Sanskrit homa, the Vedic fire rite, into Japanese goma, where the initiation is given by the achari (Sanskrit âcârya). The Sanskrit mantras in Japan are written the Siddham script of South India.” ⁶⁰⁶

Glen Peter Kezwer is a physicist from Canada. He lives in Himachal Pradesh and is author of the book *Meditation, Oneness and Physics* (2003) and he has remarked:

“Spirituality is an intrinsic part of Indian culture and life. For the worshipper, this aspect of Indian culture serves as a constant reminder that behind the material forms which constitute our daily world, there is an unchanging consciousness which permeates everything.”

Kezer has indicated very eloquently about India’s eternal message:

“From times immemorial India’s message has been promulgated by her saints, sages, gurus and rishis and transmitted by them to those who were desirous of knowing the truth. The essence of this message is simple: Behind the eyes of every living being on earth there shines a light. This light is one and the same in all beings. This light is immortal, blissful, eternal and indestructible. This is the light of consciousness, which makes each and every one of us alive and alert and gives us the power to breathe.”

“It is written in Chapter II, verse 30 of the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* that *Dayhee nityamavadhyoayam / Dayhay Sarvasya Bhaarat*: The spirit, which dwells within the body is eternal and indestructible. It dwells in the bodies of all, and is therefore the selfsame spirit in every living human being or creature. This spirit, which can also be called Aatmaa or Self, is the true nature of all. It is indivisible, being one and one alone, and is the unchanging reality behind the changing world which we experience every day through our senses. To know or realize this Self is the quest

of every spiritual seeker throughout history, and the means to achieve this loftiest of goals can be found in the spiritual heritage of India.”⁶⁰⁷

Stephen Cope is a psychotherapist who writes and teaches about the relationship between contemporary psychology and the Eastern contemplative traditions. He is currently Scholar-in-Residence at the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Lenox, Massachusetts, the largest residential yoga center in the world. He is the author of *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self* (2000).

He has eloquently written about yoga:

“Here is a language that, unlike our current psychological language, is deeply concerned with the relationship between the soul and the self, the body and the soul, the divine and the human. Here is a systematic exploration of the unconscious that predates Freud by thousands of years. Here is a philosophy that understood life as archetypal pilgrimage to the center long before the New Age. Here is a psychological language not yet rendered impotent by cliché or commercialism, and, even more refreshingly, one that is uncomplicated by Calvinism and Puritanism and is free of the Western obsession with guilt and shame.”

“Yoga puts our experience of enlightenment at the exact center of our being. Though we may appear separate from one another, we are no more separate than the wave is separate from the sea, or than the air in a glass jar is separate from the surrounding air. We are pervaded by and animated by the same spirit, the same nature, and that nature is constant through the manifold changes of birth, growth, and dissolution; it cannot be wounded, or separated from itself.”

Cope indicates that:

“Born divine” is a notion that fairly saturates Indian philosophy and spiritual practice. It was first systematically articulated in the tradition known as Vedanta, which arose on the Indian subcontinent as early as 600 BCE, and has been powerful force in Indian spiritual history even to the present day. Most of the

branches of Vedanta hold one fundamental view in common: all individual souls are one with the great river of Life, we are all, in effect, just a single soul. We are, in the classical dictum, "One without a second." 608

Dr. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is a research scientist at the University of Toronto and author of *Vedic Physics: Scientific Origin of Hinduism* (1999) has observed:

"The Vedas are considered eternal and logic demands that an eternal book can not contain mundane stories about human beings. The Vedas have been extensively studied and commented on by Indian intellectuals for all through history. With the rise of modern science it should have been feasible to crack the Vedic code at least three decades earlier, but here lies the greatest tragedy of India. Under the Marxist grip Indian intellectuals have been made ashamed of their heritage and most educated Hindus are ready to parade with the banner "We are ashamed to be Hindu" at the drop of a hat. Most educated Indians including scientists have no clue as to what is in the Vedas. The Vedas are written in Sanskrit and most educated Indians cannot understand it as there is a conspiracy to finish Sanskrit and everything else that Hindus should be proud of."

"The knowledge contained in the Vedas is very abstruse, and is well beyond the comprehension of ordinary human beings. The Vedic sages had discovered the subtle nature of reality, and coded it in the form of the Vedas. Therefore Vedic sages coded the knowledge in a simple form in which it could be understood by everyone. The Rigveda itself testifies that it has a hidden meaning in verse 4.3.16. Sage Bharata in his Natyasastra 1.23 refers to the sages who knew the hidden meaning of the Vedas. The Vedas are the pillars of Hinduism. Hinduism has evolved from the Vedas. The Vedas formed the very basis of Indian civilization."

"Every ancient civilization believed in an egg-shaped universe, which was based on the Vedic cosmology. With Christianity adopting this idea, earth and human beings received a favorite place in God's scheme of things. Church not only believed in these ideas, but persecuted anyone who dared to speak against these ideas. Following the rise of Church to power a long dark

age commenced. Modern science had a difficult birth for formulating scientific theories, which Church perceived to be against its theory of creation. It is not a coincidence that modern science is against the idea of God and anything special about Earth and human beings. In India this type of conflict never arose. Hinduism was raised on the foundation of science and freedom of inquiry. There is not a single incident of a scientist being persecuted by religious authorities in India.”

“The rise and fall of Hinduism is connected to the rise and fall of science, and scientists everywhere in the world are following the spirit of Hinduism even without realizing it.”⁶⁰⁹

Charles Seife is a journalist with Science magazine, has also written for New Scientist, Scientific American, The Economist, Science, Wired UK, The Sciences, and numerous other publications. He holds an M.S. in mathematics from Yale University and his areas of research include probability theory and artificial intelligence.

He is a mathematician and science writer, author of *Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea* (2000) and he has pronounced that:

“Perhaps no one has embraced nothing as strongly as the Indians who, “Never had a fear of the infinite or of the void.” Hinduism has embedded within it, a complex philosophy of nothingness, seeing everything in the world as arising from the pregnant void, known as Sunya.”

“The ultimate goal of the Hindu was to free himself from the endless cycle of pain found in continual reincarnation and reconnect with the Nothingness that is the source and fundament of the All. For Indians, the void of Sunya was the very font of all-potential; nothingness was liberation. No surprise then that it is from this sophisticated culture that we inherit the mathematical analog of nothing, zero. Like Sunya, zero is a kind of place holder, a symbol signifying a pregnant space where any other number might potentially reside.”⁶¹⁰

Dick Teresi is the author and coauthor of several books about science and technology, including *The God Particle*. He is cofounder

of Omni magazine and has written for Discover, The New York Times Magazine, and The Atlantic Monthly. He is the author of *Lost Discoveries: The Ancient Roots of Modern Science* (2002).

He has astutely observed that:

“The big bang is the biggest-budget universe ever, with mind-boggling numbers to dazzle us – a technique pioneered by fifth-century A.D. Indian cosmologists, the first to estimate the age of the earth at more than 4 billion years.”

“The cycle of creation and destruction continues forever, manifested in the Hindu deity Shiva, Lord of the Dance, who holds the dream that sounds the universe’s creation in his right hand and the flame that, billions of years later, will destroy the universe in his left. Meanwhile Brahma is but one of untold numbers of other gods dreaming their own universes.”

“The 8.64 billion years that mark a full day-and-night cycle in Brahma’s life is about half the modern estimate for the age of the universe. The ancient Hindus believed that each Brahma day and each Brahma night lasted a kalpa, 4.32 billion years, with 72,000 kalpas equaling a Brahma century, 311,040 billion years in all. That the Hindus could conceive of the universe in terms of billions.”

Teresi has pointed out that:

“The similarities between Indian and modern cosmology do not seem accidental. Perhaps ideas of creation from nothing, or alternating cycles of creation and destruction are hardwired in the human psyche. Certainly Shiva’s percussive drumbeat suggests the sudden energetic impulse that could have propelled the big bang. And if, as some theorists have proposed, the big bang is merely the prelude to the big crunch and the universe is caught in an infinite cycle of expansion and contraction, then ancient Indian cosmology is clearly cutting edge compared to the one-directional vision of the big bang. The infinite number of Hindu universes is currently called the many world hypotheses, which is no less undocumentable or unthinkable.”

He goes to tell us that:

“The Indians came closest to modern ideas of atomism, quantum physics, and other current theories. India developed very early, enduring atomist theories of matter. Possibly Greek atomistic thought was influenced by India, via the Persian civilization. *The Rig-Veda* is the first Indian literature to set down ideas resembling universal natural laws. Cosmic law is connected with cosmic light, with gods, and, later, specifically with Brahman.” It was the Vedic Aryans... who gave the world some of the earliest philosophical texts on the makeup of matter and the theoretical underpinnings for the chemical makeup of minerals. Sanskrit Vedas from thousands of years before Christ implied that matter could not be created, and that the universe had created itself. Reflecting this, in his Vaiseshika philosophy, Kanada (600 B. C) claimed that elements could not be destroyed. Kanada’s life is somewhat a mysterious, but his name is said to mean “one who eats particle or grain” likely referring to his theory that basic particles mix together as the building blocks for all matter. Two, three, four, or more of these elements would combine, just as we conceive of atoms doing. The Greeks would not stumble on this concept for another century.”

“In India, we see the beginning of theoretical speculation of the size and nature of the earth. Some one thousand years before Aristotle, the Vedic Aryans asserted that the earth was round and circled the sun. A translation of the *Rig Veda* goes: “In the prescribed daily prayers to the Sun we find the Sun is at the center of the solar system. The student asks, “What is the nature of the entity that holds the Earth? The teacher answers, “Rishi Vatsa holds the view that the Earth is held in space by the Sun.”

Teresi has declared that:

“Two thousand years before Pythagoras, philosophers in northern India had understood that gravitation held the solar system together, and that therefore the sun, the most massive object, had to be at its center.”

“Twenty-four centuries before Isaac Newton, the Hindu *Rig-Veda* asserted that gravitation held the universe together. The Sanskrit speaking Aryans subscribed to the idea of a spherical earth in an era when the Greeks believed in a flat one. The Indians

of the fifth century A.D. calculated the age of the earth as 4.3 billion years; scientists in 19th century England were convinced it was 100 million years.”⁶¹¹

Rick Briggs is NASA researcher, and he has written about India’s ancient language - Sanskrit:

“In ancient India the intention to discover truth was so consuming, that in the process, they discovered perhaps the most perfect tool for fulfilling such a search that the world has ever known — the Sanskrit language.

Briggs has eloquently put forth this about the Sanskrit language:

“It is mind-boggling to consider that we have available to us a language which has been spoken for 4-7000 years that appears to be in every respect a perfect language designed for enlightened communication. But the most stunning aspect of the discovery is this: NASA the most advanced research center in the world for cutting edge technology has discovered that Sanskrit, the world’s oldest spiritual language is the only unambiguous spoken language on the planet. Considering Sanskrit’s status as a spiritual language, a further implication of this discovery is that the age old dichotomy between religion and science is an entirely unjustified one.”

“Why has Sanskrit endured? Fundamentally it generates clarity and inspiration. And that clarity and inspiration is directly responsible for a brilliance of creative expression such as the world has rarely seen.”

“Another hope for the return of Sanskrit lies in computers. Sanskrit and computers are a perfect fit.”⁶¹²

Chapter 8

Poets

“Their (Hindu philosophers’) subtleties make most of the great European philosophers look like schoolboys.” “I am very thankful for having had the opportunity to study the Bhagavad Gita and the religious and philosophical beliefs, so different from (my) own.”

- *T. S. Eliot*



Goddess Saraswati carved in wood.

She is the symbol of learning and knowledge. In India, Japan and Tibet, the divine feminine Saraswati represents the power of knowledge, music, and creative arts.

(From author's collection of photos.)

Poets

Poetry is the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts. Ancient India's rishis or sages were really poet philosophers. Their elevated and intuitive perception was composed in Sanskrit, the artificial and sacred language of Ancient India. The Vedic truths were transmitted orally for many centuries by the rishis to their disciples before they were compiled by Sage Vyasa for the benefit of humanity. Europe drew Indian Sanskrit literature to heart, and the first German to recognize the beauty of Shakuntala was the poet Johann Gottfried Herder. In America, Walt Whitman drew inspiration from the Bhagavad Gita for his poem, *Leaves of Grass*. T S Eliot drew his intellectual sustenance from the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* when he penned his poem *What the Thunder Said*.



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was a German Poet, Dramatist, Novelist, and a Natural Scientist. His own enthusiasm for Shakuntala was no less exuberant than Herder's.

He reflected on *Shakuntala* in 1792:

*"Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its
decline*

And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured.

*Feasted, fed, Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one
sole name combine?*

I name thee, O Sakuntala! And all at once is said."

Goethe expressed this admiration for Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* more than once. Nearly 40 years later, in 1830 when de Chenzy sent him his edition of the original with his French translation, he wrote to the Frenchman expressing his gratitude:

"The first time I came across this inexhaustible work it aroused such enthusiasm in me and so held me that I could not stop studying it. I even felt impelled to make the impossible attempt to bring it in some form to the German stage. These efforts were fruitless but they made me so thoroughly acquainted with this most valuable work, it represented such an epoch in my life, I so absorbed it, that for thirty years I did not look at either the English or the German version...It is only now that I understand the enormous impression that work made on me at an earlier age."⁶¹³

No wonder he modeled the prologue of his *Faust* (1797) on the prologue to *Sakuntala*. The jester in the prologue of *Faust* is reminiscent of one of the *vidusaka* in the Indian drama, a parallel first noticed by Heinrich Heine.

Goethe friend Schiller, was moved to enthusiastic praise of *Sakuntala*,

Goethe wrote to his friend Wilhelm Humboldt:

"In the whole world of Greek antiquity there is no poetical representation of beautiful love which approaches even afar."⁶¹⁴

The *Sakuntala* furor has lasted till almost today. One of the noblest "overtures" in European music is the *Sakuntala* overture of the Hungarian composer Carl Goldmark (1830-1915).⁶¹⁵

Goethe also admired other Indian poems, such as Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda* and Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* which he read in Wilson's English translation in 1817 and welcomed as "a great treasure." Goethe's second Indian ballad, "Der Paria" (1824) was his best.

The plot was based on the work of the French traveler, Pierre Sonnerat (*Voyage aux Indes*, 1783), who had returned to Europe in 1782 after seven years in India.

His admiration for India was strong and deep...he was fascinated by India, but he understood Greece. Extreme attraction unaccompanied by proper intellectual understanding was bound to unnerve a thinking, sensitive scholar, such as Goethe. He expressed this feeling to his friend Humboldt in 1826: "I have by no means an aversion to things Indian, but I am afraid of them, for they draw my imagination into the formless and the diffuse against which I have to guard myself more than ever before." However, he consistently acknowledged the tremendous stimulus of Indian thought on Western civilization.⁶¹⁶

William Blake (1757 - 1827) was an English poet, painter, and engraver, who created a unique form of illustrated verse; his poetry, inspired by mystical vision, is among the most original, lyric, and prophetic in the language.

According to author David Weir - William Blake's poetry was due to the British discovery of Hindu literature. His mystic system springs from the rich historical context that produced the Oriental Renaissance.

Blake's belief that human life is manifestation of eternal being has an upanishadic ring. His Four Zoas appear to have a source in the Four Guardians (Lokpalas) of the four quarters of the Hindu mythology. Blake had been reading the *Bhagvat-Geeta* (London, 1785), and had been so impressed by it that he made a water color drawing of *The Brahmins – Mr. Wilkins translating the Geeta*.

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Blake's poetic career underwent a profound development as a result of his exposure to Hindu mythology. By combining mythographic insight with republican politics and Protestant dissent, Blake devised a poetic system that opposed the powers of Church and King

The reference to Brahma in *The Song of Los* shows that Blake was able to incorporate the latest mythographic material into his own evolving system.

*“Adam stood in the Garden of Eden:
And Noah on the mountains of Ararat;
They saw Urizen give his Laws to the Nations
By the hands of the children of Los.
Adam shuddered! Noah faded! Black grew the sunny African
When Rintrah gave Abstract Philosophy to Brahma in the East.”*

For many years now a fairly large contingent of critics has insisted on a relationship between Blake's work and Hindu mythology. In 1924, S Foster Damon claimed that Blake was “in accord with Eastern mysticism”.

Urthona is Dharma; Urizen, Karma, while both Tharmas and Luvah are included in Maya.”

In 1947 Northrop Frye observed in *Fearful Symmetry* that:

“Blake was among the first of European idealists to link his own traditions of thought” with the Indian classic, taking the account of the lost drawing of “Mr. Charles Wilkins translating the Geeta” (E 148) in Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue* of 1809 as evidence of such a link. Frye also noted that Blake's conception of three classes of human beings – Angels, Devils, and Elect – “may have come from the ‘Gunas’ of the Bhagavad Gita. Wilkins translation of the Bhagavad Gita are called “three Goon or qualities arising from Prakreetee or nature, namely, “Sattwa truth, Rajas, passion, and tamas darkness.”

Blake refers to the “Geeta” in his *Descriptive Catalogue* of 1809, the same year that Moses Haughton engraved the plates for Edward Moor's *The Hindu Pantheon* (1810), a copious account of Hindu deities with the Sanskrit names of the gods affixed in Devanagari script by Charles Wilkins. ⁶¹⁸

Fredrick von Schiller (1759-1805) was a dramatist, poet, essayist, and professor of history. He was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's friend, who otherwise took little interest in Indian literature,

was also moved to enthusiastic praise of *Shakuntala*, which he found in some respects unparalleled in the classical literature of Greece and Rome.

He published part of the *Shakuntala* in *Thalia*, and in a letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt he observed that:

“In the whole of Greek antiquity there is no poetical representation of beautiful love which approaches *Sakuntala* even afar.” ⁶¹⁹

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was also attracted by Indian thought. This is clearly attested by numerous passages and notes referring to Indian ideas and texts found in the Beethoven papers.

The Austrian Orientalist, Hammer-Purgstall, who founded a periodical for the dissemination of Eastern knowledge in Europe as early as January 1809, first introduced him to Indian literature.

Beethoven had a deep interest in Indian knowledge long before Indological studies began in Germany. The fragments of Indian religious texts that have been discovered in the Beethoven manuscripts are partly translations and partly adaptations of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. ⁶²⁰

William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850) who expressed the deepest aspirations of English Romanticism endeavored throughout his writing to communicate his new vision of nature, which was so alien to English tradition that it was not until 1830 that his poetry was given wide public recognition. In intimacy with nature and its beauties, he also found a corrective to his personal despondency. Apart from this, Wordsworth seriously attempted to work out a bridge between mental and material worlds. It is impossible for a person familiar with Indian thought not to see the reflection of Vedanta in Wordsworth when he wrote in *Tintern Abbey* 1798:

“And I have felt
A presence, that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,

*Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."*

And he also said:

*".. we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things."*

Although Hindu thought is recognizable in Wordsworth's poetry, it is often characterized as "unconscious" or coincidental. By the time his *Lyrical Ballads* appeared, the works of Sir William Jones had spread some knowledge of Indian thought in England.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a friend, collaborator, and "his spirit's brother" Wordsworth also believed in reincarnation and he observed:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting, The soul that rises with us, our life's star, Hath had elsewhere its setting, And cometh from afar." ⁶²¹

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 – 1834) was a friend of William Wordsworth and was also guided by the same vision. Indeed, he went a step farther in dabbling with the supernatural, as is reflected in "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" (1798). Although Coleridge did not use Indian material, he was greatly attracted by the words and pictures of old tales, some of which have come from India. His Eastern inspiration is to some extent attested to by the elusive yet arresting image in "*Kubla Khan*" (1787). This influence is also displayed in his Circassian love song, "*Lewti*".

Coleridge emphasized the Neoplatonic tradition and introduced into England the new idealism of Germany, which was influenced

by Indian thought. His cardinal doctrine, reminiscent of the *Vedanta*, was the wholeness of, and continuity in, self-consciousness as the basis of mental experience which was all absorbed into a single dynamic force, the divine spark in each person, the “I” in every rational being, the free will which was the eventual source of religious faith as well as genuine perception. Coleridge was well aware of Indian literature, as is illustrated by his letter to John Thirlwell in which he said he often wished to sleep or die, or “like the Indian Vishnu, to float about along an infinite ocean cradled in the flower of the Lotus and wake once in a million years for a few minutes.”⁶²²

There was a strong impact of the first translations of texts of Hinduism on his psyche, philosophical approach and poetical inspiration. In addition, Coleridge’s unpublished manuscript notes found in one of the Abbe J.A. Dubois; seminal studies of India are proof of the poet’s long standing interest in and frequentation of Hinduism.⁶²³

Novalis (1772-1801) was the pseudonym of the young Baron Friedrich von Hardenberg. He was a pioneer of the early German Romantics, one of Germany’s greatest Romantic poets.

Novalis wrote in his essay, “*Christendom in Europe*,” in 1799, that poetry, pure and colorful like a beautiful India, stood opposed to the cold and deadening mountains of philistine reason.

For him Sanskrit was the most mysterious linguistic symbol of any human expression: Sanskrit took him back to the “original people” who had been forgotten.⁶²⁴

Robert Southey (1774 -1843) was an English poet, generally considered a member of the Romantic Movement. He was born in Bristol and educated at the University of Oxford. Southey was a good friend of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

He had read the *Bhagavad Gita* in the preparation of his lurid narrative poem *The Curse of Kehama* written in 1810.⁶²⁵

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 - 1822) was one of the major English Romantic poets. He is perhaps most widely famous for such anthology pieces as *Ozymandias*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *To a Skylark*, and *The Masque of Anarchy*; but his major works were long visionary poems such as *Adonais* and *Prometheus Unbound*. Shelley's unconventional life and uncompromising idealism made him a notorious and denigrated figure in his own life, but he became the idol of the following two or three generations of poets (including the major Victorian poets Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Algernon Charles Swinburne, as well as William Butler Yeats). Both Percy Bysshe Shelley and his wife Mary Shelley were strong advocates of vegetarianism.

In his essay "*A Refutation of Deism*", composed in 1812-13, and privately published in 1814, Shelley mounts a frontal attack on Christianity but declares himself: "willing to admit that some few axioms of morality which Christianity has borrowed from the philosophers of Greece and India dictate ... rules of conduct worthy of regard."

The Indian element in Shelley had been noticed by several critics. Sydney Owenson's novel *The Missionary, An Indian Tale*, is a book that appealed to Shelley very much. It narrates the story of a Catholic missionary proceeding to India where he meets a veiled Hindu priestess who is a devotee of mystic love and Vishnu. Shelley recommended this novel to Hogg in his letter of June 21, 1811.

Robert Southey's *Curse of Kehama* was a favorite poem with Shelley. On December 17, 1812, Shelley ordered a list of books from Thomas Hookham. Among those supplied was a book entitled *Hindu Pantheon* by Edward Moor (London 1810). There is a great deal in it that would have fascinated Shelley's imagination. The symbol of the eagle and the serpent is one of the archetypes of the human imagination. *The Mahabharata* begins with a long account of this myth. Moor's book is abundantly illustrated.

There are numerous pictures showing Hindu deities in their

association with serpents as emblems of eternity. In particular Vishnu and Lakshmi are shown as *Sesha or Ananta or Anantanaga* – the endless eternal serpent. Seshnaga the eternal coiled serpent on which Vishnu reclines.

In the *Revolt of Islam*, Shelley uses the serpent explicitly as the symbol of Eternity, and of good and evil in Time. Shelley had already portrayed Cythna and Laon as avatars of Lakshmi and Vishnu. His idea of nonviolence and its Indian basis of ahimsa are discussed by Art Young in his book, *Shelley and Nonviolence*.

Shelley was also familiar with Sir William Jones's translations from Sanskrit. Besides the books cited, Shelley would have read others in the India Library at London. Whatever his sources, there is ample evidence in his poem of the appeal of Vedantic ideas, myths and symbols to him. His fervor springs from his innate mysticism aided no doubt by his wide reading. He believed the sacred writings of Christianity had their source in "the Brahmanical records of the early history of the world," its institutions in the "ancient worship of the Sun," and its axioms of morality in "the maxims of the philosophers of Greece and India."

Prometheus Unbound is unique in world literature as an imaginative fusion of the Hindu and Greek branches of ancient wisdom. Its core is the identification of Prometheus and Asia with Vishnu and Lakshmi, and the philosophy of The One above the Maya of cyclical time. Following Jacob Bryant and Sir William Jones, Shelley traces all mythologies and religions to their common source in the worship of the Sun and Agni as symbols of divine light.

Throughout the play Shelley uses Hindu ideas of the yugas of time.

Prometheus has suffered through "three thousand years of the hours" He prefers the idea of the cycles of the four yugas moving to and fro between the golden and iron ages in Hindu myths of periodic time to the concept of linear time. From *Queen Mah* to

Prometheus Unbound the Hindu myth of avatars appear from time to time to restore cosmic order after its decay recurs in Shelley.

Shelley valued the finer truths of Hinduism embodied in its myths. He uses them from his first philosophical poem *Queen Mab*, to his last, “*The Triumph of Life*”, *Prometheus Unbound* is a sublime synthesis of the best in mystical thought and feeling in the East and the West. His tutor Frank Newton converted him to vegetarianism. Towards the end of his life he desired to migrate to India. Shelley had desired to seek employment in India, and was disappointed when Thomas Peacock whom he consulted wrote to him it was not possible.⁶²⁶

Henrich Heine (1797-1856) was a late Romantic lyric poet, whose influence was enormous not only in Germany but in most countries of the Western world, describes the India of his imagination:

“In the glass I saw the dear motherland, the blue and sacred Ganges, the eternally shining Himalayas, the gigantic forests of Banyan trees on whose wide shadowy paths quietly walk wise elephants and while pilgrims.”

Heine’s poem, “*Auf Flugeln des Gesanges*,”

*“Am Ganges duftet’s und leuchtet’s
Und Riesenbaume bluhn,
Und schone, stille Menschen
Vor Lotosblumen knien.”*

He created a picture of India widely familiar in Germany.⁶²⁷

Victor Hugo (1802 – 1885) was a French author, designer, and artist. He was possibly the most important of the Romantic authors in the French language. His major works include the novels *Notre Dame de Paris* and *Les Misérables*, and a large body of poetry. Hugo has reported to have said that Plato “has the brahmin in him”. The influence of the Hindu philosophy can be attested to by his writings and the subtle references made to in his composition.

He imitated the Kena Upanishad in his poem, *Suprematie (The Legend of the Centuries)* in 1870.

He gathered his information from G. Pautheir's *Les Livres Sacres de l'Orient*. Vayou - is Vayu (God of Wind), Agni (God of Fire) and Indra (God of space).

He wrote in French:

“Lorsque les trois grands dieux eurent dans un cachot Mis les démons, chassé les monstres de là-haut, Oté sa griffe à l’hydre, au noir dragon son aile, Et sur ce tas hurlant fermé l’ombre éternelle, Laissant grincer l’enfer, ce sépulcre vivant, Ils vinrent tous les trois, Vâyou le dieu du Vent, Agni, dieu de la Flamme, Indra, dieu de l’Espace, S’asseoir sur le zénith, qu’aucun mont ne dépasse, Et se dirent, ayant dans le ciel radieux Chacun un astre au front: “nous sommes les seuls dieux!” Tout à coup devant eux surgit dans l’ombre obscure Une lumière ayant les yeux d’une figure. Ce que cette lumière était, rien ne saurait Le dire, et, comme brille au fond d’une forêt. Un long rayon de lune en une route étroite, Elle resplendissait, se tenant toute droite. Ainsi se dresse un phare au sommet d’un récif. C’était un flamboiement immobile, pensif, Debout. Et les trois dieux s’étonnèrent. Ils dirent: “Qu’est ceci?” Tout se tut et les dieux attendirent.” Dieu Vâyou, dit Agni, dieu Vâyou, dit Indra, Parle à cette lumière. Elle te répondra. Crois-tu que tu pourrais savoir ce qu’elle est? - Certes, Dit Vâyou. Je le puis.”

Agni, dit Indra; frère Agni, mon compagnon, Dit Vâyou, pourrais-tu le savoir, toi? Sans doute”, Dit Agni. Le dieu rouge, Agni, que l’eau redoute, Et devant qui médite à genoux le Bouddha, Alla vers la clarté sereine et demanda:” Qu’es-tu clarté? ⁶²⁸

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) was a talented poet who was influenced by Ralph Waldo Emerson and from whom he borrowed a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

He wrote to Emerson:

“I will e’en keep it until I restore it to thee personally in exchange for George Fox (founder of the Society of Friends, the Quakers).”

“It is a wonderful book-and has greatly excited my curiosity to know more of the religious literature of the East.” ⁶²⁹

The results of Whittier’s reading are evident in a good number of his poems like “*The Oval Heart*,” “*The Cypress Tree of Ceylon*,” “*The Dead Feast of the Kol-Folk*,” and “*The Khan’s Devil*.” A particularly striking example of his use of Indian material is his well-known poem “*The Brewing of Soma*,” which describes the preparation and use of the Vedic sacrificial drink ⁶³⁰

Richard Wagner (1813 -1883) was the German music composer known for his 13 operas.

Wagner absorbed Indian ideas and transformed them to suit his aesthetic purpose. They appear in the libretti of such operas as *Parsifal* (1882), in which he used an episode from the great epic of *The Ramayana* (c.400 BC). In a sense, he succeeded in producing a synthesis of East and West, and from it derived the materials of a universal drama. In this, he was in a direct line from the early German romantics. ⁶³¹

Walt Whitman (1813-1892) who championed American intellectual independence was amongst those who came under the influence of the American Transcendentalists. He wrote his famous poem *Leaves Of Grass* in 1855. The continuing success of of his *Leaves of Grass* led to the publication of its fifth edition, which included his poem, entitled *Passage to India*. According to some Whitman is claimed to have read ancient Hindu poems before writing his *Leaves of Grass*.

There is a reference to Brahma and the following verse in his *Salut Au Monde*:

“I hear the Hindoo teaching his favorite pupil he loves, wars, adages, transmitted safely to this day from poets who wrote three thousand years ago.” ⁶³²

India was “reasons early paradise”, for Walt Whitman.

Whitman turned to the East in his anxiety to escape from the

complexities of civilization and the bewilderments of a baffled intellectualism.

In *Passage to India* he wrote:

*"O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universe, thou centre of them...
Athwart the shapeless vastness of space,*

How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak, if out of myself,

I could not launch, to those, superior universes? "
*O soul, repressless, I with thee, and thou with me,
Thy circumnavigation of the world begin;
Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,
To reason's early paradise,
Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
Again with fair Creation."* ⁶³³

Whitman had poetically expressed a philosophy which some had said was similar to Krishana's teachings in the Bhagavad Gita. The relationship of Walt Whitman to Vedic thought is considerably complex.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once described Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as a blending of Gita and the New York Tribune Herald. In his reminiscing essay, "*A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads*" (1889) Whitman claims to have read "the ancient Hindu poems" and there is enough evidence to show that in 1875 he had received a copy of the Gita as a Christmas present from an English friend, Thomas Dixon. Edward Carpenter (1844-1929) English poet, indicated parallels between Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and the *Upanishads*. ⁶³⁴

Leaves of Grass:

*"The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems
The race of old
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion.*

*Sultry with perfume,
With ample and flowering garments,
With sunburnt visage,
With intense soul and glittering eyes
The Race of Brahma Comes!"*

Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) was a poet and scholar. He is the author of *The Song Celestial*, (1885) which is a translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. It has great elevation of tone and majesty and dignity of style. There are many translations of the Gita but Arnold's translation has a place apart among them by its accuracy and the grave harmony of the verse.

This translation was dedicated to the poet of India. The dedicatory verses are in Arnold's own translation:

*"So have I read this wonderful and spirit-thrilling speech,
By Krishna and Prince Arjuna held, discoursing each with each;
So have I writ its wisdom here, its hidden mystery,
For England; O our India! as dear to me as she!"*

Arnold wrote in his preface:

"This famous and marvelous Sanskrit poem occurs as an episode of the Mahabharata, in the sixth - or "Bhishma" - Parva of the great Hindu epic. It enjoys immense popularity and authority in India, where it is reckoned as one of the "Five Jewels" - pancharatnani - of Devanagari literature. In plain but noble language it unfolds a philosophical system which remains to this day the prevailing Brahmanic belief blending as it does the doctrine of Kapila, Patanjali, and the Vedas." ⁶³⁵

Arnold already well known for the *Light of Asia*, wrote in *India Revisited* of the rite of bathing in the Ganges, and he described with emotion the people he observed at their prayers:

"Some are old and feeble, weary with long journeys of life, emaciated by maladies, saddened from losses and troubles; and the morning air blows sharp, the river wave runs chilly. Yet there they stand, breast-deep in the cold river, with dripping cotton

garments clinging to their thin or aged limbs, visibly shuddering under the shock of the water, and their lips blue and quivering, while they eagerly mutter their invocations. None of them hesitates; into the Gunga they plunge on arrival, ill or well, robust or sickly; and ladle the holy liquid up with small, dark, trembling hands, repeating the sacred names, and softly mentioning the sins they would expiate and the beloved souls they would plead for.”⁶³⁶

Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) was the French lyric poet known for the musical quality of his verse, wrote the French poem, “*Savitri*.”

Verlaine became keenly interested in Hindu mythology during his high school days. His enthusiasm was such that he cried out:

*“Par Indra! que c’est beau, et comme ca vous degotte la Bible,
l’Evangile et toute la degueulade des Peres de l’Eglise.”*

*“By Indra! How beautiful this is and how much better than the Bible, the Gospel and all the words of the Fathers of the Church.”*⁶³⁷

Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889) the greatest poet of Rumania learnt of Indian philosophy through Schopenhauer. The Hindu approach to reality and beauty is found in his verses.

The title of his poem “*Tattwamasi*,” indicates his familiarity with Upanishadic thought, but the content deals with the identity of Atman and Brahman.

Hindu Monoism is reflected in his poem:

*“So it is that bird and man,
Sun and moon
Are born and die in Brahma
The Sacred
Where all things become one.”*

Eminescu’s poetry also contains many erotic themes, such as Kamadeva, after the Hindu god of love, the spark of creation. That Eminescu chose an Indian symbol to express one of his intimate

sentiments is held as “yet another proof of the deep and wide contact he had with the ancient literature of India.”⁶³⁸

Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919) was the famous American poet and journalist who is perhaps best remembered for verse tinged with an eroticism that was still unconventional for her time. Wilcox poems have been collected in volumes such as *Poems of Pleasure* (1897) and *Maurine and Other Poem* (1888) states that:

“India - the land of Vedas, the remarkable works contains not only religious ideas for a perfect life, but also facts which science has proved true. Electricity, radium, electronics, airship, all is known to the seers who founded the Vedas.”

William Butler Yeats (1856-1939) an Irish Poet, a 1923 Nobel Laureate in Literature, described his first meeting with a Hindu philosopher at Dublin.

“It was my first meeting with a philosophy that confirmed my vague speculations and seemed at once logical and boundless.”

In his “*Meru*” written in 1935 - Meru is the central mountain of the world in Hindu Mythology - Yeats contrasts the peaceful life of the mystic, despite the hardships of nature, with the transitory cycles of creation and destruction exemplified in the world of man.

Yeats was keenly interested in Yoga system and the Tantra.⁶³⁹

Rudyard Kipling (1865 -1936) was the imperial poet of British India, as well as a writer, who spent his earliest years blissfully happy in an India full of exotic sights and sounds. Kipling as a Nobel Laureate in Literature, and was famous for his poem, *The White Man's Burden* (1899).

He said this to Fundamental Christian Missionaries:

“Now it is not good for the Christian's health to hustle the Hindu brown for the Christian riles and the Hindu smiles and weareth the Christian down; and the end of the fight is a tombstone while with the name of the late deceased and the epitaph drear, “A fool lies here who tried to hustle the east”.⁶⁴⁰

A. E. George Russell (1867 - 1935) was the Irish poet, essayist, painter, Nationalist leader, mystic, and economist; a leader in movement for cooperation among Irish farmers; and editor *The Irish Statesman* 1923-30.

Russel paid an eloquent tribute to the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

“Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Thoreau among moderns have something of this vitality and wisdom but we can find all they have said and much more in the grand sacred books of India.”

“The Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads contain such godlike fullness of wisdom on all things that I feel the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back through a thousand passionate lives, full of feverish strife for and with shadows, ere they could have written with such certainty of things which the soul feels to be sure.” ⁶⁴¹

Allama Iqbal (1873 -1938) was an Indian thinker and poet.

The great civilization of the Indian sub continent has had its roots deep in antiquity, some seven to eight thousand years ago, and its flowering in the third millennium B.C. still lives on. In contrast, when we look round the world we are surprised by the fact that the Egyptian and Mesopotamia civilizations that flourished alongside this Indic Civilization have all disappeared, leaving hardly any trace behind. Why?

The Indian psyche has indeed been pondering over this great cultural phenomenon of ‘livingness’, and he has very aptly echoed this quest in the following words:

“Yunan-o-Misra Ruma sab mit gaye jahan se
Ab tak magar hai baqi namo-nishan hamara
Kuchh bat hai ki hasti mitati nahin hamari
Sadiyon raha hai dushman daur-i-zaman hamara”

“Ancient civilizations of Greece, Egypt and Rome have all disappeared from this world, but the elements of our civilization

still continue. Although world-events have been inimical to us for centuries, there is something in our civilization, which has withstood these onslaughts.”⁶⁴²

Iqbal, described Lord Ram as the Imam of Hindustan.⁶⁴³

Gustav Holst (1874 -1934) was a music composer of *S̄avitri*; *The dream-city, Choral hymns from the Rig Veda and S̄avitri; an episode from the Mah̄abharata, Op. 25* He was Vaughan Williams’ greatest friends. Despite his German name, Holst was born in Cheltenham in 1874. Holst’s music as exploring ‘mystical regions’

Conventional religion did not interest Holst, and he felt himself drawn towards Hinduism.

He believed in the concept of Dharma and the idea of life after death, and this eastern influence also led to his love of astrology. Holst’s beliefs are revealed in a letter to a friend:

“...Everything in this world – is just one big miracle. Or rather, the universe itself is one.”

He conceived as well a passion for Wagner, whose style looms large in Holst’s apprentice works, and an interest in Hindu philosophy and literature. The most notable of many works springing from Holst’s preoccupation with Hinduism was the chamber opera *Savitri* dating from 1908, based on an episode from the epic poem *Mahabharata*: its economy and intensity are exemplified in the arresting and dramatic opening, where Death sings, offstage and unaccompanied.

This English composer composed operas about Sita and Savitri and other works based on Hindu themes. It was in 1895 that Holst first became interested in Hindu philosophy and Sanskrit literature. His immediate impulse was to set some hymns from the Rig Veda, the most important of the Hindu scriptures, to music. Finding the English translations he discovered were hopelessly stilted, Holst decided to learn Sanskrit so that he could translate the words to his

own satisfaction. In doing so, he opened an entirely new world for himself.

Holst began work in an opera, *Sita*, in 1899. It is based in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. He worked on it, on and off, until 1906. Although it was never performed in his lifetime, he learned a great deal from it. In 1903 he also wrote a symphonic poem titled *Indra*, which was a vivid portrait of the god, Indra, and his battle with the drought.

At home in England again, a reinvigorated Holst began working on another Indian opera, which he called, *Savitri*. This was a much smaller work only lasting a little over thirty minutes. The music was written for three soloists, a small hidden chorus, and a chamber orchestra. During this time, Gustav was at the height of his interest in setting Sanskrit texts. From 1908 to 1912, he wrote four sets of hymns from the *Rig Veda*, the Vedic Hymns for voice and piano, and the large-scale choral work called *The Cloud Messenger*.⁶⁴⁴

Guillaume Apollinaire (1880 -1918) was a French poet, novelist, dramatist, and art and literary critic. He became a leader of the avant-garde in Paris in the early 20th century and is believed to have coined the term surrealist. He was christened Wilhelm Apollinaris de Kostrowitzky.

He used the Shakuntala theme in his poem in *La Chanson du Mal-Aime* (1913):

*“L’époux royal de Sacontale
Las de vaincre se réjouit
Quand il la retrouva plus pâle
D’attente et d’amour yeux pâlis
Caressant sa gazelle mâle.”*

*“The royal spouse of Sacontale (Shakuntala)
Weary of victories, rejoices
When he finds her paler
From waiting and eyes pale from love,
Petting her male gazelle.”*⁶⁴⁵

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) American-English Harvard educated poet, playwright, and literary critic, a leader of the modernist movement in literature. Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948.

He drew his intellectual sustenance from the Bhagavad Gita. He considered it to be the greatest philosophical poem after Dante's Divine Comedy. Also, he kept a copy of The Twenty-eight Upanishads in his personal library for ready reference. (Among the books from Eliot's library now in the Hayward Bequest in King's College Library is *Vasudev Laxman Sastri Phansikar's The Twenty-Eight Upanishads* (Bombay: Tukaram Javaji, 1906). Inscribed on the flyleaf is the following note: Thomas Eliot with C.R. Lanman's kindest regards and best wishes, Harvard College. May 6, 1912.

At Harvard, Eliot studied Sanskrit and Pali for two years (1920-11), probably in order to acquaint himself with Indian philosophical texts in the original, for he later admitted that though he studied "the ancient Indian languages" and "read a little poetry," he was "chiefly interested at that time in philosophy."

As early as 1918, Eliot reviewed for *The Egoist* an obscure treatise on Indian philosophy called *Brahmadarsanam* or *Intuition of the Absolute* by Sri Ananda Acharya.⁶⁴⁶

Eliot astutely observed that:

"Their (Indian philosophers') subtleties make most of the great European philosophers look like schoolboys."

Consequent on his early exposure to Indic thought through Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, whether by chance or by personal bidding, Eliot resolved to go on a passage to India ("reason's early paradise" in the words of Whitman) and imbibe deep the native spring of the Vedas.

The moral implications of the doctrine of Karma find a powerful evocation in the *Murder in the Cathedral*. The concept of the nature

of true action that does not show any concern for the fruits of action is quite a rendition from the Bhagavad Gita. ⁶⁴⁷ ⁶⁴⁸

Over and over again, whether in *The Wasteland*, *Four Quarters*, *Ash Wednesday* or *Murder in the Cathedral*, the influence of Indian philosophy and mysticism on him is clearly noticeable.

In his poem *The Dry Salvages* (1941) Eliot reflects on Lord Krishna's meaning:

*"I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant-
Among other things - or one way of putting the same thing
That the future is a faded song, a Royal Rose or a lavender spray
Of wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret."*

He mentioned "Time the destroyer" (section 2), then summarized one of Krishna's points:

*"And do not think of the fruit of action.
Fare forward...
So Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna
On the field of battle,
Not fare well,
But fare forward voyagers." (section 3).*

Eliot refers to the Bhagavad Gita's central doctrine of *nishkama karma*, 'selfless endeavor.'

He also talks of the decomposition of modern civilization, the lack of conviction and direction, the confusion and meaninglessness of modern consciousness in his poem "*The Wasteland*."

As Prof. Philip R. Headings has remarked in his study of the poet, "No serious student of Eliot's poetry can afford to ignore his early and continued interest in the *Bhagavad Gita*." ⁶⁴⁹

Eliot familiarized himself with parts of the Vedas and the Upanishads in the course of his graduate studies and used this knowledge as background for certain poetic and dramatic situations in his work.

Of all the American writers who have drawn upon Indian sources T. S. Eliot was one who knew his sources first hand and not merely through translations by Western Orientalists. Eliot as a vital force in world culture perceived the Indian tradition in poetry and philosophy and he appropriated whatever was suitable for his own themes and purposes. The theme of draught and sterility in the Waste Land seems to be inspired by the Vedic myth of Indra slaying Vritra who had held up the waters in the heavens.

In the “*What the Thunder Said*” section of the Waste Land we have the following lines:

*“Ganga was sunken and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant,
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder.”*

Then follows a sequential use of DA-Datta. What have we given? DA-Dayadhvam and DA-Damayata, which as he explains in the Notes are taken from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. The last line has Shantih shantih shantih.

He remarked that:

“Two years spent in the study of Sanskrit under Charles Lanman, and a year in the mazes of Patanjali’s metaphysics under the guidance of James Woods, left me in a state of enlightened mystification. A good half of the effort of understanding what the Indian philosophers were after - and their subtleties make most of the great European philosophers look like schoolboys - lay in trying to erase from my mind all the categories and kinds of distinction common to European philosophy was hardly better than an obstacle.”

“In the literature of Asia is a great poetry. There is also profound wisdom and some very difficult metaphysics...Long ago I studied the ancient Indian languages, and while I was chiefly interested at that time in philosophy, I read little poetry too; and I know that my own poetry shows the influence of Indian thought and sensibility.”

On the influence of influence of the Bhagavad Gita, he felt “very thankful for having had the opportunity to study the Bhagavad Gita and the religious and philosophical beliefs, so different from (my) own with which the Bhagavad Gita is informed.” ⁶⁵⁰ ⁶⁵¹

Alun Lewis (1915 -1944) was one of the few great British writers of the Second World War. His early death at the age of twenty-eight robbed Wales of its most promising poet and storyteller. Born and brought up near Aberdare in south Wales, the son of a teacher, he read history at Aberystwyth and Manchester. After a period of unemployment he became a teacher in south Wales, before enlisting in the Royal Engineers in 1940. Later in 1942 Lewis’s new regiment, the South Wales Borderers, travelled to India. His experiences there are recreated in the beautiful poems of *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets* and the stories and letters of *In the Green Tree*.

After E M Forster, the only British writer, to find the Imagination physically confronted by India was Alun Lewis, whose early death in the jungle is frequently regarded as a sad loss to literature. One of his last stories, “The Earth is a Syllable” acknowledges its debt to the Upanishads both by its title and within the story itself.

(Note: ‘The Earth is a Syllable’ deserves to be considered as his passage to more than India. Lewis’s short story is read in terms of the Upanishad from which it takes its title and his death considered in the light of both).

The story takes its title from a short and important Upanishad, the *Mandukya*, but it also includes a reference to the older *Brihad Aranyaka*, to which the *Mandukya Upanishad* is itself indebted.

What the story shares with the two Upanishads (the two which also especially attracted the attention of Yeats) is a concern to discover the stages of enlightenment a man may pass through before his death. Perhaps the closest approach poetry has made to mysticism is to say, as does the first line of the *Mandukya Upanishad*, that the whole Earth is the syllable Om, a mystic utterance thought not

only to be inclusive of all sound in the mouth and thus all language but to be the Logos which is creation.

The Earth is a Syllable' is the story of a soldier who, as he lies mortally wounded in an unspecified part of the jungle, experiences the various stages of consciousness towards enlightenment. The opening line of the Brihad Aranyaka comes to the soldier's mind close upon that of the Mandukya Upanishad: "the dawn is the head of a horse. In 'The Earth is a Syllable' Lewis reveals his familiarity with both the *Brihad Aryanka* and the *Mandukya Upanishad*.⁶⁵²

Sir Yehudi Menuhin (1915 – 1999) was born to Russian - Jewish parents who migrated to America. One of the greatest violinists of the 20th century revered an Indian Yogi as his teacher. He was famous for his affiliation with renowned Hatha yoga teacher B K S Iyengar and legendary sitarist Ravi Shankar. The more he learned about India and Yoga, the more he loved it. He was among the first in the West to espouse yoga and the principles of organic food.

He said: "India is the primal source, the mother country."

He acknowledged India, Yoga, Indian music and his teacher Iyengar in three books he authored - *Life Class, Unfinished Journey* (1977) and *Violin: Six lessons with Yehudi Menuhin*.

Yoga touched every dimension of Yehudi Menuhin's life.

He wrote with great feeling for Yoga:

"Yoga made its contribution to my quest to understand consciously the mechanics of violin playing." "Yoga taught me lessons it would have taken me years to learn by other means. Yoga was my compass." He was a genius at peace - a peace, he said, that came from yoga.

In his book *Six Lessons*, he devoted an entire chapter to specific yogasanas he had learned. These practices, he asserted, "should form an important part of the practice routine of any aspiring or performing violinist."

Menuhin has shrewdly remarked that:

“We in the Western world have grown to understand matter as imprisoned light, and light as liberated matter, yet this has had no influence on our spiritual thought. In practical terms it only led to the creation of the atom bomb. When I was a boy no one seemed to ask where the energies come from? Land, oil, coal, and air seemed inexhaustible. Now we are realizing how our very life depends upon restoring not only our balance with nature, but also the balance within ourselves. We are depleting our reserves of spirit, health, courage and faith at an alarming rate. The quiet practice of yoga is, in its humble yet effective way, an antidote.”

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“The practice of yoga induces a primary sense of measure and proportion. Reduced to our own body, our first instrument, we learn to play it, drawing from it maximum resonance and harmony.”

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“Yoga” means “union.” Its goal is union with the infinite, a goal which can be reached by any number of routes; but just as there is one ending, so there is one beginning, the asanas of Hatha Yoga, which are the precondition of every advance. It would be possible to make yoga a life’s occupation, giving up more and more of one’s time to its refinement. For me yoga is primarily a yardstick to inner peace. In my life yoga is an aid to well-being, permitting me to do more and to do better.”

“That India should offer me at once a homeland and a new-found land with lasting power to astonish seemed only right, for it is precisely the reconciling of contradictions within an all-accepting unity that is the country’s genius and its abiding appeal to me. India, I feel, has softened my Talmudical adjudications between right and wrong, upheld innocent acceptance of the lovely things of life, given me much that was new yet welcome, understandable, waiting to experienced.”

He wrote glowingly about Indian music:

“Despite predisposition in India’s favor, I have to acknowledge that Indian music took me by surprise. I knew neither its nature nor its richness, but here, if anywhere, I found vindication of my conviction that India was the original source.”

“Its purpose is to unite one’s soul and discipline one’s body, to make one sensitive to the infinite within one, to unite one’s breath of space, one’s vibrations with the vibrations of the cosmos.”⁶⁵⁵

George Harrison (1943 - 2001) was a former Beatle and rocker. He gave impetus for the group’s spiritual quest of the 1960s, which brought them to India. In 1965, he discovered the Indian string instrument, the sitar. Harrison was in India, to learn how to play the instrument under the renowned sitar maestro Ravi Shankar. But for some, Harrison brings back memories of a time when the West turned to India for inspiration and enlightenment.

One reason he became interested in India, he was to say in a 1992 interview, was because “it unlocked this enormous big door in the back of my consciousness”.

Eventually he became a devotee of Hindu God Krishna, donating large sums of money to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and even donating a 23-acre site outside London to the movement. He also incorporated the trademark Hare Krishna chants in his music. Harrison had been close to the International Society of Krishna Consciousness since the 1960s. The ISKCON in a statement said, “During his last days, Krishna devotees were by his side and he left his body to the sounds of the Hare Krishna Mantra.”⁶⁵⁶

Harrison became deeply interested in India. The late George Harrison, a longtime devotee of Hinduism, left £700,000 to build a temple in the holy city of Varanasi in India according to Hare Krishna devotees.⁶⁵⁷

His real interest remained Indian spirituality. In 1976, he told me that the most influential book he had ever read was Yogananda Paramahansa’s *Autobiography of a Yogi*. “None of this will last,” he repeated. “In the end, there’s only God-consciousness.”⁶⁵⁸

George Harrison “Beatle yogi” who linked Western pop to the strains of the sitar, would have liked himself to be remembered as the man who spread the message of Indian spirituality to the decadent West.⁶⁵⁹

George Harrison, the 'Quiet Beatle' was the most Indian of the quartet. It was his spiritual yearning that brought the Fab Four to the banks of the Ganges and to the feet of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Pandit Ravi Shankar. Harrison introduced a whole generation of western performers and entertainers to Indian music and mysticism following a 1966 visit to Rishikesh where he drank deeply of ragas and religion. ⁶⁶⁰

At a time before Westerners were flocking to yoga classes, Harrison became one of the first proponents of Eastern culture, studying meditation and Indian music.

In 1973, he came up with a neatly arranged album aptly titled, *Living in the Material World*. The songs reflect the Hindu view of the world and a culmination of his quest for self-realisation. The song, *The Art of Dying* for instance, deals with the philosophy of Karma and reincarnation. He even inculcated in himself the orthodox-Hindu way of life by waking up at the crack of dawn, bathe in cold water and study *The Bhagavad-Gita*. ⁶⁶¹

He passed away to the sonorous tone of Hare Krishna chants. He was a lifelong follower of Hinduism and was closely associated with the Hare Krishna movement. Harrison had produced the *Chants of India*, a recording of Indian religious music. A collection of mantras and prayers from the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and other scriptures powerfully transports the listener to a place of peace where it's possible to be one with the universe. ⁶⁶²

In an Interview, Henley-On-Thames, Oxfordshire, 1982, this is what the rocker said on His Personal Spirituality:

"I always felt at home with Krishna. You see it was already a part of me. I think it's something that's been with me from my previous birth.... I'd rather be one of the devotees of God than one of the straight, so-called sane or normal people who just don't understand that man is a spiritual being, that he has a soul."

In his album *Brainwashed* former Beatle, George Harrison's answer is "God, God, God" and we eventually get a reading from

How to Know God (*The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*) and a chant seemingly called *Namah Parvati* performed along with his son Dhani.

It is the perfect end to a final album of the man who took the world to the feet of the Maharishi and became Krishna's most famous devotee. "Namah Parvati" was appended it as the album's spiritual benediction, a touching reminder that while musicians come and go, music can truly embody their spirit forever.

The album is dedicated to the Yogis of Hinduism.

Sting (1951 -) was born in Newcastle, England in 1951, the son of a milkman, Born Gordon Matthew Sumner in Wallsend, Northumberland. He received his name Sting from his striped sweater in which Gordon Solomon said that he looked like a bee. Sting, who received the Commander of the British Empire (CBE) honour from the queen is reportedly unimpressed with the honour and believes it is not a big achievement to get awards from a country that has shrunk to an island. "It's not very big, the British Empire. It used to be the whole world and now we own, like, one island. It's called England"

Rock star Sting has declared himself a Hindu in an e-mail interview with Hindustan Times ahead of his concerts in India in aid of Tsunami victims. Sting revealed that he feels like a Hindu.

"In a sense I am more of a Hindu ... I like the Hindu religion more than anything else at the moment."

"I have become addicted to India," reveals Sting, adding that he would like to spend the rest of his life discovery this beautiful country. His favorite place is Benaras (Varanasi).

There is something very magical about Benaras."

He recalls:

"Shiva temple that has fallen half way into the Ganges", and says, "I find that such a wonderful, powerful image..."

The Goddess Theme - The female deity plays a prime role in his music. It is something "I spend a lot of time for." Sting feels, "We need more of the female deity in this world."

The Concept of God - "I would not consider myself a Christian any longer. My beliefs are much wider than that. I don't believe God is necessarily a Catholic or Islamic or anything else...it's a much larger concept than that..." said this latest Champion of the Universal Religion.

Sting says, "I have a great deal of respect for Indian music." He said that knows quite a lot about the musical tradition of India and its intricacies. I am aware how complex ragas are, and how specific the rhythm is." He is particularly fond of the sitar maestro Ravi Shankar and his daughter Anoushka.⁶⁶³

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Chapter 9

Scholars

“On the tree of wisdom there is no fairer flower than the Upanishads, and no finer fruit than the Vedanta philosophy.”
“The system of Vedanta, as founded on the Upanishads and Vedanta Sutras and accompanied by Shankara’s commentary on them—equal in rank to Plato and Kant—is one of the most valuable products of the genius of mankind in his researches of the eternal truth.” “In its (Rig Veda) noble simplicity, in the loftiness of its philosophic vision it is possibly the most admirable bit of philosophy of olden times...No translation can ever do justice to the beauty of the original.”

- *Dr Paul Deussen*



The Epic battle of Mahabharata - Richly adorned walls of Angkorwat, Cambodia.

An entire stretch of wall has the Kauravas and the Pandavas in furious Battle of Kurukshetra. The Mahabharata is one of the richest compositions in Epic poetry that was ever been produced. It is a mine of information about the science, customs, religion, and arts of India at various stages of its history.

(From author's collection of photos.)

Scholars

A scholar is a learned or erudite person, esp. one who has profound knowledge of a particular subject. According to Indian historian D P Singhal who wrote in his classic book, *India and World Civilization* part II p. 228, that, “While Europe’s debt to Greek literature is generally acknowledged and often overemphasized, it has not always been straightforward for Western scholars to admit the effect of Indian ideas on Europe’s intellectual and cultural landscape. The stimulus of Indian literature was so intense that scholars began to take notice. This is exemplified by Arthur A Macdonell: “Since the Renaissance there has been no event of such world-wide significance in the history of culture as the discovery of Sanskrit literature in the latter part of the 18th century. Driven by some strange fear of losing their cultural identity, Europeans endeavored to minimize or ignore the influence of Indian philosophy, and stretch logic to explain intellectual evolution purely in terms of what they call Western traditions.” However, there are several outstanding examples of scholars who freely admitted their debt to Indian thought, such as Paul Deussen, Sir John Woodroffe, Count Maurice Maeterlinck, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, Serge Elisseev and many others.



Apollonius Tyanaeus (1st Century AD) was a Greek Thinker and Traveler. He was a philosopher and mathematician of Greek origin. His teaching influenced scientific thought for centuries after his death. He was a Gnostic Saint.

He has said:

“In India I found a race of mortals living upon the Earth but not adhering to it Inhabiting cities, but not being fixed to them, possessing everything but possessed by nothing.” ⁶⁶⁴

Abu'l Hasan al-Qifti (900 AD) was an Arab scholar and author of *Chronology of the Scholars*, speaks of Arab admiration for Indian place-value system and methods of calculation.

He has reflected that:

“Among those parts of their sciences which came to us, the numerical calculation....it is the swiftest and most complete method of calculation, the easiest to understand and the simplest to learn; it bears witness to the Indians' piercing intellect, fine creativity and their superior understanding and inventive genius.”⁶⁶⁵

August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845) was a German Scholar and Poet who also learnt Sanskrit. The impulse to Indological studies was first given in Germany, through his book, ‘*The Language and Wisdom of the Indians*’, which appeared in 1818.

He wrote *The Bhagavat Gita, or, Dialogues of Krishna and Arjoon: in eighteen lectures*.

“The divine origin of man, as taught in Vedanta, is continually inculcated, to stimulate his efforts to return, to animate him in the struggle, and incite him to consider a reunion and re-incorporation with Divinity as the one primary object of every action and reaction. Even the loftiest philosophy of the Europeans, the idealism of reason as it is set forth by the Greek philosophers, appears in comparison with the abundant light and vigor of Oriental idealism like a feeble Promethean spark in the full fold of heavenly glory of the noonday sun, faltering and feeble and ever ready to be extinguished.”

Schlegel edited to original text of the Bhagavad Gita, together with a Latin translation, and paid tribute to its authors:

“I shall always adore the imprints of their feet”

He noted in his book, *Wisdom of the Ancient Indians*,

“It cannot be denied that the early Indians possessed knowledge of God. All their writings are replete with sentiments and expressions, noble, clear, severely grand, as deeply conceived in any human language in which men have spoken of their God.”

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Hindu philosophy in comparison with which, in the words of Schlegel,

“Even the loftiest philosophy of the Europeans” appears “like a feeble Promethean spark in the full flood of heavenly glory of the noonday sun faltering and feeble and ever ready to be extinguished.”⁶⁶⁷

Georg Morris Cohen Brandes (1842 – 1927) was born in Copenhagen of middle-class Jewish parents. He was a Danish critic and scholar who had great influence on Scandinavian literature from the 1870s through the turn of the 20th century. He is the author of several books including *Jesus, A Myth* and *The World at War* and *Voltaire and Friedrich Nietzsche*. In the midst of these polemics the critic began to issue the most ambitious of his works, *Main Currents in the Literature of the Nineteenth Century*, of which four volumes appeared between 1872 and 1875 (English translation, 1901-1905). The brilliant novelty of this criticism of the literature of major European countries at the beginning of the 19th century, and his description of the general revolt against the pseudo-classicism of the 18th century, at once attracted attention outside Denmark.

Brandes proclaimed that:

“His spiritual home was on the banks of the Ganges.”⁶⁶⁸

Paul Deussen (1845-1919) was a German Orientalist and a Sanskrit scholar. He was a direct disciple of Arthur Schopenhauer, preferred to be called in Sanskrit, Deva-Sena was a scholar of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. He was also a friend of Friedrich Nietzsche and Swami Vivekananda. In 1911, Paul Deussen founded the Schopenhauer Society (*Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft*). He was the first editor, in 1912, of the scholarly journal *Schopenhauer Yearbook*

(*Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*). Deussen served in this position until his death.

He has indicated that:

“Whatever may be the discoveries of the scientific mind, none can dispute the eternal truths propounded by the Upanishads. Though they may appear as riddles, the key to solving them lies in our heart and if one were to approach them with an open mind one could secure the treasure as did the Rishis of ancient times.”

About Vedanta, Deussen said: “It is now, as in the ancient times, living in the mind and heart of every thoughtful Hindu.” ⁶⁶⁹

He has observed in his *Philosophy of the Upanishads*:

“God, the sole author of all good in us, is not, as in the Old Testament, a Being contrasted with and distinct from us, but rather.....our divine self. This and much more we may learn the lesson if we are willing to put the finishing touch to the Christian consciousness, and make it on all sides consistent and complete.”⁶⁷⁰

“The Vedanta gives profoundly based reasons for all charity and brotherliness.”

Dr. Deussen had remarked,

“The fact is nevertheless that the highest and purest morality is the immediate consequence of the Vedanta. The Gospels fix quite correctly as the highest law of morality ‘love your neighbor as yourself’. But why should I do so, since by the order of nature I feel pain and pleasure only in myself and not in my neighbor?”
 “The answer is not,” he says in the Bible but it is in the Veda in the great formula:

“*That thou art*’ (*Tat tvam asi*) which gives in three words, metaphysics and morals together.” ⁶⁷¹

In his *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, recently translated by Rev. A. S. Geden, Prof. Deussen claims, for its fundamental thought “an inestimable value for the whole race of mankind.” It is in “marvelous agreement with the philosophy founded by Kant, and adopted and

perfected by his great successor Schopenhauer.” differing from it, where it does differ, only to excel.

“It was here that for the first time the original thinkers of the Upanishads to their immortal honour, found it when they recognized our Atman, our innermost individual being as the Brahman, the inmost being of universal nature and of all her phenomenon.” (p. 39-40).⁶⁷²

He points out that:

“*The Upanishads* have tackled every fundamental problem of life. They have given us an intimate account of reality.”

“On the tree of wisdom there is no fairer flower than the Upanishads, and no finer fruit than the Vedanta philosophy,’ and he added,

“The system of Vedanta, as founded on the Upanishads and Vedanta Sutras and accompanied by Shankara’s commentary on them—equal in rank to Plato and Kant—is one of the most valuable products of the genius of mankind in his researches of the eternal truth.”⁶⁷³

Regarding the Cosmological hymn in the *Rig-Veda*, he wrote profoundly that:

“In its noble simplicity, in the loftiness of its philosophic vision it is possibly the most admirable bit of philosophy of olden times... No translation can ever do justice to the beauty of the original.”⁶⁷⁴

Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862-1932) was a friend of E. M. Forster, and wrote in his *Essay on the Civilizations* thesis that:

“The real antithesis is not between East and West, but between India and the rest of the world.” Only India is different; only India unspools some other possibility fantastically. India is the odd man out of the global citizenry.” Dickinson held, religion everywhere had transported the land to somewhere nearly extraterrestrial. All other countries were located on planet Earth, in present time, in specific material conditions - which was so much “maya” or secondary reality in India, where what was important had migrated over the mountaintops into the clouds.”

Dickinson has wisely pointed out:

“Indian religion has never been a system of dogma, and is not entangled in questionable history. Indian philosophy and religion have always affirmed that there is; that by meditation and discipline an internal perception is opened which is perception of truth.”

“In the first place, India has never put Man in the center of the universe. In India, and wherever Indian influence has penetrated, it is, on the one hand, the tremendous forces of nature, and what lies behind them that is the object of worship and of speculation; and, on the other hand, Mind and Spirit; not the mind or spirit of the individual person, but the universal Mind or Spirit, which is in him, but which he can only have access by philosophic mediation and discipline. It is very much in harmony with the spirit of western science than with that of western religion. And this fact is exemplified not only by the religious and philosophic literature of India, but by its art.” ⁶⁷⁵

“Thus India stands for something, which distinguishes it from all other peoples, and so she calls Herself a Karmabhumi as opposed to the Bhoga-bhumi of all other peoples. For this she has been wonderfully preserved until today. Even now we can see the life of thousand of years ago. Standing on the Ghats at Benares or by any village well we are transported into the beautiful antique world.” ⁶⁷⁶

Count Maurice Maeterlinck (1862 -1949) was a scholar and Belgian writer of poetry and a wide variety of essays. He won the 1911 Nobel Prize for literature.

In his book *Mountain Paths* (1919) in the doctrine of Karma, he finds “the only satisfactory solution of life’s injustices.”

He expressed that:

“He falls back upon the earliest and greatest of Revelations, those of the Sacred Books of India with a Cosmogony which no European conception has ever surpassed.” ⁶⁷⁷

Maeterlinck writes in his book *The Great Secret*, pages 26-98:

"We cannot tell how the religion of the Hindus came into being. When we become aware of it, we find it already complete in its broad outlines, its main principles. Not only is it complete, but the farther back we go, the more perfect it is, the more unadulterated, the more closely related to the loftiest speculations of our modern agnosticism."

"When the world had emerged from the darkness," says the *Bhagavata Puranam*, "the subtle elementary principle produced the vegetable seed which first of all gave life to the plants. From the plants, life passed into the fantastic creatures which were born of the slime in the waters; then, through a series of different shapes and animals, it came to Man." They passed in succession by way of the plants, the worms, the insects, the serpents, the tortoises, cattle, and the wild animals - such is the lower stage," says Manu again, who adds, "Creatures acquired the qualities of those that preceded them, so that the farther down its position in the series, the greater its qualities."

Count Maeterlinck sensibly reasons that:

"Have we not here the whole of Darwinian evolution confirmed by geology and foreseen at least 6,000 years ago? On the other hand, is this not the theory of Akasa, which we more clumsily call the ether, the sole source of all substances, to which our science is returning? Is it true that the recent theories of Einstein deny ether, supposing that radiant energy - visible light, for example - is propagated independently through a space that is an absolute void? But the scientific ether is not precisely the Hindu Akasa which is much more subtle and immaterial being a sort of spiritual element or divine energy, space uncreated, imperishable, and infinite."

Commenting on the Vedic hymns Maeterlinck observes:

"Is it possible to find, in our human annals, words more majestic, more full of solemn anguish, more august in tone, more devout, more terrible? Where, from the depths of an agnosticism, which thousands of years have augmented, can we point to a wider horizon? At the very outset, it surpasses all that has been said, and goes farther than we shall even dare to go. No spectacle could be more absorbing than this struggle of our forefathers of

five to ten thousand years ago with the Unknowable, the unknowable nature of the causeless Cause of all Causes. But of this cause, or this God, we should never have known anything, had He remained self-absorbed, had He never manifested Himself." Thus it is, say the Laws of Manu, "that, by an alternation of awakening and repose, the immutable Being causes all this assemblage of creatures, mobile and immobile, eternally to return to life and to die." He exhales Himself, or expels His breath, throughout the Universe, innumerable worlds are born, multiply and evolve. He Himself inhales, drawing His breath, and Matter enters into Spirit, which is but an invisible form of Matter: and the worlds disappear, without perishing, to reintegrate the Eternal cause, and emerge once more upon the awakening of Brahma - that is, thousands of millions of years later; to enter into Him so it has been and ever shall be, through all eternity, without beginning, without cessation, without end." ⁶⁷⁸

Maeterlinck in his book *The Great Secret* calls *The Bhagavad Gita* or "*Song of the Blessed*" a magnificent flower of Hindu mysticism. ⁶⁷⁹

Irwin Babbitt (1865-1933) was the Harvard literary scholar and cultural thinker will always stand as a monument to American intellectual culture at its finest. Babbitt had a fascination with Asian religion and philosophy. He was one of the principal critics of the twentieth century and an influential teacher of T. S. Eliot.

He wrote:

"East bowed low before the blast in humble deep disdain,

It let the legions thunder past, and plunged in thought again." ⁶⁸⁰

Sir John Woodroffe aka Arthur Avalon (1865-1936) was the well-known scholar, Advocate-General of Bengal and sometime Legal Member of the Government of India. He served with competence for eighteen years and in 1915 officiated as Chief Justice. His most popular and influential book, a major contribution to the appreciation of Indian philosophy and spirituality, is *The Serpent Power – The secrets of tantric and shaktic yoga, Sakti*

and Sakta Introduction to Tantra Sastra (1918) and *The World as Power*.

Woodroffe has stated clearly:

“Ages before Lamarck and Darwin it was held in India that man has passed through 84 lakhs (8,400,000) of birth as plants, animals, as an “inferior species of man” and then as the ancestor of the developed type existing to-day. The theory was not, like modern doctrine of evolution, based wholly on observation and a scientific enquiry into fact but was a rather (as some other matters) an act of brilliant intuition in which observation may also have had some part.”

“Indian thought with its usual profundity and avoidance of arbitrary divisions, regards Philosophy as religious and Religion as philosophical.”

He has reflected that:

“The Vedanta does not speak ill of any religion, but assigns to each its place....I however was concerned with the religion of the “Idolatrous” “Heathen”...The point was this,...how could such a grade people have principles so excellent that the Western Religions also laid claim to them? It is clear that God has revealed Himself at all times and to all peoples according to their capacity to receive knowledge of Him. “It is Official Christianity which has been slow to recognize the merit of Indian teaching and to give credit for anything to the “Heathen.” Vedanta kindly tolerates even the most ignorant of its detractors. ”

“It is Official Christianity which has been slow to recognize the merit of Indian teaching and to give credit for anything to the ‘Heathen’. The European man of a “religious” turn of mind is too often over beset with sectarian notions.”

“Attacks on Indian culture however have led and will lead to its defense and appreciation. Kalidasa says:

“Jvalati chalitendhanah agnir viprakritah

pannagah phanam kurute

Prayah svam mahinmanam kshobhat pratipadyate hi janah.”

“When the faggots are stirred the flame leaps. When the Snake is stirred it rears its hood. Through being stirred to action people mostly attain their proper greatness.”

“In writing then of Indian Culture I have in mind not any soiled or hybrid developments of the time, but the principles of the civilization of old India, with its Dharma, Devata and Gomata - a civilization in its depths profound, on its surface a pageant of antique beauty - the civilization of India of the Hindus.” In India there has been intellectual and spiritual freedom - the most valuable of all. The history of Europe on the contrary is marked by intolerance and abominable persecutions.”

“If, as is finely said in India, *Satyannasti paro dharmah* - there is no religion higher than truth. As the *Veda* says, “Truth will conquer.” (*Satyam Jayate*).”⁶⁸¹

“An examination of the Vedic thesis shows that it is in conformity with the most advanced philosophical and scientific thoughts of the West and, where this is not so, it is the scientist who will go to the Vedantist and not the Vedantist to the scientist.”⁶⁸²

Woodroffe was a judge, an educator, a Hindu scholar and translator as well as an author. During his multifaceted career, he practiced and taught law in India. Aside from his successful career in law, which led to his appointment as Chief Justice of the high court in 1915, he had a prolific output as a scholar of Tantra. Had it not been for him, we might still share that general prejudice regarding Tantra. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Woodroffe boldly disregarded the hostile attitude towards Tantra.

Sir John Woodroffe's achievement in the exposition of Tantrik thought cannot be over estimated. Himself a follower of Tantric cult, this great Englishman edited in a masterly way a number of Tantric texts and most of his views on them are regarded as authoritative. It is mainly through his writings - a rare combination of insight and scholarship - that the ideas of the Tantras began to enter the mind of the West in modern times.⁶⁸³

In his views, Tantrism represents the full flowering of the religious spirit of India.⁶⁸⁴

Writing under the pseudonym, Arthur Avalon seemed to be ‘An Indian Soul in a European Body? His books challenged the dominant Western understanding of Tantra as a primitive and demonic cult. His emphasis was on the philosophical aspects of Tantra and his conclusion that textual descriptions of rites should be read as deeply spiritual symbolism. Author of several books including *Bharata Shakti*, *The Serpent Power* he has written:

“I believe that the East and particularly India possesses that which is the highest value. I wish to see this preserved for the mutual benefit of East and West.”

“...India has Panini, Patanjali’s Mahbhashya, Supadma, Kalapa, the Vakyapadiya, Bhopadeva, Sangkshiptasara, Siddantakaumudi, Laghukaumudi, amongst the ancient, while the Vyakarna Kaumudi, Upakramanika of Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagara, and the ashubodha of Taranatha Vachaspati head the moderns. How is it that all these have been displaced?”

He wondered why Sanskrit was not taught in British India:

“As regard the first point I am told that in an Indian University even Sanskrit is taught in English which means that only those who know the latter tongue can learn the classic language of event their own country. To me this seems an absurdity...In the same institution a European Sanskrit grammar is prescribed, the production of which was paid for at a larger price than would be offered to any Indian. Who offered it? Not the English. The Indian cannot I suppose write a grammar. Yet India has Panini, Patanjali, Patanjali’s Mahabhasya, Supadma, Kalapa, the Vakyapadiya, Bhopadeva, Sangkshiptasara, Siddantakaumudi, Laghukaumudi, amongst the ancient, while the Vyakarana Kaumudi, Upakramanika of Ishvara Chandra Vidyasagara, and the Ashubodha of Taranatha Vachaspati head the moderns. How is it that all these have been displaced? A distinguished European Sanskritist once aksed me where I had learned Sanskrit, but that I had been and was still learning Sanskrit in this country. “Oh what a pity,” he said, “Why” I asked? “They cannot teach Sanskrit in this country: they have no system.” He replied. I laughed. “They cannot teach Sanskrit in this country.” – The country of Panini the founder of the science of language, the greatest grammarian the world had known,

and of innumerable pandits, men of real learning, few though men of the highest attainment now be. How has Sanskrit learning come down to us today if no one has been able to teach it?"

Woodrooffe articulates thus:

"Indian tolerance is not merely a matter of temperament. It is based on the doctrine of the relativity of ordinary human knowledge and, in part, of morals and on the doctrine of Adhikara, that is the teaching that all people are not fit for the same beliefs and practices, and that what is suited to the capacity, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, of each person is that which he may and should accept, follow, and practice."

"Hinduism has no word for "pessimism," a European conception, or for optimism either. The universe according to it is a Dvandva or duality of good and evil." ⁶⁸⁵

Edward J Urwick (1867 – 1945) a British intellectual and the late Ratan Tata Professor of Social Science in London University, and author of *The message of Plato, a re-interpretation of the "Republic"* (1920).

He has remarked:

"I will not attempt - it will need a separate volume – to show how the Indian thought may have filtered through Socrates and Plato; how far it may have reached Plato in his wanderings, how far through Pythagoras, how far even before the death of Socrates, a direct stream of the Eastern doctrine may have flowed through Asia Minor into Greece. But I affirm very confidently that if any one will make himself familiar with the old Indian Wisdom – Religion of the Vedas and the Upanishads, will shake himself free, for the moment, from the academic attitude and the limiting western conception of philosophy, and will then read Plato's dialogues, he will hardly fail to realize that both are occupied with the self-same search, inspired by the same faith, drawn upwards by the same vision."

Urwick maintains that, in order to understand Plato's Republic, we should first grasp the fundamentals of Hindu thought.

Comparing the social thought of Manu and Plato, he writes:

“Again, just as Manu of ancient India instituted the caste system upon the basis of the three principles in the individual soul, so Plato divides his state into three classics, representing the three psychical elements. The lowest caste of producers and traders, corresponding to the vaishya caste, reflects the element of ignorant desire, Epithumia. The class next above this, the Auxiliaries, corresponding to the Kshatriya caste, reflects, the passionate element, Thumos. The highest class, the Guardians, corresponding to the Brahmin caste, represents the principle of prudent reason, the Logistikon.”⁶⁸⁶

Dr. D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966) was a Japanese Buddhist and Zen scholar, who has written several books, including *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture* (1938) and *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1991).

He has said:

“The study of Japanese thought is the study of Indian thought.”⁶⁸⁷

W. J. (William John) Grant (1883 -) was an author and in his book *The Spirit of India* (1938) he says:

“India indeed has a preciousness which a materialistic age is in danger of missing. Some day the fragrance of her thought will win the hearts of men. This grim chase after our own tails, which marks the present age, cannot continue forever. The future contains a new human urge towards the real beauty and holiness of life. When it comes India will be searched by loving eyes and defended by knightly hands.”

Grant writes admiringly about Hinduism:

“The religion of the Hindus is rich in legend and stupendous allegory. It is a religion of great dignity and beauty. Its wrestlings with reality are as courageous as any in the whole history of mankind.’ Indian thought has generally been contemplative it has seldom been enamored of the material side of life.”

“In the realm of religious philosophy she has given to us the most searching examination of the ethical law the world is ever

likely to have. No Greek was more splendid in his scientific fidelity than the quiet company of Indian thinkers who made the Upanishads and traced the whole beauteous outline of the Eastern spirit."

"There are cities in India whose grace and charm are matched only by the sweetness of an immemorial religion. Nowhere else in the world have I been so exquisitely invaded by the mystic quality of life."

"She is grave and old and stupendous. Her accents are for the calm and gracious. Her temples are laden with symbolism and internal beauties. It is true, that India is royal...India has been royal at heart from her very foundations of her memory."

He talks about India and her humility:

"Our sublimest delusion is that India is backward. This predicates, of course, that we are progressive. If backwardness and progress depend on the rate at which one can gobble up vanities perhaps India does not need our aid....India's devotion to being good rather than being clever comes nearer the heart of a true civilization. Cleverness dies on the tongue like a social pleasantry, goodness echoes round the universe in an unextinguishable reality. We in the West are too busy to see that science without soul is like words without meaning."

"India's greatness is in her humility; her weakness is her strength. She is both wiser and more effective than the West, for she does not declare that reform is not a new shirt on Sunday morning but a clean heart at the Throne of Grace. Justice without spirit of justice is as much of an achievement as a river without its water."⁶⁸⁸

Serge Elisseev (Elisseeff) (1889 – 1975) was an Asian scholar, and author of several books, *Etudes D'Orientlisme, Publiees Par Le muse Guimet a La Memoire De Raymonde Linossier: Notes Sur Le Portrait En Extreme-Orient* and *La Peinture Contemporaine du Japon* (1923).

He says:

"The East is impenetrable to the West only for the man who deliberately refuses to get rid of certain ideas which, like armor,

prevent him from bending . . . The teaching of the great Indian thinkers could spiritually enrich the European soul. In the course of its history, the European civilization has lost most of its spiritual values. It can no longer recover them though it still realizes their necessity. For the best of men cannot exist simply on the ideal of "efficiency of work" in the American way. In the condition in which the West finds itself, it is easier for us to go and search for truths in the India, than to come back to the few values we have left in the course of the development of our civilization." ⁶⁸⁹

Lin Yutang (1895-1976) was a Chinese scholar and author of the book, *The Wisdom of China and India* (1942).

He perceptively says that:

"Hindus are natural mystics, mysticism meaning a form of religion aiming at achieving direct union with God. To achieve the union of the individual soul (atman) with the world soul (Brahman) behind all things may be said to be the whole effort of the Vedic philosophy."

Liln Yutang notes that:

"My love and true respect for India was born when I first read the Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in the present translation in my college days. In these two masterpieces we are brought closer to the atmosphere, ideals and customs of ancient Hindu life than by a hundred volumes of commentary on the Upanishads, and through them Hindu ideals, as well as Hindu men and women, become real to us. And the fact that Hindu imagination produced such masterpieces of literature, closely rivaling Homer in antiquity and in beauty and power of portraying human passions, is definite pledge of the worth and richness of the Hindu civilization."

He thought that:

"The creative imagination of the Hindus has conceived no loftier and holier character than Sita; the literature of the world has not produced a higher ideal of womanly love, womanly truth, and womanly devotion."

"The contact with poets, forest saints and the best wits of the land, the glimpse into the first awakening of Ancient India's mind as it searched, at times childishly and naively, at times with a deep intuition, but at all times earnestly and passionately, for the spiritual truths and the meaning of existence - this experience must be highly stimulating to anyone, particularly because the Hindu culture is so different and therefore so much to offer." "Not until we see the richness of the Hindu mind and its essential spirituality can we understand India...."

Yutang declared sagaciously:

"India was China's teacher in religion and imaginative literature, and the world's teacher in trigonometry, quadratic equations, grammar, phonetics, Arabian Nights, animal fables, chess, as well as in philosophy, and that she inspired Boccaccio, Goethe, Herder, Schopenhauer, Emerson, and probably also old Aesop."

"India produced too much religion and China too little. A trickle of Indian religious spirit overflowed to China and inundated the whole of Eastern Asia. It would seem logical and appropriate that any one suffering from a deficiency of the religious spirit should turn to India rather than to any other country in the world."

"It is apparent that only in India is religion still a living emotion."

"India is the home of fables...one must say that the Hindu mind is fabulous. The genius for creating fables seems inexhaustible in Indian literature....Ernest Rhys, in his Introduction to *Fable, Aesop and Others* justly remarks, "We have to admit that the beast-fable did not begin with him (Aesop), or in Greece at all. We have, in fact, to go east and to look to India and burrow in the 'tale of tales' of Hitopadesa to get an idea how old the antiquity of the fable actually is. When one remembers also that many of the stories in the Arabian Nights, including that of the famous Sindbad the Sailor, are of Hindu origin, it is not easy to accept the view that such tales are not of native Indian growth."

"The Indian culture is highly creative and in fact has enriched the world literature with the droll humor that we associate with the Arabian Nights." ⁶⁹⁰

Nancy Wilson Ross (1901 -1986) made her first trip to Japan, China, Korea and India in 1939. She was the author of several

books including *The World of Zen and Time's Left Corner*. Miss Ross lectured on Zen Buddhism at the Jungian Institute in Zurich. She served on the board of the Asia Society of New York which was founded by John D. Rockefeller III since it's founding in 1956 and was on the governing board of the India Council. In private life she was known as Mrs. Stanley Young.

She has written eloquently about the startlingly modern theories of the universe in Ancient India:

"Anachronistic as this labyrinthine mythology may appear to the foreign mind, many of India's ancient theories about the universe are startlingly modern in scope and worthy of a people who are credited with the invention of the zero, as well as algebra and its application of astronomy and geometry; a people who so carefully observed the heavens that, in the opinion of Monier-Williams, they determined the moon's synodical revolution much more correctly than the Greeks."

Ms. Ross has astutely pointed out that:

"Many hundreds of years before those great European pioneers, Galileo and Copernicus, had to pay heavy prices in ridicule and excommunication for their daring theories, a section of the Vedas known as the Brahmanas contained this astounding statement:

"The sun never sets or rises. When people think the sun is setting, he only changes about after reaching the end of the day and makes night below and day to what is on the other side. Then, when people think he rises in the morning, he only shifts himself about after reaching the end of the day night, and makes day below and night to what is on the other side. In truth, he does not see at all."

"The Indians, whose theory of time, is not linear like ours – that is, not proceeding consecutively from past to present to future – have always been able to accept, seemingly without anxiety, the notion of an alternately expanding and contracting universe, an idea recently advanced by certain Western scientists. In Hindu cosmology, immutable Brahman, at fixed intervals, draws back into his beginningless, endless Being the whole substance of the living world. There then takes place the long "sleep" of

Brahman from which, in course of countless aeons, there is an awakening, and another universe or “dream” emerges. This notion of the sleeping and waking, or contracting and expanding, of the Life Force, so long a part of Hindu cosmology, has recently been expressed in relevant terms in an article written for a British scientific journal by Professor Fred Hoyle, Britain’s foremost astronomer.”

“Plainly, contemporary Western science’s description of an astronomical universe of such vast magnitude that distances must be measured in terms as abstract as light-years is not new to Hinduism whose wise men, millennia ago, came up with the term kalpa to signify the inconceivable duration of the period elapsing between the beginning and end of a world system.”

“It is clear that Indian religious cosmology is sharply at variance with that inherited by Western peoples from the Semites. On the highest level, when stripped of mythological embroidery, Hinduism’s conceptions of space, time and multiple universes approximate in range and abstraction the most advanced scientific thought.”

She has remarked that:

“Hinduism has seemed singularly able to accept the dispassionate impersonality of the All in One without crying out against it in despair, rage or rebellion. Perhaps this is the genius of this paradoxical land of so many blended cultures and people...”

“Hinduism – not only in philosophy and literature but also in art – has the capacity for immense conceptions, profound and subtle apprehensions that can entice the imagination and stun the mind with their depth, range and boldness. The many masks of the many gods, their various appearances and incarnations, have been employed to suggest the infinitely possible variations of one supreme essence. In seeking to give expression to that almost inexpressible idea of a unity, which admits also of polarities, a “union beyond the opposites.”

“Hinduism created such arresting icons as the divine two-in-one embrace of Shiva and Shakti; or Shiva alone, half male, half female, or the two-sided figure of Hari-Hara, an expression of the

seemingly “opposite” creative-destructive forces of Vishnu and Shiva embodied in one being.”

Expressing Hinduism’s priceless contribution to the religious life of mankind, she says:

“Down the millennia of its existence, Hinduism has made a priceless contribution to the collective religious life of mankind through the remarkable findings of her many brilliant mystics and philosophers, as set forth in a voluminous literature. Perhaps, however, her most significant contribution to the universal body of religious inquiry is the persistent, unshakable belief that union with the Divine is attainable while one is still on earth. Moreover, any man in India is at liberty to pursue salvation after his own fashion with no danger of finding himself at some point branded as heretic. Indeed, heresy in Hinduism is virtually impossible, for as the authoritative *Upanishads* firmly state: “Reality is One though sages call it by different names.”⁶⁹¹

Charles Johnston a retired English civil servant in Bengal and a Sanskrit scholar brought forth a translation in 1908 in Flushing, New York of the *Bhagavad Gita*: “*The Songs of the Master*.”

Johnston paid tribute in his lengthy General Introduction to the historical and eternal significance of the scripture:

“The Bhagavad Gita is one of the noblest scriptures of India, one of the deepest scriptures of the world...a symbolic scripture, with many meanings, containing many truths. ...[that] forms the living heart of the Eastern wisdom.”⁶⁹²

Hajime Nakamura (1912 - 1999) was a Japanese scholar. His field of research was exceedingly broad, encompassing Indian philosophy, Buddhist studies, historical studies, Japanese thought, comparative thought. He was the author of *The History of Early Vedānta Philosophy* (1990) an epoch-making study in four volumes.

He has noted wisely that:

“Indians conducted far more elaborate speculations than the Westerners of antiquity and the Middle Ages with respect to the theory of numbers, the analysis of psychological phenomena,

and the study of linguistic structures. The Indians are highly rationalistic, insofar as their ideal is to recognize eternal laws concerning past, present, and future. The thought represented by Tertullian's aphorism, "credo quia absurdum," or "I believe because it is absurd," had no receptivity in India. The Indians are, at the same time, logical since they generally have a tendency to sublimate their thinking to the universal; they are at once logical and rationalistic. On the contrary, many religions of the West are irrational and illogical, and this is acknowledged by the Westerners themselves. For example, Schweitzer, a pious and most devoted Christian, says, "Compared to the logical religions of Asia, the gospel of Jesus is illogical."

It is often contended that in contrast to Western thought the spirit of tolerance and mutual concession is a salient feature of Eastern thought. The religion of the West at times is harsh and even emphasizes struggle for the sake of keeping the faith and condemning unbelievers:

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke, 14.26).

He has noted that:

"Such aggressive thoughts as expressed here did not appear at all in the religions of East Asia. Throughout the religious world of India a more tranquil and peaceful atmosphere has prevailed from time immemorial. Gotama and Mahavira ended their lives in peace."

"The idea of tolerance and concession is based on admitting the compatibility of many different philosophical views of the world. The Indians are prone to tolerate the co-existence of philosophical thoughts of various types from the metaphysical viewpoint. Interference with religions on the part of the state was not found in India, but in China it occurred to a considerable degree." ⁶⁹³

He believed that:

"Without Indian influence Japanese culture would not be what it is today." ⁶⁹⁴

Amaury de Riencourt (1918 -) was a scholar and author and was born in Orleans, France. He received his B.A. from the Sorbonne and his M.A. from the University of Algiers. He is author of several books including *The American Empire* and *The Soul of India* (1990) and *The Eye of Shiva: Eastern Mysticism and Science* (1980).

He has noted clearly that:

“The boundless riches of the Hindu faith, its universal appeal, its tolerance, the profundity of Hindu philosophy and its enduring roots among the Indian people all this made India a poor soil for West-Christian sowing.”

Riencourt expressed very eloquently that:

“There can be no doubt that the Upanishads are based on the most profound study and understanding of human nature ever achieved, one with which we twentieth century Westerners, in spite of our vast present day knowledge, have not yet fully caught up.”

“The Vedas were the brilliant product of intuitive insight, not of the logical intellect. The essence of the Upanisadic teaching, to the extent that it can be coherently summarized, lies in the thesis that the Absolute is not separate from man and nature but immanent in both. The transcendent outlook of the Vedas (an outward projection of Vedic man’s unconscious) becomes an insight into the immanent nature of the Absolute: “The infinite is not beyond the finite but in the finite. Man’s goal is not so much union with the Divine (as in Atman) and the Absolute or Divine (Brahman), which is the basic principle of monism. Already, we can detect in Indian Culture an emphasis on the recovery of a latent Being, rather than the striving to Become – Becoming being unreal since the process of time has no reality whatsoever.”

He has pointed out the inherent scientific temper of Indic faiths:

“This spiritual and religious ethos of India is less vulnerable to scientific criticism than the Western creeds (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) because it is not connected with history - because spiritual symbolism of history has no meaning for it. Its emphasis on psychology rather than theology, on the inner man rather

than on man's relations with the external universe, shields it from the corrosive impact of our modern world." ⁶⁹⁵ ⁶⁹⁶

"The East incorporates all that derived basically, from Indian culture: Hinduism, Buddhism and their extensions in the Southeast Asia. The complementary unity-in-diversity of that vast area springs from the fact that while Indian philosophy and wisdom is the most profound, its most perfect means of expression are to be found in Southeast Asia (Angkor, Borobudur)."

"It does matter a great deal to the West whether Christ rose bodily from the dead, multiplied bread of loaves or even existed at all; it does not matter one whit to the East whether Rama, Shiva or Buddha ever existed since their importance is neither factual or historical but purely symbolic...because in the East there is no conflict between fact and faith, since Eastern faith (sraddha) aims basically at subjective cognition rather than the objective "believing to be true" of the Westerner. The West has always attempted to impose dogmatically its various viewpoints because, imbued with Biblical, Catholic, Koranic sense of God-given historical mission and the conviction of having the monopoly of literal religious truth, it felt that it was objectively in the right - regardless of the increasing conflict, within its own cultures, between the spiritual messages (often mutually contradictory) of its "revealed" religions and scientific knowledge."

"Thus, the "Eye of Shiva" that is the eye of pure consciousness in Hinduism." "Many Greeks fell under the spell of the Hindu or Buddhist philosophers and life-styles. We know, for instance, that Pyrrho of Elis, who founded the philosophic school of "pure scepticism" (Pyrrhonism) in Greece around 330 B.C. joined Alexander's expedition to India and was strongly influenced by the various siddhus he encountered and by that serene indifference to external circumstances for which Greek philosophers yearned but almost never achieved." ⁶⁹⁷

"Out of this immense creation emerged one of the most famous and moving poems, the Bhagavad Gita, whose soaring beauty makes it one of the monuments of world literature."

Writing beautifully about the *Bhagavad Gita*, Amaury de Riencourt says:

“The Bhagavad Gita is both supremely realistic and extremely idealistic, certainly the most acute, penetrating depiction of human nature and true morality, however remote it may seem from our own: “give thought to nothing but the act, never to its fruits, and let not thyself be seduced by inaction. “The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes all the basic contents of the Indian world-outlook with remarkable vividness. Lord Krisna, for example, symbolizes the principle of Divine Incarnation (avatar), the supreme spirit become flesh, pouring into the world during the evil phases of the cosmic cycle in order to check evil - but in a spirit of complete detachment and indifference. The supreme thought of the Bhagavad Gita is concerned with tolerance: *“Whatsoever devotee seeks to worship whatsoever divine form (rupa) with fervent faith, I, verily, make that faith of his unwavering.”*

“Mysticism has its place in all great religions, but never has it had such a field day as in India, where it never came into conflict with frozen dogmas or the prophetic impulse.”

He declareds this about Yoga:

“Yoga – is Indian Civilization’s finest product, the ultimate perfection reached by India’s best men. And because nothing is so difficult as to rationalize and discipline mysticism, Indian Civilization deserves full credit for having devised the best system for reaching the goal. Yoga is essentially a neutral, well-tried technique, compatible with any philosophy or religion, with Buddhism as with all forms of Vedantism. Yoga is a civilization-technique, an expansion and systematized, scientific development of the early tapas of the Arthava Veda. Yoga doctrine is at one with Vedanta, which claims that the world is not different form (ananya) and non-independent of (avyatirika) Brahman. Becoming is the great cosmic illusion – that is the supreme expression of the Indian mind.”

“The wealth of psychological insight revealed in the Upanishads and their various commentaries cannot be adequately summarized. But there can be no doubt that they are based on the most profound study and understanding of human nature ever achieved, one with which we twentieth-century Westerners, in spite of our vast present day knowledge, have not yet fully caught up. No other culture but the Indian has ever probed the depths of

the human soul so thoroughly; no other has understood so much about man's unconscious, his dreams, his symbolism; no other has gone so far in establishing the natural correlations between physiology and psychology." ⁶⁹⁸

Nani Ardeshir Palkhiwala (1920-2002) was a brilliant legal brain and a philanthropist. Former Prime Minister Morarji Desai had described him as 'India's finest intellectual'. A vocal proponent of press freedom, Palkhiwala was one of the directors of Press Trust of India (PTI) representing public interest since 1985. None other than C Rajagopalachari had once observed, "Nani is God's gift to India". He was India's best known constitutional lawyer, author, and former Indian ambassador to the US. He was the author of *India's Priceless Heritage* (1980).

He thought:

"India is eternal. Though the beginnings of her numerous civilizations go so far back in time that they are lost in the twilight of history, she has the gift of perpetual youth. Her culture is ageless and is as relevant to this present 20th century as it was to the 20th century before Christ."

"Our culture is primarily concerned with spiritual development is of special significance in our age which is marked by the obsolescence of the materialistic civilization."

Palkhiwala pointed out that:

"Ahimsa, peace and non-aggression were the hallmarks of Indian culture. In her crowded history of over 5,000 years during which she had thrown up vast and puissant empires, India never practiced military aggression on countries outside her borders. Thanks to our ethos, even today the Indian people patiently suffer miseries and endure injustices, which would result in devastating explosions in any other country. In these days of spiritual illiteracy and poverty of the spirit, when people find that wealth can only multiply itself and attain nothing, when people have to deceive their souls with counterfeit after having killed the poetry of life, it is necessary to remind ourselves that civilization is an act of the spirit."

“Material progress is not to be mistaken for inner progress. When technology outstrips moral development, the prospect is not that of a millennium but of extinction. Our ancient heritage is a potent antidote to the current tendency to standardize souls and seek salvation in herds.”

“It has been my long-standing conviction that India is like a donkey carrying a sack of gold - the donkey does not know what it is carrying but is content to go along with the load on its back. The load of gold is the fantastic treasure - in arts, literature, culture, and some sciences like Ayurvedic medicine - which we have inherited from the days of the splendor that was India.”

“Indian culture encouraged the cultivation of the intellect, not as a commodity for sale in the market-place, but for the inner joy experienced by the questing mind.”⁶⁹⁹

He predicted that:

“Modern India will find her identity and the modern Indian will regain his soul when our people begin to have some understanding of our priceless heritage. A nation, which has had a great past, can look forward with confidence to a great future. It would be restorative to national self-confidence to know that many discoveries of today are really re-discoveries and represent knowledge, which ancient India had at her command. World thinkers have stood in marvel at the sublimity of our scriptures.”⁷⁰⁰

Ram Swarup (1920-1998) was a foremost spokesperson of Hindu spirituality and culture in India. He will probably prove to have been the most influential Hindu thinker and Hindu Revivalist in the second half of the 20th century. Arun Shourie has called him a scholar of the first rank. In the 1950s when Indian intellectuals were singing paens to Marxism and Mao, he wrote critiques of communism. He was also an author of several books, *Hindu view of Christianity and Islam* (1992) and *Hinduism vis-à-vis Christianity* (1992) and *On Hinduism Reviews and Reflections* (2000).

He believed that:

“Hindu dharma was a great reconciler. It reconciled various

viewpoints, various doctrines. It knew how to look at things from various angles and viewpoints. It knew no conflict between science and religion, between rationalism and spiritualism. It was so because it was not dogmatic in reason or religion.”

“Hinduism was organized for peaceful and harmonious co-existence, not for continued confrontation with external enemies in the shape of unbelievers. It is no accident of history that though Hinduism knew internal feuds like any social polity, it never crossed its borders to wage wars against people simply because they worshipped different Gods. Organized on such non-military principles, there is no wonder that Hinduism did not even have a name for itself.”

Mr. Swarup has wisely noted that:

“In Sanatana Dharma, there is no single life, no single judgment, or eternal punishment. There is more than one life and of course, there is no single judgment. In fact, there is no judgment at all as such, for the idea is to help and to judge and condemn. The inner dynamics of incarnation is not reward or punishment but self-improvement, and ultimately self-discovery and self-recovery, moksha.”

“Many countries lost all memory of their past but India has been able to preserve it though in a form badly damaged. Thus India has come to preserve spiritual traditions, which many ancient cultures and countries have lost. Today Hinduism represents not only India but also the ancient wisdom of humanity and therefore in a most vital way that humanity itself. In Hinduism many ancient countries can still rediscover their religious past, their old Gods and their old spiritual traditions.”⁷⁰¹

Sita Ram Goel (1921- 2003) was a scholar, writer, publisher, the founder of Voice of India, an ‘intellectual’ Kshatriya’ par excellence, and a Hindu revivalist. He was the author of several books, including *The Story of Islamic Imperialism* (1996), *Hindu Temples: What Happened to Them* (1991), *Defence of Hindu Society* (1994) and *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters* (1996).

He remarked:

“It is an intuition ingrained in the Hindu psyche to inhabit our entire environment - celestial, physical, vegetable, animal, and human - with innumerable Gods and Goddesses. Some of these divinities are installed in temples as icons, and worshipped with well-defined rituals. Some others are worshipped as and where they are invoked. Hindu shastras, saints and sages have paid homage to many Gods and Goddesses in many sublime hymns.”

He declared proudly that:

“I am a Hindu, which to me means the inheritor of the oldest and the highest spiritual culture known to human history.”

“Hindu seers and sages as also Hindu shastras, no matter to what Hindu sect they belong, designate this spiritual center of Hindu society as Sanātana Dharma. Sanātana Dharma says that the aspiration for Truth (satyam), Goodness (śivam), Beauty (sundaram), and Power (aiśvarya) is inherent in every soul, everywhere, and at all times, like the physical hunger of the body for food and drink.”

“The Upanishadic prescription, ātmānam viddhi (know thyself) is a variation on the same theme. It leads to the same attainment - aham brahmo'smi (I am Brahma), tat tvam asi (thou art That), and sah tadasti (he is That). It is a steep spiritual ascent at the end of which the Ātman (Self) becomes Paramātman (Supreme Self), and the PuruSa (Person) becomes PuruSottama (Superperson). In the language of Theism, man becomes God.”⁷⁰²

Dr. Jean Le Mee (1931 -) was born in France and studied Sanskrit at Columbia University. He was the author of the book *Hymns from the Rig Veda* (1975).

He has affirmed the wisdom of the Vedic Aryans:

“Precious stones or durable materials - gold, silver, bronze, marble, onyx or granite - have been used by ancient people in an attempt to immortalize themselves. Not so however the ancient Vedic Aryans. They turned to what may seem the most volatile and insubstantial material of all - the spoken word ...The pyramids have been eroded by the desert wind, the marble broken by earthquakes, and the gold stolen by robbers, while the Veda is

recited daily by an unbroken chain of generations, traveling like a great wave through the living substance of mind. ..”

“The Rig Veda is a glorious song of praise to the Gods, the cosmic powers at work in Nature and in Man. Its hymns record the struggles, the battles, and victories, the wonder, the fears, the hopes, and the wisdom of the Ancient Path Makers.”

Glory be to Them!” ⁷⁰³

Dr. Karan Singh (1931 -) is heir apparent to the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir, Indian Ambassador to the U.S. and an outstanding thinker and leader. He is a philosopher, environmentalist, statesman, orator, author and politician.

He is the author of *Essays on Hinduism* (1990) and he has remarked:

“The Entire Cosmos is all pervaded by the same divine power. There is no ultimate duality in human existence or in consciousness. This is a truth, which in the West is only recently being understood after Einstein and Heisenberg and quantum mechanics. The Newtonian-Cartesian-Marxist paradigm of a materialistic universe has now been finally abolished; it has collapsed in the face of the new physics. Our ancient seers had a deeper insights into the nature of reality than people had even until very recently”. ⁷⁰⁴

“The master principles upon which Hinduism is based are to be found essentially in the Upanishads, which represent the high watermark not only of Indian but of world philosophy. It is in these luminous dialogues that the great issues confronting humanity have been addressed in a manner that seems to grow in relevance as we move into the global society.”

Dr. Singh goes on to explain that:

“The first and most basic concept is that of the all-pervasive Brahman — “*Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyam jagat*” (Whatever exists and wherever it exists is permeated by the same divine power). While many philosophies have postulated unbridgeable dichotomies between god and the world, matter and spirit, the Upanishadic view is that all that exists is a

manifestation without the light of consciousness behind it, and this, in a way, is the realization of the new science.”

“The second concept is that this Brahman resides within each individual consciousness, in the Atman. The Atman is the reflection of this all-pervasive Brahman in individual consciousness; but it is not ultimately separate from the Brahman. The concept of “*Isvarah sarvabhutanam hriddese tishthati*” (The lord resides within the heart of each individual) is the second great insight of the Upanishads, and the relationship between the Atman and the Brahman is the pivot upon which the whole Vedantic teaching revolves.”

“Another important Vedantic concept is that all human beings, because of their shared spirituality, are members of a single family. *The Upanishads* have an extraordinary phrase for the human race, ‘*Amrtasya putrah*’ (Children of immortality), because we carry within our consciousness the light and the power of the Brahman regardless of race, colour, creed, sex, caste or nationality. That is the basis of the concept of human beings as an extended family — ‘*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*’ — which is engraved on the first gate into our Parliament House.”

“It is certainly true that Hinduism has provided the broad cultural and religious framework that has held India together despite its astonishing linguistic, ethnic and political diversity and divisions. Hinduism is as essential for an understanding of Indian culture and civilization”⁷⁰⁵

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (1932 -) is an author, Nobel Laureate, and thinker. He was born in Trinidad into a family of Indian origin is known for his penetrating analyses of alienation and exile. Writing with increasing irony and pessimism, he has often bleakly detailed the dual problems of the Third World: the oppressions of colonialism and the chaos of post-colonialism. His grandfather had emigrated there from India as an indentured servant. He is the author of several books including *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples* (1998) *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1975), *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1982), *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1992).

He has written:

“The key Hindu concept of dharma - the right way, the sanctioned way, which all men must follow, according to their natures - is an elastic concept. At its noblest it combines self-fulfillment and truth to the self with the ideas of action as duty, action as its own spiritual reward, man as a holy vessel.” ⁷⁰⁶

Recently, he was in India to attend the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and discussed some of his controversial ideas about rewriting Indian history. He has starkly reminded us time and again that India was ravaged and intellectually destroyed by invasions that began in about 1000 AD.

Naipual has questioned the wisdom of ignoring or negating history in India:

“How do you ignore history? But the nationalist movement, independence movement ignored it. You read the *Glimpses of World History* by Jawaharlal Nehru, it talks about the mythical past and then it jumps the difficult period of the invasions and conquests. So you have Chinese pilgrims coming to Bihar, Nalanda and places like that. Then somehow they don’t tell you what happens, why these places are in ruin.”

“They never tell you why Elephanta Island is in ruins or why Bhubaneswar was desecrated.”

“You see, I am less interested in the Taj Mahal, which is a vulgar, crude building, a display of power built on blood and bones. Everything exaggerated, everything overdone, which suggests a complete slave population. I would like to find out what was there before the Taj Mahal.”

“I’m actually more at ease with the epics, the Ramayan and the Mahabharat, and the stories from the Panchantantra. But I would like to see this past recovered and not dodged. That foolish man Nirad Chaudhuri, who wrote one good book, then went into kind of absurd fantasy, he built a whole book around somebody who came with the invaders, Al-Beruni, who said, “the Hindus are very violent and aggressive people”. Their land is being taken away from them, they are being destroyed and enslaved and he

says this. This foolish man Chaudhuri builds a book around this statement; that is the kind of absurdity we have to avoid.”⁷⁰⁷

He sees India as a vast and ancient civilization that successfully met its own challenges centuries ago. It was first disconcerted, then subjugated, and finally released by the West in a damaged condition. Islam, he claimed, had both enslaved and attempted to wipe out other cultures. He has touched upon the consequences of a series of Muslim invasions of India beginning in the 10th century—and remarked on how these invasions had “shattered” Indian (at that time almost exclusively Hindu) civilization. “There probably has been no imperialism like that of Islam and the Arabs,”

He has strongly supported the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and the idea to build a temple at Ayodhya and expressed his sympathy for Hindu Revivalism.

Naipaul has astutely indicated that:

“India was trampled over, fought over. You had the invasions and you had the absence of a response to them. There was an absence even of the idea of a people, of a nation defending itself. Only now are people beginning to understand that there has been a great vandalizing of India. The movement is now from below. It has to be dealt with. It is not enough to abuse these youths or use that fashionable word from Europe, ‘fascism’. There is a big, historical development going on in India.”⁷⁰⁸

He has pointed that India was one of the cultural basins of the world till about 1400 AD or so, but it had declined since then.⁷⁰⁹

He has intelligently reflected that:

“India has been a wounded civilization because of Islamic violence. Pakistanis know this; indeed they revel in it. It is only Indian Nehruvians like Romila Thapar who pretend that Islamic rule was benevolent. We should face facts: Islamic rule in India was at least as catastrophic as the later Christian rule. The Christians created massive poverty in what was a most prosperous country; the Muslims created a terrorized civilization out of what was the most creative culture that ever existed.”⁷¹⁰

Naipaul described the mosque's destruction as being part of a "mighty creative process" unleashed by Hindus. The people who say that there was no temple there are missing the point. Babar, you must understand, had contempt for the country he had conquered. And his building of that mosque was an act of contempt for the country. Today, it seems to me that Indians are becoming alive to their history. Romila Thapar's book on Indian history is a Marxist attitude to history, which in substance says: there is a higher truth behind the invasions, feudalism and all that. The correct truth is the way the invaders looked at their actions. They were conquering, they were subjugating. And they were in a country where people never understood this.

"What is happening in India is a new historical awakening....Indian intellectuals, who want to be secure in their liberal beliefs, may not understand what is going on. But every other Indian knows precisely what is happening: deep down he knows that a larger response is emerging even if at times this response appears in his eyes to be threatening." ⁷¹¹

He rightly terms Hindu militancy as a 'creative force'. "Dangerous or not, it's a necessary corrective to history and will continue to remain so." He feels that India was renewing herself, yet again, from her own inexhaustible stream of history and civilization, her native genius.

Sir Naipaul has reasoned that: "Indian intellectuals have a responsibility to the state and should start a debate on the Muslim psyche."

Like French scholar, Guy Sorman, Naipaul also echoes that:

"To speak of Hindu fundamentalism, is a contradiction in terms, it does not exist. Hinduism is not this kind of religion. You know, there are no laws in Hinduism. And there are many forces in Hinduism.... My interest in these popular movements is due to the pride they restore to their adherents in a country ravaged by five or six centuries of brutal government by Muslim invaders. These populations, in particular the peasantry, have been so

crushed, that any movement provides a certain sense of pride. The leftists who claim that these wretched folk are fascists are wrong. It's absurd. I think that they are only reclaiming a little of their own identity. We can't discuss it using a Western vocabulary."

"I think every liberal person should extend a hand to that kind of movement from the bottom. One takes the longer view rather than the political view. There's a great upheaval in India and if you're interested in India, you must welcome it."

"What is happening in India is a new, historical awakening. Gandhi used religion in a way as to marshal people for the independence cause. People who entered the independence movement did it because they felt they would earn individual merit. Only now are the people beginning to understand that there has been a great vandalising of India. Because of the nature of the conquest and the nature of Hindu society such understanding had eluded Indians before." ⁷¹²

He has commented on the utter destruction of Hindu temples:

"I think when you see so many Hindu temples of the tenth century or earlier time disfigured, defaced, you know that they were not just defaced for fun: that something terrible happened. I feel that the civilization of that closed world was mortally wounded by those invasions. And I would like people, as it were, to be more reverential towards the past, to try to understand it; to preserve it; instead of living in its ruins. The Old World is destroyed. That has to be understood. The ancient Hindu India was destroyed."

⁷¹³

"The older I get, the more Hindu I become." ⁷¹⁴

Arun Shourie (1941 -) was a Rajya Sabha member and is amongst India's best known commentators on current and political affairs. His writings are backed by rigorous analysis and meticulous research. Shourie has been an economist with the World Bank, a consultant in the planning commission and the editor of Indian Express. Among the many honors and awards, he has received the Magsaysay Award, the International Editor of the Year, the Dadabhai Naoroji and the Astor Award. He is the author of several books, including

Secular Agenda (1997), *Missionaries in India* (1996), *Eminent Historians* (1998) and *Harvesting Our Souls, Religions in Politics* (2000).

Shourie has intelligently observed that:

“The traditions of India were rich as can be. They had attained insights of the first water...And they were inclusive. A person devoted to a tree was not traduced as an ‘animist’, a person devoted to a bull or an elephant, or a lion or a snake or even the lowly mouse was not laughed away. The objects of his devotion were received with reverence - they became part of a pantheon.. Nor was this artifice. The inclusiveness flowed from deep conviction, from what had been experienced at the deepest.. But no one could impede reform by an appeal to ‘fundamentals’, for these fundamentals made the individual’s own experience the ultimate referent. That everything should reform and transform, the tradition regarded as natural. Differences were harmonized through discourse...”⁷¹⁵

Guy Sorman (1944 -) is a French intellectual, writer, economist and a professor of political science at Paris University, visiting scholar at Hoover Institution at Stanford and the leader of new liberalism in France. He has observed India with a keen eye, a great deal of intelligence and genuine affection.

He is the author of *The Genius of India - (Le Genie de l'Inde)* (2001).

He has observed prudently that:

“Temporal notions in Europe were overturned by an India rooted in eternity. The Bible had been the yardstick for measuring time, but the infinitely vast time cycles of India suggested that the world was much older than anything the Bible spoke of. It seems as if the Indian mind was better prepared for the chronological mutations of Darwinian evolution and astrophysics.”

He has commented on the wise division of life in India:

“Here is a philosophy far removed from the grotesque refusal to grow old in the West, where wisdom has been replaced by

cosmetic surgery and psychiatric help.”

“The Indian tradition, on the other hand, is that men submit to nature and form part of it, there nature preserves its sacredness, lost in the West since the Industrial Revolution.” He further states that the idea of feminism and ecology came from the 1968 movement, from the meeting between India and the West. He says: “There is hardly anything in European thought to predispose the West to reject virility, the respect for authority, the mastery over nature. India too has a warrior (khastriya) tradition of virility as exemplified in the Mahabharata, only it is secondary. First, comes the veneration of thousands of goddesses - for the Indians, India is above all Mother India. India’s femininity and sexual ambiguity, is the very antithesis of Western virility. For example, when the British scaled earth’s highest peak, the exploit was widely hailed as the “conquest of the Everest.” It was not realized and is often not realized still, that the word “conquest” was totally out of place in the context of the peak which is considered an object of reverence by many.”

Comparing the learning tradition of India and China, he remarks that:

“The Brahmins attached to knowledge and learning is what has helped the Indian civilization endure and allowed the arts to flourish. If comparisons have to be made, it may be said that the endurance of the Brahmins in India has kept her elite intact, whereas in neighboring China the anti-intellectualism of communist peasants has completely wiped out the intelligentsia of that country. The Brahmins kept knowledge and art alive in India, preserving not only their savant but also their popular forms. The Brahmin elite is perhaps egoistical and domineering, nonetheless it has preserved a sense of dignity and beauty that has disappeared from China where all that remains is vulgarity and crass ignorance.”

“The more decentralized, diversified and ritualized a religion is the better it can withstand the onslaught of rationalist thought. Hinduism derives its strength from the fact that it is not a single unified religion but the sum total of thousands of local faiths. Every village has its own cult, rooted in the local culture without any universalistic pretensions.”

“India is a marvelous example of the art of living together at a time when Westerners are apprehensive about the future of their society.”

With great wisdom and intelligence he has pointed out that:

“You cannot be a Hindu fundamentalist. It does not mean anything...The concept of fundamentalism does not exist in Hinduism.” No one man embodies the spirit of universalism, it runs through the whole of India and there is a place for all religious groups and communities. The spiritual message of India is her capacity to let so many divergent practices coexist. The Enlightenment philosophers seemed to have grasped this profound originality...This is the real message of India.”

He has observed:

“India has a strong cultural image in the west; unfortunately, it is not being commercially exploited.” This should sink into the heads of those of us who are happy to be third-rate imitators of the US.”

Sorman asserts that India is not a rogue state when he talks of the nuclear option. But there seem to be some Indians who are not so sure of their own country. He points out that “Nobody knows what is right. Each civilization...has its sense of the right. No one can impose his perception of right over others.”

About the spirit of religious tolerance he has pointed out that:

“Each Indian looks for God in his own way and worships one or several of the millions of deities who are the supposed reincarnation or expression of God, a Spirit or a Force. This has never led to a religious war. There have been communal clashes, but India has never had to face religious wars or crusades save those that were thrust on it from outside. The multiple revelation of the East has proved to be in many ways more advantageous than the single revelation of the West.” ⁷¹⁶

Deepak Chopra (1947 -) Vedantic sage and wise-man from the East, author of several books including *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* (1993).

He says of Hinduism:

“I find that Vedanta, of all great traditions, does have a framework that I can come to terms with as a person who thinks that science is the most legitimate way of understanding the secrets of nature.”

“I regard Vedanta as a source which inspired Hinduism.” He emphasizes the Bhagavad Gita, as one of the gemstones of the Vedantic traditions.”⁷¹⁷

Georg Feuerstein (1947 -) is a specialist in the Sanskrit literature of yoga and has written considerable number of articles on various aspects of Indian thought. He has written various books including the *Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy, and Practice* (2001) and *The Introduction to the Bhagavad Gita: Its philosophy and Cultural Setting*.

He maintains that:

“From earliest times Indian man has shown a distinct predilection for philosophical speculation about the nature of man and the universe. Long before the rise of Greek thought, he grappled with the profoundest problems of philosophy. By the time the Gita was compiled, philosophical enquiry had already reached a noteworthy degree of maturity, complexity and coherence. The musings of the early Vedic seers had developed in depth and breadth as well as in clarity and precision.”

“The dry, academically stilted approach of contemporary Indology, with little interest in the inner meaning of its subject matter, becomes singularly apparent in the Gita, which is brimming with significance.”⁷¹⁸

Feuerstein notes on the versatility of India’s spiritual tradition:

“India’s spirituality is undoubtedly the most versatile in the world. In fact, it is hard to think of any metaphysical problem or solution that has not already been thought of by the sages and pundits of ancient or medieval India.”

“Our world, the sages of ancient India tell us, is but a wonderfully bewitching collage of name (nama) and form (rupa). In this they anticipated contemporary philosophy.”

“God is not the Creator-God of deistic religions like Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Rather, God is the transcendental totality of existence, which in the non-dualist schools of Hinduism is styled the Brahman, “Absolute.”

He reflects on the nature of India’s enduring culture:

“In a sense, Monoism justifies the emotional discord apparent in most of its Occidental followers and rationalizes their self-centeredness. In the case of India, this is the whole pan-en-theistic current of thought so beautifully exemplified in the Gita, some Upanishads, the Schools of Vaisnavism, The Saktivada of the Hindu Tantras and in the remarkable South Indian system of Saiva-Siddhanta. This proliferative movement was of cardinal importance in the making of India. By acting as a counter-balance to the other-worldliness of the monistic trends, it literally prevented the Indian culture from total self-extinction.” ⁷¹⁹

Michael Cremo (1948 -) was born in Schenectady, NY, and he received his first copy of the *Bhagavad-Gita* from some Hare Krishnas at a Grateful Dead concert. He later joined the group and began writing for the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust at ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness).

In the 1993, 900-page tome, *Forbidden Archeology* and its condensed version, *Hidden History of the Human Race*, co-authors Michael Cremo and Richard Thompson brought forth largely unknown evidence illustrating that modern humans worked and walked the earth millions of years ago, even as far back as 2 billion years ago.

He has written:

“The idea of ape-men is not something that was invented by Darwinists of the nineteenth century. Long before that, the ancient Sanskrit writings were speaking of creatures with apelike bodies, humanlike intelligence, and a low level of material culture. For example, the Ramayana speaks of the Vanaras, a species of apelike men that existed millions of years ago. But alongside these ape-men existed humans of our type. The relationship was one of coexistence rather than evolution.”

Talking about the cyclical concept of time in Vedic tradition, he writes:

“The Hindu, or Vedic, concept of time is cyclical. There are cycles within cycles within cycles. The basic unit of this cyclical time is called the day of Brahma. It lasts about 4.3 billion years. It’s followed by a night of Brahma, which also lasts about 4.3 billion years. The days follow the nights endlessly in succession. During the days, life is manifested in the universe, and during the nights it’s dormant. The current day of Brahma, the one we are in now, began about 2 billion years ago. So by this account, we should expect to see signs of life, including human life, going back about 2 billion years on earth. Modern geologists give the earth an age of about 6 billion years. I think there is also a Vedic parallel here as well. First, we have to keep in mind that the Vedic conception of the universe is that it’s pretty much like a virtual reality system, giving the conscious self a temporary domain of experience, apart from the eternal domain of the realm of pure consciousness, or spirit. Under this conception, I picture the earth, our particular domain of experience, as being somewhat like a rewritable CD or DVD disk. It’s erased at the end of each day of Brahma.”

Illustrates the interesting parallels between Vedic and modern science he writes:

“This is an interesting parallel between the Vedic and modern scientific accounts. Also, the day of Brahma is divided into 14 subcycles called manvantara periods, each lasting about 300 million years. Between each one there is devastation, after which the earth has to be repopulated. We are now in the seventh manvantara cycle, and that means there have been six devastations over the past 2 billion years. Modern paleontology also tells us that the history of life on earth has been interrupted by six major extinction events, spaced at intervals of hundreds of millions of years, the last being the one that wiped out the dinosaurs about 65 million years ago.”

“True ancient Hindu cosmology was “dismantled” by Europeans in order to bring it into line with the biblical time scale. This happened during the 18th and 19th centuries. They tried to fit everything within five thousand years.” ⁷²⁰

Rajiv Malhotra is an Indian scholar. After studying in Delhi's St. Columba's High School and then St. Stephen's College, Rajiv arrived in the US in 1971 to study Physics and Computer Science. His corporate careers and business entrepreneurship included the computer, software and telecom industries. He now spends full time with The Infinity Foundation, a non-profit organization in Princeton, New Jersey.

Malhotra has pointed out that:

"In Hinduism, there is no central authority to control people's personal beliefs in Hinduism, which respects many paths. There are many God-Truths, but these are merely representations by different people of a single God-Truth. This has given rise to hundreds of sects and sub sects within Hinduism, which have learned to coexist."

Writing perceptively about the uniqueness of Hinduism, he says:

"In Hinduism, there is no concept similar to Christian martyrdom or Islamic jihad. The most important and revered historical figures of Hinduism were not martyrs. Spirituality is not about fighting someone or some religion. There is no discussion of other religions in Hindu scriptures, no campaigns against "false gods." Comparative religion is not of much interest to Hindus, as they do not see religion through competitive or predatory eyes. Comparative religion is not of much interest to Hindus, as they do not see religion through competitive or predatory eyes. Christians, on the other hand, go out of their way to control positions in academics, to research and to teach about Hinduism, as a sort of competitor intelligence gathering, which seeks hegemony."

He points out that Hinduism is not history-dependent as are the Abrahmic religions:

"Hindus fail to understand the critical history-dependence of the Abrahamic religions and the way their core myths and institutions are built around these frozen smritis. Often what Hindus really mean is that all religions are equal in the respect and rights they deserve, but they confuse this with sameness. Hindu scholars to

develop a rigorous approach to purva-paksha (scholarly critiques of other traditions within the framework of the Indian darshanas); to highlight the Hindu history of constructions through its own smriti traditions; and to refute false presuppositions about Hinduism that have spread into many academic disciplines.” ⁷²¹

David Frawley (1950 -) also known as Pandit Vamadeva Shastri, is an American teacher and practitioner of Ayurvedic medicine and Vedic astrology. He is the author of several books, including *Arise Arjuna: Hinduism and the modern world* (1995) and *Awaken Bharata: A Call for India's Rebirth* (1998) in which the need for a new intelligentsia, “intellectual kshatriya” or intellectual warrior class trained in Vedic dharma, to handle challenges was emphasized.

He affirms that:

“The Hindu mind represents humanity’s oldest and most continuous stream of conscious intelligence on the planet. Hindu sages, seers, saints, yogis and jnanis have maintained an unbroken current of awareness linking humanity with the Divine since the dawn of history, and as carried over from earlier cycles of civilization in previous humanities unknown to our present spiritually limited culture.”

“The Hindu mind has a vision of eternity and infinity. It is aware of the vast cycles of creation and destruction that govern the many universes and innumerable creatures within them.” ⁷²²

He considers Hinduism to be a religion of the Earth, because, as he describes beautifully:

“ ..It honors the Earth as the Divine Mother and encourages us to honor her and help her develop her creative potentials. The deities of Hinduism permeate the world of nature...they don't belong to a single country or book only. It is not necessary to live in India to be a Hindu. In fact, one must live in harmony with the land where one is located to be a true Hindu.”

“I see Hinduism as a religion eminently suited for all lands and for all people because it requires that we connect with the land and its creatures - that we align our individual self with the soul of all beings around us. Hinduism finds holy places everywhere,

wherever there is a river, a mountain, a large rock, or big tree, wherever some unusual natural phenomenon be it a spring, a cave, or a geyser.”

“True religion, whether it predominates in the Eastern or Western parts of the world, is not a matter of geography,” says Frawley. “All the religions of the world are followed in areas far beyond the geographical locale of their origin. Religion speaks of the ultimate issues of life and death and should orient us to the Eternal and the Universal. In this respect, Hinduism with its universal view has greater relevance for all human beings than any belief system, which divides humanity into believers and non-believers.” ⁷²³

Talking about the freedom and pluralism in Indic traditions, he has rightly remarked that:

“The Indian tradition is pluralistic and has always offered freedom of worshipping the divine in the name and form of one’s choice and according to one’s individual samskaras. It is pluralistic both at the level of religious practices as well as philosophical teachings. For this reason we find more religions inside Hinduism than among all of the world’s religions put together.”

“Pluralism means freedom. It means that we should accept religious differences as a fact of life, like other natural variations. We need freedom to arrive at the truth. The pursuit of dharma, the urge for self-realization and desire for liberation are common to all paths. Rather than as a cause for confusion, I see Indian pluralism as constructively facilitating an individual’s spiritual quest.” ⁷²⁴

David Frawley has convincingly argued the central value of Hinduism is not “tolerance” (as interested parties try to make Hindus believe) but truth. ⁷²⁵

Francois Gautier (1950 -) is Paris-born, and has lived in India for 30 years, is a political analyst for *Le Figaro*, one of France’s largest circulation newspapers. He defends Indian nationalism. He caused a storm of controversy in India by advocating reunification with Pakistan. Author of several books, including *A Western*

journalist on India: The Ferengi's Columns (2002), *Arise O' India* (2002) and *Rewriting Indian History* (2003).

He has called India, The Spiritual leader of the world and has held that:

“Ancient Hindus were intensely secular in spirit, as their spirituality was absolutely non-sectarian - and still is today in a lesser measure. Seven thousand years ago, Vedic sages, to define the Universal Law, which they had experienced within themselves on an occult and supra-spiritual plane, had invented the word dharma. In a nutshell, dharma is all that which helps you to become more and more aware of jiva inside yourself.”

“India also survived the immense threat of European colonialization, which has annihilated the souls of so many countries, some more powerful than India. The British came, conquered...understood nothing...left nothing...and India's spirituality remained. It survived the cruel partition of its ancient land, tearing its limbs into Pakistan and Bangladesh any other nation might never have recovered from such a maiming. It survives today the Hindu-bashing of its westernized elite...”

“Thus, for India, the Muslims invasions and later the European ones, must be the result of bad karma....India's soul is so strong, so old, so vibrant, that she has managed so far to survive the terrible Muslim onslaughts and later the more devious British soul-stifling occupation.”

Pointing eloquently to the wisdom of ancient Rishis of India he notes:

“Yet because of this extraordinary spirituality, because of the Dharma stored by its great Rishis, India always had the extra impetus to renew itself, to spring forward again, when it seemed she was on the brink of collapsing.” ⁷²⁶

Speaking about the legendary tolerance of Hinduism, he recently wrote:

“But, once again my “fringe” Hindu brothers and sisters, as well as the Christian and Muslim communities of India, should remind themselves than in the entire Indian history, Hinduism has always

shown that it is not fundamentalist, that it accepts the others with their religions and customs as long as they do not try to impose these beliefs on the majority community.”

“Indeed, in a recent report, UNESCO pointed out that out of 128 countries where Jews lived before Israel was created, only one, India, did not persecute them and allowed them to prosper and practice Judaism in peace.”

“Hinduism is probably the only religion in the world, which has never tried to convert others, or conquer other countries to propagate itself as a new religion. The same is not true of Islam and Christianity.” ⁷²⁷

Gautier mocks India’s elite intelligentsia’s obsession with the West and all things Western and asks them:

“O members of the Indian intelligentsia! You think that reading the latest New York Times bestseller, speaking polished English, and putting down your own countrymen, especially anybody who has a Hindu connection, makes you an intellectual. But in the process you have not only lost your roots, you have turned your back on a culture and civilisation that is thousands of years old and has given so much to the world. You are forgetting what a privilege it is to be born an Indian — and a Hindu at that — inheritors of a spirituality that accepts that God manifests Himself under different names, at different times, when today the world’s two biggest monotheistic religions still think their God is the only true one and it is their duty to convert everybody by guile or force.”

He reminds us that:

“For the greatness of India is spiritual. The world has lost the truth. We have lost the Great Sense, the meaning of our evolution, the meaning of why so much suffering, why dying, why getting born, why this earth, who we are, what is the soul, what is reincarnation, where is the ultimate truth about the world, the universe... But India has kept this truth. India has preserved it through seven millennia of pitfalls, genocides, and mistakes. And this was meant to be India’s gift to this planet in this century: to restore to the world its true sense, to recharge humanity with the

real meaning and spirit of life. India can become the spiritual leader of the world, if only its own people will allow it.”⁷²⁸

Serge Trifkovic (1954 -) has received his PhD from the University of Southampton in England and pursued postdoctoral research at the Hoover Institution at Stanford. His past journalistic outlets have included the BBC World Service, the Voice of America, CNN International, MSNBC, U.S. News & World Report, The Washington Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer, The Times of London, and the Cleveland Plain Dealer. He is foreign affairs editor of *Chronicles*.

He is the author of *The Sword of the Prophet: History, Theology, Impact on the World* (2002) and he has observed in his article about India prior to Moslem invasion:

“India prior to the Moslem invasions was one of the world’s great civilizations. Tenth century Hindustan matched its contemporaries in the East and the West in the realms of philosophy, mathematics, and natural science. Indian mathematicians discovered the number zero (not to mention other things, like algebra, that were later transmitted to a Moslem world which mistaken has received credit for them.)”

“Medieval India, before the Moslem invasion, was a richly imaginative culture, one of the half-dozen most advanced civilizations of all time. Its sculptures were vigorous and sensual, its architecture ornate and spellbinding. And these were indigenous achievements and not, as in the case of many of the more celebrated high-points of Moslem culture, relics of pre-Moslem civilizations that Moslems had overrun.”⁷²⁹

Michel Danino (1956 -) was born in 1956 at Honfleur (France) into a Jewish family recently emigrated from Morocco, from the age of fifteen Michel Danino was drawn to India, some of her great yogis, and soon to Sri Aurobindo and Mother and their view of evolution which gives a new meaning to our existence on this earth. He has settled in Tamil Nadu for 25 years and has given many lectures in India and is author of *The Invasion That Never Was* (1996), *The Indian Mind Then and Now* and *Kali Yuga or*

The Age of Confusion and Is Indian Culture Obsolete? (2002). He is also the convener of the International Forum for India's Heritage.

He remarks on Indian culture:

"The so-called "New Age" trend of the 1960s owed as much to India as to America; a number of Western universities offer excellent courses on various aspects of Indian civilization, and if you want to attend some major symposium on Indian culture or India's ancient history, you may have to go to the U.S.A.; some physicists are not shy of showing parallels between quantum mechanics and yogic science; ecologists call for a recognition of our deeper connection with Nature such as we find in the Indian view of the world; a few psychologists want to learn from Indian insights into human nature; hatha yoga has become quite popular."

Danino has shown the reverence with which nature is held in Hinduism.

"In fact, since the start of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the West broke away from Nature and began regarding her as so much inanimate matter to be exploited (a polite word for plunder). The contrast with the ancient Indian attitude is as stark as could be. Indian tradition regards the earth as a goddess, Bhudevi; her consort, Vishnu, the supreme divinity, incarnates from age to age to relieve her of the burden of demonic forces—sometimes of humanity itself. This he does out of love for the earth, his companion. Sita means, "furrow," and she returned to the earth whence she came. Shiva too is bound to the earth through Parvati, daughter of Himavat, i.e. the Himalayas. Earth and Heaven are therefore inseparable: "Heaven is my father; my mother is this vast earth, my close kin," says the *Rig-Veda* (I.164.33)." ⁷³⁰

He indicates that:

"Western civilization, not even three centuries after the Industrial Revolution, is now running out of breath. It has no direction, no healthy foundations, no value left except selfishness and greed, nothing to fill one's heart with. India alone has preserved something of the deeper values that can make a man human, and

the world will surely be turning to them in search of a remedy to its advanced malady.”

“Once India’s ancientness is recognized, we can understand the strength that enabled her civilization to survive through all those ages. Whether she will survive her present phase of degradation and lead the world to a new phase is the question.” ⁷³¹

“If [Indian] teachers were not so ignorant, as a rule, of their own culture, they would have no difficulty in showing their students that the much vaunted ‘scientific temper’ is nothing new to India.” ⁷³²

Dr. Koenraad Elst (1959 -) is a Dutch historian, a scholar. He was born in Leuven, Belgium, into a Flemish (i.e. Dutch-speaking Belgian) Catholic family. He graduated in Philosophy, Chinese Studies and Indo-Iranian Studies at the Catholic University of Leuven. During a stay at the Benares Hindu University, he discovered India’s communal problem and wrote his first book about the budding Ayodhya conflict.

He is the author of several books including *Ayodhya and After: Issues Before Hindu Society* (1991), *Decolonising The Hindu Mind- Ideological Development of Hindu Revivalism* (2001), *Bharatiya Janata Party vis-a-vis Hindu Resurgence* (1997) and *Negationism in India: Concealing the Record of Islam* (1992).

He is a strong advocate for Hindu revivalism in the West.

He writes judiciously that:

“The struggle of Hindu society is not primarily with the Muslim community. The most important opponents of Hindu society today are not the Islamic communal leaders, but the interiorized colonial rulers of India, the alienated English-educated and mostly Left-leaning elite that noisily advertises its “secularism.” It is these people who impose anti-Hindu policies on Hindu society, and who keep Hinduism down and prevent it from proudly raising its head after a thousand years of oppression.”

“The Hindu fight is not at all with Muslims; the fight is between Hindus anxious to renew themselves in the spirit of their

civilization, and the state, Indian in name and not in spirit and the political and intellectual class trapped in the debris the British managed to bury us under before they left.”

Dr. Elst has rightly pointed out that:

“The worst torment for Hindu society today is this mental slavery, this sense of inferiority which Leftist intellectuals, through their power positions in education and the media, and their direct influence on the public and political arena, keep on inflicting on the Hindu mind.”

“Pride in being Indian means, for 99%, pride in Hinduism. So, this legitimate pride has to be nourished with broad and in-depth knowledge of Hindu culture. The two enemies of this effort are the pseudo-secularist morbidity that glorifies the destroyers of Hindu culture, and discourages its study altogether...”

He has revealed the bias of Western scholars to Hinduism:

“Most Western scholars positively dislike Hinduism when it stands up to defend itself. They prefer museum Hinduism, or innocent Gandhian kind of Hinduism, and they readily buy the secularist story that an assertive Hinduism is not the “real Hinduism”.⁷³³

Elst wisely notes that Eastern philosophy has appeal in the West these days because “of their aura of rationality and the absence of a conflict between science and religion as there is in Islam or Christianity.”⁷³⁴

He has observed:

“Hinduism applauds diversity and consequently accepts that people of different temperaments, circumstances and levels of understanding develop different viewpoints and different forms to express even the same view point. In that sense, it has always paid equal respect to shramanas and brahmanas, to jnana and bhakti etc. It showed samabhava to all traditions, which counted as dharma. This respect was never extended to adharma practices and doctrines such as Christianity and Islam, the religions for whose benefit the slogan is used mostly.”

He has further indicated that:

“The fundamental mistake of Indian secularism is that Hinduism is put in the same category as Islam and Christianity. Islam and Christianity’s intrinsic irrationality and hostility to independent critical thought warranted secularism as a kind of containment policy. By contrast, Hinduism recognizes freedom of thought and does not need to be contained by secularism.”

“Historically, Hindus have quickly recognized Islam and missionary Christianity as *mleccha*, barbaric predatory religions, not as instances of *dharma* to which any respect is due. Until Swami Dayananda Saraswati, they didn’t even consider these religions as worthy of a detailed critique.”

Without much ado, he vigorously states that:

“Christianity and Islam are wrong in their central truth claims and can immediately be discarded. Humanity has lived without these pretentious doctrines for long, and that it is a matter of mathematical certainty that it will resume doing so. The question is only how much damage they will be allowed to add to their record before expiring.” “A very optimistic objection could be that Hindu society need not bother about Christianity and Islam, because the thrust of their historical aggression against Hinduism is weakening and will weaken further in the future. It has happened before; while Communists were plotting the death of Hinduism and the dismemberment of India, the *Hindutva* movement did very little to counter Communism, yet Communism collapsed under its own failure in its very stronghold.” ⁷³⁵

“The Hindu revivalist movement perceives itself as the cultural chapter of India’s decolonization. This means that it tries to free the Indians from the colonial condition at the mental and cultural level, to complete the process of political and economic decolonization. The need for “reviving” Hinduism springs from the fact that the said hostile ideologies (mostly Islam) have managed to eliminate Hinduism physically in certain geographic parts and social segments of India, and also (mostly the Western ideology) to neutralize the Hindu spirit among many nominal Hindus.” ⁷³⁶

He advocates the intellectual mobilization of Hindu society.

He has observed:

“Consider the situation in Africa: in 1900, 50% of all Africans practiced Pagan religions; today, Christian and Islamic missionaries have reduced this number to less than 10%. This is the kind of threat Hinduism is up against. So far, the biggest success of these aggressors is at the level of thought: many Hindus have interiorized the depreciation of Hindu culture and society which their enemies have been feeding them from the relative power positions....” ⁷³⁷

“Hindu tradition is based on the experience of sages, sane men and women who observed the world and explored consciousness. Its approach is scientific: the Vedic truths are verifiable, universal and repeatable, not dependent on the views of privileged individuals (“prophets”) but apaurusheya, “impersonal”. ⁷³⁸

Stephen Knapp (Sri Nandanandana Dasa) is an American born author of several books including *The Secret Teachings of the Vedas: The Eastern Answers to the Mysteries of Life* (1993) and *Proof of Vedic Culture's Global Existence* (2000).

He has observed the following about the total freedom in Hinduism:

“One of the unique things about Vedic philosophy is that within the many texts it contains, it deals with all varieties of viewpoints, from impersonalistic atheism, outright materialism, to loving devotion to God. And you have room to discover and realize the knowledge at your own rate, whether it be many months, many years, or even lifetimes. In other words, you may at first be an impersonalist persuasion and believe that the Supreme is only a great unembodied force. Or you might believe that God is a person. Or you may worship Durga, Ganesh, Shiva, Vishnu or Krishna, and still be considered on the Vedic path, though on different parts of the path. But this is the sort of freedom and opportunity you have in the Vedic philosophy for your growth and development. However, we find that in other religions, such as Christianity and Islam, if you question or doubt the local scriptures or authorities, or argue different points of view, or look

for answers from another religion, your faith will be questioned, you may be called a heretic, and you may even be excommunicated from the Church, which is supposed to equate with eternal damnation. This is obviously a very closed minded discipline to work in compared to the freedom of Vedic system. After all, what kind of God would make a system in which you have only one life to live and only one chance to discover how to attain Him, and then follow all the scriptural demands and requirements or face eternal damnation?"

Knapp has contrasted Vedic Religions with Semitic faiths thus:

"In fact, history shows that the three traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have, in their monotheistic theology developed patterns and traits of prejudice, intolerance, violence and war against all other religions and cultures. In fact, the history of these three religions shows that they have spread primarily because of political intolerance for other religions, militant zeal, and through fear of persecution, rather than by spiritual purity. Hinduism, on the other hand, has not spread on the basis of fear, whether that fear is of political persecution or fear of a wrathful God."

"The Vedic philosophy contains the oldest spiritual texts of any religion in the world, and its more advanced concepts can be difficult for event the greatest scholars of the West to fathom." ⁷³⁹

"The Vedas are not new to the Western world. There have been seekers, writers, poets, philosophers, and people of all levels who have appreciated the depth, inspiration, and insight of Vedic thought for many years." ⁷⁴⁰

Dr. Frank Gaetano Morales aka Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya is an author of *Experiencing Truth: The Vedic Way of Knowing God*. He earned a Ph.D in Languages and Cultures of Asia from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He specializes in Sanskrit, Hindu Studies, Philosophy of Religion and History of Religion. At the young age of 14, Dr. Morales visited a Hindu temple for the first time. So awed was he with the majestic beauty and spiritual power that he encountered in this temple that, on the spot, he decided to devote his life to the path of Yoga. After living the life

of a celibate Yoga monk for six years, Dr. Morales was ordained as a brahmana (a spiritual teacher) in 1986. His Sanskrit name is Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya. He is a follower of the ancient Vishishta-Advaita philosophy of Ramanuja.

He has defined Hinduism as Sanatan Dharma:

“The Sanskrit word “Sanatana” denotes that which always is, that which has neither beginning nor end, that which is eternal. Sanatana Dharma can cautiously be translated as The Eternal Natural Way”. Hinduism is a way of life and world-view that is trans-geographical: traces of Sanatana Dharma are to be found in many of the ancient cultures of the world. No one actually knows when Sanatana Dharma was first started. Both practitioners of Hinduism, as well as all academic scholars of Hinduism, agree that there was no one specific time in known history when the religion was founded. Additionally, there was no one individual - a prophet, saint or priest - who can be claimed as the founder of the religion. It is an eternal spiritual culture that is as old as the Earth herself. Moreover, it is the sustainer of the Earth. This is indicated by the meanings of the two words that constitute the very name of this culture: sanatana means “eternal” and dharma means “natural law.” ⁷⁴¹

Dr. Morales wisely points out the bias in European studies on Hinduism:

“The related terms “myth”, “mythology”, “mythological”, etc., have had an interesting history and a very pointed polemic use. That the terms are rife with very negative connotations is doubted by very few. The way the terms are used today both within academia, as well as by the general public, is to denote something, which is untrue, false, “primitive” (i.e., not European), a lie. Polemically speaking, one culture’s “myth” is another culture’s sacred history...and visa versa. The academic field of the study of “mythological” literature was started by 18th century European Classicists who took their misconceptions about their own Greco-Roman pre-Christian religious and cultural heritage and attempted to apply them to all contemporary non-Christian cultures - including that of Bharat. There is the wonderful saying that we have all heard, that “history” is written by the victors.

Consequently, the stories of Noah's Ark, Abraham, Moses, the Judges, David, etc. are unquestioningly accepted by most European historians - and sadly by many Hindu historians! - as being incontrovertible and established fact. What these Western scholars and their Westernized Indian counterparts called the "mythical" Sarasvati River, for example, was discovered to be a concrete geological fact in our century by satellite photography; Krishna's "mythical" city of Dvaraka was, likewise, discovered off the coast of Gujarat about two decades ago. Despite these facts, the Puranas, Itihasas and traditional histories of Bharat, unlike the Biblical "myths", are relegated by modern Western scholars to the misty realm of "myth". Bluntly: primitive fables. If you've guessed that what has brought this situation about has been nothing less than European racism and intellectual colonialism, coupled with a strong element of Hindu inferiority complex, you've guessed right! The terms "myth", "mythology", "mythological", etc., have been used as a powerful weapon by anti-Hindu bigots for decades as a way of delegitimizing Hindu beliefs and the Hindu way of life. Such terms should be absolutely anathema to every sincere and self-respecting Hindu when speaking about the sacred stories of Sanatana Dharma. Our stories are not "myths". If we truly respect our religion, our culture, our selves, we must never use these terms again. Rather, we should do what many other formally oppressed non-Christian cultures have recently done (such as many Native American tribes), and call these "Sacred Stories".⁷⁴²

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Chapter 10

Spiritual Life

“The spiritual men of India, a great and watchful multitude whose spiritual status is unattainable, are many of them catholic in a deeper sense than we of the West have yet given to the word....”

- *Dr. L P (Lawrence Pearsall) Jacks*



Vedic Rishis or Sages of Ancient India.

"The spiritual men of India, a great and watchful multitude, are many of them catholic in a deeper sense than we of the West have yet given to the word...."

"On the tree of wisdom there is no fairer flower than the Upanishads, and no finer fruit than the Vedanta philosophy."

(From author's collection of photos.)

Spiritual Life

Spiritual is that which pertains to the spirit or soul, as distinguished from the physical nature. From the beginning of her history, India has not venerated statesmen or soldiers, or leaders of industry, or poets and philosophers. Instead, those spirits who have heard the call of the spiritual life have been the focus of her respect. Saints and religious souls like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sant Eknath, Ramana Maharishi of Arunachala, Ramanuja, Sant Jnaneshwar, Goswami Tulsi Das, Samarth Ramdass, Sant Tukaram, Mirabai and others who offered hope and harmony have showed us our spiritual potentials. The Upanishads tells us that the saint is the one who has been liberated from all desires and has become immortal by attaining supreme identity with God.



The Fourth Caliph, Ali bin Abi Talib (656 - 661 A.D.) was one of the early people who believed in the religion of Islam while still a boy. He lived in the Prophet's house and imitated him in all he did, led a humble life till the last moment of his life.

He had remarked:

“The land where books were first written and from where wisdom and knowledge sprang is India.”

(Note: Many Islamic traditions support the high standing of Indian

culture with the Arabs. This shows the affection and respect of early Muslims had for India. In any case, Caliph Umar, was opposed to attacking India, even when he was told that “Indian rivers are pearls, her mountains rubies, her trees perfumes,” for he regarded India as a country of complete freedom of thought and belief where Muslims and others were free to practice their faith). ⁷⁴³

Severus Sebokht of Nisibis - Despite his surname Sebokht, which is Persian, he proclaimed himself a Syrian. He was an astronomer and one of the foremost scientific writers of his time. His works are mainly scientific or philosophical in character, although little has been translated into English. He was the Bishop of Kenneserin (the “Eagle’s nest”) at which Greek was studied extensively.

He wrote the following in A.D. 662:

“I shall now speak of the knowledge of the Hindus...of their subtle discoveries even more ingenious than those of the Greeks and Babylonians - of their rational system of mathematics or of their method of calculation which no word can praise strongly enough - I mean the system using the nine symbols. If these things were known by the people who think that they alone have mastered the sciences because they speak Greek, they would perhaps be convinced that every folk, not only Greeks, but men of a different tongues, know something as well as they.” ⁷⁴⁴

Ramanuja (1017-1137) was like Sankara, a great exponent of Visistadvaita Vedanta, was concerned with the same problems, and adopted the same assumptions and texts. But they came to entirely different conclusions because while Sankara was intellectual, Ramanujan was devotional. Sankara’s cold and relentless logic made him identify the soul with Nirguna Brahman while Ramanuja’s devotional spirit led him along the Bhakti Marga.

Ramanuja’s teachings were based on the Vaishnava mystical Tamil poems, the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Puranas. He regarded the Brahman as the Supreme Reality, free from imperfections and possessing innumerable auspicious qualities of

unparalleled excellence. He is the Lord or Ishvara and the highest person or Purushottama.

“The Bhagavad-Gita was spoken by Lord Krishna to reveal the science of devotion to God which is the essence of all spiritual knowledge.”

“The Supreme Lord Krishna’s primary purpose for descending and incarnating is to relieve the world of any demoniac and negative, undesirable influences that are opposed to spiritual development, yet simultaneously it is His incomparable intention to be perpetually within reach of all humanity.” ⁷⁴⁵

Sant Jnaneshwar (1275 - 1297) was born over seven hundred years ago in the village of Alandi, on the banks of the Indrayani River. The son of a sannyasi, he was shunned by the local Brahmins. Their father, after living the life of an ascetic, returned to married life, and on that account the orthodox Brahmins ostracised the whole family. They were orphaned young and their genius blazed forth while still in their teens.

He was an ardent ‘Bhakta’ [devotee] of Lord Krishna, Jnandev, the greatest of them, is better known as Jnaneshwara, the ‘Lord of Wisdom’. His great work, the *Jnaneshwari* is a monumental verse commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*. Apart from this there are also his *Anubhavamrita* or ‘Elixir of Experience’.

Having himself attained this elixir, he says, it is said that Jnaneshwar won the right to investiture with the sacred thread by making a water buffalo recite the Vedas. Alandi is a village located fifteen kilometers from Pune, on the banks of the Indrayani River. Since ancient times, the village has been a shrine of Shiva as Siddheshwar, Lord of Spiritual Attainment. He was the disciple of Swami Ramanand

He was a poet, philosopher, mystic and saint who committed Samadhi 700 years ago in his early twenties believing his work completed. His commentary on Bhagavadgita ‘Jnaneshwari’ was written when he was only about 15 years old. In the eighties of the

twentieth century, '*Jnaneshvari*' was added to the list of world's cultural heritage by UNESCO, due to his unconventionally cosmopolitan visions, thinking and writing without regarding creed and caste."

"The distinction between liberated, aspirant and bound subsists only so long as this Elixir of Experience is unknown to one. The enjoyer and the enjoyed, the seer and the seen, are merged in the non-dual, which is indivisible. The devotee has become God, the Goal has become God, the Goal has become the path; this indeed is solitude in the universe."

This magnificent achievement was completed by the age of 22, when he declared that his life's work was finished and ceremoniously entered into samadhi in a specially prepared crypt, having given instruction that it was to be bricked up. This was in the village of Alandi in Poona district. There is a beautiful atmosphere of sanctity and serenity there. It contains a tree under which an unending chain of recitation of the Jnaneshwari has gone until the present day. Jnaneshwara has remained a perennial fount of inspiration for Maharashtra. He was at once the foundation and crown of this amazing dynasty.⁷⁴⁶

Mirabai (1500 -1550) was born a Rajput princess, is undoubtedly India's best-known saint-poetess of bhakti in the purest Vaishnava tradition. Her bhakti poetry is immortal. Mirabai was born 500 years ago in a little-known village called Kurki in Mewar. The much loved daughter of Rana Ratan Singh, Mira was nurtured by her grandfather Rao Duda in the fortress city of Merta in Mewar. According to the royal custom she was married in 1516 to Prince Bhojraj, son of Rana Sanga, ruler of the Sisodiya clan of Mewar.

In 1521 Bhojraj died, soon followed by Rana Sanga. Mira refused to lead the secluded life of a royal widow and defied all conventions. She sang and danced with greater mystic frenzy. Her cymbals and her anklets were heard even in the temple on the outskirts of the city, a public place open to all devotees. Such insubordination had never been witnessed before. The young Rana Vikram and his

mother could not treat Mira with either indifference or clemency. Her rising popularity and strong political connections made the Rana so jealous that he tried to kill her several times.. It is said that once a poisonous snake was sent to her in a flower basket, but when she opened it she found an image of Krishna; on another occasion she was given a cup of poison but drank it with Krishna's name on her lips and was miraculously saved.

She sang devotedly:

“My only Lord is Giridhar Gopal None else, none else, in this false world; I have forsaken my family and friends, I sit among saintly souls, I have lost regard for worldly fame and honor, My heart swells at the sight of the godly, It shrinks at the sight of the worldly. I have watered the creeper of God's love with my own tears. Churning the curds of life, I have taken out the butter and thrown away the rest. The King, my husband, sent me a cup of poison: I drank it with pleasure. The news is now public, everyone knows now That Mirabai has fallen in love with God! It does not matter now: what was fated to happen, has happened.”

Many stories are told of how the devotion of Mirabai for Lord Krishna led her to abandon her husband, who was the ruler of the ancient Rajput state of Mewar, and to pass life in complete dedication to the praise of her God. Once for example, her husband, hearing her talking in a closed room to a man, rushed in with drawn sword to kill her for her unfaithfulness. But it was Krishna with her, and he transformed her into a multitude of forms so that the king could not tell which one was really his wife. In response to her continual pleading for a demonstration of his love for her, Lord Krishna finally revealed himself in his glory and absorbed her soul into his. Her hauntingly lovely songs are still popular in western India and Rajasthan. In this poem, Giridhar Gopal is a name of Krishna. ⁷⁴⁷

Goswami Tulsi Das (1532 - 1623) was the greatest and most famous of Hindi poets, and philosopher was a Sarwariya Brahmin. His fathers name was Atma Ram Dived, his mother is said to have

been Hulasidevi. He was named 'Rambola', as to everyone's astonishment, the child cried with the word 'Rama' as soon as he was born. The name 'Rambola' meant one who uttered Rama. Tulsidas wrote twelve books. The most famous book is his *Ramayan - Ram-charit-manas - Lake of Rama's deeds* - in Hindi. He wrote this book under the directions of Hanuman. This Ramayan is read and worshipped with great reverence in every Hindu home in Northern India. It is an inspiring book. It contains sweet couplets in beautiful rhyme. Vinaya Patrika is another important book written by Tulsidas.

He first made Ayodhya his headquarters, frequently visiting distant places of pilgrimage in different parts of India. During his residence at Ayodhya the Lord Rama is said to have appeared to him in a dream, and to have commanded him to write a *Ramayana* in the language used by the common people. He began this work in the year 1574 and had finished the third book (*Aranyakanda*), when differences with the Vairagi Vaishnavas at Ayodhya to whom he had attached himself, led him to migrate to Benares.

In the 16th century, the beloved Hindu poet Tulsi Das composed a new, Hindi version of the *Ramayana* called the *Rama Charita Manasa*. An updated version was necessary because most people could no longer understand Sanskrit, the language of the original poem. Mahatma Gandhi considered the *Rama Charita Manasa* the single greatest book in the world. This book has immortalized Tulsidas as a great poet, philosopher, and devotee of Lord Ram. He was hailed as a great sage of his times. It is said that Raja Man Singh and Raja Todar Mal waited on him.

He said:

"Keep the name of Rama always in your mind, remembering it with love. It will feed you when you're alone. Bless you when you feel cursed, and protect you when you're abandoned. To the crippled it's another limb. To the blind it's another eye. To the orphaned it's a loving parent. Whenever I remember Rama's name, the desert of my heart blooms lush and green."

One day some thieves came to Tulsidas's Ashram to take away his goods. They saw a blue-complexioned guard, with bow and arrow in his hands, keeping watch at the gate. Wherever they moved, the guard followed them. They were frightened. In the morning they asked Tulsidas, "O venerable saint! We saw a young guard with bow and arrow in his hands at the gate of your residence. Who is this man?" Tulsidas remained silent and wept. He came to know that Lord Rama Himself had been taking the trouble to protect his goods. He at once distributed all his wealth among the poor.^{748 749}

Sant (Saint) Eknath (1533 -1600) was born in a Brahmin family in Paithan near Aurangabad. Eknath was the great-grandson of Shri Bhanudas. He lost his parents at an early age and was brought up by his grandfather. For 6 years, Eknath worked for Janardan Swami (Janardan Swami, a devotee of Lord Dattatreya, worked in the courts of the Muslim king of Devgiri.) He turned Eknath towards the path of Krishna. Eknath was a devout gurubhakta and wrote under the name of Eka-janardana meaning Eka of Janardana.

Eknath was a scholar, and was fluent in Marathi, Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. He wrote Bhavartha Ramayana, Rukmini Swayamvara, Eknathi Bhagavata and numerous abhangas and bharudas. Many incidents in his life, tell about how he fought against untouchability. He shocked the contemporary Brahmin community by such deeds. He faced their anger by holding a crying untouchable child in his arms, or serving food to untouchables instead of inviting Brahmins or giving Ganga-Jal to a dying donkey.

Eknath is known as a scholar of the *Bhagvata Purana*. The Jnaneshwari, which is available today, is the one amended and edited by Sant Eknath. He did a translation of the Bhagavad Gita into Marathi.

His writings are philosophical, yet he wrote with great devotion:

"Hasten, hasten, O Rama, Lover of thy Bhaktas, through lustful desires I am entangled in worldly things. In my youth, through

pride, I became still in my conceit, sensual things, especially love of wealth, flourished in me like twigs on a tree. While enjoying sensual things, I ministered to my body, but I did not remember my true good, and I neglected to think of Thee. But now I am forsaken by these sensual things, and therefore have come as a suppliant to Thee At Thy feet, I, Eka Janardan, humbly place myself.”

“He sang of Lord Vishnu’s (Panduranga) real physical presence, who has the earth and the individual souls as his body: How sweet is the curdling of liquid ghee. So blissful is the seeker, when the hidden one reveals his form. Dark is he, dark is the totally unknown and locked is the way to thoughts and words: the scriptures are silent; the Vedas do not utter a word. Not so the revealed one. How bright! How near! Our thirst is quenched if only he appears who is so dear to our heart. The ever-perfect one, eternal bliss, being and thought - see, it is Govinda, source of ecstasy and rapture. Strength, courage, honor, and exalted spirit - see, we witness our God sharing all this. If I catch a glimpse of God, my eyesight is restored. I have escaped the net of life, the guilt of my senses is cancelled. In the light of the lamp all hidden things are made apparent - so it is when I think of my God: the god from faraway is here!” ^{750 751}

Swami Samarth Ramdas (1608 - 1682) was a pre-eminent Marathi bhakti saint and poet.

According to author Historian Benoy Kumar Sarkar:

“Ramdas was one of the greatest saints of the world. He was the inspirer of Shivaji. Like the Sanskrit Gita and the Tamil Kurul, the Dasabodh is one of the greatest classics of world literature. Ramdas was a contemporary of Sant Tukaram. As makers of Maharashtra and remakers of Hindustan, Ramdas and Shivaji will always go together as one ideological complex in the historical scholarship of future generations.”

He was the last of the five great Marathi saints, and he wrote in a style that is generally prose in content and expression. Devoted to the Lord Vishnu’s incarnation in Lord Rama, he lived as a wandering mendicant visiting the temples of the region.

One of his frequent sayings was “Run to my help, Dear Ram. To what extremity are you willing to see me suffer?”

Among the one composed by Ramdas is the following:

*“O dear Ram, in Thy mercy meet me.
Through separation from Thee my whole being is in distress
I cannot free myself from worldly things amongst men
In my despondency I know not how to pass my time.
May the Almighty One not have in mind to reject me.
May there ever be kindly thought of His bhaktas.*

Union with Thee I have been unable to have. How am I to acquire it?

*In my despondency I know not how to pass my time
Victory, Victory to Ram Almighty!”*

The literary works of Ramdas such as Dasabodh, Manache Shlok (verse addressed to the mind), Karunashtakas (hymns to God) and Ramayana (describing only the conquest of Lanka by Sri Rama and the vanquishing of Ravana) are very popular. It was as a tribute to Ramdas’s extraordinary patience and determination in rehabilitating the Hindu religion in India that people named him Samarth (all-powerful) Ramdas, a name which he richly deserved. This great Guru of Maharashtra breathed his last in 1682 at Sajjangad, near Satara, a fortress which was given to him by Shivaji for his residence.

Ramdas was spiritual teacher of the greatest of Maratha political rulers, Shivaji.

He has remarked that:

*“The Bhagavad Gita teaches us that one attains union with God through knowledge, love and action. These three must develop together so that we can unite with God through the divination of intelligence, love and action. This is integral yoga.”*⁷⁵²

Sant Tukaram (1608 - 1649) is one of the saints who produced an extraordinary influence on the Marathi world through his poems.

He speaks of God as Vitthal, Vithoba, or Pandurang, local names for Lord Vishnu.

Few have felt the inherent tragedy of the human condition with such sensitivity as Tukaram. The times and his personal life and emotions show through his poetry with extraordinary clarity. The sorrows of his life were the occasion for spiritual elevation.

He was a contemporary of King Shivaji and a devotee of Vitthal. His teachings are contained in Abhangas. His parents were poor agriculturists of Maratha community but of pious and charitable nature. Their family deity was Vithoba of Pandarpur. As a petty farmer and trader, Tukaram innocent of worldly ways, and was cheated and humiliated in dealings. His life is a favorite topic for Keertankars (reciters and story tellers in praise of God) as it is full of dramatic incidents of misadventures of an unworldly man. One Babaji Chaitanya initiated him into the spiritual path. This may have been the famous deathless yogi Babaji but there is no indication either way.

“Caste and class do not come in the way of God-realization”, he declared. He emphasised the life divine and explained his desire for the Amrita. He stated that the attainment of the Amrita is through the Nama and man’s liberation is through the Amrita.

He considered that his destitution was a needed condition for his higher spiritual achievement, his greater love of God.

At this time the Marathi saints had developed to a high degree an informal ecstatic ritual known as the kirtan. Tukaram addressed his songs to the Lord-of-Pandhari:

“While Tuka in his love was thus pleading for God’s mercy, though still in his body, he became one unconscious of body, and by force of his devotion accompanied with love, the image of Pandurang appeared in his heart. In his love for God he began to dance in the kirtan, and moment after he would bow prostrate on the ground. (In his ecstasy) Tuka forgot his relation as bhakta (devotee), and Vithoba forgot his relation as God.”

He took to wandering around many towns and performing devotional songs, the kirtans, at Dehu, Loehgaon and Poona. These were strongholds of the Brahmans who were particularly rigid about the rules and regulations of caste and scripture at the time as they were under serious attack from the Mughal Aurangzeb who was in a frenzy of piety over his faith and demonstrating it by attacking the religious places and forbidding the practices of the faiths of others. It is instinctive to huddle together and hold ever more tightly to the rules that define a community at such times and here was this lower caste upstart coming along and singing that the rules and caste did not matter only love for god did.

He grimly sang:

*“Sainthood is not available in the bazaar,
It is gained by paying one’s life
All else is bragging.”*

He was naturally subject to every form of persecution. Tukaram did not care; he was too busy singing about his beloved Vithobha to notice.⁷⁵³

J. Ovington was the Chaplain to the British King, the seventeenth-century English traveler, wrote in his *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, that:

“Of all the regions of the Earth (India is) the only Public theatre of Justice and Tenderness to Brutes and all living creatures.” He also found that, because of their diet, the Hindus kept a comely and proportionate body and lived a long life. The simple and meatless food made their thoughts ‘quick and nimble,’ their ‘comprehension of things’ easier and developed in them a spirit of fearlessness.”⁷⁵⁴

William Enfield (1741-1797) was an influential dissenting theologian and tutor at Warrington Academy. His History is a translation of Johann Jakob Brucker’s *“Historia Critica Philosophiae* (first published in six volumes in 1742—67), the most significant and scholarly history of philosophy of the pre-Kantian era.

He has written:

“We find that it (India) was visited for the purpose of acquiring knowledge by Pythagoras, Anaxarchus, Pyrrho, and others who afterwards became eminent philosophers in Greece.” ⁷⁵⁵

Dr. Alexander Duff (1806-1878) was a British Christian missionary, is reported to have said, in a speech delivered in Scotland, that:

“Hindu philosophy was so comprehensive that counterparts of all systems of European philosophy were to be found in it.” ⁷⁵⁶

Mary Baker Eddy (1821 -1910) was the founder of the Christian Science Movement She published *Science and Health With a Key to the Scriptures* in 1875. She had imbibed some of the teachings of the New England Transcendentalists (Ralph Waldo Emerson Amos Bronson Alcott and Henry D. Thoreau) who made their influence widely felt through books, magazines and newspaper articles.

Christian Science founded in the little town of Lyn, MA in 1815 by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy. Yet when we read in texts of Science and Health up to the 33rd edition there are quotations from the sacred Hindu text *The Bhagavad Gita*, as well as allusions by Mrs. Eddy to Hindu philosophy. These were omitted in later editions, causing modern-day Christian Scientists to be unaware that their founder gleaned from Hindu philosophy.

There was a similarity between Advaita Vedanta Hinduism and Mrs. Eddy’s view of God and the material world. She makes reference to *Bhagavad Gita* in page 259 of the 33rd edition.

She has written eloquently:

The ancient Hindu philosophers understood something of this principle, when they said in their Celestial Song, according to an old prose translation:

“The wise neither grieve for the dead nor for the living. I myself never was not, nor thou nor all the princes of the earth; nor shall we ever hereafter cease to be.”



Gold covering of Lord Vishnu with conch and chakra. There can be no doubt that the Upanishads are based on the most profound study and understanding of human nature ever achieved, one with which we twentieth century Westerners, in spite of our vast present day knowledge, have not yet fully caught up.

Photo courtesy: Vikneswaran Shunmugam, Malaysia.

“Both these quotations from the Bhagavad Gita, or Song Celestial, which contains the essence of the Vedas or the Hindu Bible, are to be found in Mrs. Eddy’s 7th chapter on ‘Imposition and Demonstration.’ This whole chapter has been omitted from later editions of *Science and Health*. That is why many Christian scientists are not aware that their great leader Mrs. Eddy was familiar with Hindu thought, and in her bigness did not hesitate to acknowledge it in point...”

It seems clear also that Christian Science has certain historical connections with Hinduism through Mrs. Eddy’s use of the Gita, through the New England Transcendentalism, and through the very indirect influence of a certain Hindu view of Phineas Parker Quimby (1802- 1866).

Yet when we read this Christian Science Bible we find that it out-Sankara Sankara with its doctrine of cosmic illusion.

Mrs. Eddy must have imbibed some of the teachings of the New England Transcendentalists who made their influence widely felt through books, magazines and newspaper articles. Bronson Alcott, who was one of them, attended her services. Now Hinduism profoundly influenced most of the Transcendentalists, like Emerson, Alcott and Thoreau, with its spiritual breath and tolerance and unity.⁷⁵⁷

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) is rightly described as a human dynamo, Swami Dayananda shook the structure of established Hinduism to its foundations and infused into it new blood and fresh vigor. The founder of Arya Samaj was a prophet with a difference. Dayanand is the father of both Renaissance (he brought to life world’s supreme knowledge, the Vedas, with his slogan ‘Back to Vedas’) and Reformation. In 1849, the British annexation of Punjab, introduced the aggressive conversion of faith of Christianity. In time, Christianity threatened each of the coexisting religions. Christian missionaries brought with them new forms of organization and techniques of proselytism. He created a psychological revolution and gave tremendous self-confidence to Hindudom. Swamy

Dayananda took the Christian and Muslim converts back into the Hindu fold by performing purification rites for them.

The British rulers sought to consolidate their rule by instilling inferiority complex among the then 90 per cent majority community. The British called Indians “most backward, barbaric, without the gift of scientific inventions and discoveries, the worst and most pitiable creatures, to whom we brought the light of learning, blessings of science and modernism”

Dayanand thundered: ‘Our *Vedas* are the earliest books Hinduism is the most ancient of all the religions that have survived’.⁷⁵⁸

Another very important contribution of Swami Dayananda is his work, ‘*Satyartha Prakash*’ (*The Light of Truth*). It contains fourteen chapters. It is a great book. It explains the true meaning of the Vedas and therefore is ‘*Satyartha Prakash*’. And it is based solely on the Vedas.⁷⁵⁹

Madame Helena Petrova Blavatsky (1831- 1891) HPB, as she was known to her followers, was a cultured and widely traveled woman. Brilliant, fiery and witty; able to attract the attention of the highest minds, she was in the frequent company of scientists, philosophers and scholars in many fields. She wrote many books-*Isis Unveiled*, *The Voice of Silence* and *Key to Theosophy*. But her magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*, published in 1885, is her most profound book-a bible of Theosophy.

She traveled to India and entered Tibet via Kashmir and Ladakh. In the 19th century, imperialism had reached its height. Western nations were so convinced of the superiority of the white races that they had no compunction about exploiting their colonies. In this environment, Mme. Blavatsky taught the first principle of occultism-the brotherhood of all humanity, the unity of all races.

With its strong resemblances to Eastern mysticism and spirituality, Theosophy has an intertwining relationship with Hinduism-especially the Upanishads and Advaita Vedanta-and also Buddhism. The

establishment of the Theosophical Society in 1875 in New York proved to be a precursor and harbinger of Hinduism in the West. Mahatma Gandhi reports further that the two Theosophists who introduced him to the Bhagavad Gita also took him on one occasion to the Blavatsky Lodge and introduced him to Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant.

Theosophy was woven from and into the fabric of Sanatana Dharma

The small 19th century Theosophical movement impacted Hinduism in diverse ways, from India's independence from the British to the widespread acceptance of Hindu thinking in the West. The Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita translations of Swami Prabhavananda with Theosophist Christopher Isherwood were singularly successful in clearly conveying Hindu thought to the West. Leadbeater's books on occult sciences, such as chakras and auras, reinforced Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms. Aldous Huxley's book, *Doors of Perception*, promoted mystical experience and also psychedelic drugs, leading directly to the explosion of interest in the East in the 60s. *The Secret Doctrine* is saturated with Hinduism and Sanskrit terminology, and the bulk of this was copied from Wilson's *Vishnu Purana* ⁷⁶⁰

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886) was the surreal Hindu Bengali Saint spent a lifetime seeking spiritual enlightenment, beginning in his childhood with a mystical encounter he experienced at the age of six. A temple priest at Dakshinesvar and a mystical devotee of Kali, became a source of religious renewal for a large number of Bengalis who met him during his lifetime.

Mahatma Gandhi said: "The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face." Romain Rolland wrote: "The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people." (Refer to *The Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 14)

“Ramakrishna was a rare combination of individuality and universality, personality and impersonality. His word and example have been echoed in the hearts of Western men and women. His soul animates modern India.” His influence was felt throughout the social life of Bengal, where he passed his life in continuation of the bhakti tradition so deeply rooted in that region. ...Among the crowds that went to see Sri Ramakrishna were Keshub Chunder Sen.”

He experimented with the truths of Vedanta. He attained God-realization through four different religions (Tantrism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity), each time meeting the same Absolute God—which prompted him to declare that all religions lead to the same God..⁷⁶¹

Ramakrishna said wisely that:

“In Hinduism, there can be as many spiritual paths as there are spiritual aspirants & similarly there can really be as many Gods as there are devotees to suit the moods, feelings, emotions & social background of the devotees.”

“The Eternal Religion, the religion of the rishis, has been in existence from time immemorial and will exist eternally. There exist in this Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) all forms of worship — worship of God with form and worship of the impersonal Deity as well. It contains all paths—the path of knowledge, the path of devotion and so on. Other forms of religion, the modern cults, will remain for a few days and then disappear.”⁷⁶²

His disciples addressed him as Master. Once one of his disciples asked him: “Do you believe in God, sir?” “Yes,” the Master replied. “Can you prove it, sir?” “Yes,” “How?” “Because I see Him just as I see you here, and rather more intensely.” The Master said: “So long as God seems to be outside and far away, so long there is ignorance. But where God is realized within, that is true knowledge.”

“In the kingdom of God, reason, intellect and learning are of no avail. There the dumb speaks, the blind sees, and deaf hears.”

Years of aspiration, meditation and adoration in silence ripened into Ramakrishna’s realization of the Divine Mother. The great disciple

of Ramakrishna was Swami Vivekananda whose message has inspired, influenced and transformed thousands of lives around the world. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda started the renaissance of Hinduism at this time.⁷⁶³

Shirdi Sai Baba (1838 -1918) was a Brahmin from Pathri. His parents had handed him over to a Muslim fakir and his wife for reasons unknown. It is also known that after some years that fakir died and before his death he asked his wife to hand over the child to a petty chieftain of Selu in the Nizam's dominions who was called Gopal Rao Deshmukh. It is believed that Baba must have been eight years old then. Deshmukh, a Brahmin who was also called Venkatesa (Venhusa as Baba called him) worshipped Venkatachalapathi of Thirumala and had developed siddhis. He became Baba's guru and Baba served him with Bhakti and devotion.

He has very prudently remarked that:

"The creator God is one and the same for both communities, Hindus and Muslims. This is a mere verbal difference. Sadhakas should not attach importance to it. But see one God, Sat Chit Ananda in everything. He that is called Allah Ilahi by Muslims is the same as Seshasayee for the Hindus. In your Puranas you have the story of Chokia Mahar who became hundred times dearer than his pujari to Pandarinath. He who is pure in heart is pure and holy wherever he is."

Baba soon moved on to the dilapidated and crumbling mosque and made him self comfortable there. The place which was later called Dwaraka Mayi was to be his home till his death. He dug a pit and started a fire which was called the dhuni and it was kept burning day and night and it continues to burn even today at Shirdi.

He taught: "I am the attributes of Absolute Nirguna. I have no name and no residence."

"I am embroiled myself in Karma and got this body. Brahman is my father and Maya is my mother. I am formless and in everything. I fill all space and am omnipresent. I am water, in land, in crowds and also in solitary wilderness. I am in the fire and in ether."^{764 765}

Rev. Jabez T. Sunderland (1842-1936) was American born, former President of the India Information Bureau of America and Editor of *Young India* (New York). He was author of *India, America and World Brotherhood* (1924) and *Causes of Famine in India*.

He has written glowingly about India's culture and her civilization and her contribution to the world:

"India is a highly civilized nation - a nation which developed a rich culture much earlier than any nation of Europe, and has never lost it."

"India was the first and only nation that proved too powerful for Alexander the Great. It was India that stopped his advance and compelled him to turn back in his career of world conquest. India was the richest nation in the world until conquered and robbed of her wealth by Great Britain."

"India gave to the world two out of six of its greatest Historic religions. Of the six greatest Epic Poems of the world India produced two. India gave to mankind - Kalidasa. India contributed enormously to the origin and advancement of Civilization by giving to the world its immensely important decimal system, or so-called 'Arabic Notation' which is the foundation of modern mathematics and much modern science."

"India early created the beginning of nearly all of the sciences, some of which she carried forward to remarkable degrees of development, thus leading the world. India has produced great literature, great arts, great philosophical systems, great religions, and great men in every department of life - rulers, statesmen, financiers, scholars, poets, generals, colonizers, ship-builders, skilled artisans and craftsmen of every kind, agriculturists, industrial organizers and leaders in far-reaching trade and commerce by land and sea."

He has rightly pointed out that:

"For 2,500 years India was pre-eminently the intellectual and spiritual teacher of Asia, which means of half the human race."

"When the British first appeared on the scene, India was one of the richest countries of the world; indeed, it was her great riches

that attracted the British to her shores. For 2,500 years before the British came on the scene and robbed her of her freedom, India was self-ruling and one of the most influential and illustrious nations of the world.”

“This wealth was created by the Hindus’ vast and varied industries. Nearly every kind of manufacture or product known to the civilized world – nearly every kind of creation of Man’s brain and hand, existing anywhere, and prized either for its utility or beauty – had long, long been produced in India. India was a far greater industrial and manufacturing nation than any in Europe or than any other in Asia. Her textile goods – the fine products of her loom, in cotton, wool, linen, and silk – were famous over the civilized world; so were her exquisite jewelry and her precious stones, cut in every lovely form; so were her pottery, porcelains, ceramics of every kind, quality, color and beautiful shape; so were her fine works in metal – iron, steel, silver and gold. She had great architecture – equal in beauty to any in the world. She had great engineering works. She had great merchants, great businessmen, great bankers and financiers. Not only was she the greatest shipbuilding nation, but she had great commerce and trade by land and sea which extended to all known civilized countries. Such was the India which the British found when they came.”

“The fact is, not Europe but Asia seems to have been the cradle of political liberty, the cradle of democratic and republican government, in the world...research makes it clear that the democratic and republican institutions of Europe and America actually send their roots back to Asia, and especially to India. Republics actually existed in India at least as early as the days of the Buddha (6th century before Christ). The republican form of government in ancient India had duration of at least a thousand years. We have records of no other country, ancient or modern, where republics have existed and continued for so long a period. Even more important than her republics has been the spirit of freedom and democracy, which has manifested itself in many forms among the Indian people from the earliest ages. The Vedas show that the principle of representative government were held by the ancient Aryans 12-13 centuries before the Christian era.”⁷⁶⁶

Dr. William Ralph Inge (1860 -1954) was an Anglican Platonist author in his *Christian Mysticism* (1899) refers to the mystic strains in the early thinkers. Inge, however, agrees with Heiler in looking upon the negative descriptions of the deity and the world-denying character of ethics as Indian in origin.

He has pointed out that:

“The doctrine that God can be described only by negatives is neither Christian nor Greek, but belongs to the old religion of India.”

“To give a negative account of God is to affirm His immensity of being.”

Dr. L P (Lawrence Pearsall) Jacks (1860-1955) was probably the most widely known British Unitarian minister in both Britain and North America between 1914 and 1940. He was an educator, a prolific writer, and an interpreter of modern philosophy. According to L. A. Garrard, he was ‘the last of the Victorian prophets in the line of Thomas Carlyle. Jacks argued for a natural religion for the common man using twentieth century means of communication.

In his book, *Two Letters* (1934) he glowingly wrote about the spiritual men of India:

“The spiritual men of India, a great and watchful multitude whose spiritual status is unattainable, are many of them catholics in a deeper sense than we of the West have yet given to the word....” ⁷⁶⁷

Swami Abhedananda (1866-1939) in his book, *India and her People* Kessinger Publishing Company February 1998 remarks that:

“Hinduism stands like a huge banian tree spreading its far reaching branches over hundreds of sects, creed and denomination and covering with innumerable leaves, all forms of worship, the dualistic, the qualified non-dualistic and monistic worship of the one Supreme God, the worship, of the Incarnation of God and also hero worship, saint worship, ancestor worship and the worship of the departed spirit. It is based on the grand idea of universal receptivity. It receives everything.” ⁷⁶⁸

M. A. Sherring was a noted missionary of the 19th century, author of *The Sacred City of the Hindus* (1868), eloquently described the antiquity of Varanasi, in the following words:

“When Babylon was struggling with Nineveh for supremacy, when Tyre was planting her colonies, when Athens was growing in strength, before Rome had become known, or Greece had contended with Persia, or Cyprus had added lustre to the Persian monarchy, or Nebuchadnezzar had captured Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of Judaea had been carried into captivity, she (Varanasi) had already risen to greatness, if not to glory.” ⁷⁶⁹

Ramana Maharishi of Arunachala (1870 -1950) was a great sage, Kavyakanta Ganapathi Muni, called him Bhagavan or God for he regarded him as the incarnation of Skanda or Subramania, and named him Ramana, the sweet one, and Maharshi, the great sage. At the age of sixteen Ramana Maharshi left his home, his family, and all he knew. He felt drawn to Arunachula - a small mountain in Southern India. Here he lived for the rest of his life. His only possessions were a piece of cloth to cover him, and a walking stick.

In his famous discussion of *The Holy Men of India*, Carl Jung described Ramana Maharishi as “the whitest spot on a white surface,” less a unique phenomenon than the perfect “embodiment of spiritual India. In Ramana Maharishi Jung finds “purest India, the breadth of eternity, scorning and scorned by the world. Jung correctly recognized that Ramana Maharishi typifies the holy men of India who for centuries have drowned “the world of multiplicity in the All and All-Oneness of Universal Being.”

F. H. Humphreys, a British Officer of the Indian Police Service, who was an earnest student of religion, once visited Ramana Maharishi in 1911 in his Ashrama, when he was curious to learn about siddhis from the saint. Ramana said:

“Do not think too much of psychical phenomena...The phenomena we see are curious and surprising, but the most marvelous of all we do not realize, namely, the one illimitable force alone is responsible for all the phenomena we see and for

the act of seeing them. Do not fix your attention on the changing things of life, death and phenomena. Do not think of even the actual act of seeing or perceiving them, but only of that which sees all these things - That which is responsible for it all. It is inside yourself."

In a letter to a leading friend in London, which was subsequently published in a leading journal in London, Mr. Humphreys wrote about Ramana: "On reaching the cave, we sat before him at his feet and said nothing. We sat thus for a long time and I felt lifted out of myself. For half an hour I looked into Maharishi's eyes, which never changed their expression of deep contemplation. I began to realize somewhat that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost."

Ramana Maharishi's grace and compassion touched man and animal alike; his eloquent silence made a tremendous impact. But his silence was more eloquent than a thousand words spoken. F. H. Humphreys, the first European visitor to the Ramanashram penned his experience, of seeing Ramana Maharishi, to a friend in London. "For half an hour I looked into the Maharishi's eyes, which never changed their expression of deep contemplation. I could feel only that his body was not the man: it was the instrument of God." But Humphreys was neither the first nor the last to experience God in the form of Ramana Maharishi. Paul Brunton, who arrived at Tiruvannamalai more a sceptic than a believer records the impact of the eloquent silence of Maharishi: "Before those (eyes) of the Maharishi, I hesitate, puzzled and baffled ... I cannot turn my gaze away from him. I know only that a steady river of quietness seems to be flowing near me ..."

Ramana Maharishi believed in the philosophy of self-realization based on Advaita Vedanta. Sri Ramana's entire system is based on his own realization of Self. He wrote:

*"When I came to realize who I am
What else is this identity of mine
But then,
Oh Thou who standest as the towering Aruna Hill?" 770*

Swami Rama Tirtha (1873-1906) renounced his career as a Mathematician in order to practice and preach Vedanta.

He has brilliantly remarked the meaning of Sanatana Dharma:

“Sanatana means Eternal. In its purest form, this religion is Sanatana, because it is based on Truth. Truth is immortal and is never annihilated. It remains the same yesterday, today and forever. Therefore our true Sanatana Dharma, in its purest form, can never be exterminated. It, however, does not follow that we should relax into inaction, in the belief that our religion is the best or that it can never be destroyed. No, no. This idle thinking is the result of our indolent minds. It is, therefore, absolutely essential for the followers of Sanatana Dharma to keep it safe from the evil and aggressive designs of the non-Hindus, who are generally ever ready to malign us.”

“Truth is not only eternal but also unlimited and infinite. It is all embracing. It is the religion for all, irrespective of their caste, creed or nationality. In fact, it is great and glaring, and never sectarian. It is liberal. Other religions have all been founded by individuals. But this Sanatana Dharma is not based on the teachings of any one single person. Much before Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Shankaracharya and others, the germs of the fundamental principles of Sanatana Dharma were present.”

“Sanatana Dharma is very simple and natural because it is based on the Laws of Nature. The man whose life is molded according to these Laws, irrespective of their being physical, mental and spiritual, is in the real sense, a Sanatani. Sanatana Dharma is a grand and all-embracing religion. There should be no narrow mindedness in a Sanatani. He should feel His presence in the Chandala, in the thief, the lowest beings, the sinners, the foreigners and in all. He should worship God in all, especially in the hungry, the needy and the downtrodden with selfless service and liberality. This is in real sense, the true worship of and devotion to God.” ⁷⁷¹

Dr. Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) was a humanitarian, a theologian, a missionary, organist, and medical doctor.

He has observed:

“The Bhagavad-Gita has a profound influence on the spirit of mankind by its devotion to God which is manifested by actions.”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881 - 1955) was a visionary French Jesuit priest, paleontologist, biologist, and philosopher. Author of the book *Le Phenomene Humain, or The Human Phenomenon* (1955). Teilhard's evolutionism earned him the distrust of his religious superiors, while his religious mysticism made scientific circles suspicious.

A prominent 20th century scientific Christian theologian, studied *Ramanuja's Vedanta*, and then equated Saguna Brahman with “the body of Christ.” However, he was persecuted by the Church, and lived in Asia in exile, while writing many of his works.⁷⁷²

His modern followers suppress Teilhard de Chardin's extensive study and commentary on Vedanta during his trip to India, especially Ramanuja's works, even though Teilhard used these ideas to develop what is now ‘liberal Christianity’. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science quoted Indic thought in the early editions of her books, but these references later got removed as Theosophy and she became competitors - one deploying Indic ideas openly in a perennial way and the other within strictly branded Christianity.⁷⁷³

Towards a New Mysticism, Teilhard de Chardin and Eastern Religions - by Ursula King, and in that book King describes how Teilhard went to India and read *Vedanta*, and how he commented on Ramanuja's interpretation, and remarked that his own ideas were similar. Then he came up with the idea that the cosmos was the body of Christ, which is comparable to saguna Brahman notion.⁷⁷⁴

Because Teilhard's ideas are to a great extent plagiarisms from *Vedanta* and *Tantra* gummed together with Christian-sounding jargon and heavily painted with evolutionism.

“The world I live in becomes divine. Yet these flames do not consume me, nor do these waters dissolve me; for, unlike the

false forms of monism that impel us through passivity towards unconsciousness, the pan-Christianism I am finding places union at the term of an arduous process of differentiation. I shall attain the spirit only by releasing completely and exhaustively all the powers of matter... I recognize that, following the example of the incarnate God revealed to me by the Catholic faith, I can be saved only by becoming one with the universe."

This is outright Hinduism. It has a little bit of everything in it - a recognizable verse from an Upanishad and pieces from several of the philosophical systems along with their practices.

A religious concept of "evolution," which was consciously rejected by Christian thought, has been basic to Hindu thought for millenia; every Hindu religious practice assumes it. Teilhard is well on his way towards the impersonal God when he writes: "Christ is becoming more and more indispensable to me... but at the same time the figure of the historical Christ is becoming less and less substantial and distinct to me." "Christianity is still to some extent a refuge, but it does not embrace, or satisfy or even lead the 'modern soul' any longer."

For Teilhard de Chardin it is the Omega Point, which belongs to something that is beyond representation. For Vivekananda it is the Om, the sacred syllable of the Hindus: "All humanity, converging at the foot of that sacred place where is set the symbol that is no symbol, the name that is beyond all sound." ⁷⁷⁵

Kaikhushru Dhunjibhoy Sethna in his book *The Spirituality of the Future*, is critical not only of Zaehner but of many Catholic expositions of the thought of Teilhard. These Catholic studies attempt to save Teilhard for the church by pointing to his continuity with tradition, especially with the Greek fathers, as if Teilhard's pantheism is Christian. As Teilhard has come to be more and more acceptable within Catholicism, Sethna, from outside Catholicism, seriously challenges his orthodoxy. Sethna argues that the pantheism of Teilhard is truly pantheism unacceptable within Roman Catholicism. In fact, one of the major limitations in the thought of Teilhard flows

from the unfreedom within his church (keep in mind the post-Vatican I, pre-Vatican II period within which he lived), which prevented him from going fully where his spirit was leading him. Teilhard's Catholicism stands in the way of Teilhard's spirituality, which is pantheistic in a sense fully in accord with Indian Vedanta.

The 20th Century, Teilhard de Chardin - most of his followers today would refuse to acknowledge the influence of India on the development of his thoughts. Yes, and he actually, during his exile in China for a few years, went to India. He bought a two-volume book on Vedanta, which covered the four different schools of Vedanta. He wrote notes on it. He commented on the Vedanta. He liked the particular interpretation Ramanuja, who was in the 10th century and has been a major figure in Hinduism. He wrote all that and yet in the mainstream conferences and books about Teilhard de Chardin, you will be hard pressed to find people who will acknowledge that he had any Indian influence upon him whatsoever.⁷⁷⁶

Jacob Wilhelm Hauer (1881-1961) a missionary in India and an official exponent of "the German faith", and a Sanskrit scholar, who gave to the Bhagavad Gita, a central place in the German faith.

He afforded the Bhagavad-Gita, a pivotal role in the spiritual life of Germany. An official interpreter of faith in Germany, Hauer described the Bhagavad Gita, as "a work of imperishable significance" that offers:

"Not only profound insights that are valid for all times and for all religious life, but it contains as well the classical presentation of one of the most significant phases of Indo-German religious HistoryIt shows us the way as regards the essential nature and basal characteristics of Indo-Germamic religion. Here Spirit is at work that belongs to our Spirit."

Hauer stated the central message of the *Bhagavad Gita*:

"We are not called to solve the meaning of life but to find out the Deed demanded of us and to work and so, by action, to master the riddle of life." ⁷⁷⁷

He declares that the Bhagavad-Gita:

"Gives us not only profound insights that are valid for all time and all religious life, but it contains as well the classical presentation of one of the most significant phases of Indo-Germanic religious history....Here spirit is at work that belongs to our spirit." "We are not called to solve the meaning of life but to find out the Deed demanded of us and to work and so, by action, to master the riddle of life." ⁷⁷⁸

Father Heras (1885-1955) was a Spanish Jesuit priest who worked in India and was a celebrated Professor of History in Bombay. He wrote in *Studies in Proto-Indo-Mediterranean Culture*:

"India has not changed much in the course of ages. Invasions have taken place, wars have been waged in her vast plains, new nations and races have conquered the land and ruled over it, foreign civilizations have brought new notions and new ideals; but everybody and everything has been remodeled and reshaped and recast by the influence of the Indian nation and its ancient civilization. The ancient civilizations of Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria have been blotted out from the map of the world. But that of India, the first lights of which have been discovered in modern times along the banks of the Indus, is still alive...." ⁷⁷⁹

Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati Maharaj (1887-1963) was the founder of The Divine Life Society, with headquarters in Rishikesh, Himalayas, began as a physician before he turned sannyasi.

Swami Sivananda beautifully uttered these words regarding Hinduism:

"Hinduism stands unrivaled in the depth and grandeur of its philosophy. Its ethical teachings are lofty, unique and sublime. It is highly flexible and adapted to every human need. It is a perfect religion by itself. It is not in need of anything from any other religion. No other religion has produced so many great saints, great patriots, great warriors, great Pativratas (chaste women

devoted to their husbands). The more you know of the Hindu religion, the more you will honor and love it. The more you study it, the more it will enlighten you and satisfy your heart.”

Walter Eidlitz (1892 - 1976) was also called Vaman Dasa. A Jew from Germany finds himself in an internment camp in India during the Second World War. His goal was to study Indian religion and philosophy. He had left his family in Germany in late 1930 and traveled to India in search of God. His wife loved him enough to honor his spiritual quest, the fruit of which he would share with her years later upon his return. He has written about his spiritual journey in his book *Journey to Unknown India* (1955).

From India he merged from the myriad of India's spiritual paths on the bhakti marg, the path of devotion as taught by Sri Chaitanya. His goal was to go Mount Kailash, the mountain of God's revelation, and at its base Manasarovar, the lake of the divine spirit. There, says the legend, the eternal human soul glides upon the clear waves like a swan, untouched by fear, hate, or desire.

He observed that:

“God himself speaks the Bhagavad Gita, the innermost God which Brahma the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer are only aspects.”

“Hindus have a greater respect for the spoken word than do people in the West. Not only every word in a mantra, but practically every sound and every word in the language is called akshara in Sanskrit, which means “the indestructible.” Akshara is also a name for God. A true mantra should be sung not spoken. Indian scriptures call Brahma the Creator “the first singer.” Our world is said to have sprung from the mantra he sang. In the West, these ideas are probably utterly foreign, and yet there are traces of similar teachings.”

“A poor man in India can have a rough conception of the fact that within himself exists an eternal atman, which wanders through the ages. He knows that he has brought about his hard fate in his life through his deeds in a former existence and that his behavior

in this life determines his destiny. This teaching is known only to a few of the most profound mystics in the West.”

Eidlitz wrote:

“As Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, “Never was there a time when I, nor thou, nor these lords of men, were not, nor will there ever be a time hereafter, when we shall cease to be....As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new; even so, the soul in the body, having quitted its old mortal frame, entereth into others which are new....The weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth it not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind drieth it not away; for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible...Therefore, knowing it to be thus, thou shouldst not grieve.”⁷⁸⁰

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896 - 1977) was the founder of ISKCON -The International Society for Krishna Consciousness also known as ‘The Hare Krishna’ was founded in 1966. Its core philosophy is based on scriptures such as the Bhagavad-Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam, both of which date back many years into antiquity. The distinctive appearance of the movement and its culture come from the Gaudiya Vaishnavism tradition, which has had adherents in India ever since the late 1400s.

After publishing three volumes of the *Bhagavatam*, Srila Prabhupada came to the United States, in September 1965, to fulfill the mission of his spiritual master. Subsequently, His Divine Grace wrote more than fifty volumes of authoritative commented translations and summary studies of the philosophical and religious classics of India. When he first arrived by freighter in New York City, Srila Prabhupada was practically penniless. Only after almost a year of great difficulty did he establish the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, in July of 1966.

ISKCON formed to help spread the practice of Bhakti yoga (the yoga of devotion). Bhaktas, or devotees, dedicate their devotion towards Krishna who they call “The Supreme Lord” or (God);

Radha, who is Krishna's divine consort; and the many other incarnations of Vishnu, such as Sita and Rama.

Devotees believe that the sound vibration created by repeating these names of God gradually induces pure God-consciousness, or "Krishna consciousness."

*"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare."*

The founder of ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada stated that 'Krishna' and 'Rama' are both names of God and Hare (vocative of 'Hara' and pronounced "ha ray") refers to God's Energy or 'Shakti', known as Srimati Radharani.⁷⁸¹

Rev. William Robertson was a religious leader.

He could not but praise "the ancient and high civilization of the inhabitants of India."⁷⁸²

Arthur Osborne (1909 -1970) had lived with the Indian sage, Sri Ramana Maharshi. He was a man of brilliant intellect and introspective spirit. After graduating from Oxford, his inner longing to experience the Supreme Reality ultimately brought him to the hermitage of the great Indian sage, Sri Ramana Maharshi. In Ramana's presence, Osborne's literary abilities flourished, and he became a vehicle for the genuine spiritual understanding that awakened within him. He wrote some poems - including one on Arunachala. His son was Adam Osborne who invented the portable computer.

He wrote:

"The recognition of Pure Being as one's Self and the Self of the universe and of all beings is the supreme and ultimate truth, transcending all other levels of doctrine without denying their truth on their own plane. This is the doctrine of Advaita, non-Duality, taught by the ancient Rishis and pre-eminently by

Shankaracharya. It is the simplest as well as the most profound, being the ultimate truth beyond all the complexities of cosmology.”⁷⁸³

Roger Garaudy was a Muslim philosopher who said:

“*The Bhagavad-Gita* is a rich message, directed toward the human being, showing him the path for his actions, in order to establish a divine society on earth.”⁷⁸⁴

Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was a Trappist monk, poet, social critic and author of many books, including *Seeds of Contemplation*, *Life and Holiness*, *Mystics and Zen Masters*. Merton, in his book *Thoughts on the East*, reminds us about the living importance of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

“It brings to the West a salutary reminder that our highly activist and one-sided culture is faced with a crisis that may end in self-destruction because it lacks the inner depth of an authentic metaphysical consciousness. Without such depth, our moral and political protestations are just so verbiage. If, in the West, God can no longer be experienced as other than “dead”, it is because of an inner split and self-alienation which have characterized the Western mind in its single-minded dedication to only the half of life: that which is exterior, objective and quantitative.”⁷⁸⁵

Swami Chinmayananda (1916 -1993) was the founder of Chinmaya Mission. He was not satisfied with degrees in literature and law or with other worldly aspirations pursued the spiritual path in the Himalayas under the guidance of his Gurus Swami Tapovanam and Swami Sivananda.

Swami Chinmayananda was appalled by the fact that majority of Indians had no appreciation of their religious heritage, and that spiritual learning was given to only the privileged classes. From then on his only mission in life was to take religion from classes to the masses, and to “convert Hindus to Hinduism”. He told his guru, “I feel the immense urge to go down to the plains and share the wealth of the Holy Scriptures with my fellow countrymen. I want to run down like a Ganga, which nourishes and inspires with its

refreshing waves." If he thought the task was going to be an easy one, he was wrong for he faced stiff opposition from the orthodoxy. But he was not the man to be baffled by such obstacles, and he carried on with his goal of the democratization of religion. He has written several books including *Self-Unfoldment (The Self-Discovery Series)*.

He expressed his views on Hinduism as:

"Hinduism is not bound by any rigid text book or commandments, orders, declarations and revelations; but it is a storehouse of scientific facts and has in it healthy impulses of a growing tradition. The Hindu religion or Sanatana Dharma is the way of life of perfect living and of gaining mastery over oneself. This religion reveals the secret process which brings forth an effective personality out of a shattered man of despair and disappointment."

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"Hinduism is the religion for our times." Unlike the other scriptures, the methodology followed by the Gita appears to be more conducive to the modern, scientific mind and the educated classes. For they do not believe in anything. They want everything to be rationally proved, intellectually defensible. And the approach of the Gita is very rational because Krishna had to address a dynamic, young, educated, intelligent man who was a born skeptic. Arjuna did not believe or understand that Krishna was an intellectual giant. It is only in the eleventh chapter that he got a glimpse - and thereafter, his attitude changed. But till the eleventh chapter he was absolutely rational. He did not believe a word of what Krishna said. Krishna had to make him believe it by the strength of logic." 787

In his book, *Vedanta: The Science of Life*, he states:

"The Gita is very intimately connected with the life of everyone of us, whether it be in the market place, at home or in the political field, Bhagavad Gita not only indicates theories of the Hindu way of life, but also reveals certain definite scheme by which every individual can work out his own self-improvement." 788

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001) was American born and was one of Hinduism's foremost spiritual teachers, a prolific

author and publisher of Hinduism Today magazine. He was the author of several books including *Loving Ganesha* (2000) and *Living with Shiva* (2001).

He has labeled Hinduism, the Greatest Religion in the World.

“Hinduism is so broad. Within it there is a place for the insane and a place for the saint...There is a place for the intelligent person and plenty of room for the fool. The beauty of Hinduism is that it does not demand of every soul, perfection in this life, and a necessary conclusion for those who believe in a single lifetime during which human perfection or grace must be achieved. Belief in reincarnation gives the Hindu an acceptance of every level of humanity. Some souls are simply older souls than others, but all are inherently the same, inherently immortal and of the nature of the Divine.”

Satguru Subramuniyaswami describes Hinduism thus:

“Hinduism, the Eternal Way or Sanatana Dharma, has no beginning, therefore will certainly have no end. It was never created, and therefore it cannot be destroyed. It is a God-centric religion. The center of it is God. All of the other religions are prophet-centric. It is the only religion that has such breadth and depth. Hinduism contains the deities and the sanctified temples, the esoteric knowledge of inner states of consciousness, yoga and the disciplines of meditation. It possesses a gentle compassion and a genuine tolerance and appreciation for other religions. It remains undogmatic and open to inquiry. It believes in a just world in which every soul is guided by karma to the ultimate goal of Self Realization, or moksha, freedom from rebirth. It rests content in the knowledge of the divine origin of the soul. It cherishes the largest storehouse of scripture and philosophy on the Earth, and the oldest. It is endowed with a tradition of saints and sages, of realized men and women, unrivaled on the Earth.”

“It is the sum of these, and more, which makes me boldly declare that Hinduism is the greatest religion in the world.” ⁷⁸⁹

Sri Chinmoy (1931 -) was born Chinmoy Kumar Ghose in the small village of Shakpura in East Bengal. In 1944, after both his parents had died, 12 year-old Chinmoy entered the Sri Aurobindo

Ashram, a spiritual community near Pondicherry in South India. Here he spent the next 20 years in spiritual practice - including long hours of meditation, practising athletics, writing poetry, essays and spiritual songs. In his early teens, Chinmoy had many profound inner experiences, and in subsequent years achieved very advanced states of meditation. In 1964, he moved to New York City to share his inner wealth with sincere seekers in the West. He is the author of *Commentaries on The Vedas, The Upanishads, and The Bhagavad Gita*.

He has verbalized about Mother India:

“Mother India is an aspiring tree. This aspiring tree has the Vedas as its only roots. The root is Truth, the tree is Truth, the experience of the tree is Truth, the realization of the tree is Truth, the realization of the tree is Truth, the revelation of the tree is Truth, the manifestation of the tree is Truth. The Vedic seers saw the Truth with their souls, in their Heavenly visions and in their earthly actions. *Satyam eva jayate nanrtam (Mundakopanisad 3.1.6)* - Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood.”

“*The Vedas* have the eternal wisdom. It is for us. The Vedas are more than willing to illumine us if we dare to listen to their message. *Srnavantu visce amrtasya putrah (Rig Veda X 13.3)* Hearken, ye sons of Immortality. The Vedas are divinely practical value. They house the earliest poetry and prose literature of the searching, striving and aspiring human soul. He who thinks that the Vedic poetry is primitive and the Vedic literature insignificant is unmistakably wanting in such sublime and enduring wisdom to the world at large?”

“The body of the Vedic poetry is simplicity

The vital of the Vedic poetry is sincerity.

The mind of the Vedic poetry is clarity.

The heart of the Vedic poetry is purity.

The soul of the Vedic poetry is luminosity.”

“The Vedic seers accepted the laws of others not only with their hearts’ frankness but also with their souls’ oneness. They saw the One in the many and the many in the One. To them, the Absolute was not their sole monopoly.” ⁷⁹⁰

H H The Dalai Lama (1935 -) is the head of state and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people and in accordance with Tibetan tradition, as the reincarnation of his predecessor the 13th Dalai Lama, and thus an incarnation Avalokitesvara, the Buddha of Compassion.

He has said:

“When I say that Buddhism is part of Hinduism, certain people criticize me. But if I were to say that Hinduism and Buddhism are totally different, it would not be in conformity with truth.” ⁷⁹¹

Christian Fabre aka Swami Pranavananda Brahmendra Avadhuta (1942 -) was born in the south of France. He grew up in a family with ties to the garment industry. He is the author of *Swami: PDG et Moine Hindou*.

He is a Hindu holy man, who has renounced the material world - yet he is also a business tycoon who employs thousands of people. He became a Hindu holy man, or sadhu, some years ago. Now he runs an ashram or a hermitage for holy men, in the South Western state of Tamil Nadu, roughly 400 kilometres from Madras, the state capital.

He came to work in India in the 1970s, and fell in love with the place.

“I was so powerfully attracted to India’s culture, faith and its people that I cannot bear the thought of going back to France,” he says.

At the time, his house was opposite that of a Brahmin family. His first exposure to Hinduism came at their hands. A woman from that house introduced him to a Hindu sage, or swami.

Today, his company, Fashion International, has 35 factories, which employ 60,000 people. The clothes they make are exported to Europe and beyond. And as his business boomed, Mr Fabre’s faith grew stronger. He did not stop taking instruction from his teacher, or guru, and continued searching for answers to his questions. His guru eventually invited him to take up the sanyas -

renounce all worldly attachments such as family and money, and focus on their search for enlightenment. Mr Fabre now lives in the ashram in the manner of the other sadhus in his holy order.

He also wears the sadhu's saffron robes to his business meetings.

For Mr Fabre, there is no opposition between his business interests and his life as a Hindu holy man. This industrialist holy man has been truly industrious - for the villagers living near his ashram, he has provided running water and improved public hygiene facilities. ⁷⁹²

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami (1942 -) is an American born editor of *Hinduism Today*. When Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami attained mahasamadhi, his great departure, on November 12, 2001, he designated Bodhinatha Veylanswami, a disciple for 37 years, as his successor.

Veylanswami has observed:

"Hindus the world over, while following unique and varied paths, are united by their belief in karma, dharma, the all-pervasiveness of God, the sanctity of the Vedas, reincarnation, noninjuriousness, enlightenment, yoga, the illumined guru's centrality and the mysticism of worship."

"The social, political power of the family of faiths we call Hinduism is based on its spiritual, mystical power, which abides in its many individual sects and sampradayas, each with its enlightened guru lineages, dynamic temples, noble traditions and profound scriptural canons. This sectarian diversity is the real power of the Hindu faith and must be preserved." "From the Hindu perspective, all of life is sacred, and performing our duty is dharma. Dharma is a rich term that means "way of righteousness, religion and fulfillment of duty." From this lofty view, every deed is a part of our religious practice. Everything we do is an act of worship and faith. There are no purely secular activities. Our worship in the temple is part of our dharma, and our work or occupation is part of our Dharma." ⁷⁹³

Paul Hubert was a French Theosophist, and he wrote in glowing terms of Charles Wilkins translation the Bhagavad Gita.

In his book *Histoire de la Bhagavad Gita* (1949) he said it was one of the “striking events in the universal history of philosophy.” ⁷⁹⁴

Swami B V Tripurari is American born and has spent over 30 years as a Hindu monastic. Awarded the sannyasa order in 1975, Swami Tripurari has studied under several spiritual masters in the Gaudiya lineage, notably AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. He is the founder of the Gaudiya Vaishava Society in 1985, author of several books, most recently *Bhagavad-Gita: Its Feeling and Philosophy* (2001) and *Ancient Wisdom for Modern Ignorance* (1995).

He admires the *Bhagavad Gita*:

“Whoever reads the Bhagavad Gita for the first time will be struck by the beauty and depth of this work.”

He has remarked on the modern disenchantment and materialism:

“For those now disenchanted with industrialization and scientific materialism as well as pseudo spirituality, India’s ancient spiritual heritage provides a rich alternative. Eastern philosophy and the devotional heart of India’s Vedanta in particular, can fill the empty shopping bag of our Western accomplishments.”

Swami Tripurari remarks on our environmental crisis thus:

“Our present environmental crisis is in essence a spiritual crisis. We need only to look back to medieval Europe and the psychic revolution that vaulted Christianity to victory over paganism to find the spirit of the environmental crisis. Inhibitions to the exploitation of nature vanished as the Church took the “spirits” out of the trees, mountains, and seas. Christianity’s ghost-busting theology made it possible for man to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects. It made nature man’s monopoly. This materialist paradigm has dominated the modern world for last few centuries. The current deplorable

condition demands a spiritual response. A fundamental reorientation of human consciousness, accompanied by action that is born out of inner commitment, is very much needed. One of the measures that could help a great deal to fulfill this need is to regenerate and rejuvenate basic values of Hindu culture and propagate them.” ⁷⁹⁵

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (1956 -) is the founder of the Bangalore based Art of Living an International Foundation. He recently addressed the UN Peace Summit on Aug 28. He is the only non-westerner to serve on the advisory board of Yale University's School of Divinity and is author of the book - *Hinduism and Christianity*.

Marvelously defining Hinduism he observes:

“Hinduism is not a religion; it is just a way of life that thousands of Rishis have written about. It is such a democratic religion where everybody has the freedom to think, write or say whatever they want. We have no opposition for any other philosophy coming into us. We have no opposition for the Bible to be part of our own study. Nobody here will say, ‘If you read the Bible, you will go to hell’. It is an inclusive way of looking at life, and that is what we need in the world today. We have no objection taking food from every part of the world, listening to music from every part of the world. So we need to globalize wisdom too.” ⁷⁹⁶

He explains that Hindu astrology has a very ancient lineage. Ten thousand years ago the Rig-Veda saw the earth as round and the sun was at the center and all the planets revolved around it. The West is thus committing an injustice by not giving Indian astronomy and astrology due credit.

“Indian astronomers had calculated that life started 1 billion, 955 million, 818 thousand and 501 years ago and that 28 cycles of yugas have already happened.”

“The ancient sages knew these facts. This is why they devised the mala (necklace) with 108 beads, which stand for the 12 constellations and the nine planets and the 108 different permutations which affect one's life. Everything in this universe is interconnected.” ⁷⁹⁷

Swami Ghanananda Saraswati is the first African swami to be initiated by Swami Krishnanand of India in 1975. He heads the Hindu Monastery of Africa in Accra, Ghana, regularly imparting spiritual guidance to devotees.

He has pointed out that:

“African religions and Hinduism have certain similarities. Traditional African religions recognize the many aspects of Brahman and worship God as Prithivi, Vayu, Varuna, Agni, etc., just as in Hinduism. Only Africans who have been exposed to Hinduism can appreciate these similarities which help them to better understand African beliefs and aspirations.”

Referring to his discovery of Hinduism, he says:

“I was searching for the truth. I went through some books on yoga and discovered that Hinduism is a very good religion. It is open-minded. It teaches you about God. It also teaches you about science of the soul. Later I went to Rishikesh and stayed with Sivananda’s ashram, the Divine Life Society. There I found that Hinduism is a straightforward religion that revealed the truth.”

“I believe that Hinduism will grow with time among both Indians and Africans. It is now time for India and Hindu masters to turn their attention to Africa, with swamis and Brahmins coming to conduct workshops, etc., and thereby give Africa a chance to remove the veil of spiritual darkness that has given Africa the name “the dark continent.” ⁷⁹⁸

Rev. Roger Bertschausen of the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Appleton, Wisconsin has written about the Philosophy of Time thus:

“We in the West have long had trouble with time. Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam had no inkling of the long age of the universe. Cosmologies from these religions were based on the notion that the universe started at a finite point in the recent past. St. Augustine set the beginning of the universe at 5000 BCE. For centuries, most Westerners embraced this figure. (And some continue to believe it.) Additionally, the early Christians also believed that the end of time as we know it was close at hand.”

The Reverend talks of the Hindu tradition and concept of time with great sincerity:

“This view of time contrasts sharply with other religious perspectives on the age of the universe. In the Hindu tradition, for example, one day in the life of Brahma lasts 4,300,000,000 years. And Brahma lives for the equivalent of 311,040,000,000,000 human years. The historian of religions Huston Smith reports one way of conceiving of the Hindu time-frame.”

“We understand now from modern physics that the Hindu concept of time is much closer to the mark than St. Augustine’s. Scientists now estimate that the universe is ten to twenty billion years old. We do not yet know for sure if our universe will keep expanding into infinity or if the force of gravity will at some point cause it to cease expanding and to collapse in what is called “the Big Crunch.” Even if it turns out that the universe will eventually collapse, the Big Crunch probably wouldn’t begin for at least another ten billion years.”

“I find the understandings of modern science—as well as of Hinduism—to be very helpful in this regard. We are part of a universe that has existed for billions of years and will likely continue to exist for billions more. The long view that this understanding should give us has not yet fully emerged—it’s hard to unlearn centuries of believing that the universe is only several thousand years old.”⁷⁹⁹

Prema Chaitanya praises Hinduism’s classic contention “*Truth is one; sages call it by different names.*” or “*Ekam sath, Vipraah bahudhaa vadanti?*”

“How artistic, that there should be room for such variety - how rich the texture is, and how much more interesting than if the Almighty had decreed one antiseptically safe, exclusive, orthodox way. Although he is Unity, God finds, it seems, his recreation in variety!” But beyond these differences, the same goal beckons.”⁸⁰⁰

Devamrita Swami is an author and researcher specializing in the history and knowledge of ancient India. Born in New York City, he began his immersion in India upon graduating from Yale University

in 1972. Visiting India annually for three decades he is an ordained sannyasi or monk, of India's Vaishnava spiritual tradition. He is the author of *Searching for Vedic India* (2002).

Referring to the majestic world outlook in Vedic literature he has observed:

"The Vedas are the largest mass of sacred knowledge from the ancient world, and they are its most brilliant literary achievement. In the Vedic literature we find an exquisite Weltanschauung, a majestic world outlook followed by millennia by a highly developed civilization."

"The West, however, would benefit profoundly by seriously exploring the value of the Vedic texts, in revealing a completely different way of seeing the universe. And – most important for our problems today – the Vedas reveal a completely different way of belonging to the universe."⁸⁰¹

Ranchor Prime was born in Leeds and has spent his life as a devotee of Krishna in Britain and India. He now works with the World Wide Fund for Nature as their Religious Network Officer in UK. He is also currently running a tree planting and restoration project in Vrindavan, India, on behalf of WWF.

He is the author of several books including *Vedic Ecology: Practical Wisdom for Surviving the 21st Century* (2002) and *Ramayana: A Journey* (1999).

He has instructed that:

"The West has much to learn from the wisdom traditions of India. Having exposed most of the rest of the world to our own traditions, and having largely abandoned them ourselves, we now need to learn from others; to put aside our swords and guns, our computers and microscopes, our cars and televisions, and have the courage and the vision to journey to new territory where these seemingly indispensable aids may be of little value."

He has pointed out that:

“Reincarnation is a good example of a teaching which has been largely ignored by Western civilization, despite the fact that it has existed in one form or another in the unofficial religions of Europe. It is important because it stresses the equality of all life forms and their transience too. It does not support the human-centred culture of the West which permits human society to terrorize the animal kingdom and dominate the cycles of nature for its own convenience. Nor does it support the empire-building mania of the European societies who wanted to possess as much of the world as they could, believing that they only had one life in which to do it all. It is these attitudes that have encouraged us in our present path of industrial and technological war upon nature and the world.”

“Reincarnation and other knowledge of the spirit is taught by the Vedas, the sacred books of the Hindus. They contain the collected wisdom of the Vedic culture, the world’s oldest living civilization, which in modern times has come to be known as Hinduism.”

“Western civilization considers human life to be sacred, but Hindus have gone much further and said that not only human life but all life is sacred. Therefore all life forms, not just human beings, must be revered and respected. This is the reason for being vegetarian, which is ecological in the deepest sense.”

He has sensibly articulated that:

“Hinduism is a holistic religion. It is a way of life rather than a religion or a set of beliefs. It includes economic life, sexual life, political life - everything is part of Hindu religion. ‘Religion’ is a Western word, and so is ‘Hindu’. A correct description is ‘Sanatan Dharma’. Sanatan means eternal, and Dharma means the true state. The dharma of fire is to burn; the dharma of water is to quench thirst. So ‘Sanatan Dharma’ means to find the true, everlasting state of being, the eternal path. Hindus (we call them Hindus, but we mean the Indian people) are searching for the Dharma of the soul, the meaning of life. That is the quest.”

Talking about the sacredness and interconnectedness of all life in Hinduism:

“The *Isa Upanishad* says it all. Nature is sacred, all life is sacred,

and the whole earth is sacred. That is the Hindu contribution. Western industrial life has become desacrilised. The only sanctity left is human life. We have to push the frontier beyond human and include the whole earth. Earth is our mother, earth is goddess, earth is Kali, earth is Parvati, earth is Sita, Earth mother - and she is the home of God.”⁸⁰²

Swami Akhilananda is Texas raised Hindu disciple. The first question most people ask the tall, blond, blue-eyed Hindu swami from Texas, almost everywhere he goes on his traveling lectures is how he got to be a Hindu swami.

“People always ask me that,” said Swami Akhilananda, wearing sandals, beads, a saffron robe and a vertical red streak on his forehead called a tilak during a recent visit to the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of Birmingham.

“Since I was a young child I was raised as a Hindu,” he said. “Hinduism is such that, whatever you can ask, there’s always an answer.”

His father, a carpenter, was a spiritual seeker who studied Hinduism and helped oversee construction on the Barsana Dham, a Hindu Temple in Austin, Texas. Built on 200 acres near a flowing stream, it’s one of the largest Hindu temples in the United States. Steeped in the history and scriptures of Hinduism, but raised in Texas, Swami Akhilananda has emerged as an eloquent spokesman for the appeal of the ancient religion to people who are not of Indian descent.

“Every Hindu knows there’s only one God and he manifests himself in many different ways,” Swami Akhilananda said.

The representations of gods are to help people understand a formless reality, he said. “There are a lot of different understandings of Hinduism,” he said. “We don’t do idol worship. It’s a way to visualize God.”⁸⁰³

Chapter 11

Artists

“Shiva dances, creating the world and destroying it, his large rhythms conjure up vast eons of time, and his movements have a relentless magical power of incantation. Our European allegories are banal and pointless by comparison with these profound works, devoid of the trappings of symbolism, concentrating on the essential, and the essentially plastic.”

- Sir Jacob Epstein



Magnificent statue of Lord Vishnu, located in the temple of Angkor wat, Cambodia.

Lord Vishnu, considered the preserver of the Cosmos in the Hindu Trinity characteristically stands upright and balanced. As the preserver, He embodies compassion, which is considered the self-existent, pervasive power maintaining the universe and cosmic order (Dharma). Vishnu holds his attributes, the discus and conch.

(From author's collection of photos.)

Artists

An artist is a painter, sculptor, or writer, who is able by virtue of imagination and talent or skill to create works of aesthetic value, especially in the fine arts. Artists from all around the world have responded to India's exuberant art and her magnificently rich symbols. The late curator of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Ananda Coomaraswamy, was instrumental in our understanding of the rich symbolism of the Nataraja, which is a synthesis of science, religion and art. Indian art has had a far-reaching influence on many parts of the world, including the countries of South East Asia. Sir Jacob Epstein, Rene Grousset, and Ernest Binfield Havell have all been influential in deepening our understanding of the sublime philosophy of Hinduism.



Lady Calcott (Mrs Graham) (1785 - 1842) was one of the spectacular exceptions to the English Memsahibs was a woman called Maria Graham who came to India with her father Rear-Admiral George Dundas of the Royal Navy. She married Capt Thomas Graham of the Royal Navy. Later she became Lady Calcott by her second marriage. Her *Journal of a Residence in India*, dealing with her experiences mainly in the coastal areas of India during the period from 1809 to 1811 was first published in England in 1812.

She was culturally very different from most of the English Ladies who came to India along with their husbands.

She was a great lover of India and clearly stated in her Journal that one of her purposes was 'to exhibit a sketch of India's former grandeur and refinement so that I could restore India to that place in the scale of ancient nations, which European historians have in general unaccountably neglected to assign to it'.

She wrote eloquently about the grandeur of Sanskrit language and literature, its majesty of thought and loftiness of expression.

She went to Mahabalipuram along with a Brahmin servant of Col Colin Mackenzie and stayed there for three days. The Oriental Manuscripts Library in Madras today contains all the manuscripts collected by Col Mackenzie between 1792 and 1815. Lady Calcott gave a beautiful description of Mahabalipuram and its environs in her Journal.

About the glory and greatness of Sanskrit language she wrote with great passion as follows:

"Were all other monuments swept away from the face of Hindustan, were all its inhabitants destroyed, and its name forgotten, the existence of the Sanskrit language would prove that it once contained a race who had reached a high degree of refinement, and who must have been blessed with many rare advantages before such a language could have been formed and polished. Amidst the wreck of nations where it flourished, and superior to the havoc of war and conquest, it remains a venerable monument of the splendour of other times, as the solid Pyramid in the deserts of Egypt."

This was written eight years before the birth of Max Mueller and almost half a century before he published the first volume of his famous series 'Sacred Books of the East'.⁸⁰⁴

Richard Lannoy (1928 -) is the author of *The Speaking Tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society* has stated that:

"The Kailash temple at Ellora, a complete sunken Brahmanical

temple carved out in the late seventh and eighth centuries A. D is over 100 feet high, the largest structure in India to survive from ancient times, larger than the Parthenon. This representation of Shiva's mountain home, Mount Kailash in the Himalaya, took more than a century to carve, and three million cubic feet of stone were removed before it was completed. An inscription records the exclamation of the last architect on looking at his work: "Wonderful! O how could I ever have done it?"

Here Lannoy is more precise:

"A hollowed-out space in living rock is a totally different environment from a building constructed of quarried stone. The human organism responds in each case with a different kind of empathy. Buildings are fashioned in sequence by a series of uniformly repeatable elements, segment by segment, from a foundation upwards to the conjunction of walls and roof; the occupant empathizes with a visible tension between gravity and soaring tensile strength. Entering a great building is to experience an almost imperceptible tensing in the skeletal muscles in response to constructional tension. Caves, on the other hand, are scooped out by a downward plunge of the chisel from ceiling to floor in the direction of gravity; the occupant empathizes with an invisible but sensed resistance, an unrelenting presence in the rock enveloping him; sculpted images and glowing pigments on the skin of the rock well forth from the deeps. To enter an Indian cave sanctuary is to experience a relaxation of physical tension in response to the implacable weight and density of solid rock." ⁸⁰⁵

François-Auguste-René Rodin (1840-1917) was a French sculptor, who imbued his work with great psychological force, which was expressed largely through texture and modeling. He is regarded as the foremost sculptor of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In a magnificently poetic outburst about the Mahesamurti (Trimurti) of the Elephanta Caves:

"This full, pouting mouth, rich in sensuous expressions, these lips like a lake of pleasure, fringed by the noble, palpitating nostrils." ⁸⁰⁶

Rodin described the statue of Nataraja or King of Dance – “as the perfect embodiment of rhythmic movement.”⁸⁰⁷

He was overwhelmed when he saw the Chola sculptures in 1913.

“There are things that other people do not see: unknown depths, the wellsprings of life,” he said. “There is grace in elegance; above grace, there is modelling; everything is exaggerated; we call it soft but it is most powerfully soft! Words fail me then.”⁸⁰⁸

H. M. Hyndman (1842-1921) was the eminent British publicist who described the important place of India in the world’s history and civilization:

“Many hundreds of years before the coming of the English, the nations of India had been a collection of wealthy and highly civilized people, possessed of a great language with an elaborate code of laws and social regulations, with exquisite artistic taste in architecture and decoration, producing beautiful manufactures of all kinds, and endowed with religious ideas and philosophic and scientific conceptions which have greatly influenced the development of the most progressive races of the West. One of the noblest individual moralists who ever lived, Sankya Muni was a Hindu; the Code of Manu, dating from before the Christian era, is still an essential a study for the jurist....and there are in India, in this later age, worthy descendants of the great authors of the Vedas, of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.”

“And yet, nine-tenths of what has been written by the British about India is so expressed that we are made to believe the shameful falsehood that stability and civilized government in Hindustan began only with the rule of the British.”⁸⁰⁹

Clarence Edward Dutton (1841-1912) was a captain of ordinance in the U.S. army, geologist-poet and a Yale man, Dutton was deeply influenced by the philosophies of India. It was Dutton who likened the snow-covered peaks of the canyon walls to the Hindu gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. There is even a Hindu amphitheatre, which Dutton likened to the “profusion and richness, which suggests an Oriental character”.

On the 7,650-foot Shiva Temple he wrote that:

“He found the Shiva Temple the grandest of all, and most majestic in aspect....All round it are side gorges sunk to a depth nearly as profound as that of the main channel...In such a stupendous scene of wreck, it seemed as if the fabled ‘destroyer’ might find an abode not wholly uncongenial.”

He was particularly in awe of a 7,529 foot butte. “It is a gigantic butte,” he wrote in 1860. So admirably designed and so exquisitely decorated that the sight of it must call forth an expression of wonder and delight from the most apathetic beholder. Such a magnificent nature-made spire needed a timeless name. He called it the Vishnu Temple.

Dutton went on to name other buttes with such names as Brahma Temple, (7,553 feet), Deva Temple (7,339).

According to Professor Stephen J. Payne, professor of history at the Arizona State University and author of the book *How the Canyon Became Grand* there is “no explicit explanation for naming the peaks after Hindu gods, only implicit.”

He likens the naming the peaks to the historical fact of the time.

“When there was a growing awareness and respect in the West, particularly Europe, towards Indian philosophies, not economies of the past.”

Takeo Kamiya (1946 -) is the Japanese architect who has spent about 20 years and all his savings traveling across India documenting the country’s heritage buildings to enlighten Japan and the world about the “wonders of real India”. He is a member of the Japan Architects Academy. Kamiya first visited India about 27 years ago and travelled across the country, like Hieun Tsang during the Golden Age of Guptas. He is the author of *The Guide to the Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent* (2003) and *The Sacred Architecture in India* (2005). When he was young, Japan was oriented only to the West and America. But he had a feeling that the world did not end there.

He says:

“The first place I visited was the Konark Sun Temple. I was shocked...awestruck at the site of the marvelous man-made wonder, all my worries and complaints vanished then and there.”

“That intense emotional experience made me come back again and again. It gave me the urge to travel and see as much as I could. It is after this that I concretized the idea of documenting my experiences in a book form.”

The result: *The Guide to the Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, a comprehensive classification and introduction of Indian architecture from north to the south. It is a complete guide, which has been a revelation for even several leading Indian architects.

“India had always fascinated me, though I had only little knowledge about the country where Buddha was born. There was hardly any literature available on Indian architecture while I was studying in the Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku (Fine Arts faculty in Architecture). So I decided to travel to India to study about the country, its culture and heritage.” ⁸¹⁰

Dr. Ernest Binfield Havell (1861-1934) was the principal to the Madras College of Art in the 1890s and left as principal of the Calcutta College of Art some 20 years later. He wrote several books, including his book, *Indian Architecture - Its Psychology, Structure and History from the First Mohammedan Invasion to the Present Day*.

He has with great feelings about Hinduism:

“India, whether regarded from a physical or intellectual standpoint, is herself the great exemplar of the doctrine of the one in the many, which her philosophers proclaimed to the world.” ⁸¹¹

Havell has reflected that:

“In India, religion is hardly a dogma, but a working hypothesis of human conduct, adapted to different stages of spiritual development and different conditions of life. A dogma might

continue to be believed in, isolated from life, but a working hypothesis of human conduct must work and conform to life, or it obstructs life. The very *raison d'être* of such a hypothesis is its workableness, its conformity to life, and its capacity to adapt itself to changing conditions. So long as it can do so it serves its purpose and performs its allotted function. when it goes off at a tangent from the curve of life, loses contact with social needs, and the distance between it and life grows, it loses all its vitality and significance.”⁸¹²

“It was India, not Greece that taught Islam in the impressionable years of its youth, formed its philosophy and esoteric religious ideals and inspired its most characteristic expression in literature, art and architecture.”⁸¹³

Comparing the European and Hindu art, Dr. Havell writes glowingly:

“European art has, as it were its wings clipped: it knows only the beauty of earthly things. Indian art, soaring into the highest empyrean, is ever trying to bring down to earth something of the beauty of the things above.”

“Just as angels are given wings, or saints halos, or just as the Holy Spirit was portrayed as a dove, so Shiva or Vishnu were given extra arms to hold the symbols of their various attributes, or extra heads for their different roles. Havell showed how consummately the Indian artist could handle movement. Taking the example of the famous Nataraja (dancing Shiva) bronzes of south India, he first explored its symbolism. No work of Indian art is without a wealth of allegory and symbol, ignorance of which was, and still is, a major stumbling block for most non-Indians. The Nataraja deals with the divine ecstasy of creation expressed in dance.”

“Taking the example of the famous Nataraja (dancing Shiva) bronzes of south India, he first explored its symbolism. No work of Indian art is without a wealth of allegory and symbol, ignorance of which was, and still is, a major stumbling block for most non-Indians. The Nataraja deals with the divine ecstasy of creation expressed in dance.”

He has described the art at Ellora vividly:

“The design of the Kailasa remained, for all time, the perfect model of a Shivalinga, - the temple craftsman’s vision of Shiva’s wondrous palace in his Himalayan glacier, where in his Yogi’s cell the Lord of the Universe, the great magician, controls the cosmic forces by the power of thought; the holy rivers, creating the life in the world below, enshrined in His matted locks; Parvati, His other Self, the Universal Mother, watching by His side.” ^{814 815}

Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925) was an Austrian architect highly interested in the alignment between science and nature, matter and spirit he developed an anthropomorphic architecture for his own Anthroposophical Society. He is a scholar who had edited the works of German dramatist/poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe.

He has noted astutely that:

“In order to approach a creation as sublime as the Bhagavad-Gita with full understanding it is necessary to attune our soul to it.”

“What we read in the Vedas, those archives of Hindu wisdom, gives us only a faint idea of the sublime doctrines of the ancient teachers, and even so these are not in their original form. Only the gaze of the clairvoyant, directed upon the mysteries of the past, many reveal the unuttered wisdom which lies hidden behind these writings.” ⁸¹⁶

Dr. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) was the late curator of Indian art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, was unexcelled in his knowledge of the art of the Orient, and unmatched in his understanding of Indian culture, language, religion and philosophy. He is the author of *The Dance of Shiva: Essays on Indian Art and Culture* (1967).

Praising this grand achievement of ancient Hindu art, he writes about the image of the Shiva Nataraja:

“This conception itself is a synthesis of science, religion and art. In the night of Brahma, Nature is inert, and cannot dance till Shiva wills it. He rises from His rapture, and dancing sends through inert matter pushing waves of awakening sound, and lo!

Matter also dances appearing as a glory round about Him. This is poetry; but nonetheless, science."

He declared with great eloquence:

"Whatever the origins of Siva's dance, it became in time the clearest image of the activity of God which any art or religion can boast of."

"How amazing the range of thought and sympathy of those rishi-artists who conceived such a type as this, affording an image of reality, a key to the complex tissue of life, a theory of nature, not merely satisfactory to a single clique or race, not acceptable to the thinkers of a country only, but Universal in its appeal to the philosopher, the lover and the artist of all ages and all countries..."

"Every part of such an image as this is directly expressive not of any superstition or dogma, but of evident facts. No artist of today, however great, could more exactly or more wisely create an image of that Energy which science must postulate behind all phenomena? "It is not strange that the figure of Nataraja has commanded the adoration of so many generations past; familiar with all skepticisms, expert in tracing all beliefs to primitive superstitions, explorers of the infinitely great and infinitely small, we are worshippers of Nataraja still."⁸¹⁷

Coomaraswamy observed the uniqueness of the Hindus:

"Hindus have grasped more firmly than others the fundamental meaning and purpose of life, and more deliberately than others organized society with a view to the attainment of the fruit of life; and this organization was designed, not for the advantage of a single class, but, to use a modern formula, to take from each according to his capacity, and to give to each according to his needs."

"If it be asked what inner riches India brings to aid in the realization of a civilization of the world, then, from the Indian standpoint, the answer must be found in her religions and her philosophy, and her constant application of abstract theory to practical life."

"The essence of the Indian experience, rooted in 'a constant intuition' of the unity and harmony of all life. Everything has its

place, every being its function and all play a part in the divine concert led by Nataraja (Siva), Lord of Dancers.”

He has described the Bhagavad Gita as:

“A compendium of the whole Vedic doctrine to be found in the earlier Vedas, Brahmanas and Upanishads, and being therefore the basis of all later developments, it can be regarded as the focus of all Indian religion.” ⁸¹⁸

“There are many gods in Hindu pantheon, but they are no more than the imaginative shadowing forth of all-compassing, all penetrating spirit.”

“Hinduism emerges, not as a post-Vedic development, atheistic declension from the lofty visions of the Upanishads, but as something handed on from a prehistoric past, ever-changing and yet ever essentially itself, raised at various times by devotional ecstasy and philosophic speculation to heights beyond the grasp of thought, and yet preserving in its popular aspects the most archaic rites and animistic imagery.” ⁸¹⁹

He detected in India “a strong national genius... since the beginning of her history.” He found Indian art and culture “a joint creation of the Dravidian and Aryan genius.” Of Buddhism, he wrote: “the more profound our study, the more difficult it becomes to distinguish Buddhism from Brahmanism, or to say in what respects, if any, Buddhism is really unorthodox. The outstanding distinction lies in the fact that an apparently historical founder propounds Buddhist doctrine. Beyond this there are only broad distinctions of emphasis.” No right-wing historian could dare put it so boldly in Indian today. ⁸²⁰

“Almost all that belongs to the common spiritual consciousness of Asia, the ambient in which its diversities are reconcilable, is of Indian origin in the Gupta period.” ⁸²¹

“Hinduism is not only the oldest of the mystery religions, or rather metaphysical disciplines, of which we have a full and precise knowledge from literary sourcesbut also perhaps the only one of these that has survived with an unbroken tradition and that is lived and understood at the present by millions of men...”

“The Indian tradition is one of the forms of the Philosophia Perennis, and as such, embodies those universal truths, to which no one people or age can make exclusive claim.”

“We must, however, specially mention the Bhagavad Gita as probably the most important single work ever produced in India; this book of eighteen chapters is not, as it has been sometimes called, a “sectarian” work, but one universally studied and often repeated daily from memory by millions of Indians of all persuasions; it may be described as a compendium of the whole Vedic doctrine to be found in the earlier Vedas, Brahmanas, and Upanishads, and being therefore the basis of all the later developments, it can be regarded at the focus of all Indian religion.” ⁸²²

Sir Jacob Epstein (1880-1959) was the leading English Sculptor. After studying with Rodin in Paris, he revolted against the ornate and pretty in art, producing bold, often harsh and massive forms in stone and bronze. His best-known pieces include the Oscar Wilde Memorial (1911; Père-Lachaise, Paris), a marble Venus (1917; Yale Univ New Haven, Conn), and a Madonna and Child (Convent of the Holy Child Jesus, London).

Epstein has vividly written about Shiva Nataraja:

“Shiva dances, creating the world and destroying it, his large rhythms conjure up vast aeons of time, and his movements have a relentless magical power of incantation. Our European allegories are banal and pointless by comparison with these profound works, devoid of the trappings of symbolism, concentrating on the essential, the essentially plastic.” ⁸²³

Rene Grousset (1885-1952) was a French art historian. Author of several books including *Civilization of India* and *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*

He gives a fine interpretation of the image of Shiva Nataraja:

“Whether he be surrounded or not by the flaming aureole of the Tiruvasi (Pabhamandala) – the circle of the world which he both fills and oversteps – the King of the Dance is all rhythm and exaltation. The tambourine, which he sounds with one of his

right hands, draws all creatures into this rhythmic motion and they dance in his company. The conventionalized locks of flying hair and the blown scarfs tell of the speed of this universal movement, which crystallizes matter and reduces it to powder in turn. One of his left hands holds the fire, which animates and devours the worlds in this cosmic whirl. One of the God's feet is crushing a Titan, for "this dance is danced upon the bodies of the dead", yet one of the right hands is making a gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudra*), so true it is that, seen from the cosmic point of view...the very cruelty of this universal determinism is kindly, as the generative principle of the future. And, indeed, on more than one of our bronzes the King of the Dance wears a broad smile. He smiles at death and at life, at pain and at joy, alike, or rather, his smile is death and life, both joy and pain... From this lofty point of view, in fact, all things fall into their place, finding their explanation and logical compulsion. Here art is the faithful interpreter of a philosophical concept. The plastic beauty of the rhythm is no more than the expression of an ideal rhythm. The very multiplicity of arms, puzzling as it may seem at first sight, is subject in turn to an inward law, each pair remaining a model of elegance in itself, so that the whole being of the Nataraja thrills with a magnificent harmony in his terrible joy. And as though to stress the point that the dance of the divine actor is indeed a sport, (*lila*) – the sport of life and death, the sport of creation and destruction, at once infinite and purposeless – the first of the left hands hangs limply from the arm in the careless gesture of the *gajahasta* (hand as the elephant's trunk). And lastly, as we look at the back view of the statue, are not the steadiness of these shoulders which uphold world, and the majesty of this Jove-like torso, as it were a symbol of the stability and immutability of substance, while the gyration of the legs in its dizzy speed would seem to symbolize the vortex of phenomena." ⁸²⁴

He speaks with great admiration of the Trimurti statue at Elephanta Caves:

"Universal art has succeeded in few materialization of the Divine as powerful and also as balanced. He believed that it is "the greatest representation of the pantheistic god created by the hands of man."

He concludes with poetic enthusiasm:

“Never have the overflowing sap of life, the pride of force superior to everything, the secret intoxication of the inner god of things been so serenely expressed.” ⁸²⁵

In the words of Rene Grousset:

“The three countenances of the one being are here harmonized without a trace of effort. There are few material representations of the divine principle at once as powerful and as well balanced as this in the art of the whole world. Nay, more, here we have undoubtedly the grandest representation of the pantheistic God ever made by the hand of man...Indeed, never have the exuberant vigor of life, the tumult of universal joy expressing itself in ordered harmony, the pride of a power superior to any other, and the secret exaltation of the divinity immanent in all things found such serenely expressed.”

In its Olympian majesty, the Mahesamurti of Elephanta is worthy of comparison with the Zeus of Mylasa or the Asklepios of Melos.”

He writes about the Indian influence in South East Asia:

“In the high plateau of eastern Iran, in the oases of Serindia, in the arid wastes of Tibet, Mongolia, and Manchuria, in the ancient civilized lands of China and Japan, in the lands of the primitive Mons and Khmers and other tribes of Indo-China, in the countries of the Malaya-Polynesians, in Indonesia and Malay, India left the indelible impress of her high culture, not only upon religion, but also upon art, and literature, in a word, all the higher things of spirit.”

He has pointed out of the stubborn bias in our history books about India's achievements in Greater India:

“There is an obstinate prejudice thanks to which India is constantly represented as having lived, as it were, hermetically sealed up in its age-old civilization, apart from the rest of Asia. Nothing could be more exaggerated. During the first eight centuries of our era, so far as religion and art are concerned, central Asia was a sort of Indian colony. It is often forgotten that in the early middle Ages there existed a “Greater India,” a vast

Indian empire. A man coming from the Ganges or the Deccan to Southeast Asia felt as much at home they're as in his own native land. In those days the Indian Ocean really deserved its name." ⁸²⁶

Philip Rawson was an academic and artist and author of *The Art of Southeast Asia* (1967) and he has written brilliantly about India influence in Southeast Asia:

"The culture of India has been one of the world's most powerful civilizing forces. Countries of the Far East, including China, Korea, Japan, Tibet and Mongolia owe much of what is best in their own culture to the inspiration of ideas imported from India. The West, too has its own debts. But the members of that circle of civilizations beyond Burma scattered around the Gulf of Siam and the Java Sea, virtually owe their very existence to the creative influences of Indian ideas. No conquest or invasion, no forced conversion imposed upon them. They were adopted because the people saw they were good and that they could use them."

Uttering his great regard for Indian sculptures, he wrote appreciatively:

"The sculptures of Indian icons produced in Cambodia during the 6th to the 8th centuries A.D. are masterpieces, monumental, subtle, highly sophisticated, mature in style and unrivalled for sheer beauty...."

"One of the most interesting pieces of all is a fragmentary bronze bust, from the western Mebon, of the God Vishnu lying asleep on the ocean of non-being. Head and shoulders and the two right arms survive. It shows the extraordinary, delicate integrity and subtle total convexity of surface, which these sculptors could achieve by modeling. Eyebrows, moustache and eyes seem to have been inlaid, perhaps with gold, silver or precious tone, though the inlay is gone and only the sockets remain. This was one of the world's great sculptures."

"Another magnificent bronze of Shiva, from Por Loboek, suggests the wealth of metal art that once must have existed in Cambodia (Kamboja) at the height of its power."

He is most enthusiastic about the relief in Angkor Wat, a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu:

“The genius of the artists of that age was for relief. Indeed one might say that AngkorWat is a repertory of some of the most magnificent relief art that the world has ever seen. The open colonnaded gallery on the first storey contains over a mile of such works, six feet high. The main sources for the relief subject matter are the Mahabharata and Ramayana, as well as legends of Vishnu and his incarnation Krishna. The wars of classical legend, in which incarnations of the various persons of the Hindu deity triumph at length over demonic adversaries. The artists’ skill is everywhere apparent.” ⁸²⁷

Stephen P. Huyler is art historian, cultural anthropologist; curator at the Smithsonian’s Arthur M. Sackler gallery, in his book *Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion* (2002) defines Hinduism:

“Hinduism is a religion of individuality. Both good and evil are believed to be of God, and the purpose of most rituals is to maintain a balance between such opposites: creation and destruction, light and dark, masculine and feminine. All Hindus believe that the Absolute is the pure blend of opposites, neither masculine nor feminine. For the Hindu, as every aspect of existence has a purpose, human meaning involves a fundamental sense of duty and of conscientious accountability. All individuals are considered part of the greater whole, which functions well only when each person fulfills his or her obligations. The focus and means of worship are many, but the process has a common thread. It acknowledges one of the fundamental principles of Hinduism. God is a universal force, indivisible and yet infinitely divisible, the one and the many, the perfect mixture of all facets of existence.”

“Hinduism is a religion of strength, vitality, innovation, and balance.”

“For the average Hindu, the Divine is personal and approachable. God is universal force, indivisible, and yet infinitely divisible, the one and the many, the perfect mixture of all facets of existence.”

“Many Hindu texts state that the Absolute, Brahman, is pure sound.”

Huyler continues that:

“Hinduism is often said to be a religion of millions of Gods, and it is indeed a religion of diversity. But it is essential to understand that underlying all is the belief in the unity in one great God: the Absolute, often known as Brahman. Some Hindus believe that this Absolute is formless, a supreme cosmic force that cannot be completely known by humankind. Hindu philosophers state that existence, as we know it is an illusion. The universe is relative, ever changing, whereas its source, the Absolute, is the only permanent thing, never changing. To truly reach the Divine we must divest ourselves of all physical attachments and open our minds and spirit to the great void.” ⁸²⁸

Francesco Clemente (1952 -) is Italian born Indophile and a New York artist. His art was displayed at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum recently. He is the youngest artist ever to receive a full-museum retrospective at the Guggenheim.

Clemente arrived in India in 1973 and 1978 made more than ten trips there, immersing himself deep in India’s philosophy, religion, art and crafts.

“The Gods who left thousands of years ago in Milan (Europe) are still in India.”

“In Indian diversity there is still the memory of very refined expressions which we have lost.”

Marcus Leatherdale is Montreal born photojournalist has had a long love affair with India. To him Hinduism and India are almost synonymous.

What he likes about Hinduism is that it is very emotional, colorful and joyful religion.

The photojournalist Marcus Leatherdale has also had a long love affair with India. For many years he rented a house in Benares, spending half the year there on the bustling ghats, making friends with Brahmins and boatmen alike. He speaks some Hindi and calls himself an ‘adha’ Hindustani. He has shot images of maharanis and circus performers and ordinary Indians. His current focus is on the tribal folks who are an almost endangered species in India.

Leatherdale notes:

“You’d have to be brain dead to live in India and not be affected by Hinduism. It’s not like Christianity in America, where you feel it only on Sunday mornings ... if you go to church at all. Hinduism is an on-going daily procedure. You live it, you breathe it.”⁸²⁹

He has remarked that:

“Hinduism has a playful aspect which I’ve not experienced in any other religion. Its not so righteous or sober as is Christianity, nor is it puritanical. That’s one of the reasons I enjoy India. I wake up in the morning, and I’m very content.”⁸³⁰

“In Europe’s Middle ages, the great cathedrals, including the one of Chartres, rose from the ground upwards to the sky, supported not so much by stone as by the powerful religious symbolism that drove the Christian church. In India, the craftsmen did not build, but removed the earth and stone to discover space in the service of a different religious symbolism, not one identified with any religious monolith, but instead, one to which different religious groups owed allegiance.”

Michael Freeman (1972 -) a noted photographer and author of the visually stunning book, *Angkor: The Hidden Glories* (1990). Visiting Angkor Wat, the largest Hindu temple in the world, he has remarked:

*“We look up and stand transfixed
The great towers rise ahead,
Black against a crimson band of sky.
We are within the temple precincts,
Yet we still have far to go,
The causeway, broad enough for a cavalcade
Of elephants, stretches on ahead.”*

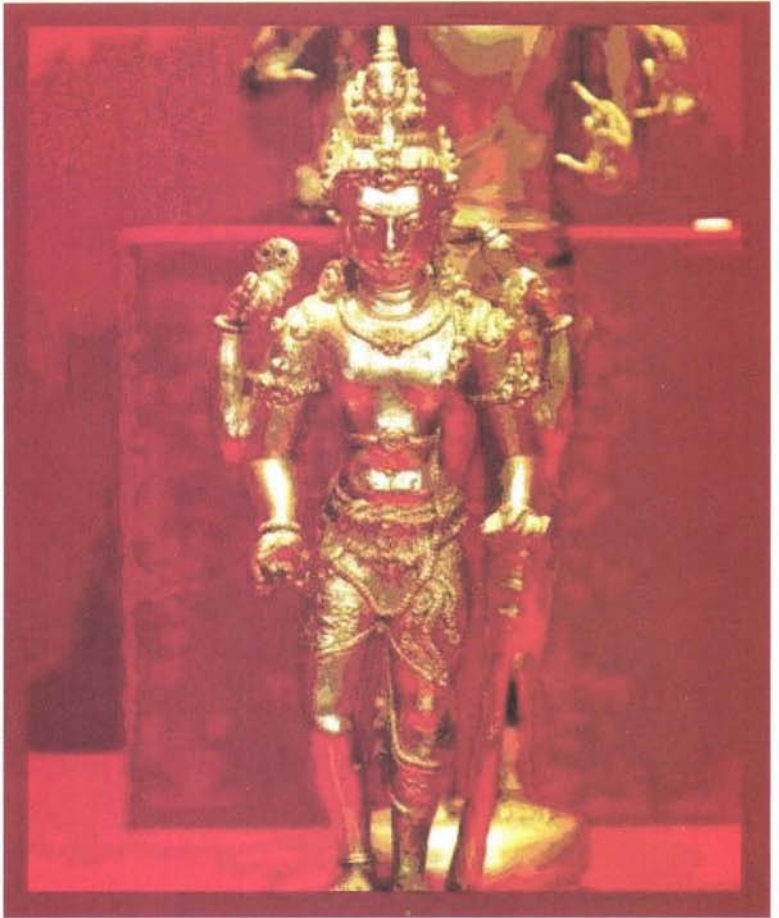
“We have been walking into a schematic version of a Hindu temple-mountain, with its concentric series of oceans and mountain ranges surrounding the five peaks of Mount Meru. The scale of Angkor Wat is so vast that it is hard to appreciate the layout without some kind of plan or aerial view. The view from the central tower is magnificent, and the way in which the

builders have recreated the experience of climbing a mountain is uncanny. To the left and right rise the corner towers; galleries link the five peaks. In the middle, under the central and largest tower, is the sanctuary that once contained the sacred image dedicated to Lord Vishnu.”

Freeman describes the bas-reliefs of the temple in glowingly words:

“The temple contains world’s longest continuous expanse of bas-reliefs, all in the form of narrative sculpture. The first one, taking up the entire section as far as the corner pavilion, more than fifty yards away, is the Mahabharata. The narrative thread of The Great Epic of the Bharata Dynasty is the feud between the Pandava and Kaurava families. A poem of hundred thousand couplets seven times longer than the combined Odyssey and Iliad. It contains Hinduism’s most famous and important religious text, The Bhagavad Gita (The Lord’s Song). Lord Vishnu appears in the epic as Krishna to assist the heroes of the story, the Pandava family; since Angkor Wat is consecrated to Vishnu, the presence of the Mahabharata is especially appropriate.”

“The Churning of the Sea of Milk is the masterpiece of the bas-reliefs. Its theme is one of the most important in Khmer mythology, the treatment is an enormous but unified tableau, and the execution is of the highest order, probably by one supremely talented artist.”⁸³¹



Golden statue of Lord Vishnu Jakarta, Indonesia.

The planet needs quite desperately a sense of moral order, spirituality and an ethical compass. The Indian religious and philosophical traditions can provide a great deal of all three. Hence the importance of the role India must play in this respect - both because of its innate qualities and because there is no other serious contender.

Photo courtesy: Vikneswaran Shunmugam, Malaysia.

Chapter 12

Industrialists

“I am more a devotee than a jnani. Though I love the wisdom of the Upanishads and such high philosophy and logic as the Nyaya Vaisheshika and Nagarjuna, I feel most drawn to the life and example of Sri Krishna. “I am captivated also by epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.” Indian spirituality is a treasure of the highest order.” “India stands for hope in a world full of violence and despair. The fertile spiritual soil of India will bring forth a spiritual figure who will guide the world back into love, into peace, into mutual respect and caring for each other. That is how we will save this planet.”

- Stephen H Ruppenthal

Industrialists

An Industrialists is one who owns, directs, or has a substantial financial interest in an industrial enterprise. Hinduism has also succeeded in dazzling many leaders of industries varying from the automotive to finance.



Ram Dass (1931-) was born Richard Alpert, the bright and personable scion of a wealthy, influential Jewish family. His father, George Alpert, a prominent Boston lawyer, helped found Brandeis University and was president of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. Alpert taught at Harvard in the '60s, joining his colleague Timothy Leary in "consciousness-raising" experiments. He remains best known for his 1971 classic bestseller *Be Here Now*.

Alpert has been studying the nature of consciousness for more than 50 years, and began his studies with psychology, specializing in human motivation and personality development. While at Harvard in 1961, Alpert's explorations of human consciousness led him to collaborate with Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, Aldous Huxley, Allen Ginsberg.

Unsatisfied by that research Alpert then traveled to India where he met a man, Neem Karoli Baba, who would become his Hindu guru. Alpert stayed on to study Hinduism with this master, was

renamed Ram Dass, and subsequently came back to the States to spread word of new techniques for spiritual practice based on yoga and transcendental meditation using a repeated mantra, such as “Om.

Since 1968, Ram Dass has pursued a variety of spiritual methods and practices from various ancient wisdom traditions, including devotional yoga focused on the Hindu spiritual figure Hanuman. In 1974, Ram Dass created the Hanuman Foundation, which developed the Prison Ashram Project, designed to help prison inmates grow spiritually during their incarceration, and the Dying Project, conceived as a spiritual support structure for conscious and dying. He helped usher in the New Age movement.

Now in his seventies, Ram Dass remains best-known for his 1971 classic bestseller *Be Here Now*, a book which sparked a generation’s quest for expanded consciousness and meaningful spirituality. Ram Dass is a co-founder and advisory board member of the Seva Foundation, an international service organization.

“One of his messages is that we are both human and divine and that we must hold both simultaneously.”⁸³²

Alfred B. Ford (1950 -) aka Ambarish Das is the grandson of Henry Ford (founder of the Ford Motor), and Trustee member of Ford Motor Company. He is involved in Ford’s corporate charity work.

Throwing light on his personal association with India, Ford said he was attracted to Indian civilization after he studied Hinduism during his college days 30 years ago. Soon after, he converted to Hinduism and has traveled to India dozens of times. He even married an Indian girl, Sharmila Bhattacharya, a doctor, who hails from Jaipur.

He joined Iskcon in 1975. He traveled to India for the first time that same year with Srila Prabhupada. He was instrumental in the establishment of the first Hindu temple in Hawaii. He also helped establish the Bhaktivedanta Cultural Center, which is a highly

regarded tourist destination in Detroit. Alfred has made significant donations to Iskcon over the years, which have assisted many ongoing projects and helped to build the Pushpa Samadhi Mandir of Srila Prabhupada. He is the founding chairman of the Iskcon Foundation, and campaign chairman of the Sri Mayapur Temple of Vedic Planetarium.

The love for Hinduism brought a great grandson of US automobile legend Henry Ford to the Russian capital to lobby for a Vedic cultural centre.

“If Moscow wants to be a world class capital, it has to open up to other cultures, particularly ancient cultures like Vedic culture.”

Ford, during a visit to Moscow last week, said: “For me the most important thing is to spread the Hindu knowledge about the soul. This is more important than any other knowledge and is my main priority”.

Russia has an estimated 90,000 Russian Hindus, sources at International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) here claim. Addressing representatives of the Indian community in Russia, Ford lauded their efforts to build the cultural centre complex that would be named “Glory of India”.

He has said:

“My main activity is connected with propagandizing Indian culture throughout the world. The Alfred Ford Foundation and the Indian community are financing construction of the center.”⁸³³

Andrew Krieger is the President and CEO of NorthBridge Capital Management. He has a BA in Philosophy (Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa) an MBA in Finance and prior to that, an MA in South Asian Studies, most notably Sanskrit. He has studied Sanskrit and Indian philosophy.

He has visited India more than 20 times, studying yoga, traveling, introducing his family to “my love affair with an amazing civilization.”

Krieger said he thought he had “ended up in the wrong body,” meaning that he is really an Indian in his heart. I have heard this from my wife. India does this to some people.

“I got turned on to Vedanta when I was about 11 years old.”

“The India I know has tremendous genetic capabilities; but 700 years of foreign rule has put a dampener on it. I still believe that it is the greatest civilisation ever on this planet, and those strong genetic factors are bound to re-emerge - if you look at what is happening to the country, the way geniuses are emerging to lead it in every field, it is already happening in a sense, people, leaders with vision, are emerging.”

“When I talk of genetics, look, and sports has been part of India’s heritage for 5,000 years or more. Archery, for instance; wrestling; swimming, all these used to be part of Indian sporting tradition.”⁸³⁴

Stephen H Ruppenthal is the son of a TWA pilot, he could travel across the world but India hooked him during his first visit. Later he would come to know the spiritual master Eknath Easwaran and work with him for about three decades. The author of the recently published *The Path of Direct Awakening: Passages for Meditation* was barely 14 when he fell in love with India.

“I have a special, soft corner in my heart for Hinduism. It is like a mother to me, and I have always felt so,”

“A journalist said not too long ago that my insights into India may have been due to karma. Over the past month, I have thought a lot about that. Maybe I did have some of India in me even before I landed there at age 14. Mine is the India of the spirit. Before that, I was not religious in the least. But I came away from India wanting passionately to find the deepest truth in religion; not hear it from a church pulpit, but experience it in my consciousness.”

“Any great treasure takes some work to find and gain. When something is easily accessible, often it isn’t worth that much or perhaps the hard work comes later down the road. To me, Indian spirituality is a treasure of the highest order.”

“India stands for hope in a world full of violence and despair. The fertile spiritual soil of India will bring forth a spiritual figure who will guide the world back into love, into peace, into mutual respect and caring for each other. That is how we will save this planet.”

Ruppenthal writes glowingly about his love for the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita:

“I am more a devotee than a jnani. Though I love the wisdom of the Upanishads and such high philosophy and logic as the Nyaya-Vaisheshika and Nagarjuna, I feel most drawn to the life and example of Sri Krishna. Right now, religion is still concepts up in my head. I want to have religion flooding my heart.”

“Sri Krishna offers this in the Bhagavad Gita. That is why I have memorised all of chapters 2 through 12, plus 15 and parts of 18, for use in my passage meditation. When I meditate on these passages, I try to repeat these words in my heart, where I believe Sri Krishna resides in all his glory. In this regard, I have also memorized all passages with the yin-yang symbol in my book that brings the same peace and energy directly from nature and the magical world around us.”

“I am captivated also by epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.”⁸³⁵

Charles H. Townes (1915 -) is a member of the technical staff of Bell Telephone Laboratories from 1933 to 1947. Dr. Townes worked extensively during World War II in designing radar-bombing systems and has a number of patents in related technology. He invented the microwave emitting - MASER.

He has pointed out:

“Indian students should value their religious culture and of course, the classical Indian culture bears importantly on the meaning of life and values. I would not separate the two. To separate science and Indian culture would be harmful. ...I don't think it is practical to keep scientific and spiritual culture separate.”⁸³⁶

Jean-Pierre Lehmann is professor of International Political Economy at IMD — a leading international business school, based

in Lausanne, Switzerland. In 1995 he launched the Evian Group, an international coalition of corporate, government, and opinion leaders. He also is an adviser to WTO Director General, Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi. Mr. Lehmann studied in Japan, Switzerland and United States (Georgetown) and received his doctorate from Oxford.

He eloquently talks about the dangers of Monotheism in the Age of Globalization. As Jean-Pierre Lehmann argues, monotheistic religions have caused much turmoil throughout history - and continue to do so today. What is needed is a new global ethical and spiritual role model, and in his opinion, the best candidate to fill that spot is India. 78 He has observed that:

“The great pre-Christian civilizations of Greece and Rome had no religious wars and had a far healthier view of their frolicking gods and goddesses than the intolerant monotheistic Christianity that later came to dominate Europe.”

“Polytheistic religions also tend to have a far more positive and healthier attitude to sex, which is seen as a good thing, than do the monotheistic faiths, where there is a much stronger tendency to equate sex with sin.”

“India’s one billion plus population is the most heterogeneous in the world. There are far more ethnic, linguistic and religious groups than in, say, the European Union. Yet, a far greater degree of unity has been achieved among India’s disparate ethnicities than among the tribes of Western Europe.”

“But in a global environment desperate for ideas, philosophy and religion, India is the most prolific birthplace of all three - because of the great synergy of democracy and diversity, and the much greater degree of self-confidence that Indians now feel. Indians and members of the enormous Indian Diaspora - over which the sun never sets - are the thought leaders in economics, business, philosophy, political science, religion and literature.”

Realizing the current desperate need for the planet’s spiritual needs, he astutely remarks that:

“The planet needs quite desperately a sense of moral order, spirituality and an ethical compass. The Indian religious and

philosophical traditions can provide a great deal of all three. It was in a recent conversation with an Indian religious guru that I was also pleased to discover I could adhere to his religious tenets, while maintaining my secular convictions. No imam or priest would allow me that."

"The planet also needs an alternative geopolitical force to the American Christian Fundamentalist brand of hegemonic thinking that the Bush Administration has generated - and that is not likely to evaporate even after his departure from office."

"Europe is an inward-looking and, in many ways, spent force. China is a dictatorship. The Islamic world is going through an awkward moment - to put it mildly."

"Hence the importance of the role India must play in this respect - both because of its innate qualities and because there is no other serious contender. The 21st century better become the century inspired by the virtues of Indian polytheism - or else we are headed for disaster."⁸³⁷

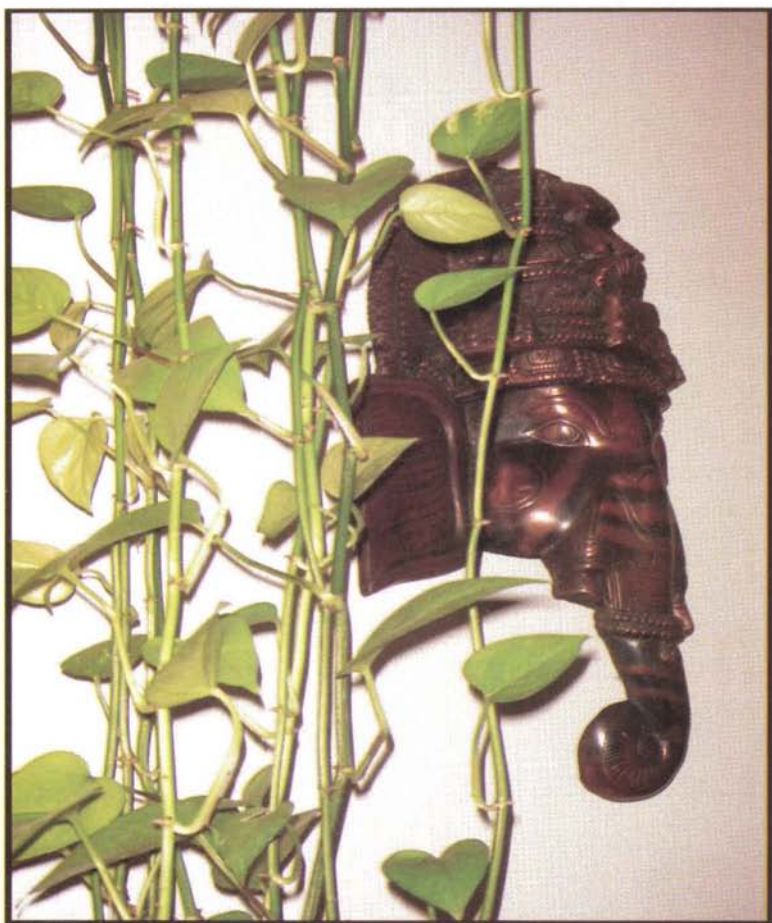
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Chapter 13

Afterword

“In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavat Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial.” “What extracts from the Vedas I have read fall on me like the light of a higher and purer luminary, which describes a loftier course through purer stratum. It rises on me like the full moon after the stars have come out, wading through some far stratum in the sky.”

- *Henry David Thoreau*



Vines and Lord Ganesha.

Hinduism has always been an environmentally sensitive philosophy. The Indian mind was the earliest to grasp the significance of maintaining the ecological balance. Nature, or Earth, has never been considered a hostile element to be conquered or dominated. Hindus are taught to live in harmony with nature and recognize that divinity prevails in all elements, including plants and animals. (From author's collection of photos.)

Afterword

India is an empire of the spirit.

“From the beginning of her history, India has adored and idealized, not soldiers and statesmen, not men of science and leaders of industry, not even poets and philosophers”... “but those rarer and more chastened spirits, whose greatness lies in what they are and not in what they do; men who have stamped infinity on the thought and life of the country”... “they declared the reality of the unseen world and the call of the spiritual life. This ideal had dominated the Indian religious landscape for over forty centuries.” - observed Dr. S.Radhakrishnan in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 37.

India has been the birth place of major Indic/ Vedic religions like Hinduism and reform movements and offshoots like Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. India's fertile and imaginative soil has nurtured and cherished countless spiritual rivers of thought over millennia. Hinduism has had a long and continuous evolution, and in the process, has been influential to other major world religions.

Hinduism has come down to us through hoary antiquity from the thoughtful meditation of our ancient rishis (sages), who sat by the great rivers and on remote mountains. It contains man's earliest prehistoric repository of speculative and abstract metaphysics. Hinduism has given India its distinctive character, its beauty, and its identity, its idealism, on the world stage. It is a primeval and positive religion. Every soul is potentially divine and thus there is no hell and damnation for the non-believer. We need to realize this divinity residing in us. Hinduism is a tolerant religion and hence it is secular

by nature. It is a thinking man's religion which has not set any boundaries or contours on itself. It is open to science and an unlimited inquiry. *The Upanishads* reflect this single minded dedication, which is very rare in history, to discovering the truth. It made Max Muller, the German scholar who observed that, "None of our philosophers, not accepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storm or lightning's." The idea of man being divine is a subliminal and lofty thought. This idea has appealed to great intellectuals all over the world as seen in the previous chapters. It appealed because it was considered to be a more refined, polished and cultured tradition, since it proclaimed with great serenity and supreme confidence that "*Truth is One.*" The Divine (The One Reality) can be worshipped in any form. This is a concept that is truly unique to Hinduism. This in turn has led to great tolerance and gentleness of our souls.

Ancient Indians were serenely thoughtful people, who saw all life as sacred. In their infinite wisdom they behold the interconnectedness of all life forms and Mother Nature. This wistful and thoughtful theology has satisfied millions of souls across great spans of time and continents. It has fulfilled a whole gamut of humanity from the great realized souls, "the rishis," to illustrious kings, to ordinary village folks, to modern seekers from the West. These ancient scriptures have caught the imagination of countless people, all of which have drawn sustenance from the spiritual well of ancient India. In spite of the lyrical and poetic admiration expressed by intellectuals from around the world why is Hinduism today in such a disarray and decline?

India has survived the cataclysmic epoch which has left few native cultures of the world intact. Despite frightful invasions from Islam and Christianity, and all other possible trials and tribulations over the centuries, India and her culture has remained in one piece. Invading religions came with a sword in one hand and their religious texts in the other, to assert and impose their hegemony. Most ancient Pagan and Earth-based cultures like the Greeks, Romans, Persians,

and the Mayans have succumbed to the onslaught of predatory doctrines. After Independence, Hinduism in India has not fared any better since the political ideology was vastly influenced by the West in the form of ‘a morally bankrupt’ Marxism and Secularism. In pursuit of a superficial type of secularism, India has squandered away a unique and precious heritage. We have thrown away our accumulated wisdom. We have failed to appreciate the rugged and original thinking of our spiritual ancestors. In the name of national integration, minority appeasement, and misguided Westernization, our shortsightedness in education has been truly astonishing. Dr. Subhash Kak has astutely pointed out that, “our school books talk about Socrates, Plato and Aristotle - and rightly so - but they don’t mention Yajnavalkya, Panini and Patanjali, which is a grave omission. Our grand boulevards in Delhi and other cities are named after Copernicus, Kepler and Newton, but there are no memorials to Aryabhata, Bhaskara, Madhava and Nilakantha!” In our supreme indifference and arrogance, in our pursuit of today’s materialism and Westernization, we are about to lose our most precious spiritual heritage. It is this spiritual legacy that is our most valuable resource to the world.

Hinduism is gradually fading into obscurity.

Hinduism’s influence was felt over a vast stretch of the ancient world. Sylvain Levy, a noted French scholar wrote, “From Persia to the Chinese Sea, from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries.”

Sadly enough today, from the far reaches of Greater India: Southeast Asia – Cambodia to Nepal, Thailand to Tibet, Java to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, Hinduism’s influence has gradually retreated over the centuries due to endless invasions and partitions. Even after Independence, the decades that followed saw

ethnic cleansing of Hindus in Kashmir, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the North Eastern parts of India. The number of Hindus is slowly but surely dropping. And though Hinduism is still very much a living force, its area of influence is little by little shrinking and dwindling. To think that one group of people has the monopoly over God is inherently arrogant and truly misguided. Religious terrorism and Western evangelical zeal to convert Hindus are both rapidly taking a toll and reducing the numbers of Hindus and their influence.

Nirad Chaudhari (1897-1999) a prominent author of the book, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, 1951 had remarked that:

“If Hinduism disappears at any time, the inhabitants of India will...cease to have any distinctive identity.”

Sir John Woodroffe (1865 -1936) was the well known scholar, and Advocate-General of Bengal in British India. His most popular and influential books, are a major contribution to the appreciation of Indian philosophy and spirituality. *The Serpent Power*, *Introduction to Tantra Sastra* and *The World as Power*. He had predicted in his book, *Is India Civilized: Essays on Indian Culture* that:

“In every way, the coming assault on Hindu Civilization will be the greatest which it has ever had to endure in the whole course of its long history.”

Alexander Zinoviev (1922 -) a Russian sociologist, and who works in Russian Academy of Sciences, has alerted us to this looming danger:

“The truth is that the situation of modern Hinduism, of all India, is far from perfect. In fact, it is alarming, if not altogether catastrophic. Even if some Indians-the so-called “secularists”-do not realize that, it is more than obvious that Hinduism is fading in obscurity, its relative influence in Asia is decreasing with every month, with every day. Perhaps we are living at the last centuries of Indian civilization and the situation of today’s Hindus is very similar to the Iranians from the late Zoroastrian age or Ptolemaic Egypt. Drastic steps must be undertaken very soon, or Hindus will share the fate of these great nations of the past. Hinduism is

too valuable for humanity, and sacred Indian books contain too much precious and unique knowledge that it will not sink in oblivion. I'd like to believe that the principles of Indian philosophy and religion are much more in agreement with the needs for the future than any other religion in the world, in agreement with the tendency, known in Western countries as New Age. It's my deep belief that without India the world will sink in spiritual darkness and ignorance."

Pseudo-Secularism and the lack of political thinking are the main problems for modern India. Ancient Indic knowledge must be saved and protected for future generations across the globe, so that we do not lose this most precious of world heritage, this lofty and sophisticated philosophy.

What needs to be done?

Hindus all over the world need to ask pertinent question as to what do we bequeath to the future generations of young Indians and Hindus? What can the descendents of this most ancient and noble religion do to safeguard its very survival?

Hinduism has cherished individual freedom over authority. It did not accept regimentation in its thinking. Thus the lack and absence of a central authority (like the Papal authority in the Vatican) has been the great hallmark of Hinduism. But today all organically grown Indic faiths (Hinduism and her offshoots Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism and others) face a clear and present danger. All Hindus need to protect Dharma against predatory and narrow minded dogmas that are bent on strangling and destroying its age old roots. All Indic organizations (in India as well as abroad) need to have the grand vision and the farsightedness to join forces, to set aside their petty differences, and for the common good and for sheer survival create a central authority to ensure that Indic religions survive. All Dharmic offshoots, regardless of caste differences, need to come under one large umbrella and take pride in their Indic ancestry. Unless they support and sustain this vast vital tree of Hinduism under which they take protection, it will wither away; these vulnerable

offshoots under this ancient Banyan tree will die out just as easily and quickly. The issue of caste tends to become an undue fodder for conversion activities. Constructive efforts must be undertaken by all organization to work together to uplift the socially downtrodden and eradicate abuses in the name of caste. Action should be taken to voice concern for biased literature in textbooks and newspapers on Hinduism written in the guise of investigative journalism in the West and in India.

Hinduism, the rainforest of the Spirit.

Rainforests are the world's oldest ecosystem. Hinduism is the world's oldest religion. Like a rainforest, Hinduism has always rejuvenated, evolved and transformed itself over and over millennia. It was Hinduism and her ancient scriptures that inspired the great and influential leaders of modern India's freedom movement. Leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Lokmanya Tilak, Netaji Subhashchandra Bose, Vallabhai Patel, the "apostle of peace" Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. S Radhakrishnan. In fact, the London Times had said, that, "No country but India and no religion but Hinduism could have given birth to a Gandhi." Hinduism has met India's tremendous evolutionary needs with amazing continuity. It is also an ecologically friendly philosophy where the Earth along with everything on it, is sacred. This is evident from the hymns from the Rig Veda paint the exquisite glories of the natural world. That is why rivers, mountains, animals and plants were considered sacred and still are worshipped today. Devout Hindus gather in millions at the Kumbh Mela every year.

Just as rainforests are extremely important to the ecological health of the planet, Hinduism similarly is vital for the spiritual health of our planet. Destroying these ancient rainforests and religion will cause catastrophic consequences. Indigenous religious traditions are being supplanted by the tyranny of religious dogmas imported from the West. As corporate greed is destroying forests in Brazil,

zeal, both evangelical and militant, is taking a toll on Hindus and creating havoc for Hinduism in India. In addition, threats to Hinduism come also from growing consumerism and western values of materialism. And yet, spiritual streams emanating from India still have all the more relevance.

Today there is a growing disquiet and a persistent discontent in the developed rich countries of the West, a feeling that Western way of life is itself no longer morally, practically supportable or sustainable because of pollution problems and environmental destruction. Western values are paramount in our current world history textbooks: individualism, materialism, and acquisitiveness, competitiveness. These are all with the sentiment that one can never seem to be content with what one has.

This materialistic, money-oriented outlook and paradigm that has so dominated the West is now taking hold of the rest of the world in its firm grip. Global warming is showing alarming and dramatic results, with evidence of melting polar caps. A crisis between Earth and spirit is what we face today in our mad dash for greed and profit. From its primordial past Hinduism has always been an environmentally sensitive philosophy. No religion lays as much emphasis on environmental ethics, as does Hinduism. Long ago it was India which taught us that the lust for possession and control will destroy and that life is sacred. That means all life is sacred not just human life. It is Hinduism which will help fill the vast spiritual wasteland and void of our shopping bag of Western achievements. In a world of finite resources India and her ancient religious traditions, speak to us with great urgency with the end of our destructive 20th century. It is imperative and critical for the health of our planet that Hinduism, with its incomparable spiritual wealth, like the rainforests should not only survive, but flourish.

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