



“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, pacifying love for all living things.” – Will Durant

“How Indian Spirituality Changed the West”

The following excerpts from Philip Goldberg’s new book, *American Veda*, indicate the theme and content of his study of cultural transfer from East to West. The book will be the focus of a study group beginning June 6th at 7:30 PM at Concord House.

“The East-to-West flow of ideas actually began with the ancient Greeks. It moved quietly through the age of exploration, when Europeans were too busy extracting resources from the newly discovered lands to learn much from their sages and seers. Then in the early nineteenth century British scholars produced the first English translations of India’s sacred texts. Those books reached American shores and fell into the hands of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman.

“Thereafter, gurus came, lectures were given, books were written, and the message of India proved alluring to more and more people. Predominantly white,

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urban, and educated, they were seekers of truth, of God, of self-improvement. Some became exponents of Indian teachings themselves. Others absorbed Eastern ideas, incorporated them in their own areas of expertise, and passed along the final products. Through them Indian philosophy, though not always discernible, has been disseminated deep and wide.

“ The influence spread slowly and imperceptibly like a gathering weather system, then surged mightily in the late 1960’s when a constellation of forces came together – mass communication and ease of travel; social unrest; war and nuclear anxiety; psychedelic drugs; and alienated but idealistic youngsters with the time and money to explore new ways of being. The Beatles journey to the banks of the Ganges blew the gates between East and West wide open. In a flash, more Americans learned about Indian spirituality than in all the previous centuries. Baby boomers read books about eastern Philosophy, took up meditation and Yoga, grooved on on the sound of the sitar, chanted Sanskrit in the streets, flocked to gurus, and in some cases trekked to ashrams in India. Hundreds of thousands joined... Hindu- inspired meditation movements.... But for every committed ...member, there were ten or twenty more who never dove into the pool but dipped in enough that their lives were changed and their worldviews were reshaped.

“In a few short years Eastern ideas and practices spread from the counterculture to the mainstream, fueling enthusiasm in medicine, psychology, academia, sports, the arts and entertainment. In time, Indian philosophy seeped into the culture, changing what we know about the mind, body, and spirit, and the way we relate to the sacred.”

Carolyn Dorrance, President, Institute of World Culture

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