

**THE YOGA ESSENTIALS**

**YOGI RAMACHARAKA**



**THE INNER TEACHINGS  
OF THE PHILOSOPHIES  
AND RELIGIONS  
OF INDIA**

# **The Inner Teachings Of The Philosophies and Religions of India**

**William W. Atkinson (Yogi Ramacharaka)**

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## **THE FIRST LESSON - The Land of the Ganges.**

India —” the Land of the Ganges —” the home of Sanscrit, the Root-Language of the world —” the Mother of Religions and Philosophies —” the Twentieth Century and the Western World greet thee! From thy sources have come the languages of the world, in which men have expressed the thoughts arising in their minds —” thy word-symbols have made possible advanced thinking and expression of thought. From thy thinkers and teachers have come the root-ideas which have since grown into many a religious and philosophical tree, with bud, leaf, flower, and fruit. To thee may be traced the great philosophical conceptions and religious truths that have animated and inspired man's thought for centuries. Thy hundred centuries of deep thought and meditation upon the Mysteries of Existence —” the Secret of the Absolute —” have proved as the leaven which has lightened the bread of life, and has raised the sodden mass of materiality and changed its character so that it may be partaken of without harm by reason of the transforming power of thy leaven !

The history of India runs back for many centuries, the Hindus themselves claiming that their records and traditions carry them back over a period of a hundred

centuries —” 10,000 years —” and that back of even this great period of time their people existed and had their successive civilizations and periods of race rest. Centuries before our present civilization had dawned —” centuries before the Christian religion was established —” centuries before even the time of Abraham, and still longer before the time of Moses and the practical beginning of the Jewish religion —” the Hindu teachers of philosophy had formed great schools of thought, which in turn had been subdivided by their followers, the teachings of which have come down along the line of the centuries even unto today. The Veda and the Upanishads were written centuries ago —” beyond the time of recorded history —” and have been handed down from teacher to pupil ever since. Before the days of the Sphinx and the Pyramids of Ancient Egypt, India's great religious and philosophical teachers had formulated their doctrines and founded their schools of thought. Surely such antiquity of teaching, and the corresponding vitality of the doctrines which has kept them alive and vigorous through the passage of these great periods of time, must arrest our attention and command our respect.

The leading scholars of the Western world have long since recognized and appreciated the great value and importance of the work of the Hindu thinkers along the line of philosophy, and have freely given credit to them for their fundamental work upon which a great body of the Western thought has been built. In fact, it is difficult to find any form of Western philosophy that has not used the Hindu philosophies as a basis—” or, at least which has not, perhaps unconsciously, re-stated the fundamental truths uttered centuries before by some Hindu thinker. Every possible form of human philosophical speculation, conception, or theory, has been advanced by some Hindu philosopher during the centuries. It would seem that the

Hindu philosophical mind has acted like the finest sieve, through which strained the volume of human philosophical thought, every idea of importance being gathered and applied, by someone, at some time, in India. Professors Max Muller and Paul Deussen have testified to the fact that India has been the fountain-head of philosophical thought, and that in the Vedas and the Upanishads may be found references to every philosophical conception that the Western mind has since evolved. This is no mere boast of the Hindu —" an examination of the authorities will satisfy the most rigid proof on this point, as the best authorities freely admit.

Victor Cousin, the French writer upon philosophical history, has said: "When we read the poetical and philosophical monuments of the East, —" above all, those of India, which are beginning to spread in Europe —" we discover there many a truth, and truths so profound, and which make such a contrast with the meanness of the results at which European genius has sometimes stopped, that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East, and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy. \* \* \* India contains the whole history of philosophy in a nutshell! Sir Monier Williams, in his great work on the Hindu Religions, said; "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." Many writers have held that the great Grecian thinker and philosopher, Pythagoras, received his instruction from Hindu teachers upon his sojourn in India, and some of the legends hold that upon his return to his native land he brought a company of Hindu

philosophers with him, in order that the Greeks might receive the benefit of their instruction. Whether or not this latter statement may be true, it is undoubtedly true that the vitality of Grecian philosophical thought was due to Hindu influences. Prof. E. W. Hopkins has said: "Plato was full of Sankhyan thought, worked out by him, but taken from Pythagoras. Before the sixth century B. C. all the religious-philosophical ideas of Pythagoras were current in India. 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 chance. \* \* \* 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 were one in the Sankhya system, before they became so in Greece, and when they appeared united in Greece, it was by means of the thought which was borrowed from India. The famous Three Gunas of the Sankhya reappeared as the Gnostic 'three classes' " Davies says : "Kapila's System is the first formulated system of philosophy of which the world has a record. It is the earliest attempt on record to give an answer, from reason alone, to the mysterious questions which arise in every thoughtful mind about the origin of the world, the nature and relations of man and his future destiny." The same authority says that: "The philosophy of Schopenhauer and Hartmann is a reproduction of the philosophical 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. Kapila recognized fully the existence of a soul in man, forming indeed his proper nature, —" the absolute of Fichte,—" distinct from matter and immortal; but our latest philosophy, both here and in Germany, can see in man only

a highly developed organization." Hopkins says: "Both Thales and Parmenides were indeed anticipated by Hindu sages, and The Eleatic school seems to be but a reflection of the Upanishads. The doctrines of Anaxamander and Heraclitus were perhaps not known first in Greece." Schlegel has said: "The divine origin of man, as taught in the Vedanta, is continually inculcated, to stimulate his efforts to return, to animate him in the struggle, and incite him to consider a reunion and reincorporation 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 flood of heavenly glory of the noonday sun, faltering and feeble and ever ready to be extinguished."

Of the Vedanta System of Hindu Philosophy, Max Muller says: "This constitutes the unique character of Vedanta, unique compared with every other philosophy of the world which has not been influenced by it, directly or indirectly." Speaking of the daring philosophical conceptions of the Vedanta in its denial of the reality of the phenomenal, and the assertion of the reality only of the Absolute One, Max Muller says : "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." Sir William Jones has said : "It is impossible 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 Indian sages." Schopenhauer, the great German

philosopher, said: "There is no study more beneficial and elevating to mankind than the study of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, and it will be the solace of my death." Paul Deussen, says : "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 from the Upanishads : we shall learn this lesson if we are willing to put the finishing touch to the Christian consciousness, and to make it on all sides consistent and complete.

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The Western student who wishes to become acquainted with the Philosophies and Religions of India is placed at a great disadvantage by reason of his remoteness from the authoritative teachers, and also by reason of his inability to distinguish between the true and the untrue —" the genuine and the spurious —" the truth and the half-truth —" among the voluminous writings on the subject. He finds a mass of literature relating to India and her religions and philosophies, written in English by various persons who often have made but a superficial study of the subject, and he is unable to reconcile the many conflicting statements that he finds in these books. He finds the various authorities flatly contradicting each other, and, in his ignorance, he is unable to decide upon the question of the relative and comparative reliability of these sources of information. This is not to be wondered at, when it is remembered that the majority of the English writers on the subject have had their own information not from authoritative sources, but gleaned from various disconnected sources, the writers not being possessed of the power of intelligent discrimination, so foreign is the subject to their previous lines of thought and so opposed to their mental, religious, and philosophical training. It is true



that there are a number of very good English works on the subject but they are greatly outnumbered by the mass of incompetent, erroneous, and sometimes prejudiced and biased treatises on the same lines.

For anyone to write intelligently upon the subject of Hindu Philosophy or Religion, it is necessary that he must be in sympathy with the Hindu mind and soul —” not necessarily a believer in their religions, or a follower of their philosophy, but most certainly possessed of a mind in sympathy with the fundamental conceptions and spiritual basic principles of the Hindu people. This is true regarding the teachings and beliefs of any people —” imagine a Chinaman who lacked a Western training attempting to write a correct statement of the Western beliefs, philosophies, etc., from disjointed and contradictory sources of information, and you will have an idea of the difficulties in the way of the average Western person who would write of the Hindu Philosophies. In fact, our Chinaman would have an easier task, for the greater part of the Western thought has been expressed in books, whereas much of the Hindu thought exists only in the shape of verbal teaching, tradition, and "reading between the lines" of printed books. For one to write intelligently of Hindu thought, he must possess not only the best sources of information, but also the "instinct" whereby he is able to discriminate between the authoritative teachings, and those which contain but half-truths —” and above all, he must be possessed of the Hindu Spirit, whereby he may see things as the Hindu sees them —” that subtle spiritual sense which enables one to go at once to the heart of the Inner Teachings —” that Key which unlocks the Door of the Temple.

When it is remembered that many of these English attempts to interpret the Hindu Philosophies have been

made by men who have lived in India as Christian missionaries, and whose duty it has been to discredit the native beliefs in the minds of the Hindu people in hope of winning them over to the 'creed and belief of the missionaries, it will be seen how prone to error such attempt must be. For no matter how sincere, honest and conscientious such a writer may be, his account must necessarily be colored by his point-of-view and the duties of his life —" he is in the position of a paid attorney for one side trying to describe the case of the party whom he is opposing —" an almost impossible task to fulfill with bias and prejudice. The paid attorney, zealous for his client's interest, and impregnated with the one-sided view of the case, is not very likely to manifest a purely judicial mind and point-of-view, no matter how honest he may be.

And then again, the fundamental opposition between the basic philosophical conceptions of the Hindu philosopher and the Christian theologian can scarcely be imagined by one not familiar with both. As a slight instance, we may say that while "creation" is one of the basic propositions of the Christian theologian, the Hindu philosopher will not admit the existence of such a thing —" he regards "creation" in the doctrine of the making of something from nothing, a conception which is filled with error for him, and which is absolutely unthinkable and insane from his point of view. To the Hindu mind nothing comes from nothing —" everything that IS is either an eternal thing, or else a form or manifestation, or appearance emanation or phase of some eternal thing. The "miracle" of creating something from nothing is absolutely incomprehensible and unthinkable to the Hindu's mind-r-no matter how hard and honestly he may try to form a mental image of the thing, he confesses himself baffled —" it is like asking him to think that twice two is something else but four —" and that the shortest distance between two points is other than a straight line.

To him, "naught" is always "naught," and never can become "aught" by any process human or divine.

Then again, to the Hindu mind, a mortal thing can never become immortal by any means. An immortal thing must always have been immortal, or else it never can become so. And therefore everything that is born must die sometime —" and everything that dies has been born sometime. To him Eternity must exist on both sides of the Now, in fact the Now is but a point in Eternity. Thus the Hindu is unable to accept the teachings of immortality for the soul, unless previous immortality be conceded to it. He can not conceive of any power "creating" a soul from nothing, and then bestowing immortality upon it for eternity. And while the Western philosopher, likewise, is unable to think of "aught coming from naught," the subject presents no difficulty whatever to the Western theologian who readily conceives the thing being done by Divine fiat.

And, so you see how little the missionary writer is apt to grasp the fundamental Hindu conceptions, or point of view —" his training and life-work prevents it. And what is true of the missionary is also true of the average Western investigator of the Eastern philosophies and religions. As the Hindus say, he who would grasp the Inner Teaching of the Hindu Philosophy must have an "Hindu Soul," no matter what may be his race, or country. There are many Western people who have these "Hindu Souls," as the increasing number of Western people who are interested in, and who intelligently and sympathetically understand the Hindu Teachings, may testify to. The Hindus, when they find such, explain it upon the theory of Reincarnation, saying "Once a Hindu, always a Hindu," no matter in what race the Hindu Soul may incarnate —" the concentrated force of the ancient teachings are indelibly impressed upon the soul, and give it a tendency toward the Hindu thought

in future lives. In fact, the Hindus hold that the souls of the ancient Hindu teachers, or rather of certain of them, are now incarnating in the West to lead the newer races toward a conception of the Truth, and their first disciples are the reincarnated Hindu souls abiding in the Western lands.

There is another difficulty attending the attempts of the Western writer who wishes to grasp the true meaning of the Hindu Philosophies, but who has failed to catch the spirit of the Hindu thought. We allude to the Inner Teachings which are to be found in all of the Oriental thought. The Oriental mind works upon entirely different psychological lines from the mind of the Western man. In the Western lands the impulse is to publish and proclaim every detail of the thought on any subject, sometimes in advance of its actual acceptance by the leading minds working along the lines of the particular subject. But in the Orient the tendency is precisely the opposite, and the sage is apt to reserve for himself and his close circle of personal students and followers the cream of the idea, deeming it too important to be spread broadcast to the unthinking and unappreciative public. Moreover, in the West the philosophy of a man is regarded as a purely intellectual matter, and he is not expected to live up to the philosophy that he has enunciated —” while in the East the philosopher takes his teachings very much in earnest, and so does his public, and he is expected to live out his teachings in his everyday life or else be considered a hypocrite. This being the case, the Oriental holds back his Inner Teachings for himself, until he is able to live out and manifest them in his life. And what is true of the individual is true of the great body of thinkers, who instinctively reserve for the few the Inner Teachings of their philosophies, deeming it almost a sacrilege to divulge the inner truths to anyone who has not proven his worthiness and right motives.

Moreover there is always the great body of the Inner Teachings of the Hindu Philosophies which are tacitly accepted and recognized by the students of the philosophies, but which are not openly taught. These basic truths are deeply impressed upon the Hindu consciousness, and are absorbed almost with their mother's milk. Consequently, the English investigator, finding no clear and detailed statement of these fundamental truths mentioned in the books, is apt to ignore them, and consequently is unable to understand the true meaning of certain secondary truths and ideas based upon the fundamental conceptions. This is apparent to anyone who has grasped the inner meaning of the Hindu philosophies, and who is able to see the common basis for the apparently contradictory theories and opposing schools, when he reads the essays and books written by Westerners who treat the different schools as diametrically opposed to each other and having no common basis of agreement. The truth is that all the various Hindu philosophies and religions are but various off-shoots from a common trunk and root. If one discovers this root-thought, he is then able to follow out the subtle differences of interpretation and doctrine, and to reconcile their differences, whereas to the Western man who fails to perceive the common trunk and root the whole system of Hindu Philosophy is a tangled mass of contradictions, lacking relationship and harmony. In these lessons we hope to be able to so present the subject that the student may be able to see the common trunk and root, and then to follow out the diverging branches to the end, from the point of apparent separation; or on the other hand, to follow a line of thought back from its extreme point to the point where it diverges from the common trunk.

If the above statements regarding the difficulty of a correct understanding and interpretation of the Hindu Philosophies be true, what must be said of an attempt of the Western mind to understand and interpret the Hindu Religious systems, in all of their branches, denominations and division down to the finest hair-splitting degree. To the average Western mind the subject of the Hindu Religions is one of extreme perplexity and confusion, seemingly based upon an unstable foundation, and lacking coherence or any reasonable common basis or foundation. The Western mind sees and hears on one hand the highest spiritual teachings, and the most refined and subtle philosophy coming from the master minds of Ancient India, and on the other hand sees and hears the grossest superstition and credulity accompanied by the most absurd forms of ritualistic nonsense and exhibitions of greedy and tyrannical priest craft. On one hand he sees the most elevated spiritual conceptions, accompanied by the most austere and ascetic lives of their followers, while on the other hand he sees the exhibition of what appears to him to be the grossest forms of the old Phallic Worship accompanied by the most shocking exhibitions of immorality and obscenity. Can such things have a common origin —” can there be any connection between the highest forms and the lowest? The inquirer forgets that in the history of all religions there have been witnessed these extremes and contradictions, but usually they are separated by periods of time and eras of thought, while in India they exist contemporaneously and almost side by side.

Then again, the Western mind sees the highest form of religious philosophy taught and practiced under some of the more elevated forms of the Vedanta, beyond which no human mind has ever dared to venture, so ethereal and tenuous are its conceptions, the Truth being followed until it faded into a transcendental vagueness impossible of

being grasped except by the mind trained in the highest philosophic methods. And, opposing this, the Western observer sees what appears to him to be the crudest form of idol worship, and debasing credulity and superstition —” almost a form of devil worship and fetishism. He is justified in asking whether there can be any common root and origin for these opposing conceptions and practices. It is no wonder that the Western world, hearing some of the reports of the missionaries and travelers, and then reading the high doctrines of the Vedas and Upanishads, fails to understand, and gives up the matter with a shake of the head and the thought that India must be a very nightmare of theological, religious and philosophical vagaries and conceptions. And, when to this he adds the reports of the "Wonder Workings" or "Magic" of some of the Hindu fakirs or magicians, it is still more perplexed; the difficulty not growing less when he hears the Hindu teachers declaring that these "miracles" and "wonder-workings" are not performed by high spiritual people, or by spiritual methods, but that on the contrary they are the result of methods along the lines of the "psychic," understandable by every one who cares to investigate the subject, and often performed by men most unspiritual and lacking morality or religious merit and often ignorant of even the rudiments of the higher philosophies. All this is most confusing to the Western mind, and we hope to be able to throw some light on the dark corners of this subject, also.

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One of the explanations of the prevalence of the lowest forms of fetishism, superstition, and religious debasement in India, alongside of the highest forms of religious and philosophical knowledge and teaching, is the mental atmosphere of India itself, and a study of the history of thought in that land. It must be remembered that for

countless centuries the Hindu mind has confined itself closely to an investigation of "the other side of Life" to a degree not to be imagined by the Western mind. While the newer lands of the West, with their active pioneers in activity, have been pushing forward toward material advancement and progress, India has been resting quietly, dreaming of that which lies back of the material world, and under and above physical existence. To the Hindu mind the physical and material world is more or less of an illusion, inasmuch as it passes away almost while it is being formed, and is a thing of the moment merely —" while the spiritual world is the real one and the one to which the mind of man may most properly be turned. Mind you, we are merely stating the fact and existing conditions that you may understand them, not as urging that the above method is the better. For, to be frank with you, we consider the general tendency of the Hindu mind to be as much "one-sided" as that of the Western world —" the one leans to the "I Am" side, ignoring the "I Do" side ; while the other places entire dependence upon the "I Do" phase, almost entirely ignoring the "I Am" phase. The one regards the side of Being, and ignores the side of Action; while the other regards Action as the essential thing, ignoring the vital importance of Being. To the Western world the Physical is the dominant phase —" to the East the Metaphysical holds the lead. The thinking minds of both East and West clearly see that the greatest progress in the future must come from a combining of the methods of the two lands, the Activity of the West being added to the Thought of the East, thus inspiring the old lands into new activities and energy; while to the Western activity must be added the spirituality and "soul-knowledge" of the East, in order that the rampant materiality may be neutralized and a proper balance maintained. And close observers see in the eagerness of the East to take on Western activity; and in the hunger and thirst of the West for knowledge of the



soul and "that which is back of all life and the universe;" the indication of a wonderful future for the whole world, East and West together.

The people of India are separated by but a very thin veil from "the other side of life," and any one who lives in India and who allows himself to "feel" the current of thought and life manifesting there, soon becomes aware that there is a vast psychological difference between the ancient land of the Ganges and the Western world. It is "in the air" of India, and none can live there without feeling its subtle effect and influence. No Western man who has lived in India for a half dozen years is ever the same man afterward, even if he returns to his own land. He never loses the feeling of the vague and nebulous Something Alive that is in the very air around him and about him. Scoff as he may, and materialist of materialists though he may be, he still feels that Something around him —" he has caught the psychic atmosphere of India.

And this fact of the mental and psychic atmosphere of the land of the Hindus, has a bad effect as well as good one. Just as does the rich ground of the tropical countries, under the blazing sun and other influences of Nature, bring forth a luxuriance of fruits, flowers and vegetation of a kind desired by Man, so does the same soil, under the same impulses, bring forth a rank growth of noxious weeds and vegetation —" the fertile fields on the one side bearing marked contrast to the wild, fierce jungles on the other. And yet both conditions arise from the same soil, under the same sun, and rain, and atmospheric conditions. And, again, just as the wonderful sun of the tropics and the semi-tropical lands tends to bring forth the wonderful harvests and vegetable growths, so does it, at times, and under certain conditions, burn up, parch and destroy the grain, fruit and nutritious growths of the land, in a fierce and

deadly drought, the result being that grim famine reigns where bountiful harvests formerly held court, and thousands perish from hunger instead of being nourished by Nature. And, as on the physical plane, so on the mental and spiritual, in India. The mental soil so rich and so filled with materials for spiritual growth under the Sun of Spiritual Knowledge, also becomes a field ripe for the noxious growths of superstition and credulity, devil-worship and frightful debasement of thought and practice. And, again, just as the sun produces the bountiful harvest in one section, and the deadly drought in another, so does the rich spiritual development of India have its dark side in the degenerated teachings and "shadow" among the same people.

India is a land of marked spiritual contrasts —" the highest and the lowest are to be found there side by side. But, to those who are able to get behind the scenes and probe to the heart of the matter, it always is evident that the debasing forms of religion in India are always found to be but the degenerated and debased sides of the true religious teachings of the Hindus. Just as men may and do degenerate morally, mentally and physically, so may and do men degenerate spiritually. Just as in the Western centres of civilization are to be found human monsters performing deeds more savage than those of the most ignorant savages —" just as men of intellect are found guilty of acts and practices below the level of the beasts —" so do we find in India the lower and ignorant classes of people so far fallen away from the magnificent spiritual teachings of their race that they are lower in the scale of true spirituality than the ignorant savage who has no spirituality at all. The greater the height, the greater the fall therefrom —" the further the pendulum swings the one way, the further the swing in the other direction. The universal laws which manifest on the

physical plane, are likewise in operation on the mental and spiritual planes as well.

Perhaps, when you have studied these lessons, you will be able to understand the true and the false about India's religions —” and to see that while her philosophies reach the summits of the highest mountains of human knowledge, at the same time certain forms of her religions dwell in the darkest lower crevasses and canyons devoid of sunshine and the vivifying influences of the more favored sections.

India has a population of nearly, or quite, three hundred million people, spread over an immense territory closely populated. Its population is made up of numberless peoples and races, of all shades of religious opinions, and practices, among which are the millions of Orthodox Hindus (with their many forms of creeds and beliefs); Christians ; Mohammedans ; Jews; Parsees; Buddhists; Jains; Sikhs; and others, including about a half million of aboriginal people, not Aryans or true Hindus, who adhere to their old form of ancestral worship. It is not to be wondered at that all shades and degrees of religious thought are to be found among these peoples, just as in Europe there is to be found every form, grade and degree of religious belief, from the highest to the lowest—” and just as in America there is to be found the most advanced religious thought, side by side with some of the most superstitious and degrading forms among the ignorant —” from the religious conception of an Emerson to the degrading beliefs of some of the southern negroes, little above the level of the Voodoo beliefs of their ancestors.

How few of the American people, of all classes just as one meets them on the streets, are capable of comprehending the sublime teachings of their countryman, Emerson! As in the East —” so in the West —” the law is universal. To those

who ask: "Why is it that with the high conceptions of the Hindu Philosophy the masses of the Hindu people are not able to rise to a higher level?" we would answer: For the same reason that the high teachings of the Western Philosophers have not reached the understanding of the masses of the people of the Western world —" the cause is the same, and lies far behind the distinctions between peoples and countries. In all lands there are advanced souls, and those less advanced —" and still those which are far down in the scale. The man of the world-wide view of life, does not make narrow provincial comparisons between peoples, for he sees everywhere in operation the same universal laws of human nature, manifesting under the guise of local features and traits, but ever the same laws.

The peculiar local feature and traits among the Hindus —" the features in which they differ the greatest from the Western peoples —" is the fact that we have mentioned a moment ago, that in India the veil between the Visible and the Invisible is much thinner than in the Western lands. In India the crust between the surface of phenomenal life, and the great underlying noumenal life, is very thin indeed, and the sensitive soul may sense the throbbings of the underlying life, with its heart-beats and tumultuous currents of being. This being so, while the advanced soul is thus brought into close touch with the Inner Life of the Universe, and is able to mount to a higher plane, the soul far back on The Path of Spiritual Attainment not having the intelligence or powers of discernment to apply the Hidden Forces of the Soul, is still conscious of the existence of the Underlying Life, and is apt to develop along the lower psychic lines, instead of along the higher spiritual ones, and accordingly tends toward superstition and credulity, and low spiritual ideals, instead of mounting upward. The weed grows in the tropical climate, as well as the fruits and flowers. Perhaps with even this slight explanation you may

be able to understand this subject just a little better than you did before reading it. Let us trust so.

And now let us proceed to the consideration of the Basic Principles underlying the entire system of the Hindu Thought. And then let us pass on to an examination of the interpretation and teachings of each system, school cult and sect of that land so fertile and prolific of thought of Things Behind the Veil.

### ***SPECIAL MESSAGE I BY YOGI RAMACHARAKA.***

This month we begin the study of "The Philosophies and Religions of India." It is a subject of the greatest interest to all who have studied with us the previous lessons on our conception of the Yogi Philosophy. You will be able to trace step by step the progress of the great Hindu Philosophical Thought from the beginning down to the present time, in all of its branches and variations. You will be made acquainted with the Inner Teachings and the Fundamental Doctrines of the Hindu Philosophers, which will enable you to perceive the exact points of divergence and difference in interpretation, and the various points of reconciliation and agreement between the various schools and sects. With the key of the Fundamental Teachings you will be able to swing wide open the heavy outer doors of the Temples of Thought. And, moreover, as these Fundamental Teachings are basic and universal in their application, you will be able to unravel the tangles of Western Philosophy, as well as the Oriental Philosophy, by the means of your acquaintance with these Basic Principles, tracing each conception back to its origin, and placing it in its proper class. Moreover, you will see wherein our own System of Philosophy agrees with, and differs from, the various differing schools of the Hindu Philosophy. You will see that while we do not "wear

the label' 1 of any of the various schools, yet there are many points of agreement with the various ones in some of their divisions and subdivisions. We belong to what is known as the ECLECTIC SCHOOL of Hindu Philosophy, which is really no crystallized school at all, but which founds itself firmly upon the solid rock of the Fundamental Teachings, and then "takes its own wherever it finds it" from the teachings of India's thinkers for the past five thousand years. "Eclectic," you know, means Selective; Chosen from various sources and systems, etc.; and is the very reverse of "Dogmatic" and "Sectarian." We have many

Points of agreement with the Monistic school of the Vedanta; and likewise many points of agreement with the Sankhya school; and some points of common thought with Patanjali's Yoga school; and also some points of agreement with Buddhism; but at the same time we take exception to many points put forth by each school. Besides, we have availed ourselves of that very great, and to us very important, body of independent thought outside of the regular Hindu systems, and which is held by the independent thinkers, teachers and philosophers of India and other parts of the East; besides drawing liberally upon other sources of Oriental Occult Teaching. To those, who not being acquainted with the history of the Hindu Philosophy, might object that an "Eclectic" System of Hindu Philosophy was a "new thing," and a product of modern tendencies, and therefore lacking the weight of ancient authority and precedent, we would quote the following from Prof. Richard Garbe, the well-known German authority on Hindu Philosophical History. Prof. Garbe says: "In the first century of the Christian Era, there was started in India an Eclectic movement which was chiefly occupied with the combination of the Sankhya, Yoga and Vedanta theories." Such a "movement" (not a school or system, remember) which has been in existence for two thousand

years, and which occasioned the production of some of the most virile philosophical thought during that time, may be pardoned M ' m declining to be called "new"; and for claiming its rightful place le Hindu Philosophy.

And, now, in approaching this study, let us lay aside all prejudice, and preconceived conceptions and misapprehensions —" and with open mind examine, consider and weigh the claims and teachings of these various systems —" testing each with the touchstone of the Fundamental Principles which shall be given you, and above all perceiving the Unity in Diversity apparent to the student who has caught a glimpse of the Truth. Let us Meditate on the idea that Truth is Universal, and that no one person, or body of persons, ever has; has now; or ever will have; a monopoly of Truth. That there is Truth in all teachings —" but that none have ALL the Truth. And so, seeing the Truth in All, and ALL in the Truth, let us lay aside prejudice and bigotry, and with clear eyes perceive the reflection of the Sun of Truth in the waters contained in the many earthen jars of Dogma, Doctrine, Creed, Sect, School, and System —" but always remember that the TRUTH itself is something far above these earthen receptacles, with their stores of water, each reflecting the Light of the Truth which proceeds from Above. And in so Meditating, let us carry in our minds the words of the thousands-of -years-old Big-Veda, which says: "THE TRUTH IS ONE—" MEN CALL IT BY MANY NAMES." And in this thought is to be found the Secret of Tolerance, Broadness, and Brotherhood, as in its absence appear Intolerance, Narrowness, Bigotry, Sectarianism, Dogmatic Assumption, Persecution, Hostility, Hatred and Separateness. There is but ONE TRUTH —" to know that Truth in its entirety is to BE that Truth —" the bits and glimpses of Truth that we see in human Dogma, Creeds, and Closed Systems, are but the reflections of the Sun of Truth, far above in the

heavens, as seen of the surface of the muddy water of the Earthen Jars standing in the Courtyard. Remember this and seek ever the Sun. But the Jars must be examined in turn, that we may know to distinguish the Truth from its reflection. Such is the Teaching of the Wise. Peace to Thee.

## **THE SECOND LESSON - The Inner Teachings.**

It is difficult to trace back to the beginning of the great Aryan Philosophies, so far removed from the present are those beginnings in point of time. It is estimated that the Aryan Race is at least one hundred centuries —" 10,000 years —" old, at the present time, and some have thought that its teachings were based on those of some still older civilization. The Aryan civilization is certainly the mother of modern thought —" yes, even of the languages of the civilized world, and Professor Max Muller has said that nearly all the word-concepts now in use by the civilized may be traced back to a few Sanscrit roots. Not only has the Aryan mind given us our subjects for thought, but also the very words by which these thoughts may be conceived and expressed.

Centuries upon centuries ago, the Aryan Race descended upon the plains of India, conquering and driving out the dark-skinned aboriginal inhabitants of that land. From whence the Aryans came, historians are undecided, but the legends indicate that they came from some unknown land at the North. Some have supposed that they came from the region of the North Pole, the former conditions of which region were quite different from present conditions, while others have supposed that they were the survivors of some great nation whose home had been destroyed by some convulsion of nature. Some of the old legends hold that the



Aryans were the survivors of the lost continent of Lemuria which is said to have been situated in what is now known as the Pacific Ocean, and parts of the Indian Ocean, and which included what we now know as Australia, Australasia, and other portions of the Pacific Islands, which islands are really the surviving portions of the lost continent —” its highest points —” the lower portions being sunk beneath the waves. The legends hold that prior to the great cataclysm which destroyed the land and the people of Lemuria there was an emigration of a large number of Lemurians, led by certain religious leaders who had foretold the coming destruction of the land. The people and their descendants took refuge on some of the higher points of the distant northern parts of the land, which were turned into islands at the time of the cataclysm. Dwelling on these islands for centuries, they afterwards emigrated to the mainland of the new country which had risen from the sea toward the south, and which is now known as India. They found the land occupied by dark-skinned aborigines who had been driven there from other lands, by the convulsions of nature, the descendants of the Aryans overcoming them by reason of the superior Aryan mental development. It is interesting to note, however, that there are nearly a million of the descendants of these non-Aryan aborigines still living in parts of India, the Aryans having allowed them to dwell in peace, and who still adhere to the primitive religions of their forefathers of centuries back, their conquerors having respected their beliefs, and having refrained from forcing their own religions upon them.

The Aryans prospered in the new lands, and from them descended the present Aryan races of India. A portion of them, however, passed on to what is now known as Europe, and their descendants today are known as the Germanic, Italian, Celtic, Greek races, etc. Few people in the West realize that the Aryan Hindus and the dominant races of

the Western world are descendants of the same stock, and are not separate people, as are the Chinese, Japanese, etc. The fact of the common origin of these peoples accounts for many of the underlying beliefs common to the several races in their earlier history, namely, that of Re-birth, etc., which the ancestors of the Western races held.

During the period of their emigration, wanderings, re-establishing fixed conditions, etc., which extended over many centuries, the ancient Aryans lost much of their culture and veneer of the old civilization, as has always been the case among pioneers from an older land entering into a new land in which they must "begin from the bottom" and build up a new civilization. Confronted with new and trying conditions and environments, they gradually relapsed into a condition of primitive simplicity, the old truths and knowledge passing away and being replaced by traditions, legends, and vague memories of the past teachings transmitted by the old men of the people to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and thus being kept alive. But although the greater part of their philosophy was lost, and their religion passed from a condition of subtle metaphysical doctrine back into a condition of primitive, simple religion, still there were some fundamental truths that never were lost to them. The old teachings had been of a great, universal One Absolute Being from whom all else emanated —" and from whom the individual souls proceeded "as the rising sparks from the blazing fire"; and of the Immortality of the Soul, which never was born and never could die, and which was subject to re-birth, under an universal law of cause and effect. And, although the ancient Aryans lost the full understanding of that One Absolute Being, they never wandered away from the idea of a great Nature-Spirit of which in some mysterious way they were a part —" nor did they lose their hold on the doctrine of Reincarnation. These fundamental

doctrines clung to the race throughout the centuries, and still continue with it.

These simple, primitive people naturally fell into the ways of all people of their degree of civilization, and they proceeded to create gods and demi-gods without number, according to their conceptions and the demands of their imaginations, the number increasing, and the differences began to manifest more clearly, as the race rapidly increased and divided into tribes, peoples and nations. But the Aryan mind in India never lost sight of the fact that above and over all of their gods there existed the One from which even the gods proceeded. Even in the most backward of the tribes, who had relapsed into a state of idolatrous practices and whose collection of gods included many crude conceptions, some of which were practically forms of devil-worship, still above all they had their tradition of their "God of Gods." And so the race began its upward climb again, passing through all the stages that all races have manifested in the evolution of their religious beliefs —" but always having their inherited ideas of The One manifesting its subtle influence, and striving to unfold itself once more into the religious consciousness of the race.

At a period estimated at about five thousand years before the Christian era, many of the Hindu people, particularly in certain favored sections in which the struggle for life was not so severe, and in which the people had risen to a comparatively high state of culture and knowledge, began to manifest a great interest in Philosophy. The Hindus claim that this was caused by the Reincarnation of many of the old teachers of the root-race, who, returning to the earth and incarnating in the bodies of their descendants, began to revive the old knowledge which had been lost during the centuries of emigration, wandering, and building up of the new civilization. About this time, whatever may have been

the cause, there began a wonderful revival of philosophical speculation and thought, the effects of which are manifest in India even unto this day. At that time appeared those great thinkers whom we now call the "Ancient Hindu Sages," the memory of whom is kept alive in India of today by tradition. These men antedated the writing of the Vedas and the Upanishads, the ancient and sacred works of the Hindus. These Sages started the Hindu School of Philosophy which has since exerted so marked an influence upon the race.

So far as we are able to gather from written and verbal tradition — particularly the latter, for the Hindus always have passed along the bulk of their teachings in this way — the Sages gathered around them the most intelligent young men of their race and began to formulate and expound a philosophy of Pure Reason. The students were instructed to lay aside all of their preconceived ideas, and religious teachings, so far as philosophical conceptions were concerned, and as we would now say in the West, "to begin from the ground up," laying a firm foundation, and then carefully erecting the structure of thought thereupon. In fact, so concerned were the Sages in establishing a firm foundation for the new philosophy, that it may be said that their entire work was in the direction of laying the Great Foundation of the Hindu Philosophy, leaving for their followers through the centuries the work of erecting the superstructure thereupon. And so well was their work done, that although many philosophies have come, and many have gone, in India during the past fifty centuries, the Foundations of the Sages still remain, as sound and as firm as when first laid, unchanged, unhurt, and unaffected by the building up and tearing down work that has gone on over them in the many years since they were laid. Surely such Foundation Work must be sound, and well worthy of the attention and consideration of all thinkers, no matter

what their belief, or race, or country. Let us now consider the work of the Sages, and the Foundation they laid.

In the first place, the Sages bade their students observe that there was nothing Constant, Abiding, Fixed, and Imperishable in the phenomenal aspect of Nature and the Universe. At this place it may be well to give their idea of the meaning of "Phenomenal." To them the Sanscrit word conveying the idea that we now express by the word "phenomenal" meant "that which appears to the senses —" that which is seen, felt, heard, smelled, tasted, or sensed in any way." The Greek word "phenomenal" is defined by Webster as: "An appearance; anything visible; whatever is apprehended by observation" —" the two words being almost identical in meaning. The Sages then bade their students observe that the phenomenal world was but a series of changing, shifting forms and events, nothing being abiding or permanent. To the mind of the Sages none of these phenomenal things —" nor all of them combined —" was or were "Real," the term being used in the sense of "existing, fixed, permanent, constant" —" just as we use the term in connection with "Real Property—" Real Estate —" Realty," etc., in law today. And, accordingly, the Sages bade their students recognize that the Phenomenal Universe was not "Real" in the philosophical sense of the word.

The next step was to bid the students recognize that underneath all the changing and shifting manifestations of the Phenomenal Universe there must be something that was Real, and Substantial, upon the face or surface of which occurred the constant play of matter, force, and life, as the ripple and waves played upon the surface of the ocean, or as the clouds passed before the blue of the sky. They held that Pure Reason must convince any philosophical mind that there must be Something Real and

Substantial under and behind the Phenomenal Universe, else the latter could not exist even in appearance —” that there must be a Background of Reality, or a Foundation of Substance. Their term, from which the concept of "Substance" arose, may be understood by the definition of "Substance," which is given by Webster as follows : "That which underlies all outward manifestations; substratum; that in which all properties inhere, that constituting anything what it is; nature; real or existing essence; etc." (Kindly remember that the word is not used in the sense of "Matter, or Material Things.") And that consequently, this Universal Substance must be Real —” and that in its totality

it was necessarily the only Reality. The next step was the recognition that this Substantiality must be but One in its essential being, otherwise there could not exist that continuity and orderly trend of manifestation observable in the Phenomenal Universe.

The next step in the logical reasoning was that this Ultimate Reality must be above all phenomenal attributes and qualities, including those of man, and consequently that its Inner Nature, or Essential Being was beyond the cognition, knowledge or even the imagination of man, and was Unknowable in that sense, and therefore beyond definition or name —” therefore the Sages styled this Ultimate Reality by the Sanscrit word "TAT," from which the English word "THAT" is derived —” a pronoun referring to something supposed to be understood —” in this case implying no qualities, attributes or name. And the Sanscrit word, Tat, and its English equivalent, "THAT," is still used even unto today to designate or point out (but not to describe) the Hindu idea of the Ultimate Reality behind the Phenomenal Universe —” and in these lessons we shall so