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Indian spirituality in the West: A bibliographical mapping

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Scope

This bibliographical essay is basically an attempt to organize, examine, and evaluate the plethora of Indian spiritual teachings which have become prominent in the West during the past decade. It is called a “mapping” because it attempts to chart and to give an overview of the maze of personalities, teachings, movements, ideas, and publications which demand the attention of scholars and nonspecialists alike. It includes an introductory section on the historical and philosophical background of the present enthusiasm for Indian spirituality; an introduction of the Bhagavadgītā and a lengthy survey of its three yogas (knowledge, action, and devotion) as expounded by some of the leading spiritual personalities presently influential in the West; and finally this mapping is an introduction to Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras and an account of recent developments in the area generally referred to as the science of meditation or the psychology of consciousness.

In addition to surveying the literature on Indian spiritual personalities and disciplines prominent in the West, a typology is offered by which to organize this complex social, intellectual, and spiritual phenomenon. In the process, an attempt is made to reconcile some of the specialized perspectives which have led philosophers and many other scholars to perceive this material in limited or negative terms. My own approach to this study has issued from a series of conflicts between seemingly opposing intellectual interests, and consequently this essay is unusually personal both in conception and execution. It is my attempt to deal with the conflict between my Western philosophical assumptions and the demands of Asian spiritualities which has prompted me to offer this bibliographical essay as an invitation to academic philosophers to confront sympathetically the implications of “Asian spiritualities in the West.”

Since personal views are operative not only in the evaluation of the more than eighty books under review, but equally in the choice of books to be reviewed and in my approach to this complex mass of material, some statement concerning those views would seem to be warranted.

Essentially, the author is addressing two questions: first, what is the philosophical significance of the various Indian spiritual and philosophical teachings currently so popular in the West? Secondly, how may the various yogas disciplines—jñāna-(knowledge), karma-(action), bhakti-(devotion, surrender) and rāja-(mental, psychological)—be understood so as to preserve their strengths while minimizing their weaknesses?

The first problem is most acute when a philosopher approaches the teachings

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Specifically, *bhakti* is most prized when it is a genuine surrender of the ego to whatever is conceived of as divine, while simultaneously fostering both knowledge and action. Similarly, both *jñāna-yoga*, and *karma-yoga* should each encourage the other *yogas*. Finally, the *yogas* of the *Gītā* should individually and collectively maintain a positive relationship with the *rāja-yoga* system of Patañjali and the contemporary meditation techniques now so prominent.

**Background**

When Jung penned his famous caution against Westerners practicing *yoga*, it was not foreseen that within a few decades Indian *yogas* would be significantly deepening and expanding the range of Western consciousness. Yet, however unlikely the present burgeoning of Indian spirituality may have seemed decades ago, the seeds of this flowering were planted as early as 1896 when Swami Vivekananda lectured at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago and founded the Vedānta Society of New York. The intellectualist emphasis of Vedānta was supplemented by the more occult aspects of *yoga* practice as expounded by Paramahansa Yogananda, who founded the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1920.

As is usually the case in broad cultural and intellectual movements, however, the Indian contribution to the so-called new religions in America is part of a complex series of developments. One of the most significant development was the publication, beginning in the 1920s, of D. T. Suzuki’s several studies in Zen Buddhism. Zen was particularly important during the 1950s and has continued to exert a significant influence on spiritual seekers and on the ideals of the counter-culture. During the past ten years, exponents of the counter-culture and some of the more imaginative scholars in anthropology and psychology of religion have articulated the cultural context within which the current enthusiasm for Indian spirituality is quite intelligible. The combination of the impact of drugs and the claims surrounding *yoga* practice led to the development of a sizable body of scientific literature on parapsychology and altered or higher states of consciousness. Similarly, studies of hallucinogenic cults and practices have led anthropologists and historians of religion to acknowledge and encourage the influence of novel religious teachings. The most celebrated of these studies are the now classic three volumes by Carlos Castaneda: *The Teaching of Don Juan—A Yaqui Way of Knowing* (1968*), *A Separate Reality* (1971*), *Journey to Ixtlan* (1972*), and the recently published *Tales of Power* (1974).

Appropriately, the influence of such personalities as Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda have been more conspicuous in the popular culture than has been the influence of Indian philosophy on American thinkers. But as exhaustively chronicled in Dale Riepe’s *The Philosophy of India and its Impact on American Thought* (1970), Indian philosophies have indeed exercised a significant influence on American thinkers dating from Emerson, through
Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America (1973*) makes the latter volume considerably more valuable. The first two chapters of Ellwood's book, "In Quest of New Religions" and "The History of an Alternative Reality in the West," will enable it to maintain considerable value long after the groups under review have passed from the scene. 2 Marvin Henry Harper's Gurus, Swamis and Avatars: Spiritual Masters and Their American Disciples (1972) offers a competent account of such figures as Sai Baba, Sathyu Sai Baba, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Sivananda and four "Holy Mothers," but in general the book lacks the interpretive and schematic power so obvious in Ellwood's study. Needleman, Harper, and Ellwood provide personal observations based on contact with these teachers and/or their disciples, but Ellwood's book is superior in its range of groups (more than thirty), and because it includes several pages of text from the writings of each master or authoritative disciple. None of these volumes covers groups which have become prominent since 1970. Specifically, the following teachers are entirely ignored: Baba Ram Dass, Swami Satchidananda, Sri Chinmoy, Yogi Bajan, Gopi Krishna, Kirpal Singh, and Guru Maharaj Ji. Such is the pace of proliferation of yogins, gurus, swamis, and alas, self-proclaimed avatars.

In addition to previously cited surveys, several recent studies exemplify the content and mode of the spiritual process generally referred to as the "new religions." Except for The Tibetan Book of the Dead, which continues to sell many thousands of copies annually, the most influential single volume in the spread of Indian spirituality in America must be Baba Ram Dass (Richard Alpert), Be Here Now (1971*). This intriguing, sometimes fanciful but frequently perceptive, collage of names, terms, maxims, and drawings has well served the hundreds of thousands of young Americans who have used it as their introduction to Indian spiritual discipline. Ram Dass' lectures at the Menninger Foundation (1970) and at the Spring Grove Hospital (1972), collected in The Only Dance There Is (1974*) constitutes a serious effort to articulate a scientifically convincing case for the positive effects of meditation (see below, Section on "The Psychology of Meditation").

Pir Vilayat Inayat-Khan, Toward the One (1974*), an oversized imitation of Be Here Now, contains countless quotations, photographs, sketches, and spiritual edicts, all loosely organized around Sufi spirituality and Pir Vilayat's emphasis on the unity of all spiritual faiths. Anyone seriously interested in the oneness of religions would probably do better to work through the classic study by Bhagavan Das, The Essential Unity of All Religions (1969*; 1932).

As is well illustrated by the highly publicized personal and professional life of Baba Ram Dass, the present enthusiasm for Indian spirituality by American youth issues at least in part from an increased awareness of the inherent limitations of drugs. A major, and manifestly effective, claim of the three most prominent gurus to arrive in the United States in the mid-60s—Swami Satchidananda, Swami Bhaktivedanta, and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi—was the ability
spirituality and the ancient encounter between the Vaisnavites (or Bhagavatas—devotees of a personal God) and the yoga of the Upanishads. As Mircea Eliade explains this ancient conflict and its reconciliation, it was the Gita which established yoga as the key to the Indian mystical tradition.

If we consider the fact that the Bhagavad Gita represents not only the highest point of all Indian spirituality but also a very broad attempt at a synthesis, in which all the "paths" of salvation are validated and incorporated into Vishnuist devotion, the important place that Krsna of the Gita accords to Yoga represents a real triumph for the yogic tradition. The strong theist coloring that Krsna gives it greatly assists us toward understanding the function performed by Yoga throughout Indian spirituality. Two conclusions follow from this observation: 1) Yoga can be understood as a mystical discipline whose goal is the union of the human and divine soul; 2) it is under this aspect—i.e., as "mystical experience"—that Yoga was understood and applied in the great "sectarian" trends, which are echoed in the MahaBHaraata interpolations.

In the same way, most of the so-called new religions, whether religious, psychological, or spiritual disciplines, aim to develop a complementarity between contemplation and other areas of human life (specifically knowledge, action, and devotion to the divine). Thus, the base for the three yogas of the Gita is the practice of physical, mental, and psychic control whereby the self becomes desireless; this discipline predates the Gita and was later systematized in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras (ca. 2d century). Some of the techniques of yoga that are central to Patanjali are included in the Gita (as explained, for example, in the commentaries by Swami Sivananda, Taijin, and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi), but it was Patanjali's system of hatha- and raja-yoga which established these techniques in an authentic text with philosophical and psychological bases. There remain significant differences between the yogas of the Gita and Patanjali (for example, in the Gita, meditation does not achieve its supreme end unless it concentrates on Krsna), but the primacy of yoga in the Gita remains a model for yoga in all Indian spiritual traditions.

Mysticism and Morality

Since Western philosophers have been generally more parochial concerning Asian religious thought than Western religionists, psychologists, and social scientists, the publication of a work entitled Mysticism and Morality: Oriental Thought and Moral Philosophy (1972) by a noted Western philosopher might have been a positive development; unfortunately, however, this work by Arthur C. Danto fails to advance the philosophical study of Asian ethics beyond the criticisms articulated four decades ago by Albert Schweitzer's Indian Thought and Its Development (1960; 1936). Danto's reputation as a Western philosopher who is open to Asian thought traditions (for example, he is an advisory editor of this journal and for many years has been a member of the Columbia University Seminar on Oriental Thought) makes this uninformed, intellectually
estimate of mysticism and spiritual discipline. This neglect has the same effect on Danto’s study as a neglect of existentialism, pragmatism, Marxism, and analytic philosophy would have on a study of Western value theory; specifically, to ignore Gandhi, Tagore, Radhakrishnan, and Aurobindo in this study is comparable to ignoring the influence of Marx, Nietzsche, James, Dewey, Sartre, Buber, and Tillich in a work on Western thought and moral philosophy.

While such a catalogue of viable ethical theorists and exemplars of creative ethical action does not, of itself, eliminate the negative effects of the Hindu spiritual tradition, either in India or in its Western versions, it does shift the burden of proof to the interpreter who classifies all Indian spirituality and ethics as self- and world-negating. In the modern period, the emphasis in Indian spirituality has been on a more positive reading of the self and world, but even the Bhagavadgītā, to which Danto devotes an entire chapter, offers a theory of action markedly more positive than the theory he criticizes. The theory of action according to the Gītā is properly understood when articulated in terms of the following interpretive contexts:

1. **Horizontal.** The Gītā prescribes duties according to the lived situation—that is, one’s caste, age, and the external factors which condition the choice on the biographical and social plane.

2. **Vertical.** The Gītā consistently recognizes a range of spiritual levels and the need to proceed from the lower to the higher in order; thus, the duties for the bulk of humanity (prescribed by artha, kāma, and dharma) are not to be abandoned for mokṣa, or the life of the sannyāsin, until one has advanced through these stages and is ready for spiritual life. Indeed, it was precisely in order to restore the value of ordinary dharma over against the Upaniṣadic emphasis on asceticism that Kṛṣṇa entered a human form and revealed his vision and discipline to Arjuna.

3. **Integral.** Modern interpreters have shown that the true teaching of the Gītā is a complementarity of yogas—that is, karma-, bhakti-, and jñāna-yoga. Like the three legs of the stool in John Wisdom’s often quoted analogy, these three yogas support the entire structure of the Gītā’s teaching, including rāja-yoga, Sāṁkhya philosophy, Upaniṣadic mysticism, bhāgavata theism, and the restoration of dharma.

Each of these contexts provides a caution against the kind of simplistic criticism which abounds in Danto’s book. The integral context, furthermore, provides a framework for the interplay of spiritual disciplines and moral behavior which modern interpreters present as a defense both of the Gītā and of Indian spirituality generally. Vivekananda, Tagore, Aurobindo, Sivananda, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, and other spiritual thinkers of modern India consistently emphasize the positive relation between spiritual experience, knowledge, and social action. The import of this emphasis will be more obvious as
As the following brief survey indicates, the classic figures of modern Indian spirituality represent the ideal of jñāna-yoga more successfully than most of the gurus currently prominent in the West. Most of the purely popular teachings and movements—including many thousands of seekers under the influence of Baba Ram Das, Guru Maharaj Ji, Sri Chinmoy, Swami Muktananda, Kirpal Singh, and Pir Vilayat Khan—generally shun even a minimum of intellectual discipline. The antiintellectualism of these movements is all the more unfortunate because there are now in evidence several attempts to blend creatively intellectual and spiritual aspirations. In varying ways, several American philosophers are working in this area; of these, the work of Eliot Deutsch is perhaps the most promising.

Clearly reflecting the Vedāntic perspective which he has both clarified and extended in his Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction (1973*; 1969), Eliot Deutsch initiates his recent work, Humanity and Divinity (1970), by offering a definition of metaphysics which equally well expresses the ideal of jñāna-yoga: “Metaphysics, as I use the term, means the articulation of a path to spiritual experience and a disciplined reflection upon that experience.” Humanity and Divinity is a comparative metaphysics which utilizes the salient ideas in Asian (primarily Indian, and particularly Vedāntist) philosophical traditions. Many of the philosophical ideas tied to the text of the Gītā in his translation and commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā (1968*), or tied to the Advaitic tradition in his Advaita Vedānta (1969), are here liberated and enhanced by a philosophical style at once poetic and precise. The result is a “metaphysical-spiritual view of man,” including man’s potential freedom, timeless, and divinity. Thoughtful readers are likely to find this metaphysical essay more enlightening concerning the spiritual dimensions of human experience than the revelations of prominent swamis, gurus and would-be avatars.

As Dale Riepe rightly observes, the late George Burch, Professor Emeritus, Tufts University, is an excellent interpreter of contemporary classical Indian philosophy (that is, varieties of contemporary Vedānta) because “he is not hardened against Indian transcendentalism or what many American philosophers would consider the irrationality, illogicality, and seemingly fantastic views of the Vedānta thinkers who have flourished since around the turn of the century.” This same openness, chastened by an astute philosophical sense, finds brilliant expression in Burch’s brief chapter on Vedānta in his Alternative Goals in Religion: Love, Freedom and Truth (1972). The thesis of the book—that the absolute, as the goal of the world religions, is not a unity at all but is rather three alternate absolutes (Love, Freedom, and Truth)—does not concern us here, but the Absolute of Truth, represented by Advaita Vedānta, is developed with impressive clarity and insight.

Troy Wilson Organ, of Ohio University, is a third instance of a contemporary American philosopher who grasps from within the intimate relationship between the spiritual and philosophical quest. In his enormously erudite study,
writes entirely from within his own spiritual experience, the writings of Radhakrishnan, the philosopher-statesman, appear to be spiritually derivative. For intellectual variety and erudition, as well as a cogent account of Indian spiritual experience, one learns more from Radhakrishnan; as an example of ānāma-yoga, however, Radhakrishnan's works are primarily an attempt to reach and to explain the spiritual realization from which Ramana Maharshi's writings spring. The writings of Ramana Maharshi have been collected in four paperback volumes: *Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi* (1972*; 1959); *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge* (1970*; 1965); *Spiritual Teachings of Ramana Maharshi* (1972*); *Teachings of Ramana Maharshi* (1971*; 1962). The essential teachings of S. Radhakrishnan have been collected in a one volume paperback: Robert A. McDermott, ed., *Radhakrishnan: Selected Writings on Philosophy, Religion and Culture* (1970*).

In terms of ānāma-yoga, Rabindranath Tagore and J. Krishnamurti stand midway between the mystical and intellectual: Tagore's artistry was itself a *yoga*—specifically *rasa-yoga*, or the way of aesthetic delight—about which he was profoundly reflective and articulate. Both his *Religion of Man* (1961*; 1931) and his *Śādhana—The Realization of Life* (1972*; 1913) are renderings of both art and thought as ways to spiritualization. J. Krishnamurti's writings, of course, are more prominent on Asian philosophy and religion bookshelves than those of any other Asian spiritual personality. His latest and most comprehensive work, *Awakening of Intelligence* (1973), well summarizes the themes with which he has been concerned throughout the four decades during which he has written perhaps thirty volumes on the spiritual life.

Essentially, Sri Aurobindo's philosophy describes several lower and higher levels of existence and their progressive interpenetration as a result of human and divine energy. As ānāma-yoga, this system shows the way to knowledge of the higher, or more spiritual, levels of existence, and it shows the positive results of systematically articulating such insights. Specifically, *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo's 900-page metaphysical masterpiece, constitutes a major effort to bind knowledge to spiritual experience—by using knowledge both as a way to spiritual realization and as a tool for its explanation. Many of the themes in *The Life Divine* are summarized in Sri Aurobindo's last work, *The Mind of Light*, written in 1949, just before he died (1971*; 1953). Selections from *The Life Divine* have been compiled in P. B. Saint-Hilaire, *The Future Evolution of Man* (1974*; 1963).

Anyone seriously interested in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and *yoga* should see the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* (30 vols.; 1970–1973). Selections from these volumes, with introductions, glossary, and bibliography, are reprinted in Robert A. McDermott, ed., *The Essential Aurobindo* (1973*). Among recent studies which reveal Sri Aurobindo's blending of intellectual and spiritual discipline, see especially Haridas Chaudhuri, *Sri Aurobindo: Prophet of the Life Divine* (1973*; 1951), Beatrice Bruteau, *Worthy is the World: The Hindu*
Indian spiritual tradition generally, which is probably closer to the mainstream of Indian spirituality than the more intellectualist reading of Śaṅkara or most other Vedāntists. In this respect, the bhakti emphasis is analogous to the Augustinian tradition which springs from Augustine's dramatic conversion by divine illumination. According to this tradition, from Augustine's formulation of the theory of illumination to such contemporary Augustinians as Tillich, the quality of intellectual achievement is a function of spiritual aspiration and illumination, not the reverse. The vision which Kṛṣṇa revealed to Arjuna in the Gītā and the vision which Augustine enjoyed at Ostia equally attest to the primacy of experience over intellect in a significant portion of Hinduism and Christianity respectively. In both traditions bhakti has been utilized by world-negators as well as by some of the most historically significant and intellectually profound spiritual personalities. Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā and Augustine are only two examples of the positive interplay of bhakti with action and knowledge; Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo are modern instances of this same integrity.

The current enthusiasm for Indian spirituality, however, has consistently emphasized bhakti at the expense of action and knowledge; in general, it follows that segment of the Indian spiritual tradition which acknowledges the superiority of the spiritual wisdom of the unlettered holy man over the intellectual accomplishments of the scholar. This degeneration of the intellect is sometimes espoused even by gurus of high intellectual achievement. Some gurus, and most disciples, treat every level of intellectual achievement as a reflection of spiritual realization. Thus, when disciples attribute avatar status to their guru, or when a guru claims avatar status for himself, the guru's teachings assume a divinely sanctioned validity. Since an avatar is by definition a living embodiment of the divine, his teaching virtually precludes alternative teachings and courses of action. The problems presented by the privileged claims of a guru revered as an avatar are well illustrated by Meher Baba. One of the most remarkable and perplexing spiritual figures of this century, Meher Baba, emphatically insists that his devotees should surrender to him because he is "the highest of the High." In "Baba Discusses Avatarhood" in Listen to Humanity (1971*), Baba not only claims avatarhood, he also explains that he is identical with all other avatars—and is supremely conscious of his oneness with all creatures. As Meher Baba, he is the avatar of this age:

The time has come. I repeat the call and bid all come unto me. This time-honored call of mine thrills the hearts of those who have patiently endured all in their love for God, loving God only for love of God. There are others who fear and shudder at its reverberations and would flee or resist. And there are yet others who are baffled, failing to understand why all the all-sufficient Highest of the High need give this call to humanity. Regardless of the doubts and convictions people may have, I continue to come as the Avatar because of the infinite love I bear for one and all. Though judged time and again by humanity in its ignorance, I come to help man distinguish the real from the false (p. 223).
personified,” teaches the doctrine of the renunciation of fruits of action” as the most excellent way of attaining self-realization—that is, becoming like unto God, or Krṣṇa.12 Similarly, Vinoba Bhave, the saintly scholar who has walked the length of India working for land reform, explains karma-yoga as an imitation of the Krṣṇa of the Gītā who, at the end of a day of battle, foregoes evening prayers in order to care for the horses. “The Karma-yogin’s work is a form of prayer (japa). His mind is purified by it, and the clear mind received the image of jnāna, true knowledge.”13 Thus, true karma-yoga leads to, and in a sense includes, both jñāna- and bhakti-yoga. This interpretation of karma-, jñāna-, and bhakti-yoga indicates that the Gītā clearly transcends the merely ethical considerations raised by Arjuna in the first chapter of the Gītā. In light of this interpretation, it is difficult to agree with the thesis recently developed in Kaveeswar, The Ethics of the Gītā (1971), that the content of action—specifically, Arjuna’s duty to fight—is Krṣṇa’s primary concern and fundamental teaching (p. 220). Rather, the message of the Gītā concerns the selflessness of action informed by a knowledge of Krṣṇa’s divine timelessness and purified by a devotion to Krṣṇa’s divine selflessness. This insight is well expressed in a key passage of John S. Dunne’s Way of All the Earth (1972*), a highly literary appreciation of Indian religious values:14

Arjuna, according to the Gītā, does not measure his activity by its fruits but by the divine activity of Krishna. But Krishna does not measure his own activity by its fruits; in fact, this is what Arjuna is to imitate in him. This leaves the God altogether unmeasured. And so he is intended to be in the Gītā: the vision of God which occurs when Krishna reveals his divine form to Arjuna is the vision of a being that is literally “immense,” “measurable.” The practice of renouncing the fruits of one’s activity does lead, it seems to a new vision of things (pp. 82–83).

It is this new vision, this new spiritual awareness, which purifies action, supplies true knowledge and enables the agent to be perfectly realized in Krṣṇa. Action is salvific, but surrender to the Divine (in the person of Krṣṇa) is the highest point in the Gītā’s teaching. Thus, Eliot Deutsch, who makes a compelling case for karma-yoga as “the central teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā,” also acknowledges that karma-yoga requires “that one perform one’s action in the spirit of sacrifice, yajña.” Deutsch continues:

This means to perform action with loving attention to the Divine; it means to redirect the empirical self away from its ego-involvement with needs, desires, passions. When this is done, any action can be performed with skill. But freedom, not perfect action as such, is the goal; it is the motive conforming to one’s duty in the spirit of non-attachment, not the objective quality of one’s act, that is crucial.15

In the final analysis, the highest motive is a devotion which integrates a true
sequently, an adequate understanding of Patañjali’s sūtras requires the “Commentary” of Vyāsa (approx. 650–850 A.D.) and Mishra’s “Explanation” (ca. 9th century). This edition includes each of these three components as well as Woods’ own scholarly introduction and appendices.

Except for scholarly research, however, one of the following editions of the Yoga-Sūtras will be perfectly adequate: R. Mishra, Textbook of Yoga Psychology (1973*); Taimni, Science of Yoga (1967*); Prabhavananda and Isherwood, How to Know God (1969*); Bahn, Union With the Ultimate (1964*); S. Dasgupta, Yoga as Philosophy and Religion (1924, 1970).

Mishra’s “Introduction to Yoga Philosophy” expertly traces the relation between yoga discipline and the Sānkhyā system of philosophy; this detailed survey is particularly useful for its explanation of such technical terms as purusa, prakṛti, citta, buddhi, and the guṇas. The commentary on the Sūtras is equally expert and useful.

Taimni’s Science of Yoga (1967*) provides both a detailed commentary on the Yoga-Sūtras and points of reference to contemporary science, particularly to psychology. Although this commentary is exceedingly detailed and frequently quite technical, its authenticity and precision reward patient study.

Prabhavananda and Isherwood have based their translations and commentaries on the Vedāntist point of view, particularly as expounded in Swami Vivekananda’s writings on rāja-yoga. In the introduction to his Union with the Ultimate, Bahn offers a brief survey of the kinds of yoga and the key points in Sānkhyā philosophy and Patañjali’s sūtras; he provides a non-technical explanation of each of the 200 sūtras. S. Dasgupta’s Yoga as Philosophy and Religion is neither a translation nor a commentary, but it provides a philosophical interpretation of Patañjali’s Yoga-Sūtras. As in his chapter on “Kapila and Patañjali School of Sānkhyā” in his monumental History of Indian Philosophy (Vol. I; 1922), Dasgupta here treats the Sānkhyā system as the philosophical basis of the theory and practice referred to as rāja-yoga.17

In addition to studies dealing primarily with Patañjali’s Yoga-Sūtras, many other studies proceed from Patañjali to a general treatment or survey of yogas. Both as an account of Patañjali and as a survey of the entire field of yoga, the unsurpassed masterpiece is Mircea Eliade’s Yoga: Immortality and Freedom (1970*; 1958). After definitive chapters on the doctrines and techniques of yoga, this work surveys the historical and systematic relations between yoga and other strains in the Indian tradition including Brahmanism, the Gītā, Buddhism, Tantrism, and Shamanism. The more than one hundred pages of notes and bibliographical references add to the scholarly worth of this invaluable volume. Eliade’s Patañjali and Yoga (1969; 1954) is a less technical and less detailed summary of Yoga: Immortality and Freedom.

Hatha and Rāja

Despite the commercialization of hatha-yoga—for example, in books such
of New York in 1896 and the Ramakrishna Order in India in 1897; Swami Sivananda, who founded the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh; Ramana Maharshi, around whom an ashram has developed in Tiruvannamalai, South India; and Sri Aurobindo, poet and philosopher who developed a highly sophisticated Integral Yoga system and, with the Mother, his spiritual collaborator, has generated the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville. These spiritual figures are too vast to be adequately discussed in this article except to note that in varying degrees each has written on hatha- and rāja-yoga. Vivekananda’s writings on yoga are collected in Yoga and Other Works (1953) and in Selections from Swami Vivekananda (1963). Similarly, Sivananda’s writings are contained in a one-volume edition, Practice of Yoga (1970) and in several smaller works: Yoga Asanas (1969*), The Science of Pranayama (1967*), Fourteen Lessons in Rāja Yoga (1970*), and Concentration and Meditation (1970). Sri Aurobindo has not written extensively on hatha- and rāja-yoga per se, because he considers them to be limited disciplines, but in The Mind of Light (1971*) he has written on physical discipline, or perfection of the body, and in The Synthesis of Yoga (1972; 1914–1921) and in Letters on Yoga (3 vols., 1972) he has written at length on all aspects of yoga theory and practice.

Transcendental Meditation (TM)

Because of his grasp of Western (primarily American) values and lifestyles, the appropriateness of his spiritual teaching, and his ability to establish an effective network of teachers and centers, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has probably exercised a greater impact than any other Indian teacher or movement during this decade of spiritual regeneration in the West. Like Swami Satchidananda, the other Indian spiritual leader who has demonstrated a remarkable grasp of the spiritual needs and aspirations of Westerners, Maharishi recognizes that the very uncongeniality of Western life to meditation makes even a modicum of meditation practice necessary and relatively transformative. By bringing a simple yet effective meditation technique to a population suffering the ill-effects of hyperactivity and alienation, Maharishi’s TM is providing a yoga peculiarly able to bridge the contemporary Western and traditional Indian spiritual experiences. Even if one were to agree with Jung’s claim that “the West will produce its own yoga . . . on the bias laid down by Christianity,”18 it would seem that for the foreseeable future Westerners will be more likely to utilize such a technique as TM than return to Christian techniques of spirituality. Not even the immediate dissolution of the TM movement—a most unlikely eventuality—would offset my belief that because of its simplicity of execution, psychological results, scientific verifiability, and vast numbers of enthusiastic practitioners (an estimated 350,000), TM has already left a permanent deposit in Western intellectual and spiritual life.

The TM movement has also exercised a subtle but significant influence on the general and academic evaluations of yoga—principally by removing the
The first half of *Psychology of Meditation* (1971*) consists in Naranjo’s classification, and analysis of the common elements, of various meditation techniques; in Part Two, Ornstein summarizes the available information on the voluntary control of brain waves, and offers a psychological analysis of such characteristics of meditation techniques as attention, concentration, openness, and repetition.

Ornstein’s *The Psychology of Consciousness* (1972*) develops the thesis that Western thought has been dominated by the more “linear” or rational half of the brain. Ornstein’s “Two Sides of the Brain” theory is not within the scope of this review—and in any case outside the competence of this reviewer to evaluate—but it appears to be sufficiently important to warrant the cooperative research of Asianists, meditators, psychologists, and physiologists. Some of the materials useful to such a collaborative study have been collected in several anthologies, including Ornstein’s *Readings in the Psychology of Consciousness* (1974). Charles T. Tart, editor of *Altered States of Consciousness* (1969), which is already a basic text in the psychology of consciousness, has also edited *Spiritual Psychology* (forthcoming).

Robert Powell’s *The Free Mind: The Inward Path to Liberation* (1972) is the work of another scientist who writes persuasively concerning the Western “crisis of consciousness,” and the positive effects of meditation. Like his spiritual mentor, J. Krishnamurti, Powell’s primary concern is with psychological and spiritual freedom. Finally, John C. Lilly’s compelling personal and precise study, *The Center of the Cyclone* (1972), represents the high point in the increasingly large and important literature on experimentation with altered and higher states of consciousness. Baba Ram Dass, Tart, Naranjo, Ornstein, Lilly, Michael Murphy (President of Esalen), and Oscar Ichazo (founder of Arica) have travelled some of the same psychic and spiritual routes, and have effectively trailblazed for the increasingly large number of Westerners who are travelling to the interior.

NOTES

2. For an in-depth review of Ellwood’s study, see *History of Religions* 12 (May 1974): 323–331.
3. Most of the translations and interpretations of the *Gītā* here cited are listed in the bibliography. A comprehensive review of these and other editions of the *Gītā* is forthcoming in this journal.
5. Ibid., p. 159.


**POSTSCRIPT**

In addition to the works cited in the article, bibliographical information, summaries of teachings and addresses of spiritual communities are contained, in Ellwood’s *Religious and Spiritual Communities in Modern America,* pp. 305–322. For an excellent bibliography of writings on Indian philosophy by Westerners, see Riepe, *The Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought,* pp. 280–305.

Curiously, a well-informed, well-stocked, “new age” bookstore called “Yes!” has published an extremely useful bibliographical guide to several thousand volumes dealing with Asian spiritualities and the occult: *Aquarian Pathfinder: Books from Yes!* (1974).

Finally, it is perhaps not premature to announce the on going bibliographical research of several teams of scholars working under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to the Council for International Studies and Programs (Ward Morehouse, President).