



American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West

By Philip Goldberg

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A fascinating look at India's remarkable impact on Western culture, this eye-opening popular history shows how the ancient philosophy of Vedanta and the mind-body methods of Yoga have profoundly affected the worldview of millions of Americans and radically altered the religious landscape.

What exploded in the 1960s, following the Beatles trip to India for an extended stay with their new guru, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, actually began more than two hundred years earlier, when the United States started importing knowledge--as well as tangy spices and colorful fabrics--from Asia. The first translations of Hindu texts found their way into the libraries of John Adams and Ralph Waldo Emerson. From there the ideas spread to Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and succeeding generations of receptive Americans, who absorbed India's "science of consciousness" and wove it into the fabric of their lives. Charismatic teachers like Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda came west in waves, prompting leading intellectuals, artists, and scientists such as Aldous Huxley, Joseph Campbell, Allen Ginsberg, J. D. Salinger, John Coltrane, Dean Ornish, and Richard Alpert, aka Ram Dass, to adapt and disseminate what they learned from them. The impact has been enormous, enlarging our current understanding of the mind and body and dramatically changing how we view ourselves and our place in the cosmos.

Goldberg paints a compelling picture of this remarkable East-to-West transmission, showing how it accelerated through the decades and eventually moved from the counterculture into our laboratories, libraries, and living rooms. Now physicians and therapists routinely recommend meditation, words like *karma* and *mantra* are part of our everyday vocabulary, and Yoga studios are as ubiquitous as Starbucks. The insights of India's sages permeate so much of what we think, believe, and do that they have redefined the meaning of life for millions of Americans—and continue to do so every day.

Rich in detail and expansive in scope, *American Veda* shows how we have come to accept and live by the central teaching of Vedic wisdom: "Truth is one, the

wise call it by many names.”

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Spiritual coach and author Goldberg (Roadsigns) is a knowledgeable and sympathetic chronicler of the past 150 years or so of Indian spiritual ideas' influence on American spirituality. Correctly starting with Emerson and American transcendentalism, Goldberg follows a trail that gets broader, more diverse, and more powerful until yoga is as American as Starbucks, and "spiritual but not religious" becomes a cultural catchphrase describing millions whose notions of the transcendent are more shaped by India's Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Religion) than by Yankee divines and Southern Baptists. Goldberg sorts gurus and systems of yoga, correctly understanding the spiritual aspects of what many Americans think of as a physical fitness discipline. He's on point in tracing the influence of the spiritual philosophy of Vedanta on a legion of influential artists and writers beyond the titular ones--think John Coltrane and the late J.D. Salinger. This book fills a void; scholars have mined the subject of Indian spiritual philosophy, but mostly for the academy, despite the broad impact of Vedantism on popular culture. Goldberg gets it. (Nov.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Although Veda is not a household word for many Americans, yoga, guru, and karma are commonplace, and each is rooted in Vedic, or Indian, spirituality, which "evolved from the Vedas, the world's oldest sacred texts." A spiritual counselor and interfaith minister as well as an author, Goldberg delineates the Vedic tradition—which encompasses Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and involves meditation and yoga—then traces its flowering in the U.S., from its profound impact on Emerson to the "Vedic bonfire of the 1960s," the Transcendental Meditation movement of the 1970s, and today's passion for hatha yoga. Because Veda, which translates as "knowledge," respects all religious practices, "recognizes a transcendent Oneness," and embraces science, it has particular appeal for Americans who identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious." In relaxed control of a veritable ocean of material, Goldberg provides lively profiles of influential Vedic gurus, including Krishnamurti, Vivekananda, Paramahansa Yogananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and B. K. S. Iyengar, and such key followers as the Beatles, Joseph Campbell, Thomas Merton, John Coltrane, J. D. Salinger, Eckhart Tolle, and Deepak Chopra. From meditating movie stars, scandalous gurus, and psychedelic drugs to genuine spiritual breakthroughs and devotion to helping others, Goldberg's history of "American Veda" takes measure of a powerful, if underappreciated, force. --Donna Seaman

Review

"American Veda is an illuminating, gracefully written and remarkably thorough account of India's spectacular impact on Western religion and spirituality."

– Deepak Chopra

"American Veda shows us how we got to where we are. It chronicles a revolution in consciousness and describes India's lasting influence on our culture, from gurus, meditation, and yoga to sitar music and aromatic curries. Savor it."

– Michael Bernard Beckwith, author of *Spiritual Liberation: Fulfilling Your Soul's Potential*

"This book demonstrates the far reach of Indian thought into the American psyche and sense of spiritual self. A well written, superbly researched book, it should be read by all the 15 million Americans practicing meditation and yoga!"

– Christopher Chapple, Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology, Loyola Marymount University

"Wonderfully comprehensive, positive, tremendously insightful, and illuminating. For anyone interested in the deep influence of yoga philosophy in American culture, I highly recommended this masterful book."

– John Friend, Founder of Anusara Yoga

"Immensely smart, wise and brilliantly written. This book should be required reading for everyone interested in ecumenical spirituality which is the one hope for the survival of the human race, and India's great gift to us in our crisis."

– Andrew Harvey, author of *The Hope: The Guide to Social Activism* and *The Sun at Midnight*

"In this important and engaging book, Philip Goldberg chronicles the long neglected history of Hinduism's encounter with the US. He astutely examines how Hinduism has been constructed and consumed within the larger American spiritual landscape. A must read for those interested in Hinduism and its transmission."

– Varun Soni, Dean of Religious Life, University of Southern California

"American Veda documents an important cultural change and is an impressive book: informed and informative, well researched and readable."

– Roger Walsh MD, Ph.D., University of California Medical School, author of *Essential Spirituality: The Seven Central Practices*

"Intriguing reading, fascinating profiles and great storytelling of Yoga luminaries adapting the teachings to fit modern American life. This book inspires us to continue to deepen in our body, mind, and spiritual journey."

– Liliias Folan, PBS Host and author *Liliias! Yoga Gets Better with Age*

"Goldberg weaves a tale as only a true storyteller can, drawing the reader into this Vedic web that has no weaver, providing us with a fresh view of how Vedic strands have woven their way into the daily fabric of every American. He masterfully unfolds this ancient play of spiritual unfolding that is just now beginning to emerge into early adolescence in America."

– Richard Miller, PhD, author of *Yoga Nidra: A Meditative Practice for Deep Relaxation and Healing*, co-founder of the International Association of Yoga Therapy and the founding president of the Integrative Restoration Institute.

"A breathtaking trek across time, American Veda shows us something extraordinary, surprising, and precious about where we come from, who we are at this moment, and what we may yet become."

– Chip Hartranft, author of *The Yoga-Sutra Of Patañjali*: a new translation with commentary

"In a delightful, compelling way, *American Veda* shows how India's ancient wisdom has permeated our lives, including many of the self-improvement teachings that have benefited millions. I loved reading this book."

– Marci Shimoff, *NY Times* bestselling author, *Happy for No Reason* and *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*

"Nothing short of remarkable. Within the pages of this fairly short volume, Goldberg manages to cover every major figure, movement, and idea that originated in India's spiritual terrain and arrived on our shores to forever alter the landscape of our thought and culture....Writing with empathy and discernment, he covers highly controversial issues regarding the impact of the transmission of Indian spiritual culture in a way that inspires deeper understanding. American Veda is an insightful guide to the fascinating history of a

phenomenon that will be seen in the future as one of the watershed moments of American history.”

– Rita D. Sherma, Ph.D., Executive Director, School of Philosophy & Religious Studies, Taksha University

“American Veda is a bright light on the historical path to enlightenment in America. Philip Goldberg is an acharya of words and research. Highly recommended.”

– Larry Payne Ph.D., coauthor, *Yoga for Dummies*, *Yoga Rx* and *The Business of Teaching Yoga*

"We imagine the United States as a Christian island far from the exotic teachings of India. We imagine wrong. As Phil Goldberg's masterful American Veda shows we have been under the sway of Hindu spiritual thought for centuries. If you want to understand American spirituality today, and get a glimpse into its future, read this book."

– Rabbi Rami Shapiro, author of *Recovery, the Sacred Art*

"This book, American Veda is a landmark! Easy to read it shines a light of understanding on the American Vedic Hindu path which started with the transference of knowledge from India, and equally important by its acceptance by the Americans of western orientation. It is a path on which now, the immigrant Vedic Hindu community and its progeny are grafting on to and traveling along with many in the mainstream community, resulting in, we hope increased understanding. The integrated approach of this book helps fill in the gaps of this historical journey, especially for those of us who see ourselves as fellow travelers working to bridge the east-west divide."

– Anju Bhargava, Management Consultant and Founder of Hindu American Seva Charities

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Raymond McMillion:

This American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West book is not really ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you have by reading this book is usually information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get details which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This particular American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West without we comprehend teach the one who reading through it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West can bring when you are and not make your tote space or bookshelves' turn out to be full because you can have it in your lovely laptop even cellphone. This American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West having very good arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

Cheryl Grosvenor:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation or go to the outside with them family members or their friend. Do you know? Many a lot of people spent these people free time just watching TV, as well as playing video games all day long. In order to try to find a new activity here is look different you can read the book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book which you read you can spent all day long to reading a guide. The book American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West it is quite good to read. There are a lot of individuals who recommended this

book. These people were enjoying reading this book. When you did not have enough space bringing this book you can buy the particular e-book. You can more very easily to read this book through your smart phone. The price is not too fund but this book features high quality.

Herbert Oakley:

In this time globalization it is important to someone to get information. The information will make you to definitely understand the condition of the world. The condition of the world makes the information better to share. You can find a lot of personal references to get information example: internet, magazine, book, and soon. You can observe that now, a lot of publisher this print many kinds of book. Often the book that recommended for your requirements is American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West this reserve consist a lot of the information from the condition of this world now. That book was represented how can the world has grown up. The words styles that writer require to explain it is easy to understand. The actual writer made some study when he makes this book. Honestly, that is why this book suited all of you.

Billy Doyle:

That publication can make you to feel relax. This specific book American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West was colourful and of course has pictures around. As we know that book American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West has many kinds or type. Start from kids until youngsters. For example Naruto or Detective Conan you can read and feel that you are the character on there. Therefore , not at all of book usually are make you bored, any it can make you feel happy, fun and rest. Try to choose the best book for you and try to like reading that will.

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