



A Comparative Study on the Impression of Indian Philosophy as Per Culture of R. W. Emerson and H. D. Thoreau

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ABSTRACT

A comparison has been made between Indian philosophy and its influence on the culture of Emerson and Thoreau. John De Crevecoeur rightly said that America is a man who acts on new principles and ideas. America was ripe for a literature with a new voice, grounded in a nationalism which welcomed many traditions. This new American culture, unique in the cultures of the world, would also be a universal culture. It would speak of humanity's supreme spiritual quest, the quest for self-culture-the full unfoldments of the individual personality based on knowledge of the Self, that transcendental aspect of the individual connected to universal intelligence. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, and other New England Transcendentalist writers between 1836 and 1860, precursors of Walt Whitman, felt that America was in a unique position to develop a literature at once native and universal. They believed America's diverse origins and cultures should be reflected in its own literature and no longer mimic one tradition-the European.

Walt Whitman envisioned a unified America at a time when it was being divided by civil war, an America able to harmonize its differences through the power of language and poetry. For contemporary readers it is difficult to comprehend why Whitman believed poetry could be a force for balancing the needs of individuals and society. This article will evaluate Whitman's claims that his language program could unify the self, culture, and Natural Law through the aesthetic experience, a claim supported by the principles of Maharishi Vedic Science.

A strong perception runs through Transcendentalist writings that Nature and human consciousness are not two separate entities. Whitman said that the main intention of *Leaves of Grass* was "To sing the Song of that law of average Identity, and of yourself, consistently with the divine law of the universal" ("Preface," 1982, p.

1010). The Transcendentalists also seem to have understood that self-referral was the way to attune oneself to the principle of unity in nature, what Margaret Fuller calls the "central soul":

Every relation, every gradation of nature is incalculably precious, but only to the soul which is poised upon itself, and to whom no loss, no change, can bring dull discord, for it is in harmony with the central soul. (1992, p. 312)

The Central Soul, or "Over Soul" according to Emerson, is the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal one. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in any hour, but the act of seeing, and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object are one. ("The Over Soul," 1979, p. 160)

Whitman saw this same relationship between the universal and local operating within a culture's language. Because language embodies both cosmic and local expressions of nature, its sound and rhythm rendered in poetry can marshal individual places and spirits into the grand march of national and even universal unity. Among his hopes for the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* was a desire to heal divisions among Americans by reminding them that "The soul of the nation . . . rejects none, it permits all". To capture the multivalent voices of America, to bind them into one rhythmic pulse, Whitman wrote long lines in an unrhymed, rhythmical speech, creating a new form meant to mimic oral rather than literary styles. He hoped by this informal and direct appeal to reach every American including uneducated labourers. He believed that sincere speech spoken from "a developed harmonious soul" would awaken the power "slumbering" in words to penetrate even closed minds. "The art of art," he said, "the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity". His poetry would speak with the "insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the



woods and grass by the roadside". Whitman saw him - self as the nation's "equalizer" who could "vivify" and unify the country with his incantations: Chants of the prairies, Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the Mexican sea, Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence equidistant, Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all I will make a song for these States that no one State may under any circumstances be subjected to another State, And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day and by night between all the States ("Starting From Paumanok," 1980, pp. 273-275)

Keywords: Transcendentalist, natural, harmonize, chants, state, soul.

I. WRITING-ANALYSIS

Creativity is the source of all culture. The infinite potential of creativity lies in the state of pure intelligence-unman fest, unbounded, absolute. As pure consciousness is the home of all the laws of nature, any nation whose life is grounded in pure consciousness will live the full potential of its culture and will enjoy the support of all the laws of nature. Transcendentalist writers understood language to be a bridge between matter and spirit. That is, there is for them a correspondence between sound and matter. Language, they believed, could in some way express the natural living law which unifies the universe and human intelligence. The Transcendentalists read the Vedic Literature, so it is not surprising there exists parallel ideas between them on the power of language; but the concept of the correlation of name and form (that the name of a thing contains the form or presence of the object named) was inherent, in a less precise way, in the western correspondence theory. Emerson says, "the poet is the Namer, or Language-maker, naming things sometimes after their appearance, sometimes after their essence, and giving to everyone its own name and not another's, thereby rejoicing the intellect".

Whitman is one of those poets who seem to have understood that language has levels. If *Leaves of Grass* is a "language experiment," surely one of Whitman's experiments is to get his readers to feel different levels of sound and meaning, including the transcendental level-the source of both sound and meaning. That there is an absolute meaning to words Whitman has no doubt: "The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail . . . the day and night do not fail," he says, asserting that "Underneath the ostensible sounds" of words

are the unfailing Laws of Nature . The absoluteness of words is not in their fixed intellectual meaning, but in their latent Being. Therefore, the whole truth of words cannot be apprehended by intellectual understanding: "The words of my book nothing, the drift of it everything, / A book separate, not linked with the rest nor felt by the intellect, / But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page". The latent meaning in words he calls "the drift," the feeling or presence of words. The drift is not just "subtext," it is intentional and primary text; it is the real transcendental meaning beyond the sound of the words. Words become more dynamic and truthful when their "inaudible" suggestive values are enlivened, first by the skill of the poet, then by the reader's own sensitivity. Whitman thus implies that one can touch Natural Law ("those inaudible words of the earth") only through the drift of words which is subtle and untransmissible. Whitman tried to hint, to give some flavour of these levels to his readers, though he realized the readers themselves had to be equal to such an experience. Whitman's enthusiasm for the power of language could hardly be contained: "Yes! Language is indeed alive! Primordial creation and manifestation of the mind, Language throbs with the pulses of our life. This is the wondrous babe, begotten of the blended love of spirit and of matter-physical, mystical, the Sphinx! Through speech man realizes and incarnates himself."

Though Whitman spoke of the timeless, absolute basis of language, he nevertheless was quite aware of the cultural changes taking place in the English language in nineteenth-century America, and, in fact, embraced the flux as part of his poetic theory. Whitman accepted change as a part of the divine plan for the advancement of the human race. He adopted the Darwinian theory of biological evolution, but like many other nineteenth-century writers viewed it in a religious light: he felt that human beings were evolving into a more spiritual species. Since Whitman believed evolution to be the law of Nature, he thought language must follow the same law . He thought English was especially suited to be the poetic language of a spiritual democracy due to its ability to absorb creative influences and therefore keep up with the unique American experience. Whitman felt that language is a dynamic process of growth, but that its changes are orderly and purposeful. He believed the new words coming into usage, for instance scientific words, were not accidental but prompted by the changing needs of the culture. However, this concept of a historically developing language appears to conflict with the



correspondence theory of language where name and form are essentially correlated. Nineteenth-century authors, challenged by the rapid changes of the industrial revolution and the loss of traditional values, looked for a way to resolve this conflict by seeing change as a “development” towards some cosmic purpose. Organic theories, such as those of German philologists like Humboldt, also attempted to account for change by searching for a unity that underlies a language's diversity and growth. Emerson's and Whitman's discussions of culture and self-culture form an interest - ing parallel to Maharishi's commentary on the distinctions between cultural and Vedic Literature. The Vedic Literature printed in books is only the written manifestation of an ancient oral tradition which has preserved the primordial sounds of Nature. The Veda itself, Maharishi explains, is not a cultural literature; rather it is the primordial sounds of one's own self-referral consciousness. The Veda is therefore in Emerson's phrase, “written before time was”; it is the sequence of sounds-the emergence of each syllable paralleling the structuring of matter from the Unified Field of Natural Law-that is the “blue -print of creation.” The theoretical physicist John Hagelin has suggested that the structure of the unified field in physics and the structure of the Unified Field of consciousness described by Vedic Science are so parallel that the elementary particles of physics should be, to preserve accuracy, renamed according to Vedic language.

Michael Dillbeck, a social psychologist, finds the Vedic blueprint appropriate for describing the laws of human psychology. Tony Nader, who has an M.D. and a Ph.D. in physiology, has shown detailed correlations between the human nervous system, the physiology of the universe, and the sounds of Vedic Literature. Veda then is the general underlying sound sequence which manifests as specific forms and patterns, subjectively as consciousness and objectively as matter. A Vedic word is like the seed con-taining all the vital information from which the tree grows.

II. REQUIREMENT OF THE WORK

The historical meetings of East and West have passed into commemorative tapestries of discourse leaving many knotted and tangled strands along with a host of innovative patterns as well. The Bhagavad-Gita is now part of the established “Wisdom of Old,” an approved icon of a non-Western “core curriculum” in a number of major universities and is enshrined as a “classic text” in contemporary yoga centres. The more vital meetings of the moment are occurring between the

North and South, both in India, Europe, and the Americas, the northern cultures that have stamped their schemas upon southern cultures for so long are being obliged to take a second look and are opening their doors to the possibility of a more whole humanity in which North, South, East, and West meet and share from the same table. Emerson's reception of the Gita may be better viewed as a fulcrum on which East and West, past and future have balanced themselves, than as one level event, for it serves as a turning point in the evolution of Yoga in the West. Perhaps more than a single turning point, even, the Emerson reading and reception of the Gita may be envisioned as a particular pattern in the loom of globalization. At worst, this strand becomes what Quinten Anderson labelled, “the imperial self,” an aggrandized form of Protestant-based “me religion,” or Robert Bellah's personal nightmare of “Sheilism” in which the individual picks and chooses among bits of culture as she pleases constructing her own form of designer religion. At best, however, Emerson and his band's interest in, reception of, and re-casting of the Gita marks an historic opening to the universal religion of freedom, the tradition of conscience that Emerson so epitomized. Emerson was certainly not rooted in the Gita, what to speak of its cultural past. In his now infamous line upon his first reading of the text, he called it “the much renowned book of Buddhism.”

Emerson took what he wanted from the Gita, just as we all do. Self righteous academic and religious badge wearers will speak of “plundering Asian texts” and even more self righteous avatars of yoga will knowingly tell you that American transcendentalism, that brief spark of genius amidst the industrial insensitivity of America, came from the “influence of the East.” Arguing about such things is a staid pastime, however, a Lila that is no longer a Lila. Things can become thorny, however, since allegiances to interpretive communities abound; from the theological, to the Ideological, to the Both Emerson and the Gita are still with us, however, they still inhabit the cultural landscape of America and the discourse of various interpretive communities.

Emerson, appearing as the icon of the individual, the harbinger of the “religion of the One,” saw America as the new holy land, one in which the individual could integrate the wisdom of many old worlds into the new. And the Bhagavad-Gita, emerging out of the list of “oriental translations,” pumped up by Emerson, Thoreau and their ilk, became an emblem of a certain kind of wisdom as it eventually flowed into the somewhat popular esoteric fiction of Theosophy along with



variant ideas about reincarnation. The same Bhagavad-Gita became an icon in an America that wanted a Hindu Bible and was appropriated by fundamentalist groups like Iskcon, while other translations of the Gita are taught in universities that still serve as arbiters of intellectual history.

III. RANGE OF THE WORK

It is no doubt that William Theodore De Bary fought for a core curriculum at Columbia University that would include classic Asian texts. And the Gita, due to its recent stature and relative readability, was perfectly suited for a "great books of orient" tier to match the Western Core. Meanwhile, the champion of the "infinite of the solitary man," Emerson, eventually voted for compulsory chapel attendance at Harvard, and is now one of the names enshrined on the outside wall of Columbia's Butler library, you get the idea. Emerson received the Gita through a lineage of political on quest and cultural acquiescence. The British thought it would make good politics to translate some brahminical texts, the Brahmins acquiesced to the Gita since technically it was *smṛti*, not *śruti*, which was not to be shared with outsiders. In 1845 Emerson acquired his own copy of Wilkins' 1785 translation of the Gita, which he initially called in the now infamous aforementioned letter to Elizabeth Hoaror, dated July 17 1845, one of the most renowned books of Buddhism. Wilkins's work is a pretty decent translation, all things considered, and it had quite a long life, being the text used by Theosophists until the Annie Besant translation in the nineteen forties. Wilken's work was commissioned by Warren Hastings in an effort by the colonial power to acknowledge native culture as necessary to maintain good business. If we take the Gita as the "the Song of God" (which need not obfuscate its being a small portion in the eighteenth chapter of the Great Epic), and if we take the title at its word, it is neither surprising nor the least bit scandalous that this text fit right in with the developing ideal of a perennial philosophy. If Krishna is the strength of the strong, the taste of water, the fragrance of the earth, and the one behind the many, and if he descends in appropriate forms in age after age to restore the dharma, his incarnation into Concord, New England might look quite different than on the battlefield of Kuru. One might even suggest that the transformation of the work out of the Epic narrative it has been embedded in is part of its incarnation prowess. Somewhat like the apple, tulip, potato, and cannabis, the Gita may have embedded itself into the Epic like a seed in the earth in winter. And when the time is ripe, it takes a

manageable and portably readable form that allows it to become a standard bearer of "Eastern wisdom."

American transcendentalism emerged in mid-1830s New England as an eclectic collaboration of romantic, idealistic, mystical, and individualistic beliefs and their adherents. Emerson's call for an "original relation to the universe" is more a cry for the continuation of a legacy than a manifesto for myopic separation; in the following passage from the first paragraph of *Nature*, the emphasis falls on the "also": "Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? . . . The Sun shines today also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, and new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship."

Walt Whitman considers man and God the major theme of his verse. The American poet chants the "great pride of man in him" which is a motif of nearly all of his verses. Whitman addresses God as the original source of love in his "Passage to India": "Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving,/ The mortal ... affection's source..." (1990, 321). Emerson also refers to God as his Beloved, when he dies and leaves the world he joins with his Beloved. This Beloved gives him another life. This is his beloved that is immortalized (In Star and Shiva 1992, 19 and 82):

You call me an Infidel. You call me old,
young, a newborn. When I leave this world, don't
call me Dead.

Say rather, he was dead, then suddenly he
came to life and ran off with the Beloved....

So you want Union?

Union is not something found on the
ground or purchased at the marketplace. Union
comes only at the cost of life.

Otherwise, everyone and his brother
would have this union.

Since, for the mystic, God is incarnated in
humanity, the mystic poets' spiritual love for
humankind can be elevated to symbolize it in love
for the Divine Beloved. Whitman and Emerson
also believe in such a divine nature in human
beings. Whitman, like the Persian Sufi poets, sees
God in the "faces of men and women". The
American poet sees something of God each



moment everywhere. Therefore, he is not curious about Him. He clearly chants his vision of God:
And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,

(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death.)

Since these poets believe in the divine nature of the human and the presence of the Divine not only in humankind but also in all creatures and nature, they see and hear His signs everywhere. Whitman, like a Persian poet, reaches to Shohud, one of the Sufi stages, where he can see the Absolute. He knows that the Divine essential nature is not fully comprehensible to humankind; however, it brings his soul to such a level that it can experience its divine nature by being in love with Him. Each poet presents the “self” moving back and forth, between the conscious and the unconscious, between the real and the ideal, life and death in spiritual rebirth, between itself and its immortal source; the Over-soul or the Higher Self. Therefore, the “self” celebrated in the poems of Emerson and Whitman is a representative universal one. This imaginative, creative, and universal “self” provides the key to most of the fundamental affinities. To compare the mystic idea and images of both poets in this matter one can consider how Whitman's “Song of Myself” begins with an “I” and “thou” duality: “I celebrate myself, and sing myself, / And what I assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you”.

Whitman looks for “Me myself”. In his “Song of Myself” there are many people and things around him, even his “dinner, dress...” that “comes of him” days and nights, “but they are not,” as the poet says, “the Me myself”. Whitman's “Me myself” is the Over-soul, the Higher self and the Divine. Emerson speaks of the same concept as he boldly addresses his Beloved: “Thou didst continue this ‘I’ and ‘we’ in order to play the game of worship with Thyself, / That all ‘I's’ and ‘thou's’ might become one soul and at last be submerged in the Beloved. The spiritual and mystic seeing in both poets' vision includes identifying with things, becoming the thing; which is different from ordinary seeing. Such a mystic seeing is the same as a transcendental one. For Whitman it is nothing more than the all-seeing dynamic transcendent self. He is like William Wordsworth, the nature-mystic poet, who in his contemplation of creation feels his oneness with its Creator. Wordsworth's poetry is full of the mystic sense of the Presence of the Divine. In the Prelude he writes of it: “It was only then/ Contented when with bliss ineffable/ I felt the

sentiment of Being spread/ O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still;/ O'er all that lost beyond the reach of thought/ And human knowledge, to human eye/ Invisible, yet liveth to the heart....” Both poets see beyond the external facts of every natural image, for they use a kind of symbolic language. They see a spirit, or an “archetype”, or an “Eidolon”, “Beloved”, primordial image, “the seed perfection”-which are all merely different terms for the same Universal, Unifying and higher Creative force.

Emerson did to some degree step out of the ethnocentric perspectives of his era and used the Gita to validate and spark his imagination. The Gita became one way out from under the thumb of the father, the church, the Boston Brahmins, but the last thing Emerson needed was a new father, a new church, and new Brahmins, hence his refusal to join the utopian Brooke Farm community.

IV. AIM OF THE WORK

The Gita contributed toward Emerson's meta-historical ideal, as did Plato, Shakespeare, Goethe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, Mme De Staël, and his contemporaries Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Whitman, Alcott, and others. Ultimately, Emerson's taking what suits him from the Gita is not much different than Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, or the Maharishi for that matter, showcasing the Gita to suit their theological agendas. The Bloomian argument that only the strong readings survive is suspect, simply because what is considered strong in one community might not be in another or in another period. Along with the “age of Arjuna,” the key figure in this drama is Krishna of course. And how ironic that Krishna is an embarrassment to contemporary sensibility which is him the Bhaktivedanta fundamentalist reading of “The Bhagavad-Gita as it is” remains highly marginalized. Krishna was an embarrassment to Emerson and his ilk, who preferred the vagaries of an open aired divinity to another personal God who would crack the whip. Any yet, Krishna remains as the puzzling narrator of the Gita, as well as its protagonist. Whether envisioned as an incarnation of Vishnu or valorised as the seed of love in everyone's heart (theosophy) or placed on a pantheon along with Christ, Buddha, and Sri Yukteswar (Self Realization Fellowship), it is not easy to write out the main character of the play.

V. CONCLUSION

In the present study –A comparative study on the impressions of Indian philosophy as per culture of R. W. Emerson and H. D. Thoreau



pioneers of American literature: A Judgemental study, the subject of the research has been introduced (Chapter-1); The Constructive influenced on Emerson and Thoreau which had their impact on their mind and art have been mentioned (Chapter-2.). Transcendentalism as a philosophy in America and its impact on American literature as a whole and Emerson and Thoreau in particular has been estimated, transcendentalism that is Indian philosophy. (Chapter-3); A Judgemental re-examination of the essays of Emerson which are full of Indian philosophy has been made. (Chapter-4); Judgemental estimation of the poems of Emerson has been attempted. (Chapter-5); Judgemental estimation of the writings of Thoreau has been done to prove that Thoreau was a part of nature. (Chapter-6). The thesis as a whole underscores the impressions of Indian philosophy as per culture of R. W. Emerson and H. D. Thoreau (oriental thought). With this scheme the study in totality appears as a unique contribution to American literature by Indian scholars. It has been acknowledged all over the world that John De Crevecoeur (1700-1813) was the father of American literature. His book Letters from an American farmer (1782) in which he recorded his experience about the new found land called America, its person, places and things, its various professions, constructions and fights with the native Red Indians, is the first classic document of American literature. In letters from an American farmer, Crevecoeur writes twelve essays on different topic of early American life. He is the first man who was escatic concerning America as an asylum for the oppressed and a melting part of races." As a farmer, he described the American frontiers as it actually was with its difficulties of agriculture and the warfare between different parts of animal nature. His half of the letters, are concerned with the education, employment, manners and customs of early Americans. The third letter answers the question "What is an American?" Crevecoeur answer is "an American is a man who acts on new principles, and must therefore, entertain new ideas". It is noticeable that the entire American literature that comes after Crevecoeur's book is about the men and women of America who act on new principles and who entertain new ideas. It is no denying the fact that Crevecoeur's book is the plinth on which the future structure of the entire American literature is raised by different men of letters of American life and society. After American Revolution (1776) when the United States had started humming with social, political and economic activities, people felt the need of producing genuine American literature.

Thoughts were simmering, simmering, simmering and they came to a boil in half a decade of 1850-55, a period called American Renaissance. During this decade five great writers of America: R. W. Emerson (1803-82), H. D. Thoreau (1817-62), Walt Whitman (1819-92), Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64) and Herman Melville (1819-91) wrote seven great "classics" in which was shining the spirits of Crevecoeur's observations. All the five writers of America acted on new principles and entertained new ideas in his writings. The pilgrim forefathers of America were Puritans-Calvinists who had brought their religion from different parts of the world. But there was nothing new in their religion based upon the Bible. It was natural for them to discover new ideas and new philosophy to be followed as a torch light for their literature. This new philosophy full of ideas of the infinitude of the soul, a God without a sectarian label, independence of the individual, the beauty of the earth, life and after life was available to them only in Oriental literature. Emerson was the Dean of American letters; and Thoreau was a lover of American Nature. Both of them believed in the "infinitude of the private man," the independence of the soul of man. Therefore, both of them bade good bye to their native religions and opted for a life of independent body, mind and soul. Emerson was the head of the Unitarian Church and he bade good bye to this Church in favour of making new experiments with the self. One new experiment that Emerson and Thoreau made was Tuesday meetings of intellectuals at Emerson's residence which was called the Brook Farm. Spiller says that "People turned to him [Emerson] for guidance, but he resisted the role of a Messiah."³ Emerson refused to join clubs, sects, discouraged any stereo typed system. Older idealist like Alcott, Thoreau were drawn to him who joined the co-operative community called the Brook Farm where they used to discuss in their meetings called Tuesday meetings new subjects like transcendentalism and the Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanishads and other Oriental religion. All these meetings fascinated them and they became new thinkers or American individualists. Anything that was new was welcomed in the Brook Farm. Although the articles on different topics of Hindu philosophy and Mohammadan thought were being published in America in English translations, and Emerson and Thoreau read them in great interest yet their joy knew no bounds when Thoreau received a collection of forty-four books in English, French, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit from one of his friends. These books contained a lot of material on Oriental Philosophy. Very soon the study material on Indian



philosophy was available in the libraries, museums, art galleries and offices of the Oriental societies which was consulted by Americans with great interest and the appreciation of Asia developed over a hundred years. Emerson wrote poetry inculcating in it the philosophy of the Gita and the Upanishads. For purpose of illustration, his poem Brahma explains at some length the knowledge of the Upanishad and the Gita acquired by Emerson. Thoreau wrote an English version of "The Transmigration of Seven Brahmins" translating it from a French version. Although in America, a large number of people believed in Calvinism yet there was a great number of people who were keen to study Oriental philosophy in America which was individualistic. It is from the Oriental philosophy that The American spirit of individualism descended down. The Oriental philosophy keenly studied by Emerson and Thoreau got assimilated into their mind and art and it was seen in their writings that the fragrance that comes in all Orientals including Mohammadan, the Persian, saints, and the Sufi's who had invented altogether a new religion. Emerson said "In all my lectures I have taught one doctrine namely, the infinitude of a private man."⁴ In old religion of the Occident, he had read that 'man' is a sinner but in the new idea of the Orient, Emerson gave a delightful conviction that every human being is infinite. The infinitude of the private man became Emerson's message which he carried out the entire world over. Thoreau learned about the immensity of human soul from Emerson: Whitman wrote "Leaves of Grass" as a Bible of democracy containing in it the message of infinitude of a private man and equality of all human beings; and Thoreau said: "He is democracy." In our study of essays of Emerson (First Series and Second Series) conducted in Chapter IV, we have seen that Emerson was out and out an Oriental philosopher. He was born in America but he called himself a Brahmin. The Indian philosophy had a great impact on the mind of Emerson and it emanates its fragrance in his essays. He had read the Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita and the Sufis of the Mohammaddan philosophy and had found in them all, the feeling of one reality of the Vedas. The Indian scholar Mazoomdar writes that "The character of Emerson shines upon India serene as the evening star. He seems to some of us to have been a geographical mistake. Ought to have born in India [sic]." ⁵ If Mazoomdar says so, he has solid reasons to support his view. For example, in Brahma, Emerson begins the poem with the following verse:

If the red slayer thinks he says, Or if the slain think he is slain, they know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

This verse is a hundred percent translation of a shaloka of Kathopanishad.⁷ It is also the same shaloka which is a part of the Bhagavad Gita.⁸ The rest of the poem is the Indian hymn which "the Brahmin sings."⁹ Brahma is the God of creation in Hindu philosophy. After creation of life he hands over the creation to Vishnu to operate, and then to Mahesha, to destroy the dilapidated creation of Brahma. The Hindu Trinity of Brahma (as Generator), Vishnu (as Operator) and Shiva (as Destroyer) signifies the Absolute GOD. The entire poem of sixteen lines Brahma runs within these meanings. A perusal of the poem Brahma by anybody who has not read the name of the poet will give this impression that it is some Indian saint who has poured forth his soul abroad in this poem. Likewise, Emerson's poem "Hematreya" is also related to the Oriental thought. The title of the poem "Hematreya" is a variation of the word 'Maitreya' about whom Emerson had read in Vishnu Purana book IV. The poem is a song of the earth in which several people claim their earthly belongings as their own: "This earth is mine, - it is my son's, - it belongs to my dynasty. This is mine, my children's and my name's," but ironically the earth laughs at such ignorance of human beings. Similarly, in almost all the poems of Emerson, the Oriental ideas reoccur.

Emerson's poetry apart, even in the essays of Emerson, we see dominance of the Oriental thought. The fact of the matter is that due to his temperamental necessity and love for novelty in Indian philosophy through which Emerson was acquainted with the word 'meditation' and its practical ramifications, Emerson got deep into Hindu scriptures such as the Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanishads, the Vedas and a very deep study of these scriptures awakened his creative 'energy' called Kundalini, and as a result thereof he realized the 'Oneness' of his soul and Over-Soul. Under the intoxication of the realization of 'Oneness', the wisdom of Hindus descended down in his essays like "Self Reliance", "The Over-Soul", "Spiritual Laws", "Nature" and "The Transcendentalist" etc. It is on the account of this truth about Emerson that all men of letters and scholars call him an Orientalist. He has rightly been called the American Brahmin along with Thoreau.¹⁰ The doctrine of faith is one of the points which has a great impact on Emerson's relationships to the Oriental thought. In his Journal and Essay Emerson says: "The question of faith is a perennial one. If the father has eaten sour grapes, shall the children's



teeth be set on edge? The Hindu theory is centered in transmigration. Fate is nothing but the deeds committed in a prior state of existence. Here we have a difference even in the Oriental thought between the Mohammaddans and the Hindus. The Quran says: "To all men is their day of death appointed, and they cannot postpone or advance it one hour." But the Hindu scriptures assert that all that man suffers or enjoys is the harvest of his own actions performed in his previous births, Emerson saw this Hindu law as the basis of the human existence. Out there in nature we see its fatal strength. Indian philosophy believes in 'Oneness' of the earth's 'whole creation'. What Coleridge called "one life", the American transcendentalists believed in the 'whole' world as one unit? This philosophy of 'oneness' is the philosophy of the Vedas. This scholar has referred to three shalokas of Athurveda(13.4.16-13.4.18) in this thesis indicating 'oneness', which he finds in the essays and poems of Emerson. Egbert S Oliver is right when he says that "Emerson was one of the great men of the West in the nineteenth century who was big enough to try to understand the 'whole world', to see into its oneness."¹¹ Undoubtedly, Emerson was the first 'genius' of America who came at a momentous time in the world history, when the East and the West were awakening to realize that each needed the other as part of universal oneness.

When the old Oriental notions were opening their doors to commerce and intercommunication of intellect and spirit, Emerson was the Dean of American Letters who had a plunge into the literature of Asia and delightfully made it a part of American literature. His Phi Beta address called the 'American Scholar' which is the emanation of the Oriental thought contains guidelines for American scholars and writers to write a genuinely American literature. In the Bhagavad Gita, when Arjun implores to Lord Krishna to acquaint him with His manifestations in Chapter X, Lord Krishna says: "I am the soul, O Gudakesha, seated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all beings (*italics mine*)."¹² Emerson was fascinated by this unique idea of Hindu philosophy of the soul being the Over-soul. He amplified this philosophy into his essay "The Over-Soul", as the soul of God dwells in the soul of every man. When a man is looking within himself, he finds the light of God, the universal soul or the Over-soul. The same idea occurs in Emerson's essay "Self Reliance". Emerson held with conviction that each individual is immensely great. Therefore, man should trust himself. "Self Reliance" is undoubtedly God-reliance, the reliance of man upon the divine truth

within himself. Emerson said: "The old artist said: I paint eternity. This eternity for which I paint is not past or future but is the height of every living hour." Emerson's personality entered into his teaching. He had an air of profit who lectured all over America, attracting the educated and the unlearned, inspiring them and enriching their lives. It is no denying the fact that it was the impact of the perennial philosophy of the Hindus which Emerson assimilated and whatever he said or wrote in his essays and poems was sheer aroma of Oriental philosophy. Even Emerson's essay "The Transcendentalist" is a transmutation of the Oriental philosophy. The Hindu philosophy believes that each and every object of Nature is the manifestation of God; that God dwells in each and every moving or unmoving object of Nature; that the human beings commit the greatest blunder of being attached to every object of Nature. The fact is that they should realize the existence of the living God in Nature without being attached to her objects. This idea is manifested in Yjurveda shaloka 2:23. Similar idea can be traced in Emerson's love for Nature. He considers Nature as an all pervading power in Nature pantheism which is much like that of Wordsworth. In his book on Nature, he writes: "Why should we not also enjoy an original relation to the universe□ a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation. Perhaps this is the crux of Emerson's and view of Nature."¹³ We have sufficiently discussed Emerson's love for Nature in his essays and poems. It is no use repeating the same idea here for want of space. Along with Emerson's love for Nature, we have another Oriental idea of self-realization. The central idea of Hindu philosophy is self-realization. That each individual should meditate to establish relations with the inner reality or the light of God. 'Meditation' is a means to the self-realization of 'oneness' with God. Emerson calls this "Know thyself."¹⁴ The Emersonian formula of study Nature and know thyself is the Hindu art of living suggested in the scriptures. We see this idea in his essay "Nature". In Eastern religions, particularly in Hinduism, Emerson found an extreme spiritualism and for years he indulged in insatiable curiosity about the Orient. He spiritualized Nature and this was his primary impulse. His early acceptance of Oriental philosophical idealism created in him the spirit of self reliance. The Oriental spiritualism enabled him to understand the God in man formula. It also led him towards mysticism and occulticism that could scarcely be communicated. Pal K Conkin asserts that: "In spite of brief flirtation with pure meditation, all his tantalizing excursion of this



Oriental thought, Emerson always came back to the battlefield. Here intellect found its justification."15 Conkin believes that though Emerson was deeply involved in Oriental thought, he always returned to active life he was obliged to live. He was an intellectual and his intellect found its justification.

No other American writer than H.D. Thoreau is a tie between the Orient and the Occident. Thoreau lived his life in and around Concord, Massachusetts but he remained a free thinker having no geographical limits of reading. He was temperamentally so Oriental that Gandhiji acknowledged his indebtedness to Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and other writings. It is through Gandhi, the great saint of modern India that Thoreau's writings taught him the secret of "passive resistance."16 Egbert S Oliver asserts that "Thoreau frequently spoke of the way he drew strength from the wisdom and spirituality insight of Asiatic writers."17 The real excitement of the nineteenth century America was the discovery of Indian thought by Americans. This discovery was seen among the transcendentalists like Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott, especially in the talk and writings of Thoreau. An Englishman, Thomas Cholmandeley, who had previously visited in Concord, wrote to Thoreau, October 03, 1855, "I have been busily collecting a nest of Indian books for you □" The books arrived in Concord on November 30, forty-four volumes in all, some are in English, French, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit, many of them in beautiful leather binding. Thoreau made a special bookcase for them, fashioned out of drift wood that he had brought home in his voyages along the Musketaquid, "thus giving Oriental wisdom an Occidental shrine." Among the manuscripts which he left at the death was a translation, "The Transmigration of the Seven Brahmins," from the Harivansa though Thoreau translated it from a French version and not from the Indian.

One of the alluring excitements of nineteenth century America was the discovery of Indian thought. The interest of this discovery was created by American merchantmen who had discovered Chinese merchandise. This new discovery of Asia became a subject of discussion for the transcendentalists - Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott, Margret Fuller and other kindred spirits especially Thoreau. Thoreau was something of a poet who wrote little poetry. He was a surveyor who surveyed his own inner areas more than he surveyed the land of Massachusetts. A writer, who was passionately interested in saying to people whatever he wanted to say, but he cared little for the amenities of publication and public

communication. Thoreau had a poetic mind but he was not a first rate poet. In his poetic experiments it is the thought that dominates and not the style. He was a man of many moods and several ideas. As one of the biographers calls him "a bachelor of Nature". He was a man of variegated moods, sometimes an amateur botanist and a geologist, sometimes a collector of specimens, and several times a man of dreams and wit. His wit differentiates him from the other transcendentalists. Thoreau takes his start from the solid earth of 'economy', enjoys his flight for a pretty long time in the space and the sky, and ultimately ends his journey in paradise where he enjoys the beatitude of the mind and ultimately comes back to the earth like a Promethean spirit to share his heavenly boons with ordinary people of the earth. This experience of his is analogous to the body and soul experience of Whitman. Robert E Spiller asserts that "Thoreau is setting his house - his soul - in order with ironic and deliberate self-deception. He knows Brahma and Buddha as well as the Christian God; he talks of reading and mentions few books by name. Gradually there are more specific comments about the details of Nature, and the walks become more important."18 Thoreau had read Charles Wilkins translation of the Bhagavad-Gita in Emerson's private library at his residence before he went to Walden Pond in July 1845.19 Therefore in his essay "A Week on the Concord and "Walden" Thoreau cites the Bhagavad Gita frequently in support of his ideas. At Walden he led a Spartan life like a that of a Yogi: he himself acknowledges his yogihood in a letter written to his friend Blake: "To some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a Yogi."20 In his essay title 'Spring' Thoreau asserts his heart-felt feelings and his love for the Bhagavad Gita. He says: "In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial. I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma, Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in the temple of Ganges reading the Vedas, all dwells at the root of the tree with his crust and water jug. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges."21 Thoreau was a New Englander, Yankee, a local man of America, yet he was at home in the entire world using his ideas, the insight, the gifted spirit of the far off Orient with the same natural ease with which he paddled his boat on Concord river. His book "A Week on the Merrimack and Concord River" he quoted from 128 different writers of the world through the centuries. In his Journal for May, 1841 he recorded



his delight with the Laws of Menu: When my imagination travels eastward and backward to those remote years of the Gods, I seem to draw near to the habitation of the morning, and the dawn at length has a place. I remember the book as an hour before sunrise.

The Very locusts and crickets of a summer day are but later or older glosses on the dharma Shastra of Hindus, a continuation of a secret code.

The Laws of Menu are a manual of private devotion so private and domestic and yet so public and Universal, a world as is not spoken in the parlour or pulpit in these days. He was so impressed by the Laws of Menu that he fell in love with the "Hindu sacred literature" and thought that this ancient philosophy and Oriental religion was applicable in Concord. On receiving the Oriental books on November 30, 1855 he read them all and got persistently interested in Oriental literature, especially the Indian literature. In the chapter "Sounds" in Walden Thoreau draws a beautiful picture of Nature, taking rest sitting in the sunny doorway of his cabin from sunrise until noon. He writes: "I realize what the Oriental means by contemplation and forecasting of works."²³ Like the transcendentalists and Wordsworth and many others who underscored the dire need for "solitary communication with the infinite", Thoreau meditated in line with the Indian practice and said: "What extracts from the Vedas and I have read, fall on me like light of a higher and a purer luminary, which describes a loftier course through a purer stratum. To achieve this purer stratum "became Thoreau's goal." In one of his letters he wrote: "Depend upon it that, rude and careless as I am, I would fane practice the yoga faithfully to some extent, and at rare intervals, even I am a Yogi.

John Weiss, Unitarian Minister from Massachusetts and prominent reformer emphasized that in Thoreau he has noticed a great contemplative quality. Thoreau's feelings of sympathy for the Oriental contemplation (meditation) were strongly underlined by him as unique but he did not strictly follow it. He believed that in devotion, one's conduct is more important than meditation. So far his conduct is concerned, he was justified calling himself a Yogi. He did not appreciate the Buddhist way of concentration. He was a rational and practical spiritualist who went deep into the mystical holiness. He went to live a life of contemplative leisure at Walden Pond, and widely he appreciated the Oriental ideal of contemplation yet he went away from Walden Pond after twenty-six months of life of a recluse. His figurative language is beautiful with which he

explains why he left Walden. Egbert S Oliver asserts that "he positively did not wish to be a Yogi, a priest of Buddha contemplative saint. He wished rather "to go before the mast and on the deck of the world". This all mean that though Thoreau was highly impressed by oriental thought, the vedantic philosophy, the Bhagwat Gita, the Upanishad. He had his own way of living, thinking independently and even interpreting the Indian thoughts and philosophy the way he liked. Branded a cynic of his own kind. Thoreau was highly impressed by the Indian thought. The oriental become a part of his life, thought and impression. The oriental had enriched and complemented his natural tendencies. It helped him to see how the foundations of the world were laid. He found the dawn of Asia rosy and fresh, the literature of oriental as emanating the aroma of the ancient thought, capable of developing the body, mind and soul of an individual of the universe. We have seen that both Emerson and Thoreau were the pioneers of American literature. Emerson was the Dean of the American letters and Thoreau was a wordsworthian lover of nature. With the contribution to American literature, both these writers, the classic American literature gets start. Both of them were the original thinkers in America who did not care for any dogmatic philosophy and temperamentally they were interested in digging out new materials from the inner soul. Incidentally in Indian philosophy, they found all that they had wanted to express on basis of their rendezvous with the soul. It suited them most and their reading of the books of Indian philosophy and religion ratified the voice of their soul. Hence it is well observed from the comparative study of the culture of Emerson and Thoreau and Indian philosophy that Indian philosophy had great impressions on the culture of Emerson and Thoreau. Both were considered as American Brahmins. Emerson's poems Brahma and Khametreyra and his essays Nature, Self reliance, Over soul, Spiritual law, Trancendentalist whole are based on Indian hindu philosophy. Thoreau's poem Transmigration of seven Brahmas and his writing Walden, a week on the Concord, all are based on Indian hindu Vedanta philosophy.

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