

# Vedic influence on western philosophy



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In a time of intellectual curiosity, 19th century philosophy incorporated many Vivid-based ideas, which have since been returned to, and analyzed by, members of the 20th and 21 the century Hindu community. The ascetic teachings expressed in the Pinheads provide the belief that the negation of all internal desires is the only way to achieve self-liberation. Arthur Schopenhauer, renowned Western philosopher, expressed this belief within his most famous work, *The World as Will and Representation* (Wicks, 2007). Schopenhauer referred to the Pinheads as being, “.

.. The most satisfying and elevating reading (with the exception of the original text) which is possible in the world; It has been the solace of my life and will be the solace of my death” (Payne, 1990). He believed that the world is a representation of man's quest to live. Schopenhauer did not believe in a new life following death; instead, he viewed death as a representation that fuels man's will to live.

Will manifests itself, not only as desires, but also as fear, terror, and awe.

Schopenhauer views contrasted with the modern Kantian ideas at the time. Though Schopenhauer was a supporter of Kantian idealism, Kant believed that the human mind could not expand its knowledge about the thing-in-itself; whereas Schopenhauer expressed that will is man's access to this knowledge, stating that will is man's most important form of existence. The will he defines can also be described as a desire, or striving, for a personal gain.

His philosophy is that where, “ the will [to live] has vanished,” the physical world, “ is-nothing,” (Wicks, 2007).

Schopenhauer also believed that these desires were the source of all of the strife in the world, proposing that man’s quest to achieve its wants is a perpetual thirst that it can never quench. Though he held these beliefs, Schopenhauer did not believe that man should try to rid itself of all of its internal desires, for that would lead to a dreary lifestyle. Instead, he believed that man should attempt to view its temptations as a “ detached observer,” for then it will recognize that the majority of these desires will remain unachieved.

By drawing upon the ascetic teachings of the Pinheads, Arthur Schopenhauer expanded upon Emmanuel Kant’s ideas behind the thing-in-itself and issued new thoughts, which express the world as a representation of the will of man. Dr. Ran Bar, professor of philosophy at the University of Delhi, states, “ For Schopenhauer, consciousness and individuality cannot be immortal; but on the other hand the forces within cannot change to nothing after death” (Bar, 2009). The will of man, in Schopenhauer’s view, continues past death, even though the physical presence is no longer there.

Bar relates this to the philosophy of Tantra. He describes the physiology of death as being broken down into various layers of others to remain separate and thrive past death. The shadow of the body is the piece of the mind that lives neglect of the body. The inner wind directs these thoughts, forever linked with the imagination, and guides it to wherever the thoughts bring attention to, such as a body is forever linked with its shadow. He also adds

that if two terms are once linked, no matter if it is true or false their connection may be, there will forever be someone to supply it with content.

When the mind develops a relationship between two objects, that relationship is forever bound and never leaves the innermost parts of the mind, so, as Schopenhauer states, as long as something is fueled by an idea, it will always be represented.

This interpretation of Schopenhauer teachings adds a more significant connection between his work and Indian culture, stemming far past the initial ascetic influence of the Upanishad texts. In 1844, Max Müller studied under Frederica Schilling. Schilling had Müller begin to translate the Upanishads into German.

At this time, the Indo-European language group became especially interested in translating texts from ancient cultures into Greece-Roman languages to try to tie together the different societies. During his Sanskrit studies, Müller became fascinated in Indian culture. In studying the Upanishads, he found that it explained the process by which religion arose.

Müller expressed the idea that religion directly relates to lexicography. He found that when man started to develop words and ideas about intangible ideas, it encountered its first experience with the infinite.

By reading the Upanishads, Müller was able to make direct connections between both the development and emergence of language. The ideas of Max Müller were perceived negatively by Hindu culture. Dr. Amid Kumar Sahasrabudhe, in his book *Ontology in India*, expresses his belief about the

difference between Orientation within the British empire and the true Ontology: “ the Nesters’ labor of love for Indian wisdom” (Sahara, 2006).

Sahara says that the arthritis had to educate themselves within the ways of Indian culture, and that these ideas from scholars such as Mjleer did not arise from true personal interest.

He holds that as relations between the East and West became more substantial, many delved into Indict culture purely based upon political reasoning rather than true curiosity about the culture itself. The British feared a rising power within the Eastern states and used their culture as a battleground to ruin them internally. Many facts about Mjleer exist to back up the claims of Sahara. A letter sent by Mjleer to the Duke of Argyle reads, “ India has been conquered once, but India must be conquered again, and that second conquest should be a conquest by education.

Much has been done for education of late, but if the funds were tripled and quadrupled, that would hardly be enough.

.. A new national literature may spring up, impregnated with Nesters ideas, yet retaining its native spirit and character..

. A new national literature Nail bring with it a new national life, and new moral vigor. As to religion, that will take care of itself. The missionaries have done far more than they themselves seem o be aware of” (Mjleer, 1868)

Within this letter, Mjleer points toward his true motives behind the translation of the Pinheads.

He tells about his infusion of Western ideas within the translated texts and his belief that it is pertinent for these ideas to translate into Hindu culture, for it must be cleansed and re-established with new standards for everyday society. These ideas can be attributed to utilitarianism, potential influence of Hindu culture in order to protect Western traditions. Although he held a fondness for his discovery about the connection between the emergence of engage and religion, Mjleer clearly did not respect the true meaning behind the Pinheads and instead tried to exploit the texts for British political power.

In 1836, the ideas of Transcendentalism truly began to become more profound with the publication of *Nature* by Ralph Wald Emerson (Ralph Wald Emerson, 2004).

Transcendentalism teaches that humanity and nature comprise divinity. It states that in order to understand the nature of reality one must first analyze the nature of experience. In 1845, Emerson Journals show that he was reading the *Baghdad Gait*. This contributed to a lot of his writing on non-dualism.

In one of his essays *The Over- Soul*, Emerson alludes to a Brahmas-like figure, which he refers to as “ the eternal ONE” (Emerson, 1841). He describes both tangible and intangible objects and states that they all make up one collected soul.

Emerson also held a belief in the immortal soul and reincarnation, an idea that relates to Hindu samara. In 1837, he met Henry David Thoreau.

Emerson found himself greatly interested in Thoreau, who worked as

philosopher of nature, studying its effect on human condition, and Emerson provided heavy influence over Thoreau.

He led him toward a practice of Transcendentalism.

Nothing his studies, Thoreau regarded the Pinheads as being his chief resource for new knowledge saying, “ What extracts from the Veda I have read fall on me like alight of a higher and purer luminary” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009). Paramagnet Swami highly praised the beliefs of Emerson. He recognized that many people made use of the Vivid texts; however, Emerson used them in such a way that showed his devotedness to their teachings.

He embraced them and often made references to them within his works.

Paramagnet wanted to dismiss the notion that Emerson borrowed Hindu ideas for his teachings, for he “ believe[d] that there cannot be any rowing in the higher realms of knowledge” (Swami, 1918). He analyzed an encounter between a man and Emerson wherein the man told Emerson that he studied all of the world’s philosophies and religions and only found truth within Christianity. Emerson responded telling the man that he studied the different frames of thought in a narrow-minded manner.

Paramagnet uses this encounter to show his true admiration for Emerson: “ Unless we have openness of mind and a certain depth of spiritual consciousness, we may come in contact with many lofty Ideas, but they will make no definite impression on us.

We may try to borrow them, but we cannot retain them or use them intelligently until we have made them our own. ” (Swami, 1918). Emerson's ability to formulate his own educated ideas about the religious texts made Swami accept his teachings, calling them well-justified and sympathetic to the ideas of Pedant.

Walt Whitman, a 19th century poet, also involved himself in these practices. The *Kathy Vanished* heavily influenced him. He wrote about an idea of unity: “ My poems when complete should be a unity in the same sense that the earth is? or that the human body, (senses, soul, trunk, feet, blood, viscera, marrow, eyes, hair) or that a perfect musical composition is Transcendentalist thought expanded because of the ideas on nature's connection with humanity found in the *Pinheads*” (Nautical, 1996).

He expresses the Punishable idea that the pieces of body have no meaning without the body as a part of Myself: “ I know I am deathless/We have thus far exhausted/Trillions of winters and sunsets are trillions ahead, and/Trillions ahead of them” (Nautical, 1996). He believed that with the entrance into a new life, man has intuitive knowledge from lives past. As shown in the *Kathy Vanished*, Walt Whitman makes the distinction between two worlds, referring to them as the “ material” and “ spiritual” worlds, as opposed to how the original text presents it as “ here” and “ there. The newly translated *Pinheads* provided Transcendentalist thought with new motives and ideas. Although previously criticized for his lack of understanding about Pedant, A. N.



Divied points out multiple ideas that prove Whitman knowledge. To display a situation that demonstrates a situation that brought disapproval from critics, Diva brings up a case in which he utilizes the mythology to bring “exoticism” to his text. At the conclusion of his poem, *Are You the New Person Drawn Towards Me?*, he writes, ‘Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all Maya, illusion? Diva states that the use of “Maya” is merely used for a theatrical effect, for the Sanskrit word holds the same meaning as illusion. This is where a lot of his criticism came from. Situations such as this were interpreted as being uneducated within the true meaning of the texts; however, he was merely utilizing them to exemplify his teachings. Diva highlights Whitman education with a particularly lyrical passage in which Whitman writes of “a consciousness, a thought that rises, independent, lifted out from all else, calm, like the stars, shining eternal.

He describes this mystical experience for several more lines before concluding: ‘Under the luminousness of real vision, it alone takes possession, takes value. Like the shadowy dwarf in the fable, once liberated and looked upon, it expands over the “hole earth, and spreads to the roof of heaven” (Diva, 1978). From these lines, the true knowledge of Whitman emerges. The “shadowy dwarf” that he describes, as Diva states, represents Banana, an avatar of Vishnu. The best known avatars being Ram and Krishna, and from this, it is apparent that Whitman has a much higher knowledge of Hindu tradition than most critics give him credit for.

Banana is one of the least represented avatars within Hindu mythology. In this situation Whitman employs a figure from Pedant and utilizes it to illustrate his own thought without giving much emphasis for its Indian origin;

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however, by demonstrating his ability to relate his personal ideas to Hindu culture, he proves his knowledge within the area. Although previously contested by critics within the field about the validity of his knowledge, Divide's evaluation of Whitman works verifies his soundness within the field.

Western scholars of the 19th century utilized Eastern traditions to form new Ideas, and as these new frames of thought permeated back into Hindu culture, they Nerve analyzed and critiqued by scholars within the society.

A stronger connection between the East and West emerged, creating higher access to information about foreign traditions. The 18th century philosophies left behind valuable information and fresh ideas to expand upon, allowing Romanticism to prosper and bring new light to the metaphysical world. Aura, Irate. Schopenhauer and Indian Philosophy: A Dialogue.