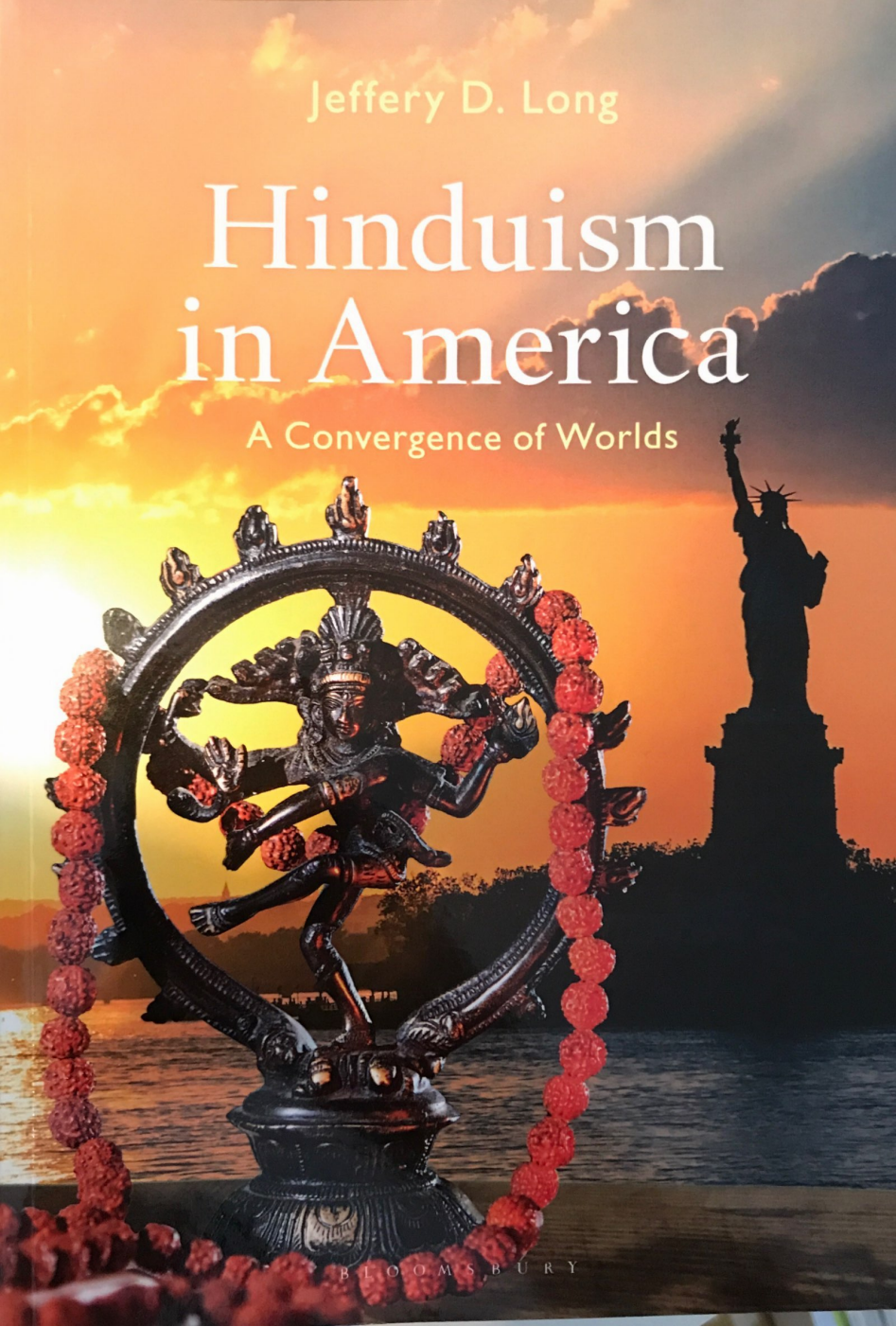
Jeffery D. Long

Hinduism in America

A Convergence of Worlds



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The Rise of a Counterculture: A New Wave of Western Fascination

Chapter 4 Summary and Outline

This chapter will explore the next wave of American interest in Hinduism: that which was centered in the 1960s. The rise of the counterculture of the 1960s, in tandem with the lifting of the Asian Exclusion Act in 1965, created conditions for the arrival of a new wave of Hindu teachers with a ready audience of ardent spiritual seekers: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Swami Satchidananda, Swami Muktananda, Sri Chinmoy, and more. Intellectuals, such as those drawn to the Esalen Institute, and figures from Western popular culture, such as the Beatles, helped to disseminate Hindu thought, as they understood it, to the wider culture, helping to prepare the way for a renewal of Hindu immigration into the United States. A number of themes of the 1960s counterculture drew upon or correlate with various dimensions of Hinduism.

The Rise of a Counterculture

The two world wars, followed by the withdrawal of the European powers from their various colonies—including, prominently, the British withdrawal from India on August 15, 1947—marked a period of crisis in the Western world. Gone was the nineteenth-century confidence in the inevitable progress of civilization. The colonial faith in Western cultural superiority had been severely battered by the Holocaust and the realization that even members of an "advanced" society could perpetrate the most barbaric crimes imaginable upon their fellow human beings. The atomic bombing of the civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—as well as the no less devastating conventional bombings of Dresden and Tokyo—revealed that even the Allied Powers—or the "good guys," to use a popular American phrase—even while seeing themselves as fighting for the values of democracy against totalitarian oppression, were capable of wreaking horrific destruction.

Indians, of course, with their experiences of British colonial violence in India and of racism directed against them in America, were already aware that Western powers were capable of great evil. After the Second World War, though, this reality began to dawn upon many Westerners as well.

In America, the 1950s saw an economic boom and the rise of an affluent middle class. For perhaps the first time in human history, the average person began to have access to social resources such as excellent medical care and a college education which were beyond even the wildest dreams of previous generations. As with ancient societies, in which an increase in standards of living led to the rise of sophisticated systems of philosophical and religious thought, similarly, the increase in leisure time to which the prosperity of 1950s America gave rise to serious reflection on the part of many in the new middle class—particularly among the youth—about the meaning and purpose of their existence. While many Americans enjoyed unprecedented material abundance, their lives were overshadowed by the threat of nuclear annihilation. With the Cold War, and the development of nuclear weapons not only by the United States but by its Soviet opponents, the fear that all life could end at any moment in a flash of atomic fire produced a pervasive undercurrent of anxiety. Much of this anxiety can be seen reflected in the science fiction genre, which became increasingly popular in this period.

It also started to become increasingly clear to many young white people that many of their fellow citizens were largely excluded from the prosperous society that they enjoyed, and for which their parents had fought. African Americans, treated as second-class citizens in the southern states by Jim Crow laws, and experiencing prejudice in the north which was no less vicious for not being enshrined in legislation, had begun to speak out and protest for their rights as equal citizens under the US constitution. The dignity of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent movement for civil rights, which was both inspired and informed by Gandhi's nonviolent movement for Indian independence,

contrasted starkly with the hatred and the violence expressed by white bigots and policemen who unleashed dogs and turned water cannons on peaceful protesters. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered on August 28, 1963, served as a call of awakening to the conscience of Americans—a call to which many among the youth responded with enthusiasm.

Finally, the escalating war in Vietnam, in which the military might of America looked to be pitted against a people fighting tenaciously for their independence, made many Americans start to question whether their nation really was on the right side: the side of peace and freedom. By the mid-1960s, King's protest methods came to be applied by anti-war activists to the movement to end this war. The iconic photograph of anti-war protester sticking a flower into the barrel of a gun, pointed at him by a military policeman, expresses well the spirit behind this movement.

It was in this context of discontentment with the racism, militarism, and materialism which many youth found to dominate the culture of their parents that a counterculture began to emerge, which questioned the dominant values of American society and the seemingly insatiable quest for ever greater material prosperity that defined it.

What is a *counterculture*? As it is defined by Paul Oliver:

> The term counter-culture tends to be used where a sub-culture evolves which is significantly different from conventional society in terms of values and patterns of behavior. Such a counter-culture exhibits and antipathy towards the established institutions of society. It could be argued that counter-cultures have existed since society has existed, since only through periodic challenges to the prevalent power structures, can society change ... Indeed one might further argue that it is part of the concept of a counter-culture that it seeks to subvert the existing society.[1]

As Oliver further points out, the conditions were ripe in the 1950s and 1960s for the emergence of a counterculture in the United States—and indeed, globally:

> There was ... at the beginning of the 1960s an increasing demand for freedom, equality, and autonomy in many areas of life. Where inequalities were deeply embedded within the existing social structure, as for example with race and gender inequalities, the coming decade would see a concerted challenge to these existing cultural norms.[2]

It could well be argued that those Americans of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who took a profound interest in Hinduism—even to the point of participating in the movement for Indian independence, taking up monastic vows, or both—were also creating and participating in a counterculture, in Oliver's sense of the term. The Transcendentalists overwhelmingly supported the abolition of slavery, and many worked actively toward this goal. Similarly, the Theosophists

rejected claims of Western and Christian superiority by working for the preservation of Hinduism and for Indian independence. And Theosophy and the Vedanta Society both had women leaders.

This early version of a counterculture is what Leela Gandhi has also described in her work on the anti-imperialist Westerners of this period—people like the Theosophists and Sister Nivedita. The main difference between the countercultural movement of the earlier period—the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—and that of the 1960s seems largely to be one of scale. Westerners drawn to, for example, the Vedanta Society or the Self-Realization Fellowship, in the early decades of these organizations, numbered in the thousands or tens of thousands, at the most. Westerners drawn to the counterculture of the 1960s, though, numbered in the millions.

To be sure, not all of these participants in the counterculture embraced Hinduism or joined Hindu-inspired organizations. Hinduism was part of a much larger mix of elements that were part of this complex movement. The Hindu elements are significant, though, on several levels. First, of course, they simply represent the openness to diverse cultures—the rejection of Western cultural superiority—that characterized the movement as a whole. But specific Hindu ideas, as well, came to inform the counterculture as a totality, even if the degree to which individual participants in this culture explicitly identified with these ideas—or were even aware of their Hindu provenance—varied greatly. This continues to be the case today; for the Hindu-infused attitudes that are described by Lisa Miller in her 2009 article, "We're All Hindus Now," have come to hold the sway they have, in large part, as an after-effect of the countercultural movement of the sixties. Because this was a mass movement, on such a large scale, the diffusion of ideas within it and their eventual infusion into the larger American cultural milieu have been far from uniform. The degree of specific Hindu influence, then, on any given individual either within the sixties counterculture or in the American culture shaped by it, ranges from an explicit embrace of Hinduism to a broad attitude of acceptance.

As with the earlier counterculture, the first rumblings of the counterculture of the 1960s—in the work of the beat poets of the 1950s—were characterized by a fascination with Asian religions. Jack Kerouac (1922–69), author of *The Dharma Bums*, and poet, Allen Ginsberg (1926–97), both had deep interests in Buddhism. Ginsberg actually traveled to India as well. Similarly, from within the bastion of Western conservatism—the Roman Catholic Church—came the Trappist monk, Thomas Merton (1915–68), who studied yoga and Zen and included them in his spiritual life.

The Popularization of Yoga

In the 1950s, postural yoga—traditionally known as *Haṭha Yoga*—which focuses upon breath control and the physical positions which are known in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra* as *āsanas*—became increasingly popular. According to the Harvard Pluralism Project,

"Yoga teachers demonstrated postures on television and bookstores carried books on yoga techniques. They were taken up by many people who had little interest or knowledge about their religious underpinnings."[3]

The differentiation of the physical practice of yoga from its "religious underpinnings" is a phenomenon that would become a major source of contention later on in the history of Hinduism in America—contention which is as yet unresolved today.

The term *Haṭha Yoga* literally means "the yoga of force." In its classical Indian form, this system of physical postures, stretches, and breathing exercises is typically attributed to a twelfth-century ascetic of the Shaiva Nāth Yogī tradition named Gorakhnāth. When most Westerners use or hear the term *yoga*, they usually have this system in mind. The original purpose of this system is not, however, the pursuit of physical health as an end in itself, but to prepare the physical body for higher yogic disciplines, such as meditation and the Tāntric practice of raising the Kuṇḍalinī energy that, according to this tradition, resides at the base of the spine.

Starting in the early twentieth century and continuing to the present day, many innovations have been made in Haṭha Yoga. A number of the stretches and āsanas used in contemporary Haṭha Yoga are not part of Gorakhnāth's original system. Indeed, some of these innovations have even come from the West; for while early modern yoga teachers influenced Westerners to take up this practice, they were also not hesitant to incorporate new knowledge into their system.[4]

As is evident from his book, *Rāja Yoga*, Swami Vivekananda did not have particularly high regard for Haṭha Yoga. Often undertaken by its practitioners for the sake of developing paranormal abilities—literally, "perfections," or *siddhis*—Vivekananda saw such aims as dangerous distractions from the goal of moksha. His focus was on inculcating a system of meditation, to which any kind of physical practice would be seen as subservient. On Vivekananda's understanding, one practices āsana, if one does so at all, in order to prevent the body from becoming a distraction in meditation.

Paramahansa Yogananda, too, was focused chiefly upon spiritual liberation, but his system of Kriya Yoga also integrated a physical dimension with the meditative practice, with elements of posture (āsana) and breath control (prāṇayama) being understood by practitioners in this tradition to be essential to the cultivation of the meditative state.

Many of the subsequent teachers of yoga, though, focused on the physical dimensions of the practice primarily, or even exclusively, while others integrated both aspects. In any case, yoga came to be seen less and less, at least in the Western world, as a component of a spiritual practice and more and more as a practice pursued for the sake of physical health. Indeed, many teachers of yoga presented it as something more akin to a medical practice than a spiritual path.

The reasons for this approach were complex. Many of the early teachers of yoga, it seems, saw the physical practice of yoga as lending itself—perhaps even inevitably leading—to experiences which would evoke in their practitioners a desire to go more deeply, and pursue the higher spiritual meaning behind yoga. Some of these teachers were happy to take their students to this point, once they proved ready to do so. At the same time, it seems that there was always a strong concern not to give offense

to the religious sensibilities of Western yoga students—whether these were Christian sensibilities or a more rationalistic skepticism about anything that sounded like a religion. Finally, when yoga teachers like Krishna Pattabhi Jois (1915–2009) and B.K.S. Iyengar (1918–2014)—both students of the famous yoga master, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888–1989)—sought to develop certification programs in their respective yoga practices, it was important that they be able to meet the Western legal requirements related to the teaching of health-related therapies. Their claims, in other words, had to pass scientific muster, and so needed to focus on observable phenomena, like the effects of the practice upon the body. They also needed to be able to ensure that the practice, if done in the correct way, would not be injurious. This placed any kind of strong emphasis on the spiritual dimensions of yoga in the realm of religion—and so outside of the bounds of governmental regulation and the validity a certification might confer. One cannot legally "certify" that a spiritual practitioner has reached moksha. One can certify, though, that a student has passed, for example, a required course in anatomy and other subjects needed to teach and practice yoga responsibly.

An especially prominent yoga lineage that was brought to the West in the fifties and sixties was that of Swami Sivananda Saraswati (1887–1963). A monk of the Daśanāmi lineage established by the founding teacher—or *acharya*—of the Advaita Vedānta tradition, Śaṅkara, Swami Sivananda himself never visited the United States. His career preceded the lifting of the Asian Exclusion Act. He did, however, establish a spiritual organization called the Divine Life Society in India in 1936.

FIGURE 24 *B. K. S Iyengar seen during his ninety-fourth birthday celebration in November 2012 in Belur, India (Photo by Dominik Ketz via Getty Images).*

A branch of the Divine Life Society was eventually established in the West—in Canada—by one of Swami Sivananda's disciples, Swami Vishnudevananda Saraswati (1927–93). This was the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre of Montreal. It was established in 1959. It was established in Canada, and not the United States, in part because the Asian Exclusion Act still held sway, while Indian immigration to Canada—a British Commonwealth country—was not restricted at this point. Similarly, in the Caribbean, the Bahamas—also a Commonwealth country—provided the location for a second center—the Swami Sivananda Ashram—which Swami Vishnudevananda established in 1967. Two years before he formally established this ashram, Swami Vishnudevananda famously met the Beatles, who were in the Bahamas to film their second movie, *Help!* He gave each member of the band a copy of his book, *The Completed Illustrated Book of Yoga*. In 1971, with the Asian Exclusion Act lifted, he went on to start Sivananda ashrams in New York and California.

In 1966, another prominent disciple of Swami Sivananda, Swami Satchidananda, "attracted many seekers to the discipline of yoga."[5] Probably best known for speaking at the famous free rock festival in Woodstock, New York, in August 1969, Satchidananda later went on to found the headquarters of the Integral Yoga Institute in the United States, at Yogaville, in Virginia.[6]

Other yoga centers established in America in the sixties include the Ananda Meditation Retreat. It was started in 1968 by Swami Kriyananda (who was born J. Donald Walters), a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda who left the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1962. There was also the Ananda Marga Yoga Society, in New York. This was the American branch of a movement begun in India by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

FIGURE 25 *Main meditation hall, Swami Sivananda Ashram, Bahamas (Photo by Jeffery D. Long).*

(1921–90), also known as Anandamurti. The word *Ananda*, or "bliss," appearing in the names of both of these yoga centers gives a sense of the aim of many Americans in pursuing the path of yoga: to find happiness and peace of mind in a stressful world.

Yoga and the Psychedelic Experience

The yoga movement predates the rise of the counterculture of the sixties; and while it does overlap with the counterculture, it is in many ways distinct from it. The overlap comes from the fact that, as the counterculture emerged, with its openness to alternative philosophies and ways of life, it was quite natural for it to attract many of the same people who were drawn to various aspects of the counterculture. One branch of the counterculture was focused, to a great extent, on physical health and on pursuing a way of life more natural or "organic" than the dominant American culture of manipulating nature—including the body—through technology. Yoga fits very well with the same sensibility that would promote organic farming, vegetarianism, and what could generally be seen as a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. Part of this same sensibility is a natural approach to health, and a corresponding suspicion of artificially produced medicines, or "chemicals." Yoga, as a holistic and non-invasive approach to physical health, again, fits with all of these ideas very well.

But yoga is also in tension with another dimension of the counterculture that is much more widely associated with this counterculture in the popular consciousness. This is the dimension of the counterculture represented by experimentation with hallucinogenic or "mind-expanding" (i.e., *psychedelic*) drugs, particularly LSD. Clearly, a holistic, organic, yoga-based approach to the health of the body which is suspicious of conventional medicine and its pharmaceuticals is at odds, arguably, with an approach the expansion of consciousness that gives a central role to artificially produced chemicals.

Experimentation with LSD as a means of expanding consciousness beyond its conventional boundaries can be traced to the LSD experiments of Aldous Huxley, mentioned earlier. Huxley was also, of course, a practitioner of Vedanta, and a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, founder of the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

Many participants in the counterculture of the sixties experimented with drugs—especially LSD. It created a sense of cosmic consciousness and a sacred connectedness with all of existence akin to that described by advanced meditation practitioners. In the later sixties and seventies, many young people used yoga and meditation to give up drugs and have this experience in a natural way.

Continuation of Earlier Hindu Influences: Vivekananda, Yogananda, and Krishnamurti

Another source of inspiration for the counterculture of the sixties, and for its specifically Hindu components, was the ongoing influence of those Indian masters who had come to

America in the earlier period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, before the imposition of the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924. The Vedanta Societies established by Swami Vivekananda and his successors and the Self-Realization Fellowship established by Paramahansa Yogananda were still active and still attracting followers throughout the period of Asian exclusion. It was, in fact, during this period that many intellectuals who had been drawn to the Vedanta Society, as already discussed in the last chapter, were actively producing many of the works that would attract great interest by the youth of the sixties. Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*; Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy*, *Brave New World*, and *The Doors of Perception*; Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*; Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*; Christopher Isherwood's numerous collaborations with Swami Prabhavananda on translations of classic works of Vedanta such as the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, as well as his solely authored *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*; Huston Smith's *The Religions of Man*—most of these books were, in effect, "required reading" by members of the counterculture of the sixties. When George Harrison, of the Beatles, first went to India in the fall of 1966, after the band had completed its last concert tour, the two books that he took with him, and that he read voraciously while vacationing in a houseboat on a lake in Kashmir, were Swami Vivekananda's *Rāja Yoga* and Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

Jiddu Krishnamurti, too, with his message of radical freedom from all forms of dogmatism, truly came into his own during the period of the counterculture, when his message resonated most strongly with this movement's "increasing demand for freedom, equality, and autonomy in many areas of life."[7] Krishnamurti remained an active public speaker until his death in 1986, and his career continued unbroken from his dissolution of the Order of the Star in the East in 1929 until the end of his life. He did not see himself, though, as a standard-bearer of the counterculture, or of any ideology. He famously stated, "All ideologies are idiotic, whether religious or political, for it is conceptual thinking, the conceptual word, which has so unfortunately divided man."[8]

The Esalen Institute

As we have already seen, many intellectuals helped propagate Vedantic concepts into the wider American culture. These included philosophers like Huxley, literary figures like Isherwood, and scholars of religion and mythology like Smith and Campbell. It also included scientists, such as inventor Nikola Tesla (1856–1943), and physicists Niels Bohr (1885–1962), Erwin Schrödinger (1887–1961), J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904–67), and David Bohm (1917–92).

The Esalen Institute, located in Big Sur, California, and established by Stanford graduates Michael Murphy (1930–present) and Richard Price (1930–85), became an intellectual hub for the countercultural movement, particularly for those interested in the expansion of consciousness and of human potential. Price was influenced by an Aldous Huxley lecture he had heard in 1962, with the title "Human Potentialities."[9] Huxley had of course been influenced by the Vedantic teaching that "Each soul is

potentially divine."[10] Murphy, for his part, had spent a period of several months in Sri Aurobindo's ashram in Pondicherry.[11] Together, the two established Esalen in 1962. The name of the institute is derived from the name of the Native American tribe—the Esselen—who were the original human inhabitants of the land on which the institute was built.[12] Esalen soon became a magnet for countercultural intellectuals interested in pushing the boundaries of consciousness, and of science. It came to be known for its experiential workshops, as well as the eclectic blend of philosophies on which it drew—including Hindu and Buddhist thought.

Renowned thinkers and writers of the 1960s, including Alan Watts (1915–73), Timothy Leary (1920–96), and Ram Dass (born Richard Alpert, 1930–present) all had connections with Esalen, as did psychologists such as Abraham Maslow (1908–70) and B.F. Skinner (1904–90). Watts is known primarily for his writings about East Asian traditions, like Buddhism and Daoism, Leary for his advocacy of psychedelic drugs, and Ram Dass for his embrace of Hinduism. (His Hindu name literally means "Servant of Rāma.") Ram Dass was the catalyst for making a large number of Americans aware of the teachings of his guru, Neem Karoli Baba (1900–73). Neem Karoli Baba was a deep devotee of Hanuman, the most famous servant of Rāma: the ape deity who is Rāma's assistant in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and an embodiment of the power of devotion.

Maslow is known for his theory of a hierarchy of human needs, which brings to mind Hindu concepts, such as the *puruṣārthas*, or personal goals (*dharma*, or goodness; *artha*, wealth; *kāma*, sensory enjoyment; and *mokṣa/moksha*, or liberation). It is interesting that Maslow refers to the highest of the human needs as "self-actualization," which resonates with Vedantic concepts such as "Self-realization," or "God-realization."

Esalen also attracted figures whom we have already mentioned who had been influenced deeply by Vedanta, such as Huxley (one of the institute's inspirations) and Campbell.

Viewed by skeptics as promoting "fringe" science, it is nevertheless noteworthy that Esalen became a second home to a large number of renowned and respected scholars.

Return of the Gurus

In terms of direct Hindu influence on American culture, though, certainly the main sources for such inspiration were, as in the earlier period of Hindu influence, Indian spiritual teachers who came to America and developed large followings among those who felt deeply drawn to alternative spiritualities such as those presented by these Indian masters, as well as countercultural celebrities who also turned to these gurus for guidance and inspiration. The first guru of this period to gain a large following, as we shall see, was the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who began teaching in the West in 1958, although not in the United States, which was still closed to most Indians. Interest among the youth of America, though, combined with the lifting of the Asian Exclusion

Act in 1965, led to a veritable flood of such teachers. As we shall see, teachers from India became numerous in the sixties, with the trend continuing into the seventies, and even to the present day.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Transcendental Meditation

The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918–2008) was likely the most famous of the Indian gurus of the second wave of American interest in Hinduism that emerged as part of the counterculture of the sixties. This fame today is at least in part attributable to the Maharishi's brief association with the Beatles. Beyond this celebrity association, though, the Maharishi's meditation method became quite popular in the late sixties and into the seventies and eighties. It even gave rise, in the nineties, to a political party based on the ideal of improving society through meditation.

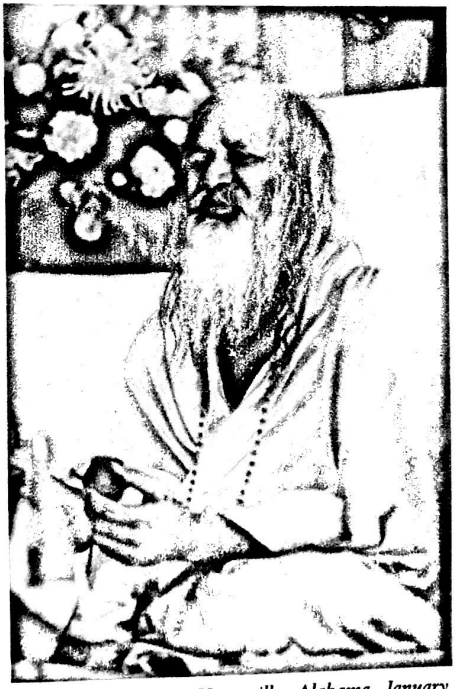

FIGURE 26 *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi—Huntsville, Alabama, January 1978 (Wikimedia Commons).*

The Maharishi referred to the meditative technique he taught as Transcendental Meditation, popularly known as TM. Transcendental Meditation represents, in some ways, a return to Swami Vivekananda's emphasis on meditative states over physical postures. It also includes some of the same elements as Vedantic meditation, such as the imparting of a secret mantra—a word or verse, typically in Sanskrit, to be recited silently while one is meditating. The mantra is used to focus the attention while one meditates. Most systems of meditation begin the practice with a focus on the breath. Meditating on the breath alone, though, is quite difficult, due to the tendency of the mind to wander. Repeating a mantra gives the mind something to focus on, in tandem with the breath, making it easier to maintain one's focus. Mantras are also believed to hold an inherent power. A secret mantra is a mantra that one does not disclose to anyone else, and is given directly by one's guru at the time that one takes *dīkṣa* (diksha), or initiation into the meditation lineage.

The Maharishi—or "great seer"—began to teach meditation in the West in 1958. His most famous students, again, were the Beatles, who visited his ashram in Rishikesh, India, in February of 1968. Born Mahesh Prasad Varma, the Maharishi earned a degree in physics from Allahabad University in 1942, following which he studied meditation under the tutelage of his guru, Swami Brahmananda Saraswati (1869–1953), who is known to the Maharishi's disciples as "Guru Dev," or "Divine Teacher."

Like the Hare Krishna Movement, Transcendental Meditation was a popular component of the counterculture of the 1960s and early 1970s. Unlike the Hare Krishna Movement, which (until fairly recently) reveled in its "Indianness," with followers dressed like medieval bhakti saints and chanting mantras in public places, Transcendental Meditation has presented itself, much like yoga has been presented, as a scientific and universal practice, promoted for health and peace of mind, rather than as a religious tradition with strong Hindu (specifically Shaiva) roots.

The Maharishi referred to his effort to promote Transcendental Meditation as the "Spiritual Regeneration Movement." It involved establishing branches of an organization called the Students International Meditation Society (SIMS) on hundreds of college campuses. (An unreleased song by the Beatles from 1968 includes the chorus, "Spiritual regeneration was my salvation.")

Starting in the 1970s, Transcendental Meditation began to focus on promoting itself as "a scientifically verifiable means to creativity and peace of mind attractive to professionals."[13] The members of the movement, in the name of promoting the practice, began to cultivate less of a "hippy," countercultural appearance and more of a conservative, professional look, involving suits and ties for the men and dresses for the women. As recounted by Joseph, a TM instructor who was active in the movement during this period, "The aim was not to deceive anyone. We just didn't want to scare people away. We really believed in the practice and that it could do a lot of good for the world and for society. That involved presenting ourselves in a way that would not put people off of the practice. It was all about the practice."[14]

In 1974, the movement established Maharishi International University in Fairfield, Iowa, on the grounds of what had been Parsons College. This university has served as the main center of the movement in the West and continues to thrive today, promoting

Transcendental Meditation as a cure for many problems which beset the modern world. Although contested by mainstream scientists, the movement claims to have carried out studies verifying the "Maharishi Effect," in which rates of crime and other incidents of violence diminish in a given geographic area when a large enough number of persons are practicing meditation in that area. In 1992, the organization even fielded a political party—the Natural Law Party—"founded on the principles of Transcendental Meditation, the laws of nature, and their application to all levels of government."[15]

The Beatles, Ravi Shankar, and Rock Star Yogis

The Beatles were, of course, a wildly successful popular music group and a major cultural phenomenon. It is difficult to exaggerate their fame and their cultural influence. But what do they have to do with Hinduism in America?

As will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter, after reaching the heights of worldly success, the Beatles—almost like a microcosm of their generation—found themselves dissatisfied with life in the material world. They were each filled with a yearning for a higher, transcendental reality and purpose in life, but none more so than George Harrison (1943–2001), who developed a deep and enduring interest in Hindu thought and practice.

Harrison was the member of the Beatles who encouraged the rest of the band to look into Transcendental Meditation. The Beatles' association with the Maharishi was relatively short-lived after the band became alienated from him upon hearing a rumor that he had made an inappropriate sexual advance toward one of his students during the Beatles' stay at his ashram in Rishikesh in the February of 1968. Near the end of the band's career, in 1969, Harrison developed a much more enduring relationship with A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder and acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Wherever the Beatles went, their fans tended to follow—both literally and metaphorically—and their interests in meditation and Harrison's role with the Hare Krishna movement led to a similar interest among fans in Europe and North America.

Harrison's interest in Hinduism was initially sparked by an interest in Indian music, which prompted him to befriend Ravi Shankar (1920–2012), from whom he learned how to play the sitar. Hindu themes were a prominent part of Harrison's song lyrics from 1967 until his death in 2001, his most famous Hindu-influenced song being his 1970 hit, "My Sweet Lord," "the most successful solo single by any of the former Beatles during the seventies."[16]

Shankar was an Indian classical musician who was instrumental in popularizing the musical traditions of India—especially the sitar—in the Western world. In his youth, he traveled frequently to North America and Europe as part of a dance troupe run by his brother, Uday Shankar. In 1938, he gave up dancing to learn the sitar, the instrument for which he is best known. Although Indian music had long been enjoyed by a small number of Western connoisseurs, Shankar's association with Harrison, starting in 1966,

FIGURE 27 *Ravi Shankar at Woodstock, August 1969 (Wikimedia Commons).*

brought him, and Indian classical music more generally, to a much wider audience. Shankar performed at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967—a precursor of the much larger Woodstock festival of 1969—and, probably most famously, at the Concert for Bangladesh, in 1971. The Concert for Bangladesh was first conceived by Harrison when Shankar approached him about the devastation wrought by the civil war between West and East Pakistan (which became the independent country of Bangladesh as a result of this war). The Concert for Bangladesh was the first rock charity concert, and brought together a number of luminaries from the world of rock, including Harrison, Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton, and Bob Dylan.

Once the Beatles took a serious interest in Indian spirituality, numerous rock stars followed suit. Mick Jagger, of the Rolling Stones, also attended the Maharishi's meditation retreat in Wales in late 1967, which the Beatles attended. Mike Love of the Beach Boys and folk singer Donovan both attended the Rishikesh retreat in 1968, also attended by the Beatles. Love and Donovan still practice Transcendental Meditation

today. Sixties rock artists who incorporated Indian sounds or Hindu themes into their music are too numerous to list. They include—besides the Beatles and the Stones—the Who (whose guitarist, Pete Townsend, is a disciple of Meher Baba), the Moody Blues, Procol Harum, and Traffic. Moving from the sixties to the seventies, there are bands such as Led Zeppelin and Yes (whose lead singer, Jon Anderson, is a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda).

ISKCON: The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

ISKCON, the Hindu organization with which George Harrison had the longest and closest association, was first established in 1965 by Abhay Charan De, who is better known as A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Prabhupada (1896–1977) arrived in New York in 1965, making him one of the first of this new wave of Indian spiritual teachers to take advantage of the lifting of the Asian Exclusion Act. He was seventy years old when he arrived. His movement of devotion to Lord Krishna, rooted in the Gauḍīya Vaishnava tradition of his native Bengal, grew within a few years to include dozens of ISKCON centers. The central focus of the Gauḍīya Vaishnava tradition is bhakti, or devotion to the Supreme Being in a personal form. According to the theology of this tradition, Krishna is not merely an avatar, but the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to whom all devotion is due.

Upon his initial arrival in New York, Prabhupada soon found a home with a group of young people who were part of the countercultural movement of the period. It was largely from young people in this movement that the following of ISKCON was first drawn. Members of ISKCON, more widely known as the Hare Krishnas, were considered quite eccentric by many Americans in the 1960s and 1970s—even more so than the Transcendental Meditation movement, whose members took to wearing suits and ties in the seventies, and presenting themselves in a much more socially conservative manner.

The Hare Krishnas, on the other hand, dressed and wore their hair in the same manner as medieval Vaishnava devotees in Bengal. They danced on busy city street corners, showing their devotion by energetically chanting and singing the Hare Krishna mantra and soliciting donations from passersby. Their unconventional mannerisms soon brought the disapproval of mainstream society, and the group was one of the first Hindu-inspired organizations to be labeled a "cult."

Despite these disadvantages, ISKCON gathered a sufficient following to establish a rural ashram called New Vrindavan in the hills near Wheeling, West Virginia. Named after the popular childhood home of Krishna in India—Vrindavan—New Vrindavan gradually became a popular place of pilgrimage not only for Hare Krishnas, but for American Hindus in general. The site is known for its golden-domed temple and for the excellent vegetarian food that is served there. Harrison also famously gave the group one of his houses in England to serve as its London temple.

FIGURE 28 *Hare Krishna ceremony held in July 1979 at Château de Valencay, France (Photo by Gilbert UZAN/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images).*

Since the seventies, ISKCON has become a more mainstream religious organization. It is less common to see Hare Krishnas engaged in public chanting, and one also finds more members of the organization dressed, like members of TM, in a conventional American manner. With the resumption of Indian immigration in 1965, more Indian families have joined the organization and it is now seen less in countercultural terms and more as an established religion. Today, it even has a multigenerational membership.

Swami Muktananda and Siddha Yoga

The teachers who came to the West from India during the period of the counterculture were representative of a variety of Hindu traditions. As we have already seen, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi taught a form of meditation derived from a Shaiva tradition, focused on jñāna yoga and the direct experience of the Self through concentration on a private mantra. Prabhupada, on the other hand, taught an ecstatic Vaishnava devotional practice, and the earlier yoga teachers emphasized postural āsana practice.

Swami Muktananda (1908–82) brought Tāntric practice into the West. First visiting the United States in 1970, his teaching was focused on the experience of the Kuṇḍalinī Shakti, or a latent energy believed in this tradition to be coiled at the base of the spine.

According to Tāntric teaching, this Shakti is the essential life force and power of creation. It is believed to inhabit the "subtle body," or body made of energy, which is said in this tradition to coexist with the physical, or "gross" body. If it can be elevated, rising

up a nerve channel known as the *sushumna nadi*—which corresponds, physically, with the spinal cord—this Shakti, or creative energy, can activate the seven energy centers, or chakras, that are said to exist along the spinal cord. Each chakra is believed to have a certain quality of spiritual energy associated with it. The heart chakra, for example, is associated with compassion, while the "third eye" chakra, located between and just above the eyebrows, is associated with wisdom. The activation of the chakras is believed to accelerate spiritual evolution.

It is not coincidental that the term for the spiritual energy evoked in this tradition is called by the name *Shakti*—which, the reader may recall, is also the name of the Hindu Mother Goddess, the wife of Shiva. The deity Shakti is the personification of the power of creation that resides in all beings. In Tāntra, the idea of this indwelling Shakti is not a mere metaphor, but is seen as an energy that can be tapped using specific meditative techniques.

The Tāntric worldview and the techniques associated with it are not limited to Hinduism. Tantra is an area where Hinduism and Buddhism overlap a great deal. Tāntric Buddhism, which is also known as Vajrayāna, is the dominant Buddhist tradition of Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan.

In Siddha Yoga, it is said that the Shakti can be made to rise up the spinal column to merge with the chakra, or energy center, in the crown of the head through the grace of the guru. This can be done through a thought, word, or gesture on the part of the guru—a process known as *shaktipat*. Muktananda received shaktipat from his guru, Swami Nityananda (1897–1961), a solitary monk who resided in a cave in Ganeshpuri, near Bombay (now called Mumbai).

In 1974, Swami Muktananda established Siddha Yoga centers in Oakland, California, and in the Catskill mountains of New York. "The South Fallsburg, New York center eventually became the international headquarters of the organization. By 1976, there were some eighty Siddha Yoga meditation groups and five ashrams, claiming 20,000 followers."[17]

Before his death in 1982, Swami Muktananda designated his translator—Malti Shetty—and her brother to be his successors. After a falling out between the brother and sister team in 1985, the sister, now known by her monastic name of Swami Chidvilasananda (and more widely known as Gurumayi) took over the lineage.

Interestingly, in 1957, several years prior to Muktananda's arrival in the United States, an American master in the same lineage as Muktananda's guru, Swami Nityananda, established an organization known as the Nityananda Institute. This American, known by his monastic name of Swami Chetanananda, was a direct disciple of Swami Rudrananda, who was himself a disciple of Nityananda and, like Chetanananda, an American, not of Indian descent. Chetanananda took his vows of sannyāsa under Swami Muktananda in 1978.[18] By the early seventies, the Nityananda Institute had grown, with "centers in Portland, Oregon; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Santa Monica, California; and Ann Arbor, Michigan providing yoga classes, study groups, retreats and a daily practice of chanting."[19] Rudrananda was known for his informal and unconventional style, for a Hindu monk. He did not typically wear monk's robes, but Western-style clothing, and preferred to be called "Rudi." As Helen Crovetto describes his teaching:

> Rudi reinterpreted Kashmir Shaivism [a Shaiva philosophical tradition that developed in the area of Kashmir between the eighth and twelfth centuries] for a twentieth-century American audience. He taught the construction of a basic internal spiritual structure designed to transfigure its practitioners and effect union with the ultimate nature reality, nondual consciousness. At the time of his death in a plane crash in 1973, Rudi had thousands of students and had engendered a group of teachers with eclectic approaches to spiritual development.[20]

Other Important Gurus

In addition to the early teachers of yoga in the West, such as Swami Vishnudevananda, as well as Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and Swami Muktananda, a number of other important gurus came to America directly or developed American followings during the period of the counterculture. So many gurus, in fact, have come to America since the sixties that it is impossible to discuss them in a single book. I shall mention a few more, to give a sense of their variety and kinds of focus that each had. Not mentioning any particular guru, though, is not to suggest that that guru is unimportant. It should be seen only as a limitation of the author.

Satya Sai Baba (1926–2011) is believed by his disciples to be a reincarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi (1835–1918), an Indian holy man with both Hindu and Muslim followers. He began to develop an American following in the seventies. "By 1984, the Satya Sai Baba Council of America listed seventy-six Satya Sai Baba Centres," the largest being those in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago.[21]

As shall be discussed in the next chapter, a large number of Hindu temples in America are actually devoted to Shirdi Sai Baba, who continues to command a considerable following more than a century since his passing. He is comparable, in this respect, with Sri Ramakrishna. In my conversations with devotees of Shirdi Sai Baba, I found a variety of views regarding the claim that Satya Sai Baba is his reincarnation. Some accepted the claim, some rejected it quite strongly, and others were agnostic on the matter, saying it was possible, but not committing either way.

Sri Chinmoy (1931–2007), a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, and an athlete and artist as well as a spiritual teacher, began to lead meditations for world peace at the United Nations in the 1970s. Based in the borough of Queens, in New York, Sri Chinmoy came to be known in America and throughout the world for his many initiatives dedicated to world peace.[22] Interestingly—and rather unusually for a Hindu spiritual teacher—Sri Chinmoy was a weightlifter. The harmony of the mind and body is a major theme of his teaching, as is unconditional love for all beings.

Many of Sri Chinmoy's disciples have continued, after his death, to reside in the vicinity of the Sri Chinmoy Centre, in Queens, where a number of them run stores that specialize in books on spiritual topics and shops selling items for use in devotional activity, such as incense sticks and images of Hindu deities, as well as an excellent vegetarian restaurant.

Brij Kishore Kumar Dhasmana (1925–96), better known by his monastic name of Swami Rama, spent many years as a wandering sannyāsi, or Hindu monk, in the Himalayas: wanderings chronicled in his book, *Living with the Himalayan Masters*, a text which is in many ways akin to Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*. In 1971, Swami Rama founded the Himalayan Institute, in Blue Mountain, Pennsylvania. After Swami Rama's death, running of the institute passed to his successor, Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, who administers it to the present day.

Finally, one of the more unusual stories of Indian gurus coming to America is that of Prem Rawat (1957–present), also known as Guru Maharaj Ji. Rawat's father, Sri Hamsa Maharaj Ji, was the head of a Hindu organization known as the Divine Light Mission. Guru Maharaj Ji succeeded his father as the head of the organization in 1966, when he was only nine years old. In 1971, at the age of thirteen, he brought the Divine Light Mission to America, establishing its international headquarters in Denver, Colorado. In 1974, he married an American woman against his mother's wishes. This led to a rift in the Divine Light Mission, which was renamed *Elán Vital* in 1983.

Rawat continues to speak on spiritual topics but goes by his birth name rather than being called Guru Maharaj Ji, and dresses in conventional Western clothing (a suit and a tie), rather than in the traditional robes of a Hindu spiritual master.

The Guru Phenomenon: Critical Reflections

The role of the guru, or teacher, is an important one in most Hindu traditions. One's guru is one's guide on the spiritual path. By receiving initiation—*dīksha*—from a guru, one becomes part of that guru's teaching lineage, and inherits the spiritual power—or *guru shakti*—that flows through that lineage from its founder, a divine or enlightened being. Typically, it is believed one should follow one's guru blindly, with an absolute faith that whatever he or she instructs one to do is for one's benefit, even if it is unconventional and appears, at that moment, to have no reason.

Such absolute faith in many ways cuts against the emphasis on freedom and individualism that have been part of American culture from the early days of the Republic. The Transcendentalists were drawn to Hindu philosophy in large part because of its emphasis, as they understood it, upon self-reliance. The same spiritual reality that is at the heart of, and that ultimately is, oneself is the same reality that resides in all of nature. One therefore does not need to look outside oneself for truth. One is ultimately responsible for one's own spiritual practice and one's realization.

It is therefore ironic, in one sense, that members of a counterculture focused on "freedom, equality, and autonomy"[23] would be drawn in such large numbers to teachers demanding complete loyalty and obedience as a condition for receiving the full spiritual benefits of their teaching. This would seem to be the opposite of what those who embraced the counterculture were seeking.

This issue is not limited only to Hinduism in America. Buddhist traditions, particularly Zen, were at least as popular as Hindu or Hindu-based teachings in the fifties, sixties, and seventies. In Zen, as in the guru-based traditions, the teaching of one's *roshi*, or Zen master, is absolute.

Some of the Asian teachers who have come to America, both Hindu and Buddhist, have been alleged—sometimes quite credibly—to have committed sexual and other improprieties with the people who have come to them for spiritual guidance. This quite naturally raises the question as to why such scandals befall these teachers. Is there something in the guru-disciple relationship which lends itself to abuse?

As the televangelist scandals of the 1980s demonstrate, as well as the horrific revelations of extensive child abuse in the Roman Catholic Church dating back decades, abuse of power is not unique to Hinduism or Buddhism, or to Hindu- or Buddhist-based organizations. The argument could be made, though, that religious faith in holy persons and organizations needs to be tempered with an awareness that even the holiest person is susceptible to human imperfection, as well as an open-eyed realization that those organizations which confer power and authority over others upon their representatives might attract those with less-than-noble intentions to their ranks. One would hope that there would be checks built into the traditions to guard against abuse. Such checks do exist. Some traditions, for example, do not permit their monastic practitioners to be alone with members of the opposite gender, although this would of course not be a preventative measure should the monastic in question be homosexually or bisexually oriented.

It is also important to note that this is not simply a question of "bad apples" getting involved in a spiritual organization for nefarious purposes. Credible allegations have been made against some teachers who were known for having practiced years of spiritual discipline, and who had, prior to the allegations, impeccable reputations for moral rectitude.

Might it be, then, that the institution of guru, with the absolute obedience that it commands, lends itself to abuse? This is also disputable, however, because there are many gurus and many organizations about which there have been absolutely no allegations of impropriety, and others in which the few allegations that exist have been shown to be false.[24]

One could argue that, if the guru has integrity, and if the organization is also made up of persons sincerely committed to the views and values for which it stands, abuse is less likely occur. On the other hand, though, one could also argue that to give so much authority to any human being, even one of deep integrity and spiritual commitment, is a path fraught with peril. It is a test of the humility and self-discipline, even of a deeply spiritual person, to be placed in a position of absolute authority over others.

A number of psychological studies have been done on the effects of giving one person or group of people absolute power over others.[25] Even "normal," psychologically healthy people in situations where they are given control over other people have been demonstrated, under particular conditions, to be capable of cruel and sadistic behavior from which they would otherwise recoil. As Robert Jay Lifton has recounted, many Germans who participated in the Holocaust were people who were otherwise "normal."[26]

The #MeToo movement has recently shown, quite dramatically, that men in positions of power in a wide range of fields—education, entertainment, business, and politics, and many others as well—take advantage of this power and abuse those whom they see as powerless with a frequency that has, upon being exposed, greatly shaken the public's perceptions of and confidence in figures who would at one time been viewed with great respect. Why should the field of religion be different than any other in this regard? Indeed, given the pervasiveness of the abuse that #MeToo has revealed, one could well conclude that the question to ask is not "Why have so many gurus been accused of abuse?," but rather, "Why have more gurus *not* been accused of abuse?"

Swami M., a monastic practitioner in a Hindu lineage in America, when asked candidly to speak about this issue of abuse and the absolute power of the guru, said:

> We teach our students and must constantly remind ourselves that the true guru, the divine guru, the Gurudeva, is the one inside all of our hearts. The human teacher is merely an externalisation of the higher spiritual reality inside of oneself. The worship and honor we give to our human teacher is done out of gratitude, but it is also an expression of our devotion to the divine teacher within. We [teachers] are conduits for that higher reality. That is all. The moment ego comes in, we have failed in our mission. We must remind ourselves of that constantly. "I am but thy instrument." A teacher who forgets this will fall.

For many in the counterculture, following a guru was initially an act of rebellion: following an unconventional practice and an unconventional teacher. The idea of a teacher as a living conduit to higher knowledge, versus the idea of blind faith in an ancient text, was appealing to many from this period. The goal was to become like the teacher: to manifest within oneself the wisdom that one found in one's guru, to bring forth from within oneself the inner guru with the aid of the outer one. This was, however, easier said than done, as many of the deeply conservative and traditional conventions surrounding the guru-disciple relationship could also clash deeply with the American ethos of equality and freedom.

This is also not simply a question of "Eastern" absolutism and "Western" individualism. The teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti, one might recall, were deeply opposed to dogmatism and finding the truth through any organizational structure or external teacher. Yet, paradoxically, people came to Krishnamurti for teaching. His unorthodox, unconventional, independent-minded approach is precisely what made him attractive to American seekers as a person whom they would trust and to whom they would be willing to give absolute authority. Krishnamurti, to his credit, always resisted attempts to put him on a pedestal or turn him into a guru.

Ironically, some American seekers themselves, through their pursuit of an independent-minded, countercultural approach to the spiritual life, themselves came to be seen as gurus by many of their contemporaries: as authoritative figures whose word was a guide to truth. Oliver gives us the example of Alan Watts, mentioned earlier in connection with the Esalen Institute:

> Watts was eclectic in his writing and philosophy, integrating ideas from Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism ... He did not concentratae on teaching the formal concepts of Buddhism or Vedanta, but tried to relate these ideas to people's everyday lives. He emphasizes the practical relevance of the teachings of Eastern religions such as the use of meditation to help people cope with periods of psychological stress ... His approach was almost inevitably a personal, subjective interpretation of the teachings of Buddhism and Hinduism, but this appeal to many young people of the counter-culture who wanted to find their own spiritual way. Whether or not Alan Watts sought it, he was, in effect, cast in the role of a spiritual guru for many thousands of people.[27]

In the wider culture, Bob Dylan, too, could be seen as another example of an independent-minded individual who said, "Don't follow leaders"[28]—and thereby became a leader for his generation.

As Oliver writes:

> The central purpose of the guru within Hinduism is to guide and assist the spiritual student in attaining ... religious union with God. The guru employs a variety of practical strategies to help students, including meditation, the analysis of scriptures, the repetition of mantras and the practice of yoga ... This approach of enabling the individual to attain a form of spiritual fulfilment was very attractive during the counter-culture. It was not an approach which depended upon submitting to a set of religious rules [though in particular lineages, such rules could and did come into play], but rather one which encouraged each individual to find their own unique pathway to God. This appealed to the autonomous, individualistic mood of the 1960s.[29]

Countercultural Themes and Their Hindu Inspirations

There was far more to the counterculture of the 1960s, and to the Hindu inspirations for it, than the guru phenomenon that we have been exploring in this chapter, though the various guru-based movements of this period are the most visible and obvious location of Hindu influence on the counterculture. Oliver draws attention to a variety of aspects of the counterculture that can be seen to have some measure of Hindu inspiration, or to correlate with various dimensions of Hindu traditions. He is also careful to point out that the Hindu provenance of many aspects of the 1960s counterculture should not lead to a view of India or of the Hindu community more broadly as akin to a giant Woodstock festival. India is, in many ways, a deeply conservative country, culturally speaking, and Hinduism a deeply conservative religion. "Conservative" and "progressive," though, mean different things in different contexts. To self-identify as Hindu and to proclaim oneself on a search to discover one's inner divinity are a fairly mainstream thing to do in India. To do the same thing in a deeply evangelical Christian community in the American south would be quite radical. The 1960s counterculture drew upon Hindu ideas, but also transformed and adapted these to a new environment, and to a culture in many ways quite different from that of India.

Countercultural themes and their Hindu correlates which Oliver notes include:

1. An experiential approach to spiritual life: Many threads of Hindu thought, particularly the Vedantic and Yoga traditions, emphasize the authority of direct experience over that of faith in an external text or institution. This appealed to American individualism in the1960s.
2. Nonviolence: Gandhi's Jain-inspired philosophy of ahiṃsā was attractive to both the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement.
3. Sexual liberation: Elements of Hindu thought such as the Tāntric emphasis on sensory experience as a means to spiritual awakening and the validation of sensory enjoyment in texts such as the *Kāma Sūtra* appealed to Americans who were interested in breaking away from the puritanical norms of 1950s American culture.
4. Communal living: The Hindu idea of the *āśrama* (ashram), or spiritual retreat became a model for a more communitarian, less consumerist mode of living, with which many in the 1960s experimented.
5. Natural medicine and environmentalism: Alternative medicine was another topic in which interest grew in the 1960s. The traditional Indian system of healing—*Ayurveda*, the "science of long life"—became a popular form of alternative medicine, along with traditional Chinese and Native American forms of healing. An ethos of environmentalism and promoting "the natural" can be seen to flow from the Transcendentalists' interpretation of Hinduism as teaching the all-pervasive existence of divinity in the natural world.[30]

Setting the Stage for a New Indian Diaspora

The passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, an outcome of the Civil Rights Movement, made it once again possible for Indians to come to America. The Act gave preference to those whose skills were needed in the United States and those with professional qualifications. Immigration from India rose dramatically and a highly educated and affluent Indian immigrant population began to grow in the United States. It is to the story of this new Indian diaspora that we turn in our next chapter.

Study Questions

1. What were the conditions that led to the rise of the American counterculture?
2. Which features of Hindu teaching were attractive to Western spiritual seekers?
3. How does the guru phenomenon both fit well and exist in tension with countercultural values?
4. In what ways is the Hindu-influenced American counterculture starkly different from traditional Hinduism, as practiced by Hindus?

Suggestions for Further Reading

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