Chapter 1

Introduction

The literature of the United States of America, popularly known as American literature, is today perhaps the most vigorous, dynamic, fresh, and fertile literature of the world. During a short period of three hundred years, it has made an incredible progress with the result that it has left the literature of every other country, including that of its mentor the Great Britain, far behind. If the international recognition is any criterion of excellence, its literature during the last fifty years, has produced more Nobel Laureates in the literary world than any other country. The decisions of the Swedish Academy, which operates on an world basis, suggests that “The twentieth century English developments have been largely American - especially those which can be considered, in the words of Nobel’s will of an idealistic tendency.”

The roots of the excellence of American literature can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century in the literature produced by Transcendentalism, which F.O. Matthiessen defines as American Renaissance. During the half decade of 1850-55 the world saw the appearance of some epoch-making books such as Representative Men (1850), The Scarlet Letter (1850), The House of Seven Gables (1851), Moby-Dick (1851), Pierre (1852), Walden (1854) and Leaves of Grass (1955). “You might,” writes Matthiessen “search all the rest of American literature without being able to collect a group of books equal to these in imaginative vitality.” American Renaissance was a
unique phenomenon in which human spirit revealed itself in a new way opening the
floodgates of its reservoirs of physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers. Like
Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, Romanticism etc. it ushered in a new era in
the life of humanity. As it was the latest, it consolidated the gains of all the preceding
movements. It inculcated not only the humanism of Renaissance but also the piety of
Reformation (Puritanism), the reason of Enlightenment, and the nature of Romanticism.
In addition to it, it went on to bring in the spirit of indwelling God.

With Transcendentalism Americans discovered a new consciousness and a new
notion of man. Emerson the father–figure of this movement, wrote in “Historic Notes of
Life and Letters in New England”:-

The key to the period appeared to be that the mind had become
aware of itself. Men grew reflective and intellectual. There was a
new consciousness. The former generations acted under the belief
that a shining social prosperity was the beatitude of man and
sacrificed uniformly the citizen to the state. The modern mind
believed that the nation existed for the individual, for the
guardianship and education of every man. This idea, roughly
written in revolutions and national movements, in the mind of the
philosopher had for more precision; the individual is the world.  

With Transcendentalism Americans discovered a new way of seeing which eventually led
them to new ways of saying and also to develop new modes of living. The new way of
seeing was invariably the discovery of an intuitive perception or a new interpretation of
intuition. Intuition, in western speculation, was looked down upon with suspicion, being
derided as “bits of wishful anticipation or unscrupulous generalization” confusing and
irresponsible.  

It was, condemned as anti-intellectual and associated with “the sudden
surge of feelings, which eludes all scientific treatment.” Westerners rejected it as “the
shadowy sentiment or pathological fancy fit for cranks and dancing dervishes.” One of
the most revolutionary steps of Emerson was to recognize and to install intuition on its pedestal – as the only valid way of apprehending reality. As a faculty of apprehension, intuition goes beyond senses and intellect. Explaining this point Whitman writes:

There is apart from mere intellect, in the make up of every superior human identity .... a wondrous something that realizes without argument, .... an intuition of the absolute balance, .... of the whole of this multifarious, mad chaos of fraud,....we call the world; the soul-sight of that divine clue and unseen thread which holds the whole congeries of things....such soul sight and the root centre for the mind.....

Emerson calls this root centre of the mind, “the intellect receptive,” the spiritual intuition which gives us the transcendental knowledge i.e. the knowledge of humanity. This conception of intuition or intuitive knowledge goes beyond the Western conception of knowledge. In the “Western philosophy knowledge is treated as the product of “the synthetic activity of the logical self consciousness.”

For Hegel knowledge is but “a triadic dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.” The Western concept of knowledge is grounded in the dualism of subject and object. However Emerson went beyond the dualism of Western concept of knowledge, He defined knowledge in terms of unity as he writes:

The act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and spectacle, the subject and the object are one.

In this ideal concept of knowledge he left behind the German philosopher Kant and the British poet-critic, and philosopher Coleridge, two of the best exponents of the Western theory of knowledge. We can find support for this conception in the following statement of Matthiessen:
we find nature ordering because we see only the forms of our own mind. For Emerson the mind does not create what it perceives through intuition it knows the truth, the divine, directly. This immediate intuition into the divine mind became indistinguishable in Emerson from the imagination. Therein he goes farther than Coleridge who, closer to fundamental theology, restricts the faculty of intuition, the participation of the individual mind in divine Reason, to the religious and moral sphere, and distinguishes it from poetic imagination.11

Indeed one of the most magnificent contributions of Emerson to American thought has been the introduction of this immediate, or to be precise, spiritual intuition, which initiated a new way of seeing. This new insight led to the discovery of "God Within," which opened a new chapter in American consciousness. Now the question is to identify the source of Emerson’s discovery of this unique mode of knowledge. It can not be found either in Swedenborg or Boehme or Edward, Emerson’s prominent Western sources of mystic and philosophical knowledge. In his eyes Swedenborg’s and Jacob Boehme’s conceptions were too narrow, because they nailed one fixed symbol to each truth and attempted to reduce it to a mathematical sign. Edward’s notion of religious intuition was too humiliating to allow the type of "Saturnalia of faith" which Transcendentalists felt after the discovery of God-within. The "inner light" of the Quakers, was after all not so enlightening as to produce spiritual intuition. That is to say, that in the Western thought there is no tradition of spiritual intuition. It stands to reason that Emerson’s sources for this spiritual intuition are certainly Indian, because his intuition is none other than the Nirvikalp Samadhi of Indian mysticism. Swami Nikhilanand defines Nirvikalp Samadhi in the following words:

The I-consciousness is totally obliterated, and there no longer remains any distinction between knower, knowledge, and the object of knowledge.12
In the state of spiritual intuition there is not even a semblance of mental activity. Swami Vivekanand says:

There is a stage of spiritual life when all reasonings are hushed like some delicious taste enjoyed by the dumb.\(^\text{13}\)

Much in the same way Emerson also conceived of intuition as a spiritual activity that goes beyond logical activity of the mind. It is the knowledge of unity in which the distinction of subject and object is. It goes to a level which can not be analysed by ordinary logic:

\[\text{...........that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions, in that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis can not go, all things find their common origin.}\(^\text{14}\)

This spiritual intuition formed the core of American Transcendentalism that produced a wonderful literature which can be compared with any literature of the highest quality. This sort of intuition was also used in the works of Thoreau and Whitman. Possessed by intuition Thoreau feels a silence, which is all pervasive and which:

\[\text{...........is the communion of conscious soul with itself. If the soul attend for a moment to its own infinity, then and there is silence. She is audible to all men, at all times, in all places.}\(^\text{15}\)

Whitman also experienced a level of consciousness beyond intellectual activity, a level in which he apprehends an unseen thread which binds all disparate objects. Whitman writes:

There is, apart from mere intellect, in the make up of every superior human identity ... a wondrous something that realizes without argument, .... an intuition of the absolute balance .... of the whole of this multifarious, mad chaos of fraud, .... we call the world, the soul-sight of that divine clue and unseen thread which holds the whole congeries of things .... such soul-sight and the root centre for the mind .... \(^\text{16}\)
Instances of spiritual intuition can be sighted almost from every writer who was influenced by Emerson during that period. The concept of spiritual intuition was just one of the countless ideas that Emerson and his contemporaries received from Indian sources, to enrich their literature and philosophy.

Emerson also absorbed the concepts of Brahman, Atman, Self, Maya, Karma, Sin, Evil, Transmigration, Incarnation etc. from the Indian sources. These sources went a long long way to contribute to, what Romain Rolland describes as the “strange moral and religious mentality of modern United States.”

How these ideas penetrated into American consciousness make very interesting reading. Most of the scholars believe that it came through the translation of the Indian classics that were introduced in America during the nineteenth century. In fact penetration of these ideas started much earlier, even before the European settlers came to America. It should be proper, if we study their arrival in three phases:-

1. The Red-Indian heritage
2. The European heritage in the form of the Greek Philosophy and the Bible
3. The Modern Vogue of Orientalism

The first phase of Indian influence an American psyche has its origin in the Red Indian heritage. It is a strange coincidence that Columbus who discovered the American Continent in 1492 called its inhabitants Red Indians. It was considered a mistake on his part. But now many scholars believe that there was a grain of truth in his assertion in as much as the so called Red Indians might well be descendants of Eurasians. For instance, Harold E. Driver believes that Eurasians migrated to the Americas via Brring Strates, “by the time of the dawn of the middle stone age in Europe.” These tribes founded
impressive empires – the Incas in Pepru, the Aztecs in Mexico, and the Mayans in between them. Indian mythology mentions that the famous giant Maya, noted for his building skill, lived in Mayadesh (Mexico). Arjuna, it is said, was married in America. These references prove at least that America existed in Indian imagination right from the epic period of her history. Americans too, were fully aware at least during the period of Transcendentalism, of their close past connections with India. Otherwise how can we explain the following remark of Thoreau:

As our domestic fowls are said to have their Original in the wild pheasant of India; so our domestic thoughts have their prototypes in the thoughts of her philosophers.¹⁹

Others besides Asiatics reached America before the fifteenth century. There might have been some from Africa – from the Nile, some from Carthage and the West coast. It has become increasingly clear that there were some from Europe. This possibility is confirmed by the discoveries made by Norwegian Archaeologists in Northern New Found Land and the eleventh and the twelfth century Scandinavian sagas, referring to Norseman as having crossed the ocean. The discovery of a world map drawn about 1440 A.D. establishes that Vinland, an island in south-west of Greenland, was discovered by Leif Ericson and Pope Paschal II had sent Bishop Eric Gnupsan to the island.²⁰ These immigrants must have carried with them the ideas of their ‘Aryan’ ancestors to these lands. The presence of Oriental ideas can be inferred from the native customs and manners which resemble those of ancient Aryans. Before finally disappearing from the ancient scene, the so called American-Indians, infused in American consciousness, their spirit of stoicim and resignation and a certain intuitive outlook, which made Americans
receptive to mystical notions. It is this Red Indian heritage which distinguishes the American mind from that of their European ancestors.

However, "in a real sense the first inroad Oriental thought made upon America was through the Bible."²¹ The Bible, though it contains some elements of Greek thought also, is Oriental, predominantly Hebraic and Iranian. The Christian philosophies, such as Thomism, Neo-Thomism, Puritanism, and the rest, therefore, contain Oriental elements and make themselves the unconscious instruments of an Orientalism despite Platonic and other leanings. Even though the Jews remained true to Judaism, they have imported to a more pronounced degree than Christians, Oriental ideas into their philosophical speculation. Both Judaism and Christianity combined to introduce Oriental ideas into American philosophy.²²

Judaism and Christianity both were administered strong doses of Indian mystic ideas as well. There are two trends in Christianity, prophetic and mystic. The prophetic trends are based on Jewish prophetic tradition, whereas the mystic tendencies, as Heiler argues, are derived from India.²³ This view is confirmed by Dr. Radhakrishnan: "While the messianic conception of the kingdom belongs to the Palestinian tradition, the mystic conception is the development of the Indian idea."²⁴ Even if, we give credence to another supposition that the mysticism of the Bible has its roots either in Greek speculation or in Hebraic mystic tradition or in Egyptian or in Iranian religious tradition, there is strong evidence to prove that these sources too received mystic tendencies from the Indian subcontinent.

The list of the beliefs and practices, which Christianity is supposed to have imported from Indian quarters is formidable. It will include the notions of the high
destiny of soul, conversion as rebirth; the real crucifixion being the crucifixion of flesh and the true resurrection, being the resurrection of Christ in man from the tomb of carnal desires, the coming world judgement, the spiritual ascent, the purified soul’s reaching God, the phenomenality of the world, the simile of the wheel of the birth, the war in heaven between Michel and his angels and the dragon along with his angels, and the practices of celibacy, relics, confessions, baptism, etc. The close connection between Christianity and Indian religions is also established by the fact that the legends of Krishna, Buddha, and Christ display an identical pattern. Furthermore some of the Christian stories “are found in the Hinayan Buddhist canon and date, therefore, before the Christian era.”

There is no doubt that Christianity in its formative stage drew heavily upon the Buddhistic religious beliefs, which had their origin in Upanishads. In this sense Buddha and Jesus are the earlier and later Hindu and Jewish representatives of the same upheaval of the human soul, “whose typical expression we have in the Upanishads.”

An important pipeline, which passed Eastern ideas into Christianity existed in the form of the mystic cults of Isis or Mithras, Jesus or Orphic mysteries. The mysticism or to be precise asceticism of these cults was imbued with Indian ideas, which they transmitted to Christian cults. Manichaeism, another mystic cult, did the same service. However, the most important vehicles of Indian mysticism were such sects as Jewish, Platonism, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, and Christian Platonism, which flourished in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria which stood at the cross-roads of the East and the West. These schools of thought, though founded on the thought of Plato and other Greek philosophers derived nothing from Greek philosophy except its language and methods. The essentials of their thought “are all Eastern.”
Jewish Platonism, an important moulder of Christian thought, was propped up by Philo, one of the world's greatest mystics. He propounded mystic ideas some of which at least, were definitely Indian e.g. his passion for God, his conviction that pure in heart shall see Him, and his faith that ascetic training alone can lead us to His presence.28

Many features of the Jewish Kabbala such as the potency assigned to letters, the use of charms and amulets, the theory of emanation as opposed to creation ex nihilo, the doctrine of the correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm, belief in rebirth and a definite Pantheistic tendency are alien to the spirit of orthodox Judaism and akin to that of the Upanishads and Tantrism.29

Gnosticism, another powerful influence on Christianity, is "pure Orientalism in a Hellenic mask."30 C.W. King understands that the seeds of Gnosis were originally of Indian growth. Its dualistic theology, ecstatic experience of the reality, and redemption from human bondage can be traced from Indian sources.

No Western school of thought is close to Indian philosophy as Neoplatonism, founded by Saccas. Its most brilliant exponent was Saccas' disciple Plotinus. His belief in rebirth, law of Karma, the teaching of entering into the spiritual consciousness, higher revelation to man in mystical experience, the superiority of jnana or wisdom or contemplation to action or Karma (an enfeebled product of contemplation), and his theory of vision are borrowed from Indian thought bank. Plotinus' God, Nous, and world soul can be equated with Indian concepts of Brahma, Isvara, and Hiranyagarbha. Like an Indian yogi Plotinus believed that ecstatic elevation can be gained by ascetic self-emancipation from the world of senses.31

Vacherot, Zeller, Brichier, Ritter, and Stutfield were convinced of Indian influence on Plotinus. Pointing out the similarities between the thought of India and Plotinus32, G.R.S. Mead writes:
The whole system of Plotinus revolves round the idea of a threefold principle trichotomy or trinity, and of pure intention. In these respects it bears a remarkable similarity to the great Vedantic system of Indian philosophy. Deity, spirit, soul, body, macrocosm and the essential identity of the divine in man with the divine in the universe... or of the Jivatman with the Paramatman... are the main subjects of his system.

Thus from the point of view of the great universe, we have the one Reality, or the Real, the One, the God; .... this is the All-Self of the Upanishads Brahman or Paramatman.33

Paul Hacker also suspects the vedantic influence on Neoplatonism. He claims:

What the Neoplatonists aimed at was much the same as the Vedantist intended to reach incorporeity as a stage of pure spirit in the case of Vedantist; incorporeity as a stage reached through spirit in the case of Neoplatonists.34

However, Richard Garbe notes that there is a Samkhya influence on Plotinus and Neoplatonism. The views of Plotinus (204-269 A.D.) are in part in perfect agreement with those of the Samkhya system, especially in the notions that “the soul is free from sorrows” that “sufferings of the world belong to matter” and that the deliverance of the world from misery i.e. redemption, which means “absolute painlessness,” can be achieved by “discriminative knowledge.” The important Neoplatonists, apart from Plotinus, were Porphyry, who popularized the teachings of Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus. These Neoplatonists were popular with American Transcendentalists. They also influenced such European thinkers as Boethius Scotus, Erigena, Eckhart et al. Many typical Neoplatonic ideas were consciously and unconsciously adopted by Christianity.

The brief analysis of the two channels viz. the Red-Indian heritage and the Greek philosophy and the Bible, which absorbed mysticism from Indian sources and then passed it to Europe and America, underscores two points. First the Red-Indian heritage with its spirit of religion, fatalism, and stoicism, most probably played an important role
in providing the American psyche with an intuitive character, which incidentally became one of its chief traits, that distinguished it from the European psyche. Second, the Bible was the chief source of mystic notions, which were prevalent in America before the advent of Transcendentalism. The streak of mysticism in Greek philosophy nourished mystic tendencies in intellectual circles. These factors combined to make America receptive to mysticism, as and when it reached there in a fresh wave in the form of the researches and translations made by the European Indologists. This wave had four distinct phases:

I. European Idealism and Romanticism
II. American Scholars
III. The East India Trade
IV. The Works of Raja Ram Mohan Roy

America's response to the Orient was, "an off-shoot of European Orientalism,"35 which started in Europe as an attack on conventional Christianity and monarchy. It was an assault on the economic moral, and aesthetic foundations of Europe.36 Perhaps the most significant part of the Orient vogue was the rediscovery of the ancient Indian classics, which were lost to Europe. An intense interest in Indian literature was revived, when the British rulers of India found it necessary for the purpose of administration, to study the Indian law books37 and when the Christian missionaries especially Jesuits such as Father Hanxleden and Father Coeurdoux made some serious effort in trying to understand the Indian heritage.38

The study of Indian heritage assumed the shape of an organized effort with the establishment of various agencies of Indology. The Asiatic Society of Bengal was
launched on the first day of 1784, by Sir William Jones, one of the fathers of Indology and the great pioneer of Sanskrit studies and comparative philology. The Society had 'Asiatic Researches' as its journal. In 1795, the government of the French Republic founded 'the Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes,' where the teaching of Sanskrit was started by Alexander Hamilton, one of the founders of the Asiatic Society. He taught Sanskrit to Friedrich Schlegel. Sanskrit was first taught in 1805, at the training college of the East India Company at Hertford. In 1821, the French Societe Asiatique was founded in Paris, followed two years later by the Royal Asiatic Society in London. In 1862, the Indian government established the post of Archaeological Surveyor, to which General Sir Alexander Cunningham was appointed. In 1901 Sir John Marshall became the Director General of the Archaeological Department. These developments increased the popularity of Indian culture in the western hemisphere.

When the translations of the Sanskrit classics made by the Britishers, connected with The Asiatic Society, appeared in Europe, they caused a storm. In 1785 Charles Wilkins brought out the Bhagavad-Gita, the first Sanskrit work ever to be translated in English. During the same decade, Sir William Jones rendered into English the Law of Manu and Kalidas dramatic masterpiece Shakuntala. The latter's translation into German by Georg Forster was "enthusiastically welcomed by men like Herder and Goethe." The works of H.T. Colebrokke found avid readers in England and America. The works of these Indologists produced an unprecedented interest in Indian literature among European countries, which also indirectly passed on to America.

German idealism, which is generally supposed to be the most important factor in the development of American Transcendentalism was greatly influenced by Indian
thought, which was knocking the doors of Germany well before the publication of Kant's
*Works*, mentions that Heinrich Roth studied Sanskrit in 1664; that the Jesuit Hanxleden
visited India in 1699 and compiled dictionaries and grammars; that Captain Wilford
wrote treatises on Indian subjects and that his (Freidrich's) elder brother Charles
Augustus went to India to study the country and its literature and died at Madras on the
9th of September, 1789. Arthur F.J. Remy tells us that in 1663 Roger's well known book
*De Open-Deure tot het Verborgen Heydendom*, containing most valuable information on
Hindu religion was translated into German by C. Arnold. Johen Gottfried von Herder's
fourth collection of the *Zerstreute Blatter* published in 1792 contained translations from
the Sanskrit consisting of maxims from the *Hitopadesa* and from Bhartrihari and passages
from the *Bhagavad-Gita* under the name of *Gedanken siniger Bramanen*. Goethe first
became acquainted with Hindu fables through Draper's book of travel in 1771 and later
on became seriously involved in Indian literature through Herder's efforts. Goethe
wrote "a poetic homage to the Indian dramatist."  

Thus before the development of idealism the atmosphere in Germany was
surcharged with Indian ideas. Though there is no concrete evidence to show that Kant
was acquainted with Indian philosophical tradition, there is a marked similarity between
his conceptions and those of the Indian thought. Schopenhauer observes that "Kant's
greatest merit is the distinction of the phenomenon from the thing in itself." "This same
truth", he continues, "...is also a leading doctrine of the Vedas and Puranas." Paul
Deussen things that "the deep fundamental conception of Plato and Kant was precisely

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that which already formed the basis of Upanishad teaching. Deaussen “found Parmenides, Plato and Kant in a nutshell.”

A kenner impulse to Indological studies in Germany was given by Schlegel brothers. Friedrich von Schlegel wrote ‘The Language and Wisdom of India’, the publication of which was regarded by Rawlinson as “the most important event of its kind since the rediscovery of the treasures of classical Greek literature at the Renaissance.”

August Wilhelm von Schlegel edited the Gita in 1823. However the first German translation of the Gita is dated 1802. Yet another translation of this scripture was made by Wilhelm von Humboldt. Indian thought made a deep impression on German minds. Friedrich Schlegel was so much enamoured that he wrote that loftiest philosophy of the Europeans, when compared with abundant light and vigour of Oriental idealism is “like a feeble Promethean spark in the full flood of heavenly glory of the noonday sun, faltering and feeble, and even ready to be extinguished.”

Schopenhauer, who came to know Upanishads through Duperron, experienced that the “incomparable book stirs the spirit to the very depths of the soul.” According to Brandes, Heins’s “spiritual home was on the banks of the Ganges.” Amiel confessed a Hindu streak in him. From the Ramayana Michelet drank “a long draught of life and youth.” Rucckert, Franz Bopp, “the greatest founder of the modern linguistic science”, Richard Wagner, Hartman, Nietzsche, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Max Muller too were admirers of Indian thought – the last named being the greatest of all.

German interest in and enthusiasm about Indian philosophy, religion, and literature were paralleled in France. France received Indian thought not only via German idealism but also directly through the translations of the classics. French philosophy and
the translations made by the French writers carried Indian ideas to America. Abbe Renaudet, Croix, Ctesias, Coeurdoux Parraud, and Chev. d’Obsonville (the last two were the translators of Wilkins’ translation of the Bhagavad-Gita) did good work to promote Indian ideas. There was a manuscript in the Imperial Library at Paris, which helped Friedrich von Schlegel in acquiring Sanskrit. Bartholemy Sainte Hilaire is notable for his Sur les Vedas. Anquetil Duperron was the first European to render the Upanishads in an Occidental tongue, from the Persian translation of the Upanishads made by several Pandits from Varanasi and Delhi at the instance of Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. The manuscript of this translation was presented to him by his friend Le Gentil, the French Resident in Faizabad at the court of Shuja-uddaulah. Anquetil’s translation was in Latin and it was published in 1801-1802. In fact Duperron and Bailly were “the counterparts” of Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins, and Warren Hastings in England. Duperron’s Oupnek’hat is mentioned in Emerson’s Journal.

Mme. de Stael, Benjamin Constant, Theodore Jouffroy Chezy, Langlois, Fauche and Burnouf did much to popularise Indian thought and to carry it to American shores. Burnouf’s Introduction to a L’histoire du Buddhism (1844) Sainte Hilaire’s La Bouddha et sa religion (1858-60) or translations such as Sacountala by Chezy (1820) Bhagavata-Purana by Burnouf (1840-47) Rig Veda by Langlois (1849-51) Bhagavad-Gita by Burnouf (1861) Ramayan by Fauche (1854-58) were well received in America. However the most illustrious figure in this connection is that of Victor Cousin, a great admirer of Oriental ideas. Once he said:
When we read with attention, the poetical and philosophical monuments of the East, above all, those of India, which are beginning to spread in Europe, we discover there many a truth, and truths so profound, and which make such a contrast with the meaness of results at which the European genius has sometimes stopped, that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy.  


English response to Indian thought was tremendous. English Romanticism absorbed Oriental ideas directly from the literature about India and also from the translations of Indian classics. It also received these ideas as a part of their German legacy. However it was largely through the translations and enthusiasm of Sir William Jones that England’s interest for Indian literature was aroused. Wilkins, Wilson, Colebrooke et al. carried on his work. Other Englishmen took a keen interest in Indians and their culture. Warren Hastings, who wrote a fine and prophetic introduction to Wilkins’ translation of the Gita, Edmund Burke, who impeached Hastings, and William Cowper were enthusiastic about India. It is interesting to note that while the German and the French intellectuals were influenced by the philosophy of India, the English Romantics were carried away by the glamour of the exotic and the romantic surface of Indian life. The Indian thought waves which were redirected through Germany influenced Coleridge and Carlyle. “There seemed to be much of India in Wordsworth and Shelley, especially in their pantheism. The Orient was more visible in Landor’s Gebir (1798), Southey’s Thalaba (1801) and Curse of Kehama (1810), and Moore’s Lalla Rookh (1817). No exception was Byron who said in 1813, with his usual shrewdness:
“Stick to the East; the oracle, Stael, told me it was the only practical policy.”

Southey’s ‘Curse of Kehama’ cast a powerful influence on Emerson’s Orientalism.

However the chief figures in American context were Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle. Christopher North in an essay on Wordsworth found at least two affinities in his thought with that of Hindus. His poetry attempted “to awaken in the minds of his countrymen, certain lumieres” and “certain convictions of moral laws.” To attain this state what is required is “an establishment of a certain stillness and equability within the mind.” These were the convictions of Emerson also. Coleridge was indebted to Schelling, the Schlegels, and Herder. All of them were students of Sanskrit literature. Schelling, who passed “the eastern strain” into the common stock of European thought, was more influential. Emerson’s indebtedness to Coleridge, Coleridge’s indebtedness to Schelling, and Schelling’s to Indian thinkers, - these facts point out to a common string running through the Western and Eastern minds. Carlyle was conscious of the affinity between his own ideas and those of Indians. Paul Elmer More finds Carlyle’s “fascination” to “spring from that sense of illusion which we call Oriental and which is really the basis of Hindu religion.” Mr. More also finds Carlyle Oriental in his “unvarying moral law of cause and effect” and his “mystic gospel of works.” Carlyle, we know, had close links with the New England Transcendentalists.

India existed in American consciousness much earlier than she was rediscovered by Transcendentalists. The early Puritans were conscious of the idea of ‘Orient.’ Anne Braadstreet wrote to her husband’s love, which she prized more than “all the riches, that the East doth hold.” Cotton Mather’s vision encompassed “the whole range of the Orient, from Persia to India to Japan.” In the eighteenth century American response began to
deviate in a significant way from that of Europe. Franklin knew Sir William Jones personally. He entertained "the notion of reincarnation, as his own epitaph suggests." Reincarnation later on became a catch-word with Transcendentalism. Jefferson was interested in Sir Jones' legal works and was proud to possess a copy of his Shakuntala. The possibilities of trade and commercial interests in India also dominated the American mind: The notion of a passage to the Orient was "one of the ruling conceptions of American thought about the west." Yu thinks that Americans responded to the Orient as a mandate of history, as a matter of birthright. Whatever separate paths they pursued, it was the Orient that helped clarify their sense of direction.

Americans wanted a sense of direction from India, a need which Europe, for reasons stated earlier, could not cater. They wanted an established tradition, which had stood the test of time.

Some Americans found these things in India which had been a civilization three thousand years before England, Germany or France.

Furthermore E.L. Mayo thinks that "more than anything else, it seems to have been a sense of the deficiency in emotional richness and depth in American intellectual life," which led Americans "to turn to Orient in their quest for the spiritual enrichment of the American Leviathan." They might have learned from Friedrich Schlegel that before the noon-day sun-light of the Oriental idealism, "The promethean sparks" of European idealism are "feeble and faltering." With Cousin they might have visualized India as the native land of the highest philosophy. Thoreau regarded East as the real home of philosophy:-
In everyone’s youthful dreams philosophy is still vaguely, but inseparably and with singular truth, associated with the East, nor do after years discover its local habitation in the Western World. In comparison with the philosophers of the East, we may say that modern Europe has yet given birth to none. 

Moreover America found in India a kindred spirit, i.e. sufferers from the same hands. The misery and slavery of India struck a sympathetic chord in American hearts. Their fascination for Indian classics was because they reflected the same thought stuff, which Americans had been searching for such a long period, without success, in European literature to resurrect their literary tradition. In February 1824 Emerson entitled a long passage in his Journals “Asia: Origin” and wrote:—

**Humanity finds it curious and good to go back to the scenes of Auld Lang Syne, to the old mans on house of Asia.... It brings the mind palpable relief to withdraw it from the noisy and overgrown world to these peaceful primeval solitudes.....**

In a comparative study they found that Indian ideas are more suitable. Whitman in his note on “British Literature” says:—

**While there is much in (Shakespeare) ever offensive to democracy.....of the great poems of Asian antiquity, the Indian epics I should say they substantially adjust themselves to us....with our notions, both of seriousness and fun, and our standards of heroism, manliness, and even the democratic requirements.**

Americans found Indian ideas congenial to their views. One of the most important Indian notion was the “narcissistic views of the self, a self easily transformed into the Great Self of cosmic proportion.” Such a view studied to the newly acquired cosmic view of the American intelligentsia. Furthermore the typical Indian distrust of the ultimate value of reason appealed to American Imagination which had seen the havoc caused by it in Europe. America’s alienation with contemporary Christianity led them to read avidly the Oriental Scriptures which were of an altogether different taste and flavour. The “eastern
bibles" kindled a strong desire in American hearts to collate a bible of the bibles. To this end Victor Cousin showed them a way - 'a method of 'eclecticism.'\textsuperscript{74} The American response to India and her classics was also accelerated because of the murky social conditions in America, produced by industrialism, urbanism, and shameful mercantile spirit. Spiritual souls turned their eyes to the Eastern horizon. In the quest for spiritual truth, these handful people, later on subsuming the title of Transcendentalists, were helped by the growth of East-West communication, which enabled them to have enough material for their perusal.

European Romanticism with idealism in its wings brought the first impulses of the incense of the Indian classics to America. It became a potent force in moulding the course of American literature and Transcendentalism, so much so that the Weltanschauung of Emerson and Thoreau was not basically very different from that of Coleridge or Shelley or Schelling. However, its role in diffusing Oriental ideas cannot be over-emphasized, in view of the fact that "the extent to which Indian thought really influenced men like Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, and some of the Continental Romantics is an obscure question."\textsuperscript{75} Moreover these Romantics were carried away by the exotic glamour of the eastern countries. They did not peep into the inner world and did not explore, what Will Durrant understood as the real character of India:-

the tolerance and gentleness of the native mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things.\textsuperscript{76}

Furthermore there is little internal evidence in the works of Emerson and Thoreau to indicate that they were guided by their Continental counterparts towards the Indian classics. Reid found only one evidence, in the form of an entry in Emerson's Diary, in
which he noted “an Indian quotation suggested to him by reading Southey’s ‘The Curse of Kehama.”

Nevertheless the one positive contribution of Romanticism was to make America eager for the old world-classics well before the emergence of Transcendentalism. Moncure Conway records:-

the passion for Oriental scriptures in America was already active, when the Transcendentalists of Boston recognized it....

But to suppose that interest in the Indian classics was limited to the Transcendental circles would be far from truth. Other groups also evinced keen interest. “Americans enamoured of language studies founded Indian studies on Indo-European philosophy.” Sanskrit studies began a the City University of New York in 1836, and at Yale College in 1841. Issac Nordheemer at New York and Edward Elbridge Salisbury at Yale were the first teachers of Sanskrit. From them the thread was picked up by others. Another pipeline – ‘the Indo-American Ship Trade – through which the knowledge of Indian legacy flowed to the New World has been discussed by Holden Furber and James Snyder.

The well known American Indologist, B. Norman Brown contends that the early trade between India and America had an appreciable effect on Americans’ knowledge of Indian literature and philosophy. “America learned nothing of India from them, nor did they leave any impression of America in India.” But John T. Reid has evidence, although fragmentary, to prove that:-

the frequent voyages of the early sea-captains helped to make thinking Americans conscious of India’s cultural heritage and even provided them with books and philosophical ideas.

Some influential Americans had connections in India. Cotton Mather published ‘India Christiana’, a treatise on methods of converting the “heathen” and sent books and
money to German Protestant missionaries in India and received a Tamil translation of the
New Testament. Elihu Yale (after whom Yale University was founded), the Governor of
Fort George in Madras, Nathaniel Higginson, the grandson of one of the founders of
Salem, Massachusetts, the Rev. Francis Higginson, Sir David Ochterlon and William
Duer served in India. After the Declaration of Independence Americans made a more
meaningful contact in the form of sea-trade between the two countries. The first
American ship to India — the United States — set out in 1784 from Philadelphia. From
Baltimore in 1786, set sail the second ship Chesapeake which was captained by John O.
Donnell, who served in the British army. Salem and later on Boston in America and
Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in India, became important ports which handled Indo-
American trade. The captains of the ship helped to diffuse Indian thought in the
American part of the world by bringing valuable literary material from India. Henry
Pickering, requested his friend Captain Heard of the Salem brig "Caravan" to bring back"
a Sanskrit bible." Adrienne Moore mentions that a file of the Bengal periodical, Hur
Karu was received in Boston. The sea-captains frequently brought books for the
Reverend William Bentley, a learned and versatile Unitarian clergyman. It is interesting
to note that Jones' translation of Shakuntala was published in 1804, in The Monthly
Anthology which was Boston's most important periodical of the time. This fact gives
some indication of the keenness and quickness of American response to the translations
of Indian classics.

The "Supercargoes" or the representatives of the owners with the responsibility of
selling and obtaining cargoes, who went with the ships, were instrumental in the
American awareness of Indian legacy. Such men were usually members of good
families, frequently Harvard graduates, whose intellectual interests were lively. One
'Supercargo' John Broomfield had read Henry Colebrooke's Remark on the Husbandry
and Internal Commerce of Bengal, published in Calcutta in 1804. Joseph W. Cogswell,
another Supercargo, had intellectual interests. Even more distinguished Supercargo
was Charles Eliot Norton, who in India, made friends with people with intellectual
interests. The sea-captains also belonged to the socially prominent families and were
properly educated. They had deeply religious background and many were doubtlessly
interested in the religious lore of foreign parts. Some of them had close contacts with
missionaries.

It is likely that these sea-farers had brought ideas and possibly
books on India's culture. Christian missionaries played a key-role in promoting American awareness of
Indian cultural heritage. In this field, no group surpassed the American missionaries in
their contributions. Their work in India started when Adoniram Judson with his wife and
Samuel Newell sailed from Salem on February 19, 1822. They developed close contacts
with missionaries at Serampore (near Calcutta) especially with Ward, who diligently
uncovered some of the glories of India's cultural past. Another important missionary
Gordon Hall reached Bombay and established Gordon Hall house in Byculla, which is to
this day a radiating centre of greater understanding and cooperation between India and
America. On the basis of this evidence we can conjecture that the early American
missionaries and their sea-faring friends "were carriers of some concepts of Indian
philosophy to their acquaintance at home. They might have made the atmosphere at
Salem and Boston loaded with India and Indian ideas.
The transcendental circles were fully aware of these overseas expeditions and were benefited by the knowledge of the ancient land brought by the voyagers. Thoreau, for example, knew of the ice trade with Calcutta and used it in one of the most striking parts of Walden. *Eight Cousins*, a novel written by Louisa May Alcott, daughter of Amos Bronson Alcott, had an episode in Indian background. Emerson records the visit of a Unitarian missionary Rev. William Adam from Calcutta. The father of Nathaniel Hawthorne, the great novelist, was a sea-captain, who kept a journal lettered by his son. It reads “Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Book-1820-Salem; a Journal of a Passage from Bengal to America in the ship America os Salem, 1798.”*86* There might be many other such journals. In this way there is a good evidence to support the contention that “a good deal of knowledge about India came to America via trade routes established early in (American) national history.”*87*

It was left to the works of Ram Mohan Roy to quicken the pace of Indo-American communication. Ram Mohan Roy was a pioneer in the field of comparative religion. His personal religion combined “the fundamental Hindu, Christian, and Islamic experiences. He transvalued all these experiences and he made them integral to his own valuation of life.”*88* His religious approach was similar to that of Unitarianism – a fact which endered him to the Western Unitarians. The Rev. Henry Ware, under whom Emerson worked as an assistant was America’s staunchest proponent of the Indian thinker and reformer. Ram Mohan’s *The precepts of Jesus* (Calcutta 1620, reprinted in the States in 1825 and 1828) shook the religious thought of New England for several years. In this book, he questioned the need of believing in the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost; a line which was later on adopted by Emerson. *A Vindication of the Incarnation of the Deity as
a Common Basis of Hinduism and Christianity, originally published in Calcutta in 1833 and reprinted by the Salem Courier in 1838, was Ram Mohan's another important work.

Roy's works on Indian philosophy and his translations of the Upanishads found tremendous response in America. Editions printed in England of an Abridgment of Vadant of Resolution of all the Vedas (1816); translations of the Moonduk-Oopanishad (1819) and the Cana Upnishad (1824); and the Translation of Several Principal Books, Passages, and Texts of the Vedas (1832) and other titles were all presumably available in America. The last mentioned book, according to Christy was drawn from the Harvard College Library by Thoreau. \(^8\)

Emerson might have read Roy's Translation of the Ishopanished, One of the Chapters of the Yajur Veda (Calcutta, 1816) on the advice of his aunt Mary Moody Emerson. \(^9\) The correspondence of Raja Ram Mohan Roy with his American friends and the articles which appeared on his personality, thought and work helped popularize Indian philosophy and religion in the States. In this role Roy became one of the moving forces behind Transcendentalism. Adrienne Moore writes:-

To the extent that Ram Mohan Roy was responsible for the interest in the Orient, amongst Americans in general, and amongst New Englanders in particulars, to that extent was he an instrument for the formation of the ideas of Emerson and his associates, with their love or Oriental literature, philosophy and religion. \(^9\)

The translations, which made deepest inroads into American consciousness were those, which Emerson mentioned in a passage of his essay 'Books'. He refers to the Vedas and Laws of Manu, the Upanishads, the Vishnu Purana, the Bhagavad-Gita of Hindus. He also refers to Vishnu Sharma. Elsewhere Emerson also praised the Bhagavad Puran and Milman's translation of Nal and Damyanti. These books, along with a large body of essays and studies, which appeared in Europe and America on Indian themes,
tremendously augmented the waters of mysticism, which were flowing in the form of a feeble current originating from the native mentality and the religious and philosophical sources, which themselves had sprung from the Indian sources, directly or indirectly.

Till now we have considered how Indian classics and ideas came to the western hemisphere, especially America where they brought a revolution in the realm of letters. Let us, henceforth discuss how the Indian classics and their ideas penetrated into the mind of Emerson the leader of this revolution. He was an Orientalist through and through. However, there is a controversy about the beginning of Emerson’s interest in Orientalism. M.M. Singh argued that Emerson was an Orientalist at the age of eighteen (i.e. 1821), whereas Cameron and Goren Leyla believed that his interest in India began as early as in 1818. In fact it began even earlier. In all likelihood Emerson absorbed Indian ideas from his boyhood, as they were present in the very atmosphere in which he was brought up. He inherited interest in India consciously or unconsciously from his father. This interest was fortified by his aunt Mary Moody Emerson. In case of mystic ideas it is probable that he might have unconsciously absorbed, at least some of them, from the native sources. With the blood of eight generations of divines in his veins, he might have also drunk at the well of the Bible, which, as we have seen earlier, had received the mystic currents from India via the classical and the Alexandrian sources. The mystic elements received from the native and the Biblical sources, could have become potent sources which ultimately produced mystical tendencies in Emerson’s mind, the tendencies which were strengthened by his personal needs and his subsequent studies in Indian lore. Waldo’s father William Emerson evinced a keen interest in Indian customs and philosophy. Emerson borrowed from the Boston Library Society, in
December 19, 1812 and kept it for five days, William Tennants' *Indian Recreation*. William Emerson’s Library also contained two important books on India. The first was William Enfield’s *The History of Philosophy*. The chapter V of this work was titled *Of the Philosophy of the Indians*. Its Appendix dealt with the progress and present state of philosophy in the Indian subcontinent and among the Chinese. Emerson’s interest in the book can be gauged from the fact that he borrowed the book from the Boston Library Society, after the auction of his father’s library on August 27, 1822. Furthermore, as an undergraduate at Harvard, he made use of the college copy, which had been donated by Thomas Hollis. The second book connected with India and accessible to Emerson in his father’s library was Joseph Priestley’s *A Comparison of Institution of Moses with those of Hindoos and to her ancient nations; with Remarks on Mr Dupin’s origin of all Religions. The laws of Institutions of Moses methodized …. Northumberland, 1799*. This book is famous for what is known as Priestleyanism which has certain marked affinities with Vedanta.

Emerson’s interest in India continued to swell. In 1818 he read Thomas Duer Broughton’s *Selections from the popular poetry of the Hindoos*. In 1819 he studied Volume I of Lord Woodhouselee’s *Considerations on the Present Political State of India* and Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*, notable for its extensive notes from many books, including books on India. In this connection, 1820 is the most fruitful year, in which Emerson read *Lalla Rookh* (again), Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire*, containing an exposition of Zoroastrianism, which closely resembles Indian religion; the Volume I of the *Asiatic Miscellany*, containing Indian hymn including “A Hymn to Narayena” translated by Sir William Jones; Grant's...
Restoration of Learning in the East, which attempted to draw a parallel between Hindu philosophy and Berkeley’s idealism and Southey’s *Curse of Kehama*. Of these works “A Hymn to Narayana” is important in the sense that it has the concept of Maya (Illusion), one of the favourite topics of Emerson. However, even more important is *Curse of Kehama* for in the appended notes, Southey has quoted from the English translation of the Indian classics including the Bhagavad-Gita. Thus Emerson’s acquaintance with Gita in all probability began before 1820.

Before composing his ‘Indian Superstition’ Emerson had read Thomas Campbell’s poem ‘The Pleasures of Hope,’ the appended notes of which included important matter on India. The poem provided the theme and a part of the subject matter to Emerson’s Pythologian poem ‘Improvement’ written at Harvard during the early spring of 1820 and delivered in April of the same year. It was also the source of the theme of ‘universal improvement’ expressed at the end of ‘Indian Superstition’. A rough draft (manuscript pages 5 and 6) of the poem (‘Indian Superstition’) discovered by Cameron, contains such expressions as “The crystal cup of Immorality’ and ‘when Brahma, for thy land, in distance viewed. We can get, from such phrases, an idea of Emerson’s interest in Indian ideas.

During Emerson’s college days, the whole Boston atmosphere was surcharged with Orientalism. There was a popular taste for Oriental themes, scenery, and pageantry in the Boston Theatre. Songs on Indian subjects were in the air. One collection of popular songs that circulated among college students, seem to have provided Emerson with models for some of his own college songs, including “Sadi and Moor” and “Indian Philosopher.” Orientalism or Indianism also pervaded in trade and educational circles.
The Harvard College Library, during Emerson’s student days had books on India by knowledgeable authors such as Alexander Chalmor, William Backford, Jean Antoine Dubois, William Adam, Henry Ware, Ram Mohan Roy, Bernard Picart, John Richardson, Carwithen, Claudius Buchanan, Boulanger, Donald Campbell, Quintin Craufurd, Alexander Hamilton, La Croze, Hanry Lord Carsten Niebuhr, Gui Tachard et al. The books of these authors and the occasional articles on Oriental subjects in the Atheneum, or, Spirit of the English Magazines (14 volumes) formed the parts of Orientalia, which Emerson was supposed to know. It would “bear further witness”, observes Cameron, “to the considerable body of Indian lore contributing to America’s enlarging awareness of the antipodes long before the Romantic writers exploited the Eastern scriptures.”

To this formidable list of authors and their books compiled by Cameron, we can add two other authors, whose books were popular with the missionary minded Christians: George Foster (Sketches of the Mythology and Customs of the Hindoos) and George Burden (‘Missionary Anecdotes’). The harvest of Oriental lore continued to interest Emerson even after his college days. He composed for his pupils, in 1823, a short story based upon extracts from Mark Wilks’ Historical Sketches of the South India. The same year Emerson read Religion and Character of Hindoos, published in Edinberg Review, Vol. XXIX, pp. 377-403. It is indicated by his Journals, I, 303-4 that this anonymous articles was read and commented upon in 1823. It was a review of several books on India, particularly of William Ward’s Account of the writings, Religion and Manners of the Hindoos, which Emerson later draw from the Harvard College Library. The article recorded among other things “the number and absurdity” of Hindu-gods and the ‘cruelty’
and the 'sensuality' of the Hindu-religion. The temper reflected in the young Emerson's Journals after reading the article was as biased and unfriendly as the article itself. However, the Edinburgh Review occupies a very important place in Emerson's readings, in so far as it published many articles on India and translations of many Hindu scriptures from 1805 to 1818 and later. Dr. Man Mohan Singh informs that Emerson borrowed many of these periodicals from libraries during the years 1820 to 1825.

Emerson's initial reaction towards India was that of indifference, caused by his "Anglo-Saxon sense of superiority" and also by reading unfair rather hostile accounts of India by the missionaries. But with the growth of his idealism, his attitude changed. "Aunt Many's enthusiasm and the lure inherent in the books of the Orientals eventually vanquished the boy's indifference." Gradually the Indian books became his dear delight, because they answered his probing questions in a way, which western writers never did. In February 1824, when he was only twenty one, Emerson entitled a long passage in his Journals "Asia Origin" in which he wished to go back "to the old mansion house of Asia" withdrawing from "the noisy and overgrown world." This change was discernible by 1825, when "the Young Emerson remembered with pride and gratitude" all great teachers of mankind, particularly the Orientals, a gesture not much in keeping with the spiritual preparation for the ministry in a religion which is the most exclusive. However, Emerson's acquaintance in depth, with Indian thought began around 1830, when he read some outstanding expositions of Indian philosophy by Joseph Marie Degerando, Victor Cousin, and perhaps by Anquetil Duperron.

In Emerson's Journals II, 334 (1830) is cited a very important work, Oupnek'hāt, a Latin translation of the Upanishads from a Persian version. The book should have been
of especial interest, as it contained the translations of the ‘Brahadaranyak, and ‘Chandogya’, two of the most important Upanishads. The two together contain, all the important tenets of the Upanishads of which the Gita is an essence. However, it is not certain if Emerson had read the book. William H. Gilman and Alfred R. Ferguson suppose that his (Emerson’s) source of information for the reference was not the book itself, but Degerando. Emerson read avidly Cousin’s *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, which he acquired soon after its publication. For his views on Indian philosophy, Cousin was indebted to Colebrooke’s Essays. The book provided Emerson, apart from other valuable information a challenging summary of the Gita. Another authoritative source of information about Indian philosophy was Joseph Marie Degerando’s *Histoire Comparee des systemes de philosophie*. Emerson drew Vols. I and II of the book from the Boston Athenaeum on Jan 1, 1830. On Feb. 1 of the same year, he drew Vol. IV. He again drew the book on April 6, 1831 (volume not designated). Emerson’s Journal 11, 333, contains, a most illuminating passage, which is a digest of what Degerando had written of Oriental cosmogonies, theogonies and idealism, together with the works of various translators, whom Emerson later read.

However the book that produced an abiding interest in Emerson was the Bhagavad-Gita. Although he had already read its quotations, as we have seen earlier, he received the full text only in June 17, 1845. For him, as he wrote to Elizabeth Hoar, it was an event:

The only other event is the arrival in Concord of the “Bhagavad-Gita”, the renowned book of Buddhism, extracts of which I have often admired, but never before held the book in my hands.
Emerson, got the first feel of the Gita, as he admitted in August 4, 1873 letter to Friedrich Max Muller, from Victor Cousin:

I remember I owed my first taste for this fruit to Cousin’s sketch, in his first lectures, of the Dialogue between Krishna and Arjoon, and I still prize the first chapters of the Bhagavad as wonderful and would gladly learn any accurate date of their age.\textsuperscript{121}

The fact that Emerson read Cousin’s Lectures in 1831, has been admitted in his May 24, 1831 letter to his brother William\textsuperscript{122}, - Victor Cousin in the third lecture delivered on the 29\textsuperscript{th} of April 1828 and contained in ‘Cours de l’historie de la philosophie’ dealt with the Gita rather in detail. Kurt F., Leidecker thinks that from the summary one can detect the original “for many a thought phrased poetically by Emerson.”\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{quote}
It is of course an outstanding summary, which gives not only the vivid picture of the setting, but also a fair account of the cardinal concepts of the Gita viz. Atman, Brahman, Maya, Transmigration, Action, Duty and the Yoga of concentration.
\end{quote}

Emerson might have got the first feel of the quotations from the Gita even earlier i.e. in 1820, when he read. Southey’s \textit{Curse of Kehama}, during his Harvard days. Southey had quoted from the Gita, in the notes appended to the book. Such a keen reader as Emerson should not have skipped over those quotations. The chances of Emerson’s reading the ‘extracts’ from the Gita before the publication of his seminal books are fairly high. Wilkins’ translation of the Gita was in the collection of the New York Society Library as early as 1838.\textsuperscript{124} Considering the importance of Boston during those days, we can assume that this translation was available to the Bostonians much earlier than 1838. It is likely that the translations of the Gita made by Parraud (1787), August Wilhelm Schlegel (1823), and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1926) were also circulating in Boston. Emerson was aware of these translations, as is reflected from his May 3, 1868 letter to
Emma Lazarus. However, no definite date can be assigned to Emerson’s acquaintance with these translations.

Besides these translations, there were articles on the Gita, circulating in the Boston area. Sir William Jones had spoken of it in glowing terms even before it was translated by Charles Wilkins. In view of Emerson’s keen interest in Jones’ works and articles published in the Asiatic Researches, it can be supposed that he might have received some ideas of the Gita from these sources. There was in the September 1845 number of the popular Whig Review, an article by E.B. Green, entitled ‘The Bhagavad Gita – And The Doctrine of Immortality.’ The existence of many such articles can not be ruled out. Furthermore ‘extracts’ made from the Gita were also popular. Kurt F. Leidecker writes that “it has been suggested that Cabot, perhaps someone else in Concord, had made extracts from the Bhagavad-Gita.” Some idea of the existence of this extract, we can get from Emerson’s letter to Cabot written on August 19, 1846:-

I have had for months no excuse for keeping these extracts from the Bhagavat.

Ralph L. Rusk thinks that the ‘extracts’ in question meant the book itself. But the language of the letter does not warrant his supposition. In the light of these facts, it would be natural to assume that in his extensive reading Emerson “came across published extracts from and appraisals of the Bhagavad-Gita, which, by 1840, were, of course numerous.”

On the basis of the above facts, it is legitimate to conclude that during his formative period, Emerson had gained a fair knowledge of the Gita-concepts. By direct or indirect reading of the ‘extracts’ from the Gita, he knew that the Indian philosophy was the first philosophy of mind; that in it there was not an unhappy diverse between religion
and philosophy; that the world emanates directly from the creative power of Brahma; that
the self of the man is one with Brahman; that the divine Maya is the cause of appearance;
that the divine justice manifests itself as a law of compensation operating through
metempsychosis; and that man has “double-consciousness.” He also knew the anti-
historical approach of Indian philosophy.

Nearly all early biographers of Emerson have noted his Oriental leanings. Among
them his son Edward Waldo, Moncure Daniel Conway, James Eliot Cabot, and George
Willis Cooke are prominent. Some scholars, like P.C. Mazoomdar, William Terrey
Harris, George Williamson, Swami Parmanand, Friederick Ives Carpenter, Herold Clarke
Goddard, and Arthur Christy have discussed in detail Emerson’s literary relations with
India. Recently Kenneth Walter Cameron, Man Mohan Singh, J.P. Rao Rayapati, K.K.
Shukla, and others have confirmed the presence of Indian ideas in Emerson’s works in
varying degrees.

Apart from this considerable body of external evidence, there is also internal
evidence in support of our hypothesis that Emerson used Indian ideas as incorporated in
the Gita in the formulation of his philosophical position. Since the very beginning of his
intellectual life shaped, as much by his circumstances as by mystic or spiritual bent of his
mind, he was engaged in a serious battle with the canker not only inside his lungs, but
also in his mind in the form of skepticism. Among many other things what he desired
most, was a “victorious answer set down in impregnable propositions to the glozed lies of
this Deceiver” i.e. the “Scotch Goliath, David Hume.”\textsuperscript{130} If he did not embark upon his
‘Eastward’ voyage, immediately and wholeheartedly, it was presumably because he could
not find out Ram Mohan Roy’s Translation of the Ishopnishad\textsuperscript{131}, suggested by his
ebullient aunt; and also because of his aversion, though mixed with fascination, to India, caused by his reading of some inaccurate and hostile accounts of the customs and manners of her people. For the time being he was content to squeeze the answer from the traditional sources, viz. Christian doctrines, the ‘moral-sense’ doctrines of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, the Ideal Theory of Berkeley, and his own doctrine of Compensation. Even these doctrines, it can be suggested, were pregnant with Indian ideas. For example, it is on record that Emerson had read Grant’s *Restoration of Learning in the East*[^32], which attempted to draw a parallel between Hindu philosophy and Berkeley’s idealism, before (i.e. in 1820) he wrote his prose fragment ‘Ideal Theory’, in 1821 or 1822 as dated by Rusk. In the same way, he drew heavily from Indian doctrine of Karma while shaping his theory of Compensation. For the influence of India on Christian dogmas and moral sense, we can refer to the second chapter of this dissertation.

The seeds, which Indian ideas had sown lay in waiting for the season of germination to come. At least Aunt Mary and his growing idealism broke the crust of his aversion and turned it to fascination. Gradually India became a source of mystery and intellectual and spiritual food, a sustaining power and an instrument, which liberated him from provincialism and Christian superstition. Indian ideas gained strength by his subsequent reading. In 1826 he read Sampson Reed’s *Observations on the Growth of the Mind*, providing the idea that the divine and the human are united within—a notion, which closely ran parallel to Indian thought on the subject. During the late twenties, his faith in Christian dogmas was eroded. His faith in the Christian God, which helped him to recover emotionally from the serious illness of the winter of 1826, evaporated by 1839. His reading of Victor Cousin in 1831, among other things, supplied him with a very
illuminating summary of the Gita, in thought and content. Then Degerando and possibly Duperron as well provided him with rich and authentic accounts of Indian philosophy.

Now the commandment upon which he set his heart was 'Know Thyself', Solon's dictum which had Indian connections.¹³³
Chapter 1 – Notes


9G.W. Cunningham, Runes 123.

10Emerson, Qtd. in Chari 38.

11Matthiessen 42n.

12Swami Nikhalanand, Qtd. in Yu 235.


16 Whitman, Qtd. in Chari 28.


20 Wager 3.


22 Leidecker Philosophy 212.


24 Radhakrishnan 185.

25 Radhakrishnan 186.

26 Radhakrishnan 186.

27 M. Vacherot, Qtd. in Radhakrishnan 191 n.

28 See Radhakrishnan 192-196.

29 See Radhakrishnan 197-198.

30 Kennedy, Qtd. in Radhakrishnan 200.

31 See Radhakrishnan 214 & 215.
32 See Radhakrishnan 208, 214 & 215.


34 R.T. Blackwood RCV, Citt and Nous, Pous Hacker in Neoplatonism and Indian Thought, ed. by R. Baint Harris, Philosophy East and West (Vol. XXXIII, No.2, 1983)

35 Yu 20.


37 Radhakrishnan 247.


39 Basham 5.

40 Basham 7.

41 Radhakrishnan 247-249.


43 Mercer 192.

44 Yu 19, 19.

45 Qtd. in Mercer 193.


48 Qtd. in Yu 19.

49 Qtd. in Mercer 194.

50 Qtd. in Yu 19.
51 Qtd. in Radhakrishnan 249.
52 Qtd. in Radhakrishnan 249.
54 Reipe 19.
55 Christy 248.
56 Qtd. in Mercer 200.
57 Kemeth Walter Cameron, “Young Emersons Transcendental Vision,” *ESQ*, Double No. 64 & 65, (Summer and Fall 1971) 508: hereafter cited as Cameron.
58 Qtd. in Yu 19.
59 Qtd. in Mercer 202.
60 Qtd. in Mercer 202.
61 Qtd. in Mercer 203.
62 Qtd. in Mercer 203.
63 Qtd. in Yu 21.
64 Qtd. in Yu 21.
65 Qtd. in Yu 22.
66 Qtd. in Yu 22.
67 Riepe 9.
69 Qtd. in Mercer 194.
70 *A Week* 116.
71 Qtd. in Mayo 167.


73 Riepe 9.

74 Christy 10.


76 Will Durrant, Qtd. in Radhakrishnan 116.

77 Reid 3.

78 M.D. Conway, Qtd. in Mercer 4.

79 Riepe 14.

80 W. Brown, Qtd. in Reid 5.

81 Reid 5.

82 S.E. Morison, cited in Reid 7.

83 Morison, cited in Reid 8.

84 Reid 9.

85 Reid 10.

86 Reid 11.

87 Ibid

88 Brijendranath Seal cited in Reid 14.

89 Reid 15.

90 Ibid 15.

91 Qtd. in Reid 16.
92 Goren 8-9.

93 K.W. Cameron, *The Transcendentalists in Minerva* ( ) 841: hereafter cited as Cameron *Minerva*.


95 Cameron Notes 82.

96 "Although Priestley's Conclusions may not have been influenced by the Laws of Manu, at all, still it is odd that his thought and that of Vedanta should be so akin, if he had not been influenced somewhat by it" Mercer, 17.


98 Cameron, "Superstition" 19.


100 Christy 278.


102 "It doubtless served as an early pointer in his life long quest for a sustaining Transcendental religious faith," Cameron, 578.

103 Cameron, *Minerva* 435.

104 Cameron, *Minerva* 836.

105 Cameron, *Minerva* 829.

106 Cameron, *Minerva* 838.

107 Cameron, *Minerva* 841.


109 Cameron, "Superstition & Orientalism" 8, 9 & 13.

111 Christy 70.


113 Christy 66.

114 Mayo 167.


116 For the Parallel between the Upanishads and the Gita see Hass appended to The Thirteen Principal Upanishads by R.W. Hume.


118 Riepe 36-37.

119 Christy 278.

120 Emerson Letters, Vol III 291.


123 Leidecker 44.

124 Rajsekharaih 132.


126 Rajsekharaih 105.

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129 Leidecker 44.


131 Chistry 283.

132 Cameron 26-38.