"Since the PATHBREAKING books by FREDERIC IVES CARPENTER and ARTHUR CHRISTY in the early 1930s, scholars have generally recognized that Oriental thought generated considerable interest among American intellectuals in the mid-19th century, particularly among New Englanders connected with Transcendentalism."¹ It is also recognized that from Oriental sources, America imbibed her Pragmatic Mysticism with an intuitive outlook, which gave her a distinctive personality. Hence the study of the Oriental factor is inevitable for the proper understanding of American consciousness. The word 'Orient' is a little vague. It was first used for the areas lying in the east of the Mediterranean, especially for Israel.² But now it is used for all countries, denoted by the terms 'Near-East', 'East' and 'Far-East', i.e., for areas "extending from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean to Japan and on into the Pacific Islands."³ But in the popular parlance, 'Orient' means 'East', to be precise "India, which is the ultimate East."⁴ At least American Transcendentalists accepted 'Orientalism'

2. Yu, p. 17.
4. Dr. Radhakrishnan: Eastern Religions and Western Thought, Oxford University Press, London, 1940, p. 58; hereafter referred to as DR. RADHAKRISHNAN.
in this sense. To Emerson Indian Thought expressed the epitome of Orientalism. No wonder that eminent scholars like Carpenter, Christy, Leyla Goren and Yu found the primacy of India in his Orientalism." When he was speaking vaguely of Asia", writes Leyla Goren, "India was primarily in his mind". Asia, always mysterious, fascinating, unifying, emotional, and religious, was the feminine passive principle for Emerson. He used to call his wife Lidia Emerson, "Mine Asia." Europe, active, practical, rational and scientific, represented the masculine principle. Emerson found the western and the eastern minds quite different from each other, "The one", to use the words of Masterlinck, "here produces reason, science, consciousness, the other yonder secrets intuition, religion, the subconscious." For Emerson, the best answer to the riddle of the universe could be found in the fusion of East and West. He believed that Plato was great, because, 'the excellence of Europe and Asia' were in his brain." Emerson always emphasized that these two elements were equally important:

"Always there is this Woman as well as this Man in the mind; Affection as well as Intellect."3

"All of foremost writers of the American renaissance were deeply touched by the Orient."4 India, the chief representative of

1. Leyla Goren: Elements of Brahmanism in the Transcendentalism of Emerson; The Emerson Society Quarterly, Supplement to No. 34, I Quarter, 1964, pp. 32–33; hereafter referred to as LEYLA GOREN.
the Orient, was the birth place of "fundamental imaginings, the cradle of contemplative religion and nobler philosophy."¹ Her thought played a vital role in the making of American consciousness. It has exerted a powerful influence on modern American thinking—much more powerful than is generally realized.²

"It has contributed to 'strange moral and religious mentality of the modern United States."³

However, the influence of Indian ideas in the intellectual life of America did not begin in the nineteenth century as it is generally believed. It began much earlier. For the proper evaluation of the part played by it in shaping the American psyche, it should be studied 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.

When Columbus, in 1492, called the red-skinned aborigines, the Red-Indians, it was considered to be a mistake. It was not. There is enough evidence to prove that these American-Indians were actually Eurasians, who "sprang from the ancestors of the marginal Mongloid population, which at one time covered most of Asia, north east of India."⁴ These people "had migrated to the Americas via

the Bering Strait", by "the time of the Middle Stone Age in Europe."\(^1\) Their tribes founded impressive empires – the Incas in Peru, the Aztecs in Mexico, and Mayans in between them. Indian mythology mentions the famous giant 'Maya', noted for his building-skill, lived in Mayadesha (Mexico). Arjuna, it is said was married in America. These references at least prove that America existed in Indian imagination right from the epic period of Indian 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 fouls 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."\(^2\)

Others, besides Asiatics reached America before the fifteenth century. There might have been some from Africa – from the Nile from Carthage and from 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 Newfoundland and the eleventh and the twelfth century Scandinavian sagas, referring to Norsemen 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 Gnipson to the island.\(^3\) These immigrants must have carried

1. WILLIS WAGER\(^{1}\), p. VII.
2. A WEEK, p. 121.
3. WILLIS WAGER\(^{2}\), p. 3.
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 American scene, the so-called American-Indians, infused in American consciousness their spirit of stoicism 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 inroads Oriental thought made upon America was through the Bible."¹ 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. In that the Jew remained true to Judaism, they have imported to a more pronounced degree than Christians a potent but, on the surface, imperceptible Orientalism into philosophical speculations and, thus, into American philosophy. ²

Judaism and Christianity both were administered strong doses of Oriental ideas particularly mystic ideas: There are two trends in Christianity, prophetic and mystic. The prophetic tendencies are based on Jewish prophetic tradition, whereas the mystic tendencies, as Heiler argues, are derived from India.³ This view is confirmed

². Ibid., p. 212.
³. Referred to in Dr. Radhakrishnan, p. 66.
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." 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 traditions, there is strong evidence to prove that these sources, too, received mystic tendencies from the Indian sub-continent.

The philosophical and mystic concepts, which originated in India, crossed the Himalayan barrier and suffused over the mental horizons of Europe. Into the early Greek thought in the first instance, these ideas sneaked into an indirect way, i.e. via Egypt, Sumer, Israel and Iran. But when the direct communication channels were established, there was a direct flow of ideas. In the religious sphere Indian mysticism was absorbed by Zoroastrianism, which passed it into Judaism and Judaism transmitted it to Christianity. Another source, which fed mystic concepts to Christianity was the Alexandrian mysticism, which too was influenced by Indian thought. Apart from mystic ideas, Christianity is indebted to India for the moral precepts, which it received from Buddhism.

The Orient played an important role in the development of early Greek thought. The belief that the roots of classical-Hellenic culture "grew and flowered into a state of vacuum and had no influences from beyond the Mediterranean," has now evaporated, in the

1. DR. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 171.
light of the facts brought out by comparative studies in philosophy, religion, literature, etc. and confirmed by archaeological excavations and historical researches. Scholars are now willing to concede Oriental influence on Hellenic thought. For example, E.R. Dodds insists upon "the Oriental background against which Greek culture arose and from which it was never completely isolated" — a standpoint which has also been adopted by Glotisch and Roth. G.P. Conger voices the same opinion:

"In the earlier days the young and tentative civilization of Greece must have been powerfully impressed by the much older civilizations around it, by Egypt if not by Babylon." 3

The Egyptian influence on Greek culture has been accepted by Dr. Windelband. The sea-faring Ionians, who launched Greek Thought, "kept in touch" with the experience of "the Oriental peoples, especially the Egyptians, with whom they stood in so close relation." 4 If Greece stood in close relation with Egypt, Egypt stood in close relation with India, because, in the opinion of Sir John Marshall, the civilizations of Indus, Sumer, Egypt and Minos had a common parent in the Afrasian Chalcolithica culture. 5 Mayer frankly admits that

"Egyptian, Persian, and Indian cultural influences were absorbed into the Greek world from the very early times." 6

1. Quoted in RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 151.
4. Dr. W. Windelband: History of Philosophy, p. 27.
5. Quoted in RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 117.
6. Quoted in RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 152.
In fact, close ties, although somewhat indirect, existed between India and Greece from the very beginning.

"India, which is, in a sense, representative of the Asiatic consciousness, has never been isolated from the Western continent..."1

In spite of geographical, linguistic and racial barriers, there were active trade relations between India and other countries. Commerce between the mouth of the Indus and the Persian gulf was unbroken to Buddhist times.2 In the same way trade between the Indus Valley and the Euphrates seems to be very old. This fact is supported by Cuneiform inscriptions of the Hittite kings.3 With the establishment of the Archaemenian Empire, which at its height included parts of India and Greece and with the construction of the "Royal Road" Indian and Greek cultures came in direct contact.

The wars, which served as cultural catalysts in bringing people together, the Greek and Indian settlements at important international trade centres and the exchange of cultural visits helped the diffusion of ideas between India and Greece. According to a tradition, preserved by Eusebius, some learned Indians visited Athens and conversed with Socrates.4 A similar visit is also mentioned in the fragments of Aristotle preserved in Diogenes Laertius.5 Ancient philosophers visited remote places to give and receive ideas. Some Greek philosophers lived in places which were closely connected with India. Heraclitus lived in the Persian Empire; Xenophanes was born

1. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 115.
2. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 121.
3. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 121.
4. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 151: see also CONGER, p. 104.
5. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 151.
in Persia; Thales, the father of Greek philosophy, belonged to Miletus; and Anaxagoras, the chief forerunner of Socrates, came from the Ionian Clazomenae of Asia Minor.

This active interaction between the two premier civilizations took place at a time when the Greek thought was in its formative stage, while Indian thought was well settled. This fact helps us to determine the direction of the flow of ideas which naturally was from East to West, i.e., from India to Greece and not vice versa, as some zealots presumed. Indian classics in Sanskrit and Pali such as the 'Upanishads', 'Dhammapada', 'Tripitaka', 'Milandpanha', 'Jatakas', etc., containing the seminal ideas of Indian culture, found their way into the Greek consciousness.

Indian influence surfaced in the names of Greek Gods, in the Greek mystery cults and in the teachings of the "seven sages" or "seven wise-men" of Greece. Solon, the most famous of the group, gave us the famous maxim "Know Thyself" which should be interpreted "in the light of the age-long Indian emphasis on the inner life." Pherecydes, the best of the cosmogonic poets, insisted on water as the first principle in the manner of Chandogya Upanishad. Diels' fragments betrayed an enthusiasm for union with the deity and hope of life after death in the Upanishadic fashion. Thales' theory about primordial water might have come from Indus. The divine

1. CONGER, pp. 111, 112.
2. CONGER, p. 112.
3. CONGER, p. 112.
nature of Anaximander's first principle, the philosophical conception of Anaxamenes' God and the "flux" of Heraclitus echo the ideas of Upanishads and the Buddhist philosophy. Xenophanes tried "to develop a suggestion or two which had come from the insights of India." Parmenides' idealistic monism, Anaxagoras' 'Nous' and Democritus' conception of man as a microcosm are pregnant with the Vedantic thought.

The mystic tradition of Greek philosophy is definitely un-Greek. Not only the Orphic mystic cults but also the teaching of Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates and the Neoplatonists break with the Greek tradition of rationalism and humanism. Orphism, perhaps, the most important mystery cult departs from Greek tradition in moral philosophy, cosmology and eschatology. Prof. Burnet admits that "it has some striking resemblances to the beliefs prevalent in India about the same time." The beliefs held in common are those of rebirth, the immortality and the God-like character of soul, the bondage of the soul in the body, the possibility of release by purification, the metaphors like the wheel of birth and world-egg. The Eleusinian cult, another important mystic cult, adopted all the Orphic practices and added to them 'initiation' meaning 'twice born', a typical Indian custom.

Pythagoras is an important name in Greek mystic speculation. He is well known for his belief in the transmigration of souls – a

1. CONGER, p. 119.
doctrine, which Pythagoras is believed to have received from Egypt. But this type of conception, observes Hare, "is entirely foreign to native Greek, Egyptian and Jewish religions in their pure and original form."\(^1\) The doctrine "properly belongs to the Indian race,"\(^2\) and from there it was received by other races. Anand K. Coomarasamy makes a very pertinent observation that 'the so-called Indian doctrine of reincarnation' "is the same as the Greek doctrine of metempsychosis and metempsychosis; it is the Christian doctrine of our pre-existence in Adam according to bodily substance and seminal virtues; and it is the modern doctrine of the "recurrence of ancestral characters."\(^3\)

Pythagoras did not receive Indian ideas directly. He received them, according to Prof. Gamperz and Prof. Winternitz, through Persia, and according to Prof. H. Rawlinson, Sir William Jones, Colebrooke, Schroeder, Garbe and Macdonell, through Egypt. The typical Pythagorean beliefs other than 'anima mundi' (World-Soul)/the transmigration of soul (metempsychosis), are the purification of soul by theoria or the contemplation of the divine being, the theoretic being the highest kind of knowledge, the release being assured to the initiated, etc. Pythagoras preferred an ascetic way of living and ate neither meat nor beans. He held in the style of the early Greek thinkers that souls are similar in class and apparent distinctions between human and other kinds of beings are not ultimate. He believed that the

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1. Quoted in MERCER, p. 44.
2. W.R. Alger: Quoted in MERCER, p. 44.
Islands of the Blessed were the sun and the moon. In the Upanishads, the moon is mentioned as the dwelling place of spirits. Both in theory and practice Pythagoras is close to India. The "similarities between the Pythagorean and the Indian beliefs, are so close as to warrant our regarding them as expressions of the same view of life. We can use the one system to interpret the other."

The traces of Indian thought are evident in Socrates' belief in an 'inner voice' and deep meditation. Like an Indian he felt himself a member of the heavenly city. However, Indian mysticism makes its greatest impact on Plato. Nietzsche, Rhode and Livingstone termed his thought anti-Hellenic. It is correct in the sense that Plato generally adopted the speculative tradition of mystic cults, which, as we have seen, was mostly un-Greek. Aristotle suggests that Plato follows the teachings of Pythagoreans. Plato, actually speaking, took up Orphic and Pythagorean views and Wove them into the texture of his philosophy. Stutfield asserts that "the mind of Plato was heavily charged with Orphic mysticism mainly derived from Asiatic sources. India always bore the home of mystical devotion, probably contributed the major share."

Plato's brain, in a way contained the "excellence of Europe and Asia", i.e. the contemplative nature of Asia and the rationality of Europe.

We have in Plato the conceptions of the highest God, the Idea of Good; the Republic, Demiurges and the Soul of the World in

1. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 143.
2. Stutfield: Quoted in RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 149.
3. Emerson: The Selected Writings, p. 479.
4. GOREN LEYLA, p. 32.
Timaeus — all on the Upanishadic lines. The three qualities of Sāmkhya philosophy, viz. 'Sattva', 'Rajas' and 'Tamas' have for their equivalents in Plato's Logistikon, Themos and Epithumia. The division of souls into classes based on the preponderance of these psychical elements answers to the division of Indian caste-system. Plato's four classes — Philosopher-King, Guardians, Artisans and workers correspond to four classes of Indian society — Dharmaraja or Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra. The doctrine of the causal determination of re-incarnation in Plato's Republic, Book X (Vision or Er) echoes the Upanishadic doctrine of re-incarnation under Karma causality, as determined by consequences of actions from previous existences. Furthermore like the Upanishadic seers Plato points out the limitations of perceptual and rational knowledge against intuitive awareness and makes distinction between knowledge and opinion. His belief in the essential unity of human and divine spirits; the immortality of the human soul; the escape from the restless wheel of the troublesome journey, the phenomenality of the world; the contempt of the body, etc. — all these notions have an Indian ring in them.¹

In the conclusion of this part of our discussion, we can quote Sir William Jones, who furnishes us with a list of interesting analogies between the Indian thinkers and their schools of thought and their Greek counterparts:

¹Of the philosophical schools it will be sufficient here to remark, that the first Nyaya seems analogous to the Peripatetic, the second sometimes called Vaiseshica, to the Ionick; the two Mimansa, of which the second is often

1. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 148.
distinguished by the name of Vedanta, to the Platonick, the first Sankhya to the Italicck; the second, or Patanjala, to the Stoick philosophy; so that Gautama corresponds to Aristotle; Canada with Thales; Jaimini with Socrates; Vyasa with Plato; Capila with Pythagoras; and Patanjali, with Zeno. But an accurate comparison between the Grecian and Indian schools would require a considerable volume."1

Alexander's invasion of India in 326 B.C. knocked down the barriers between East and West, heralding a new era of cultural fusion. All the existing communication channels were energized. With the foundation of the city of Alexandria, the opportunities for the East-West interaction increased considerably. In this cosmopolitan city, an important centre for international trade and commerce, Greeks, Jews and Syrians rubbed shoulders with Indians - a fact well testified by 'Milandpanha'. The hectic Buddhist missionary activities, during the post-Alexander era, accelerated the pace of the diffusion of ideas. Two centuries before the Christian era, Buddhism closed in on Palestine. It was a dominant force in the area, where Christian dogmas were taking shape. Jesus was helped considerably by his religious environment which included Indian influences, as the tenets of Essenes and the Book of Enoch show. In his teachings of the Kingdom of God; life eternal, ascetic emphasis and of future life, Jesus broke away from the Jewish tradition and came closer to Hindu and Buddhist Thought. The Buddhist influence on Christianity has been confirmed by Hilgenfield, Renan, Milman, Dr. Moffatt and others.

Apart from Judaism and Greek mystic tradition the other important carriers of Indian mysticism into Christianity were the

1. Quoted in CHRISTY, pp. 52, 53.
Essenes, Mandaeans, Nazarenes and the Book of Enoch. Essenes, who lived in organized monasticism were presumably a Buddhist cult, which taught adherence to the Law (Dharma) and referred to the Prophet of Righteousness or Teacher of Righteous Way (Dharmapada or Marg) and advocated compassion to those who do evil. All these teachings were adopted by Christianity. Even more important is the fact that John the Baptist, who initiated Jesus was an Essene. An important section of scholars believe that Jesus, during his 'Lost Years' from the age of eleven to thirty lived with Essenes or the Buddhist missionaries and picked up their moral precepts to an astonishing degree.

The Gnosis of Mandaeans, who flourished in Mesopotamia, was an entry-point for Indian trade and commerce with Mesopotamia, was another conduit which passed Indian ideas into Christianity - especially the notion that the spirit of man stripped of all accretion (Karma) finally reaches the Supreme spirit - a doctrine comparable to the Upanishadic view of the microcosm and macrocosm or the Buddhist view of 'Nirvanic transcendency'.

The Book of Enoch, the saint of antiquity contained the four titles, which were subsequently assigned to Jesus, viz. the Christ, the Righteous one, the Elect One, and the Son of Man, which included the important notion, the Son of Man being the Son of God. Enoch also gave to Christianity the belief in the coming world judgement, the spiritual ascent, the process of unclothing and reclothing and

1. See KARKALA, pp. 77-78.
2. RADHAKRISHMAN, 158, footnotes.
the predicates of deity, etc. — the concept which in the ultimate
analysis originated in India. ¹ "Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom
contains elements, which are certainly not of Palestinian origin,
but point definitely to connections, with the Aryan and Iranian
East."²

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 the carnal desires, the coming world judgement, the
spiritual ascent, the purified soul's reaching God, the phenomenality
of the world, the asimile of the wheel of the birth, the war in heaven
between Michael 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 Hinayān Buddhist canon and date,
therefore, before the Christian era."³ There is no doubt that
Christianity in its formative stage drew heavily upon the Buddhist
religious beliefs, which had their origin in Upanishads. In this
sense "Buddha and Jesus are the earlier and later Hindu and Jewish

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¹ See RADHAKRISHNAN, pp. 160-161.
³ RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 185.
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 and 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 crossroads of East and 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 its methods. The essentials of their thought "are all
Eastern."

Jewish Platonism, an important shaper of Christian Thought
was propped 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 the pure in
heart shall see Him and his faith that the ascetic training alone
can lead us to His presence.

"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

1. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 186.
2. M. Vacherot; quoted in RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 191 (footnotes).
microcosm, belief in rebirth and a definite pantheistic tendency, are alien to the spirit of Orthodox Judaism and akin to that of the Upaniṣads and Tantrism." Gnosticism, another powerful influence on Christianity, is "pure Orientalism in a Hellenic mask." 1

C.W. King understands that "the seeds of Gnosis were originally of Indian growth." 2 Its dualistic theology, ecstatic experience of the reality and redemption from the human bondage can be traced from Indian sources.

No western school of thought is close to Indian philosophy as is the Neoplatonism, founded by Saccas. Its most brilliant exponent was Saccas’ disciple Plotinus. His belief in rebirth, law of Karma, the techniques 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. 3

Vacherot, Zeller, Brehier, Ritter and Stutfield are convinced of Indian influence on Plotinus. Pointing out the similarities between the thought of India and Plotinus 4, 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

1. RADHAKRISHNAN, pp. 197-198.
2. Kennedy; quoted in RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 200.
3. C.W. King; quoted in RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 207.
5. See RADHAKRISHNAN, pp. 208, 214 & 215.
similarity to the great Vedantic system of Indian philosophy. Deity, spirit, soul, body, macrocosmic and microcosmic, 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 Good;...this is the All-self of the Upanishads, Brahman or Paramatman."¹

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 the Vedantist; incorporeity as a stage reached through spirit" in the case of the Neoplatonists."²

However, Richard Garbe notes that there is a Sākhya influence on Plotinus and Neoplatonism. The views of Plotinus (204-269 A.D.) are in part in perfect agreement with those of the Sākhya 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, all of them being the favourites of the American Transcendentalists. Neoplatonists also influenced European thinkers such as Beethius Scotus

¹. Quoted in LEYLA GOREN, p. 49.
Eriigena, Eckhart, etc. Many typical Neoplatonic ideas were consciously and unconsciously adopted by Christianity.

Clement, one of the chief representatives of Alexandrian Christianity, got Buddhist philosophy from Basilides. Another important thinker of Alexandrian Christianity was Origen. He was influenced by Neoplatonism and Oriental Thought. His idea that transcendental God is not an object of worship, but can be approached only by ecstasy; his concept of Supreme Being; his distinction of the two kinds of life active and contemplative; his preference for the latter; his two religions mystical and mythical; mystical for the educated and the mythical for the vulgar; and his justification of it by appealing to the examples of the Persians and Indians — are genuinely Oriental.  

Augustine, the "Christian Plotinus" and the greatest of the Church fathers, was a Neoplatonist by conviction. In his mind Christian faith was subordinate to the truth of Neoplatonism, from which he adopted his views on God, matter, freedom, evil and relation of God to man and to this world. He established the existence of the soul in the style of Shankara and Descartes. Augustine distinguished lower reason (producing science and action) and higher reason (producing wisdom). He talked of a higher intuition — "a flash of light to see that which is." He arranged the ascent of the soul in seven stages of which the last three were purgation, illumination and union.  

1. Richard Garbe; quoted in LEYLA GOREN, p. 49.
2. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 233.
3. RADHAKRISHNAN, pp. 234-239.
Dionysius, the Aeropagite, is said to be the father of Christian mysticism. Through this monk, mystic and theosophical pantheist, Neoplatonism was absorbed by Christianity. Dr. Inge's analysis of the religion of Dionysius is very revealing:

"It is the ancient religion of the Brahmins, masquerading in clothes borrowed from Jewish allegorists, half Christian Gnostics, Manichaean, platonizing Christians and pagan Neoplatonists."1

Thomas Aquinas and Dante followed Dionysius. The doctrines of Albertus Magnus, a follower of Dionysius, are characteristically Indian and his "ideas are distinctly Indian."2 The Dionysian Mystic tradition is continued in Europe by the great German mystics Eckhart and Tauler, the Spanish St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, English Platonists and a number of others. In the field of philosophy, mystic tradition was kept alive by Spinoza and Fichte. "Professor W. S. Urquhart finds in Spinoza, the speculative tendencies of both Plato and Aristotle, and of both Shankar and Ramanuja, the greatest interpreters of the Vedanta."3 According to Prof. Rudolph Otto the likeness between Shankar and Fichte is "so striking that one might almost speak of the rebirth of Indian philosophical speculation in a German personality."4

The brief analysis of the two channels, viz. the Red-Indian heritage and the Greek philosophy and the Bible which absorbed

1. Dr. Inge; quoted in RADHAKRISHMAN, p. 240.
2. Kennedy; quoted in RADHAKRISHMAN, p. 246, footnotes.
3. CHRISTY, p. 57.
mysticism from Indian sources and then passed it to Europe and America, underscores two points. The Red-Indian heritage with its spirit of resignation, fatalism and stoicism, most probably played an important role in providing to the American psyche an intuitive character, which incidentally became one of its chief traits, which distinguished it from the European psyche. 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 offshoot of European Orientalism", 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." Perhaps the most significant part of the Oriental 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

1. Yu, p. 20.
study the Indian law books \(^1\) and when the Christian missionaries especially Jesuits such as Father Hanxleden and Father Coeurdoux made some serious effort in trying to understand Indian heritage.\(^2\)

The study of Indian heritage assumed the shape of an organized effort with the establishment of various agencies of Indology. The Asiatique 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.\(^3\) 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 Asiatique 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 Société Asiatique was founded in Paris, followed two years later by the Royal Asiatique 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.\(^4\)

1. RADHAKRISHNAN, p. 247.
2. A.L. Basham: A Wonder That Was India; Grove Press Inc., New York, 1954, pp. 4-5; hereafter referred to as BASHAM.
3. Ibid., p. 5.
4. Ibid., p. 7.
When the translations of the Sanskrit classics made by the Britishers, connected with The Asiatic Society appeared in Europe, they caused a stir. 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 'Laws of Menu' and Kalidas' dramatic masterpiece 'Shakuntala'. The latter's translation into German by Georg Förster was "enthusiastically welcomed by men like Herder and Goethe." The works of H.T. Colebrooke 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.¹

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 "Critique of Pure Reason." Friedrich von Schlegel in his book 'The Aesthetic and Misc. 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, 1789.² Arthur F.J. Remy tells us that in 1663 Roger's well known book 'De Open-Deure tot

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1. RADHAKRISHNAN, pp. 247-249.
2. MERCER, p. 192.
het Verborgen Heydendom', containing most valuable information
on Hindu religion was translated into German by C. Arnold. Johan
Gottfried von Herder's fourth collection of the 'Zerstreute Blätter'
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 einiger Braminen.
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 philo-
sophical tradition, there is a marked similarity between his concep-
tions 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 thinks
that the deep fundamental conception of Plato and Kant was precisely
that which already formed the basis of Upanishad teaching." In the
Upanishads Deussen "found Parmenides, Plato and Kant in a nutshell."

1. RADHAKRISHNAN: MERCER, p. 192.
2. YU, p. 19.
4. Paul Deussen: The Philosophy of the Upanishads, Dover Publica-
5. Robert Ernest Hume: The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, Oxford
University Press, 1931, p. 4.
A keener impulse to Indological studies in Germany was given by Schlegel brothers. Friedrich von Schlegel wrote 'The Language and Wisdom of India', the publication 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."¹ 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."² Schopenhauer, who came to know Upanishads through Duyperren, experienced that the "incomparable book stirs the spirit to the very depths of the soul."³ According to Brandes, Heine's "spiritual home was on the banks of the Ganges."⁴ Amiel confessed a Hindu streak in him. From the Ramayana Michelet drank "a long draught of life and youth."⁵ Rückert, 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.

¹. Quoted in YU, p. 19.
². Quoted in MERCER, p. 194.
³. Quoted in YU, p. 19.
⁴. Quoted in RATHAKRISHNAN, p. 248.
⁵. Quoted in RATHAKRISHNAN, p. 249.
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'Obsenville (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. Barthelemy 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 Feizabad 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 'Dupnek'hat' is mentioned in Emerson's Journal.

Mme. de Stael, Benjamin Constant, Theodore Jourffroy Chezy, Langlois, Fauche and Burnouf did much to popularise Indian thought and to carry it to American shores. Burnouf's Introduction to

2. DALE, p. 19.
3. CHRISTY, p. 284.
'a L'histoire du Bouddhisme' (1844) Sainte Hilaire's 'Le 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 meanness 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." 1

Cousin's books wielded great influence in America. Emerson read and appreciated his challenging summary of the Bhagavad-Gita. 2

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, etc. 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

1. Quoted in MERCER, p. 200.
2. CAMERON, p. 508.
Hastings and William Crouper 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."1

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 luminaries" and "certain convictions of moral laws."2 To attain this state what is required is "an establishment of a certain stillness and equability within the mind."3 These were the convictions of Emerson also. Coleridge was indebted to Schelling, the Schlegels and Herder all of whom were students of Sanskrit literature. Schelling, who passed "the eastern strain" into the common

1. YU, p. 19
stock of European thought"¹, 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."² 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 Breadstreet wrote of 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."³ 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."⁴ '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

¹. Vaughn; quoted in MERCER, p. 203.
². Paul Elmer More; quoted in MERCER, p. 203.
³. YU, p. 21.
⁴. YU, p. 21.
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 Friederich 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:

1. Henry Nash Smith; quoted in YU, p. 22.
2. YU, p. 22.
4. MAYO, p. 168.
5. Quoted in MERCER, p. 194.
"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 manse 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 view of the self, a self easily transformed into the Great Self of cosmic proportion."

1. A. Week, p. 116
2. Quoted in MAYO, p. 167.
4. DALE RIEPE, p. 9.
Such a view suited 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 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.' 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 their 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, 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

1. CHRISTY, p. 10.
question." 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." 2

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.'" 3

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....." 4

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." 5 Sanskrit studies began at the City University of New York in 1836.

1. REID, p. 2.
3. REID, p. 3.
4. M.D. Conway; quoted in MERGER, p. 4.
and at Yale College in 1841. Isaac Northeemer 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 pipe-line — '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, E. 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."¹ 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."²

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 Ouer served in India. After the Declaration of Independence Americans made a more

¹ W. Norman Brown; quoted by Reid, p. 5.
² Reid, p. 5.
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 D. 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 ships 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, 'Nur 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 1805, 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 Husbandary 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 doubtless 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."2

Christian missionaries played a key-role in promoting American awareness of Indian cultural heritage. In this field, no group surpasses 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 acquaintances at home."3 They might have made the atmosphere at Salem and Boston loaded with India and Indian ideas.

1. Morison; referred to by REID, p. 8.
2. REID, p. 9.
3. REID, p. 10.
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 of Salem, 1798." 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."

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." His religious approach was similar to that of Unitarianism — a fact which endeared 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

1. REID., p. 11.
2. Ibid.
reformer. Ram Mohan’s ‘The Precepts of Jesus (Calcutta 1820, 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 Vedant or Resolution of all the Vedas (1816); translations of the Moonduk-Upanishad (1819) and the Cena Upanishad (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. Emerson might have read Roy’s Translation of the I שחפנשע, One of the Chapters of the Yajur Veda (Calcutta, 1816) on the advice of his aunt Mary Moody Emerson. 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 Rammohan Roy was responsible for the interest in the Orient amongst Americans in general, and amongst New Englanders in particular, to that extent was

1. See REID, p. 15.
2. Ibid., p. 15.
he an instrument for the formation of the ideas of Emerson and his associates, with their love of Oriental literature, philosophy and religion."¹

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 Upanishada, 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.

¹. Quoted in REID, p. 16.