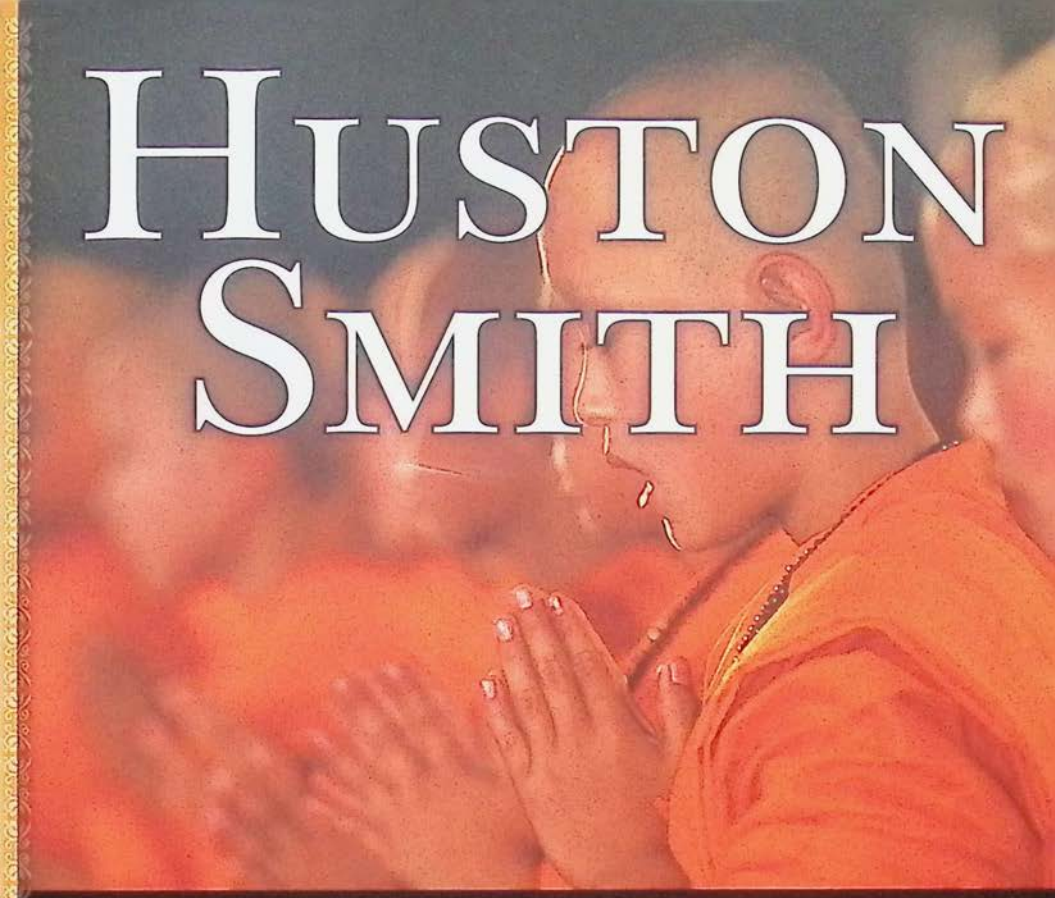

HUSTON SMITH

50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

The World's Religions

MORE THAN THREE MILLION COPIES SOLD

"This is the one book on world religions I can't do without. I return to it often—and always with reward."—BILL MOYERS

Contents

I. Point of Departure

Although the individuals that I name are now only memories for me, I begin this second edition of this book with the four paragraphs that launched its first edition.

I write these opening lines on a day widely celebrated throughout Christendom as World-Wide Communion Sunday. The sermon in the service I attended this morning dwelt on Christianity as a world phenomenon. From mud huts in Africa to the Canadian tundra, Christians are kneeling today to receive the elements of the Holy Eucharist. It is an impressive picture.

Still, as I listened with half my mind, the other half wandered to the wider company of God-seekers. I thought of the Yemenite Jews I watched six months ago in their synagogue in Jerusalem: dark-skinned men sitting shoeless and cross-legged on the floor, wrapped in the prayer shawls their ancestors wore in the desert. They are there today, at least a quorum of ten, morning and evening, swaying backwards and forwards like camel riders as they recite their Torah, following a form they inherit unconsciously from the centuries when their fathers were forbidden to ride the desert horse and developed this pretense in compensation. Yalcin, the Muslim architect who guided me through the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, has completed his month's Ramadan fast, which was beginning while we were together; but he too is praying today, five times as he prostrates himself toward Mecca. Swami Ramakrishna, in his tiny house by the Ganges at the foot of the Himalayas, will not speak today. He will continue the devotional silence that, with the exception of three days each year, he has kept for five years. By this hour U Nu is probably facing the delegations, crises, and

cabinet meetings that are the lot of a prime minister, but from four to six this morning, before the world broke over him, he too was alone with the eternal in the privacy of the Buddhist shrine that adjoins his home in Rangoon. Dai Jo and Lai San, Zen monks in Kyoto, were ahead of him by an hour. They have been up since three this morning, and until eleven tonight will spend most of the day sitting immovable in the lotus position as they seek with intense absorption to plumb the Buddha-nature that lies at the center of their being.

What a strange fellowship this is, the God-seekers in every land, lifting their voices in the most disparate ways imaginable to the God of all life. How does it sound from above? Like bedlam, or do the strains blend in strange, ethereal harmony? Does one faith carry the lead, or do the parts share in counterpoint and antiphony where not in full-throated chorus?

We cannot know. All we can do is try to listen carefully and with full attention to each voice in turn as it addresses the divine.

Such listening defines the purpose of this book. It may be wondered if the purpose is not too broad. The religions we propose to consider belt the world. Their histories stretch back thousands of years, and they are motivating more people today than ever before. Is it possible to listen seriously to them within the compass of a single book?

The answer is that it is, because we shall be listening for well-defined themes. These must be listed at the outset or the pictures that emerge from these pages will be distorted.

1. This is not a textbook in the history of religions. This explains the scarcity of names, dates, and social influences in what follows. There are useful books that focus on such material.[1] This one too could have been swollen with their facts and figures, but it is not its intent to do their job in addition to its own. Historical facts are limited here to the minimum that is needed to locate in space and time the *ideas* the book focuses on. Every attempt has been made to keep scholarship out of sight—in foundations that must be sturdy, but not as scaffolding that would obscure the structures being examined.

2. Even in the realm of meanings the book does not attempt to give a rounded view of the religions considered, for each hosts differences that are too numerous to be delineated in a single chapter. One need only think of Christendom. Eastern Orthodox Christians worship in ornate cathedrals, while Quakers consider even steeples

desecrations. There are Christian mystics and Christians who reject mysticism. There are Christian Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Unitarians. How is it possible to say in a manageable chapter what Christianity means to all Christians?

The answer, of course, is that it is not possible—selection is unavoidable. The question facing an author is not whether to select among points of view; the questions are *how many* to present, and *which ones.* In this book the first question is answered economically; I try to do reasonable justice to several perspectives instead of attempting to catalogue them all. In the case of Islam, this has meant ignoring Sunni/Shi'ite and traditional/modernist divisions, while noting different attitudes toward Sufism. In Buddhism I distinguish its Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions, but the major schools within Mahayana are bypassed. The subdivisions never exceed three lest trees obscure the woods. Put the matter this way: If you were trying to describe Christianity to an intelligent and interested but busy Thailander, how many denominations would you include? It would be difficult to ignore the differences between Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant, but you would probably not get into what separates Baptists from Presbyterians.

When we turn to *which* views to present, the guideline has been relevance to the interests of the intended reader. Three considerations have figured in determining this relevance. First, there is the simple matter of numbers. There are some faiths that every citizen should be acquainted with, simply because hundreds of millions of people live by them. The second consideration has been relevance to the modern mind. Because the ultimate benefit that may accrue from a book such as this is help in the ordering of the reader's own life, I have given priority to what (with caution yet a certain confidence) we may regard as these religions' contemporary expressions. The third consideration is universality. Every religion mixes universal principles with local peculiarities. The former, when lifted out and made clear, speak to what is generically human in us all. The latter, rich compounds of rites and legends, are not easy for outsiders to comprehend. It is one of the illusions of rationalism that the universal principles of religion are more important than the rites and rituals that feed them; to make that claim is like contending that the branches and leaves of a tree are more important than the roots from which they grow. But for this book, principles are more important

than contexts, if for no other reason than that they are what the author has spent his years working with.

I have read books that have brought contexts themselves to life: Heather Wood's *Third Class Ticket* for India, Lin Yu-tang's *My Country and My People* for China, and Shalom Rabinowitz's *The Old Country* for Eastern European Jews. Perhaps someday someone will write a book about the great religions that roots them to their social settings. This, though, is a book I shall read, not write. I know my limitations and attend to areas from which ideas can be extracted.

3. This book is not a balanced account of its subject. The warning is important. I wince to think of the shock if the reader were to close the chapter on Hinduism and step directly into the Hinduism described by Nehru as "a religion that enslaves you": its Kali Temple in Calcutta, the curse of her caste system, her two million cows revered to the point of nuisance, her *fakirs* offering their bodies as sacrifice to bedbugs. Or what if the reader were transported to Bali, with its theaters named the Vishnu-Hollywood and its bookstores that do brisk business in *Klasik Comics*, in which Hindu gods and goddesses mow down hosts of unsightly demons with cosmic ray guns? I know the contrast. I sense it sharply between what I have written of Taoism and the Taoism that surrounded me as a boy in China: its almost complete submergence in augury, necromancy, and superstition. It is like the contrast between the Silent Christ and the Grand Inquisitor, or between the stillness of Bethlehem and department stores blaring "Silent Night" to promote Christmas shopping. The full story of religion is not rose-colored; often it is crude. Wisdom and charity are intermittent, and the net result is profoundly ambiguous. A balanced view of religion would include human sacrifice and scapegoating, fanaticism and persecution, the Christian Crusades and the holy wars of Islam. It would include witch hunts in Massachusetts, monkey trials in Tennessee, and snake worship in the Ozarks. The list would have no end.

Why then are these things not included in the pages that follow? My answer is so simple that it may sound ingenuous. This is a book about values. Probably as much bad music as good has been composed in the course of human history, but we do not expect courses in music appreciation to give it equal attention. Time being at a premium, we assume that they will attend to the best. I have adopted a similar strategy with respect to religion. A recent book on legal science carries the author's confession that he has written lovingly of the law. If

something as impersonal as the law can enamor one author, it should come as no surprise that religion—again at its best—has enamored another. Others will be interested in trying to determine if religion in its entirety has been a blessing or a curse. That has not been my concern.

Having said what my concern is—the world's religions at their best—let me say what I take that best to be, beginning with what it is not. Lincoln Steffens has a fable of a man who climbed to the top of a mountain and, standing on tiptoe, seized hold of the Truth. Satan, suspecting mischief from this upstart, had directed one of his underlings to tail him; but when the demon reported with alarm the man's success—that he had seized hold of the Truth—Satan was unperturbed. "Don't worry," he yawned. "I'll tempt him to institutionalize it."

That story helps to separate the best from the ambiguous in religion. The empowering theological and metaphysical truths of the world's religions are, this book is prepared to argue, inspired. Institutions—religious institutions emphatically included—are another story. Constituted as they are of people with their inbuilt frailties, institutions are built of vices as well as virtues. When the vices—in-group versus out-group loyalties, for example—get compounded by numbers, the results can be horrifying to the point of suggesting (as some wag has) that the biggest mistake religion ever made was to get mixed up with people. Actually, this is not true, however, for to hold aloof from people would have resulted in leaving no mark on history. Given the choice—to remain aloof as disembodied insights or to establish traction in history by institutionalizing those insights—religion chose the wiser course.

This book honors that choice without following its story—I have already said that it is not a book about religious history. It adopts what in ways is the easier course of skimming off the cream of that history: the truths that religious institutions preserve, and which in turn empower those institutions. When religions are sifted for those truths, a different, cleaner side appears. They become the world's wisdom traditions. ("Where is the knowledge that is lost in information? Where is the wisdom that is lost in knowledge?"—T. S. Eliot.) They begin to look like data banks that house the winnowed wisdom of the human race. As this book concentrates on those wisdom deposits, it could have been titled alternatively "The World's Great Wisdom Traditions."

4. Finally, this is not a book on comparative religions in the sense of seeking to compare their worth. Comparisons always tend to be

odious, those among religions the most odious of all. So there is no assumption here that one religion is, or for that matter is not, superior to others. "There is no one alive today," Arnold Toynbee observed, "who knows enough to say with confidence whether one religion has been greater than all others." I have tried to let the best in each faith shine through by presenting it in the way I have found its most impressive adherents envisioning it. Readers may press on with comparisons if they wish to do so.

In saying what this book is not, I have already started to say what it is, but let me be explicit.

1. It is a book that seeks to embrace the world. In one sense, of course, that wish must fail. Even when stretched to the maximum, a single pair of arms falls short, and feet must be planted somewhere. To begin with the obvious, the book is written in English, which to some extent anchors it from the start. Next come cross-references, introduced to ease entry onto foreign turf. There are proverbs from China, tales from India, paradoxes from Japan, but most of the illustrations are Western: a line from Shakespeare, a verse from the Bible, a suggestion from psychoanalysis—Eliot and Toynbee have already been quoted. Beyond idiom, however, the book is incorrigibly Western in being targeted for the contemporary Western mind. That being the author's mind, he had no choice in the matter; but it must be accepted with the recognition that the book would have been different had it been written by a Zen Buddhist, a Muslim Sufi, or a Polish Jew.

This book, then, has a home—a home whose doors swing freely in and out, a base from which to journey forth and return, only to hit the road again in study and imaginings when not in actual travel. If it is possible to be homesick for the world, even places one has never been and suspects one will never go, this book is born of such homesickness.

We live in a fantastic century. I brush aside the incredible discoveries of science, and the razor's edge between doom and fulfillment onto which they have pushed us, to speak of the new situation among peoples. Lands across the planet have become our neighbors, China across the street, the Middle East at our back door. Young people with backpacks are everywhere, and those who remain at home are treated to an endless parade of books, documentaries, and visitors from abroad. We hear that East and West are meeting, but it is an

understatement. They are being flung at one another, hurled with the force of atoms, the speed of jets, the restlessness of minds impatient to learn the ways of others. When historians look back on our century, they may remember it most, not for space travel or the release of nuclear energy, but as the time when the peoples of the world first came to take one another seriously.

The change that this new situation requires of us all—we who have been suddenly catapulted from town and country onto a world stage—is staggering. Twenty-five hundred years ago it took an exceptional man like Diogenes to exclaim, "I am not an Athenian or a Greek but a citizen of the world." Today we must all be struggling to make those words our own. We have come to the point in history when anyone who is only Japanese or American, only Oriental or Occidental, is only half human. The other half that beats with the pulse of all humanity has yet to be born.

To borrow an image from Nietzsche, we have all been summoned to become Cosmic Dancers who do not rest heavily on a single spot but lightly turn and leap from one position to another. As World Citizen, the Cosmic Dancer will be an authentic child of its parent culture, while closely related to all. The dancer's roots in family and community will be deep, but in those depths they will strike the water table of a common humanity. For is the dancer not also human? If only she might see what has interested others, might it not interest her as well? It is an exciting prospect. The softening of divisions will induce borrowings that sometimes produce hybrids, but for the most part simply enrich species and sustain their vigor.

The motives that impel us toward world understanding are varied. I was once taxied by bomber to an air force base to lecture to officers on other peoples' faiths. Why? Obviously, because those officers might some day have to deal with those peoples as allies or antagonists. This is one reason for coming to know them. It may be a necessary reason, but one hopes that there are others. Even the goal of avoiding military engagement through diplomacy is provisional because instrumental. The final reason for understanding another is intrinsic—to enjoy the wider angle the vision affords.

I am, of course, speaking metaphorically of vision and view, but an analogue from ocular sight fits perfectly. Without two eyes—binocular vision—there is no awareness of space's third dimension. Until sight converges from more than one angle, the world looks as

flat as a postcard. The rewards of having two eyes are practical; they keep us from bumping into chairs and enable us to judge the speed of approaching cars. But the final reward is the deepened view of the world itself—the panoramas that unroll before us, the vistas that extend from our feet. It is the same with "the eye of the soul," as Plato called it. "What do they know of England, who only England know?"

I have acknowledged that the practical gains that come from being able to look at the world through others' eyes are major. They enable corporations to do business with China, and diplomats to stumble less often. But the greatest gains need no tally. To glimpse what belonging means to the Japanese; to sense with a Burmese grandmother what passes in life and what endures; to understand how Hindus can regard their personalities as masks that overlay the Infinite within; to crack the paradox of a Zen monk who assures you that everything is holy but scrupulously refrains from certain acts—to swing such things into view is to add dimensions to the glance of spirit. It is to have another world to live in. The only thing that is good without qualification is not (as Kant argued) the good will, for a will can mean well in cramped quarters. The only thing that is unqualifiedly good is extended vision, the enlargement of one's understanding of the ultimate nature of things.

These thoughts about world understanding lead directly to the world's religions, for the surest way to the heart of a people is through its faith, if that faith has not fossilized. Which distinction—between religion alive and dead—brings us to the second constructive intent of this book.

2. It is a book that takes religion seriously. It is not a tourist guide. There will be no pandering to curiosity seekers, no riffling through peoples' faiths to light on what has shock value; no ascetics on beds of nails, no crucifixions among Penitentes in Mexico, no Parsi Towers of Silence that expose the dead for vultures' consumption, no erotic sculpture or excursions into Tantric sex. The great religions house such material, but to focus on it is the crudest kind of vulgarization.

There are subtler ways to belittle religion. One of these is to acknowledge its importance, but for other people—people of the past, people of other cultures, people whose ego strength needs bolstering. This, too, will not be our approach. Our parts of speech will be in the third person. We shall be talking about Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianists, Muslims—it will be "they" and "them" all the way. But

behind these fronts our deepest concern is for ourselves. The chief reason I find myself returning to the world's great wisdom traditions is for help on issues I have not myself been able to circumvent. Given the essential similarity in human nature—we are all more human than otherwise—I assume that the issues engage the readers of this book as well.

Even the subtlest way to patronize religion will be avoided, the way that honors it not for itself but for its yields—its contributions to art, or to peace of mind, or to group cohesion. This is a book about religion that exists, in William James's contrast, not as a dull habit but as an acute fever. It is about religion alive. And when religion jumps to life it displays a startling quality. It takes over. All else, while not silenced, becomes subdued and thrown into a supporting role.

Religion alive confronts the individual with the most momentous option life can present. It calls the soul to the highest adventure it can undertake, a proposed journey across the jungles, peaks, and deserts of the human spirit. The call is to confront reality, to master the self. Those who dare to hear and follow that secret call soon learn the dangers and difficulties of its lonely journey.

A sharpened edge of a razor, hard to traverse,
A difficult path is this—the poets declare![2]

Science makes major contributions to minor needs, Justice Holmes was fond of saying, adding that religion, however small its successes, is at least at work on the things that matter most. When, then, a lone spirit succeeds in breaking through to major conquests here, it becomes more than a king or queen. It becomes a world redeemer. Its impact stretches for millennia, blessing the tangled course of history for centuries. "Who are . . . the greatest benefactors of the living generation of mankind?" Toynbee asked. "I should say: 'Confucius and Laotze, the Buddha, the Prophets of Israel and Judah, Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammed and Socrates.'"[3]

His answer should not surprise, for authentic religion is the clearest opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos enter human life. What then can rival its power to inspire life's deepest creative centers? Moving outward from there through myth and rite, it provides the symbols that carry history forward, until at length its power is spent and life awaits a new redemption. This recurrent pattern leads even the impish, like George Bernard

Shaw, to conclude that religion is the only real motive force in the world. (Alfred North Whitehead added science, which raises the number to two.)[4] It is religion as empowering that will be our object in the chapters ahead.

3. Finally, this book makes a real effort to communicate. I think of it as a work of translation, one that tries not only to penetrate the worlds of the Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims, but to throw bridges from those worlds to the reader's world. The study of religion can be as technical and academic as any, but I have tried not to lose sight of the relevance this material has for the problems that human beings face today. "If you cannot—in the long run—tell everyone what you have been doing," wrote a great scientist who was also a superb communicator, "your doing has been worthless."[5]

This interest in communication leads back to the book's stance toward historical scholarship that was touched on earlier.

As far as I am aware there is nothing in these pages contrary to the facts of historical evidence, but beyond the avoidance of outright inaccuracy, the issue is less simple. I have deleted enormously, simplifying where historical details seemed to be slowing the pace and obscuring the essential. Occasionally, I have supplied corollaries that seemed to be implied, and I have introduced examples that appear to be in keeping with the theme but are not in the texts themselves. These liberties may lead some to feel that the book "sits loose to the facts," but historical accuracy is not the basic issue. Religion is not primarily a matter of facts; it is a matter of meanings. An analogy from biochemistry is helpful here. "Despite a knowledge of the structure of protein molecules down to the very placement of their atoms in exact three-dimensional space, we do not have the faintest idea of what the rules are for folding them up into their natural form."[6] The religious analogue to the biochemist's atoms are the facts that history, sociology, anthropology, and textual studies marshall about religion. These could be as complete as the biochemists' knowledge of the atomic structure of protein molecules; by themselves they are as lifeless. Implicitly, not explicitly, I have tried in these chapters to apply the "rules" that "fold" religious facts "into their natural form." I have tried to make them live religiously.

We are about to begin a voyage in space and time and eternity. The places will often be distant, the times remote, the themes beyond space and time altogether. We shall have to use words that

are foreign—Sanskrit, Chinese, and Arabic. We shall try to describe states of consciousness that words can only hint at. We shall use logic to try to corner insights that laugh at our attempt. And ultimately, we shall fail; being ourselves of a different cast of mind, we shall never quite understand the religions that are not our own. But if we take those religions seriously, we need not fail miserably. And to take them seriously we need do only two things. First, we need to see their adherents as men and women who faced problems much like our own. And second, we must rid our minds of all preconceptions that could dull our sensitivity or alertness to fresh insights. If we lay aside our preconceptions about these religions, seeing each as forged by people who were struggling to see something that would give help and meaning to their lives; and if we then try without prejudice to see ourselves what they saw—if we do these things, the veil that separates us from them can turn to gauze.

A great anatomist used to close his opening lecture to beginning medical students with words that apply equally to our own undertaking. "In this course," he would say, "we shall be dealing with flesh and bones and cells and sinews, and there are going to be times when it's all going to seem terribly cold-blooded. But never forget. It's alive!"

Notes

1. A standard one is John B. Noss, *Man's Religions* (New York: Macmillan, 1984).
2. *Katha Upanishad* I.iii.14.
3. Arnold Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 156.
4. A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 181.
5. Erwin Schrodinger, *Science and Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 9.
6. R. C. Lewontin, in *The New York Review of Books* (April 27, 1989): 18.

II. Hinduism

If I were asked under what sky the human mind . . . has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions to some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human a life . . . again I should point to India.

—Max Müller

On July 16, 1945, in the deep privacy of a New Mexico desert, an event occurred that may prove to be the most important single happening of the twentieth century. A chain reaction of scientific discoveries that began at the University of Chicago and centered at "Site Y" at Los Alamos was culminated. The first atomic bomb was, as we say, a success.

No one had been more instrumental in this achievement than Robert Oppenheimer, director of the Los Alamos project. An observer who was watching him closely that morning has given us the following account: "He grew tenser as the last seconds ticked off. He scarcely breathed. He held on to a post to steady himself. . . . When the announcer shouted 'Now!' and there came this tremendous burst of light, followed . . . by the deep-growling roar of the explosion, his

face relaxed in an expression of tremendous relief." This much from the outside. But what flashed through Oppenheimer's own mind during those moments, he recalled later, were two lines from the *Bhagavad-Gita* in which the speaker is God:

I am become death, the shatterer of worlds;
Waiting that hour that ripens to their doom.

This incident provides a profound symbol for this chapter's opening, and Mahatma Gandhi's life can join it in setting the stage for the faith we are about to explore. In an age in which violence and peace faced each other more fatefully than ever before, Gandhi's name became, in the middle of our century, the counterpoise to those of Stalin and Hitler. The achievement for which the world credited this man (who weighed less than a hundred pounds and whose worldly possessions when he died were worth less than two dollars) was the British withdrawal from India in peace, but what is less known is that among his own people he lowered a barrier more formidable than that of race in America. He renamed India's untouchables *harijan,* "God's people," and raised them to human stature. And in doing so he provided the nonviolent strategy as well as the inspiration for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s comparable civil rights movement in the United States.

Gandhi's own inspiration and strategy carries us directly into this chapter's subject, for he wrote in his *Autobiography:* "Such power as I possess for working in the political field has derived from my experiments in the spiritual field." In that spiritual field, he went on to say, "truth is the sovereign principle, and the *Bhagavad-Gita* is the book *par excellence* for the knowledge of Truth."

What People Want

If we were to take Hinduism as a whole—its vast literature, its complicated rituals, its sprawling folkways, its opulent art—and compress it into a single affirmation, we would find it saying: You can have what you want.

This sounds promising, but it throws the problem back in our laps. For what *do* we want? It is easy to give a simple answer—not easy to give a good one. India has lived with this question for ages and has her answer waiting. People, she says, want four things.

They begin by wanting pleasure. This is natural. We are all born with built-in pleasure-pain reactors. If we ignored these, leaving our hands on hot stoves or stepping out of second-story windows, we would soon die. What could be more obvious, then, than to follow the promptings of pleasure and entrust our lives to it?

Having heard—for it is commonly alleged—that India is ascetic, other-worldly, and life-denying, we might expect her attitude toward hedonists to be scolding, but it is not. To be sure, India has not made pleasure her highest good, but this is different from condemning enjoyment. To the person who wants pleasure, India says in effect: Go after it—there is nothing wrong with it; it is one of the four legitimate ends of life. The world is awash with beauty and heavy with sensual delights. Moreover, there are worlds above this one where pleasures increase by powers of a million at each rung, and these worlds, too, we shall experience in due course. Like everything else, hedonism requires good sense. Not every impulse can be followed with impunity. Small immediate goals must be sacrificed for long-range gains, and impulses that would injure others must be curbed to avoid antagonisms and remorse. Only the stupid will lie, steal, or cheat for immediate profit, or succumb to addictions. But as long as the basic rules of morality are obeyed, you are free to seek all the pleasure you want. Far from condemning pleasure, Hindu texts house pointers on how to enlarge its scope. To simple people who seek pleasure almost exclusively, Hinduism presents itself as little more than a regimen for ensuring health and prosperity; while at the other end of the spectrum, for sophisticates, it elaborates a sensual aesthetic that shocks in its explicitness. If pleasure is what you want, do not suppress the desire. Seek it intelligently.

This India says, and waits. It waits for the time—it will come to everyone, though not to everyone in one's present life—when one realizes that pleasure is not all that one wants. The reason everyone eventually comes to this discovery is not because pleasure is wicked, but because it is too trivial to satisfy one's total nature. Pleasure is essentially private, and the self is too small an object for perpetual enthusiasm. Søren Kierkegaard tried for a while what he called the aesthetic life, which made enjoyment its guiding principle, only to experience its radical failure, which he described in *Sickness Unto Death*. "In the bottomless ocean of pleasure," he wrote in his *Journal*, "I have sounded in vain for a spot to cast anchor. I have felt the almost

irresistible power with which one pleasure drags another after it, the kind of adulterated enthusiasm which it is capable of producing, the boredom, the torment which follow." Even playboys—a type seldom credited with profundity—have been known to conclude, as one did recently, that "The glamour of yesterday I have come to see as tinsel." Sooner or later everyone wants to experience more than a kaleidoscope of momentary pleasures, however delectable.

When this time comes the individual's interests usually shift to the second major goal of life, which is worldly success[1] with its three prongs of wealth, fame, and power. This too is a worthy goal, to be neither scorned nor condemned. Moreover, its satisfactions last longer, for (unlike pleasure) success is a social achievement, and as such it involves the lives of others. For this reason it commands a scope and importance that pleasure cannot boast.

This point does not have to be argued for a contemporary Western audience. The Anglo-American temperament is not voluptuous. Visitors from abroad do not find English-speaking peoples enjoying life a great deal, or much bent on doing so—they are too busy. Being enamored not of sensualism but of success, what takes arguing in the West is not that achievement's rewards exceed those of the senses but that success too has its limitations—that "What is he worth?" does not come down to "How much has he got?"

India acknowledges that drives for power, position, and possessions run deep. Nor should they be disparaged per se. A modicum of worldly success is indispensable for supporting a household and discharging civic duties responsibly. Beyond this minimum, worldly achievements confer dignity and self-respect. In the end, however, these rewards too have their term. For they all harbor limitations that we can detail:

1. Wealth, fame, and power are exclusive, hence competitive, hence precarious. Unlike mental and spiritual values, they do not multiply when shared; they cannot be distributed without diminishing one's own portion. If I own a dollar, that dollar is not yours; while I am sitting on a chair, you cannot occupy it. Similarly with fame and power. The idea of a nation in which everyone is famous is a contradiction in terms; and if power were distributed equally, no one would be powerful in the sense in which we customarily use the word. From the competitiveness of these goods to their precariousness is a short step. As other people want them too, who knows when success will change hands?

2. The drive for success is insatiable. A qualification is needed here, for people do get enough money, fame, and power. It is when they make these things their chief ambition that their lusts cannot be satisfied. For these are not the things people really want, and people can never get enough of what they do not really want. In Hindu idiom, "To try to extinguish the drive for riches with money is like trying to quench a fire by pouring butter over it."

The West, too, knows this point. "Poverty consists, not in the decrease of one's possessions, but in the increase of one's greed," wrote Plato, and Gregory Nazianzen, a theologian, concurs: "Could you from all the world all wealth procure, more would remain, whose lack would leave you poor." "Success is a goal without a satiation point," a psychologist has recently written, and sociologists who studied a midwestern town found "both business men and working men running for dear life in the business of making the money they earn keep pace with the even more rapid growth of their subjective wants." It was from India that the West appropriated the parable of the donkey driver who kept his beast moving by dangling before it a carrot attached to a stick that was fixed to its own harness.

3. The third problem with worldly success is identical with that of hedonism. It too centers meaning in the self, which proves to be too small for perpetual enthusiasm. Neither fortune nor station can obscure the realization that one lacks so much else. In the end everyone wants more from life than a country home, a sports car, and posh vacations.

4. The final reason why worldly success cannot satisfy us completely is that its achievements are ephemeral. Wealth, fame, and power do not survive bodily death—"You can't take it with you," as we routinely say. And since we cannot, this keeps these things from satisfying us wholly, for we are creatures who can envision eternity and must instinctively rue by contrast the brief purchase on time that worldly success commands.

Before proceeding to the other two things that Hinduism sees people wanting, it will be well to summarize the ones considered thus far. Hindus locate pleasure and success on the Path of Desire. They use this phrase because the personal desires of the individual have thus far been foremost in charting life's course. Other goals lie ahead, but this does not mean that we should berate these preliminaries. Nothing is gained by repressing desires wholesale or pretending

that we do not have them. As long as pleasure and success is what we think we want, we should seek them, remembering only the provisos of prudence and fair play.

The guiding principle is not to turn from desire until desire turns from you, for Hinduism regards the objects of the Path of Desire as if they were toys. If we ask ourselves whether there is anything wrong with toys, our answer must be: On the contrary, the thought of children without them is sad. Even sadder, however, is the prospect of adults who fail to develop interests more significant than dolls and trains. By the same token, individuals whose development is not arrested will move through delighting in success and the senses to the point where their attractions have been largely outgrown.

But what greater attractions does life afford? Two, say the Hindus. In contrast with the Path of Desire, they constitute the Path of Renunciation.

The word renunciation has a negative ring, and India's frequent use of it has been one of the factors in earning for it the reputation of being a life-denying spoilsport. But renunciation has two faces. It can stem from disillusionment and despair, the feeling that it's not worthwhile to extend oneself; but equally it can signal the suspicion that life holds more than one is now experiencing. Here we find the back-to-nature people—who renounce affluence to gain freedom from social rounds and the glut of things—but this is only the beginning. If renunciation always entails the sacrifice of a trivial now for a more promising yet-to-be, religious renunciation is like that of athletes who resist indulgences that could deflect them from their all-consuming goal. Exact opposite of disillusionment, renunciation in this second mode is evidence that the life force is strongly at work.

We must never forget that Hinduism's Path of Renunciation comes after the Path of Desire. If people could be satisfied by following their impulses, the thought of renunciation would never arise. Nor does it occur only to those who have failed on the former path—the disappointed lover who enters a monastery or nunnery to compensate. We can agree with the disparagers that for such people renunciation is a salvaging act—the attempt to make the best of personal defeat. What forces us to listen attentively to Hinduism's hypothesis is the testimony of those who stride the Path of Desire famously and still find themselves wishing for more than it offers. These people—not the ones who renounce but the ones who see

nothing to renounce for—are the world's real pessimists. For to live, people must believe in that for the sake of which they live. As long as they sense no futility in pleasure and success, they can believe that those are worth living for. But if, as Tolstoy points out in his *Confessions*, they can no longer believe in the finite, they will believe in the infinite or they will die.

Let us be clear. Hinduism does not say that everyone in his or her present life will find the Path of Desire wanting. For against a vast time scale, Hinduism draws a distinction the West too is familiar with—that between chronological and psychological age. Two people, both forty-six, are the same age chronologically, but psychologically one may be still a child and the other an adult. The Hindus extend this distinction to cover multiple life spans, a point we shall take up explicitly when we come to the idea of reincarnation. As a consequence we shall find men and women who play the game of desire with all the zest of nine-year-old cops and robbers; though they know little else, they will die with the sense of having lived to the full and enter their verdict that life is good. But equally, there will be others who play this game as ably, yet find its laurels paltry. Why the difference? The enthusiasts, say the Hindus, are caught in the flush of novelty, whereas the others, having played the game over and over again, seek other worlds to conquer.

We can describe the typical experience of this second type. The world's visible rewards still attract them strongly. They throw themselves into enjoyment, enlarging their holdings and advancing their status. But neither the pursuit nor the attainment brings true happiness. Some of the things they want they fail to get, and this makes them miserable. Some they get and hold onto for a while, only to have them suddenly snatched away, and again they are miserable. Some they both get and keep, only to find that (like the Christmases of many adolescents) they do not bring the joy that was expected. Many experiences that thrilled on first encounter pall on the hundredth. Throughout, each attainment seems to fan the flames of new desire; none satisfies fully; and all, it becomes evident, perish with time. Eventually, there comes over them the suspicion that they are caught on a treadmill, having to run faster and faster for rewards that mean less and less.

When that suspicion dawns and they find themselves crying, "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity!" it may occur to them that the problem stems from the smallness of the self they have been scrambling to serve.

What if the focus of their concern were shifted? Might not becoming a part of a larger, more significant whole relieve life of its triviality?

That question announces the birth of religion. For though in some watered-down sense there may be a religion of self-worship, true religion begins with the quest for meaning and value beyond self-centeredness. It renounces the ego's claims to finality.

But what is this renunciation for? The question brings us to the two signposts on the Path of Renunciation. The first of these reads "the community," as the obvious candidate for something greater than ourselves. In supporting at once our own life and the lives of others, the community has an importance no single life can command. Let us, then, transfer our allegiance to it, giving its claims priority over our own.

This transfer marks the first great step in religion. It produces the religion of duty, after pleasure and success the third great aim of life in the Hindu outlook. Its power over the mature is tremendous. Myriads have transformed the will-to-get into the will-to-give, the will-to-win into the will-to-serve. Not to triumph but to do their best—to acquit themselves responsibly, whatever the task at hand—has become their prime objective.

Hinduism abounds in directives to people who would put their shoulders to the social wheel. It details duties appropriate to age, temperament, and social status. These will be examined in subsequent sections. Here we need only repeat what was said in connection with pleasure and success: Duty, too, yields notable rewards, only to leave the human spirit unfilled. Its rewards require maturity to be appreciated, but given maturity, they are substantial. Faithful performance of duty brings respect and gratitude from one's peers. More important, however, is the self-respect that comes from doing one's part. But in the end even these rewards prove insufficient. For even when time turns community into history, history, standing alone, is finite and hence ultimately tragic. It is tragic not only because it must end—eventually history, too, will die—but in its refusal to be perfected. Hope and history are always light-years apart. The final human good must lie elsewhere.

What People Really Want

"There comes a time," Aldous Huxley wrote, "when one asks even of Shakespeare, even of Beethoven, is this all?"

It is difficult to think of a sentence that identifies Hinduism's attitude toward the world more precisely. The world's offerings are not bad. By and large they are good. Some of them are good enough to command our enthusiasm for many lifetimes. Eventually, however, every human being comes to realize with Simone Weil that "there is no true good here below, that everything that appears to be good in this world is finite, limited, wears out, and once worn out, leaves necessity exposed in all its nakedness."[2] When this point is reached, one finds oneself asking even of the best this world can offer, "Is this all?"

This is the moment Hinduism has been waiting for. As long as people are content with the prospect of pleasure, success, or service, the Hindu sage will not be likely to disturb them beyond offering some suggestions as to how to proceed more effectively. The critical point in life comes when these things lose their original charm and one finds oneself wishing that life had something more to offer. Whether life does or does not hold more is probably the question that divides people more sharply than any other.

The Hindu answer to the question is unequivocal. Life holds other possibilities. To see what these are we must return to the question of what people want. Thus far, Hinduism would say, we have been answering this question too superficially. Pleasure, success, and duty are never humanity's ultimate goals. At best they are means that we assume will take us in the direction of what we really want. What we really want are things that lie at a deeper level.

First, we want being. Everyone wants to be rather than not be; normally, no one wants to die. A World War II correspondent once described the atmosphere of a room containing thirty-five men who had been assigned to a bombing mission from which, on average, only one-fourth returned. What he felt in those men, the correspondent noted, was not so much fear as "a profound reluctance to give up the future." Their sentiment holds for us all, the Hindus would say. None of us take happily to the thought of a future in which we shall have no part.

Second, we want to know. Whether it be scientists probing the secrets of nature, a typical family watching the nightly news, or neighbors catching up on local gossip, we are insatiably curious. Experiments have shown that even monkeys will work longer and harder to discover what is on the other side of a trapdoor than they will for either food or sex.

The third thing people seek is joy, a feeling tone that is the opposite of frustration, futility, and boredom.

These are what people really want. To which we should add, if we are to complete the Hindu answer, that they want these things infinitely. A distinctive feature of human nature is its capacity to think of something that has no limits: the infinite. This capacity affects all human life, as de Chirico's painting "Nostalgia of the Infinite" poignantly suggests. Mention any good, and we can imagine more of it—and, so imagining, want that more. Medical science has doubled life expectancy, but has living twice as long made people readier to die? To state the full truth, then, we must say that what people would really like to have is infinite being, infinite knowledge, and infinite bliss. They might have to settle for less, but this is what they really want. To gather the wants into a single word, what people really want is liberation *(moksha)*—release from the finitude that restricts us from the limitless being, consciousness, and bliss our hearts desire.

Pleasure, success, responsible discharge of duty, and liberation—we have completed the circuit of what people think they want and what they want in actuality. This takes us back to the staggering conclusion with which our survey of Hinduism began. What people most want, that they can have. Infinite being, infinite awareness, and infinite bliss are within their reach. Even so, the most startling statement yet awaits. Not only are these goods within peoples' reach, says Hinduism. People already possess them.

For what is a human being? A body? Certainly, but anything else? A personality that includes mind, memories, and propensities that have derived from a unique trajectory of life-experiences? This, too, but anything more? Some say no, but Hinduism disagrees. Underlying the human self and animating it is a reservoir of being that never dies, is never exhausted, and is unrestricted in consciousness and bliss. This infinite center of every life, this hidden self or *Atman*, is no less than *Brahman*, the Godhead. Body, personality, and *Atman-Brahman*—a human self is not completely accounted for until all three are noted.

But if this is true and we really are infinite in our being, why is this not apparent? Why do we not act accordingly? "I don't feel particularly unlimited today," one may be prompted to observe. "And my neighbor—I haven't noticed his behavior to be exactly Godlike." How

can the Hindu hypothesis withstand the evidence of the morning newspaper?

The answer, say the Hindus, lies in the depth at which the Eternal is buried under the almost impenetrable mass of distractions, false assumptions, and self-regarding instincts that comprise our surface selves. A lamp can be covered with dust and dirt to the point of obscuring its light completely. The problem life poses for the human self is to cleanse the dross of its being to the point where its infinite center can shine forth in full display.

The Beyond Within

"The aim of life," Justice Holmes used to say, "is to get as far as possible from imperfection." Hinduism says its purpose is to pass beyond imperfection altogether.

If we were to set out to compile a catalogue of the specific imperfections that hedge our lives, it would have no end. We lack strength and imagination to effect our dreams; we grow tired, fall ill, and are foolish. We fail and become discouraged; we grow old and die. Lists of this sort could be extended indefinitely, but there is no need, for all specific limitations reduce to three basic variants. We are limited in joy, knowledge, and being, the three things people really want.

Is it possible to pass beyond the strictures that separate us from these things? Is it feasible to seek to rise to a quality of life that, because less circumscribed, would be life indeed?

To begin with the strictures on our joy, these fall into three subgroups: physical pain, frustration that arises from the thwarting of desire, and boredom with life in general.

Physical pain is the least troublesome of the three. As pain's intensity is partly due to the fear that accompanies it, the conquest of fear can reduce pain concomitantly. Pain can also be accepted when it has a purpose, as a patient welcomes the return of life and feeling, even painful feeling, to a frozen arm. Again, pain can be overridden by an urgent purpose, as in a football game. In extreme cases of useless pain, it may be possible to anesthetize it through drugs or control of the senses. Ramakrishna, the greatest Hindu saint of the nineteenth century, died of cancer of the throat. A doctor who was examining him in the last stages of the disease probed his degenerating tissue and Ramakrishna flinched in pain. "Wait a minute," he said;

then, "Go ahead," after which the doctor could probe without resistance. The patient had focused his attention to the point where nerve impulses could barely gain access. One way or another it seems possible to rise to a point where physical pain ceases to be a major problem.

More serious is the psychological pain that arises from the thwarting of specific desires. We want to win a tournament, but we lose. We want to profit, but the deal falls through. A promotion goes to our competitor. We would like to have been invited, but are snubbed. Life is so filled with disappointments that we are likely to assume that they are built into the human condition. On examination, however, there proves to be something disappointments share in common. Each thwarts an expectation of the individual ego. If the ego were to have no expectations, there would be nothing to disappoint.

If this sounds like ending an ailment by killing the patient, the same point can be stated positively. What if the interests of the self were expanded to the point of approximating a God's-eye view of humanity? Seeing all things under the aspect of eternity would make one objective toward oneself, accepting failure as on a par with success in the stupendous human drama of yes and no, positive and negative, push and pull. Personal failure would be as small a cause for concern as playing the role of loser in a summer theater performance. How could one feel disappointed at one's own defeat if one experienced the victor's joy as also one's own; how could being passed over for a promotion touch one if one's competitor's success were enjoyed vicariously? Instead of crying "impossible," we should perhaps content ourselves with noting how different this would feel from life as it is usually lived, for reports of the greatest spiritual geniuses suggest that they rose to something like this perspective. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me"—are we to suppose that Jesus was posturing when he uttered those words? We are told that Sri Ramakrishna once

> *howled with pain when he saw two boatmen quarrelling angrily. He came to identify himself with the sorrows of the whole world, however impure and murderous they might be, until his heart was scored with scars. But he knew that he must love God in all sorts and conditions of men, however antagonistic and hostile, and in*

all forms of thought controlling their existence and often setting them at variance to one another.[3]

Detachment from the finite self or attachment to the whole of things—we can state the phenomenon either positively or negatively. When it occurs, life is lifted above the possibility of frustration and above ennui—the third threat to joy—as well, for the cosmic drama is too spectacular to permit boredom in the face of such vivid identification.

The second great limitation of human life is ignorance. The Hindus claim that this, too, is removable. The Upanishads speak of a "knowing of That the knowledge of which brings knowledge of everything." It is not likely that "everything" here implies literal omniscience. More probably, it refers to an insight that lays bare the point of everything. Given that summarizing insight, to ask for details would be as irrelevant as asking the number of atoms in a great painting. When the point is grasped, who cares about details?

But is transcendent knowledge even in this more restricted sense possible? Clearly, mystics think that it is. Academic psychology has not followed them all the way, but it is convinced that there is far more to the mind than appears on its surface. Psychologists liken the mind to an iceberg, most of which is invisible. What does the mind's vast, submerged ballast contain? Some think it contains every memory and experience that has come its way, nothing being forgotten by the deep mind that never sleeps. Others, like Carl Jung, think it includes racial memories that summarize the experience of the entire human species. Psychoanalysis aims a few pinpoints of light at this mental darkness. Who is to say how far the darkness can be dispelled?

As for life's third limitation, its restricted being, to profitably consider this we have first to ask how the boundary of the self is to be defined. Not, certainly, by the amount of physical space our bodies occupy, the amount of water we displace in the bathtub. It makes more sense to gauge our being by the size of our spirits, the range of reality with which they identify. A man who identifies with his family, finding his joys in theirs, would have that much reality; a woman who could identify with humankind would be that much greater. By this criterion people who could identify with being as a whole would be unlimited. Yet this seems hardly right, for they would still die. The

object of their concerns would continue, but they themselves would be gone.

We need, therefore, to approach this question of being not only spatially, so to speak, but also in terms of time. Our everyday experience provides a wedge for doing so. Strictly speaking, every moment of our lives is a dying; the I of that moment dies, never to be reborn. Yet despite the fact that in this sense my life consists of nothing but funerals, I do not conceive of myself as dying each moment, for I do not equate myself with my individual moments. I endure through them—experiencing them, without being identical with any of them in its singularity. Hinduism carries this notion a step further. It posits an extensive self that lives successive lives in the way a single life lives successive moments.

A child's heart is broken by misfortunes we consider trivial. It identifies completely with each incident, being unable to see it against the backdrop of a whole, variable lifetime. A lot of living is required before the child can withdraw its self-identification from the individual moment and approach, thereby, adulthood. Compared with children we are mature, but compared with saints we are children. No more capable of seeing our total selves in perspective than a three-year-old who has dropped its ice cream cone, our attention is fixated on our present life span. If we could mature completely we would see that lifespan in a larger setting, one that is, actually, unending.

This is the basic point in the Hindu estimate of the human condition. We have seen that psychology has accustomed us to the fact that there is more to ourselves than we suspect. Like the eighteenth century European view of the earth, our minds have their own darkest Africas, their unmapped Borneos, their Amazonian basins. Their bulk continues to await exploration. Hinduism sees the mind's hidden continents as stretching to infinity. Infinite in being, infinite in awareness, there is nothing beyond them that remains unknown. Infinite in joy, too, for there is nothing alien to them to mar their beatitude.

Hindu literature is studded with metaphors and parables that are designed to awaken us to the realms of gold that are hidden in the depths of our being. We are like kings who, falling victim to amnesia, wander our kingdoms in tatters not knowing who we really are. Or like a lion cub who, having become separated from its mother, is

raised by sheep and takes to grazing and bleating on the assumption that it is a sheep as well. We are like a lover who, in his dream, searches the wide world in despair for his beloved, oblivious of the fact that she is lying at his side throughout.

What the realization of our total being is like can no more be described than can a sunset to one born blind; it must be experienced. The biographies of those who have made the discovery provide us with clues, however. These people are wiser; they have more strength and joy. They seem freer, not in the sense that they go around breaking the laws of nature (though the power to do exceptional things is often ascribed to them) but in the sense that they seem not to find the natural order confining. They seem serene, even radiant. Natural peacemakers, their love flows outward, alike to all. Contact with them strengthens and purifies.

Four Paths to the Goal

All of us dwell on the brink of the infinite ocean of life's creative power. We carry it within us: supreme strength, the fullness of wisdom, unquenchable joy. It is never thwarted and cannot be destroyed. But it is hidden deep, which is what makes life a problem. The infinite is down in the darkest, profoundest vault of our being, in the forgotten well-house, the deep cistern. What if we could bring it to light and draw from it unceasingly?

This question became India's obsession. Her people sought religious truth not simply to increase their store of general information; they sought it as a chart to guide them to higher states of being. Religious people were ones who were seeking to transform their natures, reshape them to a superhuman pattern through which the infinite could shine with fewer obstructions. One feels the urgency of the quest in a metaphor the Hindu texts present in many guises. Just as a man carrying on his head a load of wood that has caught fire would go rushing to a pond to quench the flames, even so will the seeker of truth, scorched by the fires of life—birth, death, self-deluding futility—go rushing to a teacher wise to the ways of the things that matter most.

Hinduism's specific directions for actualizing the human potential come under the heading of *yoga*. The word once conjured images of shaggy men in loincloths, twisting their bodies into human pretzels

while brandishing occult powers. Now that the West has appropriated the term, however, we are more likely to think of lithe women exercising to retain their trim suppleness. Neither image is totally divorced from the real article, but they relate only to its bodily aspects. The word *yoga* derives from the same root as does the English word yoke, and yoke carries a double connotation: to unite (yoke together), and to place under disciplined training (to bring under the yoke, or "take my yoke upon you"). Both connotations are present in the Sanskrit word. Defined generally, then, *yoga* is a method of training designed to lead to integration or union. But integration of what?

Some people are chiefly interested in their bodies. Needless to say, they have their Indian counterparts—people who make their bodies the prime objects of their concern and endeavor. For such people India, through centuries of experimentation, has devised the most fantastic school of physical culture the world has ever seen.[4] Not that she has been more interested in the body than the West; her interest has simply taken a different turn. Whereas the West has sought strength and beauty, India has been interested in precision and control, ideally complete control over the body's every function. How many of her incredible claims in this area can be scientifically corroborated remains to be seen.[5] It is enough here to note that her extensive instructions on the subject comprise an authentic *yoga*, *hatha yoga*. Originally it was practiced as preliminary to spiritual *yoga*, but it has largely lost this connection so it need not concern us here. The judgment of the Hindu sages on this matter can be ours as well. Incredible things can be done with the body if you are willing to give your life to the project, but these things have little to do with enlightenment. If their cultivation stems from a desire to show off, they can actually impede spiritual growth.

The *yogas* that do concern us are those designed to unite the human spirit with the God who lies concealed in its deepest recesses. "Since all the Indian spiritual [as distinct from bodily] exercises are devoted seriously to this practical aim—not to a merely fanciful contemplation or discussion of lofty and profound ideas—they may well be regarded as representing one of the most realistic, matter-of-fact, practical-minded systems of thought and training ever set up by the human mind. How to come to Brahman [God in Sanskrit] and remain in touch with Brahman; how to become identified

50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

More Than Three Million Copies Sold

"Huston Smith's classic on the world's religions has justifiably become as venerable as the old texts he studies . . . I urge all readers to make it the core of their home library."
—Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul*

"The best one-volume book on world religions." —*Library Journal*

"Intelligent, clearly written . . . reveals the spirit of each faith."
—*New York Times Book Review*

Huston Smith's masterpiece explores the essential elements and teachings of the world's predominant faiths, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the native traditions of Australia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas.

Emphasizing the inner—rather than the institutional—dimension of these religions, Smith devotes special attention to Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, Sufism, and the teachings of Jesus. He convincingly conveys the unique appeal and gifts of each of the traditions and reveals their hold on the human heart and imagination.

HUSTON SMITH was widely regarded as the most eloquent and accessible contemporary authority on the history of religions. He taught at Washington University, MIT, Syracuse University, and the University of California at Berkeley, and was the recipient of twelve honorary degrees. Smith's fifteen books include his award-winning *Why Religion Matters*, as well as his autobiography, *Tales of Wonder*.

www.hustonsmith.net

HarperOne
An Imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*

Available from HarperCollins e-books

Discover great authors, exclusive offers, and more at hc.com.

Front cover design: Noel Barnes; Cover image: © Kevin R. Morris/CORBIS

RELIGION

ISBN 978-0-06-166018-4

EAN 51999

USA $19.99 CAN $24.99

0509