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A Study of Self in the light of Western and Eastern Discourses



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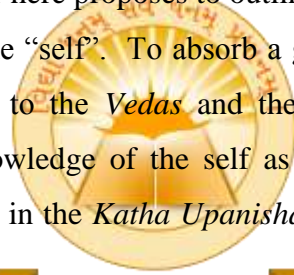
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Abstract:

Self is one of the most analyzed subjects in philosophy and literature right from Buddha to Nietzsche. The study of self has once again in trend in philosophy, given a boost by recent encourages in cognitive- and neuroscience which encounter it intriguing that an entity as familiar as the self extends to fudge full scientific investigation. The trouble of the self has informal connections with that of personal identity and the mind and body's human relationship, but they are not the same: what builds the self distinctive is its first-personal character.

Introduction:

The debate and discourse of “Self” has been in our literature, philosophy and culture since the days of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. The researcher here proposes to outline that discussion before documenting what the major philosophers have said about the “self”. To absorb a genealogy and development of the theories on the “self” we shall have to go back to the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* frequently characterize the question concerning knowledge of the self as one that even the well-educated teachers discover difficult to answer. We discover, in the *Katha Upanishad*, Yama to be distracted when Nachiketas asks after the soul’s destiny after death:



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“Choose a different boon, Nachiketas. Do not, do not insist: release me from this” (Roebuck 2003 275).

It is not easy task to know about self. Even well-learned person feels difficulties for the journey of self-discovery. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* depicts the self as being sought. “Through asceticism, through fasting ... Desiring it as their world, renouncers wander. Knowing it, the ancients did not desire offspring” (Roebuck 2003 75).

The Western Philosophers on the Eastern Philosophy

Generally, philosophy is ubiquitously set as the study of the wisdom or knowledge about the universal problems, facts, and situations linked with human existence, values, reasons, and universal reality. It searches reasons, answers, and general explanations to life and its components. Hence, if we speak about philosophy, we lecture about a school of ideas. And if we link it with our subject, it differs and comes with



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the realities, troubles, and situations of certain people like, in this case, the East and the West.

Essentially, Western philosophy is concerned to as the school of thought from Greek philosophy that determined the greater part of Western culture. In contrary, the Eastern philosophy is based primarily in Asia, more specifically the Chinese philosophy. Furthermore, Western philosophy takes its roots from Rome and Christianity, specifically Judeo-Christianity. Eastern philosophy, on the other hand, is from Confucianism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Taoism. Hence is it safe to say that Eastern philosophy is classical Chinese, while Western philosophy is more Latin in its roots.

The principal differences between the school of thought or the philosophies of the East and West are the West's Individualism and the East's Collectivism. The Eastern philosophy is depicted much more into groups or society or people's activities and thoughts as one in order to discover meaning in life as they attempt to get rid of the false "me" concept and find meaning in discovering the true "me" in relation to everything approximately them, or as part of a bigger system. In contrast, the Western civilization is more individualistic, trying to determine the meaning of life here and directly with self at the center as it is already given and component of the divine.

The chief precept of the Eastern philosophy is unity. This cosmological unity is the main point in the journey of life as it extends toward the endless realities. Life is round, and the return with everything around it is significant. Ethics is founded on conduct, and dependence is from the inside to the outside. In order to be released, the inner self must be relinquished first in accordance to the world around it. Western philosophy, on the other hand, is founded on self-dedication to be of serve to others. Life is service to God, wealth, community, and so on. Due to its Christian influence, there has to be a commencing and end to discover meaning. It looks, Western philosophy is consistent, scientific, and rational equated to the East's concept of eternal and recurring.

Eastern philosophy also flourishes on virtues. This would be explicated with the selfless approach to life. Gratification with what one has is the key. Meantime, Western philosophy centers on ethics. As individuals, one must do what is guessed to be done without inducing ill to others. Success is founded on how much one passes his way without hurting others. Eastern philosophy is also more about the spiritual while Western philosophy is more of a hands-on style. The difference is the "I" of the West, and the "We" of the East, as one focuses on finding truth and meaning. (Celine 2012 7)



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1. Western philosophy is chiefly applied in the Western parts of the world, such as in the European countries, while the Eastern philosophy is dominant in Asian countries.
2. Western philosophy conducts with Individualism while Eastern Philosophy is connected to collectivism.
3. Both philosophies center on virtues.
4. Eastern philosophy accepts more of a spiritual imminent while Western philosophy is more hands-on physical approach.

The chief concentration of this study is to trace the development of Hermann Hesse's interest in Indian thought and to scan how far his knowledge of east in general and of Buddhist study in particular has helped him in his literary pursuits, particularly as a novelist. As Hermann Hesse was not only writer in the west to seek eastern wisdom, he likes some of his peers from the west like Durrell, Richard Bach, Michael Talbot, and Thomas Campbell among the others probe deep into orient wisdom.

East V/S West: A peep into the works of some of the western thinkers.

Lawrence George Durrell, one of the greatest writers who lived in the twentieth century, was born in India. The biographies that are available afford us elaborate details about Durrell's personal life and his development as a literary writer. His relationship with Indian thought and how far it assisted him in his literary following are the only subjects coming up hither for psychoanalysis in this study. Durrell discovered in Indian metaphysics a possible answer to the trouble of the cultural lawlessness infecting this world. This is what one can collect from his writings. When we expect at his integral work in the light of this fact, we can discover the steady effort he attained in his literary career at achieving an oriental person or Indian insight, an ultimate insight.

"But one feels that real bliss, the smiling silence of pure transcendence is Asiatic", writes Durrell in *Caesar's Vast Ghost* (Nambiar 2014 2), in his final work. In other words, most of the perceptive qualities with which he made his serious characters or the way he formed his vision in his works can be described to the wisdom he collected from oriental philosophy and mysticism. As he arrived at his final novels, his Indian insight earns more and more depth. Durrell's ardent desire to construct a rich and complete opinion of life in his artistic creations is, hence, backed by the insightful knowledge he gained from the East.



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The main creative stress Durrell affords in his novels is in exemplifying the inner crises of his characters, and subjecting them to an objective scientific question. The habit of carrying out an inner examination, an insightful scrutiny in life, no doubt, is a Buddhist or a Hindu characteristic. Durrell's readers experience that he even went to the extent of calling his *Quintet* a Tibetan novel. In an interview with Cecile Wajsbrot, which is published in Earl G. Ingersoll's *Conversations*, Durrell states, "The *Quintet* accordingly offers a solution: the East as a way out for the West". (Nambiar 2014: 3)

One of the best sources to analyze the difference between Western and Eastern metaphysics is D. T. Suzuki, who was a great power of Zen Buddhism in the West. The publication of his work, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, in 1927 noted a turning point in the study of philosophy; he was made out as "the foremost interpreter of Eastern thought for Western minds". (Nambiar 2014 4) Hence, a purposeful peep at Suzuki's essay, "East and West", will be of immense help to readers in realizing the reasons why the writers in the West took keen interest in Oriental wisdom. Durrell's personal copy of the book, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, is now in the Durrell Archive in Paris.⁵ All the important passages in the book are not only densely noted by Durrell, but are also emphasized and given different codes, pointing that they would in future be drew out for pasting them in suitable places in his creative writing. The markings in the book also foreground to what extent Durrell had imbibed the great Buddhist principles.

Durrell's claim that his *The Alexandria Quartet* is a Western novel and *The Avignon Quintet* is an Eastern that can be probed under the light of Suzuki's essay, "East and West". In his essay, Suzuki equates two short poems written by two notable poets: one by a seventeenth century Japanese poet, named Basho, and the other by the great Victorian poet, Lord Tennyson. The subject of both poems is a flower. Basho discovers a flower from a distance, values its beauty, and loves it as a fantastic object in nature. He looks up to the flower, earns that its existence is rooted in nature and eventually allows for an exclamation mark in the poem.

To start with, it is advisable to get it on what Indian Metaphysics really intends, what its broad characteristics are, and how it differs from Western metaphysics. Nevertheless, a full discussion is not expected in this chapter, as a clear idea of it will emerge from the total discourse confronted in this book. "Traditionally", E. Jonathan Lowe, a Professor of Philosophy at Durham University, writes in his book, *The Possibility of Metaphysics*: "metaphysics has been thought of as the systematic study of the most fundamental structure of reality". (Nambiar 2014 11)



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In Sarvapally Radhakrishnan's words: "The very name metaphysics characterizes the type of inquiry which goes beyond what is given to us. Whereas science deals with existent objects, philosophy tries to envisage the guiding concepts of ontological reality. (Cited in Nambiar 2014 12)

There are a number of books available today on Indian metaphysics, written by both western and eastern writers. We have great sages in India, like Swami Vivekananda, Sri. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sri. Aurobindo Ghosh, Swami Chinmayananda, and similar creative thinkers of the modern period, aside from the great philosophers of the ancient past, similar Sri. Adi Sankaracharya, who have acted well in representing Indian philosophy to the common man. Nevertheless, the greatest of all Indian philosophers, who is brilliant in examining the Indian perceptiveness and who is equally great in discussing all the existing philosophies in the world, is certainly Dr. Radhakrishnan. P. T. Raju, a prominent Indian philosopher, orders that Radhakrishnan is "the liaison officer between East and West."(Nambiar 2014 14)

Capra resounds what Suzuki has said about East and West. Briefly, the opposite of what Capra enounces about the West form the bricks on which the Eastern metaphysics is built. In his lecture, "India: What Can It Teach Us?" F. Max Muller, the renowned German-born philologist and orientalist, submits: If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant--I should point to India.(Cited in Nambiar 2014: 19)

Sanskrit language and Indian religious belief were Muller's particular area of interest. As a true formal artist who always yearns to make a world in which man could be seen living in peace, Durrell too, like Muller, Will Durant, Suzuki, Heinrich Zimmer, T. S. Eliot, Henry Miller, Aldous Huxley, Fritjof Capra, Joseph Campbell and Ken Wilber, like so many such creative thinkers and writers, turns to India, looking for a metaphysical shelter. In *A Key to Modern British Poetry* Durrell spells, "In the literature of the last decade there has been a distinct growth of interest in mysticism, and more noticeably in Eastern religion" (Nambiar 2014 13).

In point of fact, Key is the key to the way Durrell as an artist was getting formed, and it also shines the subject matter with which he was going to write his novels in three phases. If anyone has a inquiry, why some of his contemporary writers were so deeply enlisted in the study of Eastern philosophies, Durrell's



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words in A Key serve as the right response: "Herein I believe lies the key to the new influences creeping into art —influences which may be recognized in the Eastern philosophies which are being studied by writers as diverse as Huxley, Heard, Isherwood, Maugham (Nambiar 2014 16).

Altogether, there formulated a situation in the twentieth century which involved a interchange in writing, because the creative artists discovered that each swelling individual ego was attempting to give shape to distinguish or isolated realities, resulting in the formation of difficult and severe boundaries, and the net effect was the growth of hate and violence in society. According to Aldous Huxley: For four hundred years, from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth, most of the Christian nations of Europe have spent a good part of their time and energy in attacking, conquering and exploiting their non-Christian neighbors in other continents." (Nambiar 2014 17)

Alan Wallace, a great Buddhist practitioner, comments in Buddhism and Science that modern science has left us humanness in the dark as to the nature and potentials of awareness, subjective experience and its relation to the objective world. In the end century there was a jump in scientific knowledge, a greater advance in industrial life, and along with it the technology in warfare experienced a rapid change. Killing became rampant. The only thing difficult to be accomplished, which was outside the reach of man, was serenity and happiness. The serious nature of this human situation was made by most of the twentieth century novelists, and it obliged them to turn elsewhere to look for a way out. The result was that examines in Oriental wisdom became a concerning and attractive preoccupation for most of the Western thinkers. The richness of Indian perceptivity quite bewildered many of them.

Richard David Bach:

Richard Bach is notable as the author of "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" (1970). Philosophical point of view said by the chief characters of this book (Jonathan, Chiang, Sullivan) can be discovered in the following works of the author, such as "Illussions", "One", "Running from safety", "Out of my mind". These books took in the philosophical thoughts conveyed in "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" and due to their polemic character a new, perfectly original philosophical system has been formulated.



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