

Chris Fueloep-Miller
848 Cambridge Ave.
Menlo Park, Cal.94025
Phone 323-2781

The Relevance of Eastern Religions to Western Youth

Ideas and experiences are neither “Eastern”
Nor “Western” and cannot be neatly
categorized, although we tend
to think in these terms
for history has its
impact and men are
prone to compart-
mentalize all things.
Realizing this limitation, the
following questionnaire will use
these terms merely as a working tool.

1. a) Name:
b) Age:
c) Sex:
d) Occupation:
e) Number of years interest in Eastern religions:
2. a) What aroused your original interest in Eastern thought &/or religion and what has sustained it? (books, friends, courses, etc?)
b) Are there any Western thinkers who triggered your interest in Eastern religions?
3. a) Which specific Eastern religion are you interested in and why did you choose it?
b) Do you embrace this Eastern religion in full or do you select only such aims and practices which attract you? If the latter, which?
c) Do you tend towards eclecticism (combining elements of various religions or of religion and psychology, etc.)? If so, in what way and for what reason?
4. In the religions content, would you comment on Kipling’s phrase: “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.”
5. There are many difference and similarities between Eastern and Judeo-Christian religious concepts. Would you give a one sentence definition and then comment, from a subjective stand-point, on the following pairs:
a) prayer – meditation b) heaven – nirvana, satori c) direct experiencing, self-realization – faith, grace, salvation d) resurrection – reincarnation.
6. a) Originally (i.e. just before turning to an Eastern religion), were there any particular aspects in Western culture and religion that repelled you? If so, what were these? Were these negative aspects causally related to your interest in Eastern thought and religion? In what way?

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- b) Are there any specific problems in Western society that you think **could** be solved by an Eastern religions approach? If so, which?
7. a) Give any information you wish about your social and religions background. What, if any, role did these play in bringing you to Eastern religion?
b) Did this interest in Eastern religion create a rift between you and 1) family 2) friends 3) society 4) combination 5) none? If so, how?
8. Do you generally read and/or study Eastern religion for credit or as a personal quest? If the latter, a quest for what?
9. a) What is your understanding of the term “religion”?
b) Do you consider doctrine and dogma as being essential to a functioning religion?
c) Is there a difference between spirituality and religion? If so, can spirituality be a religion in its own right?
10. Do you practice what you read in Eastern religion or do you read what you practice? Or neither?
11. Can you specify in any way how you have **reinterpreted** Hinduism or Buddhism (specific) to solve your own existential problems?
12. What are you looking for in Eastern religion and who do you think will benefit from its application: a) yourself b) your friends c) your race d) your nation e) humanity f) the world g) any combination of these or none? What gains and benefits will result if any?
13. Was your original scale of values (i.e. before you came to Eastern religion) enhanced or changed by your contact with Eastern thought and religion?
14. In one or two paragraphs sum up as best you can what the relevance of Eastern religious thought and practice is to you.

SAMUEL L. LEWIS

410 PRECITA AVENUE — SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. 94110

Telephone: (415) 285-5208

SUFI AHMED MURAD CHISTI

Reverend HE KWANG

Feb. 26, 1968

University of Islamabad

(Zen-Shi)

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1. a) Name: SAMUEL L. LEWIS. Also the above titles.
b) Age: 71
c) Sex: Male
d) Occupation: Retired Gardener, Horticulturalist. Now writer and teacher of Oriental philosophies as above.
e) Interested in Eastern religions since 1915. Began reading Max Muller and “Sacred Books of the East” in 1916.
2. a) World War I, turning me against Europe; a gambling instinct to bet on long shots, i.e. Eastern as against Western cultures, and interest in Asian Art as against the then contemporary Art, Influence by Perham Hal, drawing teacher and later by Mrs. Rabia Martin, a Sufi, and Dr. M. T. Kirby, a Buddhist monk, then the late Nyogen Senzaki.

b) Max Muller. Later Emerson.
3. All religions. Influence by the late Cassius Keyser of Columbia to a universal outlook. Later also by Lord Russell to universality, and of course, Emerson and Jefferson, later Whitman.

b. Experiences of a nature not yet recognized by intellectuals determined the course of life. Had too many occult and mystical experiences. Experience, not subjectivities, determined by future. Then meeting Hazrat Inayat Khan, the Sufi Pir-o-Murshid.

c. Always accepted the Eclectic. See no rational otherwise. This idea from the Mathematical Philosophy of Cassius Keyser, and the companionate study of Non-Euclidean systems.
4. You are quoting a single line from a poem which says otherwise at the end. Read the whole thing. (Was last person to be given a tea-of-honor in Kipling’s old workshop in Lahore.)
5. a. Prayers are not usually answered pragmatically. Prayers are mostly useless gestures toward a thought-form with a Cosmic Label. Yet there are prayers and they are answered.

Meditation may mean anything but generally it means Mind in a state of rest and has some value.

b. Heaven is Heaven and Buddhism has at least two systems of Heavens, and Hinduism at least one. Heavens are finite, Nirvana transfinite. As these have been personal experience validated by proper “Masters” someday it is hoped that the experiences will be at least equated to the conceptions and speculations of important people.

Instant Satori in meeting first Zen Master in Japan. Can't be because our "experts" say otherwise. Man's experiences always paramount to opinions.

c. Direction experience is direct experience and self-realization is self-realization and man's life is far superior to theoretical books written by anybody.

d. Have experienced resurrection in this life; and remember former lives. Now being accepted by Virginia University.

6. Science demands experience and religion by-passed it. If you believed blindly which is called "with perfect faith," you were accepted. But if you based your belief on validated and confirmable experience you were more than suspect.

The rejections of Western prelates and thinkers ran concurrently with acceptance by Orientals, and inner experiences.

b. Meditation in some form. Thus Newton's Law of Motion, all bodies are in a state of rest or uniformly accelerated motion, applies to mind. We do not know how to relax. We are always seeing excitement, more excitement and still more. Excitement has \$\$\$ value.

Some Eastern religions demand experience. Western religions demand belief. This is purely the interference of small minds in big things, which can and does happen within the domains of all faiths, or rather of all "non-primitive" religions.

7. Parents were either indifferent or tolerant, mostly the former. Tried four kinds of Judaism, then six kinds of Christianity. But with rare acceptance direct experience not accepted—until one also met Christian and Jewish mystics and these, not until long after one met Oriental mystics. Rufus Moseley, Protestant mystic, had **Love at First Sight**.

b. 1. Mother became rabidly anti-synagogue. 2. Many friends became interested in Oriental faiths, but did not have too many friends: 3. Society ejected and rejected. Father tended to support society although mother real enemy, excepting on this one point.

Society accepted more and more Englishmen and Europeans as "experts" on Orientalia. (e.g. the books of the rival Alan Watts and Ernest Wood). Both these and other Englishmen rejected any prowess in Orientalia and society in general supported them. Asians utterly repelled by such behavior. And Princess Poon Diskul, now head of the World Buddhist Federation rejected here socially in favor of these and other Englishmen (Huxley, Heard, Blythe, etc.) as "spokesmen" for "Oriental culture."

8. Mostly quest but occasionally for credit. Have been accepted by Zen Roshies, Sufi Murshids, Indian Swamis, Gurus and Pundits; also by Christian Fathers and at least one Jewish mystical rabbi. The heading on page one, letter head is confirmation of this. When we get out of dialectics and speculation and adopt the same standards as in the sciences, the situation will be different. Scientific knowledge is based on experience; the same is true of mysticism and occultism although the directions are different.

9. a. Originally "religion" meant that which concerned man's relation to God. Now accept the Anthropological points of view.

b. No!

c. Spirituality is based on the experiences of man in, toward, with and from Infinity. Religion, using mathematical logic, is based on Derivatives, not Functions. Religion should be the servant to help man reach God; instead it has become the master. God made every one of us in His Image and while religion theorizes this, in practice it flouts it.

10. Have practiced an enormous amount of what has been read but probably am better acquainted with the context of Scriptures than almost anybody. When the top Orientalists met here some time ago, was the only one who could answer complex questions put by Prof. M. Singer of Chicago. This evokes envy, not recognition.

Not only practice but teach many forms of discipline and rather successfully.

11. Basing both my Hinduism and Buddhism upon human experiences of self and others, using scriptures only as guide and dogma not at all; best conformation in excellent relations with Dr. Radhakrishnan.
12. Seeking God, quote from Qur'an: "Allah is neither of the East nor of the West." Believe all Occidentals would gain by studying the Orient and all Orientals by studying the Occident. As one has attained the cosmic view-point these questions are irrelevant.
13. The Divine Experience (neither "East" nor "West" and yet both) transforms all values.
14. Having attained to Spiritual Majority, confirmed by Sufi Pirs, my own Gurus (Paul Brunton and Swami Ram Das) and several **Asian** Buddhist Masters, the best evidence has been the manifestation of untrammled vitality in a body over 70. Also ability to help others toward self-realization, at least to Love, Joy and Peace; and in some cases by having disciples who have had self-realization.

This Universality has made one a guest of honor at the Royal Palaces in Japan and Thailand; and tea in the Presidential mansions of India and Pakistan, etc., etc.

A Dervish sees no differences among mankind and is welcomed everywhere. One believes mankind was made in God's image or that all have Perfect Enlightenment but do not know it. One began one's quest at 18 and is still on one's quest at 71. God bless you.

Samuel L. Lewis
S.A.M. (the Yogi)
Sufi Ahmed Murad-Chisti (the Sufi)
He Kwang, Zen-Shi (the Buddhist)