

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 150

SO 028 136

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TITLE Short Course in South Asian Literature and Culture.
Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad 1994 (India).
INSTITUTION United States Educational Foundation in India.
PUB DATE 1994-00-00
NOTE 39p.; For other Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad 1994 reports, see SO 028 135-143. Some pages may not reproduce clearly.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Asian Studies; *Course Content; Course Descriptions; Course Organization; Ethnic Groups; Foreign Countries; Global Education; Higher Education; *Indians; Interdisciplinary Approach; Multicultural Education; Non Western Civilization; Religion Studies; World Literature
IDENTIFIERS Asia (South); *India

ABSTRACT

This syllabus describes a college course developed to address South Asian literature and culture with a focus on India. Suggestions for student readings and discussion, oral communication, listening, writing, and field trips are included. The empires of South Asia, its religions, social stratification, parallels of history and religion with the arts, and a discussion of gender roles and social issues are addressed in the study. (EH)

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**Short Course in South Asian Literature and Culture
Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad 1994 (India)
Curriculum Projects Developed by 1994 Seminar Participants**

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The North Carolina School
of Science and Mathematics



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December 29, 1994

Dear Friends,

Namaste'. I apologize for the delay in sending these materials to you. It has taken more time than I'd anticipated to sort through all I learned while I was with you and to skillfully apply those understandings and materials in my lessons with my own students. I have an idea that I will be reflecting on and applying the experiences of my summer with you for years to come, so that the ideas I enclose are hardly static, but as fluid and moving as the Ganges at flood, as our own selves. I started school four days after my return, hardly time enough for me to unpack and wash clothes. I still sort through my pictures and slides, arranging and reproducing. My students are helping me to put the slides on video so that they will be more accessible to them for class use. The music you recommended we buy and a few tapes you didn't recommend but that I stumbled upon in my frequent bookstore trips will be used on these tapes as well, selected by the students themselves according to their tastes and ideas of appropriateness. So far, so good. The art prints and books have gotten perhaps the greatest use by students who are interested in sculpture, in visual arts, in simple beauty, and in the connectedness of art with the history and literature of India. Students come by to borrow from my personal library (they say that I have "strange and quirky" books. Is that good?) for their personal research projects. While I have not read 1/10 of what I've most recently purchased, it is gratifying to see someone read what I believe is an interesting work of literature or research. Even my salwar kamees outfits and saris and multiple scarves have been useful for local celebrations of devali and classical dance performances.

I was most pleased that yesterday the last shipment of books that I'd sent arrived--this one, the first four of the twelve volumes of The Mahabharata. I'd received volumes 5-12 earlier and had begun to despair of being able to read the beginning. All of the shipments handled by your office arrived earlier and in good condition. Thanks for your care and fine packaging.

I cannot begin to tell you how much the trip to and through India meant to me and through me, to my students. I had read extensively before my coming and had taught South Asian literature and history for 3 years, slowly developing the small amount I knew by reading, studying, researching. I was not a bad teacher of Indian Studies before I came, but now I feel I am a much better one, a sensitive one, a more assured one, one who has seen, heard, smelled, waded through, eaten, sweated, questioned, appreciated,

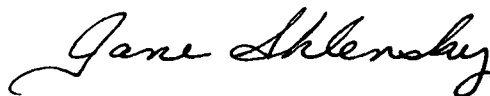
oved, and sometimes understood India. That has to make a difference to my students and to the works we study. The scholars you selected were all first rate, all so kind and open in entertaining our questions and interests; all of the staff members of USEFI were as attentive and available to us as we could hope. Frankly, being a backpacker from my youth, accustomed to sleeping in any an unsavory hovel and eating whatever presented itself, I felt absolutely hampered by the hotel staffs, the restauranteurs, the drivers and flights and rains and guides and teachers and USEFI staff and our beloved mom Neetra. We became spoiled, I'm afraid, for it was far too good. Coming home was something of an anti-climax, except for seeing our families whom we'd missed.

Although I'm tardy in sending you this project, I have not been so tardy in sending the bibliographies of Banaras Hindu University and American Institute for Indian studies to my travel mates of the summer. I've heard from a few of them saying they'd received them and were only now realizing that a wonderful summer we'd spent.

I enclose a rough outline of how I've used in my classes the materials and ideas gleaned during my stay this summer. I'm sure these studies will expand and improve as I incorporate what is most useful to this age group and alter the syllabus of readings and activities. Nevertheless, I hope to use many of the books and arts, cultural objects and ideas in individual students' research projects which change each year. For your edification, I will send you shortly a list of the books I bought while I was with you this summer. I recall that O.P. was particularly curious about what American teachers bought. I don't know that my taste is typical of all of us, but it clearly represents what I individually will pursue in my own reading and research and/or what I feel will intrigue my students and assist with their personal studies.

I wish you all the very best of the best, hoping to see you again, either here in the U.S. or there in India. Know that you are welcome to my home and state should you come to the United States. The accomodations will not be so splendid nor the food so deliciously spicy, but the welcome will be heartfelt.

All Love and Respect,



Jane Shlensky

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ASIAN HUMANITIES: COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is the place of man in relation to the universe? What is truth and how is that truth valued and pursued? How shall we live in this world with other human beings? What is humankind's relationship with gods/cause(s) of being? This course will examine these questions across time in West, South, and East Asia, contrasting beliefs and practices of civilizations as they answer these questions. Does this civilization regard man as superior to nature or as only one part of the harmonious scheme of the universe. Is man no more, and no less, than a rock, a flower, a bird? While in South and East Asia, he may find himself a part of the eternally changing cycles of the phenomenal universe (*tao* or Brahman made manifest), in West Asia, he may grant himself "steward" or lord of nature, the dominant creation of a higher being. Regardless of geographic space, are all human activities concerned with achieving harmony, whether in relation to himself, to his fellow man, or to the universe?

To help students understand both the Asian and Western mind as it has wrestled with answering these questions, the course in Asian Humanities will concentrate on the philosophical bases of the civilizations of West Asia (the Middle East), of South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), and of East Asia (China, Japan, and Korea) and the expression of these concepts as they appear in the daily life, the literature, the histories and social structures, the art, and the music and dance of these lands and cultures. The course, called the Asian World, will be divided into two semesters, the first of which will examine these areas until 1500; the second of which will examine the period from 1500 to the present. The following outline records the course on India only. A primary goal of the course, however, is to connect the geographies, cultural studies, literatures, belief systems, histories and destinies of all these areas.

A SHORT COURSE IN SOUTH ASIAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE:

Objective:

- (a) to understand the Hindu vision of life through the study of the philosophical basis of the Hindu religion: the concepts of karma, dharma, moksha, enlightenment
- (b) to see how Hindu concepts are reflected in Indian literature, dance, and theatre
- (c) to see how these concepts are expressed in art
- (d) to see how these concepts are expressed in music
- (e) to become acquainted with the major writers and primary texts of literature
- (f) to connect the history, geography, social order, art, politics, and religions of South Asia with these literary texts and concepts
- (g) to understand the relationships and contributions of other emerging belief systems of India with Hinduism (Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Jainism, and Parseeism primarily) in history, art, and literature
- (h) to set up a student news service for each country of Asia, linking history and literature with the current events within the country (in this case, India) which will be shared with the student body
- (i) to make available to students worksheets and projects whereby their study of India can be better facilitated (assorted worksheets, guidelines, and articles are enclosed)
- (j) to develop individual topics of study pursuing some facet of Indian Studies culminating in a major research paper/project

Texts and Materials for Study of India up to 1050:

- A. **South Asia Patterns in History:**
Comparative History of Civilizations in Asia, Vol. I, Farmer, et.al.
(chapters 1-8)
A History of Asia, R. Murphey, (chapters 2 and 5)

B. **South Asian Literature:**

World Mythology, Donna Rosenburg, all creation, death, and rebirth stories and Indra's fertility stories.
Discussions of Hinduism
Excerpts from Rig Veda
Excerpts from Taittiriya Upanishad
Excerpts from Bhagavad-Gita in two translations with Sanskrit and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi commentary on Bhagavad-Gita
The Ramayana, read both the Rosenburg version in World Mythology and the Narayan translation for comparison of the two texts
Application of Campbell's heroic cycle to characters in The Ramayana
Excerpt from The Mahabharata, "Savitri's Love"
Excerpt from The Book of Animals
Excerpts from the Kama Sutra, Ananga Ranga, and Perfumed Garden regarding ideal men and women in literature and society
Poems of Okkur Macatti
Excerpt from the works of Kalidasa
Bhatta Somadeva's "The Confidence Men"

C. **Early South Asia in Film and Art:**

Art prints of major events from the Bhagavad-Gita
Art prints of major scenes from The Ramayana
Art prints from works of Kalidasa
Moghal art prints
Video dance performance from Gita of Arjuna and Krishna's discussion on the battlefield (JVC World Cultures Series)
The Ramayana
Selected South Asian dances (JVC World Cultures Series and live performances by students)
Video of "Moghal Architecture and Art in India"
Video of "Hindu and Buddhist Art and Architecture in India"

Texts and Materials for Study of India 1500 to the present:

- A. **South Asia Patterns in History:**
Comparative History of Civilizations in Asia, Vol. I, Farmer, et.al.
(Chapters 9-10)
A History of Asia, R. Murphey, (chapters 2 and 5)
The Asians, T. Welty

B. **South Asian Literature:**

Keshub Chunder Sen, "Loyalty to the British Nation"
"The Asiatic Christ"
Henry Derozio, "Letter Protesting His Dismissal"
"India's Youth--the Hope of Her Future"
Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Education"
Rudyard Kipling, "The Return of Imray" and poems

Rammohun Roy, "In Defense of Hindu Women"
 Shri Ramakrishna, "Parables and Sayings"
 Swami Vivekananda, "America and India's Poor"
 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, "The Language of the Masses"
 "Hail to the Mother"
 Mohandas Gandhi, "Through Love to God"
 "Hindu-Muslim Unity"
 "The Message of Asia"
 "The Untouchables"
 Muhammad Ali Jinnah, "An International Problem"
 Liaquat Ali Khan, "Pakistan's Mission in Asia"
 Mulk Raj Anand, "The Gold Watch"
 A.K. Ramanujan, "Obituary"
 Kamala Das, "An Introduction"
 Nissim Ezekiel, "Night of the Scorpion" and "Poverty Poems-2"
 Sarojini Naidu, "The Pardah Nashin"
 Selections from R. Tagore's works
 from Other Voices, Other Vistas
 Anita Desai, "Pigeons at Daybreak"
 Mahasweta Devi, "Dhowli"
 Ruth Praver Jhabvala, "The Interview"
 R.K. Narayan, "A Horse and Two Goats"
 Khushwant Singh, "The Wog"

C. 20th Century South Asia in Film and Art:

Gandhi

Passage to India

Jewel in the Crown

The Home and the World

Salaam, Bombay

The People Bomb (documentary on world population with 3 segments of Indian focus)

Student Activities:

1. Reading and discussion of Hindu scriptures and literatures, social systems and history
2. Discussion of heroes and heroines, men and women, dharma and karma in the texts and in daily life
3. Oral communication: dramatization of scenes from plays
oral reports on individual research projects team projects presented orally to class
4. Listening: Films in both English and in South Asian languages (such as The Ramayana with introduction Telegu, Hindi, and Marathi)
Recordings of Indian music
Outside speakers invited to discuss various topics

5. **Composition:** In-class and research papers on any facet of Indian literature or history, art or philosophy
 Evaluation of character, plot, theme in literature
 Group analysis of facets of longer texts
 Team reports on projects presented orally
 In-class tests/essays defining Hindu philosophical terms, application of Hindu principles to the art of living, and interconnectness of India with other cultures and beliefs of Asia
6. **Field Trips:** to museums, Asia Society programs, Hindu meditation societies, Hindu temple for special celebrations, performances of Indian dance and theatre (both at our own school and at neighboring universities)

Primary Points of Discussion and Exploration:

Discuss empires and empire building in South Asia
 (Dravidian, Aryan, Vedic, Hindu, Mogul, and so forth)

Discuss stratification systems of South Asia
 (caste, economics, gender, and so forth)

Discuss religion(s) of South Asia
 (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Parseeism
 (Zoroastrianism), Jainism, and so forth)

Discuss parallels of history and religion with the arts
 (architecture, music, literature, sculpture, painting, dance, cookery, and

Discuss gender roles (ideals) and social issues impacted by gender concerns

Examine modern applications of Hindu attitudes and texts: a film project (teams of 2 students will develop topics/ideas of interest and make a short film (6-8 minutes) for class viewing (such as use of ancient texts for modern business, television programs, or theatre)

A few examples follow:

- a. the Mahabharata and Gita and modern business (see India Times, July '94)
- b. yoga, meditation, and ayurvedic medicine in the modern age
- c. the Eastern influence on Western music or the Western influence on Eastern music or film (example: sitar in Beatles music or Bombay as Indian Hollywood)
- d. Westernization? Indian democracy and Indian needs
- e. the beauty of commonality? multiple languages and traditions in India
- f. caste or recaste: modern social stratification in India
- g. woman's place: sati or no sati, sari or no sari
- h. the population question in India and her attempts at solutions

Jane Aronson

I. GOD

- A. God's existence
- B. God's motives
 - 1. The creation of the universe
 - 2. The creation of man
 - 3. The free rein of evil in world
 - 4. The question of justice
- C. God's participation in our existence
- D. God's nature

II. MAN'S PURPOSE

- A. Definition of a "successful life"
- B. Coping with suffering, poverty, disease
- C. Where civilization is heading

III. MAN'S NATURE

- A. Mortality
 - 1. Death
 - 2. Brevity of days
- B. Existence of soul
 - 1. Afterlife
 - 2. Reincarnation
- C. Existence of good/evil, right/wrong
 - 1. In our nature
 - 2. In society
 - 3. Independent of man or society
- D. Our composite parts
 - 1. Memory
 - 2. Emotions
 - 3. Dreams
 - 4. Mind
 - 5. Subconscious mind
 - 6. Perception
- E. Our needs and desires
 - 1. Love
 - 2.

IV. QUERIES ON THE UNIVERSE

- A. Its age, size, parts, extent, inhabitants, purpose, destination
- B. Questions on time, the 4th dimension, 5th dimension

1. Who am I? From where have I come and why have I come? What is my relationship with the manifold universe and other human beings?
2. What is the essential nature of my being, and what is the essential nature of the manifested world and its cause?
3. What is the relationship of the center of consciousness and the objects of the world?
4. What is the nature of the forms and names of the objects of the world and how do they serve the essential nature of man or universal consciousness?
5. What are the guidelines for action as long as we live in the natural body? Do we live after death?
6. What is truth, and how do we arrive at rational conclusions on questions of truth?

The basis of our investigation into Eastern philosophies

PHILOSOPHICAL SPREADSHEET

BASIC QUESTION/QUESTION	STUDENT QUESTION	TERM	BC VEDA	UPANISADS	Bhagavad Gita	Confucianism	Taoism	Zen
1. What is the nature of the underlying reality of the universe?		Brahman Tao						
2. How do we know that Brahman is within us? How does Brahman exist within us?		Tat tuam asi Atman						
3. Why do we not realize who or what we are?		Maya						
4. What is man's eventual goal or destiny?		Moksha						
5. How do we get there?		Karma						
6. What are our obstacles?		Maya						
7. How should we overcome these obstacles?		Yoga						
8. What happens when we don't bother to overcome these obstacles?		Samsara						
9. How should we approach things we must do to survive or to live our daily lives?		Jen Yi Li						
10. List analogies/similes/anecdotes used to illustrate any of the above.								

LIFE AS A SCHOOL OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING: The Hindu Quest

We enter into **PRAKRITI** (*world of Nature*)

and drawn into **MAYA** (*stuff of the universe which makes us think it the only reality*)

create our own **KARMA** (*spiritual consequence of action*).

We seek **DHARMA** (*the root of being*)

and **MOKSA** (*release, deliverance*)

from **SAMSARA** (*cycle of rebirth*).

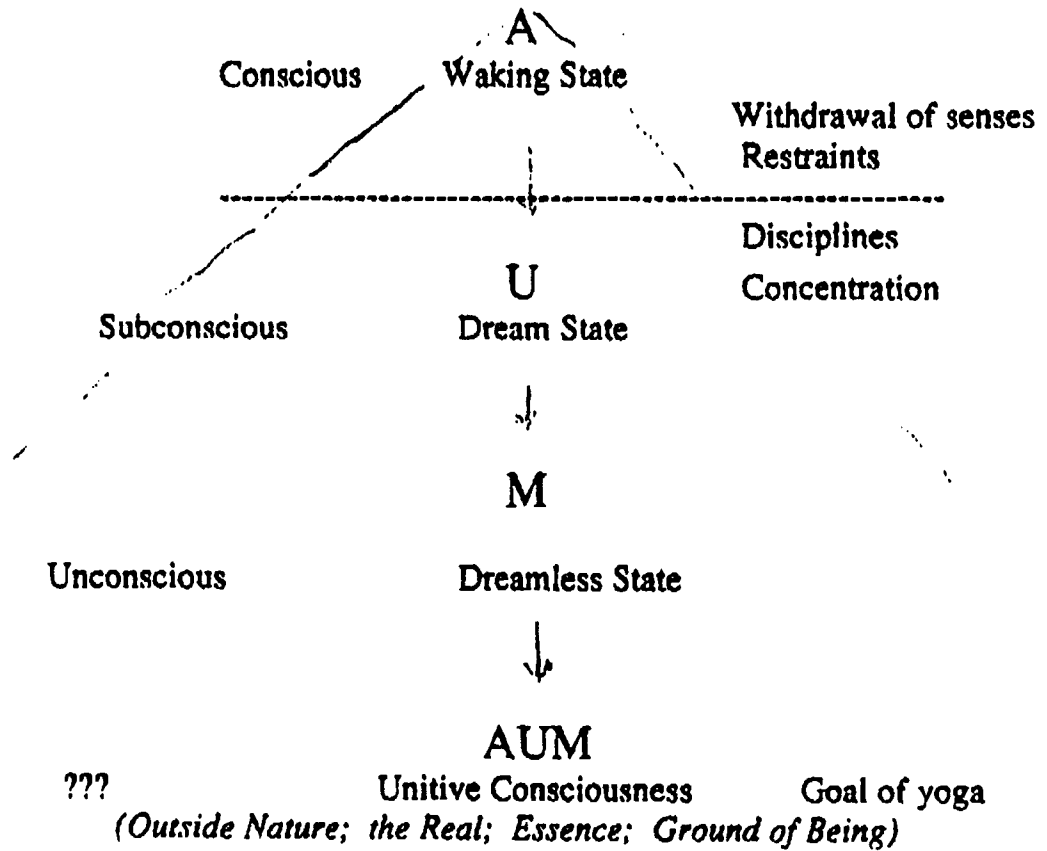
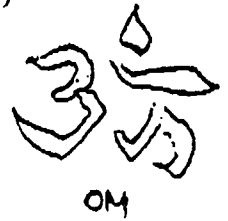
Through **YOGA** (*discipline of union,*
through restraints--violence, deception, theft, sex, greed
through disciplines--cleanliness, serenity, asceticism, yogic studies, Grounded motivation
through withdrawal of senses--asana (conditioning of body),
pranayama (breathing rhythm)
dharana (concentration)
through dhyana (meditation)
point of departure is ekagrata (concentration on a single object)

we know **SAMADHI** (*still mind*)

and realize **TAT TUAM ASI** (*"That Thou Art":*
Atman=Brahman,
or individual soul/consciousness=Unitive Consciousness/Ground of Being)

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Four Levels of Consciousness: (Freud's iceberg analogy)



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GROUP QUESTIONS FOR STUDY OF THE RAMAYANA

ne class will be divided into 5 groups, each of which will address one of
e sets of questions below and lead the class in discussion of that issue.
With your group, answer the following questions, making references to page
umbers and passages from the text of The Ramayana to prove your assertions.

- . Women: What are the qualities of the ideal wife? Do women have power? How and from where is this power derived? Do women have a dharmic code?
- . Women: Are evil women necessary to The Ramayana? List "flawed" women or feared improper behaviors and what is gained by their existence in the story.
- . Heroes: What are the qualities of the ideal hero? Does every caste have the possibility of being heroic? Can evil beings (such as Ravana) also be heroic? animals? women?
- . Dharma: What constitutes *dharma*? Is dharma different for each caste? for each person within caste? How much flexibility is possible within the concept? (note that Rama, Bharata, and Lakshmana disagree on some points of correct behavior)
- . Leadership: What constitutes a good leader in The Ramayana? Are there occasions that good leadership and righteous behavior seem to conflict?

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Comparative Translations

the Ramayana, William Buck

- 56-157 Ravana's sister, Surpanakha, is described
- 70 Ravana described
- 77 Indra's decree of Ravana's punishment if he rapes/takes women
Concerning Sita's innocence/rape and Ravana's evil
- 45-246 Sita's rape implied; Ravana's impatience/love?
- 91 Rama's adherence to common people's judgment--rejection
of Sita
- 94 Lakshmana's disapproval of Rama's decision as unjust and
cowardly
- 15-417 Sita's return to gods

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HEROES

Lord Raglan, in his study of the hero, identifies another pattern in hero myths, one based on incidents and circumstances which seem to occur with regularity in hero stories of many different cultures. Here is the pattern he identifies:

1. The hero's mother is a royal virgin;
2. His father is a king, and
3. Often a near relative of his mother, but
4. The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and
5. He is also reputed to be the son of a god.
6. At birth, an attempt is made, usually by his father or his maternal grandfather, to kill him, but
7. He is spirited away, and
8. Reared by foster-parents in a far country.
9. We are told nothing of his childhood, but
10. On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom.
11. After a victory over the king and/or a giant dragon or wild beast,
12. He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and
13. Becomes king.
14. For a time he reigns uneventfully, and
15. Prescribes laws, but
16. Later he loses favour with the gods and/or his subjects, and
17. Is driven from the throne and city, after which
18. He meets with a mysterious death,
Often at the top of a hill.
19. His children, if any, do not succeed him.
20. His body is not buried, but nevertheless
21. He has one or more holy sepulchres.

Try applying this pattern to such mythical and historical heroes as

Oedipus, Romulus, Heracles, Perseus, Jason, Apollo, Zeus, Elijah, Joseph, Moses, Jesus, **Bao Chu, Pao Yu, Tripitaka**, Kotan Utunnai, Rama, Siegfried, Arthur, Robin Hood, Hiawatha...Others???

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HERO CYCLE

DEPARTURE:

WHAT SOCIETY IS THE HERO IN?

HOW DID THE HERO RECEIVE HIS/HER CALL?

WHAT WAS THE HERO'S REACTION TO THE CALL?

WHAT PROTECTIVE FIGURE DOES THE HERO HAVE?

WHAT THRESHOLD GUARDIAN DOES THE HERO MEET?

HOW DOES THE HERO CONQUER THE GUARDIAN?

INITIATION:

WHAT TRIAL DOES THE HERO ENCOUNTER?

IS THERE A MARRIAGE? WITH WHOM? WHAT IS TAUGHT?

IS THERE A FATHER? WHO? WHAT IS TAUGHT?

WHAT DEATH DOES THE HERO UNDERGO? IS IT LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE?

WHAT EGO-ENLARGING LESSON(S) DOES THE HERO LEARN?

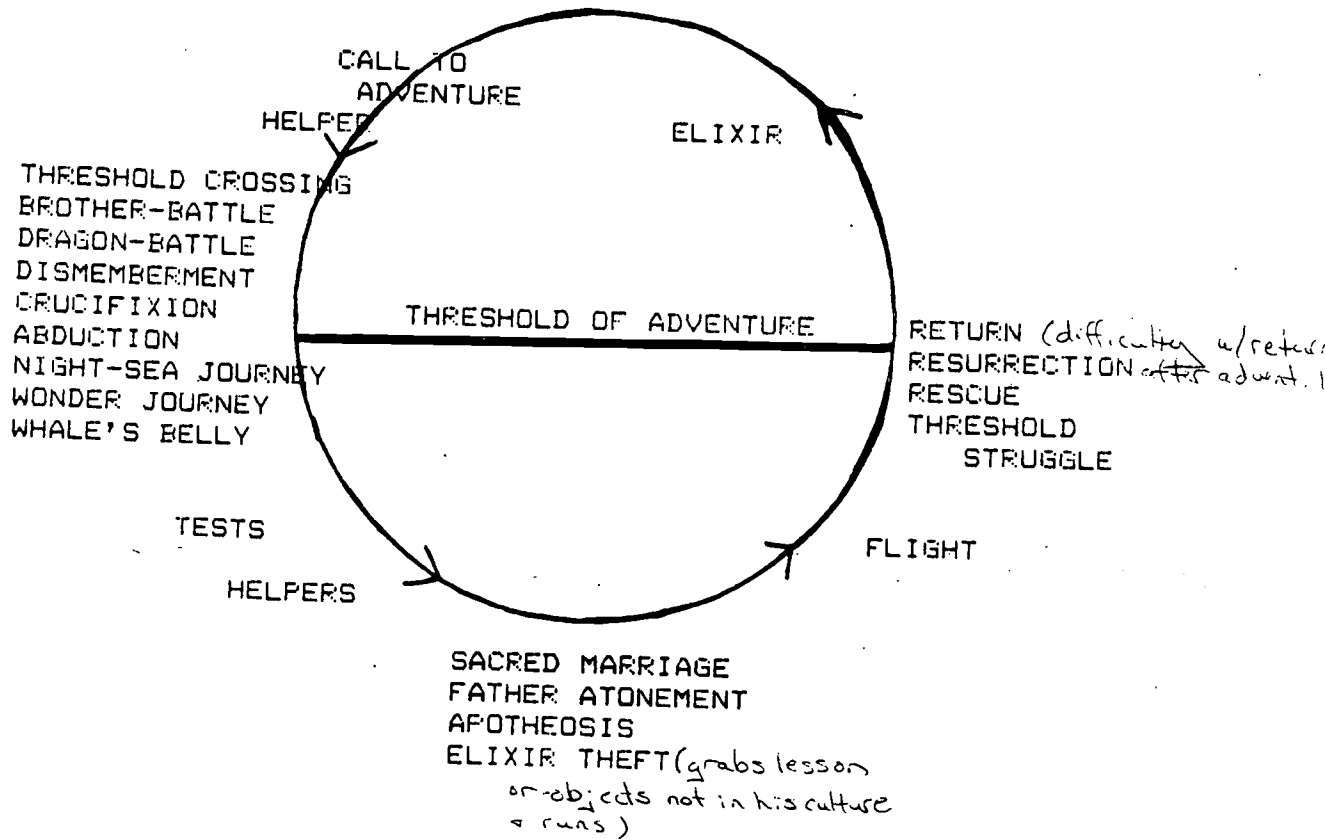
RETURN:

HOW DOES THE HERO RETURN? IS THERE A THRESHOLD GUARDIAN?

WHAT LESSON(S) DOES THE HERO TEACH SOCIETY? IT SHOULD BE RELATED TO THE EGO-ENLARGING LESSON.

IS SOCIETY WELCOMING TO THE HERO OR NOT? WHY OR WHY NOT?

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Joseph Campbell. The Hero With a Thousand Faces. Princeton.

INDIAN LITERATURE
The Ramayana, Rig Veda, Upanishad, and Mahabharata

Examine the concept of DHARMA. HOW MUCH FLEXIBILITY IS POSSIBLE WITHIN THE CONCEPT? SINCE RAMA, BHARATA, AND LAKSHMANA ARE ALL EARTHLY FORMS OF VISHNU, WHY DO THEY EXHIBIT RADICALLY DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW?

LAKSHMANA:

- (a) He suggests Rama fight Bharata for his title;
- (b) He leaves his wife while Rama takes Sita with him;
- (c) He takes an arrow meant for Vibhishana;
- (d) He leaves Sita unprotected at her bidding, against his will;
- (e) He lives and fights beside his brother Rama.

BHARATA:

- (a) Is he justified in his treatment of his mother?
- (b) What is the nature of dharma that he treat her so?

RAMA:

- (a) He questions Sita's chastity twice
- (b) He caters to public opinion/popularity
- (c) He teases Ravana's sister
- (d) What temptations does he find irresistible? Does his behavior contradict his professions of duty and dharma?

POET'S PURPOSE IN CONTRASTING BROTHERS: VALMIKI (POSSIBLY)

- (A) SHOWS A VARIETY OF JUSTIFIABLE RESPONSES IS POSSIBLE IN ANY COMPLICATED SITUATION
- (B) SHOWS RAMA IS SUPERIOR TO BROTHERS THROUGH CONTRAST

ANALYSIS OF THE HEROIC IN THE RAMAYANA

RAMA: earthly form of Vishnu; armor of gods; love of dharma; wonderful relationship with wife, brothers, parents; concern for all people; return to deity status; heroism in war; protection in single combat of loved ones; acceptance of fate

HANUMEN: gifts of gods; choice of death allows him to be more heroic; magical powers; great warrior; believes in gods and dharma; loyal follower of his king and Rama

RAVANA: magical powers; great power against gods, his own people; great warrior with fine armor; unkillable by gods; given hero's funeral

KUMBHA-KARNA: huge; great power against enemies; fearsome creature; cannibalistic in battle

VIBHISHANA: tells brother truth; offers aid to Rama; great warrior; uses logic and bit of dharma rather than purely self-

gratification as Ravana does; rewarded in outcome; honorable

VISIONS OF WIFELY/WOMANLY PERFECTION: SITA

What qualities mark Sita as the ideal Indian wife?

What womanly weaknesses cause pain for herself and Rama?

Is Sita's revenge justified after her second renunciation?

COMPARE SITA TO SAVITRI OF THE MAHABHARATA. IN WHAT WAYS DO BOTH

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Modern India and Pakistan

- 1498 Vasco da Gama rounds the southernmost tip of Africa and lands on the Malabar coast.
- 1600 Queen Elizabeth grants charter to "certain adventurers for the trade of the East Indies."
- 1690 Calcutta founded by an agent of the English East India Company.
- 1742-1754 Duplex Governor of Pondichéry for French East India Company.
- 1757 Clive's victory at Plassey gives English control of Bengal.
- 1784 Asiatick Society founded in Calcutta under Sir William Jones (1746-1794).
- 1799-1803 Abū-Tāleb (1752-1806?) visits England and Europe.
- 1815-1830 Rām Mohun Roy (1772-1833) active in religious controversy and social reform in Calcutta.
- 1818 Defeat of Marāthā Peshwa ends effective Indian resistance to British rule.
- 1827-1831 H.L.V. Derozio (1809-1831) teaches at Hindu College, Calcutta.
- 1838 Rām Mohun Roy founds Brāhmo Samāj.
- 1833 East India Company deprived by Parliament of all commercial functions.
- 1835 English system of education introduced, following Macaulay's recommendation.
- 1843 Debendranāth Tagore (1817-1905) re-establishes the Brāhmo Samāj.
- 1857-1858 Mutiny of Sepoy troops and widespread rebellion in Northern India.
- 1858 East India Company's rule replaced by that of a viceroy appointed by the British crown.
- 1865 Keshub Chunder Sen (1843-1884) secedes from the Brāhmo Samāj.
- 1875 Swami Dayānanda (1824-1883) founds the Ārya Samāj at Bombay. Syed Ahmad Khān (1817-1898) founds Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Āligarh.
- 1877 Queen Victoria proclaimed Empress of India.
- 1879 Keshub Chunder Sen proclaims the New Dispensation.
- 1885 Indian National Congress inaugurated in Bombay.
- 1886 Death of Sri Rāmkrishna (born 1834).
- 1893 Mohandās K. Gāndhi (1869-1948) begins twenty year's work as lawyer in South Africa.
- 1894 Death of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (born 1838).

[xv]

- 1897 Swami Vivekānanda (1862-1902) receives triumphant welcome on return to India; founds Rāmkrishna Mission.
- 1901 Death of Justice M. G. Rānade (born 1842).
- 1905 Partition of Bengal arouses nationalist agitation, in which Surendranāth Banerjea (1848-1926), Bāl Gangādhār Tilak (1856-1920), Rabindranāth Tagore (1861-1941), Brahmabāndhab Upādhyāy (1861-1907) and Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) take prominent part.
- 1906 Indian League founded.
- 1907 Indian National Congress split by quarrel between Moderates and Extremists.
- 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms grant Muslim demand for separate electorate.
- 1911 Partition of Bengal annulled. Transfer of the Indian capital from Calcutta to Delhi announced.
- 1913 Rabindranāth Tagore awarded Nobel Prize for his *Gitanjali*.
- 1915 Death of G. K. Gokhale (born 1866).
- 1916 Moderate, Extremist and Muslim League leaders agree on demand for a national legislative assembly to be elected on a communal basis.
- 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms provide for legislative assembly to begin in 1921. Amritsar massacre.
- 1920 Death of Tilak. Gāndhi starts first nation-wide civil disobedience movement (suspended in 1922 after outbreaks of violence).
- 1920-1924 Khilāfat Movement, led by Muhammad Āli (1879-1930).
- 1930 Muhammad Iqbāl (1873-1938) proposes separate state for India's Muslims.
- 1930-1934 Second nation-wide civil disobedience movement.
- 1935 Government of India Act grants provincial self-government.
- 1940 Muslim League, under President Muhammad Āli Jinnāh, demands creation of sovereign Muslim state.
- 1941 Subhās Chandra Bose (1897-1945) escapes to join the Axis powers.
- 1942 Congress rejects Cripps' offer, demands British quit India.
- 1945-1947 Amid communal rioting and threats of mutiny, the British Labor government prepares to grant India complete self-government.
- 1947 India, under Prime Minister Jawaharlāl Nehru (1889-), and Pakistan, under Prime Minister Liaquat Āli Khān (1895-1951) become independent dominions.
- 1948 Gāndhi assassinated in New Delhi. Death of Muhammad Āli Jinnāh (born 1876).
- 1950 India becomes a republic within the Commonwealth.
- 1951-1952 Congress Party wins national elections. First Five-Year Plan begins.
- 1956 Pakistan adopts Islamic Constitution.

[xvi]

THE OPENING OF INDIA
TO THE WEST

The spreading of European power and civilization over the entire surface of the globe in recent centuries can be viewed as a continuing series of intrusions into the cultures of the non-European world. Nowhere in Asia have the effects of this penetration been more profoundly felt than in India. Because she was the first to receive the impact of European expansion, and the only major civilization on the continent to fall directly under foreign rule, the influence of the West on her life and thought has been deep and lasting.

The first Europeans to reach India by sea were the Portuguese. Their intrepid captain, Vasco da Gama, landed on the Malabar coast in 1498. Seventy-five years later we find them received at the Mughal court by the solicitous Emperor Akbar. In the words of Akbar's biographer: "They produced many of the rarities of their country, and the appreciative Khedive [the Emperor] received each one with special favor and made inquiries about the wonders of Portugal and the manners and customs of Europe. It seemed as if he did this from a desire of knowledge, for his sacred heart is a depot of spiritual and physical sciences. But his boding soul wished that these inquiries might be the means of civilizing (*istînâs*, i.e. familiarity or sociability) this savage [unsocial] race."¹ Akbar later summoned Jesuit missionaries from Goa to expound the principles of their religion, in which he was much interested, but he laughingly preferred his three hundred wives to the Christian ideal of monogamy.

When the French and British East India Companies first established their tiny trading settlements along the eastern and western coasts of India in the seventeenth century, the great empire of the Mughals still held sway. A century later it had collapsed, and various Muslim and Hindu chieftains were fighting among themselves for possession of its remnants.

¹ Abū'l Fazl, *Akbar-Nāma* (tr. by H. Beveridge), III, 37.

In protecting their commercial interests the sea-borne Europeans were drawn into the struggle. When in the early nineteenth century the British finally emerged victorious over both the local contenders and their French rivals, they found themselves masters of a population speaking fourteen different major languages, with two-ninths of them following Islam and most of the rest belonging to various Hindu castes and sub-castes, and with small minorities professing Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity and Judaism. Onto this cultural crazy-quilt the new rulers of India imposed a pattern of their own—not a religious but a secular one. Law and order, efficient government and free trade, were the new gods, and all Indians hoping for worldly success bowed down to them and worshiped them.

While some Indians opposed and the majority ignored the coming of the new order, others actively abetted the opening of their country to the West. Four representative men, each of whom played a notable part in the history of this period and left to posterity written records of his thinking, are considered in this chapter—one a Hindu merchant of the 1740s and 50s, the second a Muslim aristocrat of the early 1800s, the third a Christian of mixed European and Indian ancestry, and the fourth a brāhman scholar-reformer and founder of a new religious movement. The last two were active in Calcutta in the 1820s—just at the time the British were overcoming their earlier reluctance to interfere with established cultural patterns, and shortly before they took the decisive step of introducing English education.

Although these four men came from quite different religious and regional backgrounds, the question of what to do about the Westerner and his culture was in the forefront of their minds. All showed an inclination toward some aspects of the new culture and (except for the Christian) an aversion toward other aspects, but even in their likes and dislikes they differed noticeably. The attitudes which each reveals in his writings therefore give us unique insights into the complexity of Indian society in this crucial period, and furnish us with valuable clues to the later evolution of Indian thought as it responded to the incessant challenge of the West.

Guiding Principles

Realising that Indian cultural tradition is rich in leadership values, corporations are beginning to analyse and absorb the wisdom of the scriptures

By ARUN KATTIYAR and SHEFALI REKHI

KURUKSHETRA. Arjun pauses, then declines to fight. Is there glory in a victory that kills fathers, sons, teachers and students? One of the most able warriors in the land is paralysed by emotion. Lord Krishna reminds him of the consequences to the state and society.

Modern day managers face the same situation everyday—a conflict between tough decisions and the larger good. "Corporate playing fields are much like Kurukshetra," says Delhi-based management consultant M.B. Athreya. "They can be viewed as *Dharam Kshetra*, where the role of leadership is to re-establish *dharma* and resolve the conflicts that arise between customers and suppliers, pollution and the environment, manipulative politics in the organisation and unfair practices towards workmen."

Concepts like *Utthistha* (stand up and be counted), *Vishadha* (doubt), *Swadharma* (duty) and *Nishkama Karma* (work without attachment to results) have always existed in the *shastras*. Now, driven by the understanding that the Indian cultural tradition is rich in these leadership values, managements are beginning to examine the wisdom embodied in the scriptures. Many across the country who have tried to inculcate the values prescribed in the Gita are starting to show positive results. Says Dr Subir Chowdhury, director, Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Calcutta: "It's back to basics. If traditional values are transplanted to modern times, a new management style can develop as opposed to the Japanese and the American style."

Companies like Crompton Greaves, Larsen & Toubro, Excel Industries and the Mafatlal Group are beginning to reinterpret business in the context of Indian heritage. Asea Brown Boveri Limited's (ABB) unit in Vadodara is one such place which has been experimenting with the Vedanta style as part of its total quality management programme for the past four years. Consultant Vanraj Jhala was called to hold workshops for workers. The results are visible and can be quantified.

At ABB, one group of workers reduced the time to make a circuit breaker from 120 days to 68 days, while customer delivery has improved 100 per cent. "The foundation of the change programme lies in getting away from the hand-body syndrome and engaging the minds of people in a creative manner towards an overall vision," says ABB Vice-President K.K. Kaura.

The *shastras* have been used in more sophisticated management missions than improving shop floor objectives.

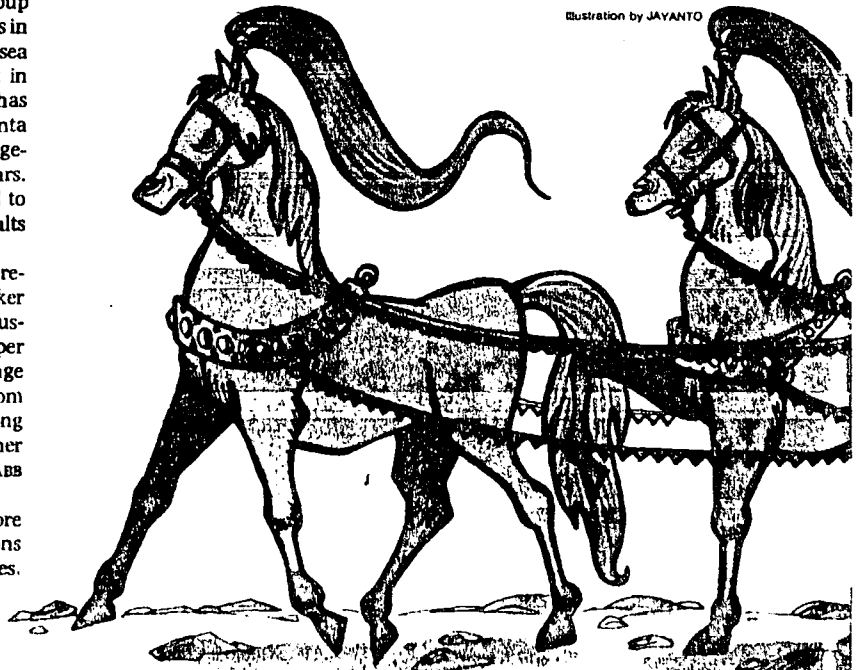
Athreya, who earned his doctorate at Harvard and leads the new interest in the *shastras* today, has used his knowledge of the Gita to reorganise Indian family businesses like those of Harishankar Singhania, transform the political culture of the L.M. Thapar group to that of a business culture and has helped workers at Shaw Wallace come to terms with the fight between brothers Manu and Kishore Chhabria.

At the Rs 240-crore Excel industries, says Managing Director K.C. Shroff, who bases his management methods on the *Upanishads*, the company hasn't wasted an hour on industrial disputes in its 53-year history. Shroff quotes the *Upanishads*: "Together we will work, together we will do great things. But never envy each other."

The rediscovery of ancient wisdom is quickly being recognised as *turbovidya*. "The Bhagvad Gita works because it is about self-management," says Alok Chopra, an *acharya* at the Vedant Academy, a non-profit organisation which holds courses on vedic principles. "We tell people, if all you want is more money and power, go to a financial institution. If you want to know the rightful place of both, the Gita will help."

According to Bangalore-based economist S.L.N. Simha, author of *Management with Dharma All the Way* and books on the Ramayan and the Mahabharat, values are critical to the performance of individuals and also to the outcome of corporate efforts. "The principles of management tell you how to acquire skills. But people don't have the courage or character to use those skills correctly," says Simha who was the founder-director of the Institute of Financial Management and Research, Madras, and currently lectures on the subject. Many are convinced that western management has outlived

Illustration by JAYANTO



its relevance in the context of the Indian psyche.

Excessive emphasis on competition and not enough on integrative cooperation has begun to expose its imperfections. "In line with the integrative mode, companies like Thermax and Sundaram Fastners have been trying to evolve 'shared vision' and core corporate values," says Jhala. "Once that is done, it has a powerful emotive appeal within the organisation."

Jhala says that he is amazed at the resonance with which Indian workmen take to concepts like Karma Yoga. His studies have shown that even three years after the training in *shastras*, the new set of values survive erosion. He thinks that when a management educator uses the *shastras*, he literally taps into what Carl Jung calls the 'collective unconscious' or the *sanskaras*. Better work ethics, cooperation between departments and improved management-union relationships begin to emerge naturally.

Results appear to match the theory. And companies like Logic Control Private Limited, which manufactures voltage stabilisers, are beginning to experience them. "Most workers lack a purpose in life," says S.K. Bahl, managing director of the Rs 1.96-crore Logic Control. "Their lives are full of misgivings, doubts and complexes." Within two months of lectures on the *Vedas*, the transformation at Logic Control became evident. Workers became aware of the contribution they make and

The *shastras* are being used to meet management needs and shop floor objectives.



began to appreciate their significance. "Things move so smoothly now that I'm sitting idle most of the time," says Bahl.

The changes caught the attention of a transporter who ships products between Logic Control and his company called Controls and Switchgear. It seldom took the transporter more than 10 minutes to get material off-loaded at Logic Control premises. But back at his own office, it took him hours. When the transporter decided to speak to the Logic Control people, he discovered that there was no bureaucracy or hierarchy. He was told that this was a result of the weekly Vedanta sittings. Soon, Controls and Switchgear's 2,000 employees, including the top management, were looking at the *Vedas* for corporate guidance. Says Controls and Switchgear Managing Director Ravindra Nath Khanna: "I too wanted to be in the same boat."

WHAT Khanna discovered are key solutions which every management aims for. "The *Vedas* combine the dynamism of the West with the peace and serenity of the East," says Khanna. "Secondly, they tell you to be true to what you are doing." Khanna gives the example of standing for a *yagna*, throwing *ahuti* in the fire in the hope that the fire god will shower his blessings. A factory is like a *havan kund*; your efforts are like *ahuti*—if they are pure and sincere, you will be rewarded. "We encourage workers to deliberate on their actions," says Khanna. "I've seen it transforming my people psychologically."

The transformation is inevitable, suggests Dr Y. Jayadev, director of Bombay's 75-year-old Yoga Institute. His experience has shown that the *Vedas* as well as yoga help cultivate an other-worldly attitude. With industry and business showing an increasing interest in the value of the *shastras*, IIT Delhi is conducting an efficiency study at Logic Stat to quantify the gains. Whatever its findings, the need for a specifically Indian movement has become imperative to balance the western dynamics of progress. "A sobering effect to the mindless rat race is the need of the hour," says Chowdhury of IIM, Calcutta where Professor S.K. Chakraborty is setting up a Centre for Management of Human Values. Recognised as one of the first to use the *shastras* in management, Chakraborty has been holding workshops and lectures for managers for more than six years now.

Unfortunately, many consultants who use the *shastras* are sometimes viewed as cranks or even religious fundamentalists. But they continue to look towards the great Indian epics for inspiration, helping resolve the conflicts between individual, corporate and social objectives. The attitude is in keeping with what Simha observes in his book: "Public interest must always take precedence over private interest. That is the path of *Dharma*." A path that could help bring in improved work ethics and enhance productivity—a mission statement that any management would be proud of.

—with RUBEN BANERJEE

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Asia: Literature and History
Jane Shlensky and Jim Litle, instructors
Spring, 1993

Modern Age: 20th century short stories from Other Voices, Other Vistas
and Prize-winning Stories from China 1980-1981**.

Short Stories:

India: M. Devi, "Dhowli"
R.K. Narayan, "A Horse and 2 Goats"
K. Singh, "The Wog"
M.R. Anand, "The Gold Watch" (handout)
R.P. Jhabvala, "The Interview" (Western view)

Japan: S. Ariyoshi, "The Tomoshihi"
Y. Mishima, "Act of Worship"
Y. Tsushima, "Silent Traders"
K. Abe', "Magic Chalk"

China: Wang M., "Kite Streamers"
Lu W., "The Man from a Peddler's Family"
Chen R., "Regarding...Piglets in Winter"
Zhang L., "Are You a Communist Party Member"***
Hang Y., "A Saleswoman"***

1. In teams of 2 or 3, select a story to present to the class, focusing on any of the following themes that are prevalent in your story:
 - A. family relationships (including extended family). How are family relationships affected by
 1. poverty of circumstance and of spirit
 2. housing problems
 3. enforced traditional values
 - B. effects of governmental oppression on individuals
 - C. plot and circumstance in geographical context (cite historic and geographical foundations occurring in the society that are reflected in the story)
 - D. the writer's purpose, message, audience in the writing of the story, i.e. in what way might the writer hope to change or inform his society's or the world's opinion through his work.
2. Presentation: you and your partner(s) should discuss the story with the class, **noting specific references from the stories** pertinent to your investigation into the ideas above. Should the story make reference to specific historic incidents, please give the class background information about this history. **Students should read all of the above stories before the presentation is given.** Each presentation should last no more than 10 minutes, so use your time well. Be prepared to present your stories by April 23.

Indian Poetry
A.K. Ramanujan
"Obituary"

Biographical note: Born in 1929, he spent first 30 years of life in India, but now lives in Chicago. His poetry is about Indian myths and history, the environment, folklore and his family. He has also translated love poems from the *Kuruntokai* and other classic Indian literature.

Discussion:

1. What has the father left to his sons?
2. What is found in the ashes after the body has been cremated?
3. What does the son hope to find in the newspaper?
4. How old do you think the narrator was at the time of his father's death?
5. Contrast the last 3 stanzas of the poem with the first 5. What change of mood has taken place?
6. The poet writes about the death in a matter of fact way. How does this affect the feeling created in the poem?

Kamala Das's "An Introduction"

Biographical note: Born in Malabar in 1934. She won early recognition with her many books of short stories and in 1963 she received the PEN Poetry Award (Asian Award). Her poetry is to some extent autobiographical and confessional. She has been likened to Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton.

Discussion:

1. Look at the way this poem is written. What is the effect of the way the lines often end at an unexpected point of the sentence?
2. Do you like this effect? What does it contribute to the poem as a whole?
3. What aspects of Indian society are revealed in the poem?
4. What does it tell us about the position of women in India?
5. What does it tell us about Women everywhere?
6. What does the last sentence mean?

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We wish you good philosophy, both in word and in practice.

Jane Shlensky and Jim Little

- Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty; do naught unto others which would cause pain if done unto you."
- Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."
- Judaism: "What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire law, all the rest commentary."
- Confucianism: "There is one maxim of loving kindness: do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you."
- Taoism: "Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss."
- Zoroastrianism: "That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself."
- Christianity: "All things whatsoever ye would that men would do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."
- Islam: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself."

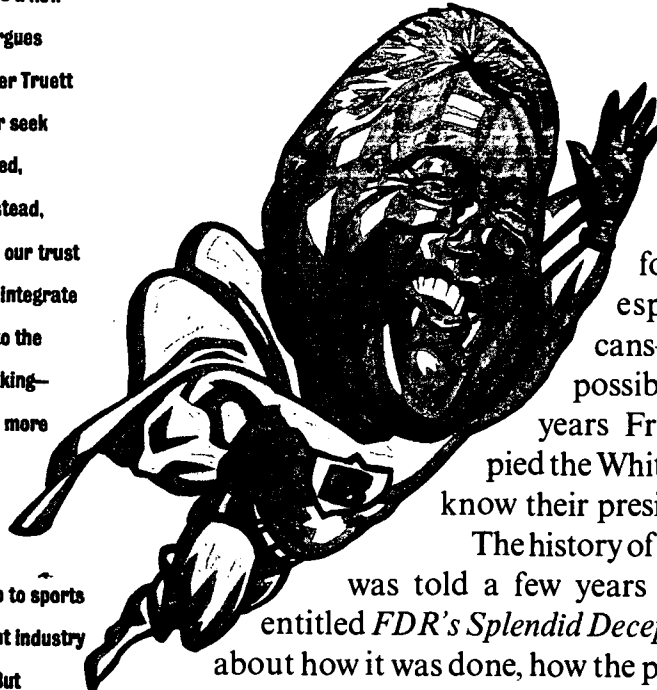
WALTER TRUETT ANDERSON • SPECIAL TO UTNE READER

Have we outgrown the age of heroes?

*Americans no longer look to men of steel—
we want honest and flexible leaders*

Bill Clinton's ascendancy to the White House, despite his admissions of marital improprieties and exposure to illegal substances, symbolizes a new era in American life, argues cultural observer Walter Truett Anderson. We no longer seek salvation in unblemished, omnipotent heroes. Instead, we're learning to place our trust in flexible leaders who integrate many points of view into the process of decision-making—what some might call a more feminine style of leadership. Heroism, however, hasn't disappeared. Millions look up to sports stars and entertainment industry giants for inspiration. But according to celebrity beat reporter Christina Kelly and sportswriter Matthew Goodman, they may be looking in the wrong place. Still, there is a place for heroes in modern life, contends Ted Tollefson, a minister and mythologist who offers an exercise to bring you insight about your own heroes.

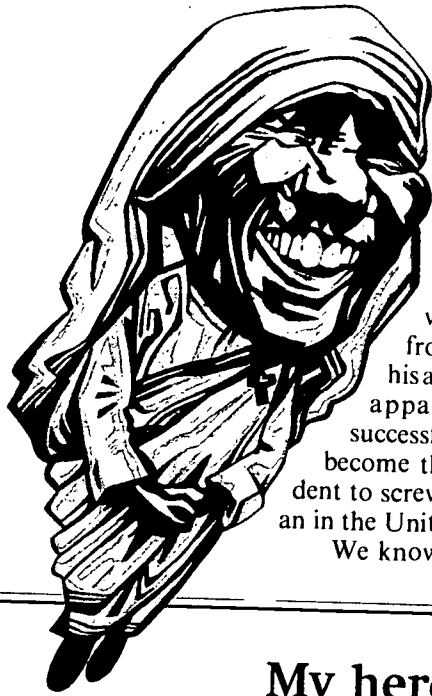
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAY LINCOLN



It must be very hard for Americans in the 1990s—especially younger Americans—to imagine how it could be possible that, throughout the 12 years Franklin D. Roosevelt occupied the White House, most people didn't know their president was disabled.

The history of that elaborate national scam was told a few years ago in a book admirably entitled *FDR's Splendid Deception*. It's fascinating to read about how it was done, how the photographers and reporters who spent time with FDR (even those from the opposition newspapers who hated him) conspired to avoid publishing any image of the president in a wheelchair. Even more fascinating is *why* it was done—the unquestioned consensus that the public should be shielded from the truth.

Times have changed, and are changing. Now, in the era of let-it-all-hang-out-before-somebody-else-hangs-it-out-for-you, we have grown accustomed to such information. We know that President Roosevelt was not a man on a white horse, but a man in a wheelchair. We know, if we care to, about Eleanor Roosevelt's ambiguous sexual orientation. We also know all



about John F. Kennedy his crooked father, his crooked election, the serious case of Addison's disease that was concealed from the public, his ambitious (and apparently near-successful) crusade to become the first president to screw every woman in the United States. We know, and on the

whole we don't seem to be too upset about it. Slowly, haltingly, in the messy way such things always happen, we are moving away from the old idea of leadership. Leadership now seems to have less to do with heroism—at least with heroism as we have known it. It is tempting to read the recent death of Superman, that comic-book colossus, as a pop-culture symbol of this transition. If the man of steel is mortal, how can we go on?—unless, of course, we didn't really need immortal men of steel to begin with. Unless we are moving toward a different idea of leaders, beginning to see them as much more complex, vulnerable, dependent, and changeable.

I would not exactly call Bill Clinton the perfect embodiment of the new leadership, but certain aspects of his style are instructive. Note, for example, his tendency to base his power on relationships rather than to tower over everybody around him. He chose a vice

My hero

Some heroes of our heroes

H. H. Dalai Lama
Tibetan Buddhist leader, through his representative Thubten Samphel

Ever since His Holiness visited India in 1956 to attend the 2500th birth anniversary of the Buddha, and having visited the memorial to MAHATMA GANDHI, he has always considered this apostle of non-violence one of the main inspirations in his life. On the same account His Holiness also has great respect and admiration for MARTIN LUTHER KING.

Jenny Holzer
artist

My hero is SHARON CAPELING-ALAKIJA, director of UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women. I admire her personal commitment and the commitment of UNIFEM to raising the eco-

nomie well-being of women worldwide. UNIFEM's support for women through innovative local projects leads to larger, national programs of economic development and protection of the environment.

P. J. O'Rourke
humorist

My hero is anyone whose annual federal income tax bill is more than \$4,300. This is what the U.S. government spends on each of us per year. THE AMERICAN TAX-PAYER who pays more than \$4,300 in taxes funds all our nation's rights and privileges. And, because that person is usually middle class and often a European male, he also shoulders the blame for all our nation's wrongs and deprivations.

Carl Sagan
astronomer

I tend to be skeptical about the entire institution of heroes, since it is so close to the uncritical submission to fallible leaders that gets us humans into so much trouble. Our propensities in this regard go very deep, and are almost certainly connected with submission to the alpha male in primate dominance hierarchies. Being a primate myself, I do have some heroes, but they tend to be those who teach reasoned and compassionate skepticism toward acceptance of prevailing dogmas—for example, DEMOCRITUS OF ABDERA, FREDERICK DOUGLASS, CHARLES DARWIN, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, THOMAS JEFFERSON, ALBERT EINSTEIN, AND MAHAT-

MA GANDHI, to mention only a few.

Robert Bly
poet

The hero I choose is WILLIAM STAFFORD. He was a conscientious objector in World War II and has never wavered in his public support for non-violence. His commitment is ongoing and, one could say, impersonal. Yet every morning he sits down and writes a poem out of the delicate personal feelings that are swirling that very morning. As a hero, he unites the outer and the inner life.

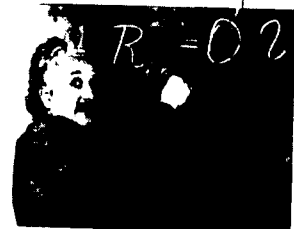
woman who lives in Newe Segonia (Nevada-Shoshone land), she continues her way of life as instructed by the creator. The federal government has for two decades tried to displace her from her land, but she maintains that it is her land, and with many others resists illegitimate authority. To Carrie, natural law, "the creator's law," is preminent.

Spalding Gray
performance artist

My hero is the DALAI LAMA, which comes from interviewing him. He em-

bodies that rare balance of political and spiritual—the power of meditation and silent prayer combined with a life of political action to change the world. I heard another interviewer

ask him, "When you look at the depressing conditions found all over the world and the injustices that happen to people everywhere, how can you be



Albert Einstein

Winona LaDuke
Ojibwa activist

CARRIE DANN is my personal heroine, if I must choose one. A Shoshone

...president who is a peer and an equal—a striking difference from the Batman-and-Robin motif of the previous administration. He lets the world see his wife as a smart, competent woman setting her own agendas, a marked contrast to the public spectacle of Nancy Reagan gazing in rapt, passive admiration at her man and then playing palace politics in secret.

This shift is not happening only in politics. If you take a look at what is going on these days in such fields as psychology and management theory, you can hardly avoid noticing that a profound shift in social values is under way. New, revolutionary ideas about the human personality are emerging, and so are revolutionary ideas about the dynamics of large organizations. Both of these have something to say about leadership, and about leaders.

Various schools of "postmodern" psychology see the individual as more changeable than stable, more

multiple than singular. Kenneth Gergen, a psychiatrist at Swarthmore College, believes that in a rapidly changing, culturally pluralistic society the traditional mental-health ideal of firm and fixed identity has become "limiting and in many ways incapacitating." He says that people who demonstrate "elasticity" are healthier and more fulfilled. Other psychologists, therapists, and cognitive scientists are talking about subpersonalities and pluralistic concepts of identity, and widely quoting Walt Whitman's famous line: "I am large; I contain multitudes."

This way of thinking about the human personality is politically important in a couple of different ways. First, it enables us to avoid getting too hung up on a one-dimensional image of any leader. We can accept a disabled-but-vigorous Roosevelt, a tainted-but-idealistic Kennedy, an anti-Vietnam War Bill Clinton who is also quite capable of serving as commander in chief in the

optimistic?" The Dalai Lama let out a deep, loud belly laugh, and then replied, "What else would you suggest?"

Marianne Williamson
founder, *A Course in Miracles* seminar

My personal hero is **JESUS**. He dwells on a plane that is beyond human illusion, and people who relate to him deeply in their hearts are lifted at least partially from their bondage. I see no other way for the planet to survive than through a mass awakening to a light that lies beyond this world. Jesus is a door, a direct beam.

Al Sharpton
civil rights activist
ADAM CLAYTON POWELL JR. personified the grace yet strength, defiance yet effectiveness, militancy yet flexibility that I admire in a person. Powell single-handedly began large parts of the civil rights and political empowerment struggles em-



Thomas Jefferson

barked upon by African-Americans and others. Powell also marched to the beat of his own drum and was never intimidated into submitting to others or other ways of life.

Rembert Weakland
Catholic Archbishop of Milwaukee

FATHER THEODORE HESBURGH (former president of Notre Dame University) has walked with the greatest but always keeps the common touch. He has been deeply involved in political issues but has kept himself unswayed. He believes in advancing the whole of the human person.

Phil Jackson

Chicago Bulls coach

My personal hero is **DR. ALBERT SCHWEITZER**. His contributions to the world of music and the arts, medicine, and humanity in general are positively insurmountable.

Michael Crichton
novelist

My hero is **GEORGE SCHALLER**, the most brilliant naturalist of the 20th century. He has made major contributions to our understanding of the natural world. And he exemplifies the life of the disciplined scholar working and engaged in the real world.

Bernie Sanders
Vermont congressman

EUGENE VICTOR DEBS, labor and socialist leader, articulated an extraordinary democratic vision for this country and for the world. He believed that government should be run by working people for their inter-

ests, and not by the rich for theirs. He believed that a world of peace and international cooperation could be achieved and that war could be eliminated.

Susan Faludi
journalist

IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT—a crusading journalist and daughter of slaves who, as editor of *Free Speech*, challenged lynch mobs at great personal danger and sacrifice—believed that not only was it permissible for reporters to practice social activism, it was their moral obligation, the basis and engine of all reporting of any worth. She continued to write in spite of repeated threats to her life and a white mob's destruction of the offices of *Free Speech* (in which she had sunk her life's savings). Long before the 1960s civil rights movement, in 1884, she refused to give up her seat in the "white" railroad car, and followed up

her grievance in the courts. (When the conductor tried to evict her from her seat, Ida, no shrinking violet, bit his hand.) She also was one of the first to see the importance of uniting the movements for African-Americans' and women's rights. She formed the first black women's suffrage organization, the Alpha Suffrage Club.



Ida B. Wells-Barnett

Lynda Barry
cartoonist, humorist

Killer of Sheep by film director **CHARLES BURNETT** is the greatest movie ever made, and all of his other films are the second-greatest movies ever made.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

1990s. Second, it gives us a different idea of our own internal authority structures. We can, perhaps, begin to be a little less intimidated by a dominant self-image that functions as a sort of psychic dictator telling the rest of our inner voices to shut up.

Gergen believes that there is a clear connection between cultural pluralism and the inner psychological pluralism that he and other psychologists have identified. For most of us, there just isn't a single social reality out there that is going to justify an unmovable personal identity.

This growing pluralism also offers a clue about where to look for heroes—simple, old-fashioned heroes. We have become too culturally fragmented to unite in admiration of any national hero. Name me one and I'll name you



people who hate him or her. But you can find plenty of subnational heroes, demigods and goddesses of this or that subculture. In the absence of national heroes we now have a pantheon of second-string superpeople who are revered by the members of racial, religious, cultural, and ideological groups and more or less ignored by everybody else: Madonna, Jackie Chan, Ice-T, Rush Limbaugh, Shirley MacLaine, Richard Petty, Bill Gates, Wendell Berry, Kim Gordon, Thich Nhat Hahn, Norman Schwarzkopf, Camille Paglia, Billy Graham, Noam Chomsky, Jesse Jackson, David Duke, Adrienne Rich, James Hillman.

While the social scientists study the changing shape of culture and personality, the

CONTINUED FROM
PREVIOUS PAGE

James Hillman
psychologist

Please, give me a break, let me name three: **FEDERICO FELLINI, ROBERT ALTMAN, AND WIM WENDERS** (all film directors). Not just for their immensity of imaginative expression, their baroque beauty, despair with humor, social sensitivity, vision, compassion, etc., but that they are masters of management. They mobilize troupes of artists, technicians, and wheeler-dealers for the wide world to enjoy and learn from; they have more value for our culture than three other heroic mobilizers of troops: Powell, Schwarzkopf, and Scowcroft.

Amory Lovins
environmental activist

DAVID R. BROWER, my beloved mentor of 20-odd years, is the greatest living conservationist—the

Thoreau or the Muir of our time. He's done more than anyone to build the modern environmental movement. Now 80, he's as active as ever, still far ahead of his time, insistent on beauty and integrity, full of vision and humor, devoted to a long future full of liberty for all life.



Federico Fellini

Al Franken
comedian

My hero would be **AUDIE MURPHY** because he killed so many Nazis in World War II. He jumped on top of a tank and just wiped out like a whole battalion of Krauts. So he would be my hero.

Susie Bright
sex educator, businesswoman

I will always be inspired by heroic actions, but I **CANNOT NAME ANY HEROES**. Cherishing heroes is like having a crush: As soon as the subject of our affections is widely acclaimed, his or her frailties and contradictions are exposed to all. The fans are left to deny and disclaim, or they're left holding the bag, humiliated. I've been in all those seats: the infatuated, the grim defender, the betrayed, and the heroine herself. I don't like any of it. Hero today, Gonzo tomorrow. I'd rather be thrilled with one modest act of courage, or impressed with a single honest declaration, than to be in love with a myth again.

Garry Wills
historian, journalist

SAINT AUGUSTINE, more than anyone, keeps teaching me what a tricky thing the mind is,

and what mysteries it can reflect.

Ishmael Reed
novelist

Nightly we get television footage of black drug gangs, welfare idlers, when anybody with money to buy a newspaper knows that these activities are not black activities exclusively.

I was waiting for these networks to comment about the death of **REGINALD LEWIS**—the richest black man in America, and the head of a multinational corporation, Beatrice International—who died in February. I found this strange, that they ignored Reginald Lewis, who gave millions of dollars to cultural and educational enterprises.

Reginald Lewis is a hero not only for scaling the heights of the business world—going where no black man has ever gone before (it must have been lonely)—but also for his generosity toward Americans both black and

white, and for revealing a very important truth: That the powerful white Americans who control the equipment upon which most Americans rely for information don't want blacks to lose and don't want blacks to win.



Eleanor Roosevelt

Michael Stipe
musician, R.E.M.

I always thought **ORSON WELLES** was kind of a hero. Even when reciting voice-overs for stupid commercials or performing magic tricks on bad talk shows he had a certain class and integrity, a self-effacing humor.

When you know your talent you don't have to shout it. He was a brilliant train wreck.

Management experts are studying the changing shape of organizations. An amazing transformation has been sweeping over business in recent years. Corporations all over the country are "downsizing," "flattening," moving toward structures based more on flexible networks and teams than on rigid top-down hierarchies. This has been partly forced on them—by economic hard times, by the pressure of foreign competition—but it also reflects a deep, and probably irreversible, change in thinking about what makes a company effective. Some people call it the "organizational revolution."

As organizations change, so, of course, do the people in them. Management researchers and theorists are now discovering—and trying to describe—a new type of businessperson. Historically, two character types have prevailed in the business world. One was the rugged individualist, the "self-made man"—Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie—of the early industrial era. In the post-World War II years, the dominant type appeared to be the other-directed, security-seeking conformist described by William H. Whyte Jr. in his 1956 study, *The Organization Man*. We had not only organization-man business executives but also organization-man presidents—Eisenhower was the classic example—and organization-man heroes: the astronauts, whose "right stuff" was a capacity to function smoothly in huge, technologically complex systems.

But the great corporate machines of past decades—General Motors and IBM, say—are not running at all smoothly these days. They have been falling behind their competitors, and so has the organizational philosophy that built them. New models of corporate excellence—such as the "learning organization" proclaimed by Peter Senge in his recent book *The Fifth Discipline*—are coming to the fore. The management gurus are talking about different kinds of employees, "knowledge workers," who cannot be handled according to the old bureaucratic rules. They are also talking about a different kind of executive, the "learning leader" who comes to work prepared to make mistakes and to change course when necessary. Such leaders are valuable because of their capacity to seek out and understand new information. They are not expected to be flawless or to know everything.

This is a massive, awkward, complex shift of American values and beliefs, and many things play a part in it. The role of the mass media in shaping public perceptions of leaders can't be underestimated. It was media self-censorship that hid from us the truth about previous leaders; it was manipulation of the media that enabled shrewd operators to rig images of Ronald Reagan, the public-hero model at its most vapid and cynical. Media gabiness now makes it harder and harder for people to spend much time in public life without having their quirks and their dark sides exposed. This is a rough way for a democracy to grow up, but it's better than continuing to follow an endless

Leadership, American style

*We have met our leaders—
and they are us*

WHAT IS OUR COMMON SENSE OF LEADERSHIP? TO PARAPHRASE former Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, leadership, like obscenity, is impossible to define, but we know it when we see it. Or do we? Just what do Americans see as leadership and, more importantly, how does it make a difference?

When they are asked to define leadership, Americans generally respond by describing a leader. We articulate the concept of leadership as the special qualities or abilities a leader possesses or as what a leader does.

The American tendency to see leadership as the remarkable individuals we call leaders creates a profound barrier inhibiting social progress. Because Americans see leadership as an expression of individuality, we fail to perceive leadership as an expression of community. Because we see leadership as something "they" do, we fail to see leadership as something "we" do. Because we see leadership as the exercise of power, we fail to see leadership as the exercise of democratic values.

Leadership is a dynamic of human interaction, a configuration of relationships and energies that moves things forward. The forward momentum of progress begins when we cooperate in the invention of a shared future. Yet, for many Americans, participation in the invention of a shared future begins and ends in the solitude of a voting booth.

Current notions of leadership distance Americans from active involvement in the invention of a shared future. If we want a vital and flourishing future for our children, we must transcend a view of leadership that encourages us to place the invention of our future in the hands of our leaders without lending a hand of our own.

—Nancy Berry
Firethorn Quarterly

Excerpted from Firethorn Quarterly (Spring 1993). Subscriptions available from 2650 N. Lakeview #2303, Chicago, IL 60614; 312/348-2184. Back issues: \$3 from same address.

sequence of heroes on horseback, would-be supermen with secrets.

It would be easy to misunderstand the new image of leadership and heroism, to assume that it dispenses with older values such as vision, strength of character, energy, moral purpose. I don't think it does. As we become more willing to struggle publicly with the vast complexity of human character and to develop a new

sense of how organizations run, we are more—rather than less—likely to find leaders with some of those admirable characteristics. We are also likely to send forth a useful message to the many countries that are now beginning to experiment with mass democracy.

Walter Truett Anderson, author of Rethinking Liberalism and Reality Isn't What It Used to Be, is a commentator for Pacific News Service.

CHRISTINA KELLY • SASSY

Why do we need celebrities?

*What have Luke Perry or Julia Roberts done for humanity?
Nothing, says a reporter from the teen idol beat*

I was in the shower, trying to think of a celebrity to interview, when I had a philosophical crisis. I wondered: Why do we need celebrities? Who even came up with the idea to make people into stars? And why do we idolize them? For what possible reason does a job like mine exist? Is it a sign of the decline of Western civilization?

People think what I do is so glamorous because I get to interview stars. And I have to admit that when I first started working at *Sassy* in 1987 I was all psyched about that part of my job. For the first couple of months, anyway. Then I noticed how celebrities (via their publicists) would jerk me around for months, rescheduling our interviews or completely backing out at the last minute. I could never get enough time with a celebrity to find out anything interesting, and some acted just plain rude. I started getting resentful over the way I was treated, and I was really disappointed to see that these people I had sort of worshipped from afar were pretty ordinary. So I decided I would just tell the truth instead of perpetuating their myths. If the celeb was a jerk, I would say so. If I thought anyone was stupid, a no-talent, pretentious, or inane, I did not hold back that information.

I thought readers would appreciate that kind of honesty. Instead, many of them hated me for it. I have gotten so many attacks on my character, like the over-1,000-letter barrage of hate mail following my negative *New Kids on the Block* article, for example, that I've become sort of immune to it by now.

A lot of times, fans will talk about Luke Perry or Julia Roberts or Kurt Cobain being their hero. But celebrities are not the same thing as heroes. Heroes existed way before celebrities ever did, even though celebrities now outshine heroes in the public consciousness. The traditional definition of a hero is someone who sacrifices himself or herself for a higher purpose: to save other people or to support an idea. Moses is the pre-eminent Judeo-Christian hero, because he took a journey up the mountain and came back with the Ten Commandments. Jesus is the Christian hero, because he died for the redemption of humankind. Thomas Jefferson is an Amer-

With rich, perfectly airbrushed celebrities crammed down our throats all the time, you'd have to be a powerhouse of self-esteem not to feel inferior.

ican hero, because he helped found a new order. Harriet Tubman risked her life to bring slaves north to freedom. Now, what has Luke Perry done to redeem humanity? At press time, nothing. Still, he is widely adored.

One of the little lessons I have learned in my job is that worshipping celebrities leaves you with a distinctly empty feeling. Experts say it's because celeb worship doesn't teach that you'll have to make sacrifices if you want to achieve anything worthwhile. Adulation of true heroes can inspire people to make sacrifices, both to help

mselves and for the benefit of society at large.

No-talents become celebrities all the time. The result is that no one in any walk of life seems to care about achievement or talent—fame is the only objective. Everyone wants to be famous, because in our society you are not considered a success unless you are famous, no matter what your career. So doctors, lawyers, designers, politicians, magazine editors, writers, and artists all hire publicists. Even being famous for doing nothing, like Linda Evangelista and Vanna White are, or just being related to someone famous, like Sean Lennon and LaToya Jackson are, is more desirable than being truly creative and talented, but obscure.

Further proof that celebrities are not heroes: People who have been involved in scandals and crimes are treated like celebrities. Iran-contra flunky Oliver North was made into a national hero for his involvement in clandestine activities that violate our Constitution. Mafia boss John Gotti has kissed media butt so successfully that at his trial he was treated like a movie star rather than the criminal he is.

How did these people become celebrities? Like Luke, Johnny, Winona, Paula, Axl, and (your most beloved celebrity here), they satisfy our insatiable demand for something to talk about outside our own inconsequential little lives. Yes, inconsequential—to be human is to feel inconsequential. Now, with glamorous celebrities being crammed down our throats wherever we turn, we feel about as faceless as bees in a hive. I mean, this stream of famous, rich, powerful, perfectly airbrushed, implanted, and liposuctioned stars is so endless that you would have to be a powerhouse of self-esteem not to feel a little inferior. It's so dumb; we worship celebs because our lives are pointless, but doing it makes us feel even worse.

Let us briefly trace the history of the phenomenon that can make a perfectly wonderful high school girl feel less worthy than, say, cross-eyed diamond-ring wearer Shannon Doherty. Before there was TV, before even newspapers, people loved to gossip—it is human nature to do this. At first gossip was confined to family, neighbors, and royalty. Then in the 1850s, printing innovations resulted in the first magazines. They published stories by people like Mark Twain and Charles Dickens, who became celebrities by virtue of reaching a big audience. Then when silent movies started in the 1890s, the first film actors became stars.

Up on the screen, so much larger than life, they seemed almost mythical, and the audiences became fascinated by these projections of seeming perfection. People wanted to know all about them, and fanzines were started to satisfy that demand. Once TV started, the whole celeb-creation and -worship thing careened out of control, because information could come out instantly right into people's houses all over the world. TV gives you the false impression that celebrities are talking right to you, and you feel like they're your friends—so much so that some people will go right up to a star if they see one on the street.

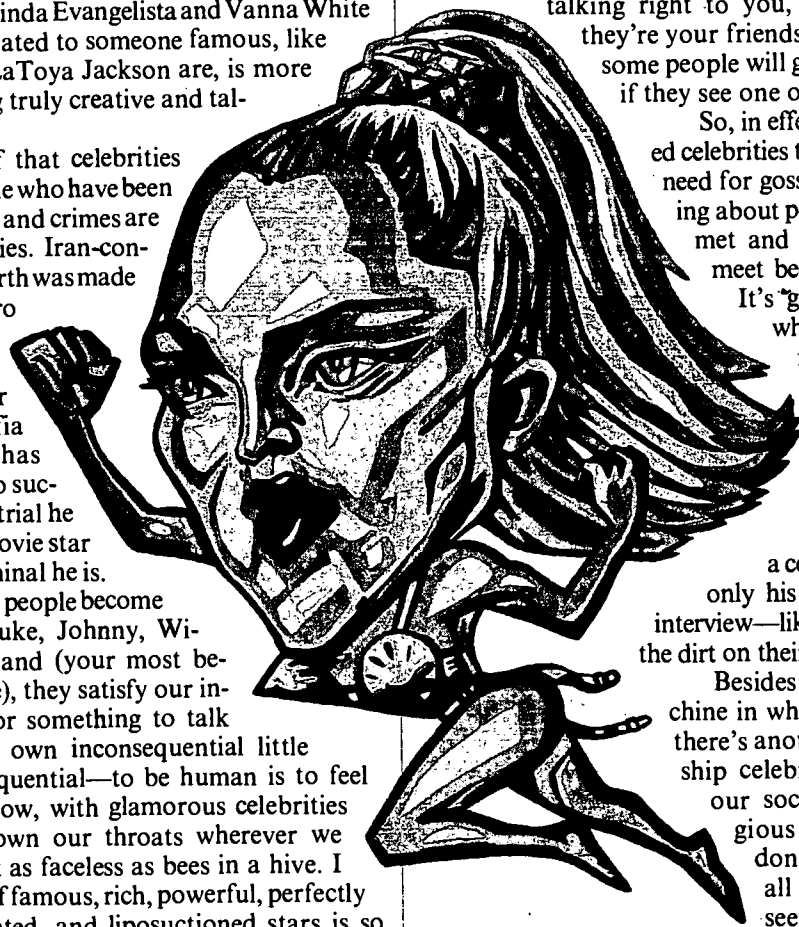
So, in effect, the media created celebrities to satisfy our primal need for gossip. Over time, talking about people we have never met and are never likely to meet became an obsession.

It's gotten to the point where some people are more interested in the personal lives of the stars than in the lives of their family and friends. No joke. That is why it is so ludicrous when a celeb wants to discuss only his or her work in an interview—like we care! We want the dirt on their personal lives.

Besides the huge media machine in which I am but a cog, there's another reason we worship celebrities. As a whole, our society is not as religious as it once was. I don't pretend to have all the answers, but it seems like people need

something to fulfill them the way organized religion once did—spirituality, art, some kind of life. Celebrity worship exists as a warped and unfulfilling substitute. True heroes often die for their people or their cause. That might be why we feel vindicated when a celebrity dies, particularly if it's from self-destructive practices like drug or alcohol abuse. We make them stars, but then their fame makes us feel insignificant—and we truly feel better about ourselves when they die. I am a part of this whole process. No wonder I feel soiled at the end of my workday.

Excerpted with permission from the teen magazine Sassy (June 1992). Subscriptions: \$14.97/yr. (12 issues) from Sassy, Box 57503, Boulder, CO 80322-7503. Back issues: \$2 from 230 Park Av., New York, NY 10169.



Use this article in conjunction with discussions of cultural definitions of heroes

Is a hero really nothing but a sandwich?

Exercises to help you pick yours

FOR SEVERAL YEARS A PICTURE OF WARREN Spahn of the Milwaukee Braves hung on my closet door, one leg poised in mid-air before he delivered a smoking fastball. Time passed and Spahn's picture gave way to others: Elvis, John F. Kennedy, Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, Ben Hogan. These heroic images have reflected back to me what I hoped to become: a man with good moves, a sex symbol, an electrifying orator, a plumber of depths, a teller of tales, a graceful golfer. Like serpents, we keep shedding

the skins of our heroes as we move toward new phases in our lives.

Like many of my generation, I have a weakness for hero worship. At some point, however, we all begin to question our heroes and our need for them. This leads us to ask: What is a hero?

Despite immense differences in cultures, heroes around the world generally share a number of traits that instruct and inspire people.

A hero does something worth talking about. A hero has a story of adventure to tell and a community who will listen. But a hero goes beyond mere fame or celebrity.

Heroes serve powers or principles larger than themselves. Like high-voltage transformers, heroes take the

energy of higher powers and step it down so that it can be used by ordinary mortals.

3 *The hero lives a life worthy of imitation.* Those who imitate a genuine hero experience life with new depth, zest, and meaning. A sure test for would-be heroes is what or whom do they serve? What are they willing to live and die for? If the answer or evidence suggests they serve only their own fame, they may be celebrities but not heroes. Madonna and Michael

Jackson are famous, but who would claim that their adoring fans find life more abundant?

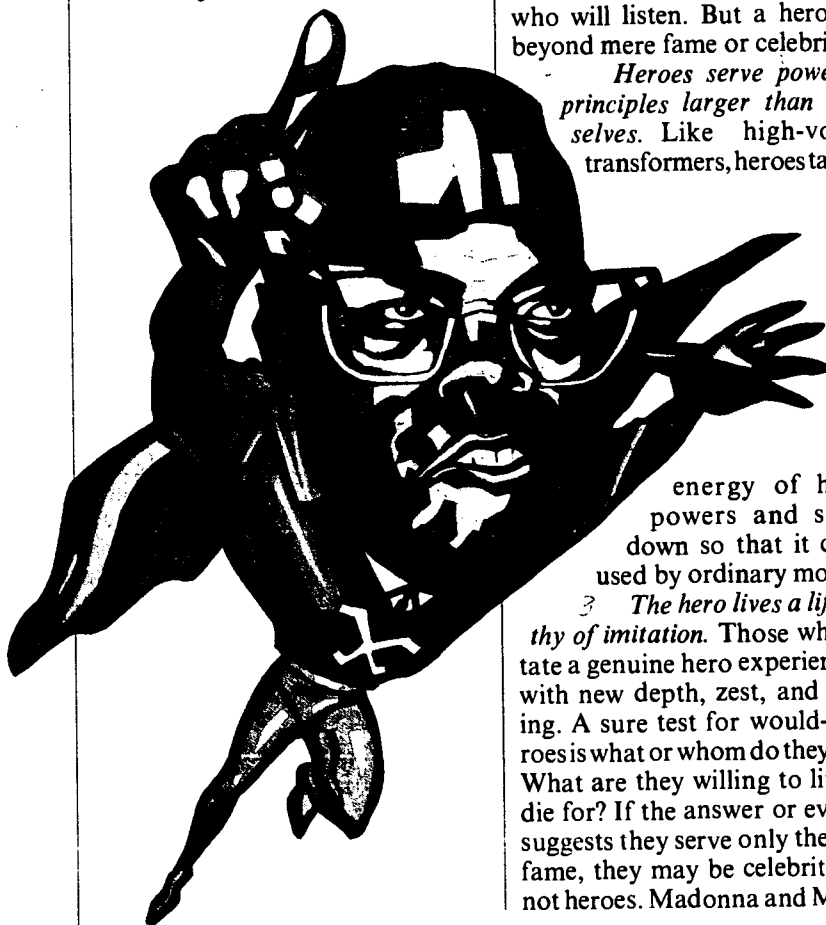
Heroes are catalysts for change. They have a vision from the mountaintop. They have the skill and the charm to move the masses. They create new possibilities. Without Gandhi, India might still be part of the British Empire. Without Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr., we might still have segregated buses, restaurants, and parks. It may be possible for large-scale change to occur without charismatic leaders, but the pace of change would be glacial, the vision uncertain, and the committee meetings endless.

Though heroes aspire to universal values, most are bound to the culture from which they came. The heroes of the Homeric Greeks wept loudly for their lost comrades and exhibited their grief publicly. A later generation of Greeks under the tutelage of Plato disdained this display of grief as "unmanly."

Though the heroic tradition of white Americans is barely 300 years old, it already shows some unique and unnerving features. While most traditional heroes leave home, have an adventure, and return home to tell the story, American heroes are often homeless. They come out of nowhere, right what is wrong, and then disappear into the wilderness. Throughout most of the world, it is acknowledged that heroes need a community as much as a community needs them.

And most Americans seem to prefer their heroes flawless, innocent, forever wearing a white hat or airbrushed features. Character flaws—unbridled lust, political incorrectness—are held as proof that our heroes aren't really heroes. Several heroes on my own list have provided easy targets for the purveyors of heroic perfectionism.

The ancient Greeks and Hebrews were wiser on this count.



Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?

Heroics in the sports arena don't necessarily produce real-life heroes

They chose for their heroes men and women with visible, tragic flaws. Oedipus' fierce curiosity raised him to be king but also lured him to his mother's bed. King David's unbounded passion made him dance naked before the Ark and led him to betray Uriah so he could take Bathsheba for his wife.

American heroes lack a sense of home that might limit and ground their grandiose ambitions. American heroes avoid acknowledging their own vices, which makes them more likely to look for somebody else to blame when things go wrong. Our national heroes seem to be stuck somewhere between Billy Budd and the Lone Ranger: pious, armed cowboys who are full of energy, hope, and dangerous naïveté.

HERE ARE SOME EXERCISES TO GIVE YOU insights into your own ideas about heroes and villains:

1. Draw a time line with markings every five years in your life. For each era, name an important hero (male or female). Identify three core qualities each stands for. Look at the overall list for recurring qualities. Who or what do your heroes serve?

2. Make a list of enemies, the people who really push your buttons. For each specify three qualities that make your blood boil. Now look for recurring qualities. What emerges is your "shadow," parts of yourself that you fear, loathe, and therefore loan to others. What does your shadow know that you don't?

3. Make a collage of your heroes, leaving room for their tragic flaws and holy vices. Hang it opposite a large mirror.

—Ted Tollefson

Special to *Utne Reader*

Ted Tollefson, a Unitarian Universalist minister, is co-founder of the Mythos Institute in Minneapolis.

These days, it seems, the sports pages have come to resemble a police blotter. The fan seeking box scores and game recaps must first wade through news stories about drug abuse among athletes, arrests for drunk driving, betting and recruiting scandals, and, most disturbingly, reports of rape and other sex-related crimes. What's going on here? American sports fans ask over their morning toast and coffee. *What's happening to our heroes?*

It's not difficult to understand our desire for athletes to be heroes. On the surface, at least, athletes display many of the classical heroic attributes. They possess a vital and indomitable spirit; they are gloriously alive inside their bodies. And sports does allow us to witness acts that can legitimately be described as courageous, thrilling, beautiful, even noble. In an increasingly complicated and disorderly world, sports is still an arena in which we can regularly witness a certain kind of greatness.

Yet there's something of a paradox here, for the very qualities a society tends to seek in its heroes—selflessness, social consciousness, and the like—are precisely the *opposite* of those needed to transform a talented but otherwise unremarkable neighborhood kid into a Michael Jordan or a Joe Montana. Becoming a star athlete requires a profound and long-term kind of self-absorption, a single-minded attention to the development of a few rather odd physical skills, and an overarching competitive outlook. These qualities may well make a great athlete, but they don't necessarily make a great person. On top of this, our society reinforces these traits by the system it has created to produce athletes—a system characterized by limited responsibility and enormous privilege.

The athletes themselves suffer the costs of this system. Trained to measure themselves perpetually against the achievements of those around them, many young athletes develop a sense of what sociologist Walter

Schafer has termed "conditional self-worth": They learn very quickly that they will be accepted by the important figures in their lives—parents, coaches, peers—to the extent they are perceived as "winners." Their egos come to rest, all too precariously, upon the narrow plank of athletic success.

Young athletes learn that success, rather than hard and honest play, is what brings rewards. And for those successful enough to rise to the level of big-time college sports, the "reward" is often an artificially

Becoming a star athlete requires self-absorption—not a quality we look for in heroes.

controlled social environment, one that shields them from many of the responsibilities other students face. Coaches—whose own jobs, of course, depend on maintaining winning programs—hover over their athletes to ensure that nothing threatens their eligibility to compete. If an athlete gets into trouble with the law, for instance, a coach will very likely intervene—hiring an attorney, perhaps even managing to have the case quietly dismissed. In some schools, athletes don't even choose their own classes or buy their own books; the athletic department does all this for them. It's not unheard of for athletic department staff to wake up athletes in the morning and to take them to class.

Given this situation, it's not too surprising that many young American athletes seem to have been left with a stunted ethical sense. Professor Sharon Stoll of the University of Idaho has tested more than 10,000 student athletes from all over the country, ranging from junior high to college age; she reports that in the area of moral reasoning, athletes invariably score lower than non-athletes—and that they grow worse the longer they participate in athletics.

Coddled by universities, lionized by local communities, accorded star status by the public, endowed with six- and seven-figure salaries, successful athletes inevitably develop a sense of themselves as privileged beings—as indeed they are. The danger arises when the realistic (and thus probably healthy) understanding of personal privilege mutates into a sense of personal entitlement.

Mike Tyson, of course, is the most blatant example of this phenomenon. Having been taught as a young man that he was special—his mentor, Cus D'Amato, reportedly had one set of rules for Tyson and another, more stringent, set for all his other boxing protégés—and having lived his entire adult life surrounded by a cortege of fawning attendants, Tyson eventually came to believe, like a medieval king, that all he saw rightfully belonged to him. Blessed with money and fame enough to last a

lifetime, he spent his time outside the ring acquiring and discarding the objects of his desire: houses, automobiles, jewelry, clothes, and women. In the wake of the publicity surrounding his rape trial, countless women have come forward to relate stories of Tyson propositioning them and then, upon being rebuffed, exclaiming in what was apparently genuine surprise, "Don't you know who I am? *I'm the heavyweight champion of the world.*" Needless to say, not all athletes are Mike Tyson; there are plenty of athletes who recognize that they have been granted some extraordinary gifts in this life and want to give something back to the community.

Some remarkable individuals will always rise above the deforming athletic system we've created. After retiring from football, defensive tackle Alan Page of the Minnesota Vikings became a successful lawyer and established the Page Education Foundation, which helps minority and disadvantaged kids around the country pay for college. Frustrated by the old-boy network by which Minnesota judges had traditionally been appointed, Page challenged the system in court and finally won election to the state Supreme Court, becoming the first black ever elected to statewide office in Minnesota. Tennis star Martina Navratilova recently joined six other lesbians and gay men as a plaintiff in a lawsuit filed by the cities of Denver, Boulder, and Aspen challenging Colorado's recent anti-gay law as unconstitutional. Thankfully, there will always be some legitimate heroes (or, to use the more contemporary term, role models) to be found among professional athletes.

Still, it's probably misguided for society to look to

In a complicated world, sports is an arena where we can regularly see a certain kind of greatness.

athletes for its heroes—any more than we look among the ranks of, say, actors or lawyers or pipefitters. The social role played by athletes is indeed important (imagine a society without sports; I wouldn't want to live in it), but it's fundamentally different from that of heroes.

Thanks to the years of hard and uncompromising work that athletes have invested in themselves, sports is often able to provide us a glimpse of that "supreme beauty" that Bertrand Russell wrote of as characteristic of mathematics: "sublimely pure, and capable of a stern perfection such as only the greatest art can show."

Can't we just leave it at that?

Matthew Goodman has written about sports for the Village Voice, Washington Monthly, Z Magazine, and The Guardian.

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