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★ **American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation--How Indian Spirituality Changed the West**

Philip Goldberg, Harmony, \$26 (416p) ISBN 978-0-385-52134-5

Spiritual coach and author Goldberg (Roadsigns) is a knowledgeable and sympathetic chronicler of the past 150 years or so of Indian spiritual ideas' influence on American spirituality. Correctly starting with Emerson and American transcendentalism, Goldberg follows a trail that gets broader, more diverse, and more powerful until yoga is as American as Starbucks, and "spiritual but not religious" becomes a cultural catchphrase describing millions whose notions of the transcendent are more shaped by India's Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Religion) than by Yankee divines and Southern Baptists. Goldberg sorts gurus and systems of yoga, correctly understanding the spiritual aspects of what many Americans think of as a physical fitness discipline. He's on point in tracing the influence of the spiritual philosophy of Vedanta on a legion of influential artists and writers beyond the titular ones--think John Coltrane and the late J.D. Salinger. This book fills a void; scholars have mined the subject of Indian spiritual philosophy, but mostly for the academy, despite the broad impact of Vedantism on popular culture. Goldberg gets it. (Nov.)