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## INDIAN INFLUENCE ON JUNGIAN IDEOLOGY

Dr. Shreeja Tripathi Sharma,  
Assistant Professor of English,  
Department of Higher Education, MP

### Abstract:

This research paper seeks to explore Carl G Jung's association with India with the aim of determining the impact of Indian philosophy on Jungian ideology.

**Keywords:** Carl Jung, Jungian ideology, Indian influence on Carl Jung

### Introduction

Jung's association with India has remained an object of scrutiny by psychologists, philosophers and scholars, particularly in India. Jung's fascination for the ancient Hindu mystic, his absorption and promulgation of the Eastern thought has been welcomed with pride. However, his myopic view of the contemporary Indians as "effeminate" and "emotional" people who were beyond rational Western thought has not escaped the scathing Indian eye. Jung's ambivalence towards India has met an identical response. His profound admiration for ancient India has been loved and his distaste for the contemporary Indian hated. However, the Indian influence on Jungian theory of the archetypes cannot be denied and has been explicitly acknowledged by Jung.

Jung was invited to India in 1938 as a part of a delegation invited to participate in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Indian Science Congress in Calcutta. He was also to be conferred the degree honoris causa by three of India's most eminent universities in Calcutta, Benaras and Allahabad. Jung accepted the invitation as his curious interest in India had been long-standing. He was familiar with the works of Indian philosophers and Indologists. The Indian and Eastern philosophy were in congruence to his own theories notably the controversial theory on the unconscious. However, he was disappointed with his journey to India and was explicitly critical of the contemporary India and its people. The cause of his contradictory behaviour is ambiguous.

Jung had distinctively parted ways with his eminent friend Sigmund Freud over conflicts in opinion and ideas particularly over Jung's theory of the collective unconscious. While Freud concentrated on the sexual libido, Jung insisted that there was more to the unconscious. He drew on the Indian and Eastern philosophy to support his theory. The Jungian theory partly born of Indian philosophical inspiration on Jung.

Jung's early impression of India may have been formed by a richly illustrated children's picture-book, *Orbis Pictus* presented to him when he was almost six. His mother read out stories about eastern religion from the book. He recollects in his work *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, "There were recollections of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva which I found an inexhaustible source of interest." His father, Pastor Paul Jung was proficient in oriental languages including Arabic and had a modest collection of books on the East. Jung became intrigued with the East reading through these books from his father's library. He began to read the philosophers who wrote about the East. He was particularly influenced by Schopenhauer's treatises that drew on knowledge particularly from the Vedanta and the Upanishads. He was well versed with the writings of the eminent Indologists like Max Muller, Oldenberg and Deussen. In 1909 he resigned from his post as a physician at Burghölzli. He became occupied with the study of mythology, folklore and religion. In December 1913, almost before the outbreak of the World War I, Jung began with an experiment which is now known as his

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“confrontation with the unconscious.” This period was dedicated to his explorations of his self and during this period his interest in the Hindu, Buddhist and Eastern philosophies intensified. In 1916, he began to draw the mandalas or the symbolic patterns of representing the Universe as per the tenets of Hinduism and Buddhism. It was during this period that his thoughts over the collective unconscious began to sprout. He found the Western scientific rationality inapt for probing into the deeper layers of the psyche, but found solace in the Eastern spirituality which in his view could permeate these depths easily. He acknowledges in his work, *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*:

Though the Christian view of the world has paled for many people, the symbolic treasure rooms of the East are still full of marvels that can nourish for a long time to overcome the passion for show and new clothes. (Jung, 7)

He further states:

So it is not surprising if the religious need, the believing mind and the philosophical speculations of the educated Europeans are attracted by the symbols of the East – those grandiose conceptions of divinity in India and the abysses of Taoist philosophy in China... (Jung, 8)

Almost throughout his career, Jung remained in the company of like-minded Indologists and philosophers who served as his links to Eastern thought. His study on the Eastern ideology was kindled with his friendship with the Hermann Keyserling, Germany's most influential philosophical writer during the early twentieth century. Keyserling travelled to India and made friends with Tagore in 1911. He wrote the celebrated book, *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, with a detailed chapter on India and implored upon an East – West amalgamation. Both Keyserling and Jung contributed articles to *Prabuddha Bharat*, the Vedanta journal of Ramkrishna Mission.

Jung also nurtured close bonding with the German Indologist, Wilhelm Hauer, who had gathered a rich understanding of the Indian Tantra during his long stay in India, while working on the Basel Mission. Their joint talks resulted in Jung's famed Kundalini lectures in which he explicated the significance of chakra symbology.

Jung also made friends with Heinrich Zimmer, an Indologist of Jewish origin, who strongly upheld that Indian psychotherapy was far more evolved than the Western counterpart. Both Jung and Zimmer contributed lecturers and articles for *Prabuddha Bharat*, *Eranos Jahrbuch* and the *Psychology Club*.

Among the Indians, who Jung met in Zürich, the most illustrious was Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, venerated philosopher, educator and former President of India. He was invited in 1929 to deliver a lecture at Harris Manchester College, Oxford which was published as a book entitled *An Idealist View of Life*. Shortly after, he had been offered the position as the Principal in the college. During his tenure there, he gave significant lectures on Indian philosophy. Jung met him in 1929 and recalls the encounter with him fondly in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. They talked about Indian education system, in particular about the relationship between guru and chela. This meeting may have stimulated Jung's interest in the Ramkrishna Mission as Radhakrishnan strongly advocated Shankaracharya's teachings and the Vedanta philosophy.

Around the same time Jung met Boshi Sen, who much like Jung was a scientist and a botanist by profession and a Vedanta supporter by spirit. Sen was the son of Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose, an eminent Indian scientist. His wife, Gertude Emerson Sen was related to Ralph Waldo Emerson. Jung contributed articles to *Asia*, a magazine edited by Gertude. Jung maintained an enduring association with the couple which fostered a healthy mutual exchange of ideas on the Vedanta.

Jung met Eastern scholars, Indologists and philosophers in the oriental scholarly circles. A name that deserves mention here is V.S. Subramanya Iyer, the registrar at the University of Mysore and who had also held the

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post of Rajguru of Maharaja of Mysore. He was a Vedanta philosopher and had been a mentor to reputable scholars including Radhakrishnan.

The high regard and overall outlook towards India and the East becomes clear from Jung's famous lecture on the unconscious delivered at Tavistock:

We Europeans are not the only people on the Earth. We are just a peninsula of Asia and on the continent there are old civilisations where people have trained their minds in introspective psychology for thousands of years, whereas we began our psychology not even yesterday but only this morning. These people have an insight that is simply fabulous, and I had to understand Eastern things to understand certain facts of the unconscious. I had to go back to understand Oriental symbolism. (Collected Works, Vol.18, par 139)

The impressions that India cast on Jung grew deeper as he graduated from his boyish Orbis Pictus years to the more mature Vedanta days. Jung's association with India and his keen interest in Indian philosophy has been a significant source of influence in the development of Jungian ideology.

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