

Seeking Oneness

***Children of Immortal Bliss: A New Perspective on our True Identity based on the Ancient Vedanta Philosophy of India* by Paul Hourihan**

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At the core of all religions lie the same truths. This constancy has fascinated me ever since I began my own spiritual journey. All masters have taught the Oneness of Truth. That we are one with God. That pain and suffering come from lack of understanding our true nature. That there is no permanence in this world. That, as the Master Jesus said, the kingdom of God is within. Studying the various expressions of Truth strengthens our own faith and reinforces it by demonstrating Truth's universality.

While the study may be termed spiritual, our understanding is facilitated or limited by our cultural awareness. It is not easy to understand the teachings native to an unfamiliar culture.

If you've found it difficult to understand the ancient teachings of India, *Children of Immortal Bliss* is for you. Hourihan's explanation of Vedanta, the mysticism of ancient India, develops ideas in easily understood terms. The section on meditation is an example.

"To realize God, first control the outgoing senses and harness the mind," cries The *Upanishads, Breath of the Eternal*. But how does one harness the mind with its wild, assuming ways? Not by force, but by substitution of thought. By giving the mind an affirmation of Truth we bring it under control and have a defense against distractions.

And where do we direct our focus during meditation? The Upanishad continues, "Then meditate upon the light in the heart of the fire — meditate, that is, upon pure consciousness as distinct from the ordinary consciousness of the intellect. Thus the Self, the Inner Reality, may be seen behind physical appearance."

The heart of the fire is true consciousness, the "I" that Christ referred to when he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Meditation on that "I" demands training of the mind. We grasp its truths, then lose them. But gradually we learn to exchange ego control for divine control, an exchange that brings a new level of joy.

Mysticism claims universality. Hourihan compares the teachings of outstanding mystics and finds parallel thoughts expressed in different terms. These thoughts have become the underlying foundation of every religion.

The teachings are ancient and the understanding thorough. Hourihan's elucidation of Vedanta, while especially designed for the Western mind, also offers further understanding for those already familiar with Indian mysticism.