



Is India really independent?

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August 15, 2004 will signify 57 years of freedom for India. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister gave a speech to the Constituent Assembly at midnight on August 14, 1947. "At the dawn of history, India started on her unending quest...she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today, a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again." His speech inspired us with ideals about a new beginning for India.

Has India lived up to these ideals? Although the British no longer occupy India, is she really independent of their influence? While they were in India, we began to follow their traditions, their philosophies, and their lifestyle. We silently allowed them desecrate our heritage, culture and religion. Yet now, it is we, the Indians that continue to honor those who tried to destroy our culture.

Perhaps the biggest tragedy has been in the area of religion. We have continued to carry the

torch for the British missionaries in their attempts to dissuade our belief system. We continue to allow the desecration of the essence of Bhartiya culture and tradition — the scriptures. Not only do we believe in wrong informa-

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tion, we allow for the propagation of it through textbooks in prestigious Indian schools and universities.

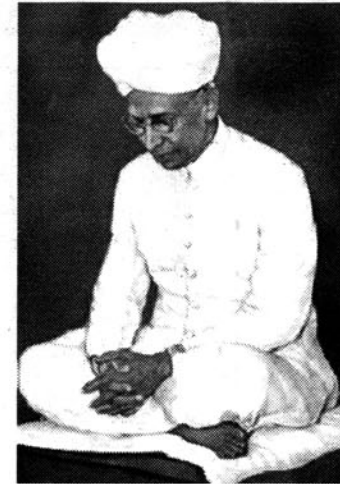
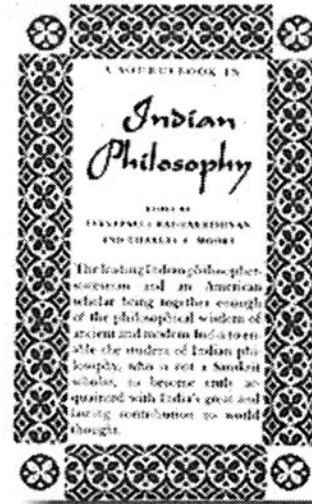
Fictitious theories about the Aryan invasion, the history of Indian civilization, the origin of our sacred Sanskrit language are being taught to our youth even

today.

Let's take one example of a great Indian philosopher, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, President of India from 1962 to 1967. Widely renowned for his philosophical writings and lectures, he was highly influenced by the books of the European writers who wrote about Hinduism and the history of India. His own writings perpetuated the British belief system rather than the knowledge of Bhartiya scriptures.

For example he wrote in his book Indian Philosophy Vol.1, "Rama is only a good and great man, a high-souled hero, who utilized the services of the aboriginal tribes in civilizing the south, and not an *avatar* of Vishnu. The religion it reflects is frankly polytheistic and external."

Further, Radhakrishnan remarked that "brahmanization of Krsna religion and elevating Vishnu as the great God took place around 300 BC." In his writings he has called the early Hindus 'the beast', the Divine wisdom of the Rishis 'the God-making factory,' and defined the



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Vedic religion as 'the religion of the primitive man in the world of ghosts and goblins who were only satisfied with bloody sacrifices.'

He described the teachings of the Upanishads and the Puranas as 'speculation, myth, parables and heretical doctrines,' called Mahabharat 'a non-Aryan epic poem' and tells that 'the higher mysticism of *Yog Darshan* was mixed with drug intoxication.'

In fact, Hinduism, originally called *Sanatan Dharm*, is a universal religion intended for the whole world, not for any specific race. The Vedic culture is the heritage of world civilizations and we should be proud that it originated in India, not shy away from it. The spiritual wisdom of ancient India is a gift to mankind and we as Indians need to cherish, nurture and be proud of it.

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Many of us want to be "like the West". We wear Western clothes, watch cable TV, send our children to convent schools and allow them to be taught by the very books that were authored by the British. The impressions of our freedom struggle are from a history book in English rather than our national language. Trousers and shirts replace traditional dress. Urban youth are shying away from Indian culture and gravitating towards Western assimilation. Modernization has been equated with Westernization. Somewhere along the way 150 years of the 'Raj' has definitely left its mark.

We have somehow lost our way towards the pursuit of independence, and have continued to be ruled by an invisible 'Raj'. We have lost sight of our quest. We have forgotten the ideals which gave us strength. There is still time to change the future, to return to our roots. We can re-discover India's timeless teachings, we can change the generations to come. Perhaps the question is not whether we have the ability to do it, but rather will we take on the challenge?

His book and thousands of others like it are prescribed for higher studies in Indian institutions.

This article is presented by The Vedic Foundation, a non-profit, educational organization whose aim is to "Reestablish the Greatness of Hinduism." For information visit: www.thevedicfoundation.org