

Introduction To The Study Of The Hindu Doctrines ##TOP##

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The *Introduction to the study of the Hindu doctrines* had, among its objectives, the purpose of giving the proper intellectual basis to promote openness to the study of eastern intellectuality. The study of Hindu doctrines is continued in his book *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*. There he described a part of the doctrine of Vêdânta according to the formulation of Adi Shankara focusing on the human being: his constitution, his states, his posthumous future, the purpose of existence being presented as identity with the Self. (Âtmâ), the transcendent principle of being, identical to Brahma.[66] The "Self" is the essence, the transcendent "Principle" of being, the human being for example.[67] He specifies that "Personality" comes under the order of universal principles: pure

metaphysics has for its domain the "Universal", which is without common measure with the domain of the general and of what is designated by the term of categories in philosophy. Guénon declared that the path to this knowledge requires "only one essential preparation, and that is theoretical knowledge [implied by traditional doctrines]". But he clarified, all this cannot go far without the most important means which is "concentration".[99] The rational study of the initiatory texts and the implementation of the rites are of no use if the spiritual transmission has not taken place: for example, the recitation of a mantra is useless without the 'spiritual influence transmitted by the master during the initiation. One cannot initiate oneself alone. Moreover for Guénon, any desire to revive dead traditions (of ancient Egypt, Celts, Germans, etc.) has no meaning.[100] The spiritual laws which govern the spiritual path have nothing to do with the magic or the paranormal phenomena which concern the psychic and not the spiritual: to be attached to these phenomena is an obstacle to the spiritual development.[101][102] Guénon considers imperative the need to combine esotericism with the corresponding exoterism and not to mix the practices of different traditions: one must practice only one spiritual path (Islam, Christianity, Judaism, etc.)[103] The *doctrine of five elements*, which plays an

important role in some Vedic texts, in Advaita Vedanta, Islamic esotericism, the Hebrew Kabbalah, in Christian Hermeticism, and other traditions, is partially exposed by René Guénon in two articles: one entitled *The conditions of corporeal existence*, published in 1912 in the journal *La Gnose* (Gnosis) (reprinted in the book *Miscellanea*) and another, published much later, in 1935: *The Hindu doctrine of five elements* (reprinted in the book *Studies in Hinduism*). A missing part of the first article was never published but René Guénon announced several times (*The symbolism of the cross*, *The multiple states of the being*) his intention to write a more complete study on this issue. Some aspects of the doctrine of five elements and conditions are used at many occurrences in all his work: in *The symbolism of the cross*, *The principles of infinitesimal calculus*, *The Great Triad* (on the vital condition), in the first two chapters of *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (on the notion of form) etc. However Guénon never wrote a comprehensive introduction to the subject, something that prompted comments from some authors.[127] René Guénon was a man who did not like biography, he had contempt for the cult of personality and believed that the age-old wisdom should stand or fall by itself. That being said, some introduction to him may prove prudent. René Guénon was born on the

15th November 1886. He received an excellent education, yet suffered from many health problems throughout his youth. His mind proved astute and he quickly mastered the "classical" form of education common during that period, he particularly excelled at mathematics. However, that was not enough for Guénon. He located and joined a range of esoteric and gnostic organisations delving deep into the secret traditions, he wandered through this "wastelands" of secret societies for some seven years. In 1909 he was consecrated Bishop of Synesuis in the Gnostic Church founded by Papus under the name of Palingensuis. Guénon's life at this time was complex and complicated. While he was involved with many esoteric, occult and Gnostic organizations, he also undertook study (and initiation?) into many traditional esoteric bodies related to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Taoism. He spent many years between 1912 and 1928 within the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church, while many also believe he became initiated into the Sufi school of Islam around 1912, it seems more likely this occurred during his later sojourn in Egypt during the 1930's. In any event, during this foundation period he digests whatever knowledge he can gain and begins to develop a truly encyclopaedic knowledge and deep understanding of the esoteric traditions. As time passes, Guénon seems

to reach a crossroads, while acknowledging the value of esotericism, he comes to regard many of the prevailing movements of the period as anarchistic, idiosyncratic and distortions of the true perennial esoteric tradition. He makes a break with them and begins his own research. His life work begins to unfold at this moment; he starts to truly appreciate the real nature of esotericism and the importance of "living traditions". Between 1927 and 1930 he works to expound esotericism as the living heart of religion, however, he experiences a great disillusionment due to hostility within elements of Catholicism towards his work (especially towards his book *Lord of the World*) and after the death of his wife migrates to Egypt in 1930 and is initiated into the Sufi Order of Shadilites and takes the name Abdel Wahed Yahya. He publishes some of his most important works during this period on esotericism, criticism of modern society and symbolism, Rene Guénon died, living as a Sufi, in December 1950. His work can be divided into four major categories - Esotericism, Symbolism, Social Criticism and Religious exposition. Guénon was not one to destroy the edifices of a belief or doctrine without also expounding the real teaching of which it is a distortion or corruption. His works on the modern world are the most astringent, critical and biting critiques of our modern way of life that have ever been

written. *Crisis of the Modern World* and *The Reign of Quantity* demolish the false structures that we have created in the name of progress and "supposed evolution" and show just how far modern man has moved away from the perennial tradition. Guénon's works on both religion and esotericism respond to modern "pseudo-intellectualism", theosophies and spiritualisms (including what we would describe as the new age) by re-asserting the pristine and original esotericism as found in the Vedas, Islam, Christianity and related canons. These works are astounding presentations offering erudite academic achievement coupled with a rare depth of insight and vision. However, to really appreciate the significance of Guénon's work we must understand some of the key concepts found in what could be described as his "traditionalist esoteric" vision. The book *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* is pivotal to Guénon's worldview. It is an extremely dense book that has resulted from years of planning, it is as though every word had been carefully chosen and every page refined time and time again. It is not easy to read, but certainly rewards those who make the effort. Its central focus is Guénon's re-instatement of the traditional view of history. In this view history is a record of decline. Guénon's uses as a foundation the age-old Vedic tradition of the Yugas or four ages. This

tradition is based on periods known as Gold, Silver, Copper and Iron is are also found in many other traditions ranging from Buddhism to Greek Philosophy. These ages do not develop or evolve, but are a series of degenerative steps. The age of silver is less evolved, has less knowledge than the age of Gold or the "Golden Age". The Kali Yuga or Epoch of Iron, in which we are presently stranded, is the most dark, dense and degenerative of all. This model stands against the rationalist, scientific, model of evolution and progress, even if man's (and it is a big "if") physical organism has been evolving (as well as his technology), his spirit, soul and culture has been heading in the other direction. Perhaps the best illustration of his concept is found in Guénon's elucidation of Quality and Quantity. For Guénon Quality is the epitome of the Age of Gold, when true spiritual experience was found by excelling in one's exploration of Self as part of a vital spiritual tradition. The opposite of this is what is found today, an emphasis on quantity, units, and the "lowest common denominator". Instead of emphasizing how we can raise levels of education, skill and awareness, we talk about averaging, affirmative action, political correctness and "educational adjustments" due to minority status. Quality is embodied in skills, crafts and personal ability - in a word achievement. Quantity

is embodied in reducing humanity to numbers, units, and a cog in a wheel. Modern employment, for example, has reduced most jobs to quantity, most people can fit into an office or factory job, no special skills are warranted or required. Modern man has become a faceless number or an equation; this is the reign of quantity. Guénon's anti-modernist worldview is found clearly expressed in both *The Reign of Quantity* and *Crisis of the Modern World*,, for those who find heavy dense metaphysical contemplation overpowering, I would suggest that *Crisis of the Modern World* is the best place to start! Coupled with Guénon's persuasive arguments against the modern world, is his understanding of living religious traditions. For Guénon a religion is that which has a living link with the Perennial wisdom, the truth that began in the Age of Gold and has emanated, like ripples in a pond, throughout time. The core of that religion must be a living esoteric tradition. Every true vital religion is hence a dynamic balance between outer forms, sacraments and rituals (exotericism) and the inner, sometimes withdrawn, esoteric teachings. Guénon saw that within the Kali Yuga these teachings were becoming debased and that these traditions were losing their link to the perennial wisdom, as such they were becoming atrophied and even, in some cases, becoming "counter traditions". Guénon worked

to re-instate the esotericism behind the forms and traditions of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and other living religions. His perceptions and insight into these faiths and the true meanings of their symbols still stands the test of time today. Extending from the dynamics of exotericism and esotericism, Guénon was able to pinpoint and denounce false traditions and those that did not function from a point within the perennial wisdom. Guénon's works in this field are extensive and include such volumes as *Man and his becoming according to the Vedanta*, *Studies in Hinduism* and *Introduction to the study of Hindu Doctrines*. These volumes while focused the Hindu Esoteric tradition offers an insight into the inner life that is applicable within any living tradition. If a living tradition must exist from a qualitative point within the perennial wisdom then Guénon reasoned that many (if not most) of the movements, cults, isms and philosophies of his day (and indeed of today) were embodiments of the spirit of the age rather than true spiritual traditions. Furthermore, he found by critically studying spiritualism, theosophy and other movements which now could be seen as "new age", that these movements were manifestations of the Zeitgeist of the Kali Yuga and hence were false traditions and operated in a counter initiatic manner. Guénon's denouncements of these movements were

venomous and without pity, he believed it was imperative to shine the light of wisdom on paths that were leading humanity towards destruction rather than illumination. At the same time Guénon also stressed the importance of a vital esoteric core to the living traditions. If you remove the esotericism of a living tradition then it atrophies and becomes a dead shell, if not a "counter traditional" movement itself. The tendencies within the living traditions of the present age illustrate how far the negativity of the present period is encroaching upon the very movements that are the lifeblood of our spiritual life. If we compare both fundamentalist Christianity (and the related forms of Protestantism) or the social-gospel of the left wing of the Church we can see how far it has moved from the mysticism and majesty of its original vision. At the same time this traditionalist vision is not reactionary, we are not talking about a return to "1950's" homespun moral values as so many "so-called" traditionalists teach today. We are talking about a revitalization of real esotericism from within the vital bodies of the world's religions, or perhaps, from within what is left of them. Modern man is in a state of decline, the Kali Yuga is reaching a crescendo and the scientific/technological culture that he has created has stolen the mysticism from his soul and replaced it with consumerism and materialism. The

most fashionable spiritual fads represent "lowest common denominator" movements which move the wallet rather than the mind and which accustom people to "counter initiatic" values. The esoteric traditions themselves have become isolated from their traditional exoteric "homes" and in isolation have become morally bankrupt and full of false promise. Guénon argued quite prophetically that in the Kali Yuga even the language and terminology of the Mysteries would be lost. Today this is undoubtedly so, concepts such as Karma, Soul, Magic, Alchemy, Hermeticism, occultism (we could continue indefinitely), have been countermanded and used in ways contrary to their transcendent nature. For modern man to survive the tumultuous upheavals that are occurring and will accelerate as we head into the future, he must regain his soul and in Guénon's view, rediscover the vital esoteric traditions that are staring him in the face. There is no need for new fads, movements, nor to travel to foreign and exotic places, within our own heritage(s) is a life changing tradition if only we can rediscover it.

The following piece, by Ibrahim Kalin, was found at ca.org/voices/g/guenon-mn.htm, dated July 25, 2001:

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