

“TO BE ENLIGHTENED”
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 12, 2021

CONTACT: JOHN RAATZ
(310) 306-7884
visioneering1@gmail.com

TO BE ENLIGHTENED
BY
ALAN J. STEINBERG

DEBUT NOVEL’S VEDIC PHILOSOPHY SHEDS LIGHT ON WESTERN MIND

First time novelist/longtime meditator digs deep, makes inner experience tangible

LOS ANGELES—*To Be Enlightened*, the debut novel by Alan J. Steinberg, has been released by Adelaide Books (New York). A visionary fiction that draws from Steinberg’s own experiences as an advanced practitioner of Transcendental Meditation (TM), the book is part cosmic love story, part philosophical exposition that aims to enlighten as well as entertain.

“Ultimately, I wanted my book to be in some ways a philosophical treatise,” says Steinberg, who is also a board-certified internist at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Group in Beverly Hills. “Vedic philosophy has, in my mind, solved most of the problems that Western philosophy has been grappling with for many, many thousands of years, way back to Plato.”

Told from the point of view of the novel’s main character, Abe Levy, a philosophy professor at a southern California college, the novel brings the reader inside Abe’s classroom where he teaches a class called “The Insider’s Guide to Our Self,” on Vedic philosophy and the roots of religion. The story also brings us into Abe’s longtime marriage to Sarah (also a meditator)—and along for the ride of Abe’s expanding consciousness.

As his increasingly zealous spiritual pursuit begins to shake up his life (his wife fears his progress on the path will divide them, and students start to question whether he's a sage or just insane), the novel explores the benefits and challenges of being on a path to Self-knowledge—and taking it as far as it will go.

For Abe, and also for Steinberg, the path is Transcendental Meditation (TM), “a mental technique and does not require any beliefs or any leaps of faith to practice it,” explains Abe. Steinberg first learned TM as a teenager in the mid-1970s, introduced to it by a neighbor.

Drawing on the wisdom of the ages, from Plato to Patanjali to Planck, Steinberg weaves East and West into the novel's narrative, making connections between metaphysical and scientific theories and showing how they converge. “I think science will end up concluding exactly what the Vedas have been saying all along,” Abe says. The grit and humor of the the novel is found in the messy business of Abe's trying to find transcendence in his daily life, trying to synthesize knowledge with experience.

Part of the novel's central message is the idea that meditation is universal, intuitive. “We all understand the idea of higher consciousness,” says Steinberg, “And it isn't owned by any tradition. It's just inherent, a birthright of every sentient being. We all have the possibility of higher consciousness.”

A technique first discovered and then codified by sages in India thousands of years ago, meditation (and other higher yogic techniques) are still not very much understood by the Western mainstream, which tends to dismiss them as either too exotic or “unscientific.” *To Be Enlightened* takes care to illustrate how yoga is as rational as it is practical.

Some of America's most important early shapers like Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman all considered themselves Transcendentalists. Eastern spiritual teachers like Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda later helped pioneer to bring Yoga to the West in the early 20th century (with Yogananda recently finding himself on the cover of

the [Los Angeles Times](#).) In the sixties (Steinberg's generation), yogis Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (founder of TM) and Tibetans like Lama Thubten Yeshe were cultural forces that helped create a tsunami of awakening in America that continues to reverberate today. A few years ago [the LA Times reported 35 million Americans meditate](#), based on a [study](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Born in Chicago, raised in Las Vegas, and a longtime resident of Los Angeles, Steinberg had wanted to be a philosophy professor as a young man—even taking the GRE in preparation for graduate school. But pressure from his father (one of the first radiologists in Nevada and an immigrant who had escaped Poland only months before Hitler's invasion) led Steinberg towards the more secure occupation of doctor. It turned out that the medical field suited his disposition; In addition to his position at Cedars-Sinai, he is also currently one of the attending physicians to the NBA's L.A. Clippers.

Writing a first novel was a journey unto itself for Steinberg. Initial feedback from editors like, "You haven't read much fiction, have you?" did not dissuade him. Steinberg's scholarly style eventually gave way to a balance between academic rigor and "showing not telling" and simply writing what he knows.

To Be Enlightened offers a portion of Truth in an age that desperately needs it. Are we up for the challenge of diving in? "The closer we get to the real truth," believes Steinberg, "the closer we all get together."

To Be Enlightened, published through Adelaide Books in New York/Lisbon, is available now. For more information, visit <https://www.alanjsteinberg.com>.

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