REVIEW

(Approved for publication)

TO BE ENLIGHTENED

By Alan J. Steinberg

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A philosophy professor wants to get out of his head… and into the Godhead

Thousands of years ago in India, great beings explored the inner Cosmos of their own minds through meditation, seeking answers to the big questions. Who are we? What is the purpose of life? How can we overcome the intractable problem of human suffering? These are the metaphysical matters at the center of ***To Be Enlightened***, the debut novel by Alan J. Steinberg. Set in southern California, the story tracks the spiritual quest of Abe Levy, a philosophy professor at Pomona College. Deep into midlife, he struggles between the duties and pleasures of being a husband and the strong desire to expand his consciousness. As his pursuit grows increasingly zealous, so does the anxiety of Abe's longtime wife, Sarah, who fears Abe's ascension will divide them. At the college, Abe teaches "The Insider's Guide to Our Self" (a survey of Vedic philosophy and the roots of religion), which serves as the setting for much of the novel's Socratic-style debate and helps outline the book's philosophical ideas. Namely, that Vedic philosophy addresses many questions left unanswered by Western philosophy. Connecting the dots between science and alchemy, Eastern and Western philosophy, and the underlying wisdom of many faith traditions—from Judaism to Christianity to Hinduism to Sufism—Steinberg invokes the "God" beyond all religion, reminding us that no religion has dibs on Ultimate Reality. A pleasurable read that makes Eastern philosophy accessible, the book is plausibly far-out. It makes a convincing case that everyone has the potential to transcend.

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