

# The Impact of the Indian Culture on the Beatles

---

Zapalac, Karla

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2021

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:142:200018>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-11-27**



**FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET**  
SVEUČILIŠTE JOSIPA JURJA STROSSMAYERA U OSIJEKU

Repository / Repozitorij:

[FFOS-repository - Repository of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek](#)



Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku  
Filozofski fakultet u Osijeku  
Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i  
njemačkog jezika i književnosti

Karla Zapalac

## **Utjecaj indijske kulture na Beatlese**

Završni rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Jadranka Zlomislić

Osijek, 2021.

Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku  
Filozofski fakultet u Osijeku  
Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost  
Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i  
njemačkog jezika i književnosti

Karla Zapalac

## **Utjecaj indijske kulture na Beatlese**

Završni rad

Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Jadranka Zlomislić

Osijek, 2021.

Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Double Major BA Study Programme in English Language and Literature and  
German Language and Literature

Karla Zapalac

**The Impact of the Indian Culture on the Beatles**

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Dr. Jadranka Zlomislić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2021

Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Department of English Language and Literature  
Double Major BA Study Programme in English Language and Literature and  
German Language and Literature

Karla Zapalac

## **The Impact of the Indian Culture on the Beatles**

Bachelor's Thesis

Scientific area: humanities

Scientific field: philology

Scientific branch: English studies

Supervisor: Dr. Jadranka Zlomislić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2021

## IZJAVA

Izjavljujem s punom materijalnom i moralnom odgovornošću da sam ovaj rad samostalno napravio/la te da u njemu nema kopiranih ili prepisanih dijelova teksta tuđih radova, a da nisu označeni kao citati s napisanim izvorom odakle su preneseni. Svojim vlastoručnim potpisom potvrđujem da sam suglasar/na da Filozofski fakultet Osijek trajno pohrani i javno objavi ovaj moj rad u internetskoj bazi završnih i diplomskih radova knjižnice Filozofskog fakulteta Osijek, knjižnice Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku i Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu.

U Osijeku, 21.9.2021.

Karla Zapalac, 012226396

ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

## **Abstract**

The Beatles are a globally famous band, who influenced numerous people with their music and style. As they influenced their fans, they were also influenced by others. American artists such as Elvis, Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly and others inspired their style in the early days. Furthermore, India played an enormous role in their spiritual awakening and songwriting. The Beatles were in touch with the Indian culture from their early days due to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. They went to India and got to know meditation by accepting an invitation from the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to attend his meditation course.

This paper deals with the Beatles' trip to India and how the Indian experience influenced their songwriting. The Beatles went from their early albums *Please Please Me*, *Meet The Beatles!*, *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, which were mostly written about love, to albums written about their personal experiences and their inner selves like *The White Album*, *Abbey Road* and their solo albums. Through meditation with the Maharishi in India they focused on their spirituality, which increased their creativity in songwriting. The time they spent in India was one of the richest periods of their songwriting. Although, they were not long in India as they had initially planned, it inspired them to write some of their most famous songs and record their most iconic albums. Some songs they wrote in India were for example "Sexy Sadie" and "Revolution 1" from *The White Album*, "Mean Mr Mustard" and "Polythene Pam" from *Abbey Road* and also many more on their solo albums.

**Keywords:** the Beatles, India, meditation, *The White Album*, *Abbey Road*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
1. The Beatles as Trailblazers in Popular Music .....	2
1.1. The Forming Years.....	2
1.2. Early Albums and Influences .....	3
2. The Influence of India on the Beatles.....	6
2.1 Hindu as an Influence in Songwriting .....	6
2.2 Maharishi Mahesh Yogi .....	7
2.3 The “Guide Course” in India.....	8
3. The Beatles’ Music after their Stay in India.....	10
3.1 Music after India That Still Had a Connection to India .....	10
3.1.1 <i>The White Album</i> .....	10
3.1.2 <i>Abbey Road</i> .....	11
3.2. The Beatles Moving on to New Topics and Styles .....	12
4. Conclusion.....	14
Works Cited.....	15



## Introduction

This paper examines the Beatles as a global phenomenon beyond the United Kingdom with a particular focus on the Beatles' experience in India and the influence of the Indian culture on the Beatles. The Beatles went to India for a spiritual reawakening where they explored the human condition, their inner selves and how to incorporate this influence in their music. The aim of this study is to show the extent to which the music and songwriting of the Beatles were influenced by the Indian culture, especially their music, philosophy, customs and meditation. The methods used in this paper are a comparison of the Beatles' early albums and experiences with the albums they wrote when they were in India. The sources used for this paper are interviews of the band members, academic journals, research reports and more.

The first chapter deals with the introduction of the Beatles as a band, Beatlemania and their early albums with an emphasis on the style of their music at the early stages. Albums such as *Please Please Me*, *Meet The Beatles!*, *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* are described and discussed by pointing to the influences behind the mentioned albums.

The second chapter deals with how the Beatles came to be introduced to the Indian culture through Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and the role of Indian religion, customs and meditation in the creation of the later albums of the Beatles. Also, the chapter deals with their "Guide Course" they attended in Rishikesh.

The third chapter shows the Beatles' music after their stay in India, as well as the songs they wrote and the albums that they recorded, such as *The White Album*, *Abbey Road* and their solo tracks.

# 1. The Beatles as Trailblazers in Popular Music

Even though they came to fame in the 60s the Beatles are still one of the most influential and famous rock bands. They have influenced numerous generations with their music, style and views of life because they were “trailblazers in music, film, fashion, and popular culture” (Womack) and they “explored issues of feminism, gender, and inclusion in ways few rock bands dared in the 1960s” (Womack).

## 1.1. The Forming Years

The Beatles were a British rock band formed in 1960 in Liverpool, England. The band's most famous lineup consisted of four members: John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr. According to IMDb:

In July of 1957, in Liverpool, Paul McCartney met John Lennon. Both were teenagers. Paul impressed John with his mastery of acoustic guitar, and was invited to join Lennon's group, The Quarrymen. George Harrison joined them in February of 1958. . . . In 1960 The Beatles toured in Hamburg, Germany. There they were joined by Ringo Starr, who previously played with Rory Storm and the Hurricanes. (Shelokhonov)

Their sound and voices were no longer unfamiliar after the first number one hits. People all across the United Kingdom were becoming familiar with the band as the ecstatic fan culture known as Beatlemania began to spread. It was not long after their sound crossed the Atlantic Ocean and Beatlemania began spreading across the United States of America as well. They started touring and having concerts drawing in enormous crowds. People were hypnotized by them, which is greatly described by Davies:

The kind of support found with the Beatles is also remarkable. Their public is a diverse one, composed not only of teenagers, but also of people who are within the older age groups. This is particularly noticeable in the kinds of audience that appear at their public appearances and their films. The gross mass reaction to the Beatles is without social precedent. No artist has ever had such a reception, or for so long a time. No religious leader, politician, general or any other public figure has ever been lionized to such an extent or for so long a period. (273)

Beatlemania spread globally and people were drawn to the Beatles like no band before them, both the young and the old. Their music spoke to the people and gave them comfort. Some of the fans

had a more drawn feeling towards the band as Davies states that, “The uncontrolled vocal and motor responses elicited in the Beatle Mania have all the marks of a mass hypnotic phenomenon” (279). Their sound and voices left the fans with the feeling of unity. Beatlemania was a phenomenon, best described by fans obsessed with the Beatles, their music and their style.

## 1.2. Early Albums and Influences

Some of the Beatles' early albums are as *Please Please Me, Meet The Beatles!, A Hard Day's Night, Help!* and many more. At this point in history the Beatles were globally popular with a number of released albums. Their albums varied in style from time to time. In the album *Please Please Me*, the early phases of their music can be shown because the focus is on topics like love, affection, desire and attraction. The song “P.S. I Love You” is a perfect example as is evident in the following lyrics: “As I write this letter/ Send my love to you/ Remember that I'll always/ Be in love with you/ Treasure these few words 'till we're together/ Keep all my love forever/ P.S., I love you/ You, you, you” (Beatles 0:01-0:30). Furthermore, discussing the song “Like Dreamers Do” written in the Lennon and McCartney era, Davies observes the same topics as he states:

The material of the songs is entirely about love. For such a subject matter, however, there is a remarkable absence of sexual content. The love is idealized and the sensuous aspects are always vicariously expressed: And I yi-yi-yi-yi waited for your kiss/ Waited for the bliss like Dreamers Do (Like Dreamers Do). / I'll pretend I am kissing/ The lips I am missing (All My Loving). (275)

The lyrics were innocently written and spoke to a broad audience. Also, the way they performed their songs with the suits they wore made them more likable. According to Davies, “There are only two exceptions in their current song literature, and even here requiting love is remotely inferential. I find the thing you do /Will make me feel all right (A Hard Day's Night). They said that love was a lie /Told me that I/ Should never try to find/ Somebody who'd be kind (It's for You)” (275-276). They idealized love and what they could have had with that specific person in their songs.

The melodic simplicity, limited range, simplicity of rhythmic content, modal tonality, elements of fourteenth-century style, clarity of diction, are all elements of bardic style. If one bears in mind that historically the guitar, lute, and harp have been the only bardic instruments, then this concatenation of facets in their music has more than a chance significance. (Davies 274)

One more example of the melodic simplicity with the guitar and violin is the song “Yesterday” from the *Help!* album. The melody fits perfectly to the melancholic love lyrics of the past and

longing for what is gone, “Yesterday/ Love was such an easy game to play/ Now I need a place to hide away/ Oh, I believe in yesterday/ Why she had to go, I don't know, she wouldn't say/ I said something wrong, now I long for yesterday” (Beatles 1:0-1:36).

The Beatles are mostly known for their original songs and lyrics. However, while building their own style they were open to many different styles, like rock'n roll, gospels and the rockabilly style, “The Beatles found more kinship with rockabilly and soft gospel than the electric blues artists, who were the originators of the style, but the British rockers recognized and respected the sources of the blues aesthetic” (Price 228).

Elvis was one of the artists who influenced the Beatles with his style as Price states, “the first singer to capture the attention of John Lennon was Elvis Presley and his 1956 hit “Heartbreak Hotel”; In Lennon's words, 'Nothing really affected me until Elvis’” (210). This can also be seen in the Beatles' cover of Presley's song “That's Alright Mama” and vice versa Presley covered some of the Beatles' songs like, “Hey Jude,” “Something” and “Yesterday.” This is a form of mutual inspiration that both the Beatles and Presley found in one another.

In addition to Elvis, Buddy Holly also influenced their music. As Dave Laing points out, “Buddy Holly, the main songwriter, singer, and guitarist for the Crickets, was a significant influence on rock in the sixties, and the success of the Beatles surely helped make that happen (qtd. in Price 214). According to Holly's widow, Maria, ‘Paul told me that Buddy had more influence on his early songwriting than any other singer’” (Harry qtd.in Price 214). The fascination with his work can be seen on the Beatles' cover of Holly's song “Not Fade Away,” which happened early on in their careers. The Beatles were impacted by the American rockabilly style, and they “were well suited to duplicate recordings in live performance. Rockabilly tunes by Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins, Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran, Buddy Holly, and others became mainstays in the Beatles' early performance repertory” (Price 214). Furthermore, Price discusses the style and inspiration for the Beatles as follows:

The Beatles were not limited to the older styles of the fifties for their inspiration. As Charlie Gillett observes, “The group's vocal style was a derivative of two American styles . . . the hard rock and roll style of singers like Little Richard and Larry Williams and the soft gospel call-and-response style of the Shirelles, the Drifters, and the rest of the singers produced by Leiber and Stoller, Luther Dixon, and Berry Gordy” (qtd.in Price 214). Price points out that “[m]any of the songs that appeared on the Beatles' early EMI releases were cover versions of the soul and r&b hits that had been produced in the United States” (221).

Another great influence on the Beatles was Asia and the oriental sound which are discussed in the later paragraphs of the paper. As Reck explains:

These influences came primarily from India, although to a lesser degree Tibet, China and Japan were also represented. What is remarkable about this phenomenon is not that it occurred at all (oriental themes have been found for centuries in musical theater and popular song genres--and in classical music as well) but rather that the musical and textual oriental references were so persuasive, extending through perhaps several dozen songs composed and released over a period of six years, that is, until the Beatles ceased to exist as a group. (83)

The Asian culture has been a source of inspiration to many musicians and the music of the Beatles reflects that influence, as is shown in the following paragraphs.

## 2. The Influence of India on the Beatles

As stated in the paragraph above, the Indian culture had a huge impact on the Beatles. From the Indian customs, religion to meditation. The world has always been fascinated by the rich culture of the East. The following paragraphs deal with the inspiration the Beatles found in India and how it changed the band.

### 2.1 Hindu as an Influence in Songwriting

Asia was always a matter of great interest to the western world. Plenty of movies and books are written with the topics of diverse religions and customs. India as a county of millions of people and with a great territory has great diversity of beliefs and traditions.

In India, religion is like an axis that transforms as it turns, propelling society through history. Religion's many expressions - the Sikh, Jain, Hindu, Buddhist, Sant, and Muslim traditions - radiate like spokes, connecting with the social in one great wheel of the universe. The ways of dharma, karma, and bhakti enact its movement in everyday life; with secularism and pluralism, both evolving from these principles, Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi built the nation. (Madan 115)

Some of the religions stated above were also a matter of fascination to the Beatles and also a form of inspiration. As Reck states: "In the mid-1960's the Beatles, then at the apex of their power as the most celebrated and influential rock group in the history of popular music, began to utilize in their songs musical elements and influences from Asia" (83). The members of the Beatles were either Protestant or Catholic, but they were open to other spiritualities. "My Sweet Lord," one of the songs that George Harrison recorded, was about religion and spirituality and can be interpreted in many ways. It has traces of the Christian and Hindu religions, with no hate whatsoever towards other religions and beliefs. Proof of this is found in the lyrics from "My Sweet Lord": (Hallelujah)/ My sweet Lord (Hallelujah)/ Mmm, my Lord (Hallelujah)/ My sweet Lord (Hallelujah) (Harrison 1:24-1:39). Hallelujah is primarily used in the Christian and Jewish religion. Furthermore, in the same song Hindu references can also be seen: "Mmm, my Lord (Hare Krishna)/ My, my, my Lord (Hare Krishna)/ Oh, oh, my sweet Lord (Krishna Krishna)/ Ooh (Hare Hare)" (Harrison 2:53-3:09). Paul McCartney also said in *The Beatles Anthology* that, "The Indian sounds are definitely mainly George. We started off just hearing Indian music and listening to things, and we liked the

drone idea because we'd done a bit of that kind of thing in songs before” (The Beatles). George Harrison was one of the main reasons the Beatles really went all in on India.

## 2.2 Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

The Beatles got in touch with meditation in the 60s due to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, an Indian spiritual leader who practiced transcendental meditation. According to Reck, “The Maharishi, like many of the transplanted gurus of the 1960's, had been around for a while. Beginning his missionary work in Los Angeles in 1959, by 1968 he had built up an international organization with centers in fifty countries and 150,000 members” (109). In an interview for David Lynch in 2010, Paul McCartney talks about the first time seeing the Maharishi. McCartney explains in the interview: “It was actually George Harrison's wife, Pattie, who had heard that Maharishi was coming to town. And she said we should all go. . . . So we heard that Maharishi was going to have a meeting and give a lecture. So that was the first time I heard about meditation” (Transcendental Meditation 0:31-0:42, 0:58-1:06). As the interview continues McCartney adds: “But we'd actually seen him when we were kids growing up in Liverpool. Because as you know he went around the world seven times to spread his message. And he was on TV. And we remembered this giggling little guy and we thought, we loved him. We just said he's so cool!” (Transcendental Meditation 1:07-1:23). Growing up they had heard of him through the media since he was a famous person, who reached out to people with his work. As the interview continued, McCartney described how they attended the seminar of the Maharishi, which led to their trip to India later:

. . . we went to Bangor in Wales, and we attended a seminar there. And, as you know there were always lots of flowers around Maharishi so there was always a very . . . . Nature was very involved, you got the feeling . . . he often used to carry the flowers. There was this feeling of connection of nature, that was very grounding. And then eventually we went out to Rishikesh with him, which was more sustained. (Transcendental Meditation 0:10-0:37)

Consequently, the Maharishi's approach and wisdom persuaded the Beatles to visit him in India. As noted above, the Maharishi practiced transcendental meditation, which will play an important role for the Beatles Rishikesh “Guide Course” as John Lennon said in *The Beatles Anthology*, “We're all going to India for a couple of months to study Transcendental Meditation properly. We want to learn properly so we can propagate it and sell the whole idea to everyone” (The Beatles).

### 2.3 The “Guide Course” in India

After the Maharishi’s invitation, the Beatles went to Rishikesh to practice meditation and work on their spirituality, as well as songwriting. George Harrison said in *The Beatles Anthology*: “Each year, Maharishi had a course for Westerners who wanted to become Transcendental Meditation instructors. Although I wasn’t going to become an instructor, I wanted to go and have a heavy dose of meditation. John came, and Paul came after him, and then Richard followed with fifteen Sherpas carrying Heinz baked beans” (The Beatles).

Covering the Beatles stay in the ashram of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *The Wire* reports that “[t]hat stint turned out to be one of the most creative periods in the group’s career. They wrote many songs and 17 of them were used in *The Beatles (White Album)* and two more in *Abbey Road*. Their long periods of meditation and being in a quiet, placid environment helped them relax” (Saltzman). As shown above, they picked inspiration from the place and the meditations they attended. In the interview, done by *The Wire*, a young photographer found himself in the same time at the same place as the Beatles and described the atmosphere there:

Very relaxed. They meditated, hung around, listened to the maharishi’s lectures and wrote music. I sometimes ate with them. There were a lot of monkeys around-perhaps that’s where John wrote, *Everyone has something to hide except me and my monkey*. I began taking photographs of them, after asking their permission. No one minded.

There was a lot of meditation; people meditated for hours. George was the most serious, followed by John, Ringo the least. It was fascinating to see them doing their music-I heard ‘The Inner Light’ and the refrain to ‘Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da’ for the first time; the song hadn’t yet been written. ‘Dear Prudence’ was a ditty written for Prudence, Mia Farrow’s sister. (Saltzman)

The meditation, peace and isolation from the outside world helped them find themselves spiritually, which played a big role in the shaping of their music. It is pointed out for *Rolling Stone* that, “Life there was idyllic and simple, by most accounts- the Beatles slept in sparsely furnished rooms, and were awakened by peacocks. They meditated for much of the day, and listened to Maharishi lecture about reincarnation and consciousness” (Hoffman). The transcendental meditation, which they attended, paraphrased from Frew is an Americanized easy-to-learn technique, which can be learned in a few hours regardless of age, sex, occupation or religion (362). This shows that anybody can learn it and exactly this makes it more attractive for people to learn.



The Beatles used it to be more productive and creative, but also to release some of the tensions that each of the members coped with. As Frew explained:

. . . it is widely claimed that T.M. releases tension and anxiety, brings about a sense of physical and psychological relaxation, increases creativity, helps one to cope more effectively and efficiently with the daily activities of life, and lessens dependence upon drugs, including such socially acceptable drugs as cigarettes, alcohol, and tranquilizers.  
(362)

It can also be considered helpful in terms of addictions and helping someone to overcome them. This influenced them to try and be their best selves. As mentioned before, not all Beatles were there at the same time, leading to some of them having a better experience than others.

### 3. The Beatles' Music after their Stay in India

After the inspirational voyage to India, the Beatles were left with plenty of new material. The albums that were most influenced by India were *The Beatles (The White Album)* and *Abbey Road*. Of course, in addition, were the songs each member wrote for themselves in their solo-careers. The major differences that can be seen between the Beatles' early albums and the later ones are the themes. Not everything is about love anymore and finding the perfect woman, but finding themselves and trying to figure out the world in their own way. They have a much more critical perspective.

#### 3.1 Music after India That Still Had a Connection to India

##### 3.1.1 *The White Album*

*The Beatles (The White Album)* was released "on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1968" (Lister). The cover of the album is entirely white, therefore *The White Album*. The *Farout Magazine* reports:

From the White Album, a bunch of classics were written in the hills of northern India, From big hitters like 'Back in the U.S.S.R.' and 'Blackbird' to the wild and wonderful 'Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da'. In fact, one of the most interesting songs on the album, 'Dear Prudence', was written by Harrison and Lennon while they were trying to calm down Mia Farrow's sister, Prudence. (Whatley)

The background information for the song is Mia Farrow's accusation that the Maharishi sexually assaulted her. A lot of rumours started to come to the surface. The song, "Sexy Sadie," which got the attention of the media, was about the Maharishi. George Harrison believed the Maharishi and did not question the rumours, as it seems from the following interview in *The Beatles Anthology*,

Someone started the nasty rumour about Maharishi, a rumour that swept the media for years. There were many stories about how Maharishi was not on the level or whatever, but that was just jealousy about Maharishi . . . John had a song he had started to write which he was singing: Maharishi, what have you done? And I said, you can't say that, it's ridiculous. I came up with the title of Sexy Sadie and John changed Maharishi to Sexy Sadie. (The Beatles)

On the other hand, Lennon seemed to have a problem with the Maharishi. The lyrics of the song can be interpreted as Lennon's disappointment in the Maharishi and the accusations the Maharishi faced, "Sexy Sadie what have you done /You made a fool of everyone/ You made a fool of everyone/ Sexy Sadie what have you done/ Sexy Sadie you broke the rules/ You laid it down for all to see/ You laid it down for all to see /Sexy Sadie oooh you broke the rules" (Beatles 0:13-0:54). That means at least two songs were about the Maharishi and what he had done.

The Beatles did not write songs only about the bad things that happened in India, but also the good things. George Harrison, for example, found himself again through the song "Long, Long, Long," "It's been a long long long time/ How could I ever have lost you/ When I loved you/ It took a long long long time/ Now I'm so happy I found you" (Beatles 0:09-0:59). Harrison was the most spiritual Beatle, that is why this song can also be interpreted as a search for God. Furthermore, an important song of the album is "Revolution 1," which they wrote while finding their peace. The song can be interpreted as an anthem for world peace, but it can also be connected to meditation in the way of finding inner peace and trying to help other people find it too. "You say you'll change the constitution/ Well, you know/ We'd all love to change your head/ You tell me it's the institution/ Well, you know/ You better free your mind instead/ But if you go carrying pictures of Chairman Mao/ You ain't going to make it with anyone anyhow" (Beatles 2:26-3:06). The song can also be interpreted as being political because of Chairman Mao. Chairman Mao was the "principal Chinese Marxist theorist, soldier, and statesman who led his country's communist revolution" (Schram). It is also important to note that the significance of the *White Album* is enormous because it is also known as the Beatles' breakup album.

### 3.1.2. *Abbey Road*

The *Abbey Road* album was one of the Beatles' last albums. "After the *White Album*, as the era of the 1960's came to a close, the Beatles increasingly drifted apart both in their personal lives and in their creative interests" (Reck 121). The album got its name from the Abbey Road Studios, where the Beatles recorded their albums. *Abbey Road* featured two songs, that did not make *The White Album* and were written in India, "Mean Mr Mustard" and "Polythene Pam." The songs were written by John Lennon, who explained: "In 'Mean Mr Mustard' I said 'his sister Pam' – originally it was 'his sister Shirley' in the lyric. I changed it to Pam to make it sound like it had something to do with it [Polythene Pam]" (The Beatles). Lennon also added, "Polythene Pam" was me remembering a little event with a woman in Jersey, and a man who was England's answer

to Allen Ginsberg. She didn't wear jackboots and kilts, I elaborated. Perverted sex in a polythene bag. I was just looking for something to write about" (The Beatles). This can be compared with the Beatles' earlier work, which was much more innocent and less sexual. This lyrical style is much more mature and experienced, as well as much more complex. John Lennon revealed that "'Mean Mr Mustard' was based on a miserly man, John Alexander Mustard, about whom he had read in the *Daily Mirror* on 7 June 1967. Mustard, a 65-year-old Scotsman, had been taken to a divorce court by his wife due to his meanness" ("Mean Mr Mustard"). This clarification of the song's meaning helps to put the lyrics in perspective. For example, in the lyrics from the beginning of "Mean Mr Mustard," "Mean Mister Mustard sleeps in the park/ Shaves in the dark trying to save paper/ Sleeps in a hole in the road/ Saving up to buy some clothes/ Keeps a ten-bob note up his nose/ Such a mean old man/ Such a mean old man" (Beatles 0:01-0:32). It is much clearer that it is about a man who is homeless and tries to save money, which he lost.

### **3.2. The Beatles Moving on to New Topics and Styles**

After the breakup of the Beatles, each member focused on their solo-career. They did not disappoint as each one of them had mayor success with their solo projects. It is interesting that lots of songs in their solo-careers were either written in India, or were written about the experience they got from India, which also gave them inspiration to write later on in life. But they also focused on other topics of life later on.

John Lennon mastered his solo music, having multiple records released until his death in 1980. Some of his most famous solo-career songs influenced by India, like "Child of Nature" and "Jealous Guy." "There was a song called 'Child of Nature' which would end up becoming not only a classic track on Lennon's solo album *Imagine* but a defining anthem about the man himself when it was re-worked into 'Jealous Guy.' Equally, McCartney's 'Teddy Boy' is also a piece that was born in the hills of India" (Whatley). "Child of Nature" and "Jealous Guy" have the same melody and rhythm, only the lyrics are different. In "Child of Nature" Lennon describes the road to India and what he had become, a child of nature. For example, "On the road to Rishikesh/ I was dreaming more or less/ And the dream I had was true/ Yes, the dream I had was true" (Lennon 0:01-0:28) from "Child of Nature" and "I was dreaming of the past/ And my heart was beating fast/ I began to lose control/ I began to lose control" (Lennon 0:16- 0:41) from "Jealous Guy" have the same tonality, only in "Jealous Guy" the lyrics start a bit later.

Paul McCartney was also very successful in his solo-career, he collaborated with many artists from Michael Jackson in the 80s to Rihanna and Kanye West in the 2000s. Paul McCartney also wrote songs in India, which he later released as a solo artist. As mentioned above, “Teddy Boy” was written in India. According to the Collins English Dictionary, “Teddy boys were associated with early rock and roll music, and often regarded as bad or violent” (Teddy boy). Another song McCartney wrote in India was “Junk,” describing a junkyard and the things that can be found there: “Motor cars, handlebars/ Bicycles for two/ Broken-hearted jubilee/ Parachutes, Army boots/ Sleeping bags for two/ Sentimental jamboree” (McCartney 0:01-0:29). The song is slow and has a melancholic sound. It differs from the song “Teddy Boy” which is faster.

George Harrison, who was mentioned in the paragraphs before with his song “My Sweet Lord,” had likewise hits in his solo-career. In his album *Gone With a Wind*, the song “Circles” was written in India. This song can be interpreted with the term reincarnation. Harrison, of all the other Beatles, was the most interested in meditation and spirituality. The name of the song gives the hint of the meaning, “Circles” as life goes in circles. The lyrics from “Circles,” “life comes and life goes/ As we go round and round/ In circles” (Harrison 1:03-1:14) help bringing Harrison’s beliefs to life.

Ringo Starr, not to be left out, had also an amazing solo-career with numerous publications to this date, even though he left India first and was not into meditation like the other members. One of his most notable albums is *Sentimental Journey*, as biography.com states, “His first album, *Sentimental Journey* (1970), was a collection of Tin Pan Alley tunes, with arrangers including Quincy Jones, Maurice Gibb, Martin and McCartney” (“Ringo Starr Biography”), the song which has the same title as the album, “Sentimental Journey” is a cover and can be interpreted in the way that he found peace. The lyrics, “Gonna take a sentimental journey, / Gonna set my heart at ease/ Gonna make a sentimental journey, / To renew old memories” (Starr 0:09-0:30), can point out the fact that the Beatles were splitting up and this was his journey back to himself.

## 4. Conclusion

The Beatles were one of the most influential bands of all time. From their early albums and songs to their later work, they influenced people with their charm and sense of music like no other artists. But as much as they influenced their fans, they themselves were also influenced by well-known musicians such as Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry. In addition, the Beatles were inspired by entire cultures among which the Indian culture had the greatest impact. The interest in India that they developed in their youth was heightened when they met Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who invited them to India and introduced them to his studies. They meditated and learned about their own spirituality. Moreover, they practiced transcendental meditation, the main purpose of which was to free their minds of what was bothering them and to give them inspiration and creativity.

To conclude, this paper has shown that the Indian culture had a strong impact on the Beatles in terms of their creativity and songwriting. Their Indian experience was one of the richest periods of their songwriting. Numerous songs had been written there, including the albums *The White Album* and *Abbey Road*, as well as many of their solo-career songs.

## Works Cited

- The Beatles. "Child of Nature." *The Beatles*, EMI, 1968. *Spotify*,  
[open.spotify.com/track/1MQhdLXEhmUWLF0bu7uVff?si=ZN58pW51THe8jAr1ru9R2Q&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/1MQhdLXEhmUWLF0bu7uVff?si=ZN58pW51THe8jAr1ru9R2Q&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- The Beatles. "Long, Long, Long." *The Beatles*, EMI, 1968. *Spotify*,  
[open.spotify.com/track/40d2EcaOOCUjDzzo2YvUWn?si=kWbj92Y0Treq1qm54J\\_Zvw&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/40d2EcaOOCUjDzzo2YvUWn?si=kWbj92Y0Treq1qm54J_Zvw&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- The Beatles. "Mean Mr Mustard." *Abbey Road*, EMI, 1969. *Spotify*,  
[open.spotify.com/track/4JOyMhad5dD81uGYLGgKrS?si=0qqTu8AZTdWfyXGcO4-ztQ&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/4JOyMhad5dD81uGYLGgKrS?si=0qqTu8AZTdWfyXGcO4-ztQ&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- The Beatles. "P.S. I Love You." *Please, Please Me*, EMI, 1963. *Spotify*,  
[open.spotify.com/track/7Msq9qojB7yORuJvz49iUy?si=5db4qMbASIm2lmyeaA2HEA&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=](https://open.spotify.com/track/7Msq9qojB7yORuJvz49iUy?si=5db4qMbASIm2lmyeaA2HEA&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=)
- The Beatles. "Revolution 1." *The Beatles*, EMI, 1967. *Spotify*,  
[open.spotify.com/track/1aOzDhi5a1RWWRy5dmYA8I?si=YsJcyo6KSLOi9Rb\\_Vtl3oA&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/1aOzDhi5a1RWWRy5dmYA8I?si=YsJcyo6KSLOi9Rb_Vtl3oA&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- The Beatles. "Sexy Sadie." *The Beatles*, EMI, 1968. *Spotify*  
[open.spotify.com/track/2tBv9tAdqEbLNDi5smSjbg?si=W3drBjziQ6uF7FJkA07GvA&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/2tBv9tAdqEbLNDi5smSjbg?si=W3drBjziQ6uF7FJkA07GvA&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- The Beatles. "Yesterday." *Help!*, EMI, 1965. *Spotify*,  
[open.spotify.com/track/3BQHpfFgAp4l80e1XslIjNI?si=1LxZgvSOTiCc4nxOQPzGtg&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/3BQHpfFgAp4l80e1XslIjNI?si=1LxZgvSOTiCc4nxOQPzGtg&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- The Beatles. *The Beatles Anthology*. Chronicle Books, 2000.
- David Lynch interviews Paul McCartney about Meditation and Maharishi, *You Tube*,  
uploaded by Transcendental Meditation, 7 Apr. 2010,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9CzJkxKKd0>
- Davies, Evan. "Psychological Characteristics of Beatle Mania." *Journal of the History of Ideas*,  
vol. 30, no. 2, 1969, pp. 273–280. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/2708439](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2708439). Accessed 12  
Sept. 2021.

- Frew, David R. "Transcendental Meditation and Productivity." *The Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1974, pp. 362–368. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/254990](http://www.jstor.org/stable/254990). Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.
- George Harrison. "My Sweet Lord." *All Things Must Pass*, Concord Music Publishing, 1970. *Spotify*, [open.spotify.com/track/0qdQUeKVyevrbKhAo0ibxS?si=hxhzQDqFQD-66iH7vWIV3Q&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/0qdQUeKVyevrbKhAo0ibxS?si=hxhzQDqFQD-66iH7vWIV3Q&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- Hoffman, Claire. "How the Beatles in India Changed America." *Rolling Stone*, 25 June 2018, [www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/how-the-beatles-in-india-changed-america-201531/](http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/how-the-beatles-in-india-changed-america-201531/). Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.
- John Lennon. "Jealous Guy." *Imagine*, Apple Records, 1971. *Spotify*, [open.spotify.com/track/3D9iV6cYkYJRAPFO6DRKIE?si=8xycx0IUTM2TtwSID7sSgQ&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/3D9iV6cYkYJRAPFO6DRKIE?si=8xycx0IUTM2TtwSID7sSgQ&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- Jonny, et al. "Mean Mr Mustard." *The Beatles Bible*, 12 Jan. 2021, [www.beatlesbible.com/songs/mean-mr-mustard/](http://www.beatlesbible.com/songs/mean-mr-mustard/).
- Lister, David. "The Beatles' White Album at 50: Paul Is Dead, the Manson Family Murders and 'Granny MUSIC S\*\*\*'." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 22 Nov. 2018, [www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/the-beatles-white-album-50th-anniversary-reissue-tracklist-john-lennon-paul-mccartney-a8644761.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/the-beatles-white-album-50th-anniversary-reissue-tracklist-john-lennon-paul-mccartney-a8644761.html). Accessed 11 Sept. 2021.
- Madan, T. N. "Religion in India." *Daedalus*, vol. 118, no. 4, 1989, pp. 114–146. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/20025267](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025267). Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.
- Paul McCartney. "Junk." *McCartney*, Apple Records, 1970. *Spotify*, [open.spotify.com/track/4zkVFDUvMZpib8E1z4c4Sa?si=O1DNtOQKS8eqN8i5vSGVDg&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/4zkVFDUvMZpib8E1z4c4Sa?si=O1DNtOQKS8eqN8i5vSGVDg&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- Pazzanese, Christina. "Kenneth Womack Explains Why the Beatles WERE 'PROTO-FEMINISTS'." *Harvard Gazette*, Harvard University, 11 Dec. 2019, [news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/12/kenneth-womack-explains-why-the-beatles-were-proto-feminists/](http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/12/kenneth-womack-explains-why-the-beatles-were-proto-feminists/). Accessed 11 Sept. 2021.



- Price, Charles Gower. "Sources of American Styles in the Music of the Beatles." *American Music*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1997, pp. 208–232. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3052732](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3052732). Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.
- Reck, David R. "Beatles Orientalis: Influences from Asia in a Popular Song Tradition." *Asian Music*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1985, pp. 83–149. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/834014](http://www.jstor.org/stable/834014). Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.
- Schram, Stuart Reynolds. "Mao Zedong." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Sept. 2021, [www.britannica.com/biography/Mao-Zedong](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Mao-Zedong). Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.
- "Ringo Starr." *Biography*, A&E Television Networks, LLC., 23 June 2020, [www.biography.com/musician/ringo-starr](http://www.biography.com/musician/ringo-starr). Accessed 17 Sept. 2021.
- Ringo Starr. "Sentimental Journey." Parlophone, 1970. *Spotify*, [open.spotify.com/track/2CCrDmgkKOoI0FuKvACRb0?si=eHRsGpuNRhKLUHJ7a8hiGA&utm\\_source=copy-link&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/track/2CCrDmgkKOoI0FuKvACRb0?si=eHRsGpuNRhKLUHJ7a8hiGA&utm_source=copy-link&dl_branch=1)
- Saltzman, Paul. "When the Beatles Came to Rishikesh to Relax, Meditate and Write Some Classic Songs." *The Wire*, 20 Feb. 2017, <https://thewire.in/culture/the-beatles-india-rishikesh-white-album>. Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.
- Shelokhonov, Steve. "The Beatles." IMDb, IMDb.com, [www.imdb.com/name/nm1397313/bio](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1397313/bio). Accessed 17 Sept. 2021
- "Teddy boy." *Collins English Dictionary*, Collins 2021, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/teddy-boy>. Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.
- Whatley, Jack. "Every Song the Beatles Wrote While in India." *Far Out Magazine*, 13 Oct. 2020, [faroutmagazine.co.uk/beatles-songs-written-in-india-lennon-mccartney-harrison-starr/](http://faroutmagazine.co.uk/beatles-songs-written-in-india-lennon-mccartney-harrison-starr/). Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.