

Resources

Books and Articles

There is an immense array of literature about Hinduism written in English. Much of it is highly technical and of interest mainly to scholars. In my selections, I have sought to highlight some of the best works currently available and easily accessible for the serious beginning student of Hinduism.

General Surveys of Hinduism

Basham, A. L. *The Wonder That Was India*. New York: Grove Press, 1959.

A classic presentation of the history of Indian culture from the earliest times through the first millennium CE.

Embree, Ainslie T., ed. *The Hindu Tradition*. New York: The Modern Library, 1966.

A fine collection of primary Hindu texts arranged chronologically from the Vedic to the modern period. Very helpful introductions place the readings in historical context.

Hopkins, Thomas J. *The Hindu Religious Tradition*. Encino, Calif.: Dickenson Publishing, 1971.

This brief text is one of the clearest presentations of basic Hinduism in English. It is especially good for understanding the Vedic and classical periods in Hinduism.

Klostermaier, Klaus. *A Survey of Hinduism*. Albany: State University Press of New York, 1991.

An eminently readable and comprehensive study of Hinduism in all its major dimensions. Highly recommended.

Koller, John M. *The Indian Way*. New York: Macmillan and Co., 1987.

A very clear and accessible introduction to the philosophical and religious dimensions of Hinduism.

Koller, John M. and Patricia, eds. *A Sourcebook in Asian Philosophy*. Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1991.

The Kollers have assembled an excellent anthology of primary sources that include not only Hindu readings but Buddhist, Jain, Chinese, and Muslim works as well.

Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli and Charles A. Moore. *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

A fine selection of important Hindu texts, this work includes primary sources from the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy as well as texts from the heterodox traditions.

Zaehner, R. C. *Hinduism*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

A good, basic introduction to the important dimensions of Hinduism.

Early Cultures of India

Edgerton, Franklin. *The Beginnings of Indian Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965.

A very scholarly presentation of the origins of Hindu philosophy with thoughtful translations of Vedic hymns and early Upanishads.

Fairservis, Jr., Walter A. *The Roots of Ancient India*. 2nd ed. rev. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

This is one of the best scholarly analyses of the Indus Valley Civilization.

O'Flaherty, Wendy D., trans. *The Rig-Veda: An Anthology*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1981.

A superb rendering of the most interesting Rig Veda texts. An essential resource for those interested in a deeper understanding of the Vedic period.

Panikkar, Raimundo. *The Vedic Experience: Mantramanjari*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977.

Panikkar's collection is an assembly of over 500 Vedic texts translated into a vigorous and compelling English.

Piggott, Stuart. *Prehistoric India*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961.

An accessible survey of ancient India, covering the earliest periods of human culture in India, the Indus Valley Civilization, and the Āryan migrations. Both scholarly and highly readable.

Wheeler, Mortimer. *Civilizations of the Indus Valley and Beyond*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972.

Wheeler's writings on the Indus Valley provide a wealth of information. This work focuses on the archaeology of the Indus Valley and northern Indian culture up to the Mauryan Empire.

<http://www.harappa.com>

Classical Hinduism

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

A classic anthropological study of the dynamics of purity and pollution. A valuable resource for understanding the theoretical foundations of caste and ritual uncleanness.

Dumont, Louis. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, complete revised English edition. Trans. Mark Sainsbury, et al. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.

A detailed and careful analysis of the caste system, accenting its complexity and assumptions.

Eliade, Mircea, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. Translated by Willard Trask. 2d ed. rev. and enl. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Eliade's work is a detailed, scholarly exposition of the classical system of Yoga. Very helpful for understanding the path of wisdom.

Hume, Robert Ernest, trans. *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*. 2nd rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Hume's translation is one of the relatively early English translations of the Upaniṣads. After over a century, it is still one of the best and most scholarly. The introduction and textual notes are very helpful.

Mascaro, Juan, trans. *The Upanishads*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965.

Although not as accurate or as elegant as later translations, Mascaró's rendering is very accessible and readily available in the Penguin Classics edition. Represents a good selection of the most significant Upaniṣads.

Miller, Barbara Stoler, trans. *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom*. New York: Bantam Books, 1998.

This is a masterful recent translation of the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, the classic Hindu text that explains the very influential system of Yoga.

O'Flaherty, Wendy D., ed. *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Wendy Doniger, formerly O'Flaherty, is one of the foremost Hindu scholars in the United States. This work is her analysis of the development of the concepts of transmigration and karma in the classical period.

Olivelle, Patrick, trans. *Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Ancient India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

An extremely well-done English translation of important texts interpreting dharma. Valuable for the information it provides on the regulation of daily life beginning in the classical Hindu period.

Olivelle, Patrick, trans. *Upaniṣads*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Olivelle's translation is a superb rendering for the modern reader. It is informed by careful scholarship and provides excellent introductory material. This is the best of recent translations.

Epics and Poetry

Bhaktivedanta, A. C. Swami. *The Bhagavad Gita As It Is*. New York: Macmillan, 1968.

The translation of *Gīta* by the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. It is over 1000 pages of text, translation, and commentary.

Buck, William. *Mahabharata*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

The *Mahābhārata* is probably the longest epic in world literature. In this version, William Buck retells the story from whole story from beginning to end in a single volume. An excellent way to enter the world of the *Mahābhārata*.

Buck, William. *Ramayana*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

The classic Hindu epic of Rāmā and Sīta retold by Buck after the fashion of his *Mahābhārata*.

Miller, Barbara Stoler, trans. *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986.

One of the best English translations available. I use Miller's version of the *Gīta* for my undergraduate courses.

Miller, Barbara Stoler, trans. *Gita Govinda of Jayadeva: Love Song of the Dark Lord*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

The *Gītagovinda* is classic Hindu poem celebrating the passionate longing of Rādḥā for her consort Krishna. This is a moving rendition of the ideal of devotion for god.

Women

Bumiller, Elizabeth. *May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons: A Journey Among the Women of India*. New York: Random House, 1990.

Although Bumiller's work is more journalistic than academic, it provides a helpful analysis of the ambiguous situation of women in contemporary Hindu culture.

Cormack, Margaret. *The Hindu Woman*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974.

Though a bit dated, Cormack's study of the Hindu woman is still insightful and informative.

Desai, Neera and Maithreyi Krishnaraj. *Women and Society in India*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1990.

The authors are leading women's studies scholars in India, and this work is a comprehensive treatment of the roles of women in religion, economics, politics, and culture.

Hawley, John Stratton, ed., *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse..* New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

An anthology of works by Indian and western scholars discussing the representation of sati in literature, art, religion, psychology, economics, and politics.

Leslie, Julia, ed. *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991.

This is a good resource for understanding the specific religious practices of Hindu women.

Narasimhan, Sakuntala. *Sati: Widow Burning in India*. New York: Anchor Books, 1990.

An excellent study of widow burning focusing on the 19th century.

Sarkar, Tanika. *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism*. Indiana University Press, 2002.

This is a fine collection of scholarly essays by a professor of historical studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University focusing of the roles of women in Hinduism.

Ritual and Practice

Eck, Diana L. *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, 2nd rev. and enl. Chambersburg, Penn.: Anima Books, 1985.

A wonderful, succinct study of the role of images in popular Hinduism. Insightful and accessible to non-specialists.

Fuller, C. J. *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992

The Camphor Flame focuses on the actual practice of contemporary Hinduism, especially in South India. It is scholarly and accessible to the intelligent lay reader.

Huyler, Stephen P. *Meeting God: Elements of Hindu Devotion*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999.

This is a beautiful book. Its well-written text is supplemented by rich images of Hindu piety. Highly recommended.

Yeshe, Thubten. *Introduction to Tantra: The Transformation of Desire*, rev. ed. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001.

Thubten Yeshe is a Tibetan Buddhist lama who written one of the best introductory texts explaining the theoretical foundations of Tantric practice.

Gods and Goddesses

Bhattacharji, Sukumari. *The Indian Theogony*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

A bit more difficult to find than other books on this list, this volume traces the historical development of gods and goddesses in the Indian pantheon and shows parallels in other cultural traditions.

Danielou, Alain. *Hindu Polytheism*. Bollingen Series, v. LXXIII. New York: Pantheon Books, 1964.

A comprehensive volume on the myths, worship, and philosophy of the gods and goddesses of Hinduism. An excellent secondary resource.

Dimmitt, Cornelia, and J. A. B. van Buitenen, trans. *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purānas*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978.

A selection of translations of the *Purānas*, the collection of myths about the great gods and goddesses of Hinduism. A valuable resource for those interested in reading the actual mythology of the devas.

Kinsley, David. *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

A very detailed discussion of the pantheon of goddesses from the Vedic period to the present. A excellent resource of studying the female principle in Hindu theism.

Kinsley, David. *The Sword and the Flute, Kālī and Kṛṣṇa: Dark Visions of the Terrible and the Sublime in Hindu Mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

A very readable study of these two deities who represent such different aspects of the Hindu pantheon.

Kinsley, David. *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine: The Ten Mahavidyas*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

This is an intriguing study of Tantra and the Devi focusing on the Mahavidyas, ten Tantric goddesses who are often associated with violence and sexuality.

O'Flaherty, Wendy D. *Siva: the Erotic Ascetic*. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

A study of Śaivite mythology and iconography, emphasizing the paradoxical qualities of this great god.

O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger, trans. *Hindu Myths*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975.

A wide ranging collections of 75 Hindu myths, from the Veda through the Purānas, translated from the Sanskrit.

Zimmer, Heinrich. *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*. New York: Harper, 1946.

Zimmer's text is a classic exposition of the important themes in Hindu art and mythology, focusing especially on Vishnu, Śiva, and Devi.

Modern Hinduism

Chatterjee, Margaret. *Gandhi's Religious Thought*. Notre Dame, MD: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.

An excellent study of Gandhi's activism in the context of his religious convictions.

Crawford, S. Cromwell. *Ram Mohan Roy*. New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1987.

Although this volume has limited availability, it is excellent for understanding Ram Mohan Roy and his significance in the political and religious context of 19th century India.

Gandhi, Mohandas K. *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments With Truth*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1957.

This is Gandhi's own account of his early life. It is indispensable for understanding the development of his mature thought.

Nikhilananda, Swami. *Vivekānanda: A Biography*. New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1989

A biography of the great modern Hindu saint, the work is especially good for its presentation of Vivekānana's relationship with his guru, Ramakrishna.

Films

Altar of Fire, 45 minutes, <http://www.amazon.com/Altar-of-Fire/dp/B001EM55G2>
Fritz Staal's controversial documentary about the ancient Vedic shrāuta rite performed by Mambudiri Brahmins in Kerala in the 1970's.

Delhi 6, 140 minutes, 2009

Centers on an Old Delhi neighborhood terrorized by a monkey-man and examines the ongoing conflicts between Hindus and Muslims

Devi (The Goddess) 93 minutes, 1960

Based on a short story by Prabhart Kumar Mukherjee, this classic black and white film explores the conflicts produced by the modernization of 19th century India through a Bengali family when the family patriarch becomes convinced that his daughter-in-law is the incarnation of the Goddess. Bengali with English subtitles.

In the Footprints of the Buddha, 55 minutes, 1978

Although not about Hinduism, this installment from the BBC series "The Long Search" sheds light on the context of ancient Northern India at the time Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism were developing.

Gandhi, 191 minutes, 1982

The Academy Award winning film about the life of the Mahatma.

Guide , 183 minutes, 1965

A classic Bollywood film chronicling the life of a tour guide who starts out as a small-time nobody and ends up as a guru; a serious examination of what might be called a "Hindu worldview," from a novel by R. K. Narayan.

India and the Infinite, Part 3 of *The Mystic's Journey*, 29 minutes,

<http://www.amazon.com/India-Infinite-Soul-People-Home/dp/B002JSTOK8>

Huston Smith's film introduction to Hinduism.

The Mahabharata, 318 minutes, 1989

A six hour film version of the play by Jean-Claude Carriere, based on the great Hindu epic. Features an international cast.

Naked in Ashes, 103 minutes. <http://www.nakedinashes.com/>

Acclaimed documentary about Hinduism's sadhus and ascetics.

Om Shanti Om, 162 minutes, 2007

Popular Hindi movie with a plot that depends on a Bollywood notion of reincarnation.

330 Million Gods, 55 minutes, 1978

After several decades, this BBC production is still the best short film introduction to the Hindu traditions.

Water, 114 minutes, 2005

Director Deepa Mehta's moving exploration of the lives of Hindu widows.