Classic Yoga Text From California Press
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The small Concord Grove Press of Santa Barbara California, has recently published Return to Shiva, a set of excerpted translations of the Yoga Vasishta from the Ramayana attributed to Rishi Valmiki. Designed, bound and printed with obvious devotion to the subject matter, this is an excellent version of the famous Yoga Vasishta, which covers topics of yoga philosophy and practices similar to Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms.

The Concord Grove Press, which published this work and other scriptures, is the publishing department of the Institute of World Culture, founded in 1976 by Raghavan Iyer. This unique and far-sighted group is dedicated to "generate a continuing inquiry into the prospects and possibilities the conditions and requirements, of the world civilization of the future" and "to rethink and renew a vital sense of participation in the global inheritance of humanity and the emerging cosmopolis."

They are working toward this goal by bringing forward the great religious and mystical traditions of the past in their fine reprints, as well as by publishing books and essays on the problems and possible solutions to the formation of a world society.

Return to Shiva is part of this publishing project, with the selection of verses ranging from yoga meditation to mahapralaya, from the stages of spiritual development of man to descriptions of immanent and transcendent natures of the Supreme God, Shiva. One can't really "review" this scripture, which is thousands of years old, beyond affirming its relevance to us today. This is one of the very profound texts of Hinduism, clear and more detailed than many of the Upanishads and other writings.

The design of the book (one of a series) is commendable, replete with delicate graphics and fine typography. It is a very welcome change from the frequent use of the paper-back book format for sacred texts.

One lack of the book is a broad introduction on the material itself, explaining the historical context of the work, its basic philosophic position and the selection of the published chapters.

Though anyone will benefit from reading this book, an orthodox Hindu might point out that these Hindu scriptures were always taught in the context of the fullness of the Hindu religion - the temples, culture, family structure, etc. Internal meditation is built upon the foundation of temple worship, as a tall building is started on solid ground. Westerners and some Eastern swamis have used parts of these texts to disparage temple worship, something not intended by the authors.

The main text is preceeded by an introductory essay by Raghavan Iyer entitled "Jnana Yoga." This is an erudite journey thought the terminology and concepts of a number of esoteric traditions. The book concludes with a comprehensive and accurate glossary.

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