

## [Spring Book Reviews](#)

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# Spring Book Reviews

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This month we set aside most of our longer reviews in order to share with readers an additional two dozen or so titles received which will be useful resources for families and researchers.

THE GARDEN OF LIFE, An Introduction to the the Healing Plants of India, by Naveen Patnaik, hb., 194 pages, US\$35.00, Published by Doubleday, 1540 Broadway, New York, New York 10036

Naveen Patnaik has created an outstanding work of art in The Garden of Life. Rarely does one see the care and effort that Patnaik has brought to this work, a year-and-a-half commission from Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, senior editor at Doubleday.

Not pretending to be an exhaustive text on Ayurvedic herbs, The Garden of Life introduces the reader to 70 varieties of healing plants with one page of text per plant and one full-page color illustration. Plants are grouped in five sections: Sacred, Medicinal, Culinary, Cosmetic and Aromatic. It is difficult to just thumb through the pages because, inevitably, the eye is slowed down and caught by the unusually fine quality of the illustrations. At first, one presumes that these are borrowed reproductions of Rajput miniatures. From the credits in the back, one learns that each painting was individually commissioned by Patnaik from eight contemporary artists, representing a cross-section of Indian art that includes Jaipur, Bikaner, Pahari, Delhi and the Chola styles of South India. In most cases the artists are themselves a living extension of a long family tradition of classical miniature painting. (In Japan, artists such as these would be revered and supported as National Treasures.) The heart leaps to realize that this tradition has not been lost,

but is patiently maintained by a dedicated few who, in their secreted studios, are still producing masterpieces. Patnaik has discovered them and we must encourage him to show us more.

THE HINDU VISION: Forms of the Formless, by Alistair Shearer, pb., 96 pages, US\$15.95, Thames and Hudson, 500 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10110 Distributed by W.W. Norton & Co.

Alistair Shearer has given us an exceptionally fine volume combining excellence in graphics with an astute and very informative text. Page after page of photographs of sculpture, paintings, people and rituals delight the eye as the author explores the symbolism of Hindu art and ritual, the creative process in the Hindu artist and the scriptural and spiritual foundation of all Hindu art forms. Copious quotes from an exhaustive array of scriptures give the reader genuine insights, rather than second-hand opinion, although the author's interpretations are also quite profound.

LIVING AT THE SOURCE, Yoga Teachings of Vivekananda, edited by Ann Myren & Dorothy Madison, pb., 153 pages, US\$12.00, Shambhala Publications, Horticultural Hall, 300 Massachusetts Ave., Boston, Massachusetts 02115

Living at the Source is a beautifully crafted compilation of writings selected from eight volumes of the The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. Some fifty

Vedantins worked to select these inspiring writings that best represent and succinctly state the teachings and philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. Sample chapter titles are: "Who Am I?, The Intense Desire to be Free, Training the Mind for Wisdom, and Flowers and Thunderbolts." The reader may browse freely throughout the book to find the message that he is looking for at the moment. Here is a beauty from "Keeping Your Balance," "I know full well how good it is for one's worldly prospects to be sweet. I do everything to be sweet, but when it comes to a horrible compromise with the truth within, then I stop." Gorgeously printed and bound in the Shambhala Dragon Editions style.

SADHUS, India's Mystic Holy Men, by Dolf Hartsuiker, pb., 128 pages, US\$19.95, Inner Traditions, One Park Street, Rochester, Vermont 05767

Sadhus is a fascinating collection of more than 100 spectacular color photographs of this potent tradition, together with text and detailed photo identifications. For 20 years the author has been a frequent traveller and resident of India and estimates that there are from four to five million of these mystics and ascetics, though surprisingly, no one until now has systematically photographed them. A sadhu may or may not be a yogi or a sannyasin. They typically have no fixed abode and travel unattached from place to place, attracted to India's remote and inaccessible places, such as the Himalayas. The author gives equal coverage to Saivite sadhus and Vaishnavite sadhus, following with an excellent chapter on "The Life" of sadhus. Parents are advised that there are many photographs of naked sadhus, some engaged in rather bizarre practices. Others may disagree with philosophical interpretations in the text. Yet, through the photographs alone, this work makes an important and positive contribution toward revealing India's rich, vast and mysterious religious diversity.

**MYSTICISM OF THE MAHABHARATA**, Insight into the Subtle Mysteries and Profound Wisdom of this Ancient Scripture, by Swami Jyotirmayananda, pb., 268 pages, US\$9.95, Yoga Research Foundation, 6111 S.W. 74th Ave., South Miami, FL, 33143

Lovers of the Mahabharata will have to have this excellent work as a companion guide for one of India's best-read classics. Swami Jyotirmayananda unravels, story after story, the mystical meanings that lie in so many layers beyond the obvious. An example, (after the game of dice) "The insulting of Draupadi and her miraculous rescue in the royal court also has profound spiritual meaning. The five Pandavas represent the individual soul (Arjuna) in association with fourfold self-effort towards the primary values of life: dharma, artha, kama and moksha. Draupadi is the personification of intellect, who is deeply involved with these five, as if married to them. There comes a time in everyone's life when intellect realizes that it cannot depend upon anything that is known in the world, that all its supports are feeble. In those significant moments, one realizes that one must rely only on his own spiritual strength and divine grace. That is what happened in the royal court when Dushasana was harassing Draupadi, and she realized that she could not be protected by anyone other than Krishna. Then God manifests in miraculous ways."

**SONIC THEOLOGY**, Hinduism and Sacred Sound, by Guy L. Beck, Phd., hb., 290 pages, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Nowhere in religion is sound so revered, so elevated, so ubiquitous and so mystical as in India's spirituality. This is the first book to focus potently on sacred sound in Hinduism. Sacred Sound is an exposition of the Hindu concept of Nada-Brahman as researched in the Vedas, Indian philosophies of language, Nada Yoga as found in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, the Yoga-Upanishads, the Nath Yogis, Hatha Yoga, Indian Music, Sakta Tantra, Saivism and Vaishnavism. Beck is well trained in both Western and Indian classical music and has spent much time in India. A scholarly, thorough piece of writing.

INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION, by Rashmi Sharma, pb., 52 pages US\$4.95, Vidya Books, P.O. Box 7788, Berkeley, CA. 94707-0788.

Part of a series of ten well-written booklets, each an informative contribution to those wishing a brief overview of the history of India from earliest days to the present. An invaluable aid to educators and Hindus raising their children outside India who have to contend with the dearth of educational material on India and inaccurate depictions of Indian history and Hinduism. Each booklet comes with a teacher's guide. Other titles are: Buddha, Ashoka, Hinduism, Ramayana, The Spread of Islam to India, British Colonial Rule in India, Mahatma Gandhi, Architects of Modern India, Post Independence India. Recommended.

HINDUISM SIMPLIFIED, For Youths Growing up in the Western Environment, by Gangadhar Choudhary, pb., 27 pages, Distrib. by G. Choudhary, 9604 Linfield Drive, Cincinnati, Ohio 45242

Hinduism Simplified is a small pamphlet that presents an overall picture of Hinduism by answering some frequently asked questions such as "How do Hindus view God?" "To a Hindu, what is dharma and why do we believe in reincarnation?" "Why so many gods and goddesses?" "What is Yoga, and what are the sacred rites and festivals of Hinduism, etc.?"

CREATIVE VISUALIZATION, Use the power of your imagination to create what you want in your life, by Shakti Gawain, pb., 152 pages, US\$8.95 New World Library, 58 Paul Drive, San Rafael, CA 94903

Creative Visualization is the art of using mental imagery and affirmation to produce positive changes in your life. It contains meditations and techniques that can become part of your everyday routine. Over a million copies sold.

HINDU CHILDREN IN BRITAIN, by Robert Jackson and Eleanor Nesbitt, pb., 228 pages, pounds15.95, Trentham Books Ltd., Westview House, 734 London Road, Oakhill, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England ST4 5NP

The challenges Hindu children face in Britain. Solutions, conclusions and reflections.

FUNDAMENTALS OF VEDIC ASTROLOGY, Vedic Astrologer's Handbook I, by Bepin Behari, pb., 280 pages, US\$11.95 and PLANETS IN THE SIGNS AND HOUSES, Vedic Astrologer's Handbook II, by Bepin Behari, pb., 256 pages, US\$11.95, Passage Press, Morson Publ., P.O. Box 21713, Salt Lake City, Utah 84121. Good resource on Hindu astrology.

HINDUISM AND ECOLOGY, Seeds of Truth, by Ranchor Prime, pb., 118 pages, US\$ Cassell Publishers Ltd., Villiers House, 41/47 Strand, London WC2N 5JE, England

Environmental values of the Hindu tradition. A well done Vaishnava viewpoint.

WISDOM OF THE ANCIENT SEERS, Mantras of the Rig Veda, by David Frawley pb., 274 pages, US\$14.95, Passage Press, Morson Publishing, P.O. Box 21713, Salt Lake City, Utah 84121 and BEYOND THE MIND, by David Frawley, pb., 171 pages, US\$12.95, Same publisher.

Well-known and respected as a Vedacharya, Frawley now gives us his personal reflections and insights.

ASPECTS, In Vedic Astrology, by Pandit Gopesh Kumar Ojha and Pandit Ashutosh Ojha, pb., 179 pages, US\$13.95, Passage Press, Morson Publishing, P.O. Box 21713, Salt Lake City UT 84121

Resource on planet conjunctions and aspects.

INDIA: Facing the Twenty-First Century, by Barbara Crossette, hb., 176 pages, US\$22.95 , Indiana University Press, 601 North Morton Street, Bloomington, Indiana, 47404-3797

A Western journalist provides an overview of India for the first-time traveler: Daily realities, political history, challenges of international relations, culture and religious diversities.

INDIA: MYSTIC, COMPLEX AND REAL, An Interpretation of E.M. Forster's A Passage to India, by Adwaita P. Ganguly, hb., 390 pages, Rs300, Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Rd., Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007, India

"Most studies of this work have been written from a Western viewpoint, thus assuming, almost unconsciously, that the central questions concern the English characters who appear in the novel. Beginning from the Indian questions that haunt the novel, Dr. Ganguly shows what happens if one reads the novel with them at its center."

PORTRAIT OF INDIA, by Ved Mehta, pb., 544 pages, US\$18.50, Yale University Press, 92A Yale Station, New Haven, Connecticut 06520

Reprint of the 1970 edition, Portrait of India presents Ved Mehta's impressions of his native land, his first-hand report on India's villages and cities, its religions, politics and wars, its poets, philosophers, maharajas and priests. Ved Mehta, born in India and educated in the U.S. and England, has been a staff writer for The New Yorker since 1961.

LIVING WITH KUNDALINI, The Autobiography of Gopi Krishna, edited by Leslie Shepard, pb., 401 pages, US\$18.00, Shambhala Publications, Horticultural Hall, 300 Massachusetts Ave., Boston, Massachusetts 02115

The extraordinary first-person account of spiritual awakening. Gopi Krishna (1903-1984) was an ordinary Indian householder who experienced the awakening of the spiritual force known as kundalini at the age of thirty-four.

FOUNDERS OF INDIA'S CIVILIZATION, The Lives of Ten Great Pre-Buddha Men of India, by P.L. Bhargava, pb., 122 pages, US\$12.00, Asian Humanities Press, P.O. Box 3523, Fremont, CA 94539

An introduction to the lives and contributions of ten great personalities who existed before the Buddha and formed the core of ancient India's civilization. They are Bharata, Visvamitra, Parasurama, Sudas, Bhagiratha, Rama, Vyasa, Krishna, Janamejaya and Valmiki.

YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI, by Archie J. Bahm, pb., 162 pages, US\$12.00, Asian Humanities Press, P.O. Box 3523, Fremont, CA 94539

The sutras of Patanjali presented in clear, simple language, with a succinct comment on each. The author shows that the beauty and psychological insight of yogic thought is available to everyone.

BASIC LESSONS ON INDIA'S WISDOM, by Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, pb., 109 pages, Rs30, Narayana Gurukula, Srinivasapuram P.O., Varkala, Kerala, India 695 145

This book is written with the intention of educating the young generation of Indians living abroad. Even the youngsters of India, in their pursuit of modern education, have lost their essential touch with the mainstream of Indian spirituality. This book tries to fill this gap.

SITA'S KITCHEN, A Testimony of Faith and Inquiry, by Ramachandra Gandhi, pb., 127 pages, US\$12.95, State University of New York Press, State University Plaza, Albany, New York 12246

A fictional exploration of an old Buddhist story which debates the honor of spiritual traditions. Its relationship to recent events at Ayodhya becomes an overlay. Intricate reading.

WAYS OF YOGA, by Gurani Anjali, pb., 87 pages, US\$10.95, Vajra Printing & Publishing of YAA, 49 Forrest Place Amityville, NY 11701

Ways of Yoga is a unique book that describes the path to human liberation in a simple style. Using both a conversational and meditational tone, the book describes joyful freedom in action, change, sacrifice, work, love and relationship.

POWER IN TEMPLES, A New Look Through Modern Science, by Srikant, pb., 156 pages, US \$9.00 (including postage,) Published by Integral Books, Ayodhya, Payyanur, Kerala, 670 307, India

An analysis of the mystical significance of Hindu temples and how they work to benefit man. Inspiring and thought-provoking to the religious-minded, the scientist, the agnostic and the atheist.

THE UNSTRUCK BELL, Powerful New Strategies for Using a Mantram, by Eknath Easwaran, pb., 223 pages, US\$13.95, Nilgiri Press, Box 256, Tomales, California 94971

Eknath Easwaran presents this traditional practice of mantra for use today to thrive under stress, beat depression, harness negative emotions like anger and fear, be reminded daily of a higher power within, and to regain our natural energy, confidence and control.

IS THE VEDA DIVINE REVELATION? Indus Valley and the Veda, by Sundar Raj, pb., 118 pages, Rs.90, Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., Sathya Complex, 1/1, General Patters Road, Madras 600 002

In the present work, the author seeks to determine whether the Veda is divine revelation or whether it derives from the religious culture of the Indus Valley. He has connected the Indus Valley figurines and seal pictures with specific verses of the Rig and Atharva Veda, and he also demonstrates that many of these figures are exactly what appear in later Hinduism.