

## [HINDU BOOK REVIEW](#)

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Gandhi Today: A Report on Gandhi's Successors

Author: Mark Shepard

160 pgs. Simple Productions hc \$20.00

12 East 15th Street, #3

Arcata. California 95521 USA

What if, on that warm, surreal day in 1948, Mahatma Gandhi staggered from a pistol shot, cried "Ram, Ram" and lived? India would no doubt be a better nation today. Even a fiction novel exploring the repercussions of a surviving Gandhi would serve a bright purpose.

But it was Gandhi's karma to die violently, as certainly as it was his dharma to live gently and follow/preach non-violence. When Gandhi's life blood leaked away, his Satyagraha (soul-force) movement faced anemia itself. It and the Gandhian ideals could have faded out.

Mark Shepard, a young California journalist, seriously asked in 1977 what had happened to the Gandhian movement and he was encouraged by K. Krishnan Nair

to go to India and see for himself. In 1978, he spent five months at the ashrams and institutes, homes and farms of people - all Hindu - who embodied Gandhi's spirit and have, to often surprising magnitude, manifested some dimension of his vision. Shepard's book is a journalist's fond and rapid-fire record of his encounters.

That Shepard was able to dwell with his subjects for awhile - including the most famous Gandhian, Vinoba Bhave, before he died in 1982 - would seem to punch through the narrative as telling and rich character sketches. Surprisingly, this doesn't happen often, though welcome tidbits do appear.

Shepard begins his survey appropriately with Vinoba Bhave, whom we learn at age twenty was deciding incongruously whether to entire to the Himalayas as a Hindu sadhu or toss home-made bombs at the British. He chose to join Gandhi, eventually founding a secluded ashram. When Gandhi died, Bhave became a reluctant leader and launched his decades-long effort to return a tenth of India's land to the harijans.

A well-told chapter, our favorite, is that on the tree-huggers of the Uttarakhand districts in the Himalayan forests. These plucky people stymied a major sports company that wanted to make tennis rackets out of precious ash trees, and eventually forced the government to fire corrupt officials and completely revamp its forestry policies.

Gandhi Today is a valuable and informative book, quickly read and digested. It's worth acquiring for adults and all teens, who would profit by these true stories of people dedicated to the Hindu sense of truth, justice and non-violence.

The Art of Positive Thinking

Author: Swami Jyotirmayananda

145 pgs Yoga Research Foundation \$3.50

6111 S.W. 74th Ave.

Miami, Florida 33143 USA

This is a book from the producers of Miami Nice, the hit show on yoga in the drug-infested streets of Miami. We wish. It is really a production of Miami's preeminent yoga institution. Swami Jyotirmayananda has collected all his articles on positive thinking into a very affordable book. We would like to compare this book (seriously) to Zen & the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, which was a humorous and wonderfully effective manual for Zen mindfulness. However, Swamiji's work lacks the humor for that comparison. It is a manual - like you would have a manual for your Bose stereo speakers - only this is a manual for the quality and amplification of your mind.

Swamiji's presentation on positive thinking is based squarely in Patanjali's raja yoga and thereby nicely represents an orthodox Hindu approach to mind-power. This is important, because there are wheelbarrows full of books on the subject. Besides, we Hindus can claim to have the first best-sellers on positive thinking. The book comprehensively covers a full range of Hindu mind-manipulation attitudes and techniques. For example: "Another important point in the development of willpower is learning how to handle disharmonious personalities." The writing is simple, clear and leavened with tiny anecdotes from the epics and so forth. Unfortunately, these stories fizzle flat in the context of the subject matter and, we are afraid, would bore a young person's mind. It would be better if the stories were totally contemporary and excitingly motivational. However, if you don't fall asleep on the stories, this book has much to offer.

Hinduism: Gospel of Humanity

Author: Badlu Ram Gupta

115 pgs Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Rs. 60.00

Bombay 400 007, India

Gupta's work is written on his perceived premise that "Hinduism is the only hope for the strife-torn, peace-hungry humanity." Not everybody (including many Hindus) would agree with this premise. But it is worth contemplating, which Gupta does through essay-style chapters. For example, he lists the huge stockpile and potency of the super-powers' nuclear weapons and then says: "Hinduism alone with its perennial philosophy of peace, humanism and universalism possesses the necessary panacea to counter and control such dangerous situations..." This is idealistically true, but India has its share of bloody territorial expansion among Hindu kingdoms. Overall the book fails to make its case.

Hinduism Simplified

Author: Gangadhar Choudhary

Booklet self-published donation

9604 Linfield Drive, Cincinnati, Ohio 45242

This is basic Hinduism, styled in a question/answer format between a child and mother. The mother is quite smart, too, and fends her way through questions on dharma, Om, scriptures, yoga, caste, etc. But she only knows very liberal Hinduism of the Smarta variety. Seems excellent for Hindus of the Smarta Sampradaya.

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