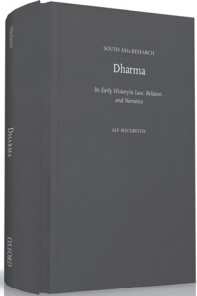


REVIEWS

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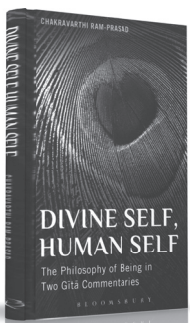


Dharma: Its Early History in Law, Religion, and Narrative Alf Hiltebeitel

Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Avenue, New York. Website: www.oup.com. 2011. xviii + 747 pp. \$ 78. HB. ISBN 9780195394238.

One of the main differences in the idea of religion in the West and that in India comes from the understanding or the lack thereof, of dharma. This book aims to give a better understanding of dharma through an extraordinarily exhaustive account of both the word and the concept through an incisive analysis of Vedic, Buddhist, Puranic, Smriti, and bhakti texts, and even some works of literature. This book is the result of ‘cumulative fruitful conversations carried out amicably over subjects of some controversy’ (xi). The author—a professor in the department of religion at the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, Washington DC—has worked on this book with a feeling that he ‘should reread virtually everything on India’ he has ‘ever read as well as everything’ he has ‘written’ (3). With an exhaustive bibliography running over forty pages, this book is the authoritative reference on everything connected with ‘dharma’.

PB



Divine Self, Human Self: The Philosophy of Being in Two Gītā Commentaries

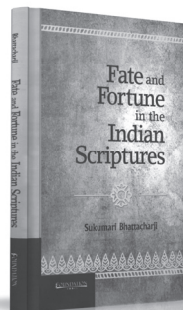
Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad

Bloomsbury Academic, 50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP. Website: www.bloomsbury.com. 2012. xii + 272 pp. £ 17.99. PB. ISBN 9781441139245.

The human self is divine and the divine Self manifests in humanity. Being and identity

have been complex issues leading to elaborate commentaries and glosses on various scriptures. The Bhagavadgita, in particular, has been commented on by numerous scholars, traditional and modern alike. This book attempts to unravel the ground of being and the divine Self, both from the perspective of Acharya Shankara and Ramanuja. The author tries to interpret their commentaries on the Gita to ‘develop two competing visions of the relationship between metaphysics and theology, and therefore of how one may relate inquiry to faith’ (xx). In this task, the author has been remarkably successful and he also gives us a wonderful comparative study of Shankara and Ramanuja. Anyone interested in these two thinkers should definitely read this volume.

PB



Fate and Fortune in the Indian Scriptures

Sukumari Bhattacharji

Foundation Books, Cambridge House, 4381/4 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002. Website: www.cambridge.org. 2014. vi + 321 pp. ₹ 895. HB. ISBN 9789382993889.

Why do people become lazy and fatalistic? Because they think that whatever happens in their lives is due to fate. Indians did not want people to become lazy or fatalistic and put the responsibility on the individual for every action one did—one faced the consequences of one’s good and bad actions, and one’s station of birth depended on one’s actions. This not only made a person responsible but also brought hope because if what one has done is the result of one’s previous actions it meant that one’s future could be moulded by oneself. This idea Swami Vivekananda preached and infused and continues to infuse tremendous faith and power into countless minds. But this point has been missed by the