
The eighteen articles in this volume grew from papers delivered at the 2006 Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions. The Symposium featured both newer and more advanced scholars who presented papers on a variety of topics and traditions of India (but especially Hinduism and Buddhism). The volume is only lightly edited, and retains the inconsistencies of citation style, transliteration (e.g., Śaṅkara, Śāṅkara, Śaṅkara, and Shankara all appear), and terminology (e.g., “Hinayana” versus “Theravada”) one would expect in a collection of conference papers. Moreover, the Spalding Symposia are not generally oriented around a specific theme, and though there is some implicit conversation between and among the various articles in this volume, as a whole it lacks the cohesion of collections with more focused themes, having instead, as King puts it in her introduction, “the character of a scholarly journal” (xii). Therefore, while the volume’s value is occasionally greater than the sum of its parts, it is not significantly so. That is not to say, however, that there are not some rather impressive and provocative parts.

*Indian Religions* is divided into four sections. Klaus Klostermaier opens the first section, “Challenging Paradigms” with an article entitled “Hinduism — Hindutva — Hindu Dharma.” In this article, which King’s introduction suggests “undoubtedly evoked the most passionate, and even hostile, responses” (xii), Klostermaier argues that the true Hindu Renaissance (usually associated with the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) is happening right now through the work of the Sangh Parivar and other exponents of Hindutva ideologies. Klostermaier compares the Hindutva movement so reviled by many western and Indian scholars to religious reform movements touched off by Shankara, Ramanuja, and Caitanya. These movements have in common, he claims, the fact that they “take elements of Hindu tradition and reshape them in the light of their own time so as to provide answers to the needs of their contemporaries” (10). Klostermaier takes religion scholars to task for their tendency to present Hindutva as an aberration of “true” Hinduism. Hindutva ideas and ideals should of course be compared to those of other forms of Hinduism, but to dismiss Hindutva as deviant rather than attempting to put it in its proper historical and sociological context (which Klostermaier believes is still significantly influenced by the memory of Muslim and Christian colonialism) is, he thinks, to arbitrarily essentialize Hinduism.

In the section’s second article, Hans Bakker differentiates the principle of *ahimṣā* (“not killing”) from Hindu theories about warfare, which he says “was
endemic in South Asia and seen as the right and duty of the Hindu king” (28). Bakker describes the various ways that warfare has been conceived and regulated in Hindu history and suggests that the Hindu encounter with Islamic invaders after the eleventh century altered Hindu views on the topic in ways that are still relevant to the interpretation of Indian communal unrest today.

Knut Jacobsen and Ninian Smart (posthumously) argue, in their contribution to this section, “Is Hinduism an Offshoot of Buddhism?” that the immensity of the Buddhist effect on Hinduism has been underestimated, so much so that — as the title implies — the usual presentation of Buddhism as an offshoot of Hinduism should perhaps be reversed. Among the central ideas and practices of contemporary Hinduism which may derive, the authors argue, from Buddhism (appearing as they do in Buddhism at least as early as in the Hindu tradition), are rebirth, *mokṣa*, meditation, renunciation, *ahimsā*, vegetarianism, cosmic cycles, the soteriological centrality of religious teachers (gurus), etc. Despite its necessarily (yet sometimes frustratingly) tentative nature, the article is in many ways persuasive.

The last article in Section One, “The Philosophy of Religion from the Perspective of Indian Religions,” is authored by Karel Werner, founder of the Spalding Symposium. In it, he criticizes philosophers of religion for being overly influenced by western theism. After reviewing and critiquing the work of some prominent (and some not so prominent) western philosophers of religion (Hick, Proudfoot, Linhart, etc.) and noting, with surprise and disappointment, that even Arvind Sharma’s work on Hindu and Buddhist philosophies of religion falls prey to the theistic bias, Werner argues that an encounter with the Indian tradition will aid and correct contemporary philosophers of religion in what he considers their four central tasks: 1) “…the conceptual analysis of human thought and the ways in which it is expressed” which includes “descriptions of human experiences, in so far as they have religious contents” (60), 2) the “interpretation or elucidation of religious teachings in terms compatible with philosophical means of expression” (60), 3) a consideration of the justifiability of religious teachings “as ontologically conceivable in the realm of the possible” (60), and 4) participation in “philosophical thinking about religion” (61).

The articles in Section Two, “Text and Context” all focus on Indian textual traditions (or those who interpreted them). Dermot Killingley’s article provides a close textual analysis and comparison of various Vedic (esp. Upanishadic) and Samkhya formulations of the body and its functions, which appear frequently in scriptures as lists of five, or “pentads,” like the common Vedic formulation: speech, breath, sight, hearing, and mind (73). Killingley emphasizes the microcosmic/macrocospic homologies prevalent in these conceptions and the continuity of Samkhya formulations with those that appear in the Vedas (despite the obvious differences between the two).