



Religions of India in Practice

By Donald S. Lopez Jr.

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The inaugural volume of Princeton Readings in Religions brings together the work of thirty scholars of the religions of India in a new anthology designed to reshape the ways in which the religious traditions of India are understood. The book contains translations of forty-five works, most of which have never before been available in a Western language. Many of these highlight types of discourse (especially ritual manuals, folktales, and oral narratives) and voices (vernacular, esoteric, domestic, and female) that have not been sufficiently represented in previous anthologies and standard accounts of Indian religions.

The selections are drawn from ancient texts, medieval manuscripts, modern pamphlets, and contemporary fieldwork in rural and urban India. They represent every region in South Asia and include Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, and Muslim materials. Some are written texts reflecting elite concerns, while others are transcriptions of oral narratives told by nonliterate peasants. Some texts are addressed to a public and pan-Indian audience, others to a limited coterie of initiates in an esoteric sect, and still others are intended for a few women gathered in the courtyard for a household ceremony. The editor has reinforced this diversity by arranging the selections within several overarching themes and categories of discourse (hymns, rituals, narratives, and religious interactions), and encourages us to make our own connections.

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Religions of India in Practice By Donald S. Lopez Jr. Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1111336 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Princeton University Press
- Published on: 1995-04-03
- Released on: 1995-04-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.68" w x 6.00" l, 1.97 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 648 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

This volume, which inaugurates a series of anthologies on religion, is unique in its focus on vernacular sources rather than classical Vedic lineage texts. Representing Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Muslim, Sufi, and Sikh religious expressions, the categories include household rites, folklore, omens, alchemical and oracular practices, temple dedications, hagiographical odes, mantras, and pujas. Editor Davis (religion, Yale) provides the historical introduction to Indian religion, while each of the 30 contributors gives a preamble to his or her chosen text. Suggestions for further reading follow each selection. The volume is arranged thematically, not by religion, and most of the works have never before been translated. Overarching themes suggest a unity that the editor leaves readers to syncretize. Many of the selections convey the rapture of devotion, celebrating sacred love toward guru, saint, or God. The complex array of doctrines and contesting ideologies is like the murmur of a mighty river providing fascinating reading for both scholar and general reader.

Dara Eklund, Los Angeles P.L.

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Review

"The very nature of this anthology suggests that the contemporary student be taught to learn in the context of uncertain borders, of conflicting and of ambiguous worlds. . . . *The Religions of India in Practice* should be in the hands of every teacher-scholar of religions in India and then in the hands of their students."--*The Journal of Asian Studies*

"A volume in the valuable series of *Princeton Readings in Religion*.... [A] most useful set of penetrating studies ... their writers are among the most prominent scholars in the field."--*The Journal of Indo-European Studies*

From the Back Cover

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