



The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism

By A.L. Basham

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The late A.L. Basham was one of the world's foremost authorities on ancient Indian culture and religion. Modeled on his monumental work *The Wonder That Was India*, this account of the origins and development of classical Hinduism represents a lifetime of reflection on the subject, and offers an intriguing introduction to one of the richest of all Asian traditions.

Synthesizing Basham's great knowledge of the art, architecture, literature, and religion of South Asia, this concise history traces the spiritual life of India from the time of the Indus Culture (around 2700 B.C.E) through the crystallization of classical Hinduism in the first centuries of the common era. It chronicles as well the rise of other mystical and ascetic traditions, such as Buddhism and Jainism, and follows Hinduism's later incarnations in the West, making it an especially comprehensive introduction to the subject.

Unlike Christianity or Islam, Hinduism was not inspired by single great prophet but rather evolved organically. The wide range of influences and sources--along with the great number of sacred texts in ancient languages--can make the Hindu system of faith and practice seem almost impenetrable to the uninitiated. With its vivid presentation of Hinduism's sources--from the warrior Aryans to the wandering ascetics--and its clearly written explanations and analyses of the major Hindu texts--among them the Rg-veda, the Brahmanas, Upanishads, and the Mahabharata and Ramayana--*The Origins of Classical Hinduism* clarifies much of Hinduism's enduring mystique. With an especially helpful bibliography, numerous illustrations of Hindu art never before published, and a lucid, accessible style, this book is must reading for anyone who has ever been intrigued by this fascinating religion.

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Editorial Review

Review

"I decided to use this text as soon as I read it, and we have used it this term. The previous texts on Hinduism received criticism from the students in formal assessments. This year's class has very much liked Classical Hinduism, finding it readable and informative. The students have been more favorable to the course this year at least in part due to this text."--Prescott A. Rogers, cademy of the New Church College

"The best brief introduction that I have seen. Basham coers all the essential material and much more. His style is wonderfully fluid and personal."--James Mayhall, University of Missouri-St. Louis

"Best work on the subject. Simple and scholarly."--S. N. Desai, St. John's University

"Clear and lucid, and it is enhanced by wonderful examples...of Hindu art. A useful introduction to the field."--Choice

"Provides an insight into what is the 'original' Hinduism....Basham will send many back with eager minds to the original texts."--The Independent Sunday (India)

"A fine book...a suitable introduction to Hinduism and to early Indic thought."--Willard Johnson, San Diego State University

"This book is a gem! Sometimes mildly controversial, it is never eccentric, and it provides, in lucid style, much of the information most likely to interest beginners."--Douglas A. Fox, Colorado College

"A concise, accurate and useful compilation of matrerials from one of the leading Indologists of our time."--Douglas R. Brooks, University of Rochester

"Reflects deep knowledge of the Hindu tradition--a complex religion made simpler."--S.N. Desai, St. John's University

"This is a lucid, comprehensive introduction to the essentials of classic Hinduism."--Bradley Nystrom, California State Univ., Sacramento

From the Back Cover

Arthur Basham (1914-86) was one of the world's foremost scholars of ancient Indian culture and religion. His account of the origins and development of classical Hinduism compiled and expanded posthumously, represents a lifetime of sturdy and reflection on the subject.

About the Author

The late **A.L. Basham**, a distinguished scholar of South Asia, was the author of many books, among them *The Wonder That Was India*, and *The History and Doctrines of the Ajivikas*.

Kenneth G. Zysk, a former student of Basham's, is Assistant Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Literature at New York University. His books include *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India* (Oxford, 1991) and *Religious Healing in the Veda* (1985).

Users Review

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