

A POPULAR DICTIONARY OF

# Hinduism

KAREL WERNER

ROUTLEDGE



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**Publisher's Note**

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent

# ABBREVIATIONS

adj.	adjective
AU	Aitareya <b>Upaniṣad</b>
Av.	Avesta, Avestan
AV	Atharva Veda
BhG	Bhagavad Gītā
BP	Bhāgavata <b>Purāṇa</b>
BS	Brahma Sūtras of <b>Bādarāyaṇa</b>
BU	<b>Upaniṣad</b>
cf.	compare
CU	Chāndogya <b>Upaniṣad</b>
f.	feminine
fr.	from
Germ.	Germanic
Gr.	Greek
IE	Indo-European
Lat.	Latin
lit.	literally
Lith.	Lithuanian
m.	masculine
Mhb	Mahābhārata
n.	neuter
Pkt.	Prakrit
Pl.	Pāli
pl.	plural
RV	<b>Ṛg</b> Veda
SB	Śatapatha <b>Brāhmaṇa</b>
sg.	singular

Skt.	Sanskrit
Slav.	Slavonic
SV	Sāma Veda
TS	Taittirīya <b>Samhitā</b>
vern.	vernacular
VS	Vājasaneyi <b>Samhitā</b>
YV	Yajur Veda

# PREFACE

The initial words of most entries in this dictionary are in Sanskrit or a vernacular or derived from one or the other. Some entries start with proper names and a relatively small number of entries begins with an English word which expresses a concept relevant to Hinduism. The following rules have been applied:

- (1) English words at the beginning of entries are written with an initial capital letter, and so are all proper names.
- (2) Sanskrit and vernacular words are written in *italics* throughout, and with a small initial letter as is customary in dictionaries. (This corresponds to the usage in Sanskrit texts, since the *devanāgarī* alphabet does not have capital letters.)
- (3) Sanskrit proper names are written with initial capitals to comply with rule (1), and they are not italicized, e.g. 'Caitanya'. That includes the names of schools of philosophy and of sectarian movements, e.g. 'Advaita Vedānta' or 'Brāhmo Samāj', some titles, e.g. Svāmi, and the titles of Sanskrit works which are a part of the Hindu scriptures or traditional literature, e.g. 'Chāndogya **Upaniṣad**'. Only titles of works of individual authors have been italicized, e.g. Madhva's .
- (4) Diacritical marks have been applied to all Sanskrit and vernacular words throughout in keeping with the generally accepted method of transliterating the *devanāgarī* alphabet. This includes names of gods, e.g. **Kṛṣṇa**, but excludes Indian personal names and some other types of proper name where English spelling has become customary, e.g. Ramakrishna, Bombay etc.
- (5) Entries are in alphabetical order according to the English alphabet but it should be noted that the Sanskrit alphabet has two extra sibilants, 'ś' and 'ṣ', and Sanskrit words starting with these letters are placed in this dictionary *after* entries starting with 's'. When correctly pronounced, 'ś' and 'ṣ' differ from each other, but the difference can be disregarded for the purposes of this dictionary, as indicated in the note on pronunciation. (The reader is reminded that some authors writing on Indian subjects in English use inconsistent simplified forms of transliteration of Sanskrit words and often fail to discriminate between the two extra sibilants, transliterating both of them as 'sh'. This may confuse the meaning in some cases and it has the

additional disadvantage in dictionaries in that it leads to altered sequence of entries, especially among those starting with the letter 's'.)

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# A NOTE ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE SANSKRIT ALPHABET

The Sanskrit alphabet is phonetical: all vowels and consonants are pronounced clearly and always in the same way.

## Vowels:

- a short like 'u' in 'luck'
  - ā long like 'a' in 'grass'
  - i short like 'i' in 'sit'
  - ī long like 'ee' in 'sweet'
  - u short like 'u' in 'bull'
  - ū long like 'oo' in 'food'
- as a hard rolling syllable-producing vowel 'rr' (perhaps the only living IE language which has preserved this vowel is Czech, e.g. in 'brk'; the new Indian pronunciation is 'ri' as in 'river' and this has also been adopted in English pronunciation and spelling of some words, e.g. 'Sanskrit')
- e long like 'ai' in 'fair'
  - o long like 'au' in 'cause'
  - ai like 'i' in 'mine', i.e. as a diphthong
  - au like 'ou' in 'house', i.e. as a diphthong

## Consonants:

- k like 'c' in 'comma'
- kh like 'k-h' in 'cook-house'
- g like 'g' in 'giggle'
- gh like 'g-h' in 'log-house'
- ñ like 'ng' in 'thing'
- c like 'ch' in 'chalk'
- ch like 'ch-h' in 'church-house'
- j like 'j' in 'jam'
- jh like 'dgeh' in 'Edgehill'
- ṇ like 'gn' in Italian 'signor'

t,	like 't' in 'tea'
th,	like 't-h' in 'hot-house'
d, ḍ	like 'd' in 'day'
dh,	like 'd-h' in 'god-head'
n,	like 'n' in 'now'
p	like 'p' in 'pot'
ph	like 'p-h' in 'top-heavy'
b	like 'b' in 'bow'
bh	like 'b-h' in 'sub-heading'
m	like 'm' in 'mum'
y	like 'y' in 'yard'
r	like 'r' in 'red', but rolled (as in Scotland)
l	like 'l' in 'law'
v	like 'v' in 'valid'
ś, ṣ	like 'sh' in 'show'
s	like 'ss' in 'assess'
h,	like 'h' in 'house'
	similar to 'ng' in 'thing', but only slightly nasalized

Strictly speaking, there is a difference between the pronunciation of consonants with and without diacritical marks (e.g. d, ḍ) and those with different diacritical marks (ś, ṣ), but it is rather subtle and can for all practical purposes be disregarded.

# INTRODUCTION

Hinduism is perhaps the most complicated religious phenomenon in the world. Indeed, views have been expressed that it is not one religion, but many, a kind of coalition of religions. On the other hand, there are some features within Hinduism which bind together the apparently bewildering variety of its deities, cults, customs, spiritual practices, beliefs, sectarian teachings and philosophical schools and which have provided a strong sense of religious belonging as well as of social and cultural togetherness for the peoples of India across linguistic and racial barriers throughout their long history, despite many changes in the political scene.

One reason for the complexity of Hinduism is the fact that it has no known starting-point and no single charismatic figure who could be regarded as its originator. It took shape over a period of many hundreds of years and many diverse influences left their mark on its fabric. It is therefore by following, at least in brief outline, the historical sequences and developments in the religious scene which led to the emergence of Hinduism as a religious system that we can hope to start appreciating its many facets and the way they form a multifarious yet coherent whole. There are several clearly recognizable phases in the historical development of Hinduism:

1. **The riddle of Harappan religion.** A great civilization flourished in the Indus valley and adjacent areas in the third millennium B.C. While its writing still awaits decipherment, the archaeological finds testify to a highly developed and stratified religious system. The nature of the burials indicates a belief in the continuation of life. Numerous female figurines, some of them suggesting pregnancy, point to a cult of the Great Goddess, perhaps the Great Mother of the Universe (known as Aditi to the Vedas and under various forms of the Devī in later Hinduism). Depictions of a male deity as surrounded by animals remind one of the Hindu god Śiva as Paśupati, his meditative position is reminiscent of Śiva's role as the great Yogi (Yogapati) and his three faces might suggest a trinitarian view of the deity akin to the **Purāṇic** Trimūrti. The ithiphallic feature of this deity and finds of phallic emblems further point to the role of the *linga* in Śaivite cults. Other

connections could be pointed out as a result of a detailed analysis of Harappan pictures on seals by comparison with Hindu mythology.

2. **The Indo-European prehistory.** The Indo-Āryans reached India in the second millennium B.C. in several waves of immigration over a period of several hundred years, after a long and slow migration from Eastern Europe. There they had for a long time been a part of the great IE family of tribes with whom they shared a common language and culture, as is obvious from similarities which survived both the parting of this family into tribes and their migrations and development into separate nations. The Vedic religion of the Indo-Āryans shows a number of parallels with the Greek, Roman, Celtic, Slavonic, Germanic and other ancient IE religions. Besides the gods, of whom the 'Heavenly Father' (Vedic Dyaus Pitar, Gr. Zeus Pater, and Lat. Jupiter) is the best known, there are concepts such as 'destiny', 'fate', 'retribution', 'necessity' or 'cosmic order', and ideas about the afterlife, including the belief in re-incarnation (metempsychosis) and immortality or the final salvation. A careful comparative investigation of these concepts would show how much of what Hinduism stands for has IE roots.
3. **The Vedic vision of the world.** Once in India, the Indo-Āryans further elaborated and consolidated their religious heritage by codifying it, by 1000 B.C., in the collection of hymns known as the **Ṛg Veda**. Its authorship is ascribed to generations of inspired seers —poets, visionaries, mystics and philosophers as well as spiritual leaders and moral guides of their communities. They developed a global picture of the cosmos, its beginnings and its duration as governed by the cosmic law on all levels— physical, social, ethical and spiritual. In order to convey their insights in an effective way to the people, they translated them into regular re-enactments of the drama of creation and of the struggle between the forces of life and stagnation or decay through the use of symbolic rituals, both private and communal, and through religious festivals. In this way the lives of individuals, families and communities were regulated. The interplay of cosmic and social forces and their impact on human life was further reflected in the richness of myths and legends with the gods, divine heroes, demons and other supernatural beings as principal actors who could be propitiated and won over to grant prosperity. For those who thought further ahead there were the means of securing heaven after death in the company of blessed forefathers, and those with higher aspirations could even attempt to tread the path to immortality discovered by the greatest among the ancient *ṛṣis*, thereby becoming exempt from the normal human lot of successive lives. This stage of Indo-Āryan religion is often called Vedism.
4. **The Brahminic universe of ritual action.** As is only natural with human communities, the majority of Vedic people focused their interest on prosperity on earth and at best on securing heavenly rewards in the afterlife without giving much thought to their final destiny. Their expectations were catered for by the successors of the *ṛṣis*, the guardians of the sacred lore

codified in the **R̥g** Veda, who developed into a hereditary caste of priests (brahmins). They succeeded in gaining a high reputation as indispensable experts in ritual communication with the deities and cosmic forces. They compiled two further Vedic collections, the Sāma Veda and the Yajur Veda, mainly for their liturgical procedures, and elaborated theories about the correspondences between ritual action and cosmic processes which have come down to us in books known as the **Brāhmaṇas**. Their confidence in their own skill and in the efficacy of rituals, performed at specially erected altars in the open, was such that there was nothing which, in their view, a correctly performed rite could not bring about. This obviously rather externalized form of religion known as Brāhmanism had its heyday at a time (cca 900-600 B.C.) when the Indo-Āryan civilization was expanding and materially prospering.

5. **The Upaniṣadic gnosis.** The Brahminic ritualism tended to grow out of proportion and was eventually felt by many to be a burden. Thoughtful individuals began to realize that behind its formalism there was not the true spiritual force which once had expressed itself in the inspired hymns that now were endlessly repeated by the brahmins as mere liturgical formulas. A new spiritual search for direct experience of the transcendent divine reality, helped by the existence of hermits and wandering ascetics outside or alongside the Vedic tradition who were given to contemplation rather than to ritual, led to a revival of the mystic vision of the ancient seers. This time its results were expressed not in hymnic poetry, but in the philosophical language of the **Upaniṣads**. (The earliest of them became the last section of the Vedic scriptures and came to be recognized as revelation or divinely inspired.)

Besides some spiritually-minded brahmins the bearers of this rediscovered wisdom were members of other classes, among them often aristocratic *kṣatriyas*, including a few kings. The great **Upaniṣadic** sages found the solution to the riddle of life and its goal in the discovery of the essential identity of one's inner self (*ātman*) with the divine source of the whole universe (*brahman*). The direct knowledge of this identity, best expressed for us by the Greek word *gnosis*, results according to them in liberation from rebirth which amounts to the final salvation. It cannot be secured by purely religious piety and observance, because they lead only to a temporary respite in heavenly abodes followed sooner or later by further births in lower realms of *saṃsāra*.

6. **Movements outside the Vedic tradition.** The goal of final liberation (*mokṣa*) was never entirely lost sight of by some of those who lived outside or dropped out of the established Vedic civilization with its cult-orientated priesthood. Among these outsiders were, in the first place, Vṛātyas, a loose oath-bound alliance of Indo-Āryan tribal fraternities who were the earliest invaders of India and moved eastwards to Magadha when further immigrants arrived in large numbers and settled in Saptasindhu. The Vṛātyas possessed a wealth of magic, mystic and speculative lore which only partly