

Dominic Goodall, *Hindu Scriptures: Edited with Translations and Based on an Anthology by R.C. Zaehner*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001, li + 411 Pp, Rs. 395.

Ever since its publication in 1966, R. C. Zaehner's *Hindu Scriptures* has been for a large number of students in the English-speaking world a convenient means of engaging with some of the key texts of brahmanical tradition. Yet distinguished scholar as he was, Zaehner's view of Hinduism as a textual phenomenon (it is well known that he was not entirely attuned to the religion's many nuances in the actual lives of its adherents) was a slanted one, tending to favour materials in accord with his views on the centrality of mystical or gnostic experience as defining religious worth, less comfortable with those involving ritual or the intensely devotional. Predictably, it was the Upaniṣads which formed the bulk of the translations provided by Zaehner, but even here he felt compelled to omit passages excessively redolent of the earlier Vedic conceptual world.

In this new edition of *Hindu Scriptures*, Dominic Goodall has retained much of Zaehner's translations, including the whole of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, but also incorporated versions of three Vedic hymns by Edgerton and O'Flaherty (to supplement thirteen others translated by Zaehner) and Hume's version of portions of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (in conjunction with most of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and the *Īsā, Kāṭha, Māṇḍūkya*, and *Śvetāśvatara* complete as translated by Zaehner). In terms of these texts alone, the anthology would no doubt be deemed useful, but perhaps not to be recommended imperatively, given the existence of alternative translations elsewhere. What renders this book particularly valuable is the material which Goodall has introduced to supplement the texts chosen by Zaehner.

As a (publisher's?) note to this Indian edition of a book which originally appeared in the U.K. in 1996 rather charmingly points out, "Hindu scriptures are too numerous to be accommodated in this volume, hence some of the Scriptures have been left. "Even if the category "scripture" be restricted, as here, to what has been composed in Sanskrit, a large number of possible candidates from what has been "left" might be put forward for inclusion. Goodall has most commendably opted to provide translations of some important texts not widely known beyond Sanskritist circles: *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* 1.1-270 and 3.1-44, the *Śaiva Siddhānta Kirāṇatantra* chapters 1-7 and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 10.29-33. The first of these deals with brahman life cycle rituals and the nature of impurity, the second with the soul's experience of dualism in a universe presided over by Śiva and the third with the yearning of the cowherd girls for Kṛṣṇa and the festival of the Rās dance, so vital for subsequent Hindu devotional expression.

These differing facets of classical Hinduism are obviously of major importance for anyone endeavouring to gain an understanding of the religion, but unfortunately primary literature describing them has hitherto not always been easily accessible to students. The inclusion of Goodall's clear and reliable translations (with genuinely helpful introductory comment and annotation) has transformed what was increasingly seeming, as scholarship advanced, a rather

pedestrian sourcebook into one of much greater merit and interest. This new, markedly improved edition of *Hindu Scriptures* can therefore be recommended with confidence to those seeking a single volume compendium of selections from mainstream Hindu scriptures.

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