

Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| LIST OF MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS | xvii |
| PREFACE | xix |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | xxxi |

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

How the West Learned to Compare Religions 1

JACK MILES

HINDUISM 43

Introduction: The Zen Diagram of Hinduism 45

WENDY DONIGER

CHRONOLOGY 60

HINDUISM IN SANSKRIT, 1500 B.C.E.—1200 C.E. 67

Ancient Texts, 1500–200 B.C.E. 71

HUMANS, ANIMALS, AND GODS IN THE RIG VEDA, 1500–1000 B.C.E. 73

I Pray to Agni 79

Creation Hymn 79

Aditi and the Birth of the Gods 80

The Hymn of the Primeval Man 82

The Funeral Fire 84

| | |
|---|-----|
| Burial Hymn | 86 |
| Varuna Provoked to Anger | 88 |
| Agastya and Lopamudra | 89 |
| Have Mercy on Us, Rudra | 90 |
| The Three Strides of Vishnu | 91 |
| | |
| SACRIFICE IN THE BRAHMANAS, 800–500 B.C.E. | 93 |
| <i>Shatapatha Brahmana</i> | 94 |
| Prajapati Creates Fire | 94 |
| The Fish Saves Manu from the Flood | 95 |
| Killing the Sacrificial Horse | 96 |
| Restoring the Horse | 98 |
| <i>Jaiminiya Brahmana</i> | 99 |
| How Men Changed Skins with Animals | 100 |
| Bhrigu's Journey in the Other World | 101 |
| The Gods Make Men Evil | 103 |
| | |
| RENUNCIATION IN THE UPANISHADS, 600–200 B.C.E. | 105 |
| <i>Brihadaranyaka Upanishad</i> | 107 |
| The Creator Creates Death | 108 |
| Creation | 110 |
| Dreaming | 111 |
| The Origins of the Self | 112 |
| <i>Chandogya Upanishad</i> | 113 |
| The Self | 113 |
| Transmigration | 114 |
| Janashruti and Raikva | 118 |
| <i>Shvetashvatara Upanishad</i> | 120 |
| The Two Birds | 120 |
| | |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF MIND AND BODY IN THE YOGA-SUTRA OF PATANJALI, 150 B.C.E. | 122 |
| Quieting the Mind. | 122 |

The Age of Ferment, 300 B.C.E.–400 C.E. 127

| | |
|---|-----|
| DUTY AND DISASTER IN THE MAHABHARATA OF VYASA, 300 B.C.E.–300 C.E. | 130 |
| The Stripping of Draupadi | 134 |
| Ekalavya Cuts Off His Thumb | 143 |
| The Pandavas Go to Heaven, with a Dog | 145 |
| The Churning of the Ocean | 149 |
| The End of Female Promiscuity | 154 |
| The Karma of Dharma | 156 |
| The Dog Who Would Be Lion | 158 |
| King Shibi Saves the Dove from the Hawk | 160 |
| Daksha's Sacrifice | 162 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| OBLIGATION, LIBERATION, AND DEVOTION IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA, CA. 100 C.E. | 166 |
| Arjuna Questions Krishna | 167 |
| The Soul Does Not Die | 175 |
| The Two Paths | 178 |
| The True Nature of Action | 180 |
| The Path of Devotion | 182 |
| Salvation and Damnation | 183 |
| LOST LOVES AND TRAGIC MISTAKES IN THE RAMAYANA OF VALMIKI, 200 B.C.E.–200 C.E. | 186 |
| The Birth of Sita and the Bending of the Bow | 189 |
| Dasharatha Kills a Boy He Mistakes for an Elephant | 192 |
| The Gods Interrupt Shiva and Parvati | 196 |
| THE BRAHMINS EXPLAIN EVERYTHING IN THE SHASTRAS, 100–600 C.E. | 200 |
| <i>Manu</i> | 202 |
| To Eat or Not to Eat Meat | 203 |
| The Dependence of Women | 205 |
| Retribution in Rebirth | 206 |
| <i>Charaka, Hiranyakeshin, and Varahamihira</i> | 210 |
| The Etiology of Diseases | 210 |
| How to Perform a Funeral | 213 |
| How to Read the Stars | 216 |
| <hr/> | |
| The Synthesis of Hinduism, 400–1200 C.E. | 221 |
| THE GODS—AND A GODDESS—IN THE PURANAS, 400–1200 C.E. | 223 |
| <i>The Puranic World</i> | 225 |
| The Fruits of Hearing a Purana: Devaraja the Sinner | 225 |
| The Four Ages | 228 |
| The Transfer of Karma in Hell | 232 |
| <i>Shiva</i> | 234 |
| The Origin of <i>Linga</i> Worship | 235 |
| How Rudra Destroys the Universe | 238 |
| Mankanaka Dances for Shiva | 240 |
| <i>Vishnu</i> | 242 |
| Vishnu as the Buddha | 242 |
| Vishnu as Kalki | 245 |
| <i>Krishna</i> | 247 |
| Krishna Kills the Ogress Putana | 247 |
| Krishna's Mother Looks Inside His Mouth | 250 |
| <i>Devi, the Goddess</i> | 252 |
| The Birth of the Goddess | 253 |
| The Death of the Buffalo Demon | 256 |
| <i>Shrines and Pilgrimages</i> | 257 |
| The Descent of the Ganges | 258 |
| The River Yamuna | 259 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Virtues of Varanasi | 261 |
| The Pilgrimage of Shiva to Varanasi | 263 |
| Yudhishtira at Prayaga | 265 |
| <i>Medicine and Ethics</i> | 268 |
| Embryology | 268 |
| Suffering | 270 |
| Hell | 272 |
| | |
| SECTS AND SEX IN THE TANTRAS | 275 |
| Tantric Points in the Body | 276 |
| The Tantric Gender | 277 |
| Terrifying Tantric Visions | 278 |
| The Five Elements of Tantric Ritual | 279 |
| Tantric Sins of Excess | 281 |
| | |
| THEOLOGY AND/OR PHILOSOPHY IN THE VEDANTA | 285 |
| Shankara Dreams | 286 |
| Ramanuja Dreams | 289 |
| The Man Who Built a House of Air | 292 |
| | |
| VERNACULAR HINDUISM IN SOUTH INDIA, 800–1800 C.E. | 295 |
| Tamil Finds Its Many Voices, 800 to 1300 C.E. | 301 |
| | |
| THE TIRUVAYMOLI ("SACRED SPOKEN WORD") OF NAMMALVAR | 303 |
| He Is Both the Crooked and the Straight | 304 |
| Worker of Miracles | 304 |
| You Do Stunts | 305 |
| Look Here | 306 |
| It's True | 306 |
| Talking of Monism | 307 |
| Kings Who Rule the Earth All Alone | 308 |
| Our Masters | 308 |
| Who Is He Possessing the Highest Good? | 309 |
| Beyond the Range | 309 |
| If You Say He Exists | 310 |
| He Is Diffused in Every Drop | 310 |
| People of This World | 311 |
| Lord of Shiva | 311 |
| He Became and Exists | 311 |
| The Whirling Age of Kali Ends | 312 |
| Monarch of Lions | 312 |
| Perhaps You Will Destroy My Sorrow | 313 |
| You Do Not Come | 313 |
| I Shall Die If You Go to Graze the Cows | 314 |
| You Were Gone the Whole Day | 314 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| THE TEVARAM ("GARLAND OF GOD") OF CUNTARAR | 315 |
| A Dog Am I | 315 |
| You Won't Remove the Fierce Karma | 316 |
| You Slew a Murderous Elephant | 317 |
| What Is the Use of Release? | 317 |
| You Kill Time Telling Lies | 319 |
| When I Hear Death Has Come | 319 |
| Can't You See How False They Are | 320 |
| I Placed Before Him | 320 |
| I Don't Call to Him as My Mother | 321 |
| THE PERIYA PURANAM ("GREAT PURANA") OF CEKKILAR | 322 |
| Maran Feeds a Guest | 323 |
| Kannappar Gives His Eye to Shiva | 325 |
| THE CILAPPATIKARAM ("THE TALE OF AN ANKLET") OF ILANKO ATIKAL | 336 |
| Pattini Is Worshipped | 337 |

**Shiva's Warriors and Wives in Kannada,
800–1700 C.E.**

| | |
|---|-----|
| BASAVA AND THE VIRASHAIVAS | 342 |
| Shiva, You Have No Mercy | 342 |
| As a Mother Runs | 343 |
| The Master of the House | 344 |
| Does It Matter How Long | 344 |
| When a Whore with a Child | 345 |
| I Went to Fornicate | 345 |
| Don't You Take On | 346 |
| The Pot Is a God | 346 |
| The Rich Will Make Temples | 347 |
| MAHADEVIIYAKKA: A VIRASHAIVA WOMAN POET-SAINT | 348 |
| My Body Is Dirt | 348 |
| Husband Inside | 348 |
| Who Cares | 349 |
| If One Could | 350 |
| People, Male and Female | 350 |

Passion for God in Telugu, 1100–1300 C.E.

| | |
|---|-----|
| THE BASAVA PURANA ("THE ANCIENT STORY OF BASAVA") OF PALKURIKI SOMANATHA | 354 |
| The Story of the Eggplants That Became <i>Lingas</i> | 355 |
| The Herdswoman's Buttermilk Pot | 355 |
| The Foxes That Became Horses | 356 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| TEMPLE POEMS FROM TIRUPATI BY ANNAMAYYA | 357 |
| Why Cross the Boundary | 357 |
| Seeing Is One Thing | 358 |
| I'll Serve You as Best I Can | 359 |
| Lord, I Give Up | 359 |
| You Think I'm Someone Special | 360 |
| It's No Small Thing | 361 |
| I Was Better Off Then | 362 |
| POEMS BY KSHETRAYYA | 363 |
| A Courtesan to a Young Customer | 363 |
| A Courtesan to Her Lover | 364 |
| A Courtesan to Her Friend | 365 |
| A Married Woman to Her Lover | 366 |
| <hr/> | |
| Falling at Shiva's Feet and Rama's Feet in Malayalam, 1850–1950 | 369 |
| KUMARAN ASAN | 369 |
| Feet Like Lotus Powder | 370 |
| Sita Lost in Thought | 372 |
| <hr/> | |
| DIASPORA INTERLUDE: HINDUISM IN CAMBODIA, JAVA, AND BALI | 378 |
| The Sdok Kak Thom Inscription | 379 |
| The Perfect Knowledge | 381 |
| The Romance of Arjuna and Ulupi | 384 |
| <hr/> | |
| VERNACULAR HINDUISM IN NORTH INDIA, 800–1900 | 392 |
| The Emergence of Hindi | 397 |
| THE BIJAK ("SEEDLING") OF KABIR | 399 |
| Saints, I've Seen Both Ways | 400 |
| Brother, Where Did Your Two Gods Come From? | 401 |
| That Con Man Hari | 401 |
| Here's How the World Fights against God | 402 |
| The Pandits' Pedantries Are Lies | 403 |
| Pandit, Look in Your Heart for Knowledge | 403 |
| Think, Pandit, Figure It Out | 404 |
| Hey Pandits, Who Didn't Die? | 405 |
| Pandit, Think Before You Drink | 405 |
| She Went with Her Husband | 406 |
| Beast-meat and Man-meat | 407 |
| It's a Heavy Confusion | 408 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Self Forgets Itself | 408 |
| Qazi, What Book Are You Lecturing On? | 409 |
| SURDAS | 410 |
| If You Drink the Milk | 410 |
| Far Off and Furtive | 411 |
| Look, My Friend | 412 |
| She's Found Him | 412 |
| Radha Is Lost | 413 |
| With Love There's Never a Thought | 413 |
| Black Storm Clouds | 414 |
| Gopal Has Slipped In | 415 |
| Thoughts of Him Stalk Me | 415 |
| Ever Since Your Name Has Entered | 416 |
| Having Seen Hari's Face | 416 |
| Madhav, Please, Control That Cow | 417 |
| MIRABAI | 419 |
| I'm Colored with the Color of Dusk | 419 |
| Life without Hari | 420 |
| The Bhil Woman Tasted Them | 420 |
| Sister, I Had a Dream | 421 |
| Oh, the Yogi | 422 |
| Let Us Go to a Realm Beyond Going | 423 |
| TULSI DAS | 424 |
| The Fire of My Stomach | 424 |
| It Is Said in Ancient Writings | 425 |
| A Blind, Mean-minded | 426 |
| Say Ram, Say Ram, Say Ram | 427 |
| The Name of King Ram | 427 |
| O Shiva, Great Giver | 428 |
| This Darkest of Ages | 429 |
| <i>Ramcharitmanas ("The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rama")</i> | 430 |
| Sati Takes the Form of Sita | 432 |
| The Crow and Anasuya | 435 |
| The Mutilation of Shurpanakha | 438 |
| The Abduction of Sita | 442 |
| Tukaram of Maharashtra Says No! 1608-1649 | 449 |
| GODS AND NOT SO HOLY MEN | 451 |
| I Was Only Dreaming | 451 |
| Insects in a Fig | 452 |
| I Pretend to Laugh | 453 |
| When My Father Died | 453 |
| I Was Held Captive | 454 |
| The Thug Has Arrived | 455 |
| God's Own Dog | 456 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Lord, You Could Become | 456 |
| With a Bizarrely Painted Face | 457 |
| The Great Mother of the Shakta | 458 |
| The Ascetic | 458 |
| Once There Was a Celibate Man | 459 |
| The Real Reason Why You Created | 459 |
| | |
| CASTE AND THE VARKARIS | 460 |
| By Caste and Lineage a Shudra | 460 |
| I've Not a Single Fraud | 462 |
| Good You Made Me a Kunbi | 462 |
| We Are Lucky! We Are Lucky! | 463 |
| I Feel Shame When People Honor Me | 463 |
| Born of Shudra Family | 464 |
| What Will I Gain by Remaining Deferent? | 464 |
| Oh Listen Now to Me | 465 |
| | |
| CRITIQUE OF BRAHMINS | 466 |
| He's Not a Brahmin Who Abhors | 466 |
| He Sells His Daughter, Cows, and Stories | 466 |
| The Cunning Grab for Coins | 467 |
| If You Don't Keep the <i>Ashramas</i> | 468 |
| <i>Brahmachari</i> Dharma Is Reciting the Vedas | 468 |
| Call Him Pandit, He's in Bliss | 469 |
| | |
| ILLUSION AND BHAKTI | 470 |
| It Is for This I Wander Wild | 470 |
| A God without a Devotee | 471 |
| Hari, You Are Cruel and without Qualities | 471 |
| I Gave Birth to Myself | 472 |
| We've Treated <i>Moksha</i> with Scorn Because | 473 |
| Silence in Speech, Life in Death | 473 |
| Brahma Is Illusion, Say the Crooks of Religion | 474 |
| Accumulating Wealth by a Noble Business | 474 |
| Avatar of Buddha, O My Invisible One | 475 |
| I've Built a House in Boundless Space | 475 |
| | |
| Love and Anger in Bengal, 1500–1872 | 477 |
| | |
| JAYADEVA | 480 |
| The Ten Avatars of Vishnu | 480 |
| | |
| VIDYAPATI | 483 |
| The Necklace-Snake | 483 |
| Counterfeit | 484 |
| Let No One Be a Girl | 484 |
| My Body Hid My Body | 485 |
| As the Mirror to My Hand | 485 |
| Children, Wife, Friend | 486 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHANDIDAS | 487 |
| What God Is That | 487 |
| He Was Black | 488 |
| It's No Use Telling Me | 488 |
| Mastering <i>Sahaja</i> Love | 489 |
| My Body Corrodes | 489 |
| Beloved, What More Shall I Say? | 490 |
| GOVINDA-DAS | 491 |
| O Madhava | 491 |
| The Marks of Fingernails | 492 |
| BALARAMA-DAS | 493 |
| A Wicked Woman | 493 |
| CHAITANYA AND KRISHNADAS KAVIRAJA | 494 |
| An Encounter with the Dual Form | 495 |
| RUPA GOSWAMIN | 497 |
| The General Characteristics of Devotion | 498 |
| The Eightfold Activities of Radha and Krishna | 502 |
| NAROTTAMA DAS | 504 |
| Poems to Krishna and Radha | 504 |
| KETAKA DAS | 506 |
| The Birth of Manasa | 507 |
| Chando Defies Manasa | 510 |
| Chando Comes Home | 517 |
| Manasa Relents | 518 |
| RAMPRASAD SEN | 521 |
| I Spent My Days in Fun | 521 |
| Tell Me, Brother, What Happens after Death? | 522 |
| What Did I Do Wrong? | 522 |
| How Many Times, Mother | 523 |
| You Think Motherhood Is Child's Play? | 524 |
| Mind, You Gambled | 524 |
| I'm Not Calling You Anymore | 525 |
| Why Should I Go to Kashi? | 525 |
| Mother, Incomparably Arrayed | 526 |
| FAKIR LALON SHAH | 527 |
| The Bird and the Cage, and the Flower | 527 |
| JAMES BATTRAY AND W. H. MACNAGHTEN | 529 |
| Hindoo Widows, &c. | 529 |
| Questions to the Pundits of the Court of Sudder Dewanny Adawlat | 531 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| RAMMOHUN ROY | 538 |
| The Practice of Burning Widows Alive | 538 |
| MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DATTA | 546 |
| The Funeral Rites of Meghanada | 547 |
| SWAMI VIVEKANANDA | 550 |
| Speeches to the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago 1893 | 550 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| THE HINDU AUTHORS OF MODERNITY, 1900 AND AFTER | 553 |
|---|-----|

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Folk, Tribal, and Dalit Hinduism | 559 |
|----------------------------------|-----|

| | |
|--|-----|
| FOLK HINDUISM | 561 |
| <i>Gujarat</i> | |
| The Goddess of Mahi River | 561 |
| Lord Shiva and the Satwaras | 563 |
| The Origin of the Shiva- <i>linga</i> at Bhimnath | 565 |
| <i>Nagaland</i> | |
| The Girl Who Was Loved by a Tree Spirit | 567 |
| <i>Bengal</i> | |
| The Birth and Marriage of Shiva | 568 |
| The Origin of the Temple at Tarakeshvar | 570 |
| The Brahmin Who Swallowed a God | 572 |
| If God Is Everywhere | 574 |
| Nonviolence | 575 |
| Walking on Water | 575 |
| <i>Andhra Pradesh</i> | |
| How Tenali Rama Became a Jester | 576 |
| Tenali Rama's <i>Ramayana</i> | 576 |
| The Guru and the Idiot | 577 |
| ADIVASI (TRIBAL) HINDUISM | 579 |
| <i>Gonds</i> | 579 |
| Mahadeo and Parvati Were Living in the Binjpahar Hills | 580 |
| In the Under World | 581 |
| An Old Gond and His Wife | 582 |
| Formerly the Whole Country Belonged to the Gond | 582 |
| A Chamar's Sons | 583 |
| <i>Rajnengi Pardhan</i> | 584 |
| The Sun and the Moon | 584 |
| One Night while Sita and Rama Were Lying Together | 585 |
| When Cows Were First Born | 587 |
| Before Mahadeo Sent Men to Live | 588 |
| <i>Muria</i> | 588 |
| When This World Was First Made | 588 |
| Long Ago Men Could Read the Future | 590 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Other Tribal Groups</i> | 590 |
| Bhagavan Wanted to Piss (<i>Gogia Pardhan</i>) | 590 |
| Why Men and Animals No Longer Talk Together (<i>Ahir</i>) | 591 |
| There Was No Death (<i>Juang</i>) | 592 |
| There Was Once a God Called Amrit (<i>Kol</i>) | 595 |
| | |
| DALIT HINDUISM | 596 |
| Dr. Ambedkar's Speech at Mahad | 597 |
| Which Language Should I Speak? (<i>Arun Kamble</i>) | 605 |
| You Who Have Made the Mistake (<i>Baburao Bagul</i>) | 605 |
| The Story of 'My Sanskrit' (<i>Kumud Pawde</i>) | 606 |
| Angulimal (<i>Tryambak Sapkale</i>) | 615 |
| Eklavya (<i>Tryambak Sapkale</i>) | 616 |
| For I Am Brahma (<i>Narayan Surve</i>) | 617 |
| Every Woman in This Country (<i>Kamla Bhasin</i>) | 617 |
| | |
| <hr/> | |
| Hinduism and the Twentieth-Century Writer | 621 |
| | |
| RABINDRANATH TAGORE | 623 |
| <i>Gitanjali</i> | 623 |
| Mind Without Fear | 624 |
| Fool | 624 |
| Leave This | 625 |
| Seashore | 625 |
| Sail Away | 626 |
| Maya | 626 |
| Song Unsung | 627 |
| Lost Time | 628 |
| Distant Time | 628 |
| Endless Time | 628 |
| | |
| MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI | 630 |
| The Gospel of Selfless Action | 630 |
| | |
| PREM CHAND | 638 |
| The Shroud | 638 |
| | |
| NIRALA | 645 |
| A Look at Death | 645 |
| Giving | 646 |
| Blood Holi | 648 |
| Shurpanakha | 649 |
| | |
| MAHASVETA DEVI | 660 |
| Dopdi (<i>Draupadi</i>) | 661 |
| | |
| ANANTHA MURTHY | 672 |
| Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man | 672 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| ANUMANDLA BHUMAYYA | 677 |
| Kausalya in Fury | 677 |
| VILAS SARANG | 680 |
| Rudra the Untouchable God | 680 |
| SALMAN RUSHDIE | 688 |
| Midnight's Children | 688 |
| PURUSHOTTAM NAGESH OAK | 691 |
| The Taj Mahal Is a Hindu Palace | 691 |
| KANCHA ILAIAH | 697 |
| Hindu Gods and Us | 698 |
| A. K. RAMANUJAN | 710 |
| Mythologies 1: Putana | 710 |
| Mythologies 2: Nara-Simha | 711 |
| Mythologies 3: Mahadeviyakka | 712 |
| <i>Glossary</i> | A3 |
| <i>Selected Bibliography</i> | A13 |
| <i>Permissions Acknowledgments</i> | A19 |
| <i>Index</i> | A25 |