

[Book Reviews](#)

Category : [October 1995](#)

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Book Reviews

This month we feature an extraordinary book, The Ribhu Gita, the Upanishadic discourse of the guru, Sage Ribhu, to his disciple, Nidagha. Its publication is a landmark achievement in the domain of Hindu scripture, making a previously inaccessible and virtually unknown, yet priceless and pure, Hindu teaching available to the English-speaking world. Following the review is an interview with Master Nome, the spirit behind this profound edition.

THE RIBHU GITA,

First English Translation from the Original Sanskrit Indian Epic Sivarahasya. Translated by Dr. H. Ramamoorthy, assisted by Master Nome. First edition, 1995, hardbound, 335 pages, US\$25.00. Available from Treasures of the Heart, 1834 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, California, 95060, USA. Phone: 1-800-465-0376 (US only), 408-458-9654, fax: 408-425-0407, e-mail: ramana@cruzio.com

How rare! How precious! How utterly lofty! How far beyond the everyday consciousness of humanity, yet how close to our most intimate yearnings! Thanks to the recent publication by the Society of Abidance in Truth, SAT, the Saivas now have their Gita, too--the Ribhu Gita, an apparently "ancient text" which, like the other Gita, is an extract from a much longer epic, in this case the Sivarahasya.

The interesting thing about this Gita is its unswerving focus upon one teaching only, that of the Self, or Self-God. "Tat Tvam Asi," "You are That." This lofty knowing permeates virtually all Hindu teaching, but we know of no other text where it is focused upon so exclusively or exposed at such length. In all, some

2,200 sutras are dedicated to this ultimate of truths.

The book consists of 44 chapters, each one of which considers the Self, or Brahman, from one point of view, or conversely, looks back upon consciousness from the point of view of the Self. The reader who is inclined to monism will be delighted. He may find some stanzas awakening new perception. For example, "You never had a witness," struck and forcefully impacted this

reader.

It is important to note that the book does not rest with absolute monism, which would not allow any validity to the dualistic view. This is what makes this text truly great. After exposing in each chapter the world and all its inhabitants and happenings as totally unreal from the perspective of the highest Absolute, it

concludes each chapter with practical advice in terms of duality, offering some of its most beautiful passages. The book systematically dismantles its own theology, one might say, after constructing it. In this it is consistent, showing that even theology and doctrine are relative, not absolutes.

It should be mentioned too that this book was the great Ramana Maharshi's "bible." He referred to it constantly, and taught and encouraged others to read it. It is a Moksha Mantra from beginning to end, with no intellectual diversions, no entertaining digressions. We must marvel at the

Great Ones who so long ago sustained such a contemplation, the likes of which cannot be found elsewhere. Let us hold our hands together in homage to those realized beings who held Truth in the palm of their hand, who knew the Unknowable, and who left us this legacy of their revelation that jiva

is, indeed, Siva.

Interview with Master
Nome

Hinduism Today: Why
did you choose to
publish this book?

Master Nome: The

book itself was highly recommended by my guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi. Reading the book and meditating upon its significance is of tremendous value for those who are

practicing the path
of jnana, or
self-inquiry. The
book also
represents that
fusion point where
Saiva Siddhanta
and Vedanta meet
as one. For many,
many years I had
wanted to read the

book myself, but it was not available in English. You know the old adage: "If you want the job done, do it yourself."

HT:How does it

show the meeting of Vedanta and Siddhanta?

MN:By the sheer
amount of deep
devotion to Siva
evident in the

text, and at the same time showing Siva beyond all differentiation, beyond every human mental concept. For those who feel

Brahman is some
austere vacancy,
the sheer spirit
of the text lifts
one beyond that.
For those
practicing the
path of Siva
knowledge, but

not having heard
of or not having
given adequate
meditation to
who Siva is in
the Supreme
sense, it
inculcates that
knowledge.

HT:What do we know about the Sivarahasya?

MN:It would have to be post-vedic. It

may be
counted as an
epic, or a
purana,
perhaps. It
covers
everything, as
much as I've

seen of it, a
vast array of
knowledge
about places of
pilgrimage,
some
history--things
one would find

in a Purana.
Then we find
teachings one
would
associate with
an Upanishad,
which Ribhu
figures in. I

would be
hesitant to
classify the
work, other
than to say it
is timeless and
ancient.

When looking
at the Tamil
Ribhu Gita,
we saw that it
derived from
a Sanskrit
original within

a voluminous
work--the
Sivarahasya.
With much
searching, we
procured from
India the

cantos of the
Sanskrit
Sivarahasya,
fifth and sixth
primarily, that
contained the
Ribhu Gita. We

decided to
translate both
books,
Sanskrit and
Tamil. This
represents
the first half

of the
publication.

HT: How did
Ramana

Maharshi use this book?

MN:Sri Ramana said

this book
confirmed,
in scripture,
exactly what
he had
realized in
silence.

When
devotees
would come,
he would
frequently
give the
book to

them and
say, "Read
this." One
woman
devotee
said, "I can't
understand

a word of it."
He said,
"Just read it.
Keep
reading it.
Again and
again. It is a

sadhana
itself."

HT: How
should a

person use
it?

MN:For one

who steep
himself in
it, each
verse
becomes
blissful. I

recommen
d that a
person
read it
extremely
slowly,

verse by
verse, or
preferably
line by line,
even word
by word.

The text
should be
approache
d with
reverence.
It was

designed
for
someone
who has
deep
devotion,

humility,
who's not
attached to
things of
the world,
who has

that
burning
desire for
liberation
and wants
a treatise

that
reminds
him of the
guru's
instruction
about the

nature of
Ultimate
Truth.
That's the
function
the text

really
serves, in a
bombastic
way, again
and again
and again.

One has to
understand
it with the
right life
and right
meditation.

[Then,
speaking
softly] We
regard it
as a
great...I

don't think
"honor" is
the right
word--just
to have
participate

d in
preserving
something
like this. I
am very
happy that

I've been
able to do
this for the
sake of my
guru,
because of

his
emphasis
on this
scripture.

Book

Reviews

JNANESW
ARI,

Commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, by

Sri
Jnanadev
a,
translate
d from

Marathi by Ramchan dra Keshav

Bhagwat,
fourth
edition,
1989. 689
pages,

hb.,
US\$25.95
, in India
rs180.
Lotus

Light
Publicatio
ns, P.O.
Box 325,
Twin

Lakes,
Wisconsin
53181,
USA.
Phone:

414-889-
8561, fax:
414-889-
8591.
INDIA:

Samata Books, 10, Congress Building,

573

Mount

Road,

Madras

600 006,

India.

This is

one of
the great
classics
of Hindu
thought

and a
mine of
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t
comment
aries on
the Gita
--perhaps

the most
significant
t after
that of
Sri

Shankara
charya--b
y the
great
saint and

yogi Sri
Jnanadev
a, who
lived in
the

thirteenth
h
century.
It is also
one of

the
greatest
books of
Maharas
htra,

where
Jnanadev
a lived,
and one
of the

oldest books in the Marathi language



Jnanadev

a's
commen
tary is
thorough
and

detailed.

It

reflects

profound

yogic

knowled
ge and
tremend
ous
insight

into all
aspects
of life.
Though
Jnanadeva

only
lived to
the age
of
twenty,

he
achieved
the
supreme
goal of

Self
Realizati
on. He
was both
a natha

yogi and
a Krishna
bhakta.
He
complete

d his
Jnanesw
ariat the
mere
age of

fifteen.

This
volume
includes
the

Sanskrit of the Gita. The English translati

on of the
commen
tary is
well
done,

and
includes
helpful
introduct
ory

material.

Review

by David Frawley

VEDIC ASTROLOGY: Ashtaka Varga,

Made Simple for the Western Astrolog

er, by

R.G.

Krishnan,

1994.

123

pages,

pb.,

US\$20.0

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R. G.

Krishnan,
900
Frances
Way
#375,

Richards
on, TX
75081-6
406.
Phone/fa

X:

214-783-

1242.

This
book is a
technical
treatise
which

elucidate
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clear,
well-writt
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English
the
hitherto
mystifyin
g aspect

(no pun
intended
) of
Vedic
astrology

--

Ashtaka Varga. The Ashtaka

Varga
system
assesses
the
effects of

transiting
g planets
from the
Moon
sign and

from
seven
other
planets.
Those

who are
not
already
familiar
with

Vedic astrologi cal concepts and

practice
may still
be
mystified
by this

book.

But for

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astrologer

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book will

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nding

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arcane
topic and
will
reveal a

deeper realm of Vedic astrology

■

AYURVE DA, A way of life, by Dr. Vinod

Verma,
1995.
278
pages,
pb., US\$1

4.95.
Samuel
Weiser,
Inc., Box
612,

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Beach,
Maine,
03910-0
612,

USA.

Phone:

207-363-

4393,

fax:

207-383-
5799.

Ayurveda: A Way of Life is an easy-to-u

nderstan d, compreh ensive guide for

assimilating the
fundamentals of
Ayurved

a--India's ancient life-sciences and system

of
holistic
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lives.
This
book is

uniquely
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constituti
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types--a
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combinat

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clearly
explaine
d, so
readers

can
create
their own
balance.
You will

learn
how to
reduce
stress,
restore

health and maintain vitality. The book

includes
recipes
for
home-cu
ring

basic
discomforts,
easy
relaxation
n

exercises
and yoga
postures
and
provides

precious
help to
anyone
who
wants to

stay
healthy,
happy
and in
tune with

themselv
es and
the
rhythm
of the

cosmos.

A

SURVEY OF HINDUIS M, by Klaus K.

Klosterm
aier,
second
edition,
1994.

715

pages,

pb.,

US\$19.9

5. State

Univ^{er}sit
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York
Press,
c/o CUP

Services,
750
Cascadill
a Street,
Ithaca,

New
York,
14851,
USA.
Phone:

607-277-
2211,
fax (US):
1-800-68
8-2877.

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a fresh,
new view
of

Hinduism
in this
book.
Surveyis
a large

book,
examinin
g the
philosop
hies and

sects of Hinduism , the Hindu social

system,
the
position
of
women

and
much
more. It
contains
passages

from the
Vedas,
Gita and
other
scripture

S, addressi ng the Hinduism of South

India as
well as
the
North.
Notably,

Klostern
aier's
work is
probably
the first

academi
c
publicati
on to
seriously

challeng
e the
Aryan
invasion
theory,

and to
offer a
chronolo
gy that
accepts

the antiquity of Vedic civilization in

India. Klosterm aier presents Hinduism

as a
living
religion
with
important

t global
relevanc
e. He
states,
"It would

not be
surprisin
g to find
Hinduism
the

dominant
religion
of the
twenty-first
century

century."

If all
Western
scholars
followed

the
example
of
Klosterm
aier,

Hinduism
would be
much
better
understo

od in the
world
today.

Review by David Frawley

AYURVE DIC COOKIN G FOR WESTER

NEERS,
Familiar
Western
Food
Prepared

with Ayurvedic Principles, by

Amadea
Mornings
tar,
1995.
395

pages,

pb.,

US\$19.9

5. Lotus

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ons, P.O.
Box 325,
Twin
Lakes,

Wisconsi
n 53181,
USA.
Phone:
414-889-

8561,
fax:
414-889-
8591.

Ayurved aapplied to Indian cooking is

virtually
assumed
. But for
the
Western

chef,
applying
Ayurved
ato daily
dishes

may
serve a
dilemma.
Who
knows

how the
standard
Western
dishes,
like

mashed
potatoes,
will
affect
the

doshas?

Now we

can all

know.

Step into

Amadea'
s kitchen
and
learn
how to

cook
fresh,
easy
recipes
for

healthy
folks, as
well as
for those
with

illnesses,
including
allergies
and
candida.

While
she
emphasi
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many

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FROM INDIA TO AMERICA , A Brief History

of Immigrat ion; Problems of

Discrimin ation, Admissio n and Assimilat

ion,
edited by
S.
Chandra
sekhar,

second
edition,
1986.
108
pages,

pb., US\$1

0.00.

Population

n

Review,

8976
Cliffridge
Avenue,
La Jolla,
Californi

a,
92037,
USA.

This first
book on
a crucial
subject
provides

a fascinati ng account of Indian

immigrat ion and the survival struggles

of a
forgotten
population
in the
US. The

author is
to be
congratu
lated for
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fairness
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tion. He
has
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challeng

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of other
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immigra
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book is a
collection
of ten
articles,
each

portrayin
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different
aspect of
the

disarray of Indian immigrat ion, the problems

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discrimin
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new land
and
culture.
The book

has
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importance with

regard to
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trend in
the US

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ent to
tighten
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immigrat

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policies.

MORE BOOKS NOT TO MISS:

A Pilgrim Guide to Some Holy Places in

Dakshina Kannada and Around, by

Swami
Jyotirma
yananda,
1995. 48
pages,

pb.,
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"Constan
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Name

before
and after
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(North),
671 531,
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practical
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Glossary; Table of Distance sand Where to

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tiny
treasure!

Living in India, written by Anne Singh,

illustrate d by Aline Riquier. Elephant

s: Big,
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Rene

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for kids;
you'll
learn

something,
too!

Sri Aurobindo o, the Story of His Life,

second
edition,
1990, 95
pages,
pb.,

rs12.00.
Sri
Aurobind
O
Ashram

Press,
Pondiche
rry,
South
India.

A
unique,
poetic
account
of the

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Aurobind
o, one of
India's
great

modern-
day
renaissa
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leaders.