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This book provides a much-needed thematic and historical introduction to Hinduism, the religion of the majority of people in India. Beginning with the question 'What is Hinduism?', Dr Flood traces the development of Hindu traditions from their ancient origins, through the major deities of Viṣṇu, Śiva and the Goddess, to the modern world. Hinduism as both a global religion and a form of nationalism are discussed. Particular emphasis is given to the tantric traditions, which have been so influential; to Hindu ritual, which is more fundamental to the life of the religion than are specific beliefs or doctrines; and to Dravidian influences from south India. *An introduction to Hinduism* examines the ideas of *dharma* (particularly in relation to the ideology of kingship), caste and world renunciation. Dr Flood also introduces some debates within contemporary scholarship about the nature of Hinduism. His book is suitable both for the beginning student and for the general reader, and as such will be an ideal starting point, and an indispensable companion, for anybody interested in learning more about a religious tradition of major and continuing significance.

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Frontispiece Kṛṣṇa riding through the air on a symbolic elephant made of cowgirls.
Rajasthan, Jaipur School c. 1800.

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An introduction to Hinduism

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For Leela and Claire

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A note on language and transliteration

The languages of Hinduism are Sanskrit and the Indian vernaculars, particularly Tamil. This book follows the standard form of transliteration with the exception of place names and some proper names which are written in their generally acknowledged anglicized forms without diacritical marks. There is a distinction in Sanskrit between the stem form of a word and the nominative or subject case. I generally use the stem form of Sanskrit words with the exception of common terms such as *karma* (which is the nominative singular) and some proper names such as Hanumān (rather than Hanumat) and Bhagavān (rather than Bhagavat). Sanskrit is a phonetic language, so transliteration reflects correct pronunciation. There are short vowels in Sanskrit (*a, i, u, ṛ, ḥ*) and long vowels (*ā, ī, ū, ṝ, e, o, ai, au*), twice as long as the short. The vowels are approximately pronounced as follows:

- a* like 'a' in 'woman'
- ā* like 'a' in 'rather'
- i* like 'i' in 'sit'
- ī* like 'ee' in 'meet'
- u* like 'u' in 'put'
- ū* like 'u' in 'rule'
- ṛ* like 'ri' in 'rig'
- ṝ* like 'ri' in 'reel'
- ḥ* like 'le' in 'table'

A note on language and transliteration

e like ‘e’ in ‘red’

ai like ‘ai’ in ‘aisle’

o like ‘o’ in ‘go’

au like ‘ow’ in ‘vow’

Consonants are unaspirated (such as *ka, ga, pa*) and aspirated (such as *kha, gha, pha*). The retroflex sounds *ṭa, tha, da, dha* and *ṇa* are pronounced with the tip of the tongue bent backwards to touch the palate. The dentals *ta, tha, da, dha* and *ṇa* are pronounced with the tip of the tongue behind the teeth. The gutteral nasal *ṅa*, pronounced ‘ng’, and the palatal *ñā*, pronounced ‘nya’, are always found in conjunction with other consonants of their class (except in the case of some ‘seed’ mantras). Thus *linīga* and *añjali*. The *m* sound or *anusvāra* represents a nasalization of the preceding vowel and the *h* sound or *visarga* represents an aspiration of the preceding vowel: a ‘h’ sound followed by a slight echo of the vowel (e.g. *devah* is *devab^h*). Apart from these sounds, two Tamil consonants which have no English equivalents are *la* and *ra* which are retroflex sounds.

Abbreviations and texts

The following are abbreviations for Sanskrit texts referred to. Assuming that the Sanskrit editions of the texts will be of little use to the readers of this book, only bibliographical details of English translations are given, where available.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| <i>Ait.Ar.</i> | <i>Aitareya Āraṇyaka</i> |
| <i>Ap.Gr.S.</i> | <i>Āpastamba Grhya Sūtra</i> . H. Oldenberg, <i>The Grhya Sūtras</i> , SBE 29, 30 (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1964–5) |
| <i>Ap.S.S.</i> | <i>Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra</i> |
| <i>Ar.S.</i> | <i>Ārtha Śāstra of Kautilya</i> . L. N. Rangarajan, <i>The Arthashastra</i> (Delhi: Penguin, 1992) |
| <i>As.Gr.S.</i> | <i>Aśvalāyana Grhya Sūtra</i> . H. Oldenberg, <i>The Grhya Sūtras</i> , SBE 29, 30 (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1964–5) |
| <i>Ast.</i> | <i>Aṣṭādhyāyī</i> of Pānini. See G. Cardona, <i>Pānini, His Work and its Traditions</i> , vol. 1 (Delhi: MLBD, 1988) |
| <i>Ath.V.</i> | <i>Atharva Veda</i> . M. Bloomfield, <i>Hymns of the Atharva Veda</i> , SBE 42 (1897; Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1967) |
| <i>BAU</i> | <i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i> , S. Radhakrishnan, <i>The Principal Upaniṣads</i> (London: Unwin Hyman, 1953) |
| <i>Baud.SS.</i> | <i>Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra</i> |
| <i>Bh.G.</i> | <i>Bhagavad Gitā</i> . J. van Buitenen, <i>The Bhagavadgitā in the Mahābhārata</i> (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981) |
| <i>BSB</i> | <i>Brhma Sūtra Bhāṣya</i> . G. Thibaut, <i>Vedānta Sūtras with</i> |

List of abbreviations and texts

- Commentary by Śaṅkarācārya*, 2 vols., SBE 34, 38 (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1987)
- Ch. U.* *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*
- Dbh. Pur.* *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*. See C. M. Brown, *The Triumph of the Goddess: The Canonical Models and Theological Visions of the Devi-Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990)
- Devma.* *Devimahātmya*. T. B. Coburn, *Encountering the Goddess, a Translation of the Devimahātmya and a Study of Its Interpretation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991)
- Gaut. Dh.* *Gautama Dharma Śāstra*. G. Bühler, *The Sacred Laws of the Āryas*, SBE 2 (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1987)
- Hat. Yog.* *Hathayogapradīpikā* of Svātmārāma. T. Tatya, *The Hathayogapradīpikā of Svātmārāma* (Madras: Adyar Library, 1972)
- Jab. U.* *Jābāla Upaniṣad*. Patricke Olivelle, *The Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣads: Hindu Scriptures on Asceticism and Renunciation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)
- Jay. Sam.* *Jayākhyā Saṃhitā*
- Kat. U.* *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*
- Kau.* *Kauṇakjñānanirṇaya*
- KBT* *Kubjikāmata Tantra*
- Kur. Pur.* *Kūrma Purāṇa*. A Board of Scholars, *The Kūrma Purāṇa*, All India Tradition and Mythology (Delhi: MLBD, 1973)
- Mabbhas.* *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali
- Mabnar. U.* *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*
- Mait. U.* *Maitrī Upaniṣad*
- Manu* *Manu-smṛti*. W. Doniger, *The Laws of Manu* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991)
- Mark. Pur.* *Mārkandeya Purāṇa*. F. E. Pargiter, *The Mārkandeya Purāṇa* (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1969)
- Mat. Pur.* *Matsya Purāṇa*. A Board of Scholars, *The Matsya Purāṇa* (Delhi: AITM, 1973)
- Mbh.* *Mahābhārata*. J. A. B. van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, 3 vols. (University of Chicago Press, 1973–8). W. Buck, *The Mahābhārata Retold* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973)

List of abbreviations and texts

MLBD	Motilal Banarsi das
MS.	<i>Mimāṃsā Sūtras</i> of Jaimini. M. C. Sandal, <i>The Mimāṃsa Sūtras of Jaimini</i> , 2 vols. (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1980)
M. Stav.	<i>Mahimnastava</i> . Arthur Avalon, <i>The Greatness of Śiva</i> , <i>Mahimnastava of Puspadanta</i> (Madras: Ganesh and Co., reprint 1963)
Nar.U.	<i>Nāradaparivrājaka Upaniṣad</i> . P. Olivelle, <i>The Samnyāsa Upanisads</i>
Pas.Su.	<i>Pāśupata Sūtra</i> . H. Chakraborti, <i>Pāśupata-Sūtram with Panchārtha-Bhāṣya of Kaṇḍinya</i> (Calcutta: Academic Publishers, 1970)
RV	<i>R̥g Veda Samhitā</i> , A selection of hymns can be found in M. Müller, <i>Vedic Hymns</i> , 2 vols., SBE 32, 46 (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1973); W. D. O'Flaherty, <i>The Rig Veda</i> (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981)
Sam.Kar.	<i>Sāṃkhya Kārikā</i> of Iśvarakṛṣṇa. G. Larson, <i>Classical Sāṃkhya</i> (Delhi: MLBD, 1979)
Sat.Br.	<i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i> . J. Eggeling, <i>The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa</i> , 5 vols., SBE 12, 26, 41, 43, 44 (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1978–82)
SBE	Sacred books of the East
Sp.Nir.	<i>Spanda-Nirnaya</i> of Kṣemarāja. J. Singh, <i>Spanda Kārikās</i> (Delhi: MLBD, 1980)
Sribha.	<i>Śribhāṣya</i> of Rāmānuja. G. Thibaut, <i>The Vedānta-sūtras with Commentary by Rāmānuja</i> , SBE 48 (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1976)
Svet.U.	<i>Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad</i> . Radhakrishnan, <i>The Principal Upaniṣads</i>
TA	<i>Tantrāloka</i> of Abhinavagupta
Tait.Sam.	<i>Taittirīya Samhitā</i> . A. B. Keith, in <i>The Veda of the Black Yajus School Entitled Taittiriya Sanhita</i> , 2 vols., Harvard Oriental Series 18, 19 (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914)
Tait.Up.	<i>Taittiriya Upaniṣad</i> . Radhakrishnan, <i>The Principal Upaniṣads</i>
Vaj.Sam.	<i>Vājasaneyi Samhitā</i>
Vakpad.	<i>Vākyapādiya</i> of Bhartṛhari. K. A. Iyer, <i>The Vākyapadiya</i> (Poona: Deccan College, 1965)
Vay.Pur.	<i>Vāyu Purāṇa</i> . A Board of Scholars, <i>The Vāyu Purāṇa</i> , All India Tradition and Mythology (Delhi: MLBD, 1973)

List of abbreviations and texts

- Vis.Pur.* *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. H. H. Wilson, *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, reprint 1967)
- Vis.Smrt.* *Viṣṇu Smṛti*. J. Jolly, *The Institutes of Viṣṇu*, SBE 7 (Delhi: MLBD, reprint 1965)
- Yog.U.* *Yogatattva Upaniṣad*. T. R. S. Ayyangar, *The Yoga Upaniṣads* (Madras: Adyar Library, 1952)
- YS* *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali. See *YS bhasya*
- YS bhasya* *Yoga Sūtra-bhāṣya* of Vyāsa. Swami H. Āranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983)