

temple for pilgrims is a wonder-message for the twenty-first century.

Jagmohan had been amidst the scorching flames of the partition holocaust and quite early in his growing-up years had become cynical about 'the state of our religion and new leadership'. Instead of moaning that nothing can redeem this 'benighted' religion and country, he set about quietly pursuing a regular career. His sensitivity caught all needed information about the state of the country, and he realized that India's Sanatana Dharma still held the key to national unity. Not born to be a mere figurehead in his profession, he used his office as the governor of Jammu and Kashmir to make the Vaishno Devi temple a comfortable shrine for pilgrims, a model for right management, and a reverential place of worship.

It was no easy task. It never is when you come face-to-face with entrenched forces that reject any forms of development. *Reforming Vaishno Devi* provides a blueprint for the future, should the common man be able to have the upper hand in managing his finances, religion, and culture. Today Vaishno Devi is garbage-free and beggar-free. No more is it shunned by tourists, while the pious pilgrims who have been coming here for decades are ecstatic. With the passing of the Sri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Act 1986, the temple came under the management of a new board that took over from the Baridars and Dharm Arth. The chapter 'Response, Reaction and Results' gives all that we need to know about this historic transformation of not only the temple but the surrounding countryside.

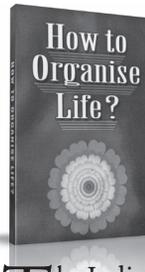
Reforming Vaishno Devi is, however, more than the problems of change, which included legal battles and Dr Karan Singh's gracious acceptance of the new dispensation. Thanks to Jagmohan's uncomplicated view of religion and society we learn that this is really a boost for the state's economy through tourism. It helps the preservation of heritage as also brings back to public memory great leaders of the region. In Vaishno Devi we now get to know about General Zorawar Singh, Baba Jitto, and Veer Ramachandra. There is also the saddening chapter on the Amarnath shrine, where politicians and communal elements gained the upper hand and thwarted attempts to make it as safe, comfortable, and prosperous as Vaishno Devi.

While each page enriches our understanding of religion, nation, and environment, the whole of Section II has plenty of educative notes on subjects like the Aryan invasion theory and the existence of the Saraswati River. The realization that Swami Vivekananda would surely exult that his coming has not been in vain comes upon us as we read: 'A reformed Hindu, in brief, would turn out to be a worthy son of a reinvigorated and healthy Mother Goddess. He would be best suited to serve not only Mother India but also Mother Earth. Being a believer in the unity of existence and committed to the welfare of humanity as a whole, he could make an effective contribution in checking the immense damage that human greed and current styles of life are causing to the planet' (259).

An inspiring call indeed from an achiever for Indians of the twenty-first century.

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How to Organize Life?

A Vedanta Kesari Presentation

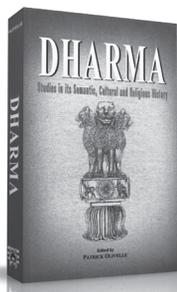
Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore,
Chennai 600 004. Website: www.chennai.math.org. 2010. vi + 229 pp.
₹ 45.

The Indian tradition lays down various schemas to organize life. This book analyses them in the modern context. Shrutis and Smritis are seen through Swami Vivekananda's eyes. Complex concepts of dharma, caste, moksha, and karma yoga have been explained. The chapter 'Modern Man, Mind and the Meaning of Mythology' takes a fresh look at mythology and seeks to clear many misconceptions about the nature of myths.

A chapter details Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, while another names the teachings of Swami Vivekananda as 'Vivekananda Smriti'. A careful reading of this work convinces one that new moral codes in consonance with traditional values and modern needs have to be created. Evolving out of the December 2002 special number of the Eng-

lish journal *Vedanta Kesari*, this work could be a manual of morality in the lines of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

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Dharma: Studies in its Semantic, Cultural and Religious History
Ed. Patrick Olivelle

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110 007. Website: www.mldb.com. 2009. viii + 492 pp. ₹ 1,195.

This scholarly work deals historically with dharma, a central feature of Indian civilization, in its cultural and religious aspects irrespective of linguistic, sectarian, or regional differences. There are nineteen papers by various leading scholars that deal thoroughly with each separate study. Such an effort was long overdue as confusion and inaccurate accounts have dogged the notion of dharma in the context of understanding the religio-cultural history of India. This volume shows that the term 'dharma' has been subject to evolution and change depending upon the context of different traditions and cultural groups, ranging from Hinduism to Jainism to Buddhism, from the ancient to the medieval to the modern periods.

The topics by the various authors are, briefly: Dharma's early history; dharma in the Rig Veda, semantic history, early Buddhism, and Jainism; the Vedas and Dharma Shastras; dharma's concept in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and in classical philosophy; dharma's meaning in practice and authority; medicine and dharma; the significance of Kumarila's philosophy; and so on. This broad canvas clearly indicates how a civilization has maintained a metaphysical world view that allows for continuity in many regions, despite diverse religious sects with contrasting myths, rituals, customs, and teachings. The term 'dharma' is wide-ranged, and many other connotations have also arisen as it came in contact with Western concepts, not necessarily always in a scholarly context, but also within contending socio-political arenas.

We thus learn that dharma has moral connotations both in Hinduism and Buddhism. It stretches into many cultural spheres, like the dharma of castes and the life-stages within which it is enmeshed. It is commonly used by lay persons during social customs, ritual ceremonies as well as covering civil law, criminal law, and statecraft or royal law. Essentially, dharma has a connection to salvation, and its practice in everyday life is for leading one towards a transcendental order. That is the basic foundation of dharma, which is not merely for material gain or personal enjoyment through the performance of sacrifices, rites, offering gifts, and so on. In this way, although dharma is beyond existential goals, it is empirical—it is to be known and operated at an everyday experiential level. In this sense it is substantial, since it manifests itself only while dealing with people or performing one's duty without motives. This in turn is linked to *ṛta*, cosmic law, and to human affairs. Thus dharma, *ṛta*, and human life are interconnected. Dharma is to be impersonally performed for the sake of the larger cosmic order; this makes it a moral duty. It is also linked to the notion of karma in terms of deeds performed. Taking all this wide range of expressions on dharma, this book is a landmark contribution to the study of Indian civilization.

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Universal Hinduism: Towards a New Vision of Sanatana Dharma

Vamadeva Shastri
(David Frawley)

Voice of India, 2/18 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002. Website: www.adityaprakashan.com. 2010. xi + 213 pp. ₹ 200.

The three parts of the book are introduced by Dharma Pravartaka (Frank Morales) and by Shivananda Murty's appreciation. In the first part, 'Universal Hinduism and Sanatana Dharma', the author gives many insights in the course of the