Indian Philosophy and Yoga in Germany: 1800-1899

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This book sheds new light on the fascinating — at times dark and at times hopeful — reception of classical Yoga philosophies in Germany during the nineteenth century.

When debates over God, religion, and morality were at a boiling-point in Europe, Sanskrit translations of classical Indian thought became available for the first time. Almost overnight India became the centre of a major controversy concerning the origins of western religious and intellectual culture. Working forward from this controversy, this book examines how early translations of the Gītā and the Yoga Sūtras were caught in the crossfire of another debate concerning the rise of pantheism, as a doctrine that identifies the divine “in all things.” It shows how these theological concerns shaped the image of Indian thought in the work of Schlegel, Günderrode, Humboldt, Hegel, Schelling, and others, lasting well into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Furthermore, the book explores how worries about the perceived nihilism of Yoga were addressed by key voices in the early twentieth century Indian Renaissance — notably Dasgupta, Radhakrishnan, and Bhattacharyya — who defended sophisticated counter-readings of their intellectual heritage during the colonial era.

Indian Philosophy and Yoga in Germany: 1800-1899 will be of interest to scholars and advanced students working on 19th-century European philosophy, Indian philosophy, comparative philosophy, Hindu studies, intellectual history, and religious history.

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