



The Hidden Lives of Brahman: Sankara's Vedanta through His Upanisad Commentaries, in Light of Contemporary Practice (SUNY Series in Religious Studies)

Joël André-Michel Dubois

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FINALIST - 2014 American Academy of Religion Best First Book Award in the History of Religions

Uses both textual and ethnographic sources to demonstrate that in ?a?kara's ved?nta, brahman is an active force as well as a transcendent ultimate.

?a?kara's thought, advaita ved?nta or non-dual ved?nta, is a tradition focused on *brahman*, the ultimate reality transcending all particular manifestations, words, and ideas. It is generally considered that the transcendent brahman cannot be attained through any effort or activity. While this conception is technically correct, in *The Hidden Lives of Brahman*, Joël André-Michel Dubois contends that it is misleading.

Hidden lives of brahman become visible when analysis of ?a?kara's seminal commentaries is combined with ethnographic descriptions of contemporary Brahmin students and teachers of ved?nta, a group largely ignored in most studies of this tradition. Dubois demonstrates that for ?a?kara, as for Brahmin tradition in general, brahman is just as much an active force, fully connected to the dynamic power of words and imagination, as it is a transcendent ultimate.

“The central idea of a multifaceted brahman in ?a?kara's thought is original and will be well received.” — Frederick Smith, coeditor of *Modern and Global Ayurveda: Pluralism and Paradigms*

“The author's detailed descriptions of the actual pedagogical practices of contemporary Brahmin training is a welcome contribution. One gets a real sense of the teacher-student relationship from this book.” — Andrew O. Fort, author of *J?vanmukti in Transformation: Embodied Liberation in Advaita and Neo-Ved?nta*

“[Dubois] captures the sounds, sights, and tastes of India's Brahmin schools and centers of study, conveying a sense of what he calls the ‘hidden lives’ of young people who later emerge to carry on the tradition of advaita ved?nta. In elegant, descriptive language, Dubois evokes the mood and energy of the daily life followed by these young men as they prepare for highly specialized careers.” — from the Foreword by Christopher Key Chapple

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