

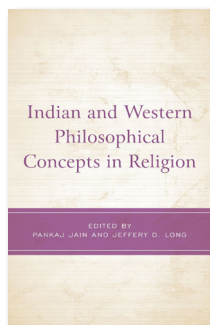
BOOK REVIEW

Indian and Western Philosophical Concepts in Religion

Edited by Pankaj Jain and Jeffery D. Long. Lexington Books, 2023.

Explorations of Indic Traditions: Theological, Ethical, and Philosophical.

172 pp. ISBN: 9781793623164. \$95.00 (hardcover); \$85.50 (e-book).



This book is an important contribution in the unlearning of “imperialism of categories” or the academic practice of imposing concepts on the other that impacts the understanding and professional practice relating to religious studies (1). The exploration of Indic categories, arising from Indic systems, offers alternative theories and methods absolutely necessary in contemporary settings such as chaplaincy and interreligious dialogue. It is important to shift our mindsets from extrapolation (using two points to draw a line assuming that all other points fall on this line) to one of expansion (using deep cases on which meditation, reflection and contemplation can broaden understanding). Thus, learning becomes a model of taking actions that evolve our consciousness in a type of insight described by Al Collins (40–41).

This book adds to a kinship of work that contributes to the decolonization of religious studies by incorporating non-Western perspectives and challenging traditional Western-centric approaches, such as *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* by Tomoko Masuzawa¹ and *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith.²

Seven chapters are organized in two parts. Part one includes chapters one (“The Dialogical and Therapeutic Paradigms in Indian Philosophy”), two (“Samkhya/Yoga as an Indian Religious and Cultural Science”) and three (“The Notion of Play in Gaudiya Vaisnavism”). In Chapter one,

1 Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (University of Chicago Press, 2012).

2 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

Bouthillette explores how dialogue, dialectic, and disputation are an essential methodology of the therapeutic journey of life. In Chapter two, Collins illuminates the importance of seeing enjoyment as both the road to consciousness and the latter's effect. In Chapter three, Olson presents three Western thinkers' notions of play (Huizinga, Turner, and Derrida) and highlights how Kaviraja's Eastern thought brings a missing role of play in renewal and spiritual transformation. These three chapters begin to crack open the metaphorical windows so that fresh air can come in and blow new life into our approaches.

Part two includes chapters four "Dharma: A Short History", five "Anthropology and Religious Studies through Buddhist Lens", six "Non-Reductive Integral Pluralism", and seven "Mahayana Buddhism and the Social Sciences". In Chapter four, Jain demonstrates how Hindus of different backgrounds (different languages, jati/varna, and regions) subscribe to a concept of order with each group (and person in that group) holding a unique understanding of what constates this overall orientation such that a word "dharma" can have over sixteen meanings. In Chapter five, Hongladarom presents an evolution of academic studies through the introduction of the Buddhist teaching of Emptiness, which allows the observer to become one with the observed such that the gap between, for example, anthropologist and phenomenon disappears. In Chapter six, Long helps us engage our humility to turn from hegemonic, reductionism as a methodological approach to complex phenomenon, and rather embrace a multiperspectival and pluralistic approach to truth. In Chapter seven, Clammer explores how the tenets of social science might change if we began with the concept of dependent co-arising rather than independent individualism, and is a requisite as current social sciences are failing to deliver equality, social justice and ecologically responsible systems. These four chapters each made me cry out "yes!" and at one point clap my hands so loud my officemates asked me what I was reading that freed such spontaneous expression.

In conclusion, all the authors are held by the editors in a playful dialogue that engages words, energy, concepts and mind-body-spirit-soul to allow the reader to expand rather than extrapolate, to grow dynamically in consciousness rather than drawing straight lines through concepts as if they are static. There are many beautiful insights that will open up your thinking to add new perspectives to religious studies and reinterpret concepts beyond "mental categories only" (90).

Preeta M. Banerjee, Ph.D.
Babson College



The views, opinions, and positions expressed in all articles, essays, and other contributions published in the Journal of Interreligious Studies (JIRS) are solely those of the respective contributors and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views, opinions, or positions of the JIRS publishing partners, the JIRS editorial staff, editors, editorial board, or the employees, officers, board of directors, advisory board, affiliates, or financial sponsors of Interreligious Studies Media (ISM).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).