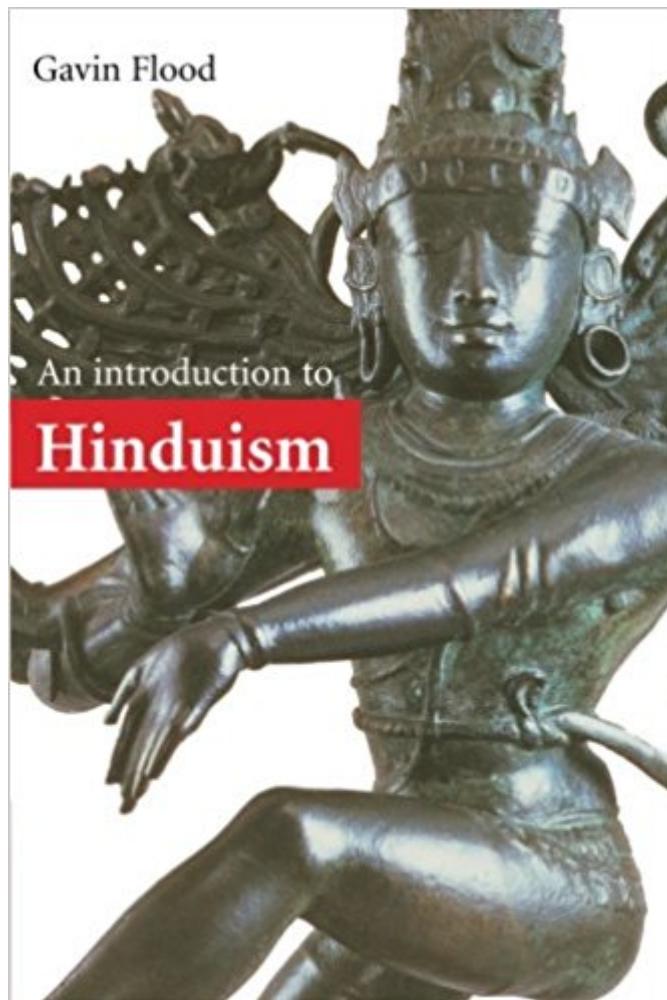


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# An Introduction To Hinduism (Introduction To Religion)



## **Synopsis**

This book provides a much-needed thematic and historical introduction to Hinduism, the religion of the majority of people in India. Dr. Flood traces the development of Hindu traditions from ancient origins and the major deities to the modern world. Hinduism as both a global religion and a form of nationalism are discussed. Emphasis is given to the tantric traditions, which have been so influential; to Hindu ritual, more fundamental than belief or doctrine; and to Dravidian influences. It introduces some debates within contemporary scholarship.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Gavin Flood's introduction is not only comprehensive, but readable. I have taught this book for two years now and feel that my students glean a sense not just of Hindu traditions today but also of the history and transformations of Hindu traditions through time. The best thing about the book is the subtle incorporation of the latest scholarly work on Hinduism. At the same time, Flood appreciates the insider's perspective and what is really significant to Hindus themselves. Flood has conducted research in both North and South India and is sensitive to the geographic differences of religious practice in India. Previous reviews on .com suggesting that Flood uses the Aryan migration question as an organizing principle of his book are ludicrous. He devotes a total of 5 pages to this discussion in the middle of the second chapter. Hardly an obsession. Furthermore, the unsubstantiated charge of Orientalism by another reviewer also seems misplaced. A minute's glance at the bibliography shows that Flood has used Indological (textual), anthropological, historical, and feminist scholarly

literature to produce his introduction. This is an excellent work on the history of Hindu religious traditions that deserves a place among the best out there.

Previous reviews of this text have shown either a very strong like or dislike and I have to place myself with the former. As noted in other reviews, the attacks are wide of the mark. Professor Flood is one of the leading scholars within his field and has taught Hinduism for many years at various universities and both the depth of his learning and the ability to relate this in a clear but not simplistic way to students are demonstrated here. Anyone seeking an introduction to Hinduism need look no further than this book that provides an excellent account of all its major features incorporating recent scholarship and clear analysis. My only regret is that this book was not on the market when I was an undergraduate student! I hope prospective readers will not be put off by the partial reviews given herein but will recognize this book as the definitive introduction to its subject, it is sure to become a classic eclipsing the older standard works entirely.

I recommend this book for the reader who has some knowledge of Hinduism and would like to delve a little deeper into the subject. The book is clearly written, and every chapter is loaded with information. Flood knows this area very well, and he expertly guides the reader through the bewildering, and often contradictory world of Hindu philosophy and theology. I feel that this book would work best if read along with a book that focused more on Hindu religious practice. As Flood concentrates more on the thematic trends and concepts within Hinduism, rather than on the practical, everyday rituals and rites of passage that make the religion so vibrant and alive. His book sets the picture, it gives the reader a framework from which to start painting one's own conceptual view. I would suggest then also reading such books as "Darshan" by Eck, and "Samskara: Rites of a Dead Man" by Murthy, in conjunction with this in order to get a more holistic and in-depth understanding of a complex subject.

If you are looking for a single introduction to Hinduism this is the book to buy. Flood has a first rate grasp of his sources, and manages to write in a manner that is at once scholarly and reader-friendly. The diversity of Hinduism is such that it is difficult to do justice to its variety. This Introduction to Hinduism brings us as close as any book can to an appreciation of that variety.

Having read a number of introductory works on Hinduism in my studies I have found this one unsurpassed in the range of its coverage. Not only that, but it incorporates much recent theory in

many areas of Indic studies. Regarding archeological evidence of an invasion of India, it is a well known adage of that discipline that lack of evidence is not evidence of lack - Flood's thought is in accord with mainstream thought in this matter, and besides, in an introductory book, the most accepted theories are those that should be covered. Anyone approaching Hinduism for the first time as a serious student, whether at degree level or as an intelligent observer, will find this book the best work to approach the subject.

The book I was looking for. Flood has achieved a scholarly analysis of Hinduism's roots, development and dependence on ritual. To be fair, you should have some familiarity with Indian history before reading this book; I recommend John Keay's wonderful History of India for that purpose (or if you just want to learn Indian history). I am a practicing Buddhist now studying Indian history, and Flood's depiction of the interdependence and antagonism between these Hinduism and Buddhism is insightful. It is essential for a practicing Buddhist to have a reasonable grasp of Hinduism, since Buddhism evolved out of that faith. The theory of reincarnation is an important aspect of Buddhism, one with which I have long been uncomfortable. The appeal of Buddhism is that it does not require one to believe in some particular idea of what happens after death, because it focuses on what is happening here and now. However, the 12 steps of co-dependent origination are based on a never-ending cycle of death and rebirth, an idea that forms the keel of Hinduism. I found An Introduction to Hinduism a fascinating read, so much so that I found myself staying up past my bedtime to finish it.

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