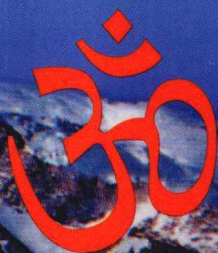


# THE HINDU MIND

*Fundamentals of Hindu Religion and Philosophy for All Ages*



**Bansi Pandit**



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# **The Hindu Mind**

**Fundamentals of Hindu Religion  
and Philosophy for All Ages**

**Bansi Pandit**

**Third Edition**

**B & V Enterprises, Inc.  
1999**

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***Dedicated to:***

*Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886),  
Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902),  
Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950),  
Swami Ram Tirth (1873-1906),  
Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950),  
Swami Ramdas (1884-1963),  
Swami Sivananda Saraswati (1887-1963),  
Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952),  
Swami Chinmayananda (1916-1993),  
sages and saints of the past and present  
of all religions--who have taught the same truth  
in different languages, at different times,  
and to different peoples--and to my parents,  
who brought me into this world.*

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**Author's Note:**

The author conducts presentations on various aspects of the Hindu heritage for those who desire to obtain a better understanding of the Hindu religious and spiritual principles and practices. In the past, such talks have been given very successfully at various institutions to numerous audiences, especially the youth and young adults. The presentations use overhead color transparencies or slides and are given over one or two days, depending upon the specific needs of the audience. The cost of these presentations is minimal to defray travelling expenses. For more information, please contact the author at:

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

To my wife, Vijay, who inspired me to embark on this work. To my sons, Rajiv and Rahul, who independently reviewed the entire manuscript several times and provided valuable suggestions. Their comments helped to improve both the detail and the presentation of the material for the benefit of the readers.



## **Seven Social Sins:**

**Politics without principles  
Wealth without work  
Pleasure without conscience  
Knowledge without character  
Commerce without morality  
Science without humanity  
Worship without sacrifice**

**(Quoted by Mahatma Gandhi  
in *Young India*, 1925)**

# Foreword

In this remarkable and highly rewarding book, *The Hindu Mind*, the author Bansi Pandit has met head-on two pressing challenges of our times: (1) how to cull and distill the essential features of the enormously vast and deep Hindu heritage so varied in scope, in the short span of a handy volume, in an easily understandable, highly engaging and readable style, and (2) how to make it highly rational, objective, interesting, relevant, and meaningful to our new generation and future generations of Hindu youth. They are growing up fast, with the full impact and influences of westernization, in all its best and worst forms, at the same time deprived of the opportunities to know, understand, and appreciate their own rich time-tested spiritual heritage and thus their own true selves. Also, Hindu adult men and women, many of them professionals in their own fields, yet unaware and uninformed, desirous of acquiring an intellectual sensibility for the rich religious and cultural "Great Tradition of Hindu religion"--profound with its illuminating wisdom, life-sustaining moral values, and splendid aesthetic expressions--will also find this volume highly rewarding.

Bansi Pandit fully yet succinctly explores, with great clarity, all the visible and tangible aspects of Hindu religion: the scriptures, epics, symbols and symbolism, teachings, deities, the important Hindu paradigms such as the "four-goals" and "four-stages" models, rituals, and festivals--that is, all the Hindu institutional machinery, all which constitutes the "hardware" of Hindu religion. But more important are his significant contributions illuminating Hindu religion's "software", that has been running the great machinery of Hindu religion in its world's longest history. In his philosophical discussions, enhanced by a rational, scientific, and truly moral sensibility that is distinctly unique to Hindu religion, Pandit also discusses the why of things. He unravels the genius and vision of Hindu religion flowing down from

the wisdom and wizardry found inside the Vedas and unfolding through the course of Hindu history, showing the secret of its universal and cosmic outlook and cosmic consciousness. This drive and impulse, that has always throbbed, has enabled Hindu religion to keep itself reinvigorating and re-inventing, again and again. The author emphasizes the purity of reason and true knowledge that are essential for recognizing the brotherhood and oneness of all mankind, found in Hindu religion. The Hindus have always felt and believed that the essential Self, the vital essence in man, is the same as that found in all forms of life--a tiny gnat, an ant, an elephant, a tiger, and a butterfly--indeed the same as that found in the whole universe. *Bhagavad Gita* declares: "The ones full of wisdom, the true *pundits*, behold and relate to a learned Brahmin, a cow or an elephant, or a dog, or a dog-eater, with the same equanimity of vision and evenness of love." (BG 5.18)

The author also recognizes, clarifies, and removes the various stereotypes, harmful misconceptions and partial understandings, which many non-Hindus have long nurtured and written about. The cross-references, faithful drawings of the sacred deities, and well-arranged and organized charts and tables, all make the book highly informative and modern.

I wish and hope this valuable volume finds, in many different ways, the wide use, appreciation, and circulation it truly deserves--as a text in Hindu heritage classes in our Hindu temples, as a meaningful gift for our graduating Hindu youth, and as a basis for study and discussion in the Hindu homes. The author deserves our congratulations and gratitude.

T. K. Venkateswaran

*Emeritus Professor of Hinduism and Comparative Religion,  
University of Detroit; Former Research Scholar,  
Harvard University*

# Preface

Hinduism, the religion of Hindus (originally known as *Sanatana Dharma*), is the oldest surviving religion in the world. Unlike other religions of the world, Hinduism did not originate from a single person, a single book, or at a single point in time. The religious and philosophical literature of Hindu religion is vast, diverse, and covers thousands of years of accumulated spiritual experiences of a large number of Hindu sages and saints. Therefore, it is difficult, almost impossible, for a beginner to know where to start to learn about Hindu religion without screening volumes of literature.

Though there are numerous books available on Hindu religion, most of them are not suitable for study by the beginners. The language and writing styles of most of the books on Hinduism are too complex for beginners to comprehend. To that extent, this book has been specially prepared to include simple language, modern writing and communication skills, and clarity of thought for easy comprehension by the readers of all ages.

A two-fold need for this book has been recognized. First, there are those who are curious and wish to learn the basic concepts of Hindu religion without indulging in extensive time-consuming research or becoming mired in the complexities of Hindu religious thought. Second, there are children born in Hindu families, especially outside India, who may lack the environment or the opportunity to receive some basic education in their own religion during their formative years. As a result, such children may feel somewhat empty in their adult lives, or have great difficulty generating a deep conviction of their own being.

The purpose of this book, therefore, is to assist the students of all ages in assimilating the fundamental concepts of Hinduism, and to provide them with a road map for further travels in the land of Hindu religion, if they so desire.

## **The Contents of the book**

Since the express purpose of this book is to present the fundamentals of Hindu religious and philosophical thought in an easily understandable format, a serious effort has been made to provide the material in a logical manner and to keep the language simple and straightforward. Basic concepts are stressed with the hope that once the student has acquired an understanding of the fundamentals of Hindu religion, he (or she) can proceed on his own accord to gain a better understanding of the higher teachings contained in other books. Accordingly, this book includes the following special features:

- The book is divided into five parts. Parts I through IV discuss all essential aspects of the Hindu religious tradition. To broaden the reader's understanding of the material presented, Part V of the book includes tables, appendices, works cited, suggested readings for higher studies, a glossary and an index. Figures are included with their respective chapters.
- Commonly asked questions with answers pertaining to various aspects of Hindu religion have been included at the ends of Parts I through IV.
- Each chapter is complete in itself and can be read independently of the others. The reader may, therefore, find some material repeated.
- Cross-references to other sections of the book have been frequently provided in each chapter, as necessary, for a more comprehensive understanding of the contents.
- Whenever a Sanskrit word initially appears in a chapter, the English translation is provided in parenthesis. However, the meanings of many Sanskrit words cannot possibly be conveyed through simple, one-word translations. To this ex-

tent, a glossary with a pronunciation guide is provided in Part V of the book.

With Part I as a background, each chapter in Parts I through IV is essentially self-contained. This arrangement provides flexibility in arranging a course for teaching Hindu religion. Various chapters in Parts II, III, and IV can be read in a different sequence without difficulty.

In conclusion, the author wishes to express his sincere thanks and appreciation to Swami Brahmarupananda, who reviewed the original manuscript with patience and provided many suggestions on the technical content of the book. His encouragement and assistance are deeply appreciated. The author is also grateful to Prof. Subhash Kak for his review of the original manuscript and recommendations for its improvement. The author is indebted to Prof. Rajeshwari Vijay Pandharipande for her review of the manuscript, advice and support, and to Dr. C. L. Shastri for his encouragement and technical support.

Finally the author wishes to express his deep appreciation to Prof. T. K. Venkateswaran for his kindness in writing the foreword and for providing wise counsel and an outstanding stimulus.

Bansi Pandit

**Even if you be the worst sinner among all  
the sinners, you will cross (the ocean of) all  
sin by the boat of knowledge alone.**

**(Bhagavad Gita 4.36)**

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