



Yoga, Bhoga and Ardhanariswara: Individuality, Wellbeing and Gender in Tantra

Prem Saran

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This book is a social–scientific interpretation of the 15 centuries-old Hindu and Buddhist traditions of tantra. It is a self-reflexive study, informed by an insider’s empathy and the apprehension of an Indologist-cum-anthropologist who is also a mystic and an initiated practitioner of the cult himself.

Using his personal praxis to inform his research, the author examines three core themes tantra: a ‘holonic’/mandalic individuality that conduces to the mystical experience; a positive valorisation of pleasure and play; and cultural attitudes of gender-mutuality and -complementarity as neatly encapsulated in the icon of Shiva as Ardhanariswara. This analysis —as captured by the tantric mandalas of deities in intimate union who vividly enact the three themes — leads to his compelling metathesis, that of tantra serving as a permanent counterculture within Indic civilisation.

This book should be of interest to those in anthropology, South Asian studies, religious studies, gender studies, psychology, and philosophy, as also the general reader.

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