

stories to illustrate the rules. The stories in these commentaries are part of the vast ocean of Indic stories preserved by the Jains. The firmly Indological style of the book makes it inappropriate for undergraduate students, but advanced students of Prakrit will appreciate the editorial comments and sixteen pages of glossary, while students of comparative folklore will benefit from the translations themselves as well as the detailed motif index provided by Bollée.

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**ARDHAKATHANAK: A HALF STORY.** Translated by Rohini Chowdhury. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2009. Pp. xlvi + 311. Rs. 350.

The *Ardhakathānak* was composed in 1641 in Agra by Banārsidās, a middle-aged merchant and lay Jain intellectual leader of the Adhyātma spiritual movement. He was fifty-five at the time, half the theoretical life span of a person, and so titled his text “A Half Story.” This text is arguably the first autobiography written in India and provides an invaluable picture of life in north India at the height of the Mughal empire. It has been translated once before, by Mukund Lath (Jaipur: Rajasthan Prakrit Bharati Sansthan, 1981; reprint New Delhi: Rupa, 2005). Lath rendered this text of 675 verses into a loose prose translation. Chowdhury has retranslated it into English free verse that reads very easily and, so, is accessible for the general audience intended by a Penguin Classic. Her translation is also more faithful to the original than was Lath’s. A preface by R. Snell and the translator’s introduction provide the reader with a useful framework for understanding Banārsidās’s text, as his chosen genre of intermixed *caupāis* and *dohās*, by its very nature, can be cryptic at times, and he did not feel the need to provide his contemporary readers with explanations of what, presumably, they already knew. Any scholar who wants to use the *Ardhakathānak* will still need to refer to the much more extensive and therefore invaluable introduction, notes, and appendices provided by Lath. Scholars will also, however, want to rely more on Chowdhury’s translation. Penguin is to be complimented for providing the Braj Bhāṣā original (from Nāthūrām Premī’s 1957 edition) on facing pages.

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**THE OXFORD HINDUISM READER.** Edited by Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich von Steitencron. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. 397. Cloth, Rs. 650 (2007); paper, Rs. 570 (2009).

The 2009 paperback issue of this book makes a valuable resource available for use in graduate and upper-level undergraduate seminars on religion in South Asia. Compiled from two earlier anthologies (*Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity*, 1995; *Charisma and Canon: Essays on the Religious*

*History of the Indian Subcontinent*, 2001), with a new essay on women in Hindu nationalism, it presents excellent essays by fourteen leading scholars on South Asian religions and societies. At the heart of the book is a concern for the ways “Hinduism” has been constructed, in terms of religious authority in medieval times and then as a single religion over the past several centuries. Most of the authors are either European Indologists or South Asian Subalternists. The fruitful interaction allows Indologists to take greater cognizance of the connections of both historical flows and historicist scholarship with contemporary articulations of religion. It also allows Subalternists to pay closer attention to the ways that classical Indological scholarship has, for decades, laid the scholarly foundations necessary for addressing many of the social and political issues on the Subalternist agenda. Much scholarship on South Asian religion in recent years has had a pronounced presentist emphasis. The historically focused essays in this volume show clearly the continuities among the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, and what Dalmia, in her introduction, terms the earlier ancient and medieval “multifarious traditions which would feed into the amalgam we know today as Hinduism.” This is a book that deserves to be on the bookshelf of—and to be read by—every student of South Asian religion.

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**SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS? THE VISION AND PRACTICE OF THE SELF-STUDY MOBILIZATION OF SWADHYAY.** By Ananta Kumar Giri. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009. Pp. xiii + 318. \$80.00.

Swadhyaya is one of the least studied new religious movements that arose in the mid-twentieth century in the western states of India and now has a presence in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Middle Eastern countries, and some African countries. Surprisingly, only a few introductory articles have appeared so far; thus, this monograph by Giri is the first serious study of Swadhyaya. Giri spent more than ten years in his fieldwork in numerous sites in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and the United States, and offers a penetrating analysis of several features of this global movement. From his introductory first two chapters, to his next three chapters based on his deeper study at the sites in Gujarat, to his last chapters on globalization and recent controversy within Swadhyaya, he covers a great deal of ground. The glossary provided at the end of the book with vernacular terms and their definitions will be helpful, because this list also includes new terms coined within Swadhyaya to describe their activities. As A. Appadurai states in his foreword to the book, Giri’s strength is to provide his readers direct access to those engaged in this movement. Rather than falling into either extreme of admiration or criticism, Giri sympathetically shows us both the “vision” and the “practice” of Swadhyaya, as noted in the title of the book. I