

Hinduism for Dummies; Reviews posted on Amazon.com in the U.S.]

[[Michael Kear](#) reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

2 of 3 people found the following helpful

★★★★★ An Excellent Overview August 8, 2011

I'm not a huge fan of the "Dummies" series. I've just never found them as accessible as you'd think they should be due to the "busy-ness" of the layout. But this volume on Hinduism really deserves 5 stars. In spite of the busy layout, the author is able to cover, quite comprehensively, almost every aspect of Hinduism in a simple and straightforward way. I acquired this book because, although I have been a student of comparative religion for nearly three decades, I am sorely lacking when it comes to Hinduism. I can tell you all about Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and many other smaller religions, but I just didn't know that much about Hinduism (even though I have read some of the more popular Hindu authors like Deepak Chopra and Paramahansa Yogananda). So I thought, why not give the "Dummies" book a try as an overview to this world religion? And Hinduism For Dummies hits the target! Author Dr. Amrutur V. Srinivasan writes from a reservoir of firsthand knowledge and experience, making what can be a very complex religion accessible to the novice and the expert alike. What a fascinating journey! There is probably much more here than you need, but everything you need is here! Plus, the author provides directions to plenty of other sources for even more information. And, of course, the cartoons by Rich Tennant are marvelous!

★★★★★ **Clearly written, comprehensive and captivating...**, August 12, 2011

By

[Tracy Marks](#)

This review is from: Hinduism For Dummies (Paperback)

HINDUISM FOR DUMMIES is an excellent and comprehensive introduction to Hinduism, in most of its forms and features. Clearly written and organized, it is likely to appeal to three kinds of readers: 1) Hindus seeking to refresh or expand their knowledge; 2) non-Hindus wanting to learn about Hinduism; 3) and spiritual seekers in search of traditions, teachings or practices which speak to their souls - articulating and/or confirming their own attunement to spirit.

Forty years ago, I majored in religion, specializing in eastern religion. Over the years, although I remember the essence of the teachings, I forgot the particulars. I therefore decided to read HINDUISM FOR DUMMIES - clearly neither for dummies nor high-end scholars - and found it to be a goldmine of information, comprehensive in its scope and lucid in its explanations.

The book is divided into six parts: 1) introduction and summary; 2) gods, goddesses and religious leaders; 3) sacred texts; 4) Hindu practices; 5) philosophical schools and paths; 6) and common questions, prayers and mandates. Within these chapters we learn about many facets of Hinduism - deities, prayers, rituals, the stories of the Ramayana and

Mahabharata, the teachings of the Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, the yogic path, and Vedanta. Each topic is clearly explained and summarized.

The author Dr. Srinivasan, a practicing Hindu and founder of a Hindu Temple Society, has obviously experienced, studied and /or practiced most facets of his religion and become adept at translating complex concepts into understandable language (accompanied by helpful examples and analogies). His occasional side commentaries on teaching and practices provide an insider's perspective, giving the book a personal, human touch.

Recently watching a documentary featuring Deepak Chopra, I vaguely remember mention of differences between Hindus at birth and Westerners embracing Hinduism. Easterners tend to emphasize prayers and rituals, whereas Westerners are more oriented toward meditation, mantras, chanting and yoga practices. As a meditator in the latter category, I was a bit disappointed that HINDUISM FOR DUMMIES barely even mentioned meditation or mantras, and didn't even refer to Kashmir Shaivism, a school of Hinduism presented MEDITATION FOR THE LOVE OF IT, a book which I highly recommend and recently reviewed here on Amazon.

A few other minor quibbles: First, Srinivasan does not discuss differences between Buddhism and Hinduism. As I am particularly drawn to Mahayana Buddhism, I kept finding myself wondering: Is dharma/duty in Hinduism so much more important than cultivating compassion - the essence of Mahayana? Does Hinduism teach us that we have specific duties that take precedence over human love? I would have welcomed such discussion.

Second, rather than a chapter on the caste system, I would have preferred more elucidation of the changing role of women in Hinduism today. And third, although HINDUISM FOR DUMMIES clearly defines terms and recommends books, it could have benefitted from a glossary and a bibliography of recommended readings. Often at the end of a chapter, I found myself wanting to know where to turn for further information.

As a whole, however, the book exceeded my expectations. I was fascinated by the stories of the Ramayana and motivated to read several of the Upanishads. Of the Hindu gods, I felt drawn to Shiva, and so captivated by Lakshmi that I intend to introduce a prayer and mantra pertaining to her into my life. Finally, I honor Hinduism for its provision of a multitude of pathways and allowance for personal choice in both belief and practices.

Whether you personally adopt any attitudes or practices described in this book, you are likely to be much more informed about and appreciative of this very rich Hindu tradition once you have read HINDUISM FOR DUMMIES.

[Jill Guntur](#) reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

3 of 3 people found the following helpful

★★★★★ A comprehensive outline for a complicated religion **September 2, 2011**

I married into a wonderful family and have collected a half a dozen versions of the Gita, one of the Upanishads and some books focused on different aspects of the avatars and books describing the stories of the deities and.... I still felt pretty lost much of the time. This book gives a nice, comprehensive outline to an extraordinarily complex religion. It explains the difference between the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and Vedas. It offers the key teaching of spiritual leaders.

More importantly to my in-laws... it has done so with respect for the traditions, teaching and beliefs of those that practice hinduism.

I have a feeling I will read this a couple more times and then go back and work my way through the Gita once more. I have a feeling it will be a much richer experience with the base of knowledge underneath it all.

[Jeffery D. Long "Jeffery D. Long"](#) reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

★★★★★ A Great Introduction to Hinduism September 6, 2011

'Hinduism for Dummies' is very clearly written, well organized, and informative, without overburdening the reader with technicalities. It has the rare virtue of being simple without being simplistic. Dr. Srinivasan has done excellent work!

I also highly recommend his book on Hindu weddings. I was asked to officiate at a Hindu wedding a few years ago (I am both a practitioner and a professional scholar of Hinduism) and his book was an indispensable guide. I mention this to affirm that Dr. Srinivasan truly has an in-depth understanding of Hindu traditions. Although 'Hinduism for Dummies' is written with the beginner in mind, Dr. Srinivasan writes from a wealth of knowledge and experience of Hinduism. It can be a real challenge for those with such in-depth knowledge to "come down" to the level of the beginner. Dr. Srinivasan has done so admirably. I recommend this book highly to anyone curious to know more about Hinduism. Even those who are already experts can find some gems of insight in this presentation of Hindu traditions.

Dr. Jeffery D. Long
Professor of Religion and Asian Studies
Elizabethtown College
Elizabethtown, PA

[Yaska Sankar "YS"](#) reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

★★★★★ A fine piece of writing March 17, 2012

The author, Dr. A.V. Srinivasan, has done a masterful job presenting the elementary aspects of Hinduism in an elegant and compact manner to give the reader a clear appreciation of the fundamental tenets and the historical facts of this oldest religion in our civilization. The language is simple, yet powerful, in conveying the spiritual strength of this ancient religion and its dynamic continuity under all adverse circumstances in human history. Borrowing the famous line from Steve Jobs, who said that simple is harder than complex and one has to work hard to get one's thinking clean to make things simple, we would say that Dr. Srinivasan has achieved it beautifully in this book.

The book is a must read for all those who are curious about Hinduism, which attracted such luminaries as the Beatles and Steve Jobs to find more about their inner calling. The book is a compulsory read for all those of Hindu descent who want to learn more about their faith.

Congratulations to the author on a fine piece of writing.

Dr. T.S. Sankar
Brossard, QC, Canada

New! [Ashley](#) reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

★★★★★ Very informative!! November 8, 2013

I am one of Christian faith, but I've always found other religions so fascinating. This book gave me such a deeper look into Hinduism and I loved it!

Martien van Wanrooij reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

★★★★★ **A very complete intro to the whole religion and also a good reference guide** June 30, 2014

A fascinating book, I read it in one breath (sorry if this is not a correct English expression). A very complete intro to the whole religion and also a good reference guide. I especially appreciate Mr. Srinivasan's respectful attitude towards every religion.

Immortal70

★★★★★ **Great introduction** May 10, 2014

This is a great book to use as an introduction to Hinduism. It also steers you in the right direction for deeper study should you choose. What I really like is how it's laid out so you can jump to a topic if you want to refresh on a particular topic and that it makes references to other chapters or where in the book you can find further information on say a particular deity, etc. without having to stop and did around in the index. Very user friendly.

Norn

★★★★★ **I recomend it!** March 22, 2014

I recommend this book for those who are curious of the Hindu pantheon and what to know,the holidays a dip into the veda's and so forth.

B. R. Ramaprasad "Atharvana" reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

1 of 1 people found the following helpful

★★★★★ **Mystery no more** February 10, 2014

Writing a concise book that attempts to explain in simple terms the complex faith "Hinduism" I thought was impossible. No more doubts. This book is written in a clear manner that I believe will appeal to everyone -the believers, agnostics, atheists, the curious and more. I am certainly not a scholar, and although I have spent quite a bit of time educating myself in understanding the philosophical messages of this faith, I did benefit reading this book as it cleared some of the doubts I had. The author seems to have

done quite a bit of serious research and through the proper usage of metaphors he has made it easier to understand and enjoy this wonderful book. The book reads like a gradually developing story challenging the reader to move from the basics to the complex. Not only the customs and the significance of numerous festivals are explained in a simple manner but for those interested in deeper understanding of this faith Chapters 19 and 20 provides a step by step explanation of various schools of thought such as the six schools of the Darshanas, the Vedantic paths to salvation in particular the dvaita, vishishtadvaita and advaita paths, their philosophies, the sutras, the root causes of human suffering, pursuing belief by doubting everything and more. Chapter 19 begins with a fair warning by the author that the subjects that will be covered hereafter are complex implying that the study needs more than perfunctory effort. But at the end I believe it convinces even the skeptics that happiness can be achieved even during our life on earth through spiritual education and not necessarily at the final stage of the unity of atma with paramatma. Chapter 21 -The Yogic Path to Salvation-will benefit those who are currently attending and plan to attend Yoga classes that have mushroomed in the recent past. In the section The Part of Tens the author answers ten questions asked most by non-Hindus (I feel that many Hindus would also ask these questions,) ten common Hindu prayers and ten traditional pieces of scriptural mandates. The ten prayers in the Hindu prayers section are carefully chosen with explanations, which I found very helpful. There are even explanations on the Holy Cow, Breaking of Coconuts at the end of Worship, Worship of Women, the Dot on Hindu Women's Foreheads, and why Hindus cremate the Dead. The author diligently introduces the reader to that crown jewel "Bhagavadgita" and few stories from the epics "Ramayana" and the "Mahabharata." The writing style is simple with fun and pun scattered throughout the book. This book could not have come at a better time when Hindu parents here in the United States and I guess everywhere including in India are struggling to explain to their children in a simple manner the complexities of this highly philosophical faith of logic, wisdom and thought. I recommend this book to all interested especially to those who are seriously committed to a deeper understanding of this highly complex faith as a beginning source for further study.

Richard Schmidt reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

★★★★★ **Helped me immensely in my research** November 25, 2013

"Hinduism for Dummies" has helped me immensely in my research on world religions. My previous books have all been about Christian spirituality, but I am now writing one to be published in 2015 on the great sages, saints, and seers of history---including Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and about 25 Hindu saints.

My knowledge of Hinduism was minimal as I undertook this project, so I sought out several general introductions to Hinduism. I would say good things about most of them, but "Hinduism for Dummies" ranks at the top of the stack.

As with all the books in the "Dummies" series, this book's format makes the information easily accessible, but "Hinduism for Dummies" has much more than accessibility to recommend it. Dr. Srinivasan writes clearly and succinctly. He touches all the bases, giving a helpful, balanced overview of Hindu history, doctrine, and spirituality. He has no axes to grind, no partisan positions to uphold. Nor does he steer around aspects of

Hinduism which might seem awkward or embarrassing. He tells the truth, objectively but lovingly. His topics range from the theological to the practical, addressing questions likely to come from both scholars and casual inquirers.

This is a splendid book and I recommend it to anyone seeking a basic knowledge of the world's oldest living faith.

---The Rev. Dr. Richard H. Schmidt

Ryan899uv7 "Yugi P." reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

★★★★★ **Excellent, a review from a Non-Resident Indian** October 27, 2013

I purchased this book because i wanted to read up on my religion. I have come to know the For Dummies series for its great informational tactic, and I must say this one hasn't failed me yet. In fact, this book goes further than I expected, delivering lessons and information on things like weddings and the other religious ceremonies of the life cycle. A lot of the info was things that i frequently ask family members for, but cannot get answers to. With this book, you know a real traditional expert made sure to give the kind of information that Hindus like myself, a third generation NRI have problems with.

Rita reviewed [Hinduism For Dummies](#)

★★★★★ **Hinduism for Dummies** April 2, 2014

An insight on the hindu culture for those of us who don't have a clue. My future husband is hindu and I want to be able to incorporate his culture into our marriage and lifestyle as one.