

the elemental conception with some form of atomism that would be familiar to contemporary scientists” (p. 63). This seems too simplistic. The comparison between the Hindu conception of the cosmic body and the physical universe of the scientific worldview would also seem forced, as would the supposition that the mere consideration of the broadly conceived “natural world” within Vaiṣṇava devotional (*bhakti*) traditions serves as an adequate touchstone for comparison with the ideals of scientific enquiry.

It may have been worth devoting more attention, from the outset, to some of the key contrasting assumptions of an amoral as opposed to a value-laden physical universe that inform the outlooks of scientific modernity and Classical Indian metaphysics respectively. It would not have occurred to a Vaiṣṇava scholastic even to question the ethical or soteriological worth of undertaking enquiry into the natural world and yet it is precisely such consideration that is bracketed off from modern scientific enquiry. There might also have been some descriptive historical account of how Hindus themselves have responded to science, e.g. the ways in which episodes of the *Mahābhārata* have been invoked in quasi-Nationalist support of Indian research into stem cell research, etc. Such a descriptive account might have proved useful alongside the more theoretical and speculative approach adopted, and may have provided a more solid historical basis for some of the comparisons made.

Nonetheless, if the debate between science and religion is to be truly global and the dialogue conversational – not just a matter of translating the terms of religion into those of science and vice versa – then Edelmann’s work is a valuable first step toward making this a reality.

Andrew McGarrity

Mangalam Research Center, University of California and University of Sydney

C. MACKENZIE BROWN:

Hindu Perspectives on Evolution: Darwin, Dharma, and Design.

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C. Mackenzie Brown provides an important historical examination of classical to contemporary Hindu sources on the issues of biological and cosmological design, cosmogony and evolution. With the widening scope of interest in science–religion interactions from non-Western contexts (e.g. John Brooke and Ronald Numbers, *Science and Religion around the World*, Oxford University Press, 2011), this book should be seen as the most in-depth consolidation of historical information for Hinduism; Brown often brings important insights and criticisms to the discussion too. It is not just aimed at science–religion scholars and Indologists, but also the growing number of self-identifying Hindus who write about the natural sciences (most of whom are trained as medical doctors, engineers, or physicists, etc., not as Indologists, Indian historians or Hindu theologians), who will gain a clear sense of the general historical sweep of Hindu thought on these issues.

Brown focuses on design, creation and evolution, starting in Part I (“The classical background”) with the Veda-Saṃhitās (Ch. 2), Śāṅkara’s Advaita-Vedānta (Ch. 3),

Udayana's Nyāya (Ch. 4) and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita-Vedānta. While much of this material could be found scattered throughout other secondary literature, Brown establishes the theological contexts by which later Indian and Western thinkers (including Darwin, Huxley, etc.) could be conceptualized. In later chapters he frequently refers back to Part I – especially Śaṅkara's *vivarta-vāda*, Rāmānuja's *pariṇāma-vāda*, as well as their views on Nyāya design arguments – but given how much time was spent with these thinkers, and given Brown's notation that contemporary Hindu thinkers often diverge radically from the sources they claim to represent, the book might have been enriched by a more detailed exposé of how and why this divergence took place. Do later Vaiṣṇavas, who support the design argument, simply not know that Rāmānuja rejected it, or are they innovating in constructive ways that Rāmānuja himself might have done in a twentieth- or twenty-first-century context?

Part II ("The colonial period") has seven chapters, which examine a diverse range of thinkers such as Mahendralal Sircar, Madam Blavatsky, Henry Olcott (spelled wrongly as "Alcott"), Rammohan Roy, Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda and Aurobindo. While this part helpfully organizes these thinkers' views on design and locates them in their political contexts, Brown's speculative and generally unsubstantiated views about who was influenced by whom blight the text. He writes: "Rammohan [Roy] became interested ... in the sacred texts of Vedānta, *inspired in all likelihood by British Orientalists like H.T. Colebrooke*" (italics my own; p. 80). Could Roy have been inspired by Śaṅkara and the Upaniṣads themselves? Too often Brown asserts without any evidence that colonial period innovators like Roy found their inspiration only in European thought. Elsewhere (p. 116), he says that Sen's notions of "yogic optics and Avataric Evolutionism" were "clearly a product of colonial discourse". The wording glosses over the more subtle hermeneutical issues in reading thinkers of this period: they drew upon their own classical sources to recreate tradition in new contexts for the purpose of dialogue with colonists and to sustain their intellectual and historical identity. Brown's wording – whether intentional or not – suggests Indian thinkers were unwittingly licked by colonial powers, lacking an agency all their own.

Part III ("The post-colonial period") provides an overview of a much larger set of writings, e.g. contemporary leaders of the Ramakrishna Mission, ISLD, and ISKCON, as well as Kisor Chakrabarti's Nyāya, and also a number of American-Indian and Indian engineers. This part also contains the most exhaustive and detailed survey and analysis to date of what living Hindus think about the sciences. This section would be particularly interesting to sociologists and cultural anthropologists. One could question the value of such studies given that we do not know how much the survey-takers know about Hindu *śāstras*, which are, in my view, complex and nuanced; but that is the way of many surveys. The scientists featured in this part are, as noted by Brown (p. 229), increasingly out of touch with Hindu intellectual history.

Although Brown's book is already grand in scope (but not to a fault), it would have benefitted from an introduction to Darwinian theory and a sampling of the major Western philosophical and theological interpretations. We never get a detailed exposition of what Brown means by "Darwinism", or "science". From what I gleaned, I think Brown's understanding of the terms requires further nuance. For instance, "Such a view runs counter to *the* concerns and methods of modern science" (italics my own, p. 58). Brown "essentializes" the sciences, wrongly seeing them as a monolithic and depersonalized canon of belief and practice. Perhaps most telling in this regard is the last sentence of his book. He notes Madhava's view in the

Sarvadarśanasamgraha that Cārvāka (materialism) is “hard to drive out” because it rationalizes desire for sense-pleasure. Brown concludes: “But today, it may be harder to drive out because it has the unanticipated support of Darwinian evolutionary theory” (p. 235). He also thinks natural selection has “anti-teleological implications” (p. 65).

Many would disagree with these conclusions. Brown’s analysis would be all the more sophisticated if it noted what historians of Western science know well: scientific theories are received and interpreted in a wide variety of ways, and that notions of a single, unified interpretation of any scientific theory are ill founded (e.g. John Brooke, *Science and Religion*, Cambridge University Press, 1991). Again, the fundamental problem is essentializing science and religion, seeing them as uncontested, neat categories, with obvious metaphysical and theological conclusions. The problem is only compounded by the fact that Brown’s book lacks deep philological reasoning, e.g. getting behind the English translations of the thinkers examined, thus giving us a sense of what words like “science” and “religion” might have meant to the Indian thinkers in their native languages and intellectual contexts.

In conclusion, Brown’s book makes important contributions to Indology, science and religion, and the history of science and religion in Hindu contexts, and would be a useful volume for research scholars concerned with the issues of design and creation, and their intersection with theology and science.

Jonathan Edelmann
Mississippi State University

ALLISON BUSCH:

Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India.
(AAR South Asia Research Series.) xx, 339 pp. New York: Oxford
University Press, 2011. £45. ISBN 978 0 19 976592 8.
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The numerous citations in the recent scholarly literature of Allison Busch’s 2003 University of Chicago PhD are a remarkable tribute to the rapidity with which the importance of her work came to be widely recognized. If that was one of those rare doctoral dissertations which open up the way to a paradigm shift in thinking about a whole set of related issues in its field, its substantial revision and expansion in the elegant and substantial monograph under review should now certainly prove to be a key reference point not only for specialists in Hindi literary studies, but for all serious students of pre-modern Indian cultural history.

Informed by a very keen literary sensibility which has been honed both by close reading of a wide range of hitherto under-explored Brajhasha verse texts and by the indispensable first-hand appreciation of their creative relationship to the Sanskrit poetic tradition, the book shows how the dominant understandings of pre-modern Hindi literature have for too long been fundamentally skewed by an almost exclusive concentration on the devotional *bhakti* poetry at the expense of a devaluation of the significance of the courtly *rīti* tradition. Busch shows how this approach, which was originally developed in the colonial period to meet the perceived needs of nation-