

Herman W. Hull, *The Vedic Origins of Karma: Cosmos as Man in Ancient Indian Myth and Ritual*, State University of New York, 1989, pp. x + 181.

This book is a unique contribution to the field of Indian Religion and philosophy. It is a scholarly attempt to establish the fact of the historical origin of the Doctrine of Karma in the vedic literature.

The work is divided into four chapters with an introduction. In the first chapter the author tries to establish the continuity of the Brahminic and Upanishadic traditions and thereby the continuity of the Upanishadic karma doctrine with the Brahminic ritual world-view. Here the author envisages the possibility of the Brahminic influence in the thought of the Upanishads against the pervasive bias of the western indology. Thus he speaks about the historical continuity of the doctrine of karma in the vedic thought.

The creation myth of the prajapathi and its implications constitute the discussion of the second chapter since the cosmos is created by the parusha's dismemberment. The cosmos is correlative to man. Coming to the third chapter we see an elaborate discussion of the *Agnicayana* (fire altar) ritual of Brahmnas. The fire altar reunifies man's material being with the essential aspects of existence and thereby regain the original state of wholeness. Here the sacrificer by re-enacting the cosmos man's primordial activity replicates the events of cosmogony and attains immortality. The concluding chapter discusses the nature of the sacrificer's transition through his death from the self contained world of the rituals to the larger cosmos. The ritual event prepares the sacrificer for the after-life and facilitates his attainment of wholeness after death.