

First it focuses on a corpus of mythological literature of which only a minute portion had previously been translated; this focus alone would make the study valuable. Yet perhaps even more significantly, the author applies the "structural analysis" method of Claude Lévi-Strauss to the Saiva myths with considerable profit. "Structuralism" is particularly useful in this study because almost any Indian myth cycle is usually cloaked within complex variations, modifications, repetitions and contradictions; yet such complexity is the necessary focal-point of "structural analysis". Accordingly, Professor O'Flaherty approaches the complex Saiva mythology with the presumption that any "myth derives its significance not from contemporary or archaic institutions of which it is a reflection, but from its relation to other myths within a transformation group" (Lévi-Strauss). She then applies this methodology to the Saiva mythology with intricate detail. The tension and contradiction of "Siva: permanently ithyphallic, yet perpetually chaste" is detailed and traced through any number of themes, sub-themes, variations, and transformations within this cycle. The principles of Lévi-Strauss are then applied, yielding considerable new light on the meaning and function of Siva. The ultimate conclusion of Professor O'Flaherty is that "variety and contradictions are ethically and metaphysically necessary; this constitutes the peculiar charm and strength of the Hindu world-view."

If, in the author's own words, "the face of mythology goes against the grain of philosophy," then Professor O'Flaherty has presented philosophers with two valuable "stimuli" to challenge and deepen their understanding of myths. *Hindu Myths* presents a broad panorama of appealing texts; *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva* is a brilliant detailed study of the complex myth of Siva. Both works profoundly challenge and cordially invite to a reconsideration of the importance, meaning, and function of Hindu myths; both are very valuable contributions to the developing literature of Indian mythology.

Frank Podgorski

James Hall,

**Knowledge, Belief and Transcendence,**

Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975, xiii+240 pp.

"One writer, knowledgeable and sensitive to the working of ordinary religion, misses all the philosophical nuts and bolts. Another writer bristling with philosophical expertise fastens on the most arid reaches of intellectual theology and would never reach anything a student would recognize as religion." (P. XI) The book is an attempt

to avoid these pitfalls in a philosophical discussion of religion especially knowledge of and belief in God.

The first part of the book studies epistemology of religion against the background of the general epistemology. The author first analyses the "a priori arguments" of Anselm and Descartes, and its modern versions, but states that pure reasoning by itself is not a valid source of knowledge. Afterwards he turns his attention to the 'a posteriori arguments' of St. Thomas and others but considers them weak and inconclusive. He finds fault both with those who prove the existence of God from the finite beings and those who affirm the absolute transcendence of God against the atheists who deny God on account of the evils in the world. The position of those who believe in God inspite of his unknowability is not acceptable. In his opinion all the arguments for the existence of God, whether they be based on knowledge or faith, have failed. They have not established the existence of a transcendent God.

In the second part of the book he offers his own solution to the problem by approaching it in a different way. Without trying to establish the truthfulness of the assertion 'God exists', he studies the language of theism, focussing his attention on the primitive utterance of theism 'God exists', on which all other religious utterances are based.

The assertion 'God exists' has no truth-value, because it is 'pre-cognitive' or 'non-cognitive'. To ask about the truthfulness of the assertion is to make a category mistake.

The author views the assertion functionally. The theistic way of taking events (viewing the world with the attitude which flows from the 'God-exists-assertion') imposes a purposive structure on them and sees them as meaningful. The world is the work of an intender. Therefore, the theist can face the world joyfully and encounter adverse circumstances courageously. Still the author considers the theist way of regarding the world weak, for it does not prove its case against other ways of regarding things. He examines the evaluation of theism from utility, truthfulness and effectiveness, and finds them relative. Finally, he comes to the conclusion that the theists' way of seeing things may be evaluated without making a definite statement about its value or suitability.

The author has made some significant contribution in the field of philosophy of religion. He has pointed out the implications of religious utterances and has shed light on religious knowledge by reference to the nature of knowledge in general. He has exposed the empirical foundation of much of our religious knowledge. Moreover, he brings to light the short-comings of the traditional views about the existence of God. However, steeped as he is in the positivist

spirit and philosophy of language; he is unable to face the core-problem, the metaphysical problem of the existence of God, not to speak of solving the problem. He stops short at examining the theistic reasoning without going further to examine its objective foundation. He is unable to find any absolute value for the theist way of regarding things because his philosophy prevents him from grounding it in the absolute.

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*Kewal Krishan Mittal,*

**Materialism in Indian Thought,**

Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publications, 1974,  
336 pp; Rs. 50.00

A characteristic note of contemporary Indian philosophical thought is the growing awareness that sufficient emphasis has not been placed in the past on matter and the material world, especially in view of the urgent need for material progress in the modern world. Kewal K. Mittal, in this book, explores the reasons for this neglect and tries to reconstruct the specifically Indian type of 'materialism' that was part of the various schools of the Indian tradition.

In the recent past Indian philosophy has been almost identified with Vedanta and that too the spiritualist non-dualism of Sankara who made a negative attitude to the world his starting point. This was a sort of rationalization of the lack of material progress in India in order to avoid foreign ridicule and criticism, and also to link Indian philosophy to the classical philosophy of Plato, Plotinus and others. According to the author, the self-flattering preconception of Indian thought had a wider and truer understanding of life and of the world and this led to a certain lack of self-criticism. In the present awareness of the need to revindicate the importance of matter some have tried to accommodate matter within the framework of a spiritualist philosophy, while others consider materialism an independent system parallel to spiritualism. But to consider materialism a complete philosophy would be as erroneous as an exclusive emphasis on the spirit. To explain solely in terms of material conditions everything moral, religious and philosophical as Marxists do, will not be true to Indian philosophical history either. By materialism the author means only the empirical, realistic and rational acceptance of the world without seeking an escape from it in a transcendental intuitionism or idealism or phenomenism.