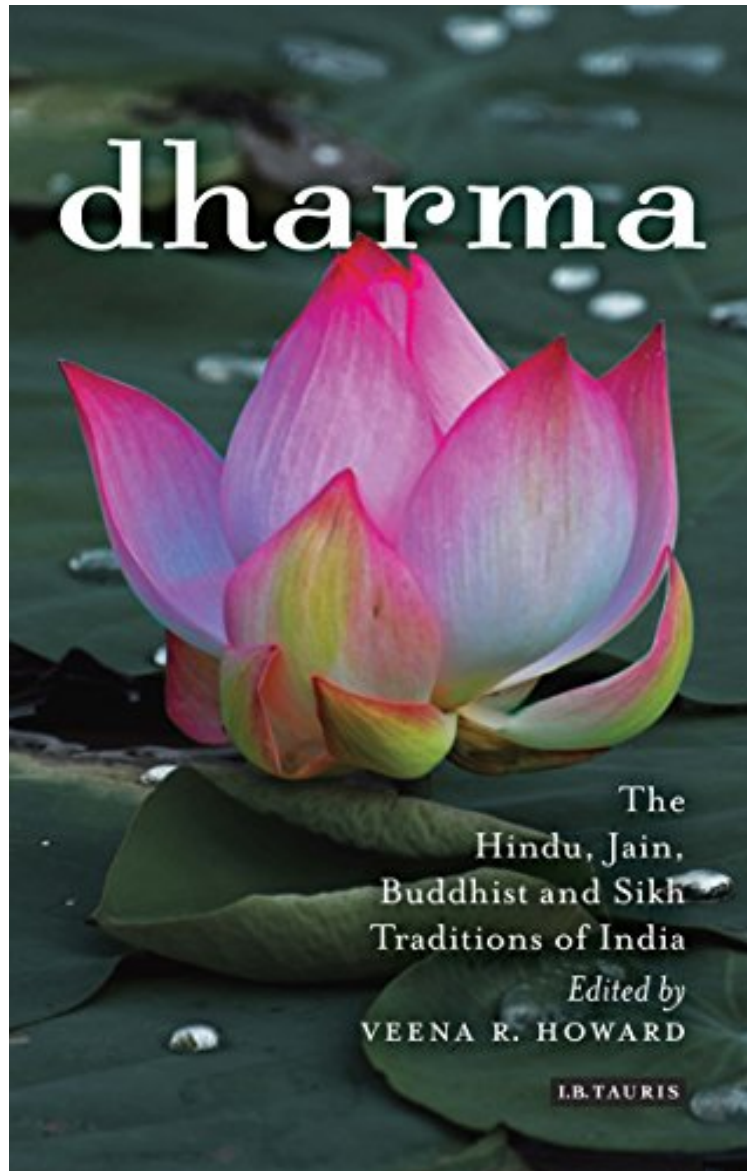


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Dharma: The Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh Traditions of India (Library of Modern Religion)

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Dharma is central to all the major religious traditions which originated on the Indian subcontinent. Such is its importance that these traditions cannot adequately be understood apart from it. Often translated as ethics, religion, law, or social order, dharma possesses elements of each of these but is not confined to any single category familiar to Western thought. Neither is it the straightforward equivalent of what many in the West might usually consider to be a philosophy. This much-needed analysis of the history and heritage of dharma shows that it is instead a multi-faceted religious force, or paradigm, that has defined and that continues to shape the different cultures and civilizations of South Asia in a whole multitude of forms, organizing many aspects of life. Experts in the fields of Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh studies here bring fresh insights to dharma in terms both of its distinctiveness and its commonality as these are expressed across, and between, the several religions of the subcontinent. Exploring ethics, practice, history and social and gender issues, the contributors engage critically with some prevalent and often problematic interpretations of dharma, and point to new ways of appreciating these traditions in a manner that is appropriate to and thoroughly consistent with their varied internal debates, practices and self-representations.

'Dharma is an ambitious volume that dares to teach Indian traditions of practice, inquiry, and spiritual insight in ways not governed solely by categories already familiar in the English language. Once "dharma," "dhamma," and "dharam" seize the space usually occupied by "religion," then the dharmic traditions - Hindu and Buddhist, Jain and Sikh, and South Asian Sufi - can be appreciated for characteristics not predictably shared with the Abrahamic religions, and for continuities among themselves that might slip by unnoticed when the categories of analysis are imposed from afar. If Dharma's good example is followed by scholars studying and teaching still other traditions globally, then the achievement of this helpful and original book will be all the greater.' - Francis X Clooney, SJ, Parkman Professor of Divinity, Harvard University, 'In the diverse landscape of medieval India, the founder of the Sikh tradition pronounced that "there is only one dharam". Veena Howard's excellent introductory volume explores the complex and multifarious definitions of this one "dharma", and urges us to reflect on our spiritual identities across cultures. Written by eminent scholars, the volume brings together accessible and comprehensive chapters on the different "religious" traditions of India, disclosing both their shared patterns and their distinct impressions. The appendix on "Sufism in Asia" is particularly useful in contextualizing how a West Asian tradition worked out in South Asia. Sikhism emerged of course between these two cultures. In our dangerously divided world, Dharma makes a splendid contribution to the academy and is moreover an ideal resource for better understanding and appreciating our South Asian neighbors.' - Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, Crawford Family Professor of Religious Studies, Colby College, Waterville, Maine
About the Author
Veena R. Howard is Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy at California State University, Fresno. She is the author of *Gandhi's Ascetic Activism: Renunciation and Social Action* (2013).