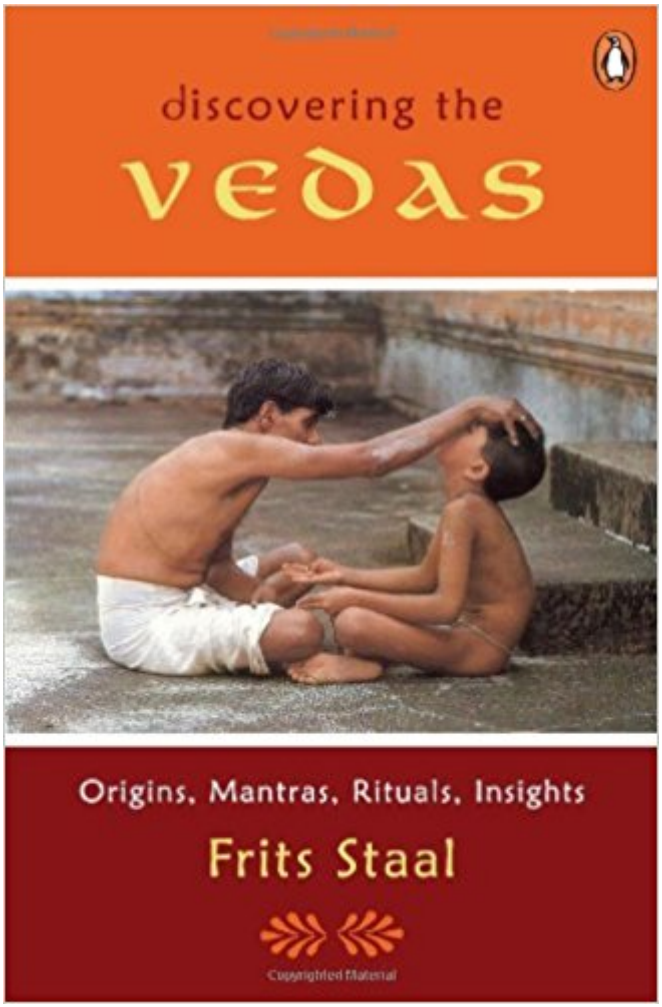
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Discovering The Vedas: Origins, Mantras, Rituals, Insights



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Synopsis

BOOKS

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

BOOKS

The author takes the reader on a journey across mountains and rivers, along with the vedic speakers. Enjoyed reading.

Frits Staal is not only a reliable Vedic scholar, but a revolutionary one as well. Mantras are meaningless (try that on for size). Civilization will move forward now through developments in knowledge and technology in India and China. 'Om' is the same as 'hum'ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •never thought of that (in fact 'hum' is a Sanskrit word). A book for both scholar and layperson alike. Very readable and yet in depth on the 4 (not just 3) Vedas, history of the spoked wheel, Hinduism, Buddhism, rituals and mythology. Staal died in 2012, and what a gift he left usÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •a lifetime of knowledge in accessible, personal, and human terms.

Not quite what I was looking for. I had wanted to purchase an abridged copy of the Vedas itself, but this turned out to be a sort of academic review of the Vedas. I intend to give it away.

Staal seems to have done substantial work in Indian ritual, linguistics and logic. Staal is the editor of

the massive "Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar", published in 1983 and now reprinted by Motilal Banarsidass. The 12 day Agnicayana was performed in 1975 in Panjal; this performance was documented in the above 1983 volumes, and parts of it were filmed and shown in the 1976 film "Altar of Fire", directed by Robert Gardner. (At about 1 minute in the film, we see the man and boy on the cover of this book.)Parts I and II, close to the first 190 pages of the book, are a good introduction to the Indo-European linguistics, archaeology, and the Vedic canon.Part III is an esoteric discussion of mantras. Staal argues that they are not language, and this involves a large discussion of theoretical linguistics and meaning. Part IV, "What can we learn from the Vedas?" is uninspired but understandable. Part V is on Buddhism. I enjoyed Part V, and for example, I learned about the Nalanda Mahavihara, which Staal describes as the world's first university.

This book begins very well and no doubt the author is a scholar of immense learning and integrity, but eventually the book flounders in poorly explained speculations.The opening is very well done, featuring a concise and insightful history of early India, speculation on who exactly were the famed 'Aryans' who allegedly wrote the Vedas, including state of the art linguistic techniques for tracing the historical movements of peoples which I found really fascinating. He them summarizes, in a chapter each, the four Vedas traditionally recognized as genuine (which I take to mean: considered "revealed" or of divine origin in some capacity, anyway). Up to this point the book is a great introduction the ancient India in general and the Vedas in particular.From here it starts to get more and more scattered, and the bizarre language used becomes more and more apparent. Staal boasts early on in the book of being fluent in 5 or 6 languages (if memory serves me the author is Dutch), and while generally grammatically correct, the English is intensely bizarre at times - I read voluminously, but I found that over and over again I had to re-read sentences - not because of their lofty thoughts or complexity, but simply because the phrasing was so alien and unlike anything a native English speaker would write. Don't get me wrong, his English is still great, but if you read the book you will probably discover this for yourself and it can be frustrating at times.But this is a minor criticism. The major thing that keeps this a 'good' book when it could have been great is, perhaps ironically, Staal's overabundance of enthusiasm for his subject. As the book progresses, he just can't help jumping from his own adventures and research in India, to speculations about the Aryans, to updating us about theories of bird song and how they may relate to what mantra really is, to a painstakingly detailed linguistic analysis of one phrase of one mantra - and so on. Staal may know what he's talking about, but I doubt almost anyone else does. And once again, I don't think this is because his theories or insights are too complex (though one could certainly argue I'm just too dim

to follow along) - the problem, rather, is that Staal is that excitable professor you once had in university, completely in love with his subject and unable to fully channel that passion into a focused and cogent presentation of the material itself, much less his own boundary-pushing thoughts on the matter. This is probably the most forgivable and indeed admirable flaw a scholar could possess - but it remains a major one, and does not make for very good or clear reading through much of the book.Still, there is a fair bit of great stuff in here and before it goes off track, the opening section is great. Recommended with the above qualifications.

This is a well-researched book written by a true vedic scholar. I am sure the author tried his best to provide authentic information by citing as many references as possible. It pains me, but I have to say that this book is not really readable or enjoyable.Firstly, the author’s sentences are mostly complex - which will make you read the text over and over again until you get it. Secondly, the author tries to make too many references(to other texts) and sometimes keeps deviating from the central idea - which goes over one’s head. Thirdly, there is lot of history and geography(who, when and where) compared to the "how" and "why" - which I am more interested in. All this makes the book unreadable for the layman. There is very little that is engaging or enlightening for the layman. Should the content of this book be extracted and rewritten by an author like Dr.Robert Svoboda (author of the Aghora trilogy), I am guess this book would be a groundbreaking success.Though the book has 5-star content, for me, readability and enjoyability is more important. Hence only 2 stars

fine. i think it is very good , All around good product and the customer service is awesome. great . I will recommend it to my friend.

This book offers a scholaristic approach to the Veda’s, and explores it’s roots it’s history in great depth. The insights he shares are invaluable to really understand the latest scientific knowledge about this subject. Unfortunately the writer didn’t have a layman in his mind while writing this book, so although it tries to be an introduction somewhat in the subject, it fails in this respect. It is just to dense and difficult to grasp and you might need some side reading to fully appreciate what he has to say. But it will be worth it!

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