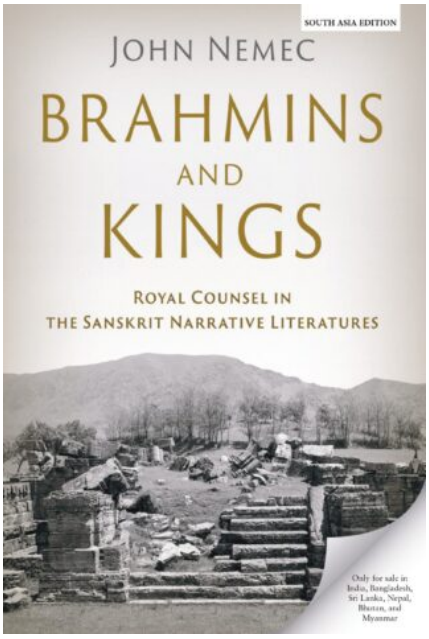
Dev Publishers & Distributors

Brahmins and Kings: Royal Counsel in the Sanskrit Narrative Literatures



Author: John Nemec

Publisher: Oxford University Press (Distributed exclusively by Dev Publishers & Distributors)

Year: 2025

Dimension: 24 x 16.2 x 2.5 cm

No. of Pages: 320

ISBN: 9780197837955

Binding: Hardcover

Territory: Indian Subcontinent

Price: Rs 1995

About the Book

Brahmins and Kings examines some of the most well-known and widely circulated narratives in the history of Sanskrit literature, including the Mahabharata, the Ramaya?a, Vi??usarman's famed animal stories (the Pañcatantra), Somadeva's labyrinthine Ocean of Rivers of Stories (the Kathasaritsagara), Kalha?a's Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir (the Rajatara?gi?i), and two of the most famous plays in the history of Sanskrit literature, Kalidasa's Abhijñanasakuntala and Har?a's Ratnavali. Offering a sustained, close, intertextual reading of these works, John Nemec shows that these texts all share a common frame: they feature stories of the mutual relations of k?atriya kings with Brahmins, and they depict Brahmins advising political figures. More than this, they not only narrate instances of royal counsel but also are composed in a manner that renders the stories themselves as instances of counsel.

Based in the technical literatures on Hindu Law and on statecraft-the Dharmasastras and the Arthasastra and related works—the counsel in question elaborates a model of action that synthesizes views found in both, recommending a kind of virtue ethic that suggests one may do well in the world by being good. Doing well involves succeeding in both worldly and otherworldly affairs; being good involves following Brahminical teachings and upholding the dharmic norms they regularly articulate in text. This ethic encompasses all human action and practice, defines the counsel offered by these texts, and seeks with it to engage the king, his princes, and queens across the spectrum of their subjective experience: intellectually, emotionally, humorously.

Ultimately, this book argues that, just as the rulers in these narratives receive moral instruction, their audiences do, as well. By putting metaphorical flesh on the proverbial bare bones of doctrinal ideals and ideas, these texts seek to shape not just readers' thoughts but also their emotions and cultivated instincts, intending to transform their very way of engaging the world by immersing them in the dreamworld of stories.

About the Author

John Nemec is Professor of Indian Religions and South Asian Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. The author of three books and numerous articles and other publications, he holds a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, an M.Phil. from the University of Oxford, an M.A. from the University of California at Santa Barbara, and a B.A. from the University of Rochester. He was an India Fulbright Scholar in 2002-2003, Directeur d'études invité at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 2016, and the Khaitan Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies in 2023.

Dev Publishers & Distributors

STAY CONNECTED
Second Floor, Prakashdeep 22, Delhi Medical Association Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi – 110 002
Phone No : +91-11-4357-2647
Email ID : info@devbooks.co.in
Website : devbooks.co.in