

STUTLEY, MARGARET. *Ancient Indian Magic and Folklore. An Introduction.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980. 190 pp., index, bibliography, glossary. Hardcover. ISBN 0 7100 0388 9.

Those who pick up this book expecting a thorough discussion of either magic or folklore in ancient India should notice the subtitle. As an introduction to magic in ancient India, this book has some excellent features and is very interesting reading but there are a few major defects. First of all, there is no basic definition of either folklore or magic. Without a clear definition of these terms, which have multiple usages, any work about them can do little more than list various phenomena without explaining their significance. The descriptions in this book tend to assume that magic is simply a part of religion and cult without considering magic as an essential part of folklore in general.

Stutley centers her discussion on the *Atharvaveda* (the samhita and the Kausika Sutra mainly). She has carefully separated the various topics dealt with in the *Atharvaveda* into several groups which form the chapters. Each chapter is distinct and her many examples provide fascinating reading (I was especially interested in her chapter on Medical Charms). Many of the examples and parallels which she mentions do not have clear reference to the source of the information. The passages from the *Atharvaveda* and other Sanskrit sources are clearly documented but many of the other references are not cited. There is an outstanding bibliography.

This book is a very welcome introduction to the fascinating but neglected topic of magic in ancient India. Serious scholars and general readers alike will enjoy this guided tour through the *Atharvaveda*. Many fertile fields for further investigation are pointed out by this fine book.

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