



The Dharmasutras: The Law Codes of Ancient India (Oxford World's Classics)

Patrick Olivelle

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The Dharmasutras are the four surviving works of the ancient Indian expert tradition on the subject of dharma, or the rules of behaviour a community recognizes as binding on its members.

Written in a pithy and aphoristic style and representing the culmination of a long tradition of scholarship, the Dharmasutras record intense disputes and divergent views on such subjects as the education of the young and their rites of passage, ritual procedures and religious ceremonies, marriage and marital rights and obligations, dietary restrictions, the right professions for and the proper interaction between different social groups, sins and their expiations, institutions for the pursuit of holiness, king and the administration of justice, crimes and punishments, death and ancestral rites. In short, these unique documents give us a glimpse of how people, especially Brahmin males, were ideally expected to live their lives within an ordered and hierarchically arranged society.

In this first English translation of the Dharmasutras for over a century, Patrick Olivelle uses the same lucid and elegant style as in his award-winning translation of the Upanisads and incorporates the most recent scholarship on ancient Indian law, society, and religion. Complex material is helpfully organized, making this the ideal edition for the non-specialist as well as for students of Indian society and religion.

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