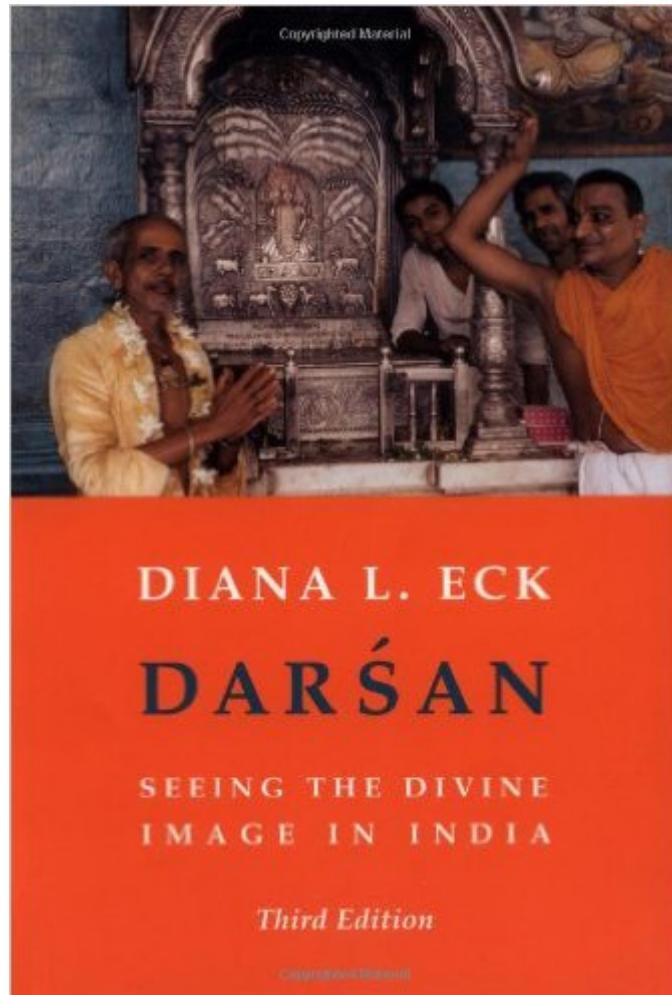


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# Darsan: Seeing The Divine Image In India



## Synopsis

The role of the visual is essential to Hindu tradition and culture, but many attempts to understand India's divine images have been laden with misperceptions. Darsan, a Sanskrit word that means "seeing," is an aid to our vision, a book of ideas to help us read, think, and look at Hindu images with appreciation and imagination.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Diana Eck is one of the West's greatest writers on Hinduism. In this little book, Darsan..Seeing the Divine Image in India, she captures the essence of Hindu devotion. She is not an apologist; rather, she sees Hindu religious practice just as a Hindu would, perhaps with an even more enlightened understanding. There is a great deal of information that most Hindus would not be aware of.

Bringing God into an image for worship is anathema to western cultures and religions. Yet it has been part of Hinduism and Paganism for thousands of years. Diana Eck reveals the nature of image worship, from the selection and consecration of the image, to the actual practice of Hindu devotion. Image worship is part of daily life for hundreds of millions of people today. I cannot think of a better book than this one to help develop a compassionate and enlightened understanding of the practice. It will be part of my home library always. Raja Bhat

Diana Eck is a wonderful scholar who has written several great books on Hinduism. Darsan (or "darshan," if you're transliterating it simply for an English-speaking audience) is a wonderfully simple introduction to Hindu iconography and the related ritual experience, a subject that is overwhelmingly

broad and often unwieldy. If you are an undergraduate studying Eastern religions, a graduate student new to Hinduism, a Western devotee wanting better cross-cultural knowledge of how to respectfully relate to your chosen god or goddess as Hindus do, or a curious layperson wanting to know more about the Hindu religious experience and what all the images and rituals are about, this is a great book for you to begin with. This slim volume doesn't go into elaborate depth, but covers a lot of ground and introduces many key terms in a very readable way, and is a useful introductory work.

This is not a book about Hinduism as such. But it explains the concept of "Darsan", the Hindu practice of the devotee ritually communing with the divine, rather beautifully. The author hits the nail on its head with her reasoning that the Westerner is at a disadvantage understanding Hindu ritual practices because of his/her upbringing in an Abrahamic (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) tradition which particularly shows "hostility to graven images expressed in the Commandments and echoed in the Hebrew Bible combined with the distrust of senses in the Greek tradition highlighted in Plato's allegorical cave." Further she highlights that the Quran and Bible are filled with injunctions to "proclaim" and "hear" the word rather than "see" the divine. The author presented arguments cogently about the Western misunderstanding of Hindu worship as "sin of idolatry" and she puts the blame where it belongs: in the eyes of the beholder. I have never seen anyone express this concept so clearly nor could I have articulated in such clear terms.

This book was my introduction to Hinduism, given to me by a friend following my first personal experience with darsan and Hindu devotion. It is a stunningly clear and subtle book, offering a careful, complex discussion of the unique nature of the Hindu conception of the divine. I read it then in 3 days and am rereading it now as a student of Hinduism, looking forward to seeing this great book from a new perspective.

This is the third edition of a very good book by a scholar of Indian art. It explains the idea of darshan--that the devotee not only sees the sacred image, but that the deity sees them. Well written.

I used this book in my Religions of India class at West Virginia University and it was a WONDERFUL learning tool. Diana Eck addresses Hinduism from a perspective that most westerners have never considered. There is a lot of information in this book that helps to describe

both the concepts of Hindu worship and some of its history. I definitely recommend this if you are interested in world religions or the varieties of religious experience.

Diana Eck has done an excellent job of sifting through the vast amount of material on Hindu imagery in India and presenting an intelligently distilled interpretation. An excellent read on a very difficult subject.

In terms of its production values and price, this book is an absolute disgrace. Columbia University Press should be ashamed of itself. For a book with 78 pages of real text (92-2-12 full-page pictures), they want \$24.00 list price. Some of the pictures are so murky and gray that you can't even make out the faces of the individuals. Going the cheap route, they spliced in new entries to the bibliography. Unfortunately, this was done in such a cheap way that it is terribly obvious. If this is indeed a "classic" book (which I don't dispute), why won't these cheapskates reset the book and upgrade the pictures instead of just continuing to shamelessly milk the college student market?

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