

excesses not only hurt other nations, says Kwitny. They tarnish America's international image and frequently drive Third World countries into Moscow's embrace. Not least, the price of maintaining the "big stick"—the arsenal behind our aggressive global posture—now exacts roughly \$1,000 a year from each American taxpayer.

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DREAMS, ILLUSIONS, AND OTHER REALITIES

by Wendy Doniger
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To Westerners, few things are more confusing than "the Indian view of reality." Really a composite picture emerging from Hindu, Buddhist, and other religious and philosophical traditions, it is a collage of seemingly contradictory propositions about the world and man's place in it. O'Flaherty, a professor of religion at the University of Chicago, is familiar with Western bewilderment before this maze of Indian paradox: "We owe to Plato," she writes, "our belief that it is impossible at one time to hold contradictory opinions about the same thing; many Indian texts, by contrast, would argue that if two ideas clash, both may be true." In stories about the Hindu pantheon, for instance, a god can be both the father and the son of another god: "From Purusa Viraj was born," says the *Rgveda*, "and from Viraj came Purusa." The tales selected and translated by O'Flaherty from classic Indian texts such as the *Vedas*, the *Upanisads*, and particularly the *Yogavasishta* consistently blur, even deny, the distinction between subjective human perceptions (illusions, dreams, instances of déjà vu) and external objective events. The point of these tales, many of which treat dreams within dreams or the theme of the "dreamer dreamt," is surprisingly consistent: that the universe is illusion, or *maya*. That is not to say that the world is unreal, O'Flaherty cautions (correcting a common Western misunderstanding of the word *maya*), but rather "that it is not what it seems to be, that it is something constantly being *made*."