

Lingë, showing how different motifs are combined to express pride in Gayo originality and Gayo relationships with faraway lands. Not only are opposites (like the well-known pairs of land and sea, male and female, ruler and realm) brought together, they are often fused into a single entity. It is within the framework of these origin stories that the political world of the Gayo is explained.

The Gayo's ideas about their history were reformulated under the influence of Islam in recent years. The Aceh people who went to teach in Gayo saw the Gayos as descending from the Aceh and regarded Gayo history as part of Aceh history. This was a severe challenge to Gayo society, which countermovements have started to rectify.

Bowen has convincingly demonstrated the dialectics of politics and poetic genres in a north Sumatran society, and thereby widened the field of anthropological insight. Gayo people appear much more "real" now than they did before. Bowen's interpretation allows us to witness the highly complex, controversial, and often turbulent intellectual life of an Indonesian society.

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INDIA

DONIGER, WENDY, editor. *Purāṇa Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993. xii+331 pages. Tables, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$59.50; ISBN 0-7914-1381-0. Paper US\$19.95; ISBN 0-7914-1382-9.

The essays in this volume were originally presented at a conference on the Purāṇas held at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in August 1985. The authors offer insightful and informative commentaries on some of the basic themes of Indian mythology. Especially important are two long pieces on the Jaina Purāṇas, a genre which shows many interesting differences from the Hindu tradition and with which even many Indologists are unfamiliar.

Though the text contains much transliterated Sanskrit, even readers unfamiliar with this language can profit from the book. Other technical language and discussion is minimal, and folklore specialists will enjoy the excellent summaries of Indian myths and folktales. Indeed, one of the major themes of the book is the effect of local traditions on the formal Sanskrit texts. Particularly relevant here is A. K. Ramanujan's "On Folk Mythologies and Folk Purāṇas," which focuses on literature from Karnataka state, and David Shulman's comparative study of the rescue of Gajendra in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and its Telegu counterpart.

Editor Wendy Doniger explains that it was Robert Redfield who first convinced scholars of the importance of local myth: "The little wheel of faith stand[s] for the so-called Great Tradition of India . . . [that] self-consciously traces its lineage back to the Veda and the Epics. The big wheel of the grace of God (*bhakti*) stand[s] for the . . . Little Tradition of India, the village tradition of localized, vernacular, basically oral culture" (vii). Redfield taught us to put aside earlier prejudices that saw the vernacular myths as (in Max Müller's words) "late and low" or "silly, senseless, and savage." In other words, it is the big wheel of local devotion that really drives the

little wheel of classical Hinduism.

The first essay in the volume is Laurie L. Patton's analysis of the *Bṛhaddevatā*, a transitional piece that may have originated ca. 400 B.C.E. but that was expanded during the age of the Purāṇic writers. In the Purāṇas there is generally great tension between the gods and the sages, primarily because the latter's ascetic practices gave them powers equal or superior to those of the gods. Patton demonstrates that in the *Bṛhaddevatā*, instead of the "ascetic" demons becoming more dangerous than the "demonic" demons, the gods and sages usually form a happy alliance.

The first of Doniger's two fine essays deals with the interplay between Vyāsa and Śuka as narrators of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Her second piece analyzes acts of undeserved salvation in the Kedāra Khaṇḍa of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, where demons and criminals inadvertently use words or things that constitute *pūjā* to the gods. Doniger also finds a "primitive" feminism in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, particularly in Pāvati's rebuke of Śiva, who thought, like many other ascetics, that he could live without nature (*prakṛti*, the feminine principle). This example is an exception to the rule that goddesses are generally dominant in the vernacular myths and marginalized in the Sanskrit Purāṇas.

A beautiful example of dethroning the goddess appears in the *Maleya Mādēśvara*, a huge Purāṇa written in Kannada and excerpted in A. K. Ramanujan's "On Folk Mythologies and Folk Purāṇas." Adīśakti gives birth to Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. In turn, she demands of each that they satisfy her lust, but each rejects her. Brahmā and Viṣṇu are burned to ashes for their disobedience, but Śiva manages to trick his mother into giving him all her power. Śiva then burns her to ashes and from them he fashions subordinate wives for himself and his brothers.

Friedhelm Hardy's essay "Information and Transformation—Two Faces of the Purāṇas" contains more examples of regional feminism, and is also important for its study of Purāṇic themes in Buddhist and Jaina literature. The Buddhist *Mahāvastu* and *Jātakas* offer instructive parallels to the Hindu Purāṇas. The Jaina Purāṇas are much more polemical and aggressive in maintaining Jaina religious autonomy. The *Kahakosu*, for example, gives a very unflattering account of how worship of the Śiva *liṅga* originated. Both the Buddhist and Jaina Purāṇas are concerned with proving how past karma leads to current actions and circumstances.

Hardy also gives examples that show how those of us familiar only with the classical Purāṇas can be fooled by local variations. Citing one misconception prevalent among Indologists, Hardy states, "Maṇavāḷa inside the famous temple of Śrīraṅgam is not Vasudeva reclining on the serpent in the milk-ocean, as the iconographic type of the *mūrti* might suggest. He is in fact the eternalized Rāma resting on his march towards Lanka and looking with longing towards the island where his Sītā is held captive" (176). Scrutinizing my three-rupee souvenir photograph from Śrīraṅgam, I now see that we book-learned Westerners really have no excuse for our mistake. There is something obviously missing from the belly of the reclining Rāma: Brahmā is not being born out of his navel!

In his very informative "Overview of the Jaina Purāṇas," John E. Cort outlines three types: 1) life histories of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras; 2) Jaina versions of the *Rāmāyana*; and 3) Jaina stories of Kṛṣṇa and the Bhārata war. He demonstrates that Jaina scholars attempted to counter Purāṇic theism by secularizing the stories and by demoting Kṛṣṇa, the most popular Purāṇic god. Responding to the amorality of the Hindu Purāṇas, the Jaina Purāṇas are filled with reminders of correct action, especially that involving the principle of *ahiṃsā*. A good example of secularization is found in

the Jaina *Rāmāyana*, where Rāma and Rāvaṇa are humans rather than a god and a demon.

The main purpose of P. S. Jaini's "Jaina Purāṇa: A Purāṇic Tradition" is to show the significant changes that occurred in the Jaina version of the story of Kṛṣṇa. The Jaina writers established the two categories of divine beings, the Baladevas and the Vāsudevas, with the former "leading the life of an ideal Jaina layman, subsequently renouncing the world to become a Jaina monk, and . . . [the latter] as the hero's companion, who is capable of carrying out terrible destruction regardless of the evil consequences that may ensue" (211). The Jaina writers cast Rāma as a Vāsudeva and his brother Lakṣmaṇa as a Baladeva, but reversed the categories for Kṛṣṇa and his brother Balarāma. As Jaini states, "In retelling their versions the Jaina authors shrewdly made a major change that was to accomplish at a single stroke both the elevation of Rāma to the status of a Jaina saint and the consignment of Kṛṣṇa to hell" (213).

The demise of Buddhism in India is attributed in part to the expert debating skills of the Hindu sage Śaṅkara (788–820), but Jaini advances several other reasons, contending that the Buddhists erred in adapting Śiva Lokeśvara as Avalokiteśvara and not protesting enough when Hindus made the Buddha an avatar of Viṣṇu. The Jains, on the other hand, aggressively maintained their own religious heritage and adapted Hindu myths only on their own terms.

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GOLD, ANN GRODZINS. *A Carnival of Parting: The Tales of King Bharthari and King Gopi Chand as Sung and Told by Madhu Natisar Nath of Ghatiyali, Rajasthan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. viii+366 pages. Illustrations, charts, map, appendices, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$45.00; ISBN 0–520–07533–1. Paper US\$17.00; ISBN 0–520–07535–8.

Ann Gold has provided us with sensitive commentaries on Rajasthani culture in the past (GOLD 1988). In this volume she presents a critical study and translation of two interrelated epic narratives, providing a reflexive discussion of the contextual dimensions of an oral performance tradition. The bard is Madhu Natisar Nath, an aged man from Ghatiyali, the Rajasthani village in which Gold has conducted ethnographic fieldwork for nearly fifteen years. The Naths, living widely throughout the northern portions of India, are seen by anthropologists as representing both a social group or caste (*jāti*) and a spiritual lineage (*saṃpradāy*).

The narratives that Madhu Nath sings are localized versions of stories well known throughout North India. Because the Naths are found everywhere in the north, their oral narratives and legends are sung and discussed from Punjab and Rajasthan in the west to Bengal and Orissa in the east. Although a semi-codified system of esoteric beliefs heavily steeped in tantric and yogic practices relating to austerity and "perfection of the body" (*kāyā siddhi* [39]) connect the disparate Nath communities of North India in theory and ritual, a great deal of variation exists in local contexts. This may partially account for the oral variants of the narratives sung by Madhu Nath.

The two central epic stories discussed by Gold concern the key events in the lives