

between the domestic world of the family home and the exterior world of the temple (*kōyil/kōvil*). Rajalakshmi invents a space that eludes the state's control and simultaneously allows limited (or controlled) public access. Her own act of opening up domestic space to a public comprised largely of other *śrīvidyā* adepts locates her within the "place" administered by the modern state, but that territory implicitly encompasses other seemingly invisible "spaces" made visible only by ritual action. In the last chapter of this section, Hancock shows the role played by Hindu nationalism in the creation of urban religious practice. By focusing on the now defunct socio-religious movement targeted toward *smārtas* called Jan Kalyān, Hancock demonstrates how the distinctly feminine imagery of devotion and service to ("mother") India, recurrently employed during the anti-colonial struggle, continues to be refracted through the bodies and imaginations of elite urban women.

Hancock's analysis of the constructed images of ideal womanhood can easily be applied to forms of expression which lie outside the realm of religious ritual as well. For example, Hancock notes the transformations which occurred when, as part of an elite nationalist agenda, *devadāsīs* in Tamilnadu were demonized, and the form and technique of *devadāsī* dance was appropriated by upper-caste women. She notes that the re-invention of the *devadāsī* dance as the Sanskritic *bharata nāṭyam* is indicative of "women's stakes and modes of participation" in the formation of nationhood and new "high culture." Moreover, the body of the *brāhmaṇa* woman was again the site for a re-invention of "tradition" (while that of the *devadāsī* was reworked as Other) and dance training strangely became part of the moral and aesthetic etiquette of the upper-caste woman.

I see few limitations to this work. I believe *Womanhood in the Making* is certainly a theoretical requisite for anyone engaged in the study of female subjectivity in India. Hancock's work is refreshingly original, comparable to few, if any studies of women and religion in modern India. This project is an invaluable contribution to the conscious re-visioning of the *meanings* and *implications* of women's experience in the religious culture of South India.

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*The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality.* By Bernard Faure. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-6910-5998-5. Pp. vi+338.

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In this book, Bernard Faure provides the reader with a wealth of anecdotal and textual information concerning sexuality in Buddhist history. The book draws primarily on the Japanese tradition and secondarily on the Chinese tradition, although the Theravādin *Vinaya* is also discussed. Faure's sections on Chinese and Japanese Buddhism are particularly entertaining, as they are replete with

the various adventures and misadventures of Buddhist “masters” with desire and sexuality.

Chapter 1, entitled “The Hermeneutics of Desire,” summarizes Buddhist views of desire, including sexual desire. It attempts to make a clear delineation between early Theravāda Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. Theravāda Buddhism is characterized as being essentially anti-desire, whereas Mahāyāna, because it advocates the doctrine of *samsāra* = *nirvāṇa*, is characterized as being more accepting of desire on the theoretical level. While it is true that Mahāyāna Buddhism may be more open to the philosophical possibility that desires can also be a source of enlightenment and not merely something to be eliminated, this distinction between Theravāda and Mahāyāna may be too simplistic. There are, for example, passages in the Pali Canon and in the *Visuddhimagga* that speak of the “desire for enlightenment” and the “desire for the welfare of others” as positive qualities that should be cultivated. These passages demonstrate that desire in Theravāda Buddhism was not always spoken of as something to be eliminated; rather, it was the object of one’s desire that was often critiqued.

Chapter 2, “Disciplining Sex and Sexualizing Discipline,” deals with the rather extreme position taken by early Theravāda Buddhism against the sexual act. This act was categorized as the worst type of offense (*pārājika* offense), or an offense that warranted the expulsion of a monk or nun from the Buddhist community. Faure asserts that this admonition against sexual practices was not done in the name of morality, nor because of the physical consequences of a loss of energy (as is talked about in some Taoist texts). Rather, the prohibition against sexual acts was so strong because the practice of sexuality was seen as provoking discord within the Buddhist community and the supporting community at large.

The next two chapters, entitled “The Ideology of Transgression,” “Clerical Vices and Vicissitudes,” deal mostly with the transgressions of historical figures in Mahāyāna Buddhism, with a particular focus on Japanese Buddhism. Faure tells us that, in theory, the transgression of the early *Vinaya* rule against sexual practices was justified by an appeal to the bodhisattvic ideal of compassion: that is, the sexual act is acceptable if it is motivated by compassion. Also, it was often said within Mahāyāna Buddhist circles that one cannot use the same standards of judgement for the acts of a Buddhist teacher as one does for an ordinary layman. Although there were transgressions of the rule against sexual practices, Faure thinks that the number of moral transgressions was exaggerated for political purposes. Monks were often powerful figures within local communities, thus they easily aroused the envy of secular powers and rival sects.

In chapters 5 and 6, “Buddhist Homosexualities” and “Boys to Men,” Faure touches upon a little discussed but significant topic: the nature of male-male relationships in Buddhist monastic history. Chapter 5 deals primarily with various records of homosexual relationships, primarily between older monks and young novices, and chapter six talks about the young novice and

his elevation to an ideal of innocence and purity endowed with an almost superhuman power.

In spite of the wealth of detail presented throughout Faure's work, there are two significant flaws with this book. First of all, since Buddhist texts do not make sexuality a topic of inquiry in an even-handed or objective fashion, the author is forced to draw his conclusions mostly from stories about Buddhist masters. This approach seems problematic, as one cannot necessarily infer a general Buddhist standpoint from the actions of a few Buddhist teachers. To his credit, the Faure openly admits this flaw. Nevertheless, it often feels as if he is not expounding Buddhist views on sexuality, but instead, how various Buddhist teachers reacted to their own feelings of sexual desire.

Second, in the beginning of the book Faure states that one of his purposes is to explicate the various sexual scandals that have taken place within modern Buddhism. He cites well-known incidents such as the sexual exploits of Baker Rishi at the San Francisco Zen center and those of Trungpa Rinpoche of the *Vajradhātu* community. Faure states that these transgressions were not merely due to the personality problems of one or two individuals, but that "they may also be seen as structural problems, having deeper social, psychological and cultural roots." Faure also says that he would like to emphasize the "doctrinal elements" that may have caused such behaviour, as well as provide some "historical background" for these modern developments. These original purposes seem to have been lost or obfuscated amidst the numerous anecdotal stories that are presented. Faure's presentation would have been clearer if he had spent more time returning to the foundational ideas of the book by tying together the common themes within each anecdotal story. As it stands, each bit of information is interesting (and entertaining) in its own right; yet, when all of the pieces of information are brought together, there is not enough time and space allotted to the process of synthesis to make the material function as a coherent unit.

In spite of its flaws, this book is a worthwhile read primarily because of the importance of the subject it addresses. Also, with the wealth of anecdotal information it provides, it is useful as a reference work. My sense is that Faure has only touched the tip of the iceberg: sexuality in Buddhism, especially as it relates to Buddhist practice, is a relatively new and therefore largely unexplored subject of inquiry in Buddhist Studies. Faure has provided some foundational material. Now it is up to future researchers to construct more definitive theories based on further textual research.

In this regard, a textual study with Vajrayāna or Tantric Buddhism as its primary focal point might be more fruitful. Tantric Buddhism tends to take the Mahāyāna theoretical standpoint of *samsāra* = *nirvāṇa* to its practical conclusion, and hence, in this way, it is the only major branch of Buddhism which truly allows for the possibility of sexuality being an integral part of practice.