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III. BOOK REVIEWS

Lustful Maidens and Ascetic Kings (Buddhist and Hindu Stories of Life), by C. Amore and Larry D. Shinn. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. xii + 198 pp. Illustrations by Sharon Wallace, Story Sources, Bibliography.

Amore and Shinn have selected the sixty-five classic Buddhist and Hindu stories found in this book on the basis of two criteria: each had use in India as an instructional vehicle conveying social or ethical values, and each was intrinsically entertaining.

The first criterion is founded on the now traditional premise that people with cultures in large part oral pass on their cultural roles and attitudes through retelling and performances of those myths, fables, epic stories, anecdotes, etc., that promote desirable qualities. The authors encapsule each of these stories with helpful, general comments clarifying the relevant values and important social roles, contrasting Buddhist with Hindu approaches to seemingly similar dilemmas, and relating the world presented within the story to the larger social structures of the time.

Whether or not each offering is entertaining is left to each reader alone to determine. It should be noted here that Amore and Shinn have chosen to translate all the material into American-style prose, a choice which, inevitably, eliminates the stylistic differences. Many of the stories tend to read and sound as if they were all from the same or similar sources. Of course, something is usually lost in transition from language to language, but the result, in this case, may leave readers who are acquainted in some way with the originals slightly disappointed in what is, on the whole, a useful and insightful presentation of some of the best of Indian myths and tales.

For the less familiar reader, the book offers not only a wealth of folk and classical stories, but also the opportunity to approach them as listeners/readers would on their home ground: "as cultural and religious guideposts." The authors find this to be the most apparent function of the stories. They offer interpretation of the actions of the characters in terms of Geertz' dichotomy between positive behavior, called "models for," and negative behavior, called "images of." In many cases, they have found stories which present opposing views or treatments of the same idea; for instance, in the section titled "Woman," the story they call "The Carpenter's Wife" (*Pañcatantra*, Bk. III, no. 8,) offers the Hindu negative "image of" woman as sly, and is immediately

followed by "Savitri and the God of Death" (*Mahābhārata*, III), in which Savitri's steadfast devotion and quick intelligence provides the "model for" the ideal Indian woman.

Amore and Shinn, in the introductory material, carefully emphasize the importance of oral transmission "in a culture where literacy is low but storytelling abounds." But, while they make clear that these stories are vital also to literate groups, they do not go on to point to the complex interaction between oral and written traditions, a relationship important not only in certain categories of overt literary development, but also evidence of the subtle interlockings of Indian social and ethical patterns. They do mention that stories tended to become "frozen" after they were included in various written collections, and they suggest that differences among written versions of the same story stem from the presence of that piece in different religious traditions, geographic areas, or historical periods.

In the brief section on sources, the authors review the general content and suggest broad temporal limits for the important collections (Sanskrit and Pali) from which they pulled their material. This section is supplemented by a list given at the end of the book, which names the specific source for each story. We find material from the *Pañcatantra*, *Jātakas*, *Mahābhārata*, the *Nikāyas*, *Rāmāyana* of Vālmīki, *Vinayapīṭaka*, the *Dhammapadam*, the *Thakathā*, four from the *Vetala-pañcaviṃśati*, the *Saddharmapundarīka*, the *Visuddhimagga*, and, of course, several *purāṇas*. The selections have all been translated "very freely" according to the authors. Spot checking reveals that "freely" should not be taken to mean self-indulgently. The allegory extracted from the *Saddharmapundarīka* (here called "How the Clever Father Saved His Sons") shows some of the freest overall treatment; on the whole, however, the originals are preserved.

Amore and Shinn also explain some of the motifs and storytelling devices that may seem alien to a novice in Indian literature. In this section, for instance, we find an elucidation of the relation between the assiduous and virtuous practice of Hindu asceticism and the resultant (often destructive) celestial intervention. Oddly, only some of these motifs are analyzed in the introduction; others, of potentially equal unfamiliarity, are found in the brief commentaries, and a few, unfortunately, are interjected directly into the body of the story, breaking the otherwise easy flow of the narrative line. In the tale called "The Radiant Sambula," which is told early in the book, Amore and Shinn deal with the character's performance of the "Act of Truth" in a heavy-handed fashion, tacking a bracketed explanation onto the end of a line of interior monologue. But, ninety-eight pages later, in a paragraph preceding the stories and tales focused on the theme of truth-

fulness, this same concept is dealt with in a clear and simple statement, an example of which is beautifully demonstrated by the action and very words of Damayanti herself in a well-chosen portion of the Nala-Damayanti story.

The stories are divided into four broad categories, each of which is subdivided: Family Roles (Man, Woman, and Children); Social Roles (King, Teacher/Priest, and Ascetic); Lay Values (Courage, Purity, Generosity, Self-Sacrifice, and Truthfulness); and Monastic Values (Self-Control, Asceticism, Detachment, and Compassion). Clearly, some of the stories fit into more than one category, but they add up to a well-rounded view of traditional, orthodox, Buddhist and Hindu attitudes and morals.

In light of the type of translation, the critical approach to selection and interpretation, and the title, I should speculate that the book might serve well as suggested supplementary reading in an introductory course on Indian literature or religions.

Beth Simon

The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en, by Judith A. Berling. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. xv + 348 pp., appendices, notes, glossary, bibliography, index.

This work by Judith Berling of Indiana University is a careful and important study of an interesting Ming dynasty figure, Lin Chao-en (1519–1598), whose life and writings provide valuable insight into the dynamics of syncretism in this period of Chinese history and beyond. The book is composed of eight chapters, plus extensive appendices and notes. The first three chapters discuss "The Problems of Syncretism," "Syncretism and Sectarianism in Early China," and "The Heyday of Syncretism" (in the Sung and Ming dynasties). Chapter Four is a brief biography of Lin Chao-en. The next three chapters, examining Lin's teachings and the movement which grew up around him during his life, are entitled "The System of Mind-cultivation," "The Nine Stages," and "The True Transmission of the Three Teachings." Chapter Eight, on "The Legacy of Lin Chao-en," examines the religious organization of this movement, the growth of a cult which followed his death, and its influence in the following centuries.

While the movement has its outcroppings even in the present century among some overseas Chinese, its principal interest for the historian of religion lies in the process whereby Lin Chao-en weaves