

in which the goddess transforms herself and her human worshipers, this book makes a profound contribution to the study of the feminine dimension of the divine in India.

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Gifts of Earth: Terracottas and Clay Sculptures of India. By STEPHEN P. HUYLER. Middletown, N.J.: Grantha, 1996. 232 pp. 203 illustrations. \$75.00 (cloth).

Lavishly illustrated, Stephen Huyler's *Gifts of Earth: Terracottas and Clay Sculptures of India* is a feast for the eyes. India is home to 350,000 potters, the largest number in the world, and this book is a celebratory ode to them. We see sinewy hands and concentrated faces shape the milky, spinning chocolate mud. Squatting legs straddle the potter's wheel, encircling the spinning center. The body, bent at the waist, is stretched to its utmost. Pots are stacked against mud houses. Especially designed with the student of Indian crafts in mind, this book takes its place in the lineage of such books as Stella Kramrisch's *Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1968), Pupul Jayakar's *The Earthen Drum: An Introduction to the Ritual Arts of Rural India* (New Delhi: National Museum, 1981), and Haku Shah's *Forms and Many Forms of Mother Clay* (New Delhi: National Crafts Museum, 1985).

Huyler reminds us through an effective combination of photographs and text: "Clay vessels, made of sacred and purified earth, serve as mediums in the rituals that are so basic to every facet of life in traditional India" (p. 27). In her foreword to the book, the doyen Kapila Vatsyayan states, "The life-cycle of the Indian, particularly the Hindu, is punctuated from birth to death, with the ritual and symbolic use of the empty, full and broken pot" (p. 10). Vatsyayan's evocation of the potter's craft defines it not by clay alone, but as "the symbiotic relationship of function and ritual use" and the "complementary categories of the mundane and the 'consecrated'" (p. 10). For more than twenty years Huyler has traveled each year to India to document both potters and the rituals in which pots appear.

The first four chapters, "Kumbhara: Makers of Pots," "Prajapati: Potters Descended from a God," "Puja: Terracottas Used in Worship," and "Mitti Ke Dan: Gifts of Earth," present various rituals, myths, prayers, and festivals to illustrate the contextual diversity of where, why, and how pottery is made. References to types of clay pots abound: *ghata*, *kumbha*, *kalasha*, and *cauri* among others. The shapes of potter's wheels are distinguished regionally: the *sancha* in Madhya Pradesh, spoked wheels with attached pivots in Tamil Nadu, kick wheels in the northwest, among others. Sources of firing materials and origin of colors of the clay are also described. Although Huyler occasionally mentions the effects of contemporary international and national cultural festivals on formal styles and designs, he emphasizes the continuity of traditional pottery techniques and contexts. The ephemeral life cycle of pots and the constant cultural need for new unpolluted pots ensure the survival of the pottery profession. Huyler points out women's direct participation in the making of finished pots, especially their decoration of the pots, once the clay slip is formed and fired. One of the highlights of the book is chapter 4 where Huyler finely articulates the cultural context of giving pots as gifts. Unfortunately, in the first four chapters, many of the most interesting direct quotations are relegated to footnotes. Moreover, there

is a lack of specificity of where the information comes from, for example, which region, which village, which festival, etc.

However, this is not true of the latter three chapters, “Tamil Nadu: Guardians of Boundaries,” “Uttar Pradesh: Gifts of Elephants,” and “Orissa: Temples for Tulasi,” which focus on detailed case studies of three pottery families. Here is the detailed contextual knowledge the reader aches for in the first four chapters, where the pots go and what they end up doing in specific cultural contexts and how potters describe what they do. Each chapter centers on one potter and his family, with the potter’s voice articulating his ritual, economic, and artistic hopes. Also, there is a beautiful series of photographs showing in detailed steps how pottery is made in each of these regions. I was especially intrigued by the unusual chapter on Tulasi temples in Orissa, and the description of terracotta planter shrines for the *tulasi* plant, the Indian basil. However, the lack of a conclusion leaves the reader hanging uncomfortably at the end of the book.

As a whole, this book should be received with high interest by art and craft historians, anthropologists of art, and artists (especially potters) who have South Asia as a focus. Detailed footnotes and bibliography complement the photographs and text and make it a useful companion to students embarking on a contextual understanding of pottery in India. For those who have traveled in the Indian countryside and have seen the flumes of smoke coming from scattered small mounds stacked and layered with old broken potsherds, this book will be richly rewarding.

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Don't Marry Me to a Plowman! Women's Everyday Lives in Rural North India.

By PATRICIA JEFFERY and ROGER JEFFERY. Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996. viii, 294 pp. \$62.00 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

The Jefferys are well known for their previous publications on rural Uttar Pradesh and urban Delhi, for solid quantitative and qualitative ethnographic work. Here, the preface and introduction tell us, they are experimenting with the storytelling genre, and their chief concern is with women’s agency as they present women’s life stories from two villages in U.P. They discuss indigenous words for agency or autonomy and the ways in which women “being in control” or “having responsibility” is “problematic,” given that women “differ from other subalterns in having rather greater stakes in the system, at least in the long term” (p. 18). There is no real attempt to investigate this assertion comparatively in this book, or for that matter to better investigate “the system,” although the overwhelming impression one gets from their rich data on women’s lives lends credence to the observation if the family is the system they mean.

The design of the book is complex. It alternates eight long stories, about four Muslim and four Hindu women, with “thematically organized interludes” of songs and accounts (p. 3). The chapters are also organized topically, with sections focused on childbearing, marriage arrangement, marital careers, relationships with natal kin, and, finally, widowhood. For the long stories, the Jefferys tried to choose ordinary women, ones whose lives are both unique and also representative of women’s experiences in rural northern India.