



Dealing With Deities: The Ritual Vow in South Asia

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Explores the practice of taking ritual vows in South Asia, a lay tradition prevalent in the region's religions.

Drawing on original field research, *Dealing with Deities* explores the practice of taking ritual vows in the lives of ordinary religious practitioners in South Asia. The cornerstone of lay religious activity, vow rituals are adopted by Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs who wish to commit themselves to ritually enacted relationships with sacred figures in order to gain earthly boons and spiritual merit. The contributors to this volume offer a fascinating look at the varieties and complexities of vows and also focus on a unique characteristic of this vow-taking culture, that of resorting to deities and shrines of other religions in defiance of institutional directives and religious boundaries. Richly illustrated, the book explores the creativity of South Asian devotees and their deeply felt convictions that what they require, they can achieve faithfully—and independently—by dealing directly with deities.

“The volume offers an excellent variety of traditions, topics, and methods in the consideration of religious vows. It is particularly notable that some essays include considerations of vows undertaken by devotees of one religion to a person or deity associated with another. This feature reflects the complexities of the ritual lives of many South Asians too often overlooked in other treatments.” — Peter Gottschalk, author of *Beyond Hindu and Muslim: Multiple Identity in Narratives from Village India*

“A splendid volume that will be read by scholars and assigned in classes on South Asian religions.” — Rachel Fell McDermott, coeditor of *Encountering Kapliq: In the Margins, at the Center, in the West*

Contributors include Martin Baumann, Louis E. Fenech, Sunil Goonasekera, William P. Harman, Shankarrao Kharat, M. Whitney Kelting, Ramdas Lamb, Jack E. Llewellyn, Vasudha Narayanan, Karen Pechilis, Tracy Pintchman, Selva J. Raj, Pashaura Singh, and Sufia Uddin.

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