

Comparing Lessons from Unit 2 & 3 Application Exercises

Unit 2:

A. Authoritative religious sources that focus on legendary heroes, supernatural beings and cosmic forces nevertheless provide a few **clues about practices** that inspired those who composed them.

Examples: *Offerings to Rudra*, Arjuna's vision of Shiva, stories of Daksha's yajña, Basavanna & Mahādeviyakka's poems

Unit 3:

A. Stories associated with particular celebrations provide

- (i) ways to envision divine powers & forces (e.g., Krishna/Vishnu's four armed form, Krishna multiplying himself with the Gopis)
- (ii) rationales for celebratory events (e.g., waiting for the moon at midnight on Krishna's birthday, dances & water-sports during Holi)
- (iii) puzzling details that invite curiosity (e.g., eight embryos, Raslila)

Comparing Lessons from Unit 2 & 3 Application Exercises

Unit 2:

B. Direct observation shows that the reflection of people engaged in practice is based primarily on

- the **sensory impact** of that practice;
- the **intention** to participate and gain something from it; &
- spontaneous **envisioning** of unseen things.

Examples: Somashekhar, Shakshi's mom, grandmother & granddaughter, Christine's letter & Shakshi's experience

Unit 3:

B. Direct observation shows that practice is heightened by very different types of reflection, including

- **feelings** of belonging and trust in community of the like-minded;
- **words** that *channel* intention to participate (e.g., divine names); &
- *cultivating* **vision** of unseen beings & forces (e.g., Krishna/Vishnu)

Follow-Up: How Does Reflection Shape Practice? (for opening discussion)

- * What kind of reflection about received stories & ideas most powerfully intensifies engagement in practice in religious contexts familiar to you?
(e.g., church, temple, mosque, home—your own or others’)
 - * What kind of reflection about received stories & ideas most powerfully intensifies engagement in practice in non-religious contexts?
(e.g., holidays, Greek life, gym, award ceremonies)
- **Use the *Mahabharata Game* to think about these questions:****
to what extent and in what way(s) does your thinking about the game intensify your engagement in the practice of playing it?

Content Objectives for Unit 4: Honoring Goddesses & Spirits in the Hot Season

By the end of this unit you should be able to describe, for an interested peer unfamiliar with these topics:

1. goddesses worship during the hot season* in both North & South India, as well as related rituals still being done in California.
2. stories about Skanda & the Great Goddess in the *Mahabharata* and Purānas that record medieval reflection related to goddess worship.
3. the way that **reflection** recorded in the above sources **intensified engagement in the practices** that inspired those sources.

*NOTE: In most of India, April & May/June are the hottest months of the year, after which time the monsoon rains cause temperatures to cool a bit.

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Primary Sources

- "Angirasa," from the *Mahabharata* (RDR, 152-64)
- "Karttikeya," from the *Vamana Purana* (RDR, 165-66)
- *Devi Mahatmya* 5-13, from the *Markandeya Purana* (RDR, 167-89)
- "Sili Sat," from *Hindu Festivals in a North Indian Village* (on-line, 2.5 MB)

--> for terms marked with “ these Overviews

- "Belief & Reflection" & "Dimensions & Layers"
(in "Essential Elements of Religious Life" in the on-line course page)
- EGHT, 32-36, 54-59 + anything else you haven't read yet!
(for any **term marked with ***)

reviewing basic terminology for the academic study of religion
“Essential Elements of Religious Life (on-line syllabus)

(a) What precise language can be used to describe the unseen things about which religious people dynamically reflect and come to trust? (sections II & III)

unstated beliefs trust

awareness faith

powers forces worlds

verbal vs. symbolic depictions

(b) What analogies help picture the relationship between reflection, practice, community? (section IV)

dimensions layers

Skanda*'s strange birth & adoption in the *Mahābhārata* (RDR, 152-64)

Frame Story:

Book of the Forest

Mārkendeya

Yudhishtira (= "King Dharma")

Deities:

[Thirty] Gods = Celestials vs. Asuras = Dānavas, Daityas

Indra* = God of 100 Sacrifices, Sacker of Cities, Shakra, Thunderbolt Wielder, Vāsava

Brahmā* = Prajāpati, "Grandfather"

Fire = "Carrier of the Oblation" (=Agni*)

Skanda* (=Kumāra, Guha, Mahāsenā, heir/son of Fire, Kārttikeya, "Six-faced")

Shiva* (=Rudra, Mahādeva, Shamkara, Lord of Cattle, bull-crested God, Tryambaka)

Goddesses & "Mothers"

Devasenā = "maiden," Shashti, Lakshmī

Svāhā

[group of] "Mothers"

Umā = Pārvatī

Skanda*'s strange birth & adoption in the *Mahabharata* (RDR, 152-64)

(a) What signs show Indra* that a new deity is about to appear? (p.646-48)

Keshin Sunrise Mountain/Peak clouds moon Rudra hour

(b) How is Skanda born & how does he win the allegiance of the gods? (p.648-653)

[seven] divine seers = great-spirited priests wives Mount Shveta 1st – 4th days

(c) What “Mothers” apply for Skanda’s protection & what are they granted? (p.653-59)

Krttikās Vishākha Companions = Kumāras 5th day Shrī
offspring = progeny Grasper = demon(ess) foetus children

(d) What is Skanda’s relationship to Shiva & what does he do in his army? (p.660-64)

golden mountain chariot Rudras diseases Mahisha

the birth of Kārtikkeya in the *Vāmana Purāna* (RDR, 165-66)

Shiva = Maheshvara, Sharva, Shankara, Tryambaka, Rudra, Hara, enemy of Kāma
Fire Kutilā Brahmā = “the lotus-born god,” Grandfather

(a) how is Kārtikkeya conceived, where does he gestate & how is he born? (p.185-86)

semen/seed 5,000 years Sunrise Mountain thicket of reeds 10,000 autumns

(b) which deities come to claim the child as their own? (p.186-87)

six-faced child = Kārtikkeya, Guha, Kumāra, Vishāka, Shākha & Mahāsena
baby boy Krttika-s swift ram
Janārdana = Vāsudeva, Hari, Acyuta Ambikā/Umā/Gaurī (=Pārvatī)

(c) how is “six-faced god” consecrated and for what purpose? (p.187-88)

Kurukshetra/golden shrine

Mahisha

rivers

The *Devī Mahātmya* Episode of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna** (RDR, 167-89)

Language & Related Texts:

Sanskrit feminine nouns *Mahābhārata** *Bhagavad Gītā* *Laws of Manu*

Names/Forms of the Goddess:

Goddess = Devī* = Shrī/lakshmī* = Pārvatī
= Aindra/Aindrī, Svādhā/Svāhā
= Prakṛti (“**primordial matter**”), māyā (“**magic, illusion**”)
= Durgā,* Kaushikī, Katyāyanī, Candikā, Ambikā/Ambā
= Kālī* = Shivadūtī

Other Deities

gods vs. Asuras (=demons, Daityas, Dānavas)
Indra Vishnu Brahmā = Prajāpati Shiva

The *Devī Mahātmya* Episode of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna (RDR, 167-89)**

(a) What gods & asuras call on the great Goddess & for what purpose? (4.35-5.76)

Himālaya Chanda & Munda Shumbha messenger Nishumbha

(b) Which demons do battle with the Goddess & how does she prevail? (6.1-10.28)

lion Dhūmrālocana heads & arms skull-topped staff elephants/horses/chariots
Cāmundā *shaktis* (of the gods) Skanda (band of) Mothers
Raktabīja swords clubs arrows conch bell sky

(c) With what praises do the gods thank the Goddess & what is her response? (11.1-12.38)

refuge **queen/mother** power of Vishnu = Nārāyanī protectress
danger evils ghosts accidents enemies **knowledges**
Yashodā vegetables bee-form *Mahātmya* autumn children animals

(d) what do the king & the *vaishya* (merchant) do after hearing the story? (13.1-17)

Devī-Sūkta earth flowers/ incense/ fire/water fasting blood

Sili Sat as described in *Hindu Festivals in a North Indian Village*
(linked to on-line schedule & also in SacCT)

Place:

Shānti Nagar

Castes:

Brāhmans
Barber
Blackmith
Gardeners
Sweepers
Jats

Deities:

Shītalā (Mata)
Crossroads Mother Goddess
Pānch Pīr
Bhumiya
Mātā (=”Mother”)
Seven Sisters

Sili Sat as described in *Hindu Festivals in a North Indian Village*
(linked to on-line schedule & also in SacCT)

(a) What different goddesses are associated with this celebration? (p.122-25)

hot season cooked food smallpox disease coolness water-pot
Shashti = Mother Sixth Kārttikeya

(b) Who offers worship, where and what do they do? (p.126-34)

castes shrines dogs tray pitcher flowers dung cakes
(four) directions Goddesses of North, South & West pond crossroads

(c) What is the overall significance of the celebration? (p.134-35)

protection/fertility porridge Yama Sanskritization Kālī Durgā

traces of Hot Season festivals in Sacramento

(view on-line slides of statues; reports available from the Learning Modules tab in SacCT for ApEx 3c)

(a) Siddhi Vinayaka Cultural Center

<http://www.sacramentoindia.us/hindu-temples.html>

&/OR

(b) Lakshmi Narayana Temple

<http://www.sacramentoindia.us/lakshmi-narayan-temple.html>

passages to locate and study in the above primary sources:

"...she also worshipped the Crossroads Mother Goddess. She said: 'I went to the Crossroads Mother Goddess. I had vowed to offer a headcloth for the birth of a grandson [who was less than five months old...]. So I offered the headcloth [to the family Sweeper whom she had summoned to the crossroads] and distributed two seers of gur and some *batashas*, five to a child. Only the Brahmans and Bairagis go [on the circumambulation]. They go and worship Kanti Mother when any child has typhoid. If any child from my house has typhoid, then I will also go and offer sweetmeats at [the shrine of] Kanti Mata.'...Any or all remedies and rituals may be used if there is any chance of their being effective."

"Then the God of luminous splendor saw the sun on Sunrise Mountain, and he saw the lordly moon entering the sun. the hour of Rudra set in on the New Moon Day, and he saw God and Asura embattled on Sunrise Peak. The God...saw the dawn covered with blood-red clouds, and the lord observed that Varuna's ocean was bloody. The fire was taking the oblation that had been offered with manifold spells and was entering the sun. The twenty-four moon-phase days gathered about the sun, and the law-coursing moon of the Rudra hour was conjoint with the sun, and the law-coursing moon of the Rudra hour was conjoint with the sun."

"When you...who has become everything, granting heaven and ultimate freedom
Are praised, what fine words could suffice for the eulogy?
O you who abide in the heart of every individual in the form of intelligence,
Granting heaven and ultimate freedom...praise be to you!
O you who bring about the process of change, in the form of minutes, moments, and so forth
The very power manifest at the destruction of the cosmos...praise be to you!"

"Thereupon a powerful, golden-hued spirit flew out of [his] body to devour the offspring of the mortals. It fell on the ground, senseless and starving, and...it became a Grasper in a Rudra-like form....They call Pūtanā a Rākshasī—one should know that she is the Pūtanā Grasper: she is an awful Stalker of the Night, evil in her ghastly shape. One horrifying Pisāchī is called Shītapūtanā: this terrible-shaped specter aborts the foetus of women. They say that Aditi is Revatī: her Grasper is Raivata: this horrible big Grasper afflicts small children. Diti, the mother of the Daityas, is said to be Mukhamandikā: this unapproachable demoness feasts gluttonously on children's flesh."