Dedicated volumes are often touching, and this one is useful, too. *Krishna’s Mandala* is a collection of thirteen articles by D. Dennis Hudson written over a thirty-year period—six from the *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*, two previously unpublished. Those who are familiar with Hudson know of his expertise in uniting archeology, art, theology, textual analysis, poetry, ritual, and sociology into a wide-ranging picture of Vaishnava and Shaiva thought and practice. *Krishna’s Mandala* is an excellent selection with a useful introduction that succeeds in providing a holistic view of Vaishnava and Shaiva traditions, drawing details from a wide range of sources.

Part I has four essays detailing the relationship between South Indian cities and theology, such as Madurai (after Mathurā) as an embodiment of the Māṇḍapa, and Madurāī as an embodiment of Kṛṣṇa and Gopāl in 300 BCE. Part II has five essays on the historical origins of *Bhaṭṭagvata* religion. Hudson attempts to overcome two prevailing theses: that the *Bhaṭṭagvata-Puraṇa* used “archaic” Sanskrit to make a new Purāṇa look old, and that it was composed in South India during the tenth century CE. According to Hudson, the *Bhaṭṭagvata* contains an “esoteric” or “secret-core” (books 7–10) that must be older than the Tamil Sangam literature (ca. 100 BCE–250 CE), which explains its “archaic” Sanskrit. Within the secret core, books 9–10 date from 700 BCE at Magadha. The “public-shells” of the *Bhaṭṭagvata* (books 1–6 and 11–12) were composed in about 800–900 CE, yet sought to retain the archaic linguistic style of the esoteric core because it was deemed sacred (p. 139).

Hudson makes his case with selections from text and archeology, but leaves one thinking it is little more than learned guesswork. For example, Hudson says that the *Bhaṭṭagvata* is from Magadha because Śuka—the primary narrator—concludes his description of the Kali-Yuga kings (*vamsā*) in Magadha at the end of book 9, and begins the *vamsā* in Magadha at book 12. Furthermore, he notes Michael Witzel’s conclusion that the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, the earliest known source for Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa rituals and the term “Pāñcarātra,” is from Magadha; but Hudson admits that no one has determined whether the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*’s linguistic style is similar to the *Bhaṭṭagvata*’s (p. 140), so perhaps these ideas traveled from Magadha to wherever the *Bhaṭṭagvata* was composed.

There are other questions. Surely *vamsā* descriptions must begin and end somewhere. Why has Hudson focused on *vamsās* to determine the text’s place of origin? Perhaps he clarifies his rationale elsewhere. Why not focus on other features of the *Bhaṭṭagvata* to determine its origin, such as the locales that it extols as most holy, or speaks of with the greatest familiarity of geography and plant life? When examined from these perspectives, Mathurā might be the most likely origin. Hudson has already noted the extent to which Southerners...
“incarnated” Mathurā and its lore into Southern cities and literature, which further indicates Mathurā as the center of Bhāgavata life and religion.

Part III has thee essays on Āñṭā Ālvār, the only female Ālvār, which the editor (John Stratton Hawley) rightly notes is Hudson’s own “deep interest in matters of gender” (p. xxix). Here we have solid historical evidence of a woman’s involvement in Vaishnava theology, but without abandonment to speculative gender theories.

The closing essay of Krishna’s Mandala—Hudson’s previously unpublished address to John Carman upon his retirement—is a gem. Śrī Vaiṣṇavism asks whether we are saved like monkeys (“self-power”) or cats (“other-power”). Monkeys’ public life—in earthly Vṛūḍāvana and in the Bhāgavata’s līlā—represent impassioned mental activity, their squabbles and frequent sexual activity symbolizing the need for self-discipline, sādhana. Cats are secretive and deceptive. Narasimha, the Bhāgavata’s most famous cat, saves (deceptively) the devotee Prahlavā from the asura Hiranyakasipu. Some see duality (“like cats or monkeys”), whereas Hudson sees unity: “I have learned that the Bhagavatas used the monkey and cat to represent processes that take place inside the consciousness of a devotee” (p. 276). Hiranyakasipu, a wrongminded yogin, represents the monkey, for by self-power he obtains universal domination; Prahlavā clung to Vishnu like a monkey when he was tormented by his father, but he was saved like a kitten: “Other-power and self-power alternated and complemented one another as the sadhaka moved from the sleep of ignorance to the wakefulness of knowledge” (p. 280). Hudson takes the metaphors to reflect on their friendship and life as scholars.

There are drawbacks: many essays do not have diacritics, and there are numerous typos, such as “books” of the Bhagavad-Gītā instead of chapters (p. xxxvii), “Vṛti” instead of Vṛtra (p. 129), “Sarmishta” instead of Sarmishtha or Sarmishta (p. 129), and reference to Bhāgavata “9.73–73” instead of 10.73.1 (p. 131). One expects more from such an expensive book. The title misrepresents the book as entirely about Kṛṣṇa, when in fact Śiva and Devī factor importantly. There is more than mandala, too, such as architecture and city planning. What does “beyond” mean? That Śiva and Devī are beyond Bhāgavata, or that Hudson’s analysis goes beyond Bhāgavata? Neither option represents Hudson’s approach.

While Krishna’s Mandala is too advanced for undergraduates, it is certainly suitable for graduate seminars in Vaishnavism and Shaivism pertaining to text and architecture. It would make a worthy reference volume for research scholars working in these fields given the detail and subtle analysis that Hudson often provides.

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