



The Grace of Four Moons: Dress, Adornment, and the Art of the Body in Modern India (Material Culture)

By Pravina Shukla

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Because clothing, food, and shelter are basic human needs, they provide excellent entries to cultural values and individual aesthetics. Everyone gets dressed every day, but body art has not received the attention it deserves as the most common and universal of material expressions of culture. The Grace of Four Moons aims to document the clothing decisions made by ordinary people in their everyday lives. Based on fieldwork conducted primarily in the city of Banaras, India, Pravina Shukla conceptualizes and realizes a total model for the study of body art—understood as all aesthetic modifications and supplementations to the body. Shukla urges the study of the entire process of body art, from the assembly of raw materials and the manufacture of objects, through their sale and the interactions between merchants and consumers, to the consumer's use of objects in creating personal decoration.

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Editorial Review

Review

In this unique and fascinating volume, the author calls the realm of her concern 'body art,' which is intended to denote all aesthetic modifications and supplementations to the body. Using rich firsthand interviews and information from modern India, folklorist Shukla (Indiana Univ.) traces the art of the body through the production of saris, bangles, and other goods and commerce and shopping, both of which are the arena of men. From this point, the author interviews individual women on personal adornment and finishes her study with a discussion of body art in the life cycle, with particular reference to weddings. For folklorists and cultural anthropologists, this is a treasure trove of information. For students of religion, it provides the material reference to the system of beliefs. Summing Up: Highly recommended. All levels/libraries. Choice, September 2008

(Choice 2008-01-00)

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(Choice 2008-01-00)

"The Grace of Four Moons provides a wealth of information about clothing and jewelry as an outlet for women seeking freedom of expression in India, while staying with a traditional framework." —India Currents Magazine, June 18, 2008

(India Currents Magazine 2008-01-00)

"The book is skillfully organized, written in a clear, jargon-free, unpretentious style... and it is an outstanding first work by a most promising young scholar." —Charles G Zug III, *Journal of Folklore Research*, October 15, 2008

*(Charles G Zug III *Journal of Folklore Research* 2008-01-00)*

"Pravina Shukla refines folklore scholarship and its study of material culture through her pioneering work on women and their body art." —William Ferris, co-editor of *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*

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"Well-researched and well-produced, The Grace of Four Moons is a welcome addition to the scholarly canon for a wide range of academic as well as more popular objectives." —Western Folklore, 69.1, 2010

(*Western Folklore* 2010-01-00)

From the Publisher

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About the Author

Pravina Shukla is Associate Professor in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology at Indiana University, where she teaches courses on dress and body art, food, museums, and material culture. She lives in Bloomington, Indiana.

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