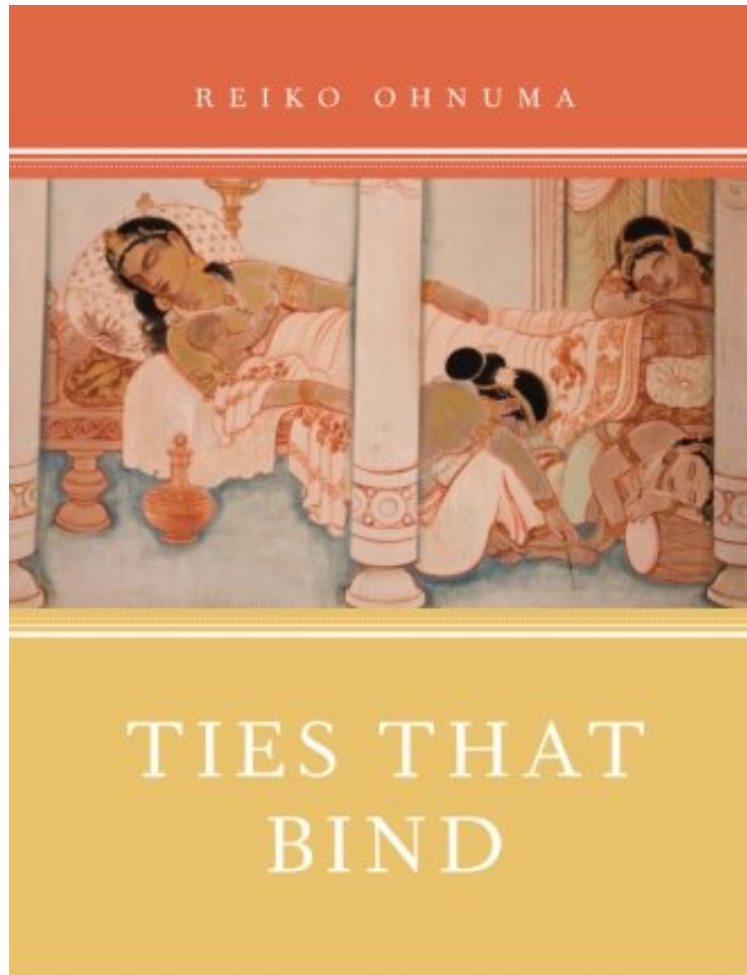


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Ties That Bind: Maternal Imagery and Discourse in Indian Buddhism

Reiko Ohnuma

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Maternal Imagery and Discourse in Indian Buddhism

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Reiko Ohnuma : Ties That Bind: Maternal Imagery and Discourse in Indian Buddhism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ties That Bind: Maternal Imagery and Discourse in Indian Buddhism:

Reiko Ohnuma offers a wide-ranging exploration of the complex role of maternal imagery and discourse in pre-modern South Asian Buddhism. Motherhood was sometimes extolled as the most appropriate symbol for buddhahood itself, and sometimes denigrated as the most paradigmatic manifestation of attachment and suffering. In Buddhist literature, feelings of love and gratitude for the mother's nurturance frequently mingle with submerged feelings of hostility and resentment for the unbreakable obligations thus created, and positive images of self-sacrificing mothers are counterbalanced by horrific depictions of mothers who kill and devour. Institutionally, the formal definition of the Buddhist renunciant as one who has severed all familial ties seems to co-exist uneasily with an abundance of historical evidence demonstrating monks' and nuns' continuing concern for their mothers, as well as other familial entanglements. Ohnuma's study provides critical insight into Buddhist depictions of maternal love and grief, the role of the Buddha's own mothers, Maya and Mahaprajapata, the use of pregnancy and gestation as metaphors for the attainment of enlightenment, the use of breastfeeding as a metaphor for the compassionate deeds of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the relationship between Buddhism and motherhood as it actually existed in day-to-day life.

"In this wonderfully well-balanced book, Reiko Ohnuma insightfully explores the complex ways in which motherhood is both valued and undermined in the Indian Buddhist tradition. By masterfully comparing and contrasting traditions about the Buddha's two mothers--his birth mother Maya, and his foster mother Mahaprajapata--she shows how the trope of motherhood led both to a feminization of Buddhist ideals, but also a cooptation of motherhood in a male-dominated world. A must-read for all students of Buddhism and of Women and Gender Studies." --John S. Strong, Charles A. Dana Professor of Religious Studies, Bates College "Not only does the book offer a compelling argument about motherhood in premodern South Asian Buddhism, but it also provides an extremely helpful roadmap of current scholarship on gender and the family in South Asian Buddhism." --Elizabeth Wilson, Professor of Comparative Religion, Miami University About the Author Reiko Ohnuma is Associate Professor of Religion at Dartmouth College and is affiliated with the Asian Middle Eastern Studies Program and the Women's Gender Studies Program. She is a specialist in the Buddhist traditions of South Asia, with a particular interest in Indian Buddhist narrative literature, hagiography, and the role and imagery of women.