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The Saint of Kathmandu: And Other Tales of the Sacred in Distant Lands

Sarah LeVine
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Devout Nigerian Muslims use practitioners of spirit possession on the sly when faced with problems they cannot solve; in an ostensibly Catholic town in Mexico, the cult of the Virgin comforts women as their husbands divide their time between them and “second wives”; in Kenya, Christians must still deal with their terror of witchcraft and the anger of their deceased ancestors; in Nepal, a saintly woman flees an arranged marriage to retain her personal freedom by becoming a respected Buddhist nun and feminist leader; in Hong Kong, masses of educated Filipina women who labor as maids in order to send money to families and children find comfort and purpose in a charismatic church; and a farm in New England, home of the first American teacher of Zen, is planted with seeds of sorrow as well as hope for enlightenment. What Sarah LeVine found as she traveled the world researching and becoming close to the people of four continents is that in facing the full range of human emotions, orthodoxy in belief and practice may not be a match for people’s traditions in bringing them hope and comfort.

Sarah LeVine grew up in England and was educated at Oxford, the University of Chicago, and Harvard, where she earned her doctorate and now teaches in the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies. She is also author, with David Gellner, of the book *Rebuilding Buddhism*.

KRISTINE MORRIS (October 13, 2008)

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