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The Living Goddess: A Journey Into The Heart Of Kathmandu



Synopsis

In a small medieval palace on Kathmandu's Durbar Square lives Nepal's famous Living Goddess - a child as young as three who is chosen from a caste of Buddhist goldsmiths to watch over the country and protect its people. To Nepalis she is the embodiment of Devi (the universal goddess), and for centuries, their Hindu kings have sought her blessing to legitimize their rule. Weaving together myth, religious belief, modern history, and court gossip, this book takes us on a compelling and fascinating journey to the esoteric, hidden heart of Nepal. Through her unprecedented access to the many layers of Nepalese society, the author is able to put the country's troubled modern history in the context of the complex spiritual beliefs and practices that inform the role of the little girl at its center. The Living Goddess is a compassionate and illuminating enquiry into this reclusive Himalayan country, deeply felt, emotionally engaged, and written after twelve years of travel and research. As seen in National Geographic. ""Combines magnificent travel writing, serious anthropological research and savvy political commentary on a changing Nepal.""--Times Literary Supplement

Book Information

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: Eland Books (August 9, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1780600461

ISBN-13: 978-1780600468

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 1.1 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #746,457 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in [Books > Travel > Asia > Nepal > Kathmandu](#) #60 in [Books > Travel > Asia > Nepal > General](#) #651 in [Books > Travel > Asia > General](#)

Customer Reviews

Completely fascinating, beautifully written and stranger than fiction. I loved it. --Joanna Lumley
Combines magnificent travel writing, serious anthropological research and savvy political commentary on a changing Nepal. --Times Literary Supplement
An inherently fascinating and informative read from beginning to end. . . Unique and enthusiastically recommended. --Midwest Book Review

Isabella Tree is a writer and journalist based in the UK. She is the author of three other non-fiction books and writes for publications such as Granta, National Geographic Magazine, the Sunday Times and the Observer. She has been travelling regularly to Nepal since the 1980s.

The author more than fulfilled my expectations and hopes for information on this fascinating subject. A very thorough presentation enjoyable to read.

Fascinating info and yet the poor child has no life!

Isabella has done a wonderful job of taking historical facts, legends and contemporary facts related to the Living Goddess tradition of the Kathmandu valley side by side. This book is very accessible and very hard to put down. Reading through the book, you get to not only understand the culture and history of the Kathmandu valley, but of the whole of Nepal and the concept of the Divine Feminine in Hinduism, and to some extent in Buddhism. The portrayal of a matriarchal tradition surviving and enduring in a traditionally patriarchal society and religion, this book is a must read for all interested in Nepalese and South Asian history and culture, and even for anyone else interested in a unique tradition which has stood the test of time and continues to inspire tens of thousands. This is most likely the only piece of work in the English language about the Living Goddess of the Kathmandu valley which covers almost every aspect of the tradition.

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