

RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2016



Welcome to the June 2016 issue of *RTC LIBRARY E-NEWSLETTER*

In this issue: Recommended Reads: *Family Life*, *Nine Lives*, *Game of Thrones*

The Tendrel: a very special year for Bhutan

Read the Book-Watch the Movie: *Room* by Emma Donoghue

This Month: What's new on the MSS

Events: RTC Book Fair and *The Secret Life of Bees* book discussion

Recommended Reads from the RTC community

Family Life: A Novel by Akhil Sharma

Family Life is narrated by the disarmingly blunt Ajay Mishra, whose family immigrated to the United States in the early 1980's. He tells the story of the aftermath of a terrible accident that leaves his academically gifted older brother permanently brain-damaged and bed-bound.

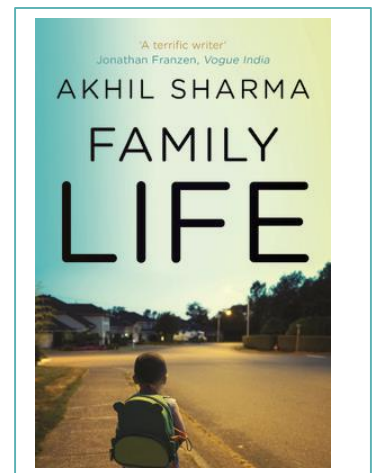
Ajay recounts the ways in which this accident reshapes family life and individual expectations about hope and love with a startlingly lack of sentimentality. I was surprised that this uniquely unflinching view into the everyday struggles of Ajay and his family drew me into the story more quickly and more firmly than other stories of family tragedy that thickly layer emotion onto every possible sad moment.

As an interesting side note, the author Akhil Sharma based the novel on a similar tragedy in his own Indian immigrant family and perhaps unsurprisingly it took him more than 12 years to finish the book.

Dolma Choden Roder, Social Sciences Faculty

Location: FIC

Call No.: FIC S5313f



Quotes:

"I use to think my father had been assigned to us by the government. This was because he appeared to serve no purpose."

"Vanishing into books, I felt held."

"I would walk along the fence and frequently I cried so hard that I lost my breath. When this happened, I became detached from myself. I walked and gasped and, as I did, I could feel my unhappiness walking beside me, waiting for my breath to return so that it could climb back inside me."

Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India by William Dalrymple

Nine Lives is a captivating collection of nine non-fiction stories. In each chapter, we are introduced to a variety of colorful and fascinating people from different religions, often times practicing their faiths in nonconventional ways. We encounter a Jain nun entering upon the course of *sallekhana* and a Tibetan monk in Dharamsala making prayer flags to atone for the lives he has taken. In Bengal, we meet Manisha who lives in the crematorium grounds of Tarapith and worships Ma Tara.

Hari Das is a Dalit *theyyam* dancer from Kerala, who ceases to be a dancer and becomes the deity and for a short time, even Brahmins prostrate before him. Srikanda, a Brahmin idol maker, continues to use a 700 year old technique to "create gods in the form of man." Rani Bai is a prostitute, a special sort of prostitute. She is a *devadasi* (a servant of the gods). As a young girl she was dedicated to the goddess, Yellamma, and since reaching puberty, was made to "ply her trade".

Mohan is an illiterate *Bhopa*, a singer of epics in Rajasthan. He recites "The Epic of Pabuji", a 4,000 line poem memorized by heart and told over the course of five nightlong performances. The Ecstatic Red Fairy is a Muslim woman from Bihar, now living in the Thar Desert of western Pakistan, a place where Muslims and Hindus gather to worship the Sufi Saint, Lal Shabhaz Qalander. Lastly, we meet Kanai, a blind Bengali *Baul*, who wanders from place to place, singing, playing instruments, and practicing esoteric Tantric *sadhana*.

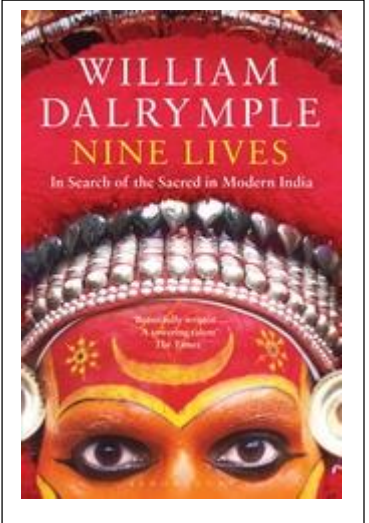
The author raises interesting questions as to the longevity of these local traditions. He writes about the rise of *bhakti* cults and the "Rama-fication" of Hinduism now replacing the more traditional and primitive forms of local devotion and worship. Regarding the future of the oral epic, Dalrymple draws from previous research by Milman Parry, who studied the demise of the oral epic in Yugoslavia. Parry concluded that illiteracy is the one essential condition for preserving traditional storytelling. He says, "It was the ability of the bard to read, rather than changes in the tastes of his audience, that sounded the death knell for the oral tradition. Just as the blind can develop a heightened sense of hearing, smell and touch to compensate for their loss of vision, so it seems that the illiterate have a capacity to remember in a way that the literate simply do not. It was not lack of interest, but literacy itself that was killing the oral epic."

As one reviewer wrote, this is "a glorious mix of journalism, anthropology, history, and history of religions, packed in writing worthy of a good novel." And I heartedly agree. Just when I begin to think the story I am reading must be the best, the next one enthralls me all the more. This is a well-researched, well written (and I hope a well-read book) that takes an intimate look at traditions that may be on the brink of extinction. **Amrita McKinney,**

Librarian

Location: **Main**

Call No.: **240 D151n 2010 -- Also available to download on the MSS**



Quotes:

"My father used to say that the chisel was his teacher. It moves in a way that even we cannot control - the heart is its driver, and God is in the heart."

"There is a wonderful sense of lightness, living each day as it comes, with no sense of ownership, no weight, no burden."

"You must understand. This is what we believe. Both hell and paradise – it is all within you. So few understand..."

"If anything, I prayed more in the army than I did as a monk."

"The sun is always there, even if the clouds are covering it. In the same way, the soul is trying to reach for liberation, even if it is encumbered by sin and desire and attachments."

"Songs help you transcend the material life, said Subhol."It takes you to a different spiritual level."

Game of Thrones by George R. R. Martin

Book One of: *A Song of Ice and Fire*

Robert the usurper sits on the Iron Throne after he won it from the Dragon King with his war hammer. Children of Dragon, Viserys and Daenerys were forced to flee the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros and go past the Dothraki Sea. When a raven arrives at Winterfell bearing dark words about the death of King's Hand, Lord Eddard Stark is unwillingly made to be the new Hand of his best friend and King. While King Robert is frivolous and trusting, Lord Eddard is wary of the Lannisters. Something about those blue eyes and golden heads has never felt right to the Lord of Winterfell.

Meanwhile, in lands past the Dothraki Sea, Viserys and Daenerys form a union with the undefeated Khal Drogo with the intention to win back Seven Kingdoms. When Lord Eddard finally uncovers the truth behind Lord Aryan's death, Lannisters will do everything to veil it. But if Wildlings and Others breach the Wall in the north, this Game of Thrones will have been for naught.

Don't let the 800 pages, scare you off from reading this engaging fantasy epic that takes the reader through a maze of plots and counterplots in a deadly quest for power. **Kezang Choden, Student BA Soc**

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LOCATION: FIC

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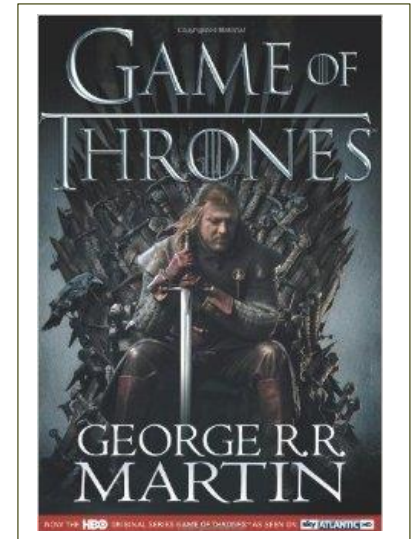
If you like Game of Thrones, we have others in the series

Book 2: *A clash of kings*

Book 3: *A storm of swords*

Book 4: *A feast for crows*

Book 5: *A dance with dragons*



Quotes:

"If you would take a man's life, you owe it to him to look into his eyes and hear his final words. And if you cannot bear to do that, then perhaps the man does not deserve to die."

"Can a man still be brave if he's afraid?"

"That is the only time a man can be brave."

"There is no creature on earth half so terrifying as a truly just man."

"When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground."

"A man who fights for coin is loyal only to his purse."

The Tendrel

Tendrel is a translation of the Sanskrit term meaning “auspicious circumstances”. The Tendrel this year in Bhutan marks the coming together of a number of auspicious occasions that coincide with the birth of the Royal Prince, making his birth a very special one.

1. 2016 marks the birth anniversary of Guru Rinpoche/Padmasambhava in the year of the Fire Male Monkey, which comes only once every 60 years. Guru Rinpoche first arrived in Bhutan in 746 AD and is revered for introducing and unifying Buddhist tantric practices. The people’s deep love and reverence for Guru Rinpoche can be seen in the many statues and artwork found throughout the country.
2. This year, Bhutan celebrates the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel to Bhutan. Zhabdrung, called the Founder of the Nation, is responsible for unifying Bhutan, bringing peace to the country, and giving Bhutan its national dress and identity, its laws and system of governance.
3. On February 5, the Kingdom welcomed the birth on 5 of the prince, Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck, heir apparent to the Golden Throne. Warmly, the King declared “the Prince is the son of every Bhutanese”. 2016 also marks the 108th year of the founding of the Wangchuck dynasty.

Tendrel Events

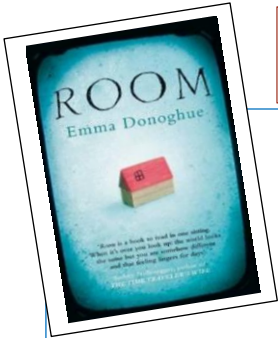
On March 6, over 100,000 Bhutanese from across the country planted 108,000 saplings to commemorate the birth of the Prince.

A sapling of the Bodhi tree, under which Lord Buddha attained enlightenment, was planted at Takila in Lhuentse.

Sachu Bumtens (blessed vessels) were installed at the sources of five water bodies in Punakha to bless the waters that course through the country.

Come see our Library Display and check out these (and other) books about Bhutan’s three bright stars





Location: FIC D6871r
Also available on the MSS

Available on the MSS



Read the book, watch the movie!

Room by Emma Donoghue

Imagine you have just turned 5 years old. Now imagine that you have lived your entire life with your mother inside a small room. Your only view of the outside world is the sky, seen through a ceiling skylight. You sleep in the wardrobe. You still breastfed.

Ma was kidnapped and her abductor, Old Nick, has kept her confined in Room, a shed, for seven years. He is her only visitor. She is completely dependent on Old Nick for food and supplies, your life. He delivers the necessities and comes for sex. She protects you from him. When Ma doesn't follow the rules, he turns off the electricity, the heat, and stops bringing food to teach her a lesson.

Until now, Ma has kept all this from you. Now that you are five, she begins to tell you the truth about your situation and the Outside. She hopes you can possibly begin to understand. It is hard for you to accept that all the things you have been told were just on TV, are now real. When Ma tells you it is necessary to escape from Room, you think "but she said we were like in a book, how do people in a book escape from it?"

Welcome to Jack's and Ma's world.

Room is an engaging read and it will keep you turning the pages. There were times I felt the repetitiveness of their lives, felt claustrophobic.

The film won critical acclaim and IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes both gave it high scores. It was nominated for four Academy Awards including Best Picture. Brie Larson won Best Actress for her role as Ma. The acting is convincing and the movie closely follows the story line with a few minor changes. I always find it interesting to compare a movie based on a book. Why they choose to add or delete a character or events and if the change is effective.

I preferred the book to the movie. I like how the author tells the tale through Jack's eyes. We experience his puzzlement, his innocence, his coming to terms with this new, major development in a life that up until this point is all too predictable. I like how the author captures moments, like the singsong games Jack and Ma play; how she capitalizes everyday objects and activities, which effectively highlight their importance to Jack. We marvel at the herculean efforts Ma has made to create a safe, loving, and interesting environment for Jake and the toll it often takes on her. Definitely Read the Book and/or Watch the Movie.

What are your thoughts?

This month: What's new on the MSS?

BUDDHISM AND MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

A Course by



The Dalai Lama has said that Buddhism and science are deeply compatible and has encouraged Western scholars to critically examine both the meditative practice and Buddhist ideas about the human mind.

You can discover this now for yourself because we have made the full course, mainly consisting of easy to watch videos with subtitles, **available for you on the Media Shared Space (MSS) in the Library and also in the RTC Cloud in the directory:**

If you have any questions on the course, or if you experience any problems in using the course materials, feel free to approach Mr. Jeroen Uittenbogaard (juittenbogaard@rtc.bt) for help.

Just a sample of the new movies (over 100)



and the new e-books added to the MSS. All available to download.



Come to the RTC Book Fair!

**Are you looking for a good book or two to read over
break?**

**Four Thimphu Bookstores will be coming to campus to display and sell
their books**

Where: Space Infinity

Date: June 9-10, 2016

Time: 9:00-5:00

News from the Reading Club:

Join us on 14 June to discuss *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd. It is a heartwarming tale of a 14 year old girl coming of age in South Carolina during the 1960's.

Where: Executive Center

When: Tuesday, June 14, 2016, 4:30-5:30

If you haven't read it yet, the book is available to download on the MSS

Speaking of the MSS...

Do you have movies or e-books you would like to share with others?
Contact the Library and we will unfreeze the MSS to add your new items.

Join others in sharing a book recommendation with the RTC community

If you've read a good book recently and would like to share your recommendation with others, the Library would love to receive your 150-500 word review. Send it to amckinney@rtc.bt or come by the library and see Amrita.

Thanks!