

For He Gladdens the Earth: Consent and Conjuality in the Astral State

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Traditional discussions of gender in Hindu traditions often begin with a critique of patriarchy in orthodox Brahmanical Dharmaśāstras, followed by a turn to potential feminist resources—for example, in goddess worship, Śākta traditions, and Tantra. One effect of this line of thinking has been a relative absence within Hindu studies of reflections on gender in relation to state power, a thematic hallmark of feminist postcolonial histories of South Asia. Geslani's talk reframes the question of gender in premodern Hindu traditions by historicizing orthodox gender theories in relation to other contemporaneous interlocutors. He focuses on royal sexual politics as depicted in the astral sciences, Jyotiḥśāstras, which he argues are crucial texts for uncovering the ideology of the medieval state. When placed in relation to ritual and omenology, an astral theory of conjuality reveals the uniquely gendered power of royal bodies to naturalize political consent.

Marko Geslani is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Carolina. He is the author of *Rites of the God-King: Śānti and Ritual Change in Early Hinduism* (Oxford University Press 2018).