

William P. Harding:

"It was said that while Saint Benedict built on the mountain top, the Cistercian built in the valley; flowing water has always been an intrinsic key to the secret of Cistercian sites, not only was running water essential to the material needs of the monastery, but springs and rivers have been associated with magical powers since the dawn of time and in the Christian Tradition streams and wells were always dedicated to the Virgin, as were all Cistercian Abbey Churches." ¹

D. Z. Bor

"All the sites of the cult of the virgin are at once haunted places with a long, mostly pre-Christian tradition. Deep under the churches of pilgrimage there are in most cases vast cavities, lodes of ore, radioactive springs, or hot or cold springs. Who discovered them, designated them, and ordered that temples should be built over them? And why? In order to prevent man's graspingness from violating them, to keep these special places of the Earth untouched? We do not know." ²

Diana L. Eck, India's "Tirthas": "Crossings" in Sacred Geography, *History of Religions*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (May, 1981), pp. 323-344 <http://culturaldiamond.org/Eck.pdf>

Hans Bakker, Construction and Reconstruction of Sacred Space in Vārāṇasī, *Numen*, Vol. 43, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 1996), pp. 32-55

Benjamin J. Fleming, Mapping Sacred Geography in Medieval India: The Case of the Twelve "Jyotirlingas", *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Apr., 2009), pp. 51-81

Philip Sheldrake, [Placing the Sacred: Transcendence and the City](#)

Eck's concept of pluralism has been influential within the wider interfaith movement, and is cited by the Interfaith Youth Core as foundational to its organizational values.

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[DIANA L. ECK@WIKIPEDIA](#)

Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies

Director, [THE PLURALISM PROJECT](#)

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Diana L. Eck, Banaras City of Light

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India: A Sacred Geography by Diana L Eck - review

Globalization is making India more religious. William Dalrymple hails a guide to Hindu mythologies William Dalrymple. The Guardian, Friday 27 July 2012. [[ONLINE HERE](#)]

But the idea of Indian sacredness is not some western concept grafted on to the subcontinent in a fit of mystical Orientalism: it is instead an idea central to India's mythological conception of

¹ Harding, Fra William P. The Origins of The Order of The Temple of Solomon, *R.I.L.K.O. Journal*, 54, Spring/Summer 1999, p.10.

² D. Z. Bor, Master Stonemasons and the Light of Divine Wisdom, In: *Opus Magnum*, Trigon, Prague, 1997, [267-271].

itself, which "continues to anchor millions of people in the imagined landscape of their country". Hindu mythology consistently visualizes India as a spiritually charged and "living landscape in which mountains, rivers, forests and villages are elaborately linked to the stories of the gods and heroes. The land bears traces of the gods and the footprints of the heroes. Every place has its story and, conversely, every story in the vast storehouse of myth and legend has its place ... In this mental map, geography is overlaid with layer upon layer of story."

Indeed this idea of India as a sacred landscape predates classical Hinduism, and, most important, is an idea that in turn was passed on to most of the other religions that came to flourish in the Indian soil. The origins of the idea of Indian sacred geography seems to lie in India's ancient pre-Vedic religions where veneration was given to sprites known as nagas or yakshas. These godlings were associated with natural features of the landscape, such as pools and sacred springs and the roots of banyan trees, and were believed to have jurisdiction over their own areas. Over the centuries, the myths associated with such features changed, so that a particular sacred pool might in time come to be associated with Ram and Sita, or a mountain linked with Krishna or the wanderings of the Pandava brothers of the Mahabharat. Just as the sacredness of the landscape percolated from pre-Vedic and tribal folk cults into classical "Great Tradition" Hinduism, so in the course of time the idea slowly trickled from Hinduism into Buddhism, Sikhism, Indian Islam and even Indian Christianity.

As Eck writes in her conclusion: "The affirmation of the everywhere of the sacred – this is the peculiar genius of the theology given expression in the landscape of India." No one, she writes, "says it better than the poet saints of south India who praise the supreme lord who is right here where the rivers meet, right here where the herons wade, right here where the hillock rises, right here where the palms sway over the estuary, right here where the mango blossoms are fragrant. The places they praise are different. The taste of the lord is different in each. But each one is a 'beloved place', and each one enables the pilgrim soul to catch a glimpse of the vast reality of God."

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David W. Kim, *Sacred Sites and Sacred Stories Across Cultures: Transmission of Oral Tradition, Myth, and Religiosity*, Palgrave Macmillan, Year: 2021