

The book was found

# Medusa's Hair: An Essay On Personal Symbols And Religious Experience



## Synopsis

The great pilgrimage center of southeastern Sri Lanka, Kataragama, has become in recent years the spiritual home of a new class of Hindu-Buddhist religious devotees. These ecstatic priests and priestesses invariably display long locks of matted hair, and they express their devotion to the gods through fire walking, tongue-piercing, hanging on hooks, and trance-induced prophesying. The increasing popularity of these ecstasies poses a challenge not only to orthodox Sinhala Buddhism (the official religion of Sri Lanka) but also, as Gananath Obeyesekere shows, to the traditional anthropological and psychoanalytic theories of symbolism. Focusing initially on one symbol, matted hair, Obeyesekere demonstrates that the conventional distinction between personal and cultural symbols is inadequate and naive. His detailed case studies of ecstasies show that there is always a reciprocity between the personal-psychological dimension of the symbol and its public, culturally sanctioned role. *Medusa's Hair* thus makes an important theoretical contribution both to the anthropology of individual experience and to the psychoanalytic understanding of culture. In its analyses of the symbolism of guilt, the adaptational and integrative significance of belief in spirits, and a host of related issues concerning possession states and religiosity, this book marks a provocative advance in psychological anthropology.

## Book Information

Paperback: 232 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; New edition edition (September 15, 1984)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226616010

ISBN-13: 978-0226616018

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 13 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #458,838 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #62 in [Books > History > World >](#)

[Religious > Hinduism](#) #107 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Hinduism > Rituals & Practice](#)

#444 in [Books > History > Asia > India](#)

## Customer Reviews

What is most rewarding with this book, is the cultural/cognitive analysis done by the author.

Obeyesekere explains how the women with matted hair (in an Indian province) obtain their particular status in a society brimming with mythological images and tales very much pervading daily life. Very

Freudian in his approach when recording the life stories of the women (allowances has to be made for this) and subsequently how these trajectories have formed the women, the author demonstrates how the women are able to explain what has happened to them by sharing the society's knowledge of the religious myths. By drawing on these myths, and their images, the women can manipulate and appropriate these images when accounting for how they got their matted hair, and consequently the sacred character of their being. So long as their account is identifiable and compatible with commonly held knowledge of the religious myths and tales, they are plausible and deemed valid by the community. Should a tale prove unidentifiable with the body of myths and characteristics of spirits, one may very well be described as plain ol' crazy. I feel that the fundamental argument of the book is how intimate knowledge of the mythological content of the culture, and the successful manipulation of this, leads to an elevation of social status, whereas in western societies, the long since (by and large) eradication of these beliefs (in lack of a better word) will most certainly lead a person with similar symptoms destined for a diagnosis of mental illness or -unstability. This is the strongest argument in the book, one that is firmly supported by the analysis, notwithstanding the reservations one might have towards traditional psychoanalysis. It's not a light read, but getting into the cultural analysis might be a sweet reward.

Having read *Medusa's Hair* as part of my University coursework, I was very impressed. Most of the books we are asked to read are fairly dull but this book really captivated me. Obeyesekere's personal opinions on the subject of matted hair in Sri Lankan women attending the festival at Kataragama was fascinating. He has a great way of putting across his own opinion and whilst he makes a great bridge between Weber's and Freud's philosophical standpoints, he very effectively shows his position across to the reader. This may seem like a difficult book to comprehend but once read will be greatly admired.

An interesting read, but not for the casual reader. This text is a pretty advanced look at the religious beliefs and practices held in a number of Eastern countries. The writer becomes fascinated with the practice of matted hair exhibited in a number of female priestesses. He likens this matting to Medusa's hair and begins to wonder at some of the Freudian psychosexual rationalizations that could be put into play to explain the phenomena. Obeyesekere explores his theory through a number of case studies and eventually comes to what will undoubtedly be a very startling conclusion for the Western eye. I believe this book would be best suited for small discussion due to its advanced academic nature.

Speedy delivery, but I did not enjoy this book very much. It's very hard to get through.

[Download to continue reading...](#)

Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience Hair: Hair Loss: Learn About Hair Loss Prevention Methods and Regrowth Treatment: Hair Loss Cure: Hair Loss (Men's Health, Hair Loss Treatment, Regrow ... Loss Treatment for Woman, Hair Loss Cure) Hair Loss Prevention: #1 Hair Loss Prevention And Reversal Techniques, Methods, Treatments And Remedies (Hair Loss, Hair Loss Cure, Hair Loss In Women, ... Protocol, Hair Loss Black book, Baldness) The Comprehensive Hair Loss Guide: Hair Loss Treatment and Cure for Men and Women (Hair Loss Treatment for Women, Hair Loss Treatment for Men, Hair Loss ... Loss Remedies, Hair Loss Cure, Alopecia) The Ayurveda Hair Loss Cure: Preventing Hair Loss and Reversing Healthy Hair Growth For Life Through Proven Ayurvedic Remedies (Ayurveda Medicine, Hair ... Diet, Hair Loss Diet, Hair Loss Sollutions) Hair Loss Cure & Treatment: Prevention & Effective Natural Regrowth Methods (Hair Loss Prevention, Hair Loss Treatment, Hair Loss Cure, Hair Loss For Men, Hair Regrowth, Self Help) Hair Loss and the Big Pharma - The Ultimate Guide on Avoiding Frauds, Disinformation and Bad Medicine (Hair Loss Cure, Hair Loss Nutrition, Hair Loss Solutions, Hair Loss Alopecia, Alopecia Areata) Hair Loss: How it Happens and How to Fix It (Hair Loss, beauty and fashion, hair, loss, aging parents, hair growth, healthy hair) How to Cure Baldness and Prevent Male Hair Loss (Mens Hair Loss, Propecia, Minoxidil, Receding Hair Line, Hair Regrowth, male pattern baldness, mens hair) Hair Loss Cure: Everything You Need to Know About Hair Loss, Hair Loss Prevention, Hair Re-growth and Hair Loss Treatments (Hairloss treatment) The Men's Hair Book: A Male's Guide To Hair Care, Hair Styles, Hair Grooming, Hair Products and Rocking It All Without The Baloney NATURAL HAIR SCALP REGENERATION - STOP hair loss and regrow hair very FAST GUARANTEED: YOUR LAST CHANCE TO REGROW YOUR HAIR NATURALLY Religious Therapeutics: Body and Health in Yoga, Ayurveda, and Tantra (SUNY Series in Religious Studies) (Sunny Series, Religious Studies) Hair Loss Solutions: Understand, Prevent and Regrow your Hair-Keep Yourself Looking Younger for Longer (Hair Loss Treatment and Prevention) Hair Loss: The Ultimate Resource of Tried and Tested Solutions for Hair Loss and the Maintenance of Healthy Hair How To Stop Hair Loss Naturally: Learn various ways to stop your hair loss and regrow your hair without the use of expensive and harmful drugs Back On Track - Fighting Hair Loss At Home, How To Prevent And Cure Hair Loss Using Home Remedies, Grow Your Hair Thicker Naturally! Grow African American Hair Long - 7 Days To Faster Growing Hair: Grow Hair Fast Methods and Natural Treatments for Balding Hair Loss Cure: A Revolutionary

Hair Loss Treatment You Can Use at Home to Grow Your Hair Back little book on hair loss restoration that really works...: unassuming hair regrowth method actually grows hair back

[Dmca](#)