

Book Reviews

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Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *Philology and Criticism: A Guide to Mahābhārata Textual Criticism*. London: Anthem Press, 2018. 568 pages.

The critical edition of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* was published in Poona between 1927 and 1971, and now forms the basis of all scholarship on the text. For each of the text's eighteen books, the editors surveyed the existing manuscripts and presented a text reconstituted on stemmatic principles, accompanied by an apparatus of variants and interpolated passages. The reconstituted text is hypothesized as the most recent common ancestor (that is, the archetype) of the surviving manuscript versions.

Philology and Criticism is a guide to the editorial principles undergirding the *Mahābhārata* critical edition and a rebuttal of some influential responses to that edition. Its main argument is that the Poona edition is a triumph of stemmatic philology and that attempts to hypothesize—or even sensibly talk about—versions of the text prior to the critically reconstituted version are misguided. This is an important project, since most of the text-historical speculations commonly advanced before the production of the critical edition gained no support from it, but have still been advanced since.

The book's introduction explains the concept of a reconstructive critical edition, stressing that the archetype reconstituted is conditioned by accidents of later manuscript survival and may have been one of many contemporaneous versions of the text. Chapter One, "Arguments for a Hyperarchetypal Inference," critiques the work of Andreas Bigger and combats suggestions that the archetype was somehow normative or agentive in its own context. It is only remarkable—and labeled "archetype"—in an accidental retrospective sense, and no legitimate inferences can

be made about its relationship to earlier or contemporaneous versions. Here, as throughout the book and in their previous volume, *The Nay Science: A History of German Indology* (2014), Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee follow Alf Hiltebeitel in seeking to discredit the general idea that the surviving *Mahābhārata* was a Hinduizing brahmin redaction of a pre-existing “epic” (heroic, bardic) narrative. The matter is a delicate one, since this general idea was held by Vishnu Sitaram Sukthankar, the first general editor of the Poona edition and the author of its programmatic “Prolegomena.” Adluri and Bagchee hold that Sukthankar’s philological work was not compromised by the offending idea and that in turn, that idea should not compromise his edition’s reception.

Chapter Two, “Reconstructing the Source of Contamination,” continues the critique of Bigger’s work. Bigger hypothesizes that some passages not in the archetype were passed into some branches of the postarchetypal tradition from a residual prearchetypal tradition of the text. This would be contamination from within the “real stemma,” but from outside the reconstructable stemma. Adluri and Bagchee carefully distinguish this subtle type of contamination from contamination between branches of the knowable tree. The latter type has had a bad press, since following Paul Maas’s statement that “No specific has yet been discovered against contamination,” the fact of contamination has often been claimed to preclude any meaningful application of the stemmatic method. In practice the extent and effect of contamination varies from tradition to tradition, and there are specifics that can successfully be applied in some cases. Adluri and Bagchee argue that the *Mahābhārata* tradition is one of those (209–15).

In Chapter Three, “Confusions Regarding Classification,” Adluri and Bagchee confront the most significant criticism of the Poona method. The initial classification of *Mahābhārata* manuscripts by script facilitated the identification of regional versions which were extremely valuable for reconstructing the archetype, since many of the Devanāgarī and Telugu manuscripts were contaminated. Yet in principle the connection between a manuscript’s text and the script in which it is written may be no older than the manuscript. Adluri and Bagchee suggest that the scriptal classification was overtaken by classification on the basis of textual features in every case, but however many examples might be adduced in support of this possibility (for example, in Table Five on pages 205–6), it cannot be proved. Nonetheless the chapter succeeds in emphatically refuting the arguments of Reinhold Grünendahl, who proposed to reach earlier than the Poona archetype by reclassifying and regrouping the manuscripts on the basis of their inclusion or noninclusion of certain interpolations, rather than on the basis of the distribution of variants within the passages they all have in common.

The introduction and the three chapters are nicely summarized at the start, and the book is rounded off by a polemical conclusion and eighteen appendices. These framing devices, together with the separation of the bibliography into several annotated sections, support the titular claim that this is a guidebook to *Mahābhārata* textual criticism. Within the chapters themselves, the argumentation can seem unnecessarily convoluted, the illustrative figures too frequent, the endnotes gratuitous in quantity and length, and the repetition of points slightly tedious. But this is justified by the evident effect of Bigger’s and Grünendahl’s views upon the

scholarly reception of the Poona text and by the value of properly scrutinizing their arguments—first made in German—in English translation. Adluri and Bagchee are unnecessarily definite in their attitude to the Poona edition and unnecessarily impatient with its critics, but they convincingly show that *Mahābhārata* textual criticism has hardly progressed beyond it.

Simon Brodbeck
Cardiff University
Cardiff, Wales, UK

Lynn Ate, *Tirumaṅkai Ālvār's Five Shorter Works: Experiments in Literature. Annotated Translations with Glossary*. Collection Indologie 140 / NETamil Series 4. Pondicherry: École française d'Extrême-Orient, Institut français de Pondichéry, 2019. 442 pages.

This book is a careful effort to analyze, annotate, and translate the five shorter verses of Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, one of many notable Vaiṣṇava poets of medieval Tamilnadu. The author elucidates the selected poems in order to bring out their beauty and literary elegance for the reader. She describes their content, structure, and context and provides a line-by-line translation, summative translation, appropriate appendices, and word indices. The elaborate metrical analysis of the poems in her introduction followed by detailed appendices constitute the most prominent part of this book. *Neṭuntāṅṭakam* “longer meter” and *kuṟuntāṅṭakam* “shorter meter” are the two major varieties of poems analyzable within the corpus of the medieval *bhakti* poems, and Lynn Ate’s description of them in the context of Kaliyaṅ’s verses subsequently becomes the focus of the volume. Particularly, Ate pays special attention to the grammar of prosody as outlined in the grammar of the poems (*Yāpperuṅkalakkārikai*, a tenth-century grammar) and discusses the poems in the context of what she calls “*bhakti* prosody” with her explorations of the type of *nirai accai*, metrical unit, illustrated in Appendix Four (417–23).

Ate begins by referring to the Aham poems of the Saṅkam period in the context of *bhakti*, specifically *maṭal* or *maṭalērutal*, “disappointed lover riding on a palmyra stem” (36). The two verses, 5.3.9–10, that Ate cites (38) from Nammālvār’s *Tiruvāymoḷi* describe the sentiments of the abandoned lover—the Lord in the context of *bhakti* poems and a female lover in the context of Saṅkam poems. The metaphorical identification of pilgrimage from temple to temple with the *maṭal* procession and the subsequent need to explore such explicit and implicit references in Kaliyaṅ’s poems and other Vaiṣṇava poems, as Ate notes (43), constitute some of the significant aspects of experiments in literature. Kaliyaṅ’s poems are known for their extensive use of worldly objects as metaphors for God. In most of his poems Kaliyaṅ employs the accusative case suffix to identify the metaphorized object with God. Thus, terms such as *Nitīyīṅ-ai* “Treasure (acc.)” and *Pavaḷattūṅ-ai* “Coral Pillar (acc.),” as in *Nitīyīṅ-ai Pavaḷattūṅ-ai neṟimaiyāl niṅaiya vallār* (56), refer to God himself. The translations should aim to capture such metaphors, and Ate’s English translations of the verses convey such nuances in most part in a very schematic manner.

In many of his poems Kaliyaṅ makes several exquisite references as to how we as humans can comprehend God within our heart. Such expressions require special reference to additional notes. *Neṟimaiyāl niṅaiya vallār* “those who can absorb Him

within through his doctrines” (55), *kuṇaṅkoṇ tuḷḷaṅ kūru* (*kuṇam koṇṭu uḷḷam kūrūm*) “capturing the ultimate Characteristics and be absorbed within” (56), *neri piṇru unṇum* “assimilated to His doctrines” (61), and so on, are examples that illustrate the poet’s attempts to approach God. Such expressions often constitute the essence of the experiments in literature, and an appendix with these references along with suitable translations would have been valuable.

Translations of the two main types, namely *Tirukkūṟuntāṅṭakam* “The Divine Short Verse” and *Tiruveḷukkūṟṟirukkai* “The Divine Seven-Part Structure” of *Periya Tirumaṭal* “The Long Divine *Maṭal*,” require particular mention in the context of how the poet approaches God in two distinct media. In the former, he longs for his unity with God with many metaphorical references, and in the latter, he praises God with Purāṇic references. A sequence of accusative phrases (referring to God) along with adverbial participle forms (referring to devotees’ intentions) constitute the points of deviation. One such example may be cited from lines 13 to 18 of *Tiruveḷukkūṟṟirukkai* (110). God is the four Vētās and He is the supreme quality (*taṅmai*) that is worshiped by the Brāhmaṇas. He is capable of letting his devotees control their five senses, eliminating all of six births in their lives. Subsequently in lines 43 and 46 (115), the poet refers to his ultimate desire “to surrender” (*iṅai paṇivaṇ*) to Him by “removing obstructions” (*iṭar akalal*) from his life. A comparison between these two major types of approaches to God by Kaliyaṇ may be noted in all of the translations.

While the first part of the book offers both the transcribed and translated versions of the verses, the second part is devoted to a glossary of Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār’s five shorter works (201–358). Words in this glossary are organized in such a way that every word that appears in the verses—both in its lexical form as well as in its inflected form—is illustrated with information such as Tamil rendering, the root form of the word as contained in the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary, its meaning, what part of speech it constitutes, and its citations in the verses. These glossary terms along with the subsequent grammatical highlights of words as provided in Appendix Three (396–415) offer a very thorough and extensive resource that can better enhance our understanding of the poems. Comprehending the medieval Tamil poems requires much background knowledge on the Purāṇas and other classical works. Appendix Two (393–95) presents an elaborate account of some of the “myths and names” that are mentioned in many of the verses. Indeed, consulting these carefully structured appendices may be a good starting point for readers to approach the verses and their translations that appear in the first part of the book.

In conclusion, Ate’s book is an immensely valuable contribution to the NETamil Series. Perhaps future additions to the series might benefit from noting some of the points I have raised.

Vasu Renganathan
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay and Aloka Parasher Sen, eds., *Religion and Modernity in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017. 336 pages.

Modernity. It's somewhat akin to that embarrassingly ill-mannered, gauche uncle who shows up early to every family gathering, monopolizes the conversation, and then won't leave even after everyone else has gone home. We try to move beyond using modernity as a theoretical framework, but it just won't go away. For several decades after World War Two and the gradual independence of much of the Global South, under the influence of development studies we had the dichotomy of modernity and tradition, until Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph laid it to rest as a deeply flawed opposition in their *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* (1967). Then we had postmodernism. Whatever modernism was, we had now entered into a universe that was increasingly beyond it. But this alternative failed to displace or clarify the concept of modernism. Postmodernism as a theoretical framework makes sense only if it bears some relation to modernism, and so the latter concept retained its centrality and the "muddle of modernism" (the term is Dipesh Chakrabarty's) remained. Maybe the answer was to shift the temporal focus earlier and to theorize both the divide and the continuities between modernity and whatever had preceded it—the premodern, the precolonial, the medieval. Thus arose the increasing focus on the early modern, a period that has been pushed further and further back in time so that in some accounts it now encompasses much of the second millennium. But all the efforts to bring coherence to the concept of the early modern simply confirmed that the modern could neither be easily defined nor easily dismissed. There is now an "early modern muddle" as well (Randolph Starn, borrowing from Chakrabarty). The next attempt to slay the concept was to fracture it, with decentralizing categories such as multiple modernities and alternative modernities. Looking in WorldCat and other search engines reveals hundreds of titles using the plural form. These theoretical moves, if anything, simply further reified the concept of modernity yet again. What is it that ties all of these multiple and alternative modernities into a common set of questions and presuppositions? For all that we thought we were beyond it, modernity was still there, smiling like the Cheshire cat. But using the term "modern" can elicit an embarrassed response from many. Recently I was working on co-organizing a conference panel, when a colleague, in response to a preliminary title that included the dreaded word, suggested we use contemporary instead of modern.

So here we have a book entitled simply *Religion and Modernity in India*, which collects papers from the similarly titled "International Conference on Society, Religion and Modernity in India" held at the School of Social Sciences of the University of Hyderabad in November 2013. Perhaps the fact that the conference was organized by the School of Social Sciences and that almost all of the contributors come from social science backgrounds (anthropology, history [a social science in India], political science, sociology) help explain the relative comfort on the part of the editors and authors with retaining the concept of modernity. But the editors are neither naïve nor foolhardy. They have obviously found the term useful in their collective project of studying expressions of the equally problematic term "religion" over the past two centuries in the Indian subcontinent. The usages of the

term in this volume and the varied content of the essays, however, raise a basic question. Is modernity merely a temporal category, referring to the past several centuries? Or does its usage necessitate social, cultural, and historical theorizing as to what the factors are that constitute modernity in contrast to anything else?

The twelve essays collected in this volume cover a wide range of topics. How does religion fit into postcolonial India? (T. K. Oommen). How do we bring into our discussion of modernity the study of possession, a religious phenomenon that deeply problematizes some of the guiding assumptions of the modernity project such as the concept of the autonomous, bounded individual, and the hegemony of science as a universal means of explanation? (Aditya Malik).

Two essays look at social and historical factors in the development of important elements in contemporary conceptions of religion in the Tamil region. The idea of the “Dravidian,” as a distinct area in terms of culture and religion, emerged at the hands of Christian missionaries, and then migrated into Tamil-language scholarship and discourse (Will Sweetman). At the same time, Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavas (re)defined their tradition as not just Tamil, but as part of a pan-Indian reformist, Bhakti Hinduism, which in turn has helped define Indian modernity (Ranjeeta Dutta).

Two important features of the modern state are that it seeks to define its borders clearly and to account for all its citizens. As a result, the modern nation-state has generally tried to sedentarize pastoralists. In the case of the Himālayas, this process has been exacerbated by policies of both colonial and independent Indian administrators who have viewed the human exploitation of forests as counterproductive to the state’s interests in resource protection and utilization. In the case of the Muslim Van Gujjars of Uttarakhand, sedentarization has led to a shift to a more mosque-oriented practice of Islam. This in turn has led to the increased influence of and disagreements between representatives of the Barelwi and Deobandi schools of Sunni Islam, the former being more tolerant of the worship at Sufi tomb-shrines (*mazhār*, *dargāh*) and other practices that are condemned as un-Islamic by the latter (Alok Kumar Pandey and R. Siva Prasad).

Interviews with eight Muslims from three large metropolitan centers provide the basis for a discussion of how the lives “of queer Muslim subjects in contemporary urban India traverse between the dialectics of determinate and indeterminate situations of realization and denial of self, between hopes and dilemmas in everyday life” (Pushpesh Kumar; 149).

Two essays look at Mohammed Ali Jinnah (Aparna Devare) and the All India Hindu Mahasabha (Sekhar Bandhyopadhyay). They analyze how Jinnah and the Mahasabha responded to the changed social, religious, and intellectual climate brought by independence and the creation of the two states of Pakistan and India, one defined by its religion and the other by its secularism. A broad-stroke overview of politics in Kerala over the past half-century shows that the Congress-led United Democratic Front and the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Democratic Front, the two coalitions that have alternated in power, operate with different conceptions of secularism. The first entails “equal accommodation of all communities in politics or non-discrimination,” while the second entails “the separation of community organizations from politics” (B. L. Biju; 232). A study of the rise of a goddess temple in Hyderabad from a position of social and spatial marginality to

one of popular centrality analyzes how the temple and its increasingly prominent annual image processions are shaped in multiple ways by contestations along the lines of caste, religion, and political party (N. Sudhakar Rao and M. Ravikumar).

Two essays move out of India to look at the post-World War Two Indian diaspora. Regional (South Indian) and linguistic (Tamil or Telugu) factors at play in the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Penn Hills near Pittsburgh shape distinct senses of belonging in the new diasporic setting (Aparna Rayaprol). One of the lesser studied communities of South Asia is that of the Anglo-Indians. A preliminary study of Anglo-Indians in India and in the diaspora, based on a survey of 515 people conducted in person and on-line in 2013, demonstrates the extent to which religion (in this case, various forms of Christianity) remains for many Anglo-Indians in the diaspora a powerful factor in their identities (Brent Howitt Otto and Robyn Andrews).

Broadly speaking, edited anthologies lie along a continuum. At one end are those that emerge from a closely organized guiding question or questions which the conference organizers and subsequent book editors ask the participants to address. This selective focus can result in a set of essays that are in close dialogue and debate with each other. Such a volume is designed to be read in much the same way one would read a monograph by a single author. At the other end of the continuum is the anthology that collects a set of essays that do not closely address a common set of questions, and as a result do not enter into conversation with each other. The articles vary in their interest to any given reader, and the anthology functions more as a repository for the different articles than as a single multiauthored contribution. *Religion and Modernity in India* fits into the latter mold. Above I noted that modernity can serve either simply to demarcate a time period or as indicative of deeper social and cultural processes. For the most part, the essays in *Religion and Modernity in India* use it with the former, temporal meaning. Most scholars of South Asian religion will find something of interest here. But an opportunity was missed to make a more substantial contribution to the field. The reader who is interested in some of the ways that modernity still serves as a generative theoretical framework for studying India is better off looking elsewhere, to volumes such as Brian A. Hatcher's edited reader *Hinduism in the Modern World* (2016) or Richard S. Weiss's *The Emergence of Modern Hinduism: Religion on the Margins of Colonialism* (2019), to mention just two fine examples of recent scholarship on the subject.

John E. Cort
Denison University
Granville, Ohio, USA

Daniela Bevilacqua, *Modern Hindu Traditionalism in Contemporary India: The Śrī Maṭh and the Jagadguru Rāmānandācārya in the Evolution of the Rāmānandī Sampradāya*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2018. 248 pages.

The Rāmānanda Sampradāya is the largest monastic order in India today and arguably the biggest in the world. In her book, Daniela Bevilacqua takes the reader

on a foray into the order and some of the reasons for its current size and significance. She follows Bernard S. Cohn's approach of blending the disciplines of history and anthropology in her research on the *sampradāya*. The bulk of the sources used, both written and oral, was collected during fieldwork in northern India, primarily at the Śrī Maṭh in Varanasi, the primary Rāmānandī headquarters. Importantly, she was fortunate to have significant access to the center's library, and more importantly to its leader, Jagadguru Rāmānandācārya Rāmānareśācārya, who oversees or at least influences much of the functioning of the order.

Bevilacqua begins her book with a discussion of various sources that refer to the practice of asceticism and devotion beginning with early Sanskrit texts to set the stage for the introduction to the Rāmānanda Sampradāya. She acknowledges the lack of historical information about the actual origins and development of the order prior to the nineteenth century, but nonetheless does an excellent job of drawing on whatever written and oral material she could collect. The result is a text that is both a unique and a significant source for one seeking to understand the history of the order and the time period of its evolution.

The first two chapters deal with Svāmī Rāmānanda along with various theories on the origin of the *sampradāya* and some of the more significant developments that have led up to its present-day form. The author uncovers and provides a useful discussion of literature from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries about Rāmānanda and other Vaiṣṇava *bhaktas* that is largely unknown to academics, especially in the West. The material herein is well researched and important reading for anyone interested in medieval Vaiṣṇavism and Rāmānanda's role in the growth and spread of Rām-*bhakti*.

The next section traces the establishment and development of the Rāmānanda Sampradāya as a unique and separate order from the Rāmānuja Sampradāya. It also looks at the proliferation of Rāmānandī centers (*gaddīs*). In pointing out the geographic and consequent cultural diversity that was early on established for the order, the author is explaining why individuality within the order is both present and fundamental to its existence. This is much different than what is found in Śaivite ascetic orders where there is more emphasis on conformity. It is also here where she supplies information that supports Tulsīdās's connection to the order, something that is not often a part of the writings about him and his multiple texts.

The material included in Chapter Four addresses the multiple aspects of the Śrī Maṭh. There is a brief recounting of the history of Kāśī, especially as it relates to the physical location of the center, and this is followed by information about the traditional reasons for its physical location, about the committee that oversees the Trust, the pattern of succession that has been established, and details about the center's physical expansion during the last several decades. It concludes with a look at the types of residents at the *maṭh* and the diverse reasons for their decisions and permission to live there. There is an informative section on the kinds of rituals and practices that occur at the center and a lengthy presentation of its ritual calendar.

Chapter Five presents the author's research and theories on the development of the new office of Jagadguru Rāmānandācārya during the last century, the role it

plays in the current functioning and direction of the order, and the bestowal of the title to a multiplicity of individuals simultaneously. The evolving social, political, and religious atmosphere in India as influenced by its exposure to and involvement with the West is discussed in showing the way the traditions of *gurus* and *āśrams* have blended traditional paths with more contemporary elements. An introduction is given of the current Jagadguru of the Rāmānanda Sampradāya, Rāmnaresācārya, and his role as head of the Śrī Maṭh and one of the heads of the order. Many of the rules that govern the philosophy and theology promoted by the Śrī Maṭh have been influenced by him and his understanding and interpretation of the teachings of Rāmānanda. Consequently, what is presented seems to be in line with the beliefs and practices of the vast majority of the order's members, although alternate understandings exist as well.

Bevilacqua has done a laudable job of presenting the Rāmānanda Sampradāya and capturing how it is seen from the perspective of the Jagadguru, a perspective which, as mentioned, is shared by much of the membership. I truly enjoyed reading the book and look forward to more from the author on the subject.

Ramdas Lamb
University of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Sibesh Chandra Bhattacharya, Vrinda Dalmiya, and Gangeya Mukherji, eds., *Exploring Agency in the Mahābhārata: Ethical and Political Dimensions of Dharma*. New York: Routledge, 2018. 268 pages.

The concept of agency and its intertwining with the notion of *dharma* in the *Mahābhārata* are subjected to thorough investigation in this collection of twelve essays by scholars from different disciplines. Following an introductory essay on the epic's "tension between human initiative on the one hand and...Time/Fate/Divine... on the other" (2), the volume is divided into three thematic parts: "Action," "Actor," and "Agency." Part One explores if there can be choice within the framework of karmic determination. For Sibesh Chandra Bhattacharya (Chapter One), Karṇa's life is an example of an unresolved tussle between a prewritten script and individual determination, while Amita Chatterjee (Chapter Two) argues that the epic tries to resolve this ambivalence by postulating that determinism is one's hardened free will, and thus makes an individual entirely responsible for the trajectory of his life.

Christopher G. Framarin (Chapter Three) rejects the perspective of scholars such as Peter Hill who states that the *Mahābhārata* does not elaborate in detail upon the theory of *karma*. He discusses Vyāsa's concept of *karmāśaya*, "a disposition to action" (71); similar to *vāsana* and *saṃskāra*, *karmāśaya* is produced by action and accompanied by desire or aversion with regard to the fruit of action. The way to freedom is then giving up the desire for the fruits of actions (that is, *karmayoga*). Arti Dhand (Chapter Four), however, says that though *karmayoga* provides equanimity, it reduces an individual to a mere agent of social determinism and reinforces discrimination; a Kṣatriya may abhor killing, but he ought to do it for the

sake of maintaining order, and by the same logic, a Sūdra is left with no option but to serve; ideas like *svadharmā*, *strīdharmā*, and *varṇadharmā* then become convenient means of exploitation. Dhand argues that the *Bhagavad Gītā* does not allow individuals to be what they want to be, but rather what they ought to be: “*Svadharmā* precludes morality, obviates moral reflections, nullifies the very concept of moral agent” (91).

Part Two, “Actor,” explores the nature of an ideal agent. Gangeya Mukherji (Chapter Five) sees Arjuna as spiritually adept, and thus a better agent of judicious violence than Aśvatthāman, whose agency was polluted due to his inordinate ambition and anger (114). Shirshendu Chakrabarti (Chapter Six) sees Yudhiṣṭhira, whose capacity for introspection, transformation, sensitivity, and inclusiveness is rooted in “self-questioning,” as the more qualified agent (141).

Arindam Chakrabarti (Chapter Seven) sees ecological inclusiveness and pluralism in the Indian tradition in contrast to the “broadly anthropocentric Greco-Christian and modern Western ethical culture” (156), as the epic expands its moral compass to nonhuman actors and allows them to scrutinize human behavior. Stories such as the crane’s forgiveness of his ungrateful murderer Brāhmaṇa and the mongoose with a half-golden body to highlight the ostentatiousness of human nature make us conscious of our selfish anthropocentrism. While Yudhiṣṭhira’s capacity to rise above speciesism is made obvious by his willingness to sacrifice his place in heaven for the sake of a stray dog, Chakrabarti wonders: “Perhaps the *Mahābhārata* wants us to re-learn how to feel embarrassed when we are killing a deer for fun or destroying a forest to build a shopping mall in front of the silently watching beasts and birds” (157).

Uma Chakravarti (Chapter Eight), however, questions the inclusiveness of the epic and states that the ethic in the epic is ideologically constructed for Kṣatriya interests. The subaltern and gendered characters are either erased or brought in line with the patriarchal-Kṣatriya worldview. Ambā’s plight in the epic is reflective of the attempt of patriarchy to discipline women, as Chakravarti argues that women “are obviously meant for abduction not for combat, merely a prize for capture by virile *kṣatriya* hero” (170). Ambā challenges man’s control over her reproductive capacity and sexuality by falling in love with Śālva, which invites heavy retribution.

The volume’s third part entitled “Epic Agency and Retelling” explores how retellings of the epic address contemporary concerns. According to Sudipta Kaviraj (Chapter Ten), there are infranarrative, undernarrated, and underdetermined moments in the epic that are picked up and filled with other stories; Rabindranath Tagore reconstructs the dialogue between Karṇa and Kuntī with modern sensitivity, and his exploration of interiority intensifies the polyphonic voices in the epic making the modern retelling radically different (208).

Applying Bakhtinian tools like chronotopicity, Lakshmi Bandlamudi (Chapter Eleven) argues that a dialogical engagement with the *Mahābhārata* leads to self-discovery: “Monologic voices seek self-affirmation at any cost, while dialogicality leads to self-realization” (227). The dialogical engagement of the epic with different times and spaces has left traces in the text. Due to her multilayered portrayal, Draupadī is a complex palimpsest of gendered chronotopes (222). Though humiliated, she is defiant.

Finally, B. N. Patnaik (Chapter Twelve) engages with Sāralā Dāsa's fifteenth-century Odia retelling of the epic, in which substantial changes are made to the characters to appeal to a nonelite audience. Ekalavya, for example, is portrayed as a vindictive thief of knowledge and Droṇa, being in service of Hastināpur, was duty bound to nip in the bud this possible challenge to authority.

The focus of this edited volume on agency underlines the epic's continuing importance as a text whose complexity and many readings render it pedagogically relevant across a wide variety of academic fields.

Ravi Khangai
RTM Nagpur University
Nagpur, Maharashtra, India

Johannes Bronkhorst, trans. and ed., *A Śabda Reader: Language in Classical Indian Thought*. Historical Sourcebooks in Classical Indian Thought series. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. 372 pages.

In this work, the third volume of the much welcome series Historical Sourcebooks in Classical Indian Thought, Johannes Bronkhorst provides a rich collection of translations of primary texts relevant to the understanding of language in traditional Indian philosophy. This volume follows in the footsteps of the first two, already invaluable editions in the series: *A Rasa Reader* by Sheldon Pollock and *A Dharma Reader* by Patrick Olivelle. Thematically, taking up the issue of language in Indian thought, Bronkhorst's contribution complements well the contributions on aesthetics and law made by Pollock and Olivelle. Language is absolutely central to the history of Indian thought, and the application of Sanskrit grammar by Western Orientalists played a pivotal role in sparking the development of modern linguistics, yet the theoretical understanding of language in India has been remarkably understudied in Western scholarship. This volume thus represents a worthy contribution, especially with the new English translations of philosophical texts that Bronkhorst provides.

A Śabda Reader is divided into two parts, with each part divided into eight chapters that correspond to one another. Part One is an introduction, in which Bronkhorst gives a brief explanation of each of the eight topics, arranged in roughly chronological order. Part Two is the reader proper, with translations of primary texts grouped according to these same eight topics. The first four topics comprise a brief historical introduction to the development of Indian thought on language. Chapter One, "The Brahmanical Background," discusses the Vedic presuppositions about language. Chapter Two, "Buddhist Thought," then details the new approach to language introduced by Buddhism. Chapter Three, "The Grammarian Patanjali," so important to those who followed him, shows how the Brāhmaṇical grammarian Patañjali was deeply influenced by Buddhist thought. And Chapter Four, "The Special Place of Sanskrit and the Veda," discusses the privileged role given to Sanskrit and the Veda in the Brāhmaṇical synthesis that emerged. The last four chapters then treat four themes pertaining to language found in later Indian

philosophy: “Self-Contradictory Sentences,” “Do Words Affect Cognition?,” “Words and Sentences,” and “Other Denotative Functions of the Word.”

While *A Śabda Reader* is a welcome addition to Indological scholarship because of the wealth of useful translations it provides, it suffers a drawback that will inhibit its profitable use: It is not well organized. This is particularly unfortunate because the source material, as Bronkhorst himself admits, is extremely technical and difficult to understand (ix). Organizational problems are seen at several levels. To begin with, it is not clear why the book is divided into two parts, especially considering that the eight chapters of each correspond to one another. It would have been much more fruitful if Bronkhorst had integrated the two parts, embedding his translations in introductions and perhaps interspersing explanations in his own words. Instead, the chapters of Part One partially, but not completely, serve to introduce the corresponding chapters of Part Two, and when reading the chapters of Part Two, the reader is presented with a quantity of difficult texts with very little guidance.

In addition, the eight-fold organizational scheme reproduced in both parts is itself confusing and difficult to follow. There is a lack of a clear narrative flow connecting the eight chapters of Part One. At the same time, with nearly all explanatory material absent from Part Two, the latter feels like a daunting sea of texts. Although its eight chapters imply a clear organizational scheme, the logic thereof can be difficult to discern. For example, Chapter Two on “Buddhist Thought” draws primarily not on Buddhist texts, but on Brāhmanical texts, including a very long excerpt from Jayanta Bhaṭṭa’s *Nyāyamañjarī*.

Finally, there is an intellectual history behind Indian linguistic thought that is not clearly traced in this volume. Readers who are not immediately familiar with, say, Dignāga, Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa, Vācaspati Miśra, Kauṇḁa Bhaṭṭa, or Dharmarāja Adhvarin will find a chronology at the back of the book (323–24) but there is little to no narrative framework clearly explaining the significance and historical context of each. Compounding this, Indologists will find it frustrating that the use of diacritics is not uniform in the book. The principle at play seems to be that titles of works and Sanskrit words are given with diacritics, but personal names are not. Although this was probably the result of an editorial decision, it is annoying because it means that specialized readers will not know how to pronounce a person’s name if they do not know it already—all for the benefit of an imaginary nonspecialized reader who surely could not profit from such a specialized book anyway.

Nathan McGovern
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Whitewater, Wisconsin, USA

Malcolm Keating, *Language, Meaning, and Use in Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Mukula’s Fundamentals of the Communicative Function*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. 320 pages.

This fresh translation and study of an important work in Indian poetics is a welcome addition to our resources on the subject. Mukula Bhaṭṭa’s work was long neglected

by contemporary scholarship since it straddles the boundary between philosophical ideas and those of literary hermeneutics. Malcolm Keating's insightful study makes the work much more accessible to philosophers, linguists, and literary critics.

The book's six parts somewhat overlap since Keating's commentary (Part Three) expands upon his translation (Part Two), while notes to each part provide references and further explanation. Part Two includes two appendices (75–84) while other indices come at the end of Part Six. A useful bibliography supplements the survey of research found at the end of Part One. Part Five applies Mukula's ideas to contemporary debates on semantics—especially the ideas of François Recanati. A brief guide explains the book's organization. The study resources contain a useful glossary, a guide to pronunciation, a chronology of important figures, and a pair of first-line indices. The glossary helps readers keep track of the book's many technical terms. Special attention is paid to Mukula's use of a key term *abhidhā*, contained in the work's title. For example, under the entry “communicative function” (*abhidhā vyāpāra*) we find “the entire communicative function of language” with further details. Keating notes that while other authors use the term to mean “denotation,” Mukula uses the term to include both denotation and indication; hence he translates “communicative function.” While quoting a passage attributed to Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (Mukula's predecessor), he translates: “A communicative function cannot get at the property-bearer when it expends its capacity on the property” (47). Compare Lawrence J. McCrea's translation in his *The Teleology of Poetics in Medieval Kashmir*: “Denotation does not reach the thing to be specified; its power is exhausted in specification” (2008: 269n17). Keating's glossary lists “denotation” but this is one of very few words whose Sanskrit term is lacking, perhaps to avoid confusing those unfamiliar with polysemic *abhidhā*. The term “function of speech” (*śabda-vyāpāra*) is found in the glossary; no listing is found for a related term: “linguistic capacity” (*śabda-śakti*) which is used three times in a single paragraph and nowhere else.

It is clear throughout that Keating has used this material in the classroom. The book is filled with helpful figures, charts, and diagrams that effectively put across what Mukula is saying in his terse and sometimes cryptic text. Comparing the diagrams here with those of K. Venugopalan (*JIP* 4, 3–4 [1977]: 253) is useful. The work is made more accessible to those unfamiliar with Sanskrit by the consistent use of precise words or phrases for technical concepts. For those familiar with Sanskrit technical terms, McCrea's study of Kashmir's contribution to poetics remains valuable, but Keating's book will work well for the uninitiated.

One especially useful feature of the book is its list of examples in Appendix Two. These twenty-four phrases provide the evidence that supports Mukula's entire thesis. The book presents accurate translations of these, supplemented by clear commentary with additional material in the notes. The presentation of the four subtypes of the famous example, “The village is on the Ganges,” is most effective for understanding how Mukula uses the example to demonstrate the broad power of indication. Since these examples are used by other authors in the philosophy of language, gaining mastery over them is crucial to understanding arguments. The

five relationships given in Table Ten nicely display the salient features of “the expressed meaning” in Mukula’s system.

There are some curious inconsistencies. In Part One Keating quotes a passage that occurs towards the end of Mukula’s work: “The one who employs it in composition has words which shine clearly” (16). But the translation given later is rather different: “For the one who employs it in composition, their words shine clearly” (74). Further down that page, Keating’s translation of Mukula’s own elaboration goes astray. Elsewhere the date of Bhartṛhari given in the Chronology is way off the mark; the correct date is provided in Part One (20). Keating’s claim that grammarians did not take up the issue of suggestion (36) is a bit misleading since their discussions on *vyāñjanā* surely paved the way for Ānanda’s full-blown defense of his core concept, *dhvani*.

The book includes the romanized text of Mukula’s *Abhidhāvṛttamātrkā* which may initially appeal to students for its convenient hyphenation of compounds. The text, however, is filled with many typos and errors of all sorts—not just the usual missed diacritics. Omissions, haplogy, and errors of *sandhi* abound; there’s even one in the section that outlines transliteration conventions. Readers of *nāgarī* are advised to use Revaprasad Dvivedi’s edition (1973); others can use Venugopalan’s 1977 text. Although no critical edition exists, the wide availability of new manuscript materials has prompted a European effort to produce one. Fortunately, Keating has based his translation on Dvivedi’s edition; so the corrupt text affects neither his translation nor his facility with Mukula’s concepts.

One of the book’s strengths deserves special mention. While dealing with questions of idiomatic expressions in Sanskrit, most scholars prefer to let examples speak for themselves, despite the fact that they may be obscure to contemporary readers. The examples involve metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and levels of irony. In one example of how “ruler” (*rājan*) is used, Keating’s analysis captures the ritual implications discussed by Mīmāṃsakas. And because Keating has carefully thought through the philosophical implications of the core concepts, he dares to use English examples that work just like the originals. So we find “Put it on plastic” and “I had to go two streets over to find a parking meter.” Keating’s familiarity with how these examples are used by contemporary philosophers facilitates his explanations of how they work within the context of comparable Indian ideas. The resulting analyses clarify the subtlest points of Mukula’s arguments in ways that will enlighten readers and enrich philosophical inquiry.

Timothy C. Cahill
Loyola University
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

Reid B. Locklin, ed., *Vernacular Catholicism, Vernacular Saints: Selva J. Raj on “Being Catholic the Tamil Way.”* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017. 318 pages.

Before his untimely death in 2008, Selva J. Raj had prepared a book proposal with the provisional title *Vernacular Catholicism, Vernacular Saints: Identity, Caste,*

Exchange, and Authenticity in Tamil Nadu. This volume, ably edited by Reid B. Locklin, brings together much of Raj's previously published work, supplemented by essays from other scholars. This format provides an engaging introduction to the study of Indian Christianity and its ongoing interactions with other Indian traditions, particularly Hinduism. Bindu Madhok's foreword and Amanda Randhawa's brief essay testify to Raj's collegial nature and easy rapport with and deep respect for the Indian Christians whose experiences he studied.

Part One, "Vernacular Catholicism in Context," draws from Raj's ethnographic research to detail the practices of Tamil Catholics, illustrating that religious boundaries remain "fluid, permeable, and negotiable" (1) as Tamil Catholics navigate their lives amongst their Hindu and other neighbors. Michael Amaladoss's essay outlines institutional pronouncements and debates regarding the practice of both Protestant and Catholic Christianity in Tamil Nadu, noting the "double religiosity" that includes both officially sanctioned and popular rituals. Raj's subsequent chapters in this section contrast what Raj termed a "contrived institutional indigenization" and a more authentic, "spontaneous popular indigenization" (29). Raj argued that the interreligious dialogues that occur through ritual (as, for example, when Hindus participate in Catholic rites, and vice versa) have been more effective than elite-sponsored ecumenical, theologically based dialogue.

Part Two presents Raj's essays on Tamil Catholic vow-taking practices (*nērccai*) and rites performed at the shrines of St. John de Britto and St. Anthony. Tamil Catholics and Hindus perform *nērccai* rituals for both Catholic and Hindu figures; Raj argued that they share a largely common ritual system, in which apparent religious boundaries are irrelevant. Raj showed that the cult of St. John de Britto centers more on caste identity than religious identity, with both Catholics and Hindus of the Maṛava castes considering Britto their clan or family deity. St. Anthony, too, has a religiously plural following, with perhaps forty percent of the devotees visiting the shrine being Hindu. Raj found that lay devotees employ their own ritual idiom which illustrates a dialogical discourse between Christianity and Hinduism.

Part Three, "Status and Humor, Competition and Communion" presents three more of Raj's essays. Raj argued that processions at the shrine of St. Anthony at Puliampatti are a case study for "intrareligious complexity and diversity, competing theological voices, divergent social discourses, and the tense power relations between the priests and the laity as well as among the laity" (153). Using Johan Huizinga's 1950 work on the relationship between ritual and play, Raj presented various rites at St. Anne's shrine that involve role reversal and status elevation, demonstrating a kind of "serious levity." Raj drew a sharp contrast between what he saw as the "contrived institutional initiatives" of church leaders and elites and the "intimate, subtle, and spontaneous ritual exchange and dialogue between ordinary Hindus and Catholics" (177). He called for a "shift in the academic study of religion in general and of Indian religions in particular, a shift away from the traditional focus on sacred text and theological reflections to lived practice" (190).

Part Four, “‘Being Catholic the Tamil Way’: Responses and Reflections” contains four chapters in which scholars present their own research and responses to Raj’s work. Corinne G. Dempsey uses the lens of transgression to compare and contrast the experiences of Kerala Christians and the role of Catholic clergy in “Hindu-looking rituals.” Eliza F. Kent notes that her research on Protestant Tamils shows that they tend more towards differentiating themselves from Hindus than do Tamil Catholics. Vasudha Narayanan applies the notion of ritual dialogue to her own work on Hindu temples in the United States and finds that American Hindu temples strive to maintain community wellbeing, much like shared rites among Tamil Catholics and Hindus. Purushottama Bilimoria explores the adaptation of Indian classical dance traditions in Australia and the United States, suggesting ways in which Raj’s work on ritual performance might illuminate the nature of performance itself. Wendy Doniger’s brief afterword highlights the significance of Raj’s comparativism. The postscript is a piece in which Raj reflected on his experiences as an ethnographer and priest.

This is of course sadly not the book that Raj hoped to write; as Locklin notes in his introduction, there is some repetition, and the concluding sections of Raj’s essays at times leave the reader wishing for more sustained analysis. Nonetheless, this volume stands as tribute to a gifted, gently provocative scholar. Through foregrounding the actual, lived experiences of his informants, Raj allowed them to shape the dialogue about what their religious experiences meant to them. Reading Raj’s work alongside that of other scholars fosters an ongoing dialogue about the nature of lived religious experience. *Vernacular Catholicism, Vernacular Saints* should be of interest not only to scholars of Indian Christianity, but to anyone seeking fruitful ways to theorize the complexities of South Asian religious experiences that cross the apparent boundaries between Christianity, Hinduism, and beyond.

Robin Rinehart
Lafayette College
Easton, Pennsylvania, USA

Suzanne Newcombe, *Yoga in Britain: Stretching Spirituality and Educating Yogis*. Sheffield: Equinox, 2019. 324 pages.

Suzanne Newcombe begins by asking, “How can this thing called ‘yoga’ that is apparently Indian now be such an unremarkable activity in Britain?” (xi). After making a case for the importance of nuanced history in her introduction she proceeds to provide exactly this, presenting detailed vignettes of the history of Yoga in Britain, particularly from 1945 to 1980. The author describes the peculiarly British way in which the “alien” cultural practice of Yoga is institutionalized and disseminated through literature, pedagogy, popular culture, television, and therapy.

Newcombe responds to the “crisis in authenticity among practitioners” (1) with a methodological imperative: to understand history. Without this historical understanding, “various fundamentalisms can rush in to fill out the narrative” (2). She takes the methodological critique to “reductionist narratives about neo-colonial

oppression or cultural appropriation” (5). Arguing that these narratives are unsustainable she details the people and motives that characterize the rise in popularity of Yoga and problematizes such reductionist narratives.

Newcombe charts this empirical, historical change through episodic chapters. Chapters One and Two bring to life autodidacts, self-taught *yogīs* such as Desmond Dunne and Wilfred Clark, and the literature they read. B. K. S. Iyengar’s *Light on Yoga* (1966) emerges as a collaboration between student B. I. Taraporewala, whose “re-Englishing” (Gerald Yorke’s phrase) involved Taraporewala editing to “correctly reflect what was in Iyengar’s mind” (Taraporewala’s phrase). Yorke, who sourced Indian and esoteric books for the publishing house Allen and Unwin, was described by Iyengar as his “literary guru” who made “forceful” revisions (32).

Chapter Two centers the influence of “salvation through relaxation” (48) without presenting its genesis in the *fin de siècle*. Newcombe revealingly analyzes how “Yoga’s integration within the institutions of adult education was an affirmation of, rather than a challenge to, British middle-class values” (50). Wilfred Clark (1898–1981), pivotal in the creation of what later became the British Wheel of Yoga, endeavored from the outset to avoid adopting a single *guru* for the organization (65).

Chapter Three uses Max Weber to frame the institutionalization of charisma by comparing Sunita Cabral (1932–1970) with B. K. S. Iyengar (1918–2015), the latter being acknowledged by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in its certification of “yoga gurus” (76). Newcombe deems Iyengar to have succeeded in routinizing his charisma while Cabral’s teachings faded as a social movement (76). Though Iyengar may have already been moving towards a focus on the physical side of Yoga, the ILEA insisted that Yoga could be taught “provided that instruction is confined to ‘asanas’ and ‘pranayamas’” and did not teach “the philosophy of Yoga as a whole” (99).

The class analysis deployed in Chapter Four is welcomed as a key analytic principle. Newcombe argues that “For many middle-class women, freedom and autonomy were psychological and ideological aspirations and not economic ones” (111). The analysis of class, gender, economics, and “freedom” could be taken further as Newcombe’s data suggest that a paradigm was established in the early years of teaching Yoga in Britain that appears to have enduring legacy.

Chapter Five explores Yoga in popular culture in the 1960s and 1970s as an “embracing of foreign ideas that had been part of colonial dialogue for several centuries” (134). George Harrison, for whom India was a source of inspiration, expresses a postcolonial incredulity at “the British going over there and telling them what to do. Quite amazing” (142).

Newcombe argues in Chapter Six that Yoga was presented on television as physical exercise with only tacit soteriological and spiritual significance, an image of Yoga bolstered by the authoritative role accorded to television presenters. First televised in 1948–50 and then more regularly from 1971, the Yoga depicted minimized “explicit discussion of religious or spiritual ideas related to yoga” (202) according to Marshall McLuhan’s dichotomy of “hot” and “cold” media (177–79).

The relative professionalization of Yoga as therapy, while deferring to medical expertise, is treated in Chapter Seven. Newcombe does not site her data within a

neoliberal analysis, which locates the responsibility for health and wellbeing with the individual, perhaps to avoid reductionist narratives. Yet this might be justified where “public discourse about yoga as therapy has stressed self-care in a regular programme of exercises, a change in mental attitude, and a focus on individual responsibility” (227).

Arguing against Colin Campbell’s “Easternisation” of the West, in Chapter Eight Newcombe finds no evidence that the “spiritual significance” of Yoga became more important, rather Yoga “thrived because it supported British cultural values that prevailed in the post-war period” (255), that is, mainstream establishment agendas of improving health, education, and contentment. Recent estimates suggest around half a million people attend Yoga classes in the UK on a weekly basis (1).

The postscript sketches the development of Yoga after the 1980s including concerns of authenticity and commercialization. Newcombe dismisses essentialist understandings of Yoga such as those associated with political Hinduism as not based on the historical evidence that she presents in this volume (267). She argues that “Understanding and appreciating the variety of meanings and approaches to yoga there has been in Britain is one way of being respectful to both yoga’s roots in the Indian subcontinent and the complexity of its current forms” (270). Despite what the title might suggest, this book is not a comprehensive history of Yoga in Britain, and this is acknowledged by Newcombe at the outset (4). This book should be of interest to scholars of the Hindu diaspora and of Yoga and for Yoga practitioners. It is significant for its championing of history as a method of problematizing reductionist narratives.

Ruth Westoby
SOAS University of London
London, UK

Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad, *Human Being, Bodily Being: Phenomenology from Classical India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 212 pages.

Situating a balanced study of texts across genres from South Asia, Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad’s new monograph delineates a method of ecological phenomenology to Indian literature. This approach to embodiment attempts to avoid the pitfalls of Cartesian dualism separating the body from mind and world while situating itself in the lineage of post-Cartesian philosophy seen in Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s work. While drawing on various theorists of Western philosophy as well as recent works of South Asianists and Buddhologists, especially his colleague Maria Heim, the study closely examines three textual works of Hinduism and one of Buddhist South Asia. This attention to close reading and critical nuance, as regards a work’s context and social location in the dense network of ecological matrices that inform it, returns Ram-Prasad to common themes of human intersubjectivity, affectivity, and openness to the world. By offering a different set of contexts through these four case studies, the book reveals how different points of salience emerge by studying the same phenomena around the body.

The introduction helps situate Ram-Prasad's themes in a "soft phenomenology" without the Husserlian background of a transcendental subjectivity (17). This shows in the turn away from concepts or theories of "the body" or "embodiment" and to a theory of how we experience the world as bodies. This staging of "bodiliness" is meant "to indicate the general human way of being present in experience, without unwittingly implying either an ontology of consciousness and materiality, or its overcoming" (14). In this respect, Ram-Prasad's theorization falls in line with scholarly focus on emic perspectives seen in the works on Hinduism by Barbara A. Holdrege, Karen Pechilis, and others. While attentive to the fact that phenomenology has no exact discursive counterpart in Hindu philosophy, Ram-Prasad nevertheless makes a compelling case that the four in-depth studies exhibit a nuanced phenomenological approach to human experience.

Chapter One explores the interrelated bodily encounter of physician and patient in Āyurvedic discourses from the *Caraka Saṃhitā*. As a medical guide for the attending physician, the text contains key assumptions on diagnostic etiology in the "regime," *vr̥tta*, which makes sense of the patient's suffering by analyzing its key features into a discursive diagnosis as an illness, *roga*. Recent theorizing assumes that the authority of the physician dominates over the subjectivity of the patient. However, the ecological approach of Caraka's text, Ram-Prasad argues, situates the patient and physician in an intersubjective field of mutual exploration and care. The patient's description and analysis of their symptoms are integral to the diagnostic encounter. In this way, the text describes bodily becoming as "in-between" the two (57).

Chapter Two examines discourses on gender and asceticism in the *Mahābhārata*'s Śāntiparvan episode regarding King Janaka and the female renunciant Sulabhā. Arguing that Sulabhā should not be read through a profeminist lens, but instead as part of the "environmental affects" of normative South Asia at the time of the text's coagulation, Ram-Prasad offers the episode as a surprising affirmation of the *bhikṣukī* as a rational elaborator of Sāṃkhya metaphysics while the king becomes an emotive being constrained by his ties to worldliness. In particular, this section demonstrates a fascinating argument by Sulabhā for an ecological position of immanence for the king as a male enmeshed in the power structures of the *varṇa* system while she has access to a neutral subjectivity freed into the nature of *ātman* (86).

Chapter Three continues with Ram-Prasad's engagement in the meditational practices of Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhimagga*, the Pali commentary on Theravādin Buddhism for monastics. In this section the departure from Western phenomenological tradition is most apparent. Edmund Husserl's notion of *epoché*, "bracketing of the world as it is found in experience," is not possible in Buddhaghosa's system (106–7). Instead, the meditative framework on bodily being as *kāya* creates an ecological flux of focus and attention on the nodes of the system of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*). This study would provide a fruitful comparison to Hindu theorizations of embodiment. Meditative focus and its resulting affective structures on the body in decay and postmortem visualizations of the meditator is a major thematic of Tantric and *bhakti* goals and methods, respectively.

Chapter Four branches off from specifically philosophical texts into the realm of *kāvya* literature in Harṣa's depiction of the love-making of Nala and Damayantī in the *Naiṣadhaccarita*. Ram-Prasad acknowledges the context of heteronormative sexuality and discursive tropes from poetics as well as *kāmasāstra* while extending the range of *Śṛṅgāra rasa* developed in Harṣa to include not only eroticism but romantic love in the intersubjective finding of the other and giving-receiving of bodily contact, affective modulation, and social leveling of love through our "limits" (180). This chapter in particular grounds the multiple perspectives in showing each text's polyvalent meanings with regard to human becoming as it links to the larger ecology of life in the natural world as well as among humans.

Human Being, Bodily Being will be a great resource for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on Hindu theories of bodiliness and comparative studies of South Asian philosophy for students of phenomenology.

Jeremy Hanes
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, California, USA

Mani Rao, *Living Mantra: Mantra, Deity, and Visionary Experience Today*. Contemporary Anthropology of Religion series. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 234 pages.

Throughout the varieties and histories of Hindu religious life, *mantra* represents a key element of *homa* and *pūjā*, a centerpiece of philosophical and theological thought, and even a standalone yogic practice. Mani Rao begins her book, *Living Mantra*, by highlighting the vast scholastic and literary field in which her research on *mantra* is positioned, calling it "a mountain" (13) and "a galaxy" (21). In Part One, Rao briskly reviews diverse approaches to understanding *mantra* including analytical works of philology, semiotics, and theology; approaches invoking myth and music; a small body of ethnographic studies; and some works that argue for the effectiveness of *mantra* practice in gaining measurable results. Invoking these works, Rao convincingly argues that "across the modern period, scholars have not sought the insights of authoritative practitioners who are influencing present and future understandings of mantra" (21).

In Part Two, Rao proceeds to make this valuable contribution to mantra studies, presenting her fieldwork and interviews with practitioners across three sites of research in Andhra-Telangana: the Sahasrakshi Meru Temple at Devipuram, Svayam Siddha Kali Pitham at Guntur, and Nachiketa Tapovan at Kodgal. She provides rich description of the locales and the personages she engaged with, often relaying lengthy transcripts of interviews to illustrate ritual pedagogy, practitioners' worldviews, and personal experiences. She introduces the reader to a vibrant cast of contemporary *gurus* and *mantra* practitioners who relay fascinating details of their ritual practices and religious experiences. All three sites are locations of contemporary Tantric practice; the ritual uses of *mantra* at these locations often invoke the systematic associations emblematic of *mantras* in Tantric traditions: with the *guru*, deity, body, and wider physical world. To date, these associations have

been invoked in religious texts and analyzed in academic literature in an abstract way; as presented in Rao's volume, however, these connections move beyond theological abstraction, as they are presented in the familiar conversational tone of an ethnographic interview and as elements of personal religious experiences.

The personal accounts of religious practice and descriptions of religious experiences are fascinating and provide abundant material for further analysis. The vibrant power of *mantras* is reported to grant *siddhis* the power to diagnose ailments (96–97) or control over snakes (124) and to stimulate intense physical sensations by their repeated utterance (132). As the title promises, through the words of these practitioners *mantras* come alive in embodied forms, not only as symbols of divinity, but also as visualized apparitions of deities. To one devotee, a devoted *mantra* practice leads to the goddess's appearance first as a mother, upon whose lap the devotee rests her head for a while and with whom she chats; the goddess appears again a few years later as a little girl in the devotee's kitchen, asking to be fed her favorite meal. Remarking on the "strange mixture of absolute certainty along with the expectations and doubts of the physical world," Rao quotes one devotee who affirmed the reality of the apparition: the goddess was "not in a dream. In fact...I did not know how she got in" (78–79). The devotee, fueled by the certainty of her visionary experience, goes on an "empowerment drive," giving ritual instruction to people across the region.

In Part Three, Rao briefly summarizes the themes invoked in her ethnography. At these three sites, *mantras* are used to foster a close personal connection with a deity, to overcome problems, to bolster faith, and to cultivate a visionary state of mind (183). The author finally devotes a substantial piece of the conclusion to the titular theme: the visionary experience. The experience of the religious vision is not optical; it is related to the capacity of the *ṛṣi* as a "seer," suggesting "a conflation between seeing, hearing and knowing" (192). Rao suggests that "practitioners may experience sensational visions but they are actually seeking something else—success, good health, enduring relationship with deities, self-transformation or liberation" (194); in the book's examples, we also see that practitioners are constructing their own authority as ritual leaders, attracting disciples, and expanding their religious communities. Considering the prominent Tantric elements of the reported practices and the important place of visualization across Tantric traditions, some further reflection on the nature of the reported experiences with respect to Tantric ritual practice and theory would have brought focus to the study.

A highlight of the volume is the detailed personal reflections Rao includes when discussing her approach and ethnographic method, outlining her own journey as an ethnographer who was also making progress in her own religious practices as she moved from one ethnographic site to the next (32–34). At Kodgal, the final site, Rao reveals her own initiation experience and visions while on silent meditation retreat, asserting that she was engaged in mutual processes of discovery with her ethnographic sources, the *gurus* with whom she conversed and conducted her research and from whom she received *dīkṣā* and spiritual guidance (173–79). Rao's vested interest in the subject is apparent in her incisive lines of questioning and her respectful approach to the subjects of her study. The result is a lively read that

would be of interest to scholars of contemporary Hinduism and Hindu Tantra, and those interested in the nature of religious experience.

Meera Kachroo
St Thomas More College
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Bihani Sarkar, *Heroic Śhāktism: The Cult of Durgā in Ancient Indian Kingship*. British Academy Monographs series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 310 pages.

Heroic Śhāktism is a fascinating Indological study of the rise of the goddess Durgā and Śāktism in ancient and medieval India between the third and twelfth centuries. The study documents the emergence of the worship of Durgā in the Sanskrit texts and inscriptions and the connection between Durgā, Śāktism, and ancient Indian kingship. The book distinguishes itself from previous studies of Durgā in the great number of textual sources investigated and the close connection of the subject with political developments in the analysis.

The idea of heroic Śāktism refers to the association of Śāktism with the politics of kingship and “the idea of power that was in the world, not removed from it” (273). Bihani Sarkar is able to present a linear development. She traces the goddess in the Sanskrit texts and argues that the textual evidence shows the Vaiṣṇava goddess Nidrā as the earliest precursor of Durgā. After the fall of the Guptas, Durgā was then reimagined in the Śaiva traditions and connected to Pārvatī. The stages of historical development relate to the three stories in the *Devīmāhātmya* of the circumstances in which Durgā was born. Sarkar argues that it was Durgā’s adoption into the Śaiva traditions that helped popularize her to become the most important goddess in the Hindu tradition and her relation to kingship caused Śāktism to become a classical religion. Sarkar shows throughout the book how Durgā as a warrior goddess, as the source of royal power, and with the ability to avert dangers became bound up with the political realm, what Sarkar calls “heroic Śāktism.” According to the author, in this development Durgā always mirrored the sociopolitical.

The book consists of three parts and seven chapters, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. The first part comprising four chapters describes the beginnings and early history of Durgā, up to the eleventh century. In Chapter One, the author argues that the goddess Nidrā represents Durgā’s Vaiṣṇava heritage, and developed into Durgā, notable in the prominent role of Yoganidrā in the first chapter of the *Devīmāhātmya*, in which she personifies Viṣṇu’s sleep and his *māyā* and awakens Viṣṇu to slay the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Chapter Two concerns Durgā’s assimilation into Śaivism. This period saw the decline of the warrior god Skanda and the rise of the warrior goddess Durgā, and Chapter Three argues that the decline of the Skanda tradition was the most important historical transformation that energized the growth of Durgā’s popularity. Chapter Four argues that after the fall of the Guptas the worship of Śakti attained a pan-Indic role in accessing patronage and that Śāktism by that time “had acquired the status of a great classical religion,

on a par with other medieval court-religions such as Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism” (116).

Interestingly, the author mentions the argument that the reason for the popularity or “cultural power” of the recitation of the *Devīmāhātmya* was that it was preceded by the popular Buddhist tradition of singing and meditating on protective hymns. The text was styled on lay Buddhist practice, and the reputation of the supreme protective and crisis removal powers of the recitation of the *Devīmāhātmya* was thus due to an adoption of a Buddhist practice. The author could have expanded on this. A discussion of the relationship of goddess worship with the Buddhist political context in ancient India is missing in the other chapters of Part One. Part Two analyzes the incorporation of indigenous goddesses into the Durgā tradition of mythology and worship from the sixth century, thus producing a more diffuse personality for the goddess. Part Three analyzes the belief system of heroic Śāktism, which the author identifies as “grand myths of triumphant civilization” (177). A primary belief of heroic Śāktism was the idea that investiture of kingship was based on a supreme female divinity. The ideology of kingship focused in particular on the Navarātra festival, and the last chapter presents the interesting historical development of this festival.

The strengths of the book are the great variety of written Sanskrit sources utilized in the study, probably larger and more varied than in previous studies on the rise of Durgā in India; the arguments for the importance of Śāktism for the making of the early Indian civilization; and the attempt to show that the development of Durgā always mirrored the sociopolitical. Durgā’s function of averting danger, however, remained the same. The author dates the composition of the *Devīmāhātmya* to “most likely in the 8th century” (139). Previously scholars have dated the text to the seventh century, but this study may perhaps lead to further research and a revision of this date. The book is highly recommended.

Knut A. Jacobsen
University of Bergen
Bergen, Norway

Sudipta Sen, *Ganges: The Many Pasts of an Indian River*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. 460 pages.

At first sight I was a little dismayed by the title of this book. Why would an Indian-born scholar choose the word “Ganges,” the anglicized version of the original Indian name “Gaṅgā” in this context? I was a bit apprehensive that the book was going to use a mostly Euro-American or Orientalist lens to study and describe the history of this Indian river. However, as I finished reading the first chapter, I was enchanted by the author’s lucid writing style and the several interesting details that he furnishes from historical, anthropological, and geological perspectives. In addition to this interdisciplinary approach, the book begins with some overarching Gangetic challenges to such dichotomies as human–nonhuman and nature–culture. Although he does not present any startling new discoveries or new arguments, the author presents a fascinating history of northern India along the banks of this river.

Like Sudipta Sen, I have also traveled extensively across India, visiting many towns on the banks of Gaṅgā, but I was unaware that *śāligrāms*, the dark polished stones that are worshiped across India, are ammonite fossils (2). The river Gaṅgā and “her two sisters, Yamuna and Saraswati” are described as the three identical yogic channels of the human body as given in yogic texts (7). We learn that rivers of the same names exist in West Bengal as well (19); and Sen makes reference to Jainism’s sacred term *tīrthankar* that is often overlooked in books dealing with the phenomenon of pilgrimage in India (21).

Chapter One traces Sen’s own journey to the glacial point of origin of Gaṅgā, Gaumukh, that he visited accompanied by his students, thus bringing yet another angle of personalized insights to the book. Several names are used to describe different parts of Gaṅgā, such as Mandākinī (coming from Kedarnath) and Alakanandā (coming from Badrinath) that meet at Rudraprayag in Uttarakhand (23). Gaṅgā refers to various other rivers such as Kālīgaṅgā, Amargaṅgā, and Ākāśagaṅgā (the Milky Way galaxy). Sen reminds us that the Hindu practice of touching the feet of elders and teachers is “to literally gather the dust of uncovered feet that have been on the pilgrim path” (27). He also gives examples of Gangetic water curing ailments with its self-purifying qualities in addition to being regarded as sacred in various Hindu rituals and rites (32–38). One of the holiest Hindu cities in India comprises an “assemblage of concentric circles” with Kashi being the largest part, Varanasi a bit smaller, and Avimukta Kshetra, the smallest (39). Chapter One concludes with a description of the fair of the Kumbh along the banks of Gaṅgā that “gives us a glimpse of the Indian subcontinent as an open society, where children, widows, wanderers, ascetics, priests, peasants, traders, soldiers, kings, and landlords could break rank for a moment and mingle with the crowds as part of an indistinguishable mass” (43). Chapter Two presents several Hindu mythological tales about Gaṅgā and its descent to earth from *Rāmāyaṇa* and other ancient texts. Chapter Three provides geological prehistorical details of the Gangetic plains.

The rest of the chapters describe ancient, medieval, and modern historical empires around the Gangetic plains and without breaking any major new ground, cite sources such as A. L. Basham, D. D. Kosambi, and Romila Thapar that have been mentioned in other Indian history books. For instance, Chapter Four, citing Basham, traces the history of empires such as Nanda and Maurya that developed along the Gaṅgā and flourished with the support of a thriving economy in the Gangetic plains. Chapters Five and Six continue the chronological journey and provide us with some intriguing and insightful details of the Buddhist and Jain monastic movements and pilgrimage routes and their impact on the economy on the banks of Gaṅgā, before and during the Gupta Empire. Chapters Seven and Eight continue along this journey in time and paint a picture of Gaṅgā interwoven with the political economy of other empires such as the Gurjara Pratihāras, the Gāhāḍavālas, the Turkish Sulṭāns, and the Mughals. Chapter Nine brings us to the arrival of the British Rāj that makes its entry from the greater Bengal Delta, the largest delta formed where the two longest rivers of the region, Gaṅgā and Brahmaputra, enter the Bay of Bengal. The British victory over and irreversible transformation of Bengal, the Gangetic plains, and eventually the rest of India is the theme of this

chapter. Gaṅgā, once a sacred mythical symbol is now tamed by dams and bridges and is marred and sullied by sewage canals. The epilogue returns to environmental issues, describing the state of the Gaṅgā in the twenty-first century and the various governmental and nongovernmental efforts to restore it to its former glory. Given that the river supports almost half a billion people, it is crucial that it flows at optimal capacity, and that is the hope with which the book concludes.

This is an erudite work packed with fascinating detail. While it may not be embraced by the general public, it will be a useful aid for history courses at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Pankaj Jain
Vijaybhoomi University
Greater Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Tulasi Srinivas, *The Cow in the Elevator: An Anthropology of Wonder*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. 296 pages.

Tulasi Srinivas's stimulating monograph on Hindu ritual in the high-tech city of Bangalore (renamed Bengaluru during her research) makes a deliberate shift from a scholarly preoccupation with the "efficacy" of ritual, which has long guided anthropological writing, to an interrogation of ritual from a new angle, that of wonder (13). Her study encompasses the active agentive pursuit of wonder by Hindu priests from two local temples in the Malleshwaram neighborhood of Bangalore City, as well as all those who co-create and experience wonder, including devotees, onlookers, and the anthropologist author herself. In the context of neoliberalism and in consideration of Western and Indian intellectual histories of wonder, Srinivas offers a critically astute view, not only of our human capacity and need for wonder, but also of the significance of wonder to the longevity of religion (s). *The Cow in the Elevator* deserves praise for its expansiveness, in its resistance of old categories and universalized definitions of "religion." Inspired by the priest-interlocutors' own agency, Srinivas writes, "The pursuit of wonder propels a decolonization of thought and is an urgent and timely response to the many things that are broken in our world—the economic, emotional, and ecological degradation that surrounds us" (209). Srinivas puts Hindu innovation at the center of a critical analysis of ritual within religion, asserting, "The question...is no longer whether Hinduism qualifies as a religion but rather what it can offer us by way of critical analysis for the category of religion" (16; emphasis in the original).

Quoted in the introduction's epigram, priest-interlocutor Krishna Battar pointedly identifies Srinivas's work as storytelling, reminding us that storytelling is a religious act: "You tell stories. Our stories. Telling stories and doing this *kainkaryam* [ritual] is the 'same'" (1). Srinivas introduces her readers to sensually vivid ethnographic storytelling in her narration of numerous memorable and instructive rituals, beginning with a description of Lord Gaṇeśa and his priest being elevated on a crane for the Gaṇeśa Cathurthī festival's rite of propitiation and leave-taking (*visarjana*), celebrated in the heart of Malleshwaram. Through storytelling, Srinivas takes her readers on a decades-long journey, evoking the complicated ways

that Hindu ritual engages at both the indigenous and global level, as she makes sense of ritual experiment within the context of Hinduism's rich history of innovation. Srinivas organizes her study according to important elements of Hindu ritual—namely, space, money, technology, and time—to demonstrate how practitioners, specialists and devotees alike, navigate and “adjust” how they sacralize “neoliberal modernity” through creative acts of “worlding.” Indeed, structuring the book around these concepts stimulates readers to consider such innovation, which Srinivas names “experimental Hinduism,” a Hinduism in which priests and ritual practitioners “co-create wondrous experiences through creative temple rituals that resist, appropriate, replace, and recast modern capitalism—the mechanism of their precariousness” (6).

Chapters One and Two, focused on ritual space, benefit from the author's architectural training which heightens her sense of the use of space. In Chapter One, readers are invited to consider domestic ritual, as in the incident that inspired the book's title, when the cow Kāmadhenu—along with her handler, a priest, and an anthropologist—rides to the eighth floor of a high-rise luxury apartment complex to perform her role in the blessing of a new home (*grhapraveśam*). Srinivas describes this ritual with the cow in order to demonstrate one way in which priests and devotees creatively adapt rituals to address the rapidly changing housing situation in Bangalore. She also details other ways in which priests and devotees use ritual action—to nostalgically address the loss of familiar landscape through “memorialized and futuristic cartography,” to recover “lost spaces,” and to protect spaces from encroachment through divine occupancy—and in doing so, she shows how ritual engages subjective resistance to rapid development and generates wonder and possibility as an antidote to unchecked neoliberal expansion (44). Chapter Two, engaging affect theory alongside *rasa* theory, explores space via deity processions during the Mallechwaram Krishna Temple's Kaṇu Paṇḍige festival. Here, Srinivas complicates clear-cut distinctions between Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva and carefully considers the potency of emotion in Hindu *bhakti*, given the hectic aspects, demanding schedules, and shifting community concerns of modern life.

Chapter Three opens with thick descriptions of deities adorned (*alaṅkāram*) in global currencies, along with gold and local rupees, reflecting the prosperity of their devotees. Set against the backdrop of the global neoliberal economy in Bangalore, Srinivas explores notions of the “piety of prosperity” alongside critiques of “fat priests” and financial chicanery to address the limits of wonder (119, 135). Dealing with ritual technology, Chapter Four engages readers with the “technological sublime”—the creations of priests, aka “indigenous innovators,” that include an Animatronic Devi (cover photo), the mythical Garuda-Helicopter, and Facetiming God. The chapter concludes that “Tradition and creativity are not opposed to each other; tradition is more creative and experimental than the scholarly literature often presumes” (170). In Chapter Five, addressing time and ritual, the Hindu *yugas* expose the “untimeliness” of neoliberal modernity in Bangalore, where many devotees work night shifts in the IT sector. Here also, Srinivas constructs a convincing argument regarding the ethics of salvage—that ecological sustainability and regeneration become integral components for the resilience and the “endurance” of Hinduism. Throughout, Srinivas invites readers to consider not only

wonder, creativity, and the “moral work of resistance” (ethics) in ritual, but also Bangaloreans’ agency in ritual experimentation, as key in their “path to resilience.”

Giving importance not only to what ritual does, but also what it is, makes Srinivas’s work relevant beyond the social sciences, particularly for Humanities-oriented scholars of religion, ritual, Hinduism, affect, technicity, and philosophy. The author’s theorizing reflects an impressive interdisciplinarity and benefits from many decades of research, contemporaneously steeped in critical analyses outside the field alongside deep ethnographic methods in Malleshwaram. Her work will stir scholars across disciplinary divides into conversations about Hinduism, lived religion, and the longevity and continuity of tradition(s) amidst rapid societal change. *The Cow in the Elevator* encourages us to think about innovation in religious practice, as not only a means for religion’s survival, but also for its potential to question and even rupture the *status quo*, while living fully immersed in it, as the mostly wealthy and high-caste ritual participants in Srinivas’s study tend to do.

The book’s first-person narrative voice gives shape and relevance to Srinivas’s “own sense of loss” and nostalgia for a Bangalore before economic liberalization (10–11). Ethically attuned to her own privilege and intellectual inheritance of anthropological expertise, the author—having grown up in the high-caste and upwardly mobile Malleshwaram as daughter of esteemed anthropologist M. N. Srinivas—provides an autobiographical voice that lends the work an important transparency. Priest Krishna Battar’s epigram (quoted above), identifying the author’s storytelling as ritual, provides an initiatory thread that runs throughout the work and gives the author’s superbly told stories a distinctive gravitas. This thread, loosely tied, leads readers to wonder about religion, religious experience, and the anthropologist’s work. Srinivas admits that she herself experienced wonder and joy at the ritual innovations she encountered during her fieldwork. Importantly, the authorial presence, in fieldwork notes and rich ethnographic stories, makes this otherwise densely theoretical book accessible for advanced undergraduate students. Conveying the depth of her ethnography may have been the “burden of [her] work,” yet in this reviewer’s opinion, turning the gaze to “claim wonder for anthropology” has yielded expansive and creative fruit (213–14).

Angela Rudert
Colgate University
Hamilton, New York, USA

John A. Stevens, *Keshab: Bengal’s Forgotten Prophet*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 322 pages.

Few individual life stories are as suitable for illustrating the complexity of the colonial history of nineteenth-century Bengal as that of Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–1884). The main focus of John A. Stevens’s fascinating book is the polyphonic representation of Keshab in Indian and British public spheres: his intellectual vigor and sensitivity, as well as the politics and poetics of his heterogeneous reception during his lifetime. The author adopts a transnational approach and explores the interconnected religious histories of the colony and the metropole, focusing his attention on the dialogue between British Unitarianism and Keshabite Brāhmoism.

The reader might find it surprising that Keshab is given the epithet of “forgotten prophet.” The book maintains that Keshab is a neglected figure in Bengali historiography (2), although several dozens of books have been written about this pivotal figure of modern Bengal, both in English and in Bengali. On this point, it should be remarked that, apart from Keshab’s personal correspondence and articles in Brāhmo journals, the book uses predominantly English-language material, including sources from the Anglo-Indian and British press and the publications of the Unitarians. The reader might wonder why the author has not found it useful to include and utilize, among the wealth of secondary literature dedicated to Keshab, early works of Bengali authors like Pūrṇānanda Caṭṭopādhyāy and Gaugobinda Rāy or of Bengali scholars like Jharā Basu or Aruṇakumār Mukhopādhyāy. Given the importance of citing local scholarship for a decolonization of knowledge that should start from our citation patterns, a justification for not using such sources would have been advisable in a book otherwise so sensitive to postcolonial issues.

A “child of the Bengali Renaissance” (15), Keshab is celebrated as a religious leader and a social reformer. Influenced by Rammohan Roy, and fascinated by Christian ideas and Unitarian radicals, Keshab joined the Brāhmo Samāj at a very young age, became a Brāhmo minister, was soon after expelled from the organization, and established a new Brāhmo Samāj with a less Hindu and more universalistic character. His visit to England in 1870 made him a sort of a celebrity. Strongly supportive of British rule in India as sent by divine providence, Keshab made it his mission to convey Indian values to Western audiences, to advise the rulers about “England’s duties to India” for a responsible leadership, and to argue for a monopoly of the East in matters of spirituality. Keshab praised the material, rational, and technological achievements of European civilization and saw English education as the antidote to the baneful customs of polygamy and child marriage. But he also advocated that progress, conceived as a higher understanding of universal truths, could only be reached through a harmonious exchange between the “spiritual East” and the West (60–62). Defining himself as an Indian, a simple *bheto Bāñali* (rice-eating Bengali), and a man of the world, Keshab interiorized dichotomies and contradictions that were part of the intellectual life of many English-educated gentlemen (*bhadralok*) of his times. However, instead of re-employing the lens of the “identity crisis” narrative (7), Stevens conveys a complex and nuanced understanding of Keshab’s life and ideas as profoundly embedded in the asymmetrical power relations experienced by a colonial subject and in an increasingly racist and aggressive imperial world. In order to achieve this, he transcends conventional discourse analysis and reflects in depth about Keshab’s emotions, friendships, representations of his body and masculinity, and bodily performance of religion.

The initial chapters of the book are dedicated to historical contextualization and to the analysis of Keshab’s networks, his lectures to Western audiences, and their reactions and receptions. The fifth chapter describes the delicate transition period (1870–77) in which Keshab posed a new emphasis on *bhakti*, on “primitive” asceticism (129), and on divine intuition or “madness” (135–44) in opposition to the oppressive Eurocentric discourse of rationality. The book continues with a detailed account of the Cuch Bihar crisis (155–72), which constituted a major shift in Keshab’s career: The decision to marry her thirteen-year-old daughter Suniti Devi

to the Mahārājā of Cuch Bihar under pressure from the British government provoked a sudden drop in Keshab's popularity among Brāhmos as well as among British Christians. The last chapter focuses on the final phase of Keshab's life as the authoritarian prophet of the newly formed, eclectic, and universalist religion named Naba Bidhān, or New Dispensation. Keshab formulated in this period the intriguing image of the "clownish juggler" (191) for self-representation, an image which illustrates the tension between the ascetic inclinations and the commitments of a public personality. The concluding part of the book looks at numerous obituaries to understand the ways in which Keshab's life was publicly remembered. The author underlines here Keshab's powerful legacy, resonating in the ideas of major figures like Svāmī Vivekānanda, Rabindranath Tagore, and Bipin Chandra Pal. Stevens's fascinating book reminds us that Keshab's vocabulary anticipated nationalist and revivalist discourses which would take root in the following decades, such as the pairing of motherhood-nationhood and the construct of a "spiritual" India. The book is also interspersed with powerful illustrations, photographic portraits, advertisements, and satirical cartoons from coeval magazines, showing the aesthetics of Keshab Chandra Sen's depictions and self-representations.

Carola Lorea
National University of Singapore
Singapore

Harald Tambs-Lyche, *Transaction and Hierarchy: Elements for a Theory of Caste*. New York: Routledge, 2018. 386 pages.

In *Transaction and Hierarchy*, Harald Tambs-Lyche, an anthropologist whose fieldwork in South Asia spans several regions and decades, wishes to "demystify" caste and supersede Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus*. In this avowedly modernist undertaking, he considers caste as one form of social stratification that may be distinguished by its particular "constellation" of factors. In approaching those factors, Tambs-Lyche draws heavily upon both Dumont's conception of hierarchy and McKim Marriott's analysis of transactions to develop an understanding that both stresses the importance of hierarchy and yet acknowledges both intense social dynamism and a rich array of situated perspectives. As such, Tambs-Lyche's work interestingly resonates with and yet differs from much of the recent scholarship on caste, and he effectively discusses these cross-currents. For those deeply interested in caste, *Transaction and Hierarchy* is an empirically rich and fascinating work. Others will likely find it daunting, but scholars of Hinduism may find interesting those moments when Tambs-Lyche pulls back his focus to consider Hinduism's rich diversity and how that diversity of practice relates to caste.

Transaction and Hierarchy may be roughly divided into three sections. The first is a lengthy introduction spread over two chapters. In the first, Tambs-Lyche presents caste as a "specific constellation of cultural and social factors" (2). He here situates his analysis in relation to the voluminous scholarship on caste and then to the turns of postcolonialism and postmodernism. While critical of these scholarly turns, Tambs-Lyche offers a thoughtful and reflexive consideration of his own

theoretical orientation and research. In the next chapter, he outlines the book's structure and begins his analysis by considering the origins of caste. Rejecting a simple conflation of caste with social stratification, he argues that caste originated during a period of ideological struggle in the classical era when new models of society were being articulated through texts like *Manusmṛti* (50–51). Tambs-Lyche also argues that central to caste is a sense of the self in which there is a strong disjunction between one's core self and the various social roles which one may play. To find articulations of this sense of self, the author turns again to religious literature, particularly the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and thereby revisits and advances debates about South Asian conceptions of the self.

Over *Transaction and Hierarchy's* middle four chapters, Tambs-Lyche builds a conception of caste beginning from the individual and their sense of self, proceeding through villages of increasing size and complexity, and culminating at the levels of the city, kingdom, and region. While a strong thread of argument runs through these chapters, not all of them are equally developed. In "From Individual to Community," the author draws upon his fieldwork, both in the ephemeral interactions that arise on bus journeys and in more sustained relationships, to consider further the sense of self identified earlier and to develop, following Marriott, a conception of "hierarchizing transactions" (94). In the next chapter, he introduces what he calls "estates," castes or caste clusters, such as dominant castes, merchants, or pastoralists, which hold similar forms of political, economic, or socially based power and thereby share ideological outlooks. Over the next two chapters, he extends this analysis to larger villages, urban centers, and the broader regions in which villages are linked with cities. Here the author uses both his highly varied field experiences and the immense scholarship on caste to underscore South Asia's great regional diversity and highlight underlying commonalities concerning caste. While largely building his analysis from the village out, so to speak, Tambs-Lyche here tries to stress the importance of cities and regions in those caste systems which were sometimes more narrowly understood as belonging to the realm of village life.

The final two substantial chapters and conclusion of *Transaction and Hierarchy* are more theoretically oriented. In "Abstractions and Models," Tambs-Lyche addresses the ideological outlooks of various estates and subordinated groups and stresses how they do not fundamentally represent society, but rather influence social action. While acknowledging, contra Dumont, a lack of any one completely hegemonic indigenous conception of society, the author, in contradistinction to some more recent scholarship, highlights the limited diversity of outlooks among different castes and their varying degrees of social influence. In the final weighty chapter, Tambs-Lyche returns to a more microsociological orientation to address his concept of "hierarchizing discourses." This discursive form, which he distinguishes by the co-occurrence of inclusion and ranking of differentiated items in a broad whole, is central to his presentation of how caste works (312), and he proposes that this concept may be useful for considering other forms of hierarchy elsewhere.

In *Transaction and Hierarchy*, Tambs-Lyche lays out a highly nuanced conception of hierarchy and caste. While it is primarily intended for those familiar with the long-standing anthropological debates about caste, the book, which unites the author's own fieldwork with thoughtful engagement with the work of others,

provides a broad overview of caste across the region and some interesting reflections upon the diversity of Hindu practice.

Ian R. Wilson
Le Moyne College
Syracuse, New York, USA

Richard S. Weiss, *The Emergence of Modern Hinduism: Religion on the Margins of Colonialism*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2019. 216 pages.

Richard S. Weiss's compelling new book addresses the topic of religious change in nineteenth-century South Asia. Its argument about the emergence of modern Hinduism challenges conventional academic accounts of the role of Western influence in the transformation and modernization of Hindu traditions. Broadly, Weiss argues that important contributions to Hindu modernity were spearheaded by actors "on the margins of colonialism" who were only obliquely or indirectly connected with colonial or Western modernities, yet whose projects nevertheless expressed distinctly modern innovations (2). In developing this argument, Weiss offers a richly detailed account of the influential Tamil Śaiva poet and religious leader Ramalinga Swamikal (1823–1874), whose life and works are analyzed as a case study of the broader historical dynamics treated in the book.

A recurring theme in Weiss's work is the relationship between tradition and modernity, and in this new book he offers fresh insight into how these dynamics are implicated in processes of religious change. In this context, Weiss argues for a conceptualization of tradition that emphasizes its dynamic and innovating capacity, arguing that tradition itself can be an important source of modernity. In making this argument, Weiss develops two closely related points: one, that there has been a tendency to conflate "modern Hinduism" with "reform Hinduism" and that this has led to a myopic understanding of the nature and extent of Hindu religious change in nineteenth-century South Asia; and two, that in taking reform Hinduism as representative of all modern Hinduism, scholars have paid little attention to developments occurring on the margins of colonialism, away from colonial centers. Thus, in foregrounding developments such as those of Ramalinga's movement and others that are generally left out of academic accounts of modern Hinduism (for example, the Swaminarayan Movement, the Ayyavazhi Movement, Mahima Dharma, and so on), Weiss asks, "Is it possible to consider a history of the emergence of modern Hinduism that does not begin, and end, with colonialism?" (11).

In seeking to decenter the role of colonialism and Western influence in processes of modern Hindu change, Weiss presents a new model for Hindu modernity that rejects dichotomies between modernity (characterized as Western and dynamic) and tradition (characterized as Hindu and static). In the process, Weiss seeks to show that Ramalinga was not influenced in any directly discernible way by Western or colonial modernity, but that he was nevertheless distinctly modern. In Weiss's view, Ramalinga's teachings were modern because "they displayed an acute awareness of challenges of the present, innovated in ways that addressed those challenges, were founded on a desire to transform the world in specific ways, and presaged later

developments in Hindu traditions” (2). These characteristics form the basis of the model for Hindu modernity that Weiss advances throughout the book. The five central chapters of the volume are each dedicated to exploring different aspects of Ramalinga’s innovations and how these reflect this model.

Chapter Two focuses on Ramalinga’s ideology of food-giving through an analysis of his *Jīva Karuṇya Olukkam* and argues that his food-giving project can be “best understood in a framework of Shaiva innovation and transformation” (28). Chapter Three examines the publication history of *Tiruvaruṭpā* and seeks to show how Ramalinga and his followers “used print as a tool to garner religious and textual authority” (52). Chapter Four examines Ramalinga’s self-presentation as a *bhakti* poet, demonstrating aspects of continuity and innovation of tradition in his deployment of premodern Śaiva-*bhakti* tropes. Chapter Five presents an account of the polemics between Ramalinga and Arumuka Navalar and argues that the debate between these two figures was ultimately “over the shape of Shaiva tradition, canon, and authority” (118). Chapter Six focuses on Ramalinga’s claims to have miraculous powers and his status as a Siddha through an analysis of his posthumously published works, arguing that “the combination of Ramalinga’s egalitarianism and his promise of the extraordinary resulted in a powerful expression of enchanted modernity” (123). A brief conclusion offers some final thoughts about the dynamics of modernity and tradition and reiterates the importance of considering “multiple centers for Hindu innovation” in giving rise to the heterogeneity of present-day Hinduism (153).

On the whole, Weiss’s arguments are persuasive and well developed. His charting of an alternative genealogy for Hindu modernity is of course quite ambitious, and some may disagree with certain of his interpretations. My only quibbles pertain to details of nuance. I find the characterization of Arumuka Navalar as a cosmopolitan Hindu reformer comparable to Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī and Rammohan Roy (for example, 100–104) to be somewhat oversimplified, given that Navalar did not speak for Hinduism as a whole, eschewed discourse on universalism, and was himself closely associated with Śaiva institutions on the margins of colonialism (that is, *Tiruvāṭuṭurai Āṭṭam*). I also find the emphasis on indigenous influences over Western influences in some passages to be somewhat overstressed (for example, 44–49). But perhaps this last is justified as a corrective to earlier accounts that emphasized Western influence. Overall, these are minor criticisms for what is a brilliant and ground-breaking work. Ideally, Weiss’s book will move conversations about religious change in nineteenth-century South Asia forward and prompt greater reflection on the role of South Asian agency in the modernization of Hindu traditions.

Michael A. Gollner
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

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