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Editor's Introduction

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Editor's Introduction

SINCE its appearance in late 2011 Rajiv Malhotra's *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism* (HarperCollins India) has provoked strong reactions among its readers, both within and outside the academy. Malhotra challenges what he calls Western scholarship's "grand narrative" of religion with its self-serving presumption of the superiority of the Judaeo-Christian worldview over the "dharmic" perspective of the Indian religions, i.e. of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The author not only argues for the viability of the dharmic understanding of reality, but also for its greater rationality and scientific coherence when compared to the history-centrism of the Abrahamic faiths with their absolutist claims to truth based on purported unique - although ultimately unverifiable - divine revelations from a distant past. His book challenges Western scholarship's attempts to assimilate and thereby to undermine distinctively dharmic ontologies and epistemologies by reversing the gaze and critically subjecting Western scholarly assumptions to dharmic scrutiny.

The three reviewers of *Being Different* in the present volume at first express solidarity with Malhotra and agree that his is an urgent and necessary undertaking, if the distinctiveness of Indian religions and culture is to be taken seriously in the academy and beyond. But all three go on to fault Malhotra for making sweeping and uninformed generalizations about religions, focusing their critique more on Malhotra's presentation of Indian religions than on his presentation of Abrahamic faiths. Malhotra defends himself in a long response, pointing out where he believes himself to be misrepresented or misunderstood and where he finds the three reviewers show deficiency in their own scholarly approach to his work.

Such a discussion, however animated and at times heated, will hopefully contribute to the primary goal of the *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*, which is to advance understanding between Hindus and Christians by promoting scholarly investigation and reflection.

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