Introductory Information and Introduction

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EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

THE HINDU TRADITION is no longer found only by travelling to India. It is alive and well in diaspora communities around the globe. Indeed, it is in just such locations that Hindu experience is taking on new forms as it lives as a minority community, often in a host Eurocentric secular Christian context. In urban centres such as London, Vancouver, and Pittsburg, second- and third-generation young people are beginning to find their voice – and the religious experience of which they speak is often different from that of their cousins in India, or in other diaspora locations. One such second-generation scholar, Tinu Ruparell, describes his experience in this regard as “a work in progress” (see this issue’s Viewpoint), and evokes the thought of Ricoeur on metaphor and Stout on bricollage in making sense of it.

This issue also contains survey studies of the Hindu diaspora communities in Trinidad, Australia, the United States, and Europe. Marion O’Callaghan recounts the history of Hindus in Trinidad from 1845 to the present with attention to issues of caste, religious discrimination, pilgrimage, feasts, and interaction with Christians in “re-working crucial aspects of Hinduism in India”. Purushottama Bilimoria offers a similar study of the Hindu experience in Australia from 1787 to the present. In his study of Hindus in the United States, Raymond Williams focuses on “Hindu-Christian Study and Dialogue” in the immigrant community. He warns Christian conversation partners against reifying either Hinduism in India or in the United States. Speaking from Europe, Martin Baumann assesses the Hindu presence in Great Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Portugal, especially with regard to interfaith dialogue.

This thematic issue of the Bulletin makes a contribution to the recent and growing body of literature on the Hindu diaspora. Gaps in our coverage here are given attention elsewhere. For “Hindus in Canada”, e.g., see my article, “The Religions of the South Asian Diaspora in Canada” in A New Handbook of Living Religions, edited by John Hinnells (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997). A book, The South Asian Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States, currently in press with SUNY Press, has separate chapters on Hindus in Britain (Kim Knott), Canada (Harold Coward), and the United States (Diana Eck). Such new resource material will enable courses on Hinduism to expand their focus from India to include the fascinating evolutions of the tradition taking place in diaspora communities around the world.

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Editor