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Briefly Noted

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superlative. Why should it be any surprise or insightful criticism that Jones and others write as missionaries and that their evaluations or judgments of Hindu texts and practices are not flattering? In fact, it would be a surprise if they were! The issue is now an old one and concerns the legitimacy and practice of conversion addressed by Gauri Viswanathan in her groundbreaking work, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton University Press, 1998) (which, Sugirtharajah does not mention at all in her book despite the centrality of the themes), among others. Is it unfair or wrong to misrepresent one's opponents' positions, as Sugirtharajah would have the reader believe? The implication of this perspective would restrict many a politician! For that matter, when scores of Indian philosophers present their opponent's position as "straw-men" in a *samvada* (debate), then they are no better than the missionary Christians. Shame on Madhava for doing the same in his *Sarvadarsana Samgraha*! How about a post-colonial perspective on *samvada*? Sugirtharajah's application of post-colonial interpretive strategies is thus anachronistic: Jones *et al* did not live in a utopian, politically correct, pluralistic, and multi-cultural world. Her application of a post-colonial methodology, then, is not fruitful, for it fails to provide much new or surprising information.

Sugirtharajah also fails in her pledge to correlate her research with issues in contemporary India and in the Diaspora. She touches upon a wide variety of issues and controversies including the right-wing Hindu fundamentalists in India (BJP, VHP, RSS), ISKCON, Swami Narayanan, and the Christian background and agendas of the early Indologists. Though she mentions all of the important players and concepts, the reader is still left with a feeling that Sugirtharajah is gesturing at the tips of very large icebergs.

So, I do not recommend this book. It promises far more than it delivers and is

founded on poorly hidden meta-claims about the appropriateness (or in this case, inappropriateness) of missionary activities and inter-religious dialogue. My criticism of Sugirtharajah's book is perhaps a larger indictment of a methodology that seems to have dominated the academic world yet increasingly sounds like a broken record.

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Briefly Noted

Encountering Kali: In the Margins, at the Center, in the West. Edited by Rachel Fell McDermott and Jeffrey J. Kripal. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, xviii + 321 pp.

This beautifully produced state-of-the-art review of Kali Studies is also a tribute to David Kinsley (died, April 2000) whose book, *The Sword and the Flute* (1975) initiated contemporary phenomenological and historical studies of the goddess. Springing from a conference at Barnard College in 1996, this team-authored, interdisciplinary volume is enriched with artwork from Venantius Pinto and wonderful visual reproductions. The book aims to analyze the promises and problems involved in meeting and interpreting the Hindu goddess Kali in her indigenous South Asian settings and in her more recent Western incarnations. Thus the approach is cross-cultural. Although probably originally a tribal goddess, by the epic and early puranic periods (third century B.C.E. to seventh century C.E.), Kali is described as being absorbed into the Brahmanical Sanskrit tradition as a dangerous, blood-loving battle queen, the incarnation of the goddess Durga's fury. During the eighth to the sixteenth centuries C.E., the Tantric tradition elevated Kali to an ontological

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absolute identified with the dynamic ground of the universe. From the sixteenth century on several Hindu devotional traditions have claimed her as the loving mother of all. Most recently contemporary Western appropriations have lifted Kali out of her cultural and literary South Asian contexts and made her into an ahistorical, archetypal figure. The essays of this volume explore these various manifestations of Kali with Part I focusing on South Asian texts and contexts while Part II examines Kali in contemporary Western settings.

Part I begins with a reprinted chapter on Kali from Kinsley's book, *Hindu Goddesses* (1986) which is followed by Patricia Dold's "Kali the Terrific and Her Tests" – like Kinsley's chapter a textual study. Then there are four chapters drawing on contemporary field studies in Bengal, Bhubaneswar, Sri Lanka, and Banaras. These studies offer evidence for Kali's associations in South Asia with blood, power, sexuality and Tantra. The focus shifts in Part II to the modern West beginning with the fear and revulsion of the eighteenth and nineteenth century Orientalists followed by Kripal's

analysis of Kali in the Psychoanalytic tradition and McNeal's study of Kali's double marginality in Trinidad where she unites in herself Catholicism and Hinduism. Caldwell offers a feminist theoretical reading of Kali while Rachel McDermott examines manifestations of the goddess on the Internet and how this democratization of information has affected Kali's depiction. What Westerners tend to see in Kali is not always what Hindus see and appreciate. A significant contribution of this book is to draw out these differences and to critically relate them to one another. Undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and general readers – all will learn from and enjoy reading this splendid book.

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Recent Articles of Interest

Francis X. Clooney, "Restoring 'Hindu theology' as a Category in Indian Intellectual Discourse," *Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin Flood (Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 447-477.

Francis X. Clooney, "Believers and Scholars: Reflections on an ISKCON-Jesuit Friendship," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 11.2 (2003): 43-60.

Francis X. Clooney, "Seeing God in a World of Many Religions: Swami Brahmananda's Teaching on the

Chosen Deity," *Prabuddha Bharata* (April 2003): 22-30.

Francis X. Clooney, "Hindu Views of Religious Others: Implications for Christian Theology," *Theological Studies* 64.2 (June): 306-333.

Francis X. Clooney, "Pain But Not Harm: Some Classical Resources toward a Hindu Just War Theory," *Just War in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Paul Robinson (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2003), pp. 109-125.

Francis X. Clooney, "Learning to See: Comparative Practice and the