

with the text, most likely utilizing one of the dozens of translations available (hundreds, if one includes older translations). It is because of this perceived centrality that Davis's "biography" is so vital: the importance and understanding of the Gita in its history is not singular, linear, or universal. The Gita had and will have many "lives"—from a small, but narratively vital text in the Mahabharata to a free-standing text commented on by different schools of Hindu religious and philosophical thought; from the romantic or pejorative interpretations in its early travels outside of India to nationalist readings in anticolonial movements; from elite and specialized doctrinal interpretations to grander pan-Hindu or universalist visions of the text. The Gita, as Davis traces, traverses centuries and geographies; indeed, this volume also nicely functions as a snapshot of the history of the study of Hinduism as reflected through the travels of a single text. For those of us who feel we know the Gita well, this volume is sure to include unfamiliar trajectories: whether of the spread of Wilkins's first English translation; of the Gita's role among revolutionaries such as the Anushilan Samiti, or of the great variety of Gita performances from Gandhi's ashram in Wardha to performances in Mumbai and New York. This "biography" is short, affordable, and written with a remarkable clarity and straight forwardness that makes it a must have for all scholars of Hinduism and a definite consideration for inclusion in any course that broaches the Gita.

*Steven E. Lindquist*

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**SHYAMJI KRISHNAVARMA: SANSKRIT, SOCIOLOGY AND ANTI-IMPERIALISM.** By Harald Fischer-Tiné. New Delhi: Routledge, 2014. Pp. xxxvi + 228; illustrations. \$160.00.

Acknowledging the apparent incongruity between dedicating a volume of Routledge's "Pathfinders" series to the less well-known Krishnavarma "of all people," the author masterfully makes the case for attending to the life, thought, and accomplishments of a figure once hounded by British intelligence services and now lionized by Narendra Modi as a veritable "anti-Gandhi." Krishnavarma's global career took him from the margins of Kutch to the metropolitan cities of London and Paris via his education in colonial Bombay and in service to a variety of princely states. Acquiring an early mastery of Sanskrit, Krishnavarma was drawn toward the Arya Samaj before finding his way to Oxford as an assistant to Monier-Williams. With admirable economy, Fischer-Tiné gives us Krishnavarma's career in both sunshine and shadow, sketching Krishnavarma's experience of British racism, his intellectual engagement with the antistatist liberalism of Herbert Spencer, and his eventual emergence as point person in a "global anti-imperialist ecumene" stretching from Tokyo to Berkeley. More than a biography, this is an exploration of the changing temper of early twentieth-century Indian patriotism. It is also a skillful querying of the meaning of

cosmopolitanism: Fischer-Tiné gives us a transnational radical who somehow also "remained fairly immune" to the ebb and flow of cultural and intellectual currents around him. This book is highly recommended for undergraduate and graduate libraries.

*Brian A. Hatcher*

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**REFLECTIONS OF AMMA: DEVOTEES IN A GLOBAL EMBRACE.** By Amanda J. Lucia. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. Pp. xv + 304; plates. Paper, \$29.95.

The cover of the book under review shows a plain-looking woman all dressed in white giving a big, toothy smile while cradling a microphone in her hands. A tight circle of people, both Caucasian and Indian, surround her with hands held up high in praise. The figure at the center is Mata Amritanandamayi, better known simply as Amma or Mother. Amma has become a worldwide phenomenon, due to her charisma and healing embraces. Lucia focuses on Amma's devotees in North America, where her disciples attempt to mimic her actions to better themselves spiritually and socially. Amma's signature act is embracing people to heal them of whatever their affliction might be. She hugs anyone who comes to her, thus erasing boundaries based on purity and pollution, class, caste, ethnicity, economic rank, and so on. The ambitious goal of her American community's mimetic action is to create a global community free from ethnic difference, economic stratification, or social hierarchy. The paradox, however, as the author argues, is that despite their good-willed attempts, cultural differences become reified in the context of American multiculturalism. The work is based on both textual research to provide context and ethnographic description to give the study contemporary depth. The result is a valuable study of the female guru phenomenon in the context of diasporic Hinduism in North America. While not really covered in this book, it would be interesting to see if the author's findings hold up in other parts of the world. My guess is yes, but perhaps we will have to wait for another book on Amma's global travels to find out.

*Frank J. Korom*

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**THIRTEEN FESTIVALS: A RITUAL YEAR IN BENGAL.** By Ralph Nicholas. New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2015. Pp. 252 + xii. Rs. 750.00.

Scholars of religious life in Bengal may one day refer to this as Volume 4 in the "Kelomal Quartet." While not the author's coinage, it would signal the contribution Nicholas has made through a series of books based on extensive fieldwork in East Midnapur. In this volume Nicholas