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Hare Krishna in the Twenty-First Century, by Angela R. Burt. Cambridge University Press, 2023. 96pp. Pb. £16.65. ISBN-13: 9781009065320.

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There is a general understanding that of the many New Religious Movements (NRM) emergent from the 1960s milieu, it is only a handful that have sustained to the current day. Angela R. Burt's volume in the Elements in New Religious Movements series published by Cambridge University Press, provides an insight into the present condition of one such NRM, the Hare Krishna movement, particularly the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), as it adapts not only into the twenty-first century, but into a rapidly shifting new identity in its endeavour to maintain longevity. Aiming to address "the multitude of issues facing the movement," taking "into account major social and cultural upheavals that have taken place since the scholarly analyses of the early 2000s," and "[drawing] on recent scholarship" (p. 6), Burt further addresses several issues in the study of the Hare Krishna movement, not least of which being the over fixation of American ISKCON members, neglecting the truly global presence of the movement.

Burt achieves this goal over five chapters: the introductory chapter which situates the founding of ISKCON by Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda (hereby Prabhupāda) within a brief history of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, and also defining Burt's methodological approach; Chapter 2 giving a concise and engaging insight into the lifestyle and beliefs experienced by ISKCON members, and how they vary according to adherent's demographics; Chapter 3 exploring ISKCON's sociological structure; Chapter 4 exploring controversy both externally in terms of ISKCON within broader society, and internally amongst ISKCON devotees themselves; and the concluding chapter's compelling prognostication of ISKCON's future directions—preceded by a brief book summary—which will likely be found far-sighted in the coming decades.

Though Burt emphasizes an emic perspective (p. 9)—Chapter 2 looks at a day in the life of an ISKCON member is vivid and engaging for it (p. 15–25)—this does not prevent a pithy and compelling methodological apparatus: her deployment of frame alignment to explore the shifting

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contextual pressures which ISKCON inflects to align with proves to be an incredibly effective extension of Rochford's (2007) use. Her emphasis on this shifting nature accounts for why ISKCON has chosen the historical avenues of permutation that result in its contemporary form; ISKCON's "religious transplant" (Bryant and Ekstrand, 2007) is not only the initial transplant from India to a global presence, but now also from a counter-cultural movement to an Indian-Hindu immigrant community (p. 69). The tensions that these transitions introduce are manoeuvred elegantly, focusing on them while careful not to over-estimate their divisive potential (p. 41), and providing concrete instances, such as the humorous contrast of an ISKCON property divided into an eco-village and a fracking project (p. 40). Also important is Burt's noting the role of Hindutva in these shifting frames (p. 36)—an area that pertinently requires more attention.

The discussion of controversies in Chapter 4 achieves the goal of shifting away from an overly American focus by providing fascinating discussion of the ways in which the current Russian invasion of Ukraine has revealed deep fault-lines in ISKCON's rapidly growing eastern European communities (p. 65). Other controversies and schisms, such as accusations of current ISKCON leader past participation in Kīrtanānanda Swāmī's criminal activities, and the various schisms of the Bhaktivedānta Institute, were understandably not included within the scope of this book. What is peculiar is the exception of the recent controversies over child abuse cases against two prominent ISKCON *gurus*. Supporters and critics of both men arose, and the ensuing contention resulted in the formal censure and defrocking of one *sannyāsin*; the other, after heavy protest from ISKCON India leadership, was not investigated. This terminated investigation resulted in a member of ISKCON's highest level of management resigning in protest, and local ISKCON leadership in Europe and North America banning the accused *sannyāsin*. Such severe controversy, undergone in recent history and revealing ISKCON's international tensions, appears odd to not have been discussed beyond two brief passing references (p. 55, 72).

Burt's engagement with the question of ISKCON as a NRM is balanced and demonstrates the issues with characterizing the Hare Krishna movement as "new" when contextualized in its Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava roots (p. 4–5). At times however, the focus on ISKCON—justified by ISKCON being the largest Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava institution (p. 5)—is still narrow enough to imply rupture where there is none. Prabhupāda is said to have

instructed only a small canon in contrast to the Gauḍīya tradition (13), and while Prabhupāda did emphasise only requiring study of a small set of books, Prabhupāda also, in his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.1 commentary, encourages reading well beyond even the broad Gauḍīya canon (1972, p. 50). Further Rūpa Gosvāmin, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism's intellectual founder, in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.13 lists "reading too many books" as a spiritual fault. Attributed to Prabhupāda then is an established Gauḍīya skepticism towards scholasticism. Furthermore, characterization of Prabhupāda's institutional drive being present "earliest days of his mission in the United States" (p. 26), while technically correct, does not reflect Prabhupāda's prior involvement in founding multiple institutions in India, with at least one, Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, continuing to today. Prabhupāda's requesting his preaching to be done within one schism from his *guru's* institution, the Gauḍīya Maṭh, for his original America trip, and his later requesting the Gauḍīya Maṭh emblem painted on an ISKCON temple, reflect that Prabhupāda's institutional drive was driven significantly from a feeling of continuity with his *guru*, and not as a solitary pragmatic event.

These peculiar ISKCON-centric framings extended elsewhere in the book, as in the discussion of the "Jīva Origin" debate, whose narrative was based entirely on the writing of Tamal Krishna Goswami: certainly an academic, but also a highly influential ISKCON manager and *guru*. The section presents a version of the debate conducive to official ISKCON narratives, with the debate becoming between those who base their views on the writings of earlier Gauḍīya thinkers, and those who draw their ideas from Prabhupāda, a framing that elides the many ISKCON individuals (including the controversial and highly charismatic *guru* Gour Govinda Swami) who found in Prabhupāda's books their foundation in rejecting the view finally adopted by the ISKCON institutional leadership.

Even in light of the critique raised in this review, Burt still stands as having provided in this book not only a fantastic introduction to the Hare Krishna movement in the twenty-first century, but also, in her effective and comprehensive synthesis of the prominent work in the field, a great entry point for any reader wishing to enter into the broader study of ISKCON (The references alone supply a great list for prospective sociological study of ISKCON). Its exceptionally accessible style, reflected in even terms like "Sanskrit" being given explanatory footnotes (p. 2), makes it appropriate for both under-graduate and post-graduate readers who

are interested in ISKCON, NRMs, and Eastern Religions in a modern and globalised world. Its content would equally be of interest to contemporary Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practitioners who would value an academically reasoned insight into the current condition of ISKCON, the tradition's largest formal institution.