Thinking Religion Regionally: Hindu Institutions in Contemporary South India

Ramesh Bairy

Thursday, April 4
5:00-6:00 p.m.
David Strong Building, Room C122

The ‘Hindu’ institution of the ‘matha’ (often glossed as ‘Hindu monastic order’) has had an extraordinary life in the 20th Century in the south Indian state of Karnataka. The matha emerges as perhaps the most significant mediator between caste communities, economy and democratic polity. The puzzle: Why and how does this institution radically re-invent itself while mathas in other regions, encountering similar demands, appear to recede into a purely ‘religious’ space? Attending to such regional accounts of religion may yet again alert us to the significance of downsizing Big Categories such as Hinduism, Colonialism, and Caste.

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