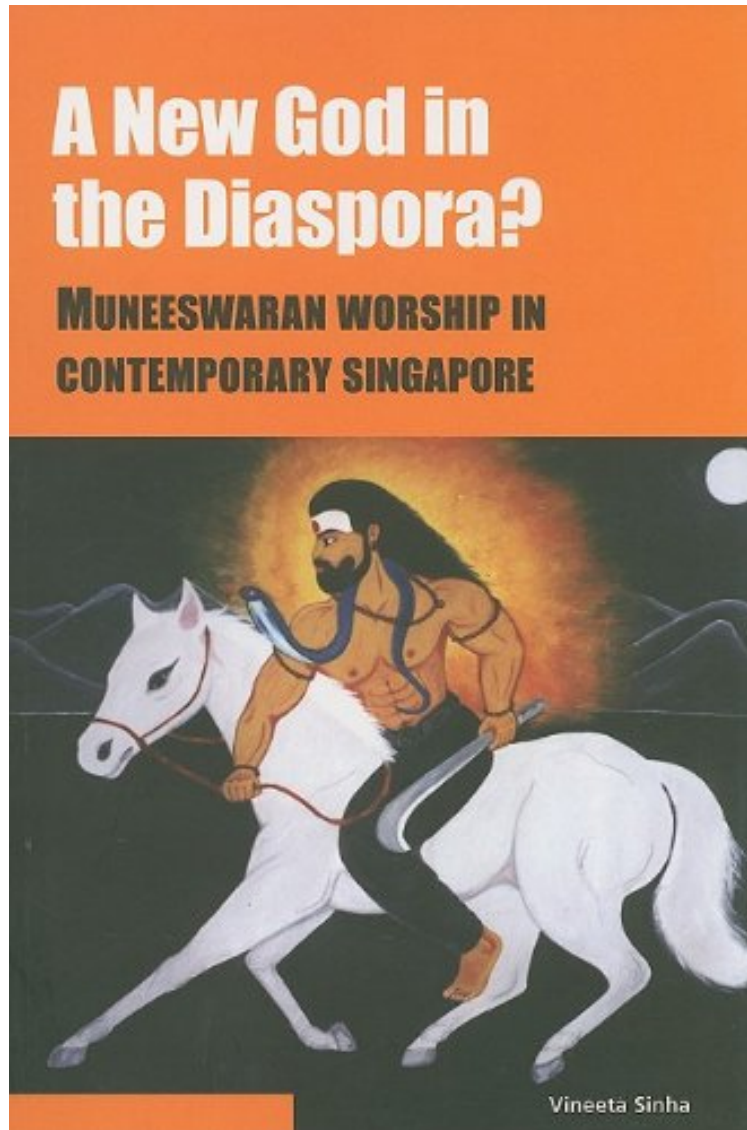


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# A New God in the Diaspora? Muneeswaran Worship in Contemporary Singapore

*Vineeta Sinha*

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'A New God in the Diaspora' explores the worship of a Hindu deity known as Muneeswaran in contemporary Singapore. The strong presence and veneration of this male deity on the island, and the innovative styles of religiosity now associated with him, justify calling Muneeswaran a 'new god' in the Indian diaspora. In examining Muneeswaran, Vineeta Sinha documents a neglected aspect of local Hinduism and the ritual domain surrounding guardian deities (kaaval deivam). She also considers a broader question, asking why this deity, brought from Tamilnadu to Malaya more than 170 years ago, has developed a powerful appeal for young Singaporean Hindus three and four generations removed from their Indian origins. Her discussion of these issues provides an ethnographic documentation of urban-based Hindu religiosity in contemporary Singapore, and makes an important contribution to the global study of diasporic religious experience.

"This study "will become an important link in a small but growing interdisciplinary field: the study of continuity, change and innovation in new urban Hindu-based religiosity" (external reader). "The work... greatly enhances our knowledge not only of the substantive contents of Singaporean Hinduism in general and of the domain of Muneeswaran worship in particular but of specific developments, trends and tensions therein, relevant to broader and theoretical questions pertaining to interrelationships between differing levels of Hinduism and to diasporic processes at work in other Hindu locales". (external reader)"About the Author Vineetha SINHA is Head of the South Asian Studies Programme at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore.