



# **The Goddess Lives in Upstate New York: Breaking Convention and Making Home at a North American Hindu Temple**

*Corinne G. Dempsey*

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Corinne Dempsey profiles an unusual South Indian temple community in Rush, New York, outside Rochester. The temple, established by a charismatic non-Brahman Sri Lankan Tamil, stands out for its combination of orthodox ritual meticulousness and socioreligious iconoclasm. The vitality with which devotees participate in ritual themselves and their ready access to the deities contrasts sharply with ritual activities at most North American Hindu Temples, where (following the usual Indian custom) ritual is performed only by priests and access to the highly sanctified divine images is closely guarded. Drawing on several years of contact with the guru and his followers, Dempsey uses the Rush temple's surprising success to analyze the distinctive dynamics of diaspora Hinduism, including issues of gender and caste, ethnic community, and spiritual enthusiasm.

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