



Riddles in Hinduism

B.R. Ambedkar

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A detailed in depth study of the contradictions in the Puranas and the scriptures of Hinduism by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the father of Indian Constitution. His aim is to show the contradictions within the mythologies and the utter lack of coherence in the scriptures of Hinduism. The techniques of manipulative reinterpretation and circumlocution are used to confuse common people and to establish what is otherwise totally illogical. Dr. Ambedkar believed that this was with the ulterior motive of holding the masses under Brahminic domination. This book is in public domain. However this is the first time this book is published in its entire form because of its sensitivity.

Riddles in Hinduism Details

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From Reader Review Riddles in Hinduism for online ebook

Ravneet Kaur says

Riddles in Hinduism by B.R Ambedkar is a scathing remark on the well-established tenets of Hinduism.

The introduction by Kancha Ilaiah sets a good base for the book. He talks about Ambedkar's life, different roles he played and his critique of Hinduism. He also talks about the current context and how ironical it is for the right to appropriate Ambedkar as a Hindu figure despite his hatred for Hinduism.

Ambedkar has delved upon various aspects of Hinduism. The first riddle digs into the question of who is a Hindu? Ambedkar says that there is no definite answer for that owing to the diversity in thoughts and practices among Hindus. He also looks into the characterisation of Rama and Krishna in the popular narrative and questions the sanctity of their actions. He is also critical of Manu's explanation of the Mixed Caste.

The most interesting read for me was the riddle of The Four Varnas: Are the Brahmans Sure of their Origin?. In this riddle, he explains how different scriptures suggest a different origin of the caste system. There is no coherence among Vedas and Shashtras.

Ambedkar's writing is hard hitting. He raises right questions and views them with an objective lens. He has deeply researched all the scriptures and dissected them for us to see their internal contradictions. He makes you question your own deep-rooted prejudices which were fed to you by the popular narrative. No wonder when Maharashtra Government printed this book, Shiv Sena sought a ban.

In a nutshell, if you have to read one book this year, it ought to be this one.

Rutik Katare says

Well, It's unfair to judge an incomplete work. And especially of scolars like ambedkar. No wonder he was a lawyer. His writing shows it. He playfully investigates both sides and even questions his own conclusions making them strong enough. He knows his stuff very deeply. I'm saying this based on his all other works included,not only this one.

Though,incomplete it may be, it still holds the power to baffle anyone's mind. Each chapter holds that potential.

It's a must read.

Pavan Dharanipragada says

The only works more retconned than Star Wars by Lucas are the sacred books of Hinduism. Thousands of generations of Brahmins have manipulated and modified, many cynically and some with noble intentions, the Vedas, smritis, shrutis, sutras, puranas, epics, brahmanas, etc. that it is difficult to invoke even one value as something Hinduism stands for without a contradiction evoked somewhere in all those books. Thence the riddles.

There's all kinds of weird stuff in there but Dr. Ambedkar's riddles are only those that were/are relevant to (then) contemporary Indian society. To be sure, the riddles as a work was unfinished and uncompiled by the time of his death. They were edited and published by the BAWS committee and now, in the edition I've read, a selected few were recompiled, edited and released with annotations.

The riddles were selected probably for their importance to counter the current Hindutva narrative in India. They all challenge some of the most deeply held beliefs of Hindus, although some more successfully than others. The first riddle included is the one of the difficulty in knowing whether one is Hindu or not- the concept of Hinduism is so nebulous that anywhere from 10% to 85% of Indian citizens are Hindus, based on your definition. Further riddles question the institutions of ahimsa, varnashrama, the yugas, and Rama and Krishna, from religious, social, and political perspectives. The specific riddles on varnashrama are most informative while the ones on Rama and Krishna seem incomplete and inaccurate in places.

Navayana's annotations in the book, like their counterparts in Navayana's Annihilation of Caste, are often not useful. The first problem is that they are too numerous. They ruin the flow. No text needs annotations in every page, especially that of a writer as lucid as Dr. Ambedkar. Secondly, they are sometimes redundant or unnecessary. If Dr. Ambedkar quotes some Indophile author, I don't need to know the biography of that author and the origin of his interest in Vedas. I would Google if I felt the need to check them out.

Dr. Ambedkar's writing is as incisive and precise as in his other works and I wish he were able to finish all the riddles and compile them into a cogent and complete work. But partly due to fate and partly due to supreme negligence and barbarity of Indian government, we only have a partial work. Even then it is extremely informative and important and is worth more without Navayana's annotations.

Karan says

A brilliant analysis that chronicles the multiple discrepancies that plague the literature of Hindu religion. Additionally the book pushes the critic of religion through a ration lens further and it's a marvel that this was written in the 20th century.

Although the multiple citations and references can overwhelm the reading experience, the book clearly gives the other side to normally accepted norms about the gods of Hinduism.

Vadassery Rakesh says

I'm amused that B.R. Ambedkar was not only a lawyer par excellence who framed out constitution, a revolutionary leader but also a person who has dived into the depths of Hindu literature before of course criticizing it. Because off late we see people criticizing something without knowing about it fully. I'm proud that we had a leader like Ambedkar.

I should also say that, despite having faced the wrath of caste Hindus through out his life, Ambedkar has been gracious enough to give credit to the Hindu thoughts wherever it deserved so. The concept of Brahmaism and the thoughts of Thatvamasi and Aham Brahmasmi have been duly given the credits of being the first democratic thoughts of the world, much ahead of the Greeks, who are credited with the invention of democracy.

The siting of incest, Niyoga and flesh eating as the hall marks of ancient Aryans, is not surprising as what else was expected from a primitive tribe. I believe not just Aryans , but even primitive Dravidians or Sumerians or even Mangolians should have done the same. But just because of that, one cannot downgrade whatever came out of that tribe thereafter. But he must have done that because of the Aryan religion which downgraded and suppressed the Dasyu/Dravidian religious ideas. But that has been done by every invading religion, see what the Christians did to Jews and Pagans. See the concept of converting or killing the khafirs. But incorporating a legitimacy of perennially suppressing the Dasyu's terming them as untouchables or Mlechas is unpardonable. Whoever has built that into the Rigveda has done an unpardonable sin to the humankind.

The Millions of souls who had to live and die as untouchables would never forgive the forces who tamper great books to serve the vested interests. The Chaturvarna theory in Rig Veda is the best example to what level people can stoop to serve their selfish ends.

Jithu says

A truly scholarly work. Ambedkar's guts are truly remarkable. Kudos to Navayana for painstakingly annotating and referencing his work.

Aravind Vivekanandan says

If you grew up in a society that was always telling you how a certain set of books are infallible and they contain all the wisdom in the world, it becomes a little difficult to question those claims. A different narrative might not be easy to digest. Enter Ambedkar. With years of research and in depth knowledge of the scriptures, he manages to dissolve the halo surrounding these texts and expose the numerous contradictions in them, in fact some of the sections attack the foundation of the religion itself. He throws light on the archaic nature of these works, and the inhumane ideology that they espouse at times. A brilliant read for anyone who can look past their dogmas. There are areas where I disagree with the author, particularly his views on polygamy/andry and their morality, but the general themes dealt with in this book strike a chord with me. Also, a wonderful foreward by kancha illiah who gives perspective to Ambedkar's thoughts in the current context.

Deepankar Rawat says

Ambedkar questions everything that the high class brahmins and other two 'upper' classes have held very close to themselves over centuries. He mostly questions the manusmriti and vedas....their infallability and the contradictions that are much too apparent in Hindu society. He was brave to question it all. I can't really imagine someone writing such a book even in present times. Or may be, it is more difficult now than it was at that time.

On a larger canvas, the important point that one can bring home is that it is very necessary for a culture to question its 'everything', as bhuddha did 2500 years back or Ambedkar did 70 years back, if it really wants to remain relevant.

Sean McInnis says

Ambedkar asks hundreds of pointed questions about Hinduism, and most of all, he digs into the contradictions inherent in it.

For example, Brahmins declared the Vedas to be infallible. Yet Ambedkar points to clear evidence that they were not always considered infallible. He argues that the declaration that "words are eternal therefore the Vedas are eternal...(and therefore) not made by man or God" is absurd. Also, he points out that the Vedas, supposedly infallible, contain sorcery and black magic.

The Upanishads contradict the Vedas, so Ambedkar says the Upanishads were made inferior to the Vedas.

Where did the vast panoply of Hindu gods come from? In his opinion, it is because India "has been formed by the conglomeration many tribes" (p 80) each with its own separate Gods, many of whom appear to be in direct conflict - sometimes in battles - with one another.

He points out that "Today human beings are not sacrificed to the Goddess Kali... But...there is abundant evidence to show that human sacrifice like animal sacrifice was practiced as taught by the Kali Purana" (p 127). Kali's husband, Shiva, has bull sacrifices in the Ashvalayan Grihya-Sutra..

He asks, "Why have the Brahmins made the Hindu religion...so devoid of morality" The Hindu religion is nothing but worshiping ...Gods and Goddesses...trees...and making offerings to the Brahmins" (p 178). It is full of folk superstitions and magic cures.

Jasun Chelat says

Ambedkar engages in an epic rap battle against Hindu Sanatan and wins

Mayur Ramteke says

Why am I reading Ambedkar?

While reading an author, one invests his time and energy. It demands attention to understand the point of views of any author. It creates an unusual bonding and if you do not have a strong reason then the chances are low to get that bonding. The reason for me to read **Ambedkar** is the partiality of our system. As far I can remember, during our school life, we never got exposed to **Ambedkar** as compared to other Indian leaders like **Gandhi, Nehru, Shivaji, Savarkar, Bhagat Singh** and many more.

I feel that the **Ambedkar** is one of the most impactful leaders among his peers **Mahatma Phule, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Mother Teresa** and many more in the Indian society. He was highly educated person in those days. Well, the naysayers will say, Gandhi & Nehru also educated one & had the foreign degree, but the main contrast is Ambedkar was from the lower strata of society while others were from an affluent background and upper strata.

Not only our education system but also the mainstream media is estranged towards Ambedkar. There are lots of movies, TV series, books, research papers and documentaries are available on the numerous Indian leaders (*Social Reformer, Political leaders and Freedom fighters*) except Ambedkar.

Ambedkar was the chairman of the constitution drafting committee and he helped establish the Finance Commission of India. He emphasised on the free economy with the stable rupee. But sadly, he never got his fair and square share and belittle to "**Dalit Demi-God**" by masses because of his views on the reservation. Ambedkar has taken more brickbat in his lifetime and posthumously as compared to any other leader in India. And this is the well-known fact that most of the time Ambedkar's statue gets vandalise as compared to any other national leader. ~~I think most of the populace has a peculiar obsession with Ambedkar and why not, he has raged a war against their 330 million Gods.~~

About the novel "Riddles in Hinduism"

Ambedkar is trying to find out pith of Hindu religion and raised a few critical questions about the creed and dogma of Hindu religion. The author has done exhaustive research, you can find a lot of references to Veda, Vedanta, Puran, Upnishadas and other scholarly work while reading the book. The book is divided into three parts viz Religious, Social and Political riddles.

In the first religious part, Ambedkar has pointed out total 15 riddles like why one is Hindu, the origin of Vedas, the infallibility of Vedas, analysis of Vedas neither man-made nor by God, why Gods fight each other, etc.

In the second social part, there are 5 riddles, the origin of four varnas, the four Aashram, Manu's explanation about the mixed castes, the shift from paternity to maternity in Hindu religion and blunder of Kali Varjya.

In the third political part, there are 4 riddles, the theory of Manvantara, the importance of Bhramha, unending Kali Yuga and lastly the riddle of Kali Yuga.

The overall tone of the author is scientific, critical and logical. It is an informative read for those who want to have a deeper knowledge and analysis of Hindu literature like Vishu Puran, Kali Puran, Vedas and other ancient texts. For me, few parts were hard to understand and assimilate all the information as there are a lot of Sanskrit terminologies used in this book and the debate is vast in nature, cannot be concluded in a single book!

CAUTION:*The author has focused on most of immoral, inhuman practices that were prevalent in ancient India in the name of religion. For example, he has summarised about Kali Puran and methods of sacrificing a human to worship the goddess, Kali. The description of such practices is morbid, ghastly and make you feel sick.*

? ?a??; TM says

Want to know more about Hinduism read this with open mind with out any preconception.

If you can not digest something against your religious beliefs don't give a try to read.

Rahul Bhalerao says

One cannot imagine the guts of Ambedkar to have raised such bold and fundamental questions about the concept and tradition of Hinduism in the times dominated solely by orthodox Caste Hindu communities. There are hardly any answers presented so far in the last entire century that could make justice to the objections raised by Ambedkar.

Aravindh Kumar says

It's unfair to give this book a rating, as it was originally an unfinished manuscript. The book is full of typos and the editing is shabby. But the genius of Ambedkar shines through regardless and makes this a thoroughly researched critique of Hinduism.

Nandakishore Varma says

When criticising the caste system, Ambedkar scores brilliantly: while analysing myth, however, he misses the bus completely. So, three stars overall.

Detailed review shall follow.

