



Indra's Net: Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity

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Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity, it is fashionable among intellectuals to assert that dharma traditions lacked any semblance of unity before the British period and that the contours of contemporary Hinduism were bequeathed to us by our colonial masters. Such arguments routinely target Swami Vivekananda, a key interlocutor who shattered many deeply rooted prejudices against Indian civilization. They accuse him of having camouflaged various alleged contradictions within traditional Hinduism and charge him with having appropriated the principles of Western religion to manufacture a coherent and unified worldview and set of practices known today as Hinduism. Indra's Net: Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity provides a foundation for theories that slander contemporary Hinduism as illegitimate, ascribing sinister motives to its existence and characterizing its fabric as oppressive. Rajiv Malhotra offers a detailed, systematic rejoinder to such views and articulates the multidimensional, holographic understanding of reality that grounds Hindu dharma. He also argues that Vivekananda's creative interpretations of Hindu dharma informed and influenced many Western intellectual movements of the post-modern era. Indeed, as he cites with many insightful examples, appropriations from Hinduism have provided a foundation for cutting-edge discoveries in several fields, including cognitive science and neuroscience.

Indra's Net: Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity Details

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From Reader Review Indra's Net: Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity for online ebook

Himanshu Chauhan says

Far from the common practitioner of dharmic traditions, among the western and westernized academia, for about more than half a century, a quasi literate bid to create an impression that the evolution of hinduism has stopped and the concurrent developments since Vivekananda are mere bastardization of christian values, has been leveraged as an impenetrable scholarship. This book tears into this flimsy facade made out bundles of eco chamber(isk) academic excellence.

The book has five main point to introduce:

1. How western civilization has appropriated several assets of eastern civilization (from Hinduism and Buddhism) which they now they call their own.
2. The core of Dharmic/Buddhist philosophy via Indra's net
3. That service and individual experience in India as promulgated by Vivekananda are not because of a short trip to Chicago but part of a long enduring tradition of revival and innovation which though has borrowings from the west but nevertheless is overwhelmingly part of the series of dharma tradition born out of a vedantic base.
4. There are difference in the darshana (sanskrit non translatable; close to philosophy) of Shanakracharya and Vivekananda, yet non severs itself from the larger tree of vedic thought or dispels the other.
5. A long going western attempt to present India as a synthetically united civilization is based out of utter misrepresentations non-sense that have become norm over time.

My thoughts after reading the book was that it is a great tragedy that a narrative which is based out of unsound academic research and subject matter understanding ran as a mainstream understanding of Indic thought unchallenged for about a century. @RajivMessage has done us common folks great service by introducing this perversion of Dharmic thought to the general public in a concise and rather well argued book. It is a tough read for someone not acclimatized to the genre and it is ideal that one reads it more than once as once in a while the details become too thick.

Subramanyam K.V. says

This is a long review , it is divided into sections. You may want to pick the sections you want to read.

A Little Background

Sanatana Dharma is rooted in diversity; you can be a staunch Sri Vaishnavaita and be a Hindu, you can be a Shaivaita and be Hindu, you can follow the Advaita Vedanta of Sri AdiShankara and be a Hindu, you can be a follower of Dvaita Vedanta and be Hindu, you can follow a Guru who follows Sastra Pramana and be a Hindu. Moksha, the ultimate Aim of Sanatana Dharma, can be obtained in any of these ways.

Since this religion is different from the religions that follow one God, one book, one Prophet and only one way to salvation, there are many people in the west who do not want to call this a religion. There are many people who want to see this religion disappear from the globe. They want this culture to get fossilized and forgotten. Now some of them have started accusing Swami Vivekananda of manufacturing Hinduism. What

makes the matter worse is the fact that some are using teachings of Adi Shankara, concocting and misinterpreting them to come up with a preposterous claim that Swami Vivekananda came up with a new religion. This book is a rebuttal to all the people who question the inherent Philosophical Unity of Hinduism.

About the Book

The book starts with the Purva Paksha where Rajiv Malhotra explains the myths that need to be challenged. Some myths that are widely in circulation are

- (i) Hinduism is manufactured
- (ii) Hinduism does not have any coherence
- (iii) Hinduism is founded on oppression
- (iv) Seva (service to others) is a concept that Hindus adopted from the west
- (v) Yoga was not treated as a path to salvation by Hindus and Hindus copied it from western science etc ..

Then he brings to light the stands taken by various Western Indologists. He speaks about the arguments of Paul Hacker, Agha Khan, Ursula King, Rambachan, Richard King, Brian Pennington, Peter Van der Veer, Sheldon Pollock and others. He speaks about the hidden agenda and the larger picture that comes from it.

The way the works of these people support each other and the way all of them overlook a lot of historical facts are brought to light in a systematic way. The author dwells on “Anubhava” Vs “Sruti Pramana” in these sections. We get to see wonderful arguments in the offing when we read about Rambachan, the position he takes on Swami Vivekananda and Rajiv’s argument that expose the fallacies in Rambachan’s line.

The second part of the book deals (Uttara Paksha) brings to light Rajiv ji’s full-fledged rebuttal to the Western Indologists. Rajiv ji brings to light the pre-colonial unities of Hinduism like Vijnanabhikshu. He attacks the lies that the Indologists present and propagate regarding Seva, altruism and Yoga, Adi Shankara’s position on Yoga. He even gives references where the West incorporated ideals from Hinduism (particularly regarding Seva etc.), and it was not the other way round.

The author presents numerous examples of the way Shankara did respect yoga and way both can complement each other and help a sadhaka in the path of Liberation. The way Shankara’s work is presented deserves a special mention it is very well researched and well presented.

The author then moves on to give a framework in which Hindu thought can dwell and empower itself. The open architecture, the common tool box, the poison pills, porcupine defense and Astika -Nastika distinction are proposed by the author as a way forward for all Hindus.

What did I like ?

1. The extensive research and the way the problem and solutions have been described.
2. The Purva Paksha, most of us don’t read about the way in which Hinduism is being targeted by various groups, we fall into the trap of believing every argument that comes our way, more so, if it comes from a westerner. Rajiv Ji shows us the double-sidedness of some of these Western intellectuals.
3. The open architecture, Poison Pills, and Porcupine defense. Rajiv Ji does not leave it with questions, he gives a lot of answers, and that is important. I loved the way he gave answers and strategies to save our religion from digestion.

4. The concept of Indra's Net itself where everything is in itself the whole and also the part of it. That's a fantastic concept that I did not know before.

What did I not like ?

1. I did not read the book "Being Different" till now. In fact, this is the first book of Rajiv Ji that I read. Many a time he refers to what was said in Being Different, this made reading a little tough for me.

2. This is purely my personal problem; I was not able to read Purva Paksha. All those arguments against Swami Vivekananda were things I could not digest. As I was reading those pages, I was praying for them to be over and was wanting Uttara Paksha to start. Probably the Hindu in me was finding all these things unpalatable.

Conclusion

A must read for all Hindus. Please read the book. We ought to know the games of these Western Indologists and the ways and means in which our Dharma is being attacked. Digestion is one of the biggest threats to our religion today. The Open Architecture, the poison pills and porcupine defense are indeed innovative methodologies that Rajiv ji proposes.

You might agree with Rajiv Ji or you might disagree, however, the threat we Hindus are facing from these academicians of the west is real. We ought to wake up and think of ways and means to counter it. This book serves as a good starting point.

Please do read the book, you would have done yourself a great favor by reading this .

Ishaan says

This book is a very specific rebuttal of selected biases against the Hindu culture that are misrepresented by some western academicians. It is worth a read if you want to know what's wrong (sometimes deliberately) in the academic circles.

Susheil Kumar says

a book which all Indians or South East Asians should read. An eye opener on the subject.

The Style Page says

In the first part of Indra's Net, Rajiv Malhotra traces the lineage of scholars who posit a "neo-Hinduism" invented by Swami Vivekananda. The most recent of this lineage is Anantanand Rambachan of St. Olaf College, who claims that Swami Vivekananda's reliance on direct experience is incompatible with Shankara's reliance on *sruti*.

Malhotra then proceeds to show that Rambachan's concept of Hinduism is too narrow: namely, that

Shankara did not dismiss direct experience out of hand and that Sankara's Advaita Vedanta is but one system of knowing within Hinduism. Malhotra discusses how Hinduism has evolved over time and places Swami Vivekananda squarely in the Hindu tradition.

In his lengthy article Untangling The False Knots In Rajiv Malhotra's Indra's Net, Anantanand Rambachan contends that Rajiv Malhotra distorts and misrepresents his work and responds to Malhotra's principal allegations.

Malhotra then discusses "digestion" of Hinduism. By digestion, he means the process by which people absorb the parts of Hinduism that they like and excrete (my word, not his) the parts they don't like. A good example is the de-contextualization of yoga from Hinduism, whereas the rest of Hinduism is trashed.

He introduces the concept of "poison pills" to prevent the "digestion" of Hinduism into other frameworks. These poison pills include characteristics of Hinduism (karma, re-incarnation, embodied knowing, integral unity) that cannot be reconciled with the traditional tenets of Abrahamic religion and force the spiritual seeker to make a choice among religions.

Indra's Net is more accessible than Malhotra's book Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism; however, Being Different and Indra's Net re-enforce one another. I would have to read both books several times to fully understand the concepts that Rajiv Malhotra introduces. My 3-star rating is less about the merits of the book and more about the limits of my understanding.

Jitendra Thacker says

Must read for all Indians.

Sid says

A very good uttar paksha to Charuvakis.

Ashish Jaituni says

I didn't like the book! The author fails to respond to any of the philosophical problems raised by western philosophers regarding Hinduism though he is able to clearly define the problems posed by them. I have read better books!

Ross Cohen says

Having already read Malhotra's "Being Different," I was looking forward to "Indra's Net."

I was disappointed, however, in Malhotra's overall tone and the false promise of its title.

"Indra's Net" is Malhotra's rebuttal to those who believe there is no unified Hinduism. He argues, forcefully and convincingly, that Hinduism is more than a cobbled-together assortment of rituals and texts – that it's a complete and evolving religion.

Yet whereas Malhotra in "Being Different" was willing to take a stand and field criticism, he comes off as a man looking for a fight in "Indra's Net." His principal opponents are "the academics" – a phrase into which he injects as much spleen and derision as possible. I found this petty and somewhat hypocritical; a man who uses words and phrases like "reify" and "gaze through the Western lens" and "subaltern narratives" ought to ask himself who sounds more academic.

This tone issue would not have been so bothersome had it not been for Malhotra's unifying image: Indra's Net.

In all my readings of religions and philosophies, from Nietzsche to Narayan, from Stoics to Shunryu Suzuki, I've found no more beautiful image for existence and interdependence as Indra's Net, a net extending in infinite directions covered in jewels that reflect the net and each other. How unfortunate, then, that an image that contains all, reflects all, and causes all to shine has been appropriated by an author as antagonistic and exclusionary as Malhotra.

K. Jaya Kumar says

First came across the Avatamsaka Sutra and its transmission from Hinduism into Buddhism. Author with incredible insight presents the shallow poverty-stricken nature or perhaps the presence of an agenda driven tint in the western lens when the lens keeps parroting that dharma traditions lack unity! And then moves to demolish that lens completely!!

Mayank Pandya says

I have read two books by Rajiv Malhotra – 'Breaking India' and 'Being Different' and Indra's Net is third book by same author. This book is serious work. Indra's Net is for those who are genuinely interested in knowing the correct history and interpretations of Hindu civilization and are willing and open minded to imbibe those thoughts in their ordinary lives as their age old customs, live those thoughts and pass on to next generation in their pristine originality. As with every work of his, Rajiv picks his subjects after deep insight into the issues and articulates them with great clarity. The subject matter of this book is to demonstrate the continuity of thoughts across a spectrum of Dharmic traditions. It demonstrates that there was no discontinuity in our philosophical traditions as is common perception. Although each work of Rajiv is independent as it deals with one specific issue, in my opinion if one has read Being Different, the pleasure of reading Indra's Net increases many folds.

Surender Negi says

Indra's Net is the most researched and valuable book of my collection on Hinduism.

Indra's net is written by Mr. Rajiv Malhotra Ji (Philanthropist, Scholar of Hinduism, Social Activist and

Public speaker). This book is recommended by me, everyone who has interested to know deep culture of Adavita Vedanta and Swami Vivekananda.

This book share many deep idea of Hinduism and reveal an conspiracy about academic misrepresentation of Swami Vivekananda character or work. This book, closely inquire the deep threat which is behind mind making against contemporary Hinduism. This book will open gate for new young mind who want to know more authentic reality of Hinduism and its deep and vibrant relation with nature.

I would like to brief book in short.

About Book

Indra's Net Started with an idea which is mentioned in Atharvaveda's about reality of Cosmos. Indra's Net is a philosophy which says "Every Living and Non Living things in cosmos is connected with each other in a deep web that each living thing represent cosmos or cosmos in macro level represent micro universe".

This book initially revolved around a group of people or lineage of institute which propagates that modern Hinduism has no resemblance with ancient Hinduism. Modern Hinduism has based on Swami Vivekananda idea's which borrow from Christianity. This book challenges this academic view and gives factual answer based on evidence that this assumption is nothing but only myth. This book also argue that how Indian unity without any stick boundary can be trace through scripture like Adavita Vedanta, school of Samkhya, school of dualism and Yoga sutra of Patanjali.

This book breaks 8 famous myth of Hinduism which has been propagated by western academia from 1960's to till date.

I will describe all eight myths in short.

- India's Optimum state is balkanization
- Colonial Indology's biases were turned into Hinduism
- Hinduism is manufactured and didn't grow organically
- Yogic experience is not valid path of enlighten and tries to copy western science
- Western social ethics are incorporated as seva and karma yoga
- Hinduism has no prior self-definition , unity and coherence
- Hinduism is founded on oppression and sustained by it
- Hinduism presumes sameness in all religions.

This is school of neo Hinduism is started by Paul hacker and inherited by many another Indologist like Ushar King's and Rambachan. Now this information which has been cultivated by Western academia from last four decade is now reached to deep core of every Hindu's mind.

This formation of myths making actually was attack on Swami Vivekananda efforts for reuniting the Hindus against social evil which was based on Adavita Vedanta.

These so called secular and liberals group of academia wants to inject an inferiority complex in every Hindu mind that they are second class humans which has given enlightened through Jesus theological church.

Most important point which I would like to highlight that, these group of academicians has malign goal to establish the theories which show that modern Hinduism is an experimental result of colonization and it has nothing to do with ancient Hinduism (which was according to them is oppressed and racial).

At last this book explains, how Hinduism is currently getting digested by many giant academia and losing its originality after many flawed theories against ancient ideology.

I would like to mention how we can help to not getting digested and use some poison pills which can protect authenticity.

Hinduism can help when it maintains some core and fundamental theory without being intact.

1) Hinduism should take strong stand that all peoples in Hinduism are divine. (The Hindu Good News) Hence, There is no need to get salvation through Jesus because we are not born sinners while we are born divine who can experience divinity by any means of worshiped.

2) Hinduism should take strong stand on theory of Re-Incarnation and Karma because this theory only explains the sudden death of children who haven't done any sin. This rebirth theory will break this urgency of getting radical in one birth. This theory will give space to people, for revived their life.

3) Hinduism should take strong position in living gurus. We all know that there are many enlightened Gurus in our history like Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishnan Paramhansa, Shri Arbindo, Swami Sajanand (ancient Guru) and Swami Yogananda, Ramkrishan math, Swami Prabhupada-ISKON, Swami Pramukhanand-Swaminarayan Organisation, Swami Chinmayanand, Satguru or I want to include Mr. Rajiv Malhotra in this list also for current living guru. Cause I am very much inspired by Him.

4) Hinduism should take strong position on Jivamukti (A state of liberation after many births and experiencing the divine). This position is totally different from concept of Heaven or Jannat or final judgement day. Because this position propagates karma and reincarnation or direct experience of divine without following way of any prophet.

Things I Like:

EVERYTHING

Things I dislike

Are you kidding? This book is must read book by every Indian and Hindu.
