

1: To Be or Not to Be | The Indian Express

*Why I Am Not a Hindu [Kancha Illaiah] on www.enganchecubano.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. In this manifesto for the downtrodden, the author examines the socio-economic and cultural differences between the Dalitbahujans (the majority).*

Electronically reprinted with permission. On the other hand, I have also read and disagreed with M. My acquaintance with these writings has inspired me to write this essay explaining why I am not a Hindu, though I was born in a Hindu family. The Meaning of "Hindu" The word "Hindu" is a much-abused word in the sense that it has been used to mean different things at different times. For example, some people even now, at least some times, use the word "Hindu" as a synonym for "Indian". In this sense of the term, I am certainly a "Hindu" because I do not deny being an Indian. However, I do not think that this a proper use of the term "Hindu". There are many Indians such as Muslims, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians as well as rationalists, humanists and atheists who do not call themselves "Hindu" and also do not like to be described as such. It is certainly not fair to convert them into Hinduism by giving an elastic definition of the term "Hindu". Besides, it is also not advisable to use the word "Hindu" in this sense from the point of view of clarity. The word "Hindu" may have been used in the beginning as a synonym for "Indian" [1] , but, at present, the word is used for people with certain definite religious beliefs. The word "Hindu" belongs to the category of words like "Muslim", "Christian", "Buddhist" and "Jain" and not to the category of words like "American", "British", "Australian", "Chinese" or "Japanese". There are, in fact, many Indians who are not Hindus, and on the other hand, there are many Hindus who are not Indians , for example, those who are citizens of Nepal, Sri Lanka and some other countries. In the religious sense, the word, "Hindu" is often used broadly to include Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs in addition to those who are described as "Hindu" in this most restricted sense of the term, that is, the adherents of Vedic or Brahmin religion. For example, the expression "Hindu" is used in the Hindu law not only for those who are Hindu by religion but also for persons who are Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs by religion. This, again, is too broad a definition of "Hindu". If we consistently use the word "Hindu" in this sense, we will have to say that Japan is a Hindu country! The above definition of "Hindu" is clearly inadequate from a philosophical point of view. Buddhism and Jainism, for instance, explicitly reject the doctrine of the infallibility of the Vedas and the system of varna-vyavastha, which are fundamental to Hinduism, that is, if the term "Hinduism" is used in its most restricted sense. Therefore, clubbing together Buddhists and Jains or even Sikhs with those who believe in the infallibility of the Vedas and subscribe to the varna-vyavastha is nothing but an invitation to confusion. Though I agree with Buddhism in its rejection of god, soul, infallibility of the Vedas and the varna-vyavastha, still I am not a Hindu even in this broad sense of the term "Hindu", because as a rationalist and humanist I reject all religions including Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. However, in this essay I am concerned with explaining why I am not a Hindu in the most appropriate sense of the term "Hindu", that is, the sense in which a person is a Hindu if his religion is Hinduism in the restricted sense of the term "Hinduism". In this restricted sense of "Hinduism", Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are excluded from its scope. I also maintain that this is, at present, probably the most popular sense of the term, and every body should, in the interest of clarity, confine its use, as far as possible, to this sense only, at least in philosophical discourse. Radhakrishnan, for example, has used the term "Hindu" and "Hinduism" in this restricted sense when he says in his *The Hindu View of Life* that, "The chief sacred scriptures of Hindus, the Vedas register the intuitions of the perfected souls. I call myself a sanatani Hindu, because, I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in avatars and rebirth. I believe in the Varnashram dharma in a sense in my opinion strictly Vedic, but not in its present popular and crude sense. I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular. I do not disbelieve in idol-worship. In my opinion, I the belief in the authenticity of the Vedas and II the belief in the varnashram dharma are more basic to Hinduism than the belief in cow-protection and idol-worship. In any case, I am in a position to establish the fact of my not being a Hindu by asserting the contradictory of each of the above statements made by Gandhi: In other words, I assert that I am not a Hindu, because, I do not believe

in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in avatars and rebirth. I do not believe in the varnashram dharma or varna-vyavastha either in the sense in which it is explained in Hindu dharma shastras like Manusmriti or in the so-called Vedic sense. I do not believe in the Hindu taboo of not eating beef. I disbelieve in idol-worship. However, while explaining why I am not a Hindu, I will concentrate mainly on I the belief in the authenticity of the Vedas, and II the varnashram dharma, which I consider more fundamental to Hinduism. Besides, in the concluding section of the essay, I will briefly discuss moksha, which is regarded as the highest end of life in Hinduism, and some other Hindu doctrines like karmavada and avatarvada. The infallibility of the Vedas First of all, let me explain what do I mean by saying that "I do not believe in the Vedas", and why I do not do so. The schools of ancient Indian thought are generally classified by orthodox Hindu thinkers into two broad categories, namely, orthodox astika and heterodox nastika. The six main Hindu systems of thought -- Mimamsa, Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheshika -- are regarded as orthodox astika, not because they believe in the existence of god, but because they accept the authority of the Vedas. According to Nyaya system, there are four distinct and separate sources of knowledge, namely, i perception ii inference iii comparison, and iv testimony or shabda. Shabda, which is defined in the Nyaya system as "valid verbal testimony" is further classified into i the scriptural vaidika, and ii the secular laukika. Vaidika or scriptural testimony is believed to be the word of god, and therefore, it is regarded as perfect and infallible. However, in its attempt to justify the authority of the Vedas, Mimamsa elaborately discusses different sources of valid knowledge. Naturally enough, among the various "sources of valid knowledge", Mimamsa pays greatest attention to testimony or authority, which, too, is regarded by it as a valid source of knowledge. There are, according to Mimamsa, two kinds of authority -- personal paurusheya and impersonal apaurusheya. The authority of the Vedas is regarded by Mimamsa as impersonal. But Mimamsa, which does not believe in the existence of god, declares that the Vedas like the world, are eternal. They are not the work of any person, human or divine. The infallibility of the authority of the Vedas, according to Mimamsa, rests on the "fact" that they are not vitiated by any defect to which the work of imperfect persons is liable. Well-known orthodox Hindu theologians like Shankar and Ramanuja believed in the authority of the Vedas. Manusmriti, too, upholds the infallibility of the Vedas. As pointed out by S. Dasgupta, "The validity and authority of the Vedas were acknowledged by all Hindu writers and they had wordy battles over it with the Buddhists who denied it. When I say, "I do not believe in the Vedas", what I mean is that I do not regard the testimony of the Vedas as a valid source of knowledge. In other words when I say, "I do not believe in the Vedas", I do not mean that each and every proposition contained in the Vedas is false. It is quite possible that one may find a few true statements in the Vedas after great amount of patient research. But I assert that the truth or the falsity of a proposition is logically independent of its being contained or not contained in the Vedas. A proposition is true if there is a correspondence between the belief expressed by it and the facts. Otherwise, it is false. So, a proposition contained in the Vedas might be true, that is, if there is a correspondence between the belief expressed by it and the facts, but it is, I insist, not true because it is contained in the Vedas. I categorically reject as invalid every argument of the form: Therefore, the proposition P is true". Besides, I also assert that some propositions contained in the Vedas are certainly false. For example, according to Purusha-Sukta of Rig Veda, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras originated respectively from the mouth, hands, thighs and feet of the purusha or the creator. I categorically reject this statement as false. I maintain that varna-vyavastha is a man-made social institution and it has nothing to do with the alleged creator of this world. I also reject both the reasons put forward in support of the infallibility of the Vedas. I neither regard them to be "the words of god" nor I consider them to be eternal and impersonal. I believe that Vedas were conceived, spoken and written by human beings. The question of their being "words of god" simply does not arise, because there are no good reasons for believing in the existence of god. The existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent god is totally inconsistent with the presence of suffering and evil in this world. It is impossible for god to exist. And there are no good reasons for believing that Sanskrit language came into existence even before human beings appeared on this earth! As far as Gandhi is concerned, though he liked to describe himself as a sanatani Hindu, he was, in fact, not a completely orthodox Hindu. For example, in the article quoted earlier in this essay Gandhi goes on to add, "I do not believe in the exclusive

divinity of the Vedas. My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired, I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned in may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense. However, since he refused to say in so many words that he did not believe in the authority of the Vedas, Gandhi may be described, in my opinion, as a liberal Hindu with an eclectic approach towards religion. On the other hand, my position is radically different from that of Gandhi, because I do not consider either the Vedas or the Bible, the Koran and Zend-Avesta or any other book to be divinely inspired. Varna-vyavastha Before discussing varna-vyavastha or varnashram dharma, let me clarify in the very beginning that I am not interested in giving my own interpretation of what varna-vyavastha is or ought to be in its ideal form. I am interested, firstly, in giving an objective exposition of varna-vyavastha as contained in recognized Hindu scriptures like Vedas and dharmashastras like Manusmriti; and secondly, in mentioning my reasons for rejecting varna-vyavastha. In doing so I will concentrate on the chaturvarnya four-fold division of society aspect of varna-vyavastha. We have already noted that the first reference to varna class based on birth or caste is to be found in the Purusha-Sukta of the Rig Veda. The reference to the four ashrams or stages of life, namely, Brahmcharya, Garhastya, Vanprashta and Sanyas is to be found in the Upanishads. These are, in their turn, related to the four purusarthas or ends of life, namely, dharma duty , artha wealth , kama satisfaction of sensual desires and moksha liberation. Out of these, the Upanishads attach maximum value to sanyas ashram and moksha purusartha, which is regarded as the highest end of life. In Ramayana, for example, Ram kills Shambuka simply because he was performing tapasya ascetic exercises which he was not supposed to do as he was a Shudra by birth. When Eklavya, treating Drona as his notional guru, learns archery on his own, Drona makes him cut his right thumb as gurudakshina gift for the teacher so that he may not become a better archer than his favorite Kshatriya student Arjuna! The much-glorified Bhagvat-Gita, too, favors varna-vyavastha. In fact, Krishna goes to the extent of claiming that the four varnas were created by him only. Had he been a Brahmin or a Vaishya or a Shudra by birth, he would have been spared the trouble of fighting a destructive war. According to him, Shudras are not entitled to philosophical knowledge. Let us turn to it in order to have a close look at the varna-vyavastha. Manusmriti In the very first chapter of Manusmriti, it is clearly stated that Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras were created by Brahma creator of this world from his mouth, hands, thighs and feet respectively. The Brahmins were created for teaching, studying, performing yajnas ceremonial sacrifices , getting yajnas performed, giving and accepting dan gifts. The Shudras, of course, are denied the rights to study, getting yajnas performed by Brahmins or even giving gifts to them. Manusmriti further states that having originated from the mouth of Brahma, being elder and being the repository of the Vedas; Brahmins are the masters of the entire universe. Therefore, no one can be superior to Brahmins. No one is to argue critically about them because religion has originated from them.

â€” Indian Review of Books 'Why I Am Not A Hindu is a modern classic.' â€” Aaka Patel editor, Mid, Day 'In Kancha Ilaiah' conceptuas I Why I Am No at Hindu A.

A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy by Kancha Ilaiah Let me make it clear, however, that I am not writing this book to convince suspicious brahminical minds; I am writing this book for those who have open minds. My request to brahmin, baniya and neo-kshatiya intellectuals is this: For about three thousand years you people learnt only how to teach and what to teach others â€” the Dalitbahujans. Now in your own interest and in the interest of this great country you must learn to listen and to read what we have to say. For a Dalitbahujan body, labour is as habitual as eating is to the stomach. In fact, every Dalitbahujan body produces more than it consumes. As a result, Dalitbahujan life recreates itself in labour more than it recreates itself through eating and drinking. While labouring, a Dalitbahujan mind does not disengage from thinking but goes on producing ideas that make labour a pleasure. If labour is not pleasure, if Dalitbahujan minds do not derive pleasure out of that labouring process, given the low levels of consumption on which they subsist, Dalitbahujan bodies would have died much earlier than they do. Even if Dalitbahujans were to consider work as a monotonous, tortuous course of life, given the amount of labour that they expend during their lifetimes, death would have invited them much earlier than it does today. In the process of labour Dalitbahujans engage in a constant intercourse with the land. Their thorough understanding of land and its productivity, its colour and combination, is solely responsible for increase in productivity. They also tried to understand the relationship between the seed and human biological systems. Before cross-breeding was studied in modern laboratories, the Dalitbahujans had cross-bred seed systems. Dalitbahujan women selected and preserved seeds for planting. They maintained huge stores of plant genes. They grafted plants and worked out whole systems of hybridization. All this knowledge was a product of their labour and its creative intercourse with land and nature. Dalitbahujan labour has creatively interacted with a whole range of non-agrarian plant systems. Dalitbahujans who were engaged in sheep-, goat- and cattle-breeding made tireless investigations of plants and their medicinal values. These investigations were done with an exemplary combination of physical labour and mental acumen. Dalitbahujan knowledge never separated physical labour from mental labour. For Dalitbahujans, physical and mental labour was an integrated whole. If we want to understand the process by which the contradiction between mental and physical labour is resolved as Mao did in the Chinese context, we must return to studying carefully the way the Dalitbahujan societies of India combined mental and physical labour, without a so-called wise man intervening, in the process of labouring to integrate, break open, reintegrate and finally discover new systems. One who lifts dead cattle also knows the science of skinning it. They themselves know how to process the skin and make chappals, shoes or ropes. All these tasks involve both mental and physical labour. This work is not like reading the Vedas or teaching in a school. Reading the Vedas or teaching in a school does not require much investment of physical labour or creative thought. Certain types of mental labour may not involve physical labour, but all physical labour involves mental labour. Dalitbahujan society has shown exemplary skill in combining both. Take, for example, the Goudas who climb the toddy trees and combine in themselves the talent of mind and the training of body. While climbing the tree a Gouda has to exercise his muscle power. He has also to invent ways of climbing tall trees which do not have branches. While climbing, if he does not focus his mind on every step the result is death. A Brahmin dance teacher, while dancing certainly combines both physical and mental labour but does not encounter a risk in every step. Despite this, why is it that brahminical dance has acquired so much value? Why is it that brahminical dance is given so much space in literature? Why not celebrate the beauty and skill of a Gouda, which over and above being an art, science and an exercise has productive value. As I have already discussed, the tapping of a toddy tree layer by layer, involves enormous knowledge and engaged application besides physical and mental skill. Tapping the gela in a way that makes the toddy flow, but does not hurt the tree, cannot be done by everybody. It needs training and cultivation of mind. Training in this specialization is much more dangerous and difficult than training in reading the Vedas.

All the same a Hindu is told to respect and value the training to read Veda mantras, but not the Goudaa skills of producing something which has market-value and consumption-value. Hindu Brahminism defied all economic theories, including feminist economic theory, that all market-oriented societies valued labour which produced goods and commodities for market consumption. In the brahminical economy Dalitbahujan labour male or female even if it is produced for market consumption has no value. On the contrary, the so-called mental labour of the Brahmins and the Banlyas reciting mantras and extracting profit by sitting at the shop desk has been given enormous socioeconomic value. Herein lies the Hindu delegitimization of productive creativity. The brahminical economy even devalued production for the market and privileged its spiritual-mental labour over all other labour processes. Brahminical scholarship legitimized leisure, mantra, puja, tapasya and soothsaying, though these are not knowledge systems in themselves. Scientific knowledge systems, on the contrary, are available among the Dalitbahujan castes. It requires mental skill to use the fingers, while physically turning the wheel, skill to convert that clay into pots, pitchers and jars—small or big—of all kinds. Firing is an equally skill-intensive process. The oven has to be heated to an exact temperature and the pots baked just long enough for them to become durable and yet retain their attractive colour. This whole scheme is a specialized knowledge in itself. Thus, Kamsalies goldsmiths have their own scientific knowledge, Kammaris blacksmiths theirs, and Shalaas weavers theirs. But all these arts and sciences, all these knowledge systems have been delegitimized. Instead of being given social priority and status, mantric mysticism has been given priority. These knowledge systems will get socioeconomic value only when their legitimacy is established. Hinduism constructed its own account of Dalitbahujan knowledge systems. As discussed earlier, while the Dalitbahujans live labour as life, the Hindus inverted this principle and privileged leisure over labour. The ancient theoretical formation of the thesis leisure as life was propounded by Vatsyayana in the Kamasutra, where he constructs a nagarika citizen as one who embodies this notion. This very theory was reinstated at different stages of history whenever brahminical Hinduism was in crisis, or whenever Dalitbahujan organic forces rebelled against Hindu theory and practice. In other words, it aimed at dalitizing Indian society. The whole world has overcome the theories of privileging leisure over labour. Whether it is countries like Japan and China or in the West itself, labour has acquired more market value and social status than leisure. Mandalization of the Indian state and society would have integrated us into these universal systems. But Hindu Brahminism reacted to this historical transformation and started the counter-revolutionary Hindutva movement by reemphasizing leisure, mantra and moksha as basic principles which will undermine the onward march of Indian society. But a quicker development of Indian society lies in privileging labour over leisure. Only Dalitization of the whole society can achieve this goal! This of course will require that they [the upper castes] unlearn the many things. Yet another major area of Dalitization will be to push the Brahmin-Baniyas into productive work, whether it is rural or urban. Both men and women of the so-called upper castes will resist this with all the strength at their command. This is because among them Hinduism has destroyed all positive elements that normally exist in a human being. During the post-colonial period their energies were diverted to manipulate education, employment, production and development subtly. Their minds are poisoned with the notion that productive work is mean and that productive castes are inferior. No ruling class in the world is as dehumanized as the Indian brahminical castes. They can be rehumanized only by pushing them into productive work and by completely diverting their attention from the temple, the office, power-seeking, and so on.

3: Why I Am Not a Hindu [Kancha Ilaiah] Books Online

I came across this book while I was reading why i am a hindu by shashi tharoor. The title of the book made me think that this book was about atheism from an Indian's perspective (something I have been longing to read for a long time now).

February 17, Defenders of militant Islam draw upon religious vocabularies to justify their politics, without once mentioning God or faith. It is precisely the distinction between politics in the name of religion, and faith, that Shashi Tharoor in this rather charming book on Hinduism and Hindutva seeks to emphasise. Many interpretations In the first part of the work, Tharoor takes us for a leisurely walk through the thickets of Hinduism. He begins with the Vedas, guides us through myths and popular practices, elaborates the thoughts of prominent expounders, and tells us about his own devotion. In the second part, he chronicles the making of Hindutva. He concludes that Hindutva as politics simply does not cohere to the precepts of Hinduism. The problem, as Tharoor himself accepts, is that Hinduism is composed of many and often incompatible strands. It is therefore difficult to find an authentic and authoritative tradition that can hold up a mirror to Hindutva. What is regarded as a dominant tradition, the Vedanta "highly metaphysical, Brahmanical and Sanskritised" was constructed by colonialists. Even as Orientalists, colonial administrators and intellectuals in Western universities set about translating, codifying and reducing a complex philosophic system to manageable proportions, we witnessed the creation of a homogenised Hinduism. This was upheld by nationalists as the anchor of an Indian identity. Such is the power of intellectual colonialism! In the process, a highly textualised Hinduism was abstracted from the social context as well as from contestations. Mohanty suggests that the wisdom of the Vedas was constantly challenged both by supporters and opponents of the philosophy. The main division was between philosophical schools that believed in the Vedas, and those that did not: Within the Vedic tradition we discern considerable self-criticism. For instance, Samkhya philosophy, that belonged originally to the Vedic tradition, developed a strong strain of atheism and naturalism. This is paid scant attention. Also excluded from metaphysical conceptualisations of Hinduism is the heretical materialist school of Carvaka philosophy that nurtures a robust anti-Vedic materialism. Other sceptics refused to accept the claim that the Vedas code absolute knowledge. The construction of a hegemonic tradition has spectacularly marginalised critical philosophies within and outside Hinduism. It simply assimilated Buddhism into Hinduism. The exclusion of critical and rational philosophies from Hinduism gives us cause for thought. If a rational, materialistic, empiricist and sceptical philosophical school such as Carvaka had been given prominence in the forging of a Hindu tradition, perhaps India would have escaped being slotted into the spiritual versus materialist dichotomy. India with all its material inequities, communalism and casteism has been stereotyped as exotic and other-worldly. This has not helped us forge an equitable future. Till today our society fails to accept the enormity of rampant inequities, fascinated as we are with the metaphysical spirit. He resolves the dilemma by suggesting that oppression is not sanctioned by sacred texts, and that educated Indians know better than to practise caste discrimination. Yet today, our tolerant and inclusive Hindu silently watches the public humiliation of vulnerable sections of our own people. The privileging of a highly metaphysical tradition as the public philosophy of India has led us away from acknowledgement of social oppressions and power. Will it be able to critique Hindutva? Alternative politics I make this point because the work at hand makes a spirited intervention in the politics of contemporary India. Whether Hindutva can be deactivated by a return to the texts and practices of Hinduism is debatable. Consider that politics and religion are fundamentally incompatible. Politics seeks power, religion gives us thick conceptions of the good. Politics searches for control over society and the way it thinks, religion shows us the road to personal salvation. The Hindutva brigade is hardly interested in the complexities of the religion that Tharoor elaborates for us. It is focussed on mobilising the Hindu community for unlimited power. Scholars in other countries, shuddering under the impact of religious politics, have tried to appeal beyond politics to texts and syncretic practices. The strategy has simply not worked. We might have to counter and dare dominant formulations with alternative forms of politics. That is precisely what the leaders of the Indian National Congress did in the early 20th century. They introduced the language of minority rights in the Constitutional Draft and secularism after the

major Kanpur communal riot in , as a part of constitutional democracy. Shall we think of politics as a radical critique of an inequitable religion as well as religion as politics?

4: WHY I AM NOT A HINDU

Why I am Not a Hindu is a book every rationalist should have on his bookshelves. --The Modern Rationalist, Chennai, India. For the students of religion on the one hand and for agnostics and atheists on the other, this book is priceless, and for the ordinary reader it is thought provoking to say the least.

Jan 07, Jeff rated it it was ok Recommends it for: Note also that you have little hope of finding this book in a library. If you want great writing, be wary: Then doubt overwhelmed me. Was that fair if even the great Bertrand Russell had fallen short of my idiosyncratic expectations? I decided to play nice and rewrite my chapter-by-chapter commentary. He admits to membership among the former but emphatically denies being the latter, though to this point he has given no reason other than the statement about rejecting all religions. Nyaya says the Vedas are the word of god; Mimamsa aka Purva Mimamsa says the Vedas are eternal just as is the world. If Proposition P is contained within text A. And Text A is sacred. Then Proposition P is true. If there is no god, then there can be no words of god. For example he sets up a straw man by issuing three requirements for the definition of god that are not required by the average Hindu: In the Mimamsa view of the Vedas, they are deemed eternal but they are also accepted as having been written down by humans. Simply allow for the metaphysical definition of To Be and the statement can be seen to be undisprovable i. Maybe he would counter that once an idea ceases to be thought, it no longer exists. Others will continue to refer to the dead body by my name and feel hate, love, sadness, happiness toward it. The idea of Me will persist. The Vedic creation myth says that the Shudras were all created from the feet, the Vaishyas from the thighs, the Kshatriyas from the arms, and the Brahmins from the mouth of the purusha. He chose to look at the Vedas, Manusmriti, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and others for details on varna-vyavastha aka varnashram dharma in a literal, conservative manner. His critique will follow from thereâ€”mostly based on Manusmriti The Laws of Manu, hence the separate section unto itself later. Access to education is acceptable for the twice-born only i. Equality â€” The entire system enforces inequality as the basic assumption of humanity: Fraternity â€” The social barriers between the castes should not be breached for anything other than the prescribed reasons. Each group must stick with their own kind only. How wise a system is that for a country of more than 1 billion people? Siddhartha Gautama aka The Buddha rejected varna-vyavastha as being irrational, unfair, and outdated. All humans are created UNequal, so this system is as good as any â€” This is exactly M. This mistaken belief is equivalent to saying that the children of two people who were blinded by physical trauma will also be blind. This is not a knock against Dr R. Maybe negative nancies ruin the ideal for everyone. Dr R reasonably points out how this concept can be applied inconsistently and to the benefit of those in power or to the detriment of the powerless. Alas, all this proves is that the writers of those texts were incapable of portraying consistent perfection, which is no wonder because the writers were consistently imperfect. Conclusion In conclusion, the rational atheist has a lot of valid objections to the pitfalls, logical errors, and strange beliefs inherent to Hinduism. Hence this longerwindedthanusual commentary. This argument of mine obviously revolves around the same hairsplitting, though in this case i think the split hair of the verb To Be reveals a larger universe hidden inside than Dr R cares to imagine.

5: Neera Chandhoke reviews Why I Am A Hindu by Shashi Tharoor - The Hindu

Ever since www.enganche cubano.com Ilaiah's book "Why I Am Not A Hindu"(- Samya Calcutta) was published,he has become a celebrity for various Christian missionary, Islamist,Marxist and other hindu phobic groups.

Reviews Why I Am Not a Hindu Priya Casteism is an evil that has been prevalent in our country for ages though this has mostly likely come down in recent times due to increasing awareness and reforms. Instead the author is solely focused on spreading extreme hatred and malice towards anyone or anything that is "Hindu" by criticizing anything and ever Arun Hindu ideologies has never been humane or egalitarian the book is a thought provoking critique of this ideology and worldview. Ela Priyanka Thought provoking touching experiences beautifully scripted. Nikhil The following is indisputable: History is usually written by and for the people in power; this treatise is written from a point of view of people who are a majority, but not in power. The parts in which author describes his childhood experiences are true to the word and was a great read as I personally saw these instances in chi Vadassery Rakesh Gets into the sad reality of our ancient culture, and how horrendous it is to know that the Aryan hegemony of caste still rules over the vanquished Dravidians even after years. Let there a hundred Ambedkars to rescue and put an end to the longest oppression in the human history. What to say author, I wish I could give you a hug, at least. Vivek Gothwal A must read for every hindu. There are minor flaws in the book to which author has admitted in the afterword. An essential read, no doubt. This book is very relevant for its take on contemporary political and class conflict. Also gives a brief historical critique of the role Brahmanical Hindu religion and its philosophy has played in class oppression. Particularly, this book shows the arrogance and the inherent fallacies of the steamrolling of culture under the Nick Although I disagree with the major thesis of this book, I actually think its a great read, and that every Hindu should read it. The author gets a lot of things wrong about upper caste beliefs and practices, but it is a good insight into Sudra culture. Ilaiah denies that Sudra religion is a part of Hinduism, or that Sudra culture is a part of Hindu society, but that is almost self evidently false. As he observes, the Gods of the Sudras and Dalits Sainath Sunil One of the most definitive works on presenting the dalit bahunjan way of life. Raghu Pavan I have given one rating to this book because there is no zero rating option. This book portrays the personal views and opinions of author. The book in its content per se is so malicious and irrational. Those who are materialisti Raman Ramanathan Astounding work. Because of hurdles faced by him from his childhood he wrote this book. The effort author takes to point out these differences across practices - religious, professional, personal or spiritual is commendable! Manooha I was never this troubled reading a book,the book shows the side of the society which is still struggling to cut open from the claws of caste system, the book stated facts no doubt, cast system is an integral part of Hindu society, and in its eradication lies the prosperity.. Sanchita Some wonderful ideas. But, some arguments seem forced, especially the ones about the different Gods and Goddesses. Also, there are lots of grammatical errors and typos throughout the book. Maybe the publisher should be more careful. Memories of the Bangladesh War Sikhism: A Practical Handbook Fascism:

6: Why I Am Not a Hindu by Dr Ramendra

"Why I am Not a Hindu is a book every rationalist should have on his bookshelves." -- The Modern Rationalist, Chennai, India. "For the students of religion on the one hand and for agnostics and atheists on the other, this book is priceless, and for the ordinary reader it is thought provoking to say the least."

His erudition, coupled with his attractive public persona, makes him an easy and constant talking point. So when his latest book turns out to be called *Why I Am A Hindu*, the choice of title appears a little, well, un-Tharoorian. It is too much to expect any appreciation of subtlety or metaphor at a time when our leaders defiantly offer instances from Indian mythology as proof of concept in conferences of science. A brief history of Hinduism The current state of brazen religious politics led by a chest-thumping menagerie of leaders has been a cause of mortification for many Indians, Hindu and otherwise. When Hindutva is often mistaken for or sold as Hinduism, it is time to set the record straight. *Why I Am A Hindu*, running close to pages, is divided into two sections, the first of which offers a brief history of Hinduism. It is a clever and necessary disclaimer underscoring subjectivity – especially useful for times when religious sentiments are easily hurt. Tharoor acquaints us with the kind of Hinduism he was raised with, and, along with a sprinkling of anecdotes, gives an overview of the religion. The writer touches upon the ideas of many Indian gods and their multifarious Puranic stories, but also how they are united by the principle of the supreme Brahman. He stresses on the fact that Hinduism has no doctrinal absolutism, which is what makes it such a delightfully democratic faith. He impresses upon his reader that Hinduism is – and can only be – experienced and interpreted subjectively, using this lovely metaphor: Tharoor describes the six philosophical traditions of Hinduism shad darshanas and its textual tradition, starting from the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas, to the Agamas, Sutras and Shastras. Moving on from the esoteric to the ritualistic, he briefly explains the ideas of utsavas, yatras, pujas and even the relevance – or the lack of them – to vegetarianism and alcohol in the Hindu way of life. The chapter offers a comprehensive yet succinct view of Hinduism, and could serve as a great starting point for anyone interested in knowing more about this religion. It helps that he peppers it with easy and recent references from real life, which makes it immediately relatable for a lay reader. His Hinduism may be a Hinduism of habit rather than a Hinduism of learning, but it is a lived Hinduism for all that. He posits that this largely unjust social system of classification, an undue dependence on gurus, and excessive belief in signs and omens, are not just rooted in the Hindu religion but are also unfortunate corollaries of a poverty-ridden and directionless society. A classic example, says Tharoor, is the recent Dera Sacha Sauda movement, where one can see all the elements at work. For those unacquainted with the subject, the story of the evolution of Hinduism is particularly fascinating. The insecurities and failings of the faith are also chronicled here. He starts building his case with the idea of secularism, which becomes a moot point when viewed through the prism of Western political theory. That he does it ever so gently despite belonging to the Opposition is worth noticing. Even if one were to turn a blind eye to the clear lack of Muslim representation at least in the Lok Sabha in this government, one can hardly ignore visible and worrying trends such as lynching and cow vigilantism. By all means acknowledge the great accomplishments of ancient Indian science, but keep fact and fiction separate, he enjoins. We need to use the past as a springboard, not as a battlefield. Only then we can rise above it to create for ourselves a future worthy of our remarkable past. Not just tolerance, but acceptance, is the hallmark of Hinduism, he reminds the reader again and again. It is also a necessary reminder to all Hindus that plural is the way they were, and plural is what they should continue to be. We welcome your comments at letters scroll.

7: Shashi Tharoor's book Why I Am A Hindu to be made into a web series | The Indian Express

Why I Am Not a Hindu by Kancha Ilaiah Report this Page In this manifesto for the downtrodden, the author examines the socio-economic and cultural differences between the Dalitbahujans (the majority, the so-called low castes) and other Hindus in the contexts of childhood, family life, market relations, power relations, Gods and Goddesses, death.

It is the most brutal religious school that the history of religions has witnessed. The Dalitbahujan castes of India are the living evidence of its brutality. Ilaiah sounds like "Isaiah" refuses to lump Dalitbahujans in with Hindus: We heard about the Turukoollu Muslims , we heard about Kirastanapoollu Christians , we heard about Baapanoollu Brahmins [the priestly caste] and Koomatoollu Baniyas [the merchant class] spoken of as people who were different from us. Among these four categories, the most different were the [Brahmins and the Baniyas]. There are at least some aspects of life common to us and the [Muslims and Christians]. We all eat meat, we all touch each other. With the [Muslims], we shared several other cultural relations. We both celebrated the Peerila festival. Many [Muslims] came with us to the fields. The only people with whom we had no relations, whatsoever, were the [Brahmins and Baniyas]. But today we are suddenly being told that we have a common religious and cultural relationship with the [Brahmins and Baniyas]. This is not merely surprising; it is shocking. In the book, he argues that Hinduism, with its focus on upper caste gods, values, and culture, is a patriarchal and fascist religion and worldview. Furthermore, Hinduism should be considered the sole preserve of the upper castes - despite efforts by the Hindu right to draw the Dalitbahujan masses into the Hindu fold in a subservient position of course to increase their numbers and gain unity and strength in the fight against Muslims and Christians. Ilaiah identifies the Hindus as the ancestors of the Aryan tribes who were supposed to have invaded the subcontinent from the north a few thousand years ago, and the Dalitbahujans as the ancestors of the indigenous peoples of the subcontinent prior to the Aryan invasion. He even attempts to explain Hindu sexism by proffering literary evidence tending to show how "all women, including Brahmin women, were treated in the same demeaning way because they were seen to share the same genealogical origins They must have had sex with such women and must have treated them as the equivalent to Sudra slaves. During British occupation upper caste Indians were made into a comprador class: Parliamentary democracy in essence became brahminical democracy. Within no time the colonial bureaucracy was transformed into a brahminical bureaucracy. The same brahminical forces transformed themselves to suit an emerging global capitalism. They recast their Sanskritized life-style to anglicized life-styles, reshaping themselves, to live a semi-capitalist and at the same time brahminical life. Their anglicization did not undermine their casteized authoritarianism. All apex power centres in the country were brahminized and the power of the bureaucracy greatly extended. Because of their anglicization quite a few of them were integrated into the global techno-economic market. Such top brahminical elites were basically unconcerned with the development of the rural economy because it would result in changing the conditions of the Dalitbahujan masses and thus new social forces might emerge. Thus the anglicized brahminical class also became an anti-development social force. But in reality the Dalitbahujan masses remained distinctly different in three ways: The masses came from Dalitbahujan castes, and these castes never found an equal place in the leadership structures. Even in states like Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, where non-Brahmin movements were strong enough to influence the society, the pattern held good All over the country, the Brahmin population has become leaders in all spheres of socio-political life. They never remained part of the masses. In every industry the working masses are Dalitbahujans whose notions of life and work are non-Hinduistic [that is, they value labor and practical knowledge over leisure and religious knowledge], whereas, the entrepreneurs and managers of the factories - the directors, supervisors, engineers - are Brahmin, Baniya or Neo-Kshatriya [the warrior caste]. As a result, there is a total cultural divide between the managerial class and the working class. If some factory workers starve or if workers get injured or die because of an accident, the managers do not feel for them because there is no social relationship between them. They are separated not only by class but also by caste. As an interesting aside, Ilaiah argues that the "persistent theory that human beings are by nature, selfish or iniquitous or the scope for selfishness is removed only when inequality is reduced as was done in some of

the former socialist systems and its obverse:

8: A Rejection of Hinduism – “Why I am not a Hindu” by Kancha Ilaiah | Sacred Space

"Why I Am Not a Hindu" by Kancha Ilaiah "Hinduism has never been a humane philosophy. It is the most brutal religious school that the history of religions has witnessed.

Buy Now Nowhere in the book does he mention the social status of his family and the caste system of Hinduism. He writes as a politician. Having been born a Hindu, according to him, all the Hinduness he wears on his sleeve comes from the early poojas of his father, the stories told by his mother and grandmother and the received godhead. Is there no caste-centred restriction in that religious life? Is there no segregative systemic life in it? No, because he comes from the Nair caste. This is exactly what the RSS also does. Every RSS theoretician approves of the scriptures and saints and justifies the Varnadharma system that it engendered. Tharoor is silent about it. He approves every aspect of the religion, as any Namboodiri writer from Kerala would do, and there is no attempt to suggest reforms. The fundamental question, in wearing Hinduism on his sleeve, is: Ambedkar laid a radical foundation for the reform of Hinduism and Indian society: However, it is not my fault,; but I will not die a Hindu, for this is in my power. But Pandit Nehru, who had many stakes in Hinduism, said: Nehru was a Kashmiri Pandit, whose ancestors were said to have composed the Vedas. Here lies the danger for the secular foundations he lays. The muscle power of Shudras is already available in the ranks of the RSS, willing to attack anybody who is not Hindu or critiques Hindutva. Shashi Tharoor has given them a theoretical weapon. Brahminism would be very happy with him. It is clear that Tharoor has nothing to do with Nehru and Ambedkar, and certainly has something to with Savarkar, Hegdewar and Golwalkar, along with his venerable seers like Adi Shankara, Ramanuja and so on. We know that Narendra Modi is owning Gandhi more legitimately than Tharoor could do. If Tharoor were to join the RSS, he would not have been allowed to become the sarsanghchhalak like Mohan Bhagwat because they look at caste background quite carefully. But he could not be the priest of Tirupati or Guruvayur temple. In Hinduism, let alone Hindutva, the right to spiritual equality is restricted. But if Tharoor were born a Pulaya in Kerala, would he have written a book with the same title? I am also surprised at the praise for this book from a sensible social science scholar like Neera Chandhoke, in another review. Caste-blind scholarship which draws a quick distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva is forcing the Congress of Rahul Gandhi to own Hinduism, as a strategy to bring the Congress back to power. But in the long run, the nation is endangered by this competition to assign Hinduness to India, which is not a religion like Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. After reading Tharoor, I can only say that the Congress will be lucky if he does not join the BJP if it retains power after the elections. He has left enough room for a transit.

Why I Am A Hindu review: The power of politics as religion The Hindu's pick of top 10 non-fiction books from From Sister Nivedita, with love. Doctor Zhivago by Boris Pasternak.

There are no easy answers to this question. From the Oxford English Dictionary: A major religious and cultural tradition of South Asia, which developed from Vedic religion. An ancient religion with Indian origins whose characteristics include the worship of many gods and goddesses and the belief that when a person or creature dies, their spirit returns to life in another body. Please note that both are stressing the Vedic roots, the former explicitly and the latter implicitly the belief that the spirit returns to life in another body. This bears witness to the fact that how much standardisation the term has undergone over the years: Subsequently, after the British conquest, it came to mean any Indian who was not Muslim, Christian, Sikh or Jew “ and all the various gods and goddesses proliferating the countryside gained official status. Vedic Brahmanism was accepted as canonical, prescribing the strict hierarchy of castes the Oxford definition quoted above goes on to say that the caste system is an integral part of Hinduism. The most miserable were the untouchable outcasts who were treated worse than animals. Which is where Kancha Ilaiah comes in. Kancha ilaiah is a Dalit social activist and writer. What Ilaiah is worried about is the induction of millions of people under the Hindu wing, who were miserable outcasts in its original implementation “ by stressing the pluses of a pluralistic culture, the BJP is trying recruit people to what essentially is a fascist agenda. To counter this, he presents arguments why most of the former untouchables and the majority of the Sudras the lowest rung of the four-caste system “ the servant class , whom he clubs together as Dalitbahujans, should not consider themselves as Hindus. This was the culmination of decades of anger against the mosque, which was allegedly built on the exact spot where Rama was born “ according to legend, the Moghul emperor Babur demolished a temple to build it. But the reason why it was suddenly brought to a head in the early nineties is, according to many, is the Mandal Commission Report, which advocates greater number of reserved seats for the backward castes in educational institutions and government jobs, which the Janata Dal government implemented a couple of years before. The Janata Dal government was a mix of political parties, headed by V. They had come into power riding on the popular anti-incumbency wave against the Congress government of Rajiv Gandhi: There was widespread anger against this move by forward caste Hindus all over the country, even to the point of self-immolation by some students. The BJP, who is mainly supported by upper-caste Hindus, immediately demanded the demolition of the mosque and the building of a Rama temple in Ayodhya. This was a clever counter-move, as they knew the government could only refuse, and they could withdraw their support thus ensuring its collapse and the non-implementation of the report. In the turbulent era following the fall of V. In this process, what happened was not a positive disappearance of caste and creation of an egalitarian vision of Hinduism; rather, the Vedic religion was accepted as canonical, its gods were made universal, and attempts are still on to standardise Hindu rituals across India. Dalits have always resisted this attempt at assimilation: Phule, Ambedkar and Ramaswamy Naicker are the prominent examples. During the struggle for independence, Gandhi was on one side, trying to include the backward castes under the Hindu fold as Harijans while Ambedkar was on the other, advocating a separate and rather combative identity. The Dalit struggle has continued since, attaining renewed vigour in the seventies and eighties as more and more marginalised castes became educated and came into the mainstream. There have always been two conflicting visions regarding the question of caste in Indian society: Ilaiah is a subscriber to the second vision. He is aware of the problems that such an approach can create, as how do you analyse the experience of another? He has analysed the differences between Hindus and Dalitbahujans with regard to childhood, family relations, power structures, religion etc. The perceptive reader will immediately spot problems with this approach. While it is excellent for a biography or a memoir, it runs the risk of missing out on a multitude of viewpoints in compiling a social critique. Moreover, analysing second-hand experience is always dangerous as the cross-section one utilises may not be representative: The author explores the Dalitbahujan experience vs. However, historically Hindus have managed to incorporate Dalits into their worldview at a very low level, not even allowing them the

common human dignities – a position the Dalits seem to have largely accepted till recently. All the social and political systems of Hindus are geared to keep them on the top socially and financially without doing productive labour. The productive Dalits are exploited to keep this order in place. The current educational system, modelled on the Hindu system of the past, actively prevents Dalits from coming to the fore. Hindu family and social systems are rigidly patriarchal with women having no voice or power, while Dalit systems are more democratic. The Hindu religion comprises mostly patriarchal gods, whose exploits mainly describe acts of violence against Dalits. The Dalit deities/goddesses mostly, in contrast, are more earth-bound and benign. Post-independence, Brahmins and other upper-castes have retained power because of the educational advantage they wielded: Even the communist revolutions have been hijacked by Brahmins. Even the urbanised Dalits have started adopting Hindu lifestyles. What is required in India is Dalitization; i.e. This should be done in a peaceable way, through the ballot-box and re-education of Indian society. Of these, I have absolutely no disagreement with the first two points. The traditional Hindu caste system is one of the most vile and disgusting systems ever implemented anywhere in the history of humankind. Man has always tried to subjugate fellow-man; however, only in India has it been legitimised with the stamp of religion and a complicated system of beliefs so that the downtrodden also came to believe in his unworthiness. Over the years, a small group of people have lived in luxury out of the riches eked out of the lifeblood of the large substrata of society. However, when Ilaiah says that Hindu systems are rigidly patriarchal, I will have at least to partially disagree. However, instead of trying to forge a classless society, they have been busy forming their own caste-based platforms and more importantly, aligning to the traditional Hindu model of attaining power based on caste. Thus, the Brahmin model has not been destroyed: However, I have a slight caveat when he says that the communist revolution has been hijacked by Brahmins. The first democratically elected communist ministry in the world in Kerala was headed by a Brahmin E. But one should understand that the whole concept of communism as a tool of social revolution was developed in Kerala mostly by Brahmins inspired by the evils prevalent within their community. I am also sure that the same goes for many Brahmin members of the Congress and other secular parties. In my opinion, the book collapses when it comes to addressing religion, as it parrots many of the early Dalit arguments without taking into account the latest historical discoveries: Aryans destroyed the Indus Valley civilisation and pushed all the people to the south; Buddha was an anti-caste crusader; the whole of India became Buddhist at one point of time, and was forcibly converted back to Hinduism using strong arm tactics. All these arguments are partially true except the first one – the Indus Valley Civilisation was long defunct before the Aryans set foot in India. Successive waves of Aryan migrations from Middle Asia did indeed subjugate and displace other cultures, but it was a slow process of assimilation. The Aryan Gods merged with the indigenous ones and created the rich tapestry that is the Hindu pantheon today. The Buddha was indeed anti-caste, but not at the social level: The reincarnating monad was thus negated. And Buddhism was not destroyed, but assimilated by crafty Hindus, who made Buddha an incarnation of Vishnu! The Bhakti movement which originated in South India, which posited salvation was possible for anyone regardless of caste, creed or colour, brought a lot of the lower caste people into the Hindu fold. Ilaiah describes the Hindu myths as wilful stories created by Brahmins to enslave Dalits – and here he does go overboard, trying to make the Hindu religion as evil as possible. I do not go into his criticism about the Bhagavad Gita or the Ramayana, which are widely discussed and carry considerable weight according to me, at least: But myth is not only history – it springs from the unconscious, and there are many motifs in Indian Mythology which have clear parallels elsewhere in world myth. It is evident that the mythology we have now is a mix of the Vedic with the local. According to Ilaiah, only the Hindu gods are violent or advocate violence obviously he is unfamiliar with the Greek myths; the Hindu polytheism is somehow flawed and primitive, Levantine monotheism is more advanced Hindu polytheism is actually pantheism, going much beyond monotheism, seeing God everywhere in life; and only male Gods of the Hindus have power. These are factual mistakes: Which brings me to another point – the regional Gods and Goddesses Ilaiah mentions, who are outside the Vedic pantheon. Not all of them are derided by the Brahmins like he says. Lord Ayyappa, the local God of Kerala and arguably one of the most popular Gods in South India worshipped by Brahmin and Dalit alike is most probably a mountain God later adopted into the Hinduism, and given celestial parents

and a royal foster father. This was the method of Hinduism: The same is the case of Mahabali, who is even now worshipped as an ideal king in Kerala. Ilaiah gives an interesting variant of the Mahabali myth in the book, but I do not know where he got it from. In fact, the stories of this sublimation can be read from the ten incarnations, but the author does not pursue this interesting concept. Lastly, I also differ with Mr. The concept of one caste or religion taking over the polity and the society, however benign it may be, is anathema to the pluralistic Indian society. We have seen the oppressed grabbing power and becoming oppressors in their turn time and again in history; the same thing should not happen in India. What we have to aim for is a secular society where the underprivileged, regardless of caste, creed or colour, are protected and supported. What we should aim for is the destruction of caste in totality. Maybe I am too much of a leftist to agree to a caste revolution. Maybe, my love of Indian culture moulded by my upper-caste Hindu prejudices, most probably rejects his reductionist analysis of Hindu mythology. Whatever be the reason, the putting off of a potential sympathetic reader does not speak in support of the way the argument has been presented. However, one thing is sure – unless the demon of caste is exorcised, India will never progress.

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