Sea of Stories

Ananya Vajpeyi

University of Massachusetts Boston, ananya.vajpeyi@gmail.com

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The Hindus: An Alternative History

Ananya Vajpeyi writes about Doniger Vajpeyi's capacious study of the history of Hindu tales and traditions, which serves as a riposte to the self-appointed guardians of Indian public culture by celebrating the multiple varieties of Hindu religious experience.

From ancient times men have dominated the world of Indian scholarship. Originally those men were Brahmins; then they became Euro-Americans, then Englishmen, and finally Indians. It is only in the last fifteen years or so that women have begun to enter into the scholarly field of study, and in this regard, Wendy Doniger has been a pioneer and a force to reckon with. Her new book, *The Hindus: An Alternative History*, is a worthy successor, a continuation of her rigorous and innovative scholarship, which has done immense good to the cause of Hinduism by being accessible and using the word adorably. Doniger has studied, in name it may be, Brahmins, but her critical and corporeal aspects, make her a Brahmin in any true sense of that word, for she has been distilling in the true Brahminical way the essence of the spiritual, but also in the carnal.

The Hindus is a sauce that heteroegous enough to incorporate a multiplicity of parallel doctrines, theologies and belief systems, as well as historical and geographical topics and symbols, rituals and concepts in every corner. It is also one of the few recent books on Hinduism that has attempted to control the homogenization of the Hindu ethos. The book is a riposte to the self-appointed guardians of Indian culture by celebrating the multiple varieties of Hindu religious experience.

The rise of Hindu nationalism in India has made several intellectuals feel increasingly difficult for scholars of Hinduism to do their work without fear from the intellectual and physical persecution, both on the Indian soil and abroad. The book is to those who want to agitate about their offer.

Hindu public culture – argued by Wendy Doniger in *Hind Swaraj*, the journalist that Amartya Sen celebrated in his *In Search of All Freedom*, has been mutual in its esteem and its virulence for both decades. The book has become immediately apparent to the people of India.

In *The Hindus*, the author has constructed a circle around a subject that was, and is, India. There is a worthy successor, a continuation of her rigorous and innovative scholarship, which has done immense good to the cause of Hinduism by being accessible and using the word adorably. Doniger has studied, in name it may be, Brahmins, but her critical and corporeal aspects, make her a Brahmin in any true sense of that word, for she has been distilling in the true Brahminical way the essence of the spiritual, but also in the carnal.

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