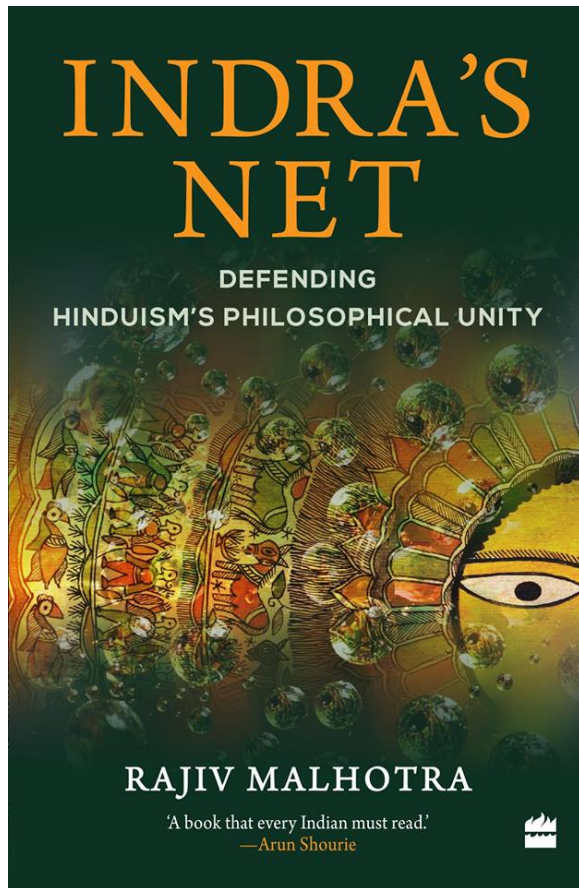




Indra's Net

Author: Rajiv Malhotra

Publisher: HarperCollins (375 pages)



I had no concept of Indra's Net before reading this book of the same name written by Rajiv Malhotra. This was recommended to me by my nephew while I visited him last month (October 2018).

I'd divide my review in two parts: 1. the concept of Indra's Net and 2. Fallacy in the Western representation of neo-Hinduism.

1. Indra's Net: Indra's Net is mentioned in Atharvaveda (Vedas are the oldest scriptures of Hinduism). It states that everything living or

nonliving in the cosmos is connected with each other in an infinite web with no beginning and no end. At each node of the net is a jewel, so arranged that every jewel reflects all the other jewels. Thus everything and everyone in the cosmos is interconnected and interdependent on everything else.

The fact that all nodes are simply a reflection of all others implies the illusory nature of all appearances. Appearances are thus not reality but a reflection of reality.

Whatever we do to one jewel will affect all other jewels including ourselves. If we do harm to others, we will also be harmed. Similarly, if we remain kind to others, it will have an infinite ripple effect affecting all the jewels in the cosmos. Indra's Net touches every jewel, every person in existence.

2. Fallacy in the Western representation of neo-Hinduism: Unfortunately the modern followers of Hinduism seem to be affected by the Western interpretation of their religion which has many fallacies.

According to Malhotra, the first and the foremost myth spread about modern Hinduism by the Western philosophers is that Vivekanand borrowed the ideas from Christianity in defining neo-Hinduism.

Malhotra mentions 8 myths about Hinduism propagated by western academia:

- 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

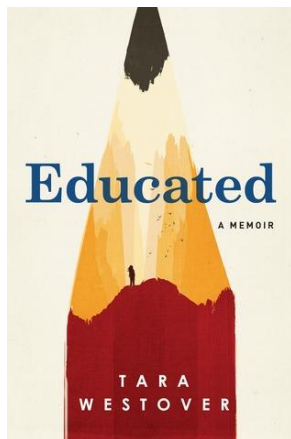
- Hinduism is founded on oppression and sustained by it
- Hinduism presumes sameness in all religions.

In essence, the Western academicians have tried to spread the notion that modern Hinduism is an experimental result of colonization and it has nothing to do with ancient Hinduism. It is important for all Hindus to understand this fallacy which is against ancient ideology of their religion. **–Reviewed by Musafir**

Educated

Author: Tara Westover

Published by Random House (335 pp)



I chose to read Tara Westover's memoir, "Educated" since I was looking for a quick read and also because the title of the book enticed me. Fortunately, I was not disappointed. Many of us, especially women, are forced to conform to tradition. Many parents all over

the world subscribe to a paranoid patchwork of beliefs beyond practicality or pragmatism. Westover was the youngest daughter of a fundamentalist Mormon in Idaho. Her father was determined to keep her secluded against modern world in a very crude manner. Westover was not sent to school, but for Westover suffocating tradition and succumbing to her father's idiosyncrasy was not an option. She was determined to be liberated from the morbid clutches of her clan. She taught herself enough to take the ACT and enter Brigham Young University at 17. She went on to Cambridge University for a doctorate in history.

Westover who is only 32 years old has described her odyssey that is daring and

inspirational. "Part of me will always believe that my father's words ought to be my own," she writes. Though defiant, she is always respectful to those (including her father) who wanted to keep her bounded by archaic and cruel tradition.

The American Language

Author: HL Mencken (1917)



Since I find linguistics fascinating, so I was attracted to attempt to read, "The American Language" by H L Mencken (published in 1917). To confess, I am not a philologist nor do I have the stomach to digest the entire book. I read a few chapters only and found it both enriching and fascinating.

To introduce Mencken, he was a patriot and a master of American prose. "In his day, Mencken was as influential in the US as George Bernard Shaw in Britain." (Wall Street Journal).

I was mostly interested in the chapters where he compared the British English with American English. Mencken believed that American English was superior to British English. He observed that even the Englishmen favored American English over their own.

However, Mencken also stated "that no such thing as an American variety of English existed – that the differences I constantly encountered in English, and that my English friends encountered in American, were chiefly imaginary".