



## Being Hindu: Old Faith, New World and You

*Hindol Sengupta*

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## **Being Hindu: Old Faith, New World and You** Hindol Sengupta

1 billion followers

33 million gods and goddesses

You

One of the world's oldest forms of faith, Hinduism has an unbroken trajectory of beliefs and rituals that have passed on for many millennia through the footsteps of pilgrims and the pedagogies of theologians; through myth, science and politics. But what does all that mean to the modern Hindu today? Why do Hindus call themselves so? Is it merely because their parents were Hindus? In what way does the faith speak to those who profess to follow it? What does Hinduism mean to the everyday-practicing or sometimes-accessing ordinary Hindu? Away from the raucous debate around religions, this is the journey of a common Hindu—an attempt to understand why, for so many Hindus, their faith is one of the most powerful arguments for plurality, for unity in diversity, and even more than the omnipresent power of God, the sublime courage and conviction of man.

Being Hindu is the exploration of Hinduism in a way you have never seen before—almost through your own eyes.

## **Being Hindu: Old Faith, New World and You Details**

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Author : Hindol Sengupta

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# From Reader Review Being Hindu: Old Faith, New World and You for online ebook

**Jashan Singhal says**

If I had to recommend just one book to any non-Hindu or Hindu alike to make them "conscious" about Hinduism, it has to be this seminal work by Hindol Sengupta.

The author is a savant of modern Hinduism, and is so deeply connected to the faith that his serene relationship with Hinduism makes the reader almost jealous. It is evident from his writing that the author is unfettered by any regressive ideas about Hinduism and is bereft of any political inclinations associated with Hinduism. Almost every modern book on this Vedantic religion has some mention of "Hindutva" philosophy but thankfully, this book left that domain untouched.

The author connects so well with an average Indian Hindu, for instance Hindu children, from a very young age are taught idol-worship and mantra chanting but nobody is ever taught the philosophy or *raison d'être* behind such a belief system. He quotes

'For Hindus, therefore, the image (idol) is not an object at which one's vision halts, but rather a lens through which one's vision is directed.'

He doesn't condemn idol worship but says that the caricatures had hardened into prejudices that blurred the core philosophies. Similar is his relationship with mantras. He reverberated my own thoughts as a child when he said:

How could God, at once so vast and all encompassing, also at the same time be so utterly petulant as to sulk at one infinitesimally small me not chanting some mantras? That made no sense.

He asks *"How many Hindus really know why they pray? What do the mantras mean, and why do they mouth them?"* and then replies with an avuncular dominance that **No one taught us to understand that the act of prayer is really inward, not outward, and that in the act of seeking all you can ever hope to receive is the understanding of that which lies within you.**

The author strips apart all notions of ancient, stringent and indoctrinated Hindu worship while being proud of our primordial Vedanta knowledge at the same time. He demonstrates that Hinduism is a religion that is quite different from other religions of the world. His progressive take on issues such as vegetarianism and atheism is amusing to read. Frequently quoting Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi throughout the book, he makes sure his facts are well researched.

I reduced one star rating from the book, because there is a section in the book where the author tries to interplay between quantum physics and Hinduism. He tries to portray that both of them are essentially the same ideas and as a physics student, it made me squirm a little bit. I wish people keep such ideas of "meta-physics" and "psuedo-science" to themselves.

At last, I would like to end this review with a simple yet profound line from the book :

Think about this: for thousands of years, we have been worshipping the sun, and yet we have been one of the least enthusiastic countries, till now, to use solar energy to replace fossil fuels, even though we have been blessed with enormous solar capacities.

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### **Shahenshah says**

Hinduism's inchoate nature manifests itself myriad forms, realised from the individual to society writ large, and it is this oft touted 'strength' which renders even a commonplace explanation Hinduism unsatisfying. The author strives to capture the 'ethos', the civilisational temperament, and modernity which contribute to unify such disparate ideas and philosophies into that 'organic whole'.

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### **Vedvrat Shikarpur says**

A simple precursor to help one understand the depth of Hinduism. A lovely short read!

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### **Shilpa says**

Funny, witty, pun intended, sarcastic and to the point. Few chapters, page that I would love to re-read

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### **Gauri Parab says**

A great introduction of this ancient religion to everyone who wants to understand its complexities and its colorfulness, whether it is non-Hindus or even those born into this faith. Much information cramped into one short book. Highly recommended!

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### **Swetha Chodavarpu says**

'If you understand the atomic, you can understand the cosmic'

To describe this book in a few words is difficult. One of the aspects of the book that spoke to me, is how the author scientifically explained theology. It's not an easy task, but Hindol Sengupta did it with brilliance.

Think of this book as a scientist's guide to Hinduism. The author has done his research! With mentions of more than 10 reference books in each chapter and various scientists, professors, authors, theologians, monks, researchers and historians, this book has something for everyone.

A must read for a budding scientist who wishes to understand the philosophy behind Hinduism.

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### **Ananya Layek says**

"Being Hindu" by Hindol Sengupta asks some basic questions about our religion.. What is hinduism? And how one follows it? Who is the one true God? Is it believing whats written in our Shastras? Or is it a way of life where one can question whats written and follow their own set of rules?

Is there a conflict between God and science or is it inclusive? Does our religion defines what to eat or what not to? Or what to wear or what not to?? Does it ask to differentiate among human beings based or caste or sexual orientation?

OR IS IT ACTUALLY BIGGER THAN OUR MERE UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION, WHICH INCLUDES ALL DIFFERENCES IN IT'S TRUEST SENSE AND UNITES PEOPLE?

This book discusses in great details how we have interpreted religion in our daily life and how by indulging in non relevant things,we are moving further away from the core beliefs of hinduism. It makes one think about Hinduism in a different light.. Makes one believe and question at the same time if there is one true God or 33 million Gods or if there is any at all. Makes one think about what's been taught since childhood and seek answer with their own judgment. It takes you through a journey to discover your own truth of religion.

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### **Anand Patel says**

Book is written beautifully, at parts it has compared different religion and their ideology, a nice way to to know about hindu religion from broader perspective . Anyone who love religion should read this book.

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### **Harshita says**

I have written a review for this wonderful book on my blog.

Here is the link to read it

<https://undecidedindubai.wordpress.co...>

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### **Nimesh Ganatra says**

Very good work done. Hinduism explained from its root meanings and the philosophies behind being Hindu. Title is well justified by all the content in it is all about being Hindu rather what Hinduism is. Book is not asking anyone to follow this religion nor about Hinduism only is better than any other religion nor any teachings of life. It shows all the best part of this religion and the worst problems it has ever faced and currently facing.I would recommend this book to anyone who believes in religion but not sure what this all means and needs a guidance in the direction of finding out the meaning of all rituals and prayers.

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## Pradeep T says

A nice attempt by the author. It is highly difficult to explain Hinduism in just 160 odd pages, however, this book doesn't fail to impress the readers. The author had done some good research on the topics that he believed as good enough for this book. The book has touched upon the details right from our ancient scriptures like the vedas, vedantas, followed by the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Ayurveda, Vedic Mathematics, Science, etc... The book also explores a little comparative study on the Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. Overall a nice attempt. This book is for those who want to know about Hinduism and quite reluctant to study hell lot of books. It covers the main aspects and ideas.

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## Arvind says

An introduction to Hinduism and a good way to shed cobwebs.

Few thoughts :-

A) Brahminism - A word that has come into use by the Leftists for Hinduism supposedly emphasising the hold of 'Brahmins' - the priestly class. Which religion has been free from the hold of the clergy/Imams ? Islam ? Christianity ?

B) Untouchability - Slavery was a feature of the world till a century or so ago. Racism has been a feature of the West till a few decades ago. Great religious discrimination exists in Muslim-majority countries even today. And worse, Dalit converts to Islam/Christianity are treated as untouchables by them.

The point is that neither of the above 2 faults are of any particular religion alone.

C) Freedom of Speech - The Upanishads are filled with a questioning spirit making fun of the Vedas sometimes. Buddha and Mahavir and a Hindu religious leader used to have bitter debates. Shankara debated with Buddhists and defeated them following which they had to leave. Or take Mahabharata which is full of inquiry. This is an ancient Indian concept where nothing is 'sacred'. Lets value our heritage.

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## Surender Negi says

### 2 STAR

This book certainly attract my attention by Title "**Being Hindu**" and I was expecting new ideas rather than *atrocities statements based on British colonization*.

### Few Points which I found writer should need to study more.

1) Idea of Brahmanism :This idea is not based of Hindu Scripture but based on Aryan Invasion theory (already debunked by Many genetics) and writer seems not interested to debunk this myth [Aryan Invasion theory] but carry out as per his secular agenda.

2) Idea of caste system: Writer again seems to be doubtful that weather caste system is originally carved from Hinduism or something else. More Over, It is seems like that writer is not able to throw his secularism in context of Hinduism. In Many places of Book, writer seems to defend Hinduism for Untouchables & Brahmins while in reality, they are not part of Sanatana Philosophy.

3) Books drags you into his own childhood where he shown nicely the conversion and impression been made by convent schools on young child. he also portrayed a very well image of a confusing child Mind who want to understand Hinduism but failed due to people in India avoid being spiritual and having knowledge of Hinduism for Secularism.

4) This books also indicate the lack of centralize Institution within Hinduism in India which can show paths to Young, Middle and Old knowledge seeking Minds.

*I wish writer next time write on Brahmanism and Untouchable after extensive study of roll of British and Europe Indologist on young Indian Minds of India and abroad.*

This book is good and forward move for describing Hindus and their culture.

Like: Explanation about why Hindus do idol worship and spiritual knowledge.

Unlike: A hidden fear of writer to call him more secular than Hindu.

Come on Men, calling himself "Hindu" will not ended secularism in India and around the world. It is not crime to being different but biggest crime is ignoring it.

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### **Shreshth Varshney says**

Does a good job with keeping the balance between the good and the bads of this.

It doesn't want to convert you. Doesn't ask you to believe in any of the nonsensical piety that a billion folks follow.

Goes into the main reason why it came to be and explains things about the religion.

Talks about the fanatics as well.

Though don't expect the bhakts to turn non savage after reading it.

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### **Nidhi says**

I would say the book is too factual. Its more like a collection of white papers or research than a book. It was not a journey for me. The book is great for CAT aspirants as it has a heavy vocabulary. Wouldn't recommend the book for anything else.

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