

Why I Am Not A Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy

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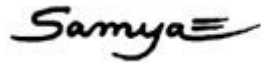
The logo for 'Samya' is written in a stylized, cursive script. The word 'Samya' is followed by a horizontal line that ends in a small, upward-pointing hook.

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Extracts:

From 'School Education'

As the first generation in Dalitbahujan history to see a slate and a pencil, we jumped straight out of the jungle into school. Even there, what was there in common between the Hindus and us? The Brahmin-Baniya children are the privileged. They are better dressed and better fed. Though they are born in the same village, the children enter the school with different cultures. Our eating habits are not the same. For all Dalitbahujans good food means meat and fish. We enjoy it, we relish it. For Brahmin-Baniya boys and girls even a discussion about meat and fish makes them feel like vomiting ... Our school teacher's attitude to each one of us depended on his own caste background. If he was a Brahmin he hated us and told us to our faces that it was because of the evil time – because of kaliyuga, that he was being forced to teach 'Sudras' like us. In his view we were good for nothing. That 'wise' teacher used to think of us as coming from sudari families (families of field

hands)... According to him only my people would work in dirty, muddy fields. Today we realize that mud is the birthplace of food and of the working people's ideas...

From 'Dalitbahujan Goddess and Gods'

Deities do not function as means to subdue a section of society; they are not designed to exploit a section within the community; they function to create a common cultural ethic, one that re-energizes the masses so that they can engage in productive activity...

Pochamma

Pochamma is the most popular of Dalitbahujan Goddesses in Andhra Pradesh (I am sure a Dalitbahujan Goddess with similar characteristics exists all over India). Near every village, there is a small Pochamma temple... Pochamma is not made the object of a daily puja by the priest. Once every year the masses (and this includes all castes except Brahmins and Baniyas) go to the temple with *bonalu* (pots in which sweet rice is cooked), wash the small stone that represents the deity, and clean the temple and its surroundings. The people can approach the Goddess without the mediation of a priest. They talk to the Goddess as they talk among themselves: 'Mother,' they say, 'we have seeded the fields, now you must ensure that the crop grows well, one of our children is sick, it is your bounden duty to cure her...' Pochamma is not a Goddess who believes in communal conflicts...

From the 'Afterword: The Torments'

'The most gratifying thing for me was that it [this book] was listed as a millennium book [by *The Pioneer*] along with Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste*. Moreover, it has been translated into several Indian languages. In a way it has become a weapon in the hands of Dalitbahujan activists.'

I was the first Backward Class (OBC) person to deny the Hindu roots for Sudras as a whole, as indicated by the very title of the book. Though Mahatma Phule and Periyar critiqued Hinduism from the Sudra point of view, there is no literary evidence to show that they had disassociated the Sudra being from Hinduism from his/her very birth. Having come from a more suppressed untouchable background, Ambedkar said that though he was 'born a Hindu' he would not die as Hindu. Ambedkar accepted the brahminic definition of Hinduism and formed a critique based on its textual construction of caste and Hinduism. He evaluated these two institutions based on the Hindu scriptures. I took a different route to examine the fascist nature of Hinduism. In the day-to-day life processes of the Dalitbahujan masses much more concrete evidence of 'unHinduness' could be seen ... As of now, I am an un-Hindu Indian.