



Disenchanted India: Organized Rationalism and Criticism of Religion in India

By Johannes Quack

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India is frequently represented as the quintessential land of religion. Johannes Quack challenges this representation through an examination of the contemporary Indian rationalist movement, which affirms the values and attitudes of atheism, humanism, or free-thinking. Quack shows the rationalists' emphasis on maintaining links to atheism and materialism in ancient India and outlines their strong ties to the intellectual currents of modern European history. At the heart of *Disenchanted India* lies an ethnographic study of the organization "Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti" (Organization for the Eradication of Superstition), based in the Indian State of Maharashtra. Quack gives a nuanced account of the rationalists' specific "mode of unbelief," describing their efforts to encourage a scientific temper and combat beliefs and practices they regard as "superstitious". Quack also shows the role played by rationalism in their day-to-day lives, as well as the organization's controversial position within Indian society. *Disenchanted India* provides crucial insights into the nature of rationalism in the intellectual life and cultural politics of India.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1316239 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Oxford University Press, USA
- Published on: 2011-11-22
- Released on: 2011-11-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.10" h x 1.10" w x 9.20" l, 1.24 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 380 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Johannes Quack has ventured into new territory in his close study of the Indian rationalist movement, particularly its manifestations in early twenty-first century Maharashtra. He has combined ethnographic analysis, social theory, and a deep knowledge of Indian history with reflections on secularism, religious belief, rationality, enchantment, and disenchantment. The result is a vivid depiction of India in the throes of modernity, in which class, gender, nationalism, and ideological and discursive strategies are contesting for the very future of India. This excellent volume must be examined by anyone interested in modern and contemporary India because it addresses in a most illuminating way a desperately understudied topic."-- Frederick M. Smith, Professor of Sanskrit and Classical Indian Religions, University of Iowa

"The book is a rich source of information...It provides the reader with food for thought on complex questions...The narrative is engaging and full of ethnographic detail about personal dilemmas, doctrinal conflicts, and rationalist performances. *Disenchanted India* is a major contribution to and entry point for the study of complex and long-standing problems of Indian society."--*H-Net Reviews*

About the Author

Johannes Quack studied Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Anthropology at the Universities of Bayreuth, Edinburgh, and Heidelberg. He was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cluster of Excellence "Asia & Europe," Heidelberg University and is currently research fellow at McGill University, Montreal.

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