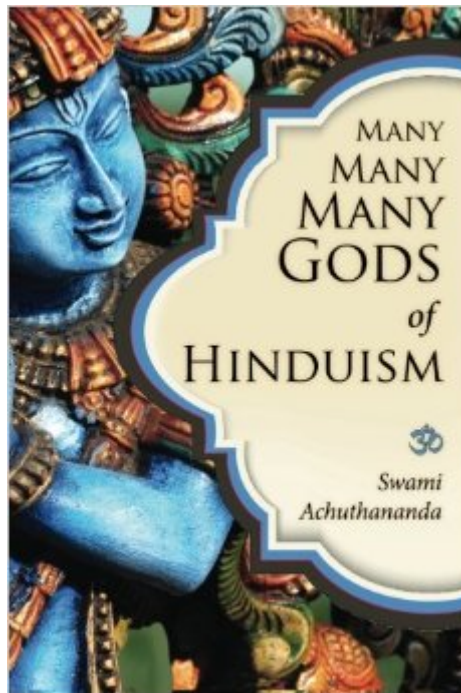


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# Many Many Many Gods Of Hinduism: Turning Believers Into Non-believers And Non-believers Into Believers



## Synopsis

Religion is the opium of the people, said Karl Marx many centuries ago. For more than a billion people living in India and abroad, Hinduism is the religion and a way of life. In this multi-award winning book, Swami Achuthananda cracks open the opium poppy pods, analyzes the causes for euphoria, and comes away with a deeper understanding of the people and their religion. \*\*\* Winner 2014 Next Generation Indie Book Awards (Religious Non-fiction) \*\*\*This is a comprehensive book on Hinduism. It tells you why Hindus do the things they do - and don't. Written in a casual style, the book guides you through the fundamentals of the religion. It then goes further and debunks a number of long-standing myths, some of them coming from the academia (of all places). While most books shy away from contentious issues, this book plunges headlong by taking on controversies, like the Aryan Invasion Theory, idol worship, RISA scholarship and many more. In fact one-third of the book is just on controversies that you rarely find in any other literature. Other Awards:\*\*\* Finalist - 2014 Pacific Book Awards (Religion) \*\*\*\*\* Bronze - 2014 IPPY Award - (Religion) \*\*\*

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## Customer Reviews

"Do I sound crazy? Do I look stupid to you? Believe me, every Indian you meet is crazy or stupid from another cultural perspective." - Swami Achuthananda  
What if our thoughts about Hinduism were all wrong? If you've grown up in the Western culture, your ideas on India and Hinduism may be skewed. Too often, the reason lies in the fact that what we've heard or read comes from an outsider's perspective of this eastern religion. *Many Many Many Gods of Hinduism* by Swami Achuthananda is a book that attempts to set the record straight from a first party authority on the

religion itself. From the ancient roots of Indian history, through the vast diversity of Indian culture, to a proper understanding of Ganesha and beyond, this book is a thorough journey into the insights, perspectives, and concepts of Hinduism. At 221 pages, author Swami Achuthananda lays out a roadmap for understanding Hinduism in three distinct parts. The main character of this book is Hinduism itself with a supporting cast of quotes and endnotes that stretches as far and wide as the religion itself. Author Swami Achuthananda first lays down the foundation in culture, presenting the history, people and perspectives of southern Asia, and India in particular. Next, he builds the framework of Hinduism through its concepts and ideologies. Finally, he presents the controversies surrounding or associated with Hinduism. In his efforts to present a clear understanding of the religion he loves and practices, the author uses some comparative religion. To critique his views of other religions, like Protestant Christianity say, would be to miss the point.

There may not be the same curiosity for Westerners concerning Hinduism compared to such religions as Christianity or Islam, nonetheless, as Swami Achuthananda points out in his *Many Many Many Gods of Hinduism*, its sacred literature is vast and represents thousands of years of accumulated spiritual experiences. Unfortunately, it is a religion that has remained largely ignored, misunderstood and forgotten as many have found it to be mystical and perplexing, for it does not have a founder or an authoritative scripture, such as the Bible or the Koran. In the form of short essays, Swami Achuthananda with his intimate knowledge of Hinduism, clearly and effectively sets the record straight concerning inaccurate information prevalent today pertaining to Hinduism and the way it is portrayed. As mentioned on the back cover of the book, he singles out the gray-haired academics for perpetuating centuries-old myths and letting the secrets stay in the dark for so long. This useful and concise primer is divided into three main sections, Culture, Concepts and Controversies and is subdivided into sixty-four topics where the author cogently explores key aspects concerning the oldest of the major religions. Did you know that Hinduism has approximately one billion adherents and is the third largest religion in the world containing an enormous collection of traditions, beliefs, and practices? Its roots can be found in the Indian subcontinent and the cultures of the Indus Valley and Indo-European people. And if we accept with an open mind Swami's invitation to begin a journey of the discovery of Hinduism in the company of one who has made the subject his life's devotion, we are assured that we will meet people not with a handshake but rather a Namaste, the traditional Indian greeting.

Although "Many Many Many Gods of Hinduism" by Swami Achuthananda was only published a few

months ago, it has already garnered many thoughtful plaudits from reviewers. Rather than repeat the same praise "well deserved as it is" I would suggest that first the reader go to the on-line Norman Goldman (Book Pleasures) interview with Achuthananda to get a feeling for the almost light-hearted approach the author has taken in presenting material that could be at the very least confusing to most of us and at worst, positively stultifying. "Many Many Many Gods of Hinduism" is carefully, simply, satisfyingly, and often amusingly written. The chapters are short, cogent, engaging, but never trivial. In the first section of the book, the author states "In India, the religion is the culture and the culture is the religion. You cannot learn one without the other." Like everything else in this book, that sentence is worth contemplating. Certainly those of us who are Christian would find that baffling compared to what we consider our culture-free belief. But slowly, sometimes through analogy (the banyan tree), sometimes through simple and fascinating historical exposition, we begin to sense this tradition: a religion of many holy books but not one single divine authoritative text, with no one hierarchical leader, with no holiest of places, without one overriding doctrine or formal symbol, a religion with 330 million personal gods, all manifestations of Brahman, the transcendent indescribable Brahman who is the only absolute reality (totality) and whose presence in all things is called Atman (self). In Chapter 33 Achuthananda gives in a few paragraphs the essence of Hinduism.

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