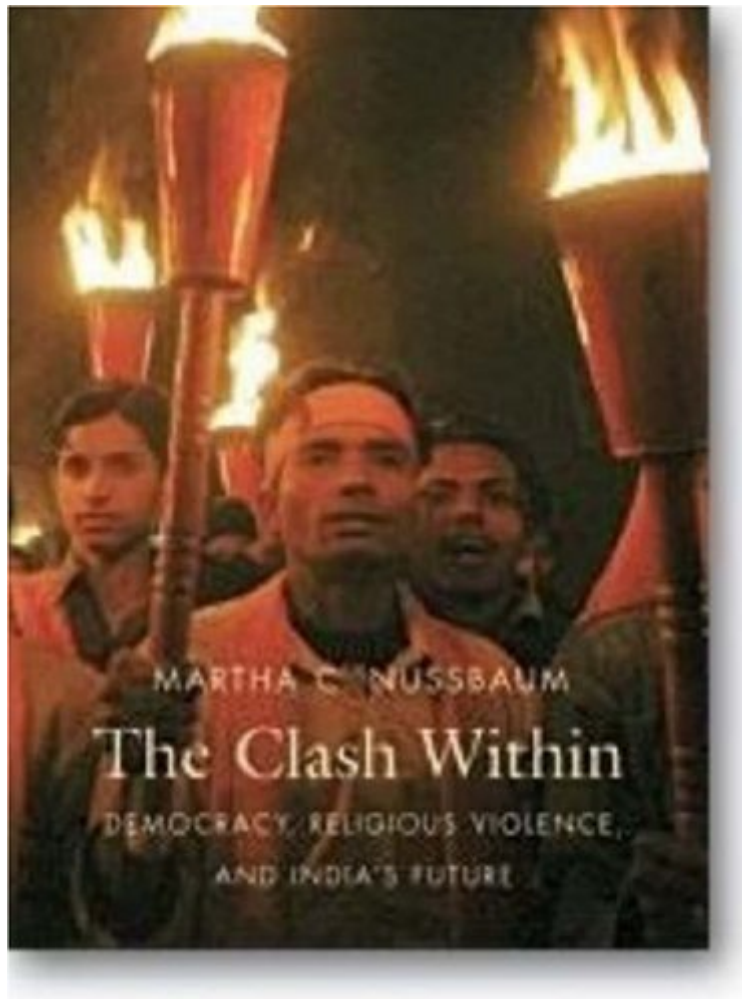


(Library ebook) The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future

The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future

Martha C. Nussbaum

DOC | *audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub



 Download

 Read Online

#2156088 in Books Belknap Press 2007-05-15 2007-06-14Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.44 x 1.27 x 6.38l, 1.61 #File Name: 0674024826432 pages | File size: 15.Mb

Martha C. Nussbaum : The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future:

2 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A Tryst With DestinyBy Etienne RPAAt the stroke of midnight on August 14-15, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru delivered the nation's independence speech that is as well-known among Indians as the Gettysburg Address is among Americans. Beginning with the famous opening: "Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny", he went on to declare: "It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity."It is indeed rare for a nation to choose as national symbols expressions of the idea that humanity is above nationality, and righteousness above

aggression. Those are however the values proclaimed in the "tryst with destiny" speech as well as in the national anthem composed by the famous poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. In the same vein, Nehru stated that the national flag was a symbol of freedom not only for India, but for all peoples of the world. Like only a few other nations, India has based its nationhood on the political rather than the ethnic, cultural or territorial conception of national unity. What bring Indians together are principles and aspirations rather than land, tradition, and blood. This is why India stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration for all world citizens committed to democracy and human well-being. According to Martha Nussbaum, this tradition of openness and universalism is now under attack. Drawing its inspiration from fascist movements in pre-war Europe, the Hindu right wants to revive notions of purity, manliness, and aggression, especially against the Muslim minority that is seen as foreign to the Hindu soil and menacing the vital interests of the nation. Nussbaum sees "a clash between two different conceptions of the Indian nation and two sorts of Indian patriots. One sort sees India as a pluralistic nation, built on ideas of respect for different regional, ethnic, and religious traditions, and united by a commitment to democratic and egalitarian norms. The other sort believes that this morally grounded unity is too fragile, that only the unity of ethnic homogeneity can really make a strong nation." In the end, this is a clash that occurs within each individual, as "the violent and dominating parts contend against the parts that are willing to live with human powerlessness and incompleteness." As she herself confesses, Martha Nussbaum has her "own slant on events." She uses the words "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" to characterize the wave of communal violence that took place in Gujarat in March 2002, where the state government and law enforcement officers condoned the maiming and killings of Moslems. She describes the branches of the RSS, an Hindi youth organization, as proto-fascist organizations. But apart from some slippages her book is not intensely polemical. She draws her analyses from trusted sources and scholarly work, like Christophe Jaffrelot's *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, as well as testimonies from human rights activists and personal contacts with various political actors. I think the most interesting part of the book is when the author applies her own scholarly work to practical issues of Indian democracy. As a proponent of a rights-based approach to development, she praises the way the Indian Constitution makes explicit the fundamental rights of citizens and their equality. Indeed, religious freedom and equality receive more detailed attention and protection in the Indian Constitution than they do in any other constitution known to the author, and this may explain why India's democracy has proven so resilient. The system also preserves the creative potential of federalism, with states acting as laboratories of social experiments, while setting thresholds beneath which they may not fall. More generally, the combination of local self-rule and state control makes it possible to see clearly which development policies work and which do not. In this way, Indian democracy has enormous epistemic value for social scientists that grapple with issues of institutional design. Nussbaum is also interested in the way shame and disgust shape our human emotions and can motivate feelings of hatred against targeted groups. Shame and revulsion at the signs of one's bodily humanity have often been invoked in analyzing group violence, and the author mixes insights from her previous work with culturally specific factors to account for the horrifying cases of sexual violence that took place in Gujarat. More generally, she shows how images of masculinity and bodily comportment influenced the worldviews of great leaders of India's past. As she notes, "Gandhi linked the future of India to a suppression of bodily desire; Tagore linked it to an embrace of the sensuous delight of the body-not to undisciplined sensuality, but to the ordered sensuousness of dance." Tagore is indeed the personal hero of the author, who places him above Gandhi and Nehru in her pantheon of Indian great men. Like Walt Whitman in America, he created a "public poetry" of nationhood that captures the imagination and exalts moral sentiments. He also founded a school in West Bengal based on critical thinking, creativity, and the empowerment of women through the arts. In line with her defense of liberal education in America, the author underscores that education nourishes the capacity to think for oneself and to become a dynamic participant in cultural and political choice rather than simply a follower of tradition. She therefore deplores the emphasis on rote learning, teaching to the test and the neglect of liberal arts that characterize the Indian education system. Emotions and the imagination are parts of a democratic public culture, and the liberal state needs public poetry, not just scientific rationality, to sustain itself.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Two Stars
By Logan Sutton
a decent analysis. wouldn't have read it if i didn't have to of course.

3 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Dishonest and biased
By Customer
This book is a favorite among Indian (and Western) Hindu-haters who believe that the stature alone of an academic proves that he/she is truthful. Although flawed, inaccurate and biased in many ways, it is still being cited by anti-Hindus. For example, she claims that Muslims imported tolerance into India and when writing about the Godhra train burning attack (where a mob of Muslims stopped and attacked a train full of Hindu pilgrims returning from the disputed site at Ayodhya, and set it on fire, hindering the Hindus to escape - women and children burned to death), Nussbaum believes the conspiracy theory that the Hindus set their own train compartment on fire. This book is not neutral, even a scholar like G.J. Larson (who has himself criticized the Hindu right) criticized her for being more interested in mounting a political assault on what she calls the "Hindu right", and that her analysis lacks balance, nuance and civility (review in *Journal of American Academy of Religion*). Her view on the Stoics and Aristotle (which she uses in some of her arguments) have also been criticized. She also defends Doniger and others for their use of psychoanalysis when analyzing Hinduism, which has rightly been criticized as inappropriate for the study of Hinduism and largely pseudoscientific. While very critical of

Hinduism and especially political Hinduism, she is an apologist for Islam and for the record of Islam in India. Read the reviews by Gerald Larson and Jason Kirk ("Hindu Nationalism Five Years after Godhra, "). I have to give Nussbaum credit for interviewing a number of Hindu nationalists (Arun Shourie and others), and therefore listening to what they actually say and believe, and not just on hearsay. In any other field this would be natural and expected, but in the field of studies on Hindu nationalism, this is the exception. For this reason I give the book two stars. Instead of this book, I recommend the works of Koenraad Elst, Arun Shourie, Sita Ram Goel, Harsh Narain and Ram Swarup.

While America is focused on religious militancy and terrorism in the Middle East, democracy has been under siege from religious extremism in another critical part of the world. As Martha Nussbaum reveals in this penetrating look at India today, the forces of the Hindu right pose a disturbing threat to its democratic traditions and secular state. Since long before the 2002 Gujarat riots--in which nearly two thousand Muslims were killed by Hindu extremists--the power of the Hindu right has been growing, threatening India's hard-won constitutional practices of democracy, tolerance, and religious pluralism. Led politically by the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Hindu right has sought the subordination of other religious groups and has directed particular vitriol against Muslims, who are cast as devils in need of purging. The Hindu right seeks to return to a "pure" India, unsullied by alien polluters of other faiths, yet the BJP's defeat in recent elections demonstrates the power that India's pluralism continues to wield. The future, however, is far from secure, and Hindu extremism and exclusivity remain a troubling obstacle to harmony in South Asia. Nussbaum's long-standing professional relationship with India makes her an excellent guide to its recent history. Ultimately she argues that the greatest threat comes not from a clash between civilizations, as some believe, but from a clash within each of us, as we oscillate between self-protective aggression and the ability to live in the world with others. India's story is a cautionary political tale for all democratic states striving to act responsibly in an increasingly dangerous world.

This is an extraordinarily interesting book on a very difficult subject. Martha Nussbaum's commanding familiarity with culturally related political issues across the world, past and present, combines immensely fruitfully here with her involvement and understanding of India. (Amartya Sen, Harvard University) This impressive and important book grapples with the problems and consequences of religious extremism. Nussbaum's brilliant analysis of the controversy over religion and democracy in India effortlessly moves between political history, philosophy, and law, to give us a powerful and compelling narrative of the political world of the Hindu Right. It is a must-read for all those interested in understanding the dangers of religious extremism and of what preserves democracy and pluralism in the face of tensions and conflicts within. (Zoya Hasan, Jawaharlal Nehru University) Preoccupation with the purported clash between civilizations has masked the clash within democracies. This passionate, engaged book has much to teach an American audience about the vulnerability and resilience of Indian democracy. Perhaps it will also stimulate reflections about similar clashes within American democracy. (Amrita Basu, Amherst College) Once more, Martha Nussbaum has applied her profound philosophical intelligence to a challenging question in the practical world. In thinking through the dangers raised by the Hindu right, she teaches us a great deal about the dangers of dogmatism everywhere. (K. Anthony Appiah, Princeton University) Few contemporary philosophers in the West have reckoned with India's complex experience of democracy; and even fewer have engaged with it as vigorously as [Nussbaum] does in *The Clash Within*...[A] strongly felt and stimulating book. (Pankaj Mishra *New York Times Book Review* 2007-06-28) Martha Nussbaum's *The Clash Within* presents a powerful analysis of the Hindu Right in contemporary India that is insightful and penetrating...She weaves a rich tapestry of how Hindu thought has been reshaped and distorted...She is correct to say "the clash within" that we find in India lies everywhere...*The Clash Within* is another remarkable achievement from the most exciting political philosopher of our age. I cannot recommend it highly enough. (Thom Brooks *Times Higher Education Supplement* 2007-06-29) Nussbaum is an informed outsider looking in...Nussbaum takes one incident--the 2002 Gujarat riots that followed the burning of a train carrying Hindu activists in Godhra--and builds a grand narrative of Hindu nationalism...Nussbaum sees lessons in India's democratic achievements for the rest of the world, particularly America. Her thesis supports Gandhi's claim that "the real struggle that democracy must wage is the struggle within the individual self, between the urge to dominate and defile the other, and a willingness to live respectfully on terms of compassion and equality." (Salil Tripathi *New Statesman* 2007-08-06) Nussbaum sounds a wake-up call to those who may have been unaware of the ugly nature of events in India in recent times, and the hate-filled ideology that informs them...As further evidence of the undemocratic danger that India now faces, Nussbaum turns to the attempt of the Hindu Right to hijack history and rewrite the Indian past to demonize Muslims and glorify Hindus. (David Arnold *Times Literary Supplement* 2007-08-24) At a time when India is claiming more of the world's attention, the philosopher Nussbaum offers an informatively rich and sophisticated analysis of democracy and religious extremism there. (Lucian W. Pye *Foreign Affairs* 2007-09-01) *The Clash Within* has a salutary message for crusading secularists as well as for lovers of India. (David Goodall *The Tablet* 2007-08-25) In *The Clash Within*, a passionate look at the crisis of democracy and religious violence in India, Martha Nussbaum provides a detailed reconstruction of the genocide she says occurred in Gujarat. She shows that the violence had been planned well in advance, and she chronicles the failures of the state to prosecute the accused Hindu-right activists or their mentors in

the Bharatiya Janata Party...Nussbaum says the main purpose of her book is to inform European and American readers about a "complex and chilling case of religious violence that does not fit some common stereotypes about the sources of religious violence in today's world." She does that well. (Basharat Peer The Nation 2007-11-19)This is a humanistic and psychological study that traces the [Hindu] Right's rage to reaction against both the Muslim and British conquests of India, which humiliated and shamed Hindus...Instead of the "clash of civilizations," Nussbaum sees a clash within each culture, but her book could serve as a Huntington case study of the roots and rise of Hindutva (Hinduness). (M. G. Roskin Choice 2007-10-01)Martha Nussbaum is a distinguished American philosopher, whose formidable corpus of academic work is the more remarkable for her enlisting of philosophy in the service of her commitment to a more just and rights-respecting world. Nussbaum is also a passionate Indophile who has collaborated, with Amartya Sen, on the capabilities approach to human, and especially womens, development. This bookwritten chiefly for an American audienceis an expression of her deep personal engagement with the challenges of pluralism in Indian democracy. (Niraja Gopal Jayal Outlook India 2007-07-16)The Clash Within is a book of and for our time. It will profoundly change the way we think about religio-national violence and about pluralism and democracy. Nussbaums persuasive tour de force makes clear that cultural diversity is a source of innovation and creativity and that a national identity that is layered and multiple, rather than exclusive or exclusionary, leads to cosmopolitan thinking and cultural innovation. Her command of the ethical, legal and sociopolitical problems that a political reading of religion poses for a multicultural plural democracy makes this work essential reading for anyone interested in the role of religion and the future of the nation-state. , (Tulasi Srinivas Harvard Divinity Bulletin 2008-01-01)In an age of academic specialization, [Nussbaum] is one of the few modern renaissance scholars...The Clash Within should be read not only by those interested in India's present and future, but by anyone seeking to understand the processes by which even the most complex and sophisticated societies can navigate their way into a morass of violent intolerance. (Irfan Yusuf Weekend Australian 2008-08-16)About the AuthorMartha C. Nussbaum is Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago.