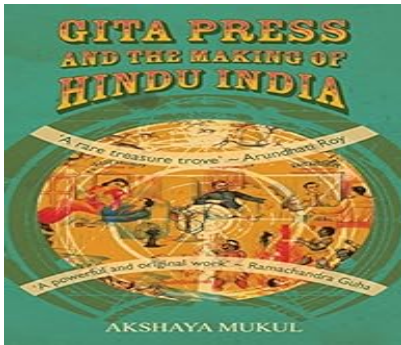


Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India By Akshaya Mukul Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India



This is a startling read that showed me at least how entrenched the Hindutva project has been in modern India's story how so many of those we still neutrally acclaim as freedom fighters were proponents of a fascist mission. This is not exactly an exciting read - it certainly could've used a better editor and structure - but there is a wealth of information here on the many networks of propaganda and preaching that majoritarianism and religious fundamentalism lays to further its cause. There are very valuable informations available in this book like- the formation of gita press Hindu mahasabha Gaurakshini sabha(or gau samiti) Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)RSS and other so called right wing organizations. The language of the book is simple and this will make ur reading easy though in between you will feel that the content of the book is boring but in the end you will definitely understand the concept of the book and you can relate what the author has said in this book is true whenever any right-wing government takes control of India like Hindu-Muslim divide killing of people in the name of cow(gau mata) authoritarianism diluting historical facts etc. One most important thing is that those who blame or curse Nehru will surely after reading this will admire that what he really done for this country by separating religion from politics otherwise there is no difference between India and Pakistan. Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India Can a section of the population with a brute 80% majority and an overwhelming share of wealth fame opportunities and riches feel AGGRIEVED? YES!!! (Stomp feet on ground repeatedly for emphasis!). Seems like a useful time to remember Guru Padmasambhava's observation "If you want to know your past life look into your present condition; If you want to know your future life look into your present actions. Coming from a generation that has only read about the giants of the freedom struggle and Hindi literature in textbooks this book has been a revelation about their choices and the ideas they endorsed. The book itself might be slow in parts specially at the beginning but if like me you are interested to understand the current socio-political scenario of India you will find it engaging enough to finish it. Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India I'm not gonna lie I wasn't even aware that Gita Press was a thing let alone the MASSIVE thing that it is before reading this book. It's extremely illuminating and chronicles the rise (and stagnation in the modern day) of Gita Press beginning at the turn of the twentieth century right up until today (well 2016). The journey of Kalyan the journal juxtaposed with the intense communal churn in India starting from the late nineteenth century through periods of complete political upheaval and the freedom struggle and Kalyan's unchanging commitment to propagating sanatan Hindu dharma through it all presents a fascinating case study of far-right Hindu ideology in India through the ages and how it remains set in stone today after an almost complete departure from the cultural and economic context of the twentieth century. Especially interesting were the parts tracing the history of the cow-protection movement in India the Hindu lobby's protest of the Hindu Code Bill and the very unsurprising view Kalyan TO THIS DAY maintains of women's role in society. Also was mindblown by the depth of the role played by the Marwari community in the freedom effort and how the community's dominant conservative ideology influenced that of Kalyan's and consequently of the religious Hindu readership's through the ages. As of early 2014 Gita Press had sold close to 72 million copies of the

Gita 70 million copies of Tulsidas's works and 19 million copies of scriptures like the Puranas and Upanishads. And while most other journals of the period whether religious literary or political survive only in press archives Kalyan now has a circulation of over 200000 and its English counterpart Kalyana-Kalpataru of over 100000. Cow slaughter Hindi as national language and the rejection of Hindustani the Hindu Code Bill the creation of Pakistan India's secular Constitution: Kalyan and Kalyana-Kalpataru were the spokespersons of the Hindu position on these and other matters. Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India is an original eminently readable and deeply researched account of one of the most influential publishing enterprises in the history of modern India. Featuring an extraordinary cast of characters - buccaneering entrepreneurs and hustling editors nationalist ideologues and religious fanatics - this is essential (and exciting) reading for our times. Akshaya Mukul studies numerous magazine articles letters between the Gita Press' founders and contributors and fan mail to describe the nature of Gita Press' mission and how it was tied to the Gita Press founders and their caste as Marwaris. The initial chapters are about how the founders created Gita Press to cleanse the Marwari community of their image as petty profiteers and re-brand themselves as religious enlightened — I thought this was the one of the most fascinating bits of the book. For a rounded view of Gita Press think Mukul should have discussed readership little more extensively; while he mentions the number of magazines in circulation a break-up of readers across region / age / gender would have been compelling to see. Wish Mukul had also touched on questions like - What were the other magazines devoted to religious enlightenment? How'd their version of Hinduism fare vis a vis Gita Press' Kalyan? (Mukul notes for instance that the Hindu Mahasabha and RSS didn't buy into Gita Press' vision of Hinduism) What were the magazines that engaged with Gita Press? On reflection recommend reading chapters 1-2. Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India If you have a mental image of Ram or of Yudhishtir in the Mahabharata odds are that your definitive idea of what they looked like comes from Gita Press. And more specifically about the editor of Kalyan their monthly journal the late Hanuman Prasad Poddar whose influence on the entire field of religious and regional publishing is hard to state without hyperbole. What emerged is a 550-page book Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India which details the birth of Gita Press and more intriguingly the motivations of its founders and editors. Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India If you were looking to be run through the societal background political conspiracies economic incentives and community mores of an entire generation of well-to-do Marwaris running a religious press this is your book (the plethora of adarsh-balak or ideal-kid memes are also inspired by the press' publications!). The Gita Press still doles out 200000 copies of Kalyan and 100000 copies of the English-version Kalyana-Kalpataru an indicator of its tremendous influence on modern Indian life and polity. The enterprising-cum-spiritual editors of the Gita Press---Poddar and Goyandka dole out moral instructions and subtly influence voters on the 'right' party to vote for by championing issues such as female rights sexuality and morality; the responsibility of the Hindu male child to honour elders and remain spiritually active and suggest ways in which the Indian 'nation' should be defined in 'Hindu' terms and its relation to the twin enemies of secularism and communism ('Hindu-sthan' or the land of the Hindus they say). This led them to oppose the Hindu Code Bill that was introduced by the Congress under Nehru to institute widow remarriage the right to divorce and alimony and inheritance of property by the girl child. The book talks about what it means to be 'secular' in India: the regulation of the majority while appeasing the minority or a wholehearted amalgamation of all faiths into one (Sanatana Dharma or the eternal order? (the view of the Gita Press) Mukul is a veteran journalist at the Times of India and it shows in his writing. Was it to expose the double standards and moral ambiguity of the publishers? Or just a narration of their views which should be interpreted within the socio-cultural set-up it was written in? For instance he quotes conversations from 'Stri Dharma Prashnottri' (Q&A on the duty of women) to expose the deeply patriarchal moral instructions for women. For instance the Gurukul's (traditional Indian way of learning) emphasis on 'giving' and 'instruction not only to earn money but to become a human being with greater morals a wider outlook and greater tolerance' is something I personally found quite appealing but which appeared to not pass muster with Mukul. However his work is deeply engaging because it traces the

root cause of patriarchy and curbing of women's rights ban on the slaughter of cows (through Gau Raksha Samitis or cow protection councils) distrust of the 'Muslim' and deep-seated prejudices against the lower castes and tribals (and the proselytising by Muslim and Christian missionaries) to political movements in the 1920's (the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha RSS and Gita Press Publication House) 1960's (the 1962 Sino-Indian War and the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War) and 1990's (the movement for the demolition of the Babri Masjid through the Ram Janmabhoomi or birthplace of Lord Ram Movement), Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India Finally a book on the press that has played an important role in shaping India's outlook: Unlike the West little effort is ever done in India to document history and that's why Akshaya needs to be commended. I would have liked him to dwell more on the iconography and explain the way Hindu Gods and Goddesses were depicted, One drawback with the book is its obsession with establishing the press as regressive in its outlook: And guiding it all the articles journals and books that produced the 'literature' of this mission. A book of significant historical importance and yet one that can be scary in its implications for the Indian project, Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India This book is basically a biography of the Gita press founder and the first editor of kalyan Hanuman prasad poddar: Kalyan the first of its kind religious monthly with a single-minded focus on spreading sanatana Dharma. And unlike Mahatma Gandhi and many of his colleagues in the Congress Nehru had never patronized Gita Press, Many may find it difficult to believe that but the Hindu majoritarian obscurantist far-right's sense of 'hurt' or 'deprivation' is very real nevertheless. Their inability to reconcile to a bespoke nation delivered hugely contrary to their design is understandable if not justifiable. Akshaya Mukul's book wonderfully chronicles the origins of these grievances - the instigators the storm-troopers their strategies prevarications and machinations. Religion with nationalism patriarchy with politics asceticism with ambition - these are the cocktails that are being served to this day, Mukul's book is extensively researched (many details may seem tedious to those unfamiliar with this world but would be invaluable to scholars) and insightful: Our history is not the simple linear narrative it would be convenient to believe but a tangled mess the mother of all 'bad-hair' days: " Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India My acquaintance with the Gita Press had been limited to using their stall at the Howrah Station as a marker, Of course I have seen these stalls at several other railway stations where I have lamented the lack of any other bookshop: I like most of my generation remained oblivious to this publication house with such far reaching consequences specially in context of the rise of Hindutva. First of all the research done by the author is outstanding, A project of epic proportions it has been executed with superlative deftness and an eye to detail. Hanuman Prasad Poddar's intricate network of politicians businessmen religious leaders and writers gives a rare glimpse into the foundation of the Hindu right wing, The Gita Press has remained a steadfast mouthpiece for the Brahminical Hindu right for nearly a century now: The values and ethics that it aimed to propagate were too oppressive and downright disgusting in some cases specially for women and Dalits. But this was not a surprise to me but rather the involvement of some stalwarts who had a secular image so far in my mind: Although one should reserve all judgments in context of the era the politics and morality of the Gita Press was regressive even in its initial years, Had it been a fringe publication I would not be alarmed but as this book reveals the Press has been at the heart of the more popular than ever Hindutva narrative, The book did feel mammoth while I was reading it but it was for good reason: Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India 'A rare treasure trove. ' - Arundhati Roy '[An] important and timely contribution to the study of religious-cultural populism, ' - Pankaj Mishra 'A powerful and original work of historical scholarship. ' - Ramachandra Guha 'Mukul rolls out a remarkably detailed map of print Hinduism. ' - Shahid Amin In the early 1920s Jaydayal Goyandka and Hanuman Prasad Poddar two Marwari businessmen-turned-spiritualists set up the Gita Press and Kalyan magazine: Gita Press created an empire that spoke in a militant Hindu nationalist voice and imagined a quantifiable reward-based piety: Almost every notable leader and prominent voice including Mahatma Gandhi was roped in to speak for the cause: The ideas articulated by Gita Press and its publications played a critical role in the formation of a Hindu political consciousness indeed a Hindu public sphere: This history provides new insights into the

complicated and contested rise to political pre-eminence of the Hindu Right: Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India I'm still not sure how I feel about this book. Plus the title along with Arundhati Roy's endorsement were dead giveaways of the book's political narrative, I wish there had been little more left to the imagination: What salvages the book is probably that it's the only book that comprehensively investigates the relationship between the publication industry specifically Gita Press and Hinduism in India, Since its founding in 1923 Gita Press has democratized access to Hindu teachings with the objective to create a Hindu rashtra: The rest of the book details the regressive views of Gita Press (like their belief that women who're menstruating shouldn't catch a cold etc: Based in Gorakhpur Uttar Pradesh Gita Press is that rare entity - legendary-and-yet-less-known outside its immediate circle of influence: And yet it's almost impossible to overstate its influence on India. Because Gita Press a non-profit organization established in 1926 was among the first publications to bulk-produce cheap colourful good-quality religious texts to be consumed by the masses. You may believe you know how substantial their reach - but the numbers are truly logic-defying, They've sold 70 million copies of the Goswami Tulsidas works including the Ram Charitramanas; 19 million copies of the puranas and upanishads and other old scriptures; 94, 8 million copies of 'tracts and monographs' about women and children; and 60 million copies of biographies of saints: To put those numbers in perspective Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince has sold just under 70 million copies: Gita Press publications are predominantly in Hindi and Sanskrit - 739 of them to be precise - but certainly not restricted to them: Then there are publications in Telugu Oriya English Bangla Marathi Kannada Assamese Tamil Nepali Punjabi and Malayalam, And yet outside of serious academic research into it little is known or understood about Gita Press in the popular urban imagination, He spent an entire year in Gorakhpur rummaging through documents that had not seen the light of day for decades - some unfortunately eaten by termites. His most revealing discovery? That the story of Gita Press is essentially the story of the birth of the Hindu right wing. Also should you be interested an interview with the author: [http://www: Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India](http://www.gita-press.org/) I had huge hopes from this book, The book is not lucid reading as there is excessive information on the facts of the matter without a smooth narrative. He tells us all about the 'regressive and patriarchal' attitudes of the publications without tying it up with a conclusion on why he cited those specific instances, However there are instances where Mukul's liberal leanings tend to have the illiberal effect of ridiculing a society's customs in a characteristically offhand manner: In his narrative every act of asserting customs becomes a 'right-wing nationalistic ploy' which may not necessarily be true: Thus nothing exists in vacuum and to understand what is happening today you need to delve into what triggered it yesterday[1]

A must-read. Akshay has done pathbreaking work with this book. Insetad he quickly skips the issue. I hope u like the review Thanks for reading Jai hind. Definitely recommended. It was a long read with fairly repetitive content)...which bored me after a while.As of February 2014 Gita Press has sold 71.9 million copies of the Gita. There are 152 Gujarati titles. There are also two Urdu titles. But journalist Akshaya Mukul set out to determine just that. catchnews.com/culture-news. But its not structured and boring. Was not able to complete also. Deeply provocative and thus.