Twitter Thread by madhuri sastry



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"Hinduism was one of the world's most easy-going faith traditions, famed for it's non-persecutory history."

I can assure you, it is NOT.

It is neither easy-going, nor non-persecutory. In fact it is the very opposite.

Thread.

> Hinduism was historically one of the world's most easy-going faith traditions, famed for its non-persecutory history. Now this ... pic.twitter.com/Obln4cns7b
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> — David Frum (@davidfrum) February 3, 2021

Modern Hinduism is a British colonial concept, created in concert with Brahmins, who are at the "apex" of the caste system. The word "Hindoo" in fact, is of Persian origin, meaning a person who lives in the Indus valley.

Colonialists who attempted to study Indian religion in the 18th century (NOT, at the time, Hinduism) were baffled by it. Strata of people living distinctly (the caste system) with overlapping gods didn't fit into their Judeo-Christian understanding of religion.

Which has an ecclesiastical authority, a holy book etc., which Indian religions lacked. In studying "The Hindoo", colonialists prioritized textual sources of knowledge, which is where Brahmins, the priestly caste with a monopoly over education/text come in.

Brahminism was a distinct "religion" (although i don't really want to use the term in this way) that was frankly terrorized of other castes. In fact, the very basis of Brahminism is oppression. Brahmins had scholars who recorded *Brahminical* canon textually.

When the British looked to them for text material, what was "Brahminism" became "Hinduism" writ large. Brahmins were only too gleeful, and why wouldn't they be, placed as they were at the apex of this new religion.

So that's about "Hinduism". This idea of it being easy-going and non-persecutory has its origin in Romantic Orientalism: a strand of European philosophers who fetishized and exoticized everything about the "mystical magical East"

In this construction the West is culturally vapid, self-interested, the East its mirror image: culturally superior, altruistic, benevolent. Better than the West in oh so many ways. Karma? What a (misinterpreted) concept!

Anwyay, this narrative of Indian superiority was catnip to the Indian intelligentsia: a new class of Indians, educated in the Western tradition, who could never really get over the blow of being colonized.

It was balm to them. They could blame British guns, they could lament their own slow technological development -- these were the only reasons that we, culturally and morally and spiritually superior folk, could actually be colonized.

Romantic Orientalism - balm though it may have been - is still really damaging because the very reasons that Indian subcontinental people were fetishized were also reasons for their oppression. Spiritual and savage are two sides of the same coin.

In the late 1800s, Swami Vivekanand - who took this romantic orientalist conceptualization of "Hinduism" pretty seriously - went to the World Parliament of Religions (uninvited). It was there that "Hinduism" first gained international acceptance as a "religion"

And the romantic notions of Hindusim that Frum articulates thus become crystallized.

In sum then, "Hinduism" is a modern construct, with a modern history. Because of the caste system it has always been deeply oppressive and terribly violent. In fact non-Brahmins have long-converted to other religions like Islam and Buddhism to escape Brahminical tyranny.

It's time we set the record straight about Hinduism. In the West today, Indian-inspired culture like yoga contribute heavily to the whitewashing of its real history and the atrocities that have been perpetrated in its name, that continue to be perpetrated in its name.

■STOP FETISHIZING HINDUISM■