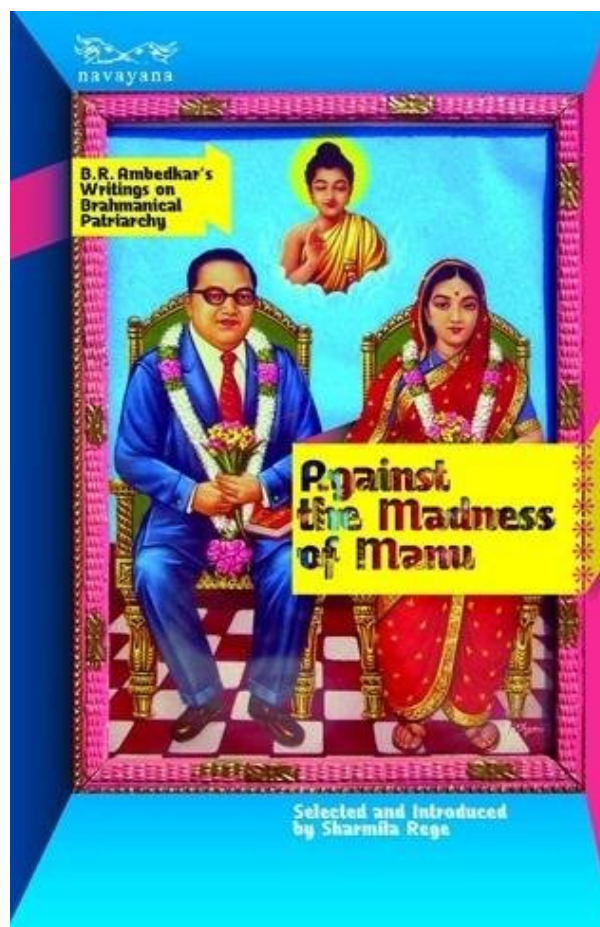
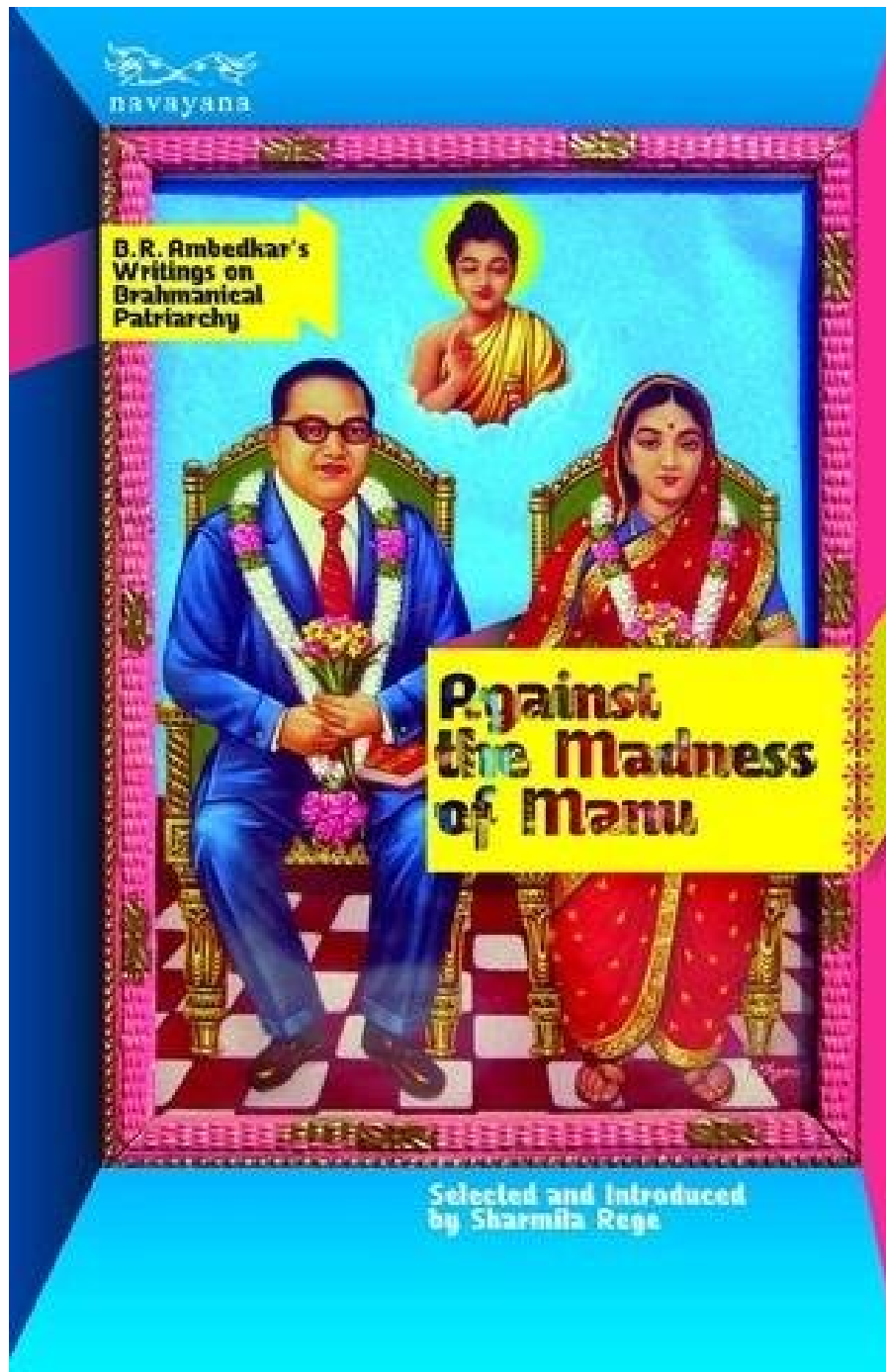


# AGAINST THE MADNESS OF MANU: B.R AMBEDKAR'S WRITINGS ON BRAHMANICAL PATRIARCHY BY SHARMILA REGE



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## **Review**

A brilliant and timely intervention in feminist scholarship in India, Dalit studies, legal sociology, and the sociology of caste --Kamala Visweswaran, author of Un/Common Cultures

In this volume, Sharmila Rege provides us a theoretically advanced interpretation of Babasaheb s thinking on the interstices of the caste and feminist questions. Rege s work assumes significance especially in the context of limited engagement with caste in mainstream feminism --Gopal Guru, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University

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# **AGAINST THE MADNESS OF MANU: B.R AMBEDKAR'S WRITINGS ON BRAHMANICAL PATRIARCHY BY SHARMILA REGE PDF**

A Brahman mega convention in contemporary Pune reasserts faith in endogamy for national interest , and imposes new codes on Brahman women. A Brahman Congress leader suggests that a Dalit chief minister be raped and paid compensation. In his 1916 paper *Castes in India* , the 25-year-old Ambedkar offered the insight that the caste system thrives by its control of women, and that caste is a product of sustained endogamy. Since then, till the time he piloted the Hindu Code Bill, seeking to radicalise women s rights in the 1950s, Ambedkar deployed a range of arguments to make his case against Brahmanism and its twin, patriarchy.

While Ambedkar s original insights have been neglected by sociologists, political theorists and even feminists, they have been kept alive, celebrated and memorialised by Dalit musical troupes and booklets in Maharashtra. Sharmila Rege, in this compelling selection of Ambedkar s writings on the theme of Brahmanical patriarchy, illuminates for us his unprecedented sociological observations. Rege demonstrates how and why Ambedkar laid the base for what was, properly speaking, a feminist take on caste.

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Ms Sharmila Rege's book *Against the Madness of Manu*

By Paul De Marco

Ms Sharmila Rege's book *Against the Madness of Manu* is an essential contribution to many fields of study as well as to India's and the World's past and present history. The present wave of ordered rapes makes this sadly clear albeit in a caricatural fashion. For Westerners now faced with the cynical strategy of their leading classes (the infamous 1 % and their allies and servi in camera) to implement a « return » to inequalities and obscurantism based on « reference to Authority » and on the barbaric use of the Nietzschean Hammer, Ms Rege's presentation of Ambedkar's thesis on castes, studied violence and endogamy will act as a revelation.

Those who already know Nietzsche and his current philo-Semitic Nietzschean unearthing will immediately appreciate the crucial importance of this book. Of course, Ambedkar's analysis of endogamy precedes that of Germaine's Tillon: Both are essential for social sciences as well as for the development of a modern non-Freudian and non-Jungian psychoanalysis. This will be occultated by academics only at the cost of transforming themselves into servi in camera as is proven in my *Pour Marx, contre le nihilisme*.

Ambedkar's pioneering periodisation of endogamy and castes origins remains vital. It does not concern India's only. Of course as Paul Lafargue, the great student of G. Vico, showed, this question involves the transition from pre-patriarchal societies to patriarchal ones. Thus, Prehistory must now be brought to task, in particular the analysis of fecundity rituals. This is often occulted by a calculated Western and generally academic conformist Puritanism, as much as Pompeii's frescoes which are but a pale Roman echo of the earlier Neolithic and Protohistoric pictograms. These fecundity rituals provide the main transition between « primitive exogamy » and hierarchical endogamy. The façades of many old temples in Southern India are also speaking to a later stage of this transition.

Because this touches upon the understanding of sexualized reproduction, one must also look at the behavior of higher primates, something which has already started. This will illuminate with a new light the various lineage structures analyzed by Lévi-Strauss and others as well as their social and psychological consequences. In the end, the simple arithmetic of sexualized reproduction illustrates in an irrefutable way the difference between inequality and difference, male and female contributing equally to the renewal of the human species. This equality supposes the wide and unfettered circulation of women and thus a new exogamy founded in gender parity and equal access to employment with equal pay. When this realization of human emancipation is negated, more or less unfortunate social and cultural mediations are invented to deal with the ensuing problems: Ms Rege's rightly points to sati and enforced widowhood as well as to institutionalized violence. When the negation of human equality rests on a strict and reinforced endogamy (Manu, Nietzsche and his teachers etc.) the human species is endangered (consanguinity, cultural closure, obscurantism and structural violence against the people.)

It does not come as a surprise to see the confluence between women's liberation movement and general human emancipation: One beautiful example is Diderot's understanding of the liberating impact of Polynesian lineage structures which he lays out in his *Suppléments au Voyage de Bougainville*. The best revolutionaries understood this immediately, including many pioneering women. The Declaration of Human Rights remains a Declaration of Man Rights without it.

Ambedkar's lesson on castes and emancipation remains essential for all, not only for India. It is only sad that life did not grant Ms Rege's more time to offer her own essential contributions. She is clearly right in stating that the celebration of December 25, 1927 is not in opposition to the March 8 celebration, quite the opposite.

Paul De Marco.

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