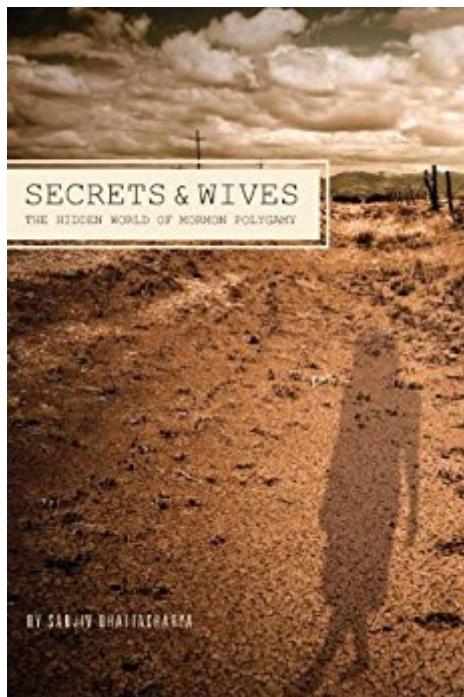


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Secrets And Wives: The Hidden World Of Mormon Polygamy



Synopsis

What do we really know about modern practicing polygamists—not fictional ones like the Henrickson family on HBO's *Big Love*? We've seen the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the news, the underage brides in pioneer dresses on a Texas ranch. But the FLDS is just one of many groups that have broken with mainstream Mormonism to follow those parts of Joseph Smith's doctrine disavowed by the LDS Church. Gaining unprecedented access to these communities, journalist Sanjiv Bhattacharya reveals a shadow country teeming with small town messiahs, dark secrets, and stories both heartbreakingly strange. Polygamy's dark side—incest, forced marriages, and physical abuse—is laid bare. But Bhattacharya also finds warmth in the fundamentalist diaspora and even finds himself taking an ideological stand for polygamy's legalization. More than just an exposé of Mormon polygamy, *Secrets and Wives* is the personal journey of a foreign atheist and liberal, a stranger in a strange land who grapples with hard questions about marriage, monogamy, and the very nature of faith.

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Customer Reviews

When I was about 10 years old I learned about reincarnation from somewhere, probably something on TV that I discussed with my mother. Later that same week I was standing in the lunch line at school and holding court with my new-found knowledge. Because my classmates hadn't heard about this phenomenon, I soon had a rapt audience and began to embellish the tiny fragment of the philosophy that I understood. "You're a 3", I told another little girl whose big brown eyes stared intently into mine. "You've had 3 past lives. I'm a 6, that's as many times as you can go." I was making it up on the spot. Another girl I barely knew approached and earnestly said, "Do ME" and shoved her face right up into mine. I scowled and gazed deeply into her ingenuous eyes, and it suddenly, and chillingly dawned on me that we weren't playing a game. The other little girls in my 4th grade class were genuinely seeking information from me, and they were anxious to believe my lies. "I can't do any more of you," I said, "It's too tiring." This is the closest I've ever come to forming a cult. This brief brush with persuasion has stayed with me for 40 years because of the attention I wasn't used to, and the intensity of the desire of my young friends. I was also strangely frightened: I didn't WANT to keep up the lie. I didn't want to come clean, either, but I knew even at that young age the responsibility even of maintaining the facade for a few more days. The naivete, the enthusiasm and the gullibility of my young would-be followers dismayed me, and in a way I couldn't understand then, broke my heart. If I hadn't had that long-ago experience I think it would be hard for me to believe in cults today.

I randomly came across "Secrets and Wives" and was immediately hooked! I'm an avid reader, particularly of Mormon history, FLDS culture & polygamy in the U.S. I live in Utah, right in the heart of Mormon Country: Utah County, A.K.A: 'Happy Valley'. Sanjiv's description was spot on in regards to the culture, or lack thereof, here in Utah. I became an instant fan! I was intrigued by the unique position Bhattacharya was in as an Atheist Englishman from India. I wasn't sure he could pull it off, much less gather enough personal research from the secretive and openly racist cults (albeit some more 'openly' than others) to fill an entire book. He not only managed to pull it off, he produced one of the most captivating books on the subject! I found it fascinating how he was able to get some of these people to talk to him, and in some cases to befriend him. His interaction with the women from the "Order" (Kingston clan) wasn't exactly harmonious, but I found it so interesting that they were even willing to meet with him at all. 'The Order' seems to be the most clandestine and covert of the Mormon cults, making his interviews with the indoctrinated Stepford wives all the more fascinating. My heart ached for these women. They're victims of a lifetime of conditioning at the hands of power hungry little boys pretending to be men. Sanjiv carefully explores the contrast between the friendly

and open people of Centennial Park to the more restrictive enigma known as "the Order". Although he manages to stay professional in most of the interviews, I loved that he was human and emotionally invested in some of their lives. Like his visit to the Rock when he genuinely tries to warn the old man of the mail/money scam he's caught up in.

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