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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 heartbreaking and 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.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 15 hours and 26 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios

Audible.com Release Date: July 19, 2013

Language: English

ASIN: B00E0QZ0Z0

Best Sellers Rank: #122 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies >

Fundamentalism #539 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Mormonism #2199 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Religion & Spirituality > Christianity

## Customer Reviews

This is a fascinating look at polygamous cults who all believed they were accurate in their portrayal of truth and the importance of living the "Principle." An outsider who enters the world of these groups is not usually welcomed, and yet Sanjiv usually does what he has to in order to gain the confidence of the group he is investigating. All in all, this is a worthwhile read and you won't believe some of the things these folks do in order to live with multiple wives in this 21st century.

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. I felt that he sincerely cared for some of these people and perhaps he went into it biased, but I think he managed to be objective in the end. His passion was apparent throughout the book. This has turned out to be one of my favorite books on the topic; it's not only amusingly written, it's a very informative and interesting read! I DEFINITELY recommend!!!

Somewhere along the line I became fascinated with these books about polygamous Mormon cults. You can read my other reviews about other books on the topic. This book approaches the topic from the angle of an investigative reporter who makes contacts with members of the groups, and tries to report objectively about the individual sects. He talks with current and former members of each group. While it's obviously not as intimate as the books written by the women who have "escaped" from these groups, his angle of an outsider looking for explanations, and his astute analysis of the personalities sheds new light on the topic. He begins the book by visiting the mainstream LDS enclave in Salt Lake City. He delves into their history, concentrating much effort on how Joseph Smith established Mormonism. It seems incredible to me that people actually bought into Joseph Smith's stories. The author brings out the policies the church had towards women and African

Americans. He uncovers some history that the Mormons would rather be kept hidden away. All this makes sense. How can we hope to understand the off-shoot cults if we don't understand the LDS church. The author then begins digging into the particulars of several of the diverse Mormon cults. It turns out that whether they are the oddly dressed FLDS or the modern, can't tell by looking at them groups, they are all oppressive to women and children. Most of them revolve around a prophet who is corrupt and controlling. Patterns began to emerge showing what kind of people are drawn into these cults--women with low self esteem, people with a need to belong. Despite the often depressing subject matter the author has a wonderful wit about him. His humor is often self deprecating. I know it sounds strange to think that a book on this topic could also be funny, but trust me, it works. I enjoyed his writing style a lot, and will watch for other books that I hope he will write. I think a reader interested in the topic will still do well to read a couple of books by some of the wives, but I do recommend this book as well. It would have been nice to have some pictures, but it is understandable that these mistrustful people weren't posing for pictures. The Kindle version of the book has no navigation or text problems.

Amazing read. Fascinating story full of cringes and head-shakes but also laughs. Love this dude's conversational writing style. Really good book and a satisfying peek behind some really weird curtains.

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