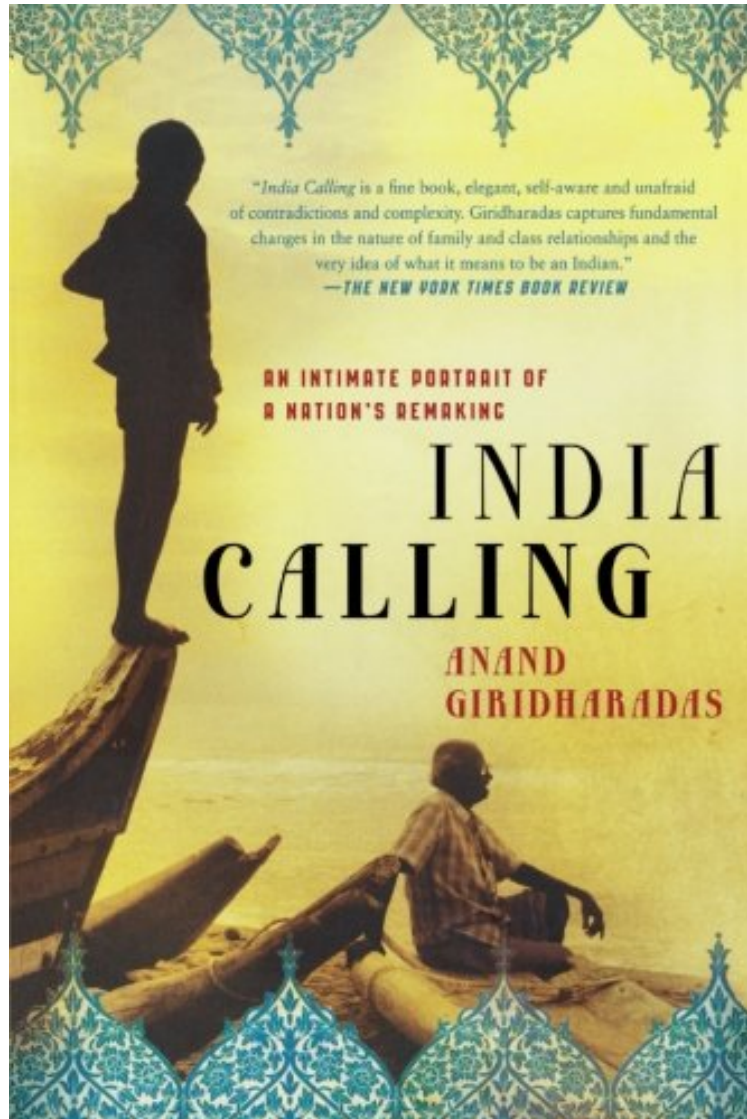


(Free and download) India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking

## India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking

Anand Giridharadas

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#478492 in Books Anand Giridharadas 2012-01-03 2012-01-03Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.28 x .80 x 5.571, .55 #File Name: 1250001722288 pagesIndia Calling An Intimate Portrait of a Nation s Remaking | File size: 34.Mb

**Anand Giridharadas : India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Cultural Insights into India's Growing Privileged ClassBy Clifford D. ConnerFor Americans looking for insights into Indian culture, this interesting and well-written book can be helpful.

Its value is limited, however, because its insights are for the most part applicable only to a distinct minority of the Indian population: the rapidly growing, modernizing "middle class." The author is a young man of Indian parentage who was born and raised in the United States. Apparently feeling that in America he could never escape the "foreignness" of his heritage, in young adulthood he decided to move to India and seek his fortune there. His observations of the cultural differences he encountered are perceptive and worthwhile, but his ideological limitations lower their value. He portrays the young, tech-savvy, upwardly mobile urban professionals he encounters as the wave of the future of India. The kernel of truth here is that in recent years a large number of Indians have indeed experienced economic prosperity. But unfortunately that "large number" is but a drop in the bucket of the immense Indian population. If one or two hundred million people have risen out of abject poverty in India to become "middle class," that is certainly a good thing, but it does not negate the much more important fact that more than a billion people remain mired in economic degradation there. It is not that the author is unconcerned with the fate of the still-impoverished billion, but his innocent faith in free-market economics leads him to assume that the trend of rising prosperity will continue until the "middle class" encompasses the entire population. His optimism in that regard leads him to focus on the culture of India's privileged gilded youth and to pay little attention to the billion who still live outside the gated communities.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must read  
By Megha  
Such a fantastic book which eloquently puts into words what many Indian-Americans feel and what some Indians may be feeling as the country modernizes. The push and pull between traditional and modern; the conflict both within oneself and taking place in the wider society is beautifully illustrated by Giridharadas in this book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A fine, thought-provoking read  
By DReader  
Giridharadas arranges his text around several themes ("Ambition," "Pride," "Anger") and includes family stories and interviews with people living in India to illuminate those themes. He strikes a nice balance between personal history, anthropological observation, personal reflection, and newspaper reporting, weaving elements of all four together in this nuanced and highly readable exploration of the social and psychological impact of the economic changes in contemporary India. He is neither seduced by the rhetoric of globalization nor nostalgic about the distant past: he readily acknowledges the contradictions and complexities of India's negotiations with modernity. His prose is just beautiful: crystal clear, at times luminous.

The one and two-star reviews that accuse of Giridharadas of not being Indian enough, or not knowing enough about India because he didn't spend most of his life there, seem to me grossly unfair, but they are interesting in the ways that they shed light on the same kinds of cultural struggles and negotiations that this text seeks to investigate.

"[A] smart, evocative and sharply observed memoir . . . Giridharadas's narrative gusto makes the familiar fresh." *The Wall Street Journal*  
Anand Giridharadas sensed something was afoot as his plane from America prepared to land in Bombay. An elderly passenger looked at him and said, "We're all trying to go that way," pointing to the rear. "You, you're going this way?"  
Giridharadas was returning to the land of his ancestors, amid an unlikely economic boom. But he was more interested in its cultural upheaval, as a new generation has sought to reconcile old traditions and customs with new ambitions and dreams.  
In *India Calling*, he brings to life the people and the dilemmas of India today, through the prism of his migr family history and his childhood memories of India. He introduces us to entrepreneurs, radicals, industrialists, and religious seekers, but, most of all, to Indian families. Through their stories, and his own, he paints an intimate portrait of a country becoming modern while striving to remain itself.

*India Calling* is a fine book, elegant, self-aware and unafraid of contradictions and complexity. Giridharadas captures fundamental changes in the nature of family and class relationships and the very idea of what it means to be an Indian.

*The New York Times Book Review* [A] smart, evocative and sharply observed memoir . . . Giridharadas's narrative gusto makes the familiar fresh. *The Wall Street Journal* [A] readable, intriguing book . . . [Giridharadas is] a marvelous journalist--intrepid, easy to like, curious . . . *India Calling* connects us to a new India, and an engaging new voice. *The Plain Dealer (Cleveland)* A beautifully written, intelligent look at the cultural history and changes of India . . . The book [is] worth reading because of [Giridharadas's] skill as a writer . . . Giridharadas publishes sentences and paragraphs that are exquisitely worded, to the point of becoming downright memorable, and certainly quotable. *Star Tribune (Minneapolis)* The moving story of an unexpected romance between a young American and a country he never knew was his to love. *San Jose Mercury News* Capturing the monumental changes sweeping India is a feat many attempt but few manage . . . In *India Calling*, Giridharadas has written the best of this now established genre . . . A finely observed portrait of the modern nation. *Financial Times* Eloquent . . . [Giridharadas's] gritty and witty pen portraits of a host of Indian characters and places make a great read. *Sunday Herald Sun (Melbourne, Australia)* Warm, witty and highly perceptive . . . Where Naipaul's gaze was excoriating, almost half a century later, Giridharadas's scrutiny, though no less penetrating, is kinder and gentler. In this return of the native genre, *India Calling* is an honorable successor to Naipaul's classic [*An Area of Darkness*]. *The Canberra Times* Giridharadas successfully uses his first-hand account of self-discovery to illustrate a larger picture of empowering change. *The Christian Science Monitor* I doubt that there's any writer today who is a more acute observer of the new India.' *The Christian Century* An eminently readable, closely observed book on a fascinating subject . . . [Giridharadas is] the perfect intermediary

between Western readers and the world he introduces. Readings.com.au (Australia)Giridharadas offers a fine-grained portrait of what seismic changes mean at the ground level . . . [and] captures in sharply observed portraits how people react to the gale force of a major change. Curledup.comRarely has an author deciphered the Indian enigma the way Anand Giridharadas does in *India Calling*. By lucidly portraying the country's real locomotive--its vast and populous youth--he provides the most timely and elegant guide to perhaps the most important next generation in the world. Parag Khanna, author of *The Second World and How to Run the World*Anand Giridharadas is more than just a widely admired journalist; with *India Calling* he has transformed into a fluent, witty, and intelligent writer. His very personal and perceptive look at the new India is a memorable debut, full of insight and diversion. William Dalrymple, author of *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*Anand Giridharadas has become one of the finest analysts of contemporary India. In *India Calling*, he has produced an engrossing and acutely observed appreciation of a country that is at once old and new--an enormously readable book in which everyone, at home in India or abroad, will find something distinctive and altogether challenging. Amartya Sen, Nobel laureate in economicsThe emergence of a more dynamic India has been widely observed. Less well understood are the myriad reinventions that make the New India so exciting. In *India Calling*, Anand Giridharadas renders this change on an intimate scale with a tapestry of keenly observed stories about the changing dreams and frustrations of all walks of Indians--and his own. Savvy and often moving, *India Calling* is for those who prefer the view from the ground than from thirty thousand feet. Edward Luce, author of *In Spite of the Gods: The Rise of Modern India*In this fresh, clear-eyed account of his stay, the author writes eloquently of how he came upon a very different place from where his parents grew up. Kirkus sWell thought out . . . Like a morality play, each chapter reflects a different inner quality, while woven together in the narrative are bits of the author's family history. The portraits . . . show the myriad ways in which India has changed and yet remains the same. Library JournalAbout the AuthorAnand Giridharadas writes the "Currents" column for the *International Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times* online. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, and a graduate of the University of Michigan, he worked in Bombay as a management consultant until 2005, when he began reporting from that city for the *Herald Tribune* and the *Times*. He now lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.OneDreamsAs my flight swooped down toward Bombay, an elderly Indian man leaned over and asked for help with his landing card. We started talking, and he asked why I was visiting India. Actually, I'm moving to India, I told him. His eyes bulged. They darted to my American passport on the tray table and then back up at me."We're all trying to go that way," he said after a moment, gesturing toward the plane's tail and, beyond it, the paradisiacal West. "You," he added, as if seeking to alert me to a ticketing error, "you're going this way?"And so it began.I was twenty-one and fresh out of college. My parents had left India in the 1970s, when the West seemed paved with possibility and India seemed paved with potholes. And now, a quarter century after my father first arrived as a student in America, I was flying east to make a new beginning in the land they had left.The first thing I ever learned about India was that my parents had chosen to leave it. They had begun their American lives in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, called Shaker Heights. It was a sprawling neighborhood of brick and Tudor houses, set on vast yards, with the duck-strewn ponds, meandering lanes, and ample sidewalks that had lured millions of Americans into suburbia.In Shaker Heights the rituals of my parents' youth quickly confronted new ones. Suburban Cleveland was not a place where one could easily cling to the Old Country or take refuge in multiculturalism. So they dug in, assimilated, gave my sister and me childhoods with all the American fixin's. Making snowmen with carrot noses. Washing our Toyota Cressida on Sundays, me in diapers working with a watering can. Playing catch with a vinyl baseball mitt. Trying in vain to build a tree house. Catching possums in baited cages. Meandering through summer block parties, where the rules of normal life seemed suspended: the roads were emptied of cars; fire engines rode up and down and could be boarded at will; there were more bubbles and balloons than your cheeks could blow.Shaker Heights was a warm and generous place. Family was the only community that had mattered in India; in America, my parents discovered the community itself: the people who shared recipes, gave them rides, taught them the idioms they didn't know, brought them food when they were sick. It was perhaps the grace of this welcome that inoculated them against the defensiveness and nostalgia that so often infect immigrants. They still loved India, but they never looked back. They spoke often of "Indian values," but these were abstractions meant to suffuse our being rather than commandments to live in this way or that. They accepted and came to savor the American way of life.And yet we were unmistakably Indian, too. Indianness in those days was like a secret garden to which the society around us lacked access. You needn't have gone there if you didn't want to, but it was there, a hidden world of mysteries. We had a past that others didn't; we had our little secrets of what we ate and wore when we attended a family wedding; we had dinner table stories about places and people from an almost mythical past. We had history, history being the only thing that America's abundant shores could not offer.We were raised with a different idea of family: family as the fount of everything, family as more important than friends or schools or teachers could ever be. We were raised with an Indian docility: we didn't hit or fight; we didn't play contact sports such as football or hockey but stuck to swimming and tennis. We didn'tnot then and still not todaycall our parents by their first names or curse in their presence. We got paid for losing teeth but not for doing chores. ("Should I start charging you for cooking?" my mother would ask.) We wore American clothes around the house and to school, but we were asked to wear Indian clothes for weddings and other important occasions. We ate

baingan ka bharta and rajma chawal and mutter paneer on some days and penne with tomato sauce on others. We ate meat only occasionally at home, and usually just chicken, but in restaurants we were free to explore the animal kingdom. My mother observed the Indian festival of karva chauth, in which women fast for their husbands' prosperity and well-being; in their American rendition of it, however, my father fasted for my mother, too. And so I grew up with only a faint idea that another country was also somehow mine. My notion of it was never based on India's history or traditions, its long civilizational parade; it was a first-generation idea of a place in our shared past, nostalgically shared but blessedly past. It came not through anthems and ritual feasts and the taut emotions of an Independence Day, but through the stories we were told at meals and on holidays and the characters within our extended clan. As I conjured up the country, I squeezed these things for all the juice that they possessed, searched for meaning where it may not have been, deduced from personal history the history of a people. I forged a memory of events I didn't witness, from times and places I didn't know. Reflected from afar, India was late-night phone calls that sparked the fear of a far-off death. It was calling back relatives who could not afford to call us. It was Hindu ceremonies with rice, saffron, and Kit Kat bars arrayed on a silver platter. It was the particular strain of British-public-school-meets-Bombay-boulevard English that my parents spoke, prim and propah. It was the sensible frugality of getting books from the library rather than the bookstore and of cautious restaurant ordering—always one main course less than the number of diners, with the dishes shared communally. It was observing that none of the Indian-Americans around us were professors or poets or lawyers, but rather engineers or doctors or, if particularly rambunctious, economists. Once every two or three years, we would fly east to India. The country offered a foretaste of itself in New York, in the survivalist pushing and pulling to board an airplane with assigned seats. On the other end of the voyage, coming out of the plane door, the machine-cooled air vanished at our backs, and the hot, dank, subtropical atmosphere drank us in. The lighting went from soft yellow to cheap fluorescent white. I remember the workers waiting in the aerobridge, smaller, meeker, scrawnier than the workers on the other end, laborers with the bodies of ballerinas. Consumed on these visits east, India was being picked up from the airport by my grandparents in the middle of the night. It was cramming more people into their little Maruti than that car could safely hold. It was cousins who knew how to slide their posteriors forward or backward in the car to make such cramming possible. It was the piping-hot aloo parathas that my grandmother unfailingly cooked for us upon arrival. It was sideways hugs with my female relatives that strove to avoid breast contact. It was the chauvinism of retired uncles who probed my aspirations and asked nothing of my sister's. It was the ceaseless chatter among the women of making jewelry, making clothes, making dinner. It was the acceptability of reporting toilet success and toilet failure at the breakfast table. I had the feeling in those days that we, the departed, were doing India a favor by returning. We used to pack our suitcases with gifts of what could not easily be obtained in India, from Johnnie Walker Black Label whiskey to Stilton cheese to Gap khakis. In a young child, this ferrying of goods fed a notion of scarcity in the motherland, casting us as benefactors from a land of abundance. My cousins used to ask me on these December visits if I felt Indian or American, and I remember sensing how much their self-esteem was riding on my answer. With a proudly defiant tone, I always replied "American," an answer that I knew would hurt them; this was because I felt so, and because I felt that to answer otherwise would be somehow to debase myself, to accept a lower berth in the world. India felt frozen. It was frozen in poverty, and I sensed, even as a child, that everything was shaped by scarcity: the pushing to get on the airplane, the reluctance of the wealthy to spend the most trivial sums of money, the obsession with lucrative careers and snobbery toward other pursuits. India was frozen in socialist bureaucracy, so that it was advisable to have an uncle working in the ministry if you wanted a phone connection before next year. It was frozen in beliefs: I quickly tired of going to yet another dinner party where yet another retiree would drink one whiskey too many and take me aside to condemn an imperialistic and materialistic America whose foreign policy choices, he seemed to imply, were basically my fault—even though I was ten years old, yawning, and up way past my bedtime. To this day, I cringe every time I hear the words, "Why is your America supporting Pakistan?" "Yes, uncle," I feel like saying, "the State Department got the idea from me." India was not supposed to feel foreign to me. I looked Indian, was raised by Indian parents, mingled in America with their Indian friends, and grew up devouring Indian food, having rakhi tied on my wrist by my sister, and wearing fresh clothes and lighting candles every Diwali. But in India all this dissipated, as if these ways of being Indian brought me no closer to India itself. Inevitably, time soothed some of these surface irritations and culture shocks. What endured was a wordless revulsion, deep and inarticulate, at what seemed to be the wastage of human possibility in India. Here was a great civilization of the world, once among the wealthiest and most powerful of nations, and yet, in ways that I was only beginning to grasp, so many were trapped in their boxes: the schoolchildren with brains crammed full of notes, fearful of voicing an opinion in front of their parents; the elders whose doctrines about marriage and childbearing seldom budged, no matter how the world changed; the w...