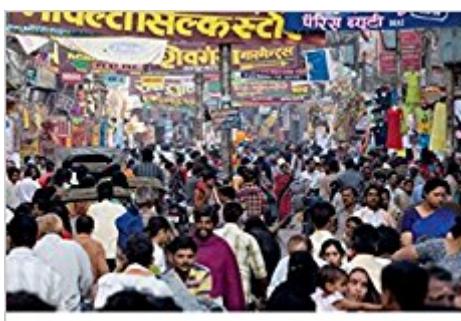
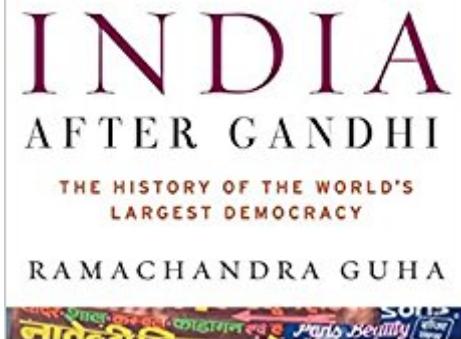


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India After Gandhi: The History Of The World's Largest Democracy



"Guha has given democratic India the rich, well-paced history it deserves." — Washington Post Book World



Synopsis

Amagisterial account of the pains, the struggles, the humiliations, and the glories of the world's largest and least likely democracy, Ramachandra Guha's India After Gandhi is a breathtaking chronicle of the brutal conflicts that have rocked a giant nation and the extraordinary factors that have held it together. An intricately researched and elegantly written epic history peopled with larger-than-life characters, it is the work of a major scholar at the peak of his abilities.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. India is the country that was never expected to ever be a country. In the late 19th century, Sir John Strachey, a senior British official, grandly opined that the territory's diverse states simply could not possess any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious. Strachey, clearly, was wrong: India today is a unified entity and a rising global power. Even so, it continues to defy explanation. India's existence, says Guha, an internationally known scholar (Environmentalism: A Global History), has also been an anomaly for academic political science, according to whose axioms cultural heterogeneity and poverty do not make a nation, still less a democratic one. Yet India continues to exist. Guha's aim in this startlingly ambitious political, cultural and social survey is to explain why and how. He cheerfully concludes that India's continuing existence results from its unique diversity and its refusal to be pigeonholed into such conventional political models as Anglo-American liberalism, French republicanism, atheistic communism or Islamist theocracy. India is proudly *sui generis*, and with August 15, 2007, being the 60th anniversary of Indian independence, Guha's magisterial history of India since that day comes not a moment too soon. 32

pages of b&w illus., 8 maps. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Historian Ramachandran Guha, the author of Environmentalism: A Global History (1999) and The Unquiet Woods (1989), among others, and a current resident of Bangalore, writes of what he knows. Weighing in at nearly 900 pages, India After Gandhi successfully clarifies the convoluted history and contradictions of the world's second most populous nation. That Guha leaves questions unanswered in a book of this scope, as one critic asserts, might be considered nit-picking. To be sure, the author does choose his questions-giving particular attention to Nehru, India's first prime minister-and he doesn't shy away from offering his (mostly optimistic) opinions on important issues throughout. Still, critics agree that Guha's effort succeeds in putting a face on a country whose political and economic history, despite its size and growing influence in the "flat-world" model, remains virtually unknown by many outside India. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc.

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This book is a good read. Author has done justice to India's fabric by not taking any sides - Hindu/ Muslim, Centre/ State, Hindi/ Tamil, Congress/ BJP, India/ Pakistan. His version of India's recent history reads like he could overcome his prejudice (or maybe he does not have many). He is written it very sensibly as if he were trying not to offend everyone. History is a tricky subject. Plenty of authors out there who write it colored. Ram has side-stepped that temptation. He uses detail and yet does not. It's a long book but a very easy read at the same time. I would especially recommend this book for Indians because we are taught something else in our classrooms. We need a balanced view more than anyone else because our State is trying to teach us a very badly coloured version of history and our Politico/ bureaucrats keep on tweaking our history every year. My history book (too socialist, bit honest) was nothing like my parents' (mostly British view of India's history) or my daughter's (too soft and yet Nationalist). It does not mean Ram's book is a bad read for non-Indians. Just that there are no snake charmers/ sadhus/ magic in this book. This book is not for virtual tourists or any kind of fanatics. Also not for businessmen looking for a reason to justify investment into or out of India. If someone were looking for one source of Indian history 1945 onwards, this is a great source. Lot's of great historians out there but hardly anyone has taken the trouble to put it in one volume. I think it's a very good read for young Indians plus anyone else in the world who knows a little about India and wants to know more. Taking one star away just because Ram is too balanced. He refrains from plain-speak. I guess it's mostly because he is an Indian living in India and he has to

deal with the consequences of what he writes. Maybe he did not want to anger too many people. Living amongst emotional people in a weak state does not help I guess.

Guha has articulated all the major events and people in Indian politics since independence. For most part his writing and description of events is unbiased. I am writing this review after about 1 year of reading this book and I can say a lot of information is still there in my head thanks to the simplistic and yet gripping tone of Guha's writing. I'd say this book should be considered as a surface sweep of Indian politics and sort of gives you the table of contents. After reading you can choose for yourself which set of events you would like to go deeper. Political history needs time and patience to grasp in. One reading of this might not suffice a lot of people. You will have to read more books similar to this one to revisit a lot of major events in Indian politics. Different perspectives to events helps create a more clearer and detailed picture of events, after all we are dealing with history here and memory is nothing but a personal expression of one's own senses. I'd say this book is for anyone who wants to know about Indian political history. But please do not consider yourself an expert on politics after this 900 page book. Politics when described in books is void of violence, tears, emotions and most importantly truth.

I got an excellent preview in the history of the country and am now in a position to appreciate the uniqueness and the challenges that it faces. The book is fairly detailed and chronicles all the major events that have unfolded in past 68 years of its independence. I think the authors been fairly objective in most places as is evident from the style of writing. Would definitely recommend the book for every Indian to read and for every non-Indian who is interested in knowing the history and the present situation of India.

This very engaging and accessible history invokes the vivid confluence of Indian social, cultural and political life since independence. No single year up to the book's publication in 2007 is free of fatal conflictual agonies on the one hand or triumphs of hope on the other. And all through these turbulent years democracy thrives and survives. As Guha argues time and again, no country could be as doomed to fall apart under the weight of its language, religious, geographic, caste, class, ideological, gender and many more divisions and yet democratic institutions survive. Only the scourge of corruption threatens the institutional edifice itself, a process well measured and documented by Guha as he bemoans the disappearing altruism of the Union's founders and flags its succession by the politics of crude self enrichment. A rewarding overview passionately written.

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