



## The International Forum

### *Suggested Resources for India*

Below is a list of some of the books we have collected on India, read and stored in our library at The International Forum. We have provided summaries and recent publishers information for you in the event that find one that sounds interesting to you and you'd like your own copy. Almost all the books listed can be found on Amazon.com as well as in bookstores across India.

#### HISTORY

**City of Djinn**, By William Dalrymple, Harper Collins Publishers (1994). A Scotland-born, award winning travel writer records a year in Delhi as an entertaining mix of history and diary informed by a deep curiosity about the ways in which the past surfaces at any point in the city. While vivid descriptions of the location as well as weather changes bring the city to immediate life there are episodes interspersed in counterpoint with historical sketches, which are organized in reverse chronology, beginning with the Sikh massacres after Indira Gandhi's death, back through Partition, the Raj, and the East India Company, back through the Mughal Empire into prehistory and archaeology. Winner of the 1994 Thomas Cook Travel Book Award and Sunday Times Young British Writer of the Year. ISBN: 0006375952

**City of Gold**, By Gillian Tindall, Penguin (1992). For over three hundred year the chaotic grandeur of Bombay has acted as a magnet to people from every corner of the globe. A Mecca for fortune seekers, an unlikely architectural jewel, and once the second biggest city in the British Empire, this vibrant metropolis - "a city of gold" - and those who created it are brought to life in Gillian Tindall's acclaimed biography. ISBN: 0140095004

**India: From Midnight to the Millennium**, Shashi Tharoor, Harper Perennial, 1998. Author Shashi Tharoor has spent half of his life outside of India, yet his position as a "NRI" (Non-resident Indian) has given him the distance and perspective necessary to produce *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*, an in-depth critique of the country's first fifty years of independence. Tharoor, currently executive assistant to the secretary general of the United Nations, is known for both his fiction (*The Great Indian Novel*, *Show Business*) and his journalism; in this effort, he blends fine prose with a reporter's talent for analysis, resulting in a skillful examination of some of the greatest challenges India has faced over the past five decades, as well as what lies ahead for the nation.

In chapters devoted to such diverse topics as caste, the free-for-all nature of Indian democracy, the troubled legacy of Indira Gandhi, and the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, Tharoor both explicates the history of India since independence and attempts to define what makes India one country and Indians of various ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds one nationality. He is forthright in his discussion of the sectarian violence that has ripped through the country, the

*As of January 2006*

corruption that is rife throughout the ranks of the Indian civil service, and the difficulties that face a nation in which 48 percent of the population remains illiterate. Yet Shashi Tharoor writes of these problems with a sense of optimism about the future, confident in the ability of his countrymen to find solutions within a democratic political system. ISBN: 0060977531

**Freedom at Midnight**, by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, Harpercollins Pub Ltd , 1997. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre have managed to capture one of the most important years (1947) of world history in their book. Freedom at Midnight is possibly one of the most outrageously enthralling works of writing based on real events that I have ever read.

This book is an account of the year 1947 in context to the freedom of India from the British Raj. It opens on New Year's Day, 1947, London and takes the reader on a journey of significant events that lead to the independence of India. On the way, the reader is introduced to many brilliant characters who shaped up the history in that part of the world and have since left their mark that is still evident. The decisions made by these people defined the future of millions of people.

Freedom at Midnight is an intimate account of the reasoning of these historical figures that lead to the independence and division of India. Why did Prime Minister Clement Atlee who took office dedicated to break the Empire apart choose Louis Mountbatten, a member of the royal family to be the last viceroy of India? Why was he the man to administer India's freedom operation?

This book is one of the most intimate accounts of the most venerated figures in the world's history, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi aka Mahatma Gandhi. His approach, position, attitude towards the British Raj, the Indian Congress, the political and social blueprint that he dreamed of the Independent India. And vice-versa. As the book flows like an epic, it gives detailed account of final days of Gandhi and who, why and how of the assassination of this revered leader. The reader is also introduced to Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

What happened to the Maharajas, the palaces, the tigers, the jewels and the harems? What led to the demise of fantastic royalty in India? The authors have devoted a whole chapter to recounting the opulence enjoyed by the Maharajas and their magnificent indulgences.

How was the line drawn that divided the nation? Who initiated the idea and why was the idea initiated? Collins and Lapierre show poignant picture of the greatest migration in history. The religious division left an estimated 250,000-500,000 people dead.

One of the unsolved matter since then that still afflicts both nations (India and Pakistan) and have since led to three wars, Kashmir, is devoted a whole chapter. The valley that was once described as "heaven on earth" by the last Mogul Emperor of India today is contradicting the emperor's statement in every way possible. This book discloses the history behind the conflict.

One of the most appealing qualities in the writing of the authors was their effort into giving some personal accounts into the lives of the common people. I recommend this book to anyone who is a student of world history and precisely history of India. This book takes the reader through the year that led to the birth of three nations, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. ISBN: 0006388515

*As of January 2006*

## GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMY

**Will the Iron Fence Save a Tree Hollowed by Termites**, By Arun Shourie, Rupa & Co (2005). This big book (not the short one, as the author claims), full of massive information, and overflowing with facts and figures, focuses on the challenges, particularly military, that India faces from her neighboring countries: Pakistan, China and Bangladesh.

In the opening chapter, Shourie attacks the Indian political leadership for mishandling the crucial political questions for which we are still made to pay a heavy price both in men and material. He does not spare Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who he thinks, committed a grave blunder in taking the Kashmir problem to the United Nations, when there was absolutely no need for doing so. Shourie thinks that Indira Gandhi too dithered. She could have resolved the Kashmir question at Simla after Pakistan's defeat in 1971. But she lost the golden opportunity. The author maintains that it was the political immaturity of Indian leaders that led to the recrudescence of terrorism in Punjab, insurgency in Assam, the infiltration of lakhs of Bangladeshis in India, and a complete collapse of administration in Bihar.

A major portion of Shourie's book, almost one third, discusses the genesis, growth and nature of terrorism in Pakistan. He shows how the mushrooming of various Islamic organizations inspired by a fanatical spirit of Jihad had caught the imagination of the youth, who indulged in reckless killing in the name of Islam. He emphasizes that a process of ideological mobilization always precedes terrorist violence.

From chapter 9, Shourie's main focus is on China. It is a matter of concern to the author that China is collaborating with Pakistan in developing atomic weapons. He sums up the China policy as "grasp, hold and time passes". Shourie warns that we should not be taken in, as had happened in 1961, by the Chinese smiles and courtesies. For India, still the issues remain unresolved: Tibet, Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh. Shourie states that just as China can stand up to the US, why can't India muster strength and will to fight back. Strength, of course, the author emphasizes, does not lie in weapons but in the development of our capacities. Hence we should concentrate on modernizing our military equipment.

The most illuminating part of the book relates to Henry Kissinger's negotiations with Chinese Prime Minister Chou-En-Lai, which Shourie discusses in the light of the secret US documents reproduced in the US Press. Shourie shows how countries professing lofty moral principles play with "clinical aloofness" a game of ruthless "Realpolitik" for promoting their national interests. Shourie emerges from this assiduously conducted research work as a fervent Indian nationalist deeply concerned about the future of his country in a topsy-turvy world. ISBN: 8129107023

**Idea of India**, By Sunil Khinani, Penguin Books (1999). "The Idea of India" was originally published to mark the 50th anniversary of India's independence. As well as looking at modern Indian history it also looks at politics, culture and identity and serves as an introduction to modern Indian history. At the heart of India's self-image since independence has been "the idea of India" - modern, technocratic, egalitarian, secular, but the tensions between the idea and the reality have become almost intolerable. With the legacy of Nehru and Gandhi everywhere under attack and ferociously religious and militant politicians in power has the idea of India lost all meaning? ISBN: 0140250581

## CULTURE AND SOCIETY

**Mantras of Change**, By Daniel Lak, Penguin Viking (2005). Daniel Lak's foray into writing a book on India started with a non-image. When, towards the end of his three-year stint as a BBC correspondent in India, he was accused by a young university student of portraying stereotypical images of the country in his report - bullock carts, cows ambling in the streets, snake charmers surrounded by enthralled spectators he was completely taken aback. This got him questioning the images of India portrayed by the media, especially the Western media. The book brings to the fore the face of a new India, a country that is in a constant and prolonged state of social and economic ferment, largely driven by the aspirations of people at every level, fuelled by the many forces that are beyond the control of the government or the increasingly powerful private sector. Bullock carts and snake charmers are deliberately set aside as Lak offers a glimpse of life in changing India based on his travels and encounters with people along the way. Witty and provocative, the essays talk about the information technology boom and its impact, the sexual revolution, environmental degradation, the breakdown of family structures and, of course, poverty and caste. In a series of sharply drawn portraits, the book introduces us to a policeman working in death squads, Hindu priests striving to save the environment, HIV-positive women dying a dignified death, old soldiers from the opposite sides of intractable conflicts showing genuine affection for each other, and several sexual advice counselors. Above all, "Mantras of Change" is an effort to share with the readers Lak's idea of India and his love affair with a glorious and perplexing land. ISBN: 0670058262

**Age of Kali**, By William Dalrymple, Lonely Planet Publications (2000). In Indian mythology, the Age of Kali is characterized as one of darkness. The 19 essays in the Age of Kali, which have never been available in the United States, portray the Indian subcontinent (including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Reunion, an island in the Indian Ocean) in the 1990s. The essays offer a wide range of interesting portraits, from a chief minister who is not upper caste, a village social worker who triumphs over reactionary forces, and a Hindi rap megastar. Dalrymple's account is most readable when he shows without simplification in the disparate elements and challenges faced on many fronts, and it is essential reading for anyone interested in the Indian subcontinent. With the publication of *The Age of Kali*, Lonely Planet is reissuing *In Xanadu* (originally published in a 1989 Vintage edition), which won the 1990 Yorkshire Post Best First Work Award and a Scottish Arts

Council Spring Book Award. In this travelog, Dalrymple retraced Marco Polo's route from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to Kubla Khan's summer capital in Xanadu, entering China without a permit. His purpose was to describe the places and people he encountered on the road and interweave them with historical flashbacks to Polo's time. ISBN: 1864501723

**India in Slow Motion**, By Mark Tully, Penguin (2003). In *India in Slow Motion* Mark Tully undertakes a journey that has no true beginning or end, seeking to unravel the mysteries lying at the heart of the country of his birth. Exploring Hindu extremism, child labor, Sufi mysticism, the crisis in agriculture, political corruption and Kashmir, he challenges our preconceptions of India – as well as those India has about itself – to create a thoughtful, humorous and deeply profound portrait of a country at odds with itself. Like no other writer, Mark Tully brings modern India and its people vibrantly to life. ISBN: 0140282084

**Being Indian**, By Pavan Varma, William Heinemann (2005). In the 21st century every sixth human being will be Indian. India is very close to becoming the second largest consumer market in the world, with a buying middle class numbering over half a billion. The Indian economy is already the fourth largest in terms of purchasing power parity. It is in the top ten in overall GNP. Yet at least 200 million Indians remain desperately poor. Illiteracy rates are high. Communal violence is widespread; corruption endemic. Brides are still tortured and burnt for dowries; female infanticide is common. The caste system has lost little of its power and none of its brutality how are we to make sense of these apparently contradictory pictures of India today? And how can we overcome the many misconceptions about India that are fed by western stereotypes and Indians' own myths about themselves. Pavan Varma turns a sharply observant gaze on his fellow countrymen to examine what really makes Indians tick. How, for example, does the indifference of most middle-class Indians to the suffering of the poor square with their enthusiasm for parliamentary democracy? How can a people who so supported Mahatma Gandhi's strategy of non-violence during the struggle for independence burn young brides for their dowries and beat domestic servants to near-death? Why do Indians have a reputation for being spiritual and 'other-wordly' when their traditions so exalt the pursuit of material well-being as a principal goal of life? Drawing on sources as diverse as ancient Sanskrit treatises and Bollywood lyrics, Pavan Varma creates a vivid and compelling portrait of India and its people. *Being Indian* is an essential book for anyone who wishes to understand Indians, and for Indians who wish to understand themselves. ISBN: 0434013919

**The Great Indian Middle Class**, By Pavan Varma, Penguin Books Australia Ltd. (2003). In this powerful and insightful critique, the author examines the evolution of the Indian middle class during the twentieth century, especially since Independence. ISBN: 0140276580

**Maximum City**, By Suketu Mehta, Headline Review (2005).

A brilliantly illuminating portrait of Bombay and its people—a book as vast, diverse, and rich in experience, incident, and sensation as the city itself—from an award-winning Indian-American fiction writer and journalist.

A native of Bombay, Suketu Mehta gives us a true insider's view of this stunning city, bringing to his account a rare level of insight, detail, and intimacy. He approaches the city from unexpected angles—taking us into the criminal underworld of rival Muslim and Hindu gangs who wrest control of the city's byzantine political and commercial systems . . . following the life of a bar dancer who chose the only life available to her after a childhood of poverty and abuse . . . opening the doors onto the fantastic, hierarchical inner sanctums of Bollywood . . . delving into the stories of the countless people who come from the villages in search of a better life and end up living on the sidewalks—the essential saga of a great city endlessly played out.

Through it all—as each individual story unfolds—we hear Mehta's own story: of the mixture of love, frustration, fascination, and intense identification he feels for and with Bombay, as he tries to find home again after twenty-one years abroad. And he makes clear that Bombay—the world's largest city—is a harbinger of the vast megalopolises that will redefine the very idea of “the city” in the near future. ISBN: 0747259690

**The Silent Revolution**, By Christopher Jaffrelot, HURST (2003).

This is a very fine and useful work, summarizing, synthesizing, and analyzing a vast amount of material to demonstrate the extent to which the transformations of caste politics have indeed led to fundamental as well as systemic changes in the Indian political system. Since the 1960s a new assertiveness has characterized India's formerly silent majority, the lower castes that comprise more than two-thirds of the country's population. Today, India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, is controlled by lower-caste politicians, as is Bihar and lower-caste representation in national politics is growing inexorably. Jaffrelot argues that this trend constitutes a genuine democratization of India, and that the social and economic effects of this silent revolution are bound to multiply in the years to come. For anyone interested in Indian politics, post-Independence history, and the contemporary political scenario, this is an indispensable book. ISBN: 1850656703

**City of Joy**, by Dominique Lapierre, Warner Books; Reissue edition (May 7, 1990). What irony that one of Calcutta's most devastating slums should be known as Anand Nagar, “the City of Joy.” By interweaving impressionistic glimpses from the lives of a French priest, a rickshaw driver, and an American doctor, Lapierre creates a searing vision of the struggle for survival, the flashing violence, and the social and cultural practices of the slum. His theme that from human misery can emerge joy might seem to some readers as a bogus acceptance of a terrible evil. Yet Lapierre's narrative slides skillfully in and out of both history and fiction to create an effective but horrible montage of disease, death, and destruction amid elements of charity, hope, and love. The City of Joy should elicit strong reactions from readers. ISBN: 0446355569

**The Argumentative Indian** by Amartya Sen, Farrar, Straus and Giroux , 2005. As India's multicultural society confronts violent sectarianism at home and a range of destabilizing forces internationally, these illuminating essays from Nobel Prize-winning economist Sen (most of which began as articles or lectures over the past decade) offer a timely and cogent examination of the country's long history of heterodoxy and public discourse. With sparkling erudition and crisp prose, Sen reminds readers of a capacious cultural legacy that has nourished a plethora of religious communities (including Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Parsee, Sikh and Baha'i), as well as a venerable line of atheist and materialist thought, while fostering ancient advances in science and mathematics, and inclusive theories of governance. Challenging the notion of the West as sole originator of liberal values, the book—which ranges over subjects as diverse as India's ancient calendars, nuclear arms policy, relationship with China, gender and class inequality, representations in the Western imagination and the competing national visions of Tagore and Gandhi—bears forcefully on contemporary debates over multiculturalism, secularism and postcolonial identity. Sen's lucid reasoning and thoroughgoing humanism, meanwhile, ensure a lively and commanding defense of diversity and dialogue. ISBN: 0374105839

## RELIGION

**The Camphor Flame**. By Chris Fuller, Princeton University Press (2004). Popular Hinduism is shaped, above all, by worship of a multitude of powerful divines beings - a superabundance indicated by the proverbial total of 330 million gods and goddesses. The fluid relationship between these beings and humans is a central theme of this rich and accessible study of popular Hinduism in the context of the society of contemporary India. Lucidly organized and skillfully written, *The Camphor Flame* brings clarity to an immensely complicated subject. Chris Fuller combines ethnographic case studies with comparative anthropological analysis and draws on textual and historical scholarship as well. The book's new afterword brings the study up to date by examining the relationship between popular Hinduism and contemporary Hindu nationalism. ISBN: 184331195X

**The Bhagavad Gita for Living, Vol 1: The End of Sorrow**, by Eknath Easwaran , Nilgiri Press (February 1, 1979) This is the first of a three volume series which translates the essential Hindu texts of the Bhagavad Gita in way that can be applied to our lives in the modern world today. It is surprisingly easy to read but filled with much to consider. It should be read carefully and savored. The Bagavad Gita, which is said to have been written in the first century millennium BC is a guide to how one can live a better life as an individual and member of society. One reviewer writes: "These sumptuously produced volumes offer a fascinating presentation of the Gita to the modern world. . . . The text in Sanskrit is followed by a faithful translation accompanied by a detailed commentary which is the most interesting part of the work. . . . His lectures are full of helpful anecdotes from the lives of eminent saints, yogis, thinkers in the West: one does not like to miss a single page. . . . The author is convincing, authentic and faithful in his exposition running into over 1500 pages of enabling reading matter reflecting his spiritual maturity and benevolence of disposition." ISBN: 0915132176

**Hinduism** by Kshitmohan Sen, forward by Amartya Sen, Penguin Books Ltd (May 5, 2005). This is a very good, though short introduction to Hinduism. It is easy to read and understand and provides a good foundation for understanding the origins of the religions, the ethics and the practice of the religion in Indian society. Kshitmohan Sen is the grandfather of nobel prize winner Amartya Sen (author of the Argumentative Indian). ISBN: 0141018240