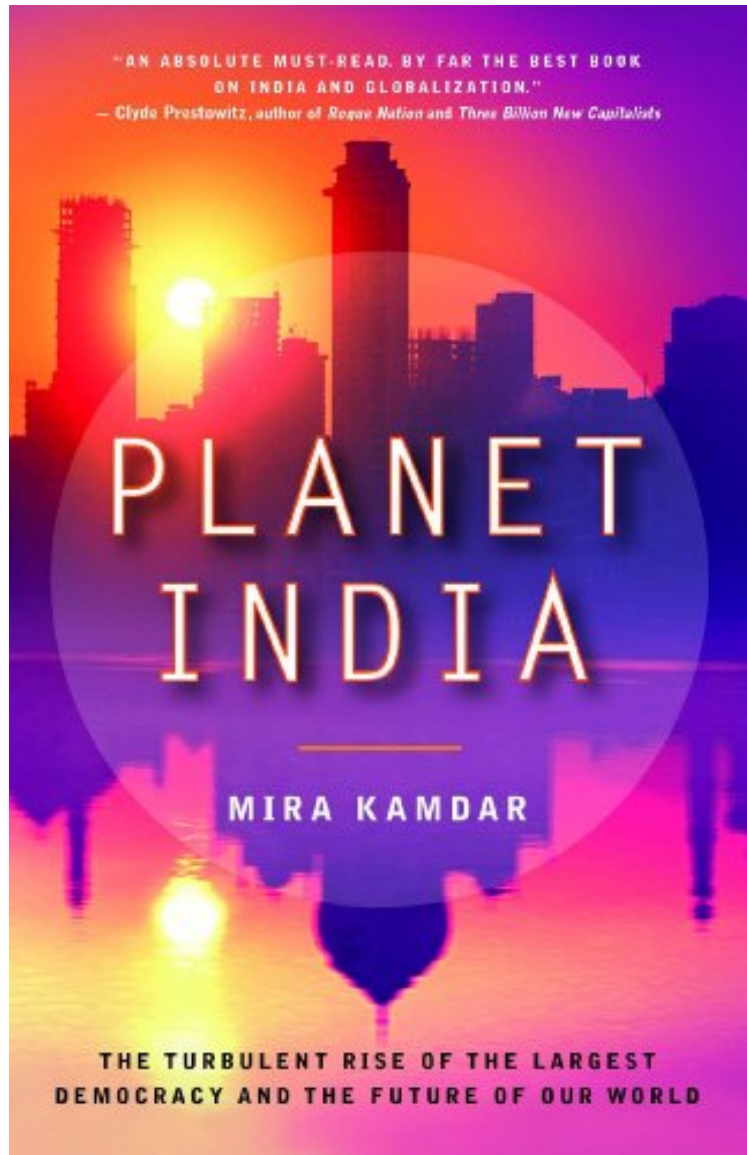


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Planet India: How the Fastest Growing Democracy Is Transforming America and the World

Mira Kamdar

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Mira Kamdar : Planet India: How the Fastest Growing Democracy Is Transforming America and the World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Planet India: How the Fastest Growing Democracy Is Transforming America and the World:

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KATHRYN I PHILLIPSThis is a great book and I recommend it to everyone I know who is in business or employed. It is a must read for anyone living in the 21st century.22 of 24 people found the following review helpful. I nearly gave up on this book about 1/3 through....By D. Chambers...but then it really got good. The first 1/3 of the book is full of gee-whiz statistics on growth. It is also full of what I call "Reader's Digest" subchapters that gush excessively, in the genre of: ("Mr. X ushered me into his elegant office, high above the immaculate tech campus. Sales grew at 83% last year, mainly due to American outsourcing...") or ("the girls upon graduation could produce PowerPoint presentations;") just what the world needs more of. Then we get into the really great parts of the book. All of India's shortcomings are examined realistically, from pollution of the groundwater and air, caste differences, religious hatred, a dozen or two languages, the bomb, the lack of any real education or medical care or opportunity for most of the vast population, corruption, the suppression of women, lack of electricity and airports, global warming, ethnic uprisings, Pakistan, China, etc, and no punches are pulled. In short there is a real question as to whether success in India will be like success in Mexico: a widening gap between rich and poor that grows worse each decade. Several reviewers have inferred from the book that global success for India is inevitable. Perhaps, but not necessarily. The book is really superb. I liken it to "Guns, Germs, and Steel" which explained how physical and cultural geography determined why certain areas of the globe prospered in centuries past. Planet India gives us the physical and cultural elements to try and deduce India's future. Frankly, it's not looking good, except for a small oligarchic class. But good luck to them, and good luck to America. Just because I am not as positive on the outcome does not make this book any less fascinating. Enjoy!0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A must readBy BobbyIndia isn't just a call center or somewhere far off and mystical anymore. Planet India shows the diversity of what India is today and reality how it will influence the rest of the world.

India is everywhere: on magazine covers and cinema marquees, at the gym and in the kitchen, in corporate boardrooms and on Capitol Hill. Through incisive reportage and illuminating analysis, Mira Kamdar explores India's astonishing transformation from a developing country into a global powerhouse. She takes us inside India, reporting on the people, companies, and policies defining the new India and revealing how it will profoundly affect our future -- financially, culturally, politically. The world's fastest-growing democracy, India has the youngest population on the planet, and a middle class as big as the population of the entire United States. Its market has the potential to become the world's largest. As one film producer told Kamdar when they met in New York, "Who needs the American audience? There are only 300 million people here." Not only is India the ideal market for the next new thing, but with a highly skilled English-speaking workforce, elite educational institutions, and growing foreign investment, India is emerging as an innovator of the technology that is driving the next phase of the global economy. While India is celebrating its meteoric rise, it is also racing against time to bring the benefits of the twenty-first century to the 800 million Indians who live on less than two dollars per day, to find the sustainable energy to fuel its explosive economic growth, and to navigate international and domestic politics to ensure India's security and its status as a global power. India is the world in microcosm: the challenges it faces are universal -- from combating terrorism, poverty, and disease to protecting the environment and creating jobs. The urgency of these challenges for India is spurring innovative solutions, which will catapult it to the top of the new world order. If India succeeds, it will not only save itself, it will save us all. If it fails, we will all suffer. As goes India, so goes the world. Mira Kamdar tells the dramatic story of a nation in the midst of redefining itself and our world. Provocative, timely, and essential, Planet India is the groundbreaking book that will convince Americans just how high the stakes are -- what there is to lose, and what there is to gain from India's meteoric rise. DID YOU KNOW? bull; India is the world's fourth-largest economy. bull; By 2034, India will be the most populous country on Earth, with 1.6 billion people. bull; India's middle class is already larger than the entire population of the United States. bull; One out of three of the world's malnourished children live in India. bull; India is home to the biggest youth population on earth: 600 million people are under the age of 25. bull; 72,000,000 cell phones will be sold in India in 2007. bull; India just edged past the United States to become the second-most-preferred destination for foreign direct investment after China. bull; In 1991, Indians purchased 150,000 automobiles; in 2007, they are expected to purchase 10 million. bull; By 2008, India's total pool of qualified graduates will be more than twice as large as China's. bull; By 2015, an estimated 3.5 million white-collar U.S. jobs will be offshored. bull; India is the largest arms importer in the developing world. bull; American corporations expect to earn \$20 to \$40 billion from the civilian nuclear agreement with India. bull; In 2007, there are 2.2 million Indian Americans, a number expected to double every decade. bull; Twenty-nine percent of India's population speaks English -- that's 350 million people.

"Planet India is a worthy addition to the burgeoning shelf of serious books about 21st century India." -- Shashi Tharoor, Times of IndiaExcerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Introduction: Life on Planet IndiaI remember the last time the world was talking about India. It was a fleeting fashion moment following the Beatles' trip to Rishikesh. Nehru collars and beads came into fashion, along with paisley motifs in psychedelic colors. Transcendental Meditation became the latest fad for stress relief. Laugh-In replaced Leave It to Beaver as the iconic

American show. India was suddenly cool. Countercultural types embraced India as the antithesis of the West, lost to the empty materialism of the famous "plastics" scene in the movie *The Graduate*. India wasn't backward; it was wise and spiritual. But then the West moved on. Plastics prevailed, and India faded into the background. My Indian father's family lived in Bombay. Every few years, we prepared for the incredible journey to the other side of the world. We collected precious supplies for our relatives in India: jeans and sneakers for our growing cousins, huge jars of Tang, later giant bottles of Tylenol, plastic bags of California-grown almonds and pistachios. Our family mailed us lists, and we stuffed whatever we could into our suitcases. Living in Bombay in 1967 and 1968, I felt like I had been exiled from the real world. My grandparents' flat in Juhu, though surrounded by the homes of Bollywood stars, had no television. Across the main road near the apartment building was a reeking slum. The only relief from the paralyzing heat was to sit under a crazily beating fan. Everything was different: the food, the language, the climate, the rules of what could and couldn't be worn, what could and couldn't be said. There was no privacy. From early morning until late at night, I could hear neighboring housewives banging pots, parents screaming at children, Hindi film songs blasting, and bicyclists ringing their little bells. In the morning the milkman came around with his cow. My grandmother or one of my aunts brought a brass pot down to him and he squatted next to the cow and sent warm streams of milk into the pot. I learned to keep a keen eye on the milkman to make sure he didn't, via a well-concealed tube, water down the milk. We took the milk upstairs and boiled it. While I sipped hot milk mixed with Ovaltine, I dreamed of dragging my fingers through the condensation on the outside of a tall glass of cold milk. My aunt and uncle live in Gurgaon now, a booming suburb south of New Delhi. They have two refrigerators and buy pasteurized milk in sealed plastic bags. A huge, flat-screen television with cable brings hundreds of Indian and foreign channels into their living room. They keep in touch with family dispersed around the world via e-mail and telephone. Air conditioners in the bedrooms keep the apartment pleasantly cool. A late-model Honda four-door sedan is parked downstairs. From the rooftop terrace of my aunt and uncle's flat, I can see buildings going up everywhere, the little tarps of the migrant construction workers dotting vacant lots. Women in full gathered skirts and flowing half-saris, arms covered with bangles up to their shoulders, carry loads of freshly mixed cement in baskets on their heads to the men who transfer the burden onto their own heads before scrambling barefoot up rickety scaffolding to deliver the wet mass. Near the tarps, a child runs crazily next to an old tire he urges forward with a stick. Beyond him, a Citibank office tower rises into view. On a recent trip to India, I sat in the new Bombay domestic airport waiting for a flight on Kingfisher Airlines, whose slogan is "Fly the Good Times," my laptop propped on my knees. I typed in the code from the card I had just bought from a Tata Indicom kiosk and immediately got a strong wireless connection. On the way to the airport from the old family flat in Juhu, I had passed forlorn groups of destitute families, huddled under an unfinished highway overpass on thin mats of filthy cotton, the little babies naked and snot-nosed. It was the kind of scene that profoundly shocks first-time visitors to India and to which I have never become immune. As I checked my e-mail in the gleaming terminal among the Indian and foreign businessmen and families waiting for one of the many flights departing for every part of the country, I thought about the India I lived in forty years ago and India today, and I wondered where India would be forty years from now. "Where are we headed with our billions?" That is the question India is asking itself," a friend told me in New Delhi over a drink. It is a question the entire world should be asking. Half my family is Indian. During most of my lifetime, India changed, but did so almost imperceptibly. Then, suddenly, the changes began to come with dizzying speed. With each arrival, I felt I was watching time-lapse photography. No democracy in history has undergone a transformation of India's magnitude or velocity. Traveling the length and breadth of the country, I witnessed the churning of India's incredible metamorphosis. I interviewed hundreds of people who shared their visions of India's future, most utopian, some grim, with me. I talked to the people in the culture industries who are reimagining India's ancient stories for a new global audience. I met businessmen who are dedicated to including the poor in India's booming economy, even as they take their companies global. I listened to household servants, taxi drivers, farmers, and street vendors talk about their daily struggles, their frustrations, their faith that their children's lives would be better. Everywhere, I was stunned by the pride, the bullishness, the sense that this moment belongs to India. I caught a glimpse of India's future, its possibilities and its perils, and in that future I saw our own, for as goes India, so goes the world. The World in Microcosm No other country matters more to the future of our planet than India. There is no challenge we face, no opportunity we covet where India does not have critical relevance. From combating global terror to finding cures for dangerous pandemics, from dealing with the energy crisis to averting the worst scenarios of global warming, from rebalancing stark global inequalities to spurring the vital innovation needed to create jobs and improve lives -- India is now a pivotal player. The world is undergoing a process of profound recalibration in which the rise of Asia is the most important factor. India holds the key to this new world. India is at once an ancient Asian civilization, a modern nation grounded in Enlightenment values and democratic institutions, and a rising twenty-first-century power. With a population of 1.2 billion, India is the world's largest democracy. It is an open, vibrant society. India's diverse population includes Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Zoroastrians, Jews, and animists. There are twenty-two official languages in India. Three hundred fifty million Indians speak English. India is the world in microcosm. Its geography encompasses every climate, from the snowcapped Himalayas to palm-fringed beaches to deserts where nomads and camels roam. A developing country, India is divided among a tiny affluent minority, a

rising middle class, and 800 million people who live on less than \$2 per day. India faces all the critical problems of our time -- extreme social inequality, employment insecurity, a growing energy crisis, severe water shortages, a degraded environment, global warming, a galloping HIV/AIDS epidemic, terrorist attacks -- on a scale that defies the imagination. India's goal is breathtaking in scope: transform a developing country of more than 1 billion people into a developed nation and global leader by 2020, and do this as a democracy in an era of resource scarcity and environmental degradation. The world has to cheer India on. If India fails, there is a real risk that our world will become hostage to political chaos, war over dwindling resources, a poisoned environment, and galloping disease. Wealthy enclaves will employ private companies to supply their needs and private militias to protect them from the poor massing at their gates. But, if India succeeds, it will demonstrate that it is possible to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. It will prove that multiethnic, multireligious democracy is not a luxury for rich societies. It will show us how to save our environment, and how to manage in a fractious, multipolar world. India's gambit is truly the venture of the century.

In "Search of a New Paradigm" Our biggest challenge is the challenge nobody has solved in the world: how to grow equity," Mukesh Ambani, chairman of Reliance Industry, India's biggest company, told me. Can liberal democracies forge a global market economy that is environmentally sustainable and reduces inequality? The United States has failed to achieve this. While it has proven its capacity to generate vast wealth, the so-called Washington consensus has advanced corporate interests over the welfare of average citizens and small businesses, exacerbated gaps between the affluent and the poor, and operated with stunning disregard for the environment. America's prosperity is dependent on overconsumption of the world's resources -- with just 6 percent of the world's population, the United States consumes 30 percent of the earth's resources. And it produces a disproportionate share -- 25 percent -- of dangerous greenhouse gases. American technological, economic, and strategic dominance is being challenged for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union. Ironically, the communication and information technologies that propelled America to the forefront during the 1990s are now contributing to the erosion of American dominance. These technologies have created a world where time and space are compressed as never before, where ideas, money, services, and people are constantly in motion, freed from the constraints of national boundaries. The process of globalization spurred by these technological innovations has created what the economist Amartya Sen calls "an age of great affluence,"...