

India in Mind

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FROM GEORGE ORWELL TO BRUCE CHATWIN AND PAUL BOWLES
TO RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA, TWO CENTURIES OF WRITERS
OBSERVE—AND CELEBRATE—A LEGENDARY CIVILIZATION

INDIA IN MIND

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

Pankaj Mishra

Author of The Romantics and An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World



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From Vintage : India in Mind before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised India in Mind:

16 of 17 people found the following review helpful. India: A Kaleidoscopic ViewBy "KB" Kamla SrinivasanIndia is certainly on many people's mind at the moment, what with the flattening of the world (due apologies to Tom Friedman). In a sense, the timing of this book is perfect. What captured my attention was the title of the book, but alas not all of the essays in this book captured my attention for at times my mind wandered off.This anthology on India is a

vivid, multicolored collection of writings, musings, poems by 25 well-known writers ranging from Rudyard Kipling, George Orwell to Mark Twain and Gore Vidal. This book gives us a view of how India was perceived and written by each of these writers right from the 19th century to present day. The reactions that India evokes are "complex, ranging from awe and wonder to repulsion and rejection," as Pankaj Mishra describes in his introduction to this anthology. I enjoyed reading Mark Twain's chapter of India from his "Following the Equator," book. It is very clear from Twain's writings that he must have been a good listener, and a keen observer of people and customs for his description of the Parsee community in India is filled with interesting little details. I particularly enjoyed reading his description of the quaint India custom of getting a "bearer" or a manservant. Somerset Maugham's piece was a tad disappointing since it read more like a journal entry with descriptions of people and places like Goa, vina player, the priest and so on. However, I got some great insights and ideas on how to write and maintain a good travel journal. Thank you Mr. Maugham! It was Paul Bowles' essay that I enjoyed reading the most and I could almost feel the heat, and the sweat pouring down my face when I read about his stay in a hotel room during a power failure. Bowles who is best known of "A Sheltered Sky," got into a bit of a soup when he wrongfully accused of being a spy. (Remember though that Bowles was traveling in India in 1963 during a highly traumatic period for India. India had just been invaded by China in 1962). Bowles traveled in India extensively and this current essay describes his stay in a remote corner of the Southern state of Tamil Nadu. It is always a pleasure to read Rudyard Kipling's writings on India, and this book has an excerpt from "Kim." After reading this book, it seemed like some things have remained the same in India. But, my sense is that will not last for long, given the inexorable pull of globalization on India and its society. This book is an interesting and kaleidoscopic introduction to India, and I am sure you will find some writings more interesting than others just the way I did. India has been sliced and diced and presented from various angles in this anthology.

Ever since Herodotus reported that it was home to gold-digging ants, travelers have been intrigued by India in all its beguiling complexity. This superb anthology gives us some of the best fiction, nonfiction, and poetry that has been written about the world's second most populous nation over the past two centuries. From Mark Twain's puzzled fascination with Indian castes and customs, to Allen Ginsberg's awe at the country's spiritual and natural splendors, or from J. R. Ackerley's delightful recollections of his visits with an eccentric gay Maharajah, to Gore Vidal's unforgettable scene in his novel *Creation*, in which his character finally meets the Buddha and is bewildered—all twenty-five selections in *India in Mind* reveal a place that evokes, in the traveler, reactions ranging from fear and perplexity to astonishment and wonder. Edited and with an introduction and chapter notes by the award-winning novelist Pankaj Mishra, *India in Mind* is a marvel of sympathy, sensitivity, and perception, not to mention outstanding writing.

From Booklist Mishra's innovative approach to Indian history and literary expertise are evident in his powerful book about Buddhism, *An End to Suffering* (see starred review on p.692), and in this brilliantly constructed anthology. Mishra has a particular interest in how outsiders perceive India, his vast and vastly diverse homeland, and accordingly he has selected a superb and unpredictable set of writings by inspired visitors (many of whom were outsiders even in their own worlds) to India past and present. Paul Bowles offers lush descriptions of the countryside; recounts his brief, harrowing incarceration on suspicion of espionage; and muses on cow worship. Bruce Chatwin reports on a wolf boy. Excerpts from Allen Ginsberg's *Indian Journals* record his 1962 sojourn in Benares. Here, too, are Hermann Hesse, Peter Matthiessen, Jan Morris, George Orwell, Octavio Paz, Paul Scott, and Gore Vidal. Superbly written, frank, and revealing both of themselves and of the bit of India they internalized, the chroniclers of India Mishra has so thoughtfully assembled create a spectrum of mental weather ranging from blazing sunshine to impenetrable shadows. Donna Seaman Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved From the Inside Flap Ever since Herodotus reported that it was home to gold-digging ants, travelers have been intrigued by India in all its beguiling complexity. This superb anthology gives us some of the best fiction, nonfiction, and poetry that has been written about the world's second most populous nation over the past two centuries. From Mark Twain's puzzled fascination with Indian castes and customs, to Allen Ginsberg's awe at the country's spiritual and natural splendors, or from J. R. Ackerley's delightful recollections of his visits with an eccentric gay Maharajah, to Gore Vidal's unforgettable scene in his novel *Creation*, in which his character finally meets the Buddha and is bewildered—all twenty-five selections in *India in Mind* reveal a place that evokes, in the traveler, reactions ranging from fear and perplexity to astonishment and wonder. Edited and with an introduction and chapter notes by the award-winning novelist Pankaj Mishra, *India in Mind* is a marvel of sympathy, sensitivity, and perception, not to mention outstanding writing. About the Author Pankaj Mishra was born in North India in 1969 and now lives in London and India. He is the author of *The Romantics*, which won the Los Angeles Times Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction, and *An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World*. He is a regular contributor to *The New York Times*, *Granta*, and *The Times Literary Supplement*.