

# RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

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## Books, Fiction

**Ali, Ahmed. *Twilight in Delhi* (New York: New Directions, 1994)**

This novel, which was originally published by the Hogarth Press in 1940 after Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster fought the printers who viewed the text as subversive, chronicles the life of a Muslim family, living in Delhi at the beginning of the twentieth century, who see their fortunes fading as the British work to eradicate Islamic culture. (Delhi, Muslim)

**Desai, Anita. *The Clear Light of Day* (London: Penguin, 1990)**

Members of an old Delhi family come to terms with their past and reconcile the differences that parted them during the summer of Indian independence in 1947. (Delhi)

**Deshpande, Sashi. *A Matter of Time* (New York: Feminist Press, 1999)**

A woman and her daughters must cope with their unexpected abandonment by her husband, an act that mirrors her father's behavior many years earlier. (Karnataka)

**Deshpande, Shashi. *That Long Silence* (India: Penguin, 1989)**

After her husband, a government official, is faced with possible disgrace and dismissal, the unhappy author of an advice column reassesses her career, her marriage, and her life. (Mumbai)

**Divakaruni, Chitra Bannerjee. *An Arranged Marriage* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995)**

These short stories examine the difference between the lives of women in India and the United States.

**Divakaruni, Chitra Bannerjee. *The Mistress of Spices* (New York: Anchor Books, 1997)**

A wonder-working Indian woman, who runs a spice shop in Oakland, discovers that in order to keep her vows, she must give up love. However, love matters more.

**Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005)**

The Sundarban archipelago serve as a lush backdrop for an intricate narrative that moves between past and present. Piyali Roy, an Indian-American marine biologist, travels in search of the Irrawaddy dolphin. She befriends both an illiterate fisherman, Fokir, and a successful interpreter, Kanai Dutt, who has arrived in the region from New Delhi to retrieve his deceased uncle journal. (Sundarban)

**Ghosh, Amitav. *In an Antique Land* (A.A. Knopf, distributed by Random House, 1993)**

In a blend of travelogue, history and cross-cultural analysis, Ghosh reconstructs a 12th-century master-slave relationship that confounds modern concepts of slavery. In medieval India and the Middle East, Ghosh points out, servitude was often a career opportunity, the principal means of recruitment into privileged strata of the army and bureaucracy. (Medieval India, Maritime Trade)

**Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Interpreter of Maladies* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000)**

This collection of short stories, which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, describes the cultural dislocation of Indian immigrants to the United States, no longer at home in India, but not quite a part of their new home. (Bengal)

**Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake* (Houghton Mifflin, 2003)**

Gogol Ganguli is born to an Indian academic and his wife. Gogol is afflicted from birth with a name that is neither Indian nor American. He grows up a bright American boy, but like many second-generation immigrants, he can never quite find his place in the world.

**Markandaya, Kamala. Nectar in a Sieve (New York: John Day, 1955)**

The lives of a tenant farmer and his family are irrevocably altered by the arrival of a tannery in their village.

**Mehta, Gita. Karma Cola Marketing the Mystic East (Simon and Schuster, 1979)**

Sometime in the 1960s, the West adopted India as its newest spiritual resort. The next anyone knew, the Beatles were squatting at the feet of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Mehta's book is the definitive epitaph for the era of spiritual tourism and all its casualties -- both Eastern and Western.

**Mehta, Gita. A River Sutra (New York: N. A. Talese, 1993)**

A bureaucrat flees from life by taking a position as the manager of a guesthouse on the banks of the Narmada River. There he discovers the meaning of life through the tales of the travelers he meets. (Narmada River)

**Mehta, Gita. Snakes and Ladders: Glimpses of India (Anchor, 1998)**

India is a land of contrasts. It is the world's most populous democracy, but it still upholds the caste system. It is a burgeoning economic superpower, but one of the poorest nations on earth. It is the home of the world's biggest movie industry after Hollywood, as well as to the world's oldest religions. It is an ancient civilization celebrating fifty years as a modern nation. Now, as never before, the world wants to know what contemporary India is all about.

**Mishra, Pankaj. The Romantics (New York: Random House, 2000)**

A young man, who is preparing for the civil service examination, becomes friends with members of the expatriate community, all of whom are searching for a deeper meaning to life and hope to find it in India. (Varanasi)

**Mistry, Rohinton. A Fine Balance (New York: Vintage, 1997)**

A group of refugees, fleeing religious and ethnic violence, forge an unlikely community in the apartment of an independent widow. (Mumbai, Parsi)

**Mistry, Rohinton. Such a Long Journey (New York: Vintage Books, 1992)**

The fortunes of a Parsi family in Mumbai diminish as Hindu supremacy, economic change and entanglement in a secret service plot during a war with Pakistan effect their lives. (Mumbai, Parsi)

**Mukherjee, Bharati. Jasmine (New York: Grove Press, 1989)**

A young woman from India makes her way in the United States, despite the fact that she is an illegal immigrant.

**Narayan, R. K. The Guide (New York: Viking, 1958)**

A tourist guide who lives by his wits meets his downfall through his adulterous love of a dancer, yet inadvertently ends up venerated as a holy man. (Tamil Nadu)

**Narayan, R. K. A Horse and Two Goats (New York: Viking, 1970)**

This is a collection of stories about village life in the Tamil-speaking region of southern India. (Tamil Nadu)

**Narayan, R. K. The Painter of Signs (New York: Viking, 1976)**

An educated young man, who prides himself on his logic, falls in love with a militant family planner. (Tamil Nadu)

**Roy, Arundhati. The God of Small Things (New York: Random House, 1997)**

A twin brother and sister watch their world fall apart when their mother dares to love outside her caste. This novel won the Booker Prize. (Kerala)

**Rushdie, Salman. Midnight's Children (New York: Knopf, 1981)**

This satiric novel about the creation of the modern Indian state is narrated in magic realism style. It

follows the fortunes of those children who were born at midnight of the day independence was declared. This novel won the Booker Prize.

**Seth, Vikram. *A Suitable Boy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993)**

This more than 1,300-page-long novel relates the interconnected stories of four Indian families during the 1950s. The central theme is the attempt to find a suitable husband for a young woman with several suitors. (Calcutta)

**Tharoor, Shashi. *The Great Indian Novel* (New York: Little Brown, 1989)**

The epic story of the Mahabharata is updated to tell the story of twentieth-century Indian history and politics.

**Tharoor, Shashi. *Show Business* (New York: Arcade, 1992)**

The novel follows the rise and fall of an ambitious actor/politician in "Bollywood," Mumbai's film industry. The author intends the novel to be a metaphor for what is wrong in Indian society. (Mumbai)

## **Books, Historical Fiction**

**Dalrymple, William. *City of Djinn: A Year in Delhi* (HarperCollins Publishers, 1993)**

Delhi has a richly layered past, and Dalrymple peels away each layer to reveal how the city came to be what it is today. The author, a young Scot carrying on the fine British tradition of travel writing, has a knack for meeting fascinating people and capturing their most revealing remarks. (Delhi)

**Dalrymple, William. *The Last Mughal: the Fall of a Dynasty: Delhi, 1857* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007)**

In time for the 150th anniversary of the Great Mutiny, the uprising that came close to toppling British rule in India, Dalrymple presents a brilliant, evocative exploration of a doomed world and its final emperor, Bahadur Shah II, descendant of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. Bahadur. (North India)

**Dalrymple, William. *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in the Eighteenth-century India* (Viking, 2003)**

At the end of the eighteenth century, James Achilles Kirkpatrick, the promising young British Resident at the Shia court of Hyderabad, fell in love with Khair un-Nissa, an adolescent noblewoman and a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. After five years' work with documents in several languages, Dalrymple has emerged with a gripping tale of politics and power but also with evidence of the surprising extent of cultural exchange in pre-Victorian India. (South India)

**Mehta, Gita. *Raj: A Novel* (Simon and Schuster, 1989)**

The span of history from Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee to India's independence is reenacted through the life of Jaya Singh, daughter of the Maharajah of Balmer. This beautiful woman's life is the medium through which the author retells the anguish of the Indian people during the domination of the British government.

**Murari, Timeri. *Taj: A Story of Mughal India: A Story of Mughal India* (Penguin Global, 2005)**

This powerful novel narrates the story of the Taj on two parallel levels. The first one tells the passionate love story of Shah Jahan and Arjumand. The second recounts the later years of Shah Jahan's reign, the building of the Taj Mahal and the bloody pursuit of the fabulous Peacock throne by his sons. Intertwined in the building is the story of Murthi, the Hindu master craftsman sent as a gift to the emperor to carve the famous marble jail around Arjumand's sarcophagus.

## **BOOKS, NON-FICTION AND BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Eraly, Abraham. *Mughal Throne: The Saga of India's Great Emperors* (Phoenix House, 2005)**

This meticulously researched book that recounts late medieval Indian history--from 1526 to 1707--is part of a four-volume study that will cover the history of India from the beginning up to 1858. The author describes in detail two of the many battles the Mughals fought and depicts the everyday life of the six rulers and the people. This account of the Mughal conquest of India is essential in understanding that period of history. *George Cohen*

### **Fowler, Marian. *Below the Peacock Fan: First Ladies of the Raj* (Viking, 1987)**

Combining women's studies and British Indian history, Fowler perceives great social skill and personal strength in the lives of four vicereines Emily Eden, Charlotte Canning, Edith Lytton, and Mary Curzon.

### **Jaffrey, Madhur. *Climbing the Mango Trees: A Memoir of a Childhood in India* (Knopf, 2006)**

The celebrated actress and author of several books on Indian cooking turns her attention to her own childhood in Delhi and Kampur. Born in 1933 as one of six children of a prosperous businessman, Jaffrey grew up as part of a huge "joint family" of aunts, uncles and cousins—often 40 at dinner. It was a privileged and cosmopolitan family, influenced by Hindu, Muslim and British traditions, and though these were not easy years in India, a British ally in WWII and soon to go through the agony of partition (the separation and formation of Muslim Pakistan), Jaffrey's graceful prose and sure powers of description paint a vivid landscape of an almost enchanted childhood.

### **MacMillan, Margaret. *Women of the Raj* (Thames and Hudson, 1988)**

MacMillan traces the role of British women in India, whose primary purpose seems to have been to replicate Victorian society in the Raj. The book reveals how these women adjusted to the many hardships of living in an alien and often hostile environment.

### **Metcalf, Barbara D. and Thomas R. Metcalf. *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge University Press 2001)**

In a challenging new history of modern India, the authors explore the imaginative and institutional structures that have changed and sustained the country. This book challenges the notion that a continuous meaning can be applied to social categories such as "caste," "Hindu," "Muslim," or even "India.". An initial chapter focuses on the period of Muslim dynasties that preceded colonial conquest, while the final chapter analyzes the dramatic recent events of the 1990s, including economic change, religious nationalism and India's emergence as a nuclear power. Thomas R. Metcalf is Professor of History, University of California, Berkeley. Barbara Metcalf is Professor of History at the University of California, Davis.

### **Moore, Lucy. *Maharanis: The Extraordinary Tale of Four Indian Queens and their journey from Purdah to Parliament* (Viking, 2005)**

Drawing on accounts from the waning days of the Raj and the British Empire to the present, brings exhaustive research to bear on the stories of four Indian queens who used their power to help forge social change.

### **Richards, John F. *The Mughal Empire* (The New Cambridge History of India) (Cambridge University Press,1996)**

The Mughal empire was one of the largest centralized states in the premodern world and this volume traces the history of this magnificent empire from its creation in 1526 to its breakup in 1720. Richards stresses the dynamic quality of Mughal territorial expansion, their institutional innovations in land revenue, coinage and military organization, ideological change and the relationship between the emperors and Islam.

**Wolpert, Stanley A. Gandhi's Passion: The Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi (Oxford University Press, 2001)**

Foremost biography of the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi.

**Wolpert, Stanley A. Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India (Oxford University Press, 2006)**

Britain's precipitous and ill-planned disengagement from India in 1947--condemned as a "shameful flight" by Winston Churchill--had a truly catastrophic effect on South Asia, leaving hundreds of thousands of people dead in its wake and creating a legacy of chaos, hatred, and war that has lasted over half a century. Ranging from the fall of Singapore in 1942 to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, *Shameful Flight* provides a vivid behind-the-scenes look at Britain's decision to divest itself from the crown jewel of its empire.

**Films (available at Blockbuster or from your public library)**

**Bend it Like Beckham (2002) – by Gurinder Chadha**

A wonderful depiction of globalization – trans-national identity and immigration. Takes place in England and focuses on a young Sikh girl growing up facing the challenges of modern versus tradition.

**Earth (1998) – by Deepa Mehta**

A tragedy set against the ethnic violence of India's independence in 1947. Racial harmony plunges into darkness when independence brings the partition of the empire and sets ethnic groups against one another in civil war.

**Gandhi (1982) – by Richard Attenborough**

Sir Richard Attenborough's multiple-Oscar winner (including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor for Ben Kingsley) is an engrossing, reverential look at the life of Mohandas K. Gandhi, who introduced the doctrine of nonviolent resistance to the colonized people of India and who ultimately gained the nation its independence.

**The Jewel in the Crown (1984) – by Jim O'Brien**

*The Jewel in the Crown*, adapted from Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet* novels, tells the story of the final years before India gained independence in 1947. It is rare for a filmed adaptation to successfully preserve the richness and complexity of a great novel, but this epic miniseries succeeds both as personal drama and historical panorama. With a huge cast and breathtaking location photography, *The Jewel in the Crown* was an enormous undertaking when it was made in the early 1980s. Twenty years later it has lost none of its power, and it remains one of the best films ever made for television.

**Lagaan (2001) – by Ashutosh Gowariker (In Hindi with English Subtitles)**

This Indian film—a period musical drama about a group of drought-stricken villagers who play a cricket match against the British authorities to avoid taxation (lagaan).

**Mississippi Masala (1991) – by Mira Nair**

A love story set in the rural American south between a black man and an Indian immigrant. Look at race and immigrant reality.

**Monsoon Wedding (2001) – by Mira Nair**

In English with some Hindi (subtitles). Shows the affluent life of a family in north Delhi with family abroad. Addresses joint family, arranged marriage, and tradition vs. modernity.

**Mother Teresa (2003) – by Fabrizio Costa**

In a powerful portrayal, Golden Globe winner Olivia Hussey illuminates the life story of Mother Teresa, the selfless missionary who brought hope, love and salvation to the poorest of the poor. Her good works transcend hardships and ultimately earn her international acclaim, including the Nobel Peace prize.

**A Passage to India (1984) – by David Lean**

This adaptation of E.M. Forster's mysterious tale of British racism in colonial India turned out to be master director David Lean's final film. Lean captures Forster's sense of awe at the kind of ageless wisdom and inexplicable phenomena to be encountered in India, as well as the British tendency to dismiss it all as savage, rather than simply different.

**Salaam Bombay (1988) – by Mira Nair**

Winner of the Caméra d'Or at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival and nominated for a Best Foreign Language Film Oscar in 1989, this riveting look at life on the hardened streets of Bombay went on to accumulate accolades and awards across the globe! Forced to leave his family at a very young age, Krishna lives on the streets with pimps, prostitutes, drug addicts and other homeless children.

**Water (2006) – by Deepa Mehta**

Set against Gandhi's rise to power, Water tells the profoundly moving story of Chuyia, an Indian girl married and widowed at eight years old, who is sent away to a home where Hindu widows must live in penitence. Chuyia's feisty presence deeply affects the other residents, forcing each to confront their faith and society's prejudices.