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I received a copy of India Becoming: A Portrait of Life in Modern India by Akash Kapur from a giveaway on Goodreads. Kapur is an

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adept writer whose first person accounts of his return in adulthood to India bring life and depth to this novel. The story flowed fairly well, and showed the readers two faces of India.

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that the Nation's history is divided into Rashtra(Politics),

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Evaluates the impact of rapid economic growth and modernization on the country's rural and urban population, describing the transformations of the twenty-first century that have profoundly

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changed the country.

A New Republic Editors' and Writers' Pick 2012 A New Yorker Contributors' Pick 2012 A portrait of incredible change and economic development, of social and national transformation told through individual lives The son of an Indian father and an American mother, Akash Kapur spent his formative years in India and his early adulthood in the United States. In 2003, he returned to his birth country for good, eager to be part of its exciting growth and modernization. What he found was a nation even more transformed than he had imagined, where the changes were fundamentally altering Indian society, for better and sometimes for worse. To further understand these changes, he sought out the Indians experiencing them firsthand. The result is a rich tapestry of

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lives being altered by economic development, and a fascinating insider's look at many of the most important forces shaping our world today. Much has been written about the rise of Asia and a rebalancing of the global economy, but rarely does one encounter these big stories with the level of nuance and detail that Kapur gives us in *India Becoming*. Among the characters we meet are a broker of cows who must adapt his trade to a modernizing economy; a female call center employee whose relatives worry about her values in the city; a feudal landowner who must accept that he will not pass his way of life down to his children; and a career woman who wishes she could "outsource" having a baby. Through these stories and many others, Kapur provides a fuller understanding of the complexity and often contradictory nature of modern India. *India Becoming* is particularly noteworthy for its emphasis on rural India-

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a region often neglected in writing about the country, though 70 percent of the population still lives there. In scenes reminiscent of R. K. Narayan's classic works on the Indian countryside, Kapur builds intimate portraits of farmers, fishermen, and entire villages whose ancient ways of life are crumbling, giving way to an uncertain future that is at once frightening and full of promise.

Kapur himself grew up in rural India; his descriptions of change and modernization are infused with a profound-at times deeply poignant- firsthand understanding of the loss that must accompany all development and progress. *India Becoming* is essential reading for anyone interested in our changing world and the newly emerging global order. It is a riveting narrative that puts the personal into a broad, relevant and revelational context.

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India has changed dramatically in recent years, but what does all this change mean for the lives of ordinary Indians? In this gripping and often moving book, Akash Kapur follows a handful of men and women in the villages and small towns of South India as they confront the ups and downs of life in a nation in transition.

Reversing his parents immigrant path, a young writer returns to India and discovers an old country making itself new. Anand Giridharadas sensed something was afoot as his plane prepared to land in Bombay. An elderly passenger looked at him and said, Were all trying to go that way, pointing to the rear. You, youre going this way. Giridharadas was returning to the land of his ancestors, amid an unlikely economic boom. But he was interested less in its gold rush than in its cultural upheaval, as a new generation has sought to

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reconcile old traditions with new ambitions. In *India Calling*, Giridharadas brings to life the people and the dilemmas of India today, as seen through the prism of his migr family history and his childhood memories. He blends the objectivity of the outsider with the intimacy of the insider. The result is India seen at once from within and without. Giridharadas introduces us to entrepreneurs, radicals, industrialists and religious seekers, but, most of all, to Indian families. Through their stories, and his own, he paints an intimate portrait of a country becoming modern while striving to remain itself.

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A monumental biography of the subcontinent from the award-winning author of *The World Is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V. S. Naipaul*. Second only to China in the magnitude of its economic miracle and second to none in its potential to shape the new century, India is fast undergoing one of the most momentous transformations the world has ever seen. In this dazzlingly panoramic book, Patrick French chronicles that epic

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change, telling human stories to explain a larger national narrative. Melding on-the-ground reports with a deep knowledge of history, French exposes the cultural foundations of India's political, economic and social complexities. He reveals how a nation identified with some of the most wretched poverty on earth has simultaneously developed an envied culture of entrepreneurship (here are stories like that of C. K. Ranganathan, who trudged the streets of Cuddalore in the 1980s selling sample packets of shampoo and now employs more than one thousand people). And even more remarkably, French shows how, despite the ancient and persistent traditions of caste, as well as a mind-boggling number of ethnicities and languages, India has nevertheless managed to cohere, evolving into the world's largest democracy, largely fulfilling Jawaharlal Nehru's dream of a secular liberal order. French's inquiry goes to

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the heart of all the puzzlements that modern India presents: Is this country actually rich or poor? Why has its Muslim population, the second largest on earth, resisted radicalization to such a considerable extent? Why do so many children of Indians who have succeeded in the West want to return "home," despite never having lived in India? Will India become a natural ally of the West, a geostrategic counterweight to the illiberal rising powers China and Russia? To find the answers, French seeks out an astonishing range of characters: from Maoist revolutionaries to Mafia dons, from chained quarry laborers to self-made billionaires. And he delves into the personal lives of the political elite, including the Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, one of the most powerful women in the world. With a familiarity and insight few Westerners could approach, Patrick French provides a vital corrective to the many outdated

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notions about a uniquely dynamic and consequential nation. His India is a thrilling revelation.

In the 1920s, the young J. R. Ackerley spent several months in India as the personal secretary to the maharajah of a small Indian principality. In his journals, Ackerley recorded the Maharajah's fantastically eccentric habits and riddling conversations, and the odd shambling day-to-day life of his court. Hindoo Holiday is an intimate and very funny account of an exceedingly strange place, and one of the masterpieces of twentieth-century travel literature.

As a child, Biddu dreamt of going west and making it big as a composer. At the age of sixteen, he formed a band and started playing in a cafe in Bangalore, his home town, At eighteen, he was

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part of a popular act at Trinca's, a nightclub in Calcutta devoted to food, wine and music, At nineteen, he had college students in Bombay dancing to his music. In his early twenties, he left the country and ended up hitchhiking across the Middle East before arriving in London with only the clothes on his back and his trusty guitar. What followed were years of hardship and struggle but also great music and gathering fame. From the nine million selling "Kung Fu Fighting" to the iconic youth anthem of "Made in India" and the numerous hits in between. Biddu's music made him a household name in India and elsewhere. In this first public account of all that came his way: the people, the events, the music tours and companies Biddu writes with a gripping sense of humor about his remarkable journey with its fairy tale ending. Charming, witty, and entirely likable, Biddu is a man you are going to enjoy getting to

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know.

James Achilles Kirkpatrick landed on the shores of eighteenth-century India as an ambitious soldier of the East India Company. Although eager to make his name in the subjection of a nation, it was he who was conquered—not by an army but by a Muslim Indian princess. Kirkpatrick was the British Resident at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad when in 1798 he glimpsed Khair un-Nissa—'Most Excellent among Women'—the great-niece of the Nizam's Prime Minister. He fell in love with Khair, and overcame many obstacles to marry her—not least of which was the fact that she was locked away in purdah and engaged to a local nobleman. Eventually, while remaining Resident, Kirkpatrick converted to Islam, and according to Indian sources even became a double-agent

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working for the Hyderabadis against the East India Company. Possessing all the sweep of a great nineteenth-century novel, *White Mughals* is a remarkable tale of harem politics, secret assignments, court intrigue, religious disputes and espionage.

On a dark evening in November 1862, a cheap coffin is buried in eerie silence. There are no lamentations or panegyrics, for the British Commissioner in charge has insisted, 'No vesting will remain to distinguish where the last of the Great Mughals rests.' This Mughal is Bahadur Shah Zafar II, one of the most tolerant and likeable of his remarkable dynasty who found himself leader of a violent and doomed uprising. The Siege of Delhi was the Raj's Stalingrad, the end of both Mughal power and a remarkable culture.

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