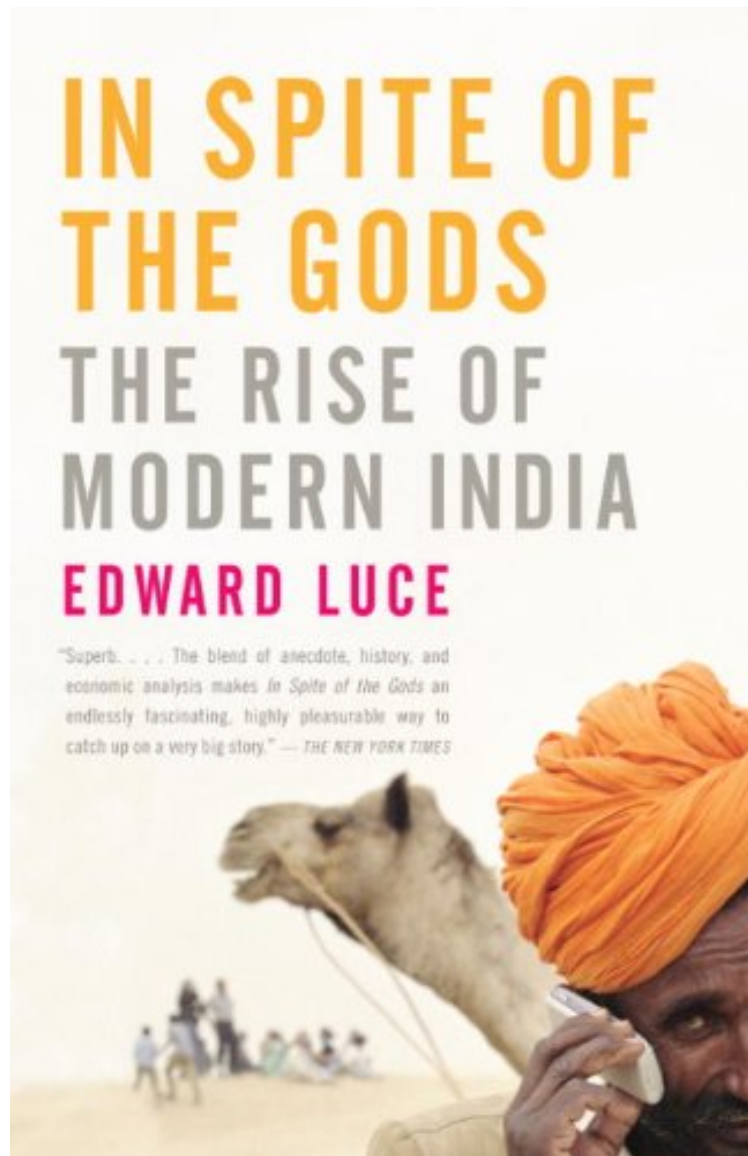


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In Spite of the Gods: The Rise of Modern India

Edward Luce

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Edward Luce : In Spite of the Gods: The Rise of Modern India before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In Spite of the Gods: The Rise of Modern India:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Gridlock and growth in IndiaBy Ethan CooperEdward Luce begins IN SPITE OF THE GODS with a terrific chapter on what he calls India's "schizophrenic" economy. This features both competitive global corporations and thousands of poor villages, where he uses the word "medieval" to describe the existing systems of labor and ownership. In chapter two, Luce next examines the practices of Indian governance, which is hampered by widespread corruption, stifling bureaucracy, and poor-policymaking. In his next four chapters,

Luce then shows how four big players in India's democratic culture--caste-based politicians, Hindu nationalists, the Congress Party, and Muslims--promote or defend their interests in this global/medieval economy, where corruption and parochial policy-making dominate. Altogether, these six chapters are first-rate and gave this reader a sense of the forces that both drive and constrain India today, as its economy and influence expand. The overarching theme of *ISotG* is India's democracy, which enables these diverse groups to find political voice and standing. While democracy is a messy process--witness America's recent gridlock and no-compromise politics in Washington--Luce does make this system seem even more problematic in India, largely because of high levels of graft, red tape, and patronage. Nonetheless, he persuasively argues that: "India can teach Europe, Southeast Asia, and other parts of the world a great deal about how to keep a multinational and multiethnic entity together without imposing uniformity on its people or denying them basic freedoms." Luce emphasizes that India is following a unique path to development. In booming China (as well as in America and Europe during their industrial revolutions), economic growth derives primarily from manufacturing, where an unskilled labor force finds work and begins a virtuous economic cycle. The slower growing Indian economy, in contrast, depends on services and its vibrant IT sector for growth. While the seeds of this difference date from the Anglophile Nehru, Luce also attributes India's slower and unique economic growth to the multicultural necessities of Indian democracy, not a lack of authoritarian government. Here, Luce writes: "If intentions can be ascribed to nation-states, you could say that India has given a higher priority to stability than it has to efficiency. In many ways, the opposite could be said of China." The contrast between India and China is selective. Although China has much better economic and social indicators, this arguably has little to do with their contrasting political systems. The Indian state of Kerala, which is as democratic as any in India, has a life expectancy of 74 and a literacy rate above 90 percent, compared to 70 years and 90 percent in China. There is nothing to indicate that any of China's policies are inconsistent with greater democracy. There is a better answer to those who argue that India suffers from a lack of democracy: Pakistan, [where] the freedom of citizens has been limited. ...As the economist Amartya Sen points out, India's economic growth rate has consistently outperformed that of Pakistan in the last two decades. ...Because of their ethnic and cultural similarities, Pakistan offers India a much better mirror than China. The last chapter of *ISotG* is prescriptive and a trifle preachy; but otherwise, this is a fine and informative book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. How India Finally Modernized a Half-Century After Independence By Thomas Mitchell This is a good review of how India decentralized and reformed much of its economy starting in 1991. India under the Congress Party was similar to Israel under the labor Zionists in the 1950s and 1960s, or various Greek governments. It had the standard modest "Indian rate of growth" at 4 percent annually, which was just enough to keep up with population growth but not enough to get ahead and really improve the standard of living of the masses in the Indian countryside. Luce writes very well on the effects of corruption on India's economic system and the lives of ordinary peasants. I bought this book for an update to all the books that I had read about the Congress period starting with Nehru and ending with Rajiv Gandhi. This gives a good overview of the period from 1991 to 2005. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good Introduction to India By Christine Luce Luce's book is very entertaining and very informative. I think it is probably one of the best books out there on the subject and the fact that it's so easy to read just adds to its value. Other reviewers have noted that Luce's book is a bit biased or that it doesn't have enough information and I concede these points. The book is biased and it doesn't have all the information. However, I've never read an unbiased book with all the information and I never will because that book doesn't exist. This book does exactly what it sets out to do. It destroys Western myths about India and shows us the dark underbelly of Indian society (poverty in the slums, sectarian tensions, imperfect democracy, etc.). Not that this book is all doom and gloom. Luce's enthusiasm for India shines through the book and he is able to show the reader India's vitality and brilliance. Basically, this book tries to show India as it is with no sugarcoating. I didn't know a lot about India before reading this book (or taking the university course I bought the book for), but I can honestly say that this book gave me a really strong base in the country. I recommend this book to anyone who is looking for an introduction to India. Of course, you should always read as much as possible on any given subject. Everyone has a bias and the more you read, the better you'll be able to separate the truth from the chaff.

As the world's largest democracy and a rising international economic power, India has long been heralded for its great strides in technology and trade. Yet it is also plagued by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and a vast array of other social and economic issues. Here, noted journalist and former *Financial Times* South Asia bureau chief Edward Luce travels throughout India's many regions, cultures, and religious circles, investigating its fragile balance between tradition and modernity. From meetings with key political figures to fascinating encounters with religious pundits, economic gurus, and village laborers, *In Spite of the Gods* is a fascinating blend of analysis and reportage that comprehensively depicts the nuances of India's complex situation and its place in the world. From the Trade Paperback edition.

From *Publishers Weekly* A burgeoning economic and geopolitical giant, India has the 21st century stamped on it more visibly than any other nation after China and the U.S. It's been an expanding force since at least 1991, explains

journalist Luce, when India let go of much of the protectionist apparatus devised under Nehru after independence in 1947 from Britain, as part of a philosophy of swadeshi (or self-reliance) that's still relevant in India's multiparty democracy. From his vantage as the (now former) Financial Times's South Asia bureau chief, Luce illuminates the drastically lopsided features of a nuclear power still burdened by mass poverty and illiteracy, which he links in part to government control of the economy, an overwhelmingly rural landscape, and deep-seated institutional corruption. While describing religion's complex role in Indian society, Luce emphasizes an extremely heterogeneous country with a growing consumerist culture, a geographically uneven labor force and an enduring caste system. This lively account includes a sharp assessment of U.S. promotion of India as a countervailing force to China in a three-power "triangular dance," and generally sets a high standard for breadth, clarity and discernment in wrestling with the global implications of New India. (Jan.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From BooklistReporting from India in recent years for the British newspaper Financial Times, Luce distills from his experiences this assessment of the country's social, economic, and international situation. Against the theme of India's anticipated ascent into the top tier of world powers, Luce sorts through facts of life that both promote and hinder that future, namely, its booming economy and the deep destitution of most of its people. Built on interviews with people from the top of politics and business to those from society's bottom rungs, Luce's presentation covers the breadth of India's billion-plus populace and its experience of economic improvement. Progress is spotty, however, and in addition to widespread poverty, it is hampered by pervasive corruption. As for caste and ethnic communalism, Luce's observations encompass both their continuing influence as social identifiers and their erosion under the forces of consumerism and relative upward mobility. Luce will accessibly acquaint readers interested in India with the country's salient contemporary aspects, from Bollywood to nuclear weapons. Gilbert TaylorCopyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved

ldquo;Superb. . . . The blend of anecdote, history, and economic analysis makes *In Spite of the Gods* an endlessly fascinating, highly pleasurable way to catch up on a very big story.rdquo; mdash;William Grimes, *The New York Times*ldquo;Sophisticated and sympathetic. . . . Richly evocative. . . . Engaging. . . . [Luce's] sharp-witted prose brings today's India to life with insight and irreverence.rdquo; mdash;The Washington Postldquo;[Luce's] research is formidable. . . . [In *In Spite of the Gods*] is stunning in its breadth.rdquo; mdash;The New Yorkerldquo;Indispensable. . . . [Luce] is a keen observer.rdquo; mdash;The Wall Street Journal

From the Trade Paperback edition.