



# Familiar Strangers: Finding Wisdom in the Real World

*Gotham Chopra*

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A flip through the newspaper or a glance at the evening news reveals a world in which old ways are dying and new worlds are beginning, often in the midst of violence and chaos. In the face of these massive changes and disruptions, many people are questioning their roles as individuals: Why am I here? What is my purpose?

In *Familiar Strangers*, Gotham Chopra travels from China, Sri Lanka, and Kashmir to Chechnya and the Yucatán in search of answers to these age-old spiritual questions. Everywhere he goes, he encounters people who have had to dig within themselves to survive horrible realities and bear heart-wrenching losses. From his New York to Los Angeles flight on September 11, 2001 to a harrowing week spent among young boys toting guns in the contested hills of Kashmir and a sojourn in a small Yucatán village where he witnesses firsthand the collision between the romance of the past and the uncertain promise of the future, Chopra shares the wisdom, idealism, and sense of purpose he found in ordinary people living under extraordinary circumstances.

Rich in drama and insights into cultures far different from our own, the stories Chopra recounts articulate, as well, anxieties and fears we all share. While acknowledging that his travels often take him to the extreme edges of civilized society, Chopra shows that the questions that arise in times of peril or in the face of great dangers are not so different from what many of us ask in the course of our daily lives—whether after a grueling eighty-hour work week, a six-hour exam, or a fiery argument with a lover. The challenge, he argues, is to use these moments of revelation as the first step in moving beyond self-imposed fears and limits and embracing new opportunities for spiritual growth.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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