



The Beautiful and the Damned: A Portrait of the New India

Siddhartha Deb

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A *Globe and Mail* Best Books of the Year 2011 Title

Siddhartha Deb grew up in a remote town in the northeastern hills of India and made his way to the United States via a fellowship at Columbia. Six years after leaving home, he returned as an undercover reporter for *The Guardian*, working at a call center in Delhi in 2004, a time when globalization was fast proceeding and Thomas L. Friedman declared the world flat. Deb's experience interviewing the call-center staff led him to undertake this book and travel throughout the subcontinent.

The Beautiful and the Damned examines India's many contradictions through various individual and extraordinary perspectives. With lyrical and commanding prose, Deb introduces the reader to an unforgettable group of Indians, including a Gatsby-like mogul in Delhi whose hobby is producing big-budget gangster films that no one sees; a wiry, dusty farmer named Gopeti whose village is plagued by suicides and was the epicenter of a riot; and a sad-eyed waitress named Esther who has set aside her dual degrees in biochemistry and botany to serve Coca-Cola to arms dealers at an upscale hotel called Shangri La.

Like no other writer, Deb humanizes the post-globalization experience—its advantages, failures, and absurdities. India is a country where you take a nap and someone has stolen your job, where you buy a BMW but still have to idle for cows crossing your path. A personal, narrative work of journalism and cultural analysis in the same vein as Adrian Nicole LeBlanc's *Random Family* and V. S. Naipaul's India series, *The Beautiful and the Damned* is an important and incisive new work.

The Beautiful and the Damned is a Publishers Weekly Best Nonfiction title for 2011.



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