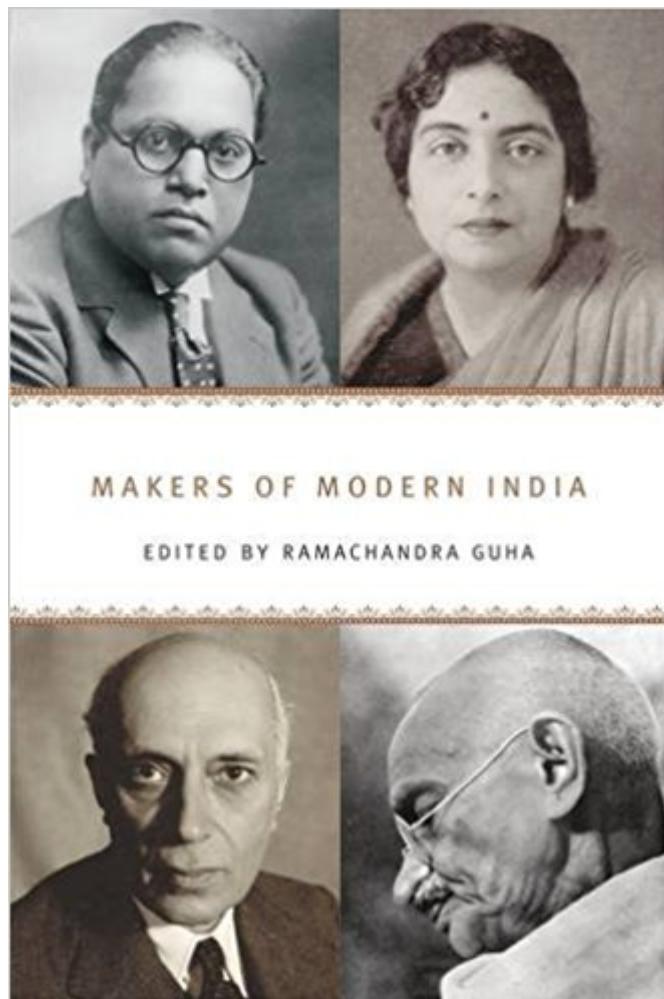


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# Makers Of Modern India



## **Synopsis**

Modern India is the world's largest democracy, a sprawling, polyglot nation containing one-sixth of all humankind. Makers of Modern India collects for the first time the writings of nineteen of India's foremost thinker-activists, ranging from legends like Gandhi and Nehru to pioneering subaltern and feminist thinkers.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"The striking thing about modern India is that the men and women who made its history also wrote most authoritatively about it." So begins one of the first major anthologies of Indian political writing, impressively annotated by Guha (India After Gandhi). The book recovers and elucidates obscure political writings that "had a defining impact on the formation of the Indian Republic" and demonstrate the diversity of India. A variety of rhetorical styles adds to the complexity and liveliness of the collection: Syed Ahmad Kahn's blunt political rhetoric on Muslim separatism abuts Rammohan Roy's elegant articulations on gender inequality. Though providing a wide gamut of political, religious, and regional writings, the collection is marred by a paucity of female voices—only two women are included. An indulgent focus on Gandhi is punctuated by welcome excerpts by other gifted writers: Jayaprakash Narayan and his incisive critique of Indian political apathy toward Tibet in the earlier stages of Chinese annexation, and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay's excerpt on communalism and the class underpinnings of partition. Despite the vastness of the material and the limitations imposed by its structure (organized by individual not by

theme or chronology), the book is an engaging and illuminating read, and brings to the fore both the diversity of India and the relevance of its modern political origins. (Apr.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Readers in the west will find some familiar personalities here, including Gandhi himself, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's secular and liberal-minded first prime minister, and Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet and Nobel laureate. But they will also encounter much less well-known and equally distinguished figures, such as BR Ambedkar, the articulate spokesman of formerly untouchable Hindus, or Dalits, and the main architect of India's extraordinary constitution that in 1949 bestowed equal rights upon all its citizens. As an anthology of Indian political debates, "Makers of Modern India" makes for instructive reading.--Pankaj Mishra "Financial Times" (01/22/2011) India has been fortunate in the abundance of thinkers who wrote extensively, and often evocatively, on the fundamental issues raised by the task of forging a modern nation from a severely fragmented and backward colony. Guha presents well-chosen excerpts, expertly contextualized by insightful introductions, from the writings and speeches of nineteen such thinker-activists who reflected, often in conflict with each other, on the critical dilemmas of their time: colonialism, religion, language, caste and Untouchability, the status of women, grass-roots governance, electoral systems, regional discord and India's engagement with the world... "Makers of Modern India" is not meant to be closed-ended, but it effectively brings together the great arguers, fiercely independent in thought and action, from whose disputatious but educated debate emerged the political traditions and compromises that underpin India's complex reality.--Navtej Sarna "Times Literary Supplement" (06/24/2011) Guha's prose is compelling. He has collected the writings and speeches of a range of influential personalities in the struggle to free India from its colonial yoke and set it on a new path as a modern nation. His introductory remarks are short, informative and enlightening without being intrusive or overwhelming. The result is a skillfully edited collection that will serve as an erudite introduction to the foundations of modern India.--Ramesh Thakur "The Australian" (06/01/2011) "Makers of Modern India" will be a valuable resource for all who seek to understand modern India.--R. N. Sharma "Choice" (09/01/2011) In "Makers of Modern India", the first major anthology of Indian social and political thought, Ramachandra Guha, an established historian, brings together writings and speeches from 19 key political figures of the 19th and 20th centuries to highlight the range and diversity of ideas about the forming nation... "Makers of Modern India" begins with an extensive introduction and includes biographical sketches of each figure and guides for further reading. Guha is a learned historian whose writing and subject matter do not fail to

captivate.--Visi Tilak"Indian American" (05/01/2011)

Guha is a great writer. This books flows very well. Really like the way he writes and provides primary sources. Definitely recommend it.

I love it. Just what I wanted at a great price.

Author's own critical judgement base needed to suggest an integrating look was missing from here. All he had was a collection of some essays. Sorry. This was not the Ramachandra Guha I was anticipating.

This is the author's next contribution to modern Indian history after his brilliant work titled 'India after Gandhi'. Here, Dr.Guha presents a selection of the contributions of nineteen eminent Indians who have shaped and made a defining impact on our country's outlook through their ideas, vision and expositions on the diverse subjects of caste, class, religion, nationalism, colonialism, democracy and secularism. The approach is somewhat different in this book because Dr. Guha simply introduces each of them through a short biographical sketch with a few of his own remarks about their role in shaping India and then lets them speak in their own words. It is wonderful to read Dr.Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Syed Ahmed Khan, C.R etc in their own words and see how civilized and erudite their discourses have been. One of the striking things for me in this book has been the realization that how lopsided the teaching of history has been to us in India in our schools and colleges. I considered myself a reasonably well-read person in contemporary Indian history till I read this book. The seminal contributions of persons like Tarabhai Shinde, Hamid Dalwai and Syed Ahmed Khan were largely unknown to me till I read this book. I would have included Verrier Elwin to this list as well but for the fact that I chanced to read about him in great detail in Dr.Guha's book on the man titled 'Savaging the Civilized'. I think the book is an essential read for most Indians to learn about their own contemporary history. It will help middle-class Indians overcome their sustained negativity about our nation as well as get a more balanced perspective on our achievements and shortcomings and faults. The book shows the democratic spirit of Gandhi in encouraging the Congress party to include Dr.Ambedkar in the cabinet even though Ambedkar was a strong critic of Gandhi's politics of Untouchability and a proponent of the idea that the Congress can not and does not represent Harijans. It was a revelation to me to read about Hamid Dalwai and how he strove to emancipate Indian Muslims from the tyranny of religious faith and the clergy. In this respect, he was

just like Nehru was for the Hindus. It is a pity that Hamid Dalwai is hardly taught in our schools just as Tarabhai Shinde on her ideas of equality of Indian women and men. Dr. Guha takes issue with Dr. Amartya Sen on his propositions on Indian democratic spirit being rooted in distant history of the Buddhist councils of the Mauryans or Indian secularism on the syncretism of Emperor Akbar. Dr. Guha believes that there was little in the history and politics of the sixth or sixteenth century that could have aided Indians in interpreting and confronting the profound changes that came in the wake of colonial rule. Rather than this distant tradition, Guha gives greater importance to the proximate tradition as reported in this book to have influenced Indian democracy and secularism. He quotes approvingly the sociologist Imtiaz Ahmed as follows: "...the evidence of history does not support the view that secularism as embodied in the Indian Constitution is derived from ancient Indian traditions, or that there is a pre-existing place for secularism in the Indian system of values.....under Hindu kings, the system of justice in ancient India was founded on the principle of inequality.....the religious policies of the Muslim rulers were characterised by bigotry and fanaticism....Akbar no doubt gave official encouragement to the spirit of religious tolerance , but the institutional separation of religion and state was probably as foreign to his political theory as it was to those of the ancient Hindu kings. In essence, therefore, the ideal of secularism embodied in the Indian Constitution....constitutes a radical break with India's past traditions". This book is an important contribution not only to Indian history but also to the world today in understanding multi-culturalism, non-violence, diverse faiths and the struggle of the marginalized people for their legitimate rights.

This is a great book. I like the book, because of the pieces of writing that have been showcased, give great insight into the minds of the people who made India. What I liked about the book, is the manner in which it has been divided into sections; the short history of each maker; the introduction to their pieces, and the fact that there were some who I had never heard of. These are people who really towered above others; people who achieved greatness in their lifetimes; people who wrote with eloquence and thought about issues deeply. While they all came from different backgrounds, they wrote with passion, sincerity and with clarity about their chosen areas and causes. They could disagree, yet could carry on the debate. The sadness that I feel after reading this book, is my reflection on how far our modern politicians have fallen since those days. What India needs today are men and women of stature; men and women of intellect; men and women who will put India back on her rightful place in the stage of world history. This book reveals much about the making of India, and of the people who made India. It also reveals much of what still needs to be done.

Men and women carefully picked by Dr. Guha in his book range from socialists, communists, anarchists, feminists, communalists, radicals and reformers. All the stalwarts covered in this book truly deserve in their own right to be called a 'maker' of India, as we know today. From Ram Mohan Roy to BR Ambedkar to Tarabai Shinde to Hamid Dalwai, the ability and courage shown by each of them in pushing the boundaries of society, community and tradition, their unique vision far ahead of their times, the passion and zeal evident in their beautiful writings and speeches is heartening. One cannot but feel proud of India's glorious past. Yes the sense of disillusionment and disappointment deepens as we see that we are in some way or the other even today we are working towards introducing same or similar changes, but with a much diminished leadership at the top. As common, educated Indians today, we read less, deate less, think less and care less, I clearly see a more materialistic India and a more mercenary Indian. Most of us are familiar with the works of Gandhi and Nehru but many of are not aware our of many unsung heroes and heroines, especially Tarabai Shinde and Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, they prove that India has had some forceful and stirring feminists. A compilation certainly worth reading and reflecting upon.

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