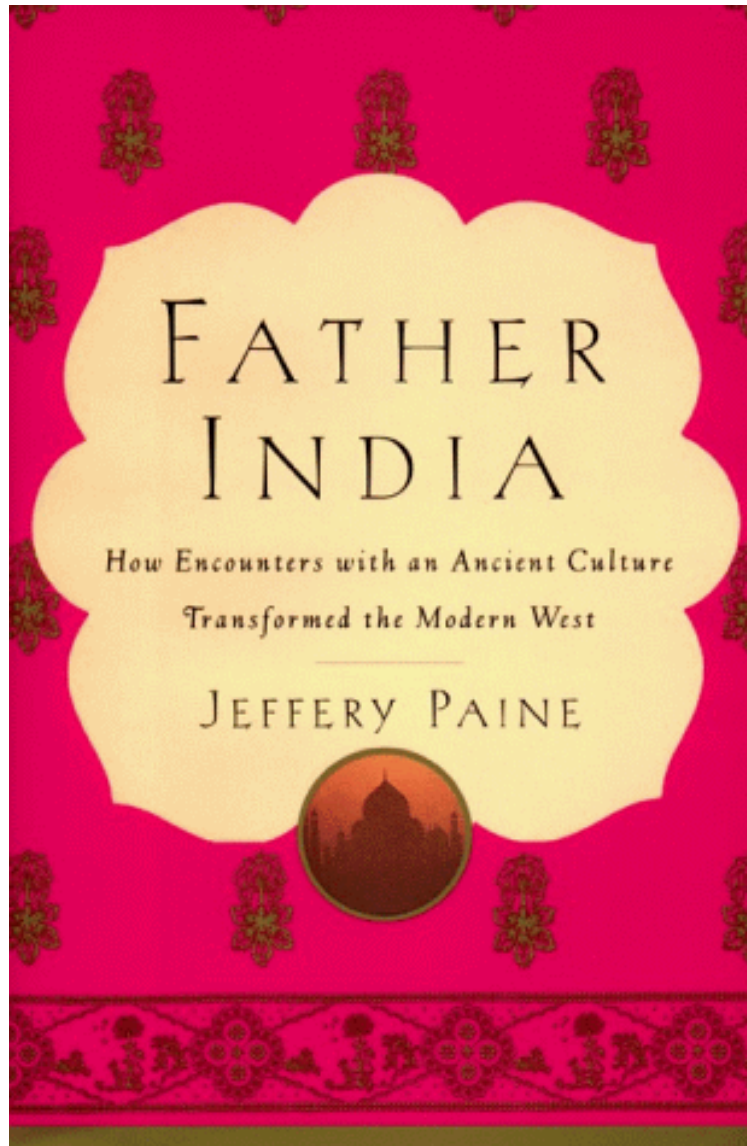


(Download pdf ebook) Father India: How Encounters With an Ancient Culture Transformed the Modern West

## Father India: How Encounters With an Ancient Culture Transformed the Modern West

*Jeffery Paine*

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**Jeffery Paine : Father India: How Encounters With an Ancient Culture Transformed the Modern West** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Father India: How Encounters With an Ancient Culture Transformed the Modern West:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Amazingly insightful

By Sanjay Agarwal  
 Jeffrey Paine has written an amazing book, which is both sophisticated in its analysis and insightful in its perspective. Yet, the narrative is racy and easy to read - possibly because of his background in journalism. Paine traces the careers and Indian adventure of eight well-known persons who were either Westerners or were Indians influenced by the West to begin with, but later became deeply influenced by India. Yet in the process, they also influenced India itself. The list includes Lord Curzon, Mahatma Gandhi, E. M. Forster, Shri Aurobindo, Mira Behn (Madeleine Slade), Mother (Mirra Richard), Carl Jung, V. S. Naipaul and Annie Besant, all well-known figures in India and outside. In the process he weaves a magical yet sophisticated tapestry showing why India exercised a near-fatal charm for these people and how it changed them. He also adds a lot of tid-bits about their personal lives, and idiosyncracies, their struggles, their failures and their successes. Surprisingly, and without noticing it, by the time you finish the book, you would have developed a pretty good perspective on how India has affected and deeply influenced Western world through these people. A remarkable intellectual feat indeed. His handling of each character in the drama is confident and skillful. He has a definite format to follow, and this adds rigour to a book, which could have become a maudling, sentimental journey otherwise. The connections he makes with other contemporary characters and happenings are simply astounding and marvellous. However, he becomes less sure of himself as he comes closer to the present, possibly because the processes are still going on, and the advantage of hindsight is not available. As a result, his handling of the chapter on Shri Aurobindo and his spiritual companion, the Mother, is less deft. He also fumbles with the conclusion, possibly because India is an incredibly complex phenomenon and Paine is after all a mere mortal. Notwithstanding this slight blemish, an excellent book, worth the time and money, for anyone interested in understanding India and the West. A paperback edition is also available in Penguin India.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Excellent book on India

By Sanjeev manohar  
 Jeffrey Paine has done a masterful job in this refreshingly new and yet thought-provoking work. His insight into the "real" India is surprising given India's diversity and the propensity for even Indian authors to miss the subtleties of the subcontinent. What comes out clearly is Gandhi's lifetime of effort from a bird's eye view, and what Gandhi was trying to accomplish in India and in the world in general. The effect India has had on "outsiders" in the form of invaders, visitors or missionaries has been to transform them into individuals who saw something greater in themselves than before. In effect India "converts" people more successfully than scripture thumping missionaries or cannon/sword-carrying members of the barbarian party. No small wonder that Gandhi, whose life exemplified the principle of turning the other cheek and in loving one's neighbors rejected Christianity on moral grounds! This book also offers insight into why Christianity could not spread in India like it did in Latin America...India intoxicates its visitors, either with conversion to "Indianism" or into revulsion...either way you are transformed forever. Fundamentally, all approaches to the Truth have been tried in India, from hero (messiah) worship to heroin worship and even Heroin (drug) worship in the form of either Vedism or Tantrism. People just don't find anything new in foreign religions. And this fact is amply brought out in the authors examples of Aurobindo's effort in Pondicherry, Annie Beasant work in Madras, and in Gandhi's own "ashrams". A corollary benefit of this book is that these facts are illuminated in a masterful manner.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A lively and entertaining collection of stories

By Greg Sampson  
 Jeffery Paine is an engaging writer, and this book, *Father India*, is a nicely crafted set of stories about the the journeys to India taken by a half-dozen travelers. Each of these travelers had some expectations about India and some goals aligned with those expectations. Paine tells us what the visitors found in India, and how the fact of India changed their lives. The reader should not expect a sober recital of history here. What we have instead (in large part) is a succession of stories in which the main characters experience in varying degrees transformations in their ways of seeing the world. The details of these changes are not documented; Paine's genius is in telling the story of the visitors' psychological progress (or regress) on the basis of what can be inferred from observed events. But again, it is not history -- that's not the genre in which Paine operates. What the author does is to masterfully paint pictures of these men and women who went to India to find X and emerged from the experience with Y. Paine handles prose so very well! I think I'll read more of his work. The only objection I would make of *Father India* is that his rather complete ignorance of Christianity, which defect was a bit unsettling. I think he has Christianity confused with some sort of New England Calvinistic cult.

This is a 1st edition copy of the book signed by the author. Over the past hundred years, India has held an enormous fascination for western intellectuals and artists. *Father India* explores the life-changing influence of the subcontinent on western ideas of modernity by narrating the curious, spellbinding stories of a succession of twentieth-century Europeans and Americans. These major culture figures--including Lord Curzon, Annie Besant, E. M. Forster, Carl Jung, William Butler Yeats, V. S. Naipaul, Christopher Isherwood, and Martin Luther King Jr., among others--acted out their most secret dreams in India. Troubled by a vague but persistent discontent, most of the characters portrayed in this book journeyed to India seeking a perspective on their own culture from outside it. The Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung, for example, unable to find within western intellectual tradition an antidote to fascism, scoured India for a different way to integrate an understanding of evil into the human psyche. Martin Luther King Jr. tried to discover a new basis for American politics, incongruously, in India. And V. S. Naipaul came to search for family roots but ended

up inadvertently placing the Enlightenment values of individuality, rationality, and progress in a living crucible there. Gandhi's answer to the question "Why now?" as he observed one westerner after another come to his own ashram, is telling: The contemporary West had misplaced its soul, and pilgrims to India were on a mission to retrieve it. In the process, their unconscious assumptions about politics, religion, and identity in their own cultures were turned upside-down and laid open to question. "What do you think of western civilization?" Gandhi was once asked. He answered, "It would be a good idea." This book is about a good idea in India, Father India tells the story of those people--Curzon, Besant, Forster, Naipaul, Isherwood, Mirra Richard, and oddly, Gandhi, too, as well as a chorus of minor characters--who attempted to comprehend or even to protect western civilization through India, and of how their successes and failures returned to the modern West a changed understanding of itself.