

# INDIA BECOMING

A Portrait of Life in Modern India  
by Akash Kapur

## ***India Becoming***

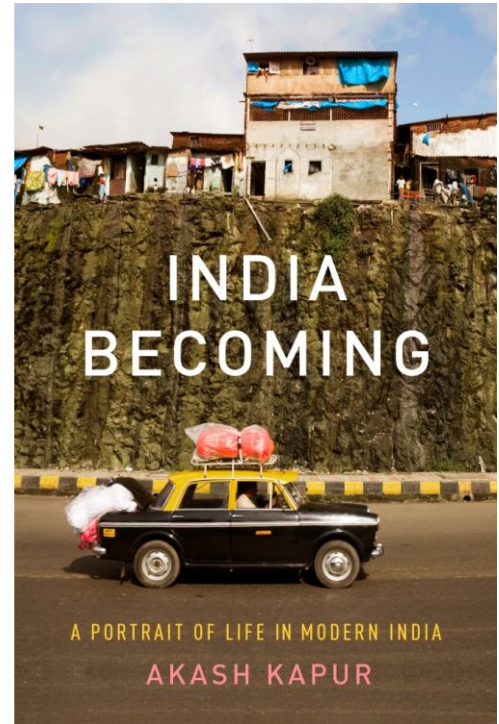
Penguin-Riverhead, March 15, 2012

Excerpted in *The New Yorker*

The son of an Indian father and an American mother, Akash Kapur was raised in India but educated in the United States from the age of sixteen. Then, in 2003, having made a life in the West, he returned to his birth country for good, eager to be a part of its exciting growth and modernization. What he found was a nation even more transformed than he had imagined, where the changes were fundamentally altering Indian society.

To further understand these changes, he sought out the Indians experiencing them first hand—young and old, across classes, in the city and in the countryside. The result is a rich tapestry of lives being transformed—for better and often for worse—by rapid economic growth, and a particularly sensitive portrait of change in rural India, where new prosperity has been accompanied by the decline of agriculture and a collapse in traditional ways of life.

*India Becoming* is a rare insider's look at the process of development, a ground-up portrait of massive economic, social and cultural transition. Akash Kapur eschews the broad sweep of policy tomes, opting instead for a close look at the villages, towns, and lives being swept up in India's great leap toward modernity. The book covers some of the biggest stories of our age (rapid economic development, inequality and environmental depredation, the rise of emerging markets and a rebalancing of the global order), but with an intimacy, level of detail and nuance rarely encountered in contemporary writing about India.



***“remarkably absorbing”***

-Amartya Sen

***“a wonderful writer...  
a gripping storyteller”***

-Philip Gourevitch

***“Marvelous...  
insightful... the  
remarkable debut of a  
distinctive new talent”***

-William Dalrymple

A PORTRAIT OF INCREDIBLE CHANGE AND NEW PROSPERITY—A GROUND UP  
VIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, A STORY OF SOCIAL AND NATIONAL  
TRANSFORMATION TOLD THROUGH INDIVIDUAL LIVES.



Sebastian Cortes

Akash Kapur is the former 'Letter from India' columnist for *The International Herald Tribune* and the online edition of *The New York Times*. He has also written for *The Atlantic*, *The Economist*, *Granta*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*. He holds a BA in Social Anthropology from Harvard University, and a doctorate in Law from Oxford University, which he attended as a Rhodes Scholar. He lives outside Pondicherry, in South India.

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*"Beautifully written...Akash Kapur celebrates the gains and mourns the losses, conveying a complex story through the ups and downs of the lives of some fascinating individual women and men."*

—Kwame Anthony Appiah, author of *Cosmopolitanism*

*"There have been many books now on the new India, but almost all of them concentrate on urban north India. Akash Kapur's marvelous book is unique in looking mainly at the south and in a detailed and intimate way at village life. He shows how the old rural world depicted and romanticized by R.K. Narayan is fracturing and breaking apart to reveal a very new, more unstable world. Sharp-eyed, insightful, skillfully-sketched and beautifully written, India Becoming is the remarkable debut of a distinctive new talent."*

—William Dalrymple, author of *Nine Lives*

*"Akash Kapur is a wonderful writer: a courageously clear-eyed observer, an astute listener, a masterful portraitist, and a gripping story teller. His voice is as sure and as intimate as his subject is chaotic and immense, and he proves himself the perfect guide to the enthralling promise and the terrifying menace of a society in the throes of colossal, epochal, all-encompassing change."*

—Philip Gourevitch, author of *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families*

*"Through a series of deft character sketches, Akash Kapur captures the contradictions of life in modern India—between city and country, technology and aesthetics, development and the environment, greed and selflessness, individual fulfilment and community obligation. His writing is fresh and vivid; his perspective, empathetic and appealingly non-judgemental."*

—Ramachandra Guha, author of *India after Gandhi*

*"Akash Kapur invites us to explore a country collapsing with contradictions. I have never been to India, but after reading Kapur's fascinating and absorbing book I almost feel as if I have."*

—David Lida, author of *First Stop in the New World*

*"Akash Kapur lives in and writes out of an India that few writers venture into. Curious, suspicious of received wisdom, and intellectually resourceful, his writing has established him as one of the most reliable observers of the New India."*

—Pankaj Mishra, author of *Temptations of the West*

*"This is a remarkably absorbing account of an India in transition—full of challenges and contradictions—but also of expectations, hope, and ultimately also of optimism."*

—Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate and author of *Development as Freedom*

Read an excerpt in *The New Yorker*

Listen to a podcast with the author, from *The New Yorker Online*

Watch a video trailer for this book