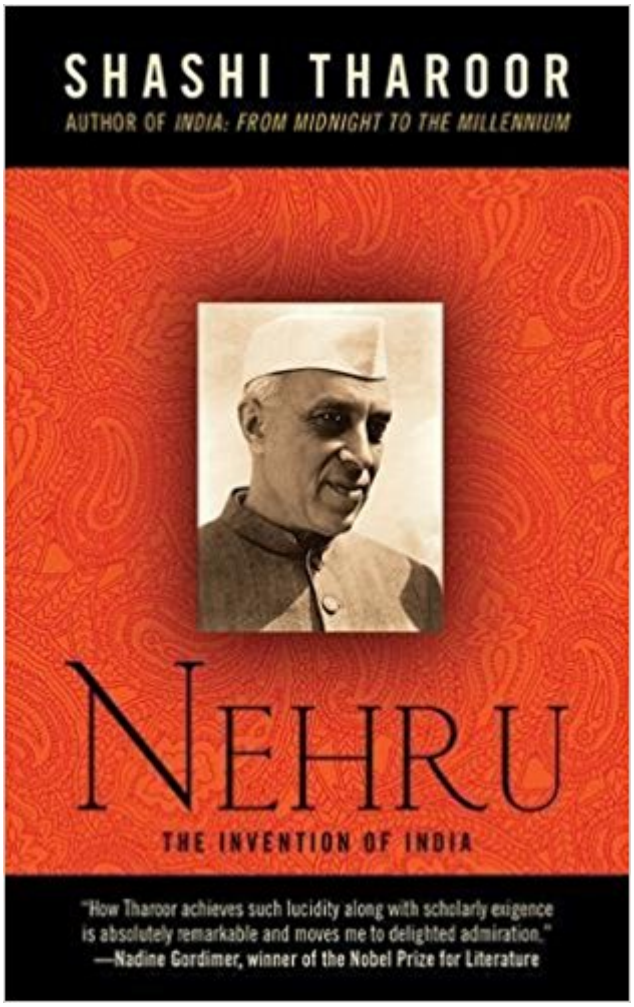
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Nehru: The Invention Of India



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Synopsis

Shashi Tharoor delivers an incisive biography of the great secularist who—alongside his spiritual father, Mahatma Gandhi—led the movement for IndiaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s independence from British rule and ushered his newly independent country into the modern world. The man who would one day help topple British rule and become IndiaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s first prime minister started out as a surprisingly unremarkable student. Born into a wealthy, politically influential Indian family in the waning years of the Raj, Jawaharlal Nehru was raised on Western secularism and the humanist ideas of the Enlightenment.Ã Â Once he met Gandhi in 1916, Nehru threw himself into the nonviolent struggle for IndiaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s independence, a struggle that wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t won until 1947. India had found a perfect political complement to her more spiritual advocate, but neither Nehru nor Gandhi could prevent the horrific price for independence: partition. This fascinating biography casts an unflinching eye on NehruÃ¢â ¬â„¢s heroic efforts for, and stewardship of, independent India and gives us a careful appraisal of his legacy to the world.

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Customer Reviews

Shashi Tharoor was born in London and brought up in Bombay and Calcutta. He has written for the New York Times, the Washington Post, the International Herald Tribune, the Times of India, and Foreign Affairs. A human rights activist and winner of a Commonwealth Writers Prize, he is currently a member of the Indian Parliament and lives in New Dehli, India.

good read

It is not easy to write a biography of a towering and complex personality like Nehru and not end up short. Everyone interested in India and its history has an opinion on Nehru and often they are diametrically opposite to one another. Tharoor, like me, is an admirer of Nehru and believes that his contribution to India is immense. This naturally, has its effect on his portrayal of Nehru and so this book should not be viewed as a comprehensive study of the man or of all his achievements and failures. I see this book as another perspective on Nehru and a well-written one.Nowadays, in India and particularly in the Indian diaspora, it is fashionable to denounce Nehru as the 'lotus-eater' from Kashmir and as one who ruined India's economic development and also as one who encouraged a pseudo-secular culture in India. Tharoor challenges this well in his book and shows the legacy of Nehru and the India that he tried to build on the pillars of democratic institution-building, staunch pan-Indian secularism, socialist economics at home and a foreign policy of non-alignment. In addition, I found that Tharoor brings out certain aspects of the past which are generally not highlighted in the teaching of history in our schools in India.For example, it was his father Motilal Nehru whose liberal and rationalist temperament that gave the son his scientific inclinations and agnosticism. Motilal had no time for the self-appointed guardians of any faith, abhorred bigotry and had contempt for Hindu communalism which mirrored the Muslim League. Motilal was also moderate and believed in compromise to find common ground. One can see that Jawaharlal Nehru imbibed all these qualities. I had never known that Motilal was such a significant personality.For all those Indians who talk ill of Nehru's independent thought process, Tharoor gives some interesting snippets. Nehru wrote in 1927, "England, in order to save herself from extinction, will become a satellite of the US and incite American imperialism to fight by her side". On China in the 1940s, he writes that a communist victory would not necessarily mean a rule by the principles of Marx; the role of the 'small peasant' would ensure a departure from 'pure communism'. He also speculates in the 1940s that Britain and the US will join together to create a powerful Anglo-Saxon bloc to dominate the world.Tharoor writes about another little-known and interesting snippet about Nehru's democratic instincts. Nehru himself penned an pseudonymous essay in the Modern Review in the late 1930s, warning the countrymen to put a check on Nehru and stop him from becoming a Caesar as he has all the makings of a dictator in him! This was because he was conscious of the risk that power, and in particular mass adulation, could turn one's head.There have been many who denounce on his conduct of foreign policy. Still, I am in agreement with Shashi Tharoor when he says: " Nehru projected a different ideal for India on the world stage. The force of example, the nobility of aspiration and the articulation of India's interests as those of a humanistic universalism,

all served to give Nehru's India stature. India did not speak in terms of nation-state rivalry or patriotic chauvinism ; Nehru sought a loftier place for India on the world stage. For all its flaws, this credibility was not easily achieved.". Such idealism obviously does not pay much dividends nor is it possible for any nation to sustain it consistently. But it shows Nehru's vision of an India, inspired by his tutelage under Gandhi and at the dawn of India's independence in the late 1940s, there was a case for such idealism.The book brings out Tharoor's passion for India through Nehru. Tharoor himself is a citizen of the world and was an UN official and through his literary abilities, he paints a composite picture of Jawaharlal Nehru. With the rising middle-class in India, which like elsewhere, tends to be more right-wing, sectarian and parochial, this book is a good balancer for the young of India to understand the ideals of the 'Nehru-Gandhi' vision of India.

Although it was actually a combination of two people which led to the invention of India. In fact were the circumstances. Gandhi was the spiritual master, Nehru was practical. It was Nehru who shaped the modern India. And it was his prime minister. Not a book of the history of contemporary India but Nehru's life, what happens is that the two are very close. Well summarized and easy to read.

This novel is very interesting and it is good to read for those who don't know the famous Indian politician Jawaharlal Nehru. It discusses the major actions that Nehru performed for the fight for IndiaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s independence. It emphasizes the impact he had on the nation, and the role he played in India's government and foreign policy. I highly recommend this novel for those interested in reading about the ones who fought for India.

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