



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

*Siddhartha Deb*

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## **The Beautiful and the Damned: A Portrait of the New India** Siddhartha Deb

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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