

- 4 What is the social setting of the text?
- 5 How can the narrator think that it will be a bright day?
- 6 Is any impact of Western values implied in the text? Substantiate your point.
- 7 The use of images of malnourished children or desolate and despondent people to achieve support or make a point is called poverty pornography. Find examples on the internet. Would you consider this text an example of that? Why/why not?
- 8 Does the author want to *entertain* – *provoke* – *teach* – *excite* the reader? How and why?

### Post-reading WWW

#### LEARNING CHECK

- 1 Text and vocabulary.

#### TEXT-RELATED ASSIGNMENT

- 1 Written assignment: letter to the editor.

#### WIDER CONTEXTS

- 1 Literary context: other genre: correction of article.

## THE IDEAS SHAPING A NEW INDIA

BY ANAND GIRIDHARADAS



Anand Giridharadas was born in Cleveland, Ohio to parents from Mumbai, India and has worked as a journalist for *The New York Times* and *The International Herald Tribune*. His first major work is *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking*. He has lived in India and at the time of publication he is writing in Massachusetts. His main issues are India and China (Chindia) and the economic and political developments in these parts of Asia.

### Pre-reading

- 1 Made-over nations: split up into three main groups. The members of each group should look for information on one of these three countries:  
**India:** Focus on the time of Independence, India's present political system, the caste system, India's changed economic policy in 1991.  
**China:** Focus on China's political and financial situation since 1995.  
**South Africa:** Focus on the time after 1989, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995) and South Africa's present political system.  
 Each group should spend about 15 minutes trying to find out in what way these three countries are made-over nations. Then meet in groups of three, each representing a different country and exchange information.
- 2 Prediction: the author has five key messages in his text:
  - a Class is a situation.
  - b A bed is for two.
  - c English is passé.
  - d Plastic is better than gold.
  - e Modernity is best served traditional.
 Write down what you think each of these key messages relates to. Then read the text to see if your predictions are confirmed. If not, discuss what they actually relate to.
- 3 Vocabulary. WWW Word class: Indian politics.



## The Ideas Shaping a New India

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shimmer flimse, glitre  
amorphous ubestemt-  
melig  
made-over fuld-  
stændig ændret

Jawaharlal Nehru  
India's first Prime  
Minister (1889-  
1964)

proclaim bekendtgøre

tryst stævnemøde

destiny skæbne

loosen løse

ancient meget  
gammel

walk with a swagger  
gå med selvsik-  
kerhed

immunity immu-  
nitet, usårlighed

exhibit udvise

simultaneously  
samtidig

bravado udfordrende  
optræden (der  
dækker over frygt)

pool pulje, mængde

distinction of class  
klassemåle

intrinsic som  
kommer indefra

heritable arvelig

circumstance  
omstændighed

subtle hårfin, diskret

hierarchically  
[hæ'rækikl]  
rangordnet

hunch and bow  
bukke og skrabe

obsequiously under-  
danigt, krybende

sahib (indisk) herre

conceive of have  
opfattelsen af

transient forbigående

of sorts en slags

This new year will bring the 20th anniversary of that shimmering, amorphous thing, the new India.

Like China and South Africa and other made-over nations, India has more than one birth date. There is that midnight hour in 1947 when Jawaharlal Nehru proclaimed the end of British rule and spoke of India's 'tryst with destiny'. But it is to 1991, when India began to open its doors to the world and loosen the economic controls on its own citizens, that the present form of the country can most easily be traced.

India is an ancient civilization, but in many ways the country can also seem like a 20-year-old. It walks with the swagger of a nation that has its best days ahead. It has a youngster's sense of immunity. Like so many 20-year-olds, it exhibits simultaneously the bravado of needing nobody and the hunger for recognition from those it claims not to need.

Who is this new India? Its character is coming into ever sharper focus, and it is becoming clearer which ideas have most shaped its re-making.

Here, based on my own years of traveling in and reporting on the country, are five ideas that have done much to turn the new India new – out of a larger pool of ideas that could be mentioned.

### CLASS IS A SITUATION

Every society has distinctions of class. But in an earlier India, these distinctions were taken to be intrinsic and eternal and heritable; class was not circumstance, but identity.

The ancient caste system was the most obvious symbol of this idea. But it had many subtler expressions, too.

Businessmen made a point of hierarchically noting that "he came to meet me" or "I went to meet him," rather than simply saying, "We met." Waiters hunched and bowed and obsequiously overdosed on the word 'sir' or 'sahib' when serving.

A rising group of young Indians conceives of class very differently; not as a fixed identity, but as a transient situation, and a situation that can change.

### A BED IS FOR TWO

In many a traditional Indian household, the bed was for more than sleeping. It was a community center of sorts. Whole families sat on beds and ate meals, planned weddings, watched television, fought, loved and gossiped.

bespeak tyde på,  
vidne om

cease ophøre med  
template skabelon

contort forvrænge

dubiously tvivlsomt

decade årti  
manner optræden  
discomfort ubehag  
gesture (hånd-)  
bevægelse  
hybrid [hæ'brid]  
blandet

hoard puge sammen

displace erstatte

Such bed behavior bespoke a certain kind of family belonging that is now fading in India. Where young people once saw themselves as part of their clan, above all, they increasingly identify themselves today as individuals.

They maintain a faith in family as an insurance policy and support network. But many have come to see family as a hindrance to achieving their dreams.

They are one by one ceasing to see family members as the templates for what they might become; and ceasing, for good or ill, to believe in the economy of guilt and sacrifice that has traditionally held Indian families together.

They are coming to believe, in short, that the best approach for family happiness is for you to take care of you and me of me, rather than everyone contorting themselves for everyone else.

### ENGLISH IS PASSÉ

When traveling through India today, it is easy at first to conclude that it is English-crazy. Every few kilometers on the highways and even country roads are signs for English-language classes – some teaching more dubiously than others.

But here is a secret: Indians are passionate about learning English, but they no longer want to be English. And the distinction matters a great deal.

For a long while after the British left in 1947, they left a hangover behind. The brown-skinned elites that took over wanted nothing more than to resemble the white-skinned elites who had gone.

But over the last two decades, a shift in the laws of manners has occurred. Today a new generation of elites has considerably less discomfort being, well, Indian. Their accents are confidently Indian, as are their gestures, their Hindi-English hybrid talk and their taste for Bollywood films. They seem unable to imagine any fate happier than that of being Indian.

### PLASTIC IS BETTER THAN GOLD

The substance that formerly defined money in India was gold. Gold represented solidity and security. But it also revealed a culture that feared the future and sought insurance against it.

It was a culture that saw people's worth as the present value of what they have hoarded until now, seeing the future as threat more than opportunity.

These days plastic is displacing gold as the substance with which Indians most associate money. And this is more than a financial matter.



swipe føre igennem  
stash stable  
hedge helgarding  
assumption antagelse  
refine forfine,  
forbedre

To swipe a plastic card, rather than stash gold, is a psychological bet on the future instead of a hedge against it. It is valuing your worth as the present value of future earnings, not past ones, on the assumption that the future will only refine the present.

## MODERNITY IS BEST SERVED TRADITIONAL

disruptive nedbry-  
dende  
fault (vb) kritisere

Changes of this kind have been disruptive, to say the least, in many parts of the developing world. India is often faulted for modernizing too slowly and chaotically. But there is perhaps another way of seeing its journey over the past 20 years: as a different model of modernization.

retain the upper hand  
fastholde magt over

It is a model of forward movement in which the past retains the upper hand and the future stands on the defensive. Change, however inevitable it might seem, must prove itself before being allowed to work on India.

cautious forsigtig

But the Indian model is more than just cautious. It tends to assume, against all odds, that the traditional and the modern are ultimately compatible.

ultimately til syvende  
og sidst

compatible forenelig

emerge dukke frem

situational situations-  
bestemt

casual hookup  
tilfældig forbindelse

tribe stamme

solitude ensomhed

What is emerging is a kind of situational modernity, in which there is a time for casual hookups and a time for arranged marriage, a time for belonging to the greater tribe and a time for solitude and self.

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## While-reading

### COMPREHENSION AND ANALYSIS

- 1 Why is 1991 just as important in Indian history as 1947?
- 2 Rephrase the passage on p. 310, ll. 9-13 "India is an ancient .... to need" What is the effect of the personalisation?
- 3 Rephrase the passage on p. 311, l. 43 - p. 312, l. 4 "These days ... the present" What does "thinking in plastic" rather than in gold suggest about the change in India's role in the late modern world?
- 4 Make a rhetorical analysis of the text (See Toolbox p. 329) in which you include the following questions:
  - a What conclusion does the author make about Indian identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
  - b What does the author's use of personal pronouns suggest about his own national identity?
  - c What do you think is the author's intention in writing this article?
  - d What attitude to England and the English is expressed in this article?
- 5 In what way is there a connection between this post-colonial attitude and the language spoken by modern, urban professionals?

## Post-reading

### LEARNING CHECK

- 1 Indian history.
- 2 Vocabulary.

### TEXT-RELATED ASSIGNMENT

- 1 Written assignment: five key messages about Denmark.

### WIDER CONTEXTS

- 1 Literary context: other genre: compare with Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*, p. 290.