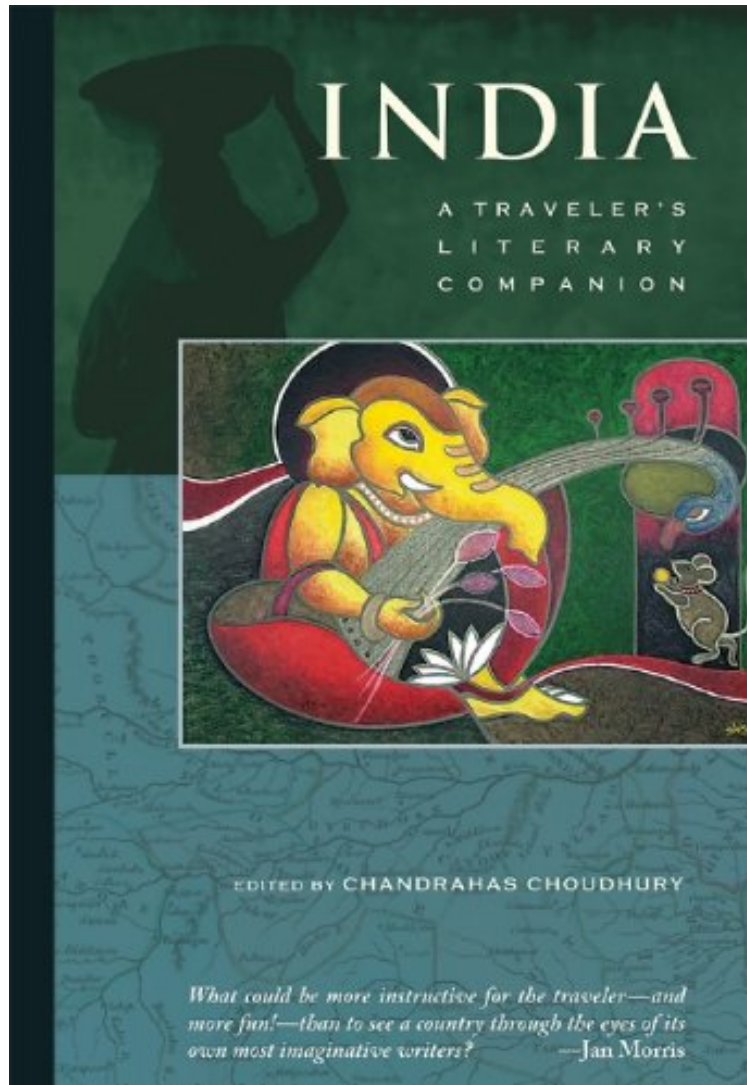


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## India: A Traveler's Literary Companion (Traveler's Literary Companions)

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**From Whereabouts Press : India: A Traveler's Literary Companion (Traveler's Literary Companions)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised India: A Traveler's Literary Companion (Traveler's Literary Companions):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Pamela K. AryaFascinating and charming vignettes from all parts of India.15 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Worthwhile as an IntroductionBy Reader in TokyoThis book was published in 2010 and collected 13 works from as many Indian writers. There were 11 short

stories and 2 excerpts from novels. The collection is part of the traveler's literary companion series, a beautiful attempt to introduce a wide range of foreign writers and locations to English-language readers. Trying to introduce modern writing from India -- a nation of 1.2 billion with 22 official languages plus English -- is a thankless task, as difficult as trying to introduce, say, the writing from all of Africa or all of Latin America in one short book. The series limit of 250-odd pages wasn't ideal for such a diverse country. Here the editor, an Indian writer and critic based in Mumbai, devoted less space to English (5 works) and more to the indigenous languages (8 works). The latter were from Hindi (north and central India), Bengali (the northeast), Urdu (major cities), Gujarati (the west), Oriya (the east) and Kannada and Malayalam (the southwest). The major languages omitted were Telugu (the south), Marathi (the west), Tamil (the southeast) and Punjabi (the northwest). The works ranged roughly from 1900 to 2010. The book sought to balance old and new, selecting a few important writers from the indigenous languages as well as younger authors, most of them in English, some well known and some not. About half of the stories were from 1900 to the 80s, the rest from the past two decades. Thankfully, the book didn't focus mainly on the well-known contemporary Indian writers in English of the past few decades, although a few of them were included. Of all the authors, five were women. The older works were by the pioneering writer in Oriya, Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918), from his novel *Six Acres and a Third*, on a village ghat in Orissa. The Bengali author Bibhutibhushan Bandhopadhyay (1894-1950), on the melodramatic travails of an aging oil-seller in Calcutta. And Lalithambika Antherjanam (1909-85), on a bride in the south chafing under restrictions that kept her husband away. The youngest writers were Vikram Chandra (1961-), in an excerpt from his recent novel *Sacred Games*, set in the slums of Bombay. Nazir Mansuri (1965-), on the sexual tension between a sailor and a widow. And Anjum Hasan (1972-), on a young woman who took a bus to Goa after quarreling with her husband. Others included Phanishwarnath Renu, a voice of rural India from the mid-20th century, about the problems of a low-caste village in Bihar. The warm depictions in his story, "Panchlight," made it my favorite. There was Qurratulain Hyder, an important writer in Urdu, on the decline of a woman from the Muslim upper class of Delhi following partition in 1947. Salman Rushdie, in a readable comic story from the 1980s on the theft of a relic from a mosque. Kunal Basu, called one of the few Indian writers of historical fiction, on a modern-day accountant transported back in time to the building of the Taj Mahal. And Mamang Dai, on a contemporary woman adapting to marriage in a village in the northeast. The present collection was a nice introduction for its size, admirable for seeking to introduce writers beyond those in English. If the book had been larger or the selections shorter, it might've been possible to include other important authors like Saadat Hasan Manto (Urdu), Premchand (Urdu and Hindi), Nirmal Verma (Hindi) and O. V. Vijayan (Malayalam), to name just a few. Large anthologies for further exploration include *The Penguin Book of Modern Indian Short Stories* (1989, revised 2001), *Mirrorwork: 50 Years of Indian Writing 1947-1997* (1997), *Best Loved Indian Stories, Vols. 1 and 2* (1999), *Our Favourite Indian Stories* (2001), and *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* (2001, aka *The Vintage Book of Modern Indian Literature*, 2004). From India's Sahitya Akademi, there's *Modern Indian Literature: An Anthology, Vols. 1 and 2* (1992-93). 6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A must for any international short fiction enthusiast. By Midwest Book Review. India is a nation with a very rich cultural history. "India: A Traveler's Literary Companion" is a guide to many aspects of modern India, told by some of its current contemporary writers, each giving a glimpse of life and their modern challenges in India's many regions. From the construction of the Taj Mahal, to the plight of its massive populations in small villages and ghettos, "India" is a must for any international short fiction enthusiast.

The latest book in the acclaimed series of literary travel guides brings together a delightful sampling of short fiction from one of the worlds most diverse, multicultural, and storied civilizations. *India: A Travelers Literary Companion* features 14 short stories from some of Indias best writers, collectively offering an insightful portrait of the beauty and complexity of Indian landscape, culture, and society. Travel to the Taj Mahal with Kunal Basu, as the humble accountant of his story becomes, in another incarnation, the architect of one of the worlds most resplendent monuments. Let Vikram Chandra leads readers by the hand into the ghettos of Mumbai (Bombay), where a small-time thug fences some gold bars he has stolen and then decides to find out what pleasures his money can buy. Journey with Bibhutibhushan Bandhopadhyays silver-tongued salesman of medicated oil as he travels the trains around Calcutta, the city he loves more than anything else. And Nazir Mansuris Melvillian *The Whale* transports readers to a small fishing village on the west coast of India, where an embittered sailor makes every whale he sees the object of his fury. Stories from nine languages and more than a dozen distinct cultures and regions from north, south, east, west, and even from Indias remote northeast are brought together in this vibrant collection.