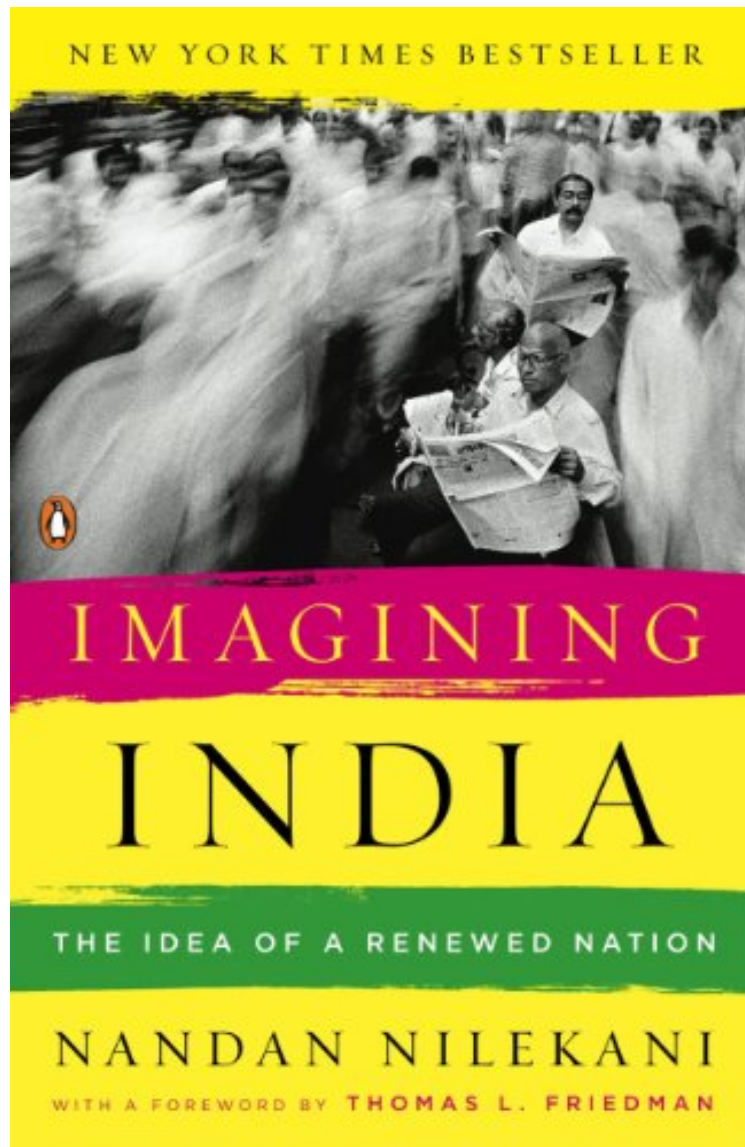


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Imagining India: The Idea of a Renewed Nation

Nandan Nilekani

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Nandan Nilekani : Imagining India: The Idea of a Renewed Nation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Imagining India: The Idea of a Renewed Nation:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Call to Arms to all Local and Global IndiansBy royal_gujuBusiness readers have been treated to a steady stream of books about India over the past half-decade. These have ranged from Edward Luce's journalistic chronicle of the country's rise in modern times, In Spite of the Gods, to Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath's marketing brochure, India's Century. But the country continues to evolve, and its challenges refuse to go away, creating an opening--and a need--for a fresh perspective. Imagining India: The

Idea of a Renewed Nation by software entrepreneur Nandan Nilekani comes through with genuine insights. Nilekani, a household name in India, is a would-be reformer, and his book may well light a crackling fire under the country's aspirations to greatness. The author is a co-founder and co-chairman of Infosys Technologies (INFY), a leading Indian tech-services company, making this one of the first books about today's India written from a business leader's perspective. *Imagining India* puts forth the ideas founding our nation's past, present and future. These ideas are divided in four sections. First section re-imagines Ideas that have arrived, concepts which have found deep roots in our society. It gives us sense of who we are and what are the strengths/weaknesses. This section is a journalistic trace of phases through which that particular idea has lived, like "Deepening of our Democracy" traces the journey of our democracy or "Home and The World" tracks how we looked at and dealt with the rest of the world as we entered globalization. It is interesting to read how we changed our approach to entrepreneurs and business. "India, by its People" talks about altered mindset of looking at our population, also brainstorms for capitalizing on famous and much discussed Demographic Dividend. We have started viewing and harnessing our population as real working asset, thanks to knowledge economy which thrived on social value which education upholds in many sections of our society since long time. The discussions in this section connect us to the present day scenario on these ideas, examine where do we stand and where we are headed. The second section talks about ideas in progress- where we need to assert the social change already happening around us and start finding the strategies for better implementation. In 'our changing faces' Nandan talks about radical shift from rural to urban which is not yet fully asserted and recognized by policymakers. "S is for schools" makes us realize that Indians are very hungry for education, but systemic response of our policy leadership is far away from delivering. This section is work of sharp social observer, who tries to hit the think tanks of power corridors with his thoughts and awaken them about changing reality of Indian life. The third section talks about ideas in battle; this is where we are stuck from taking decisive direction and fighting on hard ideological lines of divisions. Today's realpolitik is happening here. Like ideas in "The sound and Fury" essay exactly point out what our furious debates are - reservation or meritocracy, left or right, Subsidies or Free market, Top-down or Bottom-up. In "Jostling for Jobs", the author talks of paradigm shift from socialist model to 'emerging market' model of job creation. Here one gets a feel that we must facilitate our entrepreneurs faster and have greater resolve for labor reforms to help them create, spread wealth and hence more jobs. As Infosys founder, Nandan has seen both pre and post reforms era, so his writings have practical undertone of 'Keep the state away from entrepreneurs!' As bureaucracy and license raj are fading, our society is getting in better position to test the character of any reform on the criterion of scalability sustainability of jobs created. So we can now hope to get policy focus depending on value and impact. We see less of a fashionably capitalist "Hire and Fire" advocacy and more of a sustainable job creation discussions when Nandan talks about labor reforms, his criticism on recent national employment guarantee scheme also comes in light of its absence of synergy with any agricultural reforms. Even the left in India has accepted emergence of the markets now. After two decades we have seen what markets can do and what they can not do by themselves. Nandan's political writings could prove to be welcome beginning of second generation reformist thought; he sounds less 'neo-liberal' and more 'pro-people'. Fourth and last section is about ideas to be anticipated- like Information Communication Technologies (ICT) for development, health, power, environment, social security and so on... Here we think about our developmental needs to be addressed in near future, catching up with developed world and learn from their mistakes to find distinctive Indian model of development. 'ICT in India', an essay which talks about use of Information Technology in governance and social development is Nandan's masterpiece, it is the most detailed thinking ever done before on how to integrate IT into India's political DNA and not just have few golden dots of Industrial excellence in IT cities of India. When Nandan says "IT is a less of a tool and more of a strategy for public policy reforms", he hits the nail on the head and creates a synergy between all non-conventional modern day political thinkers and politicians, including himself. IT industries lead the welcome change in Indian economy and we get a sense that this is time for IT to do the same with our political system. The explanations around the ideas in all sections are so well framed that the readers get the right brainstorming bout and get triggered with creative impulse to debate with themselves. Especially for next generation young leaders in several walks of Indian life, who are looking to break the political barriers and change the very definition of Indian political community, these comprehensions serve as the profound Ideapedia. It facilitates all the next generation reformists by guiding their actions. The wide range of ideas and scenarios explaining the pros and cons of the strategy around these ideas is the highlight of *Imagining India*'s dialogue. On flipside, we start searching for ideas that are missing in a book. In never-ending roll of ideas the author has presented; our courts of laws, Security At Home, Defense and Financial Markets needed separate representations. These ideas have become a concern not only for political elite but also for our common man, so we definitely need to think more about them. The flow of narration often quotes author's discussions with several key personalities in diverse establishments and institutions. All these personalities come before us as strategic thinkers, idea churners who are likeminded with Nandan Nilekani and living the prototypes of new India already. While reading the essays one after another, we get a sense that community is being developed around the framework of ideas proposed. But this is where the book could have done better; the development of intellectual community around ideas should have been more aggressive, and targeted towards the mainstream political community. Mr Nilekani starts the book with declaration "I am unelectable" and the best way he

can contribute to process of change is to evoke the power of ideas through dialogue like this. Agreed! But the discussion on politics would never be complete without taking comprehensive account of political parties beyond the institutions of governance. The references and discussions on political parties and movements are interwoven in his entire narrative; but that is not enough. When change has to be lead for one billion people and they are to be held in one (reformist) theme - the concept called political party will have to undergo a great deal of upheaval. That has to happen in mind of thinkers and dynamic political leaders first. "Political Parties and Their Organizational as well as Ideological Innovations" are of utmost importance in any potent political thinking. That should have been separate 19th idea, may be part of a last section where Ideas to be anticipated are discussed. The detailed thinking on formation of future political organizations and networks would be expected from thought leader like Nandan. Such thinking requires getting into more complexities; but it would have taken Imagining India more close to the blueprint of tomorrow. Imagining India is the beginning of a discussion for all Indians (in India or local and global or ones that are referred to as NRIs and their descendants) who see the potential or to quote Mr Nilekani, "we will either become a country that greatly disappoints when compared with our potential or one that beats all expectations." 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. You can learn from this book By Don McGowan Nandan Nilekani is a technocrat. Not surprising for the guy who founded Infosys after graduating from IIT, but still worth remembering. So of course he sees problems as having technological solutions. The thing is, he also describes how the absence of technology has created these problems, so it's not unreasonable for him to suggest that they could be solved with technology. His review of the development of Indian democracy and society is very educational to a non-Indian reader. It's tough for those of us who aren't from India to understand how things got to be the way they are. Nilekani wreaks order onto the chaos in a comprehensible manner. Nilekani has obviously had access to many government officials and academics in writing this book and it shows. If you are looking to gain deeper knowledge without being flooded with detail, this book will get you there. I read this book just after Nilekani was named to the Indian cabinet to implement a national ID card system. Apparently he insisted on having a cabinet-level position because he perceived a lot of upcoming problems with implementing his proposals. After reading this book I know why he thinks that way. And if he really believes what he wrote here, good luck... 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Far-ranging and sure to be the topic of many discussions By Andrew D. Oram I learned quite a bit from this book, as someone outside India and the Indian community, and thoroughly enjoyed Nilekani's writing. It's a wide-ranging treatise with many big agendas; it covers education, infrastructure, environmental challenges, government intervention, and the role of historical narrative, among other things. Biggest among its agenda--and the one that I wager will generate the most debate--is Nilekani's own version of what I'd call a modern combination of neoliberalism and neoprogressivism that seems to be gaining ground. The general idea is that governments should take a leading role to promote social progress by creating an infrastructure that allows individuals to form their own destinies (good education, good health care, good physical infrastructure, a light-touch form of regulation that ensures quality, and occasional direct welfare payments) rather than preserving oases of protection and easily abused subsidies for particular interest groups, notably unions, small businesses, and disadvantaged castes.

A visionary look at the evolution and future of India In this momentous book, Nandan Nilekani traces the central ideas that shaped India's past and present and asks the key question of the future: How will India as a global power avoid the mistakes of earlier development models? As a co-founder of Infosys, a global leader in information technology, Nilekani has actively participated in the company's rise during the past twenty-seven years. In *Imagining India*, he uses his global experience and understanding to discuss the future of India and its role as a global citizen and emerging economic giant. Nilekani engages with India's particular obstacles and opportunities, charting a new way forward for the young nation.