

**AGE OF ANXIETY: COMING OF AGE IN
POST-COLONIAL INDIA BY INDRANIL
BANERJIE**



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Age of Anxiety

Coming of age in post-colonial India

By Indranil Banerjia

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AGE OF ANXIETY: COMING OF AGE IN POST-COLONIAL INDIA BY INDRANIL BANERJIE PDF

India has been Independent for just about two decades when a young Bengali boy, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, takes his place within the portals of an ancient school that continues to glorify its colonial past.

India is changing and the city that was once the proud capital of a vast Colonial empire is in rapid decline but the school holds out, white and resplendent amidst the surrounding gloom and depredation.

Sarat Chandra, cut off from his familiar world, is thrown together with a bunch of boys who hail from diverse backgrounds - Marwaris, Anglo-Indians, Armenians and Muslims. Within the school's portals he must adapt and conform to its ancient traditions. He finds a new name, makes friends and discovers the first flush of romance but struggles to come to terms with his family's precarious financial situation, which fuels his inherent anxiety.

Much like Sarat Chandra, the city too is grappling to come of age. Mired in post-Independence politics and economic decline, anxiety and gloom has spread through the populace jostling for space in an increasingly crowded and unrelenting city. The elite have taken over the mansions left behind by the colonialists while the poor throng the pavements and empty spaces.

Will Sarat Chandra find his place in the city or is he forever doomed to be the outsider, the 'mofussil' boy with an identity crisis?

This is a story about a generation numbed by the anxiety of the Sixties and the Seventies, about music dying in the bars, entire populations quietly fleeing the city and yesteryear's generation fortifying themselves within anachronistic colonial institutions to hold out against the assaults of change.

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Astounding Age

By Indywrites

This is a novel about a boy, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee finding his place in the world, facing the changes and grasping at what life throws at him. Age of Anxiety is set in the era when our country was still learning and accepting the changes Independence had brought. Sarto, is an only child and this novel takes us from the time he is in school to the time he finds himself at an juncture where he realises that he has finally found a place for himself and what he wants form life. It is also a coming of age story, taking the reader to a bygone era when life was both simpler and difficult at the same time. I have shared a few of the lines that express some of the elements that make this book a good read.

“He had to confront the unknown, listen, watch, assess and then act.”

It starts off with his experiences at school, an Anglo-Indian School still clinging to its illustrious past. I found

reading these like revisiting my own school. There is something comforting yet exciting about school and Indranil depicts it very well. Sarto and his anxiety is what the novel is all about. How he is dictated by his troubles, inadequacies and apprehensions.

“Sometimes you should stand up for what is right, even if it means being a bad boy”

The part where he is finding his profession, lucky enough to have no pressure to just work but to find his true calling is a lesson. He works his way into writing, finding his calling and a balance between just work and something he is passionate about too.

“It was an awe inspiring spectacle of steel and concrete structures reaching out from the bowels of the earth to the sky, a design stolen from some celestial architect and hammered and shaped by humans.”

When he visits the Steel factory is my favourite part, it took me to the time I did the project work, factory visits and industrial training for my post graduation. Indranil has written a balanced book highlighting each stage and aspect of Sarto’s life as he yearns to shed his anxiety and trepidation.

The language is the biggest pull of this book. The author writes with an exceptional flow, no errors no words that jar or don’t fit in. The language mirrors the age for which the novel has been penned. The author knows his craft and uses this to his advantage. As the book progresses and Sarto ‘grows up’ so does his language and his way of expression. Another thing is that even though the book uses a few big words, even I had to look up a couple; still the language is easy to understand.

I will be honest, a memoir is like reading a person’s life story and unless it is highly embellished with ‘fiction’ or is about an controversial person it will have some part where you just want to skip through however I can safely say that Age of Anxiety has a flow, a story that unfolds slowly, bit by bit yet kept me interested. At each page Sarto was the kid you wanted to root for and that is what is special about this book. You find a glimpse of your own childhood, teenage or youthful innocence in these pages.

“He was not alone with his angst but shared one that throbbed through the arteries of his country.”

The time when the Raj Hangover was so strong and Sarto was like the 70’s flower child – smoking, drinking, marijuana/ ganja and that hint of first love. Free yet restrictions of a post colonial India are so well expressed. I found the parts devoted to smoking pot very interesting and detailed; typical of how it is shared and used. How boys bond over something so basic and liberating, no wonder it is still so popular!!

The rush of first love and Nayantara; I just loved her name and the changes she brought in Sarto. This was by far one of the absorbing chapters in this book. Just as their relation changed so did they and I liked the fact that the author gave the requisite importance to ‘first love’ in the final awaking of Sarto as a man who found his spot under the sun!!

“He felt alive, afloat, effervescing and usually breathless.”

The book is meant to be savored and read as you reminisce about the golden olden days. A perfect book to revisit those carefree yet anxious days of looking inward and out, searching for the real and true you!

(I received a copy of the book from the author for a fair and unbiased review.)

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Superb Read

By Rubina Ramesh

It's different.

This phrase is oft repeated whenever we read a book. But there never has been a bundle of pages where this phrase takes its true form. Breaking every boundary of genre and rules the author Indranil Banerjee has created a character, Sarat Chandra, who grows before you in this coming to age novel, Age of Anxiety.

When the English bid us farewell

When our dear British rulers bid us adieu, there remained a gap in our society, however peculiar it may sound, but there was group of people who were totally 'addicted' to the British way of life. As the Britishers left our country, the elites of every region in India stepped in to fill in the positions left empty upon their departure. Our own personal set of Indian noblemen stepped and formed the first group of Indian Bureaucrats. This story is a window that opens into the both the planes of the society, when class division dominated over caste division.

Growing up

Set in post-colonial Calcutta, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee grows up with many privileges that many middle class boys of his age were deprived of. But enjoying the privileges that went beyond his family's means also came with a price.

"Sarat Chandra, unlike his most of his school mates, had seen all this at close quarters for his father never could afford a chauffeur driven car to ferry him back and forth from school. He believed the other boys did not experience similar anxieties because they were shielded by their affluent backgrounds and had no concept of the world beyond the confines of their inviolate environment."

When his father lost his job, times were tough for the family and Sarat was almost expelled from the school. However, destiny intervened and he was able to continue his education without any hindrances. At least outwardly.

Check the full review @

rubinaramesh.com/2015/07/age-of-anxiety-by-indranil-banerjee.html

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

An insightful read

By Geeta

WOWS!!

The story-line: Interesting, insightful and relatable, the story takes one especially those that were around in the 1960s, down memory lane. The period and those living in the India of those times have been portrayed to perfection. The emotions of Sarat and his buddies, parents as well as other characters who find a place in the story are penned beautifully. One can easily experience their joys, their sorrows and frustrations as the story proceeds. In fact one can feel the story unfold before one's eyes. The story has its fair measure of humour too. In fact there are places where I could not help laughing out loud.

While reading the book I was transported to my childhood, the grand European style building that housed my school and my school-days. The mention of 'chooran' brought a smile on my face. It reminded me of the 'chooran-wala' who was a permanent feature outside the school gate during recess time.

Characterization: Bang on! Each minute detail is presented with perfection making the characters come live

before one's eyes.

Language: Crisp and lucid. The author's strong grip on the language is reflected in each word, each sentence thus adding value to the book.

Pace: Perfect. There was not a single moment when I felt I'd like to take a break.

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