

Incendiary Circumstances: A Chronicle of the Turmoil of Our Times

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Summary:

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"An uncannily honest writer." —New York Times Book Review

The novelist and journalist Amitav Ghosh has offered extraordinary firsthand accounts of pivotal world events over the past twenty years. He is an essential voice in forums like *The Nation*, the *New York Times*, the *New Republic*, *Granta*, and *The New Yorker*. *Incendiary Circumstances* brings together the finest of these pieces for the first time—including many never before published in the States—in a compelling chronicle of the turmoil of our times. *Incendiary Circumstances* begins with Ghosh's arrival in the Andaman and Nicobar islands just days after the devastation of the 2005 tsunami. We then travel back to September 11, 2001, as Ghosh retrieves his young daughter from school, sick with the knowledge that she must witness the kind of firestorm that has been in the background of his everyday life since childhood. With a prescience born of experience, Ghosh warned decades ago of the dangerous rise of religious extremism. In his travels he has stood on an icy mountaintop on the contested border between India and Pakistan, interviewed Pol Pot's sister-in-law in Cambodia, shared the elation of Egyptians when Naguib Mahfouz won the Nobel Prize, and stood with his threatened Sikh neighbors through the riots following Indira Gandhi's assassination. With intelligence and authentic sympathy, he "illuminates the human drama behind the headlines" (*Publishers Weekly*). *Incendiary Circumstances* is unparalleled testimony of an era defined by the ravages of politics and nature.

Amitav Ghosh is acclaimed for his political journalism and his travel writing. The *New York Times Book Review* called his travelogue, *In An Antique Land*, "remarkable . . . rivals anything by the masters of social realism in modern Egyptian literature." He is also the best-selling author of four novels, including *The Hungry Tide* and *The Glass Palace*, which has been published in eighteen foreign editions. Ghosh has won France's prestigious *Prix Medici Etranger*, India's *Sahitya Akademi Award*, the *Arthur C. Clarke Award*, and a *Pushcart Prize*. Educated in South Asia, the Middle East, and the United Kingdom, Ghosh holds a doctorate in social anthropology from Oxford. He divides his time between Harvard University, where he is a visiting professor, and his homes in Kolkata, India, and Brooklyn, New York.

Praise for Incendiary Circumstances

"This absorbing collection of essays by the novelist, journalist, and travel writer Ghosh . . . covers some two decades of catastrophe and upheaval, from sectarian violence in his native India during the 1980s through the September 11 attacks . . . to the recent Indian Ocean tsunami. With an eye for evocative detail, he illuminates the human dramas behind the headlines: the plight of tsunami refugees trying to rebuild their lives and finances after every bank record and piece of ID is lost to the waves; the courage of ordinary Indians protecting their Sikh neighbors from rampaging Hindu mobs . . . He is equally engaging when he turns from current affairs to literary essays on, say, the international culture of novel reading or the Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali. Written in luminous prose with unusual understanding . . . an insightful look at a chaotic world." —*Publishers Weekly Starred Review*

Praise for Amitav Ghosh

"Ghosh is adept at delineating the complicated crosscurrents of emerging national independence movements. He is even more impressive at portraying the different ways in which individuals react to the turmoil, hardship, and disorientation wrought by war." —*Wall Street Journal*

"A wonderful hybrid of travel writing, reporting, historical analysis, and memoir — in other words, the kind of piece [Ghosh] writes better than almost anyone else." —*Washington Times*

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