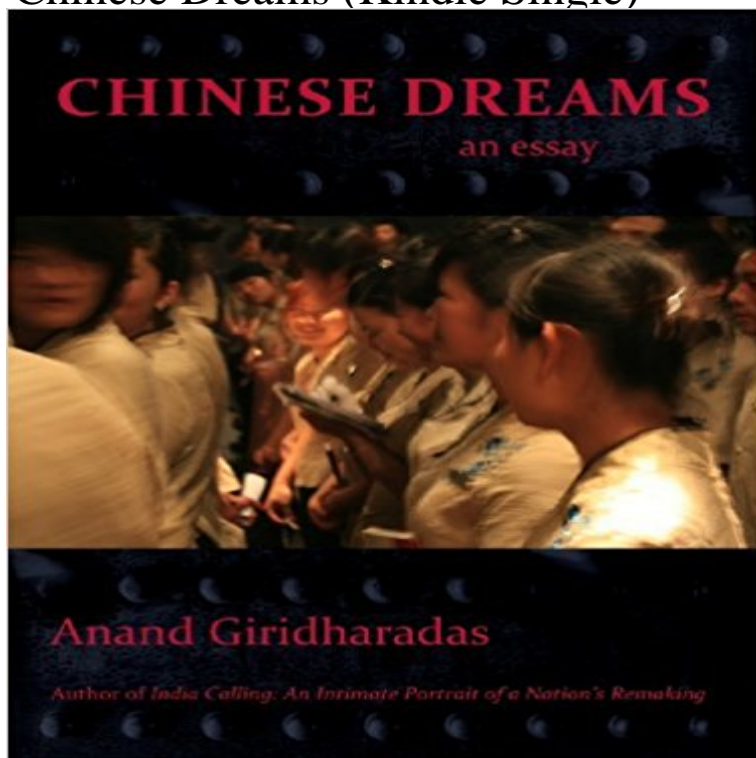


Chinese Dreams (Kindle Single)



What does the next generation of Chinese want -- besides economic growth? A report from China on the country's search for meaning, by Anand Giridharadas, columnist for the International Herald Tribune and The New York Times online, and author of *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking*.-----An excerpt: The airplane fell into China through what seemed like a vat of sour milk: a thick, yellow-white haze of cloud and smog that gave a preview of all the frenetic world-changing activity below. As we taxied through Pudong's airport, on the outskirts of Shanghai, the stew of rain and smog was thick enough to obscure the identities painted on other planes' tails. They wove around the airport as strangers in daylight. I had been to China twice before, both times only to Shanghai and briefly. Six years had passed, spent mostly in India, writing about that nation's own great turning. And, with India on my mind, what arrested me upon landing was the bodies. Every time I land in India, a jolt comes in seeing the bodies in the aerobridge and around the airport: the bodies of ballerinas, worn by grown men. They are bodies that were once and perhaps still are hungry. They sober the visitor at once; they remind one of the degradations that endure. Now, arriving in China, the seeming absence of such bodies struck me. The men in the airport -- the laborers, the gate staff, the taxi coordinators -- were full-bodied men. They had none of the Indian workers' meekness.... China's accomplishment in modern times is formidable: that much everyone knows. But it is also elusive. The Chinese scholar Steven N. S. Cheung has compared the nation to a clumsy, stumbling high jumper who, despite appearances, makes a world record jump. The man must have done something right, more right than all jumpers before, Cheung wrote in a book published last year. What

is it? That, in a different context, is the China question. I traveled to China last summer as an outsider, seeking answers to that question. My time in India had schooled me in the dangers of interpreting so vast and complicated a country through Western-built frameworks. I knew all about Chinas electronics sweatshops and factory suicides and cancer villages, its unaccountable death sentences and slow-oozing chemical spills and thick corruption, its prison abuse and censorship and treatment of minorities. What I didnt have a handle on was how Chinese themselves viewed these heady new times. I wondered how they were defining and going after their Chinese dreams. In four different settings, I eavesdropped on a fascinating conversation among the younger generation about what China has become and is becoming....I began these conversations open-endedly and followed them wherever they led. But a common thread presented itself before long. In ways as diverse as the country itself, my interlocutors were consumed and frustrated by the thought that China is lost, adrift. It was variously claimed that everything has moved too fast; that the capitalist present is burying the Maoist past as crudely and dangerously as the Maoists buried the past that they inherited; that anything resembling the future has been adopted without a thought to consequences...There seemed among those I met to be a yearning to slow it all down, to chew on what China has done and will mean, to supplement growing with reflection. Again and again, I detected a feeling of wanting more than economic success of wanting to invent, and not merely wake up in, a new China. When you make a certain amount of money, you ask, Whats next? Victor Koo, the effervescent co-founder of Youku, a Chinese equivalent of YouTube, told me high above the earth in his companys headquarters in Beijing. Were getting to a point where weve moved up a level, where the basic needs of many people are taken care of. And so the question of purpose now comes up.-----

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