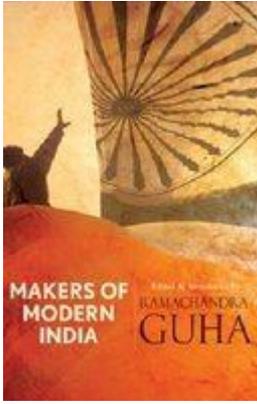


<http://amrutmanthan.wordpress.com/>

**Marathi contribution to reforms has been ignored:  
(Ramachandra Guha, Author of 'Makers of Modern India')**

**'Makers of Modern India'**

by Ramachandra Guha



- M.K. Gandhi
- Rabindranath Tagore
- B.R. Ambedkar
- Syed Ahmad Khan
- Gopal Krishna Gokhale
- Jayprakash Narayan
- M.S. Golwalkar
- Rammanohar Lohia
- Hamid Dalwai
- M.A. Jinnah
- Jawaharlal Nehru
- E.V. Ramaswamy
- Rammohan Roy
- Jotirao Phule
- Tarabai Shinde
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay
- Rajagopalachari
- Verrier Elwin

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## **Marathi contribution to reforms has been ignored: Ramachandra Guha**



Historian & sociologist Ramachandra Guha recently visited New Delhi for Penguin India lecture based on his book *Makers of Modern India*, which presents the writings and profiles of 19 men and women who nurtured the Indian political tradition. ET interviews the author about his latest book. Excerpts:

*Makers of Modern India* has political thinkers and leaders from various walks of our society, from Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi to some obscure names such as Hamid Dalwai. How did you shortlist these 'makers'?

It is an assorted list of thinkers and writers who I found influenced large groups of Indians as well their political thinking. Some of them rightly predicted the shaping of future India and its challenges too. This is by no way a composite or final set of thinkers but an attempt to start a debate.

*It is surprising that there is not one representative of Indian Left in your list.*

I seriously wanted to include a Left writer and I very nearly zeroed in on MN Roy. But most of the Left writings in India are not very original works. They have largely built upon the works of Western ideologues and their viewpoints on spread of Communism. There was none who I would feel had an insight or a deeper understanding of Indian political tradition.

*On the contrary, lesser-known names like Dalwai, Shinde find space in your book...*

*Both Dalwai and Shinde may be obscure but they are very powerful and very relevant. I have been reading Dalwai for sometime and his book *Muslim Politics In**

India, translated by Dilip Chitre, is prophetic. Dalwai died in his early 40s... just when he was maturing as a thinker. He said if there is no Muslim liberal intellectual movement, there will be a revival of Hindu reactionary forces. He talks about Muslims looking inward, becoming parochial, and not engaging with the modern world. All this is utterly relevant to not only the Indian Muslim, but even global Islamic challenges in the post-9/11 world.

And Jinnah and Golwalkar?

Because they are important in a negative sense. Jinnah provokes and challenges the national version of the Congress; he challenges Gandhi and Nehru in particular to review their commitment to inter-religious harmony and protection of minority rights. And if Jinnah wants a Muslim homeland, Golwalkar wants formation of India to be based on the concept of Hindu Rashtra. And they have a profound impact. Whether I like Golwalkar or not, the entire RSS and its political arm - BJP - was shaped by his influence. I had to add one Hindutva figure and the options were Golwalkar, Savarkar or Shyama Prasad Mookherjee. Golwalkar was the most direct in his writings. We still find his arguments in any political debate even today.

Is it a coincidence that a majority of those who have made it to your list, either for their place of birth or working, come from West India?

(Laughs) I think it happened by accident. Maharashtra was the crucible of political activism and social reforms from the late 19th century till the 1950s. That tradition of reform has been ignored. One of the reasons is that their writings have been in Marathi. Another reason is that writings in Indian history have been dominated by Bengali intellectuals who know Bengali and write well in English. So they have been able to communicate with a national or global audience. Objectively, I would say Maharashtra's contribution (to social reforms and political thinking) has been equal or even greater than that of Bengal. The more I read and researched, I was sure Maharashtra had contributed to social and political reforms much more than any other part of the country.

A hypothetical question: If these makers of India are transported to the India of today, what would they think of the country's politics?

That is not going to happen but what this book aims at is to make their legacy available to the modern readers of history. And it is for us to decide what to do with that legacy today. For example, young people must know the views propagated by Rajagopalachari on election reforms, or Shinde on gender rights or Ambedkar on institution of democracy or Nehru on rights of minorities or Gandhi on decentralization and JP on Kashmir and Nagaland. There are so many issues they raised which we are still grappling with. Their being reborn is questionable but their

works and legacies are with us to consider, to accept, to modify or reject.

One issue we found missing in the book is corruption...

Partly because when these writers and thinkers were active, corruption was not a big issue. Only Rajagopalachari touches upon it when he pitches for economic and election reforms. But yes there is no chapter where corruption is a central theme. For, corruption became an issue only after the 1960s.

But corruption is the central theme in modern political debates?

This is of course true—though not the topic of my book—and as an Indian I often think what is the use of having an honest prime minister if he can't take action against his corrupt Cabinet colleagues. I think it is simply lack of courage in our political system. If exemplary action is taken against any corrupt minister, it would send shock waves to the entire system.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/interviews/Marathi-contribution-to-reforms-has-been-ignored-Ramachandra-Guha/articleshow/6844127.cms?curpg=1>

### An excerpt from the note by Ramachandra Guha on the Blog on 'Makers of Modern India'



To understand these (and other) problems, we may turn to those Indians who have seriously thought through these issues in the (comparatively recent) past, and selections from whose writings are contained in Makers of Modern India. Thus, for example, one might turn to **B. R. Ambedkar**, **Rammanohar Lohia**, **Jotirao Phule**, and **M. K. Gandhi** to continue the struggle against caste discrimination; to **Syed Ahmad Khan** and **Hamid Dalwai** to modernize Indian Islam; to **Tarabai Shinde**, **Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay**, **Rammohan Roy**, **Jawaharlal Nehru** and **E. V. Ramaswami** to further the emancipation of women; to **Gandhi**, **Nehru**, and **Gopalkrishna Gokhale** to sustain good relations between Hindus and India's religious minorities; to **Jayaprakash Narayan** to promote understanding and goodwill between the Indian State and its still disturbed borderlands; to **Phule** to bring dignity and a secure livelihood to the farmer;

to **Gandhi** and **Narayan** to promote the decentralization of political authority; to **Verrier Elwin** to protect the tribals from discrimination; to **Rajagopalachari** to reform the electoral system and to curb the excesses of a potentially overbearing State; to **Tagore** to cultivate a productive and open-minded engagement with the other nations of the world. In this sense, the 'makers' of the book's title is appropriate in more than the past tense. These Indians undoubtedly made India the nation it now is, but their legacies may yet help make India a nation that more fully lives up to its (so far imperfectly realized) ideals.

