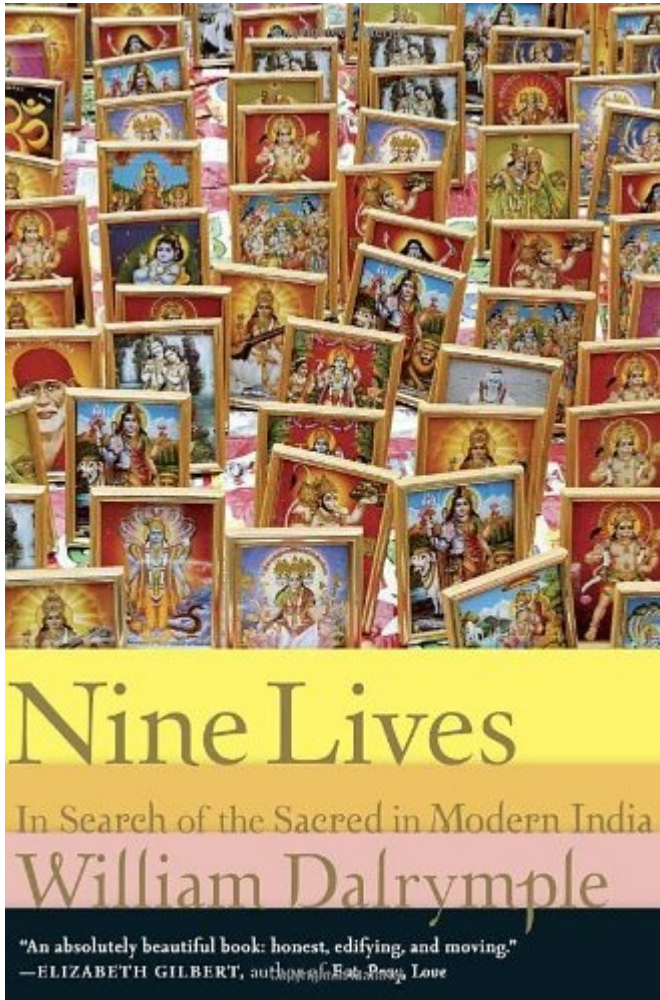


A review of Nine Lives

Books in the [October 5, 2010](#) issue

In Review



Nine Lives

by William Dalrymple
Knopf

For most of us, India is a country about which we know little. With the third largest population in the world and an economy that's growing almost as fast as China's, one can understand why India's old ways are being snuffed out. But Dalrymple

sought out "places suspended between modernity and tradition" where religion is in "a state of fascinating and unpredictable flux." In villages or small towns, he interviewed people whose religions are expressed in what seem-to Westerners at least-dangerous and peculiar ways. Dalrymple is a keen observer, reporting on what he's seen and heard, then adding religious context to help the reader place each person's story into the larger story of India. His snapshots provide only a glimpse of this vast, complex, crowded and enigmatic country.