



The Indian Clerk: A Novel

By David Leavitt



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The Indian Clerk: A Novel By David Leavitt

The brilliant new novel from one of our most respected writers?his most ambitious and accessible to date.

On a January morning in 1913, G. H. Hardy?eccentric, charismatic and, at thirty-seven, already considered the greatest British mathematician of his age?receives in the mail a mysterious envelope covered with Indian stamps. Inside he finds a rambling letter from a self-professed mathematical genius who claims to be on the brink of solving the most important unsolved mathematical problem of all time. Some of his Cambridge colleagues dismiss the letter as a hoax, but Hardy becomes convinced that the Indian clerk who has written it?Srinivasa Ramanujan?deserves to be taken seriously. Aided by his collaborator, Littlewood, and a young don named Neville who is about to depart for Madras with his wife, Alice, he determines to learn more about the mysterious Ramanujan and, if possible, persuade him to come to Cambridge. It is a decision that will profoundly affect not only his own life, and that of his friends, but the entire history of mathematics.

Based on the remarkable true story of the strange and ultimately tragic relationship between an esteemed British mathematician and an unknown?and unschooled?mathematical genius, and populated with such luminaries such as D. H. Lawrence, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Indian Clerk* takes this extraordinary slice of history and transforms it into an emotional and spell-binding story about the fragility of human connection and our need to find order in the world.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Ambitious, erudite and well-sourced, Leavitt's 12th work of fiction centers on the relationship between mathematicians G.H. Hardy (1877–1947) and Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887–1920). In January of 1913, Cambridge-based Hardy receives a nine-page letter filled with prime number theorems from S. Ramanujan, a young accounts clerk in Madras. Intrigued, Hardy consults his colleague and collaborator, J.E. Littlewood; the two soon decide Ramanujan is a mathematical genius and that he should emigrate to Cambridge to work with them. Hardy recruits the young, eager don, Eric Neville, and his wife, Alice, to travel to India and expedite Ramanujan's arrival; Alice's changing affections, WWI and Ramanujan's enigmatic ailments add obstacles. Meanwhile, Hardy, a reclusive scholar and closeted homosexual, narrates a second story line cast as a series of 1936 Harvard lectures, some of them imagined. Ramanujan comes to renown as the Hindu calculator discussions of mathematics and bits of Cambridge's often risqué academic culture (including D.H. Lawrence's 1915 visit) add authenticity. Hardy is hardly likable, however, and Leavitt (*While England Sleeps*, etc.) packs too much into the epic-length proceedings, at the expense of pace. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Based on a lecture given by a real-life Hardy in 1913, this intellectual and historical novel explores the beauty of mathematics, the nature of creativity, sexual repression, class relations, and the frailty of human connection—all set against the decline of empire and war. David Leavitt, best known for *While England Sleeps* (1993), impressed critics with his research and the novel's accessibility; even his discussions of the Riemann hypothesis and the secret order of the primes offered them interest. Leavitt depicts his characters, however, less successfully. A few reviewers complained about Ramanujan's ambiguity, questioned his decision to characterize Hardy as gay, and criticized cameos of historical figures such as D. H. Lawrence. *The Indian Clerk* is a flawed but intriguing look into the zeitgeist of the British Empire in the early 20th century.

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From [Booklist](#)

Based on real people and events, Leavitt's copiously researched new novel focuses on a relatively narrow world that he nevertheless illuminates into its deepest recesses. Eventually becoming one of the greatest mathematicians of his era, Srinivasa Ramanujan was only a 23-year-old bank clerk in the Indian city of Madras when, in 1913, he wrote a letter to the highly esteemed British mathematician G. H. Hardy, who was seated at Cambridge. The letter suggests to Hardy that the writer is a math genius, and Hardy embarks on a campaign to bring him from India to England. Once there, the relatively bland Ramanujan nevertheless stood at the center of many people's personal and professional lives for a brief time before his untimely death. Leavitt explores the legend that grew up around Ramanujan, finds what is real in the myth that shrouded his actual being, and in the process reaches impressive heights of understanding the psyche of the intellectual as well as those who seek company with the brilliant-minded. Hooper, Brad

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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The e-book untitled The Indian Clerk: A Novel is the book that recommended to you to see. You can see the quality of the book content that will be shown to anyone. The language that writer use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The author was did a lot of analysis when write the book, hence the information that they share to you personally is absolutely accurate. You also will get the e-book of The Indian Clerk: A Novel from the publisher to make you considerably more enjoy free time.

Maureen Guzman:

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Mary Mohammad:

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Carl Terrell:

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