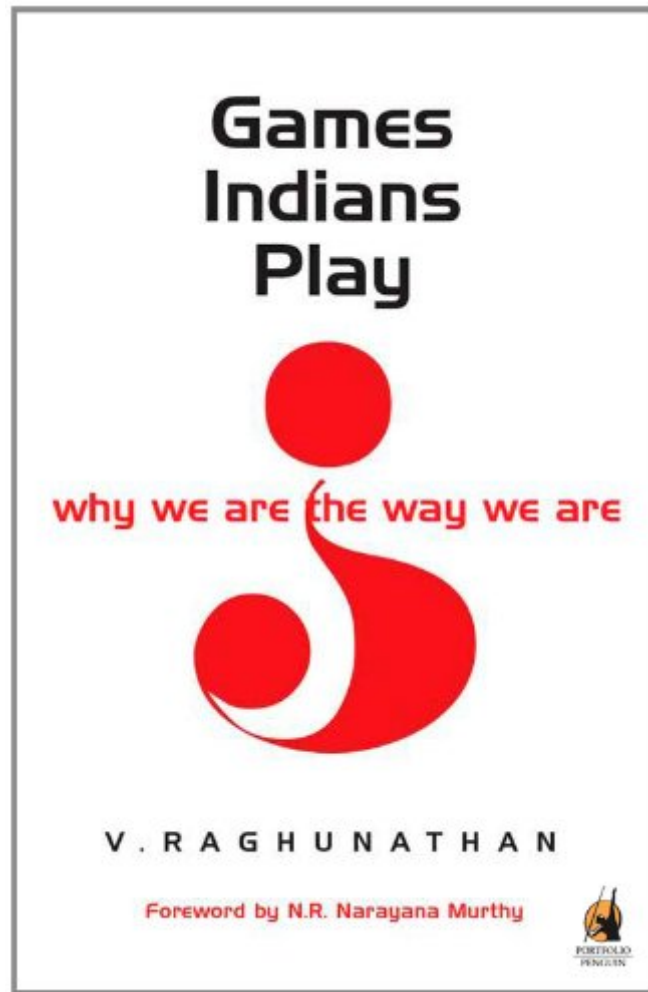


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Games Indians Play: Why We Are The Way We Are



Synopsis

“Raghunathan writes really well . . . there are rare instances where a reviewer thinks; I wish I could write like that. This is one of those rare instances” – Bibek Debroy in Indian Express
In a rare attempt to understand the Indianness of Indians “among the most intelligent people in the world; but also; to a dispassionate eye; perhaps the most baffling” V. Raghunathan uses the props of game theory and behavioural economics to provide an insight into the difficult conundrum of why we are the way we are. He puts under the scanner our attitudes towards rationality and irrationality; selflessness and selfishness; competition and cooperation; and collaboration and deception. Drawing examples from the way we behave in day-to-day situations; *Games Indians Play* tries to show how in the long run each one of us “whether businessmen; politicians; bureaucrats; or just plain us” stand to profit more if we were to assume a little self-regulation; give fairness a chance and strive to cooperate and collaborate a little more even if self-interest were to be our main driving force.

Book Information

File Size: 888 KB

Print Length: 182 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0670999407

Publisher: Portfolio (January 1, 2008)

Publication Date: January 1, 2008

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B008ET49YM

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #509,594 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #21

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Sports > Other Team Sports > Cricket #79

in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Other Team Sports > Cricket #2260 in Kindle Store > Kindle

eBooks > Business & Money > Management & Leadership > Management

Customer Reviews

This book is about "Games Indians Play" - no doubt about that. The author spares no opportunity available to go on endlessly about the million games they play and the million wrong things they do. And then he finds more opportunities to the same. What he does not do anywhere, however, in the book, is to explain "why we are the way we are". Every time he gets anywhere close to having to explain, he conveniently dives into game theory and other tools, recounts some interesting problems, draws some analogies, and then sneaks away nonchalantly hoping that nobody would notice his getaway. This could have worked, if the analogies were not largely focused on the outcomes instead of the causes and if they could have allowed for segregation of Indian behaviour from universal behaviour. As an example, the author draws the conclusion that Indians behave like "squealers" because it is the rational and intelligent thing to do as shown by the "simple prisoner's dilemma". Thereafter, he casually also mentions that this behaviour is universally applicable and not just to Indians, and then goes on to say "But what is striking is that, in most situations, we Indians do not even see the dilemma. Defection seems to be our natural setting." And that's it. So where, Mr. Raghunathan, is the blinding insight about why we "do not even see the dilemma" or why we are different from the rest of the world? Is it our history, our geography, our genes, or something else? Why don't I see any mention of causal factors in this book? And when there are causal factors, why are they always universally applicable and never specific to Indians, making them useless in this context? Frankly, I was very disappointed with the below-average analysis and deductions in this book, especially given the author's pedigree.

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