

# PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS



*Unfinished*

A MEMOIR





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*A Memoir*



PENGUIN BOOKS

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# CONTENTS

[Preface](#)

[1Monaco Biscuits and Ladakhi Tea](#)

[2Like Water](#)

[3Nomad](#)

[4Teen to Queen](#)

[5Top of the World](#)

[6Desi Girl](#)

[7Tinseltown](#)

[8Grief](#)

[9When You Know, You Know](#)

[10Shaadi](#)

[11Home](#)

[Illustrations](#)

[Notes](#)

[Photo Credits](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Follow Penguin](#)

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*Dear Papa,  
Much like the title of this book, your story was unfinished.  
With that in mind, I dedicate the rest of mine to you.  
I miss you, Dad.*

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## Preface

I'M SITTING IN a meditative pose. In Sanskrit it's called *Sukhasana*, or "Happy Pose." Spine straight, shins crossed, shoulders pulled back, and chest pulled upward, I'm taking slow, focused breaths to bring all my attention to my center. The slow breathing calms my mind so that I can now tackle life's challenges.

*Kidding.*

I am, in reality, likely sitting on the set of my latest film project, or on a plane, or slumped in a hair and makeup chair. My breathing is erratic from the four espresso shots I've inhaled in the past half hour while simultaneously wolfing down some form of comfort food that's probably not the healthiest of options. (Doritos, anyone?) My overbooked schedule glares at me with seventeen emails that are marked *Urgent! Requires Immediate Attention!* And my phone is buzzing like a bumblebee on ecstasy. I am running on IST (Indian Stretchable Time)—I'm late—and I am in no frame of mind to make sense of my day, let alone my life.

How is this possible when I come from mystical India, the land of yoga, meditation, the Bhagavad Gita, and one of the most learned civilizations of the world? Why am I unable to invoke the infinite wisdom of my ancestors to calm my raging mind when so many people around the world have embraced the teachings of my great country and managed to incorporate its lessons of peace, love, and happiness quite effectively into their lives?

Well, I am a product of traditional India and its ancient wisdom, and modern India and its urban bustle. My upbringing was always an amalgamation of the two Indias, and, just as much, of East and West. My mom was a fan of Elvis and the Doors; my dad listened to Mohammed Rafi and Lata Mangeshkar. My mom loves London, theater, art, and nightlife; my dad loved taking road trips through our subcontinent and sampling the street food at every opportunity. I lived in small towns in northern India for much of my childhood, and I also lived in the United States for three years in my teens.

Traditional and modern. East and West. There wasn't necessarily a plan to raise me as a blend of those influences, but here I am, someone who calls both Mumbai and Los Angeles home, who works comfortably in India, America, and plenty of countries in between, and whose style and passion reflect that global mindset. The cultural mash-up invigorates me, is important to me, because I believe we can all learn from one another. That we all *need* to learn from one another.

Cue my husband, Nick. As I embark on this new chapter of life with him, it seems like a good time to take stock. It's probably the first time as an adult that I've felt the desire to look back and reflect on how I've gotten to this moment. The first time since my life took a huge, crazy turn more than twenty years ago and I became a public person. Part of this desire to be introspective comes with maturity, no doubt. And I think it's safe to say that part of it came along with Nick, a mature, introspective individual if ever there was one.

Looking back, I remember how I felt as my seventeen-year-old self, a small-town girl who exploded into India's awareness back in January of 2000 when I was crowned Miss India World. I had no idea what to do with this unexpected widespread attention or how to prepare for what was next—representing my country on the global stage in the Miss World pageant. My family had no idea, either, because we weren't a “pageant” family or an “entertainment” family. Far from it; my parents were both doctors. With their love, support, and encouragement, I decided that I would do my best to learn from each new situation I found myself in, to throw myself into it wholeheartedly and work as hard as I knew how. Sink or swim. And if there was a choice, I was always going to do my damndest to swim. Admittedly, sometimes my strategy has been flawed or I've haven't learned fast enough, but whatever my failures, they haven't been for lack of effort.

I have always felt that life is a solitary journey, that we are each on a train, riding through our hours, our days, our years. We get on alone, we leave alone, and the decisions we make as we travel on the train are our responsibility alone. Along the way, different people—the family we are born to and the family we choose, the friends we meet, those we come to love and who come to love us—get on and off the cars of our train. We are travelers, always moving, always in flux, and so are our fellow passengers. Our time riding together is fleeting, but it's everything—because the time together is what brings us love, joy, connection.