



Breaking Through: India's Stories of Beating the Odds on Poverty

Meera Mitra

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If India is described in conflicting and exaggerated terms—a growth miracle, yet a poverty stricken country—Breaking Through creates a more nuanced portrait of the nation. It presents an India that is at the cusp of change, attempting to emerge from poverty.

In Breaking Through, this India is exemplified through individual, representational stories of innovation, endeavour, struggle and 'success'. We meet poor and orphaned Neelu, who becomes a serial house owner in the capital; health-worker Santosh, who strives to meet her own health needs; penurious Nazma, who is concerned about the quality of her children's education; underprivileged entrepreneurs Shan and Dhan, who wrest the rich dividends of growth.

These narratives highlight a complex journey. They present the roadblocks that hinder the entry of the poor into economic life (markets, or credit and infrastructure, or businesses governed by transparency) and obstruct their capacity to seize the basic entitlements of health, education and political participation. This makes social or economic transition difficult, circuitous and sometimes, rife with danger.

Breaking Through reminds us that to look past these stories of struggle, energy and drive—these narratives of people emerging from poverty—is to miss the vibrancy and complexity of India and her growth story.



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