



A Necessary Evil

Abir Mukherjee

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India, 1920. Captain Wyndham and Sergeant Banerjee of the Calcutta Police Force investigate the dramatic assassination of a Maharajah's son, in the sequel to *A Rising Man*.

The fabulously wealthy kingdom of Sambalpur is home to tigers, elephants, diamond mines, and the beautiful Palace of the Sun. But when the heir to the throne is assassinated in the presence of Captain Sam Wyndham and Sergeant 'Surrender-Not' Banerjee, they discover a kingdom riven with suppressed conflict. Prince Adhir was a modernizer whose attitudes—and romantic relationships—may have upset the more religious elements of his country, while his brother—now in line to the throne—appears to be a feckless playboy.

As Wyndham and Banerjee desperately try to unravel the mystery behind the assassination, they become entangled in a dangerous world where those in power live by their own rules—and those who cross their paths pay with their lives. They must find a murderer, before the murderer finds them . . .

A Necessary Evil Details

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From Reader Review A Necessary Evil for online ebook

Kate says

As in the first book, the location is the star here. We don't spend as much time in Calcutta this go around but into the kingdom of Sambalpur, where the British do not have jurisdiction.

It's been about a year since "A Rising Man". Sam and "Surrender-not" are still living together, Sam is still smitten with Annie (who is rightly having none of this or is at very least playing coy), and our boys witness an assassination. Of the Maharaja's son, who was pushing reforms. They end up investigation anyway even while staying in Sambalpur and of course the assassination isn't what it seems.

My heart is still stolen by "A Rising Man" but this was a solid follow up and, also like the previous one, I'm game for more.

Jamie Canaves says

I loved A Rising Man and have since been eagerly awaiting more in the series. Being that my only "complaint" of the first in the series was that I would have wanted more Sergeant Banerjee, I am now a fully satisfied reader, as Wyndham uses Banerjee much more as a sidekick this time around. If you're not familiar with the series, Sam Wyndham was a former Scotland Yard detective who is now working as a Captain in British ruled Calcutta (he's brought along his opium addiction and PTSD from WWI), and Banerjee is one of the only Indian Sergeants. Traveling from Calcutta to Sambalpur, Wyndham and Banerjee try to solve the murder of a Prince but find it a difficult task due to politics and the whole "they're not wanted there" thing. A great read for fans of historical fiction, and while the first in the series fit more for cozy mysteries (because of less violence) than this one, if you're looking for a read where the violence isn't towards women, here ya go. It also satisfies the itch for good-old-fashioned-detective-work-gets-the-killer mysteries.

--from Book Riot's Unusual Suspects newsletter: <http://link.bookriot.com/view/56a8200...>

❁?Rory?❁ says

4.5 Stars. This one shines!

Prince Adhir of Sambalpur has been assassinated and Captain Wyndham and Sergeant Banerjee of the Calcutta Police were in the prince's car with him when it happened. In spite of their best efforts, the assassin escapes and the chase begins. Who would have wanted the highly intelligent, forward thinking heir of the Maharaja eliminated? Was it political, personal or religiously motivated? Is someone hoping to gain control of the enormous riches of Sambalpur?

A Necessary Evil is set in 1920s colonial India when the British were still determined to maintain their hold over the jewel in the crown and the author does an excellent job of explaining the political climate of the time. India is another character in the story; the sights, sounds and smells of the country come alive, you can feel the humidity. There is fascinating information about religious practices, culture and history scattered throughout; I felt like an armchair traveler.

There is a sinister undercurrent running throughout the mystery, but Mukherjee's great sense of humor and talent for characterization balance out the violent murder and political unrest. From the flawed hero Captain Wyndham with his drug addiction and his partner, the well educated and kind Sergeant Banerjee, to the funny side characters like Mrs Mitter, the author has created people so real they pop up instantly in your minds eye.

The pleasure of this book is in the details, feeling of discovery and complex characterizations. I'm now impatiently awaiting the next book in the series.

I received a copy of this book through NetGalley.

Eilonwy says

Captain Sam Wyndham and his partner, Sergeant Surendranath Banerjee, called "Surrender-not" by Sam, are officers on the Calcutta police force in 1920. When a young prince is murdered in front of them, they are pulled into solving the crime.

I didn't realize that this was the second in a mystery series, but it also didn't matter, as the story stands just fine by itself.

I really enjoyed this, both the historical setting and the mystery itself. It's a "literary" mystery, in that there's a lot of other stuff going on around collecting clues. The story focuses on the changing times of India under British rule; its many tiny principalities; and the uncomfortable relationship between whites and "natives." It keeps itself firmly in its times by expressing British thoughts through Wyndham's first-person narration, while Indian characters point out flaws in that "logic" and the possibility of more modern views. Wyndham struggles with opium addiction resulting from a wound he got in WWI, and with grief over the loss of his wife in 1918 (presumably to the flu? although it's not stated).

I zoomed through this, it was that gripping. And while I'm not sure I entirely understood everyone's motives, all the characters were fascinating and whole, with their own agendas, so it wasn't obvious at all who was behind the murder.

I'm going to look for the first book soon!

David Kenvyn says

Sam Wyndham and Surrender-Not Banerjee are back. For the readers of "A Rising Man" this will be enough for you to know that this is a "must read" book. The rest of you need to discover the joy that is Abir Mukherjee's writing. It is a discovery that is worth making.

The story begins with the assassination of the Yuvraj, Crown Prince Adhir Singh Sai, heir to the princely state of Sambalpur at the start of the festival of the Lord Jagannath. [This is the festival that gave English the word juggernaut because of the size of the chariot, bearing the image of the god, being pulled by thousands of devotees through the streets.] Sam Wyndham and Surrender-Not have the misfortune of being in the car with the Prince when he is shot by a devotee of the god Vishnu. I should also explain, and this point is as good a place as any, that Surrender-Not is not Sergeant Banerjee's real name. It is Surendranath, but Surrender-Not is the closest that the officers of the Raj can get to pronouncing a Bengali name. So the

book is off to a rip-roaring start, and Sam and Surrender-Not inevitably get dragged into the investigation.

From this moment, the pace does not slacken at all. This is a Sherlock Holmes murder mystery set in Kipling's Plain Tales from the Hills, but with a fine understanding of the inherent and racist politics of the British Raj. The relationship between Sam Wyndham and Annie Grant has echoes of John Masters' "Bhowani Junction".

We enter the world of the princely state of Sambalpur, where the intrigues of the court are Byzantine in their complexity, with a dying Maharaja, a scheming Prime Minister, a revolutionary teacher, squabbling princes and, looming over it all, a Viceroy who needs the assistance of Sambalpur in his scheme to ensure the continuation of British rule in India. The murder of the Crown Prince throws all this into confusion. Suddenly there is everything to play for, and Sam Wyndham and Surrender-Not take it upon themselves to find out who was behind the assassination of the Crown Prince.

And this is one of the strengths of the book. The characters are well-drawn. Sam Wyndham was traumatized by his experiences in the trenches during the First World War. He has developed his own strategy for dealing with this, and it is more than a little unorthodox for someone working as a police officer for the British Raj. Even more unorthodox is his relationship with Annie Grant, an Anglo-Indian. Nowadays, of course, we would not bat an eyelid, but this is British India in the 1920s. Then, there is the fact that he shares his accommodation with Surrender-Not. So Sam Wyndham is a truly unusual man for his time. All you have to do is think of Paul Scott's "The Raj Quartet" to realise just how unusual he is.

Surrender-Not is also unusual. He comes from a Brahmin family wealthy enough to have him educated at Harrow. This is how he came to know Prince Adhir, who was a few years above him at the school. As you may imagine, his family are not too happy about him working as a police sergeant and it is a sort of running joke between him and Sam Wyndham that his mother is searching for a potential bride. This would be a sort of Holmes and Watson pairing, except that it is Surrender-Not who has the eye for detail.

Annie Grant is not the caricature love interest either. She is a woman of ambition, with a mind of her own, and knowing perfectly well what she wants from life and how she is going to achieve it. She is quite aware that Sam is infatuated with her, and she is quite capable of exploiting that.

So you have strong characters and a fast-moving plot. What else could you require from a thriller? Oh yes, a motive for the murder that explains the title "A Necessary Evil". You get that as well, but telling you what it is would involve giving away the plot, and that would spoil it.

So give yourself a real treat and read this book.

K.J. Charles says

An excellent detective novel, streets ahead of the first, which was damn good itself. The writing is stellar, the atmosphere and setting of the last days of the Raj vividly depicted, and I totally did not get anywhere near guessing whodunnit, which is pretty rare for me.

One of the great features of this series is the narrator Sam Wyndham, a war-traumatized policeman with an opium habit. Wyndham is a white man of his time and the author doesn't spare us that--he is by most lights progressive but we see the deep discomfort he feels about a white woman/Indian man relationship, we see how he interacts differently with a mixed race woman, and even though he shockingly shares lodgings with an Indian, his sergeant, he still doesn't get his name right. (Racist colleagues dubbed Surendrath)

"Surrender-not"; Wyndham tries to use his real name but eventually gives up because the d isn't English style.) This is actual flawed hero stuff, not the usual "messy divorce, drinks, gambles", and it brings the fundamentally destructive, cruel, dehumanising racism of the Raj front and centre. There's no comfortable Good White Guy to make it okay here. Everyone's pretty flawed in fact, all just struggling on. (There's a great ref to the Viceroys of India all just trying hard not to be the one in the hot seat when India is eventually lost to the empire.)

How historical detective fic should be: immersive, informative, entertaining, super vivid. Cracking stuff.

Roy says

This is currently my favourite series atm. Lovely writing, the detail in the historical setting, the characterisation and the plotting is perfect. The combination of all the elements has created a masterpiece of historical crime fiction. I love Surrender Not and his personality. Sam is back investigating a murder of a Prince, who had been Surrender Not's classmate at college. It leads down a rabbit hole of mystery and intrigue amongst the backdrop of 1920s India. There's nothing like it that I've read before. I've always enjoyed reading about India's history and combining an amazing crime story just provides pure enjoyment.

Ming says

Wow! I did not see that coming. Whoa!

This book was good till the very last page! I thoroughly enjoyed this mystery. It was intricately and cleverly plotted...and thus, I need to get a hold of #3 (and #4).

I won't recount the plot here, as it's amply available. But I will say that I especially like how this book challenges the ideas of imperialism/colonialism and particularly how it was promulgated by the British. (Book #1 did so much more emphatically.)

Some quotes:

"I'll say one thing for your British," he continued, "you certainly know how to appeal to our vanity. We've surrendered this land to you and for what? A few fine words, fancy titles and scraps from your table over which we bicker like bald men over a comb."

"As we drew closer, I saw that the edifice was embellished with the most graphic of carvings, gods and mortals intertwined in the sort of positions that your local vicar would probably never have imagined, let alone countenanced plastering all over the front of the church. And yet a vicar would be perfectly happy with gargoyles or stained-glass depictions of the damned burning in hellfire. It made me think. Why was it that we Christians seemed so squeamish about portraying scenes of love? What are our cardinals and archbishops so afraid of?"

"She was testing me, trying to see what sort of Englishman I was: the type who believed that consorting with the natives as equals in some way denigrated our whole race; or the other type. The type who realized that such attitudes were all a sham and pretense and hypocrisy rooted in guilt. But I had no reason to let this woman know which of the two I was."

"I forced myself to focus. Plenty of white men had native mistresses; hell, the woman I'd been keen on for the last twelve months was hardly lily-white, so why should it be different when an Indian man fell in love with a white woman? But it was different. It was something that every Englishman knew--or rather felt--because it was never taught to you explicitly. You just absorbed it, along with the rest of the rubbish about the superiority of the white man. And while I could discount most of that nonsense, it seemed that love between an Indian and an Englishwoman was something I couldn't quite accept.

"And then it struck me. I realized that what I found truly distasteful was not that an Indian should be attracted to a white woman--that, though undesirable, was at least understandable--but the idea that she might return his love. It wasn't something I wish to dwell on..."

"This is India, Captain," he continued. "See it for what it really is, not for what your imperial apologists and your professors of Orientalism would have you believe. Until you do that, you will never understand us."

Raven says

Following the inclusion of Abir Mukherjee's debut *A Rising Man* in my Top 5 of 2016, obviously I was as keen as mustard to read *A Necessary Evil*, the next in the series. This time our indomitable duo of Englishman Captain Sam Wyndham, and his right hand man Sergeant Surrender-not Banerjee of the Calcutta police are transported from their usual locale to the opulent kingdom of Sambalpur, following the assassination of its crowned prince. And be sure that there is more trickery afoot...

Instantly, I was drawn back into the lives of Wyndham and Banerjee, with their affectionate and mutually respectful relationship, and their sense of comradeship and camaraderie fully intact. Wyndham is still struggling with his own personal demons, and also still proving woefully inept in matters of the heart, which adds a lightness of touch to this particularly testing case. Banerjee also grows in stature throughout the book, becoming less of a foil for Wyndham's character, and becoming much more equal in terms of their professional relationship. He also has some blistering moments of insight, along with the intuitive and studied air that he displays in the course of the investigation. I love the openness and amicability of their friendship, which makes you very comfortable as a reader, and how Mukherjee affords them equal importance, with Wyndham being the more emotionally scarred of the two, but Banerjee subtly adjusting to, and caring about Wyndham's mental and physical health. I think as well that there is enough scope for both these characters to anchor a long and successful series. While in the realm of characterisation, I would also draw your attention to Mukherjee's depiction of his female characters, which I think is incredibly good. I like the way that he mirrors men's general mystification at the workings of the female mind, and his women are strong, independent, and always slightly at a remove of the understanding of his male characters throughout the book. Wyndham is once again bemused by the wonderfully strident and prismatic Annie Grant, and as the plot progresses we meet a parade of incredibly strong, sometimes scheming, women to thwart and confuse the investigation, and outwit our floundering male protagonists.

Once again, Mukherjee is pitch perfect in his representation of the period detail, during the uneasy era of the rule of the British in India. There is a sense of parity throughout where the author is equally stoical and objective of the good and bad that pervades both sides of society, and the interesting contrasts he draws between the human melting pot of poverty in Calcutta, and the ostentatious wealth of Sambalpur, accrued from diamond mining. The sumptuous lavishness of the Maharajah's palace, and its surrounds, is meticulously brought to life, immersing the reader in opulence, grandeur and the daily routines and traditions of palace life. There are tiger hunts, fancy cars, eunuchs, myriad wives and concubines, but perhaps most importantly for our enjoyment as crime readers, jealousies, plots and murder in abundance. I also like the way that Mukherjee includes little factual vignettes throughout his books, that obviously in the course of his research had piqued his curiosity like 'death by elephant' ...who knew?

So to sum up, Abir Mukherjee has returned in some style, and I thoroughly enjoyed the further adventures of Wyndham and Banerjee in *A Necessary Evil*. Colourful, dangerous, exciting, and enjoyably educational, this

is, once again, a highly recommended read. Add it to your wish list!

Leah says

Royal shenanigans...

When the son and heir of the Maharaja of Sambalpur is assassinated in front of him, Calcutta police captain Sam Wyndham quickly manages to catch the assassin, but unfortunately the man dies before he can be questioned. Although the authorities and even the Maharaja are willing to let the matter rest as the work of a fanatic, Sam isn't so sure, so he manages to get himself and his sergeant, Surrender-not Bannerjee, invited to the prince's funeral so he can do a bit of investigating. Soon they are both sucked into the skulduggery going on beneath the glittering surface in this fabulously wealthy kingdom...

This is another excellent historical crime novel following on from Mukherjee's debut, *A Rising Man*, which was one of my top books from last year. The year is 1920, the power of the Raj is in decline and the British need the support of the Maharajas to give a veneer of Indian participation in the rule of the country, so Sam has to handle things sensitively so as not to ruffle any political feathers.

Within Sambalpur, the Maharaja is still the ultimate power – the British police hold no official sway there. But the Maharaja is old and it's rumoured that he may be dying, so his family and subjects are beginning to look to the future and to jostle for positions of power when the kingdom passes to the next in line. And with three wives, vast numbers of concubines and hundreds of children, there's plenty of scope for trouble just in the Maharaja's family alone. Throw in some dodgy politicians, a couple of princes who insist on falling in love with unsuitable women, some diamond mines and an avaricious businessman or two and it's no wonder I didn't have a clue what was going on for the bulk of the book! But happily, neither did Sam, and once he finally worked it out it all made sense in the end.

The book is narrated by Sam in the past tense and he's a likeable character. He has a strong desire to get to the truth and, more than that, to see that justice is done. But, though he may not always like it, he understands that sometimes politics will get in the way. He relies on Surrender-not for knowledge of local customs and religious practices. Surrender-not is more than just a guide though – he comes from a wealthy, high caste family and was educated in England, so he's often as much of a partner as a subordinate.

There's not quite so much about the politics of the Raj in this one. Instead, Mukherjee gives a picture of what life was like in one of the many small kingdoms that still existed within the country at this time – a curious mix of modernity and tradition. The royals are opulently, ostentatiously wealthy and are revered as godlike by their people. The royal wives and concubines live in seclusion in the zenana – the women's quarters – but Mukherjee suggests that they had plenty of power to influence things within the kingdom, and the wives, at least, had their own roles to play in the many traditions surrounding the court. Mukherjee also shows some of the religious rituals of the Hindus, especially the cult of the deity Lord Jagannath, all of which adds to the interest.

For me, this book had a couple of slight weaknesses. In the first book, Sam occasionally indulged in opium – in this book, that seems to have become an addiction, and I got a little tired of being told about his withdrawal symptoms and then about how wonderful he felt whenever he had a hit. I find all the many addicted detectives of current crime fiction tedious, whether their addiction is to drugs or alcohol, so I'm seriously hoping Sam can get himself clean soon. I also felt that there were occasional anachronisms, not in the history or setting, but in the language. Would anyone from that period really talk about someone being “hands on”? Were paper cups so commonplace they would be used as part of a simile? These anomalies

weren't frequent or major enough to spoil the book but they did tend to throw me out of the story for a few moments each time, and a more careful revision and edit could have got rid of them.

Overall, though, an excellent second book that assures this series its continued place among my must-reads. It could be read as a standalone, but to understand the relationships among the characters, I'd recommend reading in order. 4½ stars for me, so rounded up.

NB This book was provided for review by the publisher, Harvill Secker.

www.fictionfanblog.wordpress.com

eyes.2c says

I am just loving these novels set in India in the 1920's with Captain Sam Wyndham and Sergeant 'Surrender-not' Banerjee.

A great read with the politics of the day bleeding fact into fiction. The richness of the cultures, everything is just so descriptive. You are there, present!

Another spell binding can't put down read!

William says

Superb! 5 stars.

On sale at Amazon today

Amazon UK £0.99

Amazon USA \$1.33

This is wonderfully plotted and paced, with just the right balance of action, description and dialogue, steeped in a amazing variety of Indian culture and history, and seasoned with colourful characters and a dash of romance.

As in the first book, A Rising Man (my review), the mystery is complex, and we (and Sam) are presented with far more possible solutions than we can manage. Clues are presented frequently, along with red herrings, but it's so hard to tell the difference! Delightful and challenging.

This book is more courageous, confident and better than book #1. Well done!

As usual with my reviews, please first read the publisher's blurb/summary of the book. Thank you.

Book epigraph before page one:

You can't make an omelette without breaking heads.

Quotes and thoughts below:

In Calcutta, Prince Adhir to Sam ...

We've surrendered this land to you and for what? A few fine words, fancy titles and scraps from your table over which we bicker like bald men fighting over a comb.'

Sam to Adhir as they ride in a silver Rolls Royce, plated with solid silver!

'A prince, a priest and a policeman drive past the Bengal Club in a Rolls-Royce ...' I said. 'It sounds like the opening to a not very amusing joke.'

'On the contrary,' said the prince. 'If you think about it, it is actually most amusing.'

The lovely Annie Grant appears again, although Sam somewhat blew up their romance in the previous book, stupid git.

I imagine most women would go off a man who'd accused them of complicity in murder. I had of course tried to explain that I hadn't technically accused her of anything; but it's difficult to resurrect a romance by resorting to technicalities.

According to Surrender-not, Calcutta was where the science of modern fingerprint detection was born. He claimed it was two Bengalis –one a Hindu, the other a Mohammedan –who'd done the work. Of course the classification system they'd devised bore not their names, but that of their supervisor, Edward Henry. He'd gone on to receive a knighthood and become commissioner of Scotland Yard.

(Wikipedia **does remember and credit their names**, but like most bosses of any race or nationality, the technique bears his name. In fact, one of my bosses during my research at MIT tried to steal my work, as well as that of three other graduate students in following years.)

"The Henry Classification System is a long-standing method by which fingerprints are sorted by physiological characteristics for one-to-many searching. Developed by Hem Chandra Bose, Azizul Haque and Sir Edward Henry in the late 19th century for criminal investigations in British India, it was the basis of modern-day AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Identification System) classification methods up until the 1990s."

The monsoon. Far more than just rain, it sustained life, brought forth the promise of new birth, broke the heat and vanquished drought. It was the country's saviour, India's true god.

Monsoon in Calcutta

Walking into Howrah station was akin to entering Babel before the Lord took issue with their construction plans. All the peoples of the world, gathered under the station's soot-stained glass roof.

Howrah Train Station

The murder weapon, a Colt Paterson revolver, patented by Samuel Colt in 1836

45%

Some delightful, ribald humour here in the provenance of Carmichael's golf bag! Well done, Mukherjee!

Annie and Sam:

It's interesting how Mukherjee has placed Annie more out-of-reach of Sam now. She started as a mere secretary, although a beautiful and important one, in the first book. Their's was a gentle romance of almost-equals in societal terms, although clouded by her involvement with the shady industrialist, Buchan.

In this book though, Annie's newly wealthy status has elevated her into circles above Sam, and the heartache he feels is poignant. She is not unkind to Sam, her respect and attraction still remain, but she clearly relishes her increased power and freedom, and the romantic attentions of the powerful and wealthy here. The loss of his dead wife and the possible loss of Annie are dangerously dark clouds in Sam's life, especially with his growing addiction to the escape of opium.

Colonel Arora's pick for the midnight run: Alfa Romeo 20/80

Before the tiger hunt...

A bearer handed out the guns. Good ones, too. Made by Purdey's of Mayfair - gunmakers to the King, as well as to international aristocracy and any other rich bastard who felt a need to shoot things that didn't shoot back.

And to end, an outstanding, breakneck climax, and a masterfully complex and satisfying resolution. Once again, we arrive at the surprising solution just as Sam does - wonderful!

She took my hand. 'I hope we meet again some day, Captain. In the meantime, remember what I told you. Your soul craves the truth. You have that now. Justice is a matter for the gods.'

Paromjit says

After Mukherjee's stunning debut *The Rising Man*, he follows up with this equally brilliant sequel with the return of Captain Sam Wyndham and Sergeant 'Surrender-not' Banerjee in the India of the 1920s. Britain is trying desperately to keep their hold on a country where unrest bubbles everywhere. The Viceroy may be the most important man in India, but the civil servant is uneasy and merely treading water until his successor can take over, his goal to avoid the ignominy of being the man responsible for losing Britain its Jewel in the Crown. To this end he is pushing to establish the toothless Chamber of Princes as a fig leaf suggesting that change is underway. Banerjee's Harrow and Cambridge friend, Prince Adhir, is key in persuading other Princes to fall in line with these plans. Adhir, however, is a moderniser and contemptuous of this latest idea, and worried about notes he has received that warn he is in danger. Wyndham and Banerjee are in the car with Adhir when he is assassinated by a man dressed as a priest at the Rath Yathra, a procession of Lord Jaginnath, in Calcutta. The assassin is tracked down but after burning evidence, shoots himself dead. The Viceroy wants this to be the end but Wyndham knows the true perpetrators of the deed reside in the Prince's kingdom of Sambalpur in Orissa. With Lord Taggart, a plan is concocted where Banerjee is named the emissary to the Prince's funeral and Wyndham is accompanying him on the pretext of being on holiday.

Sambalpur is decadently wealthy, with a history of trading in opium but now reliant on its fabulous diamond mines and home of the opulent Palace of the Sun. The Royal Court is a hotbed of intrigue and plots, and the Anglo-Indian Diamond Company and its director, Sir Ernest Fitzmaurice, are negotiating to buy the diamond mines. Adhir's brother, the playboy and womanising Prince Punit will become Maharajah when his elderly and frail father dies. Derek Carmichael is the foreign office representative in the kingdom, trying to implement the Viceroy's orders for Sam to return to Calcutta. Wyndham is forced to confront his assumptions and prejudices of how the natives and royals are meant to behave. He is rocked to the core when

he is confronted with Katherine Pemberley, an educated Englishwoman, patently in love with an Indian man, whilst it is rampant and accepted practice that white men have relationships with Indian women, it is unacceptable and beyond the pale that a native man be involved with a white woman. Annie Grant returns, although she has yet to forgive Sam for viewing her as a murder suspect previously, but his obsession with her merely grows to gargantuan proportions as does his jealousy of any man in her vicinity. Sam and Banerjee face a rising tide of dead bodies, where every theory they have proves to be inadequate in their difficult investigation in search of the truth. Even if they are successful, will justice be beyond their grasp?

Mukherjee has undertaken impeccable research as he writes atmospherically of the sweltering and vibrant India on the cusp of the monsoon rains, under the turbulent political climate of paranoia amongst the British, insisting the Princes play their part in supporting their rule. We get a glimpse into the world of the wildly rich and decadent powerful princes with their tiger hunts, sense of entitlement, concubines and many wives. Wyndham is a flawed man of this historical period, subject to the entrenched thinking of the time, despite his efforts to be a more liberal thinking man. His opium habit looks as if he is in on the path of becoming a prisoner of his need for the drug. What is wonderful to observe is that his relationship with Surrender-not is becoming more natural and equitable, developing into a partnership where the two trust each other and work well together. This is a superb, complex and totally gripping portrayal of India in the 1920s with an insightful and brutal picture of the culture, attitudes, and practices of the British and the Indian Princes with their divisions as to the way forward. I can only urge you to read this fantastic piece of historical fiction. Highly recommended!

Annet says

Really really good, and wonderful book.

Full of atmosphere of the 1920s India, story tells of a 'British gentleman and policeman in India'. I enjoyed the first book, enjoyed this second one equally as much.

Wow... what a read! Loved it. Thus, five stars. Can't wait for the next one.

Highly recommended! Read this series!

Here's the story: this is the second book about Captain Sam Wyndham. I can really recommend the first book, *A Rising Man* (see my review). *A Necessary Evil: India 1920*. The fabulously wealthy kingdom of Sambalpur is home to tigers, elephants, diamond mines and the beautiful Palace of the Sun. But when the Maharaja's son and heir to the throne is assassinated in the presence of Captain Sam Wyndham and Sergeant 'Surrender-not' Banerjee, they discover a kingdom riven with suppressed conflict. Prince Adhir was a modernizer whose attitudes - and romantic relationship with a British woman - may have upset the more religious elements of his country, while his brother, now in line to the throne, appears to be a feckless playboy. Wyndham and Banerjee become entangled in a dangerous world where those in power live by their own rules and those who cross their paths pay with their lives...

This series... mystifies and intrigues me. Recommended & highlight 2017!

Vaseem Khan says

Some books you savour long after you have read them because of the way they connect with you. For me last year's breakout crime hit *A Rising Man* was one of those books. I love India-based fiction, and in this, the second in the series, Mukherjee once again evokes 1920s India in all its humid glory. This time his protagonist Captain Sam Wyndham is on the trail of the murderer of an Indian prince. Mukherjee uses the plot as a means of taking us back to the time of the nawabs, showing us the excesses, eccentricities, and

hidden responsibilities of the men and women who once ruled the subcontinent. What distinguishes these books is the quality of the writing and the dry humour. A solid recommendation from me. Meanwhile, I eagerly await the third.
