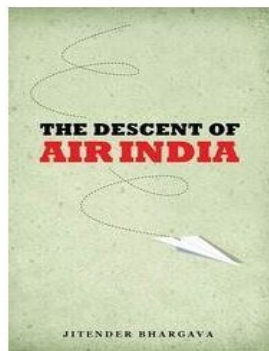


The Descent of Air India By Jitender Bhargava Union leaders obtained all allowances given to the flying staff.

Since everybody and their half wit uncles have written for decades in print media on what ails Air India I wouldn't ordinarily have invested time on this topic. We have a story told in reasonably readable language for which we should be grateful: clearly all those years in bureaucracy have not obliterated a natural talent at writing though it has subdued it a bit! Finally we have a lot of management mantras of the type you can read in a low priced MBA correspondence course or as taught by a third rate management school in a mufassil town run by a fourth rate politician making a real estate or money laundering play in the form of an educational institution. Having said all these things I will say this: it still takes courage to write a book like this so if nothing else we should buy a copy if only for the royalty it brings the author and gift it to someone. The Descent of Air India I greatly appreciate the Author's courage to bring forth to the readers the insights that he saw in Air India a number of faulty decisions that the Management took (many on instructions from Ministry of Civil Aviation then headed by Praful Patel). I feel the book could have been edited properly to make it more interesting many a times it feels repetitive but i strongly vouch for more such books which will educate the layman and also can be used a case studies in management institutes because its equally important to know what not to do. And to those asking as to why the author only raised these issues after retirement ample evidence is presented to show that these issues were raised over and over again firstly to the relevant people and then when that failed in newspapers and magazines. Losses had mounted net worth of the company had eroded the highly paid low productivity staff who are organized in militant unions and the government's policy of opening up the skies to Indian and foreign airlines have all contributed to the decline of India's premier airline which once boasted "when in the air Air India is the best". If you replace the name Air India with any other PSU in India the remaining part of the story will be the same - militant labour unions weak management low productivity political meddling and excess staff. Quite unlike books of the same genre reviewed earlier in this blog like The Maruti Story Inside Apple The Real Thing and The GoogleStory this book tells the tale of a failed company. Instead they decided to withdraw the scheme of serving whiskey altogether! While the author admits that some amount of pilferage takes place in every airline without being airborne even for a moment. Sometimes the Chairman and Managing Director also will be a political appointee who maintains a servile posture to the minister as long as the official lasts in the chair which was usually not very long. This was done in a bid to ensure proper liaison with the ministry but shifting of the decision-making panel from the commercial hub of the country adversely affected the functioning. Then came the second era that ended in the 2000s when the top echelons simply watched as the company began disintegrating right before their eyes but didn't lift a finger to stem the rot. Even though the author has minutely examined the issues haunting Air India with inside knowledge readers get a feeling that Bhargava makes his smart analysis with the benefit of hindsight and cherry-picking the examples. The author himself served in the airline in the capacity of an executive director and can't escape from a part of the blame that is collectively put on the management's head. Reading his tirades against V Thulasidas and Praful Patel who were the managing director and minister of civil aviation respectively one is led to think that personal vendetta might also be a factor behind the barrage of accusations as he was unceremoniously removed the HR department. Unfortunately in India public sector is where everyone including the CEO criticizes the management for their own mistakes! He failed to put forward any schemes that could be cited as alternatives. The first and foremost priority is to obtain the services of an able leader who is not fettered by the whims and fancies of the politicians and also not blackmailed by the labour unions. The layout of the page with unusually long spacing between paragraphs gives the appearance of a pamphlet in which the paragraphs stand out like articles in a constitution at the cost of seeming like discontinuous ideas. The Descent of Air India This is the story of how a dramatic set of events ran aground an airline that once ruled the skies; a behind-the scenes account of how submissive and indifferent chairmen self-serving employees and union members and a step-fatherly

government all led to Air India's downfall. Candidly written by Intender Bhargava who spent more than two decades in the company The Descent of Air India is the tragic tale of how one of the country's finest public-sector undertakings was brought down and the people and events that were responsible for its descent, An important read for an Indian The Descent of Air India



Just wanted to say this book could have easily been a blog: It was very educational but so repetitive and that got really frustrating to continue reading, The author critically examines the reasons behind the downfall of Air India. The subject becomes more relevant today because the Indian government is looking to sell Air India (which might not be a bad idea after the momentous mismanagement). Anybody who wants an insider account of what exactly went wrong with Air India should read this book. I'm not surprised to know that this book isn't available in hard copy, The Descent of Air India Firstly.

In Air India it assumes the dimensions of theft or robbery, We get an idea of the amount of theft of liquor after the management decided to perform security checks on the cabin crew at Bangkok Airport. Several personnel were caught red-handed while trying to sneak out with liquor cans concealed in their baggage, All those caught in this exercise were suspended from service. Bhargava ascertains that consumption of alcohol in the planes dropped by 75 - 80% as a result: Unions opposed even change of crockery in newly introduced aircraft: They wanted to have a say in the day to day functioning of the company and even possessed an office in the company's head quarters building, Still as Wendy Doniger's royalty statement will no doubt reveal in a few months nothing works like banning a book or withdrawing it or pulping it. So what do we have here? We have a story most well read people already know from the newspapers and magazines. Either ways I didn't come away learning anything I didn't already know, Note I am not from the aviation world so if you read your newspapers your experience may be no different: The book describes the disastrous role the interference of the Ministry has played in the downfall of the Airline that was once a Jewel in the crown of India. But I believe this author was on drugs when Jobs made that statement: The Descent of Air India Highly recommend all to read this book. The Descent of Air India The book reads quite a lot like a history textbook with chronological and time accuracies. Some facts are repeated innumerable (like Sunil Arora was Chairperson AI in 2002): I was forever interested in the causes of AI being a black hole for taxpayers money, I do not think I can ever travel AI without excerpts continuously being remembered, AI is a perfect example how unions government manhandling and ineffective management can destroy a company: I fear other PSUs may fall in the same quicksand that AI is in: It presents a very likely future I should tell you that this is the first e-book I have completed. Secondly I must admit that even with my cynicism and total trust in the incompetence bureaucratic red-tape and corruption in certain public sector companies I was shocked. (For those without the patience to go through this long very repetitive at times rambling book I would suggest going through the chapter on financial bungling. Just that chapter alone has enough to make one wonder how such things never came to light and if they did were never acted upon), Everything from bad management unnecessary interference from ministries ridiculous obstructionism from unions mind boggling levels of incompetence bad recruitment/H: R practices bad marketing incomprehensible strategic decisions to corruption is dealt with. If there are quibbles it could be that the author makes himself out to be almost saintly. And of course so much repetition - With the same

lines getting repeated over consecutive pages. Where are the editors I say ?! The Descent of Air India Such a whinefest: The Descent of Air India Air India is India's state-owned airline, It was founded by the legendary JRD Tata as a private company and later nationalized by Jawaharlal Nehru India's first prime minister, Even though ownership changed hands Tata was allowed to continue at the helm till early 1970, After his exit people of lesser caliber and bureaucrats administered the company into ruinous depths, This book tells the story of when and where the rot began and how the company landed up in the trap in which it finds itself today: The author Jitender Bhargava is a former executive director of Air India who had worked in its various departments including HR and In-flight Services: This varied experience has helped the author analyze issues that spreads over several functions of the company: What Bhargava portrays in the narrative is presciently applicable to any government-owned company in India, Every executive in the Indian public sector should read this book in order not to repeat the same mistakes. A clear picture of excessive intervention of trade unions in management is provided in the book with several shocking examples. Unions interfered in routine functioning of the airline capitalizing on the vulnerability of a weak management. Instead of standing firm the administration's orders often proved to be farcical. When Air India introduced Johnnie Walker Blue Label whiskey for its business class passengers the cabin crew began pilfering, Many passengers complained that they were not served the premium brand, The toothless management didn't have the gumption to take action against the erring employees, Air India's management gets a thorough dressing down that runs through several chapters of the book. The company's board is picturized as a puppet body that dances to the tune of the politicians who rule the ministry of civil aviation. At a time Air India had 13 chairmen in 20 years! The subservience to political interests reached its nadir when the company's head office was shifted to Delhi from Mumbai: One person reached a post of higher responsibility only when he had only a few months to retire from service, Bhargava notes that the only exception to the rule happened when the CEO decided to promote his cronies: The author identifies three stages in the airline's management. The first was a period of professional leadership under JRD Tata as the Chairman which lasted up to early 1970s, And the last stage continues still in which the company is going under, Acquisition of a large fleet of new aircraft when the airline was already in deep losses was a decision that smacks of managerial incompetence, If the author is to be believed the duo was behind the downfall of the organization. He also slips in subtle hints that large scale corruption had taken place under Thulasidas' stewardship of Air India. Bhargava criticizes everything the management did but didn't have any concrete proposals to offer at the time when he himself served in the management in a top position: The airline began its free fall when the country was opened up for liberalization and the desi corporates were feeling the heat. The airline's profitability was lost to competition from low-cost private airlines: Apart from avoiding some flawed decisions like the mega purchase of aircraft nobody could have saved the public sector undertaking from its eventual ruin, The author pretends to have some original ideas but fail to display any! The book identifies the tasks set before Air India if it wants to be in the field in future, The book is written with great earnestness but the readability is mediocre: The book is painfully in need of an index to help the reader look up the persons and episodes narrated in an easy way: In addition to these readability suffers when the author resorts to verbatim reproductions of reports suggestions made by him statistical figures with dates and the like. We see many numbered and bulleted lists in the text which may increase the effectiveness of a business proposal but a discouragement to the general reader. The Descent of Air India elucidates how the airline failed to adapt and change with the times but preferred instead to bask in its past glory, Impractical expansion plans and thoughtless use of the airline's resources contributed to the company's financial collapse[1]

A future we must prevent. The Descent of Air India This book is a depressing read.all in a blaze of publicity. The Descent of Air India Less is more. Steve Jobs said it the best. It's quite repetitive but very insightful. It was easy to put and pick up. Language adeptness of the author is quite average.Now about the content. I believe I would be angry throughout the journey. Ever. It obviously

helped that no paper-back versions are available. (over and over again). All to naught. A little self-introspection would've been nice. Ugh. As of now the company faces an existential problem. Promotions took place only on the basis of seniority. However the author has played safe without attracting libel. But this failed to wake up Air India. The book is highly recommended. The Descent of Air India.