



# Dead Ringers: How Outsourcing Is Changing the Way Indians Understand Themselves

*Shehzad Nadeem*

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In the Indian outsourcing industry, employees are expected to be "dead ringers" for the more expensive American workers they have replaced--complete with Westernized names, accents, habits, and lifestyles that are organized around a foreign culture in a distant time zone. *Dead Ringers* chronicles the rise of a workforce for whom mimicry is a job requirement and a passion. In the process, the book deftly explores the complications of hybrid lives and presents a vivid portrait of a workplace where globalization carries as many downsides as advantages.

Shehzad Nadeem writes that the relatively high wages in the outsourcing sector have empowered a class of cultural emulators. These young Indians indulge in American-style shopping binges at glittering malls, party at upscale nightclubs, and arrange romantic trysts at exurban cafés. But while the high-tech outsourcing industry is a matter of considerable pride for India, global corporations view the industry as a low-cost, often low-skill sector. Workers use the digital tools of the information economy not to complete technologically innovative tasks but to perform grunt work and rote customer service. Long hours and the graveyard shift lead to health problems and social estrangement. Surveillance is tight, management is overweening, and workers are caught in a cycle of hope and disappointment.

Through lively ethnographic detail and subtle analysis of interviews with workers, managers, and employers, Nadeem demonstrates the culturally transformative power of globalization and its effects on the lives of the individuals at its edges.

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