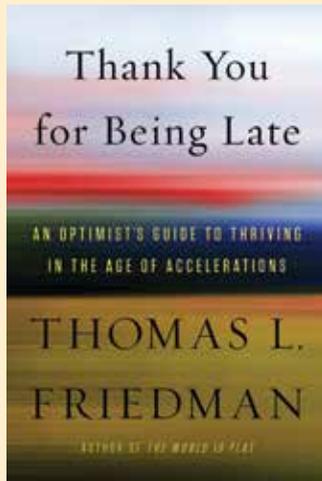


Go Slow



Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations

Author: Thomas Friedman
Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux
Pages: 496
Price: Rs 1190

In the latest book from influential *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, *Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*, readers are taken through a typical globe-spanning Friedmanesque journey of ideas, insights and, of course, people — many people of a wide variety of nationalities and perspectives, but all supporting in some way Friedman's central theme: The world is speeding up — and that's okay, if we all keep moving ourselves.

Friedman compares thriving in today's world to riding a bicycle: a bike is steady, upright and comfortable when you are moving; stop moving and you topple over. The way to keep moving is to embrace collaboration, pluralism, trust of others — and to not be afraid of

change. "So many people today seem to be looking for someone to put on the brakes, to take a hammer to the forces of change — or just give them a simple answer to make their anxiety go away," he writes. "It is time to redouble our efforts to close that anxiety gap with imagination and innovation and not scare tactics and simplistic solutions."

Not that there isn't good reason for trepidation. As Friedman notes, the most dangerous period on New York City streets occurred when cars started appearing but horse-and-buggies had not yet disappeared. We are currently in a similar transition period, with the world accelerating at such a rate that humans are having trouble adapting to the changes.

In *Thank You for Being Late*, Friedman explores in detail the three accelerations driving "the machine" today — the machine being Friedman's term for the "world's biggest gears and pulleys (that) are shaping events."

The first acceleration is in the domain of technology. When visiting the laboratories of the multinationals driving technology

In *Thank You for Being Late*, Friedman explores in detail the three accelerations driving "the machine" today — the machine being Friedman's term for the "world's biggest gears and pulleys (that) are shaping events."



forward, Friedman writes, he feels a bit like James Bond visiting Q's laboratory to discover the latest high-tech spy gadgets.

Except that the mechanical gadgets of Fleming's hero have been replaced by what most people refer to as "the cloud" and what Friedman calls "the supernova." Beginning in 2007, according to Friedman, the supernova started launching Moore's law on the exponential increase in processing power into the stratosphere. Friedman uses the example of an information-technology multinational company based in the surprisingly named town of Batman, Turkey to exemplify how the supernova empowers innovators to reach everywhere from anywhere.

The second acceleration concerns globalisation, which Friedman calls "the Market." The world, according to Friedman, is even flatter than before. One impact of the acceleration of globalisation that Friedman highlights is "the big shift," a term coined by management thought leaders John Hagle III, John Seeley Brown and Lang Davison. The big shift refers to the core unit of value moving from stocks of knowledge to flows of knowledge.

The third acceleration concerns the environment, perhaps the one area where the reader might sense a bit more trepidation on the part of Friedman. Humans, he argues, must adapt, starting now, to the accelerations of Mother Nature, as summarised in a "boundaries" report by environmental researchers that shows how the earth is pushing past boundaries (in carbon dioxide levels, surface temperature, tropical forest loss, among others) never breached.

Given the illuminating insights and explorations in this book readers will be grateful that even in this age there are some things that continue to slow people down. ■