

BOOK REVIEWS

Gurucharan Das, *India Grows at Night: A Liberal Case for a Strong State*, New Delhi: Allen Lane (an imprint of Penguin Books): India, 2012. ISBN: 9780670084708. pp. 307. Rs 599.00.

Though at present we are witnessing the slide of almost all economic growth indicators, it cannot be ignored that compared to many other countries, the Indian economy has been growing fast and has been much discussed and talked subject for good as well as bad reasons in the present times. India has been the second fastest growing economy in the world after China and aspires to have double-digit growth in the times to follow. Urban India visibly has portrayed that kind of development through the expansion of physical infrastructure and the provision of amenities, though not adequate to cope with the fast migration of striving rural class towards urban centres. Another topic of discussion amongst the argumentative Indians is the issue of governance which has of late become a serious problem as day after day a new scam is getting unfolded and the media as the fourth pillar of democracy is able to influence people conscience in different ways.

In these times an acclaimed author and columnist, a management guru (as Arvind Kejriwal calls him), an erstwhile corporate leader, Gurcharan Das brings out the book, '*India Grows At Night (IGAN) – a liberal case for a strong state*'. As he mentions, he originally intended to keep the title as 'India grows at night when the government sleeps'. Although he drops the other half of the original title, the book reminds the reader that in spite of the governance deficit, growth has been taking place which is praiseworthy. One tends to wonder as to what would have been the situation had there been better governance. I am sure as regards to the economic growth; India would have surpassed China by this time easily. But that was not to happen.

An excellent case of comparison between Faridabad and Gurgaon in the backdrop of Indian polity, policy and partnerships of private as well as public initiatives is made in the book. One a sparkling star whereas another one getting fade off. The former is Gurgaon and the latter is Faridabad. I, myself observed it when I visited Faridabad first time

sometime in late 80s or early 90s, that it was a much better township as compared to erstwhile Gurgaon.

Having read *India Unbound*, another masterpiece by Gurcharan Das, somehow I could relate and preempt the interventions made by IGAN, though not agreeing to all points made by him. However, I enjoyed reading the book with full involvement, concern and commitment. India's transformation in the visible indicators during last 20 odd years is appreciated in the book apart from the dismal conditions of social infrastructure viz., education, health, sanitation, etc., especially in rural India. The reality, I think, is even worst in rural India. The force driving the rural youth towards cities in search of petty jobs is still continuing and at least I have not come across any data supporting the case that such migration is in real terms going down even when our growth rates are positive and are being appreciated by all.

The book provides an excellent account of rationalizing the existence democratic practices. Comparison between democracy in America and Scandavian countries is tracked and elaborated. The author reiterates the merit of democracy, by drawing comparison between Tahrir Square uprising in Cairo with Anna's agitation at Jantarmantar in Delhi. Ironically, in India we do see mockery of democracy (many in Indian social media term it as 'demonocracy' however as a form of government still carries more merits and judicious fairness as compared to dictatorship or autocratic rule of state.

In his earlier work, *India Unbound*, Gurcharan Das primarily traced business history and related the changing economic conditions in the wake of liberalization. The story of young aspiring Raju narrated in the book makes his way learning Windows and English is in contrast to Raju of Satyam and Raja of Indian telecom scam fame. The appreciation of Anna Hazare movement as an awakening call is illustrated at many places in the book, although the author does not subscribe to all that this movement stood for. In order to build a case for poor governance, the author cites the cases of Jessica Lal and Ruchika, apart from many others. These are not stray cases; happening day in and day out in all cities and villages, at all places. Crony capitalism has somehow found a concrete grounding in the Indian development story. The purchase and sale of favor is rampant and the politicians playing the role of middlemen

have become so acceptable that aspiring bidders first form nexus and then manipulate the whole process.

Dharma as a proxy for moral well-being and *artha* as a proxy for material well-being are narrated through the text very convincingly. Gandhian way of promoting small business and developing industries on the basic premise of self sustenance is questioned and in a way big-push theory of economic development is advocated by the author highlighting and illustrating its strengths over welfare economy. Although both development and welfare are essential, there is a debate among the economists as to which one should be given priority. My personal belief is that the policy should target welfare first and that should further lead to economic growth. However, Gurcharan Das's thinking is that economic growth should be primary and that should lead welfare.

At the end, in the chapter titled, "What is to be Done?", Gurucharan explores political alternatives and advocates the need to revive the now extinct Swatantra party or start a new political party at the national level, as both the major parties viz., Congress and the BJP are losing people's trust. I too feel that an awakened India would certainly like to see the change at the top and would commit oneself and pray for a better India which does not only grow at night, rather during the day as well and there is never a time when the government really sleeps. I admire Shakespeare for his farsighted and ubiquitous statement '*great men work when others sleep*'.

The book is a simple read making a strong case for liberating India from the clutches of corrupt individuals and showing us a path which could help the state to deal with governance deficit successfully. It is a richly referenced book defending the viewpoint of the author very nicely. I recommend this book to all who are concerned about the future of India.

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Gladson Dungdung, *Whose Country is it Anyway – Untold Stories of the Indigenous Peoples of India*, Adivaani: Kolkata, 2013, pp. 280. ISBN: 978-81-925541-2-9. Price: Rs. 200.

There have been many writings on issues concerning the Adivasis – the indigenous peoples of India. But these have often tended to be written by academics or activists who are mostly non-Adivasis. The book titled “Whose country is it anyway”, written by Gladson Dungdung, a tribal activist, breaks away from this trend. The book, to use Gramscian terminology, is the work of an organic intellectual which challenges the hegemony established in the name of development.

An insider’s perceptions of the injustices faced by Adivasis are presented through a collection of articles titled under the broad heads: Violence and Adivasis, Displacement, Land and Forest, Red Corridor, Corporate Crime, Dissent Voice, Communalisation, Civil Society. The first section on Violence and Adivasis questions the linkage of Adivasi society with violence. By providing historical and contemporary evidence, the author argues that it is the Adivasis who are the victims of violence and not vice-versa. The changes introduced during colonial and post-colonial rule, such as the Permanent Settlement Act, introduction of private property in land, the state takeover of forests through various forest legislations, etc. have only alienated the Adivasis from their natural environment and deprived them of sources of livelihood. The Adivasis became encroachers in their own lands. Land alienation continued despite the tribal uprisings and protective legislations. Land Acquisition Act and Special Economic Zones (SEZ) have further accentuated the problem. The beneficiaries tended to be landlords, project officers, engineers, contractors, bureaucrats, politicians and outsiders. The development process has marginalised the Adivasi religion, language and culture. The self-rule of Adivasis has been replaced by Panchayat Extension for Scheduled Areas (PESA). A need based economy has been substituted by market economy.

In the second section dealing with the issue of Displacement, the author brings to light judicial bias in handling cases related to compensation and rehabilitation of the displaced. The cases related to victims of Malay dam, Kelaghgh dam and Nagri education project - all in Jharkhand - are discussed. The government policies turn self sufficient

communities into dependent rehabilitation victims. Gladson considers Jawaharlal Nehru as the architect of Adivasi misery. The author argues that all the principles of Panchasheel that Nehru enunciated were violated through exogenous development, disrespect for tribal customs and tribal leadership, imposition of an external governance system (PESA) and inadequate attention on human growth. However, the struggles by Adivasis against land acquisition, for fair compensation, rehabilitation and people's movements against corporate giants continue.

The third section on Land and Forests discusses the problem of land alienation among the Adivasis. Land alienation of Adivasis continues despite the protective legal provisions such as Chotanagpur Tenancy Act. The legislations for forest and wildlife conservation have only separated the Adivasis from their life source. Despite the claims by Adivasis under Forest Rights Act (FRA), there is biasness in settlement of their claims. The author states that media has a vested interest in opposing protective legislations. While some of the local news channels in Jharkhand are run by builders and industrialists, in some cases their revenues depend considerably on advertisements from the corporate sector. The media bias is reflected in its underreporting of protests against violations of protective legislations and in its giving priority to the industry viewpoint. While violations of protective legislations by Adivasis are reported, the same by non-Adivasis are underreported.

The fourth section on Red Corridor describes the situation prevalent in areas under Left Wing Extremism (LWE) which the state views as the 'greatest internal security threat'. The book gives the details of instances of death of innocents, burning of villages, arson, rape, murder, atrocities and torture by paramilitary, police and Special Police Officers (SPOs) in the name of Greenhunt and Salwa Judum. The killing of earning family members is creating livelihood crisis for the families and making children orphans. Gladson says that all this is happening with the purpose to create 'investment climate', rather than for protecting the Adivasis. He claims that the Operation Green-hunt is intended to create fear, insecurity and livelihood crises among villagers so that they move out and the land can be given to corporate houses. In his view, Naxalism which has its genesis in inequality, injustice and discrimination can only be dealt with equitable development and justice.

The fifth section on corporate crime highlights the crimes being inflicted on the Adivasis for establishing corporate corridor. The author says that initially the corporate houses use muscle power to force the Adivasis to move out. When muscle power fails, they talk of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The author views the CSR work of companies like that of the Mittals in Jharkhand as a 'conspiracy for snatching resources'. The corporate sector tries to co-opt opposing forces and produce consent through media. The media produces biased report in favor of the corporate houses by glorifying them. However, CSR programs could not make much headway and now corporate houses have started talking about human rights, although they are the worst violators of the same.

The sixth section on Dissenting voice shows how the state tries to suppress the dissent by equating it with Maoism. The book cites how the efforts of human rights organisations to bring to light the cases of human rights violations by state police and paramilitary are maligned. Organised protests by human rights organisations are branded as Maoist events. The human rights activists are questioned for their position on Maoist violence, despite the fact that they do equally condemn Maoist violence. The seventh section on Communalisation takes a critical stand against the efforts of Hindutva organisations in identifying the Adivasis with Hinduism. The author points out instances in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* to argue that the Adivasis never were part of Hinduism. The Sarna religion practiced by Adivasis is different from Hinduism. He criticises the efforts of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) carrying out *Ghar Vapsi* program in the name of re-converting the Adivasi Christians back into the hold of Hinduism and trying to create communal tensions in the tribal belts.

The eighth section on Civil Society interrogates the pretensions and performance of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in the tribal areas. The author points out that most CSOs are led by elites who have got enriched by pretending to be working for the marginalised, but the situation of the marginalised Adivasis remains as they were before. The book correctly points out that the Adivasis are at best found only in the lower rungs of CSOs, working at low salaries but never in higher echelons of leadership. The funding agencies also favor CSOs led by non-Adivasis, and ignore organisations led by Adivasis themselves. Awards are

instituted for non-Adivasis working for their work with Adivasis, rather than the Adivasi leaders working for the Adivasis.

At a time when development is being increasingly equated with growth and industrialisation, the book by providing space for subaltern voices shows the other side of neo-liberal reforms. It shows exactly what the growth and industrialisation means for the marginal classes. The book of this kind is relevant at a time when the so called reforms have been affecting various marginal communities.

One area where the book lags is in its failure to see emergence of classes within the Adivasi communities and the alliance of the tribal elites with other exploitative classes. It also fails to see similarities of interests between the exploited Adivasi communities and other non-tribal marginal classes such as peasants, unorganised and organised workers etc. affected equally under the neo-liberal reforms. The book raises relevant questions about the nature of Indian democracy and the reforms taking place in the country in the name of economic development. However, the book is worth reading for anyone interested in the issues concerning the Adivasi and indigenous peoples, political economy of development and the impact of neo-liberal reforms.

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Tage Tada, Jagat C. Dutta and Nabajit Deori, *Archaeological Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh: Discoveries from 1991-2011*, Directorate of Research, Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Arunachal Pradesh: Itanagar, 2012. pp. i-xviii +214. Price: Rs. 500/-.

The book, *Archaeological Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh: Discoveries from 1991-2011*, under review is based exclusively upon the findings of archaeological investigations of two decades (1991-

2011) in various parts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Government of India, through the Finance Commission has provided financial support to the Arunachal Pradesh under heritage up-gradation schemes for protection, preservation and development of archaeological monuments. These grants helped and encouraged the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Arunachal Pradesh to conduct a series of archaeological explorations and investigations even in the far flung border areas. The book under consideration is the outcome of such devoted hard studies. The book comprises of five chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction to the book containing a theoretical account of the heritage, archaeology and a brief description of the political development of the State. The second chapter named land and people is the description of geography, geology, river system and the people and their living patterns. The third chapter deals with prehistoric archaeology and the fourth with historical archaeology. The fifth chapter, Summary and Conclusion, attempts to summarize the new discoveries and draw a conclusion especially on the migration of the local inhabitants. Apart from projecting the glimpses of hidden archaeological treasures of the State, the chapter also talks about the scope for further investigation. A select bibliography and an appendix on archaeological wealth of the State and Government notifications on declaration of State Protected Monuments are incorporated.

The archaeological findings published in the book is going to be significant not only for the future researcher of the history of Arunachal Pradesh but also the neighbouring areas. It is more so internationally because of the state's geographical situation: three sides of the state are surrounded by three countries – China, Bhutan and Myanmar. The third and the fourth chapters are the two main chapters wherein the entire primary findings of the last two decades of the archaeological investigations have been presented with photographs, maps and sketches wherever applicable along with description. The authors of the book under review have systematized and classified the findings and preserved them for the future scholars to conduct further research / scientific studies and arrive at new conclusions. Unlike the other publications on the archaeological findings of Arunachal Pradesh, this book covers the whole of Arunachal Pradesh as well as the Neolithic, Megalithic, traces of blacksmithy, religious structures, forts etc.

The book *Archaeology of Arunachal Pradesh* by Y. A. Raiker and S. Chatterjee (1980) had documented a few prehistoric and historic artifacts and monuments reported and excavated mainly from the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh. Later on, books on Malinithan, Naksaparvat, Itafort were published with findings of the respective exactions. A. A. Ashraf in his book, *Prehistoric Arunachal* (1990) exclusively dealt with the Neolithic findings of the Parsi-Parlo in the present Kurung Kumey district. Apart from the books, a number of booklets, research papers and articles were written by many scholars of the Department and other institutions, which were published in different journals, highlighting the archaeological wealth of Arunachal Pradesh. These reports and research findings have also been published in the journal of the Research Department of Government of Arunachal Pradesh, *Resarun*. If we analyse the contribution of this book, it is certainly able to bring back the history of Arunachal Pradesh to its prehistoric past with more evidence from almost all parts of Arunachal Pradesh and connect them to the subsequent developments. The new Neolithic and Megalithic finds and the traces of blacksmithy of the early period, as reported in the book are significant.

If historians and anthropologists want to analyse these findings in their researches, it will lead certainly to new heights in the researches on Arunachal Pradesh. There is a definite connect between the stone age cultural developments of Pari-Parlo and other areas to the growth and development of iron and finally the guns coming from Tibet/China and Myanmar in the areas of Arunachal Pradesh and its impact on the material culture of the area and the neighbouring areas. The archaeological findings of the book can also be very helpful to deduce the technological progresses in various parts of Arunachal Pradesh. The impact of the neighbouring areas not only on the archaeological finds but also on the material culture of the area can also be studied in future. Thus, this book is a mine of information with significant pointers to the direction of future researches on the bases of archaeological finds towards places and routes of migration and settlements in Arunachal Pradesh, development of art and architecture of Arunachal Pradesh, sacred status of some stones and other antique objects; thus have tremendous potentialities to encourage future researches.

However, the authors should have avoided the claim to “highlight the glory of hidden heritage of the land” as one of the objectives of the

work. We study the developments of the past to understand them, not necessarily to glorify them. Even for the developments of the Buddhist art and architecture, the use of terms such as “glorious” should have been substituted with any other value neutral term. Barring such limitations, the book is a significant addition to the existing knowledge on the land and its people. It is one of the finest examples of institutional involvement and devotion to the archaeological studies; and will certainly open new vistas in exploring the comprehensive history of the region.

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R.K. Satapathy, *United States and Central America: The US Involvement in Nicaragua*, Mittal Publications: New Delhi, 2012. ISBN : 81-8324-361-4. Pp.183. Price: Rs. 600.

Since the Spanish American War of 1898, relations between the United States and the Hispanic America were centred round the Caribbean Sea. The sea is of vital interest to the US from the perspective of both commercial interest and military defence. The Caribbean Sea offers an entrance to the Atlantic and the Pacific and thereby its importance to the US as a sea line of communication (SLOC) is immense. Further, various republics bordering the Caribbean Sea are of special significance to the US because of their natural resource reserves. In this context the pronounced US goal, to have supremacy over Central America only states the USA’s overriding concerns for the region. The famous Monroe Doctrine (1823) bears the testimony. It is known to any political analyst that the smaller, weaker and debilitated states of this region were always source of US worries. Throughout the history of colonialism, the fear of European aggression in this region kept alive American vigil and concern over the region. The bold enunciation of President Monroe, “henceforth the American continent are not to be considered as subjects for future colonialism by any European powers” (speech delivered to the Congress

on Dec 2, 1823), underlined the future US engagement with the region. The United States has followed the doctrine as a policy in her own interest for more than a century. In course of time, it has moved from its original content of prohibiting any European intervention to the self-proclaimed right of US to intervene in every conflict between an American and a non-American power. In pursuance of this policy the United States has extended its control over this area by means of mediation, intervention, commercial expansion, training and aids to pro American regimes. None other than Nicaragua, the largest of the Central American states exemplifies so clearly the US intention in this region. Apart from its strategic location, its natural resources have induced US interest in Nicaragua. The location of Nicaragua fulfils the prime interests of the US - the military base, control over canal routes, protection of Panama Canal and commercial expansion. Mining, timber, banana and coffee industries of Nicaragua had attracted foreign investments in the republic from the days of colonialism. Once the USA emerged as a great power after the civil war of 1861-65, it began to assert itself in the region, viewing it as its own backyard. Further during the Cold War era, incremental increase in Soviet presence in the region and the emergence of Cuba as Soviet ally further induced an increasing and aggressive US presence in the region.

Written with this backdrop, the book, *United States and Central America*, is a welcome addition to the vast literature on US intervention, interest and engagement in Central America. The book is an adaptation from his Ph.D work on the subject and the research output of those years has enriched the book with valuable insights.

Apart from the concluding chapter and a postscript, the book comprises five chapters. US involvement in Nicaragua forms the core of the book and except for the first, rest of the chapters primarily focuses on the core area. The central theme of the book highlights the exploitation of Nicaragua by the US, its “unrelenting war of attrition against Nicaragua” (p.vii). The book presupposes the hegemonic ambition of the US in Central America. As an appendage to its ambition of global supremacy, the relations between US and Nicaragua surfaced as “exploiter-exploited and dictator-dictated.” (p. 23)

The preface sets the tone of the book by providing glimpses of US intervention in Nicaragua. The introduction unfolds the basic postulates

of US design in Central America and presents an overview of American policy options over a wide period, from 1821 to the decade of 80s up to Reagan administration. A brief sketch of colonial subjugation, economic exploitation, inequality and political instability of the region in the beginning of the chapter provides a prelude to US policy design in the region.

Chapter 2 promises the readers a historical survey of US-Nicaragua relations from 1840 to 1979 - the various phases of US intervention in Nicaragua. Inclusion of detail analysis of different landmark events, treaties and agreements in the early part of 19th century involving US, Nicaragua and Britain supplements our understanding of the historical background and evolution of the US-Nicaragua relations. The chapter examines US intervention in Nicaragua from Walker era until the killing of Sandino and the rise of Somoza Garcia and Somozián dynastic rule. It covers primarily four time periods - (1855-1893, 1893-1912, 1912-1933 and 1933-1979). The US interventions in 1855 and 1910 are said to have been motivated by the desire to secure control over Panama Canal and its routes. Beginning with William Walker's involvement in Nicaragua (who became the President of Nicaragua by virtue of leading the successful filibuster, the 1856 conquest of Nicaragua), the chapter proceeds on analysing the US interventions against Jose Santos Zelaya (1910) and the consolidation of US control over Nicaragua (1912-1933). The chapter draws attention to the dictatorial rule of Somozas for more than forty years which is marked by US support and backing. The chapter briefly examines the then prevailing economic conditions, political cleavages and instability in Nicaragua. How those conditions have augmented US involvements in Nicaragua, also finds a mention. In this context, the elaboration of 'Dollar Diplomacy', which finds a brief place in the text, would have made the chapter interesting - as 'Dollar Diplomacy' explains substantially the American intention in Nicaragua. Nevertheless, the chapter prepares the readers to uncover the most destructive rage of US against Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990. During that period, the United States had to confront the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSNL- *Frente Sandinista Liberation Nacional*) which posed a serious challenge to US hegemony.

Chapter 3 illustrates how the US made things worse for Nicaragua during that period, until the fall of Sandinista Government in the 1990 elections. The author provides an account of US opposition to Sandinistas,

by documenting in detail the nature and extent of US involvement in Nicaraguan domestic affairs. US interference was marked by host of activities which ranged from false propaganda against FSNL, low intensity war against Nicaragua, training of the Contras-a militia to overthrow the Sandinista, creation of economic hurdles for Nicaragua, various secret CIA / Contra plans and operations to destabilise FSNL and finally orchestrating the defeat of FSNL in 1990 election. Historic continuity of US dominance in Central America was scripted by US through such policy options. Approach towards the Sandinista Government broadly remained unchanged under the three successive administration of Carter, Reagan and Bush i.e. the “harassment, malignity and strangulation of a tiny nation, which braved to come out of the control of a super power” (p 60).

Chapter 4 outlines the international responses towards the United States Nicaraguan policy. The responses of the Europe, United Nations, Soviet Union, and Central American nations form the core of this chapter. The chapter brings into focus the fact that the role of United States in Nicaragua did not even receive the support of some US allies. The discussion on reaction of Central American nations captures the factors responsible for divided response fo the neighbours to US response to Nicaragua. The author discusses initiatives taken by various groups of countries to bring peace and stability in the region. The analysis of the efforts of groups like Contadora, Lima etc., various stakeholders’ response to their proposals, their ideological proximity to the US or USSR has added substance to the content of the chapter.

Chapter 5 draws the attention of the readers to the ulterior motive behind US active involvement in the 1990 election of Nicaragua. The United States played a pivotal role in that election to ensure the ouster of the Sandinista government. Contextualising the electoral debacle of Sandinistas, the author has highlighted how the US forced the FSNL to adopt various unpopular measures and went for all out support to rival Contras.

Chapter 6 summarises the US approach to Central American republicans in general and Nicaragua in particular. Chapter 7 (postscript) carries the work to the contemporary developments in the US-Nicaragua relations. The chapter points out the US interference in the elections of

1996 and 2001 against FSNL and its as presidential candidate, Daniel Ortega. The chapter ends with a bird's eye view of President Ortega's efforts to rebuild the country by accepting IMF conditions and for opening up Nicaragua to the outside world for diversification of economic relations and for rebuilding its defence relations with the US. The author concludes by saying that only through confidence building measures it will be possible to bring a positive change in US-Nicaragua relations.

The book helps as an introductory book to understand US attitude to any perceived or potential threat to Pan-Americanism and it has been explained through the case study of its age old hostile attitude towards Nicaragua. Use of resources other than the US Department of State has enriched the book. The detailed information of covert and overt activities of US in Nicaragua and elaborate discussion of US policy approaches towards Nicaragua in various phases will go a long way in encouraging such endeavours in future. The students of International relations will benefit immensely from the book.

The work however has not much to say in terms of new insights. It has not made any reference to the untended modernising affects of US intervention on Nicaraguan society and economy. Some of the recent researches on US–Nicaragua relations have focused on this aspect. The work also does not address the dilemmas and dichotomies of the indigenous elite in Nicaragua. This would have made the book more interesting to read. The mere stereotypical profiling of US actions in Nicaragua might inhibit the interests of a section of readers. In the introduction, a brief reference of the geographical area under focus and the nations that comprise Central America would have been helpful for those who hardly navigate in the world of international relations. A map of the region certainly would have made a visual contribution to the book. Some of the opinions expressed appear to be subjective, as they are not supported by proper references. (pp. 63, 75, 76, 78). For such a well researched work, citing sources which helped the author to form opinions would not have been difficult.

The book could have taken care of typographical errors, avoided repetitions (in preface and acknowledgement) and evaded long sentences. Proper editorial care would have placed the book to a higher academic

plane. The cover page which has an excellent design could have included the sub-heading of the book – *US involvement in Nicaragua* – as well.

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Sagar Boruah ed., *Historical Studies In The Context Of Globalization: Rationale for Restructuring Curriculum*, Khagarijan College: Nagaon, 2011. 978-202-8876-7. pp. 113. Rs. 150/-.

As the editor of the book observes in his preface, this book is the outcome of a National Seminar organized at the Khagarijan College, Nagaon and the theme of the seminar has been adopted as the title of the book. This edited volume as a collection of eight papers attempts to understand the challenges posed to History as a discipline and knowledge system and the response evolved from within the discipline to counter them in this new age, identified as the age of Globalization. Challenges to history as a discipline is of course not a recent phenomenon. Scholars have raised issues over the relevance of studying History in the past as well. One can only remember the attempts by historians to respond to the Age of Science by asserting with all their intellectual rigour that ‘history was a science, no more no less’. History is one of the oldest disciplines within human knowledge systems. The onset of Globalization has unleashed new forces that have challenged organized classical disciplines, including History.

About two decades before E. H. Carr¹, it was Jawaharlal Nehru who in his *Discovery of India* viewed history as a continuous attempt of the ‘present’ to engage with the ‘past’ and highlighted the necessity of a discipline such as history to re-discover its relevance with the times. History writing is a continuous romance between the Historian and

¹ E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, Penguin Books, London, 1990 (Rep)

‘historical fact’. Nehru observed that, “[T]he past becomes something that leads up to the present, the moment of action, the future something that flows from it; and all there are inextricably intertwined and interrelated.”² There is no doubt that for a colonized land that India then was, history became an important platform from the age of Bankim Chandra, both for assertion of colonial hegemony and for resistance against it; an effective forum of contest between the colonized and the colonizer. Within this contest, framing a curriculum in History became an important part of political struggle between the major parties (Indian National Congress and the Muslim League) and their leaders (Mahatma Gandhi and Muhammad Ali Jinnah).

India’s engagement with the global capitalist order continued even after the transfer of power. The importance of continuous engagement with the global order was asserted by Nehru himself who set the tone in his inaugural address to the Asian History Congress in 1961, the very year that E. H. Carr delivered his ‘George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures’. Nehru set the tone for the framework of a new curriculum in History in a globalized world by asserting that, “... the world is getting integrated. We have really to consider history today in a world perspective...”³ When the Congress government later adopted the policy of globalization, it was not totally incongruent with the Nehruvian vision, over which the political spectrum in India had evolved a broad agreement. The new age ushered in far reaching social changes. Preceded by a technological revolution, it had an impact on the manner in which knowledge systems came to be perceived and pedagogy came to be constructed. The editor of this book, Sagar Boruah correctly contextualized the situation when he observed in his essay, that “...the Globalization has given birth to such an environment that every aspect of society is bound to change its own nature. The subject history as an academic discipline is too affected by the wave of globalization.”

The impact of globalization on the Indian knowledge system was indeed phenomenal. The political class who rode high on the wave of technological revolution since mid-1980s was openly critical of classical

² J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, pp.9-10, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2010.

³ Jawaharlal Nehru’s *Speeches*, Vol.-IV, 1957-1963, Publication Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1983.

disciplines. Some even went to the extent of proclaiming the redundancy of subjects like History and called for its replacement within the school curriculum by subjects which were in tune with the times and served the cause of employment generation. This position of the political class was criticized by professional historians and History Associations alike. The 1990s was indeed an age of crisis for discipline of History. The last decade of 20th century was difficult and the historians responded to the challenge by framing new history curriculums which could meet the challenge of globalization. The curriculum by which the discipline of History was geared up to meet the needs of globalized citizens itself became one of the arenas of fierce ideological contest among the historians . With the onset of a new age, history had to reassert the relevance of its traditional concerns with polity, society and economy but also engage with new areas such as environment, technology, food and fashion.

This collection of eight essays is in tune with the attempt by historians to engage with the curriculum. The opening essay by J. B. Bhattacharjee sets the tone for the book. The essay helps readers to make sense of the various crises faced by the discipline of history in the new millennium. The strength of Bhattacharjee's scholarship is not just in identification of the crises but also in his attempt at providing suggestions for overcoming them. One cannot help but give a serious thought to the assertion that "... if historical method is to be more 'scientific', the proposed techno-historical approach deserves serious consideration....." (p.6). If the first essay set the tone, the essay titled 'The curriculum of History in Modern' by A. K. Thakur successfully picked up the leads by highlighting the changes that have taken place over time within the teaching-learning processes of history in modern India. In the essay, Thakur identifies the dominant currents of historical thought and examines how some historians in India have shaped the study of history. Using a wide array of 'historical' data, the author highlights the contrast in history writing between the colonial and the post-colonial period. The reference to the Nehruvian vision of History is both ideological and functional. The author successfully weaved a narrative of challenge and response in scientific history writing in post colonial India. The scientific approach was not a fetish but the cornerstone of Indian secular historiography. This essay is a mine of information about the continuous tussle within dominant political classes within the Indian state

to influence and determine the course of history reading and writing. At the same time it also deals with the efforts by professional historians to resist the attempts to politicize history and history writing. The author's assertion that such an ideological and political nexus harms the idea of a secular and scientific historiography, sets the tone for review of similar contests between the motivated political class and professional scientific historians in the early years after Independence. It appears that the author is very much influenced by Prof. V.C.P. Chaudhary, one of the stalwarts of scientific and secular historiography in India. Incidentally Thakur himself refers to Prof. Chaudhary's unpublished article ('Indian Historiography as the Tool of Ruling Class Interest: A General Survey from Canning to Morarji', submitted to Indian History Congress held at Waltair, 1976) to integrate his core arguments. This essay is successful in highlighting the nexus between political ideology and history writing and curriculum framework, not only in India but also at various other countries of Asia and Europe. The case studies from China, France, Pakistan, and South Korea have given this essay an added leverage and this book a new dimension.

Globalization has been advocating the linkage of education with job market. Of late, the relevance of a discipline is judged on the basis of its employment potential. Probably in response to such demands, J. B. Bhattacharjee in his introductory essay observes that "contemporary global situation calls for striking balance in which the students are prepared for the emerging economy... Globalization demands that the curriculums in all courses are to be globally compatible....." Such an academic engagement between globalization and history seems to be the dominant thread in the essays by Ajanta Khargharia and Dipjyoti Das, Manjushree Bora and Swapan Jyoti Nath. Applied History in the sense of trying to relate History with applied disciplines such as Travel and Tourism and Environmental Studies within History are the core concern of the papers by Pradip Barman and Mamoni Bhuyan and Prasanta Khanikur. The result of such an engagement can be practically demonstrated in the commencement of a diploma course in Travel and Tourism in various department of History in Indian universities. The only paper that sought to enter into a theoretical discourse on globalization using the colonial and post-colonial as historic signposts is the essay by Kishore Goswami. Goswami must be credited for engaging with the idea of modernization and underdevelopment as a

justification of colonial hegemony over non-western societies. He makes sense, when he projects the ayurvedic movement initiated in late colonial and post colonial India as sites of resistance against the juggernaut of globalization. The essay, 'Globalization and History' by the coordinator of the Seminar, Sagar Boruah serves as an interesting epilogue for this book.

Over the ages, the nature and practice of history as a discipline has undergone several changes. From serving the cause of theology in the medieval ages to technology in the age of globalization, history and historians have tried to rise up to the challenges of the times. In India, with the emergence of a new nation state with a millennium old civilizational heritage, the discipline has witnessed rapid transformation. There is no doubt that this book does make an attempt to intervene in the debate over the nature, scope and the prospect of historical studies in India in this global age. But on reading the book, one cannot help but note the typographical errors. Some of the authors could have done more justice to the theme of the seminar and the book if they had come out with detailed case studies, rather than observations of generic nature. But at the close, one is left wondering whether there could have been some space for understanding the nature of Globalization as a world system perspective or an overview of its relationship with the idea of colonialism and neo colonialism in theory and practice. Probably that has been left for historical scholarship in some other seminar in future.

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