

Book Review

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Strangers No More

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In this book one can find how the draconian law AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Power Act) has affected the lives of the ordinary people of northeast India in a devastating way. Mr. Hazarika provides us an insider account of his experiences at the Justice Reddy Committee to review AFSPA 1958, where he was a member. This book also nicely illustrates Delhi's "own" way in managing the turmoil in the northeast through the past decades. This book gives a detailed account of how the states of northeast India got their statehood and other major issues of the states.

This book clearly shows the anger of the author against the injustices meted out by the central government on the common people of this region under the banner of AFSPA for national integrity and security. This book is not just emotion but emotions with hard to digest cruel facts. It tells us the stories of the lady Thangjam Manorama ; Irom Sharmila; Leika Yumnam; Laldenga; Sangliana, son of Brigadier Sailo etc to name a few. Even the Armed forces who carry out the orders of implementing AFSPA wants a more humane alternative. It shows that because of AFSPA the public vulnerability is and the accountability of the security forces is low. While narrating the untold stories of the people of this region the author gives a sprinkle of his own opinion. In one point he questions:

"How can acts of rape, molestation, torture, damage to homes and theft in any way be seen as being conducted in the line of duty?"

Here one can see the complexities and multilayers of Naga nationalism. The author once had a meeting with NSCN(I-M)'S Isak and Muivah in Bangkok of which he gives a detailed account in this book. He also discusses how people were driven like cattles in the Protected and Progressive Village in Mizoram.

This book can be seen as a collection of nerve wrecking and spine shivering anecdotes and confessions made by people holding various positions in the governmental machinery. The author tells little known stories, drawn from personal experiences and knowledge, of the way the insurgents operate, of the reality of the border towns in the region and the pain of victims. He travels across borders and mountains, listening to tales of the people living in the region. He challenges the stereotype of 'North eastern', critiques the categorization of the Bangladeshi deals with the issues of race discrimination and suggests ways of dealing with these issues.

While it may be argued that the geographical and socio-political heritage may be responsible for some issues and plague the region but it is also true that most of the political scenarios have been forced upon the region.

Since there aren't many books that deal with such issues in the market, this book is worth it.

This book can be seen as the sequel of his book "Strangers of the Mist".