

building a strong base of heavy industries, his ambitions to make India's parliament the model parliament of Asia, his courage to chart the course of non-alignment in a bipolar world were remarkable. He laid foundations for a large number of institutions of scientific research, socio-economic studies, art, literature, theatre and culture. India's scientific progress, especially the nuclear and space programme, owe a lot to Nehru. Second, many of the positions of the author are opinionated and heavily influenced by the views of others. His assessment of Nehru would have carried more weight had he used more archival materials and untrammelled documents in support of his arguments. This seems to be the main objective of the author, and to that extent he has done his job honestly.

The questions raised in this book are bound to draw the attention of both Nehru's followers and critics. The study fits into the wider current scenario of a critical re-assessment of the Congress-dominated first few decades of India, in which the Nehru dynasty, despite its flaws, played a dominant and critical role.

## References

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Pawan Agarwal (Ed.), *A Half-century of Indian Higher Education: Essays by Philip G. Altbach* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2012), xxii + 636 pp.

DOI: 10.1177/0262728015615492

Altbach's work on Indian and contemporary global higher education is widely known. This edited volume of 34 important contributions by him, with introductions to each major section by Indian higher education specialists, is designed to allow a comprehensive overview of the development of higher education in post-Independence India (p. xv) and to carry on discussion and policy planning about the future of Indian higher education, a massive enterprise with 'myriad challenges', as the optimistic editor fittingly notes (p. xvii).

Among those challenges, the role of state involvement in higher education is certainly a significant overarching theme, though clearly not the only major topic. The volume is grouped into seven sections that focus in turn on (a) higher education and modernisation, (b) the academic profession, (c) regional issues and challenges, (d) globalisation impacts, (e) publishing and knowledge production, (f) campus politics

and (g) a comparative analysis of India and China. Each part, briefly introduced by a section editor, offers a fascinating array of Altbach's comments over five decades. Although this generates much repetition and overlap of arguments, it also creates a rich discussion from many different angles and perspectives, given that Altbach started writing in the late 1960s.

Section 1 on higher education and modernisation is introduced by Fazal Rizvi, who focuses on 'Challenges of Modernization in Higher Education' (pp. 3–8). He highlights that Altbach's insights have helped scholars appreciate the complexities of Indian higher education and have contributed to policy analysis, planning and evaluation within India. Modernisation as a highly contested idea offers of course many different routes to development, including higher education. Rizvi reads Altbach's stance on Indian education and modernisation as being 'tied conceptually to ideological forms first articulated in the West' (p. 4). Altbach is understood to show that the basic structures (mainly 'the London University system'), curriculum and orientation of universities in India even today reflect the colonial heritage

despite postcolonial nationalist aspirations. Indeed, university education in India continues to place an emphasis on the values of individualism, secularism, rationality and, to a lesser extent, cosmopolitanism. Ultimately, its vision of progress continues to mimic Western traditions of knowledge creation and dissemination. (p. 4)

Should this normative understanding not make significant distinctions between observed structures of management and delivery and underlying values involved in the business of education? The two only *appear* the same at first sight and Rizvi does articulate the potential for Indian characteristics at the end of his introduction:

Indeed it should be possible for India to imagine a distinctively Indian form of modernity, which values the spirit of individual freedom without abandoning its commitment to community, which celebrates both scientific rationality and religion. It should be possible for Indian universities to collaborate with foreign universities without accepting the asymmetrical logic of the global markets. It should be possible for Indian higher education to reject some of the most destructive aspects of neoliberal governance without abandoning a quest for the modernization of its curriculum and pedagogy, working towards administrative reforms that are based on both India's cultural traditions and good ideas whatever their origin. (p. 7)

Actually, the Indian Supreme Court through Justice Bhagwati in one of the M.C. Mehta cases on environmental protection during the 1980s said very much the same about borrowing useful ideas and strategies from anywhere. Developing and educating India cannot involve straightforward transplantation. Altbach's rich comments in the eight essays of Section 1 identify Indian higher education as a contested territory (p. 62) in permanent crisis, operated in a society of scarcity. Throughout, he notes the highly political orientation of education, with universities as an arm of the state. Not

optimistic about the scope for reforms in the 1960s (p. 36), Altbach later charts massive development and ‘uncontrolled expansion’ (p. 57), which leads to overproduction of graduates and a widely noticed and much discussed lowering of standards. Altbach connects a tendency towards status quoist authoritarianism with traditional Hindu values (p. 35) but also identifies gerontocracy and general conservativeness as factors resisting change within the academic system, quite in line with other countries. Notably, he observes that the Indian state has been generally careful to preserve academic autonomy (p. 54), with some exceptions during the Emergency (pp. 153–5). He advises more primary data collection and more focus on studying practical problems (p. 54) but by 1993, describes India as a ‘research superpower’ (p. 56). While he finds systemic reform virtually impossible (p. 73), by 2005, he discusses the newly emerging private sector (p. 81), including a brief critique of the Vedanta University plans in Orissa (p. 88). Pertinent comments are also made on taking advantage of India’s demographic dividend (pp. 92–4).

Section 2 focuses on the academic profession in the land of the guru, but by 1979, Altbach discusses college teachers in Mumbai under the heading of ‘Distorted Guru’ (pp. 125–59) and observes further changes, painting a still richer picture combining stagnation and growth in an ongoing scenario of quiet crisis (p. 98). Section 3 on ‘Regional Issues and Challenges’ (pp. 161–234) raises expectations that centre–state relations and language issues with regard to education would be debated, but this part actually offers case studies of higher education institutions, mainly in Mumbai (chapters 11 and 12) but also in Kerala and Bihar (Nalanda). The dominant preoccupation everywhere with quality and probity is brought out well. There is much evidence of leadership vacuums and partly horrendous (p. 165) political interferences at state level, contributing to the scenario of ‘almost permanent crisis’ (p. 191).

Section 4 on ‘Globalization and Open-door Policies’ problematises India’s partly justified distrust of foreign institutions. It recognises the need to open doors but advises caution about getting involved with foreign universities and stresses the need to protect India’s academic sovereignty (p. 244). While there are no world-class universities in India according to global league tables, observing what goes on in other countries is certainly advisable. Notably, the experiences of the Gulf countries are indeed different but instructive (pp. 250–1). Section 5 focuses on publishing and language issues, with highly informative articles on the growth and limits of regional publishing, especially with reference to Marathi (Chapter 20), insightful pieces on certain publishing houses and their strategies (Chapter 22) and various aspects of knowledge production in the context of centre–periphery balancing. This remains a major challenge, of course not only for India, as the example of Dutch opposition to increase the use of English (p. 383) illustrates. Some explicit positive comments about the manifest benefits of multilingualism—in which many Indians are masters, often without much formal education—may not be expected from an anglocentric author, but they would have been pertinent here.

Section 6 discusses campus politics and its changing nature after 1947, which will interest a wider readership, although Altbach's articles are quite dated. Student organisations, in his view, lack an organisational and ideological base and are often ad hoc agitations, frequently concerned about standards (pp. 405–6). Sometimes motivated by language issues such as the anti-Hindi agitations (p. 430), they reflect the diverse politicisation of the higher education sector and its many different shades. While Altbach shows well how earlier Gandhi's movements involved many students, today's Aam Aadmi activism is outside the volume's remit and timeframe.

Section 7 offers a comparative analysis of India and China, with articles that are notably more up to date. Altbach advises mutual cooperation (p. 518) and observes in both systems further trends towards expansion and increased privatisation. Also unsurprisingly, he predicts that both countries will play a major role but sees China as more likely to develop world-class facilities. The final sections of this volume—an interview with Altbach, his afterword on India's higher education challenges (pp. 582–94) and an epilogue by the editor—sum up the various strands of discussion and place them in the context of an emerging national planning and policy debate under the Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2012–17). Indian higher education development is characterised by massification as the main trend (p. 576), posing serious challenges at the top and bottom. Altbach remains, to the end, quite sceptical about India's achievements and potential to achieve excellence. He perceives 'a sea of mediocrity' (p. 585) and warns again of wasting the country's demographic dividend. Agarwal's epilogue (pp. 595–611) highlights the dramatic growth of the system as a whole and anticipates much positive impact from the transformative potential of technology on higher education (p. 609). In conclusion, admitting that there are changes all around and long-term implications are not clearly known, he calls for integrative thinking and applied creativity.

The book as a whole makes it clear that the juggernaut of Indian higher education will move on, but that there are massive challenges ahead at all levels and in all respects. It is quite remarkable that higher legal education is not included in these rich discussions. There is a useful detailed index at the end, and the entire volume is well-produced and makes partly intriguing reading.

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Shukla Sanyal, *Revolutionary Pamphlets, Propaganda and Political Culture in Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2014), vii + 211 pp.

DOI: 10.1177/0262728015615495

This study on the revolutionary nationalist movement in Bengal actually covers the period from 1905 to 1918 and examines specifically the pamphlets propaganda disseminated by revolutionary terrorists. Such writing is designed as a means of