

BOOK REVIEWS

Editor's Note: The following two book reviews are of works that we think are particularly appropriate for high school students. Readers are invited to submit reviews of books especially suitable for adolescents.

Buttertea at Sunrise *A Year in the Bhutan Himalaya*

BY BRITTA DAS

DUNDURN PRESS (MAY 30, 2007)
224 PAGES, ISBN 10: 1-550026-80-1, PAPERBACK

REVIEWED BY FRITZ BLACKWELL

In 1997, at age 26, a Canadian physiotherapist (physical therapist), volunteered through Voluntary Services Overseas for a year's stint in a small hospital in the town of Mongar in eastern Bhutan. She compassionately, but certainly not uncritically, absorbed the culture and rapidly made friends with patients, doctors, and villagers. She showed inordinate patience with the sparse medical resources and often unsavory and unsanitary conditions, as well with the difficult living situation. Nevertheless, she had an appreciation for the culture which few—probably very few—Westerners would have. It is her perception and the non-exotic outlook which makes this memoir fascinating and so very readable. An American or Canadian high school or college student would likely find the work interesting and valuable for its adventuresome account of one of the last truly little-known lands, which nonetheless is changing significantly and rapidly (as a return visit, recounted in the book, alarmingly notes). ■

Daughter of the Ganges *A Memoir*

BY ASHA MIRO

NEW YORK: ATRIA BOOKS, 2006
288 PAGES, ISBN 10: 0-7432-8672-3, HARDBACK


REVIEWED BY FRITZ BLACKWELL

In this sensitive memoir, a young woman, who had been adopted at age seven from a Bombay (Mumbai) orphanage and raised in Barcelona, made two return trips to discover and bond with her past, including with relatives she did not even know she had. Her experiences revealed strong ties with both families, Spanish and Indian, and provide for the reader insights into the similarities and differences between the cultures. She learns that although her physical characteristics are Indian, her "demeanor has been Westernized." Objectively discerning, she yet has intense feelings; sentimental to a degree, she channels her emotions into an appreciation for similarities and differences between her two heritages. Because of this quality, the human essence of sameness and difference between cultures, this book can be a rewarding experience for the student. Beyond that, there is an almost haunting quality to the narrator's feelings and presentation. It is a good read. ■

FRITZ BLACKWELL is emeritus Director of the Asia Program, Washington State University.

A landmark study
on the origins of China's ascent to power...

The Rise of the Chinese Empire, Vols. I & II
by Chun-shu Chang

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