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## It's a watery mess

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A book on water is not novel for Indians. They appear on the bookshelves with amazing regularity. But, Radha D'Souza's book, *Interstate Disputes Over Krishna Waters*, is just not another book dealing with the water-management issues in our land. It is a comprehensive attempt to bring together various forces behind the existing development concepts, including management of natural resources in the Third World.

"Ex-facie this book is a contextual analysis of the award of the Krishna Water Dispute Tribunal (KWDT) on the interstate disputes between the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka," says D'Souza. But this carefully constructed study can be read at several levels.

The author says the need to revisit the existing theories of imperialism inspired her to take up the subject. She tries to "integrate law, science and technology and space as conceptual categories" while structuring her theory. Throughout the history of India, water-usage and management were contentious issues. D'Souza tries to make her point by analysing the paradigms of modern development, 'development project', as she calls it, as perpetuated by a continuum of imperialist/colonialist forces, across space and time. After World War II, a multilateral and more complicated form of imperialism under the UN and related bodies, all heavily dominated by the US, substituted the unilateral form under the UK.

Keeping the Krishna water-sharing disputes on the pivot, D'Souza carefully analyses the global and local politics and thought processes behind the development models conceived and sponsored — ideologically, technically and financially by the UN-US systems. In the process, the mandates and modus operandi of such mechanisms and agencies, an essential part and source of the development 'project', are also discussed.

The rhetoric of science and technology from the colonial powers as a panacea to the problems of developing nations falls apart. The author does well to prove how science and tech were made tools by the colonial powers, notwithstanding the footprints of people struggles, of various forms and dimensions. Imperialism thereby extends its claws as an established order in to the 'sovereign democratic' societies with a colonial backdrop. D'Souza delves into the existing social contradictions on management of water resources and its historic dimensions. River water disputes and their ready-made solutions in India primarily rest on the earlier mentioned development models, which negated and destroyed the time-tested community controlled resource management, and agrarian and ecological systems.

The author critically views the Centre-state relationships in the country over development issues and the contradictions and disjuncture regarding it.

### Interstate Disputes Over Krishna Waters

Radha D'Souza Orient Longman  
Rs 1150, Pp 571

Sharing of water remains an issue, but D'Souza exposes the incredulity of the 'official' thought processes working to solve it. This is a well-researched and referred study, where the author's perspective is clearly established. New researchers will find this study as a model to analyse 'development' paradigms and imperialism.

It's a treasure trove for students, researchers, policy makers and activists to streamline their thoughts, amidst the maelstrom of water-issues in the world. D'Souza unwinds the tangle, with a meticulous eye. She raises many questions, including the futility of international agencies trying to replicate the near-fairy tale stories of community water management success like the Ralegan Siddhi episode of Anna Hazare.

A missing link is an insight into the agricultural aspect of the water-sharing mess, the changes and players behind the agrarian changes in the Krishna basin and India as a whole. While discussing a river-basin issue, agriculture, which utilises 85% of the water in the country, should also be dealt with.

Though she discusses various aspects of artificial demand creation for water and related issues, the policies, decisions and imperialist interventions on farming needed more careful deliberation. Nevertheless, the book is academically sound and eloquently presented. A big question remains unanswered. Who owns the country's water resources?