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Are you reading this?



Alien Technology: Coping with Modern Mysteries

by Ananda Mitra

SAGE Publications

Reviewer: Deepa Kandaswamy

At the outset, let me clarify that his book is not about UFOs, three eyed aliens, mysterious crop patterns that appear out of the blue, secret spaceships hidden by the governments of the developed world or about Area 51 as the title suggests. Instead it is something extremely practical and useful to everyone though our awareness of it is very little. What is it about? Well, read on to find out.

Nowadays, it has become a true cliché to say we live in a gadget world or that technology has become indispensable to our everyday lives. But think about it. How well can you use your computer? Do you know and use all the applications in your mobile? Can you fix your car if it breaks down? Do you even

know what is wrong with your TV when the screen freezes?

If the answer to most of the above questions is no, you are not alone. All of us are alienated from the technology that we use in our daily lives and the author examines the various degrees of alienation (both individually and as a society) and how to overcome it in the book, *Alien Technology: Coping with Modern Mysteries*.

Mitra explores the consequences of technological alienation in individuals, communities and countries that has led to a new caste system of the technically literate and technically illiterate, that is defining which country is a superpower and which is not. On the individual level, it almost defines ability and who is in control and has the power. Could this be why a country is considered more advanced if it has a better technical grasp or if it produces more number of engineers and uses more gadgets?

The style of the author is engaging, humorous, easy to read as the reader is able to identify with the book on a personal level. The real life anecdotes used

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will leave you in splits. More importantly it is jargon free and the prose is clear and concise. This is an important book on a topic extremely relevant in the world we currently live in.



We are not in Pakistan
by Shauna Singh Baldwin
Goose Lane Publications
Reviewer: Deepa Kandaswamy

What binds us and at times blinds us? Be it the family of an engineer in Chernobyl or a single mother who finds herself alone and pregnant in a foreign country, a father finding out for the first time that he has a daughter from a marriage of convenience he had entered into to obtain the citizenship of a foreign country, or a second generation American immigrant who disowns and ridicules her ancestry just to fit in? Shauna Singh Baldwin asks and answers these questions in her book, *We are not in Pakistan*.

From a hospital in UK to apartments across the USA, from people standing in long queues in the snow in Moscow to a house in the mountains in Costa Rica, in ten spellbinding stories Baldwin explores the fears that lead to prejudices in relationships and seeks solutions to overcome them.

Baldwin weaves a tapestry of interesting stories

where the characters range from a dog to people of various nationalities, whose longing for love: the love of a child, love of freedom, love of family, love of possession, love of a partner; and the sense of fear: fear of displacement, fear of isolation, loneliness, rejection, fear of being single and fear of commitment; drives them to certain actions, experiences and emotions and also defines their relationships.

The tone of the book is stylishly insightful, entertaining and humorous. Baldwin shows how individuals when faced with cultural, political or social compulsions, find it easier to be like the sheep that follows rather than think clearly and act on their own until something drastic happens to them at the personal level.

Baldwin is an award winning author and the recipient of the Commonwealth Book Prize for her debut novel, 'What the Body Remembers'. This Canadian born author of Indian origin is unlike her expatriate compatriots. Her stories are not confined to the South Asian community alone but plunge into the lives of people worldwide and tell their stories effectively while making us realise that 'they' are not so different from 'us'.

Deepa is an award winning writer and author based in India. She is an extremely passionate book worm who has devoured thousands of books.

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