

THE NEHRU CENTRE NEWSLETTER



The Nehru Centre (TNC), New Delhi is an independent think tank, set up in 2024, with the goal of producing accessible research findings in the fields of history, policy, law, and governance in India. We aim to bring this knowledge to a wider audience through articles, podcasts, events, and other forms of public communication. At its core, our work is about engaging with the issues of our time, fighting misinformation, and encouraging a deeper understanding of India's evolving political, social, and economic landscape.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

We're excited to share with you the fifth issue of our newsletter! It's been an incredible journey, and we're so grateful for all the support and feedback we've received. As we navigate through a rapidly changing world, our pieces bring forward insightful perspectives on pressing issues that shape our society today.

A special thanks to our guest columnists for their contributions this month and to the TNC team members who have brought everything together to make this issue what it is.

As always, we hope these pieces inspire you to reflect, discuss, and engage with the world around you. Your feedback is always appreciated, and we look forward to sharing more with you in the upcoming issues.

We look forward to your continued engagement!

Best,

Divya Singh Chauhan (she/her)
Lead Editor, The Nehru Centre



Researching Truth, Reimagining Democracy

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CALL FOR GUEST WRITERS

The Nehru Centre (TNC) is now accepting submissions from guest writers on a rolling basis for our upcoming newsletter. Please read our editorial guidelines carefully before sending us your submission.

We invite submissions in the following formats:

1. Opinion pieces – Arguments backed by facts and figures (not rants) (800-900 words)
2. Socio-political, law & policy, and historical articles – National or international scope (600-800 words)
3. News reports – Curated or original reporting based on primary field research (500-600 words)

How to Submit ?

1. Email your submissions (doc) to thenehrucentre.india@gmail.com with a short author bio & your social media handles.
2. Mention the title of your piece in the subject line and specify if it is time-sensitive.
3. For the write-ups, please use English (UK), Times New Roman, 12pt, and line spacing 1.15.
4. If selected, the editor will review your work and request edits, if necessary.
5. You will be informed about the expected publishing date once the newsletter goes live.
6. Your article will be shared on TNC's multiple social media platforms and you will be tagged (depending on social media accounts provided by you).
7. We retain the final say over headlines, publishing dates, and images used.

AI & Plagiarism Policy

We value original thought and authentic writing. While AI tools can assist in proofreading, structuring, or shortening content, all AI usage must be disclosed to the editor. AI-generated content without human oversight will not be accepted.

Terms & Conditions

1. Indicate if your article is exclusive to The Nehru Centre or has been published elsewhere. We prioritize original content and typically do not republish blog posts.
2. Copyright for material that is published exclusively is held jointly by The Nehru Centre, New Delhi and the authors.
3. If others request to republish your article, you must seek TNC's informed consent before granting permission.
4. Once an article is published, it cannot be removed/ taken down except in legal, copyright, or safety-related cases.
5. With the exception of trans writers, we do not allow any writer to change their name or write under a pseudonym for The Nehru Centre to ensure complete transparency and to avoid any legal hassles going forward. However, writers wishing to publish personal narratives can choose to write anonymously for us (editorial records will still require full author details).

OPINION | MEDIA & DEMOCRACY

TRPS OVER TRUTH: INDIAN MEDIA'S MISINFORMATION EPIDEMIC

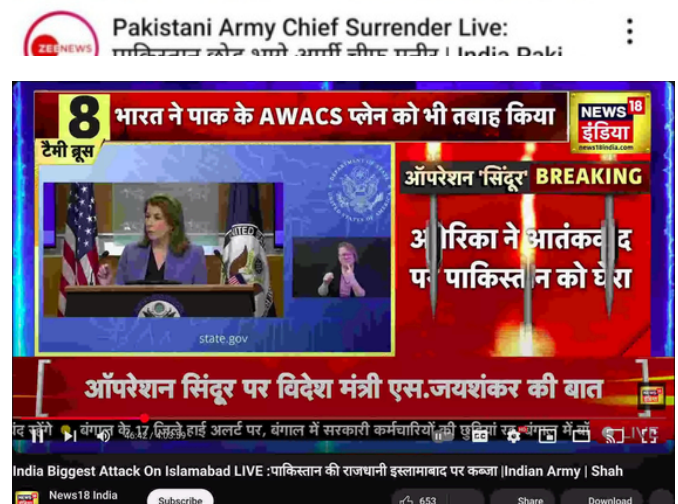
By Midhat Samra

Earlier this month, Indian media created a sense of panic around the entire nation. While the nation was dealing with a war-like situation, when both India and Pakistan were exchanging fires, Indian media escalated the situation by disseminating misinformation all over the national television. Almost all media channels were circulating misleading footage, from Gaza, from Syria and some even from the destruction in Lebanon. Some videos aired on TV were that of video games.

Fact-check organisations like Alt News, Boom Live and others have shown the same disappointment. Prateek Sinha, the co-founder of Alt News, said that both India and Pakistan were directing misinformation inwards rather than outwards.

The media's malpractice of spreading misinformation has existed for a long time. The problem is especially dire in Hindi-language media, where hyper-nationalist rhetoric, religious polarisation, and clickbait journalism often override facts. Many news channels seem more interested in trending hashtags than in public responsibility.

Fake news thrives during moments of heightened emotion. Take, for example, the Operation Sindoor narrative. News channels ran sensational, entirely unverified stories, from "Karachi port destroyed" to "Asim Munir arrested", none of which held any factual ground. No disclaimers. No contextualisation. Just unrelenting drama aimed at stroking public sentiment and maximising TRPs, often resulting in the invalidation of the achievements of institutions like the Army.



Even more concerning is the role that fake news plays during elections. False claims, doctored videos, and manufactured outrage dominate primetime discussions. This isn't just poor journalism, it is a direct attack on democracy. The combination of fake news and hate speech can set off real-world violence, spread communal disharmony, and alter election outcomes.

This crisis is not accidental. It stems from the commercialisation of news, weakening editorial standards, and a lack of accountability. Most Indian news channels are not held responsible for the misinformation they peddle. The News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authority (NBDSA), though present, lacks teeth. Media ownership patterns also play a role, with powerful political and corporate interests influencing coverage.

While the student-led mass uprising toppled Sheikh Hasina's regime in Bangladesh in August 2024, there was a flow of misinformation that flooded India. Indian media made sure to detract and distract from the real sentiments of the movement. Reporters like Sudhir Chaudhary contributed to the communal unrest by making statements like "No country, no community in the world stepped forward to stop this genocide. Like how they did for Rafah."

Misinformation and fake news have caused stampedes, communal unrest and mob killings in India. But blaming only the media is not enough. The audience, too, plays a significant role. Social media has democratised access to information, but it has equally democratised the spread of misinformation. Forwarded messages on WhatsApp and viral tweets often form the basis of people's understanding of complex issues. In such a landscape, media literacy becomes a national necessity.

An AI-powered platform for information, Osavul, states that "Many citizens are capable of accessing the internet but still lack the digital literacy required to fully understand how to make the distinction between fake news and accurate information. This makes them more likely to fall prey to misinformation in India and the damage it can cause".

The urgency to address fake news cannot be overstated. In times of heightened tensions: war, elections, communal unrest, any wrong information can cost real lives. It destroys reputations, fuels hatred, and destabilises institutions. We need strict enforcement of existing regulations, independent watchdogs with real power, and most importantly, a cultural shift within newsrooms that prioritises verification over virality.

The media must remember that its first responsibility is not to power, not to ratings, but to the truth.

Accountability, transparency, and commitment to facts are not just professional standards, they are moral obligations. As citizens, we must demand better because, in the end, a misinformed public is more dangerous than an uninformed one.

India deserves a media that informs, not inflames.

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BOOK REVIEW | FEM LIT & PHILOSOPHY

A VERY EASY DEATH BY SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

By Divya Chauhan (she/her)

Simone de Beauvoir's *A Very Easy Death* is a work that cuts through the quiet cloaks that cover the dying. Dissects the deaths of women, of mothers, with a blade of truth, vulnerability, and unresolved intimacy. As a feminist social worker and lawyer who has worked closely with systems of care and justice, and as a daughter shaped by a complex maternal relationship, I found myself holding this slim book with equal parts caution and compulsion.

This memoir is often framed as a philosophical text on death, but through a feminist lens, it reads even more powerfully as a text on the lives of women, their identities circumscribed by roles, institutions, and expectations. Although De Beauvoir had confronted profound grief before, in the death of her childhood friend Zaza (which she recounts in *The Inseparables*), this experience was different. The slow, intimate witnessing of her mother's decline brought her face-to-face with a new kind of vulnerability, both physical and existential.

De Beauvoir's mother, Françoise, is more than a dying body in a hospital bed; she is a woman whose life was inscribed by Catholic patriarchy, respectability, and maternal duty. Her death is symbolic: a disintegration of a lifetime of gendered constraints.

What strikes me most painfully and personally is the way De Beauvoir records her mother's decline not as a detached observer, but as a daughter still tangled in the unresolved web of shared disappointments and withheld affections. Their relationship is not reconciled by death. There is no redemptive arc here.



De Beauvoir refuses the sanitised, sentimental portrayal of maternal death. Instead, she documents the indignities of dying, the incontinence, the infantilisation by medical staff, the unspoken truths that hover in hospital rooms.

In doing so, she exposes the gendered violence embedded in end-of-life care. As a social worker, I have witnessed how older women, especially marginalised women, are routinely stripped of autonomy in their final days. Françoise is lied to about her diagnosis, patronised by doctors, and made invisible in the decisions about her own body. These are not isolated cruelties, they are systemic, patriarchal practices disguised as protection.

De Beauvoir's complicity in this paternalism is what makes the memoir so radical. She does not exonerate herself. She lies to her mother. She consents to a surgery that prolongs pain. She misses the moment of death.



Her moral ambiguity echoes the messy reality many of us face when caring for those who once had power over us. Her grief is stained with guilt, and her guilt is drenched in love; and all of it is saturated with the impossibility of making death “easy.”

The tension between Françoise’s religious, gendered identity, and De Beauvoir’s socialist feminism is a compelling undercurrent.

Their distance is not just emotional, it is epistemological. One woman clings to faith, the other to reason. This book also forced me to confront my own fear of my mother’s death, an ever-present shadow. Like De Beauvoir, I have not always understood or agreed with my mother. Our lives diverged; she was shaped by silence and sacrifice; I, by resistance.

Yet, while reading *A Very Easy Death*, I was reminded that to be a daughter is to be perpetually entangled in your mother’s becoming and unbecoming.

There is one moment in the book that crushed me. When Françoise, in excruciating pain from bedsores, pleads for death, “Give me a revolver. Have pity on me”. It is a cry from a woman stripped of power to a daughter who cannot return it. De Beauvoir’s helplessness is visceral, as is her confession, “I had grown very fond of this dying woman.” In this sentence is every contradiction I carry about my own mother: admiration, resentment, distance, closeness, fear of her death, and fear of who I’ll be after it.

Amid this heaviness, the portions where De Beauvoir is with Sartre add a layer of relief for me; at least she has someone to talk to, someone who would hold her hand through it.

A *Very Easy Death* is not about death being “easy.” It is about how language, memory, and love fail us when we try to make sense of the unspeakable. It is about how women’s deaths, like their lives, are politicised, controlled, and rarely narrated with dignity. And it is about how daughters, especially those of us shaped by feminism, must learn to hold grief not as a weakness but as a deeply human, deeply feminist act.

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GUEST COLUMN | OPINION

NEHRU'S MIXED ECONOMY: EVOLUTION AND MODERN RELEVANCE

By Suresh Kumar, IAS (Rtd.)

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, architected a transformative mixed economy model that boldly merged socialism and capitalism, skilfully addressing the myriad challenges of post-independence India. This visionary approach expertly balanced state-led industrialisation with private-sector dynamism, propelling economic growth while staunchly advocating social justice. Even in the aftermath of India's landmark economic liberalisation in 1991, the relevance of Nehru's model endures, particularly in crucial sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, and defence.

Nehru's economic philosophy, profoundly steeped in socialist ideals, aimed for equitable growth in a nation wrestling with deep-rooted poverty and glaring inequalities. Inspired by the Soviet framework, he championed a planned economy where the state was pivotal in steering key industries. The establishment of the Planning Commission in 1950, coupled with the formulation of ambitious Five-Year Plans, channeled resources into transformative large-scale industrial projects, with the government overseeing sectors like steel, coal, electricity, and heavy machinery. In tandem, private enterprises thrived in consumer goods and agriculture, nurtured within a carefully calibrated regulatory environment. This hybrid model aspired to harmonise industrial advancement with fair wealth distribution, laying the groundwork for a balanced economic landscape.

Nehru's mixed economy bears striking parallels to the strategies employed by nations that have deftly balanced state control with market efficiency. China, for example, transitioned from a rigid socialist structure post-1978, much like India's reforms of 1991, while maintaining



strategic state oversight and catalysing industrial exports. The Nordic countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, exemplify the successful intertwining of welfare-oriented state intervention alongside robust private sector growth. France and Germany initially embraced state-led industrialisation before gradually adopting privatisation, all the while ensuring strong regulatory safeguards. These examples illuminate the dynamic evolution of mixed economies, which continue to prioritise public welfare, an enduring principle at the heart of Nehru's vision.

As the 20th century unfolded, inefficiencies within public sector enterprises, escalating fiscal deficits, and sluggish growth summoned the urgent need for reform. The 1991 economic crisis ushered in a paradigm shift under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, characterised by liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation (LPG). This transformative approach dismantled the antiquated License Raj, reduced trade barriers, and privatised numerous public sector undertakings (PSUs), attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and enhancing India's competitive standing on the global stage. By 2020, FDI inflows had soared to an astounding \$81.72 billion, up from a modest \$4.15 billion in 1991. However, while these reforms ignited econ-

-omic growth, they also intensified income disparities, rekindling concerns regarding social equity—an issue that echoes the core tenets of Nehru’s model.

Despite the economic progress, the rapid surge of privatisation has unveiled significant vulnerabilities: inequality and jobless growth have emerged as troubling byproducts, disproportionately benefiting the affluent. Oxfam’s 2022 report starkly reveals that the richest 10% of India now control an astonishing 77% of the nation’s wealth. This dilution of public services is evident in the increasing reliance on private healthcare and education, making essential services increasingly beyond the reach of many. With out-of-pocket healthcare spending reaching 55%—one of the highest rates in the world—the necessity for bolstered public investment has never been clearer. Furthermore, the efficiency of PSUs versus their strategic significance raises alarming concerns; while some PSUs struggle with inefficiency, privatising critical sectors such as oil and defense poses serious risks to national security and strategic control.

Notwithstanding the sweeping market reforms, the principles that Nehru established remain integral to India’s economic fabric. Public investment in health and education signifies a vital recognition of the limitations inherent in unchecked privatisation; the government has continued to make substantial investments in prestigious institutions like AIIMS and state universities. Initiatives such as the Ayushman Bharat Scheme (2018), which provides health coverage to over 500 million citizens, underscore the indispensable role of the state in safeguarding welfare.

Strategic control over core industries remains essential; sectors such as defense, oil, and tele-

-communications require vigilant state oversight. For instance, ONGC continues to account for an impressive 71% of India’s crude oil production. Modern regulatory bodies, including the Competition Commission of India (CCI), work diligently to prevent monopolistic practices and exploitation, ensuring that market-driven growth remains equitable and just.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) emerge as a compelling model to strike a harmonious balance between efficiency and the public good. The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), targeting an ambitious \$1.4 trillion in investments by 2025, exemplifies this synergistic approach. Nehru’s mixed economy sprang from India’s quest for economic self-reliance and social justice. While liberalisation and globalisation have profoundly reshaped India’s economic landscape, the foundational principle of state intervention in key sectors continues to be of paramount importance. Global examples affirm that successful economies adapt, rather than entirely relinquish, government oversight. Today’s economic policies in India seek to find equilibrium between market forces and social welfare, ensuring a sustainable and inclusive growth trajectory.

Empirical evidence supports the assertion that a finely tuned mixed economy—one that artfully interlaces state intervention with market efficiency—stands as the most viable pathway for a diverse and developing nation like India. Nehru’s vision, having evolved with the times, remains a cornerstone of India’s economic governance and an enduring legacy that continues to inspire generations to come.

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GUEST COLUMN | OPINION

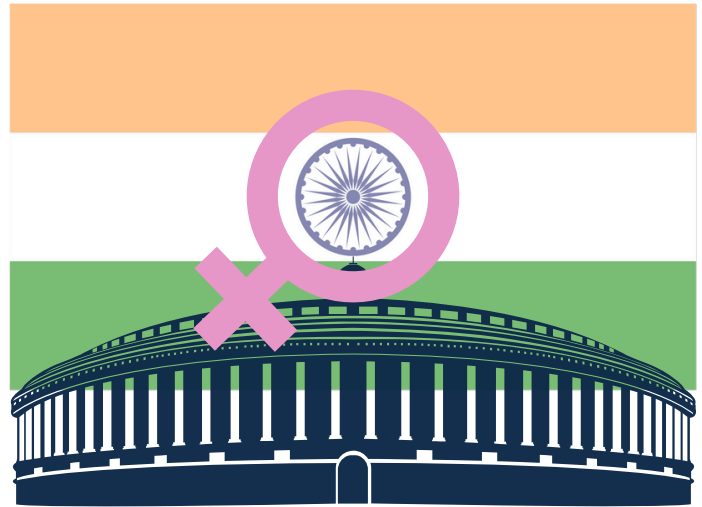
WOMEN'S RESERVATION ACT: A POST-DATED CHEQUE?

By Nitin Lende*

Mahatma Gandhi famously dismissed the British government's Cripps Mission proposal as a "post-dated cheque drawn on a failing bank," highlighting their hollow promises compared to the aspirations of Indian nationalists. Were he alive today, he might wield the same scathing indictment for the government's handling of Women's Reservation, a façade of empowerment tethered to indefinite contingencies, rendering it an empty promise for an uncertain future.

The struggle for women's reservation is not new. It dates back to the 1990s, with successive governments attempting to pass similar legislation, often encountering political hurdles. The UPA government succeeded in passing the bill in the Rajya Sabha in 2010, but it failed to become law. The NDA government, with its strong parliamentary majority, could have enacted the reform without delay. Instead, by tying the act to contentious issues like delimitation and census, the government has diluted its immediate impact, effectively postponing women's empowerment.

The *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam*, or the Women's Reservation Act, has been heralded as a monumental stride toward gender parity, promising to reserve 33% of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures. Yet, beneath the veneer of progress lies a stark reality: the Act is shackled by two uncertain preconditions: the completion of a long-overdue census & the subsequent delimitation of constituencies. Both processes remain devoid of concrete timelines, reducing this so-called landmark legislation to a hollow gesture, deferred indefinitely. This calculated delay not only diminishes the Act's revolutionary



potential but casts doubt on the government's commitment to women's rights and political representation.

Delimitation: A Double-Edged Sword

By making women's reservations contingent on delimitation, the government has compounded these regional tensions. For southern states, which have historically championed women's rights, from granting voting rights in the Madras Presidency in 1921 to electing India's first female legislator in 1926, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy in 2026, this conditionality feels regressive.

Delimitation, the redrawing of electoral boundaries based on population data, has been on hold since 1976 to address regional disparities in population growth. States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which implemented effective population control measures, could lose parliamentary representation to states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where population growth has been higher. This imbalance threatens to penalise southern states for their social and demographic successes.

In 2002, Article 82 was amended to the effect that it shall not be necessary to readjust the allocation of Lok Sabha constituencies State-wise and the

division of each State into constituencies until the figures of the first Census held after 2026 were available. The main issue raised was whether this would mean that the women's quota would not be implemented until the 2031 Census figures are available and delimitation is subsequently done.

The Real Cost of Delay

Women continue to face systemic underrepresentation in politics. In the present Lok Sabha women's representation is less than 14%. The representation in State Legislative Assemblies is even poorer with the national average being around 9%. India ranks on November 2024, is 150 in the list of countries in the 'Monthly Ranking of Women in National Parliaments' published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Delaying their rightful representation by tying it to delimitation and census completion perpetuates the challenges they face and risks turning a progressive reform into a tool for political manoeuvring, overshadowing its intent to empower women.

Article 243D and Article 243T mandate a minimum of one-third reservation for women in Panchayats and Municipalities, with 21 States and 2 Union Territories and 17 States and 1 Union Territory implementing 50% reservation for women, respectively, significantly enhancing gender representation at the grassroots level. This has demonstrated women's transformative leadership potential. For instance, Rajanikandham, the Dalit panchayat president of Nachangulam in Tamil Nadu's Sivagangai district, addressed her panchayat's water crisis by installing three large borewells, 15 mini borewells, and three overhead tanks. In Devakottai block, women presidents allocated 30%-40% of their revenue to water infrastructure, compared to 10%-20% by men, and spent 15%-25% of their budgets on roads, far exceeding the 1%-10% spent by male counterparts.

Delaying women's reservation in legislatures risks losing the momentum built by such grassroots efforts. It deprives women leaders of the opportunity to scale their impact at higher levels of governance. Linking their empowerment to uncertain conditions perpetuates tokenism and undermines the very inclusivity and efficiency they bring to governance. It sends a message that women's leadership remains conditional and secondary to political expediency.

Immediate Action

To truly empower women, the government must decouple the Act from delimitation and implement it immediately. Parliament must also address regional concerns by exploring innovative solutions. India's delimitation exercise faces the complex challenge of reconciling democratic and federal principles. There is no definitive timeline for when delimitation will occur. It could take over a decade, possibly even 15 years or more, given the complexities involved. The uncertainty highlights the need for a focused approach to address immediate priorities while waiting for clarity on this issue.

A practical solution lies in balancing representation across governance levels. At this moment, our primary focus should be on ensuring that women have the representation they deserve. We can revisit other important issues once this crucial step has been taken. Women's empowerment should not hinge on the resolution of a politically fraught and time-consuming process. In its current form, the Women's Reservation is not a triumph of empowerment but a calculated delay cloaked in symbolism.

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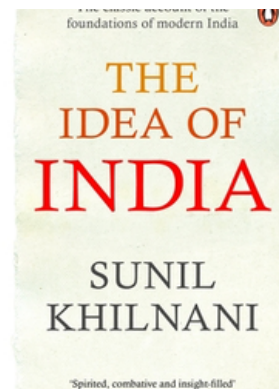
**AUTHOR BIO: Nitin is working with MP Smt. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi as a Parliamentary Research Head and has started his own initiative in the field of public policy and higher education named 'Hanumant Niti'. He has done his Post Graduation from JNU in Development and Labour Studies.*

TNC READING LIST: MUST READS

Recommendations by Amartya Mishra

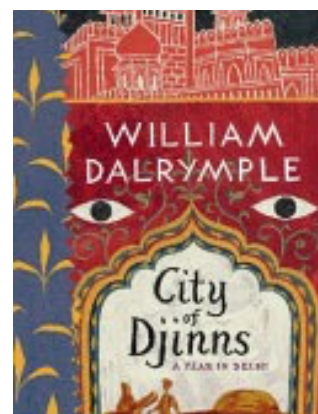
The Idea of India by Sunil Khilnani

It is a landmark work on the intellectual and political foundations of modern India – one where Khilnani lays a clear case of how India's democracy is a product of political contingency and not a deliberate or natural result of its history. A central argument of the book is that India's unity is not rooted in sameness, but in the political idea of coexistence, an idea constantly under pressure, yet remarkably enduring. Written in an elegant and accessible style, the book is both a defence of Nehruvian pluralism and a critical inquiry into whether the "idea of India" can survive the strains of modernisation and populism.



City of Djinns by William Dalrymple

Part-travelogue, part-historical meditation in which William Dalrymple recounts his year-long stay in Delhi, uncovering the city's many layers – ancient, imperial, colonial, and contemporary. He introduces readers to the everyday characters of the city – taxi drivers, classical dancers, civil servants, eunuchs, and mystics – all of whom help him piece together a portrait of Delhi's resilient yet fragmented soul. With warmth, wit, and curiosity, Dalrymple explores how Delhi is a city of visible and invisible ruins, haunted by its past but alive with stories.



A Man's Place by Annie Ernaux

Written by Nobel laureate Annie Ernaux, it is a poignant, unsentimental memoir about her father's life and the quiet distance that emerged between them as she moved up the social ladder through education. Written in her characteristically spare prose, Ernaux reflects on class, identity, and the discomfort of upward mobility. The book is both a tribute and a reckoning – documenting her father's working-class dignity while acknowledging the emotional and cultural divide her success created. It's a deeply personal yet sociologically sharp account of memory, guilt, and belonging.



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