

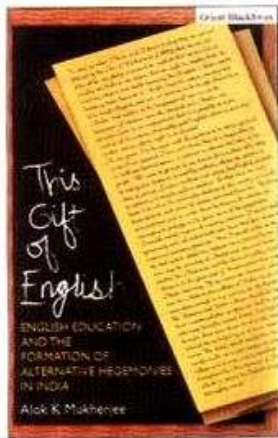
Relevant in context and content

The reader may wonder what this book *This Gift of English* on English education is doing in a business magazine? The colonial rulers had hoped that, through English education, a benighted people would be civilised and the rule of the English would be

perpetuated. English education to Indians would have an impact favourable to the British. Their mindset in every field of duties and actions like administration, governance, business, political activities, social reforms, armed services, *et al* would be restructured.

On the other hand, the 'high' caste Hindus saw in English education the possibility of Hindu revival. In this context, it would be useful to quote an excerpt from Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education*: "We must at present do our best to form a

class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." In post-independent India, education, especially English education, continues to be 'brahminical'. This has caused emergence of a new battleground

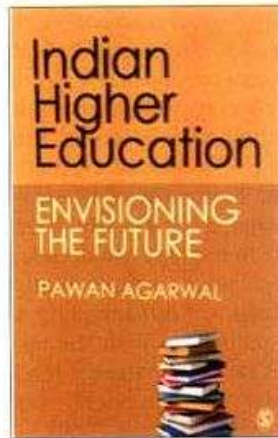


**THIS GIFT OF ENGLISH
ENGLISH EDUCATION AND
THE FORMATION OF
ALTERNATIVE
HEGEMONIES IN INDIA**

By Alok K. Mukherjee
Published by: Orient
BlackSwan
Pages: 374; Price: Rs795

for alternative hegemonies. Thus, it is a book relevant in context and interesting in contents for business class too, apart from other segments of the Indian society.

Alok Mukherjee has made an attempt in his book to understand within a historical context, the role, reception and contents of English legacy and language studies in India today. According to him, there has been little examination either of the sensibility that English education produced among Indians or of the questioning of a post-colonial formation that happened in the years thereafter. He wants us to keep in mind also the nexus of caste and class, and recognise the predominant role played by high-caste Hindus though their numbers were minuscule. Seeing English as the conduit to visible success, role of English was, and continues even now to be, implicated in a conservative



**INDIAN HIGHER
EDUCATION
ENVISIONING THE FUTURE**

By Pawan Agarwal
Published by: Sage
Pages: 488; Price: Rs895

brahminical political agenda.

Hegemony was achieved through a two-way process – deliberate selection of ideas, perspectives and texts and a systematic construction of England as the repository of culture, progressive social, political and ethical ideas, and scientific progress. On the other hand, there was the willingness of students to accept the potential benefits of English education. The gift was able to cast its spell, with far-reaching consequences. Mukherjee goes on to study the performance side of hegemony through an examination of two interesting texts – a diary and an autobiography, by two English-educated Indians.

Amarsingh, the diarist, was an officer in the British army and scion of an aristocratic family in Rajasthan. C.D. Narsimhaiah, the autobiographer, came from a 'low' caste, poor family in southern India and became one of

post independence India's first professors of English. His purpose is to demonstrate ways in which English education impacted the Indians – and he does it so well. The language question was one of post-independence India's most complex and intractable problems. Mukherjee underlines that, while English was initially sought by high-caste Hindus as an instrument of revival, groups that have been historically oppressed are now looking at it as a means for emancipation and empowerment. Thus, the 'gift' of English was both sought and given, though out of different hegemonic agendas. A well-written book indeed!

India has nearly 18,600 universities and colleges for higher education. This is more than four times the number of higher education institutions both in the US and entire Europe. Consider this against only 2,500 institutions managing in China the highest enrolment,

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nearly 23 million. A smaller number of higher education institutions has implication on governance and regulation of the system. According to the author, China is giving as much priority to education as to economic growth. An educated workforce provides strong yet flexible backbone to the economy. And, in almost all the countries, more and more private funding of higher education and

active participation in every aspect of management is taking place. All segments like industry, research, etc, have crucial dependence on levels and skills provided by higher education. Thus, private business has a legitimate interest in structuring, costing, funding and regulating higher education.

In India, the Central government makes key appointments in all central universities and other central institutions of higher education. This enables the government to have a final say on all major and even minor issues, not only nationally but also on international scale. Designing a high quality system, according to Pawan Agarwal, is a complicated issue. Interestingly, he also points out that some of the strongest brands are associated with higher education. Realising the importance of branding, private sector in business has now engaged itself in building branding exercise in the field of higher education.

Agarwal is a sympathetic insider favouring the widest possible support for higher education from among all the stakeholders. He presents his case with considerable aplomb. Based on his arguments, the book has several suggestions for shaping the future of Indian higher education. He has so defined the options and solutions that underline their practicality.

♦ JAYANT KHER