

## REVIEW

### “Terrorism and Other Themes—”

**Madhusudan Pal**

Published by Seagull Books (Pvt.) Ltd., 26 Circus Avenue, Calcutta 700017, Paperback, “*Terrorism and Other Themes—Politics, Principles and Practice*” is a collection of essays originally published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (EPW) (Mumbai) and *Frontier* (Kolkata) in their various editions between 1968 and 2003 with the exception of one which seems to have been written for this collection only. The author, Robi Chakraborty, has arranged his essays under three groups : (1) General Issues containing 6 essays ; (2) American Issues with 8 essays and (3) Special Pieces having 3 only. The price of the book has been fixed at Rs 325 only.

The author is known in journalists’ circle in Kolkata for a long time. However in the preface he mentions anecdotes of his days in Kolkata and Minnesota as well as of his reading of books and study of the thoughts contained therein that somehow bred an urge in him to enter the field on “academic journalism” as opposed to non-academic journalism. For example, in his “*Terrorism: Past, Present and Future*” the author first introduces the reader with a book on the subject that contains over 100 definitions of the term. He gives another instance of how one American journalist stumbled on papers on the subject from US Defence Department, the FBI, the State Department, Justice Department and the Vice-President’s task force and after studying the papers found *Terrorism* a notoriously difficult term. Naturally the essay leads to reference books across continents over time. About the US elections he writes about its rhetoric and reality. Money is the most important factor but all expenses are accounted for. But campaign funds usually come from big business, special lobby groups and wealthy people. Ordinary people’s contributions are disproportionately small. It reflects the permanent settlement of the rich people at the helm of the political system while an ordinary American cannot do much to change this aspect of the political machinery. In “Human Rights and the American Rights” he glimpses on the students’ movement in Chicago, Woodstock through another’s eye who sees three levels of consciousness—consciousness I representing Marxist radicalism, consciousness II meaning organisational interests leading to conservatism and III, an awareness of the individual self as the only true reality which the economic and organisational parts of society failed to supply. Consciousness III was destined to triumph.

In this way each essay is rich in referral materials. At first the reader enters a fuzzy world even in known field. But a little persistent thinking on the thought-materials presented by the author clears the cloud. The reader appreciates the author. A bond develops. The 138-page book can serve as a book of reference for journalists, academic and non-academic. ✍✍✍✍

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