

UNITED NATIONS FOR A BETTER WORLD. BY J. N. SAXENA, GURDIP SINGH, A. K. KOUL [New Delhi: Lancers Books. 1986 xv + 313 pp. Hardcover: Rs. 250]

THIS book is a collection of papers delivered at a conference organised by the Faculty of Law of the University of Delhi to mark the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations Organisations in 1985. It begins with platitudinous statements by the Indian Prime Minister extolling the virtues of peace. The very first paper in the collection - no doubt intended to be the centrepiece of the conference - is one by Professor Reisman of Yale. It is a rehash of a paper that was published in the 1984 proceedings of the American Society of International Law. Having performed this customary genuflection to the right quarters in good Indian style, there follows a series of papers by Indian scholars, with a couple of papers by scholars from other countries. The names of the contributors are the same ones that have kept appearing in Indian publications on international law for several years. Has this vast sub-continent not thrown up any new talent in a field that is so relevant to its existence as a nation? Or, is it that the older scholars are like banyan trees, brooding and ever-spreading without letting anything grow in their shadows? Most papers are so full of the tired old truths that one has read before.

But there are papers in the collection which are outstanding contributions to the knowledge in the field. It is invidious to single them out but since they establish the value of this collection, some of them require special mention. Upendra Baxis' writings are well known outside India for their lucidity and originality. His paper on "Crimes against the Right to Development" enhances that reputation. S. K. Verma's paper on the emergence of the services sector in the international economy and the treatment of this development in the international agencies with trade is timely as is Bhattacharya's paper on the then current recession. Nirmala Chandrahasan's views on self-determination and Dholakia's survey of human rights in the Asian context are interesting. The collection is rescued from being condemned as an unnecessary addition to the vast literature generated by the United Nations by the presence in it of such papers.

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