



The Edge of the Earth by Dr. Sharadindu Mukerji, published by Redgrab Books, 2017. Paper back, 252 pages. Price ₹ 175.00

This is an interesting book right from the beginning. The book has been authored by a native Bengali written in Hindi and translated in English by a native of Allahabad, whose native language is Hindi. The author Dr. Sharadindu Mukerji served in the Geological Survey of India for 37 years, out of which he was involved with geological investigations in Antarctica for about 26 years. The book is based on his experience in Antarctica presented bit by bit starting from his excitement when he was selected as a team member in the Fifth Expedition team to Antarctica in 1985 till the end in December 2009 as an Indian representative to the Antarctica expedition team of Brazil. The sea journey described by the author starting from Goa till the edge of the earth in Antarctica reminds me of the poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Samuel Coleridge: "The ice was here, the ice was there, The ice was all around; It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and

howl'd, Like noises in a swound! At length did cross an Albatross, Through the fog it came; As if it had been a Christian soul, We hail'd it in God's name."

Although the author is a scientist and was on a scientific expedition in Antarctica, the book has been written with an eye for general readership without any scientific jargons and is therefore an easy-to-read text. The book also serves as an introductory lesson-book to the people who are uninitiated to Antarctica. Antarctica, by itself, is a nature's mystery riddled with so many extremes: it is a farthest continent of our planet, over 14000 sq.km. of the continent (98%) is covered with thick sheet of ice with an average thickness of two kilometers, has no permanent human habitation, recorded lowest temperature on the earth -89.6°C and many more which readers can explore while reading the book.

Australia, Africa, South America, Madagascar and even India were connected to Antarctica about 500 million years ago and started breaking up about 200 million years ago and slowly drifted away from Antarctica. Naturally, the continent has so far been a pristine source of natural resources, untouched by human habitats. I agree with the speculation that once these resources are fully explored there might be a claim of shares of these new-found resources between the nations which are now investing their resources in the name of science.

The author was stationed at Dakshin Gangotri which was the first research station in India established during the Third Expedition (1983-84). Living there for months in such extremes with a few persons around with two months of continuous daylight from mid-November till the third week of January and continuous darkness for two months starting mid-May is a physiological and psychological challenge in many ways, for example, watch can only tell whether it is day or night. There were many challenges and how to circumvent such dangerous situations will be an interesting lesson for readers. Just imagine if the petroleum gas in your kitchen cylinder got frozen at a time when you needed it most. Wrapping the cylinder with a blanket and rolling it over boulders was the trick that worked. There are many more interesting and amazing events and incidents spread all over the book which readers can explore and enjoy.

A good translation, as it is said, reproduces as exactly as possible the meaning of the source text, but most importantly it should be smooth flowing and easily understood. I have not seen the original book neither my knowledge in Hindi will justify to make any judgement about the fulfilment of the first criterion. But I am convinced that the other criteria have been fully fulfilled. I must congratulate Dinesh Srivastava for presenting a nice translation of this interesting book. I know Dinesh for years as a theoretical physicist who retired as director of the

Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre (VECC) in Kolkata. I was amazed to see his literally skill of which I did not have any idea.

The book is priceless metaphorically as well as literally. Being reasonably priced, anyone can afford to buy a copy of the book. I recommend to people of all classes and ages to read the book, which will expand their knowledge as well as refresh their minds. □

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