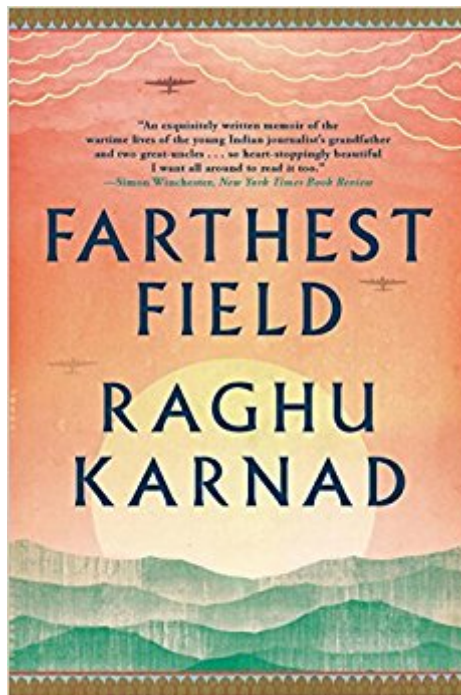




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Farthest Field: An Indian Story Of The Second World War



Synopsis

“I have not lately read a finer book than this—on any subject at all. . . . A masterpiece.”—Simon Winchester, *New Statesman*

The photographs of three young men had stood in his grandmother’s house for as long as he could remember, beheld but never fully noticed. They had all fought in the Second World War, a fact that surprised him. Indians had never figured in his idea of the war, nor the war in his idea of India. One of them, Bobby, even looked a bit like him, but Raghu Karnad had not noticed until he was the same age as they were in their photo frames. Then he learned about the Parsi boy from the sleepy south Indian coast, so eager to follow his brothers-in-law into the colonial forces and onto the front line. Manek, dashing and confident, was a pilot with India’s fledgling air force; gentle Ganny became an army doctor in the arid North-West Frontier. Bobby’s pursuit would carry him as far as the deserts of Iraq and the green hell of the Burma battlefield. The years 1939–45 might be the most revered, deplored, and replayed in modern history. Yet India’s extraordinary role has been concealed, from itself and from the world. In riveting prose, Karnad retrieves the story of a single family—a story of love, rebellion, loyalty, and uncertainty—and with it, the greater revelation that is India’s Second World War. *Farthest Field* narrates the lost epic of India’s war, in which the largest volunteer army in history fought for the British Empire, even as its countrymen fought to be free of it. It carries us from Madras to Peshawar, Egypt to Burma—unfolding the saga of a young family amazed by their swiftly changing world and swept up in its violence. 5 illustrations

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Customer Reviews

“Like a superior commander himself, Karnad marshals and orders a huge range of materials, locations, and actions with apparently effortless skill, making everything cohere not only through a galloping and affecting narrative but, crucially, through a passionate moral core that repeatedly exposes the numerous ways in which Indians were treated as fodder by the Empire. . . . The writing of history intersects gloriously with several other genres in this moving, eloquent, intelligent work.” - Neel Mukherjee, Financial Times

“From the very first page it is the brilliance of the writing that stands out. . . . It has the stamp of imaginative truth about it, and we can ask nothing more of any kind of writing.” - David Crane, Spectator

“[S]pectacular. . . . In prose that verges at times on poetry, he writes with the imaginative gift of a first-rate novelist in order to deliver the truth. Romance and the attendant grief of loss permeate the book alongside passages that are unexpectedly moving. . . . Unforgettable.” - Juliet Nicolson, Daily Telegraph

“[Karnad’s] fascinating [book] is both a poignant memorial to his lost family and a gripping account of how India contributed to the allied victory and sowed the seeds of its independence.” - Ian Critchley, Sunday Times

“This book tells us that we all have two deaths: when we die and when we are forgotten. But there is a possibility of two births, the second being re-created in an extraordinary book. This is one of those rare books that bring people alive again. It has been written with imagination and is engrossing to read.” - Michael Holroyd

Raghu Karnad is a journalist based in Delhi and Bangalore. He has worked as a reporter on the Indian magazines Outlook and Tehelka and is a former editor of Time Out Delhi.

Wonderful writing and rare intelligence bring grace to this military and family history. I am by no means a reader of military history, but I found the story of these Forgotten Soldiers gripping and tragic. The family’s story can only break your heart. The Epilogue is a revelation, in writing and in content, an essay that could stand on its own. I’ve read a fair amount about the horrors of Partition, but to learn of the role of these military men brought a new dimension to that tragedy. Kudos for bringing back to life these men, this war, this time, through the story of three intimate strangers.

The author tells the story of India in WWII through the lives of three Indians who fought in the Indian Army on behalf of the British. Because of this approach, and the quality of the writing, the book becomes a page turner as well as highly informative, describing an extremely brutal front that is little

known to people in the West and the significance of the Indian Army to the war effort.

Finally a work that chronicles the heroic contributions of the Indian Army to the Allied cause. Beyond that, the book explores the complex relationship between India and the British empire in the context of liberating the world from tyranny, while suffering the indignities of colonization at the same time. This work also candidly exposes the dark side of Churchill, especially his overt racism.

Stunning! Overwhelming! Writing to rave about! And forgotten history revived. I don't know why this book hasn't appeared on lists, front pages of newspapers - the works. Read it - and you will weep.

This is a book about an issue in WWII that is largely unknown to American readers. It is also mostly about the Burma Theater of operations, "The Forgotten War". It is very interesting and easily read. The footnotes are impressive.

Beautifully and intelligently written; a tale of coming of age and of India's painful lurch into the 20th century. Balances subtlety between imagination and history.

Well written and moving. Enabled me to see part of history from the Indian perspective. Highly recommended and a good read.

Wonderful combination of history we have never heard of plus human empathy. Terrific book.

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