

Book Review

Transformation of Survey of India (2023), by Dr Prithvish Nag,
former Surveyor General of India

Ethics International Press, Cambridge & New Castle, Price 90 British Pounds.
Order online: www.ethicspress.com; Discount code: INTEGRITY33. Pages 340.

The Survey of India was established as the Survey of Bengal in 1767 and has since become one of the longest-standing scientific organisations in the world. For more than 250 years, it has made significant contributions to surveying and mapping, as well as to the broader fields of geography, geology, and earth sciences. Mount Everest, the world's highest peak, was named after Sir George Everest, who served as Surveyor General of India from 1830 to 1843. The author held the position of Surveyor General of India from 2001 to 2005, marking the first time a geographer occupied this historic role. During this period, a major initiative was undertaken to transform the organization.

The book under review details the changes and initiatives during this transformative phase, including the reorganization of the nationwide setup, the introduction of dual map series under the National Map Policy of 2005, the establishment of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure, and enhancements in field operations and geodesy. This included the scientific study of topographical changes following the 2004 tsunami. This era was marked by significant scientific advancements. This unique book addresses a wide range of topics related to the survey, including geography, geology, forestry, military science, civil engineering, geospatial technology, architecture, environment, and ecology. The history of the Survey of India is closely intertwined with the history of India itself, making this book particularly interesting for historians.

The period from 1802 onwards is known for the Great Trigonometrical Survey (GTS), which began in Madras, now Chennai, and laid the foundational groundwork for the Indian cartographic empire. According to the author, this book will be remembered for its focus on the Great Digital Transformation initiatives, which aimed to transition from conventional to digital mapping techniques. Additionally, this book holds significance as it is the first time an Indian author has written a comprehensive work on the Survey of India. Previously, the organisation was primarily understood through the lens of Western authors. This book functions as a valuable time capsule. While the book is essential for cartographers, geographers, historians, and GIS experts, its high cost has made it less accessible to these audiences. However, there are hopes for the release of more affordable versions, like paperback and Kindle editions, shortly.

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