

Title—A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire

Author—Sugata Bose

Year—2009

Categories: Region, Movement, Empire

Place: Indian Ocean

Time: 1800-1950

Argument Synopsis:

A Hundred Horizons aims to reveal the workings of colonialism in the Indian Ocean region. Bose is concerned with the role of colonialism in restructuring states and redefining ideologies of sovereignty. He utilizes a series of nonlinear narratives to provide an understanding of the Indian Ocean as, what he refers to as, an **interregional arena**. Bose pushes for categorizing the Indian Ocean as an interregional arena, as opposed to a system, because the Indian Ocean's flexible boundaries are not rigid enough to be a system. Bose aims to affect the understanding of the Indian Ocean arena by reintegrating the modern history of culture, politics, and economy of the Indian Ocean rim.

One theme found throughout *A Hundred Horizons* is the **unity amid diversity** in the Indian Ocean region. He highlights the spread of Islam which brought new patterns of economic and cultural unity to the arena. Bose strives to provide a comparative approach to Islam as an ideology of anti-colonial resistance in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Bose identifies the hajj as a key integrative element in economy religion and culture of the Indian Ocean in the precolonial era and provides an analysis of the hajj under colonial rule. Bose claims that the hajj helped reveal the connections of Indian Muslims to the world community of Islam, which helped foster anticolonial imaginations. In particular, he highlights the emergence of a universalist anticolonialism that did not recognize the (false) binary between the secular and the religious.

An aspect of the Indian Ocean arena that kept it very interconnected during the colonial period was the incredible movement of people, especially Indian, as both labor migrants and soldiers throughout the empire. In order to explore the commonality of the experience of Indian soldiers, he uses the writings of Indian soldiers to highlight the subaltern perspective. His use of participant narratives helps clarify the tension between the interregional and global roles of Indian military personnel. He discusses Indian soldiers in concert with labor migrants in order to explore the phenomenon of expatriate patriotism. Bose strives to address the issue of patriotism among Indian expatriates without pushing the idea of a monolithic Indian nation. He argues that various regional patriotisms helped to fuel anticolonialism in the Indian Ocean arena. Bose underscores how globalism and nationalism were not antithetical, and actually worked together, in this anticolonial project.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Unity amid diversity in the Indian Ocean region—Islam played a unifying role even under colonialism through the hajj
- Disproves popular claim that oceanic connections closed during the interwar period thorough use of subaltern poetry