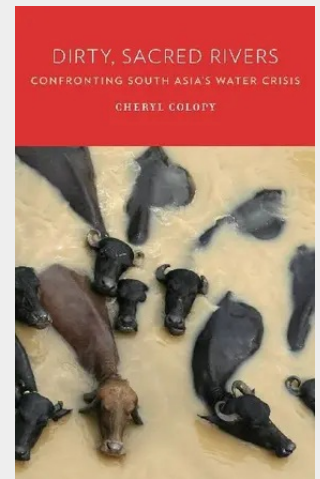


Dirty, Sacred Rivers

Confronting South Asia's Water Crisis

Rivers have traditionally been revered by the people of the Indian subcontinent, though in recent decades, the region's rivers have deteriorated dramatically due to economic progress and gross mismanagement. Dams and ill-advised embankments strangle the Ganges and its sacred tributaries. Rivers have become sewage channels for a burgeoning population. *Dirty, Sacred Rivers* explores South Asia's looming water crisis, tracing a journey through the vast watershed of the Ganges, one of the great rivers of South Asia and to many people the holiest. To tell the story of this river basin, Cheryl Colopy treks to high mountain glaciers with hydrologists; bumps around the rough embankments of India's poorest state in a jeep with social workers; and takes a boat excursion through the Sundarbans, the mangrove forests at the end of the Ganges watershed. She lingers in key places and hot spots in the debate over water: · Delhi--a megacity on the banks of one of the Ganges' most revered tributaries, the Yamuna--and a paradigm of water mismanagement · Bihar, where the Buddha gained enlightenment. It's now India's poorest, most crime-ridden state, thanks largely to the blunders of engineers who tried to tame powerful Himalayan rivers with embankments but instead created annual floods · Kathmandu--the home of one of the most elegant and ancient traditional water systems on the subcontinent, now the site of a water development boondoggle · The Nepal Himalaya, whose sweeping glaciers are starting to melt, threatening villagers in the high mountains A first-person narrative holds together disparate places and issues. The reader meets a cast of characters, ranging from the most humble members of South Asian society to engineers and former ministers. Some of these men and women are heroes, bucking current trends, trying to find rational ways to manage rivers and water. They are reviving ingenious methods of water management that thrived for centuries in South Asia and may point the way to water sustainability and healthy rivers.

Dirty, Sacred Rivers explores South Asia's increasingly urgent water crisis, taking readers on a journey through North India, Nepal and Bangladesh, from the Himalaya to the Bay of Bengal. The book shows how rivers, traditionally revered by the people of the Indian subcontinent, have in recent decades deteriorated dramatically due to economic progress and gross mismanagement. Dams and ill-advised embankments strangle the Ganges and its sacred tributaries. Rivers have become sewage channels for a burgeoning population.



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