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*Utpal Sandesara Tom Wooten*

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#6239571 in Books 2012-06-07 Original language: English 9.53 x 7.32 x .551, 1.23 #File Name: 8129119897444 pages | File size: 63.Mb

**Utpal Sandesara Tom Wooten : No One Had a Tongue to Speak: The Untold Story of One of History's Deadliest Floods** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised No One Had a Tongue to Speak: The Untold Story of One of History's Deadliest Floods:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A vivid, thought-provoking tale...By JoyA vivid, thought-provoking tale of a natural disaster and the ensuing relief and recovery efforts, shifting of blame, and socioeconomic implications. Bravo for entering into the public memory a tale that might soon have been forgotten.9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. The once untold story, now unforgettable.By Eileen, DMNo One Had a Tongue to Speak, the once untold story, now unforgettable!The authors lace India's political and social climate with its intriguing cultural beliefs. It is a masterful illustration of personal tragedy and its effects on the human spirit.I learned a great deal from this intelligent read. I found it compelling, heartfelt, and beautifully written.11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. "Wherever you put your foot in the mud you strike a body"By ealovittThe two Harvard student-authors, Utpal Sandesara Tom Wooten develop their account of the devastating 1979 dam collapse in Gujarat within the context of the social history of 20th century India. This book is part travelogue and part biography as well as the story of a terrible tragedy. I couldn't help comparing it to accounts of New Orleans before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina. Politics are firmly embedded in the latter part of both tragedies in an ugly, but predictable

manner. The collapse of Machhu Dam-II looms over the narrative like the Erinyes over the hero in a Greek tragedy. It was an accident waiting to happen, rather like the collapse of the New Orleans levees during Hurricane Katrina. On an exceptionally rainy August 11, 1979, the impounded water finally overtops its earthen embankments as the 2 million+ people living below it are performing their monsoon routines and preparing for the Hindu Shraavan holidays. The dam itself was only seven years old, but the calculations for the maximum amount of water that it needed to hold were fatally flawed. The monsoon rains that precipitated the collapse dumped 28 inches of rain on the region in less than 24 hours. The two-mile-long earthen embankments that flanked either side of the concrete spillway were never meant to be overtopped. When they were, the banks quickly eroded away and the cities and villages downstream were inundated by twelve to thirty feet of raging floodwater, including Morbi (aka Morvi), which was also known as 'the Paris of India.' The authors interviewed many citizens of Morbi and its surrounding villages, including the mayor, a principal, and a convict who was serving time for murder, all of them victims of the flood. The reader is given a solid introduction to what life for these protagonists was like before, during, and after the disaster. One of my favorite characters, other than the convict Gangaram Tapu who saved many people during the flood, is Pratapbhai Adroja, the owner of a small tobacco shop called 'Ghost Paan.' The Indian Government did finally get around to helping Morbi rebuild, but Pratapbhai's fellow-citizens pitched in and helped his Ghost Paan reopen less than a week after the floodwater almost destroyed their city. I think Americans could learn a few lessons from the citizens of Morbi on how to get a city back up and running, with only minimal help from Big Government. Be sure to read the thoughtful forward on 'Disasters Natural and Unnatural' by Paul Farmer, the Chair of the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School. I actually came away from this book feeling proud of what the citizens of Morbi accomplished during the rebuilding of their city, in spite of a Government that seemed to be most interested in suppressing the report from the Machhu Dam-II Inquiry Commission, and elected officials who were focused on fixing blame on the 'other' political party, rather than on the rebirth of the 'Paris of India.' Morbi was rebuilt to be bigger and wealthier than before the flood, then suffered another round of devastation during a 2001 earthquake centered just north of the Gulf of Kutch. So the authors were surprised to find that "the Machhu dam disaster remained 'the' disaster for the city's inhabitants... Although the region had transformed radically in the intervening decades, the disaster of 1979 remained a definitive event in the local consciousness." Estimates of the number of dead from the Machhu dam break range from 1500 to 15000 people, but the focus of "No One had a Tongue to Speak" is quite rightly on the survivors. \*\*\*review copy supplied by the authors

In the monsoon of '79, the Machhu dam collapsed after incessant rains. The town of Morbi was almost washed away and the death toll exceeded 25,000. The immense loss to life and property was followed by a blame game between authorities. This book, based on over 130 interviews and extensive research, gives a bona fide account of the heart-wrenching tragedy that wiped out entire families, and brings to light the long-hidden human errors that culminated in disaster. Grounded in meticulous archival research, this eye-opening account of the Machhu dam disaster unfolds almost like a novel as it recounts a historic human tragedy and its aftermath. No One Had a Tongue to Speak paints a vivid portrait of an India torn between its feudal past and its industrial future, and the consequences of rapid yet short-sighted growth. This fascinating story about an Indian dam disaster should be required reading for anyone interested in modern India, the environment, or narrative nonfiction... One of the most important books about India in recent years.'

"What is it about dams that inspire fatal dreams of grandeur? Utpal Sandesara and Tom Wooten have done a great service by vividly reconstructing one of the greatest and least known dam disasters in history although it is anything but unknown, of course, to the largely voiceless people who were its major victims. This is an absorbing story not just about bureaucratic ambition and folly, but about power and powerlessness." --Adam Hochschild, author of *To End All Wars*, *King Leopold's Ghost*, and other books. "Written with a sympathy as deep as its research, this is the story of a deadly environmental disaster that sprang from hubris and miscalculation. Like any sudden disaster, the floods that destroyed Morbi burst upon the everyday lives of people unaware of what was about to befall them. Sandesara and Wooten skillfully capture both the commonplace and the extraordinary, and in doing so reveal what sometimes seems to be the near universal failures that lay behind so many environmental disasters and the quite specific particulars of Indian history and development." --Richard White, professor of American History at Stanford University "The anatomy of a perfect storm: not just a South Asian monsoon-driven tragedy killing thousands, but an overall portrait of social, political, historical, and moral corruption and dysfunction. Inspections are missed, planning is chaotic, and disempowered find themselves squarely in the path of an epic disaster." --Clark Blaise, co-author (with Bharati Mukherjee) of *Days and Nights in Calcutta* and *The Sorrow and the Terror: The Haunting Legacy of Air-India 182*. "This memorable account of an epic flood is all the more impressive because its authors, one of them the son of a survivor, are so young. Their reporting is painstaking, their stories heartbreaking." --Anne Fadiman, author of *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* "It is one thing for 25,000 people to perish all at once; it is another to completely forget about them. Utpal Sandesara and Tom Wooten's fascinating story about an Indian dam disaster should be required reading for anyone interested in modern India, the environment, or narrative nonfiction. 'No one

had a tongue to speak'until these two young writers came along to listen. One of the most important books about India in recent years." --Suketu Mehta, Pulitzer Prize finalist and author of *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*"Sandesara and Wooten paint a vivid peoples' portrait of the human impact of a top-down development project gone wrong. Though the Machhu Dam disaster occurred nearly thirty years ago, the themes explored in *No One Had a Tongue to Speak* are as relevant today as they have ever been. With developing nations racing to catch up, the world simply must get better at contending with the humanitarian and environmental consequences of rapid growth. As such, this is a book for our time." --William Clark, Harvey Brooks Professor of International Science, Public Policy and Human Development at Harvard University, and a 1983 MacArthur Fellow"Sandesara and Wooten provide a fresh, engaging account of a horrendous, man-made flood in Gujarat, India. The tale of the Machhu dam disaster highlights the pitfalls of a top-down approach to development, risk mitigation, and long-term recovery, using the words of those who have experienced it. As a globally surgent India marches ahead with its economic growth and comes to terms with its prospects and limitations in the realm of development, these two researchers offer a refreshing, comprehensive, painstaking, and lively account of a defining moment in India's past. From policymakers to common citizens, readers will relish this book's narration and ponder its implications for future disasters." --Mihir Bhatt, founder of the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute"The break of the Machhu Dam-II, which killed thousands of people on India's Saurashtra peninsula in 1979, must rank as one of the world's great engineering disasters. In their book, *No One Had a Tongue to Speak*, Utpal Sandesara and Tom Wooten recall in painstaking detail the secrecy and arrogance that led to the disaster. They also recount the tragedy that struck unsuspecting farmers and townspeople one fateful monsoon afternoon, the courage with which survivors rebuilt their lives and homes, the generous support that many officials and citizens lent to their task, and the shameful deceit by which a government bureaucracy refused to be held to account. All who read this important book will gain great respect for the good people from northern Saurashtra. Readers will understand that the dam disaster can repeat itself as long as the lessons from a flawed planning process have not been learned." --Peter Bosshard, Policy Director of International Rivers"The book addresses with rigor and compassion the devastating effect of floods in the Machhu River Valley in Gujarat, India, in 1979 caused by the unintended consequences of a development project. The two researchers have documented its impact and the inadequate response on a forgotten community. The book's social significance and important findings will appeal to all those interested in issues of development in India and elsewhere." --Jerome Sauvage, former deputy director of the United Nations Development Program in India

About the Author Utpal Sandesara grew up in a Gujarati-American household in New Jersey and attended college at Harvard. His mother's experience as a Machhu flood survivor led to his interest in the research that became this book. He now attends the University of Pennsylvania, where he is jointly pursuing an MD and a PhD in anthropology. In his free time, he enjoys learning languages, reading world literature, and riding the bicycle Tom built for him. Tom Wooten attended college at Harvard. A keen interest in environmental issues and development led him to collaborate with Utpal Sandesara on this book. Since 2008, Tom has lived and worked in New Orleans, where he studies community recovery efforts. He also teaches writing at KIPP McDonogh 15 School for the Creative Arts in New Orleans as a Teach for America corps member. His forthcoming book is called *We Shall Not Be Moved: Rebuilding Home in the Wake of Katrina*.