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Under The Red Blanket



Synopsis

Under The Red Blanket is a memoir of a Swedish-American family living in the remote area of North East India among headhunting tribes. The book opens with the father of Bea, Bengt Anderson, immigrating to the United States from Sweden on the advice of his aunt Hedda, who worked as a cook for the Roosevelt family at their home in Hyde Park, New York. He later moved to Minnesota where he met and married Edna Michaelson. Soon after, they left the US to spend twenty-nine years living in India. The story relates the trials and tribulations of life in the jungle. It includes stories of life under the British Raj, World War II and the Japanese invasion into India. The book also describes the horrors witnessed during the separation of India and Pakistan in 1947.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's like the book from which a great movie was made. Not because of cleverly imagined plot lines but because it paints pictures of how these missionary family children, born in the middle of headhunter tribes, circa 1930, in the most primitive of conditions, lived their life as if all that was around them was perfectly normal. Tales of their father's missionary travels to the neighboring villages, what happened along the way and then...when he got there. And his wife, their mother, born diabetic, met her soon-to-be husband while studying nursing in missionary school and then off to the remotest corner of India where along with trying to take care of everybody else she still had to find, keep and take her insulin. A time when hostility, illness and hardship met faith, resolve and a firm belief in their purpose and themselves. Suffice to say, this tiny corner of India is nearly 100% Christian in faith today. This book, reading it is like living it and like life, it's way too short.

Fabulous! In this book, danger and beauty are always intertwined. Headhunting tribes, lions and tigers share the same pages as lifelong friends, beautiful scenery and life-changing experiences. India of the 1930's-1950's was a fascinating place to be through the recollections of author Bea Anderson Swedien and her family. When she tells of traveling to India aboard a mine-sweeper during WW II the reader is assured there will be great adventures ahead and she never fails to deliver. I found her writing style engaging and conversational to the point where I felt transported to India alongside her family. Each chapter was filled with events that propelled me to the next chapter just so I could learn what lie ahead. While some of the photos may be graphic, they were never gratuitous. For me, they underscored the brutality she tells us still existed during her time there. Sometimes pictures say more than words. As a parent, I was struck by the courage and emotional fortitude both parents displayed in raising their young family in such a remote and unforgiving place. I enjoyed learning about day to day life in India before electricity and the modern technology we have come to depend on. From her accounts, they never saw that a drawback. They certainly fostered a sense of adventure in their children as well as an acceptance that change was a constant element of life. It seems like they adapted to whatever circumstances unfolded. This book had me from the first page to the last. It is the thing movies are made of. This book is the perfect weekend read.

"This is a great story set in the glorious era of Colonial India. If this were the fictionalized account of a young girl, waking up from a dream, it would have made a good novel. The fact that it's true makes this an exceptional read."

I found this book a fascinating glimpse into a world I didn't know existed as recently as the mid twentieth century. Swedien's honest, forthright style and her many intriguing anecdotes kept my interest. Colorful detail, and yes, sometimes graphic description, remind me how fortunate I was to have been raised in a safer environment, and at the same time are a testament to the strength and perseverance of her amazing family. Strongly recommended.

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