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# Deep Water: The Epic Struggle over Dams, Displaced People, and the Environment

*Jacques Leslie*

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**Jacques Leslie : Deep Water: The Epic Struggle over Dams, Displaced People, and the Environment** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Deep Water: The Epic Struggle over Dams, Displaced People, and the Environment:

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By Hector M Malano  
Good book but the author could have said the same thing in fewer pages

"If the wars of the last century were fought over oil, the wars of this century will be fought over water." -Ismail Serageldin, The World Bank  
The giant dams of today are the modern Pyramids, colossally expensive edifices that generate monumental amounts of electricity, irrigated water, and environmental and social disaster. With *Deep Water*, Jacques Leslie offers a searching account of the current crisis over dams and the world's water. An emerging master of long-form reportage, Leslie makes the crisis vivid through the stories of three distinctive figures: Medha Patkar, an Indian activist who opposes a dam that will displace thousands of people in western India; Thayer Scudder, an American anthropologist who studies the effects of giant dams on the peoples of southern Africa; and Don Blackmore, an Australian water manager who struggles to reverse the effects of drought so as to allow Australia to continue its march to California-like prosperity. Taking the reader to the sites of controversial dams, Leslie shows why dams are at once the hope of developing nations and a blight on their people and landscape. *Deep Water* is an incisive, beautifully written, and deeply disquieting report on a conflict that threatens to divide the world in the coming years.

From Publishers Weekly  
This worthy but difficult book looks at large dams and their consequences through the eyes of three members of the 1990s' World Commission on Dams. Indian activist Medha Patkar planned to drown herself to protest the Sardar Sarovar dam's displacement of several hundred thousand people. Thayer Scudder, a dam resettlement expert and consultant to the World Bank, stopped a dam that would have destroyed Botswana's Okavango Delta. Don Blackmore, in Australia, where dams are a virtual necessity, has to regulate "the dozens of variables that affect the health of a river basin" during an acute drought. Leslie's (*The Mark: A War Correspondent's Memoir of Vietnam and Cambodia*) intent was to "see dams whole," and he conveys the complex, disheartening issues surrounding them. Whether the reader can see dams whole is another question. Leslie is capable of both punchy and lyrical writing. But with the flood of detail, from the mechanics of dam financing to the water sources for African villages, the book becomes a hard slog. A draft of this unquestionably informative and eye-opening book won the J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award, but it will need a devoted reader to get the last drop of good out of it. (Sept.)  
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From Booklist  
During the twentieth century, 45,000 large dams were built in 140 countries, complicated projects that are now being recognized as major environmental and humanitarian disasters. Add to that the fact that freshwater is the most precious and endangered resource on the planet, and journalist Leslie has chosen one hot topic. His extensive research and demanding journeys to controversial dam sites around the world result in solid documentation of the often-corrupt finances and politics of dam building and the cruelty and injustice of the displacement of (usually) indigenous communities and the submergence of their land. Leslie also offers lucid explanations of how dams cause aridity, erosion, extinction, and pollution. Indelible portraits of three dedicated individuals put a human face on the subject. Medha Patkar, India's leading antidam activist, has put her life at risk to protest the forced displacement of tribal communities. Anthropologist Thayer Scudder is "the world's leading dam resettlement expert." Don Blackmore is devoted to rectifying dam-related problems in Australia. Leslie's edgy, potent, and in-depth inquiry unveils the drastic, unintentional consequences of dams and exposes yet more evidence of the catastrophic results of allowing greed and politics to trump science and justice. Donna Seaman  
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A thoughtful look at the legacy of the rush to plug the world's rivers... A piece of meticulously researched globe-trotting. -- Dave Gilson, *Mother Jones*, September/October 2005  
Compelling and impressively integrative.... Richly written.... Leslie has a wonderful eye for telling details that illuminate the larger picture. -- *SEJournal*, published by the Society of Environmental Journalists, Summer 2006  
DEEP WATER is one of the "top science books of the year." -- *Discover Magazine*, January 2006  
Heir, both in organization and in power, to John McPhee's *Encounters With the Archdruid*. Beautifully wrought. Stunning descriptions. -- Bill McKibben, *OnEarth Magazine*, Fall 2005  
Leslie delivers scenes and mood with the economy and precision of a good novelist. -- Tom Vanderbilt, *Columbia Journalism*, Sept/Oct 2005  
Leslie's edgy, potent, and in-depth inquiry unveils the drastic, unintentional consequences of dams. -- Donna Seaman, *Booklist* (starred review)  
Masterful. A startling peek at the world our descendants will inherit. -- Ira Boudway, *Salon.com*, Sept. 23, 2005