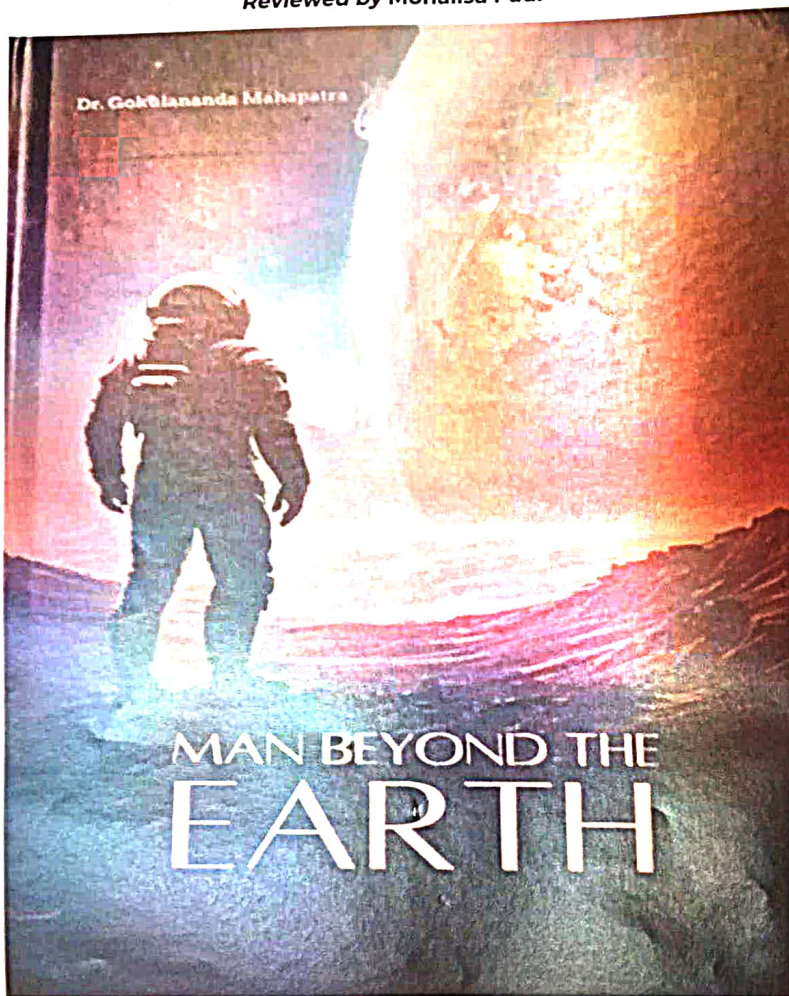


## BOOK REVIEW

# Man Beyond the Earth

Reviewed by Monalisa Paul



**Title:** *Man Beyond the Earth*  
**Publisher:** Abhishek Publications  
**ISBN:** 9789368805939  
**Pages:** 172  
**Price:** 396/-

**T**HE book *Man Beyond the Earth* is a novel based on science fiction written by the late Prof. Gokulananda Mahapatra. Dr Mahapatra won the Kalinga prize for the popularisation of Science by UNESCO in 2010. Prof. Gokulananda Mahapatra was born on 24 May 1922 at Bhadrak, Odisha, and authored more than 95 science fiction, children science books, science novels and other reading materials dedicated to science during his lifetime. The book's first edition was published in 1952 in the Oriya language and later translated into English. This book is from the past, which could peep into the future.

Going for the presentation of the book, it is a hard-bound book with an impressive cover page and author's bio sketch, interesting preface, good quality paper, and legible printing. Structured in 20 chapters, the book takes us on the journey of the future from the window of the past. The author imagined those scientific concepts seven decades ago, which are being experienced in 2025.

The fantasy of a civilised society on the planet Mars is the main theme of this book. The story revolves around two nuclear scientists: Professor John Richardson and his student Miss Laura Walker, working at the University of Columbia, who discover the power of the element Berkelium, which can produce an enormous amount of nuclear energy as compared to conventional uranium. The professor wants to tap nuclear energy for peaceful purposes rather than as a war weapon. They go for an unexpected expedition to the planet Mars, which is the nearest neighbour of the planet Earth, using Berkelium as the rocket fuel to understand the degree of scientific advancements on the planet.

The backdrop of the story highlights a feud between scientific outlook and capitalism, and how science is governed by the people who have no humanitarian perspective for science and portray it as a tool for earning maximum profit. Geopolitics play a significant role in deciding the dynamics of science. It also deals with the constant pressure the scientists undergo in the hands of red tape bureaucracy and political powers.

As the story transcends from one chapter to another, the protagonists reach the red planet and discover a higher human-like civilisation which is completely based on scientific advancements. The story addresses various scientific concepts like mobile phones, AI-controlled devices, digital watches, modern movie theatres, driverless cars, escalators, advanced telecommunication systems, automated doors, advanced financial and digital literacy and everything else that we are experiencing today, almost several decades ago. The story gives us glimpses of the modern science that was imagined almost 70 years ago. Many of them are realities today, and many of them are yet to be achieved by the scientific community.

The story may be a fiction, but it highlights the various issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The best part is the solution provided by the author, which symbolises how prudent he was. There is no doubt that Dr Mahapatra was ahead of his time. His imagination provides answers to many global problems which our current administrative and legislative bodies have failed to provide. The topics such as unemployment due to the introduction of machines, climate change disasters,