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Robert Hutchinson's book "Garden of Fools" was released here today by renowned historian and cultural expert Shekhar Pathak.

This book tells us with heartfelt compassion the story of the construction of Ganga Canal. It has been published by Palimpsest, New Delhi.

Proby Cautley, the son of a humble English clergyman, is one of history's forgotten heroes. He became an East India Company cadet and arrived in India in October 1819 at the age of 17. As a young artillery lieutenant stationed at Agra in 1825, he was transferred to the Bengal Engineers and began work on restoring the Eastern Jumna Canal. At 23, he knew nothing about canal engineering, but learned quickly.

In 1826, while stationed at Saharanpur, he made his first visit to Mussoorie, where he met the district magistrate Captain Frederick Young. He helped Young found the new township by constructing Mussoorie's first water supply system. In 1831, Cautley acquired Dumbarie Cottage on Blucher Hill, marrying the beautiful Fanny Bacon in All Saints Church, on the Castle Hill estate, in 1838.

During the Great Famine of 1837-38, he was devastated by the agony of people who were dying by the thousands and decided the only way to overcome famine in the north was to harness the waters of the sacred Ganga for irrigation. Such a project had never been attempted before as the natural hazards were thought to be insurmountable.

The venture found approval of the governor-general, Lord Auckland, and Cautley was provided with a small budget to survey the canal's route from Haridwar to Kanpur. However as work progressed obstacles were thrown in his path and because of the stupidity of subsequent administrators he had to fight for every inch of the canal.

The stress broke his marriage and his heart, while the workload almost killed him, until finally in April 1854 the 530-mile canal was inaugurated amidst great fanfare. Shortly afterwards, Cautley returned to England a broken man. Queen Victoria rewarded him with a knighthood.

His canal, acclaimed as the world's eighth engineering wonder, continues to function, having eradicated the plague of hunger in the Doab. Sadly, Sir Proby Cautley has all but been forgotten. The story of his genius, perseverance and his betrayal makes compelling reading. He is the stuff of which great heroes are made. Canadian-born Robert Hutchison in his latest historical novel, Garden of Fools, pays Cautley a tribute richly deserved.

Hutchison's long affair with the Himalaya takes him through the foothills and on to the plains beyond where the Ganga begins her 1,569-mile journey to the sea. This book comes soon after his last book, *Rajah of Harsil – the Legend of Pahari Wilson* and was three years in the writing. From a garden where fools tried to trip him at every step, Cautley's Ganga Canal

transformed the Doab into a garden of plenty and banished forever famine from the face of northern India.