

ARRESTING TIME SPAN AND DIRECTING FUTURE: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF TWO BOOKS

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SUMMARY

This Paper is critical analysis of two important Books about India's Foreign Policy and present Indian Politics which are quite relevant in any discussion related to India, the Subcontinent, South East Asia, East and Asia in large considering changing Power-Balance.

Keywords: *Shibdas Bhattacharjee- an Indian non-fiction writer- nexus-unholy alliance of nations, Unbound Opportunity-huge mandate behind Indian Prime Minister Modi, Substantives-Ground Realities of India.*

Introduction

Books are rightly regarded the most authentic documentation of human history. Writing is a never-ceasing process. But some people always like to swim against the tide. Such a unique personality is Shibdas Bhattacharjee. I have recently gone through his two Books; one is: *India's Fragile Foreign Policy towards Neighbouring Nations* published in 2017 and *Modi's Rule and India's Unbound Opportunities: Narrative of the Substantives and Beyond* published in 2019 by the Overseas Press India, New Delhi. I am a regular reader of Mr. Bhattacharjee's Articles published in different English newspapers in India and Seminar Papers mostly organized by the University Grant Commission (UGC) in India. After finishing the two Books, I decided to write a review of the Books.

The First Book:

His first Book *India's Fragile Foreign Policy towards Neighbouring Nations*, 2017, ISBN-978-93-83803-18-7 is not an incremental analysis of India's foreign policy but highlighting the weak points of New Delhi's Foreign Policy regarding the Neighbouring Nations. The Book having 777 pages and divided in 23 Chapters analyze in detail the state of India's bilateral relations with every nations sharing land and maritime borders. In separate Chapters India's relations with China, Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives have been discussed where the pinpoint of argument is: India has failed to gain anything from her bilateral relations since Independence in 1947 and till date. Similarly, the Book analyzes India's security setups

and threat perceptions in separate Chapters. Similarly, there is discussion about India's strategic strength, military and naval power base where the author finds only fragility that makes things vulnerable from India's perspective. The author puts performance of every democratic regime of sovereign India. The issues like terror threat, China's game plan against India, SAARC nations playing the role of Chinese proxies, India's wizard security setup have been discussed in detail. So also, the dismal state India's foreign trade and investments have also been discussed with prominence. The author starts hammering with the comment *"political leadership of the country has never presented India as a military power or a big strategic game-player. The term like peaceful co-existence sounds good. But it has not worked on the ground."*¹ This followed by some questions like *"why India's all the frontiers regions are volatile today? This makes the point clear that India's Policy towards Neighbours lacks something serious that demands a serious introspection. The legitimate point is: despite immense military power and supreme sacrifice of our military personnel; why is India suffering from multi-porn security challenges?"*² The author's view is loud and clear *"Indian political leadership must take responsibility for whatever has happened in this country since 1947. The leadership of this nation irrespective of personal status and political affiliation need to be judged by their performance on the ground; more precisely what the ailing rank and file has got from their administrations and as per the constitutional rights. There are various sectors where our so-called visionary leadership displayed utter insensibility, incredibility, inadequacy, inefficiency and unaccountability. One such sector is India's Foreign Policy and the country's weak-wizard diplomatic standpoint. This has not only got exposed on numerous occasions but kept India mostly on the receiving end. India's successive regimes have failed in framing country's foreign policy prerogative that can really help India to fulfill its security needs, harness strategic goals and evolve India rising and shining. This failure is too costly for the nation that cannot be concealed under any rhetorical term."*³ The author is critical all together regarding India's policy towards neighbouring nations. The author feels, *"India's Foreign Policy that began with the Non-Aligned movement suffered repeated setbacks. India became compelled to engage its security mechanism in the battle field on repeated occasions just after the Independence and the subsequent decades. Both Pakistan and China kept on testing India's military might. India needed military power, advanced technology and better intelligence capability to face the new menace.*

Expansion of the whole defence structure and greater strategic maneuver were needs of that era as is the case today to face the challenges in the security and the strategic fronts.” ⁴ The author’s final view is if India’s policy towards neighbouring countries can never achieve anything if New Delhi continues to fail in restricting China’s forward march. In author’s opinion restricting China is acid-test for India’s any policy for security and solidarity. The author finds nothing substantial happening in this sector.

Author’s Second Book:

Shibdas Bhattacharjee’s second Book; “Modi’s Rule and India’s Unbound Opportunities: Narrative of the Substantives and Beyond” can be termed as most authentic documentation of present Indian government and politics. Opportunities of India comprising the factors like unprecedented support behind Modi, winning more than requisite number of Parliamentary segments by the BJP after three decades-long coalition experiments, BJP forming Provincial governments in most Indian States, Modi’s undisputed authority in his government, the ruling party and alliance, youth participation in the electoral, paradigm shift in the balance of power in South East Asia and so on are at the centre of discussion in this Book. Second criteria of assessment is the policy initiations of Prime Minister Modi in availing those Opportunities and the track record; realistic assessment of both the successes and failures of Prime Minister Modi in different fronts. This Book is a venture to find out the answers of some relevant interrogatives; Has India succeeded in availing the huge Opportunities during the tenure of Modi-led Government? What has India achieved substantially under Modi’s rule so far? How much probabilities left to be availed and harnessed in the days ahead? Similarly, the Book makes a comparison between what Mr. Modi as the Gujarat Chief Minister promised from election rallies to do for this nation and what substantial he delivered during his tenure as the Prime Minister of India. *“Change has happened in the socio-political discourse of the country, an unnoticed revolution took place. Or else, Prime Minister Narendra Modi could not convince the electorates in 2014 that for delivering his so-called agenda of development, his hands should be made strengthened with full authority. This is important that people of this country extended overwhelming support to his agenda and leadership at a time when along with politicians, poll-pundits, viable Indian media took it for granted that the days of sole authority of one individual in the administrative machinery of New Delhi is over.”* ⁵ The Book

makes detail analysis and exposes the ground reality in different sectors of Mr. Modi's performance; be it India's Social Sector, Youth Empowerment, Job, Economic issues, Price rise, Foreign policy and its success rate during this time, Strategic hold of India after Mr. Modi had become the Prime Minister, Security Scenario of the country and all relevant issues of India's national interests in separate Chapters of this Book. The Book sheds light on the ground reality that initiates a new debate about what should be the realistic approach for putting India's opportunities in future. This Book gives credit only to Mr. Modi if he has done anything worthy and similarly makes him answerable and accountable for the failures. This Book seeks accountability from Mr. Modi and appeals to make analysis on the substantial keeping aside rhetoric. Here important is India and her larger interests. So this Book is by no means a political vendetta. This Book does not advocate political and even ideological opposition of any sort. This Book does not favour politicians; be Mr. Modi or his political opponents. This Book is by no means a political criticism. There is only realistic analysis of the prevailing situation in India that delineates India's national interests and advocates that Indian rank and file get empowered to make the rulers accountable ensuring to achieve what they really deserve. This far-sighted view has been convincingly outlined in this Book. The Book is all about pragmatic discussion regarding menace called politics on communal and other sectarian issues. The author makes all the political parties of India and all the regimes that have hyped this for vote-bank politics. Modi-regime is no exception. *"Religious biasness of some organizations in India and their divisive agendas have torn India's fabric time and again. These organizations seemed remaining pro-active under the rule of Prime Minister Modi as was the case during the time of other governments. The issue is too sensitive to be ignored by any political party. Appeasing politics for catching votes has been pre-dominant in India. Here, the term minority has different ramifications. In the lexicon of fanatic organizations the term minority has got manipulated."* ⁶ This dismal reality prevailed under the rule of Modi which is the prime cause behind losing opportunity. But the author affirms positivity and showcases this distinctly. This is the changed trajectory of Indians who now seek accountability from the government and individual judging things both from national and individual perspectives. Considering all this, the Book attains relevance for now and the days to come as it leaves behind larger issues to introspect with a nationalistic spirit for India and her larger interests. Price of this Book is Rs. 1995.00.

Conclusion:

All the arguments of the author in both the Books cannot be taken for granted. But most part of author's analysis sheds a different light and wake up call for Indian people and the government. The Book has been written from different parameter. But this is also true that the author seems too critical in some cases. Similarly, long illustrations quoted from his own write-ups or other sources can be said a negative point of both the Books. Similarly, the author has used too many graphs and Tables to express his view. Nevertheless, these two Books are undoubtedly most comprehensive, realistic and authentic documentation of India and its people in the present era. His unconventional way of discussion and journalistic analysis make his Books more readable and relevant.

References:

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