

REVIEW OF ARUN MAIRA'S BOOK 'REIMAGINING INDIA'S
ECONOMY : THE ROAD TO A MORE EQUITABLE SOCIETY'

The author of this erudite book, Arun Maira is a former General Manager of TELCO, Executive Director of Tata Motors, Chairman of Boston Consulting Group(India) & member of the Planning Commission Of India.

Among his previous ten books are : *Shaping the future - Inspirational leadership in India & abroad*; *Transforming Capitalism - Improving the World for Everyone*; & *'Transforming Systems - Why the World needs a New Ethical toolkit.'*

In this book's Preface he has written : "Independent India is at a turning point. Will it provide *poorna swaraj*, full political, economic & social freedom to all its citizens or will it be a nation in which some of its citizens - the rich, upper castes & Hindus - are more equal than others."

This book's 18 chapters have been divided into three parts & titled : *A new nation's aspirations & challenges*; *Economic, Natural & social systems*; *Shaping our future differently*.

In its first part the author has revealed he was born in Lahore on August 15, 1943. Because of partition, his family had to move to India & lost most of their Lahore possessions. Fortunately, Nawab of Rampur. appointed his father as General Manager of Rampur Engineering Company. His mother, a "devoted follower of Gandhiji" took him to one of his prayer meetings shortly before he was assassinated.

While studying at St. Stephens' College he "imbibed the general view that joining a private sector company was for losers not good enough to be selected for the civil services". However, "by a strange twist of fate" he joined a private sector company as he was too young to appear for the civil services exam when he graduated & received an interview call from a Tata 'campus recruiter'. At it he learned of Jamshetji Tata's struggle to set up India's first textile & steel mills & Gandhi's statement that his struggle was for India's political freedom, while Jamshetji's was for its economic freedom. He thus took the "road less travelled" to serve his country.

His initial seven years were spent in the TELCO (Tata Engineering & Locomotive Company) Chairman's office at Jamshedpur. In 1954, TELCO had signed a 15 year collaboration agreement with Daimler Benz to produce their renowned trucks & buses in India. By 1969, not only were these vehicles fully manufactured in India, some of them had been exported to Sri Lanka & Malaysia, with the tri-cornered Mercedes Star emblem on them. In 1970, TELCO decided to move from 'Made in India' to 'Made by India'. A new factory on Pune's outskirts, with its own R & D Centre was built & staffed with those who had worked closely with Daimler Benz engineers at its Jamshedpur factory.

In 1979, at age 36, the author was appointed TELCO's General Manager & Resident Director. By 1990, TATA vehicles which now also included cars, cross country & armoured vehicles besides buses & Trucks were being exported to over 30 countries of Asia, & Africa in competition with American, Japanese & European, manufacturers, "including Daimler Benz, from whom Tata's had absorbed their technology". The number exported was almost 200,000, of which 20,000 to South Africa alone!

I was High Commissioner of India to Ghana in the 1979-82 period. As prodded by me its Govt had ordered 200 Tata buses in March 1980 & a further 200 in June that year. Each of them cost it only \$33,000; Those it had previously bought from Leyland of UK & Neoplan of Germany had cost \$ 88,000 each.

On October 2, 1980, New York Times carried a half page article titled '*Ghana moves to Rebuild its Transport; Controversial Purchase of Indian buses completed*'. In it was a photo of Ghana's Transport Minister Harry Sawyer & me.

In the second & third parts of this book the author also made the following points :

Since 1991, India's Govts have focused on GDP growth. It grew at 7.2%, both under UPA & NDA Govts in the 2004 - 2024 period but the livelihoods of India's large & youthful population worsened.

Employment elasticity, a measure of jobs economic growth produces, was 0.44% in the 2004 - 2014 period & 0.01% in the 2014 - 2024 period.

In 2010 the Planning Commission had assessed that despite India's GDP growth rate being among the world's highest, it was the least inclusive & environmentally sustainable among South, South East Asian & BRICS Countries.

Prime Minister Modi replaced the Planning Commission with NITI AAYOG. He has urged India's capitalists to invest abundantly & make India's GDP the world's third largest. Their investments are only a fraction of what the Indian economy needs.

China's economy has grown much faster than India's. Some economists have argued this is because of China's "unelected autocratic govt" & India's "messy, multi-party electoral democracy". This argument is flawed. Germany & Japan's post WWII rapid economic growth took place under democratic, not autocratic govts.

"Innovation has become conflated with technologies & patents; innovations in processes & institutional architecture, which provide the greatest benefits are ignored". Toyota's production system did not utilize new technology nor was patented, yet enabled its "just in time production & zero defects".

Japan has no petroleum, mineral, or chemical resources. Yet it has led the world in many industries because its workers have given it a cutting edge competitive advantage.

"Human beings are the only 'appreciating asset' a country possesses." India has it more than any other country.

When WWII ended, US emerged as the world's most powerful nation. It took the initiative to create the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, GATT & WTO. This architecture for global democracy & fair trade endured for almost eight decades. "It has been shattered by Trump & his henchmen. Now financial greed trumps human needs. Power rules not justice".

Nuclear bombs destroyed two Japanese cities in the mid twentieth century. Now Artificial Intelligence is being used to wage wars with no ethical concern about their nature or purpose. "Intelligence without ethics & compassion will destroy humanity".

India has gone off course twice on its economic development journey. "The first was when it turned away from socialism towards capitalism in 1991. The second wrong turn was in 2014 when Hindutva made all Indians, including Hindus, insecure".

In the vision of Gurdev Tagore, Gandhi & Nehru, as also in the Constitution of India, this country is for all its citizens irrespective of gender, caste, religion & ethnicity.

"Narendra Mode & his party have a different vision for India. They think it is only for Hindus. They should pay heed to

Zionist Israel. It is the most insecure & war embroiled country in the world"

"Government is not governance. Democracy is not words in the constitution. Democratic governance requires a robust process that *"works with citizens not on them"*.

The systemic problems India presently faces cannot be solved with methods that have failed. It needs a new model for socially inclusive & environmentally sustainable growth & of governance & leadership.

"Mahatma Gandhi is the best example of leadership. Millions followed him because he cared for what they deeply craved: freedom from political ,economic & social oppression."

"We must not retreat into our glorious past & revel in the discoveries made thousands of years ago. We must move forward to improve the lives of everyone in our country".

All these points made by the author are valid & an accurate diagnosis of the wide spectrum crisis India presently faces. Yet, he has not enunciated a strategy for its emancipation from the 'Hindutva cage' in which it has been trapped since 2014 with diverse state bodies, particularly ED, CBI & CEC "weaponized" to harass political opponents, suppress dissent & win elections. Besides, communal outfits have been given a free hand to attack minorities & their places of worship.

Hindutva is to Hinduism what Zionism is to Judaism, gross distortions of the noble teachings of these ancient religions to achieve ignoble political ends. This is much more so for Hinduism because 'Ekam Sat Vipraha Bahuda Vedanti' &

'Vasudaiva Kudumbakam' are its millennial maxims. Judaism embodies concepts of 'Divinely revealed Truth' & 'God's Chosen People'

Hindutva's pernicious ideology cannot be countered with "new models of governance & leadership" but with mass mobilization & Gandhian satyagraha as was done by Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) in 2020 / 2021. When eleven rounds of its talks with GOI to repeal the 3 iniquitous farm laws enacted in September 2020 failed, SKM issued a 'Delhi Chalo' call to Indian farmers through its 40 constituent units. Almost 200,000 of them, men & women, young & old, of all castes & creeds, came from all over India & camped on Delhi's outskirts. They bravely endured winter cold, summer heat & heavy rains for over a year. On November 19, 2021 Prime Minister Modi announced withdrawal of the 3 farm laws. Ten days later Parliament formally repealed them. This has reestablished the potency of Gandhian Satyagraha

The author has averred that India's youth is its most valuable "appreciating Asset". He should therefore identify at least 20 dynamic youth leaders in diverse sectors of India's polity & mentor them to become "Velvet Revolutionaries" of the type Roger Markwick has written in his book '*From Violence to Velvet : A Century of Revolutions 1917 - 2017*'. They should be harbingers of Gandhiji's 'poorna swaraj' & ensure full political, economic & social freedom to all Indian citizens irrespective of gender, caste, religion & ethnicity within the next ten years.

A 35 year old India origin, pro-Palestinian Muslim has recently staged a 'Velvet revolution" in New York city, the world's most Zionist one, by being elected its youngest mayor. He achieved this with mass mobilization & a promise to make NYC "affordable" for all its citizens irrespective of gender, religion, ethnicity & nationality. It is notable that his ancestors hailed from the same part of India as Gandhi !

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