

Book Review

Title: Why Bharat Matters

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In the popular culture, the accounts of current political analysis based on recent events of old and contemporary turmoil dating as fresh as a decade are rare to come along in a first-person narrative from an expert witness himself. This book by India's former foreign secretary and currently the Minister of External Affairs, Mr S. Jaishankar, is a fine specimen of the same. The book is a collection of essays, eleven in count. To declare it as a mere compilation of facts based on observations would be an understatement. The book has been based on strong scrutiny with respect to the past regimes in comparison with the present one all over the world. The author holds the authoritative lead at all fronts to base and provide an overview of the world about India, universal understanding of the pros and cons of the roles of misleading governments chosen as a best available solution under the misapprehension of present crises across countries and the long-term damage caused by this which not only affects the future policies of countries but also nullify every attempt that had gone into resolving age old debates and conflicts be it geo-political, cultural or which people find the most sensitive to talk about, religious. This book, although only legible to readers of English, yet the generic nature of explanation can appeal to the teens in school, a debater in a college fest, a street performer, a businessman and a monk alike. Mr S. Jaishankar's forte of years of service can be put under the magnifying glass through his detailed attention to the anticipated outcomes of policies of India over the years as the ambassador of the country overseas, which is reflected in his description of issues and problems of a commoner and how they affect the foreign policy making at the global level and vice versa. The analysis of confidence the nation has been displaying in 'new era of multiple strategic competitions' on a global forum about matters and memberships ranging from Indo-Pacific front, G20 Summit, Neighbourhood First, The Vande Bharat Mission, the Land Boundary Agreement of 2015 to domestic historical decisions on Article 370, the interests of Indian diaspora overseas (Madison square 2014)

Digital outreach and advancements, policies of SAGAR, furnishing internal security, *Atmanirbhar Abhiyan*, the agendas of *Amrit Kaal* and set aims to empower the youth and make them skilled, educated and employable to contribute to nation building is worthy of applaud. There is a unique subtlety employed by the author to address ubiquitous conflicts of tensions of West Asia, Russia-Ukraine war, the economic tumult that India to a great extent was able to curb as an aftermath of a pandemic-stricken society and all the times how the leaders of the current regime turned out only stronger with their policies (which are the governing principles of the present govt) such as international solar alliance etc. In the times of omnipresent multipolarization, Bharat stood at the centre as the first responder. A significant portion of the book deals with the salient strategies which will be required to strengthen the socio-economic elements at home and how early they must be implemented to serve the desired outcomes which will help the nation to resolve the differences likely to become disputes and move towards self-reliance along with renewal of learning from scriptures with references to Mahabharata and Ramayana which are beautifully included in the book to explain diplomacy and its art, the cradle of which again is Bharat. The power dynamics of the US and China are something that India has always struggled with. The book throws a light on the loose strings of the recent past events which caused a global economic crisis, especially after 9/11 and how such events cause unprecedented damage in all possible dimensions, political, economic and diaspora alike. The book extensively emphasises the impact of the factors that are changing paradigms of the world economy, steadily moving from physical spaces of conducting trade and commerce to managing business through media that heavily depend on technology, digitisation and new modes of transactions. This itself is a dragon that governments across nations are learning to tame. Data mining, National cyber security, system hacking, Homeland Security, counter terrorism, are new

challenges that have come along with the surge of global digitisation not to mention the instrumentation of finance, investments, big tech giants' role in multi-national market capture, data monetization to influencing non-market goals as 21st century weapons can be easily dubbed as 'crisis of the new age'. The Book further explains the timing of the Emergence of Quad after staying in a much prolonged hibernation was itself not anticipated by many given the backlash of Japan post nuclear tests conducted by India in 1998 and its passive participation and disinterest in collaborating with India on matter beyond measure and its several internal implications while practicing the 'three mutuals' in the neighbouring regimes are dealt with intentions of learning from the previous errors of not having secured border management leading to passive disputes and salting immediate peace. The conflict of interest between PM Nehru and Deputy PM Sardar Patel to date is still looked upon as a deferred opportunity of territorial fortification, which at the time may have seemed defensive, but it should not come from the position of desperation at the cost of one man's emotion to play the bigger man and let 'China first'. Mr S. Jaishankar often quotes instances of the past mistakes where the natural demeanour of establishing peace of Indian policy makers was often mistaken for dependent diplomacy, also seeming as hidden economic agendas, and how that too led to the prolongation of many positive outcomes. Even today, the CPEC project can be tagged as an audacious move on the part of its collaborating countries, and many such events, no matter how little they appear on a global scale, are big enough to deter decade's decades-long attempts to realise the dream of the 'Asian Century'. In further chapters, a detailed examination is conducted on the significant second half of the twentieth century and the diplomacies that created more grey areas than necessary in domestic disputes with neighbouring territory, and how some exceptional leaders contributed to minimising the consequential damage which could have broken hell, if it were otherwise. The lesser recognised and direct contributors to the taping of modern Indian geographies, Sardar Patel, Dr B. R. Ambedkar, Pt. Shyama Prasad Mookherjee and Mr Masani had drawn their policies on the governing principle of Independent India's 'Unity in Diversity'.

Even today their political crusades in different directions of the map, only leading one way back towards a unified home under a flagship which was supposed to be plural but one, are studied and quoted for their exceptional benefaction to the nation. The lessons derived from the past become decisive factors when the power play of bigger fish encounters the one who is hard to catch. The structural and behavioural transformations are the constants of the new century. India's alliance with the global giants under numerous influences of situational circumstances has opportune them to dictate India's modern, historical and political narrative for a much longer period, and yet still we rise. The book excels at deciphering the intricately woven pattern of the strings whose one end can be located in the innermost remotest location situated in the middle of nowhere, and the other in the hands of policymakers deciding regulatory norms of commerce and security for the future concerning the former's nation. As J Sai Deepak rightfully quoted as one of the debaters on a National News channel, that history is nothing but a movement of Shakti, and we now witness that Shakti is finally returning to its source. It is pretty much evident in the endeavours initiated by commoners or guides attending foreigners at home to representatives of the country in arts, sports or academia at global platform, they are now driven by nationalism and declare their love for their nation where they have garnered their talent not as individual but to bring the unidentified, undermined at times thought unworthy of receiving such respect and glory. The reclamation of disputable spaces, identity and authentic history is never easy. This book, through its comprehensive description, sketches possibilities that at one point in time could have been easily deemed farcical. This narrative of Mr. S. Jaishankar is one of the rarest accounts to have covered the Indian foreign policy and its immeasurable, multi-directional facets in terms of its role in the nation's development and vice versa. The understanding of an individual's contribution, which is often neglected and undermined, must be exposed to the potential of its significance in leaving a global footprint and indeed making a nucleus of a major continent. It is a book reflecting an optimistic and realistic image of India that is protected in the shadow of the giant that is *Bharat*.