

# BOOK REVIEW

**Bharat Rising : Dharma, Democracy, Diplomacy, Utpal Kumar (2024)**  
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## ARTICLE HISTORY

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Bharat Rising Dharma, Democracy, Diplomacy by Utpal Kumar is a very thought provoking, well researched and argumentative book which is majorly divided into two parts: first, dharma and democracy, second, democracy and diplomacy. One cannot agree more with Anu Lall when she says that “Everyone should read this book, irrespective of their political affiliations.”

The book primarily revolves around the efforts taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government in reclaiming the civilisational culture and heritage of Bharat leading to its transformation since 2014. The best part about this book is that it contains various excerpts from many other sources and it will make you read those other books too. It traces the journey of India from 1947 till the post 2014 period labelled as a “revolution in progress”. The author boldly claims that Bharat had a false start in 1947, now it is leaving behind the Nehruvian ethos and is looking at the west while making it crystal clear that agendas which don't suit Bharat will not be welcomed. The book is about how Bharat has transformed itself both internally and externally and has become much more confident and assertive with absence of any inferiority complex shaping the world and itself without being apologetic or underconfident about it. Many outstanding revelations are made in this book supported by facts.

The author criticises the left liberal intelligentsia for historical distortions in understanding of India's rich and diverse past and an insidious type of cultural and intellectual colonialism which Bharat continued to suffer from in the post-independence period. No wonder he has unapologetically used the restoration of temple in Ayodhya, Kashi Vishwanath, Kedar Nath, Ujjain as parts of a broader civilisational perspective while also criticising Nehruvian secularism which stemmed from his own aversion and disdain towards Hindus and their temples. His compelling arguments support the view that during the

Nehruvian era, a Muslim could remain a Muslim, a Christian could remain a Christian but a Hindu was expected to be totally secular in nature. One of the major strengths of the book lies in the fact that almost every argument in it is substantiated by excerpts from diverse and credible references, and it is also written in a very simple, lucid, easy to understand language, avoiding the use of any heavy jargons which enhances its readability.

The book also launches an attack on the power-hungry elites of Lutyens's Delhi popularly referred to as "the khan market" group who owe their existence largely to the Nehru- Gandhi dynasty. They lived in sprawling bungalows, used private transport, went to private clubs, lived lives of luxury and also enjoyed various other privileges but publicly called themselves as socialists. Even during the era of prime ministers such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, it was these Lutyens's Delhi elites who remained in power and ruled the country either directly or indirectly till 2014. Utpal Kumar has rightly referred to them as a residue of the philosophy of colonial rule. The author highlights that one cannot ignore the fact that PM Narendra Modi is the first leader since independence to dismantle and overthrow the stronghold of hierarchical and elitist Lutyens' Delhi over politics.

For me, one of the most compelling arguments of the book is contained in chapter titled : "Three Musketeers and the Nehruvian Tyranny" where the author provides ample evidence to suggest that the outstanding contributions of the three legends of Indian history namely : Veer Savarkar, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and B.R. Ambedkar has been neglected by the previous regimes only because of ideological differences between them on one side and Nehru and Gandhi on the other. The author further praises post 2014 efforts by PM Modi such as the construction of statue of unity and installation of the granite statue of Netaji at India gate as symbolising a New India which gives these legends their due share and recognition. Without a doubt, this by far was one of the major victories of Modi.

The second part of the book deals with dharma and diplomacy focusing on the importance of multi-alignment strategy in diplomacy pursued by Bharat today. Bharat is making its presence felt in international relations today and it is taking a clear stand now. The author delves deeper into why India and Pakistan can never be friends, why India should consider Japan as a crucial partner and engage actively with it and how New India should not bow down to Chinese pressures in the present geopolitical context. It also

sheds light on how the earlier idealistic foreign policy of seeking concessions and neighbour's love will not serve India's interests today. The author draws a sharp contrast in earlier foreign policy far from being practical and farsighted with the current foreign policy where India's national interest comes first, shedding the earlier Panipat syndrome, a term coined by Jasjit Singh. Utpal Kumar beautifully sums up India's contemporary approach by stating that today's Indian diplomacy is very assertive in its active engagements with the QUAD, G20, Arab countries, SCO, and others but without being offensive or aggressive in its nature. In this part, the author has done a very insightful analysis of India's relations with the West, China and Pakistan over the years while also highlighting what has changed post 2014. He emphasizes that the rise of New India no longer requires western approval for all its actions as evident in the case of the Ukraine Russia war and many other global instances as well.

In the last chapter of the book titled "Liberal Media, Illiberal Agenda" Utpal Kumar calls out the anti- Indianness and hypocrisy inherent in the agendas of the western liberal media. He brings into light the articles from some of the most well-known media channels of the west like the Guardian, BBC, New York Times and others which have frequently portrayed Modi as a Hindu supremacist, authoritarian, dictatorial leader always cracking down on dissent. The same media remains silent and is completely ignorant when it comes to China Xi, Pakistani generals, jihadi installation in Afghanistan or the prevailing dictatorship in North America. Utpal Kumar has left no stone unturned in analysing the rise of New India from reclaiming its civilisational history based on dharma to criticising Lutyens' Delhi elites and hypocrisy of western liberal media while also unfolding its multi-aligned assertive foreign policy. *Bharat Rising* is a must-read book for all those who want to understand the differences between the present government's approach with the earlier ones and what has changed in India in the span of last ten years. It gives various interesting insights into the rise of New India with belief in its own destiny and strength rooted in the dharmic philosophy.

**Kirti Singh**

Post-graduate, University of Delhi.