

Book Review

Book Name: “How China Sees India and the World”

Dr. Valte

Teaches Political Science at Deshbandhu College, University of Delhi

Shyam Saran with his imposing command on China brilliantly captured China’s approach towards India and the world in his book “How China Sees India and the World”. The author being a diplomat of high caliber with extensive knowledge and experience on diplomacy and foreign policy meticulously delved on China’s gradual rise right from the emergence of People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 to the contemporary times. Being a former Foreign Secretary and having served as an Ambassador to China, Saran’s approach of unfolding China’s views with India and the rest of the world can be considered a master piece with a clear cut picture of China’s progress both domestically and internationally. The book throws light on numerous nitty-gritties that China has overcome to a level in which it stands now and the positive point in the approach is elaborate mentioning of India as a centre of excellence both in terms of diplomatic ties with the outside world since time immemorial in the field of knowledge. India no doubt provided a window of opening for China to explore in the middle east and even beyond.

The author inaugurated the writing by mentioning the past glory of both India and China. India’s flourishing era in ancient times both in the field of cultural and economic growth and maintaining a good ties with the outside world is well reckoned upon in details. The author citing of how India provided a perfect gateway for China to access Europe through Central Asia popularly known as the silk route is worthy of acknowledging. And also mentioning of how the spread of Buddhism from India to far flung areas like the East Asian countries and even to China is another point that the author pointed out in favour of India. In fact, Saran also expounded the historical ramification and the importance of India as a centre of learning. Evidence shows that in ancient times, scholars from China like Fa-Hien travelled to India in the early fifth century with a purpose to look for sacred texts related to Buddhism and similarly, another Chinese traveller Hiuen-Tsang visited India during the reign of Harsha. Significantly, many centre of excellence flourished during that time like the Nalanda and Takshashila is considered to be the hub of learning.

About China, the author begins with the internal dynamics and how it instigates the external ties with the rest of the world. The crucial point that the author made with regard to this is worth mentioning. China inspite of initial domestic problems simultaneously depended on territorial integrity. To make it functional, China looks forward for cordial relationship with the neighbouring countries. Shyam Saran also made a vivid explanation on China’s history especially the role of the Chinese Communist Party under the leadership of Mao Zedong and the gradual rise both in economic and military field. Besides this, the author also mentioned about a long boundary that India and China shares and the occasional spilling over of tension between the two countries. But

ostensibly, this drawback could not dither the continuing relationships between the two countries, China is still India's second largest trading partners. This makes it clear to validate Saran's hypothesis - China irrespective of all odds and hardship the Communist Party of China maintained well-crafted diplomatic ties with India. In similar line, Saran also sporadically made a references of the past historical context of China, like mentioning about how China was victimize with the aggression under the Mongol rule. Saran further clarified by mentioning about the cordial ties that China and India shared in ancient times still continues to persist in spite of the occasional border skirmishes in recent times between the two countries.

In order to understand China's approach to India and the world outside, the book speaks out all in brevity. The mentioning of how the economic growth of the two countries in the later part of 1970s almost equated at \$293 billion, but over the period of time the gulf began to expand exponentially in China's favour. Another important point to be noted is about how China began to shift its approach with India. To this Saran cited by mentioning it to the growing animosity that emerged due to incessant border disputes. Saran also strongly justifies about how India's diplomatic ties with the East-Asian countries is a plus point in making diplomatic maneuver in favour of India. The point of justifications begins with the mentioning of glorious India's past - the spreading of Buddhism to far flung areas especially to the East Asian countries is due to India's cordial ties with the outside world. This ties that India shared with the outside world no doubt made India the fulcrum of bridging different countries and this practice continues even in the present scenario. With regard to this, Saran directly stated that the changing situation is in India's favour as compared to China.

Although negligible, but few drawback can be noted. Viewing China from the prism of India's perspective alone seems sometimes not enough. The exponential growth of China in the field of economic and military capability cannot be demeaned without taking note of China especially keeping in mind the occasional conflicts between the two countries regarding border issue. Similarly, the diplomatic adjustments between the two countries can be possible only if both the stakeholder carefully carry out diplomatic negotiations to solve the problems amicably. Apart from these, the notion that the conflict with China is basically Nehru's making is something which needs to be thoroughly introspect as the recent border clashes between the two countries shows that the bitterness lies in to have an upper edge to dominate the region and territorial occupation.

No doubt, the crux of the book is a classic piece in itself. The simplified approach used by the author provides crystal clear view on China and its approach with the outside world. Shyam Saran with his wide-ranging knowledge on China fits well in accounting the growing geo strategic maneuver of China. However, in similar line, India with its growing world stature in diplomatic importance cannot be sideline. The economic growth and the military capability of India will continue to be a hurdle for China to have a complete free hand in the region.

To provide status quo India fits well in the region to checkmate China to which Saran opined in straight forward riposte – China's lack of knowledge vis-à-vis India would further distance the gap between the two countries. Saran further stated that China's depending on third party source to understand India would be a detrimental factor. In summation, the book is a must read for all those academicians and intellectuals who deals on China and its policy with the world. The information provided is concise and clear with easy to comprehend and understand the much vexed geo politics of the sub-continent.



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Written by: **Shyam Saran**

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