

“Breaking the Mould Book Launch”



Weekly Learnings 49 / 2023

I did the book launch chat with Raghuram Rajan and Rohit Lamba last evening. Here are my learnings on how countries stay competitive:

1. Countries need diversity, irreverence, and argumentation to stay ahead. Many countries have done that over 100 years like America reinvented itself in the face of the Russian challenge in the 60s, the Japanese challenge in the 80s and the China challenge in the 2000s. Challenging oneself to do better is an important trait as that sparks debate, innovation, creativity.

2. India has an advantage knowing English. English is the global language of business. 60 pc of the websites are English based, and all the AI work will happen with English data bases. About 12 to 13 pc of Indians know how to read and write in English but many more have a working knowledge. Leveraged well, this will help India.

3. India should pursue quality at scale. The world will increasingly demand more quality. We have many examples of quality success from India. Building quality is essential to fight global brands. India has scale and quantity by definition; we must put quality first in the pursuit of scale.

4. Moving from a society of Authority to a society of justification. India has many instruments like the RTI etc, we must analyse the experience so far. We had to justify the finance spends in front of an opposition led finance committee and Ravi Shankar Prasad and Piyush Goyal asked us tough questions. It was good learning. We must continue these practices. In UK they have a question hour where the Prime minister has to be present and answer all the questions. Every leader is a citizen first and then an authority figure and should justify their actions.

5. Role of Government. Government cannot create jobs the way they did after World War 2. The role of a government in a fast changing world is to give a fair and equal opportunity at early stage for its citizens to succeed. The role of government is to ensure proper intellectual property rights and collect taxes to plough into development. Basics like good education, health care are a given function of Government.

6. Successful current Indian examples include Id foods, Tifli, Moglix, Lenskart, Cipla, Orchids schools, India stack, Delhi schools, Mohalla Clinics, Arvind Eye hospitals, CMC Vellore, Agnikul

and Tejas. All of them solve a genuine problem. All of them have a vision and direction, so, we must identify problems, challenge current answers, and build quality led solutions.

7.The last chapter as reader/ critic vs Editor in a dialogue format. We borrowed this idea from Mahatma Gandhi's book Hind Swaraj. We wanted to write the book in this style, but our editor Radhika convinced us otherwise. A new model must always be better than an existing model and that's the thrust of the argument in this chapter. Many people have liked this 13th chapter. A no plan cannot beat a current plan. A better plan is needed.

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