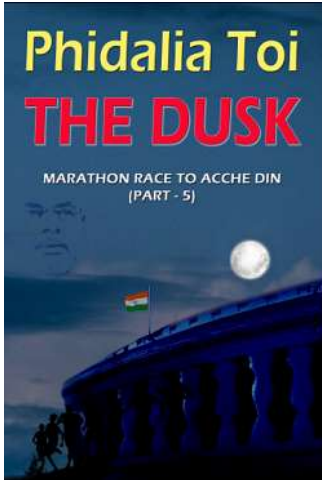


Dr Prof Shiv Sethi Reviews Phidalia Toi's *The Dusk—Marathon Race to Acche Din*

A Subtle Analysis of Modi Raj

Phidalia Toi's 'The Dusk—Marathon Race to Acche Din' which is the fifth and last book in the series 'Marathon Race to Acche Din' is a seminal piece of work for political enthusiasts. The book critically examines the situation in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's India. The Dusk reflects



her thoughts and presents minute observations on the five years of the NDA (National Democratic Alliance - II) government that came at the helm of affairs in May in the year 2014.

Phidalia Toi, an author adherent of the Constitution of India, is inspired from Narendra Modi's rise from a humble background. All the books in the series widely depict his journey from the narrow dingy alleys to the commodious corridors of powers. The books shed light on a host of burning social issues prevalent in the country. While raising her staccato

the author subtly analyses every important event that took place during the last five years. She states that the book has been written about India and not against it. Her works are unique which chronicle all the achievements and yet-to-be achieved goals and objectives of the present government. She writes, not rues.

The opening chapter of the last book, 'The Dusk: Have the good times rolled in?' throws a salvo of questions to the readers. The chapter questions without passing any judgment. The chapter elaborates the fact that India saw a mixed-bag of the good, the best and the worse. She mentions that '...the BJP and its supporters agree that five years is too short of a period to make desirable changes because after over 50 months of his tenure, many problems still plague the ruling BJP party at the centre and in the BJP-ruled states'.

The subsequent chapters in the book distinguish between the 'low-hanging fruits' and the 'big bang reforms and their impact on the socio-economic health of the common citizen of India. Among many other things, the chapter points out the delay in the implementation of the Lokpal and the suppression of uncomfortable and potentially embarrassing data spread mistrust regarding the transparency and incorruptibility of the government.

Toi's usage of adages and proverbs reflects her command of the English language. She writes plainly that 'if we look through the lens of the masses, what do we see? The empty spaces for children to play are piled up with

mounds of garbage; streets are occupied by skinny starving cows and the footpaths are taken up by the hungry and homeless.' She adds, 'the adage laws catch flies and let hornets go free applies to the prevailing situation from The Dawn until the The Dusk'.

Toi in the second chapter of the book, 'The No Confidence Motion', describes the Modi government which faced the first no confidence motion during its term. The chapter describes the historic day on which the no confidence motion unfolded. One of the most striking features of the chapter is that it describes the famous 'hug' episode of the Parliament session which featured both Narendra Modi and front line Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. The construction of the sentences and the choice of words by Toi is so apt that they do not sound didactic and preachy .

The Election Commission of India is one of the most important institutions in the country. Phidalia Toi's third chapter 'Fundamental Pillar of Democracy: Part II' delineates the invoking of Article 324 of the Constitution of India which endows it with the power to 'superintendence, direction and control of elections'. The role of the Election Commission of India is to organise and get elections conducted with smoothness. Toi very pertinently puts forth the point that the Commission, 'in the scorching heat of the elections and midst all the political mud-slinging, has to keep its head above the tumultuous water...'. Her deep understanding of the

workings of the Election Commission provides delightful insights to the readers.

The chapter deals with how 'over the years, political parties and candidates have been in the habit of blaming the Election Commission for their electoral issues'. She states 'there is an urgent need to free the Election Commission of India from political influences by putting in place better processes to appoint and remove the Election Commissioners'. She shows the courage to suggest that the biased and corrupted Election Commissioners be removed. Toi's mentions the losing of Indian's faith in the EVMs and functioning of VVPATs. She balances every aspect quite dexterously and cautiously and lets the readers decide what is right and what is wrong with the country.

One of the most important and interesting chapters of the book deals with the fourth pillar of democracy—the media. She begins the chapter with Mehmet Murat Ildan's brilliant quote - 'Beware of pro-government media in your country because it doesn't open your eyes, it just makes you blind'. Writing about media is a daunting task given the fact that it always views and keeps a watchful eye. She blatantly expresses '...the abridgement of free expression and the press by the establishment is a serious infringement of that right as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution'. She writes about the instance in which the BJP-led government told NDTV India to shut down for a day. 'The Editors Guild of India and non-BJP political

parties have dubbed the ban a blatant attack on press freedom and likened the censorship to the emergency years of late PM Indira Gandhi', she writes.

The chapters that follow in the book are inter-linked and above all very relevant. She deals with democracy in social media, digital India, and the defence deal among other issues. It is striking how Toi handles the issues and concerns of the people regarding the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB). The chapter begins with one of the most celebrated quotes of former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee (If India is not secular, then India is not India at all. Governments will come and go. This nation must remain).

The best part of this chapter is that it reveals the turmoil and mayhem in the wake of the CAB 2016 and also balances it without passing any remark or comment. Her deep knowledge of the north east region is reflected from her writings in this chapter. She mentions 'Relatively, the CAB is a recipe for disaster in the region'. It is known to all that the NRC gave the ruling party a jolt. Toi's understanding and thorough knowledge of the NRC is depicted from the lines 'Honesty speaking, the Central Government cannot blame the people of North East for being against the CAB. Instead of deporting illegal migrants, the CAB portends to welcome the Bangladeshis and add Pakistanis and Afghans to the list of accepted migrants'.

Phidalia Toi saves an important issue for the last. The concluding chapter of the book, 'Jammu and Kashmir:

View from a Distance (Part II)' advises 'the Indian public from other parts of the country should refrain from making any untoward comments based on hearsay or rumours'. A lot many chapters and books have been written on the issues and concerns pertaining to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. But Toi's single chapter encompasses almost all its aspects. She dedicates a considerable segment of the chapter to Pulwama.

Toi ends each chapter without sermonising. In fact, the entire work examines the present India without judging or passing any remark with an absolutely dispassionate approach . She leaves it there for the readers to formulate their own opinions. 'The Dusk—Marathon Race to Acche Din' is a landmark work which must be read not only by the political aficionados but by all the segments of the readers

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About the Author



Phidalia Toi was born and raised in a small town called Jowai, in Meghalaya, North-east of India. She has acquired a Masters degree in Khasi Language Literature from North Eastern Hills University Shillong. She has also learnt Cinematography from Mumbai.

Writing Lyrics, Novels and scripts for Dramas are her passions.

About the Interviewer

Dr Prof. Shiv Sethi is an internationally acclaimed columnist, literary critic and book reviewer. He has reviewed the works of the most famous authors from across the globe.



Dr Prof. Sethi (Ph D, M Phil, four times MA) is the Head of the Department of English language and Linguistics at Dev Samaj Post Graduate College For Women Ferozepur for the last 17 years.

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