

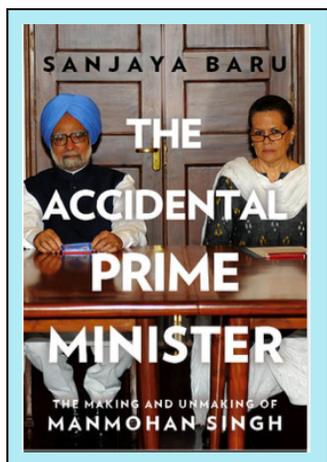
# CHANGING TIMES

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THE HEALING NEWSPAPER

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## Book Review: "The Selling-Out of a Nation" - Nalin K. Nirula



(Penguin, Hardcover 320 pages, March 20, 2014.

Kindle Edition: Viking, April 11, 2014, 320 pages, 860 KB

*'The Accidental Prime Minister: The Making & Unmaking of Manmohan Singh' – Sanjaya Baru, Penguin, 320 pages*

*Seeing the news about this book and the clearly confused and uninformed knee-jerk responses to it by various politicians, I tried to get a hard copy of the book. Not able to get one, I settled for downloading the Kindle edition and read it on my iPhone and Mac devices. The author is a well-respected journalist, and professor of economics, who left his job as Chief Editor of the Financial Express to join Manmohan Singh in 2004 as his Media Adviser.*

As I read the book I was overcome by nagging feelings of disquiet and a sense of sad sympathy for Dr. Manmohan Singh. Baru's book, although promoted as a political gossip narrative by the publishers (Penguin), it is much more than that. The book reveals much about the effects of the inner workings of the UPA-1 regime, without overtly giving away any confidential 'official secrets'. Cleverly done indeed!

While most of us 'know' that the country is run by dynastic rulers and their venal satraps, this persuasive narrative by an insider confirming this still has the power to shock.

Sanjay Baru establishes that, as Prime Minister, Dr. Singh was under many pressures and compulsions, and his fundamental role was to take the fall as head of a government, for any political-economic fallout, and to ascribe all positives to the Congress party and the Gandhi Dynasty.

Dr. Manmohan Singh's role for his initiatives and successes were downplayed. Instead, the ruling party sycophantically praised the Gandhis for those achievements.

Many positive initiatives for the benefit of the country fell by the wayside and were scuttled in the interest of promoting the Gandhi Dynasty.

From the book it is clear that the dynastic politics of India holds back the possibilities of maximizing any progress for the people's aspirations.

In the epilogue Sanjaya Baru likens Manmohan Singh to Bheeshma of the Mahabharata – he, who also had to preside over and support dynastic politics, corruption and venality while maintaining his own integrity. In a deranged sort of way, the comparison is alarmingly apt.

Dr. Singh as the Accidental Prime Minister *is*, in fact, unnervingly reminiscent of Bheeshma, with all the back-story implicit in that comparison.

Sanjaya Baru succeeds in setting up this impression indelibly in the reader's mind, and when he makes the inevitable comparison of Dr. Singh to Bheeshma, it brings into focus the oddly horrific feeling one has while reading the book that somehow, somewhere, one has met this characterization of Dr. Singh—that one knows him in this way from another time and place, that is all too real.

This impression remains despite the flaws in the hastily edited book, and some tedious sections of narrative.

Like the 'Accidental Prime Minister', the book too is a flawed but heroic presentation, while remaining deeply disturbing. It should stimulate sober thinking and re-evaluation of not only Dr. Singh's part in the growth and progress of India, but it also should rudely awaken all who have tacitly or helplessly accepted the established corruption of government that has stepped into the daily lives of all Indians.

Nalin K. Nirula

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