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BOOK REVIEW

"AADHAR A Biometric History of INDIA'S 12 DIGIT REVOLUTION", Westland publications ltd, 2017 "

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Pultizer prize winning writer Journalist Thomas Friedman in an Recent interview when asked about India's structural reforms he supported it for bigger goals keeping privacy & security issues in the mind citing Equifax. When concept of Unique Identity (UID) was floated it faced lot of uproar on right to privacy. Lot of civil society group raised questions on the security of data and sounded bell over incidents like Equifax; still the Nation of an Argumentative Indian gave birth to a sophisticated system with possible multiple uses called 'AADHAR'. Shankar Aiyar takes us through this journey spread over decades for fight over IDENTITY. The Review is spread in three parts

- **THE CONCEPT**

Need is mother of all innovations and same holds true for AADHAR, its multi-pronged utility envisaged by every individuals and organisations uniquely and differently. For a last mile man the biggest everyday war was to prove his identity at every window for his claim. Since independence consecutive governments have introduced welfare schemes for weak and deprived however their right never reached them or they received the filtered residual. The system treated them as beggars who can have the left overs of the schemes created for them. The corruption could only be wiped or reduced through more transparency and less human intervention. This explains love for technology of our PM's from Mr. Rajeev Gandhi to Mr. Narendra Modi. They have understood human can be corrupted but machines and software are more robust and very cost effective. For a nation of billion even saving a rupee per person turns out to be a saving of a Billion. So a cost effective technology based system on low people to people intervention at various stages of the transaction became narrative of the solution called AADHAR.

The book takes to inception of the Idea from Vajpayee to UPA I & II to NDA, the author maintains the narrative. In the year 2000 the then Vajpayee government basis Kargil Review Committee form a GoM(Group of Ministers) to look in to issues pertaining to national security; One of the recommendations to come out of this was to introduce a multipurpose National Identity Card, the seeds were sown for the birth of UID. It was not as if there was dearth of any existing identity establishing number/card/document though be it PAN, Voter ID or Ration Card etc. each of these were designed to address specific purposes. As Mr NandanNilekani told K.P. Krishnan, "All that is needed is to induct technology to establish that you, K.P. Krishnan, are K.P.Krishnan and issue a unique identity number that can be validated across the Country. This simple excerpt from the book defined platform on which the future scrappers of UID will be built.

- **THE TEAM**

NandanNilekani remains the name synonyms with UID however the success of any project depends on the team. A heady cocktail of straight jacket bureaucrats with free flowing corporate honchos was going to be created. The talent pool from both worlds merged to create a unique platform, As the author interestingly calls it a 'SarkariStartup'. The contribution of CFO Ram Sewak Sharma an IAS of 1978 batch having MS in computer science from University of California to UID program is huge. Being coding hobbyist and already having an

experience in implementing IT solution to various issues in a Sarkari Setup proved to be price less for UID program. He was the first one to be taken on board followed by M.S. Srikar a Karnataka Cadre IAS officer and a law prodigy was taken on board as the PS, who ensured the entire project kept flowing with in the gambit of the constitution. The last of trilogy to be inducted was Ms Ganga K a finance expert by profession and technology buff by choice joined as a CFO with a caveat that she will be allowed to actively participate in conceptualisation and implementation of project.

The author articulately lays down the premises for each and every team member. The team UID worked like force to reckon with, creating in house solution, designs. Every member using their linkages to bring in the technical know how to resolve issues. Most of the road blocks were cleared using back channels to ensure the project keeps moving ahead. The book also does justice by giving appropriate space to leaders of the nation who tirelessly supported, debated and fought for the cause. From Pranab Mukherjee, Rahul Gandhi To Narendra Modi AADHAR found musketeer in some one or the other.

- **THE JOURNEY**

Spread over more than a decade and program of such magnitude is bound to have challenges over its course. Author draws the issues precisely and paints the solutions beautifully. From finding the name to the program from an elderly Mongiya, Naiya Ram Rathore, lines of wisdom to iconic logo through crowdsource, UID program overcame creative issues brilliantly. The tougher nut was Right to privacy. Social welfare societies, NGO's, Ministers etc viewed UID programs as a government infringement in right to privacy. AADHAR teams's approach was to create an ID which become a platform for delivery of various services. The basic utility of AADHAR being a valid KYC documents was primary motive however UIDAI tireless worked towards making AADHAR enabled processes a solutions that would enable the creation of an ecosystem for financial inclusion to be possible. The UIDAI team kept the dialogue open at various fronts to create such an ecosystem which can facilitate RBI, law makers, tech buffs in the web.

- **EPILOGUE**

Technology can be transformational and this book weaves story with this line in the back ground. The author summarises the stark reality is the wide claim between availability of provisions in laws and enforcement.

The entire gambit of fake and duplicate identities has been eroding government exchequer. The right to food bill act has been played with when owners of the Ration shop deny the beneficiary their entitlement and black market the channels.

The subsidies entitled for backward and down trodden section of the society never gets the credit and the affluent enjoy it. The entire black economy thrived or were offshoot of these loopholes, starting from crop procurement (MSP-Minimum Support Price) to Public distribution system the middleman always popped up to take advantage of the loopholes in the system.

A fractured system has given rise to a Factured society AADHAR could plug in these loophole, DBT- direct benefit transfer has an example of this, creating a cleaner and just future societies.

Author through his book not only sizes up the innovation miracle which is AADHAR however he does not shy away from other side by putting up case for data protection and privacy issues which clearly transcends in to the domain of Right to Privacy act. The Road ahead requires society and government to take a pragmatic approach towards AADHAR, it cannot be a potion for all ills, though it has capacity and capability to restructure the level of effectiveness and transparency for various programs both regulatory and welfare.

However, as the author put its for so many identity is AADHAR for life.

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Journal of Amity Business Journal
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It is author's obligation to provide complete references with the necessary information References should appear in the text as: "*Filbeck et al*. (2005) reported that……" and the list of all reference must be placed at the end of the manuscript in APA style.

– Basleeris, N. and Huang, M. (2004), "Preferences with frames: A new utility specification that allows for the framing of risk", Working Paper, Stanford University.

– Complull, J.Y. and Viceira, L.M. (1999), "Consumption and portfolio decision when expected relies are time working", Journal of Economics, Vol. 114, No. 2, PP. 433-495.

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- The paper should be typed in MS Word. Maximum size of the paper should be about 6,000 words including title/cover page and references.
- Title of the page should be followed by name, e-mail and affiliation of author(s).
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