

BOOK REVIEW

- Book Name: I do what I do
- Author: Dr. Raghuraman Rajan
- Publication: HarperBusiness; 1 edition
- Publishing date: 4 September 2017
- No. of Pages: 344
- Approximate time to read: 5 Hours 45 minutes
- Reviewer : **Dr Aditi Priya Singh**

A book, which has made ripples this year, has been written by a career academician, a temporary bureaucrat and one of the sharpest economic minds of our time – ex-Governor of RBI – Dr. Raghuraman Rajan. The book got its title from one of the press conferences that the author attended where a journalist tried to trap him with a question of whether he is dovish like Yellen or hawkish like Volcker. As a response, jokingly he started in James' blondish style “My name is Raghuraman Rajan...” and then he did not know how to end the sentence in a way that does not reveal much about the monetary policies and he ended up saying “...and I do what I do.” The statement became headline of next day newspapers, captured more media space than monetary policy discussion and eventually became the title of his newly published book in September 2017.

“I do what I do” is primarily a collection of his speeches that he delivered during his tenure at RBI along with some commentary setting the context of the speeches.

In his own words, the rationale behind writing this book was:

“In the speeches, I gave while at the RBI, I had been describing the reforms we were undertaking and the rationale behind them, both to build confidence amongst investors and to get support from the public. If I could link together the speeches in a book with commentary about what prompted each speech, I could give the youth of the country a feel for the excitement of working at the central bank. I hoped that will attract a few into the area of economics and finance, where India really needs more good people.”

The series of speeches start from the day he took over as governor of the reserve bank of India. That was a time when Indian rupee was in free fall, inflation was high and India was being dubbed to be part of ‘fragile five’. The first speech is his statement on taking office on

September 4, 2013. In this speech, he outlined his ideas on monetary policy, changes that he envisaged in banking regulation and internationalization of rupee.

From here, the author takes us through a journey through his tenure which culminated in his last letter to his colleagues on 18th June 2016, some days shy of end of his tenure at RBI. In this letter, he wrote about factors affecting his decision to go back to his university and how he is ready to take up any responsibility for his nation. He listed down the accomplishments during his tenure and as a true leader, he shared his success team stating that he felt proud that “....we at Reserve Bank have delivered on these proposals..” He talked about how the things changed since he took over (when India was being counted among fragile five) to the point where country’s forex reserve was at its peak. How exchange rates were stabilized and inflation was brought to a target zone (in 2016, at the time his term ended, CPI was 4.39% as compared to 10.5% when he took over as RBI governor in 2013). He shared credit for all these with the team working at RBI.

Between these two addresses to his colleagues, there are numerous speeches which talk about intricacies of how RBI work and how the dynamics between government, bureaucracy and the RBI exist. He emphasized on the importance of RBI governor role and his/her responsibilities.

What comes out most significantly in his book is the importance of communication in the role of the head of India’s central bank. His example of ‘dosanomics’ in explaining how low nominal but high real interest rate is good for pensioners stands out in the way economy can be talked about when speaking to common men and women. In a developing country like India, he emphasized the role that communication from RBI chief plays in sending right signals to the mass and to build confidence among investors and the market. No wonder Mr. Rajan was one of the most vocal RBI chiefs, we have seen in recent times. He was darling of the media and he understood the reason why media followed him and played the game very judiciously. Who can forget his statement in a press interaction “My name is.....I do what I do”.

During his tenure at RBI, he was revered by media and mass alike as a person with ability to simplify economics. His acumen is reflected in his speeches at global front, where he talked about global financial situation; role of banks and the changes that the role of a banker has seen over a period of time. His understanding on impact of changing technology on the changing roles of a banker and on reducing cost of money is insightful.

Having seen the global meltdowns, some of which resulted from changing risk appetite of the new bankers, driven by skewed incentives, he brought the point pretty well in his speech at Jackson Hole Conference.

Mr. Rajan’s understanding of economy, paired with his ability of reaching out his audience and skill of writing his speeches himself is evident in the book, which makes a good read for anyone, who wishes to understand how central banks work and what’s the role of the chief of central bank is, especially in Indian context.

Anyone who wishes to understand how India went through transition between 2013 and 2016 will find it a good read. The book provides a good oversight on how our system works, what is being done to 'fix' the system and why it is needed to reform the system rather than just fixing it. 5 Ps of financial inclusion – what it is and how it can be used to include the poorest into the financial system, how imposing certain conditions may work and what could be the pitfalls of these conditions make the book comprehensive for all those who wish to understand the role economy/finance can play in Indian society and where do the opportunities lie.

The goal that he set for his book to achieve – that of being useful for youth of the country to have a feel of excitement of working at RBI – has been met successfully. However, the reader is advised to read the content with an open and analytical mind.

The Author, while giving credit to whoever deserves, skirts the controversial issues, where someone could have been blamed and thereby giving food to the thoughts for Media, shows maturity of the author, which is expected from an RBI governor.

Overall, I would say it's a book worth reading, the content is worth understanding and the skills of Mr. Rajan in communicating his ideas is worth learning from. Go and enjoy the book!