

Bhagavad Gita to Modi Jacket: Exploring the essence of Narendra Modi's gift Diplomacy

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Abstract

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign visits have been incomparable with the foreign visits made by his predecessors due to many reasons such as his engagements with Diaspora, business community, industrialists, innovators, political leaders and also with many more unique features. Modi has offered Line of Credit of millions of dollars for various countries for various purposes. Modi has sought assistance from developed countries for Technology, funding and raw materials. On the contrary Modi has offered assistance for capacity building, infrastructure development, education etc to many countries. Gifting antique things, health care equipments, ambulances etc to head of states he met or for the whole nation, were one among those unique features. As on 31st December 2018, Modi has landed over ninety times in foreign Airports. He has covered almost all parts of the world with multiple visits to same country. It is notable that Modi often carried a gift whenever he visited foreign countries for bilateral talks despite whether it is with a developed country or with a developing country. Modi has framed a new way of diplomacy which can be termed as 'Gift Diplomacy' in India's International Relations. The gift diplomacy conveys India's culture, tradition and its care for humanity. This paper is aimed to cover the in-depth details of Modi's gift diplomacy while he was the Prime Minister of India from 2014 to 2019. This paper is divided into three sections. The first section is a detailed report on gifts presented by Modi during his foreign visits. Second section is the analysis of the core objectives or essence of Modi's 'Gift Diplomacy' and final section is the conclusion.

Keywords: Gifts, Foreign Visits, Diplomacy, Indian culture.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been visiting nations to nations since he assumed the office on 26th May 2014. He has been covering many countries in a row to save the time and fuel. The main agenda of his visits were to enhance the bilateral relationship and to strengthen the cooperation. He sought assistance from developed countries and also never missed to offer support and aid to developing countries. Modi's speeches and activities at various occasions outside India reveals that he always tried to carry and spread Indian culture and tradition across borders. Offering financial aid, loans, scholarships, technical assistance, educational exchange programs are not a very uncommon thing with regards to a Prime Minister who is on an outbound tour. Modi's foreign policy which is often deliberated as 'Modi Doctrine' is special by its unique feature of 'Gift Diplomacy'. Modi used to gift antiques, commemorations, replicas, ambulances, medical equipments etc whenever he visits foreign countries and it has become a part of Modi Doctrine. Modi, who visited Nepal for the first time as Prime Minister of India in August 2014, conducted a special Puja at the Pashupatinath temple and donated 2,500 kg of sandalwood and also promised Rs. 25 crore for the renovation and restoration of the 17th century heritage structure. This marks the beginning of Modi's gift diplomacy. (The Hindu, 2014)

Gift to US President Barack Obama

Modi gifted a Bhagavad Gita to US President Barack Obama on his maiden visit to US in September 2014. It was named as 'The Bhagavad Gita According to Gandhi'. Modi presented this to Obama during a dinner hosted at the White House. Modi has spoke about Mahatma Gandhi and his struggle for India's independence during the speech at Madison Square Garden. He noted that India's guiding philosophy for peace was inspired from Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi. The first Hindu ever elected to the US House of Representatives and a Democrat from Hawaii, Mr Tulsi Gabbard gifted a copy of the Gita to Narendra Modi during the meet. Modi showed up a deep connection with the Gita. He has also gifted a copy of 'Bhagavad Gita' to Japanese Emperor Akihito when he visited Japan in August 2014. (The Indian Express, 2014)

Gift to Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott

Modi gifted late Australian lawyer Mr. John Lang's 1854 petition on behalf of Rani Lakshmibai against the East India Company, to Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbot during his maiden visit to Australia in November 2014. Modi's gifts to Abbott brought John

Lang's contribution to Indian history to the fore¹. He also gifted a commemorative Photo Collage dedicated to the memory of Mr. John Lang. The collage included Photo of Marriage Certificate of John Lang with Margaret Wetter (Christ Church of Mussoorie, India, 11 May 1861), Photo of John Lang's final resting place (Camel's Back Road Cemetery Mussoorie), Photo of a Commemorative Plaque in memory of John Lang (Christ Church of Mussoorie). As a part of strengthening cricket diplomacy between India and Australia, Modi presented "Skippers" memento carrying replica of Mahatma Gandhi's charkha with three cricket balls signed by himself and World Cup winning Indian captains Kapil Dev and M S Dhoni, to Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott at Melbourne Cricket Ground. Veteran cricketers Kapil Dev, Sunil Gavaskar, VVS Laxman, Glenn Mcgrath etc were also present in the function. (The Economic Times, 2014) (DeshGujarat, 2014) (The Economic Times, 2014)

Gift to Nepal

As a symbol of shared Buddhist heritage, Modi gifted a sacred Bodhi tree sapling to be planted in Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha when he visited Nepal in November 2014 to attend 18th SAARC Summit. The Bodhi Tree at the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya, Bihar, is the exact place where Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment 2,600 years ago and became the Lord Buddha. The sapling was planted near to the Maya Devi temple in Lumbini. (The Hindu, 2014)

Gift to French President Francois Hollande

Modi gifted a painting titled 'Tree of Life' to French President Francois Hollande when he visited France in April 2015. The painting reflects the traditional societal respect for nature in India. The painting was done by an Odisha artist, Bhaskar Mahapatra, who has been practicing the art form for the last 30 years. He works from his home in the heritage crafts village of Raghurajpur. He has been honoured by Lalit Kala Akademi, for his expertise in palm leaf painting and pattachitra. The message behind gifting is seemed to be the importance on sustenance of life and clean environment ahead of the global meet on climate

¹ Mr Lang was born in Sydney in 1816. He is regarded as the Australia's first native novelist. He was also a lawyer, journalist and a born traveller. He sailed to India in 1842. He learnt Hindustani language and practiced as a lawyer in India. He started a newspaper in 1845 called 'The Moffusilite', published initially from Meerut and later from Mussoorie. The paper often took a critical stance against the British East India Company's harmful policies and was he imprisoned by the company. John Lang became the member of Counsel of the Maharani Lakshmibai of Jhansi In 1854. Lang represented for Lakshmibai in legal battles against the East India Company

change which is planned to be conducted in France in December 2015. (The Indian Express, 2015)

Gift to German Chancellor Angela Merkel

Modi gifted reproductions of some manuscripts and papers by Indian Nobel Laureate Sir CV Raman to German Chancellor Angela Merkel when he visited Germany in April 2015. German Chancellor Angela Merkel herself is a doctorate degree holder in quantum chemistry. Modi said at the function that the 1930 Nobel Prize for Physics winner, Sir CV Raman had a strong connection with Germany. He noted that Sir CV Raman was inspired to pursue science as a career by famous German scientist Von Helmholtz. Helmholtz's famous book 'The Sensations of Tone' had motivated Sir CV Raman to undertake a scientific study of acoustics of both Indian and western musical instruments. The Terms Raman Effect and Raman Spectrum themselves were coined in 1928 by a German physics professor Dr Peter Pringsheim and also the two of the scientists who nominated Mr Raman for the Nobel Prize were German physician Richard Pfeiffer and German physicist Johannes Stark who had won the Nobel in 1919. Modi noted that the seeds of Indo-German research collaboration were sown in Sir CV Raman's time. Such collaboration has grown immensely over the years and now Germany is one of India's leading partners in research. Modi tweeted that "*Sir CV Raman's work finds extensive application in diverse areas, even quantum chemistry - in which Chancellor Merkel holds a doctorate*". (NDTV, 2015)

Gift to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper

Modi gifted a miniature painting depicting Sikh Guru Nanak Dev with his two disciples to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper when he visited Canada in April 2015. It was a painting done in traditional Indian miniature style. The composition shows Guru Nanak Dev with his two disciples Bhai Mardana and Bhai Bala, sitting beside him. The painting is encased in intricately painted borders and made with handmade paper with mineral colours. The work has been done by a Jaipur-based artist, Virendra Bannu. Modi said at the occasion that "*So many of our Punjabi brothers and sisters have made Canada their home and enriched it with their renowned vigour and entrepreneurial drive*". (NDTV, 2015)

Gift to Chinese Premier Xi Jinping

Modi presented replicas of a stone casket of Buddhist relics and a stone statue of Buddha to Chinese President Xi Jinping while he visited China in May 2015. These were excavated from an AD 4th century Stupa at Dev-Ni-Mori in 1957². (India China Trade Centre, 2015)

Gift to Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj

Modi gifted a specially commissioned reproduction of a rare 13th century manuscript on the history of Mongols from the Rampur Raza Library, to Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj while he visited Mongolia in May 2015. The manuscript which is called Jamiut Tawarikh, was one of the grandest projects undertaken by the Ilkhanate king Ghazan Khan (1295-1304). This work was done by the king's Wazir Rasheeduddin Fazlullah Hamedani who wrote it in Persian and chronicled the history up to the reign of Oljeitju (1304-1316). The manuscript has over 80 fine miniature illustrations. The manuscript is a part of Volume 1 of the work and no other copy of it is known to exist. Modi has also handed over a Bodhi tree sapling to Hamba Lama (Chief Abbott) during a visit to the Gandan Monastery in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. (The Indian Express, 2015) (The Economic Times, 2015)

Gift to South Korean President Park Geun-hye

Modi presented South Korean President Mr. Park Geun-hye two finely woven pashmina stoles while he visited South Korea in May 2015. The poem that Rabindranath Tagore had written specially for Korea was hand embroidered in English and Korean on the beige-coloured stoles. The text of Tagore's poem that was published in 1929 in the Korean

² Dev-Ni-Mori is situated 80 kilometres east of Vadnagar, Gujara. Modi also presented archaeological drawings of excavations at Vadnagar which was one of the places visited by the great Chinese traveller Xuanzang. Xuanzang is also known as Hieun Tsang and is believed that he visited Dev-Ni-Mori in AD 641. The site is referred to as Anandpur in Xuanzang's writings and recent excavations prove the existence of a Buddhist centre at Vadnagar way back in AD 2nd century. Additionally, Modi paid a visit to Giant Wild Goose Pagoda where Xuanzang worked for years to translate the sutras that he brought from India. Recent excavations at Vadnagar have revealed a burnt brick structure that has been identified as a Buddhist monastery, on the basis of its peculiar plan and the antiquities recovered from there. The antiquities recovered include a red sandstone broken head of Buddha, a votive tablet with foot impression, and a crescent-shaped stone tray depicting the scene of a monkey offering honey to Buddha. Xuanzang had recorded in his writings that there were more than 1000 monks of the Sammitiya School or Little Vehicle in ten monasteries at Vadnagar, suggesting that Vadnagar was an important centre of Buddhist learning in western India during that period.

daily Dong was - *In the golden age of Asia, Korea was one of its lamp bearers and that lamp is waiting to be lighted once again for the illumination of the East.* (Zeen News, 2015)

Gift to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

Modi presented a rare gift to Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina while he visited Dhaka in June 2015. It was an audio clip of her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech, a hand-woven tapestry and the transcript and digital record of parliamentary debates on the historic Land Boundary Agreement.³ Modi also presented Sheikh Hasina a rare audio recording of Bangabandhu's speech in Kolkata in 1972. In a reciprocal gesture, Sheikh Hasina presented Modi a photograph of the 1971 signing of '*Instrument of Surrender*' after the Bangladesh Liberation War. Ahead of the visit, Modi tweeted as - "*Hello Bangladesh. I bring with me the affection & goodwill of the people of India.*" (India Today , 2015)

Gift to Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov

Modi presented a gift to Uzbekistan President Mr Islam Karimov while he visited the country in July 2015, a specially commissioned reproduction of *Khamsa-i-Khusrau* by the great 13th century Sufi poet Amir Khusrau who was born in Uttar Pradesh and whose father hailed from Uzbekistan. The work is a part of the manuscripts collection of National Museum, Delhi, written in Persian language and decorated and illuminated with various colours including gold. (PM India, 2015)

Gift to Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev

Modi presented a set of books relating to religions born in India to President of Kazakhstan Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev while he visited Kazakhstan in July 2015. The set includes an English translation of *Guru Granth Sahib* along with specially commissioned reproductions from the manuscripts collection of National Museum, Delhi. The reproductions also include one of Jainism's most revered texts, *Bhadrabahu's Kalpasutra* (15th century AD)

³ The tapestry was fabricated by Shri Gowrabathini Ramanaiyah. Gowrabathini Ramanaiyah is a national award winning artist and master craftsman from Nellore. The Tapestry was woven using fine cotton yarns and pure gold thread with both the warp and the weft having the same count of cotton yarns. The tapestry is a form of textile art traditionally woven on a vertical loom. Venkatagiri, Located in Nellore district is famous for handlooms. Its weavers have adopted the fine 'jamdani' style while assimilating traditional designs of the region. The 'jamdani' style is a well-known textile tradition in Bangladesh It was depicted with a sacred Kalpavriksh tree and the Kamdhenu cow which is a symbolic representation of prosperity as per Hindu mythology. The Kalpavriksh, or the wish-fulfilling tree, is believed to be one of the nine jewels churned out of the primal ocean. It is one of the most pervasive motifs in Indian artistic creations. It is believed that Kamadhenu or the sacred cow grants all wishes and desires.

in Prakrit, one of Buddhism's most important scriptures Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita (12th century AD) in Sanskrit and a Persian translation of Valmiki's Ramayana (18th century AD) in nastaliq script. The President Nazarbayev has held the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions every three years at the Palace of Peace and Accord in Astana since 2003. (PM India, 2015)

Gift to Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov

Modi presented a specially handcrafted horse saddle to Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov while he visited Turkmenistan in July 2015. President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov is known to be passionate about horses. He is a keen horse rider and known for his passion for horse breeding, racing and equestrian. Horse-riding is an important part of culture In Turkmenistan. President Berdymuhamedov has also written books about horses and was given the title of "*national horse-breeder of Turkmenistan*". His love for horses was immortalised with a golden statue of himself on horseback in the Turkmen capital Ashgabat. The statue is at a mountain of marble which is 69 feet above the city. (Mid-Day, 2015)

Gift to Kyrgyzstan President Mr. Almazbek Atambayev

Modi presented a hand-knotted carpet of very fine grade wool blended with silk to Kyrgyzstan President, Mr. Almazbek Atambayev while he visited Kyrgyztan in July 2015. (Press Information Bureau, 2015)

Gift to Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny

Modi presented to Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny, a reproductions of a historic manuscripts and papers pertaining to two Raj-era Irish officials, Thomas Oldham (1816-1878) and George Abraham Grierson (1851-1941), in recognition of their contributions to India. Modi also gifted a specially handcrafted piece of silver, marble and roughly-hewn sandstone rock that imagines the Irish symbol of shamrock as a votive candle-stand or an aarti lamp, with a peacock perched by the side of shamrock leaves, along with silver-tipped crystal dewdrops signifying serenity and purity. The original manuscripts and papers which

Modi presented to Kenny are preserved in the National Archives of India.⁴ (India Today, 2015)

Gift to British Prime Minister David Cameroon and to Queen Elizabeth II

Modi presented British Prime Minister David Cameron a specially handcrafted pair of bookends made of wood, marble and silver while he visited UK in November 2015. There is a silver bell at the centrepiece of each of these bookends which is a symbol of inner wisdom and tidings. It was etched with a verse from the Bhagavad Gita in Sanskrit, along with its English meaning along the inside rim. Modi also presented Prime Minister Cameron, David Omissi's *Indian Voices of the Great War* in view of Cameron's fondness for Robert Graves' work on World War I *Goodbye to All That*. Modi presented an Aranmula metal mirror and some Pashmina stoles to first lady Samantha Cameron. It is a unique GI protected handicraft from Kerala. Modi who also met Queen Elizabeth II, presented her some rare photographs which was taken in 1961 while she made her maiden visit to India. It was during this visit that the Queen had also paid a visit to some other Indian cities like Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Udaipur, Varanasi, Chennai, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Modi also gifted her some award-winning Darjeeling tea from Makaibari tea estate in West Bengal, fine organic honey from Jammu and Kashmir, and Tanchoi stoles that are a specialty of Varanasi. (The Indian Express, 2015) (NarendraModi.in, 2015)

Gift to Singapore Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong

Modi presented Singapore Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong a reproduction of a map of the island of Singapore dating back to 1849. The dimension of the map was 52in x

⁴ Thomas Oldham was born in Dublin and was appointed as geological surveyor in 1850 to conduct a survey in India and his services were placed with the then Government of Bengal. The joining day of Mr Thomas into service in March 1851 is celebrated as the foundation day of the Geological Survey of India. Apart from conducting the first systematic coal mapping of India and later initiating mapping of other minerals, he has written extensively on the fossils of India. Mr. Abraham Grierson was an Irish civil servant and philologist who conducted the first Linguistic Survey of India in 1898. The Survey was later published over several years during 1903-28. It was Abraham Grierson's Survey that provided the first scientifically based taxonomy of the Indo-Aryan languages within which the linguistic status of various forms of Hindi, Urdu and other Indo-Aryan speech forms is based. The separation of Hindi into Western and Eastern dialect zones is the direct result of Grierson's classification efforts. Grierson was a student of mathematics at Trinity College, Dublin and he was awarded prizes in Sanskrit and Hindi. Grierson lived in Bengal from 1873 to 1898 where he carried his duties as a government official; however he devoted most of his time for research on languages. Two of his most important works are *Seven Grammars of the Dialects and Sub-dialects of the Bihari Language (1883-87)* and *Bihar Peasant Life (1885)*. His works was famous for linguistic information, life of farmers, farming methods and beliefs of the Bihar peasantry. Government of India has instituted an award in the name of Abraham Grierson in 1994, for foreign scholars who have made significant contributions to Hindi.

52in. It was based on a survey that was done during 1842-45. The map depicts topographical details and description of various points in the vicinity of Singapore town above the level of low water spring tides. The reproduction was done from the cartographic collection of the National Archives of India, New Delhi. (Mid-day, 2015)

Gift to King of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

Modi gifted Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud a gold-plated replica of the Cheraman Juma Masjid in Kerala while he visited Saudi Arabia in April 2016.⁵ Modi, in a series of messages, conveyed the significance of the mosque in highlighting the important place that Islam has in the Indian subcontinent. (First Post, 2016) (Press Information Bureau, 2016)

Gift to Iranian Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Khamenei

Modi gifted Iranian Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Khamenei, while he visited Iran in May 2016, a rare 7th Century manuscript of the Holy Quran written in Kufic script and attributed to Prophet's son-in-law Hazrat Ali, the fourth caliph and first Shia Imam. This manuscript is a prized possession of the Ministry of Culture's Rampur Raza Library and is written in Kufic script⁶. Modi also gifted the Iranian President Dr Hassan Rouhani specially commissioned reproductions of Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib's collection of poetry in Persian, Kulliyat-e-Farsi-e-Ghalib and also Sumair Chand's Persian translation of Ramayana. Kulliyat-e-Farsi-e-Ghalib, which was first published in 1863, is a collection of over 11,000 verses by Ghalib.⁷ (The Indian Express, 2016) (NarendraModi.in, 2016)

⁵ The Cheraman Juma Masjid is believed to be the first mosque built in India by Arab traders around 629 AD. It is an evidence of active trade relations between India and Saudi Arabia since ancient times. It is situated at Kodungallur in Thrissur district. According to oral tradition, Cheraman Perumal was the Chera King and a contemporary of the Holy Prophet who went to Arabia and embraced Islam after meeting the Holy Prophet at Mecca. Some years later, he sent letters to his relatives and the ruling chieftains of Malabar through his friends Malik bin Dinar and Malik bin Habib who, along with their companions, were then given permission by the local rulers to build the mosque at Kodungallur. The mosque has an ancient oil lamp that is always kept burning and believed to be over a thousand years old. People from all religions bring oil for the lamp as an offering.

⁶ The Kufic script was developed around the end of the 7th century in Kufa, Iraq and is the oldest calligraphic form of the various Arabic scripts.

⁷ The reproduction is from a rare copy of the book's 1867 edition to which some missing pages have been added from a copy of the 1872 edition from Maulana Azad's personal collection preserved in the library of Indian Council for Cultural Relations in New Delhi. Sumair Chand's Ramayana is a rare manuscript at the Ministry of Culture's Rampur Raza Library, translated into Persian in 1715 and copied in 1826 and contains over 260 illustrations – possibly the largest number in any hand-written Ramayana manuscript.

Gift to Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa

Modi presented the *Overseas Citizen of India card* to Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa while he visited Portugal in June 2017. Modi described him as the best of the Indian Diaspora across the world. Prime Minister Antonio Costa is of Indian-origin. (NDTV, 2017)

Gift to US President Donald Trump

Modi presented US President Donald Trump and his wife many gifts while he visited USA in June 2017. He presented Trump a folio containing an original commemorative postal stamp which was issued in 1965 in India to mark the centenary of President Abraham Lincoln⁸. Donald Trump gave a guided tour of White House to Modi and also took him to Abraham Lincoln's bedroom. Trump also showed Modi the famous Gettysburg address of Abraham Lincoln along with the desk on which he wrote it. Modi also gifted Donald Trump an intricately designed wooden chest, a specialty from Punjab's Hoshiarpur. Modi presented a hamper to US first lady Melanie Trump containing a Himachali handcrafted silver bracelet, Kangra valley's special tea and honey. He also gifted hand-woven shawls from Jammu Kashmir and Himachal to the First Lady. (India Today, 2017)

Gift to Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Modi gifted Prime Minister of Israel Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, replicas of two sets of relics from Kerala while he visited Israel in July 2017. It is regarded as key artefacts of the long Jewish history in India, comprising two different sets of copper plates that are believed to have been inscribed in 9-10th Century⁹. (The Hindu, 2017) (Financial Express, 2017) (News18, 2017)

⁸ The stamp honoured the memory of the great American President and symbolized closeness of the ideals for which Lincoln stood and which drove Mahatama Gandhi. Both President Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi led from the front with indomitable courage against the forces of reaction and outmoded beliefs. Both the leaders believed in the basic goodness of the common man and in emancipation of the downtrodden.

⁹ The first set of copper plates is a cherished relic for the Cochin Jews in India which is regarded as a charter describing the grant of hereditary royal privileges and prerogatives by the Hindu King, Cheraman Perumal (often identified as Bhaskara Ravi Varma) to the Jewish leader Joseph Rabban. According to traditional Jewish accounts, Joseph Rabban was later crowned as the Prince of Shingli, a place in or equated with Cranganore, where Jews enjoyed religious and cultural autonomy for centuries, before they moved to Cochin and other places in Malabar. Local Jews once placed in each coffin a handful of earth from Shingli or Cranganore that was remembered as a holy place and a “*second Jerusalem*.” The replica of these plates was made possible with the

Gift to Myanmar State Counsellor and President

Modi gave Myanmar State Counsellor, 72-year-old Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi a surprise gift while he visited Myanmar in September 2017. It was a special copy of the original research proposal she submitted for her fellowship in 1986 at Indian Institute of Advanced Study Shimla. The research proposal was titled "*The Growth and Development of Burmese and Indian Intellectual Traditions under Colonialism: A Comparative Study.*" Ms Suu Kyi has a strong connection with India. She studied political science from the Lady Shri Ram College in Delhi and graduated in 1964. She was also a fellow at Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. Ms Suu Kyi had also spent time with her husband Michael Aris and two sons Kim and Alexander in Shimla. Modi also presented a sculpture of Bodhi tree and reproduction of an 1841 map of a stretch of the River Salween to President of Myanmar Mr. U Htin Kyaw. (NDTV, 2017) (Orissadiary.com, 2017)

Gift to Chinese President Xi Jinping

Modi gifted two specially commissioned reprints of renowned Chinese painter Xu Beihong's works, to the Chinese Premier Xi Jinping while he visited China in April 2018 for an informal visit. The reprints were specially commissioned by The Indian Council of Cultural Relations. The two paintings were titled as '*The Horse*' and '*Sparrows and Grass*'. These were in the collection of the Visva Bharati University. Xu Beihong was the first Chinese professor to teach at Kala Bhavana at Shantiniketan in 1939-40. Rabindranath Tagore who visited Wuhan in December 1939, inaugurated an exhibition of more than 150 paintings of Beihong. (India Today, 2018)

cooperation of the Paradesi Synagogue in Mattancherry, Kochi. The second set of copper plates is believed to be the earliest documentation of the history of Jewish trade with India which describe the grant of land and tax privileges by the local Hindu ruler to a church and oversight of trade in Kollam to West Asian and Indian trading associations. West Asian association included Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians and also a group of Jews who signed in Judeo- Persian and possibly also in Arabic and Pahlavi (Middle Persian). The plates bear their signatures that appear to have been cut into the plates by a local workman unfamiliar with the script. The replica of these plates was made possible with the cooperation of Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church in Thiruvalla, Kerala. Modi also presented a metal crown and a Torah scroll to Netanyahu. The crown was covered in gold sheets in floral ornament style bearing motifs typical of lamps and decorations of south India. The Torah scroll was donated by the Paradesi Jewish community in Kerala and was enclosed in wooden staves in a wooden case adorned with silver sheets. Handwritten over a hundred years ago, the Torah scroll had been dedicated to the Paradesi Synagogue in Kochi that had been built in 1568.

Gift to Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

Modi gifted Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong a replica of a sixth century Buddhagupta Stele that bears Sanskrit phrases in the Pallava script and serves as important evidence of the transmission of Buddhism from India to Southeast Asia, particularly the Straits and the Malay peninsula region¹⁰. (The Free Press Journal, 2018)

Gift to Rwanda

Modi gifted 200 cows to poor villagers in Rwanda while he visited there in July 2018. This is to support President Paul Kagame's initiative, the Girinka Programme for poverty reduction and tackling childhood malnutrition¹¹. (The Hindu, 2018)

Gift to BIMSTEC Leaders

Modi presented traditional gifts from Indian North-Eastern states to leaders of *Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)* during the BIMSTEC summit held in Nepal in August 2018. The BIMSTEC leaders include Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Thailand Prime Minister Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Myanmar President Mr. Win Myint and Chief Advisor of the Interim Government of Bhutan Mr. Dasho Tshering Wangchuk. The gifts presented were stoles and shawls depicting traditional motifs from North-Eastern states and Kantha embroidery of West Bengal¹². (Timesnownews.com, 2018)

¹⁰ A stele is a stone or wooden slab, generally taller than wide, erected in the ancient world as a monument. The inscription on the Buddhagupta stele was the product of a Buddhist community that was residing along the coast of the Malay Peninsula, likely a sangha of local and Indian monks supported by Malays and Indian merchants who had settled in the area. It was discovered by Lt. Col. James Low of the East India Company in Bujang Valley, Kedah, in 1834, in association with brick and laterite ruins of what was assumed to be a Buddhist monument. The original Buddhagupta Stele is currently housed at the Indian Museum, Kolkata. The replica was made by the Indian Ministry of Culture in association with the Indian Museum.

¹¹ The Girinka Programme was initiated by Mr. Kagame in 2006 to provide one cow per poor family for their nutritional and financial security. Modi gifted these cows to poor families during a function at Rweru Model Village. The word Girinka which means 'may you have a cow' and describes centuries-old cultural practice in Rwanda whereby a cow was given by one person to another as a sign of respect and gratitude. The programme is based on the premise that providing a dairy cow to the poor transforms livelihoods, reconciles communities improving agricultural productivity through the use of manure as fertilizers which would lead to improving soil quality and reducing erosion through the planting of grasses and trees. The cows gifted were sourced from Rwanda itself.

¹² These were made from golden Muga silk, Eri silk, and cotton. The gifts highlight the development potential of the North-East region through enhanced connectivity, trade and commerce in the BIMSTEC region. The BIMSTEC is an international organisation consisting of seven nations of South Asia and South East Asia,
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Gift to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

Modi presented Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe two handcrafted stone bowls and dhurries made from rose quartz and yellow quartz stone sourced from Rajasthan, while he visited Japan in October 2018. Modi also presented a Jodhpuri wooden chest from Rajasthan with traditional work¹³. (The Hindu, 2018)

Gift to South Korean President Moon Jae-in

Modi has sent some “Modi jackets” to South Korean President Moon Jae-in in October 2018, who expressed his liking for them during his visit to the country in July 2018. President Moon Jae-in tweeted that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent him some gorgeous garments. Moon Jae-in wrote “*During my visit to India, I had told the Prime Minister Narendra Modi that he looked great in those vests, and he duly sent them over, all meticulously tailored to my size. I would like to thank him for this kind gesture,*” (The Hindu, 2018)

The Diplomatic Gift – A Symbol of Honour

The Diplomatic gifts may be in all shapes and sizes. It may be a woven straw basket to precious gem. Even from the ancient ages, the dignitaries and leaders exchanged gifts to welcome and honour diplomatic relationships. The gifts embodies symbol of esteemed love, care, affection and respect. A gift of state often captures the essence of the whole nation, chosen for its ability to exhibit pride in a unique culture and people. Gifts of state may showcase traditions of fine or folk arts, crafts or craftsmanship. They may display wealth in precious stones or metals, fine textiles or apparel. Gifts may draw from a rich heritage of

namely Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal. The main objective of the BIMSTEC is technical and economic cooperation among South Asian and Southeast Asian countries around the Bay of Bengal.

¹³ The bowls were crafted by master artisan Shabbirhusen Ibrahimhai Shaikh of Gujarat’s Khambhat region. He is known for its practice of stone craft since generations and is also a leading hub for exports of stone products from India. The uniqueness of this craft lies in the fact that the form of the product is scooped out from a block of stone, and then shaped and refined using basic hand tools generally without any lathe machines. The dhurrie, which was hand-woven by the master weavers of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh, has a design which show the diversity of possibilities available — from a symmetrical repeating geometric tessellation in one, to stylistic floral motifs arranged around the classical medallion pattern in another. The dhurries were in two distinctive Indian colour palettes. One of Indigo blues, reds and sprinkles of turmeric yellows, the colours that have marked Indian textiles for centuries, the other was in muted earthy tones of the Indian landscape. The stone bowls and dhurries were made under the design supervision of the prestigious Ahmadabad based National Institute of Design

antiques and antiques or an expressive storehouse of cultural icons. This way the gift becomes more than a mere formality, but a reminder of the special alliance between the gift giver and receiver. (Discover Diplomacy)

Presidents, First Ladies, the US Secretaries of State and other US leaders give a wide range of gifts including jewellery, fine books about the US, ornamental objects or engraved silver trays. A Secretary may choose a gift that contains a personal message. The US may provide a one-of-a kind gift based on a foreign dignitary's interests, if there is a close relationship. The Protocol Office at the U.S. Department of State identifies and wraps gifts for the President and Secretary of State to exchange. (Discover Diplomacy)

The history of gift giving practices in the early modern period is a complex one. A gift enabled one to start or strengthen a relationship of fidelity, by cultivating a feeling of dependence. The language and meaning given to gifts, the way they are presented, are depended on difference in culture of the giver and the receiver. The rulers and diplomats were able to take advantage of the potential of gifts by efficient administration of the messages that were conveyed through gifts. Gifts were not only used to create mutual obligations and to cultivate ties of fidelity, they represent a nation and it could be an effective instrument for communication between nations. As Christian Windier has shown, a gift could serve to demonstrate the technological superiority or dependence of one nation over or other. Gifts such as clocks could have far-reaching political implications and serve similar purposes. Eighteenth-century Spanish diplomats were aware of how beneficial, effective, and inexpensive to take gift for international Relations. (Carrió-Invernizzi, 2008)

Not Mere Gift but a piece of Pride

The gifts given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the World leaders are not mere gifts rather it's a part of our national pride. The Nations past and its legacy play a vital role in determining the foreign policy framework of a country and its place among the world nations. By choosing items from our cultural, historical, scientific and heritage assets, it is beyond a normal act of gifting. Below are the few hidden agenda identified as the essence of Modi's gift diplomacy –

Spreading Gandhism

Modi has given several gifts associated with Gandhian Philosophy and principles to several leaders like Barack Obama, Japanese Emperor Akihito etc. Many peace activists and Nobel Peace Prize recipients have acknowledged their intellectual debt to Mahatma Gandhi, many has written about Gandhi's influence on social activists and many has written on Gandhi's influence on shaping of peace, justice and environmental philosophies. However, it is still mystifying that possible links between Gandhian praxis and the recent conflict resolution literature has not received effective attention globally. Gandhi was a lifelong practitioner of conducting major public conflicts and a profound conflict theorist. It is often argued that Gandhi should be viewed from conflict resolution theory, rather than as being distinct from it. It would be a reasonable assumption that Gandhian principles of nonviolent resistance and the voluminous writings on his techniques at least set the tone for the later development and phenomenal growth of conflict resolution literature in the guise of modern problem-solving and win-win approaches leading to integrative conflict resolution. The two bodies of knowledge - concerning Gandhian satyagraha and modern conflict resolution theory and its practical application as spelled out in negotiation guidebooks seem to have developed in mutual ignorance. (Weber, 2001). Prime Minister Narendra Modi could give an effective push in publicizing Gandhian Principles worldwide by seeking attention to Gandhian Philosophical works.

Recalling the Heroes and the Brave Hearts of History

Modi has utilised the gift diplomacy as an opportunity to convey India's gratitude towards heroes of history. Modi recalled the story of Australian Journalist, Mr. John Lang, who assisted Rani Lakshimibai in fighting against East India Company.

"She was a good looking woman, rather stout but not too stout, her face must have been very handsome when she was younger. Even now it has many charms, long, who knew her, said. According to him, the expression was very intelligent, the eyes were particularly fine, and the nose very delicately shaped. She was not fair though she was far from dark. Her dress was plain white muslin, so fine in texture and drawn about her in such a way that the outline of her figure was plainly discernible – a remarkably fine figure she had. What spoiled her was her voice," (John Lang in Wanderings in India 1859). (Balachandran, 2007)

Modi's gift to Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbot has reminds John Lang's contribution to Indian history as well as the heroism of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi to forefront. The "Skippers" memento carrying replica of Mahatma Gandhi's charkha with three cricket balls is a symbol India's expertise in indigenous capabilities. The occasion was an event to honour the great cricket players of India and Australia as well. Gifting manuscripts regarding Raj-era Irish officials, Thomas Oldham and George Abraham Grierson to Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny recalled their contribution to India. Gifting postal stamp of Abraham Lincoln issued in India in 1965 to US President Donald Trump marks the respect India gives to the former US President.

Spreading Buddhism

Modi has brought in a shift in India's diplomatic approach towards the East Asia, by laying emphasis on the Buddha diplomacy. Modi has played the Buddha card, highlighting India as the place of origin of Buddhism by gifting Bodhi Tree to Nepal and Mongolia, a stone statue of Buddha to Chinese President Xi Jinping, Buddhagupta Stele to Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong etc. Modi has highlighted the role played by Buddhism in the cultural integration of the country. He has adopted a Buddhism-influenced approach to diplomacy when reaching out to other nations with a Buddhist heritage in an attempt to build bilateral relations built on the foundation of a shared spiritual heritage. India has always shied away from religion-hued diplomacy, whereas Prime Minister Narendra Modi has utilised the perceived benefits of the country's Buddhist heritage. He has made it a point to make Buddhism as a regular feature of his diplomatic visits. He has made significant efforts to emphasise shared Buddhist heritage and often spoken about Buddhist faith for the development of both India and the world. (KISHWAR, 2018) (Dipananda, 2018)

Care for nature

Modi has always showed India's commitment to follow Paris Climate Agreement and its target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions up to 35 per cent by 2030. It was evident from Modi's gift 'Tree of Life' to French President Francois Hollande that clean and green environment is at the root of India's policies. Modi has told on several occasions that Indians have always treated nature as a living organism and use of cutting edge technology and renewable energy are the solutions to save the nature. (The Times of India, 2014)

Promoting Research and Honouring Scholars

Modi has used gift diplomacy to promote research and honouring the scholars. Modi's gift of CV Raman's manuscripts to German Chancellor and doctorate degree holder Angela Merkel was a true example for it. Modi has said at several occasions that the pursuit of science is fulfilled through achievement of two objectives – generation of profound or disruptive knowledge and use of such knowledge for socio-economic good. It clearly shows India's respect and honour towards the research community where Science Diplomacy has emerged as an important strategy in international affairs and in addressing global challenges. (Padmanabhan, 2019). This act of Narendra Modi would definitely add to the motivation of Researchers worldwide.

Addressing Diaspora Community

Modi has utilised gift diplomacy to address Indian Diaspora. His Sikh gifts to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, gifting overseas citizen of India card to Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa are few evidence for the same. Canada is a country where the Sikh community has well rooted by all means. They are even the top political players of the country. The gift from Narendra Modi turned up as a tribute to entire Sikh community outside India. (NarendraModi.in, 2015)

Recovering Ancient Literatures and Honouring Writers and Historians

Modi has recovered many ancient literatures for executing his gift diplomacy. This has also been used to honour the great ancient historians, Philosophers, Poets and writers. The 13th century manuscript on the history of Mongols from the Rampur Raza Library to Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, Rabindranath Tagore's Poem on stoles gifted to South Korean President Mr. Park Geun-hye, the manuscript of Sufi poet to Uzbekistan President Mr Islam Karimov , the collection of poetry in Persian to Iranian President Dr Hassan Rouhani etc are few among them.

Popularising India's Textile, Tea Industry and skills in Craftsmanship

Modi has always tried to popularise India's expertise in Textile Industry through his gift diplomacy. The Pashmina stoles to South Korean President Park Geun-hye, a hand-

woven tapestry to Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, hand-knotted carpet to Kyrgyzstan President Mr. Almazbek Atambayev, Aranmula metal mirror and pashmina stoles to British first lady Samantha Cameron, silver bracelet, Kangra valley tea and hand-woven shawls to US first lady Melanie Trump, stoles and shawls to BIMSTEC Leaders, stone bowls and dhurries to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe etc are example for the same. Modi's interest in textile industry appears often promising. Textile industry is one of the largest industries in India. It is the second largest industry in terms of providing employment opportunities to more than 35 million people in the country. India is the second largest producer and exporter of cotton in the world. (NarendraModi.in, 2017)

Establishing Personal Connect

The purpose of gift is always to build interpersonal rapport. Prime Minister Modi has well attempted a more proactive approach for establishing Personal connect with people through his gift diplomacy. Gifting audio clip of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's speech to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheik Hasina, gifting horse saddle to Turkmenist an President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov knowing his passionate about horses, gifting books related to World War to British Prime Minister David Cameroon in view of his interest in the subject, gifting photographs of Queen Elizabeth II which was taken in 1961 to herself, gifting copy of original research proposal to Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, gifting 'Modi jackets' to South Korean President Moon Jae-in etc are few among them.

Popularising Indian Culture, ancient Trade Relations and Religious Heritage

Modi's gift diplomacy had several elements that popularise India's cultural and religious heritage. It also had traces of ancient trade relations. Gifting books relating to religions born in India to Kazakh President Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev , bookends with a verse from the Bhagavad Gita to British Prime Minister David Cameroon, gift of replica of Cheraman Juma Masjid to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the gift of Holy Quran in Kufic script to Iranian Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Khamenei, gift of replicas of Jewish relics to Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, 200 cows to poor villagers in Rwanda etc were few among them.

Promoting Territorial Integrity

Modi has utilised the opportunity of gift diplomacy to promote the territorial integrity. The gift of 1849 map of Singapore to Singapore Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong is an example for the same.

Those gift worth much more

Modi's foreign trips have included the act of gifting of diverse items to the heads of various nations. Although gifting precious things to national heads is not a novel action in the realm of foreign policy, the enthusiasm with which Narendra Modi incorporated this idea into his foreign policy frame work has made it distinct and noteworthy. A lion share of the gifts given by Indian prime minister was taken from Country's rich cultural assets and Modi's foreign policy, which is often deliberated as 'Modi Doctrine' has become special by its unique feature of 'Gift Diplomacy'.

India's cultural engagements with others have been more profoundly shaped by a particular sense of national selfhood by Prime Minister Modi's interest in cultural diplomacy. The Indian Diaspora has also been an exceptionally active stakeholder in shaping the country's cultural presence abroad. Since 2014, Narendra Modi has been energetically foregrounding India's cultural assets and skill set, both in National and International arena. Even though there are few elements of 'Saffronization' in his cultural diplomacy, there can be many positive outcome for these acts which may not be very visible to the forefront. (Isar, 2017)

Modi has tried to promote India's soft power during his foreign visits. It appears that although India's soft power may not directly promote foreign actors to support India's positions on various issues, Modi believed that in the long run it would assist India to promote its traditional foreign-policy goals such as security and economic interests. *According to Joseph Nye, 'soft power' is the ability to influence others to get the results one wants through 'attraction' rather than 'coercion' or 'payment'. If a country has substantial soft power, its actions will be seen as more legitimate and it will be likely to encounter less resistance from others. The three sources of a state's soft power are 'its culture', 'its political values' and 'its foreign policies'. Nye is very clear that economic strength and the power of 'inducements' do not constitute soft power, that soft power is more than just 'persuasion',*

and that the ability of soft power to produce desired behaviour depends on the context and the skills with which the resources are converted to outcomes. (Mazumdar, 2018)

The sources of India's soft power includes Ayurveda, Bollywood, Buddhism, Cinema, Cricket, Cuisine, Diaspora, Fine Arts (architecture, music, painting, poetry and sculpture), Information Technology, Performing Arts (dance and theatre) and Yoga. There are multiple objectives behind the projection of soft power by India, including utilising it for lack of hard power, mitigating international anxieties about India's rise, improving India's image, honouring the legacy of the founding fathers – Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru, attracting foreign investment, engaging with the Indian Diaspora, inviting foreign tourists to visit and outlining India's position on various issues. Modi has drawn attention to India's soft power resources and projected India as a benign rising power, as well as reaching out to the Indian Diaspora across the world, re-energizing public diplomacy efforts in order to engage with people from various countries, and promoting India as a tourism and foreign investment destination. There is a developing consensus among scholars that soft power projection has become an important element of India's foreign policy in future years. Buddhism has been witnessing a resurgence of popularity globally. Modi has taken a keen interest in promoting India's rich Buddhist heritage. There is no doubt that India has several soft power assets at its disposal which it can leverage in the pursuit of foreign-policy interests. Modi has not been shy of deploying the country's soft power assets as it projects the idea of a rising India. Modi has made tremendous efforts to integrate and project various aspects of India's soft power in the service of larger strategic goals. Cultural diplomacy, in the form of promotion of Buddhism and Yoga, and Diaspora diplomacy have been used to complement India's conventional diplomacy, boost its international image, project it as peaceful rising power, improve relations with other countries and help attract foreign investment, technology and tourists in order to promote economic growth and development. The promotion of Buddhism and its identification with it helps India to create a benign image of itself, builds new links with Asian countries, attracts tourists and helps it in its search for commonalities with China. (Mazumdar, 2018)

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