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FOREWORD

NARENDRA MODI: **ISSUES & CONCERNS** is a Modi-centric collage of articles carried by the eponymous magazine over a period of time. That such a publication is conceived comes as no surprise to anyone. Modi has an uncanny knack, an unmatched gift, to capture the attention and imagination of people, for better, for worse, not only in India but also overseas. He is endowed by nature to be centre-stage and in control of issues and concerns.

Modi is a man hard to dislike, if you know him at close quarters. I can't claim that I enjoy this felicity, though I have met him on a couple of occasions; both, prior to his tenure as the Prime Minister of India. The first of these happened fortuitously in 2000 in New York. I was there, invited to the Millennium Peace Summit under the auspices of the UN. We happened to be staying in adjoining rooms at Waldorf Astoria in Manhattan, NY. I bumped into this serious-looking, deeply-thoughtful, strikingly self-contained man. We got to talk. And I have to admit, he left an impression on me. On the second occasion, we were members of the National Integration Council. He was, by then, the chief minister of Gujarat. I greeted him and he very kindly, reciprocated. I reminded him that we used to be pitted against each other in the "Black and White" column, since then discontinued, of the Times of India. "So what? he quipped, "We live in a democracy. You have the right to say what you want. So have I. That need not prevent us from being friends."

Turns of speech apart, we did not become friends. Not because he was not friendly enough; but because I wasn't important enough. Friendship too settles down, these days, within the metrics of transactional.

Since then, Modi has had a meteoric rise. Not wholly unpredictable; though even in early 2013, the dice seemed loaded against him. Remember, Nitish Kumar who now finds nothing but virtue and hope in Modi was allergic to him; and it was in protest

against the ascendancy of Modi that Nitish had walked out of the NDA. I have no way to find out if Modi still remains within reach of pedestrian sentiments like friendship. The Prime Minister-ship of a country as vast and complex as India is, is a burden under which a person could change, though I believe it to be a sign of greatness that one rises above the office one holds rather than sinks under it.

My admiration for Mrs Indira Gandhi was ruined by the excesses of the emergency. It was an aberration that I could not forgive her for. When Mrs. Gandhi came as the chief guest at the centenary celebrations of St. Stephen's College on the 1st of February 1981, I was the lone faculty member who boycotted the group photo with the chief guest on the occasion. What disappointed me most was the alibi she offered vis-a-vis the atrocities perpetrated then, "I did not know". I only hope that Modi would not have to offer a similar excuse anytime. It is the business of a Prime Minister to know. It is not optional. Ignorance of lived reality is not an excuse. It is a self-condemnation.

I allude to this instance in order to reckon the failure of most men and women who come to occupy exalted offices. They encircle themselves with coteries; often concentric circles of flatterers and time-servers who barrier them from the plight of the people. Those who over-value the power-quotient of the offices they hold tend to revel in widening the distance from the people. Inaccessibility is deployed as an advertisement of self-importance. The glaring paradox here, often over-looked, is that this systemic alienation from the people and the image of a 'people's Prime Minister' co-exist quite cheerfully, especially in an under-developed society. Hence it is that Modi's efforts to stay in touch with the people, of which his 'Man ki Baath' is a familiar example, and his larger-than-life image as an unapproachable demi-god, seem two sides of the same coin and are accepted as such facily.

A massive and carefully orchestrated propaganda to project Modi as the best-ever, most effective, Prime Minister of India has been underway for four years now. This began by projecting him as the magician of good governance; followed thereafter by a series of assertions and projections: the slayer of the demon of corruption, the invincible election winner, the Nemesis of Pakistan, the loco pilot of India's bullet train streaking to economic superpower-dom. The current spotlight is on Modi as the man whom all opposition parties hate and are arrayed against -a latter-day Lord Ram pitted against a horde of Ravanaas. The very size and scale of this propaganda,

and the emergence every now and then of the communal card, cast a shadow of doubt over posturing on good governance. As a result, the clean and charismatic image with which Modi began in 2014 is beginning to be sullied.

But no one should write off Modi for all that. Not merely because he is like a cat o' nine lives, but also because he really has no opposition worth talking about. Unlike others, I do not see this as anything to gloat over. To think that in a country of 130 crore people, there is no alternative to one man, is a sad commentary on her substance and stature. But that seems to be the case as of now; though in politics the only certainty is that there is nothing we can be assuredly certain about. The opposition parties are a motley crowd, not a cohesive force with a steadfast, self-transcending sense of purpose. It is too early for them to attain the maturity it takes to bury petty differences, develop a cogent ideological platform and work selflessly towards a supreme goal. The reason I think so is that their present inclination towards knee-jerk unity is driven only by the lower instinct of self-preservation. History tells us that a period of protracted suffering is needed, if disparate elements are to forge themselves into a cohesive force. A change of strategy needs to be preceded, and secured, by a change of heart. That takes time and suffering. As of now these regional outfits are scared; but they have not had the time or privation to undergo a genuine change of heart. So, it seems, for the time being at least, that election 2019 is good news yet for Modi.

But there is a lesson from history that Modi would do well to not forget. The great thing is not to capture power, but to use it as a benign medium for awaking and articulating the latent potentialities of a people. It was in this respect that even Napoleon Bonaparte -not to say anything of Adolf Hitler- failed disastrously. By the time Napoleon -deemed one of the three greatest military geniuses history has seen- realized this, it was too late. The rest is history. "Your brilliance," said Albert Einstein, "may carry you to the top; but it is only your character that will keep you there." Nothing tests 'character' as thoroughly and mercilessly as power does. History is the art of reducing boisterous heroes into silent footnotes!

As I review the national scenario I cannot help feeling a touch of sadness. Modi did not have to take the path he has. He had a dream-run and a flattering mandate. The state was well set for the emergence of a statesman. In the difficult tight-rope walk he has had to maintain between the parivar hawks and the monstrous expectations he kindled in the people through campaign promises -thanks

to his nearly supernatural powers of oratory- he lost sight of what could have been a noble and enduring alternative to the present desperate attempts to win 2019, no matter what. Regrettably, the Karnataka elections marked an abysmal low.

In all of this, Modi is failing to do justice to himself. He is running counter to the logic of history. The paradox of life is that it is not those who are hyper-eager to perpetuate themselves in positions of power who endure. It is those who embrace a mission, valuing it higher than the seductions of chairs and paraphernalia of officialdom, who survive the test of time. Some 2500 years ago Plato wrote, in the Republic, that the very keenness of a person to get a position proves that he is unfit for it! I am convinced that Modi does not have to do it. He is eminently eligible for the highest office in our country. All he has to do is to deliver on his 2014 election promises; in particular, the promise of good governance, which needs to be accomplished with specific reference to India as a 'socialist, secular, democratic republic' -as the Preamble to the Constitution states.

The contents of this anthology of articles are too varied and disparate to weave together significant patterns embracing them. They are, all the same, held together by the lynch pin called Modi. And that quite suffices.

I quite agree with the publisher's view that Narendra Modi came to the national scene as 'a breath of fresh air'. Modi would do well to remember that freshness can never be a once-and-for-all state. It is, by definition, a transitory and ephemeral thing. Freshness has to be kept! What is fresh today will be stale tomorrow. That's the law of nature. This mandates renewal.

The alternative to renewal is to succumb to the malodour of anti-incumbency. Not even the proven inferiority or ineligibility of one's adversaries can help Modi forever. The shelf-life of victory by crying-wolf against all else is proverbially short. Freshness, by the way, is an aspect of truth. That is precisely where I have a concern in respect of Modi's excessive dependence on propaganda. It has nothing to do with freshness. It is more like a stopper that tries to press down the bad smell of staleness in one's own bottle.

It is not in my province, or within the remit of a foreword, which I have already exceeded, to comment on the diverse issues and views anthologized through the articles included in this collage of diversity. Not surprisingly, the limelight falls on Modi's gift of the gab. Who can dispute that this is his greatest strength and finest gift? But there are times one feels that he is banking too heavily on the power of words. The truth is words need to draw their sustenance from deeds. He needs to perform beyond propaganda. Mere claims

of having performed, no matter how crafty his strategists and how loud-mouthed his spokespersons, will not do. Statistics is like a bikini; what it reveals is interesting, but what it hides is vital!

It is understood that the reader would not approach this work as if it is Modi's quasi-biography, covering a period of his life. Yes, Modi is the reason this book has come to be. Yes, he is the over-arching presence in the book; but all that does not make this work biographical in the familiar sense of the term. **As per literary canon, this work belongs to a rare genre, to understand which an analogy could help -that of the Wikipedia. The reader would do well to take this work as a sort of Wikipedia view of Modi.** As against, a biography, which is written by a single author, armed with prodigious research and protracted evaluations, this book is a corporate creation. It is written by a host of people -as in the case of Wikipedia- who, in this case, and unlike that of Wikipedia- did not know that they were unwittingly authoring a book! Each one of them wrote spontaneously, in a state of sincerity to oneself, **creating a bouquet of impressions that, together, constitute a valuable and worthwhile offering.**

Such a book has its unique value. And it is typically Indian, given that unity-in-diversity is our core philosophical outlook. We also believe -as evidenced by the old Indian tale of the blind men visiting the elephant- that truth is complex and demands a composite, not monolithic, approach. An aggregation of diverse points of view, rather than a monotone harangue, is more apt to enable the reader to plod his own path through the tangles of views, impressions and perceptions towards a more personal, and for him more authentic, understanding of the subject.

So, here is a book that has, so to speak, written itself by accident! And that should be interesting, provided the reader is willing to be participative, apply his mind alertly and synthetically, and assume for himself the responsibility to 'seek and find' the elusive and enigmatic glimpses of truth, especially in this age of aggressive propaganda and willful obfuscation. So, Modi is not sketched in chiaroscuro for the reader. He is merely silhouetted, though a host of seemingly random touches, with the mind of the reader as the light behind the silhouette. **Admittedly, we need more efforts of this kind!**

But, why should I detain you, readers, from the felicity of going ahead and discovering for yourselves what this kaleidoscope of views and opinions on one who is, arguably, the most magnetic personality of our times is ready to offer? The proof of the

pudding is, after all, in the eating of it. Well, the pudding is ready. And it sits right in front of you. Now, as Shakespeare would say, “fall to, fall to. Wait not a jot!”

Prof. Dr. Valson Thampu

Former Principal, St.Stephen’s College, Delhi & Former Member, National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions, Govt. of India and former Member of the National Integration Council.

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J. Shriyan

INTRODUCTION

ISSUES & CONCERNS is a monthly in English, being published since 17 years. Dr. M.V Kamath, the doyen of Indian journalism was a founder member of its editorial board. Prof B.M Hegde, a former Vice Chancellor of Manipal University is another prominent member of this board. Both these gentlemen received Padma Bhushan, the third highest national award.

It is an accepted view that in India there is no dearth of issues, but surely there is dearth of concerns. As a junior member of the print media, we can only try to highlight issues of concern and raise questions. We are trying to provide some suggestions as we go along which may be further sharpened by the society. In our journey of last over 17 years, what difference we have made in the public space, is unknown to us. However there have been plethora of positive responses from readers. And that has kept us going.

Mr. Narendra Damodardas Modi or just Narendra Modi has come into the national politics as a breath of fresh air. He has a past, in present he is all over and surely he will continue to occupy the public space into the foreseeable future. As media member, we have no right to pass value judgment or being judgmental. We have covered Mr. Modi in our pages since 2012. We have tried to be balanced in handling issues involved, beginning with an iconic Gujarat Chief Minister and his journey up to the corridors of power in New Delhi and his stint as the Prime Minister.

This is an attempt to put all our writings together on this extraordinary personality and his extraordinary journey from 2012 to 2018. We have tried to be objective as we saw it, and hope readers would find it the same way.

We do hope, readers will find this, our however incomplete, account of the remarkable journey of this remarkable man worth their time.

J. Shriyan

MAY 2012

An Open Letter to Narendra Modi

Shri Narendra Bhai

Jai Shree Krishna, Khemcho? Majaama!

Hope this finds you hale, hearty and in good spirit amidst all your multifarious socio-development activities and those issues of statecraft occupying the media space. I am not sure if this is the first open letter that has come your way. Surely, it will not be the last, as in our Mera Bharath Mahaan nobody, I mean nobody, has been written about with such endearing verbose as well as hatred, like you have been. How much of these writings are right or wrong, is not very easy to conclude. Public opinion, like media hyperbole is never even-handed. They are mostly subjective since the vision is stymied by the prism with which we try to see things, and prism is never the same.

Most of India, outside Gujarat, did not know you or about you until you catapulted into the seat of Chief Minister of Gujarat. From then on, there was no choice for media viewers or readers of the print media, to know about you. You were there everywhere, sometime even force fed. Of course 2002 post Godhra carnage on 27th Feb. and the mayhem that followed, has perforce kept you at the top of the happening news, unfortunately, mostly for wrong reasons.

Now 2012 Feb 27, has come and gone. Ten years have passed since the torching of train at Godhra, where some 60 had perished, burnt alive, reduced to cinders. Stories that followed the torching suggested some mischief by some of the victims, like drinking tea from the tea stall on the Godhra platform, behaving badly and then not paying for it. If true, they were certainly in poor taste. But the reaction of the mob that set a whole compartment on fire, blocking all escape routes, was most barbaric, by any stretch of imagination. To think that all occupants of the bogie were burnt to death, as a price for some unpaid cups of tea, is a horrendous retribution beyond

any human comprehension. Of course people died were Hindus coming from Ayodhya. One unfortunate, misguided but heinous crime, led to much bigger reaction, equally unthinkable and barbaric, in its scale and vehemence. It was a reaction far in excess of the original action.

Yes, media didn't have time to react on the first tragedy for its brutality and morbidity. Hence it remained to be understood in its fuller depth. Of course the reaction, the scale of its infliction, and the vividness of its cruelty has only confirmed the long held view, that the rational animal that supposedly man is, probably is the most irrationally beastly in his vindictiveness. Yes, what followed Godhra, and if what is available in the media is to be believed, it was, without doubt equally most inhuman, as Godhra carnage was.

Looking back in perspective after 10 years, the phrase 'mighty trifles,' indeed continue to have its time tested relevance.

It was the assassination of the heir to the Habsburg throne, Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo in Bosnia, on 28th June 1914, which triggered the World War I, which lasted for almost 5 years. (1914–18) and involved 14 countries. Estimated combatant loss was close to over 8 million for all the 14 countries that took to war-rightly or wrongly. So, if one person's killing, may be of some royal origin, could lead to 4 years 3 months' war and cause the death of over 8 million people and leave double that figure injured, how could this be seen as rational?

Similarly, if the human pettiness, of misbehaving and non paying of few rupees as the cost of some cups of tea, could lead to the devastation of Godhra torching and then the Ahmadabad mayhem, that could cause the death of some 2000 people, isn't this so terribly senseless! Yes, it does make one think, could there be reasons deeper than seen apparently?! If Godhra was a prelude to the ugliest sectarian flare up - hardly provoked and barbaric, the reaction was equally barbaric and appeared to be a reflection of a deeper hatred. Karbela Swain, the 3-in-1 M.P (BJP, VHP & RSS) was on record having said "the recent violence in Gujarat was a necessary lesson to the minority community that Hindus, if slapped will retaliate". Was he articulating a cornered psyche?!

Unfortunately, added to the existing communal divide was the official response to the bloodbath. Senior police officers, instead of giving instructions to police personnel to enforce law and order took the view that 'lower cadre policemen too shared popular mob sentiment' and allowed the mob a free hand. This situation is totally and completely inconceivable. Law abiding citizen was up against

a wall. Yes, Gujarat of post 27th Feb. 2002, for the most part, represented complete collapse of law and order, where Muslims of all hues were targeted by the rampaging crowd with the unstated but tacit backing of the state administration. Clearly you have exposed yourself Narendra Bhai, when you announced Rs: 1 lakh compensation per riot victim as compared to the Rs: 2 lakh compensation for the Godhra victim. It was a bias-hither to practiced by Arabs, against non-Arabs and non-Muslims, so also by whites against Non-whites and blacks, a practice clearly unknown in free India of 21st century. It was indeed a fall for India in the eyes of its own citizens.

On April 13, 1919 in the city of Amritsar's Jalianwala Bagh, over 10,000 men, women and children had gathered to listen to political speeches. To put down all kinds of nationalistic movements by Indians, Brig. Gen. Reginald Dyer, commander of the units in Amritsar had forbidden any public meetings and had announced that all mobs would be fired upon. His men fired at point blank range. Caused the death of unarmed 379 men, women and children, besides over 1200 wounded, in just 10 minutes, was the lowest point in the British Rule of India. Of course, officially there were wide spread condemnation. Gen. Dyer was court martialled. He told the court of inquiry that "he wanted to create the maximum impact so that Indian would not dare repeat this law breaking". Did this episode cross your mind, as you allegedly allowed the rampaging crowd to 'vent out their anger' as reportedly claimed by IPS Sanjiv Bhat.

Of course, the World War I had come and gone, so had World War II. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the culmination of global estrangement. But the world has moved on. The Americans, who bombarded Japan, became its biggest trading partner, friend and protector. Both have found new meaning to their co-operative co-existence. Newer ways of socio-political life has emerged in the larger context of live and let live. Democratic way of life, based on adult franchise has come to stay for the larger good of the world at large. Yes, there are the regimes in the Middle East, China, Myanmar, Northern African countries, so also some of the eastern, central and western African nations, who live by coercion. In these countries, laws are meant to be enforced, not to be interpreted. Everything is controlled under a central authority with no freedom or restricted freedom. The so-called civilized world, with its global bodies like United Nations Organization, tries to give some meaning to the concept of co-operative living based on unfettered equal human rights to all, irrespective of colour, race, religion, or country, and do takes up issues of Human Rights Violations all over the world. But, it is also well known that UNO does not have teeth, rather some of its more powerful members have blunted its teeth and

therefore it cannot bite. These powerful members have their own agenda and hence at times made UNO meaningless. Among the members, who have caused problems to UNO are United States of America, Russia and China. All three hold veto powers. But the greatest culprit is the U.S.A. It has double standards most of the time, only to serve its own interest. And they are the biggest democracy in the world! Russia is still not as democratic as U.S and China is authoritarian. It is an oft repeated observation that “there is nothing as a permanent friend or a permanent enemy but only permanent interest”. Therefore all those who are powerful, they are only pursuing those agendas which helps them both politically and economically. In the bargain, it is the weak that pays and also suffers. Arm twisting is the done thing. All talk about fairness is for the gallery. But like it or not, life has to go on, whether for an individual or for a nation. Therefore self reliance is the best solution, to be counted and respected, in the international fora. During its existence of 64 years-of post colonial era-India has proved, it is no push over. India always had its inherent strength of its people and its natural resources, but it was only post 1991 that economic forces were unleashed. Suddenly India is a happening place and everybody is taking India seriously. It is here that complete turn-around in American mentality-vis-a-vis-you Narendra Bhai, has to be seen.

For all 10 years, there have been revelations in the media about the Gujarat violence – post Godhra torching of train. It is true that what happened in Godhra is bad but what followed as a reaction in Ahmabad was worst. It is allegedly compounded by official inaction, meaning covert support by the state. There are whole lots of statements from different sources, general public, NGOs, media, politicians who accuse the state, of connivance in the Gujarat pogrom. Of course the state keeps denying these accusations. Truth probably is not what both sides say. Even the judicial intervention has not been very helpful in having a final word.

It is also true that 1984 Delhi riot is another blot on the image of India as a country of Mahatma Gandhi. Even here, somehow, things did not conclude to everybody’s satisfaction. 27 years have gone by. Justice has certainly eluded lot of people who have suffered. But the visible animosity is not there, except in some pockets. Life has gone on. Media somehow did not play it up excessively. Hence, time is slowly making its inroads into the human psyche. It is a positive development. Similar thing will happen in Gujarat also, if it is not over-played by media and vested interest players. Of course ends of justice have to be met. But for heaven’s sake, we should not mortgage our todays and tomorrows for the baggage of a distant past.

Yes, you do have a point. Despite the horrors, the government headed by you has been able to lay stress on development and there is a whole lot of approbation from all over, which includes a Modi portrait on the cover of TIME, the leading US weekly in English. For the record, for the alleged Human Rights Violations, Narendra Modi was not allowed entry into the U.S. by successive administrations. Under the circumstances, for the U.S weekly TIME, to put you on cover is a complete turn-around. Of course Modi baiters in India were rather shocked at this development. But the dynamics of life has its own way of expressing itself. What happened in South Africa, after the release of Nelson Mandela and he was voted to power! He was a statesman enough to forget what his colonial masters have done to him and his people. Instead the constitution of Reconciliation Commission by Mandela was epochal in its intention and meaningfulness. That is the most positive aspect of a human being. He can forgive and probably even forget.

Narendra Bhai, there is no denying of the truth that a section of Gujarat's citizens have greatly suffered. Whether it is, as alleged, due to the official action of allowing the lawlessness and mayhem to continue or whether there was enough that government has done to restore normalcy as claimed by you, the fact remains what they are. Therefore as head of the state you cannot run away from your responsibility. Yes, you have done well on the development front. Cutting across socio-political divide, it has been recognized that when it comes to development you are a 'no-nonsense man', besides being personally incorruptible without any hangers on. Your credentials as a visionary leader are impeccable. There should be no reason why you should not play a bigger role at national level.

However, it is well known, that you are not acceptable to a significant section of Indians, including a large section of people who have suffered in the 2002 violence. And of course, there is this 'Secularists' in media and civil society whose only agenda is to fix you. Court cases can go on. Those found guilty shall continue to be punished. But you as a leader can grow in public perception if you reach out where it is needed.

The recent SIT report which has exonerated you of any direct involvement is a development that can help things settle down, although there will be many who will not let that happen.

Way back in 2002 itself, when Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister and happened to have visited Gujarat-post Godhra/Ahmadabad mayhem. He had spoken about 'Raj Dharma'. What it really means may not be very clear. But Raj Dharma or

similar terms only means what we have already stated, that your concern, indeed very genuine at that, must necessarily cut across the myriad divide that India is so infamous for. That, **'every one, without any differences of any kind, should have the right of your attention'**, should be the golden rule.

However, what is extremely important in this ethereal moment in the history of Gujarat is to remember those immortal words of Vajpayeejee in his poem 'Kshamaa Yaachna'. Where he begs Mahatma's forgiveness for being 'guilty of breaking the oath, of defiling Rajghat', and to JP beseeching that 'please trust us, we shall reknit the broken dream from the amber of the pyre to light the very foundation of the darkness'.

Narendra Bhai, please trust me, should you go to the people of Gujarat, and ask for 'Kshamaa Yaachana' from all those who suffered by the action or the inaction of the state administration, rightly or wrongly, whether the state is directly responsible or not, that you as the head of the state take responsibility of their well being, so that Gujaratis of all hues, join in creating a state powerful enough to empower every single individual socially and economically, that there is no repetition of any public display of animosity among the multi ethnic society of Gujarat.

Believe me; if you do that, you will go down as the best that India can have in this contemporary troubled time. Think clearly, first as a human being, then as an Indian, you would have come to the bridge that would link India to its ultimate greatness among the comity of nations.

**Yours ever Indian
Jayaram Shriyan**

AUGUST 2012

‘The Hindu’ Bias

NEW DELHI: In days of Ramakrishna Hegde, as Chief Minister of Karnataka, the Times of India always carried news inimical to Hegde in front page, and any report favorable to Hegde would be consigned incognito to some inside pages making it difficult to find easily. It was a clearly visible bias of the 4th estate towards the then Karnataka C.M.

Without doubt The Hindu, which claims itself as ‘India’s National News Paper since 1878’, can be accused of similar bias. Quoting from the memoir of former President APJ Abdul Kalam, the news paper had, on the first front page had this report ‘Keep off Gujarat, Kalam was advised.’ In fact this news item appeared in a box. The report informs that the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was not comfortable with Mr Kalam wanting to visit Gujarat and had apparently asked “Do you consider visiting Gujarat at this time essential?” Whether publication of this item was required to be on the first page in bold letters?, is a question which certainly demands an answer. But what exposed ‘The Hindu’ mindset was the report on the same book, where ‘Gujarat government was shown in better light, when all through his trip to Gujarat, he was provided with more than appropriate protocol so also that CM Narendra Modi had accompanied Mr Kalam to all places he visited and generally expressed satisfaction about the trip. This report, when taken up by LK Advani, like Times of India, was consigned to page no.10 of The Hindu under the title “Why did media ignore Kalam compliment to Modi”. This is how most of the media behave, never evenhanded.

SEPTEMBER 2012

Building Bridges with Muslims

GUJA T: 2014 is not far away, less than two years for the Lok Sabha elections. So, the political parties calculating their plus and minus, combinations and permutations, is the done thing. Surely, the high profile BJP face of Narendra Modi is no different. For Modi, even the state election due late this year is also a matter of concern. It is this election that shall decide his future role in national politics. If he romps home with ease and majority, then his claim for a larger role becomes more assured. Hence the news that “Modi bid to rebuild bridges with Muslims” should not surprise any. After all he too is a politician, may be, reportedly incorruptible. He has credentials which can catapult him for bigger national roles. But he is not acceptable to a significant section of electorates, cutting across socio/religious divide. He probably realizes, that the ghost of 2002, is still haunting the Gujarat landscape. Time and economic development has pushed the harrowing memories to the background. There is an element of hope in the air. But bitterness among those who suffered shall linger, of course with much less degree. Time heals and economic improvement heals it further. But it is politics, which shall always try to keep the memory of those dark days alive. Media plays its own vested interest cards. But Narendra Modi need to recognize that, it is not bread & butter alone that influence peoples’ psyche. A comforting, well meaning and sincere approach to reach the aggrieved shall not only improve his personal stock among those aggrieved, even those liberals who have not suffered, but would like to go with an in-corrup leader shall have won over. Reportedly he has steadfastly refused to apologize for the 2002 suffering of Gujarat’s public. Nothing so far, has indicted him personally, but in the interest of the society-at-large, an apology can go long way, as leader of the state, in mending the crack, which may not be wide but visible all the same. In fact, this will stump the entire opposition to him, in tracks, and bloom social harmony not seen anywhere in India. ‘Hang me if Guilty’, is a mere rhetoric, which will only please his Hindu hardliners, and they do not constitute India, not even Gujarat.

DECEMBER 2012

Uncalled for Comment

GUJA T: Narendra Modi may be the Best Chief Minister of India, but he too can put his foot in his mouth. He had absolutely no business to drag Shashi Tharoor's wife into any political discourse. His comments of '50 crore Girl Friend' was absolutely in bad taste. In his own way, he has earned respect, besides some brick-bats, but that certainly do not give him license to talk anything he fancies. He must stick to his brand of development politics, where he is respected and taken seriously, controversy surrounding him apart. In fact, if he attacks less his opponents, and goes about in his inimitable style as a no-nonsense political leader of Gujarat, he can forever remain, "Hriday Samrat" of Gujaratis. That can also do lot of good to the national politics, due to its multiplier effects.

JANUARY 2013

Gujarat Won for 3rd Time

GUJA T: Victory of Narendra Modi was a foregone conclusion. It was only the margin of victory that was in question. Yes his victory margin has come down, by 2 seats at 115, as compared to 5 years earlier, which was lower by 5 seats to the earlier 5 year. Thus, on the paper he is arithmetically coming down. Narendra Modi, as a politician, is liked and disliked across the national spectrum, like no other politician. And he is unlike many in the political scene. He has his strong points, but has a controversial image of being a Hindu fundamentalist in the mould of RSS. While some of the charges may stick, the fact remains, 'Jo Jeetha Wohi Sikandar'. How justified is the apprehension that his rise in the political firmament in the country, is an open question. There is no way he can deny the role of his administration in Gujarat in failing to check the mob fury in 2002. It is therefore essential that he reaches out

to those suffered, as a statesman, cutting across the communal divide. Only then maybe he will be acceptable to the larger Indian crowd. But unfortunately, his king sized ego, has so far held him back from apologizing for the suffering of people in the 2002 pogrom across Gujarat. Now that he has won for the 3rd consecutive term to the seat of power in Gandhinagar, he could be gracious in victory. A minor indication was already in the air. On the announcement of his victory on 20th Dec., he has reportedly remarked while speaking to his party men “If there has been a mistake somewhere, I seek apology from you, the six crore Gujaratis”. Hope for the nation’s overall good, an emotional connectivity takes place besides the economic development which is just as important.

FEBRUARY 2013

Apex Court Bungles on Lokayukta

NEW DELHI: The news datelined New Delhi “Set back to Modi as Supreme Court upholds Lokayukta appointment” gave highly mixed signals. Of course members of the media and politicians with socio/political leanings gave it a Modi centric bias as the above news from a leading English daily of the South. Certainly Gujarat needs Lokayukta. There’s no doubt. However, on the one hand, the Supreme Court bench while criticizing the role of Governor Kamla Beniwal observed that Governor “has misjudged her role and has insisted that under the Lokayukta Act, council of ministers has no role to play in the appointment of the Lokayukta and she could therefore fill it in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court and the leader of the opposition, such an attitude is not in conformity or in consonance with the democratic set up of government envisaged in our constitution” while adding that appointment can be made “only with the aid and advice of the council of ministers and not independently as a statutory authority”.

This observation, *prima facie*, nullifies the appointment of Lokayukta by Governor. It is unconstitutional and therefore can be termed ultra-virus. Yet apex Court due to some predilections decided to let go the governor’s action and validated it. This is very strange.

In fact some of the print media newspapers termed it “Apex Court gets it wrong”. One paper even called it as “pronouncing someone a thief and then allowing the latter to keep the loot”. It was indeed mutually contradictory. However, what is indeed questionable is, there are many states where Lokayukta is not there at all, and nobody including Apex Court taking any stand. But the same court questioned the delay in Gujarat. Is it the selective wakefulness of the questioning authorities?!

MAY 2013

Modi as PM Candidate

GUJA T: **ere is something, which is not really** healthy about what BJP is trying to do in going head-over-heels in projecting Narendra Modi, as a future savior of India. Narendra Modi, may be personally incorruptible, but is he the best that has happened to India? Answer is an emphatic ‘NO’. Being incorruptible is definitely a very positive aspect of a leader. But a leader has to be also sensitive. He also has to be open to suggestions and ideas from others. Modi appears to be rigid. He has his own idea of what constitutes growth. No doubt, being, a person with no apparent financial self interest, although a big plus point, his no holds barred ego, can be a big stumbling block for his ambition for the role. Even in his own Gujarat, he is not accepted, on face value, fully. His detractors have all kinds of stories to buttress his negative image. Some may be true and some may be false. But the lapping up by a section of BJP led by its president Rajnath Singh, can create hurdles by this over-kill. If at all BJP wants to offer alternative governance at the centre, a mere Modi-fication of the model is not enough. Development has to have a human face with inclusiveness spoken by Rahul Gandhi. Like Robert Lynds ‘Sermon on shaving’, to have a clean shave, one needs to have not only a good razor, but also a good brush and an equally good lather. Hence there has to be marriage of ideas for a humane governance to evolve as progressive and humane. Something Rajnath Modi & Co has to realize.

NaMo & RG

NEW DELHI: **ere's an ongoing debate about the speech by** Rahul Gandhi and Narendra Modi to the captains of India Inc, recently. Of course there have been all kinds of analysis by pro Congress group and pro BJP group to primarily run down the other. But frankly both had their own plus points. It is not the fault of Rahul Gandhi that he is born into Ghandy or Gandhi households, but he appears to be a good human being. To begin with it is indeed very important to be a good human being, ability can always be hired. But what is relevant and therefore important, but strangely not touched by any of the supporters or the critics of Rahul Gandhi, is the decisiveness of taking action against your own people, people close to you. Modi has scored hands down, on this count. At the top he has no friend or relation either to help or someone who would misuse his position. Same cannot be said about Rahul Gandhi, especially when there are characters like Robert Vadra and his family involved in questionable transactions yet not subjected to public scrutiny. This shall be the most important corner stone of the moral tone of his leadership. His shouting brigade must understand this, sooner they take note of it, to make amends, the better for the Congress, take it or leave it.

NOVEMBER 2013

Gold at Daundiya Kheda

U A R P D E S H: **Shoban Sarkar – the head priest** of his own temple dreamt of a 'hidden treasure' of 1000kg gold coins under the Daundiya Kheda fort of Raja Ram Buksh Singh in the Unnao district of U.P. And come to think of it, amidst heavy police cover, the Archaeological survey of India, the keepers of India's heritage monuments, launched the biggest and unprecedented chase, of digging to unearth the hidden treasure. Even a Public Interest Litigation was filed in Supreme Court to order a court monitored excavation to protect the gold. So you can imagine the cross country interest that this dream of hidden treasure triggered.