

# The remaking of Narendra Modi

SHIV VISVANATHAN



POWER fascinates and when self-obsessive, it is even more fascinating. Subject to continuous churning, a dynamic sense of power has a magic few other processes possess. Narendra Modi is not just a man obsessed with power, but one who sees himself as a basic medium for it. Here is a Frankenstein redoing himself, creating a new self and a new costume. The remaking of Narendra Modi has to be understood because he stands as one of the major threats to the Indian polity. His attempt to project himself as a future prime minister has paid dividends. This essay is an attempt to understand the remaking of Modi, the modernist as fascist.

Recently, *Time* magazine asked us to be realistic and adjust to him. The Brookings sees him as a necessary evil, more necessary than evil. The report of think tanks should serve as a warning that recognizes that policy makers are already assuming the coming era of Modi. Yet, there is a paradox here. While Modi consolidates his image outside Gujarat, the state itself might be turning more lukewarm to him. The lack of enthusiasm emerges from three sources. First, elements within the BJP find him a hot potato and would be content to queer his pitch. A whole array of small movements, from the boat *yatras* to the battle against the Nirma plant, betray an unease with his development policies. Third, the shadow of the 2002 carnage still hangs over him and not all the perfumes of the SIT (Special Investigation Team) have been able to cleanse his little hands.

As opposed to this, the middle class who loves a winner sees in Modi a man who caters to their vulnerabilities and projects their fears in searching for solutions. The middle class sees in Modi a decisive, security oriented, and development centred, urban fixated politician who has voiced all their fears about Muslims, anarchy, security and transformed it into a huge vote bank. The future and Modi appears twinned in the middle class mind. So how did a simple, lower middle class *pracharak*, already diagnosed as a fanatic and a fascist by the psychologist Ashis Nandy, try to change his spots? It is this remaking of Modi that we must understand if we wish to unmake it.

A decade ago he was a simple cadre functionary. As the *pracharak* became chief minister, he extended the *pracharak*'s lens on to his new world. Gujarat was seen a cadre to be transformed. Modi's world was simple but his idioms were powerful. Like most RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) organizers, he evoked a *swadeshi* cultural idiom which was ascetic, nationalist and nativist. What was good for Gujarat was good for Gujaratis, as long as Modi determined it. Here was a man uneasy with difference and sought to meet it either by erasing or denying it. He lived out a parallel

history where Delhi was seen as an alien region controlled by foreigners. He enacted out the feelings of many Hindus who thought of electoral democracy as majoritarian tolerance that had gone too far, convinced that official history had been unfair to Gujarat which had produced both Sardar Patel and Mahatma Gandhi. Even worse, that Delhi acted as if Gujarat was a non-place. Rectifying history was Modi's and the RSS' favourite idea of justice.

This process paralleled the rewriting of history by Stalinists. The Stalinists rewrote history to suppress dissent. Modi rectified history to construct and consolidate the mentalities that would sustain him in power. Both used production statistics to create legitimations. Stalin had Stakhanov, the legendary worker who always met unreal production quotas. Modi cited Gujarat as a continuous example of business booms and found the semiotic Stakhanov in himself. He worked overtime to project an image of Gujarat as if he alone was responsible for Gujarat's success. Continuous repetition creates its form of legitimation and loyalty. By repeatedly reciting the story of Gujarat's success, Modi created a sleight of hand. The propagandist of Gujarat's success was gradually seen as the creator and cause for it. It was an act of usurpation that was swift and complete.

**T**he man who complained that history was unfair decided that fairness comes from rewriting it. Modi was sure that propaganda by creating self-fulfilling prophecies becomes true. He realized that he could not be a Gandhi or a Patel. They were ideals or icons he could not mimic. He also understood that the Gujarat of his time had no national figure. The textile strike and the collapse of the industry had created a *tabula rasa* in terms of models. With the death of textiles, the *mahajans* and *seths* who reinforced its orderly world lost their halo. Modi realized that the time was ripe for a new construct, an image constructed out of anxieties, fears, and even the traditions of achievement that have made Gujarat into an increasingly urban society.

Narendra Modi is a master of the language of populist politics. He understands the cultural idiom, in particular both the dialects and the dialectics of resentment; his grasp over the cultural politics of relative deprivation convincing Gujaratis that their contribution to the nation, GNP and history was not recognized. By playing on this unconscious, he shaped it to suit his instrumental politics. Any complaint about Gujarat would immediately switch to these cultural tracks, creating the logic of insider/outsider politics. The insiders were patriots; the outsiders were illiterate, unfair and arrogant. The corollary was obvious. Any insider who criticized Gujarat and its synecdoche, Narendra Modi, was automatically classified as an outsider. This classificatory exile was the task of enthusiasts who found in English journalists and newspapers their targets. English was an alien language and represented the outside.

**T**he imaginary house that Modi built had two sites, the Gujarat of his imagination and Delhi as his imaginary. Delhi was the last colony. It was the location where the imperial forces of the Congress ruled by the empress

Sonia lived. Delhi embodied an extension of Mughal rule perpetuated by the Congress. Delhi was non-Gujarat, it embodied colonial history without a hearing aid, deaf to the complaints of its opponents. Delhi was soft on the Muslims creating an invidious politics which favoured bootleggers and smugglers. Modi was adept at taking partial ethnic truths and transforming them into political slurs.

Narendra Modi is a shrewd politician. In recognizing the limits of Hindutva politics conducted in Hindutva idioms, he unconsciously realized that a rampant Hindutva might eventually threaten Hindus themselves. In that sense, his co-religionists were a problem as they are soft on history, preferring a soft democracy more in tune with their syncretic mentality. Modi sensed, early on, that his role as the lumpen speaker gorging on the violence of the riots had to be a temporary phenomenon. He sensed that while such resentment could be a layer in the unconscious, what one needed was an image of a more positive politics, something that could exorcise the ghosts of 2002. More than exorcism, one needed a semiotic makeover to create a set of self-fulfilling prophecies around the new Modi to survive politically. Populist politicians can perpetuate their tyranny by letting the rumour and gossip of a new leader play itself out. As a wag put it, Narendra Modi became 'The Gentleman'. It is this transformation that we need to understand.

**M**odi is a cultural construct whose semiotic grammar we have to understand. Semiotics as a theory of signs and symbols served to update Modi. Originally Modi appeared in the drabness of white kurtas, which conveyed a swadeshi asceticism. Khadi is the language for a certain colourlessness. Modi realized that ascetic white was an archaic language. His PROs forged a more colourful Modi, a Brand Modi more cheerful in blue and peach, more ethnic in gorgeous red turbans. His ethnic clothes serve as diacritical markers of respect. He plays the chief in full regalia. Having earned traditional respect, he needed a more formal attire – suits for Davos, a *bandhgala* for national forums. Hair transplants and Ayurvedic advice served to grow his hair. Photographs show him even trying a Texan hat. Hoarding after hoarding proclaims not only the same message but a diverse attire of designer wardrobes. He senses he has to sustain himself as both icon and image of a different era.

Modi grasped that the core competence of a politician must be built around different cores or, to switch metaphors, he needed a set of second skins which people would see as natural. He was shrewd in realizing that it was the Hindutva man in him that had to be deconstructed and recomposed. Like Eliza Dolittle, he had to project a new grammar. He (or I guess his PROs) disaggregated elements of his Hindutva to create a new image. Hindutva or the RSS training evoked the state as the God of society, organizational skill, asceticism, a cultural embedding of ideas, a sense of competence as machismo, a clear idea of history. Modi presented himself as the Vivekananda in politics.

Modi realized that the chameleon in him could transform Hindutva into a more neutral but aggressive technocratic idiom. Management became a form of masculinity and the idea of Hindutva conventionally seen as local

or parochial now became globalized. Modi's Gujarat behaved like a city state, a combination of Singapore and Shanghai on a larger scale. What came to his aid was the language of the World Bank. Modi's expert handling of the earthquake was decisive. He realized that World Bank transmuted its ideologies into methodologies of audit and standards, creating as it were a new kind of accountability. Modi may have been responsible during the riots but he was definitely responsive to World Bank idioms and norms. The language suited him as he could preen himself with numbers.

**T**he aura of accountability found its hyphen in the obsession with security. Security was the technocratic idiom of nationalists. Security was also the machismo that would fight terror. Gujarat's handling of terror was presented as exemplary. The brilliance of it was that security and accountability were positivist terms measured by tonnage or control. In Modi's thesaurus, they substituted for the ethics of responsibility. Responsibility is more encompassing in its philosophy, more inclusive in involving minorities. As a way of life, it involved dialogicity, an accommodating mentality, while security or accountability could be handled with forceps. They were distancing terms. If responsibility sounded soft, security was hard. It exuded power, control, and hierarchy. Gujarat was secure under Modi while Delhi was vulnerable to terror under an effete Congress. Technology needs a sense of cosmopolitanism which Modi's presence in Davos as the only Indian chief minister provided.

**S**reekumar, the ex-Inspector General of Police who is an acute observer of Modi, is full of insightful nuggets into the craft and craftiness of the man. He said, 'For all his Hindutva, Modi has become a devotee to power. Power is his only idol. Power secularizes Modi by instrumentalizing him. Modi will have no problem attacking Hindus to retain control.' In fact, Sreekumar claimed that Modi's 'secularism' can be double-edged. Modi, he said, demolished 600 temples to clear road obstructions in Ahmedabad. The message was clear. It was not that he was secular but that he was in control. The act could also be used secondarily to show how Modi can control Hindus when they get out of line. Modi began playing the Lee Kwan Yew of Gujarat emphasizing that all problems could be dealt with at a single window – Modi.

The myth of efficiency epitomized as security and stability needed investments as a continuing barometer of success. Modi played the self-styled magnet for investments brilliantly. In this new age of liberalization, investments are manna, the gift, the grace all tyrants are looking for. Investments are more powerful than riots in silencing critics. Gujarat was soon to become the Camelot of investments and its centre was Sanand. Modi created a dreamland for the automobile industry, successfully inviting Ford, Tata, Maruti and contouring this hub with a stunning array of ancillary industries which could add to employment. Modi's message to the corporations was clear and Ratan Tata was among the first to sense it when he said, 'It would be stupid not to be in Gujarat at this stage.' Modi had become Gujarat's best political salesman and his clients were the

corporations and the diaspora. He played or enacted his vision of shining Gujarat impressing diasporic Indians, starved and nostalgic for efficiency and decisiveness. For them, as for *Time* magazine later, here was an Indian who could stand up to the Chinese. This was a helpful aura to have especially with the US government. A nuclear plant or two would become an apt mutual token of esteem.

**I** must emphasise that Narendra Modi's tactics were not taking place in a vacuum. The chief minister is a very tactical man and his initial tactics differentiated between opposition and dissent. Modi recognized that the opposition was effete. The Congress, as the opposition, willingly or inadvertently had tied itself into knots, raising issues which it could not follow up. He sensed that the Congress was afraid of opposing him nationally, afraid to lose the Hindu vote. The Congress opposition in Gujarat was reduced to sniping with little effect.

Modi discovered that it was dissent, not opposition, that was devastating. Small pockets of activists created little colonies of resistance that was effective. For example, Teesta Setalvad and her team created a memorial for the survivors at Gulberg House, the housing colony where the Congress MP, Ehsaan Jaffri and 69 others, were brutally murdered. The event at Gulberg House was not organized or instigated by any party. A loose network of citizens put it together. The impact was stunning. Over 2500 people came and spent the day in a quiet act of solidarity. Shubha Mudgal came and sang powerfully, creating a circle of emotion, with the survivors in tears.

**M**odi understood that it was this form of protest that most threatened him and as part of his new repertoire he chose to suppress dissent in the academe. A senior professor at DAIICT, Gandhinagar, was asked to resign. In fact, what one is now witnessing is Modi's effort to take control of key national institutions like CEPT and the Indian Institute of Management. The report by *Time* was publicized and translated into Gujarati to submerge such dissent. He has been successful, temporarily, in part because many academics see in the future Modi a career to be pursued. Modi is shrewd enough to anticipate that even if Gujarat becomes an intellectual corridor, dissent is one epidemic he cannot afford.

Modi's effort to mobilize film stars like Anupam Kher, Sunil Shetty, Ajay Devgan, and Amitabh Bachchan is an attempt to create a groundswell of cinematic support for the regime. The use of Visvanathan Anand to announce and inaugurate Gujarat as a major chess culture is another powerful example. To combat dissent, Modi has created a braintrust of advisors, including corporate dons like Narayana Murthi and Azim Premji, giving him legitimacy in entrepreneurial and managerial circles. IIM Ahmedabad's decision to invite him as CEO for the day is merely one more example of academic institutes quietly falling in line. He has also nurtured a bureaucracy that is only a prosthetic extension of him.

The tactical brilliance of Modi lies in his ability to use law to thwart justice and employ democratic ideals to perpetrate his control. In this, both he and the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Jayalalithaa are siblings in politics. Both have criticized the Congress for not adhering to the spirit of federalism. Yet, the very same politicians who tout the importance of democracy at the federal level are reluctant to allow democracy at the state level. Modi's contempt for his own party men and his distancing from them is projected as part of his honesty, his refusal to recognize party politics as a spoils system. In fact, distance becomes tactical. Initially, Modi was presented as a politician almost tactilely in touch with the masses. Now he is presented as a hoarding, a larger than life creature to be quoted, cited, his every act a policy event.

**I**t is Modi's use of the law, however, that appears most cynical. The Nanavati Commission continues happily creating an archive that means little. The SIT, behaving technically and narrowly, gave him a clean chit. He seemed to enjoy all the moral luck till the Ramachandran Report queered his pitch. But the pseudo trial by commission and committee sanitized a space around him, blurring basic ethical questions. What it conflated specifically was the difference between guilt and responsibility.

Assume that the CM had no direct role in the riots, yet was he right in disowning responsibility for the victims of the riots? Gujarat was the first example of a state government in India which refused responsibility for the aftermath of the riots, disowning any connection with the refugee camps that mushroomed after the carnage. The argument was that to accept responsibility for the camps was to signal a guilt about the riots. With one bad syllogism, a huge sector of victims were declared less than citizens and forced into subhuman lives in transit camps. Ten years after the riots, transit camps have acquired an air of permanence while everything within is ramshackle. Yet, Modi denies the camps exist or claims that they have shut down. Their very names, Ekta Nagar and Citizen Nagar, provide an ironic note to the ethical presence of the regime.

**Y**et viewed objectively there is a shrewdness to this tactic. Modi has injected the idea of development as a credo deep into the middle class. For them and him, development is a process that cannot wait, that has an inevitability to it, that is Darwinian in that the fittest survive. The Modi credo then suggests that those who act tangential to or are recalcitrant about development are reluctant citizens. The idea of development creates a double demand on ethnics, marginals, minorities. It throws them two specific challenges. First, it asks them to de-ghettoize and de-ethnicize themselves and erase, if necessary, identity and memory. It asks them to forget the riots, plainly stating why wait for justice when we are offering you development. It argues that development can be more distributive than justice can. The catch is that they have to become citizens and citizenship is defined as attempts to join the mainstream.

Here Modi's discourse also suggests that minorities have hidden behind their ethnicity and behave like reluctant citizens. He claims that his is the

'true' secular option. He seems to suggest that the majoritarian electoral democracy of Congress plays to religious sentiments, while the BJP's offer of development is an invitation to secular citizenship. With this, Modi acts as if he has claimed the higher moral ground.

Many Muslims find this suggestion tempting. They realize that they need to join the mainstream but they also sense the craftiness of the Modi option. He is asking them to abandon memory and justice, to forget, erase and accept entry into development, yet realizing that development too might be a zero-sum game. They sense that the new urbanization in the aftermath of the riots may disempower them further. Many of the Muslim women had an answer for Modi. They (in a composite sense) said, 'We want to go on but this society won't let us. We do not want our children to carry the burden of violence. We want to forget the past; they want us to erase it. Yet, they will not let us return to our livelihoods.' The politics of memory has become a millstone around the Modi neck and the many commissions have not sanitized him completely.

**P**oliticians are word splitters and consequently world splitters. Muslims like J.S. Bandukwala, a civil rights activist and retired professor of physics from Baroda, talked of apology and forgiveness as rituals of healing. For Modi, power which apologizes is no longer power. He lacks the wisdom and empathy of a Willy Brandt who knelt and asked for forgiveness of the victims of the Holocaust. Brandt rose in stature after the act but a Modi, afraid of the label of guilt, is unable to imitate him. But politicians can create parallel worlds which mimic the authenticity of the real. Modi lacks the courage to ask for forgiveness. He feels no empathy for Muslims. They remain a problem to be solved.

Instead of forgiveness, he chose magnanimity. Magnanimity is imperial; it evokes the height and distance of power. Modi's *Sadbhavana Yatra* was an act of piety. Inaugurated on his birthday, where he received a *Ramcharit Manas* from his mother, the rituals felt like a *darbar*. The signal to the outside world was that Modi was a changed man. Yet, the message inside Gujarat was different. Minority groups came like subjects to swear fealty to a lord. Attendance was a performance to be duly noted. There was no sense of community; the entire drama spoke of power speaking to vulnerability. What betrayed Modi was his body language. When a Muslim cleric offered his cap, Modi shrugged, creating an embarrassing gaffe. There was a sense that he was not speaking from his heart. One could sense a politician waiting to be prime minister.

The viewer by now realizes that Modi was on a double stage, a CM fighting to be elected and waiting to be proclaimed a prime-ministerial candidate. Such was Modi's confidence that even Lal Krishna Advani, Nitin Gadkari and Sanjay Joshi, stalwarts from the RSS, surrendered the stage to him. Modi's autocracy, however, created an interesting shift in messages. Earlier, as a pracharak and a chief minister, the BJP was the text of his messages. Given his distance from internal party democracy, the party began appearing as a context for politics slowly withering to a pretext. His main opposition is now surfacing within his own party tired of his egocentric politics.

Yet, evil for all its flaws is more inventive. Modi, like the devil in *Paradise Lost*, still has the best lines. More critically, Modi is consolidating power beyond electoral rhetoric. His unease with his party and with his communal image nudges him towards a new discourse, one which make one want to reread the past. Modi seems to have rewritten the scripts of modernization. His modernization no longer seeks the scapegoat in the Muslim; it sees its power in the collective force of the city. Now riots appear to be a clearing house of a project called the city. The fascist as modernizer has found a new symbolic project, the city.

Gujarat has always been the most urbanized part of India with at least 57 major towns. Modi is building on it a new wave of urbanization. Modi articulates the fact that urbanization is both process and a promise. As a process, there is logic to its demands which necessitates certain decisions. Instant cities unlike instant coffee are complex entities. Yet, Modi grasps the fact that cities are a coalition of opportunities. The city caters to a middle class, to corporations hungry for land, to a network of fixers who create opportunities around a city. Each act of Modi invokes a corporation and urbanizes Gujarat. Modi has allied himself with a newly emerging entrepreneurs like Adani and Mittal, with the pharmaceutical industries, and with Nirma, while tying up with the Tatas. He has offered the Japanese, always hungry for land abroad, two cities for development. He has hypothecated the coastline to the corporations like the Adanis, whose control of pipelines and ports make them a formidable force. Corporations desperate for land find him amenable.

The middle class seeing in investment the prospect of employment is also content. Modi has become the new urban hero. Yet, one senses an unease about these new cities. One wonders if they are a kind of enclosure movement, a new way to displace nomadic and pastoral populations as ways of life. Gujarat has long been the home of these great nomadic and pastoral civilizations. The speed of Modi's policies of urbanization makes one wonder whether marginals and minorities are doomed in this feat of citizenship we call the city. The swadeshi pracharak has transformed himself into a development hero with the city as his script. Modi as a development statesman now projects messages at three levels. Locally he is a BJP CM; nationally, he is a future hopeful for the prime ministership; globally, he is a player articulating the rhetoric of climate change. His idiom and his style are now completely different.

There is also a struggle for a symbolic domain, some claim to a myth or legend of India. In some ways the idea of class now lacks the appeal and Naxalbari, the romance of revolution. The Congress also realizes that its narratives of Nehruism and nation-building ring hollow. As a symbolic entrepreneur, Modi senses it. He realizes that he cannot cite Savarkar or Hedgewar. They make for poor mnemonics, lacking any real appeal for the new generation. Modi is shrewd enough to realize that he needs a floating signifier, something all India can claim and he can claim in a particular way. The choice of Vivekananda appears immaculate. Unlike Ramakrishna, he is not the mystic. He is an outward looking, organization

centred religious monk who built an institution. By juxtaposing himself to Vivekananda, Modi becomes another cultural innovator, seeking to revitalize society to face the next wave of modernity. His is not a spiritual pulpit; he is at heart a propagandist. He unleashes thousands of plastic balls with Vivekananda quotes to bounce around a society's mind.

**T**he question one has to ask is what Modi as performance teaches one about electoral democracy in India. Modi embodies a paradigm of violence forged out of resentment with history. His swadeshism, tinged with the folklore of a Bhagat Singh, sees the state as a masculine trope and the administrator as a decisive person. It is a denial of softness as a part of duty and a summons to violence as a part of patriarchal responsibility. Like many in the Hindu majority, he senses an effeteness about politics and democracy, a minoritarian bias that vitiates power. In seeking to create a strong India, it seeks a character building that emphasizes efficiency, security and decisiveness.

**T**he emphasis is more on duty. Minorities in this discourse have a duty to join the mainstream and respect majority sentiments. Violence or a threat of violence becomes an administrative tactic to keep them in line, to create order. Such a sense of order is uneasy with difference and is often punitive about imagined disorder. The body language is patriarchal, more used to dictates than discussions. The dream is of the motherland, but as fathers see it. A strong state, preferably nuclear because the nuclear commands respect; a strong leader because leadership is the leitmotif of democracy; a strong people, often cadre-like in action, who will help constitute a different India.

Such a notion of order sees minorities, dissent, difference as sources of disorder. A minority that is reluctant needs to be disciplined in this model. A minority that emphasizes rights over duties is not ready for citizenship and is thus open to majoritarian violence as a pedagogical punitive exercise. In such a conception, minorities should episodically be taught a lesson so as to keep them in line. Such a notion frequently sees the majority as a victim of democratic normativeness.

One has to recognize that to many Modi represents a public policy hero, a Hindu Bismarck as a technocrat. Modi has consistently been ranked as the most able chief minister by *India Today*. As an administrator, he evidences an impressive set of skills; as a politician he is adept at survival. In fact, of late, one can see him chuckling over the embarrassments of the Congress. He comments freely on its alleged ability to handle the national grid or the question of terror. Gujarat scores high in terms of electricity, investment, quality of roads. He is a cultural dream for Hindus tired of softness and gentleness who welcome his technocratic machismo.

The diaspora sees in him an almost American competence, a quickness and a decisiveness rarely witnessed in Indian politicians. But Modi is a Rorschach for these people. They project on to him the qualities they wish to have – economy, decisiveness, a patriarchal brusqueness, a modernity rooted in tradition but without succumbing to it. He is a creation emerging out of a subculture's deepest fears, hybridized with its sense of the correct response to these fears. If fear and resentment were the mother of invention, Modi as a cultural figure would be one product of such anxieties. A Vivekananda spouting manager, he seems an invention from some B grade commentary on the *Bhagvad Gita* speaking of security, nationalism and efficiency. He is a bully dressed up in managerial values and projected as the problem solver, an Indian answer to Chinese planning.

Modi realizes that there is an economy to the waiting game. He does not have to do much. He can laugh at the antics of his opponents, create an occasional spectacle, to grab the front page. By simulating a PM in waiting, he is even convincing people that he is going to be one. He is creating a self-fulfilling prophecy around himself. The press falls for it. *India Today* keeps saluting his powers of governance; *Outlook* creates the outlines of an unequal battle between him and Rahul Gandhi. This is pre-emptive politics and Modi plays it beautifully.

As a politician he realizes that he thrives on other people's and other party's mediocrity. It is not that he has an eloquent vision or an idea of India. He, however, guesses that an India without ideas is sure to vote him into power. Democracy, in this age of political mediocrity, will always pick the caricature of the lowest common denominator. Modi combines the worst of our anxieties with the most authoritarian of solutions. Authoritarianism like technocracy is a particular approach to problem solving. The charisma that fascism needs mixes with the pragmatism of technocracy to create a frame of thought as a way of life. Once a society accepts Modi as a mentality, a mode of thought, it might well have to live out its consequences over the next few decades. A friendly fascism can be a lethal mode of governance.

Finally, one has to recognize the moral luck of the man. *Time* and *Brookings* go out of their way to give him good conduct certificates for governance. Corporations feel he is the flavour of the year. The one thing that rankled was the refusal of the British and US governments to give him a visa. In October 2012, the British government withdrew its objections, contending that the laws of the land had given Modi a clean chit. Britain, like other countries, realized that Modi was heaven-sent in terms of business investment and the prospect of investment silences any mercantile conscience. The British, like many others, felt that here was a politician whose time has come. The ensuing hysteria made one wonder whether he had received an OBE. This sense of luck is something we need to acknowledge. Demagogues love signs and the signs are that Modi is a politician ready for a bigger stage. The modernist as fascist breathes a legitimacy that electoral pundits love.

