

# The two years of Modi rule

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi has completed two years in office in this second term. The occasion has spurred a spate of assessments, most of which are confined to the post-Corona times as if all that happened before does not qualify for consideration. For a dispassionate assessment, one needs to rise above immediate concerns and interests. Only then we shall be able to view meaningfully his personality and works.

This is not to exonerate the BJP government for whom governance should have been as much important as fighting elections. Whether this over-involvement of the Prime Minister was responsible for the slackening of efforts in marshalling men and material to check the march of the pandemic in its tracks would require deeper scrutiny. Health is a concurrent subject and a national emergency like the present Covid pandemic calls for collective measures by both the centre and the states. Due consideration must be given to the central government initiatives like the immediate lockdown in the first phase coupled with subsistence package for the poor and various state governments' initiatives. Mercifully, the situation is improving and the concern for the third wave is spurring right kind of moves by all stakeholders.

If we cast a look at the pre-Corona times and assess Modi as a leader, we shall find him a cut apart. As a simple man coming from a poor background, he reminds one of late Lal Bahadur Shastri. The fact that his mother and other members of the family continue to lead lives as ordinary persons is something that is hard to find in our times. His honesty is beyond reproach and he has taken action wherever need of action on this count against any person arose.

He has the vision and commitment along with the energy to implement his ideas not all of which are political. His very first actions upon assumption of office during the first term laid emphasis on personal hygiene which was unique because no Prime Minister ever talked about it from the ramparts of the Red Fort. The fact that children in rural schools were trained to wash hands with soap can be appreciated better in these Corona times. Besides, his stress on opening of bank accounts of people belonging to lower stratum of society did not only help remove corruption but also taught them to conduct digital transactions, so important in Corona times.

Similarly, at the global level, his promotion of Yoga and getting UNO to declare International Yoga Day raised the value of Indian culture for which the world is obliged during these Corona times when lockdowns compel people to stay inside and tend to their health through Yoga. Modi's connect with the Indian diaspora and his government's help to different countries with Covid vaccines has ensured goodwill for India which was paid back recently through help in the form of treatment paraphernalia.

As a political leader of the country, whichever department or state he visited, he went after studying deeply about the problems and guided them with a practical roadmap. In this, he can be compared to late President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. There is no leader in sight in any political party who can equal him in this regard. He has the courage and determination to take risks and usher in big changes. We saw it when he declared demonetization. Implementing the promises made in the BJP manifesto, he took to conclusion the abrogation of Article 370 that had been pending for more than seven decades. The Ram Janmabhumi issue was resolved through the good offices of the Supreme Court and then implemented peacefully by his government. There is a long list of measures taken to ameliorate the plight of poor people, minorities and women.

It is natural for opposition in a democracy to oppose the government in power even as the situation in our country is unique in that we often see opposition for the sake of opposition. Measures like Aadhar preparation, CAA and NRC were opposed for the sake of ensuring illegitimate vote banks. The three farm laws were likewise opposed and it was ensured that no solution could be reached through single-track demand to repeal the laws. Modi's failings (after all he is no god!) have come to the fore here. It is his skewed judgment in dealing with incidents like Shaheen Bagh and farmers' protests which were just left to become festering sores. Is he aspiring to prove his democratic credentials and win over the anti-India media in other countries? One won't know.

Modi is also saddled with the task of leading the nation against the machinations of adversaries like China and Pakistan which he has very ably done whether through Balakot strike or through the very long standoff at the LAC. But you never know when situation might deteriorate. There are testing times ahead because of the looming economic crisis feared due to Corona lockdowns. All these demand a capable leader and one does not find any leader in the opposition who can match Modi's clout, popularity and capability. This is a weakness of our democracy at present. We need opposition leaders who can coolly and rationally analyze things and present solutions rather than talk childishly or irrationally and mislead public. Presently, a leader like Modi alone can ensure that India comes safely out of these calamitous times.

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