

# India Has A Prime Minister

■ Dr. M.N. Buch

Narendra Modi gained both notoriety and controversy as the Chief Minister of Gujarat in his first term when in 2002 after the post Godhra killing of pilgrims returning from Ayodhya, major riots broke out in the districts of Central and South Gujarat. Feelings against Modi in liberal circles ran so high that he was dubbed a murderer and the United States of America, invoking a law which prohibits the entry into America of anyone involved in racial or religious discrimination and worse, denied him a visa. The then government, using CBI and the courts, spared no effort to try and indict Modi. Surprisingly the Minister of State for Home Affairs in that government, in reply to a question in Parliament, stated that almost three hundred people had died in police firings by the Gujarat Police attempting to suppress the riots and that a sizable number of rioters shot were Hindus. The same Chief Minister won wide acclaim for the way in which the major earthquake in Gujarat was handled and subsequently his government was held out as a role model of economic development in the State. Now that he is Prime Minister not only has the United States Government extended him an invitation to pay an official visit but top functionaries such as their Secretary of State are virtually wooing Modi as if in a *swayamvar*. Which is the real Modi, a question which must be answered because now he is Prime Minister of India, the world's largest democracy.

BJP's election strategy for 2014 was the most appropriate for the general election. The party concluded that the old leadership was worn out, fixed in a groove and unable to deliver success in an electoral campaign. That leadership was virtually put on the shelf and a new set of leaders of middle age and younger was put in place, with Narendra Modi being given leadership of the campaign. With his energy, his appeal to voters through presenting development as the main agenda of the party, by speaking directly to the young and holding out hope for the future, Modi was able to deliver an absolute majority to BJP, thus ending more than two decades of coalition rule. This was an outstanding performance. He started well by inviting the Heads of State and of government of the SAARC nations to attend his swearing-in-ceremony. They all came, including Nawaz Sharif and Modi reached out to all of them with a promise of extending Indian's friendship to all the neighbours. It was a very impressive performance.

Soon after assuming power Modi visited Bhutan and convinced the Bhutanese that India was their friend. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014 he visited Nepal for two days and put in a virtuoso performance when addressing the Constituent Assembly/ Parliament by referring to the Constitution under drafting as a document which would bind all Nepalese together. By stating that in a bouquet there are different flowers each with its own colour and fragrance, which together form a beautiful bouquet, he reached out to every Nepalese, whether a priest of Pashupatinath, an aristocratic Rana, a warrior Thapa or a Limbu or Magar. He even praised the Maoists by comparing them to Ashok, who in the hour of victory gave up Yudh, or battle in return for Buddh. So much so that Prachanda and Bhattarai, the two main Maoist leaders, have publicly proclaimed that Modi has won their hearts. In offering highways, information highways and transmission ways to Nepal Modi showed that he is deeply involved in the economic progress and modernisation of that country, by making a credit line of one billion dollar available to that country in addition to all other aid he has proved India's financial commitment and by categorically stating that India would not in any way interfere in the affairs of Nepal he has given proof of goodwill. For the first time after Indira Gandhi Modi proved that we now have a Prime Minister, firmly in the saddle.

India is the horse, Modi is the rider but the question is in which direction will the rider take the horse. India is a much more diverse nation than Nepal. It has the Muslim of Pathan origin living in Rohilkhand, the Khalsa of the Punjab, the Chamar of Agra, the Pandit of Banaras, the Syrian Catholic of Kerala, the Nadar and Brahmin of Tamil Nadu, the Garo, Mizo and Angami Naga of the North East, the Gond of Betul, the Buddhist of Ladakh and the Muslim of the Kashmir Valley. All of them represent a flower, each with its own fragrance, shape and colour, which together form the kaleidoscopic bouquet that is India. Each flower in the bouquet is beautiful in its own way. That is the unity in diversity of this country. As 2014 has proved, those who appealed to caste or religion, such as Mulayam Singh Yadav, Mayawati and the Congress Party, bit the dust because divisive politics was clearly rejected. Does Modi realise this? Will he use the diversity of India to create a multi hued bouquet?

The above questions are asked because recently in Bhopal Shri Mohan Bhagwat, the Sar Sanchalak of R.S.S, stated that if Hindus united India would be safe. Are they not united today in patriotism to the country? Are the Sikhs, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jains and Parsees not united in patriotism? In the wars with Pakistan in 1965, 1971 and 1999 many soldiers across the religious spectrum sacrificed their lives to protect India. Then why a separate call to Hindus? Buddha and Guru Nanak created new religions out of the Sanatan Dharma, the Adi Sankara reformed the Sanatan Dharma and Vivekananda taught us true religious ecumenism. St. Thomas came to India just fifty-two years after the birth of Christianity and the contribution of the Christian community to India is far in excess of their numbers. The Sikhs are the warrior arm of India and the Muslims of Kargil stood firm against the Pakistani invasion. We are all Indians, but even more, Narendra Modi is the Prime Minister of the whole of India and of every Indian. This has to be his guiding star. In this he must emulate APJ Abdul Kalam, whose greatest respect was reserved for his Tamil Brahmin teacher in his village school who inculcated in him a love for mathematics. In turn the teacher taught Abdul Kalam in the Guru-Shishya tradition without caring for the fact that the student was a Muslim. It is the tradition of India that Adi Sankara, Vivekananda, Guru Nanak and Amir Khusro are equally revered, just as the body of St. Francis in the Bom Jesu Basilica in Goa attracts pilgrims from every community in India. Modi can bring true development to India only if he lives in the true traditions of this nation whose coat of arms, besides the words '*satya meva jayate*', must also bear the words '*Bhinnata Mae Ekta*' or unity in diversity.

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