

# **Modi and the idea of India**

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2014 general elections have been most difficult elections. It is a departure from all early elections. The voters have voted not only for a change and a new government. They have voted for a new idea of India.

Modi has sold to the youth of our nation a dream larger than the universe. More than 50% of youth have stood with Modi and voted for him.

The promise Modi has made to all will be fulfilled through 'development and good governance'. He will bring about good governance. But the good governance and development will be brought about through neo liberal path of development. In this respect Modi has not come out with any new idea. UPA has been following exactly the same path, in spite of their slogan of "inclusive growth".

UPA, however did not enjoy the kind of luxury that Modi will enjoy in having an absolute majority on his own. UPA allies were opposition within. The prime minister's cabinet was formed by the allies and not by his prerogative. When there was a need to raise railways fares after several years Mamata Banerjee changed the railway minister. UPA's attempt to introduce FDI in multi brand retail was opposed even by the congress government in Kerala, not to speak of TMC and DMK who were

their big allies. At the end Congress lost both these allies on one pretext and the other. It was relying on the outside support of BSP and SP. But their outside support functioned as vehement opposition than anything else. SP and BSP might have had some vested interests to give the outside support. Good governance needs good numbers in the parliament.

The development by neo liberal ideology essentially means mobilizing resources from all parts of the country, particularly from the remotest tribal areas to promote growth. It will exploit all the mineral wealth from the tribal areas depriving them of their assets, livelihood and displacing them to live on wages under contract labour. The formation of special economic zones through land acquisition, taking away the lands of the dalits, adivasies and of farmers and handing over to private industrialists has been a blow to the farmers and to agricultural sector as a whole. Another important aspect of neoliberal ideology is to globalize the national economy to the maximum extent. This includes inviting foreign direct investments and opening the market to the international producers. At one level this leads to what is called growth. More foreign capital flows in and there will be growth in employment in short run. When growth of any economy depends on the flow of foreign capital it is a growth on borrowed money. When the tides begin to change the flow of capital takes reverse direction. Before this happens the foreign capital would have made huge profits and repatriated to their base outside our country. Foreign direct investment will leave our country high and dry at the end of the story. This would cause crisis in our economy. This is precisely what happened towards the latter part of UPA II rule.

A word about private public partnership, Modi has added one more P to it to run it like people, private public partnership. This is a formula meant to make use of public assets to be used by private interest to make more profits. To add to this Modi will also involve the people to join the band to be exploited for private profit. The net result of this will be all the common property and public assets will go under the control of private industrial interests. This formula fits into the picture of neo liberal policies that aims at mobilizing public and people's resources into the hand of the private industries. Neo liberal ideology believes in privatizing social assets for private good, just opposite to what we would desire - socializing the wealth for common good.

The good governance that Modi speaks of is governance that will facilitate growth of capital, foreign investment and industrial peace. Good governance will give free hands to all to expand capital and deregulate the market. Liberalization or deregulation is a mantra of good governance. The private capital will have unfettered access to the common wealth and free market.

Modi has assured that he will revitalize agriculture. Given his pro industry enthusiasm one will have to imagine what kind of attention he will give to agriculture. One would not be surprised if by this he means industrialization of agriculture. Contract farming would be another way out to meet short fall of food production. If agriculture is viewed only in terms of producing more food then this approach would be found suitable in the Modi's frame work of things. In either case there would be growth in food production but rural population would have no money to buy food as their livelihood would be usurped by the industrial agriculture or contract farming. We will land up with

agriculture that will not be sustainable. One does not need to talk about the harm it will cause to the environment.

Modi wishes to revitalize the economy through good governance and neo liberal policies. However the extent to which he will succeed in globalizing our economy to that extent our economy will come under the influence of global economy. The impact of global crisis and swings in global economies will get reflected in our economy. Will Modi have any control on this situation? Will his development not come under the sway of global ups and downs?

What will be the social impact of the Modi government? Almost every BJP leader has come to politics through rigorous RSS indoctrination and drill. RSS' nationalist and Hindutwa agenda is expected to be part of the mission of every BJP. Under NDA I BJP had a reduced strength and hence they were constrained in their militant ideology. Now BJP on its own enjoys absolute majority, will it be constrained in their militancy? BJP did not given ticket to a single Muslim candidate in the recently concluded elections. The only Muslim who got elected from NDA to the parliament was a candidate put up by Mr. Paswan LJP.

Many like Mr. Gurucharan claim that majority of the youth who voted for Modi did not vote for Hindutwa but for development. Those who voted for Modi for development may make a distinction between Hindutwa and development. But how will BJP and its militant cadres at the ground interpret the mandate? Will they implement Modi's election promise to send Muslim immigrants back to Bangladesh and welcome Hindu immigrants? One must remember that apart from the youth reposing their faith in Modi the RSS cadres have put immense efforts in

ensuring Modi's victory. How will they act under the absolute majority of BJP?

Sudheendra Kulkarni has asked Modi, "You should pledge that your government would work towards the goal of a riot-free India." He reposes responsibility for riot free India in the lap of Modi. We have seen how he conducted Raj Dharma in Gujarat in 2002. Would he be able to restrain militant RSS-Hindutwa cadres?

What is even more serious risk we are facing is gradual safranization of Indian state. There will be a fair chance that more pro saffron officials, army and police personnel, judges and bureaucrats will be recruited in to the state machinery. We have experienced safronization of school curriculum in the past. In this case the state will not be able to respond to the aspirations of multi-racial, multi religious and multi ethnic population of our country.

Modi and the youth, the first time voters are looking anxiously to their future. They would like to carve out their future along the lines of their aspirations. Modi seems to have struck a chord in the lives of the youth. These young people will make their own history.

But these people cannot make their own history in a historical vacuum. By the very definition making history is in the context of our past and our vision for the future. Their efforts, no matter how innovative at finding solution to their problems in the present and charting out their future, are guided and circumscribed, moulded and conditioned by their respective histories, their inherited economic, political and ideological structures.

India set on its path on its own as it were after independence, i.e., from 1947. But this path has deep roots in the struggle of the people for independence. The political and ideological features, which have had a decisive impact on the post-independence development, are largely a legacy of the freedom struggle. It is a legacy that belongs to all the Indian people, regardless of which party or group they belong to now, for the party which led this struggle from 1885 to 1947 was not a party but a movement. All political trends from the Right to the Left were incorporated in this movement.

What are the outstanding features of the freedom struggle? A major aspect is the values and modern ideals on which the movement itself was based and the broad socio economic and political vision of its leadership. This vision was that of a democratic, civil libertarian and secular India, based on self-reliant, egalitarian social order and an independent stand as against the rest of the world.

The movement popularized:

- Democratic ideas and institutions in India: The Indian National Congress was organized on a democratic basis and in the form of a parliament.
- From the beginning the nationalists fought against attacks by the state on the freedoms of the press, expression and association and made the struggle for these freedoms an integral part of the national movement. The defence of civil liberties was not narrowly conceived in terms of one political group. It was extended to include the defence of other groups whose views would be politically and ideologically different.

- From the initial stages, the movement adopted a pro-poor orientation which was strengthened with the advent of Gandhi and the rise of the leftists who struggled to make the movement adopt a socialist outlook.
- The national movement was, from its early days, fully committed to secularism. Its leadership fought hard to inculcate secular values among the people and opposed the growth of communalism. Despite the partition of India and the accompanying communal holocaust it did succeed in enshrining secularism in the constitution of free India.

Modi has a herculean task to deliver on the promise of dream taller than the Mount Everest made to the youth and all the people of our nation. Any short fall on this will be very hard for Modi.