

India's most trusted



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In three years, the nation has seen the prime minister and his team work towards a new vision

THREE YEARS IS not enough for any government to transform a nation; but it is enough to judge if the direction is right. Three years of the Narendra Modi government clearly demonstrate that the direction is not just about reform, it is transformative. The political resolution passed at the National Executive of the BJP last year stated: "We are here not merely for reform. Reform is good, but it is largely about tinkering with the existing system. A new culture of honesty, discipline, commitment and patriotism is the end goal of these measures by our government."

At a time when the Modi government is celebrating its third anniversary, one can experience that transformative flavour in the everyday life of our nation. The country is less corrupt, less indisciplined, less violent and, importantly, less argumentative today than it used to be a few years ago. The last thing happens when people develop trust in the leadership. Modi is undisputedly the most trusted leader in the country today. Normally, the popularity of a leader dips with each passing year in power. In Modi's case, it seems to be the opposite. After three years, his popularity ratings remain high.

Normally, a government's success is measured in terms of growth and development in the country. The last three years have been more than satisfactory on those parameters. We are building more roads per day, our train stations and trains are more hygienic, economic activity is picking up, stock markets are booming and inflation is under tight control. Even the unemployment rate has come down to an all-time low of 3.5 per cent. But that is not all there is to the success story of this government.

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After many years, the people of the country feel the reassuring presence of a strong and decisive leadership under Modi. After the disastrous experience with 'many PMs and no PM' under the UPA, the country sees a PM and his team working cohesively, with a purpose. Ancient Indian wisdom says that a leader has to be strong and soft at the same time, decisive and benevolent. PM Modi is a leader in that mould. He has the courage to take unpopular decisions, with the ability to convince people to support them.

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Ancient Indian wisdom says that a leader has to be strong and soft at the same time, decisive and benevolent as well. PM Modi has demonstrated that he is a leader in that mould. He has the courage to take the most unpopular decisions, yet he has the ability to convince the people to support them. His schemes, like demonetisation and Give Up, have shown his ability to determinedly pursue a reformist agenda by infusing a transformative spirit into society.

This government has brought in schemes that help the poorest of the poor, and it has introduced systems like the GST that will help industry, traders and investors in a big way. This government has shown its ability not just to sail with the winds but to swim against the tide if necessary.

In the West, it is said that "a society gets the government it deserves", but in the Shanti Parv of the *Mahabharata*, explaining Raj Dharma to Yudhishtir, Bhishma says "*Raja kaalasya kaaranam*", meaning "it is the king who is responsible for the times". In our ancient wisdom, it is said that the rulers are held responsible for transforming societies. That is Modi today.

But in this task, we have to be balanced and impartial. A disciple asks Confucius a tricky question: "Some say that 'if you are slapped on one cheek, you should show the other'. Some say 'for one tooth, the entire jaw'. Which approach is correct? Doing good to those who do bad to you? Or replying in the same coin to those who harm you?" Confucius puts a counter-question to his disciple. "If you do good to those who do bad to you, what do you do to those who do good to you?" And then, he answers the disciple:

"Always do good to those who do good to you. To those who do bad to you, you don't have to do bad unto them. Give them justice."

To impart justice, one needs courage and character. That explains our stand on various difficult issues, like relations with Pakistan or China or even issues like triple talaq. Our leadership is not vengeful. The prime minister's December 30, 2016 speech is a case in point. In that address to the nation, he promised that the honest will be fully respected in the country and the dishonest will be brought onto the path of righteousness. Also significant is his caution to his partymen to refrain from making triple talaq a political punching bag.

That doesn't mean everything is hunky dory in the country today. The government faces serious challenges in areas like security and foreign policy. J&K, the Indo-Pak border and Maoist insurgency continue to bother this government. Similarly, foreign policy challenges in the neighbourhood coupled with changing power dynamics in the West put to test our leadership's strategic ability. But none of these issues have been created by this government. They are all inherited from the previous regimes.

An article in the prestigious *Forbes* magazine enumerates 10 qualities of a successful leader. They are: honesty, delegation, communication skills, confidence, commitment, positive attitude, innovation, intuition, being inspiring, and approachable. If a leader possesses several of these good qualities, he will be a good leader.

At the end of his three years, Modi rides the success wave because he possesses most, if not all of these qualities.

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