

# Neighbours Envy Owners Pride: A Case Study of Charismatic Leadership in Indian Sub-Continent

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## Abstract

India has seen many charismatic leaders in the past. However, in the recent years Narendra Damodardas Modi has been one of the most influential leaders in this sub-continent. The reason for opting him is because of his role in politics as head of state and journey in becoming the 14<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of our nation, which is a rare feat for any politician to achieve hitherto. He has assumed the prime minister office, since May 2014. The critics and supporters of him generally agree that his leadership style is authoritarian and congregates the power in his own hands. In addition to that, his performance in the last decade has established him as most popular leader after independence. Also, the different type of initiatives he has taken under his tenure to strengthen the country from within has increased his popularity amongst Indian masses, whereas his foreign policy has made him an admired leader across the globe. It was in the year 2016 Shri. Modi has won the Time's Person of the Year after reader's poll. Furthermore, both Times and Forbes magazines have figured him as one of the most influential political figures in the world. This paper is an attempt to study the charisma created by Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi in India, which has made India as neighbours envy.

Keywords: Modi, Leader, India, Charismatic, Neighbour.

## Introduction

The leader like Narendra Modi is best known for rising from humble beginnings to become Prime Minister of India. He grew up in the town of Vadnagar in India, wherein his father was a street merchant who struggled to support the family. The young Narendra and his brother sold tea near a bus terminal, which has been their usual routine. He is an average student in school and spent hours in the library and well known for his strong debating skills. He entered politics as a youth and quickly rose through the ranks of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a Hindu nationalist political party. Later, he joined the mainstream Bharatiya Janata Party in 1987, eventually became its national secretary. In 2002, he was alleged to be responsible for the deaths of more than 1000 Muslims during civil unrest, but later exonerated. It was in May 2014, he was elected as the Prime Minister of India.

### Life Dedicated to Politics

Modi had an arranged married at the age of 18 but spent little time with his bride. The two eventually separated with Modi claiming to be single for some time. He dedicated his life to politics in Gujarat by joining the RSS in 1971. During, the political crisis period (1975-77), the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency, banning political organizations such as the RSS. Eventually, Modi has been under hide and wrote a book, *Sangharsh ma Gujarat (Gujarat in Emergency)*, which chronicles his experiences as a political fugitive. In 1978, Modi graduated from Delhi University with a degree in political science and completed his master's at Gujarat University in 1983.<sup>1</sup> Narendra Modi joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on 1987, which stood for Hindu nationalism. His rise through the ranks was rapid, as he wisely chose mentors to further his career. He has promoted privatization of businesses, small government and Hindu values. In 1995, Modi was elected BJP national secretary, a position from which he successfully utilized to settle internal leadership disputes, paving the way for BJP election victories in 1998.<sup>2</sup>

In February 2002, while Modi served as chief minister of Gujarat, a commuter train was attacked, allegedly by Muslims. The retaliation of this attack has been carried out on the Muslim neighborhood of Gulbarg. The surmounting violence was spread and Modi imposed a curfew granting police shoot-to-kill orders. His Gujarat governance was criticized for the harsh crackdown. He was also accused of allowing the killings of more than 1000 Muslims along with the mass raping and mutilation of women. It was after two investigations contradicted with one another, the Indian Supreme Court concluded there was no evidence against Modi claiming he was at fault. Surprisingly, he was reelected as Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2007 and 2012, despite of these accusations.<sup>3</sup>

### Elected Prime Minister

Narendra Modi was selected to head the BJP's 2014 election campaign to Lok Sabha (the lower house of India's parliament) on June 2013. Subsequently, he and his party achieved a thumping victory in bagging 282 out of total 534 seats in Lok Sabha. Over winning more than 50 percent majority of Lok Sabha seats, he has sworn in as the 14<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of India on 26<sup>th</sup> May

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<sup>1</sup> Biography.com Editors, Narendra Modi Biography.com, April 28, 2017. Online at <http://www.biography.com/people/narendra-modi>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Biography.com Editors, Narendra Modi Biography.com, April 28, 2017. Online At <http://www.biography.com/people/narendra-modi>

2014. He is the first PM to have been born after the country got its independence from Britishers.<sup>4</sup>

### Major Initiatives

The Modi government has launched several schemes and programs, since it has assumed as PM of India. The list of few major initiatives is indicated below:

**Jan Dhan Yojana:** The scheme is aimed to give access to basic financial services for low-income groups of society.

**Make in India Campaign:** This initiative seeks to facilitate investment and encourage companies to manufacture their products in India.

**Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:** A national level cleanliness drive is a program aims to encourage all citizens to take up the initiative and also involve others to clean India.

**Beti Bachao Beti Pado Yojana:** The program seeks to promote gender sensitization, awareness against female feticide and education for girls.

**MUDRA Bank:** The Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency Bank aims at providing loans at low rates to small entrepreneurs.

**Efforts to unearth Black Money:** Promising to track down and bring back black money stashed in foreign banks and offshore accounts was a major point on which the Modi government was given the people's mandate.

**Smart Cities:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised 100 smart cities by 2022 to take the pressure off the metro cities. It intends to promote the adoption of smart technology-based solutions for efficient use of available assets, resources and infrastructure. Many countries like the US, Spain, Singapore etc. have reportedly envisaged their interest in partnering with India in developing these smart cities. A smart city in Gujarat is currently under construction.

**Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Shramev Jayate Karyakram:** This scheme was launched to improve employability, skill development and other conveniences to the labour class.

**Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana:** One of the Prime Minister's Independence Day mantras, the village development scheme cuts across political aisles involving nearly 800 Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs, wherein each Member of Parliament (MP) has to take the responsibility of developing three villages as model villages by 2019. All the MPs have to develop one model village by the year 2016 in their constituency and two more by 2019.

**Integrated Ganga Conservation Mission 'Namami Gange':** The river Ganga's conservation and development was one of the major touch points, which has been one of the electoral commitments for Prime Minister Narendra Modi whilst his electoral campaign. A separate ministry has been created to look after the Ganga clean-up project under the name 'Namami Gange'. This scheme will look after pollution abatement, ghat beautification works and a host of other things for its conservation.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

**Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana:** This is a rural electrification project with the goal to provide all houses with electricity.

**Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission:** To improve infrastructure in rural and semi-rural areas.

**Soil Health Card Scheme for every farmer:** Each farmer to be provided with a soil health card for optimal use.

**Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana:** To provide the facility of irrigation to all farmers who are dependent on rain water. In addition to this, Self Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU) programme has been enacted with a sum of INR 1000 crore, which has been set aside to be used by NITI ayog for investing in start-ups.

**Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana:** To make one million youths for job within 2017.

**HRIDAY (National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) scheme:** HRIDAY has been launched to conserve heritage of 12 cities, which includes Amritsar, Varanasi, Gaya, Puri, Ajmer, Mathura, Dwarka, Badami, Velankanni, Kanchipuram, Warangal and Amaravati.<sup>5</sup>

### Foreign Policy

In terms of foreign policy, Modi has taken a multilateral approach. He has participated in the BRICS, ASEAN and G20 summits as well as aligned himself with United States, China, Japan and Russia to improve economic and political ties. He has also reached out to Islamic republics, which has been most notable in terms of diplomatic ties with Pakistan, despite his repetitive labeling as a "terrorist state" and an "exporter of terrorism".<sup>6</sup> It has been ever since PM Modi has launched his Made in India initiative, business analysts have started calling India as the biggest opportunity as revealed in the statement AM Naik - describing India as the "biggest opportunity" for both business investment and career-building in the current global economy. AM Naik, is the chairman of Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A) and Executive Chairman of Larsen & Toubro (L&T). He has stated that Modi government's biggest impact is its foreign policy in delivering his welcome address at the 50<sup>th</sup> annual convocation. Modi has revitalized the foreign relations with almost all major and neighbouring countries. The recent initiatives in mining sector, land acquisition, deregulating diesel, FDI in selected sectors,

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<sup>5</sup>Online at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-one-year-of-narendra-modi-government-major-initiatives-and-highlights-2082450>

<sup>6</sup>Biography.com Editors, Narendra Modi Biography.com, April 28, 2017. Online at <http://www.biography.com/people/narendra-modi>

Direct Benefit Transfer and Make in India campaign have been widely acclaimed”.<sup>7</sup> PM Modi has taken a courageous step to fight with demonetization and changed the currency to curb black money, which laid a lot of impact on its neighbouring countries. It is clear that the expansion of bilateral ties with neighbours will remain a cornerstone of his government’s foreign policy. However, Narendra Modi’s 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016 announcement on demonetization has rattled countries such as: Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, which encouraged the usage of Indian Rupee as a parallel currency within their borders. The demonetization move has impacted countries like: Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and even Sri Lanka, wherein Indian Rupee has been used in large-scale transactions through cash.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the neighbouring countries started noticing the political upheaval in India and landslide victory of BJP in 2017 assembly polls, which will have an implication for Sino-India ties, as it could further embolden Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "hard-line attitude" and pose difficulties for "compromises" in rows with countries like China. The recent elections at Uttar Pradesh the most populous state of India has proved a sweeping electoral victory for BJP. The ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) has expressed that there will be a overwhelming support of people towards BJP in the future elections at other major states. The first commentary by the Chinese state media after poll results indicated that not only this will increase Modi's chance to win in India's 2019 general elections but also predicted that he is already set for a second term.<sup>9</sup> The PMs’ action plan is going to benefit the neighbouring countries. Also, it is quite evident from his address to joint session of Bhutan's Parliament in Timphu, wherein he stated that India is committed to good neighbourly relations and assured Bhutan that a change in the government will not alter the dynamics of Indo-Bhutan ties. In addition to that, he said if India progresses, it will directly impact the development of its neighbours. The stability and development in India will help neighbouring countries like Bhutan.<sup>10</sup> Modi has been criticized for his frequent travels abroad, but still he is admired by critics for bringing India to newer heights in terms of international relations. Also, the worst critics in private admitted, that the one area, wherein the Modi government has undoubtedly scoring is the foreign policy. The political potshots at PM's travels abroad, ironically claim credit, with some justification for the origin of many of his diplomatic

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<sup>7</sup>Financial Express, Narendra Modi’s Biggest Impact has been in Foreign Policy: IIMA chairman AM Naik, 2015. Online at <http://www.financialexpress.com/economy/narendra-modis-biggest-impact-has-been-in-foreign-policy-iima-chairman-am-naik/56128/>

<sup>8</sup> Basu Nayanima, Demonetization to Impact Modi’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ Policy 2016, The Hindu Business Line. Online at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/demonetisation-to-impact-modis-neighbourhood-first-policy/article9362288.ece>

<sup>9</sup> Modi’s Victory in 2017 Polls Can Impact Sino-India Ties: Chinese Media, Deccan Chronicle, April 28, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> India's Progress Will Impact Development of Neighbours: Modi in Bhutan, 2016. Online at <http://www.rediff.com/news/report/slide-show-1-indias-progress-development-of-neighbours-modi-in-bhutan-parliament/20140616.htm>

initiatives. It is difficult to ignore that the world sees India favourably than it did a year ago.<sup>11</sup>

### Global Recognition

Modi won the reader's poll as *TIME*'s Person of the Year in 2016. In previous years, he was listed in top ranking as one of the most influential political figures in the world in both *TIME* and *Forbes Magazine*. He was ranked second to President Obama for having the most social media followers as a political figure with high favourable ratings among Indian voters. Modi has a reputation for actively engaging citizens through social media and encouraging his own administration to stay active on its platforms.<sup>12</sup>

### Suggestion

The charismatic leadership in India exhibited by Shri. Narendra Modi has been proven, since his assuming the office as the Prime Minister in 2014. However, the leadership needs to be sustained through his governmental initiatives by the efforts in implementing the schemes at all levels. It is to be noted that India is a secular country, wherein the leadership needs to be decentralized with regard to unconditional acceptance and have to be embraced by the communities residing at rural areas, accounting for majority of population. The reason being the neighbours are envying on leadership of India, which is a pride on one side and equally sustained for India's phenomenal growth without disintegration at rural areas, wherein people's awareness are not so high in understanding such leadership and / or his foreign policies. The charismatic leadership of Modi also has a threat underneath regarding its continuity on exigencies and emergencies for socio-economic prosperity and growth of a country like India. Hence, the historical researchers should focus on studying the impact assessment of leadership and policies in terms of its inception and implementation in general with people and beneficiaries in particular so as to understand the status of such charismatic leadership style of PM and its longevity for future progression of India.

### Conclusion

Modi became the Prime Minister India amidst the disturbed neighbourhood. It has been under his leadership country's relations with the neighbouring countries has improved. Also, he is trying to address each issue that concerns the nation internally and externally. His style may be criticized

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<sup>11</sup> The Economic Times.

Online at:

[http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/47612964.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/47612964.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

<sup>12</sup> Biography.com Editors, Narendra Modi Biography.com, April 28, 2017.

Online at: <http://www.biography.com/people/narendra-modi>

as authoritarian, but still the types of initiatives Modi government has taken to strengthen the country from within has increased his popularity among Indian masses, whereas his foreign policies has made him an admired leader worldwide. It has been recognized by both Time and Forbes magazines, which indicated him as one of the most influential political figures in the world. Moreover, Modi said that despite the fact that India wants peace and friendly relations with its neighbours, it will not ignore its national interests. He further stated that those who have to work from the table will work from the table, wherein each one will fulfill their responsibility entrusted to them and our jawans are fulfilling their responsibilities.<sup>13</sup> Also, Modi's charismatic leadership has made the neighbouring countries envy and fetched pride for India.

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<sup>13</sup> India Wants Friendly Relations with Neighbours: PM Narendra Modi, The Economic Times, June 27, 2016.

Online at:

[http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/52942374.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/52942374.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)