

**AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE OF POPULISM: LEADERSHIP,
ORGANISATION AND COMMUNICATION**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

Master of Philosophy

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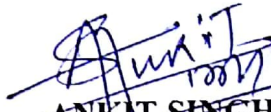
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DECLARATION

I, Ankit Singh, declare that the dissertation entitled "An Indian Perspective of Populism: Leadership, Organisation and Communication" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, is my original work. No part of this work has been published or submitted to any other University


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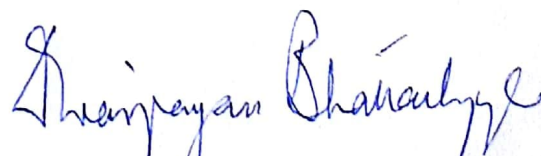
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We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



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*Dedicated in
the loving memories of
Daiji.....*

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Introduction

Situating the problem

Populism as a concept or category of political analysis has become much relevant in contemporary times. The scholars, political commentators or journalists unhesitatingly invoke populism and try to paint different political landscapes with somewhat a similar analytical brush. From United States of America to European countries like Britain, Germany, France, Greece, and Latin American countries like Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, populism as a conceptual category is widely employed to understand democratic politics. It is argued that political discourses in many of these countries are shaped by populism, which largely influences their social and political movements, as well as governmental programmes and policies.

While this has primarily been the case for European and Latin American countries, attempts to employ the framework of populism to understand Indian politics is also not rare. In recent times, scholars like Christopher Jaffrelot, Subir Sinha, Sanjay Srivastava, YogendraYadav and several others¹ have adopted the framework of populism to understand Narendra Modi's spectacular rise to power in the election of 2014. In addition, scholars have also attempted to attribute his programmes and policies, the *modus operandi* of his regime as populist.²

¹Jaffrelot in several of his articles published in News Paper, journals declared NarendraModi and his regime as populist. Comparing NarendraModi with Mrs. Gandhi he drew several parallels between the leaders like thrust for personalization of power, delegitimization of institution, direct and unmediated communication with the people, claim to represent the authentic will of the people, use of the tropes like nationalism etc. He also delineated certain differences with Mrs. Gandhi on ground of aversion of NarendraModi toward Muslims and other minorities which according to him represent the case of ethnic democracy. Apart from Jaffrelot there are also group of scholars who tries to read election of 2014 as the populist moment in Indian politics. Subir Sinha, Sanjay Srivastava and several others attempted to understand how populism operated in politics of NarendraModi in 2014 elections. Scholars like YogendraYadav attributed the success of Narendra Modi as a reaction of non English speaking people who went on to support him.

²AshutoshVarshney compared NarendraModi with Indira Gandhi and called him a hybrid variety of Mrs. Gandhi who is culturally situated in right wing politics but his programmes and policies reflect left wing leanings where as Mrs. Gandhi was left of the Center. For Varshney, Modi represents the blend of cultural right and economic left wing populism.

At this juncture it becomes important to understand the theoretical parameters of Populism and its relevance in the Indian context.³

It is often argued by scholars working on Anglo-American and Latin American experiences of populism that it is an aberration from the normal politics. The root for the rise of populism and populist leader lies in crises and contradiction which gets accumulated due to malfunctioning of normal politics⁴. Populist leader builds upon those crises to identify with the people or creates the people who are victim of those crises.

However, if we reflect upon Indian situation, we find a different situation. A perennial sense of crisis and contradiction is a defining constituent of the Indian society. Such a sense continued from the colonial to postcolonial times and, in response, Indian politics has devised various means to manage it.⁵ Populism, if defined as a mode of politics that addresses situations of perceived crises, has rather been a permanent feature of Indian politics. One could trace it in Gandhi's style of functioning to Nehru's appeal to the masses, and also in Indira Gandhi's grand political promises. Thus, any assumption to understand it as conjunctural and 'exceptional' becomes problematic in Indian politics. If crises and contradiction serve as important indicators for emergence of populism, one can read populism either as an innate feature of Indian politics or conversely, an irrelevant category for analyzing Indian politics.

Hence, it is important for us to investigate what 'populism' signifies in Indian politics and how Narendra Modi's immense rise redefines the conception of populism in the Indian context.

There is debate between the employment of term "popular" and "populist". Scholars like Robert Jansen, Ashutosh Varshney makes the distinction in the employment of term. According to Varshney Nehru was a popular leader while Mrs. Gandhi and Modi represents the populist case. The theoretical base for the argument comes from Robert Jansen who takes clue from Ernesto Laclau and argues that in populism and populist mobilisation there is creation of "the people" who remains in antagonistic relation with "the other" which generally exists in term of elite, institutions etc. in popular case the dichotomy between *the people* and *the other* remains absent. While a populist leader needs to be popular, a popular can exist without being populist.

⁴Normal politics here denotes to liberal democratic politics. Scholars like Chantal Mouffe who borrowed heavily from Carl Schmitt, Macpherson and others have argued that liberal democratic politics has failed to incorporate the demands and provide representation to the public leading toward development of massive antagonism in society which feeds populist politics.

⁵While emphasising upon the permanency of crises, I don't mean to say that only one kind of crisis existed or all crises have pre independence legacy. I simply mean to point out that the several new and old form of crises has been there in Indian society upon which the politics has found its articulation.

For this, one needs to closely analyse the processes which led to the emergence of the leader and the perpetuation of his regime. This calls for an examination of a host of areas, of which we will attempt only few in this dissertation. For a fuller understanding, it is required to analyze the tropes that Modi uses, his speeches and rhetoric, his emotional outpouring in public forums, his frequent airing of frustration and anger in relation to political establishments of the present (such as ‘obstructive’ parliament) and the past (such as the Congress party). All this add to his attempts to make and expand his basic constituencies, his ‘people’ and, also, identify the ‘other’, his adversaries, who refuse to identify with him, his ‘authentic’ representation. Needless to say, political organizations aligned to BJP and the new as well as traditional media play a big role in the creation and perpetuation of Modi’s aura. The attempt is also to map the significance of those organizations in populist mobilization.⁶

The aim of this work is to delve into these aspects and to understand the Narendra Modi phenomenon. To what extent populism as a concept captures the rise of Narendra Modi? What distinct experiences does the ‘Modi phenomenon’ offer to the concept of populism itself?

This task requires a dense engagement with the existing literature on populism in order to gain clarity on the concept and map the variations that the Indian case represents.

Literature review

What is populism? How has it been understood? To what extent the understanding developed by the scholars around populism serves as an analytical tool to map the political developments of contemporary time especially post-colonial context?

⁶There is debate between the employment of term “popular” and “populist”. Scholars like Robert Jansen, AshutoshVarshney makes the distinction in the employment of term. According to Varshney Nehru was a popular leader while Mrs. Gandhi and Modi represents the populist case. The theoretical base for the argument comes from Robert Jansen who takes clue from Ernesto Laclau and argues that in populism and populist mobilisation there is creation of “the people” who remains in antagonistic relation with “the other” which generally exists in term of elite, institutions etc. in popular case the dichotomy between *the people* and *the other* remains absent. While a populist leader needs to be popular, a popular can exist without being populist.

The attempt of this section is to look into the theoretical debates and contestation that surrounds around the concept of populism which emerged in relation to particular and specific historical context in Europe, US and Latin America. The objective is to understand the extent to which these theories of populism contribute to grasp the Indian political experience especially the 2014 general election where we have seen the rise of a leader like Narendra Modi.

Populism: A Theoretical Evaluation

As a concept, Populism lacks any agreeable definition. There exists wide range of differences among scholars in defining populism. Such kind of disagreement comes because the concept serves several masters and mistresses⁷. At several junctures and places it has propelled changes, it proved to be the force against change, an asset for the progressives and the left, even a final recourse for status quo, and a bastion for the right⁸. The populist discourses have produced dupes, democrats and demons and it has been used to describe political parties, leaders, ideologies cutting across geography and history. It is primarily for this reason, of its conceptual slipperiness Isaiah Berlin called it as “Cinderella complex”⁹ because any consensus was difficult to arrive at.

However, it is not as if attempts have not been made to define populism or add content to the concept. One can identify, enormous volume of literature on the subject of populism, explaining different cases of populist politics throughout the world. The major contribution came from scholars like Edward Shils, William Kornhauser, Di Tella, Ernesto Laclau, Margaret Canovan and others who studied populism both as a concept as well as different cases of populism across the European, American, African and Latin American societies.

⁷ Taggart, *populism*, 2.

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Berlin emphasizes that there is no perfect fit for the concept of populism. Any attempt to search a true limb or feet would be illusionary.

Defining the Concept

While studying populism in the context of Carthyism in U.S.A, Nazi in Germany, Bolshevism in Russia, Edward Shils argued that populism exists where ever there is an ideology of popular resentment against elite, their rule and the imposed order in the society in terms of monopoly over power, property, breeding and culture¹⁰. The key criterion to analyze populism, for Edward Shils, existed in mapping the relationship between the masses and the elite. In environment of populism, according to Shils, there exists massive distrust and ambivalent attitude toward the existing institutions like bureaucracy, universities, state and financial sectors. They are not only considered to be corrupt but also antithetical to the interest of the people. Such a kind of relationship emerges from the fact that in context of populism, the people is considered supreme and the institutions are portrayed to be anti-people i.e. non representative of their wisdom and interest.

Though such an analysis of populism for Shils was highly contextual, he tried to extend his analysis of populism to explain populism in continents like Asia and Africa. He did so in a comparative manner and argued that populism emerges from global intellectual community and thus represents a phenomenon of tension between the metropolis and province, which arises from the trend toward that world-wide intellectual community¹¹.

Edward Shils does not only restrict himself to a mere analysis of “populism”, instead, goes into the genealogy of it and traces it back to the German history where there was a rejection and critique of the rule of the state, the universities and the church authorities. Instead of these institutions, Edward Shils argued that there existed belief in ‘folk’ or “the people”¹². Thus he traced the roots of populism and drew ‘oppositionalism’ as an eminent feature of it. His ideas were of significant contribution in analyzing populism. Oppositionalism being one of them as it still serves as powerful trope to understand populist leaders like Trump, Modi, Erdogan

¹⁰ Shills, *The torment of Secrecy*, 100-101.

¹¹ Edward Shils, *The intellectuals in the political development of the new states*, 1962, Quoted in Paul Taggart, *populism*, 12.

¹² *Ibid.*,

and others. But the major contribution of Shils lies in that he opened avenues for other theorist to analyse the concept of populism.

William Kornhauser, drawing on Shils' definition of populism, argued that populism is both cause and effect in mass societies. It advocates homogeneity and uniformity in the face of social differentiation. Mass society gives rise to populist democracy which is opposed to the idea of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy while believes in values of individual freedom, institutional autonomy etc., in populist democracy it is the people who circumvent the institutions. An underlined assumption is drawn from Edward Shils, that "wisdom resides in people". The centrality of the people, which in William Kornhauser's case is the mass society, is that they not only take on institutions but also the individual liberty. The mass society, which is assumed to be monolithic, has priority over the individual and their rights and liberties. Thus populism, according to Kornhauser, was about restoring the sovereignty in the masses rather than the individual¹³.

The entire contribution of Edward Shils and the other theorist who contributed to the idea of populism during 1950s and 1960s is that, 'they located the source of its origin in modernity or the crises of modern world.

However it is not as if the attempt to set it apart has not been made; Torcuato Di Tella's intervention was a significant contribution in analyzing the populism of Latin America. He set apart European experiences of populism from Latin American through comparative approach by illustrating cases of different kind of populism that occurred in LatinAmerica.

Populism for Di Tella, occurs when there is anti-status quoist motivation among middle level elites, when growing expectations creates a mobilized mass of citizens, who remains politically unrepresented and when conditions allow collective enthusiasm among elites and masses to merge, leading to the emergence of populism. Thus, populism for Di Tella is based on 'mobilized but not yet autonomously organized popular sector which is led by elite whose base is rooted among the middle

¹³Kornhauser, *The politics of mass society*, 131-32.

and upper echelons of the society and kept together through charismatic, personalized link between leader and led'¹⁴. Unlike oppositionalism, Di Tella advocates the unity of the people in the image of leader. Thus, contrary to Shils and others' suggestions, Di Tella's account of populism serves as the vehicle for modernity¹⁵. Di Tella's attempt was to understand the social base for classical populist like Peron and Vargas by focusing on the economic angle of populist coalition. It is in that regard, developmental condition becomes his major vantage point in the analysis situating him in the domain of modernization theorists.

It is not as if social differentiation does not occur in Di Tella version of populism but that largely remains in terms of aspiration of developing country toward developed country and the sense of grievance toward status quo.

While Di Tella emphasized upon the link between populism and modernity, drawing populism as a vehicle for industrial development, Gavin Kitching, analysis of populism in African and Asian countries suggested populism as a reaction to industrialization and modernity.¹⁶

Apart from these major attempts to define populism, in the year 1967, Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner at London School of Economics tried to bring scholars on populism together in order to draw out a more general theory. They attempted to clarify the main aspect of a concept which according to Ionescu and Gellner, during the 19th century, and even more in 20th century, remained fundamental in shaping of the political mind than is generally acknowledged"¹⁷. Through the conference they raised certain important questions which though remain contested, throw important insights upon the concept of populism. The questions include, whether populism is an ideology or a recurring mentality brought about by similar condition, a political psychology or a reaction against capitalist system, anti-urban or anti-Semitic, pro

¹⁴Di Tella, *populism in twenty first century*, 196.

¹⁵ Ibid.,

¹⁶Gavin Kitching, *Development and underdevelopment in historical perspective; populism nationalism and industrialization*, 19-22.

¹⁷Ionescu, G and Gellner, E ,ed, *populism: its meaning and national characteristic*, quoted in Taggart, *populism*, 15-16.

people phenomena or as a mentality absorbed by socialism, nationalism and peasantry¹⁸.

Dealing with these questions, Peter Worsley made a significant observation where he examined the populism of USA, Russia, Africa, Asia and Latin America. He argued “populism can be better regarded as an emphasis, a dimension of political culture in general and not simply as a particular kind of overall ideological system or type of organization”¹⁹. Populism, according to Worsley, ascertains more of popular sovereignty and direct contact of government with the people. It is at this juncture that Worsley makes an attempt to free populism from being or representing an ideology²⁰.

Worsley’s significant contribution exists in analyzing and drawing characteristic features of the third world populism. He drew out certain essential characteristics of third world populism. Firstly, third world societies are essentially homogeneous with absence of class politics in it. It implies there existed no antagonistic relationship within it and the constitutions of those societies are more natural and their existence is more in terms of community. Secondly, even if the conflict exists, it exists more in between nations or the external world. Thirdly, it is the presence of one dominant party through which the ideas of community, society and nation gets an expression. Fourthly, while emphasizing upon the role of party, Worsley clearly indicates that it is party which acts as an agent of liberation and a force for economic development²¹.

Though Worsley’s account becomes significant as it attempts to free populism from being representative of any ideology and establishes it as a concept which signifies the dimension of political culture of any country but if we subject his analysis in post-colonial context like India, we will come across the inconsistencies inherent in his own formulation. Writing in 1969, he mistakenly assumed congress system as the *one party system* and undermined the role played by caste in terms of politics and in terms of class.²² It is due to absence of important category of caste in his analysis, he failed

¹⁸Ibid.,

¹⁹Peter Worsley, *The concept of populism*, 212-50.

²⁰Benjamin Adriti, *populism as spectre of democracy*, 135

²¹Paul Taggart, *populism*, 16.

²² The idea of congress system was built by Rajni Kothari. Kothari in several of his writings clearly indicated that congress system represented one party dominance rather one party system which Worsley mistakenly assumed. He also failed to take into consideration the changes which were in its

to locate antagonism existent in Indian society. In addition to that, he also failed to see the mobilization of masses under the banner of left politics which reflected the class coalition building up in subaltern societies²³. Undoubtedly his analysis of party remained significant, which not only acts as a source of liberation but he failed to note that the Modicum of expression of party was populist, which came from the larger Indian political culture. Though Worsley's account may be powerful in charting out a larger structure for Populism (for which laclau endorsed him), his understanding of the Indian society remains orientalist.

Although, Worsley's analysis attempted to situate populism as a dimension of larger political culture but the quest for more nuanced understanding of populism continued. It resulted into drawing a characteristic of populism.

Peter Wiles, in his essay on populism "A Syndrome, Not a Doctrine" drew out 24 features of populism. Populism is moralistic; of a certain style of appearance; dependent on extraordinary leaders; as an ill disciplined movement, self consciously loose in its self definition; anti intellectual; anti establishment; capable of ineffective and short winded violence; class conscious but conciliatory, avoiding class war; corrupted and bourgeoisified by success; given to small scale cooperation; supported by those of limited wealth; vigorously opposed to financiers; potentially less critical of large scale productive capitalists; possibly urban as well as rural; supportive of state intervention; opposed to social and economic inequality caused by institutions it opposes; in foreign policy particularly suspicious of the military establishment but isolationist in orientation; for religion but against the religious establishment; disdainful of science and technology; nostalgic; mildly racist to a great extent; various (spanning pre-industrial, peasant anti-industrialism, farmer industry intolerating); and not to be thought of as bad²⁴. The problem with peter wiles account of populism was that it carved out inventory characteristics for identifying populism. But he failed to

initial phase in 1969. 1969 was the juncture in Indian politics where for the first time mobilisation based on caste was developing, new alliances on caste basis were forged and hegemony of congress party was under challenge from growing regional forces.

²³In Kerala EMS Namboodripad was a leading communist leader under whose leadership communist were able to form government, in West Bengal communist were actively mobilising support from massive section of society, Naxalbari movement was the first significant instance of armed rebellion against Indian state. The growing influence of communist indicated that the mobilisation was taking place more in terms of class which Worsley denies in his central thesis.

²⁴Peter wiles, *A syndrome, not a doctrine*, quoted in Taggart, *populism*, 16.

establish any causality for the growth of populism and represented more of functional aspect of the concept.

The contribution of Margaret Canovan becomes significant in understanding populism. Her works set forth more variegated approach, which differentiates populism between *agrarian populism* and *political populism*. Such an attempt to categorize populism emerged because there were a host of definitions surrounding the concept²⁵ which jeopardized the meaning of it.²⁶ Within agrarian populism, Canovan enlisted three variant of populism i.e. populism of farmers, of peasants and intellectuals.

While analyzing Russian *Narodnichestvo*, and comparing it with Algerian, Tanzanian and Bolivian forms of agrarian socialism, Canovan argued that these forms of populism shares common tendency which oscillates between idealized regard for peasantry and the role of intellectuals to provide leadership to them²⁷. For Canovan, it represented the case for intellectual Populism when intellectual elites take up the charge to mobilize rural population and provide leadership to them. It was only with the peasant parties of Eastern Europe which grew up into green uprising, Canovan located peasant variant of agrarian populism. The basic thrust of the movements which grew in Romania, Poland, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia after the First World War was to implement ideas of voluntary cooperation between peasants with an emphasis on democracy, family property and an antagonism to the cities²⁸. For Canovan there exists enormous overlap between these agrarian variants of populism as a result she suggested 'to make intelligible use of the single term but not to unite all

²⁵The list of definition read populism as the socialism which emerged in the backward countries which faced the problem of modernization. It was considered as the ideology of small rural people threatened by encroaching industrial and finance capital. In other words, it was a rural movement which seeks to crystallize traditional values in a changing society. It is also defined as the belief through which the majority opinion of the people is checked by the minority elites. Populism also exists as creed or movement which is based on the premise that virtue resides in the simple people, who are in all majority and in their collective traditions. In populism the centrality of the will of people and its supremacy becomes the vantage point for several definitions.

²⁶ M. Canovan: Two strategies for the study of populism, political studies 1984.

these movements into single political phenomena with a single ideology, programme or socioeconomic base'²⁹.

Although Canovan created the typology of agrarian populism, she understood its limitation too.³⁰ As a result she went ahead to demarcate another kind of populism, which she called political populism.

Political populisms included for Canovan, populist dictatorship (Peron of Argentina), populist democracy (i.e. calls for referendum and participation), reactionary populism (eg. George Wallace and his followers) and politicians populism (ie. broad nonideological coalition building that draws on the unificatory appeal of the people)³¹.

Within the category of political populism when she examined populist dictatorship, the concern for strong, mighty and decisive leader figured centrally, who mobilized the people (both urban working class and peasantry) in the name of his reformist programmes. While Peron was central in Latin America, moving North she also took up the case of the governor of Louisiana Huey Long, who later on went to become the senator of USA. She analysed that long appeal was primarily based on denunciation of the concentration of wealth³² in WallStreet and improving Louisiana through social welfare programmes but the aim was to be achieved through strong arm and deceptive politics. As a result, the role of strong and decisive leader becomes central³³.

While analyzing populist democracy she argued that once populism takes ground in democracy, it bypasses the institutions of representation and sets itself primarily on referendums. Such kind of an attempt to bypass institutions exists in order to create direct contact between the people and the populist ruler. It is a way to valorize the wisdom of the people.

³⁰According to Canovan, Agrarian populism is unable to describe those populist phenomena which are highly political in nature and strongly premised upon leaders, politicians and their appeal. Even Canovan was apprehensive of the fact that agrarian populism would explain Latin American cases sufficiently as those were the urban movement led by a leader invoking wide range of people.

³¹ Canovan, *populism*, 177.

³² Denunciation of the concentration of wealth remain central to the present populist leadership as well, with some major qualifications though. While Trump is against globalism and the wealth it creates in other parts of the world, he is mum on US profiteering. Of late he is also appearing as advocating the causes of specific US multinational manufacturing companies. On his part, Modi also talks against concentration of wealth, against inequality. But he refrains from making any adverse comments on the big business, the Indian MNCs.

³³Canovan, *Populism* quoted in Taggart, *Populism*, 18-19.

The third kind of populism which Canovan suggests is reactionary populism. She compares the case of George Wallace in the US with Enoch Powell in Britain and highlights the similarity among the leaders. According to Canovan both were united in making appeals which deepened the chasm between the people and elite. Canovan suggests that both of these leaders were reacting against the apparent tide of progress. Canovan makes the point that the clash between progress and populism is heavily dependent on the context, on what is seen as progress. In the sense that populism as a reaction to the prevailing ideas can be both reactive and yet rational. What is, in Canovan's terms, disreputable, can also be a reaction on the part of popular opinion to real conditions of hardship³⁴.

The final version of political populism for Canovan comes in the form of politician's populism. Under this category of politician's populism, Canovan investigates how politicians create their people. How their appeals cut across the social barriers and help in creating the unified people. Canovan argues such kind of attempt is made to justify one-party rule and catch all coalitions. While analyzing Jimmy Carter, Canovan suggested that his claim as an outsider, an honest farmer helped him to muster support of both liberal and conservative.

Thus while outlining the seven categories she mentions that there exists no core to populism. One has to locate symptoms to understand populism. But what becomes essential in her analysis, where one needs to pitch forth, is the association of populism with leadership. While drawing upon the political variant of populism she ended up essentializing the central role of leadership³⁵.

Ernesto Laclau's intervention at this juncture becomes a significant departure from his predecessors who attempted to define populism in terms of ideology³⁶, drawing characters, assigning it with the quest for modernisation, reaction against modernisation etc. and liberating it from its vagueness, but end up in drawing the

³⁴ Canovan, *Populism*, 257-58

³⁵ Canovan, *Populism* quoted in Taggart, *Populism*, 18-19.

³⁶ CasMudde has been an influential proponent who identifies populism with ideology. He argues that populism is thin centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups and which argues that politics should be based on general will.

syndromes. In fact, for Ernesto Laclau, the vagueness to the concept has emerged more due to the vague nature of social reality³⁷. So instead of relegating vagueness as a *negative attribute* attached with the conception, one can begin by understanding that vagueness is the precondition to construct relevant political meaning³⁸. It is due to this nature, populism for Laclau remains an elusive concept³⁹ but it opens up doors to understand how the formation of social collectivities takes place. In other words, the aim of populism is to understand *how social agents totalize the ensemble of their political experience*.⁴⁰

In an attempt to draw Populism as a general logic of the political, Laclau argues that populism is a mode of articulation through which “the people” is being created by creating “the other”. In explaining the process of how *the people* and *the other* is being created he further invokes several conceptions which become significant. According to Laclau, there exists several heterogeneous demands in the society. Some get addressed by the institutions which he terms as “differential logic”, while other remains unfulfilled. The unfulfilled demands when they get unified despite heterogeneity lead to the creation of “the people”. It happens through what Laclau terms as the chain of equivalence. Equivalence chain helps the particularized self of demand to get aggregated to totality of other demands by creating an internal frontier between *the people* and *the other*. Thus it divides the social into two camps the power and the underdog. However, still the problem of representation of demands remains intact. Though the equivalential chain helps to overcome the particularity and fuse with the totalized demand, the creation of that totalized demand happens through empty signifier. Empty signifier is a universal popular signification which operates by homogenizing the heterogeneous reality by reducing the particularistic content⁴¹. The more the equivalential chain is extended, the more the particularistic character gets reduced and the empty signifier gets activated. The role of leader also becomes

³⁷ Social reality for Laclau at times is vague and undetermined. It is due to that the vagueness emerges in defining the concept of populism as well.

³⁸ Laclau's *On Populist Reason* highlights that how the vagueness gets translated as a totalizing force and in the making of people. For more reference see Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 3-16.

³⁹ Ernesto Laclau at this point not only takes on those scholars who have attributed negative connotation to populism but to also those who have refused to draw any definition of populism as it appeared vague to them.

⁴⁰ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 4.

⁴¹ There exists the prominent role of hegemony. Hegemony for Laclau is the process by which the particular demands comes to represent an equivalential chain incommensurable with it.

significant in Laclauian analysis of populism. It is through the identification with the leader that populism finds its existence⁴².

With this framework Laclau was able to establish populism as an ontological category, rather than an ontic category⁴³. The meaning of populism for Laclau is to be found not in the political or ideological content, which is invoked to explain the practice of any particular group, rather in the particular mode of articulation of whatever social, political, or ideological content it may constitute of.

Though laclauian analysis of populism as ‘logic of political’⁴⁴ becomes significant but if we contextualize his approach of populism in India, several contradictions emerges. If populism is all about a creation of hegemonic politics, in India we find multiple number of populism existing at the same time. So on the one hand while we have a populism operating at the national level, which Chantal Mouffe and others will call as the “right wing populism”⁴⁵. We also have counter populism or alternative populism existing at the same time⁴⁶. It clearly suggests then ‘the chain of equivalence’, which Laclau tries to draw, runs short to explain populism in a multicultural, hierarchical and an extremely stratified society where a single hegemonic order is difficult to achieve. Not only the cultural difference but regional, language, caste and several other cleavages has different underpinnings in shaping demands. Any single chain of equivalence or any other positive empty signifier other than the image of the leader finds it too difficult to articulate.

⁴²Ernesto Laclau, *populism: what's in a Name* quoted in Francisco Panizza, *populism and the mirror of democracy*, 32-49.

⁴³ Ernesto Laclau at this juncture departs from althusserian brand of articulation which according to him is based on ontic content entering into articulating process (the economic, the political or the ideological). Although Althusser had certain element of ontological articulation especially when one refers to the idea of “relative autonomy” but as these formal logic are derived from of the ontic content of some categories (for example, the determination in the last instance could only correspond to economy), the possibility of advancing the ontology of social and thinking of political logic of populism was restricted. For more elaboration refer Ernesto Laclau *populism: what is in a Name?* Quoted in Francisco Panizza, *populism and the mirror of democracy*, 32-49.

⁴⁴ Logic of political for Laclau means, political constitutes the social.

⁴⁵Chantal Mouffe, *The 'end of politics' and the challenge of Right Wing Populism* quoted in Francisco Panizza, *populism and the mirror of democracy*, 50.

⁴⁶ The regime of Trinamool congress in Bengal is entirely a populist regime which runs parallel to and antithetical to populism at national level. Similarly, the works of Subramanian, Narendra. "Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political parties, citizens and democracy in South India." 2018 brings out different facts of populist regime operating at the level of region and state.

The discursive aspect for Laclau translates subjectivities into political action. Such an assumption completely negates the importance of organizational capacity, opportunities and resources along with the performance of leader which plays a significant role in converting form into action and sustenance of it⁴⁷. Laclau complete negation⁴⁸ in analysing the practice of populism primarily landed him in such kind of abstraction or criticism. The practice not only helps to situate the abstraction but it also highlights the specificities and the details of other supportive constituents that plays a significant role in making and unmaking of populism as a *political project*⁴⁹.

Populism in contemporary time

Apart from the theorists who assumed populism to be a modernizing force, having roots in antagonistic relationship with in society or between societies or nations, populism as a political culture or populism operating through discourse formation there exists another school of theorist who argues populism as the critique of or alternative to the hegemony of liberalism and liberal democracy.

According to this school of thought, liberalism and liberal democracy are under huge crisis⁵⁰. It has failed in multiple ways to provide representation to masses, as well as ensure their sense of participation in political processes at large. Not only there is massive decline in ideology and class politics but also the participation of people has receded overtime in politics. There has been constant decline in membership of traditional parties and also citizens are reflecting lack of interest in politics and

⁴⁷Robert Jansen, *populist mobilization: A new theoretical Approach to populism*, 80.

⁴⁸ Though this criticism remained valid for sometime, Laclau, in his latter works, addressed the criticism when he brought performance to the core of populism. In his works *on populist reason* he takes beyond his previous argument where he focused on the role of interpellation in populism to the role of performance in populism⁴⁸. When Laclau says “*political practices don’t express the nature of social agent but constitutes the latter*”⁴⁸, he takes populism as something that is done. In other words, Laclau formulation acknowledges that populist don’t speak for pre-existing or given set of people but they carve out the people through their articulation performances etc.

⁴⁹ The reason for using populism under political project is to map both the discursive form that the populism takes along with the mobilizations aspects that comes along with populism in a coherent manner both in terms of rhetorical underpinnings and ongoing enactment. This idea of treating populism as political project is flagged by Robert Jansen in his work *populist mobilization: A new theoretical Approach to populism*, 80-86.

⁵⁰ The premise of these scholars de la Torre, Ellener, Roberts and Weyland is that the triumph of liberalism although reached to its peak after the fall of Berlin war, but it was also the juncture when fissures started to emerge in liberal democratic countries.

politicians. The role of media is significant in creating an atmosphere of an apolitical and disillusioned citizenry, who not only doubt politics but also the capacity of politicians.

In other words, these assumptions are primarily based on the notion that under the era of economic and cultural globalization, people are becoming more vulnerable in an existential manner. There is a deep pessimism that has come to dominate their life-worlds in the form of anger, anxiety, anomie and alienation⁵¹. They trace the root of such crisis under the overall decline of liberal ideology and democratic politics.

While liberalism and democracy were the separate aspects they merged at certain junctures, which Macpherson argued as *democratization of liberalism and liberalization of democracy*⁵². But what is happening in contemporary times, that link between liberal- democracy is under a siege. This turn in liberal democracy has taken especially after the advent of technological innovation, which has not only accelerated the pace of economy leading to development of consumerist society⁵³ but also has Modified the political process and life world of people engaged in it⁵⁴. The shrinking

⁵¹Guy standing in his work, *Precariat: a dangerous class* talks about how in contemporary time there is massive development of anger, anxiety, anomie and alienation which is coming from globalisation. For more reference see Standing, Guy. *The Precariat-The new dangerous class*. London: Bloomsbury, 2011.

⁵² Macpherson claims that while the extension of right to franchise in second half of 19th century to blacks women, oppressed etc. opened avenues for the democratization of liberalism, the permanence of market society and representative government lead to liberalization of democracy. The conception of representation is under attack now. With the decline of traditional party which were also called the mass party and democracy more falling into line with elite and its conception the rubric of it as representative of masses, sovereignty resides in the people is breaking at rapid speed. For more reference see, Chantal Mouffe, *The 'end of politics' and the challenge of Right Wing Populism* quoted in Francisco Panizza, *populism and the mirror of democracy*, 52-53.

⁵³ The major proponent in this cult of thinking was *Herbert Marcuse*. In his work *one dimensional man*, Marcuse has dealt in detail about the growth of consumerism that has followed the process of capitalism. In capitalist society, Marcuse argued that the distinction between the base and super structure barely exists. Super structure are highly diffused in the base itself. Infact the relationship between base and superstructure changes according to specific historic necessity. In contemporary time which is dominated by consumerism, it is the technocratic rationality, which subsumes the Marxian distinction of base and superstructure. The existence of critical rationality don't appear anymore as it was during the earlier modes of production as defined according to historical materialism, neither they were in industrial capitalism, it is only with the onset of monopoly capitalism the technological rationality has acquired dominance as a result it converts everyone into conformist. This conformist man whose consciousness, aesthetics, culture all guided by technocratic rationality is *one sided man*. For more reference see, Herbert Marquese, *One Sided Man*, 3-251.

⁵⁴ With the breaking of the important chain of representation in traditional form, growing scale of economy, constant retreat of state from social welfare activities, there is huge section of the underprivileged which is emerging. They are occupied with deep sense of insecurity, fear which one can term as anxiety, there exists wide scale of anomie, directionless anger, and alienation. The

of public sphere, lack of interpersonal communication, development of technocratic society has replaced politics with technology⁵⁵. This has created a deep crisis with the notion of sovereignty of people, which once remained the cherished goal of the democratic society ensured by liberal politics⁵⁶. What needs to be noted is that at this juncture along with the loss of sovereignty of people, it is also producing emotions among them who are left out of this process of economic and technological development and whose addressal is not sought.

Scholars like *Chantal Mouffe* points out, that the complete negligence of emotions and passions in political sphere by liberalism and liberal democracy has deepened the crisis at much larger scale. One can underline this argument as a significant intervention. Liberal society has worked primarily by drawing the distinction between the public and the private sphere, where public is assumed to be the space for rational, intellectual domain and private for emotions. This attempt to create public as a domain of rationality and hence the sphere for operation of politics clearly indicates the path of compromise which liberal philosophy sought to draw. Private being the domain of contestation and contradiction, emotions and passion, they were relegated to the domain of non-political.

Populism, in contemporary times, breaks that dichotomy and redefines the conception of politics again to antagonism, contradictions, politicization of passion and emotions. It brings the private into the domain of public, or in other words, blurs the line between them⁵⁷. The invocation of the emotions, passions in the speeches of populist

emergence of these kinds of emotions and passions are producing results which are political in nature. It is creating a deep antagonism in society and redefining the norm of liberal politics which assumes that politics is about conciliation of irreconcilable conflict and one can arrive at perfect consensus in political.

⁵⁵ Development of technocratic society has led to emergence of expert society where from complicated problems of everyday life to material requirements seems to be sorted out by experts. This has led to complete decline in the atmosphere of space where one could debate, dissent, differ. It has created a situation of aloofness, liveness boredom while on the other hand access to that expert solution has become more exclusive.

⁵⁶ The merger of liberal politics with democratic ideals has always been in tension. Infact it was this tension which guided as a driving force. The entire process of legitimating was procured on this ground. With the neo liberal hegemony taking over the democratic spheres, it is being portrayed that the site of those tensions has been resolved. It has become successful only by depriving people from the sovereignty that they once possessed. One can cite it as an important reason why populist primarily appeal is to restore the sovereignty of the people.

⁵⁷ If one closely analyse the rise of populist leader throughout the world, they have invoked emotions to gain support of the people. Anger has been prominent among them. *The Emotional Underpinnings of Citizens' Populism: How Anger, Fear, and Sadness Affect Populist Attitudes*

leaders signify the attempt to incite the people and ensure their politicization. They promise the people to restore the sovereignty in them, they promise to end all the sufferings, hardship that the system has brought in their lives, to conquer “the lost paradise”. What needs to be noted is that the construction of the people takes place by creating elite and institutions as the other. In contemporary time it is been done by highlighting the threat that exists in the values, beliefs, prosperity of the people by elites and their institutions. It is easy to locate national elites as an enemy who had sold out the nation to the members from their own brethren. Thus the attempt largely remains to redraw the line of the political on basis of friend and enemy. The entire aim of the contemporary scholars is to look into the phenomena of how populism then offers a challenge, alternative or restructuring⁵⁸ to the liberal democracy.

What is interesting to note among the scholarship of this brand of populism is that since they have drawn heavily from Laclau, the merit and flaws that the Laclauin analysis of populism carries continued in their theory but most interestingly, they made populism conjunctural and crisis dependent⁵⁹. Scholars like Chantal Mouffe and others heavily emphasized that populism, especially right wing populism, emerged due to the failure of liberal democratic politics to resolve the contradictions and it is on this accumulated crises and contradictions that populism builds upon.

Populism as constitutive of Indian politics

Now if we subject the aforesaid theories of populism in Indian context and try to analyse Indian politics, it becomes difficult to capture the nature of politics which Indian experience offers. Neither the rigid distinction of the people versus the enemy stands the ground, nor does the strict adherence to accumulation of crises-populism thesis serve any purpose. Such kind of distinctiveness comes from the complex

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Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona February 2017 highlights it in case of Spain.

⁵⁸Restructuring becomes significant on the point that if populism works under the framework of liberal democracy then instead of restructuring the institutions it engages in restructuring the values of it and attempting to incorporate the left outs, the dropped ones from the market. In other words it remains an attempt to bring people out of repression and to secure the capitalist order from the dangerous class, or from those who are outside the aspect of consumerism (Marcuse) or reproduction in the condition of production (Althusser).

⁵⁹One can also read it as the move away from the Laclauin understanding of populism. Populism for Laclau is a larger political logic, for these scholars it has become a conjectural phenomenon.

organization of the Indian society. Not only the Indian society is deeply hierarchical and stratified in terms of caste, religion but also multicultural along with cross cutting linguistic and other regional and ethnic identities. This complexity provides uniqueness for the politics as there can be no single chain of equivalence, nor can there be any strict categorization of friend and enemy. Secondly as far as the question of crises/ contradiction are concerned, crises and contradiction in Indian society has always been immanent and has continued to increase in multifaceted manner. Under such condition the question of crisis and contradiction- populism dependency dynamics becomes problematic.

Given such context, then the question which needs to be addressed is to what extent populism as conceptual category unpacks Indian scenario or is it completely irrelevant?

The case for populism as a conceptual category to map indian politics finds ground when we look populism not only as the result of crises or drawing friend and enemy distinction but in terms of manageability of contradiction or crises. During pre-independence period till contemporary time, crises and contradictions⁶⁰ are inherent part of Indian society. They have been existent in different form, sometime in material demands and other in terms of cross cutting identities, recognition, abolition of caste practices, religious rights etc⁶¹. The attempt of politics has always been to manage them. It is in this manageability, populism gets established in Indian context. Unlike anglo-American experience, where populism arrives due to failure of liberal democratic politics, in India it is very much enmeshed within the domain of the political. Scholars like Dwaipayyan Bhattacharyya rightly suggests, 'Government as practice' works it's way through messy terrain of myriad contradictions. It is in this working out through contradictory lane populism gets established in politics.

Having located populism as management of contradictions/ crises one also needs to unravel what are these crises and contradictions all about? Why do these crises and contradictions have a permanent stay in India? Where does its root exist and how does it condition the politics? India witnessed liberal democracy not in the similar pattern

⁶⁰One can locate the sources of crises and contradiction in the multiple demands which exists in society and are most of the time cross cutting and contradictory in nature.

⁶¹In Anglo American experiences these problematic barely exists as society largely is homogeneous in nature

as it emerged in the Anglo American experience or East European countries. Unlike Anglo-American contexts, where liberal democracy emerged to complement capitalism or in the eastern European experience where it evolved due to ideological consensus especially after the decline of Soviet Russia. In India, liberal institutions and universal suffrage were pressed upon a socio- economic formation that had large segments of pre-capitalist relations prevailing within them.

Unlike Anglo-American experience, where bourgeoisie emerged as the hegemonic class which mobilized the peasantry to overthrow the monarch and feudal lords, in India bourgeoisies never constituted the hegemonic ruling class. Rather it was a constituent of large coalition of forces that included feudal elements as well. Consequently, the popular consensus in India was different from that of the rights bearing individual citizens of the West. A host of communitarian and pre capitalist social and cultural values continued to inform such consciousness. The coexistence of such diverse popular tendencies in the political sphere made Indian politics highly unpredictable, which does not have any prior script to follow. Therefore, Indian politics requires a constant mechanism for accommodation and management, not entirely supported by existing liberal institutions (given their frailty) nor totally in absence of them. Such mechanisms can only be devised by a popular leader who stands above the polity, as a guardian, a sovereign, a father-figure, who can offer guidance and absorb pain. One therefore encounters populist leadership in the Indian context as a permanent feature of its politics, not an exceptional response to an abnormal crisis of liberal democracy.

Operation of populism in India: A brief analysis

One can take instances from, both, pre independence to post independence India to understand how populism unfolded on Indian soil. During pre-independence phase one can locate it in the leaders like Mahatma Gandhi. After his arrival on political landscape the nature of congress party and Indian National Movement changed significantly. On the one hand, he made congress accessible for the people coming from all walks of life, from different regions, religions, castes etc. by making structural changes in the organization. On the other, his contribution lies in turning the

emphasis of national movement from ‘nation-state’ to ‘people’s nation’⁶². By emphasizing upon peoples nation, Gandhi gave rise to the imagination of independence for the people from their own experiences and understanding. He picked up those issues which impacted day to day life of the people and politicised it. It is through the tactics of connecting the daily struggle of the masses with the question of national liberation Gandhi created ‘the people’ and ‘the other’.

One can read it from his symbolism of salt, *Charkha*, denial to pay arbitrary taxes, emphasis on swadeshi etc. It helped him to draw multiple *chains of equivalences* from where he built “the people” and sought their unity in what Laclau would call empty signifier which reflected in his personality. While the image of Gandhi as a father figure, as a saint, as a guardian, as a politician operated prominently. At rural level, it also translated into magician, godly incarnation etc. Samir Amin in his essay, Gandhi as Mahatma, traced how on his name the rumours, superstitious values were too operative. Gandhi’s image submerged all of them and from that he attempted to create the people to put up resistance against British government and its rule.

Gandhi represents the classic example of *manageability of contradictions* in the populist politics of India. Not only the discursive articulation of ‘Ramrajya’ became significant but also through his performances i.e. his image of half-naked man to simple living, emphasis on swadeshi, bringing politics and religion together, calling Dalits as Harijans were all an act to manage the contradictions and build a movement against the British.

⁶²The difference between nation state and people’s nation has been taken from Partha Chatterjee’s paper on populist reason in India where he argues that nation state was the discursive project of English educated nationalist who sought to implicate the British state and structure after independence. Their entire attempt was to draw the possibility that India could survive on the modern structure of nation state as it has the elements of state before the arrival of British in Vijaynagara, Chola or Mauryan and Mughal Empire. It was the cherished goal of Indian nationalist before Gandhi came to the scene. The problem with such kind of imagination was that it was unable to bring people under its fold. It is only after Gandhi, this project of nation state took a backstage and people’s nation came at the fore front. Gandhi brought nation to everyone’s own imagination asked them to visualise independence in their own terms. The reason for the congress to reorganise provincial committees on regional languages precisely tells us the fact that it was an attempt to bring nation and national independence to the people’s understanding and not to dictate it or superimpose it. This gave attraction to the national movement among the people.

(In the seminar organised by CSDS on metamorphosis of political, Partha Chatterjee presented the paper on populist reason in India. I am really thankful to Prof. Chatterjee for not only allowing me to use his concepts in this thesis but also opening up the avenue for me to look into populism from different perspective. This section deals immensely from Chatterjee’s formulation on populist reason in India)

Populism in post independent India

In post independent India, the existence of populism continued to be based on leadership but it took different form in its operation. The variation generally occurred due to difference in the invocation of the people.

During Nehruvian era, populism manifested as a modernizing force. It was in the modernization of society and economy the contradictions were attempted to be managed. Writings on the link between populism and modernization, Di Tella⁶³ argues it occurs when there is anti-status-quoist motivation among middle-level elites, when growing expectations create a mobilized mass of citizens, who remain politically unrepresented and when conditions allow collective enthusiasm among elites and masses to merge seeking their unity in the personality of leader, leading on the way toward modernization, occurs populism. Nehruvian Era represented the perfect case of modernization populism.

After death of Gandhi and Patel, he remained the only leader in whose personality both the common people and the elite re-posed their faith. He sold modernization as a dream⁶⁴ whose buyers were both the elites and the common masses who wanted to get rid of their hardships. It was in the modern image of Nehru, where they saw redemption from 200 years old colonial hardship.

The biggest challenge with populism and populist politics when it works as a manageability of contradiction is to maintain its empty signifier robustly. It is through constant recreation and innovation of empty signifiers a populist regime-perpetuates. Modernization failed to recreate or innovates itself after certain time and especially after Nehru's death, it lost the only unifier who held it firmly. As a result it lost its force.

⁶³Di Tella, *Populism in the twenty first century* quoted in Taggart, *populism*, 13.

⁶⁴ If we look at Nehru's political style, he represented in his own image a modernising force. The way he dressed, he spoke, his views and opinions regarding religion, his emphasis on science, on democratic values attracted elite. His deep involvement in national liberation movement, his companionship with Gandhi gave him the legitimacy to lead the masses which were poor, illiterate, deeply religious.

During Indira's regime populism unfolded into what Chatterjee categorized governmental populism and ideological populism⁶⁵. While governmental populism for Chatterjee represents the case of creation of the people on the basis governmental programmes and policies which leads to distribution of benefits to targeted population and drawing allegiance for their support in return⁶⁶. Ideological populism is premised on the creation of the people through the discursive articulation of demands forming chain of equivalences and projection of the other. Indira's regime represents intermix of both the versions⁶⁷ of populism and since then it has become an ongoing pattern⁶⁸ in Indian politics. Even states in India represented one or the other variant of populism or the mix of both these models⁶⁹.

What is significant to note, unlike the operation of governmental populism which at the level of center and state remains similar, ideological populism may vary in its functioning at both the level, Laclau's model is perfectly applicable at the level of states in the operation of ideological populism. Since the invocation of people is based on homogeneous identity i.e. on ethnic, region, language, caste, religion etc., there could be stable sources of identifier either in form of enemy or the image of leader, organization etc. through which unity of the people could be maintained. At the central level, case remains different. The absence of homogeneous people neither allows a single chain of equivalence to sustain nor can any single enemy serve the

⁶⁵ Chatterjee, *On Populist Reason in India*, unpublished.

⁶⁶ Laclau would barely consider governmental populism as a category of populism. He would suggest that it falls under the domain of "logic of difference" and is subject to administrative rationality of liberal and neo liberal governmentality. However for Chatterjee, administrative rationality of liberal and neo liberal governmentality transform to populism when the distribution is done as a humble gift from regime giving rise to mass clientalism and competitive populism.

⁶⁷ Indira Gandhi's populism of the 1970s set a few trends. First, it established a form of state populism in which power was centralized in a single leader, no alternative leadership was allowed to emerge within the ruling party and benefit schemes were implemented through a politicized bureaucracy. Second, the personality of the leader was projected through the state and party media as a benevolent protector of the poor and the underprivileged. Third, despite the apparently socialist-sounding rhetoric, actual policies did not necessarily conform to any specific economic ideology since large corporate houses, big landowning farmers and the urban middle classes largely dependent on the state sector, all had to be kept within the ruling class coalition. Fourth, the fact that Indira Gandhi called for elections after a year and a half of emergency rule showed that populist politics requires a periodic validation by the electorate in order to retain its credibility as a legitimate modality of government.

⁶⁸ The reason for the ongoing pattern can be derived from the critics of populism who describes that once populism takes the form of clientalism, it leads to development of competitive populism. In India the case of governmental populism describes the clientalistic aspect of populism, in whose response several competitive populism at the level of state and center has emerged.

⁶⁹ Studies conducted by Narendra Subramanian on rise of DMK and AIDMK suggests how in Tamil Nadu, it was mix of both. For more reference see, Narendra Subramanian. *Ethnicity and populist mobilization*, 1-330.

cause. As a result the multiple chain of equivalences are formed, constantly enemies are invented and its only in the image of the leader that the unity of the people is stabilized. Chatterjee notes the difficulty of operation of ideological populism at central level during Indira's regime.

Indira Gandhi's populism also revealed a major difficulty in establishing an effective chain of equivalence to tie together the people at the national level. Except at the time of the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971 when the spectre was raised of a national enemy in Pakistan backed by the United States and China, the idea of the people's enemy so crucial to populist reason could only be actualized as Indira Gandhi's enemies. But these tended to shift over time. In the beginning, her enemies were the old Congress bosses, called the Syndicate, who were said to be conservative and resistant to the progressive policies she was trying to introduce to benefit the people. Then the enemies became Jayprakash Narayan and the group of Gandhians, socialists and Jan Sangh leaders who were said to be conspiring to topple her by spreading disorder in the country. When she returned to power in 1980, her main enemies were identified as Khalistani agitators engaged in armed insurrection and terrorism with backing from foreign sources. In Laclau's terms, the enemy of the people was a floating signifier that was required to take on different meanings over time. But it also reflected the lack of a stable positive identifier that could provide imaginative and emotional coherence to the unity of the people; the only such signifier was the person of the leader herself⁷⁰.

Due to this difficulty in the operation of ideological populism, after Mrs. Gandhi's regime, it was mainly governmental populism which frequently appeared in India at central level as a variant of populism till emergence of Narendra Modi.

Narendra Modi's rise to power in 2014 was unique moment in Indian politics. He emerged as the leader at the time when India was witnessing 23 years of globalization. New classes were coming up whose aspirations and demands were shaped by global finance capital, new social formations were taking place. Traditional values and demands were incorporating new values and demands retaining their traditional version. Modi in a way represented those contradictions and aspirations.

Since, populism as manageability of contradiction rests on the shoulder of the leader, any attempt to study populism in Indian context then invites close investigation of how the leader performs to create "the people". Performance becomes central because it is through performance one can map the details such as speeches, rhetoric, invocation of emotions, images of self-representation, imagination of body language or sexuality, use of organization, communication which a leader invoke in the manageability of contradictions. This research takes the study of Narendra Modi as

⁷⁰Partha Chatterjee, *on populist reason in India*, unpublished.

the leader and delves into these areas to investigate what Narendra Modi has to offer to Indian populism.

Structure of Thesis

Narendra Modi, as the Prime Minister of India, is a unique case. He was a leader whose past was deeply soaked in communal history and had no experience of national politics. How he transformed his weaknesses into his strength is an important exercise this work has tried to delve into.

The work investigates and elaborates upon the processes through which Narendra Modi transformed himself into an empty signifier giving different meaning to the people and ensuring their unity. It has mapped the entire process through which this was achieved. From the masculinity to consumerism, upholder of Hindutva, to a developmental and nationalist man, from projecting subaltern aspiration to politicization of anger, aspiration and anxiety, the thrust of the work has been to locate each and every aspect which Modi presented and through which he sought to create “the people”.

The people, for Modi was not confined to any one section. He got support across the society. This work has taken up the task to examine how he was able to mobilize different sections of Indian society which has cross cutting differences and contradictions. How that manageability was achieved by Modi?

But apart from that the work also takes into cognizance the centrality of organization. If leader is the performer, he needs stage to perform. How organization complemented Narendra Modi, becomes an important to stage to investigate. In a country of such an enormous size, the physical reach of the leader always gets limited. The role of organization always comes in that way to take the leader where he can't reach. How Modi's organization worked on that aspect becomes important to note. It is often being argued by scholars of populism that the role of organisation becomes insignificant in populist mobilization. The attempt of this work is to question the claim by emphasizing upon how the use of men and material was carried out in the populist mobilization of 2014. In the era of a mediatised world, where the informal

transmits within seconds, the role of media can't be discounted. It acts as an organization in itself, specifically when the leader uses its logic to create the people. In the election of 2014, media played a significant role. It is often being argued that Modi was a child of media. It was media who created him and branded him. While such kind of argument is not false, it fails to capture how Modi used media logic and compelled media to rally behind him and complement him in the creation of "the people". This makes media itself as an organization. The work investigates the entire process by which media came into play in 2014 elections. Along with that there is also an attempt to chart out the role of technocrats and professionals who not only managed the stage for Modi but also controlled social media campaign which led Modi to build his image as the *Brand Modi*. How it was operationalised is an important area which this work has delved upon.

In populism and populist politics, the creation of the people is not one time process. The leader has to constantly create and re-create the people and in that entire process the leader creates and recreates oneself as well. The exercise of Narendra Modi to deliver 'Mann Ki Baat Programme' was an attempt in that regard. The work tries to investigate how redrafting the contract with the constituency was established by Narendra Modi.

Mann Ki Baat programme is a medium of direct communication to establish oneself in the moral domain, to gain moral authority over the individual and to make them feel obliged. How it was materialized becomes significant to be mapped, which this work has attempted to do. It is through examining Mann ki Baat one can also note the governmental aspect of Narendra Modi's populism. How that was brought into force to appeal different sections of the people. Apart from that Mann ki Baat is also an exercise to situate sovereignty among the people, how it is being conducted is a significant aspect to observe. The work, has in details, brought these aspects forth, regarding how Modi on the one hand deprived the people of the sovereignty and on the other hand, attempted to reinstate it within them.

Chapter 1

The Leader and the People: Populism in Contemporary India

INTRODUCTION

The 2014 general election is marked as a critical election in Indian politics. Critical not only because of the outstanding outcome that one party in the electoral fray achieved but also because of greater voter involvement (66.4%) i.e. 834 million people¹, a profound readjustment in the relations of power within community and formation of new and durable electoral groupings.² Although continuities existed in terms of party competition³ but the outcome differed as their relevance in conduct of 16th Lok Sabha declined significantly. It was emergence of Narendra Modi and Bhartiya Janta Party which made 14th Lok Sabha election historic.

BJP emerged as the single largest party with 31.4% of vote share and 282 seats. Not only the *seat vote multiplier effect*⁴ worked tremendously in this election adding new impetus to success of BJP but along with that the election also saw significant increase in rate of shift in electoral support from one party to the other, if compared with the previous elections. According to scholars like Suhas Palshikar, the *electoral volatility*⁵ in 2014 crossed 20%, which can be considered high and similar to the political situation that the Indian political processes witnessed in 1980s and 1990s⁶. Apart from this there are immediately two reasons that made the 16th Lok Sabha

¹ Louise Tillin, Indian elections 2014: explaining the landslide, 117-119

² Suhas Palshikar and K. C. Suri, *India's 2014 Lok Sabha elections: Critical shifts in the long term, caution in the short term*, 40.

³ As the total number of party in the electoral fray continued to increase

⁴ Seat vote multiplier effect can be explained as the ratio of proportion of seats won by the party to the proportion of votes won by it. In 2014 general election while BJP polled 31.4% of votes it secured more than 52% of lok sabha seats.

⁵ Electoral volatility can be understood as the net change in the support of party from one election to other in terms of percentage of votes secured by the party resulting from individual vote transfer.

⁶ Suhas Palshikar and K. C. Suri, *India's 2014 Lok Sabha elections: Critical shifts in the long term, caution in the short term*, 20-21.

elections significant, one is that the congress party was reduced to diminutive position. And two, the era of coalition politics ceased to be the single most determinant in forming the government, thus the role of regional parties declined significantly.

The more interesting and the aspect which commands serious research in and around 2014 elections were the emergence of a leader like Narendra Modi. The election of 2014 was primarily centered on the question of leadership. The way it was contested resembled no less than a presidential form of election. The modality of the election resembled with the presidential form of elections. Infact it can be suggested that it was Narendra Modi and his style of campaigning which added the presidential flavor to the general elections⁷. However it was not an easy task for him. Other leaders of Indian political dynamics who had contested for the post of Prime Minister including those who later on became the PM had a history of association with national politics, Contrary to which, Narendra Modi's central presence on the National political platform was completely missing. Though he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat for more than one and half decade but his identity as a leader was deeply enmeshed in regional politics. On top of that, his history of communal past was a prominent blockade in the path to National politics.

Narendra Modi overcame all these barriers that blocked his path, thus providing a unique context to 2014 elections. The way the discourse was shaped around him, the prominence that he acquired within the party, the connect which he established with the followers and the people, the promises that he made to *the people*, the reconfiguration or manageability which he ensured through his politics were important factors which made 2014 election a unique one and merits serious investigation.

⁷ Narendra Modi initiated the election campaign nine months ahead of the election. The campaign was conducted with massive rallies, wide scale publication, advertisement in t.v, news paper and social media. Modi himself covered 437 rallies, 5827 events and travelled more than 3 lakh kilometer. Sources: Saurabhi Malik, " from Narendra Modi's team, some stats: 437 rallies, 5827 events, 3 lakh kilometers." NDTV elections news, May 9, 2014, accessed April 14, 2018. <https://www.ndtv.com/elections-news/from-Narendra-Modis-team-some-stats-437-rallies-5827-events-3-lakh-kilometres-560938>. Even if we look into the campaign style it was Modi and not the organization at the fore front. The slogans like Ab Ki Baar Modi Sarkaar, Har Har Modi, Ghar Ghar Modi, NaMo NaMo

Contextualising 2014 elections: An empirical overview

While Indian democracy is considered distinctive due to several features, there can be no doubt that elections form the core of it. Not only is India considered to be the largest electoral democracy but elections in this country are performed like festivals⁸. With certain hiccups in the year 1975-77, free and fair elections and peaceful transition of power has defined Indian democracy along with several other features⁹. While 2014 was a continuation in that electoral history, the character of the 2014 elections was unique from its previous experiences. The congress party which dominated Indian political scene from the time of independence was relegated to diminutive position. In addition to that the regional parties which emerged prominently in the wake of Mandal politics lost their prominence. The major development that characterized the 2014 election was massive emergence of BJP. There are several explanations in literatures on the subject which explain this phenomenon.

One set of arguments that are put forward suggest that it was disenchantment with congress and the UPA regime which led to the rise of BJP. The inefficient governance, corruption charges, policy paralysis, lack of leadership damaged the reputation of congress party and led to its decline. The other set of arguments comes in terms of enchantment of the electorate with the leader that led to the rise of the phenomenon named Narendra Modi. One needs to subject both set of arguments to critical scrutiny to understand what went into the making of Modi.

Palshikar and Suri using NES survey have captured the role of disenchantment and the role it played in the down fall of congress¹⁰. In the pre election survey, 40% of those who were somewhat dissatisfied and 52% of those who were fully dissatisfied indicated that they would vote for BJP. Even in non congress and non BJP ruled states, 35% of voters who were dissatisfied preferred BJP over other parties. In fact in

⁸ Mukulika Banerjee, *Sacred elections, 1556-1562*.

⁹ Philip Oldenberg, *India, Pakistan, and democracy: Solving the puzzle of divergent paths*, 57.

¹⁰ Suhas Palshikar and K. C. Suri, *India's 2014 Lok Sabha elections: Critical shifts in the long term, caution in the short term*, 41-42.

states where congress was in power it suffered more. Only 40% of voters were intending to vote for congress and 7% for its allies¹¹.

By analyzing this data, one can come to an understanding that dissatisfaction played a major role in the decline of congress. *Anti incumbency* against congress party, their rule and inefficient administration were crucial factor in bringing such a change in Indian politics. Undoubtedly one cannot deny this set of argument but it fails short to provide an assessment that how anti incumbency against congress went on to establish BJP and Narendra Modi in such a profound way. In other words, what went into making of Narendra Modi and BJP as a credible alternative at pan India level, a shift from the Hindi heartland and *Brahmin-Baniya* party to the party of all regions¹² and leader of all castes and class becomes subject worth Investigation.

Enchantment for the leader: An Empirical investigation

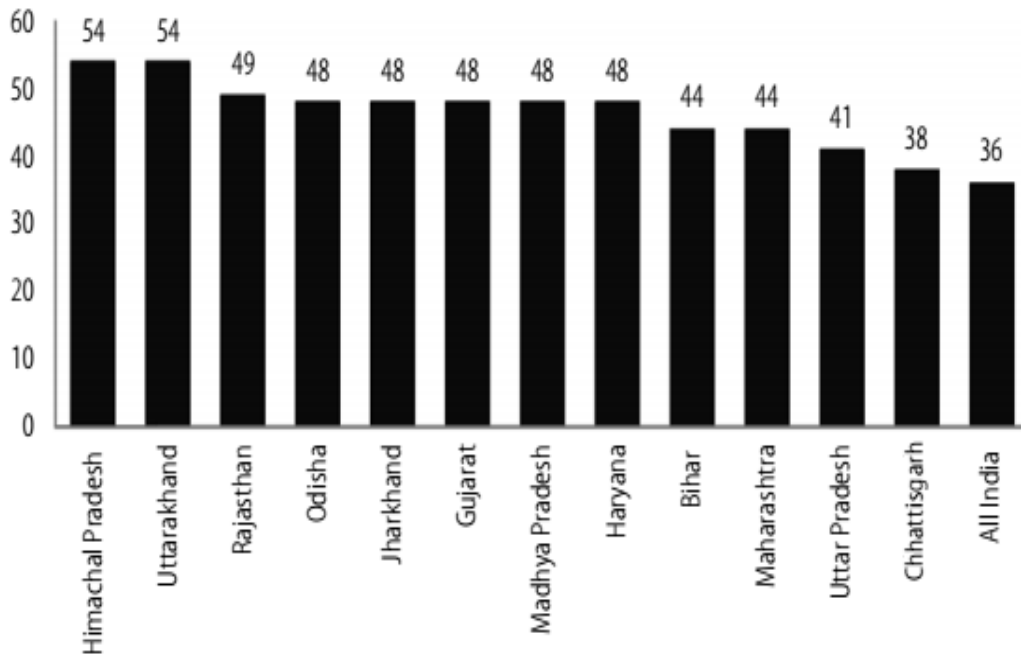
According to the scholars like *Sandeep Shastri and Reetika Sayal*, the popularity of Narendra Modi, went up considerably once he was appointed as the chairman of the campaign committee and picked up after his anointment as BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate. As per the national election survey reports, Modi maintained 20 percentage point lead over Rahul Gandhi which remained unchanged in the months preceding the elections.

The data shows that the popularity of Modi was much higher than the national average in the 13 states where BJP performed well. While the BJP ruled states (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat) were on the top of the list, it also included the

¹¹ Ibid., 41-41

¹² Although the BJP did exceptionally well in its traditional bastion, Hindi heartland especially in central and northern India where it won 190 seats out of 225 seats with the vote share of 43.7%, the performance of the party improved significantly in south, east and north eastern region of the country. In Arunachal Pradesh it received 46.1% of votes, in Assam it received 36.5% of votes, jammu and Kashmir 36.4%, odisha 21.5% and in west Bengal it won 16.8% without support of any ally. The overall performance of BJP in non hindi region was it won 92 seats with 22.3% of vote share while in 2009 election it managed to win 53 seats with 14.7% of vote share. For more reference see, Suhas Palshikar, and K. C. Suri, *India's 2014 Lok Sabha elections: Critical shifts in the long term, caution in the short term*, 44.

states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand where the party performed significantly¹³.

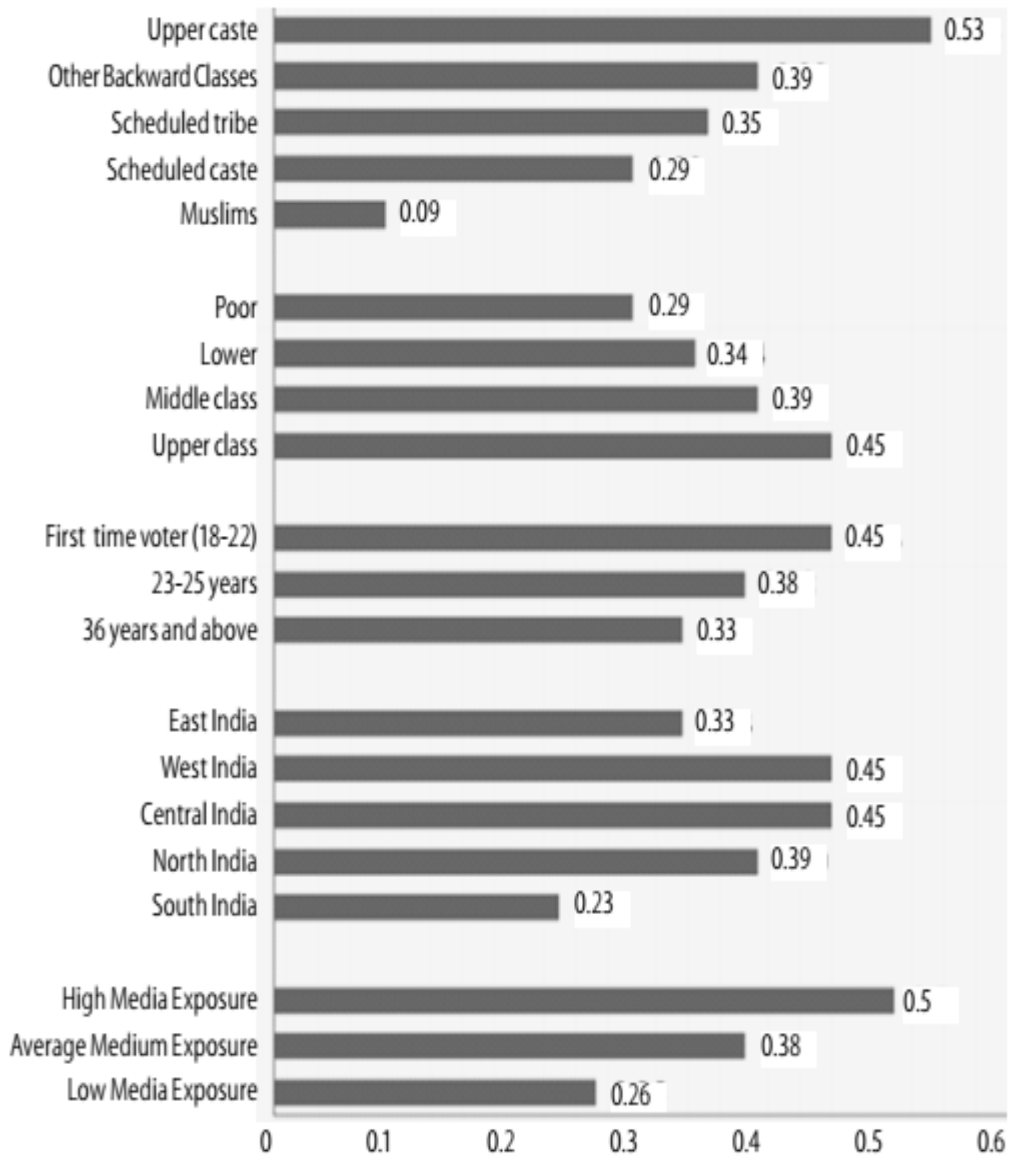


Source: Lokniti, CSDS-IBN NES 2014 Post-Poll Study (Taken from *Leadership in Context: Impact of Leadership in the 2014 LS Elections*. Sandeep Shastri & Reetika Syal. EPW, XLIX;39. P.77).

One can dissect the popularity in more subtle manner to understand its variation among different caste and class group. While the support for Modi was maximum in upper caste and OBCs, the support declined when it came to Dalit and Muslims. However, this is not to say that his popularity was less than his opponents running for the post of prime minister. Similarly the upper and the middle classes were more likely to opt for Modi than the poor and the lower classes. Half of those with access to media favoured Modi and support for him fell as media exposure declined. Interestingly, the popularity of Modi was highest among the first time voters than those in the older age group bracket¹⁴.

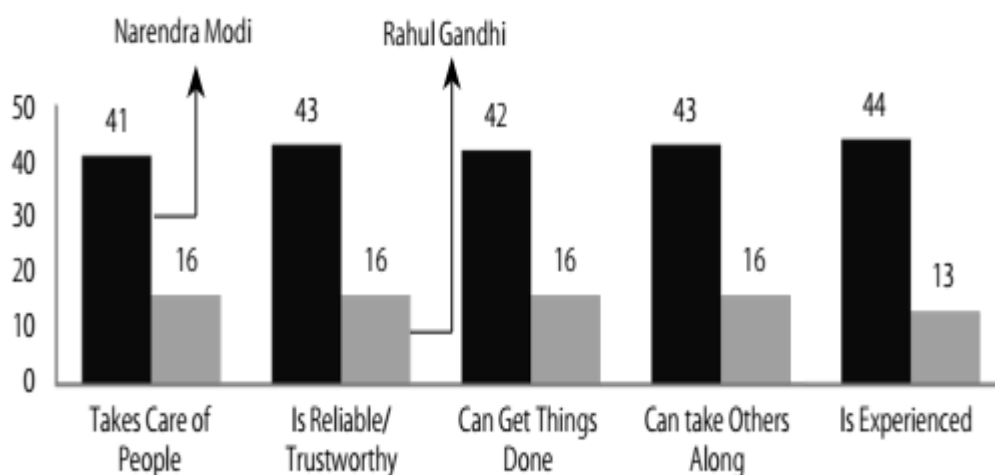
¹³ Sandeep Shastri, and Reetika Syal, *Leadership in Context: Impact of Leadership in the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections*, 79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 79-80p



Source: Lokniti, CSDS-IBN NES 2014 Post-Poll Study (Taken from Leadership in Context: Impact of Leadership in the 2014 LS Elections. Sandeep Shastri & Reetika Syal. EPW, XLIX;39. P.77).

As far as the question of caring, reliability, trustworthiness, capability of leadership was concerned in 2014 elections, Narendra Modi enjoyed a twenty five percentage point lead over Rahul Gandhi and 16 percentage point lead over other leaders within BJP.



Source: Lokniti, CSDS-IBN NES 2014 Post-Poll Study (Taken from Leadership in Context: Impact of Leadership in the 2014 LS Elections. Sandeep Shastri & Reetika Syal. EPW, XLIX;39. P.77).

On looking at the question of preference of leader, one could ask if Narendra Modi had not been the candidate of BJP, would people have voted for BJP. Close to one fourth of the respondents of NES survey of 2014 suggested that they could have voted differently had Modi not been the prime ministerial candidate. Close to three out of ten said that their voting preference could have changed. More interestingly, in states where BJP was in power, the percentage dropped marginally and in those states where BJP was strong (but not as a ruling party) it rose up by 2 percentage points. In states where BJP was not strong, close to three out of ten who voted for BJP could have voted differently¹⁵.

There is of course an anti incumbency narrative that alludes to the election results but the implication of the empirical overview of 2014 elections above becomes important as it suggests the critical role played by the leadership in 2014 elections. However one needs to seriously investigate then, how the discourses behind leadership generated in 2014 elections. Why the question of leadership became so essential and how the entry of Narendra Modi contributed to it?

One needs to trace the journey of 2014 Loksabha election in nuanced manner in order to understand the crucial developments which were undergoing in Indian politics and especially in Bhartiya Janta Party. Politics as populism elaborated previously in this

¹⁵ Ibid., 79-80

work is a permanent feature of Indian polity and becomes a signifier of how contradictions are made manageable. Contradictions were always present in Indian society, politics as populism either nurtured them or managed them. This chapter intends to investigate the reconfiguration or manageability of contradiction which went into election campaign to build a leader called Narendra Modi and Bhartiya Janta Party. How through his performances¹⁶ Narendra Modi politicized the social and created himself as the leader, what alteration in the status quo were promised, how the redrafting of the terms of contract was materialized in basic constituency, what kind of ideological reinvention BJP underwent to understand the everyday-ness of the multitude in rapidly transforming world?

Making of the leader: the centrality of Narendra Modi in 2014 elections

The coming of Narendra Modi as a prime ministerial candidate of BJP in the year 2014 changed the discourse of Indian Politics. Prior to 2014, congress and several regional parties remained a major player and played a significant role in setting the electoral agenda especially in terms of mobilization of voters. In the year 2014, there was a change in terms of role rotation. Congress and regional parties were more on a defensive track and it was Narendra Modi who dictated the terms of mobilization. It is evident from the fact that during his election campaign he almost measured the entire landscape of Indian territory and was able to present himself in every nook and corner of India. After being anointed as the prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi attended and addressed 430 rallies, travelled to more than 300000 km, and made appearances at 5385 times which includes his interviews, conclave, TV Programmes, *Chai Pe Charcha* and through 3-D hologram techniques. Indian politics for the first time was witnessing such an enormous investment (physical and material) in campaign by a leader.

His ability to gain wide reach well across the nation, led to a marked return to a strategy of national level mobilization as opposed to regional and local level which

¹⁶ As elaborated previously Performance becomes central because it is through performance one can map the details such as speeches, rhetorics, invocation of emotions, images of self representation, imagination of body language or sexuality, use of organization, communication which a leader invoke in the manageability of contradictions.

had remained a prominent feature of Indian politics since 1990s¹⁷. The politics of hope and aspiration, “Ache Din Aane Wale Hai”, development “Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas”, common man’s leader with strong and decisive tendency, nation and nationalism acquired acquiescence. However this is not to suggest that the traditional mobilisational strategies¹⁸ and agendas went completely absent from politics but Narendra Modi was successful in weaving those traditional mobilization strategy into themes such as development, *hindutva* and a nationalist matrix leading towards manageability of contradiction. The factors like development, nationalism, *hindutva* operated at multiple levels¹⁹ as chain of equivalences which rope in particularistic demands like caste, region, language, job insecurity, unemployment, backwardness etc. This merged itself into the image of a leader which operated as an empty signifier. Thus, through transforming himself as an empty signifier, where multiple chains of equivalences merged, Modi could create “the people” in elections of 2014. The reasons for Modi’s popularity which constantly remained and went up as elections approached as Sayal and Shastri have indicated was precisely due to the fact that he gave the people opportunity to interpret him in the way they wanted. The people drew multiple meanings from his image which they failed to draw in any other alternative. Having analyzed the notion of Empty Signifier as the reason for Modi’s popularity, one needs to chart out the indicators through which the empty signifier got operationalised in the image of leader as well in the discourse of his politics.

Indicators of Empty Signifier

As mentioned above, the arrival of Narendra Modi in National politics was full of challenges, primarily because of his deep embeddedness in regional politics, lack of experience and his communal past but he was not only able to overcome these challenges but successfully turn these weakness into his strength. While the lack of

¹⁷ Suhas Palshikar, *The BJP and Hindu nationalism: Centrist politics and majoritarian impulses*, 725.

¹⁸ The traditional mobilisational strategies included the mobilisation based on caste, region, languages, religion as well as on the aspect of governmental populism, which is based on clientelism.

¹⁹ One can locate the operation of chain of equivalences separately and also in overlapping manner at the level of hope, aspiration, anxiety, anger. Traditional aspects like religion, caste, language. While hope and aspiration were the factor which were roped in through development i.e. sabka sath sabka vikas, ache din aane wale hai. Aspiration and anxiety factor were also operative in communal mobilization which operated through the language of *hindutva*. Similarly at times, caste and identity politics were considered to be divisive and merged in the language of progression of nation and development for all, at times Modi himself invoked his caste identity to mobilize the people.

experience of national politics helped him to carve out an image of the *outsider*, his deep involvement in regional politics of Gujarat presented him as a *developmental and Decionist face*²⁰. The communal past on the other hand gave him the image of the *Hindu Hriday Samrat*. While the imagery of a man possessing a fifty six inches wide chest gave him a *masculinist avatar*. It is these multiple images on which Narendra Modi performed which turned out to be a crucial element in projecting him as the Empty signifier and making of him as the populist leader of 2014 elections.

The implication of creating the empty signifier helped him do two things. One, people in general could reflect back in him their identities, diverse heterogenous demands got materialized in his image. Two, it helped him generate ‘*the other*’ According to Laclau, “*the other*” becomes significant in populist mobilization because the unity of the people is maintained on the ground by projecting someone as the oppressor or working against the interest of the people. What is significant to note is that as elaborated previously, *the other* in populist politics of India constantly kept on changing. So unlike American, Latin American or European model of populist mobilization, in India the nature of *the other* was temporal. However, in 2014 elections, there was departure from the marked precedence. The other was getting stabilized.

In his speeches, slogans, and the advertisements, Narendra Modi constantly invoked congress as the other. Left liberal intellectuals and elite who cherish the ideas of diversity, secularism, plurality also came under his attack. Along with that, Muslims always remained an underlined enemy in account of the populist mobilization of 2014 elections. What needs to be noted is that the reference towards congress as an enemy was directly made by Modi. Quite distinctively from which the left liberal elite, intellectuals and Muslims figured indirectly on the enemy list. He used the word “political pundits” in a sarcastic tone to criticize left liberals and intelligentsia, but his major attacks on left liberals and intellectuals can be read from his condemnation of the idea of ‘secularism’. He criticized the practice of secularism in India to be divisive and in referring to it each time, he made direct comment on the congress party politics

²⁰ After the 2002 Anti Muslim riots in Gujrat, Modi went into an image making process, where he not only approached the capitalist class for investment in the state but he also showcased Gujrat as one of the leading and prosperous state of India having more share in GDP than any other state and more than the national average.

and indirectly referenced the liberal elites. The invocation of the 'Muslim' was never direct. It however was manifested in the superimposition of beef on the Muslim community, invocation of Pakistan etc. What needs to be noted that the direct reference to Muslims as enemy was made by second order leaders of BJP with whom Modi shared the stage several times. These were subtle indications of how Muslims remained an underlining enemy of Modi political narrative. In fact it is these two categories i.e of *empty signifier* and generation of *the people and the other* which separated Modi from Mrs. Gandhi's regime in terms of populist politics. Since, Modi heavily dealt upon the image of hindutva, it added a potential in him to manage regional and caste differences and unify people in his personality by projecting Muslim as the other. Secondly, he was successful in diverting the anger and frustration of blocked opportunities widely prevalent among youth and the neo middle class against a incumbent congress²¹. As elaborated previously management of contradiction does not always refer to reconciling the contradictions as was the practice of Indian populism through governmental populism or even through ideological variant, it also means nurturing the contradictions mostly by prolonging them, breeding them and letting them fester. Modi was only practicing a distinct, perhaps changed, perhaps a new ideological variant of populism. One needs to seriously investigate as to how Modi performed through those empty signifiers to create the people and the other. The close mapping of performance of the leader is required both at the level of discourses and also at the level of self representation, images and his body language which played a pivotal role in the carving out empty signifier.

The *outsider* in populist mobilization: turning weakness into strength

The role of an outsider as a leader is of significant in populist mobilization. It is through invocation of this outsider to politics that not only the existing structure of political is created as a morally and ethically corrupt and degenerating place but an attempt is also made to carve out the moral and ethical space in both politics and among the people for the populist leader. The populist leader uses this category of the

²¹ For Mrs. Gandhi though congress(o) remained "the other" but soon it lost its relevancy as Mrs. Gandhi completely demolished it and as most of the leaders accepted her paramountancy. Since then the other which emerged or which Mrs. Gandhi herself created in khalistan issue had a temporal currency.

outsider to resemble himself with the people as an ordinary or one among them but on the same hand it also works as a method to uplift oneself from the people as morally superior and having extraordinary qualities²². Thus in populist mobilization this category of outsider not only helps to create a morally superior leader bereft of all the morally degenerative elements which politics inherently posses within but it also helps to constitute “the other” in terms of existing political structure and the participants of it i.e. elite, ruling political parties, system etc. Ideological variant of populist mobilization always portray politics as anti people so being an outsider the leader connects with the people through a promise to resurrect the politics and bring people in the fold of it. In other words it also serves as the method of restoring the sovereignty back into the people.

If we look at 2014 elections, the discourse of outsider operated significantly in the entire run up for the campaign. The portrayal of Narendra Modi as *chai wala*²³, the leader coming from a humble and poor economic background, the one which desired to serve in the army but could not fulfill his dreams because of poverty²⁴ were an attempt to create a leader sharing the background, aspirations and vulnerabilites of ordinary people. It was also an attempt to create a leader who is familiar with the problems of the people and can solve it once being elected²⁵. But apart from that humble background and tormented childhood due to extreme poverty, the discourses also operated in ways that projected Narendra Modi as a leader above politics.

By emphasizing upon his personal life, where he left home and his family at early stages, toured throughout the nation, worked relentlessly as a “Karyakarta”, as a man having a simple life style alluding to him sharing characteritiscs of an ascetic; an attempt was made to create the image of leader who has sacrificed all the social and

²² Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 18

²³ Narendra Modi invoked his identity of Chai Wala at several rallies, including Rewari, Bengaluru. In his interview to Rajat Sharma at India TV which is considered to be one of the biggest interview ever done of leader in terms of TRP, Narendra Modi again invoked his identity as Chai Wala, a leader coming out of extreme poverty, had only two Kurtas to wear.

²⁴ Andy Marino, *Narendra Modi: A political biography*, 46.

²⁵ In a speech made at Banglore, Narendra Modi said since he was a chai wala, and had sold tea in railways, he is completely aware of the problems persisting in the railway department, once being elected he will resolve those problems. For more reference see *Narendra Modi's Bharatha Gellisi rally at Banglore*, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/10-memorable-speeches-of-shri-Narendra-Modi-from-2014-lok-sabha-elections-campaign-3143>.

material pleasures in pursuit of social welfare and work for humanity at large²⁶. It is this image of a sacrificing leader, having no personal interest to serve from politics not only separated Modi from other politicians but it also carved out a special space for him within “the people” and placed him on a superior pedestal of morality, commitment, care and ethics. This invocation of saintly idioms and images²⁷ gave Modi a strong resonance among the people as he was successfully able to establish the narrative that the congress and other leaders have used the position of power to serve their own personal interest and involved themselves in self aggrandizing. His constant emphasis upon the scams that the country has witnessed during congress and UPA regime ranging from Bofors deal to coal gate, 2G Spectrum, Robert Vadra land allocation cases, all these helped Modi to convert the discontented masses into *the people* by projecting himself as one who neither wields family, nor has any personal interest in accumulation of wealth. Christopher Jafferlot puts it succinctly, “Populist mobilization is most favorable at the time of moral and ethical crisis mixed with the crises of economy and social”²⁸. Narendra Modi successfully blended the crises of both the horizons and targeted it toward congress party especially Sonia Gandhi and her family to carve out a separate space for himself.

Modi transformed politics for congress and other leaders as an activity which they undertook in pursuit of lakshmi.²⁹ It is evident when he said in a rally at Rewari, “Delhi is not interested in army welfare, they are more interested in next tender”³⁰. He justified his presence in politics by assigning the role of “*Sevak*” to himself, not guided by any personal commitment but a social commitment of service to the nation. In speeches made during election campaign he emphasized several times that he is willing to contest for the post of PM to render services to the nation that every citizen of the country should do. One can read his invocation of the idea of *pradhan sewak* instead of *pradhan mantri* in this light. It was also a sort of psychological maneuvering at the level of perceptions of self of the people, to empower people as

²⁶ Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, *Narendra Modi. The man, The times*, 46- 48.

²⁷ Ramchandra Guha, *Political Leadership* 289-93.

²⁸ Christopher jafferlot , "The lure of the populist ," The Indian Express, February 26, 2018.

²⁹ The phrase in pursuit of lakshmi is taken from Rudolph and Rudolph, *In pursit of lakshmi, the political economy of Indian state*. However, the phrase has been used in changed manner. It represents the corrupt practises of congress party leaders for self aggrandizement.

³⁰ Narendra Modi, *Rally at Rewari*, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/10-memorable-speeches-of-shri-Narendra-Modi-from-2014-lok-sabha-elections-campaign-3143>.

the masters, the real owners of Nation and Modi a recruit in *service of people's nation*.

The idea of service on one hand placed him on morally superior pedestal among existing political class and on the other it also provided him a vantage point to attack congressmen and the so called elite as the one who have betrayed “the people” and nation at large and kept them under poverty, hardship and toil. While addressing rally at Amethi he said

It is the gang of 2,000 who loot the people and the country. We have to stop it. I am ready for any consequence³¹. However pointing out towards culprits was not the only strategy of Modi. In a dramatical style he confirmed from the audience to take revenge of the the supposed betrayal³².

The category of outsider as enunciated above not only help to create the people but also *the other*. In his Avatar as an outsider to politics Narendra Modi successfully created insiders i.e politics and people associated with it as *the other*. The existing leadership was not only portrayed as corrupt but also lacking moral and ethical weight to rule the people³³.

It became more evident when Narendra Modi, along with highlighting the corrupt, irresponsible side of congress and other politicians, emphasized upon the role of the congress party to implicate him through CBI. He referred to Gujarat riots case and the

³¹ Narendra Modi, *Bharat Vijay Rally*, Amethi, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/10-memorable-speeches-of-shri-Narendra-Modi-from-2014-lok-sabha-elections-campaign-3143>.

³² At Hunkaar rally in Patna, he performed his speech in such a manner that it appeared he was delivering oath to the people to take revenge from congress party. For more reference see, Narendra Modi, *Hunkaar rally*, Patna, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/10-memorable-speeches-of-shri-Narendra-Modi-from-2014-lok-sabha-elections-campaign-3143>.

³³ Several instances could be cited out from his speeches where he carved out a morally degenerative place for congress and its politicians . The invocation of *shahzada* while on the one hand separated Modi from Rahul Gandhi, given the hardship that the former has undertaken to reach the place and the cakewalk that the latter has received, it was also an attempt to highlight that these perks and privileges were given to him at the cost of sufferings of the people.

The involvement of UPA and congress regime in facilitating corruptions, scams, caste politics, religious appeasement were emphasized by Modi as an act of morally degenerative party, thus denying all the legitimate claims of congress to rule the Nation. Modi in several of his speeches alleged congress and its dynastic politics (maa- bête ki sarkaar) to be responsible for the maladies of the country. He claimed Nehru- Gandhi family to be power hungry and can go to any state of compromise to ruin the national interest. The invocation of the remarks of congress ministers on the soldiers beheading, absence of strict steps against Pakistan and china repeatedly appeared in his speeches as morally bankrupt act that the existing political class performed.

way CBI and other investigating agencies were left behind him to implicate him as the prime accused. By making an emotional appeal to the people he alluded to his political opponents as a set of immoral, imposter politicians who never wanted someone who can change the rule of their game to come to power. Through this he not only touched upon the hurdles that an ordinary man faces but he also pointed out that how these hurdles are constructed by ruling elites and political class to serve their interest. The remarks made upon his image as *chai wala* by congress minister, *poverty as state of mind* was used in this reference to show how the ruling elite are insensitive towards the plight of a common man. While addressing a rally at Patna, Modi argued that the politicians live in their ivory tower, they had barely experienced poverty as a result their understanding of hardship of common people's life is bereft of any reality. He clubbed his entire opposition in the same framework and made an emotional appeal to people to punish them. Thus suggesting through his words that he was infact the one who was taking away the charge from the depraved immoral politicians and putting it ultimately in the hands of *the people*.

Narendra Modi reminded people time and again through his speeches, interviews that he is not a politician, not in the conventional sense of the term; he is the man who has come to fight with whatever strength he has against everything which is not in the interest of the people³⁴. Thus reminding the people that the strength of his leadership lies in the strength of 1.25 billion people, in the strength of all the youth the nation has. He being the serviceman entrusted himself with the task to take it in right direction if people elect him. He was creating pessimism by performing the crisis and offering the redemption to the people in his image. As Francisco Panizza elucidates, "*Against the corruption of politics, populism offers a promise of emancipation after a journey of sacrifice.*"³⁵ Narendra Modi heavily banked upon this idea of sacrifice. In his speeches he appealed to masses as to move away from the particularistic identities of caste, region and religion and think and feel in terms of one nation as proud Indians (*Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat* (one India, great India), as the manifesto of the BJP read).

³⁴ Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 21.

³⁵ Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 23.

He portrayed the politics of caste, region and minority rights as the politics of appeasement and thereby as the conspiracy of congress to keep the people divided. He instead projected himself as the man who has come to unify the nation and its people. Francisco Panizza writes... “*In discourses of populist mobilization politics and political parties are often considered as divisive institutions that should be eliminated, or at least purified of factions and particularistic interests, to allow people to become united*”³⁶. Narendra Modi’s image in that sense was created as a melting point for all the differences in order to restore unity and progression of nation and the people. However, the identification of the leader with the people does not come out through passive interpellation. It needs to be showcased. Arrival of the idea Gujarat to idea of India, in development discourse can be read in that sense.

Gujrat Comes to India

While talking about populist mobilization it would be a mistake to assume that *the people*, created through multiple chain of equivalences come without agency. Panizza refers to the work of Gardener and rightly notes that the

the audience is not simply a blank slate waiting for the first, or for the best story to be etched on the virginal tablet. The stories of the leader must compete with many other stories and if the new stories are to succeed, they must transplant, complement or in some measures, outweigh the earlier story as well as contemporary oppositional counter stories³⁷.

The story of Gujarat thus comes out as a story of transforming the collective subjectivities into a political action. It comes out as a defense of the category of the outsider. It remains a story built around Modi to showcase his potential of extraordinary quality to the nation and *the people*. Panizza argues

The leader’s personal qualities straddle the personal and the political divide. As a political figure who seeks to be at the same time one of the people and their leader, the populist leader appears as an ordinary personal with extraordinary attributes”. Success in business or other private pursuits are used to legitimize the leader’s political persona by showing that his or her qualities are both different to and more valuable than those of ordinary politicians³⁸.

Thus, through the story of Gujarat, Modi not only proved his developmental and decisionist agenda which remained a larger theme of his populist mobilization in

³⁶ Ibid., 23

³⁷ Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 23.

³⁸ Ibid.,23.

creation of the people but was also able to overcome the essentialised location from the periphery of Gujarat to mainstream India.

Decoding imagery and discursive formulation of developmental agenda in 2014 elections

The essence of 2014 elections campaign could be captured in the reading of discourses that took place around the word ‘development’. From the beginning of the election campaign to the last rally that Narendra Modi addressed, the word development figured multiple times in his speeches. What is interesting is that the word “development” was mostly used in reference to Gujarat and in the image of Narendra Modi. It is due to that reason that the projection of the image of “*vikash purush*”, “*developmental man*” became possible for Modi. He gave an assurance to the people that the model of Gujarat will be replicated in India. The slogans like “*Ache din aane wale hai*” were complementary discursive formulations in that discourse of development which was attached with the leader. What is interesting and worth investigation is that how Gujarat model of development become acceptable to the people? How the idea of the development was catered to *the people* and how it leads to carve out the constituency for Narendra Modi?

Gujarat model of development came out in a certain context. During UPA regime when the country was witnessing massive corruption in form of 2G spectrum, common wealth, Coalgate scam, when the economic growth rate of nation went down due to global economic recession, when the inflation was touching a highest scale, when there was massive unemployment, the model that the Narendra Modi presented to the people in form of Gujarat development found strong resonance.

Immediately after his third electoral victory as chief minister in December 2012, at BJP head quarters in New Delhi, Narendra Modi presented his Gujarat model of development, where he said

Brothers and sisters, today I came here to attend NDC meeting and in the meeting I put my point before the prime minister and said that it is country’s misfortune that [in] the post where you are, [in] the place from where you are speaking, an atmosphere of despair is being created in the country.[...] friends, the matter of sadness is different, this time they have even stopped thinking about 9% and decided to achieve 8.2%

growth rate[...]... while Gujarat is growing at 11% plus rate. In the field of agriculture they are not able to cross 2.5% to 3%, while as Gujarat is not coming below 10%³⁹.

In the name of Gujarat development, these statistics were thrown to the people to contrast Gujarat with the rest of the India. These statistics and numbers were represented to make people believe that the success of Gujarat lies in Narendra Modi. It is only after Narendra Modi's coming to power that the face of Gujarat has changed. He has redeemed Gujarat from developing state to the developed state of India and if India accepts him as the PM the face of Gujarat will become the face of India.

It is evident from the fact that during his speeches he continuously indicated policies and programmes that Gujarat government claims to have successfully launched like 24 hours electricity, budget allocation on skill development programmes, ease of doing business, policies to enhance human resources, and other welfare activities⁴⁰ and compared it with the other states which has failed to do so despite all the resources available in the same manner.

In a rally at Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh) for instance Modi mocking at Mulayam Singh Yadav said,

Netaji, do you know meaning of converting to Gujrat? It means 24 hours electricity in every village and street. You can't do it. It requires 56 inch chest [] this country is not poor. The people of this country has been kept poor for the sake of politics...you give me 60 months and I promise you a life of happiness and peace⁴¹.

³⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics*,152.

⁴⁰ In speech at SRCC in Delhi, Gujrat model of development emerged prominently and started to dominate the rest of the development model. While Modi took the credit of developing non agrarian state into agrarian at growth rate of 10% with enormous production in cotton ranging upto 1 crore 23 lac bails. He also highlighted how due to his continuous effort the state which was facing water scarcity developed into water conserving state. As per the data which Modi himself presented during his tenure as chief minister he built 60lac water conservation tanks, which has not only increased the production in agriculture but also potable water has become accessible in the remotest of village in Gujrat. In his speech Modi took a jibe on rest of India saying that while Indians don't have a health card, farmers in Gujrat have soil card. He emphasized how his officials conducts kisan mela every year for 30 days in which right information is being provided to farmers for their cultivation. It is in the speech of SRCC he said "he had developed five "F" formula for linking agriculture with market. Taking the case of textile he said from *FARM TO FIBRE, FROM FIBRE TO FASHION AND FROM FASHION TO FOREIGN* , this has led to enormous increase in the production and income distribution in state, leading to massive generation of demand .

⁴¹ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics*,153.

Thus in the Speeches where he emphasized upon the development of Gujarat, he made sure that the people find the reason for their backwardness/ deprivation in their State and Central government⁴². While addressing *Hunkaar* rally in Bihar, Modi said that “the government of Nitish kumar and BJP performed well because of the rigorous work of BJP MLA’s. From the day they have left them, Bihar is back on the track of backwardness and Jungle Raj”. He openly targeted the regional leaders like Lalu Yadav, Nitish kumar of betraying the vision of the son of the soil Jai Prakash Narayan and also of BJP and Narendra Modi who has suffered humiliation multiple times from Nitish kumar for the sake of development of Bihar⁴³.

Similarly, While addressing the rally at Haryana (Rewari) , just after the declaration of his name from the party as the prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi based his entire theme of his speech on Indian Army where he touched upon the massive corruption both moral and material that was undergoing in defense department. He took the instances of soldiers beheading and the response that the congress politicians (A.K Antony) gave vis-à-vis those incidence as the site of moral corruption that the congress party was involved in⁴⁴. With an emotional appeal he said that “if you have no tears for the soldiers who lose their life protecting us from external threat, it’s all right. If you have no heart, it’s all right but don’t disrespect the soldiers of my country”⁴⁵. But along with that moral corruption, he also heavily emphasized upon the

⁴² What is interesting in Narendra Modi’s attack on state and central government that while he launched unrelenting attack on central government, his approach toward regional government apart from one or two states remained initially modest. Though he said Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav as baap “bête ki sarkar”, like he said Sonia and rahul as MAA bête ki sarkar but at Amethi’s rally he calmed his tone and temper against Yadav family. Modi said it’s not like baap bête ki sarkar won’t do the work if being properly facilitated by the center. It is the lack of the center that underdevelopment has persisted. The reference that one can draw from such mild attack is simple, Modi initially wanted to make room open for alliance but once he got the message that offensive strategy was working well vis a vis offense- defensive, he took on state government hand in hand. Narendra Modi, *Bharat Vijay Rally*, Amethi, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/10-memorable-speeches-of-shri-Narendra-Modi-from-2014-lok-sabha-elections-campaign-3143>

⁴³ See Hunkar rally at Patna, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/10-memorable-speeches-of-shri-Narendra-Modi-from-2014-lok-sabha-elections-campaign-3143>

⁴⁴ While replying in parliament A.K Antony, the then defense minister said that terrorist came wearing the dress of Pakistani Army and beheaded our soldiers. Modi took this statement as highly defamatory and went up calling A.K Antony as Pakistani agent in one of his rally at Jammu and Kashmir. For more reference see, rediff.com, “India’s defense suffered during Antony’s stewardship: Modi” *rediff news*, 8 April 2014, accessed on 16, April, 2018, <http://www.rediff.com/news/report/ls-election-Indias-defence-suffered-during-antons-stewardship-Modi/20140408.htm>

⁴⁵ see Narendra Modi speech at Rewari, Haryana, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/10-memorable-speeches-of-shri-Narendra-Modi-from-2014-lok-sabha-elections-campaign-3143>.

material corruption which has led to lack of modernization in army. All that the congress leaders are interested in is not in the modernization/ welfare of the army but in the new tenders⁴⁶. He again invoked Gujarat and how after becoming chief minister of the state when he visited Army camps at Gujarat- Pakistan border and saw the water crises, he was emotionally moved. He ensured that the soldiers get proper water supply as a result he built the water pipeline supplying water to the soldiers. Not only that he also built a *Smarak* (park)for the martyrs of 1964 war and asked tourist to visit that and pay homage to the brave martyrs. Through this not only he established himself as a nationalist who has deep reverence for the soldiers but also questioned congress and UPA government what stopped them from building the pipeline all these years? He emphasized that the congress lacked the willingness to work; it lacked the moral and ethical aspect that the government must possess. It is at that juncture he raised the demand for *one rank one pension* for the soldiers and promised that once his government will come to power the policy would be made.

One can note significantly the aspect of performance of crisis as well. On the one hand he raised the issue of corruption on the other lack of political willingness, moral degeneration, humiliation was invoked to touch upon the sentiments of the people. In populism, these aspects of performance become significant. The way, crises are projected or at times manufactured indicate strategy of the leader to manage the contradiction. By connecting crises like corruption with apathy, national disrespect with insensitiveness, under development with absence of courage in political leadership, Modi was creating new tropes for management of contradiction. And through his image (as the man ready to take risk, having strong commitment, thumping his chest and giving expression of valor, courage, challenging the opponent for debate on the question of development which represents confidence, vision) he was transforming himself as a messiah who can liberate people from the situation of encirclement.

⁴⁶ Ibid.,

Thus the leader through performance directly situates himself among the people as the victim and as the liberator. He attaches emotional connect with them and carves out constituency for oneself.

Seduction of Development

The Gujarat model of development was important in other sense as well. Through invocation of Gujarat model he brought development to cater to all kind of people from all section, all classes i.e. from poor and marginalized to lower and upper echelons of middle class and blended development with Nation and Nationalism. It was a calculated move made by Narendra Modi to overcome his Gujarati identity and establish him as Pan India leader. By highlighting the significance of Gujarat as the one of the most prosperous state, where every class finds currency, Modi focused to carve out constituency among all the sections of Indian society. It is evident from the campaign rallies where he referred to Gujarat model as superior to the particular states model and center at large and tried to target it to different sections. The development discourse became most seductive because it directly merged itself the empty signifier i.e. leader where each and every section of society has something to extract. “*Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas*” was the language which reoccurred several times in the advertisement, rallies and other campaigns, representing participation and sharing the equal benefits from the fruit of development. It is at this juncture it becomes important to understand what it meant for several classes.

Development for Middle/ Neo middle Class

Middle/Neo- Middle⁴⁷ class remained the major target for Narendra Modi in 2014 elections. He was well aware that the nature of both the classes as hegemonic/aspirational and consumerist force. As a result he packaged development both along the criteria's which suits the mobilization of these classes. For middle class who seeks their future in liberalization and privatization of economy, Modi ensured promotion of foreign investment, job opportunities, going global, ease of doing

⁴⁷ While middle class constituted the urban population mainly belonging from the higher caste and professional class, neo- middle class was an interesting innovation of Narendra Modi. The manifesto of BJP read neo middle class as those who have risen from the category of poor and are yet to stabilize in the category of middle class.

business, e-governance, minimum government maximum governance, Privatization, skill development etc. The speech at SRCC was the beginning point where he emphasized how Gujarat model was supportive of business and commerce, privatization and liberalization. It was an attempt to attract the aspiration of middle class by emphasizing his commitment for the promotion of neo liberal capital⁴⁸. He launched scathing criticism of congress party in speeches delivered at FICCI and other places⁴⁹ for failing to ensure foreign investment, creating job opportunities and the right kind of atmosphere where business could prosper. He blamed congress for over emphasis on bureaucratization and attempted to seduce middle class by developing an image of leader who believes in paperless work, e-governance which includes single window clearing system, e-transaction.

With these performances, Modi overtook congress who too equally champions neo liberal capital. Middle class found Modi as the leader who has the vision and knowledge of where to take the country. It suddenly caught the imagination of *the people* that here was a man who like CEO of their company can resolve problems, have vision and insights to take ahead the country (just like the CEO does with the company) and can earn profit whose fruits will be shared among all. Thus the CEO image of Narendra Modi situated him directly among the middle class. The image of CEO got certified when he talked of converting India into “Brand India”.

Modi also caught the imagination of middle class by developing an image of hardworking chief minister, who sleeps for four hour and is dedicated to work for the people⁵⁰. It helped middle class to associate with the idea that here was a man who despite belonging from the poor and backward family (which includes Modi as an

⁴⁸ By inviting Tata to open its NaNo plant in Gujrat, Modi through one move won the faith of middle class who saw their future in promotion of capitalism.

⁴⁹ While addressing a rally at Bangalore where he targeted to appropriate urban middle class and technocrats, he blamed congress for ignoring the interest of this large section of neo middle class. He asked the question “are not they the citizens of India, that the congress government should ignore them”. By counting on the Vajpayee years and the efforts that the then government made to develop IT sector including establishment of IT ministry, inviting investment etc. He alleged UPA regime for having failed to capitalize the momentum that the Vajpayee government initiated. He also brought Gujarat in that context to juxtapose investment friendly nature of state, ease of doing business and the rising prosperity of the neo middle class.

⁵⁰ As Modi was running for campaign, media constantly focussed on his daily routine highlighting his fooding, sleeping and working habits. Never has media centered itself upon a leader and emphasized programmes of leader’s everyday life before elections. It was with Narendra Modi, this trend was getting established as it has some implied meaning which was to be delivered to middle class.

OBC leader) can climb up the ladder without reservation. This anti reservation and merit image which Modi reflected established him as undisputed leader among middle class.

Along with image of CEO and meritorious leader, the Hindutva image of Narendra Modi also offered spiritual redemption to Middle class. Engrossed in growth rate and consumerism, middle class always look for avenues for compensating the guilt of materialism; Modi provided it in terms of Nation and nationalism. Linking private development with the development of nation and ensuring strong state to fight against the growing terrorism, Naxalism. Modi made middle class a participant in the noble task of developing nation ensuring the escape route from the guilt of self aggrandizement.

Apart from touching upon the middle class, Modi strongly attempted to bridge neo middle class in his fold. Having moved up in the ladder through government programmes and policies, the major issue that arrested the neo middle class was ‘fear’ of falling down again from the ladder . Modi tapped upon this aspiration and anxiety of the neo middle class and tried to bring them under his fold by promising welfare benefits to them. It is evident from the manifesto of the Bhartiya Janta Party which says,

India has a large middle class with immense understanding, talent and purchasing power. In addition a whole new class has emerged. Those who have risen from the category of poor and are yet to stabilize in the middle class, the “neo middle class”. This class needs proactive holding. Having moved out of poverty their aspiration have increased. They want amenities and services of certain standard. They thus feel now that the government facilities and services are not up to the mark and hence resort to the private sector for things like education, health and transport. This is obviously costly putting the neo middle class into a daily dilemma. As more and more people move into this category their expectations for better public services have to be met. We have to strengthen the public sector for providing efficient services to our citizens. In particular attention would be paid on government providing: educational scholarship and educational facilities, medical insurance and quality health care services, middle income housing and efficient public transport system⁵¹.

It is through these versions populism as manageability of contradiction was being performed. On the one hand he was promoting neo liberal capital in terms of ideological populism on the other he was also promising strong activation of

⁵¹ Bhartiya Janta Party, *Election manifesto 2014*, 18.

governmental populism. Along with middle and neo middle class, Modi also attempted to bring under fold farmers, women, poor, marginalized and youth under the fold of ‘the people’.

In Chennai, he focused on the fisherman community and declared: ‘if government had even little concerns for the poor then the condition of the fisherman community in Tamil Nadu would be different. In Guwahati on February 2014 he thundered: “Assam has the Bhramaputra but Guwahati does not have water to drink”⁵². In Punjab and several other places, he touched the question of “kisan” farmers and blamed congress for ignoring the plight of agrarian sector. He said congress has tactically changed the slogan of Lal Bahadur Shastri’s “Jai Jawan Jai Kisan into Mar Jawan Mar kisan”. Referring to the farmer’s suicide Modi said “you will be able to learn that the number of farmer class who have been forced to commit suicide is more than the number of jawans who dies fighting wars”⁵³. Modi promised to the farmers of Punjab and farmers in general that after he wins the election he would ensure 50% profit on the total input cost of the farmer. Like Vajpayee’s Pradhan Mantiri Gram Sadak Yojna, he promised to initiate Pradhan Mantri Grameen Seechai Yojna. These policies were announced to lure the farmer and carve out constituency from them⁵⁴.

In the speech at Amethi, the traditional constituency of Nehru and Gandhis’, Modi targeted youth and said that

In so many years they have ruined the dream of three generations. I am here to sow seeds of hope among the youth. I have come here to share your sadness and make your problem mine. And then he mentioned the Gujarat government initiative to build 76000 toilets at schools so as to enable girl student to pursue their education⁵⁵.

Youth remained a central concern of Modi in 2014 elections. He specifically targeted youth and approached to them like Vivekananda did, reawakening them from their sleep. Thus acquiring the traits of great personality, Modi performed a similar role of reawakening the youth. He envisioned the idea of making India “the leader of the

⁵² Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics*, 155.

⁵³ PTI, “Modi reaches out to farmers, promises high MSPs for crops” *The Hindu*, 25 april 2014, accessed on 18 april 2018, <http://www.theHindu.com/elections/loksabha2014/north/Modi-reaches-out-to-farmers-promises-high-msps-for-crops/article5948046.ece>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁵ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics*, 153.

world” through successful utilization of youth’s potential. He projected himself as the leader who knows how to use it. It was explicit in his speech at SRCC, where he indicated his potential as a unique and visionary leader by throwing away stories of development and initiatives made for the development of Gujarat.⁵⁶ India he claimed had a glorious past and Modi promised to bring that glorious past through successfully channelizing the potential of youth. Thus, through discursive articulation on the potential of youth, successful harnessing it in the development of nation, he situated himself in the mind and heart of the millions of youth whose first preference in 2014 election was Narendra Modi. What was interesting in Gujarat model of development that apart from some numerical references nothing concrete was explained by Narendra Modi.

Shiv Vishwanathan rightly analyses that the development discourse of Narendra Modi in his article Narendra Modi’s *symbolic war*. Commenting upon Modi as a *semiotic construct* who went ahead to fight symbolic war Vishwanathan writes “one has to enter mind of Modi as semiotic space in order to understand him”⁵⁷. The discourse of development in that sense was itself a semiotic construct. Development as a word represents more open ended-ness. Unlike planning which India envisaged after independence and which continued with certain hiccups till 2014 represented technocratic, top down and restrictive method. Development serves as a catch all method for every group. It’s lateral in nature, technical enough to be scientific and elementary enough for general use⁵⁸. Development as a word gives invitation to all sectors in the society and takes them on ride of both aspirational and competitive domain⁵⁹. Most importantly, it has a numeric value; it can be measured and hence

⁵⁶ Apart from his initiatives in the field of agriculture and industry, Modi brought education, skill at the fore front to mobilise the youth. In that section Modi talked about how after 2010-11 the number of universities in Gujrat has increased from 10-11 to 42 in 2014. His vision behind establishing forensic science university, raksha shakti university which works extensively in the field of skill development. It allows students from class 10th to graduation to enrol itself and train the field of security development. Along with the skill Modi touch upon scale and speed to incorporate massive section of youth in skill building programme so that the development task could be pushed ahead. He talked about importance of branding India and most importantly he emphasized upon building the confidence among the youth who is leading their life in despair, uncertainty and hopelessness.

⁵⁷ Shiv Vishwanathan, *Narendra Modi’s symbolic war*, 10.

⁵⁸ By the use of the word development one enters into the domain of ranking at both global and local level. The connotation of the word can easily be attached with making personality making it personality development, industries making it industrial development and community making it community development.

⁵⁹ Vishwanathan in his article Narendra Modi’s symbolic war makes a distinction between planning and development. He argues that Narendra Modi was a semiotic construct in 2014 elections which went

prone to manipulability. Thus it acts as a unifying word for all sections full of historical anxieties and ready as well as waiting for new history⁶⁰.

Modi built upon these particular discourses of development and strongly politicized the everyday emotion of anxieties, aspiration, pessimism and hope which remained prevalent cross cutting class and caste in India in 2014 elections.

What needs to be noted that the solution which he rendered to those problems was blended in consumerism. Modi weaved the language of consumerism in the language of morality and development of nation and presented it to *the people*. Through that Modi was managing contradictions of capitalist mode of production with Indian context.

It is evident from the fact that unlike focusing upon “savings” which used to be the central aspect during the days of planning for the nation development. Modi upturned the idea into consumerism and building of individual subjectivity oriented more toward privatization and moral consumers⁶¹. Public role of state in his imagination nowhere extends beyond the Lockean nightwatchman, where state is mere facilitator. Narendra Modi use of word like *chaukidaar*, *prahari* in several of his speeches, minimum government and maximum governance is indicative of the fact that how state was going to ensure development to all.

Consumerism in Performance

Consumerism, for Modi as said above, was Panacea for all the evils which existed either in the domain of economy, culture or politics. He emphasized consumerism not only for the people but also reflected in his performance i.e his clothing style, his hair cut, polished beard, the way his events were managed creating it into spectacle highlighted no less than a consumerist Modi.

ahead to fight a symbolic war. Development in that context provided a symbol to bring the people from every section of society. See, Shiv Vishwanathan, *Narendra Modi's symbolic war*, 11.

⁶⁰ Ibid.,

⁶¹ Sanjay Srivastava, *Modi-Masculinity: Media, Manhood, and “Traditions” in a Time of Consumerism* 331-338.

Writing on the way Modi changed his taste and preferences and made himself more consumer friendly, Sanjay Srivastava, quotes Shiv Vishwanathan who writes,

Originally Modi appeared in the darkness of white kurtas which conveyed a swadeshi asceticism. Khadi is the language of certain colourlessness. Modi realized that ascetic white was archaic language. His PROs forged a more colourful Modi, a brand Modi more cheerful in blue and peach, more ethnic in gorgeous red turbans ... hair transplants and ayurvedic advice served to grow his hair...Modi sensed that he has to sustain both as icon and as image of different era⁶².

Vrinda Gopinath a famous blogger wrote on Modi's new image as masculine also highlighted that how his masculinity was deeply entrenched in consumerist attire.

Modi's empire line is most flattering to himself - of opulent turbans adorned with pearls and feathers. Rath and chariots of gold and chrome, a machismo swagger with self proclaimed chappan chatty, giant cuts in every street, to 3D virtual images that walks, talks and eats; mammoth road show of pomp and pageantry; flashy showmanship and stagecraft at public meetings... good grief 'Narendra Bhai' does sound like Mughal emperor in modern india!⁶³



The question worth investigation is what meaning does these aspects of consumerism have to signify both for the people and the leader.

⁶² Shiv Vishwanathan, *The remaking of Narendra Modi* quoted in Sanjay Srivastava, *Modi-Masculinity: Media, Manhood, and "Traditions" in a Time of Consumerism*,334.

⁶³ Vrinda Gopinath, *Does Narendra Modi's Grand Image of Himself Come from His Roots, Asks Vrinda Gopinath*, quoted in Sanjay Srivastava, *Modi-Masculinity: Media, Manhood, and "Traditions" in a Time of Consumerism*,334.

Firstly, by advocating consumerism to people, Narendra Modi was bridging the aesthetic gap⁶⁴ between the represented and the representative. The charm and the stardom which surrounds the representatives and is emptied in the represented, he was trying to bridge that aspect for the people.

Secondly, his road show, the mega events which he attended and organized through his associates and PR team, the political spectacle that surrounded the election of 2014 like performing 'aarti' at Ashwamegh Ghat in Vanarasi or the symbolism which Vrinda Gopinath talked, can be read as an attempt to empty content from politics and turn active political citizen into passive viewers who remains happy to watch politics from distance⁶⁵. This aspect works significantly for middle class who has strong distaste from politics and wants polity to operate as mere facilitator.

The third and most important aspect of consumerism which Modi represented through his own image can be read as an act where the leader was performing on the extraordinary quality of health and strength. Since populist leader not only represents but embodies people, he can not look old. Through his young image the leader attempts to delineate himself with the people who has to someday go through natural ageing process.⁶⁶

Thus, through development enmeshed in consumerism, Modi gave it what Vishwanathan calls a political weight and theological force⁶⁷. While he was denouncing development under Congress and UPA regime, contrasting Gujarat model with other states, on the other side he was also projecting himself as a messiah/ Albatross whose arrival will clear the mist and fog entrapping the developmental boat⁶⁸. "*Acche Din Aane Wale Hai*" can be decoded from the aforesaid aspects. Narendra Modi, nonetheless, wanted to shed his Gujarati identity but he chose to use Gujarat model everywhere. One can argue that the placement was tactical as it provided an imminent aspect to Modi's personality, decisionism being one of them.

⁶⁴ Benjamin Moffit, *The Global Rise Of Populism*, 57-58.

⁶⁵ Ibid.,

⁶⁶ Ibid.,

⁶⁷ Shiv Vishwanathan, *Narendra Modi's symbolic war*, 11.

⁶⁸ The metaphor of Albatross has been taken from the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* written by S.T. Coleridge.

“Decisionism” -A Propeller in Making of Modi!

“Decisionism” remained a central theme in the populist mobilization of 2014 general elections and in the imagery of the leader Narendra Modi. Since, the leader opted for populist mobilizations based on the structures of promises and expectations, mobilizing sentiments of different section of society; decisionism was bound to operate in tandem with those expectation and promises. What mattered in the operation of decisionism of Narendra Modi was very act of deciding himself irrespective of the content and consequences of such decisions. Hence, it was the centrality of form vis-à-vis content which played a crucial role in shaping the discourse of decisionism in 2014 general elections⁶⁹. What ran as a recurrent theme in the discourse of decisionism was that the decision should be taken by right kind of political Authority. Modi attempted to represent that cult in distinctive manner.

In the elections of 2014, Narendra Modi built the discourses around development and change. For Modi the development requires change but change could not take place unless it is not complimented by a strong and decisive leadership. The problems of backwardness, deprivation, inequality, poverty etc. persisted in the nation because India until Modi was being ruled by meek congress leadership. If the towering wall of these problems which has obstructed India’s future toward development has to be demolished or withdrawn, it requires a wise man at the helm of affairs. Narendra Modi in that sense not only qualified to the people as morally superior but also as the man who have propelled development in Gujarat through his tireless efforts and strong decisionist endeavours. Gujarat developed because Modi worked tirelessly to solve these problems of the state and if India has to develop it will have to replicate not only the Gujarat model of development but also its leader Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

Decisionism requires courage, valour, potential of a leader to take decision. It requires intellect, vision, discipline, rigour to fight with problem and willingness to implement the solution. As a leader Narendra Modi catered all these aspect to the several constituencies which he was carving out through decisionism.

⁶⁹ MSS Pandian and Satyaki Roy, ‘*Decisionism’ and the cult of Narendra Modi*, 30-31

While referring to Mulayam Singh Yadav in a rally Modi said, “in order to develop a state it requires 56 inches of chest”. Using such kind of symbolism, Modi not only created a masculine competence and valour but eulogized decisionism of Indian variety enmeshed in patriarchy to the best of its use. In a speech at Amethi, he emphasized that unlike congress and several other leaders who are mindless, visionless and parochial, he devotes hours in contemplation, he struggles with the problem unless he does not get solution of it. He indicated in several of speeches that the efforts made by Gujarat government to ensure happiness and prosperity of the state came from his genius mind. It was his vision to locate the minute and large problems and willingness to work relentlessly for it’s solution which has brought development. In several of his speeches he made it clear to the people, “Voting for Modi” is to “vote for India” and hence “vote for development”. It is therefore, by creating a discourse of development enmeshed in the discourse of decisionism, that he assumed the title of “Vikas purush”, the developmental man.

However development remained one aspect of his decisionism, through which he created *the people* in the form of middle and neo middle class, farmers, youth, female, cross cutting caste and other dynamics. It was also by using the power of decisionism, Modi created the other. In his speeches it operated as a constant theme, whereby he not only relegated congress party to backwardness, corruption, moral degeneration but Narendra Modi also deprived them from capacity of decisive leadership. Despite all the efforts made by outgoing prime minister to save the country from economic slowdown during the first tenure of UPA regime, and all the social welfare programmes and policies in form of MNREGA, food security bill and others he was deprived of all the credentials and mocked as ‘*Maun*’ Mohan Singh. Not only Manmohan Singh was deprived of leadership qualities but Modi chose to deprive Jawaharlal Nehru too from the credentials of leadership. The entire thrust of Narendra Modi towards Sardar Patel was to create a counter figure of equal stature against Nehru and takeaway the leadership credentials, which involves decisionism at its core from the congress family. This happened by converting Sardar patel as both a decisionist and as a victim who had been discriminated by the congress party constantly and denied the due respect which he deserved in history.

In 'Maha Jagran' rally at Assam and rallies at several other places, Modi openly claimed that Sardar Patel was abandoned by congress party in 60 years of its rule. He faced discrimination at the hands of congress and now when he (Modi) has announced to build statue of Patel named as statue of unity, they (Congress) have come to appropriate Sardar back to congress by denying him the right to do so, since he (Modi) belong to RSS. Modi tactically carved out a response to this when he said that for congress Patel may be a leader of a party but for Modi he is a national leader beyond any party and politics. Thus, eulogizing Sardar Patel as the iron man, whose statue would be built from the irons collected from each and every part of the country (farmer's especially). Modi was replacing Nehru and other prominent leaders of congress party. Patel's portrayal as the leader beyond party was a message to convince the people that by following the decisionist footprints of Patel, Modi would be representing India as a whole.

While creating "*the other*" in the congress party, Modi was fighting a multifaceted war with oldest party of India. On the one front while he was robbing congress of its past (projection of Sardar Patel and Shastri can be seen in this frame), he was also demolishing congress from its future prospect. The vehement attack on Sonia Gandhi and her two children were parts of that process, which Modi referred constantly to as the "Congress Mukht Bharat".

Modi, time and again referred to the outgoing government in terms of "Maa bete Ki Sarkaar" (a government confined to family, which he also referred as "*Delhi sultanate*" where Madam Sonia withheld the important keys of government along with her son Rahul Gandhi or when he preferred to call him a '*Shehzada*'). It was dynasty politics for Modi, which has ruined the nation. According to Modi, the lust to remain in power has compelled them (Congress) to make any kind of compromises with the national interest as a result the roots of Indian political system has shaken down. The manifesto of the BJP clearly brings this out "UPA's biggest blow to Indian political system is that they have taken our Genuineness from Governance; Authenticity from Administration. UPA has shown Governance of Enactment and not Action. We have become a polity of promises and not performance. We represent an

economy of deficit, a work culture of delays and an asset base of deficiency...”⁷⁰ Such condition has aroused from the indecisiveness of the leadership in the congress party.

Modi prominently used the much timely publication of Sanjaya Baru’s “the accidental prime minister” to substantiate his allegation on the government in Delhi. In speech at Amethi referring to two incidents, firstly of Sonia Gandhi disapproving behavior toward ex-PM Narshima Rao’s funeral as well as the incident of Rahul Gandhi publically castigating the UPA government by tearing apart the ordinance passed by government to negate supreme court rulings of disqualifying convicted MPs and MLAs from contesting elections, Modi declared them as an autocratic rulers controlling the government from behind.

In words of Shiv Vishwanathan, “Modi contributed immensely in generating a discourse where apart from creating tragicomic act, a deep fissure was highlighted that was destroying a whole sense of responsibility”⁷¹. It is evident from the fact that in several of his speeches he was emphasizing inaction of the government to deal with the growing issue of terrorism and Naxalism, soldiers beheading, as well as growing threat from china and Pakistan⁷². India in order to become a strong state required a strong government, strong leader with a vision and it was only in the image of Modi that it could be achieved⁷³.

Modi promised that once he becomes the prime minister he would respond to the enemies of Indian state in the language which they understand (*main unko unki bhasa mein jawab dunga*)⁷⁴. By providing an emotional touch through invocation of nation and nationalism, he projected himself as the true and brave son of the soil, as brave as lion. Slogans like “*Dekho Dekho Kaun Aaya, Bharat Maa ka Sher Aaya*” thundered

⁷⁰ Bhartiya Janta party manifesto,7

⁷¹ Shiv Vishwanathan, *Narendra Modi’s symbolic war*, 11-12.

⁷² Modi referred to this incident in almost every speech which he delivered. From Rewari to Amethi, Patna, Muzaffarpur, Bengaluru in all those speeches, Modi invoked this incident and drew condemnation of government for not acting in strong manner. But apart from that it was also the vantage point for Modi to do moral shaming of congress party and indicate how insensitive they are in relation to the responsibilities.

⁷³ Modi promised not only economic development but also security from internal as well as external threat. It was prominent theme of the manifesto of Bhartiya Janta party.

⁷⁴ Narendra Modi, *Rally in Rewari*, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/10-memorable-speeches-of-shri-Narendra-Modi-from-2014-lok-sabha-elections-campaign-3143>.

before he arrived on the stage to deliver the speech. Not only slogans, songs⁷⁵ were composed and played in almost all of his rallies before he arrived, depicting him as the harbinger of hope, prosperity, and the one who has the power and courage to change the course of country and empower people. Such a kind of projection of his image as savior, caring, emotional played a significant role in blending decisionism with Indian variety enmeshed in patriarchy and father figure or as a guardian.

One can read this aspect of decisionism in the body of the leader as the tactical move for manageability of the contradiction. With the onset of democracy, the body politic is disembodied from power at the level of leadership. In other words, democracy is conceptualized as empty place for power. Through such imagery of courage, valour, 56 inches wide chest, Modi was bringing back the centrality of body politic and through that he was ensuring the unity of the people.

While touching upon the issues of poverty, unemployment, inflation and drawing a causal explanation of all those plights and miseries due to congress rule, Modi carved out special position for himself. In a speech at Assam Modi he said “the state is enormously rich in natural resources, minerals but why is it poor? Who kept it poor? Awaits! for answer from the crowd, as soon as the crowd responds congress, he repeats the question for one more time and then shifts the question for whom u people were waiting forth? Awaits! As the crowd responds Modi, he repeats the question twice and moves ahead launching a scathing critic of congress”. Such a strategy of delivering speech was unique as he was not only confirming his words from the people but seeking response time and again from the people he was making the people to perform with himself. It can be read as a strategic act which Modi followed not only in Assam but almost all the rallies which he delivered. Through this means, Modi was putting back the sovereignty in the people and constituting them as active social agent. It is in this manner, through the use of decisionism he was redrawing the constituency for himself.

⁷⁵ The lyrics of the songs which was officially inaugurated by Arun Jaitely and sung by prominent singer named sukhwinder singh reads as *saugandh mujhe iss mitti ki main desh nhi kjukne dunga, main desh nahi mitne dunga.*

Writing in the context of centrality of decisionism in 2014 election, MSS Pandian and Satyaki Roy in their article *Decisionism and the cult of Narendra Modi*⁷⁶ trace the role that decisionism played in formation of the people as well as the other. For Pandian and Roy, Narendra Modi represented decisionism in three major aspects i.e. i) Gujrat development ii) Gujrat program and iii) Subaltern aspiration.

While decisionism and development that has been discussed in the aforesaid section represents the material source of identification with the leader, the centrality of Gujarat program and subaltern aspiration exists in terms of what Zizek calls 'imaginary identification' with the leader. Zizek points out that "the process through which the people identify with the leader is not necessarily the glamorous one. The trait to identify with the leader can also be a certain failure, weakness or even the guilt of other"⁷⁷. By emphasizing upon these aspects, populist mobilization ensures the creation of the people. Narendra Modi tactically used these symbols in election of 2014, to garner support among the people.

Subaltern aspiration in Narendra Modi

If we closely analyze the discourses that were created in and around Narendra Modi from his childhood days to the day of becoming a Chief Minister of Gujarat and later as the contestant for the prime minister's post, we will come across in an image reflective of the subaltern aspirations in India.

Emphasizing upon his image as *chai wala*, a man having a humble background, coming from OBC family, rearing the life in extreme poverty, he tactically placed himself among the subalterns. What was unique in his identity as subaltern is that while for most of the people Subalternity remains a blockade in the progression of his life. Here was a man who successfully overcame this barrier. It is this aspect of the leader to be one among the common man, share the aspect of ordinary and overcome that ordinary living with an extraordinary one gives inspiration and connect the people with the leader. Theodor Adorno has shown that such perception leads the common people to identify with the idealized leader as the compensation for the lack in their

⁷⁶ MSS Pandian and Satyaki Roy, '*Decisionism*' and the cult of Narendra Modi, 30-31

⁷⁷ Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 26.

lives⁷⁸. Subalterns were identifying with Modi from the aspect which they failed to achieve.

The invocation of *Chai Wala, chai pe charcha* in the election campaign and its wider acceptance among people is instructive of that fact. Despite the attempt made by Mani Shankar Aiyar⁷⁹ to disparage his image as ‘*chai wala*’, it was widely mobilized by Modi (*maine chai becha hai desh nhi*) in an emotional overtone which strengthened his identification with the people. He made Kiran Mahida, a chai wala from Barodra as his proposer for Lok Sabha candidature and later on invited him to attend his swearing in ceremony⁸⁰. Such kind of performance established Modi in close parlance with millions of poor and subalterns of the country who have strong aspiration to move ahead in life but failed to achieve.

Subaltern aspiration also reflected in the way he tactically used his caste location to create the other in congress party especially against Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi. In several of his meetings and rallies he called Rahul Gandhi as *Shehzada*, a man born with silver spoon whose past was soaked in entitlements and legacies. He contrasted himself vis a vis Rahul, as a hardworking, deterministic personality, who has arisen as phoenix from the ashes. It had strong resonance among the people as they easily identified with their difficulties and hardship with Modi. In a controversy with Priyanka Gandhi, which aroused from his remark that the motivation for political action of Priyanka Gandhi comes as a daughter where Priyanka rebutted Modi saying that “the remark is indicative of low standard politics”. Modi used that “low” remark and gave it a caste turn. In an interview with Arnab goswami, when Goswami asked him, whether he really takes Priyanka’s comment on his caste identity he replied,

...don’t I have right to say the truth? Is it because I come from the humble background, from humble family? Has the country become like this? Has my democracy submitted itself to one family? When poor man says something, there is an uproar⁸¹.

⁷⁸ MSS Pandian and satyaki roy, ‘*Decisionism*’ and the cult of Narendra Modi , 31.

⁷⁹ Firstpost, “Modi will never be PM, but he can sell tea: Manishankar aiyar”,18 january 2014, <https://www.firstpost.com/politics/Modi-will-never-be-pm-but-he-can-sell-tea-mani-shankar-aiyar-1345419.html>. Accessed on 21 April 2018.

⁸⁰ MSS Pandian and Satyaki Roy, ‘*Decisionism*’ and the cult of Narendra Modi , 31.

⁸¹ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics*, 159.

Thus by invoking his lower caste and class status Modi on the one hand mobilized the aspiration of subaltern sections on the other he was also able to gain support of prominent Dalit and Bahujans leaders like Udit Raj who was the prominent face in the establishment of Dalit chambers of commerce and industries and Ramdas Athwale, prominent leader of Republican party of India (RPI) along with leaders like Ramkripal yadav who was the second in command of Lalu Prasad yadav. The co-option of parties like Apna dal, Lok Jan Shakti Party, RPI worked significantly in carving out constituencies for Narendra Modi among Dalits and OBCs.

Gujrat Pogrom- A unique Decisionist Turn

The carnage in Gujarat 2002 provided a unique image to Narendra Modi. While on the one hand it placed Narendra Modi on a national platform, though with a shoddy image among the secularists and the elites on the other it gave a clear indication to the Hindu public awaiting the messiah who possessed the potential to use the state machinery to take revenge of past misdoings.

The project of the RSS throughout from its inception till date has been to construct a mass with the belief that Muslims during their regime dating back to slave dynasty and Mughals have been atrocious over Hindus. They have not only defeated Hindus in wars but have also taken away their property, wives and enforced forceful conversion during their regime. Modi's act in that sense was a befitting reply to that misdoings and injustices. It was unique in some sense. Though riots against Hindus and Muslims has been taking place in Indian society from pre to post independence India on those same grounds. But every time it happened, it was projected as the failure of state machinery to contain or control the riots. The uniqueness of Gujarat riots lies in the fact that for the first time a state being ruled by Man who has strong RSS background allowed the state machinery to actively participate in the killings. Though at formal level, it was again a failure of state machinery but in the psychology of Hindu public it was active participation of state. There were reasons for Hindu public to believe so, When Atal Behari Vajpayee condemned the riots of 2002 saying that "*hume*

rajdharm ka palan karna chahiye”⁸², it indicated that someone consciously chose not to follow the rules of ‘*Rajdharma*’ or prioritize Rajdharma over the secular principles which the country envisaged since independence.

Their messiah Narendra Modi “did it” through a brilliant use of extralegal decisions and in 2014 elections. Pandian and Roy write that

Every time, Modi invoked 2002 riots to be forgotten he was bringing back the memories afresh “we can do it”. The memories of 2002 emptied of gory details were projecting him as the decisionist par excellence. At the same time, the commands to forget the actual events of 2002 was a move to create the decisionist vacuum, from which the action (and hence order) of the future would arise”⁸³.

Narendra Modi in 2014 represented that promise of the future. How he represented that promise would be dealt in the next section of the chapter but through the Gujarat riots and invocation of it, he assumed a decisionist face in the Hindu cultural sphere of Indian society.

It is interesting to note that the face of decisionism which Modi represented had a typical masculine avatar. From his invocation of 56 inches wide chest, brave and courageous son of soil, lion (protector) of Bharat Mata to his grand events, 3D avatars, his gestures and postures in speeches like thumping of his chest, to pointing fingers indicated how tacitly masculine avatar was projected in image of Narendra Modi. Masculinity served a special purpose for Narendra Modi. It easily situated him in the domain of family as a guardian, protector, disciplinarian⁸⁴ giving him the moral authority to rule. On the other hand it was in the imagery of masculine leader that the effeminate portrayal of Hindu society was relinquished.

Thus this decisionist face entwined with masculinity helped him to garner support cross cutting the social divisions in the society. It not only appealed to middle and the neo middle class but also the youth, subalterns and the women in the society.

⁸² Sobhit sujay, “congress rakes up Vajpayee’s Rajdharm remark post 2002 gujarat riots to take on Modi”, *The Indian express*, 11 April 2014, <http://Indianexpress.com/article/India/politics/congress-rakes-up-vajpayees-concerns-on-2002-gujarat-riots-to-attack-Modi/>. Accessed on 19 April 2018.

⁸³ MSS Pandian and Satyaki Roy, ‘*Decisionism*’ and the cult of Narendra Modi, 31.

⁸⁴ One of the prominent slogan which easily reflects how he was carving out constituency for himself in the domain of family was “BAHUT HUA NARI PE WAAR, AB KI BAAR MODI SARKAAR”

Promise to Hindusim in the making of Narendra Modi

Even though the election of 2014 was fought on the grounds of development which included politics of hope and aspiration, corruption free India, return of black money stored in foreign accounts, freedom from congress rule (*congress mukt bharat*) made evident from the campaign line of BJP. Hinduism remained a recurrent theme operating parallel to all those narratives. Any attempt to understand Modi and the election of 2014 without reference to Hindutva would be a categorical mistake⁸⁵.

Although, Hindutva did not appear at the formal level more explicitly as the leader Narendra Modi himself chose to use the language of development as an all encompassing category to mobilize different sections of society. But the populist mobilization in 2014 subtly took a cultural turn. Unlike previous elections where Babri Masjid - Ram Mandir, Article 370 and UCC controversy remained at the top of BJP's agenda for the mobilization of Hindu public. In 2014 these agendas became secondary⁸⁶ and the mobilization that took place was largely symbolic. The uniqueness to the Hindutva mobilization in 2014 lies in the fact that it was repackaged in terms of leader and his symbol itself. It helped to serve two major purposes of Hindutva politics. On the one hand the 'Muslim' was relegated to the domain of "the other" along with the parties representing them⁸⁷ and on the other hand it helped in managing of the social cleavages existing within Hindu culture. It is interesting to note how both these phenomena worked simultaneously through projection of leader like Narendra Modi.

⁸⁵ Hinduism has been a dominant theme of Indian politics right from the time of independence. Though it was initially congress which represented the interest of Hindu society due to its all encompassing party structure, after the decline of the congress system the discourses of Hindu nationalism started to take the route of the society in independent form. Emergence of Jan Sangh with JP movement was the first instance when Hindutva politics marked its presence at such a large level on electoral platform. It has continued to grow since then and took a national platform after Babri Masjid incident.

⁸⁶ In the manifesto of the Bhartiya Janta Party, the issue of Ram Mandir was brought out in the last page, where the manifesto reads "BJP reiterates its stand to explore all the possibilities within the framework of the constitution to facilitate the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodha", apart from that the question UCC was again dealt from the framework of equality especially of women where the concern was to end the system of "Triple Talaq".

⁸⁷ The representation of Muslim in 16th general election reached its lowest ebb. There are only 22 Muslim MPs in Indian parliament with highest number of MPs coming from Trinamool congress(4), and two each from congress and CPI. Although, Muslims Constitues 10.5% of Indian population, it's representation in parliament is only 4.2%, lowest than 1957 when it was 4.6% and 23 MPs in number. For more reference see, Zeeshan Shaikh, "Only 22 Muslims in !6th Loksabha", *The Indian Express*, 17 may 2014, <http://Indianexpress.com/article/India/politics/only-22-Muslims-in-16th-lok-sabha/>. Accessed on, 21 April 2018.

Carving a new fate for Muslims: Muslim as “the other”

The question of minority especially Muslims per se was approached differently by several political parties in the general election of 2014. While one group of political parties including Congress as the major player along with several other regional parties contested among themselves and claimed to be the true representative of Muslims interest as well as the authentic withholder of the principle of secularism. The question of Muslims and secularism for Narendra Modi and BJP was different.

Modi strongly condemned this claim of true representation of Muslim interest by congress and regional parties as the *politics of appeasement* and remarked it as divisive, along with that he also relinquished the principle of secularism as unfit for Indian society⁸⁸. It is interesting to note that if these two basic premises were challenged through which Muslims were represented in post colonial India. What new model was Narendra Modi offering?

For Narendra Modi and BJP the centrality of Muslim representation was hardly a question. They pointed out toward the socio-economic and educational backwardness prevailing among Muslims and juxtaposed it with the idea of representation. Modi and his allies openly claimed that a mere representation has brought no development for the Muslim society. They thoroughly raised a question as to why the conditions of Muslims have not improved despite representation being provided by congress and regional parties. It is at this juncture that the idea of representation was problematized by BJP⁸⁹. While on the one hand discourses of representation remained as an important aspect for majority community as the tickets to seats in elections were distributed taking into consideration the caste and class dynamics of the constituency. Despite the several claims made by the leader that his politics is above sectarian

⁸⁸ It is interesting to note that it was for the first time after the adoption of the word secularism in the preamble was being contested at such formal level.

⁸⁹ By prioritising the question of deprivation over representation, alleging specific group based representation of Muslim community as divisive politics, Narendra Modi successfully carved out a position whereby the discourse of representation which is one of the fundamental aspect of modern day citizenship was denied to Muslim community. In order to understand Narendra Modi take on Muslim representation see, the interview of India today conclave 2011 between Narendra Modi and digvijay singh. See, Angry Narendra Modi and digvijay singh fight -2011, (<http://Indiannpolitricks.blogspot.com/>).

interests and that his leadership represented the interest of all, what remained in real was that for Muslims it was denied on grounds of development.

The politics of inclusion which Narendra Modi championed through the idea of “*Antayoda*” tactically became exclusionary as it deprived Muslims of having any single voice in the largest ruling party of the country⁹⁰. Thus the other/ outside was carved out from inside through the larger rhetorics of *Antayodaya* and development.

In several of his speeches he pointed out towards the Muslim’s deprivation in Gujarat before he became the Chief Minister⁹¹ and how it has improved under his regime. By indicating the prosperity of Muslims under the guise of Gujarat model of development, Modi created a narrative making a case for development/ performance and dismissing the question of representation which is significant for minority community, denying them the basic right of citizenship. The parties which attempted to mobilize the Muslim votes were called divisive and the politics was bracketed as the politics of appeasement.

Modi and his allies openly blamed the left liberals and intellectuals along with congress party members for practicing divisive politics based on Pamperism of one group/ community over other. What troubled Narendra Modi and BJP most in the politics of pamperism/ appeasement was the “en-bloc voting” behavior of Muslim community and the opposite fragmented voting behavior of majority community. Hence, the allegation of divisiveness can be read from this perspective⁹². Narendra Modi tried to unify and mobilize the sentiment of Hindus to imbibe the pattern of ‘en block’ voting behavior and simultaneously demean the ‘en-bloc’ voting behavior of Muslims as regressive and opposed to development⁹³.

⁹⁰ Although, BJP fielded seven Muslim candidate but they all lost in the election of 2014 including Shahnawaz Hussain, the then sitting MP of BJP.

⁹¹ The plight of the Gujrati Muslims involved in kite making industry was eulogised (explain)

⁹² Modi alleged that by creating a fear psychosis of Hindu nationalism, congress and other regional parties had polarized the Muslim society to vote en bloc for them on the other hand they have continuously divided Hindu society on basis of caste, region, language. It has helped them to carve out successful constituency for themselves from where they have managed to win election. Modi’s idea was to break that arithmetic. By portraying that Muslim vote in en- bloc he attempted to unify Hindus and vote for him. On the other hand he reached to the some section of Muslims and tried to mobilize them on the ground of development.

⁹³ Though the voting pattern of Muslims remained highly fragmented

The attempt to mobilize and unify the Hindu sentiments happened subtly in 2014 elections. One needs to unpack the repackaged Hindutva that was made available to the the Indian electorate in leader and his symbols to understand how the process of unification through the chain of equivalences took place at the cultural level creating the other.

While Narendra Modi on the one hand was projected as the poster boy of “development”, harbinger of prosperity and well being but his past soaked in the RSS and 2002 communal riots was reminder of the fact that the leader was nonetheless *Hindu Hriday Samrat*⁹⁴. Modi after Supreme Court verdict on Gujarat riots chose to declare himself as the Hindu nationalist. It was for the first time any candidate contesting for the post of Prime Minister was making such claim in public life. It had a strong resonance in Hindu masses who appeared convinced with the idea that congress no more represented the interest of Hindu majority and was engaged in the politics of appeasement and vote bank⁹⁵. It is this specificity on which Narendra Modi banked upon while mobilizing the Hindu public. In several of his speeches he made clear that so called *secular*, which latter on was read as “*sickular*” politics of congress, left liberals and progressives has heavily compromised the interest and sentiments of Hindus by relegating the religion to the domain of private sphere and favouring the religious interest of Muslims in the name of minority rights. Writing in the context of 2014 election on the discourse of secularism, Shiv Vishwanathan made an assessment in his article “How Modi defeated liberals like me the left intellectuals and their liberal siblings behaved as a club, snobbish about secularism, treating religion not as a way of life but as superstition”. In the name of invoking scientific temper in the constitution in order to shield the public from superstition and religious fear, secularism was converted into what Vishwanathan calls “empty domain, a coercive milieu where ordinary people practicing religion was seen as lesser orders of being”. Such an understanding of secularism goes not only antagonistic to the

⁹⁴ Though this title of Hindu Hriday Samrat was originally used for Bala Sahib Thackrey but after Gujrat riots of 2002 Modi too became contender for this title.

⁹⁵ Hindu nationalism heavily banked upon this discourse since Shah Bano case and numerous attempt were made to foster this debate in society which included debates on UCC, Triple Talaq and subsidies to Muslims for Haj pilgrimage and several other. for more reference see, Inder Malhotra, “Rear view: The Era of the politics of appeasement” *The Indian Express*, 8 december 2014, <http://Indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/rear-view-the-era-of-the-politics-of-appeasement/>. Accessed on, 21 april 2018.

everyday religiosity symptomatic of people's everyday life but in the name of secularism the politics that was practiced under compulsion of electoral democracy by congress and other regional parties to provide certain benefits/ exceptions to minorities created a sense of majoritarian injustice⁹⁶. Narendra Modi tapped into these two aspects that the secularism created i.e. alienation of people from practice of its own religion and majoritarian sense of unfairness. The assertion of "what is wrong in being Hindu" was coming from that suppression or alienating aspect that secularism fostered.

Writing on the question of a leader's identification with particular culture Zizek argues "... leaders adoption of the cultural elements that are considered markers of inferiority by the dominant culture"⁹⁷.

The way the secularism was practiced, it alienated huge mass of middle class feeling apologetic and under confident about their belief. Modi's presence and his symbolism on the one side was challenging the hegemony of left liberals, intellectuals and congress, on the other it was emboldening the Hindu public to feel confident of their belief and practices. His decision to contest from Varanasi was an explicit message to Hindu public that the leader is resolved to save Hindutva from its enemies and Hindutva would be the larger backdrop of his campaign and the subsequent reign. Varanasi's being one of the important site (cultural capital) of Hindu religion, his candidature from that place drew massive support of Hindu public. He held nothing back at the speech he gave at Varanasi, tying the threads of a historical kind, he said that "he had come from the land of "Somnath to seek blessing from Kashi Vishwanath". It is the '*Ganga Maiya*' who has called him to give his service to Banaras and to India at large. Apart from that Varanasi speech which was replete with religious references and symbols, Narendra Modi openly invoked the sacred Hindu God and Goddess like kamkhaya in Assam, his visit to Vaishno devi, sankat mochan in Varanasi etc. were instances where the leader was openly aligning himself with a culture which was simultaneously being projected as suppressed in public sphere.

⁹⁶ Modi in several of his speeches invoked the issue of cow slaughter, how it was being promoted by the congress regime and tried to connect it with the sentiments of Hindu majority that how in the name of secularism congress was fostering injustice with Hindus. He eulogised the importance of cow not only as sacred but also as mother and tried to convey the message that congress barely cares for the sentiments of Hindu public.

⁹⁷ Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 26.

Narendra Modi was breaking that divide between public and private when he was celebrating and making reference to Hindu religion. Most of the time, before and after his speeches Hindu religious songs were being played and slogans being shouted. He made frequent references to Mahabharata and Ramanaya and drew stories from those mythologies. He also used Sanskrit words and couplets from religious texts, shared stages with prominent Godmen like Ramdev, Ravishankar, openly advertised his observance of 10 days fast during *Dussehera* and publicly displayed arms in the name of *shakti pujan*, performed Ganga Aarti at Dashwamevh ghath etc. The symbolism of such kind were indicative of the fact that Modi was providing an outlet to the hitherto perceived repressed religious desires of Hindu public. In one way it could be argued that he created a sense of religious deprivation in the Hindu public and then offered to satiate the hunger by enacting the ideals of a practicing Hindu.

It can be suggested that this had never happened before in Indian politics, where a Prime Ministerial candidate openly sided with one particular religious belief in this case his own beliefs as a devout Hindu. Through such an invocation of religious practices and rituals, giving them a shape of a grand event, being telecasted throughout nation on Television, radios and live feeds on social media, Modi was creating *the people* in form of what he and his allies were perceiving to be a potential 'Hindu public'. But the people can't be created without the generation of *the other*. *The other* for Narendra Modi and BJP was no one else than their traditional enemy Muslims. It is evident from the fact that, While Modi wore Sikh turban in a rally at Punjab, he denied wearing skull cap in the Sadvabhana rally which he organized in the year 2011. The craftsmanship of Modi lies in the fact that he divided Muslim community into two groups. He juxtaposed the Gujarati Muslim with rest of the Muslims. Gujarati Muslims were applauded as the *Good Muslim*. It is not hard to suggest that it was so because Muslims in Gujarat had rallied behind him even after Gujrat riots. Those Muslims who did not fall in ideological line with them and voted in 'en-bloc' were condemned⁹⁸.

⁹⁸ Though Narendra Modi does not uses the category of good Muslims and condemned one but in his speeches he appreciates the Muslims of Gujrat like Zafar Sareshwala and several others Gujراتi Muslims who have voted for BJP and Narendra Modi time and again, For Modi2002 carnage was an accident but after that he had ensured atmosphere where there exists ease of doing business, happiness and prosperity among Muslims . Muslims of Gujrat are also good because without asking the question of representation they are voting for Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP).

Thus the image that Modi drew for himself in 2014 elections was not that of a traditional RSS activist. His references to Muslims were indirect⁹⁹ and more emphasis was laid on the ideas of unifying and emboldening the perceived Hindu public to realize its potential as majority community. The approach which Modi adopted for that was symbolic or what scholars call as the politics of “Soft Hindutva”. It does not mean that communal tone remained missing completely in Modi. Narendra Modi in elections of 2014 adopted a multi layered strategy for mobilization of the people. It helped to carve out a different constituency within the people which includes nationalist, Hindutva and developmental constituency .While his image conjured development with soft Hindutva and nationalism¹⁰⁰, his allies openly advocated the language of hard Hindutva. What needs to be noted here is that hard or rigid version of Hindutva was especially crafted out for Northern and Western parts of India. Palshikar rightly notes that each state will get a Modi of a different kind, while underdeveloped states will get Modi in form of vikash purush i.e. developmental man, developed states will get a desicionist Modi and the northern and western region which has proven itself to be fertile for communal violence will receive Hindutva Modi.

In his speech at Assam, he made references to “Assam Accord” signed during Rajiv Gandhi Government and condemned the congress regime for not implementing it strictly in order to get the votes from migrants especially Bangladeshi Muslims. He indicated how Bangladeshi migrants are taking up local and administrative jobs while the natives of the state are unemployed¹⁰¹. Similarly in his spechs at Bihar, he brought the discourse of *pink revolution* and sought to polarize Yadav-Muslims votes. He said how can the parties, where he was referring to RJD and SP which claim to represent Yaduvansis (who worship cow) support congress government which has subsidized and helped in expansion of slaughter industry instead of agrarian sector which is in deep crisis

⁹⁹ Palshikar, Suhas. "The BJP and Hindu nationalism: Centrist politics and majoritarian impulses." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 719-735.

¹⁰⁰ In an interview to reuters Modi clearly mentioned nationalism is development and being nationalist is the core of Hindutva. For more reference see, Archive, “Yes , I am a Hindu Nationalist”, *The Indian Express*, 13 July 2013, <http://archive.Indianexpress.com/news/yes-i-am-a-Hindu-nationalist-Narendra-Modi/1141243/>. Accessed on 21 April 2018.

¹⁰¹ See Modi’s Maha Jagaran Rally at Assam, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/10-memorable-speeches-of-shri-Narendra-Modi-from-2014-lok-sabha-elections-campaign-3143>.

I am coming from Dawarka city and Dawarka has a direct connection to the yaduvanshis. And because of this connection, I feel at home here (bringing Gujrat to India). I am therefore shocked that the same yadavs who worship shri Krishna, who keeps cows as livestock, who serves the cow. It is their leader who are in bed with the same people who proudly massacre animals (a moral attack on leaders carving out special position for himself). We have heard of green revolution, have heard of white revolution but today's Delhi Sarkaar wants neither (mobilizing agrarian class with an eye on yadavs who constitute formidable support for SP and RJD and are what Rudolph calls bullock capitalist); they have taken up cudgels for pink revolution. Do you know what it is? That is their game; they are keeping the country in the dark. I want to ask mulayam singh yadav and laloo Prasad yadav; do you want to support the people who want to bring pink revolution?¹⁰²

By elaborating in detail about why slaughter industry is called pink revolution, Modi was touching upon the emotion of the people as well as strengthening the rumors which are omnipresent in rural society and plays a significant role in both low and high intensity communal riots.

When you slaughter an animal, then the clour of its meat is pink. This is what they call pink revolution (detail elaboration so that he could touch upon the emotion of the people). And the center said this with pride that, last year, India has earned the most from exporting meat. Across the countryside our animals are getting slaughtered. Our life stock is getting stolen from our villages and taken to Bangladesh. And that is not all. The delhi sarkar will not give out subsidies to farmers or to yadavs keeping cows but will give out subsidies to people who slaughter cows, who slaughter animals, who are destroying our rivers of milk as long as they set up qatalkhanas¹⁰³.

What is interesting is that Modi heavily built upon the discourses of pink revolution throughout his election campaign. It was not only confined to Bihar or Uttar Pradesh, but the communal Avtar of Modi reached almost entire north-western eastern region of India¹⁰⁴. But more than what Modi contributed in othering of the Muslims, it was second line of leadership which acted prominently in creating a communal atmosphere in 2014 elections¹⁰⁵. The speeches made by leaders like Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Giriraj Singh, Yogi Aditya Nath played a significant role in carving out the people by othering the Muslims. In his rally at Muzaffarnagar (which was badly hit by communal riots in 2014) on 4th April, Amit shah said to Jat community to make 2014 elections as an opportunity to “take revenge” for the insults in riots.

¹⁰² For more reference see, “How Narendra Modi helped spread anti beef hysteria”, *Scroll.in*, <https://scroll.in/article/760006/how-Narendra-Modi-helped-spread-anti-beef-hysteria>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.,

¹⁰⁴ Cow slaughter remained one of the prominent theme of Gujarat politics as well but apart from that in 2014 elections UP, MP, Rajsthan, Bihar all these states which laid the road down for the prime ministerial post saw such an avatar of Narendra Modi while other states from north eastern region witnessed the soft Hindutva in his speeches.

¹⁰⁵ What commands introspection is that Modi has no hesitation in sharing the stages with those people. Amit shah frequently appeared in his rallies, so did sangeet som and Mahant Adiyath.

Adding fuel to the fire, yogi made a statement saying that minorities are responsible for the communal riots. Only those places are hit by communal riots where Muslim population is growing at a rapid scale. The comment came in comparison to the argument that why eastern UP is less prone to riots and riots are frequent in western UP. In similar vein, Giriraj Singh comment of *Pakistan bhejo* to those who opposed Modi was a clear indication that if Muslims don't vote for Modi their place has been destined to be Pakistan. Kalyan singh remarked in the same rally at Varanasi where he shared the stage with Modi that "I don't say that every Muslim is a terrorist. But I ask why every terrorist is a Muslim"¹⁰⁶. These remarks had serious consequences in the election of 2014 as they played a vital role in polarizing the masses and was part and parcel of strong Hindutva which Modi too endorsed but was subtle in representation.

But apart from the speeches which were made by these leaders, rigid version of Hindutva also manifested itself through communal riots. As election approached, in the year 2013, the Ministry of Home Affairs noted that there was 30% i.e. (823 cases) rise in communal riots to the year 2012 (668 cases). The riots were frequently distributed from northern to southern region of the country but the epicenter of riots was UP, which witnessed maximum number of incidents in 2013 i.e. 247 vis-à-vis 118 in the year 2012. But apart from UP, other Hindi speaking states like Bihar also witnessed rise in riots. It went up to 63 in the year 2013 vis-à-vis 21 in the year 2012. In Rajasthan, it went from 37 in the year 2012 to 52. In Narendra Modi's own state Gujarat, the number of cases of riots increased to 68 from 57. Sporadic cases of communal violence were also noted in the sates of Karnataka, Maharastra, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu where it went upto 36 from 14¹⁰⁷.

These figures here explain an important story. Sudha Pai and Sajjan kumar in their work *Everyday Communalism (2018)* highlighted how RSS- BJP benefitted from these riots. Although their case study is confined to Uttar Pradesh (the epicenter of riots) but it tells us a story which becomes the medium of analyzing how communalism profits electoral mobilization. According to Pai and Kumar, the success

¹⁰⁶ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics*, 160.

¹⁰⁷ New delhi, "communal incidents up 30% in 2013,UP top list", *The Indian Express*, 5 february 2014, <http://Indianexpress.com/article/India/communal-incidents-up-30-in-2013-up-tops-list>. Accessed on 21, April 2014.

of BJP and Narendra Modi in 2014 elections lies in two prominent factors. The coming of Narendra Modi at national political platform redefined the conception of Hindutva from what it was conceived in 1980 and 1990s. The invocation of his caste identity in several of his speeches not only signaled the subalternisation of Hindutva (BJP and RSS) which was once conceived as Brahmin –Baniya party but his deployment of economic agenda irrespective of caste and class brought massive section of people from Hindu society cross cutting caste dynamics under the fold of BJP. This broadening of the social base while on the one hand helped significantly in creating the people through the chain of equivalence which scholars like Badri Narayan calls “Maha Hindu Identity” but it represented the cultural colour of mobilization¹⁰⁸. Communalism in general and UP particularly also built itself upon the economic angle. The economic deprivation that the state faced being locked in caste and identity politics leading to poor governance led to widespread emergence of anger and anxiety among different caste and classes which were charged with political consciousness. The benefits of the green revolution started to wane away as the orientation of the government at the center shifted from agrarian to industrial growth leading to wide scale agrarian crisis. Further with the decline of traditional industries like leather, weavers lock and brassware added more burden to the economic crisis leading to development of wide scale frustration and anxiety.

From 1990 onward the process of globalization took its root in Indian economy. It created a wide section of aspirational class who sought their socio economic mobility but being blocked in their given socio economic condition, it easily translated into anger and anxiety.

¹⁰⁸ Badri Narayan notes how this broadening of social base of Hindutva took place. Here he locates the centrality of the organisation like rss which has worked tremendously to bridge the gap between the contradictory forces. The social program likes samajik samrasta (samajik bhoj) where by dalits were invited to have kichdi with upper caste, the invocation of Ramayana and bring the centrality of underprivileged in the victory of rama nad representing the underprivileged with dalits played a significant role in bringing them under Hindutva fold. But apart from that the two major way through which dalits were appropriated was through invocation and celebration of their local heroes by RSS and BJP eg. Suhadev an icon of pasi community who tried to protect Hindu rastra against Muslims invasion and by appropriating BR Ambedkar in order to have dalit middle class under its fold. For more reference see, Badri Narayan, “Dalits and the remaking of Hindutva”, *The Hindu*, 18 October 2016 <http://www.theHindu.com/opinion/op-ed/Dalits-and-the-remaking-of-Hindutva/article14018125.ece>. Accessed 21 April 2018.

Narendra Modi through his image while represented the hope and the aspiration, RSS and its sister organizations like Hindu vahini sena led by Mahant Adityanath, VHP, Bajrang dal operated to polarize the anger and anxiety into “communal commonsense” of the people by dealing with mundane everyday issue like cattle theft, love jihad, beef and pork etc. It’s is this two pronged campaign strategy which made BJP and Narendra Modi acceptable to all section of Hindu society including Dalits, OBC, Middle Class, Lower Middle Class.

Thus, the discourses of Hindutva both soft and rigid not only mobilized the social but helped to carve out large constituency of the people by creating the other in form of Muslims. While soft Hindutva oriented itself of making Hindu feel pride about its religion and religious practices. Rigid form of Hindutva focused on creating communal divide on the basis of religion. What was unique in the operation of rigid form of Hindutva that unlike Gujarat riots it did not took a massive form. More often the intensity of riots was low. Badri Narayan rightly notes “big riots needs lots of prepration and bring lots of critical scrutiny thus its memories fades away after certain span of time. Low intensity riots are more powerful as their memories exist for longer duration”¹⁰⁹. These low intensity riots helps to create the communal moments which then add to the electoral mobilization and win elections but apart from that it is also leads to what Satish Deshpande calls normalizing anti Muslim prejudices in order to build robust system of oppression where by Muslims obliges to self perpetuate subordination and accept it as their fate, limiting the extent and quality of citizenship¹¹⁰.

Nation and nationalism in the making of Modi

Nation and nationalism remained a constant theme in each and every speech of Narendra Modi. Any rally which he attended during 2014 election began and ended with the slogan “Bharat mata ki” and this was repeated multiple times with different energy level. But apart from the slognareeing, which itself was an act of developing

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.Hindustantimes.com/static/uttar-pradesh-communal-riot/anatomy-of-a-riot/>

¹¹⁰ Satish Deshpande, “ The‘restrained riots’ of Atali”, *The Hindu*, 20 june 2015, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-restrained-riot-of-atali/article7333979.ece>. Accessed on 12 July 2018.

the active people participating in nation making¹¹¹ the idea of nation and nationalism was catered in different manner in the making of the people.

On the one hand the idea of development was closely intermixed with the idea of progress and development of nation on the other the strong decisionist leader would not lead the nation fall or divided thundered in the songs made for Modi. While Modi projected himself as the true son of the soil as brave as the lion giving a masculinist projection of protector, it also appeared in emotional fervor when he was critiquing congress for selling the country and justifying the beheading of soldiers, keeping the Indian masses under plight and poverty. Whenever the leader touched upon the discourse of soldiers/poverty, unemployment it had enormous amount of emotional appeal ranging from anger to frustration, sorrow to compassion. What is interesting to note that such kind of emotional outpouring was directed against *the other* i.e. the regime of congress, elite and liberal intellectuals, Muslims on the one hand and internal threat rising from the naxalism to external factors which constituted the national security concern of India i.e. Pakistan and China.

However, that is not to mean that RSS idea of Hindu Rastra was completely abandoned by Narendra Modi. It operated under the fabric of “Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat”. The idea of “Ek Bharat” appeared in the writings of RSS founder Savarkar and Golwalkar who imagined the territoriality of India upto Afghanistan, Modi was taking up the project in a Modified manner in order to incorporate the NRI’s settled in different part of the world. But apart from that Narendra Modi was also realizing the larger project of Hindutva’s “Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat” when he was attempting to undermine the social division and heterogeneity of the cultural sphere into homogeneous one.

What is interesting and needs to be noted that he was doing it through two ways. Firstly, he was playing upon the heterogeneity, to homogenize them into one sphere i.e. his image. While addressing the speeches he frequently gave salutation to the people in their regional language. In a state like Bihar, where apart from Bhojpuri

¹¹¹ There are several ways through which slogans were crafted to invoke nation and nationalism. Bharat Mata Ki Jai and Vande Maataram being prominent among them but apart from that India first, team India

there exists several other languages like Maithali, Maghi, he has chosen to speak with the audiences in all those language. Similarly, in Assam he spoke Akhomiya, in Maharashtra he used Marathi, in Tamil Nadu he spoke in English, Karnataka he spoke in Kannada. It may appear as RSS and BJP which supports idea of Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan was moving away from its principle but in other way round he was merging these diversity in his own personality and was taking it a step ahead from Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan to development which his image represented at large. The other way through which Narendra Modi catered the project of nationalism was through his ambition of converting India into “Brand India”. In a speech at SRCC, Modi openly declared that India in 21st century, if it has to lead the world needs to be converted into “Brand India” that can happen by ensuring maximum utilization of democracy, demography and demand¹¹².

Thus, on the one hand while Modi was taking nationalism beyond territory (Indian diaspora) which scholars like Sanjay Srivastava¹¹³ calls as ‘post nationalism’ on the other hand he was offering nationalism in terms of ‘moral consumption’ especially to the neo middle class. Both these terms commands explanations. While post nationalism in terms of Sanjay Srivastava

... is the articulation of the nationalist emotion with the robust desires engendered through new practices of consumerism and their associated cultures of privatization and individuation. It indexes a situation where it is no longer considered a betrayal of the dreams of nation-building to either base individual subjectivity within an ethic of consumption (as opposed to savings) or to think of the state’s statism in a context of cooperation with private capital (as encapsulated by public–private partnerships).¹¹⁴

Moral consumption can be defined as an attempt to incorporate older social identities within the new paradigm of individualised consumerism. Modi was offering such a kind of de territorialized and hyper consumerist nationalism under the larger arch of “Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat”.

Thus the centrality of his popularity in 2014 elections can be located from the fact that Modi was successfully able to weave several chain of equivalence for fostering “the

¹¹² The preface of the manifesto of Bhartiya Janta party reads “*Today, India is blessed with the rare capacity and the opportunity of democracy, demography and demand. If we are able to consolidate and harness them, we will be able to reach the heights which India deserves...*”

¹¹³ Sanjay Srivastava, *Modi-Masculinity: Media, Manhood, and “Traditions” in a Time of Consumerism*, 335.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

people”. The other was crafted tactically and unlike Mrs. Gandhi who has to shift her other constantly, Modi premised othering in terms of congress party, elite and intellectuals and made them responsible for appropriating economic gains and undermining the Hindu cultural values. The portrayal of the liberal elite intellectuals who believed in the idea of secular and plural India was crafted as the stooges of congress party. Thus denying all their legitimate claim and stakes from the society, Modi carved out space for homogenization. It was performed significantly by projecting his image as empty signifier.

The empty signifier helped to manage the contradictions of caste, class, region and religion. In addition to that it also helped to strengthen the identification of the leader with the people. The strong face of decisionism was devised to solve the undecideability and irreducible nature of contradiction. In other words it was manageability of contradiction which populism of 2014 offered to India.

Chapter 2

Mobilisation and Populist Politics: Bringing Organisation Back In

The assessment of 2014 elections by scholars, intellectuals and political commentators revolves around the centrality of 'leadership'. The basis for such kind of assessment comes from the way the election of 2014 unfolded. It appeared as a plebiscite on leadership. The projection of Narendra Modi as a prime ministerial candidate a year before the election, the mobilization of the electorate on the ground of efficiency of leadership, the portrayal of Narendra Modi as a strong, decisionist leader and the denunciation of the congress party leaders as corrupt and inefficient became dominantly operative. These discourses shifted the attention of not only the electorate but also the scholars and intellectuals like shastri and sayal, Rahul verma, jaffrelot etc. who focused their entire attention on investigating the question of leadership and its centrality in the populist politics which they claim emerged in India with Narendra Modi.

It is generally argued that it was leader and centrality of the leader alone which brought such a massive victory for Bhartiya Janta Party. Undoubtedly, the claims made for the centrality of leader is not wrong at all. There remained strong attraction for Narendra Modi not only amongst the electorate but also among the activist and karyakartas of Bhartiya Janta Party and RSS. It is evident from the way Narendra Modi was nominated as a prime ministerial candidate¹. The slogans like "*Ab Ki Baar Modi Sarkaar*", "*Har Har Modi; Ghar Ghar Modi*", pointed to the centrality of Narendra Modi in the 2014 election campaign. However, this centrality of leadership

¹ Popularity of Narendra Modi is evident from the fact that despite objection from the old veterans of BJP, his name was projected in the parliamentary board meeting. While BJP went on to disregard the decision of grand old man, L.K.Advani and his team, the RSS sacrificed Sanjay Joshi as Modi threatened the RSS that he would not attend the parliamentary board meeting unless Joshi does not resign. Within hours after the complaint Joshi was made to resign from the national executive committee. For more reference see, Ravish Tiwari, "Modi is BJP's prime ministerial candidate despite Advani's objection", *The Indian Express*, 14 September 2013, <http://Indianexpress.com/article/news-archive/web/Modi-is-bjps-prime-ministerial-candidate-despite-advanis-objection/>. Accessed on 3 March 2018.

does not explain the entire part of the story of election 2014. It requires more nuanced explanation in terms of posing further questions regarding the significant outcomes of the 2014 elections. Particularly, looking into the complex affair of elections in totality, one starts to pay attention to how organizations like RSS which is averse to personality politics allowed Narendra Modi to be the front runner? What role did it played in the elections of 2014? How did the organization negotiate its role as a central mobilizer of the electorate? What new forms did the organization adopt to ensure mobilization of votes?

The centrality of leader thesis under the framework of populism builds on the ground that under populist mobilization the leader bypasses the organization and establishes a direct connect with the masses. This is done through powerful articulations which have the capacity to convert them into “the people” by drawing on a loose chain of equivalences and projecting “the other”². The reason that one could cite for such an attempt of the leader is primarily located in the theories of populism which argues that since populist mobilizations are based on the creation of “the people” and “the other”, the generation of “the other” not only happens at the level of individuals, elite/ groups but also at the level of institutions. Institutions are portrayed not just as corrupt and unrepresentative but also lacking in the wisdom of the people³. It is this portrayal of institutions as *the other* which hinders the organizational centrality⁴. This argument stands the ground if we see the experience of populist mobilization in European and Western countries when a new party or organization emerged after the enormous mobilization of electorate by successfully destabilizing the existing parties but in context of India, parties have been at the fore front of populist mobilization.

The centrality of party existed in all possible manner be it in the governmental populism where clientalism emerges as the characteristic feature or ideological populism where creation of the people and the other acquired prominence. One can trace the centrality of the party from pre independence period to post independence India. Even Gandhi who represented ideological populism required congress party and

² The role of empty signifier becomes important in establishing that connect, where leader itself rewpresents as empty signifier and by drawing upon the chain of equivalence converts the masses into the people.

³ William Kornhauser, *Politics of mass society* , 131-32.

⁴Political party being the part of party system which the leader often in an populist mobilisation projects as the other, it takes a backstage.

heavily thrived on it for political mobilization and totalizing the social collectivities. For Nehru too, the significance of the party was paramount, so has been the case at the regional level of populism (Dravida Munnetera Kazhgam (DMK) , All India Anna Dravida Munnetera Kazhgam (AIADMK), Bahujan Samajwadi Party(BSP), Trinamool Congress(TMC). Along with the prominence of leaders, parties have operated significantly. The leader may have impacted the nature of the party or changed the form of its operation but the prominence of party organization remained central. Indira Gandhi's tenure is often remarked as the regime where party became secondary and the stature of leader rose greater than the organization. Though this aspect is not incorrect as Mrs. Gandhi drew the line of *the other* within the party to consolidate her power and carved out Congress(I) but her dependence on political parties and the development of informal organization working parallel to Congress(I) needs a serious investigation. The role of Sanjay Gandhi in developing the parallel organization in order to promote clientalism was an important source for Indira's legitimacy. It can be said that at superficial level though the congress party during Indira's regime changed however other informal sources emerged and worked as party for Mrs. Gandhi.

In the context of 2014 elections, it may appear at a quick glance that the party (BJP) did not take frontal stage and promoted Narendra Modi before itself but that can be read as a tactical move by BJP , to allow Narendra Modi to create *the other* in terms of Congress and the party system that India represented.

Indian party system that has emerged 1947 onwards strongly represented the idea of heterogeneous India and diverse polity⁵. It represents several caste, class, region and religion. While this diversity which gets represented through Indian party system is a cherished symbol of democracy all over the world, for BJP and RSS it's a divisive strategy. They took it as an opportunity to push the individual leader forward to counter this diverse representational pattern and turn it toward their ideal of homogeneous India. It is in that context one can read why organization consciously took a back stage in the 2014 elections.

⁵One of the reason which can be cited that most of the parties which emerged in India after decline of congress system was based on social cleavages

Writing in the context of populist mobilization in South Indian politics especially in terms of growth and successful maintenance of Dravidian parties like DMK and AIADMK, Narendra Subramanian highlighted the significance of political party not only in populist mobilization of electorate but also in ensuring social plurality in society⁶. He indicated how Dravidian populist party followed the trajectory of *strategic flexibility* which remained the core for the organization plurality and how right wing especially BJP follows *tactical flexibility*⁷.

According to Subramanian, tactical flexibility involves appealing to different groups in idioms suitable to attract them *especially their sentiments/ emotions*⁸ or even changing the way party presents itself to everyone according to its leaders' perception of the general mood without correspondingly altering the party's ultimate goal⁹. The latter remained the case in the populist mobilization of 2014. The preponderance of the leader especially Narendra Modi can be read in that perspective¹⁰. By projecting him as the frontrunner, BJP and RSS was realizing its longstanding dream of acquiring power and consolidating a homogenised Hindu society. On the one hand Modi's image was unifying Hindus, on the other it was challenging the institutions and discourses which promoted diversity, plurality and secular ethos of the country¹¹. It is for this reason there was no specific need for the BJP to put itself ahead. Secondly, by drawing the election around the question of leadership, BJP in one move nailed down the congress and regional parties both in terms of party structure (as corrupt leaders come from corrupt party structure) and future prospect of authentic

⁶Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political parties, citizens and democracy in South India*, 40

⁷ Strategic flexibility according to Narendra Subramanian represents the case when there is autonomy among the supporters or cadres within the party structure to mark their opinion even contrary to the leader and also to the case when party cast away its short term goal for larger purpose. For more reference see, Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political parties, citizens and democracy in South India*, 40

⁸Emphasis added

⁹Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization: Political parties, citizens and democracy in South India*, 40

¹⁰Shiv Vishwanathan rightly puts Narendra Modi is RSS child. His past is soaked in the politics of RSS, his entire political training has been in that cult. Projection of Narendra Modi was automatically projection of RSS and its ideology of Hindutva. For more reference see, Shiv Vishwanathan, *Narendra Modi's symbolic war*, 10.

¹¹The way the discourse around secularism was challenged through sickularism, the institutions like office of prime minister, political parties which promoted secular values were attacked. It resembled RSS long standing vision was being materialised.

leadership representing the nation at large¹². The centrality of leadership thesis ignores this aspect of tactical operation of organization which took place in 2014 elections.

Having analyzed the tactical move that the BJP followed for keeping itself on the backstage, one needs to locate the centrality of organization in 2014 elections, especially in its functional aspects i.e. by raising questions like how organisation lead to the mobilization of electorate, how it worked in redrawing the contract with the constituency for its leader, what promises, resources and opportunities organization ensured to the people and how these all phenomena lead to the making of leader itself?

Locating Centrality of Organization in 2014

The nature of parliamentary democracy in India plays a significant role in establishing the centrality of party/ organization. Elections in India are considered as festival, it requires enormous amount of preparation, from selection of candidates to their nomination, from booth management to polling agent, preparation of voter list, planning campaign methods and executing it on ground, party's role becomes quintessential. It is difficult for any leader to solely depend on his/ her personality and mobilize such a large number of electorate having diverse and plural demands. It is at that point one can locate the significance of organization. Organization comes in rescue not only in terms of providing basic paraphernalia which are required to conduct elections but also in management of the heterogeneous demands and mobilizing the electorate.

In the elections of 2014, the task for mobilizing the electorate for Narendra Modi was taken up by both BJP and RSS prominently¹³. In the projection of Narendra Modi as

¹²The entire attempt was to build congress mukt Bharat and malign the leadership of congress both from past to future. The attack on Nehru on the one hand and Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi needs to be read in that semblance where the attempt was to strip down congress from its both past and future. While the attack on regional party was more centred on divisive politics and agendas which they follow to break unity among the people and serve their own material interest.

¹³Although BJP and RSS are two different organisations at least in the formal sense, one claims to be political organisation and other the cultural one. This thesis analyses the role of both the organisations in the making of Narendra Modi. Apart from its work at cultural level, RSS contribution in making of Modi was significant at the level of political.

the prime ministerial candidate, RSS broke down its passivity from politics and appeared overtly¹⁴. Apart from projecting Modi a year ahead of elections, RSS took the daunting task of generating popular consensus for the leader. From heavily deploying its manpower to utilizing its credibility¹⁵ on the ground, the role of RSS was significant in the making of the leader. One needs to map it down in subtle manner to understand how organization worked in 2014 elections in the making of Modi.

RSS, BJP and other Organisations at work in 2014 Elections

Badri Narayan in one of his work on the Modi's modus operandi in 2014 elections provides a significant account of how RSS operated at the ground in the making of Narendra Modi. According to Narayan, more than one lakh RSS group leaders, six lakh swayamsevakas and 42,000 units spread across the country were working full time in the elections of 2014¹⁶. Such a heavy investment of man and material power along with the technical support which BJP and RSS managed from IT professionals (both national and foreign based companies), management gurus, and engineers worked effectively in the making of Narendra Modi and provided a unique turn in the campaigning strategy during assembly elections of 2014.

¹⁴It is generally being argued that RSS has appeared at the political campaign so vehemently twice in its history. For the first time it appeared at the political front during 1977 elections and it was only in 2014 that RSS which claims to be the cultural organisation actively participated in elections. For more reference see, Pradeep Kumar Maitra, Ashutosh Shukla and Manish Chander Pandey, "BJP gets strategic RSS support for poll push", *Hindustan Times*, 19 April 2014, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/India/bjp-gets-strategic-rss-support-for-poll-push/story-4JChsnTIGHgGJvbjLoJMXM.html>. Accessed on 2 March 2018.

¹⁵The argument of credibility strongly comes in the work of Tariq Thachil, where he emphasizes how the elite parties has successfully weaved the votes of poor. Refuting the argument based on patronage and ethnic divide thachil makes an interesting observation where he argues that it's the private distribution of social service which has brought success for BJP in terms of its rising support among dalits and adivasis. He emphasized how the continuous engagement of the RSS and other affiliates of it on the ground for the distribution of social benefits on private basis like saraswati school for education, vanvasikalyansamiti to improve livelihood for tribals has worked for the BJP to gain subalterns support. For more reference see, Thachil, Tariq. *Elite parties, poor voters*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

¹⁶Badri Narayan, *Modi's modus operandi in the 2014 elections*, 12-14. Also see, Pradeep Kumar Maitra, Ashutosh Shukla and Manish Chander Pandey, "BJP gets strategic RSS support for poll push", *Hindustan Times*, 19 April 2014, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/India/bjp-gets-strategic-rss-support-for-poll-push/story-4JChsnTIGHgGJvbjLoJMXM.html>. Accessed on 2 March 2018.

RSS worked closely in tandem with BJP to bring the campaign on the ground for Modi. Despite non approval for enchanting NaMo- NaMo to RSS karyakartas from the chief of the RSS, it's resolution to make image of Modi was tremendous¹⁷. One can understand it by analyzing the case of Uttar Pradesh where the emphasis of the party was maximum in order to achieve the magical figure of 272 Plus.

It was for this purpose the trusted man of Narendra Modi.e Amit shah was called from Gujrat and given the charge as chief of campaign committee for UP to devise strategies for the maximum utilization of man and material which was at disposal for the campaign. Since UP was crucial to materialise the ambition of 272 Plus , it could not have been possible unless successful coordination was not established between all the organization that represented the idea of Hindutva politics. Amit Shah worked enormously to weave all those small and big strings of organization affiliated to Hindutva idea¹⁸. In an interview with Economic Times, Shah openly admitted that while there was a strong Modi wave riding in the country that could not have materialized 272 Plus seats unless the hurdles lying on the path were not cleared.

There was a huge Modi wave in the country but there were some factors that could have limited the impact of the wave in UP—the state is influenced by caste, there are dark zones meaning areas where neither television nor newspapers are read or seen, it was difficult convincing locals to vote for the BJP even if they sympathised with us since most problems of water and electricity are handled by the state government¹⁹.

In the year 2014, by introducing corporate style of campaign these hurdles were cleared of. Instead of focusing on 42% of population which comprised support for BSP, SP (especially in terms of Dalits (Jatavas and Muslim Voters) and other parties, BJP focused on the rest of the 58% of the voters. Shah being an outsider and influential personality established good coordination among local and top brass leaders of UP. Soon after assuming the charge he held days long meetings with group of MLA's and MP's candidate who had lost elections previously and tried to know the

¹⁷Pankaj Vohra, "Bhagwat aims to insulate RSS from NaMo", *The Sunday guardian*, 2 May 2014, <http://www.sunday-guardian.com/analysis/bhagwat-aims-to-insulate-rss-from-namo>. Accessed on 3 May 2018.

¹⁸From activating AkhilBhartiyaVidyarthiParishad to Hindu Vahinisena and Bajrang dal on the one hand to the use of high professional and strategicians on the other, the role of Amit shah was crucial.

¹⁹Rohini Singh, "Election results 2014: How Amit Shah swept Uttar Pradesh for BJP, *The Economic times*, 17 may 2014, <https://economictimes.Indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/election-results-2014-how-amit-shah-swept-uttar-pradesh-for-bjp/articleshow/35222119.cms>. Accessed on 3 may 2014.

reason for their defeat. It helped BJP in resurrecting the wretched system within its own organization and also in the distribution of resources, tickets etc.

Unlike previous elections where there used to be a homogeneous campaign module for the entire state, in 2014 it was divided into four layers. The entire state was stratified on four layers ranging from seats to clusters, zones and finally the whole state. BJP divided entire UP into 21 clusters comprising of 3-5 seats each and into 8 zones²⁰. This segmentation of the state helped enormously to diversify planning and strategies as per the requirement of the region and keep an optimized view on each seat. This strategy of stratification of state within seats, cluster and zones worked effectively to map not only the leaders who were seeking tickets but also the voters. In an interview conducted with the RSS karyakarta who worked on the ground in 2014 elections, he said,

The party heavily conducted surveys of each and every candidate running up for tickets. We were asked to visit maximum number of houses/ families and get the opinion regarding the popularity of the candidates in the list. Based on our feedback, party allocated tickets to the candidates. This helped us not only to map the sense of voters but also about their preference of leaders²¹.

This strategy followed by BJP helped in confirming the seats. It is due to this reason, Modi time and again in his speeches challenged political pundits and opinion polls that their prediction of 2014 elections will go in vain as BJP was going to prove all of them wrong²². Such an assurance emerged from the strong organizational work which was performed at the ground.

Mobilisational Strategy

To reach out to maximum number of people party conducted massive volunteer programme. It reached to 13,000 colleges alone in the state of UP to recruit young volunteers for the campaigning purposes²³. The recruitment was done through both online and offline facilities. This gave enormous data in the hands of BJP IT cell

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ This narrative is based upon my interview with a RSS karyakarta who worked in 2014 elections.

²² Modi made this claim in several of his speeches where he targeted the political pundits, journalist alleging them that they have no sense of the real ground situation.

²³ Rohini Singh, "Election results 2014: How Amit Shah swept Uttar Pradesh for BJP, *The Economic times*, 17 May 2014, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/election-results-2014-how-amit-shah-swept-uttar-pradesh-for-bjp/articleshow/35222119.cms>. Accessed on 3 May 2014.

which fed them with regular news and campaign materials. Those recruits worked as the “vote mobiliser”²⁴ for BJP. The contribution of vote mobiliser lies in the fact that once activated they conduct wide scale campaign for the party which they support. The campaign lies in terms of canvassing, debating with the non supporters, door to door campaign, handling out election material.

These vote mobilisers played significant role in the victory of Narendra Modi. Pradeep Chibber and Susan S Ostermann in their research on vote mobiliser argued that the more the percentage of vote mobilisers the more are the chances of winning elections. They highlighted through a comparative study, between 2004-09 and 2014 elections as well as among different states that how the increased percentage of vote mobiliser increases the chances of winning. In 2014 elections, the role of vote mobilisers was crucial and they were more in number than congress or any other party. In every state where BJP performed well, it outnumbered congress and regional parties in terms of vote mobiliser. In Uttrakhand out of total vote mobilisers BJP had 55% of them where as congress fared with 40%. In Jharkhand BJP had 54% (Congress 15%), Rajasthan 59% (Congress 32%) UP 42% (Congress 8%). The states where BJP did not perform well it had a lesser number of vote mobilisers. For example in Karnataka it had 34% vis-a vis 41% of congress vote mobilisers. In Tamil Nadu regional parties had 87% of vote mobilisers vis-à-vis 7% of congress and 5% of BJP. Similarly in Odisha, regional parties had 41%, congress 24% and BJP 36%.²⁵

But apart from vote mobilisers, the role of organization and committed cadre can't be ignored. They played a significant role in mobilizing the electorate. In the dark areas, where electronic campaign was impossible to reach, they took the campaign through GPS installed vans called 'NaMoRath' showing 16 minutes of video of Narendra Modi. It was reminder of typical hinduised version of Darshan culture where god appears before their bhakts and takes away all of their miseries and pain²⁶. Narendra Modi was projected through the “NaMo” rath in similar fashion. Apart from GPS installed NaMo vans, 3D technology was also used prominently where 3 to 4 speeches

²⁴Chhibber, Pradeep K., and Susan L. Ostermann, *The BJP's fragile mandate: Modi and vote mobilizers in the 2014 general elections*, 147.

²⁵Ibid., 145.

²⁶Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics*, 155.

which Narendra Modi delivered in one day was shown at 100 places at the same time. In total 12 speeches which Narendra Modi delivered during the month of April and May of his campaign was telecasted at 1350 venues²⁷. According to Rajdeep Sardesai “A crew of 2500 members handling 125 3D projectors units were involved and more than 7 million people reportedly witnessed 3D shows over 12 days”²⁸. Besides that in his campaign on ‘Chai peCharcha’, where Modi interacted with people, massive deployment of DTH, broadband and video conferencing was done. In order to manage all these campaign affairs while there were several expert teams of IT professionals involved but beside them the RSS swayamsevaks and BJP karyakartas were mobilizing the people and bringing them to the venue.

In the rallies of Narendra Modi where people turned out on a massive scale, the role of cadres was significant. It was the active presence of Karyakartas and SwayamSevaks on the ground that helped to draw people within the radius of 175 km to the venue of the rally²⁹. Not only mobilizing the people remained their task but collecting their feedback was also one of the prominent aspects where the organization contributed significantly in the 2014 elections. In his study in the state of UP, Badri Narayan emphasized how these Karyakartas after the speech of Narendra Modi asked questions to the audience based on his speeches, noted their response and sent it back to the call center which was established in Lucknow, where it was cross checked from other reports in order to avoid exaggeration³⁰. It was from these feedback, new strategies were prepared, new contents were added or subtracted for Modi’s speech. It was taken care of by the team of experts that which portion of Modi’s speech attracted more resonance among the people, where the weaker aspect existed which didn’t appeal to the public. For instance initially in his speeches at UP, Modi adopted a defensive strategy against Mulayam Singh Yadav and his son Akhilesh Yadav but in his latter speeches he launched an allout offensive strategy

²⁷Ibid.,155.

²⁸Sardesai, Rajdeep, *The Election that Changed India*, 240.

²⁹In an interview with Economic Times, one of the close allies of Amit Shah revealed how Karyakartas mobilised people, took them to Modi’s rally. One bolero was deployed in each booth to carry 10 people, there are around one lakh booth in UP. This simply highlights how resources were mobilised at the level of booth by the organisation to pull supporters in Modi’s rally. For more reference see, Rohini Singh, “Election results 2014: How Amit Shah swept Uttar Pradesh for BJP, *The Economic times*, 17 may 2014, <https://economictimes.Indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/election-results-2014-how-amit-shah-swept-uttar-pradesh-for-bjp/articleshow/35222119.cms>. Accessed on 3 may 2014.

³⁰Badri Narayan, *Modi’s modus operandi in the 2014 elections*, 12-14.

against samajwadi Party. Such an offensive strategy continued to attract more people and Modi followed the suit. These changes in the moves of Narendra Modi came through the strong feedback mechanism which was operating at the ground for Narendra Modi.

Along with campaigning which went from door to door, canvassing, mobilizing and drawing people in rallies, enrolling the vote mobilisers, RSS also took up the task of surveillance on BJP workers. According to Badri Narayan, RSS Swaymsevaks were entrusted with video cameras and were asked to have a look on BJP activists and report their anti party activities to the Headquarters³¹. This helped critically to check the defection and counter it within the time limit.

The role of RSS was also significant in booth management. In the state of UP where there was maximum investment of men and material RSS worked in close connection with BJP in booth management. While the BJP had its own team of 25-30 members in each booth to manage it, RSS worked parallel to it with its own highly trained 10-15 member team. In areas dominated by Dalits and OBCs, it made sure that the booth management committee has the member from same communities. It also deployed women activists on the ground to mobilize female voters as well as gauge their mood³². They were entrusted with the task of drawing consensus in the name of Modi by clearing all sorts of doubts that persisted against him.

Development, *Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas* though remained a constant theme in the mobilization of electorate along with scathing criticism of congress and its timid and inefficient leadership, the mobilization of the electorate also took place on Hindutva ground. It is at this place one can locate the centrality of the offshoot organizations of RSS which played crucial role in unifying diverse Hindu masses. Prof. Sudha Pai and Sajjan Kumar traced the role of organizations like Hindu Vahini Sewa, Bajrang Dal and several other organization affiliated with Hindutva ideology working to disseminate Everyday Communalism which worked significantly in mobilizing the Hindu electorate. Such low scale polarization at ground worked significantly and masses got connected automatically to Modi and other second order leadership when

³¹Ibid.,13.

³²Ibid.,14.

they channelized the discourse of Hindutva. It provided congruence to material reality and helped in successful carving out of “the people”

Apart from RSS and BJP along with its affiliate organisation, a new kind of organization of professionals belonging from Management schools, IT sectors, ad agencies³³, News anchors emerged which along with monitoring the campaign programmes of RSS and BJP operated with wide scale intensity on electronic, social media and print media to shape the image of Narendra Modi³⁴. Their ambition was to change Narendra Modi into “Brand Modi”. They successfully managed to do it by producing the stories of Narendra Modi’s childhood from where the decisionist, brave, courageous figure was carved out³⁵. Also by composing songs³⁶ where Modi himself appeared as a savior of the nation or by projecting slogans like “*Ab Ki Baar Modi Sarkaar*”, “*Jantaa Maaf Nahi Karege*” and “*Achhe Din Aane Wale Hai*”, the team made sure that Modi became ubiquitous. By converting Narendra Modi into “Brand Modi”, the PR and Agencies were able to secure a place for Narendra Modi from drawing room discussions to tea stalls, barber to tailor shop. A subtle capturing of public and private spaces through utilization of media spaces took place with the help of a range of techniques, symbols and organisational machinery.

³³The major Ad agency on work for Narendra Modi in 2014 elections were oglivy and Mather (Piyush Pandey), MaCann world group (Prasoon Joshi), Madison(Sameer Balsara), Soho square which handled television, radio and print campaign such as Ab Ki Baar, ModiSarkaar along with local advertising groups were deployed with the task of projecting Narendra Modi.

³⁴Jafferlot regarded them as the parallel organisation which operated in the making of Narendra Modi. However, if we look at their functioning closely we find that they operated in an integrated manner. In state of UP, where Badri Narayan conducted his ethnography on the functioning of RSS, he revealed a story of “blue brigade” A team constituted from CAG citizens for accountable governance (prashantkishore’s organisation). The role of CAG and blue brigade was to look and supervise the local campaign committee and wherever they find the weak link they were supposed to replace them with the team of highly professionals campaigner. Thus the parallel organisation was not operating in isolation. It was working along with the other organisation at the ground. For more reference see, BadriNarayan, *Modi’s modus operandi in the 2014 elections*, 14.

³⁵The childhood stories of Narendra Modi deals with his image of how courageous and decisive he was from his childhood. It is based upon narration where he undertook the dangerous task of swimming the river which was supposed to have crocodile and went across on the top of the temple to hoist the flag, his determination of leaving the home, wandering throughout the country for meditation and yoga etc.

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrJGOHtrJRg>. The song on the one hand gave a strong and decisionist image of modi, on the other hand it also reflected an image of different class/ region which modi was trying to reach and convey the message.

Modi through Media Appearances

In an article published in Hindustan Times, it was reported that the total expense of BJP in 2014 elections on advertisement rose up to 5,000 crore, India witnessed one of the most expensive elections where such a huge amount of money was spent on advertisement. The major agenda of the planners and media managers was to bombard the viewers with Modi's image and block avenues for the other parties across the communication spaces irrespective of the cost³⁷. The team operated in systematized manner. According to the report³⁸ the party booked 15,000 hoardings across India where the cost of each hoarding went up from 2-3 lakh rupees per holding per month in cheaper location to 20 lakh per hoarding per month in the expensive areas of Mumbai and other metropolitan cities. The total estimated cost for the party on hoarding was supposed to be 2,500 crore. In print media, the party bought all the prominent advertisement slots of all the regional, vernacular and National newspaper for 40 days. On the condition of anonymity the planner from Madison Company said in an interview to Hindustan times, "we have chosen 50 top national and regional newspapers across India and plan to release about four to five ads everyday till the end of the election process."³⁹ The estimated cost for newspaper advertisement was 500 crores, with additional 150 crore for advertisement in magazine. In electronic media, especially in TV advertisement, BJP bought 2,000 spots a day across news, entertainment and sports channels. The estimated cost was 500 crore. Along with that BJP also allocated 150 crore for advertisement during T-20 world cup. These data on the one hand explains the emphasis that the party made in the projection of the leader on the other hand it also signals how tactically it shifted itself on the backfoot and allowed the public space to be hegemonised with the imagery of Narendra Modi⁴⁰.

³⁷In an interview with Hindustan times, the prominent media strategist from Madison company revealed the objective and data of expenses on advertisement in 2014 elections. For more reference see, HimaniChandnaGurtoo, "BJP's advertisement plan may cost a whopping Rs 5,000 Cr", *Hindustan Times*, 20 April 2014, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/India/bjp-s-advertisement-plan-may-cost-a-whopping-rs-5-000-cr/story-y8x34eYh26xwoAxeRuaCoO.html>. Accessed on 03 May 2018.

³⁸Ibid.,

³⁹Ibid.,

⁴⁰It is to note that in most of the hoardings, posters it was Narendra Modi's image which acquired centrality. The poster which read as NayisochNayiUmeed depicting the image of Narendra Modi was approved as an official poster of BJP replacing the old posters where party top leaders like Advani and other leaders figured prominently. For more reference see, Akhilesh Sharma, "out with the old...Narendra Modi replaces Advani on BJP posters", *NDTV News*, 08 August 2013, <https://www.ndtv.com/India-news/out-with-the-old-Narendra-Modi-replaces-advani-on-bjp-posters-530904>. Accessed on 03 May 2018.

In one of the reports published by CMS media lab⁴¹, it was argued that Narendra Modi received highest prime time coverage than all the other leaders in the last two months of election. While Modi got 2575 minutes of coverage i.e. 33.21% of the prime time news telecast, his opponent Rahul Gandhi was at third position. What is interesting that apart from Narendra Modi, it was only Amit Shah from BJP who figured in the list of top 10 leaders who got political coverage. The incumbent prime minister got the coverage for 143 minutes i.e. 1.84% of time of prime time news that also because of the book published on him by Sanjaya Baru the accidental prime minister which added insult to injury.

Findings of the Television News Coverage of Leaders - Top 10 Leaders

1 st March -30 th April 2014		
Leaders	Time in Minutes	% of Time
Narendra Modi	2575	33.21
ArvindKejriwal	799	10.31
Rahul Gandhi	336	4.33
Priyanka Gandhi	171	2.20
Sonia Gandhi	156	2.01
Manmohan Singh	143	1.84
MulayamYadav	142	1.83
Amit Shah	107	1.38
Raj Thackeray	102	1.32
Mamata Banerjee	90	1.16

Note: Figures are percentage of total coverage given to leaders in 5 news channels (8-10 pm)⁴².

⁴¹ “It is Modi driven television coverage-2014 poll campaign”, CMS Media lab analysis of 2014 loksabha election coverage by television news channel, www.cmsIndia.org/2014-Lok-Sabha-Election-media-coverage.docx.

⁴² “It is Modi driven television coverage-2014 poll campaign”, CMS Media lab analysis of 2014 loksabha election coverage by television news channel, www.cmsIndia.org/2014-Lok-Sabha-Election-media-coverage.docx.

As far as the question of party was concerned BJP received maximum prime time coverage than any other parties contesting the elections. It received 1507 minutes i.e. 37.99% of time than congress which got 1101 minutes and 27.75% of time.

Findings of the Television News Coverage of Parties - Top 10 Parties⁴³

1st March -30th April 2014		
Parties	Time in Minutes	% of Time
BJP	1507	37.99
Congress	1101	27.75
AAP	742	18.70
SP	176	4.44
Shiv Sena	72	1.82
BSP	57	1.44
MNS	41	1.04
CPI(M)	41	1.04
TMC	38	0.96
JD (U)	24	0.61

Note: Figures are percentage of total coverage given to parties in 5 news channels (8-10 pm).

These data clearly indicates that 2014 election was combination of both personality as well as party. The move by the party to project personality was tactical and oriented toward achieving long term interest which Modi and his image represented at large.

⁴³ Ibid.

Findings on Television News Coverage on Election Issues: Top 10 issues/subjects⁴⁴

1st March -30th April 2014		
Issues	Time in Minutes	% of Time
Personality	7753	37.66
Party	3966	19.26
Satire/Comic Programmes	908	4.41
Corruption	749	3.64
Election Commission	508	2.47
Opinion Polls/Exit Polls	478	2.32
Public Policy	474	2.30
Governance	421	2.05
Development	417	2.02
Local / Regional Issues	338	1.64

Now the question which becomes important at this juncture is what does it symbolize, why media ran after Modi, what was the logic behind such immense coverage?

Modi and Social Media

Along with electronic media, social media too became the site for the hegemonic operation of imagery of Narendra Modi. It was one of the powerful medium to connect with the urban mass especially youth. By projecting the image of Narendra Modi as tech savy, this platform was exploited immensely in creating the discourse around BJP. IT professionals like Arvind Gupta, vikashpandey, piyushpandey and the team of thousands of volunteers were hired from state and central universities, engineering colleges who played significant role in projecting the leader and capturing the imagination of people. From trending up the tweets of Narendra Modi to hashtag

⁴⁴ Ibid.

campaign, from sharing the events on facebook pages to opening up youtube channel, the activity of this group was to dominate the sphere of virtual world and create the image of Narendra Modi in all possible manners through engagement with the voters of young age.

They collected wide scale data of all the previous elections, surveys, party membership, processed it and made it a powerful source of engagement with the people. According to Arvind Gupta, the master man behind the digital campaign of Narendra Modi, through data analytics they basically targeted all 543 constituencies, 810 million voters and 11.36lakh polling booths⁴⁵. In a seminar “social intelligence for business success; a case of three culture” organized by Ad factors PR, Arvind Gupta said,

We had data on each of the 543 constituencies. We knew how many mobile and internet user were present in each constituency. The same holds true for social media users. Alongside, we used analytics to understand which polling booths had voted for BJP in the previous elections⁴⁶.

The major task for Gupta and his team was to mobilize the “floating votes”. For that they constantly engaged with those voters by using the entire communication channel and pumping inside all the information outlining party manifesto, programmes and policies as well as the vision of the leader. According to Gupta, the contribution of IT cell was in setting up narratives for Narendra Modi, countering and quickly responding to the counter narratives against the leader and the party, involving the vote mobilisers as well as mobilizing the floating voters.

The presence of party and its leader at social media helped significantly to carve out *the people*. Though the constituent of the people varied in general but on social media it was basically youth which was at target. Narendra Modi’s presence on social media helped him directly reach to the people. Modi’s shares on facebook pages got maximum number of views and likes and he was second to Obama’s popularity on facebook. On twitter, Narendra Modi ranked 6th in the world to have maximum

⁴⁵Staff reporter, “How India’s BJP data analytics to swing voters”, *PR week*, 17 September 2014, <https://www.prweek.com/article/1312443/Indias-bjp-used-data-analytics-swing-voters>. Accessed on 4 April 2014.

⁴⁶ Ibid.,

followers⁴⁷. It was this massive following which played significant role in 2014 elections. Such a strategic presence on social media helped BJP and Narendra Modi significantly to locate the demands of the people. The party initiated the programmes to crowd source agendas for election manifesto and it incorporated lots of suggestion in its manifesto⁴⁸. This helped to build a *chain of equivalence* creating *the people* from the wider section of society especially in terms of youth.

Thus by creating a hegemonic presence of leader on all the available platforms the attempt was to capture the imagination of the public. The role of organization extended from managing those spaces, allocation of funds to adding content in it⁴⁹. It is at this juncture the role of formal organization extended itself to informal organization. It has tremendous impact on electorate.

Analysing the Role of Informal Organization

It can be substantiated in profound manner by emphasizing upon the study conducted by Rahul Verma and Sheryas Sardesai. According to Verma and Sardesai, the role of media exposure was significant in deciding the voting preference of the electorate. The more the media exposure the more likely the electorate was to vote for Modi and BJP. The study emphasized that role of media was significant in mobilizing the “swinging voters” and on the scale of swinging voters the gap between the congress and BJP went up significantly. Apart from the supporters who already decided their vote, it was the voting preference of swinging voters which gave enormous lead to BJP. Secondly, Verma and Sardesai also found that the media played a significant role in establishing the discourse of Gujrat development model. The high the exposure

⁴⁷Idrees Ali, “Social Media played big roles in India’s election”, *Silicon Valley &Technology*, 6th June 2014, <https://www.voanews.com/a/social-media-emerges-as-a-key-tool-in-Indias-election/1931238.html>. Accessed on 14th July 2018.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹While allocation of funds, management of spaces in media houses, advertisement was done by formal organisation where PiyushGoyal was entrusted with the task of handling the affairs, the content part was developed by PR team and it intellectuals. It worked as informal organisation working in tandem with the formal one. Sardesai argued in his book how each and every campaign line was finally approved by Amit shah, jaitely and Narendra Modi himself.

to the media the more likely the respondent “on being asked which state was doing better in terms of development indicator”, Gujrat figured up⁵⁰.

The nuanced understanding of why BJP emphasized so much upon media, why they invested so heavily upon the advertisement in television, newspaper, social media can be best understood from the fact which suggest how the popularity of BJP and Narendra Modi picked up after 2013. According to Verma and Sardesai⁵¹, in July 2013, the BJP lead over congress in terms of vote was 3 percentage point among those who saw TV news regularly. However, within a span of 9 months it went to 20 percentage point. Among newspaper readers, in the year 2013 the lead of BJP over congress was 7 percentage points which grew up to 20 percentage point in 2014. Among internet users it shoots up from 13percentage point to 26 percentage point. It is within this period the preference for Narendra Modi as a prime minister of India too increased over Rahul Gandhi. Among TV viewers it rose up from 9 percentage point to 25 percentage point among newspaper readers it grew from 11 percentage point to 27 percentage point and among internet users 14 percentage point to 35 percentage point⁵². The data clearly indicates how the media played a significant role in deciding the voting preference. The campaign which BJP launched on media platform, the amount of coverage which Narendra Modi and his party got played a significant role in building up the image for Narendra Modi and attracting voters toward BJP. It is due to this reason media’s role was no less of an organizational force working behind Narendra Modi and Bhartiya Janta Party.

According to Professor Zoya Hasan, the uncritical role of media toward Narendra Modi, the corporate ownership of media houses and successful backing of corporate houses toward Narendra Modi played significant role in the making of Modi. Through successful use of media, Modi created what Prof. Hasan calls “dissent”⁵³ against congress. Instead of looking through critical and objective framework into the

⁵⁰According to verma and sardesai, it was four times higher in the respondent with more media exposure that Gujrat emerged as most developed state vis- a- vis low media exposure respondent. Most importantly they were likely to vote for BJP. For more reference see, Verma, Rahul, and ShreyasSardesai, *Does media exposure affect voting behavior and political preferences in India*, 85-87.

⁵¹Ibid., 85-87.

⁵²Ibid., 85-87.

⁵³Zoya Hasan, “ Manufacturing dissent; Media and 2014 election”, *The Hindu*, 2nd April 2014. <http://www.thehinducentre.com/verdict/commentary/article5843621.ece>. Accessed on 14 July 2018.

allegations made by BJP and Narendra Modi against congress government (both UPA and congress regimes), the claims made for development in Gujrat, the uncritical and partisan role of media helped in establishing a public discourse where congress party was delegitimized of all its pro poor policies and programmes as well as from the role it played in the development of nation.

By completely ignoring the stories on programmes and policies of the congress government, by not paying any adherence to the facts/ claims which Modi made in the name of development, media was satisfying the middle class anxiety and building its TRP. The emphasis on Modi and his personality was precisely due to this fact. He was representing the case of middle class anxiety, he was talking about neo liberal reform and media was rallying around him. It was fetching viewership for them and enhancing their turnout of profit. At a seminar in Gujarat, Rajat Sharma, the owner and editor of India TV said “The TRP of our news channel increases by more than 60% when Narendra Modi is there on TV”⁵⁴. It is this race for TRP which collided with the diverse Indian media house to become the supporter of Modi.

But apart from TRP aspect, the ownership and corporate aspect of media houses also played a significant role in establishing Narendra Modi as the leader. The amount of money that BJP intended to invest in the Lok Sabha election of 2014 on the campaign and advertisement explains the fact that how “paid news”⁵⁵ operationalised. It became nearly impossible for the prominent news channels and newspapers to carry story with a critical approach on Narendra Modi or even to emphasize on programmes and policies of congress and UPA regime. Instead of critical appraisals/ objectivity media followed/created the buzz and mediated it widely in order to build the image of Narendra Modi⁵⁶. The thrust to earn profit remained at the center of their attraction

⁵⁴ Sandeep Bhusan, “ How The Television News Industry Scripted The Indian Elections”, *the Caravan*, 15th may 2014. <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/vantage/television-scripted>. Accessed on 14 july 2014.

⁵⁵ MayaRanganathan, *paid news; cocktail of media, business and politics*, 121.

⁵⁶ In her P.hd thesis Amrita Basu studied both the buzzwords which media created and propagated in six prominent news paper of India i.e. Times of India, The Telegraph The Hindu, DainikJagran, Anand Bazaar Patrika and Hindustan Dainik and concluded that not only these Buzzwords lacked objectivity but they were more favourable in the image building process of Narendra Modi.

While one set of words like NaMoNaMo, HarHarModi, GharGharModi, gujrat model of development, AbkibaarModisarkaaretc depicted the positive news for Modi, the other set of Buzzwords like sehzada, dynastic politics, colgate, 2g, Maun Mohan Singh, candy kid depicted the negative image of congress party and it's leader. Even the buzzword like Gujrat riots, Hindutva, minority which cropped up were to

toward Modi. Secondly, the interest of corporate capital which owns large share of Indian Media and their open affiliation toward Narendra Modi made it impossible for editors of news channel and news paper to exercise their autonomy. The cases worth notice are of Subhash Chandra, owner of zee media, who publically went to campaign for BJP in 2014 elections⁵⁷. Since master declared his affiliation, the editorial board was bound to follow the suit. Most of the programmes on Modi's personal life to personality were carried by zee news up to the day elections in Varanasi was conducted.

The Zee editorial team recast their boss's political slant into some shoddy spin doctoring, though it is possible that it proved effective on some viewers. Terribly made "features" (on Modi's mother, brother), which aimed to wrench hearts and portray Modi sympathetically as a self-made chai-wallah-turned-chief minister, were dished out on an hourly basis. But easily the most horrifying was the channel's "exclusive" Modi interview, which was played (with the tagline "the biggest interview of 2014") every single day on Zee network's prime-time band, right up to the day Varanasi went to polls. The network's news anchors transformed into Modi cheerleaders, especially when it came to the BJP's pet peeve—the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)⁵⁸.

Apart from zee media, the role of India TV owner and prominent anchor Rajat Sharma was also critical. He was not only able to manage interview of Narendra Modi's in his programme "Aap ki Adalat" but the way he conducted the interview was more of advocate promoting the party and its leader. Analysing Rajat Sharma's interview with Narendra Modi, Atul Dev and Praveen Dhonthi writes

Sharma opened the interview with a comment rather than a question" "All the country's top politicians were worried, he said, because everywhere they went all they heard was Modi's campaign slogan, "Abki bar, Modi sarkar" (This time, a Modi government). The audience cheered. Several of Sharma's prompts to his interviewee sounded like compliments. Every once in a while, the audience broke into chants of "Modi, Modi, Modi." Sharma read out some messages he had seen online: "Twinkle twinkle little

indicate and emphasize that how Narendra Modi name was being fabricated in the entire case through SIT's and appraisal of supreme court verdict which gave Narendra Modi a clean chit. How Narendra Modi is approaching Muslims for votes, BJP against minority appeasement. In her conclusion, Basu depicts that in totality it was an image building exercise that was followed. One of the primary reason if we can locate that these news papers received maximum advertisement from the BJP For more reference see, Amrita Basu, *Role of Media in electoral politics of India: A study of general election 2014*, 59-63.

⁵⁷ Sandeep Bhusan, "How The Television News Industry Scripted The Indian Elections", *the Caravan*, 15th may 2014. <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/vantage/television-scripted>. Accessed on 14 july 2014.

⁵⁸ Ibid.,

star, abki baar Modi sarkar.” “Rahul Gandhi ne khai chocolate bar, abki baar Modi sarkar”, Modi laughed. The show went on in this vein for over an hour⁵⁹.

Caravan magazine traced the entire journey of Rajat Sharma and his association with BJP and his bonhomie with prominent BJP leader like Arun Jaitley. The report traced how Rajat Sharma went on to become India's one of the powerful editor-entrepreneur⁶⁰. The accolades that journalist like Rajat Sharma, Arnab Goswami, (then the editor of Times Now, latter on the owner of Republic TV Channel), the owner of Zee News Shubash Chandra, Reliance (Network 18) received post elections clearly indicate how corporate ownership of media and political interest worked simultaneously and acted in the making of the leader. Thus media in its all form (electronic, print and social) rallied behind Narendra Modi as a party in shaping his image and making of the people for Narendra Modi.

The silences on the part of media to emphasize upon the work of congress both during UPA regime and previous government, the propagation of negative set of buzzwords against congress and its leadership was reminder of the fact that prof. Hasan calls disseminating “dissent”. Modi's representation of corporate interest, middle class anxiety, neo liberal reforms played a significant role in bringing media on the board and behind his back in the 2014 elections.

Popularized Media and Mediatized Populism

Apart from that money- material / affiliation and connection side of the story or the story of effects of mass media coverage on populist mobilization, one also needs to investigate the connection between mediatization and populism. Though populism has always been present in Indian context, the growing mediatization has provided favourable ground for the growth and sustenance of it. It makes the performance of the leader easier as it provides wider stage through which the populist leader performs.

⁵⁹Pranjoy Guha Thakurta and Jyotirmay Choudhary, “ The 6,500 Crore Mystery At Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Limited”, *The Caravan Magazine*, 4th February 2015, <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reportage/man-studio-rajat-sharma-india-tv/6>. Accessed on 14th July 2018.

⁶⁰Ibid.,

Writing in the context of media and populism, Hjarvard argued that media in contemporary time touches and influences all sphere of life (politics, culture, family). It has developed its own logic which dominates society and politics at large⁶¹. The logic of media includes simplification, polarization, intensification, personalization, visualization and stereotypization. It also consists of emotionalization and anti-establishment attitude, negativism, sports based dramatization and triumph of style over substance. Along with it media prioritises conflicts, focuses on scandals⁶². This logic plays a significant role in shaping politics⁶³. According to Meyer, media logic colonises political logic which involves both policy dimension i.e. finding solution to political issues and the process dimension where there exists the effort to make other accept your solution⁶⁴.

Populism under such condition exists in the nexus of these logics, media logic combining with policy and process dimension of political logic. One can understand this by taking into cognizance that how the attributes of media logic marries populist tendencies. In populism appeal to the people are made generally in terms of “the people” versus “the other”, where the other may represent elite, establishment and system, media promotes the logic of sports based dramatization, polarization of conflict, antiestablishment attitude. Whenever populism promotes crisis or break down threat and manifests itself in form of decisiveness, distaste for complexity and instrumentalisation of politics, media logic promulgates intensification, simplification and focuses on scandal. Similarly when populist leader emphasizes disregard for appropriateness political incorrectness, colourfulness, the logic which media follows is personalization stereotypisation and emotionalisation⁶⁵.

⁶¹Stig Hjarvard, *The mediatization of culture and society* quoted in Benjamin Moffit, *The Global Rise Of Populism*, 75.

⁶²Indian media especially the hindi electronic media operates completely with these logics. Their emphasis on the programmes which creates sensationalism, spreads superstition, invokes emotion, dramatization was profound. The saas- bahu TV shows, programmes that preached superstitious beliefs like zodiac signs, stories of ghost appearances were already prevalent and being telecasted on regular basis.

⁶³ Benjamin Moffit, *The Global Rise Of Populism*, 75.

⁶⁴Thomas Meyer, *Media Democracy: how media colonize politics* quoted in Benjamin Moffit, *The Global Rise Of Populism*, 76.

⁶⁵quoted in Benjamin Moffit, *The Global Rise Of Populism*, 76.

Hence the argument of media biasedness gets problematised on the ground that it is not the media which has gone biased but it has developed such a kind of logic under whose temptation any if any leader falls it is bound to pick him up. The case of Narendra Modi is illustrative of that fact. Narendra Modi completely suited the media logic. He believed in creating the people versus the other, antiestablishment sentiment, indecisiveness discourses, polarization, simplification of politics etc. media was bound to follow him as an organization.

In short, one can say, it was significant contribution of organization (both formal and informal) at large in the making of Narendra Modi. Alongside projecting him as the leader, the organization continued to work on the ground. From mobilizing voters on the ground of leadership quality to its own credentials⁶⁶ the role of formal organization was crucial. A new impetus to organization was added with heavy support from IT professionals, technocrats and media person who themselves went to align in 2014 elections with a particular party and worked as parallel organization and contributed immensely in the making of Modi. Apart from these dynamics, it was the aspect of manageability of contradiction which organization pushed at the level of ground by offering unity of the people cross cutting caste and class dynamics in fold of hindutva which played a significant role in the victory of 2014 elections. It was the part of the social engineering, which organization was able to ensure especially in terms of providing inclusion to the castes within OBC's and dalits, while retaining their base of forward castes took Modi wave to different pedestal. It was significant redrafting of the contract with the constituency as the existing political parties consistently failed to voice the concern of representation despite being the upholders of social justice⁶⁷. In words of Jafferlotit was Subalternisation of Hindutva

⁶⁶Thachil, Tariq. "Elite parties and poor voters: Theory and evidence from India." *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 2 (2014): 454-477, talks about how the embedded mobilization works on ground where poor vote for the elite parties based upon their credentials of providing private social service. He highlights the role of RSS working prominently in the Dalit and Adivasi section to gain their support.

⁶⁷In state like UP and Bihar, after the implementation of Mandal commission though regional parties like RJD and SP emerged which claimed to provide representation to the wider section of OBC's but essentially it remained party confined to interest of one particular caste or community. The support base for both these parties remained prominently among Yadavs and Muslims. While BSP, a dalit party in UP remained confined to Jatavas. Though at the time of inception they banked upon the slogan of "jiske jitney sankhyabhariuskutnibhaagidari", the aspect of this ideal remained unimplemented while these parties came into power. BJP successfully tapped upon it. In 2014 loksabha elections and the state assembly elections which followed then after BJP ensured that it changes its character, face and profile. For more details see, Prashant Jha, *how BJP wins the elections*,93-113.

organization which provided such a massive appeal to the leader like Narendra Modi. The organization significantly changed its character from Brahmin Baniya/ urban party and consolidated those sections which remained untouched from all national and regional level parties and their politics. In words of Govindacharya, the prominent ideologue of Sangh, it was a shift in “*chaal, charitra and chehra*” of the party which made BJP more inclusive Hindu party⁶⁸. It was this change in the character of the party, extension of organization itself, inclusion of youth, building on aspiration and anxiety dynamics which created the wave for Narendra Modi and worked significantly in the making of *the people* and *the leader*.

⁶⁸Ibid.,

Chapter 3

Broadcasting Populism: “Mann Ki Baat”

Populism and populist mobilisation, when acquire permanency in politics need constant innovation, recreation and creativity. The objective to create “the people” by creating “the other” is not one time process. The people are constantly created; chain of equivalence is constantly stretched, drawn and redrawn so as to pool large section of public within the domain of its supporter. The purpose for such an effort lies for the sake of endurance of populism and populist politics.

The role of leader becomes central in this pursuit. If populist mobilisation is based primarily on the face of leader, it’s the leader who has to devise new and creative methods for connecting with the public and converting them into “the people”. The recreation of “the people” becomes more crucial in competitive polity as there are multiple populist mobilisations to counter the larger one. Hence appeal needs to be established in more direct fashion and several avenues are searched for to establish the credentials of the leader and the politics which he represents. In other words the empty signifier needs to hollow out more space so that it could include more people in it.

“Mann Ki Baat” programme can be read as one of the attempts of the leader and his party at large in that process. It serves as medium to redraw the constituency, redraft the contract with the masses and convert them into “the people”. The process remains too subtle and needs a close study to understand how the radio programme which was started by Narendra Modi after 2014 elections played a significant role in perpetuation of his popularity. The chapter seeks to explain the entire process. It goes in detail to analyse how multiple chain of equivalences were made operative to bring the people under the fold.

The claim that the leader often made during several episodes of “Mann Ki Baat” that it is an apolitical programme, this chapter also seeks to explain to what extent “Mann Ki Baat” programme is apolitical, where exists the domain of politics and how it is

crafted in subtle manner? In other words the attempt of the chapter is to read “Mann Ki Baat” programme as the political text.

“Mann Ki Baat” Programme- A Format of Direct Communication

“Mann Ki Baat” programme was first aired on 3rd October 2014, from all the channels of All India Radio and Prashar Bharti. The inception of the idea to launch a radio communication programme came from no other than Prime Minister, Narendra Modi himself. It was a unique experiment in Indian politics as for the first time any head of the government was about to communicate with the people at the end of every month. It is not that leaders before Modi has not practised the same experiment for transmitting message to the public or establishing direct connect with the masses. In pre independence period, Subhas Chandra Bose relied heavily to spread his political messages to the people through “Azad Hind Radio”. In post independence era, Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Shastri turned frequently toward radio to propagate the message. During Indira’s regime the use of radio went upto such an extent especially during the emergency period that political commentators started to call AIR as All Indira Radio. From propagation of the socialist policies to the declaration of emergency as well as criticising opposition, radio was used by Indira Gandhi more extensively than any of her predecessor.

But the use of radio as a means of communication by Narendra Modi differed significantly from his predecessors. While leaders before Modi opted to establish direct communication with the people during extraordinary times, wars or tragedy, Modi extensively used radio during ordinary times. What is unique and needs significant attention, Modi shifted to use radio in 21st century when India is going global and new modes of communication are acquiring prominence. The “radio” has both symbolic and “political economic” value. While all the great leaders (both Authoritarian and Democrat) had used radio as the medium to communicate directly with the people, it was reminder of the fact that Modi’s position is no less than them¹.

¹ It can be read as an attempt of the leader to situate oneself among the coterie leaders who have used radio to transmit the message. The most popular among them in the series of democrats comes Roosevelt whose “fireside chat” a 31 episode programme attracted lot of attention. It was latter on revived by Ronald Regan who started weekly programme to address the people and then the suit was

Secondly, Modi's approach to communicate with the people unlike his predecessors was not based on one time approach or during extra ordinary times. He chooses to communicate with the public at the end of every month. Radio potentially allows him to reach every Indian, even in far flung areas.

But the question that becomes pertinent at this point is why Modi chooses to speak to the countrymen at the end of every month? Despite being widely present at several other platforms like TV, twitter, face book, state and national assembly election rallies what makes him turn to radio so frequently?

“Mann Ki Baat” programme was one such medium which helped Narendra Modi to establish direct communication with *the people*. The leaders who has framed their politics on ideological variant of populism has frequently used the one or other medium of communication and has established a direct connect with their people. The reason for direct contact comes from the fact that at times, institutions can manipulate, alter the political messages which the leader wants to transmit to the masses and may subject it for critical scrutiny that can denigrate the image of the leader. Populist leader thrives on their images as a result they don't allow any interference of institutions. Secondly, under populist mobilisation, it is through direct communication, leader reinforces sovereignty among the people. They make people realise their centrality in the political process and highlights institutions as the other, which historically was inadequate sites for incorporating popular wisdom. Thirdly, emboldening “the masses” as the repository of authentic wisdom enables the leader to project him/her as the real representative of people's truth. It is through this method, populist leader acquires power in his personality. While this has remained a universal method which populist all over the world has acquired.

The speciality of “Mann Ki Baat” comes from the way the leader performs through it for the manageability of contradiction. “Mann Ki Baat” served as the platform through which Modi promulgated and reiterated his programmes and policies and also discursively created or maintained “the people” for perpetuation of his regime. In Indian context what makes MKB specific than any other programme is that Modi

followed by several other president of America. Apart from American president the speeches of “Martin Luther king” and others were also aired on radio. So it carries a great symbolic meaning.

packs politics in it in the language of care, compassion, humility and serves it as guardian, as a big brother, as well wisher and at times as a man who is above politics. The themes which Modi touched upon in this programme is illustrative of the fact that Narendra Modi politicises emotion, repackages it² and through that attempts to create “the people” or strengthen identification with them.

What is interesting to note that despite so much of politics loaded in it. It is presented as an apolitical programme. In the book published on “Mann Ki Baat, which talks in detail about how the inception of programme took place. At the time of deciding the name of the programme while the bureaucrats were busy brain storming over it and when they reached with the suggestions to PM, after listening to all the suggestion, PM said ‘arre isme kya hai? Kaho kuch halki phulki “Mann Ki Baatein” karoonga’(what is in the name, I will discuss the issues which will come to my mind) and the christening was done!! Thus “Mann Ki Baat” programme emerged officially as a non political programme where PM desired to talk or to communicate directly to the people sharing his light and heavy moments of his public life and governance. While addressing through the programme in the month of December 2014 Modi said

Aap ko lagta hoga ki ye pradhan mantri aise baate kyu karta hai, ek to main pradhan mantri kam aur pradhan sewak jaada hu. Bachpan se ek baat main sunte aaya hu aur sayad wahi “Mann Ki Baat” ki prerna hai. Bachpan se ek baat sunte aaya hu ki dukh baatne se kam hota hai aur sukh baatne se badhta hai. “Mann Ki Baat” me main dukh aur sukh baat ta hu. Main jo baate karta hu wo mere mann me jo peedaye hoti hai usko aapke beech me pragat kar k halka karta hu aur sukh ki jo baate hai usko aapke beech me rakh k chauguna karta hu. (you must be wondering why a Prime Minister should be interacting the way I am. Well, first and foremost I am less of your prime minister and more of Pradhan Sewak (principal servitor). Since childhood, i have been hearing that by sharing the intensity of our pain becomes less, while intensity of our joy grows manifold. WellI think this is the guiding thought behind ‘Mann Ki Baat’.it is an opportunity for me to sometime share my concerns and sometime my joys. Sharing my deepest concerns with you makes me feel light hearted and sharing my joys multiplies my happiness.)

‘Apolitical’ nature becomes important in ideological varient of Modi’s populism. During his election campaign he represented politics with corruption, as a degenerated site. He was bound to project himself above politics and time and again reminded the people of that. Mann Ki Baat programme, i.e., musings from the mind and straight

² It is interesting to note that in the MKB programme Modi apart from publicizing his programme and policies talks about children’s examination, summers and heat, advises people to drink water, advises parent not to be harsh upon the children, teach them good values, practice yoga, maintaining travelogue, organ donation etc.

from the heart of the leader was tactically designed to serve that purpose. What is worth consideration that Narendra Modi subtly weaved politics of manageability of contradiction in the so called apolitical nature of programme. The attempt of the following section is to unravel how it manifests?

Politics behind Mann Ki Baat

Perpetuation of popularity while remains an arduous task for any leader or government which comes into power, it becomes more crucial and intense for the populist regime. Since the mobilisation and creation of the people remains based on articulation of multiple unfulfilled demands, drawn together through the chain of equivalence in an empty signifier. It does not remain one time process. The leader and the organisation needs to constantly reinvent itself to consolidate and add more people in it. While the role of organisation remains tactical, primarily it is the face of the leader which requires a constant change and innovation. Through “Mann Ki Baat” programme, Modi promises those changes and innovation as well as draws out more space in his image of empty signifier so that identification with the people can be strengthened and new people can be drawn in. It becomes important for the sake of perpetuation of regime.

After the election of 2014, once Narendra Modi and BJP came to power, it became pertinent for both of them to look for the new avenues from where mobilisation could be done and legitimation could be ensured. “Mann Ki Baat” served as the medium from where prime minister reiterated his each and every policy and programmes which his government initiated but apart from that it also served as a forum from where he appealed to the moral conscience of the people establishing himself as the conscience keeper and humane prime minister. The attempt for Modi on the one hand was largely to humanise the office of prime minister on the other he tried to establish himself in the domain of family as the member of it.

In Indian society where childhood and adulthood³ are divided by thin line, Modi at times placed himself both as the child and as the adult in the family in order to carve out love and respect from the country men or especially “the people”. During 2014 election campaign where Narendra Modi drew his image of strong, masculinist and decisionist leader to create “the people”. In “Mann Ki Baat” programme the attempt is to show the other side of the leader and connect the people through it. The image which is emphasized is of people loving, caring, compassionate* light hearted, humane, down toward the earth prime minister who knows the problems of his people, speaks in their language by using their anecdotes and is eager to resolve them by developing a medium of direct communication. But apart from that, the central attempt of Narendra Modi in “Mann Ki Baat” programme is also to reinstate sovereignty in the people. He does it by acting as a motivator. Since he builds upon the hopelessness, anxiety and aspiration of Indian people, he entrusted a task upon himself to raise and awaken the people from the deep sleep. As a result, he turns time and again as a motivational guru to make people realise their mammoth potential and strive to achieve it. It is in this aspect, he turns toward people and ask suggestions from them about what is to be done on several issues.

All these Avatars, strategies and tactis of Narendra Modi played a significant role in consolidating and creating the people, redrawing the contract with the constituency and establishing him at emotional level with the people. It is an interesting exercise to locate how MKB served all these purposes for the populist mobilisation and led to strengthen the identification with the people or create the people.

Perpetuating Popularity

In hisaddress to the nation on 3rd October 2014, Modi inaugurated “Mann Ki Baat” programme by advertising his policy of “Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan”⁴. While the programme focussed on the aspect of cleanliness, it was not entirely based upon the

³ Though the writings of asis nandy suggests that childhood is the characterstic feature of Indian society.

⁴ The policy of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan was first declared from red fort on 15th August. It was itself an unconventional pattern which Modi adopted to declare policy and programme from Red fort. Before Modi, leaders maintained the decorum by following codes and conduct. Modi era saw a departure from the set standard. It can itself be read as a populist move which scholars like Benjamin Moffit calls bad manners in leader as it helps to strengthen the identification with the mass.

state to take up the task rather than the people were roped in not only to participate but make it a successful programme. It remained a central strategy of Narendra Modi to bring the people back in a master role. By withdrawing the role of state, he was fixing the responsibility upon the people and demanding their active participation in achievement of programmes and policies.

Delivering the speech on the occasion of Vijaya Dashmi, he asked people to eliminate ten bad habits from themselves, dirt and filth being one of them. By putting the people at the Centre of the helm in the success of any policy, he attempted to reinstate sovereignty in them. It is evident from the fact that when he said,

I will nominate nine people and they need to upload their videos of cleaning the country on social media websites and nominate nine more people to do the same. I want you to join me clean up the nation and join nine more people in the drive. Eventually the entire nation will be filled with this atmosphere. I strongly believe that all of you will join hands with me to carry this forward.⁵

Similarly addressing the question of poverty, he linked the solution of it with consumerism and asked people to be more active consumer so that the purchasing power of the poor can be enhanced. Such a solution came in reference while Modi dealt with Khadi industry. Since khadi industry lacked behind all the other industries and the people associated with it were in bad economic condition. Modi actively engaged people for the solution of it. He said,

you may be wearing variety of clothes, made of different fabrics and company brands. Is it not possible to include khadi too? I am not telling you to use khadi products only. I am just requesting you to use one khadi product, like a handkerchief or a bath towel, bed sheet, pillow cover, curtain etc...I am saying this because when you buy a khadi products, it help poor people light lamps on diwali, so please buy a product or a two.⁶

Never has any leader or any government approached to the people in such a manner to fix the problem of poverty. Modi openly advocated “consumerism” as panacea for all. It is by offering such a simplified solution to a complex problem like poverty, he was creating an important place among the people. It is interesting to note the way he advocated it. He said,

⁵ Lexis Nexis, *Mann Ki Baat*, 132-135.

⁶ Ibid.,

When I speak of 125 crore countrymen and access the outcome, we assume that the government will take care of everything and as individuals we stand nowhere. But we have seen that if we intend to move ahead, we need to identify our potential, understand our strengths and I can vouch that we as a people, as a country are incomparable in this world.⁷

While conversing upon the issue Modi was attempting to make people realise their potential, he was awakening the people to understand India as the biggest market and Indian as massive work force. He was attempting to locate identity of Indian as a consumer and search the solution of material deprivation in consumerism, in the forces of market. No other leader before Modi attempted to manage the contradiction of consumerism with Indian style of living. He was pushing forth the capitalist agenda coded in the moral language of realisation of self.

In the country infested with deep inequality, discrimination, lack of job opportunities, poor living condition, high range of insecurities, such kind of speech was seducing. Modi was successful in establishing the fact that 60 years of Congress rule, lack of leadership capacity has pushed the country on the path of backwardness. He was presenting himself as a man who has vision, who had simple solutions, who could see the potential of 125 crore Indians in several manners which the people themselves can't do,

My countrymen, 125 crore of Indians have infinite strength and capabilities. We need to recognise ourself. We need to recognise our inner strength...we need to carry our self respect, identity ourselves and move forward in life and be successful. This will in turn make us a winning and a successful country. I believe, all our countrymen, a population of 125cr. Are efficient, strong, and efficient and can stand against any odd with confidence.⁸

This kind of appeal to the people was unique, a sense of empowerment was restored not as citizens but as an active consumers. One can recall his SRCC speech where he made similar claims for developing India by turning it into BRAND INDIA through meticulous packaging and marketing. Unlike leaders who took upon the task of developing the country through active participation and engagement of state in everyday life of people⁹, Modi was arguing against those premises and bringing the

⁷ Ibid.,

⁸ Ibid., 137.

⁹ Here the reference is made for governmental populism.

people in the center of the helm¹⁰. It is not like that he was completely removing the state from participating in the development process but was tactically shifting the parameter in the hands of the people. The solution of all the problems exists within the people and its the task of the people to search solution or follow the advice of the leader

My countrymen, till the time we don't decide to walk, stand on our own; we will not receive guidance from others in our journey. We will not find people to hold our hands and help us in walking. We need to take the initiative in walking and I trust that all 125 cr. Of Indians are capable of walking on their own and will keep on moving ahead.¹¹

In other Words, Modi in his speeches through MKB was directly hitting the psychology of the people. He was appealing the people to change their mindset, improve their vision. It is at this juncture where initially he pointed out the situation of hopelessness, anxiety and then as a messiah brought hope and happiness. Such a tactical placement helped him to acquire power in his personality.

In most of the speeches, Modi emphasized how under his successful guidance and supervision situation started to change. People followed his advice; they listened him carefully and responded to the suggestions made by him.

...the last time I had asked them to buy at least one Khadi...the feed back that I got from Khadi stores was that in a week time the sales of this cloth had jumped upto 125%. In this way the sales as compared to the last year the sales for this year were more than double in a week following the second of October.¹²

Similarly, he cited numerous individual attempts and responses which were sent to him through letters or emails emphasizing upon the changes which were taking place after the appeals which he made in “Mann Ki Baat” programme. Citing an example of Mr. Bharat Gupta, who sent him an email on mygov.in with regard to his personal experience of changes related to cleanliness in train compartment, Modi was suggesting how behavioural transformation was undergoing among the citizens and the people of the country along with the government employees¹³. This remained a

¹⁰ It can be read as a neo liberal move of minimum government and maximum governance which Modi promoted in his election campaign in the role of “chowkidaar and prahari”.

¹¹ Ibid.,

¹² Mann ki baat programme, November 2014, see, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/mann-ki-baat>.

¹³ In his address through MKB in the month of November 2014 Modi said “*people from HRD ministry after hearing my talk, felt the need to do something and officer came together to work out an action plan.*”

specific strategy of Narendra Modi in MKB programme. He took up an evaluative approach and presented it before the countrymen. He mentioned individual to group, small to large scale changes that has taken place after his discussion upon the issue in “Mann Ki Baat” programme,

once I had mentioned in “Mann Ki Baat” about the problem faced by the poor families, like how their children cry because of the pollution affecting them when the smoke chullas are lit. Should not they be getting gas cylinders? And I had requested the affluent to surrender their gas subsidy. Just think. Today I can say with great pride that 30 lakh families have given up their gas subsidies and they are not rich people.¹⁴

It was an attempt to locate change and development, the promises of *Acche din* which he made during his election campaign on everyday basis. While announcing about the *Suraksha* policies for the first time on MKB programme prime minister updated the people with the results of the policies in first 20 days.

It has just been 20 days, since the launch of these policies and I can proudly say that due to your trust in our nation, our government and our programmes and policies, the common citizens of our country have joined hands with us in such huge numbers. I am extremely happy in sharing the fact that with in the span of 20 days, more than 8 crore and 52 lakh people have registered their names for these programmes.¹⁵

Counting the success of *Jann Dhan Yojna*, PM addressed the nation,

Today when I talk to you, I want to mention that around a year back *Jann Dhan Yojna* was started on a large scale. A task that could not be achieved in 60 years, would it be possible to achieve it in such a short span of time? Many questions were raised back then. But, I am happy to tell you that all unit of government and all bank have put tremendous effort as per my knowledge, till date, close to 18 crore people have opened their bank accounts, 17crore 74 lakh to be precise. I saw the richness of the poor. They had to open zero balance account but these poor people have saved money and deposited a sum of 22,000crores instead.¹⁶

Similarly, while conversing upon direct benefit transfer scheme PM highlighted the significance of it. How successfully the subsidies on several things like gas cylinder, fertilizers are reaching to the poor people directly. He also emphasized that the *DBTS*(Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme) has earned a place in guinness book of world

¹⁴ Lexis Nexis, *Mann Ki Baat*, 335-351.

¹⁵ Lexis Nexis, *mann ki baat*, 208.

¹⁶ Lexis Nexis, *mann ki baat*, 236.

record. Apart from that Modi also counted upon the efforts of individual as how they are bringing change in their own condition as well as society at large.¹⁷

Highlighting the changes ranging from his policies which include several insurance schemes to behavioural changes, Modi placed it in terms of number or narratives.¹⁸ Such a kind of strategy was followed by the leader to acquire magical power in his personality. By empowering the people, crediting them for making all these attempts of changes, on the one hand he was bringing sovereignty back into them on the other he was deriving power from them and placing it in his personality. Modi was uniquely perpetuating and exemplifying his popularity.

The narratives of “Achhe Din” devised by the leader were translated in these terms before the people. It was an attempt to place Modi not only as visionary but also as the leader who commands obedience from the people and behind whom the nation was ready to rally. Those who ignored or were not willing to obey the advice of Modi were sidelined into the domain of *the other*. The image of visionary and a motivational leader whose commands, the nation and its people obeyed unhesitatingly, unquestionably, he was setting himself apart within the party as well as the other leaders which India had. The larger message the leader wanted to perpetuate was that with his arrival, the nation has taken a new turn. Its emboldened with confidence and people and leadership both are committed to take India to new height. Through this on the one hand he attempted to restore sovereignty in the people on the other he was repackaging himself for perpetuating his popularity.

¹⁷ To count a few, Modi in detail talked about operation mallayuddha under which the entire government official in harda district in Madhya pradesh started a campaign to gift one toilet to their sisters. Similarly he also narrated the story of keshla in rajnandangaon, chattisgarh where the villagers initiated a campaign to build toilets and successfully completed the task. Similarly the story of Noorjehan, who initiated the campaign of providing solar lanterns in each house of her village all these are reminder of how change was undergoing in the society. Along with the government officials to individual all are joining to bring transformation under the conducive atmosphere provided by the leader.

¹⁸ Modi in his speeches bombarded the people with numbers and narratives, be it the success of Jan dhan yojna, suraksha yojna, giving up the subsidies on cylinders, operation mallayuddha, Amrut scheme, beti bachao beti padhao and several other schemes, programmes and policies, the objective of the prime minister was to count upon the success of his government. It was largely to make people believe that unlike the previous government which hardly bothered about the life world of the common people, his government was sensitive and aware enough with the problems and were tackling them sensitively bringing in all the positive changes that was possible. One can locate how Modi was blending governmental populism with ideological populism to situate himself among the people.

Apart from being a visionary leader Modi also shifted his location as a benign ruler who gets deeply moved by the sufferings of his countrymen, who seeks happiness in the happiness of its people and sorrow in their sorrow. Modi attempted to carve out such an image by touching upon the day to day life of the people. Never has any leader in political history of India tried to such an extensive level to penetrate oneself in the personal or in the domain of family life. Modi attempted to project himself as the family member, both as a guardian and as well well wisher.

Conversing upon the issue of drug traffic, Modi said,

last time, I had mentioned my concern about the youth of the country. It is not because you choose me as the prime minister, but because I feel concerned as an individual...I could see the bravest of my officers struggling to control their tears. I met suffering mother too. In Punjab, i met suffering mothers who were very angry and yet concerned about their children who had fallen into drug trap... I understand the youth who fall into drug trap are often blamed, they are blamed for being careless and irresponsible. We perceive victims are bad but the fact is it is the drugs that are bad. Let us not blame and wrong our children. Then let us get rid of the habit of addiction and not victimize them.¹⁹

Modi correlated the question of drugs with that of terrorism, how the money raised from drugs is being used in anti national activities leading to martyrdom of our soldiers. By bringing the discourse of Nationalism, Modi tried to force moral argument against drug abuse. But apart from that like a well wisher, Modi advised the parents to cultivate dream in their child. Give them a direction. He advised parents to foster amicable relationship with their wards. Not to prioritise material success over spiritual one,

Children do not take bad habits suddenly. It happens gradually and it also impacts at home. If you observe closely, I believe that you may be successful in detecting the problem at the very beginning. Beware of your child's friend circle and don't focus your conversations on material progress alone. Your concern should extend to their inner thought, their logic, their books, their friends and their mobiles- how and where they are spending their time. These things need to be taken care of. I believe that no one else can do what parents can for their kids.

Modi advised the pharmacists not to issue any medicine without doctor's prescription as it may lead to addiction. Similarly he also advised young children not to get into the trap of addiction due to peer pressure or to prove themselves among their friend circle. Prime minister also advised the society to take up positive role to discourage

¹⁹ Ibid. p.147.

use of drugs among children. He appealed to superstars, sportsmen to campaign against drug abuse and start online movement #Drugsfreeindia.

Modi said that the issue of drugs has brought enormous grief and pain among the family members whose children are trapped with that addiction. He wanted to share grief and pain with them as a member of their family,

I touched this topic because, like I said in the beginning, grief lessens through sharing. This topic is of national concern and I am not here to sermonize. And neither am I entitled to preach. I am just sharing my grief with you. I also want to share the pain of the families who are suffering from this menace.²⁰

But sharing grief does not remained the only concern for Modi, as a strong guardian, who once discovers any problems, does everything what he can do to solve that problem. Modi was pretending to do away with that issue in a similar fashion,

a few days ago, I had organised a DGP level conference in Assam. I expressed my concern over this issue and my displeasure at the non serious attitude of the people concerned. I have asked the police department to seriously discuss this issue and come out with relevant solutions. I have asked the police department to launch a toll free help line as the families often feel ashamed to come out and in the open about the addiction problem of their children...parents from any part, any corner of the country, can freely approach the police if their children have fallen victim to addiction.²¹

Modi attempted to connect at the emotional level by raising up this drugs issue. Through the use of the words like “*Maa ka laal*”, “*Maa ka dard*” he was directly banking upon the sentiments which prevail in Indian society for mother and was projecting himself as a leader who is well aware with the pain that the mother and parents undergoes whose child gets involved in drug addiction. It is through this move the leader was attempting to humanise the office of prime minister.

In his address on February 2015 to the students appearing for their class tenth, twelfth and competitive examinations, Modi made a direct attempt to situate himself within a domain of family²². Beginning his speech by narrating the incidents in such a fashion

²⁰ Ibid., 147-58.

²¹ Lexis Nexis, *Mann Ki Baat*, 148.

²² The idea of situating oneself as the member of family comes as a tactical move where the leader tries to project himself as one among the people, who has similar kind of life world or who is aware of the life world of the people, has similar experiences. But what makes the move tactical is the point of elevation from the situatedness which makes him the iconic leader.

as he is inside the house and observing everyone, PM wanted to make sure that his identification should be as a family member. As an insider to the house, Modi said,

Hello, my young friends. The entire day today, you must have probably been preoccupied with the ongoing cricket match. On the one hand, you have your exams and on the other, this world cup. You might also be asking your younger sister to tell you the score of the match from time to time. Sometimes you must be elated about the fact that holi is just around the corner and then suddenly you may get disappointed that even your holi festival will go for a toss. Why? Because your exams are approaching and I am sure you must be tense...your mother and father scold you and so do your teachers...whether it is class 10th or 12th, the whole year you must be hearing the things like- “get off the phone, switch off the TV, you are glued to the computer the whole day...”²³

But apart from that he also chooses to patronize the students and gain popularity in their eyes. Great leaders are loved by children. Modi wanted to situate himself in that list as a result he tried to befriend children.

But friends, I am there with you at this important juncture in your life...I don't know who primarily will benefit from this, but I will have satisfaction to know that I was there with my young friends on the most important occasion in their life and that I was sharing my inner feeling with them.²⁴

He urged the teacher, academicians to celebrate a week long programme as “Pariksha Divas”. Apart from befriending children, he took the opportunity for parenting the parents. He advised the parents with the long list of do's and don'ts that they should follow toward when they approach toward their ward.

He suggested students to compete with oneself rather than with anyone else. He asked the students to set goal for oneself and run after it with strong determination and resolve. Bringing the Buddhist philosophy of “Appo Deepo Bhava” be a light unto yourself, don't follow others, Modi was trying to teach some basic principles and moral values of life to the students.

It is my belief that one should recognise one's inner light, recognise one's own potential. Those who set themselves a new limit are the one who scales greater heights. Don't bother yourself with what the future will be. Also, leave the past. The present is what is important.²⁵

It helps us to understand how Modi was building upon the traditional sources of power. While in Anglo-american context after enlightenment, the idea of adulthood

²³ Lexis nexis, *Mann ki Baat*, .,173-83.

²⁴ *Ibid.*,176.

²⁵ *Ibid.*,178

and individuality gained primacy. In India even parents were advised with their approach toward children by PM. It was reminder of the fact that how prime minister was attempting to bring down himself from 7 Race Course to life world of an ordinary man.

The power behind Modi to connect with the people lies in his speeches. The speciality of his speeches is that he substantiates his arguments with common examples. So unlike Vajpayee who emphasized too heavily with the right use of words, Modi either deals in numbers which has immense enticing capacity or with common everyday examples, anecdotes, stories anecdotes while conversing with the students or he used the example of cricket and tried to convey his message.

A good batsman never thinks about his performance in the last match, or the last ball or for that matter what will be the outcome of the match. He only focuses on the particular ball at given point of time...you should also fix your mind in the present. There is only one formula to win. Live in and connect with the present. Victory will be yours.²⁶

Such kind of use of performative tool provides immediate connect with the audience. It strengthens the identification of the leader with the audience on immediate scale. The uniqueness of MKB programme was that through this he was transforming his presence from *vocal to physical*²⁷ creating a tangible relationship with the audience.

The multifaceted role that Modi assumed in MKB was to perpetuate his popularity as a leader. But apart from that he was also able to successfully draw multiple chains of equivalences. Thus while discoursing with the students he not only acted as a sincere parent or a family man or well wisher but also translated himself as a philosopher, guide or guru.

My dear friends, do you think that exams are meant to exhibit your capacity. If this is what you think then you are wrong. Whom do you have to show your capacity to? Whom do you need to demonstrate it to? You should understand that these exams are not to demonstrate your capacity, but to realise your own potential. If you make this basic mantra your calling, your confidence will get a new boost...my young friends appear in the examination with self confidence without getting nervous. Keep yourself away from the meaningless thoughts.. be successful not to defeat others, but to

²⁶ Ibid.,179

²⁷ The leader no more remains distant but appears to be sitting next to audience and listening the programme.

overcome your challenges; be successful for your own pleasure and be successful for bringing pleasure to the lives of others living in this world.²⁸

In the month of May 2015 when the results were out, conversing with the students he congratulated those who passed the examinations successfully and asked them to choose a career path cautiously so that they could transform their dream into reality, while advised failed students to learn from their failure. “To those who have not succeeded, I would like to tell them that success and failure is part of life. Those who consider failure as an opportunity will always be on the path to success. Those who give up in life can never reach heights of success. We should learn from our failures.”²⁹

He also advised parents to keep motivating their children. Thus one can see how tactically prime minister attempted to craft position in the family or private domain as the member of them. It was a unique strategy to legitimise his rule. Popularity among youth as a developmental leader, as a friend, philosopher was unique way of crafting the people. Modi was successfully implementing that. Projecting oneself as the kind hearted leader³⁰ who lives for everyone, thinks for everyone he was identifying himself with an image of saint. . In his election campaign he already crafted an image of a *FAKIR*, in “Mann Ki Baat” programme, he was elaborating upon it³¹.

It was to normalise the image of Modi as a common man leader, to humanise the office of prime minister and to elevate him from the common man’s world so that he could be seen as icon.

²⁸ Lexis Nexis, *Mann Ki Baat*, 179.

²⁹ Mann Ki Baat, May 2015, <https://www.NarendraModi.in/mann-ki-baat>.

³⁰ In the month of may 2015 Modi, during the time of scorching heat and suunny days began his speech saying that the people should protect themselves from heat. He advised people to drink enough water and cover oneself for protection from the heat. But apart from that, he also requested the people to take care of birds and animals and fulfil their requirements. He asked the parents to teach their children to put bowl of water for birds , it will not only relieve the birds but also will inculcate good habits amongst children.

³¹ While discussing upon the issue of road accident cases and visually challenged people one can note how the emphasis of Modi was to elaborate the saintly, kind hearted approach toward the people.

Recreating Heartland

Perpetuating popularity remained one aspect of “Mann Ki Baat” Programme, the programme also served as the avenue to propagate the message to the audience³². Modi crafted *the people* through Mann ki Baat programme. It happened by merging the governmental aspect of populism with the ideological variant.

While celebrating Pratiksha Utsav, Modi was trying to lure students and youths of the country turning examination into festival, through his social security schemes like Prime minister’s Suraksha Bima Yojna, Prime Minister Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojna and Atal Pension Yojna³³ he was attracting the poor people of this country. Speaking in month of May 2015 after inaugurating these policies prime minister said,

...my heart is always yearning to do something for poor. I always think of novel ideas and welcome suggestion from others in order to help the poor...no one could have imagined receiving Suraksha Bima Yojna by investing one rupee per month or 12 rs in a year. In order to get the benefits of Jeevan Jyoti Yojna, you need to invest rs. 330 in a year, which is less than a rupee per day. Therefore by using these benefits, the poor will not be dependent on others for their living. The poor will become independent and self confident. We are adopting different measure in this direction. I want to create an army of people, an army comprising poor people who will fight against poverty and defeat it.³⁴

His announcement of Jan Dhan Yojana, toilet schemes etc all were there in the name benefitting the poor people. What was interesting that through his announcement of these policies on the radio programme Prime Minister was educating about these policies to his audience directly from his mouth and creating an atmosphere that government is seriously engaged in dealing with the issues of people’s concern?

The larger message which Modi tried to convey to the countrymen especially poor people that how after his arrival conducive atmosphere for change and development has arrived. Modi highlighted a move away from the status quo. He was representing himself as harbinger of change, hope, prosperity and happiness. By highlighting the beneficiary of the changes on the one hand he was consolidating the people on the other he was adding new into his fold.

³² There is difference between audience and the people . audience consists of all or the potential supporters while the people are fixed constituency.

³³ These schemes has been dealt separately in the chapter, how they were targeted toward audience.

³⁴ Ibid.,

While poor remained one larger category to which Modi approached through “Mann Ki Baat” by publicizing his programmes and policies. One can dissect MKB further to understand how he was consciously approaching to different sections within the poor and non poor class.

Women and Girl Child

The discourses on women and girl child appeared frequently in Modi’s “Mann Ki Baat” programme. The reference to women while came in form of mothers and sisters, discourses on girl child emerged through “*Beti Bachao Bati Padhao Scheme*”. What needs to be noted that through the discourse on women and girl child, Modi attempted to connect with the people at emotional level. While discoursing upon drug abuse by young kids, to the matrydom of soldiers “*maa ka laal*”, “*maa ka dard*” figured prominently in Modi’s speeches. One can note similar kind of prominence of mother in Narendra Modi’s 2014 election campaign where he invoked “*Ganga maiya*”, “*Bharat Mata*”, “*Maa ka sapoot*”, “*garib maa ka beta*”. A serious question that needs investigation is in what manner the invocation of “women as mother-sister” helped Modi to garner and consolidate support.

In Indian society the eulogisation of mother is always approached with glory. She is considered as epitome of several virtues like prosperity, purity, humility, sacrifice, love, care, bravery. On the other hand an imagery of delicate, soft, sensible, vulnerable women is also deeply attached to her along with the attachment of patriarchal value like pride and honour. Modi approached to women especially mothers, sisters in those entire possible manner. He projected himself as a patriarch, as a caring son, as a loving brother and established connect with myriad variety of emotion cutting across caste and class. While this remained one strategy to mobilise *the people*, he also took recourse toward policies and programmes. While speaking on Suraksha Yojna, he appealed all the brothers, husbands and fathers to gift policies to their women in the house. On the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, he asked brothers to gift one policy to their sisters making Raksha bandhan equivalent as Suraksha Bandhan.

I have a thought which I want to put forth before you. Raksha bandhan falls in the month of August. Can't we start a massive movement before this festival and make every women, be they our mother and sister, a part of this thereby giving them benefit under this insurance scheme.³⁵

With this invocation of traditional authority where a brother gives gift and promises security to her sister, Modi created his people cutting across caste, class, gender as it remained widely upheld patriarchal values in Indian society.³⁶

Similarly raising the concern over female foeticide especially in North India, Narendra Modi initiated Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, giving it a mass mobilising character by adding a programme #selfiewithdaughter, which was initiated by Sunil Jaglan, a Sarpanch in the Bibipur village of Haryana. Speaking on the occasion of inaugurating the programme at Panipat, PM said

If we do not become aware and compassionate about this problem, we will be setting a dangerous precedent for future generations. The message has to go to every family, village and state in India...Our mental illness is responsible for this. We give a lot of importance to boys. Many women also do this. For how long will we look at girls as 'paraya dhan', From our mindset, we belong to the 18th century. We are not fit to be called people from the 21st century. In the 18th century, the girl child was allowed to see the mother's face and then put in a milk utensil to kill her. We are worse as we kill our girls in the womb and don't let them be born.³⁷

Scolding the doctors who are involved in aborting girl child Modi said "Why earn money from killing girls in the womb...Hope your hands, with which you eat food, are not coloured in someone's blood." And thus making an emotional appeal he tried to connect with the people "Like a beggar (bhikshu), this PM is begging you for the life of girls." He administered a pledge from all men and women and thus situated himself among *the people*.

Here again PM took recourse to traditional tropes to command obedience from the people. The use of saintly image becomes important in that aspect. Saints in Indian society represents both an epitome of sacrifice i.e., who had left all material pleasures

³⁵ Lexis Nexis, *Mann Ki Baat*, 235.

³⁶ Patriarchy and patriarchal values cuts across stratifications prevalent in Indian society. Modi was well aware of that. By repackaging patriarchy in language of love, care and security Modi was delving on the traditional power structure and attempting to build the people on that basis.

³⁷ INAS, "Panipat's fourth battle: PM launches 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign, *Business Standard* 22 January 2015, https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/panipat-s-fourth-battle-pm-launches-beti-bachao-beti-padhao-campaign-115012200850_1.html.

and taken up life of meditation and also as a figure whose wrath can destroy and dismantle anyone. They command huge respect (out of reverence or fear) in Indian society due to both these imageries. Narendra Modi projected himself in the garb of these saintly images several times. During his election campaign, while he used populist trope of “fakir” delineating others as submerged in indulgence. In MKB he projected himself as beggar “bhikshu”³⁸ to invoke compassion among the people toward girl child. Thus, the operation of manageability of contradiction heavily premised itself upon the traditional sources of authority during Narendra Modi’s regime projected himself as a patriarch, as a caring son, as a loving brother.

He returned to the issue of women and girl child in several other ways. while conversing upon the toilet schemes he brought in the discourse of women and girl child defecating in open spaces, similarly while talking about Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojna, PM invoked the plight of women, mother especially, her hardship, the damages which she incur on her health while cooking food through firewood. He narrated the story of her own mother, how in a small house, full of smoke she used to cook food and serve food to her children. Since he was aware of the plight and hardship, the scheme was basically to redeem women (mother) from the hardship.

Farmers

The question of farmers figured centrally in the election campaign of Narendra Modi. In his election speeches he raised issues of farmers prominently and blamed the UPA government for maintaining negligence toward the concern of that section which feeds the entire country. The approach toward farmers in election speeches remained emotional as he vehemently criticised the government for its inaction on farmer’s suicide and apathy of the government towards the plight of farmers. He took up the issue of insufficient subsidies, poor irrigation condition, lack of storages facilities etc. and reiterated several times that congress party is the biggest enemy of farmers. He popularised the slogan of “*Mar jawan Mar Kisan*” and attached it with the policy and programmes of congress party and its intention. It is through this way Modi brought farmers into the chain of equivalence and mustered their support in 2014 elections.

³⁸ Ibid.,235.

However, after coming to power the major task of the government was to consolidate this section. Since the nature of the demands were too complicated and unlike other areas where Modi gave a readymade solution to tackle with the problem. The tactics of Narendra Modi varied significantly when he dealt with farmer's issue.

He took up the issues of farmers in MKB programme for the first time in the month of March 2015. He began his speech saying that he was aware of the issues farmers were facing in the country and lamented on their condition. Modi said "despite bearing much misery myself, I cannot imagine what you have gone through in your life."³⁹ It was a significant move by Modi, he attempted to situate himself among the farmer section. Populist leader takes recourse to this strategy of projecting oneself as one among the people. It helps them to strengthen identification on the ground that the leader is aware of their problem and has the capacity to solve this⁴⁰.

When Modi raised the issues of irrigation, lack of infrastructure and other facilities prevailing in the agriculture sector, he was projecting his awareness with the problems of farmers. When he said

I feel so embarrassed when I read your letters and think about what we have done so far. I have no answer to this question. What we have done? My chief goal is empowering farmers. I will try my best to bring a change and would awaken the slumbering government to work in the most appropriate manner. This will be my primary focus and that is a promise from my side.⁴¹

He was reflecting his extraordinary capacity and trying to draw a chain of equivalence projecting himself as messiah who will redeem them from their miseries.

What is interesting to observe that during his discussion on the issues of farmers, Modi constantly pointed toward Congress regime and its incapacity toward dealing with the issues. While such does not remained the case explicitly while he dealt with other issues but in the case of farmers congress, bureaucracy, judiciary and other institutions figured as "the other" prominently. One of the reasons can be cited that Modi wanted the farmers to realise that their issue is complicated and unlike other it can't have a quick solution, though he is trying hard to achieve it.

³⁹ Lexis Nexis, *mann ki baat*, 184-85.

⁴⁰ The capacity to resolve the problem comes from the projection that the leader is not only ordinary but extra ordinary.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 187-88.

The strategy adopted by Modi to deal with the complicated problems like farmers issue was to merge ideological populism with governmental populism⁴². On the one hand he created the enemy in form of congress, bureaucracy, and judiciary on the other he went on to distribute patronage and convert them into clients of the regime. It is through blending of both these variant of populism Modi was attempting to bring farmers under the fold of “the people.”

Ideological Variant: creating “the People” and “the Other”

In his first address to the farmers after becoming the prime minister, Modi took up the issue of land Acquisition bill. In his entire speech he made an enormous attempt to directly bring the government perspective and the perspective of the opposition before farmers. He tried to convince the farmers that the policy of land acquisition which his government was trying to bring was in their interest and better than the land acquisition bill brought by congress in 2013, yet, Congressmen were opposing the bill because they never wanted the interest of farmers to be served,

In the year 2013, a new law was passed in haste. We too supported this law, extending our full support to the government. If a law benefits the farmers, who would not support it, so we too supported the law. But after the initiation of the law, some grave concerns arose in our minds and we felt that in this way, we would be betraying the hopes of our farmers...we found that no state was ready to implement the law except the state of Haryana and Maharastra, which, under congress rule, had implemented the law, proclaiming themselves to be the well wisher of the farmer. They brought an ordinance and decided to pay only half the decided amount as the compensation to farmers. What kind of justice is this for farmers?⁴³

Highlighting the drawbacks of the previous bill, Modi explained the rational for the 2014 land acquisition ordinance.

Now I will speak of the most primary drawback, which you will all find quite astonishing. All those, who have self proclaimed well wisher of farmers, are not ready to give any answer to the questions. Are you all aware that there are 13 different laws in our country through which most of our country’s land like the railways, national highways and minefields is acquired. 13 areas have been excluded from the law, which, means land could have been taken without the consent of the farmer. The farmer would receive the same compensation as they would receive under the previous law. When this law was passed, many in the government too raised their voice against it...this law can be useful, it was said, only to fill the treasury of the officer and for their enjoyment,

⁴² Governmental populism while refers to the programmes and policies of the government and regime which is distributed to targeted people to derive clientalism. While ideological populism means discursively creating the people by creating the other through drawing the chain of equivalence.

⁴³ Ibid.

to promote red tapism. If this was the truth, then apt Modification should be done or not? Thus we have tried to eliminate the drawbacks of the law and work in the direction of betterment of farmers.

Modi tried to explain the difference of land acquisition ordinance with the previous bill on the aforesaid rational and attempted to create “the people”.

My dear farmer brother and sisters, I can't even think of committing the sin. In the year 2013, under the dispensation of previous government, the compensation which was decided has not been Modified a bit. We have decided to provide four times the compensation than the provided earlier. Not only this, we have also included the 13 areas which were which were excluded in the earlier law. We have also continued with the clause that in the case of acquisition of land for development of the city, the land owners will receive 20% of developed land, so that they are benefitted financially at all times. The youth of the family gets a job. We have also decided to provide employment to children of farmer where the district authorities will have to make an announcement on who will be employed from the family, in what field they will be employed and what will be their work location. The government will have to provide written announcements for the same.

On the question of land being appropriated more than what is required, PM clarified through MKB that “proper survey will be conducted and then will it be decided, so that more land is not required.” on the question of social impact, which remained one of the central controversial aspect of 2014 land ordinance, PM clarified,

In the name of social impact assessment if these judicial proceedings are carried on for several years, how can the farmer take the right decision in this situation? He can't decide whether to grow crops in the field, as he is in the fix, since he will keep anticipating that the judgement may come any day. This will lead to two to four years of loss and things would be stuck due to red tapism.

PM made this as an excuse to bring relaxation in the law of Impact Assessment. He tried to convince the farmers saying that “due to long and difficult judicial proceedings, a poor farmer is forced to beg before the officers to get his work done,- ‘sir, please write this....’ I don't want my farmers to fall prey to these officers”. PM Modi also tried to convey the message that there are rumours being spread around land acquisition ordinance. He advised the farmers to shield themselves from this conspiracy as it is being spread by the same agent who have blocked the opportunities for the farmers throughout their rule.

I would like to request you all not to fall prey to these rumours. These rumours are absolutely against farmer rumours. It is part of the conspiracy of keeping farmers poor, like it in the past. This is part of the conspiracy of not letting country progress. We have to save ourselves from this conspiracy and save our country and our farmer as well.

By turning down the criticism of opposition in terms of conspiracy, Modi was dealing with the technicalities of the ordinance where his government was trying to rope in big reform for instance changing the time limit of unused land from fixed five years to completion of project, the complete negligence over the question of consent. For these major changes he required an opposition whom he can project as “enemy” and rope in reforms. In his speeches while upturning the opposition as conspirator he was trying to evade the contradictory aspect of the land ordinance and create consent for it.

Governmental Populism: Developing Clientalism

Apart from these aspects of dealing with the technicalities and trying to give clarification to the farmers on land acquisition ordinance, Modi also attempted to induce hope and aspiration among the farmers. By counting upon the advantages of land acquisition he said, it will bring more opportunities, employment and modern infrastructure into play. Farmers will get benefitted as their children will get employment, the transportation and communication will increase connecting villages with small and big cities. These all will enhance the economic activities of farmers and will increase their access to market.

If we make road and the government establishes industrial corridor next to it, which is not private. I reiterate that a corridor by the government, is not for the rich or industrialist, so, if the government makes the corridor on the left or right of 50-100 km road, then all the resident of nearby villages- maybe 50,100-200 villagers falling along it will have an opportunity for employment, their kin will get employment.

Giving an emotional touch to his policy and trying to connect emotionally with the farmers, Modi invoked the question “tell me dear brothers and sisters, do we want children of our village to suffocate in the slums of delhi or Mumbai. Should not they get an employment closer to their home with in 20-25 km from their village?”

Thus by portraying himself as the “well wisher”, authentic representative of the farmer, projecting the opposition as the enemy/ conspirator, Modi was attempting to seek legitimacy for the most controversial bill on land acquisition. He was tactically banking upon the problematic aspect of the bill and trying to blend it in terms of four fold compensation, easy consent, speedy implementation, employment generation etc. was attempting to mobilise the opinions of the farmers so that the blockade over the bill from opposition could be cleared.

In other words he was trying to generate the consent from the section which was going to be impactful. While communicating directly on the policy to the section which was going to be impacted he was sending the message to the opposition that “I am not individual, I am the people”⁴⁴. It is evident from Modi’s statement when he says,

I want to assure you that through whatever you have written to me, I will shake the entire government and will make them see the reality about what is actually happening at the ground level. I am happy that you have told me so many things and I believe you have told me all this because you trust me. I want to assure you that I will not shatter your faith. I desire your love and blessing at all times. You are the elders of the nation and can never think of wrong of others. You may suffer losses for other benefits. This has been your tradition.

Thus putting himself in the shoe of the true representative he also sought to install sovereignty among the people. On the other hand he tactically elevated himself out of the shoe and reminded farmers their tradition of sacrifice and their willingness to rally around him. It is a typical style of through which populist operates. Panniza writes “against the corruption of politics, populism offers a promise of emancipation after a journey of sacrifice.”⁴⁵

The voice of the farmer figured centrally on several other occasions which represent how forcefully he was trying to induce governmental populism. On the issue of rain water harvesting, PM time and again dealt not only with the ways to tackle water scarcity but also how it is going to increase water level which will benefit the farmers. He even suggested changing method of farming for the farmers and advised them to sow the crop which is favourable to their soil condition and water level content. What is interesting is to look at the policies through which he tried to convert farmers as the people. He talked about Soil Health Card through which farmers will get acquainted about the available nutrients in the soil and the crop which they can harvest. Apart from that PM also talked about “Fasal Bima Yojna” under which he tried to insure the crop for the farmers in both Rabi and Kharif season. He brought the discourse of electrification and Pradhan Mantri Seechai Yojna to provide irrigation to the fields of farmer. The famous slogan “*Har Khet Ko Pani*”, “More Drop Per Crop” was coined by prime minister to assure farmer that he is going to take up issues of farmers

⁴⁴ Hugo Chavez used this in light of getting consensus for his policies.

⁴⁵ Francisco Panniza, *Populism and the mirror of Democracy*, p. 23.

concern seriously. Modernisation of agriculture remained a prominent theme of Narendra Modi. He tried to alleviate the farmers and connect with the technology so that they could feel empowered. By launching a “Kisan Suvidha App”⁴⁶, he tried to make Farmers tech friendly and include them as participant of PM digital India campaign. It was an attempt to build sense of empowerment among farmers. Since, farmers were technologically deprived, a change in their orientation would have made them feel empowered and they would have been thankful to Modi.

The primary line of difference which Modi drew from the previous UPA government was the specific identification of the problem and proper advertisement of the solution which they tried to devise in terms of policies. It is not like that UPA regime was failed to identify the specific problems but Modi was tactically dissecting the problems and advertising it to the targeted audience so that they could remember the policies and feel empowered.

The most interesting strategy adopted by Modi to announce the policies was in terms of gifts, so that no one claim it as their right. Be it Suraksha Bima Yojna, kisan suvidha app or subsidies on gas, Modi time and again reiterated it as the *gift from the leader*. It was a method to draw personalised clientalism.

Dalits

Dalits and marginalised too were under the influence of Narendra Modi. Though till 2016, direct reference to Dalits and marginalised were not made by him in “Mann Ki Baat” programmes but he touched upon their issue indirectly several times. For the first time he referred to Dalits was on the occasion of 125th birth anniversary of Baba Saheb Ambedkar. But before highlighting the plight and works needed to be done to uplift Dalit, he talked about his contribution. The rigour and pain which he took to allocate land where Baba Saheb Memorial would be built and plan to build International Center for Baba Saheb. By projecting BR Ambedkar and himself at the

⁴⁶ Under kisan suvidha app farmers would be able to directly communicate with agriculture scientist, will be able to know the prices of crop, condition of market. They were supposed to download the app in their mobile and with a click the information would be revealed to them.

center⁴⁷ he was trying to identify directly with the Dalits and subaltern masses and convert them in “*the people*”.

In 2014 elections Modi was able to an extent attract the vote of Dalit. Now it was time for Modi to consolidate the Dalit section. He emphasized upon the plight of Dalit society

even today there are families in our country that are forced to carry garbages on their head. Is it not the matter of disgrace that some of the families have to carry the garbages on their head? With all earnestness, I said at the government forum that we have to get ourselves free from this blot in the year when we are commemorating Baba saheb Ambedkar’s 125th birth anniversary. Now the time has changed we will not tolerate a situation where poor will have to take loads of garbages on their heads.⁴⁸

What is interesting to note that while discoursing upon the category of “Dalits”, the word Dalit was replaced by poors and then it was poor which was subsequently used in place of alit. It can be read as a strategy of how political mobilises the social collectivities.

Emphasizing upon education as the only medium for the upliftment of Dalit, Modi said “we must pledge on the occasion of Babsaheb Ambedkar that there must be no sons or daughters of the poor who remain illiterate in our villages, cities and localities.”⁴⁹ Thus choosing Babsaheb as his vantage point, Modi tried to build and consolidate the people among dalit masses. The attempt of Bhartiya Janta Party has been to appropriate Babasaheb Ambedkar and identify him with Narendra Modi ensuring inclusion of the dalit masses. It is evident when Modi announced that Maharashtra government has bought the place in London where Ambedkar used to stay and it would be converted into International Research Center. But apart from this symbolic representation which Modi attempted to provide by eulogising Baba Saheb Ambedkar no other concrete policies and programmes were suggested.

⁴⁷ It is evident from the fact that while talking about the construction of international center for Babsaheb he said “ the matter which was pending for years I completed it and laid the foundation stone of the memorial. I have pledged to finish the work in 20 months, a work which did not happen for 20 years.”

⁴⁸ Lexis Nexis, *Mann Ki Baat*, p.310.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.334.

Middle Class

Middle class remained one of the dearest sections to Prime Minister Narendra Modi whom he approached in multifaceted way to mobilise them as well as convert them into “the people”. Although any strict categorisation or definition of this class is difficult to make, one can locate the appeals through the pronouncement of specific emotions and policies that were brought by Modi to seduce the middle class.

In the elections of 2014, Modi strongly built upon the narrative of inefficiency of congress leadership, backwardness in terms of slow growth rate, lack of job opportunities, unemployment, poverty etc. to carve constituency among middle class. He projected his strong and decisionist image and made promises to redeem middle class from these challenges⁵⁰. It was on that promise of “Achhe din” a matrix of hope and redemption middle class supported Narendra Modi in 2014.

Post elections, it was time for prime minister to deliver. Prime minister roped in wide varieties of issues to mobilise and consolidate this class.

From discourses of nationalism to Swachh Bharat movement, Green India mission and tree plantation to safe driving advices, diabetes and dengue to international yoga day, digital India to cashless economy, stand up India and start up India to make in India, smart cities, India’s mars mission to prime mister visit in several nation all these remained central issues through which middle class was approached by prime minister.

Dealing on these issues PM reflected several avatars. While promoting “Swachh Bharat Movement”, PM dealt extensively on the physical cleanliness pertaining to hygiene and day to day life of the people which attracted middle class profoundly because they hold strong aversion to the dirt and filth. The advises shared on precaution from diseases, to protect oneself from heat, the emphasis upon physical fitness reminds special purpose which Modi was serving. It is difficult to locate any other Prime Minister conversing upon these issues in such a manner. It was a subtle politics for maintaining a paternalistic image.

⁵⁰ The challenges can be read especially in terms of anger-anxiety as well as to fulfil the aspiration of the middle class. While suggesting people to take care of their health, to planting trees, clean environment all were middle class concern which Modi invoked in paternalistic sense.

In Indian society, the paternalistic image operates with different complexity. Father commands undisputed obligation from their children. The image of father remains unchallenged despite all the problems and differences the child faces within the family. The paternal imagery of Modi was to derive undisputed authority to rule. It can also be read from the minute dissection of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan. Though it's a social programme to maintain cleanliness but its political implication may be read as an attempt to create divide between social and political and make the people realise that all the dirt and filth exists within the domain of social. So, social needs purification. Political is clean with the arrival of leader as a result the sphere to question political does not exist. Such a kind of approach aligns with the tendency of middle class in India. While they represent modern value at economic level at the level of culture its blend of both modern and traditional. Modi's traditional approach as non-questioning father or patriarch appeals them, while they also find Modi their economic aspiration as a result, their seduction increases toward him.

Although this remains one set of interpretation to analyse Modi's health, hygiene, sanitation, disease, fitness concern which had strong attraction to middle class. Another set of powerful interpretation comes from Benjamin Moffit who argues that in doing populism the leader just not project himself only as the representative of the people but as the incarnation of the people. Since the leader is strong, virile, macho, he can't represent weak, unhealthy and timid people⁵¹. It is ultimately the health of the people which represents the health of the leader and ultimately the health of the political. They all need to be strong, fit and healthy. The emphasis of Modi time and again on the health, fitness, yoga, exercises can be read from this perspective that there exists strong emphasis on body politic.

Apart from health and fitness concern which undoubtedly remains the major concern of middle class, Modi approached to mobilise middle class in two more specific ways i.e. through consumerism and nationalism. At times nationalism was pitched independently to mobilise the middle class at certain juncture it was merged with consumerism. When Modi, talked about spending time with jawans at Siachen during the festival of Deepawali, he was invoking a nationalistic fervour. He made middle class realise that they all were celebrating the festival because of their Armymen who

⁵¹ Benjamin Moffit, *The Global Rise Of Populism*, p.64-65.

sacrifices their lot of happiness for the sake of nation and it was Narendra Modi who thought to be with them during this festive time. With this move Narendra Modi carved out a special position of strongly dedicated nationalistic prime minister, whose worries and anxiety goes beyond electoral gains and benefits and thinks of nation and its saviour first. Apart from that, such a move of Narendra Modi also placed moral obligation upon middle class to think beyond their own immediate interest in the interest of nation.

It is based upon this same moral obligation the idea of consumerism and nationalism was also repackaged together by Narendra Modi. When he advocated use of khadi or Earthen lamps during deepawali to increase the productivity of the products so that people engaged in the production would benefit, he was advocating consumerism on the one hand mixed in the language of nationalism as it will help those poor people engaged in these profession. The language was highly moralistic on the one hand on the other he was redeeming middle class from the sense of guilt that they only think about themselves and made them participant in the progression of nation.

Similarly when he talked about “Gold Monetisation Scheme”, he appealed middle class to deposit the gold in the bank against which interest would be paid to them. This on the one hand would help them to minimise the security concern of their gold saving and on the other hand would pay them interest and enhance their profit on it. Moreover, he also talked about sovereign gold bonds and encouraged people to buy them from banks. According to prime minister the sovereign bonds which would be in form of sheet of papers will be equivalent to gold and whenever the owner wants to sell it, he can sell it according to the price of that gold on that day. By introducing this schemes PM was relieving middle class from the security concern of their possession and was also maximising their profit. While this seemed to be one aspect of it on the other side he was also maximising the gold reserve of the nation. When the people will deposit their gold in the banks the value of the currency will get stronger as the government can melt it and pledge it as the collateral to raise the rupee which it can further invest in raising infrastructure and enhancing the domain of market. Secondly, the import export balance of gold in India is negative, since the consumption of gold is high in India as it is used on several occasions like wedding, festival etc. GOI has to import gold from other countries. By appropriating the gold in its reserve it can

increase the circulation of indigenous gold and can reduce the burden from the government to buy gold from other countries paying heavy amounts in terms of dollar. The contribution of middle class would be immense in the development of nation if they deposit their gold with the bank. Modi tried to dispatch that message when he was talking about the gold monetisation scheme. Secondly, by associating national emblem on gold coins he was developing a sense of pride and honour in the consumption schema of middle class⁵². When Modi said,

...I feel very glad to tell you that we are introducing a gold coin with ashok chakra. It has been around 70 years since independence but we are still using foreign gold coins or gold bullion which are still used by the foreigners. Why should it not have the national emblem of our country?

A sense of nationalistic pride was invoked by Modi and attempt was made to connect with middle class in all these possible manner.

Modi developed an art of providing readymade solution to the problems. It was a typical middle class tendency for approaching and quickly fixing the problem. Middle class lacks patience, they are always in paucity and tries to fix the problem as soon as possible. It comes from the fact that their engagement with global corporate capital is so intense that the time to reflect barely remains with them. As Harvey points out under Post Fordism era, “time” has come under the domain of competition, by minimising the time of reproduction of capital profit is ensured. Given in that context, any problem, whatever their complication may be needs to be addressed through “just in time approach”. Narendra Modi in a way was providing that. Through this “just in time approach” he was dealing with the complex issues like diversity. “Run for india”, can be read in that light, where running on tracks would integrate the country and foster “unity in diversity”. While discussing upon ‘Ekta Ki Daud’ programme during the month of October which also happens to be birth anniversary of Sardar Patel, Modi said,

since many years, ‘Run for unity’ programmes have been organised in various parts of the country on 31st October, ‘Ekta Ki Daud’. I had chance to run in one of these earlier. I have heard this year also the race is being planned at many places. People are excited to be part of this race. In the true sense, ‘Ekta Ki Daud’ is the true race for development. In other words the guarantee for the race of development lies in the race

⁵² Modi on the same day announced to put national emblem on the gold on the occasion of deepawali.

of unity. Come, let's pay the tribute to Sardar Sahib. Let's move forward with the mantra of unity.⁵³

Empowering middle class has been another central notion of Narendra Modi. He ensured empowerment of middle class through publicizing yoga campaign. On the one hand yoga is related to health concern on the other by publicizing yoga at international level to the extent that United Nations declared 21st June international yoga day, Modi tried to install sense of empowerment among Indian middle class. During his election campaign he repeatedly said India has to lead the world, yoga in that sense offered the opportunity to lead the world. Modi said,

...it is matter of great pride and honour for India...in past, when it was decided to celebrate the birthday of Nelson Mandela, 165 countries become co sponsors. Before that the efforts were on international toilet day and 122 nations become co sponsors of that initiative. For celebrating 2nd October as non violence day 140 countries became co sponsors. But 177 countries co sponsoring yoga is a world record of sorts.

Thus by bringing India in top of list be it sports, yoga, World Bank report etc. Modi was empowering the middle class which draws sense of pride from nation and nationalism. It is precisely one of the reasons why nation and nationalism figured prominently under the regime of Narendra Modi.

Appeal to Youth

Appeal to middle class also incorporated, appeal to youth. Modi mobilised both section on similar pattern. One of the reason, one can cite is both middle class and youth suffered from same anger, anxiety and aspirational matrix, which remained prevalent in middle class. He mobilised upon these aspect to bring under them his fold.

In his election campaign Modi touched upon the issues of unemployment, corruption, lack of opportunities, absence of skill development programmes etc. and against this unstable order promised change and stability. After election it was time for Modi to deliver.

He knew that more than 40% of the population of India was below 35 years age group and as election data shows they were the largest supporter of Modi in 2014

⁵³ Lexis Nexis, *Mann ki baat*, p.268.

elections. Modi at any cost would not have let this section slip out of his hand as a result he constantly harped upon both the governmental and ideological aspect of populism to maintain youth under the fold of the people.

While Start Up India, Stand Up India, digital India, abolition of interviews from grade B, C and D level examinations were the programmatic avenues to draw and to maintain the unity of youth. Modi also took recourse to discursive articulation and performance to bring youth under his fold. His entire image of tech savy leader⁵⁴, as a politician who has great passion for science and technology⁵⁵, as a modern and fashionable politician⁵⁶, helped Modi to attract youth.

The entire imagery of developmental man was to attract the middle class youth whose aspiration was to get included in the structure of the capitalist world. The promotion of stand up India and start up India⁵⁷ was an initiative that anyone can be entrepreneur, can have corporate lifestyle if they realise their potential in correct manner.

What commands attention is that Modi tactically located the entire task of development upon the shoulder of youth and state was turned into mere facilitator whose task was to eradicate bureaucratic hassles and red tapism⁵⁸. The public sector jobs were reduced and generating self employment and employment for others became the mantra for the government. Through this Modi was able to successfully

⁵⁴ Modi's reach on social media like twitter, facebook, instagram gave him wide popularity among youth. His emphasis on digitalisation, e management of bureaucratic works, e commerce redeemed youth from bureaucratic hassles and red tapism. Even in Mann ki Baat programme he strongly advocated people to respond on My Gov. App, emails. This created strong attraction of Narendra Modi among youth.

⁵⁵ The passion for science and technology was immensely projected by Narendra Modi. He kept on congratulating the countrymen and the scientist community on each and every achievement made by scientist.

⁵⁶ It is evident from the way Modi dressed, his hairstyle, his beard, his larger than life image. All of these aspects helped him to develop identification with masses.

⁵⁷ Though stand up India and start up India were first time announced by the prime minister from the red fort on 15th august 2015, the programme caters different masses differently. While stand up India is related to providing assistance for entrepreneurship to women and sc/st up to ten lakh in general and only one person one crore from each branch of the bank. Start up programme is defined according to DIPP as an entity headquartered in India, operational within 7 years and have a turnover of 25 crore annually. Such enterprise can be registered under start up programme. Government provided several benefits to start up ranging from tax exemption for three years to self certification. The idea is to encourage youth in taking up their innovative ideas and give colours to their dreams. While stand up India was to promote middle class within dalit start up India was a general policy.

⁵⁸ It was not like congress or UPA did not advocate neo liberal reform but the pace through which it was initiated and the grand publicity which the programmes and policies got made it popular among the youth.

develop sense of participation and empowerment in the youth. During a joint addressal with Barrack Obama, he encouraged them by introducing a slogan “youths, unite the world”⁵⁹ and requested them to be active participant in electoral and democratic process. Such an emphasis over youth played a significant role in earning the people for Narendra Modi.

Mann Ki Baat: Restoring the Lost Paradise

Developing the sense of empowerment among the people remains the fundamental task of populist leader⁶⁰. One need to clearly delineate the idea that the empowerment of the people as citizen is one thing where concern for rights, demand of equality and freedom figures prominently, but empowering the people is other. The people as a category are always a manufactured lot who significance has to be established in order to perpetuate a populist regime. Making the people believe that their wisdom, their centrality, their presence is always taken care of becomes primary for the populist regime.

Narendra Modi successfully delivered on that aspect. Declaring himself as the Pradhan Sevak, a Chowkidaar and not Pradhan Mantri can be read as the primary move through which a sense a sense of empowerment among the people was fostered. Alongside that, through “Mann Ki Baat” several avenues were searched for through which Modi tried to empower people. By asking for the suggestion from the people of what prime minister should speak from red fort on 15th august can be read as another instance of empowering the people. No other prime minister ever in India asked suggestion on the content of his speech from countrymen. Modi was establishing a different trend. Moreover, MKB was the programme through which Modi presented his report card to the people every month. Such has never been the tendency of any prime minister to present report card directly to the people that too in every month, Modi was delivering on that.

⁵⁹ It was built upon the slogan of Karl Marx- workers of the world unite.

⁶⁰ From scholars like Edward schils to willianm kornhauser has extensively dealt upon this aspect. How populism performs by developing sense of empowerment among the people.

Modi gave divinely status to the people. It is in response of praising the people Modi said,

In a democracy, the power of the people is of great importance. This thought has been fundamental to my thinking and that is why i have immense faith in the power of the people. But with “Mann Ki Baat” whatever I was taught, whatever I was explained, seems only the half truth because the experiences I had have made me realise that the power of the people is immeasurable and it far exceeds that our thinking. Our ancestors would say that there is divine element in each individual. My experience of “Mann Ki Baat” has made me realise that the thinking of our ancestor was very authoritative and had great authenticity in it, as I have myself experienced it.⁶¹

“Mann Ki Baat” programme was the medium through which he was engaging with the people. After a series of monologues, he developed a new pattern in which he only responded to the question or suggestions made to him through letters or on my Gov App. This was a unique method where he was prioritising the people. It is also evident when on record he went to the extent of saying that political leader should know how to trust the people and the masses more than they trust themselves⁶². It is only then they would come out of their preconceived conceptions of problems and solution that the people faces and requires as the remedy. Speaking on the issue of how people voluntarily left the gas subsidies Modi said,

I would like to salute those one crore families. I humbly bow to them because they have compelled political leader to think of coming up with something new. This has also forced the economist of the country to think differently. Even global economic expert who used to live in a world of their own calculations would find this phenomenon to be beyond the limit of traditional wisdom...imagine the quantum of the achievement of one crore families giving up their subsidy on gas cylinder and in return one crore poor families getting gas cylinders with that money which is saved from the subsidy given up by one crore families. Externally it may appear small incident, but its extraordinary lesson is that if you place faith in the people, it leads to most striking achievements⁶³.

This is how Modi maintained centrality of the people.

The idea that Narendra Modi was trying to induce reflects what Carl Sandburg in his poem once remarked,

I am the people-the mob- the crowd-the mass. Do you know that all the great works of the world is done through me? I am the workingman, the inventor, the maker of the world’s food and clothes. I am the audience that witness history. The napoleons come

⁶¹ Lexis Nexis, ,*Mann Ki Baat*,197.

⁶² Ibid, p.346.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 347.

from me and the Lincons. They die. And then I send forth more Napoleons and Lincons.

Modi portrayed himself in the similar fashion. By acquiring varied political style, he was creating the people and assuring their representation in his empty signifier. He was redrawing the contract with his constituency. Mann Ki Baat provided him the avenue to connect with different sections of the society and perpetuate his popularity, recreate or consolidate the heartland which he created in 2014 and ensure sense of empowerment to the people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the thesis began with two major claims a) populism is permanent feature of Indian politics, b) it operates through manageability of contradiction, where manageability takes place in both the form, i.e., reconciliation of the conflict or prolongation and generation of conflict. Unlike the West European, American or Latin American experiences, where attempts has been to understand populism and populist politics as conjunctural, which emerged due to failure of liberal democratic politics to incorporate the demands of varied section of society. In India, roots of populism exist permanently in terms of both material and non material demands and conditions which manifest itself in terms of crises and contradictions.

It is with these claims operating in the background, the attempt of this thesis has been to study Narendra Modi phenomenon i.e., his style of leadership, the role of organisation in Making of Modi and the use of communication methods and technologies for the perpetuation of his popularity and regime at large.

Having analysed nuances of the performances of the leader i.e., Narendra Modi, his use of organisation both formal and informal and Mann Ki Baat programme as a unique method of communication to establish direct connect with the people, through use of the radio. It can be concluded that the modus operandi of Modi's populism has certain elements of continuity and discontinuity from the past experiences of operation of populism in India.

Continuity

The elements of continuity can be drawn in the formal structure through which populism has operated in India especially at the level of Center. Modi's populism reflects both intermix of governmental and ideological aspect of populism. In that case, Modi stands close to Mrs. Gandhi⁶⁴ whose regime was also marked by the same

⁶⁴ This work is not a comparative study of Narendra Modi and Mrs. Gandhi. The reference to Mrs. Gandhi becomes important because she also manifest the same brand of populism that Mr. Modi manifests.

intermix of both the variant of populism. At the level of governmental populism, Mrs. Gandhi sought Nationalisation of banks, green revolution along with several poverty schemes targeted to benefit the scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, women and children. Similar is the case of Narendra Modi. Through his programmes and policies like Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojna, PM Fasal Bima Yojna, Direct Benifit Transfer Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala scheme, Modi attempted to reach to the farmers, women, poor.

At ideological level, while 20 point programmes, Garibi Hatao were the rhetoric through which Mrs. Gandhi tried to create “the people.” For Modi too, development (Sabka Sath Sabka Vikash, Ache Din Aane Wale Hai) were the rhetoric which prominently to create “the people”.

Apart from that certain trends which Mrs. Gandhi established (as elaborated by chatterjee)⁶⁵ also ran close to Modi. For instance, Mrs. Gandhi established a form of state populism in which power was centralized in a single leader, no alternative leadership was allowed to emerge within the ruling party and benefit schemes were implemented through a politicized bureaucracy. Similar has been the case with Modi, apart from him, there is only Amit Shah in the party who commands so much power and most of the work in Modi’s regime is also done through highly politicized bureaucracy.

Second, the personality of the leader was projected through the state and party media as a benevolent protector of the poor and the underprivileged⁶⁶. Both the private and public media operated on similar pattern to create the image of Modi. Third, despite the apparently socialist-sounding rhetoric, actual policies did not necessarily conform to any specific economic ideology since large corporate houses, big landowning farmers and the urban middle classes largely dependent on the state sector, all had to be kept within the ruling class coalition⁶⁷. Modi, has strong aversion for socialist rhetoric but his policies attempts to incorporate different sections of the society. It has

⁶⁵ The features of Mrs. Gandhi’s regime has been directly reffered from chatterjee’s work which he presented at seminar organised at CSDS on metamorphosis of political. Partha chatterjee, *Populist Reason in India*, unpublished.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

been highlighted in the thesis in elaborate manner how Modi approached to middle class, neo middle class, youth, farmers, women, children, dalits during pre and post election period.

Fourth, the fact that Indira Gandhi called for elections after a year and a half of emergency rule showed that populist politics requires a periodic validation by the electorate in order to retain its credibility as a legitimate modality of government⁶⁸. Modi's primacy to election is visible from the fact that despite being prime minister, he has travelled almost all those state where elections were being held for both state legislative assembly and national assembly.

With these structural and performative continuities there are several areas where Modi's populism tends to depart from the larger nature of Indian populism.

Discontinuities

The major domain of discontinuity that this thesis traced existed in the domain of operation of structure itself. While there was similarity between Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Modi in creating "the people" and "the other" as both of them created it. But the way they were created, their nature varied significantly. For Mrs. Gandhi while the nature of both ideological and governmental populism was economic. For Mr. Modi it was subtle weaving of both economic and culture. If we analyse, his speeches during election time they were primarily based upon anxiety-aspiration matrix whose solution at one level he dispatched through development but at other level it was in the operation of communal riots that it manifested. Modi weaved both these aspects of economy and culture through his own personality. It happened in India during Mahatma Gandhi's time when he managed to reconcile the friction of culture and economy through populist politics and counter posed it against Britisher. For Modi, it was prolongation or recreation of that friction between culture and economy and counterposing it against Muslims. Manageability of contradiction operated in that form. In rally at Nawada, when Modi was in detail discussing about the pink revolution he was exactly, enlarging the friction and giving birth to communal sentiments. Such a strategy helped Modi to create a permanent enemy, which was

⁶⁸ Ibid.

absent there in Mrs. Gandhi regime. For Modi, the avenue to shift and permanently base the enemy both existed. He operated with the shifting enemy as long as the unity of the people can be maintained through that. But once he finds that not working, the recourse toward permanent becomes important. How Modi is able to do so or how Mahatma Gandhi was able to reconcile the friction so easily becomes an important question at this juncture. It is because of the enlarged hollow or vague image that the leader created. Modi or Gandhi's image gave multiple meanings to the people than Mrs. Gandhi.

Modi is an outsider to politics which connects him with subaltern aspiration. Modi comes from poor and humble background which connects him with the poor masses cross cutting caste, class. Modi represents aspirational face in the garb of consumerism, Modi takes on fast, worships god, believe in rituals and practises which gives him image of Hindu hriday samrat. Modi believes in modernisation of women but with strict adherence to family values, which makes him patriarch. Mrs. Gandhi or even Nehru did not dealt with these multiple images. To an extent both of them sought to resolve the contradiction of traditional authority in modern methods. For instance, dealing with religion, Nehru attempted to make modernisation a vehicle for all the primordial problems. Mrs. Gandhi sought the solution of it in secularism. Rajiv Gandhi, though his regime was based on governmental populism, attempted to resolve it through both majoritarian and minoritarian appeasement, which made him more predictable. Left parties completely failed to engage with it. Modi thought to give a solution of it in terms of eulogizing Hinduism "Garv Se Kaho Hindu Hain". Modi thrived upon the so called majoritarian sense of injustice, to create "the people".

The centrality of organisation comes into play at that juncture in populism. Organisation plays a crucial role in both reconciling aspect of manageability or prolongation or recreation of the contradiction. Apart from BJP, all other non political organizations like RSS, Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Hindu Vahini Sena, played a crucial role in fostering the Hindu image of Modi. They used their credibility to mobilise votes as well. Tariq Thachil assessment becomes important in understanding why poor vote for elite parties.

But apart from the formal role of organization, in a mediatised world today where information passes on in millisecond throughout the world, the role of media can't be

discounted. Although it arrived late in India as Paula Chakravarthy or Srirupa Roy would suggest. But it had immense aspect in creating what Naom Chomsky would suggest in manufacturing consent or what zoya Hassan calls it as manufacturing dissent. For Hassan and others it was corporate and modi nexus, heavy investment of money in campaign which sidelined the critical view of media from developmental model of Gujarat and centered it against congress and establishment. This thesis tried to unfold why media took such a position in 2014 election. It attempted to look into the corporate modi nexus which brought media on the corridors of Narendra Modi. Apart from that the attempt in this thesis was also to ponder why congress was unable to gain similar sympathetic view of media. It was equally equipped to pay or serve the interest of corporatistised media. What went wrong for congress? It is at that juncture the argument for logic of media became prominent. In contemporary time, populist politics stands on the edges of media's logic. Whosoever is able to gain and incorporate media's logic in its politics, media is bound to follow it. In 2014 elections, modi reflected the logic of media and media followed it.

As scholars like Dwaipayyan Bhattacharya, reminds us profit and populism operates together. In case of Modi, these combinations manifested apparently with intermix of religio- cultural values.

It is significant to note, the creation of image is not one time process nor is the creation of "the people". Populist leader constantly innovates, reinvents, and recreates his image to ensure his popularity. Mann Ki Baat programme was one such method, where Modi re- invented himself and presented to the people in different fashion. This gave him unique legitimacy through which the attempt is being made to perpetuate his regime. In the apolitical appearances of programmes and its content carried varied political message. The attempt was to look into it.

The Road Ahead

In populist politics, while the emphasis is always on creating "the people". The people do not come without agency. The leader tells them a story and its only while evaluating with the competing stories, the people elects a populist leader. Modi narrated a story in 2014. It had strong resonance because it inter- mixed economy with culture. The strength of that story does not lay in economy per se rather its culture

which acts as catch all net. It is evident that whenever the crises in economy increase the invocation of cultural language becomes prominent to hold the unity of “the people”. One can use this logic to understand why during Narendra Modi’s regime there has been constant rise in communal polarization especially in terms of small scale riots ranging from Muzaffarpur in Bihar to Asansol in West Bengal, mob lynchings from UP to Assam. The growing discourse on love Jihad, conversion to Triple Talaq are strong signifiers of how this regime has brought culture into play. What is interesting to note that all these signifiers which are located in the chain of equivalence operating at the level of culture are invoked in the name of perceived sense of majoritarian injustice.

The task or the road ahead which exists for the opposing political parties to counter such vulgar tendencies of majoritarianism is to either counter it through fostering liberal values or by breaking down existing majoritarian social formation and creating a new one.

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