

Review Article

One Year of Modi Government: Review of Rajiv Kumar's Modi and His Challenges

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Both before and after the formation of the BJP Government in Delhi, Narendra Modi has received scholarly and other attention. More recently, Rajeev Kumar has made a study of his work as the chief minister of Gujarat and then as the prime minister of India during the first year. He met Modi for the first time in Gandhinagar on December 16, 2011 and was immediately impressed. Kumar writes in the very beginning, "His openness to ideas, eye to detail and knowledge of frontline technology surprised me as this was in complete contrast with other politicians" (p. ix). In writing this book, Kumar says that he has accepted "... without a moment's hesitation the opportunity to examine with an open mind, the strengths and weaknesses of the newly elected prime minister and his ability to seize the opportunities for taking India forward towards good times" (p. x). In addition to it, he writes, "... this book's avowed rather heroic goal is to try and understand if the present prime minister's track record as Gujarat's chief minister has equipped him sufficiently to tackle the enormous challenges that faces (sic) him in Delhi" (*ibid.*). In other words, it is to see if the Gujarat model can be replicated at the national level. He thinks that he has successfully appraised Modi as a leader and the challenges Modi faces as he tries to put India on rapid growth. However, he displays his sympathy for Modi for in the very beginning itself he writes that Modi's India "... will hopefully be an India free of 'Congressism' that has so far prevented the country from exploiting its amazing potential" (p. 9). When Kumar has anti-Congress sentiments, the reader begins to wonder in which direction will the wind blow when the assessment of Modi's work is done in the book.

He tries to explain the unprecedented electoral victory of the BJP as a personal triumph of Modi. He had been projected as the BJP's prime ministerial candidate and as a man who could do what he spoke. His electoral speeches were replete with specific promises. Kumar points out, "His speeches had a familiar pattern. He would start by connecting with the audience by referring to some

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burning local issue or personality. He would next prepare the ground for his own promise by initially lampooning the UPA regime for its abysmal governance record and rampant corruption and promising to do much better on both counts. He would then list some of the specific targets that he would achieve if given 60 months in power. He contrasted this with the lack of development under the Congress rule for more than 60 years” (p. 6). It was Modi who counted and not the election manifesto of his party for winning the elections. Kumar makes an honest observation, “It is quite evident that manifestoes hardly play any role in determining electoral outcomes in India, as they are not taken seriously by either the voters and more ironically, not even by the parties who release them” (p. 6).

In Modi’s scheme of things, minorities per se did not have a role to play. He stood for an even-handed distribution of the benefits of development for the society as a whole. Some specific targets with which he tried to lure his audience were 24/7 availability of electricity in all towns and villages by 2022, rapid industrial growth including increasing the share of manufacturing in the economy, raising farmers’ welfare levels, more efficient and effective governance, maximum governance with minimum government, etc., for taking India to the top ranks of global country rankings within the foreseeable future (*Shreshtha Bharat*). His promises were in line with the aspirations of the common people. By all this, he has created high expectations among the masses and it is to be seen to what extent he will be able to meet them. It is not impossible but not easy either. Kumar remarks, “Modi has amply demonstrated that he combines, with a degree of finesse, the elements of Hindutva, development objectives, and vigorous nationalism” (p. 9).

He begins by saying that when Modi became the prime minister, he has had many firsts to his credit. One of them was that he was the first politician to hold this position without first being a member of the parliament. For many people it marked the beginning of a ‘golden age’ in Indian democracy. Many of them began to predict that it was the beginning of Congress-mukt Bharat and that the NDA will rule the country for 10+ years. It was also a vindication of their thinking that the Indian masses would be carried away more by the development agenda than by communal agenda or appeasement. However, the euphoria was short lived. Results of elections held in Delhi and Bihar proved that they were building castles in the air. Although a political novice, Kejriwal carried the day and Amit Shah moaned that had the elections taken place shortly after the Lok Sabha elections, the outcome would have been different. Nitesh Kumar secured votes cutting across the caste lines in Bihar. Kumar is oblivious of Anna Hazare’s contribution to the BJP’s victory. He raised the national consciousness against the rampant corruption in the government through his public meetings in Delhi which the media publicised throughout the country. This wrecked the Congress ship in the electoral storm.

Kumar then passes on to the influences on Modi. RSS and its luminaries constituted one of them. His association with this organization commenced when he was only eight years old. But Modi has shown himself to be not under its

thumb. Kumar rightly points out, "... his rather individualist and centralised style of working has gone against the grain of the RSS style of teamwork, collective decision making and negating individual credit" (p. 20). His focus on attracting foreign capital in the country is not something that goes well with the RSS's militant economic nationalism. Modi's break with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad also became irrevocable when in 2008 he went ahead with the demolition of about 200 temples constructed on government land without authorisation so much so that Ashok Singhal called him a modern-day Mehmud of Ghazni!

There were other influences on Modi. They were Vivekanand, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Patel, to name only some of them. Ambedkar was of course a Mahar and Vivekanand a non-Brahmin who opposed the caste-system. When Kumar writes about the early life of Modi, there is an inevitable reference to the help which he rendered to his father in running the small tea shop. When the general elections took place, his detractors used it to belittle him but his supporters used it to show how he could be the rising star from a small beginning. In a democratic set up, it is the merit of a person alone which determines the limit to which he/she can rise. His detractors seem to have forgotten that one veteran Congress leader who became a union minister was a Class IV employee in a government office. In this context, Kumar makes a pertinent remark, "His was not a protected childhood. This has surely been an asset in finding his way forward in the Indian political jungle where only the fittest survive" (p. 13).

Kumar then passes on to Modi's work in Gandhinagar which spanned from October 2001 to May 2014. His supporters called it the *Gujarat Model of development* which could be emulated for the country as a whole. Kumar thinks that Modi was reasonably confident that this model could be the blue print for Indian economic development.

But the Gujarat model was not his single handed contribution. There were other circumstances which were fortuitous for him. Foremost among them was the public consciousness about the rampant corruption in the government which was highlighted by Anna Hazare. Inflation caused dissatisfaction among the masses. Slowing down the growth rate became another factor for his benefit.

Kumar writes appreciatively about the economic performance of Gujarat under Modi. He writes, "It is incontestable that Gujarat's economic performance as measured by the annual rate of growth of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) was above the national average for all the years that Modi was chief minister" (p. 41). Three sectors which brought laurels to Modi in particular were agriculture, industry (mainly manufacturing) and services. At the same time, Kumar is honest enough to mention that a variety of factors were responsible for its impressive economic performance. Some of them were internal and others external. In the field of agriculture a great achievement was the completion of Narmada dam under Sardar Sarovar project giving water to Saurashtra and Kutch after a long wait. Gujarat emerged as the largest cotton producing and exporting state in India with yields that are comparable to or sometimes even higher than

the global levels. It is also noteworthy that in the state the share of non-cereal production in agricultural output is by far the highest among the major Indian states. The electricity sector saw not only a turn round but a sharp increase in installed capacity of renewable energy. The state's energy deficit declined and in the short term power market it even emerged as a major seller. Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam (successor of Gujarat State Electricity Board) could not only wiped out its losses but began to book profits. With power thefts successfully plugged, transmission and distribution losses sharply declined. This was made possible by a law which made power theft a criminal offence, setting up special courts and police stations, recruiting ex-servicemen for tackling power thefts, giving functional autonomy to functionaries engaged in preventing power thefts, etc.

While rural-urban connectivity is less than 50 per cent in most states, in Gujarat it is nearly 99 per cent. Apart from rural roads, large networks of inter-district and state highways have been built. Bus Rapid Transport System has been an unqualified success winning several awards. It has provided fast and affordable urban transport to urban citizens. At the same time, Gujarat Maritime Board has been instrumental in establishing specialised ports many of which have attracted the business of other ports. These are examples of mutual trust between the government and private sector.

Although Gujarat has fared relatively well with respect to health parameters, the child sex ratio is well below the national average. The record of infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, child malnourishment and some other human development indicators is poor. Obviously the, economic progress has not translated into human progress. However, two features of the health delivery system have relevance for other states. First is the attempt at inclusion and improvement in access to quality health services for the poor under which families below the poverty line are entitled to a benefit of upto Rs. five lakhs for hospitalisation. The second is the public-private partnership in the delivery of health services which has been an innovative approach. Its illustration is the government's collaboration with the GVK Medical Research Institute to provide emergency ambulance services. In the sphere of education, budgetary allocations sharply increased. The state took a lead in establishing specialised universities for ayurveda, security, forensic sciences, petroleum and teacher education. Yet, there is a significant drop out by students during the transition from elementary to higher secondary education. There has also been a decline in the quality of education because of worsening pupils to teacher ratio. The incentive schemes to encourage girls to remain in school have not succeeded. Overall, Kumar concedes, "The conclusion is undeniable that Gujarat's performance in the education sector, though better than the overall national trend, has not been as good as in comparable states" (p. 73).

But in the fields of manufacturing and industry Gujarat maintained its lead. It is recognized by all concerned that even before Modi entered the arena, Gujarat was a relatively advanced state. Kumar says that his achievement was that he further built up on this foundation. He shifted emphasis from capital-

intensive industries to relatively employment-intensive industries. As a result, Gujarat reached the position of the top ranking industrial state, pushing Maharashtra to the second place in 2009-10. He helped to institutionalise the working partnership between the government and private business based on transparency, clear procedures and mutual trust.

Kumar then passes on to the principal features of Modi's style of governance. First and foremost, he inculcated a sense of Gujarati pride in the state. He organised *chintan shivars* of brainstorming sessions in which presentations were made by different departments. Second, he centralised decision making in the chief minister's office. Third, he empowered senior bureaucrats and also made them directly accountable to him. Fourth, e-governance emerged as the main stay of government processes and procedures. Fifth he improved management of state-level public sector enterprises.

Kumar notes that Modi drew his lesson from the experience of Gujarat. He says, "Gujarat's successful governance and development experience is seen as being replicable in other states, because it achieved both economic advance along with political gains. After all, Modi was re-elected by a politically mature Gujarat electorate, both in 2007 and 2012, in assembly elections with sizable majorities. Its replicability was highlighted by Modi who was never shy of claiming credit and indeed of flaunting it" (p. 83). Kumar gives a list of 32 schemes launched by Modi in Gujarat as well as human development indices. All the same, he points out that Gujarat was better placed than other states when it came to economic development because of three reasons. First, the global economic environment was conducive for India as well as Gujarat. Second, right from its inception in 1960 the state had adopted relatively progressive economic policies. Third, it was more development-oriented than other states owing to Gandhian influences, cooperative traditions and social environment. Kumar goes to the extent of saying that a time may come when Modi himself may recognize the rich legacy that he inherited.

Modi's movement from Gujarat to New Delhi was smooth and almost a foregone conclusion. Modi asked the masses to give him 60 months as against 60 years they had given to the Congress. This meant by implication that his performance in this short period will be better than that of the Congress during a far longer period. After assuming power, Modi took several initiatives which are designed to fructify before he faces the next elections. His underlying idea is to show his achievements to the masses. Since Kumar's purpose is to assess the first year of Modi's government, he has naturally concentrated on the projects launched during this period. He is cautious to point out that while the work is in progress, there are factors which could mar it. One of them may be lack of required capacity in the central government where there are reportedly no takers for key positions like those of joint secretaries. Second, there are difficulties in achieving the necessary inter-governmental coordination for pushing forward the stalled projects. Third, there are inter-ministerial turf wars which result in a majority of decisions being taken at the level of the Cabinet Secretary or PMO.

Finally, there are delays in putting in place effective monitoring and feedback systems.

The economy which Modi inherited from the UPA government was in a bad shape with high food inflation, faltering economic growth, plummeting investor sentiment and yawning fiscal deficit. Global rating agencies threatened to degrade India's international credit ratings. Modi tackled these problems by adopting a cautious approach. In this he was helped by four factors. First, the overall economic situation began to improve. Second, global oil prices declined sharply. Third, the government's defeat with respect to amending the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 made Modi shy of taking a risk. The new estimates of GDP revised upwards the growth rates for 2012-13 and 2013-14 which made India a shining example of the emerging economies. Finally, the equity markets reacted bullishly owing to political stability.

But there are sceptics who hold contrary views. Exports declined, and construction and real estate sector suffered a marked slow down. There was a significant excess capacity in major industries and agriculture suffered from sub-normal monsoon. Some more examples can be given to this effect. Although Modi is accused of going somewhat slow in reforms, his approach to them has three features, i.e., first, they are pro-poor; second, they are focussed on improving governance; and, third, they seek to eliminate/reduce infrastructure deficit. The one undeniable structural reform has been the abolition of the Planning Commission and its replacement by the NITI Ayog. The objective is to give up the top down approach in favour of the bottom-up approach to involve the state governments in the formulation of development policy. In his election speeches Modi had talked of minimal government but in practice this has not been so. The resolution establishing the NITI Ayog stated that the role of the government in achieving national objectives will always remain significant.

Modi considers himself a work-alcoholic and this has made an impact on the working of the government. The drift and inertia in large segments of bureaucracy have gone. Another improvement has been more coordination among different departments and ministries. Besides, corruption scandals are conspicuous by their absence. Modi discouraged his cabinet colleagues and bureaucrats from meeting business representatives behind the closed doors. Kumar points out, "Modi's detractors of course maintain that all this activity has simply gone 'underground' and nothing has really changed. Yet, even the detractors will have to admit that the climate of brazen rent seeking and audacious demands as quid-pro-quo by politicians and officials does not prevail any longer. This is a huge change" (p. 127). He refers to other positive developments under Modi. Tax administration has been tightened, and real estate and industrial construction brought under closer scrutiny. Policy paralysis has been cured. Long pending procurement orders in defence, railways, etc., have been cleared. At the same time, Kumar finds fault in Modi's conception of governance which is "... characterised by high level of activity; relatively corruption free administration; unquestioned loyalty of civil servants towards

Modi himself; wider and increasing use of *e-governance* for both higher efficiency and greater transparency; and over-centralisation. It is a model that revolves around Modi's person and requirements and not a structurally-driven model for sustained improvement. I am afraid it may not yield the same desired results in Delhi as it did in Gandhinagar" (p. 131).

Kumar then passes on to the foreign policy of Modi. He thinks that it is hyper-active. He visited as many as 33 countries in a short span of 18 months. He intends to make India a leading global player. He successfully mustered the support of the US and several other countries for India's permanent membership of the Security Council. This is remarkable because the US had an anathema for Modi and did not give him a visa for ten years. But he overlooked the slight and responded positively to Obama's congratulatory message to him. He gave a new turn to the US-India relations. He also handled the Sino-Indian relationship with rare self-confidence. During his visits to China he openly expressed admiration for China's achievements and talked of what India can learn from them. He gave attention to the Indian diaspora, treating the non-resident Indians as asset for the country. At the same time he faces difficulties. India's relations with Nepal are strained and for the first time the dispute between the two neighbours went to the UN. Pakistan constitutes another problem. It is rooted in the military domination of its government and any improvement of Indo-Pak relations is seen as a threat to the relevance of that country's army. The Maldives is also a problem area. This is because it has the dubious distinction of a major supplier of manpower to the IS.

In the appendix, Kumar discusses the performance of different ministries. He begins with the ministry of finance. Arun Jaitley has presented two budgets. Kumar says, "His focus, surely with Modi's concurrence, has been on fiscal prudence; financial inclusion; raising tax revenues and liberalising conditions for FDI in sectors such as insurance and defence production" (p. 139). Some of the new schemes which have been launched are Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and Atul Pension Yojana. The weak points are that neither the direct tax structure is simplified nor the tax administration streamlined and made more taxpayer friendly. In the field of energy (power and coal), the Government launched Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana which aims to electrify all the villages by 2022. In the first year the target of village electrification was exceeded. In the coal sector too several initiatives have been taken. But Kumar thinks that they will not suffice "... to ramp up coal production to levels required for optimal utilisation of our vast coal reserves before they are left unusable due to rising global pressure for environment protection" (p. 142). Several innovative steps have been taken with respect to the railways. They have been opened for direct foreign investment for the first time. Besides, the Government entered into a collaboration agreement with Japan for launching a bullet train in India. For roads, transport and highways, in a significant departure from the past the Government gave a top priority to road safety. It set up the National Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation

Authority of India which aims to save 2,00,000 lives over five years. The target is to increase the speed of highway construction from two-three kilometres a day to 20 kilometres a day in the next two years. When it comes to health and family welfare, infant mortality rate is unacceptably high and, therefore, India New Born Action Plan was launched to end preventable new-born deaths and still births to a single digit by 2030. Mission Indradhanush was launched for the vaccination of children. National Deworming Day was observed and other health related programmes were launched. Finally, a Draft National Health Policy and National Health Portal were started. Allied to them is women and child development. Its integral part is Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative. It is focussed on one hundred districts with the lowest child sex ratio.

Information technology is yet another forte of Modi's policy. His flagship programme is Digital India. It is a game changer in improving the delivery of public services. It is notable that it was visualised within one hundred days of government formation. In the field of labour and employment, a much needed initiative that was launched was for the registration of unorganized workers to whom identity cards will be issued. In the area of new and renewable energy an audacious target of expanding solar power capacity by 1000 per cent by 2022 has been set. Similarly, hydro capacity is targeted to expand by five times during the next five years. But Kumar has reservations and he says, "However, these rather unprecedented targets are open to genuine scepticism as they require an enormous build-up of execution capacity and participation by willing investors" (p. 159). With respect to petroleum and natural gas, the Government launched the scheme of direct transfer of LPG subsidy to consumers. This is the largest direct cash transfer scheme in the world. Modi has launched a direct appeal to the middle class consumers to voluntarily give up their LPG subsidy. The Government also deregulated domestic diesel and motor spirit prices and abolished the administered oil price mechanism. Modi established an independent ministry to give special attention to skill development and entrepreneurship supportive efforts. A draft civil aviation policy was released. Air-India has accumulated losses, apart from a heavy debt. Modi sees it as a prize case for showing his managerial capabilities by effecting its turnaround. India joined the select countries that use a satellite-based navigation system. The Ministry of Tourism launched two schemes to promote tourism.

Modi announced a national policy aimed at housing for all by 2022 including rehabilitation of slum dwellers. Besides, there is the Smart Cities Mission for building 100 such cities. His Swachh Bharat Mission is another initiative which will change the face of both urban and rural India for the stigma of manual handling of solid waste will be done away with.

The Government is engaged in a mission to clean the Ganga as well as linking rivers for a better management of water. This will tackle the problem of floods on the one hand and contribute to the extension of irrigation on the other.

Next Kumar dwells upon the challenges facing Modi. With some exaggeration he writes, "It is difficult to think of any other political leader in the

world who has traversed so long as difficult a path from his very humble beginnings to the top of the political ladder in India, the world's largest and most fiercely competitive democracy" (p. 165). It is refreshing to note that notwithstanding his RSS affiliations, he repeatedly affirmed that he considers Indian constitution to be his exclusive scripture. Nevertheless, he faces the risk of his party pushing the majoritarian socio-economic agenda which naturally means Hindu revivalism at the cost of the interests of minorities. Kumar concedes that India has unprecedented diversity. Apart from 18 officially recognized languages, it has 122 minor languages and 1600 dialects. All the major living religions of the world followed in the country. In terms of economic conditions of the people in India vis-à-vis other countries, there is much which is left to be desired. Per capita income here was equal to that of Korea in the beginning of the sixties and equal to that of China in the beginning of the nineties. But today an average Indian earns less than a fifth of his Chinese counterpart and a mere one twentieth of an average Korean. Over the last four decades, India has come to be grouped among the 40 poorest countries of the world in terms of average income of its citizens. Thus, Modi's tasks are daunting.

Kumar then deals with what Modi can do and talks of three transitions. The first among them is social transition. He has already talked about *sabka saath sabka vikas* as an all-inclusive way to social transition. At the same time, he is trying to ride the second horse of Hindutva. When its proponents cry about it from the roof tops, he maintains a studied silence. He has not openly expressed his disapproval of the wild statements to this effect. But he has praised the virtues of Sufism and dissociated religion from terrorism. The award of the highest civilian award by Saudi Arabia to Modi is a kind of acceptance by the Islamic world that Muslims are a part of the national life of India. As for political transition, the problem of financing elections has been a debatable issue from the very start. Today several options ranging from state funding of elections to lifting all constraints on private donations for elections are discussed and Modi has to take a decision on the subject. Today the need for electoral reforms is accepted by all concerned. Modi can take a fair decision on it and make electoral financing transparent, thereby he will make a historic achievement in cleansing democracy. An allied issue is the criminalization of politics in terms of the members of the Parliament as well as the Assemblies. Something needs to be done to overcome this plague. An urgent reform in the judicial system is also called for. Pendency of court cases is a Himalayan problem and all cases lying in the high courts will take 320 years to be settled at the current rate of settlement. In case the judgement process is quickened, the criminalization of politics will also be restrained. Yet another burning issue is good governance not only in words but in deeds. Modi will earn accolade if he is supportive of the good work of Arvind Kejriwal, Nitesh Kumar and Naveen Patnaik.

For economic transition, a double digit growth is required. Opening employment opportunities has to be an integral part of it. Availability of reliable data for it is needed. Modi has to ensure that the state is involved only in critical

public services while commercial activities are left to the private sector. Inducting talent from the private sector and civil society into the government is also called for. Different ministries work at cross purposes which has to be put to an end.

These are some pre-conditions for accelerated growth and Modi has to meet them. He has also to adopt a suitable macroeconomic policy. Maximising employment generation should be its principal objective. This necessitates world class export infrastructure, flourishing tourism, affordable housing, overhaul of fiscal subsidies, etc.

In this context Kumar discusses policies for four sectors which will maximise employment generation. First, in agriculture a second green revolution is urgently required, India should emulate Israel, middlemen should be removed, multi-brand foreign retailers allowed, distortions in cropping pattern corrected and wastage in water use stopped. Second, in manufacturing and exports, the importance of R & D cannot be over-emphasized. Make in India will not succeed without Innovate in India. Restraining food and wage goods inflation is required to lower wage costs. Infrastructure needs to be paid attention. Ancillary functions in railways (like hospitals, catering, etc.,) should be corporatised, reorganization of railway zones done, global mining majors be ramped for coal production, increased share of Indian ships in trade achieved, dredging of rivers for navigation done, reduction in T & D losses in electricity sector effected, etc. Last, the educational sector needs to be invigorated. Owing to the spread of education, a kind of policy complacency has crept into it. There are vacant positions in top institutions like IITs, few PhDs in science and technology, modest numbers of patent applications, etc. Kumar ends his study with the remark, "My modest effort is only to try and offer some suggestions for him to minimise possible slippages and for him to keep India firmly on the path of becoming *Shrestha Bharat*" (p. 221).

Kumar's book is sympathetic to Modi. He talks of "an India free of 'Congressism' that has so far prevented the country from exploiting its amazing potential" (p. 9). Kumar discusses the communal riots of 2002 following the Godhra incident and exonerates Modi of any responsibility for them. His arguments are that over 100 people have been convicted on charges ranging from pre-planned conspiracy, murder, rape and mob violence. About 4,000 arrests were made and more than 100 deaths occurred as a result of the orders to control riots. Most of the people killed in police firing were Hindus. The judiciary gave a clean chit to Modi. The favourable electoral results in 2014 mean an endorsement of his plea of being not guilty. To reinforce his position, he took decisive steps to reassure the Muslim population of Gujarat that he had no animosity for it. But a contrary viewpoint may also be referred to here. He has refrained from publicly criticising those who indulged in the riots. In many quarters he is blamed for them and its most outstanding expression is the American Administration's refusal to give him the visa to visit the country till he became the Prime Minister.

Kumar admits that to begin with Modi did have antipathy for Muslims which mellowed down in course of time. He notes that he went about consolidating the Hindu vote for the elections in Gujarat in 2002 and 2007. Says Kumar, "Subsequently, as his development programme begun to bear fruit in higher economic growth and employment opportunities, Modi's anti-Muslim rhetoric became relatively weaker and was completely absent during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Modi will have to henceforth demonstrate his unwavering commitment to his powerful electoral slogan of *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas* (Development for all with participation by all) (p. 32). Although he has sought to keep distance from the fringe elements and extremists, occasions did arise when he failed to do so. Kumar approvingly notes that Modi refused to wear the skull cap offered by a visiting delegation of Muslim clerics when he was in the midst of his Sadbhavna Programme in Gandhinagar. He had the softer option of accepting it and then keeping it aside a short time thereafter. There have been numerous instances when public men and women wear traditional headgears, etc., offered by the local people which are accepted in a good spirit without identifying themselves with their religious and cultural beliefs.

Kumar writes about rumours in Delhi that Modi has allowed the RSS to give maximum leeway to shape the future of Indian education in return for its cooperation on the development agenda. He thinks that such an arrangement is understandable for the RSS will be enabled to pursue its goal of changing curriculum from the colonial to the nationalist colour. But the RSS's interpretation of 'nationalist' education will clearly be saffronization of education the echoes of which are already heard. It is regrettable that some months back an eminent Indian scientist settled abroad withdrew from the Indian Science Congress complaining that it had become a circus because it discussed subjects like inter-planetary planes invented by a rishi which flew in ancient India!

Kumar's account of Modi is sympathetic and there are many others who share may this opinion. At the same time, India Inc. opines that the economy picked up although a lot still remained to be done. An exclusive *Economic Times Poll* of top 55 CEOs in India on the eve of the Government's first anniversary appreciated the Government's action against corruption, its attempts to ease the rules of business and its reforms. But some policy changes were stuck, especially those relating to GST and land acquisition. (V. Vijayalakshmi, "One year of Modi Government," *Southern Economist*, vol. 54, no. 4, June 15, 2015, p. 5.) Pranab Dal Samanta talks about the grey areas of the government's performance. The problematic side includes a PM many are not sure how to approach if a grand idea needs a second look, a PM who sometimes appears not to give sufficient attention to the gap between the idea and its execution and a PM whose administrative presence has affected both ministerial and bureaucratic effectiveness. *The Economic Times*, May 26, 2015. The report titled "Modi one year on" by Hudson Institute, Washington published in August 2015 is also critical of Modi Government. It looks critically at his performance against the

election promises. No real progress was made in manufacturing arms in India, and on education and skill development front also his government's contribution is unsatisfactory. The story is the same in the sphere of health since health care is not accessible to most people. The imbalance between energy demand and supply remains unabated. Overall the report is not kind to Modi. A. Chatterjee sums up by saying, "He did not perform as per election promise, after one year in office. However, he created hopes for corporate India, for many Indians and for foreign investors. However, whether high hopes will translate into strong and sustainable economic expansion is doubtful." (A. Chatterjee, "Modi government's performance – Hudson Institute's report," *Southern Economist*, Vol. 54, No. 16, December 15, 2015, pp. 7-8.).

Notwithstanding its shortcomings (which are few), Kumar's study is certainly both enlightening and objective.