

By Sidharth Mishra



Your reporter isn't very literate when it comes to the subject of economics. At least, I do not understand the kind of economics that ferrets out various types of rates and concludes, "All is well". For me, wellness means a reasonable monthly bill at the Kendriya Bhandar, a manageable account of my household expenses, which my better half so meticulously maintains and an acquiescent management of the publishing houses which clear my bills without much pleading. If these parameters were to be applied to the current socio-economic situation in the country, the mood of the nation is anything but bright. However, I was surprised at the recent results of a survey by a leading news channel, which is not known to be very amenable to Narendra Modi government. The survey concluded that although Prime Minister Narendra Modi may have been coming under opposition fire more often than before, he still retains the support of the majority.

The survey said that the people of the country rate his performance as the prime minister to be above average. The assessment also indicated that the electoral profile of the NDA alliance has also not taken much damage. The survey found that they would form the government again if Lok Sabha elections were to be held in near future.

The survey gave an impressive tally of 301 seats to the NDA as against 339 seats they actually

got in the Lok Sabha elections in 2014. According to the survey's result sheet, UPA would improve its tally to 108 seats from 62 in 2014. The Left would win 20, almost doubling the number of seats. There would be a dip in the number of seats won by other parties.

More intriguingly the survey said that the BJP's vote share is expected to be 43 percent if elections were held immediately while the Congress would be left with a mere 14 percent. The Aam Aadmi Party, despite its idiosyncrasies, was expected to come third with a vote share of 4 percent.

Several panelists present at the discussion had raised questions about the credibility of the survey, with an obnoxious professor of Delhi University, representing a regional party, claiming that the findings were manipulated under pressure from the Centre. How ironical that certain BJP ministers refer to media persons as 'Presstitudes' while their rivals also cast similar aspersions.

Despite being in disagreement with the survey's conclusion, I have no reason to believe that these findings were manipulated. First let us recount the reasons why a large number of people believe that the mood of the nation was despondent. One doesn't need to go mapping with a survey agency to find the reasons.

To begin, let's take up the real estate sector. Forget about the price of the properties, the landlords are even finding it difficult to get tenants for their properties. Go to any middle-class colony, and you would find plenty of stories about tenants vacating the accommodation due to their inability to pay the rent any further. Many of them are moving farther away to the suburbs in search of cheaper accommodations. But the real story lies in the fact that the landlords are finding difficult get a tenant for their vacated properties despite bringing down the rent. This is an unseen and unheard trend in the national Capital, at least in the past 30 years that I have been living here. The poor economic scenario has brought the landlords to their knees and certainly the Narendra Modi government can take this only as a left-handed compliment.

Despite all the loud talk of Make in India and Digital India, the fact remains that the jobs market in India has shrunk rapidly, with several people in the leading companies being rested on the benches and several others being handed the pink slip.

And mind you these pink slips are being handed over at a time when the prices of food commodities are sky-rocketing. Millions of tonnes of newsprint and ink have been used to report on how the price of ordinary pulse breached the Rs 200 mark last year.

The unabashed admirers of Narendra Modi government may find this unacceptable, but the

High ratings for govt misleading

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 03 February 2016 03:18 - Last Updated Wednesday, 03 February 2016 03:29

prevailing situation could provide an apt script for the remake of Bollywood super-hit “Roti, Kapada Aur Makan”. The 1974 flick, written, produced and directed by Manoj Kumar, who was also in the lead role, focussed on the issues of inflation, unemployment and frustration among the youth. It was the highest grosser for that year for having caught the imagination of people undergoing great hardships at that point of time.

If the national mood is so despondent, why is it that the survey still put the performance of the Narendra Modi government on a very high pedestal? The answer lies in the survey figures, which places Modi much above the current crop of national leaders, especially from the Opposition benches. However, it would be catastrophic for the NDA government to take solace from it.

In 2004, the surveys had also put the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led government on a very high pedestal. At that point of time, nobody gave much credence to the opposition benches. However, a close study of the Indian polity would show that a socio-economic crisis in the country always throws up a unique political solution. Let's not forget that Atal Bihari Vajpayee's successor Manmohan Singh, an absolute political non-entity, went to rule the country for next 10 years.

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