I could not agree more with Amartya Sen when he wrote that Modi has won power but not the battle of ideas. But the question is – Do we need to win the battle of ideas? India as a nation has never been short of ideas. Both Gandhi and Tagore had lofty ideas which is still acclaimed in the international arena. However, did that help the nation in any way? Even after seventy years of independence this nation is still a developing nation. If the Nobel Laureate with all his prudence is right, Indians should congratulate themselves that they have finally chosen a leader whose actions are speaking louder than words.

The terms of ‘secularism’ and ‘socialism’ may appeal to the western educated academicians and English speaking journalists but India still lives in the villages where bijli and paani are burning issues. Prime Minister Modi has realized that if he has to remain a leader of the masses he has to cater to the basic needs of Indians. If anything, his project of ‘toilet for each household’ which was once pooh-pooed by so-called policy makers have yielded results. The gas cylinder to a housewife in a remote village has shown her a path to a better world and instilled in her a hope that she too can afford a luxury accessible only to a few. How could she not vote for him? Selfies are a growing pastime for Indians across age and class, with affordable mobile technology. This is not a mean achievement with a nation of billion plus. The common man wants a leader who thinks and dreams like him. And Modi certainly knows that and in that sense is truly a leader of the masses.

People in India have realized that their access to the better things in life is possible through Modi as their leader. These Indians are not concerned about ideas. They want to live better and dream lofty. Modi is feeding the dreams not only of the poor but the aspiring middle class as well. This class with their access to the happenings in the global world gets to consolidate their ideas of India through the projects of bullet trains that Modi plans. As the first generation of not so rich travelers revel in the air-conditioned coaches of the metro, the aspiring middle class flaunt their pictures in made-in-India fast trains. Access is no more enough for Indians. The best is aspired.

Indians in particular and Hindu Indians in general have always been guided by the ideas of tolerance and acceptance as within their own group they are forced to embrace different kinds of diversities including that of praying to different deities or even not praying at all. Most Indians are not reluctant to embrace modernity be it the western dresses or food. Both Chinese and Mexican have found a place in the cuisines of young Indians. However, this group is equally proud of their cultural heritage. The prevalent practice of yoga and sale of Patanjali products are a testimony to the adoption of swadeshi.

Modi perhaps won the majority vote because he connects with all these. He projects himself as one who not only embraces new technology but does not hesitate to take bold action. Projecting an image of India which is strong appeals to all Indians even those residing beyond her physical boundaries. India has been suffering the onslaughts of a not so prosperous neighbor who is responsible for many killings along the borders and even at times inside the borders. It is easy to talk about the hazards of war but it is difficult to accept deaths of family members and countrymen. And even worse to tolerate the lashes to one’s beliefs and practices which Hindu India has been undergoing for a long period now. In that sense Modi is a leader who resonates with many. Can those countless people who believe in chardham yatra and wish to do it once in their lifetime, forget the Prime Minister’s image in a colour coordinated grey and gerua attire with a Vivekananda style posture at Kedarnath?

Ideas dilute, but actions speak and images linger.

DISCLAIMER : Views expressed above are the author’s own.