

Reforms work if the people are sensitised: Vasundhara Raje



Business Standard asked Rajasthan Chief Minister **Vasundhara Raje** five questions during the course of the Round Table event. Edited excerpts from the interview:

Could you compare your current stint as Chief Minister with the one you had previously? Which one is more satisfying and rewarding?

That's unfair. Let's just say that when you come in for the first time there are a lot of things that you learn on the job. And there may be a few mistakes that you make while learning. So the first stint would be about that, I think. But in the second stint, you have learnt from your first stint. And therefore, the mistakes that you made don't get repeated a second time. I really believe that it is very important to keep one's feet on the ground and the one thing I keep saying to myself every day is that this too shall pass. When you do that you understand that life has to go on and that you have been put here to do a job, and if you can do that job half-way okay, then maybe you would have provided something for the people of the state. And if you can do it honestly, even better.

So, we did that. We got into controversies last time, I remember. And it was unnecessary, because the one thing that I prize highly is our family's good name. And I have worked with that in mind, keeping my family in mind, keeping the kind of people where I come from, and also keeping the people that I have been allowed to serve in mind. In Hindi you would say izzat. It's a very precious commodity and I have tried my best to live up to their expectations.

It is said that tough reforms need political packaging and a soft touch. Would you agree with this assessment and do you think it is possible as somebody who is...?

Absolutely possible. It is possible because if you converse, if you consult, if you work together, there is no problem. Because people then have faith in what you do. If you push it down somebody's throat, there will always be resistance. So we always say we have made some mistakes and we have tried to hurry the reforms. People haven't understood it and then it's been opposed. But it's much better to work with them. Maybe it will take a little more time but it will happen.

So I believe if you package it well, if you talk to people, if you sensitise people, and make them understand that it is for their own good that you are doing this, I don't think there is anyone that is going to get in the way. There is no shortcut to that. So, if you think you can leap over that and go to the reform immediately, that doesn't happen.

What has been your most difficult decision as the Rajasthan Chief Minister?

I think every day you make difficult decisions. To be tough, to be soft, those are decisions that you have to make. Every day there are decisions that you need to make in favour of the state or not. And very often it's a tough decision, because politically it might suit you and it may not suit the state. So the decision has to be made to see whether we are just going to play politics, or whether we are going to really work for the state. That is a very difficult decision and those decisions have to be taken almost every day.

As an administrator who has run a state for so many years, are there any easy decisions that you have taken?

When it's right, it's easy.

Finally, when does the nation see you in New Delhi in one of the Bhawans there?

Let me just finish my job here. I would like to finish my job. I believe that we have things to do. And I am very happy where I am just now, as long as everyone else is happy. So if that is okay, then as long as everyone else is happy, in this term there are things to be done, and all of us, every single one of us, in government, within the party, within our offices, our officers, everybody is committed to moving in the next two and a half years to showing results. We now have to put on the ground the policies and the decisions and the budget promises that we have made to the people.

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