

Of Development and Religion

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Gujarat has made history. Gujarat is in news ever since genocide of 2002. For every small or big development it remains in news. Gujarat carnage was unparalleled in the history of India and it will continue to be discussed for a long time to come. Like partition of India it cannot be easily forgotten. Any election in Gujarat will draw into discussion Gujarat carnage. Modi, could not have won 2002 election without organizing that carnage nor the 2007 election could he have won without it.

It is wrong to maintain that he won election due to economic development he helped achieve in Gujarat. Gujarat is as much polarized today as it was in 2002. Even if Modi had not mentioned anything related to Hindutva, he would have won. Question is only of margin. Now the Congress leaders also have admitted it publicly that they had not kept Sonia Gandhi in any illusion about victory in Gujarat.

He won with such majority for number of reasons one of which was Mayawati's candidates. In many constituencies Dalits voted for Mayawati candidates and in those constituencies Congress candidates lost by margin of not more than 5000 votes, Congress would have undoubtedly won in these constituencies had Mayawati not set up her own candidates taking away Dalit votes.

Up to eighties socialism and socialist ideologies had great appeal for the people. When Indira Gandhi, in late sixties of last century, gave slogan of quit poverty (*Gharibi hatao*) it had electrifying effect on Indian masses; and she instantly emerged as great leader in her own right and all Congress stalwarts like Kamraj, Morarji Desai and Atulya Ghosh and others fell by the roadside. She was voted to power with overwhelming majority.

Similarly in Pakistan when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave slogan of *Roti, Kapda Makan* (bread, cloth and house). He acquired charisma of his own and Ayub fell by the roadside. To this slogan he added, after Bangla Desh war one thousand-year war with India and he emerged as an unquestioned leader of Pakistan. However, the basic mantra was *roti, kapda, makan*. Even in Arab countries slogan of socialism brought Jamal Abdan Nasir and Mohammad Ghaddafi to the fore.

But now there is complete paradigm shift in politics. Socialism no longer has any charisma. It has been replaced by religious ideologies or religious fundamentalism throughout the world. Until late eighties Hindutva had no appeal to Indian masses or Islamic ideology to Pakistani people. Today it is politicized religious discourse which has strong appeal.

Also, slogans of basic needs have been replaced by 'development' discourse and development never means fulfilling basic needs like *roti, kapda makan* but development of the rich, increase in the wealth of the haves as today in liberalized economies in the globalized world. For Gujaratis trade and economic prosperity has been their lifeline. Even among Muslims of Gujarat Bohras, Khojas and Memons are rich traders and they will be as much attracted by the development

discourse as upper caste Hindu Gujaratis. It is for this reason that Narendra Modi tried to win over Bohras and Khojas by his development discourse. He even had special section for Muslims (Bohras, Khojas etc.) in the economic exhibition arranged by him to showcase his development.

And today in the Hindutva laboratory that Gujarat is combination of economic development and Hindutva ideology is a sure guarantee for political win. And who knows this better than Modi? Modi thus combined development discourse with Hindutva mantra and won elections hands down.

The BJP maintains that Modi was using only development discourse for his campaigning and it was Sonia Gandhi by her remark of 'maut ka saudagar' that compelled Modi to use Hindutva card and then whole nature of campaign changed. This can hardly convince any reasonable mind. In fact it was planned that Hindutva discourse will be the last minute mantra. Development discourse was thought to be effective but perhaps there was lurking doubt and to dispel that doubt Hindutva discourse had to be used very tactically, throwing entire blame on the opposition after all.

What Mrs Sonia Gandhi said was in no way contrary to facts. There was enough proof to maintain that Modi had used death and destruction to win 2002 election (which in all probability, he would have lost). In that election there was no reference to any development. 2002 campaign was heavily loaded with Hindutva discourse and he had earned enough bad publicity throughout the world. He could not afford to deploy pure Hindutva discourse in this election.

The Election Commission was also watching and he could not afford to be on the wrong side of law. He, therefore cleverly crafted his winning strategy—to use development and Hindutva at the last stage and hang the blame on Soniabhen's 'maut ka saudagar'peg. If he was so sure of development factor why did he not use it in 2002 election? On the contrary he is enjoying its after effects even in this election.

There is now another question: will the Gujarat model be as effective in other states? There are doubts. Even after 2002 win the BJP was saying they 'will repeat Gujarat model in other states' but it lost in several states. The fact is that BJP is in power in MP and Rajasthan by itself like in Gujarat and yet these two states have yet to go Gujarat way i.e. they have still not become 'Hindutva laboratory' like Gujarat.

It is an important question: why MP and Rajasthan, like Gujarat, could not become Hindutva laboratory. Obviously conditions in these two states and caste and community equations are very different. Neither MP nor Rajasthan can ever become Hindutva laboratories like Gujarat. Nor development *a la* Gujarat can be effected in these two states. Obviously Gujarat model cannot be repeated even in these two BJP held states, much less in other states of India.

India is a highly diverse country - bewilderingly diverse, and what is possible in one state cannot happen in other states. Even CPM cannot repeat its model in states other than West Bengal and Kerala otherwise it would have captured other states long ago. Gujarat is more suited for Hindutva as West Bengal and Kerala are more suited for left ideology.

Traders are generally very conservative while supporting conservative religion and traditions. For the same reason Gujarat, unlike Maharashtra and other

states, never saw any reform movement. The reform movement which brought into existence Swaminarayan sect, itself was very conservative religious reform movement. Today Swaminarayan movement is most popular and hegemonic in Gujarat. Swaminarayan temples are being built wherever these Patel Gujaratis live spending crores of rupees. Huge complexes have come into existence. Thus Gujarat never experienced modern reform movement like Bengal or Kerala or Maharashtra or Karnataka. And hence the vice-like hold of conservative religion on Gujarat. Narendra Modi has shrewdly exploited this for his political rise. Also by organizing 2002 carnage of Muslims he built his charismatic image and now he is shrewdly combining it with his development discourse.