

COMMENT

'Nano' in Gujarat

The spectre of 'Nano' continues to haunt the CPM-led left front government and the people of Singur as well. While the left is worried about its declining market ranking in supporting industrial capital, the dissidents of Singur who refused to part with their land are being continually harassed and oppressed by the ruling party cadres and police. The 'marxists' have formed a "save Nano committee" to deprive the unwilling peasants of their legitimate right to land. What a tragedy! Never in the history of Bengal was a corporate house welcomed with such open arms.

And now shifting of Nano to Gujarat has been projected as a feather in Narendra Modi's cap. With this his already rising popular rating due to the projections by a section of media and blind apologists of current pattern of development has got a big boost. Some from the world of business and vested interests have started saying that Modi is the future of India and if there are five more Modis, the country will prosper in the real fast way! The additional point being made is that he has shown the path to deal with 'terror'; he can control this problem effectively etc.!

True, Modi is the one who gave the final push to convert Gujarat from being a part of democratic India to 'Hindu Nation in one state'.

Poverty levels are rising; employment and agriculture are having a bad time. The agricultural production has been declining, e.g. from 65.71 lakh tones in 2003-2004 to 51.53 in 2004-2005. A survey conducted by NSS in 2005 shows that approximately 40% farmers of the state of Gujarat said that given the option they would like to shift away from agriculture. Recent studies show that agriculture and labour both have suffered extensively during last one decade. Modi in a reply given in state assembly stated that in one year up to Jan 2007, 148 farmers had committed suicide and the condition is worsening on that score. While on one side the state exports electricity, its villages are having a power deficit. Indian Express 8th April 2007 reported that state is reeling under the shortfall of 900 Mega Watt of power, the victims of this are mainly in the villages. One of the indices of poverty, prevalence of anemia is very revealing on this count. The percentage of women suffering from anemia has risen from 46.3% in 1999 to 55.5% in 2004 (Third round of National Family Health survey report 2006). Amongst children it rose from 74.5% to 80.1%. Some of the reports point out the conditions of dalits and women have deteriorated during last decade. For women one of the indices is the declining sex ratio in Gujarat during last decade. The plight of Adivasis is no better.

Gujarat also witnessed the anti-Christian violence during Modi regime and Adivasis have been a totally neglected lot in the state, reeling under the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashrams Gharvapasi (Conversion into Hinduism) campaigns. Minorities have been reduced to scapegoats and the social partitions are becoming rigid by the day. Some development has taken place in the state, but Gujarat was always amongst the more developed states of the country. It is not that things have started from the scratch. One reason Gujarat is industrially developed today is the Centre's prolonged discriminatory policy of investing in the Western region at the expense of the eastern region and imposition of unequal tariffs and step-motherly attitude to the East. Also discovery of oil in the state boosted its industrial growth.

The pattern of things in Gujarat today is clear, it intimidates and brow beat minorities, take up policies which help the affluent and upper middle class, project this and hide the backyard where the poor and minorities stay. No wonder this is what attracts the ilk of Tatas who are very appreciative of Modi, the violation of democratic norms has no meaning for them, the only thing which matters for them is the proliferating coffers of their companies, the considerations of ethical and holistic development don't matter there. This is no different from the attitude of big industrialists towards Hitler. They backed him to the hilt in his rampage against all kinds of democratic norms and social justice. □□□