

“HOW THE DEAD LIVE”

India is a place where all things are possible. If anyone questions the power of Indian democracy Narendra Modi's vibrant Gujarat is the answer. During the 'Vibrant Gujarat Global Investment Summit' (December 2008) the captains of India's booming corporate world cheered their fellow travellers of industries calling for Narendra Modi to be next prime minister. And expectedly Gandhians in Sonia Gandhi's Congress did not like the hyperbole. There are many reasons why India's top industrialists and NRI bigshots are so eloquent about Modi and his vibrant Gujarat. This state has been ruled by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with iron fists for more than a decade. The way Gujarat has violated human rights and persecuted the minority community has no parallel in India's so-called democratic tradition. It is possible in Modi's Gujarat to wage and sponsor communal riots against minority community people and they routinely declare that this 'vibrant' state, otherwise amongst the more industrially developed states of India even before BJP came to power, is India's great guarantor of peace and security against 'terrorism'. Industry's marriage with Modi's Gujarat is one of convenience. It is possible in Modi's Gujarat to subordinate democratic values to the demands and dictates of corporate lobby and scapegoat the marginalised as the cause of everyone else's hard times.

In the midst of the euphoria created by the investment bonanza in Gujarat and lakhs of new jobs likely to be created one would like to draw the attention of the world that this is only one side of the story.

The success story of the two digit growth has masked the several digit realities of loss of livelihood, land acquisition, displacement and permanent loss of natural resources, which are treated as free goods in this process. The investment figure without the displacement and depletion of natural resources figure and the employment figure without loss of livelihood does not make sense. No wise person would talk about the income without talking the cost of acquiring that income or wealth.

It is a shocking fact that even leftists have never tried to arrive at even a realistic estimate of these figures but the magnitude of the loss can be guessed from some of the facts emerging from various important research works.

Development-Induced Displacement in Gujarat 1947-2004 report prepared by Dr Lancy Lobo and Shashikant Kumar of Centre for Culture and Development clearly indicates that there are 4,00,000 households displaced and affected in Gujarat during 57 years of Independence, amounting to 5% of the total population of Gujarat from developmental projects such as water resource related, transport and communications, industries, mines, defence, sanctuaries, human resource related, government offices, tourism and so on. This report further indicates that a total of 33,00,000 hectares of land has been acquired during 1947-2004 as computed from 80,000 Gazette notifications of the government of Gujarat and from Land Acquisition Departments from 25 Collectorates through RTI Act. This figure does not include the land acquired and people affected by the most controversial project Sardar Sarovar Dam [Narmada]. The acquisition of land was not based on the market value of the land but by bypassing all the rules of market mechanism.

In Gujarat, groundwater is the major source of drinking water in several talukas including those with a high concentration of industries. This groundwater has been contaminated in some areas of about 74 talukas out of 184 talukas.

But Modi is successful in selling his 'vibrant Gujarat' with lies, half-truths and illusions despite his fascistic terror against the oppressed and migrant workers and specifically against the minority community people. Then Gujarat is a place where many things are happening in the name of democracy. It is possible to terrorise the poor and impoverished in the name of combating terrorism. It is possible in vibrant Gujarat to demonise and systematically discriminate against the religious minority community people. And industrialists have reasons to talk loudly about Modi's vibrant Gujarat. □□□