

Pramod Paliwal & Sudhir Yadav***

In Conversation with Chief Minister-Gujarat



*Meeting Mr. Narendra Modi, Chief Minister-Gujarat State- also aptly considered as the architect of post economic- liberalization Gujarat- is quite an experience, even for somebody who has known him and followed him for over years now. Sometime back Prof. Pramod Paliwal and Prof. Sudhir Yadav had an audience with **Mr. Narendra Modi** in connection with certain research projects concerning the state of Gujarat. Shri Modi's deep respect for academia was evident when he apologized for a small delay in the meeting. In a businesslike and focused conversation, the Gujarat CM shared his thoughts on a range of issues, from Gujarat's strides in economic and social domains to good governance. Excerpts from the conversation:*

The conversation started by Mr. Modi stating that for times immemorial Gujarat has been perceived as the land of traders. While this indeed being a unique distinction, he strongly feels that the world should also recognize the headway made by Gujarat in the areas of manufacturing, agriculture and infrastructure.

Saluting both, the spirit of resilience and resoluteness of the people in overcoming crisis- especially natural disasters, he cited the example of post-earthquake transformation that has taken place in the Kutch-Bhuj region of Gujarat. According to Mr. Modi, it is rare to witness such quick progress after a traumatic event. The region now has not only left behind the bitter memories, but also has become an attractive investment destination for the manufacturing sector.

Apart from the *never-say-die* attitude of the people of the region, he also attributed this to the robust delivery mechanism of the state government of Gujarat. It is his desire that the world should know about such success stories-which often remain neglected in the layers of perceptions.

Mr. Modi added that the achievements of Gujarat are all pervasive. They are not region specific, sector specific or community specific.

Passion for his work is evident from the fact that he quoted extensively from Gujarat based research studies undertaken by independent organizations in the areas of agriculture, electricity distribution management {the *Jyotigram* (Unique rural electrification scheme introduced by Gujarat Government under the leadership of Mr. Modi) is considered to be the brainchild of CM-Gujarat} and water –resources management.

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He said that the people are not only the beneficiaries but they are active partners in the process of development. The state Government merely plays the role of a catalyst and facilitator. Gujarat as per him has emerged as a model of Good Governance not only in the country but in the entire world. This of course, is corroborated by the fact that the state government has been receiving national and international awards in various areas of Governance, scheme formulation and their outcomes. This year itself, the Chief Minister Office received the United Nation's Public Service Award in the category of "Transparency, accountability and responsiveness" for improving the "effectiveness, efficiency and quality of public service'.

"We are trying constantly for achieving higher and higher standards. Many of our Government offices, including my own office, are ISO certified." -Mr. Modi has a humble gleaming streak, when he states this.

The chief minister strongly feels that at a personal level, it is his responsibility to motivate the team to keep up these standards, and try for betterment.

The world of management is known for leaders who invent phrases and are committed to keep working upon them. And Mr. Narendra Modi is no exception.

He believes in what he calls the approach of **P2 G2** in Governance. According to him, this means "**Pro-Active and Pro-People Good Governance**". He further commented that the era of people's apathy with government system is over. People of the country have traversed the path of indifference, despair and hope to activism. Governments overlooking this change in attitude of people are bound to pay a heavy price! Incidentally the state of Gujarat, which has always redefined paradigms, has taken a lead in this direction also.

Mr. Modi added that these awards and successive support of the people to his Government are a testimony that his government's efforts towards good governance agenda are in the right direction. The chief minister further says that from an academic point of view, the process vide which these governance system achievements took place, should be brought to the notice of the younger generation as, the way he put it- "***(Though the) end result creates impact (it is also understanding) the process that gives inspiration.***"

When asked about an apparent bias in the intelligentsia about giving Gujarat and his leadership the due credit that it deserves, he was very candid in pointing out that it may not necessarily be this bias but what he calls the *lack of courage* on part of these people to come out with the analysis based on facts. It also may have to do with the systemic mechanism that they have been a part of for last so many years-he feels. He was quite right in quoting the example of a forthright economist who risked his prestigious position in one of the central government and centre-ruling party supported think-tanks when he publicly lauded the economic and social achievements of Gujarat under the leadership of Mr. Modi.



The chief minister also well known for exhorting the public-audiences during his rallies to take oath on issues like conserving the environment by planting trees and stopping wasteful consumption of water was sad that not many present day politicians have followed the path of Mahatma Gandhi to bring such kind of awareness amongst the masses.



The conversation ended with the chief minister-in his characteristic style- flipping through some pages of India's political happenings. He pointed out the aspirations and expectations of the people of Gujarat of recent times in context with what he witnessed about the larger Indian masses about two decades back, when he was on the all India (Kanyakumari to Kashmir) tour with the then BJP national chief.

The people, wherever the tour went, he said, presented the delegation with a large number of memoranda- *a typical democratic way of people making representation to the political leaders.* That was, Mr. Modi feels the then state of affairs-as far as expectations from the political system goes.

Mr. Modi very proudly cited the case of Gujarat, which he feels is the only state in India, where the masses have never ever presented him with any memorandum! Instead he says that people present him with gifts and (whatever small or big) contributions for larger public good.

It has now become a yearly event for the Gujarat Chief Minister Mr. Narendra Modi to publicly deposit all such gifts and financial contributions in the government coffers so that they can be utilized for a bigger public cause.

Some may call it symbolism, but the message is quite clear-only such political parties and personalities who are sensitive to the development of people, shall survive in the Indian polity. Others may risk the proposition to be written off!

Leaders instill in their people, a hope for success and a belief in them. Positive leaders empower people to accomplish their goals.



Reproduced from SPM Mirror: Vol. 1 Issue 2-January 2011

Published for internal circulation to PDPU stakeholders

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