

India - Laboratory of Fascism: Capital, Labour and Environment in Modi's Gujarat

How is the fascism of the Sangh Parivar going to be utilised for capital?

Monday 21 October 2013, by [PRAJAPATI Rohit](#), [SHAH Trupti](#) (Date first published: 20 October 2013).

We are caught in a false debate in which the reality is presented in an erroneous perception. Narendra Modi, the perpetrator of 2002 carnage is counter posed with Mr. Modi the “development leader”. We call it a false debate, since for us, who have lived and grown in Gujarat over the past five decades the two aspects are actually the same – that of fascist. And we use the label of fascist for Modi with utmost seriousness and with full awareness of what the term involves. Of course, we have a different situation in India today, compared to Italy or Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. Then, bourgeois parliamentary democracy was not too deep-rooted in those countries. By contrast, despite the efforts of Maoists on the extreme left and fascists on the extreme right, parliamentary democracy has struck considerably greater roots. This has had implications for the far left as well as the far right. Our concern today is the far right.

Since the Sangh Parivar has been consigned by fate to operate within ‘bourgeois democracy’ for a far longer time than it had originally envisaged (in 1947-48 it had clearly planned for a fairly swift grab for power, creating a ‘Hindu Rashtra’ analogous to Jinnah’s plan for a ‘Islamic State’), it has been compelled to split its operations. The BJP, as the electoral arm, has to look “moderate”. Of course, it is “moderate” only if one argues that a hyena is moderate compared to a wolf-pack. One should remember that the Mr. L. K. Advani, hailed these days as a “Statesman”, was seen as aggressive as against the “moderate” Mr. Vajpayee back in 1989-1992.

So the issue is not as if there is a “fascist tendency” in the Sangh Parivar, but also a “developmental discourse”. The issue is, how is the fascism of the Sangh Parivar going to be utilised for capital? This is where the ‘Modi model’ is crucial. It is Gujarat, a rapidly industrialising province that is showing, in a small way, what the Sangh Parivar is willing to do for capital.

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 figures for displacement and depletion of natural resources 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 we 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. This is just a tip of iceberg.

What the Government data shows:

In order to forestall charges that we are using tendentious data, we propose to build our case by using, in the main, data released by government sources, or data not repudiated by the regime.

The Gujarat Government claims that it has generated vast numbers of jobs. This is the first thing we

wanted to investigate. Activists of the Gujarat based Jyoti Karmachari Mandal, an independent militant trade union, Amrish Brahmhatt and Rohit Prajapati, in collaboration with the Documentation and Study Centre for Action chose a close scrutiny of Government of Gujarat's latest "Employment Effort", the "Swami Vivekanand Youth Employment Week" in February/March 2012 as an instance [1]. In response to our RTI application, the Gujarat Government told us that spread over months, 489 melas were organised, and 65,000 youth were given employment through the 'Rojgar Melas'.

In April 2012, we filed a detailed RTI application to the Chief Minister's Office of Gujarat (CMO) and Principal Secretary, Labour and Employment department, Gujarat seeking details on 18 counts.

Instead of getting collated data from the CMO or the Principal Secretary, Gujarat Labour and Employment Department, which would have given a state-wide comprehensive picture, we started getting fragmented replies from each of the 'District Employment and Training Department' across the state.

The Employment and Training Departments in the districts were not in sync with each other, as some provided statistics in their replies of the district employment or data to some of the queries, while some did not, without giving any satisfactory reason.

Instead of 65,000 beneficiaries, the number of jobs provided based on information given by the authorities in 23 districts, totals only to 51,587. Out of that 11,172 are apprentices (30.4%). i.e. the actual figure is 40,415 and not even 51,587. But, the names of only 32,372 were provided to us.

We had sought specific information on what post, what pay and which industry and if each of them provided 'employment' in this "Rozgar Mela" would be entitled to benefits under labour and other statutory laws.

Again, we received no categorical reply about entitlement of benefits, saying the information would be best available with the concern employers. While some gave details about post employed, the employer's name, none gave details about the pay and other legal benefits they will get.

Collating all the information, we got some important facts. Nobody had been given an 'Appointment Letter'. What they got was a piece of paper called 'Employment letter', which is bad in law. Secondly, the total amount spent for these melas came to Rs 1, 87, 70,000 according to the Department of Employment and Training. This excluded the money spent on the participation of the ministers - including the Chief Minister - in these melas. The Department of Employment and Training categorically told us that it had not spent money for their participation. This money therefore came from other sources.

Thus, we get a picture that some 32,000 to 40,000 (at best) got some sort of unspecified jobs, while another 11,000 odd got apprenticeships. In Ahmedabad, 4,370 were recruited but all as apprentices. The Apprentice Act, 1961 [2] under which the employers of certain factories have to recruit certain number of apprentice in their factories clearly states that they are not employees of the factories and therefore they are provided with no legal benefits but only stipend of Rs.1,490 for the 1st year, 1,700 for the 2nd year, and 1,970 for the 3rd year. In the other cases, where people did get actual jobs, those were mostly temporary in nature.

Thus, the 'employment' given ranged from apprenticeship to private sector employment for temporary jobs, with very few being skilled workers. The state was using its finances and officers to procure low paid workers for private capital, for example the GIDCs [3].

We leave out the fraudulent information given by the state, not because we forgive the fraud, but because that is not central to our present arguments. It is however important to note that many names have been put more than once to pump up the figures, and also that people who got jobs on their own and were already in job have found their names listed as beneficiaries of Mr. Modi. What is vital, however, is that most of the workers we could actually contact and interview stated they have low wages, high working hours (in some cases even 12 hours per day). Most of them do not get any other legal benefits like Provident Fund or leave except weekly leave.

In Anand district, 2,464 candidates were provided jobs by the Employment and Training Department. The list of Anand District shows that 621 (25.21%) graduate/post graduate/MA-B.Ed/PGDCA were given job as School Coordinator. They were promised the salary of Rs 4,500-5,000/month but they received only Rs. 3,100-3,500/month. This is less than the statutory minimum wage! With some of them, an 11 years contract was signed but they were relieved after 10-11 months.

The central picture that emerges from the foregoing is, the rhetoric of Mr. Modi is belied by the reality that his government is driving down state expenses and also the expenses on wages by private employers, using force and fraud.

Environment and Industry in Gujarat:

The Gujarat Government has charted out its roadmap clearly. It wants to take over peasants' land at low cost, it wants to ensure that workers are paid low wages, and it will do its best to ensure that industrialisation does not confront 'stupid' hurdles like labour rights and environment protection. The then Finance Minister of Gujarat Mr. Vajubhai Vala while addressing a day-long pre-Vibrant Gujarat Summit seminar at Ahmedabad Management Association on 'Industry Responsive Skill Development: The Emerging Trends in Gujarat' on January 11, 2011 said that "A farmer engaged in agriculture on a five acre plot will earn enough only for his family. But if an industry is set up on that land, it will provide sustenance to families of 25-30 thousand workers." [4] He asked local industrialists not to spoil workers by giving them more than what is rightfully due to them. [5]

Thus, it is evident that for the Gujarat government, toiling people of any kind do not matter.

Modi's hymn singers, and today they are increasing, as so many among the privileged think they should take the "right" side before it is too late for them to get a fair share of the gravy. They will therefore contest our claims, accusing us of at least overstating our case. We will therefore make the case in further details.

GDPise Chemical State - Gujarat State does not have Comprehensive Chemical Emergency Plan:

Gujarat is the only state where all registered chemical factories have been identified and categorized in various hazard classes, by the Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health considering their hazard potential. [6] Major Accident Hazard (MAH) factories are identified as per standard norms of related laws. Gujarat state has the highest total 497 MAH Class factories which amounts 30 % of MAH factories in India. At present, 3204 'B' + 'C' class hazardous chemical factories are identified in the state. Gujarat is having a total 30,310 factories registered under the Factories Act (employing directly 940567 Workers) out of which total 4,559 (15%) are hazardous chemical factories. [7]

Over a period of time, Gujarat has also succeeded in widening its industrial base. At the time of inception in 1960, the industrial development was confined only to four major cities viz. Ahmedabad, Baroda, Surat and Rajkot and some isolated locations such as Mithapur and Valsad. Today, almost

all the districts of the state have witnessed industrial development in varying degrees. Such a massive scale of industrial development has been possible on account of haphazard and severe exploitation of natural resources. The discovery of oil and gas in Gujarat in the decade of 1960s has played an important role in setting up of petroleum refineries, fertilizer plants and petrochemical complexes. During the same period, the state government has also established a strong institutional network. Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC), established industrial estates providing developed plots and ready built-up sheds to industries all across the state. Institutions were also set up to provide term finance, assistance for purchase of raw materials, plant and equipment and marketing of products. Later, District Industries Centers (DICs) were set up in all the districts to provide assistance in setting up industrial units in the form of support services. The state also developed infrastructure facilities required for industries, such as power, roads, ports, water supply and technical education institutions. The Government also introduced incentive schemes, from time to time, to promote industries. All these initiatives have made Gujarat emerge as the highly industrialized state in the country today.

Gujarat contributes more than 62% of national petrochemicals and 51% of national Chemical sector output. It leads all states in India in terms of the investments committed in the chemical and petrochemical sector. 30% of fixed capital investment is in the manufacturing of Chemical and Chemical Products. Manufacturing of chemicals and chemical products contribute to around one fifth of the total employment in state. The production capacity of major suppliers of polymers, PE/PP/PVC in Gujarat is nearly 70% of the whole country's production. The province also has large quantity of production of basic chemicals like caustic soda, caustic potash and chloromethane. It is the largest supplier of bio-fertilizers, seeds, urea and other fertilizers. [8]

But the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA), it seems, doesn't think that chemical industries have potential to cause chemical disasters in the state. Despite the Bhopal gas tragedy that took place 28 years ago, which killed at least ten thousand persons and resulted in about 500,000 more people suffering agonizing injuries with disastrous effects of the massive poisoning [9], the Gujarat government doesn't seem to have learnt anything. Replying to one of our Right to Information Application (RTI) about Chemical Emergency Plan of the Gujarat state the GSDMA stated in their replies that "A Chemical Emergency Plan is currently under consideration at the Disaster Management Authority." [10] GSDMA further stated in their replies "In reference to your above mentioned letter where information like numbers and names of the chemical industries, chemical used, final product, pollutant generated and its impact, also information about engineered landfill site - treatment storage and disposal facility, effluent treatment plants, common effluent treatment plants, etc. have been sought by you, we would like to inform you that the requested information is not available with this office." [11]

The 'Honourable' Chief Minister is the chairman of the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority and the same authority has to implement 'The Gujarat State Disaster Management Act, 2003. The Act clearly under clause 2(h) states that "disaster" means an actual or imminent event, whether natural or otherwise occurring in any part of the State which causes, or threatens to cause all or any of the following: (i) widespread loss or damage to property, both immovable and movable; or (ii) widespread loss of human life or injury or illness to human beings; or (iii) damage or degradation of environment;' [12] but the web site of Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority states 'The GSDMA has been constituted by the Government of Gujarat by the GAD's Resolution dated 8th February 2001. The Authority has been created as a permanent arrangement to handle the natural calamities.' [13] What about environmental disasters? There is no 'Comprehensive Chemical Emergency Plan' with the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority. The Director, Health & Safety Department has an 'Off Site Emergency Plan;' but when we demanded a copy of it, we were told that it is secret. [14] A chemical emergency plan is not among the priorities in Gujarat, a state

with one of the country's highest concentration of chemical industries.

The Cases of Critically Polluted Area - Vapi and Ankleshwar:

This is another first for Gujarat, though this finds no mention in Gujarat chief minister's speeches.

In 2009, the Ankleshwar's industrial area, with 88.50 CEPI [\[15\]](#), topped the list of 'critically polluted areas' of India.

In 2011 and 2013, Vapi industrial area, with CEPI of 85.31, topped this list.

Thus Gujarat is able to top in 2009 in 'critically polluted areas' in India and continues to maintain its position in 2011 & 2013.

The Gujarat Chief Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi who is the BJP's PM-designate does not comment or engages ever on this issue. We, the concerned citizens challenge him for an open discussion on this issue.

Mr. Narendra Modi in his book 'Convenient Action: Gujarat's Response to Challenges of Climate Change' published in 2011, on p. 132-133, has printed a photograph of Vapi's Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) which even today does not operate as per the prescribed norms of Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB). When the CETP of Vapi industrial area is not able to meet the prescribed GPCB norms, what message does the CM want to convey to the country and the world by printing a two page photograph of this treatment plant? On this issue we have posed several questions to him in our review of his book but he has been unable to answer a single question. [\[16\]](#)

The constant advocacy by the pollution affected people and people's organisations and NGOs regarding the increasing pollution levels in the industrial areas of India forced the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) in 1989 to initiate the process of indexing the critically polluted areas. At that time 24 industrial areas including Vapi, Ankleshwar, Ludhiana etc. were declared 'critically polluted'.

Thereafter, in several meetings of CPCB and SPCBs serious debates on the pollution status of these areas were undertaken. Even after formulation of 'action plans' for the said industrial area no substantial or qualitative change was observed in these industrial areas. For this reason, in 2009 the CPCB and IIT-Delhi, in consistence with the demands of the people's organisation's working on environmental issues decided to use a new method of 'indexing the pollution levels' of these areas, which is now known as the 'Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index' (CEPI). The CEPI includes air, water, land pollution and health risks to the people living in the area. However, our demand has been to include the health of the workers, productivity of land and quality of food / agriculture produce in the index since the presence of high levels of chemicals and heavy metals in food produce has severe health implications. This is affecting not only people living around the industrial area but anyone consuming it - hence not restricting the impact to the particular industrial area.

As per the agreed upon measures, industrial areas with a CEPI of 70 and above are considered 'critically polluted' areas while those with a CEPI between 60-70 are considered 'severely polluted' areas. In our opinion, those industrial areas with CEPI between 40-60 ought to be labelled as 'polluted areas'.

In December 2009 the CEPI of 88 polluted industrial estates was measured; it was then that the CPCB and the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) of Government of India were forced to declare 43 of those as 'critically polluted areas' and another 32 industrial areas as 'severely polluted'

areas. Following this study the MoEF on 13 January 2010 was also forced to issue a moratorium (prohibition on opening new industries and/or increasing the production capacity of the existing industries) on the 43 critically polluted areas. At that time, Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti (PSS) and other environment protection groups had asked for a moratorium on all the 75 (43+32) polluting areas, but it was not done under pressure from the powerful industrial lobby and state governments. The mucky politics and economics of 'GDP growth' prevailed over the cause of 'life and livelihood' of ordinary people and 'environment & conservation'.

As such the process of declaring moratorium was started from Ankleshwar in Gujarat in 2007. The industries located in Ankleshwar, Panoli and Jhagadia GIDC estates treat their effluent in their Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) and then, after giving further treatment 'at the Final Effluent Treatment Plant (FETP) at Ankleshwar discharge the effluent into the sea. The FETP, from its inception, did not work as per the prescribed norms set by the GPCB. Even today it is not able to meet the prescribed norm. For this reason, on July 7, 2007, GPCB, on the directions of the CPCB, imposed a moratorium on the industrial areas of Ankleshwar, Panoli and Jhagadia. The moratorium is in force even today, since there has been no substantial improvement in the pollution levels even after the implementation of the so-called 'action plans' prepared by these estates. The same plant's disposal pipe line's project was inaugurated by Narendra Modi on January 25, 2007. By inaugurating this plant, he was sending out the message to the investors to not to worry much about the compliance/s of environment laws in the state. Despite this moratorium being in force officially, the active connivance of the industrial lobby with the collusion of politicians along with the official machinery in Gujarat has surreptitiously lifted the moratorium from some area at different times.

Despite the "Polluter Pays" principle, common effluent treatment plants (CETPs) were highly supported by public money; 25% of the cost was state subsidy, 25% central subsidy, 30% loans from financial institute, and only 20% was directly paid by industries. In essence, half of the 'supposed' solution to the pollution generated for private profit, was funded by the general public. As if this subsidy was not enough, the subsidy for the CETP has been increased from 25% to 50% by the Central Government.

The pipe line project of Final Effluent Treatment Plant of Ankleshwar was built with the sweat of tax payers. Out of a total project cost of Rs. 131.43 crores, the industries paid only Rs. 21.75 crores (about 17%); the rest of the tab (Rs. 109 crores) was borne by the Central Government, the Gujarat Government, and the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) - all of which ultimately draw from public money. It is a familiar story: the profits are distributed privately, but the institutional costs and environmental burden are borne by general public. Can we find a better example of the privatisation of profits and the socialisation of the costs, burdens and hazards?

With no improvement in the levels of pollution being shown by the CEPI of the CPCB, the MoEF again, through its order of September 17, 2013 re-imposed a moratorium for some industrial areas. [17] However, surprisingly the same order also lifted the moratorium from some polluted areas in the name of 'promises, presumption and assumption' of improvement. [18] However, in our opinion the moratorium ought not to be lifted until these units bring down their CEPI to below 60.

In Gujarat, the GPCB has served repeated closure notices to several industries, which have been openly flouting environmental norms. However, the CPCB report of April 2013 has revealed no significant change in these industrial areas. Strict action needs to be taken against such industries and their 'treatment facilities'. The CPCB report of 2009 covered 88 industrial estates, but the reports of 2011 and 2013 covered only 43 'critically-polluted areas'. In our opinion, the CEPI of all 88 areas should be conducted by the MoEF, CPCB and SPCBs. Other areas should also be included if the residents so wish.

Moratorium continues	Moratorium lifted	Moratorium re-imposed after having been lifted
Ankleshwar-Gujarat	Bhiwadi-Rajasthan	Vapi-Gujarat (CEPI - 85.31)
Chandrapur-Maharashtra	Dhanbad-Jharkhand	Gaziabad-UP (CEPI - 84.30)
Pali-Rajeshthan	Manali-Tamil Nadu	Singrauli - UP (CEPI - 83.24)
Vatva-Gujarat	Ahmedabad-Gujarat	Panipat-Haryana (CEPI - 81.27)
Vellore-Tamil Nadu	Korba-Chhatisgadh	Indore-MP (CEPI - 78.75)
Najafgarh-Delhi	Asansol, Haldia and Howrah - W. Bengal	Pattancheru-Bellaram - Andhra Pradesh (CEPI - 76.05)
Jodhpur-Rajasthan	Vishakhapatnam-Andhra Pradesh	Ludhiana-Punjab (CEPI - 75.72)
	Kanpur-Uttar Pradesh	Jharsugoda - Orissa (CEPI - 73.31)

The mega-star Amitabh Bachhan - the brand ambassador for tourism of Gujarat - with his welcome speech, "Come and spends some days in these areas of Gujarat" is never heard welcoming anyone in these polluted areas.

Modi is neither uttering single word on these issues nor is he ready for any kind of dialogue or debate on this issue.

Struggle against proposed 6000 MW Mithi Viridi Nuclear Power Plant:

At Mithi Viridi, in the Bhavnagar district of Gujarat, the Central Government, with full cooperation of the state government, is seeking to build a 6000 MW Nuclear Power Plant. Thousands of villagers are up in arms, protesting this with the slogan 'Not here, not anywhere; not in any country in the world'. The Government of Modi is perfectly aware, that Mr. Manmohan Singh is trying to dilute the Nuclear Liability Act even further, so that private profits are safeguarded even as Fukushima exemplified all over again how risky N-plants are.

Indeed, Mr. Modi is not merely silent. The agencies of the Gujarat government, in this matter, are working hand in glove with the centre. As The Hindu reported in August, CRZ clearance has been given in a remarkably slipshod way. During and before the Environmental Public Hearing (EPH) for the proposed Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), villagers, local Panchayats and organisations like Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti have brought to the notice of the authorities that Engineer India Limited (EIL), the consultant of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) does not have necessary accreditations to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA) for a NPP. However, in an instance of utter disregard and disrespect to the Environmental Law and the Constitution of India, NPCIL and EIL went ahead with the EIA study and the collector tried to go ahead with the illegal Public Hearing in March 2013.

On March 5, 2013, on the day of Public Hearing more than 6500 villagers, local Panchayats and Voluntary Organisation raised certain basic legal issues and sought clarification from the Chairman of the Public hearing, the then collector of Bhavnagar Mr. V. P. Patel. He had no answers to the important questions raised by them but instead tried to go ahead with the illegal hearing. The villagers were left with no choice but to walkout from the illegal, unconstitutional public hearing.

The EPH was held in a coercive and terror-filled atmosphere, in order to prevent the villagers from making free and fair representation. Not only a heavy posse of police force but also private security guards were hired at the EPH site, frisking and checking every entrant, and at places questioning villagers and participants about their antecedents. Unnecessary barricades and iron wire fencing

separated the collector's dais and the participants area, a first ever arrangement during the EPH in recent times in Gujarat. While the barricades and iron wire-fencing might have been put for "the safety and security" of the collector and officials, they created an atmosphere of coercive tactics that invoked state control and fear over the proceedings of grave public concern.

The collector allowed songs and recordings in favour of the NPCIL and benefits of nuclear power plant to be broadcast from the public address system arranged by the collectorate. These recordings continued to be played till the EPH proceedings began formally. This was a clear violation of the neutral approach that the collector should have taken on the issue and instead made clear his predisposition on behalf of the NPCIL. On the contrary, the villagers were not only prevented from making free and fair representation; their representations on procedural issues were also ignored during the EPH.

There were at least thirty odd people sitting on dais on both the sides of district collector during the EPH, whose presence and background went unaccounted with no one introduced or briefed about who they were and in what capacity they sat there. The villagers and their elected representatives on the other hand got no such chance and instead were frequently frisked and subjected to irritating queries.

The NPCIL and EIL has since then continued to resort to the illegal practices by keeping silence on the issues raised by the villagers. This is evident from its application and presentations for Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance to the authorities in Gujarat without submitting adequate documents and information.

Members of the Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti, Krishnakant, Swati Desai, and Rohit Prajapati, environmental activists in Gujarat, wrote letters to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), alleging that the Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) clearance by the State Government was without any site visits and documentation of ground realities.

On June 11, 2013, while giving the so-called CRZ clearance/ recommendation for CRZ clearance to the NPP, the Gujarat Coastal Zone Management Authority (GCZMA) stated that "The Authority deliberated the proposal of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited and after detailed discussion, the Authority decided to recommend to the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India to grant CRZ clearance for construction of intake, outfall facilities, jetty and Desalination plant at Village: Mithi Viridi, Dist: Bhavnagar by M/S Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited, only after submission of the following details to this Department : 1. Detailed note regarding the safety aspects and site selection criteria along with its advantage for this site and submit to this Department. 2. A site visit should be carried out by GCZMA Member."

This clearly means that the Gujarat Coastal Zone Management Authorities is not serious about the CRZ clearance because they have casually given this clearance/recommendation for CRZ clearance without asking for and reading the note on safety aspects, site clearance report and without undertaking the site visit. GCZMA has also not taken in account the basics, for instance eventualities like population increase in the immediate vicinity of the proposed plant. What the CRZ clearance does, therefore, is to endorse the illegal and unconstitutional act of NPCIL and EIL. Activists earlier alleged that the EIL had no accreditation to conduct an environment impact assessment for a nuclear power plant. It appeared as if the GCZMA is a victim of the non-transparent and secretive approach of NPCIL, which has not attached the report dated June 28, 2007, of Site Selection Committee even in the Environment Impact Assessment document and also to the GCZMA.

NPCIL needs 81 hectares of forest land in addition to the other land for the nuclear power plant. To facilitate this the Taluka Development Officer (TDO) of Gujarat State sent a letter dated July 15,

2013 to Sarpanch of Jaspara directing him to pass a resolution on the lines of the copy that he had sent, so as to have the village body's stamp of approval for the state government transfer of forest land to the NPCIL. In this letter the TDO instead of seeking the opinion of Gramsabha as per the law for the land transfer, illegally and unconstitutionally orders the Sarpanch to pass the readymade resolution. The Gramsabha of Jaspara unanimously condemned and rejected such an unconstitutional letter of TDO. The Gramsabha unanimously resolved not to hand over the forest land for non-forest use to be handed over the NPCIL.

This is the new way of getting the consent from the villagers by Mr. Modi's Gujarat State.

Kevadia near Sardar Sarovar Dam: Old and New Struggles

Another hot spot Mr. Modi faces is near Sardar Sarovar Dam.

The work for the Garudeshwar weir, proposed about 12 km downstream of the Sardar Sarovar dam, began without necessary environmental clearance from the Environmental Sub Group (ESG) of Narmada Control Authority's (NCA). It is very clear if one looks closely at the letter dated March 24, 2013 written by a senior member Mr. Shekhar Singh of the ESG of NCA to its chairperson Mr. Dr V. Rajagopalan, the secretary of Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India.

He expressed surprise over Gujarat Government's decision to start work for the construction of the Garudeshwar weir without obtaining necessary environment clearances.

He states in his letter that "Garudeshwar weir, to be built 12 km downstream of the SSP dam with a live storage capacity of 32.9 Million Cubic Meters is a component of the Sardar Sarovar Project, as was envisaged by the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal Award of 1979. However, as far as I recollect, the environmental and social impacts of construction and operation of Garudeshwar weir (GW) have never been brought before the ESG of NCA."

He further states in his letter "In my estimation, the construction and operation of the GW will have significant social and environmental impacts, since it will entail a reservoir of about 12 km in length and unknown width and submergence area. The weir will have the potential of affecting the fisheries in the immediately surrounding areas and also of affecting the downstream river and its biodiversity, and other related aspects. This is especially because the weir will control the flow of water and silt downstream. However, I do not know whether there has been a comprehensive assessment of the environmental and social impacts of the GW and its contribution to the cumulative impact of all the projects and activities in the area. And if there has been, I do not believe that this has been put up to the ESG for its approval."

At the end of the letter, he clearly demands, "If this is correct, I find this problematic as ESG has not yet cleared the construction of this weir. Under the circumstance, I urge you to: (1) Ask the Government of Gujarat (GoG) to immediately stop construction of the GW. All other activities related to the GW should also be stopped. (2) Ask GOG/ SSNNL to submit the full feasibility report, environment and social impact assessment report including impacts during construction and operation of the GW to the ESG and seek clearance of the ESG for this work. (3) Ask GOG not to start any work in this regard till the ESG clears this."

In a clear example of how area development authorities, notified by the Gujarat Government, behave vis-à-vis local villagers, a letter written by the Chief Executive Officer, Kevadia Area Development Authority (KADA) has threatened the Sarpanches of 52 villages adjoining the Sardar Sarovar Dam that they better agree to hand over their villages for tourism purpose or else they would face consequences. The four-line letter dated March 6, 2013 sent to the village Sarpanches under the

heading “Regarding the decision to include your villages under KADA”, threateningly states “the government has decided on development oriented work in these villages, even then you have not passed resolutions on your letter-heads agreeing to be included under KADA.” Calling the behaviour of the 52 village Panchayat “improper”, the KADA letter says, “You are requested to send your approval for the use of your villages for developmental purpose within seven days. In case you fail to do it, then – keeping that in view – we will be forced to take further steps against you.” Significantly, KADA comes directly under the Gujarat Urban Development Department and has been given the task of “developing” the area around the Sardar Sarovar Dam into a tourism spot, complete with all types of entertainment facilities, hotels and sports.

KADA Chief Executive Officer Mr. D. B. Rahewar said that his office has so far only asked consent from 54 villages to get consent of the village Panchayats for town development purpose, and the process was still at initial stage. “We have added 54 more villages under our scheme and have sought consent from the Panchayat but are yet to get their consent. We intend to develop the area under town planning scheme. The systemic development of the basic infrastructure in the region will be meant for mass service,” he said.

The six villages, which were the first to hand over the land way back in 1961-63 to build the Staff Colony, Government Offices and Guest House to build the Sardar Sarovar Dam, have even decades later not been considered “equal” to other project affected persons (PAPs), thus remaining deprived of all the facilities which other PAPs of Sardar Sarovar Dam of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have received. In fact, they cannot even access to Sardar Sarovar Dam water for irrigation. Worse, the view is gaining ground among them that water is only for urban and industrial use.

The view is also gaining strong among the villagers that all this is being done at a time when the Gujarat Government has decided to build the highest statue of the world in the memory of Shri Sardar Patel by spending Rs 2,500 crores near Sardar Sarovar Dam, around which KADA’s tourism will be developed. Already, 16 villages have been brought under KADA, while the plan is to take the number to 70.

On October 2, 2013 a huge contingent of police force was mobilised by the Gujarat state police department to create an atmosphere of terror and threat among the villagers to prevent them from reaching the place of the meeting where they were to discuss and raise their grievances against KADA (Kevadia Area Development Authority) near the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat. Government authorities photographed as well as video recorded the villagers who made their way to the meeting venue as a means of intimidation.

This happened a day after October 1, 2013, when the Collector, district Narmada and KADA authorities organised an urgent meeting with Sarpanches, Panchayat members and the Talati of 70 villages where they spelled out in not many words to dissuade the locals not to join the October 2 meeting. In spite of these “efforts” by the state and KADA authority, over 1500 people from the villages attended the meeting and resolved to fight back this inhuman and unconstitutional action. Protesting tribals shouted, “jaan denge, jameen nahi (we will give our life, but not our land)”, “jameen rotlo aape chhe (we get food from our land)”, “amaro gaam, amaro raaj (our village, our rule)”, “vikas joiye chhe na ki vinas (we need development and not destruction)”, among others, to register their protest against the move of the KADA to acquire land.

The Chairman, Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd, the Chairman & CEO, KADA and Collector, district Narmada were invited for the meeting to put forward the information, facts and figures before the villagers on October 2. Much to everyone’s regret, they all chose to remain absent from the meeting.

At the end of the meeting, the villagers and concerned citizens took a pledge with Narmada water in their hand.

In other words, in the Modi development model, if you are workers, dalits, adivasis, and of course Muslims, then you may expect extremes of oppression and suffering. Tie this in with the export of the Gujarat model to the rest of the country, starting with the experiments in Uttar Pradesh (Muzzaffarnagar). The BJP sent a tested criminal, Mr. Amit Shah into UP to apply the lessons of Gujarat to the country's biggest state, since Mr. Modi has decided that whoever wins UP wins India. In UP, Shah communalised the state or large parts of it, pitting the Jats against the Muslims. Incidents were concocted so that pogroms could be whipped up. This resulted in the mass violence. At least 48 people died, many more are still missing and huge numbers had to flee their homes. And meanwhile the thugs who fanned the flames of this cynically orchestrated violence and destroyed thousands of lives gather for a photo-op in the corridors of the UP state assembly. This is what projecting Modi as PM implies – capitalist development in the interest of the top layers of the country, mass exploitation of workers and other toilers, along with mobilisations based on extreme communal politics and the destruction of peoples' organisations. This is precisely Indian fascism.

Rohit Prajapati and Trupti Shah

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<http://www.radicalsoci alist.in/articles/national-situation/579-laboratory-of-fascism-capital-labour-and-environment-in-modi-s-gujarat>

* Rohit Prajapati and Trupti Shah are members of Radical Socialist, <http://www.radicalsoci alist.in/> Radical Socialist is an internationalist Marxist organisation based in India.

The authors can be contacted at rohit.prajapati gmail.com, trupti.vadodara gmail.com

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.sacw.net/article3417.html>

[2] http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/ApprenticeAct1961.pdf

[3] Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation has been created with public money for the facilitation and establishment of private companies and corporations both domestic and international in industrial areas and industrial estates in the state. It has established 182 industrial estates, ranging from mini to mega sizes, in 25 of the 25 districts of the state. It has also developed 7 Special Economic Zones (SEZ). It is now establishing Special Investment Regions, PCPIR, Industrial areas and large sector-specific estates to attract big capital with the help of public finances.

[4] Gobbling farm land for industry a fair game: Minister, Indian Express, 12 January 2011.

[5] Gobbling farm land for industry a fair game: Minister, Indian Express, 12 January 2011.

[6] <http://www.chemicalsafety.co.in/mesures.htm>

[7] <http://www.chemicalsafety.co.in/mesures.htm>

[8] <http://www.vibrantgujarat.com/focus-areas/chemicals-and-petrochemicals.aspx>, dated 21-9-2011

[9] <http://www.bmhrc.org/Bhopal%20Gas%20Tragedy.htm>

[10] Reply by GSDMA to Rohit Prajapati dated 10-8-2007

[11] Reply by GSDMA to Rohit Prajapati dated 23-8-2007.

[12] <http://www.gsdma.org/dmact.pdf>

[13] <http://www.gsdma.org/profile.htm>

[14] Reply by Director, Health & Safety Department, Vadodara, to Rohit Prajapati, dated 9-9-2010.

[15] Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI), is a rational number to characterize the environmental quality at a given location following the algorithm of source, pathway and receptor have been developed. The index captures the various health dimensions of environment including air, water and land.

http://cpcb.nic.in/divisionsofheadoffice/ess/NewItem_152_Final-Book_2.pdf

[16] Mr. Narendra Modi - 'CONVENIENT ACTION - Gujarat's Response To Challenges of Climate Change' has conveniently ignored the level of irreversible environmental degradation in the State of Gujarat. - Rohit Prajapati

<http://www.radicalsocialist.in/articles/environment/378-narendra-modi-and-climate-change-a-response>

[17] <http://envfor.nic.in/sites/default/files/om-ia-moratorium-reimposing-170913.pdf>

[18] <http://envfor.nic.in/sites/default/files/om-ia-moratorium-lifting-170913.pdf>