

Profile

# Narendra Modi : India's most controversial and misunderstood politician

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**By G L Jalali**

To write about Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi is a taboo these days because a very hostile environment has been created against him by the media and some TV channels. His main achievements as the architect of modern Gujarat, capable administrator and great humanist have been altogether sidelined by the English media controlled by vested interests.

He is vilified as "the merchant of death," killer of Muslims and card-holder of the Hindutava. He has been frequently criticized by his political enemies and dubbed anti-Muslim politician following the torching of the coaches of the Sabarmati Express at Godra and the riots that occurred as a result of the burning of 58 Karsevaks travelling from Ayodha. Godhra has been proverbially notorious for communal riots since independence. It has always been the epicenter of communal politics. Any communal flare-up is not something new in the history of Godhra.

After the partition of India, a large number of Muslims living in Godhra fled to Pakistan. Soon after, they returned to their native places where a good number of them were exploited by ISI. Although aligned with India's pseudo secular parties, some of the prominent Muslim leaders who even were elected to Parliament and state assembly played in the hands of Pakistani agents, resulting in polluting the communal atmosphere in Gujarat. It was easy for these Pakistani agents to infiltrate into Gujarat because it is in close proximity to Pakistan whose border is a few kilometers away from Gujarat.

To blame 59 year old Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi for the riots is sheer injustice to him as proved by various commissions and impartial agencies. This is pure canard being propagated by his enemies who have been persistently trying to dethrone him as the Chief Minister and bring a bad name to Mr. Modi and discredit him in the eyes of people. But so far they have abysmally failed, for 5 crore Gujaratis have elected him twice with a thumping majority. He is still the acknowledged leader of Gujaratis who commands great respect outside Gujarat.

Mr. Narendra Modi has a humble origin unlike any pseudo-secular leader. He was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth. The Modi family originally hailed from nondescript Navdotra Village in Banaskantha district of Gujarat which was then a part of Bombay Presidency (Maharashtra state).

His ancestor Manganlal Ranchhoddas left his native village to set up a grocery store in Vadnagar. Manganlal had only one son, Mulchand who, after the death of his father took over his father's grocery shop. Mulchand's son Damodardas was the father of Narendra Modi. He was fifth son of his father. Narendra was born on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1950. His eldest brother was born in 1944. The second brother Amit was born in 1946. So Narendra Modi is the youngest son of his father who was known for honesty, and humanitarian outlook. His eldest brother Som completed senior secondary school education and subsequently acquired a diploma in sanitary science. After completing studies Amit became turner in a private company in Odhav. Narendra has one sister, Vasanti born in 1955. His two younger brothers, Prahlad and Pankaj were born in 1955 and 1958 respectively. Being too poor to afford higher education Pankaj after completing his school education, joined the Information Department of the Gujarat government. His ninety five year old mother, who has lost hearing stays with her eldest son Som in the Ranip area of Ahmedabad. His younger brother runs a fair price shop in the state capital. Prahlad, works as an ordinary clerk in the Information Department in Gandhinagar. As chief Minister of the state, Narendra Modi never went out of way to help his brother who leads a modest life in their respective villages. Had he done so, he could have raised them from dust to skies as is the case with other politicians. He never visits his home to see his brother. It shows that Mr. Modi is impeccable honest in his public dealings. He is completely dedicated to his mission which is the service of the people of Gujarat.

The house where Modi was born and brought up had just three rooms. All these rooms accommodated such a large family. They served as a bed room, kitchen and sitting room. In one corner of the bed room, all the members of the family would worship, for all of them were deeply religious minded people. This was the first place where Narendra Modi learnt the high principles of morality, humility and catholicity that serve as the bed rock of the Hindutav of which the Chief Minister of Gujarat is an ardent supporter. Like his brothers Narendra acquired his primary school level education at a government run institution. Later on he was enrolled in Bhagavatacharya High School. His classmates have a very high opinion of Narendra. He is remembered as a bright student who excelled in English and social studies. He proved a good debater in his school. The art of oratory, which enthralled his audience, was learnt by young Modi during his school days.

Born in a lower middle class Hindu family, Modi always wore a simple dress. He never had more than two pairs of clothes which he maintained meticulously neat and clean. At home he helped his mother in household chores and occasionally helped his mother in cooking food for entire family. He never wasted a single minute in gossip. From the very beginning of his life, Narendra Modi would worship in a temple of Lord Shiva that was very close to his home. He would observe the Navratra fasts when he was just twelve years old boy. He had inclination to become a Sanyasi (mendicant). After completing his school career, Narendra made a religious pilgrimage to Mansarover & Kailash in the very heart of the Himalayas. He had finally decided to be a Pracharak (whole time worker) of the RSS. His family members were keen to marry their son. But young Modi turned down their plea. He has all along remained a bachelor. The young boy was "tremendously influenced by the life and works of Swami Vivekananda whom we regard the morning star of the Indian Renaissance (social awakening). When Narendra was seventeen years old, he joined college in Visnagar. "He decided to quite both home and studies to set off for the Himalaya in search of supreme truth and spiritual knowledge. His decision came as a rude shock to the family that did not know how to react. A traditional farewell was given to him" (M.V.Kamath in Narendra Modi the architect of Gujarat, Page 43).

Glamour, power and wealth meant nothing to Modi. His main aim was to serve his people, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. At last he became RSS Pracharak. By dint of his hard work and devotion to the Hindutv Vichardara (Philosophy) he became a prominent person in the RSS fold. He rose to the position of the General Secretary of the RSS. "The arrival of Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP, in Ahmedabad gave Modi an opportunity to meet. He had come here to launch Navnirman movement in Gujarat in the wake of the emergency imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In this movement RSS workers took a prominent part. Like other RSS workers Narendra Modi went underground in Gujarat. As an underground worker, Narendra had to don various disguises. In Gujarat the Congress Government had to face many odds as a result of the mass movement led by Navnirman Santi. Congress ministry was so often changed in Gujarat. Ultimately Madhav Singh Solanki became state Chief Minister in 1976. Mrs. Indira Gandhi was forced to lift emergency. Elections were held and consequently Janata Government came to power at the centre. Narendra was shifted by the party to Delhi where he was appointed General Secretary of the BJP.

That was a turning point in the life of 59 year old Modi. He was also appointed a member of BJP's All India Election Committee. In Gujarat, the BJP started itching for a political showdown with the Congress (I) and it was able to win twenty seats from Gujarat in the Lok Sabha elections held in May 1991. Narendra's success as hard working BJP leader "stirred jealousy among his seniors and the new BJP president Shanker Singh Vaghela declined to include Narendra in his team. The spat between Vaghela and Modi ultimately resulted in the dismissal of Vaghela from the party which had elevated him as the Chief Minister of

the state. He joined the Congress and became Central Minister in the Congress cabinet. In 2009 election Vaghela has been defeated.

Narendra was disciplined worker of the party. He dedicated himself fully to the task assigned to him. As the national secretary of the BJP, he organized his party in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab. When the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) formed its first government, Modi played very important role as the BJP performed well in the general elections, Narendra inevitably became "the cynosure of foreign eyes". He visited many foreign countries, including Australia, Malaysia etc. By 1999, Narendra had won the full confidence of Prime Minister Vajpayee.

Narendra Modi proved the best organizer. He sowed the seeds of the BJP in Gujarat by working very hard at the grass root level. He had to face severe opposition from his political rivals. Even BJP bigwigs, including Vaghela, opposed him and tried to create rift between him and the BJP central executive. But they failed in their sinister designs. "Looking back at those days one is amazed at the vilification, hatred and harshness which Narendra had to face. Never before in the history of elections since the Independence can any one politician considered to have faced such an animosity. He was reviled, abused and condemned in no uncertain ways. When those tactics failed, some journalists tried to belittle him and make him but of dirty jokes...." (M.V. Kamath in the Architect of a Modern State, Page 155). No other communal incident has been discussed and analyzed by the media more than the Godhra riot. When thousands of communal riots since independence have been erased from public memory as soon as normalcy was restored and peaceful conditions prevailed once again, the dark memories of the communal riot in Godhra in which a good number of Hindus were also killed are kept alive even after more than seven years of peace and harmony in Gujarat. The propaganda campaign against Modi by vested interests has proved counter productive. It smacks of a deep-rooted conspiracy against Narendra Modi under whose leadership the whole of Gujarat has made marvelous economic progress. It is for the people of India to ponder over this million-dollar question and take an important view of his achievements as the architect of vibrant Gujarat.

**(To be continued)**