

**When you go into court you are putting your fate into the hands of twelve people who weren't smart enough to get out of jury duty.**  
Norm Crosby

### CPM: Unity dilemma

The CPM appears confused over whom to unite with and against whom. The party has gone on record to say that the BJP is its main enemy and that to fight the battle against the BJP the unity of all secular and democratic forces is a must. By any definition, the Congress is both secular and democratic. Some CPM leaders like Prakash Karat realize this but the anti-Congress sentiment in them is so strong and has been ingrained over such a long time that despite knowing that the Congress cannot be left out in the fight against communalism, they find it hard to persuade them into accepting the Congress as an ally.

Things become more complicated when the dominating trait in the CPM brings them into conflict with other Left allies. Kerala is an example. Here the RSS and the BJP are fast growing in strength and breathing down the neck of the LDF Government led by the CPM. Even so, the CPM finds itself unable to go along with its Left allies. Unable to stomach the overbearing attitude of the CPM, two of its Left allies, the Forward Bloc and the RSP, have already left the LDF. One by one, they broke with the CPM and joined the Congress-led UDF. Now the CPM has fallen out with the CPI on the issue of corruption. The difference between the two parties has become acute after three ministers in the UDF cabinet had to resign, one by one, after being accused of corruption. Now the CPI-M's relation with the CPI seems to have reached the breaking point. If the CPI also deserts the CPM, the latter's position as the ruling party will become more vulnerable.

In West Bengal, the party is facing a different problem. The Bengal unit of the party is all for working with the Congress against the Trinamool Congress-led State Government headed by Mamata Banerjee. On record the State party leaders say they are both against the TMC and the BJP but in practice they consider the TMC as a bigger enemy than the BJP. According to their understanding, the differences between the TMC and the BJP are all 'made up', to hoodwink the people. They refuse to accept the fact that the TMC has emerged as the strongest anti-BJP force on the national arena. But the numerically stronger faction of the party's central leadership led by Prakash Karat is still sticking to its no-truck-with-Congress policy. How the party intends to overcome these 'inner contradictions' remains to be seen.

# Dalit leaders' role in community uplift

## REFLEX ACTION

Arun Srivastava

On November 25, three mahadalit members of a family were brutally assassinated by upper caste goons in Jandaha. They were the father, mother and ten year old brother of a dalit girl. The goons owing allegiance to the upper caste people of the area nursed a lecherous desire to rape the girl. They forcibly entered into her house. When her parents fiercely resisted, the goons killed the three and also brutally thrashed the girl. She is fighting for life at the Patna Medical College and Hospital. The police officer of chief minister Nitish Kumar, who carved out mahadalit from the dalit on the plea of providing better opportunities and facilities to them for their empowerment, turned its face away and allowed them to carry on their terror.

It was really a coincidence that on November 27 when the news broke in Patna, the messiah of the dalit and ally of BJP, wedded to the cause of the feudal landed gentry, Ram Bilas Paswan was celebrating the foundation day of his dalit political force, LJP, in the state capital. He was not even aware that such nasty incident had taken place just some km away from his convention venue. Even his party's dalit leader hailing from the area did not bother to put the news into his ears. This is the extent of aversion political leaders hold towards the dalits. Even the local language and national newspapers published from Patna did not carry the news.

This simply manifests how dalits and mahadalits in a consistent but planned manner are being forced to vacate the space for others, who have greater relevance for the urban middle class and the market forces. Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar lead the country in the number of cases of crimes against the dalits and mahadalits. In Gujarat too, the numbers of crimes against dalits jumped to 6,655 in 2015 from 1,130 in 2014. Some time back, a 15-year-old mahadalit boy was allegedly burnt to death after his goats ate the paddy crop of an upper caste man at Mohanpur under Karakot police station in Bihar. In yet another incident, two persons, including an elderly

Mahadalit man, were allegedly hacked to death in a village under Bhargama police station area in Bihar's Araria district. The clash took place in Rahariya village over a piece of land with a lake between mahadalit people and some upper caste land owners.

The killings of the mahadalits or dalits in Bihar acquire significance as the state has thrown open the concept of social justice in public domain. It was expected that the reforms and globalization of the economy would have brought about some basic changes on the attitude of the feudal landed gentry. But unfortunately they are immune to any such transformation. On the contrary, these elements have become more assertive and aggressive, as shown by the violent incidents in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. Despite all the rhetoric about the welfare of dalits and the downtrodden, politicians treat these sections simply as a commodity that can be bought and used for winning elections. Their populist politics has made little material difference to the life of these people or their empowerment.

Issues concerning the dalits, poor and mahadalits have lost their relevance for the politicians and the political establishment of the country, except as a prospective vote bank, which the dalit leaders trade off for their own benefit. While the dalits continue to be an eyesore for the upper caste leaders, the dalit leadership too has failed to uphold their cause. The high decibel growth led to a 15 fold increase in wealth for the richest 10% people since 2000, while for the poorest 10% the income jumped just three times, mainly due to the dismal record in new job creation.

The Labour Bureau's data underlined that only 1.35 lakh new jobs were created by the Narendra Modi government in 2015, lower than the previous UPA government. In fact, the answer to these failures and poor performance could be traced in the apathetic and averse attitude and approach of the political system towards dalits and the proletariat. Unfortunately, the traditional dalit politicians have been pushing them towards reformist politics, which has created a new class amongst the dalits, keen to align with the upper castes and follow their political line. A general impression has been created that dalits have come above the poverty level.

It is an irony that the impact of globalization and reforms has been quite despicable on dalits. The lopsided growth has led to higher migration, with 35-40 million labourers, almost half of the casual labourers, outside agriculture. This owes to a fall in the proportion of cultivators and multiplying of the farm labourers since 1951. Shockingly, the political leaders have failed to do justice to them. An insight into the recent lynching of the dalits by the RSS gau rakshaks (cow vigilante) clearly reveals that it is a strategy to suppress their voice forever. The killing of four dalits in Una in Gujarat, in fact, led to a new dalit uprising in the state, led by Jignesh Mevani. Apparently, this appeared like a protest against the government initially, but it has had much wider contours. Since the naxalbari movement, this was a concrete step towards politicization of the dalits after a long gap. Mevani has been trying to redefine the new dalit politics.

The immediate impact of the movement could be realized from the fact that Congress has referred to a 'special package' for dalits in the party's Gujarat manifesto with 'economic, social and legal guarantees' for the community. Party vice president Rahul Gandhi was also forced to declare, 'Justice for the Una atrocity should not be your demand. It is a legal imperative. It is not a gift by any government, it is your right.' (IPA)



The Capitol Christmas Tree, the 79-foot-tall Engelmann Spruce which was grown in Montana, is lit on West Front Lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, U.S.—REUTERS

# Rahul Gandhi's campaign in Gujarat

## FOCUS

Harihar Swarup

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP President Amit Shah have been carrying on a Marathon campaign for December 9 and 14 Gujarat assembly elections. Their no-holds-bar attack on the Congress and the UPA government is bitter. One wonders if this will get them votes? This is for the first time in over two decades that the BJP faces such a tough poll and PM, Amit Shah and other BJP leaders appear jittery about the poll outcome.

As the Gujarat campaign enters a decisive and final phase, a row has erupted over Rahul Gandhi's visit to Somnath temple—his name was allegedly entered into a register meant for non-Hindus. Apparently, the political discourse is increasingly becoming vicious.

On its part, the Congress denied that Rahul had ever signed the register. A party spokesman asserted that the Congress Vice-President is a devout Hindu and a "Shiv Bhakta" and he had gone there to seek Lord Shiva's blessings. When the BJP asked Rahul to specify his religion, the Congress Spokesman said he is a "janauhdhari (sacred thread) Brahmin." One wonders what

Rahul's visit to Somnath temple and his religion has to do with election campaign. They are certainly not election issues. Yet, another irrelevant issue was raised by the Prime Minister: he took Jawaharlal Nehru to task for his discomfort with the state playing patron to rebuilding of Somnath temple, destroyed by Mahmud Gazi sever times, and its inauguration by the then President Dr. Rajendra Prasad. "If there was no Sardar Patel, the temple in Somnath would never have been possible", said Modi. Records reveal that Nehru's objection was not to reconstruction per se, which had begun shortly after Independence, but to the aegis of the state.

Prime Minister, apparently, wanted to mock Rahul Gandhi's temple trip when he said his (Rahul's) great grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, had opposed the reconstruction of Somnath temple. Even if Nehru had opposed rebuilding of the temple, how Rahul is responsible for that, he was not born at that time. The extent to which the poll campaign in Gujarat had fallen in disrepute, the Congress, unlike

other elections, have support of Hardik Patel, Alpesh Thakor and Jignesh Mevani; the three young leaders have following in their respective communities. They have been drawing massive response to their election meetings. So is the case with Congress Vice-President Rahul Gandhi. His attack on the BJP, particularly the PM, is pungent and points made by him draws applause from the people.

Both the Congress and the BJP have chosen the poll candidates carefully and fielded best of candidates for 182-member assembly. It is difficult to predict the poll outcome at this stage but, judging from the peoples' mood, the Congress and its allies appear to be having upper hand. The dissatisfaction regarding GST among trader community, the travails caused by demonetization, the rising prices, the atrocities on Dalits and the

overall challenge posed by three new entrants—Hardik, Alpesh and Jignesh—are the main election issues and these are a cause for worry to the BJP leaders. Besides, Chief Minister Rupani suffers from heavy anti-incumbency.

All this has provided to an almost moribund Congress in Gujarat a window of possibility. Whether rallies and meetings by Rahul Gandhi are well attended or not, and whether those attending them do so out of choice or enticement is an open matter, and the answer would differ depending on who you talk to. However, the sight of Rahul drinking tea, eating a biscuit, stopping by anywhere on the roads has caused a dent, however small and insignificant, in the narrative of the BJP being in exclusive possession of Gujarat. Will the dent translate into real politics and actual numbers? Will the dent in the BJP narrative diminish its hubris, or will a turnaround happen in the forthcoming weeks? These are some stirring questions. Their answer will be known on December 18 when results come out. (IPA)

### Conventional Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6
	7				
8	9	12		10	11
14	15		16		17
18			19	20	
	21		22		
23		24		25	26
28			29		

- ACROSS**
- 1 Reviews unsurprisingly
  - 5 Mineral spring
  - 7 Become firm
  - 8 Influence exerted
  - 11 Groove
  - 12 Pursue
  - 14 Skin eruption
  - 15 Piebald horse
  - 18 Bury
  - 20 Incline
  - 21 Wear away
  - 23 Frozen treat
  - 24 Slew
  - 27 Top card
  - 28 Fuel
  - 29 Violent agitation
- DOWN**
- 1 Snow runner
  - 2 Serpent
  - 3 Instructor
  - 4 Cat into
  - 5 Calm
  - 6 Energetic activity
  - 8 Nigard
  - 10 Faucet
  - 13 Absence of sound
  - 14 Division of Yorkshire
  - 15 Bullocks
  - 16 Division of rootstock
  - 19 Decay
  - 22 Expensive
  - 25 Lail
  - 26 Vote against

### SUDOKU : 2048

3	8		5					
6		1			2			
		2	8			5		
8	1			9	4		7	
		9				1		
2	7		3				5	9
		3			1	8		
			9			7	1	
					6		4	5

### Yesterday's Solution 2047

7	6	1	8	4	2	3	9	5
4	9	5	6	1	3	2	7	8
3	8	2	9	5	7	6	4	1
8	4	3	5	7	1	9	2	6
1	7	6	2	8	9	5	3	4
2	5	9	4	3	6	8	1	7
9	3	7	1	6	8	4	5	2
5	1	8	3	2	4	7	6	9
6	2	4	7	9	5	1	8	3

### Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 056

S	C	A	R	F	M	E	S
P	R	O	A	R	E	D	L
E	X	T	O	L	T	I	N
L	I	T	F	L	E	E	T
L	I	T	R	O	D	S	
S	N	A	R	L	R	O	W
L	O	O	T	R	E		
H	E	E	L	R	E	N	A
U	N	E	G	A	T	E	L
M	A	T	S	P	A	T	H

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