



## Gujarat Result Analysis: Modi's win, grey areas & implications

By: Akrita Reyar - December 20, 2012

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Just before the first vote was counted in the spotlight state of Gujarat, Narendra Modi tweeted, "No need of looking behind, FORWARD! We want infinite energy, infinite courage, infinite patience...."

He was in a sense flashing the 'V' sign with a message. Forget my past, look at what I would promise for the future. For a man who has sworn his sweat, blood and life to Gujarat, there was an undertone of his desire to fly to higher destinations – in this case it would have to be New Delhi. Had that not been the case, he would not have allowed his mother to address media and bat for him for the top executive post, soon after it was clear that he had spearheaded his party to a third successive victory and ensured for himself a fourth term as Chief Minister.

But more of his PM ambitions later, as the topic has already been shrilly debated to no end in television studios and more than enough newsprint will be devoted to it tomorrow.

The point today and now is how has he fared in these elections and how in the world has one man assumed such a larger than life persona that even a hatrick is no surprise.

### **The Numbers:**

Modi has just about equalled his 2007 tally by winning 115 seats.

As indicated by statistics, BJP put up a spectacular performance in South Gujarat with the party garnering 28 seats of the total 35 in the area. Congress managed a lame 6, while Others grabbed 1 seat.

Of Saurashtra's 48 seats Congress got 15 but BJP was ahead with 30 while Gujarat Parivartan Party (GPP) got 2 and Others 1.

In Central Gujarat where Congress had put up a stout fight in 2007 elections, BJP edged ahead with 21 even as Congress trailed with a robust 17 and Others managed 2.

Congress this time put up a good performance and dented BJP in North Gujarat by grabbing 21 seats of the total 53. BJP was ahead with 32.

In Kutch, the two parties were neck-and-neck with 3 each.

On the whole for the BJP the results are a testimony to what Narendra Modi himself called as “pro-incumbency”.

### **What worked**

Clearly, the main factor that worked for the Gujarat Chief Minister was politics of cult. Congress had no candidate to match Modi’s charisma and Sanjeev Bhatt’s wife was hardly an answer by the end of the duel.

An entire enigma has been crafted around this one man and his constant spiel on development. And then there are symbols, like the homeless Nano finding shelter in ‘Vibrant Gujarat’.

When a well respected and secular industrialist like Ratan Tata endorses Modi, it makes for headlines. Not all the hype is without reasons. Gujarat ranked No. 1 in India on parameter of Economic Freedom in a report prepared by Bibek Debroy of the Centre for Policy Research, Laveesh Bhandari, Indicus Alaytics, Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyar, the Cato Institute and Ashok Gulati, Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, Government of India.

These factors explain well the reason why BJP has won 4/5th of the seats in Urban Gujarat and 2/3rd in semi-urban areas. We all also know that Gujarat is probably the most urbanized state of India, and thus the thumping victory.

But Modi knew better than us the urban, upwardly mobile nature of the enterprising Gujarati and connected with him in a manner that would be relished by him. Twitter, Google+ hang out and 3D-holographic tech campaign facility which addressed 50 rallies simultaneously all contributed the making of Brand Modi.

Historically, the British have been the first to sense winds of change. So when the British High Commissioner found it worthwhile to visit Modi and shake hands with him publically, he was making a statement on the new found acceptability of a people’s leader, who had been deemed a pariah by the international community.

### **The Lessons for Modi**

In the midst of all this glam and gizmo, there was another factor. That of the highest turnout of voters – 71.32% - since the carving out of Gujarat in 1960.

One wondered how the rural populace which came out in huge numbers would cast its ballot. Indication is that this remains Narendra Modi’s grey area. Despite rapid infrastructure development, Gujarat ranks low on social and basic human indices.

Gujarat stands 18th among 35 states and union territories on the barometer of literacy with gap of 16.7% between males and females. On the male-female sex ratio, Gujarat is at an abysmal 24th position in India with 918 to a 1000 females in 2011.

In terms of poverty, despite 7-8% growth for nearly two decades, in 2009-10, 23% of the population or 13.6 million were counted as poor in the state. Gujarat, similarly, performs poorly on health and child mortality indices.

Data shows that BJP and Congress were tied when it comes to seats in backward rural areas with SC/ST and most Muslims still not backing Modi.

And it is precisely for these reasons that Modi should not fall in the false trap like BJP did by overplaying the 'India Shining' campaign.

As he moves forward to consolidate his position further in his party he needs to address the problems in Gujarat's countryside. He also needs to decode why four of his ministers and the BJP state chief RC Faluda lost. And while Amit Shah won, he had to change his constituency in order to book a certain victory.

### **The Congress' Fix**

One would have reckoned that anything around 60 for Congress would have been respectable in the current scenario –it has still not been reduced to a speck like it had been in the three-decade Communist rule in West Bengal.

But this is no reason for celebration or even smugness.

The party has a lot to mull over. For one, Congress is a divided house. Its first list of candidates had to be scrapped after a near rebellion. Two, it is still groping in the dark for an agenda that would blunt Modi-led BJP.

All its stalwarts lost including Congress state head Arjun Modhwadia, Shaktisinh Gohil and leader of opposition Siddharth Patel. Even the gun totting infamous Vitthal Radadiya, who had organised Sonia Gandhi's very well attended Rajkot rally, lost.

What is clear is that national issues like corruption and inflation do not matter at the state level. If they did, Congress would not have won Himachal Pradesh.

But these factors would matter in all possibility in 2014.

Meanwhile, as is apparent, the octogenarian Keshubhai Patel failed to make a mark and may well re-merge with the BJP, if Modi's visit to him today is any indicator.

### **Battleground Delhi**

Narendra Modi at the state level has been able to get away with a lot. When he says Sonia Gandhi has lost her mental balance or that Rahul Gandhi needs to watch his tongue, the polarised Gujarati may lap it up. But it will not necessarily work at the national level.

Pan India, issues such as minority vote would count for much more. And while his sadbhavana fasts would be appreciated, what will also be noticed is that he did not give a party ticket to even a single Muslim.

BJP has been winning in Gujarat since 1995 if one were to discount the 17-month tenure

of Shankersinh Vaghela-Dilip Parikh duo. This time around, there was a lot of nattering about the 150 mark, the aim being to better Congress' best tally of 141 seats in 1980 under Madhavsinh Solanki.

Nevertheless, for Narendra Modi to win Gujarat three times is indeed a fabulous achievement and the fact is that he has set his eyes on bigger goals in life. His administrative abilities and integrity as far as corruption-free image is concerned will bide him well, but he may have to drop his belligerence on the national stage and develop a more consensual approach.

India after all would be a very different ball game.