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- ❖ **Rise of Women Entrepreneurs**
- ❖ **United Nations and Human Rights**
- ❖ **Solution to Meritime dispute between Croatia and Bosnia**
- ❖ **Socio-Economic Situation of Agricultural Labour**
- ❖ **Indian Industry: GST Issues and Challenges**
- ❖ **Role of Telecommunication Sector**



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Third Concept aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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Ambiguous signals

The victory of BJP in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, where BJP retained power in Gujarat and wrested Himachal from Congress, sets a mixed trend and an alarming signal for both the national parties. While BJP claims that it has scored a record sixth straight win in Gujarat, the Congress argues that it has restricted the BJP tally in two digits, the lowest ever since BJP came to power in the state. Himachal. On the other hand has always alternated between Congress and BJP, without exception, a trend that continued this time as well. Presently, the moot question is whether this kind of identification with BJP is peculiar to Gujarat, or can be replicated in other states too. Some trends like substantial rural discontent can be seen, but this alone will not be able to create a crescendo large enough to unseat BJP from its urban base that held intact and propelled them to power. The odds had seemed stacked against the BJP this time in its citadel of Gujarat, with discontent brewing on at several fronts—among Dalits, OBCs, Patels and the downtrodden. Rural distress and glitches in the transition to GST regime amid the hangover of Demonetisation were core issues. Congress too seemed more engrossed under an apparently more resolute Rahul Gandhi and newly minted leaders like Hardik, Jignesh and Alpesh has pooled their efforts in synergy. Yet the Modi – Shah combined led the party back to rule another day albeit with a reduced tally.

Actually, Gujarat was the original laboratory of Hindutva, and it remains a BJP bastion. The BJP confronted the anger at ground level, especially rural areas about lack of jobs, privatized health and education with unchecked social and demographic inequalities. BJP could overcome all this only after the intervention of Prime Minister during the last phase of campaign. Aggressive rhetoric and enormous resources were mobilized to keep intact more or less party's base-like in his previous election campaigns in Gujarat Narendra Modi highlighted the development plank before turning to a Hindu nationalist rhetoric, that had already been widely circulated on social media. This rhetoric culminated in references to the alleged anti-national collusions of the Congress Leaders with Pakistan and to the invocation of the riots in past, which were alleged to be orchestrated by the Congress. As a Son of soil, Modi. With his Gujarati discourse, could also play the Gujarati *Asmita* card to his advantage against an outsider Rahul Gandhi.

The BJP continued to win election after election, even as many voters continuously felt alienated. But three restless, young men emerged from Gujarat soil and things begin to look up. Hardik Patel, Jignesh Mevani and Alpesh Thakore began by voicing the concerns of their respective communities and maneuvered social engineering in political direction. But eventually, they brought ordinary people's agenda to the centre stage. This led to emergence of a pro people narrative around agrarian distress, employment, privatization in education, lack of civil amenities, subsidies to industry, dignity governance etc.

In this election, the Congress fought a prestige battle under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi and adopted a me-too strategy on Hindu issues. Data shows that the BJP which packed ideologically in Gujarat, pivoted quickly under radar to post-ideological formation in the past of North Gujarat and a huge swathe through central Gujarat to wrest previous Congress constituencies, while congress tactfully offset its losses in Patidar dominated areas of Saurashtra. Congress reaped the harvest of Patidar revolt, gaining as many as 18 new Saurashtra Seats on a straight belt from Rajula at the Southern tip of the peninsula to Dasadao in the North but it was hit badly by its failure to maintain its traditional base in Central Gujarat. The campaign saw the emergence of Rahul Gandhi as an effective mobilizer. He held 34 major rallies across the state and exposed the loopholes of the "Gujarat Model" especially in rural area.

So, if the BJP's official plank is development, the subtext of the Gujarat politics remains ethno-religious. But 2.0, driven by renewed Rahul Gandhi may have fallen short of dethroning BJP but it has made significant gains. He has succeeded in capturing the rural narrative cornering BJP largely in agrarian Saurashtra and pockets of north Gujarat, a significant leap, indeed.

— BK