

I am human and I can also make mistakes: Modi

Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi spoke to *DNA* on a wide range of issues, including the global recession, his leadership mantras, Gujarat's place in India's growth, and the future of sectarian politics. While admitting that he may have made mistakes in the past, Modi said he never does anything with mala fide intent. Excerpts:



On the current global recession and how it will affect India.

India has a big opportunity which was never there earlier. China is basically an export-oriented economy. The recession's biggest impact is on export-oriented economies, not on us. So China stands to lose, we don't. We can take advantage of it.

The industrial revolution took place when we were slaves. In the 20th century, America acted smart and created global institutions like the UN, WHO, and so on. Most of them are located in Washington or New York. The US monopolised all issues, including human rights, and tried to become a superpower.

In a recession, no one wants to close down one's business. What they want is low-cost manufacturing so that they can stay globally competitive. India is capable of becoming a low-cost manufacturing facility. But for that one requires high efficiency. That is why I gave a slogan: RACE. Which stands for (low) risk, (high) alertness, (low) cost, (high) efficiency.

If we achieve this, I believe we can attract the world towards us. It will be quite an opportunity.

On why some businessmen see him as a future leader of India.

I don't get into such issues. I realised I am the CM only after becoming chief minister. And even after all these years, I don't feel that I am the CM. I am a '*mazdoor aadmi*.' I work for Gujarat and I don't think beyond this. I don't get into any debates on this and I have nothing to do with it.

On his leadership mantra.

In a democratic system, teamwork is of the essence. The real quality of leadership is the team and team spirit. My success lies in my team and team spirit. My temperament is that I am basically a '*mazdoor maanas*'. This is the reality, so I never escape from any challenges, I don't run away from them. It's not an option. And god shows me the way from that situation.

On how he plans to build up his national profile.

If that is not my goal, why should I waste my energy? Why should I waste my time? Why should one try to see how one can gain acceptance for oneself?

Dekhiye bhai, jab kahin phool khilta hai, to phool ko yeh koshish nahin karni chahiye ke (puchhey) meri khushboo kiske naak me jaati hai? Agar aapko sardi hui hai to nahin jaayegi. Agar aapka naak theek hai, to jaayegi. Why should I waste my time? Main kyon dawaai leke ghoomta phiroon duniya mein ke uska naak theek karo, kyonki meri sugandh nahin jaa rahi hai?

[If a flower blooms, it should not ask whose nose is receiving my fragrance? If you have a cold, you won't get the fragrance. If your nose is fine, you will get the smell. Why should I go around offering medicine to fix your nose because you are not getting the fragrance?]

I am committed to what I am doing; this is the only thing. It is my commitment that I have to do something for my state, that's it.

On his vision for the economic development of Gujarat.

Economic development should be divided into three parts. One-third should be industrial development, another third should be agricultural development, and the remaining third should be the services sector. A balance should be maintained. If it doesn't happen, whenever there is a global problem, the entire state will suffer. This balance can allow us to shift to something else for survival and to scrape through the worst period. We are making an attempt to develop a model of this sort in Gujarat.

Till now Gujarat was proud of its golden corridor. The Ankleshwar-Vapi belt was deemed Gujarat. I don't agree. There should be equal development in all directions geographically.

We have ensured this. All the roads in Gujarat were running in a north-south direction, connecting Jaipur and Mumbai. For the first time I took a decision to make nine horizontal roads. This decision was made in 2004 and we invested Rs33,000 crore. All the logistics support centres are coming up on these crossroads.

The biggest benefit is that Gujarat's development, which was till now around the highways alone, will now connect east to west, which were economically not so well developed. Tribals in the east and fishermen in the west will get an opportunity and wealth will percolate there.

Kennedy made a famous statement, 'money doesn't bring roads; roads bring money.' These roads have become a vehicle of development. For the first time in India, the state government is being paid for making the highway in a tribal stretch by the contractor! We are getting Rs1,700

crore for a road that they will make. This means people know how vibrant this road is! This road will pass through Shamlaji in the tribal belt. So the prosperity you see on the SG (Sarkhej-Gandhinagar) highway of Ahmedabad will be seen in the entire tribal area, Umbergaon to Ambaji. This is our development model.

On urban versus rural development.

We are developing a Gujarat within Gujarat. This will include GIFT city (the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City), Nano city, Knowledge City, and many more such cities which will come up. These cities will have the most modern infrastructure.

In villages, too, we are bringing a new concept called Rurban -- where the soul would be that of villages, but facilities of a city. This will change the whole of rural life. For example, Jyotigram provides 24 hours power supply, broadband connectivity, long-distance education. This means one teacher can impart quality education to all villages of state. Development has to be a mass movement, says Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi



On the criticism that Gujarat's prosperity preceded him.

This whole talk about Gujarat already being a prosperous state was started by those who cannot admit (some of my) achievements. Gujarat never had a double-digit growth rate. The growth rate is not a one-year phenomenon; it has to be seen over five years. Gujarat has never been at first position in industrial investment since its birth in 1960 -- but it's No 1 now. Agricultural production was never so high.

These lies are spread by people who don't like Gujarat and they are trying to cover their lies.

Between 1960 and 2002, there were only 11 universities. Since then the number has risen to 35. What will you call this?

On Gujarat's low score on the human development index (HDI).

Globally, our country is 127th in the list. It's an issue the entire country should be concerned about. When I took the oath as chief minister for the third time, I announced that I will put all my efforts and energies on improving HDI. When I say HDI, I mean air, water, food, education, health. I want to take care of these five aspects. After this comes accommodation and multi-mode mass transportation for the common man's convenience. You need to take care of these issues.

We launched a drive for education which focused on 100% enrolment, reducing school dropouts, increasing classrooms, sanitation for schools. We appointed one lakh teachers. We set up the system for it. Gujarat is the first state to insure every student from KG to PG (post-graduation).

We also installed a 1,400km-long Narmada pipeline to provide drinking water to over 8,000 villages. We also launched the first initiative in India on the food front to fight malnutrition by introducing fortified foodstuff like flour, oil, salt, milk, and bread. HDI improvement is not something which can be achieved in just 2-5 years. It's a process that has to be on constantly.

On his development approach.

My philosophy is that in a country like India, development should be a mass movement. This is my basic thrust. It should be irrespective of the governments that come to power.

On Swarnim Gujarat, Gujarat's golden jubilee in 2011.

Swarnim Jayanti is an opportunity, not a function or event. To reach this message to every household, I am asking people in every village to take one pledge -- like, I will not breach traffic rules; or kids can take a pledge not to waste food; or housewives can say they will not throw garbage in the streets. This will do good for everyone personally and for society. We have started the work since May 2008 and the Sankalpjayot Yatra is moving across the entire state. It has visited 161 places.

I started the *yatra* from Amreli, which is the native place of Gujarat's first chief minister, Dr Jivraj Mehta. I bowed in front of his statue and took his blessings. Swarnim Jayanti is not a party programme or government programme. It's not about Modi. This is an effort to include the whole society and go further.

So your leadership philosophy is about mass movement?

I believe that development must be a mass movement.

On his green agenda.

We made a rule that all government buildings will have rainwater harvesting, will strive to be energy-efficient and have recycling systems. For society, too, we made a rule that all new buildings should have a rainwater-harvesting system.

We have made check dams. Recently, we made India's longest irrigation tunnel on Panam dam. This will earn us carbon credits. There is a hill and the water was to be carried to the other side, consuming electricity. I created a tunnel and changed the decision. We saved money and it became a green project.

Gujarat earned 30% of the total carbon credits that the entire nation earned last year. In Surat, we made India's largest solid-waste processing plant generate power. I want to make Gandhinagar a solar city. I don't know how long it will take, but a concept has been made clear.

On the criticism he faces.

In a democratic system, if there is no criticism, it amounts to a failure of the system. Criticism is always welcome, but allegations are not. I am against allegations. To criticise, you have to do research. But most people don't take this trouble, they level allegations, which is not done. This is the biggest enemy of democracy. If there is valid criticism, I immediately change my thinking. If I had preferred a '*chamcha mandal*', I would have never been this successful.

On caste and communal politics.

First of all, I don't have any caste of my own; this is my biggest advantage. I don't have any caste. In the real sense, I belong to the most backward community, but I never use that for my identification. No one knows (what my caste is) and I don't want it to be known either. Vote-bank politics is a problem for the country. It is done for getting immediate benefits, which damages us in the long run.

We started a *bal sakha yojana* for children. These people will take 18 years to become voters. Politics teaches me that when there is a Lok Sabha election, I should not be doing all these things [*long-term development plans*]. But I don't do that [*vote-bank politics*], it is not my cup of tea.

On whether he will admit mistakes, like US president Barack Obama did recently.

If I have intentionally made a mistake, I should not be spared and must be punished. My statement is one step ahead. There should be no forgiveness if something has been done intentionally. But if it is unintentional, then, as I have said so many times, I am also human and I can also make mistakes. But I will never do anything with mala fide intent. I have been saying this since 2002, but since I am not Obama, you don't publish it!

On how he will stitch the state's social fabric together.

I got Narmada water into the Sabarmati. Who is the beneficiary? I started the girl child education campaign. Who is the beneficiary? I got a medical check-up done for every school-going child. Who is the beneficiary? I got CNG [*compressed natural gas*] for Ahmedabad. Who is the beneficiary? 5.5 crore Gujaratis. The answer is very clear.