

**SPECIAL: ST. STEPHEN'S LOOKS AT LIFE AFTER 130**

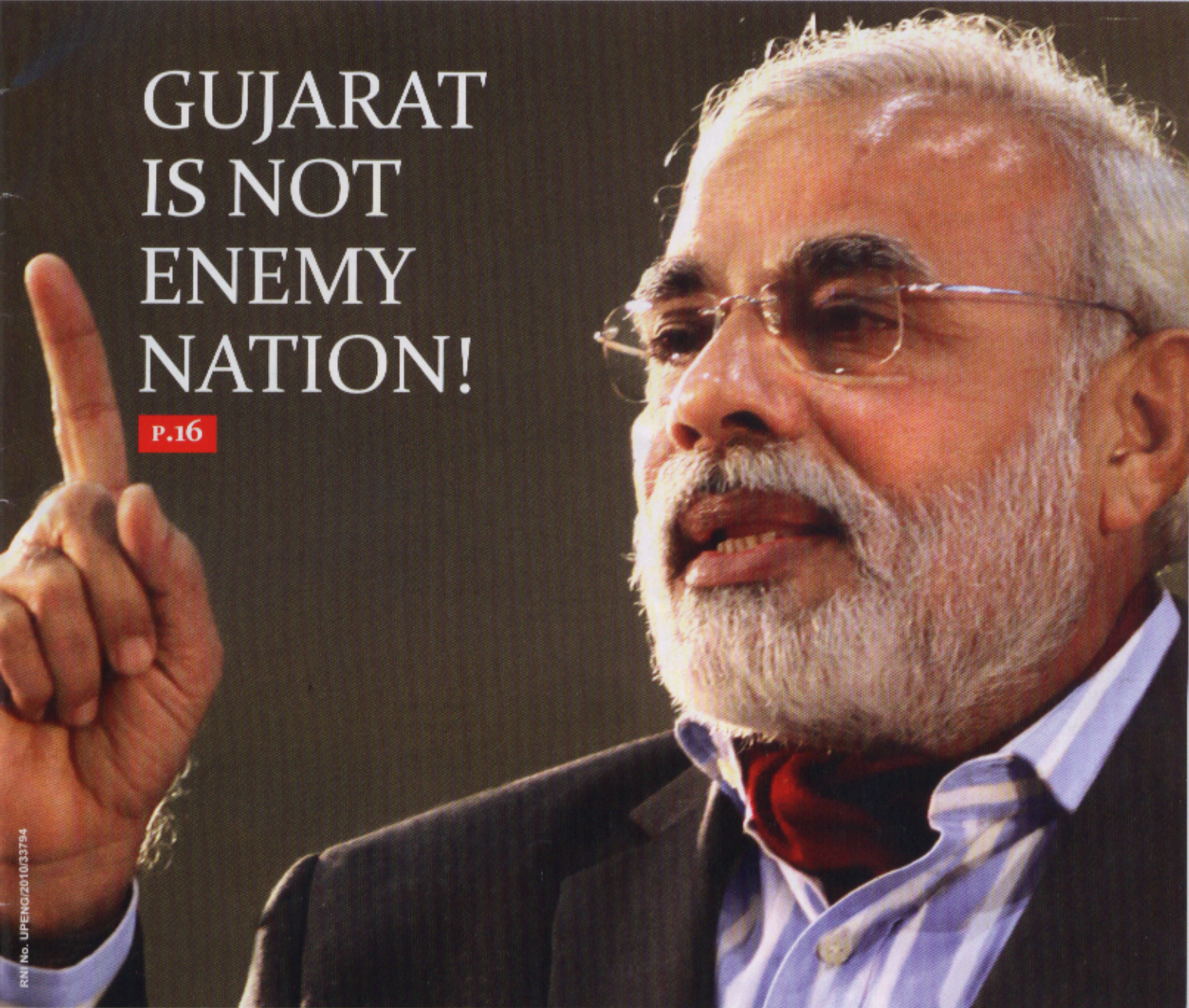
# GOVERNANCE **now**

February 1-15, 2011 | Vol. 02 Issue 01 | ₹ 30

**LET'S MAKE IT WORK**

## GUJARAT IS NOT ENEMY NATION!

**P.16**



RN No. UPENG/2010/33794



Journalist-turned-sarpanch puts Rajasthan village online

**p.08**



A whole tribe is disenfranchised in Orissa (nobody knows why)

**p.28**



Ramachandra Guha on the state of debate in today's media

**p.12**



# Connecting soil and soul

Let's identify inspired teachers at different levels and empower them to infect others with the virus of their optimism and dedication



Anil K Gupta

It is well recognised world over that growth impulses by themselves will not take care of the needs of the socially disadvantaged. But growth can generate resources which can be invested for the purpose. Sankranti festival is a good time to reflect how two time periods, one in which things happen very fast and the other in which things happen very slowly, can meet. I will list initiatives which may not take too much of money, though money is important, but will require attention of the top-level policy-makers to bring about desirable results.

Let me begin with water. In a future column we will see how considerable success has been achieved in providing access to water in Gujarat. But the concern remains about the quality of water. It requires a massive programme of sanitation and awareness about the problem. If we provide a microscope in every school and encourage students to evaluate the quality of water in terms of microbial load, they will start demanding better quality. Morally as well as institutionally, it may become impossible for the policy makers to show inertia in that regard.

K M Munshi, in his lecture on 'Gospel of Dirty Hands' (1952), had advised an integrated perspective linking hydrological, nutrient and community cycles. We need to pay attention to that again. Our children and mothers deserve better.

Let us turn to education. A great deal has been achieved in terms of enrolment and retention of children in schools. But the real achievement, that is, the competence to observe, analyse, abstract, assimilate and evolve new concepts remains to be improved. I asked a question



K M Munshi

*No educational reform can ever succeed without making inspired teachers the centre of the reform process. Every state has such teachers at all levels. If only the secretary and the chief minister meet them once in three months and start acting upon their advice, the education system can be transformed within a year.*

to a former education secretary, who had spent 15 years in this field, when the Gujarat government had sought our help in strengthening primary education more than a decade ago. The question I asked was whether he knew the names of 25 teachers who had achieved outstanding results without any input from the state. He did not. We agreed to meet in the office of the primary schools teachers

federation in Gandhinagar to learn from such inspired teachers scouted by the federation. Inspiring stories followed. My colleague Vijaya Sherry Chand had beautifully put together these in several volumes from many states.

The question still remains. Do we have a list of inspired teachers in different disciplines, classes and levels today? And can we not empower them to infect others with the virus of their optimism and dedication? No educational reform can ever succeed without making inspired teachers the centre of the reform process. Every state in the country has such teachers at all the levels, from primary to college education. If only the secretary and the chief minister meet such teachers once in three months and start acting upon their advice, the education system can be transformed within a year. When research students in basic sciences discontinue their PhD education and join schools as teaching assistants, there is something fundamentally flawed in the way we look at the sector. When, for 40 vacancies for physics teachers, we just get a few applicants, we know we are not doing something right. If education does not become the hub of our entire investment and growth policy, how will we rebuild the foundation of inclusive growth and compassionate society?

Let me mention one more factor waiting for urgent reforms. Agriculture has shown buoyant growth, thanks to minor irrigation, technological change and remunerative prices. But micro-nutrient imbalances are known to affect the productivity of macro-nutrients. Some studies are already available which indicate a cause of concern. These deficiencies will eventually figure in the food chain and affect human health. Soil and soul are intricately linked, said Munshi. Maybe we need to rebuild this connection in our inner self as well as in public policy institutions. ■

Gupta is a professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.