

Office of Shaktisinh Gohil
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Press Note

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What happened in Parliament yesterday was unprecedented event in the history of India – it was an effort to tarnish the country’s Parliamentary tradition. The ruling party has the primary responsibility to see to it that Parliament functions normally by holding constructive dialogue with the opposition. In the past, when the Bharatiya Janata Party was in the opposition, for days together Parliament would not be allowed to function normally, yet the speaker would never suspend anyone. Yesterday’s order by the speaker to suspend 25 members of Parliament from the Lok Sabha took the entire country by surprise.

What happened in the Lok Sabha actually reflects the mindset of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his chief ministership in Gujarat, when he sought to establish a similar unparliamentary practice. In the Lok Sabha, Modi only replicated a Gujarat model which he had propped up through undemocratic ways.

Between 2002 and 2013, as chief minister of Gujarat, there was not one budget session of the state assembly when he did not suspend opposition MLAs. Earlier, there weren’t any such instances of suspending opposition MLAs with such frequency. During the Congress rule, a senior BJP MLA crossed the floor, snatched a document which chief minister Amarsingh Chaudhury was reading, tore it to pieces, and threw it on him. Yet, this MLA was not suspended for long, nor was any punishment proposed against him. Breaking this high parliamentary tradition, Modi would use his brute majority in Gujarat to suspend the entire opposition several times over during assembly budget sessions. Despite the existence of the speaker’s chair, it was clear from his behaviour as to who was pulling the strings.

On March 2, 2012, as Leader of Opposition of the Congress legislative party, when I sought to place before the House certain details of how Modi uses corrupt ways to favour certain selected industrialists, the treasury benches created a furor and made a plea to suspend me. My behaviour was fully in line with best parliamentary traditions, nor did I indulge in sloganeering or rush in well, hence the speaker was not ready to suspend me. At this point, Modi – acting through a proposal by minister, seconded by another minister – ensured my unlawful suspension for the entire budget session. According to Gujarat state assembly rules, first the speaker should name an “unruly” MLA, and even after this he refuses to keep quiet, he should be asked to go out. Only after this if he refuses to obey can a proposal be brought in against the MLA to for suspension. Despite this clearcut provision in the rules, Modi went against the law, and he suspended the opposition leader. It seems clear that Modi wants to repeat his unparliamentary ways in the national Parliament.

In the past, raking up a large number of issues -- including the telecommunications scandal in which Sukhram was an accused, or the 2G scam, or Railway Minister Bansal, against whom where were no proof and was totally innocent – the BJP, when in opposition, would not allow Parliament to function normally for days together. This type of behaviour

was justified by Arun Jaitley, who said that it was a “tactic of the parliamentary practice”. Now that the BJP is in power, why adopt a totally different stance?

We are witnessing yet another Gujarat model here: The BJP, when in opposition, would hinder Parliamentary work till the resignation of a certain minister, against whom there was no proof, was solicited. But now, when it is in power, it is refusing to seek the resignation of its chief ministers against whom there is clear enough evidence. A Gujarat minister, who was found guilty by a lower court of stealing crores of rupees worth of minerals, was allowed by Modi to continue in the council of ministers, even though he was a convict and a criminal. Modi also allowed another minister to remain in his council of ministers, though he was a TADA detainee under section 302, and also involved in several other criminal offences. Modi and moral have been irreconcilable entities in Gujarat – this is the Gujarat model he wishes to implant on India. The speaker’s job is not to teach opposition a lesson, but to manage and regulate the ruling party. In Gujarat, Modi always tried to work out ways so that the speaker violated parliamentary practice. It seems Modi wants to repeat this model in the country’s parliament, too.

It hasn’t ever happened that the ruling party indulges in sloganeering and the opposition members are now allowed to speak. Yet, in Gujarat, after Modi became chief minister, when several senior MLAs were speaking on tribal issues, he instigated certain ruling party MLAs to indulge in sloganeering, so that they could not speak in the assembly. This is another Gujarat Modi, which one may witness in the country’s Parliament, too.

Under Modi’s rule in Gujarat, the state assembly met for the least number of days compared to previous years, yet Congress MLAs were suspended frequently. Data of 10 years under Modi rule show that as many as 259 MLAs were suspended from the state assembly.

If the country’s people and concerned citizens do not wake up to the despicable event in Parliament, Modi wouldn’t hesitate to further strangle the democratic traditions of the country.

To,
The Editor,

Request to kindly publish this press note in your esteemed newspaper.

(Sunil Rami)
Personal Assistant