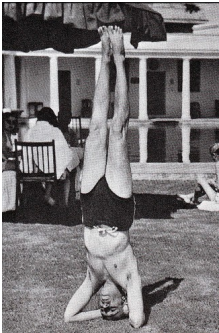


PM brought Nehru out of the closet

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 24 June 2015 13:08

By Sidharth Mishra



Last Sunday, the Congress party stood completely dumbfounded as Prime Minister Narendra Modi once again showcased his event management skills mobilizing lakhs of people, especially the middle and the upper-class, across the length and breadth of the country to celebrate the 1st International Yoga Day. While the Prime Minister led the “yogis” at Rajpath, the event’s reverberations were felt across the neighborhood parks in every nook and cranny of the country. With regards to its scale, it got the better of even the Republic Day parade, which showcases the nation’s military and cultural diversity but has actual little citizen participation, which Yoga Day ended up achieving. Given the sheer level of participation, and given his ability to judge people’s pulse, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, despite his acrimonious relationship with Centre, decided to join the Prime Minister in a 40-odd minute long “Yog Shivar”. The Congress on the other hand, went into a silent sulk, and immediately as it did the media houses tied to its apron strings, tried to raise the issue of Hinduvta and Hinduism, which sounded like a ‘mersia’ (funeral song) being sung at a ‘nikah’ (marriage),

completely out of sync with the environment and enthusiasm which Prime Minister Modi’s initiative managed to create.

Not that the Congress had not realized that its cantankerous attitude on the matter was not paying off. Not surprisingly it surreptitiously released photographs of the first Prime Minister of Independent India Jawaharlal Nehru doing “Yogasan”. However, having committed itself to a stupid stand, it could do little. If the Congress thought that by releasing the photograph of its ‘patron saint’ it could steal Narendra Modi’s thunder, they were just being naive. Inadvertently they only ended up endorsing the Prime Minister’s event.

The Congress should realize that Modi, without admitting it publicly, is modeling himself as an international statesman, something which only Nehru achieved as a Prime Minister before him. The recognition of June 21 as International Yoga Day takes him closer to becoming an internationally recognised personality. His achievement is substantial given that till a few years back he was considered a pariah by the global community.

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It must also be noted by the Congress leadership that the preparation for last Sunday's event did not happen at a short notice. It started on September 27, 2014 when PM Modi, during his address to the United Nations General Assembly, first proposed that June 21, which is the longest day of the year, be marked as the International Day of Yoga, in a bid to unite the world by the medium of the ancient Indian tradition.

Following the speech, a resolution was proposed to the United Nations, asserting the need for a day dedicated to yoga. Highlighting the various virtues of yoga, the resolution had noted that it was relevant because of "the importance of individuals and populations making healthier choices and following lifestyle patterns that foster good health."

The resolution was then subsequently endorsed by a record 177 countries within a short span of 100 days. No resolution had ever been passed by the United Nations with such record support in such a short span.

Taking note of the importance of the International Day of Yoga, the World Health Organisation (WHO) too asked its member nations to urge their citizens to reduce physical inactivity, which is one of the major causes of lifestyle-related deaths worldwide. Referring to the recognition of June 21 as an international day of yoga, 69th UNGA President Sam Kutesa pointed out that "people from all walks of life have practiced yoga for centuries". United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon also termed yoga as a "sport that can contribute to development and peace".

With the world having taken notice of the proactive initiatives of the Prime Minister, the Congress could have done better by participating in the event and not politically isolate itself by going into its shell. Moreover claiming that Yoga day was being celebrated because it also happened to be the death anniversary of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founder Keshav Hedgewar was churlish to say the least. In fact, what is being witnessed today is a repeat of the partisan politics of the 1950s, when Nehru towered over Opposition, which could not either match the then Prime Minister's political machinations, social mannerisms or personal charisma. The Congress in its current form and state of fitness is comparable to the Socialist rabble-rousers of 1950s, towards whom Nehru gift-wrapped his contempt with open indulgence.

The Congress party, as the spearhead of a decimated Opposition, has so far adopted the lethargic strategy of countering Prime Minister Modi by arm-twisting the Government in the Rajya Sabha, where the Opposition MPs outnumber those on the treasury benches. However, the politics being played on the floor of the Upper house has not found even a semblance of an echo in the hinterlands.

There are several states scheduled to go for polls in less than a year's time, including the

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politically significant ones like Bihar and West Bengal. The Congress, however, is nowhere in the mix of things.

They have even threatened to stall the parliament's upcoming Monsoon session on the issues of impropriety on the part of Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj and Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje. They would succeed at gaining space on the television but far would it take them politically?

The gimmicks and histrionics of Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi, peddled as earnest politics by his acolytes, would not have any significant long-term impact either. Doing politics just for the sake of television rating points is increasingly making the role of the Congress as that of a fringe party in the current political scenario.

The Congress leadership must realise that their belief in the politics of dynasty being paramount has already made them lose many of their icons to the BJP, most significantly Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Whilst the Congress leaders could keep shouting from roof tops that Prime Minister Modi belongs to the ideology of the killers of Mahatma Gandhi, they are now in the process of losing Jawaharlal Nehru too to the right wing pantheon.

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