

Who is attacking civility?

-Prem Singh

M Rajivlochan's article 'An attack on civility' (IE 30 March 2023) has been published in response to the newspaper's lead editorial of 25 March 2023 titled 'Disqualified'. The editorial was about the cancellation of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's membership of Parliament after his conviction by the Surat Court in a defamation case. In the opinion of the newspaper, the swift action against Rahul Gandhi is yet another example of a politics of vindictiveness. The newspaper has also opined that this action is another bad sign for a democracy. It further hinted that the praise of democracy in the propaganda machinery and speeches of leaders of the government seemed to be a cover up for its inner hollowness. Disagreeing with the editorial, Rajivlochan has suggested that a better title for the editorial would have been 'Deservedly Disqualified'. Means, Rahul Gandhi should have been put in the dock for his 'disqualification', not the government.

Registering disagreement with the editorial, the author has served some such assumptions about politics, judicial system and civility in society, which can only be termed as surprising. Before proceeding further, I would like to make it clear that as a citizen, on the basis of the Constitution, and as a political worker, on the basis of socialist ideology, I am opposed to the politics of Rahul Gandhi and Arvind Kejriwal. I also see no point in lumping together Rahul Gandhi and Kejriwal, as Rajivlochan has done in his article. My political belief is that the semiological universe of the RSS/BJP, the Congress and most of the political parties involved in the game of power is the same. This universe is formed by the nexus of corporate-communal-criminal forces. Even if there is difference of more or less between these parties and leaders on this account.

Rajivlochan says in his article, "Arvind Kejriwal and Rahul Gandhi seemed to be willing to make specific accusations that would actually torture the honour and dignity of other people on false grounds." The article is about Rahul Gandhi. The editorial to which disagreement has been noted was also written regarding the question of Rahul Gandhi's conviction and disqualification arising out of it. But Rajivlochan has included Arvind Kejriwal in the later part of his article, so that it does not appear that Rahul Gandhi, a 'deliberate lair', is the only target. The author further says that "No other political leader in India does this. At least I

don't know of anyone else who insists that their accusations against others are correct, especially since they have no evidence to back the accusations." According to this assumption of the author, the rest of the country's politics and leaders should be considered beyond reproach. For those suffering from depression due to the present political decline in India, the author has presented this great recipe!

Before saying all this, the author has also stated in the article that allegations and counter-allegations have been common phenomena in the speeches of leaders in India. Their audience enjoys it. In the era of "wild TV news channels", this enjoyment of the people reaches its zenith "even while everyone tut-tuts about the decline in standards of public discourse." This means that by taking advantage of this 'innocent trend' of allegations and counter-allegations, Rahul Gandhi deliberately commits the 'crime' of degrading the honour and dignity of the people. The court has done the right thing by punishing such an 'arrogant' person. The government has also done the right thing by expelling him from the membership of the Parliament. Needless to say, this is the RSS/BJP line about Rahul Gandhi.

Rajivlochan probably does not consider Narendra Modi a leader, but, like many others, he considers him the Messiah. Therefore, what Modi says about others is beyond question for the author. Otherwise, has the author not heard the speeches of Chief Minister and Prime Minister Narendra Modi? Even mentioning only two things will be sufficient, without opening the box of his statements about the dead and living persons, or about the communities. One, by saying 'nothing happened in the last 65 years' again and again, the achievements of the independent India has been defamed again and again. Further, a great humiliation has been done to the citizens, dead and alive, who had done their work with integrity and honesty in nation building. Two, by saying 'before now it was considered a shame to be born in India', while on abroad trips, is a direct attack on the honour and dignity of the motherland. The propaganda that 'the country has really got freedom now', which started with Modi becoming the Prime Minister, has not stopped yet. Even if it insults the countless Indians who made sacrifices during the country's long struggle for the independence.

It is a good thing that the author has full faith in the country's judicial system, despite the "mysterious" nature of its decisions. He believes that disobeying the court's decision is weakening the fabric of justice, due to which civility is maintained in the society. The author warns that in case of non-compliance of the court's decision, the gates will be open for a free for all situations where norm of might is right would prevail. Does the author really not know that civility has already become a victim of 'free for all' in the society? Is he really ignorant of the truth that what are the elements involved in eradicating civility from the society!

It may be noted that the well-meaning people of the RSS/BJP take solace in attributing fringe elements to the frequent attacks on civility. They assume that these fringe elements do not pose a real threat to civility. Rajivlochan, who expressed concern about the attack on civility in the article, also seems to believe the same. By proving Rahul Gandhi as the only villain of civility, does he also want to prove that even the strings of 'fringe elements' are not connected with the RSS/BJP fold, but with Rahul Gandhi!

It is a matter of regret that even scholars of history and political science often fail to show mature understanding of the complex reality. It is not only the TV channels that provide hyper excitement day and night in the name of news that have lowered the level of political discourse; Scholars are also not performing their role properly in this matter. This article by Rajivlochan is a hallmark of the same worrying phenomenon.

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