

Farmers' Movement: Bar Association president's letter denotes the fall of civil society

Prem Singh

Have we ceased to be a wakeful and sensitive civil society and instead have become the horns of parties, leaders and governments? Whatever profession we are in, have we lost all respect for our responsibility and dignity? It is understandable that a pro-corporate government should launch a campaign to defame the farmers from the very first day of its agitation against the government's apathy to their long-pending demands. Because it considers the people of the country, especially the hardworking farmers, labourers, artisans, unemployed and underemployed, not as citizens but as subjects who live at the mercy of the government. But the professional noblemen of the civil society should defame the farmers in an organizational manner, this explains our fall as a civil society.

It is a matter of utmost regret that the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association has written a letter to the Chief Justice demanding that he take suo motu cognizance of the “erring” farmers who are forcibly trying to enter Delhi in a bid to create nuisance and disturb the daily life of citizens. He further asked the Chief Justice to take action against them. It seems that the Action taken by the Haryana government is not enough for the bar Association president. The letter is quite elaborate, which has been written without hiding the intentions behind it. That means the letter writer does not care about the responsibility and dignity of his position and status.

It is yet to be known what the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court will say on this letter of the Bar Association president and the demand made in it? Or what stand will other office bearers and member lawyers of the Bar Association take? However, it can be inferred that from the very first day, the government has made a strategy to mobilize various professional organizations of the civil society to defame the farmers. It is possible that after the letter of the Supreme Court Bar Association, organizations of some other professions may come forward with similar letters. Perhaps the government does not have full confidence in the police and central security forces deployed in large numbers in Haryana and Delhi; its strategy of dividing farmers into provinces, organizations and castes; and the skill and strength of its media management. It seems that this time the government has decided to wage a decisive fight against farmers and their demands.

Even before the Lok Sabha elections 2024, the Prime Minister has announced his third term in the speech at the Red Fort and then in the Parliament. He has also already expressed his determination to do some “big” work in his third term. The work to be done in the third term may also include the “big” task of implementing the three withdrawn agricultural laws by making them more pro-corporate. While withdrawing the laws, the government had openly stated that the laws would be implemented when the opportunity arises.

Bharat Ratna awarded to Karpoori Thakur, Chaudhary Charan Singh and MS Swaminathan is the government's effort to accomplish the same big task. The “heirs” of Karpoori Thakur and Chaudhary Charan Singh will drag the farmers and labourers into the government's fold. Those who do not come will be thrashed by the security forces and the farmers themselves! The farmers' movement of 2020-21 is an example of this. Around 750 farmers died in that movement. An elected BJP MLA from Uttar Pradesh had openly called for shooting 'anti-national' farmer agitators. And along with BJP supporters at Ghazipur border, he had planned to teach a lesson to farmer leader Rakesh Tikait. Surrounded by all sides, Rakesh Tikait had tears in his eyes.

It should be hoped that this time the farmers, who struggle for their livelihood through agriculture, a profession that was once considered the best (*uttam*) and now the lowest (*adham*), will put their hands around the neck of the unbridled corporate-horse and control it firmly. And, like the movement of 2020-21, they will not let all the energy dissipate.

(The writer associated with the socialist movement is a former teacher of Delhi University and a fellow of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla)