

By Sidharth Mishra



January 26 became a sacrosanct day in Indian history much before India became a Republic on this day in 1950. It was on this day that the annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1930 passed the resolution of 'Purna Swaraj' setting for the country the goal of complete independence.

This date was chosen to proclaim ourselves as Republic in 1950 because putting our constitution into action signified, we becoming a sovereign country completely detaching ourselves from the umbilical cord of having a dominion status under the British – Purna Swaraj.

On this day 71 years later, an attempt was made to desecrate the symbol of Indian Sovereignty – the Lal Quila. I feel anguished for my Republic, as attempt at its desecration symbolizes increasing degeneration of democratic principles and dialogue becoming casualty to pursuance of narrow political goals.

In the near seven decades after the first elections were held in this country, vote alone has come to tall over every other issue in our polity. The political manifestos of contesting parties today read more like brochures of marketing firms out to grab the vote shares. The anti-farm protests too have become a casualty of political one-upmanship.

If one chronicled the history of the current farmer agitation, its origin lies in the hurriedly passed legislation last year in Parliament whose functioning had been curtailed due to the Covid19 related lockdown. In one of the lowest acts in our parliamentary history, the Bills were passed in Rajya Sabha by a voice vote despite opposition MPs asking for a recorded vote. It was done because the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) clearly was not in a position to win and the vice chairman of Rajya Sabha Harivansh decided to consign his conscience to political prolificacy.

The Narendra Modi government while pushing the passage of these bills in Parliament clearly failed on the age-old dictum of governance – Cesare’s wife should be above suspicion. It failed to foresee the unrest it was going to cause among the more prosperous sections of the Indian peasantry. It’s policy of ‘draining the agitators of energy’ by allowing them to lay siege of the national Capital for more than two months too proved counter-productive as mandarins in the government failed to read the religious, social and economic milieu of the agitators.

Having continued their violence-free demonstration accompanied by langar sewa (running community kitchens), may not have won the agitators the admiration of the residents of the national Capital but it certainly helped soften their ‘ferocious’ image despite the pro-law social media warriors running various campaigns like the movement being backed by the forces amenable to the idea of Khalistan.

Thus, despite the despicable act of undermining our sovereignty it has failed to make people rise in contempt against the agitators; in fact, there is a feeling in a section that the Lal Quila raid was an act of those who tried to break the agitation and take it on the wrong path.

Now a crackdown has started as there is no sight of a dialogue. First it was thought that the agitators could be removed using force but that has been ruled out given their determination to stay put. Now the government is using the ways and means of withdrawing civic services including power cuts and internet shutdowns.

And the fallout of all these acts is that the online university examinations in the city are being rescheduled, the business transactions and e- payments are facing impediments as connectivity is now coming at a premium and there are several kilometres long traffic jams on the city roads. Will the politics of vote, will the game of political one-upmanship leave the Capital of the Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic of India bereft of governance? If politics of vote is part of democracy, so is governance. Sadly, nobody cares for the latter.

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