

Against Selective Outrage & False Narratives

An open letter which has been published on July 23 2019, and addressed to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has astonished us. Forty nine self-styled “guardians” and “conscience keepers” of the nation and of democratic values have once again expressed selective concern and demonstrated a clear political bias and motive.

To us, the undersigned, this document of selective outrage comes across as an attempt to foist a FALSE NARRATIVE with the intention of denigrating the democratic ethos and norms of our collective functioning as a nation and people. It is aimed at tarnishing India’s international standing and to negatively portray Prime Minister Modi’s untiring efforts to effectuate governance on the foundations of positive nationalism and humanism which is the core of INDIANNESS.

The signatories to the “open letter” have, in the past, kept silent when tribals and the marginalised have become victims of Naxal terror, they have kept silent when separatists have issued dictates to burn schools in Kashmir, they have kept silent when the demand for dismembering India, for making pieces of her -*Tukde Tukde* – were made, they kept silent when slogans chanted by terrorists and terror groups were echoed in some leading university campuses in the country.

For the signatories, it seems the freedom, unity and integrity of India can be bartered away in the name of freedom of speech and expression. But for us, the unity and integrity of India, her freedom is sacrosanct and anyone who questions these, who works to dilute or destroy these, who conspires to disturb these need to be resisted. Some of the signatories to the “open letter” have a record of acting as mouthpieces and ideologues for insurgents, separatists and terrorists in the past. Their concern, therefore, smacks of dishonesty and opportunism.

They have argued that “anti-government stands cannot be equated with anti-national sentiments”, in fact under the Modi regime we see maximum liberty to differ, to criticise and to abuse the government and the dispensation in power – the spirit of dissent has never been stronger. The Constitution of India certainly gives the right to dissent but not the right to try and break India apart. To disguise the propensity for subversion by the name of dissent is a dangerous trait.

Prime Minister Modi has very succinctly put forward the mantra of his governance and that is SABKA SATH, SABKA VIKAS and to that he has now included SABKA VISHVAS. Lynching is a social malady which has to be dealt up front, Prime Minister has spoken out against it repeatedly and respective state governments are empowered to take action. We would urge everyone to give up being selective and condemn lynching, discrimination and desecration of religious places with equal vehemence when they occur. Instead of indulging in grand-standing, personalities with a social and public profile ought to generate greater awareness on the need to tackle and eliminate the mind-set that leads to lynching.

Today the marginalised and the oppressed have been empowered like never before, not through the smoke-screen of hollow slogans and political claptrap but through creative schemes. The “open letter” comes across to us as an attempt to mock the mandate of the marginalised, to create a false sense of fear and siege and to try and derail India’s march towards collective empowerment of all sections of society. It is clearly an attempt to defame the nation. WE DO CONDEMN the conspiracy.

These signatories have strangely kept silent:

- 1) When those who chant Jai Shree Ram were imprisoned, were called criminals and were being killed and maimed
- 2) When complaints of being forced to chant Jai Shree Ram were being repeatedly exposed as being false and concocted
- 3) When members of a certain community – in this case Hindus of Sandeshkhali in West Bengal, were being prevented from exercising their franchise during the last Lok Sabha elections and were being terrorised by one Shah Jehan Sheikh who was passed off as a popular “social worker”
- 4) When an orgy of unprecedented violence was unleashed during the Panchayat elections across West Bengal in 2018
- 5) When violence was unleashed in the state during the Lok Sabha elections this year
- 6) When Jagannath Tudu was bludgeoned to death in Purulia just because he followed a different political ideology from that of the ruling dispensation in West Bengal
- 7) When students were fired upon in Daribhit High School, Islampur, just because they wanted teachers for Bengali, Geography and Computer Application instead of being forced to learn Urdu.
- 8) When temples were vandalised in Kaliachak, Deganga, Baduria, Raniganj and even as late as in July 2019 in Chandni Chowk in Delhi
- 9) When there was a concerted conspiracy by a certain section, taking advantage of the Sabrimala Temple entry movement, to disguise themselves and try and enter the temple and thus hurt the sentiments of millions of devotees
- 10) They are silent when farmers are killed by cattle smugglers and live in terror due to them or when Jawans along some sectors of our borders are attacked and murderously assaulted by these smuggling cartels.
- 11) When Hindus in Kairana (UP) had to migrate leaving their home and hearth behind
- 12) They were silent when Kashmiri Pandits were driven out of the Valley and have never till date spoken of their plight

This very group did not display the courage to stand beside women who were opposed to and are struggling against the regressive Triple Talaq tradition and did not speak out for the need of equality and empowerment in this case.

The selective outrage and amnesia of this particular group makes us believe that they are working to a certain agenda and are only playing into the hands of those forces that are out Balkanise India and to destabilise her.

This group has also repeatedly expressed disdain for the faith of the majority in India. They have repeatedly heaped derision on those who believe in Lord Ram and who derive strength and solace by chanting his sacred name. This letter is a disguised attempt to pour disdain on the subalterns for whom faith and worship are defining dimensions.

We are confident that India shall continue her march of all round development, of progress and of social equity and not pay heed to those who try to destabilise her polity and society through trying to generate a false sense of siege and victimhood. Finally it shall be the triumph of democracy, of unity, of the Constitution and of the *mantra* of *Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas* and *Sabka Vishvas*!

1. **Prasoon Joshi**, acclaimed lyricist, playwright, screenwriter
2. **Sonal Mansingh**, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, acclaimed danseuse and Guru, Member of Parliament
3. **Kangana Ranaut**, acclaimed film star
4. **Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt**, Padma Bhushan, acclaimed instrumentalist, Grammy Award winner
5. **Professor Achintya Biswas** former Vice-Chancellor Gourbanga University, eminent public intellectual, noted educationist.
6. **Dr Swapan Dasgupta**, Member of Parliament, eminent journalist & public intellectual
7. **Rantidev Sengupta**, eminent journalist, public intellectual, editor
8. **Madhur Bhandarkar**, Padmashri, award winning film maker
9. **Vivek Agnihotri**, film maker & bestselling author
10. **Ashok Pandit**, acclaimed film maker
11. **Pallavi Joshi**, actor & producer
12. **Dr Anirban Ganguly**, Director, Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation
13. **Shri Binayak Bandyopadhyay**, acclaimed poet
14. **Dr Saradindu Mukherjee**, eminent historian, author
15. **Malini Awasthi**, Padmashree, renowned folk artist
16. **Manoj Joshi**, renowned actor
17. **Pratibha Prahlad**, Padmashree, eminent danseuse
18. **Professor Manoj Dikshit**, Vice Chancellor, Avadh University
19. **Sandhya Jain**, noted columnist, author, public intellectual, Fellow, NMML
20. **Professor Abhijit Chakraborty**, former Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University
21. **Dr Vikram Sampath**, cultural historian, author, Fellow, NMML
22. **Professor Ruby Sain**, Jadavpur University
23. **Dr Shyamal Basu**, former Principal Kolkata Medical College
24. **Maj General (retd) P.K. Mullick** VSM
25. **Professor Smriti Kumar Sarkar**, former Vice-Chancellor, Burdwan University
26. **Professor Radharaman Chakraborty**, former Vice Chancellor Netaji Subhas Open University, public intellectual
27. **Professor Dulal Chandra Ghosh**, eminent educationist, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan
28. **Biswajit Chatterjee**, veteran film personality
29. **Subhadra**, popular film and television actress

30. **Parno Mitra**, film actress
31. **Ayanjit Sen**, film producer
32. **Prithviraj Sen**, writer and thinker
33. **Kanchana Moitra**, film actress
34. **Dr Susovan Banerjee**, former MLA, eminent physician, Bolpur, Member executive council Visva Bharati, Santiniketan
35. **Professor Sirajul Islam**, professor of philosophy, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan
36. **Basanti Devi**, film actress
37. **Raj Bhowmik**, film actor
38. **Bappaditya Chakraborty**, film and folk drama producer
39. **Professor Debashish Bhattacharya**, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan
40. **Professor Pritam Prasad Roy**, former professor, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan
41. **Dr Abhinav Prakash Singh**, Delhi University
42. **Kalyan Chaubey**, former footballer
43. **Dr Rameshwar Mishra**, professor of Hindi, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan
44. **Prof. Iman Kalyan Lahiri**, Jadavpur University
45. **Bani Kumar**, film actor
46. **Saikat Mukherjee**, film producer
47. **Tuhin Pal**, film producer
48. **Professor Ganesh Malik**, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan
49. **Professor Anil Kumar Rai**, poet & Pro Vice Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Motihari
50. **Moumita Choudhury**, film actress
51. **Pradip Kumar Mondal**, film and television serial producer
52. **Milan Bhowmik**, producer and director
53. **Rupa Bhattacharya**, television actress
54. **Rita Ghosal**, film and television actress
55. **Anitesh Bhattacharya**, television actor
56. **Vinita Chatterjee**, film actress, journalist
57. **Ranadeep Sarkar**, film producer
58. **Sadhan Talukder**, film producer

59. **Goutam Das**, television producer
60. **Ram Nath Ray**, litterateur
61. **Sujit Ray**, journalist
62. **Piloo Bhattacharya**, singer and composer