

## **RULERS INVOKE 'SEDITION' TO STIFLE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION AGAINST THE SYSTEM**

The British colonial rulers who intended to stabilize their rule in India and to suppress the people's movements against their rule have in 1870, devised the crime of 'sedition' and included it in the criminal law.

With the help of such a section of crime of 'sedition' they had incarcerated the fighters for the national independence like Balagangadhara Tilak and others.

Now the heirs of those British colonial rulers, our 'independent' and democratic rulers, despite the end of the colonial rule of oppression and suppression, have chosen to follow in the foot-steps of their colonial masters and treat their opponents in such a manner. For these 'democratic' rulers the section 124 A, which speaks of 'sedition', came handy to stifle any justified dissent or difference of opinion with the establishment, of their opponents. Though the British government had removed and repealed such a clause of crime of sedition from their penal code decades ago, the Indian rulers have not even thought of abolishing such a section from the penal code of India; nor consider it necessary to abolish such a penal code.

This section of penal code on 'sedition' vza 124 'A' is being liberally used by the rulers against adivasis, dalits, poets, artists and whistie-blowers and are being severely punished.

Dr. Binayak Sen who provided health services to the adivasis neglected by the state in Chattisgarh was arrested under section 124 A-sedition- and was convicted with the life sentence. But with the intervention of Supreme Court he came out on a bail. A journalist Seema Azad who exposed the activities of Mining Mafia in the state of U.P. too was incarcerated along with her spouse. The Tamilnadu state government too had arrested the activists of anti-Kudamkalam nuclear project under this section of 'sedition'.

Three years back Aseem Trivedi, an activist in the anti-corruption movement of Anna Hazare, for having tried to bring-out awareness against corruption through his cartoons posted in social media too was arrested under this section of 124 A for sedition by Maharashtra state government and jailed. Consequent to an outcry and protest nationally and internationally and with the intervention of Highcourt, Trivedi was granted with a bail.

The Bombay High Court sensing and feeling that the section 124 A of sedition is being used indiscriminately and mis-using it without basing on the gravity of crime alleged to be committed by the accused, has ordered the Maharashtra government to issue a circular on the applicability of 'sedition' - section with clarity for foisting such cases against offenders by the police. The good intention of this direction of the high-court to the government is clearly apparent, that it intends to restrict and avoid the mis-use of the section on people, to stifle their freedoms- of speech, expression-guaranteed by the constitution.

However this direction of the court seems to have appeared 'god sent' opportunity to Maharashtra government rulers, to make the circular further more stringent to suppress its opponents who dissent with their opinions and actions, in the good faith that they are striving to protest their democratic rights.

So the circular made the section more stringent, making it a crime of sedition even a simple, justified criticism against the government. Any criticism that appears to be defaming the government or appearing to be dis-respecting the government or appearing to be causing the fall down of the government- is to be treated according to the clarification of the new circular issued by the Maharashtra government recently. Thus the crime of 'sedition' has been broadened in its scope instead of restricting its scope.

When questioned about this callous nature and attitude of the circular the Maharashtra rulers simply maintained that, this circular was drafted during the rule of earlier Congress-NCP government and again stated that this occurred due to the mistakes committed by the Home department officials while translating it. However they have not announced that the recent circular will be annulled and new restrictive circular will be issued.

This is a clear-cut example of how our rulers to whatever political party they belong-are interested to trample the freedoms of the people and stifle them whenever they chose without any compunction even while pretending about protection and maintenance of democracy through their despotic rule.

The error and the danger is imbued in the very system itself that always props up such rulers in to governmental power.

Hence the necessity of a movement demanding to remove the clause of 'sedition' from the penal code became imperative and most urgent for all democratic forces in India.

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