

WAKE UP CALL

The brutal murder of Mohsin Mohammed Sadique Shaikh in Pune on 2nd of June is one more wake up call for all of us who believe in the Inclusive Idea of India which has been the most precious legacy of our freedom struggle.

Our Constitution captures this Idea in a large measure and its fundamental principles constitute the embodiment of the Idea. The story of Independent India is the story of Peoples' struggle to realize those principles and the fierce opposition of the vested interests at every stage.

The recent high pitched election campaign with unprecedented sound and fury had little to say about those principles. But it was rich with subtle and not- so- subtle messages and innuendos which ran totally counter to those very values.

The result has been an irrational euphoria generated by meaningless catchwords on the one hand, and the recrudescence of communalism, on the other.

We have seen how communal riots were engineered in Muzaffarnagar in UP only a few months before the Parliament Elections and how the consequent polarization impacted the electoral outcome. When the Assembly Elections are only a few months away, we are now witnessing riots and violence gripping many places in Maharashtra in the wake of sudden appearance of objectionable and condemnable content on the social media. Pamphlets inciting communal hatred have been circulated. Muslim minority has been systematically targeted. Press reports and police investigations point to a well planned conspiracy. The role of a violent anti-social outfit called "Hindu Rashtra Sena" has been exposed. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that communal and anti-social elements are conspiring to re-enact the noxious experiment of polarizing the society on communal lines with the electoral outcome in mind.

The abuse of social media and rapid and large scale circulation of the inflammatory content raises another concern. While nothing should be done to curtail the democratic right to free expression, everything must be done to nip in the bud any scurrilous and inflammable material intended to endanger communal harmony. While the enforcement machinery has the primary responsibility, the society too must play a pro-active role in stopping the circulation and emphatically

rejecting such mischief. All responsible political and social organizations must denounce such attempts and discipline their cadres so that they do not fall prey to such vicious propaganda.

The recent incidents of intentional abuse of social media and rapid and large scale circulation of the content provided a handy trigger to communalism to bare its vicious fangs which ultimately resulted in the brutal murder of the innocent young man whose only 'fault' was that he had a name and appearance identifying him as belonging to the minority community.

We believe that we can ill-afford to ignore this wake up call. Too much is at stake. We condemn the brutal murder of Mohsin Mohammed Sadique Shaikh. We demand that police investigations be swift and conclusive so that the culprits are brought to book. Knowing well that nothing can really comfort the bereaved family in its ordeal, we extend our heart- felt condolences. We also demand that government generously compensate the family. More important is the need to create a sense of security in the minority community.

While the government machinery bound by the constitutional obligation must discharge its responsibility with efficiency and true commitment to the principles enshrined in the Constitution , it is equally the responsibility of every citizen to reiterate his/her faith in those values and take steps to restore communal harmony and defeat the forces fanning the fire for narrow political gains.

Signed by

Bhai Vaidya, Baba Adhav, S. P. Shukla, Shanta Ranade, Vidya Bal, Kiran Moghe, Bhalchandra Kerkar, Subhash Thorat, Sanjay Pawar, Sachin Bagade, Razia Patel, Sulabha Brahme, Vinay R. R. Manisha Gupte, Vidya Kulkarni, Sanjivani Kulkarni, Dr. Suresh Beri, S. N. Guttikar, Milind Chavan, Amit Narkar, Milind Champanerkar, Vandana Kulkarni, Ramesh Awasthi (PUCL, Maharashtra), Suniti S. R. (NAPM)

June 25, 2014

Note - Original signed statement is with Sulabha Brahme, 129B/2 Erandavane, Pune 411004.
Email : sulabhabrahme2013@gmail.com