

Hijacking of Dissent: A Blueprint for Subversion and Mindless Violence

BY: GUEST AUTHOR JANUARY 30, 2021

The violent turn that the “farmer” protests took this Republic Day, is a chilling reminder for us citizens of the new normal of rioting and subversion that has encircled the national capital in the name of dissent.

At display in the national capital was a sinister play of opposition forces who have adopted a model of mindless opposition and violence against the Indian nation at large. These forces seem to have made it the rule of the day to irrationally oppose the incumbent government at any cost, establish protesting groups indefinitely in various pockets of the national capital region, choose an opportunistic time to create havoc so as to grab the attention of the entire nation as well as international media, and finally push their ulterior motives and agendas under the façade of genuine dissent.

In fact, the very idea of dissent itself has been ideologically subverted to such an extent that it is running out of all its legitimacy. The championing of the Khalistani-cum-communist causes in the protests, the savagery unleashed against the police personnel without any justification whatsoever, indicates the urgency of reclaiming the idea of dissent from such forces.

The parallels between the recent events and the anti-CAA riots are unmistakable and simply can't be ignored. At the risk of repetition, let me take a brief detour to remind the reader about the events in Delhi last year. Delhi had been witness to a macabre dance of violence and death in the month of February, following rioting and clashes between various support constituencies of anti-CAA and pro-CAA narratives.

The sordid state of riots and violence made one realize the futility of it. One sensed the power of narrativity, and witnessed the hijacking of dissent itself. What had begun initially as a resistance to the granting of citizenship and permanent settlement of refugees, soon turned into protests demanding citizenship benefits to be extended to a larger group of illegal immigrants (read Rohingya and Bangladeshi Muslims) and “refugees”.

The origins of the anti-CAA protests soon sunk into silence and peace while the rest of Bharat picked up pace fighting for the dominance of an entirely new narrative with respect to illegal immigration and refugee status. Throughout the fiasco, the most surprising role was that of the “intellectual” circles, who implicitly contributed to the suppression of voices of the North East in favor of a pro-refugee narrative.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019, the legislation of the incumbent government around which the entire fiasco revolved, received the assent of the President of Bharat on 12th December, 2019, and was notified. This act intended to provide that any person belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian community from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan, who had entered into India on or before the 31st day of December, 2014, having faced persecution on grounds of religion and was thus compelled to seek shelter in India, would no longer be regarded as “illegal migrant” and to facilitate such people to apply for the process of acquiring citizenship through naturalization under the Citizenship Act, 1955 by speeding up the process.

Amidst the heated debate, the Government's claim was that as per the record furnished by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) to the Joint Committee on the Citizenship Amendment Bill in 2016, there were only 31,313 persons belonging to minority communities (Hindus – 25447, Sikhs – 5807, Christians – 55, Buddhists – 2 and Parsis – 2) who had been given Long Term Visa on the basis of their claim of religious persecution in their respective countries and who wanted Indian Citizenship. Hence, these persons would be the immediate beneficiaries of CAA.

The majority of the people opposing it, which primarily consisted of the “intellectual” circles, were arguing for including even the Muslims from the three countries in the list of beneficiaries of the CAA. However, the main point as to why the resistance against the CAA started had been blatantly sidelined and shamelessly ignored by the “intellectual” groups in the then discourse being peddled.

The proposed amendment, when initially introduced in the year 2016 and then reintroduced in 2019, was perceived as a threat to the language, culture and heritage of the ethnic people of Assam due to the high influx of foreigners (mostly Muslims) from Bangladesh. The indigenous people of Assam have become the minority, when compared to the position at the time of partition due to this influx.

As pointed out in the Report of the Joint Committee on the Citizenship Amendment Bill in 2016, there are various issues in Assam, particularly relating to people of Scheduled Caste communities as almost 50 per cent reservation is absorbed by the Bangladeshi community, and the tribal communities of Barak Valley have become the minorities due to the continuous Muslim migration from Bangladesh. Even after 1971, there is continuous migration to these States which has totally changed the demographic structure of the region and has dealt a blow on the political and cultural identity of the indigenous communities of the North-Eastern States.

Keeping these concerns in mind, the incumbent government, by way of inserting Section 6(b)(4) in the principal Act, made it very clear that nothing by virtue of this amendment shall affect the constitutional guarantee given to indigenous populations of North Eastern States, covered under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and applied to tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, and the area covered under “The Inner Line” notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, the very essence of which is to protect the minorities and indigenous populace of these specific regions. That’s the reason why the protests and violence which had initially begun in the North-East died down very soon, and peace has largely prevailed since then.

The anti-CAA protests and the following riots had wreaked havoc across the entire nation. But more than all of this mess, the anti-CAA narrative created, nourished and propped up mainly by the Left-liberal “intellectual” circles has been a defining blueprint of the methodology of spinning false narratives and hijacking of genuine causes and concerns. The hollowness of the anti-CAA arguments lay bare the apathy that these “academic” groups had shown towards our North-eastern brethren.

In the name of dissent, these groups successfully marginalized the voices of the indigenous North-eastern citizens, and abandoned and dumped their cause. By a clarion call for extending citizenship rights to a large number of illegal migrants (who would eventually trump the demographic and economic status of the indigenous people of North-east), the anti-CAA protests had proven that their hues and cries for displaying support towards the minorities was a façade after all!

Their narrative exposed the fact that they do not have enough empathy towards the indigenous tribals and vanvasis, who are as much Bharatiya as any of us are. The potential to spin fake narratives and run amok in the name of dissent had indeed reached a new nadir with the descent of the anti-CAA protests into violence. The worst consequence in the aftermath of the protests was the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism, which was actively allowed by the intellectuals to become a part of the mainstream political narrative.

Coming back to the “farmer” protests and the terror unleashed by them in the national capital, one sees the same methodology of the anti-CAA protests playing once again. It isn’t required to point out that the reforms brought in by the Central Government were long due and have been advocated by all quarters of political and academic spheres for quite some time now. So, I do not venture here to discuss them.

Even if the protesting people holding the capital to ransom had an ounce of legitimate concerns, there was absolutely no reason for carrying out the violence that they did on Republic Day. The government has literally been as accommodative as it can possibly be, and yet the protesters were hell-bent on creating chaos and havoc on the eve of our national festival.

As if this wasn't enough, they not only captured the national capital but also besieged the Red Fort, the symbolic representation of the Bharatiya (Indian) nation. Instead of our National Flag, the Sikh Nishan Sahib flag (from which the Khalistani flag is derived) was put up. This incident has definitely left a mark of psychological trauma in the nation's consciousness. It also reeks of subtle anti-Hindu sentiments along with loud separatist tendencies.

The putting up of the Sikh flag by Khalistan supporters should not be let off as an unfortunate incident, rather one must pay attention to the message being conveyed to the entire nation from the Red Fort. It speaks volumes about what lies ahead in store for us to experience, namely, radicalism, separatism, insurrection and terrorism. The intention to take over the nation, to dump the very idea of existence of a Bharatiya nation was loud and clear.

It is this message that shall keep haunting us collectively for generations to come. If the brutality and barbarism of the rioters against Delhi police showed their hatred for all the representatives of our nation-state, the breach of the Red Fort was an outright challenge to the common citizenry's right to exist as a Bharatiya nation, and a call to overthrow the nation.

Just as during the anti-CAA campaign, a cooked-up frenzy around the largely beneficial farm reforms culminated in rioting in the heart of Delhi. The rigid, non-negotiable attitude of the protestors clearly smacked of hidden agendas and pre-meditated wildness. The principles of dissent were tarnished and subverted through propaganda and misinformation. The acts carried out in Delhi had no nexus at all with the objects of the protest, even if the objects were to be considered legitimate somehow.

One may recall the Delhi riots happened during the visit of American president to Bharat, so as to get international media coverage. The same approach was deployed this time as well, by choosing Republic Day for the naked dance of terror. Just as Islamic fundamentalism was the root cause and the driving force behind the anti-CAA protests, the present riots were actively directed by radical Khalistani-cum-communist ideology.

One may interpret this to be a one-off incident, but there's no denying the fact that there have been several incidents earlier indicating the lurking of these forces amongst the protestors for quite some time. In any case, the burden of proof lies heavily on the protestors. Ultimately, the final message that the rioters left the nation with was that of the sinister dreams of Khalistan, and with open threats to anyone who may sympathize even slightly with our nation-state.

The naked swords and axes swinging in the air and coming down on the police personnel, rioters brandishing and charging at the police with lathis or any other weapons that they brought along, throwing of the poor police forces into steep ditches from the Red Fort, pulverizing of police forces by tractors, putting up of a religious flag on the Red Fort are some sights that are maddening and shall fester as a deep wound in our collective psyche for a long time. There is no doubt that such irrational, radical forces have pushed us as a nation to question the very legitimacy of dissent, and have left us much more suspicious about any such calls for protests in the future.

Dissent is a priceless ethic in any society and it surely needs to be rescued from all sorts of hate-mongers and fear-mongers who indulge in mindless opposition under its garb. The sooner one realizes this, the better. One can just hope that we as a society acknowledge its cherished value before it loses all its legitimacy in the psyche of the general public.

-By Yashwardhan Tiwari