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Bangladesh After 46 Years

Kuldip Nayar

Even after 46 years, the liberation of Bangladesh is very vivid in my memory. I was the first Indian journalist who landed at Dhaka after liberation. My first visit was to the Press Club where I heard anti-India remarks. When I ordered smoked Hilsa, a delicacy, one of the scribes remarked: Hilsa is now available at Kolkata, not Dhaka. This hurt me really.

I complained to Bangabandhu Sheik Mujibur Rahman about the remarks made at the Press Club. He appreciated my feelings and when I pointed out that some 6,000 Indian soldiers died along with MuktiBahini supporters, the Sheikh laughed away at my disappointment. He said: A Bengali does not forget even a glass of water you give. How can he forget the lives lost by the Indian army?

This was the time when Syed Mohammad Ali, who later founded The Daily Star, called me and complained that India was writing on the defeat of Pakistan but not a word on the courage and sacrifices made by the Bangladeshis to liberate their country. On my return, I called a

meeting of journalists at the Delhi Press Club and told the members how disappointed Bangladesh felt.

Why did this omission take place? The Bengali journalists, who were in the agitation, gave up the cause as soon as the Bangladesh flag flew at Dhaka. Many years later, I found that the Indian government saw to it that there was no follow-up to the liberation. It was afraid of the renewal of sentiments that the two Bengals should unite. That was the reason why even the mention of Bangladesh was discouraged. True, for the Bengali journalists, the mission of seeing Bangladesh liberated was over. They should have followed the agitation with stories on how the Bangladeshis had sacrificed their all and the Indian army fought by the side of Mukti Bahini.

During the liberation war, D.P. Dhar, who was in charge of Bangladesh in the Indian cabinet, gave me the impression that India would dovetail its five-year plan with the development of Bangladesh. But this did not happen and Dhaka was understandably disappointed. All that Dhar was interested in was that

another coup should not take place to oust the Awami League's regime. Dhar saw to it that the Indian army would quit soon. The army withdrew.

When the coup took place and the tanks were used, New Delhi regretted that it did not follow up its resolve. These were the tanks given by Egypt. They were used to overthrow and eliminate the entire family of MujiburRahman. Only Sheikh Hasina escaped because she was in Germany at that time. The rest is too well known.

Once Bangladesh became free, New Delhi tried to distance itself from Dhaka because it wanted to mend its fences with Pakistan. Rawalpindi did not forget or forgive India for the division of East Pakistan from West Pakistan. This may not be mentioned at the dialogue table between India and Pakistan, but this occupied the minds of rulers at Islamabad very much.

For a long time, Pakistan did not recognize Bangladesh. Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto said at a UN meeting that they would fight a 100-year war with India and not normalize relations until the original Mountbatten plan, with a weak centre but a united country, was implemented. The Mountbatten plan wanted East Pakistan to be a part of Pakistan. When I met Mountbatten at Broadlands, where he was living after retirement, he said he had warned Bhutto that East Pakistan would not be part of Pakistan some 25 years hence. This is precisely what happened and his prediction came true. Lord Radcliffe, who drew the boundary, told me that he had no problem with settling the affairs in the east but he faced the

intractable situation in the west.

It goes to the credit of successive governments at Dhaka that they have maintained a six-per cent growth in the last 30 years. The garment industry is respected all over the world. Yet, the problem of poverty is exploited by the anti-Hasina forces, which comprise both pro-Pakistan elements and fundamentalists. Islamabad is said to have given currency to another idea. Although it is not in good shape economically, Pakistan is telling Bangladeshis that they were better off when they were part of East Pakistan. Some people have been taken in by the propaganda. This has only added to the anti-India feelings because Delhi is seen as an 'exploiter'.

For the Bangladeshis, the dream becoming economically viable has not come true even partially. With 40 per cent unemployment among the educated, the disappointment in the country about not making good is deep. But there is vicarious satisfaction that Pakistan is in more economic trouble than Bangladesh. To my dismay, I discovered that Delhi only wanted to escape the fallout of the enmity between the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by Khalida Zia.

The ongoing battle between the two begums, Sheikh Hasina and Khalida Zia, is also affecting the progress of Bangladesh. Fortunately for Prime Minister Hasina, her *bête noire* does not count much these days, particularly after Khalida Zia had started boycotting elections in recent times. Now there is a split in her party too, and the BNP has fallen to No. 3 position in the country.

Khaleda is known to have exploited religion for her electoral gains though she has refuted the charges. Yet both fundamentalist organisations, the Jamiat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote, are her electoral allies. "I have more freedom fighters in our party than the Awami League," Hasina told me once. But there is no doubt that the anti-liberation forces are proliferating on her side.

It is generally taken for granted that if Khaleda returns to power, the extremists and pro-Pakistan forces would come to the fore. This prospect is not good for India which is bound to be hurt, particularly when Pakistan's ISI uses Bangladesh as a conduit to foment trouble in the India's northeast. Liberal forces in Bangladesh will also be hurt because they do not want the anti-liberation elements and fundamentalists to be strengthened. In a way, the liberals and India sail in the same boat.

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Defective Kettle and Dead Sabarmati

Sandeep Pandey

When Narendra Modi was to contest the election to become the Prime Minister of India, after being the Chief Minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014, it was revealed to the country that he used to sell tea in his young days - to project his meteoric rise from a modest position. Vadnagar railway station was identified as the location where he used to sell tea. The government is spending money on this railway station to convert it into a tourist location.

In reality Modi took over the management of his uncle's canteen for sometime at the State Transport depot at Geeta Mandir in Ahmedabad when he was a teenager.

At a major traffic junction in Ahmedabad, Akhbar Nagar circle, which fell in the assembly constituency of Modi's protegee Amit Shah when he was a Member of Legislative Assembly, now the second most powerful person in this country, model of a kettle was built by the Silveroak Institute of Engineering and Technology in 2012. At first appearance the kettle looks impressive. The problem with its design is, if observed carefully that the handle is so connected that the kettle cannot be tilted to pour the tea. Howsoever much you may tilt the handle, the body of the kettle will remain stationary in a horizontal position. The design is a telling description of the capability of our engineering institutions and quality of their products.

This defective kettle model is

symbolic of the Narendra Modi brand of politics. It is a bold display of a model which doesn't work. Actually, it is useless. Initially it gives you an appearance of real. But if you take a close look at it, you realise that you've been cheated. It looks so real that you almost believe that it'll deliver tea. But one keeps waiting in expectation and in the end it doesn't benefit anybody. It is only for show off. People pass by it everyday without making a comment. It is unclear whether they prefer to ignore it or they are unaware of the defect? One wonders whether the creator of the model considered people as fools and worried little about what they would say when they would become aware of the flaw in design. Question is can he fool all the people for all time to come? Or someday people will feel embarrassed enough to consider the kettle model as a blot on their intellect and pull it down or at least try to rectify the defect by placing the handle at the right position?

That there was no truth in the story of Modi having been a tea seller in the past was clear from the way real tea vendors serving the patients and their attendants outside the Banaras Hindu University hospital in Lanka market were treated when Modi used to arrive in his parliamentary constituency. As his helicopter used to land inside the University campus all the tea vendors were bundled away days in advance and were treated as security threat to him. The President of the vendors' association Chintamani Seth handed over a

memorandum detailing the loss the tea vendors had suffered during Modi's numerous visits to Varanasi and claimed compensation from the local office of Narendra Modi. Vendors were denied of their livelihood so long as their representative was in town. Could a real past tea seller have been so insensitive to his co-vendors? His office did not choose to respond to the above memorandum. The police was more repressive next time vendors were to be removed. Usually they would re-establish their shops once Modi left Varanasi. But since Yogi Adityanath became the CM life became more difficult for vendors. Once removed they were not allowed to return. It took an agitation before they could set up shop again. The future of these vendors is uncertain in the PM's constituency. The Modi-Yogi rule has left them more vulnerable than before.

Modi also made an election promise in Varanasi in 2014 that he would clean Ganga the way he cleaned Sabarmati in Ahmedabad. Three and half years have passed. The sewer treated and untreated both flows into Ganga unhindered. Nitin Gadkari has recently made a foreign visit to raise money for the clean Ganga project.

Upstream of Ahmedabad Sabarmati is a dried river with not a single drop of water present. There is no governmental effort seen to revive the river. Only in rainy season some pools are visible. An unplanned

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Who Killed Sohrabuddin? Debate Around Judge's Death Puts Focus Back on Murders by Gujarat Police

Harsh Mander explains why he challenged a court decision to discharge BJP leader Amit Shah from a case involving the extra-judicial killings of three people.

Harsh Mander

On November 26, 2005, a man in his thirties named Sohrabuddin Sheikh was gunned down by a team of the Gujarat police. The police claimed that Sheikh was an operative of the Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorist organisation and that he was, along with Pakistan's ISI intelligence agency, planning a high-profile assassination of a senior leader in Gujarat - presumably Narendra Modi. The Rajasthan police had tipped off their Gujarat counterparts about the conspiracy, and came to Gujarat to help catch the terrorist. A police party was said to have spotted Sheikh riding a motorcycle on a highway at Vishala Circle near Ahmedabad. They challenged him, but he refused to halt. As he desperately tried to escape, he shot at the policemen. The police said that they fired back in self-defence and killed him.

In the wake of the Gujarat carnage of 2002, sensational reports frequently flashed on the front pages of newspapers and on television screens about men and women gunned down in encounters with the state police. The police mostly claimed that these men and women were dreaded terrorists who intended to assassinate Chief Minister Narendra Modi. But in each case, the authorities had been able to gather advance information of their plans and apprehend the terrorists almost miraculously (or with the utmost professionalism) just

in time. The official story on every occasion was that the men and women had been killed because they tried to shoot at the police while attempting to escape.

In reply to a question in the legislative assembly, the Gujarat government conceded that as many as 21 people had been killed by the state police in what are popularly known as "encounters" between just 2003 and 2006. But the names of Sohrabuddin Sheikh and his wife Kauser Bi did not figure in the Gujarat government's response.

"Encounters" are extra-judicial killings of people in the custody - legal or illegal - of the police. The stories given by the police about the circumstances of many of these encounter deaths in Gujarat, however, were mostly clumsy and unconvincing. Six of the people killed were officially in police custody when they died. It was incredible that they could possess firearms in custody to warrant the police killing them in self-defence. It was claimed in all cases that the persons killed by the police were dreaded terrorists, with plans to assassinate Modi or other senior leaders, or launch terror strikes, but there was rarely any convincing evidence to establish these allegations. No postmortem followed the killings, or statutory magisterial enquiry.

The story of how Sohrabuddin

Sheikh, his wife Kauser Bi, and a year later his associate Tulsiram Prajapati were killed may never have come to light, like numerous other encounter killings buried in the dusty files of official malfeasance. But the shadowy truth of these encounters was exposed by a combination of chance, the unconventional investigation techniques of a maverick journalist, the dogged pursuit of justice by human rights workers and the families of those killed, and above all public officials who displayed unexpected sterling courage and fairness. The pursuit of these cases uncovered the brazen way that people had been killed by the Gujarat police and how these custodial murders were dressed up as acts of self-defence. Subsequently, many senior police persons and Amit Shah, who was Gujarat's home minister at the time, were jailed on extremely grave charges of extra-judicial murder.

A brother's plea

In the case of Sohrabuddin Sheikh, two events intervened. In December 2005, Sheikh's brother, Rubabuddin, wrote a letter to the Chief Justice of India that he was not convinced about the police version of how his brother died, and was worried about his sister-in-law Kauser Bi, who had also gone missing at the same time as Sohrabuddin's murder. The Supreme

Court ordered the Gujarat police to investigate how he had been killed and what had happened to Kausar Bi.

Matters may still never have surfaced, except for a discussion over drinks of a few police inspectors with a journalist with a colourful history Prashant Dayal, who worked with the widely circulated newspaper, Divya Bhaskar. Dayal had been employed in a garage and then drove an auto-rickshaw before he established his credentials as an investigative reporter. He often plied police officers with liquor to extract "inside" news in a state that officially has a policy of prohibition. That evening, with much liquor in their bloodstreams, the officers bragged about how they had eliminated "anti-national elements".

The journalist investigated further, and his enquiries confirmed that two men and a burqa-clad woman had been confined in a farm house. In November 2006, he finally broke the sensational story of the killing of Sohrabuddin Sheikh and his wife Kausar Bi. (In 2008, he was soon charged with sedition by the Gujarat police. It took until 2013 for him to be acquitted.) Dayal's report sparked a series of developments that led ultimately to the arrest of senior police officials like DG Vanzara and Rajkumar Pandian of the Gujarat police, and MN Dinesh Kumar of the Rajasthan police, for the murder of Sheikh and others.

The investigation ordered by the Supreme Court into Sheikh's killing was initially supervised by Inspector General of Police Geetha Johri. Her investigation established quickly that the police story was a criminal fabrication, and that Sheikh had been deliberately murdered by the Gujarat

police without any provocation. The motorcycle that the police claimed Sheikh had been riding actually belonged to the cousin of a constable of the Gujarat Anti Terrorist Squad. The Gujarat state government counsel was forced to admit to the Supreme Court that this was indeed a fake encounter.

It became clear that a police team had taken Sohrabuddin Sheikh, his wife Kausar Bi and associate Tulsiram Prajapati into custody on November 22, 2005, as they were travelling in a luxury bus from Hyderabad to Sangli. The group of policemen who abducted them were from Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh and were led by a senior IPS officer from Gujarat, Rajkumar Pandyan. The police team initially apprehended only Sheikh and Prajapati, but Kausar Bi refused to let them take away her husband without her. All three were pulled out of the bus by the police. After they reached Gujarat, though, a protesting Kausar Bi was taken to a separate farmhouse. Prajapati was later handed over to the Rajasthan Police and subsequently sent to jail. Sohrabuddin Sheikh was killed by the police team on November 26, 2005.

A gruesome killing

Investigations established that Kausar Bi was killed and her body was burnt on or around November 29, 2005. The police had never announced her killing, nor claimed that she was a terrorist. Human rights lawyer Mukul Sinha pieced together what perhaps happened based on statements by police witnesses to the Central Bureau of Investigation: "Kausar Bi was confined in a farmhouse known as Arham farm from 26th to 28th November, 2005... One PSI Chaube was given the job to guard her...

Ravindra Makwana ASI ... on 25.8.2010, stated before the CBI that ... 'Choube the then PSI who was deputed to look after Smt Kausar Bi, raped her in farmhouse.' The last journey of Kausar Bi was of course the most brutal. On 29th November around 12.30 p.m, she was taken to the ATS office at Shahibaug by PSI Choube. DG Vanzara, DIG and Rajkumar Pandyan, SP, tried to buy peace with her and offered her a huge sum of money for her silence but she refused. On being told about the death of Sohrabuddin, she turned hysteric. Narendra Amin, Dy SP Crime Branch Ahmedabad, who was earlier a doctor by profession, was summoned by Vanzara around 4 pm. Kausar Bi was drugged and killed in that very office."

When Sheikh's associate Prajapati realised that Kausar Bi had been killed, he immediately surmised that she had been eliminated because she was a witness to the abduction. Now that he was the only remaining witness, he was terrified that he would meet the same fate. He spoke of his fears to many people, including some undertrials with whom he was detained in prison, and to his lawyer. He wrote desperately to the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, praying that it intervene to save his life. He feared that he would be killed while he was taken out of jail to attend the court cases pending against him. When the police transported him to other places, he would ask members of his family to try to travel on the same train. He was prescient.

Despite his many pleas, he was killed in yet another purported encounter. The Rajasthan Police brought Prajapati to Ahmedabad by train on December 26, 2006, and boarded the night train to Udaipur

from Ahmedabad station. Early on the morning on December 28, Prajapati was shot dead by the Gujarat Police near the Gujarat-Rajasthan border highway, close to a village called Chhapri. The police claimed that he had fled en route to the court. The claimed encounter took place in Gujarat's Banaskantha district, to which accused IPS officer DG Vanzara had been transferred just 13 days before the murder. The chargesheet filed later by the Central Bureau of Investigation said that Prajapati had been abducted in Ahmedabad. The encounter took place under the direction of Vanzara and another IPS officer, Vipul Aggarwal, the agency said.

Police officer's testimony

Prajapati was killed at a crucial point in the Sohrabuddin and Kausar Bi murder investigation, when the Investigating Officer, VL Solanki had sought permission to interrogate him. According to a statement by police officer GC Raiger to the CBI later, Home Minister Amit Shah called a meeting in the second last week of December 2006. Raiger testified that he attended this meeting with Geetha Johri, the Inspector General of the state Criminal Investigation Department who was supervising the Sohrabuddin enquiry, and Director General of Police PC Pande. (Both were later listed as accused in this case.) According to Raiger's testimony, Shah "scolded us for not being able to tame Solanki, who wanted to drag the matter further in his enquiry by way of examining Tulsiram Prajapati for which he had sought permission. He told us to wrap up the matter."

According to Raiger, Shah specifically directed that Prajapati should not be interrogated and that Solanki should be stopped from his

investigation. The investigating officer Solanki also told the CBI that Johri, the senior police officer who was supervising his investigations, instructed him to change the case papers in order to delete evidence against Amit Shah. This, she told him, was on Shah's instructions. Solanki refused. Rajendra Acharya, who was Geetha Johri's personal assistant, confirmed this conversation.

In March 2007, the investigation was handed to Deputy Inspector General of Police, Rajnish Rai. When Rai was entrusted with this task, it was expected that he would protect the state police and political establishment. Instead he stunned his peers and seniors by arresting IPS officers Vanzara, Pandyan and Dinesh MN in April 2007 for the Sohrabuddin fake encounter. Pandyan was Rajnish Rai's batch-mate, and they had been close friends but he was convinced that a great wrong had been committed and that he had to stand firmly on the side of truth and fairness. Rai alleged that Amit Shah and the police officers loyal to him were making every effort to cover up the fake encounter. He also maintained that the Prajapati murder was also part of this conspiracy.

In January 2010, the Supreme Court finally transferred the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation. In April 2010, senior Gujarat police officer Abhay Chudasama was charged with extortion in partnership with Sohrabuddin Sheikh. After Chudasama's arrest, the CBI also charged the Amit Shah with collusion, based on 331 phone calls by the politician to the concerned police officers that had been deleted from the records.

The murky story that emerged

from the CBI investigation was that Sohrabuddin Sheikh was a member of a criminal gang. This gang was encouraged and patronised by some Gujarat police officers and political leaders, and operated an extortion racket in Rajasthan. However, matters came to a head after Sheikh's gang threatened some well-connected marble businessmen in Udaipur. His political and police masters felt that Sheikh was not amenable to control, and should be eliminated. They could not take the risk of charging him formally for his crimes, because he would expose his powerful mentors and partners in crime.

According to the CBI charge-sheet, the killing was orchestrated by senior police officers on the orders of Gujarat Home Minister Amit Shah and former Rajasthan Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria, who was also a senior BJP leader. A supplementary charge-sheet filed by CBI on May 6, 2013, alleged that Vimal Patni, the owner of RK Marbles and Gulab Chand Kataria conspired to kill Sohrabuddin Sheikh as he was allegedly trying to extort money from RK Marbles. The CBI further charged that the killing was outsourced to the Gujarat Police in consultation with Amit Shah, the Minister of State for Home of Gujarat.

It was after the investigation by the CBI that Amit Shah was charged as an accused in these extra-judicial murders, and he was jailed along with more than 10 police officers. The CBI further charged that Shah was also involved in criminal extortion activities.

Vanzara's role

Dahyaji Gobarji Vanzara, who headed Gujarat's Anti-Terrorist

Squad, was in jail from 2007 to until he got bail in 2015 on charges of having conducted a series of extra-judicial killings. In addition to being accused of killing Sohrabuddin Sheikh, Kauser Bi and Prajapati, he was also charged with the murder of Sameer Khan (killed in October 2002), Mumbai college student IshratJahan and three others (shot dead on June 15, 2004) and Sadik Jamal (killed in 2003). It is reported that in September 2013, there were 32 police officers, including six Gujarat IPS officers, who were serving time in jail for their involvement in fake encounters. Most of them had worked under Vanzara.

From jail, he wrote a letter of resignation, in which he was entirely unrepentant. "The CID/CBI arrested my officers and me holding us responsible for carrying out allegedly fake encounters," he wrote. "If that is true, then the CBI investigating officers for all four cases have to arrest the policy formulators too as we, being field officers, have simply implemented the policy of this government, which was inspiring, guiding and monitoring our actions from very close quarters." He described himself as a "nationalist Hindu", spoke of NarendraModi as "god", yet he felt abandoned and disgruntled. Vanzara was released on bail in February, 2015, and returned home to a hero's welcome.

Change of fortunes

The winds had changed course once the BharatiyaJanata Party government led by NarendraModi took charge of the government in Delhi in May 2014. The fortunes of Shah and the indicted police officers changed dramatically. There were some initial hiccups, but these quickly

remedied. The trial judge JT Utpat pulled up Amit Shah on June 6, 2014, for failing to appear in court in person. He ordered Shah to present himself in court on June 26, 2014. But only a day before this scheduled hearing, Utpat was transferred to another court, and replaced by another judge BH Loya. Judge Loya also expressed concerns over Shah's failure to appear before the court. But this judge died on the night of November 30 or in the early hours of December 1, 2014, in circumstances that his family claims were suspicious. In an article published this week, they detailed their misgivings to The Caravan magazine.

Within weeks of Judge Loya's death, on December 30, 2014, the third judge to hear the case, MB Gosavi, discharged Amit Shah from the Sohrabudin Sheikh fake encounter case. Gosavi said he saw no evidence against Shah, and instead said he "found substance" in his main defence that the CBI had framed him "for political reasons". In so doing, Gosavi ignored crucial pieces of evidence such as police officer Raiger's categorical statement that Amit Shah had instructed obstruction of the investigation, and his phone records.

One by one, the court also discharged Rajasthan former Home Minister GulabchandKataria, Rajasthan-based businessman VimalPatni, former Gujarat Police chief PC Pande, Additional Director General of Police Geeta Johri, Gujarat Police officers Abhay Chudasama, Rajkumar Pandian and N Amin from the case. So too were Yashpal Chudasama and Ajay Patel, both senior office-bearers at the Ahmedabad District Co-Operative Bank. Gosavi discharged Pandyan on the flimsy technical ground that

there was no permission to prosecute him and hence he could not be prosecuted, ignoring that such permission is not necessary when an officer is charged with murder. All the serving officers have been reinstated and promoted.

PP Pandey was released on bail in February 2015 and, in three days, was reinstated and given charge of an investigation against Satish Verma, the police officer whose Special Investigative Team inquiry had led to Pandey's indictment in the first place. In April 2016, he was appointed the acting Director General, Police, Gujarat - the first time in India that a police officer on bail for murder was given this high responsibility. Respected police officer Julio Ribeiro unsuccessfully challenged his promotion and appointment. "The police force of a state can't be headed by a person accused of extremely serious offence of murder of four persons, especially, when the trials are yet to begin," Ribeiro said. In time, seven indicted police officers were granted bail. Three retired, the remainder were promoted.

By contrast, police officer RajnishRai, whose brave and fearless investigations led ultimately to the charge-sheeting and arrest of Amit Shah and several senior police officers, has been consistently punished. Since 2007, Rai was then not posted even once to the same location as his wife, an IAS officer. A number of false charges were levelled against him, his confidential reports sullied, and he was superseded. But he is unbroken, accepting stoically the personal and professional costs of doing what they believed was right.

RajnishRai said to me that for him the highest satisfaction is that after

the investigations undertaken by him and Satish Verma (in the IshratJahan matter), extra-judicial killings came to an abrupt and absolute halt in Gujarat. This would not have happened if these two officers had not demolished the long-sustained tradition of impunity from any criminal investigation for custodial killings by police persons. This alone makes all that they have suffered and lost in their careers worthwhile for them.

Meanwhile, after Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014, he picked Amit Shah to head the BJP, vaulting him over the heads of many senior leaders. Shah is widely perceived to be the second most powerful person in Modi's India. It mattered for nothing for Modi that Shah had been charged and jailed for his alleged role in conspiring and directing the extra-judicial killings of Sohrabuddin Sheikh, his wife Kauser Bi and Tulsiram Prajapati in 2005, and in other extra-judicial killings such as of the teenaged IshratJahan.

It is very rare for the CBI to fail to appeal against the discharge of its own chargesheet in any criminal case, because this would amount to admitting that its own investigation and chargesheet was flawed. But in the Sohrabuddin Sheikh case, the CBI has chosen not to appeal against the discharge of Amit Shah and other police officers by the trial court. It was Sohrabuddin's brother, Rubabuddin Shaikh, who challenged Amit Shah's discharge in the Bombay High Court. But after a few hearings, he withdrew his challenge. He went on record in later press interviews that he did so under pressure, fearing for his life.

I felt that this was too important

a matter to pass unchallenged, therefore I filed an appeal against the order in the Mumbai High Court, with the assistance of my friends, senior lawyers Indira Jaising and Anand Grover. I did not claim that Shah or the Gujarat police officers were definitely guilty (I have no basis to do so), only that since the CBI had filed a chargesheet against them, it was in the public interest that the evidence against the former home minister should be heard and evaluated fairly.

However, the Mumbai High Court dismissed my application on the grounds of locus, or in other words maintaining that since I am unrelated to the person killed, I have no right to intervene. I am convinced however that this was not a matter of the private grief and loss of Sohrabuddin's brother, Rubabuddin Sheikh. Since the grave charges of multiple murders were against a person who held the high office of home minister of Gujarat, and is now the national president of the ruling party, I and the people of India have the right to know whether he, or the police officers under his command, had anything to do with the killings of Sohrabuddin Sheikh, Kauserbi and Tulsiram.

I challenged the High Court rejection in an appeal to the Supreme Court. Kapil Sibal, my lawyer, pleaded before the judges that there are any number of rulings of the higher courts, both to support my right to raise this question before the courts, and for the evidence against the accused persons who have been chargesheeted to be tested in a court of law. He spoke of the imperative for the courts to demonstrate that that there is only one law in the land for all people, not one for the

powerful and one for ordinary citizens. The court dismissed my appeal as well without giving reasons.

But the CBI's unwillingness to have this order examined by the higher courts speaks volumes about the pressures it faces, or its willing (and culpable) partisanship. The discharge orders of the trial court freeing Amit Shah and the police officers from facing trial for the murder of Sohrabuddin have not been approved or upheld by either the High Court or the Supreme Court. Many news reports have since claimed that a clean chit has been given to Amit Shah by the High Court and the Supreme Court. This is not correct. The High Court and the Supreme Court have merely denied one petitioner the chance to challenge these orders on technical grounds. Shah, as of date, has received no such clean chit from any of the constitutional courts of the country.

On November 29, the special CBI court will begin the trial in the Sohrabuddin fake encounter case, hearing evidence against 22 other people against whom charges of murder, abduction and destruction of evidence have been framed, as well as offences under the Arms Act.

In one of his election speeches in Gujarat, Modi declared defiantly, "Congressmen say that Modi is indulging in [illegal police] encounter[s], saying that Modi has killed Sohrabuddin. Friends from Congress, you have a government at the centre, if you have the guts send Modi to [the] gallows." When he asked the crowds what to do with Sohrabuddin Sheikh, the crowd responded, "Kill him! Kill him!"

Courtesy : Scroll.in

Rampage around Film Padmavati: Power of Historical Fiction

Ram Puniyani

Nearly a year ago multiple rowdy protests took place when the film Padmavati was being shot in Rajasthan. Sanjay Leela Bhansali had to interrupt the shooting for some time. This time around, more intense opposition has been witnessed as the film was due to be released. On the basis of its trailer, the Karni Sena demanded that the film should not be released. Crores of rupees were on offer from BJP leaders for cutting the nose of Deepika Padukone, the actress doing the role of Padmavati, and for the head of Bhansali, the director of the film. Bhansali was also interrogated by the Parliamentary committee. The assertion from Karni Sena was that the film distorts history and is an insult to Rajput honor. An intense intolerance to the artistic freedom of the director has been on display, with the State looking the other way, in a way giving silent support to the violence and attempt to suppress the freedom of expression. The Chief Ministers of five BJP-ruled states have already proclaimed that the film will not be released in their states and a Congress Chief Minister too has talked against the film.

What is the story line of the film? The story line is basically drawn from the classic novel of Malik Muhammad Jayasi, with modifications as per the film makers. Jayasi in his novel tells the story of Allauddin Khilji, the 13-14th century ruler of Delhi. As per this fictional tale he is smitten by the immense beauty of Padmavati and attacks Chittor to get her. As he lays the siege of Chittor, Padmavati along

with many valiant Rajput women commit jauhar (self immolation) and kill themselves, depriving Khilji from getting Padmavati.

The objectionable part of the film for the likes of Karni Sena and the BJP is a probable dream sequence of romance between Khilji and Padmavati. The film makers are denying such a sequence. As such Jayasi's narrative is a metaphor for the futility of power and aspiration of the soul for liberation. Historians like Rajat Datta ("Rani Padmini: Classic Case of How Love Tale was Inserted into History", *The Wire*, <https://thewire.in>) tell us that Padmavati or Padmini is not a historical character. Khilji did lay the siege of Chittor in 1303. The novel Padmavati was written in 1540, more than two centuries later. The books which were written between these two periods do not mention Padmavati at all. After Padmavati appeared, many bards picked up this tale and made it a part of popular folklore. Its communal distortion only took place after British ethnography-historiography began which was aimed at the demonising the Muslim rulers. While the accounts of the bards underplayed the Muslim aspect, the British writer James Tod's work, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, that he wrote in 1829, transformed the whole story, giving the narration an anti-Muslim slant. This was an artificial insertion into history, which has come to life over a period of time.

There are two major types of presentations relating to Rajput

women and Muslim men. One is that which shows the valour of Rajput women who commit self immolation rather than yielding to the Muslim kings. The other one is where there is interaction and alliance of Muslim rulers and Rajput families, with intermarriage being a part of the relationship. Over the years, the understanding has been promoted that the 'giving away' of Rajput daughters to Muslims was a surrender, a weakness of Rajputs. This understanding falls into the category of 'our women' being given away to the 'others'; it is a patriarchal presentation of events and is interpreted as a matter of shame for Rajputs! It is interesting to note that when there is an obverse incident, like that shown in the film *Bajirao Mastani*, the reaction is totally different from this.

While the film is yet to be seen in full, what one can glean from the trailer of the film is that Khilji is shown to be a cruel, barbaric person. His army carries a flag that looks like that of Pakistan. The present stereotypes about Muslims seem to be embodied in Khilji. This creation of 'Muslim as evil' has its roots in the British accounts of Indian history. British colonial powers followed the policy of 'divide and rule'. The British officers/historians followed their masters and gave a tilt to past events where the image of Muslim kings was tarnished. Kings have their own characteristics and religion is not the only marker for their nature and character. Kings cutting across religions had traits which can be attributed to their power. They also

had their specificities. The historical accounts don't present Khilji as a particularly cruel ruler. What is recorded is that he expanded his Delhi empire, and fought against the Mongols and saved Delhi from their invasion.

Because of the growing atmosphere of intolerance in the country, these types of films are getting a hostile reception. We first had *Mughal-E-Azam*, one of the great films from India, a fiction nevertheless, where Jodha bai, a Rajput princess, is married to Akbar. The reception of the film was extraordinarily positive, and the alliance was not questioned. This was few decades ago when communalisation of society was not so intense. A few years ago we had another film *Jodha Akbar* on the same theme. This time there were some protests, but film was screened in theatres. Now with *Padmavati* the protests are horrifying. History has been distorted here for sure, but what part of history and in which way? *Padmavati* is a fictional reality, how has it been depicted needs to be seen. But the fear of a Hindu girl romancing a Muslim is what is agitating the Senas and the CMs of BJP-ruled states in particular. Here actually the film distorts Khilji, presenting him as an embodiment of the currently prevalent negative perceptions about Muslims. But the entire debate is taking place around the character of the fictional *Padmavati*, with it coming to haunt the present as a real character, and Khilji being painted in the biases of present reflected in the past. Nevertheless, filmmakers should have their liberty and the film must be seen, appreciated and criticised on the grounds of its strengths and weaknesses.

Love, Marriage and Religion

J. L. Jawahar

That appears to be the problem in the case of *Hadiya* now. But we should not ignore facts. In almost all these cases of love and conversion, it is the boy from a minority community that takes a girl from the majority Hindu community. We do not come across any case or an insignificant number of cases, in the reverse direction. It cannot be said that the media is not reporting such cases as they are always anxious to report any such thing. That it is always the Hindu girl that is asked or voluntarily comes to convert to the other religion. This naturally causes great angst for the orthodox Hindutva group. Moreover, the conversion is almost always followed by marriage. Whether it is marriage that follows conversion or the conversion that follows marriage is not clear. It is like the question raised by *Draupadi*.

In order to minimise the effect of this tendency, Hindu groups started *GharWapasimovement* to take back the converted people into the religious fold. But at that time there was a big hue raised in the parliament against it - not by the minority communities, but by the so-called secular parties. (It is no doubt foolish to expect any party in India to be secular). The conversion in one direction was going on for centuries in India. Nobody objected to it. But when the Hindus tried to get back their flock, there were all sorts of allegations of communalism. That discrimination naturally gave a handle to the RSS and VHP. At that time the central government offered to bring in an Act to forbid religious

conversions. But none of the political parties agreed to it. Of course, the Act against conversion of political parties was supported enthusiastically! That is how our secularism is being practiced.

Obviously, there is a conflict between love and religion in practice. Religion is coming in the way of lovers wanting to consummate their love. There is Special Marriages Act to overcome religious objections. But they do not dare to avail of it. Why? Religion is more important than love to at least one of them. Strictly speaking, if you are honest and if religion is more important to you than love, it was never difficult for you to get a spouse from out of your own religion. But you chose a person from another religion, cultivated love over some time patiently and when the question of marriage comes you suddenly make a demand that the lover should convert to your own religion and discard her own religion. What kind of love is this? "Love knows no boundaries of caste, class, religion or nationality," they say. In fact there are many cases to illustrate the truth of it. It would be wise to understand at this point how important love really is for both the partners. Perhaps it would be sensible to call the bluff, and get out of it. But various factors are brought to bear on that person to weaken the capacity to take a drastic decision at that stage. That is what can be called coercion to justify cancellation of both conversion and marriage. Perhaps the Hon'ble Kerala High Court might have found some such evidence to nullify the marriage.

If conversion is really based on appreciation of religious tenets of the new religion, it requires fresh thinking. Before you want to change your religion, if the change is really based on religious considerations, you must have sufficient knowledge of the spiritual values of your original religion. Then you must have sufficient knowledge of the other religion also and find it sufficiently attractive to change. You can be rest assured that it is not the case with most of those who are converting now from one religion to another. Obviously, the considerations are not spiritual and so it is not covered by freedom of religious practice.

One dangerous tendency is that the problem of gender inequality is being clubbed with the problem of religious conversion. "With the clouds of communal divisiveness coming up on the horizon, patriarchal notions and attempts to control the lives of women have become stronger," it is stated. By clubbing the two problems we are losing the advantage of clear vision of both the problems which are separate and distinct and quite serious in their own way. We fail to solve both of them by clubbing them together. Let us not do that mistake just for the sake of rhetoric. By doing so, in fact, you are admitting that the present problem is of controlling the Hindu girl and not of spurious religious conversions. Whether it is love jihad or not, certainly there is dubious process of conversion involved in it. Let nobody think that I support Hindutva here. I condemn all the religions with equal vehemence. Particularly the recent behavior of Hindutva forces is not only disappointing, but disgusting. But if we condemn this for the wrong reasons, we actually strengthen them, as they are able to point to injustice.

We should not give them that opportunity.

There are many illustrious Muslims who have married Hindu women and have harmonious family lives. They prove inter-religious marriages can lead to communal harmony. We salute those silver screen and political celebrities. They are the hope of a secular society in future which is not with us now. There are also Hindu gentlemen who have married women from other communities and lead peaceful and happy lives. But now love is being played as a game. Religious people are upset they are being exploited. Parents are worried that their wards are being misled and used as pawns in nefarious games. Sociologists are worried that human values are being violated. Secular institutions are being tainted with religious tints.

Why is this happening? We have defined secularism in a wrong way. We have wrapped the Indian society in the religious blanket inevitably leading to conflict and friction. Every human value is being viewed through religious glasses - even love. How did it happen? Our secular constitution gives freedom which is defined in Art.25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion....All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion." A clause is added at the end that it does not include a right to forcible conversion. Our liberal courts have clarified that propaganda is concerned with right to communicate beliefs to another person or to expound the tenets of one's religion. Naturally it is a right protected under freedom of speech. But is the freedom of speech unlimited? Is it

not circumscribed in any way like other rights? Religion consists of certain faiths which are supposed to be personal and the Constitution rightly allows freedom to hold those beliefs. But why should anybody communicate his beliefs to another person of different faith? After all, everybody has his own religion and his own beliefs. Communicating consists of something more than informing. It carries an intention to impress about the merits and superiority of the faith. It is a clear violation of the faith of the other person. Communicating your beliefs to them amounts to violating their beliefs which is not proper. That amounts to propaganda which shall be forbidden or at least restricted. But any such idea is frowned upon by the pseudo secularists. Naturally these frictions arise.

Freedom of speech in the Constitution is meant for expression and propaganda of secular ideas - academic, political and scientific, which will enlighten the people. But religion consists of a dogma which allows no changes and no discussions whatsoever. Then why should it be allowed to be propagated? There would be no friction if that communication is confined to those who are already within that faith. But extending it to people of other faiths involves many frictions unnecessarily. Not only in the past, even now that has become the cause of many quarrels and destructive fights. It can be avoided by circumscribing the right of religious propaganda in some way.

Those who have more resources create more noise and influence people. Now-a-days there is no religion without political agenda involved. Foreign countries are

(Continued on Page 13)

Convergence and Mutual Support of Movements of Social Justice and Movements of Spirituality

Can This Possibility Increase To Create A Better World ?

Bharat Dogra

It is very widely agreed that intolerably high levels of economic inequalities and social injustices exist in India and these are a very important cause of distress and deprivation in our country. There are several sincere social movements which have been struggling against these inequalities at various levels. The highly relevant role of those social movements against injustice is widely acknowledged. On the one hand, these movements seek some relief for deprived people and victims of injustice. And on the other hand they seek to create a much more equal and just world, where the possibilities of deprivation and the related distress will be greatly reduced due to equality on a longer-term basis.

India is a land where there have been several sincere spiritual movements in the past. These movements have generally been concerned with the development of high character of individuals (or groups of individuals) and providing them a firm base of value systems so that they can remain free from greed, dishonesty, arrogance, dominance, excess of sensual pleasures, various addictions, overwhelming personal ambition, violence and falsehoods while remaining close to truth, honesty, love, peace, co-operation and inspiring them to lead a simple life based on limited needs. Any movement which helps to create more and more such individuals helps

to create a better world in which distress will be reduced at various levels in various ways.

Thus, at a most basic level, those movements of social justice which are sincere and those movements of spirituality which are sincere have one basic similarity, that they aim to create a better society and reduce distress. It is also most likely that as long as they are sincere both will succeed in achieving this aim to a lesser or greater extent.

However, beyond this very basic commonality, there are many other possibilities of convergence and mutual support which can increase the impact of both movements for creating a better world.

A movement for social and economic justice can succeed in creating a more equal society by making structural changes in the economy, but in order to sustain these gains, society will need spiritual development. If by changing ownership of means of production you create a more equal society for the time being, but people and leaders have the same weaknesses of greed, lust, arrogance, addictions, dishonesty and dominance as afflict society today and no efforts are made to check these, then after some time new problems and tensions including trends towards new forms of inequalities are bound to appear again. Ecological ruin will also increase which in the present

day world is likely to be most harmful.

On the other hand if a movement for social justice after its initial success in creating a more egalitarian society also emphasises spiritual development adequately to inculcate the virtues of truth, honesty, simplicity and limited needs, co-operation and non-violence in people, then the possibilities of maintaining equality, justice and peace as well as ensuring broad-based and sustainable progress based on co-operation of all will be significantly increased.

Furthermore, it is very important for the movement for social justice to maintain the high commitment and dedication of its members over a long period of time. For this too, efforts of spiritual development and an overall environment of spiritual progress influenced by sincere spiritual movements is very useful.

On the other hand, for the movement of spirituality also, the movement for social justice plays a very helpful role as the development of spirituality is much more possible in conditions of justice and equality than in conditions of inequality and injustice.

Imagine a village in which landlords exploit others almost as bonded workers. Then if someone who wants to create a better world goes to bonded workers and without

talking about ending their exploitation talks only about honesty and truth to them, this is going to appear ridiculous to them. On the other hand, if exploitation is also being challenged at the same time, then it makes sense to talk about spiritual development too, both in terms of being important in itself and also as being very helpful for the struggle of workers against exploitation. Similarly, imagine a situation in which exploitation has already been checked to a considerable extent but the gains of betterment have to be stabilised. Here again the role of spiritual development becomes very important to complement and complete the earlier achievement of the movement for social justice.

Thus while the movement for spirituality acquires added strength alongside and in co-operation with the movement for social justice, in isolation the movement loses some of its strength and potential for wider benefits to society. Imagine a big company involved in exploiting farmers and workers which holds meditation classes for its officials to improve their mental health. The question then naturally arises, is the company doing this to improve their mental health so that they can exploit others more?

Such contradictions do not arise when social justice and spirituality work to complement each other. These are essentially two very beautiful branches of a tree, and when they converge and complement each other, the beauty and fragrance of both branches is further enhanced. Sincere people belonging to both these movements need to come closer to each other and explore possibilities of closer co-operation.

(Continued from Page 3)

diversion of water from the Narmada canal makes 10-11 km of Sabarmati passing through Ahmedabad city look resplendent. A river has been converted into a longitudinal lake. But downstream of city the water becomes black as all the industrial effluent, with or without going through a treatment plant, is merged with water. Sabarmati cries for help here but there are no plans to clean it.

The kettle and the Sabarmati are symbolic of Modi's Gujarat model of

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waiting anxiously to pour money into the country in the name of religious functions. When any restrictions and regulations are made to control the same, it is alleged that there is no religious freedom in India and no respect for human rights as if religion is the measure of human rights. Freedom is given to follow your own religion and believe in it. But why should anybody take the trouble and spend money to expand his faith into the realm of others? You should not step on the area of other religions as they have a similar right of faith. FCRA and Foreign Currency controls are not able to prevent Naiks and Popes to come and purchase people for their faiths. On the other hand they had the audacity to proclaim that they have a right to get others converted to their religion and India did not object when Pope said it on Indian soil. We pat ourselves on our backs for our pseudo secular ideas and fail to understand the fissiparous tendencies created by that secularism. The immediate necessity is to curb this religious fanaticism and nobody allows any mention of that

development, which has now been thoroughly exposed. After waiting for so many years expecting some miracle to take place now people have decided to question it. The power of youth represented by Hardik Patel, Alpesh Thakur and Jignesh Mevani is arrayed against the Bhartiya Janata Party government and Narendra Modi in particular and the BJP doesn't have a face which people find attractive enough this time.

The days of the politics of symbolism seem to be numbered now.

problem, leave alone solving it. We do not have the courage of conviction to go to the bottom of the problem. It is the same with the politicians, intellectuals and pitifully also with the judiciary. Religious fanatics have a field day and they play havoc with peaceful life of gullible people.

(concluded)

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Press Release

CJAR Statement on the Supreme Court order Dismissing the CJAR Petition and Imposing Unprecedented Costs

The Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR) strongly disagrees with the order of the Supreme Court dismissing the Writ Petition filed by the Campaign to ensure a fair and impartial investigation into the allegations of bribery of judges of the higher judiciary, to obtain favourable orders for medical colleges.

To briefly recap the facts: The CBI registered a FIR in the case of Prasad Education Trust based on evidence gathered, of a criminal conspiracy including preparation and planning to pay large sums as bribes to procure a judgement in favour of the medical college, from the Allahabad High Court and the Supreme Court. As is widely known, the process for granting permission to private medical colleges has been steeped in corruption. In this particular case, the Prasad Education Trust was seeking relief against the decision of the MCI to deny their medical college permission to operate and the decision of the MCI to confiscate the caution money of the trust in view of the flagrant violations of the terms and conditions for operating a medical college. The college was able to secure partial relief in the case.

An investigation by a government controlled agency like the CBI into a case concerning the Judges of the Supreme Court could seriously compromise the independence of the judiciary. In this case, there was particular concern as the matter of the medical college was being heard

by a bench headed by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India himself. Therefore, CJAR filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking that such a sensitive investigation should not be left in the hands of a government controlled agency and should be undertaken by a Special Investigative Team headed by a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and monitored by the Supreme Court itself.

CJAR prayed before the court that the petition should be heard by judges other than those who had served on the bench hearing the matter of the medical college. CJAR requested that the petition be dealt with by the five senior most judges of the Supreme Court, excluding the CJI, so that the monitoring of this investigation would be robust and fair, and to ensure that there was no compromise in the integrity of the investigation. This would be also be in keeping with the fundamental principle that no one should be a judge in their own case.

A related matter was filed by Kamini Jaiswal which was referred by the second senior most Judge of the Supreme Court, to a Constitution Bench comprising the 5 senior most judges of the Court. However, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India intervened and dealt with the petitions on the administrative side as well as the judicial side.

The Code of Conduct formulated in a Conference of all the Chief Justices in the country in 1997 which

has been laid down in the 'Restatement of Values of Judicial Life', says in the very first code that:

"1. Justice must not merely be done but it must also be seen to be done. The behaviour and conduct of members of the higher judiciary must reaffirm the people's faith in the impartiality of the judiciary. Accordingly any act of the judge of the Supreme Court or a High Court, whether in official or personal capacity, which erodes the credibility of this perception has to be avoided."

The actions of the Hon'ble Chief Justice in this case clearly violate this salutary Code of Conduct.

The bench comprising of Justice R.K. Agarwal, Justice A. Mishra and Justice A.M. Khanwilkar has now passed the order dismissing the CJAR petition by holding it to be mala fide and intended to defame the Supreme Court and the Judiciary and has imposed costs of Rs. 25 lakhs on the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms. As Justice Khanwilkar was also on the bench which heard the medical college case, we believe that he should have recused himself from this bench.

The Campaign for Judicial Accountability And Reforms was set up more than a decade ago and comprises of representatives of many national campaigns and social movements and citizens from all walks of life who have come together to campaign for the

accountability of the higher Judiciary and reforms in the judiciary. Contrary to the charge against the campaign that this was a mala fide petition intended to defame the Judiciary, CJAR had approached the court with the intention to protect the independence, integrity and reputation of the Supreme Court and the judiciary in general. CJAR was not making any allegations. It was only seeking a court monitored independent investigation into the issues recorded in the FIR filed by the CBI.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has held that approaching the court to seek a court monitored investigation into serious charges of conspiracy, preparation and planning to bribe the Judges of the Supreme Court in a case before the court, is an attempt to defame the court. The court has also said that this FIR does not involve any judges. We believe that such a statement cannot be made when the FIR clearly states that there was a conspiracy to procure a favourable judgement from the Supreme Court by paying large bribes. Obviously bribes to procure a favourable judgement from the Supreme Court, cannot be paid to any other officials except to the judges themselves. Only an independent investigation could have cleared this allegation.

It has also come to light that the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India has reportedly denied permission to CBI to register an FIR against a sitting judge of the Allahabad High Court allegedly involved in this matter. The reported denial by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India and the judgement of the Supreme Court in the matter, has in effect ensured that there will be no investigation of sitting judges

in this matter.

The Campaign has taken up many cases of judicial corruption and has made several complaints to various Chief Justices under the in-house mechanism, for investigating charges of misconduct against judges. We believe that the unprecedented order imposing costs of Rs 25 lakh on CJAR is a case of "costs in terrorem" in an attempt to intimidate the Campaign into not taking up cases of judicial misconduct and corruption and deter it from demanding accountability of the judiciary. Further, the order is in violation of the principles of natural justice, as CJAR was not given any notice of the court's intention to impose costs and further, it was not given an opportunity to contest the decision to impose costs.

The refusal of the court to allow an independent probe into the allegations of corruption (as recorded in the CBI's FIR) and through its conduct in this case, the Supreme Court has itself brought down the esteem of the judiciary in the public's eyes – especially those who look up on it as the most important constitutional guardian of the rights of the people against executive and legislative excesses.

However, this order of the Supreme Court and its decision to impose costs of Rs 25 lakh will not deter CJAR. We will challenge the order and fight it tooth and nail through every legal channel and remedy. In the coming few days, we will be filing a review petition. This judgement is only going to strengthen the Campaign and energise us to carry forward our efforts and campaigns. We will also put forth our demand for an independent probe

into the allegations of conspiracy and corruption through all available forums. Since the pronouncement of the judgement, several groups and citizens from all across India have sent in messages of support urging CJAR to carry forward its work.

We believe that the people of this country are the real stakeholders in the institution of the Judiciary and in the judicial system. They are groaning under a system which has enormous problems and requires serious reforms of all kinds including a robust and credible system for investigating complaints against judges and holding them accountable for their misconduct and corruption. The actions of the Supreme Court in this case will now be judged by the people's court which is the ultimate court in the country.

–Campaign for Judicial
Accountability and Reforms

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