

TIME FOR SABBATICAL?



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FROM THE DESK OF CHAIRMAN

The hot topic of the day, undoubtedly, is criminal conviction under defamation law with 2 years of imprisonment followed by disqualification of Mr. Rahul Gandhi as Member of Parliament. This is real irony in the sense that Mr. Rahul Gandhi himself tore apart in public the then ordinance relaxing rules of disqualification in case of criminal convictions of MPs etc approved by cabinet of then Government headed by his own party, and the ordinance was then withdrawn.

Though such disqualification as MP or MLA etc is not first time in the history of our polity, but the hue and cry generated by the opposition parties is much more this time, evidently for political purposes. On the other hand the Government also has provided its reasons and tried to justify the aftermath of conviction. Further, Mr. Rahul Gandhi created another controversy for not wanting to apologize for his defamatory remarks. We may not deal with righteousness or otherwise of conviction order or disqualification process etc., but this whole episode has divided vertically the whole political arena, media analysts, and so on.

It goes without saying that criminals cannot be allowed to be lawmakers of a country, however, whether all kinds of criminal convictions of persons be barred from becoming lawmakers or there needs to be drawn a line, is a question being raised. As present law goes, a line has been drawn to the effect that conviction with minimum two years of imprisonment will trigger disqualification. Is this enough? The debate is also going on for some time on the issue of criminality under defamation law. However, as a matter of fact, public figures must check their vocabulary and avoid making derogatory remarks about any individuals or group of persons or particular caste etc. which are baseless. Mr. M. Rajivlochan observed in his opinion (the Indian Express) about this episode and he says, "Being a politician, a reasonably popular one at that, does not allow anyone to go on and on making irresponsible statements. Making irresponsible statements increases the likelihood of making statements that are also untrue. The usual form of political discourse in India is to make disparaging statements about one's opponents. Withering nit-picking through which politicians seek to delegitimise their electoral opponents, taunting each other, is expected by the people of India. The millions who routinely tune in to the wild TV news channels of India love the resultant spectacle, even while everyone tut-tuts about the decline in standards of public discourse." There is truth in what he says. While accusing political opponents, the lies should stop and accusations shall be based on facts. Hopefully this conviction will make leaders to think twice before what they say or accuse others of. There are different views also about this disqualification, but a lot of false narratives are being circulated in the social media and elsewhere. Unfortunately, even the foreign governments of USA, Germany etc have unnecessarily dragged themselves into this episode to provide avoidable opinions. Foreign media also has provided their views on the subject, but they have their own agenda to fulfill.

In today's times, where a lot of lies can be spread, in fact hammered, through media and social media, it becomes very important for us as citizens to check the facts, evaluate the facts without any biases and then form our informed opinions. Only then we will be able to choose right people for the job of lawmakers. India does face lot of challenges, from within and from outside world, and the challenges will increase with its progress in various fields, it becomes our duty to choose right people, with no criminal backgrounds, for the said job. As for Mr. Rahul Gandhi, I feel it is time for him for a sabbatical.

Thank you all..... Always in Gratitude

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