

COMMENT

## Tolerating Terrorism

THINGS HAVE BEEN CHANGING by the day on the issue of terrorism investigation since the proof of Sadhvi Prgya Singh Thakur's involvement in the Malegaon blast has come to the surface. So far the word Islamic terrorism has been in the air in the post-9/11 phase when the US administration ensured that media takes up this new word and propagates it. Common sense that 'all terrorists are Muslims' went to such a pass that many a lawyer taking up the cases of terror suspects were not only beaten up but also some of the leading Bar Associations of the country passed the resolutions, contrary to their own professional ethics, that they will not take up the cases of the terror suspects. The legal aid to many of these suspects was meagre, if at all.

Matters changed with Sadhvi being arrested by the Maharashtra ATS. The Rashtriya Sayamsevak Sangh (RSS) affiliates, VHP, Shiv Sena rushed to put together the team of lawyers to stand for the terror accused. The Shiv Sena is calling a bandh in support of Pragya and her associates.

In pre-Sadhvi period of terrorism RSS and its different forntal outfits accused the Congress of being soft on terrorism, in turn encouraging terrorism. They came up with the formulation that they will provide a Government with Zero tolerance for terrorism, meaning a total high handedness in case of terror accused. Now the matters stand turned upside down and no question of zero tolerance for terror accused, special efforts are being made to ensure that popular pressure is built up to save the likes of Sadhvi, Acharya or Lt Col. Not only that, the issue is being cornmunalised and many right wing political parties are offering the accused the tickets for the forthcoming elections. At the same time propaganda is launched that a holy person like sadhvi is being targeted for political reasons or that the noble institution of army is being sullied by the Congress Government. And the Congress is politically motivated. Maybe there are grains of truth in Opposition allegation. But 'soft terror' turns out to be hard when the saffron brigade itself faces the drama.

Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur and the Lt Col Prasad Purohit have alleged that they were tortured in the police custody. It goes without saying that torture of accused in police custody is not a matter of surprise, it must be condemned and there is no place for compromising with the human rights of the accused, whosoever one is. One will condemn the authorities if the torture of Sadhvi and company has taken place.

Surprisingly, so far no one from RSS affiliates talked of human rights violations by security forces. Now this section is talking that the terror accused are being tortured and that their human rights are being violated. One must ensure the truth behind this. While police is capable of using its usual armstwisting methods to extort confession, one will doubt if the police can really brutalise a saffron robed sadhvi or green uniformed Lt Col. □□□