

By Sidharth Mishra



There is this Member of Parliament from East Delhi (Mahesh Giri) who on the advice of some soothsayer has rechristened himself as Maheish Girri, probably to better his fortune. Said to be from Sri Sri Ravishankar's Art of Living stable, Girri first emerged in the national Capital in 2011 on Anna Hazare's India Against Corruption forum and quit it soon after he fell on the wrong side of Arvind Kejriwal. Thereafter he joined the BJP.

His rise within the BJP has been meteoric. Union Minister Harshvardhan had to shift base to Chandni Chowk to accommodate Girri as party's candidate from East Delhi during the 2014 Lok Sabha polls. After he entered the Parliament, he was soon accommodated as a party secretary in BJP president Amit Shah's team. That he is a powerful man is evident from the alacrity with which the government acts on his letters and complaints. I can recall at least two incidents when he managed to move the government within no time. The first was when he wrote to the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), after former President APJ Abdul Kalam's death, to rename Aurangzeb Road as APJ Abdul Kalam Road, which was immediately done. Next he filed a complaint on the pro-Afzal Guru rally on the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus; again the police took unprecedented steps including the arrest of JNUSU president Kanhaiya Kumar.

Lest this Notebook be seen as a document in the favour of what happened on JNU campus, let me make it clear that it isn't and need to make a mention of Girri's role arose only to underline the point that the man who has been of no help to a beleaguered East Delhi Municipal Corporation despite being the area MP, makes powers move with a single missive. It's clear that in both the cases it has been a command performance from Girri and the high command in these cases of course have been his ideological masters.

My grudge against Girri, especially for the JNU act, is that it ought to have been done with some finesse. The police raid on the campus, breaching decades-long tradition, and arresting JNUSU president from the campus could have been avoided. Though comparisons are odious, the United Front government, which had a Communist (Indrajit Gupta) as Home Minister, saved Jamia Milia Islamia from the clutches of Islamists by sending a retired General (MA Zaki) as Vice-Chancellor. Zaki took some time but cleansed the campus of anti-national elements and Jamia, since then, has ascended in academic performance. Ironically, the current JNUSU president is from Gupta's party.

Here, in this case, the Government has embarrassed Vice-Chancellor M Jagadesh Kumar, who assumed office just a few days ago. Kumar, who unlike his predecessors, is not from the campus and has been made to face baptism by fire. Whether he would come out unscathed or get consumed only time would say. The problem with the Narendra Modi government is that it's getting repeatedly caught in the booby traps being laid by the left-wing intelligentsia.

The challenge before Modi government or any other government should not be to cleanse any campus of the left or right but ensure maximum utilisation of tax payer's money for academic and research purposes. I must recount a 10-year-old incident which took place during the

Target secession, not campus

Written by Administrator

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meeting of a selection committee for appointment of lecturers in a college of Delhi University.

We had an applicant, who was less of a researcher and more of an activist. The interview was for an appointment in the department of Economics. Being a non-specialist, I asked the candidate why coins of different denomination have different sizes. He had no answer and then he went on to tell his friends that the chairman was biased.

His candidature was not rejected for the coin question but for being speechless on his research work. At the end of the conversation regarding his research work, the expert professor remarked, "Subsidised stay on taxpayer's money on a pristine campus for six years but not even six published words of research." The eminent professor's comments, in hindsight, were specific and cannot be termed generic. But the disease is fast spreading and becoming cancerous.

The voice of secession - which Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi wants to confuse with of voice of dissent - we cannot forget, lives on JNU campus funded by Indian taxpayer's money. There certainly is a need for the Indian universities to contain elements who in the name of dissent promote secession. Freedom of speech and expression cannot be allowed at the cost of compromising the sovereignty of the nation. However, this has to be dealt with some tact and not as a game of one-upmanship between competing ideologies.

The way ahead for the Modi government should be to use academic tools to cleanse the campus of "free-loaders" irrespective of the student organisation they may belong to. Zaki managed to clean the Jamia campus of cancerous elements wielding the scalpel like a surgeon and not running amuck with a bayonet. The situation in Jamia then was much worse than what it is in JNU today.

It's a case of missing the woods for the trees. The need of the hour is to target the subversive elements living on campus and not the entire community as such. As JNU teachers have rightly pointed out, it's incorrect to call the whole JNU community anti-national. After all, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad too has a very strong presence there.

Today the nation is witnessing a turning point in Left struggle (largely limited to the campuses) against the Right. Somebody has to win but the fighters on both sides should remember that in their duel, the sovereignty of the Constitution should not get sullied. And Rahul Gandhi should remember that countering BJP does not mean that he should become an advocate for the secessionist forces.

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