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Post Mortem

State unleashes its power via nia: fr. stan its prey

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Fr. Stan Lourduswamy, 83-year old Jesuit priest, an organic intellectual and a social activist was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday, the 8th of October, 2020, supposedly the latest in the series of arrests across the country comprised of cross-section—intellectuals, lawyers and social activists alleged to have been involved in the Bhima-Koregaon case. Fr. Stan is a person who has always been compassionate to the poor and the vulnerable. He is a person of deep faith committed to the upliftment of the poor and the vulnerable. Known to me for more than four decades committed to serving the downtrodden for more than 50 years. A true democrat and believes in peace, equality, dignity and social justice.

A rare persona blended with deep conviction to the power of the Gospel and authentic discipleship. He responded genuinely to the calling and vocation he opted for. The news that flashed by The Hindu quoting Fr. Stan: “The nature of the present NIA investigation of me has nothing to do about Bhima Koregaon case in which I have been booked as a suspected accused and consequently raided twice. But it had everything to do to somehow establish that I am personally linked to extremist leftist forces and through me

Bagaicha (his residential campus) is also relating some Maoists. I denied both these allegations in strongest terms.”

According to The Hindu he has been questioned over several hours on July, n27,28, 29 and 30 and August 6 as NIA believe that he has Maoist links. Fr. Stan is the sixteenth person to have been arrested who seem to have actively been involved in the activities of the Maoists. NIA also alleges many things as he was part of those who have been languishing behind the bars; convenor of a frontal organization of the Maoists; having possessed propaganda material of the Maoists and so on which Fr. Stan had flatly denied. They took him to Mumbai. Fr. Stan reiterates that he was not present in Bhima Koregaon for which he was accused.

In a video conference he without mincing words said that “...what is happening to me is not something unique happening to me alone, it is a broader process taking place all over the country. We all are aware how prominent intellectuals, lawyers, writers, poets, activists, student leaders are all put in jail because they have expressed their dissent or raised questions about the ruling powers of India,”. In one of the moving statements he said that he is part of “the process” and in a way happy to be so because he is not a silent spectator and is part of the game. I’m ready to pay the price whatever be it.”

Committed to the tribal upliftment as he was engaged in educating the Adivasi communities of their rights and voicing for the rights in the tribal belts in Jharkhand for over three decades. He did address various issues of the Adivasi communities face particularly their land, forest and labour rights. When he along with tribal leaders started questioning the non-implementation of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, which stipulated setting up of a Tribes Advisory Council with members solely of the Adivasi community for their protection, well-being and development in the State. Almost resonating self-rule and governance that adds dignity and honour to the eco-space they belong to.

What crime did he commit and why the State is after the Dalit intellectual land human rights activists? He has been a critical voice for the Adivasi communities who questioned the policies and programs of the governments—both the Centre and the State accusing him was part of group involved in waging war against India. He spent his lifetime for fighting for the development of the Adivasis. His arrest was arbitrary and as we have been experiencing in recent times that the State first arrests and then frames charges and then one should languish in the jail without knowing when the trial would take. When anyone questions and points their fingers at the government for its policies, the State shows its real colour.

The State was irked when Fr. Stan challenged the “indiscriminate” arrest of thousands of young Adivasis and moolvasis with investigating agencies labelling them as “Naxals”. The State is coming out ruthlessly with open fangs when intellectuals, social activists and civil society raise difficult questions. He has always been a critical voice of the region expressing solidarity on issues that concerns the Adivasis. In a democracy peaceful protests are allowed within the framework of the Constitution.

A firm believer of justice and democratic rights. How can he be arrested on the grounds sedition that he planned to waging war against India? This is indeed bizarre that lacks any substance. He spent his lifetime for the upliftment of the Adivasis within the constitutional framework. The State first arrests and then frames charges and so that they would be languishing in the jails not knowing when the trial would start—years or decades!

The State was irked when Fr. Stan challenged the “indiscriminate” arrest of thousands of young Adivasis and moolvasis with the investigating agencies labelling them as “Naxals”. The State is coming out ruthlessly with open fangs when intellectuals, social activists and civil society raise difficult questions. And those point out the failures and deficiencies of the programs and policies of the government they are branded as anti-nationals and booked under sedition.

He has always been a prophetic voice of the region expressing solidarity on issues that concerns the Adivasis. In a democracy peaceful protests are allowed within the framework of the Constitution. As a firm believer of justice and democratic rights, he voiced along with others whenever the rights of the Adivasis are trampled. The irony is that when the Adivasis raise their voices and question the State and the ruling class and so look out for those who are behind the empowerment process of the Adivasis.

The State wants the vulnerable communities particularly the Adivasis in mute-state and should live in a culture of silence. When they start asking difficult question the State clamps all sorts of laws against those who they consider as “nuisance value”. The State is bent on taking on those who raise difficult questions showing zero tolerance. More such arrests are bound to happen in the coming days. The State nowadays is showing its true brute force against the writers, intellectuals, activists and others who question the government on issues of grave concern. As citizens we are bound to show solidarity to those who stand for truth to power.

Dr. John Mohan Razu

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