

[Note: the following letter is published in original. The only changes made by *The Leaflet* are the correction of spellings of names, and making the spacing between paragraphs uniform.]

Four years...

The 6th June 2022. The day when we complete four years behind these bars since our arrest in the Bhima Koregaon Elgar Parishad Case. We Prof. Shoma Sen, Adv. Surendra Gadling, Rona Wilson, Mahesh Raut and Sudhir Dhawale, were arrested on 6th June 2018. Revolutionary poet P. Varavara Rao, Adv. Sudha Bharadwaj, Adv. Arun Ferreira and Vernon Gonsalves were arrested on 28th August 2018 in the second round. Of these, Varavara Rao and Sudha Bharadwaj are out on bail as on today.

You are well aware as to who we 16 are, what charges have been slapped against us. Of the 16 late Father Stan Swamy was institutionally murdered by state in custody. We take this as an opportunity to tell you all that we are not exclusive or specials one with whom this has happened.

All those who are rising for rights Dalits-tribals-oppressed and women; and those activists, students, writers, poets, scholars, journalists, agitating masses who are ardent critics of Governing powers of our country, are being targeted. Many are being jailed to stifle the dissent. For that anti-terror laws are being used, rampantly.

These laws paralyze a person from defending herself. When bail is demanded same is condescendingly rejected. Statistics will reveal that it takes about 5-10 years in India (and 8-10 years in Maharashtra) to get bail, till then one must languish in jail. This is the elaborate scheme created by the rulers to destroy persons social, economic, psychological and emotional life.

But they have always failed to understand humans. We all are prisoners because of our conscience, because of our sensitivity,

because of our feelings. Unlike the rulers we have not divorced from it. Even in the darkness of these fetters, our conscience is wide awake; rather this has helped make it even sharper.

All of our loyalties are always on sides of proletariats-oppressed and exploited. Time and again we have raised our voice and have fought injustice, exploitation, plunder, discrimination and inequality. This ruthless world gives nothing without struggle; hence our struggle has ranged from one for bread to one for liberation.

Our soil is blessed with the radiant ideology of liberation struggles of Charwak, Buddha, Kabir, Tukaram, Shivaji Maharaj, Bhagat Singh, Phule, Ambedkar and so on. Each page of our history radiates fragrant embers, an eternal inspiration for us. We being part of it naturally we have eccentric love and pride of it. Having unquivering faith, dedication to our ideologies and our work, we neither deviated as such nor shall we.

Obviously for those who continue to execute legacy of Bramhanwad, Peshwas, British invaders and Hitler found us to be big obstacle. That is why those who are afflicting our nation are being hailed as patriots, whereas those who are serving with their sweat and blood are being labelled as traitors. Fanatic mobs are made to lock their common sense in the closet and let loose for hysterical rampage. Lies are being repeated mischievously on and on, with increasing force to create communal polarisation. This fanatic nationalism is dragging us towards authoritarianism. Thus, they calling us traitors by foisting such fabricated case, and fettering us to prison walls was bound to be.

But, they are labouring under false belief, they think they will be able to break us by throwing us in jail. On the contrary, in these four years, we have not just kept ourselves alive, but lively too. We are in solitary confines. Be it momentarily each of us, have taken a deep dive in darks of depression; yet we never bowed down. We never begged for release. We never cried. We never wrote any apology petition.

On the contrary some of us have written poems of protest, some have composed songs of love, songs of freedom and singing them from their hearts; some have penned stories, written articles-books, some are exposing lies of the prosecution, some are busy preparing defence of the case. During the hearings our counsels have demonstrated what our strength and resolve is... And then there are those who have befriended other inmates in the jail, have forged coalition of humanity with them, some are doing work of spreading enlightenment- awareness right inside this prison.

Anti-people regimes have prison as its one of the most crucial weapons, basic human amenities which are traditionally considered as parameters of development of civilisation, are kept away from there. Thus, it has become a routine to raise voice against the injustice, and then agitating against it. Here, you need to create your own space, then the prison life becomes kind of liveable, bearable. This struggle of ours is every day chore...

This period of four years, seems nothing in comparison to many other prisoners who have spent years altogether. They have been here for so long, yet they spend their days and night with a smile on their face. Looking at them gives us some a different kind of energy. Even in these inhuman places, they live with great optimism. Apart from books and other literature, it is optimism of these persons which has been breathing life in us. These kind hearted, sensitive people have been with us while learning news of the terrible violence which the newspapers report...

all of us of varying age are sensitive and emotional human beings. We are in the politics of transformation because we are humans. And that is why we continued our struggle for the humanity even in this incarceration...

Jailed since four years, we are away from our friends and families, bereft of love, affection, company of beloved ones. Our hearts too beat for Love, for freedom. But their ability to endure our absence with such courage, strength and patience strengthens our

resolve. It has strengthened our faith in each other. We are in fact learning from you all how to love and put up struggle simultaneously.

In these testing times you have reminded us that love reflects in togetherness, in unity, in peoples voice, in your voice. In fact, our families too are jailed with us, only that they are outside these walls. Each one of us is going through this torturous struggle of psychological and emotional trauma. It's a tight rope walk for them, requiring to take balanced stand, requiring to care of all including us. Even after going through so much torture, smiles from their faces never vanishes. They are leading with example by braving what it means to be part of something bigger than personal self. That is precisely why they have been able to brave nay, defy the lies unleashed by the Government trolls. They are standing with the truth; they are on the side of the truth. They are squeezing already dried up resources to promptly send us money orders, books, medicines and clothes. At the same time many of our sympathisers are bearing substantial expenses for trial related matters. They amongst others must be credited with whatever little of love and justice that is left in this world.

With their support and the efforts of our lawyers, M/s Arsenal Consulting, an independent institution in the U.S., has been able to expose the fake electronic letters and evidences fabricated by our arrogant rulers. It is vindication of our innocence; it is proof of our innocence. Yet, given the adjournment after adjournment and recusal after recusal by the judges, we don't know how much time it will take for our judiciary to digest it.

However, the humanists and the progressive people's representatives all across the world have strengthen our voice supporting us from the beginning. They have demanded Central Government our unconditional release. Some among them have run independent campaigns and have sent us letters, greetings in prison. Such backing has not only fortified our dreams but has vindicated

our belief that there are a large number of people out there who raise their voice in support of justice, truth and liberty.

Even in India many activists, students, writers, artists, former judges, lawyers, progressive parties and organisations, agitating farmers have ceaselessly raised their voices demanding our release. We have no words to express our gratitude for their efforts, they will not like it either. However, we are certain that this unprecedented backing, public outcry and the relentless efforts from within our country and beyond will bear fruit one day.

It is a fact that we have entered in yet another age of darkness; However history bears witness to the fact that empires built on the strength of oppression did exist, and did flourish; and then they were all reduced to ashes. This too shall pass.

It is need of the hour to come together to form a better world. Its not just the fundamental rights we fight for, not just our fundamental rights, but we shall fight to create a better, just, equitable and compassionate world. suffering of hundreds and atrocities on thousands, are shaping consciences of millions. Exploitative governance by rulers and white lies are breathing power in people. It is the power of people which one day will unshackle those who are confined for their conscience. This optimism will bring in reality these lines of legendary Sahir;

*when earth will turn its course
when from such bondage we will be freed
when there will be no wrongs
when clouds of oppression will pass
when governments world across will run without prisons
that morning we will bring
our collective efforts will bring such morning*

this 6th June 2022

Prof Shoma Sen

Surendra Gadling, Adv

Rona Wilson

Mahesh Raut

Sudhir Dhawale