

Baghpat Report Supports Oppression

Maya Tyagi is back on the stage. The curtain had been rung down but it seems the main actors are being presented again as if for a curtain call. The P.N. Roy Commission has once again brought the lady into the picture-but this time there is no applause nor salacious descriptions of the incident nor Maya Tyagi's own version of how she was stripped. Political parties and newspapers have lost interest in her. That act is over. The report of the enquiry commission has wiped off the agony by chanting some magical mantras.

The commission says: It is true that Maya Tyagi's husband Ishwar Tyagi and his friends were not dacoits- this was framed by the police only after the incident. It is true that the police shot these people down because the husband abused and beat the policemen who misbehaved with his wife. It is true that the police dragged Maya Tyagi out of the car, beat her up and forcibly stripped her, and Narendra Singh scratched her breasts. It is true that Maya Tyagi resisted before all this happened. She squatted on the floor-naked and was not prepared to move despite cruel beatings. It is also true that the police finally shoved a lathi into her body and then she helplessly had to get up.

But the commission asserts that it is incorrect the police raped her. How does the commission define rape? The brutalities committed on Maya Tyagi's body were not rape? To touch a lone women sitting in a vehicle and pass vulgar remarks, to drag the woman out, bare her breasts and touch them and shove a stick into her body, are not rape? Then what is rape? Maya Tyagi's husband and her well-wishers were shot down in front of her because some policemen had wanted to rape her and she had resisted and he; husband had stopped the policemen from so doing. The policemen thought it easier to rape Maya Tyagi when she was alone, and so they dragged her out and started molesting her and wished to take her away, but Maya Tyagi continued to resist. Because of this resistance the attack on her was intensified and when the policemen failed to maul her physically, they inserted what characterises their body and personality together into her body. According to the commission, all this does not amount to raping though whatever has been described above is taken from the newspaper reports on the commission. The truth is that it was not only rape but the real form of rape where the desire to exhibit force was more marked than the sexual act.

The report of Mr. P.N. Roy, the one-man commission set up by the U.P. government, was tabled in the state assembly on February 3. Whatever parts or the gist of the 49-page report that appeared in the press, shows clearly that either the commission's approach has been purely technical, or the parts of the report where the commission has raised any moral issues have deliberately been suppressed. That only if there is a forced physical intercourse it will be considered rape is the male chauvinistic notion on which the commission has based its judgement. That Maya Tyagi was molested while she was alone was perhaps due to the childlike curiosity of the policemen! According to the commission there was nothing immoral about it and the policemen should not be punished. The report says: Maya Tyagi was a simple village girl; therefore, she resisted being touched by the policemen. As if it was her foolishness whereas it was, in fact, an expression of her self-respect. The report further states: when Ishwar Tyagi beat the policemen up, he was unaware that there was a police inspector in plainclothes among them. As if, had he known it, he would not have beaten them up. Further, when Maya Tyagi refused to go to the police station naked, the police used a common way out: they put a stick into the woman's body which hurt her badly and she bled profusely. This being a common practice, the commission's approach suggests that this should be acceptable too.

The report of the commission does not betray any understanding of the healthy relations between the police and the people, and between man and woman. On the contrary, the report exposes hidden oppressive tendencies, a status quo ideology and the anxiousness of the author of the report to support the State. The report as it has appeared in the newspapers is a document that approves of oppression, though seemingly a "realistic, fearless" judgement exposing the false claims of the police regarding an encounter with dacoits and Maya Tyagi's humiliation at the hands of the local people. But our politicians hardly have any time, the intellectuals less, to think about the lies that the report is spreading behind a facade of truth.

If the report has deliberately come to conclusions about police-people relations, that girls should keep silent about being teased by policemen; that their guardians should also remain silent, particularly when they know that the culprits are policemen; and that if a policeman 'because of his pride and youth' (these are the words used for Narendra Singh in the report) takes her to the police station for raping and, as is commonly practised, shoves a stick into the woman's body, it should not be considered rape, then this report will be the meanest and the most obnoxious document. So long as the government of UP does not publish and distribute the full report it will be interpreted as such.

The public has the right to know whether or not the people of Baghpat tiled to save Maya Tyagi from being raped by the police. If yes, in what manner? In its publicised form the report asserts the strength of the perpetrators of crime. It does not mention the exemplary human courage shown by Maya Tyagi nor does it express the sense of moral judgement of the common people. The report cleverly hides the fact that some citizens gave a lungi to Maya Tyagi to cover her body. Instead, it attempts to clear any doubts by stating that the police claim of offering a lungi to Maya Tyagi is wrong. Readers may like to know whether someone gave a lungi to Maya Tyagi and the police did not allow her to wear it. Or are we so afraid and have we become such "observers" that nobody even gave a piece of cloth to her?

But the published parts of the report are silent about the larger questions or cleverly suggest that others keep quiet about it. Narendra Singh was the main culprit, but the report says that he has already been killed by some unknown assailant before the enquiry was completed (though it is not clear how one can come to the judgement that only he-Narendra Singh-was the main culprit before the enquiry is complete). Therefore, should the story be supposed to have ended here-this is what the report indicates. And the other ten policemen with laths and guns, who murdered and raped along with Narendra Singh, though responsible for the murder (the report says) have a case to exonerate them, for they (the poor ones!) were doing nothing on their own. And they were participatine in the whole act because of instructions from Narendra Kumar Singh who had called them armed from the police station.

What is it that you are saying Mr. P.N. Roy? That the policemen do not have their individual moral values? Bringing arms from the police station without authority and killing and raping people to satiate the sexual desires and the pride of power of a sub-inspector-were these official orders which must be obeyed by them? Is this what he is saying? The readers want a reply.

In sum and substance, this report preaches: forget what happened to Maya Tyagi; God has already punished the main culprit. Now let us forget Maya Tyagi as well as the police. Let the police perform their normal duty. This report is not about the normal duties of a policeman.

[Translated from an article by Raghuvir Sahai in *Dinmaan*, 15-21 February, 1981.]