



We are not mere subjects of the state

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We are not mere subjects of the state-In a democracy, citizens have the freedom to criticise laws that violate their idea of dignity

- The unease of the Maharashtra government with the idea of personal liberty should have caused alarm. Political parties should have critiqued it.
- There was hardly a murmur in the media.
- It almost seems as if we agree with the Maharashtra government that individual liberty is a luxury and is at the mercy of state authorities.

Problem with individual liberty

- The Maharashtra government is neither the first nor alone in expressing its disquiet with the idea of individual liberty in recent times.
- Not being allowed to get away from the gaze of the state is a surreal feeling, but this is where we seem to be heading.
- Being remembered is very often confused with being loved.
- For the state, every individual has the potential to turn into an anti-state actor.
- That is the premise of extraordinary laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which criminalises even the intent to indulge in what the state perceives as unlawful.
- This is an excuse to rob a person of his or her individual liberty.
- Nehru said ideas need to be fought with ideas and not with the coercive power of the state.

Democracy and subjectivity

- Do I have the freedom to criticise or challenge the idea of welfare and goodness propounded through these laws?
- If not, I am a mere subject of the state; I have not attained my subjectivity.
- The journey towards democracy is closely tied with the discovery and realisation of this subjectivity.

- The objective is to realise the essence of human nature.
- In this struggle is born the idea of individuality.
- It is a complex and relatively new notion for us humans who seem to be programmed to think that the standards of human nature are issued from some authority and we are simply its creatures.
- It is therefore not surprising that the transfer of loyalty from religion to nation is almost seamless.
- The tension between the state or any authority and individuality will remain.
- A democratic state is not a citizenry which only has the freedom to elect lawmakers but is more than that.
- It is one where citizens have the freedom to criticise and disobey laws that they find violating their idea of dignity and goodness.

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