

Some reflections on Mahua Moitra's 'Fiery' speeches and 'Stardom'

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By

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March 4, 2020



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June 2019 saw the mainstream media being taken by a storm. The Indian Parliament was its epi-center. The **TMC's** first-time **Member of Parliament Mahua Moitra** grabbed thousands of eye-balls with her debut speech in the **Lok Sabha**. Moitra didn't mince her words while taking a head-on plunge at the National ruling party's political tendencies. One is true, well at least to a certain extent, the correct is been **applauding** the elegant poise and graceful oratory with which she attempted to deconstruct and condemn the alleged fascist ways of the **BJP**. Let us clear out one thing at the very beginning, lest we might be misunderstood. This article is **not a rebuttal** to the **TMC's political actions**, neither is this a subvert attempt

to justify those actions which the TMC stands **opposed** to. This article aims to **simply point out** the issues with her rhetorics in general. One of the key takeaways of this article can be reasonably summarised by saying that: "pointing out at someone else's incompetence doesn't give proof of the **complainant's own competence**".

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Mahua Moitra is back in the news, with all **guns blazing** during another parliamentary speech delivered last week which was filled with abstract rhetorics, and she has been catapulted yet again as one of the 'crusaders' of the fight against the incumbent government's alleged 'fascism'. While many learned and concerned quarters of the society have come out in appreciation of the **MP's speeches** – we, unfortunately, seem to be amongst the very few, who didn't find the substance of her submissions equally impressive.

It would be worthwhile to scrutinize the rhetorical arguments of Mahua Ji in her various speeches in order to have a clearer understanding of the reason behind her being hailed as one of the 'saviours' of **Indian democracy**. Also, on the face of it, it seems that while almost each of Mitra's admirers could agree on complimenting her "parliamentary pyrotechnics" – not many perhaps understand, that the party she represents isn't itself a symbol of political and ethical righteousness. Therefore, it seemingly invites the old criticism of not practicing what it preaches. While her observations might be welcome in certain quarters, it will only be justified to attribute her concerns genuine legitimacy if she could have critically reflected and stood against TMC's political **violence** and **massacre** in **West Bengal**. The fact that she never questioned the doings of her own party clearly indicates the hollowness of her concerns about rampant 'fascism' in the nation. While she has all the rights to question the incumbent government and the ruling party and its leaders, being an emerging young political leader, she is ethically duty-bound to stand face-to-face against the gruesome bloodshed carried out by her **own** party cadres.

The MP takes a direct punch at the bull's eye. She states in **very clear** and unequivocal terms that the country's political ecosystem is being polluted by the evils of 'Fascism'. We believe that the definition of this word has an academic foundation. However, we will not bother our readers by citing a scholarly definition. Adopting a **lay man's** understanding of the word Fascist should suffice. It would be reasonable to understand the aforementioned term as a political tendency of the ruling party to forcefully impose its ideological beliefs on the society using an oppressive or tyrannical state apparatus, simultaneously wiping out all the opposing forces and shunning dissent. This 'ruling party' might aim at creating a common identity –

religion, ideology, race, etc, or be content with simply holding on to the reigns of the state. Here, we have two contentions against the observations made in the speech. Firstly, even a cursory look at the **general elections of 2019** makes it very clear that the central government did not use any sort of physical force or misuse the state apparatus (which the opposition parties would want us to believe) to suppress the opposing parties. Secondly, on the very contrary, it was West Bengal that witnessed extreme violence throughout the period, with the TMC goons attempting to literally wipe out the entire BJP cadre at the grassroots level. In fact, the blood bath had begun a year back with the panchayat elections which witnessed almost half the seats going uncontested in favour of the TMC. Indeed, it would have been a truly laudable and bold act had Mitra acknowledged the violence that the state had witnessed due to the outrightly Fascist behaviour of her own party cadres and **apologized** for the same.

Secondly, the mainstream media probably fails to understand the fact that the critique she offers is nothing new in substance. **Leftist academicians** and **Marxist** leaning 'public-spirited' individuals have literally bombarded popular media and scholarly journals since 2014 with detailed essays and reports painfully dissecting the alleged triangular love affair between the BJP, Fascism and other factions of the Sangh. It would be safe to assume that the people who have applauded Moitra's elegant speech are also well informed about these articles which criticize the BJP. The natural question that arises then is that why did the mainstream media go gung-ho over her speeches despite them being a repetition of what has been said over and over by political commentators of all hues since 2014? Possibly, it is because the Indian mainstream media constantly needs to project someone **critical** of the incumbent government as the champion of ethics speaking truth to power. Moreover, another question that immediately strikes us is that if the BJP was indeed so Fascist in its ways as it is portrayed to be, why did it come so close in snatching away Bengal from the present ruling party in the **2019 Lok Sabha elections**?

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The reason isn't very difficult to fathom. No matter how bad the BJP has been in reality – it is equally true that the TMC has not been able to provide an **equally strong** and reassuring alternative to the BJP's philosophical and political bastion. If at all the BJP adopted a nefarious use of religion mixed with politics, let us take a few more steps and daringly state that the TMC had acted exactly like the BJP on a micro-scale, only it has not been able to tactfully perfect, improvise and maneuver the shrewd mixture of religion and politics in its outlook. One must also understand that the TMC is not just at a loss when it comes to offering an

ideological alternative to the BJP or having a strategic counter during elections, the TMC is also terribly confused about how it should tackle the **saffron giant** which is rapidly making inroads into their core constituencies, and once again reminding the Bengalis of the urgent need to wake up from a false sense of lost 'colonial – cultural pride' and dwell upon contemporary issues like **lack** of industrial and infrastructural development in the city coupled with an strong need to tackle the increasing out-migration caused by lack of job opportunities.

Every MP is not only a representative of her/his respective constituency but also a responsible spokesperson for the deeds of the party she/he represents. In this backdrop, we must humbly submit that one cannot applaud a party and its MP simply for pulling off a few **Parliamentary stunts** in the form of oratory gymnastics. What matters here is that what progressive change or what alternative that party promises to bring for the betterment of the citizens. Planned governance and parliamentary discussion is about offering productive changes for the State and its people. It's not an elocution competition.

Note:

1. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of PGurus.

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