

Vocabulary:

Saffron Error

The BJP seems to have fielded Pragya Singh Thakur for all the wrong reasons

Pragya Singh Thakur may not be the first person to contest in an election despite facing serious charges, but her candidacy on behalf of the BJP in the Bhopal Lok Sabha constituency stands out as exceptionally controversial. She is arraigned as the prime accused and principal conspirator behind the September 2008 blast at Malegaon, in which six persons were killed. In other words, a person accused of a 'terrorist act' and against whom charges have been framed under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is being fielded as a candidate, by a party that wants to underscore its anti-terrorism credentials. While many candidates may have criminal cases pending against them, it is highly unusual to find among mainstream party contestants one who has been accused of planting a bomb targeting a community. An obvious problem with Pragya Singh's candidacy is that she appears to have been chosen solely as a totemic representative of aggressive Hindutva nationalism. She was not prominent as a BJP member until she was named the candidate for Bhopal, where she will take on senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh. It is one thing to field a political leader who faces criminal charges, but quite another to create an electoral candidate out of a key terror suspect. It would appear that the sole purpose of fielding her is to bolster the BJP's narrative that there never has been any 'Hindu' or 'saffron' terror group. Two blasts at Malegaon (2006 and 2008), the Samjhauta Express bombing near Panipat (February 2007), the explosions at Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad (May 2007) and the Ajmer Dargah (October 2007) were linked to a fringe Hindu group called 'Abhinav Bharat', but the NIA had neither the political backing nor the ability to obtain convictions. To no one's surprise, Ms. Singh lost little time in embarrassing the BJP by making serious allegations against the chief of the Mumbai Police Anti-Terrorist Squad, Hemant Karkare, who was martyred in the 26/11 terror attack.

Election law as it stands today does not bar one facing criminal charges from contesting, except those convicted of specified classes of offences, or those that entail a sentence of at least two years. If the mere pendency of a case was made a ground for disqualification, a vindictive regime could get any political opponent disqualified by merely slapping a criminal charge. However, given the tortuous process of taking a criminal prosecution to its conclusion, some have made a case for advancing the stage at which disqualification kicks in — by making a legislative change to rule out of the contest any person against whom charges have been framed by a competent court. It may be difficult to get enough lawmakers to agree to this significant change, but it can be a principle political parties adopt on their own. There have

been instances of Union Ministers resigning from office as soon as charges were framed against them. There is no harm in extending this norm to the selection of candidates.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Arraign	Verb	Prosecute, put on trial, file charges against, Criticize, censure, lambaste, chastise, reproach
Serious	Adjective	Severe, critical, perilous, parlous,
Kill	Verb	(Make away with, mow down, execute, lynch kill illegally)
Credentials	Noun	Make away with, mow down, execute, lynch (kill illegally)
Mainstream	Antonym	Normal, Conventional, orthodox
Totemic	Adjective	Spiritual (Animal)
Bolster	Verb	Strengthen, boost, fortify, buoy up
Fringe	Adjective	Unconventional, innovative, avant-garde,
Fringe benefit		Extra benefit
Convictions	Noun	Declaration of guilt, judgement/belief, opinion.
Back	Verb	Support, buttress, advocate
Embarrass	Verb	Hunuilate , abash, shame
Entail	Verb	Involve, imply, necessitate, demand, call for
Pendency	Noun	Suspension, Adjournment, interruption, deferral, deferment
Vindictive	Adjective	revengeful, resentful, acrimonious, vengeful
Tortuous	Adjective	Twisting, winding, complicated, entwined
Kick in/off		Start, begin.