

PROTEST AT AIL, MOHALI: THE STRIKE ENDS AND A MOVEMENT BEGINS

“And once the storm is over, you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.”

---Haruki Murakami

CIRCUMSTANCES ENGRIPPING THE CONCLUSION OF THE STRIKE: 144 HOURS OF NON-COOPERATION & WHAT NOT?

- i. The night of 20th October, 2019 ended with yet another series of messages to the parents misrepresenting their wards as part of an agitation initiated with ‘vested interest’
- ii. A notice was put threatening disciplinary action against absentees from the classes and offenders of hostel rules after an unprecedented academic shut down on working days.
- iii. The failing health of the students who were denied the shade of tarpaulin sheets in scorching heat by the authorities was endlessly tussling with their undying spirit.
- iv. The authoritarian wrath was witnessed at night too as the sight of the protest was ordered to stay lit until 01:30 hours. In blatant violation of right to privacy, the guards, acting under administrative orders, were seen capturing images of sleeping students late at night to aid the authorities to exhibit a pre-scripted misrepresentation of facts.
- v. The right to freedom of media and press was repressed by the management, as the Registrar declared, ‘the consequence that ensues upon any student who contacts any person from media is penalty for the major offence of ‘bringing disrepute to college’.
- vi. The parents of handpicked students were continued to be personally intimidated by higher officials in the army.
- vii. The approaching Diwali break and mounting parental pressure tactfully strengthened the authoritative regime which has been acting arbitrarily and insensitively for over 6 days now, but under palpable haste and fear.
- viii. The blatant disregard to the constitutional rights of the student community coexisted with a split-pacifist stance of the authorities who agreed to completely fulfill some of the eight demands while reconsider the remaining ones only upon consultation with parents or receipt of a formal complaint, as communicated through a management order dated 18th October, 2019, earlier agreed to be issued not before lapse of 10 days.
- ix. A counter reply to the said order was drafted and ready to be posted. The same was accompanied by a formal complaint against the abusive conduct of female warden. Declarations were received from parents of approximately 200 students, sternly supporting the merit in all the demands, accompanying the already existing solidarity statements received from the aluminis and more than two dozen institutes, including NLS Bangalore, NALSAR Hyderabad amongst others.

POST-STRIKE AIL, MOHALI: REVIVING FROM 144 HOURS

- i. In complete fulfillment of demand no. 1, an interim student body consisting of 5 representatives from each batch has been democratically nominated. In pursuance of the management order, it is incumbent upon the said body to draft a charter for appointment of a democratically elected permanent student body, to be submitted by 15th November, 2019.
- ii. In due consideration of demand no. 2, all the provisions of the code of conduct as have been challenged as measures of unnecessary fine imposition and unconstitutional regime have been declared to be under review.

Having been already circulated amongst all the students to invite suggestions, a draft titled, 'Recommendations to the Code of Conduct' has been submitted by the newly appointed interim student body and addressed to the Principal and forwarded to the Chairman for due deliberation and consideration, as on 25th October, 2019.

- iii. In partial fulfillment of demand no. 3, the order has welcomed a system of feedback on the existing faculty.
- iv. In complete fulfillment of demand no. 4, the order has decided to mandate a system of weekly feedbacks and checks on the service providers, viz.-a-viz., messing and café. Also, in due consideration of the remaining part as to immediate redressal of complaints and student participation in hiring of the said service providers, the management has empowered the nominated student body to look into the same.
- v. In complete fulfillment of demand no. 5 pertaining to equal student representation and fair hearing in disciplinary proceedings, the management has decided that one nominated student will be a part of the Board of Inquiry.
- vi. In due consideration of demand no. 7 and as required by the management order, a formal complaint requesting the initiation of Internal Complaints Proceedings against the Warden (Girls Hostel) has been forwarded by the Principal to the Chairman for directions as on 22nd October, 2019.
- vii. A sense of fearlessness and accountability in the previously hostile environment is overwhelmingly obvious.

In less than 2 hours of conclusion of strike, the roll-call in the hostel was compelled to be conducted by the respective wardens for no member of the previously existing prefectorial body co-operated.

The warden-student interaction in the allegedly abusive girls' hostel is visibly minimal and not even a single incident of abuse at her hands has come to become the subject of discussion.

In another episode, insects found in the lunch served one day after the conclusion of the strike agitated the already-aggrieved students, who were served fresh lunch by 2:15 pm, and unprecedentedly, a fine worth Rs. 1000 was imposed on the mess contractor upon receipt of a complaint against him on the same day.

In supreme anecdotal and historic value, an institute where students were discouraged to file combined petition for the fear of being fined for a minor offence under the Code of Conduct,

not only filed a joint petition and participated in a strike lasting for 6 days, but also emerged in great number for a candle march organized on 22nd October, 2019, one day after the conclusion of the strike. The said march commemorated and celebrated the relentless and ongoing contribution of the student community to victoriously emerge through this joint endeavor.

THE ROAD AHEAD: 144 HOURS AND COUNTING

As the constitution of a permanent student body, revocation of draconian provisions of the code, and institution of inquiry against allegedly abusive female warden is underway, it is the resolve of every student to ensure the fulfillment of everything promised and implementation of everything which is rightfully ours. That being stated, the student community awaits and is consistently pursuing a prompt response to the replies and complaints filed in reference to each of the above.

In consonance with the administrative decision to ensure fair hearing and mandate a system of periodical feedback, it is imperative to acknowledge and discharge the student duty to devise the modalities for implementation of such system. The unheard and unanswered demands which have been blatantly refused shall find an effective and fresh redressal through the democratically elected student body. An additional demand to seek justice for every baseless disciplinary action speculated to follow this monumental strike shall find its way. The stance stands strengthened by the abundance of alumini support, and zealous instinct of esteemed legal luminaries who propose to intervene and extend support.

The road ahead shall be marked with the underlying spirit of the protest which is kept alive even after the culmination of strike. Such culmination in no way indicates the submission of our spirit to a state of imposed fear by the authorities, but an act of marching towards a better future. The strike has ended only to fuel the ongoing protest and the voice of this protest shall echo an everlasting movement.