Silencing the voices of Dissent

Why in news?

Recently, Delhi Police arrested a climate activist Ms. Ravi alleging that her social media post amounted to sedition and incitement of riots.

What was the charge mentioned in the arrest?

- The main charge was that she edited a Google document shared among activists, including global climate activist Greta Thunberg.
- It is alleged that the document was prepared by a pro-Khalistani outfit and Ms. Ravi is working with separatists to create disaffection against India.
- However such documents are common for those organising protests online and they do not contain much more than calls for protests, texts to be tweeted and hashtags.
- Moreover discussing and planning the protests does not amount to incitement of violence, a mandatory requirement to charge someone, as done in the case of Ms. Ravi.

What we can infer from this?

- The police in India have a dubious record of effecting needless arrests and filing questionable cases as a tool of harassment.
- The state is increasingly resorting to heavy-handed responses to issues that attract a convergence of activism, opposition political activity and adverse media scrutiny.
- This will attract international because of indiscriminate use of police power against activists, protesters and the media.
- Online or offline activism in support of the ongoing farmers' protests, mobilisation of public opinion against government policy are not going to affect the country's reputation and prestige.
- Government which is truly worried about its global image should address the deficit in tolerance.

Source: The Hindu



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