



JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY TEACHER'S ASSOCIATION

PRESS RELEASE

3rd Oct 2016

The JNU Teachers Association condemns the witch hunt of teachers and students of Central University of Haryana and extends its support to the embattled faculty and students of the university who, like the students and faculty of JNU, are being targeted as 'anti-national' for the exercise of the university's autonomy and their Constitutional rights of freedom of speech and expression.

The substance being claimed as proof of these so called anti-national activities are the events hosted by the Department of English and Foreign languages on September 21 to commemorate the life and works of Mahasweta Devi. This included the staging of a play based on Mahasweta Devi's short story "Draupadi" and some concluding remarks by Dr. Snehsata, a young woman assistant professor at her department. In these remarks, Dr. Snehsata highlighted the relevance of this story to our current reality, where both fake encounters and sexual violence are committed with impunity. She referred to the important cases of Kunan Pushpora and the Manipuri women's protests in the wake of the rape and murder of Manorama Devi. These are both well known and often cited cases of the abuse of state power and referencing them in no way constitutes an insult of Indian army soldiers in general.

Despite the fact that this was a departmental event for which all due permissions were taken, and was indeed vastly praised on the day by those present including the Acting Vice-Chancellor, two young faculty of the Department of English, Dr. Snehsata and Dr. Manoj have now been targeted out as culprits by the CUH administration in the face of some vitriolic and well-orchestrated campaign by a particular section of students. Dr. Snehsata in particular is being singled out, and besides having to face an official enquiry, is also subjected to investigation by the security apparatus of the state.

These disturbing developments at the CUH once again underline the existence of a design intended to stifle free speech and critical inquiry in the one place where it must be guaranteed -- the University -- if new knowledge is to be pursued and produced. The JNUTA GBM held on 3 October 2016 demands that the CUH administration immediately stop this witch hunt of its own faculty motivated by external forces, and affirm its commitment to a university space which upholds the freedom of speech and expression.

Prof. Ajay Patnaik
President, JNUTA

Dr. Bikramaditya Choudhary
Secretary, JNUTA