

Satyendra Dubey

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Satyendra Dubey was a 31-year-old IIT Kanpur civil engineering graduate working with the National Highways Authority of India and assigned to the prime minister's pet project, the Golden Quadrilateral, to connect the four corners of India. He was posted at Koderma, Jharkhand.

On discovering rampant corruption and poor implementation of work in the section where he had been posted, Dubey wrote to the prime minister exposing the irregularities. In the letter, received by the prime minister's office on November 11, 2002, he had named some companies. Fearing retribution, he had requested that his name be kept secret.

But PMO officials circulated his letter along with details of his identity among the bureaucracy. The number of notings on the file bear witness to this (*The Indian Express*, November 30, 2003). While the file was making the rounds, not one official thought about the threat Dubey was being exposed to.

Why officials in the PMO did not heed Dubey's request for anonymity is not known. But just over a year later, on November 27, 2003, he was murdered in Gaya, Bihar.

This is a clear signal to everyone that honesty in India has only one result – failure. An honest citizen must be prepared to forfeit one's life.

Satyendra Dubey's IIT status is being talked about for two reasons:

- IITians will band together to generate support for one of their kin.
- National and international attention is attracted by this name.

When the weakest person is hurt, our voices should rise the highest; and IITians are not the weakest.

But the main issue is not about Dubey having been an IITian, and therefore having had the choice of a better job or country.

When a citizen files a complaint or brings some wrongdoing before the local police, he believes that the police will protect him. The minimum expectation of a citizen from the State is of a reasonable level of safety and protection for his body and life. The State is expected to ensure this at all levels.

The single aspect that differentiates Dubey's case is the fact that the PMO gave out details of his identity in spite of a specific request to the contrary.

The office of the highest executive authority in the country not only failed to provide him security, it almost seems to have commissioned his murder.

It is nobody's case that it is the prime minister's act; however, all of us have a reasonable expectation that the prime minister would act against the erring officials in his office immediately.

Else, we can only expect a powerful criminal response at all other levels. We would then have to give up even a pretension to being a nation with enforceable laws and a Constitution.

We cannot be party to a State which expects a citizen to be a martyr if he wishes to counter dishonesty.

We can persuade the next generation to stay in India only if they feel they can live safely and honestly.

The angst against Satyendra's murder must ensure a quick change for a better India. He is a symbol of an urge for an honest and ethical India. He has done more than his share; we

must carry his ideals forward; otherwise we fail India and ourselves.

The best tribute can be a Whistleblower's Act. Most people are badly hurt by the corruption in our country. This is the time for them, along with various bodies and associations, to get together and initiate a movement for a more honest society and good governance.

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