



RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
RAJYA SABHA

Member of Standing Committee on Defence
Member of Consultative Committee on Finance
Member of Central Advisory Committee for the National Cadet Corps
Co-Chairman, District Development Coordination & Monitoring Committee, Bengaluru Urban District

1st March 2017

Dear Gurmehar,

Let me start this letter to you by saying I have always held martyrs and their families with the highest respect. As the son of a veteran, I have lived my entire childhood amongst men, women and families who served and sacrificed. The service of Martyrs to the Nation is unparalleled and their sacrifices supreme. From Major Som Nath Sharma the first recipient of the Param Vir Chakra who laid down his life in the 1948 Indo-Pak War at the age of 24, 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal at 21 – and then who can forget Captain Saurabh Kalia, Captain Vijayant Thapar and Captain Vikram Batra - all a few years older than you are today. I have had the honour and experience of engaging with families of numerous Bravehearts. It is true that most have no hate or revenge in their hearts – just a desire that others don't suffer the losses that they did.

And so let there be no doubt in your mind that most in our country consider you and your family as worthy of great respect – for the service and sacrifice of your father Captain Mandeep Singh. What you have gone through, the painful experiences in your life, no child or family should. Losing a father, a husband, son or brother in service of the nation, is a tragedy for any family. And for that, there is only humble salutations and unstinting support that we can offer.

So I consider it unacceptable that anyone in this great nation of ours would think of anything other than only protecting and supporting you and your family – let alone harassment and violence of the kind in recent days by some on social media. Let me assure you of my complete commitment to your total safety and to your right to speak your mind. That commitment is unambiguous and total - I assure you!

I have watched your video and heard your views with great interest. I admire your pluck and courage to stand up and speak what you believe in. Your father would be proud of your courage.



University is a point in life when you are free to experiment with thoughts and ideas, including idealism. So here are two points that I want to leave you to think about as well.

The first is the point you make about absolving Pakistan - while I understand your desire for peace, here is where you are wrong about Pakistan. It is not enough to blame killings today on an amorphous concept of war and look for peace. Over 15,000 people alone have lost their lives to terror attacks and so thousands of families have suffered and lost because of violence exported from across the border – into our territory, into our homes. This is the stark reality we must understand. Many thousands of our men in security forces have laid down their lives whilst protecting against these terror attacks.

No one wants war – we do not want violence after all India was born out of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence movement. But sometimes threats of violence and indeed violence are thrust on us and the nation's leaders can't be found wanting then. The 1962 conflict with China should teach us, what happens when seemingly sound moral positions run into nations with a strong force led doctrines of expansion.

Let me quote what President Obama said in his Nobel Peace prize speech in 2009, that may explain the conundrum – between this desire for peace and the need to be also strong militarily to defend ourselves.

"Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem. It merely creates new and more complicated ones. I am the living testimony of the moral force of Non-violence and there is nothing weak, nothing passive, nothing naïve in the creed of Gandhi and King.

But I cannot be guided by their examples alone. I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to my people. For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's Armies. Negotiations alone can't convince Al Qaeda to lay down their arms. To say that force is sometimes necessary is not a call to cynicism – it is recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason."

So that's the thrust of the point I want to make to you. I admire your peace activism. But a desire for peace (even one as deeply felt as yours) will not make the terrorists in Pakistan surrender their weapons. In your desire for peace, we cannot forget that



Nations do have an obligation to bear arms to defend themselves, defend their people. Your father did just that. He and all the others like him fought to protect these values. They didn't fight because they like war or hated the people in front of them - they served and sacrificed because they loved India and the Indians behind them.

So while I also share your desire for peace - peace doesn't come from simply desiring it, especially with Pakistan. We (both Indians and Pakistanis) must cause the Pakistan state to change its state policy of supporting Terror and doing so by using all possible options and not simply begging or pleading for peace.

The second point is about debating Political issues. I am a strong advocate of young Indians being more politically active and aware. So if you choose to be active politically, more power to you. I am confident that you would carry with you, the values and principles that your father and family hold dear about our country and nationhood. But be aware that politics is as much about aligning with those who agree with you on some issues and at the same time ensuring that the same people don't have beliefs that are counter to your other core values like national integrity etc. Also be warned, entering a political debate also means opening yourself to criticism and arguments – this should be expected. It's sometimes unpleasant and noisy – but that's the nature of the beast as it is today. So brace and prepare yourself as you plunge in.

I for one believe deeply in our Nation and its younger generation. I hope this letter helps you regain your confidence and composure after the last few difficult days. I also hope through this letter, you are also a little better informed about how others view Pakistan and its terror exports and the need to secure our people.

I wish you and your family the very best.

Jai Hind!

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR