

Binayak's work is great, his conviction unjust: Amartya Sen

'Binayak was against sedition; I am amazed by the decision'

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen on Saturday described the conviction of Binayak Sen, charged with sedition, as "unjust" and said he was amazed by the nature of the decision.

Prof. Sen said that although the matter was sub judice, he was compelled to speak because the "legal process [was] not divorced from human reasoning."

Expressing optimism that the higher courts would find no reason to charge Dr. Sen with sedition, the Nobel Laureate said the sentence of the lower court had also focused attention on the legal system and raised questions on how courts had come to enjoy the powers that they had exercised in the case.

"I emphasise that his [Dr. Sen's] work was great, and is not a matter of sedition. It is not sedition in my view; his work has been extraordinary, exemplary. Being a doctor, he could have been earning huge amounts of money, but he decided not to play it that way. He chose to serve the people," Prof. Sen said.

Speaking here at the launch of Minnie Vaid's book *A Doctor to Defend: The Binayak Sen Story*, Prof. Sen said the book compelled one to understand the motivation and realisation of Dr. Sen's commitment and willingness



IN DEFENCE OF BINAYAK: Nobel laureate Amartya Sen during the release of Minnie Vaid's book *'A Doctor to Defend: The Binayak Sen Story'* in New Delhi on Saturday. — PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

to make any extent of sacrifice.

He said Dr. Sen did not believe in violence and that it came as a shock that his credentials had been questioned, and that he was even referred to as a "fake doctor." "Even if he did pass [on] the letters, it does not seem to be material of which [allegations of] sedition can be made. In his own writings, Binayak Sen has said that violence is not prudent. He was against sedition and I am amazed by the nature of this decision," Prof.

Sen said.

"It was said that he offended the patriotic sentiments, but we have no obligation to air only patriotic sentiments when we are making a judgment for ourselves," he said.

He said Dr. Sen's work should be seen as a combination of work for an underdeveloped population in a deprived area; a fight for human rights. "He served a great cause and does serve and will serve. I hope this [his sentencing] is just an intermission, like an interval in a film

and then the second part will begin."

Worrying factor

The former Attorney-General and noted jurist, Soli Sorabjee, said it was the "tone and the tenor" of the ruling that was "worrying," because it seemed to suggest that those sympathising with the naxals could be in trouble too. He said there was "an atmosphere of paranoia."

'Not a biography'

Author Minnie Vaid said the book was not a biography, but a compilation of Dr. Sen's life and work, as narrated by some of his closest aides.

"When I read about Dr. Sen in a magazine, I thought about making a documentary on him. Later, I got an opportunity to write this book. And in this book I have let some people who do exemplary work, like Dr. Sen, to tell his story, while I have told theirs."

She said Dr. Sen had earned the goodwill of the people of Chhattisgarh and they were all waiting for him to return.

"He always said 'give peace a chance,' and spoke of the need to build peace, equity and justice. If he is a naxal sympathiser, it is for the courts to decide. But, for me he has never crossed any line. Please go to Chhattisgarh and see the work he has done," said Ms. Vaid.