

Important Vocab For the Editorial

1. **regrettable** (adjective) – undesirable, unfortunate, disappointing/distressing.
2. **conviction** (noun) – sentence, judgement, verdict.
3. **sedition** (noun) – incitement (to riot/rebellion), agitation, trouble making/provocation.
4. **scrap** (verb) – abandon, cancel, withdraw.
5. **impassioned** (adjective) – showing feelings so strongly, ardent, emotional.
6. **lenient** (adjective) – merciful, sympathetic, forgiving/forbearing.
7. **criminalise** (verb) – make something (an activity) illegal.
8. **deem** (verb) – regard as, consider; view as.
9. **inopportune** (adjective) – unfavourable, untimely, disadvantageous.
10. **alarming** (adjective) – worrying, disturbing, shocking/distressing.
11. **quell** (verb) – stifle, suppress, thwart.
12. **dissent** (noun) – disagreement, disapproval, opposition.
13. **provision** (noun) – term, clause, requirement.
14. **hatred** (noun) – hate, dislike, hostility.
15. **contempt** (noun) – disrespect, disregard, neglect.
16. **momentum** (noun) – impetus, driving force, power/strength.
17. **disloyalty** (noun) – unreliability, subversion, duplicity.
18. **disaffection** (noun) – dissatisfaction, discontent, frustration/disgruntlement.
19. **check** (verb) – prevent, curb, block/stop.
20. **unleash** (verb) – let loose, release, set free.
21. **diatribe** (noun) – tirade, verbal onslaught, rant.
22. **betray** (verb) – be disloyal to, be unfaithful to, let down.
23. **indictment** (noun) – charge, accusation, allegation.
24. **amount to** (verb) – be regarded as, be equivalent/equal to, be tantamount to.
25. **incitement** (noun) – inducement, stimulation, provocation.
26. **debatable** (adjective) – questionable, arguable, doubtful.
27. **complicity** (noun) – collusion, involvement, collaboration.
28. **allegation** (noun) – charge, accusation, indictment.
29. **sow the seeds of** (phrase) – trigger, initiate, activate.
30. **mischievous** (noun) – damage, detriment, trouble.
31. **disorder** (noun) – disturbance, disruption, confusion.
32. **foment** (adjective) – instigate, incite, provoke/stir up.
33. **regrettably** (adverb) – unluckily, sadly, woefully.
34. **advocacy** (noun) – endorsement, approval; backing/supporting.
35. **abrogate** (verb) – overrule/overturn, revoke, repeal.

A regrettable conviction: on Vaiko being found guilty of sedition

Mr. Vaiko being found guilty of sedition strengthens the case to scrap Section 124A

The conviction of prominent pro-LTTE politician [Vaiko on the charge of sedition](#), based on a typically impassioned speech he had made in Chennai a decade ago, is a worrying development. Even though Section 124A, the IPC section that makes sedition an offence, attracts either a three-year term or imprisonment for life, the trial court sentenced him to a somewhat lenient one-year jail term. Yet, it is a matter of concern that political speeches are criminalised to the point of being deemed an offence against the state. Further, the timing of a political leader being found guilty of sedition is quite inopportune. In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in sedition charges being used to quell political dissent. This conviction will needlessly send out a message that such provisions are necessary to protect the government against being brought into hatred and contempt. Also, it comes at a time when demands to scrap the section is gaining momentum. There is greater recognition now than in the past that Section 124A is neither relevant nor needed today. The Law Commission released a consultation paper highlighting arguments for its reconsideration. There is a body of opinion that a modern democracy does not need a free speech restriction based on political concepts such as disloyalty and disaffection towards the state. Britain, which introduced the offence of sedition in India in 1870 to check the use of speech and writing to criticise its colonial administration, has abolished it.

It is true that Mr. Vaiko had unleashed a diatribe against the Union **government** by accusing it of betraying the Sri Lankan Tamil cause, and holding it responsible for the death of Tamil civilians in large numbers. However, whether his harshly worded indictment amounts to incitement of violence against the government is debatable. The speech was made at a function to mark the release of the Tamil version of a book that accused the Congress-led regime of complicity in Sri Lanka's military campaign. The court ruled that his allegations would sow the seeds of disaffection and hatred towards the government. Here is where the real mischief of Section 124A lies. Its definition of sedition as anything that excites disaffection against the government, or brings it under hatred and contempt, is too wide and can take in its fold not only incitement to taking up arms but also harmless, even if strident, criticism. In 1962, the Supreme Court limited its scope to acts that show actual intent or a tendency to create disorder or foment violence. Regrettably, the court has held that anyone who heard Mr. Vaiko's speech would develop hatred towards

the government; that “mere advocacy” is the essence of the crime, and there need not be actual violence as a consequence. Higher courts will have the final say on whether he was guilty, but the case for abrogating Section 124A just became stronger.

Gupta Classes