

## Swami Agnivesh condemns Pragya's remarks on 26/11 martyr

**Press Trust of India | New Delhi April 19, 2019** Last Updated at 22:10 IST

Social activist Swami Agnivesh Friday condemned BJP's Bhopal Lok Sabha seat candidate Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur's remarks on ATS chief Hemant Karkare who died during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

Agnivesh, in a statement, said Thakur's candidature reveals the saffron party's "true nature and value system".

Addressing party workers in Bhopal on Thursday, Thakur

had claimed that Karkare inflicted the worst kind of abuses and torture on her while she was in custody in connection with the Malegaon blast case and that the officer died due to her curse.

The Malegaon blast accused is contesting against Congress heavyweight and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijaya Singh.

Referring to her remarks, the social activist said, "The BJP did not choose Pragya for her spiritual finesse or political maturity, both of which she lacks utterly."

"She has been chosen because of her ability to communalise the election," he said in the statement.

Agnivesh also attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying "Thakur's outlook is in sync with Modi's".

"The trait common to both is that those who are inconvenient to them must be either crushed or cursed out of existence. So, while Modi seeks to eradicate the Congress from the face of the earth, Pragya has done one better: she has cursed her adversary to extinction.

"This mindset of extreme intolerance, rendered all the dangerous by mixing it up with religious sentiments, is harmful to the spirit of democracy," the statement said.

The activist said if Modi disagrees with what Thakur said, he should remove her from the electoral fray.

"It will send a clear signal to the country at large that such statements and sentiments have no place in our democratic culture," he said.

Thakur also said Karkare committed an "anti-national" act by falsely implicating her in the Malegaon blasts case and keeping her behind bars without evidence.

"It was treason. It was against religion," she said.

"He tortured me and subjected me to harsh abuse which was unbearable. I told him he will be destroyed. A little over a month later 'sutak' (ritual observed after death of a family member) was going to start... just over a month later, he was shot dead by terrorists and the inauspicious period ended," she said.

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) led by Karkare cracked the September 2008 Malegaon blast case and arrested Thakur and others.

Out on bail, Thakur (48) has been discharged by a court on charges under the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) in the case. She is still facing trial under other criminal provisions, including the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Six people were killed and over hundred injured in the bomb blast at Malegaon, a communally sensitive textile town in north Maharashtra, on September 29, 2008.