

Nandigram, Haripur, Jadugoda

Inhuman, all too inhuman. They shot to kill as most bullet injuries were above the waist level. Many people were shot in the back. It is one of history's darker ironies that the marxists granted the police and 'death squads' with red bands a free hand to murder and rape. The mass murder as horrific as it was, was not an end in itself. It was part of a process of 'homogenising' the marxist rule. Yet the eyeless in Nandigram refused to go beyond saying 'Nandigram was a mistake'.

No doubt it will take long to heal the wounds of Nandigram. But the ruling marxists are ready to create more Nandigrams if the situation so demands. What matters is election, not bloody Nandigram. They know how to win election—or what may be called opposition cleansing. If sop does not work, terror tactics can. If the Chinese Communist Party can acquire 80 percent of the 1.84 million hectares of farmland illegally and forcibly for industrial uses and for notorious special economic zones while maintaining their communist label 'intact', the CPM too should not have any problem to imitate the Chinese model! But China's most publicised special economic zone— Shenzhen—is a worker's graveyard where no labour rights exist. 'The mere loss of an identity card can reduce workers to destitution'. All this happens under the baton of communist party—the vanguard of working class. And China too is facing the musings of globalisation as there were at least 23000 officially admitted grass-roots protests in 2005 alone. Alarmed by growing income gap the Chinese mandarins seem to be thinking in terms of basics—introducing massive new poverty alleviation programmes, like their Indian counterparts, to arrest rural unrest.

While Nandigram is yet to return to normal by overcoming the trauma it faced on March 14, the nuclear power issue is hotting up in nearby Haripur. At the time of writing Indo-US parley on the contentious nuclear trade deal between India and America, with every possibility of further surrendering of India's sovereignty to Washington was in progress. This way or that Indo-US nuclear deal does hardly bother about nuclear fallout at Jadugoda, again not far away from Nandigram and Haripur as it is geographically located in the adjoining Singhbhum district of Jharkhand state. Jadugoda, being the only viable uranium mining centre of India, does not figure much in the so-called main stream media for obvious reasons. If the advocates of neo-liberalism go ahead with their grandiose plan of setting up nuclear power plants at Haripur and elsewhere at any cost, they are likely to aggravate the plight of poor tribals living in Jadugoda mining areas. The people of Jadugoda have been paying a terrible price in terms of toxic health hazards after being made sacrificial lambs, for long. But 'whatever befalls the earth befalls the child of the earth'. And it is nowhere so vivid as in an agonised child's face in Jadugoda. Home to Santhali and Ho tribes of Jadugoda, having India's all important uranium mining facility under Uranium Corporation of India [UCIL] is facing a catastrophic effect on the health of its people. And their agony multiplied manyfold after the December 24, 2006 accident when one of the pipes carrying radioactive wastes from the uranium mill to a storage dam had burst, discharging highly toxic wastes into a nearby creek. The authorities know well how deadly the radioactive wastes are to the people living in the surrounding areas as well as their land and water. Poor tribals who are already displaced from their lands more than once because of acquisition of land at the point of guns will find it increasingly difficult to have any access to safe drinking water. They have been drinking contaminated water for long, bearing the brunt of deadly diseases but the December accident may lead to a situation beyond tolerable limits for inhabitants.

Though not much is heard about the resistance movement by the people of Jadugoda, their fight, of late, gets international solidarity support. The December '06 accident, rather disaster and its mishandling by the UCIL management has already drawn flak from the global community.

Peasants are resisting reckless industrialisation everywhere because they have no option but to resist and face bullet. Nuclear issue too in the ultimate analysis is a peasant question. Anti-nuclear movement is also anti-land grabbing movement. But without a broad-based platform no tangible results can be achieved from sporadic outbursts here and there. This so-called industrialisation, be it SEZ or nuclear power plant—is in reality a kind of 'ethnic-clean-sing' in modern era. It is annihilation of one major human group by a miniscule elite club and it cannot go on unchallenged anymore, particularly after Nandigram. ❄❄❄❄