

Assaulting Reality

THERE IS A SENSE THAT POLITICAL SYSTEM IN INDIA IS crumbling without producing a viable new one. The question is not whether old political parties can deliver, but rather how to maintain the status quo. With the decline of so-called national parties, regional formations under different brand names without reflecting ground reality, have every reason to live happily in their fiefdoms. The disaster has many fathers. After every election the torch bearers of what they call mainstream politics, find themselves more crippled than ever before. “All India Parties” are losing their all-India relevance with every passing day though they would like to derive comfort from their ‘glorious’ national role. Both Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress have long become irrelevant in their regional citadal—Uttar Pradesh—not to speak of national scenario. They are ‘national’ parties without national presence. Bi-polar administrative dispensation as it exists in India today, is not the solution to multiple political problems with different roots of origin.

In a way two major political parties—BJP and Congress—and their satellites, not excluding the officially recognised communist parties, seem to be an assault on reality. All of them work overtime to ‘confuse the confused’ so that people could not locate the real source of danger they face day in and day out. Also, no party, regional or ‘national’, is against the prevailing economic onslaught launched by global capital. They are too enthusiastic to obey the dictates of international financial institutions controlled by America and Western Europe, even by openly surrendering country’s interests. They are sellouts, all too eager to accommodate multinational wishes. Both Congress and BJP are united despite their skin-deep political differences over this issue or that, in not opposing unfair trade practice by multinationals and yet they ask people, rather voters all the time to support them so that they can serve innumerable foreign players better. All political groups are not on friendly terms but they are not unfriendly either when it is the question of silencing the genuine voice of dissent.

As Indian polity is increasingly dominated by regional groupings, even municipal and panchayet electrons get national significance. After the Nandigram carnage, the CPM-led left front was caught in a dilemma as to how to sell their ‘industrial revolution’ scripted by notorious multinational companies. They are still in a dilemma because, this counter-revolution involves large-scale eviction and bloodshed. By winning Haldia Municipal election they are now doubly encouraged to describe their ‘counter-revolution’ as victory of democracy. They are in reality trying to win what they have lost in Nandigram—confidence. Initially Nandigram was billed as another Haldia in the making which it was not.

The issue in Haldia Municipal election was not ‘industrialisation’—it was illegal and forceful acquisition of farmland. But the so-called grand alliance of all anti-CPM opposition parties had to bite the dust in the end, because broader economic issues beyond Nandigram did not get adequate attention; mere emotional outbursts over police atrocities did not click. They failed to sufficiently address the impending environmental degradation and its harmful impact on agriculture and people who depend on agriculture. In truth they too are

interested in short-term gains without bothering about long-term adverse consequences, foreign investment would bring in. No amount of demagogic niceties can make up for directionless leadership and lack of motivation among the rank and file. Haldia election provided an opportunity for all anti-CPM forces to project an alternative model of development—development with dignity—but they failed miserably to articulate the aspirations of people. Actually they were trapped by the CPM in the ‘pro-industry, anti-industry’ gambit and played to the tune of CPM, by defending themselves all the time as pro-industry from a position of weakness. Finally they allowed the CPM to emerge as the unchallenged votary of multinational capital. The grand alliance with diverse political tendencies and narrow political vision did not work on Bengal politics in 2001, it didn’t work this time too in a local body election and it won’t work in the future.

Incidentally, as all political parties depend solely on elections for their survival, nothing is heard about party programme. All of them issue manifestoes on the eve of election and ignore them after election—at every level, local, state and national.

Revolution is no longer on the immediate agenda of any revolutionary party. Nor does socialism find place even in the election manifestoes of official communist parties. CPM knows well how to kill ideological debate that goes against its reformisms, the naxalbari upsurge created a political space for a broader ideological battle for a longer period but that battle too lost direction in the middle because of sectarian tendencies in the naxalite movement. No doubt Nandigram gave an opportunity to the far left to launch a fresh ideological attack against all sorts of election—all communists who are just apologists of multinational capital, but no group, moderate or extreme left, did really come forward to take advantage of it. All their exercises did not cross the limit of illegal land acquisition and that too in a limited way. □□□