

Nandigram to Khammam

THE STATE-SPONSORED VIOLENCE does not end with Nandigram. Only a few weeks back, police rained bullets at protesting farmers in Khammam district of Andhra Pradesh, killing eight of them. The farmers were agitating for the implementation of land reforms and housing for the landless. The protests were a part of the daylong strike called by the left parties for the implementation of land reforms in Andhra Pradesh.

Nandigram and Singur in West Bengal, Kalinganagar in Orissa, Santoshpur in Chattisgarh, and now Khammam in Andhra Pradesh: the political colour of the ruling governments in these States might be different, but across the political spectrum, neo-liberalism has been embraced unconditionally, ignoring the writings on the wall: Mass uprisings are inevitable if the State continues to allow industries to grab agricultural land.

Ironically, the Left, especially the CPI(M), that spouts out anti-neo-liberalism slogans in public rallies but practises that very strategy on its home turf, today stands totally shorn of its façade and hypocrisy. The party is fast acquiring expertise in the veneer of sophistication to hide the dark face of capitalism. CPI(M), the political party that goes around tom-tomming about humanism, has not even committed itself to disbursing minimum compensation to the victims of Nandigram till date.

And to think of it the party leadership did not waste any time in sending observers to Andhra Pradesh to admonish, criticise and hurl barbs at the administration for its high-handedness in Khammam. Of course, the party, with its selective amnesia has conveniently forgotten that not a single Left leader of any standing has visited Nandigram. As if this was not enough, the Left parties managed to exert enough pressure on Andhra Pradesh CM Rajsekhar Reddy so as to make him cough up Rs five lakh each for the kin of the deceased. On the Nandigram front, however, there is an intriguing silence on the issue of compensation to victims.

Going by the way the Left is behaving, it seems that they have forgotten that the onslaught of neo-liberal globalisation policies everywhere translates into a systematic demolition of the welfare state, cutting down on welfare schemes, undermining health, education and social security. And all the while, these policies only appease the financial markets and go about increasing armament and armed interventions. This has often led to a sense of hopelessness—individual and collective—creating a breeding ground for fundamentalism and other vices. It is unfortunate that in six decades since Independence, India finds itself in a situation where globalisation has robbed people of their livelihoods. It is strange that while riots and communal carnage are on the rise, the state is vigorously playing the role of the protective shell for corporate houses and multinationals. The Left, with its stated commitment to the welfare state and fight against capitalism, has succumbed before the deadly offensive of predatory neo-liberal policies. Nothing signifies this more starkly than Singur and Nandigram—two villages in West Bengal that perhaps mark a new low in the history of the communist movement in India. □□□

