

Putting a 'Good Face

India, where everyone talks about democracy and parliamentary democrats enjoy surfeit of democracy throughout the year. Democracy in this part of the globe, is a democratic excuse to indulge in undemocratic acts. At one stage socialism was fashionable even for the diehard rightist parties of India. It is no more. It's democracy now! Registered communists and Lohia-ites with different brand names are today the worst apologists of multinational capital. In other words they have lost the track in the middle and simply do not know how to utter a word or two against American hegemonism and its disastrous impact on Indian foreign policy orientation. It is obnoxious to see they can still maintain different kinds of socialist flags only to hoodwink the victims of social and economic oppression. In India's multi-party parliamentary showbusiness there is no permanent foe or friend. Nor does ideology matter in choosing coalition partners. What matters is opportunism, naked and simple. The latest episode comes from the much talked about notorious caste-lord of Uttar Pradesh. His party—Samajwadi (Socialist) Party—has succeeded all these years in polarising communal politics in Uttar Pradesh, all in the name of combating majoritarian communalism.

Currently casteist Samajwadi Party is in the news for its historic mission to bail out Sonia Gandhi's Congress Party for the Indo-US nuclear deal impasse it has been in for quite some time. Only a few weeks ago Congress was its enemy. Not now. Because they represent the world's biggest showpiece of democracy. While CPM and its left allies are trying to refurbish their patriotic nationalism, rather anti-imperialist stance by opposing the controversial deal, otherwise designed to establish America's exclusive sway over India's nuclear establishment, Indian National Congress and its supporters are vigorously pursuing the deal to achieve the same political mileage—patriotism. For ordinary voters—only voters count in parliamentary game—it is a bewildering situation because useless debate over nuclear patriotism is no answer to ever rising inflation. Supporters of the deal say communalism is more dangerous than imperialism. The CPM-led left that has withdrawn support to the Congress-run United Progressive Alliance government on the nuclear deal issue, may not disagree because anti-imperialist struggle is not on their agenda.

Locating communalism in the saffron family—Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its frontal affiliates—is a risk free business in Indian politics. Investing in secularism continues to earn reasonable return in vote market. All secularists including communists preach the idea of secularism in such a way that it can flourish in a vacuum without any economic perspective. In other words they talk of a kind of communalism that has no economic base.

Congress has taken a calculated move to go ahead with the nuclear deal even by sacrificing left's support. Gandhians and their non-Gandhian allies have every reason to ignore curtailment of India's sovereignty because they have already

mortgaged it to international financial institutions controlled by America. Nor does communist left that now boasts of holding high the banner of India's sovereignty by way of blocking the Indo-US nuclear deal, wants to see any genuine mass mobilisation developing against American overlordism. They are no less fanatic than the Congress and the saffron party—BJP—in wooing American transnational corporations to loot India. If the nuclear-deal gets through, it will open a huge market for America's ailing nuclear industry to tide over the severe crisis resulted from the Chernobyl disaster. For the people of Chernobyl the tragedy continues to visit new generations even after so many decades as the Bhopal Gas disaster remains a perennial source of agony for thousands of survivors and their descendants. After Chernobyl, most European countries, barring France, are reluctant to rely on nuclear energy despite so much propaganda in favour of it. Born poor in coal and oil, necessity, some forty years ago, led France to pursue nuclear energy aggressively as a chief source of electricity. The rest of Europe had no such compulsion to look at nuclear options.

New Delhi's nuclear hawks have a grand plan to neuclearise coastal India with a chain of reactors stretching from South Bengal to Tamil Nadu. Ironically, marxists who are apparently against the deal, are not really against nuclear electricity as they fanatically lobbied for a nuclear power plant in the thickly-populated region of coastal Bengal. Like Congress and BJP they are equally hawkish in campaigning 'safe energy' which it is not—nuclear power. It's not cheap either. The nuclear authorities of India are too optimistic to increase India's nuclear power generation capacity from the present 3 percent to 6-7 percent in a decade or so. And for this they slavishly depend on American god. That China is not against Indo-US nuclear deal is yet another ball game. Like America China too is trying to capture potential energy business in Asia and elsewhere. Beijing is not afraid of India's possible enhanced nuclear weapons capability because of Indo-US deal. But this nuclear deal has virtually made the possibility of India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project redundant. Uncle Sam does not want it because it is not in American interest. Meanwhile toilers are in a hopeless situation as even one meal a day seems to be out of reach to most wage-earners in informal sector because there is no party to douse market-fire. □ (16-07-2008)