

Living In The Past

As the biggest political crisis in the official left camp continues to unfold in so many ways progressives and intellectuals who cherish the idea of being called left, remaining always on the fringe of the left movement, are worried. In the wrangling spirit of democratic discourse they delve into questions and challenges posed by major changes in the country today, sometimes marginally influencing spontaneous mass movements. The last quarter-century has seen intensified globalisation, growing urbanisation and shanty town-isolation in major cities, the rise of religious fundamentalism, shifting alignments in parliamentary groupings and the unprecedented acceleration of environmental degradation. And quite naturally they are worried and demarcate themselves from the non-responsive civic society to achieve the requisite understanding of the situation. They are not worried about the saffron onslaught and the ideological, political and strategic implications of globalisation for radical change. They are worried about the steady decline of the official left and the possibility of losing paradise they have built up in some regions of the country. They undertake theoretical explorations of the issues that affect the left without showing any hard commitment to further the cause of basic masses. The electoral debacle of the left in some states in recent months has created a chain reaction, leading to political wilderness for them. They are panicky because they may lose their non-partisan leftist identity, whatever it means in the real world of survival and resistance, in a situation in which the traditional left is dangerously eclipsing itself by drastically changing its class position.

If the so-called left parties, including the communist parties and various socialist formations, lose whatever relevance they still enjoy in regional politics, it is because they are away from ordinary people, the toilers. Progressives see in the demise of official left an end of their leftism which sometimes borders on left aristocracy.

So they are asking the official left, particularly the CPM, to try to get back what they have lost—mass contact. They are flooding the mainstream media with their well thought-out articles seeking to set forth, defend and further advance the theoretical and practical framework for the beginning of a stage of popular movement in the changed context. But the official left is not listening. For all practical purposes CPM has developed social-fascistic tendencies while other left parties have no option but to share the historic blame for their inability to defy CPM diktats.

So long as they were betraying workers' interests, particularly organised sector workers' interests—unorganised sector labourers are mere statistics in their scheme of things—progressives and intellectuals didn't take any notice of it. Starvation deaths of workers of closed mills and tea gardens didn't prick their conscience much. Nor did they press the panic button as they are doing now. As the communist left has alienated itself from rural masses, both peasants and non-peasant labourers, progressives have a hard time to maintain their progressive flag without really doing anything concrete in the field. They find it increasingly difficult to identify their progressive outlook with CPM-brand of leftism. And yet

they cannot desert them completely. In times of voting they will reluctantly, rather grudgingly vote for them.

CPM's land-grabbing exercise in the name of industrialisation, through coercion, even by deploying crime syndicates makes it an ideal candidate for promoting social fascism. The ruling left in Bengal is on the defensive because they don't know how to keep their leftist image intact without hurting the interests of the Tatas and the likes. After Singur and Nandigram the Vedic Village episode illustrates the marxist left can go to any length to serve the money bags, all in the name of development and industrialisation. They engaged notorious criminals to force peasants to sell their small parcels of land.

Progressives hope the leftists will go back to basics to refurbish their leftist image so that they could derive comfort from high-sounding intellectual exercises in air-conditioned halls. But it cannot be. Communist parties these days are mostly without communists. What all their party programme says is they are fighting for people's democracy. True, they are talking of people's democracy of their kind but the very definition of their people is queer. Their people mainly come from the corporate world.

Progressives really face a tough time to see their not-so orthodox leftism is crumbling before their eyes. Good old days won't return. They are trying to save the current 'left phenomenon' without any success. Tragically, the degenerated left continues to blind some people to what they are really all about and the actual nature of the system of which they are a part. □□□