

# Are Media Mad?

**Madhusudan Pal Vedantatirtha**

Three states where the Congress Party-led UPA is ruling had gone to the polls. In one of these states, Maharashtra, there is some Maoist Party activities and those are confined in that interior and inaccessible part of the state where the state machinery treated the citizens as sub-humans for more than 62 years as if the ruling class have earned that 'freedom to oppress' as a right. Now they are being ousted from their age-old habitat or their ecological space is being forcibly snatched from their communities or their collective entities are being endangered or their known means of livelihood are being destroyed. It is a horrible situation for those poor victims of the ruling class. Yet it is 'freedom' of the ruling class and this 'freedom' the ruling class have been enjoying for the last 62 years without opposition. Now, after 62 years, the ruling class and the state machinery consider it as their fundamental right to rape and kill and burn and mutilate and satisfy all their sadistic desires on these 'poor' citizens. Recently the ruling class is emboldened by the emergence into the open of a deeply embedded camouflaged deadly deceptive outfit, CPI(M), who while ruling are ruining, plundering, raping, killing and burning with covert as well as overt help from the state machinery. Female government officials were raped and murdered allegedly by party while on duty thereby sending a chilling message that the government would brook no procrastination on the part of the executive in carrying out the rapacious business. Another female Deputy Controller of Examinations of Calcutta University went missing, simply vanished. She was perhaps privy to some gross irregularities happening in her department. No trace of her could be found till date. Criminalization of this administration knows no bound. Recently a poor village girl in her teens, Tapasi Malik, who was taking a leading role in the agitation for recovery of fertile agricultural land forcibly taken for Tatas' Nano Motor Factory was raped and burnt to death for her audacity to oppose the party in power and government diktat.

Whereas some good-natured well-meaning social activists are protesting, within constitutional limits, all these atrocities on the poor—tortured ousted and about to be ousted citizens, and whereas these social activists are creating public opinions against these naked forms of state terrorism and leading people's movements peacefully, the ruling class, whether sitting and wielding state power from the judiciary or from the executive or from the legislative or from any combination of these three estates or from any extra-constitutional outsource, this Indian insensitive ruthless ruling class, instead of learning lessons and mending ways, have, again and again recourse to harassing, blackmailing, abusing, imprisoning and as in a recent bizarre incident even showing bare buttocks and bottoms by party-cadres. These peace-loving philanthropists and civilized public opinion builders failed to arouse the media sufficiently to put pressure on the insensate ruling class and their savior of the last resort, the Indian security machinery. Whereas in West Bengal where bare buttocks and bare bottoms were shown to an accomplished and eminent social activist, another lady of the soil with fire giving political fight alone for about two decades against the atrocities perpetrated by the persons in authority, hijacked the social movement and turned it into a political battle and could win some precarious success in the bargain, whereas a backdrop of long battles, constitutional or in cases where constitutional form does not work, unconstitutional, forced the ruling clique in West Bengal now to think twice before committing atrocities, in the state under discussion, that is, in Maharashtra, there is a vacuum, political agitation being restricted to the question of share of Marathis in the distribution of office of profit, and the poor ousted citizens have no means left to defend

themselves from aggressive rapacious ruling class except reciprocating offence with similar offence.

If and when a set of people are constantly pushed into the unfathomable hole in a discrete manner, others may or may not notice it. Even if noticed, others may or may not raise a hue and cry, but the media should flash and break the news immediately without waiting for permission and excuse from the perpetrators. They must come forward with all weapons at their disposal to dissuade the perpetrators from carrying out such heinous, criminal act. Instead, the media, particularly the big-business-owned media either hide the truth in the first place or if the truth is exposed, color it in such a way as to make it appear as an innuendo. Take, for instance, the Narmada Bachao movement launched and led by Medha Patekar. Nobody in the fourth estate took cognizance of the plight of the hapless oustees from the Narmada basin! Rehabilitation and compensation package is a far cry. Why? Is it because the ruling class considers that they can do whatever they think fit, using or abusing the vast resources? Medha Patekar's experiment failed to dent the ruling establishment. Again take the case of the victims of Bhopal Gas Tragedy. Thousands lost their lives while in sleep, thousands are crippled for life and, still-born or crippled babies will be born in generations to come! But to the ruling class it is nothing but colateral damage to 'development and growth'. It is a price the nation must pay. Years of protracted 'constitutional' fight such as protest marches, law suits against the killer Union Carbide Corporation as well as against the governments and all other peaceful forms of protests bore no fruit! In West Bengal, a tribal woman's eye was gouged out and another pregnant tribal woman had miscarried as a result of police torture, thatched mud huts reduced to dust by police, wells for drinking water made undrinkable with human faeces. Finding no other alternative the tribal population over a vast area have organized themselves under the People's Committee for Protection against Police Atrocities and while resisting virtually boycotted the government, expelled government agencies including the police from the area and Bengal's intelligentsia, true to the values inherited from the great Bengal renaissance promptly extended moral and material support. The government and the party in power have been caught on the wrong foot and all these ghastly incidents have cast a lurid light on the CPI(M)-led Left Front Government in West Bengal.

The sum and substance of the matter is that this is a killing system. The ruling class can kill at will and dub it as killing in 'self-defence'. If someone is a serious opponent of the breach of faith enshrined in "We, the people of India..." concatenated constitutional conception and seriously work for the primary constituent, "the people of India", the probability of his being killed is higher than his leaving the field with a mark of success. Take the case of Sarita and Mahesh in Sabdagaon village near Gaya in Bihar. The duo were killed because not only did they awaken creativity in the hearts of villagers but also led the villagers to pull together all resources available locally to dig a forty-kilometre long canal towards creating a self-sustained, self-dependent, self-ruled village where 'the mind is without fear and the head is held high...'

It is not for a trifle of a thing that people, especially the village women are taking up guns and fighting real battles against the state authorities, which is solely responsible for the reign of terror in the countryside. The victims of state sponsored terrorism are just reacting. Look at Lalgarh and the tribal population there. The unique form of struggle that the tribal people of West Bengal have been carrying on is now at a critical phase. The governments at the centre and in the state are seeing the spectre of Maoism in the Lalgarh people's peaceful democratic movement and at present busy crushing the movement, resorting to military action and maligning and even threatening to arrest the Bengal intelligentsia who are supporting the Lalgarh people's movement. In this case the government, instead of sitting and amicably settling the matter for which a date was

finalized, reversed the process and set police and military forces on the tribal people in order to firing them to their knees just as the British colonialists did in Jalianwalabag, creating compelling circumstances for Maoists to appear on the scene. Clearly, it is the foolish policy of the government that is responsible for the reign of terror in Lalgarh. Just the other day the government was forced by the Maoists to free about a dozen innocent women of Lalgarh in exchange for a Police Officer held hostage by the Maoists. The media are crying hoarse and shedding tears for the OC babu's family but are lacking in sympathy for the families of poor tribal women who were incarcerated for nothing. While granting them bail the court observed that there was no substance in detention charges against the tribal women. The Central and West Bengal governments seem to have taken lessons from Sri Lanka where the government militarily crushed its own people crying for justice.

If and when none of the estates come forward to rescue the besieged from falling into the pit, if those great hearts who come forward on their own sweet will are either disparaged like Medha Patekar or killed like Sarita and Mahesh or incarcerated and implicated in false cases, what should they do? Vote for the butcher? Voting in an environment of state terror does not signify democracy.

Coming back to the discussion first mooted, and under the circumstances enumerated as above, it is wrong to eulogize Black Cat besieged hamlets forced to gather at polling booths as success of democracy, controlled as it is by money bags, guns and criminalized politics. Indian democracy never reflects the will of the people. To a great extent it reflects money-power and organized-crime syndicate. Indian dailies dally and dance with this frenzy. □□□