

Living On Borrowed Time

They can be dynamic again, at least until they are dead. No that is not going to happen. So it seems. The decline of CPM, the cheerleader of 'progressives' who derive comfort from being called leftists, is irreversible. No, the maoists are no threat to their ideological and political orientation though they could have been. In truth the maoists' sole pre-occupation with armed struggle has forced them to move in a blind alley when it is the question of ideological confrontation. Panic is so pervasive in the marxist ranks that they are now talking in multiple voices sometimes even at cross-purposes. The election-all party has everything to lose when it loses elections. After several electoral reverses they continue to compound their political woes with every passing day by deceiving themselves as also the public. They have been debating over what is being dubbed in the media as Bengal line versus Kerala line for long though in a subtle manner without really making it a point of vertical or horizontal split. The withdrawal of support from the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance dispensation is viewed as a turning point in their misfortune. The Indo-US nuclear deal issue that tempted the central leadership of CPM to break with the Congress was too weak to motivate even their blind supporters against Congress and America.

All their outburst against the nuclear deal is too clever by half. They are not opposing the deal knowing full well nuclear power is no solution to the crippling energy situation. They are not opposing importing nuclear reactors from American hell or Russian heaven, albeit opening market for reactors and nuclear industry in general, is precisely the objective of the Deal. Nor do they oppose uranium mining in the country which has already destroyed hundreds of tribal hamlets while creating radiation-related health hazards for thousands. Their anti-American stance is too skin-deep to save their radical image.

Not that they are losing elections because they are no longer in the Congress-camp. The Yadav brigade in Bihar continues to nurse their honeymoon with the Congress and yet Laloo Yadav is no longer a force to reckon with. True, "mistakes are less important than drawing lessons from them". But communists in this part of the globe never try to learn from their past mistakes. They always justify their wrong policies by defending the indefensible through obnoxious theorising. At every critical juncture of Indian history they committed blunders and theorised them by quoting from marxist literature.

What was true for them in the yester years is true for them even today. They are now trying to identify corruption and favouritism as the principal cause of their demise in electoral arena. No doubt rampant corruption plays an important role in hastening the process of their decline but it is not the whole story behind their alienation from basic masses. For all practical purposes they stand for social-fascism, not marxism. Their out and out pro-corporate policies which are in the main responsible for the destitution of millions in rural and urban areas are the roots. But they are trying to trim branches to regain what they have lost—people's confidence.

In rural Bengal their real tragedy started when minority community voters began to desert them. And all this started even when there was no furore over the nuclear deal. They overplayed the communal card, rather anti-communal card, without addressing the objective reality—dispossession of farmland. In their overdrive to woo big business and corporate tycoons they tried to divert public attention from the real issues. Security did not remain top priority for the minority community people as security was somehow ensured because of the decline of the saffron power. So long as security was their top concern they voted for the left in Bengal and, for the Yadav brigades in Bihar and UP. After security the problem of grinding poverty and unemployment was a burning issue for the most marginalised section of the minority community. Losing small parcels of land means total deprivation for the vast sections of minority community people. And it turned the swing in favour of opposition. Marxists look helpless. So were the caste-cards in north-India. They cannot create Advanis at this point to win minority voters.

It's the land question that has alienated them from basic masses, irrespective of their caste and religions. For one thing they are virtually living on borrowed time. They have no option either because they cannot serve two antagonistic interests simultaneously. For them the end of 'man-money-muscle' culture is very much in sight. □□□