

NOTE

Sen and Neo-Liberalism

A B writes :

The nationwide protest after the sentence of life-imprisonment to Dr Binayak Sen has revealed that human conscience in this country has not died down, although the Central Government as well as the Chhattisgarh State Government seems to remain unmoved.

Whatever the position of the police and the judiciary, the voices of the people, to whom Dr Sen virtually dedicated his life and who belong to the marginalized sections of the society, cannot be ignored, and have touched the minds of all well-meaning citizens. The opinions expressed by Professor Amartya Sen, Professor Noam Chomsky and other distinguished persons have added fresh momentum to the campaign against this open, naked manifestation of state terrorism, but possibly more important is the cry of the people of Chhattisgarh.

Of course, it is a long practice of the police force of this country to act at the behest of the rich and powerful, and judges too are not immune to it. Whatever may be the outcome of the appeal made to the higher court, the heinous crime of the police officers who implicated him in a case of treason and the judge who gave the sentence of life-imprisonment to Binayak Sen and two other co-accused is an eye-opener to the left and progressives who have enormous faith in this functioning democracy.

Why was Binayak arrested and put behind bars for so long, after which he was granted bail only to be given the sentence of life-imprisonment? It must be mentioned that Chhattisgarh's mineral resources are very much coveted by the corporates, and in order to grab these resources, they are all out to rob the inhabitants, particularly tribals, of their land, water and forest products, if necessary by force and if possible without compensation. As evident from Manmohan Singh's and P Chidambaram's recent speeches, the realization of his 'national goal' of 10-11 percent rate of growth on a sustainable basis depends crucially on how the mineral resources of the central Indian plateau are exploited, which is why they consider Naxalism as the biggest threat to the country's internal security. And the policy of realizing this 'national goal', as everybody knows, is to handover the task to the captains of industry. The nitty-gritty of this is to satisfy their greed for accumulation and reinvestment, and to create a sizeable market for them even if the vast majority of the population is excluded from it. Days are perhaps not far away when even a critic of this policy will be branded a traitor and put behind bars, or killed in fake 'encounters'. Of course, Manmohan Singh and his mentors can ill-afford to express their policy too openly, and they have to resort to other swindles, because they have little option except to count on the 'gullibility' of the people. The fraudulent statistics about the reduction of poverty paraded by the government is one such example. The poverty line was fixed at 2400 calories per day per head for the rural population in 1973-74, but the Planning Commission, in order to deceive the people, continuously lowered this norm, bringing it down to 1820 calories in 2004-05.

Struggle for the release of Binayak Sen, hence, cannot be taken as an end in itself. It has to combine with the greater struggle against neo-liberalism. As long as this policy of wooing the big business and oppressing the marginalized sections of the society continues in the name of growth, such incidents of state terrorism will continue to recur. □□□