

Peace without Dignity

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THE WORD 'PEACE' IS deceptive. From the time of epics to the recent days, there lie innumerable examples where 'peace' was disturbed deliberately by the gods people worship. Goddess Kali or Durga fought battles to break the status quo. Shree Ram could have bought peace with Ravana by sacrificing his wife: he chose to destroy peace. Despite being attacked the US could have maintained peace, instead Washington waged a grammatically wrong 'war on terror'.

Most of the deliberate efforts to break peace, from the days of Shree Ram to George Bush, have created various and even totally opposing reactions. Asura tribesmen till today avoid the vicinity of any *Durgapuja pandal*, because for them those are symbols of the wrong done to their ancient great king Mahisasura. Similarly, many believe the war George Bush waged was actually aimed at destroying Islam.

So, it is not important whether peace is maintained; what is important is whether peace is justified. Breaking peace to end colonial exploitation is justified. Maintaining peace by creating Jaliwanwallah Bag is not justified. If a locality is terrorised by goondas and police avoids any action so that peace is not broken, it is not justified.

So, the question that is important is not whether it will be 'all quiet on the western front' of Bengal; the question is whether junglemahal will be living in signs of prosperity and dignity. Prosperity is important, but more important is dignity. When, after a failed attack on a CM's convoy, the goons in uniform unleash brutality on the tribal population dignity of those people takes a serious beating. Those goons of the state cannot even imagine doing the same with the people of New Alipore. This very attitude of the police can bring in the nemesis of a democratic state. And so far none of those policemen have been punished even after the regime change.

So, the question of dignity will surely hang fire for a long time. Jalianwallah Bag massacre happened nearly a century ago, but it is still alive in the collective psyche of the country. Peace will bear no meaning in junglemahal till the hurt is assuaged. And what great magnanimity these people showed to the cohorts of the ruling elite. They only demanded apology from the perpetrators of the crime. In any civilised society those criminals in uniform should have been brought to book. But here the ruling elite never do anything like that, because they need those goons. The arrogance of the elite manifested itself in turning down the proposal of tendering 'apology'. This arrogance that essentially betrays anti-democratic mind of the political class is not only enemy to peace, but has generated strong reaction against the present elitocracy.

It seems that the new government of Bengal is quite oblivious about the social aspect behind disturbance in the heartland of India, the extension of which is junglemahal. Though such

ignorance is potentially dangerous in the long-term, for a short period Bengal government's initiative for development may turn out to be good, only if it is implemented properly. Otherwise, people may be back to square one after a few years. The problem is, development does not depend upon the CM's honest intention: it depends on the lower-level bureaucracy and other related sections. In fact it is intertwined with the concept of dignity mentioned earlier.

For ages, the rulers, their lower-level representatives and the traders have treated tribals and dalits and the OBC population as groups of gullible people who could be deceived, tortured, raped and need be killed. Rulers changed, but the rotten attitude has not changed for hundreds of years. Every development efforts will be usurped by those classes even now. There will be lower-level government staffs, ration-dealers, police, forest guards, school-teachers, and grassroots level political workers who will intimidate them and rob them of most of their benefits.

Against this oppressive system the mainland tribal population has rebelled for hundreds of times in India's known history. They retreated to the jungles and from there they have fought for ages to regain their lost glory. Almost all the tribal groups have their own mythologies that talk of arrival of a great leader who will lead them to re-establish their kingdoms. The myth has inspired them to wage wars against the 'outsiders'.

Now, the latest form of this rebellion has assumed a Maoist cover. The leaders of the movement may be concerned with Maoism or Maoists thoughts, but the cadre are not. Neither the supporters. The leaders abide by a dogmatic and dangerous ideology the followers of which have killed innumerable human beings all over the world and had invariably taken a U-turn to come back to the path of capitalism. Their ideology is dangerous, but the lower level comrades have nothing to do with it. They fight for their own rights.

This assertion was inevitable in independent India where the dream of a just society had receded farther and farther in six decades. A corrupt, headstrong and ignorant (about the reality of this country) political class and its cohorts like educated middle and upper middle classes have succeeded to make some two three percent of population obscenely rich while providing scope to another fifteen to twenty percent to come up the ladder. All this at the cost of seventy percent of population whom the intellectual class, wished away during the last quarter of the last century. A black lie about Manmohonomics blinded all intellectual capacity, and a selfish middle class decided to forget the vast majority.

Maoists have come up as an answer to that attitude. But it is not only the Maoists who have come up. A section of intellectuals and dedicated social workers have also emerged and have taken up cudgels against insensitiveness of the ruling elite and their cohorts. Probably a young middle class is also emerging who are prepared to fright this insensitiveness. The Maoists, because of their dogmatic faith in guns and obsolete books, have failed to realise how a protest is growing all over this country.

Unfortunately, in Bengal the intellectual fight against the rotten part of the system and the civil society is still to mature. Maybe a totalitarian Left regime that pledged to serve the deprived by changing the system and ended up, like all brands of communists, in total surrender before the system have created confusion in the minds of the people. Hopefully present government would understand that civil society's assertion for a just system is supplementary to good governance, not detrimental for it. And the middle and upper middle class intellectuals must respect the assertion of the bottom seventy percent for a socially and economically dignified life.

If the civil society and the government of Bengal understand these points then peace will return to junglemahal, and this time peace will be stable. It does not matter how many Maoists have surrendered, because the fight against injustice is eternal and omnipresent. What matters is bold step towards a just system. □□□