

Kalinganagar Calling

To speak bluntly the so-called forward areas are really backward when it is the question of resisting the unprecedented onslaught of corporate power and police. Radical ferment is totally absent in politically and culturally 'advanced' regions. It's stagnating—the 'advanced' society. The poor communities otherwise eternally condemned as backward, literally form the weakest link in the ruling chain while making the debate for radical change a living issue. Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chattis-garh—all backward states as per official development index. But these are the regions where the mighty administration looks weak. The poor people of these areas are up in arms challenging the authority of ruling elites, mocking at democracy and exposing the fascistic face of the parties in power more realistically than anybody else. They are crying out for fundamental change but the civic society in forward areas is not responding. It's an uphill task for the dispossessed and impoverished to counter disinformation and create broad public opinion against police brutalities without which they are going to lose in the unequal battle for rights. Soil is their soul and they are going to lose it for ever. The phenomenon of indigo cultivation imposed by the East India Company was temporary but modern Indian Companies owned by Tatas, Jindals, Mittals, Ambanis and their like are permanent settlers. Unlike the indigo planters they are not going to vacate lands which they have acquired forcefully and illegally by creating thousands of internal refugees—displaced persons.

Right now Tatas are making news for their brutalities in Kalinganagar in Orissa. The Orissa government till date has signed about 40 MoUs with various corporate houses in the state, out of which 13 are planned in Kalinganagar of Jaipur district. For more than 3 months now the resistance villages of Kalinganagar have been beset by state police and paramilitary forces. Tribal agitators were brutally attacked on March 31 because they were protesting against the construction of a 7.5 km road, otherwise euphemistically called Common Corridor Road, aimed at expediting a Tata Project. The adivasi villagers were terrorised by police and goons and their houses demolished. As police fired on peaceful demonstrators in Balligotha village at least 15 persons were injured, the condition of one being critical. The proposed Tata Steel Plant needs this road—Common Corridor Road—and the Navin Patnaik government is hell bent on teaching the 'audacious' tribals a lesson or two for refusing to kowtow. The people of this locality irrespective of their ethnic identity have been agitating for long under the banner of Bisthapan Birodhi Jan Manch (BBJM) against forcible acquisition of fertile land.

This is not the first time in Kalinganagar that the Orissa government proved to be so vindictive and ruthless. Human Rights Groups are scared because they think this time there will be bloodshed at a larger scale than January 2, 2006 when 14 tribal men, women and children were brutally killed in a police shootout. The government can go to any length to woo corporate tycoons as they did in the recent past when police killed 3 tribal people who alongwith their fellow villagers

gathered at Maikanch and Kashipur to voice their anger against the notorious Utkal Alumina Project.

Kalinganagar and other flash points in Orissa are producing martyrs who remain largely unsung even in radical discourse, not to speak of mainstream media. They are actually resisting globalisation, rather giving a tough time to the advocates of globalisation in the fields. A citizens' committee recently visited the affected areas of Kalinganagar and they were simply shocked to file their bone-chilling report detailing the atmosphere of perpetual police terror.

For the security establishment the pet theme is the movement is maoist inspired, albeit the movement leaders of BBJM, have clarified several times that they are in no way swayed by the maoists. Neither ideologically nor materially.

It is in this backward region of India that revolution is fighting counter-revolution, real democrats are fighting pseudo-democrats who are in all mainstream parties, ruling or opposition.

The surge of violence in India's heartland illustrates among other things that a civil war is raging. Those who are not yet affected cannot remain unaffected for long. After all a flash at any point may detonate a chain reaction. □□□