

Chief Minister of Tamilnadu Dr. J. Jayalalitha formally presented in September 2011 to the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, the concerns of the people agitating peacefully against Koodankulam nuclear power plant on the east coast. Jayalalitha proved she was different from the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Prithviraj Chavan who had unleashed harsh measures on people agitating peacefully against Jaitapur nuclear power plant on the west coast.

Jayalalitha at that time, quite rightly made it clear that it is for the Prime Minister who holds direct charge of the Department of Atomic Energy to allay people's fear for nuclear safety. She was not prepared to accept that the nuclear safety could be concluded from official assurances. The tone and tenor of her letter to the Prime Minister implied that there is a need for comprehensive examination of the dangers at all stages of nuclear route to produce electricity. A further implication in a Chief Minister writing to the Prime Minister on a burning nuclear issue is the desirability of transparency to make public the nuclear radiation pollution in and around all the existing nuclear installations in India.

Having been the first Chief Minister to raise seriously the nuclear issue with the Prime Minister, why has Jayalalitha fallen in line to embrace the Koodankulam nuclear power plant in her State?

Who are the experts on whom she relied upon, to deviate from her stand that people's fear for nuclear safety should be allayed not by mere assurances but by concrete technical facts and analysis?

Is Jayalalitha aware that there is no scientist or engineer in the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), who is familiar and experienced in Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) technology which is used in the two Russian VVER type nuclear reactors of 1000MWe each at Koodankulam? All the existing nuclear power plants in India use Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR) technology of the Canadians which is different from PWR technology.

Jayalalitha chose Dr. M. R. Srinivasan to head the expert committee to advise her. It was a blunder because Dr. Srinivasan has all along been an ardent supporter of Koodankulam nuclear plant. His recommendation is a foregone conclusion. Dr. Srinivasan never

worked on a PWR reactor. He has no knowledge on the design and development of nuclear reactors of any type – PWR or PHWR. Moreover, at the relevant point of time, the Standing Committee on Energy, Lok Sabha observed that it was during the tenure of Dr.Srinivasan in DAE; equipment was ordered from foreign companies nearly ten years in advance for the proposed nuclear power projects. By the time of its actual use, much of the equipment became of scrap value as reported by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India. Enormous loss was caused to the nation. The matter was not fully investigated.

It is not known whether Jayalalitha is aware as to how Koodankulam nuclear power plant came to be sought from the Russians.

Two successive Prime Ministers, Smt.Indira Gandhi and Shri.Rajiv Gandhi, upon seeking professional opinion from a knowledgeable source (it is a quite involved long story) became convinced that the scientists of BARC and DAE have not been able to make any progress on the PWR design for nuclear submarine propulsion plant, even with over ten years of sustained design effort and after spending considerable money. It was the conscious decision of the two Prime Ministers one after the other to seek Russian help for the nuclear submarine project. Russians were ready to help. But they demanded their pound of flesh from India.

Russians proposed, India should not only pay for the help in the nuclear submarine project with PWR technology but also be willing to purchase civilian nuclear power reactors of PWR design. Because of the incompetency in BARC and DAE, Indian leaders agreed to pay for the nuclear submarine project and also for the nuclear power reactors. Consequently, the nuclear submarine project commenced at Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and the nuclear reactors of VVER type fell in the lap of Koodankulam in Tamilnadu.

The fact is some of those incompetent scientists of BARC and DAE who became responsible to dot Koodankulam with nuclear reactors are now advising the present Prime Minister Dr.Manmohan Singh and also the Chief Minister Dr. Jayalalitha on Koodankulam nuclear power plant with PWR design. By being misguided by all such people with proven incompetency in PWR technology, Chief Minister Jayalalitha embraced the Koodankulam nuclear power plant. In the process, Jayalalitha lost a historic opportunity to save the country

from the grip of intellectually dishonest scientists, serving and retired, from DAE. She lost the unique distinction of causing the reorientation of DAE in the national interest.

Jayalalitha also lost a historic opportunity to reset the nuclear priorities of India and to set the country to invest in alternate and renewable energy sources. Generations to come would have remembered Jayalalitha for having put the energy security of India on firm foundations instead of the present make-believe foundations.

Jayalalitha's compulsion to seek waters for Tamilnadu from the rivers of neighbouring states including water from Krishna River, should have reminded her that water is a priority for people of India including the people of Tamilnadu.

The writing on the wall is clear. India is heading for internal and external wars for water. Nuclear power plants are water guzzlers. Investing heavily on nuclear electricity will deprive resources to invest in hydro power which offers not only electricity, but also irrigation, drinking water, navigation, fisheries and several other benefits. India has not exploited even thirty per cent of her huge hydro potential.

Commissioning Koodankulam nuclear power plant for fear of losing Rs.14,000 crores will pave the way for investing Rs.5,00,000 crores for other nuclear power parks in the country including at Jaitapur in Maharashtra and Kovvada in Andhra Pradesh.

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The earlier articles in [countercurrents.org](http://www.countercurrents.org) by the same author on Koodankulam Nuclear Plant and the nuclear issues are:

(i) "Should The Koodankulam Power Nuclear Plant Be Commissioned Or Abandoned?"

<http://www.countercurrents.org/subbarao080312.htm>

(ii) "Need To Revisit The Role Of Nuclear Power For India 's Energy Security"

<http://www.countercurrents.org/subbarao151211.htm>

(iii) “ Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant Is Destined To Reset The Nuclear Priorities In India”

<http://www.countercurrents.org/subbarao161011.htm>

(iv) “ Indo-US Nuclear Deal- Some Unexplored Angles”

<http://www.countercurrents.org/ind-subbarao090306.htm>