

## **1. Koodankulam: Manmohan Singh's grand and faulty obsession**

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Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has invited foreign money and entities, including the Koodankulam plant, into India like no other PM and most of it is hurting the interests of local communities, says Sandeep Pandey

India has done a commendable job by voting in favour of a United Nations Human Rights Council resolution censuring Sri Lanka for human rights violations of its Tamilian population. The Tamil Nadu government played an important role in convincing the reluctant Indian government to take a position on this issue. Although it opens the possibility of Sri Lanka raising the issue of human rights violations in Kashmir, etc, India should have and has taken an ethically correct position.

However, the state and the central governments do not seem to share the same concern for their own Tamil population protesting against a nuclear power plant being thrust upon them at Koodankulam, not far from Kanyakumari. People genuinely feel unsafe after the Fukushima accident about a year back and are concerned about their lives and livelihoods.

While the first phase of this plant with a capacity of 2000 MW, till date the largest nuclear power plant in India, was being set up locals were enthusiastic about it. They foresaw the possibility of employment generation and attendant benefits of industrial development. They never took Nagercoil based SP Udayakumar or any of the anti-nuclear activists coming from outside, who told them about the hazards of radioactivity, seriously.

In June 2011 the government decided to conduct a mock safety drill in the event of a possible accident. This drill rang the alarm bells. People saw the real possibility of an accident and overnight the public opinion turned against the nuclear power plant. Whereas in the earlier protests the activists could muster

only hundreds of people, the first protest after the mock drill attracted close to 20,000 villagers. Udayakumar became a saviour for them.

Since then people have been waging a valiant battle against the State. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh seems to have put his prestige once again at stake like he did for the Indo-US nuclear deal. He has gone all out in indulging in character assassination of the activists. One would have hoped that the governments would have learnt lessons from Singur and Nandigram incidents. But clearly, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa and Manmohan Singh are getting desperate. One of them is accusing Udayakumar of working with American money and the other is accusing him of being a Naxal. These are now outdated tactics of suppressing the people's voice.

A heavy contingent of police has been posted in the area to cordon off the protesting villagers from the outside world. The movement has so far remained totally peaceful even though a large numbers of people have been involved. In fact, the people deserve to be commended for this. Instead, the State is trying to provoke them. Once again this proves that people never indulge in violence. It is always the State which creates situation where violence erupts.

Manmohan Singh has invited foreign money and entities, including the Koodankulam plant, into this country like no other PM and most of it is hurting the interests of local communities. Hence, whether it is a question of inviting foreign money or using violence, it is quite clear that the government is the real culprit and it is also working against the interest of people of this country.

Thus, the government seems to be engaged in anti-national activities rather than the activists. The activists are protecting the people and empowering them to exercise their democratic rights. They are encouraging people to ask questions, a must for any functioning democracy. They should be credited for the deepening of democracy in this country.

In the West, people have often come out in large numbers on the streets to protest against nuclear activities. It is one of the important reasons why most developed countries are shedding their nuclear status. The disposal of radioactive waste is a serious problem to which the scientists haven't found a safe solution. Japan and European Union are committed to developing a no nuclear and low carbon energy solution. The countries are evolving their positions from past learning.

However, the largest democracy in the world seems to have adopted high-handed ways of dealing with this question. The unelected PM of over 120 crore people takes a unilateral decision in this matter and uses subterfuge to thrust his decision upon the people. What he is doing is neither development nor a scientific-democratic way of doing things.

If fulfilling the energy needs is a priority then one doesn't have to go anywhere else to look for alternative. The Koodankulam coastline is dotted with numerous windmills, including several of them inside the nuclear power plant. Incidentally, the new safety plans at Koodankulam intend to use backup power from wind energy in case of a Fukushima type accident. The electricity produced from wind energy in Tamil Nadu exceeds what the Koodankulam nuclear plant is likely to produce. Instead of pushing a controversial project, the decision-makers would do well to think of expanding the wind power base in this area.

However, if the Koodankulam nuclear power plant is part of the grand design of military-industrial complex, slated to enhance India's status as a powerful nation, then we're on a self-defeating path. No country which has focussed on enhancing its military power has remained peaceful and neither has it allowed others to live in peace. Manmohan Singh is seriously changing the role of the Indian nation from that of a harbinger of peace to that of an aggressive ally of the most notorious military power in the world.

India having become the largest importer of arms in the world and American and Israeli soldiers training Indian soldiers doesn't bode well for us.

**Cited Source:**

[http://www.rediff.com/news/column/koodankulam-manmohan-singhs--grand-and-faulty-obsession column/20120326.htm](http://www.rediff.com/news/column/koodankulam-manmohan-singhs--grand-and-faulty-obsession-column/20120326.htm)

## 2. Indian Left and the Nuclear Googly

The CPIM and CPI are a part of the Konkan Bachao Samiti in Jaitapur which has a resolve of protesting against the world's biggest nuclear complex which is coming up at Jaitapur. This Jaitapur nuclear plant will not only have safety issue's but it's going to make extinct the Alphonso mangoes which this konkan region gifts to the whole world in every season. A committee has been formed which has Prakash Karat and Baradhan as its key leaders. The left parties are also part of the protest committee against the Kovvada plant in Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh. But the same parties in Tamilnadu have been welcoming the Nuclear Plant in Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. This dual approach is snowballing into a big debate among Anti Nuke protestors across India. It's as if the Russian reactors are Communist in nature and the French are Capitalist reactors.

The CPIM and CPI have on the record been pro Kudankulam since the protest began 210 days ago in Kudankulam. They have been ridiculing the protest and have been demanding commissioning of the Nuclear Plant at the earliest as they very strongly think that this is the only way out to overcome the power crisis in Tamilnadu.

Both the parties have been writing editorials and continuous columns in their respective party organs Theekathir and Jana Sakthi advocating nuclear power as the only viable option and that Russian reactors were the safest. They also were frequently quoting Abdul Kalam and M.R. Srinivasan to defend their stands. When this issue was raised with comrades of both the left parties, answer was naïve. Our comrades had an intimate bondage with the Kudankulam Reactors as they originated from Russia our Comrades share a great nostalgia with the word "Russia" and this was the profound reason. They further went on

to say that Russian reactors were tested ones and Areva was going to install an untested reactor in Jaitapur. Both the parties had spoon fed their cadres that this protest was just orchestrated by the American money against a Russian Reactor.

On March 1, 2012 CPI (M) general secretary G. Ramakrishnan stated that based on former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's recommendations, the Centre should ensure the safety of those in and around Kudankulam and allocate Rs.200 crore for development activities.

Similar to this view CPI TN Secretary D. Pandian also said that power cuts were increasing, affecting all sections of society. The government should initiate all necessary steps to find a solution quickly and overcome the shortage. The CPI supported the commissioning of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project. The just demands of the local people, such as providing employment opportunities, should be addressed.

On March 24<sup>th</sup> the State unit of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Friday called upon anti-Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) protestors to give up their agitation, as panels of experts appointed by the Centre and the State governments had vouched for the safety of the plants.

In a statement State secretary of the party G. Ramakrishnan welcomed the State government decision to go ahead with the commissioning of the plants. He requested the local people to extend their support for the functioning of the plants. Mr. Ramakrishnan said that instead of resorting to repressive measures such as filing criminal cases against the protestors, the State government should take steps to allay the fears of people about the technology and safety aspects of the Kudankulam project.

On March 25<sup>th</sup> CPI secretary D. Pandian also backed the CM's decision to support commissioning of the Koodankulam plant and demanded that the entire

power generated from it be given to TN. The State should initiate dialogue with protesters and demand that the entire 1,000 MW generated in the first reactor should be given to TN till the power crisis in the State was solved, and he also went further to state that "Their apprehensions are borne out of ignorance. It cannot be cleared," CPI state secretary D. Pandian said, demanding immediate commissioning of the nuclear plant. Accusing anti-nuke protesters of "holding the country for ransom" the CPI leader said, "It is a national asset and it must be utilised"

Earlier D. Raja, CPI leader, too, reacted on similar lines saying, if America-based NGOs are playing a role in Kudankulam, then they should be isolated and action should be taken against them.

Just a few days ago when ten thousands of police forces were mobilised by the state against the protestors at the same time CPI state secretary D. Pandian went on the media and said, if u don't want the Nuclear plant to operate please come take your compensation and vacate this place.

Even at the recent Tamilnadu state conference of the CPIM Prakash Karat went on in full length to say that this issue was a bit complicated to explain. "The CPIM stand was that they were pro nukevis-à-vis the first reactor in Kudankulam" as that was a contract between India and the erstwhile Soviet Union, and then went on to say that, "We would oppose the other 3 phases which are about to come up in Kudankulam as they were signed by agreements with the new government in Russia which has a Capitalist character and these were pure business deals. CPIM also is against all the reactors which are mushrooming in India as a result of the 123 pact which transformed India as a military partner with US, UK and France". This dosage has added to the already confused understanding of the party comrades.

Both the state and central Governments are not ready to address the simple question raised by the anti-nuke protestors but are keen in tainting and

intimidating the fisher folk with cases and crackdowns in various shades. First they tried to paint a communal portrait, then the Congress brought in the hand of Jesus and now it has replaced the hand with a gun, the Naxal angle. The Government and the Nucleuocracy knows well the answers to the questions But the huge billion dollar contracts and the spill offs are more nearer to them.

VVER-1000 reactors pose many safety concerns. Their operating experience raises questions about the reliability of their control-rod mechanism, which is crucial to preventing a runaway fission chain reaction. In the last couple of years, at Temelin in the Czech Republic and at Kozloduy in Bulgaria, numerous control rods, which are supposed to arrest power excursion or reactor misbehaviour, did not move as designed.

On March 1, 2006, when Kozloduy's Unit FIVE was operating at full capacity, one of the four main circulation pumps tripped due to electrical failure. As reactor power was reduced to 67 percent of nominal capacity, three control-rod assemblies remained in the wrong position. Of the remaining 61 assemblies, 22 did not move with driving mechanisms. The number of control-rod assemblies unable to scram remains unknown. Control-rod insertion failures are considered serious and lead to a severely degraded state of safety if an accident-initiating event occurs. Kozloduy, Temeling to the almost 10 lakh lives lost in the last 25 years in Chernobyl the whole power guzzling world needs to learn lessons about risking lives. But even with so much tragedy lying around the VVER the leftists still tilt to the rhythm of nostalgia.

Adding to the VVER and Russian debate Nuclear Cheer leader Abdul Kalam had stated in this article that only 57 persons died in Chernobyl accident. But on the contrary John Vidal says "Five years ago, I visited the still highly contaminated areas of Ukraine and the Belarus border where much of the radioactive plume from Chernobyl descended on 26 April 1986. I challenge chief scientist John Beddington and environmentalists like George Monbiot or any of

the pundits now downplaying the risks of radiation to talk to the doctors, the scientists, the mothers, children and villagers who have been left with the consequences of a major nuclear accident. It was grim. We went from hospital to hospital and from one contaminated village to another. We found deformed and genetically mutated babies in the wards; pitifully sick children in the homes; adolescents with stunted growth and dwarf torsos; fetuses without thighs or fingers and villagers who told us every member of their family was sick. This was 20 years after the accident, but we heard of many unusual clusters of people with rare bone cancers.... Villages testified that 'the Chernobyl necklace' - thyroid cancer -was so common as to be unremarkable", in "Nuclear's Green Cheerleaders Forget Chernobyl at Our Peril," The Guardian, April 1, 2011.

S.P.Udayakumar who leads the people's non violent struggle at Kudankulam said in an interview that "Both the CPI and CPM are confused. CPM is anti-nuclear in Jaitapur, but pro-nuclear in Kudankulam; they are against nuclear weapons, but are pro-nuclear for energy". The Leftists still think that electricity is directly proportional to the development of this country.

It's high time that the Left understand the Jaitapur and Kudankulam are twin sisters of the Nuclear Tragedy.

**Cited Source:**

<http://kractivist.wordpress.com/2012/03/26/indian-left-and-the-nuclear-googly/>

### **3. Urgent Appeal from Koodankulam- Take action- Anti Nuke activists will be arrested soon**

The hunger-strike in Idinthakarai, Koodankulam today has entered its 9th day. There have been no attempts on the part of the government to end the stalemate and start a process of dialogue with the people on hunger-strike. Even the routine medical check-ups and services extended by the govt in such cases are absent here. Yesterday, one of the 7 women on hunger strike in Idinthakarai, Melret (aged 48) had to be taken to hospital as her blood pressure became too low.



S P Udayakumar has expressed his apprehension that once he and other main activists are taken to hospital, they might be arrested and isolated from the local people. The govt then would use this opportunity to force people into compliance. The local administration has already started meetings with local panchayat (elected village bodies) leaders to distribute the 500-crore package which the PMANE has termed as 'bribe' to silence and divide people's opposition.

The immediate demands of the protesters are simple and the government must be forced to listen to them at the earliest. They are demanding removal of prohibitory orders, adherence to AERB norms which stipulates safety drill before commissioning of reactors and revocation of criminal charges piled up against the activists supporting the Koodankulam movement.

The larger civil society and citizens of India must step in to stop this callousness and contempt of democratic dissent.

4 persons from Idinthakarai village are meeting the District Collector of Tirunelveli today to demand earliest intervention to end the hunger strike.

**Cited Source:** <http://kractivist.wordpress.com/2012/03/27/urgent-appeal-from-koondankulam-take-action-anti-nuke-activists-will-be-arrested-soon/>