

Conflict, Tension and Violation of Human Rights in West Bengal, India with Special Reference to Lalgarh, West Medinipur

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Abstract: The Marxist-based social theory argues that individuals and groups (social classes) within society have differing amounts of material and non-material resources (the wealthy vs. the poor) and that the more powerful groups use their power in order to exploit the groups with less powerful groups. In this regard, extreme level of inequality in all forms and in all fields such as economy, politics, religion, education, social etc. exist in the traditional Indian society since long and because of these, continuous conflicts, unhappiness between powerless poor/down-trodden people and powerful elites are reported. The prime aim of this article is to know the recent-past conflicts, abductions, killings, torturing, violation of basic human rights etc. that took place in West Bengal; and its effects on the development of local the people; and the reasons and interest behind those conflicts.

Keywords: Conflict, abduction, killing, torture, violence, Singur, Netai, Lalgarh, skeleton.

(I)

Introduction

Conflict is a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns (<http://www.ojrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/aboutwhatisit.htm>). The Social Conflict Theory is a Marxist-based social theory which argues that individuals and groups (social classes) within society have differing amounts of material and non-material resources (the wealthy vs. the poor) and that the more powerful groups use their power in order to exploit less powerful groups. According to Karl Marx, in all stratified societies there are two major social groups: a ruling class and a subject class. The ruling class derives its power from its ownership and control of the forces of production. The ruling class exploits and oppresses the subject class. As a result, there is a basic conflict of interest between the two classes (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_conflict_theory). In this regard, a conflicting situation reached at highest level during 1998 to 2010 in West Bengal which might have a serious effect on human life including life securities and basic human rights. The nature of conflicts etc. and their impact on human life are discussed below:

Conflicting Situation in West Bengal, India: India is in a state of turmoil as far as its huge forest resources are concerned. Though not officially acknowledged, many of such forest areas covering more than seven States of India including West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have become hot-beds of armed conflicts of Maoists (an extremist organization). The Maoists are now operating in more than 223 districts of India with large tribal concentration through guerilla warfare tactics. The armed conflicts that cover 223 districts

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and the states though rich in natural resources are relatively poor in terms of human development indicators (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010b, 2).

Mass violent conflict in several districts of India has severe impact upon the local level and the lives of poor people who are likely to be adversely affected in the process and are likely to become impoverished and vulnerable due to such conflict and are likely to feel traumatized. Armed conflict and civil war, which started since 2009 in the forest areas of West Bengal particularly in Lalgarh in the Jhargram sub-division of West Medinipur district is a part of the much larger conflict in India (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010b, 3). Even it was also spread to Purulia, Bankura and some other districts of the state. It was known that more than 6,000 people have been killed during their 20-year fight of Maoists in a communist state, West Bengal (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010a, 2).

Apart from this, there are so many conflicts, violence; killings also have been reported from many other areas of West Bengal. According to calculations made by D. Bandyopadhyay (retired IAS officer), former West Bengal Land Reforms Commissioner and former Secretary to the GOI, there have been 55,408 political killings in West Bengal between 1977 and 2010. In addition, according to Sujato Bhadro of the Association for the Protection of Civil Rights, at least 10,000 opposition members have been killed by the CPI-M while it has lost about 2,500 of its own cadres. Civil rights group Bandhi Mukti Morcha (Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners) says there are at least 2,500 political prisoners in West Bengal at present.

Abraham Lincoln described the American Civil War as a situation in which “murders for old grudges and murders for pelf proceed under any cloak that will best cover for the occasion.” Anthropologist Stanley Aschenbrenner describes the Greek Civil War, in a Greek village, as “a sequence of action and reaction that politicisation of private life ultimately leads to the privatisation of politics.” Both could be describing the reality of West Bengal (TEHELKA 22 January 2011, 5). In addition to that, mainly after 1998, many of the people, supporters of the Trinamul Congress (TMC) or opponents of the CPI-M were kidnapped and killed. Even in many cases the case diaries related to missing or killing persons could not be filed by the concerned family members in Police Stations rather the cases were filed against the victims’ family members. The family members, relatives, supporters and witnesses could not say the truth or anything against the accused persons in Police stations or in Court. Moreover, an unbearable and monarchial situation had developed.

(II)

Conflicts, Violence and Killings in West Bengal

West Bengal continued to witness serious human rights violations especially by the State agencies. Some of those are mentioned below-

1. According to the estimate of Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), 22 persons were killed in the Naxalite conflict in the State during 2006 which included eight civilians, 10 security personnel and four alleged Naxalites (ACHR 10 January 2007 cited in ACHR 2007, 1).
2. The BSF personnel allegedly killed Musaruddin Molla (17), son of Enamul Molla, near Taltala outpost-1 under Jalangi police station in Murshidabad district on 22 May 2006 (AHRC 8 June 2006, UA-184-2006).
3. Jabir Hossain at Muslimpur village under Englishbazar police station in Malda district was also killed by BSF on 20 July 2006 (The Telegraph 21 July 2006).

4. On 28 June 2006, a 14 year old boy identified as Mithun Sarkar, son of Nripendra Nath Sarkar, was allegedly killed by the BSF personnel of Outpost No. 2 of 136 Battalion under Kuthibari Camp at Harudanga village under Raninagar police station in Murshidabad district. The victim was held by the BSF personnel during an anti-cattle smuggling operation in the village. During interrogation, the victim was allegedly tortured and later shot dead on the charges that he was part of the cattle smugglers. On the other hand, the Officer-in-Charge of Raninagar police station, S. Bhattacharjee allegedly refused to provide the First Investigation Report when approached by the victim's father, Nripendra Nath Sarkar (AHRC 10 July 2006, UA-225-2006).
5. Violence against women: The National Crime Records Bureau (2014) recorded a total 38,299 incidences of violence against women in West Bengal which represent 11.33 per cent of the total incidences of violence against women in India during 2014. These included 1466 rape (19 incest and other 1447), 4976 kidnapping/abduction, 5670 assaults, 1045 sexual harassment, 501 dowry death etc.
6. Violations of the rights of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes: (i) The National Crime Records Bureau (2014) recorded, various types of crimes committed against scheduled tribes 141 and Scheduled castes 159 in the State during 2014. During this period 14 tribal women were assaulted, eleven tribal women were raped etc. (ii) On 7th June 2006, a 18-year-old tribal girl, a resident of the Kamlapur tea estate under Phansidewa police station in Darjeeling district, was allegedly gang raped by four unidentified boys at Gulma. Medical tests reportedly confirmed rape. On 9th June 2006, the victim recorded her statement before the magistrate court in Siliguri (The Telegraph 10 June 2006). (iii) On 20 August 2006, a tribal woman identified as Anchala Pramanick died at Namopara village under Belpahari police station in West Midnapore district after going without any food for almost a week. According to the family members of the deceased, there was nothing to eat in the house and even other members of the family were surviving on water (The Telegraph 23 August 2006).
7. The first signs of this near civil war came in East Midnapore, when 14 villagers died in police firing in 2007. What began as a conflict over land spiraled into an ugly political war. Men on motorcades trooped in waving flags, brandishing arms, pitting neighbouring villages against each other. While the TMC shoved the CPI-M out of Nandigram, the red brigade swarmed into nearby Khejuri. Three years later, the war in Khejuri continued (TEHELKA 22 January 2011, 2).
8. At night on 15th February 2010 (Monday), the Maoists guerrillas' Silda camp attack killed 24 paramilitary personnel of the Eastern Frontier Rifles (ERF) in an operation. The Chief of the rebels' military wing, Maoists leader, Koteswara Rao – alias Kishenji, stated that the attack was the beginning of "Operation Peace Hunt", the Maoist answer to the government "Operation Green Hunt" recently launched against them (Bhaumik 2010).

Conflict at Singur, West Bengal: The conflict in Singur under Hoogly district began over land acquisition for proposed Tata Motors' small car manufacturing project (Rediff news 25 December 2006). The State Government acquired 997 acres of farmland in five villages of Gopalnagar, Beraberi, Bajemelia, Khaser Bheri and Singher Bheri in Singur under Hoogly district under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 without consulting the local bodies. Fearing loss of their fertile farm land, the only source of their livelihood, the farmers who have been permanently residing in these villages spontaneously got together to launch a resistance movement under the banner of 'Krishija-

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mi Raksha Samiti', an Association for the Protection of Agricultural Land (ACHR 6 December 2006 cited in ACHR 2007, 5).

9. The Singur area turned into a battlefield. On 2nd December 2006, as many as 60 villagers, including women and minor girls, were arrested by the police when they tried to resist the barbed wire fencing of the project site. The police resorted to indiscriminate lathi-charge, used rubber bullets and shelled tear gas on the villagers, majority of whom comprised of women and children. A large number of villagers were injured, some of them critically and were undergoing treatment.
10. The conflict gained momentum following the recovery of the burnt body of an 18 year old girl identified as Tapasi Malik at the site of the proposed Tata car plant on 18th December 2006. The victim was reportedly a member of the Krishi Jamin Bachao Committee which was spearheading a movement against the land acquisition in Singur. Trinamool Congress alleged that the victim was raped and burnt by men guarding the controversial land (The Central Chronicle 19 December 2006).

Following strong protests, Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee ordered a CBI inquiry into the alleged rape and murder of Tapasi Malik on 19th December 2006 (The Asian Age 20 December 2006).

11. The situation worsened following alleged murder of two other persons identified as Tinkari Dey and his wife Maya whose bodies were recovered from the site of the Tata project on 28th December 2006 (The Indian Express 29 December 2006).
12. At least three persons were killed in the conflict over the acquisition of 997 acres of land for a proposed Tata Motors small car plant at Singur in Hoogly district to bring "industrial development of the State" (The Hindu Business Line 1 November 2006) without the consent of the affected persons.

Armed Conflict at Lalgarh, West Medinipur, West Bengal: West Medinipur district located in West Bengal (India) was under a severe conflicting situation, especially in the blocks situated in its Western part bordering two other districts – Purulia and Bankura and also two different states of India– Jharkhand and Orissa. West Medinipur is considered to be a backward district of West Bengal in terms of human and physical indicators and is mainly agro-forest-based. As per 'Below Poverty Line (BPL) Survey' of the Government of West Bengal, the district has one of the highest numbers of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe BPL families in the State of West Bengal. Most of the indigenous communities such as Santhals, Oraon, Bhumij, Mahali, Munda, Sabar/Lodha and other indigenous tribes of West Medinipur are ultra poor and have remained neglected over long years. In terms of social and physical infrastructure, the district is one of the most deprived districts of West Bengal..... The conflict and violence is mainly affecting the Jhargram subdivision of the West Medinipur district which consists of Jhargram municipality and eight community development blocks: Jhargram, Binpur–I, Binpur–II, Jamboni, Gopiballavpur–I, Gopiballavpur–II, Nayagram and Sankrail. The eight blocks contain 79 gram panchayats and the subdivision has its headquarters at Jhargram. As per 2001 Census, the Jhargram sub-division has a total population of 8930295 with 51.9 per cent male and 48.1 per cent female (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010b: 7-10). Some of the examples of conflicts, violence and killings are mentioned below:

13. The Naxalites targeted alleged police informers. After killing a CPI-M leader identified as Kartick Singh at Lalgarh in West Midnapore district on the night of 4th March 2006, the Naxalites reportedly tied Kartick Singh's dead body to a palm tree in the Jhitka forest and left behind a note at the spot which read as "death sentence was awarded to the police agent" (The Statesman 6 March 2006).
14. Similarly, alleged Naxalites killed two workers of the CPI-M identified as Gumai Tudu and Jaladhar Mahato on the charges of being police informers at Dangardihi area of West Midnapore district on the night of 8th March 2006 (The Telegraph 10 March 2006).
15. The activists of the ruling CPI-M were specifically targeted. The political party activists killed by the Naxalites included a CPI-M local committee member identified as Chhoti Mahato at Lalgarh in West Midnapore district on 2nd July 2006 (The Telegraph 3 July 2006).
16. CPI-M activist Anil Mahato and his bodyguard Dinesh Baskey who were dragged out of a bus and shot dead at Joypur in West Midnapore district (The Times of India 20 September 2006).
17. A CPI-M activist identified as Dipak Mahato, who was killed in Birghosa forest near Bhimpur under Salboni Police Station in West Midnapore on 26th December 2006 (The Kashmir Times 28 December 2006).

The entire chain of events started after the 2nd November 2008 land mine explosion targeting the convoy of West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and union steel and mines minister Ram Vilas Paswan as they were returning from the inauguration of the Jindal Steel Works special economic zone (SEZ) in Salboni in West Midnapore district. Around 5000 acres of land have been acquired for this project, of which 4500 acres have been handed over by the government and 500 acres have been purchased directly by Jindal from landowners. The government was, and is, not bothered about the setting up of an SEZ having a polluting steel plant in the middle of a forested area, dispossessing tribes from their land and endangering their means of survival. Understandably, there were major grievances amongst the tribes against this, although the mainstream media had constantly portrayed a very rosy picture of the entire project. The land mine explosion was blamed as usual on the Maoist insurgents allegedly active for a long time in Salboni and the adjacent Lalgarh area (Ray 2008, 3).

18. Usually, the police harass and arrest tribal villagers after every Maoist attack; this time in order to hide their own failure in providing security to its political masters, and to save their skin from the wrath of the government, the police went on a rampage in tribal villages. Having no clue about the real perpetrators of the land mine explosion, they started beating up and arresting people indiscriminately.
19. Among the first to be arrested were three teenage students, Aben Murmu, Gautam Patra and Buddhadeb Patra, who were returning from a village festival during the night. They were charged with sundry charges including waging war against the state, conspiracy, and attempt to murder, using dangerous weapons and obstructing justice.
20. Then during the day on 4th November, 2008 an armed police party arrested Dipak Pratihari of Kantapahari village while he was buying medicine from a chemist's shop in Lalgarh for his pregnant wife Lakshmi. In the process the police brutally beat up Lakshmi and threw her to the ground. She had to be subsequently hospitalized.

21. Ten people were arrested during the police raids and beaten up, including a retired teacher Khsamananda Mahato and a civil contractor Shamsher Alam from Chotope-liya village, who was visiting the area for a day for some construction work. Although these two people were subsequently released, as the police could not formulate any charges against them, the rest were kept in police custody.
22. The police and CRPF, led by the officer in charge of Lalgarh police station, Sandeep Sinha Roy and the superintendent of police of West Midnapore district, Rajesh Singh, unleashed a reign of terror in 35 villages encompassing the entire tribal belt of Lalgarh.
23. In raids throughout the night of 6th November 2008, women were brutally kicked and beaten up with lathis and butts of guns. Among the injured, Chitamani Murmu, one of whose eyes was hit by a gun butt. Chitamani's lost her eye because of the injury.
24. Panamani Hansda, who was kicked on her chest and suffered multiple fractures, had to be hospitalized.
25. Eight other women were badly wounded. These police brutalities soon reached a point where the adivasis had no other option but to rise up in revolt (Ray 2008, 3).

In November 2008, following reports of alleged police brutality, enraged tribal villagers apparently blockaded roads and protested against the police and paramilitary forces in the area of Lalgarh, which is the headquarter of Binpur-I block of Jhargram subdivision. Reportedly the Maoists were able to exercise control over the villages in that area and its surrounding areas for eight months until Operation-Lalgarh was launched on 18th June 2009 by India's para-military. Exchange of fire and the long gun battles between the security forces and the Maoist continue even today and conflict situation continues nearly unabated (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010a, 7).

Armed Conflict at Netai Village, Lalgarh: On the morning of 7th January, 2011 in Lalgarh's Netai village, eight unarmed villagers were shot dead by men firing from the rooftop of a two-storied building. The building is the home of CPI-M zonal leader, Ratin Dandapat who fled the village six months ago. Last month, locals say, it was turned into a CPI-M camp housing 30 armed cadres, known as the 'Harmad Vahini'.

For past few months, life has been changed in Netai village. "The *harmad* threatened us to attend CPI-M rallies at gunpoint, forced us to cook food, and made us do night patrols to guard the camp from the Maoists," say the locals. "A list with villagers' names and assigned duties is maintained." But a week ago, the cadres announced a new demand— every house must send its men for arms training. "We will not always be here to save you. You have to defend yourselves from the Maoists. We are preparing you to protect your village," the cadres declared. On 6th January, the villagers were told to gather at a football field at 3.00 pm. Of the 500 who assembled, 62 were picked based on their physical fitness. "They told us to sit down and hop on the ground with lathis in our hands," says Subroto Pal, one of the chosen men. "I had just eaten lunch and couldn't do it. Then they beat us with the lathis. 'If you don't do this, we'll shoot all of you and load you into a 10-wheel truck'," they told us.

On the morning of 7th January, two men with rifles arrived outside Ranjit Patro's hut. His son Aroop Patro had not attended the mandatory training session the previous day. "If you don't send your sons for arms training at 3 pm today, we will set all the houses on fire," they warned. That morning all the villagers decided to unite in protest. More than 1,000 gathered outside the CPI-M camp.

Local leader Abani Singh emerged and asked five people to come in for a dialogue. Village elder Krishnagopal Rai was one of them. "We said we are ordinary villagers who don't want to pick up

arms. We want to live in peace,” says Rai. Singh signalled to other cadres on the rooftop and told Rai he’d discussed the matter with his leaders.

Suddenly he saw another band of CPI-M men marching towards the village, firing in the air. “They were reinforcements from nearby *Harmad* camps,” he says. “The firing from rooftop began as soon as they arrived.” Rai’s testimony counters the police claim that it could have been retaliatory fire from the Maoists. It shows that firing from both directions came from the CPI-M.

“Suddenly the woman next to me died on the spot,” says Kolami Pal. “We all ran.” Phulkumari Maiti went to save her 12-year-old son Krishna. She was holding his hand when she caught two bullets and died. Dhiren Sen tried to flee as bullets rained down. His sister-in-law Latika Sen pushed him into the house. “He was dragged out of the house and shot,” she says (TEHELKA 22 January 2011, 2-3).

Moreover, huge number of political abductions and killings had taken place in West Bengal and those kidnapped persons still remained untraced. It was also telecast by a news channel, viz., ‘Mohua Khabar’ on 24th August, 2011 at 5.20 pm, that “52800 (fifty two thousand eight hundred) people were politically killed during the CPI-M period from 1977 to 11.5.2011”. However, after the new TMC Government came to power, many skeletons were discovered through excavation and also had identified those missing persons by their DNA test.

In this regard, The Statesman published on 10th August, 2011 wrote “ Mr. Shyamal Acharya claimed that he had recognised his father Ajay Acharya on the basis of the clothes found with the skeleton recovered from the graveyard. Seven skeletons were dug up near the former minister for paschimanchal development affairs, Mr. Susanta Ghosh’s ancestral home at Benachapra in Garbeta on 2nd June. CBI lawyers today submitted the forensic reports and DNA test result of the recovered skeletons.The reports have confirmed that two of the deceased were Ajay Acharya and Swapan Sigh, the sources said” (The Statesman 10 August 2011).

It was also published in a daily ‘Uttarbanga Sambad’ on 10th August 2011 that “it was complained against CPI-M that ten (10) TMC party workers were kidnapped in 2000 from Piashala village under the Keshpur Police Station areas and were killed. The complaint of TMC against CPI-M since one decade has finally become true and confirmed after DNA test result of the recovered skeletons. The scenario becomes very much clear that only for gaining and holding political power and position; many of the people were murdered or killed harshly by the CPI-M in Garbeta and Keshpur areas. In last 22nd September, 2002 at night, the seven people (TMC workers) who were pulled out (by CPI-M) from the house of Mr. Ajaya Acharya of Anadapur Police Station areas were killed nastily and buried those bodies. But many of the eyewitnesses are getting scared to give witness as well as say anything against the accused persons to the authorities as well as administrators about the fact (Uttar Banga Sambad 10 August 2011).

Again, the daily ‘Uttarbanga Sambad’ published on 26th August, 2011, that “..... some of the TMCP workers of Keshpur area were missing since 2001-2002. But the concerned family members were not getting any information about those missing persons. Total seven TMCP Workers of Benachapra village got disappeared on 22nd September, 2002. At that time this village was under the Chandrakona Police Phanri of Garbeta Police Station. Many of the TMCP workers of the Police Stations areas Keshpur, Garbeta, Bhupotinagar etc. of West Medinipur were missing. Subrata Das was one of the four disappeared TMCP workers of Bajkul areas of Bhupotinagar in 2001. Some of the body parts including femur bone and black pant have been discovered from the primary school of Bajkul. After detecting the black pant, the wife of Subrata Das primarily identified her husband’s skeleton. The CPI-M leader, Laxman Sheth was

blamed for the missing of the above four TMC workers.” (Uttarbanga Sambad 26 August 2011).

The Statesman published on 30th August.2016 ‘In a fresh discovery, bones and three human skeletons were dug up from an area in Goaltore, West Midnapore, a day after one was unearthed at Kundrisole forest in the same area. Local TMC workers claimed that the recovered skeletons could be those of their supporters who were abducted in March 2010 by armed CPI-M cadres. The CPI-M cadres had kidnapped many TMC workers when they had unleashed a reign of Terror at several nearby villages for putting up an “armed resistance” against Maoists, TMC workers said.

One Sufia Bibi of Lalitpur identified a skeleton as that of her husband Soukat Khan after recognizing the clothes unearthed along with the skeletons. “My husband was an active TMC worker. In March, 2010, some armed CPI-M cadres kidnapped him on the suspicion that he was a Maoist and since then, he had been missing,” said Sufia. Police have taken the skeletons and bones to Midnapore for forensic tests and a DNA test. Yesterday, local TMC supporters caught hold of three CPI-M activists who provided them clues to the body of a missing TMC worker. After digging a pit, a human skull, bones and torn shirt were found. Bapi Karak, a resident of nearby Sundargeria village, claimed that the skeleton is that of his father Sudarshan who was allegedly abducted by armed CPI-M men from his house on 4th June, 2010. “I have identified the shirt as my father’s and even police found that it was made by a local tailor of Sundargeria whose tag was on the collar,” Bapi told to the reporters.

Chandana, daughter of the deceased, alleged that last year police had refused to register any complaint when they went to the police station to lodge his father’s abduction case. Meanwhile, a murder case has been initiated against Mrs. Antara Bhattacharya, the CPI-M Zilla Parishad sabhadipati in West Midnapore, following the recovery of another human skeleton from a village at Narayangarh, the constituency of former CPI-M minister and leader of the opposition, Dr. Surya Kanta Mishra.

Ms. Arati Das, a resident of Pingla, had earlier claimed that the skeleton was that of her husband Prabodh. She had also lodged a murder complaint against many CPI-M workers. Mr. OP Mishra told that the “recent recovery of skeleton is another indication of political violence unleashed against Congress and TMC activists by the CPI-M cadres. These skeletons are a proof of the assault on democracy.....” (The Statesman 30 August 2011). Again, The Statesman published on 3rd September 2011- “Senior CID officers said Mr. Shankar Shaw, the CPI-M Bir-singpur local committee secretary, who was present at the spot when seven TMCP supporters were killed, is the main accused. The bodies were then buried near the Benachapra residence of former Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs Minister Mr. Susanta Ghosh. Mr. Shaw was missing since first week of June after Mr. Shyamal Acharya, whose father Ajay Acharya was killed and buried in 2002, had lodged a complaint at Anadapur Police station against 40 people, including Mr. Shaw and Mr. Ghosh (The Statesman 3 September 2011).

In this regard, the news, ‘Arms Recovered’ is very important for realizing the intensity of the conflicting situation. Over 140 people have been arrested in connection with the recovery of huge cache of arms and ammunition from West Bengal’s West Midnapore district since May 14, the police said on Monday. “Since May 14, police in West Medinipur have conducted about 100 raids and recovered 1109 fire-arms and 11,088 rounds of ammunition of different varieties from various Police Station areas in the District, mainly in Goaltore, Garbeta, Anandpur, Keshpur, Pingla, Salboni and Kotwali,” said an official statement (<http://calcuttatube.com/140-arrested-in-west-bengal-arms-haul-olice/151542/>).

Ultimately, huge number of people were killed and victimized due to political conflicts. But the truth is this, the people who were killed they were mostly poor and engaged in agriculture as well as labour class and by working hard they maintained their daily livelihood anyhow. Even most of the persons who were politically killed they were not holding any political position. They might have been the supporters only or even not. Historically the same tradition is going on, where the ruling class derives its power from its ownership and control of the forces of production.

(III)

Effect on Local Development Process and Outcome

The socio-economic development process in the conflict-ridden areas of West Midnapore was badly affected and different development programmes were either stalled or even discontinued. Many social impacts of the mass conflict are not easy to estimate but are problematic enough for the local poor. Police force and para-military personnel were occupying many school buildings as there was lack of space to house them for carrying out their operations in the conflict-ridden areas. Reportedly, since police forces occupied 14 school buildings in Lalgah area, at least 20000 students were faced with the problem of regular education in an area where illiteracy has remained high for long years (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010a, 8). Fall in nutrition of pregnant women, lactating mothers and children mainly due to constraints in running of government nutrition programmes such as mid-day meal schemes in the local schools (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010b, 11). In a few areas, wages from jobs offered by the forest department dried up when the conflict intensified (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010a, 9). Continuation of such violence has implied stalling of the region's development process and the local development programmes, loss of lives of ordinary residents, living life under constant fear, increased anxiety and ill being, confusion and tension, decline in social capital, constraints in social mobility and lack of community meetings, spread of violence and uncertainties, stoppage of public transport and closure of public institutions, forced compromise of human dignity and freedom due to different pressure groups, loss of forest cover and wildlife and loss of peace and freedom (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010b, 11).

The outcomes from conflict situation have emerged in terms of difficulties in composition of traditional local livelihoods; fall in income and earnings, greater efforts by poor households to address subsistence needs, education problem due to problem in running schools, lack of health care, and fall in household nutrition levels. Kalvyas (2006) writes that the violence that results from armed conflicts can directly affect certain households through changes in economic, social and political institutions. Many young men left the villages to avoid the conflict. It also has an impact on the burden of work done by women, which has increased in absence of men folks. Due to heavy work-load, the women groups are no longer free to do other things such as protecting forests and volunteerism (Mukherjee and Parihari 2010b, 14).

The adivasis of India are one of the most oppressed and downtrodden groups of people in the country. Police oppression is nothing new to the Santhal adivasis of the Bankura-Purulia-Midnapore area. However, the adivasis's upsurge has spread over an even wider area encompassing Dahijuri, Binpur, Jhargram and Bandowan. The movement has been continually intensifying and spreading over a larger area. The slogans emanating from the movement have also been changing and now the adivasis are demanding that the dispossession of tribals from their land, forests and water in the name of development and industrialization has to stop. The struggle against state oppression is turning into a bigger struggle against dispossession and marginalization. What we are witnessing in the tribal belt of West Bengal is of historical moment. A long

oppressed people have risen up and are daring to confront their oppressors and question the logic of “development” that destroys their lives and livelihoods. It is interesting to observe that the nature of confrontation with the state, exceptional in scale and intensity, seems to be inspired by the popular resistance at Nandigram- thereby, providing some sort of continuity to the possibility of an emerging people’s struggles against state repression.

This is amply expressed by what Arati Murmu, a woman who had been assaulted by the police, and who had gone to block the Lalgarh police station had to say: “Whenever there is a Maoist attack the police raid our villages and torture our women and children. For how long will we suffer this oppression by the police? All of us are Maoists, let the police arrest us. Today we have come out” (Ray 2008, 4).

The Amnesty International defines, human rights are "basic rights and freedoms that all people are entitled to regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, language, or other status" (<http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/human-rights-basics>). Article 1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, states "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a1>). Human rights are conceived as universal and egalitarian, with all people having equal rights by virtue of being human. These rights may exist as natural rights or as legal rights, in both national and international law (Nickel 29 July 2006). Thus, it is obvious that the above mentioned downtrodden/poor people were deliberately neglected. Their human rights were violated seriously in various ways as they were deprived of ‘basic human rights’ such as food, shelter, education, health; security, justice, freedom, dignity in their everyday life.

(IV)

Discussion

Since long the, the downtrodden people of India are continuously being exploited, deprived, maltreated, oppressed by the power class as well as power elite and they are retaining in the same position i.e. subject class. India is a very peculiar country where the people are stratified in the name of castes, creeds, sects, religions and so on. The poor/downtrodden people such as so-called lower castes, tribes and other backward castes and communities are continuously being deprived since around 2500 years ago to till now.

In India, the prime aim of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) was to uplift the poor working class people/ downtrodden people through socialistic means which would free them from the bondage of land-lordism and capitalism. Their aim was also to save the poor class/downtrodden people and bring them into the mainstream population through their all-round socio-economic development by stopping exploitation, deprivation, oppression and violation of basic human rights. But very fortunately they failed to do the same because the leader or leadership could not come out from the upper caste/class mentality. They tried to make the classless society but they failed to understand that the extreme class system is existed through/in the caste system in India. The alliance of CPI-M with their so called bourgeois (capitalist) designated Congress party in the April-May 2016 West Bengal Assembly Election has again proved that the leaders of the party as well as power elites of the CPI-M party always want only power and position anyhow and any means rather to fight for the interest and rights of poor/downtrodden people. From the above study, it has been observed that the tribal people were victimised seriously in various ways, either in the name of Maoist or others. Their land, culture, forest, everything has been alienated or lost. Now they are deprived of their forest rights, land rights, cultural rights and so

on. In their everyday life they are facing a lot of problems to maintain their very minimum needs i.e. food, shelter, dress, education and so on. Due to this long run political conflict the tribals could not gain rather the non-tribals who were in the political power used them only for their political gain as well as for their profit also. The political leaders are not really interested to solve these problems rather they try to continue this agitated situation.

In Medinipur and in other areas of West Bengal, several political chaos and conflicts have been taken place in last three to four decades. But it has been observed that the poor people including tribals faced problems for maintaining their minimum daily livelihood seriously.

Many of the famous as well as wise persons told that without development of the so-called down trodden as well as poor people, the real progress and development of this country is not possible.

It was expected that after independence, the concerned people would be protected as well as saved from all kinds of exploitations, humiliation and violation of basic human rights but it is very unfortunate that before independence to till date the downtrodden people are continuously being deprived, exploited and oppressed in various ways and resulted in they are becoming poorest of the poor in all respects. Most of their properties have been looted by the upper class people as well as so-called power elites in various ways and as a result now they are facing a lot of problems in their daily life for maintaining their very minimum livelihood. However, if such kind of exploitation, deprivation, and violation of basic human rights in all respects are continued, then conflict is must. But we do not want conflict. Therefore, the people of ruling class as well as power class (in India upper castes) must have to give the space to subject class (down trodden people) in all respects and in all fields such as in economy, politics, education, law, policy and decision making and so on. But it is really very difficult, as the traditional Indian society is extremely stratified in the name of castes, creeds, sects; religions etc. and most of their socio-cultural systems are very different and also rigid in various respects. Each of their socialization, enculturation, personality formation and overall development is primarily happened in a particular socio-cultural system where the caste system/stratification plays the prime role to mold them. The traditional caste system never allows any vertical mobility to the people in any field such as economy, politics, education, religion social. Thus, in real sense impartial or non-biased decision, policy, development etc. are rarely be expected from them or even not at all as their thinking pattern is primarily constructed and developed in a particular caste system. In India, in the name of caste, economy, duties, participation in politics, power, position, status, role, food, shelter, place of living, education, promotion, social customs, norms, interactions etc. are pre-fixed. Therefore, the real development is absolutely very difficult until and unless their mind setup and thinking pattern is not changed by abolishing or coming out from the traditional caste system/stratification mentality.

It is the fact that the basic human rights of the poor/downtrodden people are continuously being violated. Apart from others, those people already have lost most of their property from where they maintained their daily livelihood but now in their everyday life they are continuously being exploited, deprived, oppressed and maltreated and so on. Their prime human securities and basic human rights are continuously being violated.

Apart from facing of all the above mentioned problems, the downtrodden/poor people also face serious problems to get the legal supports as well as judgment etc. timely. Even rarely court judgment is found in favour of the downtrodden/poor people because (i) they are not in a good economic condition to continue the case; (ii) high fees, behavior and several stories of the advocates and their staffs (clerk, muhori etc.); and the lengthy and complex processes of the court make them puzzled and discouraged very much; (iii) rarely they get the political and administration and other supports rather they are misguided more and threatened also; (iv) they fail to un-

derstand the cleverness of others due to their poor education, knowledge and simplicity; (v) these simple people extremely face linguistic and cultural problems; (vi) lacking of shelters or resting place of their any kinsman, friend or knowing person who lives nearer to the city/town of the court and as a result, they became demoralized and feel very alone; (v) further, no kinsman, friend or knowing person are in the good administrative position or in the power and politics from where they can get any good advice and moral support; (vi) they face extreme crisis to provide requisite evidences, documents and witnesses; (vii) long distance between residence and court; and so on.

But from the humanitarian ground the aims should be: to stop all kinds of exploitations, deprivations, oppressions on the poor/down trodden people immediately; to ensure and protect the prime human securities of those people so that they must be respected and can live with basic human rights in social, political, economic, educational, religious fields.

Furthermore, the downtrodden/poor people are mostly powerless and positionless in all respects and they are being neglected continuously but how long the continuous happening of exploitation, deprivation, oppression on them in this country will be continued. Will it not be stopped by ending the bloody-holly or it will be continued for long for holding and enjoying the power, position and politics more by exploiting, depriving, oppressing the downtrodden/poor, power and position less people.

Why do we tend to avoid dealing with Conflict? We should keep in mind that negotiation requires profound courage on the part of all parties: It takes courage to honestly and clearly articulate your needs, and it takes courage to sit down and listen to your adversaries. It takes courage to look at your own role in the dispute, and it takes courage to approach others with a sense of empathy, openness and respect for their perspective. Collaborative approaches to conflict management require us to engage in the moment of dialogue in profound and meaningful ways, so it is understandable if we tend to avoid such situations until the balance of wisdom tips in favour of negotiation (<http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/aboutwhatisit.htm>).

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