

NUCLEAR FREE INDIA

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Kalpakkam's forgotten people have a tale to tell

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FORTY-five-year-old Sundarammal is in immense pain. Sitting beside a pile of dry fish, she touches a large lump on her neck.

"I do not know how this came. I got it maybe six or seven years ago," she says, and asks the doctor for some medicine to relieve the pain.

Sundarammal is, in fact, suffering from thyroid cancer. And crucially, she is a resident of Meiyoor Kuppam, some five km from the Madras Atomic Power Station and Kalpakkam Atomic Reprocessing Plant.

"Her cancer is in an advanced stage. She can survive at the most for five years," says Dr V Pugazhendi, an activist belonging to Doctors for Safer Environment (DOSE).

This is not the only case. Residents say scores of people in the fortress town of Sadras and villages near the campus have died, some of cancer and others of 'mysterious illnesses'.

"The government," says Dr Pugazhendi, "has so far conducted no health survey though the local area of MAPS, measuring about 4,000 sq km of landmass, which includes a portion of the Chennai metropolitan region. It has a population of 10 million." More than one-third of women in the age group of 15-40 years have been affected by thyroid enlargement or autoimmune thyroid disorders in surrounding areas of the plant, says Dr Pugazhendi, who has done a study on thyroid incidence in the region along with Dr Conrad Mary, Dr R Ramesh and V T Padmanabhan. They are all part of DOSE.

There are three confirmed cases of thyroid cancer in the study, he says. And there may be others. He says this is mostly due to routine release of radioactive gases, including Iodine 131, in the air and sea from the Kalpakkam nuclear plant. But this is not reflected in the government Environment Survey Laboratory (ESL) data.

"My study is the only one in India which has confirmed that radioactive Iodine is linked to thyroid cancer and autoimmune thyroiditis," says Dr Pugazhendi.

The ESL Kalpakkam had found after the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in April 1986 that the incidence of thyroid-related diseases in goats had registered an increase as a result of feeding on grass laced with Iodine-131.

A report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) says that the routine release of radionuclides from Kalpakkam has been high in comparison to the release from facilities in other countries.

Kalpakkam houses four nuclear reactors, two waste-reprocessing plants, a centralised waste management facility and a tritium plant. The seawater intake structure for the reactors is located

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420 metres offshore. A 405-metre-long approach jetty that connects the intake system to the shore also supports a discharge pipeline for low-level radioactive effluents.

“Aquatic organisms display considerable ability to accumulate trace elements as well as radionuclides from water even in exceedingly small concentrations,” says M V Ramanna, a physicist, quoting a study done by M A R Iyengar of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), along with three other experts.

The low-level radioactive wastes released into the sea increase the risk of cancer, says Ramanna, who is also a senior fellow in the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Environment and Development in Bangalore. This is dangerous for people living near beaches and dependent on sea food for a large part of their diet.

Dr Pugazhendi says the Department of Atomic Energy stopped releasing data on the effluent emissions once the Kalpakkam Atomic Fuel Reprocessing Plant went on stream in 1998. IGCAR officials declined to comment immediately.

According to UNSCEAR, “Relatively large quantities of radioactive materials are involved at the fuel reprocessing stage. The radionuclides are freed from their contained state as the fuel is brought into solution, and the potential for release in waste discharges is greater than other stages of the fuel cycle. Routine releases have been largely in liquid effluents to the sea.” The radioactive effluents may have affected the livelihood of fishermen in the coastal areas surrounding plant. “This was an area which was rich in lobsters, crabs, shrimp and other varieties of fish. Now we rarely get any,” says Nagooran, a fisherman in Sadras. But the fishermen have no choice. They still venture out to sea. The catch is their only source of livelihood. It keeps the wolf from the door, but then nobody knows whether and how toxic the fish are, and most end up in Chennai markets.

Some are dried and sold as chicken feed, says Dr Pugazhendi. A fisherman says: “They are probably toxic but we can’t catch anything else. And there is hardly any money coming in at the moment.” Among the workers at the plant, Dr Pugazhendi says three persons died of multiple myeloma in 2002-2003, a rare bone cancer that is linked to nuclear radiation. This was denied by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Trombay.

The death rate due to myeloma is 2.4 per one lakh population per annum in the Chennai area alone. The Kalpakkam area has a population of about 25,000. So three myeloma deaths within a span of 18 months is considered statistically significant by cancer specialists because it is four times the normal.

Dr Pugazhendi has another case. Some years ago, a 24-year-old temporary worker died of colon cancer. According to doctors, it is unusual for patients at contract this cancer at such an early age. For this and other reasons, he says “we need a thorough study of the radiation levels and their effects in the area”.

In another worrying indication, several cases have been reported of congenital defects and mental retardation. A DOSE study revealed 12 cases of polydactyly below the age of 15 in the coastal areas in a radius of 16 km.

Dr Pugazhendi rules out consanguinity and parental history in all the cases. “Polydactyly and other malformations are usually associated with the exposure of the foetus to radiation,” he says.

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As the waves hit the shores, the black sand is visible. "The sand here is rich in monazite but we suspect it is also highly toxic," says Dr Pugazhendi.

"Unfortunately, we don't know the levels of toxicity and whether it has increased after the radiation levels. We don't have the equipment for a proper series of tests. There is no safe radiation dosage, so we must have a full study." M Hussain of Pudupatnam, whose daughter is suffering from autoimmune thyroiditis, is clear about the first step.

"The government should conduct a health survey in the region.

We have faith in the government and it should act. And I hope it will not be too late for my daughter."

Too many fingers

Polydactyly, also known as hyperdactyly, is a congenital physical anomaly consisting of extra fingers or toes.

When each hand or foot has six digits, it is sometimes called sexdactyly, hexadactyly or hexadactylism.

The extra digit is usually a small piece of soft tissue; occasionally it may contain bone without joints; rarely it may be a complete, functioning digit. Polydactyly may be passed down (inherited) in families.

This trait involves only one gene that can cause several variations. It also happens due to radiation exposure during pregnancy.

Dangerous fallout

Iodine-131 is an artificially produced fission byproduct resulting from nuclear weapons, above-ground nuclear testing, and nuclear reactor operations.

It is found in the gaseous and liquid waste streams of nuclear power plants, but is not released into the environment during normal reactor operations.

Iodine in food is absorbed by the body and preferentially concentrated in the thyroid where it is needed for the functioning of that gland. When Iodine 131 is present in high levels in the environment from radioactive fallout, it can be absorbed through contaminated food, and will also accumulate in the thyroid. As it decays, it may cause damage to the thyroid gland. The primary risk from exposure to high levels of Iodine 131 is the chance occurrence of radiogenic thyroid cancer in later life. Other risks include the possibility of non-cancerous growths and thyroiditis.

Iodine-131 can also cause exposure by ingestion (consumption of green leafy vegetables, drinking water, fish and shellfish containing the substance), as well as exposure by inhalation and external exposure from ground deposition.

Deadly exposure

Ajith (name changed) was offered Rs 3,000 to work as rigger in the Kalpakkam nuclear plant. It was a lucrative bargain. His job was to clean up the reactor during shutdown.

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“After two months my contract expired,” says Ajith, an employee of Tech-Sharp, a Chennai based company which has taken the contract, hardly unaware that he had exposed himself to radiation.

“I later worked in Rawabhata nuclear plant,” says Ajith.

This time the contract was sourced through Bangalorebased Avasarala Technologies. After five months of working in both the nuclear plants, Ajith, the lone breadwinner of the family, is suffering from cancer. He has been diagnosed with carcinoma rectum by Chengalpattu Medical College Hospital. “We have shelled out more than Rs one lakh on his treatment and are living in debt. We can’t afford his treatment anymore, the government should help us,” says his brother.

“Most of the contract workers are hardly provided with any compensation and many of them are illiterate,” says Dr V Pugazhendi of Doctors for Safer Environment.

“In the US after much protests from atomic workers, the government has passed a law covering a list of cancers for which atomic workers might seek compensation.

Why can’t we have the same law in India,” wonders Dr Pugazhendi. Meanwhile, the nuclear plant is recruiting migrant workers instead of locals for doing the cleaning job in the nuclear reactor. They are mostly from Orissa, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Assam and Andhra Pradesh.

“The recruitment is just to avoid the blame as locals can be tracked but migrants can’t,” he alleges.

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Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace The National Coordinating Committee Meeting Koodankulam

A Report

August 16-17, 2008

The first day meeting began at 10:10 am with a welcome Speech by Dr. S. P. Udayakumar. Mrs. Lalita Ramdas was elected to chair the proceedings. Prof. Achin Vanaik suggested that the meeting should begin with a discussion on the Press Release followed by a discussion on the CNDP Charter of Demands. Finally, it was decided that the Charter of demands would be addressed first. Prof. Vanaik started the discussion with the following input.

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The Charter should include at least three aspects: viz., the Nuclear Deal, Indo-Iran Relations, and the question of Koodankulam. There are 3 aspects of the deal: Strategic-Political Dimension and the question of Indo-US Partnership, Weapons, and Energy. With respect to the three above noted aspects there are 3 major positions.

The first is the dominant position. From this position the view of the three above noted aspects are as follows. Strategic: The deal will strengthen India's relations with the United States. This is good. Weapons: This will lend legitimacy to India as a nuclear weapons possessing power and allow access to uranium that may be used for weapons production; good again. Energy: And thirdly the deal will help the expansion of civilian nuclear power. And this is of course highly desirable. Whatever price we have to pay in terms of some amount of international monitoring etc. is insignificant as compared to the gains.

The second position, held by many, e.g. that of the BJP, is as follows. The deal helps to improve relations with the US. That is good. But we could have got a better bargain and there was no need to go to the US with a cap in hand. Nuclear weapons are quite desirable but this deal does not permit nuclear testing. The deal does not give us equality with other nuclear weapons possessing powers. All this is bad. That the deal helps the expansion of civilian nuclear energy use is good. But nuclear energy is not going to be of great value in any future energy scenario for India therefore this aspect of the deal is not of much significance. This is essentially the "carrot" to the "stick" of the deal.

The third position is that of the mainstream left parties. The deal is bad. Because: Close strategic-political relationship with the US is bad. There is general silence on the issue of nuclear weapons. The aspect of nuclear power is of little significance as it is not a highly desirable energy source.

Fourth position is held by some of us in CNDP. The deal is bad on all the above counts. Close strategic relations with the US is bad. The deal opens the way to nuclear proliferation; that is bad. And it eases the way to expansion of nuclear power. That too is bad.

Sukla Sen noted, "There has emerged a frightening consensus within the mainstream political establishment. This is the consensus on the theme that considerations of so-called sovereignty and strategic autonomy have absolute priority over everything else. Thus while the government speaks of the deal in no way curtailing our right to conduct nuclear weapons tests, the mainstream opposition of the Deal criticizes the Deal for the restrictions on nuclear testing that the deal will impose. There has even been talk of the desirability of the hydrogen bomb and the testing thereof. What is alarming is that the mainstream Left Parties are also couching their criticism in terms of sovereignty, strategic autonomy and restrictions on nuclear testing. This line of argument constituted a frontal assault on non-proliferation and global disarmament. We, in contrast, must speak of South Asia free of nuclear weapons."

Admiral Ramdas said that in discussing the Deal we should attend to the following: "We have strategic partnerships with various countries. How does the deal impact on these? The Deal and issues of weapons and energy security: Discuss. The specific points of rejection and/or addition in the Charter of Demands and the Press Release need to be addressed."

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Lalmohan from Nagercoil said: “There are two issues here. The first is the short term issue of meeting energy needs. The second is the long term issue of whether in the name of addressing energy needs through nuclear power we are walking into a trap. Nuclear power is a trap for India because, first, this source of power is unsafe on account of radioactive hazards and secondly, as India has little uranium this source of power is unsustainable for India. Therefore with nuclear power India will, on the one hand, be confronted with the problem of disposal of nuclear waste and on the other, will become dependent on countries with uranium. Moreover the strategic alliance with the US will be too costly for India as India will become economically dependent on the US.”

Admiral Ramdas said: “We are here in Koodankulam. So we should try to get maximum mileage of this fact. Nuclear plants have far reaching implications and we should stand unambiguously against them. We must strive to dispel the brainwashing that has taken place. In this Deal trading is the paramount interest of the US. What is being sold to us is very bad and on the other hand insignificant in terms of our growing energy demands. We are planning to invest colossal amounts in order to get only a meagre proportion of our future energy demands. Nuclear power plants are biggest guzzlers of water and they will have gravely deleterious effects on coastal ecology and environment.”

Praful Bidwai said: “There is a great deal of rubbish being propagated about the deal. One of them is that national sovereignty is being threatened. This is simply not true. There is genuine concern over India’s misuse of fissionable material to conduct tests. One must remember that India has already done so once in 1974, when she reneged on her ‘civilian use’ promise regarding CIRUS and produced plutonium for making the bomb. Incidentally, while we lack the uranium for all our power reactors, we have sufficient uranium for all the military plutonium that we are ever going to need. Nuclear power has proved to be unsafe and undesirable as an energy source. On the other hand we have wind power dramatically surging ahead both at the global level and in India. Investments in nuclear power in India have proved to be expensive and unrewarding and the thorium reactor has proved to be a fiasco. Nuclear power is now being proposed as *the* solution to climate change on the ground that it is emission-free. However, the term ‘emission-free’ only applies to the last stage of the nuclear fuel cycle, nuclear fission within the reactors. Everything else, from the mining of fissionable material to its transport and enrichment calls for large-scale energy use leading to the emission of greenhouse gases.

Then the Press Release was discussed in great detail and approved unanimously.

Debasis gave an account of the people’s struggle at Haripur in West Bengal against setting up of nuclear power plants. The struggle was initiated sometime in May 2006, when it became clear that the government had surveyed the coastal area in Haripur and was proposing to set up a nuclear cluster in that area. The struggle peaked on 17-18 November 2006 when the NPCIL team was prevented from entering the area. Thereafter for many months there were ceaseless meetings, rallies and group discussions. Thereafter the government seems to have beaten a temporary retreat and there is a lull. But we are on alert. Santanu said: “The battle was won at that point but the war is far from over.”

Achin Vanaik brought the discussion back to the question of having a Convention on Potential and Actual Radiation Victims and asks whether the members were at least prepared to envisage

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having a preparatory meeting aimed at the Convention. Santanu responded by saying, "If we aim to create a Network on radiation hazards, then that network would need a punchline, a position on which to develop campaign. And that could be 'There are no safe levels of ionizing radiation'. It is on this basis that a network, aiming to address issues of radiation hazards ranging from dental X-Rays to nuclear power plants, could be formed. In such a network physicians would have to play an important role and indeed the issue of ionizing radiation would likely to have the greatest appeal to the more conscious members of the medical community. However, we must remember that radiation in general terms is likely to have less popular and emotive appeal than the question of nuclear power."

At 3:30 pm a Press Conference was conducted at the venue and several reporters from local newspapers and TV networks attended [and the event was widely reported in the local press the following day].

At 6:00 pm a massive public meeting was held in the west bazaar of Koodankulam Besides the local people, several van loads of people from Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts came and attended the public meeting. Rev. M. P. Jesuraj presided over the meeting. S. P. Udayakumar introduced the national guests who were going to address the people. Rajalingam of Koodankulam welcomed everyone. Mrs. Lalita Ramdas, Praful Bidwai, Sukla Sen, Anton Gomez, C. Boaz, Initha, Helen Mary, R. S. Lal Mohan, Sandal Muthuraj and many others spoke. A. S. Ravi offered vote of thanks. The meeting came to an end at around 9 pm.

On the second day, the session began at 10:00 am. The "Demand of Charter" was discussed clause by clause; some changes were made and it was decided that the final draft would be distributed soon. Sukla Sen, Praful Bidwai, Lalita Ramdas, and S. P. Udayakumar will work on the changes and prepare the final draft.

As regards declaring Nepal as a nuclear-free nation, Admiral Ramdas asked why an Indian NGO should go and meet the neighboring countries' government leaders. Anil Chaudhry described the background of the decision and pointed out the new openings in Nepal and Bangladesh. It was decided that the CNDP should meet the foreign leaders when they came to India. Admiral Ramdas suggested meeting Indian leaders. The NCC mandated the CNDP to explore possibilities of dialogue in collaborating with local groups and political parties including the 'Communist Party of Nepal' in Nepal in the context of promoting peace and nuclear disarmament.

Achin Vanaik, Dalia, Sukla Sen, Adv. Rajendran from Chittoor, Lal Mohan from Nagercoil, S. P. Udayakumar from Nagercoil, Gabriella Dietrich from NAPM, A. S. Ravi from Koodankulam and Bharathidasan from Idinthakarai reported on various anti-nuclear activities that were held in their areas/states etc.

Many organizational matters were discussed and decided upon. The CNDP website was to be upgraded and redesigned. A pamphlet on Indo-US nuclear deal was planned. Praful Bidwai and Lalita Ramdas would explore ideas for preparing comic books on nuclear power and the Deal. Collin Gonsalvez of Human Rights Law Network could work with us and Praful Bidwai would facilitate that. Adv. Rajendran, M. V. Ramana and S. P. Udayakumar would head the nuclear law study group. And the next NCC meeting of CNDP would be held on December 13-14, 2008 at Kolkata and Wilfred would explore the modalities. The meeting was concluded around lunch time with national anthem.

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The following people participated in the proceedings:

S. Mark Antony, Admiral L Ramdas, Lalita Ramdas, K. Nija, R. Mohandas, Jans Mary,

K. Malar, A. Robert Jesu Durai, C. Boaz, D. Gabrielle, Parasuram Rana, Tapan Car, Dalia, N. Asraf, Ali, Adv. K. Rajendran, M. J. Jose, K. Prasanna, Chitranjan Singh, A. Rubanraj, Shantanu, Chacraverti, Assunta, S. Bharathidasan, N. Sudandiran, Debasis Shyamal, N. Saraswathi, J. Asha

Sr. Sarojam, A. Gothandaram, R. Ponnambalam, Wilfred, Anil Chaudhary, M. P. Jesuraj, John P. Rayan, G. Anton Gomez, S. Chockalingam, P. Alexander, R. Initha, P. Stephen, P. Saravanan, M. Krishnamoorthy, S. Helen Mary, Meena, G. Jenitta, S. Elizabeth Mary, G. Prisca Mary, Amutha

M. Pushparayan, Lidwin, S. M. Prithiviraj, S. P. Udayakumar, Achin Vanaik, Praful Bidwai, George Gomez, R. S. Lal Mohan, S. Sivasubramanian, A. S. Ravi, Bala Ganesh, Rajalingom, Sandal Muthuraj, C. Manikandan, Bharat, Roopan, S. Rajamani, Some 10 INSAF members, Some 10 Koodankulam people

கல்பாக்கம் கதிரியக்கம் குறித்தான சில விளக்கங்கள், **உண்மைகள் :**

கல்பாக்கத்தில் கதிரியக்கத்தின் காரணமாக சுகாதார சீர்கேடுகள் (உ.ம். புற்றுநோய், பிறவி கோளாறுகள்...) இல்லை எனக் கூறும் அணுசக்தி நிர்வாகத்திற்கு சில கேள்விகள்.

செய்தி : காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்வின்படி அணுசக்தி பணியாளர்களுக்கு புற்று நோயோ (அல்லது) பிறவி கோளாறுகளோ அதிகம் இல்லை என தெரிய வந்துள்ளது.

இது உண்மையா?

பதில் :

காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்வின் குறையுடிகள் : (காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்வு முறையான அறிவியல் ரீதியான ஆய்வு இல்லை என்பதற்கான ஆதாரங்கள்).

காஞ்சிபுரம் ஆய்வு என்பது குறிப்பிட்ட ஒரு நாளில் (ஒரு கால வரையறைக்குள்) எத்தனை பேருக்கு புற்றுநோய் என்பதற்கான ஆய்வே. (Cross – Sectional Study) அதாவது அந்த தேதியில் அந்த கால வரையறைக்குள் புற்றுநோய் இல்லை என்பதாலே அவர்களுக்கு பிற்காலத்தில் புற்றுநோய் வராது என்பது சொல்வதற்கில்லை. உண்மையில் பின்னர் பலருக்கும் புற்றுநோய் பாதிப்பு ஏற்பட்டுள்ளது. இருப்பினும் ஆய்வில் அது பதிவு செய்யாமல் போவதால் புற்றுநோய் இல்லை என தவறாக பதிவாகும்.

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உதாரணமாக பெண் பணியாளர்கள் யாருக்கும் புற்றுநோய் இல்லை என காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்வு கூறுகிறது. இது உண்மையா? பெண் பணியாளர்கள் புற்றுநோயால் இறந்தது நிர்வாகத்திற்கு தெரியும். இருப்பினும் மௌனம் காப்பது ஏனோ? பெண் பணியாளர்கள் சிலர் இறந்தவரின் பெயரை நான் சொல்ல தயார். அணுசக்தி நிர்வாகம் சரிபார்க்கும் பொறுப்பை ஏற்குமா?

கதிர்வீச்சால் புற்றுநோய் ஏற்படுவதை கண்டறிய தொடர் ஆய்வுகள் (Follow-up Study) செய்வதே சிறந்தது என அணுசக்தி விஞ்ஞானிகளுக்கு தெரியாதா? பின்னர் ஏன் தொடர் ஆய்வை (Long-term Follow up Study) செய்யவில்லை?

காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்விற்கு தேவையான 25% புள்ளி விவரம் (புற்றுநோய், பிறவிகோளாறுகள்) அணுசக்தி நிர்வாக மருத்துமனையிலிருந்து பெறப்பட்டது. இது முறையாக புள்ளி விபரங்கள் சேகரிக்கப்படாமல் போவதற்கு வழி வகுக்காதா? (Allowing Industry to Police itself!).

காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்வு நிபுணர்களே ஆய்வில் 30 பேருக்கு தொடர் ஆய்வு மேற்கொள்ள வலியுறுத்தியதாகவும், அதை அணுசக்தி நிர்வாகம் மறுத்ததாகவும் செய்திகள் சொல்லப்படுகின்றன.

காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்வில் ஒருவருக்கு புற்றுநோய் இல்லை என்பதை எப்படி உறுதி செய்தனர்? அதை எவ்வளவு தூரம் நம்ப முடியும்?

காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்வில் பலரது சட்டையைகூட ஆய்வாளர்கள் கழட்டிச் சொல்லவில்லை என்பதை பலர் புகார் கூறியுள்ளனர். சட்டையை கழட்டி பார்த்தால் மட்டுமே தொடை இடுக்கு, அக்குள் - இவற்றில் உள்ள புற்றுநோய் கட்டியை காண முடியும். இதை செய்யாமல் புற்றுநோய் இல்லை என்பதை எவ்வாறு உறுதி செய்ய முடியும்?

பணியாளர்கள் அறிகுறிகள் ஏதும் சொல்லா நிலையில் “X” Ray, இரத்த பரிசோதனை, கர்ப்பப்பை புற்றுநோய், பரிசோதனை (பெண்களுக்கு) மட்டுமே செய்யப்பட்டுள்ளது. இதிலும் இரத்த பரிசோதனை 1 வருடத்திற்கு முன்னர் செய்திருந்தால் மீண்டும் இரத்த பரிசோதனை செய்யாமல் விட்டுள்ளனர். அதையும் அணுசக்தி மருத்துவமனை புள்ளி விபரங்களில் இருந்தே திரட்டியுள்ளனர்!

புற்றுநோயை பொறுத்த மட்டில் தொடக்கத்தில் எந்த பிரச்சனையும் காட்டுவதில்லை என ஆய்வாளர்கள் நன்கறிவர். மேலும் ஆரம்ப கட்டத்தில் இருக்கும் புற்றுநோயை Scan போன்ற கருவிகளால் பரிசோதித்தாலும் 1cm-க்கு குறைவாக கட்டி இருக்கும்பட்சத்தில் அது தெரியாமல் போகும் வாய்ப்பும் நிறையவே இருக்கின்றன என்பது ஆய்வாளர்களுக்கு தெரியாதா? மேலும் அறிகுறிகள் இருந்தாலும், இல்லாவிட்டாலும் அனைத்து பரிசோதனைகள் செய்வதே புற்றுநோய் கண்டுபிடிக்கும் வாய்ப்பை அதிகப்படுத்தும். விஷயம் இப்படி இருக்க பணியாளர்கள் அறிகுறி என கூறும் பட்சத்தில் மட்டுமே சம்பந்தப்பட்ட பிற பரிசோதனைகளை செய்திருப்பது புற்றுநோய் கண்டறியும் வாய்ப்பை கணிசமாக குறைக்கும் இல்லையா? மேலும் கதிர்வீச்சு பாதிப்பு ஏற்பட்டு 10-15 வருடம் கழித்தே புற்றுநோய்

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உருவாகும் என்பதை மருத்துவ ஏடுகள் தெளிவாக கூறுகையில் தொடர் ஆய்வு செய்யாமல் விட்டது எதனால்? ஆக இவ்வளவு குறைபாடுகள் உள்ள காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்வை எப்படி நம்ப முடியும்?

திரையீடு பாதிப்பு/புற்றுநோய் பிரச்சனை இல்லை என கூறும் நிர்வாகம் பணியாளர்களுக்கான திரையீடு பாதிப்பு, புற்றுநோய் குறித்தான முடிவுகளை (அணுசக்தி நிர்வாக மருத்துவமனையில் அனைத்து புள்ளி விபரங்கள் இருந்தும்) வெள்ளை அறிக்கையாக வெளியிடத் தயங்குவது ஏன்? அப்படி செய்தால் பணியாளர்கள், சுற்றுப்புற மக்கள் மனதில் ஏற்பட்டுள்ள பயம் போகாமல்லவா? அதை ஏன் செய்யவில்லை?

காஞ்சிபுர ஆய்வு 2001-ல் வெளியானது. ஏன் 2003 ஆய்வின்படி அணுசக்தி நகரிய மக்கள் "மல்டிபிள் மயலோமா" (Multiple Myeloma) எனும் எலும்பு மஞ்சை புற்றுநோய் இறப்பு விகிதம், பிற மக்களுடன் ஒப்பிடுகையில் புள்ளி விபர அடிப்படையில் முக்கியத்துவம் வாய்ந்ததாக உள்ளது நிரூபணமாகியுள்ளது என தெரிந்தும், ஆக கதிர்வீச்சும் அதற்கு காரணமாக இருக்கக்கூடும் என இருந்தும், அதைப் பற்றி ஏன் முழுமையாக பேச மறுக்கிறீர்கள்?

மும்பையில் இருந்து Multiple Myeloma பற்றியான மறுப்பறிக்கையில் நோயால் இறந்த மூவரில் இருவர் மட்டுமே பணியாளர்கள் என்றும், அவர்கள் வாங்கிய கதிர்வீச்சின் அளவு AERB (Atomic Energy Regulatory Board) பரிந்துரைத்த அளவை விட குறைவானது என மட்டுமே கூறுவது ஏன்? இறந்தவர்கள் வாங்கிய கதிர்வீச்சை அளப்பதற்கு சமூக ஆர்வலர்களுக்கு வாய்ப்பு அளிக்க வேண்டும்.

மறுப்பறிக்கையில் என்ன சொல்லி இருக்க வேண்டும்? எதை சொல்லவில்லை?

1. இறந்தவர்கள் மல்டிபிள் மயலோமோ நோயால் இறக்கவில்லை என்றோ
2. குறைந்தபட்ச கதிர்வீச்சு அந்நோய்க்கு காரணமில்லை என்றோ மருத்துவ ஏடுகள் கூறுகின்றன என்றோ
3. அந்நோய் புள்ளி விபர அடிப்படையில் முக்கியத்துவம் வாய்ந்ததாக இல்லை என்றோ (இவ்வளவு ஏன்?)

அமெரிக்கா, ஜப்பானில் அந்நோய் பாதித்தவர்களுக்கு அணுசக்தி நிர்வாகம், Energy Employee's Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA) எனும் சட்டப்படி இழப்பீட்டுத் தொகை வழங்க வேண்டும் என்று இருக்க (இதிலிருந்தாவது அணுஉலை கதிர்வீச்சு அந்நோய்க்கு காரணம் தான் என தெளிவாக தெரியவில்லையா?) (இந்தியாவில் அத்தகைய சட்டமே இல்லை என்பது வெட்ககேடான விஷயம்). இவையெல்லாம் இப்படி இருக்க இவற்றிற்கு எதிரான வாதம் ஏதும் சொல்லாமல் மௌனம் காப்பதிலிருந்து நிர்வாகத்தினர் எவ்வளவு தூரம் உண்மையை சொல்கின்றனர்

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என்பது சொல்லாமலே விளங்கும். மேலும் உடலினுள் தங்கியிருக்கும் (Internal Contamination) கதிரியக்கம் குறித்து என்ன ஆய்வுகள் செய்துள்ளீர்கள்? அதன் முடிவு என்ன? என்பதையும் விளக்குவது நல்லதல்லவா?

செய்தி : 2006-ல் ஒரு தன்னார்வ தொண்டு நிறுவனம் செய்த ஆய்வில் (அணு உலைக்கு 5 கி.மீ. சுற்றளவில்) சுற்றுப்புற மக்களுக்கு புற்றுநோய் வாய்ப்பு மாவட்டத்தின் பிற பகுதிகளில் உள்ளவர்களுக்கு உள்ளதுபோல் தான் உள்ளது.

பதில் : தயவு செய்து இந்த ஆய்வறிக்கையை எனது முகவரிக்கு அனுப்பி வைக்க வேண்டுகிறேன்.

மரு. வீ. புகழேந்தி,
694-A, காவேரி இல்லம்,
கலைஞர் தெரு,
RMI நகர், புதுப்பட்டினம்,
காஞ்சிபுரம் -603 102.

அதற்கு முன் இந்த ஆய்வில் எத்தனை பேருக்கு தைராய்டு புற்றுநோய் பாதிப்பு இருந்தது என அனைவரும் அறியும் வகையில் வெளியிடவும்.

எந்த தன்னார்வ தொண்டு நிறுவனம் ஆய்வு செய்ததோ, அதே தொண்டு நிறுவனம்தான் என்னை வைத்து நெய்குப்பி கிராமத்தில் இலவச மருத்துவ முகாமை நடத்தியது. இதில் கலந்து கொண்ட மூன்றில் ஒரு பெண்மணிக்கு 64 பெண்களில் 21 பேருக்கு தைராய்டு பாதிப்பு இருந்ததாக நான் பதிவு செய்துள்ளேன். அதுபற்றி ஆய்வு செய்து அதன் முடிவையும் வெளியிட அந்த தன்னார்வ தொண்டு நிறுவனத்தை கேட்டுக்கொள்கிறேன்.

எனது Multiple Myeloma ஆய்வின்படி பிற இடத்தைவிட அணுசக்தி பணியாளர்களுக்கு அப்புற்றுநோயின் தாக்கம் புள்ளி விபர அடிப்படையில் முக்கியத்துவம் (Statistically Significant) வாய்ந்ததாக இருப்பது அணு உலை கதிர்வீச்சு அதற்கு காரணமாக இருக்கக் கூடும் என்பது தெரியவில்லையா?

தைராய்டு பாதிப்பும், (Auto Immune Thyroiditis) புள்ளி விபர அடிப்படையில் முக்கியத்துவம் வாய்ந்ததாக இருப்பதும், அதற்கு அணு உலை கதிர்வீச்சு காரணமாக இருக்கக் கூடும் என மருத்துவ/அறிவியல் ஆய்வறிக்கைகள் தெளிவாக கூறுவதிலிருந்தும், இங்குள்ள சுற்றுப்புற மக்களுக்கு கல்பாக்க அணுஉலை கதிர் வீச்சு (குறிப்பாக KARP (Kalpakkam Atomic Reprocessing Plant) காரணமாக இருக்கக் கூடும் என்பது தெளிவாக இல்லையா?

கதிரியக்கத்தை பொறுத்த மட்டில், இந்த அளவிற்கு மேல்தான் பாதிப்பு வரும் என கூற முடியாது என (There is no Safe Dosage) உலக ஆய்வுகள் உறுதி செய்ததை குறித்து பேசாமல் மௌனம் காப்பது ஏனோ?

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‘X’ கதிர், காமா கதிர்கள், நியூட்ரான்கள் புற்றுநோய் ஏற்படுத்தும் தன்மை கொண்டவை என அரசறிக்கைகள் சமீபத்தில் உறுதி செய்ததை குறித்து ஏதும் பேசாமல் மௌனம் காப்பது ஏன்?

“X” கதிர்களால் ஏற்படும் புற்றுநோய் வாய்ப்பு, அணுகுண்டு போட்டால் ஏற்படும் புற்றுநோய் வாய்ப்பைக் காட்டிலும் அதிகம் (சொன்னவர் - John goffman) என அணுசக்தி நிர்வாகத்தினர் நன்கறிந்திருந்தும் அது குறித்து பேசாமல் மௌனம் காப்பது ஏன்?

மேலும் எனது கட்டுரைக்கு (Indian Express 18.10.2008) நான் எழுப்பிய முக்கிய கேள்விகளுக்கு பதில் கொடுக்காமல் விட்டது ஏன்? எனது கேள்விகள்?

1998-க்கு பிறகு, KARP (சுத்திகரிப்பு ஆலை) வேலை தொடங்கியதிலிருந்து சுற்றுப்புற கதிரியக்கத்தின் அளவை ஏன் வெளியிடவில்லை? தயக்கமா? பயமா? சுத்திகரிப்பு பணியின் போதுதான் அணுக்கழிவுகள் அதிகம் வெளியாகும் (ஐயோடின் 131 உட்பட) என்பது தங்களுக்கு தெரியாதா?

தைராய்டு பாதிப்பு (Auto Immune Thyroiditis) தைராய்டு புற்றுநோய்க்கு ஐயோடின் 131 காரணம் இல்லை என ஏன் மறுக்கவில்லை. (ஐயோடின் 131 தைராய்டு பாதிப்பு / புற்றுநோய்க்கு காரணம் என மருத்துவ ஏடுகளில் உறுதி செய்யப்பட்டுள்ளது).

கதிரியக்கத்தின் அளவை வெளியிடச் சொன்னால், அதை செய்யாமல், அது மிக மிக குறைந்த அளவிலே மட்டுமே உள்ளது என பதில் சொல்லுவது ஏன்? ஒரு வேளை அளவை வெளியிட்டால், அதை விட கூடதான் கதிரியக்கம் உள்ளது என யாராவது சோதனை செய்து சொல்லி விடுவார்கள் என்ற அச்சமோ? மிக, மிக குறைந்த கதிரியக்கமும் ஆபத்து தான் என நிர்வாகத்தினருக்கு தெரிந்திருந்தும் அதை சொல்லாமல் விடுவது ஏன்? கதிரியக்கத்தின் அளவை ஆய்வு செய்து எவ்வளவு அளவு உள்ளது என்பதை AERB யிடம் கூறும் நீங்கள் பொதுமக்கள் பார்வைக்கு அதை ஏன் வைக்கவில்லை? KARP இராணுவத்துடன் தொடர்புடையதால் அதைப் பற்றியான புள்ளி விபரங்கள் அறியும் உரிமை யாருக்கும் இல்லை என்பது உண்மையாக இருக்க, அதைப்பற்றி பேசத் தயங்குவது ஏன்? KARP-ல் நடக்கும் விபரம் MAPS-க்கு சொல்லத் தேவையில்லையே?

கனடா போன்ற நாடுகளில் பணியாளர்கள் உள்வாங்கும் கதிர்வீச்சின் அளவு வருடம் இருமுறை அனைவரது பார்வைக்கும் வைக்கப்படுவது போன்று, இங்கு ஏன் செய்ய தயக்கம்? MAPS-ல் ஒப்பந்த பணியாளர்கள் கதிர்வீச்சு பாதிப்புக்கு உள்ளாகியும், அவரது பரிசோதனை முடிவுகள் கூட அவர் கடிதம் எழுதி கேட்டும் அவருக்கு நிர்வாகம் கொடுக்கவில்லை. அதை பதிவும் செய்யவில்லை. இதற்கான ஆதாரங்கள் என்னிடம் உள்ளது.

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விசயங்கள் இப்படி இருக்க, இப்போதைய தேவை ஒளிவு மறைவற்ற விவாதம் மற்றும் புள்ளி விபரங்களை பொதுவாக வைப்பதுதான். ஆக பாதிப்பு குறித்தான புள்ளி விபரங்களை முழுமையாக பொதுமக்கள் பார்வைக்கு வைக்கப்பட்டு அது குறித்தான பொது விவாதம் மேற்கொள்வதன் மூலம் மட்டுமே பணியாளர்கள், மக்களிடத்து உள்ள கதிர்வீச்சு குறித்தான பய உணர்வை போக்க முடியுமே ஒழிய, வேறு முயற்சிகளால் நடக்காது.

கல்பாக்க கடலோர மணலில் உள்ள கதிர்வீச்சின் அளவு 2 to 35 msv. இது வழக்கமான அளவைவிட 3 to 10 மடங்கு அதிகம்.

கல்பாக்க மீன்களில் கதிர்வீச்சு தன்மையுள்ள பொளோனியம், ஈயம் அதிகமுள்ளதென கல்பாக்க அதிகாரிகளின் ஆய்வறிக்கையே அமெரிக்க விஞ்ஞான ஏடுகளில் பதிவாகியுள்ளது.

– மரு. வீ. புகழேந்தி

Koodankulam Protest Diary

[1] Marthandam, Kanyakumari District, November 13, 2008

The People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy (PMANE) organized a one-day hunger strike from 10 am to 5 pm at Marthandam, Kanyakumari district on November 13, 2008 with the three demands that the Koodankulam nuclear power project that is threatening the people of southern Tamil Nadu and southern Kerala must be scrapped immediately, that the nuclear agreements India has signed with the US, Russia and France rescinded totally, and that the nuclear weapons program of India abandoned completely.

S. P. Udayakumar, coordinator of the People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy, presided over the hunger strike in the presence of C. Boaz and others. Sakuntala inaugurated the program; Samji, Santhi, Mary Joyce, Flori, Sivasubramanian, Mathias, Venice, Anthony Dasan, and others spoke at the event. Sowmini, Venice and others sang songs. P. Saravanabhavan offered vote of thanks and concluded the strike. Thousands of handbills on the purposes of the hunger strike, cancer, alternative ways of producing electricity, and a Q&A on the Koodankulam nuclear power project were distributed to the shopkeepers in the area, pedestrians, bus passengers, students, and the general public. The people listened to the speeches attentively, read the leaflets carefully and encouraged the hunger strikers with much enthusiasm and warmth. Two CID intelligence officers were with us throughout the day and took elaborate notes on our speeches, and the day's proceedings. There were several policemen posted around the strike site.

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[2] Thoothukudi, November 4, 2008

A one-day hunger strike had been planned in front of the Thoothukudi District Administrator's office on November 4, 2008. However, the local police informed the organizer just the previous day that we were not granted the necessary police permission to carry out the protest event. We were also threatened with "legal consequences" if we chose to ignore the notice and went ahead with the hunger strike. So the organizer, Sr. Assuntha, approached the High Court bench at Madurai to grant us the necessary permission to organize the hunger strike.

As the High Court was hearing our petition on November 4, 2008 at Madurai, three CID intelligence officers asked us not to gather there and to leave the place. We told them that we had to be there to share the news with our comrades who were coming from other parts of Tamil Nadu. Some 75 of us had gathered in front of the Thoothukudi District Administrator's office; we exchanged news and views with each other, distributed leaflets to the general public, organized an impromptu press meet, and announced our decision to organize a bigger event at a later date. By the time we were about to disperse, we received a word from the Court that they had ordered the DSP to give us a fresh date to organize the hunger strike. We decided to have the hunger strike on November 24, 2008.

[3] Cancer and Alternative Energy Awareness Campaign, October 25-28, 2008

A four-day awareness-raising tour was organized to educate the people of Kanyakumari district coastal villages about the harms of nuclear power plants, cancer disease and alternative sources of energy generation.

The vehicle tour began at 9 am on October 25, 2008 at Neerodi village with some 25 participants. Social activist Berlin flagged off the tour. Traversing through some 46 coastal villages across the Kanyakumari district and traveling almost 150 kms distance, the tour met with approximately 15,000 men, women and children.

When we entered a coastal village, a few of us addressed the people through the public address system explaining the goals of the tour, general information about nuclear power plants, the high cancer incidence in our area, the possibility of getting even more cancer cases because of the upcoming nuclear power plants at Koodankulam, the alternative and renewable sources of electricity generation. As the speakers spoke, several of us walked through the villages, distributed different fliers and booklets, talked to people, collected their signatures in a petition to the government to stop the Koodankulam nuclear power projects.

The villages were so enthusiastic about our awareness-raising tour that they offered breakfast, lunch, tea and snacks and dinner wherever we went.

The tour came to a close on October 28, 2008 evening at Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip of India, with a cultural program and series of speeches. The tour demanded that a well-equipped and appropriately staffed cancer hospital be established in Kanyakumari district that has been affected by high natural radiation and higher incidence of cancer. The campaign also asked for a cancer research center in the district. It was further demanded that an insurance scheme to help the cancer victims and their families be instituted.

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[4] Alatthankarai, October 11, 2008

The People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy organized a one-day hunger strike from 10 am to 5 pm at Alatthankarai village near Rajakkamangalam on October 11, 2008 with the three demands that the Koodankulam nuclear power project that is threatening the people of southern Tamil Nadu and southern Kerala must be scrapped immediately, that the nuclear agreements India has signed with the US, Russia and France rescinded totally, and that the nuclear weapons program of India abandoned completely.

Mr. Chellappan, Elluvilai panchayat councilor, presided over the event in the presence of Vellimalai panchayat councilor Mrs. Thangaleela. Mr. Vijayaraghavan, Alatthankarai community president, flagged off the hunger strike. Social activists Samji, C. Boaz, P. Saravanabhavan, R. Ariharasuthan, S. P. Udayakumar and S. Lidwin, the convener of the Campaign Against Violence on Women spoke at the event.

[5] Nagercoil, September 29, 2008

Scores of school children from all over Kanyakumari district, who are members of the Children's Panchayat, made a representation to the Kanyakumari District Administrator on September 29, 2008. They expressed their fear that the Koodankulam nuclear plant would give rise to

dangerous radiation that will spread through air and water and damage the health and well-being of all the people, especially the young children and their futures. They were concerned that the additional four plants at Koodankulam would further damage their futures and hence demanded that electricity be produced through alternative means. They wanted the Kanyakumari District Administrator to stop the Koodankulam nuclear power project immediately.

[6] Nagercoil, September 22, 2008

The People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy organized a one-day hunger strike in front of the Kanyakumari District Administrator's office at Nagercoil on September 22, 2008 with the three demands that the Koodankulam nuclear power project that was threatening the people of Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts must be stopped immediately, that the nuclear agreements India had signed with the US, Russia and France scrapped, and that the nuclear weapons program of India wrapped up completely.

Sr. Assuntha presided over the event and flagged off the hunger strike. Tamil Nadu Fishworkers' Union president Peter Dhas, Human Rights Protection Movement president Gunaseelan, Tamil Nadu-Pondicherry Consumer Federation president Navaneetham, Create Trust president Ponnambalam, Koodankulam panchayat union councilor Sandal Muthuraj, Land Protection Sangam president Padmadhas, social activist Samji, Helen Mary, C. Boaz, Voice from the Margins convener S. M. Prithviraj, P. Saravanabhavan, R. Ariharasuthan, S. P. Udayakumar, S. Lidwin, Philomena, Joyce, Adv. Sivasubramanian, Fr. Jesuraj, and many others spoke at the event. S. Lidwin concluded the hunger strike in the evening. Some of the strikers handed a memorandum to the Kanyakumari District Administrator, B. Jothi Nirmla, that demanded immediate closure of the Koodankulam plants. Several activists sang thought-provoking songs throughout the day.

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An Open Letter to Left Parties

People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy
42/27 Esankai Mani Veethy
Parakkai Road Junction
Nagercoil 629 002
Tamil Nadu

October 2, 2008

To

The National Executive Members
Communist Party of India
Ajoy Bhavan
15, Kotla Marg
New Delhi 110 002

The Central Committee Members
Communist Party of India (Marxist)
A.K. Gopalan Bhawan
27-29, Bhai Vir Singh Marg
New Delhi 110 001

The Central Committee Members
All India Forward Bloc
28, Gurudwara Rakab Ganj Road
[New Delhi](#) 110 001

The Central Committee Members
Revolutionary Socialist Party
17, Firoz Shah Road
[New Delhi](#) 110 001

The Central Committee Members
Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation
U-90, Shakarpur
Delhi 110 092

Dear Comrades:

We, the members of the People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy, would like to congratulate the Leftist parties and leaders in India on your principled opposition to American imperialism that seeks to dominate our national life. We would also like to thank you for problematizing the India-US nuclear deal and popularizing the issue across the country among all sections of our

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society. The Leftist parties and leaders are the only hope of India to create awareness on people-friendly development paradigm; alternative energy generation; elimination of war and weapons of mass destruction; and transparency, accountability and popular participation in our national affairs.

It is our humble submission that only the Leftist parties and leaders can shift the course of our national economy, politics and history in India and pave a new way for our collective salvation and freedom. After all, human society is based on “production of products” and “production of life.” Humans act on Nature with the help of instruments to get products. Such a production of products must be based on needs; but now it is all done with greed damaging the Nature irreparably. Should humanity continue on the Earth, Nature should be protected! For the “production of life,” Nature should be pristine so that future generations could thrive on our planet.

However, the contemporary world operates with a wrong understanding of “development” that has its focus on indiscriminate industrialization, liberalization, privatization, globalization, monetization [and Americanization] with complete disregard for Nature, future, the interests of the labor, the safety and well-being of unborn generations, and other such externalities.

India’s ruling class says that if India has to achieve and sustain the desired growth level of 9-10 percent, the country has to have energy security, or as some nationalist leaders put it, energy independence. In India, electricity has always been considered to be a development input but now it has come to be regarded as a tradable commodity. Of the 593,732 villages in India (1991 census) 474,982 have been electrified with the remarkable 80 percent electrification. But if we look at the electrification of rural households, we see a different picture. There are some 138.3 million rural households (2001 census) in India but only 60.2 million of them have access to electricity and the electrification percentage is only 44 percent. So it is not that electricity is not available in their villages for these rural households but they simply cannot afford it. It is poverty that prevents them from accessing electricity.

Although India has more or less sufficient quantity of electricity today, a considerable portion of our electricity is said to be wasted because of technical and commercial factors. Some 40% of electricity is lost in transmission because of energy dissipation in conductors and equipment used for Transmission and Distribution (T&D). Pilferage, defective meters, error in meter reading, error in estimating unmetered supply are other reasons for this huge wastage of electricity. So the challenges India faces today include reducing and eliminating T&D loss, improving the quality of supply and delivery systems, providing electricity for all at affordable price, and improving the economic lot of all the people across the country.

Ignoring all these socioeconomic-political intricacies and complexities, India’s ruling class seeks a scientific-technical solution for the energy issue and keeps chanting the nuclear mantra. They completely overlook the facts that there have been no new nuclear power stations built in the United States for the past 35 years and in Russia for almost 22 years, and that many European countries are phasing out their nuclear power program. There is hardly any debate about the enormous amount of dangerous nuclear waste we will accumulate from the nuclear power plants, the need to safeguard this “hazmat treasure” for 48,000 years, huge amounts of heavy metals discharged by light and heavy water reactors, radiation blues, shoving around fissile material,

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nuclear weapons proliferation, and Armageddon on the Earth.

In fact, American, Russian and French capitalists try to dump their nuclear technology on India for their own survival and profit. Global capitalism turns any calamity to its advantage, and it puts forward nuclear power as the answer for climate change. If we look closely, mining and processing of uranium, building nuclear power stations with so much cement and steel, the long construction process, the decommissioning of the plants, and handling the radioactive waste - all cause considerable climate-changing pollution.

Just as nuclear power is not an answer for climate change, it is not a panacea for our energy needs. As the *People's Democracy* and many of the Leftist leaders have pointed out, the contribution of nuclear power to the national grid has been so small and will continue to be so even after the India-US nuclear deal comes into effect. Nuclear power is also more expensive than any other mode of electricity generation.

Global capitalism promotes nuclear power as the single solution for all the world's energy woes and its economic development. In India, so much money has already been wasted on nuclear power projects that are expensive, inefficient and troublesome. Since the current cash crunch is mainly due to nuclear power being very expensive and capital intensive, Indian nuclear establishment has expressed interest in inviting private investments and amending nuclear laws to facilitate privatization. What all this means is that while private companies make money with no responsibilities whatsoever, Indian taxpayers and the "ordinary citizens" will bear the cost of dealing with all the liabilities such as nuclear waste, possible accidents, public health issues and other dangerous consequences.

The international and Indian capitalists will thrive at the cost of India's poor. National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector reveals that 320 million Indian workers live on less than 20 rupees a day. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has recorded 1,66,304 farmers' suicides in a decade since 1997. There were 17,060 farmers' suicides in 2006 alone across India. All these mean that there has been one farmer's suicide every 30 minutes since 2002 (*The Hindu*, January 31, 2008). When our people lack basic food security, water security, sanitation security, job security, and human security, energy security is bandied about to promote the interests of the rich and powerful.

Nobody except the Leftists dares to challenge any nuclear activity in the country. In fact, the present pro-military-industrial-academic-complex-thinking considers uranium mining, nuclear power plants, nuclear weaponization, nuclear deals with Americans, Russians and the French, and strategic partnerships with them as integral parts of being a patriotic Indian. Nuclearism has been part and parcel of the Northern capitalist development paradigm and the UPA government is underscoring this aspect to gain an upper hand in the national political game. An unequivocal problematization of this mainstream understanding of "development" has become the need of the hour.

A highly populated country like India does have an increasing need for energy. But that energy has to be economical, sustainable and environment-friendly for the same reason of having over-and-dense- population. The country needs to spend less on energy because there are other

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pressing needs such as health, education, housing, transportation and so forth. India cannot afford the “use and discord” strategy as in nuclear power projects for obvious reasons of limited land availability, reliance on the sea and sea food, future generation’s interests and so forth. Its energy projects have to be environmentally-friendly because even a small incident can harm, hurt or kill a huge number of people.

Nuclear power is beset with threats and dangers that can encompass the most improbable meteorite fall to the commonplace terrorist attack. For instance, *The Hindu* newspaper (September 6, 2006) reported that a meteorite fell at Kanvarpura village near Rawatbhata, where Rajasthan Atomic Power Plant is situated, on August 29, 2006. The [Geological Survey of India Deputy Director-General (western region) R. S. Goyal] said the meteorite could have caused devastation on an 'unimaginable scale' if it had fallen on the Rawatbhata Atomic Power Plant. Presiding over a crucial day-long meeting of the Chief Ministers on Internal Security, the Indian Prime Minister said terrorist outfits planned possible terrorist attacks on vital installations including nuclear establishments (*The Hindu*, September 6, 2006). In fact, two armed men were reportedly seen moving in the inner fencing area around the Kakrapar nuclear power plant in Gujarat (*The Hindu*, August 23, 2006). The plant was declared safe later without much elaboration.

Most importantly, nuclearism is a global political ideology that cannot stomach any transparency, accountability or popular participation. It snubs dissent, denounces opponents and creates a political climate of fear and retribution. With the India-US nuclear deal, and the deals with Russia and France and the private participation in nuclear energy generation, the situation is going to get out of hand. The combination of profiteering companies, secretive state apparatus and repressive nuclear department will be ruthless and this nexus of capitalism, statism, nuclearism and communalism does not augur well for the country. These forces gaining an upper hand in our national polity will mean a death knell for the country’s democracy, openness, futures and sustainable development.

When the beginning of the 21st century provides India a historic opportunity to be a world-leader by building on our traditional strengths such as sustainable development and appropriate technology, our elites are forcing us to be American stooges with war-based values and wasteful lifestyle.

The way out of this capitalistic and imperialistic quandary is to be progressive and being progressive does not necessarily mean going back to the days of pastoral simplicity. We need to strive for Green alternatives for our modern needs. The Leftists with Green values would be a boon for the country at this hour of crisis.

We would like to present you with a concrete example. We are sure you have heard about the Koodankulam nuclear power plant that is being constructed in the Koodankulam village on the Gulf of Mannar in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. The Government of India is constructing two 1000 MW light water VVER nuclear power plants with Russian technology and loans. They have not released any Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, or the safety analysis report or the site evaluation study for the first two plants they are constructing. Nor have they conducted any public hearing to hear what the people of southern Tamil Nadu and Kerala have to say about the construction of these two nuclear power plants. We in southern Tamil Nadu and

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Kerala are very concerned about this undemocratic and anti-people multimillion dollar project that is thrust down our throats in the name of “development” and “energy security.”

Neither the Government of India nor the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has shared any information about the Koodankulam plants or anything about the overall nuclear energy plans with any kind of transparency, democratic spirit or civic responsibility. They spread rumors and gossips about their plans and intentions and when these “unconfirmed reports” circulate among the public for sometime and gain some negative acceptance, they confirm the hearsays. The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) has decided to increase the number of reactors at Koodankulam to eight (*The Hindu*, September 25, 2006). The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) also has proposed to establish nuclear power plants in or near Koodankulam with the generating capacity of 2000 MW power (*The Hindu*, September 6, 2006). So, as a recent newspaper report confirms (*The Hindu*, September 11, 2008) Koodankulam will be the largest mega nuclear complex with almost 10,000 MW generation capacity.

Some of the RTI enquiries to the district collectors of a few southern Tamil Nadu and southern Kerala districts reveal how woefully inadequate they are about the nuclear safety arrangements and emergency preparedness. The India-Russia agreement on Koodankulam stipulated first that Russia would take the nuclear waste but now it has been decided that the waste will remain in India. There is hardly any discussion or consciousness among the political or bureaucratic circles about the nuclear waste issues, decommissioning questions, radiation hazards, future impact on our seas, fish and so forth. Nuclear waste management is going to be a major headache for our people. That is why D. D. Kosambi branded nuclear power as a “menace that even the unborn generations have to deal with.” He further said, “only opportunists and third rate scientists spend their time and energies on nuclear power.”

Our people in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala are taking a clear and bold stand that these nuclear power plants are not in the best interests of us and these projects should be stopped for ever. The Koodankulam mega nuclear complex will have disastrous consequences for all of us, the Tamils, the Malayalees, and even the Sinhalese and the Maldivians in the neighboring countries.

Friends in Kerala have had such a fine record of fighting for the Silent Valley, against the soft-drink companies’ stealing their water resources etc. They took such a courageous stand in not having any nuclear power plants in Kerala because of the over and dense-population in the state. But the Government of India has pushed the plant just a little outside their state boundary and set up the plant right across their front door.

When 10 nuclear power plants release the coolant effluents into the sea on daily basis for the next four to five decades, one can think of the impact and repercussions that will have on all our air, our land, our water, our sea, our fish, our cattle, our children, our fathers and mothers, our health, and our future. The vested interests are trying to set our common home on fire in the name of energy security and national security. How about our human security? Our food security? Our air security? The security of our children who speak and sing in Tamil, Malayalam, Sinhalese and Divehi? Their songs and dances and their dreamy futures?

This corner may be the "End of India" for the rest of India! But for us, this has been the

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beginning of India, the beginning of life, the beginning of everything! This place, this little corner of hills and high seas, rivers and forests, and ponds and paddy fields, is full of beginnings for us. This is where our life began, our history began, our culture began, our speech, our memories, our meanings, our dreams and desires – all began. But what will come off this beautiful place?

Almost all our political parties, politicians, bureaucrats, religious leaders, and many NGOs have turned a blind eye to the nuclear issue. When people ask some uncomfortable questions about the nuclear project, we are often branded as unpatriotic, anti-national, and even CIA agents. It is quite ironic that the Indian elites call the people who oppose the nuclear program CIA agents when they themselves are selling the country to the Americans.

Only the Leftists can and may tell us that we, the working class of India and the neighboring countries, are all human beings, that we all have a common home, the south of South Asia, that the sea is part and parcel of our home, and that fish is the most important food for us all. In short, the people of the south of South Asia share the same destiny of nuclear agony and only the Leftists can see this at the larger international picture and offer us a way out. Some Leftists tend to think that it is only the United States we should oppose and not nuclear energy per se or nuclear cooperation with Russia or France. Russia, like America, is also a capitalistic country and is interested in selling their nuclear technology to India in order to make some quick bucks.

It is high time the Left all over India took an unambiguous stand against expensive, inefficient, dangerous waste-producing, weapons-proliferating, Nature-harming, future-hurting, children-killing, colonizing and enslaving nuclear energy without riders and exceptions and ifs and buts!

Nuclearism is no more an energy issue or a scientific matter but a life-threatening political issue. The Left parties and leaders can and must make a difference in the nuclear issue just as you have done in the ongoing global financial crisis. Hoping that you would take this appeal seriously and lead us to better futures, we send you our best personal regards and all peaceful wishes.

Cordially,

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