

The role of church and western NGOs in destabilization activities in India

By Ravindranath

There is a misconception that only the Muslim radicals resort to terrorism. However, the truth is that the Christian evangelists are equally guilty of encouraging terrorism in India. The only difference is that they do it in a surreptitious manner. In fact, the Christian involvement in aiding various insurgent and militant groups in the north-east started right from the time of India's emergence as an independent nation in 1947. The Christian missionaries, especially those belonging to Catholic and Protestant factions, are also found closely linked with pro-LTTE elements in Tamil Nadu, militant tribal groups in Tripura and the Maoist movement. It may be recalled that four RSS Pracharaks who were opposed to the Christian conversion activities in Tripura were abducted by a Christian militant group about 20 years back, and even their dead bodies were never recovered. Even now there are various instances of pro-Christian militants in Tripura intimidating the Hindu tribals against offering prayers at their religious places and disrupting their pujas and other religious rituals. It is an open secret that the church had used the Maoist outfit to eliminate VHP leader Swami Laxmananda Saraswati and four others in Kandhamal district of Orissa on August 23, 2008, because of his opposition to the Christian conversion activities in the area. In an interview published in the May 6, 2010 edition of 'Sathyadeepam', a Catholic weekly published from Kochi (Kerala), Bishop Charles Soreng of Hazaribagh, Jharkhand has admitted that the Maoists are sympathetic to the church and are supporting the priests in carrying out their missionary activities. The church activists and Maoists are also found jointly supporting the NGO-sponsored agitation against all mega-development projects in India as part of a western conspiracy to stall India's economic progress. The church's involvement in such destabilization activities was never seen as blatantly as in the case of agitation against the Kudankulam nuclear power plant in Tamil Nadu.

Kudankulam nuclear project

The government of India had signed an agreement with the erstwhile government of USSR in 1988 to set up two 1000 MW light water nuclear reactors at Kudankulam in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. After the collapse of the Soviet regime, a supplementary agreement was signed with the new Russian Federation in 1998. The first of the two units of the Kudankulam project was to be completed in December 2007, which was subsequently revised to mid-2010. This was further revised to September 2011, by which time the anti-nuclear protests broke out in Kudankulam. In 2011, the NCPIL of India and the Russian firm AtomstrovExport formally had inked another deal for building two more civil nuclear reactors of 1000 MW each at Kudankulam.

Misinformation campaign

The Christian missionaries were opposed to the Koodankulam nuclear power plant from the very beginning. However they were not getting much support from the local people initially. Then the Church leaders and the church-funded NGOs started a vicious and sustained propaganda campaign among the local villagers to turn them against the nuclear power plant. The salient features of this misinformation campaign were as under.

- 1) The nuclear power plant poses a grave threat to the local population as even a minor accident due to a human or mechanical error or due to a natural calamity can wipe out the entire local population.
- 2) The plant will adversely affect the livelihood of the local fishermen as the radiation from the plant will cause large scale destruction of fish. Whatever catch they get, will be disqualified for export to the European market because of radiation effect.
- 3) The nuclear plants are responsible for the spread of cancer.
- 4) The nuclear plant will disturb the ecological balance of the area.

The fishermen in the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu are all mostly Christian converts, many of them having been converted to Christianity in the recent past. The 2004 tsunami tragedy was a blessing in disguise for the Christian missionaries, who used the vast sums of money received as tsunami aid from the western countries to convert the tsunami-hit poor and homeless villagers into the Christian fold. Their religious affinity has helped the senior church leaders in brainwashing them over a period of time into believing the potential threat posed by the nuclear power plant. The fishermen in the coastal districts of Tuticorin, Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu are now convinced that there is a real threat to their lives and livelihood from the Kudankulam nuclear power plant, and they are now ready to resort to any form of agitational activities as per the directions of the church and the NGO leaders.

Agitational activities

The villagers and other anti-nuclear activists have been conducting protest programmes against the Kudankulam plant since last two decades by holding protest demonstrations, sitting in dharnas, etc, in the locality at regular intervals. The church and NGO activists and local fishermen were in the forefront of such agitational activities. Earlier the villagers were opposing the plant raising mainly the issue of loss of livelihood. But now, after the Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan on March 11, 2011, they have shifted their focus from the livelihood to the safety issue. The church leaders, who exploited the Fukushima incident to create panic among the local villagers over the possibility of a nuclear disaster at Kudankulam, were able to motivate the villagers to step up their agitational activities against the Kudankulam nuclear power plant. The agitating villagers led by the church and NGO activists had laid siege to the nuclear plant on December 11, 2011, paralyzing the work at the plant.

The first unit of Kudankulam Phase-1 was to be commissioned in December, 2011. But it is yet to be commissioned because of the ongoing anti-nuclear plant protests in Kudankulam. The massive protests organized by the church activists and some western-funded NGOs had paralyzed the work at Kudankulam plant since December 2011. The delay in commissioning the plant was causing huge loss to government of India. The Russian government had also conveyed its displeasure to India over the disruption of work at Kudankulam plant. Then suddenly in February 2012, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, while giving an interview to the Science magazine, lashed out at some NGOs based in the US and Scandinavian countries for inciting anti-nuclear protests in Tamil Nadu. The prime minister's outburst against the role of some western NGOs in encouraging the anti-nuclear stir in Tamil Nadu had its desired effect. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha took prompt and immediate action against some of the Christian NGOs spearheading the agitation in the state, paving the way for resumption of work at the plant from March 19, 2012. Subsequently, four NGOs were booked for diversion of funds for

anti-nuclear stir and licenses of three NGOs were cancelled for violation of FCRA rules. Meanwhile, a special home ministry team that visited Kudankulam and checked the accounts of two of the organizations spearheading the anti-nuclear protests had found that the two outfits had received Rs 55 crore from the foreign donors. (<http://www.ndtv.com/article/tamil-nadu/minister-alleges-receiving-of-foreign-funds-170354>).

After a lull in the anti-nuclear protests following the prime minister's outburst against some western-funded NGOs and the arrest of some NGO leaders by the Tamil Nadu police, the protest against the Kudankulam plant had resumed in Tamil Nadu with renewed vigour and intensity from September, 2012. The police lobbed tear gas shells and also resorted to a cane charge to disperse a mob of about 5000 anti-nuclear protesters who assembled at Kudankulam beach on September 10, 2012. It was the first time that the police used force to disperse the anti-nuclear protesters. Hundreds of villagers held a 'Jal satyagraha' at Idinthakarai (near Kudankulam) in Tamil Nadu on September 13, 2012 by standing in waist-deep sea water and forming a human chain, in a novel way of protest against the Kudankulam nuclear plant. On September 22, about 600 fishing boats from the coastal districts of Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram in Tamil Nadu laid siege to the Tuticorin port, located about 100 km away from Kudankulam, for two hours in a symbolic protest against the Kudankulam nuclear power plant. On September 26, hundreds of villagers buried themselves in neck-deep sand at Idinthakarai beach from 10 AM to 4 PM in another dramatic form of protest against the nuclear plant. On the same day, the villagers occupied cemeteries in some places in the state, symbolically seeking the help of ancestors in their fight against the nuclear plant. Can you believe that the poor and illiterate villagers in the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu would indulge in such gimmicks as their own innovation in the name of agitation against the nuclear power plant?

Not only the foreign funds are used for promoting anti-nuclear stir in Tamil Nadu, but there is also direct intervention by foreigners and foreign agencies in support of the agitation against the Kudankulam nuclear power plant. British MPs and members of European Parliament under the aegis of South Asia Solidarity Group had sent a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in May, 2012 expressing deep concern about the human rights and environmental issues over the Kudankulam nuclear project in Tamil Nadu which according to them violates International Atomic Energy Agency's safety guidelines. The letter also demanded the immediate withdrawal of all cases registered against the nuclear power plant protesters and accusing the security forces of intimidation and harassment. Demanding the immediate scrapping of the project, the letter described it as a safety hazard as it is located in a tsunami and earthquake-prone region. Anti-nuclear and rights group activists held a noisy demonstration in front of the Indian High Commission Office in London on May 18, 2012 in protest against the Kudankulam nuclear power plant allegedly located in a tsunami-prone area. The activists representing anti-nuclear and human rights groups like South Asia Solidarity Group, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and South West Against Nuclear demanded immediate scrapping of the Kudankulam power plant.

Millions of rupees are spent by the various church agencies and NGOs in providing food and transportation to the villagers who participate in the prolonged agitation against the Kudankulam nuclear plant and for their nation-wide misinformation campaign in support of their

agitation. The church and western-funded NGOs are whipping up anger and fear-complex against the nuclear plant only to serve the private agenda of the western countries aimed to stall India's economic progress and also to sow the seeds of disintegration. Every agitational activity against the Kudankulam nuclear plant was openly supported by the church leaders in the area. The churches in the entire coastal belt of Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari used to give open appeals to the people asking them to come out in large numbers and take part in various protest programmes against the nuclear plant. Reports about such open abetment by church leaders to agitation against the Kudankulam plant had come in all national newspapers. Kudankulam nuclear plant is a prestigious project undertaken by the government of India with the collaboration of a foreign government. How can the church try to stall it by inciting a violent agitation against it? Why are our politicians silent over such anti-national role of the church in India?

The church and NGO leaders have been exploiting the Fukushima accident to spread panic among the villagers in Tamil Nadu. But what is the truth about Fukushima accident? It is true that three Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactors were crippled by the tsunami flood in 2011. However, while about 19000 people were killed in the devastation caused by the earth quake and tsunami in Japan on March 11, 2011, none died from any radiation leakage from the Fukushima nuclear plant. The biggest ever recorded nuclear mishap in history took place at Chernobyl in Soviet Union (now Ukraine) on April 26, 1986. About 200000 people had to be permanently relocated after the accident. But there was no immediate casualty. However, death of 56 people, including 47 plant workers, could be linked directly to radiation leak from the plant. The combined death toll in all the past nuclear accidents in the world so far is less than 100. This is a minuscule number when compared to thousands of deaths occurring the world over every year from various industrial accidents. Why are the church leaders concealing such facts from the people? Why are they silent over the fact that the Kalpakkam nuclear plant near Chennai withstood the 2004 tsunami attack without any loss of life? Why can't the church and NGO leaders speak about the safety records of BARC and other nuclear plants in India since 1950s?

There were only two nuclear disasters in the world in which thousands of innocent people had perished. One was at Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and the other was at Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. These were however not accidents, but mindless and brutal massacres carried out by the Americans. About 90000 to 160000 people were killed in the bombing of Hiroshima city on August 6 where as about 60000 to 80000 people perished in the bombing of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. About 50% of the victims died on the day of bombing itself, and the rest died over a period of five years. It is inconceivable as to how could anyone, after witnessing the devastation caused by the bombing of Hiroshima, target Nagasaki too three days later? Well, only the Americans can do it. There is not much change even now in the mindset of American rulers. The American misadventure in Vietnam, the carpet bombing of Afghanistan in the name of war on terror and the Iraq invasion prove just that.

It is time to call the bluff of these anti-nuclear activists. They are the same people who successfully paralyzed the work at Jaitapur nuclear plant in Maharashtra. The same bunch of activists were able to sabotage the Haripur nuclear plant in West Bengal at the land acquisition stage itself. Activist B.G.Kolse Patil, a retired judge of Bombay High Court, who headed a so-called three-member independent inquiry commission to probe into the police crack down on

anti-nuclear protesters at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu on September 10, 2012 had submitted his probe report condemning the state authorities for the crack down and supporting the cause of the anti-nuclear protesters. He is the same activist who had courted arrest in 2011, while participating in the agitation against the Jatapur nuclear power plant in Maharashtra. The same Kolse Patil had headed a 15-member independent inquiry committee in 2006 only to prove that the three Muslim terrorists who were shot dead by the police in an encounter in front of the RSS headquarters in Nagpur on June 1, 2006, were innocent people killed in a fake encounter. NGO activists Medha Patkar and B.D.Sharma are two of the prominent leaders who coordinate the various anti-development movements and agitations at the national level. But are these activists opposed to only the nuclear power plants? Not at all. They are opposed to all developmental projects in India, including thermal power plants, hydel projects, cement and steel plants and dams and ports. They oppose all such projects raking up issues like livelihood and rehabilitation of the project-affected people, environmental pollution, health hazards to local people, threat to rare species of birds and animals and wild-life protection. The whole exercise is part of a big international conspiracy funded by the church and some western agencies to stall India's march to progress. For instance, about 250 NGOs from 37 countries had conducted an international campaign in support of Medha Patkar-led Narmada Bachao Andolan's opposition to Sardar Sarovar Project, which culminated in the cancellation of a world bank loan for the said project in 1993. The UK branch of World Wide Fund for Nature and the Rufford Foundation of UK had played a key role in mobilizing support for a campaign against the proposed mega port project at Vadhavan near Dahanu in Maharashtra in 1997. Several British MPs and representatives of international NGOs had participated in a protest demonstration in front of the Indian High Commissioner's office in London against the Vadhavan port project in 1997. The said port project was finally scuttled in 1998 due to the machinations of the anti-development lobby. The World Wide Fund for Nature and some Christian NGOs were in the forefront in a vicious campaign against a prestigious underground Neutrino laboratory proposed to be constructed at Shingara in Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu leading to the shifting of its location to Theni district in Tamil Nadu in 2010, thereby delaying the project by about seven years. The employees of Alcan, a Canadian aluminum company, and some human rights and NGO activists had started a prolonged campaign in Montreal from 2000 in protest against the Utkal Alumina project, a joint venture by Hindalco and Alcan in Kshipur tahsil of Orissa, on the ground of displacement of tribal villagers and environmental pollution. They even started an NGO called 'Alcan't in India' to coordinate the campaign against the Utkal Alumina project in India. The Alcan sold its share to Hindalco and withdrew from the project in July, 2007.

The Centre on August 20, 2010 had withdrawn permission for the 600-MW hydropower project coming up at Loharinag-Pala in Uttarakhand following environmental concerns raised by some NGOs and locals. The Rs.2262-crore project which was sanctioned on February 8, 2005 was coming up on the river Bhagirathi. The state-run firm had already spent Rs.700 crore and made financial commitment worth crores of rupees. The NTPC had taken environmental clearance for the project before starting the work. As part of the construction work, tunnels and shafts have been dug through the mountains. The Centre will now have to pay Rs.600 crore to the promoters as compensation.

The other two minor projects, 480 MW Pala Maneri hydro project and 381 MW Bhaironghati hydro project coming up on the same river were already scrapped by the Centre

earlier due to opposition from local environmental groups who alleged that the plant will reduce the flow of the river venerated in the Hindu mythology. When have these Christian and leftist-dominated activists started respecting the divinity attached to these rivers by the Hindu mythology?

The activists of several NGOs and human rights groups held a demonstration in Central London on August 28, 2012 in protest against a bauxite mining project of Vedanta Aluminum Ltd, a subsidiary of Vedanta Resources of the UK, in Niyamgiri Hills in Orissa. The protest programme was organized by the Survival International, an international NGO, Amnesty International and South Asia Solidarity Group. Senior Labor MP John Mc Donnell also participated in the protest. All the leaders who addressed the gathering criticized the Vedanta Resources for going ahead with its project ignoring the misgivings and grievances of the local Dongria Kondh tribals of Niyamgiri Hills against the project. The Norwegian government in 2007 had withdrawn its pension fund of more than 9 million Euros, invested with the Vedanta Resources of UK, in protest against the alleged insensitivity of the Vedanta Resources towards the grievances of the Dongria Kondh tribals of Niyamgiri Hills in Orissa. The UK National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, a government agency, which conducted a probe into the allegations raised by the Survival International against the Vedanta Resources, had also come up with its probe report on September 25, 2009, severely criticizing the Vedanta Resources for ignoring the fears and concerns of the tribal residents of Niyamgiri Hills. The state chief minister had laid the foundation stone for Vedanta's mining project in 2004. However, the final environmental clearance for this project is yet to be received. (<http://www.oecd.org/investment/guidelinesformultinationalenterprises/43884129.pdf>)

The Vedanta Aluminium which runs a one million tonne alumina refinery in Lanjigarh block of Orissa's Kalahandi district, closed down this unit from October 13, 2012 due to acute shortage of bauxite. The refinery has been facing a crisis of bauxite ore supply after the environment ministry in August 2010 withdrew the stage II forest clearance for the diversion of 660 hectares of forest land for mining bauxite in the Niyamgiri Hills.

In April 2011, two Australians from Queensland province had lodged two separate complaints with the Indian High Commission against the threat to the local communities in downstream villages of Lanjigarh from Vedanta Aluminium's Red Mud Ponds in Orissa and seeking remedial measures and denial of permission to any expansion programme of the project, as though they are better informed of such threats than the Indian authorities. In another development, the Orissa government recently had imposed stringent restrictions on foreign tourists visiting the tribal regions in the state because of their suspicious activities among the local tribals.

A German national, by name Sonntag Reiner Hermann, was picked up by the Tamil Nadu police from a lodge in Nagercoil on February 26, 2012 for his role in mobilizing funds and support for the anti-nuclear stir in Tamil Nadu. After interrogation, he was deported back to Germany on February 28, 2012. In a similar incident on September 26, 2012, three Japanese nationals, including a woman, who arrived in Chennai en route to Kudankulam to participate in the anti-nuclear plant stir, were deported back on the same day. Fishing in the troubled waters, German physicist and Nobel Peace Laureate Hans Peter Duerr, who is also the Director Emeritus of Max-Planck Institute for Physics, Germany, said in Chennai on March 8, 2012, that nuclear

energy could never be safe or sustainable option for the mankind and any claims to the contrary were nonsensical. All these instances clearly indicate a wider international conspiracy behind the protest movements and agitations against various developmental projects in India. However these movements could not have been such a success without a helping hand from the ruling regime. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who had recently criticized some American and Scandinavian NGOs for inciting the anti-nuclear stir in Tamil Nadu cannot be unaware about the nexus between the anti-development lobby and the NAC led by Sonia Gandhi. The ministries of environment and forests and Tribal affairs have played a key role in stalling or delaying various mega development projects in India, as is seen in the case of POSCO project in Orissa.

The South Korean steel major POSCO is setting up a mega steel plant at Jagatsinghpur in Orissa at an estimated cost of Rs.52000 crores. The MOU for the project was signed in June, 2005. This will be the biggest ever single- project foreign investment in India. This project will give employment to about 13000 people and indirect employment to 35000 people. But, as usual, the NGO and environmental lobby is opposing the project raking up displacement, environmental and livelihood issues. They also claimed that the proposed port at Jatadhari would affect the fishing community in the area, cause damage to the coastline and destroy the nesting habitat of endangered Olive Ridley turtle. There had been many clashes in the past between the supporters and opponents of the project. The first phase of the project was scheduled to be completed in 2010. But the work on the project has not even started because of the confrontationist attitude of a section of the people backed by some NGO activists. On November 2, 2010, the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) recommended withdrawal of the forest clearance granted to the 52000 crore project in 2007, as it was going to come up in violation of the Forest Rights Act. In 2011, the ministry of environment and forests gave an environmental clearance to the project with 28 additional conditions over and above what was stipulated in the original environmental clearance of July 2007. However, creating further hurdles against the project, the National Green Tribunal (TGT) on March 30, 2012 suspended the final 2011 environmental order of the MoEF given in favour of the POSCO plant. The ministry of environment and forests has thus made a mockery of the process of granting environmental clearance to various projects in the country.

Frustrated by the prolonged delay in granting environmental and other clearances by the concerned ministries to various mega development projects in India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh now wants to introduce a single-window clearance for all developmental projects with an investment of Rs 1000 crore or more. Finance Minister P.Chidambaram, while speaking at a meeting of the Planning Commission on September 15, 2012, had proposed to set up a national investment board (NIB), headed by the Prime Minister, to fast-track all infrastructure projects in the country. He had said that the NIB's authority should extend to all proposals and projects involving an investment of Rs 1000 crore or more and once the final decision is taken by the NIB, no other ministry or department or authority should be allowed to interfere with its decision. Well, it is a very admirable and laudable proposal. However, as expected, the ministries of environment and tribal affairs are opposed to the said proposal. In a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, environment minister Jayanthi Natarajan has slammed the finance ministry's proposal for a National Investment Board (NIB) as unconstitutional and completely unacceptable. She has further said that the proposed decision to shift decision making from the respective ministries to the finance ministry and the manner in which the proposal was pushed through was disturbing. In simple terms, it means that while the prime minister backed by

P.Chidambaram wants to fast-track all infrastructure projects, Jayanti Natarajan backed by the National Advisory Council, wants to retain the authority to stall all such projects. (<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/jayanthi-natarajan-writes-to-pm-objects-to-chidambaram-s-proposal-on-infra-projects-277619>)

At a time when the Hindus are faced with deadly onslaughts from two of the major minority communities challenging their very survival in India, the National Advisory Council has come up with a draft Bill purportedly intended to curb communal violence in India. The Bill called the "Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence Bill, 2011", unashamedly puts all the blame on Hindus, unless proven otherwise, for every incident of communal violence in India. The Bill violates individual and state rights and principles of equality under the law and innocent-until-proven-guilty principles underlying the due process of law. This Bill will only serve to instigate inter-religious and communal tension in India as under the provisions of this Bill, in all cases of communal violence, the Hindus, being the majority community, will be automatically considered as the perpetrators of the crime and the people from the minority community as the victims. This vicious Bill was drafted by congenital Hindu-baiters like Harsh Mander, Aruna Roy, Jean Dreze, Teesta Satalvad, John Dayal and Syed Shahabuddin, all hand-picked by the NAC, the super cabinet cum think tank of Sonia Gandhi. Though the Bill is presently kept in abeyance because of stringent criticism from all quarters, the very fact that such an obnoxious and blatantly anti-Hindu Bill was drafted by the special committee appointed by the NAC, clearly demonstrates the destructive designs of the NAC. The NAC could be aptly described as a Satan's Workshop. Every piece of draft legislation that comes out of this workshop is intended to harm the interests of Hindus, imperil the Indian economy or cause social unrest in the country.