

Aamar naam, tomar naam, Nandigram , Nandigram!

She was one of the children, about four or five years old, with some gruel on an aluminum plate. She was an orphan, a victim of a decade long genocide in some war-torn segment of Africa that the world somehow forgot in the midst of its pressing priorities and geo-political computations. There she was with no one to turn to for any comfort; she was like the rest of the children, all orphans, with no hope or a smile for tomorrow or for any other day after that.

As she began shoveling a spoonful of gruel in her tiny mouth, a drop of tear emerged from her large welled eye and fell on her plate. We had robbed her off her parents through our violence, through our wanton killings, burning and rapes; she had no idea of how to live for tomorrow, a lesson she would never learn from anyone of her kin who were mostly dead by then – she was all alone, scared, uncomforted.

Yet, after all these years, seeing innumerable pictures of children like her every month on TV news-reels, we still continue unabated in our daily routine of violence, rationalizing them using logic, and language of our politics cushioned in our own grammar of hate. Forgive us, my child! Forgive our insolence, our inhumanity, our insensitivity! When in defense of our ideas, in promoting our values and cause we blast suicide bombs without even a hint of remorse killing fathers and mothers before they get a chance to say good-bye to their children, killing children on way home from school -- the cold statistics, distant and impersonal, meaningless stats, is all that stare at us with a vacant look

Someone has approached me to use this domain kolkata.com for a “bigger cause”. Let this domain be used, he suggests, to highlight the atrocities of the current state government in West Bengal. Let the humanity voice its disdain and disgust, through this domain, for the CPM-induced killings in Nandigram, in Singur that has turned it all but genocide. Even the “Bengali Intelligentsia” is on a protest-march demanding the outright dismissal of the government. Shouldn't I, therefore, dedicate this domain for the people of WB?

Can we all, and not just one party, denounce violence? So long we are political, so long we chose what suit us and ignore the rest, we are but corrupt and dishonest. We can play games as long as we like, but sooner or later we would be called in for paybacks. Where were we when the entire Nandigram was hijacked by TMC and the Maoists for the last eleven months? Where was all those marching intelligentsia when a significant section of the village was forced to leave their residence fearing for their lives? Where was the people (and the intelligentsia) when BUPC was set up by TMC and Maoists to fight on the pretext of saving the villager's land when none was threatened? Are these really intelligent people? Where was the Governor who decided to remain silent for the last eleven months and now waking up from his slumber for a cause of his own choosing?

Dear Kolkata! Dear people of the entire West Bengal! Give in not to the violence of the Maoists and the TMC. Ask questions, ask every bloody question to discover the real accountability for this mess! This may be hard, but friends, we don't have any choice.

November 13, 2007.