

Rally of pledge ignited glowing flame of women's upsurge



Gliding, flowing, running like streams
Disgorging from hills above,
Flooding like tides flushing through meadows,
Messengers sweep through arches overhead.
From north, from south, From east and west,
From all over the land.

All else had stopped, but this flowing, rumbling tide. All talks had ceased, but this chorus of slogans. Behold, my people, what a moment of history to be a witness to: A wave of fluttering white flags, a stream of white-capped, white-dressed marchers, occasional glimpse of green-capped volunteers were echoing the roar of a firm pledge to resist the sustained savagery of outraging modesty of the women. Never has the state seen such unending disciplined, determined procession of awakened women, fists clasped in resolve to build up a sustained powerful movement to resist ongoing atrocities against their sisters, their children or even mothers. In the abyss of darkness and gloom appeared an epitome of light—yes, human conscience is no more dormant, voice of protest has not been muted, fighting spirit has not died down.

Dragged into subjugation, women had long been doomed to languish in fetters in the patriarchal society. But instead of abatement of their woes, the world for women is not just in a downward spiral but become horrific. Objectification of women has assumed such a proportion that it has become nightmarish for them to protect their modesty and dignity. Rapes, gangrapes, lynching, dowry deaths, trafficking, acid attacks, honour killing, female foeticide and infanticides—such is in store for women in this rotten inhuman capitalist society.

Reckless bestiality started raving wild from the Nirbhaya episode in Delhi in 2012, followed by a spate of such savage attacks in Unnao, Hathras in UP, Kathua in Kashmir and of late in the gory episode of Abhaya in R G Kar hospital and rape of a student in a law college in Kolkata—the list is endless. No one, from a six month old baby to 80 year old lady—is spared by the insane rapists and killers. However, hardly any offender is brought to book as the power that be protects them. It was even seen that when such woman-bashers and

murderers were released from the jail, they were greeted with garlands by the ruling party leaders. So, such growing crime against women is often found to become a virtually state-sponsored affair.

When the sexual assaults, domestic violence and persecutions have become beyond endurance and justice remained elusive, something cherished, long cherished so fondly, appeared with splendour. The women themselves closed their ranks and built up a platform named 'Awaken ye women, the glowing flame'—a line from the blazing lyre of revolutionary poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. They planned out a detailed programme, with twelve distinguished personalities—all women—from different professions as convenors. They roused their friends, neighbours and relatives to join in marches throughout the state for 7 long days from 9 December and then converge at College Square, Kolkata, on 16 December in front of the statues of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, doyen of Indian Renaissance and an uncompromising fighter who undauntedly upheld the cause of women. 9 December was the birth as well as death anniversaries of Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, a thinker, writer and educationist of the 19th century Bengal, a legendary figure for her efforts in support of women's independence and women's education. And 16 December was the Nirbhaya Day.

The marches originated from four points—Coochbehar in North Bengal, Purulia in Western part of the state, Jhargram, a tribal belt and Kakdwip in South Bengal. The marchers *en route* to Kolkata passed through



different districts where reception committees, formed by the persons of eminences, greeted them.

At every spot, there were rallies, meetings and cultural programmes. The response was overwhelming since everyone wants the question of women safety to be addressed in right earnest. Defying cold, the marchers moved from place to place, had brief stopovers at the venues organized by the reception committees of various districts, relished whatever food was offered and then again stood in queue to

trudge to the next destination. For all these seven days, they felt no tiredness, no fatigue nothing because they imbibed the cause and prepared themselves for the strenuous voyage. And they also felt the warmth of close association, fervour of fraternity and joy of collectively raising voice in favour of a just cause.

College square, Kolkata, wore a different look on 16 December, the closing day of the first phase of the Rally of Pledge. Right from the morning, people from all walks of life began to reach the spot and be a witness to a really historic event. The marchers from the different parts of the state first assembled at three different spots. From there, three well-decorated rallies congregated at the venue from three directions as if it was confluence of three tidal rivers. People on the streets had made common cause with the onlookers stranded on the street sides. Invisibly and silently now the two were bound together. Hardship of being stranded for hours has melted into tolerance born of identity of cause.

During three hours of concluding programme on a well decorated dais, the convenors of the momentous rally, and well-known personalities briefly addressed the gathering. Also, various groups presented inspiring songs, staged street dramas and gave dance performances.

These marchers of the 'Rally of Pledge' kindled a new hope among the masses because what they witnessed was a real people's struggle which surged forth spontaneously but in a well-organized well-coordinated manner with a promise of being sustained in different forms. Only in this way, the wails of assaulted women can be halted, the lust of the pervert beasts can be curbed, flame of insensate cowardly violence on innocent women, and the government-administration turning a blind eye forced to undertake some remedial steps.

Our Party, the SUCI(C), has long been exhorting the suffering citizens to come forward, close their ranks, form people's struggle committees and spearhead people's movement on the burning issues of life. So, this surge of people's power has delighted us. We wholeheartedly support sprouting of such people's movement, earnestly want these kinds of movements to be organized and sustained and led to their logical destination following right track.