

Akhil Gogoi's protest and Government's indifference



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Jatin Das, one of the associates of martyr Bhagat Singh staged hunger strike for eighty four days behind bars of the colonial regime. It has been considered the longest hunger strike in India. The anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare demanding strong ombudsman staged hunger strike for thirteen days last summer. Now peasant leader Akhil Gogoi has been taking indefinite hunger strike protesting against the construction of big dam in lower Subanshiri. After three days of his protest he fell sick and the doctor attending to him said his blood pressure is alarmingly low. On the otherhand nobody, from the state government takes initiative to upend the peasant leader' strike unlike Anna Hazare.

Meanwhile, Team Anna has extended support to Akhil Gogoi. At the time of Hazare' strike, though it was literally a conspiracy to restrict the process of establishment of an effective anti-corruption mechanism, all the senior union minister including the congress spokesperson, Manish Tiwari strived to find a solution to the issue. But now Tarun Gogoi-led state government shows no interest to the cause of the peasant leader leading the deterioration of the situation of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts of North Assam. The government though it is quite impossible, strives to handle the situation with iron hands. Already the police have arrested three anti dam protesters from Lakhimpur district. Before that the police allegedly brutally assaulted the anti-dam protesters on the mid-night of 18 May. Protesting the police atrocities, the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti had called on a stir of the two districts on the following day and at last the peasant leader resolved to sit in indefinite hunger strike.

Would Akhil Gogoi' stir gain no fruitful result for his demand like Irom Sharmila of Manipur, who has begun her hunger strike a decade back demanding the repeal of controversial Armed Forces (Special Power) Act of 1958? Though the slogan of democracy is cited in the northeast, but the fundamental rights of the people is often denied here. Akhil and Sharmila may be two examples of such denial of rights. No body could put question on their method of democratic stirs. Rather they are the vox-populi of the under-privileged section. But the democratically elected government's indifference is a matter of deep concern.

Witnessing the situation some wellwishers of the peasant leader have advised to give up his fast. But he is adamant with his demand like Sharmila. According to Mahatma Gandhi mute agitation or hunger strike is a method of peaceful protest and is recognized by all democratic countries of the world.

Indeed, the peasant leader's unintermittent protest against the construction of big dam is very need of time. Considering the imminent ravages of the big dam people from all walks should join the movement. People from Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts, pointing to the river erosion and annual flood, have extended support to the peasant leader and stand with him.

People from all strata of the society trust Akhil Gogoi for his uncompromising stand against any mis-doings of the government, be it misappropriation of fund released for development or curtail down of rights of landless farmers. He was successful in revealing corruption of the PDS at Golaghat. He was also successful in Doyang Tengani movement where rights of the landless farmers were denied earlier.

Today, he is known as a strong anti-dam protestor across the country and is supported by activists like Medha Patkar, Anna Hazare. He alleged frequently that the government both central and the state attempt to throttle the anti-big dam movement only for their understanding with the corporate. He alleged a clandestine treaty between the government and the corporate people in construction of big dam in Assam as well as northeast which according to him would ruin Assam in near future.

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