

Chennai's Deluge – The Man Made Disaster

The worst deluge consequent to a record rainfall has submerged large parts Chennai city, dividing Chennai in to several little islands. Communities have been stranded by flood waters. 280 people have died. 3 million people are deprived of basic services. Several thousands of people are stranded in railway stations, flood homes, on roof tops and streets. People are suffering with unending woes like displacement, traffic Jams, power-cuts, abnormal rising prices, non-availability of food or even drinking water.

Despite various efforts by the state and central governments in taking relief and rescue work, the magnitude of their tragedy remains to be too-much, and much will be remained to be done to rehabilitate the people who have lost every-thing in the floods.

Though it is claimed that the rains caused this devastation are the heaviest in 100 years, this cannot be said to have occurred just because the 'nature has vented its fury'. On examination it is revealed that the authorities were warned days in advance of the possibility of unusual amounts of rain, following the developments of a cyclonic circulation in the Bay of Bengal. But the preparations following this warning were minimal. Moreover it is reported that almost 30,000 cusecs of water were actually released from Chembarambakkamlake, which may also have accounted the flood devastation. Even as on December 3, water was lapping against the banisters of the bridge across the AdyarRiver, which reveals the magnanimity of the floods.

This extreme weather event is not an isolated occurrence, but such events are becoming more and more common, and climate scientists are viewing them as an effect of global warming.

In fact, the capitalist neo-liberal economic policies with the one and only purpose of earning 'super profits' without any concern for humanity or protection of environment, with their powerful thrust of ruthless exploiting of natural resources have been playing this lot of devastations around the world.

Particularly with the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies, the real estate growth has been given unprecedented priority over planned development. Naturally this led to ignoring natural drains and lakes, by building over them or turning them in to land fills; leaving no space for the water to drain out-Chennai has actively blocked its network of lakes, rivers, canals, wet lands and marshlands that absorb rain water or divert to the sea. Colonies, malls, universities and I.T.offices have been built over them. The coowm and Adayarrivers are rarely dredged and their flood plains have been encroached upon. A recent study estimates that more than half of Chennai's wetlands have been rendered useless by development and that the 150 water bodies in the city serving as catchment areas have been reduced to 27. Green cover in some municipal wards have been wiped out totally which means that the ground cannot retain water.

The policy of "smarter cities" being focused by the government is totally undermining the basic requirements of proper water drains systems and planning. The highly prioritised urbanisation in the advent of neo-liberal economic policies gives scant regard to draw up plans and to base on for a real functional city.

Thus this is the man-made devastation of Chennai viz the callous attitude of the rulers and ruling governments.

Now even after this devastation it seems that the rulers of the Tamil Nadu state are refusing to learn lessons and ready to take corrective steps. Instead they are engaged in blame games. The AIDMK-ruled Chennai Corporation claimed that shoddy drain work by the previous DMK regime to be largely responsible for this mess in the city. Interestingly the ban on manual scavenging was cited and projected as a main reasons for the drains not being desilted well in time.

This 'blame game' tactics once again confirm the fact that our rulers (to whichever party may they belong) are interested only in their power and votes and but not at all sincere and interested in bringing about wellbeing of people through their policies. Whatever they do is purely with the aim of catching votes to governmental power.

Now it is the common man and the toiling people that has to suffer the effect of this devastation, whatever might be the huge funds that are supposed to be spent on relief and rehabilitation. Such is the fate of the tailing masses in to which they are plunged by our ruling-classes and rulers, reducing them in to beggars eagerly awaiting for any aid! This is the bitter reality to have to be experienced after of Chennai deluge by the common man and toiling masses!