

# **The Obnoxious Nexus that Killed Rizwanur in ‘Secular and Progressive’ Bengal**

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We all know how caste panchayats try to stop inter-caste marriages in the interiors of North-Western India. They hold kangaroo courts and deliver instant and exemplary ‘justice’ hoping such brutal acts would deter all potential ‘deviants’ to try and cross caste boundaries. We also know how freedom of expression often attracts lethal fatwas. But we always tend to think that such incidents happen beyond the realm of our liberal and democratic ‘mainstream’ – either in some remote feudal badland or only in a fundamentalist culture ! And we are told such fundamentalism flourishes only in Madrasas and Masjids. But what happens when a young Muslim man from the world of computers and graphics designing decides to marry a Hindu girl he loves ? And that too in progressive cosmopolitan Kolkata, the capital of Left-ruled West Bengal ?

Well, as Rizwanur Rahman discovered and we all have discovered through his experience, such a marriage is considered a taboo by the rich and the powerful, a ‘crime’ which needs to be punished with nothing short of murder. It is perhaps not difficult to understand that industrialist Ashok Todi, whose daughter Priyanka had legally married Rizwanur in the month of August, could never agree to this marriage. But what is really shocking is that the police took it upon itself to do Todi’s bidding and ‘free’ Priyanka. And imagine the extent to which the top brass of Kolkata police went in its mission ! They repeatedly threatened Rizwanur, even calling him and Priyanka over to the police headquarters and ‘advising’ them to part ways. In spite of their full knowledge of the marriage having been legally registered on August 18, they filed a case of abduction against Rizwanur. And finally when Rizwanur’s battered body was discovered on railway tracks on September 21, the Police Commissioner of Kolkata promptly described his death as an unfortunate case of ‘suicide’ !

Rizwanur has of course left behind ample evidence of his will to live – he gave intimation to the police and to many of his friends regarding the threat to his life. Instead of saving Rizwanur’s life and marriage why are the police trying to legitimise his murder as a case of suicide ? The Police Commissioner’s role becomes perfectly understandable when one realises that he is also the President of Cricket Association of Bengal ; that Todi, apart from being the managing director of Lux Hosieries, is also the kingpin of a betting mafia, and that Todi had ‘facilitated’ the election of the Police Commissioner Mr. Prasun Mukherjee as the CAB chief. What we see here in action is however not at all a ‘private’ relation between the top cop and a city business baron, it is a veritable nexus between the police top brass, big moneybags and the underworld.

But there is more to the nexus than mere financial muscle and licensed and unlicensed gunpower – what enables the nexus to have a free reign is political blessings from the powers that be. Have we forgotten how Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee had thrown his entire weight behind Mr. Mukherjee’s candidature (he however lost the first time he contested before being elected unopposed on the second occasion) ? Even as the whole of Kolkata is crying out for justice, the Chief Minister does not see it fit to take any action against the Commissioner and his senior officials. Nor does he see any merit in the demand for a CBI enquiry into the murder and all its disturbing dimensions. Is it just the government’s ‘compulsion’ to keep the police top brass in good humour ? The Todis and Sardas (Govind Sardas, the infamous jute baron, who is a prime accused in the

notorious blood kit scam) are of course all 'esteemed investors' in the eyes of the Left Front government and it does not have the will to take any action against them even if they habitually steal the provident fund of their employees.

If Kolkata is insisting on stern action against the police-business-politician nexus, rural Bengal is witnessing a growing revolt against another hated nexus – the nexus between the party (CPI(M)), panchayat and corrupt 'ration' (public distribution system) dealers. The PDS is notoriously non-functional in West Bengal with the state topping the list in terms of pilferage of food grains meant for the poor. Thirty years ago the CPI(M) had come to power promising to empower the worker-peasant alliance and the middle classes. But all over the state it is the rich and the corrupt who have gained in power while workers, peasants and the middle classes are at the receiving end of the obnoxious nexus that is increasingly perceived as a shorthand for the CPI(M)'s record stay in power for an uninterrupted stretch of thirty years. All sections of the progressive opinion must be worried about the tell-tale signs of the rot in West Bengal. Now is the time to unite and act against this rot before it is too late.

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### **Protest on Rizwanur Death Controversy**

CPI(ML) and its mass organisations have organised protests against the killing of Razwanur Rahaman in Kolkata. On 3 October Kolkata Nagarik Samommay and AIPWA (All India Progressive Women Association) organised a protest at Tilzala, near Rizwanur's house. Prominent citizens and intellectuals of Kolkata like Nabarun Bhattacharya, Bivas Chakroborty, Sujato Bhadro, Meher Engineer along with CPI(ML) leaders Indrani Dutta, Amit Dasgupta, Animesh Chakroborty addressed a gathering. After Singur and Nandigram, the arrogance of LF Govt. is expressed through the case of Rizwanur's death. The meeting strongly demanded an unbiased investigation into the incident and punishment to those who perpetrated this crime. On 7 October, AISA and RYA organised a mass meeting at the same spot. RYA President Mohammad Salim and West Bengal State Secretary of AISA visited Rizwanur's home and met bereaved family members. Delegate team expressed their deep grief and promised to fight to punish the killers.

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