

An Open Letter to The Hindu from Academics on their Nandigram Coverage

Friday 7 December 2007, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 1 December 2007).

We are writing this open letter to the editorial board of "*The Hindu*" to express our dismay at your coverage of recent events at Nandigram.

Most of us are regular readers of your paper. We have appreciated your balanced coverage of topics such as the Narmada Dam, Gujarat or the Agrarian Crisis. At least in our eyes, your principled reportage of these issues (and numerous others) has lent your newspaper an unusual degree of credibility. We believe that your paper's articles carry enormous weight in moulding public opinion and policy.

It is therefore a cause of collective concern when this credibility gets damaged. We are particularly disturbed by the editorial titled "The Challenge of Nandigram" (12th Nov. 2007) which displayed a marked slant. Even granting merit to the editorial's contention that the state government had to take steps to restore governance in the area, it seems beyond dispute that the methods adopted to do so were inherently incompatible with the rule of law in a democracy. We cannot comprehend how a full length editorial could completely fail to take note of the unchecked violence by the CPM cadres, the curbs that were placed on independent reporting, the attacks on reputed activists like Medha Patkar, all of which seem to have been facilitated – or at least condoned – by the state. None of these well documented events have any place in a society governed by law, and should have occasioned strong comment. We failed to see any critical editorial acknowledgement of these events, even after the chief minister had practically admitted having operated outside the law through remarks such as being "paid back in their own coin". This stands in marked contrast to the way the governor has been singled out for supposedly impolitic remarks. This selective silence opens the *Hindu* to the charge of being partisan in its outlook.

We also notice that, unlike many other issues of similar gravity, there has been a marked absence of centrepiece articles on this topic. One would have expected *The Hindu* to flesh out the differing points of view on this issue as well as the dimensions of the human tragedy. By choosing not to do so, The Hindu abdicates its responsibility to its readers for fair and balanced reporting.

We would hate to see *The Hindu* be identified as a newspaper purveying party propaganda. It is important that the integrity of the newspaper be above all question. An erosion of *The Hindu's* credibility would be an immeasurable loss for journalism and for society.

Your Sincerely,

Academics from Harish-Chandra Research Institute Allahabad, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay/Kanpur/Madras, Institute of Mathematical Sciences Chennai, Jawaharlal Nehru University Delhi, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research Mumbai. (A complete list of signatories is given below.)

CC:

1. N. Ram, Editor-in-chief
2. N. Ravi, Editor
3. K. Narayanan, Readers' Editor
4. N Murali, Managing Director

5. Board of Directors

List of Signatories:

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