

**Seminar on ‘Nuclear Plants and Kudankulam Agitation’
Held at the CSI Eco-spirituality Centre, Othara on 20-11-2012**

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it. Ps. 24: 1.

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PREAMBLE

In contrast to the anthropocentric view of the world, which to a great extent has resulted in the massive exploitation of the earth and her resources, the Bible speaks about an earth which belongs to God. The role of every human is to partner with the Creator as the created co-creators. As disciples of Christ, we ought to affirm that it is the Lord who has made the world and all things therein (Acts 17:24). He is the all-wise, all-good, and all-powerful ruler and sustainer of His creation. God sovereignty and His purpose for His creation is to be trusted, respected and obeyed. Obeying His will brings fullness of life (Jn. 10:10), otherwise, it invites ultimate and inevitable disaster (Gal. 6:7; Rom. 6:23).

The environmental risks involved in nuclear power include the threat of nuclear accidents, the legacy of toxic radioactive waste, and the effects of unintended radiation. Christians should be particularly mindful of human fallibility and consequently, the potential for accident. If an accident were to occur the effects are potentially very severe. Humanity's responsibility under God for His Creation is one of the issues at stake. Christians believe that economic growth should not be sought at the expense of environmental and social goals. Churches could have an important role in supporting a partnership attitude to overcome some of the driving forces behind profligacy and over-consumption. The Bible contains many warnings of the dangers posed by materialism and the early Christians advocated a lifestyle characterised by sharing and moderation (Acts 2:44; 1 Tim 6:8). We believe that the Government should take advantage of the opportunities provided by renewable sources of energy and that it would be foolish to rely on nuclear power, an outmoded technology that should be phased out as existing reactors become obsolete. The church must play its part, too, by actively promoting the use of renewable energy.

In Nagasaki and Hiroshima, official research showed that the main rise in most types of cancer and non-cancer diseases only became apparent years after the atomic bombs fell. The deaths from Chernobyl are variously estimated between 4,000 and 1 million. The Guardian, UK, wrote in 2010 that specialist doctors in Belarus and Ukraine, places that are hundreds of kilometres from Chernobyl, were convinced that they were seeing unusual rates of cancers, mutations and blood diseases linked to the Chernobyl nuclear accident 24 years prior to that.

The five year study, which has cost around 500000 British pounds, suggests that radiation received by male workers may cause a mutation in their sperm which results in the child developing cancer. It is the first research to offer a plausible explanation of why clusters of leukaemia have been detected around Sellafield, and other nuclear plants such as Dounreay, Aldermaston and Hinkley point. (The Guardian 16 Feb 1990)

The three year study by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) concluded that adults living and working within a 10 mile radius of Boston Edison's Pilgrim reactor between 1978 and 1983 had a four times greater risk of contracting leukaemia than those living elsewhere. The study also concluded that the risk of leukaemia increased the closer one lived and worked to the plant. (Nature 18 October 1990)

There is no denying that, even without accidents, nuclear power is a real threat to people's lives in that it imposes sacrifices on socially weakened people throughout the process, from the mining of uranium to the disposal of radioactive waste.

In addition, indigenous peoples are exposed to radiation in the process of the mining and enrichment of uranium abroad, while the lives of workers engaged in the maintenance of nuclear power plants are also threatened. Moreover, the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy is inseparable from military aims, in the sense that a large amount of plutonium created in the plants can be

immediately converted into material for nuclear weapons. The nuclear power plants are also vulnerable to possible attack in case of a war or a conflict.

Mortgaging the future

High-level waste is dangerous to life for a quarter of a million years. Should the earth survive even a fraction of that time, how will coming generations know where such waste is stored? What right do we have to mortgage the future of the earth in this manner? The present generation would enjoy the apparent benefits of nuclear energy, but passes on the burdens and risks of waste disposal to future generations.

Shutting down of Nuclear plants

Following the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, Germany has permanently shut down eight of its reactors and pledged to close the rest by 2022. Mexico has sidelined construction of ten reactors in favour of developing natural-gas-fired plants. Belgium is considering phasing out its nuclear plants, perhaps as early as 2015. The Italians have voted overwhelmingly to keep their country non-nuclear. Switzerland has banned the construction of new reactors. Other countries that remain opposed to nuclear power include Australia, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Israel, Malaysia, New Zealand and Norway. Japan's government (Japan has been the third biggest user of nuclear energy in the world) said it intends to stop using nuclear power by the 2030s. The decision marks a major shift from policy goals set before last year's Fukushima disaster that sought to increase the share of atomic energy to more than half of the country's power supply. Japan has 50 nuclear power plants that account for about 30 percent of its electrical generation, but since the damage at Fukushima from the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, they have been subject to safety reviews.

Alternatives

Nuclear power has plenty of alternatives that pose no risk to human life and livelihood, which is why numerous countries have been able to decide against nuclear power. We need a paradigm shift from fossil fuels to Solar Photovoltaics (SPV). All the satellites in outer space on which the vast majority of mankind depends for communication, entertainment, weather forecasting etc. are powered by solar photovoltaic arrays. There is almost unlimited scope for evolving better solar energy harvesting technologies. A 500MW plant could be constructed in less than a year, whereas a nuclear power plant could take anywhere from 5-10 years for completion.

Kudankulam Agitation

In almost every country that has decided to end its dependence on nuclear power, the decision was the result of agitations by its people against a source of energy that is dangerous to people's lives. It is a real irony to note that when the majority of countries using nuclear energy are planning to phase out nuclear power plants, India is installing them ignoring the protests of the people. The commissioning of a nuclear power plant should not happen without taking into account the interests of the stakeholders. In the case of Kudankulam, the people in the local villages are the biggest stakeholders. Since the power plant is in their backyard and it affects the livelihood of the people especially those who depend on the sea, they cannot allow such a plant there. The Christian Church must speak publicly against nuclear power. It is the moral duty of the Church to support the Kudankulam agitation. As all nuclear programmes affect biotic life in that area and make the area sterile for life in the foreseeable future, Churches should oppose such activities against Christ's love of humanity.

At this point, it is important that we continue to strive for the realization of the Reign/Rule of God, in order to foster the values of justice, peace and integrity of creation. It is in this context that more than 100 participants belonging to various realms, particularly Christians, on the invitation of the Church of South India Department of Ecumenical Relations & Ecological

Concerns and the Church of South India Diocese of Madhya Kerala Ecological Concerns Department met at the CSI Eco-Spirituality Centre, Othara on November 20, 2012 and discussed on the theme 'Nuclear Plants and Kudankulam Agitation'.

STATEMENT

We, the delegates from different Dioceses of CSI and fraternal delegates from sister Churches, attending the Seminar organized by the CSI Synod Department of Ecumenical Relations & Ecological Concerns and the CSI Madhya Kerala Diocese on 'Nuclear plants and Kudankulam agitation' on Nov. 20, 2012

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- 1. Declare our solidarity with the people's struggle against the nuclear plant in Kudankulam. Also, we join with the struggling communities in Idinthakarai and Kudankulam areas (and also in Jaitapur, Maharashtra) to whose livelihood, the Indo-Russian project, is incompatible.**
- 2. Fear that the reactor effluents would kill the fish and further, that the other life inside the sea would be affected by the water discharged from the nuclear reactor into the Bay of Bengal. In fact, the area around the Kudankulam reactor, being home to a lot of small scale fishermen, we are afraid that their life and livelihood would be affected.**
- 3. Express our concern over the huge radioactive accumulations at the plant site which could become the principal causes of environmental and health hazards. It is a known fact that the nuclear radio-active waste, are in fact an almost inextinguishable fire which contaminate the layer of the earth and living organisms, radiating energy in the forms of radiation and heat.**
- 4. Demand that no new nuclear plant should be commissioned in India and that existing plants should be decommissioned within a specified period in a phased manner.**
- 5. Ask the government to set up a Solar Energy Commission on the same lines as the Indian Space Research Organisation with a mandate to achieve a clearly defined target**
- 6. Request the government to set up a large number of factories to manufacture SPV panels with the best technology available.**
- 7. Request the Government to make it mandatory for large houses, buildings and factories to create standby/fall back energy capacities to a prescribed proportion of their total energy consumption either by SPV panels and/or biogas plants which will process biodegradable solid waste created in the premises.**
- 8. Hope that for approaching self sufficiency in energy and to reduce pollution, all panchayats and towns should be asked to set up biogas plants to convert solid waste into energy. Setting up of family biogas plants fed by cattle dung should be a major thrust area in all projects of rural development.**
- 9. Support a low consumption, non-nuclear, energy strategy based on a significant reduction in energy demand and investment in renewable sources of energy rather than nuclear power.**
- 10. We demand that the Central and State Governments should hold a democratic and transparent national consultation on nuclear power projects in the country with proper assessment of economic, environmental and human cost of such expansion.**

CONCLUSION

It is a known fact that nuclear power has a bleak future, globally and therefore India must stop chasing the nuclear power mirage and drop Kudankulam and of course, Jaitapur too. It is true that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but let us not forget that energy can destroy us. Are we gearing up toward another Chernobyl or Fukushima?