

# ANALYSING THE CAUSES & PROBLEMS OF NAXAL MOVEMENT

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## **Introduction**

The typology of interpersonal violence, a method to categorize different kinds of acts of aggression, whether performed individually or collectively, categorizes coordinated destruction as the highest kind, both in the degree of coordination and the degree of destruction. The use of violence by salient actors, who otherwise, in their daily lives are peaceful and non-violent, can be influenced by several factors. The motivating factor behind the use of violence for a Naxalite is a conscious response to *difference*, in order to eliminate it. However, it is indeed illusory, as violence cannot eliminate the difference as such, as much as it eliminates the person himself. Similarly, the ideas themselves can be replaced by ideas alone and a person subscribing to the idea can merely carry the idea, which becomes redundant by the use of violence as it eliminates the very process of a meaningful dialogue between actors, and hence, the possibility of an amicable settlement.

The advent of Naxalism has caused this very problem in India today, where the process of replacing the idea of class domination or capitalism with the communist society is being executed through violent means. This in turn is met with an equally violent counter reprisal by the State, making the world witness the grossest abuse of human rights and resulting in the marginalization and the existence of backwardness in most parts of the Naxal-affected regions. Thereby, allowing neither progress in dialogue nor development in the country. Though the root of the problem allowed the advent

of such a movement, the condition today has led to much suffering of the poor for which this fight had begun in the first place.

In light of this, the paper aims to analyse the inextricable link between the behaviour of naxals, the reason behind using violence against the State and the State's acts for causing this act of violence. It is an analysis of victimization of the local villagers and forest dwellers that are left with a Hopson's choice in the war between the Naxalites and the State. Finally, interdisciplinary solutions consisting of changes in the power of eminent domain, recognition of rights of forest dwellers and a need for societal intervention and engagement on the issue are suggested.

### **The Naxal Ideology**

An analysis of the declared policy of Naxalism leads us to the conclusion of its belief in the class character of Indian State Power, with an assertion that the country is independent merely nominal, and in reality, is semi-feudal and semi-colonial. The semi-colonial nature is exemplified in the belief that the "Congress administration represents the interests of the Indian feudal princes, big landlords and bureaucratic comprador capitalists". This domination transcends the country's boundaries through globalization where Naxalites believe that after the British left the country, she has subjected herself to the imperialism of the US and revisionism by Russia, ultimately trading its own national interests (Dasgupta, 1974, p. 117). On the other hand, the semi-feudal nature of the economy is evidenced by several facts such as excessive dependence on agriculture for livelihood, ineffective implementation of land reform laws, concentration of land ownership in even smaller number of hands, high rent, eviction of tenants, high rate of interest charged by money lenders and social oppression of scheduled castes which is 'reminiscent of the middle ages'. This view is supported with evidence by the recent surge of 'development' in the country, which boasts of a nine per cent growth, though the means by

which the growth is achieved is at the cost of the poor, many of whom now choose to join this movement.

Large tracts of land in the forests and agricultural lands of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, etc. are being taken over by the government and given to giant multinationals and national conglomerates for setting up industries or mining activities (Peoples Union for Democratic Rights [PUDR], 1997, 2005a). This results in forced evictions from lands that are fertile and fruit-bearing for farmers in a pre-dominantly agrarian economy, and hence this eviction not only leaves them landless but also without the means to obtain a steady income and livelihood. Statistics suggest that at least forty percent of the forced evictions in the last sixty years have been of 'Adivasis' to build dams for the country's supply of power and irrigation and for 'development', where the dispossessed never get a share in it. Along with a constant struggle to make ends meet and no effective government policy to provide the basic necessities of life, as promised in the policies, an additional burden was placed by these forceful evictions, which was bound to raise the levels of frustration among the people of these regions.

### **State's response**

The State machineries considered Naxalism to be only a law and order problem and not a social movement, hence, the response was in the form of a fire-fighting mechanism that would resolve the problem on a short term basis instead of a long term policy analysis that would cure the issue from its very root. This message was conveyed loud and clear, when the NDA government was at the Centre as it had wound up the institutional mechanism for independent policy analysis of the Government in the Research and Policy division of the Union Home Ministry. At the time of the emergence of Naxal movement, the same Research and Policy division had suggested taking up of land reform measures to ensure social justice in order to salvage the agrarian

unrest arising out of the green revolution. Since the inception of Naxalism, this has been a fundamental problem in the State's attitude towards Naxalism which has resulted only in providing fuel to the fire.

In a Status Paper tabled in the Parliament in 2006, security and development were the proposed solutions for dealing with the 'problem of Naxalism' (Planning Commission of India, 2006). However, ironically, security and development are the two areas where the States affected by Naxalism have caused much trouble through their inappropriate attitude and policies which have hence ultimately had a boomerang effect. The States' response can be primarily considered at two levels:

### ***1. Security-centric external approach by the State***

The State's approach to the Naxalite movement was security-centric, even though an ameliorative and right-centric approach with emphasis on a negotiated solution was the need of the hour. This was so, especially considering the fact that the violence was not a one-sided affair by Naxalites, but the government too, had a fair share in trying to deal with the 'menace'. An anti-Naxal attitude combined with a status attribution of culpability widely prevailed in State governments. A direct consequence of this was a bias in the minds of people in power and even otherwise against any person even remotely related or perceived to be related to any person considered to be a Naxalite. Even the people working for the welfare of the marginalized section were considered to be Naxalites. For example, in 1973, the District Collector of Warangal district in Andhra Pradesh had been concerned with the welfare of the weaker sections by improving land distribution, irrigation, etc. and got rid of the middlemen by establishing a direct contact with the concerned villagers. For such a concern, he was alleged to be a Naxalite based on his 'close friendship' with the Naxalites.

### ***2. Land acquisition: Is the affected people not a part of 'public'?***

The other approach by the State is by way of exercising the power of eminent domain, which is the compulsory acquisition of land, and this power, which vests with the government, may be invoked only for a public purpose. Unfortunately, what constitutes a public purpose is wide and open to interpretation (Ramanathan, 2009, p. 133), and hence the setting up of every kind of private industry, power plant, dam or mine by any large scale industry, Indian or foreign is done by taking the land in the exercise of the power of eminent domain. The main problem with this approach is the displacement of the tribals and the peasants who use the land as a means of livelihood, and this disparity in the definition of 'public purpose' accorded by the State clearly shows that the consideration for the welfare of the tribals and the peasants, who are also citizens of the country is not within consideration while taking away the land for 'public purpose'. The majority of the tribal population in the country derives their livelihood directly or indirectly from the forests. However, most of the country's mineral resources are concentrated in the forest and tribal regions. Over time major irrigation and power projects, mines and heavy industry have come up in these regions like Chhota Nagpur leading to the uprooting of tribals from their native homes. Some of them are rehabilitated, but most often they become destitute (PUDR, 1982). This can be attributed to the irreplaceable nature of the activity of agriculture and ignorance of their deep sentimental connection to their land. Even rehabilitation in terms of provision of jobs in the mining undertakings has negative impacts on the affected people morally, as they suddenly find themselves at the mercy of their employer, and practically, as they are inherently farmers and no other job can replace agriculture for them. In public hearings for the acquisition of their lands, despite their objection, their lands are taken away. Placed in a 'do or die' situation, they have been forced to launch militant political and social struggles in defence of their life and liberty (Iqbal, 2010). Such marginalization and forced evictions were bound to generate frustration and loss of faith towards

the State among people. Further land grabbing was initiated by the Government's movement called Salwa Judum. Villagers were forcefully evicted from their villages and were made to stay in camps set up on the sides of highways which lacked living conditions, so that they may be protected from the Naxalites and the forces could fight the Naxalites in the empty villages.

### **Strategies**

The existence of a distorted form of Naxalism, restricted to mere anti-state violence devoid of true ideological goals, has undoubtedly become a menace which contributes to the marginalization of the very people who were to be voiced through the Naxal movement. On the other hand, with all the equating factors of violence and force that exist on both sides, land grabbing is a detriment caused exclusively by the State and hence, is a deciding issue for the villagers to add to the Naxal forces. Disappointment and frustration with the States' ignorance was the reason why Naxalism started and with its egoistic land grabbing policies, the State is keeping the otherwise neutral villagers out of its confidence.

In order to stop such victimization of innocent tribals and the alarming growth of Naxal forces, changes are required, *inter alia*, in the land acquisition laws specifically for the naxal-affected tribal dominated forest areas. Such a need is not new. The Constitution of India, in Schedule V, provides the Governor of a state with the power to create an exception of the Scheduled areas for non-applicability of any laws. In this respect, the Supreme Court of India has ruled that the transfer of tribal lands to non-tribals stands prohibited and that the tribals and forest dwellers have the first right over the natural resources in and on their lands (Samatha v. State of A.P. (1997)). However, despite this judgment, the Government has been extremely impudent and is flouting the directions of the Supreme Court time and again. The coerced physical eviction of the locals from their lands to enable Vedanta to start its mining activities in



Niyamgiri, Lanjigarh and Kashipur in Orissa serve as evidence enough for the total disregard of the Constitution, law and Supreme Court judgments in the name of 'globalization' and 'development'.

### **Conclusion**

The largest threat that the Indian Government faces today is Naxalism, which has infested itself in more than 4 states of the Country. The root of the problem lies in the simplest of issues –marginalization of the poor forest dwellers by the very government that had sworn to protect them, as the very land that they depend on for their sustenance is snatched away. It has been transferred to giant multinational corporations in the name of development, by the exercise of the power of eminent domain. The government has been striving hard but has not been effective enough to solve this problem and rather overlooks the root of the problem. Victimization of forest dwellers begins by unilaterally taking away the very land they depend on, which results in them taking up arms against the government, and ends with trying to suppress the act of insurgency by implementation of draconian laws like the Chhattisgarh Special Public Safety Act, 2005. In between, we witness the grossest forms of crimes, marginalization and inhumane conditions in the States affected by the insurgency, to remain in the most backward conditions in the country. In light of this, the paper aims to analyse the inextricable link between the behaviour of naxals, the intent of using violence against the State and the State's acts for causing this act of violence, and propose interdisciplinary solutions on a comparison with other countries which dealt with eminent domain in forest lands and hence, resolving the issue in the Indian scenario.

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