

The Spectre of Naxal Violence

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The simmering rural unrest has continued to find its outlet in the form of naxal violence throughout Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand. The recent incidence of passenger hijacking by Maoists in Jharkhand is a disturbing reminder of an array of issues which the country is yet to come to grips with.

During the last few years or so, the series of violent activities by the banned People's War Group in Andhra Pradesh and the Maoist Communist Centre in Bihar suggest that naxalism has entered a new phase and security agencies are in a state of shock. Attacks on important government buildings, telephone exchanges, railway stations, villages and police pickets have become quite common. In some areas where there was a lull for long, a recurrence of naxalite activity has disturbed the peaceful ambience.

Over the years, the government of Andhra Pradesh has suffered a heavy loss of public and private property because of the upsurge in naxalite activities. The main purpose behind these activities is to induce fear in the minds of police and administration. On the other hand, in Bihar, there are various such extremist organisations operating, including the Indian People's Front (IPF), the MKSS (Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC). There have been a number of attacks on police pickets by them. In some areas of Central Bihar their underground operations are on the rise. These organisations raise funds by means of extortion from contractors, secure small contributions, subscription from corrupt officials and powerful landlords. Although it is difficult to assess the actual strength of these groups, the Maoist Communist Centre is considered to be the most organised with sophisticated weapons. A few years ago, the massacre of 11 people near Dodadih Hills in Bihar by the MCC almost turned basic issue into caste-war like situation. There have been numerous instances of such gruesome acts by the MCC. The group is very active in Central Bihar districts such as Patna, Jehanabad, Gaya, Nalanda and Navada. In Jehanabad area, the mobilisation of weaker section by the IPF and the MKSS has been mainly on the basis of a common concern for equitable distribution of land and payment of minimum wages, among other things. The MCC has been responsible for the Darmiam, Dalelchak Baghora, Bakridh and Bara incidents. After the Dalelchak Baghora (Aurangabad) massacre, the state government declared a ban on the activities of the MCC. But it has emerged quite a powerful organisation by bringing about changes in its tactics since 1990's. The MCC has organised an armed outfit called the Lal Raksha Dal and acquired sophisticated weapons like AK-47 rifles. The MCC

considers the land owning caste as exploiters of the rural poor. In mid 1970's, it was very active in Aurangabad district, particularly in the Gurva, Guraru and Amar Paraiya regions. Its ideology is based on the assumption that the Government, the rich and upper castes have acquired maximum benefits and are denying justice to the rural poor. The MCC is in favour of adopting violent means to sustain its struggle. It was reported in the media that the MCC has organised a parallel judiciary system in certain districts. In Chatra, Khagaria, Jehanabad and Ranchi the MCC has been successful in building a strong base at the rural level.

The naxalites have also killed members belonging to rival factions. In past, the PWG killed two persons belonging to the rival Janashakti faction and a former PWG member in Nizamabad districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The situation has become worse than before because of the migration of population under economic pressure. This has led to the problems in housing, employment and the law and order in these areas. The presence of labour force in the cities and towns has brought about a link between rural and urban areas. The rural and far-flung areas provide a base for the naxalites to carry out their activities. The existing inequalities in urban areas have added a new dimension to the problem. As a result, some sections without sufficient means to propel their cause, found themselves in the lurch. Thus, violence is gradually becoming a common strategy. Gangs which initially confined themselves to committing murders and thefts are now involved in full scale naxal violence against those whom they consider responsible for their miserable life.

In the last two decades, the People's War Group has made several attempts to emphasise its rights. Dissatisfied with government policies, it has lashed out violently and continues its activities which include bank robberies, murder of policemen, kidnapping of businessmen, officials and political assassination attempts.

A careful analysis of the naxalite problem may be attributed to the following reasons :

- a). Improper implementation of the Minimum Wages Act and non-payment of minimum wages fixed by the government for rural labourers,
- b) Absence of proper employment opportunities,
- c) Rigid caste based social structure,
- d) Atrocities on women of lower castes,
- e) Lack of industrialisation and other development programmes,
- f) Illegal occupation of uncultivated public land by landlords,
- g) Lack of irrigation facilities for rural poor mostly belonging to the Scheduled Castes,
- h) Denial of political rights to rural poor,
- i) Nexus between landowners and the police
- j) Tussle over political domination,
- k) Caste and class violence in rural areas.

In addition to these causes, widespread unemployment, under-development, poverty, the continuing feudal order and growing cases of corruption among local politicians and bureaucrats combined with socio-political and economic disparities among the upper, middle and Scheduled Castes have added new dimensions to the problem of naxal violence.

The recent incidents of naxal violence suggest that most of the targets are selected in the hope that the people would change their opinion about the potency of the government's authority. The naxalites also plan their attack in such a way that people see in them the justification and fulfilment of a cause leading to a just order according to their own perception of justice. This, they hope, will ultimately lead to the overthrowing of a particular order. Thus, they are attempting to induce, inspire and create terror to achieve myriad purposes.

The meek nature of people at large has frustrated efforts by security forces to identify a naxalite immediately. In this regard, there is an urgent need to re-establish faith among the masses in the capability of the Government to protect them. For a permanent solution it is not sufficient to think about some policy changes in the attitude of the government towards the rural poor. The entire society should make substantial efforts at removing the disadvantages of the poor and maintaining the social equilibrium.