

The Naxalite Movement in India

Sonali Awasthi

Symbiosis Law School, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

Ayush Mishra

Symbiosis Law School, Pune, Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT:

From the village of naxalbari in west Bengal the term naxalism is derived. Naxalism is an informal name given to radical, often violent, revolutionary communist groups that were born out of the Sino-soviet in Indian Communist Movement. It was initially started with a rebel by a group of people against the local landlords, as a peasant was bashed by the local landlords over land dispute.. The objective of the rebellion was, “Rightful redistribution of land to the working peasants.” The Naxalite movement is not principally a rural, agrarian problem as the doctrine of the Naxalites argues, but is a problem of the leading edge of the urban intelligentsia. Now naxalism is one of the biggest security problem faced by India. Naxalism not only affects the internal security but it also affects the external security. This paper aims to study the Naxalite movement in India and the problems faced by the Naxalites. The object of this research paper is to identify the root causes of the Naxalite movement in India and mode of operation identified to tackle its existence. The government of India had made certain provisions to stop the entry of large number of people and to rehabilitate the affected population but the main problem lies in the implementation of these provisions so in this study we try to focus on the solutions and how these provisions can be conveyed to the isolated mass in a substantiated way. This paper also focuses on the the naxal tactics and strategies and the suitable measures that should be taken by the government to abolish the existence of naxalism in India. It also speaks about the naxal’s as well as government’s point of view. It furthermore emphasizes on the evolution of the naxalism in India for the purpose of understanding the reason of its present domain and to tackle the problem faced by the Naxalites. A few keywords in this paper can be seen as ‘naxalism’, ‘rightful redistribution’, ‘ideology’, ‘revolution’, ‘urban intelligentsia’, ‘India’.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Naxalite Movement in India has experienced a fascinating journey encountering numerous organizational upheavals and conflicts of thoughts and ideas. The movement has seen many highs and lows in its long history since 1967 and mirrors the sentiment expressed by one of the official Maoist documents: “Revolutions never proceed in a straight line. The history of all successful revolutions shows this. The path is zig-zag, there are ups and downs, there is victory and defeat repeated a number of times...before final victory”.

The birth of the Naxalite movement in India took place in a remote village in West Bengal called Naxalbari¹ in the year 1967. A tribal youth named Bimal Kissan obtained a judicial order permitting him to plough his land. The local landlords with the support of their goons and musclemen attacked him. This event infuriated the local Tribal population and led to a violent retaliation by the tribal community to recapture their lands. The events in Naxalbari took shape of a giant rebellion and gained visibility and support across regions including West

¹V. Marwah, India in Turmoil (Rupa Publication, 2009), p. 98

Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and parts of Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. A section of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] led by Charu Majumdar and Kanu Sanyal led a violent uprising in 1967. They tried to develop a “revolutionary opposition” to the official CPI (M) leadership. Revolutionary cadres of the CPI (M) counter attacked the landlord, giving rise to the “Naxalbari Uprising”. The uprising was spearheaded by Charu Mazumdar. Similarly, a peasant revolution was launched in an area called Srikakulam of Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh led by Chandra Pulla Reddy. Both incidents were violent in nature and drew their inspiration from the success of the Communist movements in China and Russia the then United Front government led by the CPI (Marxist) came down heavily on the rebellion using all kinds of repressive measures. Seething with anger, the participants of the “revolution” formed the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) in May 1968. “Allegiance to armed struggle and non-participation in the elections” formed the cornerstone of the AICCCR. The radicals comprehended the Indian situation then to be similar to that in China prior to 1949 and characterized it as essentially semi-colonial and semi-feudal. Based on that analysis, the revolutionaries concluded that the “People’s Democratic Revolution” should be launched in India by immediately resorting to an armed struggle on the Chinese lines.²

Who are Naxalites?

Naxalites are common people who want equal social and financial status for all. Their ideology is clear that they are fighting oppression and exploitation to create a classless society. They work for the centralization of power. They just want basic amenities for their survival; infrastructure and most importantly they want opportunities to grow. The Naxalites operate mostly in rural and Adivasi regions. They are usually found in the area where there is a forest cover. Their motto is to show teeth and enlarge upon their ideology and if possible support landless and poor.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The objective of this research, is to trace the Naxalite movement in India, and assess the root causes of this movement, as well as study its impact on the society.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing literature, in the form of books, articles and documents have been referred to for the purpose of this project. The main sources of reference are the articles ‘The Far-Reaching Consequences of the Naxalite Movement in India’³ by Shrey Verma a. The book ‘Revolutionary violence’⁴ by M. Manoranjan has also been

² M. Manoranjan, *Revolutionary Violence: A Study of Maoist Movement in India* (New Delhi, 1977), p. 60.

³ Shrey Verma, *The Far-Reaching Consequences of the Naxalite Movement in India*, Rakshak Foundation, July 2011

⁴ M. Manoranjan, *Revolutionary Violence*, New Delhi, 1977

referred to for this research project. The existing literature fails to trace and assess the issues which led to the rise of such a movement.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The type of research conducted for this research paper can be categorized as basic research. The data has been collected from secondary sources. The information has been interpreted from already existing works and information collected from historical sources on the topic. The research is descriptive in nature. The research is contextual in nature for it is the analysis of already existing factual information. The methodology that this research follows falls under qualitative study. Data has been occupied from various sources, forming its foundation as one belonging to the qualitative field of research. A method of ‘content analysis’ is exploited by the researchers in achieving the results and interpretations of this study. This methodology is commonly used by researchers to arrive at a conclusion by collecting qualitative data from media such as documents, journals, books, excerpts etc. This research is constructed in such a way that the data administered is formulated according the existing information of the Naxalite Movement in India.

V. HYPOTHESIS

The root causes for the formation of the Naxalite Movement must be identified and resolved by the government, as well as its mode of operation identified to tackle its existence.

VI. THE NAXALITE MOVEMENT IN INDIA:

- **ROOT CAUSES OF THE NAXALITE MOVEMENT:**

The Naxalite movement derives the root causes of its formation from the inequalities and exploitation faced by the tribal communities. The following issues at the inception of the Naxals, form the plight of the sufferers:

- i. Zamindari System**

The Zamindari system was adopted during the British rule wherein a piece of land was given to a Zamindar and in return, he was required to pay a certain amount to the company or the state. The Zamindar did not cultivate the land himself. He distributed and redistributed it till it reached the tiller of the land who was a tribal or a common man working hard in the field. At each stage, the poor people or the tribals suffered immensely because a certain amount was required to be paid to the renter of the land and it led to the exploitation of the poor tribal at each stage.

- ii. Status of Tribals**

The government decided to declare certain forests as reserved forests for the purposes of conservation, scientific research, for sanctuaries and land acquisition for dams, roads, industries, etc. It was done directly at the cost of the tribals who the inhabitants of these forests for many generations were. Thus, the state government, the contractors, and lower level officials fully exploited the tribals, bringing down their status to that of encroachers in the forests.

iii. Resettlement and Rehabilitation

The records of resettlement and rehabilitation reveal that payment of compensation for lands and assets acquired from the people for various purposes, are very rarely compensated to them. For certain poor families, it has meant generations of resettlement without being given any compensation. This has led to deprivation and marginalization of the people. Although industrialization did take place in the country, the tribals were deprived of the basic benefits of education and training. Therefore, they could not avail of new opportunities in the industries and remained marginalized. Administration in Remote Areas Being very poor and unmonitored, these areas were developed but had poor connectivity. Even post-independence, the agrarian reforms did not reach these areas. Corruption, vote bank politics and atrocities against the Scheduled Castes wrecked havoc in the economic and social fabric of the society.

iv. Governance Related Factors

The malfunctioning of government machinery in terms of inefficiency, corruption and exploitation was largely considered as the main factor behind the creation of a power vacuum as well as a space for Maoists to take root in and find legitimacy amongst the deprived and impoverished sections of the population in the country. Since the demand of the poor people for change was not coming from the government, a natural recourse was to look for an alternative. The mass mobilisation has been possible only due to the inherent disenchantment with the prevalent system. The Naxals reached out to the people, understood them, took up their issues and fought for their dignity and rights. They earned goodwill among the tribals and the downtrodden. It is of great interest to note that unlike the other internal security problems of the northeast, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Punjab were separatist in nature; Left Wing Extremism (LWE) is not a separatist or externally driven movement. LWE believes that democracy is ill suited to India and wants to make it a Communist type state. They have no respect for, or faith in, the Indian Constitution and the democratic system of government. They strongly believe in a classless society and consider rich capitalists, farmers and industrialists as their enemies. The aim is to overthrow the established government by using armed guerrilla rebellion along with agitation by the masses which in effect means dictatorship by the proletariat. Globalisation and liberalisation are seen as challenges to socialism. It is common knowledge that in most Naxal-affected regions, there is total lack of governance. The civil administration departments like the police forces, revenue department, and judicial institutions are seldom

heard of. This has allowed the Naxal forces to run a parallel government in these areas. The practice of holding Jan Adalat's, land distribution, construction of irrigation facilities and tax collection by the Maoist cadres, are evidence of the lack of the hold of the state government, as also explain the reach of Naxalism.

v. **Socio-Economic Inequalities**

The Naxal affected areas are severely affected by the disparities in economic and social terms. The rich Thakurs and Zamindars consider poor people and tribals as people with no dignity and, hence, socially exploit them. All kinds of social discrimination are practised against them. The females of the poor classes are treated as commodities to be used and exploited. These inequalities in society force them to take recourse to violence and join Naxalism. Economically, there is a large gap between the haves and have nots. Lack of employment opportunities for the youth in the relatively deprived regions of the country further allows Naxal groups to recruit more and more people. Hence, the primary incentive to join the Naxals was to ensure an adequate income. The poverty levels in the Naxal affected states of Orissa, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are much higher (with more than 40 percent of the population living below the poverty line).

• **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

No organisation can survive without sound financial support and a source of regular income. By rough estimates, the LWE generates approximately Rs 500- 700 crores annually. This money is spent on payment to its cadres, for the purchase of arms and ammunition, running of frontal organisations and institutions. The main sources of funds are wealthy industrialists who carry out mining in these areas. To finance their activities, the Naxalites "accept contributions" in the form of "taxes and levies", loot government treasuries and banks and also extort vast amounts from businesses, industries, political leaders, government officials, rich landlords and professionals. The extremists live by the gun, reaping a rich harvest of extortion and tax collection, with revenues to the tune of Rs.1,000 crore a year.⁵ The quantum of collection varies from state to state. As per estimates, the total collection from Bihar and Chhattisgarh is around Rs 200 crore and Rs. 150 crores respectively,⁶ while that from Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh is about Rs. 350 crore and Rs. 100 crores respectively.⁶ In addition, the Naxalites are also engaged in, or control, significant levels of illegal economic activity⁷. The extremists live by the gun, reaping a rich harvest of extortion and tax collection, with revenues to the tune of Rs.1,000 crore a year. In addition, the Naxalites are also engaged in, or control, significant levels of illegal economic activity, harvesting and smuggling of forest produce. Smuggling of tendu leaves and other forest products such as opium and kattha also adds to their revenue.

⁵The Economic Times, April 9, 2008

⁶ Ibid

⁷ R.K. Bhonsle, "An Integrated Strategy", Yojana, February, 2007, p. 32

- **NAXAL STRATEGY AND TACTICS**

- i. **Organisational Strength of the Extremist Groups**

The consolidation of several sections of the Naxalites has been responsible for the organised, institutionalised and planned manner in which the Naxalites function. The ideological dedication, the cadre-based organisational setup and understanding of the micro socio-economic situation in various regions of India makes the extremists plan, operate and implement their strategies efficiently. There is a Central Committee and a Politburo at the apex. The hierarchical structure, which flows from the Regional Bureaus— State Committee/Special Zone Committee—Zone and Sub-Zone District/ Division Committee—Squad Area Committee, is well established and institutionalised. The armed wing has a few divisions and dalams. At the village level, they have units called “Sanghams” comprising ideologically committed active supporters.

- ii. **Protracted War**

The Naxalites have adopted the strategy of “protracted war”. The aim is to capture political power by armed struggle as a prelude to the subsequent unification of the liberated areas. The armed struggle has no time limit. It can attain the goal in one or 10 or 20 years and, in this way, the struggle moves ahead. Recently, the Naxalite groups have laid greater focus on organising along military lines. The military wing has based its ideology on guerrilla warfare. They have resorted to well-conceived, thoroughly planned and ably executed sensational actions such as the attack on the convoy of Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, the forced release of prisoners from the prisons at Jehanabad (Bihar), Narayangarh (Orissa), police stations in Chhattisgarh and Silda (West Bengal) and the recent spurt in hijacking of trains in Bihar and Jharkhand.

- iii. **Building up Bases/Guerrilla Zones**

In order to fulfil the aim of protracted war, the Naxalites believe in building up both physical and mass bases. Initially, the bases are built up in rural and remote areas. The areas are, then, to be developed into “Guerrilla Zones” and ultimately into “Liberated Areas”. Naxalites operate in the very heartland of India, known as the Dandakaryna region (named after a mythological region from the epic Ramayana) which spreads over Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The heart of this region is the thickly forested area of Abujmarh which is approximately 10,000 sq. km. This area till date has not been surveyed by the Government of India. The Naxalites treat it as a totally liberated area.

- iv. **Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ)**

The Naxalites, with the support of their Nepal counterpart, plan to create a ‘Red Corridor’, starting from the Nepal border with Nepal and extending up to Kerala. It was in August 2001 that the idea came up of

establishing a Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) or the Red Corridor. It extended from the forest tracts of Adilabad (Andhra Pradesh) to Nepal, traversing the forest areas of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar and Nepal. It was conceptualised at Siliguri in a high-level meeting of the Maoist leaders. The notion of CRZ seems to be working in the correct direction. There has been a remarkable growth in Maoist between 2001 and 2010 in India. Training the LWE affected areas being underdeveloped and forested, safe joint training camps can be organised. It has been reported that some Nepal Maoists have been possibly trained in the West Champaran and Aurangabad districts of Bihar, and Palamau and Kodarma districts of Jharkhand. Also, CPI - ML and PWG cadres are imparting specialist training to the Maoists of Nepal in Rolpa and Rukum districts of Nepal. On this basis, they attack the enemy's outposts. An uncorroborated media input reveals that an attack on a police outpost in the West Champaran district on July 16, 2004, was carried out jointly by Indian and Nepalese groups. The attack on a police post in Madhu Bani in North Bihar in June 2005 is also reported to be a joint operation.

v. Tactics

To obtain their strategic, objectives, the Naxalites have been very ruthless in their approach. The following methods highlight their tactics to achieve their goals. The Naxalites aim at enhancing public support and mass base.⁸ The failure of the Naxalbari movement in the initial stages led the Naxalite leaders to rely solely on the people and create a powerful mass base. Therefore, now, the Naxals' aim is to enlarge their mass/support base by undertaking development work and garnering the support of the civil liberty groups. In addition, they indulge in rendering instant justice through 'Jan Adalat's'. The movement has strengthened itself in the forest areas and in areas marked by lack of governance.

vi. Jan Adalat's:

Naxalites hold 'Jan Adalat's' to dispose of the criminal and civil cases and, then, dispense justice by settlement of disputes and punishing the offenders. For this, the PWG has introduced a new 'Judicial System' by forming the 'People's Court', i.e., the Gram Rajya Committee and subsequently 'Revolutionary People's Committee', as an alternate judicial system. The 'Judicial Department' i.e. 'Sangham' comprising three to five members with a 'People's Protection Squad' at its disposal, delivers judgments and sentences, including fines and imprisonment in a temporary designated lock-up in the village, apart from awarding capital punishment. The Dandakaranya Adivasi Mazdoor Kisan Sangh (DAKMS) and the Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sanghatan (KAMS) are two specific Naxal front organisations that are entrusted with the task of looking into all disputes.⁹

⁸ Singh, n. 15, p. 11

⁹ Ministry of Home Affairs, Annual Report, 2008-09.

- **STATE'S RESPONSE TO NAXALITE CHALLENGE**

Government failed to understand the reasons behind the Naxalite Movement. Initially the response of the central as well as the state government, was that this was a problem of law and order. The government completely failed to understand the situation and this can be borne out by the statement made in Lok Sabha by Home Minister Y.B. Chavan, On June 13 1967, where he stated that “This was a case of lawlessness and should be contained and crushed by the local police force”. Even Manmohan Singh who served as the Prime Minister stated that “What was thought to be a brief period of discontent has today grown into becoming India’s biggest threat to internal security.

- **PRESENT DOMAIN OF NAXALISM**

The exponential spread of Naxal influence has now engulfed 231 districts or 20 states as compared to 182 districts or 16 states earlier, which indeed gives a pan-India hue to the Naxal movement. The Naxals’ consolidation along the axis of the projected ‘Red Corridor’ or the ‘Compact Revolutionary Zone’ (CRZ) highlights the long-term objectives of the outfit. The Naxals’ aim is to upgrade their armed wing from a ‘Guerrilla Force’ to a regular ‘People’s Army’.

- **LAWS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT**

- i. Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007:**

The main aim of this act is to minimize the displacement of people and to promote non-displacing or least displacing alternatives (Dharmadhikary, 2010). The objective of this act is to ensure that proper care is been taken of the weaker sections of the society. On 11 October 2007 the government issued a rehabilitation policy for the easy displacement of people who lost their land for industrial growth. According to this policy land will be given for the exchange of the land, in future jobs will be given to at least to one member of the family, also they will be providing them with the housing benefits vocational training and houses to people in urban and rural regions¹⁰.

- ii. Forest Rights Act, 2006:**

This act grants the rights to weaker sections of the society and the traditional forest dwellers. Forest dwellers are the people residing in the forest from past so many years, for their livelihood. Under this act forest dwellers are given various rights such as land rights, right to protect and conserve and rights to use. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has allowed conversion of kutchra roads into pukka roads and also allowed the use of 1

¹⁰ Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007

hectare of land for non-forest purposes¹¹.

iii. Chhattisgarh Special Public Securities Act, 2006 :

This bill provides definition of unlawful activities, declaring an organization unlawful, formation of an advisory board wherever the state government feels the need for its establishment, procedure of the formation of the advisory board, action of the advisory board, penalties viz punishments even for not committing a crime, the power to notify a place being used for unlawful activities and taking occupation of such place thereof and revision/bar against intervention by the courts (Dr. Abid Ali, 2015).

These laws have in many ways caused a lot of problems to the tribal's and the scheduled castes by negating the spirit of the various safeguards available to the scheduled tribes under the constitution and other laws in the country¹². The act providing 'land for land' has become a nightmare for the government and has become a stumbling block for ensuring industrialisation. As per the Unlawful activities prevention act (UAPA) the government has banned all organisations that have any connections with any Naxal movements like the MCC or the CPI-M (Marxist-Leninist). There was no need of this bill to tackle Naxalism. This bill was formulated, only to silence the appropriate discord and dissent brewing in the minds of people in the areas affected by Naxalism due to persistent ignorance by the government to their situation. This Bill has also failed to make a distinction between the anti-social, anti-national elements from the people who are peace loving.

CSPS Bill, 2005

It provides the District Magistrate unconditional powers to notify places which he thinks are being used for unlawful activities without any prior notification. There is no requirement of production of anything as evidence to prove that the said place is being used for unlawful activities. It is just a violation of principles of natural justice as the aggrieved parties don't even get a fair hearing. This bill also provides that any revision application has to be filed with the High court only, challenging the validity of the order of the government. This petition has to be filed within 30 days and that no court has the jurisdiction against any decision of the court. Any kind of application or form of revision or injunction by a court or officer except for the High court and the Supreme Court regarding any action to be taken as a follow up to the order of the government has been

¹¹ Forest Rights Act, 2006

¹²“Indigenous Issues”, Asian Indigenous and Tribal People Network (AITPN), Source: <http://www.aitpn.org/Issues/II-09-06-Forest.pdf> (Last accessed on 13th January, 2010) at 3; see also N. Nayak, “Naxalism in Chhattisgarh: Down, not wiped out”, Source: <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/NiharNayak300107.htm> (Last accessed on 13th January, 2010).

barred in this Bill. So, it can be said that this bill was totally uncalled for and has only be brought to act as a blandishment to the people¹³.

VII. ANALYSIS

The Naxalite Movement in India emerged to address the exploitation faced by the tribal community in India. Reasons like exploitation of tribals by the rich zamindars, corruption by the government officials, displacement of tribals from land by falsely alleging encroachment and failure of proper governance in the areas like Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh etc lead to the formation and continuance of the movement. It later spread due to the effective propagandas used by the Naxalites in mobilising people, which they made sure appealed to them, and pointed out the flaws in the existing governance.

The Naxalites derive strength from the failure of governance mechanisms. It wins over people by pointing out that the elected government cannot effectively govern them and picks up such issues to use in their own favour. The under developed state of education and employment opportunities in the affected areas also contribute to the recruitment of people into the outfit, The Naxalites finance themselves through taxes and levies collected from the local people, looting of government treasuries and banks and also extort vast amounts from businessmen, miners, industries, political leaders, government officials, rich landlords and professionals. The funds must first be cut off for the outfit to stop functioning for without it will be impossible to carry out attacks. There must be awareness created to prevent the Naxalites from securing finances for the sustenance of the movement. The government must extend its sovereignty upon the 'liberated areas' captured by the Naxals and prevent them from capturing or accessing more areas. The government must also include the support of the Government of Nepal to curb the influence of its Nepali counterpart on it and prevent the extension of the proposed 'red corridor'.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The Naxals reached out to the people, understood them, took up their issues and fought for their dignity and rights. They earned goodwill among the tribals and the downtrodden by fighting for them. The Naxalite Movement started with a noble objective to protect the rights of the tribals, but its extremism and violence deterred it from becoming an accepted revolution. The tackling of the threat to internal security, as a result of this movement must start with government addressing the problems faced by the tribals and ensure that their rights are protected. The central and eastern parts of the country are relatively underdeveloped as compared to other parts of India, both industrially and agriculturally. The areas also lag behind in almost all human development indicators. Hence, efforts must be made by the government to tackle the disparities in the social

¹³ CSPA Bill, 2005

system. The government must take immediate steps to eliminate poverty, ensure speedy development and enforce law and order strictly and initiate welfare programs for the tribals in all parts of India. Naxal groups have been raising mainly land and livelihood related issues. If land reforms are taken up on a priority basis and the landless and poor in the Naxal areas are allotted the surplus land, this would go a long way in tackling the developmental aspects of the Naxal problem. Greater attention on this area and also speeding up developmental activities and create employment opportunities in the Naxal affected areas, with special focus on the creation of physical infrastructure in terms of roads, communication, power as also social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, etc would go a long way in tackling the issue. In my opinion, the Naxalites today are far more radicalised than they were when they first began and this leads to a greater chance of increased violence. Before the government retaliates, it must address the core issues on which this movement is based, eradicate or solve them and then further work towards restricting the existence and spread of Naxalism. The government must also resort to publicity campaigns in order to expose the unlawful activities and misdeeds of Naxal outfits and their leaders, use of violence and armed struggle, loss of human life and property and absence of developmental activities in the affected areas due to fear of, and extortion by, Naxal cadres, etc. It must aim at finding loopholes in the strategy and tactics in the modus operandi of Naxalites in the State. Furthermore, an attractive and all-encompassing surrender-cum-rehabilitation policy will have a great psychological effect on the Naxals who seem far removed from their ideology.

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