



NAXALISM : FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR GROWTH AND IDEOLOGY

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Abstract

One major challenge before the India today is that of Naxalism, a movement which has a long history and which over a period of time has expanded its influence and violent activities. The Naxal affected areas are tribal dominated districts in the interiors of the states where the administrative architecture and development has not reached. The discontent among the population of these areas is on the matters of rights to lands, forests, mining, development and the caste based discrimination. Naxalism is the outcome of a number of various factors political and economical in nature as discussed below.



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Introduction

The tribes in central India have witnessed movements for a long time—even during the British colonial period. Right from the beginning their movements were against the intrusion of alien forces and people. For quite some time in the colonial period the tribes were militarily subdued and intrusion of non-tribals was encouraged. The tribes suffered all these quietly for long except for brief durations. The situation did not change much even in the post-colonial period. In fact with better communication system the exploitation got multiplied. In course of time the tribes or adivasis also realised more about their rights and started resisting. They also wanted to be a party to the political processes linked to development. They became all the more restive as the government adopted the neo-liberal policies and encouraged the entry of the multinational companies to exploit the resources. As the adivasis suffered due to oppression and exploitation, the Leftist parties, particularly the Maoists, moved into the fray and supported the adivasi cause. The Maoists were not content with passive resistance; they adopted violent methods with the intension of seizing state power. The adivasis got all the more attracted to this as they shared the history and tradition of armed revolts. The movement further positively responded to their motto of the right to self-determination. The adivasis are no longer enamoured by the government sops like the provisions of Vth Schedule and PESA. They are seeking autonomy and state power.

The Naxalite movement first came to the forefront in the late 1960s, when Naxalbari became famous for the left-wing revolt that took place in West Bengal. Since then, it is perceived as the greatest threat to law and order within India. The movement has now advanced to the hilly and forest regions of around ten different states, with more than 160 districts are believed to be under its direct influence. It is mostly active in the tribal areas spreading from Andhra Pradesh to Bihar and Maharashtra, and also covering parts of Karnataka, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, and Tamil Nadu. Naxal violence has resulted in the death of over 10000 civilians and displaced 12 million people since 1980s with a significant rise in the number of killings in Naxalism-hit states. Additionally, 2700 personnel of security forces have also been martyred.

It is originated as rebellion against local landlords who bashed a peasant over a land dispute. This rebellion was under the leadership of Kanu Santhal and Jagan Sanyal with an objective of rightful redistribution of the land to working peasants which was initiated in 1967. It is considered to be the far-left radical communists; the Naxals support Maoist political sentiment and ideology. It was started in West Bengal and the movement slowly spread across the Eastern India in less developed areas of rural central and eastern India, such as Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. The movement has rapidly found roots among displaced tribes and natives who are fighting against exploitation at the hands of major Indian corporations and local officials whom they believe to be corrupt.

Factors Responsible for Growth of Naxalism in India

The Naxal affected areas are tribal dominated districts in the interiors of the states where the administrative architecture and development has not reached. The discontent among the population of these areas is on the matters of rights to lands, forests, mining, development and the caste based discrimination. Naxalism is the outcome of a number of various factors political and economical in nature as discussed below:-

- Social Factors
- Political Factors
- Economic factors
- Other Factors

Social Factors

Naxalism signifies a particular kind of militant and violent armed struggle by the peasants and tribals who accept Marxist-Leninist ideology. In spite of Naxalism being termed as the

biggest problem in Adivasi areas, the social problems are actually much wider in the form of unemployment, poverty and an untold number of socio-economic injustices. Here are some points to justify the statement:

- India's development paradigm pursued since Independence led to commercialisation of forest resources, reducing the traditional access to forest produce. Besides destroying their natural environment, mining-based industries and the construction of large dams caused wide-scale displacement of the tribals.
- In the late 1990s, privatisation and economic development were the main agenda for the ruling parties like the BJP and Congress. On the other hand, one of the major wings of Naxalism movement, the CPI-Maoist tried to keep the struggle alive on behalf of workers, rural poor and the lower middle classes who suffered tremendously and, largely, silently in the name of economic reforms. The Communist Party of India (Marxist- Leninist) which was formed in 1969 advocated armed struggle and condemned participation in parliamentary elections and work in mass movements.
- In spite of the government laying down a clear plan to tackle the left-wing extremism like launching a Police Modernization Scheme in areas affected by Naxal movements, the bill for safeguarding land rights introduced by the UPA, etc which were all modest measures in the right direction, the local elites still continued to manipulate the Panchayati Raj structures, as it was noticed. Such a move gave fuel to the already ignited fire to the tribals to start the Naxalism movement.
- The police and paramilitary organisations' approach to the 'Naxalite' problem exposed weakness within state governments. Various state governments, from time to time, banned Maoist outfits, without developing any consistent policy to deal with such elements. Without understanding their needs and issues, such bans, along with preventive detention or anti-terror laws that allowed the police to come down heavily on such groups, created a feeling of unrest amongst the Naxals.

Political Factors

- Emergence of the movement coincided with the formation of the first United Front Government in West Bengal (1967) with CPI (M) as its main constituent. The movement thus received increasing official support, attention and press coverage in those times.
- The movement was influenced with the political ideology of Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong. They used slogans such as "*China's path is our path; China's*

Chairman is our Chairman". However, this ideological inclination to China faded away later. Today, the Naxalite groups are no more having the same perceptions. However, their commitment to Maoism remains as it was earlier.

- The Naxalbari movement began as an armed peasants uprising. The insensitive nature and apathy of the political system towards tribals remained one of the most important factors that led to such uprisings.
- The most important political factor for rise of Naxalism is the **inability of the legitimate political authority** in India to provide avenues for structural uplift to the deprived sections of society in the affected states. There are some areas where there is absolutely no civil administration or police.
- The Naxalites operate in a vacuum created by administrative and political institutions, espouse local demands, take advantage of the discontent prevalent among the exploited sections of the population and seeks to offer an alternative system of governance that promises emancipation of these segments from the clutches of the exploiter classes through the barrel of gun.

Economic Factors

India's Maoist movement is often thought to be rooted in economic deprivation. A review of the emerging literature and descriptive evidence from a district-level data set on Maoist conflict indicates that the relationship between underdevelopment and Maoist activity cannot be explained in simple economic terms. At the state level, Maoist conflict-affected states have similar growth trends and do not score lower on development measures. In a cross section of districts, the most robust predictor of Maoist activity is forest cover, which could reflect the importance of strategic terrain factors as well as the relevance of forest rights and forest produce.

- Problem of poverty and economic inequality and underdevelopment in the naxal affected regions.
- Skewed distribution of land and economic growth.
- Encroachment of forest lands by and wealth controlled by contractor-politician nexus.
- Entry of mining companies in Tribal lands and forests, posing threat to the livelihood of the tribals.
- Indigenous tribal population deprived of their lands, uprooted from their traditional source of livelihood. Globalization accused to have led many MNCs making inroads in

tribal areas owing to their resource richness. The benefits of the resource exploitation are not passed on the tribals.

- Well knitted linkage between the illegal mining industry in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand which results in a lucrative source of earning for the Naxal leadership and cadres.
- The tribal villages have no medical facilities, no schools, low literacy, and high poverty.
- The Naxalite cadre base is formed of tribals, lower castes from India's poorest communities, form the Naxals' cadre base. Naxalite movement is supported by the grievances of the tribals and the dalits.

Other Factors

- **Mismanagement of Forests.** It is one of the main reasons for the spread of Naxalism. It started with the British government. The monopolization of the forest started with the enactment of various forest laws. The integration with the wider world led to an influx of a new class like moneylenders. The administrative machinery became more exploitative and extortionate at functional level.
- **Tribal policies not implemented well.** Even during the post Independence era, the government was not able to stop the process of the tribal alienation and their displacement caused by large projects. Even the issues of food security were not fully sorted out. Consequently, Naxalism made inroads in Orissa and other states.
- **The Growing inter and intra regional disparities.** Naxalism attract people who have poor livelihood like fishermen, farmers, daily labourers and bamboo cutters. The government policies have failed to stem the growing inter and intra regional disparities. The poor people think that Naxalism can provide solutions to their problems.
- **Absence of proper Industrialisation and lack of land reforms.** The half-hearted implementation of land reforms by the government has yielded negative results. The agrarian set up has not been defined in the absence of proper implementation of survey and settlement. This further damaged the agriculture production and the rural economy. Absence of proper industrialization has failed to generate employment for rural people leading to dissatisfaction with the government. It is also one of the causes behind Naxalism.
- **Geographical Terrain.** Naxalism thrives in areas covered with forests. It helps them fight against the police and the army by waging Guerrilla warfare.

- **Middle Class Youth.** The educated youths have been the largest supporters of the Naxalist movement as the maximum of the youths involved in the movement are medical and engineering graduates. Universities have turned up to be a pitch for the creation of radical ideologies. Naxalism was the brain-child of exploitative relation of landlords and peasants, but today it became the biggest security problem for India's future.

Conclusion

Naxalism was the brain-child of exploitative relation of landlords and peasants, but today it became the biggest security problem for India's future. Development is, without a doubt, very necessary in today's age but the Central and State governments should make sure that it is not done at the cost of citizens. Having said that, the Naxalite movement attempted to achieve equity in the society by means of a mass movement and struggle, and they did achieve it to some extent but at the cost of the economic development of the state. There has been a range of violence which has had no direct consequence on the rights of people but invariably ended up harming masses by way of disruption in the elections, destruction of schools, trains and rail lines, etc. A mutual understanding, therefore, should prevail which can end Naxalism.

Naxalites are powerful and effective in some areas in India because of the unresolved contradictions and issues in our society. They have proved effective because they have an ideology that inspires youth apart from having an organisational structure and armed groups. Proper enforcement of land ceiling laws, utilisation of the funds provided to the government to the maximum could be the solution to this problem. The central reason for the advancement of Naxalism is the vast exploitation of the poor and the scheduled castes. People, who have been displaced, should be given proper rehabilitation along with police protection. Security, as well as development, has to run hand in hand.

The right to self-determination is so deeply entrenched into the psyche of the tribals that they cannot remain at peace until their demand for territorial consolidation is met. The tribes in Jharkhand had demanded tribal areas in the adjoining Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal to be a part of the Jharkhand State. But instead Jharkhand State was carved out of Bihar. Presently the Maoists are mainly active in the areas which were a part of the Jharkhand region that was demanded by the locals. Parts of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh too have been now added to the area. The call for a Gondwana State is also being raised in parts of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Were these regions brought under a

unified territory the tribes would have gained numerical majority and not be under the mercy of the majority non-tribal people as currently seen in the Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh States. Apart from everything, it must be conceded that tribal movements by themselves most of the time have been violent. Whether it be the Birsa movement or be the Santal Hul, they were by and large violent and the tribals had freely taken recourse to the use of bows, arrows, axes and spears. In the North-East too most of the tribal movements involve the use of armaments and even sophisticated weapons. In the central and western parts of the country where non-tribal leaders or intermediaries have led non-violent movements, their goals have not been achieved. The case of the Narmada Bachao Andolan is a striking illustration on this score. The movement is led in an arbitrary manner and the names of tribal leaders do not figure prominently anywhere. The movement started with the slogan that the dam of the Sardar Sarovar project will not be allowed to be built; but that dam is today three hundred feet high. It is well forgotten that during British reign the fearsome Bhil chiefs compelled the high-ranked agents to come and sign treaties in the tortuous ravines close to the river valley. The fate of the Tultule project in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, on the other hand, was doomed due to the armed onslaught of the local tribesmen not very long ago.

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