

## Terrorism Can never Lead to Democracy

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The two slogans are, indeed, contradictory, and yet how often we see that yesterday's freedom fighter is today's dictator! The terrorist groups that operate on a worldwide stage today are imbued with this contradiction; not one of them is free of it. Whether it is the LTTE, the ULFA, the Naxalites of various hues and shades, or the so-called 'Islamic' fundamentalists fighting in our own Kashmir or in other parts of the world, not one of these groups can tolerate the flexibility and tolerance for a different view that is the hallmark of democracy. Yet each one of them will claim loud and clear that they fight for democracy and freedom of the oppressed. Their most inhuman acts- kidnapping, torture and murder of innocent people- are done in the name of winning 'human right' for certain groups of people. They claim they are forced into these acts because they have no other way of calling attention to the plight of the oppressed or getting justice for them. Some of them, like the Naxalites who represent the extreme Left radicals, advocate the use of violence and bloodshed to achieve the goal of social change. The presumption is that social and economic change would follow once the established power is destroyed by force and replaced by an ideological system that will usher in a new era of classless society. Unfortunately, there is no evidence yet anywhere in the world of the classless society or complete equity in prosperity coming in the wake of revolutions however bloody they have been. A new class structure grows, and as Orwell said in *Animal Farm*, there are always some pigs more equal than other animals. And the promised freedom and unrestricted flow of milk and honey remains as distant as they were before the new dispensation.

The ideology of use of violence to correct the ills of society does, however, appeal to many who are frustrated at their lot, crushed by poverty and waiting endlessly for the fruits of development to 'trickle' down. And the ideology combined with the promise of a Utopia appeals specially to the young. The young hate to wait, they are impatient to go ahead and achieve something, and hitting out at those they see and are made to see as their oppressors comes easily to them. The promise of utopia appeals to their innate idealism, for most dreams of achieving something meets with obstacles in the callous contempt from the 'elite', they are easily swayed by the firm voice of radical action to fight these ills. It is not surprising that the naxalite movement is mainly concentrated in the rural and backward areas of various states. Poor peasants, usually landless, form the rank and file of these organizations.

Any researches done to find the root causes of the growth of terrorism points out that there are genuine political and socio-economic points out that there are genuine political and originate and flourishes. The authorities are oppressive, the

rule of law is subverted to favor the rich and influential or particular classes, and there is no redress forthcoming from those whose business it is to look into the grievances of the people. The political leaders, more often than not, have lost touch with the needs of the masses, or have grown callous to their basic needs, or have developed fiefdoms of their own that work on loyalty. Individuals cannot get their business with government done without huge bribes. The funds allocated for development, as is well known, are shared by 'middlemen' – the officials and politicians; and the poor remain where they were if not worse off than before. In such circumstances, a promise of radical change seems welcome. Indeed, many of the naxalites and other militants show a readiness to work for the welfare of the local communities and get things done. Quick justice is meted out, with more than a degree of fairness. The Robin Hood image cannot but appeal to the poor who have borne the brunt of violence at the hands of the rich and powerful. The hatred one feels for the corrupt and callous makes one readily overcome one's conscience over the right and wrong of violence and bloodshed, and in any case it is only renege for what one has been made to suffer. In the beginning, the idea of hurting those who hurt one comes as sweet revenge; later, killing the innocent is smoothed over by the ideologues as necessary for the cause – the small sacrifices essential on the way to achieving the cherished goal of well being of all.

Unfortunately, the militants are themselves no subscribers to the basic tenets of democracy, at the first sign of resentment at their high handedness or rigid implementation of their 'rules', they show their inability to tolerate any difference of opinion. They cannot abide the growth of other power centers, show of violence, and no one is allowed to stray. Once again, it is just a power move, hiding under the guise of benevolence and concern for people's welfare.