



Anachronistic Naxalism— Need for Reinvention

The recent spate of Naxal activities including the abduction of a Collector of Malkangiri, an MLA or two Italian tourists in Orissa, the shooting of an SP in Pakur in Jharkhand, the continued mindless killings of security personnel as seen in the Garhchiroli district of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand or Bihar clearly shows that Naxals have far from given up their anachronistic fight against the Indian state. This is notwithstanding the reverses suffered by them including death of hundreds of their cadres in encounters with the security personnel including that of Koteswar Rao alias Kishenji.

The Naxals just refuse to see the writings on the wall. They refuse to accept the antediluvianism of their horse and buggy methods that they have embraced since the heady days of sanguinary 1960s when thousands of Indians lost their lives in the prime of their youth in pursuance of a chimera. These youths were imbued with the ideals of a Marxist discourse and were ready to go to any extent to realise the same including resort to violence as is synonymous with Naxalism today.

However, as Gandhi would have said, the means to achieve a goal is much more important than the goal. If the means are erroneous and immoral, then the insidious influence thereof starts corrupting the goal itself, howsoever lofty it might be. This is what has happened with Naxalism in this country.

Many of the critics at the dawn of our independence felt that India was too huge a democracy and too colossal an entity in terms of pluralities and diversities to survive the vicissitudes of time. India, to these prophets of doom, was like a Leviathan infested with the mind-boggling contradictions of castes, creeds, religions, languages, in egalitarian social hierarchies and ethnicities, which was sure to crumble. But even the strongest critics of the Indian state, including the likes of Selig Harrison, who once, like Cassandra, predicted our downfall and balkanisation, would agree that the Indian state has managed its contradictions much better than any other state of comparable size.

We, as a nation, have proved to the world time and again our maturity as a nation and the inherent strength of our society. Through consociational policies and interventions, the Indian state has ingeniously charted a *sui generis* course of development for its citizens which have seen the successful co-option of many of the anti-state forces to the satisfaction of all, be it the fissiparous or separatist movements in Tamil Nadu, in Punjab or in the North-East. Coupled with constructive political engagements, the customised policy interventions to cater to the specific needs of each community and each region, the Indian state has successfully managed these intractable contradictions. The seeming stray and sporadic failures, as noticed from time to time, are nothing but some rough edges, which would be smoothed sooner than later.

Be it securing the interests of the huge pageantry, ratcheting up the development of the socio-economically backward communities or regions, or catering to the revolutions of rising aspirations of our increasingly demanding middle classes through multiple development schemes, particularly those in the field of health, education, nutrition and employment to ensure a dignified quality life for our citizens, the Indian state has more or less come out with the flying colours. Those who rue our performance and criticise the working of our system just need to look around the working of the states in our immediate neighbourhood or elsewhere, be it Myanmar, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, countries of the middle east including Iraq, Libya, Syria, countries of the Africa and East Asia to not only derive solace but to also be proud of our sterling achievements.

Those who criticise and attack Indian state fail to see through the difficulties involved in managing the operation of a hugely complex society like India. The Indian political system, as obtaining now, has survived and proved its efficacy by tiding over sundry trials and tribulations of time. Any other political system would have been a sure recipe for disaster. That is why the Naxals, who are still imbued with the Marxist notions of a violent overthrow of the Indian state, had better realise the follies and flaws in their (mis)conceptions. They need to revise and remodel their vision for the complex Indian society and put forward the same to the Indian public for appreciation. After all, the society and the people for which they have been fighting a bloody war know nothing of their ideas, ideology or vision they have for this country.

And before they do so, they should not forget that extremism of any ideology is bad as has been amply proved by history. The collapse of communism in the 1990s did that loud and clear though one refuses to accept that it was an 'End of History' as Francis Fukuyama famously declaimed. After all, the reigning laissez faire model led by liberal capitalism cannot be said to have succeeded given the raging recession across the globe and near collapse of many countries including Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. The call for rolling back the state has itself been rolled back now. The socialist, welfare state, as aptly envisaged in our Constitution, is the way forward. And it is this model, which has come to stay if we see through the functioning of all political systems across the world including the Western democracies or Eastern autocracies/aristocracies. It is for no reason that communists or Marxists all over the world have transformed themselves to suit the times as was also seen in the iconic Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or in our neighbouring Nepal.

The lone surviving China has also changed beyond recognition. Only the veneer of Marxism–Leninism survive in that Occidental country with intense debate raging for bringing their political system in sync with the economic model they have been following since the 1980s. The extremist Marxists masquerading as Naxal ideologues and activists in our society should also understand the realities and realpolitik well enough to jettison a moth-eaten ideology to creatively and constructively bring the same in sync with the times and needs of our society. Naxals, however, can be said to have succeeded to an extent to which they have forced the Indian state in reorienting its policies to make them more meaningful and effective.

It would be well within the interest of the thousands of youth engaged in a war against the Indian state through a violent Naxal movement to reject violence and come forward to participate in the parliamentary democratic system which give them ample opportunity to influence the Indian state in a more meaningful way than they have done so far as done by the Maoists in Nepal and other extremist groups in other places. If they don't, then they would only be showing contempt for the people for which they have said to have taken cudgels.

Almost all the state governments today have a rehabilitation policy for such extremists. In fact, it would be advisable if all these policies are synchronised and made into a more comprehensive and holistic package as part of a national policy. The Naxals would be well advised to take advantage of the same and join the national mainstream in the interests of the country and in their own interests to be better able to contribute to the development of our beloved country. If they don't have a relook at their ideology and methodologies, they would continue to be dubbed as nothing but 'a mere bunch of extortionists'.

Salient Points

- The means to achieve a goal is much more important than the goal.
- Through constructive political engagements and the customised policy interventions Indian state has quite successfully managed its contradictions arising out of pluralities and diversities.
- The people for which Naxalites have been fighting do not know their ideas, ideology or vision.
- Extremism of any ideology is bad as has been amply proved by history.
- The socialist, welfare state, as aptly envisaged in our Constitution, is the way forward.
- Naxals, however, on the positive note, have forced the Indian state in reorienting its policies to make them more meaningful and effective.
- Naxals should take advantage of state welfare and rehabilitation policies and join the national mainstream.

Glossary

Antediluvianism: adherence to or fondness for ancient things or customs

Buggy: a light, four-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage

Sanguinary: bloody

Chimera: a mythological, fire-breathing monster

Insidious: operating in a seemingly harmless way but with grave effect

Colossal: extraordinarily great in size

Vicissitudes: a change or variation occurring in the course of something

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Consociational: the act of uniting in association

Ingenuously: sincere

Fissiparous: reproducing by fission

Intractable: not easily controlled

Pageantry: spectacular display

Ratcheting: to move by degrees

Rue: to feel sorrow over

Solace: comfort in sorrow

Occidental: western

Jettison: discard

Cudgels: a short, thick stick used as a weapon