



Caste Divide and Social Imbalances Driving Naxalism In Central India

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ABSTRACT

In the present day scenario, Naxalism has become the major internal security threat. The root causes of spread of Naxalism are poverty, unemployment, famishment and difference in the status of people in the society. Since, the dawn of the human civilisation, poorer have been ill treated and harassed by the people of higher class and when the level of suffering and harassment reached the pinnacle, people decided to take up guns under the umbrella of Naxalism. There is need to identify and address the root causes of spread of Naxalism. Government has taken up the various steps and launched various schemes with an aim to win the hearts and minds of common people. However, it is important to ensure that these benefits of government initiatives must reach the common man.

Keywords: Naxalism, Exploitation, Caste based Division, Social Imbalance, Government Initiatives

“The internal dangers should be got rid of first;

For they are the internal troubles, like the fear from a lurking snake;

Those are more serious than external troubles”

—Kautilya

With the advent of new technology and sincere efforts, India has become one of the fastest growing economies of the world and super powers like USA have started noticing the pace of its growth and development. In order to realise its full potential, India needs to overcome its internal and external challenges. The country has developed a strong military to counter any challenge to the security of its citizens from external aggression and to the territorial integrity however, the internal security situation continues to remain the Achilles heel of the Nation. Naxalite problem is the single largest internal

threat to India which has engulfed more than 100 districts in 13 states. The problem has moved through rural armed struggles and penetrated the domains of the policy makers, media, human rights, youth organisations and others. They are influenced and radicalised by the ideology of Communist Party. They were initially formed when the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was divided due to difference in ideology and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) was formed. Initially the movement by Naxals began in West Bengal. However in due course of time, it engulfed the central and southern part of the country, which witnessed less development, through the activities of various naxal groups. For the last one decade, it had deepened its root in the least developed areas of central and eastern India where local people, mostly tribals have taken the law in their own hand after being cheated and exploited by people of higher section of society. As of December 2017, 105 districts across 09 states are affected by left-wing extremism, down from 180 districts in 2009. Jharkhand has maximum districts affected by Naxalism. 18 Districts of Jharkhand are adversely affected by the Naxalism and these are Hazaribagh, Chatra, Gumla, Lohardaga, Palamu, Garhwa, Ranchi, Simdega, Latehar, Giridih, Koderma, Bokaro, Dhanbad, East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum, Saraikela Kharsawan, Khunti, and Ramgarh. Bihar is second most effected state, a total of 11 districts are adversely affected by this evil and these are Aurangabad, Gaya, Rohtas, Bhojpur, Kaimur, East Champaran, West Champaran, Sitamarhi, Munger, Nawada, Jamui, followed by Chhattisgarh and Orrisa with 10 and 9 naxal affected districts respectively.

CAUSES OF EXPLOITATION

If we study the states where Naxalism has deepened its root, we will find out that since the dawn of the civilisation, these were the areas which were severely affected by poverty, unemployment, famishment and difference in the status of people. This was the root cause of exploitation of poorer by the rich and resulted into the poorer going under the umbrella of Naxals. When the threshold of sufferings reached the pinnacle, people from weaker section decided to resist against the suppression and bigotry. In early years, the people started the movement with peaceful protests demanding for the basic rights but the desired result could not be achieved and many of the protesters were put behind the bars. This lead to wastage of their hard earned money and entire family had to undergo agony and suffering, people had started losing their patience and that was the time, Naxals promised to fight for their cause. A section or group, who lent a helping hand towards any person in pain, is like a god to him and he will be ready to do anything in reciprocation. Same thing happened in Central India, and people left the path of peaceful protest and picked up weapons against the state under the leadership of Naxals. Landlords and police were frequently targeted by this section of society. In retaliation, police targeted their villages and harassed the simple people which could not be explained in simple words. Even the private armies of higher section had left no stone unturned in harassing the relatives, sympathisers or the common people. Mrs Smita Narula, researcher for the *Asia division of Human Rights Watch* had carried out research in 1998 on Caste violence and she had brought out in her report that Ranvir Sena, a private army of people of higher caste, was responsible for brutal murder of more than 400 peoples of weaker section between 1995 to 1999. The irony of situation was that these people were rarely questioned by the Law as they happened to be well connected. Caste Based Division and Exploitation is one of the major causes for aggravating the problem of naxalism, due to the following reasons:

- ⊙ **Gender based Exploitation:** Gender based exploitation was largely seen in the rural areas which includes oppression, sexual exploitation of the tribal women and exploitation of low caste women by the upper caste males.
- ⊙ **Social Inequalities:** Oppression, atrocities and discriminatory treatment of Dalits and lower caste peasants by the upper caste landlords was and still exists in many parts of the country. The rich ‘*Thakurs*’ and ‘*Zamindars*’ treated poor people and tribals with no dignity and exploited them socially. These inequalities in society forced them to take recourse to violence and join the Naxalites.
- ⊙ **Land Reforms:** Absence of land reforms and aspirations for owning land resulted in a struggle against the rich and powerful landlords. The Naxalites exploited this sentiment, distributed land to poor and landless and caused bloodshed of the *Zamindars* who opposed them.
- ⊙ **Tribal and Forest Policies:** Due to implementation of Forest Regulatory Act, the tribals have been denied their traditional means of livelihood which was their only means of survival.
- ⊙ **Low Wages to Farm Workers:** On the economic front, there is discrimination in access to services and participation in some category of jobs. These social barriers also exist in the urban labour market in Central India. Despite policy to support entrepreneurship among these groups, they account for only 10% and 4.6% of the private enterprises compared to 40% and 45% in respect of the OBCs and higher caste respectively. These issues also flared up the movement which received utmost support *Ideological Inspiration*. Motivated by the success of the communist revolutions in Russia under Lenin and in China under Mao in the early Twentieth century, the aim was to bring about a similar revolution in the County to create a classless society providing equal opportunities to one and all.
- ⊙ **Inadequate Governance:** It is a common knowledge that in many of these areas, there is lack of proper governance. The civil administration departments and judicial institutions are not effective. This has allowed the Naxals to run a parallel government in these areas. The practice of holding ‘*Jan Adalats*’, land distribution, construction of irrigation facilities, tax collection by the Naxalite cadres, explain the reach and writ of the Naxalites.
- ⊙ **Induced Displacement:** Establishment of Special Economic Zones according to Naxals, is a treacherous policy to snatch the land of the people and hand it over to the MNCs. People strongly believed that their lands and villages falling in these zones would be snatched away from them. Once displaced there would be no place for them to go and would ultimately will be at the mercy of these MNCs. Naxal leaders added fire to the propaganda and left people with the chilling feeling of being displaced from their own lands ultimately gaining support for them in the process.

- ◎ **Unemployment:** One of the primary reasons of unemployment is lack of education. There is large scale illiteracy in Naxal affected states. Though government has taken some steps for compulsory education of children, however still there are number of children who are illiterate or have only primary education. The illiterate population is idol for Naxals for recruitment as they can be easily brain washed and taken into folds of Naxalism.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOCIAL IMBALANCE

The Social status of the poor is deeply affected by antagonism and structures which has led to never ending social imbalance in their communities, which had become the integral part of their daily lives. Various factors that create imbalance in the Society are as follows:

- ◎ **Agrarian Structure:** Isolation of Tribal land was a major issue as it handicapped tribals economic welfare. Gradually tribals started losing their land, which was their only source of income. The browbeaten classes were not only exploited as landless labourers and sharecroppers by the landlords but also were cheated by the money lenders. When the level of harassment and suffering reached the pinnacle they formed groups and demanded social justice and equality, however it was not agreed to *zamindars* and people of higher section as they were not ready for this social equality and wanted to retain their powers over these tribals. This led to disputes within the various sections of the society, disturbing the social equilibrium and giving a push to the Naxal movement.
- ◎ **Social Structure:** Various policies launched by the government from time to time invariably disturbed the balance in the tribal societies. There were a number of tribes whose social structure was more conducive to mass mobilisation. The tribes of Rajbhansi, Oraon and Santhal were the main inhabitant of the region of Naxalbari, Phansideoa and Kharibari, which was severly affected by the naxal movement. They were hardest hit by the agricultural commercialisation and the government's forest policies. They also bore the brunt of social oppression. Their egalitarian social organisation was very conducive to mass mobilisation. The landless everywhere shared the same woes. This invariably created a feeling of resentment among the tribes and attracted the youth of these tribes to join the Naxals.
- ◎ **Land Holding:** With the passage of time various land reforms were introduced and legislated for the landless and people with disputed land cases, but they could not be implemented in the right perspective due to the corrupt and influential people who dominated the local political structure. The poor peasants felt that even the government could do nothing to ameliorate their condition whereas the rich and influential people of the society would get what they deserved. In the bargain they would loose more land to the powerful sections of the societies. This caused resentment amongst the sections of the society which gave a push to the Naxal movement.

© **Socio-economic Alienation:** The economic situation is exploited by Naxalites and their extreme left ideologies. On one hand, India has experienced relatively fast economic growth, which has led to increased levels of national wealth. To facilitate and continue this development, business needs more land and natural resources such as minerals. On the other hand, economic growth has been uneven and has widened the disparity between the rich and poor. Proponents of these businesses argue that these regions need economic development if they need to catch up with their richer counterparts. The conflict between economic progress and aboriginal land rights continues to fuel the Naxalites activities. This is more prominent in the tribal belt such as West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh where locals experience forced acquisition of their land for setting up of developmental projects.

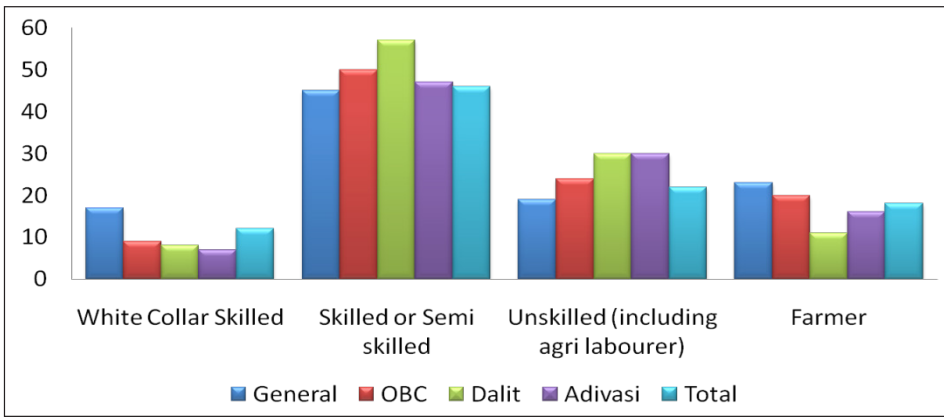


Fig. 1: Classification of Jobs on the basis of Caste

GOVERNMENT’S INITIATIVE

© **ROSHNI:** It is a special initiative under Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (Formerly Ajeevika Skills), launched in June 2013 for training and placement of rural poor youth from 27 LWE affected districts in 09 States (Andhra Pradesh-01, Bihar-02, Chhattisgarh-08, Jharkhand-06, Madhya Pradesh-01, Maharashtra-01, Odisha-06, Uttar Pradesh-01 and West Bengal-01). Two Roshni projects for skilling 1085 candidates in Bihar at a total cost of approximately ₹ 16 crores and Roshni projects for skilling 3956 candidates in Jharkhand at a total cost of ₹ 100 crores have been sanctioned.

© **MGNREGA:** Under this act, the financial security of people living in the villages is ensured by guaranteeing them hundreds days of wage employment in a financial year. In the financial year 2017-18 under the scheme Central government had released ₹ 20,78,31,77,000 and ₹ 10,23,80,22,000 to Bihar and Jharkhand respectively.

- ◎ **DDU-GKY:** The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) announced the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), on 25 September 2014. It's a part of National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), aimed to achieve twin objectives of adding to the incomes of poor families and focuses on the career aspirations of rural youth. It exclusively focuses on rural youth between the age group of 15 to 35 years. As a part of instrumental role in supporting the social and economic programs of the government like the Make in India, Digital India, Stand-Up India campaigns. Measures by the states of Jharkhand and Bihar for the smooth implementation of these schemes are as follow:
 - **JSLPS:** In Jharkhand the Rural Development Department has formed a autonomous society with the name *Jharkhand State livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS)*. It is a nodal centre for coordinating and ensuring successfully implementation of various livelihood promotion schemes and various projects sponsored by *National Rural Livelihood Mission* in the state. The main objectives of JSLPS are:
 - ❖ Improve the financial condition of the people of the state.
 - ❖ Contribute towards improvement of the lives of the rural poor in the state through fostering strong self-managed grass root institutions and empowerment.
 - ❖ Evolve policies for the empowerment of the people of weaker section in the state.
 - ❖ Provide social and technical guidance to the poor in their overall social progress and livelihood development.
- ◎ **JEEVIKA:** With the assistance of *Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (BRLPS)*, the state government of Bihar initiated Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project (BRLP), also known as *JEEVIKA*. These projects are funded by World Bank and aims at economic & social growth of the people from villages. Subsequently, Bihar Kosi Flood Recovery Project (BKFRP) was also formed the part of this project. The BRLP aims to augment economic and social empowerment of the people of weaker section in the rural areas of the state. This objective is to be achieved by :-
 - Augmenting economic and social empowerment of the rural poor.
 - Investing in capacity building of service providers (Public / Private).
 - Playing an important role in encouraging development of microfinance and business related to the agriculture sector.

CONCLUSION

Naxalism has affected nearly forty percent of our territory and has become the biggest threat to the internal security of the Country. A coordinated effort is required to deal with the menace of expansion of Naxalism which is spreading like wild fire and will challenge the national sovereignty if not checked in time and space. As discussed above, the main cause which fuels Naxalism is Caste Divide, Economic

Deprivation and Social Inequalities. It's high time that coordinated efforts are made to address these issues which will go a long way in overcoming the problem of Naxalism in the Country. Meanwhile, government needs to ensure that people from every section of society enjoy equal common rights as bestowed by the Constitution. There is a need to take strong action against those who are responsible for harassing the poor and the downtrodden and this in turn will dissuade the tribals and the labour class from joining the Naxals.

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