

## **Naxalism and its Urban Spread in Jharkhand, India**

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### **Abstract:**

Naxalism is not new to India and has impacted state and society at a massive level. It has absorbed questions of security and development and has spread to newer localities and avenues over time. The expansion of the movement has often been discussed in terms of states and regions but what is again less discussed is the mechanism in which there has been a constant interaction between the practisers in rural and urban areas. It would be a disguise to just say that naxalism is about poor and impoverished sections of the Indian tribal society as over the years it has been constant understood that the movement has been a result of support of all kinds provided by the intellectuals and educated elites in big cities and townships. This study is about naxalism and its most recent incarnation that is 'urban naxalism'. The example of Jharkhand has been taken and discussed to talk about the nature of the movement.

**Keyword:** Naxalism, India, Under development , MCC

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### **I. Introduction:**

The problem of Naxalism in India has not been something new. It has been since 1967 that we witnessed armed revolution led by the extreme leftists. on March 2 1967, an armed rebellion was conducted by the tribal peasants in the Naxalbari village in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The movement was led by Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal who were the prominent members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). It is since then that it has been called popularly as the 'Naxalbari Movement'. Since then, all those who have subscribed to the idea of an armed overthrow of the state have been generically referred to as naxalites, the term having its origin in the Naxalbari village [1]. Eventually the penetration of naxals have been spreading across the entire country. Presently the hard hit states in India have been those of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and few districts of Maharashtra. At the same time, Naxalism in India has been the conduct of numerous groups, some of the notable examples being, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, Peoples War Group (PWG), Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and the Communist Party of India (Maoist).

The Maoist strategy in India has been to spread the movement across the entire geographical area of the country to carry out a strong war against the state.

### **Spread of the movement:**

When the Naxal uprising began in 1967, the Indian government looked at it as a law and order problem, where it did not analyse the causes of the movement and the extent of mobilisation of people and believed that it could and would put an end to it in a short span of time using force [2]. The reactive approach of the government went along with the spread of movement across the Indian states. The movement heavily impacted the neighbouring state of Bihar which was later bifurcated into two states of Bihar and Jharkhand. Jharkhand, which was the newly formed tribal state, since its inception witnessed massive damage because of the problem of naxalism. It was also a dominant event in the southern areas of western and eastern ghats. The Peoples War Group (PWG) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) had emerged as the two groups which had a functioning organisation and a devoted cadre of revolutionary workers, where the PWG was very active in Andhra Pradesh and MCC's base was principally in Bihar [3]. They have a grand design to create a Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) or Red Corridor from Pashupati (Nepal) to Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh) [4]. There also have been reports of their penetration in the Golden Corridor stretching from Pune to Ahmedabad, including Nashik, Surat and Vadodara [5]. There have also been reports of their spread in the North-Eastern states [6].

The different corridors influenced by Maoist activities have been identified as:

\* Bihar-Jharkhand-Chhattisgarh-Andhra Pradesh

\* Chhattisgarh-Orissa;

\* Bihar-Jharkhand-West Bengal

\* West Bengal-Assam;

\* Manipur-Tripura;

\* Jammu and Kashmir-Uttarakhand-Punjab-Haryana-Delhi; and

\* Gujarat-Maharashtra.

### **Jharkhand and Naxalism:**

It was the Jharkhand Movement with the demand for a separate state that led to the formation of Jharkhand. It is the 28th state of the Indian union. It was formed on 15th November 2000. The vast tract of mineral rich area in the heartland of India with its plain and plateaus, hills and jungles is known as Jharkhand. The formation of the state was a result of a prolonged movement. Though all communities support Jharkhand, the tribals remained ahead in struggle and sacrifice since its inception [7]. However soon with its formation the problem of Naxalism became a troubling factor in the lives of people. But, one can also not ignore the fact that Naxalism was prevalent in Bihar which was passed on to Jharkhand. Currently, 18 out of 24 districts in the state are struggling with it. These Naxalite affected areas are Lohardaga, Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Chatra, Palamu, Garhwa, Latehar, Gumla, Simdega, Bokaro, Koderma, Giridih, Dhanbad, West Singhbhum, East Singhbhum, Kharsawa, Ramgarha, Saraikela, Khunti. The Naxalite group of MCC has been very active in the state owing to its minerals, forestry and natural resources. Fund raising has been easy for the Naxalite groups in the resource rich state while dense forests have provided them with places to hide.

Some of the characterising features of Naxalism in Jharkhand are:

1) High Intensity- the degree of destruction and casualties caused by the Naxalites in Jharkhand is quite high in comparison to the other states like West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra etc. there has been a rise in attack over the officials, civilians and infrastructure in all these years. In one of the incidents, Maoists set on fire 70 trucks in North Jharkhand where a major road construction work was being undertaken and also extorted money [8] (cite idsa Ramana reading 63).

2) Difficult to intrude: the geographical terrain of the state makes it difficult for the state security forces and armed authorities to infiltrate into the jungles and fight Naxals. This has been something peculiar to Jharkhand.

3) Naxal Bands: in Jharkhand announcement and practice of Naxal bands has been carried out frequently. The state undergoes more number of clampdowns compared to other states.

Tactics employed by Naxalites in Jharkhand:

Naxals in Jharkhand follow a range of strategies which help them in organising and carrying out their programs of opposing and countering the state. Some of these tactics can be explained as follows;

1) They refrain from Surrendering.

2) They believe in instant attack.

3) They resort to 'hit and run' tactics.

4) They organise themselves into getting their members released from police custody.

5) They attack the forces suddenly from hidden places.

6) They lay mines in areas of control.

7) They organise 'people's court' or 'janadalats'.

Naxalism and its Impact in Jharkhand:

1) Naxals have regularly assassinated policemen, civilians, security men, and civilians.

2) They have indulged into destroying roads, railway tracks, hospitals, schools and all other infrastructures delaying and slowing down welfare activities.

3) The Naxal threat has led to more spending on security at the cost of development.

4) Another consequence has been lack of political stability in the state.

### **Naxalism and its Urban Spread:**

One needs to emphasise the fact that Naxals are no longer located and circumscribed within rural areas rather they have eventually spread and are still spreading into towns and cities. The defections of urban scatters have served to be advantageous to the urban spread of the Maoists. This urban spread needs to be understood with the idea of TUF. TUF is about communists organising to disarm state by creating a network of alliances

with several organisations who may not necessarily be related to communist ideology. The alliances with such variety of organisations are to serve as instruments to achieve the communist objective. The naxals and maoists have been always present in the urban areas trying to achieve certain motives by taking help from several agencies. Such environments cater to logistical needs and enable them to stay in safe-houses during medical treatment or while in transit [9]. Urban areas also provide anonymity to the maoists making it easier for them to function. For the maoists small towns, districts, mining areas near to their base areas are of great importance. Towns and cities serve the business and other economic purpose of the maoists.

There are several factors associated with the urban centres that makes them perfect site for maoist activities. The towns concentrate mining and other Industries. They therefore invite the working class to perform industry related activities. At the same time townships become the centres of government institutions. These urban centres serve as zones to carry out secretive revolutionary practices. There are hidden efforts to organise within the towns and mobilise the working class and labour class. The underground activities are networked and galvanised in such townships by the maoists in an effort to wage a protracted people's war against the state. At the same time, performance in the urban areas experiences several issues with respect to maintaining structures, having and continuing with a stable leadership, linkage between open and secretive activities, cooperation between lower and higher echelons and connection between the urban centres and the rural based activities and leaders. These issues have always been taken with utmost care by the leaders of the maoist organisations. The idea behind the efforts at both urban and rural level remains to effectively practice in a decentralised manner. At the same time the issue of coordination between the lower and higher bodies of the maoist organisations is solved through interactional efforts in urban areas in a disguised manner.

The objectives of the maoists with respect to the urban movement can be introduced as follows:

- a) mobilisation and organisation of masses under the party structure: it incorporates organisation and inclusion of the working class and the urban labourers along with other classes and groups within society like the students, middle class employers, university intellectuals and scholars etc. It also in such attempts tries to sympathise with other marginalised groups like dalits, women, religious minorities in a manner to bring them into the movement. The aim is to politicise the masses and include them into maoist cause.
- b) Create the United Front: this is about creating a protracted movement against the state and its institutions by unifying all sections of the society, creating worker-farmer unanimity, coordinating with other like minded organisations and agencies etc.
- c) Military assignments: this involves creation of an army in a secretive manner by recruiting rural people into the cadre, infiltration of state security units, penetration into important industrial units, having control over arms and ammunition, logistical support etc. [10].

Their agenda remains on taking hold over the worker's movement and labour movement. They also strategise their efforts towards exercising command over important industrial units with a view to make state helpless from all fronts. They organise and activate themselves in a manner to inflict violence as well as handicap state's economy. The industries they want to penetrate comprises of coal, power, oil and natural gas, communication, transport, defence production etc. one can always think about the dangerous outcome of any such strategy. A very important aspect of this urban movement is that the masses are to be organised both broadly through legal measures and through secrecy.

They work with feminist groups, atheist groups, anti-superstition movements, intellectuals, students, labourers, slum groups, farmers, journalists, competitive exam centres etc [11]. At the same time, an interaction of such maoist organisations with intellectuals, professors, scholars, human rights groups and NGOs has also been evident. Such interactions have not been merely philanthropic but there have been financial interests associated between the parties. Any kind of action or offensive launched against the maoist organisations has been retaliated directly or indirectly by such parties.

The so called people's war of the maoists focusses on establishing revolutionary base in the rural areas and then to organise efforts towards commanding over townships and city initially in the vicinity areas and later networking inside large urban centres. So, while organisation and mobilisation in countryside is prioritised, urban networking is not given meagre importance. Instead participation of urban masses directly or indirectly into armed rebellion becomes a strategic importance for maoists. This urban spread of the movement can be further understood with respect to the maoist activities being evident in several towns and cities throughout the country. Some of these towns and cities are Delhi, Allahabad, Indore, Bhubaneswar, Rourkela, Ranchi, Bhilai, Patna, Kolkata, Nagpur, Varanasi etc. The Tactical United Front or TUF is one of the three mechanisms to carry out the maoist revolution, the other two being, a strong party and a strong army. The maoist gear up the task of mobilising and organising themselves by forming alliances with like minded groups who are not communist but are opposed to state. This

idea remains the foundation stone of TUF. On many occasions, important top level leaders of the CPI(Maoist) have been arrested from cities and towns indicating that front organisations in cities are used as shelters [12]. The most important organization of the CPI (Maoist) which is the key component of TUF and has been recognised under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act is Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF). The interaction of this group with the Jharkhand Progressive Students Union (an affiliate of the All India Radical Students) has been evident. Such urban spread of the maoist movement has also featured in the state of Jharkhand in a widespread manner in all these years. The key townships of the state have been a victim of the underground and hidden initiatives and programs of the maoists.

### **Urbannaxals in Jharkhand:**

Now, we all know that 'urban Naxalism' is real and its different facets have been evident. This has no exception in the state of Jharkhand. There have been figures, activities and events that have made it pretty obvious. There have been reports about the rebels having plans to strike in the industrial belts of Bhilai-Ranchi-Dhanbad-Calcutta and Mumbai-Pune-Surat-Ahmedabad to take their battle into the heart of India. Jharkhand has therefore proved to be of strategic importance to naxalites. The dense forests and difficult terrains of the state has provided safe haven to all sorts of maoist activities. The naxals in Jharkhand have often received backing from the human right activists and intellectuals and have weakened the resolve and mechanism to eradicate Naxalites [13-16]. There have been evidences of various naxal organisations working in a hidden manner within the structures of human rights NGOs with offices in key townships of Jharkhand. At the same time such offices whenever raided produced scores of money. R L Mallick, ADG Operation and Law and Order remarks, "when the new Surrender Policy of the Jharkhand government was announced and that fetched rich dividends bringing in many maoists join mainstream there was a PIL in the High Court opposing the Surrender Policy. The message was clear". Very often, the intellectuals and scholars in Jharkhand have written in newspaper columns whenever the state takes some action against the maoists. They have never hesitated in showing their opposition to Surrender and Rehabilitation policy initiated by the government. Such policy involved surrender and grant of reward amount or government job to the surrendered naxals. At the same time, there have been exchange of finances for all such kind of support provided to the maoists. Also, the Naxals have tried to enter student unions, organisations, trade unions and several interest groups in an attempt to raise public support for the movement and present state as enemy of society. An important event happened when a pro-naxal group Mazdoor Sangathan Samiti (MSS) organised meetings in a college along with senior maoist leaders. This organisation was very soon banned by the Jharkhand government under the clauses of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The ban was condemned by several intellectuals including President of Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF) Varavara Rao. At the same time, the Jharkhand police has also clarified the manner in which the maoists while using intellectual and educated minds do not give them proactive role in higher committees as they find them unsuitable to become good foot soldiers. To put an end to the maoist presence and activities an operation named 'Prahaar' has been initiated collaboratively by the states of Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The state police in all these states garnered support from CRPF, SSB, BSF and ITBP soldiers. The police of the states created a list of 25 naxalites. Though maximum number of maoist leaders from Chhattisgarh figured in the list but there were six top maoists from Jharkhand and West Bengal [17-19]. From the state of Jharkhand, four naxalites were mentioned in the list:

- 1) Prashant Bose: naxalite active in Saranda jungles
- 2) Misir Besra: another prominent naxalite
- 3) Sudhakar: a naxal commander
- 4) Aseem Mandal: an active naxal in Jharkhand and West Bengal

Along with the above mentioned other states, the 'operation Prahaar' initiated intensive offensive in Jharkhand specially in the interstate border areas like Bengal-Jharkhand, Bengal-Odisha, Saranda forests etc to wipe out top CPI(Maoist) guerrilla leaders and 'Urban Naxals'

## **II. Conclusion:**

The journey from a rebellion in a small village in West Bengal to the present situation of so called 'People's War' organised in majority of the states in India has been long and has gone through several phases. The present movement has proved to be a real threat to the security of state and civil society. There was a time when the issue was limited to the rural areas and hampered development of villages of India. But in contemporary times, the problem has spread its feet in the urban regions, townships and big cities. There has

been an interactive mechanism developed at all levels. The movement is being spearheaded and led by intellectuals and educated elites who are busy mobilising rural peasants and urban workers into their movement. At the same time, while the less educated rural peasants have served to form the foot soldiers or cadres, the urban dwellers and industry workers have been made use of as instruments to spread the communist ideology in townships and cities while making the hold of party structures stronger in the cities. There have been efforts to galvanise the sympathy of rural and urban masses towards the ideology of seeing state as an evil entity. Small townships and villages have also been victims of infra-structural attacks, blasting railway tracks, public transport and buses set on fire, destruction of bridges, schools, hospitals, towers etc. The motives of such assaults have been to provoke state and its power and to mould the lifestyle of common people in Maoist manner and to hamper the development of the areas. This has raised not only security concerns but has also led to loss of life, livelihood and resources of the society and state. Jharkhand was a state formed with tremendous hopes as the state is rich in terms of forests, minerals and natural resources, but Naxalism has served to be a big menace and obstacle in the realisation of development related goals. It has networked around the villages and cities. It has threatened the tribals and non tribals residing in the state. The governments of the state have tried to address the question in several manners. The issue becomes the most important to be found a long lasting solution by the state and society.

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