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Chhattisgarh: Naxalism, Human Rights and Role of Media

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Abstract

Why would someone take the course of guns and violence when its filled with pain and sufferings. Naxalism though being one of the violent forms of Marxism better known as Maoism has to be understood from a wholistic perspective. In this context Chhattisgarh one of the worst affected states with Maoism has been tried to be understood from the intersections of Naxalism, Human rights and the role media plays. How in year 2000 along with two other states Chhattisgarh was carved out from eastern part of Madhya Pradesh. This paper will first try to start the discussion from the time of formation of the state of Chhattisgarh which will further be taken into the discussion of state neglect in terms of development, education and social and economic justice which carried forward from the time when the region belonged to Madhya Pradesh. In this context this paper will try to locate the role of media in highlighting, projecting and expressing the interconnections of the above mentioned topic.

Keywords: Chhattisgarh, Naxalism, Human Rights, Media

1. Introduction

The paper discusses about Naxalism the better known version as Maoism from a wholistic perspective and is contextualized from the perspective of Media's role in Human rights in the state of Chhattisgarh which came into formation in the year 2000. When have to discuss about the Naxalism we have to also understand the context in which it could understood before being critical about of it. So why would someone leaving in the villages of Chhattisgarh takes up arms and fights against the state machinery and the system. Unless we understand this we can't make sense of any topic related to Naxalism being Human rights and media's role in this case. Further I have outlined the paper in the following conceptual framework where in first section I will discuss about the formation of the Chhattisgarh State which will try to bring the historical linkages between the previous State of Madhya Pradesh from which Chhattisgarh was carved out. After that in the second section problems of development and State neglect with regard to development will be discussed. This section will discuss that how due to lack of development, systematic neglect from government officials and administration Naxalism became the choice of many tribal and village youths in Chhattisgarh. Further in the third section Naxal movement will be tried to be understood, its genesis in India and the so called red corridor. After this the fourth section will discuss about Human rights, its definitins and universal declartions. In following section Naxalism and Human rights problems will be discussed and analysed in the context of Chhattisgarh. After this Media and its role will brought into the picture which also signifies the crux of the paper and the importance. Furthermore, why media is important will be discussed which will connect to the section which will discuss naxalism and its portrayal by media in Chhattisgarh. All the previous sections discussion will be essentially linked with the question of 'How Media Highlights Naxalism, Paramilitary Operations and the Problem of Human Rights?' and what is the future in this scenario which will be followed by conclusion.

The Formation of the State: Chattisgarh

The State of Chhattisgarh came in November 1, 2000 along with two other states of Uttarakhand and Jharkhand. Chhattisgarh belonged to the erstwhile State of the Madhya Pradesh (M.P) and from where 16 Chhattisgarhi speaking districts of M.P were carved out to form the new State having Raipur as its capital. Chhattisgarh is a State which minerally endowed and has good base of Steel and electricity production. Chhattisgarh also a sizeable tribal population who live in villages and forest areas of the state and mainly are practicing subsistence agriculture and forest-agri livelihoods. The current State of Chhattisgarh includes 27 districts and it shares State boundaries with 6 states starting from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The 27 districts of Chhattisgarh are divided into 5 divisions of Bastar, Durg, Raipur, Bilaspur and Surguja. Tracing the historical links for the demand of the State of Chhattisgarh will take us to Colonial India when demand for separate state of Chhattisgarh was raised by the Raipur Congress unit in 1924 and again discussed in the Tripuri annual session of Congress. One of the most influential and powerful political platform related to the demand of Chhattisgarh was the Chhattisgarh Rajya Nirman Manch under leadership of Chandulal Chandrakar one of the known and influential figures in the demand of State of Chhattisgarh. The final demand show its culmination into formation of State when the then ruling national democratic alliance in the centre passed the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Act of 2000 in the Parliament and the State of Chhattisgarh came into effect from November 1, 2000.

Problems of Development and State Neglect

Before embarking upon the discussion on Naxalism and Naxal movement we first have to make sense some of the basic premises to understand that why youths in rural areas and in this case the tribal areas of Chattisgarh have taken up arms against the state machinery. As we know the several socio-economic indicators which can be used to measure the standard of living of the people and for the population of any state throughout India. These can be in general categorised as living standards, education, health, housing, livelihoods, employment, accessibility of areas, level of development and many related aspects. Similarly we can also find that there are established techniques to measure the standard of living of people with help of various index clubbed together under the umbrella of Human Development Index (HDI) which incorporates indices related to life expectancy, education and income. As per the India Human Development Report HDR 2011 report published by the Planning Commission of India, Chattisgarh stands last and the lowest in HDI having 0.358 in comparison to other Indian states. This suggests that the region of eastern Madhya Pradesh which was formed as the state of Chattisgarh has been systematically been neglected and the region has been in the down slope in terms of Human development from a long time. The current State government which is only 15 years old has carried the burden of utter neglect by previous Madhya Pradesh state, big responsibility of social and economic justice and also the upliftments of the tribals and most needy people of Chattisgarh. The problems related to poverty, education and connectivity is a major problem related to many of the tribal regions of Chattisgarh which have become hotbeds of Naxal movement. As per census data of 2011 Chattisgarh ranks 27th in literacy rate with 71.04% which is better than states like Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Arunachal Pradesh. But still it stands somewhere close to the states which are severely affected with

Naxal movement states like Jharkhand, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. Further connectivity of rural and tribal areas from the cities is a problem which is mainly due to lack of road density of rural areas. This is also one important problem since 80% of Chhattisgarh population is based on rural areas. It is with the formation of new State and its own government to rule things have showed up in a positive light but still at large problems and discontents related to state neglect related to socio-economic issues and development has been widely prevalent which fuels the engine of Naxalism in the State. These several factors like lack of development, lowest Human development Index, lack of connectivity, discontents related to governance and system has made the tribal and rural youths to take up arms against the state.

Understanding the Naxal Movement.

Genesis

Before going further about the topic it would be good to understand about Naxal movement. The history of naxal movement can be traced in the year 1967 where decent and revolt by farmers in the Naxalbari village of West Bengal. This uprising was done against the landlords and moneylenders who controlled most of the land and money resources of the village. Currently the naxal movement is associated with Communist Party of India (Maoist). The general elections of 1967 show the rise of Naxal movement where the starting point became the Naxalbari. The word 'Naxal' is also related with the name of this village. This uprising in the Naxalbari village was led by two leaders named Charu Majumdar and Kanu Sanyal. The Communist Party of India was the first communist party to be established in India during the British rule. But in 1964 due to Indochina war and their own internal political problems the party was split in two groups, namely Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist). CPI-M were close to the ideology of Chinese communist leader called Mao Tse Tung and believed in armed struggle against the Indian state. This was an influencing factor for many other states which got impacted with Naxal ideology and started some form of armed struggle against the landlords and the Indian state.

How it started

The Naxalite movement started due to many factors related to social, economic and political domains. The social factors related to social dominance of landlords and upper caste, their exploitation of down trodden and the farmers. Economic reason related to complete debt trap of money lenders and landlords which farmers could not get themselves rid off. Political reason related to rise of Communist party of China and more specifically Maoism. Impact of Chinese communist party in India and especially in the Communist Party of India and more in the Marxist wing.

The red-corridor

The so called red corridor is the geographic region which stretches from south-eastern to eastern flanks of the country. States which fall under the influence of red corridor are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Telangana, West Bengal and some parts of Uttar Pradesh. It is this area where the merged wing of Communist party of India (Maoist) and the People's war group (PWG) operates and carries armed raids and insurgency against the police and paramilitary forces.

Salwa Judum

Salwa Judum meaning the peace initiative was an anti-Naxalite campaign started in the Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh in June, 2005. The formation of Salwa Judum under the leadership of Mahendra Karma was a move immediately supported and assisted by the state government. Many youths who joined the Salwa Judum were provided military style training and were called as SPOs (Special Police Officers). Formation of Salwa Judum was also seen the problems faced by tribals who were subjected to torture and killings by the Maoist. Cases of small children being killed when their parents were not found in the house, killing of many innocent tribals and many other factors led to the creation of anti-Naxalite group named as Salwa Judum. But any group taking up arms to fight arms will have its own problem. Atrocities and killings were started to be reported by the media about Salwa Judum cadres and how they were becoming a unregulated fighting force with governmental support and backing. Salwa Judum has now been stopped because of the supreme court ruling and more recently its founder leader Mahendra Karma was gunned down by the Maoist.

What are Human Rights?

International Human Rights Law

The International Bill of Human Rights consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols (UNHCHR). The first article of the Declaration outlines the basic assumptions of the Declaration: that the right to liberty and equality is a birthright and cannot be alienated and that man is different from other creatures on earth and entitled to certain special rights and freedoms. Article 1 says, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood "(UNHCHR).

Article 2 defines the basic principles of equality and non discrimination and it forbids "distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". It also states that there are "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war", thus making it virtually impossible for any defense of these actions to take place. Article 3 is a cornerstone of the Declaration because it proclaims the right to life, liberty, and security of person, which are essential rights needed for the enjoyment of all other rights. Article 3 also introduces Articles 4-21, which cover other political and civil rights, such as freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and freedom of opinion and expression.

The Case of Chhattisgarh

In the case of Chhattisgarh, we can analyse the situation according to the above mentioned clauses. The article 3 of the declaration mentions about right to life, liberty and security of life. In the remote areas of Chhattisgarh especially in the Bastar division which is the worst affected division with Maoist insurgency, right to security and liberty is at stake. The best example could that people are not free to participate in the democratic practices especially in elections be it state or central government elections. Right to liberty is also curtailed where villagers can send all their children to school, since in many places Maoist have made a mandatory system of getting one child from one family of village. Taking article section 4-

21 it mentions freedom from arbitrary arrests, freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, punishment and freedom of opinion and expression. We can find this with respect to security and paramilitary forces committing this human rights violation. In many cases we find that police and paramilitary forces arrest villagers who are not involved in Maoist insurgency or have no links with Naxals. In these cases the arrested villagers are wrongly implicated and charged just because they are helpless in front of the government machinery and system. Maoist are also responsible for cruel and inhuman practices which they use as armed and covert techniques. Maoist plant bombs inside the body of armed policemen or troopers which explodes when carried by their colleagues. Planting bombs inside the injured soldiers body.

Human Rights Cases, Violations by Police and Naxal Violence: Facts and Figures related to Chhattisgarh

Table 1: State-wise Number of Cases Regarding Alleged Human Rights Violation by Police in India. (2009-2010 to 2012-2013-upto 20.11.2012)

2009-2010			2010-2011			2011-2012			2012-2013 (Upto 20-11-12)		
Pen ding	Disp osed	To tal	Pen ding	Disp osed	To tal	Pen ding	Disp osed	To tal	Pen ding	Disp osed	To tal
6	109	115	13	119	132	71	156	227	25	72	97

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2833, dated on 11.12.2012.

Table 2: Selected State/District-wise Number of Incidents and Deaths (Tentative) due to Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Violence in India. (2014 -upto 30.06.2014)

Districts	Incidents	Deaths
Balrampur	1	0
Bastar	6	8
Bijapur	50	23
Dantewada	13	8
Gariyabandh	3	0
Kanker	19	2
Kondagaon	6	3
Narayanpur	19	2
Rajnandgaon	11	1
Sukma	47	24

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 69, dated on 08.07.2014.

Table 3: Selected State-wise Incidents and Deaths due to Naxal Violence in India. (2013-2014-upto 31.03.2014)

2013		2014 (Upto 31-03-2014)	
Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths
355	111	95 (60)	37 (18)

Note: The bracketed figures in the last two columns indicate the position during the corresponding period of 2013.
Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

Table 4: Selected State-wise Number of Incidents and Security Forces/Civilians Killed in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Affected States of India. (2011 to 2014-upto 11.07.2014)

2011			2012			2013			2014 * Tentative		
Incident s	Civilian s Killed	Secur ity For ces Killed	Incident s	Civilian s Killed	Secur ity For ces Killed	Incident s	Civilian s Killed	Secur ity For ces Killed	Incident s	Civilian s Killed	Secur ity For ces Killed
465	124	80	370	63	46	355	67	44	184	35	37

Note: *: 11.07.2014.

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No.1817, dated on 22.07.2014.

Table 5: Selected State-wise Number of Incidents Left Wing Extremists (LWE) Violence, Civilians Killed, Security Forces (SFs) Killed, Maoists Killed and Maoists Arrested in India. (Upto 07.07.2014)

No. of Incidents	Civilians Killed	Security Forces Killed	Maoist Killed	Maoists Arrested
179	34	37	19	231

Source: Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 118, dated on 15.07.2014.

Table 6: Fatalities in Left-Wing Extremist Violence in Chhattisgarh: 2005-2015

	Civilians	SFs	Naxals	Total
2005	52	48	26	126
2006	189	55	117	361
2007	95	182	73	350
2008	35	67	66	168
2009	87	121	137	345
2010	72	153	102	327
2011	39	67	70	176
2012	26	36	46	108
2013	48	45	35	128
2014	25	55	33	113
2015	8	9	2	19
Total*	676	838	707	2221

* Data till March 22, 2015

Source: South Asia Terrosim Portal, <http://www.satp.org/>

Making Sense of the Data

When we go through the data we will find that in almost all sections, be it alleged cases of Human Rights violations done by Police, numbers of incidents of deaths related to Naxal violence, number of civilians, security forces and Maoist killed we will find that Chhattisgarh reflects a recognisable amount of these incidents. When we compare these data to the national data and with other states we can find that Chhattisgarh is second ranked state after Jharkhand in terms of Left Wing Extremism (LWE). In terms of total number of security forces and civilians killed Chhattisgarh is the second highest after Jharkhand which shows the seriousness of the matter and concern. In terms of cases related to alleged human rights violations done by police the total number of cases has declined if we see the data. The total cases which includes pending and disposed cases, were in 2009-10 115, in 2010-11 it was 132, in 2011-12 it was 227 and in 2012-13 it came down to 97. In number of deaths related to Naxal violence was less in 2014 in comparison to 2013. In 2013 the total number of violence incidents reported were 355 in which incidents of deaths were 111, comparatively in 2014 the total number of

incidence reduced to 95 and incidence of death came down to 37. In the number of incidents related to Maoist violence and killings in most of the cases the number of civilian casualties are more than Naxals and Security forces killed. We clearly find how the conflict between the Naxals and security forces has taken and is taking the on people of Chhattisgarh.

Making sense of Naxalism and Human Rights Problem In Chhattisgarh

How can we analyse the Human Rights situation in Chhattisgarh from a holistic perspective. When we talk about human rights we can't take a one sided approach and conclude that only police and paramilitary forces are committing all the cases of human rights violations, doing so will be biased approach towards understanding Naxalism and human rights issues. As mentioned earlier that human rights violations are not only committed by security forces but also by Maoist themselves who claim that the state carries on atrocities on its own people. Blowing of school buildings, primary schools, roads and other infrastructure of public services is also related with violation of human rights. Every child whether belonging to the city or the village has the right to go to school, but how can they when the schools in which they study is blown up by the Maoist using mines and bombs. Maoist talk about lack of development but the existing infrastructure and services is most of the times destroyed and brought to sambles by Maoist themselves. Then can't we also say that Maoist who claim that state does no development in tribal areas and forests, are also responsible for the problems faced by many tribals and forest dwellers. Villagers and forest dwellers live in constant fear of the Maoist and security forces and there is always the danger of losing life and the freedom of mobility is also hampered. When we talk about the state as the system which due to its neglect and apathy has given rise to Maoist movement in many places and large number of recruitments in its cadre. Tribal youths of Chhattisgarh being disoriented and completely losing faith in the government system take the course of armed struggle against the state. They find taking up arms against the state and the system is the best way to express their dissent against the system and its neglect towards people.

Bringing the Media in the Picture

After the above mentioned discussions which was about Chhattisgarh, its formation, the Naxal movement, understanding human rights and the case of Chhattisgarh we bring the Media into the picture. The reader might think that why bring Media after discussing so many things, I would say that it is necessary and prerequisite to understand many issues related to Naxalism first and then to come to Media. How do we make sense of the word 'Media'? Is it something which is only about bringing news and information to people and the nation or is it something more than that. Media from the time of its evolvment has developed and has acquired diverse meanings and relevance for our society. Media has become more than just a medium of getting news and information. When we discussed the formation of the state of Chhattisgarh, problem of Naxalism, Human rights, its context in Chhattisgarh and making sense of Naxalism and human rights problem then in all this Media is implied. From the time of demand of separate state of Chhattisgarh the role of media can be traced, role in shaping public opinion, role in garnering support for its demand, role in making people aware about the issues and problems faced by the state and its people and the governmental neglect and apathy towards people and development work. More specifically most of the cases of Human rights is being covered

and highlighted in the media from an open and balanced perspective where neither Maoist nor Security are left out from the scrutiny of the press. The cases of arbitrary arrest, torture of innocent people and failure of government machinery is all systematically highlighted and discussed by the media. The cases of people and villagers facing problems during elections is always covered by the media personnel without fearing about their lives. Media has covered regions which are heavily dominated by the Maoist insurgents, especially regions of bastar division.

Naxalism and Its Portrayal by Media in Chhattisgarh

Naxalism and its portrayal by media in Chhattisgarh has been in the flanks of news and updates about Maoist insurgency and security forces operation. Various guerilla raids and attacks which Maoist carried have been systematically shown in the Media. But the story doesn't end here and the projection and discussion is much more deeper and has several connotation if we try to deconstruct it. Media not only shows about the attacks and raids which Maoist are conducting, but also try to go into the deeper reality and truths of such incidents. The attacks done on tribals and villagers is also shown by the media and the reason discussed being that Maoist consider these people as government sympathisers and they are considered as traitors by Maoist. Media has systematically highlighted the problems and constraints faced by the people and tribal dwellers in the heat of Maoist and security forces operations. How the tribals and villagers are caught in between them and how their lives and livelihoods are impacted seriously.

Role of Media: Naxalism, Paramilitary Operations and the Problem of Human Rights

Role of media vis-a-vis Naxalism, Paramilitary operations and problems of human rights can be analysed and understood from the intersections of all these three. As mentioned earlier Naxalism though starting with social causes has now become a system entrapped in its own problems. Maoist themselves are responsible for numerous atrocities and human rights violations. The media has shown the trajectory and phases of Naxal movement and has captured the phases of Naxal movement with the passage of time. This has helped the people and nation to have an opinion about the Naxal movement and the Maoist. Maoist find no widespread support in people and it is also because they are subjecting people to fear and danger. This has been highlighted and discussed in the media and one of the reasons why Maoist influences have not reached the cities and urban areas of the Naxal hit states.

Furthermore, paramilitary operations like operation green hunt has been critically analysed and studied by the media. The advantages and ills of such operations has been brought up by the media and especially the cases of innocent tribals and villagers being subjected repressive laws and extreme force of the security forces. The role of media in this is also very critical and important since police and security forces are not left out from the scrutiny of the media and they are always kept in their toes in terms of checks and balances. Regarding the problems and issues of human rights violations done both by Maoist and security forces has also been well analysed by the media. In some cases the media has not completely shown the picture or the existing reality but that is also a part where media is not away from public criticism. It will help media to reform itself and to make its functioning and work more efficient.

Conclusion

The conclusion is very difficult when it is about some very important thing which is being analysed and studied. Yet it will be holistic in a perspective that Chhattisgarh as new state formed in the year 2000 has carried the burden of historical neglect of its regions by the earlier Madhya Pradesh state. The bastar division of Chhattisgarh is one of the most worst affected areas of the state with Naxal violence. Tribal and village youths are disoriented in their lives due to governmental neglect and apathy and are attracted towards taking up arms and fighting against the state. Human rights problem is a pervasive problem which touches the lives of people affected by the Maoist as well security operations done by paramilitary. Human rights violation cases are not only reported about security forces but also about Maoist who try to hamper development and human development works. Their armed struggle has worstly impacted the lives of thousands of rural and tribal children living in Chhattisgarh. When we bring media in the picture then its role becomes more implied in the issues which have been discussed and highlighted. Media not only has addressed this issue from a balanced perspective but has also shown that the problems and concerns of people should be highlighted and brought into the public domain.

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