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RESEARCH ARTICLE



ACCOUNTS OF ACTIVISTS: RED CORRIDOR AS A SOCIAL SPACE

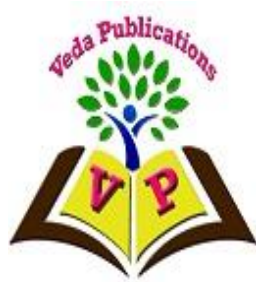
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ABSTRACT

The present research paper explores that there is a nexus among state, center and capitalists who for getting profit from the natural resources always exaggerate the activities of the locals and in the name of maintaining peace and security there and to avert the crime by Naxalites, misuse the funds released for the betterment of that area and its people. They even create problems for easy-going life of people by overusing their resources and disturbing the nature as per their requirements.

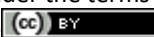


Keywords: *Tribal, Maoists, Capitalists, Exploitation, Government.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Every person enjoys the privilege of freedom of speech and expression on the form of civil liberties, which cannot be cut down by any Government or Court. Many persons start working for the human rights and engage themselves for the cause of people under the People's Union for Democratic Rights, Delhi, One such activist is Gautam Navlakha who claims to present a true picture of the war against Maoists in his work, *Days and Nights in the Heartland of Rebellion* (2012). He believes that whatever Government presents in its reports is not the true story. It always tries to hide the truth and presents a totally different cooked up story. As the books and Government reports do not convey the truth, Gautam Navlakha himself visits the land of Maoists to get a first hand experience of the situation and to give his own perspective.

ANALYSIS

According to Navlakha, for the last 35-40 years the war between the Government and the Maoists is going. Earlier they fought for the reforms in land and the land distribution. Now they are revolting for sources of living and their natural resources. Although the Maoists are attacked by the Government with all the strength by the aid of PLGA and other armies, yet it is said by the Government that they are "merely carrying out 'police activity' to restore civil administration in areas where 'Left Wing Extremists' have launched a People's War against the Indian State" (Navlakha,1-2). In a one page press note army emphasis on the fact that "The deployment will indeed open up the region to the outside world. Purchase of local materials and

supplies will bring jobs and finance to cash strapped villages. The presence of the Army will also bring feeling of security in the villages" (3). However "blatant violation of tribal interests and the reluctance (in some cases, sheer procrastination) of the state administrations to cede authority have often compelled tribes in the Fifth Schedule areas to reassert their identity and rights violently" (Kurup 91).

The Army has set up training headquarters in Chhattisgarh to expand its control. For the same the land has been allotted to them violating The Fifth Schedule, Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (1996) and the Forest Rights Act (2006). The SPO,s have become so powerful under the shelter of Senior Police Officials that they have created a state of lawlessness. They indulge in murders, rapes, mass killings, loots and exploit the local tribals. Without the ID cards the tribals are unable to go for a weekly market. They do not follow Constitution or any orders of Supreme Court. The Government is of the view that the presence of Maoists hinders the economic and social development. But Navlakha says it is quite the opposite. It is the presence of SPO,s that prevents the doctors, teachers and other educated persons to work in these areas. They are even involved in attacking the media persons and civil liberties activists. It is a nexus of the Centre-State and Security Forces, not to give entry to anyone from outside as their horrible reality will be exposed.

The State government always tries to exaggerate the problem to get more money from the Centre Government. The Centre Government propagandizes the whole issue by presenting the



whole issue in front of Israeli Government. PM Manmohan Singh says that it is the single most internal security threat to India. But ironically the size of Army operating in those areas and its violence is quite large as compared to the Maoists:

The overwhelming reason for the war unleashed by the Indian Government is because in the adivasi belt of Central and eastern India, corporations are avidly eyeing mining for coal, iron ore, bauxite, etc, setting up integrated steel mills and aluminum smelter units and privatizing water distribution to enable the industries to avail of nature's bounty for their near-exclusive needs and extraordinary profits. (Navlakha 34)

The motive behind Salwa Judum or Peace Campaign is also the same. It is controlled or regulated by Murias, army cadres and behind them are the industrialists. The land is rich in minerals and natural resources and the Government wants to give it to the capitalists to get more profit out of it. The mining activities "which is a major threat " to tribal livelihood and a main reason of their "displacement, migration, and human distress" in these areas is a violation of the laws but still not much action is being taken by the Supreme Court or the Government as the wrongdoers are only made to pay the penalty and the work is easily resumed (Hans 33). Even media never talks about these illegal acts as they have to depend upon the bureaucrats for financing. Similar is the condition of tribals in Kerala as V. A. Haseena posits that "These groups have very limited capability to act as strong pressure groups in Kerala politics,

because of the poor organizational strength; and bargaining power. Consequent to this, the political bodies seldom take care of their concerns" (80).

The looting is not only limited to minerals and natural resources. Gradually the rivers are privatized with the motive of supplying water to the industries. This results in problems for the agrarian sector as the quantity of water has reduced. Moreover with privatization, the companies have started fencing of their rivers and acquiring the land near it without giving much concession for it. In spite of the Forest Rights Act 2006 the forests are still controlled by the Forest Department and they are engaged in selling the bamboo produce to the pulp and paper industry. And the Secretary environment puts all the blame on naxalites of chopping the trees "Whereas in their area there is net gain of 83 square kilometers in the forest cover" (Navlakha 37). The law of Environment Impact Assessment notification has been flouted by the Government itself as "the PM laid the foundation stone for Dibang hydroelectric project in Arunachal Pradesh without the requisite approval and clearance" (39).

Navlakha emphasizes on the point that whatever is done by the Maoists is right. They are only defending themselves. It's the Government that has waged a "fight to finish" war against them as it has ploughed a lot of money into the foreign investments and war that it is not even thinking about the revision or modification of the current policies (46-47). Even the harmless and inoffensive acts coloured by the Government to be criminal when the question of internal security comes to play. "There is a strong likelihood of evidence being



manufactured, facts misconstrued or twisted to suit the State's objective of silencing critics of its policy of curbing the so called internal sources of threat to security" (46-47). But as long as the Government does not change its policies regarding the foreign investments, the situation will not change and the Maoists will continue resistance.

Navlakha seems a bit disturbed with the reckless killings by the naxalites. He believes that this way they would not be able to win friends and everyone will be against them. The cadres in DK are of the view that they are responsible for only their action. Comparisons cannot be drawn between their style of working and that of cadres in Jharkhand and Bihar. When they are wrong they always feel sorry for their acts. He feels that "if the party could not maintain discipline among its armed cadres maybe they should rethink whether their forces are politically equipped to fight a People's War" (75). Sometimes the cadres got agitated by his questions and didn't even answer the questions like "the use of detonators in the Tata-Bilaspur passenger train on 27 November 2009? And why did the party fail to restrain people from carrying out executions in Lalgahar if the Party was opposed to it" (76). Sometimes they do not admit it but also show a serious change in their behaviour as the number of killings has reduced since 1990's. But it is felt that they are very eager to speak about their future strategies.

But Navlakha really feels admiration and amazement at the show of strength of the cadres with the army troops setting up their camps all around them. They get all the power and vigour from

the people's love and faith in them. They are not scared because they know that they are in their own land and they know the way to tackle them with strategies. When Salwa Judum was launched in 2005, it was felt that the party will not survive but "Within six months the tables were turned" (81). They did not submit to the suppression and tyranny of the Government by vacating the forests because doing so the land as well as their lives would have been lost. They distributed pamphlets among the tribals not to join the armed forces of Government because that will "earn undying hatred of the people and you will not be remembered. Instead your death will be celebrated" (86). The cadres have a lot of courage, enthusiasm and strength unlike the army because they are fighting for a cause. Their main agenda is the welfare of the people. If it's been done by the Government, they are not against it.

When the party came in 1980's in DK, it was not easy for them to encourage and influence the people and win their heart. When the party members started fighting for them in the issues regarding land, forest produce, labour issues, problems related to village chiefs and teaching them to boil water, people started trusting them. JS has resolved the land issue by mentioning the following in the Constitution of JS:

JS will encourage collective work through mutual labor, cooperation of the peasants in leveling the land, tilling, transplantations, weed removing, harvesting, growing vegetables, raising fruits, fish cattle and other such agricultural and agriculture related works. It will strive to increase productivity and production so as to fulfill



the necessities of food grains to people (111).

Naxalites led to the emancipation of women. Women were not given equal rights to men in property and there were some faulty customs to which they adhered. Navlakha presents women in contrast to the account given by Mohanty, who says that tribal women enjoy a lot of freedom and share equal status with men. But Navlakha describes the condition of women quite opposite to him:

Women could not move from one village to another, during menstruation and were forced to remain outside the village, and their attendance in meetings was discouraged. A woman has to get tattooed, cannot wear blouses or saris, cannot eat eggs- and follow other do's and don'ts- all in the name of tradition (136).

Naxalites give discussions and debates to bring about reforms in their traditions. It is not meant to be imposed upon them. Its influence is seen in the fact that now there are number of women as commanders in the leading cadres. While the naxalites feel that much has to be done to bring about reforms in the issues related to land. They are also trying their best to free the people from superstitions.

While talking to the RKM members Navlakha comes to know that the administration has prohibited the entry of doctors into naxalite affected areas claiming that they will avail the facilities, thereby flouting Supreme Court's order. On the contrary they say that it is because of the presence of

naxalites that hinders social and economic development. They also blame naxalites for threatening the teachers and destroying '385 residential schools', which in reality do not even exist. Abid Ali and Sant Lal bring to the light that "a majority of the massacre was committed by landlord armies which were not considered an act of terror under the law. Such treatment for the upper class only serves to threaten the rule of law, state legitimacy and democracy as the political norm" (2976). Talking about development and industrialization, he says that the party is not opposed to it but they want it within their own terms and conditions. "The party was firmly against handing over leases to MNCs, that too for the export of minerals rather than for the use of domestic industries" (Navlakha 160).

Staying with them he has witnessed a completely different side of naxalites. They are engaged in writing a 30 years history of the cultural work being done by them. Their works include music, arts and dance. They release their own cassettes. So far they have composed 204 songs. During their free time every one of the party members is engaged in reading books and magazines. He has a lot of respect for the party because he feels it is not easy to live a nomadic life, face daily challenges and have a lot of courage and commitment to their aim. He believes that the party will sprout and if suppressed at one place will emerge somewhere else because it is rooted among the people who have faith in them. As long as the Government exploits them, they will defend themselves.



According to him the Maoists do not pose as much a threat as it is said by Government. It is not that they do not want the violence to come to an end. Many a times they have taken a lot of risks by engaging in peace talks but they have suffered a lot due to it as the Government itself does not want the war to end. But still he has listed some of the faults of Maoists, which he feels might not obstruct their growth and expansion:

Two major failings stare at them: in the first place they are weak politically and secondly they display a wonderful lack of respect for those who differ from them. When this is combined with overemphasis on guerilla action, where a weaker side has to break the encirclement by carrying out actions to disperse the security forces, then the political weakness and intolerance become near fatal mistakes (221).

He feels that when the movement is at a massive level, mistakes are bound to happen. But what matters, is that the Maoists have a willingness to learn from their past mistakes and are looking forward to make changes in their strategies:

I agree that heinous crime committed by squad members besmirch the entire resistance, belittle the selfless labour of thousands of ordinary Maoist cadres, and silence those who took to revolution...I also agree that a leader can cause strategic errors and tactical blinders, yet, there is a

fight for a life of dignity for the mass of our people (224).

CONCLUSION

He considers their violence more of a threat to themselves, than to the Government but he really admires them for achievements and the goals that they have attained. The party says that they do not want any kind of ruthlessness and bloodshed. Fighting is only an act of liberation and self-defence. He says he agrees with them but "these words must reveal themselves in actual conduct. If revolutionaries fight for life, they must fight honorably. Having taken root and aroused hope they cannot afford to destroy it through indiscipline, intolerance and dishonorable conduct" (225). Thus he asserts that they ought to follow discipline, address the problems related to the difference in their political conduct and the practices taken up by them, only then they will be able to fulfill the dreams that they have aroused in the poor for their emancipation. Otherwise all their hard labour and struggle will go futile.

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