

Fighting The Power

The repressive edge in Indian society has been particularly brought to bear against those who advocate radical change and revolt against the status quo and, especially those who refuse to play the parliamentary game. Surveillance, police harassment, suppression, fake trials, detention without trials, and murder have been the fates of thousands of revolutionaries and their sympathisers throughout Indian history and much of these measures are now visiting upon the people who show guts to resist oppression. There is nothing new in it. What is new is the scale of ruthlessness and cruel devices to carry out that ruthlessness. The persons in authority in different states and at the national level as well find it easy to isolate the dissenters whom they deem to be “terrorist” and have created an atmosphere where even liberals, democrats and civil rights activists see their reputations and even their livelihoods under attack. As ‘terrorism’ in the Indian context has long been officially identified with Islamic fundamentalism, particularly in view of Pakistan’s proxy operations in Jammu and Kashmir, “terrorists” now make room for ‘maoists’. The laws of the land do not apply to the ‘maoists’—all mainstream political parties are united in denying political space to the maoists. They have no right to freely espouse and organise for their views, and to engage boardly with toilers about those views.

The maoist party is not banned in Bengal but Bengal marxists are in a serious campaign to isolate their main opposition—Trinamul Congress- men—by blaming it on them for inviting maoists to escalate violence in Nandigram. On this issue all opposition parties including the Trinamul Congress are so defensive that they are speaking in too many voices only to help the ruling marxists in spreading their untruths and half-truths. When the people of Nandigram revolted against the ruling dispensation, almost a year ago, attacking even the policemen, there was no danger of ‘maoism’. The token presence of maoists, if any, at the later stage of the on-going movement did hardly make any difference on the ground reality. In truth Trinamul Congressmen allegedly tried to dislodge some parliamentary maoists (or naxalites) from the area even by taking help from the police because of their fear to lose new found political mileage which can be converted into vote in the coming panchayet polls. For one thing even during the 1970s when the naxalites were a force to reckon with in some parts of Bengal, East Medinipur region in general, not to speak of Nandigram, was free from naxalite influence. Some naxalite leaders found it difficult to break caste solidarity between share-croppers, landless labourers, small and medium peasants, all belonging to the same caste. It was a peculiar situation for the communist revolutionaries as they could not properly propagate their maoist formula of new democratic revolution and their class equation failed to resolve the caste dilemma of East Medinipur.

Narendra Modi is yet to discover maoist threat in Gujarat as Islamic terrorism works there fine. At the time of writing he was reportedly hoping for the third term with a slender majority. Surprisingly, Modi has succeeded in getting his detractors in the saffron establishments—RSS and Viswa Hindu Parishad—ousted from his dictatorial path. Without a strong vertical split in Modi’s BJP,

nothing will change for the better in Gujarat. But split without ideological polarisation in BJP cannot weaken Modi and his likes. And the Congress Party is in no position to engineer a vertical split because it is equally communal like BJP. Only their style of functioning is different. If the Bharatiya Janata Party is hell bent to polarise the polity on hindu-muslim divide Congress is no less responsible in strengthening the divide by wooing minority communalism at every critical juncture. What is more, marxists too sometimes find it lucrative to indulge in communal culture if it matters in vote market. The Taslima issue illustrates among other things that Congress and communists are on the same wave length when it is the question of combating minority communalism. What is at stake is minority vote and they can sacrifice rationality for vote. So the ruling marxists of Bengal, otherwise registered secularists, surrendered to the pressure created by the mullahs over the Taslima fiasco.

Both maoism and communalism come in handy for all ruling parties, left and right alike, to hoodwink the aggrieved. Without bringing forth a fresh, relevant and compelling approach to India's complex social reality even maoism seems too inadequate to polarise the haves and have-nots towards a viable alternative that could break the political chains of status quo-ism and ad-hocism and spontaneity as well. □□□

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