

The Killing Fields

A lot happens in a year but outlook for next year and the year after seems worse by any standards. The centre looks reluctant to initiate dialogue with the maoists despite popular urge from different quarters to give peace a chance. The Union Government is more interested in war, not peace. With the 'Green Hunt Operation' gaining momentum the security strategists of Congress-led United Progressive Alliance Government at the centre are unlikely to see reason because they hope to politically isolate the maoists from the people before launching the Sri Lankan-type final solution—genocide. They have enormous faith in the multi-faceted counter insurgency infrastructure they have built over years, albeit they refuse to learn anything from their failures in the Northeast and Kashmir.

Today all the so-called 'naxal-infested' areas are virtual war-zones. And people do hardly get the actual war scenario replete with ever increasing casualties because of undeclared emergency in those areas. Several attempts by human rights groups and media persons to measure the depth of wounds inflicted on the toilers of Chattisgarh and Jharkhand in the recent months have been foiled by the guardians of law and order. Meanwhile, the junglemahal of West Bengal, bordering Jharkhand and Bihar—the two most 'naxal-infested' states in the east—has literally become a killing field. During the last one year 55 people have been killed by joint security forces and the party-backed goons who have earned historical notoreity as *harmads*.

As per press release issued by the people's committee against police atrocities their first martyr in Jharkhand area was Nirmal Sardar who was murdered by the vigilante group euphemistically called *gana pratirodh committee* on January 5, 2009 when there were no maoist guerillas around. Since then the roster of martyrs is getting inflated with every passing day as Fulmoni Murmu became the latest victim when she was gunned down by joint security forces on March 3, 2010. Also, Lalmohan Tudu (50), the popular leader of Jharkhand movement, was murdered allegedly by police at point blank range on February 22, 2010 at his native village Narcha though it was publicised that he was killed in 'encounter'. What is more, about 700 women have reportedly been tortured, humiliated, and raped by security forces in a year. The figures are staggering. Even school children and girls were not spared while the children of movement leaders were specially targeted as it happened in case of Asit Mahato, the chief spokesperson of the people's committee at the moment.

The way the entire tribal community is being stigmatized has all too a familiar ring as it generally takes place in communal politics. The authorities think all tribals are ideologically and politically motivated by maoism. Maybe, the civil society too is influenced by this logic as liberals and democrats are not in any mood to respond to the fervent appeal made by the struggling people of Jharkhand for solidarity, moral or otherwise.

For all practical purposes maoism is equated with 'terrorism' and 'terrorism' is a dirty word as socialism became so immediately after the collapse of actually existing socialism in Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe. As for the maosits it is a situation of 'armed revolution fighting armed counter-revolution'. But subjective forces are so weak even in junglemahal where a somewhat spontaneous uprising against the police brutality and corrupt administration caught the authorities napping, that to think of any kind of revolution in the immediate future makes little sense.

Right now the maoists are pinning too much hope on Dandakaranya (DK) in Chattisgarh where they see new democratic power emerging in its embryonic form. What they call *Janathana Circar* in DK seems to be semi-liberated zone in maoist parlance. Though they dismiss the idea of establishing base areas in true sense, they think *Janathana Circars* are likely to expand despite police repression. But the ground position of maoists is far from rosy. They are on the defensive everywhere. And their renewed appeal through their mouthpiece to all progressives for united struggle itself suggests they cannot move ahead without popular support at different levels. Strange it may seem, when it is the question of united struggle against the onslaught of global capital, they are still divided over pretty ideological and political differences. Unless they show a little bit of flexibility to accommodate diverse political tendencies that are fighting for social justice in their own ways, the centre is unlikely to initiate negotiations because the Chidambarams may derive comfort from the fact that the killing fields are enlarging.

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