

Claiming Their Place

EXTREMISM IS SHOWING NO SIGN OF FALLING INTO HIBERNATION, while actually the persons in authority are running from one crisis to another with no idea as to how to hide their bankruptcy. Those who are theorising on the crisis of maoism while blaming it on this factor or that for the failed peace process initiated by the so-called interlocutors may have a fresh look at the current Afghan scenario to judge the ground reality.

‘Five years ago the Americans were refusing to speak to the Taliban. Now the Taliban are refusing to speak to the Americans’. Maoists in India at no point of time succeeded in creating such a situation tilting the balance of power in their favour despite their limited gains from kidnapping-centered bargaining with the lower-level administration. The government and its leaders have not changed their policy of ‘arrest and kill’ while dealing with the naxalites, even at the time of negotiations. The maoist phenomenon is being projected in most cases as a tribal problem which it is not, gets interpreted in diverse ways to diverse cross-sections of the population to isolate the communist revolutionaries in general. And maoists get easily trapped despite recurring set-backs.

The Taliban being a regressive force have been able to garner people’s support because of their ‘do or die’ fight against a foreign occupying army. No doubt ordinary Afghans are dying in cross-fire and yet broadly speaking people are not against the Taliban, notwithstanding immense hardships they face day in and day out. In the absence of any visible foreign occupying army, though Indian paramilitary forces behave like an occupying army, in the naxalite-affected regions, the maoists find it difficult to break the encirclement conducted by the powers that be, both militarily and politically. For America and NATO the law of diminishing returns has set in because the very presence of NATO troops is being viewed by the peace-loving people across the world as a problem, not a solution. The rush for the exit from Afghanistan is becoming a race despite so much superior fire-power at their disposal. As the US and NATO prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan in 2014, it is the scale of defeat and humiliation that is to be determined. Barack Obama’s much hyped surge in 2009 only served to intensify the war and provide additional targets for the Taliban resistance. Thus, if 2009 claimed the lives of 317 US soldiers, 2010 claimed 499 and 2011 witnessed 418 body bags going to America.

In the seventies the naxalites launched a vigorous campaign explaining their programme of revolution for radical change, to politically and ideologically demolish their opponents including official communists who have long stopped talking any kind of social revolution but electoral revolution. The Government of India has been carrying on a kind of predatory war against its own people for long without being politically opposed in its entirety even by the broad-spectrum of far left. Occasionally the maoist gun raises the issue but they simply lose the course in the middle.

No doubt independent people's initiatives, otherwise peaceful and democratic, against this predatory war far outstrip the maoist-action oriented exercise in a few jungle stretches of central and eastern India. And yet localised movements are losing because they cannot sustain themselves for long, having no substantial solidarity support from the majority of the society. Maoists are so isolated that they cannot counter the government's vilification move even when an author like Jan Myrdal of international repute is being singled out to make a villain out of the maoist movement by giving it a foreign tag. The other day the minister of state for home Jitendra Singh while keeping the elders in the upper house of parliament in good humour said that 'One Jan Myrdal, a pro-Maoist Swedish author, had visited India in January this year and attended pro-CPI (Maoist) conventions in Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ludhiana and Delhi', ostensibly to establish the Maoists' foreign link in a grand design to isolate them further from broad masses.

Myrdal, despite his advanced age, well in the eighties, came all the way from Sweden to Kolkata, to launch the English version of his book 'Red Star Over India' that depicts how the crisis managers of Government of India enterprise, have created a living hell for millions of poor and marginalised Indians, particularly in backward regions of tribal India, through their predatory war. It is not a hand-book for guerilla war- fare. Among most prominent foreign writers Myrdal has written extensively on the on-going people's resistance movements against the neo-liberal onslaught of the Indian government.

Meanwhile, the poster-boys of Indian drama are in trouble to project a vibrant emerging economy as rupee hits an all-time low against the US dollar. They continue to mislead the public by high-lighting the prospects of steady growth despite, not-so secret moderation in the GDP that dropped to 6.0 percent in 2011-12. Globally economic growth is coming down steadily and India cannot be an exception to the rule, albeit the Singhs and Mukherjees look enthusiastic enough to talk of nuclear power and all that amidst the doomsday forecast. Even China, otherwise the most stabilised economy is feeling the heat as their 'sequential GDP growth rate for 2011 stood at 9.7 percent, 9.5 percent, 9.1 percent and 8.9 percent, showing a trend of deceleration'.

The Singhs have no options but to fall back on austerity measures asking people to tighten the belts. And the maoists, of course, provide a diversionary issue while people suffer. In bringing truth to the masses, what is essentially required is to combat prejudice not only born of active campaigns of lies and deceit which cannot but strongly influence public opinion. The basic problem with the maoists is that they are reluctant to learn Mao's excellent advice to the effect that 'one should learn from the masses'. It is no easy talk! □