Anthropolitics: An Alternative Approach for Parliamentary vs. Revolutionary Politics in India

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Abstract[3]

Indian democracy is experiencing various uprisings in the regions of Central and Eastern India, Jammu & Kashmir and North-Eastern regions. However, the nature and causative factors of these uprisings are different. The insurrection in Central India is popularly known as "largest internal security threat" that the country is facing as described by former Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh in 2006. The insurrections of Jammu & Kashmir and North-Eastern regions have strong identity base and assumed the form of insurgencies. The failure of the parliamentary democracy in implementing the provisions of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution and the inadequacy of the revolutionary politics of the CPI (Maoist) in delivering good governance to the people indicate the need for alternative politics. These alternative politics may be called as Anthropolitics where human dignity and rights of an individual preferred over the power-centred politics.

Key Words: Anthropolitics, Democracy, Insurrection, Governance, Fifth Schedule, Constitution, India, Revolution, Maoist Party.

Introduction

The birth of parliamentary democracy in India has been intrinsically linked with state violence through the repressive apparatus such as Military and Police. Massive killings have taken place in military operation known as 'Operation Polo' in Telangana region as documented in Pandit Sundarlal Committee Report on the Massacres in Hyderabad (1948). Currently, Indian democracy is experiencing various uprisings in the regions of Central and Eastern India, Jammu & Kashmir and North-Eastern regions. However, the *nature and causative factors* of these uprisings are different. The insurrection in Central India is popularly known as "largest internal security threat" that the

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country is facing as described by former Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh in 2006. The insurrections of Jammu & Kashmir and North-Eastern regions have strong identity base and assumed the form of insurgencies.

Why and how the insurrection in Central India does become "largest internal security threat" concern for the governing class of people? In this context, Sundar (2016:14) argues that:

"*My narrative is really about Indian democracy when it reduces what are essentially political contests over rights, distributive justice and alternative visions of the good to law and order problems, and when it would rather fight against its poorest citizens than talk to them*".

This means that the government, media and the ongoing discourses on insurrection in Central India have deduced the issues of rights over natural resources, tensions between self versus state led governance systems, distribution of economic prosperity to the local communities, coercive land acquisition and faulty development model imposed by state on *adivasis* (also known as indigenous and Scheduled Tribe in official language) communities to a *security and law and order problem*. The discourse has become sanitised to an extent that if any one questions or raises voice against state actions they will be labelled as anti-national and anti-development.

In her recent work entitled 'The Burning Forest: India's War in Bastar', Sundar observes that "not only have India's democratic institutions failed to respond adequately to serious human rights violations (Sundar, 2016: 256)" in the name of fighting Maoist insurgents and providing security to the local people in the chapter on 'The Amnesias of Democracy'. To what extent it is true that the democratic failures of Indian State have given rise to insurrection in Central India? The answer to this question is plausible. It is argued that the "current Maoist upheaval needs to be understood as a part of the general phenomenon of democratic deficit (Mukherji, 2013:73)". The near failure of parliamentary democracy in implementing the provisions of Fifth Schedule is one of the major causative factors for the growth of insurrection. In other words, insurrections are inevitable when the elected governments fail to deliver the rights and justice in day to day life of the citizens. Democracy and insurrections are the two sides of the same coin i.e. political legitimacy. Proper understanding and appreciation of insurrections have the potentiality to strengthen democratic tradition, helpful in improving the quality of local governance.

Democratic deficit: Case of Bastar, Chhattisgarh

The whole Bastar region of the Chhattisgarh State has only one Member in Parliament. It consists of seven districts and all of them are experiencing insurrection. There is a need to increase the

representation of *adivasis* from this region in Parliament. From its inception the Vidhan Sabha consist of only 90 constituencies. Increase in representation of *adivasis* both in Parliament and Vidhan Sabha is necessary through delimitation of seats as per Article 170 of the Constitution. Accordingly, the representation of local democratic entities should also be increased. Along with this, the long pending National Policy on Tribals that has drafted in 2006 covering most of the aspects of the tribal well-being, need to be tabulated in the coming parliamentary session for its enactment. This is with respect to the representation in parliamentary democracy. The poor representation of *adivasis* is also reflected in executive positions and in judiciary. There are no official estimates about these figures. The following facts provide a grim picture about the representation of *adivasis* in Indian democracy,

"*The one-third strong adivasi populace of Chhattisgarh had failed to force the government to give its constitutionally mandated share of jobs, both an indication and an outcome of its marginality in the state's electoral arena* (Sharma, 2012:21)"

"*The adivasi, we know, has not been able to participate fully and effectively in this system of representation, because neither numbers nor the liberal concept of minority works in their favour* (Banerjee, 2016:9-10)".

The above analysis reveals that under or poor representation of adivasis in legislative, executive and judiciary positions i.e. institutions of government is a clear *indicator of the political 'alienation'* (term borrowed from Marx's writings) in the Indian democracy. In every census there is an increase in the per cent of *adivasis* (from 30 million in 1961 to 104 million in 2011) in the country but not the representation in parliamentary democracy. Ironically *adivasis* are one of the largest sections of the society which has been displaced in post-Independent India in the process of pursuit of the so called-development.

Governance of CPI (Maoist) Party

The Maoist party argues that it is fighting with the deficiencies of Indian Democracy, particularly with the structures of inequality in economic, political and social institutions. It is observed that:

"*Though elections have been held several times and several governments had changed in the past 65 years of 'independent' rule, it is a fact that even to this day the basic needs of the people like food, clothing, shelter, education and health care remained out of reach. The oppressed masses who constitute 95% of the population are confronting poverty, illiteracy. Unemployment, price rises, diseases, starvation deaths, corruption etc on a daily basis* (Collected Statements of Central Committee, CPI (Maoist) Party, 2014:302)".

The view of the CPI (Maoist) party is that, Indian democracy is working only for the big industrialists, land owners and not for the improving the lives of all people. It is perpetuating the social and economic inequalities in the social fabric and is the growing cause of social and political unrest. The issues raised by the CPI (Maoist) party are definitely connected with serious aspects of the social and economic development. The question is not just about the democracy, but its deliverables in terms of public goods and services.

The CPI (Maoist) party in Dandakaranya is running primary schools, teaching in local languages, engaged in organic farming, establishing village defence committees, organising cultural festivals, fighting for the land and forest rights with the local bureaucracy, traders, providing health volunteers. Issues concerning the life and livelihood of the people are discussed wherein the failure, inadequacy or injustice of State mechanisms and institutions created space for naxalite activities. Such a description may help people to appreciate why naxalites derive support (Government of India, 2008: 45). To illustrate, the Maoist party has made efforts to negotiate the wage rates paid for adivasis for the collection of tendu leaves, one of the Minor Forest Produces and a major economic source of livelihood for almost 300 million *adivasis (indigenous)* and other forest dwelling communities. It is observed that:

"*these wages- negotiated by Maoists with private contractors-are higher than those announced by the Chhattisgarh government. Maoists were also able to eliminate traditional social evils such as free first day labour for tilling the land of the village chief. These measures explain why adivasis feel indebted to Maoists* (Mukherji 2013: 118)".

By the time Chhattisgarh State has come into existence in 2000, the party has established its social base in the region. In a way the Maoist party's social legitimacy is relatively better when compared to that of the elected local government in the State. This observation can be corroborated by the fact that:

"*We are implementing the MGNREGS in 25 Panchayats only. Earlier it was only in 16 Panchayats; this year another 9 were added making it to 25. The CPI (Maoist) party has initially resisted; however due to the people's pressure we were able to extend it to another 9 Panchayats in this current financial year*[4]".

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, a total number of 338 Adalats (People's Court) have been held throughout the country during 2011-16 by the CPI (Maoist) party. From the above discussion, it

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[4] Field notes (2016).

may be inferred that the parliamentary democracy of India is facing resistance from the CPI (Maoist) party whose aim is to establish people's democratic government. A competition between democratic politics and the politics of insurrection is observed.

The Maoist party led Janathan Sarkar's or people led government have established the different departments such as (i) finance (ii) defence (iii) agriculture (iv) judiciary (v) education-culture (vi) health (vii) forest protection and (viii) public relations; however the delivery of public goods and services to the local people is not widely known. For example,

"*there is no mention of even a single health centre with permanent structure initiated by Maoists. Given the acute conditions of malnutrition among children and women, what the 'alternative model' of agriculture and other efforts at Maoist 'development' has done to the people of Dandakaranya*" (Mukherji 2013: 120-21)".

Apart from these deficiencies in delivering the developmental outcomes at the local level, one of the most important critiques towards CPI (Maoist) party is its restrictions on the people's mobility and freedom of movement. The CPI (Maoist) party does not hesitate to use coercive means to stop the villagers from voting particularly in the villages located in interior areas. In this context it is worth to recollect the words of a Standing Sarpanch[5] of a Gram Panchayat as follows,

"*Each person who is coming out of the village has to communicate to the local dalam member of the party and their purpose of going out of the village. They have to report after reaching the home in time. If there is a delay proper explanation has to be given otherwise the villagers have to be ready to face the severe consequences*".

This indicates that the CPI (Maoist) party is restricting the people's movements and curtailing the liberty in their own vicinities. This is undesirable for a party which is aiming to bring 'New Democratic Revolution' (Communist Party of India (Maoist), 2004) in the country. This kind of restrictions on people's mobility in itself negates the spirit of democracy which insurgents are claiming to establish through insurrection. One of the main limitations in understanding the CPI (Maoist) party's Janathan Sarkar's functioning is the unavailability of the same for an objective and open inquiry. This raises many doubts in the minds of the citizens about the claims of CPI (Maoist) party on what the party calls as "liberated zones (Banerjee, 2006: 3159)".

Insurrections take place in a given society for the reasons of failures of democracy as a political system in ensuring equality and justice. In this case it is observed that even though there is an electoral

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[5]President of the Local Government Institution (Rural). Field notes (2016).

legitimacy at State and national levels, it has not been able to transform the ideals of democracy at grass roots politics. The near failure of parliamentary politics and the Indian State in addressing the specific democratic governance issues have laid the platform for insurrections in Central and Eastern India. The current insurrection in Central and Eastern India is a classic example for the rival relationship between democracy and insurrection. In this context, the Indian State needs to see the aspects of citizenship where the assertion of rights in the form of insurrections does fall under the democracy within the Constitutional scheme of governance framework. Similarly, the CPI (Maoist) party needs to acknowledge and appreciate the legitimacy of the electoral system functioning through independent Election Commission of India in spite of limitations on the grounds of accountability and transparency.

Therefore, there is no escape for the Indian State from addressing genuine issues raised by the CPI (Maoist) party and especially poverty, unemployment, land reforms, rights over resources and most importantly social and political inequality. Insurrections are potential tools to build 'active citizenry'. There is a need to locate insurrections in a broader framework of democracy and its institutions for a stable social order. For this to happen, there is a need for transforming the way politics is operating in Bastar the epicenter of insurrection from power centred to human centric politics known as Anthropolitics.

The ongoing insurrection needs to be looked beyond the binary categories of state and ideological perspective within which the parliamentary and revolutionary approaches of politics have inadequately acknowledged and appreciated the humanistic elements. To contextualise, the Indian state and the Maoist party perceive and treat the *adivasis* society and most importantly the youth, as political rather than apolitical subjects. The local communities were reduced to the subjects of power struggle of Indian state and the Maoist party by negating the human consciousness and its varied manifestations. Anthropolitics urges the Indian state and Maoist party to look at the human component of the adivasis society rather than as mere political subjects in the pursuit of power politics. Anthropolitics is essential to explore the fullest human capacities and capabilities of the people in fifth schedule areas and it would be beneficial to the Indian state and the Maoist party. For the Indian state, it provides an opportunity to improve the governance and standard of living whereas for the Maoist party it gives scope to revisit the political ideology in the changing democratic scenario.

Conclusion and a way forward

The near failure of the parliamentary democracy in implementing the provisions of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution and the inadequacy of the revolutionary politics of the CPI (Maoist) in delivering

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good governance to the people indicates the need for alternative politics. This alternative politics may be called Anthropolitics where human dignity and rights of an individual are preferred over the power-centred politics. Anthropolitics combines the human values into the political theories and tries to look beyond the power, authority or sovereignty concepts. The Union Home Ministry data clearly shows that the common citizens who lost their lives are more in number when compared to the security forces and the insurgents. Anthropolitics is an approach and process to understand the politics from the humanitarian dimension. To contextualize this to what is happening in the central and eastern states is not to be treated as politics but as war. "Politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed (Mao-Zedong)". Even if we are considering it as war, it is an unjust war because both the state apparatus and Maoist party are indulging in killing each other. In other words, death has become an end itself to the both parties.

In this battle of killing each other the local citizens are also losing their lives. Both the state and insurgents are not thinking of the invaluable human lives of the local people. In a sense the human element is largely missing in the struggle for power. The State and the Maoist ideologues are contesting each other for the sovereignty over the local citizens. Therefore there is a need to explore alternative politics which emphasize on human component preceding the political struggles. Anthropolitics calls for the priority of humane content into the political discourses particularly in the conflict zones. It ascertains the fact that human life is more important than the ideology or power though both have a role in shaping the life of the humankind.

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