



Naxalism Problem in India: A Study of Jharkhand State

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ABSTRACT

Naxalism is one of the biggest threats to the internal security of India. There were many cases in which society was affected by the problem of Naxalism. If we look at history, the problem of Naxalism started in the late 1960s in Naxalbari, West Bengal. But, the problem spread in others states of India at a very fast pace. The state of Jharkhand is also one of the states which has been affected by this problem since its inception on 15th November 2000. The main objective for the creation of the state was to help the people of the state to develop and flourish in their own way. However, after 23 years of inception, the level of development and progress is not up the desired level. There are many reasons for this, but one of the biggest challenges is the problem of Naxalism. Few scholars are of the opinion that Jharkhand is very ideal for the Naxalites as the land is surrounded by mountains. In this present paper, an attempt is made to understand the background and problem of Naxalism in India, and specifically in the state of Jharkhand. Further, the responses of the Government and the security agencies are also discussed.

Introduction:

The state of Jharkhand was created on 15 November 2000 by the Bihar Reorganization Act. Even before the formation of the state, the history of this land has been very glorious and great. Countless heroes like

Birsa Munda, Sidho and Kanho, Nilambar and Pitambar, Jatra Oraon etc. who were born on this holy land made their supreme sacrifice for this country when the country's freedom struggle was going on (Rizvi, 2014). In the post-independence era, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and other parties launched a regular agitation which forced the government to establish the Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council in 1995 and eventually a full-fledged state. Indian independence brought relatively little socioeconomic benefit to the people of the Jharkhand region, leading to widespread resentment among the people of Jharkhand, especially among the tribal communities, towards the Bihar administration. In Jharkhand, 2/5 population is inhabited by tribal and backward tribes, in which Santhal, Munda, Kora, Gond, Kharwar, Lohra etc tribes reside (Halder, 2015).

The main and only objective of the formation of the Jharkhand state was the development of the state and the people of the state, today almost 23 years have passed since the formation of the state, but the state has remained far away from its objectives. There are many reasons for staying away from the objective, but one important reason is the problem of Naxalite¹, which played a significant role in slowing down the pace of development of Jharkhand. Today our country is touching new heights of development, but even in this era of development, investors and tourists neither wants to come Jharkhand nor invest openly in the projects here, the biggest reason for this is the Naxalite problem. However, if we pay attention to the last few years, the central and state government have taken better and stronger initiatives to deal with this problem, along with strengthening the security system, the government has also paid attention to the model of development. The result of which has been seen better, we have seen that Naxalites are getting confined in their areas. In this article, we will try to highlight this important problem as well as throw light on various points related to it.

Objectives

The study has been undertaken to understand the main problems and new trends of Naxalism in India with special reference to the state of Jharkhand. The main objectives are as follows:

- To understand the evolution of Naxalism in India.
- To examine the issues of Naxalism in the state of Jharkhand.

¹ The Naxalites are a group of extreme left-wing radical communists who espouse Maoist political sentiment and ideology. Their origins can be traced to the split of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in 1967, which led to the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist). They are known by the names of Naxalites, Naxalism, Maoism, extreme leftists etc.

- To know the current trends of Naxalism in the state of Jharkhand.
- To find out the challenges to tackle Naxalism problem in Jharkhand.

Naxalite originated in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal as a revolutionary movement among farmers and the working class. The movement was supported by the Communist Party of India (Marxist and Leninist), and was initially led by Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal in the first Naxal insurgency. At that time, peasants were taught military strategies and guerrilla warfare, which later became more radical, inciting them to engage in armed struggle against rich and influential landowners. This movement became even stronger with the support of neighbouring China, and it later spread to other Indian states including Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. By 2008-09, Naxalite had created a violent red corridor in India, with Jharkhand also becoming a part of it. The Naxalites had spread their empire from Pashupati in Nepal to Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh.

Even before its formation as a separate state, Jharkhand was affected by the Naxalite problem when it was a part of undivided Bihar. The Naxalite movement was born in 1967 when Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal formed their party and started an armed struggle against the country from Naxalbari village in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. This struggle was a direct attack on the democratic structure of our country (Kujur, 2008). Scholars and writers have divided Naxalite into three phases, with Charu Mazumdar's period placed in the first phase, which ended with his death. Even in the first phase of Naxalite, we can see the evidence and seeds of Naxalite in Jharkhand. In the early 1970s, some CPI-ML leaders were found to have established contacts in some areas of Palamu, but many of them were arrested during the Emergency. Hazaribagh and Ranchi also had whispers related to Naxalite ideology, and it is known from some sources that these areas were used by Naxalites to hide or take refuge after committing crimes in the urban areas of Bengal (Jha, 2005).

In the second phase of Naxalite, this state was also affected by the Naxal problem, although at that time, most of the present-day Bihar was in the grip of Naxalite. Maoist Communist Center of India and other smaller parties dominated these areas at that time (Narayan, 2011). Naxalite was seen deviating from its ideology in this period, and dangerous politics of casteism emerged. An aggressive group of almost all castes was visible in Bihar during this time. After facing various challenges, Jharkhand state was formed at the end of this second phase. After its formation, Jharkhand proved to be an ideal land for Naxalites due to its geographical location, abundance of forests and mountains, and government irregularity. September 21, 2004, proved to be a fateful day for India and Jharkhand in particular when the Maoist

Communist Center and the People's War Group merged, giving birth to a new party named the Communist Party of India Maoist (Maoist Documents, 2004). This marked the beginning of the third and most dangerous phase of Naxalism, which later became the biggest threat to the internal security of the country.

State Naxal Data Analysis:

Scholars say that Jharkhand inherited the Naxal problem since its formation, and the state has been battling it ever since. According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, in the year 2000, six districts of the state reported killings in Naxalite incidents, while in the present year, 36 people, including 11 Naxalites and three security personnel, were killed in such incidents. From the year following the state's formation, there was an unusual increase in Naxalite incidents. While only a few areas were affected by this problem during the state's formation year, by 2009, almost all the districts were affected. The year 2009 proved to be the worst in Jharkhand's history, with 200 people losing their lives in terrible violence, including 71 security forces, 61 Naxalites, and 68 civilians. It is noteworthy that security personnel and civilians suffered more losses than the Naxalites. Since 2000, over 2,183 people have lost their lives as victims of Naxalism. Nevertheless, the state and central government have made significant progress in resolving this problem, with only 21 deaths reported in 14 serious Naxalite attacks in 2022, and 25 deaths in 2021.

According to the 2021 statistics of the Ministry of Home Affairs, 16 out of 24 districts in Jharkhand are affected by the Naxal problem, which is higher than the number of Naxalite-affected districts in Chhattisgarh, the state most affected by Naxalism, where the number of affected districts is only 14. In 2021, the Central Government released a list of the 25 most affected districts in India, which included 8 districts in Jharkhand and 8 in Chhattisgarh. In 2019, the figures were 30, with 13 of the most affected districts being in Jharkhand. The 5 districts that were removed from this list were all from Jharkhand. Currently, the Santhal Pargana region of Jharkhand has been freed from the Naxalite problem, while western Jharkhand, especially the Palamu circle, is still suffering from this problem.

State action and response against the Naxal movement in Jharkhand:

The government has taken several steps to address the issue of Naxalism, but unfortunately, success has been limited. The situation peaked in 2009-2010, leading former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to describe Naxalism as the biggest internal threat to the country. However, in 2014 (Lal, 2009), when

Rajnath Singh was the Home Minister, he intensified the anti-Naxal campaign, which resulted in progress.

The present government in Jharkhand, in collaboration with the central government, has made significant strides on the ground to combat Naxalism. As a result, there has been a substantial reduction in both Naxalite incidents and Naxalite-affected areas in Jharkhand. The government is now working to bring both security and development to the affected areas. On the one hand, state-of-the-art security personnel are carrying out operations to establish security in the state, while on the other hand, the government is promoting development by establishing schools, colleges, and industries in the state.

The government has launched several crucial projects for the development of these affected areas, and some of them have already been successfully completed. For instance, the government set a target of constructing 16,200 km of roads in Left Wing Extremism-affected areas, of which 10,600 km have already been completed (Development of LWE Affected Areas, 2022). Roads are considered the foundation of development, and constructing them in these affected areas is crucial for accelerating development.

To enhance communication services in the affected areas, the government is working to install a large number of mobile towers. The target is to install a total of 4,072 towers, of which over 2,343 have been installed (Development of LWE Affected Areas, 2022). In today's digital age, it is essential to provide network coverage in these areas to promote real and modern development.

The state and central governments are also making efforts to promote skill development, education, energy, and the expansion of digital connectivity. For example, under the skill development project, 47 ITIs and 68 skill development centres had been established by 2018-19 (Development of LWE Affected Areas, 2022). Experts believe that people join Naxal groups because they lack education and employment opportunities. To address this issue, the state and central governments are working to provide education and employment opportunities to people in affected areas under various schemes.

Under the 'Special Central Assistance (SCA)' scheme, INR 3,085.74 crore was released to the most Left Wing Extremism-affected districts to fill critical gaps in public infrastructure and services, further improving the infrastructure for development (Left Wing Extremism Devison, 2022).

Citizens living in affected areas previously had to travel to cities for minor banking-related work. In response to this issue, the government is working to provide banking facilities within 5 km. There is also



a special focus on education for children, and approvals have been granted for the construction of new Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) in affected areas. Additionally, there are plans to establish more schools under the Eklavya model, ensuring that children receive proper basic education (DNA, 2022).

Finally, the state government is making significant efforts to bring Naxalites back into the mainstream through development initiatives. The government is providing various incentives to encourage Naxalites to surrender and leave the path of violence. After surrendering, the government is providing them with various forms of assistance, such as expedited legal proceedings, reduced punishment, protection for their families, and special benefits in government policies.

Conclusion:

Naxalites claim to fight for the rights of the tribals and the poor, who they say have been neglected by the government for decades. However, there is no truth to this claim. The Maoist-affected areas in Jharkhand are mostly tribal-dominated, and basic living facilities are still lacking. Public and private sector companies have exploited the natural resources of these areas, leaving no good roads, drinking water supply, education, health facilities, or employment opportunities. Nevertheless, the government is working quickly to solve these problems.

Between 2008 to 2011, Naxalite incidents were at their peak in the state. Although Naxalite incidents continued after 2014, the government's policies brought them under control to a great extent. Economic reasons have also contributed to the rise of Naxalism in Jharkhand. Naxalites hinder the government's development works, and they do not allow development in tribal areas, instigating locals against the government. They extort money from people and establish their parallel courts in those areas.

Due to lack of access to the administration, local people have always been victims of Maoist atrocities. The neglect of illiteracy and development work has further strengthened the alliance between the local people and the Naxalites. However, the government's efforts and security agencies have gradually reduced the Naxalites' local support. The government's work is commendable, but better collaboration between the central and state governments can improve development work on the ground. We should promote education and culture in Naxalite-affected areas. Students from Naxalite-affected areas should visit other parts of India to gain a better understanding of the country's reality.

We can establish a State Human Rights wing in Naxal-affected areas, prevent those who have surrendered from returning to Naxalites' influence, and free the tribals from exploitation by Naxalites, contractors, and security personnel. The government should allocate land to landless people for cultivation. Strengthening the Panchayati Raj system in these areas can give the local people more power to solve their problems. We should also make the people of Naxal-affected areas aware of the government's good intentions.

Even today, our state lacks livelihood education and affordable education. Due to the lack of employment-oriented education, changes in industry, uncontrolled mechanization, and the lack of cottage industries, education is becoming expensive and scarce. Therefore, there is a need to modernize our education system and make it more employment-oriented. By solving these small problems, we can prevent our state from this big election.

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