

Fighting crypto-intellectuals



By Meenakshi Lekhi | Issue Date: September 23, 2018 | Updated: September 15, 2018 16:15 IST

With the recent arrest of some overground activists of the banned CPI (Maoist) by the Pune police, a full-blown war of words is on in the country, between those working for the sovereignty of India and those working against it. The arrested activists allegedly work through well-known frontal organisations of the banned Maoist outfit, which has waged an internecine war against various Indian states with the aim of overthrowing legitimate democratic governments.

It is well known that Maoists are not fighting an isolated war. They enjoy an umbilical patronage from various influential people and groups, who provide them financial, emotional, cultural and ideological support from urban areas. Such people, under the garb of poets, writers, dalit-rights activists or lawyers, work through close-knit networks of commensality. That is why, and rightly so, such crypto-intellectuals are termed 'urban Naxals', as they give legitimacy to the jungle Maoists.



Illustration: Bhaskaran

As a result of this robust network of urban support, the armed struggles of the Maoists have continued for decades. These individuals and groups have penetrated deep into academic institutions, besides being in the layers of civil institutions, art and cinema. Taking advantage of various forms of dissatisfaction among the population, they convince others to join their violent struggle in different capacities. Thus, both the support and recruitment to the movement continues unabated in urban as well as rural areas. Such arcane activists, enjoying respectable status in society, are nothing but invisible enemies of India, who work overtime against the very foundations of the state and its Constitution, while enjoying complete immunity from the law under the

garb of intellectual freedom.

Public intellectuals are the backbone of a liberal's democracy because of their ability to think critically, analyse and research, and because of their ability to voice their dissent without fear of persecution, adding vibrance and richness to its institutions. However, it does not give them the freedom and license to indulge in unlawful or antinational activities, and, should a situation arise, no one can accuse the government of indulging in any kind of persecution against anybody for any resultant action. No government can afford to act against respectable citizens without reason.

As a strong democracy requires the right to dissent and criticise, so does it necessitate an obligation upon the state to crush violent rebellions. No democratic government would survive if it dithered in either of the two. Hence, it is shocking and anguishing that the leftist intellectual brigade, supported by a section of the media, finds the action arbitrary and chilling. Though, it does not surprise me, a close look at the protesters reveals that they are the same people who indulged in such antics in the past, inventing gimmicks like intolerance and award-wapasi, and fabricating labels like fascist and anti-dalit for the Modi government.

However, what surprises me is the response of the Congress, who, in a complete somersault of position, finds the arrest of these people repressive. While in power, the UPA government had unearthed the devious network of such individuals in society and had also arrested a few of them, like Varavara Rao, Arun Ferreira and Vernon Gonsalves.

Although it is the court that will have the final word on the matter, it is clear that the Congress, like a chameleon, changes colours with time, and does not hesitate to compromise with vital issues of national security, if it finds the same electorally rewarding.

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