

## ***No Proof Required***

Terror by any other name...

By

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*Blurb: There is as much difference between Lashar-e-Tayyiba and the Maoists as between Al-Qaeda and the Naxalites. This recognition is important if the system has to defeat the terrorists.*

Over the last few weeks, there has been a ratcheting up of the Naxalite/Maoist violence to bring truth and justice to the Indian democracy. A parallel movement has occurred over the same period – a campaign by “liberal intellectuals” (I am sorry but that is the most accurate description, though Yasser Arafat would have added *so-called*) to cleanse the ever increasing flow of blood. We are told, in breaking news terms, that the violence can only be stopped with “development”; that unless progress is brought to the poor tribals, arresting the violence will be of little consequence.

We are also told that it is not only incorrect but unfair to characterize the N&M's as terrorists. The reason not? Because unlike genuine terrorists, the N&Ms are genuinely interested in development and helping the poor. For example? Well, a Maoist leader and a leading member of their Politburo, Mr. Kobad Ghandy, has been glowingly reported as a development junkie. His movement, we are told, has been operating in poor villages for decades; they have been talking and cajoling the poor tribals to use boiling water, something that the official authorities presumably haven't done.

How does one differentiate the N&Ms from all the NGOs that have devoted their lifetime to helping the poor, and in many more ways than just communicating the importance of boiled water? For that matter, how does one distinguish the N&Ms from Bill Gates's foundation, or for that matter from international organizations like the World Bank? Before we get all syrupy about violent protesters having a heart of gold, we need to understand, and define, the limits to action in the name of the poor. If media reports are to be believed, the N&M violence is often against

the poor, only they are a different kind of poor. They are the local police, or local government officials. Other times, the violence is against “ordinary” poor people.

One of the main complaints of the N&Ms is that development often does not reach the poor, that it gets eaten up by the state, as official help travels from the center to the hinterland. This is a complaint that is widely echoed by the liberal intellectuals, as they staunchly defend their defence of the N&Ms. The defence, therefore, has two components; first, that the violence is perpetrated by the Maoists because they have little option; the state has in many instances behaved badly, and is massively corrupt, so corrupt that it would steal from the poor. Second, that the N&Ms are really like any other NGO, going to remote areas where the middle class does not dare to tread, and helping the poor by telling them about the importance of boiled water.

Criticism of the non-beneficial nature of the state, and its innate corruptness, is not the monopoly of the N&Ms or their defenders. This claim has been made by most; indeed, the first person to concretize this proposition was no less an establishment figure than the former Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi. And he made that claim – that less than 15 percent of government expenditures meant for the poor actually reached the poor – in 1985, when the present day M&Ns were mere toddlers.

There are other people who resort to violence when they feel that they are unjustly treated by the state, or by art. India’s leading painter, Mr. M. F. Hussain, has been in exile for several years. His crime? That he dared to paint nude Indian goddesses. There was protest violence, though not as violent as that by the N&Ms. Yet, no one has come to the defense of these vandals – nor they should. But by any count, these “morally right” lumpen proletariat has done less violence *to the poor* than the N&Ms. So why are the latter defended and the former vilified?

Throughout history, there have been several champions of the poor; these champions came to power in the name of the poor, and soon destroyed the poor and the nation. There was Stalin, and more recently Pol Pot of Cambodia. Look into their histories – it is the same sad movie over and over again. They say the system is rotten; the intellectuals support them, because the terrorists are also smart enough to realize what resonates with the “intellectual” elite. Then they come to power and when they leave, the system, and the poor, is a lot worse off than when they started.

Above, we had discussed the question of differentiation of those who do good. The flip-side question is equally important. How does one, nee should one, distinguish between those who do bad? To put it starkly – there are few people (except the mandatory some) who defend the actions of a terrorist group like Al-Qaeda. Since these “some” reside in India, let me restate the proposition – how many Indians would defend the perpetrators of 26/11? Did I hear any? No. Now what is the difference between the 26/11 terrorists and Al-Qaeda ? None; indeed, the financing for the two organizations most likely comes from the same source. What do these terrorists have in common? Much; for starters they have the same cause: fighting for the poor, and the oppressed. And why are they fighting for the poor and the oppressed? Because the system has failed, the system is corrupt, and only the valiant in the name of the poor terrorists can right historical wrongs. Honestly, there is as much difference between Lashar-e-Tayyiba and the Maoists as between Al-Qaeda and the Naxalites. This recognition is important if the Indian system has to defeat the terrorists.

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