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## **The Shifting Structures of Violence**

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**Abstract:**

*The present research project proposes to explore the evolving relations between violence and social structures. Social structures have been analyzed exhaustively in terms of core elements like modes of production and forms of consumption. Alternatively, theorists like Foucault have traced the genealogies of institutions in correspondence with the genealogies of power structures. The institutions and discourses thus studied include the prison and sexuality. The hypothesis of the present project is that the genealogy of violence as an institution may be profitably studied, to expose the subtle aspects of social structuration. Violence of the grand scale, like wars and conquests, have been widely studied and recognized as historical markers. These have had a definitive impact on historiography, and continue to be recognized as ruptures that mark and define historical periods. The focus of the present project however is violence which has been a perennial institution replicating the subtleties of social structuring in performative terms. The evolution of social spaces finds analogical reflection in the evolving technologies of violence.*

**Keywords:** *Violence, social structures, structuration, war, historiography*

An important segment of the research would be to historicize violence in relation to material conditions and social structures. Thus, the unidirectional hierarchies of feudal economies may be expected to secrete similar – though exaggerated – forms of violence. Industrial capitalist economies may be assumed to constitute violence in more sophisticated and “democratically” performative modes. The globalized neo-liberal structures of the present further sophisticate the institution of violence, making it diffuse and ubiquitous. Complexly networked structures, corporate agility, speculative orchestration of finance capital, and the overlaps of the virtual and the real, are constitutive elements of neo-liberal forms. Violence, here, transcends physical and observable manifestations to assume protean and near-invisible forms. It could become so diffuse to be perceived even as benevolence. Here, especially, an anatomy of violence could generate a methodology and insights for the comprehension and articulation of social structures. This is because neo-liberal forms display a stubborn resistance and intractability to analysis.

The manner in which violence is mediated is another important area proposed to be studied. Institutional forms of mediation accommodate violence within social structures, and fix the thresholds of tolerance. Religion, the media, bureaucracy and the legal and legislative structures are filters that determine the perception of violence, and often, its legitimation.

An important premise of the present research is that the institution of violence has not been adequately explored. It is embedded in social structures; only the exaggerated performative forms fall within the range of perception.

“Propaganda is to democracy what violence is to totalitarianism” says Chomsky. There is no gainsaying the importance of culture studies in decoding the politics of positionality and representation in the public space. The ways in which the nation unfolds its meaning over time through its changing material contexts *vis-à-vis* its prime narrative mechanism -- the media -- are interrogated here. Mass media, both visual and print, are potential instruments for generating ‘social facts’ thus falling squarely within the purview of culture studies. A historical instance would help illustrate this point -- the dispute related to the demolition of the Babari Masjid and the recent verdict on Ayodhya. The point encapsulated in the famous remark by Nietzsche that ‘there are no facts only interpretations,’ undercuts the notion of a commonsensical signification of events usually taken for granted unless self-consciously challenged by counter-narratives. The political event under the scanner here is a case in point. This makes it imperative to rethink narrative strategies and also the ways of fostering one definitive version and privileging it over the others.

From a cultural studies point of view this study zooms in on the aspect of the nation state *vis-à-vis* the rhetoric under discussion in decoding the important strategy of the nation as a unitary entity in self representation and the articulation of its nationalism. A nation emerges over time as a result of historical processes and these processes are not mere historical antecedents but shared memories that inform its existence as a nation. Every nation state has its own understanding of its distinctive past, its memories transmitted through

myths and stories whose factual accuracy is rarely contested. It is in this context that the present political issue is to be placed – it was a case where masses were exhorted to dwell upon the verity of a historical memory. The onus of molding public opinion, by default, falls on the narrative strategies of a self critical media, given the extent to which it is involved in the process of deciding the fate of political processes. Under consideration here, is the capacity of the nation state to permeate the ways in which people's identities are created and shared in cultural practice.

In the act of narrating the political process involved in this case the media challenged the most fundamental elements of the practice of rendering a text or even the reading of it. A brief recap of the origin of the problem as shown in *Ram Ke Naam*, a documentary by Anand Patwardhan, would be relevant. Patwardhan takes a look at history as far back as 1528 when the Babri Mosque was built in Ayodhya by the Mughal Emperor Babar. It was fifty years after the construction of the mosque that Tulsidas began to compose his version of the *Ramaayan*. By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century many temples had sprouted in Ayodhya -- all claiming the location to be the exact birth place of the demigod Ram. By the nineteenth century the Britishers who were ruling the subcontinent began to feel the potential threat in the hindu-muslim unity of the subcontinent. They began to lend patronage to a version of the story that the Babari Masjid had been built after destroying a temple which was at the exact birth place of Ram, thus sowing the seeds of communal violence. The issue *per se* does not, in strictly material terms, touch the lives of any class of people. The birth place of a demi-god/deity/mythical figure is not a 'thing' anthropomorphically oriented to touch the everyday lives of the people. It was, however, made so by a set of social relations and experience.

Indian national consciousness, formed in the wake of the British engagement with the subcontinent, comprehends a contradiction between national state enterprise and nation as state apparatus. The empire, an important legacy of the unitary Indian nation that emerged post British-India, has impacted Indian national consciousness in deeper and subtler ways, exceeding the scope of the institutions of the state. Thus the seeds of communal tension sown during the British India resisted every attempt to defuse it. The memory of the violence of partition remained a persistent element of the baggage of the national entities formed to set history straight. Nation in the making is the state seen as a national enterprise since this is the moment when the nation is structurally amorphous and preoccupied with addressing itself to the fluidity of its institutions, and to the flux characteristic of all its social relations. Thus the Indian subcontinent during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is a state engaged in the national enterprise of emerging a truly homogenous and progressive national culture. In spite of the rawness of the wound of communal violence it is seen to be actively engaged in catching up with the requirements of industrializing itself with a view to fit into the context of nationalism. The news purveyors as well as the emerging visual media are afire with ideas of indigenous masterminds of the stature of Tagore, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, and B.R Ambedkar. Their thoughts circulate as the life blood of the largest functional democracy which sets in motion the constitutional machinery to make room for the incommensurability of its peoples, thus the print media is rife with speeches of ministers and their attempts at reckoning with the iniquitous ways of the past. Quota system is introduced, five year plans are introduced with an eye on inclusive development thus fixing the structural aspects of the nation. The nationalistic frames are identified the national state apparatus starts spreading its ideological roots. This point which is a natural phase in the progress of a nation is also the moment of reckoning with the contradictions of the ideology of nationalism. At this point the nationalistic principle starts mutating into political messianism. There is a subtle change in the narrative strategy of the media which acts as the main harbinger of the national state apparatus. The historical blunder of vandalizing an archeological monument, the political process that worked up a rabble to that point and the ways in which the state judicial mechanism dealt with the matter will serve to highlight the change.

The narrative processes of the media did engage a conflict between the 'forces of reaction and those of progress.' (Chatterjee 23). The media here can be seen to engage in the act of evolving a new sort of language of power play where the powerful one percent speaks and the the rabble assumed as ninety-nine percent are muted and play out the event like puppets stage-managed by corporate politics. The scariest feature of this new language is the extent to which it has rendered uncritical and docile its takers. Media in general and the visual media in particular are to be consciously self-referential in their narrative strategies to mould a critically aware public consciousness. *Ram Ke Naa*, a documentary by Anand Patwardhan effectively foregrounds this issue of anti-essentialism by effectively raising the question of the exact time of Ram's birth. The visuals show how Janma bhoomi protestors who swear by the precise place of Ram's birth are evasive when asked about the exact time of Ram's birth. The extent to which meanings are actively created by the new language of power is evident by the means by which historicity is quashed in favour of the 'natural' and the 'essential'. Anand Patwardhan's documentary is the only narrative space where the confusion between notions of time have been analysed - the cyclical notion of time followed in Indological texts like the different versions of the epics, and the linear notion of time followed by the industrial west and universalized as a tool in keeping track of progress.

The following excerpt from a report in *The Asian Age* provides a glimpse of the furor the screening of this documentary created, and serves as evidence of the way in which media cultures organize along corporate interests to create substance and meaning out of thin air:

The Bharatiya Janata Party criticised the government's screening of Anand Patwardhan's documentary *Ram Ke Naam*, which it described as a 'fabrication' .... Raising the issue in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, BJP MP K.R. Malkani asked why it was screened in "such indecent haste". He also attacked the Mumbai high court order which lifted the earlier ban on the film. "Why did not the government appeal the order in a higher court?" he asked. Heated exchanges ensued as the United Front MPs defended the screening while the BJP and some others alleged that the documentary would incite communal hatred, by hurting the religious sentiments of millions of Hindus" "The Congress presented a divided front, with Mr S.S. Ahluwalia condemning the screening while Mr Sibte Razi praised it. The United Front MPs lauded the movie saying it "exposed" the real culprits who incited communal passions."The previous

government was responsible enough not to telecast it, but unfortunately the present government chose to telecast it, hurting the religious sentiments of millions in the country," Mr Malkani said."

Also to be noted is the subtle rhetoric of obviating the distinction between notions of time. The idea of nation and the main tool of modern industrial nations, linear clock time are subtly exchanged for the cyclical time space where the exceptionally sharp count of clock time is blunted in favour of eternal time or the *yugas* of the scriptures. This is also disruptive of the structure of the nation state; it challenges the *raison d'être* of the major institutions of the nation state -- the judiciary, and the government all situated within the historical time that is challenged in the process of dealing with the event. As the discourse takes off totally oblivious of the problem of historicity and the criminal indecency involved in vandalizing a solid archeological structure the historical evidence involved is totally erased from public memory. It just does not find space in the mainstream media as the report continues to discuss the different political view points. It is not even discussed in course of the judicial proceedings of the matter. The gist of findings on the Ayodhya issue cites a number of evidence of the fact that the disputed structure was constructed as a mosque; that no temple was destroyed but it was built on the ruins of a temple; that the Hindus and the Muslims alike identified the disputed premise as sacred; both parties had a working agreement on their mutual access to the area and so on. It goes on to cite many more evidences in support of its verdict and focuses on the possession of land thus while invoking historical evidence it is effectively sets aside. As Romila Thapar rightly points out "the verdict has created a precedent in the court of law that land can be claimed by declaring it to be the birthplace of a divine or semi-divine being worshipped by a group that defines itself as a community." (Thapar 11) The court of law operating within the commonsensical linear time, with the kind of time within which historians work, by reducing the concept of cyclical time, as construed in much of the Indological texts of divine beings, has set aside historical evidence thus legitimizing a criminal act. The problematic of the contesting matters of faith within the paradigm of the judiciary, a patent institution of the modern times, is never ever raised in any discourse on the event and the judiciary gets away justifying the demolition of the mosque by implication, and by choosing not to condemn a willful act of crime in full view of the nation. The verdict is also a notorious example of the new language game of pacification. They actively belie the anti-essentialism of identities. Media in general and the visual media in particular is to be consciously self-referential in its narrative strategies to mould a critically aware public consciousness. *Ram Ke Naam*, the documentary by Anand Patwardhan effectively undermines this issue of anti-essentialism by effectively raising the question of the exact time of Ram's birth. The visuals show how Janma bhoomi protestors who swear by the precise place of Ram's birth are evasive when asked about the exact time of Rams birth. The extent to which meanings are actively created by the new language of power is evident by the means by which historicity is quashed in favour of the 'natural' and the 'essential'. The discourse succeeds in reinforcing the political agenda by weaving round the issue of 'communal passion' and the 'real culprits' who incite violence. Under focus here is the issue of identity formation in modern Indian state considering the fact that the political faction who rode to prominence on the issue examined in the documentary, very carefully built their political identity round the keyword "nationalism". The advocates of the faction carefully built their political plank round a narrative that, for all practical purposes, is of dubitable genesis and from a socio-cultural point of view, immaterial. It is immaterial from the point of culture conceptualize by Raymond Williams as the practice of everyday lived character of life.

This, coupled with the power of narrative strategies to bring things into existence, project it into a mass movement and to suck people into the whole mayhem is evidenced by the devious ways of building the whole point from " "Advani said he had replied, "I am not at all apologetic. Indeed, I am proud of my association with the Ayodhya movement. But I am extremely sad that our party's credibility has been badly dented by the happenings of December 6."

He recalled that he had written in his article that organizations involved in the movement could be faulted for not being able to judge the impatience of the people participating in it." (indianexpress.com). This underscores the relevance of discussion on the politics of narration of the mass media vis-à-vis any enterprise touching the state. The centrality of the concept of power which pervades every level of social relationship is a major feature of the nation as a unitary entity. Nationalism as a cultural phenomenon becomes a forum of conflicting claims in its actual grounded terrain of practices, language and representation of social groups. This proves the fact that cultural representations and meanings have a degree of materiality. Production of consent is a major factor in this particular historical forum.

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Raising the issue in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, BJP MP K.R. Malkani asked why it was screened in "such indecent haste". He also attacked the Mumbai high court order which lifted the earlier ban on the film. "Why did not the government appeal the order in a higher court?" he asked. Heated exchanges ensued as the United Front MPs defended the screening while the BJP and some others alleged that the documentary would incite communal hatred, by hurting the religious sentiments of millions of Hindus" This excerpt from a report in The Asian Age on the furor the screening of this documentary created and also an evidence of the means wherewith media cultures organized along corporate cultures create solid material meanings out of thin air. As the discourse takes off totally oblivious of the problem of historicity and the criminal indecency involved in vandalizing a solid historical structure the historical evidence involved is totally erased from public memory. It just does not find space in the mainstream media as the report continues to discuss the different political view points; "The Congress presented a divided front, with Mr S.S. Ahluwalia condemning the screening while Mr Sibte Razi praised it. The United Front MPs lauded the movie saying it "exposed" the real culprits who incited communal passions."The previous government was responsible enough not to telecast it, but unfortunately the present government chose to telecast it, hurting the religious sentiments of millions in the country," Mr Malkani said." The discourse succeeds in reinforcing the political agenda by weaving round the issue of 'communal passion' and the 'real culprits' who incite violence. Under focus here is the

issue of identity formation in modern Indian state considering the fact that the political faction who rode to prominence on the issue examined in the documentary, very carefully built their political identity round the keyword “nationalism”. The advocates of the faction carefully built their political plank round a narrative that, for all practical purposes, is of dubitable genesis and from a socio-cultural point of view, immaterial. It is immaterial from the point of culture conceptualize by Raymond Williams as the practice of everyday lived character of life. Indian culture in that sense should be more concerned with discussing the political aspects of the “affidavit that the Planning Commission recently submitted to the Supreme Court stating that a person is to be considered poor only if his or her monthly spending is below Rs.781 (Rs.26 a day) in the rural areas and Rs.965 (Rs. 32 a day) in the urban area” (Patnaik 10). This is a farcical estimation of poverty which never gets discussed in a nation which has one out of every four people of the world populace starving. In a decade from 1999 to 2001 a mindboggling seven million people whose main livelihood was agriculture quit farming.

This, coupled with the power of narrative strategies to bring things into existence, project it into a mass movement and to suck people into the whole mayhem is evidenced by the devious ways of concentrating a whole cultural point round *Rath Yatras* taken out in air-conditioned vehicles by messiahs of our culture while silencing into oblivion a *padayatra* of a head of a Dalit matha in protest against the practice of untouchability as also taking for granted the obnoxious practice of manual scavenging as the preserve of one community. The latter mentioned events are material from the point of culture conceptualize by Raymond Williams as the practice of everyday lived character of life thus would warrant more than a cursory attention given to them within the narrative strategy of the state. The visual and the print media the chief narrative arms of the state would do well to start zooming in on them.

Another very sensitive issue of the state, justice is under discussion here, in this present study planned as a sequel to the earlier one on narrative strategies of the nation state. The present paper focuses on a major story of intra-state belligerence- naxalism and the means adopted by the independent Indian state to come to terms with this problem. The treatment of the larger social context which is indispensable to the idea Justice is perhaps the cardinal stake here and the state management of the larger paradigm is one which it is interesting to examine. This problem may be effectively highlighted with an important anecdote from Amartya Sen of three children- Anne, Bob and Carla- who are quarreling over a flute. Anne claims the flute on the ground that she is the only one of the three who can actually play it... In an alternative scenario, Bob who speaks up, defends his case for having the flute by pointing out that he is the only one among the three who is so poor that he has no toy of his own. The flute would give him something to play with (the other two concede that they are richer and well supplied with engaging amenities). Alternatively Carla who speaks up and points out that she has been working diligently for many months to make the flute with her own labor which the others confirm. This anecdote is a good enough metaphor of the complexity of the cumbersome machinery of the Indian democracy.

To the extent that the state is concerned the impossibility of remaining silent on the larger context is also the reason that makes it difficult to speak on it squarely. The state, very effectively, presses the propaganda machinery in service of the ideological state apparatus, thus effectively keeping down certain perspectives. A great bulge of the ‘peace loving’ Indian middle-class basking in the grandeur of mall-culture, the legislators, administrators, and policy makers live in the willful stupor of the denial of the Maoist phenomenon. No sort of discussion what so ever, on a balanced understanding of the human story behind the politics of conflict is to be had from anywhere in the mainstream media. The propaganda factor begins right from the naming of the events: e.g. an armed offensive of the state to safeguard the ‘civil society’ against the menace of naxal violence is called *Operation Green Hunt*\*. The ‘democratic’ Indian state decided to launch a massive armed offensive against a section of its own people in November 2009 with an eye on resolving the problem of Maoist violence once and for all. What was of greatest significance in the mobilizing of such a massive armed offensive was the fact that it happened in complete silence and with absolutely no debate in any political forum. The movement Operation Green Hunt sounds far less abstract than it actually is and it is far more deliberately innocuous sounding; in fact named to sound more ‘environment’ friendly than the brutal fact of an armed operation of a state against its own people may seem. Add to this the news papers’ blathers voicing the concerns of the heads of states – Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh and Home Minister P. Chidambaram have variously called “Maoists –the gravest threat to India’s internal security”; we have a profound statement of the undeniable might of the Indian state apparatus and its policy of dealing with aberrant forces and perspectives threatening its hegemony.

On September 22, 2009 the media reported the capture of a top Naxal ideologue, 58 year-old Kobad Ghandy. While the Home Minister P. Chidambaram called this the most important victory of the state over Naxal violence the visual media aired prime-time debates and talk shows on Kobad Ghandy — a South Bombay Parsi who had grown up in the lap of luxury and had access to the best education possible, he had gone to Doon School and had his CA form the London School of Economics and had returned to work with the destitute of Indian citizens in Maharashtra. The news papers and talk shows were rife with comparisons between two alumni of the Doon School and the London School of Economics, Home Minister, P. Chidambaram and the Naxal ideologue, Kobad Ghandy. The media was prolific on the 6000 or more numbers of people who had fallen prey to Naxal violence. Very often it came up with lurid details of how a 12 year old girl in Jharkhand had been slain by Naxals, mass murder of 15 CPM cadres in Bengal. The media, careful enough to dwell at length on the dramatic details of those victimized by Naxal violence, homes rendered destitute and children orphaned and also the high drama of an affluent Bombay Parsi turned militant with recourse to infrastructural facilities on par with the high officials of the country and the parallels that can be drawn between the Home Minister and a Naxal ideologue, deliberately silences the larger political context and the more complex arguments behind Naxal violence. The public discourse marked by reductive official propaganda matched the infantile ignorance and simple-mindedness of the ‘great Indian middle-class’ for whom the lives of tribals featuring in this struggle have no meaning, no human flesh and face. Thus the media largely addresses the middle-class who are more than eager to consume the drama, a situation laboriously created by the state apparatus, reluctant to unseat its

comfortable status quo. The powerful few who are privileged by the parliamentary democracy are not to be shaken of their urban perch by an analysis of why large sections of people have lost faith in parliamentary democracy and have taken up arms against the state. While crying hoarse on the heinous acts of violence perpetrated by the Maoists the state propaganda machinery is silent on the deeper structural violence at the heart of the parliamentary democracy that the state refuses to address. A rational analysis of the belligerent statement the likes of Kobad Ghandy are trying to make would put in the dock the representative politics supposed to be the hallmark of Indian Nation.

To see a nation through its narrative address is to also take into account its various formative factors. The Indian nation state evolving through times of resistance and with its national memory strongly rooted in peoples movements and a state territorially merged out of the cultural spaces of peoples had the idea of justice to all as its cornerstone. Even at the inception the state and its policy makers were aware of the fact that it encompassed within it large groups of people, many of whom had to be, overtime, and with diligent and inclusive policy brought to achieve statehood. That accounted for the affirmative policy of the quota system of including into the mainstream groups of people left behind by history.

Nation state as against a tribe or even an ethnic group is supposed to be more progressive as a cultural unit in that the nation, in theory, evolves in deference to individuals or groups. The space for dissent is an indispensable feature of the Nation state in this strict sense of the term. It is also to be taken into account that through the development of the written law of the land, Indian state was at a point of 'national longing for form' (Brennan). This feature is evident in the fact that the written law codes of the Indian state, envisaged as the national law of the land has accounted for intra- territorial inconsistencies, thus historical absurdities are a patent feature of the national space called India. Coming back to the idea of justice and the metaphor (of the three children and the flute), the state of India during the nationalistic phase i.e. when it was ideologically, a national state enterprise its narrative space thrived on landmarks like the Article 44 of India's 1950 constitution, which mandated that "The state shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India." Thus, there would be no more separate marriage, inheritance, and other personal laws dividing India's Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. This is a vibrant illustration of dissident voices finding a narrative space within the Indian nation state; so, does this take us to the metaphor of the three children and a flute where the paradigm of plural nationalism begs politics of a relatively lesser unjust decision.

Travelling down the annals of history, just a bit, as far back as 1937 the British (read brutish) ruled over an increasingly restive India in a divide and rule mode. Thus "Shariath law" was enacted providing that the Muslims in India would be governed by Islamic religious laws in matters concerning family and marriage and that Hindus would be ruled by Hindu laws. This calculated move to set neighbors against one another was an important point of contention during the partition phase of the national ensemble. However the Indian state that emerged post 1947 was serious in negotiating the space of the state for the legal-social inclusion of the sub-proletariat of its territory- those who had not achieved statehood, thus the Article 44 of the Indian constitution just one among plenty such provisions made in deference to those whose cognitive mechanisms had been so badly impaired by historical absurdities. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of modern India wanted to carry out such rational policies in favor of building modern and balanced society; however he was overruled by modern day God men who resented government intrusion on their turf. This law ending polygamy ended up a Hindu only reform. The lunacy of allowing religious considerations to influence government policy and also the slow and subtle working of the ideological national state apparatus is to be seen in the curious case of Shah Bano.

Shah Bano, a middle-class Muslim woman married Mohammad Ahmed Khan who, at the end of 43 year and seven children enlists the Sharia law to divorce his wife. The destitute woman rendered homeless seeks legal redress and the matter mutates into a legal battle of contesting statutes--Article 125 of the Indian Code of Criminal Procedure, requiring a husband to provide 500 rupees a month maintenance to an indigent wife – including a divorced wife who has not remarried as against the Sharia law which allows a husband perfect legal grounds to summarily kick his wife out by just telling her "I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you", so which law controls – Sharia, or the criminal code? After fretting over the matter for a long the legal fraternity decided that Shah Bano was entitled to the maintenance and allowances provided by Article 125. However as time advanced and India was rearing to enter the ranks of one of the most advanced nation the Muslim Women Act was slapped in the most constitutional of ways thus reversing the Shah Bano verdict. The labyrinthine ways of the ideological state apparatus which enlists the support of its narrative mechanism the media in mouthing the platitudes of the people oriented "Ganga Action Plan", how Maruti Udyog limited became a success story on Indian roads, the drama offered by the Bofors scam and so on while confining to a footnote such acts annulling the basic entitlements and rights of its destitute groups is the deliberate strategy of a media culture organized along corporate lines.

This case of a 62 year old Muslim woman from Indore, Madhya Pradesh, one of the most significant lawsuit in the history of Indian Judiciary, pioneered the case of justice for Muslim women. The point of interest here is that in the Indian context Shah Bano was given space in the national narrative over ethnic/tribe/religious group interest. Inclusivity of this kind involving groups more than individuals is the *raison de etre* of a national institution. Coming back to the problem of nationalism which let down groups of people, it is evident that the menace of Naxalism that became active as a peoples' movement since the 1960has increased exponentially overtime into a problem, as identified by the Home Minister, "more dangerous than the problem of terrorism." Spread across the heartland of India it has only increased its spread and intensity. What sort of visibility is given to the people who decide to take up arms against the state and resort to desperate means to defend their modest positions and aspirations? To what extent is their rationale given room in the paradigm of the national consciousness? Is the nation state ever allowed to think that they operate in the vacuum created by inadequacy of administrative and political institutions?

The mighty Indian state polices over all its disruptive forces, catching up with the frail individuals who are audacious enough to stand up for the cause of subject groups. The cases of Arun Ferreira and the likes of Soni Sori appear in the inner pages of national news

papers when they are taken into custody are subsequently consigned to history, locked up to rot in captivity. Their crime — in the words of Arun Ferreira—is that along with their faith in the constitution they also believe in the rights of the oppressed people to protest, if necessary with arms. Ferrari who is languishing in the jail for the past four years on multiple charges framed against him became the target of the police for working with the Mumbai’s slum dwellers and with youth groups in Mumbai and Nagpur as part of an organization called Vidyarthi Pragati Sangatha. He committed the grave mistake of organizing protest against atrocities like the massacre of a Dalit family in Khairlanji in 2006. The case of Soni Sori and her cousin Linga Kodopi is another story of systematic silencing of the first generation educated tribals for their outspokenness and their courage to stand up for their cause. Soni Sori, her cousin Linga Kodopi, the radicals like Binayak Sen are framed by the police and arrested and sent behind bars and left their for some years to keep them insulated from political activism if not to be tortured to death. This is the chilling story of the free Indian state which boasts of a free press—a free press that gives little room for such state atrocities and deliberately silences such pages of belligerent nationalism. Ferreira writes on how a pattern of arrest and re-arrests are illegal, writings which will never make it to the mainstream media and thus will always remain insular from influencing the Urban, progressive India. The progressive Indian state is to progress ‘peacefully into the future’ and while the repressive state apparatus strives to keep the state free of hindering violence the ideological system operates via its narratives of highlighting the most ‘important’ and silencing the disruptive radical elements. The important point is this is Ferreira and the radicals like Binayak Sen to be punished for their ideas alone? What is the danger quotient in protesting state violence? Isn’t the great, supposedly progressive Indian state turning into a Thought Police with dangerously fascistic overtones?

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