

## TRIBAL WOMEN IN LEFT WING EXTREMISM: PROBLEMS, PERSPECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

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In recent years the relation between economic performance and civil conflicts has generated a considerable amount of interest among economists. Not surprisingly within the span of a few years a lot has been written on the subject (Blattman, 2010). The topic of tribal women in left wing extremism has emerged as a major issue of serious concern in tribal communities in Chhattisgarh. Available empirical evidence indicates that tribal women in left wing extremism exist in almost every State in the country, mostly in tribal dominated areas, but increasingly also in other areas. The Left Wing Extremist groups (Maoist/Naxalite), forcibly recruit female cadres, including minors girls, from the tribal belts of naxal affected areas in various parts of the country. At present in some of the areas like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha women are playing vital role in left wing extremism. However, there is no authentic data on the exact number of female cadres who are working for the extremism is available. However, in recent incidents of naxal attacks, participation of a substantial number of female cadres has been observed.

The presence of Left wing extremists in a majority of the mineral-rich pockets of Chhattisgarh like Dantewada, Kanker, Bastar, Kawardha, Balrampur, Sarguja and other districts is not only affecting economic activities in the state but also forcing it to adopt an imbalanced model of growth. It is also a thesis that has found support in some recent scholarly studies that have found that mining areas are more prone to Maoist insurgent activity than non-mining areas (Miklian and Carney 2010; Miklian, Hoelscher and Vadlamannati

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2011). It has not only hampered the pace of the development but has also cast its shadow on the livelihood opportunities in the region. Left-wing extremists share a narrative that the manipulations of the policy makers and implementers manipulate the general public through the media and use the police to suppress the atrocities on the voiceless. Inequality, “multi-national companies’ greed for profit” and other social problems are described as the results of Left Wing Extremism in tribal areas. Militant left-wing extremism offers the women a strong sense of community responsibility and the possibility of confronting traditional and systematic norms. It often attracts socio-economically disadvantaged women from mal-functioning homes, who feel in opposition to their families’ norms. Through meetings and canvassing on the streets, LW extremists try to recruit new followers by appealing to a widespread feeling of discrimination and injustice. They also try to attract new members through personal networks, where existing members are encouraged to invite friends along to events. The environments offer a strong sense of group identity that revolves around social justice, equity and human rights. Most of the women who are in disadvantaged are participating in the LWE.

The adivasis life is intertwined with Jungle, Jal and Jamin, some typical conditions and stupid reasons forced them to displace. Lack of access to resources, or assetlessness, is a unifying characteristic of poverty in all its manifestations. The poor lack ownership of or access to assets such as land, water, forest, a dwelling unit, credit, literacy, longevity, voice and capital both physical and social (Mehta and Shah, 2001). Differences in income, status, facilities and opportunities have been minimised neither among individuals nor among different spatial and occupational groups like Dalits and Adivasis. The challenge of chronic poverty emanates from the mainstream of the society, this determinant is impacting the tribal women and some motivated ideology is forcing them to adopt the LWE without hesitation.

The adivasis were organised, mobilised and indoctrinated by the communists for several years channelizing them into movements with equality

doctrines and directions. The disadvantages, suppression and marginalisation of many tribal women made them to adopt communist ideology. They expelled the landlords, redistributed the land, abolished the bonded labour, introduced minimum wages and build up a militia. In terms of making the ordinary people a fighting group, this marked the first time that the lessons from Mao Zedong and China's violent struggle were adapted to India (Kujur 2008, 2).

### **Reasons for Tribal Women in Left Wing Extremism**

There are several typical scenarios for how women join violent left-wing extremism:

- High poverty incidence
- Concentration of vulnerable and marginalized communities (Tribes)
- Deprivation of natural resources
- They have often experienced humiliations
- Forcibly recruited by the LWE groups
- They often lack a sense of belonging and do not feel they are an equal part of society
- They tend to have an interest in violence.
- It is a momentary issue, where the women are driven by indignation over a current issue, and acts out of loyalty to their peer group who share this indignation.

### **Methodology**

The purpose of the study is to know that causes, consequences, challenges and chances involved in Left Wing Extremism. Most of the women who are involved in LWE are from tribal communities. To find out the driving forces the study was conducted in Bastar region.

### Study Setting

For the purpose of study Bastar Region was purposefully selected where LWE is predominated. In the Bastar Region 7 districts (Bastar, Dantewada, Narayanpur, Bijapur, Kanker, Kondagaon and Sukma) were existed and predominated by the tribal people. Their main occupation is agriculture and forest based livelihoods. For the purpose of study respondents should be stipulated following conditions.

1. Respondent should be from Tribal Community
2. Respondent should belong to Bastar Region not from the outside of Bastar.
3. The respondent should have knowledge about the LWE
4. Respondents should be age group of 18-45 of any gender.

### Sampling Frame

In the part of study 2 villages were selected from one block in each district. Each village 10 sample were selected, a quota sampling method was followed. As such from each village 10 respondents were selected and thus the total 140 respondents were identified from the 14 villages from 7 blocks in 7 districts.

**Table – 1**  
**Sampling Frame**

S.#	Name of the District	Block	Village	Sample Size
1	Bastar	Bastar	1. Harra 2. Kodher	20
2	Dantewada	Kunwakonda	1. Aranpur 2. Mukpal	20
3	Narayanpur	Narayanpur	1. Bennur 2. Bakulbahi	20
4	Bijapur	Bhairamgarh	1. Mirtur 2. Pinkonda	20
5	Kanker	Antagarh	1. Toropi	20

			2. Bhanbheda	
6	Kondagaon	Parasgoan	1. Kongud 2. Alore	20
7	Sukma	Konta	1. Errabore 2. Sandigura	20
<b>Total Sample Size</b>				<b>140</b>

The villages were selected on the intensity of the LWE. These villages were badly affected by the LWE and experienced the LWE activities.

**Table – 2**  
**Total Population in Seven Districts**

District	Population		Total
	Male	Female	
Kanker	324636	326298	748941
Bastar	408833	425522	834355
Dantewada	264142	269496	533638
Narayanpur	70104	69716	139820
Sukma	122447	127393	249243
Kondagaon	284781	294043	578824
Bijapur	128761	126419	255180
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1603704</b>	<b>1638887</b>	<b>3242591</b>

Source: Census 2011.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Social Characteristics

**Table – 3**

**Social Characteristics**

Variable	Percentage (n=140)
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	29.29
Female	70.71
<b>Educational Qualifications</b>	
Primary	15.2
Secondary	27.75
High School	41.43
> +1	15.62

The above table reveals that a majority of the respondents were female and rest of the respondents was male. As regards the education more than two fifths (41.43%) of the respondents were in High schools and 27.75 per cent of the respondents were in secondary schools. The study revealed overwhelming facts that none of the respondents were interested in higher education and women are not at all interested in High school education. The apathy of the family and the student are not motivating to complete the higher education.

**Table - 4**  
**Occupation**

Variable	Percentage (n=140)
<b>Occupation</b>	
Agriculture	28.6
Forest Based Activities	30.0
Daily Labour	41.4
<b>Income (Per Month in Rupees)</b>	
1000-2000	56.19
2001-3000	22.11
3001-4000	15.2
> 4000	6.5



It can be seen from above table that 41.4 per cent of the respondents were engaged in daily labour and a significant number of respondents (30.0%) were engaged in forest based activities like collection of fire wood, hunting, Non-timber forest products and plantation and rest of the respondents were engaged in agriculture. As regards the income more than fifty per cent of the respondents (56.19%) were earned between 1000-2000 rupees per month and two fifths of the respondents (22.11%) were earned between 2001-3000 rupees per month.

**Table - 5**  
**Opinions on LWE**

Statement	Percentage (n=140)		
	Agree	Disagree	No Idea
LWE is Helping People	57.75	17.51	24.74
LWE is a Parallel Government	35.00	63.82	1.18
LWE is anti social element	41.90	52.10	6.00
LWE is a development blocker	63.69	33.19	3.12
LWE is fighting for the suppressed	67.28	31.12	2.59

The study revealed many overwhelming facts and divergent opinions. Most of respondents believe that the Left Wing Extremism is helping people to manage their life without any haggle. A significant respondents disagreed that LWE is a parallel to government, this statement really indicates their awareness towards the State of Law. Moreover, more than fifty per cent of the respondents disagreed that LWE is a social element. They agreed that LWE is answer for the social ailments. This kind of statements can be perceived that they are in dilemma whether they support LWE or State and it can be noticed that they have sympathy towards LWE due to various reasons. Another side, most of the respondents believed that they the LWE is a development blocker and they stated that they are unable to taste the development fruits due this issue. This kind of conviction can change the present scenario. On the other hand a

majority of the respondents accentuated that LWE is fighting for the suppressed.

**Table – 6**  
**Satisfaction levels**

Statement	Percentage (n=140)
Satisfied	53.45
Dissatisfied	41.65
No Idea	4.90

The data accentuated that more than fifty per cent of the respondents were satisfied with the left wing extremism and two fifths of the respondents were dissatisfied.

**Table – 7**  
**Reasons for Tribal Women in LWE**

Statement	Percentage (n=140)
Illiteracy	20.14
Women are cheated by upper caste men & Police	21.25
Due to Suppression joined in LWE	26.32
Taken away by LW Extremists	12.38
Poverty forced to support LWE	9.27
Single Women	2.93
For Ideology	7.71

The data revealed a majority of the respondents (26.32%) expressed that due to suppression the women joined in left wing extremism and 20.14 per cent of the respondents stated that illiteracy. Two fifths of the respondents (21.25%) stated that women are cheated by upper caste men and police extortion. The



respondents stated that taken away by LW extremists (12.38%), Poverty forced them to support LWE (9.27%), for LWE ideology (7.71%) and single women (2.93%) in that order.

### Discussion

The data revealed the rural and tribal characteristics and the income levels are very scanty. The education levels and occupations are poor most of the respondents were engaged in agriculture and its allied activities. The respondents stated divergent opinions on the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) some of the respondents directly supported the LWE due to some systems and structural problems. Due to Suppression and oppression of women they joined in LWE, and their life style is very pathetic in LWE. The respondents stated that those who (women) involved in LWE they are not happily joining and they have to face numerous problems. The illiteracy and ignorance playing very dreadful role in the choice of the opportunities, the government programs are not reaching to the unreached. Most of the women in LWE are forced by some bad reasons due to social malfunctioning. The social malfunctioning is existed in tribal communities due to globalization and other capitalist activities. Land grabbing, violation of rights, poor opportunities and other systemic problems are the driving forces to choose the LWE. Moreover, there is evidence on how class antagonism driven by land institutions that have lingered for centuries also has a significant impact on the LWE conflict. Elimination and amelioration is not the solution for the LWE, but prevention is the answer for ills and odds in the society. Most of the women in tribal culture are idle and have no work these people are motivated by the LW Extremists to opt the LW. The conflict indeed is mostly located in the more impoverished tribal regions; the existence of such a conflict would give a further adverse shock to the economy of tribal women.

### Recommendations

- The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme guaranteed 150 days of work a year to any rural / tribal household that needed it and daily wage need to be increased.
- Strengthening of Civil Societies is very important than construction of buildings.
- The Government should restrict the violence against women.
- The Armed forces need to stop the custodial violence, illegal detention and torture.
- Food Security of the tribal women needs to ensure at all levels.
- Preventive action dealing with the enabling factors for growth of Maoist violence.
- The Central and the State governments have to device meaningful efforts for the development as well as security, to curtail the Maoist menace.
- People participation in development programs must be initiated at the grass root level.
- Large promotion of Self Help Groups can yield good results to engage the women.

### Conclusion

Poverty is the largest and most serious development challenge facing tribal communities. The mining and other odds of globalization is affecting their culture. However, the reduction in the rate of incidence of poverty has been extremely slow among tribal communities. Improvements in literacy and a rise in the awareness of the poor by means of the mass media have also plays a significant role in reduction of LWE. Furthermore, the increasing involvement of NGOs in empowering the poor and the sustained functioning of democratic institutions can contribute a great deal to the protection of human rights and to building up the potential for social action.

## References

Blattman and Miguel (2010) for a recent survey of the existing literature.

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