

CHAPTER V

CHAPTER V

A REVIEW OF MAOIST INSURRECTION

Since her very independence India has been plagued with so many internal problems. However, among them the Maoist problem seems to be the most critical of all because this persistently nagging problem has taken a heavy toll not only on the lives of a substantial number of poor people – the dalits and Adivasis but also posed the biggest internal security menacing India has ever faced. The situation became so grave that in October 2009 the then Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh initiated Operation Green Hunt¹ against the Maoist guerrillas camouflaging in the forested areas of central India. This decision has been hotly debated and discussed because on either side the victims were Indians. Moreover, many viewed the war a ploy of the state to wipe out the Adivasis and tribal people from their homeland so as to get hold of the lucrative mineral resources. As a concerned writer, Roy also grew vocal and her *Broken Republic*, a collection of three outstanding essays, is a scathing attack on the atrocities of the state that not only allows a widespread corporate acquisition of its people's land and resources but also tries to alienate them from the mainstream by demonizing their insurrection through the means of manufacturing consent as simply Naxalite-Maoist uprising. Roy's essays outline the context and through them she tries to find out the root causes behind their insurrection – the condition, the situation, the people, and the policy which led them to rise against their own motherland. In the process of fact-finding she also provides us with corrective to the prevalent notion of the government or the elites regarding these so-called Maoists.

The opening essay, “Mr. Chidambaram’s War” gives a riveting account of the lives of the Dongria Kondh people living in the southern portion of Orissa and in doing so it becomes a microcosmic representation of the macrocosm. The ruthless exploitation of the Kondh people in the name of progress and prosperity shows the appalling magnitude of socio-economic deprivation in the country. It clearly shows that the fundamental problem lies in the dearth of attention paid to the obligatory and pressing needs of the laymen, especially of the destitute Adivasis and tribals - those so-called marginalized people.

For a holistic understanding we need to travel back to the days of early independence. During the enactment, the Constitution of India guaranteed her citizens - socio-political and economic justice; equality of status; liberty of thought and expression. At the same time the progenitors of the Constitution made their honest efforts to make the marginalized communities – the tribal people, Adivasis and other minorities – stakeholders in shaping the national discourse of future development. Even Constitutional provisions were made to bestow immunity to these oppressed and backward people. But unfortunately, in many ways, in independent India, the tribal people have been shabbily treated and neglected by the mainstream. Indeed, as Ramachandra Guha has argued, the tribal people of the mainstream India have remained so far the ‘unacknowledged victims of seven decades of democratic development’ (Guha 105). They have continuously been exploited and dispossessed to give room for the mega projects. It is to be noted that the majority of the tribal people have their habitat in the forested areas of the Indian peninsula. The abundance of natural resources – the rivers, the fountains and the bountiful forests provided these people of the earth the means of livelihood and they thrived well. But in the course of time when the policy makers emphasized on

economic and industrial development the tribals were displaced and stripped of from their livelihood for the sake of commercial forestry, dams and mines. Sociologist Walter Fernandes has estimated that :

...about 40 per cent of all those displaced by government projects are of tribal origin. Since Adivasis constitute roughly 8 per cent of India's population, this means that a tribal is five times as likely as a non-tribal to be forced to sacrifice his or her home and hearth by the claims and demands of development and/or conservation. (Guha 108-09)

This pathetic picture of tribal displacement as a consequence of deliberate state policy gets authenticated when one surveys the official reports down the decades.

*A Report of the Committee on Special Multipurpose Tribal Block*² clearly pointed out that - of all the glaring issues, plaguing these people of the earth, the worst is, undoubtedly, sheer poverty. Much of the plight they witnessed, said the panel members, was :

...the fault of us, the 'civilized' people. We have driven [the tribals] into the hills because we wanted their land and now we blame them for cultivating it in the only way we left to them. We have robbed them of their arts by sending them the cheap and tawdry products of a commercial economy. We have even taken away their food by stopping their hunting or by introducing new taboos which deprive them of the valuable protein elements in meat and fish. We sell them spirits which are far more injurious than the home-made beers and wines which are nourishing and familiar to them, and use the

proceeds to uplift them with ideals. We look down on them and rob them of their self-confidence, and take away their freedom by laws which they do not understand. (Guha 110)

A few years later another high-powered committee, chaired by the former Congress President U.N. Dhebar, also highlighted the sheer poverty, land estrangement, the repudiation of forest rights and the subsequent systematic annihilation of the tribal people by the state machinery in the name of progress and prosperity of the nation. The committee also pointed out that the tribal people were not only displaced from their land to give way for mega projects like dam, steel plant, power plant, mining but also how the mainstream propaganda has presented them as stumbling blocks lying athwart in the path of progress and development. The report³ stated that :

There is constant propaganda that the tribal people are destroying the forest. We put this complaint to some unsophisticated tribals. They countered the complaint by asking how they could destroy the forest. They owned no trucks; they hardly had even a bullock-cart. The utmost that they could carry away was some wood to keep them warm in the winter months, to reconstruct or repair their huts and carry on their little cottage industries. Their fuel-needs for cooking, they said, were not much, because they had not much to cook. Having explained their own position they invariably turned to the amount of destruction that was taking place all around them. They reiterated how the ex-zamindars, in violation of their agreements, and the forest rules and laws, devastated vast areas of forest land right in

front of officials. They also related how the contractors stay outside the contracted coupes, carry loads in excess of their authorized capacity and otherwise exploit both the forests and the tribals.

There is a feeling amongst the tribals that all the arguments in favour of preservation and development of forests are intended to refuse them their demands. They argue that when it is a question of industry, township, development work or projects of rehabilitation, all these plausible arguments are forgotten and vast tracts are placed at the disposal of outsiders who mercilessly destroy the forest wealth with or without necessity. (Guha 111-12)

The reports amply testified the absolute dereliction of the so-called welfare democratic government in creating a congenial atmosphere where these tribal people could live with dignity and respect. They, therefore, urged for an immediate reconstruction of the policy framework so as to ensure that 'new' India's commercial, industrial, manufacturing, mining and economic growth should not be done at the expense of its marginalized communities. But sadly enough there was no such honest effort to heal the grievous injury of the tribals as the 'government policies remained entirely unchanged' (Guha 112).

However, the tragedy of the tribal people worsened to an abysmal extent during the 1990s when India opened up her market under the auspices of liberalization and globalization by signing in GAT, GATT and other trade related treaties on the pretext that these would bring peace, prosperity and equality. At that time it was stated that globalization would bring in a world of obvious benefits for everybody i.e. a more prosperous, stable and a pleasant world. But after two

decades of corporate globalization the consequences were simply disastrous. The diabolical face of corporate globalization has succinctly been exposed by Vandana Shiva. She states that :

Every vital, living resource of the planet that maintains the fragile web of life is in the process of being privatized, commodified, and appropriated by corporations. Every inch of land that supports the life and livelihoods of tribal and peasant communities is being grabbed, leading to land wars. Every drop of water that flows in our rivers is being appropriated, leading to water wars. Biodiversity is being reduced to “green oil” to extend the fossil fuel age, ignoring the intrinsic worth of life on earth, and ignoring also the rights the poor have to biodiversity to meet their daily needs. Forests were already commoditised by commercial forestry; now their ecological services are being commoditised for a so-called “green economy”. Green is supposed to be the colour of life and the biosphere but, increasingly, green symbolizes the market and money, and a green economy could well entail the ultimate commodification of the planet. Green is also becoming the colour of the militarization of the resource-grab taking place in order to fuel limitless growth. Militarization is the shield for corporate globalization, both nationally and globally. At the national level, militarization is becoming the dominant mode of governance, whether through laws regarding Homeland Security in the US or Operation Green Hunt in India. Economic growth is literally flowing through the barrel of a gun. As people resist ecological destruction and appropriation of their resources, the war against the planet also

becomes a war against local communities and people struggling for justice and peace. (Shiva, *Making Peace* 4-5)

And now coming back to the specific context it is to be noted that the Dongria Kondhs are one of the oldest tribals of India. They live on the low, flat-topped hills of South Orissa for generations, ungrudgingly. They have a beautiful healthy reciprocal relationship with the hills. Like other tribal people of India they also worship the hills as living deity and their live giver. However, the problem arises when the government of India hands over the hills to Vedanta, one of the gigantic mining conglomerates of the present time. The other multinational mining companies trying to acquire the Adivasi homelands are - Mittal, Jindal, Tata, Essar, Posco etc. And now why does Vedanta want this land – this forest – these hills? The question is neither difficult nor complex to answer. They want to extract the minerals, the resources – to be precise the bauxite to prepare aluminum from them. In other words, the hills are the store house of natural resources like coal, copper, limestone, iron, dolomite, phosphorus, mica, manganese, diamond, gold, etc. and in this age of neo-globalization everything is on and for sale – even God can be sold. The scathing remark of Vandana Shiva is worth quoting here –

....a handful of corporations and a handful of powerful countries seek to control the earth's resources and to transform the planet into a supermarket in which everything is for sale. They want to sell our water, our genes, our cells, our organs, our knowledge, our cultures, and our future. (Shiva, *India Divided* 12)

The question, however, doesn't stop there because to extract bauxite one needs to destroy the flat-topped hills first. And quite naturally with this destruction

the greenery, the rivers, the streams that spring out of them and turn the barren land fertile, by watering the plains below, will automatically be destroyed. So the existence, the survival of the Dongria Kondh people is under threat. The land which they have been inhabiting since long past – probably before the creation of ‘India’ – in a single MoU signed by the government of India, who has given them virtually nothing, is now taking away everything from them in the name of growth, progress and prosperity.

At this critical juncture when the poor Kondh people are being united to fight against the atrocities of the state they are being labelled as Maoists – the single biggest threat to the internal security of India. There is no denying the fact that there is Maoist uprising in several parts of the country and there is also the presence of Maoists in the volatile area of our discussion. But it would be a misnomer or simply an over simplification if we, without contextualizing the Kondh problem, summarily dismiss it as a Maoist uprising. Roy also states the same thing :

Of course, the Maoists are by no means the only ones rebelling. People are engaged in a whole spectrum of struggles all over the country – the landless, the homeless, Dalits, workers, peasants, weavers. They’re pitted against a juggernaut of injustices, including policies that allow a wholesale corporate takeover of people’s land and resources. However, it is the Maoists the government has singled out as being the biggest threat. (Roy, *Broken Republic* 4)

It is noteworthy at this point that the honourable Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh has revealed his anxiety in the Legislative Assembly by stating that:

...if Left Wing extremism continues to flourish in important parts of our country which have tremendous natural resources of minerals and other precious things, that will certainly affect the climate for investment. (Roy, *Broken Republic* 4)

With this statement what comes to our mind, first, is – who are the Maoists?

Roy herself answers that :

They are members of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) – CPI (Maoist) – one of the several descendants of the Communist Party of India (Marxist – Leninist), which led the 1969 Naxalite uprising in West Bengal. (Roy, *Broken Republic* 5)

Manoranjan Mohanty⁴ in his book *Red and Green : Five decades of the Indian Maoist Movement* also discusses at length the socio-economical and socio-political context of the Maoist uprising. He also shares the same view of Roy. Now the revolutionary violence that has been going on for five decades – one simply cannot summarily reject it as Left extremism. According to a government report at present the Maoists have a strong presence in 180 districts in ten States⁵ and very interestingly, the map of red corridor coincides with the mineral rich areas of Indian peninsula. The Maoists have also a mass base in other parts of the country too.

And now why are the Maoists fighting or better say why is there revolutionary violence? The problem seems to be deep rooted and that is why we should be careful and judicious in our treatment. It is easy to fight with the external forces but when the problem is internal then one cannot dismiss it summarily because they are our own people – they do belong to us as we do. When we are fighting with the external forces there is a sense of justification. The whole nation

backs the decision. But in this case India is a divided India. A large number of people are raising their voices, taking arms and fighting against the atrocities of the state – as this is their last resort. The minerals and the raw materials are national property and they should be owned collectively by the denizens of India but sadly enough through the means of private ownership they have been kept confined or being handed over to the control of a few mining conglomerates. Therefore, numerous people are also showing sympathy towards these hapless people as they feel that there is a sense of justification in their fighting.

It is interesting to note at this point that in 2008, one professional body, designated by the Planning Commission of India, prepared a study-report entitled *Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas*⁶. The report states that :

The Naxalite (Maoist) movement has to be recognized as a political movement with a strong base among the landless and poor peasantry and Adivasis. Its emergence and growth need to be contextualised in the social conditions and experience of people who form a part of it. The huge gap between state policy and performance is a feature of these conditions. Though its professed long-term ideology is capturing state power by force, in its day-to-day manifestation, it is to be looked upon as basically a fight for social justice, equality, protection, security and local development. (Roy, *Broken Republic* 7-8)

The view of Planning Commission is not only sidelined but also the safeguard of the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution that bestows immunity to Adivasi people and prohibits the estrangement of their land – has been overlooked.

Instead, to allow the wholesale corporate takeover Special Police Forces like - Greyhounds, Cobras etc. have been formed and deployed. Unlawful Activities Prevention Act has been enacted. The heavily armed paramilitary forces have been given the license to kill. The irony lies in the fact that the poor people are denied the right of self-defense. Even the notorious Salwa Judum⁷ has been raised to unleash terror and violence to suppress the mass uprising or the so-called Maoist uprising.

However, what people like Roy, Mohanty, Sundar argue that these steps taken by the Indian government have only aggravated the situation. It has only widened the feud between the elite and the poor. Moreover, the portfolio of Mr. Chidambaram, the CEO of Operation Green Hunt not only reveals bizarre issues but also put into question the honesty and integrity of the whole democratic system. It is to be noted that before becoming the Finance Minister in the year 2004, he was, by profession, a corporate lawyer. He had defended the corporate interest more than the public interest. Moreover, he was also a member of the board of directors of Vedanta Resources. After being designated as the Finance Minister of the UPA government, one major decision he took regarding the foreign capital investment was to allow the Mauritius-based multi-national mining company, Twinstar Holdings 'to buy shares in Sterlite' (Roy, *Broken Republic* 20) and everybody knows that Sterlite is a sister concern of Vedanta Resources. In an open letter published in *Outlook India* even it was stated that :

Is it wrong for “civil society” to conclude that both as home minister and finance minister you have been protecting corporate profiteers (by first allowing them to loot the mineral wealth belonging to the people and now securing these mines for them) and not protecting the

interest of the poor and tribal people who are victims of corporate greed and crony capitalism of the political parties? (Agarwal)

Very evidently the staunch supporters of neo-liberal economy, these elite people were unaware about the deep agrarian crisis in India that is 'reflected in persistence of high magnitude of rural poverty, lagging agricultural performance, conditions of starvation and malnutrition, distress migration, farmers' suicides and the accentuation of rural-urban contradiction' (Mohanty ix-x).

Truly this neo-liberal economy has not only widened inequalities, but has also eroded the basic principles of democracy. Vandana Shiva has painfully narrated how this neo-liberal economy is –

...destroying the rich biodiversity and cultural diversity of our land through ecological destruction and the imposition of monocultures; how millions lose their livelihoods so that a handful of global corporations and billionaires can control markets and resources. "The India Story" is the story of India Inc. and Global Inc., the story of the new Indian oligarchs and billionaires – the Ambanis, the Lakshmi Mittals, the Anil Agarwals, the Ruias, the Tatas, the Adanis and the Jindals. (Shiva, *Making Peace* 7-8)

It is interesting to note that the 2017 Oxfam report⁸ states just 57 top Indian billionaires possess same amount of capital as that of the down-line 70% population of the nation. Mukesh Ambani's accumulated personal worth at present is \$35.2 billion.⁹ The palatial 27-storied house, Antilia he resides - is the second most extravagant residential property of the world next to the Royal Palace of Buckingham.¹⁰

Under such circumstances a large number of people – the poor farmers, Adivasis, tribals, peasants are compelled to unite them, pick up arms for resistance. Resistance to this neo-liberal economic strategy implies ‘defending the culture, ecology and indigenous livelihood systems of the adivasis and from the vantage point present an alternative model of development that is materially productive, socially just and environmentally sustainable’ (Mohanty-x).

The second essay, “Walking with the Comrades”, however, gives us a better insight into the revolutionary violence as Roy here becomes an ethnographer to give us a better insight from the epicenter of the Maoist insurrection – Dantewada. In other words, it provides the outside world an insider’s view of the burning forest. Risking her own life she went to the troubled area to understand, witness and investigate the socio-cultural, political and economic reasons for the uprising of the revolutionary violence that culminated in the commissioning of Operation Green Hunt by the government of India.

Dantewada, the so-called nerve-centre of this insurrection, is the district head-quarters of Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh, India. The district, however, is known as Dakshin Bastar District. It is part of the Bastar Division. In the pre-independence period Bastar was a princely state and Dantewada was a part of it. But after independence due to land reformation it was made part of Madhya Pradesh. However, in the year 2000, by truncating 16 districts from Madhya Pradesh a new state Chhattisgarh was constituted. Since then Dantewada became a part of Chhattisgarh.¹¹

The district Dantewada covers an approximate area of 3411 square km.¹² It shares its boundary on the north and north-east with Bastar district, on the east it

meets the Malkangiri district of Odisha, on the south and south-west there is the Khammam district of Telangana, and on the west there is the Indravati River. The river gives easy access to Karimnagar district of Telangana and Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra.

These regions are noted for lack of development; at 33.21% literacy, the Dantewada district has the lowest literacy rate in the nation.¹³ The place is inhabited mainly by several tribal groups, out of which three particular tribes are found widely. They are Muriyas or Gonds, Dorla and Halba.¹⁴ The main occupations of these tribal people are farming, poultry farming, animal husbandry etc. They also depend heavily on the forests. It is a major source of food, fodder, fuel, timber, medicine, oil etc. They also sell minor forest produces like leaves, fruits, fire wood etc.

However, these areas, which remained obscure from the notion of the mainstream India, have recently been in the news headlines for wrong reasons. This remote, under-developed area is now viewed as the nerve-centre of the Maoist insurgency and to tackle the menace Government of India has launched Operation Green Hunt against the so-called rebels along the red-corridor which includes the Dantewada district.

To understand this extremely complicated issue Roy went into the heart land for her 'true' narrative. The origin of the uprising can be hunted back down to the volatile days of late 1960s when Kanu Sanyal¹⁵ and other front liners of CPI (Marxist) orchestrated an armed insurrection against landlords of Naxalbari of West Bengal.¹⁶ Their upsurge was for the rightful redistribution of the land to the working peasants. In course of time the West Bengal government, led by Siddharta Sankar

Roy and backed by the Central government, cracked down the uprising. But eventually the revolutionary violence found traction among the landless poor share croppers, Adivasis and tribals in the rural, backward regions of Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Chhattisgarh etc. Due to the activists like Charu Majumdar¹⁷ even the urban elites were attracted to the movement. Thus the CPIML (Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist) could be considered to be an origin from which virtually all the Naxalite groups have emerged.

The general view of the Naxalites is that India is a semi-colonial, semi-feudal state where the have nots are always oppressed and exploited by the state. So, their main objective is to capture the political power through revolutionary violence by putting an end to imperialism, feudalism and comprador bureaucratic capitalism and herald true democracy under the leadership of the agrarian class. Contextually, Karl Marx considered capitalism to be an economic system facilitating the control of exclusive personal freehold over the means of production. Undeniably the present society is chiefly controlled by a few personages, the bourgeoisie who own factories, merchandise and other corporations. This bourgeois society of the present time, for Marx, represented the most advanced form of social organization. However, he was optimistic that one day the working class would be united to revolt against all sorts of injustice and exploitation. The dream of a new era of social justice would come true in the long run through their mass struggle. Such exhaustive and drastic transformation would definitely take place through the means of insurrection. Then in place of capitalism a new order would be established where there would be no discrimination among people; and all the factories and merchandise would be possessed and enjoyed by everyone i.e. they would be communally owned. Marx called this set up communism.

In order to translate their dream into reality the Red Guerrillas are actively operating, especially in the forested areas, where the marginalized tribal communities inhabit. To gain their foothold among these impoverished communities the Red Guerrillas set up their bases in those inaccessible and off the beaten track areas and get involved in the socio-economical and socio-political issues plaguing the tribal people like – forcible land alienation, issues of untouchability, caste discrimination etc. The lack of elemental and primary amenities, including proper connectivity, basic health care, access to primary education, running water and credible administrative supervision provides the Guerrillas with a congenial atmosphere to propagandize their dreams of a ‘new democratic revolution’ (Kumar).

And now the question that comes to the fore : why is there the recent spurt of violence? The reason is that this area is rich in minerals like iron ore, coal, bauxite, manganese etc. And in this world of neo-globalization and liberalization everything is on sale. Roy has justly stated :

Over the past five years or so, the governments of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal have signed hundreds of MoUs with corporate houses, worth several billion rupees, all of them secret, for steel plants, sponge-iron factories, power plants, aluminium refineries, dams and mines. In order for the MoUs to translate into real money, tribal people must be moved.

Therefore, this war. (Roy, *Broken Republic* 30)

The ardent supporters of neo-globalization and neo-liberalization would argue that for the sake of development and progress displacement is especially needful. But the question is - why the impoverished people are always at the

receiving end. Moreover, this wholesale corporate takeover is tantamount to environmental plunder and destruction of the eco-system to the point of no return. Amartya Sen, Jean Dreze, Vandana Shiva, Ramachandra Guha and many others have posed serious questions and have shown evidence with regard to this abysmal void of guilt and injustice done to nature and to these people. In *An Uncertain Glory* Amartya Sen argues that :

In India, we have huge reasons to be worried about our treatment of the environment and its implications for the lives people can lead in this increasingly polluted and environmentally devastated country. Indeed, the acceleration of economic growth in recent decades has coincided with unprecedented environmental plunder. Groundwater has been extracted with abandon, leading to a sharp fall in water tables in many areas. Majestic rivers have been reduced to a trickle, or to sewage drains. Mining activities (often illegal) have spread with few safeguards, destroying forests and displacing communities. Air pollution has risen so far that India is now rated as the most polluted among 132 countries for which comparable data are available. (Dreze and Sen 41)

However, the tragedy lies in the fact that the welfare government, which should have protected the poor Adivasis and tribal people from being exploited, instead to silence the voice of protest, has itself unleashed terror in the region by deploying COBRA, Grey Hound, Special Force, CRPF, Naga Battalion along with the notorious Salwa Judum led by Mahendra Karma.¹⁸ Through the deployment of these special forces the government has virtually compelled the tribal people to

desert their forested homelands so as to live in the road-side camps. Chief Executive Head of the Chhattisgarh government, Raman Singh even openly declared that ‘villagers who did not move into the camps would be considered Maoists’ (Roy, *Broken Republic* 52).

One is here reminded of Antoine Fuqua directed Hollywood blockbuster movie, *Shooter* – a fast-paced conspiracy thriller, based on Stephen Hunter’s novel, *Point of Impact*. In the movie we see the Ethiopian archbishop, who is in an official tour to America, is shot dead in a set-up. He is murdered in broad daylight by the American Secret Agency to deter him from disclosing US complicity in the extermination of an entire Eritrean Village. The ghastly genocide was perpetrated to retain exclusive control over petroleum resources. The entire village was annihilated as it came into the way of the pipeline so that the next village in line won’t need to be asked to move away. The Attorney General’s comment that he made in the trial room is worth quoting here : ‘Justice does not always prevail in today’s world. It’s not the Wild West where you can clean up the streets with a gun, even though sometime that’s exactly what’s needed’ (*Shooter*).

The Government of India is also doing the same thing by commissioning Operation Green Hunt.

Under such circumstances there is no surprise that the Indian Constitution in spite of guaranteeing the tribal people their primal rights – these people have been denied their basic rights. They have been cheated. There is growing resentment among them. And the Naxalite groups have systematically capitalized on this resentment. The poor peasants, dalits, Adivasis – already isolated due to the pathetic

infrastructure, are being methodically provoked to turn against the democratic system in favour of revolutionary violence for a communist regime.

However, what is being overlooked and neglected in the process is that the worst affected by the incessant hostility are the millions of Adivasi and tribal people. They are unaware or too naive to perceive the concealed agenda lied underneath the apparent benevolence of the ‘protracted people’s war’. They are the worst casualties of Red terror and state cruelty. Nandini Sundar’s *The Burning Forest : India’s War in Bastar*¹⁹ also gives us this shocking picture of abysmal guilt and injustice done to these people who are caught between the devil and the deep sea. Amartya Sen while commenting on the book remarks that the book provides us with :

...deeply disturbing analysis of the sacrifice of tribal lives and communities caught between the camouflaged barbarity of the security forces and the violent arrogance of a deflected rebellion. The appeal for reasoned humanity cannot be any stronger – or more eloquent – than this. (Sen)

The third essay of this volume – “Trickledown Revolution” carries the ambit further. It is a critique on the current policy of economic liberalism and corporate globalization that has eroded the basic principles of Indian Constitution namely : fraternity, equality, liberty and justice. Through the metaphorical journey Roy is once again delving deep to find out the root causes of this malady that led the forest to burn.

Before entering into the debate the observation of Vandana Shiva is worth quoting here :

The cages in which humans feel trapped are the new enclosures that rob communities of their cultural spaces and identities; and their ecological and economic spaces for survival. Globalization is the overarching name for this enclosure. Greed and appropriation of other people's share of the planet's precious resources are at the root of these conflicts, and at the root of terrorism. When President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that the goal of the global war on terrorism was to defend the American and European "way of life", they declared war against the planet : its oil, its water, and its biodiversity. The way of life for the 20 percent of the earth's people who use 80 percent of the planet's resources will dispossess 80 percent of the earth's people of their just share of resources. Eventually, it will destroy the planet. We cannot survive as a species if greed is privileged and protected, and if the economics of the greedy set the rules for how we live and die. (Shiva, *India Divided* 68)

Vandana Shiva's warning is reiterated by the recent Oxfam report which has been stated earlier. The 2017 report points out the glaring inequality by stating that just 57 top Indian billionaires possess same amount of capital as that of the down-line 70% people of the country. In the global context just top 8 billionaires possess the equivalent amount of capital as the impoverished 50% of the entire global population. And since 2015, the affluent 1% has accumulated more capital than the rest of the planet. Oxfam has also urged that it is high time to reconstruct a human economy that does well to each and everybody, not just the affluent ones.

Roy is well aware of this precarious situation. That is why leaving aside all the pretensions of civilized hypocrisy she has consistently been vocal in globalizing dissent against the wrong and injustice done to nature and to these unprivileged people of the earth. The narrative becomes a metaphorical journey where an inquisitive Roy is in search of the answers to the questions like – Does global capitalism put up with any society existing outside of its domain of control? Is capitalism or corporate globalization compatible with sustainable development?

The genesis of this current crisis probably predates the 15th century with the ‘Age of Discovery ‘or ‘Age of Exploration’ when the European explorers undertook sea-voyages in search of new trade routes in the coastal areas of Africa, Middle East and Asia. However, the main impetus came from the Industrial Revolution of 1688. It had a lasting impact on class structure, urbanization and life style. With the expansion of trade and commerce the capitalist people needed new markets to sell their products. And that led to the Eurocentric invasion in the other continents. The invaded countries were gradually turned into the colonies of the imperial powers. India, for example, became the colony of Great Britain.

The colonial masters with their unbridled greed started to exploit the indigenous people in India. However, it was the tribal people who were the most adversely affected ones. For centuries they used to live in seclusion and had their own way of living almost utterly different from the mainstream population. But colonialism altered their lives tremendously. The mighty colonizers brought the forest areas, where most of the tribals and Adivasis lived, under the fold of formed administrative apparatus. The tribals and Adivasis were thus deprived of their own forest resources on which they depended for centuries for their sustenance. This new

set up enabled a vicious nexus amid traders, money-lenders and policemen to strengthen their hold over the tribal resources.

The outcome of this exploitation was severe resentment among the tribals and Adivasis which found its expression in the form of numerous tribal revolts. Mention may be made of Halba rebellion (1774-79) in Dongar by Halba tribes in Bastar against the British army; the Great Rebellion by the Santal Community against the British in Eastern India led by Sido and Kanho in 1855; the Kols of Singabham, the tribals of Bihar rebelled against the British in 1830; the mass agitation by the Mundas against the British in Eastern India in 1889; the mass uprising of the tribal people of Bastar in 1911 etc. Indeed no other community in India offered such heroic resistance to British rule. In the global scenario the world witnessed two deadly Great Wars. They were the reactions of capitalist aggression and greed.

However, struggling against odds during a long period India finally got independence in 1947. Though the Indian government retained the bureaucratic system inherited from British people yet there was an honest effort from the progenitors of Indian Constitution to safeguard the rights of the tribal people over their land and forest. But still in the name of progress and development the tribal people were displaced, transplanted, relocated from their land. In other words, exploitation was still going on and the heart land of India was never happy.

The deep rural-urban divide along with the agrarian crisis snowballed into something big. During the late 1960s there was an armed uprising against the landlords of Naxalabari in West Bengal under the leadership of Kanu Sanyal for the rightful redistribution of land to the working peasants. Though the uprising was

cracked down but eventually the revolutionary violence found traction among the landless poor share croppers, Adivasis and tribals of Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Telangana etc.

The crisis, however, deepened since the 1990s when India opened its market to the foreign countries by signing in the GATT and GAT. And with this came the terms – globalization, neo-globalization, liberal economy, corporate globalization. At that time globalization was lauded as the panacea for the social discord and malady. It was supposed to usher in a new age of economic prosperity and stability, of equality, democracy and justice for all. Here it must be noted that GATT, GAT, globalization, liberalization are but the subtler means of the former colonial masters to perpetuate their hold on the hegemony. The Marxist theory of cultural hegemony, associated particularly with Antonio Gramsci, is the proposition that the hegemons for their imperial dominance often use implied means of power rather than direct military force i.e. invasion, occupation and annexation. In this case globalization and neo-liberalism have been presented in such a manner as if they are inevitable and beneficial to everyone. In India the Left Parties had severely renounced the signing of the treaties of GATT and GAT by the Indian government. Renowned CPIM leader, Somnath Chatterjee called it ‘the surrender of our economic sovereignty’ (Agha) and the Left Parties’ official stand is that it will ‘doom the common man’ (Agha). Even Atal Behari Vajpayee said in the Lok Sabha that ‘our dependence on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is primarily responsible for India signing the draft in detriment to its own interest (Agha).

However, very soon the stories of real suffering, deprivation, exploitation, stark poverty and pathetic plight of a large section of people began to surface.

Things began to fall apart when the pledge of shining India instead resulted in the glaring discontent between two Indias – one about homelessness, rural destitution, unemployment, deprivation, transplantation, exploitation and the other the concentration of wealth and money to a handful of people. Moreover, this conglomerate of the rich is so powerful that they run the virtual government undermining the lateral arrangement of checks and balances among constitution, courts of law, parliament, the administration and even the independent media that form the structural basis of a parliamentary democracy.

Things posed alarming when the mineral rich areas of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh - traditionally the house of so many tribal people, were disposed of to the corporate giants like - Vedanta, Tata, Essar, Posco, Rio, Tinto etc. for mining. After decades of injustice, exploitation and deprivation the poor tribal people are left with no choice. Their life is at stake. To resist this total annihilation they are forced to protest – to take up arms for revolutionary violence. Roy writes :

All over the country, there's unrest; there are protests by people refusing to give up their land and their access to resources, refusing to believe false promises any more. Suddenly, it's beginning to look as though the 10 per cent growth rate and democracy are mutually incompatible. (Roy, *Broken Republic* 23)

There is no denying the fact that these people got support from the Maoists whose proclaimed mission is to protect the marginalized people from the threats of displacement and exploitation from their forest homelands. And very interestingly when they are doing this for their survival they are branded as 'the single biggest

internal security challenge ever faced by our country' (Roy, *Broken Republic* 4). The irony is evident in the statement as Roy writes :

...Passed in 1996, PESA is an amendment that attempts to right some of the wrongs done to tribal people by the Indian Constitution when it was adopted by Parliament in 1950. It overrides all existing laws that may be in conflict with it. It is a law that acknowledges the deepening marginalization of tribal communities and is meant to radically recast the balance of power. As a piece of legislation, it is unique because it makes the community – the collective – a legal entity and it confers on tribal societies that live in scheduled areas the right to self-governance. Under PESA, 'compulsory acquisition' of tribal land cannot be justified on any count. So, ironically, those who are being called 'Maoists' (which includes everyone who is resisting land acquisition) are actually fighting to uphold the Constitution while the government is doing its best to vandalize it. (Roy, *Broken Republic* 112-13)

The bizarre situation is once again highlighted in the report entitled, *PESA, Left Wing Extremism and Governance : Concerns and Challenges in India's Tribal Districts* which the authors, Ajay Dandekar²⁰ and Chitragada Choudhury,²¹ submitted to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj during 2008 and 2009. The authors conclude that :

The Memorandum of Understandings signed by the state governments with industrial houses, including mining companies

should be re-examined in a public exercise, with gram sabhas at the centre of this enquiry. (Roy, *Broken Republic* 114)

But to the utter dismay of the authors, on 24 April 2010, when the report was released at a formal ceremony by the then Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh, this chapter was dropped. At this very moment one is certainly reminded of Che Guevara who said : ‘When the oppressive forces come to maintain themselves in power against established law, peace is considered already broken’ (Roy, *Broken Republic* 115).

Thus, this very brazen picture is, indeed, a blow to the hollow promises of economic globalization – that privatization would foster economic growth and that would benefit the entire population. The tribal people feel cheated when the democratic government of India, instead of safeguarding the tribal people from being exploited, is keener on exploiting them. The government has already deployed tens of thousands of soldiers in the form of COBRA, NAGA Battalion, CRPF, Special Forces etc. They are heavily armed with sophisticated weapons. At this point one must not forget the atrocities of notorious Salwa Judum led by Mahendra Karma. This state backed medieval barbarity was condemned severely by the Supreme Court of India. Truly the people trapped in the burning forest are in terrible distress.

Roy’s constant concern for these people is the symptomatic reading of her text. This is her texture. She has consistently been vocal against the current practice of western consumerism and corporate globalization and advocates for a pluralistic egalitarian society that follows the principles of sustainable development for an inclusive growth.