



By ALBERTINA ALMEIDA

Connecting the dots for human rights – Goa-wise!

What took place on 28th August, 2018, in Goa, must be seen as a defining moment for Goa. On this day, the State donned the visible mantle of terrorist, when in the garb of the Pune police, it created havoc on the campus of a well recognised educational institution, and traumatised the security guards before barging into the residence of Anand Teltumbde, in his absence. Teltumbde is a professor teaching Big Data analytics at GIM, and also the General Secretary of the Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR). These actions of the Pune police should be seen as terrorist activity because, in violating all due process of law, they are tantamount to an illegality and an attack.

How shall we in Goa look at this? That Teltumbde is not a Goan, and therefore why bother? That Teltumbde is a member of the elite, teaching at an elite educational institution, and he should therefore take care of himself? That he writes about the need for the annihilation of caste, which is not something that some of us may be aspiring for? That Teltumbde is an “urban naxal”, and therefore doesn’t deserve our attention? That it is fine if the rule of law is flouted, in order to clamp down on so-called urban naxals? That the State was just being disciplinarian? These are the kinds of responses that can only come from the State itself, and the State-supporting mechanisms.

Why did the State decided to include Teltumbde in its terrorizing plan? It was certainly not a random bureaucratic act, and that makes it all the more dangerous. The elections are coming. The Central Government doesn’t like what he says or writes about. Teltumbde’s incisive writing makes those in the line of power uncomfortable because it lays bare how their casteist and anti-working class approaches are inlaid in their social, economic and political practice. They thought he may be isolated as he also speaks out against, or rather challenges the ideas of, a range of movements that are otherwise also allies in the broad struggle for justice. They thought Goa’s groups are busy fighting for the environment, and for women’s rights and civil liberties, and the concerns he raises may not mean much to them. They thought Goans are besieged by an anti-Non Goan attitude.

What the State did not anticipate is that people in Goa will not simply accept what is being | 1

dished out. That even if Goa feels colonized by metropolitan Delhi for instance, it does not mean that we are against all individuals from Delhi. We may feel demographically overwhelmed by the presence from other parts of India, or by haughty approaches emanating from the colonial Indian state, that treats Goa as a pleasure periphery, but we haven't lost our humanity and sense of rights. We also know that our progressive movements are intrinsically connected, and we cannot have economic, social and cultural rights without civil and political rights, and vice-versa.

What the State did not also anticipate is that we have the ability to connect the dots. We know that the Reserve Bank of India annual report which indicated that demonetization did not serve the purported objectives, was released on 29th August, 2018, a day after the multi-city raids (in Sanquelim-Goa, Ranchi, Mumbai, New Delhi, Faridabad, Hyderabad) were conducted, as part of which Teltumbde's residence in Goa was raided. Already intense discussion about the failure of demonetization was underway.

Branding a troublesome person as a Naxal is not new to us in Goa. Sebastian Rodrigues was targeted with this label, when he was in the thick of the battle against mining. This fact, and the middle-class activists being arrested over the years all over India, says something about the kind of middle class activists or persons being targeted. People who write and speak clearly and sharply against the status quo of eco-terrorism, State corporate terror, against neo-liberal political practice, against Hindutva fascist forces, against casteism, and so on, are those who get targeted. People who work to assert the land rights, the socio-cultural, economic and political rights of common people, and have a readership or a following, are another set of people who get targeted.

What are the tools the Indian Government is using for creating this terror? One important tool that can be seen from the spate of arrests earlier this year, and now too, is the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967, as amended to date, which enables any political dissenter to be caught in its web, even current kinds of political dissenters, like those fighting for energy security. Other weapons include mainstream media and social media through which persons/activists are demonised and delegitimized, so that all his or her work will be seen from that coloured lens. Or the newest weapon, which is to dig up some old case. Maybe in the future, it will be about filling in or adding to an open FIR. It is heartening that retired Justices P.B. Sawant and B G Kolse-Patil have come out openly to call the bluff indulged in by

the State, to justify its draconian acts.



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Instead of addressing the burning issues staring people in the face such as devaluation of the rupee, and the failure, or in fact adverse impact, of demonetization, the Government has sought to distract by bringing in other variables altogether. This is being done so that in the process of getting distracted, people will overlook all the negative news streaming in about how the present Government has played with people's economy, to suit a select few corporate interests, whose economies have been untouched by demonetization.

Closer home in Goa, the following is the scenario: decreasing employment opportunities that force Goans to migrate, openly pejorative attitudes towards those forced to migrate, development policies that do not take into account the locally available skills and sustainability of local resources that can enable organic development, expressions of consumerist masculinities by the powerful, blind consent to 'national' policies that don't benefit the local people, less and less availability of land for local people, a reinforcement of casteist attitudes, non-declaration of tribal areas as scheduled areas, a casino politics that encourages you to dream unrealizable dreams while it pulls out the rug from under your feet and further fuels corruption in politics.

What better way to mask all this than to discredit the critics themselves, by projecting them as dreaded terrorists, thus creating an environment of terror?

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