

ADULT NEED FREEDOM

The Delhi High Court has recently said that a live-in relationship between consenting adults is akin to marriage and neither parents nor friends can interfere with their choice or threaten their life. While this seems to be a matter of fact judgment, one wonders why Indian society needs to be told and retold about the difference between a minor and an adult. The parental control on children, even adults, is taken for granted and this is creating a lot of problems in society and breaking social relationships. The Indian parents believe they are repository of wisdom and experience and must control the lives of their children. India and parts of South Asia are, perhaps the only parts of the world where parents still arrange matches for their adult children to wed. They interfere in their lives in the name of support. This must change. While social relations are a major support and reason why family is still intact in India, the elderly parents must leave their sons and daughters to manage their lives. The children must be made self-reliant and not just score marks by learning through rote and writing the most stressful competitive examinations to get into professional colleges.

The court spoke of the independence of a grown up a live-in couple who sought protection against threats from the girl's family. The parents' concerns are genuine but the grown up children have a mind of their own and must have the freedom to exercise their choice. Surely many of them end up in a bitter state but that is given in any relationship. Indian parents have to change their thinking and as Sdguru Jaggi says children are born to live their lives; they are not extensions of their parents. Indian parents too need to make their lives interesting after having raised young children by pursuing hobbies and enjoying their lives. This can reduce the growing social friction between parents and adult children and save families.

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The Problem Isn't Gen Z. It's The Entitlement Some People Have Borrowed From Gen Z Activism

Mallika Bhagat

Gen Z has often been called the generation that is not afraid to speak up. They question authority, call out unfairness, are more comfortable talking about issues that older generations often avoided. In many ways, that is a good thing. Young people should ask questions. They should challenge things that are unfair. They should not be afraid to say when something is wrong.

But there is a difference between standing up for yourself and believing that you are entitled to get your way every time.

The recent Ladakh checkpoint controversy is a good example of where that line can get blurred. A tourist, angry after being stopped for several hours, was heard saying, "We are Gen Z, and we are not going to tolerate this nonsense." The video quickly went viral, with the phrase becoming the focus of criticism online.

The issue here is not that she questioned the authorities. Ask-

Decoding The Modern-Day 'Dimagi Naxal'

Tuhin A Sinha

The Maoist with an assault rifle was its visible hardware. But behind that hardware existed a sophisticated ideological software: activists, intellectuals, lawyers and political sympathisers who repeatedly questioned the legitimacy of the Indian State's response, romanticised revolutionary violence, opposed development projects in conflict zones and often converted the fight against a brutal insurgency into a morality play in which the State was perpetually cast as the villain.

This is the phenomenon Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described as the "Dimagi Naxal."

The phrase deserves serious examination because the phenomenon is not new. Its vocabulary has evolved, its protagonists have changed and its methods have become more sophisticated. But the underlying instinct remains remarkably consistent: distrust the Indian State, delegitimise its institutions, obstruct development and, whenever confronted with the consequences, shift attention from the violence of the insurgent to the supposed sins of the State.

Of course, criticism of government policy is legitimate and indispensable in a democracy. But there is a profound difference between dissent and an ideological ecosystem that appears instinctively hostile to the country's institutions, security apparatus and developmental ambitions.

That is where dissent ends and the Dimagi Naxal begins.

The software behind the hardware

For decades, India's security forces fought an enemy that had perfected violence against some of India's poorest citizens. Maoists blew up roads, attacked police stations, killed elected representatives, extorted contractors, destroyed schools and intimidated villagers who refused to cooperate.

Yet the insurgency survived partly because its violence was accompanied by an ecosystem outside the forest.

SABARIMALA: THE PROBLEM WITH IMPOSED REFORM

Prajesh Panikkar

Last week, the Supreme Court indicated that the Constitution Bench's verdict on the entry of young women into the Sabarimala temple is likely to be delivered in October this year.

In its 2018 verdict, the Supreme Court had allowed women of menstruating age to enter the temple. The judgment was difficult for many devotees to accept, even as the then LDF government in Kerala sought to enforce it. The episode proved politically disastrous for the government, which had earlier submitted an affidavit supporting the entry of young women. The ruling alliance was subsequently forced to change its stand.

The review petitions filed against the judgment widened the scope of the dispute, bringing into consideration larger constitutional questions concerning religious practices and, potentially, other faiths as well. It is the Constitution Bench's final verdict on these review petitions that is now expected in October.

The restriction on women's entry had earlier sparked a huge debate, not just in Kerala, but across India and beyond. Some sought to portray it as a manifestation of Hinduism's misogyny or the ostracisation of women.

The Supreme Court's 2011 judgment on Salwa Judum is an important part of this complicated history. Petitioners including Nandini Sundar and others challenged the State's handling of the counter-insurgency campaign, and the Court directed the State to desist from using tribal youth as armed Special Police Officers against Maoists.

The Court's concerns about constitutional governance and human rights must be respected. But another question also deserves to be asked: when the State's counter-insurgency architecture is dismantled or delegitimised, who fills the vacuum?

That is the paradox India has often struggled to articulate. A State fighting an armed insurgency must itself remain bound by law. But a democracy cannot afford a moral framework in which the violence of the insurgent becomes almost invisible while every action of the State is subjected to infinitely greater scrutiny.

Dr Binayak Sen became one of the most prominent faces of this debate. His conviction by a Chhattisgarh trial court in 2010, followed by the Supreme Court granting him bail, generated intense national controversy. The Court subsequently made an important distinction: mere sympathy with Maoist ideology, by itself, does not constitute sedition.

That distinction is crucial. The argument is not that every critic of the State is a Maoist sympathiser, or that dissent should be criminalised.

The larger question is what happens when an entire intellectual ecosystem consistently produces narratives in which the insurgent's political grievance receives greater moral attention than the civilian, policeman, tribal villager or elected representative killed by the insurgent.

That ecosystem did not disappear as Maoist influence declined. It evolved.

Its vocabulary moved from "revolution" to "resistance"; from defending insurgents directly to opposing development projects; from Maoist rhetoric to a broader hostility towards mining, industry, infrastructure and the security establishment.

This is why "Dimagi Naxal" is ultimately less about an individual's political label and

more about a pattern of behaviour: an instinctive opposition to development, reflexive suspicion of national institutions and a willingness to turn every legitimate grievance into a larger narrative of institutional collapse.

The old ecosystem largely operated on the margins of mainstream politics. Today, elements of that operating style have entered the mainstream.

Rahul Gandhi's political trajectory offers a striking example.

In 2016, amid the JNU controversy, Gandhi appeared at a protest involving student activists, including Umar Khalid. The episode became a national controversy over nationalism, free speech and alleged anti-India slogans. Whatever one's assessment of the subsequent legal proceedings, the political symbolism was unmistakable: a mainstream national leader was aligning himself with a campus movement that had become synonymous, fairly or unfairly, with the most radical edge of the political debate.

What followed was a gradual narrowing of the distance between mainstream opposition politics and fringe-style confrontation.

Consider the spectacle at the India AI Impact Summit in February 2026. Youth Congress workers staged a shirtless protest at Bharat Mandapam during a major international technology summit. Rahul Gandhi subsequently praised his Youth Congress colleagues as "Babbar Sher."

The symbolism could hardly have been more revealing. At a global summit showcasing India's technological ambitions, sections of the opposition chose spectacle over substance.

And then came the July 21 protest outside the Prime Minister's residence, where Rahul Gandhi and other Congress leaders staged a dharna demanding the Prime Minister's resignation.

There is nothing inherently undemocratic about protesting against a government. But there is a qualitative difference between parliamentary opposition and politics that increasingly seeks to turn every institutional disagreement into a street confrontation with the State.

The Leader of the Opposition is not a

campus activist. He occupies a position of enormous constitutional and political responsibility.

When mainstream politics begins borrowing the tactics and theatricality of the fringe, it risks normalising a dangerous proposition: that institutions are legitimate only when they produce outcomes one approves of.

Chidambaram once occupied the very office responsible for combating India's internal security threats. And 2010 was among the bloodiest years of the Maoist insurgency, with more than 1,000 people killed in Left Wing Extremism-related violence.

The irony therefore demands attention.

The man who once had responsibility for combating an insurgency that was killing hundreds of Indians now proudly embraces a phrase associated with its intellectual ecosystem.

There was, interestingly, a moment when Chidambaram himself appeared to recognise the danger of this ecosystem. During the controversy surrounding the Kudankulam nuclear project in 2011, he criticised the role of Naxal elements in obstructing the project.

That recognition now appears to have been replaced by the compulsive politics of opposition.

This is perhaps the evolution of the Dimagi Naxal. The original Naxal sought to destroy the State with a gun. The modern version often seeks to delegitimise the State with a narrative.

It is whether the people who once lived under the shadow of the gun can finally live under the shadow of opportunity.

For decades, vast tribal belts were trapped between insurgency and underdevelopment. Roads became security targets. Schools became battlegrounds. Businesses stayed away. Investment became synonymous with exploitation in the dominant political narrative.

The result was predictable: the very people supposedly being "liberated" remained among India's poorest and most isolated citizen. Bastar is now being positioned for a development-led transformation, with the Centre and the Chhattisgarh government



that is simply unreasonable. Saying "I have a right to question this" is very different from saying "I have a right to ignore this."

Social media has made this even more complicated. A confrontation that may once have ended at the spot can now be-

come a video, a viral post and a public battle. The louder the argument, the more attention it gets. Sometimes, people can end up performing their anger for an audience rather than trying to understand what is actually happening.

There is also a danger in turning every disagreement into a battle between "us" and "them". Once someone believes they are standing up against a powerful authority, it becomes easy to assume that the other side must automatically be wrong.

But real maturity is knowing when to question something and when to understand that there may be reasons you do not know about.

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The Ladakh incident is particularly sensitive because it happened in a region where security restrictions can be necessary. A road closure may be frustrating

for tourists, but there can be operational, security, weather or safety reasons behind it. Not knowing the reason does not automatically mean there is no reason.

Young people should absolutely continue questioning authority. They should continue demanding accountability. They should continue speaking up when something is genuinely unfair. But perhaps the bigger lesson is that being confident is not the same as being entitled.

The best kind of protest comes with an understanding of what you are protesting. It asks questions without assuming all the answers. Most importantly, it knows the difference between fighting injustice and simply refusing to accept an inconvenience.

The problem, then, is not Gen Z. It is the entitlement some people have borrowed from the language of Gen Z activism, without understanding the responsibility that should come with having a voice.