

The Debate

6 months before the Purulia Arms Drop I participated in an Ananda Marga debate about whether terrorism could ever be justified. Ananda Marga was a pacific revolutionary organization that denounced both the materialistic philosophies of capitalism as well as communism. The focus of the ideology was primarily on yoga and meditation but there was a lot of emphasis on social justice and activism as well. My friends in Ananda Marga were fans of the libertarian socialist ideas behind the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the Spanish revolution of the 30's and most especially the Zapatista revolution in Mexico which was still occurring at the time of this debate. Nobody in the debate could really defend terrorism. We evaded the idea of terrorism and focused on the justification of using force against the state by violent revolution. However, the other side said our idea of revolution was not terrorism because it is a declared political and revolutionary military movement which does not target civilians like terrorist attacks. We were ideological rebels, but nobody was aggressive enough to really talk about terrorist attacks. I led our team in the debate and we could argue that the capitalist system is more terrorist than any terrorist organization, but when the opposing team asked me specifically if that gives us justification to use violent force against the system which would include attacking innocent civilians, we could not argue this position. We could not even pretend to and we clearly lost the debate. The leader of the other group was a Vietnam war veteran who was very well spoken and even though it was all a structured formality, his sincere non-violence stance made us somehow feel that we were in the wrong and did not want to be a part of the debate.

There were many brilliant people in Ananda Marga, especially in India and Anandamurti's organization became the enemy of the state, both the national capitalist state as well as the local state of Bengal, which was governed by communists. Anandamurti infiltrated the state by creating an army of civil servant yogis who follow a strict definition of morality, Yama and Niyama. Anandamurti worked for the Indian railways and many of his disciples worked in various levels of government. Having these leaders apply yogic principles in society would help establish a new order of non corruption. Spiritual people who perform their duties with honesty and noble character will be loved and trusted by others. These highly respected ethical leaders would be the vanguard of a new society and collective spiritual awakening. It was very clear that this is the type of spiritual revolution that Anandamurti wanted. He was not non-violent like Gandhi and thought that sometimes force is needed in a revolution, but his efforts were clearly focused on spiritual and social revolution. The organization he created was revolutionary and instead of battalions of soldiers he created battalions of social service workers who teach the ancient principles and practices of tantra yoga.

In the early days Indira Gandhi's (Nehru's daughter) regime wanted to incorporate Ananda Marga into the Indian state. When Anandamurti refused then the trouble started. This assault on Ananda Marga only helped the movement to expand beyond India. When I visited India just a few months after the debate, I went there in full confidence that I was in the company of peaceful rebels persecuted by the

state but I never once thought that Ananda Marga would end up in the middle of an arms deal and a failed revolution which got me thrown into jail and an Indian Supreme Court trial for charges of terrorism.

After returning from India and being declared innocent in their Supreme Court I stayed at an Ananda Marga community in Missouri. Some black, unmarked helicopters began to appear periodically during the meditation retreat. I recalled the debate 6 months earlier and could hardly believe the absurd situation of the present. I saw the leader of the opposing debate team, the Vietnam Veteran, and he was frantic about the black, unmarked helicopters. He said they were sent by "them." I thought he meant the CIA or the government, but he started speaking about reptilian beings. This person who read Chomsky and had very enlightened and clear political views now seemed to be possessed by Alex Jones. He began to drive around our community in a jeep with a trailer connected. The trailer had some long object covered by a plastic tarp. We were already so deep into the real life Theater Of The Absurd that we said it was probably a missile he had stock piled to shoot down one of them buzzards hovering overhead. All we could do was laugh at it all. Most people thought that we were being harassed by the government because of what had just happened in India. They wanted to make us nervous, that we were being watched. Their strategy was obviously working.

I had just returned from being under house arrest in India. It was the greatest blessing of my life, like Briar Rabbit being thrown into the briar patch. I was not allowed to leave the immediate area and all I could find time to do was meditate on the sacred grounds of Ananda Nagar, a place used by Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu tantrics for centuries to finish their spiritual practice. They said the rocks still held a great vibration which was absorbed by the environment during their great samadhis, or spiritual realizations. I got lost on those rocks. However, at the same time the ashram was surrounded by Indian military. We used to joke about how they had surplus World War II rifles. An Irish friend of mine who was also under house arrest with me jokingly called them "musket loaders." They would sometimes raid the compound to scare people and we would make jokes saying "here come the muskets." Returning to the present narrative, in the U.S., the military now surrounds us, but with very silent black helicopters. A few years later Ananda Marga was placed on the FBI's top ten terrorist organization list. We were simply dumbfounded. A.M. was up there with the IRA and Al-Qaeda and Hamas, but what had A.M. ever really done as far as terrorist activity? Sure, they got in some scrapes in India when they tried to defend themselves from the government who violently attacked them but they were the ones who always got massacred and never massacred anybody else.

Anandamurti was a very mysterious person. He was first put under surveillance by Nehru before the Independence from the British Empire, while Nehru was leader of the Congress Party. Nehru liked the letters that the 17 year old student had sent to Congress and they were read aloud. People wanted to know who this youth was. He eventually initiated some revolutionary leaders in congress into tantric practice. By the time of the 70's A.M. was infiltrated by the CIA. I know people who saw Anandamurti perform many "miracles" in front of many people in

A.M. Many of these miracles involved healing but it was also known that Anandamurti knew all sorts of things. When my Vietnam veteran friend was planning on going to India he was very nervous because he was a secret chain smoker and he was afraid of getting a scolding from the guru. He had heard rumors that Anandamurti knew everything about his disciples and that he even scolded them for things far in their past of which nobody else knew. When he arrived he entered Anandamurti's room with great apprehension. Anandamurti stared sternly at him and then smiled saying "smoking is just a bad habit, not a crime."

I know so many people with so many similar encounters with Anandamurti. I even saw that some of the elder disciples also had some mystical knowledge and healing powers. There is no doubt that Big Brother knew about the mysterious powers of this great yogi. I truly believe that A.M. was infiltrated and disintegrated not because they were a terrorist organization but because they never wanted the world to know of the great man behind the great and humane revolutionary ideas that they were so frightened of.

As a liberal arts student that had just graduated the university, I went to an Ananda Marga ashram to do doctoral studies on tantra yoga when the arms drop occurred. Far from being an mere academic experience, I was becoming deeply immersed in the very high spiritual vibration at Ananda Nagar. It was clear that much spiritual work had been done in this environment. I felt that my meditation was 5 times as strong there! By just closing the eyes, one enters into deep, effortless meditation in such an environment. Despite all that has happened with Ananda Marga, those experiences always help me remember that the philosophy and spiritual practices of Ananda Marga have a very pure origin.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/dVxilyDXKDs>

After a nice meditation one morning I hear there was an arms drop in a nearby village and then the military arrived. The arms drop was a typical botched-up Ananda Marga operation and the arms fell in the wrong place and it was reported to the local police and military. They discovered it just in time. The simple locals live like people from thousands of years ago. They discovered these unknown objects which had very nice boxes and canvas bags. At the time they were making cob houses and were just about to throw some sturdy hand grenades into the cob mixture.

I contemplate my memories of Ananda Nagar the weeks before this incident and remember how there was a humorous, supposedly ex-Marine with a USMC bull dog tatoo giving fitness training to illiterate tribal boys who were employed by Ananda Marga. At the time I really believed that Viirendra, the ex-Marine, was helping train official guards to protect the election boxes of the Indian state for the upcoming elections. It sounded rather odd that the Bengali government would trust its foe Ananda Marga with such a duty, but I didn't criticize this inconsistency at the time because I was so distracted by the humorous environment of the "fitness training." Viirendra finally got to be in charge as a drill sargent. He had

some sensitive yogi qualities but was really a jar-head at heart.

The trainees underwent rifle training one day with a b.b. gun. All 30 of them took turns with the one and only b.b. gun. It was just like the one I got on my 8th birthday. An old guard of the V.S.S. (the elite guard of Ananda Marga) took pride in being the leading official and decided to instruct the trainees himself. He instructed one boy to point the gun at a nun, who like us, was peering over the fence and snickering at these antics. "Okay, you hit the target, now point the gun at the nun, right between her eyes," the guard said. The nun was laughing and screaming at the same time saying "no, no" while we were roaring with laughter at these Gomer Pyle antics. Viirendra grabbed the gun, invoking the archetypal drill sergeant from Full Metal Jacket and screamed, "I'm gonna shove that gun up your ass, soldier." That sweet nun and the Indian boy fortunately couldn't understand these words. It was all too comic and absurd to accept as reality. This is ample proof that Ananda Marga is not essentially a terrorist organization. The system tried to impose it on them with infiltrators like Viirendra, but militant radicalism really wasn't in the nature of the majority of the monks and nuns.

Viirendra disappeared the day before the arms drop and we simple observers were sent to jail. A few years after that I hear that there is a pentagonal meditation room in the Asheville, N.C., in an Ananda Marga community where Viirendra has settled. That is ironic because in my experience, people in Ananda Marga, especially in the U.S., put special spiritual significance in architecture, especially architecture for meditation rooms. Hexagons and hexagrams are more of their style, not pentagons. They chose the design and didn't purchase the building as such.

Prior to this home, he lived in a recluse ranch in Colorado where a proud monk named Krsnananda would visit him. Krishnananda told me himself that Viirendra had to report to the people in the black helicopters that came to see him at his hidden ranch. Krishnananda also told me that his brother, who is also a monk, was in the airplane when the arms were dropped. As a crescendo I also get news that Ananda Marga made it on the top 10 terrorist list of the FBI around the year 2000. This understanding turned my whole Ananda Marga experience upside down and inside out. All the while that I was lost in deep meditation at Ananda Nagar and beginning my studies at the research institute, these miscreants were planning an international conspiracy with the CIA against Ananda Marga.

I was never seriously drilled by Interpol because they knew I was innocent. They sent a file clerk to interview me. He was the sweetest Bengali who really wanted to know if I liked Bengal and wanted to know all about my family. He was sincerely hurt when I said the vacation didn't turn out quite as I suspected and that I would prefer not to be in this situation but that I would probably be content here otherwise. He really wanted me to be happy.

This was not the case when they interviewed the Devashish, however. They kept him in the interrogation room for hours and had their best agents drilling him. He was obviously nervous. Later, knowing that he needed to give the rest of us some

kind of reason as to why Ananda Marga is being framed as a terrorist organization and why we are under house arrest, he decided to give us a story.

He was sincere. I never thought he lied about anything because they were very humiliating confessions. He told us all about the underground A.M. mafia and how they operated. Most of it seemed pretty innocent compared to most mafias. In the early days they were simply smuggling electronic equipment into India to sell on the black market. The money was funding schools and orphanages in India and Africa. Anandamurti prohibited these activities but many people still participated in them because it was very easy and few considered it immoral. I realized that I had even participated in this unknowingly by agreeing to carry a video camera into India for a monk who would later sell it to an Indian contact. If immigration were to ask me what happened to my camera, I was to say that it was stolen and that was the end of the case.

However, I did expect that there were a ton of things that the Devashish wasn't telling us. He confessed that he had been to federal prison twice for his activities with Ananda Marga mafia. He had worked in various counterfeit operations with the great mafia giant and pimp, Karunananda. Hopefully, he had nothing to do with Karunananda's Love Shack, the monastic prostitution service for all of the celibate monks in Ananda Marga. He only confessed to counterfeiting and credit card scams. This was a step up from smuggling electronics and it was impossible for me to condone A.M. involvement in these activities.

I suspected that he had been compromised by somebody, by the FBI, or some agency. He told me that the FBI came to his house during the 84 Olympics in Los Angeles and spoke to him the whole day about how A.M. are terrorists. He argued the contrary but the FBI agent had all kinds of inside knowledge of A.M. and cited conversations of Anandamurti that were given only in closed circles. The FBI agent argued that followers of Ananda Marga believe Anandamurti is "Taraka Brahma." They had subtle arguments about how this is a belief system and not some official doctrine, as the agent wanted to argue. This was my first piece to the puzzle of how A.M. got infiltrated, was thoroughly studied, and later disintegrated.

We were under house arrest during this time and so I could begin to see how the criminals of Ananda Marga had been utilized by Big Brother to step up their criminal activities to the next level. The very same people behind the smugglers got involved in an international arms deal that was monitored and controlled by M.I. 5 agents from England.

I began to think of all of the complexities and dissonance that this whole Ananda Marga experience was creating. Ananda Marga was a very complex world view, an alternative and revolutionary society in all of its aspects, and Big Brother was afraid of them for this. I contemplated the A.M. from the texts and the immediate A.M. culture of which I was immersed in while being under house arrest in their "Mecca" of Ananda Nagar. Now I am seeing that there are so many other voices that could try to define what A.M. is in contrast to the official doctrines and the norms of the movement. The mafia activities were a great contradiction to the

ideology, for example. And now I had to consider that there are now really intelligent and powerful people who are trying to impose and define what Ananda Marga is all about and that they are only interested in its destruction and dissolution.

I think we need to hunt down the Devashish and have a conversation with him. The Devashish made a joke with me just after the court case and our deportation to the U.S. He said, "Have you seen Nirvananda's new face yet?, he looks good with his new plastic surgery. " He just laughed and walked away.

The producer of the documentary cites another author that considers it is likely that Kim Peter, or Nirvananda, was aided and protected by the CIA. The producer leaves the question open for scrutiny. Some people in Ananda Marga were informants to the CIA and the senior members of the organization knew of this. Kim Peter worked in North America with a gang of Ananda Marga monks. He is still seen as a Robin Hood type of figure. In the beginning, they only smuggled electronics into India to raise money for orphanages and schools. However, they later moved on to greater ventures. Many members of this underground mafia extended into immoral and dangerous international mafia connections. Some were caught and forced to be informers to the FBI and the CIA. I knew who some of these people were and I think they were used as tools to help frame Ananda Marga as a terrorist organization. After the Purulia arms drop Ananda Marga was placed on the FBI's top 10 global terrorist groups list for several years. Now, they are practically non-existent in North America.

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