

Resistance and Democracy

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After decades of careful concealment by both the state and the Maoist party, the Maoist issue burst into the public domain first with the atrocious Salwa Judum campaign and then by the launch of operation green hunt. The prime minister's "greatest internal security threat" speech of 2005 contributed significantly to renewed interest in the Maoist movement. As a vast population of adivasis became the primary victims of the resulting violence, an impressive variety of vigorous discourse ensued in both the print and the electronic media, including several online forums that devoted significant space to the Maoist issue.

Unsurprisingly, much of the discourse is sharply critical of the Maoist party and is in favour of some form of military action against them. The basic problem with this discourse is that it ignores the primary victims: if the state fires a bullet, it is likely to hit an adivasi even if she is wearing military fatigues. Thus, the statist discourse, shared even by the parliamentary left, lends at least indirect support to the atrocious violence of the state. In that sense, this discourse imparts at least indirect moral credibility to the opposing Maoist discourse in the noted climate of binary choices. The Maoist discourse has a general two-part structure:

1. The discourse begins with a just and trenchant critique of the predatory Indian state, highlights aspects of crony capitalism imposed on the people, and reports on the resulting widespread impoverishment and oppression of vast sections of the population.
2. The discourse ends with varying degrees of support to the Maoist programme.

Compared to the ambiguous and, therefore, opportunistic character of the statist discourse, I have much admiration for the courage, honesty, and fluency of the alternative discourse. The fiercely pro-people character of this discourse rekindles hope for genuine

democratic possibilities otherwise sorely missing in political opinion. Still, in my view, the discourse is deeply flawed.

Before I proceed to examine the discourse, it is interesting to note its more prominent authors. They obviously include Maoist spokespersons such as Ganapathy and (the late) Azad, and some of their intellectual sympathisers such as Amit Bhattacharya, Saroj Giri, Jesse Ross Knutson, Gautam Navlakha, Varavar Rao, and Arundhati Roy, among others. Although these are powerful pro-people voices from the intelligentsia, none is known for direct and sustained grassroots work with the masses. Interestingly, in contrast, the discourse does not find approval with a range of naxalite authors some of whom have a record of sustained participation in the original movement, have spent years in jungles and impoverished villages, and have suffered long imprisonment. Some respectable left-wing journals not given to state-propaganda—*Economic and Political Weekly*, *Seminar*, and (the Bengali journal) *Aneek*—recently published special issues on the Maoist upheaval. Many authors belonging to the non-parliamentary left and sympathetic to the original naxalite movement contributed to these issues. As we will see below, they agree with the first part of the Maoist discourse while rejecting the second.¹

Unsurprisingly, the most direct and aggressive form of this discourse ensues from the Maoist leaders themselves. To substantiate the first part of the discourse, the Maoist spokesperson the late Chemkuri Rajkumar (Azad, 2010) responded to the veteran journalist B. G. Verghese in these words,

In which part of India is the Constitution prevailing, Mr Verghese? In Dantewada, Bijapur, Kanker, Narayanpur, Rajnandgaon? In Jharkhand, Orissa? In Lalgah, Jangalmahal? In the Kashmir Valley? Manipur? Where was your Constitution hiding for 25 long years after thousand of Sikhs were massacred? When thousands of Muslims were decimated? When lakhs of peasants are compelled to commit suicides? When thousands of people are murdered by state-sponsored Salwa Judum gangs? When adivasi women are gangraped? When people are simply abducted by uniformed goons? Your Constitution is a piece of paper that does not even have the value of a toilet paper for the vast majority of the Indian people.

Needless to say, this is only a partial depiction of the Indian state. One could easily add grim facts about widespread malnutrition with sub-Saharan conditions prevailing in some parts of the country, abject condition of women and children, massive unemployment of youth, inhuman wages for agricultural and casual labour, plunder of natural resources, and so on. Thus, the general secretary Ganapathy (2009) articulates the second part as follows:

No fascist regime or military dictator in history could succeed in suppressing forever the just and democratic struggles of the people through brute force, but were, on the contrary, swept away by the high tide of people's resistance. People, who are the makers of history, will rise up like a tornado under our party's leadership to wipe out the reactionary blood-sucking vampires ruling our country.

In an earlier interview, Azad (2010) was a bit more specific about "people's resistance":

Let us suppose the men sent by Chidambaram are combing an area. When we come to know of it, we will carry out an offensive, annihilate as many forces as possible in the given circumstances, and seize arms and ammunition. We will also take prisoners of war where that is possible. Likewise, we may have to attack ordnance depots, trucks carrying explosives, guards at installations such as NMDC, RPF personnel, and even outposts and stations far beyond our areas to seize arms, as in Nayagarh, for instance.

According to the strongest version of the Maoist discourse, therefore, resistance to the state means immediate armed struggle under the leadership of the Maoist party which is "a revolutionary political party which represents the vast masses and which would lead the government that would be completely responsible for this country after we come to power" (Ganapathy, 2010b). No doubt, "friendly" invitations are often issued to other groups and organisations that are resisting the state to form a "united front," but with the ill-concealed proviso that the Maoist party will determine the course of events:

We are appealing to all revolutionary and democratic forces in the country to unite to fight back the fascist offensive ... By building the broadest fighting

front, and by adopting appropriate tactics of combining the militant mass political movement with armed resistance of the people and our PLGA (People's Liberation Guerilla Army), we will defeat the massive offensive by the Central-state forces (Ganapathy, 2010a).

Some of the writers mentioned above seem to support this exclusivist position of the Maoist party. While Jesse Ross Knutson² holds that the Indian state should immediately surrender to the Maoists, Gautam Navlakha advocates that the armed struggle ought to continue until the Maoist party is in a position to dictate terms of peace with the Indian state.³

Other writers such as Roy (2010a; 2010b) seem to advocate a milder view for now. According to them, Maoists are not the only ones resisting the state, but they form the most militant and organised part of a broad spectrum of (assorted, unorganized) resistance. The implicit (pious) hope is that they will adjust themselves to a pluralist form as resistance expands.

I will argue that even this milder view is unacceptable. The critique can take one of two forms: (1) a strong critique that denies that Maoists constitute a force of resistance at all, and (2) a weak critique that, even if view the Maoists as a (genuine) force of resistance, this form of resistance is inconsistent with the broader democratic struggle leading to genuine welfare and empowerment of the people.

There is much to recommend the strong critique. As discussed elsewhere (Mukherji, 2010), Maoist practices in Dandakaranya and elsewhere raise grave doubts as to whether the Maoist party is genuinely concerned with the welfare of the people. To recapitulate quickly, the Maoist party has

- no history of struggle outside jungles
- no history of participation in broad resistance movements
- clear complicity with mafia and reactionary forces
- little concern about abject conditions of health and poverty in control areas
- enforced large-scale use of children for warfare

The cumulative evidence will be enough for some to conclude that, notwithstanding revolutionary proclamations, the Maoist party in practice is an undemocratic—perhaps

even anti-people—force whose sole aim is to seize state power by hook or crook to bring the masses under the control of the leadership of the party.

If only for the sake of argument, suppose we take a softer view of Maoists. Suppose then that they are able to improve on their dismal record on welfare and human rights in their areas of control, stop the use of children, use arms only to defend themselves strictly in accordance with international conventions, avoid contacts with the mafia, develop a friendly attitude towards other radical groups etc. *without giving up on the programmes of secret organisation, armed struggle and protracted war*. The highlighted condition is crucial since, without it, the Maoist party will cease to be what it is, as their criticism of the Maoist party of Nepal and the remarks of Azad cited above show.

Some recent remarks of Noam Chomsky (2010) are instructive at this point. As noted, Maoists, with approval from authors under discussion, often reject the politics of other left groups, including other naxalites and the parliamentary left, as reformist and not genuinely revolutionary: “contrary to the parliamentary parties and all kinds of reformist organizations, the CPI (Maoist) which is based on a cadre that has unflinching faith in their aim, a sacrificing nature and dedication is shining like a bright sun, lighting up all the darkness surrounding our country. Indian people want revolution” (Ganapathy, 2010b).⁴

Chomsky holds that a reformist is someone “who cares about the conditions of life for suffering people and works to improve them.” “Reformists” in this sense support “measures to improve safety in the workplace, to ensure adequate food and health care and potable water for everyone, and so on.” “To accuse someone of being a reformist,” he continues, “is to accuse him or her of being a minimally decent human being.” For Chomsky, anyone “who is even worth talking to is a reformist.”

As the history of human struggles show, even basic reformist measures to improve safety in the workplace and to ensure adequate food and health care and potable water require prolonged resistance to exploitative forces. What forms of resistance are viable to ensure these minimum measures? Chomsky holds that “if we are committed to certain goals, whatever they are, we would seek to attain them peacefully, by persuasion and consensus, if possible—at least if we are sane and accept the most minimal moral

standards. That is true no matter how revolutionary our goals.” In his prolific political writings over six decades, Chomsky has not discounted the tenability of armed struggle in certain contexts and contingencies. For example, his support to the armed resistance by Hezbollah against Israeli military offensive in Lebanon is well known. Still, he holds that the issue of armed struggle is entirely contextual and must “meet the minimum moral standards.” It is deeply questionable, if in the current Indian context, the Maoists have met either condition.

As to the form of an organization carrying out resistance to ensure welfare for the people, there is no ideal form in advance that is guaranteed to "avoid pitfalls," yet, Chomsky holds, “there is good reason to believe that more democratic and participatory forms of organization can overcome the pitfalls that are inherent to the Central Committee or the tyrannical workplace or other forms of illegitimate hierarchy and domination.”

To illustrate the point, it is interesting that Chomsky cites the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua—not any other obviously authoritarian organisation such as the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. It is well known that Chomsky himself was deeply associated with the Nicaraguan resistance led by the Sandinistas. He was one of the principal authors who exposed the vicious contra war launched by the Reagan administration to uproot the democratically elected government. As they took on the might of the Pentagon and the CIA, the Sandinista movement itself was a shining example of resistance throughout Latin America. However, after few years of valiant struggle, the movement collapsed and the Sandinistas lost the elections.

Chomsky interprets these events as follows. “Anyone familiar with what was happening in Nicaragua,” he remarks, “knows full well that the Sandinista’s authoritarian practices contributed to undermining popular support that might have overcome the terror, and these were also exploited effectively by supporters of Washington’s terrorist war to undermine solidarity movements in the United States and Europe.” Chomsky is drawing attention to familiarity with the movement because, unlike the communist regimes in Europe, the Sandinista movement was vastly popular and was generally not known to be authoritarian in character.⁵ So, Chomsky’s point is that even a strand of

authoritarianism in an otherwise popular movement can ruin it irreparably; in turn, it creates grounds for repressive forces to crush it completely.

Moreover, as Chomsky points out, the failure of a movement due to its authoritarian style can have negative fallouts far beyond the movement's local territory; in the Sandinista case, it affected solidarity movements even in US and Europe. Compared to the Maoists, the Sandinistas were angels. This is the reason why I suggest that the Maoist movement is not only traumatic for the adivasis in Bastar, it poses dangers for broader resistance against the state itself.

What means are available to achieve a non-authoritarian, reformist, and popular form of resistance? On this issue, the Maoist party had always rejected the salience of every form of electoral politics, including panchayat elections at the local level: "this dictatorial and bourgeois parliament and state machinery ... would serve none else than [the ruling] classes. They may be sacred for those classes but they are a big menace for the people. So it is their birth right to pull them down ... They should establish a genuine democratic political system which constitutes new legislative bodies and a new constitution" (Ganapathy, 2010b) under the dictatorship of the Maoist party of course.

Electoral politics has lost much of its initial shine over the decades. Especially in the neoliberal era, electoral politics has degenerated to the point where even liberal thinkers are beginning to express exasperation with it; this explains the problematic but spectacular growth of non-electoral activism. We will return to this topic shortly.

Chomsky agrees that "the neoliberal onslaught against democracy—its primary thrust—has imposed even narrower limits on functioning democracy, as intended." Yet, it does not follow that "the attack on democracy cannot be beaten back." "Electoral politics," he asserts, "has in the past achieved gains in human welfare that are by no means insignificant, as the great mass of the population understands very well." According to Chomsky, then, an outright rejection of electoral politics—especially in the (rare) contexts such as India where it has "achieved gains in human welfare" in the past—signals the Maoists' basic disconnect with the "great mass of the population."

It is also most instructive that Chomsky's views are matched, almost point by point, by the views of Santosh Rana. Santosh Rana is no internationally-acclaimed public

intellectual with a location in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As he reported in a lengthy interview to the journal *Seminar* recently (Rana, 2010), he was one of the original participants in the naxalite movement. Following rapid divisions in the movement, as noted, he joined the CPI (ML) led by Charu Mazumdar, went underground and spent years in the now-famous Jangalmahal area organising a peasant uprising. In the process, the party “eliminated” about 120 landlords in that area as part of its “annihilation campaign.” As the movement broke up under severe state repression, Rana—with other leaders of those times such as Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santhal, and Asim Chatterjee—were arrested, while others were killed in encounters, fake or real. Charu Mazumdar himself died a “natural death” in prison, according to the police (Mukhopadhyay, 2006).

After spending years in jail and undergoing torture, Rana was finally released under the general amnesty scheme for political prisoners announced by the just-elected left front government in West Bengal in 1977. Almost immediately, he returned to his location of struggle in Jangalmahal and began to re-organise the deeply fragmented movement. He is *still there* working among peasants, adivasis, dalits, and other backward communities. His organisation is called Provisional Central Committee, Communist Party of India, Marxist-Leninist (PCC, CPI (ML)). He is also one of the principal organisers of a mass front in the area known as *Jharkhand Andolan Samanway Manch*, JASM (Jharkhand Unity Forum), comprising of a variety of radical groups and organisations. When Santosh Rana talks about resistance movements in India, he knows what he is talking about.

As with the authors mentioned in this chapter, Rana agrees with the first part of the Maoist discourse. “Since early nineties,” he says, “the regimes both at the Centre and the states have been spreading the tentacles of neoliberal global economy across the country that resulted into the concentration of wealth in the hands of 27 super-rich families. This concentration of wealth has been reflected in the country’s politics also. Never before Indian parliaments have so many *crorepatis* [multimillionaires] as its members.” Linking this class character of the Indian parliament with the repressive anti-people policies of the state, Rana contends that “it was hardly unexpected that none of the 540 MPs had opposed the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) ... this has only reduced the democratic space with the parliamentary system.”

But this reduction of the parliamentary space does not lend credibility to the programme of the Maoist party since “in reality, both the State and the so-called Maoists are taking complementary roles in shrivelling the democratic space.” His (strong) criticism of the Maoist party involves several steps.

First, he holds that “we have to understand that no revolution in our age will be successful without addressing the question of democracy.” He illustrates the point with several historical examples: imposition of one-party state was the main reason for the Soviet debacle; proletarian dictatorship in China has now degenerated into a capitalist heaven because the party dictatorship was consolidated in the name of people’s democracy; Rosa Luxemburg was one of those few revolutionary thinkers who foresaw the dangers posed to the Russian revolution because of the denial of democracy. In general, “there is no reason to believe anymore that the rule of the communist party is synonymous with working class rule.”

Second, the Indian case contrasts sharply with that of Russia and China because there “the people had accepted the party rule in the name of the class since bourgeois parliamentary democracy was rudimentary or non-existent in pre-revolutionary Russia and China.” In india, “parliamentary democracy, despite its all travesties [as above], has taken roots down to the villages.” Thus, “revolutionaries have to move ahead in India not by shrinking the parliamentary democracy but by expanding it. For us, the basic question should be more and more power to the people in order to make the democracy meaningful in the lives of the millions.”

This is where the Maoist party has failed Indian people since “there is no democracy in the so-called people’s committees and people’s courts ... the Maoists’ squads dictate everything in the name of people. Any dissenters will risk beating, even killing.” In the name of developing a people’s movement, “they are forcing people to join their rally, extracting tax from them, compelling the supporters of CPM and other political parties to give undertaking at the point of gun.” Referring to the bitterly-contested Lalgarh area in Jangalmahal where he himself works, Rana reports that the Maoists “have turned the people of Lalgarh into cannon-fodder” (see also Hensman, 2010).

Third, Rana also finds deep parallels between the operations of the LTTE and the Maoist party. He says that the Maoists are “in fact following not only the LTTE military

line but also its political line. Prabhakaran had exterminated all other Tamil groups. In the end, he got exterminated.” In fact, both the mass front Jharkhand Unity Forum and PCC, CPI (ML) have issued a series of appeals and statements to highlight this point. Here are some excerpts from an appeal to intellectuals and other democratic forces issued by the forum on 25 August 2009:

The Maoists who were in the leadership of the movement in Lalgarh and Belpahari resorted to the method of resolving all contradictions with other forces participating in the movement with the use of force ... A virtual ban was imposed on activities of all other political parties ... It is a matter of regret that the Maoists are attacking the activists and supporters of Jharkhand movement. Nearly a dozen of Jharkhand supporters including Sudhir Mandi, Sarna Bara Besra, Manik Mandi, Rampada Mandal, Sankar Tudu, Kaliram Singh, Gopal Sardar, Karan Murmu, Lal Murmu have been killed by Maoist squads. All of them are poor dalits and adivasis. Moreover, more than 70 supporters of the CPI (M) and some supporters of PCPA have also been killed. They, too, are all poor dalits and adivasis. We condemn all these killings ... We want an environment where any political party can propagate its line and organize the masses and where every individual may freely follow or not follow any political party.

Over the years, there are many instances of Maoists killing grassroots activists, including other naxalites and adivasis. An even more recent example is the killing of Niyamat Ansari on 2 March, 2011 in Jharkhand. According to one fact finding report, Ansari was deeply engaged in a variety of peaceful struggles against the state—especially the widespread corruption in the implementation of pro-people projects such as NREGA; he was also a close associate of Jean Dreze. According to this report, Maoists, some state officials and contractors joined hands in this murder. In a letter to Jean Dreze (15 April, 2011), Santosh Rana said (excerpts):

I heard about the murder of NREGA activist Niyamat Ansari in Latehar by a Maoist squad ... This murder, along with many other murders committed by the Maoists in Jharkhand, Lalgarh and other areas is the inevitable culmination of a line followed by the Maoists—the line of establishing exclusive control

over any area by physically eliminating not only their opponents but any activism which is different from them ... From the beginning of the movement in Lalgarh we have steadfastly supported the people's agitation against police repression and for autonomy of Jangalmahal ... Most significant was the participation of *Bharat Jakat Majhi Marwa*, a social organization of Santhals. But the Maoists destroyed the people's unity by killing Sudhir Mandi in the end of November 2008. Sudhir was a leader of *Majhi Marwa* ... His only offence was that he refused to act according to orders of the Maoist squads ... I drew the attention of a team of intellectuals from Delhi (led by Amit Bhaduri and Gautam Navlakha) who visited Lalgarh in early 2009 to this incident ... But nobody bothered about it. During 2009 and 2010, more than 400 people have been killed by the Maoists in Jangalmahal, most of them being adibasis, dalits and other poor people ... Now, on the eve of the Assembly election they are hand in glove with the Trinamool Congress and are helping them to win the seats in the Jangalmahal.

Finally, Rana holds that "the Maoist experiments in alternative development are all sham. They are not interested in these school, health centre- or road-buildings. These are basically ideas of some city-based sympathizers, attempted half-heartedly." As I mentioned, Rana knows what he is talking about since he has been *there* for over four decades.

By now, the broad naxalite movement has formed such a complex phylogenetic tree that it is difficult to reach definitive general conclusions from the naxalite voices just cited. For one, current naxalite groups branched out from the original source at different points of time under different—often traumatic—circumstances. As such, there is a marked tendency in each group to defend its own history from that point onwards. Much of that history involved some degree of armed struggle somewhere as most of the groups are still led by veterans of the original movement; there is also the issue of identity to distinguish themselves from the parliamentary left. So, except perhaps for Santosh Rana, it is psychologically and publicly difficult for them to advocate essentially non-violent means for achieving a just society.

For another, since each of them somehow belonged to the original tree, they all share a rather rigid and doctrinaire form of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism; the entire naxalite family has basically ignored the “new left” and social justice movements and ideas that have dominated Western radical thinking since the 1960s, and have penetrated movements in latin america as well (Nigam, 2009; 2010). Thus, naxalite criticism of Maoists is compelled to work within a rather restricted set of choices. Moreover, there is the lingering “Bush” doctrine that prohibits outright rejection of Maoist politics even when one points out fundamental flaws with the form and content of the movement.

Still, even if the prospect of a distant armed struggle is raised as a flag of identity marking naxalite politics, a non-doctrinaire conception of Indian reality seems to be emerging as well. There are two aspects to this conception: (1) a greater appreciation of electoral politics as one of the salient reformist means to ensure welfare for the vast masses of people in India, and (2) the problems that armed struggles face in the impressive diversity and development of the Indian context. What is not yet fully appreciated is that the second is actually inconsistent with the first in the Indian context, perhaps in any context if the first option is available at all.⁶ This is what the Maoists in Nepal realized once a widespead armed struggle created the conditions for establishing a republic based on universal franchise, and the institutions supporting these basic means. In other words, once the first option was made available *through armed struggle*, the second option immediately became infructuous. My own sense is that, except for the Maoists, naxalites in India are very close to appreciate the inconsistency between (1) and (2) even if it is difficult to give up a dogma that has sustained much revolutionary enthusiasm for many decades since the uprising in Telengana in the 1940s.

Insofar as the Maoist party is concerned, I hope to have shown with some clarity and detail by now that almost every aspect of their undemocratic—often demonic—character, including the inability to form a mass base anywhere except in areas of near-absolute destitution such as the shrinking adivasi belts, can be traced to the adoption of armed struggle. The essentially undemocratic character of their armed struggle leads to other aspects of moral and political perversion. To say this is not to rule out the prospect of armed struggle. It is quite possible that all other efforts of ensuring genuine welfare for the poor and the unempowered might fail. But then armed struggle will become a

necessity *demand*ed by the poor out of their own understanding of that failed context. Until that point, once a workable electoral system is made grudgingly available to the people by the ruling dispensations, it cannot be an *a priori* intellectual goal in advance to prepare for an armed struggle.

Some radical thinkers might argue that elections do not lead to fundamental social change; they do not shape a new society. If the adivasis in Bastar are able to earn Kerala-type wages, have access to safe drinking water and reliable medical facilities, if their children have decent and free school education, and so on, won't that be a "fundamental social change" *at this point*? Isn't that what Dr. Binayak Sen and Himanshu Kumar are fighting for individually without much success? Of course, there is no suggestion here that adivasi welfare is to be restricted to this minimal list. But isn't it then the right of the well-nourished and secured adivasi to formulate a more advanced list after exhausting the scope of the first as the dalits are beginning to articulate in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh after much success in Tamilnadu? Or is there an intellectual blue-print formulated in advance of the wishes of the people?

The radical concern about "shaping a new society" is appreciated. But the historical experience is that, after some initial populist measures to consolidate the rule of the elites, welfare measures are often progressively withdrawn as the "new" societies get old. Thus, withdrawal of welfarist measures happened not only in US, Europe, and now in neoliberal India, but also in Russia, China, Vietnam, Sandinista's Nicaragua, Mandela's South Africa, and the like which were "shaped" with promises of "new society." Thus, resistance ought to be unbounded without any expectations of a permanent shape. The state and the resistance to it are a (continuous) process in that sense everywhere. Any programme of political action that dismantles the possibility of such resistance even temporarily is to be rejected outright: no excuses for infantile socialism, unsettled new democratic revolution, fragile democracy, etc. As long as societies are unable to formulate the shape of a new society with people genuinely at the center, and *with their mass approval*, the only route is to resist injustice and indignity wherever they show up. What shape the collection of such resistance—"million mutinies"—will lead up to is not for any "vanguard" to articulate in advance.

The perspective of continuous resistance just sketched is directly linked to the value of elections since elections seem to be only method available to sustain the perspective. In this light, we can view the Nepal uprising as a country-wide articulation of the point; the armed struggle by Maoists in Nepal essentially made free vote available to every citizen. Availability of free vote then assumes something of an absolute value. No doubt, elections are extremely complex, there are too many issues, conflicting interests and aspirations, too much dust and grime, and far too many compromises on the ground; perhaps the most overriding problem is the palpable disobedience on the faces of the poor when the elites seek their votes with folded hands. Although elections lack the pristine character of an unfolding blue-print directed at an assenting audience, they are direct expressions of people's power.

Notes

¹ For a balanced review, see Gopalakrishnan (2010).

² <http://sanhati.com/articles/2431/>

³ <http://sanhati.com/articles/2610/>. Navlakha has formed the interesting belief that “be it NREGA, the forest bill or the decision to enforce Panchayat Extension to Schedule Areas, which was passed in 1996 but not implemented and so many other such issues figure on the agenda thanks to the fear that were this not done the poorest among the poor will continue to turn to Maoists.” So, the credit for NREGA, FRA, PESA, Right to Education, planned legislations on right to healthcare, right to food, etc. goes to the Maoists (I wonder why RTI wasn’t mentioned)! Hence, “it would be a recipe for disaster to surrender the right to offer armed resistance until such time that the State outlaws war against the people,” Navlakha insists.

⁴ Also, Patnaik (2011).

⁵ Closer to home, it is clear that one of the main reasons for the downfall of the left-front government in West Bengal in recent elections is the increasingly authoritarian character of governance orchestrated with a complex network of cadres, party apparatchiks and the police. See Mukherji (2008; 2009; 2011).

⁶ The Maoists are very clear on this point about inconsistency, but from the opposite direction. According to their policy document, “it is an error to hold that, alongwith other war-strategies, [participation in elections] is another war-strategy if it fits in with the strategy of seizure of power through protracted war.” It is an error because participation in elections “has nothing to do with the ebb and tide of revolution.” “Tactics and strategies of Indian Revolution” (in Bengali), *Aneek*, July 2010.

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