



Social Movement, Conflict and Change:

Towards a Theoretical Orientation¹

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Introduction

'As they evolved in Western countries', contends Charles Tilly, 'social movements combined three major elements: (1) sustained campaigns of *claim-making*; (2) an array of *public performances* including marches, rallies, processions, demonstrations, occupations, picket lines, blockades, public meetings, delegations, statements to and in public media, petition drives, letter-writing, pamphleteering, lobbying, and creation of specialised associations, coalitions, or fronts – in short, the social movement repertoire; and (3) repeated *public displays* of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment (WUNC) by such means as wearing colors, marching in disciplined ranks, sporting badges that advertise the cause, displaying signs, chanting slogans, singing militant songs, and picketing public buildings.' (Tilly 2006: 183-84; emphasis added)

Two other points he makes merit noting: (1) social movements have only now become ubiquitous, 'at least in relatively democratic countries', but come to think of it, they 'had never existed anywhere in the world three centuries ago.' 'Western Europeans and North Americans' were the ones to have put 'the elements of a new political form' in the late eighteenth century, which became available to the 'ordinary people' in these countries in the first half of the nineteenth century even 'as it began spreading to the other parts of the world.' (ibid: 182-82) (2) Social movements had to be distinguished from collective violence, which refer to phenomena such as civil war and terrorism, including revolts rebellions and state spon-

sored terrorism. (ibid: 118-50).²

In this formulation, social movements perform a functional role within a largely democratic framework. The means and mode of protest lie within the permissible limits of regulation of social order. Implicitly, there was a pre-social movement era, much the same as the pre-modern era. It is indigenous to the West, but getting universalised.

Wallerstein distinguishes between 'social' and 'national' movements, which nonetheless reveal 'a series of shared features' within the period 1850 and 1970. The former, 'were conceived primarily as socialist parties and trade unions; they sought to further the class struggle within each state against the bourgeoisie or the employers.' The latter 'were those which fought for the creation of a national state, either by combining separate political units that were considered to be part of one nation – as, for example, in Italy – or by seceding from states considered imperial and oppressive by the nationality in question – colonies in Asia or Africa, for instance.' (2002: 29) He locates the emergence of these movements in the second half of the nineteenth century. The role of violence or its absence is left open in this framework.

In recent times, the distinction is made between 'old' and 'new' social movements (NSM), the former referring to labour and working class movements; whilst the latter, to movements in the 'postindustrial' society in which 'other social cleavages become more salient and generate new identities, and the exercise of power is less in the realm of work and more in "the

setting of a way of life, forms of behavior, and needs” (Touraine cited in Edelman, 2001: 288). Touraine ‘excludes from this category, however, forms of “collective behavior” that “defend” the social order or “social struggles” directed at the state.’ (Edelman, 2001: 288) In general, ‘the NSMs emerge out of the crisis of modernity and focus on struggles over symbolic, informational, and cultural resources and rights to specificity and difference.’ (ibid: 289) Melucci identifies three important dimensions of social movement: (a) commonalities, shared identities, objectives and understandings among the actors; (b) ‘adversarial relations with opposition who claim the same goods or values’; and (c) ‘actions that exceed the tolerance limits of a social system, thereby pushing it to change.’ (Ibid 2001: 289)

In the largely European discourse, the theoretical premises of both the old and new social movements have their structural bases in social conflict having consequences for social change. Mainly developed in North America, the ‘rational-actor postulate’ (Olsen) and the ‘strategy oriented’ paradigm (Cohen) underlie the resource mobilisation (RM) theorisation. Couched in terminologies of ‘social movement industries’, ‘social movement organisations’, ‘movement entrepreneurs’, who ‘had the task of mobilising resources and channeling discontent into organizational forms’, the RM theories considered ‘collective action mainly as interest group politics played out by socially connected groups rather than by the most disaffected.’ (Ibid: 2001: 289) To this was added the proposition of political opportunity structure (POS) which introduced the element of perceived opportunities or threats posed by the ‘challengers’, and equally, the element of facilitation or repression likely to be exercised by the authorities.

Historical and contextual factors such as a strong Marxist tradition leading to a social democratic consensus in Europe; its absence in North America, and the strong civil rights movement that has characterised it; provide the two models that are consistent with their respective historicities. Each of these experiences has an element of indigenosity with respect to their evolution. It follows that if these experiences of collective action could differ across the Atlantic,

then they need not qualify to be universal for other regions of the world like Asia or Latin America or Africa, although, surely, their experiences cannot be discounted in reaching out for more universalistic formulations.

I propose to attempt a theoretical orientation/framework that is not constrained by any historicity, while permitting analysis of the historical evolution of social movements in their social and cultural specificity. The South Asian experience in general, and the Indian, in particular, provide extraordinary rich experience of numerous varieties of social mobilisations over time. The claim that social movement is of Western origin linked with an earlier stage of the plight of the working class during the industrial revolution and development of capitalism; and subsequently, with social and cultural alienations that the postindustrial era produced, will have to be re-examined in the light of the experiences of the postcolonial and developing world.

Drawing from my personal researches on agrarian, ‘revolutionary’ and other movements I have been attempting a comprehensive theoretical orientation/framework³ (as distinguished from theory per se) for a more efficient comprehension of the dynamics of social movement and change. It has therefore a good bit of inductive indigenous input, consistent with the position I hold that indigeneity is an essential condition of universalising social sciences, as long as we are searching for the universals in the particulars in different knowledge and cultural contexts. Such an exercise, I believe, benefits from an approach, which Merton long ago described as ‘disciplined eclecticism’. The search for ‘truth’ in this kind of thinking cannot be circumscribed within any single theoretical school or paradigm, nor does it mean that we have necessarily to involve all existing paradigms. It does mean that in the course of ‘truth seeking’ no holds are barred in following the logic of selection from the available repertoire of theories and paradigms. In this paper, I propose to extend and build on the theoretical exercise I began in 1977. I shall confine my illustrations to the Maoist movement in India.

Theoretical Orientation⁴

Three essentials, without which social movement cannot be conceptualised, are social conflict, social or collective mobilisation and social change, *in their interrelation*. None of these singly constitute social movement. Collective mobilisation in the face of sudden natural disaster, or for pulse polio campaign, or for combating AIDS, by themselves do not qualify as social movements. If these lead to collective mobilisations against perpetrators of environmental degradation, or against those who in the medical profession/general public practice unwarranted discrimination against AIDS victims, then such mobilisations link up with conflict and change.

The central concern in the study of movements, as Gusfield long back observed, is 'its relation to the analysis of change and social conflict.' (1970: 8) This leads us to question: do revolts, rebellions, revolutions fall outside the pale of social movements, as Tilly, based on his Western historical experience seems to contend explicitly?⁵

I argue that this can be answered if we regard social movement as the *generic*, and the other forms of socially mobilised social conflicts as the *species* type. This would unfold a complex variety of social movements and conflicts that would tend to dilute analytical precision. To counter this it is important to inter-relate social movement, conflict and change within a single dynamic framework that can capture structure, change process and change. In our framework, social movement, when it has to do with social change, includes resistance to change.

The first step is to classify the variety of social changes. Since social movements are inevitably related to social conflict and to social change (either change promoting or resisting), classification of social change is primary to an understanding of social movements. Only then will we be able to relate social movements with the changes they *intend* to address and the nature of conflicts involved.

This requires some notion of a social system that is structured in terms of *interrelated*⁶ and *interpenetrating* 'parts' (structures), such that changes in any one or more of these will have likely consequences for

one or more or all of the others. Both Marxist and non-Marxist theoretical approaches that sport a preference for a structural understanding of society, either in the functional or dialectical frame, entertain some notion of 'social system'. What distinguishes various approaches to this conceptualisation lies in how the structures are conceived and in what manner of relationships they are constitutive of the system. In the broadest sense, a social system is a system of social interaction of its 'parts' (or structures). Lastly, any social system is an abstraction relative to a *system referent* (family, caste, bureaucracy, party, society, country, international, global, and so on).

Social conflicts, as they are understood here, are overt manifestations of collective behaviour, rather than as potentials for action and to subjective states. They refer to conflicts 'in which the parties are an aggregate of individuals, such as groups, organisations, communities and crowds, rather than single individuals, as in role conflict...[S]ocial conflict encompasses a broad range of phenomena: class, racial, religious, and communal conflicts; riots, rebellions, revolutions, strikes and civil disorders; marches, demonstrations, protest gatherings, and the like'. (Oberschall, 1973: 291) While there can be no social conflict in the absence of any relations of antagonism, it is equally true that the mere presence of social antagonism does not trigger a social conflict. Manifestation of social conflict is 'contingent upon to what extent and in what manner a given society is structured, permitting or inhibiting the articulation or expression of dissent or antagonisms and their resolution or neutralisation through institutional means'. (Mukherji, 1986: 26) Many studies of social conflict start with a typology 'based on the *forms it takes and the ultimate outcome*, e.g. revolution, rebellion, riot, coup d'etat, or guerilla war, or *classification based on the social categories of the participants and social institutions primarily affected*, e.g. peasant rebellion, political conflict or economic conflict.' (Oberschall 1973: 32; emphasis added) The general applicability of such typological efforts being less than satisfactory their analytical utility is diminished.

Like social conflict, social change too admits of a wide array of phenomena from attitude changes, to

pattern variables, to notions of development, progress, evolution, revolution, and the like. The inadequacy of classifications of conflict and change, unrelated to each other, is of limited salience. Precisely for this reason, I am arguing for classifying social change in relation to social movement and conflict.

Paradoxically, it is from the classical, conservative, functional perspective that Talcott Parsons makes the crucial classificatory distinction 'between kinds of change...in his analysis of change *within* and change *of* the system...' (Strasser and Randall, 1981: 12) Two clarifications are crucial before I propose the classificatory scheme. First, social conflicts are not a necessary condition for social change. Social changes can and do occur independent of social conflicts, for example, through changes in technology, demography,

environment and such other factors, or even as a consequence of natural disasters. Second, social changes occurring independent of social movements, in fact, may provide the objective conditions for the maturation of social conflicts and movements.

Social changes can now be classified in terms of:

- Changes occurring *within* a given social system;
- Changes occurring on account of the *emergence* of additional structures;
- Changes occurring due to the *elimination* or *loss* of structure/s;
- Changes occurring as a result of *replacement* of existing structure/s by alternative structure/s. (Mukherji 1977, 1986)

Social movements, in this framework, cover the

Table 1: Classification of Social change, conflict and movement.

Description of change	Type of change	Type of conflict	Type of conflict
Changes occurring within a given system	Quasi-structural/ accumulative/ Intra-systemic	Intra-systemic	Quasi-structural social movement (e.g. role of pressure and interest groups, grievance redressal, etc.)
Changes occurring from emergence of additional structure/s	Structural/ Alterative/ Systemic	Systemic	Structural-alterative social movement (e.g. introduction of wage labour in a feudal area with only attached labour; abolition sharecropping)
Changes occurring due to elimination or loss of structure/s			
Changes occurring as a result of replacement of existing structure/s by alternative structure/s	Structural/ Transformative/ Systemic		Structural-transformatory/ revolutionary social movement (e.g. replacement of state ownership of property by private ownership; the Maoist movement.)

Source: Adapted and revised from Mukherji (1987: 1608)

entire gamut of social mobilisations that characterise Tilly’s conceptualisation of social movements; or movements that fall within the categories ‘old’ and ‘new’; even revolutionary movements that do or do not employ violence. *Only when social/collective mobilisations emanate from sources of perceived, real or imagined, antagonistic relationships embedded in the contradictions within the social system, would they qualify as social movements.* Contradiction and conflict are the key concepts in this scheme of analysis. Classification of social movements provides an analytical tool by which we can distinguish between the generic and the species types.

Quasi structural social movements operate *within* the social system. The changes sought to be brought about are accumulative and incremental seeking to improve the capacity and efficient functioning of the social system through pressure group demands and

grievance redressal. Social movements in this category help in the gradual evolution of the social system. Tilly’s conceptualisation of social movements does not go very much beyond this threshold. Over a long stretch of time, such accumulative changes may lead to structural changes.

Social movements that seek to or are instrumental in bringing about *alterative* changes in the social system, by *creation* of additional structure/s or *elimination* of structure/s are *structural-alterative* social movements. The addition or elimination of structure/s in some way alters the social system. For example, a feudal agrarian system based almost entirely on a landlord-tenant-attached labour undergoes *alterative* changes as wage labour becomes another structural component of the system, or when share-cropping tenancy gets eliminated and a basically landowner-wage labour agrarian system emerges.

Table 2: Social movement, change and praxis

Means/praxis	Change promoting/resisting movement	
	Intra-systemic	Systemic
Institutional	Quasi-structural movement e.g. strikes, lockouts, protest marches for legitimate demands and redressal of grievances. <i>Stable state [A]</i>	Quasi-structural tending towards structural-alterative. e.g. Union claims for decision making powers. <i>Unstable state [B']</i>
Non-institutional	Quasi-structural tending towards structural e.g. peasant revolt for 2/3rd crop share from existing 1/2. <i>Unstable state[B'']</i>	Tending towards revolutionary movements e.g. Naxalite movement Charu Mazumdar underground phase. <i>Unstable state: Flux. [C']</i>
Institutional-Non-institutional	Quasi-social movement tending towards structural social movement. <i>Unstable state</i> e.g. riots, rebellions peasant revolts against oppression, exploitation. <i>Unstable state [B''']</i>	Situation of flux. Social transformatory and revolutionary movements e.g. structural changes associated with rebellion, revolution, terrorism, civil disobedience, satyagraha etc. <i>Unstable state: Flux.[C'']</i>

Source: Adapted and revised from Mukherji (1987: 1608)

Structural-transformative social movements occur when replacement of one or more or all structures take place bringing about transformative changes in the system. Consider replacement of private ownership by state ownership. It is a far-reaching transformative change. Carried to its logical end, when all or most of the major institutions of society are replaced by *alternative*⁷ structures, we are witnessing a *revolutionary social movement*.

While classification provides for much-needed conceptual clarification, it is not a substitute for a theoretical orientation, which should enable a better comprehension of the dynamic of social movements, and possibly generate meaningful hypotheses. With this in view, I have tried to factor in the *means employed to achieve movement ends*, namely, the notion of praxis, to introduce an element of the 'dynamic' in the model. Thus, *institutionalised* or *non-institutionalised* means or a combination of both can be employed as *short-term tactics* or *long-term strategies* by movements.

A few conceptual clarifications are important. Institutional means refer to the repertoire of forms of collective actions legitimated by the state for voicing dissent; seeking redressal of grievances; bargaining for better deals in the competition for power and scarce resources; and the like. Social mobilisations in antagonistic relations with others, per se, do not pose a threat to the social system. The rules of the game prevail in the means adopted for the pursuit of legitimate goals. This is the most predominant and pervasive form of social movements.

Non-institutional means are of the opposite kind. Violent or non-violent, they attract the coercive power of the state and of those constituting the ruling elite, particularly when the threat perception to the system crosses permissive limits of tolerance. They pose a threat to the system; consequently to those entrenched in the system. Social movements don't necessarily have to be directed against the state.

It is essential to remember that all social movements *intend* to bring about certain changes in or of the social system, but there is no guarantee of their total or partial fulfillment. On the contrary, it often results in *unintended* consequences as well. Social

movements may remain resilient, if the contradictions that gave rise to them persisted. If these contradictions lost their primacy, either on account of movements having partially or fully achieved their goals or because of some other external factors, the movements either routinise into a party or some organisation, or shift goals more relevant to other emerging contradictions, or just fade away. Movement outcomes are a function of the dialectic of social conflict between contending groups.

This dynamic model envisages six types of situations:

- Social movements seeking quasi-structural, accumulative changes through legitimated institutional means. Trade union mobilisations for better emoluments, service conditions, and against perceived victimisation would fall in this category. [A]
- Social movements seeking systemic changes but through institutionalised means. Trade Unions are now demanding a share in the power of decision making, e.g. membership in the board of directors. This is not permitted in the existing system. The demand is potentially de-stabilising. If the social movement persists and the authorities are intractable in their stand, the collective mobilisation may take recourse to non-institutionalised means. Hence the situation is at a low unstable state [B']. Trade unions may decide not to pursue the demand beyond a certain point.
- Social movements seeking quasi-structural changes through non-institutionalised means reflect an unstable situation. The threat is not to the system as such and yet the disaffection and alienation of the collective mobilisation is sufficiently strong to push it towards adopting non-legitimate means. The agrarian struggle in Bengal in the forties with the tenants demanding 2/3rds of the crop share, already recommended by the British, led to violent class struggle. The radical slogan of 'land to the tiller' found expression during the course of the movement. Subsequently, this would acquire a revolutionary form under Maoist inspiration in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, present Chhattisgarh. [B'']
- Social movements seeking systemic changes through

non-institutionalised means provide a situation of flux that can escalate into transformative or revolutionary movements. The militant underground phase of the Naxalite (Maoist) movement under Charu Mazumdar that spread from West Bengal to Andhra Pradesh and to some other states with lesser intensity is a classic example of such a transition. [C']

- Social movements seeking quasi-structural changes through a combination of institutional and non-institutional means reflects an uncertain situation in as much as there is greater persistence and insistence on change outcomes, against resistance. Social movements that employ mass movements along with covert instruments of violence would qualify as an illustration. Again, this would include Maoist parties that have not abjured violence in their ideology, keeping it handy for exceptional circumstances, but actually furthering their cause through mass movements and participation in so-called bourgeois parliamentary democracy. [B''']

- Social movements seeking transformatory and revolutionary social changes clearly target institutions that they aim to replace with alternative institutions by a combination of non-institutional and institutional means. Such movements make use of all variety of available or possible social mobilisations directed towards quasi-structural, structural-alterative demands that cumulate under a more overarching, transformative and revolutionary ideology and mobilisation. The Gandhian sarvodaya–gramdan movement of the sixties and the Maoist movement post-seventies are classic illustrations. Nationalist and secessionist nationalist movements too can fall in this category. [C''']

The model integrating social movement, conflict and change can now be situated within a broader theoretical perspective. I have already clarified that the notion of social system is analytically more useful if it is shifted out of its functionalist description as *interdependency* of 'parts', to that of a system of asymmetrical *interrelationship* of its 'parts'.

A social system at the macro-societal level can be conceived as constituted of *domains* of social relations of asymmetries. The number of domains a social sys-

tem can be divided into is the researcher's prerogative, although the major ones drawn from the substantive field of the discipline will carry consensus. I have suggested that we conceive of society being composed of five major domains of asymmetries – discrimination (ethnic), exploitation (class), oppression (power), gender discrimination, and the eco-environmental asymmetry. These are counter-concepts describing a social system. No society (except in utopia) in contemporary times is likely to be free from these domainal asymmetries. These domains are interrelated, interpenetrating and hence, *interfaced*.

Discrimination essentially conveys the context of normatively legitimated relations of asymmetry that are internalised generally from birth through family and childhood socialisation. This is the domain of primordial, ascriptive loyalties that provide major cultural anchorages on the basis of language, caste, race, religion, creed, etc. This is the *ethnic* domain.

Exploitation is best applied in the context of unequal economic exchanges in the normatively defined role of the market, and in the relations of production. This is the *class* domain.

Oppression has to do with the control and exercise of power. It defines the relationship between the dominant and the dominated. It also implies deliberate impediments created to obstruct access to power of the less privileged. This is the *power* domain.

Gender discrimination refers to the iniquitous relationship between male and female in a system of gender relations.

Eco-environmental asymmetry is basically the asymmetry between humankind in its relation of exploitation of nature.

Embedded in each of these asymmetries are contradictions, *'defined as actual or potential oppositions arising out of differences that are socially perceived, sooner or later, and/or ideologically/theoretically constructed, having changel/transformation (or resistance to changel/transformation) consequences for the social system under reference.'* (Mukherji 1999: 61) Contradictions

can be antagonistic but not always. The presence of antagonistic contradictions does not *ipso facto* give rise to social conflicts nor to social movements. However, a strong social movement is the surest indication of the existence of antagonistic contradiction/s that triggered the movement.

The type of a social movement can be identified in terms of the locus of its *primary contradiction*. Competing/conflicting interests associated with the conflict facilitates the location and identification of the primary contradiction/s. Caste conflicts and movements, for instance, would mean that the primary contradictions lie in the asymmetrical domain of social discrimination. An agrarian conflict will signify the location of primary contradiction in the domain of exploitation. A movement against *suttee* is surely centred on the primary contradiction of gender inequity.

In this framework, the primary contradiction is not deterministically fixed in any domain. A social movement arising out of primary contradiction in any one domain may be overtaken, at a subsequent stage, by another in the same or different domain. This is because the domains are interfaced. A strong caste-ethnic movement, with the primary contradiction located in the domain of discrimination, for example, is likely to have interfaces with secondary contradictions within the same domain (say, in religious ethnicity) or in the domain of class exploitation, cutting across caste.

I have classified social movements at two different levels of abstraction: (a) with respect to classification of social change and conflict; and (b) at the domainal level of asymmetries of social relationships. By and large, the social space within which social movements have been taking place have had boundaries circumscribed within 'national', 'country', or 'societal' territories. With the advent of technology-driven, time-and-space-compressing-globalisation, the space for social movements has also expanded to global proportions. This has given birth to a new species of transnational social movements in response to transnational institutions that operate over and above the nation-states. The market liberalising economic regime that dominates the world have consequences

for nation-states of the world. The World Trade Organisation and the expanded role of International Monetary Fund are global structures that have come about in response liberalisation of world trade. Summit meetings of the world's largest market players are necessitated to decide on future economic strategies that have consequences for people at the 'local' level in different countries. This has led to structural responses at the global level – namely, transnational activism; International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs); World Social Forums (WSFs) held at intervals; anti-corporatist social movements; and the like.

While this is not the place to go into this vast social terrain that is still unfolding, two points have to be kept in mind. First, globalisation as it is impacting on the local has become a new source exacerbating existing contradictions and giving rise to new ones. For example, acquisition of agricultural lands for corporate private industrialisation (special economic zones) has generated a contradiction that has led to strong social movements opposing such capitalist penetration. Even with globalisation, the operational space for such movements remains largely unaltered – bounded by the 'national', 'societal' or 'country'. The abstraction of domainal asymmetries remains valid. Second, large amorphous transnational social movements that operate at the global scale within a transnational global space, responding to contradictions that have global import, creating, as some suggest, the ground for global civil society, are too complex to fathom at this initial stage of its evolution. Whether the interests opposing economic globalisation are truly global concerns (climate change) or still country-specific (subsidy for agriculture) has not yet been firmly established. (see Edelman, 2001; Nash, 2005)

I shall now make a brief attempt to understand Naxalism as a pervasive structural-transformative-revolutionary movement.

Naxalism: Indian Maoism

Consistent with the theoretical orientation, I have argued that similar goals in different societal contexts may have different implications of their being achieved. A structurally evolved, socially and politically differentiated democratic societal context is more likely to generate and accommodate quasi-structural movements associated with intra-systemic conflicts. The capacity of adaptive changes is higher in such societies with institutionally legitimated groups, representing competing and conflicting interests; than ones in which structural elaboration is less developed. In the latter context, the intensity of conflict even for intra-systemic changes can run very high and the scope for structural-alterative-transformative-revolutionary changes is relatively greater.

I will argue that Naxalism or the Mao-inspired social movements for structural-transformative-revolutionary changes that have taken place almost exclusively in remote, backward, mostly tribal, less-communicable areas of the country, are the very regions where the responsible role of the democratic state has least penetrated, leaving feudal enclaves to persist and prosper outside the ambit of governance of the state. The demolition of these feudal vestiges may be transformatory with respect to the backward region, but not so for the environment external to it, where feudal structures are getting dismantled through market and other social forces such as farmers movements. By stating this, I will not like to undermine the complexity of the phenomenon nor cling exclusively and narrowly to my theoretical position.

It is impossible to do justice to the immensely complex phenomena of Naxalite politics within the scope of this paper. One cannot be certain how many parties and groups are involved and active in this overarching politics⁸, save and except those that have expanded in their operations of violent class struggles to the point where the national government feels threatened and is compelled to act.⁹

It is the Naxalite formation following the merger of the CPI-ML People's War Group (PWG) with the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in September 2004 that has posed a real threat to the state. Bal-

agopal, one of the most authentic voices of the poor, whose appreciation for the Naxalite achievements is well known, traces the passage of the PWG movement (later known as, CPI-Maoist), through several phases. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was through mass organisations of agricultural labourers, student and youth fronts that the spread of Maoism as ideology and political practice was initiated. In the *second* phase, the achievement of a heightened awareness of 'attainability of justice was [itself] a fundamental change' in the psyche of the exploited and oppressed tribal population., but it was accompanied by a gradual, barely perceptible, dependence of the people on armed squads. Consequently, 'oppressors of local society, whether upper caste landlords or insensitive public officials, started dreading the wrath, initially of the awakened masses, and later of well-armed squads composed of cadre born and brought up in poor families of the very same villages.' In the *third* phase, old landlords were gone, but new local elites had emerged, instilling the fear among the poor that without the Naxalites they would face a survival threat (Balagopal 2006:3183). Apparently, the dependence on the Naxalite armed squads was now established. *The gradual shift from institutionalised to non-institutionalised means for the accomplishment of structural changes in the prevailing feudalistic agrarian system had taken place during this period.* The social system was moving from a stable to a less stable state.

The Naxals were 'remarkably successful', observes Balagopal, in eliminating the institution of '*begar*' or the system of unpaid labour, and were able to enforce 'close to minimum wages for rural labour.' Two 'constitutional tasks' were achieved. (Ibid: 3184) On the issue of land, the fight was 'not so successful', as the lands belonging to 'runaway landlords' remained fallow under police protection. However, they were more successful in getting forests cleared over a period of 15 years in four lakh acres of land making it fit for cultivation. Thereafter, they stopped felling trees in the very interest of the tribals. (Ibid: 3184) The elimination of '*begar*' certainly altered the structural arrangement of the prevailing feudal agrarian system.

The use of violence by Naxals that 'lived by its own norms, which [were] enforceable only by itself',

attracted heavy State suppression. Maoists decided to take on the state and began hitting back from onwards of June 1985, killing police personnel. The frequency of encounters with police went on increasing and with it the '[d]ecapitation of limbs of police informers by Naxals. Special police forces that 'were allowed to operate totally incognito', were formed for the express purpose of eliminating Naxalites. (Ibid: 3185) These encounters led the State to craft a new instrument of repression – the 'Greyhounds', 'a well-trained anti-guerrilla force that live[d] and operate[d] as the Naxalite armed squads [did] and [was] bound by no known law, including the Constitution of India.' (Ibid: 3185)

By 2000, the PWG 'declared the entire tribal forest region that include[d] Bastar and extend[ed] into Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh as guerilla zone, i.e. a region where People's War would attempt to prevent the state officials and forces from maintaining their rule and create alternative institutions of what it termed 'people's rule'. (Fact Finding Report 2006: 11) By creating a guerilla zone involving three adjacent States, the movement prompted the formulation of 'inter-State joint task force' by the state as a matching counter measure. *By the unilateral declaration of the replacement of the authority of the States by that of the authority of the social movement, the Maoist movement got into a structural-revolutionary mode.*

The game of establishing military supremacy over the States became an obsession with the text of the ideology, deflecting attention from the context of decreasing involvement of the masses in the decisions that affected their lives and livelihood. The suspicions that breed in secret underground guerilla operations and the benefit of doubt that is invoked in favour of maintaining secrecy, often result in the ruthless killings of innocent people suspected of being police informers. Party and ideology take precedence over the people for whom the revolution is meant. Balagopal postulates an invariant law of sociology of armed insurgency, '[w]ithout exception, all militant movements have killed more people of their own social base than their purported enemy classes... The very fact that this is true of the Naxalites, the most politically sensitive of all insurgents, is proof enough.'

(Ibid: 3185) *The movement in the course of revolutionising its praxis, at the same time, set in motion a reversal of the process of its activation of quasi-structural movements, thus weakening its mass base.*

Spiraling violence led to peace talks initiated in Andhra Pradesh by the new Congress government between July-October 2004. Two fundamental issues led to its failure: (a) the Naxalites maintained that 'the question of carrying arms and conducting armed struggle were non-negotiable', and (b) the State government expressed its inability 'to undertake land reforms on the scale and manner suggested by the Naxalites.' (Nayak 2006) Even as the talks were on, Naxalites continued their armed struggle in other States, e.g. landmine blasts in eastern Uttar Pradesh killed 15 policemen. (Ibid) Violence escalated exponentially on both sides after the failure of talks.

With the Greyhounds gaining the upper hand in Andhra Pradesh in the game of spiraling violence and counter violence, the Maoists concentrated in the neighbouring Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh. The story that unfolds in this adjacent district is very similar to that of northern Telengana and other areas in Andhra Pradesh. A number of ML groups initiated peasant struggles in the 1970s. In the 1980s the Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sangh (DAKMS) was formed. It took up (a) issues relating to oppression and exploitation by 'outsiders', primarily by personnel of the forest and revenue departments, the police and moneylenders; and (b) the '*patta*' issue of vesting ownership rights on forest lands brought under cultivation; and others. The DAKMS 'deployed methods of chasing away forest and revenue officials from villages and attacking forest posts.' (Fact Finding Report 2006: 11) Later in the 1980s, 'internal contradictions in the *adivasi* society started being addressed. Portions of land under control of a few families of large landholdings, mostly village headmen and *sarpanches*, were expropriated and distributed among the landless. Grains also were distributed likewise. (Ibid 11) *Forcible seizure of cultivable land from landowners and their distribution amongst the landless clearly indicates the use of non-institutionalised violence for 'illegal' appropriation and distribution of land, made possible by an alternative structure of authority in*

defiance of the existing legitimate authority.

This was followed by the creation of *sanghams*, with the ultimate objective of replacing the existing traditional structures of authority at the village level. They articulated village issues and settled disputes. (Ibid: 11) Later still, they fixed the prices of forest produce, notably, that of *tendu* leaves; prevented *sarpanches*/headmen from misusing government funds; mobilised labour for creating irrigation facilities; created seed banks; maintained land records of all cultivated lands; encouraged afforestation. (Ibid: 11) By the time the new State of Chhattisgarh was created, 'the CPI (ML) had created substantial bases in the forest areas of Bastar, Kanker and Dantewada.' (Ibid:11) It was in 2000 that the area was declared a guerilla zone. *The sangham was an additional structure introduced within the social system to replace the traditional structure and authority of the headmen/sarpanches. It helped activate a number of quasi- movements to bring about intra-systemic changes with mass participation.*

Soon after the *sanghams* were established, in July-August 1990, the headman of village Badre near Kutru was killed. The retaliatory attacks against Maoist sympathisers sowed the seeds of the *Jan Jagran Abhiyan*, which later got transformed into *Salwa Judum* (May-June 2005) a counter mobilisation of the local people, with armed support of the state, against the Maoists and the *sanghams*. The leadership was taken up by a tribal, Mahendra Karma, earlier of the CPI, later of the Congress party. With political support from parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Madhya Pradesh, the *Abhiyan* and the Maoists had alternating successes. The landownership issue, unlike in Andhra Pradesh, became a highly 'contentious issue in enormously differentiated villages.' (Ibid: 13) The escalating retaliatory violence after the formation of *Salwa Judum*, from both the ends of the pole resulted in huge loss of lives and in mass dislocation of population, with nearly 50,000 people driven into makeshift camps after forced or fearful desertion from their villages. *The declaration of a sovereign guerilla zone followed by increased violence for the elimination of headmen and sarpanches was a direct assault on the sovereignty of the state and its legal and constitutional*

obligations. The ensuing contestation between usurped authority of the movement and established authority of the state has resulted in a full scale warlike condition in which democratic space of the affected people has shrunk to zero; who now find themselves disenfranchised having been displaced from their homes and properties and are reduced to the status of refugees.

The declaration of the forest strongholds as guerilla zones by the Maoist movement, the creation of a sovereign space within which a new people's democracy was sought to be established and governed, under the revolutionary authority of a few hard core doctrinaire leaders, sounds ominously problematic. Balagopal perceptively observes, 'the real challenge for the Maoists is not whether they can militarily get the better of the greyhounds, who have a clear upper hand at present, but whether they can retain active support from one generation to the next while retaining the Maoist strategy...' (2006: 3186).

The Maoist ideology recognises the contradictions of gender, caste, religion and so on, but only as subsidiary and subject to the deterministic dialectic in which primary contradiction is fixed in the domain of exploitation. While in theory the whole array of quasi-structural, structural-alterative, structural-transformative mobilisations of the proponents of the movement are regarded as important for building a mass base, in practice, this has at best been limited to the initial stages of the movement. The propensity for militarisation of the conflict carries within its womb the seed of its own denouement, as the mass base erodes; the people become fearful and suspicious of gun-toting squads who tend to turn extortionist. The romantic notion of a people's democracy, a construction of the party elite, is thrust upon an unsuspecting people who find their culture and customs denigrated for their alleged obscurantism.

In the end, I will raise some questions. What do we make of the growing spread of the Maoist movement? Given its ideological anchorage in anti-feudal contradictions, a dedicated, ideologically committed party or group will find objective conditions ripe for its role in the most backward, isolated, feudal enclaves, where not only the States have failed to extend their governance, even Left parties in electoral politics

are conspicuous by their absence. Given their romanticised vision of capturing national state power through the barrel of AK 47s, rocket launchers, landmines combining guerilla warfare tactics, it is anybody's guess what progress they can achieve beyond forest covers and simple, illiterate, uneducated tribal masses. Besides, no matter how much good a militant movement does to people, violence begets state violence. As long as state violence is able to establish its superiority over movement violence, its success is doubtful. In this respect the conditions in India and Nepal are oceans apart. This has been demonstrated since the Naxalbari peasant mobilisation and the phase of annihilation of class enemies during Charu Mazumdar regime.

Are there any unintended consequences of such militarised Maoist movements? Yes. First, it dismantles the feudal structures. Then, by overstressing their claims for guerilla zones, they attract disproportionate involvement of the States in establishing their superiority in quelling the rebellion. This is followed by high inputs of 'development' from the government for creation of employment, improvement in productivity, building roads and bridges, developing markets, and so on. With the feudal structures dismantled, the development process may become more effective.

The second unintended consequence is that the state is able to gain in experience in controlling such situations more effectively in the future. For example, in Andhra Pradesh, the State was able to create an anti-guerilla greyhound force that is already being prescribed for places other than Andhra Pradesh. The experience in Chhattisgarh, has contributed the formulation of *Salwa Judum*. Although this has attracted widespread condemnation, the repertoire of counter-guerilla actions is increasing.

Are such movements vulnerable to internal contradictions? Generally yes. Firstly, there is the fallacy that the primary contradiction is fixed in the domain of economic exploitation or class. This tends to assign secondary importance to the domains of discrimination, oppression and gender bias. The top leadership is reluctant to loosen its grip over the movement organisation. Secondly, the logic of instruments of violence is itself alienating for the common people.

There are so many other questions, but there has to be an end.

Notes

¹ Paper presented at the international conference on *Social Development, Social Movements and the Marginalised: Perspectives and Concerns*, organised by the Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, 17-18 February 2008

² Rajendra Singh in his latest book on social movements is in close agreement with Tilly on this point. He observes, '[u]nlike movements, however, riot and rebellion necessarily involve violence. Revolution is necessarily violent and unlike movement, riot and rebellion, it involves all sections of society living in its territory.' (2001: 36) Non-violent revolution in his scheme is axiomatically out, and so is it from Tilly's framework. Besides, while revolution involves mobilisation of *all* sections of population, social movements involve only *a* section. The scope of social movements, therefore, is limited to seeking 'redressal of a grievance or to struggle for specific goals and objectives.' (ibid: 36)

³ A theoretical orientation as distinguished from theory is 'the set of ideas, assumptions and methodological approaches that serve to guide or orientate the researcher in his examination of substantive issues... it does not in itself form a consistent system of inter-related propositions which are capable of being tested empirically, although it may facilitate the formulation of such hypotheses or theories.' (Long 1977: 4)

⁴ I have drawn liberally from my following articles: (1) 'Social Movement and Social Change: Towards a Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Framework' (1977); (2) 'Social Conflict and Social Change: Towards a Theoretical Orientation' (1986); (3) 'Study of Social Conflicts: Case of Naxalbari Peasant Movement' 1987; (4) 'Nation-State Reformulated: Interrogating Received Wisdom' (1999). This paper has gone beyond the earlier ones in stating my present position.

⁵ Rajendra Singh tows the same line. Disagreeing with Smelser, he emphatically states: 'Social movements

may lead to or transform itself into revolution. When it does transform itself into revolution, it ceases to be a movement.' The reason he gives sounds arbitrary rather than convincing. He assigns to social movements the limited role of struggle for grievance redressal and pursuit of 'specific goals and objectives.' Violent methods are not for social movements. (2001: 36)

⁶ My preference for 'interrelatedness' (rather than 'interdependence') between the 'parts' in a social system is prompted by the fact that a social system may be constituted of dominant, dependent and independent structures. Such a system can accommodate antagonistic and non-antagonistic relations of competition, conflict and cooperation. It permits the presence of structural asymmetries that embed antagonistic or non-antagonistic contradictions. In contrast, 'interdependence' implies mutuality of dependence.

⁷ It has been my singular misfortune that in some of my earlier publications the term 'alterative' has been printed as 'alternative' creating confusion most confoundingly. This has been one instance of the printer's devil that has wrought great damage to the author.

⁸ Manoranjan Mohanty identifies three streams of Naxalites since 1977: (1) CPI-ML Liberation which is the first breakaway faction from the original CPI-ML founded by Charu Mazumdar. It was led by Satya Narayan Sinha, a member of the first Polit Bureau when the party was formed in 1969. After his death the leadership was with Vinod Mishra, who in turn, was succeeded by Dipankar Bhattacharya after his death. The party focuses on mass movements and organisations, and participates in electoral politics. (2) The Communist Organisation of India-ML (COI-ML), led by the legendary Kanu Sanyal, who was the architect of the peasant revolt in Naxalbari, under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar. The party is engaged in consolidating the Naxal parties and groups that believe in creating mass organisations, and participates in electoral politics. (3) CPI-ML People's War Group (PWG) founded by Kondapalli Sitharamayya, followed the Charu Mazumdar line of rejecting parliamentary politics and eventual seizure of state power through a people's liberation guerilla army. Based in the backward tribal region of north Telengana in

Andhra Pradesh, it merged with CPI-ML Party Unity of Bihar in 1996 to extend its territorial reach. In September 2004, it merged with the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), which had emerged as a parallel organisation to the CPI-ML led by Charu Mazumdar and was strong in Bihar and Jharkhand. In 2004, the armed wing of the PWG merged with that of the MCC, forming the People's Liberationa Guerilla Army (PLGA), having as many as 3,500 trained fighters who can handle sophisticated arms like AK-47, rocket launchers, grenades, and landmines. Ganapathy ousted Sitharamayya from power. It will be obvious that it is this last combine, rechristened, the CPI-Maoist, that has instilled the fear of the devil in the state, with its operations strongly felt in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Jharkhand. (Mohanty 2006: 3165-67)

⁹ On 19 September 2005 the Union Home Ministry in a meeting in New Delhi, attended by Chief Ministers, Home Secretaries, Director-Generals of Police and other senior officials from 12 Naxalite affected States, decided to set up inter-State joint task forces to 'facilitate coordinated and synergised anti-naxalite operations across State boundaries' and 'strengthen intelligence networks' for this mission. This was described as a historic decision without precedence in countering Naxalite threat. (Ramakrishnan 2005). On April 13, 2006 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addressed the Chief Ministers of six States outlining the factors contributing to the growth of Naxalism: 'exploitation, artificially depressed wages, iniquitous socio-political circumstances, inadequate employment opportunities, lack of access to resources, underdeveloped agriculture, geographical isolation and lack of land reforms.' (Gupta 2008)

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